

L'adab, toujours recommencé

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L'adab, toujours recommencé

*“Origins”, Transmissions, and
Metamorphoses of Adab Literature*

Edited by

Francesca Bellino
Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen
Luca Patrizi



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Preface. A Project, a Conference, a Book

Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, Luca Patrizi, Francesca Bellino

The notion of *adab* lies at the very heart of the Arab-Islamic culture. Born in the crucible of the Arabic and Persian civilisations of the Late Antiquity period and nourished by Greek, Syriac, and Indian influences, this polysemic notion covers a broad scope of meanings, ranging from good behaviour, good manners, etiquette, proper knowledge of the ethic rules, belles-lettres, and, finally, literature.

In the framework of a 5-year research project (2011–2016) sponsored by the Institut Universitaire de France (IUF), the two first investigators of the project *L'adab en islam*, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (Institut national des Langues et civilisations orientales, then Sorbonne Université, Paris) and Luca Patrizi (University of Turin), were joined by several collaborators. Together they convened three international conferences on the history of this notion attended by many colleagues.

The first conference, held in Paris (November 29, to December 1, 2012) was co-organised with Ève Feuillebois-Pierunek and was entitled *Adab in Islam: Ethics and Spirituality, Sufi adab*. The proceedings of this conference were edited by Francesco Chiabotti, Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, and Luca Patrizi, *Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi adab* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

The second conference, held in Paris (May 22–24, 2014) was organised by Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Luca Patrizi and was entitled *Adab et modernité: un processus de civilisation? (XVII^e–XXI^e siècle)*. The proceedings of this conference were edited by Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, *Adab and Modernity, "A Civilising Process"?* (*Seventeenth–Twenty-First Century*) (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

The third and final conference held in Paris (December 1–3, 2016) was co-organised by Francesca Bellino (University of Turin; then University of Napoli L'Orientale) together with Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Luca Patrizi, and was entitled *L'adab, toujours recommencé/(Re-)Begun Adab: The "Origins", Transmissions, and Metamorphoses of Adab*.

This volume presents the proceedings of the latter conference. It opens with an Introduction by Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and includes 22 contributions by the conference attendees. Unfortunately, it does not include the papers given by Stefano Pellò and Nuha Alshaar, but is enriched by a new contribution by Bilal Orfali along with Maurice Pomerantz.

The preliminary section includes the Introduction, which addresses methodological issues concerning the origins of the concept of *adab* and, along with it, the origins of Arab-Islamic civilisation itself. It also deals with the

concept of *adab* moving between education and etiquette. The first part entitled Backgrounds and Foundations comprises two chapters and explores the early stages of the formation of the notion of *adab*, also in relation to other notions such as *paideia* and *musar*. The remaining contributions of the volume were organised into three more parts to give it a structure that is both thematic and chronological as well as, we hope, also dynamic.

The second part focuses on the Origins of *adab*. It is, in turn, divided into two sections respectively devoted to *Adab* and the Formation of Literary Canons, and *Adab*, Power, and Ethics. The chapters therein contained address fundamental issues related to *adab* as a pivotal notion during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods through a series of case studies linked to specific works and authors.

The third part concerns the Transmissions of *Adab* and includes three sections respectively devoted to major works and/or genres such as the *Kalila wa-Dimna*, the *maqāmāt*, and the anthologies. These have crossed many centuries, transforming and redefining themselves into the different languages and traditions they passed through.

The fourth part looks at the Metamorphoses of Origins. It discusses works and/or genres relating to science, aesthetics, and mysticism. It addresses the issue of origins as perceived from a modern perspective. The last section, significantly entitled Reconstructing Origins beyond Ruins?, reformulates the problem of the origins as a question of modernity.

At the end of this long research program, we wish to acknowledge and thank all those who made the conferences and the publication of the proceedings possible. In addition to the crucial help of the Institut universitaire de France (IUF), we received assistance from a great number of institutions: the Institut des études sur l'islam et les sociétés du monde musulman (IISMM), based at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Ehess); the Centre d'études sur les oralités et les littératures du monde (CERLOM, Institut national des Langues et Civilisations Orientales); the Centre d'études et de recherches sur le Moyen-Orient et la Méditerranée (CERMOM, Institut national des Langues et civilisations orientales); and the Université franco-italienne (UFI). We express our gratitude to the respective directors who headed these institutions at the time: Pascal Buresi, Stéphane Sawas, and Sobhi Boustani. We also thank Charlotte Courrey and Renan Jaouen, who provided help during the conference.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the anonymous reviewers for their readings and helpful remarks. Many thanks to Ly Lan Dill for translating the Introduction and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen's contribution and many thanks to Giovanni Chiapparini, Marie Jaouen, Maëlle Pezout and Denis Jaouen for their contribution to the Index. We express our gratitude to Joseph Smith for his English revision of the texts and Edib Husejnagic for his beautiful calligraphy, which we used for the book's cover.

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