



Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazali

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354.

Translated with revisions and notes from the Arabic text edited by C. DEFREMERY and B. R. SANGUINETTI by H. A. R. GIBB. Vol. II ["The Hakluyt Society," Second Series, No. CXVII.] Cambridge: Published for the Hakluyt Society by the Cambridge University Press, 1962. Pp. xii + 537. \$6.50.

The author of these travels was a fourteenth-century North African who had a modest share of learning and no pretense to literary accomplishment. He was seized by a passion to "travel through the earth," and he "encompassed the earth with attentive mind and travelled through its cities with observant eye." In a somewhat superficial, honest, strict, and narrow-minded way, he "investigated the diversities of nations and probed the ways of life of Arabs and non-Arabs." Having concluded his travels, he returned to Fez, where he was commanded by the sultan Abū 'Inān to dictate an account of them to the secretary Ibn Juzayy, who "put his work into elegant literary style" (Vol. I, pp. ix-x, 5-6). Whatever the virtues of the style of the original may be, there is little room for doubt that the English translation is a model of faithfulness, precision, and clarity, and a scholarly and literary accomplishment of the highest rank.

The first volume (published in 1958) included the account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's initial journey from Tangier to Egypt, and his travels through Syria, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his journey from Mecca to Kūfa. The present volume includes the account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travels through Southern Persia and Iraq; Southern Arabia, East Africa, and the Persian Gulf; and Asia Minor and South Russia. As in the earlier volume, the translator pursues the author as an accomplished detective follows the movements of an important suspect: he catches

and corrects errors, notes confusions, finds and notes corroborating or divergent evidence from other sources, and gives more precise data on proper names and place names whenever available. All this is of course essential for the proper appreciation of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travels as a historical source. Finally, the translator provides in an Appendix (pp. 528-37) a provisional chronology of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travels in Asia Minor and Russia, which involves a number of serious inconsistencies. This and other matters will probably be treated at length after the completion of the translation.

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Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazali.

By W. Montgomery Watt. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1963. Pp. viii + 215. \$5.00.

The author of *Islam and the Integration of Society* and *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (reviewed in *JNES*, XXIII [1964], 285-89, and 139) presents here a "study of the struggle and achievement of al-Ghazālī" in an attempt "to look at his life and thought as a whole within the context of the times in which he lived" (p. vii). As in the earlier two books, the author writes from the general standpoint of "the sociology of knowledge—a discipline which, though in its infancy, is characteristic of our age and an expression of its spirit" (p. viii). By "intellectuals" or "intelligentia," he means "men of knowledge" in the broadest sense, including all "journalists, broadcasters or writers of books," "politicians and civil servants," as well as those engaged in the "creative handling of ideas." With regard to the last group, he distinguishes three aspects. (a) The "instrumental intellectual" who is the scientist. ("At the present time men are developing

the social sciences, and thereby increasing the possibilities of controlling society and other men.”) (b) The “systematizing trend” represented by “the philosopher, the philosophically-minded scientist, the theologian, the legal theorist . . .” (c) The “intuitive intellectual,” who “may be said to be concerned with the values acknowledged in a society and their basis in reality.” These include certain prophetic leaders (“like Muḥammad”), poets, and other litterateurs, etc. In the present study, the author is concerned chiefly with the “intuitive aspect”: “so far as the response to the situation is intuitive it is partly unconscious; the intellectual need not be fully aware either of that to which he is responding or of the precise manner of his response to it” (pp. 1–3, n. 2). The author’s main objective is to give an account of al-Ghazālī’s conscious response to the social situation that surrounded him, and to explain the ground (“the economic and material framework”) of al-Ghazālī’s unconscious response to that situation. His approach to this task is a combination of a conscious attitude to religion (p. 5) and “an element of intuition lurking in the results of the scientist, especially the social scientist” (p. 2).

The work begins with a summary account of al-Ghazālī’s “world” (consisting of the political background, beginning with the death of Muḥammad in A.D. 632; the religious and intellectual background, beginning with the background of Muḥammad in Mecca and Madina; and al-Ghazālī’s early life [pp. 7–24]). Next, he gives an equally summary account of al-Ghazālī’s “encounter” with philosophy. This includes short accounts of the philosophic movement in Islam and of the social relevance of philosophic ideas as a background for al-Ghazālī’s account of his “scepticism” in the *Deliverer from Error* and for his refutation of the philosophers in the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (pp. 25–41). (Al-Ghazālī himself has concealed the “social” intention of his attack on the philosophers by not treating their views of politics and ethics in the *Incoherence*. He reserved this for the *Criterion of Action*, a book that is much

discussed but whose *contents* have never been carefully studied. Al-Ghazālī neither “condemns” nor “rejects” philosophical ethics [p. 68].) This is followed by a short account of al-Ghazālī’s encounter with the Bāṭinis (pp. 74–86). Then comes a relatively long chapter on al-Ghazālī’s reappraisal of theology (pp. 87–125), where the author makes a number of interesting remarks on the relation between theology, society, and politics in Islam up to al-Ghazālī’s time. (Unfortunately, it is not always clear what the author means when he speaks of “philosophical or rational theology” [“scholar-jurists or ulema,” “theologians”], “dogmatic theology,” “abstruse rational theology,” vs. “concrete forms of religious instruction,” etc. [pp. 21, 71, 92, 109, 117, 119, *passim*].) The two chapters that follow deal with al-Ghazālī’s retirement and return to writing and teaching (pp. 127–69), including a summary account of al-Ghazālī’s chief practical or ethical work, the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Finally, there is a short chapter on al-Ghazālī’s achievement, “based on the perusal of a few well-known works and on some obvious historical facts . . .” (pp. 171 ff.).

Muslim Intellectual is the latest installment of a series of studies by the author on al-Ghazālī’s works and thought (see *JRAS*, 1949, pp. 5–22; 1952, pp. 23–45). These studies attempt to solve what has come to be known as the “Ghazālī-problem” (see, e.g., W. H. T. Gairdner, “Al-Ghazālī’s *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and the Ghazālī-Problem,” *Der Islam*, V [1914], 121–53). Initially, the solution was based on rejecting all of al-Ghazālī’s works and statements that do not harmonize with three “general principles” that the author proposed in *JRAS*, 1952, pp. 25–30. But these general principles were clearly insufficient for solving the entire range of the difficulties presented by al-Ghazālī’s works. “A little additional light on these questions of authenticity may come from further detailed studies, especially from the discovery of parallel passages. But much more is to be expected from an attempt to give an account of al-Ghazālī’s intellectual and religious development as a whole” (*ibid.*, p.

31). The attempt has now been made, but the expected results have not materialized.

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The Art of Story-telling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights. By MIA I. GERHARDT. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963. Pp. xi + 500. 52 guilders.

Mia Gerhardt is an intelligent, perceptive, and sympathetic reader of the vast and unwieldy literature on the *1001 Nights* that Orientalist scholarship has produced in the past hundred and fifty years. Not being an Orientalist or an Arabist, she is neither annoyed nor discouraged by scandalous editions, barberous translations, dull annotations, and idle historical speculations. She divines the predominantly historical orientation of Orientalist scholarship. Without intending to be rude to anyone, she states that Orientalist scholarship is concerned with "origin, sources, dating, locating, filiation and transmission of the stories . . ."; it is not concerned with literature as literature; and it does not deal with "purely literary problems" (pp. 5-6). As for the Arabist, he is allotted a "rewarding" and "intriguing" pastime—the study of "words," "the choice and arrangement of words," "the use of stock descriptions and of standing formulas," and "the manner in which opening and closing formulas are chosen and worded" (p. 377). Whatever the role of innocence and ignorance in the *1001 Nights* may be, it is not necessary to praise them in the student of the *1001 Nights*.

The author formulates her critique of earlier studies and the justification of her own task clearly and convincingly:

If Oriental scholarship could tell us exactly when, by whom and in what circumstances for instance THE HUNCHBACK in its present version was written and its amazing central character, the barber, invented, the information would not bring us nearer to realizing why THE HUNCHBACK is so fine a story. On what does its effectiveness depend? How is it put together? What are the means it uses to create

amusement, suspense, surprise, to bring about a satisfactory ending? Those are the literary problems it poses. And it is this kind of investigation that literary criticism must undertake. (P. 6.)

She then proceeds to "grapple with the stories" in six chapters. Chapters i-iv (pp. 7-374) give a summary of the contents of the stories, present a broad outline of the historical and literary problems they pose, characterize various translations, and offer a classification of their material. These chapters address themselves only incidentally and in passing (cf. p. 377, n. 1) to the literary problems posed by the stories. They contain frequent methodological remarks and clarifications of concepts. And one finds numerous suggestive impressions and reflections on individual stories, plots, characters, and other details. The author succeeds in presenting a vast amount of material with considerable taste and good judgment. Chapters v-vi (pp. 375-470) investigate "structure" and "The Harûn Cycle" respectively. Again, a considerable number of pages is devoted to summaries and the study of historical background. Nevertheless, the discussion of "structural proceedings," the classification of frame stories, and the remarks on the significant traits of "The Harûn Cycle" are a welcome contribution and deserve to be read carefully. Taken as a whole, the book is at once an intelligently designed handbook and the best available introduction to the study of the *1001 Nights*.

In the Epilogue the author confesses that she is aware that not all has been said. "In fact, almost any '1001 Nights'-story which I discussed left me with the impression that there was more, and perhaps something more essential, to be said about it" (p. 471). This could hardly be avoided given the scope of the book, the novelty of its perspective, and the fact that it is based on Littmann's translation. (It is not always easy to see, let alone touch, "den Leib einer Tänzerin durch ihr Gewand.")

The question is whether the more essential thing about these stories will be said by formal literary analysis, however extensive. This