

Reviews

IQBAL, Muzaffar (ed.), *Studies in the Making of Islamic Science: Knowledge in Motion*, XXIII + 552 pp., ISBN: 978-0-7546-2916-0. Vol. 4 of Muzaffar Iqbal (ed.), *Islam and Science: Historic and Contemporary Perspectives*, Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate, 2012.

This volume brings to an end a series devoted to gathering recent (in the sense given to the term in historical disciplines) scholarship on the history of Islamic science and the interrelation between science and Islam. The articles compiled here present the state-of-the-art of a wide range of issues addressed by leading historians of Arabic and Islamic Science during the 1990s and early 2000s, save one exception, an article by Rashed dated in 2008. The contributors are: P. Kunitzsch, J. Vernet, J. Samsó, B.R. Goldstein, J. L. Berggren, A.I. Sabra, G. Saliba, R. Rashed, D.A. King, H. Hugonnard-Roche and F. Sezgin. The chronological selection of their papers allows the editor to present materials which, after having passed a preliminary filter of time, need little or no updating and have demonstrated both their consistency and their topicality.

The theme underpinning the whole series is the legitimate vindication of the role of Islamic civilization as a historical catalyst of scientific progress, a much debated question which, even today, many people tend to view through the prejudices of nineteenth-century Eurocentric positivism

Indeed, the present book and its predecessors are not aimed (at least not primarily) at either specialists on the subject, who are deemed to know the true dimensions of the Islamic contribution, or at a general public who would be, in principle, deterred by excessively scholarly material. Iqbal's main target seems to rather be the numerous learned non-specialists who are directly or indirectly concerned with the area of Islam and science. Probably for this reason, the editor has wisely included in the volume several synthesis articles borrowed from the most helpful *Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science* edited by R. Rashed in 1996, together with other articles that reflect on the significance, extent, and appraisal of Islamic contribution to science. Two articles by A.I.Sabra on these topics constitute a tribute homage to this recently deceased master; and the same may be said of Juan Vernet's presence in the volume.

The blend of synthesis, essay and pure research that the editor offers the reader is interesting, although for those who are unfamiliar with the history of Arabic and Islamic Science, it may be slightly hard to follow.

In previous volumes, the editor explored several aspects of the compatibility between Islam and science, and showed that innovations accompanied the science produced in Islamic civilization for longer than is generally acknowledged. In this fourth volume, he focuses on the dynamism of the Islamic contribution to science. Put another way, Islamic Civilization was not a passive recipient of something invented by others but an active crucible which assimilated and then transformed this heritage. This key idea – well known to specialists – is expanded in a classical three-act structure that encompasses eighteen articles: 1. Greek into Arabic (setup); 2. Naturalization, transformation, and originality (confrontation); 3. The transfer of Islamic science to the West (resolution). Despite the length of the volume, not all the possible aspects of the main subject are dealt with; one of the omissions, for instance, is a part devoted to medicine and the natural sciences. Also missing are some of the recent debates among the historians of Arabic and Islamic sciences – most

of whom are contributors to the present volume – regarding crucial issues such as the acculturation of the Greek legacy or Islamic Cosmology. The editor's introduction fills these gaps on some occasions, yet not to the extent that the topics addressed demand. This notwithstanding, Muzaffar Iqbal succeeds in conveying a rich portrait of this extremely complex subject that avoids simplification and propaganda. The non-specialist but learned readership will find in this volume a consistent set of arguments in favor of the vitality and originality of the Islamic contribution to science that should foster further reflection. The volume may also be of great interest to specialists, given that it puts the results of research in the context of a larger debate of both academic and social concern which we cannot disregard.

Miquel Forcada

VAN DALEN, Benno, *Islamic Astronomical Tables. Mathematical Analysis and Historical Investigation*. Ashgate, Variorum. Farnham, Surrey- Burlington, 2013. XII + 350 pp.

In 1968 E.S. Kennedy published a paper in *Centaurus* entitled "The Digital Computer and the History of