

Power, Religion and Wisdom: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in al-Andalus and Beyond

Abstracts

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Ontological options and cosmological descriptions in the *Risāla al-Jāmi'a*

The *Risāla al-Jāmi'a* provides several cosmological descriptions that differ from the diffused frame of Neoplatonic origin that often recurs in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. These descriptions emphasise terms and themes that are close to cosmological Ismaili representations, such as, for example, the concepts of *amr*, divine Imperative, *ibdā'*, immediate origination, or *ḥadd*, limit. In the *Jāmi'a*, these and other representations interact with the idea of “emanation”, which is often elaborated in a peculiar way with regard to the notions of Active Intellect and Universal Soul. On the line of M. Ebstein's considerations in his book *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus. Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabī and the Ismā'īlī Tradition* (Brill, Leiden – Boston 2014, pp. 45 ff.), my purpose is, on the one hand, to come back to the few ontological passages of the encyclopaedia featuring similar concepts, and, on the other hand, to put the representations in the *Jāmi'a* into relationship with some “additions” I discovered in the MSS examined for the new edition of the epistles patronized by the IIS. I hope to disclose a common texture that confirms the Ismaili character of these representations, adding further data to the way how al-Andalus may have faced Ismailism and, as an additional result, to enhance the much-debated issue of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā''s Ismaili commitment.

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The Place of the Pseudo-Ibn Masarra in the Intellectual History of al-Andalus

‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Masarra b. Najīḥ al-Qurṭubī (d. 319/931), better known as simply Ibn Masarra, is widely acknowledged as the first prominent intellectual of al-Andalus. In 1972, Muḥammad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Ja‘far attributed to Ibn Masarra two short works, *Risālat al-I‘tibār* and *Kitāb Khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*, extant in a manuscript held in the Chester Beatty Library. The contents of these two works differ from previous descriptions of the thought of Ibn Masarra in primary sources, which overwhelmingly regard him as a theologian upholding Qadarī-like views, and thus in the light of these two works subsequent scholarship has diminished the bulk of primary sources on Ibn Masarra as inaccurate and either biased or uninformed. In a recent article, I attributed to Ibn Masarra a work previously ascribed to Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī*. I based this attribution on a quotation from Ibn al-Uqlīshī in which he attributes this work to Ibn Masarra, and also on the fact that the theology espoused by Ibn Masarra in *al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī* is congruent with descriptions of his thought in primary sources. In the present contribution, I will dismiss Ja‘far’s attribution to Ibn Masarra of *Risālat al-I‘tibār* and *Kitāb Khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf* based on the fact that the theology espoused by Ibn Masarra in *al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī* and that in the two Ja‘far treatises, i.e. *Risālat al-I‘tibār* and *Kitāb Khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*, are incompatible. In addition, an analysis of terminology in *Risālat al-I‘tibār* and *Kitāb Khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf* shows that it is incongruent with 4th/10th century al-Andalus and that these two works should be dated at least one century later.

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Thābit ibn Qurra *On Talismans* and its Presence in Talismanry in Tenth-Century al-Andalus

The treatise on talismans by Thābit ibn Qurra (d. 901 A.D.) was particularly popular in the Iberian Peninsula. Two Latin versions were made in the early twelfth century, most probably from Arabic manuscripts belonging to Spanish Muslims. But it was already available to, and used extensively, by the mid-tenth-century author of the *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm*. This presentation will examine the concepts that underly Thābit's talismans, and his description of their construction and use. It will then show how they are adapted to the purposes of the *Ghāyat*, and perhaps can be detected in other tenth-century Andalusī texts.

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The *Kitāb Šarāsīm al-Hindiyya* and the Arabic Occult Sciences of the Tenth Century

In the 13th century, the *Kitāb Šarāsīm al-Hindiyya fī l-sīmiyā* ' was already considered as a have-to-read book for anyone interested in occult sciences. This work introduces itself as the teaching of a mysterious and wise Indian woman to a Muslim shaykh in order not to be deceived by a wizard. Its ten chapters deal with a lot of subjects and some sources are mentioned. But we can also draw some parallels with other Arabic occult sciences treatises such as the *Kitāb Šawq al-mustahām* attributed to Ibn Waḥšiyya or the *Kitāb al-Uṣṭūṭās* attributed to Aristotle. This paper aims to understand how the *Kitāb Šarāsīm al-Hindiyya* interact with these other works.

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An Arabic version of Qusṭā b. Lūqā's *De Physicis Ligaturis*?

After the short version (52a), published in 2011, the critical edition of two other versions (52b and 52c) of the Epistle of Magic ascribed to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' is to come out soon as part of the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* series at Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies. Although it occupies the last position in the corpus and has sometimes been presented as the conclusion of the work as a whole, there are various reasons to assume that this epistle on magic was not part of the original plan of the Brethren and that therefore none of these three mutually exclusive versions should be regarded as integral to the Ikhwānian encyclopaedia. This paper will be concerned with one particular section of the 52b version – a version whose heterogeneity of content and intricate manuscript tradition are particularly notable. In this section, found in many authoritative manuscripts but lacking in others and not part of the Beirut edition, the author discusses the power of imagination (*wahm*) and the use that physicians from Greece and from India made of it to help curing some illnesses, generally by means of spells attached to parts of the body. We shall argue that this section is, if not the Arabic original itself, an early testimony in the tradition of the *De Physicis Ligaturis*, a work written by the Christian physician Qusṭā b. Lūqā (d. 912) and which was thus far only known through its Latin translation, presumably by Constantine the African (d. 1087).

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Ps.-Empedocles and the *Risāla al-Jāmi‘a* on the Origin of Evil

The set of texts and doctrines attributed in the Arabic tradition to the Presocratic philosopher Empedocles, along with the *Risāla al-Jāmi‘a* ascribed to the Brethren of Purity, are two main sources for Andalusian *bāṭinism*. However, the doctrinal relationship between both has hardly been investigated, although they are grounded in a common Neoplatonic background somehow linked with the Ismaili branch of Shi‘ism. Both traditions, for instance, have a strong dualistic vision on the origin of evil, caused by two antagonistic principles: Love and Victory for the Ps.-Empedocles, Light and Darkness for the *Risāla al-Jāmi‘a*. Although these principles are already present in the intelligible world, they need the matter of the sublunary realm in order to generate evil. In my paper, I will explore the common doctrine behind these two different treatments of dualism and the origin of evil, a common doctrine that could be of Ismaili origin.

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The Mathematical Determinants of the Symbolic Order of Architecture: Looking at Madīnat al-Zahrā' from the Perspective of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'?

This present study aims at examining some of the philosophical, scientific, and architectural entailments of the treatment of mathematics in the encyclopaedic compendium of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* ('The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity'). This line of inquiry is mediated via a consideration of the symbolic order of the occultist take of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' on proportional ratios (*nisab*), and on their applications in the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, along with their bearings on studying the spatial structuring of the human body and its signifiers in terms of the macrocosm-microcosm analogy. Such investigations would be set in view of disclosing the latent iconographic modelling that has resonances within the premodern Islamic architecture. This is advanced as a conceptual framework for analysing some design premises in the plastic and material architectonics of the artwork based on the mathematized outlook of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' on the structure of reality and its phenomena, as underpinned by their Neo-Pythagorean sense of gnosis. To give a concretised actual context for such analytics, we shall evoke in this regard the mathematical determinants of the Andalusian Caliphal architectural design of the palatine Madīnat al-Zahrā' in the western outskirts of Córdoba. This will be undertaken in line with Manuel A. Ación's hypothesis regarding the decorative crafting of the '*Salón Rico*' (eponymously known as the Salón of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III) in Madīnat al-Zahrā', along with the directives of its spatiality and inward *façades* with their arcades of horseshoe arches, which resonate with the esoteric symbolism that is at work in the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* (*Picatrix*; 'The Aim of the Sage').

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**Prolegomenon to the History of Letter Speculations in Andalusī Mystical Thought:
From the Early 10th to the Late 13th Century**

The distinctiveness of both the Islamic and Jewish mystical traditions that developed in the Iberian Peninsula during medieval times is a well-known fact. Al-Andalus or Sepharad gave birth to two of the most significant mystical phenomena in the history of Judaism and Islam: Kabbalah and specifically the *Zohar* (“Book of Splendor”) in the north, and the teachings and oeuvre of Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) in the south. These two phenomena were to have a tremendous impact on the development of Jewish and Islamic mysticism in subsequent generations, primarily in the East. It is similarly widely recognized that Neoplatonism served as an important factor in the development of Iberian mysticism, in its Islamic and Jewish manifestations alike. In recent years, more and more scholars are likewise becoming aware of the pivotal role that the Shī‘ī-Ismā‘īlī tradition played in the formation of the specific type(s) of Neoplatonic thought that Andalusī mystics, beginning with Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931), were adopting and adapting so as to fit their respective religious traditions and mystical heritage.

In my lecture, I will attempt to give a general overview of this process by focusing on one topic or theme, namely letter speculations in al-Andalus and the way they were intertwined with Neoplatonic conceptions, from the early stages of the development of Andalusī mystical thought (Ibn Masarra) to its majestic crystallization in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s oeuvre and in the Zoharic corpus. I will also refer to letter speculations in Ismā‘īlī Neoplatonic writings, which I believe may shed light on the background of the Andalusī preoccupation and even obsession, as it were, with letters.

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Following the steps of the *Ikhwān al-Şafā'* in Ottoman Anatolia: the case of Lamii Çelebi

Lamii Çelebi (Mahmud b. Osman, 1472-1532) is one of the most prolific writers of his time in Ottoman Anatolia and a Sufi sheikh of the Naqshbandi order. Coming from a respected family from the old Ottoman capital of Bursa, he follows the line of a grandfather, who was a reputed painter (*nakkash*) and a father, who was a chancellor of the treasury. His *Şerefü 'l-insān* (Human Honor), a partial translation of the twenty-second Epistle of the tenth-century encyclopedic brotherhood *Ikhwān al-Şafā' wa Khullān al-Wafā'* (the Brethren of Purity and the Friends of Loyalty), combines the debate between the representatives of animals and humans in the Brethren's work with stories of mythic-historical Iranian kings from Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāma*. This work, which was presented to Sultan Süleyman in 1527, had a circulation outside of the palace that is attested by the more than one hundred extant copies dispersed in former Ottoman lands and elsewhere. In this paper, we are going to use Lamii Çelebi as a focal point to further unveil the sixteenth century network of Anatolian intellectuals, who fashioned themselves after the *Ikhwān al-Şafā'*, and using their name, produced translations, interpretations, and exegesis in an educational mission to disseminate a world vision infused with Islamic Neoplatonism and resolutely imbued with occult knowledge. We hope our work to be a step towards understanding and demonstrating how the mysticism of Bayazid Bestami (804-874), the mystic-theology of Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240) and the epistemological and ethic framework proposed by the *Ikhwān al-Şafā'* formed a particularly productive union in the Turco-Persian intellectual environment in roughly 1400-1600 and prospered in a gradually 'Ottomanizing' Anatolia, itself in a process of Islamization. For this purpose, we are going to examine some of Lamii Çelebi's works, including his *Şerefü 'l-insān* and his collection of poems, together with his biography, including his connections with the Sufi orders and the Ottoman court.

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Bāṭinism among the Jews of Medieval Cairo – The Evidence from the Cairo Genizah

The Cairo Genizah is a unique source for studying all aspects of the intellectual, cultural, social, communal, material and economic life of the Jewish community of medieval Cairo and, more in general, of the medieval Mediterranean world. Within the circa 350,000 fragments retrieved from the Genizah, there is a relatively small but very important corpus that can help us evaluate the penetration and reception of bāṭinī, Ismā‘īlī, Neoplatonic and cognate ideas in the context of the Jewish communities of this world. The corpus has the potential of revealing the modes of transmission of these ideas from the Islamic East to Al-Andalus and, vice versa, of shedding light on the texts and ideas that Jews brought out of Al-Andalus during the Almohad period, when a large number of Jewish intellectuals left the Iberian Peninsula for safer areas of the Islamic world. In my paper, I will present, analyse and evaluate the presence of bāṭinī texts and ideas among the manuscripts of the Cairo Genizah, and investigate what this can tell us about their circulation in the medieval Mediterranean world.

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Again on Maslama b. Qāsim and his relations with the Cordoban Umayyads

The Cordoban Umayyad caliphs have been usually associated with a strict Sunni outlook that privileged Malikism and rejected any possible connection with esoteric (Batini) trends. However, as explored in a previous paper (“Plants, Mary the Copt, Abraham, donkeys and knowledge: again on Batinism during the Umayyad caliphate in al-Andalus”, 2012), Abd al-Rahman III and his successors had to look for different ways to counteract Fatimid political power and religious propaganda, and they could not but also consider Batinism. In this paper, I will add new materials on this topic while also revisiting some of the data already discussed.

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The Scientist in the Umayyad Caliphate: Intellectual Profiles and Intellectual Debates

The lives and works of the scholars who dealt with the rational sciences in 10th century al-Andalus are relatively well documented in historical and biographical sources. There is in consequence a relevant amount of prosopographic data about physicians, astronomers, mathematicians and so on that contributes to define, with some degree of accuracy, general characteristics of the groups of scholars who practiced the sciences of the ancients. Even though their jobs, skills, talents, and personalities are varied, a good many of them were multifaceted scholars particularly interested in philosophical disciplines. These scholars are rather numerous from the mid-10th century onwards, coinciding with the reign of al-Ḥakam II (961-975). Al-Andalus experienced a period of cultural flourishing at many levels in this epoch. The disciplines that the religious scholars considered as unorthodox like astrology, alchemy and philosophy were practiced. It seems that the rational sciences, including astrology and philosophy, were a subject that courtiers were expected to know about. There are moreover few but significant examples of discussions about the rational sciences held between scholars that were, to some extent, publicly known. The fact that many Andalusīs decided to follow a broad-ranging programme of intellectual training is one of the factors that may account for the relevance of the rational sciences in Cordoban society. An analysis of the intellectual profiles of these scholars in connection with an analysis on the main debates held in Cordoba will shed and interesting light on the intellectual life of Umayyad al-Andalus.

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An Esoteric Science? The Twelfth-Century alchemist Ibn Arfa‘ Ra‘s as a case-study

The twelfth-century scholar Ibn Arfa‘ Ra‘ s is generally taken to be a Moroccan alchemist-cum-Mālikī faqīh. However, recent research has challenged this view, arguing that the alchemist and the religious scholar are two different persons, mistakenly identified. It also seems likely that the alchemist left the Maghrib at some point of his life for Egypt. This paper will not deal with the identification of the scholar, but rather focus on his so far little studied prose works on alchemy. While Ibn Arfa‘ Ra‘ s’ fame rests on his collection of alchemical poetry, a dīwān entitled *Shudhūr al-dhahab*, his prose works have not been studied yet. While alchemy is generally difficult to access, guarded by secret language and symbols, Ibn Arfa‘ Ra‘ s offers explanations in his prose writings, especially in his self-commentary upon his dīwān. This paper will argue that his explanations make alchemy far less esoteric than usually assumed, but rather accessible at least to those trained.

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Al-Būnī's Lettrism as a Late Product of Tenth-Century Andalusian Thought

The writings of the Ifriqiyan cum Egyptian Sufi Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 622/1225 or 630/1232-3) are one of the main vectors through which the science of letters and names (‘*ilm al-ḥurūf wa-al-asmā*’) - a.k.a. - “lettrism”—was introduced to the larger Muslim world. While it is generally acknowledged in recent scholarship that this science was a product of discourses that had percolated among Andalusian thinkers in the centuries prior to al-Būnī and his Sufi lettrist peers, the specific indebtedness of al-Būnī to that milieu has been little explored. In this paper I will draw on two of al-Būnī’s major works on the letters and divine names, *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt fī ‘ilm al-ḥurūf al-‘ulwīya* and *‘Alam al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidā fī sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* to examine connections to some of the authors and texts with which the ERC PhilAnd Project is centrally concerned, including Ibn Masarraḥ, *Ghayāt al-ḥakīm*, the Jabirian corpus, and Isma‘ili literature. In doing so, my goal will be less the identification of sources for its own sake than an attempt to discern the logic through which these various strains of thought were synthesized and what light this may cast on the Andalusian intellectual culture of the Tenth Century.

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Neoplatonism and the Fāṭimids: Some remarks on the *Ta'wīl al-Zakāt*, attributed to Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman

Despite the presence of philosophical doctrines, particularly of Neoplatonic origin, in the works of several Ismā'īlī authors, one can still question to what extent early Ismā'īlism as such can be identified as 'Neoplatonic'. While there is no doubt about the Neoplatonic character of the so-called 'Persian school' (Madelung) of Ismā'īlism in early 4th/10th century in Central Asia and Iran, Neoplatonism does not seem to have been part of the Fāṭimid doctrine before the reign of the caliph al-Mu'izz (r.341/953-365/975) (De Smet, Hollenberg). As it happens, this reign also marks a 'reconciliation' of the Western and Eastern *da'was*, through partial recognition of Fāṭimid authority by al-Sijistānī. This coincidence raises the question of the influence al-Sijistānī may have had on Fāṭimid authors such as Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, an author from the 10th century at the service of several early Fāṭimid caliphs. The present paper investigates the *Ta'wīl al-Zakāt*, attributed to Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, by highlighting some of its features that are reminiscent of the 'Persian school' and thus illustrate the rather ambiguous relation of the Fāṭimids to Neoplatonism. Apparently written under the reign of al-Mu'izz, this work has not yet been examined from the perspective of the study of the adoption of Neoplatonic features in Fāṭimid context. Yet, it is an important piece of the puzzle. The text is generally void of philosophical vocabulary, while displaying classical Ismā'īlī (spiritual hierarchy) and Shī'ī (Qur'ānic exegeses, parallels between 'Alī and Aaron) features – in line with other works attributed to Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman which *do not* contain philosophical features. However, its cosmology is identical with the one found in the works of al-Sijistānī as it adopts the pentad of spiritual entities: *'aql/nafs/jadd/fath/khayāl*. More decisively, it contains some passages opposing the 'subtle substance' (*jawhar laṭīf*) to the 'thick body' (*jism kathīf*), and manifests several attempts to adapt the philosophical couple 'in potentiality' / 'in actuality' (*bi'l-quwwa/bi'l-fi'l*) to Ismaili doctrine. Finally, the paper will demonstrate that a full chapter of the *Ta'wīl al-Zakāt* is copied from al-Sijistānī. All these elements further confirm that al-Mu'izz' reign was a turning point in the history of Fāṭimid Neoplatonica, and they situate the

Ta'wīl al-Zakāt as an essential source for the assessment of Neoplatonic Ismā'īlīsm. They also shed some light on the obscure relation between Eastern and Western *da'was*.

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The *Walāya* Doctrine's Principal of Continuity and its Possible Channels of Transmission to a Jewish-Andalusian Text

Part seven of the classical Judeo-Arabic treatise *al-Hidāya ilā farā'id al-qulūb* written in al-Andalus by Baḥya ibn Paqūda in the second half of the eleventh century, includes a concise rendition of the *Walāya* doctrine. Highlighting the principal of continuity central to this Islamic doctrine by using some of its typical terms and expressions, the author of this rendition is utilizing Talmudic sayings as its prooftexts. In an effort to trace possible channels of transmission of the *Walāya* doctrine from its habitat in eastern part of the Islamic world, to its western part and to a Jewish text, the lecture is focused on one specific tradition. This tradition is ascribed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and known under the title *Ḥadīth Kumayl*. The impressive and authoritative tune of this tradition made it a point of reference for many and diverse articulations of the *Walāya* doctrine. The wide circulation of *Ḥadīth Kumayl*, which includes the well-known tenth-century Andalusian *adab* work *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, makes it a good candidate for the transmission of the *Walāya* doctrine's principal of continuity to Baḥya's treatise.

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Jābirian Alchemy, Ibn 'Arabī and the Reading of the Book of Nature

It is known that the Jābirian alchemy was based on the idea that substances were constituted by a direct interaction between the four elementary qualities (hot, cold, dry and humid), and not on the four Elements. This idea allowed its authors to think of the possibility of an infinite chain of transmutations: any substance could eventually be transformed into any other. The Jābirian authors explicitly relate this vision to the functioning of language, based on a combination of mobile letters. As a result, the alchemical operations of the Jābirian corpus are to be read as a series of dynamic processes, as the deployment of a syntax of interactions - and not as the description of the state of stable substances. Ibn 'Arabī in turn gave a much broader and more complete account of the processes of the transmutation of matter. A comparison with the Jābirian conceptions would perhaps shed light on the often mentioned idea of a "spiritual" dimension of alchemy.

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The Redaction History of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity

Major part of the scholarly debate on the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity has focused on the interrelated questions of authorship, doctrinal affiliation, and dating, while much less attention has been devoted to the problem of how the work came to assume its current shape. Many scholars today advocate the hypothesis of repeated redactions over a prolonged time, not least because the considerable variation in the manuscripts, highlighted by the new critical editions, makes it evident that the *Epistles* must have been subject to substantial changes. Previous attempts to construe a redaction chronology have involved a strong hypothesis of authorship, such as the Ismā‘īlī affiliation for Marquet or the co-authorship of the Andalusian al-Qurṭubī (d. 964) for Madelung. The *Epistles* and the manuscripts that carry it, however, contain considerable internal evidence for the redaction process, which in this paper is set against the late ancient and early Islamic tradition of ordering the philosophical sciences into a set curriculum. First, the arrangement of the *Epistles* both follows and diverges from the standard curricular order, while the work also includes curricular passages that contradict the current configuration of epistles, which suggests that the plan for the contents of the *Epistles* evolved in time. Second, manuscript variation with respect to the composition, positions, and titles of the epistles, as well as epistle transitions contradicting the order of the epistles in the current work, show that some epistles were split into one or more epistles and other epistles were moved from one position to another. Third, the cross-references between the epistles provide a basis for speculations about the relative chronology of the epistles. Based on all of the three kinds of evidence together, it is possible to construe a hypothesis on what the redaction history of the *Epistles* might have been like.

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**From Ibn Masarra to Ibn Turka: The Construction of an Imperial Occult Orthodoxy
between Iberia and Iran**

Five centuries and four thousand miles separate the Andalusian Sunni mystic Ibn Masarra (d. 931) from the Iranian Sunni occult philosopher Ibn Turka (d. 1432); yet their pioneering lettrist projects mark respectively the beginning and the apex of a sociopolitical and epistemic seachange that would transform the nature of Islamic Empire utterly, and wed Sunnism to Shi'ism by means of science. That seachange was accomplished through a Mashriqi-Maghribi Neopythagorean oscillation of specifically Neoplatonic and occult-scientific ideas—first from east to west, in the tenth century, then from west to east, in the Twelfth to Fourteenth centuries. The first stage is represented in the first place by the Old Brethren of Purity in the east and Ibn Masarra and Maslama al-Qurṭubī (d. 964) in the west, and the second by Ibn Barrajān (d. 1141), Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240) and Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. btw. 1225-32); the latter two westerners and their writings migrated east, where they were acclaimed the supreme authorities on lettrism (*‘ilm al-ḥurūf*), coeval Arabic twin to Hebrew kabbalah, both sciences peculiar to the Mediterranean zone. Then over the course of the pivotal fifteenth century these ideas—long strongly associated by Sunni polemicists with Isma‘ilism and heterodoxy, and for good reason—were so successfully mainstreamed by Ibn Turka and his fellow New Brethren of Purity as to become tantamount to both Sunni and Shi‘i imperial orthodoxy (Timurid, Aqqyunlu, Safavid, Mughal, Ottoman) for at least two centuries after. The status of the Maghrib as alembic in which this partially Isma‘ili, partially Ikhwānī and fully occult-scientific amalgam was cooked, then diffused east via Mamluk Cairo and Damascus, was hailed by Mashriqi occultists to a man. With Ibn al-‘Arabī, they declared the west to be best—precisely due to its relative isolation from the rest of Islamdom. “Heterodox” currents flowed more strongly there, and “orthodox” ones evolved in exotic directions, paralleling Christian and Jewish cultural developments along the Mediterranean’s northern shore. And yet those currents would only be systematized and imperialized in the Persianate east, scene to the greatest Islamic empires of the early modern era. This paper attempts to map this occult-scientific east-west-

east oscillation, which came to shape early modern Islamic intellectual and political history to no small degree. In particular, I argue that the signal tenth-century developments in the far west of the Islamicate ecumene should not be studied in isolation, but are best understood with reference to their transformative effect on the early modern east, where their sociopolitical and scientific implications were fully worked out, and on a much grander, Islamo-Helleno-Perso-Mongol universalist scale. Only thus may the confessionalist irony this reception history presents—whereby certain Isma‘ili and/or Ikhwānī doctrines were simply rewritten as Sunni, whereby bad religion became good science—be properly savored.

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The Emergence of *Bāṭin* Discourse in Tenth-Twelfth Century Medieval Judaism

One of the primary conduits for the integration of various philosophical trends into medieval Jewish discourses was the hermeneutical category of *bāṭin*, later translated into medieval Hebrew by a variety of terms (e.g., *tok*, *'inyan ne'elam*, *seter*, *sod*). But how, and in what contexts, did this very category emerge in the writings of Jewish writers in the Islamicate world? This question was thus far largely unexplored. In this presentation, I will argue that the category was first introduced into Judaism in the exegetical enterprises of both Geonic and Karaite authors from the 10th-11th centuries, in a process that involved a decisive transition in the tenets of the hermeneutical approach to Scripture. The foil for this phenomenon is the earlier, late-antique Rabbinic approach, whose exegetical *modus operandi* involved "horizontal exegesis" – namely, the presentation of exegetical alternatives along a single, non-stratified axis of significance. As I will show, numerous medieval thinkers and commentators contended that Scripture is characterized by different, and distinct, layers of textual meaning, which exist on a vertical axis. According to this view, Scripture is to be interpreted by associating the various interpretations with these different layers of meaning. This concept of multi-level exegesis was to change the face of medieval Jewish culture, for it created the conditions for a process of expansion of the text's receptive capacity to meaning to almost infinite dimensions. The bulk of the presentation will be dedicated to a pioneering attempt to scrutinize the appearances of the category of *bāṭin* in Geonic and Karaite literature, in light of several manifestations of Islamic *bāṭin* discourses as well as the critique leveled at them. I will also present both continuities and rifts between *bāṭin* discourses as they appeared in Rabbanite and Karaite literature, and the presentation of the category of *bāṭin* by Jewish Rabbanite thinkers from the Iberian Peninsula in the 11th-12th centuries. Beyond the hermeneutical focus of this presentation, attention will be given to the question of which patterns, trends, and bodies of knowledge were integrated into Rabbanite and Karaite Judaism by presenting them as the profound meaning of Scripture.

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Between *dīn* and *‘ilm*: Negotiating the Esoteric in the *Jābirian Kitāb al-Nukhab*

This presentation focuses on an overlooked work attributed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, called *Kitāb al-Nukhab* ('The Compendium'), also known as *Kitāb al-Baḥth* ('The Book of Investigations'). This is a long and rich text on the natural and metaphysical foundations of the science of talismans, primarily, but also alchemy, and artificial generation. I will introduce one of the most interesting aspects of this work; namely, its author's transparency about his conceptual boundaries; particularly, his negotiation of *dīn* ('religion'), *‘ilm* ('science'), and *al-bāṭin* (and *al-ẓāhir*) and its instrumentalization in legitimizing the occult sciences (magic and alchemy). The author explicitly tells us that this text is not concerned with the esoteric aspect of knowledge; in stressing this, he divulges what he means by the exoteric and their implications on the epistemological approach to the occult. By looking at the ways in which *dīn* and *‘ilm* are conceptualised in the Jabirian Corpus, we are able to discern the place of the occult sciences in, and the challenges they delivered to, medieval discourses of science and religion.

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Hypotheses about the Arabic Hermetica

The Arabic Hermetica are texts in Arabic attributed to the legendary sage Hermes Trismegistus. They deal variously with astrology, talismanic magic, alchemy, wisdom sayings, and related topics. Some astrological treatises and other little texts among them are translations of ancient works, but most of the Arabic Hermetica are new works concocted in Arabic by different authors in the name of the ancient figure. Some of these texts have been published in editions based on one or a few manuscripts, whereas most remain unpublished. This presentation has three parts. First, it briefly addresses scholarship on the Hermetica since the publication of my book *The Arabic Hermes* (2009). Second, it outlines the four main groups of Arabic Hermetica and sheds limited light on their chronology and origins. Third, it discusses the challenges for further research on the Arabic Hermetic and what such research is likely to reveal.

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Sectarian Conflict and the Dating of the *Nabatean Agriculture*: Who were the Sethians?

In the *Filāḥa an-Nabāṭiyya*, the Sethians (*banī aššīṭā*) emerge as the adversaries of the narrators Qūthāmā and Yanbūshād. They continuously seem to censure Qūthāmā's words, who attempts to position himself on their side, while repeatedly alluding to their hatred for Yanbūshād. In the *Agriculture*, the Sethians are associated with magic and the foretelling of the future. They are said to believe in the existence of eternal objects in the sublunar world, and refer to the soul with the phrase "solar matter". The identity of the Sethians remains shrouded in mystery and subject of much scholarly debate. The same applies to the identity of the narrators and the dating of the source text(s) of Ibn Waḥshiyya's translation, if such a source text indeed existed. Uncovering the identity of the Sethians in the *Agriculture* may contribute towards the ongoing attempts to solve these questions. Previous scholarship has suggested the Sethians could be a fictional representation of the Muslims living at the time of the author (Hämeen Anttila 2007). On the other hand, the 13th-century historian Yaqut mentions the existence of Sabians in Tib who spoke Nabatean and worshipped Seth. This paper will analyze the references to the beliefs of this group to provide a clearer image of who they might have been.

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**Intense Focused Rivalry, Imposed Sectarian Secrecy, and Doctrinal Recourse to Reason:
Obstacles in the Way of a Tenth-Century Transmission of Ismaili Thought to Al-Andalus**

Despite evidence of Fatimid attempts to gain a foothold in Umayyad Spain, as in the embassy of Ibn al-Haytham and colleague to Ibn Hafṣūn, the divide between the two rivals persisted openly with fierce polemical exchanges on all sorts of issues (for the Fatimid side of which see Walker, “Fatimid Portrayals of the Umayyads in Official Pronouncements and in Da’wa Literature”). Over the first two thirds of the tenth century, the constant vocal opposition, emanating from al-Andalus and the threat of Umayyad interference in North African affairs precluded any but the most minimal exchange of ideas or texts. Fatimid authorities were particularly sensitive to and focused on the Umayyads, perhaps even more so than the Abbasids who were in that period less of a threat at least locally. In addition, the more esoteric doctrinal writings by agents of the da’wa were subjected to a rule of secrecy imposed by virtue of the oath and other mechanisms. There was thus a sharp distinction between public discourse and what was kept highly restricted. The latter was accessible solely to members tested and approved by senior da’is. All were sworn never to let it out or reveal anything in it without explicit permission. Modern scholarship has even now gained some degree of access only recently and then with difficulty. What the opponents and detractors of Ismailism in the Fatimid era knew of it has been studied and a few examples of a breach wherein an outsider or renegade did in fact expose true esoterica are known but are rare. Most denunciations of the Ismailis were based on generic polemical falsehoods. Another possible obstacle needs to be considered. Although tenth century Ismaili thought becomes heavily dependent on a form of Neoplatonism, most clearly seen in the works of al-Sijistani, there are serious questions about to what degree it was accepted in the Maghrib. To be sure it was fairly widely adopted later, though mainly in Egypt and the east. But there is also a matter of whether it promotes any kind of mysticism rather than a narrower doctrine of intellect that tends to reject most forms of supra-rational perception.

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Tracing the Sorcerer's Circle: Demons, *Mandals*, and the Art of Translation

Much of the technical vocabulary of Islamic occult learning is born of exotic origins. The *ṭilasm* is, of course, from the Greek *telesma*, the *nīranj* is patently related to the Middle Persian *nērang*, and the *mandal*, which is used as a term of art for the sorcerer's circle, can be traced to the Sanskrit *maṇḍala*, signifying both circle and realm. The ritual of the *mandal* is treated in depths in books of spells produced by the likes of Abū l-Faḍl al-Ṭabaṣī (d. 482/1089) and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229), as is the ritual of drawing of a circle and sitting within it in order to conjure astral spirits described in the *Ghāyaṭ al-ḥakīm*. In his Persian classification of the sciences, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) offers a rather normative example of the preparation of *mandal* diagrams for harnessing occult powers, in a section on the science of incantations (*'ilm al-'azā'im*). As with many other arenas of occult practice, the Islamic vocabulary of the *mandal* has important afterlives amongst both Christians and Jews. Moreover, the ritual form and content of the *mandal* are not stable as the word circulates among Muslims across time and place. Particularly in the west, the expressions *ḍarb* or *fath al-mandal* came to be associated with divinatory practices of scrying which involve staring into a goblet, kettle, or a circle of ink to summon jinn who can then help to uncover knowledge of the unseen. This paper seeks to trace the significance of the *mandal* in early Arabic and Persian writings on incantations produced in the east and to probe the various Indic traditions of astral magic from which the *mandal* emerges. Attention is also given to the wide circulation of the *mandal* as a ritual technique for summoning jinn, demons, angels, and other occult forces.