

In the group of articles on RELIGIOUS STUDIES we find Dominique Urvoys’s article on “The ‘Ulāmā’ of al-Andalus” [p. 849], Manuela Marías’s on “Muslim Religious Practices in al-Andalus (2nd/8th-4th/10th Centuries)” [p. 878], Maria Isabel Fierro’s on “Heresy in al-Andalus” [p. 895], and Claude Addas’s “Andalusi Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ‘Arabi” [p. 909].


The book as a whole concludes with a closure article by the hand of Margarita López Gómez (“Islamic Civilisation in al-Andalus: A Final Assessment”; p. 1059); Biographies of the Contributors [p. 1063]; an Index [p. 1074]; and Maps by Jezus Zanon [p. 1099].

It should by now be clear that I could not discuss all the articles. However, the bulk of the articles give a good and balanced survey of the present state of research. In this connection I would like to mention the above mentioned article by Raymond Scheindlin on the Jews in Muslim Spain, which also deals with the presence of Judio-Arabic culture in medieval Christian Spain and the article on translation by Charles Burnett. The book will be useful for the coming decennia, although since its appearance many other studies in the field of the history, cultures and literatures of Muslim Spain have come to light. In this connection I do not wish to leave unmentioned the last five monographs which appeared in Brill’s Medieval Iberian Peninsula, Texts and Studies, by O. Zwartjes (Love Songs From al-Andalus, 1997), N. Roth (Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain, 1994), P.C. Scales (The Fall of the Caliphate of Córdoba, 1994), G. Wiegors (Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado, 1994), and by myself (Spanish Hebrew poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition, 1994).

Amsterdam, October 1998


This book brings together a number of essays and articles by Rachel Arie which has previously been published in various periodicals, the aim being to make the reader more at ease in rereading the articles, and to focus anew the reader’s attention upon many interesting historical aspects of Muslim Spain. All the articles included in this book have appeared earlier in French and Spanish periodicals. As we know, Rachel Arie is one of the leading specialists in the field of the history of Muslim Spain. The First Chapter (pp. 7-20), entitled “Contacts de civilisation et échanges culturels entre l’Espagne musulmane et l’Espagne chrétienne”, offers interesting material about the contacts between Christians and Muslims in Spain (e.g. the introduction of, among other things, rice, chess and bathhouses by the Arabs) and raises various interesting questions such as the linguistic situation (the co-existence of Romance and vernacular Arabic) and the enduring importance of Arabic in Toledo, even under Christian rule. Rachel Arie presents a global survey of Muslim Spain, a civilization which produced eminent scholars in different fields of sciences (philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy) and art (poetry, singing, music). Spain of this period was a rich ethnic and cultural mix, which influenced not only the rest of the Iberian peninsula but the whole of Christian Western-Europe. The Christian kings imitated the luxury and comfort of the Muslim cities. Likewise they adopted orchestras and singers, clothing, games and tournaments. Rachel Arie also speaks about the Christian Feasts (Christmas, Easter, the Holy Week and the Night of St. John) in Muslim Spain, as well as holidays with Persian names such as Nawruz and Mihrajân, which are connected with the beginning of the season or the year in the solar year. Many arabisms have survived in the Romance languages of the Iberian peninsula. The work done by Alphonse X the Wise and the translators of Toledo, Seville and Murcia is also discussed, as well as the Arabic influence in Castilian literature and poetry as seen in medieval works such as the Conde Lucanor and the Libro de Buen Amor.

The Second Chapter (pp. 21-44), entitled “Aperçu sur la femme dans l’Espagne musulmane,” covers the position of Muslim women vis-à-vis Christian and Jewish women of the Iberian peninsula. In spite of the scarcity of data, Rachel Arie is able to extract valuable material from the juridical works, historical descriptions and sources and the biographies of some of the poetesses.

Maliki jurisprudence, which dominated al-Andalus, placed women and men on an equal level in the fields of ethics and religion; women were, however, inferior to men in the political and legal domains. This inferiority was confirmed by the Koran, the penal code, matrimonial law and the complex hereditary law. There is a discussion of the marriage ceremony, as well as visits by women to the public bathhouses, and to the cemeteries, the great religious feasts and the vintage feasts. As far as the professions are concerned, women worked as milk merchants, embroiderers, weavers, and in the less favoured classed as servants, singers and prostitutes called kharājīyyāt [i.e. involved in the tax called kharāj] in brothels called kharāj-houses or girls’ houses.
There seems to have existed a greater freedom in the period of the petty kings [reyes de taifas] and particularly during the Nasrid reign of Granada. Also, on the basis of poetic excerpts, there are descriptions of the garments, perfumes and jewels of the Andalusian women. Women were instructed in sciences such as calligraphy, poetry, religious sciences, medicine, law. Some of the verses by poetsesses are quoted.

The Third Chapter (pp. 45-52), entitled "Un lettré hispano-musulman du Haut Moyen Age: Ibn 'Abn Rabbih," gives a complete survey of all the works and poems and facts of his life. Lévi Provençal included in his evaluating judgement of 1953 about Ibn 'Abd Rabbih the remark by the famous Buyid vizir al-Sāhib Ibn 'Abbād about his main work, the 'Iqd al-Farīd ("Unique Necklace"): "It is our merchandise which is sent back to us," which implies that the western author took everything from the East. However, opinions about the value of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's work have varied. Similarly, judgements have varied as to the poetry of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, especially his urjūza (i.e. poem in rajāz metre on the history of Muslim Spain). Rachel Arie gives an overview of all these opinions spanning the last century. Thus, the points of view of R. Dozy, F. Pons Boigués, C. Brockelmann, A. González Palencia, H.G. Farmer, and G. Wiet are reviewed. She also mentions the somewhat negative opinions, by Jibra'il Jabbar and Continente respectively, from the two editions of his personal and love poetry. Rachel Arie comes to the conclusion that, although the poet is influenced by the great oriental poets, he cannot be accused of plagiarism. She also quoted the opinions of Cowell, Nykl and Monroc. The latter is convinced of the influence of the eastern caliph Ibn al-Mu'tazz upon the historical urjūza of Ibn Abd Rabbih and shows his disagreement with Ribera who considered the urjūza to have been influenced by Visigothic epic poetry. María Jesús Rubiera Máta, in her literary history which appeared in 1992, does not even find this poem very epic.

The Fourth Chapter (pp. 53-64) entitled "Les minorités religieuses dans le royaume de Grenade," again deals with the relations between the three religious groups, Muslims, Jews and Christians. Arie discusses the position of the Christian minority — the mozarabes — during the Nasrid reign. There were Christian elements, renegades, who took refuge to Granada. A small group of Christians had remained in al-Andalus, after the persecutions of the 12th Century, taking care of the land and paying a legal percapita tax at the beginning of the 14th Century. Another group consisted of Castilian cavaliers in the service of the kings of Granada. Some missionaries were sporadically present. Also present were a large number of captives. Some of these, having converted to Islam, occupied important posts in the Nasrid administration, but the majority were deprived of their freedom, and were dependent upon redemption. Finally, Arie mentions the Christian merchants from Castile and Aragon and the prosperous Venetian and Genoese colonies. As far as the Jewish presence in Granada — which dates back to Roman times — is concerned, they were protected from persecution and intolerance, under the Nasrids as they had been earlier under the Umayyads. Moreover, the Jews had an important role in politics during the Zirids of Granada (eleventh century). Little information is available, and nothing is known about the internal organization of the Jews. The author offers some data about the bearing of yellow badges by the Jews for purposes of fiscal control, and provides some interesting notes: Muhammad V saved the life of the Jews of Jaén when he took this town in 1367 and evacuated 300 families to prevent them falling into the hands of Henri de Transtamare. From 1391, following the killings of Jews in the Christian kingdoms, many survivors were able to find refuge in the kingdom of Granada. As far as demography is concerned, Arie estimates their number at 1,500 persons in the last years of the 15th Century. She demonstrates the significant extent to which Jewish intellectuals contributed to scientific, economic and administrative activities during the Nasrid reign. One of the outstanding Jewish intellectuals in 15th Century Granada she mentions is Sa'ādyah ibn Dānnān, who also wrote Arabic poetry.

The Fifth Chapter (pp. 65-82), entitled "Les échanges culturels entre le royaume nazaride de Grenade et les pays musulmanes de la Méditerranée," is also about intercultural exchange. Firstly she discusses the Andalusis who travelled to the East in order to visit the Holy Places of Islam and followed lessons of the most famous scholars to gain a diploma. Due to the great Christian Conquests in Spain, from the 13th Century onwards there was a conspicuous emigration to the Maghreb of poets such as Ibn Sahl, scholars such as the historian Ibn al-Abbār and literary figures such as the members of the Banu Sa'id family. Others went to Egypt, where they commented and propagated their juridical and other knowledge. On the occasion of the pilgrimage to Mecca or during journeys in search of wisdom and science, many Andalusis frequented scientific circles in the East and The Maghreb. Some of them returned to their native country, while others emigrated. Rachel Arie enumerates and presents the most interesting figures, and focuses on certain great Andalusian travelers who practised the 'ribaḥ genre and reminded us of travelers from the East who left us such captivating descriptions of Muslim Spain. Finally, she describes the final situation of the Nasrid reign and the last Andalusí emigrants.

The Sixth Chapter (pp. 83-106), entitled "Boabdil, sultan nazaride de Grenade: le personnage historique et la figure littéraire," presents us a complete picture of Boabdil, the last Nasrid prince of Granada, as a historical and a literary personality. First the author offers a survey of the history of the last years of the kingdom of Granada. She then discusses both the physical and the moral portrait which we find in the Romancero, whose many romances lack authenticity. She also deals with the negative and untrue interpretation of the historical truth by Ginés Pérez de Hita in his Las Guerras civiles de Granada. She dwells upon the figure of Boabdil as seen by the Romantics — Spanish as well as French — of the past century (Chateaubriand, Théophile Gautier), and by the American Washington Irving. Finally, she refers to an extensive poem by Louis Aragon, entitled Fou d'Elba, published in 1963, which tries with great originality to rehabilitate the person of Boabdil without using either the Romancero or the Spanish literature of the Golden Age. Nor does he try to idealize him, as did the Romantics.

This book presents us in a few hundred pages with the most important facts about the history of Muslim Spain, with particular focus on the socio-cultural facts and all the aspects dealing with the relationship between the different ethnic and religious groups during the seven centuries of the Muslim presence in Spain. We are grateful for Rachel Arie's very eru-
dite and highly readable presentation of all this detailed mate-
rrial, in a book of readable length.

Amsterdam, February 1999 Arie SCHIPPERS

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BÖTTCHER, Annabelle — Syrische Religionspolitik unter
Asad, (Freiburger Beiträge zu Entwicklung und Politik,
(21 cm, 258). ISBN 3-928597-24-8; ISSN 0934-9480.
DM 30.—

Dr Bötcher's study — originally published as a disserta-
tion presented in 1997 to the University of Freiburg in Ger-
many — contains a meticulously detailed, occasionally some-
what encyclopaedic, description and analysis of how Syria's
official Sunni Islamic institutions were gradually brought
under full control of the Ba'th regime which came to power
in 1963. She recounts how various of these religious institu-
tions managed to survive and develop by way of a comprom-
ising symbiosis with the Alawi dominated secular Ba'th
regime.

Bötcher analyses the developments and changes in vari-
ous Syrian Islamic institutions, describing organisational
authority structures, relevant posts in ministries, the admin-
istrative apparatus, the higher Awaqf Council, the institution
of mufitis and grand mufitis, the position of preachers, imams
and mosque teachers, the place of mosques in political life
and religious education, the Hafiz al-Asad Qur'an institutes,
the Shari'a Faculty of Damascus University, etcetera. She fur-
thermore deals extensively with the position, background and
teachings of the Syrian Grand Mufti, Shaykh Ahmad Kaftaru,
whose religious centre Majma' Abi al-Nur is described by her
as "the largest 'Islamic laboratory' which built a Sufi move-
ment with support of the state" (p. 219). Bötcher concludes
that Shaykh Kaftaru's Naqshbandiya-Kaftariya Sufi order can
be considered as the organisational backbone of Syrian "state
Islam" (p.149).

In contrast with Syria's Islamic opposition, Shaykh Kaf-
taru's Kafariya movement has taken an "extremely friendly
position towards the Shi'is" (p. 206), trying to build a bridge
between Sunnis and Shi'is in a way which could be seen as a
conscious effort to put the Alawi dominated Ba'th regime at
ease.

Böttcher notes that the strength of Ahmad Kaftaru is at the
same time his weakness: his willingness to cooperate and
compromise with the Ba'th regime also discredits him in the
eyes of the Islamic opposition and many others in Syria: "He
has neither support in the Ministry of Awaqf, nor among the
Syrian Ulama. Similarly, the Kafariya has little support
among Syrian society" (p. 220). Böttcher concludes that
whatever precautionary measures President Asad has taken,
his "avalanche walls" may nevertheless be unable to ulti-
mately prevent "Ba'th Islamists" from forming a (temporary)
coalition with other Islamic forces with the aim of seizing
power (p. 228).

To some extent the Ba'thist governmental domination of
religious institutions is nothing but a continuation of a long
tradition, which also existed under Ottoman rule and before.
Different from Ottoman times, however, the Ba'th regime
preferred to have a Sunni Shaykh as Grand Mufti who lacked

a strong following among the local Sunni establishment and
who might therefore be used as a counterweight against, for
instance, the traditionally strong Damascene Sunni estab-
lishment.

Böttcher observes that the aim of the strategy of the Ba'th
regime was not just to control the religious administration,
but also to transform it into a powerless instrument. In addi-
tion to changing the structure of official Islamic institutions
in this sense, the ruling Ba'thists also filled the various key
religious functions with personalities who were expected to
be cooperative and willing to support their regime (p. 65).

Böttcher discovered from an internal memorandum circu-
lated in 1989 that Ba'thist control over Islamic life in Syria
reached such proportions that the Ministry of Awaqf did not
only prescribe the central themes of the Friday sermons, but
for some specific provinces even dictated their full text (pp.
100-101). It is not fully clear why some provinces have been
supervised more strictly than others.

Whereas Böttcher has thoroughly studied the official Sunni
Islamic structures and establishments, she does by far not deal
with the other Islamic communities in Syria, such as the Alawis, Druzes and Isma'ili. To this reviewer this was somewhat disappointing, because members of these
communities have played — as is fully acknowledged by
Böttcher — such an important role during the Syrian Ba'thist
era, Alawis in particular. Nevertheless Böttcher provides
interesting insights in their respect. She notes for instance
that in certain Syrian circles it is customary to speak on pur-
pose of "five" instead of four Islamic law schools: Shafi'i,
Hanafi, Malik, Hanbaali and "Shi'i", so as to take account of
sensitivities among the predominantly Alawi rulers of the
country. Without much further comment, Böttcher follows
the official position of today's Alawi religious leaders that
Alawis are in fact "Twelver Shi'i" or "Ja'fari" Muslims. In
line with this view, the concept of "Alawis", "Twelver Shi'i"
and "Ja'faris" are mostly used interchangeably in the
book. Böttcher notes that in areas with a "Twelver Shi'i" or
Isma'ili population like Lattakia, Salamiya, Haffa, etc., there
are apparently Shi'i muftis. These constitute a paradox in the
SunnI Ifta' system, because such an institution does not exist
in Sh'l a law. Making any distinction between Sunni and Shi' a
Ifta' would be contrary to Ba'thist ideology which officially
aims at eliminating sectarian differences and discrimination.
In this spirit the first Mufti Conference in Damascus in 1980
reportedly even recommended to do away with the "distinc-
tions that colonialism had created between Islamic law
schools" (!)(pp. 71-72).

Syrian parlance of "five" Islamic law schools is not
reflected in daily practice, however, as Böttcher notes for
instance that the Shafi'i Mufti of Aleppo used to issue fat-
was according to "all four law schools" (p. 75), thus being
"open minded" towards the three other Sunni schools, while
ignoring the fifth "Shi'i" school. The fact that the Grand
Mufti of Syria continues to be officially considered as the
representative of "all Muslims" in the country, including the
Sunnis, Alawis, Isma'alisis and Druzes (p. 145), does not take
into account that many, if not most Syrian Sunnis, do not
even consider the members of these other Islamic communi-
ities as real Muslims.

This is the first time that an academic work with such
depth has been published by a western scholar on the earlier
mentioned subjects. The reader is repeatedly confronted with
a lengthy mass of data, including for instance the detailed