SHORT NOTICES

STEFAN C. REIF: 
A Jewish archive from Old Cairo: the history of Cambridge University’s Genizah Collection.

This introduction to one of the great British collections of materials on Middle Eastern culture and civilization is a wholly appropriate and admirable addition to the new Curzon series being produced under the editorship of Professor Ian Netton. Not only does the book’s compiler, Professor Reif, possess impeccable scholarly credentials for the undertaking, since he has been Director of Genizah Research at Cambridge for the last quarter of a century, but many of its non-specialist readers—and this is a book which deserves to have many readers—will certainly echo this reviewer’s gratitude for the commitment expressed in his introduction to the cause of communicating the results of specialist academic research to a wider interested public.

The book’s ten chapters cover two main themes: the history of the Cambridge Genizah Collection itself, and the historical and cultural significance of the vast array of documents contained therein. The opening chapters deal with the original site of the Genizah in the Ben Ezra synagogue in Old Cairo, and how its re-discovery in the nineteenth century led, through the enterprise of Solomon Schechter (originally inspired by his quest for materials from which the Hebrew text of Ben Sira might be reconstructed) and the invaluable support of Charles Taylor, to the transfer of the bulk of its contents to the Cambridge University Library. The account of the parts played by these and other heroic pioneers makes for absorbing reading, and if some of the later detail of the relevant university library politics occasionally has a somewhat claustrophobic feel, the tale told in the final chapter of continuing success down to the present in the preservation, cataloguing and scholarly use of the Collection provides ample vindication of the original Schechter-Taylor vision.

In the chapters which deal with the contents of the Collection, five principal areas are defined and illustrated. Chapter v explains its value for the study of the text and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, while Chapter vi describes its very great importance for Talmudic and liturgical studies. The next three chapters move to the illustration of how studies of the Collection have enhanced the understanding of broader cultural themes: first, of the internal relations between different local Jewish communities and those between Jews, Muslims and Christians; secondly, of the daily lives of the period, as particularly exemplified in the work of the Goitein school; and thirdly, of Jewish language use, where the Genizah documents are such a rich source not simply for Hebrew, Aramaic and Judaeo-Arabic, but also for such lesser known ethnolects as Judaeo-Greek.

The attractiveness of the volume is much enhanced by the provision of numerous illustrations, many of them in colour. Its utility as a work of reference is guaranteed by the provision after each chapter of very full guides to further reading, including final sections devoted to secondary sources in modern Hebrew, and at the end of the volume by a set of very helpful indexes.

CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE
KATHRYN KUENY:  
*The rhetoric of sobriety: wine in early Islam.*  

This stimulating short monograph addresses a major topic of the greatest cultural interest and significance in an interesting and original way. While it contains a most informative compilation of relevant textual citations for the key taboo surrounding wine in Islam, its purpose is to identify and account for the various strategies that may be identified in the handling of the topic in different categories of early Islamic literature.

In her introduction, Kueny draws on Mary Douglas for the intrinsic notion of wine in early Islam as not so much a straightforward impurity as an anomalous substance whose inherent ambiguity threatened to upset the all-important distinction between the human realm and the divine. The book’s five chapters then explore the ‘rhetorics of sobriety’ in what she terms the prophetic, analytic, narrative, poetic and mystical discourses in early Islamic tradition.

The first three chapters deal with the core religious texts of early Islam, beginning with the quranic discussions of wine and intoxication. The careful discussion of key passages is used to show how the great concern of the scripture with the display of cosmic order embraces an essentially ambiguous treatment, depending on whether the setting for the consumption of wine is on earth or in paradise. Based upon the *ḥadīth* (and the related *tafsīr* and *sīra* literature) the next two chapters show how halakhic strategies are used to provide more closely defined prohibitions on the consumption of wine in the human context, and how these are surrounded with haggadic supplements emphasizing the rewards attached to the observance of the taboo and the perils concomitant with its flouting. A particularly interesting subsidiary theme to emerge in this discussion is the markedly harder line characteristic of the Shiite *ḥadīth*, which Kueny associated with the stronger perception of the threat of chaos inherent in the predilection within Shiiism for personalized drama and event.

The shorter two remaining chapters deal in a more impressionistic way with the portrayal of wine in the poetry of the Jahiliyya and with the topic of wine and mystical utterance. The ambiguities of the attitudes to wine expressed in these two types of literature, so different from the texts earlier considered, are suggestively sketched, with a sympathetic discussion of the Ibn al-Fārīd’s famous *khamriyya* being used to point to the paradoxes inherent to the wine imagery which was for centuries to be so prominent a theme in Islamic mystical poetry.

Given the enduring ambivalence of the actual status of the wine taboo in the practice of Islamic societies and in the imagination reflected in their literatures, this scholarly study may be recommended to a wide range of Islamicists, particularly since it is both succinct and refreshingly jargon-free, unlike so many academic books which have begun life as doctoral dissertations.

CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE

RICHARD G. HOVANNISIAN and GEORGES SABAGH (ed.):  
*The Persian presence in the Islamic world.*  

The format of the biennial Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conferences, at which an
exceptionally distinguished scholar in the field of Islamic studies is invited to
give a keynote lecture and to nominate both the theme of the conference and
to select fellow participants—who are usually themselves of hardly lesser
distinction than the honorand—is virtually guaranteed to produce a set of
magisterial treatments. And this indeed proves to be the case in this volume
of the proceedings of the thirteenth in the series, held in 1991 to honour
Ehsan Yarshater, universally acknowledged as the \textit{doyen} of later twentieth-
century Persian studies.

Yarshater’s own lengthy paper bears the same title as the book, over one
half of whose compass it extends. Reflecting the exceptional coverage of both
the classical and the pre-Islamic, for which the following of a Tehran doctorate
with a second Ph.D. at SOAS under Henning in 1960 already provided an
unusual double qualification, the sweep of this chapter first sets the scene with
a description of the Persian presence among the Arabs prior to Islam before
examining the evidence of the Quran and \textit{hadith}, and looking at the inventory
of Iranian loanwords in classical Arabic. It then discusses the scholarly debate
on the Persian role in the Abbasid revolution before looking at the Persian
presence more generally in classical Islamic civilization, the non-Arab Islamic
lands, and in the modern period. Copiously footnoted throughout, the value
of the chapter as a work of reference is enhanced by the provision of a
lengthy bibliography.

While necessarily more restricted in format, the other chapters each in
their own way add to the illumination of the broad theme which was given to
the contributors. Some are quite specialized—and none the worse for that—
like Saliba on the Persian contribution to \textit{hay'a} astronomical texts, Bower
on ideas of time in Persian mysticism, and Doerfer on the influence of Persian
language and literature among the Turks. Grabar provides a thought-
provoking and thoughtfully illustrated chapter on ‘Persian miniatures:
illustrations or paintings’, while other contributors have chosen to respond to
Yarshater’s invitation with similarly wide-ranging surveys of their own. Thus
in her chapter ‘The West-Eastern Divan: the influence of Persian poetry in
East and West’, Schimmel (herself a Della Vida award-holder, like Grabar)
provides a characteristically engaging intercultural mélange which embraces
both Iqbal and Rückert as well as Hafiz and Goethe, while Bosworth’s
masterly survey of pre-Mongol Islamic historiography suggests that the
Persian contribution here lay in its broadening of the orthodox Islamic
tradition by adding the special world view which came from its own distinct
prior cultural outlook.

\textbf{CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE}

\textbf{FARIBA ADELKHAH:}
\textit{Being modern in Iran.}
(The CERI Series in Comparative Politics and International
Studies.) xiv, 190 pp. London: Hurst \& Company, in association
with the Centre d’Études et de Recherches Internationales, Paris,
1999.

The work under review is the English translation of a book published in
French in 1998. It explores the interaction between the institutionalization of
the Islamic Republic and changes in Iranian society. The originality of
Adelkha’s argument is the use of the concept of ‘javanmard’ (the image of
ideal social man) to explore the processes of socio-economic and socio-political changes in Iran. She argues that the concept of ‘javanmard’, which historically was defined as a male social ethic centred on selflessness, has changed according to historical contexts. Therefore, the concept has remained an important factor in determining an ideal public social being and has allowed men and women to form their spaces in the public sphere of economy, politics, culture, society and so on.

Adelkhah draws on Weber’s and Foucault’s analysis and argues that to be modern in Iran is about a moral being in relation to the public sphere. There are a number of factors (economic, political and cultural) determining the question of modernity in Iran. Nevertheless, Islam remains at the heart of the question: ‘as a set of practices, as an institution of knowledge, and as an intellectual product, [Islam] is directly involved in the creation of a public space’. She does not believe that ‘Islam is the conveyor of modernity par excellence’. It is not more important than social, economic and cultural factors, but it is a central part of people’s lives.

This is an important book, as it stresses the danger of any form of determinisms—political, economic or religious—to explain the processes of change, as these factors are historically determined and subject to change. More importantly they can mutually interact and have an impact on each other. This is particularly important at the present historical period (post 11th September 2001) when after many years of debate and analysis on the problematic definitions of modernity (wearing lipstick) and traditionalism (wearing burqa), the politicians and the media promote the idea that Islam is in contradiction with modernity.

Nevertheless, my criticism of this book is that the informal political struggle of women, students, and youth for change has not been analysed deservedly. This factor has been at the heart of the changes in Iran since the 1979 Revolution. This is an important issue, which keeps the debate on Iranian society and other Muslim societies alive. Hopefully this book is an important contribution to this debate.

ELAHE ROSTAMI POVEY

KEES VERSTEEGH:
The Arabic language.

This is a paperback reissue of a work originally published in 1997 (and reviewed in BSOAS, 61/3, 1998, pp. 550–1). It is to be warmly welcomed, as it should now make this lucid, wide-ranging and thought-provoking survey more affordable to students of Arabic, for whom it may be recommended unreservedly as a valuable and informative adjunct whatever the level of the course they are following.

The preface (p. viii) adds a sentence to the effect that various corrections and amendments have been made, but the resulting changes are minor: Vollers’ views are now more clearly expressed (p. 40), and some recent publications have been added to the bibliography. Nevertheless, the text remains almost the same, and for all practical purposes the reissue is virtually identical to the hardback version. One amendment that would have been welcome, though, is to the text of p. 81, in order to make the complex argument about the distinction between the analysis of verbal and nominal
sentences both clearer and logically more compelling. Elsewhere there is one alteration for the worse: presumably as the result of a computer problem, the symbol ø (reproduced correctly elsewhere, as in e.g. hàmēš, p. 21) is replaced on p. 19 by f, thus yielding what may be for the unitiated rather unsettling comparisons between Arabic ġarb and ‘ahad and Hebrew ḥfrb and ḥhad respectively; and a further technical slip is the omission of a branch from the tree diagram on p. 12. But these are tiny blemishes indeed.

Owen Wright

LUDWIG ALSDORF:

Ludwig Alsdorf is the third German Indologist (after Hermann Oldenberg and Paul Thieme) whose *Kleine Schriften*, published in the Glasenapp-Stiftung Series, have sold out and have now been reprinted, making Alsdorf’s great achievements in the field of language and literature of Jainism and Buddhism (cf. the review of the first edition, *BSOAS*, XXXIX, 3, 715 f.) accessible again.

The new edition is provided with a separate table of contents, duplicated from the list of publications into which it was integrated in the first edition, and a new preface by the editor. It does not reprint the index, since the index was included, in an improved version, in the index to ‘Nachtragsband’ (the supplement published in the same series in 1998 as vol. 35).

A. Wezler’s Preface, after presenting a list of misprints in this ‘Nachtragsband’, consists mainly of a passionate answer to the criticism voiced by Sheldon Pollock and specified by J. W. de Jong (*IIJ* 42, 1999, review of ‘Nachtragsband’) that Alsdorf was closely involved with National Socialism. Wezler refutes these allegations, pointing out the difficulties of living under a totalitarian system which may force citizens to pay lip service to ideologies they do not favour privately. At any rate, Alsdorf’s Indological merit is certainly not impaired by this controversial point, as the necessity for a new edition may testify.

Renate Söhnen-Thieme

SHOMA MUNSHI (ed.):

This edited collection examines the reach of global media and its transformations in the local contexts of Nepal, Japan, China, Thailand, India and Turkey. The ten papers are all concerned with how media and the politics of consumption contribute to constructing the ‘modern’ Asian woman. The authors write from different disciplinary perspectives, with the majority in communication studies. All papers address the contradictions and ambiguities of the Asian modern woman as a discursive ideological space partially created by the media.

Renate Söhnen-Thieme
An introduction by the editor outlines the emergence of global image industries in Asia, and the articulation between global and local, consumption practices, individualism, and modernity in selected case studies. Robins examines the corporate ideology of globalization, focusing on the ‘productive disorder’ of diasporic communication in the context of globalization and transnationalism. Here he locates the possibility of a new transnational media order. In the next paper, Liechty explores how imported pornographic videos in Kathmandu are being consumed in the private sphere by both men and women. When groups of women watch these ‘blue movies’, they attempt to critique and negotiate these representations of the modern Asian woman.

Using changes which took place in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, Chaplin looks at the creation of the stereotypic ‘modern girl’ who moved to occupy public spaces in Japanese cities. These transgressive spaces outside the traditional home include love hotels where women construct their sexuality free of connotations of servitude. Munshi examines how India’s beauty industry, including beauty contests, make-up and fitness items, contributed to redefining femininity. ‘Indian-ness’ is no longer signified by television serials of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, as a new model of Indian femininity is constructed.

Papers by Johansson, and Donald and Lee examine the modern Chinese woman through advertising in Chinese women’s magazines, and the ambiguous representation of women’s bodies in film and television. The latter paper draws attention to Mulan, a Disney cartoon representing a cross-dressing Chinese military heroine, a much transformed incarnation of filial courage.

Harrison interrogates the media coverage of Thai prostitution, drawing attention to how images of prostitutes and prostitution in films and videos become images of Thailand, the nation state. In an examination of Indian short stories of romantic courtship in women’s magazines, Uberoi addresses the problem of creating romantic love after arranged marriages. Finally, Lewis compares how Ottoman Turkish women writers and British journalists engaged with Western feminism in their discussions of women’s emancipation.

The volume ‘resists closure’—which means there is no conclusion. Nor could there be, when ten knowledgeable authors explore such wide-ranging current questions about how the social imagery expressed through media influences the experience of social life. This slim volume would be useful for undergraduate women’s studies, media studies, Asian studies, or cultural studies courses, were it not for its hefty price.

PENNY VAN ESTERIK