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Reynold A. Nicholson

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STUDIES  
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ISLAMIC MYSTICISM

THE LATE REYNOLD A. NICHOLSON  
LECTURER IN PERSIAN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
FORMERLY FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE  
FORMERLY SIR THOMAS ADAMS'S PROFESSOR  
OF ARABIC IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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## PREFACE

As was explained in the preface to my *Studies in Islamic Poetry*, the following essays conclude a series of five, which fall into two groups and are therefore published in separate volumes. While mysticism, save for a few casual references, found no place in the studies on the *Lubābu 'l-Albāb* of 'Awff and the *Luzūmiyyāt* of Abu 'l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī, in these now brought together it has taken entire possession of the field. Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ, indeed, is an exquisite poet; and the picture of Abú Sa'íd ibn Abi 'l-Khayr, drawn by pious faith and coloured with legendary romance, may be looked upon as a work of art in its way. But on the whole the literary interest of the present volume is subordinate to the religious and philosophical. I have tried to make the reader acquainted with three Şúfís famous in the East and worthy of being known in Europe. Most of what has hitherto been written concerning Abú Sa'íd begins and ends with the quatrains passing as his, though (for the chief part, at any rate) they were neither composed nor recited by him. As to Jlí, the masterly sketch in Dr Muḥammad Iqbál's *Development of Metaphysics in Persia* stands almost alone. Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ had the misfortune to be translated by Von Hammer, and the first intelligent or intelligible version of his great *Tá'iyya* appeared in Italy four years ago. It will be seen that the subjects chosen illustrate different aspects of Şúfism and exhibit racial contrasts, of which perhaps the importance has not yet been sufficiently recognised. Abú Sa'íd, the free-thinking free-living dervish, is a Persian through and through, while Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ in the form of his poetry as well as in the individuality of his spiritual enthusiasm displays the narrower and tenser genius of the Semite. Nearly a third of this volume is concerned with a type of Şúfism, which—

as represented by Ibnu 'l-'Arabí and Jílí—possesses great interest for students of medieval thought and may even claim a certain significance in relation to modern philosophical and theological problems. Mysticism is such a vital element in Islam that without some understanding of its ideas and of the forms which they assume we should seek in vain to penetrate below the surface of Mohammedan religious life. The forms may be fantastic and the ideas difficult to grasp; nevertheless we shall do well to follow them, for in their company East and West often meet and feel themselves akin.

I regret that I have not been able to make full use of several books and articles published during the final stages of the war or soon afterwards, which only came into my hands when these studies were already in the press. Tor Andrae's *Die person Muhammeds in lehre und glauben seiner gemeinde* (Upsala, 1917) contains by far the best survey that has yet appeared of the sources, historical evolution and general characteristics of the Mohammedan Logos doctrine. This, as I have said, is the real subject of the *Insánu 'l-Kámil*. Its roots lie, of course, in Hellenism. Andrae shows how the notion of the *θεῖος ἄνθρωπος* passed over into Islam through the Shí'ites and became embodied in the Imám, regarded as the living representative of God and as a semi-divine personality on whom the world depends for its existence. Many Shí'ites were in close touch with Şúfism, and there can be no doubt that, as Ibn Khaldún observed, the Shí'ite Imám is the prototype of the Şúfistic Quṭb. It was inevitable that the attributes of the Imám and Quṭb should be transferred to the Prophet, so that even amongst orthodox Moslems the belief in his pre-existence rapidly gained ground. Particularly instructive to students of the *Insánu 'l-Kámil* is Andrae's account of the Logos doctrine of Ibnu 'l-'Arabí, whose influence is manifest in every page that Jílí wrote. In this connexion another book by another Swedish scholar—H. S. Nyberg's *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-'Arabí* (Leiden, 1919)—provides new and valuable material. The introduction, to which I have now and then referred in the footnotes, not only elucidates the mystical philosophy of the *Insánu 'l-Kámil*

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but enables us to trace in detail the indebtedness of Jīlī to his great predecessor. In the 16th and 17th centuries the *Insānu 'l-Kāmil* exerted a powerful influence upon Indonesian Śūfism, which has been studied by the Dutch Orientalists D. A. Rinkes, B. J. O. Schrieke, and H. Kraemer. I should like to call attention to the account given by the last-named scholar in *Een Javaansche primbon uit de zestiende eeuw* (Leiden, 1921), p. 40 foll. and p. 83 foll.

Some months after my work had gone to the press, I received from Prof. C. A. Nallino an off-print of his article *Il poema mistico arabo d'Ibn al-Fāriḍ in una recente traduzione italiana*<sup>1</sup>, from which I learned that a prose translation by Sac. Ignazio Di Matteo of Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ's most celebrated ode, the *Tā'iyyatu 'l-Kubrā*, had been published in 1917 at Rome. As this book was reproduced in autograph for private circulation, it would have been inaccessible to me, if the author had not kindly presented me with a copy. He replied to Nallino in a paper entitled *Sulla mia interpretazione del poema mistico d'Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (RDSO., 1920, vol. VIII. 479–500), which was immediately followed by a second article from Nallino, *Ancora su Ibn al-Fāriḍ e sulla mistica musulmana* (*ibid.* vol. VIII. 501–562). Having myself attempted to translate the *Tā'iyya*, I am impressed with the merit of Di Matteo's version rather than inclined to dwell on its faults. He has given us, for the first time, a careful and tolerably correct rendering of the original; and that is no slight achievement. The articles by Nallino, which include a critical examination of numerous passages in the poem, are the most important contribution that any European Orientalist has so far made to the study of Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ. In an essay consisting largely of translations, I could but indicate (pp. 193–5 *infra*) my views on the main question which he has discussed in his friendly controversy with Di Matteo. To him, as to me, it seems clear that the view put forward by Di Matteo is erroneous. Neither the form nor the substance of the *Tā'iyya* suggests that it was inspired by Ibnu 'l-'Arabī, though some traces of his influence may perhaps be found in

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Rivista degli studi orientali* (1919), vol. VIII. 1–106.

it<sup>1</sup>. It differs in kind from poems indubitably so inspired, such as the *'Ayniyya* of Jīlī. Above all, it is a mystic's autobiography, a poet's description of his inner life, and the terms which it employs belong to the psychological vocabulary of Ṣūfism, with few exceptions. I have no quarrel with those who call Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ a pantheist; but his pantheism (unlike that of his commentators) is essentially a state of feeling, not a system of thought. The poem, however, requires explanation, and I do not think it can be interpreted without reference to the corresponding philosophical doctrine. In other words, if we are to elicit any definite meaning from the symbols which shadow forth a consciousness of mystical union, we must somehow connect them with metaphysical propositions. But although mysticism is not an allegory, still less is it a theology or philosophy. Hence the sayings of "God-intoxicated" men will not serve as a sure criterion of their attitude towards religion. Moslems themselves, as a rule, want better evidence of heresy than this.

I desire to express my gratitude to Prof. C. A. Nallino and Sac. Ignazio Di Matteo for their gifts of books and for the courtesy which accompanied them; to Mr A. G. Ellis for the loan of his copy of the *Insānu 'l-Kāmil*; and to the authorities of the India Office Library for placing at my disposal the manuscripts mentioned on p. 77 *infra*. Especial thanks are due to Mr Rhuvon Guest, who most generously sent me his unpublished translation of the *Tā'iyya* of Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ and allowed me to use it for the purpose of correcting and improving my own, before the latter was in print. Mr Guest's version, while keeping very close to the original, is thoughtful and judicious, and I found it of great service in dealing with passages which to me seemed obscure. If I have sometimes preferred my interpretation to his, he has at least as often

<sup>1</sup> There is no trustworthy basis (cf. p. 164 *infra*) for the statement that Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ was acquainted with Ibnu 'l-'Arabī. The latter is said to have asked the poet's permission to write a commentary on his *Tā'iyya*, and to have received the reply that the *Futūḥātu 'l-Makkiyya* was a commentary on it (Maqqarī, Leiden ed., I. 570, 16-18); this, however, is the kind of story that could scarcely fail to be invented. The *Futūḥāt* was completed in A.H. 629, only three years before the death of Ibnu 'l-Fāriḍ.

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convinced me that his was more likely to be the right one. Besides thanking the scholars who have helped me in the second part of these studies, I wish to acknowledge the appreciative criticism which the first volume has received. Both Nöldeke and Goldziher have declared their agreement with the view there taken of the character of Ma'arrî. The remarks of my old teacher, Prof. Nöldeke, are so interesting that I cannot refrain from quoting them:

In der Gesamtauffassung des Dichters und Denkers muss ich Ihnen durchweg beistimmen. Zunächst darin, dass M. kein Muslim mehr war, sondern als einziger, allerdings festen Punkt aus der religiösen Ueberlieferung das Vorhandensein eines allmächtigen Gottes behielt, der in seiner Willkür so ziemlich dem koranischen glich. Dabei halte ich es immerhin für möglich, dass M. hie und da auch sonst an Einzelheiten der Lehre Muhammeds festhielt, je nach verschiedenen Zeiten und Stimmungen. Dass die Widersprüche innerhalb der Sammlung nicht alle auf absichtliche Täuschung herauskommen, möchte ich damit betonen. Welche Weltanschauung und welche Dogmatik ist ohne innere Widersprüche? Das christliche Dogma habe ich hier vor Allem im Auge; ich meine die Dogmatik aller christlichen Confessionen. ...Was man auch an M. aussetzen mag, man muss vor seiner Selbständigkeit doch die grösste Achtung haben. Wie eigen berühren uns nr. 117–119, worin die Fürsten als Diener und Besoldete des Volkes erscheinen, bei einem Orientalen! (Friedrich der Grosse dachte wenigstens *theoretisch* auch so.) So fern uns oder mir (da ich mich doch als strenger Rationalist ihm verwandt fühle) seine übertriebene Askese liegt, die z. B. nicht berücksichtigt, dass "Die grossen Fische fressen stets die kleinen," dass die Singvögel grösstenteils von Insecten leben und dazu, dass wir Menschen von den Tieren direct oder indirect aufgefressen würden, wenn wir sie nicht vielfach töteten, so muss man doch auch in der Hinsicht vor ihm Achtung haben. Wenn er den Wein verabscheut, so muss man bedenken, dass dieser damals wie jetzt (namentlich bei den Persern) ganz besonders dazu diente, rasch sinnlos betrunken zu werden (cfr. Gen. xliii. 34, וישכרו). Der Standpunkt war also vernünftiger als der amerikanischen Gesetzgebung, die das Kind mit dem Bade ausschüttet. Wie verständig ist M. auch darin, das er nicht an dem fast zum Dogma der islamischen Ueberlieferung gewordenen Satze festhielt, dass die Menschen in früheren Zeiten besser gewesen wären als die Zeitgenossen (nr. 162, 4 als zweifelhaft, 146, 3 bestimmt ausgesprochen)! Vermuthlich wollte er damit besonders den Vorzug der "Genossen des Propheten" treffen.



Prof. Nöldeke laid me under a further obligation by reading the text of the pieces selected from the *Luzûmiyyât* and proposing a number of emendations. These are given below, together with some which I owe to the kindness of Prof. Bevan. Misprints are included, and the English version has been corrected in a few places where, as Prof. Bevan pointed out, the original was mistranslated or not fully understood.

P. 66, No. 20, first line. *Read*

“Ah, let us go, whom nature joined of old in friendship fast.”

P. 79, No. 52, eighth line. *Read*

“With blackness of stony wastes, parched desolate highlands.”

P. 101, note 4. “The dark raiment” (شِية العظم) refers to Death. “Er (Abú Muslim) hatte der Dynastie treu gedient: darauf bekleidete die ihn mit der Farbe der Finsterniss” (N.).

P. 109, No. 124. Although I have deliberately rendered الكلامُ كُلوْمُ by “words are wounds,” that rendering gives too wide an application to the Arabic phrase. As the context shows, الكلامُ has here its technical meaning and refers to the dialectic of the *mutakallimîn* (scholastic theologians).

P. 116, No. 144, lines 5–6. *Read*

“Be just and live on earth what can?  
 And none is more unjust than Man.”

In the original, فوقها stands for فوق الارض (B.).

P. 121, No. 163, third line. *Read*

“Thou deem'st thy being here calamity.”

P. 123, No. 171, third line. *Read*

“If nonsense be all the coin we exchange, then better.”

P. 132, No. 192, last line. *Read*

“To succour, and shall surpass in excellence Hájib's bow.”

Note 2 should be deleted. For “Hájib's bow” see *Naqd'id*, 462 (B.).

P. 141, seventh line from foot. By an oversight, “Jáhiz” has been written instead of “Abú 'Abdallah al-Khwárizmí.”

P. 145, note 1. The animal called by the Arabs الفهد and by the Persians يوز is not the lynx but, as Prof. Nöldeke reminds me, the hunting-leopard (*cynaelurus*), commonly known in Europe as the cheetah.

P. 157, note 2, last line. *Read* قَبْلَهُ for قَبْلَهُ.

P. 165, note 2, first line. *Read* فَبِيحٍ for قَبِيحٍ.

P. 167, No. 240, first verse. *Read*

“Say to wine, which is a foe to (men's) understandings, ever drawing against them the swords of a warrior.”

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Nöldeke writes: “240, 1 ist **سَيُوفٌ** doch wohl richtig, da **نِضًا** schwerlich als Intransitiv gebraucht werden kann. **نُيُي** wird als Fem. gebraucht, Ibn Qotaiba, *‘Uyün*, 277, 2, wie es ja regelrechter Plural von **نُيُيَةٌ** ist (Baiḍāwī zu *Sūra* xx, 56, 128); und so passt das **لِهَا** gut.”

P. 178, No. 264, first verse. For “my nose” read “noses.”

P. 191, No. 301, second verse. Read “howbeit akin to them are stones that were kicked.”

P. 192, No. 303, second verse. Read

“But pardon me, O my God! At Mecca shall I throw off  
 Amongst pilgrims newly come the weeds of a widowed frame.”

Prof. Bevan justly observes that **سَلِيْبٌ** in conjunction with **ثِيَابٌ** can scarcely have any other meaning than “a woman who is wearing the black garments of mourning.” Moreover, although **طَرَحَ**, when followed by **عَلَى**, can be used of “throwing on (a garment),” it properly means “to throw off.” I suggest that **سَلِيْبٌ** denotes here the poet’s body, which—as bereaved of sight, strength, and all its pleasures—he compares to a woman clad in mourning, while **ثِيَابٌ** refers to the garments which would be laid aside on assuming the *iḥrām*.

P. 204, No. 326, lines 3–4. The general sense is given correctly, but I should have noticed that the words **بِالْحَمْدِ وَالْإِخْلَاصِ** allude to two short *Sūras* of the Koran, *viz.* *Sūra* 1 (cf. the Commentary of Bayḍāwī, ed. Fleischer, p. 3, l. 6) and *Sūra* cxii. These are contrasted with the two long *Sūras* mentioned in note 1.

P. 216, No. 30, v. 8. For **الْخَلْقُ** read **لِلْخَلْقِ**.

P. 220, No. 40, v. 16. For **يُعِدِّي** read **يُعَرِّي** (B.).

P. 228, No. 69, v. 3. For **حَلِيْبَهَا** read **حَلِيْبَهَا** (B.).

P. 229, No. 72, v. 8. **خَامَلٌ** (B.) is better than **خَامدٌ**.

P. 237, No. 107, v. 5. Read **عَلَى غَضَبٍ**, “im Zorne” (N.).

P. 240, No. 115, v. 3. For **قَبْلُ** read **قَبْلُ**.

P. 246, No. 143, v. 2. For **لَا تَبْسُحُ** read **أَقْبَسُ** (N.).

P. 248, No. 149, v. 4. For **الْفَتْحُ** read **الْفَتْحُ**.

*Ibid.* For **وَالْمَرْعُ** read **وَالْمَرْعُ**. Cf. Wellhausen, *Scholien zum Diwan*

*Hudail*, 277, 5 (ZDMG., xxxix, 479) and *Lisdn*, x, 211, 4 fr. foot and foll. “Die Bedeutung scheint ‘Wachtel’ zu sein” (N.).

P. 251, No. 163, v. 2. For **وَيَعُدُّ** read **وَتَعُدُّ** (B.).

- P. 251, No. 167, v. 1. For *بِخِلَافٍ* read *بِخِلَافِ*.
- P. 253, No. 174, v. 6. For *سَقِيًّا* read *سَقِيًا*.
- P. 255, No. 181, v. 3. For *جَلَّى* read *جَلَّى*. "ihre Geheimnisse mit Wissen aufdeckt = klar erkennt. *جَلَّى* und *سَرَّ* bilden ja natürliche Gegensätze" (N.).
- P. 262, No. 210, v. 4. For *مَنْصَبُ* read *مَنْصَبُ* (B.).
- P. 265, No. 225, v. 2. For *بِإِذْنِ* read *بِإِذْنِ*.
- P. 266, No. 229, v. 6. For *مُتَوَافِقِينَ* read *مُتَوَافِقِينَ*.
- P. 268, No. 238, v. 1. For *كُتِبَ* read *كُتِبَ*.
- P. 269, No. 240, v. 1. For *سُيُوفَ* read *سُيُوفَ* (N.).
- P. 274, No. 262, v. 2. For *الْحَذْمُ* read *الْحَذْمُ*.
- P. 274, No. 264, v. 1. For *الْأَنْفَ* read *الْأَنْفَ* (N.).
- P. 277, No. 274, v. 7. There is, of course, a word-play here, as *ظَلِيمٍ* can also mean "the male ostrich" and *نَعَامَةٌ* "the female ostrich." Nöldeke suggests that the sense may be, "Fear the prayer of an oppressed man on behalf of his wife."
- P. 279, No. 284, v. 1. Read *تَقَلُّ* for *تَقَلُّ*.
- P. 282, No. 302, v. 4. Read *قَرَاهَا* for *قَرَاهَا* (the rhyme-word).
- P. 286, No. 318, v. 1. If *يَجْزَى* be retained, its subject is the individual implied by the preceding words. The reading *تَجْزَى* gives an easier and more natural sense.

Even the minutiae in this list will be carefully noted, I hope, by students of the *Luzúmiyyát*. Success in mastering the difficulties of Arabic poetry depends on the conviction that no detail is small enough to be neglected.

REYNOLD A. NICHOLSON.

March, 1921.

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