investigated within the thematic paradigm of this book. I would have to agree with Professor Dick Davis's estimation that *'Aṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition* "is one of the most consistently informative and exciting collections of essays on a single Persian author that I have read" in English.

Alireza Korangy
University of Virginia

Shari L. Lowin. *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives.* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006. xvi + 308 pages, appendices, bibliography, index. Cloth US$130 / €100 ISBN 9004152261.

Shari Lowin's *The Making of a Forefather* is the latest of a growing number of studies that seek to reevaluate the relationships between Jewish and Islamic narrative traditions. For quite some time, the standard scholarly approach to the copious parallels between rabbinic midrash on the one hand and Islamic genres such as tafsīr and qiṣaṣ on the other was to assert the near-absolute dependence of the latter on the former. In assuming that Muslim traditions on biblical prophets and Israelite history always derive from Jewish sources (even when those sources have not been preserved), previous generations of scholars often overlooked the many instances of creative and dynamic cross-fertilization that shaped both traditions. As a corrective to this older approach, Lowin shows how traditions on the early life of the patriarch Abraham, forefather to both communities, were first transmitted from Jews to Muslims and then subsequently back from Muslims to Jews. Focusing on the intertextual relationships between these traditions, Lowin refutes the uncritical view of scholars such as Sidersky who insisted that all aspects of the Abraham legend in Muslim sources must have some basis in the *aggadah*, a reductionist approach that was at one time sadly all too common.

We might take Chapter 3, "On Finger-Food, Wet-Nurses, and Fate," as an example of Lowin's method. Here, she addresses a group of narratives preserved in Islamic sources that describe how Abraham was hidden in a cave as a child and protected from persecutors through a series of miraculous divine interventions. The cave narrative is without precedent in either the Bible or earlier midrashic tradition, but it *does* appear in numerous Jewish sources dateable to after the rise of Islam. Notably, these later Jewish sources omit the supernatural elements found in the Muslim versions and attribute the child's

survival to more quotidian benefactors (human wet-nurses now take the place of the angel Gabriel, for example). Lowin argues that such changes illustrate the fundamental difference between the Muslim attitude towards Abraham, seeing Abraham's life and career as completely foreordained and guided by God, and the Jewish attitude, which emphasizes that Abraham discovered God all on his own, without receiving any special assistance or protection. Further, Lowin demonstrates that the Muslim traditions on Abraham's miraculous salvation in the cave seem to ultimately derive from a Talmudic tradition that describes the numerous measures God took in protecting the Israelite children in Egypt while they were persecuted by Pharaoh, a tradition based in exegesis of numerous biblical prooftexts. This Jewish tradition on the Exodus seems to have been adopted by Muslim authors and then subsequently transferred to the accounts on Abraham's early life.

Lowin's concluding argument in Chapter 5, "Abraham, Ibrāhīm, Moses, and Muḥammad," is elegant and persuasive. She asserts that Muslim tradition took major aspects of the narrative about the miraculous birth and early life of the prophet Muḥammad from analogous Jewish traditions on Moses. (Strangely, Lowin fails to take the monograph of Brannon Wheeler, *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis* [Routledge, 2002], which makes a similar point, into account here. This is only one of a number of puzzling lacunae in the bibliography of this work.) Many of these elements were then transferred to Abraham as well. As Lowin puts it, "Ibrāhīm is constructed to look like his descendant Muḥammad so that it appears as if Muḥammad simply followed in his, Ibrāhīm's, footsteps" (p. 256). In turn, in the centuries after the rise of Islam, during which the midrashic tradition continued to evolve, Jewish exegetes proved receptive to these new narrative elements in the biography of Abraham, but altered them to fit with the perception of Abraham that had traditionally prevailed in Jewish circles.

Despite its clear value to the field, two major criticisms may be leveled against this book. First of all, Lowin's near-total omission of any discussion of the Qur'ān here is extremely puzzling. The various allusions to Abraham's early life in the Qur'ān (e.g. Q.21:51–70) must have some significance for our understanding of the transmission and development of biographical traditions on the forefather, but Lowin generally avoids any discussion of the Qur'ān's place in this history. Second, the book's purpose in encouraging a more nuanced understanding of the intertextual dynamics between the Jewish and Islamic traditions is generally overshadowed by Lowin's repeated demonstration of the ultimate basis of virtually all aspects of the Muslim Abraham traditions in older traditions of Jewish biblical exegesis. Despite her recognition that medieval Jewish exegetes derived their

portrayal of the early life of Abraham from Muslim sources, the author seems to expend considerable energy in providing evidence that almost every element in those Muslim sources is "originally" Jewish in some way. Sometimes these reconstructions are quite convincing, but at other times they appear forced or even superfluous. Contrary to Lowin's intentions, the emphasis on the seemingly endless ways in which Muslims borrowed from Jews implies that the relationship between Islam and Judaism is still to be understood primarily as one of dependence and not mutuality.

Michael Pregill
Elon University

Muhammad Khalid Masud, Rudolph Peters and David S. Powers, eds. *Dispensing Justice in Islam: Qadis and their Judgments.* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006. xiv + 591 pages, bibliography, index. Cloth US$195 ISBN 9004140670.

This volume makes a significant contribution to the growing number of studies that utilize court records and anthropological and ethnographic research to analyze legal practice in the *shari'a* court's socio-legal setting. These essays grew out of a conference on "The Application of Islamic Law in Courts," held in Leiden in October 2001, and is a companion to an earlier volume concerning *muftis* and their *fatwas* (Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick and David S. Powers, eds., *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and their Fatwas,* Harvard University Press, 1996).

The role of *qadis* in the Islamic legal system has only recently come under serious scrutiny by scholars. The foundational studies from the late-nineteenth century focused on the juridical aspect of the law, as opposed to legal practice. This lack of interest in court procedure and practice was partially the result of the influence of Max Weber's concept of *Kadijustiz,* which held that the *shari'a* court was an irrational institution. The court's procedures and functions began to draw closer attention in the 1960s when social historians in the West discovered the wealth of information about socio-economic life in the Ottoman court records. In the mid-1990s, scholars began to take further steps towards examining the court as a socio-legal arena. The field did not attract wider interest, however, until the last decade when scholars, such as many of those represented in this volume, responded to the stagnation in the field and began to move beyond the Orientalist tra-