POST-ALMOHAD INTELLECTUAL HISTORY: ASH’ARITE TEACHING IN IFRĪQIYA (13TH–16TH CENTURY)

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Ifrīqiya—roughly the territory of the modern state of Tunisia—played an important role in the establishment of the scholarly discipline of discursive theology (kalām) in the Islamic west and of the Ash’arite school of theology in particular. The city of Kairouan was one of the earliest intellectual hubs in the region and the first to attract Ash’arite theologians trained by such chief authorities of the school as Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013). It was in particular under the Almoravids—a Berber dynasty that reigned parts of the Maghrib and al-Andalus between 1040 and 1147—that Ash’arite theology was further transmitted westwards and eventually widely accepted among Mālikī scholars, the predominant legal school in the Islamic west.

This presentation will discuss the history of Ash’arite theology during the reign of the Ḥafsids in Ifrīqiya. This episode remains largely uncharted territory, although it was marked by important developments: it was during this period that the methodological shift towards the so-called ‘approach of the moderns’ (ṭariqat al-mutaʾakhkhirīn) in Ash’arite theology was adopted in this region. The label of the ‘moderns’—which is still used by modern scholars for the periodization of Ash’arism—was incidentally introduced by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), who himself was born and educated in Ḥafṣīd Ifrīqiya.

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