

Education and Learning in the Early Islamic World, edited by Claude Gilliot (The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, 43), (Surrey, UK & Burlington, VT-USA: Ashgate Variorum, 2012), xc + 410 pp, ISBN: 978-0-86078-717-4, £180.00 (hb)

This is a hefty collection (381 pages) of nineteen essays edited by Claude Gilliot, a scholar of medieval Islam. The essays have been written by Western Orientalist scholars on the topic of Education and Learning in the Islamic World between 600 to 950 CE. The editor divided the collection into five parts: 1) Pedagogical Tradition, 2) Scholarship and Attestation, 3) Orality and Literacy, 4) Authorship and Transmission, and 5) Libraries. The authors included in the volume are: Ignaz Goldziher, Christopher Melchert, Albert Dietrich, Richard Bulliet, Sebastian Guenther, Johannes Pedersen, Gilliot himself, Jan Just Witkam and Georges Vajda, Fritz Krenkow, Stefan Leder, Richard Walzer, Johann Fuch, Isabel Fierro, Adolph Grohmann, Ruth Mackensen, David Wasserstein, Max Weisweiler, and Manuela Marin. All these articles have been published before. Gilliot appends a fairly lengthy Introduction to the volume in which he provides an overview of Orientalist scholarship on education and learning in Islam and includes, perhaps less explicably, a discussion of the early history of the Arabic script. The editor provides a helpful bibliography at the end of the volume on medieval Islamic education which includes sources in Arabic and Western languages. Sources in Persian and Turkish, however, are conspicuously missing which is a pity since they would have considerably enhanced the usefulness of the bibliography.

As is inevitable in such a collection, the quality of the articles is not consistently even and some of the older articles seem rather dated in content and tone. Ignaz Goldziher and Johannes Pedersen, for example, would fall into this category. Goldziher's references to women's education will now have to be regarded as superseded by Asma Sayeed's recent comprehensive study of women's scholarship and transmission of learning, published by Cambridge University Press (2013) under the title *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam*. Pedersen's treatment of the *wā'iz* or preacher is perhaps still useful to a certain degree but should certainly be augmented with the more substantial treatment of the *wu'āz* and the

quṣṣāṣ in the later work by Jonathan Berkey (*Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, University of Washington Press, 2001). Richard Walzer's discussion of the process of translation of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic should now be supplanted by Dimitri Gutas's comprehensive treatment of the same and of the Arabic translation movement as a whole during the eighth and ninth centuries of the Common Era (*Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society*, Routledge Press, 1998).

Among some of the noteworthy essays are two by Sebastian Guenther, one of which is on Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 256/870) who believed that a proper education should include study of the Arabic language and of proverbs, epistolary, calligraphy, poetry, history, arithmetic, and not least of all, etiquette, and proper behavior. The other essay is on the views of the celebrated belle-lettrist al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) on holistic education, termed in Arabic *adab*, whose Greek equivalent is *paideia*.

Albert Dietrich's study comparing Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd perspectives on education is illuminating of different approaches to learning and pedagogy that developed over time. He discovered that Umayyad rulers tended to emphasize the inculcation of traditional Arab virtues of chivalry, courage, and hospitality as part of the educational training of their sons. 'Abbāsīds focused on the acquisition of knowledge (*'ilm*) which included study of the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, and religious law, as well as on *adab* which stressed the acquisition of practical skills and worldly refinement, such as medicine, geometry, poetry, genealogy, the playing of musical instruments, and polite conversational skills. The purview of classical and medieval education clearly changed and evolved according to historical contexts, reaching in some ways its apogée during the 'Abbāsīd period with its emphasis on both religious and secular sciences.

There are two essays dealing with education in Muslim Spain. The first by Isabel Fierro makes the case that the study of Islamic law began in Spain as a discipline separate from the study of ḥadīth. The second by Manuela Marin looks at intellectual life in al-Andalūs in the early period and identifies as many as 22 scholars who were prominent during this time.

A noteworthy essay by Max Weisweiler discusses the role of the *mustamli*, who assisted in dictation by relaying the speech of the professor to large groups of students who would copy down these dictations. Audition of lectures (*samāʿ*) and transmission of learning (*riwāya*) were key components of learning in the pre-modern world which culminated in the awarding of the coveted *ijāza* (lit. permission to transmit learning and therefore a certificate or diploma) to successful students, a process described by Witkam and Vajda. These became standard academic procedures in the *madrasa*, the critical institution of higher learning, which emerged and spread in the Islamic world after the fourth/tenth century. Unfortunately there are no studies in this volume of the *madrasa* since Gilliot ends his survey of Islamic education before this period. Instead, we have Melchert's discussion of the *ḥalaqa*, the study circle, which despite its generally informal structure was nevertheless regulated by rather detailed rules of decorum and participation, as he points out.

By compiling these essays together, Gilliot makes these studies conveniently available in a single volume. Comparison of these essays written over a century makes us realize that academic scholarship on such an important topic is getting better and more sophisticated, especially as more sources have come to light and less ideological attitudes prevail among Orientalist scholars.

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