

pression that the book conveys, however, is not one of an even-tempered scholarship from cover to cover. On the contrary, apart from the handful of authentic authorities, we encounter essays and remarks that have come from the mills of Shi'ite propaganda, and even from revolutionary ideologues. The book's arguments unfold on the basis of an initial thesis that goes unproven, namely, that the Imam Ali's right to rule must be accepted because "both God and his Messenger had so mandated". That is a proposition totally unacceptable to the vast community of Sunnite Muslims, who constitute, after all, the great majority of the faithful.

Nevertheless, the book supplies readers with entire chapters that serve to explain the Shi'ite theses that have fueled the beliefs of that sect for centuries on end. If nothing else, one cannot but be impressed by the persistence of Shi'ite teachings in the face of stone-like opposition coming from the great world of Sunnism.

The book is well-printed, the type is clear, and at the end there is a general index. The reader without background can follow the arguments easily enough even when wading through the occasional morass of Islamic names and technical terms; but when it comes to the givens and constants of Shi'ism, the uninformed reader might lose his footing or simply go astray for the lack of more precise historical information to counter the tendentious interpretations of some of the contributors. Apart from that, the variety of perspectives, from those of cool-headed scholars to those of impassioned revolutionary politicians, together with the historical slant that begins with the early Imams and culminates in our times, gives to this work an importance and value as a storehouse of information on Shi'ite political ideas that no other work nowadays can furnish.

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Chittick, William C.: *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*. (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1989), xxii + 478 pp., \$ 74.50. ISBN 0-88706-884-7.

In recent years, a veritable stream of books on the great Andalusian Sufi Ibn al-ʿArabi has appeared in the English and French languages. The Chodkiewicz family of scholars in France, for example, has actually specialized in the works of the *Shaykh al-Akbar* ("The Most-Great Master") and produced important books in the past few years. Now William Chittick has added to this growing body of literature yet another volume. Suddenly the great Sufi has become the focal point of considerable scholarly enterprise. In the Islamic tradition, he is the embodiment of Sufi intellectuality and spirituality because his immense production created a synthesis of the metaphysical, cosmological, and spiritual doctrines of Islam as seen through the perspective of pure *Tawhid* ("the affirmation of Divine Unity").

In this particular book, Chittick provides English translations of certain key Arabic texts drawn from Ibn al-ʿArabi's great encyclopedia of Sufi esoterism, *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah* ("The Meccan Revelations"). Originally, he had

planned to furnish a comprehensive survey of the eminent Sufi's thinking in all domains. Because of the vast corpus of materials in the *Futuhat*, he decided to confine this first volume to theological, epistemological, and other related matters, while leaving questions of cosmology and the like to a forthcoming volume.

In his introduction, Chittick tells us that he is anxious to preserve as much as possible of the actual thinking of Ibn al-ʿArabi himself and not to foist upon him attitudes he did not at all have. In his translations and his comments throughout the book, Chittick manages to reveal what the *Shaykh al-Akbar* really thought. It comes as something of a shock to learn that the great Sufi had a view of things quite distinct from his later disciples as well as from contemporary Western thinkers who have written about his teachings.

This is a massive work of erudition and translation. Chittick begins it with a general introduction on the life and works of Ibn al-ʿArabi, and then this is followed by eight sections, each containing chapters and subheadings. Theology, ontology, epistemology, hermeneutics, soteriology, and the like—these are the general themes of the sections. Within the section on theology, for instance, there are interesting chapters on the Names of God, on the Divine Essence and the Attributes, and on hierarchy and conflict within the Names.

All in all, Chittick has provided both the specialist and general reader with a remarkable ensemble of translations that fulfill the goal of letting the *Shaykh al-Akbar* speak for himself. Chittick's own comments in the numerous introductions to the sections and chapters are of first-rate importance; they serve to guide the reader and clear the way for Ibn al-ʿArabi's own words in the translated texts. One of the fruits of this methodology is that the reader sees clearly what the actual teachings of the Sufi were. We are surprised to learn that he was a meticulous observer of the Sacred Law of Islam and that he considered this very Law to be an essential element of the Path. We also see that he cannot be classified in any usual philosophical category, such as that of pantheistic monism or philosophical idealism, and the like. His roots in both the Koran and the Hadiths—and therefore in the actual Islamic message itself—are profoundly inextricable.

This is a good-sized book with the text printed in double columns and running to almost five hundred pages. The translations are in very clear and readable English, and it is obvious that Chittick has a firm grasp of his materials. To put together this book, the author must have read thousands of pages from the *Futuhat* and then selected appropriate texts on the varying topics. Toshihiko Izutsu, in his *Sufism and Taoism*, which is a contrastive study of Ibn al-ʿArabi with certain Taoist sages, gives us a particular slant to the writings of the Sufi that reflect the interests of Izutsu. In his *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ʿArabi*, the French scholar Henry Corbin does the same thing and even winds up injecting his own ideas into the teachings of the Sufi. But William Chittick, dissatisfied with the approaches of Izutsu and Corbin, decided to let the Sufi do his own explanations through the English translations. This approach has the advantage of permitting the reader to draw his own conclusions without having to filter the Sufi's ideas through someone else's intellectual perspective.

A book of this sort comes at just the right time. We have heard a good deal of Westernized or modernist Muslims' interpretations of Islam as well as those of the fundamentalist Muslims. When confronted with one of the great medieval

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intellectual authorities, such as Ibn al-ʿArabi, the reader is awed, not only at the depth of the Islamic message, but also at how far the modernists and the fundamentalists have strayed from the straight path.

This was obviously a labor of love on the part of William Chittick: it could not have been written simply as a kind of scholarly duty. For over twenty years, he has been studying the *Futuḥat*, which is generally printed in many volumes with thousands of pages. Not only has he written fine introductions to the many translated texts, but he has likewise provided the reader with a great number of footnotes, and many of these are important explanations and contain information of great relevance to the texts under consideration. Apart from the footnotes to the different chapters, there are also a number of indices. One index traces all of the sources from the *Futuḥat* to the page numbers in Chittick's book; another index has Koranic verses; and still other indices deal with *hadiths*, sayings, and, finally, with names and terms, this last being extensive and of great utility.

We shall have to await the future appearance of his other book on the cosmology of Ibn al-ʿArabi to evaluate properly his scholarly endeavors. But already we can discern several things: the translations are accurate and clear; the explanatory remarks are quite thorough; and the whole work breathes the usual meticulous scholarship and lucidity of thinking that have come to be associated with the writings of William Chittick.

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Cole, J. R. I.: *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989), xiv + 327 pp., \$ 38.00. ISBN 0-520-05641-8.

The book under review describes the development of Shiʿī thought and institutions in the Indian princely state of Awadh from 1722 until the incorporation of India into the British empire after the revolt of 1857. This development is described as concomitant with the establishment of the Shiʿī state in the region. The author devotes much of his attention to the process through which the Shiʿā of Awadh was transformed from a loosely related group of believers into an organized community, with its own religious institutions and communal rituals. One of the important themes running through the book relates to the changes which take place in the religious thought of a community whose members reach positions of political power. Cole analyzes the conflict between the Usuli Shiʿī *ʿulamāʾ*; the Akhbārīs and the Ṣūfīs; and shows how and why the Uṣūlīs succeeded in establishing their predominant position in the state. In addition to other means, this was done by the establishment of a Shiʿī seminary in Lucknow (pp. 204-207) and by setting up of Shiʿī courts in which the Sunnī jurisconsults of Farangī Maḥall were reduced to subordinate positions (pp. 209-213). One of the most fascinating chapters in the book is that which describes the establishment of Shiʿī Friday prayers in Awadh and the religious debate which accompanied this development (pp. 127-137). Then there is an analysis of the relations between the Shiʿīs, the Sunnis and the Hindus in Awadh. In contradistinction to the time