era, Jehangir rebelled (1599–1604) against Akbar and Prince Khusrau against his father Jehangir, (1606), to establish their own rule. An identical situation emerged during the last years of Emperor Shah Jahan, when a war of succession started (1657–58) amongst his sons. An explanation correlating Bairam Khan with the past and the future could have universalised the work. Besides this, the bibliography is incomplete and poorly arranged, and so is the index which lacks comprehensive information. The publisher appears to be giving a touch of sanctity to the work, the usefulness of which is questionable. For instance the use of idiom "doyen of scholars of South Asian history" for Sir Jadunath Sarkar (p. III.), a letter of Professor Riazul Islam and Urdu translation (at two places) of an ode of Baim by one Muhammad Akhtar Muslim negate the principles of free inquiry.

The book in the present form is a narrative, and helpful to the students of history at Masters level. It is equally interesting for the lay readers. However, the book deserves special credit for being co-produced by Dr Beg. It will not be fair to recognize his intellect in history of the Mughals. His interest to reconstruct the life and time of Baim is really praiseworthy in the sense that he managed to undertake this project at a time when surgeons and physicians are engaged in such a professional race that they have seldom time for their families, what to say of such a literary and unproductive venture. The students of history should, therefore, be specifically thankful to Dr Beg for giving them this good book. The interest of persons like Dr Beg is a ray of hope for better future of historical scholarship. The Institute of Central and West Asian Studies of the Karachi University must keep this spirit on, and welcome other similar scholars who might select to add to the contemporary historical knowledge.

Sayyid A. S. Pirzada


This book was initially published in French language in 1964. This translation in English now published (1993) by Kegan Paul International deserves commendation for filling up certain gaps in English literature on Islamic culture.
There was a great need of this sort of book in English, because it familiarizes English readers with some foundational knowledge for those who want to understand Islamic culture, Islamic history, Islamic religious history and Islamic philosophical history. It helps us understand how Islam, Islamic culture and major Muslim sects stand today with a certain history. Such a background knowledge is also essential for those who want to see and bring about reawakening in Islam and in Islamic peoples as Islamic ummah. Scattered pieces of information, however deep and scholarly, cannot make us understand or appreciate present Islamic predicament and Muslim culture in a meaningful way. For such reasons the present translation of the book is recommended for all English-readers who are lovers of, and researchers in, Islamic culture, Muslim religious history and history of Muslim philosophy.

The author's main concern and interest in this book is to highlight the importance of Shi'ah thought and philosophy, and especially of Ismā‘īlī Shi‘ah. He laments that this side of Muslim philosophy, though of paramount importance, has been ignored by the orientalists and scholars on Muslim philosophical history.

The author with sound justification claims that philosophy in Muslim culture has not been separated from theosophy (hikmat ilahiyyah). Now, the chief sources in this theosophy have been the Qur‘ān, the Greek philosophers as understood then like Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Neo-Platonism like Plotinus, and Iranian religio-philosophy. Al-Kindi accepted Neo-Platonistic Emanation Theory in principle which was already prevalent in theosophical thoughts particularly among Judo-Christian and other religious thinkers. His successors, for example Al-Fārābī and Ibn-i-Sīnā, continued to hold Al-Kindi's Neo-Platonism with minor changes to suit their own ends and rational inclinations. The main point of the emanation theory is that from Ultimate Reality, God, overflow or emanate other realities in succession. It is a non-temporal, somewhat 'metaphysio-logical' way of deriving realities from the ultimate source, God, and is opposed to the theory of creation from nothingness. With the help of Emanation Theory a cosmological or cosmogonic view was attached to Ptolemaic universe. From the earth as centre other seven heavenly bodies like Moon, Mercury, Sun revolving concentrically with rising radii, and the last eighth sphere of fixed stars was supposed to exist. To these celestial bodies they assigned corresponding nine souls emanating in succession, but the first Emanation was supposed to be without a celestial body. This first Emanation from God was called Active Intelligence, sometimes called Logos or Nous, sometimes Archangel Gabriel, and was supposed to be the giver of (Platonic) Forms. Human souls are parts of World-soul and human (potential) intellect can have access to the true knowledge radiating from Active Intelligence. Theosophists and metaphysical mystics differ in details in presenting their accounts. Philosophers were supposed to acquire this knowledge through reasoning and philosophical cogitations; prophets and mystics through
imaginative power. In this hierarchical structure of Intelligences, or religiously
called Angels, we find philosophers, religious scholars or Imams differ to suit
and harmonize their particular religious and metaphysical views and dogmas.
Now Shi‘ah scholars, especially Isma‘ili, have been holding that the Qur‘an (or
any other sacred book) contains two sorts of prophecies: the esoteric ones which
are universal eternal spiritual realities and mysteries expressed in symbolic or
hidden verbal forms, the other exoteric ones which are obviously expressed and
understood in legal terms. A prophet is holder of both esoteric prophecy and
exoteric or legislative prophecy: he is both nabi (— knower of esoteric truths)
and messenger. All prophets are alike as bearer of esoteric truths. To know
these truths one needs a guide or murshid or nabi or imam. For a Shi‘ah the
first Imam is Hadrat ‘Ali and through Walayah (— because nubuwwah ended
with Prophet Muhammad) we have succession of Imams (— for the Twelvers,
the twelfth Imam disappeared and is to reappear; for the Seveners or Isma‘ilis
there are seven Imams). Walayah is the same as nubuwwah in essence; the latter
continued in the shape of the former.

The author of the book emphasizes that the concept of Walayah
penetrated among Sunnī sufism though with changed religious preconceptions
and ways. In Shi‘ism especially in Isma‘ilism the concept of Walayah is
associated with Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Emanation Theory. The legalistic
aspect or message of prophecy changes from era to era and even place to place.
But the esoteric aspect, the inexpressible in ordinary form, the divine secret, the
'Godly' word, the really real religious core or truth is eternal; and as the author
points out that sometimes this truth or Logos 'solidifies' in the shape or flesh of
such persons as Jesus Christ and Imams, sometimes this religious mystery or
wisdom is unveiled in mysteries like Ibn al-'Arabi, and sometimes it is uttered in
such enigmatic assertions as 'I am the Truth or Huqq ' . . . ', sometimes this
religious mystery is preserved in sacred books. The first Imam, Hadrat ‘Ali
received this knowledge or wisdom from the Prophet Muhammad and then it
passed on through Walayah from one Imam to the other in succession . . . and
in similar vein from one mystic to the other. Accordingly several Shi‘ite and
Isma‘ili thinkers wrote mystic exegeses of the Qur‘anic verses to unveil the
secret religious meanings embedded in words, e.g. works of Mullā Sadrā of
Shirāz include Shi‘ite gnosis, Shaykhī School produced 'irfānī or mystic
commentaries of certain suraḥs, Husayn Kāshifī wrote great mystical
commentary on the Qur‘ān. Imām knows the secret meaning of the Qur‘ān and
hence leads his people on right religious track. The author does not instruct us
how much the concept of heredity is involved in the concept of Walayah,
how much the grace of God and how much self-struggle and how much
environmental factors are involved. Probably the answers to such queries would
weaken the concept of Walayah, but the author does not comment on this point.
If faith is the answer, the argumentation is in vain. His view appears to be that
there are persons, call them Perfect men ( . . . Insān-i Kamil, as in the thoughts
of ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, is a cosmic thought of man, a Platonic Ideal or Form
of Humanity), in every religion who have the right divine vision, and in this sense all religions, all true mystics or sufis are one in knowing the ultimate religious reality. But, as a matter of fact, divisions and diversities in the thoughts and visions of imams and mystics of various religions and sects belie uniformity and go against the concept of religious unique truth. Neither can there be any consensus about the real esoteric meanings of religious truths of the sacred books discovered by the claimants.

The author claims that the orientalists are very wrong in assuming that the history of Muslim Philosophy essentially ended with Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 /595 H) who was anti Platonist and tried to explain the things in Aristotelian terms. He asserts that, although Greek Platonic cum Neo-Platonic Muslim philosophical thoughts ended in the (Muslim) West, Platonism and Neo-Platonism flourished in the Muslim East in the form of 'Platonists' of Iran and in the form of sufistic (mystic) metaphysics. Ibn al-'Arabi, who attended the funeral of Ibn Rushd, brought forth important mystic metaphysics which influenced the Muslim East. Thus in the East the great contribution of Shaykh al-Ishraq Al-Suhrawardī Maqtūl (contemporary of Ibn al-'Arabi), who organized the thoughts of Hermes, Plato, Neo-Platonism, Zoroaster, Ibn Sinā etc., led to Ishraqi movement. In this direction the author mentions dozens of important theosophists or philosophers and sufis like Mīr Dāmād, Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shirāzī, ‘Āṭār of Nishapur, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and his school, Jalāl-al-Dīn Rūmī, Husayn Kāshīfī, Jāmī, Ṣāfī al-Dīn Tūsī, Hayder Āmulī, Rajab ‘Alī Tabrīzī, Qāḍī Sa’īd Qummī, Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsā’ī and Shaykhi School of Kirmān, Ḥādī Sabzawārī and his school in mid 19th century etc.

The author emphasizes the contributions of Shi‘ite thinkers especially of Ismā‘īlīs which took the shape of ‘Īrāfāt metaphysics after the Mongol destroyed Alamut (1256). The author rightly brings out their philosophical metaphysical importance e.g. ‘Ikhwān-al-Ṣafā’ movement, Ibn Sinā and other Neo-Platonist thinkers. He himself is apologetic about not giving adequate account of Sunni thinkers because of the limited space in the book. But it appears from the reading of the book that he holds that the core of Islamic philosophical thought in Muslim history is essentially Shi‘ite, and that this thought has essential similarities and affinities with other religious thoughts like those of Christianity and of Iranian religions. He does not discuss the political background and motivations which influenced the Shi‘ah – Sunni rift, may that be political, religious, philosophical or metaphysical. While discussing the Mu‘tazilite view of createdness of the Qur‘ān he opines that they really wanted to oppose any form of polytheism like Iranian dualism and incarnation of Christ as divine uncreated word i.e. Logos made flesh in Christ. He thinks that both Mu‘tazilites and Ash‘arites were confused. Ash‘arites thought that the Qur‘ān is eternal as to its non-verbal kalām exempt from all verbal and phonetic articulations. But they fail to account for the connection between the eternal non-verbal kalām of the Qur‘ān and its created verbal words. For the mystical
Shi’ite — Isma’îlite gnosis the words "created" and 'uncreated' are wrongly posed for the sacred book Qur‘án. Here it is the question of spiritual hermeneutics of the Qur‘án, a question of spiritual interpretation to know the real or esoteric meaning. According to Shi‘ah gnosis there are levels of understanding according to spiritual hierarchy of men. Here comes 'Platonism': there is a metaphysical thought, call it of Eternal Imam or Celestial Adam or Holy Ghost or Angel Gabriel or Angel of Revelation or Active Intelligence . . . the earthly imam like Jesus Christ of flesh and blood, 12th Imam, 1st Imam are only exemplifications of celestial Adam or Eternal Imam! The more one knows or recognizes Eternal Imam the more one knows the reality, the esoteric truth. So the real problem is that to know the sacred book or the Qur‘án is to reach esoteric meaning, and the question of the createdness of the Qur‘án is off the point. On page 256 of the book the author remarks: ‘. . . according to Shi‘ism, the Qur‘án that We posses today is a mutilated form of the original . . . the truth of the holy Book must be sought at the heart of its hidden depth, in the plurality of its esoteric meaning’.

The author fails to note that finding esoteric meaning is a game of creating fictions and that there is no way to reach unanimity or agreement. The author appears to take for granted an unbridgeable gulf between Sunnism and Shiism. He traces the religio-metaphysical history of the Muslims and is not concerned with the Muslims as one ummah. The truth is that our weltanschauung and conceptual framework in the present era have changed and the above concepts of Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Emanation, Celestial Man, etc. have no relevance, rather they are also inharmonious with our scientifically oriented world-view and with the present position of philosophical analysis and enlightenment.

Intisar-ul-Haque