



Matthew S. Melvin-Koushki

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EDUCATION

Ph.D.	Yale University, with distinction (Islamic Studies)	May 2012
M.Phil.	Yale University, with distinction (Islamic Studies)	Dec. 2009
M.A.	Yale University (Islamic Studies)	May 2008
B.A.	University of Virginia, <i>summa cum laude</i> (Middle Eastern Languages and Literatures)	May 2004
	University of Jordan (Arabic)	Spring 2002

Dissertation title: "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Šāʿin al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran"

*Winner, 2012 Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award in the Humanities, Middle East Studies Association
Honorable Mention, 2012 Dissertation of the Year on a Topic in Iranian Studies, Foundation for Iranian Studies*

CURRENT POSITION

Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of South Carolina; Faculty Associate, Walker Institute for International Studies	2014-present
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PAST POSITIONS

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University	2013-2014
Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Oriental Institute/Junior Research Fellow, Pembroke College, University of Oxford	2012-2013

PUBLICATIONS

Preprint Books

The Occult Science of Empire in Aqqyunlu-Safavid Iran: Two Shirazi Lettrists: With an Edition and Translation of Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī's Tuḥfa-yi Rūḥānī and Maḥmūd Dihdār's Zubdat al-Alvāḥ (manuscript in preparation, expected submission spring 2016)

Occult Philosophers and Philosopher Kings in Early Modern Iran: The Life and Legacy of Ibn Turka, Timurid Lettrist (manuscript in preparation, expected submission fall 2016)

The Lettrist Treatises of Ibn Turka: Edition, Translation and Commentary (manuscript in preparation, expected submission spring 2017)

Edited Volumes

Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives, ed. with Noah Gardiner (a special issue of *Arabica*, forthcoming 2016)

Articles & Book Chapters

"The Occult Sciences in Safavid Iran and Safavid Occultists Abroad," in Rudi Matthee, ed., *The Safavid World*, New York: Routledge (forthcoming)

"World as (Arabic) Text: Mīr Dāmād and the Neopythagoreanization of Philosophy in Safavid Iran," in Sajjad Rizvi, ed., *Philosophy and the Intellectual Life in Shī'ah Islam*, Leiden: Brill (forthcoming)

"Powers of One: The Mathematicalization of the Occult Sciences in the High Persianate Tradition," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 4 (2016) (forthcoming)

"Mobilizing Magic: Occultism in Central Asia and the Continuity of High Persianate Culture under Russian Rule," *Studia Islamica* (co-author with James Pickett, forthcoming)

"Early Modern Islamicate Empire: New Forms of Religiopolitical Legitimacy," in Armando Salvatore and Roberto Tottoli, eds., *The Wiley-Blackwell History of Islam and Islamic Civilization*, Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell (forthcoming 2017)

"Astrology, Lettrism, Geomancy: The Occult-Scientific Methods of Post-Mongol Islamicate Imperialism," *Medieval History Journal*, 19/1 (2016) (invited essay in dialogue entitled "Cosmos and Power," forthcoming)

"Safavid Iran: Lettrism," in Hani Khafipour, ed., *Empires of the Near East and India: Sources for the Study of Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Societies*, New York: Columbia UP (forthcoming 2016)

"Reorienting the Study of Islamicate Occultism," in Matthew Melvin-Koushki and Noah Gardiner,

eds., *Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives* (forthcoming 2016 as a special issue of *Arabica*)

“Defending Geomancy: Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī Rebutts Ibn Khaldūn’s Critique of the Occult Sciences,” in Matthew Melvin-Koushki and Noah Gardiner, eds., *Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives* (forthcoming 2016 as a special issue of *Arabica*)

“Persianate Geomancy from Ṭūsī to the Millennium: A Preliminary Survey,” in Nader El-Bizri and Eva Orthmann, eds., *Occult Sciences in Premodern Islamic Culture*, Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut/American University of Beirut Press (forthcoming 2016)

“The Occult Challenge to Messianism and Philosophy in Early Timurid Iran: Ibn Turka’s Lettrism as a New Metaphysics,” in Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, ed., *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, 247-76

“The Delicate Art of Aggression: Uzun Hasan’s *Fathnama* to Qaytbay of 1469,” *Iranian Studies*, 44/2 (March 2011), 193-214

Encyclopedia Articles

Encyclopædia Iranica, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1983-:

“*Kānaqāh*,” Vol. 15, pp. 456-66 (c. 10,500 words, co-author with Gerhard Böwering)

“*Ṣā’en-al-Dīn Torka Eṣfahānī*” (c. 4,000 words, forthcoming)

“*Maḥmud Dehdār Širāzī*” (c. 3,400 words, forthcoming)

Encyclopædia of Islam 3, ed. Gudrun Krämer et al., Leiden: Brill, 2007-:

“*Iṣfahānī, Ṣā’in al-Dīn ‘Alī Turka*” (c. 700 words, forthcoming)

“*Dawlatshāh b. ‘Alā’ al-Dawla Samarqandī*” (c. 700 words, forthcoming)

Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought, ed. Gerhard Böwering et al., Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012:

“*Tamerlane (1336-1405)*” (c. 700 words)

“*Mongols*” (c. 900 words)

“*Khunji, Fazl Allah b. Ruzbihan (1455-1521)*” (c. 900 words)

“*Qajars (1789-1925)*” (c. 700 words)

Source Companion to Medieval Islamic Political Literature, ed. Stefan Leder et al., Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, forthcoming:

“*Khunji Iṣfahānī, Faẓlallāh b. Rūzbihān: Sulūk al-Mulūk*” (c. 4,500 words)

Reviews

“Reading and Writing al-Būnī,” a review of Noah Gardiner, “Esotericism in a Manuscript Culture:

Aḥmad al-Būnī and His Readers Through the Mamlūk Period,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014, in *Dissertation Reviews* (forthcoming)

“‘Mysticism’ in Iran, 17th-21st Centuries,” a review of Ata Anzali, “Safavid Shi‘ism, the Eclipse of Sufism and the Emergence of ‘Irfān,” Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 2012, in *Dissertation Reviews* (29 May 2014)

Preprint Articles

“Divining Chaldiran: Ottoman Deployments of Astrology, Lettrism and Geomancy in the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict” (co-author with Ahmet Tunç Şen, in progress)

“Islamicate Millenarian Cosmocracy as Occult-Scientific Method” (in progress)

“Shams al-Dīn Khafī on Geomancy” (in progress)

“Naşīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī on Geomancy” (in progress)

“Mughal (Occult-)Scientific Imperialism: The *Zīj-i Shāhjahānī*” (in progress)

“The Unpatriotic Persian: Fażl Allāh Khunjī and the Development of Anti-Safavid and Anti-Shi‘ī Propaganda, 1488-1521” (in progress)

Translations

Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240), *Mawāqī‘ al-Nujūm wa-Maṭāli‘ Ahillat al-Asrār wa-l-‘Ulūm* (Stars’ Settings and Crescent Moons’ Risings, Secrets and Sciences), introduction and translation of a 12th-century Sufi manual of theory and practice (under contract with Anqa Publishing, Oxford)

Encyclopaedia Islamica, ed. Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary, Leiden: Brill in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies (50 articles translated to date as member of a team working on a 16-volume abridged translation of the *Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif-i Buzurg-i Islāmī*, published in Persian by the Center for Iranian and Islamic Studies, Tehran; 2010-present)

Muḥammad Mitwallī al-Sha‘rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha‘rāwī* (member of a translation team working on the Azhari scholar’s popular 25-volume Quran commentary, under contract with Dar El Shorouk; 2009-2010)

PRESENTATIONS

Conference Papers

“Lettrist Cosmologies in 15th-Century Iran: Ibn Turka’s Ṭahawī Circle,” *51st International Congress on Medieval Studies*, Kalamazoo, Michigan (May 2016) (accepted)

- “Writing vs. Speech in the Islamicate *Prisca Sapientia*,” *Renaissance Society of America*, 62nd Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts (March-April 2016) (accepted)
- “The Unpatriotic Persian: Faḏl Allāh Khunḡī as Pioneer of Anti-Safavid Propaganda,” *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting, Denver, Colorado (November 2015)
- “Calculating Power: Occult-Scientific Cosmology and Universal Kingship in 15th-Century Iran and Central Asia,” *14th International Conference on the History of Science in East Asia*, Paris, France (July 2015)
- “Persianizing Occultism in Mamluk Cairo,” *2nd Conference of the School of Mamluk Studies*, Liège, Belgium (June 2015)
- “Ibn Khaldūn’s Anti-Occultism Rebutted,” *Renaissance Society of America*, 61st Annual Meeting, Berlin, Germany (March 2015)
- “World As (Arabic) Text: Decoding and Recoding the Cosmos in Early Modern Islamicate Lettrism,” *Knowing Nature in the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, conference at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland (October 2014)
- “Philosophical Lettrism in Safavid Iran: Mīr Dāmād and His Sources,” *International Society for Iranian Studies*, 10th Biennial Conference, Montreal, Quebec, Canada (August 2014)
- “The Imams and the Ancients in the Canon of ‘Postclassical’ Islamicate Occultism,” *American Comparative Literature Association*, Annual Meeting, New York, New York (March 2014)
- “Imami’ Letter Magic in Safavid Iran: The Life and Works of Maḥmūd Dihdār ‘Iyānī, Shirazi Occultist,” *The Occult Sciences in Islamicate Cultures (13th-17th Centuries)*, workshop at the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (February 2014) (organizer)
- “Occultism and the Practice of Millenarian Politics in the 15th-Century Persianate World,” *Association for the Study of Persianate Societies*, 6th Biennial Convention, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina (September 2013)
- “Using Heaven to Move Earth: Astrological Letter Magic in Early Modern Islamic Occultism,” *Celestial Magic*, Eleventh Annual Sophia Centre Conference, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Carmarthen, Wales (June 2013)
- “Subversion and Synthesis in 15th-Century Islamicate Occult Philosophy: The Lettrism of Kashifi and Davani,” *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting, Denver, Colorado (November 2012)
- “Thinking a New Age: The Role of Occult Philosophy in Early Fifteenth Century Iran and Anatolia,” *International Society for Iranian Studies*, 9th Biennial Conference, Istanbul, Turkey (August 2012)
- “The Naturalization of Intellectual Lettrism in Early Timurid Iran,” *American Academy of Religion*, Pacific Northwest Regional Meeting, Portland, Oregon (May 2012)

“The ‘Scientific’ Lettrism of Ṣā’in al-Dīn Ibn Turka Iṣfahānī and His Circle as a Doctrine of Evolutionary Progress,” *Messianism and Normativity in the Late Medieval and Modern Persianate World: Themes and Sources*, fourth conference in the project *Reconsidering Normativity in Post-Mongol Muslim Communities: Esoteric, Syncretistic and Messianic Trends*, Berlin, Germany (September 2010)

“Who Were the Neo-Ikhwān al-Safā’? Sa’in al-Din Ibn Turka’s Intellectual Hierarchy and Shi’i Hurufism in Early 15th Century Iran and Anatolia,” *American Academy of Religion*, Pacific Northwest Regional Meeting, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada (May 2010)

“Imami Hurufism and the Neo-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ in 15th Century Iran: Ṣā’in al-Dīn Ibn Turka’s Intellectual Hierarchy,” *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Missouri (March 2010)

“Don’t a Poet Know It: Jāmī’s (d. 898/1492) Verse Translations of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s (d. 632/1235) *Tā’īyya al-Kubrā* and the Consolidation of a Commentary Tradition,” *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois (March 2008)

“Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Mawāqī‘ al-Nujūm* and the Master-Disciple Relationship in the Maghrib,” *Maghrebi Area Studies*, Annual Symposium, Rabat, Morocco (March 2005)

Invited Talks

“Strange Attractor: Occultism and the Ottoman Conquest of Mamluk Cairo,” *1516: The Year That Changed the Middle East and the World*, conference at the Department of History and Archaeology, American University of Beirut/Yunus Emre Institute, Beirut, Lebanon (December 2016)

“Starlord, Letterlord: Astrology and Lettrism in the Construction of Post-Mongol Persianate Imperial Ideologies,” *Political Theologies*, workshop at the Department of History, University of California, Santa Barbara (October 2015)

“Mīr Dāmād and the Neopythagoreanization of Philosophy in Safavid Iran,” *Philosophy and the Intellectual Life in Shī‘ah Islam*, 1st Annual Shi‘ah Institute Symposium, Warburg Institute, University of London, London, UK (September 2015)

“Persianizing Occultism in Mamluk Cairo,” public lecture, Department of Oriental and Islamic Studies, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany (July 2015)

“Conjuncting Astrology: The Mathematicalization of the Occult Sciences in the Premodern Persianate Tradition,” *Characterizing Astrology in the Medieval Islamic World*, conference at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Chicago, Illinois (May 2015)

“Teaching Early Modern Iran,” *Teaching Iran: Zoroaster to Khomeini*, workshop at the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (June 2014) (organizer)

“Occultism, Imamophilia and Rationalism in Timurid-Safavid Iran: The Case of Lettrism,” *Reason and*

Esotericism in Shi'i Islam, 2nd Annual Symposium of the Shi'i Studies Group, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois (April 2014)

"Court Neopythagoreans and Philosopher Kings in Early Timurid Iran," Islamicists' seminar, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey (January 2014)

"Letter Magic and Sacral Kingship in Early Modern Iran and India," *Occult Sciences in Premodern Islamic Culture*, conference at the Orient-Institut Beirut, Lebanon (December 2013)

"Lettrism as a New Metaphysics: Ibn Turka's *Book of Inquiries*," *Yale Arabic Colloquium*, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (November 2013)

"Occultism, Science and Empire in the Early Modern Islamic World," public lecture, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK (February 2013)

"The Occult Challenge to Philosophy in Early 15th Century Iran," IMPACT Lecture Series in Late Medieval and Early Modern Islamic Intellectual History, Pembroke College, Oxford, UK (April 2012)

"Lettrist Commentaries on the Quran in Timurid Iran: Ibn Turka and Ḥusayn Vā'iz Kāshifī," guest lecture for Gerhard Böwering, "Seminar on the Qur'ān," Department of Religious Studies, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (October 2011)

"Ibn Turka (d. 1432): His Intellectual and Literary Context in 15th Century Iran," Graduate Fellows Colloquium, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (July 2009)

WORKSHOPS & PANELS ORGANIZED

"Islamicate Occultism I: Words, Spirits, Substances" and "Islamicate Occultism II: Ottoman Book Cultures," double paper session presented to the *Renaissance Society of America*, 62nd Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts (March-April 2016) (accepted)

"Pro- and Anti-Safavid Propaganda, 1480-1580," paper session presented to the *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting, Denver, Colorado (November 2015)

"Locating Occultism in the Early Modern Islamicate World," paper session presented to the *Renaissance Society of America*, 61st Annual Meeting, Berlin, Germany (March 2015)

Teaching Iran: Zoroaster to Khomeini, one-day teacher training workshop hosted by the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University (June 2014)

The Occult Sciences in Islamicate Cultures (13th-17th Centuries), two-day international workshop hosted by the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University (February 2014; volume of proceedings under preparation)

“Shi‘ism,” paper session presented to the *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Missouri (March 2010)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of South Carolina, Department of History

- ♦ HIST 104 (SCHC): Introduction to Islamic Civilization (Fall 2014, Fall 2015)
- ♦ HIST 104: Introduction to Islamic Civilization (Spring 2015, Spring 2016)
- ♦ HIST 300: The Historian’s Craft (Spring 2016)
- ♦ HIST 386/RELG 354: Islamic Institutions and Traditions (Fall 2014)
- ♦ HIST 387/RELG 368: Messiahs, Mystics and Rebels in the Islamic World (Spring 2015)
- ♦ HIST 389/RELG 362: Science, Magic and Religion (Fall 2015)
- ♦ HIST 712: Modern Middle East History (Fall 2014)

Princeton University, Department of Near Eastern Studies

- ♦ NES 382: Messiahs, Mystics and Rebels in the Islamic World (Spring 2014)

Yale University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

- ♦ NELC 102/MMES 102: Introduction to the Middle East (supplemental lecturer, Fall 2010)

Yale University, Department of Religious Studies

- ♦ RLST 287: Islamic Theology and Philosophy (teaching fellow, Spring 2010)
- ♦ RLST 290/MMES 290: Islam Today, Jihad, and Fundamentalism (teaching fellow, Spring 2009)
- ♦ RLST 170/MMES 192: The Religion of Islam (teaching fellow, Fall 2008, Fall 2009)

PH.D. COMMITTEES

Committee Member

Sadegh Foghani, “The Diaspora of Iranian Engineers,” Department of History, USC (in progress)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Service to the Field

Field Editor for Islamic Studies, *Dissertation Reviews* (June 2012-May 2015)

Managing Editor, *Dissertation Reviews* (April 2013-May 2014)

Field Editor for Medieval and Early Modern Islamic History, *The Marginalia Review of Books* (January 2013-present)

Book proposal referee for Columbia University Press (1)
Article referee for *Journal of Religion and Society* (1), *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1),
British Journal for the History of Science (1)

Departmental Service

Member, South Asia Search Committee, Department of History, USC (2014-2015)
Member, Graduate Committee, Department of History, USC (2015-2016)

University Service

Member, Arabic and French Literature Search Committee, Department of Languages, Literatures and
Cultures, USC (2015)

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

Winner, Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award in the Humanities (Middle East Studies Association)	Fall 2012
Honorable Mention, Dissertation of the Year on a Topic in Iranian Studies (Foundation for Iranian Studies)	Fall 2012
Fulbright-Hays/IIE Graduate Fellowship for International Study (Turkey, Egypt) (declined)	2011-2012
Yale University Dissertation Fellowship	2011-2012
Yale MacMillan Center Dissertation Research Grant	Spring 2011
Beinecke Manuscript Library Pre-Prospectus Fellowship	Summer 2009
Yale Graduate School Fellowship (full tuition and stipend)	2006-2010
Fulbright IIE Student Scholarship (Morocco)	2004-2005
Golden Key International Honor Society	2004
Mastercard Asian Studies Scholarship (full tuition)	2003-2004
Harrison Undergraduate Research Award (UVa)	Summer 2003
Summer Research Fellowship (UVa)	Summer 2003

LANGUAGES

Arabic (reading fluency in classical and modern Arabic, speaking competence in Levantine and
Moroccan colloquial)
Persian (reading fluency in classical and modern Persian, speaking competence)
Ottoman and Modern Turkish (beginning reading)
German, French, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Anglo-Saxon, Gothic (reading competence)

OVERSEAS RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Iran, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Middle East Studies Association
American Historical Association
International Society for Iranian Studies
Association for the Study of Persianate Societies
Renaissance Society of America

REFERENCES

Dr. Gerhard Böwering, Professor of Islamic Studies
Department of Religious Studies, Yale University
Email: gerhard.bowering@yale.edu

Dr. Dimitri Gutas, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Graeco-Arabic Studies
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Yale University
Email: dimitri.gutas@yale.edu

Dr. Paul Losensky, Associate Professor of Central Eurasian Studies/Comp. Literature
Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington
Email: plosensk@indiana.edu

Dr. Maria Subtelny, Professor of Persian and Islamic Studies
Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto
Email: m.subtelny@utoronto.ca

Dr. Sajjad Rizvi, Associate Professor of Islamic Intellectual History
Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter
Email: s.h.rizvi@exeter.ac.uk

Dr. Cornell Fleischer, Professor of Islamic and Ottoman History
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago
Email: c-fleischer@uchicago.edu