

and a population of approximately 35,000. Since its inception, the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation has launched six major projects: (i) The Sunna Project and its associated online component, the ihsan Network; (ii) The Islamic Manuscript Association; (iii) The Dār al-Kutub Project, for the preservation, conservation and curation of the Egyptian National Library's estimated 60,000 manuscripts, and working with the National Library to establish it as a regional leader in collection care and management; (iv) Editio Electrum, which is the Foundation's design studio, providing support to the Foundation's efforts to revive the traditional arts of the Islamic book; and (v) the Islamic Art Network, which provides a number of important resources for Islamic art and architectural historians including an online digital photo archive, prepared with the support and permission of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, that contains over 10,000 images of the Islamic architectural monuments of Cairo; and (vi) Onetradition, which is the imprint dedicated to the Foundation's publications of spiritual and metaphysical writings from all major religious traditions. For details of these projects, see <http://www.thesaurus-islamicus.org/index.htm>. The Foundation has offices in Cairo, at the University of Cambridge, England, and in Stuttgart, Germany.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL
Center for Islam and Science
Canada



Sonja Brentjes. *Travellers from Europe in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, 16th-17th Centuries: Seeking, Transforming, Discarding Knowledge.* Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate/Variorum, 2010. xxx+320 pp, ISBN 978-1-4094-0533-7, HC.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, Muslims have been consistently characterized as ill-suited for science because of an inherent deficiency regarding rational enquiry. This disability is presumed to be embedded deep in their race, religion, languages, and cultures. In some articulations, it has been said that there is something inherently wrong with Islam and Muslims such that they are not, were never and will never be genuine heirs to scientific knowledge, whether of the ancient Greeks or modern Western science. This verdict was passed in absentia; the accused were not offered a chance to defend themselves, as it was abundantly clear to the prosecution (*à la* Karl Marx) that they cannot represent themselves but must be represented—an adage which is not without truth in this case, for had they been asked to defend themselves in the nineteenth century,

Muslims could not have offered any concrete evidence against these charges (Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's (1838-1897) confused and emotional rebuttal to Ernst Renan's (1823-1892) racist bigotry notwithstanding). A very large amount of carefully collected data, gathered since the twelfth century in two separate phases of European interaction with the Muslim world, was ready to support these charges.

The first phase began in the late twelfth and continued throughout the thirteenth centuries, a time when the Church-sponsored translation and acquisition of knowledge brought into Latin a large number of scientific texts on arithmetic, algebra, geometry, astronomy, astrology, geography, and medicine along with many philosophical texts from Arabic into Latin; these were considered to be the preserved knowledge of the Greeks genuinely belonging to their legitimate heir, that is, Christian Europe, and were used at the newly established universities at Bologna, Paris, Cambridge, Oxford and elsewhere. The second phase began in the late eighteenth century and produced a continuous flow of French, English, Dutch, Austrian and German traders, armies, missionaries, colonial administrators, and scholars who were not seekers of knowledge like their earlier counterparts but emissaries of an Enlightened Europe which was about to swallow the rest of the world into the tidal wave of its rising power. They brought with them Western science and knowledge and found in the soon-to-be colonized lands learning institutions, hospitals, armies, administrative and political bodies, all of which seemed to them despicably ossified, stagnant and inferior compared to their own institutions.

The verdict passed on Islam and Muslim with regard to science (or even rationality writ large) was based on this dual European experience. The contemporary historians of science and Orientalists, both of whom contributed toward the construction of a framework for historiography of Islamic science, allowed little room for any alternative narrative. Subsequent scholars contributed to the consolidation of the verdict, and it was thus written—and sealed—in textbooks. Then, however, appeared a few brave souls who found the verdict incommensurate with what they were discovering in the 1960s through a painstaking reading of scientific manuscripts and examination of instruments which no European had ever touched before. They started to ask fundamental questions: how can such a verdict be passed when no one has ever examined the thousands of manuscripts dealing with astronomy and mathematics—especially those belonging to a period which even the most sympathetic judges, such as George Sarton (1884-1956), the Belgian chemist and historian of science generally regarded as the founder of the discipline of history of science, had declared to be barren?

The verdict was reopened to question during the last quarter of the twentieth century through the work of historians of science such as David King, George Saliba, Abdelhamid I. Sabra and others, initially only in certain isolated

respects but then more generally and finally in its very construction. Sonja Brentjes' work has contributed toward this revision. Born in 1951 and raised in the former German Democratic Republic, and currently at the University of Seville, Brentjes specializes in the history of mathematics. Of late her work has broadened to include a critical examination of the over-arching aspects of archeology of knowledge transmission between cultures, especially between the Islamic world and Europe as she notes in her introduction to the present book:

I came to recognize that our previous meta-narrative of the intellectual relationships between the 'West' and the 'East', in particular between 'Europe' and 'Islam', was flawed on several levels. In my own intellectual journey, the four most important of these levels concerned our pre-suppositions, the criteria and methods for analyzing historical evidence, the questions we do and do not ask and the answers and judgments we do and do not construct. Categories like inferiority and superiority or the mostly implicit beliefs that progress is the only 'natural' trajectory for science and that societies to which this 'axiom' does not apply are intrinsically flawed were part of the criteria upon which we built answers and evaluations. The search for the 'primeval locus or form' of a method, a subject matter, an institution or an observation or the reduction of the matter of inquiry to scientific content and usually only one of the cultures and its representatives involved in producing such kinds of knowledge dominate our repertoire of questions...

Once I began to realize that our historical narrative of the intellectual encounters between Catholic, Protestant and later secular societies in Europe and Islamic societies in Europe, western Asia and northern Africa was highly selective in its choice of topics, periods and actors and often negatively inclined toward Islamic societies, I began to pay more attention to the stories told in the historical sources that I studied and the methods that were applied to compose them. I began to understand that our concept of humanism was too narrow in its exclusive focus on the role of Greek and Roman authors. (xiv-xv)

Travellers from Europe in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires contains eight previously published articles, all but one printed with original page numbering, as is customary for volumes in Ashgate's Variorum Collected Studies Series. As its title suggests, it focuses on European travelers to the Ottoman and Safavid Empires during the 16th and the 17th centuries, and asks

questions that are too seldom asked...: how, where and with whom visitors of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires acquired the necessary communication skills and learned where to look for the kind of knowledge and objects they wished or had been told to buy, copy, or appropriate otherwise, what problems they encountered in these undertakings and how they solved or sidestepped them. Who were their intermediaries and brokers of introductions, contacts, permissions and safe guards? What were the concepts and methods of teaching and learning the various languages spoken and written in western Asia? How can we corroborate the veracity of the travellers' accounts about the adventures,

friendships and dangers, that is, what was ‘fact’ and what ‘fiction’, and what choices could and did the writer make when drafting his letters, diary entries or accounts? With whom did he cooperate in which activities abroad and at home? In short, which were the many little and bigger steps a traveller had to take physically and metaphorically in order to arrive at the chosen stations of his journey(s) and reap the gains of his courage, curiosity, patience and boldness? (xxii)

The first five articles address aspects of these questions. The first, “The Interests of the Republic of Letters in the Middle East, 1550-1700,” challenges broad contours of the narrative on the place and fate of the so-called rational sciences in Muslim societies through an examination of the reports of the West European travellers, who encountered “educated people capable of understanding and answering their visitors’ scholarly questions in non-trivial ways” (435). The second, “On the Relation between the Ottoman Empire and the West European Republic of Letters (17th-18th Centuries),” disputes H.J.M. Nellen’s 1996 claim that “in the Ottoman Empire there was no autonomous scholarly life such as was developing in the West more or less independently of Church and State” (121). Brenjtes opens her paper by stating: “I believe that Nellen’s statements are fundamentally wrong” and then goes on to provide, with critical control, solid evidence for her conclusion.

The third and the fourth articles in the volume focus on the published and unpublished writings of Pietro della Valle (1586-1652); the third opens on a note of courtly courtesy:

In 1561, on his second journey to the Safavid Empire, Anthony Jenkinson carried a letter from Queen Elizabeth that greeting Shah Tahmasp in the following manner:

Elizabeth, by the grace of God, queene of England, &c. To the right mightie, and right uictorius prince, the great Sophie, emperor of the Persians, Medes, Parthians, Hyrcanes, Carmaranians (sic), Margians, of the people on this side, and beyond the river of Tygris, and of all men and nations between the Caspian sea and the gulph of Perisan, greeting, and most happie increase in all prosperitie. (1)

It goes on to examine published and unpublished versions of della Valle’s letters and travel diary and concludes:

The printed letters differ in many aspects from the originals sent by della Valle to Schipano, the question arises whether they differ also in spirit, something denied by della Valle’s assurance that he only omitted private, slippery and politically sensitive statements. Given the enormous difference with regard to the presence of authors and books in the two versions of the letters [published and unpublished], this question can only be answered with yes. The letters as originally composed by della Valle had a much more private and much more Oriental outlook than letters given to the printers. Many facets of the original letters’ Oriental character have been annihilated, including della Valle’s

researches into the administrative geography of Safavid Iran. (22)

The fourth article, “Pietro della Valle’s Latin Geography of Safavid Iran (1624-1628): Introduction,” as suggested by the title, is an introduction to and annotated translation of della Valle’s treatise on the geography of Iran. The fifth article, “Early Modern Western European Travellers in the Middle East and their Reports about the Sciences” is a fascinating analytical piece filled with insights one acquires after long years of patient inner reflections and deliberate intellectual journey. Brentjes also addresses the mystery of the markedly different attitudes of European travelers toward the Sunni Ottomans and Shi’i Safavid through a narrative filled with direct quotations from primary sources, such as letters and travel accounts.

The sixth article, “Pride and Prejudice: The Invention of a ‘Historiography of Science’ in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires by European Travellers and Writers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” continues in its thematic concerns with the previous article, but the focus here shifts to the question of the relative subordination of the Ottomans and the Safavids in the European historiography of Islamic science as opposed to the Arabs. Brentjes begins by making two major claims: (i) “travellers and writers from Catholic and Protestant Europe who visited the Ottoman and Safavid empires and wrote about their travels or empires’ histories and present state of affairs laid the foundation for the current contradictory attitudes towards the history of science in the Islamic world”; and (ii) “the factors that shaped this newly emerging discourse arose from religious convictions, political enmities, scholarly training, modes of ensuring ‘politically correct’ behavior, clientele relationships, and social hierarchies in Catholic and Protestant countries in Europe” (229). To substantiate her claims, she first provides a general outline of the components of the discourse about the sciences in the two Muslim states in western sources and follows it with three case studies.

The seventh article, “Peiresc’s Interests in the Middle East and Northern Africa in Respect to Geography and Cartography,” focuses on certain aspects of the life and work of Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), the French astronomer and antiquarian, who determined the difference in longitude of various locations in Europe, around the Mediterranean, and in North Africa, and who “was on a never ending quest for information about activities of nature, the political climate, commerce, history, languages, religious beliefs and practices in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, and for finding the cheapest, but also most reliable ways to acquire manuscripts, antiquities, plants, and animals” (1). It examines (i) Peiresc’s network with the Ottoman Empire and its dependencies through his letters; (ii) his investigations of winds, tides, and volcanoes in the Mediterranean region, once again through his correspondence; and (iii) his interest in Arabic geographies and mapmaking.

The last article of the volume, “Astronomy a Temptation? On Early Modern Encounters across the Mediterranean Sea,” a paper presented at a conference focusing on the question “whether astronomy turned during the early modern period into a discipline providing other areas of intellectual enterprise with guidance”, examines this question from six different angles and concludes by stating that “no straightforward, unequivocal picture emerges from the narratives, the practices, and the objects as to whether astronomy indeed provided travelers to the Ottoman and Safavid Empires with guiding principles for what they should look for, buy, ask for, talk about, and observe” (42).

The present volume is necessary reading for historians of science, especially those latter-day intellectual heirs (such as Toby Huff) of still-influential figures such as Ernst Renan and Goldziher, who continue to repeat the grand but flawed and prejudiced narrative the nineteenth century, formulated in the departing glory of the Empire. Although all of these papers have been published elsewhere, their collection in one volume makes them a valuable source for any future historian of science who wishes to write a critical and nuanced history of science in Islamic civilization, an overdue task which awaits a competent scholar.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL
Center for Islam and Science
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Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych. *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010; PB; xx+306 pp; ISBN: 978-0-253-22206-0.

Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and Adjunct Professor of Comparative Literature at the Indiana University, is clearly at the cutting edge of the field. In her latest work, she has extended her expertise in pre-Islamic poetry to the poetry of the Prophetic era and beyond, and she has done so with a sensitivity that is hard to find in academic discourse on Islam. *The Mantle Odes* is a feast for the general reader, a storehouse of ideas and research leads for the scholar, and a valuable addition to literature on poetics and literary theory. The three Mantle Odes translated in this book span several centuries of Islamic history, from the Prophetic time to the medieval Mamlūk period (late 13th century) to the colonial era. *The Mantle*