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AFRICAN  
BIOGRAPHY

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Emmanuel K. Akyeampong

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

VOLUME 1

of the Marinid capital directly next to Fez al-Bali provided the sultans with the opportunity to keep an eye on religious dissidence and to work on establishing ties among the city's influential religious scholars.

By the early 1270s, Abu Yusuf felt his rule to be more secure, and he was in a better position to attempt an expansion of Marinid power beyond the borders of Morocco. In 1272, he took on the Zayyanid threat, defeating Yaghmurasan at Isly and destroying his fortress at Oujda. Although he also laid siege to Tlemcen, Abu Yusuf was unable to conquer the city. In 1274, the Marinids captured the southern desert city of Sijilmasa, wresting it from the authority of the Zayyanids. This victory allowed Abu Yusuf to gain more direct control over the prosperous caravan trade from West Africa, which passed through the desert outpost. It also provided additional security for the southern parts of the country. After agreeing to a truce with Yaghmurasan, Abu Yusuf began to pursue active involvement in Spain. From 1275 to 1286, the Marinid sultan led four expeditions across the Strait of Gibraltar, frequently involving himself in internal struggles among the Castilians and Granadans in an effort to stabilize his northern frontier.

By the time of his death on 20 March 1286, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub had successfully consolidated Marinid authority throughout Morocco. He had eliminated the Almohads, defeated the Zayyanids, gained an interest in the caravan trade at Sijilmasa, and constructed a new capital that stabilized the Marinid administration, even as it helped to keep Fezzi religious opposition under control. Although Marinid rule lacked the scope and religious legitimacy of the earlier Almohads, the Marinids had at least established their supremacy in Morocco and demonstrated themselves to be a dynasty that neighboring states would need to take seriously. It was a feat in which the old sultan could legitimately take pride.

[See also Abu Yahya ibn 'Abd al-Haqq; and Yaghmurasan.]

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STEPHEN CORY

**Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid** (1943–2010), Egyptian thinker and academic, was born in Quhafa in Tanta. His father was a grocer and his mother a housewife. He had two sisters and two brothers. He married Ibtihal Younes, a professor of French literature at Cairo University. Though his family could not afford to give him a university education, he obtained an industrial secondary diploma in 1960 that enabled him to work as a radio technician between 1961 and 1972.

Abu Zayd joined the Department of Arabic, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. Upon his graduation in 1972, he was appointed as a teaching assistant in Islamic studies. He obtained his MA degree in 1976 and his PhD. in 1982. During the preparation of his Ph.D., he attained a Ford Foundation Grant to study at the American University in Cairo between 1976 and 1977. Then, between 1978 and 1980, he obtained a grant from the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania. He also worked as a visiting professor at the University of Osaka from 1985 to 1989.

After a controversial court sentence demanding the divorce of Abu Zayd from his wife, on the basis of Abu Zayd's being an apostate, he had to leave Egypt. In October 1995, he settled in the Netherlands to work as a visiting professor at the University of Leiden. In 2002, he was appointed as professor to the Averroes (Ibn Rushd) Chair at the University of Utrecht. He died in Cairo on 5 July 2010 after contracting a virus during a visit to Indonesia.

Abu Zayd devoted the majority of his academic work to the study of both the traditional and the contemporary Islamic discourses. In a brief statement summarizing the purpose of his academic project, Abu Zayd says that it is “the production of scientific awareness of religion and rational interpretations of the texts wherein history and human interests are seen as essential factors” (Abu Zayd, 1994, p. 48).

To achieve this aim, Abu Zayd tackled many fundamental issues related to the major trends in the interpretation of the Qur'an in Islamic tradition. He dedicated his M.A. thesis to dealing with the problem of metaphor in the Qur'an; it was published under the title *Rationalism in Exegesis: A Study of the Problem of Metaphor in the Writing of the Mutazilites* (*Al-Ittijah al-'Aqli fi al-Tafsir: Dirasah fi Qadiyat al-Majaz fi al-Qur'an 'inda al-Mu'tazilah*, 1982).

His doctoral thesis tackled the basis of the Sufis' hermeneutics of the Qur'an in the writings of Ibn Arabi. It was published under the title *The Philosophy of Hermeneutics: A Study of Ibn al-'Arabi's Hermeneutics of the Qur'an (Falsafat al-Ta'wil: Dirasah fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an 'inda Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi*, 1983). Moreover, in his book *The Foundation of Moderate Ideology in Islamic Thought by al-Shafi'i (al-Imam al-Shafi'i wa-Ta'sis al-Idiyulujyah al-Wasatiyah*, 1993), Abu Zayd explored al-Shafi'i's concepts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which had a great influence on many traditional interpretations of the Qur'an.

Before leaving Egypt, Abu Zayd wrote *The Concept of the Text*, which produced much controversy. In this book, Abu Zayd argues that the Qur'anic text is a product of the interaction between the revelation and the social, political, and economic conditions that surrounded its descent, understanding, and interpretation. To understand the impact of cultural factors in the production of the meaning of the Qur'anic text, he employs linguistic and philosophical approaches and methodologies such as semiotics, discourse analysis, and hermeneutics. These approaches allow him to present new perspectives on some of the central concepts in Qur'anic studies, such as the revelation, the burner and the abrogated, Mecca or Medina verses, and the reasons behind the descent of the Qur'an.

Abu Zayd pursued his project in Islamic discourse critique by working in two directions. First, he developed methodologies for analyzing texts and talk; his coedited book *The Systems of Signs (Ilm al-'Alamat*, 1986) is considered one of his most prominent contributions to this field. Second, he studied critically contemporary Islamic discourses such as salafism, fundamentalism, political Islamic groups, and what Abu Zayd termed the "Islamic left." *Critique of Islamic Discourse (Naqd al-Khitab al-Dini)* is considered one of his most important books in this field.

Abu Zayd spent the period from 1995 until his death in 2010 outside Egypt except for short visits. During this period, he achieved a high international

profile in the field of Qur'anic studies. He wrote many of his works in English, and his major writings have been translated into different languages such as Dutch, English, French, German, Turkish, Persian, Indonesian, and Spanish.

During this period, Abu Zayd paid great attention to two major issues, the first being human rights, especially the rights of women. His book *Circles of Fear (Dawa'ir al-Khawf)* analyzes the religious discourse that could be employed to legitimize sorts of domination and discrimination against women in some Islamic societies. The second issue is the development of a humanistic hermeneutics approach to the Qur'an that gives a key role to the human historical and cultural context that accompanies the descent of the Qur'an in comprehending and reproducing its meaning. He attempted to put his approach into practice through the establishment of an institute of Qur'anic studies in Indonesia; he was working intensively toward its establishment in the months immediately preceding his death.

Abu Zayd received many awards, including the Prize of Democracy, awarded by the Association of Muslim Democrat, Copenhagen, Denmark (2006); the Ibn Rushd Prize for Freedom of Thought, Berlin (2005); and the Jordanian Writers Association Award for Democracy and Freedom, Jordan (1998).

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EMAD ABDUL-LATIF