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Book Review:

The Mukhtasar al-Quduri: A Manual of Islamic Law According to the Hanafi School

Translated from the Arabic with Introduction and notes by Tahir Mahmood Kiani,

(Taha Publishers LTD. 2010). Pages 761. ISBN 9781897940709

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This is the translation of small opusculum, *al-Mukhtasar*, written by the head of the Baghdadi Hanafi guild Abu 'l-Husayn al-Quduri (d. 428/1037); and is one of the first works of the Mukhtasar genre only to be preceded by al-Tahawi (d. 321/933). Books in the Mukhtasar genre were used to quickly train lawyers in the sacred law as well as for memorization for reference purposes. The Mukhtasar of al-Quduri gained much popularity in the Hanafi School of thought due to the position its author held in the guild as well as the superior arrangement of its contents, which hitherto was missing from legal text books. It was incorporated into the *Darse Nizami* syllabus taught in the religious seminaries of the Asian sub-continent as well as their affiliate seminaries in the Western world as an elementary text of Islamic sacred law.

With the steady growth of Islam in the public sphere coupled with the demands for accessibility of classical Islamic literature, translation of classical texts has found a niche in the book market. The translation under review is another example of the steady growth of translations of elementary pedagogical texts.

The translation, mostly, is clear and precise, and is honest to the Arabic. It boasts many benefits to its merit. First of all the inter-linear Arabic text with the English translation makes it easy for novices to compare and contrast the two languages. Where classical Arabic rarely employs punctuations, the translator breaks down large passages into bullet points without compromising the Arabic. He also uses sub-headings to group themes together which are missing in the Arabic. This then adds another layer of contribution to al-Quduri's already superior arrangement. The translator uses square parenthesis to bring out the ellipses in the, otherwise somewhat obscure, Arabic text. Excessive use of footnotes has been used to clarify and elaborate issues. These take on many forms, from explaining literary conventions (ft. 8) to simple clarification (ft. 118) to making the book relevant for the modern context such as his discussion on Zakat on silver (ft. 169), medicine (ft. 216) and money in the modern context (ft. 295).

The translation has an exhaustive content page without which it would have been difficult to manoeuvre around the 761 pages. It also has endorsements from the author's teachers as well as from Shaykh Muhammad al-Ninawi, who in very eloquent Arabic situates the author and the book in the wider context of the development of Islamic Sacred law. The translator also has a small section on jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) as well as his methodology in translating this text. Finally, he has appended an exhaustive glossary and a useful table on the Zakat of livestock which can be quite mind-numbing to read in the Arabic.

This is a very good and useful translation; however for this reviewer the translation follows the Arabic grammar too closely which at times makes the English archaic. A more idiomatic translation would

have read better although the translator acknowledges these limitations in the introduction. This translation is recommended to all those who are thinking of studying Islamic law and is a welcome addendum to the library of translated pedagogical texts.