

ABSTRACT

Miquel Forcada *Rational and More Than Rational Sciences in the Umayyad Caliphate: Dialogue, Debate, and Confrontation* pp. 17-64

The time of the Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba (early fourth/tenth century to early fifth/eleventh century) represents a crucial phase in the creation of the scientific and philosophical culture of al-Andalus. At the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, the economic and political situation of the Umayyad regime was weak and the rulers were largely unable to sponsor the arts and sciences. Due to the general instability of the time, the rulers needed the support of the religious scholars, and so the disciplines that most of these scholars rejected (namely astrology, philosophy, and rational theology) were banned from the court. The ascent of 'Abd al-Rahmān III (r. 300-50/912-61), who proclaimed the caliphate in 316/929, signified a new beginning for scientific and intellectual activity, which flourished until the end of the period, most particularly during the caliphate of al-Ḥakam II (350-66/961-76). There was intense activity in disciplines that appeared particularly controversial in the eyes of religious scholars, like astrology, magic, and alchemy. These and other disciplines made their mark in learned society and at the court. This article explores the political and intellectual considerations underlying this process and analyzes the extent of the practice of controversial disciplines in the context of the period, paying particular attention to the role played by Maslama b. Qāsim and Maslama al-Majrīṭī.

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Paul Walker *Intense Rivalry, Sectarian Secrecy, and Doctrinal Recourse to Reason: Obstacles to the Fourth-/Tenth-Century Transmission of Ismāʿīlī Thought to al-Andalus* pp. 65-87

Occasional Fāṭimid attempts to gain a foothold in Umayyad Iberia were typically accompanied by fierce polemical exchanges from both sides. Vocal opposition emanating from al-Andalus and Umayyad interference in North African affairs precluded any but the most minimal transmission of ideas or texts. Moreover, esoteric doctrinal writings by agents of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* were subjected to a rule of secrecy. Ismāʿīlīs were sworn never to reveal anything in their writings. Opponents in the Fāṭimid era knew little of it and most denunciations of the Ismāʿīlīs were based instead on generic polemical falsehoods. In addition, although fourth-/tenth-century Ismāʿīlī thought became dependent on a form of Neoplatonism, there are serious questions as to what degree it was accepted in the Maghrib. There is also an issue 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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Travis Zadeh *Tracing the Sorcerer's Circle: Demons, Polysemy, and the Boundaries of Islamic Normativity* pp. 89-154

In the development of Islamic practices of summoning and controlling intermediary beings, the *mandal* features as part of a broader repertoire of rituals and diagrams designed to control unseen forces. As a term of art, this multivalent category is connected etymologically to the Sanskrit *maṇḍala*, for a circle or catchment, itself often used in Tantric esoteric rituals. This article traces the history of the *mandal* as it first emerged in the science of incantations (*ʿilm al-ʿaṣāʾim*), by drawing parallels with earlier practices of encirclement, as well as by following later developments and adaptations. In doing so, it also addresses the various manners in which incantations and the rituals

surrounding them came to be understood in distinctly Islamic terms, rooted in ancient prophetic techniques for communing with otherworldly powers.

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Regula Forster *To What Extent Is Alchemy an Esoteric Science? A Case Study of Ibn Arfaʿ Raʿs (fl. sixth/twelfth century)* pp. 155-78

This chapter discusses the status of alchemy as an esoteric science, oscillating between ‘exoteric’ and ‘esoteric’ and between the not quite synonymous Arabic *zāhir* (outer or apparent meaning) and *bātin* (inner or hidden meaning). Taking the works of the sixth-/twelfth-century Moroccan alchemist Ibn Arfaʿ Raʿs as a case study, I discuss what elements in Ibn Arfaʿ Raʿs’s work may be interpreted as hints that he conceived of alchemy as an esoteric science. At the center of the contribution is a reading of Ibn Arfaʿ Raʿs’s commentary *Ḥall mushkilat Shudhūr al-dhabab* (The unraveling of the difficulties of the “Splinters”) which already, in its title, promises a clarification and might therefore be considered an ‘exoteric’ work. While alchemy with its stress on secrecy seems to be an upfront candidate for consideration as an esoteric science, the Arabic terminology *zāhir* and *bātin* is largely absent from most alchemical writings. Rather, alchemists in general, and Ibn Arfaʿ Raʿs in particular, seem to play a game of hide and seek in which seemingly esoteric works become far more widespread than their exoteric counterparts.

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Pierre Lory *Jābir b. Ḥayyān’s Alchemy, Ibn ʿArabī, and the Reading of the Book of Nature* pp. 179-206

The debate over the possibility of the transmutation of matter involves profoundly divergent visions of the world, of man, and of God. The com-

parison attempted here between the conceptions of Jābir b. Ḥayyān and Ibn ‘Arabī illustrates quite distinct ideas. According to Jābir, no being on earth has a fixed essence: all creation is subject to transmutation. A man’s effort to acquire the science of these transmutations is itself transformative, elevating souls mired in ignorance. This is why, for Jābir, alchemy is the philosophy par excellence; this is why he believed it would pave the way for a new humanity, at the coming of the Mahdī. According to Ibn ‘Arabī, the expansion of consciousness does take place; it is described in terms of the Sufi spiritual path, but it is the effect of divine grace with the saint (wali). Material alchemy is known and recognized, but its role remains discrete, because for him the essences of things are immutable in God. The renewal of humanity is also conceived by Ibn ‘Arabī, but it is the work of God’s self-realization.

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Elaine van Dalen *Who are the Sethians in the Nabatean Agriculture?* pp. 207-46

This article explores the character of the Sethians as they appear in the fourth-/tenth-century Arabic *Filāḥ a al-Nabaṭiyya* (*Nabatean agriculture*). In the *Filāḥ a al-Nabaṭiyya*, the Sethians (Banī Ašīṭā) emerge as the adversaries of the main, largely fictionalized, Nabatean narrators of the work. Much like the work’s provenance, the identity of the Sethians has remained shrouded in mystery and the subject of much scholarly debate. This article analyzes the descriptions of this group in the text, and compares their characteristics to other late antique and early Islamic sects who similarly revered Seth, as well as geographically associated groups such as the Ṣābiān in southern Iraq. The article argues that the Sethians discussed in the *Nabatean agriculture* could allude to a historical ancestor of the non-Mandaean Ṣābiān who continued to live in this region in the classical Islamic period. The Nabatean Sethians provide further insight, even if they prove fictional, into early Islamic ideas about pagan sects in southern Iraq.

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Janne Mattila «*Fihrist*» of the «*Rasāʿil Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʿ*»: *Textual Variants and Their Relation to «al-Risāla al-Jāmiʿa»* pp. 247-74

The aim of this article is, first, to investigate the textual nature of the *Fihrist* that precedes the epistles of the *Rasāʿil Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʿ*, and thereby its relation to the rest of the work. Second, the article addresses the relation of *al-Risāla al-jāmiʿa* to the *Fihrist*. The *Fihrist* consists of two main parts: (1) a table of contents that summarizes each of the epistles and (2) a final section. The four sections of this article address (1) the *Fihrist*'s position in the *Rasāʿil* in general; (2) the manuscript variants of the epistle summaries; (3) the final section of the *Fihrist*; and (4) the relation between the *Jāmiʿa* and the *Fihrist*. Although most manuscripts contain the *Fihrist*, the absence of genuine references from the *Rasāʿil* to the *Fihrist* indicate that it was either composed as the final part of the *Rasāʿil* or postdates the *Rasāʿil*. The manuscripts contain three main variants for both the table of contents section and the final section of the *Fihrist*. Their distribution in manuscripts is different, which suggests that the transmission of the two sections was separate. In the case of both sections, the editors employ a method of expansion: the text of the previous variant is retained while new text is inserted between words and phrases. For the final section, later variants also add novel blocks of content, in particular an allegorical garden story. The relation of the *Jāmiʿa* to the *Fihrist* is similar: the beginning of each epistle entry in the *Jāmiʿa* expands on the third variant of the *Fihrist*. For many epistles, this constitutes the complete entry in the *Jāmiʿa*; for others, the *Fihrist* section is followed by an independent commentary. In consequence, large sections of the *Jāmiʿa* depend textually on the the *Fihrist*. This supports the view that the *Jāmiʿa* postdates the *Rasāʿil*.

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Carmela Baffioni *The Andalusī Reception of Ontological Options and Cosmological Descriptions in the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and al-Risāla al-Jāmi'a: A Case Study* pp. 275-300

In line with M. Ebstein's considerations in his book *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabī and the Ismā'īlī Tradition*, my article considers a few lines from al-Baṭalyawṣī's *Kitāb al-ḥadā'iq* that are strongly influenced by two passages from the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. Al-Baṭalyawṣī substantially differs in his general approach from the Ikhwān, despite his literal borrowing from their texts. His aims seem to follow their own goal, far from the possible Ismā'īlī reading of the *Epistles*, legitimized in particular by some cosmological descriptions in *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*. The *Jāmi'a* emphasizes, in fact, terms and themes close to Ismā'īlī cosmological representations (such as the concepts of *amr*, divine imperative; or *ibdā'*, immediate origination). An Ismā'īlī approach can also be recognized in conceptions similar to those of the Ikhwān's passages found, for example, in the Ismā'īlī *dā'ir* Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī or in an addition to Epistle 50 that I have recently discovered and edited. On the one hand, al-Baṭalyawṣī's elaboration of the Ikhwān's sources can be better understood through their rather different version in *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a* that, contrary to the widespread framework of neo-Platonic origin often recurring in the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', combines the "Ismā'īlī" cosmological representations with the idea of "emanation." On the other hand, while one cannot deny the similarities between the aforementioned Ismā'īlī texts and the Ikhwān's encyclopedia, the contacts scholars claim to have existed between the Ikhwān and Andalusī thinkers do not automatically imply an Ismā'īlī reading of them in al-Andalus.

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Gabriele Ferrario, *In a Hidden Place: Traces of Bāṭinism in the Fragments of the Cairo Genizah* pp. 301-34

The fragments retrieved from the Genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo represent a treasure trove of sources on medieval Judaism and the medieval Mediterranean world at large. A survey of the fragments reveals the

circulation of *bāṭinī* texts and ideas in the Genizah: book lists preserve mentions of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity, which are also found in a handful of partial copies in both Arabic and the Judeo-Arabic language. These fragments, together with two alchemical manuscripts that preserve several titles of the works of Jābir b. Ḥayyān, are discussed in this article as evidence of the circulation of *bāṭinī* ideas among the Jews of medieval Cairo. An edition of a partial Judeo-Arabic version of the natural philosophical epistles of the Brethren of Purity is presented in the appendix.

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Laura Tribuzio *Restoring Harmony through the Propaedeutic Science of Music: A Reconsideration of the Brethren of Purity's Epistle on Music and Its Relation with the Epistle on Proportions* pp. 335-68

In the fourth/tenth century, if a novice had wanted to approach the theoretical fundamentals of music, he would have been disappointed by studying the Brethren of Purity's epistle *On Music*. A major objective of the present article is to provide some basis for reassessing the Brethren's views on the art of music in the epistle that is purposely devoted to it. According to the Brethren, who faithfully follow the Greek definition of this art as a propaedeutic science, the subject of the epistle is to present music as the most perfect model (*mithāl*) to represent the art of harmony. For this reason, the epistle does not discuss specific music theoretical elements, but rather it aims to identify the methods (referred to as modalities or *kaṣṣfiyya*) through which the concept of harmony can be understood and reproduced by men. Additionally, it explores how the idea of divine harmony is expressed through mathematical principles, which are the foundation for both divine music and its human counterpart, the art of music. This reconsideration enables us to better appreciate the Brethren of Purity's attempt to reconceptualize the important distinction between the two dimensions of "harmony" and "music," the divine and the human, and, consequently, resolve some inconsistencies in the Greek literature on the subject. The present contribution highlights the intimate connection between *Epistle 5 (On Music)* and *Epis-*

tle 6 (On Proportions) that deals with what we could today approximately refer to as rational numbers. Together they represent two aspects of the same propaedeutic art of harmony. The former is based on the qualitative aspects, the latter on the quantitative dimension.

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Nader El-Bizri *The Mathematical Orders of Architecture: Seeing Madīnat al-Zahrā' from the Perspective of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* pp. 369-90

This article offers a mathematical analysis of some of the architectural features of the Salón Rico (Hall of Richness) of Madīnat al-Zahrā' (Radiant City in the outskirts of Córdoba), with a specific focus on the design and proportionality of the horseshoe arch. This line of inquiry is guided by the mathematical knowledge of that epoch in the Islamicate milieu of the fourth/tenth century, particularly as embodied in the studies on arithmetic, geometry, and proportional ratios in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity); it also considers the construction techniques in that context and its associated arts and crafts.

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Liana Saif - Charles Burnett, *The Book on Attracting the Rūḥāniyya of Every Animal: A Pseudo-Aristotelian Hermetic Text* pp. 391-420

The Book on Attracting the rūḥāniyya of *Every Animal* is a text which purports to be Aristotle's questions to Hermes concerning dominating wild animals solely through the attraction of the spirit (rūḥāniyya). Hermes, in

turn, imparts the wisdom of Hādūs, the creator and teacher of Adam. The text belongs to the corpus of Pseudo-Aristotelian Hermetica, and was excerpted from this corpus into the last letter (“On Magic”) of the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*. This article provides a critical edition and translation of the fullest version of the text, and its partial Latin translation as an appendix.

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Godefroid de Callataÿ - Sébastien Moureau *An Arabic Version of Qusṭā b. Lūqā's De Physicis Ligaturis?* pp. 421-86

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 is 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 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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Godefroid de Callatay - Rémy Baranx - Hubert Naets, *M-Classi: A New Digital Tool for the Classification of the Sciences, in Islam and Beyond* pp. 487-510

M-Classi is a new digital tool in the field of knowledge organization. It is conceived primarily as a means of cataloging and interrogating the classifications of the sciences in Islam and those of the cultures with which the Islamicate world came into contact from antiquity to the pre-modern era. The aim of this paper is to present this game changing tool, whose vocation is to become an open-access engine for future research. After briefly recapitulating the current state of the art on Islamic classifications of the sciences and succinctly presenting the specificities of *M-Classi*'s technical configuration in its current beta version, we review some of the application's main functionalities and illustrate various aspects of *M-Classi*'s potential in terms of visualization.

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