

medieval Egypt and adjacent moments of “confessional ambiguity”, ‘Alid loyalism, and messianism in the fifteenth-century “eastern” Islamic world, long believed to be closed off from isolated, Sunni, “Mamluk” Cairo (pp. 736, 785).

The author could have devoted more time to strategically editing, both for brevity and to decrease the number of typos that arrived in the final manuscript (pp. 21, 27, 126, 133, 210, 240, 245, 321, 355, 357, 393, 457, 582, etc). The rather idiomatic choice to translate ‘ulamā’ *al-qirsh* as “crappy scholars” (457) or to refer to the *majālis* texts as a “best of” (573) also seem odd in an otherwise serious work of scholarship. Nevertheless, these are minor faults, and some verbiage notwithstanding, the work is expertly explained and well-written. Following the author’s arguments and instructive theorization, scholars can no longer use “court” as thoughtless shorthand; instead, future scholarship is behooved actively to ponder and digest Mauder’s important conceptualization as it applies to the eras before, during, and after the early sixteenth century.

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GEORGE WARNER:

The Words of the Imams: Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and the Development of Twelver Shī‘ī Hadith Literature.

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The Words of the Imams focuses on the life and works of prominent Twelver Shiite scholar Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī (d. 381/991) – al-Ṣadūq “the Veracious One” or al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq “the Truthful Master” – compiler of the Twelver Shiite *ḥadīth* work *Kitāb Man lam yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh* (The Book of One Who Does not Have a Jurist at Hand), one of the four canonical *ḥadīth* collections in the Twelver tradition.

The work consists of an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction provides an overview of Ibn Bābawayh’s life and works. Like other prominent Shiite scholars of this period, including Muḥammad al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941), al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), and others, the life of Ibn Bābawayh poses a historiographical challenge since biographical sources provide the names of teachers, book titles, and a death date. The historian is forced to scour the scholars’ own works to investigate his life. Ibn Bābawayh was born c. 306/918–19 and raised in Qum, where he studied with his father ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn Bābawayh (d. c. 329/941), Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Walīd (d. 343/954), and Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Mājīlawayh (fl. fourth/tenth c.). He moved at some point between 339/950 and 347/958 to the Buwayhid capital Rayy, where he resided for much of the rest of his life, but he travelled to Iraq and made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 352/963 and made pilgrimages to the Eighth Imam’s shrine in Ṭūs in 367/978 and 368/979. He died in Rayy in 381/991 (pp. 7–8). Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) reports that Ibn Bābawayh wrote over 300 works, and he and Aḥmad al-Najāshī (d. c. 450/1058) record over 200 titles (pp. 26–7). However, only 19 of Ibn Bābawayh’s works have been preserved, and Warner provides an annotated list (pp. 22–7).

Chapter 1 focuses on Twelver Shiism of Ibn Bābawayh's period against the backdrop of several simultaneous developments: the transition from grounding in the guidance of living Imams to that of the Greater Occultation, from 329/941 onwards, during which regular communication with the Hidden Imam was cut off; the rise of the Islamic legal *madhhabs*; and the rise of the Buwayhids, who dominated Iran and Iraq in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Chapter 2 focuses on Ibn Bābawayh's approach to *ḥadīth*. Ibn Bābawayh's works in the field of *ḥadīth* look different from Sunni works of this and earlier periods not so much because Twelver intellectual production lagged behind that of the Sunnis but rather because Twelver authors' goals in this field differed. Ibn Bābawayh's oeuvre was consistently devoted to the corpus of *ḥadīth* of the Imams. Whereas Ibn Bābawayh has been characterized as an uncritical gatherer of reports, the *mashyakhah* or "register of authorities" attached to *Man lā yahḍuruḥu al-ḥaqīh* suggests otherwise, as do occasional comments on the reliability of transmitters or *isnads* and the titles indicating that he wrote biographical works on *ḥadīth* transmitters (*rijāl*). Rather, Ibn Bābawayh's approach differs because he is convinced of the proximity of the Imams' time to his own, of the authenticity of the Twelver *ḥadīth* corpus generally, and in its sanctity as an embodiment of the Imams' religious authority.

Chapter 3 discusses the relation of Ibn Bābawayh's oeuvre with the field of *adab* or belles-lettres. Scholars such as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, in addition to Ibn Bābawayh, wrote seminal works in the religious sciences of *ḥadīth*, theology, and law which would set the parameters for later Twelver tradition. Shiites also made major contributions to Arabo-Islamic belles-lettres during this period, including the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990), the literary anthology of al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ābī (d. c. 421/1030), and the poetry of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015). Ibn Bābawayh is known primarily for his works on the religious sciences, but five of his works, *al-Khiṣāl*, *Ma'ānī al-akhbār*, *al-Mawā'iz*, *Ilal al-sharā'ī*, and *Muṣādaqat al-ikhwān*, though all based on the *akhbār* of the Imams, are shown to be affected by the belles-lettres associated with court culture, especially in Rayy, where literary circles were dominated by the erudite vizier al-Šāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995).

In chapters 4 and 5, Warner examines two major works by Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Tawḥīd*, which focuses on the nature of God, and *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah*, which focuses on the Hidden Imam. Appendices I and II provide detailed tables of contents of those works. The purpose of *al-Tawḥīd* is not, as the title suggests, to present a creed – an orderly account of Twelver theological doctrine. Rather, its main goal is to defend the authority and uphold the sanctity of the *ḥadīth* of the Imams. The work responds to opponents who characterize the Twelvers as heretical and inept and who accuse them of two doctrinal heresies in particular: anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and the belief in predestination (*jabr*). The work argues that these are not, in fact, the views adopted in the Twelver tradition, while also suggesting that the line of the Imams gives the Twelvers more reliable – and more recent – access to divinely inspired religious authority. This body of *ḥadīth*, which preserves the wisdom of the Imams, provided the Twelvers with a theology that was acceptable within the prevailing Buwayhid context.

Chapter 5 examines *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'mah*, a work in which Ibn Bābawayh defends the Twelver theory of the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam against detractors. It differs considerably from Ibn Bābawayh's other works and does not argue for the truth of Twelver doctrine by restricting attention to a narrow body of authentic Imami reports, or by citing Sunni reports. Rather, Ibn Bābawayh resorts to other bodies of evidence. He mounts a typological argument that the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam was prefigured by related events that befell Biblical figures such as Moses,

Jonah, and others in salvation history. An array of accounts attest to the physical existence of the Twelfth Imam, including letters to followers and accounts of meeting him. Another section treats long-lived individuals, in which the sources the stuff of legends and 1001 Nights' stories – about the pre-Islamic soothsayer Saṭīḥ, King Shaddād, who built the legendary city of Iram, the sage Bilawhar and the prince Yūdhāsaf (i.e. Buddha), and more. On the one hand, numerous accounts support the idea that men may attain extraordinary ages. On the other, if people believe such accounts of extraordinarily long-lived people, they should certainly be able to accept as truth the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam, which is less outlandish.

Overall, *The Words of the Imams* provides an insightful assessment of Ibn Bābawayh's works, which draw on *ḥadīth* of the Imams to make contributions to Twelver Shiite theology, law, ritual practice, and, to some extent, Arabic literature. He did not merely gather material but carefully selected, arranged, and deployed it, adding his own comments and assessments occasionally, to craft arguments and convey ideas. Throughout his work he was concerned to uphold the value of the *ḥadīth* of the Imams as the locus of religious authority, preserving access to their guidance despite the disruption of the Occultation.

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LETIZIA OSTI:

History and Memory in the Abbasid Caliphate: Writing the Past in Medieval Arabic Literature.

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In this careful study Letizia Osti takes seriously the praise and criticism that her subject, Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947), has received through the ages, and comes down definitively in his defence. She argues convincingly that he was a thoughtful commentator on his life in the caliphal court and his time in history. Osti goes far beyond a “life-and-times” piece, however. She models how to work with the grain of the written material to craft something that is useful for scholars today.

In the first chapter, “Life and afterlife”, Osti closely examines the biographies of al-Ṣūlī that appear in biographical dictionaries. She examines how biographers categorized al-Ṣūlī in their collections. Then, turning to the content of the biographies, Osti shows how two distinct persona of al-Ṣūlī developed and were transmitted over time: that of a court poet and scholar and that of a chess player. Both versions were in circulation yet biographers chose one. Here Osti illustrates the ever-present reality in pre-modern Arabic history of authorial choice masquerading as mere repetition. Osti concludes by noting that while al-Ṣūlī is best remembered as a chess player, al-Ṣūlī himself did not dwell on this aspect of his life and it was clearly not how he wanted to be remembered.

In Chapter 2, “In his own words”, Osti turns to how al-Ṣūlī saw himself, as conveyed in the autobiographical material that peppers his chronicle the *Kitāb al-Awrāq*. Osti begins by framing her analysis within modern scholarly discussions on what constitutes autobiography. She appropriately warns against universalizing