

most central of these figures should go a long way toward rectifying this situation. This biography presents Thon's involvement in literature, his religious thought, his social and intellectual path, his views on nationalism, and his political thought and activity. All of this should be new to most readers, and the author supplies the necessary background information and supplementary discussions of pre-Holocaust Jewry and subsequent realities. Unfortunately, there is only a name index and no topical index but the very coherent structure of the book makes up in part for this absence. Many of the sources regarding Thon's life and thought were destroyed during the Holocaust, but the author did very thorough research on the sources that did survive. He is clearly sympathetic to Thon's personality and thought but maintains a critical approach and balanced presentation.

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THE ROMANIAN KEHILLAH: THE PULSE, CHARACTER, AND HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ROMANIA. By Liviu Rotman. Tel Aviv: Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center—Tel Aviv University, 2015. Pp. 259. \$35.00.

There are not very many books in English on the history of the Romanian Jewish community, even though in the interwar period this was one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe. Rotman's newest book focuses on the history of the communal organization of Romanian Jews up until the twentieth century. Religious life in this period depended on communal frameworks and also strongly influenced them. Therefore Rotman gives detailed attention not only to social and occupational factors and financial and welfare considerations but also looks very carefully at synagogue life and the rabbinate. Romanian Jewry was made up of both Sefardic and Ashkenazic elements, and the varying responses and adaptations of these two groups to the evolving modernization of Romania is both complex and enlightening. Rotman has a deep familiarity with the primary materials, and he is aware of the need to provide context to readers who are not well acquainted with the history of Romania more generally. About half of the book is devoted to documents in Romanian that are photoreproduced. English summaries of each document are provided. This should be quite useful to specialists but also somewhat accessible to students. This volume is an excellent tool for examining less-known narratives of Jewish modernization and enables a fuller picture of the modern European Jewish experience. It will be a classic study for a long time.

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THE BURDEN OF SILENCE: SABBATAI SEVI AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE OTTOMAN-TURKISH DÖNME. By Cengiz Sisman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xvii + 318. Cloth, \$74.00.

When a Jewish messianic pretender named Sabbatai Sevi underwent a forced conversion to Islam in 1666, a group of his Jewish followers then also converted to Islam though they maintained their identity in secret for generation after generation. They were known as Dönme. In contemporary Turkey, they are the foci of many conspiracy theories. This phenomenon, similar to that of the conversos in Spain, has recently begun to attract the attention of academic researchers. This volume is the most recent study to appear on the topic, and it should interest many students of religion. It is extremely difficult to gain access to source material on the Dönme, and the author deserves a great deal of credit even for this basic contribution. Sisman, a Turkish-born specialist in Ottoman and Islamic studies, brings a mastery of many sources and a great sensitivity to the concerns of the Dönme. The book has a wide chronological scope. It deals with the career of Sabbatai Sevi, the Sabbatean movement, Sabbatai's life after his conversion, the early years of the Dönme movement, the development of their secret communities, the ways they maintained their identity, the impact of "modernization" on the Dönme and their impact on modernization, and finally the settlement of Dönme from Saloniki/Thessalonika in modern Turkey. This book is very important not only for students of Sabbateanism but for a much wider circle of readers interested in Jewish mysticism, modern Judaism, the sociology of religious mysticism, Ottoman Islam as well as crypto-religious sects. This wide range is an indication of the importance of the book. The contents are fascinating, the author is very perceptive, and the book raises many issues for further thought and research. The book is also a lesson in the moral importance of respect for privacy on the part of scholars. Indeed, current political developments in Turkey may give this book added importance for the study of Turkish popular and political culture.

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Islam

TAFSİR AND ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL HISTORY: EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF A GENRE.

Edited by Andreas Görke and Johanna Pink. Qur'anic Studies Series, 12. London: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2014. Pp. xxi + 547; appendixes. Hardcover, \$99.00.

The editors of this volume explore an important question for Qur'anic exegetes: What precisely *is tafsir*, and how did its operative concept(s) develop to where we stand today? Those new to the field will benefit greatly

from an exceptionally cogent historiographical overview found in the editors' introduction. One goal is to redress the dearth of attention paid to *tafsīr* by scholars who see it as mere adjunct to the Qur'an. The argument that it deserves study on its own terms comes in the form of fifteen essays leading the reader through a kaleidoscopic tour of the genre. Early entries are classically oriented in both era and subject, including Mecca's exegetical tradition, the development of early *tafsīr* literature, and Shāfi'ī hermeneutics. One could say that any volume on *tafsīr* worth its salt must cover this type of material. However, one of this volume's main strengths is the work it does to decenter our understanding of *when*, *where*, and *how* *tafsīr* takes place. Johanna Pink points out the porosity of the premodern/modern divide. Andreas Görke complicates the received notion that only elite 'ulamā' "do" *tafsīr*, and that they do so exclusively by writing. Andrea Brigaglia's chapter on Nigeria serves as a welcome corrective to the countless scholarly works that seem almost willfully ignorant to the vast amount of exegetical material produced in West Africa. Andrew Rippin articulates the diverse—and often problematic—motivations driving the translation of classical *tafsīr* into European languages. As a whole, the essays work to convince the reader that we cannot understand *hadith*, *tafsīr*, law, or theology as stable categories that never touch upon one another. This volume is an enormous contribution in that it is a coherent and cohesive attempt at identifying the boundaries of this important genre of Islamic literature. Those seeking a holistic response to the question of what exactly constitutes *tafsīr* should prepare themselves to find unexpected answers in unusual places.

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MULLA ŠADRĀ. By Ibrahim Kalin. Makers of Islamic Civilization Series. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 181. Paper, \$25.00.

Grappling with the thought and intellectual context of Mulla Šadrā is no easy task. As the recent groundswell of publications on this great Safavid philosopher suggest, any explication of his work requires erudition in both the Islamic and Hellenic philosophical traditions. It is all the more impressive then that Kalin is able to provide the general reader a concise and incisive reading of Šadrā's ontological and epistemological theory, while simultaneously placing him within a complex network of texts, intellectual lineages and interlocutors. Kalin's central thesis is that Šadrā's philosophy, rejecting the idea that essences were ontologically prior to existence, fundamentally broke with that of his teacher Mīr Dāmād and a long line of neoplatonic and Aristotelian thinkers who preceded him. Šadrā argued that it was impossible for essence to precede existence because existence was not simply another "accident" like color or shape. Rather, existence was the very

substance through which everything emerges. As a concomitant to this, true knowledge does come from transcending existence to understand the changeless essences lying behind it. Instead, Šadrā developed the concept of a graded existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), arguing that each level of existence has a level of epistemology pertinent to it. For example, the material world can be understood through the empirical knowledge of the senses, while logic and discursive demonstration allow for knowledge of things as universals. However, there are higher levels of existence, transcending the material, that are only understood by individuals who, having purified their souls, attain knowledge of a more rarefied kind; it is this kind of knowledge—'irfān or gnosis—for which Šadrā uses the metaphor of tasting (*dhawq*). Kalin's book has a useful bibliography of both primary and secondary sources, but, constrained by the style of the series, includes very few footnotes, which can be frustrating for scholarly readers. Kalin's book avoids the opacity that characterizes some writing on the history of Islamic philosophy while losing none of the precision or nuance: it will be useful for the specialist and nonspecialist alike.

Daniel Morgan
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THE EXPEDITIONS: AN EARLY BIOGRAPHY OF MUḤAMMAD. By Ma'mar Ibn Rāshid. Edited and translated by Sean W. Anthony. Library of Arabic Literature. New York: New York University Press, 2014. Pp. xlv + 372; tables, maps. Cloth, \$40.00; paper \$15.00.

Scholars, students, and general readers alike typically face a conundrum when sitting down to study the earliest biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad. Barring familiarity with classical Arabic, they are left with various renditions of Ibn Isḥāq's expansive *sīra nabawiyya*, but with little else to compare it to in terms of other biographies composed in Arabic during the second/eighth century AH/CE. Thankfully, now there is some relief for those who want to engage with the text without the mediation of broader historical work on early Muslim community. After all, some folks just want to read the text first, then backtrack to cogent analysis composed by others. With this valuable addition to the biographical literature on the Prophet Muḥammad available in English translation, those same readers are finally able to access a different compilation of the Prophet's life. A detailed introduction by the editor and translator outlines the importance of this genre, in particular the challenges incumbent on those invested in searching for the "historical Muḥammad." This fluid translation stands alongside an elegantly displayed Arabic text, both of which are supplemented by insightful notes, and all of which are buttressed by maps, glossaries, timeline, and genealogical table of the Quraysh tribe. These elements combine to form an uncommonly polished piece of

scholarship that should reset the bar for similar efforts to produce translations (bilingual or otherwise) of texts attesting the earliest Muslim efforts at recording and remembering their history. This book is a must for scholars working in the field, and those who would join them.

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Africa

**JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY AND PUBLIC LIFE: HIS SOCIOPOLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE GHANA-
IAN CONTEXT.** By Paul Kwabena Boafo. Accra, Ghana: Asempa Publishers, 2014. Pp. xxii + 335.

Boafo's book unveils the exceptionally positive legacy of the nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society on the West Coast of Africa, a legacy still influencing Ghanaian sociopolitical life today. The WMMS worked tirelessly toward abolishing slavery and the slave trade. Singling out the Wesleyans as unique among nineteenth-century European missionaries is possible only by scrutinizing the life of John Wesley (1703–1791), one of the primary founders of Methodism. To that end, Wesley's family, academic, and religious backgrounds help trace the origins of his key theological doctrines, spirituality, and sociopolitical thinking that undergirds his own anti-slavery advocacy at a time when the Anglican Church and British elite strongly backed the degrading trade. Boafo finds that Wesley rejected Calvinism, as represented by his main dialogue partner, Rev. George Whitefield (1714–1740), a defender of the slave trade and a slaveowner. The Wesleyan doctrine of sociopolitical interference is grounded in a religion of love as “a remedy for social vices.” Hence, “the achievements of the Wesleyan Revival should be evaluated in terms of the moral and ethical transformation which it engendered in individuals who became responsible for the political, social and economic growth of the society.” Most of Wesley's nineteenth-century British and African heirs thus fought slave traders in Britain, the West Indies, and West Africa, while some tried a noninterference approach to avoid persecution. Boafo believes that the antislavery legacy championed by the Afro-British Thomas Birch Freeman (1809–1890) was behind Ghanaian Methodists' witness for moral and societal transformation throughout independence, post-independence, and the democratizing era and hopes to see key areas of public life that are being neglected today being addressed in the future. Wesleyan theology and African Christianity are enriched by this book, which reveals how some Western Christian missionaries were sociopolitically engaged and humane in Africa and how Africans' own participation in abolition could inspire sociopolitical engagement today.

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THE AUDACITY OF DIASPORA MISSIONS: THE ANTIOCH MULTIETHNIC CHURCH-PLANTING MODEL FOR AFRICAN REVERSE MISSIONARIES IN POST-CHRISTENDOM BRITAIN. By Anderson Moyo. Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015. Pp. x + 163.

Moyo's book argues that African Christians living with their cultures in Europe must engage the public square with their faith. Grounded in a qualitative study among Zimbabwean churches in Sheffield, England, Moyo offers an analysis of African Reverse Missionaries using theological, missiological, and anthropological insights that will aid Africans to be productive in the Diaspora. Moyo delves into the history of African migrations into Great Britain, multiculturalism in Europe and Great Britain, factors that prompt Africans to migrate, and the effects of diasporic realities on both home and host societies and churches. His clarion call is grounded in the sociological impossibility of living monoculturally in Europe and Great Britain as well as on the theological problem with monoculturalism, if one is to take seriously the doctrines of *Missio Dei*, Trinity, and the Antiochene multiethnic church model drawn from Acts 11:19–30. Moyo discusses the dying American Homogenous Unit Church planting model and chastises his own diasporic colleagues working “with models and traditions that were contextually appropriate in their homeland but no longer compatible with the new diaspora setting.” He invites them to embrace a model able to address socially constructed divides of race, ethnicity, economic status, and gender found in their host cultures. Moyo's book insists that African Christians must take on the task of re-evangelizing the West by engaging those who are different from them and thus transform their homogenous churches into multiethnic churches. He calls for using creative discernments to become innovative leaders who would lead the way into “telling the big story of God's redemptive activity, particularly when told to a meta-narrative post-modern generation.” Moyo offers a distinctly African classroom voice to the field of anthropology from a socio-theologically engaged diasporic viewpoint among African churches in Britain.

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MUSLIMS BEYOND THE ARAB WORLD: THE ODYSSEY OF 'AJAMĪ AND THE MURDIYYA. By Fallou Ngom. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xxiii + 306. Cloth \$99.00.

Simultaneously ignored and championed, any publication that seriously investigates Ajami—the penning of West African languages in the Arabic script—is noteworthy in and of itself. The culmination of years of work, Ngom's book is an in-depth look at “read, recited and