

Book Reviews

The Nusayri-Alawi Religion in the Mamluk Sultanate: A Book Report

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Readers of Mamluk chronicles and juridical treatises are familiar with anti-Alawi accounts and measures that several sultans and viceroys took against them.¹ M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, who published an important inquiry into the history, belief system, and rituals of the Nusayri-Alawi religion,² recently appended to it a translated anthology. The present short notice lists the Mamluk-era Nusayri liturgical texts that this excellent Hebrew research analyzes and presents.

The first text, “Kitāb fihi munāẓarah,” was presumably composed during the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century. In it, the shaykh Yūsuf ibn al-‘Ajūz al-Nashshābī al-Ḥalabī debates the fundamentals of the Nusayri belief concerning the unity (*tawḥīd*) of God.³

An anonymous Nusayri preacher wrote two combined epistles, between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that deal with master-novice relations and provide guiding instructions regarding mentorship and initiation. The first is entitled “Bāb fī ma‘rifat al-ta‘līq” (Chapter on the rules of association). The second is named “Bāb fīmā yajibū fī ma‘rifat al-samā” (Chapter on the duties of obeying the master’s instructions).⁴

¹Edward E. Salisbury, “Translation,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 2 (1851): 288–99; M. S. Guyard, “Le Fetwa d’Ibn Taymiyyah sur les Nosairis,” *Journal Asiatique* (6e Serie) 18 (1871): 158–98; Urbain Vermeulen, “Some Remarks on a Prescript of an-Nasir Muhammad B. Qala‘un on the Abolition of Taxes and the Nusayris (Mamlaka of Tripoli, 717/1317),” *Orientalia Lovanensia Periodica* 1 (1970): 195–201; Yaron Friedman, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Fatawa against the Nusayri-Alawi Sect,” *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 349–63; Yvette Talhamy, “The Fatwas and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 2 (2010): 175–81.

²Meir M. Bar Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nusayri-Alawi Religion: An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy* (Leiden, 2002).

³Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Arabe 1450, fols. 67b–155a.

⁴Ibid., fols. 158a–167a.

