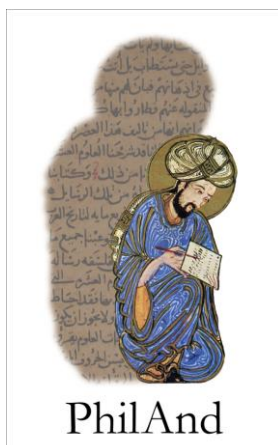


“Interconnections Between Jewish and Islamic Rationalistic Forms of Thought”

Abstracts

(Updated: 19 June 2023)

UCLouvain, September 5-7, 2023



European
Research
Council



José BELLVER

CSIC-Granada

josepbellver@gmail.com

**Exploring possible Masarrian influences on Iberian Jewish philosophy:
Causality and divine voluntarism in Ibn Masarra and Ibn Gabirol**

Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Masarra al-Qurṭubī (d. 319/931), mainly known as Ibn Masarra or Ibn Masarra al-Jabalī, is the most relevant theologian, philosopher and mystic in al-Andalus during the Umayyad period. Until quite recently, his thought has been mainly known through later quotations and polemic literature, prompting different interpretations of his figure, both in primary and secondary literature. The earlier primary sources viewed him as a theologian and ascetic with Mu‘tazilite tendencies, while later Sufi sources of the Almoravid and Almohad periods mainly viewed him as a sort of lettrist proto-Sufi. In 1972, Muḥammad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Ja‘far unearthed two treatises, *Risālat al-I‘tibār* and *Kitāb Khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*, in a manuscript held in the Chester Beatty Library in which these two works were credited to Ibn Masarra. These works sparked new interpretations of Ibn Masarra’s thought as either a Bāṭinī or a Sufi.

Thanks to a reference to Ibn Masarra’s thought in Ibn al-Uqlīshī’s (d. 550-1/1155-7) *al-Inbā’ fī sharḥ ḥaqā’iq al-ṣifāt wa-l-asmā’*, I was able to attribute *al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī*, a work previously credited to Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), to Ibn Masarra. *Al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī* aligns with the criticisms levelled at Ibn Masarra in early biographical and polemic literature, and presents him as a theologian with views close to the Mu‘tazila, despite the author clearly denying these accusations. *Al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī* is an important witness of the parcourse and struggles of rational theology and philosophy during the Umayyad rule of al-Andalus. As the earlier extant work of rational theology written in al-Andalus, *al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī* is a very relevant precedent to understand the development of rational theology and philosophy in al-Andalus.

Al-Radd ‘alā l-Kindī is a refutation of al-Kindī’s *On First Philosophy* on the topic of divine causality. Ibn Masarra denies the common notion in Neo-Platonism that regards God as the First Cause. Instead, he views God’s action in the cosmos through will. This position strongly recalls Ibn Gabirol’s views on divine voluntarism as in *Fons Vitae*, thus raising the question whether Ibn Masarra influenced Ibn Gabirol.

The present contribution compares Ibn Masarra and Ibn Gabirol’s theology and cosmology in order to explore possible Masarrian influences on the latter.

Gideon BOHAK

Tel Aviv University

gbohak@tauex.tau.ac.il

The Occult Sciences in Judaeo-Arabic

In the Middle Ages, Arabic-speaking Jews had access to numerous manuals of magic, divination, and the occult sciences. In some cases, they read these texts from Arabic manuscripts, but in many other instances they preferred to read them in Judaeo-Arabic, that is, in Arabic written in Hebrew letters. Many Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts of the occult sciences are attested – often in a very fragmentary state – in the Cairo Genizah, and more such manuscripts are attested outside the Cairo Genizah as well. In my paper, I will discuss three specific examples of Judaeo-Arabic copies of occult texts: (a) “The Book of the Images of the Degrees of the Zodiac Circle” attributed to Teucros / Tankalus; (b) “The Book of the Rising of Sirius” attributed to Hermes; (c) “The Sources of Truths and the Explication of Paths” by the thirteenth-century Abū al-Qāsim al-‘Irāqī. In discussing these examples, I will also stress the difficulties of, as well as the opportunities afforded by, the identification and analysis of Judaeo-Arabic texts of which only fragments are preserved, and which have thus far elicited very little scholarly interest.

Charles BURNETT

The Warburg Institute, University of London

charles.burnett@sas.ac.uk

**The Influence of Andalusian Arabic Astrological Texts
on Abraham ibn Ezra's Hebrew Astrology**

The late Shlomo Sela has shown how extensively Abraham Ibn Ezra used Arabic astrological works by al-Qābiṣī and Abū Ma'shar in his own Hebrew texts on astrology. This presentation explores the contemporary knowledge of the same texts by the Arabic-Latin translations active in the Iberian peninsula, and the position of the *Epitome totius astrologiae*, a Latin work giving Ibn Ezra's doctrine, within this picture.

Godefroid DE CALLATAÿ

UCLouvain

godefroid.decallyatay@uclouvain.be

Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and the Jewish World:

A Focus on three Tenth-Century Commentaries on the *Ṣefer Yeṣira*

Modern scholarship has revealed that the impact of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' in the general history of ideas was more extended, ramified, and lasting than previously assumed, and that it needs to be significantly re-evaluated. As part of this broad phenomenon, it is also becoming increasingly clear today that the Brethren of Purity also left a profound mark on Jewish thought throughout the Middle Ages and that their influence was not restricted to a particular place but widely disseminated across the diaspora. The present paper is another contribution to this field, resolutely focused on contemporary material. Our purpose will be to reconsider the possible influence of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* on three commentaries on the *Ṣefer Yeṣira* ("Book of Creation") written during the 10th century, respectively by Sa'adyā Gaon (d. 942) in Bagdad, Dūnash ben Tāmīm (d. after 955/6) in Kairouan and Shabbetai Donnolo (d. c. 982) in Apulia.

Jean-Charles DUCENE

Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris

jean-charles.ducene@ephe.psl.eu

**The geographical introduction to the *Sepher Yosippon*
and the Arab geographers of the 10th century**

The geographical introduction to the *Sepher Yosippon* (1st half of the 10th century) describes a situation of the European nations according to the system of the Table of Nations in Genesis (Chapter X) but taking into account the situation contemporary with it. Now, this description is very close in places to that drawn up by eastern Arab geographers (Ibn Rusteh, fl. 910; al-Mas'ūdī, d. 956) or Andalusians (Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb, fl. 962; al-Bakrī, d. 1094). Although we cannot speak of a transfer, it is worth comparing these texts in order to highlight certain convergences, especially as the *Sepher Yosippon* interested Ḥasdai ibn Šaprūt (d. ca 970), himself curious about the political situation in Europe. This text was to be translated soon into Arabic, perhaps in al-Andalus.

Michael EBSTEIN

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

michael.ebstein@mail.huji.ac.il

“And Appoint the Intellect as your Ruler”:

Intellectualist Mysticism among Muslims and Jews in Eleventh-Century al-Andalus

In the mystical traditions of both Muslims and Jews during medieval times, one finds a variety of attitudes towards the human intellect (‘*aql* in Arabic, *sechel* in Hebrew), particularly as regards its role in the mystical path leading to God. In eleventh-century al-Andalus (or Sepharad as it is known in the Jewish tradition), Iberian mystics seem to have perceived the intellect in a favorable and positive light. In their eyes, and in contradistinction to the prevailing Ṣūfī view in the East, ‘*aql* occupies center stage in man’s spiritual quest, albeit in ways that are different from the theological and philosophical *Weltanschauung*, at least as it had developed up to that period. In my lecture, I will examine this pro-‘*aql* approach as reflected in the Arabic *Kitāb al-gharīb al-muntaqā min kalām ahl al-tuqā*, by the Muslim author Ibn Khamīs al-Yāburī (d. 503/1109), and in the famous Judeo-Arabic *al-Hidāya ilā farā’id al-qulūb*, by the Jewish writer Baḥyā b. Paqūda (active in the second half of the eleventh century). Notwithstanding important differences between these two works in content and in style, they both reflect a very similar mystical worldview, in which, as stated above, the human intellect plays a vital role. In this context, Ibn Khamīs al-Yāburī and Baḥyā b. Paqūda seem to have derived their inspiration from the works of the influential mystic-theologian al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) as well as from the celebrated *Epistles of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, among other sources.

Gabriele FERRARIO

University of Bologna

gabriele.ferrario@unibo.it

**A Treasure Trove of Thought: Jewish-Islamic intellectual encounters
as portrayed by the manuscripts of the Cairo Genizah**

The Arabic, Judaeo-Arabic and Hebrew manuscript fragments of the Cairo Genizah are a unique source of information on the daily life of Medieval Cairene Jews and on their relationship with the surrounding Islamic society. While the social, political and cultural aspects of this relationship have been at the centre of thorough research and important surveys, the interconnections between Jewish and Islamic rationalistic thought as portrayed in the Genizah fragments still await an overarching study. In my paper, I will present a selection of Genizah fragments that can contribute to our image of such intellectual relationships: Arabic materials read by Jewish readers, Judaeo-Arabic renditions of Arabic texts, Hebrew translations of philosophical material, identified and unidentified portions of treatises produced in the Jewish context both in Judaeo-Arabic and Hebrew.

Miquel FORCADA

Universitat de Barcelona

mforcada@ub.edu

The Jews and the rational sciences during the Umayyad period and its aftermath

During the Umayyad period, the Jewish community of al-Andalus developed an intense scientific and philosophical culture that laid the foundations of a well-known legacy in the field of rational disciplines. The sources agree in saying that the court-physician Ḥasdāy ibn Shaprūt (d.ca. 975) played a prominent role as a political, religious and intellectual leader of the Jewish community. Under his influence, there emerged a new generation of Jewish scholars, well connected to the Muslim circles of knowledge, who contributed in many fields and particularly in philosophy and medicine. Due to the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty at the beginning of the 11th century, they developed their careers in the courts of the newly created Party kings that tried to replicate the cultural ambiance of the Umayyad court. One of these scholars was the physician and linguist Marwān ibn Janāḥ (d. ca. 1050), who had to move to Zaragoza due to the sacking of Cordoba in 1012. It is worth noting that Zaragoza received other relevant scholars from Cordoba like the Muslims Ibn al-Kattāni (d. 1030) and Abū l-Ḥakam al-Kirmānī (d.1066), or the Jews Manāḥim ibn al-Fawwāl and Abū ‘Amr Yūsuf ibn Ḥasdāy (d. after 1040), the son of the Ḥasdāy ibn Shaprūt. The relatively recent edition of Marwān ibn Janāḥ’s book on simple drugs, *Kitāb al-Talkhīṣ*, has brought relevant new evidence not only on his biography but also on the scientific culture of the period in which he lived. The *Talkhīṣ* is a most useful complement to the biographical sources about the intellectual life of the epoch like Ṣā‘id al-Andalusī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam* or Moshé ben Ezra’s *K. al-Muḥāḍara wa-lMudhākara*. On the basis of the *Talkhīṣ* and the known evidence, we may reconsider the dynamics of creation and transmission of rational knowledge from mid-10th century to mid-11th century in the Jewish and Muslim communities of Cordoba and other cultural locales, particularly Zaragoza, the city in which also lived the philosophers Ibn Gabirol and Ibn Paqūda.

Ehud KRINIS

Ben Gurion University of Negev

ksehud@gmail.com

**Missing yet Present: On the Lack of Explicit Mentioning of Muslim Philosophers
in Medieval Judeo-Arabic Works**

The significant exposure of the authors of Judeo-Arabic philosophical works to their contemporary Muslim philosophers is a well-established scholarly fact. Yet, while Judeo-Arabic writers openly acknowledge the role played by ancient Hellenistic philosophers and scientists in the development of their philosophical scientific legacy, they commonly fail to explicitly acknowledge the contributions made by Muslim philosophers to this legacy. The lecture tackles this peculiar phenomenon and suggests a possible explanation for it.

Reimund LEICHT

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

rwleicht@mail.huji.ac.il

**Al-Fārābī's logic, epistemology and politics as keys for the modern interpretation of
Jewish philosophy - Critical remarks**

The paper will deal with the usage of al-Fārābī's logic, epistemology and politics as cornerstones for the interpretation of Jewish philosophy in the 20th century. The impact of the leading Muslim-Arabic philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd on medieval Jewish thinkers was frequently discussed in modern research, but from a historical point of view, there can be little doubt that al-Fārābī assumes an outstanding position among those non-Jewish thinkers who influenced Jewish philosophers in the Arabic-speaking world.

In addition to that, it was mainly from al-Farabian sources that Leo Strauss developed his highly influential theories about the political character of medieval Jewish philosophy and the techniques about esoteric writing. These theories have served for decades as hermeneutical paradigms in the study of medieval Jewish philosophers, most notably in the study of Maimonides. Conversely, this also led to a specific perception of al-Fārābī among scholars from Jewish Studies, which is not always identical with that of scholars dealing with philosophy in the Islamic world.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss and assess the achievements and the shortcomings of these scholarly "al-Farabianisms" for the study of medieval Jewish philosophy.

Omer MICHAELIS

Tel Aviv University

omermichaelis@gmail.com

‘Ilm al-bāṭin in 11th-century Andalus: Jewish and Muslim perspectives

Taro MIMURA

University of Tokyo

mimurataro@gmail.com

**Dūnash ibn Tamīm and His Astronomical Proof of the Existence of God:
Survival Strategy of Jewish Scholars at Islamic Courts with Greek Rational Sciences**

Dūnash ibn Tamīm, a Jewish physician and philosopher in the Fatimid court, was a disciple of Isaac Israeli (c.855–c.955). Biographical information concerning Dūnash is notably scarce; nevertheless, it is evident that he pursued scholarly occupations in medicine, just as his mentor, Isaac Israeli did. Whereas our sources on Dūnash’s medical contributions are exceedingly limited, we possess at least two books written by him pertaining to astronomy: *Treatise on the Armillary Sphere* and *Book on the Configuration of the Orbs*, the latter of which I have recently attributed to him. Through reading these two works, we realize that after expounding upon the rational structures governing celestial and terrestrial phenomena, he frequently acknowledged the existence of the omnipotent one God who created the rational World, whilst vehemently renouncing an astrological worldview. His stance toward astronomy and astrology diverged significantly from his contemporaries engaged in astronomical endeavours at the Abbasid court, given that almost all astronomers were practitioners of astrology in the Abbasid dynasty. However, the fact that the early Fatimid caliphs had a similar attitude as Dūnash, indicates that his view of astronomy and astrology evolved during his arduous quest to secure a prominent position within the Fatimid court, despite being Jewish. In this paper, I will elucidate how he thrived as a scholar at the Fatimid court by using his knowledge of Greek science and philosophy as a powerful survival tool, so that he composed his astronomical works for defending the central doctrine of monotheism, that is, “the existence of the one God”.

Maryam SHEHATA

UCLouvain

mariam.shehata@uclouvain.be

The Reception of Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī

This scholarly paper meticulously explores the intricate intellectual interconnections between Jewish and Islamic rationalistic thought during the Middle Ages, with a particular focus on the reception of the eminent figure, Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī. Al-Baghdādī, a Muslim philosopher with a Jewish background, experienced controversial debates surrounding his conversion to Islam, highlighting the multifaceted attitudes prevalent between Muslims and Jews in that era. Beginning with a concise analysis of his conversion narrative, this paper delves into the subsequent implications for the credibility of Jewish scholars within the Muslim intellectual arena.

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive examination of how al-Baghdādī's theodicean ideas were received by two influential Muslim scholars, al-Suhrawardī and Ibn Taymiyya, within the context of their respective philosophical frameworks. Al-Suhrawardī, known for his illuminationist philosophy, expressed reservations and critiqued al-Baghdādī's thought, as he perceived potential conflicts with his own philosophical approach. In contrast, Ibn Taymiyya, a renowned theologian staunchly adhering to early Islamic teachings, demonstrated genuine appreciation for the intellectual contributions put forth by al-Baghdādī.

These divergent responses offer valuable insights into the prevailing attitudes towards intellectual exchange and provide a lens through which the reception of ideas during the Middle Ages can be examined. By analysing the intellectual frameworks of al-Suhrawardī and Ibn Taymiyya and their reception of al-Baghdādī's ideas, this study enhances our understanding of the intricate interplay between Jewish and Islamic rationalistic thought during the Middle Ages.

Laura TRIBUZIO

UCLouvain

laura.tribuzio@uclouvain.be

The Brethren of Purity Epistles 5 and 6 in the Judeo-Arabic Tradition

The Berlin Or. Oct. 350 (Seville 1446) is a miscellanea of manuscript extracts from Arabic scientific literature written in Hebrew characters, most of which are devoted to medicine. The folios from 28b to 30b report “the eight chapter” of a treatise On Music, corresponding to a compilation of parts of the Brethren of Purity Epistle 5 and Epistle 6. The aim of my contribution to the conference is to bring the manuscript excerpt to light as one of the pieces of evidence for the influence of the Brethren’s *Epistles* in al-Andalus among Jewish people. It will also be considered as a proof that Epistles 5 and 6 were originally conceived and then transmitted as parts of the same treatise on the science of harmony, commonly known as the science of music.