***Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on* Takfīr**, edited by Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro, and Sabine Schmidtke (Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts, 123) (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016), xviii+534 pp., ISBN: 978-90-04-30473-4 (hb) & 978-90-04-30783-4 (e-book), €172.00 / $223.00 (hb)

This volume takes its readers in a journey of the subject of *takfīr* (generally rendered "accusation of unbelief") in Islam. It begins with an introduction that is generous with references to sources on various aspects of *takfīr*. Despite, or perhaps because of, the "long history" of *takfīr* in Islam (p. 2), the Editors emphasize from the outset that many of the traditions, Prophetic and otherwise, from early and medieval Islamic history condemned the practice of *takfīr* that was regarded as a "dangerous instrument" (p. 12). In an overview of events from early Islam and the emergence of early Muslim sects, the Editors touch on issues that were closely associated with the rise of *takfīr*, mainly, the definition of faith and the status of miscreants (*fussāq*). Here, we find a tendency among some Muslim sects (such as the Muʿtazilīs and the Sunnīs) to condemn certain views as constituting unbelief while abstaining from accusing individuals holding them of *takfīr*.

Noting the distinction that some Sunnī scholars made between various kinds and degrees of *kufr* (unbelief), the Editors discuss the various conditions that these scholars stipulated for accusing someone (presumably Muslim) of unbelief, including *ʿilm* (knowledge), *qaṣd* (intention), and *ikhtiyār* (choice). Only when it has been ascertained that a person accused of unbelief is aware that what he has said or done constitutes unbelief, had both the intention to do or say it, and was not coerced to do that, he can be punished (in no specific way) but only by a person with authority (supposedly the ruler). In the actual practice, "mainstream Muslims" refrained from practicing *takfīr* even against sects that practiced it against them (such as the Khārijīs and more recently members of the so-called ISIS, p. 14). This approach was confirmed in a 2005 conference in Jordan where hundreds of Muslim scholars belonging to various sects agreed to "forbid *takfīr*." (p. 15)

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Contributors to this volume may regard this overview of both the theory and practice of *takfīr* in Islam too idealistic, as evident in their contributions. The chapters in this volume are grouped in two sections, the first of which presents chronologically various cases of *takfīr* in different places and periods of Islamic history, while the second section is more thematic in nature. The first chapter, by Ercilia Francesca, in the volume discusses Ibāḍī Khārijī notions of *walāyah* and *barāʾah* (association and dissociation), two notions that were shaped by Ibāḍī interpretation of events from early Islamic history (notably the schisms in which the Companions participated), and shaped the Ibāḍī relationship with other Muslims. Next, Steven Judd examines whether Qadarīs (those who deny *qadar*, or predestination) were accused of unbelief in medieval heresiographical and biographical works. Other chapters (by István T. Kristó-Nagy and Daniel De Smet, respectively) deal with how the Manicheans were regarded by Muslim scholars, and how some Ismāʿīlīs regarded other Muslim sects (such as Sunnīs, other Shīʿīs, and even some extremist Ismāʿīlīs). In chapter five, Sonja Brentjes demonstrates that religious scholars were generally tolerable of specialists in non-religious sciences (such as philosophy, astronomy, geometry, etc.) and did not readily accuse them of unbelief.

Next, Amalia Levanoni presents 60 cases of *takfīr* in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria. Most of the victims in these cases (some of which ended up with public execution) were Sufis, Coptic converts to Islam, and at times Mamlūk *amīr*s. Levanoni discusses how relationships among Mamlūk leaders, among judges belonging to different Sunnī *madhhab*s, and between the Mamlūk Sultan and the "religious establishment" influenced the course and outcomes of some of these trials. Chapter seven presents the case of the $8^{th}/14^{th}$-century Ḥurūfī movement as example of what Orkhan Mir-Kasimov calls the "renovational" as opposed to the "abrogational" trends that he argues have existed since early Islam. Whereas the former trend accepts Islam's religious texts and can thus be tolerated by the traditional *ʿulamāʾ*, the latter is based on the notion of the "continuation of the prophecy" and is therefore regarded as sheer *kufr*. Chapter eight, on the other hand, presents a case of a group – the $11^{th}/17^{th}$ "revivalist" Qāḍīzādeli movement in the Ottoman Empire – that practiced *takfīr* against others. As Simeon Evstativ argues here, the boundaries between accusations of *bidʿah* (innovation) and of *takfīr* were sometimes blurred.

The next chapter discusses *takfīr* in Ṣafavid Iran. Although it makes specific reference to Mullā Ṣadrā, the discussion deals with *takfīr* of philosophers and Sufis more generally, which Sajjad Rizvi argues was a reaction to the increasing influence of philosophy and Sufism in the $11^{th}/17^{th}$-century Iran, but also and primarily to their seeking sources of knowledge other than the rightful Imāms. The next, rather long chapter on heresy and *takfīr* in a South Indian community, also capitalizes on the idea that *takfīr* often involves more than a mere conflict between orthodoxy and heresy and relates to issues of authority and prerogatives of traditional religious scholars. At the time of a perceived challenge (from the state, a certain group of people, or certain ideas), these scholars may become less tolerable to beliefs and practices that they may otherwise ignore.

Chapter eleven presents the case of three Saudi scholars whose criticism of the policies of the "state" suggests that they considered the rulers of the Kingdom unbelievers. These specific rulers, however, are not guilty of democracy, which is the subject and source of *takfīr* in the next chapter, where Joas Wagemakers seeks to demonstrate that denouncing democracy as a heretical system does not necessarily mean that those who participate in it (members of parliament and voters) are unbelievers. He points out, however, that this general acceptance of democracy changes when it is associated with factors such as foreign invasion or bringing non-orthodox lawmakers to the parliament (such as the Shīʿīs in Iraq for the Sunnīs). This part of the volume ends with a chapter on three Arab women accused of unbelief in recent decades, and another on a case of *takfīr* in Sweden. In this latter case, some Somali migrants accused of unbelief other migrants who had converted to Christianity. Göran Larsson states here that our understanding of these cases is based on "impressionistic knowledge" and lacks enough data on many relevant questions (p. 390).

In the thematic part of the volume, Hussein Modarressi presents various views on the "minimum" that a person needs to believe and practice to be considered a Muslim. Views vary from the mere belief in the oneness of God and the messengership of the Prophet Muḥammad, to a long list of other theological beliefs and commitment to certain practices. Next, Robert Gleave discusses how failure to exercise one such practice – saying one's prayers – is tantamount to abandoning Islam in Shīʿī jurisprudence. Examining *al-*

Fatāwá l-ʿĀlamgīriyyah from 17th-century India, Intisar Rabb discusses how and why, unlike other Muslim scholars, Ḥanafī jurists regarded both defamatory and blasphemous statements to be violations of God's, rather than man's, rights that cannot therefore be pardoned because of their crucial connection to public values and social order. In chapter 18, Zoltan Szombathy discusses *takfīr* that is based on literary writings, focusing on how "intent" divided Muslim scholars into formalists insisting that intent was irrelevant in statements and motifs deemed to constitute unbelief, and interpretativists for whom it was crucial in condemning littérateurs as unbelievers. Finally, Michael Ebstein seeks to demonstrate how the writings of *Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* and Ibn ʿArabī illustrate a feature of many mystic traditions, namely, their acceptance of alternative spiritual paths to their ultimate goal, proximity to God.

An immediate impression that readers of this volume would get is that the sources available on the issue of *takfīr* in early and medieval Islam are generally indeterminate and insufficient. This in itself is a contribution to our knowledge of the subject, but this rather long volume would be more valuable if only chapters were included that add to our knowledge, use new primary sources, or present original arguments (e.g. chapters 17 & 18). More consistency among the chapters in their use of primary vs. secondary sources and improvement of chapters that make strong or multiple arguments on thin evidence would have been appreciated. The organization of the volume may have been improved by placing Modarressi's chapter in the beginning, for his discussion would lay the foundation for some other discussions on *takfīr* in the rest of the volume.

Some of the chapters in this volume read just as they originally were, conference papers. The published version of these papers does not seem to have been improved and enriched by discussions that likely followed each set of presentations. A case in point is István T. Kristó-Nagy, "Denouncing the Damning *Zindiq*! Struggle and Interaction between Monotheism and Dualism." Reading at times as polemics against Islam and at other times as preaching for dualism, the chapter does not seem to have been revised properly to make it more suitable for a scholarly volume. It is not even consistent with the theme of the book, which presumable focuses on *al-kufr al-ṭāriʾ* (acquired unbelief, i.e. *takfīr* of Muslims by Muslims), while Kristó-Nagy's chapter deals with Muslim *takfīr* of Manicheans whose *kufr* is *aṣlī* ("original and inveterate unbelief," as the Editors translate it, p.

11). (Kristó-Nagy does mention that some of the *zindīq*s were professed Muslims, but most of his chapter deals with Manicheans.) This confusion over the focus of the volume is again evident in Brian J. Didier reference to the use of the terms *kufr* and *kāfir*s in the Qurʾān (which, as is well known, is not used to describe Muslims, including even the hypocrites of Medina) to demonstrate that *takfīr* has a long history in Islam, starting with its foundational texts (p. 273). Similarly problematic is chapter 13 on Arab women accused of unbelief, which reads more like a manifesto than a scholarly piece of writing.

There are some issues with the translation and transliteration of some terms (in some chapters more than others) and some typos and perhaps errors here and there in the volume. *Takfīr al-sayyiʾāt* ([seeking] God's forgiveness of our sins), for instance, is explained as "the need of pious believes to accuse of unbelief those Muslims who are performing 'bad things'" (p. 229). *lā zalatu* (sic.) *ukaffiru l-dawla* (I still consider [the rulers of?] the state unbeliever) is rendered "I have not committed any mistake in accusing the state of unbelief" (p. 306). An example of a possible typo that went unnoticed is the "second/seventh century" in page 155.

In short, some chapters in this volume will disappoint serious readers who would nonetheless be able to identify other useful chapters that do exist in the volume. General readers and students will need some guidance to identify some obvious biases and to get a coherent view of the subject of *takfīr* in Islamic law and history from this long volume.

Amr Osman

Qatar University, Doha-Qatar

aosman@qu.edu.qa

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1550-6234