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LIGHTS: THE MESSA JOURNAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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*Lights*  
The  
MESSA  
Journal

FROM THE  
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VOL. 1 ISSUE 3, SPRING 2012





# LIGHTS: THE MESSA JOURNAL

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## *From the desk of the Executive Board:*

Welcome to the Spring 2012 edition of *Lights: The MESSA Journal*.

As a publication of the Middle East Studies Students' Association at the University of Chicago, *Lights* aspires to provide a forum for scholarly work on the Middle East, particularly for those students pursuing a Master's Degree. We are a non-political publication, seeking to foster understanding of the region and its people and offer a space for intellectual exchange. Our undertaking is to promote professional and educational growth among students and faculty through this avenue.

*Lights* adheres to high standards of scholarship, choosing the work that it publishes in consultation with University of Chicago faculty members. All submissions are considered anonymously and evaluated on their scholarly and stylistic merits. We select papers that explore the political, linguistic, historical, and cultural significance of the Middle East; works that transcend limitations across formal cultural and ideological boundaries, with varying aesthetic approaches.

We would like to sincerely thank the Center for Middle Eastern Studies faculty and staff for their support and cooperation with our mission. Special thanks to Dr. Fred M. Donner and Dr. John E. Woods for their insights and valuable time dedicated in guiding the Subcommittee with this publication. Additionally, we are extremely grateful to the authors who submitted their work for this inaugural edition.

*- The Executive Board of MESSA's Subcommittee of Publications*

## *Editorial:*

I was excited when asked to be a peer-reviewer for *Lights*, as it was my first opportunity to participate with the University of Chicago. I was assigned three articles to read, two of which I was to score and one that I needed to read, only to comment on during our discussion of submissions. All of the readers met in a study hall, and, after a short introduction, proceeded straight to discussion. I was blown away by the discussion: everybody had very strong and unique readings of the pieces, and we were all able to communicate that to others effectively. There were a few pieces that were generally agreed that did not fit the standard of the journal. For these, we workshopped them, providing suggestions for improvement, identifying grammatical errors, and suggesting stronger theses that might make the article more argumentatively successful. There were also some pieces that we agreed would go well in the journal, but suffered from small grammatical errors, or perhaps needed a bit of rewording to clarify central arguments. We noted those suggestions to send back to the authors. The final group of papers was great in their original states and were easily agreed upon to be a good fit for the journal.

I was astounded by nearly every part of the process, but the review session stands out as particularly impressive. All of the comments were constructive, well thought-out, and appropriate to the piece. Consensus in the group was easy to reach, and came in a respectful manner. The discourse was academic in nature, well thought-out, and not at all excluding of me as an outsider. My field is Art History and I'm matriculating at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, but if anything, my different perspective only made people listen to me and respect my point of view, as I was able to provide input that was relevant, and academic in nature, but concerned with different ideals.

Serving as a peer-reviewer for *Lights* was a great experience. It let me participate with the University of Chicago, showed me how inclusive of an environment there is at that school, and served to reinforce the longstanding commitment to interdisciplinary study at the university.

Jonathan Cox  
New York University

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# PART I

## *Featured Master's Thesis*

### **Robert Loomis**

Robert Loomis graduated with a Master of Arts from the Center of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago in June 2011. At the University of Chicago he focused his studies on minority populations and nationalism in the late Ottoman Empire. Robert's Master's thesis focuses on the Jewish population in Salonica at the turn of the twentieth century, and compares memoirs and newspaper articles written by various Jewish intellectuals.

Robert also completed a Bachelor of Arts in History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2009, with a focus on the Middle East and Central Asia, and German language and literature. He is currently working at Bilkent University Primary School in Ankara, Turkey as an English teacher.



*Jewish Identity in Salonica*  
*at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*  
By Robert Loomis

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*Introduction*

By the turn of the twentieth century, the city of Salonica had long had one of the most vibrant Jewish communities in the Ottoman world. Located in present day Greece, Salonica was a vital port city and economic hub for the Ottoman Empire that housed a diverse population of Sephardic, Spanish-speaking Jews, Turks, Greeks and other Slavic peoples. As was the case in the rest of the Ottoman Empire, the Jewish population had undergone tremendous changes in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ottoman reforms and the influence of Western philanthropic organizations, such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU), prompted the emergence of a new secular Jewish elite that was largely supportive of Westernization and reformist elements in the Ottoman Empire. Many historians such as Aron Rodrigue, Esther Benbassa, and Sara Stein have examined the birth of these burgeoning intellectual communities connected with the AIU which advocated liberal reform in the Empire and the betterment of the Jewish minority. These groups developed a thriving Ladino and French language press, and many individuals became involved in Ottoman reform movements, such as the Young Turks, both before and after the 1908 Revolution.

Of the many cities of the Ottoman Empire that were heavily influenced by the AIU, Salonica was unique as one of the first urban centers that saw the emergence of Zionism as a significant cultural phenomenon. Proto-Zionists in Salonica in the late 1890's founded organizations such as *Kadima* and printed their own newspapers. The historians Avigdor Levy, Esther Benbassa, Aron Rodrigue, and Rena Molho have traced the evolution of Zionism within the Ottoman Empire and argued that it did not manifest into a political movement until the Young Turk Revolution. By 1908, Jewish leadership in Salonica was divided between those affiliated with the AIU and the newly founded Zionist organizations. Very little attention has been given to the political writings of the Zionist community prior to this period. In the hope of adding greater understanding to the process of Jewish political fragmentation in Salonica and the Ottoman Empire that emerged by 1908, this essay will draw upon memoir and periodical sources from liberal Jews connected with the AIU, early Zionists, and non-Jewish observers, and examine their competing understandings of Jewish identity. I contend that in the decade prior to 1908, the AIU and its affiliates, and early Zionists had begun formulating fundamentally different conceptions of Jewish identity: one stressing the peculiarities of a Sephardic history rooted in an Ottoman context; the other, calling for a revival of the Hebrew language, religiosity, and communication with European Jewry.

There is a dominant narrative of Jewish history within the Ottoman Empire supported by most historians including Avigdor Levy, Bernard Lewis, Aron Rodrigue,

Esther Benbassa, and Sarah Stein. This narrative is described in Avigdor Levy's work, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. He argues the Jewish community transformed drastically over the course of the nineteenth century. During the seventeenth century, the Jews fell behind the Christian populations economically and socially. However, after the *Tanzimat* reforms in the mid-nineteenth century, a Jewish middle class emerged, Jews achieved greater representation in Ottoman state institutions, and the secularly educated intellectual elite participated actively in the Young Turk Movement.

Avigdor Levy grants much of the credit to the Ottoman state in achieving these successes. In his work, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, published in 1994, he writes that in the face of Christian separatist movements, and as a result of the political ideology of Ottomanism among the Turkish elites, the government quickly realized that its interests were linked with the Jewish community.<sup>1</sup> The state strengthened the power of the Jewish leadership and supported the political liberalization of the *millet*.<sup>2</sup> He writes that the Ottomans actively encouraged Jews to attend elite state schools and supported secular education. Levy describes the nineteenth century as a time in which the Jewish community experienced a dramatic cultural and economic revival, due to the efforts of reform-minded members of their own *millet*, Ottoman initiatives, and international organizations, but views the primary impetus behind these changes to be the state's attempt to reform its empire on the basis of an Ottomanist ideology. Although European schools, such as the AIU, played a great role in the revitalization of Ottoman Jewry, "the supportive attitude of the Ottoman authorities insured, in effect, the success of the *Alliance's* education work within the Jewish community."<sup>3</sup>

The historians Aron Rodrigue and Esther Benbassa examine reforms in the Jewish community during the nineteenth and twentieth century in several works, including *The Jews of the Balkans*, *Sephardi Jewry* and *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, and argue that the primary impetus behind the development of a secular Jewish middle class were Francos, or Jews of Italian and French origin, and the AIU. They provide a tremendous contribution, most significantly through their comprehensive analysis of archived sources of the AIU and study of the influence of European philanthropic organizations. Their research centers on the key role played by the Francos and the AIU in the Ottoman-Jewish community. The Francos were a demographic of Jews within the Ottoman Empire whose heritage stems from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jewish merchants from the city of Livorno immigrated to different cities in the Levant and became involved in trade with Tunis. They secured a protected status with the French consulate, which paved the way for the continued immigration of French Jews to the Ottoman Empire. The Francos formed a significant presence in the cities of Aleppo, Izmir, and Salonica.<sup>4</sup> In the nineteenth century many of these Jews were at the forefront of the secular reform movements within the Empire, and despite considerable backlash from the clergy, established modern schools in Salonica, Istanbul, and other urban centers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Avigdor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1991), 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>4</sup> Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Jews of the Balkans* (Cambridge MA: Basil Blackwell Inc. 1995), 46.

<sup>5</sup> Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue *Sephardi Jewry, A History for the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 76-77.

Benbassa and Rodrigue also stress the pivotal role the AIU played in ultimately tipping the balance of power away from the clergy to a new elite of secularly educated Jews by the turn of the twentieth century. The AIU was a philanthropic organization founded in Paris in 1860 with the mandate to “work everywhere for the emancipation and moral progress of the Jews.”<sup>6</sup> They became active in the Ottoman Empire in 1865, opening a school in Volos Greece, and by World War I, had spread to every Jewish community of over 1,000 people.<sup>7</sup> Their schools taught secular subjects and emphasized the study of French and Turkish in order to grant the Jewish population greater possibilities for participation in Ottoman public life.<sup>8</sup> Aron Rodrigue writes that, “the Alliance was genuinely pro-Turkish...It tried to foster patriotism for Turkey in its schools in the Empire.”<sup>9</sup> By World War I they had become so successful that on average thirty five percent of the Jewish population in each city located in modern Turkey had graduated from an AIU school.<sup>10</sup> Rodrigue and Benbassa’s work concerning the Jewish community in the late Ottoman Empire describes the emergence of a new secular elite of Jews that, thanks to the AIU’s curriculum, achieved the requisite knowledge to flourish in Ottoman society, and supported the progressive ideals of the Young Turks as Ottoman citizens. By the first decade of the twentieth century, it was this new middle class that had come to dominate the community’s cultural, political and economic life.

Several scholars who contributed to Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude’s edited edition, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, published in 1982, and Avigdor Levy’s, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, have examined the subject of Jewish attitudes towards the Ottoman state and the Young Turks’ treatment of the Jewish community. The historian Feroz Ahmad discusses the Committee of Union and Progress’s relationship with each non-Muslim group in the article, “Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914.” He argues that the Jews, more than any other Ottoman minority, were involved in the movement. Ahmad contends that the disproportionate representation was due to a confluence of interests between Muslims and Jews. He suggests that particularly in the Balkans, the Jews supported the Young Turks because of the uncertainty of their future if they were to become part of Bulgaria or Greece.<sup>11</sup> This view is advocated in a short article written by Şükrü Hanioğlu, entitled “Jews in the Young Turk Movement to the 1908 Revolution.” He provides an overview of notable Jewish intellectuals who participated in the movement and demonstrates that in Young Turk rhetoric the Jews were frequently not treated as the other religious minorities. For example, he shows that the Young Turk press would often draw comparisons between instances of Turkish and Jewish oppression and praise Jews for their loyalty to the state.<sup>12</sup> These two articles are examples of scholarship, which argue that the Sephardic leadership established

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<sup>6</sup> Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 113.

<sup>7</sup> Benbassa, Rodrigue, *Jews of the Balkans*, 83-84.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>9</sup> Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 140-141.

<sup>10</sup> Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 92.

<sup>11</sup> Feroz Ahmad, “Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society, Vol. 1*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc. 1982), 426.

<sup>12</sup> Şükrü Hanioğlu, “Jews in the Young Turk Movement to the 1908 Revolution,” in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1994), 524.

strong relations with the Ottoman state and the Young Turks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Sarah Abrevaya Stein was among the first scholars to investigate the question of Sephardic attitudes towards the Ottoman state through the usage of Ladino sources. Her work, *Making Jews Modern*, written in 2004, provides a survey of the major themes covered in the Ladino press, focusing especially on the newspaper, *El Tiempo*. Stein argues that like most major newspapers at the turn of the century, *El Tiempo* was connected with members of the AIU and sympathized with the organization's modernizing efforts. She writes that they were largely supportive of the Ottoman state and did not tolerate discussion of Zionism or of separatism.<sup>13</sup> She suggests that in Salonica, the fear of annexation to Greece or Bulgaria due to Christian anti-Semitism influenced a print culture that advocated Ottoman patriotism.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, her work agrees that the dominant stance of Sephardic leaders in Salonica was to support the Young Turk movement due to the lack of an outside nation with which to align and the fear of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

Although the works of Levy, Rodrigue, Benbassa, and Stein have argued that, for the most part, the Ottoman Jewry supported the state and was dominated by a new class of secularly educated Jews affiliated with the AIU, Zionism achieved a significant cultural presence in Salonica and other urban centers by the end of the nineteenth century. Authors such as Stanford J. Shaw, Avigdor Levy, Esther Benbassa, and Rena Molho have explored the topic of Zionism in the Ottoman Empire. In *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, published in 1991, Stanford Shaw argues that from the 1890's through World War I, Zionist organizations gained increased prominence in the Empire, yet were at odds with the local Jewish population.<sup>15</sup> His work provides a comprehensive history of Jewish settlement in Palestine during the late Ottoman period; the Zionist movement, however, is treated as a foreign element rather than one developed organically. He maintains that they were not graciously received by the local population or by the religious hierarchy in Istanbul.<sup>16</sup> As an explanation he writes that with Jewish prosperity under Abdül Hamid II,

These Zionists found little local Jewish support except among recent Ashkenazi immigrants from central and Eastern Europe, and in Salonica...whose Jewish community was far more progressive socially and politically than that of Istanbul, with local Jews organizing and leading the Socialist labor organizations...<sup>17</sup>

Shaw's work is an example of older scholarship that stresses the narrative of Jewish and Ottoman cooperation, and therefore treats Zionism as an alien ideology that could not have been embraced by the local population.

Other scholars such as Avigdor Levy have challenged this point of view arguing that Zionism did indeed have a significant presence in the Ottoman Empire even prior to the

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<sup>13</sup> Sara Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern, the Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 80.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 223.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-226.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 223



Young Turk Revolution. He argues that Zionism existed first as a grassroots cultural movement, devoid of political agenda, and therefore did not contradict the ideals of Ottomanism, or the later Young Turks. He contends that,

Since there were currents within Zionism that stressed a cultural revival, rather than a political one, and since the establishment of a Jewish state was not an imminent possibility, to many Ottoman Jews, as well as to some Young Turk spokesmen, the contradictions between Zionism and Ottomanism did not appear unbridgeable.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore he draws the conclusion that many Jews, “saw Zionism and Ottomanism as complementing each other and...advocated an Ottoman-Zionist alliance.”<sup>19</sup> In Levy’s view, versions of Zionism were present in the Ottoman Empire as early as the nineteenth century, but were not hostile to Ottomanism.

Works written by Esther Benbassa and Rena Molho have complicated Stanford Shaw and Avigdor Levy’s downplaying of Zionism in the Ottoman Empire and provide a systematic periodization. In an article titled, “Zionism and the Politics of Coalitions in the Ottoman Jewish Communities in the Early Twentieth Century,” published in 1992, Benbassa writes that “official Zionism” did not enter the Ottoman Empire until 1908. However, she clarifies this is not to say that there had been no presence of Zionism previous to that and, “in the case of the Turkish Jewish community, it would be more accurate to speak of Zionisms, in the plural, and to make a particular distinction between currents brought in from the outside and local nationalist variants.”<sup>20</sup>

In *The Jews of the Balkans*, published in 1995, Benbassa and Rodrigue trace Zionism’s evolution in the Ottoman Empire and schematize the movement’s history. They argue that, until the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, Zionism did not represent a coherent set of political aims, but rather promoted pan-Jewish sentiments.<sup>21</sup> Beginning in the 1890s, social organizations and newspapers that were sympathetic to Zionism were established in urban centers such as Salonica, Istanbul, and Izmir and were tolerated due to their lack of a political agenda.<sup>22</sup> Although not united as a political front, these groups advocated the instruction of Hebrew language and Jewish religion. Despite this, they found resistance across the Empire from the Ottoman state and entrenched centers of Jewish power, such as the Head Rabbi and the AIU.<sup>23</sup>

Benbassa and Rodrigue argue that the early Zionist associations had a greater degree of success in Salonica due to their cooperation with other groups. In 1908, local Zionists were aided by the appointment of the city’s head Rabbi Jacob Meir who was sympathetic to their cause and by *Die Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*. The *Hilfsverein* was a German Jewish organization that had broken off from the AIU in 1901 and opened schools in Eastern Europe and the Middle East that focused their curriculums on the

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<sup>18</sup> Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 117.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Esther Benbassa, “Zionism and the Politics of Coalitions in the Ottoman Jewish Communities in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry, Community and Leadership*, ed. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1992), 225.

<sup>21</sup> Benbassa and Rodrigue, *The Jews of the Balkans*, 134.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 134-135.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 123-124.

instruction of Hebrew and German.<sup>24</sup> Benbassa writes that by 1908 Salonica was divided between the population that favored the AIU and an alliance between Zionists, the Head Rabbi, the *Hilfsverein*, and the city's *Talmud Torah*, or religious elementary school.<sup>25</sup>

The foundations of the domestic Zionist movement in Salonica are covered in greater detail by the author Rena Molho in her work, *Istanbul and Salonica*. Molho agrees with Benbassa's periodization, namely that Zionism was introduced to the Ottoman Empire in two stages: first, "the cultural oriented [Zionism] towards restoring national cohesion by returning to traditional Jewish values..."; and secondly, "the political, which asserted that national identity could not be secured unless a national homeland was established in Palestine."<sup>26</sup> The first stage of "Cultural Zionism" began in Salonica in the late 1890s with the advent of the Zionist newspaper *El Avenir* in 1897 and the affiliated organization *Kadima*. *Kadima* was formed in 1899 by David Florentin (the chief editor of *El Avenir*), Abraham Gattegno, and Beniko Ben-Yakov, with the goals of developing Hebrew into a modern language and promoting Jewish education.<sup>27</sup> To this end they founded a library of books in Modern Hebrew and religious texts and led classes in Hebrew on the topics of Jewish history, culture, and religion.<sup>28</sup> She writes that *Kadima* quickly garnered seventy members, as many as the opposing *Association d'anciens Éléves de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle*.<sup>29</sup> The organization was at first greeted warmly by the Jewish community, but was soon treated with hostility by the AIU, the religious establishment, and the Ottoman authorities, which were distrustful of its increased promotion of European Zionism.<sup>30</sup>

What emerges from the works of Esther Benbassa and Rena Molho is a picture of Salonican society at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, deeply divided over competing visions of modernity. On one hand, the AIU and those affiliated with it favored assimilation into the Ottoman State, while local Zionist organization, allied with elements of the clergy and the *Hilfsverein*, sought to promote a Jewish identity that could transcend borders. This viewpoint implies that in the case of Salonica, by 1908 Zionism did indeed have a strong cultural presence and that its impact should not be downplayed.

Many authors have focused on the different historical actors behind the economic and cultural vitalization of Ottoman Jewry in the late nineteenth century and the emergence of a new generation of leadership educated by the AIU. The consensus concerning the topic of Zionism is that prior to the Young Turk revolution it was largely absent as a political force, existing only in the form of newspapers and organizations that promoted Jewish cultural identity. However, Benbassa and Molho's descriptions of Salonica's vibrant intellectual life of secular reformers and Zionists alike, as well as the rupture within the community by 1908, suggest that in its infant stages Zionism was a significant cultural phenomenon in the city. Through the analysis of memoir and press sources, I support Benbassa and Molho's contention that by 1908 elites among Salonica's Jewish community had become deeply divided over serious questions within the community concerning their

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<sup>24</sup> Malte Fuhrmann, *Der Traum von Deutschen Orient, Zwei Deutsche Kolonien im Osmanischen Reich* (New York: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2006), 217.

<sup>25</sup> Benbassa and Rodrigue, *The Jews of the Balkans*, 135.

<sup>26</sup> Rena Molho, *Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2005), 165.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-168

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

place within the Ottoman Empire and competing visions of Jewish identity. This paper hopes to shed light on how prior to the Young Turk Revolution the two factions were developing competing ideologies of Jewish identity that would ultimately result in political fragmentation.

### *Leon Sciaky*

This paper will begin with an examination of a memoir left by an upper class Jew who was born in Salonica in 1893, named Leon Sciaky. Sciaky's father was a successful merchant who had attended an AIU school. Sciaky was educated at a prestigious French *lycée* in the company of students of all different ethnic and religious backgrounds. His account illustrates how a member of the Francophone Salonican elite understood Jewish identity. Sciaky's work reflects his struggle to reconcile his identity as a religious minority with his pro-Ottoman and Young Turk world view and expresses Judaism in a manner conducive to Ottoman patriotism in an age of burgeoning nationalism.

As a refugee who was forced to leave the city of his birth during the Balkan Wars, it is certain that Sciaky views his childhood memories through a nostalgic lens. Mourning over what he has lost, he paints an overly positive picture of inter-confessional relations and blames the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the failures of Ottomanism on Christian secessionist groups. It must also be noted that this memoir was written in 1946. While there is no mention of World War II, it is likely that its proximity would cause him to view his own past in a different light. The Ottoman Empire is described as a haven for Jews in comparison to Europe, and it is on the Balkan Christian movements that he places the blame for the outbreaks of violence in the region. These biases indicate his hopes and vision for reform of Ottoman society that never came to fruition and display his political convictions that a multi-ethnic Ottoman state could have been possible. His careful navigation between such ideals and nostalgia for a lost Sephardic culture is an excellent source by which to understand how an educated Sephardic Jew attempted to reconcile his Jewish identity and Ottoman patriotism.

Sciaky's memoir begins with reminiscences of his early childhood that provide short glimpses of daily life in Salonica at the turn of the century. These reflections consistently underscore the city's diversity and the constant mixing of the different populations. This is first evident in the language and dialogue included in the text, which freely exchange Spanish and Turkish vocabulary. Sciaky and his family members mix Turkish and Spanish words such as "*hayde*" and "*señora*."<sup>31</sup> The narrator and his father spoke fluent Turkish in addition to Ladino and French, a characteristic that was not uncommon among the Jewish elite.<sup>32</sup> The expressions and terms used by the characters paint a picture of diversity that the author attempts to convey, suggesting that prior to the Young Turk Revolution the varying religious and linguistic groups may have formed separate communities, yet they lived together in relative peace and had many cultural similarities. While these memories may not display historical realities, they certainly betray his political convictions that the different religious communities in the Ottoman Empire shared a common culture and could have found a way to coexist.

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<sup>31</sup> Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Ottoman Salonica* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), 7-9.

<sup>32</sup> Ilber Ortayli, "Ottomanism and Zionism," in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1994), 529.

Sciaky bolsters this point through fond reminiscences of both Islamic and Jewish religious and musical traditions. The memoir opens with, “*Allahu ekber, Allahu ekber, La’illah illa’Allah*” emanating from a minaret.<sup>33</sup> The narrator is mesmerized by the beauty of the call to prayer and returns home, where he is greeted by the sound of a song; “*decild’a la morena que lla me va ir, la nave ‘sta’n vela y lla va partir*.”<sup>34</sup> This is an example of Sephardic poetry that invokes the image of a ship in reference to the diaspora that was expelled from Spain in 1492 and settled largely in the Ottoman Empire. In the third chapter, Sciaky recalls that his grandmother would often sing such *romanzas*. Although he was unaware of the historic events they referred to, he explains that, “it was as if an unaccountable nostalgia came over me, an ancestral nostalgia which made me sad and happy at the same time.”<sup>35</sup> These accounts of the prominent role that Islamic and Jewish cultural life played in his childhood demonstrate the importance that the history of the diaspora had on his identity. The reader is given the impression that he feels intimately connected to his past as a member of the Ladino speaking community, yet at the same time considers public expressions of Islam to be an integral aspect of his boyhood.

Sciaky’s description of the city’s physical layout advances the notion of interconnectedness between the Sephardic Jews and the Muslim population. Like most Ottoman cities, society was organized according to religious affiliation, and each religious and linguistic community lived in its own quarter. The narrator explains this while recounting the earliest Jewish migrations to Salonica in the late fifteenth century. He writes that, “the Moslems had lived on the slopes of Chaoush Monastir...the Greeks remained in what had formerly been the center of the city...the Spanish Jews...occupied the quarter between the sea wall and the street of the Vardar.”<sup>36</sup> Despite this picture of rigid segregation, Sciaky’s account of daily life consistently breaks down this image. His family lived in the house of a former Ottoman paša in the Turkish neighborhood because of his family’s business ties with the Muslim population.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, in his childhood, the author frequently describes business dealings with Turks, Kurds, and Christians, which creates a sense that the *millets* frequently mixed and were intertwined in the local economy.

In his childhood memories, Sciaky includes descriptions of several non-Jews for whom he had great admiration and who treated him with respect. One example is the imam, Sheikh Hamdi. As a child, Sciaky was intimidated by the imam’s sincere and serious posture, yet comforted by his warm greetings and his generosity. Hamdi was respected by holy men throughout the entire city, not merely by the Muslim population. Sciaky’s grandmother spoke of his healing power, implying that he lent his services to the Jewish community, but more significantly that the Jews would petition for his help.<sup>38</sup> The author includes several stories that support his view that religious differences did not typically lead to sectarian strife and of instances in which the Jewish population would solicit the help of pious individuals outside of their own faith. Anecdotes such as these show that Sciaky did not view the presence of alternative belief systems as a threat to his own community, nor does he recall social divisions to be as rigid as expected. While these memories are certainly exaggerated, and inter-confessional relations could not have been as devoid of conflict as he recalls, his insistence on the cosmopolitan nature of the city in which he was raised

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<sup>33</sup> Sciaky, *Farewell to Ottoman Salonica*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. (Tell my dark-haired one that I am going, The ship has set sail and is leaving.)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.



demonstrates that he does not view his Jewish faith to be in opposition to his parallel identity as a patriotic Ottoman citizen.

The languages, musical traditions, and harmonious inter-communal relations that play a prominent role in Sciaky's memoir are significant as they indicate his vision for Ottoman society. It is important to note that in the course of his memoir the subject of Hebrew or Jewish religious practice is entirely absent. In contrast, his earliest childhood memories are rife with excerpts of Ladino and Turkish, and discussions of the Sephardic diaspora from Spain, and life among the Ottomans. This is not coincidental as it demonstrates that he understood Judaism to be rooted in the Sephardic experience within Ottoman lands. Similarly, relations between Jews and Muslims are overwhelmingly positive. Rather than stressing the distinctiveness of his group, he highlights the elements of Judaism that are specific to Ottoman history, such as the diaspora and the culture that developed in the Ottoman Empire. These memories reflect Sciaky's belief that Jewish identity was not at odds with Ottoman patriotism. His focus on Ladino literary tradition rather than Judaism and the positive relations Jews shared with the other inhabitants of the city makes it clear that his Jewish identity was tied to the Sephardic experiences in the Ottoman Empire.

Sciaky's memoir changes as he begins to describe his education. It becomes more grounded in concrete memories and acquires an increasingly political tone. Sciaky's first school was the *Shalom* school. From his memoir it is unclear what the history of this institution is, but his descriptions indicate that it had been affected by the educational reforms. In contrast to most contemporary schools, "the *Shalom* school had more modern ideas and had abandoned corporal punishment many years before..."<sup>39</sup> The author makes a point that his favorite teacher had been the Ottoman language instructor, a Turk named Selim Effendi. Sciaky devotes much attention to Selim's class for two reasons: First, its inclusion highlights the author's early exposure to literary Turkish, the knowledge of which enables him to connect with the Empire beyond his local community. Secondly, Selim's pedagogical skills are classified as modern and "full of warmth and understanding," in juxtaposition to the traditional style employed by the other teachers that is based on "adherence to rules."<sup>40</sup> This glimpse of his earliest schooling is a turning point in the work, as it displays his first connections to the greater community and again underscores his vision of an Ottoman citizenship that could be shared by all religious groups.

When he turned eleven, Sciaky began attending the French School, *Le Petit Lycée Français*, which had opened in 1904.<sup>41</sup> His memories of his time there display the influence that French thought and language had on the Sephardic elite, as well as on the Christian and Muslim population. One of the author's first comments on the school is the diversity of the students, a group composed of Jews, Europeans, Turks and Christians. He writes, "we all spoke French fluently...none of us had more than casual contact with any children but those of his own nationality [prior to enrolling at this school]."<sup>42</sup> He describes the French school as a point from which students of different backgrounds worked together and shared common aspirations. The students relished the study of the French language and were given time to speak with one another about their customs, a practice that yielded the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

discovery that they had many shared traits.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Sciaky recounts that through his education, “we came to know France and to love her as our cultural mother...the France of the rights of Man, the France of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.”<sup>44</sup> Sciaky’s memories of his time at the *Lycée* display the influence of French liberal ideas on the urban elite population during the final years of Abdul Hamid II’s rule and show his belief that a new manner of social organization and political identity could have been established to unite the different *millets*.

Sciaky’s descriptions of his education highlight his vision for political and social reform. It is clear that his educational background instilled in him a belief in the French ideals of nationhood and the rights of man. As his memoir progresses he laments that such a future was not in store for Turkey. However, his enthusiasm for such liberal ideology makes it clear that he supported such changes in his own country. Sciaky yearned for a liberal multi-ethnic society, rather than the ideal of a Jewish nation.

Sciaky’s ideological underpinnings become clearer as the memoir continues. In the end of his work, he spends a great portion of time recounting the Young Turk Revolution. He glowingly praises the revolutionaries in the CUP for their commitment to constitutionality and their early efforts to include members of all religious and ethnic backgrounds. He writes, “the very earnestness of the men and their unswerving devotion to the cause of freedom could not but convince others of their sincerity. In 1903 the Armenian Committee threw in its lot with the Young Turks.”<sup>45</sup> He places much of the blame for the failures of the CUP on the separatist Christian groups within the empire and the outside interference of European powers. He asks regretfully, “how could the union, however sincerely sought, be attained between such antithetical aims and aspirations?”<sup>46</sup> Sciaky consistently praises the CUP’s attempts to undermine conservative elements of society and lauds them for their aspirations to work with the non-Muslim *millets*.

Sciaky’s treatment of Zionism is also telling of his identity as a Sephardic Jew in the Ottoman Empire. He never addresses the topic explicitly, yet his attitudes concerning many European schools in Salonica is highly disparaging.<sup>47</sup> He states that in addition to the *lycée*, “there were the German Gymnasium, the schools of the Lazarist Brothers, and a few others. But these were clerical in general tone, and too concerned with subtly disseminating sectarian religious teachings.”<sup>48</sup> Though perhaps hypocritical given his own enthusiasm for French culture, Sciaky viewed sectarian institutions to be detrimental to the political future of the Ottoman state because of their emphasis of religious topics and the ethnic separatism they encouraged.

The lack of attention given to Zionism and the absence of any mention of the Hebrew language suggest that Sciaky’s identity was not tied to the Jewish people at large. His childhood memories place his Jewish heritage in a local context that was firmly rooted in the Sephardic experience. His account highlights the *romanzas* and the Ladino language that relate to the shared culture and history of the Ottoman Sephardic population rather

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Fuhrmann, *Der Traum von Deutschen Orient, Zwei Deutsche Kolonien im Osmanischen Reich*, 221.

<sup>48</sup> Sciaky, *Farewell to Ottoman Salonica*, 93.

than the religion of Judaism or the recent concept of a Jewish political entity. He is an example of middle class Sephardic Jews from Salonica who had received a secular, Francophone education and supported assimilation into the reforming Ottoman Empire. Although he never mentions Jewish religious figures or religious practice, he speaks only positively concerning his faith and history as a Jew. His Ottoman patriotism and support for liberal elements of the state cause him to formulate his identity as a Jew in a fundamentally local manner. He views the Ladino language and Sephardic culture and history as a phenomenon that is essentially Ottoman and in no way contradictory to the Young Turks' nation building project.

### *El Avenir*

This essay will now turn to an examination of the Zionist newspaper, *El Avenir*. The two periodicals I will examine are *El Avenir's* second issue, written during Hanukah on December 22, 1897, and the thirteenth issue, released during *Purim* on March 7, 1898, as they are found in Beatrice Schmid's edited collection of Ladino texts, "*Sala de Pasatiempo*": *Textos Judeoespañoles*. As these are early selections published in the nineteenth century while the censor was still in place, they do not promote Jewish separatism, nor do they discuss settlement in Palestine; however their discussion of Judaism, Ottoman, and world politics represents a vision of Ottoman Jewish identity that is fundamentally at odds with Sciaky's. I argue that although the influence of Zionism in the Ottoman Empire has been downplayed prior to the Young Turk Revolution, early Zionist organizations, such as *El Avenir*, could have a profound impact as they offered a new vision of Jewish identity based on the notion of a Jewish nation.

Much concerning the focus of the authors of *El Avenir* can be found in the physical layout of each issue, given what sections are regularly included. The newspaper begins with an editorial that usually addresses a theme connected with recent happenings in the community.<sup>49</sup> Second is *Politica de la Semana*, which details the political events of the week, focusing particularly on the Ottoman Empire and its European allies, as well as the plight of Jews in various European countries. The following section, entitled, *Revista Israelica*, provides further news limited to the Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire and abroad. It follows stories of particular interest to the Jewish community, such as the Dreyfus affair, and in addition may include editorials or essays on religious themes. Finally, the section *En Salonico* confines itself to local news. The order and the space allotted to each section suggest that what topics interested the authors were quite different than those that interested Leon Sciaky. Their publication is more concerned with Jews worldwide and Jewish thought than the local community. This is highlighted by the placement of *En Salonico* at the end of the publication after the discussion of European news.

In contrast to Leon Sciaky's account, the two issues of *El Avenir* spend much time discussing Jewish history and religious tradition outside of a purely Sephardic context and shed light on the religiosity of the city as well as the intellectual vision of the newspaper's writers. The opening articles in both issues, entitled "Hanuká" and "Purim Tov Mevoraj" respectively, provide some details concerning the holiday's celebration and history, but emphasize the centrality of the two holidays to Jews across the world. The theme of unity between all Jews is stressed throughout the article, "Hanuká". It begins with the sentiment, "In life there is no difference between big and small," and it continues to poetically elucidate

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<sup>49</sup> Beatrice Schmid, "*Sala de Pasatiempo*": *Textos Judeoespañoles de Salonica, Impresos entre 1896 y 1916* (Basel: Romanisches Seminar der Universität Basel, 2003), 88.

the idea that in the eyes of God, people of all countries and social statuses are judged equally.<sup>50</sup> The writer then turns to the history of Judaism, connecting the holiday with the shared history of Jews all across the world, and tells how the Jews as a people have suffered together. He writes that the Jewish people have endured much and, “it [the Jewish race] was attacked continuously by its jealous neighbors, and always left victoriously, thanks to their noble qualities and the protection of the Almighty, without whom they wouldn’t have done anything.”<sup>51</sup> This opening advances the notion that Jews across the world have a common history based on their shared persecution.

Following these opening statements, the author declares that, like any people, the Jews have significant anniversaries and holidays that are worthy of celebration. He then gives a short account of the story upon which Hanukah is based, describes the crisis and ultimate salvation from God that the Jews received, and argues that ceremonies such as the lighting of candles are a noble and respectful way to honor Jewish history and pass the story on to younger generations.<sup>52</sup>

The article, “Purim Tov Mevoraj” underscores several of the same themes. The author begins with the statement, “the holiday of salvation and joy grants us a beautiful look at our ancient history. Judaism, always strong and youthful, does not forget its great men. It is this that always protects it and protects it from its anguishes.”<sup>53</sup> Following this call to remember the past, the author recounts the story of Purim. In conclusion, he states that such a tale of oppression of Jews at the hands of the state remains relevant in the modern day. He writes, “Envy and enmity always arm enemies against us who are terrible and powerful.”<sup>54</sup> In addition, he declares that Jews, “were always faithful to the state and king,” despite constant persecution and it is a testament that, “being so persecuted, having suffered so much and continuing to live with such great, natural joy seems strange to those who watch.”<sup>55</sup>

These articles present the political beliefs of the authors as much as they provide general information on the holiday. They take great pains to emphasize the unity between Jews across the world based on their relationship with God and their common history of persecution and perseverance and stress the importance of sharing such events. Such a presentation strengthens the notion that in the modern world, there is a meaningful connection between Jews of all lands. In addition, it is significant to note that, in his discussion of persecution and salvation, there is no explicit mention of the Sephardic Jews’ flight from Spain, a topic that routinely appears in Leon Sciaky’s account and other Sephardic literary works of the twentieth century. This omission may indicate the authors’ deliberate attempt to leave out Jewish traditions specific to Sephardic Jews, instead focusing on themes readily accessible to Jews of the Ottoman Empire as well as Europe.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 98. (En la vida non hay ninguna diferencia entre chico a grande)

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 99. (Ella [la raza judía] fue continuamente atacada de parte sus vecinos celosos, y salió siempre victoriosa, gracia a sus hermosas cualidades y a la protección del Todo-Potente, sin la cuala non se hacía nada.)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 109. (El Purim, la fiesta de la salvación y de la alegría, nos acodra una Hermosa hoja de muestra historia Antigua. El Judaísmo, siempre fuerte y mancebo, non olvida sus grandes hombres. Es esto que lo guardó siempre y lo guarda de sus angustias.)

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 110. (El cello y la enemistad armaron siempre contra nosotros enemigos furiosos y potentes.)

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. (Los jidiós fueron siempre fieles al país y a sus rey...)(Ser tan preseguido, haber tanto sufrido y continuar a vivir con una grande alegría natural, parece extraño a los que examinan...)



A second article in the section, *Revista Yisraelita*, is entitled, “Historica de Hanuká.” This article is a fictional story about a Sephardic family rather than a history of the holiday, as the title suggests. A young boy asks his mother what Hanukah is, to which she is unable to respond. The authors write, “according to her, children should ask, ‘when is Hanukah?’ And the parents should say ‘this day or that’ and the children nearby having washed their hands would say, ‘quick! Let’s go eat some bimuelicos.”<sup>56</sup> The son continues to ask and the mother, exasperated, tells her older son, who is busy studying, to answer his younger brother. The older boy is ashamed and declares,

Mom, with all of my eagerness to volunteer and with all of my education, be sure that I myself do not know why it is proper to celebrate this holiday. Me! Who knows about China, Japan, Madagascar and Timbaktu! Ignoring the history of Hanukah! But what do you expect? We don’t know our language.<sup>57</sup>

This article illuminates *El Avenir*’s mission as well as their perception of the religiosity of the Sephardic community. It implies that the newspaper is not publishing articles on Jewish events only to celebrate days of religious significance, but also as part of a broader initiative to educate the public of their own history. The ignorance of this fictional mother and the response of her oldest son suggest that the writers of *El Avenir* were concerned that the Sephardic community had lost their connection to Judaism and observed the holidays only out of habit. This point is driven home with the son’s comment that the root of the problem is that the Hebrew language is not widely known. It is deemed vital that the first step in connecting with one’s Jewish heritage is the study of Hebrew. This article displays anxiety on the part of the writers that the younger, secularly educated generation, signified by the eldest son who is studying and professes knowledge of the modern world, have become disconnected from Judaism at large.

The writers of *El Avenir* bolster this point through the large portion of “Revista Yisraelita” and “Política de la Semana” that are designated for foreign news. These sections are in the front pages of the publication with local news not appearing until the end of each issue. Two themes that frequently appear are the cultural and social progress of Jews across the world and Jewish persecution, particularly in Eastern Europe. In the issue from December 22, 1897, there are several articles that describe political successes of Jews in Europe and the works of influential Western European Jews. A salient article tells of five youths who have recently graduated from the rabbinical school in Paris. This seems hardly newsworthy and is covered in only four sentences, but it is included to make a statement about Salonica. Two of the recent graduates are designated “our compatriots,” referring to presumably Sephardic Jews from the Ottoman Empire. The writer states, “permit us to note that Judaism in the Orient demands religion and progress. Our compatriots are needed as guides in the march to advancement.”<sup>58</sup> This short inclusion lines up with the previously

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 104. (Según ella los hijicos debían demander, “cúando es Hanuká?” Y los parientes iban responder “tal o tal día,” los niños ajuntarían entre una y otra refregada de mano, “haide ya vamos a comer bimuelicos.”)

Bimuelico is a type of pastry.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. (“Mamá, con toda mi Buena voluntad y con toda mi instrucción, vos aseguro que ni yo conozco por qué es esta fiesta, es propio de maravíar. Yo que sé lo que es la Quina, el Japón, Madagascar y Tombuctú! Iñorar la historia de Hanuká! Ma qué quieres? Nuestra lengua lasón no la conocemos.”)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 99. (Mos permeteremos de acodrarles que el judaísmo en oriente demanda religión y progreso. Muestrós compatriótos tienen menestrer ser guñados en el camino del adelantamiento)

mentioned Hanukah story, rallying for a new generation of religiously educated Jews to bring back knowledge of Judaism to the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire.

Many of the other notifications hold no commentary on the state of affairs in the Ottoman Empire, but are designed to elicit the sense of shared triumph and appreciation for the actions of their co-religionists in Europe. For example, short columns about charity given by the AIU or other philanthropic organizations portray European Jews as benevolently concerned for their Ottoman brethren. In one article, the AIU is reported to have spent 45,000 francs constructing a Talmud Torah school in Izmir. Similarly, they write that Madam la Baronesa de Hirsch donated 35,000 francs for the construction of houses for poor Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup>

Beyond accounts of European generosity, examples of political success are also recorded. It is stated that the parliament in Austria recently passed several favorable articles towards their Jewish population, with one of the articles officially recognizing the Yiddish language. Until 1814, Jewish languages were banned in Austria, and as of 1846, signatures in Yiddish were not recognized, meaning that contracts signed by Jews were considered null and void.<sup>60</sup> In addition, this issue reports on several notable Jewish figures in England, such as the retirement of English statesmen, Sir Saul Semuel, described as “one of the most important English Jews.”<sup>61</sup> These reports of political successes and European Jewish notables grants the readers the feel that their Jewish identity was not limited to the confines of the Ottoman Empire.

This goal is also found in the inclusion of several articles on injustices committed against Jews in Europe. One example found in this issue is a lengthy article on Romania, describing the unfortunate recent set of discriminatory laws aimed against the Jews. They claim that it had recently been passed that Jews could no longer enter government schools nor serve in the military, and instead were required to pay a special tax.<sup>62</sup> The authors write lamentfully that the Jews partake in “all of the penalties and none of the honors.”<sup>63</sup> After these laws were passed, they write that there was much unrest between Jewish merchants and Christian subjects in Bucharest that resulted in the loss of property of many Jews.<sup>64</sup> In addition to this piece of news, the Dreyfus Affair is recounted in detail in both issues. These are examples in which the writers portray the suffering of Jews in Europe as a shared experience.

An essay included at the end of the Purim issue is entitled, “Historiyica de Purim,” and was translated from an English short story. This narrative is a fictional piece similar in style to the aforementioned story of a family celebrating Hanukah. What is unusual is that it is set in England and tells the tale of an upper class British Jew. It describes the day of Miriam Berenski, a duchess who lives in a wealthy neighborhood of London, and travels to a poor Jewish neighborhood in East London to attend Purim service. She is impressed by the beauty of the sermon delivered by a young religious student with whom she had previously gone to school, and at the end of the story they decide to marry despite their differences in

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 101. (Sir Saul Semuel, uno de los más grandes jidiós ingleses)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. (En todas las penas y non están en ninguna de las honores.)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

social class.<sup>65</sup> This story's inclusion highlights several points: First of all, its Western European setting points out the similarities between the European and Sephardic Jews. Secondly, several social issues are involved here that are equally relevant in an Ottoman setting. Issues of class differences and faltering religiosity in London's Jewish community play a large role in the story. Such parallels reflect the newspaper's intentions to promote the idea that Ottoman Jews are not distinct from their co-religionists in Europe and indicate that they deal with the same struggles and communal concerns.

Thus far, it has been argued that the writers of *El Avenir* are responding to what they perceive to be a lack of religiosity and awareness of Jewish culture in Salonica by promoting a Jewish identity that unites European and Ottoman Jews based on shared history, religion, and persecution. However, their treatment of the Ottoman Empire is interesting as they appear to remain loyal patriots and often laud the Ottomans for their favorable treatment of Jews. These attitudes frequently emerge in the covering of political events. One article entitled "Turquía y Japón" describes a recent commercial agreement signed between the two countries. The author consistently refers to "our country" and lists the advantages that this development may have for the empire. They report that a French newspaper declared that this agreement could yield an enormous amount of power to Turkey and France that will certainly catch the notice of Europe.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, he concludes this is somewhat exaggerated, but Ottoman subjects can be comforted to know that, "if we do not have an alliance with Japan, the likes of which they do not have or cannot in fact have in Europe, we can be sure that our relations with this old and young empire are, as the whole world knows, very friendly."<sup>67</sup> This passage indicates that the writers and the Jewish audience are invested in Ottoman world politics, and it shows no hint of dissension or separatism.

The Ottoman Empire is also sometimes treated as a counter example for the persecution of Jews in Europe. The article that describes the recent progress for Jews in Austria finishes with a comparison to the Ottoman Empire. They write, "In Turkey no difference was made at all between the different races and religions. What they are doing today in Austria had already been done a long time ago in the Ottoman Empire." This ending is not particularly pertinent to the story, but comes across as if the writers feel legitimate pride for their country. In this statement, the Ottoman Empire is viewed as a model in its tolerance for Jews and other minorities. However, such flattery can in part be explained by the fact that these articles were published during a time of heavy censorship in the Empire, and such patriotism may represent an act of appeasement. This is apparent in a preface responding to an objectionable article they had previously published, apologizing that, "this error was done on our part unintentionally. We know what we should give to the county and we submit with the greatest care to all points of the regulations."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, although the authors appear to retain a degree of Ottoman patriotism, this may in part be due to the censor and to the political situation of the time. In the late 1890s, there was no

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 119-123.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 96. (Ma si tenemos una alianza con el Japón, el cual non se ocupa ni puede ocuparse de hechos de Evropa, podemos asegurar que musestras relaciones con este viéjo y mancebo imperio, son como todo el mundo lo sabe, muy amigables.)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 105. (Este yero fue hecho de muestra parte sin quiererlo. Conocemos nuestro dober verso el país y mos sotometemos con el más grande cuidado a todos los puntos del regolamento.)

Jewish state, and the Jews of Salonica would have been quite aware of anti-Semitism in the neighboring Balkan countries.<sup>69</sup>

I have argued that as early as 1897, the writers of *El Avenir* propped a fundamentally new and different interpretation of Jewish identity than much of the Sephardic elite in Salonica. Their articles routinely call for a return to the study of Hebrew and the holy texts and inform the readers of news of the Jews of Europe. This focus deliberately promotes an interpretation of Judaism alien to the Sephardic and Ottoman patriotism found in Sciaky's memoir. Their stress of Hebrew and religious traditions provides the groundwork for the possibility of a Jewish identity to be shared by Ottoman and European Jews alike.

### *Conflict in Salonica and the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*

I have argued that in the decade prior to 1908, although Zionism may not have existed as a political force within the Ottoman Empire, different factions of Salonica's Jewish community had begun formulating differing visions of Jewish identity. The accounts of several non-Jewish observers suggest that by the end of the decade these issues had caused substantive division within the city's Jewish community. An Ottoman army officer, Kazim Nami Duru, recounts his time as a student and officer in Salonica between 1890 and 1911. He first moved to the city in order to attend the military secondary school, or *askeri rüştiye*, from which he graduated in 1891. After graduation, he continued his studies at a military college in Manastir; he eventually returned to Salonica, however, where he worked as an officer and later a teacher until 1911.<sup>70</sup> In his account, he endeavors to provide a social background of the city, writing, "now I will attempt to explain to you that beautiful city's geography and social situation from that time."<sup>71</sup>

In regards to the city's Jewish population, Duru describes a community vibrant in cultural life, yet beset with internal divisions. Duru writes, "The Jews in Salonica had two, or three social groups. From these groups, those on the side of the Alliance-Israélite Universelle would gather and did not accept the Zionists."<sup>72</sup> He explains that during his time in the city, Zionism had taken a foothold, much to the chagrin of the AIU and its affiliates, and liberal newspapers, such as *Le Progrès de Salonique*, mounted attacks against the Zionist movement.<sup>73</sup> He states that the clear difference between these two sides was the languages in which the two sides chose to conduct their work: the secularists favored the French language, while the Zionists issued journals in Hebrew.<sup>74</sup> Given his status as an outsider, Duru's account highlights the extent to which the Jewish community was divided over rival ideologies.

Competing visions for Sephardic identity in the final years of the Ottoman Empire were played out at the end of the decade in Salonica by the rivalry that emerged between the

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<sup>69</sup> Stein, *Making Jews Modern, the Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires*, 80.

<sup>70</sup> Kazım Nami Duru, *Arnavutluk ve Makedonya Hatıralarım* (Istanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1959), 31.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. (Şimde size bu güzel şehrin o vakitki coğrafi, sosyal durumlarını anlatmaya çalışacağım.)

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* (Selanikte Musevilerin iki mi, üç mü kulüpleri vardı. Bu kulüplerden birinde (Alyans-İzraelit) taraflıları toplanır, (Siyonist) leri içlerine almazlardı.)

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

AIU and the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*. The *Hilfsverein* was a German philanthropic organization that was founded in 1901 with the aim of providing relief and education to Jews in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. They arrived in Salonica in 1908, establishing a kindergarten and, later, a high school.<sup>75</sup> The organization began as an offshoot from the AIU. In her article, "Conflicts in the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Founding of the Anglo-Jewish Association and die Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden," Zosa Szajkowski traces the emergence of the *Hilfsverein* as an independent organization and argues the divergence occurred primarily as a result of the competition between France and Germany. She writes that as early as 1863, the Berlin Alliance committee found issue with the central committee in Paris, complaining about its lack of appeal to Jews in Germany and its allocation of funds.<sup>76</sup> Rivalry between France and Germany further exacerbated these tensions, and German Jews began to petition for independent leadership, advocating the formation of the *Bund für Deutschen Juden*.<sup>77</sup> Conflicts continued until in 1901, when *Die Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* was formed as a separate organization under the leadership of Professor E. Landau and Dr. Paul Nathan.<sup>78</sup>

The *Hilfsverein's* stated mission mirrored that of the AIU, but its methods and ends ultimately differed greatly. Like the AIU, the *Hilfsverein* was committed to philanthropic work in Germany, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. In a *Festschrift* issued 25 years after the organization's foundation, Dr. Paul Nathan includes an essay describing the *Hilfsverein's* history and mission. He writes that his organization, "promised to direct their chief goal, to bring German language and culture to each of our coreligionists, for whose economic advancement and intellectual development depend on our intellectual life, in order to facilitate their difficult struggle for existence".<sup>79</sup> For the most part, this statement is in accordance with the stated goals of the AIU, namely to promote solidarity among the Jewish people, the emancipation of Jews across the world, and the cultural and social regeneration of the Jews in their respective countries.<sup>80</sup> However the *Hilfsverein's* decision to conduct their mission work in German stands in contrast to the AIU, which emphasized the instruction of French and a "useful" or local language.<sup>81</sup>

More significantly, the *Hilfsverein* placed greater emphasis on the Hebrew language and Jewish religion than the AIU. Nathan writes,

Of course intensive care of Hebrew and religious perspectives will be taken into account in the most conscientious fashion; especially so that the Jews of all lands would have a strong pillar in retaining their religion, which provides a

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<sup>75</sup> Molho, *Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life*, 169.

<sup>76</sup> Zosa Szajkowski, "Conflict in the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Founding of the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Vienna Alliance and the Hilfsverein," *Jewish Social Studies* 19 (1957): 32-33.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Nathan et. al., *Festschrift anlässlich der Feier des 25-jährigen Bestehens des Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, gegründet am 28ten Mai, 1901* (Berlin: Buchdruckerei Marx & Co., 1926), 23. (versprach auch, sein Hauptstreben darauf zu richten, jenen unserer Glaubensgenossen, für deren wirtschaftliches Fortkommen und intellektuelle Entwicklung der Anschluß an unser geistiges Leben das Gebotene sei, deutsche Sprache und deutsche Kultur zu bringen, um ihnen dadurch den harten Kampf ums Dasein zu erleichtern)

<sup>80</sup> Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 22.

<sup>81</sup> Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 71.

strengthening in their belief and simultaneously a fortification of their customary doings.<sup>82</sup>

Nathan's words stress the importance of teaching religious customs and the Hebrew language. In contrast, while Hebrew was often taught at AIU schools, it had a subservient role to French and was restricted to reading religious texts.<sup>83</sup> In addition, the AIU maintained good relations with the Ottoman authorities through their curriculums, which stressed Ottoman patriotism and modernity.<sup>84</sup> This reflects a fundamental difference in mission. Nathan's words call for an awakening of Jewish national identity based on a common language and religious traditions, rather than for social and economic integration.

C.Z. Klötzel was a German teacher at the *Hilfsverein's* school that was opened in Salonica in 1908. In 1920 he published a memoir describing his experiences. From his account, the reader can glean information on the religiosity and politics of the city's Jewish population. The school was run by Jonina Cohen-Chanowitsch, a Russian Jew who joined the *Hilfsverein* and studied with the organization in Jerusalem. After completing her training, she was given an assignment to open a kindergarten in Salonica.<sup>85</sup> Klötzel is highly complimentary of the academic vigor employed by the school and writes that compared to the two hours of instruction in the afternoon that German students receive, "In Salonica the little tots would come scurrying in the early morning hours...and stayed the whole day until sundown."<sup>86</sup> He emphasizes that the education was conducted in Hebrew, and that German, while taught, garnered less interest than Hebrew.<sup>87</sup>

Klötzel underscores the success and righteousness of the *Hilfsverein* by contrasting his school with those opened by the AIU. He summarizes the AIU's history in the Balkans and Ottoman Empire, writing that it was founded by two of the premier Jewish intellectuals in Europe, Cremieru and Sir Moses Montefiore, in order to unify Jews across the world. However, he accuses the organization of having abandoned its initial principles and of having morphed into an arm of French imperialism. He writes that the AIU, "have driven the Jewish youth from their Jewish life and brought them to French culture and assimilation." On the other hand, "the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden carried itself differently in Salonica. It saw that all one should strive to do to the local Jews, is allow them to be led by their own interests and desires."<sup>88</sup> His comparison portrays the AIU's French curriculum as a threat to the wellbeing of Ottoman Jewry, while the German school emerges as the true defender of Sephardic culture.

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<sup>82</sup> Nathan, *Festschrift anlässlich der Feier des 25-jährigen Bestehens des Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, gegründet am 28ten Mai, 1901*, 23. (Selbstverständlich werde intensiver Pflege des Hebräischen und den religiösen Anschauungen auf das allergewissenhafteste Rechnung getragen werden, zumal da die Juden jener Länder in ihrer Religion sich eine so feste Stütze bewahrt hätten, daß eine Stärkung in ihrem Glauben zugleich eine Festigung ihres sittlichen Handelns bedeute)

<sup>83</sup> Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Balkan Jewry*, 84.

<sup>84</sup> Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 114.

<sup>85</sup> C.Z. Klotzel, *In Saloniki* (Berlin: Judischer Verlag, 1920), 71.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 73. (In Salonika aber kamen die kleinen Knirpfe schon zu frühester Morgenstunde...und bleiben den ganzen Tag über bis Sonnenuntergang.)

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 79. (die jüdische Jugend aus ihrem jüdischen Lebenskreis herauszuführen und sie französischer Kultur und damit der Assimilation auszuliefern.) (Der "Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden" aber ging in Salonika anders vor. Er sah ein, daß was man für die dortigen Juden tun wollte, nur von ihren eigenen Interessen und Wünschen geleitet sein dürfe.)

Klötzel's memoir makes it clear that such partisanship concerning the rival schools was not limited to European leadership. The local Jewish community also took great interest in the event. This debate comes to light in his account of local reactions to the opening of the German school. He writes that Jonina Cohen-Chanowitz was met with hostility from much of the city's elite and by the AIU. The local population did not see the point of learning Hebrew and would prefer that, "their children went to the school of the *Alliance Elite Universelle* to learn all types of practical things, and did not want their children, as they said, to all become rabbis."<sup>89</sup> Cohen-Chanowitz found a room to teach in and began to look for students despite growing opposition. Klötzel recounts that she was unable to find any students until the Head Rabbi, Jacob Meir, intervened. In a gesture of goodwill he sent his own nephew as a student to her and supported her publicly. Klötzel states that other "respectable men of the community followed his example."<sup>90</sup>

Despite the fact that the local leaders objected to the German school, Klötzel's memoir indicates that after the initial reaction, many families eagerly enrolled their children. He claims that the institution became wildly popular with the locals as they came to realize that it offered the best education and allowed them to celebrate their Jewish faith. He praises the enthusiasm with which the students learned Hebrew, relating that when he arrived, the students already spoke fluently and were reluctant to learn German. He goes so far as to say, "the students learned very little German from me, but it was necessary for me to learn Hebrew commands...as fast as possible."<sup>91</sup> In addition, he argues that although the AIU already had a firm place in the city when the *Hilfsverein* opened their school, "the population caught on quite quickly, that here a school was built, that matched their own interests and fulfilled their own wishes that they harbored...the boys and girls were proud to be a young 'Hebrew'...and the elders learned Hebrew from the youths."<sup>92</sup> He estimates that there were 100 kindergarteners, and shortly after the kindergarten was opened, a high school followed suit.<sup>93</sup> Although this account is doubtlessly exaggerated, the school's relative success shortly after its opening indicates that for many Jews in the city, the prospect of studying Hebrew and German was attractive.

This conflict underscores the polarized nature of Salonican society. On the one hand, much of the city's elite seemed to have viewed the *Hilfsverein* and its Zionist mission a threat to their community. However, the head rabbi and other notables' public defense for the institute indicates that by 1908 certain social circles within Salonica had become well integrated with Zionist discourse and had taken an interest in learning Hebrew and German, two languages that could better allow them to forge contact with European Jewry.

Klötzel's work highlights the fact that by 1908 much of the city's population, including some of the elites had become interested in Hebrew and religious education. The conflict between the German school and head rabbi against the AIU and much of the local

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 72. (Sie sahen es viel lieber, wenn ihre Kinder in die Schule der "Alliance Israélite Universelle" gingen, wo sie viel Französisch und allerlei praktische Dinge lernten, und wollten nicht, daß ihre Jungen, wie Sie sagten, alle "Rabbonim" werden sollten.)

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 73. (Andere angesehene Männer folgten seinem Beispiel...)

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 76. (Die Kinder lernten daher bei mir sehr wenig Deutsch aber ich war gezwungen, mir möglichst schnell einen genügenden Schatz an hebräischen Befehlen und Scheltworten zuzulegen...)

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 80. (Die jüdische Bevölkerung begriff recht schnell, daß hier ein Schulwerk errichtet würde, das ihren eigenen Bedürfnissen entsprach und Wünsche erfüllte...Die Jungen und Mädels waren sehr stolz darauf, junge Hebräer zu sein...Die Alten lernten von den Jungen Hebräisch.)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 70, 75.



sephardic population is a significant anecdote that points to deeper conflicts within the community. French educated Jewish elites who held high social statuses in the city were threatened by a new locus of competing intellectual thought. In addition, the fact that the head rabbi chose to intervene in such a public manner and the subsequent enrollment of students is a bold statement. The religious hierarchy and a number of observant Jews chose to support an organization that granted their youths an option of learning Hebrew. Klötzel's account indicates that a significant portion of Salonica's Jews supported education that fostered religiosity and enabled them to connect to their co-religionists across the world.

### *Conclusion*

This essay has attempted to add to the ongoing discussion of Jewish identity in the Ottoman Empire in the final decades prior to the First World War. There is a breadth of scholarship that focuses on the liberal transformations that occurred in the Jewish community from the hands of the Ottoman state, local reformers, and European Jewish organizations such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. These changes collectively saw the emergence of a Jewish middle class that was educated in Francophone schools and a new elite of secularly educated Jewish intellectuals and reformers who took active roles in their own community and in the Ottoman state apparatus.

Scholarship has debated the influence and nature of Zionism within the Empire. Earlier works have downplayed its significance, however scholars such as Esther Benbassa and Rena Molho have traced the development of Zionist political organizations and examined the role of Zionism in the development of Sephardic print culture, particularly in the urban centers of Salonica and Istanbul. Salonica emerged in the 1890s as one of the largest centers of Zionist intellectual thought in the Turkish speaking Ottoman world, with the emergence of social organizations and the opening of newspapers such as *El Avenir*. In 1908, the German Zionist organization, *Die Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*, opened an elementary and secondary school in the city and served as an additional source of Zionist ideology and education. Ultimately what had emerged in Salonica in the decade preceding the outbreak of the Balkan Wars was a Jewish society heavily divided between Zionists and the traditional clergy on one side and secularly educated Jews on the other.

This essay has argued in favor of Molho and Benbassa's contention that even prior to the Young Turk Revolution, Zionism had a significant cultural presence in Salonica and offered an alternative understanding of Jewish identity to that which was understood by the majority of the city's Sephardic elite. Through the examination of memoir and press sources, I have sought to understand how Jews of different social groups conceptualized and expressed Judaism while living as religious minorities in a rapidly developing multi-ethnic and multi-religious Empire. Leon Sciaky was born into a middle class family, and having received a secular French education with classmates of Jewish, Turkish, and Christian origin, his political beliefs aligned with the early reformers in the Young Turk movement, and he believed strongly in the possibility of a liberal, multi-ethnic Ottoman nation. Despite this, through the course of his memoir, it is clear that he was proud of his Jewish heritage. In an attempt to reconcile this with his Ottoman patriotism, he emphasizes his identity as a Jew firmly within a local Ottoman context. He recounts to the reader the history of the Sephardic Jews and speaks favorably of his people's experiences under Ottoman rule. In addition, he is nostalgic for the Ladino language and provides several examples of verse and idioms. Leon Sciaky provides an example of how Judaism could be understood and reconciled by secular Jews who supported reform within the Ottoman Empire and hoped to

participate equally as Ottoman subjects.

On the other hand, the authors of *El Avenir* newspaper were early proponents of the Zionist movement within the Ottoman Empire. The selections I have included were written in 1897 and 1898, years in which Zionist groups were not yet politically active and in which the press was controlled rigidly through the censor. Due to this, their newspaper does not promote Zionism in terms of Jewish settlement to Palestine, nor is it explicitly separatist, and perhaps due to the censor, appears favorable to the Ottoman state. However, they display a markedly different understanding of Judaism than that espoused by Sciaky. Rather than celebrating Sephardic culture as practiced in Anatolia and the Balkans, they consistently emphasize the necessity of studying Hebrew and religious texts and spend a greater portion of each issue reporting on events concerning European Jews. As a fledgling newspaper, *El Avenir* situated their identity as Jews within a larger context. They stressed Jewish history as portrayed in the holy texts, informed the reader of Jewish persecution in Eastern Europe, and lauded the accomplishments made by French, German, and British Jews in an attempt to foster a pan-Jewish concept of identity that could extend beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire.

Given the hostile reception to the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* in 1908, it is clear that Zionism carried a significant cultural presence in Salonica by this time. I have attempted to demonstrate that although political mobilization had not yet occurred, there was a fundamental divergence in the Salonican community based on competing visions of Jewish identity. Early Zionist organizations such as *El Avenir* challenged the conception of Jewish identity as something specifically Sephardic. By examining the writings of several Salonican Jews of different political and social backgrounds in the context of an Empire increasingly beset with nationalist movements and liberal, secular reforms, I have found that Judaism remained a central part of Sephardic identity within Salonica but was understood remarkably differently by different social factions within the Jewish community.

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## PART II

## Biographies

### **Naji Bsisu**

Naji Bsisu is a Master of Arts candidate in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago. Previously, he obtained a Bachelor of Sciences in Business Administration from the University of Dayton. In the summer of 2012, he will be attending the Qasid Institute in Amman, Jordan through the Critical Language Scholarship. His research interests are: the Palestinian and Israeli conflict and their domestic politics, Palestinian insurgency movements, counterinsurgency tactics, pan-Arabism as well as democratization in the greater Middle East.

### **Andrew O'Conner**

Andrew O'Connor graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Madison in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in History, along with certificates in Middle Eastern Studies, Religious Studies, and Medieval Studies. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Chicago. He is interested in inter-communal interactions, identity formation, and the history of Christian - Muslim relations in the Middle East, particularly in the context of the Coptic Church in Egypt during the High Middle Ages.

### **John Savage**

John Savage is a US Army Middle East Foreign Area Officer (FAO). He studied Modern Standard Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California and served and traveled extensively in the Middle East, where assignments have included Amman, Jordan and Baghdad, Iraq. He has most recently served as an advisor to the Deputy Commanding General for Operations at the headquarters for US Forces-Iraq in Baghdad from February 2010 - February 2011. Currently he is working toward a master's degree at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

### **Emily Silkaitis**

Emily Martha Silkaitis is a Master of Arts student in the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. She earned her A.A. from the College of DuPage in 2007 and graduated with a B.A. from the University of Richmond, where she studied history. After working for the American Civil War Commission in Richmond, Virginia, Emily decided to pursue graduate studies at the University of Chicago. She is interested in early Islamic history and currently has an affinity for the Saffarids.

### **Vanessa Voss**

Vanessa Voss recently received her Master's Degree in Central Eurasian studies from Indiana University with a specialization in Iran and Afghanistan. She was awarded a previous Master's in Philosophy from the University of Houston, with a focus on aesthetics, Greek philosophy and postmodern theory. She worked for India Studies and Islamic Studies at Indiana University and has worked at the Philosophy department at the University of Houston. She has received multiple FLAS awards for the study of Dari and for the study of Urdu at the University of Wisconsin. She has traveled to Uzbekistan, Greece and India and hopes to spend time in Afghanistan in the coming year. Vanessa's research interests include the ancient history of Greece, India and Persia, the history of music, and the history of religion and gender. Currently she is researching the history of corporeality in ancient Iran.

# *Israeli Domestic Politics and the War in Lebanon*

## By Naji Bsisu

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Has the state of Israel exhibited signs of over-expansionist behavior during its formative years? From its inception in 1947 following the United Nations plan to partition Palestine, Israel's borders have steadily increased. Following multiple conflicts with several of its neighbors, Israel managed to conquer the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, as well as large portions of Lebanon. The key issue will be to determine whether Israel's territorial expansion was largely a response to external stimuli or if it had been orchestrated by elements within its society and government. Israel's invasion and subsequent occupation of Lebanon in 1982 will be used as the test case in this study. A framework is needed in order to determine whether Israel resorted to war purely because of a threat to its national security, or if its actions were due to over-expansion. The relevant conceptual structure will be provided by Jack Snyder,<sup>1</sup> who details his theory on over-expansion and its causes in his book *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (1991).

Per Jack Snyder, the 'myth of empire' is the belief that a nation's security can only be safeguarded through expansion. Moreover, he believes that this myth has been responsible for every case of over-expansion by complex post-industrial powers.<sup>2</sup> Over-expansion occurs when additional territory gained actually decreases a state's security rather than enhancing it. Snyder argues this myth was created by domestic groups in order to justify their expansionist policies.<sup>3</sup> The one key element which differentiates Snyder's theory from others, is that it is based on domestic coalitions that arise and work together to 'hijack' a state's national policy, rather than individual domestic groups seeking to influence a state's behavior. "The crucial element in this explanation, however, lies not with the power and persuasiveness of these groups taken separately, but with the process by which they form coalitions of several such groups and with how these coalitions justify their policies."<sup>4</sup> Snyder describes these groups, which have joined together, as log-rolled coalitions. Individually, each group would be unable to gain control over national policy, so they seek out other groups in which they can band with in order to create a coalition strong enough to take power. Each group in the coalition is willing to concede certain aspects of its policy to ensure their most valuable goal is met. Snyder further explains that by trading favors, "each group gets what it wants most and costs are diffused to society through taxes imposed by the state."<sup>5</sup> The second critical

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<sup>1</sup> This paper utilizes Jack Snyder's work *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, in order to determine if Israel has been systematically engaged in overexpansion. Snyder's work seeks to explain why certain states engage in this type of behavior. This paper applies his theory to Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon to determine if this was a case of overexpansion or a legitimate response to external stimuli.

<sup>2</sup> Jack L Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



aspect of this arrangement lies in the newly empowered log-rolled coalition being able to utilize the state's inherent propaganda resources. "Selling myths is easier for coalition leaders than for individual interest groups, because the instruments and credibility of the state can be exploited for the task and because self-serving strategic arguments become less traceable to the parochial interests that benefit from them."<sup>6</sup>

With this understanding of how log-rolled coalitions can take control of a state's national policy and propaganda resources, one may better understand how it can lead to other factors which result in over-expansion. States have a tendency to believe that expansion will guarantee their safety for multiple reasons. One justification for expansion can be best described by the cumulative gains and losses theory, which states that expansion increases power because it adds resources, both human and material, which can be used in further competition against other states. On the other side of this theory is the belief that losses in the periphery can easily bring a collapse of power at the core.<sup>7</sup> The second rationale lies with the old adage: the best defense is a good offense. Striking first will force the opponent to fight at the time and place of the attacker's choosing, giving the aggressor the advantage. Additionally, if a rival's power is increasing relatively, it may be beneficial to initiate hostilities while still possessing an advantage.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the third justification refers to bandwagoning and the concept of paper tigers. Bandwagoning refers to the idea that neighboring states will choose to bandwagon with the most aggressive state, rather than trying to balance against its aggression. The paper tiger can be best described as an unrealistic image of the one's adversary: "the main opponent is seen as an implacable foe posing an immense security threat, yet at the same time as too weak, inert, or irresolute to combat aggressive countermeasures."<sup>9</sup> Thus the combination of a political log-rolled coalition with expansionist ideals, and the belief that expansion—or sometimes merely the necessary potential for expansion—will allow them to achieve their most sought-after goals can lead a state to engage in over-expansionist behavior.

In order to determine if Israel was acting as an over-expansionist state during its 1982 invasion and subsequent occupation of Lebanon, it must be determined whether or not a log-rolled coalition was directing national policy. The definitive event was Israel's 1977 legislative elections. The Likud party, led by Menachem Begin, came to power, marking the first time in Israel's history that a right-wing party gained the most votes. As Likud did not have enough seats in Israel's proportionate representation parliamentary system, however, it needed to form a coalition with a few other parties to gain the necessary votes. Likud chose to align itself with the National Religious Party, Agudat Israel, and Shlomtzion. This coalition represented a mix of right-wing and ultra-religious parties that came together to form Israel's new government. "Numerically it was a weak government with a wafer-thin majority. But what it lacked in numerical strength, it more than made up for in political cohesion and ideological fervor."<sup>10</sup> Menachem Begin was a former leader of the armed group, Irgun, which was a militant Zionist organization based on the teaching of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who said, "every Jew had the right to enter Palestine; only active retaliation would deter the Arabs; only Jewish armed force would ensure the Jewish state."<sup>11</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 389.

<sup>11</sup> Howard Morley Sachar, *A History of Israel: from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, (New York: Knopf, 2007), 265-66.

addition to this militant right-wing ideology, the Likud party was a major supporter of the settler movement, wishing to see Israelis settle in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.<sup>12</sup> The National Religious Party was a religious Zionist movement which aspired to maintain the Jewish and democratic nature of the state. This meant the fewer non-Jewish persons within the Israeli state, the more likely the state would remain both democratic and Jewish. Agudat Israel represented the Haredi population within Israel. Haredi Jews represent one of the most conservative forms of Orthodox Judaism, and are commonly called ultra-Orthodox. Their main political goals include funding for *yeshivas* and community institutions, as well as legislation regarding the observation of Shabbat and Kosher dietary laws. To the other parties in the coalition, these were minor issues to acquiesce to in order to obtain the necessary amount of seats for a majority government. Finally, Shlomtzion was a small right-wing group, led by Ariel Sharon. They eventually merged with Likud, but Sharon was able to use this bargaining chip to get himself placed as the defense minister in Menachem Begin's second cabinet. Sharon was described as, "A cynical, headstrong executor who regarded the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) as his personal tool for obtaining sweeping achievements—and not necessarily defensive ones—and a minister prepared to stake the national interest on his struggle for power."<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these political parties, the Mossad, the IDF, and the Israeli press all had parts to play in the log-rolled coalition. The Mossad, which is Israel's intelligence collection and covert operations unit, was largely responsible for establishing and championing Israel's ties with Bashir Gemayal in Lebanon, which will be discussed in much further detail when considering Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Senior members of the IDF, while not completely engaged with the coalition, tacitly went along with it by not revealing the discrepancies in the myths created by the log-rolled coalition. Through their military training and experience, high-ranking military commanders knew the battle plans they were being asked to put together indicated a much larger operation than what was being discussed publicly.<sup>14</sup> Defense minister Sharon might have been able to mislead those in the government and the public sphere that his coalition's aims in Lebanon were modest and would not require confronting the Syrian forces or entering Beirut, but he could not continue to operate without the cooperation of the IDF's senior commanders.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the Israeli press, similar to the IDF, played its part by going along with the accepted rationale provided by the log-rolled coalition in turn for increased exposure and profit. "In light of the early victories in the field, many of the papers abandoned themselves to jingoistic raptures and a festival of gloating at the enemy's undoing."<sup>16</sup> All these groups—whether actively working towards an expansionist national policy, or merely standing aside and de facto condoning the actions—set the course for Israeli expansion in the name of national security.

Before transitioning into the log-rolled coalition's instigation of the Lebanon war, a quick caveat needs to be made regarding the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed by Begin and Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat in 1979. This peace treaty resulted in mutual recognition, a cessation of the state of war that had existed since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, complete withdrawal by Israel of its armed forces and settlers from the Sinai Peninsula, which Israel had captured in the 1967 Six-Day war, as well as free passage for Israeli ships

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<sup>12</sup> Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians the Politics of Expansion* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 120.

<sup>13</sup> Zeev Schiff, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

through the Suez Canal. Some will be quick to point out that signing peace treaties and ceding territory to a potential bordering rival is not indicative of an expansionist regime. It is however, imperative to understand that log-rolled coalitions leading to expansionist regimes do not merely expand for expansion's sake. They have clearly defined goals, albeit potentially obscure ones, and seek to achieve these goals in the most rational and logical way possible. The crux of the matter is that the Sinai Peninsula was not seen as an essential part of the future land of Israel as envisioned by the log-rolled coalition. Their focus and energy was to be spent on Greater Israel, which included the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Solving the problem of the PLO and installing a Maronite regime in Lebanon was the answer they were looking for, and if ceding the Sinai Peninsula and making peace with Egypt would allow them to achieve this goal, then that is what they were prepared to do that. The Likud government and the coalition it had formed became more aggressive in its attitude towards the Arab world following the conclusion of this peace treaty. Since they had secured one of their borders, they could now consolidate their control of the West Bank and act with impunity towards the rest of the Arab world.<sup>17</sup>

The 1982 invasion and occupation of Lebanon was the culmination of an expansionist policy adopted by the newly empowered log-rolled coalition. There were multiple prior incidents indicating this shift in ideology, through which Israel would earn, "the reputation of a country that indulged in overkill to achieve objectives far beyond its legitimate security needs."<sup>18</sup> Prior to Begin's log-rolled coalition, the Israelis had prided themselves on the belief that they had the most moral army in the world, and their military prowess was only to be used in wars of no choice. This was a "radical deviation from a security doctrine on which there had been national consensus since the founding of the state—that the Israel Defense Forces were mandated only to defend Israel and were not to be used for the sake of installing or toppling governments."<sup>19</sup> One of the first harbingers of change was Israel's attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor on June 7, 1981. Using weaponry obtained from the United States, with the explicit condition that they were for self-defense only, Israel's strike was described as "an act of war, in clear violation of international law."<sup>20</sup> Barely a month later Israel struck again; this time their targets were PLO buildings in Lebanon. On July 17 and 18, "the Israelis again used planes we [The US] had supplied to bomb apartment areas of Beirut on the asserted excuse of knocking out a PLO headquarters. Those raids killed over 100 and wounded some 600, most of whom were civilians."<sup>21</sup> Finally, in December 1981, Israel formally annexed the Golan Heights, which they had captured during the 1967 war with Syria, forcing even its staunchest ally, the United States, to condemn this action through a United Nations Security Council resolution. One of the reasons Begin decided to annex the Golan Heights was to pacify the Israeli right and the members of his log-rolled coalition.<sup>22</sup> The next phase of Israeli expansion, however, would dwarf these initial actions.

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<sup>17</sup> Avi Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: the Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, 1st U.S. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 418.

<sup>18</sup> Schiff, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 218.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> George W Ball, *Error and Betrayal in Lebanon: an Analysis of Israel's Invasion of Lebanon and the Implications for U.S.-Israeli Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Middle East Peace, 1984), 33.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 394.

Almost as soon as he became defense minister, Sharon began to put together his grand strategy regarding Lebanon, which bordered Israel from the north.<sup>23</sup> This strategy included elements which were attractive to each member of the coalition, ensuring they would throw their full weight behind its realization. The plan was as follows:

The first aim of Sharon's plan was to destroy the PLO's military infrastructure in Lebanon and to undermine it as a political organization. The second aim was to establish a new political order in Lebanon by helping Israel's Maronite friends, headed by Bashir Gemayel, to form a government that would proceed to sign a peace treaty with Israel. For this to be possible, it was necessary, third, to expel the Syrian forces from Lebanon or at least to weaken seriously the Syrian presence there. In Sharon's big plan, the war in Lebanon was intended to transform the situation not only in Lebanon but in the whole Middle East. The destruction of the PLO would break the backbone of Palestinian nationalism and facilitate the absorption of the West Bank into Greater Israel. The resulting influx of Palestinians from Lebanon and the West Bank into Jordan would eventually sweep away the Hashemite monarchy and transform the East Bank into a Palestinian state. Sharon reasoned that Jordan's conversion into a Palestinian state would end international pressure on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank.<sup>24</sup>

It would have been impossible for Begin, Sharon and the other parts of the coalition to get approval for this type of grandiose, expansionist, national plan. They needed to create a myth revolving around protecting Israel's national security. The result was Operation Peace for Galilee. This was, "an operation designed to clear the PLO away from Israel's northern border. It was simple, modest, and logical - something all Israelis, labor and Likud alike, would support. They would discover the full agenda later."<sup>25</sup> Nothing united the Israelis like the threat, whether real or imagined, of Palestinian aggression.

Each group within the log-rolled coalition had something to gain by partaking in this grand strategy. Likud and the other political parties within the coalition would be able to eliminate the PLO, allowing for the absorption of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem into their polity with minimal resistance. "Once the PLO had been crushed in its stronghold in Lebanon, so the argument ran, all effective Palestinian resistance to the imposition of permanent Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza would come to an end."<sup>26</sup> Additionally, through their alliance with the Maronites and the Phalangist leader Bashir Gemayel, they would be able to secure their northern border. The Mossad had invested a lot of time and effort into cultivating a relationship with Bashir Gemayal, the young and charismatic leader of the Phalangist party, which was the strongest Maronite faction in Lebanon. They were convinced that propping up Gemayel's regime was the most effective way to solve Israel's security problems in the north.<sup>27</sup> Senior leadership within the IDF, while not completely ingrained into the log-rolled coalition, gave its tacit support by not revealing the true nature of the invasion (which they easily could have done due to their knowledge of the plans presented to them). Finally, the Israeli press, which had an obligation to seek and report the truth, fell victim to the sensationalist stories they could produce by going along with this scheme.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 396.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas L Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989), 145.

<sup>26</sup> Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 422.

<sup>27</sup> Schiff, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 236.

In order to determine the amount of mythmaking going on, the extent of the threat posed to Israel's national security by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) needs to be ascertained. The PLO is a political and, at the time, paramilitary organization which was anointed the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Following their ouster from Jordan during the events of Black September, the PLO leadership and their followers made their new home in Lebanon. The leadership, which included Yasser Arafat, set up their headquarters in West Beirut, among the city's Muslim population, while the armed paramilitary wings were located throughout the country with a heavy presence in the south. The PLO had no air force or navy to speak of, and was only gradually shifting from a guerrilla fighting force to a professional standing army. They had a limited collection of heavy artillery and rocket launchers at their disposal, with enough range to hit the northern settlements inside Israel.<sup>28</sup> While their military power was not an existential threat to the state of Israel, they were able to strike fear into the population through artillery and rocket bombardments as well as through cross-border incursions which led to attacks within Israel. Senior civilian and military leadership, however, knew of the limited military threat the PLO actually possessed.

The strategists were not seriously concerned at the PLO's military power—Israel possesses thirty times the military force that the PLO could possibly improvise. Nor did all of them really want the PLO to stop its terrorist activities. Extremists in the government found those activities politically useful, since they served to dehumanize the PLO and, by association, all Palestinians—to make them appear to the world as, to use Prime Minister Begin's words, 'beasts walking on two legs.'<sup>29</sup>

The painting of the PLO as a major threat, and one that was hell-bent on the destruction of the Israeli state, was all part of the mythmaking needed to justify the log-rolled coalition's expansionist national policy. What they needed now was a trigger event to put their plans into action. In order to facilitate the process, Begin approved a request from his cabinet to renew bombings of PLO positions in southern Lebanon. The purpose of the attacks was political, and the long-range goal was to initiate a controlled escalation of tension which would ultimately trigger a war.<sup>30</sup> Arafat, knowing that an escalation with Israel would lead to a war he would ultimately lose, showed restraint, and prevented Begin's coalition from obtaining the inciting incident they so craved. Ultimately, however, it was out of Arafat's hands. The sought-after incident was provided by Abu Nidal's terrorist organization which carried out an attack on Israeli Ambassador, Shlomo Argov. Although the attempt on his life failed, it was just the type of incident needed to show the Israeli public that the PLO in Lebanon had to be dealt with. The issue that Abu Nidal's organization was not part of the PLO, in fact they were mortal enemies, did not matter to the coalition. When this point was raised, Begin responded with, "They're all PLO" while his chief of staff said, "Abu Nidal, Abu Shmidal, we have to strike at the PLO!"<sup>31</sup>

The coalition finally had the excuse to launch their expansionist foray into Lebanon. Sharon's grand design, which had come to be known as Operation Big Pines, was summarily rejected the one time it had been presented to the cabinet on December 20, 1981.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ball, *Error and Betrayal in Lebanon*, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>30</sup> Schiff, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 35.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 97-98.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 47-48.

Sharon knew that they would not be able to get approval for a war which included making Bashir Gemayel president of Lebanon, or one that would include taking on the Syrian forces. Instead, he knew the only way to get approval would be to present the goal as the elimination of terrorists within the southern parts of Lebanon.<sup>33</sup> They told people what they wanted to hear in order to get the green light to put their plan into action. The stated goal of the Invasion would be to push the PLO artillery and rocket launchers forty kilometers (twenty-five miles) north of the Israeli border, placing Israel's northernmost settlements out of striking range.

Nothing was said or even intimated about the IDF advancing beyond this forty-kilometer limit. No one suggested that the ground forces would strive to link up with the Phalange troops in the Christian enclave around Beirut. Nothing resembling the more ambitious version of Operation Pines was approved.<sup>34</sup>

The coalition was able to manipulate public sentiment and play off their fears, using the myths they had created, in order to begin the process that would enable them to complete their grand design in Lebanon.

Unfortunately for Begin and his coalition, the grand design turned out to be a grand failure. The IDF was able to utilize the element of surprise, their superior training, and technological advantages to garner some initial success, but things soon began to fall apart. There were multiple delays in the IDF's push to Beirut. Some were due to fuel shortages while others were because of enemy resistance, which was stronger than expected. Unable to quickly land a knockout blow to either the PLO or the Syrian forces, Israel was forced by the international community to accept a ceasefire before they could accomplish their goals. Another aspect, which severely limited their gains, was the unwillingness of Bashir Gemayel's Phalangist militia to engage the PLO and push them out of West Beirut. Ultimately, the final straw came when pro-Syrian elements managed to assassinate Bashir Gemayel, who had just recently been elected President of Lebanon. This forced the IDF to enter West Beirut and attempt to finish the job themselves. The IDF's presence in Beirut marked the final piece of proof necessary to show that this invasion was not a limited military action, but rather a runaway war to conquer an Arab capital.<sup>35</sup> The Phalangist militia, looking to avenge their fallen leader, decided to enter the fray by cleaning out Palestinian 'terrorists' from the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. The Phalangists were given entry by the IDF, which encircled the camps to keep the population inside. What occurred subsequently can only be described as a massacre, as a revenge-minded militia vented their fury on anyone that stood in their path—man, women or child. These events created a huge uproar by the Israeli people, who finally caught on to the true nature of this escapade. Labor, which was Likud's primary rival and led the opposition within the Knesset, finally began to protest.

Only when the war started to go sour, drag on, and become unpopular did the Labor leaders vociferously protest that they favored only a 25-mile-deep invasion—not a blitzkrieg all the way to Beirut—and that no one had told them about the war's "grand designs." Had those grand designs worked, however, Rabin and others would have cheered

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 181.

them along as well, because those designs, too, were based on myths and longings which ran as deep into the Labor Party as into the Likud.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, these protests and newfound objections did not bring an end to the war. Israel continued to occupy the area for nearly two more years, only to finally pull out in April 1985. They managed to retain a narrow security belt along the southern border until 2000. All in all, the log-rolled coalition's policy was a massive failure, inasmuch that it achieved that which it did not seek to: it made Israeli citizens less secure.

One example of this was evident in the fact that Syrian forces in Lebanon were more entrenched than ever, and even managed to turn some of their military defeats into positives by convincing the Soviet Union to send them more advanced weaponry and radar systems. Along with these shipments came military trainers and advisors, bringing a Soviet presence to Israel's border. Bashir Gemayel's assassination, and his brother Amin Gemayel's failure to unite the Maronites and establish control over the state of Lebanon also had dire consequences for Israel. Most notably, it allowed for the ascension of Shiite influence, and the creation of the militant organization Hezbollah—which created another threat to Israel along its northern border. Finally, although the PLO was forced out of Lebanon after suffering a resounding military defeat, they managed to score a significant political victory. They were able to reinsert the Palestinian cause into the international sphere, providing much needed exposure to their plight as a people without a land.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that Israel's 1982 invasion and ensuing occupation of Lebanon was a case of over-expansion, due to the efforts of a log-rolled coalition. The process was put into motion beginning with the 1977 legislative election, which brought to power a coalition of right-wing and ultra-religious groups. These groups banded together, and with the help of the Mossad, the press, and certain members of the IDF, they managed to push forward an aggressive expansionist national policy in the name of national security. The result was "a war for whose meager gains Israel has paid an enormous price that has yet to be altogether reckoned; a war whose defensive rationale belied far-reaching political aims and an unconsciously myopic policy."<sup>37</sup> Politically, this ended Begin's career as he tendered his resignation on August 20, 1983. The 1984 Israeli Legislative election saw each party which played a part in the log-rolled coalition, lose seats. Likud dropped two seats for a total of 41, behind their rival, the Alignment party, with Shimon Peres taking over as Prime Minister. The National Religious party dropped from twelve seats to four; Agudat Yisrael dropped from four seats to two, and Shlomotzion had ceased to exist after its merger with Likud. Fortunately for the State of Israel, the log-rolled coalition was able to recognize that their grand design was a failure and they needed to end their expansionist national policy for the benefit of their state, avoiding the fate suffered by others who failed to recognize the error.

Although it has been demonstrated that a log-rolled coalition was brought together in Israel, one which was able to hijack national policy into self-serving expansionist actions, other potential explanations must be explored. In order to do so, Realist international theory will be used in an attempt to explain Israel's actions leading up to, and culminating in, its invasion and occupation of Lebanon. Realist international theory is based on the premise that the world system is in a constant state of anarchy. Essentially, there is no higher body to turn to for justice and equality; each state in the international sphere must look out for its

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<sup>36</sup> Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 131.

<sup>37</sup> Schiff, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 301.



own interests. “Realism contends that the costs and risks of aggression may be unavoidable in an anarchic international environment that forces states to use warlike means to guarantee their safety.”<sup>38</sup> Although, history has shown that the success rate of expansion leading to security is fairly low, it may be rational due to competitive interactions between states in an anarchic world. In the case of Israel, one could argue that invading Lebanon to neutralize the PLO, push back the Syrians, and prop up a friendly government, may have been rational. A realist would argue that Israel found itself in a security dilemma, and due to its superior military strength and its ability to utilize its offensive advantage, pushing into Lebanon and the elimination of the PLO seemed to be plausible and realistic choices. There are several fallacies with this type of logic, however. Initially, in order for the realist argument to make sense, one would have to accept the decision makers’ reasoning for expansion, in that it is only carried out in the promotion of national security. This has already been proven to be false, as neither the PLO, nor the Syrian garrison in Lebanon posed any existential threat to the state of Israel. Additionally, Israeli decision makers fell victim to the problem of viewing their adversary as a paper tiger. The coalitions’ thinking was along the lines of the Syrian forces being a threat needing to be pushed out of Lebanon, while at the same time, believing as soon as the IDF invaded the Syrians, there would be a hasty retreat. Finally, this type of reasoning violates one of the key tenants of realist theory. Namely, realist theory shows how states tend to balance against aggressive and expansionist states, not bandwagon as Israel expected them to do in Lebanon. This was most notably illustrated by the reaction Bashir Gemayel and his successor Amin Gemayel were afforded by the various other religious and political factions within Lebanon. Instead of bandwagoning with the Israeli-supported Maronite faction, pro-Syrian elements, the Druze, and multiple Sunni and Shiite factions all opposed them, preventing them from establishing Maronite control over Lebanon.

In chronicling Israel’s progression—from the creation of its log-rolled coalition in the 1977 legislative elections, to its subsequent change to a more aggressive and expansionist national policy—it has been illustrated how this process can take shape. Israeli over-expansion was caused by a log-rolling process by various political and civilian groups banding together, with each willing to sacrifice certain aspects of their own goals and ideology in order to achieve what was most dear to them. In this case, it was the newly elected Likud party which brought together a coalition of right-wing and ultra-religious groups, while managing to include the Mossad, IDF and the Israeli press. Each group within the coalition had their own separate agendas; however, knowing that by themselves they would likely be unable to attain these goals, they turned to each other to increase their chances of achieving their most prized goal. The reason for the coalition’s initial success was that their goals were not mutually exclusive, and they could agree on the path moving forward. The coalition was able to utilize its place in the leadership of the state, as well as the state’s propaganda resources, to disseminate the myth needed to gain acceptance for their new strategy. The myth, as is usually the case, was that the new policy was necessary to secure the state’s safety, effectively playing on the fears of the Israeli population. Ultimately, what transpired was a log-rolled coalition that could have embarked on a risky and far-reaching aggressive national policy, which, if successful, would have resulted in great gains, while passing on most of the costs to the civilian population. While it may have been a low-risk, high-reward strategy for those within the coalition, it was a high-risk, low reward strategy for the citizenry. It is for this very reason that log-rolled coalitions and their expansionist policies need to be studied further: in order to recognize in the process of their occurrence, in order to prevent their negative consequences.

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<sup>38</sup> Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 10.

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*The Popular Psyche and Representations of the  
'Religious Other' in Medieval Sīras*  
By Andrew J. O'Connor

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"Cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be."  
—Edward Said

This essay is an exploration of select medieval Arabic folk epics (*sīra*, plural *siyar*) and how they approach representations of 'the religious other'. Scholars have frequently hunted for depictions of the 'religious other' in medieval apologetic, theological, and political tracts, but these were all penned by the bodies of the educated elites and members of the upper strata of society. The views held by the ordinary masses are much more elusive, and here popular literature and folk tales may provide the best clues. Indeed the chronicler Ibn Kathir (d. 1373) wrote that this body of literature was "popular among the public, the ignorant, and the unwise", the contents of which were fabricated nonsense and silly invention.<sup>1</sup> Of course, folk epics cannot be said to be completely indicative of the views of the 'regular folk', but they nonetheless contain elements of popular imagination that would have been promulgated by these stories and thus disseminated amongst large audiences. Consequently these literary images are important because of how widespread they would have become and the way in which they reveal a portrait of the popular psyche. This in turn prompts us to ask: what sorts of images of the 'religious other' (namely Christians and Jews) were being circulated among the audiences and readers of these epics? How much diversity existed, and what general conclusions about these others did the epics encourage? We will here examine in-depth a handful of these epics and the depictions therein, paying particular attention to the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, and the *Sīrat 'Antar*.

We should not be surprised if what we observe is crude or what by modern standards we would consider inaccurate, tendentious, and overly polemical. In the Middle Ages, as today, the denigration of other peoples, cultures, and religions was a ubiquitous mechanism to defend an individual's or community's identity and intellectual construction of the world. These constructions were not necessarily based on accuracy and facts but on what was perceived to be the most vital claim or factor in cultural differences. Among peoples or periods in which religion is or was the central lens through which they interpreted the world, other sects naturally became particularly targeted—especially if they were political or cultural rivals. Through this process they would define themselves over and against those they deemed to be the 'others'; that is, those whose ethos or dogma were seen as diametrically opposed to their own. The creation of boundaries and walls against the other community was a natural way in which one could avoid challenges to their identity and world views.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Irwin, "The Image of the Byzantine and the Frank in Arab Popular Literature of the Late Middle Ages," in *Mamluks and Crusaders: Men of the Sword and Men of the Pen*, ed. Robert Irwin (Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2010), 353.

In the medieval Mediterranean world, this drama often played out between the adherents of the two religions that dominated its shores—Christianity and Islam—who were for centuries particularly pugnacious in their attitudes toward one another. Christian states often emerged as the theological and political rivals against whom Muslims defined themselves; early Arab Muslims in particular often sought to define themselves in relation to the Byzantines, who for a time were their ultimate rival and religio-political ‘other’.<sup>2</sup> Suffice to say, this tendency toward employing invectives is readily apparent in the popular epics.

The first Islamic *sīra* to which we will turn is the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. Although the action of the poem largely takes place in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa in battles between two groups of Muslims, it deals with themes similar to other frontier epics: heroism, fantastical feats, love, battles against foreigners (in this case, mostly Berbers and some Byzantines), and, most important for this essay, other-worldly depictions of foreign religions. The hero is Abu Zayd (“Father of Increase/ Surpassing”), leader of the collection of tribes known as the Banū Hilāl. Like the figure of El Cid in the west, he was inspired by a real historical figure—but the literary Abu Zayd is almost entirely fictional.

Most of the action in the epic takes place in conflicts with other Muslims, and indeed the foremost enemies of Abu Zayd and the Banū Hilāl are his co-religionists, but the poem nevertheless contains remarkable portrayals of the ‘religious other’. Most portrayals of non-Muslims within the saga can be characterized by the way confessional boundaries and definitions are blurred or confused; indeed the reader (or listener) finds it difficult to determine whether the narrator is referring to Christians, Jews, or Zoroastrians. For example, an early allusion is made to a Jewish carpenter marked with a tattooed cross.<sup>3</sup> Other garbled religious categories include fire-worshipping Nazarenes and cross-worshipping Zoroastrians—that is, amalgamations of Christians and Zoroastrians. Furthermore, they are often depicted as silly or perverse, although most such depictions have more of a comedic ring than one of malicious demonization. Early in the epic, Sarhan, father of Abu Zayd’s friend Hasan, is captured by a group of pirates in a *Rūmī* vessel full of Jews.<sup>4</sup> He is then taken to a Byzantine city, where the inhabitants become so enamored with his beauty that they shout, “We’ll send him in to our womenfolk so that he can sire lots of beautiful children for us!” We are told that the inhabitants were, “Jews, heathens, of long ago, and they had no shame!”<sup>5</sup> References to Christians often take the forms of slap-stick insults directed at other Muslim characters:

“You equip yourself with [supernatural] helpers, O base one,  
 O Despicable one, O Cursed on, O Worshipper of Crosses!...  
 ...Come meet my fighting,  
 O Son of Cross-Worshippers!”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Nadia Maria El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 14. Also cf. Ahmad M. H. Shboul, “Byzantium and the Arabs: The Image of the Byzantine as Mirrored in Arabic Literature,” in *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. Michael Bonner (Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2004), 245.

<sup>3</sup> Dwight F. Reynolds, “Sīrat Bani Hilal Digital Archive,” University of California, Santa Barbara 2012, <http://www.Sīratbanihilal.ucsb.edu/>. 1.4 p. 9. Coptic Christians in Egypt often get a small cross tattooed on their wrists.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.1, 5. The term ‘*Rūmī*’ was a general Arabic term for Byzantine Christians (an allusion to ‘Roman’)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.1, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.3, 13

Abu Zayd's words were directed at a Muslim, not a Christian; these accusations were clearly meant as an affront to his opponent.

The poet details one battle between Muslims and Christians when Mecca is beset by a figure named al-Harqalī ibn Yūshū (Hercules son of Joshua/Jesus), who is at first said to be a Jew but later reappears as a Christian. His treacherous bands of Christians fight with poisoned arrows and supposedly covet the city of Medina—a notion that may have been born out of the Crusading era. Nevertheless al-Harqalī is slain and his legions of villains are easily dispatched by Abu Zayd.<sup>7</sup> We shall see that this pattern of depicting non-Islamic religions as garbled entities continues in our next epic.

Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan, the hero of the folk epic *Sīrat Sayf ibn dhī Yazan*, was a pre-Islamic king of Yemen famous for defeating the Axumites of Ethiopia and driving them from Arabia. The historical Sayf was a Jewish Arab who fought against Christian Ethiopians, but in the epic he is re-imagined as a sort of Pre-Islamic Muslim.<sup>8</sup> Although Judaism was accepted as a legitimate precursor to Islam, the composer(s) of the epic must have hesitated to depict a Jewish figure as the central hero. Indeed, we are told in the opening lines of the narrative that even his father, King Dhi Yazan, had:

...read the ancient books and old heroic tales, and had found—in the Torah and the Bible, and the writings of Abraham the Friend of God, and the Scrolls of David—the name of our master Muhammad... and he had read, too, of how this prophet would spread the true faith of Islam, rooting out the religions of unbelievers and tyrants...and believed in the Prophet Muhammad and became one of the Faithful.<sup>9</sup>

This pre-Islamic Islam is complete with practices of ablution, prayer, and even a pre-Muhammad *shahāda*: “there is no god but God and Abraham is the friend of God”.<sup>10</sup> This would have allowed a stronger sense of connection between the audience and the protagonist, even if it meant that he was transformed into a character that was more fiction than fact.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, this is without a doubt the most fantastical of the epics detailed in this essay, for the story of Sayf is full of arcane artifacts, sorcerers, geomancy, valleys of giants and ghouls, magical palaces, and powerful jinn. Sayf travels far and wide to numerous mystical locales throughout Africa and Yemen in a constant struggle to win brides, defy the Ethiopian King Ar'ad, and regain his throne from his own mother, Queen Qamariyya. This story was popular in Mamluk Egypt, and the portrayal of Ethiopia as a primary antagonist may have reflected Egyptians' anxiety about the prospect of Ethiopia allying with Crusaders invading from the north, thus pinning Egypt between two Christian powers.<sup>12</sup> The poem even includes some notion that the Ethiopians would always be the enemies of the Arabs.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3.1, 4-5

<sup>8</sup> Lena Jayyusi, ed. *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan: An Arab Folk Epic*, trans. Lena Jayyusi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xxi.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Or it may be the simple result of residual beliefs among Arab tribes that he was a Muslim

<sup>12</sup> Jayyusi, xxi.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 98.

The Ethiopians of the tale are not Christians, however, but pagans.<sup>14</sup> Like the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, religions other than Islam are portrayed in an overly simplistic manner and are infused with elements of stereotypical pagan practice. The Ethiopians in the story worship Saturn, the Chinese worship the stars<sup>15</sup>, and others—including *ʿAjāmī* (Persians)—worship fire.<sup>16</sup> The giants residing in the aptly named Valley of the Giants worship a sheep, the dung and urine of which they hold to be sacred. In one encounter, Sayf threatens to kill the sheep, which the giants believe to be impossible:

“If you think,” he told Sayf, “that you can slay our god, then do your worst. You will see what you receive at his hands”...At this King Sayf grew angry. “All you speak is lies...This is a mere sheep, to be slaughtered and eaten, and the only true God, worthy of all worship, is the One God, Alone and Almighty!” And with that he slaughtered the sheep, letting its blood flow down the walls of the dome.<sup>17</sup>

This scene may well have served as an underhanded slight directed at Christianity: the death of any creature was demonstrable proof that it was not divine; that is, the Christian claim that Christ was divine could not be true. However, this could also have simply been another allusion to paganistic practice as Christianity and Judaism do not exist as such in the world of the *sīra*—they are never even mentioned by name. The closest acknowledgements are allusions to the Torah and Bible and the use of the Syriac, Greek, and Hebrew alphabets on magical charms.<sup>18</sup> Anyone not a Muslim is instead explicitly a pagan, unbeliever, or idolater, all of which easily crumble against the upholders of the veracity of Islam.

Indeed there are numerous depictions of individuals converting from paganism to Islam in the epic, which is again rather surprising considering its pre-Islamic setting. Sayf himself initiates many of the conversions, including Princess Nahid, Sabik al-Thalath, Daminhour al-Wahsh, and Maymoun al-Hajjam.<sup>19</sup> The epic’s hero even beheads a minister for refusing to convert, and Abd al-Samad strangles a concubine who also remained obstinate.<sup>20</sup> Abd al-Samad himself, who had previously been named Abd Nar (Servant of Fire), converts through the divine intervention of a heavenly messenger, as does the magician Barnoukh.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, many of these converted characters enter the narrative as villains and explicit enemies of Sayf. Through their conversion, however, they not only intellectually assent to the truth of Islam but also become the most ardent and faithful of Sayf’s allies. Muslims, therefore, are always on the side of the hero of the epic and anyone who does not convert remains his potential foe.

The last Arabic epic to be analyzed, *Sīrat ʿAntar*, likewise narrates the exploits of a pre-Islamic figure: the poet and adventurer ʿAntara ibn Shaddad.<sup>22</sup> Like Abu Zayd, the hero is

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 80-81 This last portrayal is the most accurate, as the Persians were mostly Zoroastrians in the period depicted in the poem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 145.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 191, 226. Syriac and Greek were common liturgical languages of Christian denominations in the Nile-to-Oxus region in these periods, and Hebrew, of course, was still used by Jews.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 64, 212-214, 219.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 78, 155.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 77, 152.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Heath, *The Thirsty Sword: Sīrat ʿAntar and the Arabic Popular Epic* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996), ixv.

dark-skinned and appears as a hero of herculean quality, although ‘Antar is not as thoroughly Islamicized in the poem as was Sayf. The romance of ‘Antar likewise follows a similar pattern of pseudo-historical exploits and romance, often in the context of the Byzantine-Sasanian conflict. In contrast to our earlier examinations, however, the *Sira* stands apart in its treatment of the ‘religious other’. Instead of basing portrayals of non-Muslims from an array of stock renditions and simplistic pagan motifs, their religious identities are downplayed and they are defined primarily through ethnic or geographical categories. Furthermore, ‘Antar freely combats or enters into alliances with various other powers regardless of their confessional adherences. Simply put, some Christians are his friends and others are his enemies.

A young Syrian Christian knight named Muqri al-Wahsh, for example, initially duels ‘Antar but then joins his little band of adventurers and becomes one of his most steadfast companions—no conversion was necessary.<sup>23</sup> Byzantines also often feature as friends of the hero and at one point in the *sira* the Byzantine Emperor (*qaysar*; i.e., Caesar) even expresses a desire to meet ‘Antar and is subsequently thoroughly impressed by the hero.<sup>24</sup> The Byzantine prince, Hiraql<sup>25</sup> then befriends ‘Antar and joins him along with the Frankish prince Kubart in a campaign against other various Frankish leaders. Even Yaksum, king of the Ethiopians, becomes an ally, as does Balqam ibn Marqus, the king of Rome.<sup>26</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the rulers and kingdoms of the Christians are nonetheless depicted as alien and fantastic. Al-Lailman ibn Marqum, Muqri’s cousin, lives in a large white marble city built by Alexander the Great. King al-Lailaman lives in *Qal’at al-Ballir* (The Citadel of Crystal), and the evil king of Spain al-Jantiya’il rides to war on a giant elephant.<sup>27</sup> However, these sorts of themes may primarily have been because the characters were foreigners to the Arabs and not on account of their religious identity. On the other hand, the fact that most Franks enter the narrative as enemies again bears some resemblance to anti-Crusader sentiments that were common in the era that the epic was popular. With some exceptions, Franks, that is Latin, European Christians, are more likely to be portrayed as villainous compared to Syrian or Greek Byzantine Christians. Indeed the hero’s two closest Christian friends were Syrian and Byzantine (Muqri al-Wahsh and Hiraql respectively), and his foes, when Christian, were usually Frankish.

The Christians of the *sira* also play an eminent role in prophesying the imminent rise of Muhammad and Islam. In one rather striking scene ‘Antar meets a Christian monk who is overjoyed with the foreknowledge of the appearance of Muhammad.<sup>28</sup> This confirms for the audience the notion that Christians should accept Islam as the perfection of their own religion. Christians thus function as the audience believed they *ought* to have functioned.

### *Concluding Remarks*

What sort of conclusions can be drawn from these epics? First, we should concede that a variety of literary conventions, motifs, and stock images existed, and not every author felt compelled to insult other religions. These folk epics also always presented the ‘religious

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 222. This bears striking resemblance to a similar scene in *Digenis Akritas*.

<sup>25</sup> A reference the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius?

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 216, 222, 224.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 224.

other' in terms familiar to their audience, and yet simultaneously attempted to evoke a sense of the 'alien'. Members of other religions were always 'one of them' that were different from 'us', and were described in simplistic vocabulary comprehensible to vast audiences. However it should be added that in these stories the religious conflicts were always secondary to the more central narrative concerning the exploits of the hero. Presenting explicit diatribes against Christians or Jews was never their chief intention.

The image of the Christian in these medieval *siyar* also followed similar patterns to the way that medieval Christian epics and *chansons de geste* depicted Muslims, and for this reason it may be worthwhile for a brief addendum on the Christian side for a point of association. Europeans and other Christians struggled for centuries on how to understand Islam and its adherents, and they tended to interpret the success and failures of Muslim powers along the frontier or abroad through particular cultural filters and paradigms. These 'Saracens' were often re-imagined to assume the role of the traditional archenemy of the church: pagans.<sup>29</sup> In the French *Chanson de Roland*, for example, the author bluntly declares "The pagan's wrong! The Christian way is right!"<sup>30</sup> Authors employed stereotypical depictions to emphasize the un- or even anti-Christian intentions of their opponents. This anti-Muslim discourse was in turn used to justify and even glorify the violent action of the warrior classes. Some divergent interpretations existed, such as in their treatment of Saladin,<sup>31</sup> but most depictions of Muslims followed predictable trends in which their military encounters and theological disagreements dominated (or clouded) their perceptions. Conversion paradigms persistently reoccurred as well, as they frequently dreamed that their greatest enemies would opt to receive baptism and transform into their allies.<sup>32</sup> Even in frontier epics that are generally less concerned with direct doctrinal attacks against Islam and Muslims, such as the Byzantine frontier epic, *Digenis Akritas*, and the Spanish *Cantar de mio Cid*, Muslims nevertheless assume a sort of function as stock villains.

Muslim authors employed similar tropes and literary conventions and also borrowed a considerable amount of motifs, themes, and imagery.<sup>33</sup> Similar to the depiction of Muslims in Europe and the rest of Christendom, images of Christians within the epics of the *Dar al-Islām* were shaped as much or if not more by historical fiction than through serious scholarship. In the *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, which details the adventures of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars al-Bunduqdari in his struggle against the Crusaders, the hero's chief antagonist is Kahin Juwan (Prestor John), the evil mastermind behind all of the crusades.<sup>34</sup> Christians are often portrayed as villains undeserving of respect or decent treatment through

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<sup>29</sup> John V. Tolan, *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 67-69.

<sup>30</sup> Michael A.H. Newth, ed., *The Song of Roland*, trans. Michael A.H. Newth (New York: Italica Press, 2011), 30. Pagan here is in reference to a Muslim.

<sup>31</sup> Tolan, *Ishmael*, 81-82. Saladin was alternatively portrayed as 1) a scourge from God sent to punish Christians for their sins, 2) as a valorous and worthy foe, or 3) as the epitome of knighthood and (Christian) chivalry

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>33</sup> However, there is certainly debate over the extent of this influence between cultures. Robert Irwin argues that it results from borrowing (cf. Irwin, p. 239), whereas Gustave E. von Grunebaum argues more for mere similarities over direct transmission. (cf. Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "Parellism, Convergence and Influence in the Relations of Arab and Byzantine Philosophy, Literature, and Piety," in *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. Michael Bonner (Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Irwin, "The Image of the Byzantine and the Frank in Arab Popular Literature of the Late Middle Ages", 234-235.



their denigration as polytheists or violent invaders<sup>35</sup> or, reminiscent of the approach of some Christian authors themselves, they are at times transformed into pagans. Crude oversimplifications were once again common and Franks and Greeks are often rudimentary plot movers illustrated in elementary and unfavorable terms, although as we saw with the *Sirat 'Antar* there were exceptions and a certain amount of diversity.<sup>36</sup> These motifs and themes were never monolithic or monochromatic, but there was doubtless a general trend toward simplifying and ideologically disarming those deemed to be political and religious rivals.

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<sup>35</sup> On account of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Crusades respectively.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

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*Locke in Arabia:  
Arabian Tribal Practice through the  
Lens of Western Democratic Philosophy*  
By John Savage

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*Thesis:* This paper challenges an apparent assumption that the Middle East lacks democracy. By looking at tribal societies of the Arabian Peninsula through the lens of Locke's 'Second Treatise, of Civil Government,' this essay seeks to show tribal societies of the Arabian Peninsula exhibit a tradition of basic human freedom and equality, consent-based lawmaking, and objective adjudication and enforcement of laws that aligns Arabian tribal societies with Western democratic philosophical values in a manner that suggests contemporary democratization policy may benefit from a more refined philosophical approach.

### *INTRODUCTION*

"The best cure for what ails the Middle East is what it has lacked: free debate and democracy"...concludes the Washington Post's December 16, 2011 editorial opinion encouraging policymakers to support the 2011 Arab Spring's projects of change throughout the Middle East. Indeed, since the inception of former President George W. Bush's democratization agenda in 2002, makers of foreign policy, think tanks and scholars have focused on few subjects as intensely as that of democratization in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> The Arab Spring ensures the foreign policy focus on democratization in the Middle East isn't going away. President Obama's May 20, 2011 Middle East Policy speech, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's recent visit to Libya in support of democratic transition there, and recent western foreign policy focus on reform in Syria are but a few examples that attest to the prominence of democratization in US foreign policy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Craner, Lorne. "Will US Democratization Policy Work?" *Middle East Quarterly* Volume XIII: Number 3: 3-10, 2006. <http://www.meforum.org/942/will-us-democratization-policy-work>; Youngs, Richard. "Misunderstanding the maladies of liberal democracy promotion." Working paper no. 106, FRIDE European Think Tank for Global Action, Madrid, Spain, 2011. <http://www.fride.org/publication/884/misunderstanding-the-maladies-of-liberal-democracy-promotion>, 1-16.

<sup>2</sup> Cole, Juan. "Obama and the Dilemma of US Middle East Policy." *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History and Religion*, May 20, 2011. <http://www.juancole.com/2011/05/obama-and-the-dilemmas-of-us-middle-east-policy.html>; Shanker, Thom and Liam Stack. "Panetta is First US Defense Secretary to Visit Libya," *New York Times*, Dec 17, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/18/world/africa/leon-panetta-defense-secretary-libya-visit.html>.

The size, scope and direction of Western – indeed, American – democratization policies vary as much as the challenges that critics levy against them. Richard Youngs’ 2011 FRIDE European Think Tank study presents a plethora of recent democratization policies, and their critiques, defending democratization to a certain extent by insightfully arguing the critiques do not hold up under close inspection.<sup>3</sup> From the most prolific policy to the most obscure, one idea made apparent in Youngs’ work is that whatever their success or failure, democratization policies since 9/11 do not want for effort, thought or research, either by those who promulgate them or by those who critique them. While this essay seeks to add to the burgeoning debate on democratization in the Middle East, it does not mean to suggest that any failures of democratization result from a lack of research, effort or expertise.

Despite his attacks on critiques of democratization, Richard Youngs does not give democratization policies a free pass, either. Youngs argues that despite the error in many critiques of democratization policy, the policies themselves must do a better job of taking a more “nuanced” approach, which includes, among other forms of analysis, a more engaged philosophical look at the underpinnings of democracy.<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging the benefits democratization policies aim to achieve (e.g. improved human rights and freedoms, economic improvement through market liberalization, and decreased motivation for terrorism, to name a few alluded to by Lorne Craner’s 2006 article cited above), one assumption, noted by the above-cited Washington Post editorial, that seems to have underlined democratization policy in the Middle East since 2002 is that the Middle East needs democracy because it “has lacked” it. Contemporary anthropological studies challenge this assumption, that the Middle East – more specifically, the Arabian Peninsula – “has lacked” democracy. Perhaps taking a cue from Youngs’ discussion encouraging deeper philosophical inspection of the underpinnings of democracy, this article proposes to do just that, looking at one aspect of Middle Eastern society – Arabian tribes, as depicted in relevant contemporary anthropological literature – through one particular philosophical lens, namely, John Locke, the thinker whose ideas (arguably) squarely underpin much of the American democratic tradition.

## *METHODOLOGY*

According to Peter Woll, American “...governmental institutions, processes and traditions rest upon [John Locke’s] principles such as the primacy of the individual...and a political and social equality among men in which no man shall count for more than another...”<sup>5</sup> This is not to suggest all governments of the world must base their constitutions on the theoretical treatises of John Locke. It is, however, valid to challenge the assumption that the Middle East “has lacked” democracy by showing how, if at all, John Locke’s theory emerges in the practice of tribal custom in the Arabian Peninsula. If the very theoretical fiber of the unique American democracy, as articulated by Locke and accepted by the American tradition, is apparent in Arabian tribal practice, perhaps policy makers will see a need to re-assess their underlying assumptions of democratization policy. If democratic theory is apparent in tribal practice, perhaps that would require, as Youngs asserts, a more nuanced approach to democratization policies than what the past 10 years have produced. Close inspection of relevant anthropological texts from this perspective may provide clearer insights

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<sup>3</sup> Youngs, 1-11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 3, 12-16

<sup>5</sup> Woll, Peter, editor. *American Government: Readings and Cases*. (Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown Higher Education, 1990).

into how closely Arabian tribal societies live with democratic values, and thus clarify whether or not these societies have or have not “lacked” democracy.

In his ‘Second Treatise, of Civil Government,’ Locke articulates a problem and a solution. The problem, according to Locke, is that our basic human “state of Nature”, where individuals are free to live as they wish so long as they don’t infringe on the freedom and/or property of others, is inherently dangerous exactly because each individual is vulnerable to infringement of their freedom and/or possessions by another.<sup>6</sup> Therefore in articulating the problem, Locke articulates some fundamental truths that western – again, American – societies accept about the value of human beings: 1) every person is completely equal to every other, free to do as they wish without infringing upon others’ freedom; 2) every person has a right to property; 3) every person has a right to seek redress or compensation if they are wronged by another person.<sup>7</sup>

Locke then articulates the solution, by introducing the idea that individuals willingly sacrifice some of their personal freedoms in exchange for the security and sustainability provided by civil government. He specifies this solution in terms of what must be the ends of civil government. First, there must be a known law that all agree upon as the standard. Second, there must be a known and indifferent judge to adjudicate disputes if/when a violation of that law occurs. Third, there must be a force of power to execute and enforce punishment. As a means to ensure these ends, legislatures receive power to legislate the law, but not without the complete consent of and accountability to those people for whom they are legislating.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, contemporary anthropological studies may provide insight into whether or not Arabian tribal societies demonstrate parallels to three particular aspects of Locke’s view: 1) the value of the individual; 2) the ends of civil government; or 3) the means of civil government.

### *TRIBAL VIEWS OF THE VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL*

Shelagh Wier’s 2007 anthropological study of the Razih tribe in Yemen illuminates a tribal view on the value of the individual similar to that described by Locke. According to Wier, Razih tribal law, or *urf*, holds that basic rights of people and property are “inviolable” and that “[u]nderlying the rules and practices of *urf* are fundamental assumptions about the rights of individuals and groups to dignity, autonomy, security, justice, compensation, retribution, and apology. An important strength of *urf* is that these principles and their related procedures are rooted in the values and norms of ordinary relationships and therefore widely understood”.<sup>9</sup> Also, the Yemeni tribespeople have a “drive for order” and a “vivid awareness that everyone’s livelihood is intensely vulnerable to major disorder”.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, “unauthorized action by individuals or groups within tribes is generally frowned upon –

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<sup>6</sup> Locke, John. “Second Treatise, of Civil Government.” in *American Government, Readings and Cases*, edited by Peter Woll. (Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown Higher Education, 1990 [originally published 1690]), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 6-9.

<sup>9</sup> Wier, Shelagh. *Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 156, 149.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 143-4.

especially if it causes other people problems”.<sup>11</sup> Wier’s observations of tribal society echo Locke’s emphasis on the inherent equality and rights of the individual, as well as Locke’s contention that vulnerability drives individuals to seek security through the order provided by civil government.

As a somewhat contrasting example, Steven Caton’s 2005 ethno-memoir of tribal conflict and its mediation in Yemen might indicate an inherent class division that contradicts Locke’s value of the individual. Contrary to Locke’s view of individual equality, Caton’s research points to class divisions between tribe members and servants that suggest all are not, in fact, equal. Caton describes a successful merchant of the servant class who is prohibited by social convention and the higher ranking elements of society (tribes and *sāda*, or descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) from owning land.<sup>12</sup> Caton adds, “...categorization of work, ranking the tribesmen above the servants and regulating jobs as well as access to material resources, is central to the political economy of Yemen”.<sup>13</sup> Donald Cole’s 1975 ethnography of Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Peninsula’s Empty Quarter also suggests similar class divisions inherent in Arabian tribal society.<sup>14</sup> Mandana Limbert’s 2010 ethnography of an Omani town, along with Anne Meneley’s 1996 ethnography of a Yemeni town both give significant attention to the observation of similar class distinctions.<sup>15</sup> As a potential clarifying perspective to these observations of class division, Andrea Rugh’s 2007 study of the political culture of leadership in the United Arab Emirates concludes that despite hierarchical relationships within the tribes, the tribes themselves are equal: “The tribal model has discrete units – families, tribal sections, and tribes – that at each level are treated equally...In becoming more powerful or more adaptive, the units keep the essential ability to group and regroup.”<sup>16</sup>

#### *TRIBAL VIEWS OF THE ENDS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT*

Wier’s research indicates a clear parallel between the Yemeni tribal view and Locke’s view of the ends of government. According to Wier’s research, the Yemeni tribal patterns of government exhibit strong concurrence with all three of Locke’s requirements for the ends of government – they have a known law that all consent to, they have indifferent judges, and they have power to enforce punishment. With regard to Locke’s requirement for known law, Weir insightfully describes a tribal law practiced with full consent of those to whom it applies: “The law’ is not...a dictatorial imposition by an elite few on a powerless and unwilling majority. It is rather an ideal system which people charge their leaders with administering on their authority, or inciting dissidence or defection, if they do so inadequately or pursue their own interest to the detriment of those of their constituents.”<sup>17</sup> Fredrik Barth’s 1983 ethnography of an Omani town also portrays a certain intimacy between ruler and ruled by characterizing the tribal sheikh responsible for enforcing the law as someone who, “...should be close to all

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>12</sup> Caton, Steven. *Yemen Chronicle: An Anthropology of War and Mediation*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 56.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>14</sup> Cole, Donald Powell, *Nomads of the Nomads: The Al-Murrah Bedouin of the Empty Quarter*. (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine, 1975.), 72.

<sup>15</sup> Limbert, Mandana. *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory & Social Life in an Omani Town*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Meneley, Anne. *Tournaments of Value: Sociability and Hierarchy in a Yemeni Town*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Rugh, Andrea B. *Political Culture of Leadership in the United Arab Emirates*. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2007), 221.

<sup>17</sup> Wier, 144.

people: to the boy he is like a boy, he is an equal with the poor man, and with the rich he is the equal of the richest.”<sup>18</sup> With regard to Locke’s requirement for indifferent judges, both Wier and Caton extensively describe tribal processes of “negotiation, arbitration and compromise” which enjoy the full trust and support of the tribes-people.<sup>19</sup> Caton’s extensive description of the protracted mediation sequence of a particularly divisive inter-tribal feud indicates how the people of the tribes place their trust in the tribal system to arrange an objective mediator when the tribal sheikhs themselves are unable to resolve it.<sup>20</sup> Finally, tribes also provide the power that Locke would argue is so important to ensure just enforcement of meted punishments and/or compensation: “...primary responsibility for extracting penalties and costs from reluctant criminals or subscribers falls on the...clans and wards...If [they] cannot persuade an offender to pay up, they resort to summoning external guarantors from their own or another tribe – according to the severity of the problem and the relevant pacts.”<sup>21</sup>

### *TRIBAL VIEWS OF THE MEANS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT*

Wier’s research again provides detailed evidence that would indicate tribal agreement with Locke on the means to achieve government’s ends: laws that are created by a legislature, accountable to the people, acting with the consent of the people. Wier describes an informal tribal process of lawmaking, parallel to that of a legislature itself: “If all the meetings at which [tribal members] agree and ratify their laws and enshrine them...are considered collectively, and as connected processes, they can be regarded as functionally equivalent to the legislative assemblies of states.”<sup>22</sup>

### *CONCLUSION*

Contrary to the Washington Post’s December 16, 2011 editorial opinion, relevant anthropological literature would suggest Arabian tribes have not “lacked” a democratic tradition. The relevant anthropological literature studied here unambiguously supports and parallels two of the three of Locke’s precepts examined: namely, that of the ends of civil government, and that of the means of civil government. Only regarding Locke’s view of the inherent value of every individual, does our analysis show a more ambivalent result. While some literature supports Locke’s view, other relevant literature does in fact suggest that class divisions in Arab tribal societies would contradict Locke’s view. This ambivalence suggests Arabian tribal societies show a certain propensity to view all individuals as equal, while at the same time exhibiting a general inclination toward demarcation by class boundaries that define unequal status for members of each class. It is noteworthy here to clarify that our 21<sup>st</sup> century reading of Locke’s inherent value of the individual probably infers a greater degree of equality across the social spectrum than Locke himself intended, since, in other examples of his writings, he accepted the class demarcations of his day as part and parcel of civil society.<sup>23</sup> On the whole, then, one could reasonably conclude, given Arabian tribal societies’ propensity to

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<sup>18</sup> Barth, Fredrik. *Sohar: Culture and Society in an Omani Town*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1983), 66.

<sup>19</sup> Wier, 167-8.

<sup>20</sup> Canton, *Yemen Chronicle*, 70-5; Canton, Steven, “Tribe and Tribalism.” Lectures for SW 46, Anthropology of Arabia, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, MA, September 20, 22, 27 and 29, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Wier, 187.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 154.

<sup>23</sup> Tuck, Richard. “Carolina and Atlantis.” Lecture for Government 2099, John Locke, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, (Cambridge, MA, February 16, 2012).



exhibit enough of a parallel with the value of the individual and the ends and means of civil governments as described by Locke, that assuming Arabian tribal societies lack democracy would be inaccurate. In cases where class divisions challenge Locke's fundamental equality of the individual, we have literature to suggest tribes as units are completely equal, even if individuals within the system may not be, thus indicating a tribal parallel with the concept, if not the application, of Locke's precept.

This is not to censure Western policies of democratization in the Middle East. As mentioned above, far too much work worldwide has gone into successful attempts to bring the benefits of democratized societies to undemocratic nations. Indeed, it is acknowledged most democratization policies are aimed at nation-states rather than the tribal societies discussed here. From this analysis, however, we may gain greater appreciation for the benefit of challenging normative assumptions, in this case using liberal democratic philosophical analysis of anthropological literature as a tool for such a challenge. This supports Richard Youngs' contention (albeit in much simpler form) that makers of democratization policy, for all their successes and critiques levied against them, could stand to predicate policy upon somewhat of a more refined approach, even a philosophical and/or anthropological one. This would ensure policy toward a particular society does not go forward until one makes an accurate assessment of where that society stands in relation to the existence, or lack thereof, of inherent, even philosophical, democratic values. We may also reasonably say the assumption that the Middle East has "lacked" free debate and democracy indicates a misguided attempt to simplify issues in the Middle East that in fact require complex understanding. As Youngs might say, or as Caton said often while instructing students on the merits of tribalism, or stated in his 2010 *Foreign Policy* article regarding the politics of Yemen, the problem, and the solution, are much more "nuanced" than that.<sup>24</sup> There is probably still much room for democratization policy by Western nations, namely, the United States. Rather than begin with the assumption that the Middle East needs democracy because it "has lacked" it, policy makers would do well to assume each Middle Eastern nation's situation is inherently unique, their peoples may exhibit a democratic social tradition of their own from one of a number of traditions, and before we decide on the policy we need to fully understand the society and its social traditions.

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<sup>24</sup> Youngs, 3; Canton, *Tribe and Tribalism*; Canton, Steven, "Yemen: Not on the Verge of Collapse." *Foreign Policy*, August 11, 2010.

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# *Modern Takes on Motivations Behind the Zanj Rebellion*

## By Emily Martha Silkaitis

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The Zanj Rebellion lasted nearly fifteen years, from 255-70/869-83 in southern Iraq. Believed to be slaves of African origin, the Zanj toiled under harsh conditions, working the land by removing the nitrous topsoil in order to make the terrain cultivatable. The exact motivations behind the uprising are subject to debate, but the impetus seems to stem from this taxing agricultural labor, coupled with the effective leadership of 'Alī b. Muḥammad. For the first ten years of the rebellion, the Zanj experienced success, though by 266/879 their support was waning and eventually the 'Abbasid army defeated the rebel coalition. By branding this occurrence a "slave rebellion", it is inherently linked to more recent events even in the United States, such as Nat Turner's raid on Harper's Ferry, which occurred a mere 150 years ago in 1849. Slave uprisings are by no means a thing of the distant past. In addition, certain themes of the Zanj uprising are still prevalent in more current events: the idea of an oppressed class rising up against the existing social order, religion as a motivation for revolt, and the issue of racism. Then and now, the Zanj Rebellion merits significance in Islamic history.

Spanning over one hundred years and a multitude of disciplines, a particularly colorful group of scholars has attempted to reconstruct various aspects of the Zanj Rebellion in their works. Rich in primary sources, the rebellion seems only to be lacking in modern scholarship, thus the need to examine sources as far apart in time as Theodor Nöldeke's account from 1892<sup>1</sup> and Zakariyau Oseni's article from 1989.<sup>2</sup> The recent translation of Alexandre Popovic's *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Century*<sup>3</sup> from French into English has undoubtedly made this subject matter more available to numerous researchers. Originally published in 1976, Popovic's book and Ghada Hashem Talhami's article<sup>4</sup> came out a mere two years apart, while Jere L. Bacharach's work was published only a few years later,<sup>5</sup> thus ironically making the 1970s and early 1980s, right after a period famed for Civil Rights strife, a booming time for Zanj Rebellion scholarship. This amalgamation of authors presents a cavalcade of information on military history, commerce, the purportedly sorrowful plight of black men, and piety. The broader subject of the Zanj links these scholars, and what follows below is a literary review of the mentioned sources in the areas where they can best be compared. In the first section, I will analyze the motivations for the rebellion according to certain authors, focusing on race, economic and class-based attributes, and

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Nöldeke, "A Servile War in the East," in *Sketches from Eastern History*, Reprint from 1892 ed. (Beirut: Khayats, 1963), 146-75.

<sup>2</sup> Zakariyau I. Oseni, "The Revolt of Black Slaves in Iraq under the Abbasid Administration in 869-883 C.E.," *Hamdard Islamicus* 12/2 (1989), 57-65.

<sup>3</sup> Alexandre Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century*, transl. Léon King (Princeton, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Ghada Hashem Talhami, "The Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10:3 (1977), 443-461.

<sup>5</sup> Jere Bacharach, "African Military Slaves in the Medieval Middle East: The Cases of Iraq (869-955) and Egypt (868-1171)," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 13 (1981), 471-95.

religion. In the second section, I will discuss how some of the works comment on military aspects of the rebellion.

Evaluating the Zanj Rebellion in terms of racial motivation sparks a lively debate, beginning with Zakariyau Oseni's "The Revolt of Black Slaves in Iraq Under the 'Abbasid Administration 869-883 CE". Oseni makes no attempt to hide the fact that he views the Zanj rebellion as a modern author who feels passionately for the plight of the black man: ". . . especially Black slaves whose race, more than any other, had suffered the atrocities and humiliation inherent in that ancient institution throughout the course of known history."<sup>6</sup> Oseni cites examples of slavery throughout world history, drawing comparison to revolts that happened as late as the nineteenth century. In blatant contrast to Ghada Talhami's article, which will be further discussed below, Oseni states that slave trade started earlier than the ninth century A.D., insinuating that a large slave community existed on the coast of East Africa for hundreds of years before the Zanj Rebellion. He argues that resentment from the black slaves against their harsh treatment had been building up for hundreds of years before the actual revolt.<sup>7</sup> This discontent felt by the Zanj slaves served as a driving force for their uprising.

In terms of race as a motivating factor for the rebellion, the core of Ghada Hashem Talhami's argument stems from the writing of al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī's account of the event is cited by all five authors in varying degrees and hence provides the largest trove of information on the rebellion, yet it is his very words that lead Talhami to contend that the Zanj were not the main actors in the rebellion. She points out that al-Ṭabarī alternately describes the dissident group as *Zanj* and *Soudan*, while simultaneously using *Zanj* to refer to all slaves who did not speak Arabic. Talhami also claims that little evidence exists that directly links a thriving East African slave trafficking economy to the commercial activity of the 'Abbasid Empire before the tenth century. Therefore, the Zanj revolt, according to Talhami, was not actually carried out by the Zanj, but instead by people like the Bedouins, Bahranis, artisans, and a number of black slaves. As a result, this would not merit the the label of a "slave" rebellion.<sup>8</sup> In a broader sense, Talhami attempts to prove that race mattered little in the actual rebellion, but instead falsely united many later historians concerning the issue. Describing these Westerners as using ". . . a historiographic bias perpetuated by defenders of the European colonial regime",<sup>9</sup> Talhami attempts to view the Zanj rebellion separate from those Western historians with whom she disagrees, though even she admittedly draws from the same sources as they do.

Theodore Nöldeke also presents the issue of race as an influence for the revolt, albeit inadvertently. His account clearly contrasts with Talhami's work, though Nöldeke wrote nearly one hundred years earlier and therefore was likely more affected by imperialism than Civil Rights. Nöldeke does not specifically analyze the Zanj Rebellion in regards to race as a motivating factor, but a modern-day reader would certainly take notice of the coarse descriptions provided. Writing at the height of imperialism, Nöldeke describes the Zanj in one of four ways: slaves, blacks, East Africans, and negroes. In fact, he calls the rebellion the "negro insurrection."<sup>10</sup> Though these words are certainly salient to today's reader, Nöldeke's intended audience of fellow scholars in 1892 most likely would not have registered as much

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<sup>6</sup> Oseni: 65, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Oseni: 57-8.

<sup>8</sup> Talhami: 445, 451-2, 457-9, 460-1.

<sup>9</sup> Talhami: 443.

<sup>10</sup> Nöldeke: 149, 153, 152.

surprise. Therefore, though his description may seem to be racially oriented, this particular theme would not have been as applicable to him and would comprise a gross understatement of his monumental work.

Bacharach and Popovic do not comment on race as a relevant cause for the Zanj Rebellion and thus will not be discussed in this section.

This next section will discuss economic and class-related factors as motivators for the rebellion. Oseni argues the applicability of class warfare in describing driving forces behind the revolt. He waxes poetic on the oppression and inhumane working conditions of the Zanj, which served as the catalyst for the so-called insurrection. Within the first paragraph of his article, Oseni emphasizes the reasoning for the existence of the Zanj in the region: to remove the salt from the fields and make the land profitable. Oseni believes this economic coloration of the Zanj's essence eventually leads to their revolt. Furthermore, an overall sense of mistreatment by the 'Abbasids brought other ethnic groups into their ranks and provided some degree of solidarity based on discontentment. Oseni goes so far as to assert that "... the uprising was that of the oppressed classes under the 'Abbasid regime."<sup>11</sup> To claim that the Zanj and their allies possessed the acumen to revolt on the basis of their economic class may be a stretch and undoubtedly a product of the hindsight of a twentieth-century historian, but Oseni assuredly is not alone in claiming the importance of economic attributes for causing the rebellion.

In agreement with Oseni, Talhami admits that the rebellion involved a variety of factors, including the oppression of certain groups. Since numerous parties came to join the revolt, it should not strictly be seen as an attack on the use of slavery but rather as an affront against social injustice. Talhami analyzes this aspect in regards to the leadership of 'Ali bin Muhammad, seeing him as one of the uniting forces of the disheartened.<sup>12</sup> Talhami brings the issue of economic dissatisfaction into her argument, though this supplies only one part of her overall illustration of an incorrectly-named rebellion by oppressed individuals.

In discussing the relevance of economic and class incentives for the Zanj Rebellion, Popovic initially appears to diverge from Oseni and Talhami. He expressly states in his introduction the necessity of not examining the insurrection with modern day ideas such as class struggles, even quoting an example of the usage of the term proletarian. Yet one hundred and fifty pages later in his conclusion, Popovic offers a closing argument that the rebellion was indeed a "political (power struggle) and social (betterment of certain class living conditions) revolt."<sup>13</sup> In attempting to show this true character of the revolt, Popovic quotes al-Ṭabarī more than any other of the discussed scholars and uses a semi-chronological approach, therefore making the work read like a clear-cut history text. Thus, even though *The Revolt of African Slaves* showcases a variety of themes in regards to the uprising, Popovic's conclusion essentially cancels out the significance of the other issues. He purposefully chooses to end the work with the perspective of a twentieth-century writer and thus his ultimate argument must be considered one centered on economic attributes as significant stimuli of the revolt.

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<sup>11</sup> Osen: 57, 60.

<sup>12</sup> Talhami: 460.

<sup>13</sup> Popovic: 1, 3, 27, 153.

Nöldeke and Bacharach do not focus on the economic or class-based motivations for the rebellion, and therefore will not be discussed here.

Lastly in this section on motivations for the Zanj Rebellion, the role of religion is seen by three scholars as a significant driving force. Oseni addresses the importance of religion from two standpoints: the Kharijite doctrine and the piety of 'Abbasid rulers. He views the Kharijite beliefs as being imperative for understanding the activities of the Zanj. They were attracted to the doctrine because of its egalitarian tendencies, and likewise were drawn to the charismatic leader of 'Ali who preached such principles. This leader spoke to the Zanj for the first time on their right to a lawful, happy existence according to Islam. Oseni draws a noteworthy connection between the periodic Kharijite uprisings against the 'Abbasids and the insurrection of the Zanj, suggesting that the slave revolt was actually a manifestation of the Kharijite uprisings. This religious milieu gave the slaves a certain zeal and hope as they fought, but in the long run these beliefs did not carry enough weight to bring them to victory. In addition, Oseni points out that the lack of information pertaining to the administration of the Zanj means that an ad hoc government could have been established based on Kharijite ideology.<sup>14</sup> Oseni's claims about the relevance of Kharijite beliefs appear to be exaggerated in comparison with the opinions of the other scholars, but his interpretation poses vital questions to the reader and certainly attracts attention. Oseni acknowledges the lack of sources regarding the internal workings of the Zanj government, therefore opening the door for him to provide his own explanation on the character of the temporary ruling establishment.

Likewise, Oseni sheds light on a separate religious aspect of the revolt: the practices of the 'Abbasid rulers. He cites examples of the Prophet Muhammad's just treatment of slaves in the early community (570-632 C.E.) and highlights how only two centuries later these practices seem to have faded out under the 'Abbasids. Though the Zanj Rebellion failed for numerous reasons according to this article, it did raise fundamental questions about the nature of the caliphate involving the treatment of disadvantaged members of society and how rulers should help them in accordance with the doctrines of Islam.<sup>15</sup> Oseni combines these two ideologies of Kharijism and Islamic practices of the 'Abbasids within the scope of his work, accentuating his view on the significance of religion but also acknowledging that these beliefs were not sufficient enough to lead to victory for the Zanj or alter the institution of slavery under the 'Abbasids.

The bearing of religion can also be seen in Nöldeke's work, as he also elaborates on Kharijite beliefs. He delves into issues regarding the lineage of the leader 'Ali and the question of his legitimate claims to the divine house, though overall Nöldeke mainly concentrates on Kharijite practices as a mobilizing factor for leadership. He calls the sect enemies of the Shi'a and zealots, though he believes Kharijism affected the leader 'Ali more than the Zanj themselves. According to Nöldeke, the Zanj were eager to believe that they were the legitimate followers of Islam and consequently had the right to annihilate others. However, the slaves needed a dominant personality to stir up these sentiments and provide leadership for their movement.<sup>16</sup> Nöldeke sees 'Ali as a supporter of the Kharijite doctrine, but the Zanj Rebellion was not essentially based on these beliefs; religion only motivated the rebellion in the sense that it greatly influenced the leader of the Zanj and he used it to appeal

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<sup>14</sup> Oseni: 58-9, 60, 62, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Oseni: 63-4.

<sup>16</sup> Nöldeke: 147, 151.

to the slaves. Of all the discussed publications, Nöldeke's is the only one that references another religious revolt in comparison to that of the Zanj, as opposed to the numerous cited examples of slave and social rebellions. Al-Mukhtār's revolt during the second *fitna* (685-687) also raised a dominion with a religious pretext with the help of an underprivileged class.<sup>17</sup> Like the Zanj Rebellion, Mukhtār's revolt utilized religious sentiment to take advantage of social discontent. Nöldeke is interestingly the only author to reference a religious rebellion in comparison to the Zanj, but he was likely using this example to showcase the effectiveness of combining spiritual beliefs with the mistreatment of oppressed groups. In total, Nöldeke provides a succinct account, albeit emotional at times, of the Zanj Rebellion with emphasis on religion as a motivating factor.

Lastly, Popovic incorporates the influence of religion into his book by first presenting the leader 'Ali as a compelling orator to the slaves but also as a dishonest, zealous man. At times, Popovic seems to mock 'Ali's spiritual convictions, waxing lyrically on his beliefs in the supernatural, such as telepathy, hearing voices from heaven, and the meaning of a lunar eclipse.<sup>18</sup> By characterizing 'Ali in this manner, Popovic undermines the actual ideology that may have appealed to the Zanj or induced them to follow 'Ali. In the conclusion, Popovic asserts that 'Ali attempted to appeal to both the Shiites and Kharijites and use these two groups as political tools.<sup>19</sup> This, in essence, reflects Popovic's belief that religion in the Zanj Revolt was no more than a means for manipulation.

Alternatively, Popovic claims that the 'Abbasids were motivated by Islam to overtake the rebels. *The Revolt of African Slaves* begins with a brief discussion on the beliefs of 'Ali (Master of the Zanj), and then as the book progresses, it begins to emphasize the religious incentives of the 'Abbasids, so that by the end all religious legitimacy has been contextually removed from 'Ali's movement and applied to the 'Abbasid military. The caliphal military are even said to read the Qur'an, pray before battle, and participate in Friday prayer. As the revolt progressed, they came to view the rebelling slaves as people lacking religion and laws. By the conclusion of the Zanj Rebellion, Popovic brands the insurrection a "holy war".<sup>20</sup> Popovic specifically links the Zanj to Shi'ism and Kharijism while the 'Abbasids are more generally portrayed as pious people supporting popular Islamic practices of the time period. By applying the notion of a religious impetus to both the 'Abbasids and the Zanj, Popovic makes quite a case for the significance of faith in the Zanj Rebellion. Without it, the Zanj may never have had a leader and the 'Abbasids may never have possessed the necessary motivation to win.

Talhami and Bacharach do not incorporate the importance of religious motivations into the main arguments of their articles and thus do not merit analysis in the section.

For the second part of my paper, I will discuss how certain authors relay military attributes of the Zanj Rebellion. Due to the length of their works, Bacharach, Popovic, and Nöldeke have the capacity to include more extensive military accounts of the revolt in comparison to Talhami and Oseni. Bacharach, Popovic, and Nöldeke differ in their descriptions of the events and emphasize distinct military aspects. Bacharach's "African Military Slaves in the Medieval Middle East: The Cases of Iraq (869-955) and Egypt (868-1171)" approaches the Zanj Rebellion in a remarkably different manner than the other scholars.

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<sup>17</sup> Nöldeke: 149.

<sup>18</sup> Popovic: 31, 57, 60, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Popovic: 152.

<sup>20</sup> Popovic: 92, 118, 120, 129.



First of all, his work encompasses a broader spectrum than just the uprising of the Zanj. As reflected by the title, Bacharach concentrates on the use of African military slaves in two particular areas, spanning a time frame much greater than that of the uprising. However, his article provides insight on the background, motivations, and results of the usage of African military slaves. Expressly relating to the Zanj Rebellion, he argues that the composition of the 'Abbasid and Zanj fighting forces effectively led to the defeat of the Zanj. Though primary sources say nothing on the subject, Bacharach argues that the slaves commenced the uprising with little military training, yet within a few years transformed themselves into a formidable army. While this transformation is underway, the 'Abbasids had to direct their attention to other problematic areas in the empire, such as Egypt, instead of devoting all their efforts to bringing down the rebellion. Bacharach combines these two points to show that the makeup of the 'Abbasid military came to include a variety of talented soldiers, such as the Tulunid general in Syria, Lu'lu, who defected and joined 'Abbasid ranks in 268/881. A number of now-trained Zanj joined the caliphal army as well. The skill of this enriched 'Abbasid army, according to Bacharach, is largely responsible for the ultimate failure of the rebellion. He argues that the uprising is fundamentally a political and military power contention between the Africans and the 'Abbasids. Bacharach concludes his article by putting forth the notion that African military slaves are most significant as a reflection of Islamic military history and an exemplification concerning the conclusion of earlier Islamic ideas on military organization.<sup>21</sup>

This sense of overall significance afforded to the Zanj in Islamic military history, or any other field for that matter, is not shared by Popovic, who maintains that, "the revolt does not seem to have influenced, in any lasting way, the course of Islam's history, nor brought about a radical change in social structure."<sup>22</sup> Though his book offers a different conclusion from the article discussed above, Popovic still primarily conveys the story of Zanj Rebellion as an organized military event. Starting with the origins of the uprising and a description of the leader, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq* then devotes nearly eighty pages of accounts regarding battles, torture, and noteworthy individuals on both sides of the fight. Popovic also labels the rebellion as a war, singling himself out from the other historians.<sup>23</sup> By attaching this label to the events, it makes sense that the structure of the book and recounting of affairs reads like a straightforward military history. However, this stress also can create confusion, and he mentions nearly every single Zanj and caliph military commander, the dates of every clash, and geographic location. The pages that recount the details of battle draw heavily from al-Ṭabarī, thus the narrative is rather one sided. Popovic includes endnotes with provocative questions and clarification regarding al-Ṭabarī's writing, but the end result of the chapters is still the same: a chronological interpretation of al-Ṭabarī's version of the Zanj rebellion. Retelling the revolt from this perspective also strikes one as definitively unemotional and yet provocatively gory. Popovic reports incidents of cannibalism and violent massacres without sparing many details,<sup>24</sup> thus making his account a graphic military history indeed.

Tantamount to Popovic's war-like retelling of event, Nöldeke also relays the revolt in a chronological order based on specific clashes and labels it as a war. Though unlike the previously discussed work, he sees the slave uprising as being highly significant because it was one of ". . . the bloodiest and most destructive rebellions which the history of West Asia

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<sup>21</sup> Bacharach: 474-5, 490-1.

<sup>22</sup> Popovic: 153-4.

<sup>23</sup> Popovic: 45, 53, 70.

<sup>24</sup> Popovic: 112, 114.

records. Its consequences must long have continued to be felt . . .”<sup>25</sup> The physical effects of the rebellion, such as casualties and the altered relations between the ‘Abbasids and the slaves, make the Zanj Rebellion so important in history according to Nöldeke, and hence his choosing of recounting the rebellion in terms of battles and people. Nöldeke writes without citing sources, which gains criticism from Popovic, and also refrains from using the plethora of names and dates that Popovic includes. Yet with this approach, *Sketches from Eastern History* also retains an epic-like story about the Zanj. Their courage in battle, the statesman-like conduct of Mawaffak, and the occasionally horrifying massacre imposed by the slaves<sup>26</sup> make for a dramatic retelling of the events in comparison with that of the other scholars.

Talhami and Oseni composed shorter articles on the rebellion and therefore write notably less on military attributes. Consequently, they do not need to be discussed in this section.

Inspiring a variety of scholarly works in an abundance of academic fields, the Zanj Rebellion remains a hotly debated subject due to lack of primary sources (except for al-Ṭabarī) and differing perspectives of modern-day writers. The uprising can be viewed through the various lenses of racism, socioeconomic class, religiosity, and even within the confines of military history, thus demarcating the Zanj Rebellion as highly unique and allowing for the innovation of modern scholars, as thoroughly explored in this literary review. Unfortunately, aside from a few names and dates, little concurrence seems to exist regarding the nature of the Zanj uprising, though there does seem to be a certain degree of awe at the overall epic character of the fifteen-year rebellion. However, the usage of the term “Zanj” cannot even be agreed upon, much less the overall significance or lack thereof in the scheme of Islamic history. Nevertheless, this insurrection will confidently continue to attract the attention of scholars as we optimistically hope for the revelation of new information in the form of archaeology or perhaps manuscripts. Only then can a complete picture of the Zanj Rebellion be revealed.

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<sup>25</sup> Nöldeke: 146, 174-5.

<sup>26</sup> Nöldeke: 159, 164.

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Ganymede and Ghulam:  
*Eros and the Quest for the Divine in the Classical Greek and Perso-  
Arabic Worlds*  
By Vanessa Voss

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When Achilles, hero of Homer's classic war saga *The Iliad*, receives news that the Trojan commander Hector has killed his dear companion Patroclus, taken the man's armor, and left him naked and disgraced on the battle field, Achilles, the greatest fighter of all the troops, weeps and tears his hair like a grieving Greek woman:

A dark cloud of grief came shrouding over Achilles./ Both hands clawing the ground for soot and filth./ he poured it over his head, fouled his handsome face/ and black ashes settled into his fresh clean war-shirt./...Achilles lay there fallen.../tearing his hair, defiling it with his own hands./...Antilochus kneeling near,.../clutched Achilles' hands as he wept his proud heart out—/ for fear he would slash his throat... "Patroclus—the man I loved beyond all other comrades, loved as my own life—I've lost him...let me die at once/...since it was not my fate/ to save my dearest comrade from his death!/...away from his fatherland he's perished, lacking me, my fighting strength, to defend him./ But now, since I shall not return to my fatherland...nor did I bring one ray of hope to my Patroclus<sup>1</sup>

The poet Ahmad al-'Ināyātī was known for frequenting a coffee shop in Damascus and drinking many cups of that liquid from a server (*sāqī*, a cup-bearer) named Ibrāhīm al-Suyūrī, with whom he was enamored. He writes,

Come, let us polish our rusty souls with the Ibrāhīmic visage.  
Come, let us gaze at the luminous moon which puts the bright sun to shame.  
Come, let us look at the tender branch, swaying in radiant garments.  
Come, let us take the cup from that lavish hand . . . <sup>2</sup>

In these two literary examples, a man is impassioned by another man. Patroclus is the driving force in Achilles's heart. When Agamemnon takes Achilles's war prize, Briseas, and thus causes Achilles to lose honor, the only one who can move the brooding Achilles is Patroclus. Plato discusses these men in his writings, such as in the *Symposium*, holding them as an example of true lovers.

Al-'Ināyātī plays with his cup-bearer's name, including it in his poem to both address his lover and call up the important religious figure Ibrāhīm. In his poetic vision, both his *sāqī*

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<sup>1</sup> Homer. *The Iliad*. Transl. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1998), 468-70.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ināyātī, Ahmad al-, *Dīwān*, MS(1), fol. 100a; MS(2), fol. 71a, quoted in Rouayheb, Khaled el-, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009),

42.

and the religious figure can cure the “rusty soul.” The moon is often used as a symbol of beauty, but it is also a symbol of the heavenly realm. Al-‘Ināyātī was one of the many poets between the 14th and 17th centuries who wrote in praise of youthful male beauty, often glossing over pederasty and speaking only to beauty and longing for men, appealing to the needs of the soul, not the body. Achilles and Patroclus are never spoken of as lusting for each other’s body, but each other’s presence. In the same way, many Arab poets speak of young men as someone longed for in the heart.

There is plenty to unpack in terms of philosophical, religious, and metaphysical values when it comes to the topic of homoerotic love and “brotherhood” in both the Classical Greek and Islamic worlds. The more one reads of 14th-17th-century poetic tradition in the Islamic world (from North Africa to Persia), the more one notices that certain themes are strangely familiar to an avid Hellenophile. In this paper, I explore underpinning themes present in both Classical Greek and Islamic thought concerning *erōs* and homoerotic friendship in a homosocial context.<sup>3</sup> First, I explore the conception of *erōs* in Plato’s *Symposium* and then discuss the concept of *futuwwah* in al-Sulami’s work on Sufi chivalry. I then present the Greek gender hierarchy—the roles of men, of youths, and women)—and discuss how these members of society are described and distinguished from each other metaphorically (women as wet, or adult men as the sun) and philosophically (the adult man and his experience of *erōs*, or women’s lack of). Then I bring forth examples which have parallels in Persian and Arabic writings (legal and allegorical) and poetry of the 14th through 17th centuries, citing figures such as Al-Nābulusī and the figure of the young Turk, or the *ghulam* (a young man, sometimes a servant, who barely shows indications of growing a beard). By comparing these two homosocial worlds and their ideas of beauty on unbearded youth, a larger theme between the two can be extracted with religious repercussion—the passage to a higher Truth/Divinity through the young male face, thus the movement of God into a masculine type.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Eros and Futuwwah***

In Plato’s *Symposium*, a group of men argue about the nature of love and what counts as the best love. Diotima’s speech is clearly Socrates’s view on love. The Socratic speech presents the concept of *erōs*: proper *erōs* transcends the body, it is a rebirthing of beauty (and thus truth) in the soul, a glimpse of the Higher realm through the beloved, an experience from which women are barred because they are “pregnant in the body,” not in the soul.<sup>5</sup> Love is described as being like a spirit in between a god and a mortal, yet neither mortal nor spirit. Mortals also seek love, because in love there can be wisdom (as proper love is a link to the gods, who are the bearers of beauty and wisdom). True love is not of the body. True love is a relation “in-between,” at first between two wisdom-seeking parties, seeking to

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term *homoerotic* to mean a same-sex relationship that arouses erotic sentiment, not physical excitement. To quote Eileen O’Neill in her essay “(Re)presentations of Eros: Exploring Female Sexual Agency,” “the erotic is what expresses sexual arousal and desire rather than what causes them.” I also add that physical action upon the erotic sentiment is not part of *erōs*/erotic love necessarily, but with its common use today the meanings become confused. Eros is not physical in nature, but spiritual. *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Alison Jagger et al. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 68-91.

<sup>4</sup> For Classical Greek society, the maleness of the Truth/God is not impious, but for the Islamic one, it is very problematic. This will be addressed in a larger version of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989). For a great discussion and critique of the *Symposium*, see Luce Irigaray’s essay “Sorcerer Love” in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*.

share their wisdom, then the “in-between” of the mortal and Divine. The ultimate aim of love is Divine wisdom.

Erotic love, proper erotic love, is only for men to experience with each other. Women have an overly-corporeal existence, thus cannot see the Truth beyond the veil of the material world. Women can never be true lovers, since they are perceived as being unable to seek wisdom and thus will never aim at a glimpse of the Divine.<sup>6</sup> Again I remind the reader that this is not explicitly homosexual love but homoerotic love, not a lust driven by a bodily compulsion, but driven by passion for the Divine in the beloved.

In al-Sulami’s work *The Way of Sufi Chivalry*, the term *futuwwah* is explained as “the way of the *fatī*,” a *fatī* being a handsome, brave young man. It is the path towards the ideal, noble, and perfect man as well as being that man. “Futuwwah is above all Love, love is the essence of futuwwah, Love of God, of His creation, love of Love . . . This code of honor leads to a state of total consciousness of Truth, not by hearing it or by seeing it, but by being it.”<sup>7</sup> The *fatī*, the handsome young man, “is he who breaks the idol” meaning that he breaks the illusory ego and body and moves towards “Ultimate Reality.”<sup>8</sup> The cover of al-Sulami’s book even states, “When the light of the heart is reflected in the beauty of face, that beauty is *futuwwah*.”<sup>9</sup>

For a *fatī*, love is not a bodily love but a love realized in the interaction with one’s close friends, on a social then ultimately spiritual level. Even though the beauty of the face is brought up, it is merely a vessel, a reflection, for the Higher good, but not the Good itself. The following is a story that al-Sulami relates to the proper expression of *futuwwah*:

Be among the lovers who obey with pleasure all the wishes of the beloved . . .  
. Let me tell you a story. My friends were in a garden. One of us was supposed to bring our meal, but he was late. We went up on the terrace to look out for him. We saw approaching us on the path a blind man accompanied by a youth with a beautiful countenance. We heard the blind man say to the younger one, “You ordered me to do ‘this.’ I did it. You prevented me from doing ‘that,’ and I did not do it. I have never acted against your wishes. What else do you want from me?” The young man said, “I wish you to die.” “Very well, I will die,” replied the blind man. He lay down and covered his face. I said to my friends, “That blind man indeed looks lifeless but he could not really have died; he must be pretending.” We came down, we looked at the man, we shook him and saw he was indeed dead.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to note in this story that the lover is blind. This is no coincidence, for the proper practice of loving from an elder to younger man is not said to be bodily love (even if hinted at through beautiful faces).

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<sup>6</sup> There were many female oracles that had links to god, but because they were unmarried and virgins, thus being able to escape their “bodily” restraint, they were not integrated into the everyday world of proper society and thus not totally “female” in the eyes of Greek citizenry.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami, *The Way of Sufi Chivalry*, trans. Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi (Rochester: Inner Traditional International, 1991), 13-15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, cover.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

What I would like to explore is the possibility that the concept of *futuwwah* (expressed through a *fatī*) is similar to the manly virtue leading to proper homosocial *erōs* in Classical Greece. To explore this claim, first I compare the concepts of woman, man, and boys in the Classical Greek and Islamic traditions, giving terms for women and boys that have parallels in both the Arab-Islamic (Persian-Islamic) and Ancient Greek traditions.

## The Classical Greek World

I start here by giving a simple overview of the Classical Greek concept of gendered beings, their properties, and their placement in society.

The Ancient Greek citizen (an adult, bearded man) is argued by Hellenistic philosophers (Aristotle mainly) to be rational, dry, complete, and capable of having a *telos* (meaning that he has an over-arching higher purpose, a higher value for his existence). The Ancient Greek woman is not a citizen like a man, though she was considered a citizen wife if married to a citizen man. She is conceived of as not owning her own *telos*, but her body is a place for male *technē* (meaning work), a place that must be worked on by that which is active (thus male) and has the ability to create something of Form (also male).<sup>11</sup>

All women are perceived as boundless; that is, they are subject to polluting forces more easily (even her sexual organ is an opening to the outside world). Since she is more subject to the outside pollution, she is more subject to chaos itself. In Greek mythology, Uranus had to cover *female* chaos (Gaia) in order to create the world, but Gaia had created Uranus to do just that.<sup>12</sup> Women are also seen as never sexually satisfied. Once a woman is sexually initiated in marriage, she is thought to become uncontrollable.<sup>13</sup> It was thought that only by bearing a child could this carnal aspect of hers relax.

Women are conceived as mixed dirt, wet, porous, unbounded, and lacking in completion in the Classical Greek world. Women are also seen as imperfect men. She is *molusmatōdās* (polluted, ritually), *apeiros* (without boundary), *ateleīōtos* (without fulfillment, incomplete), and *pathikeuomai/pathikos* (enjoying passivity).

An important topic to address for this discussion is the Classical idea of what a boy is in relation to his society. The boy is not a man, but a male waiting to become a man (one of the words for boy is *paída*, which is neuter). Through the growth of a beard and through his “rebirth” by an older man, the youth become a man (not just a male). The boy’s mother gives only bodily life. She gives the mere matter. Citizen men give spiritual and public life. He gives Form to the matter. There is a named role to be played by both the unbearded boy and the older man—that is the *epastās* and the *erōmenos*, the lover and the beloved.

This is the foundation on which my assertion of the similarities between the expression of *eros* and *futuwwah* can truly stand: the lower rank of women as “more bodily” and the idea of men needing to rebirth a youth into the man’s world from that “more bodily”

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<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, “On the Generation of Animals,” *The Basic Writings of Aristotle*, trans. Arthur Platt (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 675-680.

<sup>12</sup> David Halperin, John Winkler, and Froma Zeitlin, eds., *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 160. Gaia claims it is Zeus that does this, but it might be attributed to Uranus as well.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

woman's world. In the Islamic tradition, women do not fare any better in concepts about their bodies and spiritual natures.

## The Classical and Post-Classical Islamic World

In this section I discuss the similar concepts of women's nature running throughout historical Islamic discourse about women, and then introduce the discussion on the beliefs about boys.<sup>14</sup>

The concepts *'ql* and *nafs* are defining features in Islamic discourse and also in the creation of roles men and women play in Islamic society. *'ql* translates to reason while *nafs* translates to desire or bodily passion. Similar to the discourse in the Western philosophical tradition, the formula is that the male is reasonable (thus more spiritual) since he has more *'ql*, while the female is more passionate, more bodily (and thus lacking in reason as compared to men) since she has more *nafs* and less *'ql* to control it.<sup>15</sup> Thus, even though Mohammad claims all souls are equal before God, saying

Allah has promised the believers—men and women—Gardens under which rivers flow to dwell therein forever, and beautiful mansions in Gardens of . . . Eden,<sup>16</sup>

Many scholarly writings and hadith claim women are not as spiritually competent as men. While some theorists hold that women were written as equals in the *Qur'an* (different but equal), socially, philosophically, and legally women were still perceived as bodily, wild creatures needing a male relative to keep control over them, even though, as Asma Barlas argues “they (the Qur'anic verse) make no claims about the female body.”<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that *nafs* is not by nature bad, since it is needed for procreation, for eating and survival, but when it is not controlled, one will act badly.<sup>18</sup> One must have *nafs* to be a respectable and brave man, but in the case of women, *nafs* creates in them weakness since they lack the reason to control it. This is also the reason given why men should inhabit the world of culture and the public, and women the world of nature and the private: men can employ the essential *nafs* under the ropes of *'ql* to wander the world freely and safely, to study and be political. Women must be at home to be safe from themselves and others, since their *nafs* cannot be controlled and used for social benefit, but instead would cause social disintegration.<sup>19</sup> Their sexuality is too volatile.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For much of this discussion of the concept of male and female “qualities” in everyday society, I will be relying heavily on Azam Torab's *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Torab, *Performing Islam*, 49. For a great overview of the history of the reason/passion gender division in Western thought, see Genevieve Lloyd's *The Man of Reason* (1993).

<sup>16</sup> *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, At-Taubah (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2001), 9: 72.

<sup>17</sup> Asma Barlas, “Islam and Body Politics: Inscribing (Im)morality” (paper presented at the Conference on Religion and Politics of the Body, Nordic Society for Philosophy of Religion, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, June 26-28, 2009). For other writers on the history of feminist thought in Islam, see Fatima Mernissi and Leila Ahmed.

<sup>18</sup> Even Aristotle's ethics require certain passions to be employed to achieve his ethics of the “mean.”

<sup>19</sup> As a side note, I would also like to add that in Classical Greek society, citizen women were veiled, if they were ever lucky enough to leave their homes. The Greek word for that veil, and the veil worn on the wedding day, is called *krādemnon* which also refers to the “stopping of a bottle.”



This idea of women being more passionate and bodily is also linked to the idea of *fitnah* being a female problem. *Fitnah* loosely means social disorder.<sup>21</sup> In Azam Torab's book, *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran*, she speaks of conservative jurists who, wanting to argue that women need to be denied control over certain aspects of their life, cite that women "are presumed to be the major site of social disorder (*fitnah*), luring men away from God."<sup>22</sup> The folkloric story of Yusuf and Zulaykha is also linked to the idea of *fitneh* and women's responsibility for it. In this story, Zulaykha, the wife of a Pharaoh, who cannot control her desires (*nafs*), tries endlessly to seduce the handsome and virtuous Yusuf, who does not give into her (perhaps because he has control over his *nafs* due to his ample amount of *qil*).<sup>23</sup> But what is the *fitneh* that Zulaykha is causing? What disorder? It is not just that she is seeking sexual fulfillment outside of her marriage (a marriage which perhaps she did not particularly want, as it was a royal marriage); it is that she is assuming the male role of active sexual drive, pursuit, and thus making Yusuf the passive receiver. The passive role is not meant for a respectable man in society, just like in Classical Greek society. That is the role for women. This reversal is completely disastrous to the patriarchal paradigm, thus complete *fitneh*.<sup>24</sup>

Another misogynistic ideological structure within historical Islamic discourse is the concept "*sawt al-mar'a 'awra*," meaning "the voice of a woman is a shameful thing."<sup>25</sup> The idea that women's voices are dangerous is not an idea from the *Qur'an* (many of the misogynistic practices listed so far are not from the *Qur'an*), but from later Islamic theorists, such as the 11th century Persian Islamic theologian and philosopher Al-Ghazali. In his writing about music, Al-Ghazali claims that women should not sing, even if they are not seen, because their voices lead to lustful thinking (even young beardless boys should take care in singing, since they might be too enticing). This also can be linked back to the idea that women are by nature filled with more *nafs*. Al-Ghazali says, "but with women, there is something more which effects the moving of lust."<sup>26</sup> Obviously, the "something" which causes the arousal of lust is the abundance of *nafs* that a woman carries within her female essence. It almost seems that a woman's abundance of passion can spring from her mouth like a fishing net which catches men, strong and weak alike. But even more dangerous, this voice can cause confusion in spiritual music. A woman's voice might draw a man away from God when he attempts to be closer to God, or he might get the lust for the woman confused with his "lust" for God. "So he over whom a passion has gained control," Al-Ghazali says, "applies all he hears to that passion . . . . yea, the thoughts which control the heart weigh more than the expression of what is

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<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Rosen, *Bargaining for Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 34-37.

<sup>21</sup> *Fitneh* here means the disorder, or the breaking of order, which occurs when women are seductive. *Fitneh* could be described as anything breaking society, or one's relationship to God.

<sup>22</sup> Torab, *Performing Islam*, 50, 55

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 60. It is also a note of interest that the Yusuf in this story is the Joseph from the Bible, the favorite son of Jacob, and that Zulaykha is Potifer's wife, unnamed in the Bible. What is also interesting is that poets such as Jami portray Zulaykha with sympathy, since she loves so purely, whereas the conservative Sunni or Shia explanation for her love is purely *naf*-based carnal lust and wicked.

<sup>24</sup> Afsaneh Najmabadi gives a pointed interpretation of the story in which the theme is that the men in these kinds of tales need to be removed from the "corporeality" of women, thus the driving force of the conclusion. "Reading 'Wiles of Women' Stories as Fictions of Masculinity," *Imagined Masculinities*, 147-168.

<sup>25</sup> The quote in Al-Ghazali's writing clearly says women's voices aren't always shameful, but when they are singing, it is always a shameful thing, since "hearing may invite to looking and drawing near, which is unlawful." *Ihya' Ulum ad-Din of Al-Ghazali*, trans. D.B MacDonald, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (April 1901), 234-236.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Ghazali 236.

heard.<sup>27</sup> So even if a man who is trying to reach out to unite with God already is being ensnared by the passionate sound of a woman's voice, that passionate voice will trump the intent of the song (even the intent of the man, too). Even if the woman sings of God, the expression is lost under the passionate heart. Thus, women should not even sing sacred Sufi songs. Yet again, we see the theme that women are perceived to hinder man's relationship with the divine.<sup>28</sup>

Women fare no better in the Classical and Post-Classical Islamic world as in the Classical Greek world. In both worlds, women are polluted (*molusmatōdās/nejas*), without boundary, chaotic (*apeiros/fitneh*), and lusting (*ateleiotos/nafs*)<sup>29</sup>. Though it seems that in the Islamic tradition, women are not viewed *pathikeuomai/pathikos* (as enjoying passivity, as craving to become passive sexually), there is still the fear in both societies that a male youth might learn to enjoy being sexually passive, which is still female in some way.<sup>30</sup>

I have shown that in both these worlds, women were seen as a lower, more bodily. There was a fear that since young boys were raised in a woman's universe, they would become like women. It was up to the elder men to bring the young males into manhood, into the public life. This also meant bringing them into a higher realm, with the possibility of wisdom and glimpsing the Divine. How does this translate into socially-acceptable behavior between two men, especially the younger wanting to join the spiritual realm of the elder man, who has already separated from the "lesser" world of women? I will now discuss the proper relationship between men and youths in both these societies and how they compare and contrast. I first expand on the concept of *erōmenos* (the beloved) and *erastās* (the lover), and then discuss the roles of the youth in the Islamic world. I will also give examples of what these "social rebirthing" relationships were not supposed to be, giving the examples of the *kinaidoi/katapugones* and the *lutī/mukhannath*.

## The Youthful Male and the Man: The Greek World

In this section, I discuss the relationship between a youthful male and an older citizen man and what is acceptable for a future and current citizen and what is not.

The man-boy relationship is called the relationship of an *erastās* and an *erōmenos*. The *erastās* is the older man who is a part of society, a citizen who has a beard and a legal wife. He is a full grown man and dominates in many ways (over women, over slaves and non-citizens, and, to a point, over boys). An *erōmenos* is the young male who has not yet become a man but does not belong in the woman's world any longer. He is a male waiting to become a man. He is the passive one courted by the dominating, active *erastās*, and although the youth himself is passive, he does not take pleasure from being the passive partner (because he is soon to become a man through his relationship with the *erastās*, not a woman, who enjoys passivity in relation to a man).

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that the thoughts on women vary in practice in the Modern Islamic world, with sects that allow men and women to pray together, women to sing, and women to walk in public uncovered. Here I am giving historical theory alongside some of its practice in more conservative societies.

<sup>29</sup> I think here that these terms are comparable. The Classical Greek-given reason for women's unending lust is due to their incompleteness. I am currently researching more words of comparison for carnality.

<sup>30</sup> This is also an issue I am still researching and will explore at a later time.

It can be dangerous for the young Greek male to be rebirthed into the homosocial world of males: he could learn to enjoy passivity. In the event of this, he risks losing his rightful place as a citizen. If he becomes a *pathikos* (passive partner who enjoys his position) or a *katapugones* (a man who seduces men and enjoys acting like/being a woman), he is in danger of not becoming an “active” man. Any youth who wishes to be a citizen (who is eligible and non-foreign) must be reborn a man, for one cannot be a citizen if he is like a “passive” woman. Women (those who are passive) are not citizens.

Another danger for the Greek youth was learning to love women. Loving women might lead to becoming a woman and thus becoming passive (*anterōs*). An adulterer was not admonished for taking women who belong to other men, but admonished by allowing himself to be too interested in women and thus becoming one himself. The Greek word for a male adulterer is *moichos*, and he is not passive in his nature but turns passive through contact with women who corrupt him by turning him into them.<sup>31</sup> Women’s ability to turn men into a *pathikos* is a danger, even when men appear to be the active, dominant figure; thus, one must limit their contact with them to maintain proper manhood.

Proper erotic love is not end-driven or sexually-driven for either parties involved. The boy is not insatiable like women and not a public commodity like a male or female *pornā* (a sex worker). The beloved boy has beauty that can lead the lover to the Divine (the Platonic idea of *erōs*). Platonic *erōs* defines divine love as “vertical,” leading upwards. These themes (the proper place of the beloved boy and the path via erotic love to the Divine) will also arise in the Perso-Arabic context which is discussed in the next section.

The main issue I would like the reader to take with them from this section is the idea of man-young male love as superior and also the gender hierarchy within Greek society, where women/passives are on the bottom and the dominant/actives are on the top. Why is the man-boy relationship better? It is because it is the love of a man who will create a man (socially), another higher being like himself. It is only by loving the beauty of the young man that an adult man can see the Divine, the Truth, and Wisdom (because a love of a woman is bound by procreative desires). As the older man glimpses the younger, he is on the first step in giving birth to the experience of divinity between the pair. As Diotima puts it in her speech in the *Symposium*,

Some people are pregnant in the body, and for this reason turn more to women and pursue love in that way, providing themselves through childbirth with immortality . . . while others are pregnant in the soul . . . and these are pregnant with what is fitting for the soul to bear and bring to birth. And what is fitting? Wisdom and the rest of virtue . . .<sup>32</sup>

And who will be the group that is birthing Truth? Men. Who will be allowed to glimpse the Divine through erotic love (which is not of the body)? Men. And it is men who are lucky enough to be able to glimpse Divinity in the Islamic Arabic and Persian tradition as well.

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<sup>31</sup> James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999), 165-6.

<sup>32</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 56.

## The Youthful Male and Man: The Islamic World

I have shared all these terms to begin my discussion of the similarities underlining the use (abuse) of *erōs*, not just in Classical Greek culture (and its diffusion and preservation through philosophy and reapplication in the Christian writings of those like Augustine), but its apparent influence (or perhaps native development) in the Arab-Islamic world of the 14<sup>th</sup> through 17th centuries.

Men in the Classical and Post-Classical Islamic World, since they are in a world separate from women (like in Classical Greece), engage in a form of romantic love with each other. The appropriate relationship occurs when an older man takes an interest in a younger man (the *nawkhat* or *āmrād*).<sup>33</sup> The younger man must be seen in a religious, enlightening way—an older man can see God's beauty and goodness in him. If he perceived the boy with carnal desire, he is not engaging in anything socially acceptable: he becomes a *lutī*, or sodomite.<sup>34</sup>

This paradigm, which parallels the Greek one, has a rich history in poetic works in Arabic and Persian by which this homoerotic affection is expressed. In this section I use poetic examples to prove that the paradigm of *erastās/erōmenos* applies to the Perso-Arabic world. I have already shown that their views on women and boys are parallel, and by giving the poetic examples, I strengthen my point.

In the Greek tradition, the youth was meant to show the elder, who was rebirthing him into the male society, a glimpse of the Divine. The role of the religious *shāhid*, who was himself an *āmrād*, plays this role in the Classical Islamic world. Consider the following poetic verses:

In beauty and masculinity there is a secret unknown except to the sanctified...

One who does not believe in seeing beauty is an unbeliever.

“Oh boy,” if I regard you as a body, and if I ascend to a higher level I say,  
“Spirit of essences,”

And if I reduce you and me to nothing I say, “O Lord, in his most  
comprehensive attribute.”<sup>35</sup>

Poets write about male beauty as a path to the divine, and that looking at young boys as a meditative/religious practice could allow someone in their right mind to glimpse God. El-Rouayheb says,

In other words, looking at physical beauty was not in itself sufficient for the appearance of love on the part of the beholder. In Arab-Islamic love theory,

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<sup>33</sup> The terms I will be using are drawn primarily from works like Najmabadi's book *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and el-Rouayheb's book, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*.

<sup>34</sup> This topic has been elaborated on in detail through Islamic law about what is appropriate between partners. *Liwāt* (sodomy) is never defended as appropriate and often given as a reason to sometimes avoid youthful boys, because the temptation might be to see them carnally.

<sup>35</sup> Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 101-3.

aesthetic appreciation (*istihsān*) usually featured as the first stage in a process that culminates in passion, ardent infatuation . . . . It was recognized that love was not simply a function of physical beauty, and could instead cause a person to see as beautiful that which was not so. Those who saw love as sublime and praiseworthy were inclined to reject deflationary explanations that would make it the effect of lustful looking or the excessive accumulation of semen in the body.<sup>36</sup>

But this is not just the contemporary author who is placing modern ideas of beauty and the Divine in homoerotic content. El-Rouayheb bases this assertion on the writings of Sufi mystics, poets and philosophers hundreds of years before him. Poets write of the youthful beauty of a male face in terms not of lust but of an intricate supernatural experience *between* the elder and the youth. The youth gains wisdom through the words of the elder, that is admission into male society. The elder gains a glimpse of the Divine through the practice of *istihsān* (aesthetic appreciation) by the vehicle of *nazar* (gazing). A key element shared in the Platonic school of homoerotic lover and the al-Nābulusī path of thought is this concept of aesthetic contemplation. Philosophers and poets in both schools wrote theories attempting to account for how the glimpse of the Divine is in the youthful face. One writer, Zayn al-'Abidin al-Bakrī al-Siddīqī, theorized a divine origin of youthful beauty similar to that Aristophanes's story in Plato's *Symposium*, in which the soul was once spherical and now looks for its counterpart in order to create a perfect "whole." In Aristophanes's speech, confoundingly, the privilege is given to male-male "sphere-souls" that have joined, and he brushes off the male-female and female-female as being lower order. It might be possible to assume al-Siddīqī would draw the same conclusion, regardless of this miss-step of logic due to the idea of the male face as the vehicle for the Divine.

One of the most prominent writers on the theme of the homoerotic lover is al-Nābulusī. He gives many accounts of love between men and *āmrād*, citing specifically their purity and lack of carnality. He writes that any man who sees the *āmrād*/elder relationship as carnal is ignorant of beauty and even ignorant of the Divine. He writes, "love (*al-mahabbah*) is different from the sexual desire (*al-shahwah*), and this everyone knows from himself if he abandons obstinacy."<sup>37</sup> This means that once one has been initiated into the glimpse of the divine via a *shāhid*, that a true lover will no longer question the carnality or baseness of the love. The cooked will remain cooked, never to become raw again. They will understand that the love is the love of God through the young boy, not of the young embodied male himself. To love a young male properly one cannot have it be a carnal love, for "base, carnal love aims at satisfying the self's desires. By contrast, the mystical love of beauty involves an annihilation of the self—and attempts to become a transparent medium for the outflow of the divine love directed at divine beauty."<sup>38</sup> And this beauty is not bound up in ego fulfillment and desire, but of losing the ego via love (that is overcome by Love). It should be noted here that losing the ego is an essential part of *futuwwah* as well.

When he (Sa'īd ibn 'Uthman al-'Abbas) was circumambulating the Kaaba, there came into his heart a vast sense of love, and he uttered the words, "O my beloved!" Then he heard a secret voice say, "Are you not yet prepared to give up your attachment to the feeling of love?" He fainted. When he returned to

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 91.

consciousness, he heard himself saying, "I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing."<sup>39</sup>

Al-'Abbas became enlightened about the Divine when he realized that Love is beyond the feeling of love: it is giving up that bodily feeling and seeing Love. Feeling love requires an ego. Being Love, experience true Love, is egoless.

There was much written for and against such relationships. Legal writers, such as Ibn Hajar, claimed that looking at boys was by nature satanic or incarnationism (*ḥalūl*).<sup>40</sup> There were also those in Athens who challenged the *erastās /erōmenos* relationship as well. Both sets of criticism were based in the idea that no one was truly capable of looking beyond beauty to the Divine, but all were stuck in carnal lust. As proponents of the youth-man relationship claim, those who have not experienced seeing the Divine in a youthful face cannot understand going beyond carnality.<sup>41</sup> To one initiated, there is poetry and Divine presence in the beloved's face. It is not worshiping something other than God but a direct link to God.

What does such a view of true love do the status of women as partners and as being capable of seeing the Divine? Such questions are bound to follow such a debate. While many writers claimed that the Divine could be perceived in a female face (though it was more easily found in a male face due to the assumed carnal drive present in seeing a woman's face), there is not much written about women seeing the Divine in a male face. How can women be barred from the experience of the Divine if the Divine is truly egalitarian? In Greek society, the relegation of the Divine to the male sphere is unproblematic since their religious system allows multiplicity of forms, genders, and qualities. For followers of Islam, relegating God to the male-only sphere contradicts the philosophy of the *Qur'an* in two ways: it masculinizes God and also ignores the words of equality originally found in God's Word. If the beloved in Sufi poetry is often described as a *shāhid* who also makes the good and beautiful visible in this world, what does that add to the understanding of God? The intended (or unintended) consequence is the maleness of God. If beauty is glimpsed more often through a male face, is not God then associated with maleness?<sup>42</sup>

I conclude by pointing to this serious issue of the masculinization of the Divine in Islamic writings of homoerotic love. The Divine, in the Islamic tradition, is a genderless Being and to attribute a gender onto the Divine is to commit blasphemy. Yet little has been written on the history of this blasphemous masculinization of God in Islam. I hope that by starting the questioning of such concepts of masculinity, boyhood, and womanhood embedded in poetic and religious writings in Islamic history, the door can be opened to ungendering the Divine and rethinking gender itself in the substantive world. This paper is one small step in the questioning of basic assumptions of gender and divinity still latent in the history.

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<sup>39</sup> Sulami, *Sufi Chivalry*, 47.

<sup>40</sup> Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 112.

<sup>41</sup> I happen to agree, and in my expansion of this paper, I will give legal critics's views on what they think was always *liwat* and more examples of defense against these critics by Sufi masters and poets.

<sup>42</sup> When this paper is expanded, I will be using feminist theory to show how concepts (in this case The Divine) become masculine. Using critical tactics such as those Irigaray uses towards Aristotle and Plato, I will try to unpack the misogyny inherent in Islamic philosophy. I will also be using Asma Barlas's book *Believing Women in Islam* to aid my case.

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