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Þý Th. Emil Homerin (ed. and trans.): Q ¼ishah al-B  
The Principles of Sufism [Book review]

Knysh, Alexander

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at some distance from the tribal capital are particularly promising, and we may hope for further illumination on the subjects of tribe and territory when more of the documents have been studied.

The great virtues of HOFFMANN-RUF's book are thoroughness, good sense, clarity of expression and transparency, characteristics by no means universal in the literature on pre-modern Oman. The book's deficiencies are minor in comparison with its virtues, but they are unfortunately of a type that will diminish its readership. The main problem is an unhappy arrangement of the material. Parts of the book resemble a calendar of documents, while other parts are analytic or synthetic, and HOFFMANN-RUF has often mingled the two elements in such a way that it is largely left to the reader to give shape to the data. The detailed table of contents and the numerous cross-references are of some help in keeping track, but there is no index. There might usefully have been two, one for names and subjects, the other for the letters cited. More radically, it would probably have been best to divide the book into two sections, one a calendar, the other analytic and synthetic. Partly because of repetitions and partly because of the inclusion of information that is not really relevant, the book is longer than necessary. There should have been sketch maps showing all the little places mentioned in the text; the map supplied is entirely inadequate.

None of this detracts from the author's substantial achievement. She has laid firm foundations for further research on a unique and valuable body of material for the history of Oman.

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**Th. Emil Homerin (ed. and trans.):** *ʿĀ'ishah al-Bā'ūniyyah, The Principles of Sufism*. Library of Arabic Literature, New York and London, New York University Press, 2014, ISBN 978-0-8147-4528-1 (hardback); 978-0-8147-4516-8 (e-book). (*Alexander Knysh*)

This book is the latest in a series of publications (both studies and translations; see "Bibliography", p. 189) by Th. Emil HOMERIN on the legacy of the female Sufi master of Syria ʿĀ'ishah bint Yūsuf al-Bā'ūniyyah (d. 923/1517). The American editor and translator is justified in calling her "an exceptional Muslim scholar" (p. xiii): ʿĀ'ishah was a recognized Sufi master of her age and author of "over a dozen works of prose and poetry, praised by a number of her contemporaries" (p. xv). Moreover, the advertisement on the book's dust-jacket claims that "she composed more books in Arabic than any other woman before the 20<sup>th</sup> century".

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As the editor/translator shows in his Introduction, ‘Ā’ishah’s works, only some of which have survived until today, deal with such typical Sufi themes as panegyrics to the prophet Muhammad, the “primordial covenant” (*al-mīthāq*) between God and his human creatures, the Sufi path to God, and “the wine of love, spiritual intoxication, and union with the divine Beloved” (p. xvi). According to ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyyah’s own testimony, her poems, including those translated in the volume under review, were “inspired by God and represent intimate conversations with Him regarding spiritual states and mystical matters” (p. xvi). Coming from a family of Syrian religious scholars, ‘Ā’ishah joined a local branch of the Qādiriyyah Sufi order – an affiliation that she shared with her husband, who, as his name Aḥmad b. Naqīb al-Ashrāf (d. 909/1503) indicates, was a descendant of the Prophet (p. xiv; Th. Emil HOMERIN does not mention this fact, though). Shortly before his death on the battlefield in Syria (922/1516), the penultimate Mamlūk sultan of Egypt Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī (Th. Emil HOMERIN gives a different spelling of his first name) met ‘Ā’ishah and her son in Aleppo (p. xv). Although the translator does not say this, one can surmise that, given her reputation as a charismatic Sufi master, the sultan may have hoped to secure ‘Ā’ishah’s blessings in anticipation of his decisive battle against the Ottomans. Whether this was indeed the case, the meeting with the female saint (*waliyyah*) did not prevent his defeat and subsequent death at Marj Dābiq, north of Aleppo, in the same year. The publication of ‘Ā’ishah’s “Principles of Sufism” (the original title is *al-Muntakhab fī uṣūl al-ruṭab fī ‘ilm al-ṭaṣawwuf*, that is, “Selections on the Principles of the Stations in the Science of Sufism”, p. xvii) is based on a manuscript from Cairo’s famous library *Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyyah* dated 1071/1661. Th. Emil HOMERIN, a major Western scholar and connoisseur of Arab Sufi poetry and literature generally, was able to identify ‘Ā’ishah’s rather numerous sources (p. xvii). They include such well-known classics of Sufism as al-Kalābādhi (d. ca 380/995), al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074), Ibn al-‘Arif (d. 536/1141), ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), and Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309). Quotations from al-Qushayrī’s exegetical work *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt* are particularly prominent throughout the treatise. Among the heroes of early Sufism frequently quoted are the celebrated female saint Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyyah (d. 185/801) and her fellow ascetics and mystics al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. ca 162/778), Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ (d. 187/803), al-Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī (d. 320/932) and a few others. The editor/translator has done a wonderful job identifying the explicit and no-so-explicit references that populate ‘Ā’ishah’s treatise. His explanations in the endnotes of various literary and scriptural allusions found in the text are of great help to the reader navigating it. Also helpful is his brief discussion of ‘Ā’ishah’s indebtedness to the work of the great mystical poet of Egypt Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), the object of Th. Emil

HOMERIN's life-long study that has made him famous among both scholars and admirers of Arabic Sufi literature. This reviewer would like to add that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's influence during the epoch in question was not confined to Egypt and Syria, but is also well attested as far as Yemen, where his poetry inspired similarly eloquent imitations both in the literary language and its local vernaculars (see Alexander KNYSH, "A Tale of Two Poets: Sufism in Yemen During the Ottoman Epoch," in R. Chih and C. Mayeur-Jaouen (eds.), *Le soufisme à l'époque ottomane/Sufism in the Ottoman Era*, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Cairo, 2010, pp. 337–367). Here, too, we find some female poetic voices, although not as well attested and preserved as 'Ā'ishah's. Given Th. Emil HOMERIN's solid background in medieval Sufi literature, it is hardly surprising that his translations of 'Ā'ishah's poetry and prose are of the highest quality. They are also quite readable in English, which bodes well for the book's non-specialist readership. As any reviewer this one has attempted to find flaws to comment on or correct in his review. For the most part, these efforts have been in vain. In the majority of cases, at issue is the translator's choice of words, not the overall accuracy of the translation. Thus, on p. 114 (Arabic) and p. 115 (English), this reviewer is inclined to translate (ln. 4 from the bottom of the Arabic text): "patience over what has been lost (*al-mafqūd*)", as opposed to "patience with what is not", and "compliance with the [primordial] pact" (*al-muwāfaqa li-l-ma'hūd*), as opposed to "acceptance of what one has been assigned". In a similar vein, one may question the translator's choice of several different English words to translate one and the same Arabic word *al-wafā'* neither of which, in the reviewer's opinion, corresponds to the meaning of the Arabic root: "gift" on p. 145/146, ln. 2 of the Arabic text and ln. 3 of the English, and "realization" on p. 146/147. In both cases, the use of the original meaning of the word *wafā'* ("loyalty" or "faithfulness") seems to be more appropriate. See also p. 148/149, where the phrase *jannat al-wafā'* is rendered as "garden of delight". In this reviewer's opinion, this phrase could better be rendered as "garden of loyalty/faithfulness". In the same poetic passage (p. 146/147), "a clear report/statement" seems to be a more suitable translation of *bayān*, because it is juxtaposed in the same line with "symbolic speech" (*bi-ramz maqāl*); the word "eloquent" chosen by the translator does not necessarily mean "clear" or "obvious", which appears to have been the author's intent. Finally, on p. 150/151, ln. 3 of the first poetic passage, the translator seems to have ignored the fact that the first verb (in the imperative) in the line is addressed to the listener who is about to embark on the voyage to God. Hence, "Recite to him who aspires to reach (arrive at) His sea, 'If you are one of the lovers, then plunge [headlong]!'" In regard to the Arabic text, the only passage that this reviewer has found problematic is on p. 94/95. Here the English text indicates that the Arabic should have been *wilāyah* or *ukhuwwah* ("friendship"), but what one finds there is illegible.

This may be a typing/typesetting error. These are minor quibbles indeed that do not compromise the high quality of the translation and edition of this rich and challenging text. The translator certainly does have the right to occasionally depart from the exact wording of the text, and in the cases just mentioned, the overall meaning of the Arabic original is no doubt preserved. Two minor critical observations: First, the title “Principles of Sufism” has already been used by the American scholar Barbara von SCHLEGEL in her partial translation of al-Qushayrī’s *Risālah al-Qushayriyyah* (“Epistle on Sufism”) that was published by Mizan Press in Berkeley in 1992. This is not a big problem, but does create a possibility for confusion between the two books. Second, while the editor/translator has duly acknowledged ‘Ā’ishah’s considerable debt to al-Qushayrī’s Sufi commentary on the Qur’ān entitled *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*, a recent study of this exegetical work by Martin NGUYEN (*Sufi Master and Qur’ān Scholar: Abū ’l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and the Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2012) is not mentioned in the otherwise comprehensive bibliography. Again, these quibbles by no means call in doubt the overall high quality of this attractively published book. The fact that it has parallel English and Arabic texts adds further to its value as a teaching and reading resource. In sum, Th. Emil HOMERIN’s recent contribution to the field of Sufi studies and Islamic studies generally is his discovery of ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyyah – this truly remarkable mystical poetess whose mastery of Sufi poetic diction, intellectual tradition and imagery is fascinating. It is true that her poems are not very original, but the same can be said about male Sufi poetry from the late Mamlūk and early Ottoman epoch, as shown in the volume on Ottoman Sufism that was quoted above. Besides, as scholars of Islamic culture and literature have increasingly come to recognize, originality or lack thereof is, after all, in the eye of the beholder.

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**Verena Klemm (Hrsg.)**, *Refaiya 1853: Buchkultur in Damaskus*, Leipzig: Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, 2013 (Schriften aus der Universitätsbibliothek, 29). ISBN 978-3-910108-77-6 (UBL); 978-3-86583-772-1 (Universitätsverlag) (Karin Hörner)

Das DFG-Projekt des Leipziger Orientalischen Seminars “Datenbankgestützte Erfassung, Erforschung und digitale Präsentation der Damaszener Familienbibliothek Refaiya in der Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig” wurde durch zwei Ausstellungen gerahmt. Im Jahre 2008 wurde “Ein Garten im Ärmel: Islamische Buchkultur” gezeigt, darunter auch Objekte aus Leipziger Besitz, die nicht zur

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