

Publication

Arabic and Islamic Studies in Europe and Beyond. Etudes arabes et islamiques en Europe et au-delà

Edited Book (Herausgeber eines eigenständigen Buches)

ID 3701153

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Year 2016

Title Arabic and Islamic Studies in Europe and Beyond. Etudes arabes et islamiques en Europe et au-delà

Publisher Peeters

Place of publication Leuven

ISSN/ISBN 978-90-429-3288-3

Series title Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta

Volume 248

Keywords Islamic Studies, Arabic Studies

This volume presents the proceedings of the 26 th Conference of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants that took place in Basel, Switzerland, from 12 to 16 September 2012. It was the first time since its foundation in 1962 that the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants (UEAI) had convened in Switzerland. The theme of the 26 th Union conference was “Arabic and Islamic Studies in Europe and Beyond / Etudes arabes et islamiques en Europe et au-delà / Arabische und islamische Studien in Europa und darüber hinaus”. The ambiguity of the title was intentional. On the one hand, we wanted to indicate that, although the members of the Union are coming in their large majority from European countries, research in Arabic and Islamic Studies is carried out in many non-European regions of the world. On the other hand, our intention was to express that Arabic and Islamic Studies no longer represent an exclusive or, if one might want to take a more critical stance, a field of research distant from the public mind. Nevertheless, the focus of Arabic and Islamic Studies is still very much concentrated, largely calling on specialists to devote their academic lives to learning and practicing the major (and minor) languages of Islamic history and culture. In this regard, Arabic and Islamic Studies, in general, and the UEAI have to locate an equilibrium, again and again, between disciplinary immersion and intellectual openness. The present volume is a further documented example of these endeavors and struggles. The two editors of this volume, Monika Winet (University of Göttingen) and Maurus Reinkowski (University of Basel), are themselves representative of the breadth of research and interests spread across the field of Arabic and Islamic studies in general, and the UEAI in particular: Monika Winet has taught at the Orientalisches Seminar of the University of Basel from 1996 – 2010. Her fields of interest are Arabic travel literature, Karshknī and Aljamiado texts, and language contacts in al-Andalus. Maurus Reinkowski has taught at the same institution since 2010. His interests rest in the history of the late Ottoman Empire, the modern Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. The University of Basel, as an institute of learning, lays claim to some of the finest scholars of Islamic and Arabic studies in the 19th and 20th centuries. Albert Socin, an expert of Oriental philology, taught here in the 1870s, and Adam Mez followed him in the 1890s. Friedrich Schulthess then finally established the Seminar of Oriental Studies in 1919. In the years 1922-2009, three scholars, Rudolf Tschudi, Fritz Meier and Gregor Schoeler, have held the chair of Oriental Studies at Basel University – a period not only of enormous continuity, but also of stunning productivity and diverse research interests. Tschudi was a specialist of the Ottoman empire and his successor, Meier, was acclaimed for his works on Islamic mysticism and Persian poetry. Gregor Schoeler

is a highly esteemed scholar of Arabic and Islamic studies and was one of the participants of the UEAI 2012 conference. Since 2010, history has come back full circle with Maurus Reinkowski, a specialist of Ottoman history. This volume brings together almost 30 contributions that cover a wide area of research interests, reflecting the highly variegated nature of research in Islamic and Arabic Studies. The papers are preceded by the lectio magistralis “Science as Competition: The Debate between Saʿdaddīn al-Taftaznī (d. 793/1390) and al-Sharīf al-Jurjī (d. 816/1413)” that was delivered at the opening ceremony by Ulrich Rudolph, professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Zürich. As we have already stated: The volume covers an enormous breadth of scholarly activities and interests, from Quranic and Hadith studies to Islamic philosophy, sciences and culture to Arabic literature, from religious studies to socio-political history. It is, therefore, with great pleasure that we present to the scholarly community the explorations of these vast continents of knowledge, in all of their diversity, deep meaning and profound enlightenment. The importance of the scholars’ research, coupled with the strong intellectual imprint left on the research community by them, will always be central to any conference; however, the tireless work and assistance of other institutions and people warrant our gratitude. The organizers are thus grateful to the University of Basel for providing splendid infrastructural support and to the Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft (Voluntary Academic Society), Basel, for their generous financial support. We are grateful to Claudia Bolliger and Gudrun Schubert, specialists of Islamic studies at Basel University Library who put together the exhibition Orientalistennachlässe (Orientalist Legacies) in the context of the conference.

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