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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KHALED EL-ROUAYHEB
Harvard University

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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!

– Ḳara Ḫalīl Tīrevī (d. 1711)

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Figures, Maps, and Tables

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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 Ḫ/ḫ (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

example, Ibrāhīm Kūrānī (not Gūrānī), Shāh Waliyullāh (not Valiyullāh), and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (not ʿAbdu). 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 ʿArabī," "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.