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## Characteristics of Philosophical and Cultural Exchanges between Muslim and Christian Scholars in the Fourth AH/Tenth AD Century

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### Abstract

From a philosophical standpoint, the fourth Islamic century (tenth-eleventh Christian centuries) stands out as the most remarkable and brilliant period among the centuries of the Islamic calendar. It exemplifies the essence of Islamic civilization, characterized by freedom, tolerance, morality, humanism, and rationality. During this period, Iran and Iraq were governed by the Sunni Abbasid Caliphate and Shiite Persian Buyid Emirate. One characteristic of this significant period, reminiscent of the Renaissance (centuries before the European Renaissance), is its cultural pluralism and religious tolerance. A notable example that epitomizes this remarkable tolerance can be found in the philosophical circles of Iran and Iraq during the tenth century. These circles brought together thinkers from diverse nations and religions. At times, the role of the master and moderator was assumed by Muslim figures like al-Sijistani (d. 1001 AD), while in other instances, Christian philosophers such as Yahya (Yuhanna/John) ibn 'Adi (893-974 AD) took on the responsibility of moderating these intellectual gatherings. Yahya ibn 'Adi had two groups of disciples: one comprised of Muslims, including al-Sijistani and Ibn Miskawayh, and the other consisting of Christians such as Ibn Samh, Nazif al-Rumi, and 'Isa ibn Zur'a. This study employs the method of intellectual historiography as applied to that age, specifically al-Tawhidi to explore the characteristics of intellectual exchange and the relationship between Muslim and Christian scholars.

**Keywords:** The Fourth Islamic Century, Religious Tolerance, Philosophical Circles, Islamic Renaissance, Islamic Humanism, Islamic Rationality, Philosophical and Cultural Exchanges, Muslim and Christian Exchanges.

### Introduction

The fourth Islamic century, corresponding to the eleventh Christian century, is widely recognized as a remarkable period in Islamic history and civilization due to its diverse range of intellectual pursuits and a conscientious commitment to free thinking. Some scholars draw parallels between this period and the Renaissance in the West, suggesting that it may have even influenced the latter (Kraemer, 1996, p. 19, 31). This period can be aptly described as an era of intellectual and philosophical circles that transcended dogmatism and limitations often found in religious societies. It distinguished itself from certain contemporary intellectual circles that view free thinking as conflicting with religious commitment and divine significance.

By acknowledging humanism and rationalism as the

fundamental pillars of free thinking, it becomes evident that the fourth Islamic century can be regarded as one of the most liberal eras in human history. In contrast to the Western Renaissance that emerged centuries later, this period displayed a remarkable inclination towards human concerns and rational approaches. Importantly, it successfully reconciled this open-mindedness with a strong commitment to religious principles. Hence, it is plausible to embrace the viewpoint put forth by certain intellectual historians of the fourth century, who argue that the humanism prevalent during that time had a religious foundation, intertwined with elements of philosophy and literature. Similarly, the rationalism of the era drew nourishment from both divine revelations and the accumulated wisdom of previous generations and ancestral insights (Arkoun, 1997, p. 615).

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During this period, notable philosophers like al-Farabi (Alpharabius, 872-951 AD) who spearheaded philosophical and logical thinking at the start of the century, and Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980-1037 CE), the renowned Islamic philosopher at the end of the century, may not be found. However, it is within this era that we discover the finest exemplar of vibrant, dynamic, and problem-oriented thinking in the history of Islamic philosophy.

One remarkable aspect of this intellectual heritage is that it was not solely produced by Muslim scholars but also involved significant contributions from followers of other religions, particularly Christians. One prominent example is Yahya (John) ibn 'Adi, who succeeded al-Farabi and served as the master of a renowned philosophical circle in Baghdad, the capital city of the Abbasid caliphate.

### Research Background

Indeed, one of the earliest and most significant works that delves into the cultural and scholarly dimensions of the fourth Islamic century is Adam Mez's book titled *The Renaissance of Islam* (Mez, 1983). However, it is worth noting that this particular book did not place a significant emphasis on the philosophical aspects of this century.

In subsequent decades, Mohammed Arkoun became captivated by the brilliance of this period from a philosophical perspective, with a specific focus on humanism. He wrote his thesis in French, exploring humanism in Arabic thought during the fourth Islamic century. This research was later translated and published in 1997.

Joel L. Kraemer delved deeper into our topic and authored two significant books related to this period. The first book, titled *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abu Suleiman al-Sijistani and his Circle* (Kraemer, 1986), focused on the philosophical aspects of this era. He then published another book titled *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Kraemer, 1996).

We should be aware of some other searches that studied Yahya bin 'Adi especially his connections with the Muslim scholars (such as Endress, 1977). Endress in the preface of his book, says that the Jacobite Christian Abu Zakariyya, Yahya ibn 'Adi (893-974) was an influential philosopher and eminent apologist of the Christian faith. Augustin Perrier compiled the first list of his writings in 1920. Then, most of his philosophical works were believed to be lost. According to his recent publications, it is reasonable to know him as a translator and the commentator of Aristotle. However, for a long time, most of his philosophical monographs were not available until a collection of his treatises was discovered in the libraries of Tehran. Based on this collection, we are able to study in an exact manner, his contribution to logic, his research for physical and metaphysical problems, and his answers to the theological matters or questions of Islamic *kalam* "Yahya ibn 'Adi, was a Monophasic Christian. Now his approach is better known through the studies of G. Graf and A. Perrier. In spite of his works, this dimension still requires renewed examination. So, the new index of his writings is expected to construct the basis for evaluation of his function as an Aristotelean as well as a Christian thinker. The study of Endress contains a survey of biographical data, detailed bibliographical information on manuscripts, and printed works and summaries of most of Ibn 'Adi's unpublished texts (The other works concerning Yahya ibn 'Adi are as follows: Graf, 1910;

Griffith, 2007; Périer, 1920).

The book titled *Humanist and Rationalist Thought in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century (A.H) as Viewed by Abuhayyan Tawhidi* (Shariatmadari, 2010) covered the philosophical circles of fourth Islamic century according to the reports of Abh Hayyan Tuhidi in his famous books especially *Al-mughabasat and al'imta' wa al-Mu'anasa*, but the book didn't go to the details of relations between the Cristian and Muslims scholars.

### Fourth Islamic Century

Islamic Philosophy is considered a science of foreign origin specifically Greek origin. But it was accepted in spite of its apparent contradiction with some official Islamic dogmas. Al-Kindi (Alkindus 801-873 AD) was the first Muslim scholar who was called the philosopher. Many philosophical idioms and definitions return to him. He was formerly a Mu'tazilite theologian and then in the Islamic world, the rational approach was represented by theologians including Mu'tazila and Shi'ism. There were some philosophical components in theological matters and debates that entered through some translations of Greek philosophy, but the first theologian who converted to philosophy was Alkindi who was still somehow under the influence of theology. Actually, Farabi (Alpharabius 870- 951 AD) is the real founder of Muslim philosophy accordingly named as the second Master. Classical philosophy started with him. It was so similar to ancient Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle's approach with its components, structure, steps, and official teaching system. This way of philosophizing didn't survive directly after him. His repentance was exactly Ibn Sina (Avicenna c. 980-1037 CE), known as the greatest Muslim philosopher. All Islamic schools of philosophy, purely rational or mixed with an illustrating approach, were in Classical way. The exception is the philosophy in the Fourth Islamic century.

The fourth Islamic century/tenth Christian is considered a special and brilliant period in Islamic history from different aspects including cultural and philosophical ones. Different nations and tendencies who lived and experienced coexistence and tolerance.

This century witnessed a good sample of the coexistence of Shiites and Sunnites not only in usual life or cultural affairs but also at the political level. The main Islamic Caliphate then in Iraq and Iran was dominated by Abbasids. This order which is considered the longest Caliphate in the Islamic era, was established in the middle of the second century AH on the basis of a Sunnite approach (with a general Shi'ite tendency). One hundred years later, the sons of Buye (Al Buya) who were Shiites (firstly Zaydi then Twelvers) dominated most of the Caliphate domain and the caliph didn't have any choice except to recognize them as the Amirs (commanders-in-chief), and this combination and cooperation which continued for more than one century, resulted in a proud example of coexistence of the two main Islamic denominations (Sunnites and Shiites) in the political sphere. The scientific and philosophical gatherings were the other aspect that crystalized this mutual relationship among Muslims at the elite level. There we can observe meetings managed by the ministers or great masters (philosophers or theologians etc.) including Shiite and Sunnite scholars and others belonging to other religions. The philosopher and author, Abu Hayyan Tawhidi, reports in his famous books (such as *Mughabasat and 'Al-'Imta' wa al-Mu'anasa*) the contents of these meetings which show and improve how the scholars of different religious tendencies

discussing different topics far from religious tendency and in scientific space.

### Characteristics of this Period

The prominent characteristics that make this period akin to the Renaissance, which occurred many centuries later, are as follows:

1. **Cultural pluralism and religious tolerance:** A compelling example that epitomizes this tolerance can be observed in the philosophical circles of Iran and Iraq during the eleventh century. These circles brought together thinkers from diverse nations and religions. At times, the role of the master and moderator was assumed by Muslim figures like al-Sijistani (d. 1001 AD), while in other instances, Christian philosophers such as Yahya (Yuhanna/John) ibn 'Adi (893-974) took on the responsibility of leading these intellectual gatherings. Ibn 'Adi had two groups of disciples: one comprised of Muslims, including al-Sijistani and Ibn Miskawayh, and the other consisting of Christians.

2. **Philosophical approach:** Their philosophical approach was distinguished by its problem-oriented nature and practical goals, rather than being scholastic or overly concerned with abstract concepts. Furthermore, their philosophical endeavors were infused with a religious inclination. They did not perceive philosophy (and science) and religion as contradictory disciplines. Instead, they maintained a clear distinction between religion and philosophy, avoiding any attempts to conflate or blur the boundaries between the two. The topics that captured their attention revolved around existential matters and had direct relevance to both individual and social aspects of life. They delved into subjects such as the relationship between knowledge and suffering, the nature of friendship, and the exploration of aesthetic values. This mode of inquiry naturally led them to delve into moral subjects.

3. **Moderate humanism:** They embraced a moderate perspective on humanism, emphasizing the importance of self-knowledge. They respected reason, underscoring the tendency to ancient knowledge, belief in fraternity and friendship, belief in the relationship of humankind, and love of all of humanity, irrespective of nationality or religious affiliation.

4. **Ethics and moral moderation:** To capture the prevailing rational tendencies of that era, it is essential to consider both logic and ethics. Al-Farabi, the founder of Islamic philosophy, was seriously concerned with morality, which profoundly influenced the philosophical approach during the fourth century of Islamic philosophy much more than any other historical period.

Moral moderation is one of the basic principles of ethical philosophy in Islamic tradition as well as Greek philosophy. It is not the criteria to be virtuous but it is an important sign of to be virtuous. Farabi says that to be virtuous means the soul's health is gained by moderation of being in the middle point as well as the body's health which is provided by moderation or to be in the middle point between the four moods (according to ancient medicine). This principle is not found explicitly in the writings of his disciple Ibn 'Adi, but Yahya has emphasized for couples' times the concept of moderation in his moral judgments. For example, he advises humans to be moderated in all of the pleasures, in showing love, in eating, etc. But Miskawayh as the most famous author of Islamic ethics has written explicitly concerning the moderation in using the three soul's faculties, faculties of desire and anger, and the rational faculty). According to Miskawayh, the middle point in these

faculties respectively is: piety, courage, and wisdom and there are two other points for each faculty which are excess and defect (going to extremes). If these three middles were gained, it would create a fourth virtue, which is called *'idala* or justice. The moderation in Islamic philosophy is associated with the concept of rationality, as it is accepted in the Islamic tradition. Imam Ali (the first Imam of Twelver Shi'ite Muslim) says that: You can't find the ignorant (who don't act reasonably) except deviated from righteousness (going to excess or defect).

### Philosophical Circles

These approaches and achievements were primarily generated and disseminated within circles and gatherings, rather than through formal educational institutions or official programs. During this era, notable circles emerged, often moderated by ministers (viziers) or distinguished scholars, particularly philosophers and theologians. The most famous circles were as follows:

1. Sijistani's circle including Tawhidi, Abu Zakariyya Saymori, Abu al-Fath Noshajani, Abu Muhammad 'Arooz, Abu Muhammad Andulusi, Abu Bakr Ghoomasi, Ghulam Zuhul, Hasan Mighdad, and Abu'l-'bbas Bukhari. We will talk about this circle more;

2. Ikhwan Al-Safa' (The Brothers of Purity) including (as mentioned by Al-Tawhidi) Ma'shar Al-Maghdisi Al-Bosti, Abu'l Hasan Al-Zanjani, Abu Ahmad al-Mahrajani, and Al-'oufi. The Brethren of Purity (also The Brethren of Sincerity) was a secret society of Muslim philosophers in Basra, Iraq. Their esoteric teachings and philosophy are expounded in an epistolary style in the Encyclopedia of the Brethren of Purity (*Rasa'il Ikhwan al-safa'*), a giant compendium of 52 epistles that would greatly influence later encyclopedias.

3. Abu 'Abd Allah Al-Basri's circle which was theological and –as Tawhidi described it– full of great masters of *Kalam* or Islamic theology;

4. Circle of Ibn Sa'dan, the vizier who gathered many philosophers around him, Such as Al-Tawhidi, Zayd bin Rufa'a, and Ibn Zur'a. The detailed contents of the sessions of this circle are recorded and compiled by Abu Hayyan Tawhidi in *'Al-'Imta' wa Al-Mu'anasa*.

Most of these circles were philosophy-oriented. The circle of Basri was not philosophical, but Mu'tazilite rational. Among the renowned circles during that period, the assembly led by Yahya/John ibn 'Adi, a Jacobite Christian, stands out. This circle attracted followers from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds. A prominent work on ethics in the Islamic tradition is *Tahdhib al-akhlaq* (Refinement of Character), authored by Abu 'Ali Miskawayh, an Iranian Shiite philosopher who was a prominent member of this circle.

However, it is worth noting that the initial book on ethics titled *"Tahdhib al-akhlaq"* was actually authored by Yahya ibn 'Adi, the leader of the aforementioned circle. Yahya ibn 'Adi, the circle's leader, was in turn influenced by his master al-Farabi (also known as Alfarabius), widely regarded as the founder of Islamic philosophy, including the field of philosophical ethics.

Based on these historical records, it is evident that there were concerted endeavors to develop a moral philosophical system that involved the collaboration of Muslim and Christian philosophers (Kraemer, 1986). The philosopher and writer, Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, documented the discussions held in these meetings, revealing how scholars with diverse religious inclinations engaged in intellectual discourse on various subjects, free from religious biases, within a scholarly

and intellectual atmosphere (Shariatmadari, 2010).

### Canonical Concepts

The canonical concerns, concepts, and problems that characterized their ethical thinking included the following:

1. **Friendship:** its nature, degrees, and varieties;
2. Relationship between human nature and technique;
3. Relationship between ethnicity and virtues;
4. Relationship between knowledge and suffering;
5. **Death:** fear of death and the roots of suicide;
6. **Worldliness and ambition:** their roots and the reasons why they were forbidden by religions;
7. **Knowledge and hostility to the unknown:** the reasons why humans desire to know, why knowledge is associated with vanity (self-admiration), and why human beings are enemies of what they do not know;
8. Relationship between the body and the soul;
9. **Self-knowledge:** why do humans desire intensity as they grow older?
10. **Variety of human life:** There exist ten distinct types of life, including perception life, knowledge life, good action life, religious life, and others. Among these, moral life holds great significance as it is devoid of evil and replete with virtues. The moral individual's exemplary conduct inspires those around them to embrace virtue;
11. Typology of human beings and the perfect man;
12. **Oppression:** its nature and position in human beings, whether it lies in human nature or in human actions and behavior.

### Yahya ibn 'Adi

Abu Zakariyya Yahya ibn 'Adi (John, father of Zachary, Son of Adi) was a Syriac Jacobite Christian. He was born in Tikrit, located in northern Baghdad, in the year 280 AH/893 CE. During that era, Tikrit held the status of a metropolis, serving as an archbishopric in the eastern region. It emerged as an intellectual hub, witnessing profound theological and philosophical debates among Christians as well as between Christians and Muslims. Ibn 'Adi was affiliated with Jacobite Christianity, which was one of the three major branches of Christianity in the Islamic world, alongside Nestorianism and Melchite.

He received an education encompassing literature, physics, mathematics, and philosophy under the tutelage of Ibn 'Adi. In addition to his extensive studies in medicine, he gained fame for his extensive travels undertaken for business purposes. He held a prominent position within the court of Ibn Sa'dan, serving as a trusted minister (for more details, see Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 1/33, 2/15, 3/63, 127, 197). Al-Tawhidi has quoted Yahya ibn 'Adi as narrating that Jesus was asked why, when two individuals receive the same true word, one accepts it while the other rejects it. In response to the question, Jesus explained that those individuals are akin to sheep being called by a shepherd. Some of them heed the call and approach, while others do not respond. Abu Hayyan relayed this particular response to Abu Sulayman, but the latter criticized Ibn Zur'a regarding the translation of Jesus' words. Abu Sulayman expressed that it is not suitable to compare humans to animals since humans, unlike animals, are governed

by rational motivations and hindrances.

Paul Khouri states that Yahya ibn 'Adi held the position of leader among the Jacobites in Baghdad (Khouri, 2007, p. 48), where he attended the lectures of the Nestorian philosopher, Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunis, as well as al-Farabi. Following the passing of Matta in 939 and al-Farabi's relocation to Aleppo in 941, Yahya ibn 'Adi ascended to a prominent position within al-Farabi's circle and among the emerging generation of philosophers<sup>1</sup>.

Numerous works of Greek philosophy have been translated into Arabic. Most of them are translated directly from existing versions in Syriac. Among them, we can refer to: Plato's *Laws*; Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* (from a Syriac translation made by Theophilus of Edessa) and *Topics* (from a translation made by Hunayn ibn Ishaq); and Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*.

Ibn Nadim (d. 990 AD) called him the master (*Ra'is*) (Ibn al-Nadim, 1997, p. 324). He applied this title only four times (for Hippocrates, the Greek physician, Galen, the physician, Abi Bishr Matta ibn Yunus, and Ibn 'Adi). It shows the significance of the latter. He mentions that the headship of his companions terminated to Ibn 'Adi and he was unique for his age.

Ibn 'Adi excelled as both a distinguished philosopher and a notable Christian theologian and apologist. It can be said that his philosophical pursuits were driven by personal interest, while his theological endeavors were motivated by a sense of duty. His works reflect his philosophical inclination even within his theological treatises. For instance, he conceptualized the Trinity (the three persons) as manifestations of intelligence (Khouri, 2007, p. 184)<sup>2</sup>. He can be recognized as one of the founders of scholastic philosophy within Eastern Christianity. His influence extended to later developments in Egyptian Monophysitism. Yahya ibn 'Adi authored numerous books and treatises on various subjects, including metaphysics, monotheism, contingent beings, and the knowledge of God. He dedicated considerable efforts to refute criticisms by Muslim theologians against the concept of the Trinity, and he also responded to Nestorian arguments to defend the Jacobite understanding of the human nature of Jesus. Furthermore, he composed commentaries on the Bible (For a complete bibliography of Ibn 'Adi (see Endress, 1977). The author notes that Augustin Perrier compiled the initial list of Ibn 'Adi's writings in 1920 when many of his works were thought to have been lost. Subsequently, Endress published his study, which, as he mentions, includes a comprehensive overview of biographical information, detailed bibliographical data on manuscripts and printed works, and summaries of the majority of unpublished texts. Several other scholars, particularly those from Iran, later provided supplements for Endress's work.)

*Maqal fi al-tawhid (Discourse on Unity)* is one of his works. In that book, he speaks of the unity of God to affirm monotheism (which was important for his Muslim contemporaries) while he emphasizes the three attributes of God, namely goodness, wisdom, and power (pointing to a Trinitarian understanding of God).

Yahya was a famous author in the field of Christian theology and wrote many books that embodied an apologetic

<sup>1</sup> Ibn al-Nadim says: "and the mastership of his colleagues reached to him" (Ibn al-Nadim, 1997, p. 264).

<sup>2</sup> This book contains many theological ideas developed by Yahya ibn 'Adi.

approach. Some of his apologetic writings concerned and refuted the Muslim mutakallimūn with whom he was in regular contact.

Yahya, for instance, composed a detailed response to the *Kitab fi al-radd 'ala al-firaq al-thalath min al-našara* (Refutation of the three sects of the Christians) by Abū 'Isa Muḥammad b. Harūn al-Warraḡ (d. ca. 862) who was initially Mu'tazili, then converted to Shi'ism. Yahya also defended the Christological formulation of the Syr. Orth. Church through his apologetic works.

*Tahdhib al-akhlaq* (Purification of morals or refinement of character) stands as one of the early treatises in the Islamic world, written in the Arabic language, that delves into the field of ethics or philosophical morality. Due to its universal and meta-religious approach, there have been debates about attributing the book *Tahdhib al-akhlaq* to Ibn 'Adi as a Christian theologian. However, it is widely accepted that the book indeed belongs to him. The book *Tahdhib al-akhlaq* is one of the earliest and most important works on ethics in Arabic literature.

According to Griffith, what is offered by Yahya in *The Reformation of Morals*, is the encouragement of kings and other members of the social elite to purify their morality. Many echoes of Hellenistic moral philosophy are reflected in his presentation. The topical profile of the work and its language manifests his participation in the circle of philosophers and intellectuals—both Christian and Muslim—in Baghdad. These scholars were typical of the classical culture of the Islamic world in the fourth century. It now stands as an important Christian contribution, in Arabic, to moral philosophy and it is an integral component of the intellectual tradition of the Islamic world.

Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi depicts Ibn 'Adi as a gentlemanly elderly man who had a quick temper. While he may not have excelled in translation and writing, he possessed great expertise in deduction and argumentation. Many of the philosophers of his time gained prominence through their participation in his gatherings. However, theology was not his strongest area of focus (Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 1/37). Al-Tawhidi has made references to Yahya ibn 'Adi, including his words and ideas, in various books such as *al-Imta'* and *al-Muqabasat* (Tawhidi, 1929, pp. 154, 156, 224, 225, 298; Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 2/38).

### The Circle of Yahya ibn 'Adi

As previously mentioned, Yahya ibn 'Adi succeeded his master, al-Farabi, and assumed leadership over his circle, which included his disciples. According to al-Tawhidi, the eminence of numerous philosophers of that era can be attributed to Yahya ibn 'Adi's mentorship. His disciples can be categorized into two distinct groups.

**First:** The Christian disciples who were:

1. 'Isa ibn Zur'a: Borne in Baghdad in 943 AD was a philosopher and prominent translator with special ideas concerning reason, ignorance, and insanity;

2. Ibn al-Khammar: Abu al-Khayr al-Hasan ibn Suwar, commonly known as Ibn al-Khammar, was born in Baghdad in 942 CE and lived until 1016 CE. He was one of Ibn 'Adi's steadfast disciples, studying both medicine and philosophy under his guidance. Ibn al-Khammar became renowned as one of the prominent logicians of his era. As a Nestorian Christian, he imparted his knowledge to prominent figures such as Ibn Hindu, a physician and philosopher, and

Abu al-Faraj ibn Tayyib, a physician, philosopher, and Nestorian theologian. Additionally, Abu 'Ali Miskawayh acquired knowledge of the ancient sciences and philosophy from Ibn al-Khammar. Ibn al-Khammar possessed great expertise in translating from Syriac to Arabic. Abu Hayyan, quoting al-Hariri, identifies both Ibn al-Khammar and Ibn Zur'a as noteworthy philosophers and prominent representatives of Christianity during that period (Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 2/14), as well as members of the assembly of the minister Ibn Sa'dan (Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 1/34);

3. Ibn Samh: Abu 'Ali Hasan ibn Samh was a masterful logician. His shop located in Bab al-Taḡ in Baghdad served as a gathering place for Christian scholars. Ibn Sa'dan names him as one of his companions (Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 1/32);

4. Nazif the Roman: He was widely recognized as Nazif al-Mutatabbib (the physician) and Nazif al-Qass (the priest). Belonging to the Melkite Christian community, he served as a physician under Buyid ruler 'Adud al-Dawla. He possessed great mastery in translating texts from Greek to Arabic. In addition, he authored several treatises in Christian theology. Notably, he wrote an essay on the nature of Christian creeds in response to a request from 'Adud al-Dawla regarding the creeds of the three main Christian denominations. Abu Hayyan identifies him as one of his mentors who actively participated in the intellectual gatherings hosted by Ibn Sa'dan (see Tawhidi, 1929, p. 345);

These masters engaged in studying the texts and translating philosophical tendencies. Their studies were primarily focused on delving into Aristotelian works that encompassed logic and the natural sciences. Like Ibn 'Adi, the majority of his disciples were not only scholars of philosophy but also physicians. Additionally, all of them authored treatises on Christian theology. They represented exemplary instances of philosophical humanism, placing a strong emphasis on the study of historical philology;

**Second:** The Muslim disciples who were:

1. Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani: Muhammad ibn Tahir ibn Bahram, commonly referred to as Abu Sulayman al-Mantiqi (al-Sijistani), succeeded Ibn 'Adi and significantly enhanced his assembly, transforming it into the preeminent and scholarly gathering of the fourth Islamic century. The discussions held during those meetings have been documented and preserved through the writings of Abu Hayyan, particularly in his books, *Muqabasat* and *al-Imta'*. Undoubtedly, he acquired a wealth of knowledge from Ibn 'Adi and Abu Bishr Matta, a prominent Nestorian expert in logic and philosophy. There is uncertainty regarding his attendance at the sessions of al-Farabi. However, it is known that his entire life unfolded during the fourth Islamic century. Notably, he authored the first historical account of Islamic philosophy, known as *Siwan al-hikma*;

2. Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi: 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abbas was born approximately between the years 922 and 932 CE and passed away around 1009 CE. He received education from numerous masters, including al-Sirafi, Rummani, Marwrudi, and Yahya ibn 'Adi. However, his most significant influence and companionship came from Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani. He was regarded by some as the Boswell of al-Sijistani, and al-Ya'qubi al-Hamawi described him as the philosopher among literati and the literary figure among philosophers (See Hamawi, 1993, v. 4/288);

3. Abu 'Ali Miskawayh: Abu 'Ali Ahmad Ibn Ya'qub,

a historian, philosopher, and physician, was born in Rey (Iran) in 936. He served as the librarian of the ministers, Muhallabi, and Ibn 'Amid Abu l-Fadl, earning the title of *Khazin* (librarian) due to his long-standing role in that position. His philosophical pursuits were primarily focused on the realms of ethics and politics;

4. Abu Bakr al-Qumasi: Originally hailing from Ghomshah (present-day Shahreza, Iran), he attained mastery in philosophy and spent some time in the company of Ibn 'Adi. According to al-Tawhidi, he was a member of Ibn Sa'dan's circle, and as a result, he is frequently referenced in the works of Abu Hayyan (See Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 1/35);

5. Abu Muhammad al-'Arudi: Abu Muhammad al-'Arudi, a philosopher, received education under Ibn 'Adi for a period of time, and his name appears frequently in the works of Abu Hayyan (see Tawhidi, 1929, pp. 156, 190, 191);

6. 'Isa ibn 'Ali: Born in 914 CE and passing away in 998 CE, he was the son of 'Ali bin 'Isa, a prominent minister, and belonged to a distinguished Iranian family. Notably, he served as a scribe to the Caliph al-Ta'i 'li-Allah. It was in his assembly that the notable dialogue on the origin of philosophy took place between Ibn al-Nadim, the author of *al-Fihrist*, and Abu al-Khayr. Ibn al-Nadim describes him as an exceptional scholar in the logic and ancient sciences, interested in the Persian language (See Ibn al-Nadim, 1997, p. 129);

7. Abu l-Hasan al-Badihi: He was not only a companion of Ibn 'Adi but also a renowned poet. Al-Tawhidi lauds him as a master of *'arud* (prosody) and *ghafiya* (rhyme) (See Tawhidi, 1961, p. 155). He was interested in studying ancient works and the history of philosophy.

These scholars displayed less interest in translation and editing tasks, instead bringing a touch of literary humanism to Ibn 'Adi's philosophical humanism.

The contents of the circles of Iraq and Iran in the 4th century are reported by Abuhayyan Tawhidi, the philosopher and author. His reports show and improve how the different topics were discussed by scholars with different religious tendencies in a scientific space. Perhaps it is very strange that Tawhidi who is famous for his criticism, doesn't criticize the religious tendencies of the members of the circles. It shows the domination of the academic aspect and the acceptance and application of religious tolerance in that period. It is known that some of the scholars including Ibn 'Adi were theologians as well as philosophers and they had their apologist activities, but these trends were not taken into account in their discussions. The common characteristic was philosophy, ethics, and the demonstrative methodology and the meetings and their disputes were merely philosophical and scientific not apologetic.

#### **Abu Soleiman Sijistani, the Successor of Yahya ibn 'Adi:**

After Yaha passed away, his disciple, AbuSoleiman Sijistani, succeeded him and became the master of his circle. This circle is undoubtedly considered the most famous and important circle of the Islamic fourth century. He is known through his major work, *Siwan al-hikmah* (treasure of wisdom) and by his Boswell, *Abū Ḥayyan al-Tawhīdī's* writings. Sijistani, moved to Baghdad and joined the school and circle of Yahya ibn 'Adi, an educated Christian scholar who teaches Sijistani the ancient sciences. Baghdad at the time had been the first cultural city in the Islamic world in which different religious tendencies such as Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sabaeans, and Mazdaeans (Zoroastrians), had their common interest in ancient sciences

(*'ulum al-awa'il*). Sijistani, also mastered Aristotle and Neoplatonism. Sijistani and his intellectual circle deeply traced the integration of ancient philosophy into the Islamic perspective (Shariatmadari, 2010, p. 100).

According to Al-Tawhidi, Sijistani belongs to the Baghdad school of philosophy. He was not convinced by the harmonization (*talfigh*) to which the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwan al-Safa'a*) adhered. Sijistani often belonged to a group of thinkers who are known as Islamic humanists (Tawhidi, 1942-1944, v. 1/32). Sijistani emphasized the use of reason and did not deny the significance of religion. We can name this Humanism as a literal or religious one. Religious faith is considered an integral part of people's lives, whereas the use of reason is appropriate for the intellectual elite.

Sijistani attempted to make a bridge between grammarians and logicians. According to him, grammar and logic are essentially two distinct aspects of the same phenomenon. He maintained that logic is inclusively the internal aspect of expression, whereas grammar manifests its external dimension. Sijistani argued that logic is universal and therefore is common between all languages.

Sijistani's teleological view of the world bears resemblance to Hegel's, arguing for a gradual progression of history toward perfection. Despite his interest in rational discourse, Sijistani did not condemn faith as a possibility of knowledge beyond sensory perceptions, and he maintained that Greek discursive philosophy and Islamic sciences can be harmonized with intellectual intuition and religious faith.

His circle in addition to some of the members of Ibn 'Adi's circle, included some other scholars, such as his Boswell, Abu Hayyan Tawhidi, Abu Zakariyya Seymori, Abu al-Fath Noushajani, AbuMuhammad Arooz, Abu Muhammad Andolosi, Abu bakr Ghoomasi, Abu Al-Abbas Bukhari.

#### **Conclusion**

According to Abu Hayyan and other historians, the Islamic fourth century witnessed a remarkable phenomenon that was likely an exception in the ancient world, particularly within religious circles. During that time, Muslim scholars, particularly philosophers, exhibited a keen interest in engaging in discussions on existential issues. These intellectual debates took place not only in official gatherings but also in informal settings, such as markets of writers. These sessions brought together experts from diverse fields, irrespective of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. At times, the master or moderator of these intellectual circles was a Muslim figure, such as al-Farabi and al-Sijistani. However, there were also instances where Christians, including Nestorians, Jacobites, or Melkites, assumed the role of the master. Yahya ibn 'Adi, for instance, was a Christian scholar who served as a master of both Muslim and Christian philosophers.

The tolerant nature of the philosophical circles in the fourth/eleventh century in Iraq and Iran was fostered by the inclusive character of the Islamic Caliphate during that period. During the fourth/eleventh century, the Caliphate was under the rule of the Sunni Arab Abbasids, while the Emirate was dominated by the Persian Shiite Buyids. The Buyids held control over the Caliphate for a period of 115 years. Vladimir Minorsky (1877-1966) characterizes this period as an interlude of Iranian Shiite influence within the broader history of Islam.

The humanistic and rationalistic nature of philosophical thought during that era, akin to the European Renaissance, prompted scholars like Adam Miz and Paul Joel Kraemer to

label this period as the Islamic Renaissance, which occurred centuries prior to its Western counterpart. B However, it is important to note that unlike its European counterpart, the Islamic Renaissance, while exhibiting similar characteristics, maintained a religious or, at the very least, non-irreligious nature. After engaging in free thinking and philosophical exploration, the scholars of that time maintained their belief in their respective religions, be it Islam, Christianity, or other religious traditions and denominations. Similar to many Muslim philosophers of their time, they firmly believed in the compatibility between religious faith and engaging in philosophical inquiry or free and rational thinking. They rejected the notion of inconsistency or complete integration between religion and philosophy. Instead, they advocated for either a consistent approach, as exemplified by figures like Averroes, or a separation between the two, as supported by Abu Suleiman Sijistani, as quoted by Abu Hayyan.

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