

Book Reviews

Robert Irwin, *Mamlūks and Crusaders: Men of the Sword and Men of the Pen*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010). Pp. xii+370.

Reviewed by Niall Christie, Corpus Christi College and Langara College, Vancouver

To scholars of the Mamluks, Robert Irwin requires little introduction; well known for both his academic works and his fiction writings, the author of *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1382* (1986) and *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (1994), among other works, has been an influential figure in the development of study of the medieval Islamic Middle East in general and Mamluk studies in particular. Thus this collection of articles, dating from 1977 to 2008, is a useful and welcome addition to the library of any scholar of the Crusading and Mamluk periods.

Irwin's title, *Mamlūks and Crusaders*, is a deceptively simple one, not doing justice to a volume that contains chapters on not only the eponymous individuals but also merchants, poets and storytellers, Arab amirs, Mongol horsemen, and historians both medieval and modern, to name but a few. Some may find a full list of article titles useful: (I) "Iqta' and the end of the crusader states"; (II) "The supply of money and the direction of trade in thirteenth-century Syria"; (III) "The Mamluk conquest of the county of Tripoli"; (IV) "Egypt, Syria and their trading partners 1450–1550"; (V) "Factions in medieval Egypt"; (VI) "The image of the Byzantine and the Frank in Arab popular literature of the late Middle Ages"; (VII) "How many miles to Babylon? The *Devise des Chemins de Babiloine* redated"; (VIII) "Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun"; (IX) "Eating horses and drinking mare's milk"; (X) "Usamah ibn Munqidh, an Arab-Syrian gentleman at the time of the crusades reconsidered"; (XI) "The impact of the early crusades on the Muslim world"; (XII) "What the partridge told the eagle: a neglected Arabic source on Chinggis Khan and the early history of the Mongols"; (XIII) "Under western eyes: a history of Mamluk studies"; (XIV) "Ali al-Baghdadi and the joy of Mamlūk sex"; (XV) "The privatization of 'justice' under the Circassian Mamluks"; (XVI) "Mamluk literature"; (XVII) "Orientalism and the early development of crusader studies"; (XVIII)



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“Tribal feuding and Mamluk factions in medieval Syria”; (XIX) “Al-Maqrizi and Ibn Khaldun, historians of the unseen”; (XX) “Gunpowder and firearms in the Mamluk sultanate reconsidered”; (XXI) “*Futuwwa*: chivalry and gangsterism in medieval Cairo”; (XXII) “Ibn Zunbul and the romance of history”; and (XXIII) “The political thinking of the ‘virtuous ruler’, Qansuh al-Gawrī. Several of these articles have appeared previously in the pages of this journal. Irwin’s scholarship is of course excellent, and at the time of their publication a significant number of these articles were pioneering studies.

If one were to allow oneself to be inspired by Irwin’s own talent with the pithy phrasing, one might comment that a *Variorum* collection is a curious beast (cf. Irwin’s “improbable beast” in Chapter II, p. 75). Rather than gathering a number of articles on a particular theme, it instead takes a particular author as the epicenter of its choice of materials. This is not entirely a bad thing; each volume provides readers with a collection of works of a top-notch scholar, usefully gathered together in one volume. However, given that scholars publish articles over an extended period of time in ever-changing fields, and also do not always concentrate on the same research areas throughout the period in question, one can find oneself with a miscellany of works that, while of highest quality, feel a little dated at times, as well as slightly scattered and lacking in a central focus.

Of these two causes for concern, the first is occasionally present in this volume; probably the most apparent example is Chapter X on Usāmah ibn Munqidh, a figure who has since been the subject of considerable study, particularly in Paul M. Cobb’s *Usama ibn Munqidh: Warrior-Poet of the Age of Crusades* (2005) and *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades* (2008). This is not to detract from the immense value of Irwin’s study, which is the important corrective upon which most later studies of the Shayzarī amir have been based, but our attention is still drawn to one limitation of this sort of compiled volume. The second concern is less apparent, in that all the articles contained in this volume are indeed of interest to scholars studying the Crusades and/or the Mamluks, even though the range of topics addressed is extremely broad.

As hinted above, the quality of Irwin’s scholarship is of course complemented by his ability to craft a memorable turn of phrase. Whether it be describing stories in the *Kitāb al-Zahr al-Anīq fī Lubūs wa-al-Ta’nīq* of ‘Alī al-Baghdādī as having “the ring of truth—or, if not that, then at least the dull clank of possibility” (Chapter XIV, p. 56), or stating that the historical section of Shibāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī’s *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* “provided disproportionately a large tail to this learned dog” (Chapter XVI, p. 8), Irwin’s works are thus both scholarly and at times entertaining to read, which only enhances the value of this collection.

Irwin’s introduction, in which he states explicitly that he has now moved away from Mamluk studies to work on the *Arabian Nights*, feels like a passing of the



torch, especially as he lays out some possible avenues of study of the Mamluk period even as he bids it farewell. Chapters XIII and XVII of this collection provide a useful starting point for those wishing to build upon his suggestions, while the other articles in the volume also serve as helpful, scholarly, and accessible entries into more specific topics. This reviewer would thus strongly recommend it to both students and scholars of the Crusades and the Mamluks.

Kristen Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action: Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Pp. xii + 238.

Reviewed by Caterina Bori, Università di Bologna

This is an important book. It is important because of the questions it asks, the answers it gives, or at least attempts to give, and the research trajectories it sets. It is important because it brings our understanding of the role, action, and jurisdiction of the *muḥtasib* in Mamluk Egypt (Cairo and Fustat) a good step forward and because it tackles with due care a crucial issue in historical Islamic legal studies, that of the relationship between the theory and practice of law: two faces of the same coin that have often been researched separately. Social, religious, political, and economical daily practice mattered to legal scholars and ulama, although it is not easy to detect legal change provoked by social and historical change. Ulama often reacted to social practice and tried to regulate the daily life of individuals according to their own vision of an Islamicly correct conduct. It is more difficult to detect how, if, and in what format doctrine informed the decisions and daily behavior of ordinary people, many of them poor and uncultivated. By exploring the figure of the *muḥtasib*, the relationship between theory and practice is one of Stilt's major concerns. In fact, for every single case she presents, Stilt explores to what doctrinal pressures the *muḥtasib* eventually responded, or how doctrine could be used to provide the rationale behind certain measures. When legal theory provided little guidance, it emerges that it was usually the sultan's policy (*siyāsah*) which offered grounds for action. In fact, Stilt identifies two major sources of authority behind the *muḥtasib*'s sphere of action: *fiqh* and *siyāsah*. *Fiqh* defined what was right and what was wrong and in a simplified, hence more accessible form, made up the core of the *muḥtasib*'s manuals. Stilt shows how, most of the time, rules of *fiqh* had direct pertinence to the officials' decisions such as measures against gambling and wine, or the length of towels to be used in bathhouses. The counterpart of *fiqh* for the *muḥtasib*'s decisions, she argues, was *siyāsah*, which she describes as policy-based decisions associated with the ruler



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and informed by the priority of serving the public interest (*maṣlahah*). Currency, taxes, and public order were the ruler's prerogatives and, in this regard, the sultan exercised his control by directing the *muḥtasib* towards specific measures such as collecting a special tax to fight the Ottomans, or ruthlessly punishing an episode of theft which was evidently perceived as a threat to the public order. According to Stilt, the two legal dimensions of *fiqh* and *siyāsah* did not usually clash in their capacity as sources of authority for the *muḥtasib*. Stilt reports only one case in which a scholar objected to the collection of a *zakāt* that did not meet the doctrinal requirements of *zakāt*. In this specific regard, *Law in Action* shows that the tension between *siyāsah* and *fiqh* did not specifically articulate around the figure of the *muḥtasib*. However, one may add that the tension was there (Stilt seems to be aware of this, pp. 32–33), but it emerged in literature other than chronicles (Stilt is also aware of this, p. 189). It probably involved the jurisdiction of other legal actors, such as the qadi. Apart from *fiqh* and *siyāsah*, the *muḥtasib*'s action was strongly driven also by his own discretion, especially in the area of punishment.

Stilt also examines how the people who were meant to be regulated by the *muḥtasib* reacted from time to time to the different measures taken by the officer. This is a most interesting trajectory of enquiry, for it well underlies that action is meant to set in motion a reaction, and that if one wants to research thoroughly the interaction between law and society, it will not be sufficient to examine rules and their enactment, but reactions to rules and spaces for enacting such reactions will also have to be carefully taken into consideration. In other words, it is not only the rule and its enactment that matters, but also how the “rule” is perceived, received, and responded to by those involved. In this regard, it is difficult to distinguish a common pattern in Stilt's book. People enjoyed different spaces of resistance according to the circumstances. There was little they could do in the face of new currency issuances, but in the case of bread shortages the commoners repeatedly attacked the *muḥtasib*, crowded bakeries to make their voices heard, and directed their anger at the amirs who were responsible for hoarding grain. When the *muḥtasib* forbade women to camp outside in order to gain a view of the yearly caravan to Mecca, the *muḥtasib*'s prohibition was not taken too seriously: after a while, women returned to the street and secured themselves a front-row seat to the pilgrimage procession. In this case, and for some reason, the *muḥtasib*'s measure was not perceived as binding.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 are introductory. The first is a brief presentation of the Mamluk sultanate, of the social organization of its inhabitants and the main features of its economy, and, more specifically, of the places featured in the book (Cairo and Fustat). The chapter then moves to the sources available for reconstructing the legal history of the Mamluk period: the sources of legal authority, and the interaction between them, the main legal insti-



tutions, and legal actors of the period. The second chapter describes the position of the *muḥtasib*, his duties, and the sources which present them, and then turns to a depiction of the *muḥtasibs* of Cairo and Fustat, the geographical expanse of their jurisdiction, and the change in their social background through time. Chapters 3 to 9 investigate the spheres of action of the *muḥtasib* in specific topical areas: devotional practice; serious crimes and offences (gambling, consumption of intoxicants, prostitution); regulation of Christians and Jews; commercial transactions (market regulation, consumer protection, pricing, availability of grain); currency and taxes; and, finally, public order. This last set of chapters follows a recurrent structure: the description of a cluster of selected cases pertaining to the main topic of the chapter, an examination of the eventual connection between the case at issue and legal doctrine (the leading question behind being: to what extent was such and such measure justified in *fiqh* or in *ḥisbah* manuals?), analysis of the reasons behind the *muḥtasib*'s decision, and the reactions of the people targeted by these decisions. Step by step, Stilt poses many questions. Many of them are left unanswered because of the nature of the sources. But still, they serve the purpose of highlighting the great diversity of variants whose combination determined the daily experience of law.

In sum, the book explores the multiple ways in which law was put into action during the Mamluk period by taking the *muḥtasib* as its central actor. By investigating the sources of authority which informed the *muḥtasib*'s actions, the expanse of his activities, and their interaction with the people they regulated, Stilt delivers a complex and nuanced picture of the daily experience of law in which a multiplicity of factors at work, often discretionary and circumstantial, affected both the *muḥtasib*'s activities and their reception among the commoners. In the future, it will be interesting to see how law was put into action also in minor centers of the Mamluk domain and whether one can detect patterns of change in the *muḥtasib*'s activity. It would be also most desirable to widen our research horizon by considering what was happening in Europe in the same period (1250–1500) when a similar field of research is tackled. But, for the moment, we are grateful to Kristen Stilt for this significant contribution, which will be compelling reading for social and legal historians alike.



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ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah, *Sharḥ al-Badīʿiyah al-Musammāh bi-al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*. Edited by Riḍā Rajab (Damascus: Rand lil-Ṭibāʿah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2008). Pp. 434.

ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah, *Badīʿiyat al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*. Edited by Ḥasan Rabābiʿah (Amman: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 2008). Pp. 172.

ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah, *Al-Badīʿiyah wa-Sharḥuhā: al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*. Edited by ʿĀdil Kuttāb and ʿAbbās Thābit (Damascus: Dār Kinān lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2009). Pp. 213.

Reviewed by Th. Emil Homerin, University of Rochester.

Th *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn* (“The Clear inspiration in praise of the trusted prophet”) is the most famous poem composed by ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah (d. 923/1517). The poem has been copied many times and published as early as 1886. Th *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* is a *badīʿiyah*, a poetic form that developed during the Mamluk period in which each verse praises the prophet Muḥammad while illustrating a rhetorical device (e.g., types of paronomasia, antithesis, etc.). Moreover, like her predecessors in the genre, ʿĀʾishah adds a commentary after each verse in which she names and explains the rhetorical device and cites examples by earlier poets. Needless to say, this is a very complex type of poem, and together with its commentary, the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* is a testament to ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah’s polished poetic skills and substantial erudition.

In 1981, two Syrian scholars, Mājid al-Dhahabī and Ṣalāḥ al-Khiyamī, published a detailed article entitled “Dīwān ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah” (*Turāth al-ʿArabī* 4:110–21) in which they describe a 921 AH manuscript written in ʿĀʾishah’s own hand (al-Zāhirīyah [Damascus] MS 7335) and a 1304 AH copy made of this original (al-Zāhirīyah MS 11320). These manuscripts contain the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* and several other poems composed by ʿĀʾishah during her stay in Egypt. Over the last five years, at least three edited editions of the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* have appeared in print.

Of the three editions reviewed here, the *Sharḥ al-Badīʿiyah al-Musammāh bi-al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn* edited by Riḍā Rajab is the most useful. In his introduction, Rajab gives a concise summary of *badīʿ* (“rhetorical figures”) in Arabic literature (pp. 7–17), followed by a review of the *badīʿiyah* as a distinct poetic genre. While there has been some speculation on the originator of the form, as a genre the *badīʿiyah* follows the lead of the Mamluk poet Ṣāfi al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 750/1349) who composed a *badīʿiyah* in the meter *basīṭ* and rhyming in “m” in imitation of the *Burdah* or “Mantle Ode” by Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī (d. 694/1295), to which he added a commentary. This, then, became the model for similar poems



by subsequent poets, including Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah, and ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) (pp. 17–21). In a useful appendix, Rajab has given the texts to these and other noted *badīʿiyyāt*, though without their commentaries (pp. 251–372).

Next, Rajab provides photos of his sources for his edition, which include al-Zāhiriyyah MS 11320, and then he gives a brief and very general account of ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah’s life and writings (pp. 22–30). I was not surprised that Rajab was unaware of my work on ʿĀʾishah, but I was surprised that he never mentioned Ḥasan Rabābīʾah’s earlier study in Arabic, *ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah: al-Shāʿirah* (1997). There follows Rajab’s edition of ʿĀʾishah’s *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn*, which is clearly printed with a partially voweled text and with extensive footnotes to Quranic verses, hadith, and the poets and poetry that ʿĀʾishah cites in her poem and commentary (pp. 31–249). Following his appendix of *badīʿiyyāt*, Rajab includes a number of useful indexes to his edition of ʿĀʾishah’s *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn*. I want to acknowledge Rajab’s efforts for his edition, yet I am puzzled by several issues. First, why did he not seek out and edit ʿĀʾishah’s own copy of the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn*, al-Zāhiriyyah MS 7335? Did he not know of its existence or is it unavailable for some reason? Second, in their description of the original manuscript of the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn*, al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī state that the poem was composed of 129 verses, yet Rajab’s edition has only 127 verses. What is missing and why?

We may find an answer in *Badīʿiyyat al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*, edited by Ḥasan Rabābīʾah, though along with other problems. As noted above, Rabābīʾah has published a study of ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah’s life and work, and he has also published an edition of her *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Takhmīs Burdat al-Madīḥ* (“The Five-fold good word on *The Mantle of Praise*”), ʿĀʾishah’s *takhmīs* on al-Būṣīrī’s *Burdah*. In his very brief introduction to his edition of the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn*, Rabābīʾah refers the reader to his earlier study, and other recent works in Arabic on ʿĀʾishah. He then discusses his sources for his edition of the text. He notes that he was in Syria and had consulted a number of manuscripts, including al-Zāhiriyyah MS 11320 (1304 AH, though Rabābīʾah gives the date incorrectly as 1204 AH), but that for the most part he has relied on MS 619 Taymūr from Egypt’s Dār al-Kutub, which, he says contains 130 verses (pp. 7–12). Next, Rabābīʾah provides photos of his sources (pp. 15–24), which are blurry and, in eight cases, exactly the photos that Rajab provides in his book. Adding to this odd “coincidence” is Rabābīʾah’s caption to photos on pp. 21–24 as being from MS 619 Taymūr when, in fact, they are absolutely identical to Rajab’s photos of al-Zāhiriyyah MS 11320, which clearly match the description of the manuscript by al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī. Something is amiss here.

As was the case with Rajab’s edition, Rabābīʾah’s edition of the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* (pp. 25–131) is clear, partially voweled, with ample footnotes to Quranic verses,



hadith, and the poets and poetry that ʿĀʾishah cites in her poem and commentary. It should be noted that, whatever the relationship to Rajab's edition, Rabābī'ah's notes are his own, as are his useful indices (pp. 133–72). Yet, despite his statement that the poem is 130 verses long, Rabābī'ah's edition has only 129 verses, since there is no verse numbered 49 in his edition. The two additional verses beyond Rajab's edition are #101 on *al-ittisā'* (p. 112), which suspiciously lacks any commentary by ʿĀʾishah, and verse #129 on *al-tawjīh* (pp. 128–29), which does have a commentary resembling the others in the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn*.

The third and final recently edited text of the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* is *Al-Badī'iyah wa-Sharḥuhā: al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn*, edited by ʿĀdil Kuttāb and ʿAbbās Thābit. Their introduction to the life and work of ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah is largely a paraphrase of the account by the biographer Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651), and both editors seem unaware of recent studies on her (pp. 5–13); they also provide a general introduction to the *badī'iyah* genre, including ʿĀʾishah's *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* (pp. 13–22). As to manuscript sources, the editors rely on a manuscript at al-Mustanṣiriyyah University, presumably in Iraq, though they do not provide a catalog number or date for the manuscript (pp. 22–26). Their partially-voweled edition of the *Al-Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* has 126 verses, with source footnotes and variant reading from nineteenth-century published editions of the poem, followed by indices. Like the Rajab edition, the Kuttāb/Thābit edition is lacking the verse on *al-ittisā'*, the verse and commentary on *al-tawjīh*, as well as the verse and commentary on *tawshīh* (Rajab #80; Rabābī'ah #81).

ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah, *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Takhmīs Burdat al-Madīḥ*. Edited by Ḥasan Rabābī'ah (Amman: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 2009). Pp. 250.

Reviewed by Th. Emil Homerin, University of Rochester

Over the last ten years, several books, articles, and translations of writings by ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah (d. 922/1517) have appeared, including in *Mamlūk Studies Review*. Among these works was Ḥasan Rabābī'ah's very useful study *ʿĀʾishah al-Bāʿūniyah: al-Shāʿirah* (1997), and now he has issued an Arabic edition of ʿĀʾishah's *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Takhmīs Burdat al-Madīḥ* ("The Five-fold good word on *The Mantle of Praise*"). As the title indicates, this work is in homage to Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī's (d. 694/1295) famous panegyric to the prophet Muḥammad, popularly known as the *Burdah* or "Mantle Ode." As Rabābī'ah explains in his introduction to his edition, a *takhmīs* consists of an original poem by an earlier poet, to which a later poet adds three hemistiches to each verse of the original poem, hence the name *takhmīs* ("to make



five-fold"). In this case, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah's hemistiches precede each verse by al-Būṣīrī, while rhyming with the first hemistich of the target verse (pp. 15–18).

Rabābi'ah based his Arabic edition of this poem on MS 619 Taymūr in Egypt's Dār al-Kutub, dated 1304/1886; the scribe states that this copy was made from a manuscript written in 'Ā'ishah's own hand and completed in 921/1515. Rabābi'ah claims, incorrectly, that MS 619 Taymūr was completed in 1204 AH, but it is clear from the photos he provides of the manuscript that the date is 1304 AH (p. 14). Significantly, two Syrian scholars, Mājid al-Dhahabī and Ṣalāḥ al-Khiyamī, published an excellent article in 1981 ("Dīwān 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah," *Turāth al-'Arabī* 4:110–21) describing both a 921 AH manuscript written in 'Ā'ishah's own hand and a 1304 AH copy, containing a number of poems composed by 'Ā'ishah during her stay in Egypt. 'Ā'ishah's introduction to this manuscript is identical to that in MS 619 Taymūr, suggesting that MS 619 Taymūr is an abridged copy of the 1304 AH copy, which contains several other poems in addition to the *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and is nearly twice as long. Though Rabābi'ah cites the article by al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī (p. 3), he fails to make this connection. What is more, I do not understand why he did not consult the originals in Damascus.

Drawing from 'Ā'ishah's introduction, Rabābi'ah notes that 'Ā'ishah composed this *takhmīs* in 921/1515 after her earlier one was stolen, along with other writings, during her journey to Cairo from Damascus in 919/1513. Rabābi'ah also discovered that 'Ā'ishah's version of al-Būṣīrī's *Burdah* omits three verses (vv. 135, 144, 148) from the standard 160 vv. edition of the poem, and he goes on to note several grammatical issues and orthographic peculiarities of the manuscript, which he ascribes, in large part, to scribal error (pp. 3–10).

In his edited edition of the poem (pp. 22–85), Rabābi'ah provides a generally clear, partially voweled text with helpful footnotes on vocabulary, poetic tropes, and allusions to the Quran, hadith, and Sufi concepts. However, a number of verses from the *Burdah* as found in this edition (vv. 77, 104, 134, 141, 150, 157) are spaced incorrectly with what should have been the last word of the first hemistich being placed as the first word of the second hemistich, thus making it appear that 'Ā'ishah's hemistiches have the wrong rhyme. There are a few minor typos as well: v. 21 (*lil-mar'i* not *lil-mar*), v. 86 (*al-sanah* not *al-sunnah*), and v. 123 (*yarmī* not *tarmī*).

Following the poem, Rabābi'ah presents his analysis of it, which he divides into ten thematic sections: (1) the opening *nasīb*, (2) on the *naḥs* and its lust, (3) praise of the Prophet, (4) the Prophet's birth, (5) his miracles, (6) praise of the Quran, (7) the Prophet's night journey and heavenly ascension, (8) his military battles, (9) the poet's plea for intercession, and (10) the poet's closing prayer (pp. 87–203). For each section, Rabābi'ah cites, again, the verses from his edition of the poem (with all of his footnotes!), while his analysis is little more than a prose recap of the



Burdah, with almost no mention of ‘Ā’ishah’s verses and how they interact with the original poem. In several places, Rabābī’ah (e.g., p. 98) asserts that ‘Ā’ishah’s verses take the poem in a mystical direction. While a few Sufi concepts and terms do appear in her verses, ‘Ā’ishah’s *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ* has only a faint Sufi flavor, especially when compared to much of her other verse.

From the outset of the poem, ‘Ā’ishah imagines herself as al-Būṣīrī’s travel companion standing in the abandoned campsite, recalling together a life wasted in sin, but one that may be redeemed by devotion to the beloved Prophet. Throughout the poem, ‘Ā’ishah’s verses elaborate on al-Būṣīrī’s themes and images, adding further details, examples, or commentary. She also uses vocabulary from nearby verses in the *Burdah*, thus presaging or echoing the original poem to good effect. Had Rabābī’ah given attention to these and other interactions between the two poets, his analysis would have been substantive and useful. Nevertheless, by editing and publishing ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah’s *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Takhmīs Burdat al-Madiḥ*, Ḥasan Rabābī’ah has made a meaningful contribution to Arabic literature and Mamluk studies.

Doris Behrens-Abouseif, ed. *The Arts of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria: Evolution and Impact*, Mamluk Studies, vol. 1, edited by Stephan Conermann (Göttingen: Bonn University Press and V&R Unipress GmbH, 2012). Pp. 351, with more than 150 illustrations, many in color.

Reviewed by Jonathan M. Bloom, Boston College and Virginia Commonwealth University

Over three decades ago, in 1981, Esin Atil, the indefatigable curator of Islamic art at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, organized the first international loan exhibition devoted specifically to Mamluk art. Entitled *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks*, it was first shown in Washington at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution; it then traveled to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Phoenix Art Museum, and the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. The Washington venue was accompanied by a lavish symposium held at the National Gallery of Art, and many of the papers from that event were published in the second volume (1984) of the journal *Muqarnas*. The papers reflected the state of the study of Mamluk art at that time. A few years later, Michael Hamilton Burgoyne published his magisterial *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Survey* (1987), and five years after that in 1992 Michael



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Meinecke published his long-awaited *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien (648/1240 bis 923/1517)*.

At that time it seemed like Mamluk studies were on a roll, but the fickle focus of most historians of Islamic art shifted elsewhere. Twenty-five years after the initial exhibition and symposium, Prof. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, the *doyenne* of the study of Mamluk art and author of *Cairo of the Mamluks: A History of the Architecture and its Culture* (2007) among other books, thought it was an appropriate time to readdress the subject. While a new exhibition remains only a pipe-dream, this book is based on the conference, *The Arts of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria*, that she organized in 2009 at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. As the editor says, it is not a “proceedings” publication (p. 9), but she doesn’t explain why: although it presents sixteen chapters on various subjects by fifteen individuals who spoke at the conference, ten more of the presentations were not published in this volume.¹

The volume is bookended by three rather general chapters. The introduction is the editor’s short overview of the art of the Mamluks and a summary of the following papers. The second chapter, by Nasser Rabbat, is a rather diffuse thought piece on the experimental quality of early Mamluk art. The editor closes the volume with a somewhat longer essay on Mamluk perceptions of foreign arts, which cites such familiar examples as the Crusader Gothic portal reinstalled in the madrasah of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, the great *īwān* of the madrasah of Sultan Ḥasan, or the Iranian-style ceramic tiles used to decorate a few minarets in Cairo. Nowhere in this volume will the curious reader find a broader assessment of the nature of Mamluk art and its place in the grand scheme of things.

Six of the chapters deal specifically with architecture, mostly in Cairo but also in Aleppo, Damascus, and Anatolia. Bernard O’Kane discusses the long-vanished mosque of Bashtak in Cairo, of which only the portal remains in situ, and deftly reconstructs it on the basis of drawings by the nineteenth-century British architect James Wild now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Iman Abdulfattah and Mamdouh Mohamed Sakr present the remains of a Mamluk reception room excavated on the Cairo citadel along with its mosaic decoration, which they reconstruct using Computer Aided Design (CAD). The somewhat

¹ According to the conference program, other speakers included Philipp Speiser on “Mamluk Archaeology: An Overview on Recent Excavation Projects”; Geoffrey King, “Mamluk Art in the Arab Peninsula”; Stefan Weber, “Rebuilding the City: Damascus after Timur Lenk”; Abdallah Kahil, “Stone Carving in Mamluk Cairo”; Alison Ohta, “Binding Relationships: Mamluk, Ottomans and Turcomans”; Mariam Rosser-Owen, “Cairo and Granada: Artistic Interchange between the Mamluks and Nasrids”; Anna Ballian, “The Mosul Tradition Meets Mamluk Metalwork: A Rasulid Basin and a Jaziran Candlestick”; Fodil Fadli and Magda Sibley, “The Mamluk Hammams of Cairo”; and Howayda Al-Harithy, “Mamluk Tripoli Reinscribed.” Concluding remarks were given by Robert Irwin.



disorganized presentation of the material predictably concludes that such fancy mosaic decoration was made to enhance the prestige of the ruler. Julien Loiseau applies a text-based approach to explain the proliferation of Friday mosques in Cairo during the Mamluk period. His interesting study concludes that there was a change in the meaning and practice of Friday worship during the Mamluk period, as worshipers wanted to stay closer to home and pray with fellow members of more exclusive religious communities. Julia Gonnella discusses the Mamluk throne hall added over the entrance to the Aleppo citadel by the little-known amir Jakam min 'Iwan (d. 1407), and Ellen Kenney discusses a mosque built by the amir Tankiz al-Nāṣirī in Damascus, of which only a few bits and pieces (a tomb and a rebuilt minaret) survive in part. In a book of unusually good reproductions, many in beautiful color, her figure 8 is one of the worst images I have seen in a long time. Finally, Mehmed Baha Tanman discusses Mamluk elements in the Beylik architecture of Anatolia, particularly under the Ramazanoğlu and the Dulkadiroğlu, both vassals of the Mamluk state.

Seven of the chapters deal with particular objects or classes of objects: Sophie Makariou and Carine Juvin present an interesting but inconclusive study of Mamluk inlaid metal stands, based on a hexagonal panel in the Louvre that was clearly recycled from an earlier tray. Although six-sided stands are some of the most familiar examples of Mamluk metalwork, they remain poorly understood and their purpose undetermined. Two of the chapters present new light on particular classes of objects. Rachel Ward's essay convincingly establishes a reliable and completely new chronology for enameled glass lamps. Her close and careful analysis of specific lamps has reversed the chronology of enameled glass, one of the most familiar arts of the Mamluks. She clearly shows how artisans became increasingly adept in applying colored enamels over the course of the fourteenth century, although she doesn't even mention where—Cairo or Damascus—these beautiful vessels might have been made. Roland-Pierre Gayraud begins by presenting a useful, if rather pedestrian, summary of Mamluk ceramics. His chapter takes an unexpectedly interesting turn when he sensitively discusses why Mamluk pottery declined—whether from the movement of artisans, or massive imports from the Far East, Anatolia, and Renaissance Italy. His chapter is one of the very few in this volume to look at the larger picture.

Rosalind Haddon writes about Mongol (and Chinese) influences on Mamluk ceramics. It is difficult to believe that in this day and age people still write about the idea of "influence" as if it were a disease that one art catches from another. Many years ago, the noted British art historian Michael Baxandall stated that the idea of influence was wrongly conceived, because it confuses the agent and patient. In this case the Mongols had no power (or influence) over Mamluk potters; rather potters in the Mamluk realm may have looked at Mongol ceramics and



copied or emulated them, or perhaps—as Haddon suggests—tile specialists from Ilkhanid Iran may have migrated to Cairo, although there is no evidence that tile specialists made crockery. The carpet specialist Jon Thompson presents a chapter on the enigmatic group of Mamluk carpets and where the tradition of making them came from. Thompson sensibly proposes that the Mamluk carpet industry was based in Turkmen practice of the mid fifteenth century. Following an idea first put forward in A. W. Newhall's (unpublished) dissertation (1987), the Mamluk ruler Qāyṭbāy established the workshop to furnish the many buildings he was constructing in Cairo. Zeren Tanindi continues her meticulous work in the libraries of Istanbul, here focusing on the patronage of two bibliophile Mamluk amirs, Qānṣūh the Master of the Stables and Yashbak the Secretary, at the very end of the Mamluk period.

The most far-reaching of the chapters on objects is that of J. M. Rogers, who writes on the court workshops of the Bahri Mamluks. Although Rogers, who has been writing about Mamluk (and other) subjects for more years than anyone else at the conference, readily admits that there is absolutely no textual evidence for court workshops under Mamluks, all their contemporaries seem to have had them. He then proposes that two of the most famous examples of Bahri Mamluk metalwork, namely the basin made for Hughes of Lusignan, King of Cyprus, and the anonymous but spectacular Baptistère de Saint-Louis, both in the Louvre, are products of this hypothetical court workshop. Citing visual similarities between the manuscript illustrations produced by the historian Matthew Paris (d. 1259) at the Cistercian Abby of St Albans in Britain and the Baptistère, Rogers further proposes that Muhammad ibn al-Zayn's distinctive imagery on the Baptistère was inspired by Cistercian art as mediated through a hypothetical Cistercian Crusader intermediary. This hypothesis is as intriguing as it is unprovable, but Rogers's paper—like Gayraud's on ceramics—is one of the few that looks at Mamluk art in broader contexts.

This is a useful, if ultimately disappointing volume. It is refreshingly free from theory, with which many contemporary scholars feel the need to liberally season their texts. Some of the papers present new material in interesting ways, but the whole seems less than the sum of its parts. Apart from Rabbat's attempt at delineating a Big Picture for the early period, the reader will find a lot about little details but little about the nature of Mamluk art and the role of the arts of the Mamluk period in comparison to those of contemporary Iran, Anatolia, the Maghrib, or al-Andalus. There is nothing about calligraphy and manuscripts of the Quran, and nothing about textiles, apart from carpets, although these were major media in the period. In sum, this is not a book for the novice. I realize that I am writing this review for *Mamlūk Studies Review*, but it would seem to me that a new book on Mamluk art might try to ask—and answer—such questions as how



important it is, how it relates to the arts of the contemporary world, both Islamic and Christian, or how it develops—or doesn't—over time. The “select” bibliography at the end is just that—select and somewhat idiosyncratic.² The map might have included some of the less-familiar Anatolian sites mentioned in Tanman's chapter. Although the publication received support from the Barakat Trust and the Fondation Max van Berchem, this did not make this otherwise attractive book affordable to the people who might want or need to read it, and upon publication I know that several authors immediately circulated PDFs of their chapters because it was so outrageously expensive.

Sulāfah 'Abd Allāh, *Binā' al-Uslūb fī al-Muwashshahāt al-Mamlūkīyah* (Himş: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2009). Pp. 309.

Reviewed by Hakan Özkan, University of Münster

'Abd Allāh's monograph sets out with a seemingly naïve question: “Was there anything like a *muwashshaḥ* genre in Mamluk literature?” While anyone who merely takes a cursory glance at Arab literature written in the Mamluk ages would say yes, the truth is that we do not know much about this genre. The author is therefore right to ask this question at the very beginning of her study. For the same reason 'Abd Allāh's book is a welcome contribution to the understanding of the *muwashshaḥ* genre during the Mamluk reign and to a lesser degree in the Ottoman era.

Rightly 'Abd Allāh remarks in her introduction that the literature of the later ages of Islamic history has been largely befuddled by “random generalizations” (p. 5) and wrong judgments that stigmatize the literature of that time as weak and stale, without any objective or scientific underpinning. As a direct consequence of this misconception 'Abd Allāh seeks to reread the Mamluk *muwashshaḥs* using methods pertaining to the fields of modern literary criticism in the light of their context, that is, the historical and societal circumstances at the time of their creation. The literary critical approach 'Abd Allāh refers to puts the phonetic, grammatical, idiomatic, and semantic structure of the *muwashshaḥs* at the core of her work, characterizing the linguistic analysis as one of its mainstays.

As corpus she chose from the poems of twelve famous *washshāḥūn*: Sirāj al-Dīn al-Maḥḥār, Shihāb al-Dīn al-ʿAzzāzī, Ṣadr al-Dīn ibn al-Wakīl, Ibn Nubātah, Badr al-Dīn ibn Ḥabīb, Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, Shams al-

² There is, for example, no citation of my “Mamluk Art and Architectural History: A Review Article,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 31–58.



Dīn al-Wāsiṭī, Fakhr al-Dīn ibn Makānis, ‘Alī Wafā al-Iskandarī, Majd al-Dīn ibn Makānis, and ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūniyah (in the appendix ‘Abd Allāh includes short biographies of all these poets, pp. 257–77). This covers almost the whole Mamluk era from 684/1250 until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 923/1517, with the notable absence of *muwashshaḥ* poets from the ninth/fifteenth century. The only exceptions are Majd al-Dīn ibn Makānis, who died 822/1419, and ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūniyah, d. 922/1516. Poets such as Ibn Sudūn (868/1464) and the famous hadith scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (852/1449), who both composed a noteworthy number of *muwashshaḥs*, deserve to have been among the *washshāḥūn* represented in this volume.

In addition to secondary literature on the subject, the author consulted not only printed anthologies of *muwashshaḥ* poetry such as the *Ta’ḥīl al-Gharīb* and the *‘Uqūd al-La’āl fī al-Muwashshaḥāt wa-al-Azjāl* by al-Nawājī, but also unedited manuscripts such as the “Durr al-Maknūn fī Sab‘at Funūn” by Ibn Iyās.

Throughout her study ‘Abd Allāh uses the Andalusian *muwashshaḥ* tradition as reference and basis for comparative analyses, which abound in her work. As we know that the first examples of Eastern *muwashshaḥ* poetry were modeled on their Western predecessors, her approach is sound and leads in most cases to cogent results that show the differences between Eastern and Western *muwashshaḥ* poetry. However, the question of representability of the corpus utilized, be it on the Mamluk or the Andalusian side, is a matter that ‘Abd Allāh should have discussed in more depth. This is also the case for the quantificational analyses and percentage calculations of the first chapter.

In the introduction (pp. 5–16) ‘Abd Allāh gives an outline of the scope of her work and explains why her work fills a considerable gap in the history and study of Arabic literature, followed by a short section on terminology and a summary of the history of the Mamluk empire. The study is divided into four chapters, each with a dedicated introduction and concluding remarks at the end that make this a very well-structured scholarly work. The first chapter deals with the formal elements, meter and rhyme in the first place. ‘Abd Allāh proceeds with a quantificational analysis of these elements by setting up tables that show how often a certain meter or rhyme letter has been used and compares these figures to those of Andalusian *muwashshaḥs* (see pp. 26–28, 30–32, for example). Apart from the fact that the Mamluk *washshāḥūn* employed two new meters, *dūbayt* and *silsilah*, one of the noteworthy results is the far less frequent use of the meter *basīṭ* in Mamluk *muwashshaḥāt* (pp. 26, 30) as compared to the Andalusian varieties. In this chapter ‘Abd Allāh comments also on the expressional and phonetic peculiarities of internal rhymes (*al-taqfiyah al-dākhiliyah* and *al-taṣrī‘*), paronomasia (*jinās*), and the insertion of elements known in rhymed prose (*taṣrī‘*), which are frequent in Mamluk *muwashshaḥs*. The author is right in pointing out that these elements



are not merely embellishments as has been claimed, but rather they contribute to the purport of the poems because they semantically interrelate with the content of the verses or the stanza and thus accentuate their meaning. Lastly ‘Abd Allāh remarks that the majority of *muwashshaḥs* were sung, and therefore meters could differ from the traditional ones because of rhythmical and musical strictures. She also correctly asserts that some *muwashshaḥs* show different meters, one used only in the *aqfāl* and one only in the *ghuṣūn*.

In the second chapter ‘Abd Allāh turns her attention to semantic fields that are represented in the *muwashshaḥs*. She identifies five fields: love, wine, praise, elegy, and mysticism. For every field she counts the related words. Thus, in the field of *ghazal*, or love poetry, we find *qalb*, *qamar*, *firāq*, *ẓabī*, *thaghr*, *ḥubb*, *bukā’*, *shawq*, *jamāl*, *wajh*, *ṣadd*, *ṣabr*, *waṣl*, *‘adhl*, *‘itr*, *sahar*, *salwā*, *sha’r*, *khaṣr*, *hāmah*, *mawt*, *dallāl*, etc., all clearly belonging to the field in question (pp. 81–82). But ‘Abd Allāh includes only nouns in her count and completely neglects verbs and adjectives. In the *muwashshaḥ* of Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī on page 86, for example, she does not mention the verb *habānā* “he gave us as present” as belonging to the field of generosity. For me, these lexical items should also have been included in the analysis. Furthermore, it is hard to understand why even nouns like *turāb* “dust” in an elegiac *muwashshaḥ* by al-Maḥḥār on page 88 are not considered as belonging to the field of *rithā’*. Finally, it is regrettable that ‘Abd Allāh totally eclipsed the semantic fields of *mujūn*, *khalā‘ah*, and *hazliyah* or *hubāliyah*. This is probably one reason why she did not include Ibn Sudūn and others in her study. In the second section of chapter two ‘Abd Allāh discusses the types of intertextuality; among these we find the *mu‘āraḍah* between Mamluk poets and their counterparts in Andalusian and other Eastern or Mamluk *muwashshaḥ* poetry. She examines borrowings from the Quran, insertions of verses or parts of verses from old poetry, insertions of the names of famous people and traditional proverbs, and lastly types of semantic opposition of words, word phrases, and contrastive parallelisms.

‘Abd Allāh dedicates the third chapter of her book to the structure of the *muwashshaḥs*, including the function of the *kharjah* and its linguistic registers. Much to the detriment of her work, she wrongly interprets and translates a clearly vulgar *kharjah* in Turkish which ends in *sekem senī* (Tr. *sikeyim senī*, “let me fuck you”) (p. 145). She not only renders the already incorrect version of *Tawshī‘ al-Tawshīḥ*, an anthology of *muwashshaḥs*, but reiterates it with minor alterations. In the corresponding footnote to her translation she states that she used a modern Turkish-Arabic/Arabic-Turkish learner’s dictionary. But what is the use of a Turkish dictionary if you do not know any grammar and (even if you know the grammar) you cannot (or do not want to) correctly interpret the variety spoken by the Mamluks in Egypt at that time? In that respect my presumption from above in relation with *mujūn* and Ibn Sudūn’s *hubāliyāt* unfortunately proves true.



In the final chapter ‘Abd Allāh analyzes four figures of speech and stylistic devices: allegory, metaphor, metonymy, and symbol. Although her treatment of these items is valuable insofar as they are dedicated discussions of single *muwashshaḥs*, they appear somewhat erratic. Hence, the conclusions ‘Abd Allāh draws from her discussion are limited to general statements like “the innovation of the Mamluk *washshāḥūn* lies in their style insofar as every *washshāḥ* singles himself out by using a special style in order to express his desired meaning” (p. 251).

In concluding this review, note first of all that it is the great merit of Sulāfah ‘Abd Allāh to have presented the first comprehensive study of Mamluk *muwashshaḥs*. This is to be highlighted, given that the literatures of the later centuries have been unjustifiably neglected for more than a century by Arab and Western scholars alike. While ‘Abd Allāh’s study is very well organized and the *modus operandi* she follows is mostly logical and clear, the modern literary critical approach she refers to in her introduction does not really shine through because she does not lay out a pertinent methodology that is based on such an approach. Furthermore, there are only a few references to critical methods and works of modern literary criticism in the four main chapters. The most convincing parts of her work are the first two chapters, where she presents a statistical analysis of the formal elements of Mamluk *muwashshaḥs* and examines their semantic fields, comparing them consistently with their Andalusian counterparts. Finally, it is regrettable that sexuality, frivolity, and graphic descriptions in literature still seem to be taboo among Arab scholars, especially as a notable portion of the literature produced in that period relates to these subjects.

The book has a few omissions and typos that I will not list here except for one major omission: ‘Abd Allāh obviously leaves out one stanza of a *muwashshaḥ* by al-Maḥḥār that she refers to in her following discussion (pp. 51–53).

