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Der unbekannte Kalām.

Theologische Positionen der frühen Māturīdīya am Beispiel der Attributenlehre. History of Islamic Theology / Islamische Theologiegeschichte, Bd. 2. Berlin/Münster/Wien/Zürich/London: Lit, 2014. 616 pages, € 69.90, ISBN 978-3-643-12402-9.

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The work reviewed here is based on materials gathered by Brodersen during the preparation of her edition of Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm aṣ-Ṣaffār al-Bukhārī's *Talkhīṣ al-adilla li-qawā'id at-tawḥīd*, published in 2011. The present study aims "to analyze the Māturīdī authors in the context of their own conceptions of thought and to put them in the broader framework of Hanafi tradition" (Brodersen, 21). This is achieved by first presenting an overview of all Māturīdī authors and their texts until the 8th/14th century (Part One) and subsequently analyzing them systematically (Part Two). Publishing the first part of the book alone would already have been a great contribution to the German-speaking research on al-Māturīdī and the Māturīdīya. With her analyses of the original texts and her thoughtful conclusions that in some cases set new standards in dealing with this school of thought, Brodersen went even further and produced a work that deserves great appreciation.

The first part of the book is divided into two main chapters: The chapter on biographies, in which Brodersen provides detailed information on historiographical works about the Māturīdī authors and their texts, is followed by the documentary chapter in which the texts are introduced in greater detail. Already in the first chapter, we find lists of the individual

texts containing detailed descriptions of the structure of the texts and elaborations on the authors' intentions. In some cases, even the genesis of the texts is taken into account. While being faced with the so far broadest and at the same time concise overview of the Māturīdī school of thought currently available to the researchers, the reader will unfortunately not find any information about different editions and manuscripts other than the one used by Brodersen nor about such texts that are no longer extant or presently unavailable.

The second chapter contains excerpts of the mentioned texts, which are organized chronologically and topically. Although there are no original text citations, Brodersen gives a detailed summary of the arguments presented on every topic. This provides the reader with a quick and good overview of the works. The lack of possibility to compare these summaries with some excerpts of the original passages is excused by the sheer scope of the book which in total amounts to 595 pages. The lack of original sources should therefore not be identified as a shortcoming of the book, although the possibility of arranging the two main parts into separate volumes could have been a reasonable alternative. This way, a second volume could have dealt with the analytical discussion of the topics without the need to quote any original texts and the first volume might have served as a source of reference. Quotations from at least from excerpts of the original texts might have proved very valuable resources for the international research. When taking into account, however, that Brodersen's work is aimed especially at the students of Islamic theology (Brodersen, 593) - a university discipline only recently established in Germany - it becomes apparent that her priority is the promotion of the current state of art in the German-speaking researcher community.

The second part of Brodersen's book is a systematic presentation of the main arguments of the various books. Of special importance here are her observations and analyses of the arguments, carefully presented after every topic. The discourses and debates are contextualized and discussed with reference to the original position held by al-Māturīdī himself. Such an approach makes it possible to examine and reconstruct the development of the discourse tradition within the Māturīdī school of thought. Moreover, it opens completely new perspectives on the Māturīdīya as a whole: A passage on the question of al-Māturīdī's reputation and influence among his successors might illustrate the possibilities opened up by Brodersen's work:

As to the question of the continuity of the Māturīdī school, this research has shown that these theologians followed the teachings of their (broadly speaking) master much more closely than in the case of al-Aš'arī and his followers. For the research on al-Aš'arī is often confronted with the question whether some teachings in fact go back to him or whether they have merely been attributed to him by his successors. It is only at the first glance that we are surprised by the absence of the name al-Māturīdī's in the works of the early Māturīdī scholars. This simply proves the matter-of-course attitude with which his teachings were taken as normative. That al-Māturīdī's successors remained far more uniform in their teachings than the Aš'arites speaks only in favor of this view. (Brodersen, 594)

These considerations open up a completely new approach to the problem and will have to be considered in all future reflections on the Māturīdīya. The task remains, however, to clarify which topics and teachings are precisely affected hereby, which ones have been simply transmitted and which ones further elaborated or even completely discarded. For Brodersen

mentions rightly that at least in the field of ontology, al-Māturīdī has been forgotten very quickly. Shedding light on this problem might lead to new insights into the formative period of the science of *kalām* and consequently also to new impulses for modern *kalām*.

Compared to the overall volume of the book, the concluding chapter appears to be very meager in size (Brodersen, 593–595). The reader is left wanting further explications of the ideas presented in this chapter. Brodersen indeed draws some fruitful conclusions from her observations of the texts. Still, there is no elaboration of these ideas in their final consequences, something that for instance, could have been achieved by referring to some examples. One of her most important concluding remarks shall be illustrated here.

The conclusion about the transmission of al-Māturīdī's teachings goes well with Brodersen's observation about the gap between the Ash'arīte and the Māturīd school of thought being even much bigger than assumed: "In fact we are dealing here with fundamentally different approaches." (Brodersen, 593) The title of her book suggests that what Brodersen has in mind particularly are the differences in the question of God's attributes, where "al-Māturīdī's teachings radically differ from those of al-Aš'arī" (Brodersen, 512). Since the general tendency in the field is rather going towards the reduction of the gap between these two schools to some minor differences, this remark can be considered as announcing a new insight. Even in some recent studies on this topic, such as the one by the Turkish scholar Emrullah Yüksel (2012, 13), we still find the notion that the differences between the two schools are not to be understood as "contradictions" (*zıtlık*), but rather as "variations" (*çeşitlilik ve farklılık*).¹

1 Yüksel, Emrullah. 2012. *Mâtürîdîler ile Eş'arîler Arasındaki Görüş Ayrılıkları*, İstanbul: Düşün Yayınları.

Indeed, Brodersen also notices the similarities, but she also highlights that in some points the differences between the Ash'arītes and the Māturīdīs are much more fundamental than previously assumed:

Regarding the understanding and the reality of the attributes, the Māturīdī theologians concur with al-Aš'arī and the Aš'arītes. What is also striking is the similar line of argumentation that excludes the opposites of the attributes when it comes to God. But the position of al-Māturīdī and his followers regarding the infinity of the attributes is clearly contradicting all the other concepts. *(Bei der Frage, inwieweit die göttlichen Attribute als ewig zu bezeichnen sind, befinden sich sowohl al-Māturīdī als auch die Theologen in seiner Nachfolge dann im offenen Widerspruch zu allen anderen Konzepten.)* (Brodersen, 509)

The Māturīdīs viewed all the attributes of God as not being separable from his essence and thus as being eternal with him. The Ash'arītes, on the other hand, distinguished between the attributes of essence and the attributes of act. The latter are regarded as temporal, and thus not eternal, since every action takes place in time or at least cannot be grasped without the notion of time. The position on this issue has further implications for the very notion and understanding of God and thus also for the world view and for questions of cosmology. Furthermore, it is closely related to theological problems like the nature of the revelation and therefore of the Qur'ān. It is scarcely possible to formulate a theological approach to the problem of theodicy without first having decided the underlying question of the essence of God, his attributes and his relation to his creation. Diagnosing a fundamental gap at this very point therefore has far-reaching consequences in the sense of fundamental differences in the theological orientation.

Angelika Brodersen

If Brodersen should be proven right on this point, we will have to radically re-think the term *ahl as-sunna* and the conceptions that go along with it.

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