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Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti and the Second Coming of Jesus in Islam

BY ANTONIO CUCINIELLO // DECEMBER 14, 2022



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This article first provides an overall picture of Jesus in the Qur'anic Text, amongst the stories of the other prophets, his prophetic role during the mission God gave him on earth and at the End of Times to kill the one-eyed Antichrist (*al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl*). Then, it analyzes a relatively short *fatwā* on Jesus' second coming on earth titled *Kitāb al-I'lām bi-ḥukm 'Īsā 'alayhi al-salām* (*The Book of Declaration of Jesus' Judgment, Peace Be Upon*

Him). This *fatwā* is found in the well-known al-Suyūṭī's *fatāwā* collection, namely, *al-Hāwī lil-fatāwī*, but was also circulated separately. Among al-Suyūṭī's numerous contributions to eschatology, this eschatological-legal treaty explores matters in relation to the judgment of Jesus on his return before the Last Day. Specifically, al-Suyūṭī addresses an issue that has occupied the minds of commentators on several *aḥādīth* concerning the son of Mary, namely, what body of law he will follow.

Prophets in the Qur'an

In the Qur'anic text, God says that the reports about the previous messengers are being narrated to Muḥammad by God Himself: "So We relate to thee stories of what has gone before, and We have given thee a remembrance from Us" (Q 20, 99).

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In the Qur'anic text, God says that the reports about previous messengers are narrated to Muḥammad by God Himself: "So We relate to thee stories of what has gone before, and We have given thee a remembrance from Us" (Q 20, 99). [2] The Qur'an certainly talks about several characters belonging to the Biblical text (largely from the Old Testament), from the patriarchs and envoys to Jesus. These Biblical characters are all identified in the same mission, without any particular distinction in their function, and are mentioned alongside the so-called pre-Islamic Arabian prophets (*Hūd*, *Ṣāliḥ* and *Shu'ayb*), who belong to the Muslim tradition. [3] Yet, not all of them have an evident narrative importance. Far from the characteristic narrative style of prophetic Biblical stories, the Qur'anic prophets' episodes are distributed in a number of passages throughout the Text in different contexts. Moreover, they are frequently repeated in series, not always following a chronological order, though they mainly represent a significant segment in the Meccan *sūras*. [4] Each story is generally portrayed as an edifying narrative, a divine "sign" and a reminder for listeners. Priority is given to moral lessons before narrative details, and all the characters, with their related incidents, are for the most part depicted as moral paradigms. In addition, specific narrative parts are repeated in different *sūras*, sometimes with a few variations or additions in the plot. This feature also has an impact on the language used to relate the diverse stories, without forgetting that "their divergences, then, point to a successively changing narrative pact, to a continuing education of the listeners and the development of a moral consensus that is reflected in the texts." [5]

Jesus in the Qur'an [6]

The Qur'an mentions Jesus in fifteen *sūras* by name and by several epithets. His Qur'anic name is *ʾĪsā* as attested twenty-five times and is generally followed by the matronymic title Ibn Maryam "the son of Mary," invariably preceded by "Jesus," "the Messiah," or "the Messiah Jesus." As a counter to the Christian title "son of God," it functions mainly as a reminder, by highlighting that Jesus was not divine and was designated in a matrilineal ascription, since he had no human father [7]. As a matter of fact, both Mary and Jesus are regarded as signs of God's power. Another epithet referring to him is *al-Masīḥ*, "the Messiah," a title never previously given to other Qur'anic envoys. Appearing eleven times, this title should be considered distinct from the Bible concept of Messiah or Christ, "the Anointed." [8] Indeed, the Qur'anic verb *masaha* occurs with various meanings: performing ablutions by wiping different parts of the body with water or, for want of water, with dust and in a reference to Solomon stroking his horses. When Jesus was announced to his mother, he was depicted as *kalima* "a Word" from God and when John was announced to Zechariah, it is said that he would confirm a "Word from God" (Q 3:45; 4:171), clearly referring to the son of Mary, if we consider that the annunciation to Mary is the structural homologue of the earlier annunciation to Zechariah (Q 3:39).

Although elsewhere in the Qur'anic text *kalima* usually denotes a divine decree, the term is used for Jesus, as God brought him into existence merely by uttering the creational imperative *kun*, "Be!" This is the assertion of divine creative power both for the creation of Adam (Q 3:59) and for the virginal conception of Jesus. Moreover, Jesus is mentioned as *qawl al-ḥaqq*, "word of truth" (Q 19:34), but this likewise does

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not imply the concept of God's incarnation.

In fact, this verse is part of a highly polemical passage denying the claim that God has taken a son. Jesus is also declared *rūh*, "a Spirit" from God (Q

4:171), since He breathed into Mary of His spirit. Thus, Mary conceived and gave birth to her son, paralleling the story of Adam's creation, when the Lord breathed His spirit in him (Q 15:29; 32:9; 38:72). Among the other Qur'anic designations, it is Jesus who said that the Lord made him *mubārak*, "blessed," since "God chose Adam and Noah and the House of Abraham and the House of 'Imran above all beings, the seed of one another" (Q 3:33-34)[9]. This passage clearly emphasizes that Jesus was a descendant from Adam through Noah, Abraham, 'Imrān and Mary. Jesus is also *wajīh*, "high honoured" (Q 3:45) in this world and the next, an exclusive attribute given only to him and Moses (Q 33:69). Furthermore, he is *min al-muqarrabīn*, "near stationed" to the Lord (Q 3:45), this latter being a concession granted only to angels and those who will reach paradise without judgment. Finally, Jesus is presented as *'abd Allāh* "God's servant," considering that he was both a *nabī*, "prophet" and a *rasūl*, "messenger"[10].

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The "non-crucifixion" of Jesus: *shubbiha lahum*

According to the Qur'an the Jews sought to kill Jesus by crucifixion: "We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God" (Q 4, 157). They are criticized for boasting that they killed Jesus. In fact, they neither killed nor crucified him. They thought they had, but Jesus was delivered from death, since "only a likeness of that was shown to them" (*wa-lākin shubbiha lahum*) (Q 4, 157). Most of the classical commentators understood this to mean "but he [the person whom they killed] was made to resemble [Jesus] for them." [11]

Consequently, having projected his likeness onto someone else whom they mistakenly crucified in the belief that he was Jesus, the passage rejects the Christian view of the death of Jesus. Indeed, it was an illusion created by God to mislead the Jews; thus, someone other than Jesus died in his place. Despite this passage, there are various Qur'anic pericopes in which it seems that nonetheless Jesus suffered a kind of death. Q 3, 55, for instance, focuses attention on a statement about what God said to Jesus: "I will take thee to Me and will raise thee to Me" (*innī mutawaffika wa-rāfi'uka ilayya*). The interpretation of this passage clearly depends on the meaning of the active participle *mutawaffa*. It derives from the finite verb *tawaffā* that, according to the translation of the Qur'an used for the present essay, was rendered as "I will take [thee to me]". Certainly, this verse could be interpreted to mean that Jesus died a natural death, or it could also imply his elevation to God, rather than his death, since in Q 4, 157 (*wa-lākin shubbiha lahum*) his decease on the cross is manifestly rejected. In spite of divine election, the prophets always remain "God's servants" (*'ibād*).

The eschatological role of Jesus

Even though the Qur'an insists that only God retains the knowledge of the Hour (*al-sā'a*), the time of resurrection: "Surely God – He has knowledge of the Hour; He sends down the rain; He knows what is in the wombs. No soul knows what it shall earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it shall die. Surely God is All-knowing, All-aware" (Q 31, 34), there is another Qur'anic verse in which it is possible to find an eschatological reference to Jesus alluding to his final coming. Being indicative of the approaching Hour of the Day of Judgement, the

passage turns out to be as interesting as it is complicated to interpret: "It [or he] is knowledge of the Hour" (*innahu la-'ilmun li-l-sā'a*) (Q 43, 61). It includes the cryptic assertion that "he" or "it" (the pronominal suffix *-hu* could mean either) is "knowledge of the Hour." The interpreters, in fact, diverged on the meaning of the third person singular masculine suffix *-hu*. Ṭabarī reports two different interpretations: some said it referred back to Jesus, given that Jesus' appearance will offer a clue by which one will know the coming of the Hour. Others said *-hu* refers to the Qur'an, as it is knowledge pertaining to the Hour, giving information about the Resurrection and Judgement. Furthermore, it is worth underlining that Q 43, 61 contains different variant readings. The first reading is that of the Vulgate: "He (Jesus) is knowledge of the Hour" (*innahu la-'ilmun li-l-sā'a*), namely, he by whose descent the approach of the Hour is known. The second reading is a canonical variation: "He (Jesus) is a sign for the Hour" (*innahu la-'alamun li-l-sā'a*); the commentators generally explain that in this reading the second coming of Jesus acts as a "sign" which would indicate the approach of the Last Hour. The third and last reading, attributed to Ubayy, is: "He (Jesus) is a reminder of the Hour" (*wa-innahu la-dhikr*), suggesting that Jesus (or the Qur'an) reminds people of the Hour.

Al-Suyūṭī the eschatologist

The well-known polymath scholar of the Mamluk era Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) is one of the most prominent and prolific religious scholars of the pre-modern Islamic world.^[12] Based in Mamluk Egypt, he had the opportunity to grow up in a highly literate and educated environment.^[13] He authored works on a wide variety of genres of literary production, from shorter treatises to multivolume compendiums, with an remarkably large presence in almost the entire gamut of the Islamic sciences^[14]. Considered for a long time a mere compiler, a judgment that undervalues his scholarly contributions, al-Suyūṭī's works deal with a wide range of subjects. His bibliography ranges from jurisprudence to theology, from linguistic arts to history, together with Sufism, geography, cosmology and so on. Furthermore, al-Suyūṭī often compiled *ḥadīth* collections on topics that had not previously received attention, including angels, cosmology, earthquakes, *jinn* and turbans. He was undoubtedly interested in exploring and describing the otherworldly realities, devoting himself to writings on the mysteries of the supernatural, the apocalyptic and eschatology, such as the events in the grave, *jinn*, *al-Mahdī*, the *Dajjāl*, the second coming of Jesus (*nuzūl 'Īsā*), Paradise and Hell. Several other works on apocalyptic and eschatological themes are found in his collection of *fatwās*, *al-Ḥāwī lil-fatāwī*. For example, *al-'arf al-wardī fī akhbār al-Mahdī* (*The rose-like fragrance in the reports of al-Mahdī*) deals with the eschatological figure of *al-Mahdī*, "the Rightly Guided One," the restorer of religion and justice who will rule before the end of the world, *Lubb al-lubāb fī taḥrīr al-ansāb* (*The essence of constructing genealogies*) is a portion of a more comprehensive genealogical work, *al-Kashf 'an mujāwizat hadhihi al-umma al-alf* (*Revelation concerning this community's passing the Year 1000*) is a *fatwā* on the Last Day, with reference to some of the major signs of the Hour (*al-sā'a*) such as the *Dajjāl*, the second coming of Jesus, the rising of the sun from its setting point (*ṭulū' al-shams min maghribihā*) and the need for a *mujaddid* for the ninth century.

The second coming of Jesus in al-Suyūṭī's *al-Ḥāwī lil-fatāwī*

In a section entitled *al-Fatāwā al-usulīyya al-diniyya* (*Juristic determinations about the fundamental beliefs of Islam*) of *al-Ḥāwī lil-fatāwī*^[15] we find the *Kitāb*

al-īlām bi-ḥukm ʿĪsā ʿalayhi al-salām (The Book of Declaration of Jesus' Judgement, Peace Be Upon Him). Essentially following evidence from the *ḥadīth* literature, it is a relatively short religious-legal text on Jesus' return to earth, which explores matters in relation to the judgment Jesus will render on his second coming before the Last Day. Since the issue of law and jurisdiction after the second coming of Jesus was a topic of interest to a number of commentators, many came to the conclusion that Jesus will follow, as a reference for his ruling system, Islamic law. Al-Suyūṭī is one of those who argues in favour of this point. Specifically, he argues that *Jesus will judge according to the Prophet's law, as attested in the aḥādīth and determined by several 'ulamā'*. Indeed, he says that on this point there is their unanimous agreement (*ijmā'*). Among the set of texts that address this subject, al-Suyūṭī cites *Ma'ālim al-sunan (Auspicious Examples from Prophetic Traditions)* by Abū Sulaymān Ḥamad ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 386/996), a pioneer in the field of *ḥadīth* studies, and *al-Minhāj fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (Commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)* of Abū Zakariyyā Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), in order to corroborate that Jesus will not abrogate Islamic law in favour of a different law. Rather, he will restore the commandments that people no longer observe. As regards to specific *aḥādīth* on this very subject, al-Suyūṭī refers explicitly to those reported by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), Aḥmad ibn ʿAmr al-Bazzār (d. 292/905) and Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971), as transmitted by Samura ibn Jundub (d. 60/679), on the basis of which *al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl*, literally the pseudo-Messiah or the opposite of Jesus the Messiah (*al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā*), blind in the right eye, will be able to perform miracles resembling those performed by Jesus, such as healing the sick and raising the dead. He will stay on earth as long as God wills it. Then, the son of Mary will come from the West verifying the prophethood of Muḥammad and the truth of his religion. Lastly, after Jesus has killed the Dajjāl, the Hour (*al-sā'a*) [16] will come.

Al-Suyūṭī notes his own surprise when asked which of the four Sunni juridical schools Jesus will choose, give that there are many who exercise independent reasoning in the interpretation of the Law (*mujtahidūn*).

Al-Suyūṭī notes his own surprise when asked which of the four Sunni juridical schools Jesus will choose, give that there are many who exercise independent reasoning in the interpretation of the Law (*mujtahidūn*). Indeed, the Companions of Muḥammad (*ṣaḥāba*), the Successors (*tābi'ūn*) and the next generation after the Successors (*atbā' al-tabi'īn*) had their own school and from this time at least ten schools arise, each having its master and his doctrine duly codified. Al-Suyūṭī wonders why a prophet like Jesus should follow a juridical school among the recognized ones, since *'ulamā'* have established that the interpreter of the Law (*mujtahid*) is not required to follow the opinion of another interpreter. Yet, Jesus will not make use of *ijtihād*, al-Suyūṭī argues, pointing out that Muḥammad used to legislate according to what had been revealed to him in the Qur'an, never calling this interpretation (*ijtihād*) or conformity to a juridical opinion (*taqlīd*). In fact, if his judgment derived from what he understood from the sacred book, this would be precisely called interpretation. Hence, al-Suyūṭī outlines three ways through which Jesus will know Islamic legal rulings (*aḥkām*). As far as the first way is concerned, it will be through divine inspiration (*waḥī*) and the archangel Gabriel (*Jibrīl*) will act as intermediary. The second way for Jesus to know the *aḥkām* will be through the simple reading of the

Qur'an, without having to refer to the *aḥādīth*. His understanding of the Qur'anic text will be similar to that of the Prophet who used to understand legislative precepts through his own ability, before explaining them to the community through his teachings, sayings, deeds and silent permissions or disapprovals (*Sunna*). Finally, as for the third way, al-Suyūṭī claims that, according to *Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī* (d. 771/1370) and other '*ulamā*', the son of Mary can be considered as part of the community of the Prophet, and specifically part of the *ṣaḥāba*. Besides, believing in him and attesting to his truthfulness, Jesus met Muḥammad several times, other than on the occasion of the night of the Ascension (*laylat al-isrā*). Consequently, nothing prevents Jesus from collecting the *aḥkām* directly from the Prophet, without the need for an intermediary.

Regarding the revelation (*waḥī*) that Jesus will receive after coming down, al-Suyūṭī summarizes a long *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), *Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal* (d. 241/855), *Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī* (d. 275/888), *Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī* (d. 279/892), *Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Sinān al-Nasā'ī* (d. 303/915) and others^[17] stating that God will send the son of Mary who will descend at the white minaret in the eastern part of Damascus. He will wear two garments lightly dyed with saffron and have his hands on the wings of two angels. Thereafter, he will search for the *Dajjāl* until he catches hold of him at the Lod Gate (*Bāb Ludd*), where Jesus will kill him. Then, God will reveal to Jesus that He has unleashed some of his servants that no one can fight; therefore, Jesus will be asked to place them under his protection on *al-Ṭūr*.^[18] Eventually God will send Gog and Magog. This report acts, indirectly, as an attestation of Jesus receiving some form of revelation or news from God. Regarding the angel who will act as intermediary, al-Suyūṭī argues that it will be Gabriel, given this is his mission as the messenger between God and the prophets, and given this function is not performed by any other angel but him. Confirming this role given to Gabriel, al-Suyūṭī mentions different Prophetic traditions, for instance, those of Abū Na'īm al-Isfahānī (d. 430/1038) from his *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (*The Proofs of Prophethood*), on the authority of 'Ā'isha (d. 58/678). Moreover, al-Suyūṭī counters the widespread idea that Gabriel will no longer descend on earth after the death of the Prophet by citing several Prophetic traditions. For instance, in *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr* (*Great Encyclopedia*) of Abū al-Qāsim al-Tabarānī (d. 360/971) it is said that Muḥammad was asked if he who is in a state of major ritual impurity (*junub*) can go to bed. Then, the Prophet replied that it is better to do the ablutions before going to sleep for fear that he could die without Gabriel being present next to him. Thus, this confirms that Gabriel keeps on descending to earth to witness the death of each believer in a state of ritual purity (*ṭahāra*).

Al-Suyūṭī then shifts attention to another important issue. He declares that some mistakenly claim that the son of Mary, after he returns to earth, will not receive revelation (*waḥī haqīqī*), but a simple inspiration (*waḥī ilhām*).

Al-Suyūṭī then shifts attention to another important issue. He declares that some mistakenly claim that the son of Mary, after he returns to earth, will not receive revelation (*waḥī haqīqī*), but a simple inspiration (*waḥī ilhām*). He counters this with two arguments. As for the first, al-Suyūṭī says that this claim contradicts a solidly established Prophetic tradition cited above. Indeed, it is reported by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and by others, including al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014) in his *al-Mustadrak*, that God will reveal to Jesus that He has freed some of his

servants that no one can fight; therefore, Jesus will be asked to place them under his protection on *al-Ṭūr*. The expression “God will reveal” evidently shows that it is a true revelation and not a simple inspiration. Regarding the second reason, al-Suyūṭī expresses disbelief with respect to such a position relating to Jesus, since it is an idea that borders on impiety (*kufṛ*). In fact, he wonders what would prevent a prophet like Jesus with such a storied reputation from receiving revelation. On this point, al-Suyuti stresses that a prophet never loses his dignity, not even after his death. Furthermore, it cannot be imagined that revelation is granted to a prophet in a certain era and not in another. He also cites other scholars who hold the same position regarding Jesus’ revelation. In particular, he quotes *Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī* (d. 771/1370) by highlighting that God made a covenant (*mīthāq*) with each prophet under which if He had sent Muḥammad in their time, they would have believed in him, assisted him and ordered their community to do the same. Al-Suyuti points out that this covenant emphasises the high status of the Prophet. Moreover, this also means that if Muḥammad had been sent in their age, he would have been their envoy (*mursal*). Hence, since his prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and his Prophetic message (*risāla*) encompass every creature from the time of the prophet Adam (*Ādam*) until the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*), all the prophets with their communities are part of his own community. For this reason, Muḥammad is defined as a prophet of the prophets (*nabī al-anbiyā*).

Al-Suyūṭī also comments regarding someone who denies that when Jesus descends he will pray the dawn prayer (*ṣalāt al-ṣubḥ* or *al-fajr*) behind *al-Mahdī*. Al-Suyūṭī declares that the prayer of Jesus behind *al-Mahdī* has been proven strongly via numerous authentic Prophetic traditions. For instance, Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) in his *Musnad* and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī (d. 405/1014) in his *al-Mustadrak*, on the authority of ‘Uthmān ibn Abī al-‘Āṣ (d. 50/671), report that Muḥammad said that when Jesus returns, at the time of the dawn prayer, he will be called Spirit of God (*rūḥ Allāh*) and invited to lead the prayer. Yet he will decline by saying that among them God has made leaders for others and has bestowed his bounty upon them. Then, the son of Mary will take his spear heading towards the *Dajjāl*. Elsewhere, addressing those who find strange the fact that Jesus could pray behind non-prophets, al-Suyūṭī refers to authentic Traditions in which the Prophet prayed behind ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf (d. 32/652), a prominent Companion and a famous figure in early Islam, and behind *Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq* (d. 23/634), through his daughter ‘A’isha, a father-in-law of the Prophet, as well as the first of the *Rāshidūn* Caliphs.

As for the question of how Jesus will administer the House of Wealth (*bayt al-māl*),^[19] in the sense of whether he will uphold its management at the time of his descent, al-Suyūṭī says that it is a puzzling question, since he himself believes that it is not administered according to the legal provisions. For this reason, he wonders how a prophet like Jesus could perpetuate this situation. Indeed, al-Suyūṭī declares that the continuance of the House of Wealth would not be possible unless it is properly administered, that is, administered as it was in the times of the Companions of the Prophet. In this regard, he notes that he wrote a work dealing with the manners of kings (*ādāb al-mulūk*)^[20] and concludes that most of the contemporary affairs of the House of Wealth are administered without respect for the relevant legal provisions.

Finally, as for the question relating the judgment of Jesus on charitable endowments (*awqāf*, sing. *waqf*)^[21], al-Suyuti says that if these funds are intended for good works, the benefit of Muslims, ‘*ulamā*’, Muhammad’s

descendants, poor, sick and lonely people, schools, mosques, the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina (*al-ḥaramayn*), Jerusalem (*Bayt al-maqdis*) and the cloth that covers the Ka'ba (*kiswat al-ka'ba*), they will constitute true *awqāf*, perfectly conforming to the *sharī'a*. In this case, Jesus will confirm these institutions. But if the beneficiaries of the *awqāf* are kings, princes and their descendants, they will be judged illegal and illegitimate and Jesus will abrogate them.

Conclusions

Al-Suyūṭī put *Kitāb al-i'lām bi-ḥukm 'Īsā 'alayhi al-salām* in a section of his collection dealing with *al-Fatāwā al-usuliyya al-diniyya* (*Juristic determinations about the fundamental beliefs of Islam*). Specifically, it is placed after *Inba' al-adhkiya' bi-ḥayat al-anbiyā'* (*Enlightening the intelligent about the lives of the Prophets*) in which, for instance, al-Suyūṭī quotes evidence in support of the belief that the Prophet is alive in his grave and will remain so till the Day of Judgment. Both of these concepts, and in particular, al-Suyūṭī's detailed analysis of issues like Jesus' ruling on charitable endowments, reflect a profound belief in the immediacy and relevance of eschatological events. In an age characterized by the dominance of Mamluk sultans and the decline of a caliphate-centric worldview which he himself upheld, al-Suyūṭī may have intended *Kitāb al-i'lām* as a form of activism aimed at softly undermining the legitimacy of the rulers of his time.^[22] Although his discussions pertain to a time that is yet to come, the points he raises often return to contemporary problems in the implementation of Islamic law (e.g. with the House of Wealth or charitable endowments) and remind the reader that there will soon come a higher, prophetic authority above and beyond the authority of princes and sultans. Yet, considering it prudent to not be overly blatant in voicing political critique, al-Suyūṭī may have sought to legitimize his own behaviour and thoughts by demonstrating that he was following sound and authoritative sources. Accordingly, following mainly evidence from the *ḥadīth* literature, he penned this relatively short religious-legal text on Jesus' return, and the legal judgment he will render before the Last Day.

Antonio Cuciniello is an Arabist and Islamologist. He holds a PhD from the Catholic University of Milan, where he is a Research Fellow in Islamic studies. In 2001 he got a Diploma in Arabic Studies and in 2002 a Licentiate in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) in Rome. In 2000 he got a Master's Degree in Comparative Studies at Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples. From 2003 to 2005 he lived in Cairo. His main fields of work and research interests are: religion (Islam), interreligious dialogue (Islamic-Christian relations), education, intercultural relations. He was part of the Scientific Committee of the Group for Islam of the Office for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI).

[2] The translation of the Qur'anic passages are taken from Arberry's version, New York: Touchstone, 1996.

[3] See R. Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 2002; Al-Ṭarafī, *The Stories of the Prophets by Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafī*, ed. and translated by R. Tottoli, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2003; B. M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Qur'ān: An Introduction to the Qur'ān and Muslim Exegesis*, London: Continuum, 2002.

[4] See G. Böwering, "Chronology and the Qur'ān", in *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, I (2001), pp. 316-335.

[5] A. Neuwirth, "Form and Structure of the Qur'ān", in *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, II (2002), p. 261.

[6] Among the extensive bibliography on Jesus in Islam in Western languages, see S. M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1912; M. Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, Paris: Seuil, 1959; H. Michaud, *Jésus selon le Coran*, Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1960; R. Arnaldez, *Jésus dans la pensée musulmane*, Paris: Desclée, 1988; K. Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim: An exploration*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1985; N. Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity: The Representation of Jesus in the Qur'ān and the Classical Muslim Commentaries*, London: Macmillan, 1991; T. Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001; C. A. Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus: A New Interpretation*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019.

[7] See, e.g., Q 2:253; 4:156, 171; 5:17, 46, 75, 78, 110, 112, 114, 116; 9:31; 19:34; 23:50; 33:7; 43:57; 57:27; 61:6, 14. This association only appears once in the New Testament in Mk 6:3.

[8] The title occurs by itself in Q 4:172; 5:72; 9:30, while in Q 5:17 (twice), 5:72, 75, 9:31 it appears in the sequence *al-Masīh ibn Maryam* and in Q 4:157; 3:45; 4:171 *al-Masīh 'Īsā ibn Maryam*.

[9] In the Qur'an God also granted blessings to other envoys, such as Abraham (Q 16:121), Lot (Q 54:35), Moses (Q 28:17), Solomon (Q 27:19).

[10] See Q 3:49, 53; 4:171, 172; 5:75; 19:30; 43:59; 61:6.

[11] N. Robinson, "Jesus", in *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, III (2003), p. 19.

[12] See E. M. Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī: Biography and Background*, vol. I, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 39-41.

[13] See J. P. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 24.

[14] The number of his works is not agreed on, with estimates ranging from 550 and 981. See G. Flügel, "Sojuti's Leben und Schriften", *Jahrbucher der Literatur, Anzeige-Blatt* 58 (1832), pp. 25-40; 59 (1832), pp. 20-36; 60 (1832), pp. 9-29; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* [GAL G], Leiden: Brill, 1937-49, vol. 2, pp. 180-204; C. Brockelmann, *Supplement-bände* [GAL S], Leiden: Brill, 1937-49, vol. 2, pp. 179-98; *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*, tr. J. Lameer, 2 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2018.

[15] Al-Suyūfī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *al-Hāwī lil-fatāwī*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 146-58.

[16] This term occurs forty-eight times mainly in Meccan *sūras*; cf., e.g., Q 6:31; 7:34; 9:117; 10:45; 12:107; 15:85; 22:7; 31:34; 40:59; 43:61; 45:32; 47:18; 54:46-79:42.

[17] There are six officially adopted canonical collections of *aḥādīth*, which were compiled in the third century A.H., called "the six books" (*al-kutub al-sitta*). These are: the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and that of his student Muslim (d. 261/875), the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888), *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-

Tirmidhī (d. 278/892), the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886) and that of al-Nasā'ī (d. 302/915). Some put in this list the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/856) in place of the collection of Ibn Mājah.

[18] This term has the basic sense of “mountain.” It occurs ten times in the Qur'an (Q 2, 63, 93; 4, 154; 19, 52; 20, 80; 23, 20; 28, 29, 46; 52, 1; 95, 2). On two occasions (Q 23, 20; 95, 2 2) it is expressly coupled with *Sīnā'/Sīnīn*, specifically meaning “Mount Sinai”. All its Qur'anic occurrences are virtually connected with the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the Sinai Desert. See E. Honigmann-[C. E. Bosworth], “*al-Ṭūr*,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*², vol. 10, pp. 663-5.

[19] See, e.g., S. M. Imamuddin, “*Bayt al-Māl and Banks in the Medieval Muslim World*”, *Islamic Culture* 34 (1960), pp. 22-30.

[20] It denotes a subject matter and a corresponding genre of literature. The subject comprehends a variety of topics related to sovereignty, including practices of statecraft and ceremonial expressions of political culture. See L. Marlow, “*Adab al-mulūk: The Mirrors for Princes of Classical Islam*”, in *Encyclopedia of Mediterranean Humanism*, ed. H. Touati, Spring 2014.

[21] See, e.g., A. Arazi, “*Al-Risāla al-Baybarsiyya d'al-Suyūṭī: Un Document sur les Problèmes d'un Waqf Sultanien sous les Derniers Mamlūks*”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 9 (1979), pp. 329-54; R. S. Hernandez, “*Sultan, scholar, and sufi: Authority and power relations in al-Suyūṭī's Fatwā on Waqf*”, *Islamic Law and Society* 20 (2013), pp. 333-70.

[22] Al-Suyūṭī's relationships with the sultans of his time, as well as with some scholars were not particularly cordial. See Sartain, *Jalāl*, pp. 56-7; R. S. Hernandez, *The Legal Thought of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī: Authority and Legacy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 69. Although he did not address rulers directly, he expressed his political critique against those in power, considered former slave-soldiers and usurpers. Indeed, he opposed what he defined the illegal character of the Mamluk sultans' power because of the usurpation of caliphal rights, while standing up for the claims of the 'Abbasid caliphate. See J.-C. Garcin, “*Histoire, opposition politique et piétisme traditionaliste dans le Husn al-Muhadarat de Suyūṭī*” *Annales Islamologiques* 7 (1967), p. 66; Geoffroy, *Le soufisme*; See M. Banister, *Casting the Caliph in a Cosmic Role: Examining al-Suyūṭī's Historical Vision*, in *Al-Suyuti, a Polymath of the Mamluk Period: Proceedings of the Themed Day of the First Conference of the School of Mamluk Studies (Ca' Foscari University, Venice, June 23, 2014)*, ed. A. Ghersetti, Leiden: Brill, 2017, p. 108.

TAGS

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