
Franklin Lewis
A Treatise on Mystical Love.  
Translated by Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie,  
Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press,  
2005, lxx+224 p. (Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies Monograph Series, 1)

Franklin Lewis

1 Daylamî’s treatise, Kitâb ‘atf al-alif al-ma’lûf’ al-lâm al-ma’thûf (Book of the Conjunction of the Cherished Alif with the Conjoined Lâm), written in the last quarter of the 10th century CE, appears to be one of the first on mystical love in the Islamic tradition. Though the Arabic text is only known to us from one surviving manuscript, it may have had a profound influence on Persian mysticism through Rûzbehân Baqî and his followers. A quarter century ago, Jean-Claude Vadet translated this treatise to French as Le traité d’amour mystique d’al-Daylami (Geneva, Librarie Droz, 1980) on the basis of his own edition of the Arabic text (Cairo, Imprimerie de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1962). Bell and Al Shafie’s amply annotated English translation follows the text established in their new, separately published, critical edition of the Arabic (Cairo, Dâr al-Kitâb al-Maṣrî, 2006). Although the unique Arabic ms. of the work presents some thorny textual problems, the Bell/Al Shafie text and their English translation improve upon our understanding of the text.

2 In another work, Daylamî provides us with a biography of his famous teacher, Ebn ṭafîf of Širâz, though Daylamî’s own life appears by comparison quite obscure. The extended introduction of the present translators attempts, drawing upon the work of Vadet and Florian Sobiroj, to remedy this situation. The translation itself is clear, and rightly preserves technical distinctions in the terminology of love, especially with regard to hubb
(rendered as “love”) and ‘ešq (rendered by “eros”). It includes a bibliography (207-218) and an index of proper names (219-24). Though the text is in Arabic, its importance for the Persian mystical traditions of maktab-e ‘ešq is clear.

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Thèmes : 8. Soufisme

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