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978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

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## Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century

### *Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*

For much of the twentieth century, the intellectual life of the Ottoman and Arabic-Islamic world in the seventeenth century was ignored or mischaracterized by historians. Ottomanists typically saw the seventeenth century as marking the end of Ottoman cultural florescence, while modern Arab nationalist historians tended to see it as yet another century of intellectual darkness under Ottoman rule. This book is the first sustained effort at investigating some of the intellectual currents among Ottoman and North African scholars of the early modern period. Examining the intellectual production of the ranks of learned *ulema* (scholars) through close readings of various treatises, commentaries, and marginalia, Khaled El-Rouayheb argues for a more textured – and text-centered – understanding of the vibrant exchange of ideas and transmission of knowledge across a vast expanse of Ottoman-controlled territory.

Khaled El-Rouayheb is James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic and of Islamic Intellectual History in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. He specializes in Arabic and Islamic intellectual history, especially in the period from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. He is the author of *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (2005) and *Relational Syllogisms and the History of Arabic Logic, 900–1900* (2010). He is also coeditor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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KHALED EL-ROUAYHEB

*Harvard University*



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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107042964](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107042964)

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First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

El-Rouayheb, Khaled.

Islamic intellectual history in the seventeenth century : scholarly currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb / Khaled El-Rouayheb.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-04296-4 (hardback : alkaline paper)

1. Turkey – Intellectual life – 17th century. 2. Africa, North – Intellectual life – 17th century. 3. Learning and scholarship – Turkey – History – 17th century. 4. Learning and scholarship – Africa, North – History – 17th century. 5. Muslim scholars – Turkey – History – 17th century.

6. Muslim scholars – Africa, North – History – 17th century. 7. Muslim philosophers – Turkey – History – 17th century. 8. Muslim philosophers – Africa, North – History – 17th century. I. Title.

DR511.E57 2015

956'.015 – dc23 2015010600

ISBN 978-1-107-04296-4 Hardback

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

O reader! There may occur in our work things with which you are not familiar and that you will find nowhere else. Do not hurry to condemn this, whimsically heeding the call of the one who merely relays what others have said and stitches it together, and for whom the ultimate in knowledge and the aim of all effort is to say “So and so has said.” No by God! . . . We seek refuge in God from blackening folios and stuffing quires with what people have said and meant, following the well-trodden path of imitation (*taqlīd*) as the dull-witted do . . . There is no difference between an imitator being led and a pack-animal being led. So know, o reader, that we have not included in this or other compositions anything besides what we believe to be correct, viz. concepts and propositions that are evident or correctly argued for.

– al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1691)

Had it not been for imitation (*taqlīd*), no one of the ignorant would have been deprived of the truth, and no one could be heard saying, “We have not heard this from our first forefathers.” The one whom the Lord wishes to make a consummate scholar, He will guide by making him understand that “Wisdom is the stray camel of the believer” and will make him commit to take what is pure and leave what is adulterated . . . O you, who are brimming with intelligence, do not look to *who* is saying something but to *what* is being said, for this is the way of the verifiers (*muḥaqqiqīn*) and the custom of those who delve deep (*mudaqqiqīn*) into scholarly matters!

– Kara Ḥalil Tīrevī (d. 1711)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents  
in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

<i>Figures, Maps, and Tables</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<i>Note on Transliteration, Dates, and Translations</i>	xv
Introduction	I
PART I: “THE PATH OF THE KURDISH AND PERSIAN VERIFYING SCHOLARS”	
1 Kurdish Scholars and the Reinvigoration of the Rational Sciences	13
The Myth of the “Triumph of Fanaticism”	14
Opening the Gate of Verification in Damascus	26
Opening the Gate of Verification in the Hejaz, Istanbul, and Anatolia	37
Conclusion	56
2 A Discourse on Method: The Evolution of <i>Ādāb</i> <i>al-baḥṭh</i>	60
An Explosion of Interest in Dialectics ( <i>Ādāb al-baḥṭh</i> )	61
Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Contributions to <i>Ādāb</i> <i>al-baḥṭh</i>	70
<i>Ādāb al-baḥṭh</i> and Relational Syllogisms	85
3 The Rise of “Deep Reading”	97
Traditional Manuals on the Acquisition of Knowledge	99
<i>Ādāb al-baḥṭh</i> and “The Proprieties of Reading”	106
Müneccimbāṣī on “the Proprieties of Reading”	109
Sāçaqlizāde on the Acquisition of Knowledge	115

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

*Contents*

Deep Reading and Textual Criticism	120
Ottoman Education and the Ideal of Deep Reading	125
Conclusion	128
PART II: SAVING SERVANTS FROM THE YOKE OF IMITATION	
4 Maghrebī “Theologian-Logicians” in Egypt and the Hejaz	131
Maghrebī Logicians in Egypt	131
The Seventeenth-Century Efflorescence in the Maghreb	147
Four Maghrebī Scholars in the East	153
The End of an Era	170
5 The Condemnation of Imitation ( <i>Taqīd</i> )	173
Sanūsī on Imitation ( <i>Taqīd</i> )	175
Sanūsī’s Influence in the East	188
Sanūsī-Inspired Creedal Works	193
A Forgotten Chapter in Islamic Religious History	200
6 al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī and Two Theological Controversies in Seventeenth-Century Morocco	204
The Controversy Concerning the “Imitator” ( <i>Muqallid</i> )	204
Ḥasan al-Yūsī’s Defense of Logic	215
Ḥasan al-Yūsī on the Controversy Concerning the Islamic Profession of Faith	221
Epilogue: Zabīdī’s Criticism	230
PART III: THE IMAMS OF THOSE WHO PROCLAIM THE UNITY OF EXISTENCE	
7 The Spread of Mystical Monism	235
Sixteenth-Century Arab Sufi Scholars on Ibn ‘Arabī	237
The Shaṭṭārī Order in the Hejaz	249
The Naqshbandī Order in the Hejaz and Syria	257
The Khalwatī Order in Syria	261
Conclusion	270
8 Monist Mystics and Neo-Ḥanbalī Traditionalism	272
Kūrānī on Figurative Interpretation ( <i>Ta’wīl</i> )	275
Kūrānī and Nābulusī on the Value of Rational Theology ( <i>Kalām</i> )	285
Kūrānī and Nābulusī on Occasionalism and Human Acts	294
Conclusion	305
9 In Defense of <i>Waḥdat al-Wujūd</i>	312
Taftāzānī’s Criticism of <i>Waḥdat al-Wujūd</i>	313
Kūrānī’s Defense of <i>Waḥdat al-Wujūd</i>	320



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents  
in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

	<i>Contents</i>	ix
	Nābulusī's Defense of <i>Waḥdat al-Wujūd</i>	332
	Conclusion	344
	Conclusion	347
	<i>References</i>	363
	<i>Index</i>	391

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents  
in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Figures, Maps, and Tables

Map of the Near East	page 12
Beginning of a manuscript of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī's <i>Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājib</i> with a commentary by Mullā Ḥanafī Tabrīzī (fl. 1516) and a gloss by Mīrzā Jān Bāghnavī (d. 1586), copied in Mardin in 1042/1632 by the Kurdish scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm Āmidī (d. 1656)	123
Map of the Maghreb	130
Title page of Egyptian manuscript, dated 1137/1724, of al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī's gloss on Sanūsī's handbook on logic. A note by a later hand indicates where in the manuscript readers will find the discussion of the ten Aristotelian categories	146
Autograph certificate by Muḥammad al-Rūdānī, dated 1083/1673, to the Damascene scholar Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Naqīb al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1708)	167
Map of India and Arabia	234
Autograph certificate by Ibrāhīm Kūrānī, dated 1089/1678, to the Damascene Ḥanbalī scholar ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Taghlibī (d. 1723), written on the title page of a manuscript copy of Kūrānī's <i>Maslak al-sadād fī masʿalat khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād</i>	308
Autograph dedication by Kūrānī to the Damascene Ḥanbalī scholar Abū l-Mawāhib al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1714), written on the title page of a manuscript copy of Kūrānī's postscript to his <i>Maslak al-sadād fī masʿalat khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād</i>	309

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents  
in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgments

The greater part of the present book was drafted while I was a Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin in the academic year 2011–2012. I would like to thank that wonderful institution for its support, and for providing me with an ideal environment in which to ponder, research, and write. I am also grateful to Harvard University for granting me a sabbatical leave in that year, thus allowing me to accept the fellowship in Berlin.

While working on the book, I benefited greatly from discussions with (in alphabetical order): Shahab Ahmed, Michael Cook, Patricia Crone, Edhem Eldem, Th. Emil Homerin, Cemal Kafadar, Roy Mottahedeh, Reza Pourjavady, Adam Sabra, and Himmet Taşkömür. Michael Cook and an anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press kindly agreed to read the entire manuscript in draft and saved me from a number of factual errors and stylistic infelicities.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Marigold Acland of Cambridge University Press for initial encouragement, and to William Ham-mell and Kate Gavino, also of Cambridge, for seeing the manuscript through the later stages of review and production.

The images from manuscripts that appear in this book are reproduced with the kind permission of Princeton University Library. Chapter 3 of the present work is a revised and expanded version of my contribution to K. Chang, B. Elman, and S. Pollock (eds.), *World Philologies* (Harvard University Press, 2015), 201–224. I thank Harvard University Press for permission to reprint that contribution in revised and expanded form. Brill kindly granted me permission to use excerpts from my article “The Myth of the Triumph of Fanaticism in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

*Acknowledgments*

Empire,” *Die Welt des Islams* 48(2008): 196–221. Cambridge University Press kindly granted me permission to use excerpts from my article “Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the Seventeenth Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38(2006): 263–281.

I am greatly indebted to the Turkish Ministry of Culture for allowing me to access their online collection of digitized manuscripts ([www.yazmalar.gov.tr](http://www.yazmalar.gov.tr)). I am equally indebted to the curators/directors and staff of the Rare Books and Special Collections division of Princeton University Library, of Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul, and of the Orientabteilung of the Berlin Staatsbibliothek for graciously allowing me access to their invaluable manuscript collections.

My research assistants Caitlyn Olson and Shahradsch Shahvand provided valuable assistance with the preparation of the manuscript. My wife Manja Klemenčič offered her support and encouragement throughout, from the earliest stages of thinking through the basic idea of the book to the final submission of the manuscript.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Note on Transliteration, Dates, and Translations

I have followed the transliteration system of the *Journal of Islamic Studies* for Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish respectively, with one exception: for Ottoman Turkish I use Ĥ/ĥ (instead of H/h) to render the letter خ.

One obvious problem in a book such as this is how to transliterate personal names. Adopting a single transliteration system (say Arabic or Turkish) for all scholars of the period is both unsatisfactory and offensive to modern national sensibilities. I have instead elected to follow the Arabic transliteration system for Arabic-speaking scholars from North Africa, Arabia, and the Levant; the Ottoman Turkish transliteration system for Turkish-speaking scholars from Anatolia, southeastern Europe, and Crimea; and the Persian transliteration system for Kurdish, Persian, and Indo-Muslim scholars. My solution to the problem may not be to the liking of all, and there will be liminal cases where it is admittedly arbitrary (e.g., the case of a scholar born in Herat but active most of his adult life in the Hejaz, or a Kurdish scholar who was active mostly in Istanbul). But I can think of no other solution that avoids unsatisfactory transliterations such as “Abdülġanī Nāblusī” or “Muḥammad al-Sājaqlīzāda.”

I have retained the Arabic transliteration system for scholars active before the establishment of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires, regardless of ethnicity. I have retained the Ottoman Turkish rendering of epithets such as “Çelebī” and “Efendī,” not varying the spelling when these are used of Arabic- or Kurdish-speaking scholars. In a few cases, a scholar’s name is already widely used in the secondary literature in a form that does not correspond to a strict application of these transliteration rules. In such cases I have retained the more familiar form, for

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04296-4 - Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

Khaled El-Rouayheb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xvi *Note on Transliteration, Dates, and Translations*

example, Ibrāhīm Kūrānī (not Gūrānī), Shāh Waliyullāh (not Valiyullāh), and Muḥammad ‘Abduh (not ‘Abdu). I have not transliterated terms that are already widely used in English, such as Quran, hadith, madrasa, Sufi, Sunni, Shiite, and Hejaz.

Especially in cases of very common names such as “Muḥammad” and “Aḥmad” I have sometimes added the father’s name to facilitate the proper identification of a person. In such cases, I have used a simple “b.” for *ibn* (“son of”). I have retained the full “Ibn” only when it is followed by the name of a more distant ancestor, the construction “Ibn X” functioning in such cases as a family name that is passed on through the generations, as in the case of “Ibn ‘Arabī,” “Ibn Taymiyya,” and “Ibn Khaldūn.”

I have in the main given all dates according to the Gregorian calendar only. In a few cases, especially in footnotes discussing the dates of manuscripts, I have given the date according to both the Islamic calendar and the Gregorian, thus: “Hijri date/Gregorian date.” A year in the Hijri calendar will usually begin in one Gregorian year and end in the following year. Unless the source also gives the month of the year, I have given the Hijri date followed by the two Gregorian years that it spans, for example, 1078/1667–1668.

All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.