

canvas than can be developed in a study focused largely on the Nawabi ulama. Cole's suggestion that his book should be seen as a critical contribution to an understanding of the general development of Muslim separatism detracts from the substantial contribution it makes as a pathbreaking study of an important group of ulama during a critical transitional period in India's history.

This book's creative, wide-ranging use of sources and lucid argument will serve both historians of modern India and those interested in the broader development of Shi'i Islam.

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The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination, by William C. Chittick. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989. xxii + 381 pages. Notes to p. 413. Bibl. to p. 417. Indices to p. 478. \$74.50 cloth. \$24.50 paper.

Reviewed by Hermann Landolt

The present study is best described, in the author's own words, as "an attempt to lead the reader into Ibn al-Arabi's own universe in a language accessible to non-specialists" (p. xx). Like Professor Chittick's earlier work of a similar nature, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*,¹ the book is essentially an anthology of Sufi thought, Ibn al-Arabi's *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkīya* being selected this time as virtually the exclusive sourcebook. More than 600 passages from this monumental work, which by itself consists of four large volumes in the traditional editions, are translated here in an exemplary fashion and explained by way of a simple running commentary. The material is arranged according to a broad thematic scheme, with the following terms serving as major headings: overview, theology, ontology, epistemology, hermeneutics, soteriology, and consummation. Exhaustive indices,

1. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.

including a useful list of translated passages, help to make this work—devoted to the teaching of one of the most controversial among all Sufi authorities—an extremely valuable tool for further research as well.

In his introduction, Chittick speaks with admiration and gratitude of three "seminal" (p. xix) studies preceding his own: Henry Corbin's *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*,² Toshihiko Izutsu's *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*,³ and the more recent *Le Sceau des saints: prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabi* by Michel Chodkiewicz.⁴ He also makes it clear, however, that he does not wish to adopt the "personal predilections" or "limitations" of either among the former two.

Corbin's "intellectual presence" (p. xxii) may be perceived in the subtitle of the present work, which seems, however, more in line with Izutsu's thematic approach and analysis, except that the text analyzed by Izutsu is the far more "esoteric" *Fusūs al-Hikam*. Chittick also shares with Izutsu in particular a lack of concern for questions of a historical nature. Izutsu partially compensates for this through brilliant insights and clear analysis of thought, while Chittick's presentation is more kaleidoscopic in nature, perhaps due to his overriding concern to convey the message of the *Futūhāt* as faithfully as possible. Yet, in the final analysis, one keeps wondering what that message actually is and why the shaykh became so famous with friends and foes alike. Even if it may be true, as Chittick argues, that there is "no special internal reason" why his followers would have extracted the term *wujūd* from his writings and "placed it at the center of their concerns" (p. xviii), it is nevertheless difficult to see why "a book devoted to Ibn al-Arabi, famous as the great spokesman for the Oneness of Being, should end not with

2. Tr. by R. Mannheim. (Princeton, NJ: Bollingen Series XCI, 1969); original French edition, Paris: Flammarion, 1958.

3. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983; first edition, Tokyo: Keyo University, 1966.

4. Paris: Gallimard, 1986.

Oneness, but with duality, which can never be escaped in our relationship with the One" (p. 357). Perhaps Chittick's forthcoming study on "Rumi and *Wahdat al-Wujūd*" (referred to on p. 382) will provide further discussion of this all-important point.

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LITERATURE

Mother Spring, by Driss Chraïbi, tr. by Hugh Harter. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1989. 118 pages. \$18.00 cloth. \$8.00 paper.

Reviewed by Aida A. Bamia

Having long been preoccupied with two major themes—the situation of North African workers in France and the conflict of civilization—Driss Chraïbi, a prolific Moroccan novelist writing in French, now focuses his attention on a different topic. *Mother Spring* looks closely and critically at the advent of Islam among the Berbers. The novel marks a shift in Chraïbi's interests, a change that began in his preceding book, *The Flutes of Death*.¹

The novel, a quest for the Berber identity traced back to the pre-Islamic period in Morocco, is set on two time levels: in addition to the present, addressed in the epilogue, there is the distant past described in the "First Tide," while the more recent past is the subject of the "Second Tide." The latter is concerned with the Islamization of the Moroccan Berbers under the leadership of Oqba ibn Nafi. The epilogue deals with a theme dear to Chraïbi, as it places the Berbers living in the country in a position of confrontation with the central authority of the government.

Chraïbi's usual sense of humor, with a degree of irony, brings the reader forcefully to the center of the action. The Berbers are portrayed as a united group relying on a

simple weapon—patience—that throughout history has proved efficacious in the face of various foreign invasions. A sample of that killing patience and a studied naivete are revealed in the epilogue. The feigned passivity of the people maddens the government representatives and defeats their efforts at modernizing the Berber village. The epilogue, usually found at the conclusion of a novel, is instead placed by Chraïbi ahead of the main text. This epilogue is slightly misleading, however, as it presages a lighter novel than the following parts prove to be. Eager to ascertain the strong links of the Berbers with the land of the Maghrib, Chraïbi dwells heavily on historical events. All through the book, written in the form of a flashback, there is an ominous echo of the past resounding into the future and predicting it.

The novel is, in a certain way, a vision of the future as suggested by a quotation offered at the beginning of the novel and attributed to the Prophet Muhammad: "Once again Islam will become the stranger it was in the beginning." The apprehension of the novel's main character, Azwaw Ait Yafelman, toward Islam and the Arab conquest resides in the message of the new religion. It aims at the souls of the people, not their land, and hence its dangerous nature. Tireless and shrewd, Azwaw perfects a scheme. He advises his people to convert to Islam instead of opposing the Arab conquest and then to conquer it, patiently from inside. He becomes an imam and makes use of the practice of the *athan* (the call to prayer) to warn his brothers of oncoming dangers. He thereby catches Oqba ibn Nafi and his army in a trap that proves fatal to them.

The novel reveals the dilemma and seemingly contradictory position of the Berbers who profess Islam yet reject the Arabs who brought them the Islamic faith. The novelist balances this situation with the expression of a deep admiration for Oqba, the conqueror of the souls and not of the lands, a flattering description of Islamic principles, a delight in Quranic recitations, an affection for the poetry of the religious texts, and a respect for the unity and discipline of the Arab armies.

1. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1985.