

## Book Reviews

*Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-Iʿtibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār li-Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī*. Edited by Ayman Fuʿād Sayyid. Vols. 1–2 (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1422/2002).

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In the field of historiography, the Egyptian scholar al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) is one of the most renowned and esteemed representatives together with his master and friend, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406). Despite the charges of plagiarism often leveled against him and the assertion that he was a mere compiler, his works are considered to be invaluable for the history of Egypt from the beginning of the Islamic conquest until his time. The most frequently advanced reason for this appraisal lies in the numerous sources, most of which are now considered lost, that were summarized and abridged by al-Maqrīzī in his works. His masterpiece *Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-Iʿtibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār*, truly original in its conception and plan, the main subject of which is the topographical history of the city of Cairo, remains the unequalled source for historians dealing with Egypt and more particularly Cairo. Acclaimed by his contemporaries, its importance was quickly recognized and it is for this reason that it was among the early texts printed by the nascent Bulāq press. This edition, published in 1853 in 2 volumes, has remained for more than 150 years the standard text, despite its defects and shortcomings. Reprinted several times and the basis of new editions (!)<sup>1</sup> that multiplied its mistakes, the Bulāq version was obviously unsatisfactory and several scholars of the early twentieth century called for a critical edition of this fundamental text. One of them, Gaston Wiet, answered the call and tried to produce a text meeting the standards of critical editing prevailing at that time (i.e., derived from those long established in the field of Classical studies). He produced an edition (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1911–27), praised not only for its scientific method (several manuscripts were collected and collated, the result of which was conscientiously indicated in footnotes) but also as a technical achievement. Five volumes, covering pages 1–322 of the Bulāq edition, were issued. However, this edition, although representing an improvement in comparison to the Bulāq edition, still contained many mistakes (which is confirmed by the numerous *errata* added at the end of each volume) and Wiet decided to put an abrupt end to his

<sup>1</sup>See, for the last of these (ed. Muḥammad Zaynuhum and Madiḥah al-Sharqāwī, Cairo, 1998, 3 vols.), my review in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (2004): 299.



project once he discovered that more than 170 manuscripts of this work were preserved in libraries around the world. He claimed that it was impossible for a single man to proceed further and that this should be a collective work involving specialists for the various periods covered by the book. This was in 1927 and for the last 75 years nobody has taken up such a project, although similar enterprises were launched (for instance al-Şafadī's *Al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafāyāt*, now coming to an end after more than 60 years, al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, and Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*).

Finally, Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid decided to make that effort alone. Sayyid opines (vol. 1, introduction p. 4) that, although he is aware of the difficulties one would encounter working alone on such a text, projects involving several scholars, all the more so in the Orient, rarely succeed in producing anything good,<sup>2</sup> and suggests moreover that in his mind this kind of text must be edited by a single individual having a clear and harmonized idea of the whole.<sup>3</sup> But if it is true that collective projects require more time than individual ones, they generally produce an excellent result because of the involvement of several specialists with the same text. Furthermore, the second argument could be valid if the edited text would have represented the expression of the author's reflection on a particular subject (philosophical, juridical, or scientific), requiring from the editor an understanding of the author's overall concept. This is not the case with the *Khiṭat*, which has always been defined as an accumulation of facts compiled by the author from various sources and organized in a very lucid way. In some ways, it is comparable to the work required in the edition of a biographical dictionary or a chronicle. Clearly, some collaboration would have benefitted the final result, as we shall see.

Sayyid is probably the best specialist on Muslim Egypt, especially of the Fatimid period. His many studies and critical editions of important historical sources plainly show that his interests focus on this subject. No one in the Orient was better prepared to undertake such a project. During the past twenty years, he has mainly published sources which were used by al-Maqrīzī in his numerous works and this has placed him in a good position to undertake a critical edition of the *Khiṭat*. He planned to publish the whole text in four volumes together with a final volume consisting of various indexes. At the time we are writing this review, volumes 3 (788 pages) and 4 (1,089 pages in two parts) have already been published, which means that in the space of two years 3,263 pages of critical text have been produced. This implies that the text has not only been published,

<sup>2</sup>“ . . . fa-istaqarra fi yaqīnī anna al-a'māl al-jamā'iyah—wa-‘alā al-akhaṣṣ fi al-sharq—nādiran mā yuktab la-hā al-najāh.”

<sup>3</sup>“ . . . amā anna taḥqīq kitāb mithla al-mawā'iz wa-al-i'tibār yajib an yatimma min qibali shakḥ wāḥid ḥattā yasūda ḍabṭihi [sic] wa-ikhrājihi [sic] fikr muwaḥḥad munsajim dūna tanāquḍāt.”



but also critically edited, as it clearly appears that the editor has been working on each volume in succession, and that while he was preparing the next volume for publication he was reading at the same time the proofs of the preceding one. In conclusion, each volume was produced in six months, probably a world record in the discipline! We could legitimately fear that the editor has botched his work, but this is definitely not the case. However, it is clear that mistakes, omissions, and shortcomings still exist and that a careful proofreading would have avoided<sup>4</sup> most of them. Nevertheless, the whole is nicely produced and will remain for years the standard edition for this text.

The question that immediately arises in the reader's mind is whether or not this edition may be considered to be a critical and definitive edition of this important work. Before stating our opinion, we would like to describe Sayyid's working method. The editor had at his disposal two volumes of the draft (*musawwadah*)—the second and fourth part of it—covering respectively the contents of volume 2 and the beginning of volume 3, and of the end of volume 3 and volume 4. He had already prepared a critical edition of the second part of the draft, but not of the fourth, which, he says (vol. 1, introduction p. 109), he discovered (*‘athartu ‘alayhā*) during a visit to Istanbul in 2001.<sup>5</sup> In addition, he collected copies of several manuscripts containing various parts of the text. According to him, the number of these manuscripts exceeds 180. Wiet had already gathered information about 170 manuscripts at the beginning of the twentieth century and the number must have increased since then, with the discovery of new holdings and the publication of catalogues that has known an extraordinary development in the past decades. Unfortunately, the author gives no list of these manuscripts, declaring that this is useless for the reader (*lā yufīd minhā al-qārīʿ*). The reader would probably have preferred to decide whether it was useful or not. That is a pity, since this would have been the very first census of all the manuscripts of the *Khīṭaṭ* in the world! Sayyid surely did not have adequate information about all of them and this is clear in the introduction to volume 2, where new manuscripts are mentioned. In fact, they are all to be found in Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* and reference is made to old catalogues, so that one wonders why they were not described in the first volume, and why these and not others. During several stays in Istanbul, Paris, and Leiden, Sayyid was able to consult a great number of these manuscripts and was able to identify several copies made

<sup>4</sup>For instance, we could give the following omission: on page 124 of the introduction of volume 1, the number of folios of a manuscript is not given and the space is occupied by several dots, indicating that the editor was supposed to fill this space with the information.

<sup>5</sup>Although this same manuscript, as well as the other part of the draft, is mentioned in F. E. Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kültüphanesi Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu* (Istanbul, 1962–69). See 3:588.



from a copy in the author's own handwriting. To these, another one must be added: preserved in the Maktabat al-Asad (MS 3437) in Damascus, it represents a copy of a part of the draft and must be placed together with the two parts of the autograph draft preserved in Istanbul (TK Hazine 1472 and TK Emame 1405). Unfortunately, no stemma, which would have helped the reader to understand the choices made by the editor and the relationships of the different manuscripts, is provided.

Among these manuscripts, Sayyid decided to use a group of five manuscripts based on al-Maqrīzī's copy, preferring Aya Sofya MS 3475 (referred to as *al-aṣl*) for volume 1 and another group of five manuscripts, with a preference for Aya Sofya MS 3483 (referred to as *al-aṣl*) for volume 2, together with part 2 of the draft (TK Hazine 1472) and Maktabat al-Asad MS 3437 copied on the draft. As he acknowledges himself (vol. 1, introduction p. 8), the only acceptable way to prepare a critical edition of the *Khīṭaṭ* presupposes publication of the draft, a task he himself performed. But why then did he not follow the same method with the fourth part of the draft he consulted in 2001? We know that al-Maqrīzī's preserved drafts represent an early stage of his writing, that he modified the plan, and that at that time he recorded a lot of data which do not appear in the final version. Due to the subsequent disappearance of most of his sources, these are the only accounts we have of these lost texts and the data, in many cases, cannot be found elsewhere. The best way would have been to publish first this new part of the draft, completing the edition he gave of the second part. One must keep in mind, however, that this version does not really reflect the image of the author's conception of the book. It can help in reading some words difficult to identify in copies of the final version, but parts of the drafts can surely not be integrated into the edition of the final version, because the author chose not to include them after careful consideration. At least, discrepancies, additions, or corrections offered by the draft can be added in footnotes to enlighten the reader. Nevertheless, Sayyid sometimes adds sentences, words taken from the draft (e.g., vol. 2, p. 245) not appearing in the manuscripts of the final version. More serious is the following dealing with al-Maqrīzī's notebook which the present writer discovered and identified among the holdings of the University of Liège (Belgium).<sup>6</sup> We responded to Sayyid's request for a copy of some folios which allowed him to ascertain exactly the contents of some of the abstracts it contains. One can see that he decided to add, from these fragmentary folios, passages not found in the final version of the *Khīṭaṭ* just on the basis that it was the source of al-Maqrīzī for

<sup>6</sup>A critical edition of this notebook is in preparation by the present writer. See Frédéric Bauden, "Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of his Working Method—Description: Section 1," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (2003): 21-68.



that given passage.<sup>7</sup> Here and there, he also refers to the Liège manuscript, saying that a summary of al-Maqrīzī's source for a given passage is to be found in it, without referring to the folio numbers. The question is why Sayyid decided to refer to this particular manuscript and to use some fragmentary parts without having a complete knowledge of its contents and a precise description of it.

The *apparatus criticus* is limited to the discrepancies noticed between the Bulāq edition and the manuscript used as a basis. The editor explains this decision by the fact that given the existence of two parts of the draft and several manuscripts copied on the basis of al-Maqrīzī's manuscript of the final version in his own handwriting, it is useless to indicate the various readings offered by these manuscripts. If there are discrepancies, they are due to the copyists. Once again, this is a strange bias that deprives the reader of the possibility to freely choose what he might consider a better reading. The result is that we only have in the footnotes the result of the collation with the Bulāq printed text, although this collation is not always properly done. A comparison of the first pages of volume 1 has produced the following results: p. 7, l. 8 (*mimmā allafahu wa-jama'ahu*. Bulāq: the two verbs are inverted, not indicated); l. 10 (*anbiyā' Allāh wa-rusulihi*. According to Sayyid, the word *Allāh* does not appear in Bulāq. Bulāq reads: *anbiyā'ihī wa-rusulihi*); *ibid.* (*Allāh ta'alā*. The second word appears in Bulāq); l. 15 (*akhbār ma'rūfah 'indahum*. Bulāq has: *akhbār 'indahum ma'rūfah*. Not indicated); l. 18 (*al-qudrah al-bashariyah*. The last word is in Bulāq contrary to what Sayyid says); p. 8, l. 10 (*mashyakhah*. Bulāq has *shaykhah* [sic]. Not indicated); l. 22 (*maqna'*. According to Sayyid, Bulāq has *matā'*, but one reads *qana'*). Of course, these mistakes have no importance for the edited text, since they refer to the Bulāq edition, but since the editor went to great pains to collate both and to indicate in the footnotes the result of this, one should expect it to be accurate.

Sometimes, he also indicates in the footnotes the different readings of the Maktabat al-Asad manuscript and the draft. Notes that were found in the margin in the author's hand by the copyists who used al-Maqrīzī's manuscript of the final version were copied in the same way (i.e., in the margin with the letter *ḥā'* used as a symbol over the note to indicate *ḥāshiyah* [commentary], sometimes with the words *bi-khattihī* [in his handwriting]). The editor decided to place them in the critical apparatus. We know that al-Maqrīzī added notes to his works almost until the last days of his life. Therefore, the marginal notes that were found by the copyists in his final version were meant to be placed in the text itself. Al-Maqrīzī did not do it because it was too difficult to make a new clean copy (*mubayyadāh*) just for small additions. Thus Sayyid should have integrated them where indicated

<sup>7</sup>For instance, vol. 1, p. 756, where he relies on the beginning of a resumé dealing with Ibn al-Ma'mūn's history. No reference to the folio in the Liège manuscript is given. A copy of only the recto of this folio was communicated to Sayyid, who thus did not see the end of this resumé.



by al-Maqrīzī. However, the editor must be commended for having collated, when it was possible, the text with the sources al-Maqrīzī exploited. He indicates in the footnotes where a passage is to be found if the original text has been preserved and printed and he gives the result of the collation in the critical apparatus. Here again, unfortunately, he could not refrain from adding or correcting words on the basis of what is to be found in the original source (e.g., vol. 2. p. 151, from Ibn Ḥawqal). It would be strange that all the five different manuscripts based on the author's final copy would have discrepancies of this sort. Moreover it is not even certain that the edition of the source used by al-Maqrīzī is to be trusted. For instance, in vol. 1, p. 179 (l. 4), the text reads: *naḥa'a min waja' al-qalb wa-al-kulyatayn*, while the manuscript of reference (*aṣl*) and the Bulāq text give *al-ṣulb* instead of *al-qalb*. The correction is made on the basis of the source, Ibn al-Bayṭār, and in spite of the manuscripts used. The reading they provide, however, is confirmed by Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir, “Badā'i' al-Akwān fī Manāfi' al-Ḥayawān” (Dublin, Chester Beatty MS 4352, fol. 38r): *fa-yanḥa'u min waja' al-kulá wa-al-ṣulb!* It is clear that it designates the region situated between the kidneys (*kulyah*) and the spinal column (*ṣulb*).

The text is also abundantly vocalized, which helps in the reading of some difficult words. Nevertheless, the vocalization is sometimes not strictly necessary (*faṭḥah* over the letter preceding a *tā' marbūṭah*, for instance), or superfluous (words easy to read are fully provided with vowels while other more difficult ones are not), or even inaccurate (p. 7, l. 9: *'urifata*; p. 8, l. 1: *jumalin akhbār*; p. 8, l. 5: *adraktu*, read *adrakat*, . . .).

A positive point regards the annotation, profusely provided and always accurate with its context, which enlightens the reader on the subject touched upon in the text. A clear identification of most of the individuals, place names, technical words, etc., appearing in the text is supplied and is very helpful. It is a pity that the references to publications in Latin characters are often misspelled. Both volumes contain several plates illustrating the manuscripts used, buildings preserved in Cairo, or plans proposing a reconstruction of lost structures on the basis of the description given by al-Maqrīzī, the quality of which is unfortunately not always of the required standard.

The first volume is preceded by a long introduction, most of it taken, almost word for word, from the introduction published with the edition of the draft in 1995. In it, Sayyid comments on the book itself and its subject with a detailed survey of the books written on the same theme by previous and subsequent authors up until the nineteenth century (introduction pp. 8–30). He then places al-Maqrīzī in the historical context in which he lived, providing a detailed biography (pp. 30–39, entitled *tarjamah jadidah lil-Maqrīzī* as in the 1995 edition of the draft) and bibliography (pp. 40–53). This latter is, however, incomplete and sometimes



inaccurate.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, we are still lacking a thorough analysis of al-Maqrīzī's life and a detailed enumeration of all his works citing the manuscripts and the editions.

Sayyid proceeds on pages 53–68 with an analysis of the writing process of the *Khīṭaṭ*. Many interesting conclusions may be drawn from this part of the introduction. The editor clarifies the problem of the charge of plagiarism made by al-Sakhāwī against al-Maqrīzī. According to al-Sakhāwī's master, Ibn Ḥajar, al-Maqrīzī plagiarized al-Awḥadī's book on the *Khīṭaṭ* of Cairo in a major way. This al-Awḥadī, who died in 811/1408, was al-Maqrīzī's neighbor and colleague and he used to allow him to consult his library as well as his own writings. At his death, al-Maqrīzī inherited his book on the *Khīṭaṭ*, which was not finished and was mostly still in draft form. Although he made great use of this draft, al-Maqrīzī never mentions al-Awḥadī in his own book, but he acknowledges him in his biographical dictionary of his contemporaries (*Durar al-ʿUqūd al-Farīdah*). For Sayyid (p. 64), this suffices to exonerate al-Maqrīzī from the charge of plagiarism. The present writer has recently identified part of al-Awḥadī's draft and will be able to prove that al-Maqrīzī was not so innocent. The most useful part of this introduction (pp. 69–98) deals with the sources of al-Maqrīzī in the first volume. Since R. Guest, no attempt has been made to study this aspect of the book, which is not unimportant as we have already noted. Not only based on the authors and titles given by al-Maqrīzī, the study also supplies a list of sources identified thanks to the original texts through which it can be deduced what part was taken from it by the author. We now have a detailed account for almost every passage of the text which will open possibilities for further research in this field. This introduction concludes with a description of the most important editions of the book, the most useful studies of it, and finally of the manuscripts (unfortunately not complete) and the technique used to critically edit this text.

The introduction in volume 2 is almost as long as the one in the first volume. Here again, the most interesting part of it deals with the sources used by the author in this second volume (pp. 19–49). The remaining part is filled with a description of al-Maqrīzī's autographs of his other works. We learn that the editor, during a stay in Paris, had the opportunity to visit Leiden where he was able to consult al-Maqrīzī's autographs. On this basis, he provides us with a complete and accurate description of them, even if the link with the *Khīṭaṭ* is not immediately

<sup>8</sup>For example, the short treatise entitled *Al-Bayān al-Mufīd fī al-Farq bayna al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Talḥīd* is not a work composed by al-Maqrīzī. It was copied by him from a manuscript he found in Damascus in 813. This false attribution goes back to G. C. Anawati, who published it in 1969. See G. C. Anawati, "Un aspect de la lutte contre l'hérésie au XV<sup>ème</sup> siècle d'après un inédit attribué à Maqrīzī (le *Kitāb al-bayān al-mufīd fī al-farq bayn al-tawḥīd wa-al-talḥīd*)," in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire (27 mars-5 avril 1969)* (Cairo, n.d.), 23–36.



obvious. In any case, the Leiden MS Or. 14533 (part of *al-Muqaffá*) had already been described by J. J. Witkam and the same can also be said of MS Or. 560 which, as early as 1851, was very precisely analyzed by de Goeje (the latter not cited).

To conclude, Sayyid must be commended for having undertaken the task of editing the *Khīṭaṭ*, a task that nobody else felt up to until now. In achieving it, he managed to collect the best manuscripts, and to produce a readable text, full of scientific annotations and illustrations which help the reader to better understand al-Maqrīzī's text, probably better than ever. However, for the reasons I have given, we clearly cannot consider his work a critical edition, as it is defined nowadays, or a definitive one. It is to be hoped that in the near future he will be able to produce a second edition closer to the version of the *Khīṭaṭ* as al-Maqrīzī wrote it and giving full satisfaction to the reader from a critical point of view.

‘ALĪ IBN DĀWŪD AL-JAWHARĪ AL-ŞAYRAFĪ, *Inbā’ al-Ḥasr bi-Abnā’ al-‘Aşr*, 2nd ed. Edited by Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo: al-Ḥay’ah al-Mişriyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2002). Pp. 22, 562.

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This printed version of the *Inbā’ al-Ḥasr bi-Abnā’ al-‘Aşr* is a so-called second edition of a text which was first published in 1970. In fact, it is simply a reprint of the first edition. The chronicle was written by a certain Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Dāwūd al-Jawharī al-Şayrafī (819–900/1416–95). This man was the son of a money-changer in the *dīwān* of the sultan in Cairo, who supplemented his meagre income by trading in the jewellers’ market. Although al-Şayrafī enjoyed quite a good education, he could never get rid of a strong awareness of his father’s low social standing.

After a while al-Şayrafī attracted the attention of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449). This eminent and influential scholar encouraged his promising disciple to try his luck as an historian. At the same time, al-Şayrafī applied for a position as a Hanafī qadī in the capital. But all his endeavours to find good employment failed. Only once, in 871/1466, was he granted the opportunity to stand in for the Hanafī *qāḍī al-quḍāh* Ibn al-Shihnah (d. 890/1485). For some time, al-Şayrafī worked as imam at the *Zāhirīyah* mosque. To earn his living, he





had to make copies of all sorts of manuscripts. His favorite texts were the works of his teachers Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Ibn Taghribirdī (d. 874/1470), and al-Kāfiyājī (d. 879/1474) to which he usually added his own remarks and commentaries. Unfortunately, fame and glory were denied him, as he was overshadowed by such erudite contemporaries as al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), and Ibn Iyās (d. ca. 930/1524).

It is said that al-Ṣayrafī's efforts to become a professional historian produced nothing but scornful laughter among his colleagues. They reproached him for having a very boring and long-winded style and for writing unfounded works by ignoring the known sources. Al-Sakhāwī, whom our author obviously knew personally, complains in a spiteful biography in his *Dawʾ al-Lāmiʿ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsiʿ* that he had absolutely no understanding of the historical sciences. These defamatory remarks by a well-known and highly respected alim show the arrogance and the conceit of Mamluk scholarly circles. Perhaps they are also a sign of uncertainty among the established historians about their social status faced with a substantial growth of historical writing among the lower classes during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A great number of people from society's lower strata joined the traditional circles of theologians, *muḥaddithūn*, and *munshīs* who normally held a monopoly on historiography. Examples of this development include the anonymous soldier who wrote the first volume of the chronicle that has been published by Zetterstéen, the humble Turkish army officer Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 736/1335), who struggled all his life to establish his reputation as a scholar, Abū Ḥamid al-Qudṣī (d. 888/1483), a reader of hadith works who was always looking for a better job, or, of course, our al-Ṣayrafī.<sup>1</sup>

The *Inbāʾ al-Ḥasr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿAṣr* treats in a panegyric way the reign of Qāyṭbāy during the years 873–86/1468–81. The work represents a typical “Widmungsschrift” (eulogy). Al-Ṣayrafī wanted to present the sultan his small text in the hope of being rewarded with a position at court. Unfortunately, his desires were not fulfilled. Al-Ṣayrafī's *Inbāʾ al-Ḥasr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿAṣr* may be grouped with similar “opportunistic texts” (“Zweckschriften”) in which a high representative of the ruling class is praised to the skies.<sup>2</sup> For example, one could cite Ibn Abī

<sup>1</sup>See Ulrich Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>On this quite popular genre, see Otfried Weintritt, *Formen spätmittelalterlicher islamischer Geschichtsdarstellung: Untersuchungen zu an-Nuwairī al-Iskandarānīs Kitāb al-Imām und verwandten zeitgenössischen Texten* (Beirut, 1992), 183–200; Peter M. Holt, “Literary Offerings: A Genre of Courtly Literature,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge, 1998), 3–16; Rudolph Veselý, “Ibn Nāhid's *As-Sira aṣ-Ṣaykhiya* (Eine Lebensgeschichte des Sultans al-Muʿayyad Ṣayḥ): Ein Beitrag zur Sira-Literatur, *Archiv Orientalní* 67 (1999): 149–220; Henning Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel im Mamlukensultanat: Historische und historiographische Untersuchungen zu Abū Ḥamid al-Qudṣī und Ibn Taghribirdī* (Berlin, 2003).



Ḥajalah's (d. 776/1375) *Kitāb Sukkardān al-Sultān al-Malik al-Nāṣir*,<sup>3</sup> al-ʿAynī's *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir Ṭaṭar*<sup>4</sup> and *Al-Sayf al-Muḥannad fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Muʿayyad Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī*,<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad Ibn Nāhiḍ al-Juhānī al-Kurdi's (d. 841/1438) *Al-Sīrah al-Shaykhīyah*,<sup>6</sup> or Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsi's *Tārikh al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy*.<sup>7</sup>

This edition of the *Inbāʾ al-Ḥasr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿAṣr* is based on the only known manuscript, located in the Czech National Library in Prague. Ḥasan Ḥabashī has done a very good job. The printed text is nearly flawless and provides helpful commentaries. But we should keep in mind that the merits of the editor have been well-known for twenty years. Instead of going into that in more detail it seems more worthwhile to say something about al-Ṣayrafī's two other preserved chronicles.

His *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-al-Abdān fī Tawārikh al-Zamān* covers the years from 784/1382 to 842/1438.<sup>8</sup> It is a normal dynastic history in which Mamluk politics are analyzed by analogy to the hagiographical description of the Prophet's acting as a statesman in Medina. Al-Ṣayrafī uses an annalistic approach that was common practice in his time: he subdivides his text into days, months, and years. At the end of every year, one finds necrologies not only of Egyptians but also of prominent figures from all Islamic countries. Al-Ṣayrafī's style has a closeness to spoken Arabic and on some occasions the grammar is not congruent with *fushḥā*. Although it is focused on a chronologically fixed period, the *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-al-Abdān fī Tawārikh al-Zamān* is an Islamic universal history which starts with the creation of the world and with the prophet Adam and ends in the lifetime of the author. The first part of the chronicle which bears a special title ("*al-Jawhariyah*") is dedicated to the history and genealogies of God's messengers up to Muḥammad. With Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsi, al-Ṣayrafī shares the bad habit of copying unscrupulously from al-Maqrīzī's *Al-Sulūk*.

A third work by al-Ṣayrafī is called *Al-Durr (al-Thāmin) al-Manẓūm fīmā Warada fī Miṣr wa-Ahluhā (wa-ʿAmaluhā) min Mawjūd wa-Maʿdūm bi-al-Khuṣūṣ wa-al-ʿUmūm* ("The string of precious pearls: the traditional general and specific knowledge on Egypt and her provinces").<sup>9</sup> This is a typical *faḍāʾil* work. The author tells us that his *Al-Durr (al-Thāmin) al-Manẓūm* contains a description of all the beauties,

<sup>3</sup>(Bulāq, 1871).

<sup>4</sup>Ed. Hans Ernst (Cairo, 1962).

<sup>5</sup>Ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1987).

<sup>6</sup>Ed. by Veselý in his *Ibn Nāhiḍ's As-Sīra aṣ-Ṣaykhīyah*, 172–220.

<sup>7</sup>Unedited, but see Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel*.

<sup>8</sup>Ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970–73).

<sup>9</sup>Unedited. For manuscripts, see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1949), S2:41.



merits, and miracles that can be found in Egypt. The reader learns everything that the Quran, the Sunnah, and the Muslim scholars, historians, and philosophers have to say on this topic. It seems to be more than a remarkable coincidence that we can, in this respect, draw a parallel to Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudṣī, whom the guild of Mamluk ulama discredited as being as lousy as al-Ṣayrafī. Like our chronicler, he tried his hand at writing panegyric prose about his native country. But his *Al-Faḍā'il al-Bāhirah fī Maḥāsin Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira*<sup>10</sup> was not much of a success. Nevertheless, a comparison of both scholars would be just as worthwhile as a detailed analysis of the three works we have received from al-Ṣayrafī.

ROBERT IRWIN, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* (London: Allen Lane, 2006). Pp. 376 + index.

REVIEWED BY JOHN RODENBECK

Robert Irwin remarks in his introduction that the subject of his latest book “is neither very important nor very glamorous—still less actually sinister” and observes that he would never have written it except for Edward W. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), to which it is a rejoinder. Orientalists in general, he points out, have had very few readers and little influence. One might observe here that the current celebrity in the White House of an Orientalist academic like Bernard Lewis is unprecedented in Orientalism since its beginnings 450 years ago and is in any case due not to his scholarship, but to his elaboration from 1990 onward of a myth that has been found useful by the engineers of the Bush regime’s Middle Eastern policies.

Irwin need hardly point out that the title Said chose for *Orientalism* is a misnomer or that the polemic for which Said is famous is directed not against Orientalists in general, but almost exclusively against Western Arabists, all of whom Said blames for perennially sustaining, inculcating, and encouraging innumerable prejudices in Europe and America, which have somehow led in turn to imperialism and a host of other wicked follies. It is thanks to Said, in fact, that since 1978 the word *orientalist* has come colloquially to function chiefly as a code word for “anti-Arab.”

<sup>10</sup>Unedited. However, for this text consult Stephan Conermann, “Lebensspender, Stätte der Erinnerung, Gedächtnisort: Der Nil während der Mamlukenzeit (1250-1517),” in *Wasser—Lebensmittel, Kulturgut, politische Waffe*, ed. Ulrich Hübner and Antje Richter (Schenefeld, 2004), 15–60, esp. 48–50.



“I have no significant disagreement,” Irwin says, “with what Said has written about Palestine, Israel, Kipling’s *Kim*, or Glenn Gould’s piano playing.” Said’s *Orientalism*, however, Irwin sees as an ignorant, irrational, and frequently dishonest polemic based upon a radical over-estimation of the power of literature. While adhering to the Marxist-Foucaultian notion that any verbal representation of something is inevitably skewed by the cultural matrix from which it comes, Said makes no distinction between the literal and the figurative or between what is physical and what is verbal and appears to believe that mere discourse about something actually has at least the weight, value, and ultimate import, for good or ill, of the real thing to which it refers.

One upshot of such curious attitudes is to deny all the past and much of the present their own reality. Said’s blanket condemnation of all past or present Western scholarship, moreover, which he condemns for its ineluctable Westernness, leads to the conclusion that the only significant qualification for doing research on the Arabic language or literature or the Arab world is a genetic one: no non-Arab, dead or alive, need ever apply. Taken together, these convictions amount to a declaration that history (as well as, say, archaeology, linguistics, cultural anthropology, or travel-writing) is really impossible, a conclusion that might explain why a sense of history—except as fiction or myth—is so absent from everything Said himself ever wrote.

Whatever its original value as an alarum, Irwin observes, the long-term influence of Said’s polemic has been largely malign. And the present situation, when an entire tradition of scholarship has been discredited and a whole generation of Arabists have been not only dispirited, but placed under multiple suspicion, cries out for redress. As Irwin has seen it, the publication of a true history of Orientalism—as true as one could make it—was a moral necessity.

Mamlukologists may recognize his title as an allusion to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* (1913), lines that took the following form in the last act of Flecker’s posthumously produced play *Hassan* (1922):

We travel not for trafficking alone;  
By hotter winds our fiery hearts are fanned:  
For lust of knowing what should not be known.

(These same lines also supplied the title for the memoirs [1988] of a charming polyglot American spy who worked in the Middle East, Archie Roosevelt [1918–1990]—by no means to be confused with another American spy who worked in the Middle East, his first cousin Kermit [1916–2000], mastermind of the coup that in August 1953 felled Iran’s first democratically elected government.)

Irwin’s first chapter deals with Said’s claim that what he monolithically styles “The West” has been perennially and viscerally anti-Middle-Eastern since classical



times, the days of Herodotus or of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and especially Euripides. Irwin looks at the actual texts of the *Histories* and *The Bacchae*, however, and points to a plentiful scholarly literature that settled this question some time ago. To demonstrate the baselessness of charges that in Rome under the empire Arabs were regarded as Alien Others, Irwin reminds us that Septimius Severus married an Arab lady, Julia Domna, who became not only the mother of Caracalla, but also in her own right the most powerful politician in Rome. Meanwhile her elder sister Julia Maesa, married to a Syrian noble, had two daughters, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea, who became respectively the mothers of the emperors Heliogabalus and Alexander Severus. Irwin also draws our attention to yet a fourth Roman emperor, Philip, who was known as “Philip the Arab” (244–49).

The next chapter takes up the period from the foundation of Islam to the beginning of the fourteenth century, an era in Europe illuminated much less by “ancient Greek science and technology transmitted via Arabic renditions translated into bad Latin” than by the direct acquisition of techniques, knowledge, and skills developed more recently among the Persians and Arabs themselves. Irwin here points to the likes of Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen), al-Khwārizmī (Algoritmi), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). Capable European Arabists included William of Tripoli, Ricoldo da Monte Croce, and, of course, Raymond Lull, all of whom were Christian missionaries. The Councils of Vienne (1311–12) and Basel (1341) decreed that chairs of Arabic should be established at Avignon, Bologna, Oxford, Paris, and Salamanca, but by that time the medieval vogue for Arabic had passed and in fact these decrees came to nothing.

In the third chapter, “Renaissance Orientalism,” Irwin deals first with the term *Renaissance*, which he understands in the ordinary sense recognized as primary by the OED: “The great revival of art and letters under the influence of classical models which began in Italy in the 14th century and continued during the 15th and 16th.” Since the Arabs demonstrably had no positive interest in Greek art, architecture, poetry, or drama and not even a negative interest in Latin, the suggestion that they were somehow responsible for the European Renaissance is absurd. In fact, as Irwin demonstrates, there was a general flight from Arabic and Arabic learning during this period, exemplified first in Petrarch (1304–74), who may justly be said to have founded the Renaissance, and his attack on Averroism, which signaled a reaction against earlier Arab intellectual influence and the Aristotelian attitudes to which it was linked.

Irwin ascribes the beginnings of Orientalism to a much later early-modern figure, the mad Guillaume Postel (1510–81), who held the first chair of Arabic at what became the Collège de France (1539) and whose career coincided not only with the rise of travel and travel literature, but also with much diplomatic activity surrounding the long-enduring naval and military alliance between France and the



Ottoman Empire. Said mentions Postel twice in *Orientalism*, but not his peculiar and entertaining beliefs, among which was the attractive idea that “almost everything in Asia was superior to almost everything in Christendom.” The great Huguenot scholars Julius Caesar Scaliger (1540–1609) and Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) were interested in Arabic, but never achieved Postel’s mastery of the language. Irwin notes (p. 110) that the lack of Orientalists specialized in Turkish studies has persisted into the twentieth century.

The next three chapters provide a meticulous history of Orientalism as it arose out of sixteenth-century France to reach full maturity in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the first volume of which, in English, French, and German, was completed in 1913. All the great figures, including the elder Pococke—whose name Said misspells even in the indexes of both editions of *Orientalism*—are treated at fair length; and for most Mamlukologists a rehearsal here would be superfluous. Apart from the men—with the possible exceptions of Gertrude Bell and Annemarie Schimmel, there appears never to have been any outstanding lady Orientalists, a fact that some might construe as a tribute to the level-headedness of the fair sex—institutions and major projects are also discussed. In each chapter Irwin makes the necessary corrections to Said’s narrative, which tends to elevate the unimportant or the irrelevant (e.g., Flaubert) to prime status while ignoring the greatest schools of Orientalist learning. Most notably excluded by Said, as he himself vaguely acknowledges in his introduction to *Orientalism*, are the Germans, who dominated the field for a century and a half. But Said also omits any mention of the Italians, who have had an important Orientalist tradition from Marracci onward, and the Russians, whose Kazan University was the backbone of an ambitious and successful imperialist agenda and actually employed Arabs, Turks, Persians, and Afghans as professors. Irwin, by contrast, gives us the full story.

Chapter Seven is devoted to giants—Goldziher (designated by Irwin “the greatest of the Orientalists”), Nöldeke, Snouck Hurgronje, Caetani, E. G. Browne, Margoliouth, Massignon, Kratchkovsky, Brockelmann, and others—and describes the beginnings of SOAS. Chapter Eight treats the rise, thanks largely to the destruction of German institutions in two world wars and the flight of German intellect in between, of British Orientalism and the beginnings of Orientalism in the U.S. A concluding paragraph here reflects on problems peculiar to British academia, which are in some ways the reverse of difficulties in the U.S. and elsewhere. Chapter Nine, titled “An Enquiry into the Nature of a Certain Twentieth-Century Polemic,” confronts Said head-on, concluding that “on the whole . . . the good qualities of *Orientalism* are those of a good novel. It is exciting, it is packed with lots of sinister villains, as well as an outnumbered band of goodies, and the picture that it presents to the world is richly imagined, but essentially fictional.”

The last chapter considers various Muslim attacks on Orientalism, including



those of Kurd ‘Ali and A. L. Tibawi, the secular critiques of Abdallah Laroui and Anouar Abdel-Malek, and finally the just resentment of certain attitudes apt to appear in Western Orientalist works—arrogance in particular—expressed by two distinguished Oriental scholars, Fazlur Rahman and my friend and neighbor in Languedoc, Muhsin Mahdi. The fact that he gives them the last word indicates the degree to which Irwin has sought to remain scrupulously just and honest, as well as deeply informed. This book is not a defense of Orientalism, but something much better: a conscientiously straightforward history of the subject.

*Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars ḥasb al-Riwāyah al-Shāmiyah*. Edited by Jūrj Būhās and Kātyā Zakhariyā (Damascus: al-Maḥad al-Fransī lil-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabīyah bi-Dimashq, 2000–4). 5 vols.

REVIEWED BY LI GUO, University of Notre Dame

Yes, you read it right: that is the way the protagonist’s name is spelled—with a *ṣād*, instead of a *sīn*—a literary device used by the anonymous authors apparently aimed at distancing themselves from the risky business of art imitating life. Hereby hangs the tale of the Syrian version of the *Romance of Baybars*, one of the few surviving pre-modern Arabic popular tales. Riding on the tide of the hugely successful 10-volume French translation, *Roman de Baïbars* (1986–98), by Georges Bohas, the coeditor of the volumes under review, and Jean-Patrick Guillaume, the state of the study of this monumental work has never been in better shape. The publication of the “Syrian” text, as opposed to the more familiar Egyptian versions, should thus be considered a milestone in this collective enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

Like other Arab folktales, such as the *Arabian Nights* and the *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, the history of the manuscripts of the *Sīrat Baybars* has its share of twists and surprises. The oldest manuscript, the Vatican MS, goes back as far as the sixteenth century, and the subsequent modern prints one finds everywhere in street bookstalls all over the Arab world today are mostly cut-and-paste renditions of the manuscripts

<sup>1</sup>On the French translation and the related publishing activity around it, see Robert Irwin’s review of *Lectures du Roman de Baybars*, ed. Jean-Claude Garcin (Marseille: Editions Parenthèses, 2003), in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2004): 395–96; also see the three special issues of *Arabica*, 51, nos. 1–2, 3 (2004), guest edited by Jean-Claude Garcin, dedicated to this subject.



now housed in various libraries, mostly in Europe. Thomas Herzog discovered a manuscript in the possession of a storyteller (*ḥikawāṭī*) in Aleppo. Through the teamwork by mostly Arab scholars, a hand copy was made in 1949 under the auspices of the French Institute. Actually originating in Damascus, this “Aleppo codex” is very close to the version handed down through another Damascene *ḥikawāṭī*. The merit of the Aleppo codex, in the coeditors’ own words, is the fact that it is “complete,” in the sense that the original quires are intact and the imagined life and career of Baybars/Baybars̄ is brought to a grand finale. Given the remarkable fact that the uncut, un-sanitized edition is being published in Damascus, of all places, in the present day, the editors seem to have been compelled, in the Introduction, to bring up two rather sensitive issues, in addition to the usual information about the manuscripts and the editorial policies: first, that the Baybars dealt with here is a fictionalized figure (as in “any resemblances to the actual person are purely coincidental”); second, the retaining of the “dirty” stuff, namely sexually explicit material, contained in the original text is justified on the grounds of “legitimate academic reasons” (vol. 1, pp. 13–16).

This is a long text. The part published so far covers only half of it. To facilitate the reading, each volume begins with an Introduction (repeated), and, starting from Volume Two, a cumulative synopsis of the story line and plots covered in the previous volume(s).

Volume One (pp. 334) starts off with a dream al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb had: that a wonder boy will eventually rise to lead the Mamluks to eternal triumph. A Damascene merchant is sent to marketplaces, in Syria, to purchase young boys to be brought up as soldiers. Among them is a sick orphan named Maḥmūd and two boys who would eventually become “big shots” themselves: Qalāwūn and Aйдamur. Out of jealousy, Qalāwūn bullies the orphan while Aйдamur acts as his protector. On their way back to Cairo via Aleppo, the boy, in fact the scion of a king, is abandoned in a hospital, thanks to a trap set by Qalāwūn. After some more twists, he is adopted by a Syrian woman, Sitt al-Shām, under whose care he learns, and perfects, the arts of *furūsiyah*. Sitt al-Shām names the boy Baybars̄, after her deceased son.

The boy is then brought to Cairo to be presented to al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ and his wife Shajarat al-Durr. On his way, he saves the life of a lad who was about to be buried alive by his own father, a member of the Ismāʿīlī militia who had known, all along, the future of the wonder boy through the divination (*jafr*) of their imam. At Baybars̄’ urging, Ibrāhīm, the lad, pledges to sever his ties with his family and gives up his name to become Ḍāʿī al-Ism, or Nameless. He is to become Baybars̄’ confidant and right-hand man. Villains do their best to battle the hero along the way: in addition to the arch rival Qalāwūn, there is an even more dangerous enemy, a Christian named John, disguised as a Muslim qadi, who





had assassinated al-Ṣāliḥ's chief judge in order to become his replacement. His goal is to thwart Baybars, whom he saw in an epiphany as the ultimate threat to Christendom. Minor villains consist of a legion of the "evil vizier" type, those who work for, or are associated with, the establishment; and all of them hold some grudge against the hero. Good Muslims they are not: chief among them are a "sissy" pedophile (*al-shaykh al-mukhannath*), a homosexual (*lūṭī*), and a gangster (*qā'id 'ayyārīn*). And then there is a Jewish *kātib*, who steals money from Baybars' estate. (By the way, he also runs a successful real-estate business on the side.) The stage is set for high drama, with a full cast, historical and fictional.

Volume Two (pp. 340) follows up Baybars' quick rise to power: from a low ranking officer (*shāwīsh al-dīwān*), to the governor of Egypt, then Commander of the Left Wing Brigade (*silāḥ-dār muyassarāh*), and finally the most important post, Commander of the Right Wing Brigade (*silāḥ-dār muyammanah*), replacing Qalāwūn, further fueling the latter's resentment and jealousy. Baybars' triumphs over the Franks and the Mongols are described with great fanfare. Battlefield scenes, in Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople, the Bilād al-Shām, and Alexandria, are interwoven with garden variety cloak-and-dagger sabotage attempts staged by the hero's inner-circle enemies to do him in. Diplomatic negotiations between Baybars and the Franks in Alexandria and Genoa show his savvy. And his solicitation of aid—from the Ismā'īlī *Fidā'iyyīn* militia (through the connection of Nameless), the sympathetic Mamluk rank-and-file, and the civic elite—to form a loose alliance, demonstrates his maturity and readiness for bigger things. Here the plot involving the clandestine Christian qadi as the main villain gets even more tricky: al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ designates Baybars to succeed him, a development that further enrages John, who in turn incites the rebellion of the governor of Syria, 'Īsā al-Nāṣir, and secretly invites the Frankish army to occupy the Syrian lands. Al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ thus leads his last, and fatal, expedition to Syria, over the course of which he dies suddenly. Some have suspected Baybars' involvement in the sultan's death.

Volume Three (pp. 379) begins with the ensuing power struggle after al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ's death. His son 'Īsā, who is "fond of drinking and pretty boys," is named al-Malik al-Ghāzī and has an immediate clash with Baybars, who declines to take over despite al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ's will. A series of bloody court intrigues take place and Baybars is stripped of power. And then, under mysterious circumstances, al-Malik al-Ghāzī, "the queer and alcoholic" (*lūṭī wa-sikkīr*) boy king is found dead, wine cup in hand. His brother Khalīl, the son of Shajarat al-Durr, is enthroned with the regnal title al-Malik al-Ashraf. Accompanied by Baybars, who has since been brought back on account of the pressing Frankish threat on the border, the young sultan dies on an expedition to Syria. Again, Baybars is accused by his enemies, among them Aybak, an ambitious general, and the disgruntled Kurds.



Aybak marries Shajarat al-Durr and is made the sultan, with the title al-Malik al-Mu'izz. Fearing for his safety and avoiding the potential *fitnah*, Baybars goes East again, to Syria, where he prospers and overcomes a series of attempts on his life and finally confronts Aybak in battle and wins.

In Syria, Baybars is approached by Berke-Khan, the brother of Hülegü, who claims that he and his daughter Tāj Bakht have converted to Islam. Berke-Khan and his troops are killed by heavy snows in Syria. Baybars brings the surviving Tāj Bakht back to Damascus, and, with the blessing of his adoptive Syrian mother, marries the Mongolian princess. He declares himself to be the ruler of Syria, with the title al-Malik al-ʿAdil. Defeated and a political lame duck, Aybak returns to Cairo and is soon assassinated, in the bath, by a jealous Shajarat al-Durr, who then jumps from the balcony to her own death. Once again, Baybars declines the throne, and Uṭuz is elected, only to be immediately killed by his own Mamluks. With the repeated urgings by the power brokers (*al-a'yān*), Baybars is finally declared the sultan, with the regnal title al-Malik al-Ẓāhir.

The new sultan immediately faces a new round of sabotage, set up by John the Christian, who has poisoned the water sources in Jerusalem and nearly kills Baybars, who has come to safeguard Muslims in the city. Baybars is helped by Nameless, by now known as Siyāj al-ʿAdhārā, or Virgins' Keeper, a nickname bestowed upon him by Tāj Bakht, for having rescued her and her young son Sa'īd during a raid in al-ʿArīsh on their way from Syria to Egypt. The Queen has also adopted the young man as her brother. Baybars appoints his old friend, and new brother-in-law, Commander of the Right Wing Brigade. The volume ends with the sultan's conquest of Antioch and his negotiations with the dissenting Ismā'īlis in the Syrian highlands.

After this, the narrative gets fuzzy. Volume Four (pp. 332) and Volume Five (pp. 368) read like an epic in its true sense: a combination of a road map, of the hero's endless military victories, and a thriller, full of suspense and over-the-top plot developments. This is by far, for better or worse, the most entertaining and fantastic portion of the tale. Some of the highlights include a spy operation in Constantinople to win the release of some 800 Muslim prisoners of war, the capture of Baybars in al-Shaqīf castle and his miraculous rescue by Ibrāhīm/Nameless/Siyāj al-ʿAdhārā, and another assassination attempt plotted by Hülegü's men in Damascus. Topping this all off is an episode of conspiracy with seduction wrought, again, by John the Christian, who has tricked Marina, the beautiful daughter of a Frankish general in Macedonia, to send an invitation to Baybars to witness her conversion to Islam with the help of a beautiful Muslim woman, Sharifah al-Maghribiyah. Off the hero goes, but manages to escape again, and brings the two women back to Muslim territory. Marina is to marry Sa'īd, Baybars' son, and the Maghribī girl is to become the wife of Qalāwūn. The sultan finally has made



it back to Cairo, along with the entire entourage and the newlyweds, including Ibrāhīm, who is also given a royal lineage by marrying the daughter of the Persian Shah, whom he has convinced to convert to Islam.

The hero's next triumphal act is on the international stage. Baybars first successfully defends Tripoli against the Franks and then, in a swirl of seemingly ridiculous plots, negotiates a truce with the Mongols led by Timur, the uncle of his wife, who has come to Cairo to pay tribute. This part of the text is the stuff of pulp-fiction, with a story line that goes like this: Timur has conspired to kidnap Baybars and gain control through manipulating the young and naïve al-Saʿīd; Ibrāhīm, the unsung hero, discovers the plot but becomes caught in a rivalry with al-Saʿīd and his mother, Tāj Bakht, Timur's niece. Timur then dispatches the captured Baybars and his son, in a trunk, to Aleppo, in the hope that by this gesture he would win the favor of his brother Hülegü to give him the land of Syria as a gift. With the help of Ibrāhīm and the Ismāʿīlī *Fidāʿī* militia, Baybars manages to escape and returns to Cairo.

There are more battles for the hero to win against the enemies: the plotters and conspirators, the Franks, and the Mongols. Fights have broken out in Tripoli and then extended to Europe. The Mamluk army, led by Ibrāhīm, wins decisively near Lombardi (Arabic: *jīsr al-inkibār*, "Bridge of Defeat"), in northern Italy. Replete with panegyrics, which come in handy for storytelling performance, Volume Five ends with the Mamluk victory over Genoa.

So far as storytelling goes, the historicity of such a tall tale can easily be challenged. The text is known to have been produced at a much later time, in the sixteenth century, to be precise, and the "red flag" is all over the place: people's habit of sipping coffee (which would have been unheard of in Baybars' time) being one, and the Mamluk army's use of the cannons (*al-midfaʿīyah*) by Baybars' troops another. (The editors state that cannons were not introduced to the Mamluks until the early sixteenth century [vol. 4, p. 32, n. 46]; however, based on a description in Ibn Menglī's *Al-Aḥkām al-Mulūkīyah*, a *furūsiyah* treatise, the use of cannons by the Mamluks can be dated at least as early as the reign of al-Ashraf Shaʿbān [1363–76], which was, of course, still nearly a century later than Baybars' time.) In essence, what we have here is an Ottoman text telling a Mamluk tale. Going through the text, one cannot help but marvel at the rich details of the hitherto little known aspects of *mamlūkīyāt*: how boys were purchased and trained to be Mamluks, what soldiers wore on the battlefield, what they ate, how they entertained themselves in leisure times, and the frequent references to homosexual activities, and tendencies, among them. Whether these descriptions reflect historical reality or educated imagination is a matter for further exploration. I, for one, would like to think that the truth lies somewhere in between. There is no denial that the documentation is rooted in the traditional narrative repertoire and collective



memory, which are worthy of serious study in their own right. Aside from the genre-related paradigm—that of good vs. evil, good Muslims beating up the bad guys, and the royal lineages, and intrinsic virtues, of all the heroes involved—there is a striking dimension of this particular version: the Syrian context of the hero's background and success it duly adds to the commonplace narrative. In this representation, Baybars is not only portrayed as the adopted son of Lady Syria, Sitt al-Shām, but is also being helped along the way by an alter ego, Ibrāhīm, with strong ties to the Ismā'īlīs. Equally fascinating for me is the way the Syrian storytellers take sides in the Qalāwūnids vs. Zāhirids scheme, which was long a bone of contention in Mamluk historiography. This text is full of such intrigues, both in the materials it presents and in the way they are presented.

And then there are other materials that any student of pre-modern Arab culture would savor: the language (a blend of the classical and “Middle Arabic,” proverbs and jokes, idioms and slang, multilingual—Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Frankish—features), food and drink (preparation, descriptions, recipes), scenes of daily life (marketplace, wedding, health care, housekeeping, hygiene and beautification, attire, dream interpretation), entertainment (music, dance, games), and much, much more.

The editors are to be commended for providing us with a well-executed edition. It is based on the Damascene manuscript, and collated with the “Aleppo codex” for missing folios and variants. The reader is thankful for the profuse footnotes that tackle a wide range of problems—historical, lexicographical, linguistic, and literary. For me, especially useful are the notes on the Syrian vernacular as well as the Persian and Turkish loanwords that pepper the text. (Which raises another issue for today's Mamluk scholars: the importance of acquiring a working proficiency of Persian and Turkish.) Some footnotes are repeated, perhaps for the convenience of the reader, so he/she needs not go back to Volume One for an explanation of a rare word in Volume Five. For a text so long, some inconsistencies in execution are unavoidable. There are some redundancies: on “Christian” (vol. 4, p. 214, n. 33) and on al-Mutanabbī (vol. 4, p. 246, n. 45), for example. Some notes fail to catch the words in their first appearance: the word *kindī/jundī*, for example, is seen in Volume One, but is only footnoted in Volume Two (p. 33); *al-jarīd*, a sort of fencing game, appears in Volume One, but waits till Volume Three to be explained (p. 95). The typography is adequate, with very few errors. Speaking of which, I do have one quibble, with the editors' tendency to alter the text in order to “correct” its Middle Arabic features, by adding the *nūn* suffix to the imperfect plural, and the *alif al-wiqāyah* to the perfect plural. Insofar as the characteristics of the Middle Arabic are valuable for scholastic purposes in their own right, this kind of scrupulous editorial touch seems to me to be unnecessary, and impossible: while some of the “irregular” features are being corrected, many, many others are



not. (There is a long list of them; I will not dwell on them in detail due to space concerns.) In any case, the “fuṣḥāfication” of a profusely Middle Arabic oriented text simply does not work. That said, the achievement of the editors is enormous and the completion of the full text is eagerly awaited. A volume of index and glossary would be icing on the cake.

ṢĀ'IB 'ABD AL-ḤAMĪD, *‘Ilm al-Tārīkh wa-Manāhij al-Mu’arrikhīn: fī ‘Ilm al-Tārīkh Nash’atan wa-Tadwīnan wa-Naqdan wa-Falsafatan wa-Manāhij Kibār Mu’arrikhī al-Islām* (Beirut: al-Ghadīr, 2001). Pp. 312.

REVIEWED BY JUNE DAHY, University of Copenhagen

This historiographical work seeks to introduce classical and modern approaches to the writing of history, as well as the main classical Arabic historians. It is written as a manual for students and introduces them to the critical reading of history. The content is organized systematically, divided into three main sections, each of which is divided into smaller chapters. The first section is entitled “The Science of History and Historical Research.” The second is devoted to “Historical Schools and Philosophy of History.” The third, and longest, section is reserved for the book’s main focus, the presentation of classical Islamic historical writings, and simply called “The Discourses of the Historians.”

In the first section history as a science and the job of the historian are defined. It also contains the genesis of historical writing in ancient Europe, and history writing in Europe of the Middle Ages and in modern Europe until 1955. A short, but very informative chapter on modern Islamic historians is also included, illustrating how national historical writing overtook historiography in its Islamic framework. The central chapter of the introductory section deals with methods of historical criticism, and stresses the importance for students to question the motives, goals, and biases of the historian, as well as the political context in which the text was written.

In the second section, the importance of historical criticism amongst the historians of the classical Islamic era is addressed. In the Islamic era, historical criticism went beyond simply testing the *isnād*, which had been dispensed with by historians as early as al-Ya‘qūbī (d. after 292/905) and al-Mas‘ūdī (346/956). *‘Aql*, or reason, was also a very early criterion for the selection of material. Even a



sound *isnād* was not enough to ensure the inclusion of fantastic or “untrustworthy” material in historical writing. In addition, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd illustrates the ways in which early Islamic historians, including al-Mas‘ūdī, Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), and Ibn al-Ṭīqṭaqā (d. 701/1302), expressed their own vision of the proper aims and scope of historical writing.

Philosophy of the science of history is the topic of the second section. The student is introduced to the classical European philosophers such as Machiavelli, Rousseau, and Voltaire, as well as later modern philosophers such as Hegel. In addition, the classical Arabic and Islamic theorists are introduced. These include of course Ibn Khaldūn and several modern theorists. The chapter on the theory of history is primarily concerned with defining the elements that create complex civilizations and cultures. Both Ibn Khaldūn and the modern religious philosophers are presented as “Islamic”; however, a more nuanced discussion taking into account the differences in their presuppositions and historical contexts would have been appropriate here. It seems that Ibn Khaldūn is labelled “Islamic” because he flourished in classical Islamic times, whereas the modern Islamic theorist ‘Imād al-Dīn Khalīl is called so because he takes the Quran as his point of departure for understanding history.

The presentation of this section only aims at presenting the individual philosopher, and ignores the historical currents or trends that impacted the philosophers as a group, be they European or Islamic. The absence of historiographical perspective also characterizes the presentation of the historians and their works. Although this has been accomplished by historians such as ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Dūrī and Tarif Khalīdī, their works are not included in the references of this book.

The book’s third section, entitled “The Discourses of the Historians” (*Manāḥij al-Mu‘arrikhīn*), is devoted to the introduction of several classical historians. It begins with a survey of the different genres within Islamic historical writing, including local histories, annals, universal histories, etc. Artistic or poetic exposition of historical matter is also included, though characterized as unfit for serious history writing.

Following this are systematic introductions to individual historians, divided into three groups, listing several historians in each, but giving special attention to the most important:

1. The *sīrah-maghāzī* literature: Ibn Ishāq, Aban Ibn ‘Umar al-Aḥmar, and al-Wāqīdī (d. 207/822)
2. Early universal history writing comprising al-Ya‘qūbī (d. after 292/905), al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), and al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 346/956).
3. Discourses of the later universal historians: Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406).

A general point of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd’s investigation is how individual historians



treated the early Islamic era and the emergence of the Shi‘i schism. Generally, he also focuses on the historian’s personal relationship with Shi‘ism. This could be understood as a reflection of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd’s own sectarian sympathies, and might lead the reader to question his criticism of both Shi‘i and Sunni sources. On the other hand, this does not undermine his analysis, which is an excellent point of departure for further reading of the sources.

The presentation of the historians follows a rough scheme, where each historian is examined with respect to the conditions in which he wrote, use of sources, use of *Isrā’īliyyāt*, and an evaluation of his importance for later historians.

The second chapter of this section on the exposure of historians is occupied by introductions to al-Ya‘qūbī, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Mas‘ūdī. Al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 292/905) and al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 346/956) are clearly the favorites of the author. Al-Ya‘qūbī is presented as a scientific historian, who leaves out all kinds of myths and fabulous material. He could do this because of his own wide knowledge of other nations, acquired during his own travels. Al-Ya‘qūbī was also the first to recognize the relation between geography and history, a discourse developed by al-Mas‘ūdī, who explicitly stipulates the importance of travelling and collection of information about peoples where they live. Al-Mas‘ūdī’s travels served as a supplement to his written sources and he is often seen as a geographer as well as a historian. Al-Ya‘qūbī is also distinguished for being the first historian to record the years of the deaths of the members of the House of the Prophet, thereby introducing the new discipline of obituaries, or *wafayāt*.

The author’s main objection to al-Ṭabarī’s method is that al-Ṭabarī chooses the sources he prefers before choosing the accounts of events. Al-Ṭabarī then registers all accounts available in the chosen sources and presents them uncritically and as having the same value. Al-Ṭabarī is also criticized for not leaving out mythical and fabulous material, a step al-Ya‘qūbī was able to take, and for concentrating exclusively on political history. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd is also critical of al-Ṭabarī for limiting himself to a single source—Sayf ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī—for the period of the Shi‘i schism in Islam, and for leaving out Mu‘āwiyah’s correspondence with Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr. Drawing attention to these observations is of great importance because of al-Ṭabarī’s overwhelming influence. Al-Ṭabarī is still the main source for early Islamic history. In fact, al-Ṭabarī’s influence and popularity were so great that his own sources were not preserved, since they were no longer needed after al-Ṭabarī. This in particular led to an uncritical reading of al-Ṭabarī, since later historians did not research his sources, and thus failed to fulfil their obligations as professional historians.

The chapter “The Later Universal Historians” gives special attention to the three best-known historians of the later Islamic era: Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn Khaldūn. The historian of the Crusades, Ibn al-Athīr, is examined in terms



of his sources and methods. Once rid of al-Ṭabarī as his main source, he shows more independence and often tends to combine his sources into one narrative. Ibn al-Athīr's critical attitude toward Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, different from other historians, is examined and examples of this are thoroughly presented. Ibn al-Athīr also introduced a system of references that serves to avoid repetition of *akhbār*. Ibn al-Athīr is further distinguished as a historian who linked the history of various Islamic lands, thus incorporating the sources for the history of the Maghrib or the western part of the Islamic world. In doing this he succeeds in presenting the beginning of the Reconquista and the Crusades as one historical movement.

Ibn Kathīr (700–74/1300–73), described as “the historian of the Mamluks,” was heavily influenced by his contemporary, the Hanbali Ibn Taymīyah, leading him to write in a way that revealed his ideology or *madhhab*. No doubt ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd finds this approach unsuitable for history writing. Ibn Kathīr's work *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah* is also shown to be rather uneven. The end of the Buwayhid era, the Seljuks, the Fatimids, and the Ayyubids are treated together in one of the work's fourteen volumes, whereas the Mamluk era, up until the year 767, of which Ibn Kathīr was a contemporary, takes up one whole volume, sometimes taking the shape of a diary. This way of reading Ibn Kathīr, however, fails to see his value as a source for his own age. The observation that he was influenced by his *madhhab*, which though originally Shafi‘i is often labelled neo-Hanbali, could have been further elaborated. In the context of Mamluk religious policy this *madhhab* was strongly ideological and reflects the first Mamluks' anti-Mongol and anti-Shi‘i mobilization. This in fact makes Ibn Kathīr an excellent source for the early Mamluk period.

The last historian to be examined is Ibn Khaldūn, best known for his sociological theories about the nature of human society. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd shows how Ibn Khaldūn used this theory of *‘aşabīyah*, or tribal solidarity, to explain how Mu‘āwīyah became powerful within the Quraysh and thus was able to seize power in the early Islamic community. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd also observes that Ibn Khaldūn mentions al-Mas‘ūdī several times and even calls him the imam of the historians. This has led ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd to a most interesting examination of al-Mas‘ūdī as a source for Ibn Khaldūn. He has actually found several instances of nearly identical headings concerning government and leadership of the state, and the role played by religion in state building. Obviously Ibn Khaldūn was inspired by al-Mas‘ūdī, who lived more than 450 years before him. But it is the accomplishment of Ibn Khaldūn that he voiced his theory for the benefit of generations.

In his concluding chapter, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd acquaints the reader with three interesting Shi‘i historians who represent special points of departure for historical investigations. The first of these three is Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), who developed a method he called *tajārib*, or experience, by which he singled out only





those events from which mankind is supposed to gain knowledge and wisdom. Events over which mankind has no control, such as divine or prophetic actions, are left out. Ibn Miskawayh is very precise in describing his method but too harsh, in ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd’s view, on the prophet’s *sīrah*, leaving out too many events important to Islam. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd next treats the lesser known historian al-Ṭabarsī, who specialized in the *siyar* of the twelve Shi‘i imams, and finally Ibn al-Ṭīqṭaqā and his fourteenth-century work *Kitāb al-Fakhrī*.

*Stiftungen in Christentum, Judentum und Islam vor der Moderne: Auf der Suche nach ihren Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden in religiösen Grundlagen, praktischen Zwecken und historischen Transformationen.* Edited by Michael Borgolte (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005). Pp 297.

REVIEWED BY ALBRECHT FUESS, Universität Erfurt

Universal history is certainly in vogue these days and “foundations are a phenomenon of Universal history,” as Borgolte emphasizes in his introduction. Therefore one wonders why a comparative conference on foundations has not taken place earlier. Prof. Dr. Michael Borgolte (Medieval History at the Humboldt University, Berlin) and Dr. Johannes Pahlitzsch (Seminar for Arabic and Semitics, Freie Universität Berlin) therefore deserve much credit for organizing such a worthwhile inquiry.

This edited volume is the fruit of the conference: “Foundations in the Great Cultures of Old Europe,” which took place in June of 2003 at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Now one could argue whether the term “great” is really appropriate in this context, but maybe this was meant as a response to Rumsfeld’s definition of “old” and “new” in the European context at that time. However, the actual title of the proceedings, which translates as: “Foundations in Christianity, Judaism and Islam before modernity: Searching for commonalities and differences in religious principles, practical aims and historical transformations,” describes more precisely the intention of the editor, i.e., to present a comparative point of view on the history of foundations with a special stress on the ways they were used to raise revenue according to the principles of the three Abrahamic religions.

This collected volume contains eight English and six German articles. Out of the fourteen contributions, two are on Mamluk history, while two others speak about foundations in other periods of Islamic history. Five focus on foundations



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in Christianity, with the Byzantine era well represented in three articles. Two discuss Jewish practice (with strong references to Islamic practice), while two more synthesize the themes at the beginning and the end of the volume. Another contribution stands somewhat apart as it addresses pious foundations during the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus.

The book is divided into the three thematic fields: “*memoria* as motive,” “*charity* as duty,” and “state and society as field of operation.” In his German introduction Borgolte broadly examines foundations and their founders. Foundations, he says, serve a higher purpose than to preserve a good memory (*memoria*) of the founder. Often the founder would like to see his endowment be given as charity (*caritas*) which serves the society through feeding the poor, student scholarships, and the like. In other cases the founder acts as patron for science and art (Einleitung, p. 12). Not all foundations are completely altruistic though, since foundations may serve as well to preserve private money from being taken by the tax collector, as happens for example in the case of the Islamic pious foundation, the *waqf*. Although Borgolte elaborates his initial thoughts on the role of foundations in society, this section of the introduction remains rather short and one would have liked him to link the chapters more systematically under thematic headings, maybe by providing a bit more of an analytical hypothesis about what he sees as commonalities and differences, instead of merely describing the contents of the following chapters.

The book then continues with the contribution of Susanne Pickert, who argues that in ancient Rome foundations were quite often used by former slaves and social climbers (*homines novi*) to ensure they were remembered, while the members of the old nobility used other ways to preserve their legacy. Ralf Lusiardi opens the door to the medieval period with his overview of foundations in the monotheistic religions of medieval Europe. Giving to charity in medieval Europe was apparently always linked to receiving a positive or negative reward in the afterlife, especially in Christianity, which has been characterized in this context by experts as “Religion der Angst” (p. 67). The concept of purgatory, which was introduced by the Catholic church around the thirteenth century, then further enhanced the importance of the practice of *memoria* and foundations. One of the shortcomings of this article is that while the Christian practice of endowment is well described, the discussion concerning the other two monotheistic religions, especially Islam, remains rather shallow, thereby devaluing the insights in the rest of the paper.

The “Islamic” part of the book begins with a German introduction by Johannes Pahlitzsch on the aspect of *memoria* in Islamic foundations from the early times until the Mamluk period. Actually, it is this kind of introductory and comprehensive survey that the reviewer would have liked to read for the Christian and the



Jewish side as well. Pahlitzsch explains how the idea of *memoria* in the Islamic realm overcame the early Islamic theological objection against tomb cults until it became an integral part of Islam, culminating in the emergence of the institution of the *turbah-madrasah* from the eleventh century onwards. With the *turbah-madrasah* the Islamic pious foundation (*waqf*) witnessed a remarkable increase of popularity. *Waqf* played a key role from then on in Muslim memorial culture and it became a common concept that the memory of the founder lived on through his pious deeds. A *waqf* document which was issued for the foundation of the grave of the Prophet Moses by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars in 1270 reads as follows: “it [the foundation] keeps alive the memory of the founder, . . . whereby he receives a second life” (p. 92). Adam Sabra then elaborates the ambivalent character of Islamic foundations between private charity and public policy in the Mamluk period. He especially draws attention to the fact that the land which the Mamluk military elite used to establish foundations was quite often initially *iqṭāʿ* (fief)-land, which should have theoretically paid the armies and should not have been used by pious foundations; moreover, in many cases they contributed more to the relatives of the founder than to the general public. However, attempts to abolish the *awqāf*, as happened in 1378 when Sultan Barqūq attempted to convert it back into public land to benefit the army, were unsuccessful, as this practice had been too widespread among the Mamluk elite. Sabra further advocates reconsidering the classical dichotomy of *waqf khayrī* (charitable foundation) and *waqf ahli* (family foundation), because “historians of Islamic foundations now realize that many *awqāf* served both groups” (p. 101). Ana Maria Carbeilleira-Debasa in her chapter describes the positive effects of the institution of foundations in Islamic Spain, which is called *hubs* in the Maghrebi context. This is followed by three articles on endowment practices in Christian Byzantium (John Thomas on aspirations of Byzantine founders, Peregrine Horden on motives of Byzantine philanthropists, and Dionysios Ch. Stathkopoulos on foundations of hospitals in the late Byzantine period). Ludwig Steindorf then presents a valuable introduction to the system of foundations in the period of the Kievan Rus’ in Ukraine and Russia.

Of more direct interest for the Mamluk scholar might be Mark Cohen’s study on foundations and charity among Jews in medieval Egypt. The study makes explicit use of the Geniza documents of medieval Cairo and states that only 10% of the revenue from Jewish foundations (sing. *heqdesh*) went to direct charity, i.e., feeding the poor, whereas 76.3% was given as salaries to Jewish scholars and officials and about 14% went to the maintenance of synagogues. In the contemporary European Jewish *heqdesh* system it was apparently the opposite; most of the proceeds from foundations went directly to the poor. Cohen explains this on one hand by the fact that in Egypt Jews were very much influenced by the Islamic *waqf* system, which also contained many aspects of indirect charity



distribution, and that on the other hand in Egypt there were more direct charities available for Jews, which could be financed, for example, by intercommunity taxes, than in the more restricted life in the European ghettos.

Judah Galinsky discerns differences in foundation practices in the Jewish community of Germany and Spain in the fifteenth century, whereby the Islamic example in Spain apparently had a decisive impact in creating such distinctions. Benjamin Scheller then applies a modified Weberian approach to the connection between foundations and political power in the Occident and how studying this question can help us to understand the history of nation building in pre-modern Europe. This is followed by Suraiya Faroqhi's description of the state of the art of modern scholarship concerning pious foundations of the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The final contribution of the volume is reserved for the late doyen of *waqf* studies, Gabriel Baer. The article, which is here printed posthumously, was first delivered as a lecture in 1981 and is published in this book with the help of Miriam Hoexter, another very important and influential scholar of Muslim *waqf* studies. The paper is titled "The Muslim *waqf* and similar institutions in other civilizations." Baer's intention was "to find out the particular characteristics of the Muslim *waqf*, and to derive from these findings some more general conclusions" (p. 258), but it seems to me he has not succeeded. He correctly describes the success story of the *waqf*; how it became one of the most long-lasting foundations in the history of mankind and how it developed into the principle way to circumvent the rules of succession and inheritance in the Quran, while still being considered religiously acceptable. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings in the argumentation once Baer leaves the Judeo-Islamic aspects of his analysis. To be honest, I did not really understand the relevance of comparing *waqf* to Hindu religious and charitable trust and endowment practices in early modern Nepal. Such comparisons are bound to be lopsided, simply because the scholar draws on one side (here from the side of Islam) from primary sources and on the other side only relies on secondary sources.

My main critique of this volume would follow the same direction. If you really want a comparative work, then you have to make it more comparative. First of all, a glossary containing all technical terms used in the volume and their detailed explanation could be a start. The outer framework of the topic could be outlined more stringently, so that contributions might be more intertwined or focused on the same questions. For any comparative chapters my suggestions would be to bring scholars from different fields together to write such papers. There are very good articles in this book but as they stand now, they lack an inner cohesion.

Having said all this, I am well aware that these points are easier to posit than to fulfill. In any case, one has to acknowledge that a very important step in universal foundation studies has been achieved by the participating scholars and especially



the organizers of the conference, and that there are certainly more exciting studies in this field to come.

*Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities: Warfare in the Middle Ages.* Edited by Niall Christie and Maya Yazigi. *History of Warfare*, vol. 37 (Leiden, New York: Brill, 2006). Pp. 269.

REVIEWED BY WALTER E. KAEGI, The University of Chicago

This collective volume is, on balance, a useful contribution to the understanding of medieval warfare even though the papers are disconnected and of uneven quality. Overall quality, despite some lapses, is good. These are materials or explorations of topics towards writing a history of medieval warfare, without any comprehensive synthesis. Most of these diverse papers were originally part of a program of a medieval workshop at the University of British Columbia in late 2003.

The papers fall into three explicit categories: (1) Noble Ideals: Perceptions of Warfare, (2) Bloody Realities: War In Practice, and (3) Unto the Breach: Re-examining Issues in Medieval and Modern Military Historiography.

The Crusades are prominent within this collection of essays even though the Crusades are not the subject of every contribution. But there are unexplicable and major gaps. For the readers of this journal conspicuously absent are the Mamluks, who appear only briefly in an allusion on page 93. The very regrettable omission of the Mamluks is even more striking because many of the actual papers discuss thirteenth- and fourteenth-century military topics. Although the fate of Crusading states is interlinked with their warfare and diplomacy with the Mamluks, none of that is found in this volume. The best Islamic history paper is that of Hugh Kennedy on “The Military Revolution and the Early Islamic State,” pp. 197–208. It is a valuable contribution with many insights concerning Turkish soldiers in ninth- and tenth-century Iraq. Likewise of special interest is the essay by Niall Christie, “Religious Campaign or War of Conquest? Muslim Views of the Motives of the First Crusade,” pp. 57–72, who wisely consulted with Paul M. Cobb of the University of Notre Dame concerning particulars of the Arabic texts. Christie explores fragmented Muslim reactions and notes the relatively modest claim, within Muslim sources, for Frankish motivations for holy war. A third essay of special interest is Piers D. Mitchell, “The Torture of Military Captives in the



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Crusades to the Medieval Middle East,” pp 97–118. He does not discuss any cases of torture in Mamluk-Crusader warfare.

Treadgold’s essay “Byzantium, the Reluctant Warrior,” pp. 209–34, rightly rejects, as I have, the concept of holy war for Byzantium (pp. 210–12), but with qualifications. He then discusses what he calls Byzantine “civil wars,” on pp. 224 ff. He criticizes the coverage of civil wars in my *Byzantine Military Unrest* (1981); however, its subject was never intended to be what he calls “civil wars.” Instead its explicit subject was military seditions, conspiracies, intrigues, rivalries, and expressions of grievances between 471 and 843 C. E. These are not synonymous with civil wars. This is a false categorization. His critique of my work is erroneous. There is nothing wrong with Treadgold’s listing, cataloging, and commenting on Byzantine civil wars, but civil wars were not my chosen subject. Treadgold omits citation and use of the important and lengthy monograph by Catherine Holmes on the civil war-ridden reign of Basil II: *Basil II and the Governance of Empire* (Oxford, 2005). Readers should exercise caution with respect to Treadgold’s numbers for Byzantine armies and his criticisms of John Haldon; among others, see the English-language review by Wolfram Brandes, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 95 (2002): 716–25, and the review by J.-M. Carrié and S. Janniard, “L’Armée romaine tardive dans quelques travaux récents: 1ere partie: L’Institution militaire et les modes de combat,” *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000): 321–41.

David J. Hay offers a useful collection and review of instances of civilian casualties and suffering in his paper “‘Collateral Damage?’ Civilian Casualties in the Early Ideologies of Chivalry and Crusade,” pp. 3–25. He concentrates on the period of the earliest Crusades.

John France, “Thinking about Crusader Strategy,” pp. 75–96, revisits some of his previous conclusions about the Crusades, most notably the First Crusade. In his words, it was “a papal strategy to achieve survival and perhaps dominance in a changing Europe” (p. 93). He stresses the papal and Crusaders’ need for a Byzantine alliance and of course the importance of Jerusalem.

What readers will not find are histories of operational warfare, with the possible exception of Milwright’s essay. Fascinating but undocumented speculations abound in his paper, “Reynaud of Châtillon and the Red Sea Expedition of 1182–83,” pp. 235–60, concerning possible objectives in this failed raid. According to him, the objectives of the expedition may have included seizure and removal of physical remains of Muhammad and other eminent Muslims from Medina.

Kelly DeVries, “Medieval Warfare and the Value of a Human Life,” pp. 27–55, argues provocatively that changes in later medieval warfare resulted in the reduction of the value of human life from that of the early and high middle ages. He challenges some generalizations about the history of warfare that appear in recent surveys.



Deborah Gerish, “Holy War, Royal Wives, and Equivocation in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem,” pp. 119–44, explores aspects of gender theory and royal identity. Her essay would have profited from consulting the valuable art historical dissertation of Cecily J. Hilsdale, “Diplomacy by Design: Rhetorical Strategies of the Byzantine Gift” (University of Chicago, 2003), and especially her important article on twelfth-century royal identity in the eastern Mediterranean: “Constructing a Byzantine Augusta: A Greek Book for a French Bride,” *Art Bulletin* 87 (2005): 458–83.

Papers do not concentrate exclusively on the eastern Mediterranean. One investigates conditions in Spain: Paula D. Stiles, “Arming the Enemy: Non-Christians’ Roles in the Military Culture of the Crown of Aragon during the *Reconquista*,” pp. 145–61. She investigates the policies towards Muslims and Jews in recently conquered regions in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, especially in the Ebro valley. Two papers refer to aspects of warfare in medieval England: David G. Sylvester, “Communal Piracy in Medieval England’s Cinque Ports,” pp. 163–76, and Ilana Krug, “Wartime Corruption and Complaints of the English Peasantry,” pp. 177–93, an instructive, acute, and revealing investigation of military finance and grievances with special attention to the reigns of Edward I and Edward III.

These are essays worth reading and absorbing. Some are stimulating as well as informative. No coherent picture emerges, but the collective volume has a place in any bibliography on medieval and Crusading warfare. There is a short index, but it lacks maps or figures or a comprehensive bibliography. It belongs in libraries on the history of warfare, medieval military history, medieval history, Byzantium, medieval Islam, and the medieval eastern Mediterranean.

*Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honour of Michael Winter*. Edited by David J. Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon. Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern History, vol. 5 (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). Pp. 258, figures, tables, and a list of publications.

REVIEWED BY W. W. CLIFFORD, The University of Chicago

This volume, in English, is one of two published simultaneously to commemorate the retirement of Professor Michael Winter from the department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University after more than three decades



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of distinguished academic service. The second volume, in Hebrew, is said by the editors to be concerned with religious and educational matters less historically embedded, presumably, than the present collection of articles. Dr. Winter, it should be noted, was for some years before taking up his post at Tel Aviv University an inspector in the Arab section of the Israeli Ministry of Education.

The “leitmotif” of this volume, as of Dr. Winter’s scholarship generally, is the mutual historical interdependence of Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt, and the editors are quite unapologetic in their rejection of “that epochal date of 1516/1517” with its anachronistic “implications of closure and rupture” as a watershed in Egyptian history. Indeed, these contributions have been groomed to reflect this “crossover” in the “historical experience of Arabic-speaking societies in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent during the period from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.”

As with many *Festschriften*, however, some contributions are more germane to the editors’ purposes than others. Particularly apposite is Daniel Crecelius’s study of the financial administration of Damietta’s *zāwiyahs*, mosques, and madrasahs during the last half of the eighteenth century, which provides an overview of the gradual impoverishment of religious institutions in the Delta following their heyday in the late Mamluk period. The *sijillāt* reveal clearly that many of these smaller religious centers “could barely sustain their function” over time, and while some larger ones enjoyed relatively greater and more stable incomes—the result of more numerous and profitable, long-term, commercial leaseholds—they too were steadily falling prey to inflation and physical decay. Even the once illustrious Mu’ayyadiyah mosque, one of many tributes to Sultan Qāyṭbāy’s pious profligacy, was barely a going concern on the eve of Napoleon’s invasion.

Miri Shefer of Tel Aviv University has profiled continuities and changes in the profession of court medicine between the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods. Ottoman sultans had long been interested in acquiring Mamluk medical experts for their relatively unsophisticated courts and the conquest gave them an unqualified opportunity to gratify this cultural desire. A case in point, the Qaysunizades, a family of Cairene physicians who had served the late Mamluk court, were recruited to tend not only Yavuz Selim, but a whole succession of Ottoman sultans down to the early seventeenth century. Yet, in spite of the dramatic medical brain-drain from Cairo to Istanbul in the aftermath of the conquest, the post of court physician in the Ottoman period was generally more likely to be filled by Anatolian than Egyptian medical experts. Increasingly absent, too, by the seventeenth century, Shefer contends, were court physicians of *dhimmī* origin. This was so, despite the fact that the medical profession under the Ottomans remained an open occupation circumscribed only by the acquisition of medical ‘ilm and remained still one of the few paths to great wealth and position open to non-Muslims, unlike in the Mamluk period.





Rachel Milstein of Hebrew University, through a close comparison of illustrated hajj certificates with the illuminated *Fuṭūḥ al-Ḥaramayn* of Muḥyī al-Dīn Lārī, has detected in their stylized representations certain actual changes in the urban landscape of Mecca and Medina from the Mamluk through the early Ottoman periods. These include such things as modifications to the archways and roofs of the Haram, the fountains by the Maʿlah cemetery, even the novel erection of coffeehouses near the Jabal ʿArafat. Her research has not only revealed Mecca as an “intense” center of book production but suggested the evolution from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries of a discernible “Meccan school” of manuscript illumination among the *mujāwirūn* in the Holy City.

Amnon Cohen, also of Hebrew University, has seen equally no “watershed in the popular customs and habits” of Palestinians relative to the annual religious festival centered around the Maqām Nabī Mūsá in the Judean Desert near Jericho. A walled complex of some note by the end of the Mamluk epoch, the *maqām* continued to thrive during the early Ottoman period, supported both by private endowment and public monies commensurate with its increasingly blended role as a shrine, rest stop, and security post for travelers diverting to Jerusalem off the main Damascus–Mecca Pilgrimage route. Coincidentally, in this same volume, Reuven Amitai has shed new light on the foundation of the Nabī Mūsá complex in the early Mamluk period through his analysis of an inscription of al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars on the mosque. In this volume, too, Hanna Taragan has further embedded these observations on Maqām Nabī Mūsá and other Mamluk religious sites in a general consideration of the psychology of Baybars’ architectural usages. Whether through the incorporation of the cushion voussoir in portal arches, the revival of the hypostyle mosque, or even just the salvage of historic building materials, Baybars sought to “visually reflect the power struggle between the two religions [Islam and Christianity]” in medieval Syro-Egypt.

Boaz Shoshan of Ben Gurion University has drawn attention to a clutch of instructional Sufi sermons, *Al-Rawḍ al-Fāʿiq fī al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-Raqāʿiq*, to contemplate the increasing integration of Sufic knowledge into mainstream Islamic culture during this Mamluk-Ottoman “crossover.” Though little known and of uncertain authorship, such scarce examples of *mawāʿiẓ* literature, Shoshan believes, are vitally important in shedding light not on the organizational but rather ideational structure of late medieval Egyptian culture.

Daphna Efrat of Open University has reiterated that theme in her contribution, noting that the ostensible divide between popular and elite religious practices was visibly “bridgeable” in late medieval Syria as well. This is particularly noticeable in the social consolidation of public veneration of the *walī Allāh* in Mamluk Jerusalem and Hebron, both already prolific centers of pilgrimage, saintly tombs, and lodges.



A few contributions are perhaps inevitably wide of the mark paced off by the editors. Some are temporally displaced. Articles, for instance, by Ursula Wokoeck of Tel Aviv University on the expropriation of the Egyptian peasantry and Gabriel Warburg of the University of Haifa concerning the role of the Sufi *tariqah* in the Islamization of the Sudan are considerations of chiefly nineteenth-century history. Other contributions are geographically displaced. The joint study by Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel of the University of Haifa and Tel Aviv University, respectively, concerning the Istanbul fire of 1569, based principally on the letters of the Venetian *bailo* Marcantonio Barbaro, certainly sheds new light on the problems of urban renewal in Istanbul, but not Cairo. The survey by Amy Singer, also of Tel Aviv University, of the Ottoman *‘imaret* institution in the early seventeenth century, derived from Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyahatname*, is similarly devoid of any references to Egypt, despite the fact that Çelebi not only took in the sights but resided there some years writing up his travel notes.

Singer’s conclusion that the *‘imaret* system, geared especially for the needs of travelers, “established a shared culture across the Ottoman Empire” is nevertheless insightful. Puzzling, though, is her contention that the “genesis of the *‘imaret* is as yet untraced” and without any “parallel in Middle Eastern . . . history in the pre-modern period.” If there is no antecedent in the Mamluk period, there is one certainly in the Byzantine. With its roots in classical antiquity, the *xenon* (hospice) emerged in the early medieval period as part of an administrative effort, both public and private, to dispense *philanthropia* at the diocesan and eparchic level. *Xenones* served travelers of every description, especially indigent pilgrims and refugees. Primarily centers of food distribution, they sometimes also provided temporary housing, quartermaster, medical, and even burial services. While often annexed to churches, monasteries, and shrines, there were numerous independent urban *xenones* as well as those posted out along the highways that crisscrossed the Byzantine Empire. Indeed, many of the cities listed by Singer as possessing *‘imarets* in the Ottoman period correspond to already well-known centers of industrialized philanthropy in the Byzantine period. Though likely in decline during the last century and a half of its existence, the Byzantine *evage systemata* surely informed the inception of the Ottoman *‘imaret* system.

Even a contribution with seemingly greater temporal and geographic relevance such as Jane Hathaway’s observations on the “prelude” to Ottoman rule in the Yemen touches on Egypt only tangentially. Moreover, her contention that the acquisition of the Yemen “loomed large” in Ottoman strategic thinking as a means of forestalling a “Portuguese . . . reconquest of Jerusalem” seems far-fetched. At the turn of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans were far more absorbed by the strategic problem of protecting Anatolia from Safavid Iran than Palestine from Portugal.



In sum, scholars generally will find much of interest in this *Festschrift*. Mamlukists in particular will discover a bonus in three additional contributions to fourteenth-century Syro-Egyptian history. Donald P. Little has reproduced and interpreted yet another important Haram collection document concerning a divorce proceeding in Jerusalem; Carl F. Petry has brought to light a bizarre criminal incident in Cairo replete with interesting sociological implications; and Amalia Levanoni has tied the increasing military employment of the *awlād al-nās* to a revolutionary attempt by the Qalawunids to establish “a new political nobility in the Mamluk army,” to offset the declining importation of *mamālīk* of Turkish origin over the course of that century. Finally, the *Festschrift* provides an interesting cross-section of current, younger Israeli scholarship, particularly at Tel Aviv University, centered around Winter’s unitary vision of late medieval/early modern Near Eastern history.

NICHOLAS WARNER, *The True Description of Cairo: A Sixteenth-Century Venetian View* (London: The Arcadian Library; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Vol. I, pp. 216; vol. II, pp. 237 + topographic key; vol. III, 1 map.

REVIEWED BY JOHN RODENBECK

These days it is probably Nicholas Warner who knows more about the physical fabric of Mamluk Cairo than anyone else alive. He has done restoration and conservation in the city’s historic zone, and his stunning *Monuments of Historic Cairo: A Map and Descriptive Catalogue*, published in 2005, is as complete a survey of what is known about its monuments and their current state as we are ever likely to have. His elegant three-volume *True Description of Cairo* succeeds in a complementary task, evoking with unparalleled thoroughness the physical reality of the city as it was near the end of the Mamluk era. It rests on the story of one particular Venetian map of Cairo, which Warner describes as “the first great surviving representation of the city of Cairo in the Renaissance tradition of the aerial oblique view”: *La Vera Descrizione de la Gran Città del Caiero* [sic], which was drawn on wood blocks by the Greek artist Giovanni Domenico Zorzi of Malvasia and printed with an accompanying commentary in booklet form by Matteo Pagano of Venice. Both map and commentary were published in or before 1549, but obviously drew upon material dating back as far as the 1490s.



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The chief subject of the legends and vignettes printed on the map is the capture of the city by Selim the Grim in 1517. The legends, which are in Venetian, are the basis of the commentary, which is in Latin. The most probable author of the commentary, Guillaume Postel (1510–81), identified by Robert Irwin as the first Orientalist, probably never visited Cairo and thus likewise drew upon earlier material. This view/map survives in only two impressions (one in the Arcadian Library, the other in the Kupferstichkabinett und Sammlung der Zeichnungen in Berlin), the commentary in only three known copies (in the British Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin).

The first volume of Warner's trilogy begins with a consideration of medieval and early modern European visions of al-Mahrūsah—sometimes quite fanciful—then moves on to an analysis that contains the following: (1) A chapter surveying all the surviving and known images of Cairo from the early fourteenth century to the mid- or late-seventeenth, with an illustration of each. Of special interest here are a sketch (held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana) and a watercolor map or view (held in the Archivio di Stato di Torino) of Cairo as seen and rendered at first hand from the height of the Muqattam by Pellegrino Brocardo of Liguria. Painter, musician, traveller, pilgrim, and priest, Brocardo visited the city in 1556. Like most of the other materials in this chapter, neither the sketch nor the map has been published before. (2) A chapter on Pagano, Zorzi, and Postel, their sources and aims, and the techniques involved in producing such an enormous piece of work. (3) A chapter on the cultural and economic context of sixteenth-century Venice, which enjoyed both commercial and cultural ties with Egypt stretching back over several centuries. (4) An appendix demonstrating the subsequent persistence of Pagano's image of Cairo throughout the following century and a half. (5) A second appendix consisting of extracts from the well-known letter addressed by Brocardo to Antonio Gigante da Fossombone, secretary to Ludovico Beccadelli, bishop of Ragusa, who became Brocardo's patron. Dated 1557 and first published in 1803, it describes what Brocardo had seen in Cairo the previous summer, including such major public events as the opening of the dam at the head of the Khalij al-Miṣri during the annual flood of the Nile and the departure of the caravan bearing the *mahmal* to Mecca, with its enormous escort of Ottoman troops. Of all important travelers' accounts surviving from this period Brocardo's is the only one composed so shortly after the events it describes. (6) A bibliography of relevant works in English, French, Italian, German, and Latin. (7) An index to volumes I and II.

The second volume consists of (1) A facsimile of *Descriptio Alcahirae*, Postel's three-chapter Latin commentary on the map, followed by (2) Warner's own detailed commentary on Postel and (3) A series of 32 addenda in which Warner takes up items in the map that range from Pagano's business address to the depiction of monuments and several unlabeled vignettes ignored by Postel.



Of the three chapters in Postel's *Descriptio*, the first and second are generally deluded, wrong, or negligible, and serve chiefly to remind us that Postel came to entertain ideas that were very bizarre even by the standards of his own era and, indeed, spent the last 19 years of his life in a madhouse. Postel's third chapter, however, containing his commentary on the 34 legends printed on the map, owes a great deal to sound earlier sources, such as Leo Africanus. Here Warner brings to bear on Postel the results of an enormous amount of research among primary and secondary sources, providing a kind of compendium of available scholarship. Continuing in this same vein with 32 addenda of his own, independent of Postel, Warner then offers a wonderful collection of accurate and detailed historical insights drawn from secondary sources, much of which has the additional virtue of being attached to real physical objects—the buildings of Mamluk al-Maḥrūsah—most of them still extant. Others of Warner's addenda consider in detail some of the unlabeled vignettes printed on the map. Many of them are amusing; and they range in subject matter from palm trees and camels to a stout citizen defecating into the Nile, a vision that suggests someone's first-hand observation.

The map itself, finally, on heavy paper and measuring more than two meters long and a meter and a quarter wide, constitutes the third volume. It comes folded and slip-cased to match the first two volumes and does somehow succeed in giving an impression of the majesty of the Mamluks' imperial capital. Though there are many obvious omissions and errors, there are also many touches of authenticity.

As Warner observes, for example, not one Christian church is shown, though there were—and are—many. The aqueduct is placed south of Old Cairo, a major error copied repeatedly by subsequent plagiarists and thence mistakenly taken as a valid clue by archaeologists, who have looked in vain for physical evidence of an aqueduct in that location. What the absence thereof shows instead is the degree to which European depictions of al-Maḥrūsah became traditional, rather than being based on observation. Unlike earlier images, on the other hand, Pagano's map shows Cairene houses correctly as flat-roofed; and the city's mosques, which are identified as Cairene even down to this day by their characteristic pairing of dome and minaret, have all been supplied both with domes of various kinds and recognizably Mamluk minarets. Pagano's map thus has an overall flavor that is familiar and curiously right.

These three volumes have already been described by Robert Irwin in a review in *Times Literary Supplement* as “fit for the shelves of scholar princes.” They are a triumph of modern book design and printing and binding technology. I have suggested elsewhere that Nicholas Warner and the Arcadian Library should be celebrated, Mamluk-style, with lights, music, acrobatics, and feats of horsemanship.



JALĀL AL-DĪN AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *Kawkab al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Shishtāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-ʿArabīyah, 2002). Pp. 620.

REVIEWED BY STEPHAN CONERMANN, Universität Bonn

For this recently published edition of the work *Kawkab al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah* from the pen of the well known Muslim scholar, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), the editor Muḥammad al-Shishtāwī has collated seven manuscripts. Six of them are preserved in the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah and the last one in al-Azhar. As al-Shishtāwī himself admits, none of these manuscripts are the best ones available. They are neither very reliable nor of good quality. Apparently, the selection principle was more due to the location of the holding libraries than to research criteria. In any case, in his preface to the text, al-Shishtāwī gives us no further editorial principles. But faced with the fact that we have knowledge of a large number of accessible manuscripts of al-Suyūṭī's text, this seems to be a rather unsatisfactory way of proceeding. So while we are pleased to have a printed version of this remarkable text, strictly speaking this is no feat of scholarship. At best it is a good *editio princeps*.

And yet the contents of the work are quite interesting. It is part of the Mamluk literature about the Nile which, up to now, has only been partly analyzed by Mamlukologists. From a comparatist's point of view, various questions might suggest themselves. One could, for example, ask what genre the *Kawkab al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah* represents? How can we categorize pre-modern Arabic texts that focus more or less exclusively on the Nile and its island al-Rawḍah? What are the specific literary characteristics of these works? In a pioneering article, Thomas Bauer has edited, translated, and interpreted a *zajal* on the Nile written by Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār (d. 749/1348).<sup>1</sup> Thomas Bauer points out that it is surprisingly rare for Egyptian Mamluk poets to write about the great river and its life-giving floods. Besides the above-mentioned *zajal*, there also exists an epigram of Ibn Nubātah (d. 768/1366) and some verses from Ibn Sūdūn's (d. 868/1464) *Dīwān*—but what else do we have? Fortunately, you find more when you look at the *maqāmah* literature. Even our author, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, composed a *maqāmah* dedicated entirely to the Nile flood: *Al-Maqāmah al-Baḥrīyah (aw al-Nīliyah) fī al-Rakhā'*

<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Bauer, "Das Nilzaḡal des Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār: Ein Lied zur Feier des Nilschwellenfestes," in *Alltagsleben und materielle Kultur in der arabischen Sprache und Literatur: Festschrift für Heinz Grotzfeld zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Thomas Bauer and Ulrike Stehli-Werbeck (Wiesbaden, 2005), 69–88.



*wa-al-Ghalā*.<sup>2</sup> Another epos which bears the title *Bulbul al-Rawḍah* deals only with the famous island, on which al-Suyūṭī lived and worked for many years.<sup>3</sup> This work contains the same verses we find included in his *Kawkab al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah* (pp. 344–50).

Al-Suyūṭī says that he took the first part of the title, which means “The star (i.e., the abundance of flowers) of the island Rawḍah,” from the *Ṣiḥāḥ* of the lexicographer al-Jawharī (d. ca. 397/1006–7).<sup>4</sup> He wants, al-Suyūṭī continues, to present the reader with a beautiful and edifying book about “the history of the Nile and the island al-Rawḍah.” Concerning the genre, one could probably say that his work is representative of the so-called *faḍā’il*-literature<sup>5</sup> which was very popular during the time of Mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria. A characteristic trait of these texts is the compilation of known and unknown historical events, occurrences, legends, poems, marvels, wonders (*‘ajā’ib*) and traditions in praise of persons, locations, books, tribes, and other things. This genre is linked with geographic descriptions as well as with pure *‘ajā’ib* works in which the producer of the texts tells about marvellous things as they exist in reality or fantasy. The narration is meant to evoke general astonishment in the recipient’s mind at the wonder of God’s creation. So, if we find in many treatises implausible and dubious as well as realistic and scientifically accepted *‘ajā’ib* side by side, the authors actually are aware of the difference between the two categories.<sup>6</sup> A good example is Ibn Iyās’ (d. 930/1524) “Nashq al-Azhār fī ‘Ajā’ib al-Aqṭār” (MS Gotha 1518), which is about the description of the Wonders of the World with the focus on Egypt and the Nile.

Additional books from the Mamluk epoch in which the Nile is praised are Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥallī’s (d. 864/1459) “Al-Qawl al-Mufīd fī al-Nīl al-Sa‘īd” (MSS Paris 2259 and 2260) and al-Aqfahsī ibn al-‘Imād’s (d. 808/1405) “Risalah fī al-Nīl wa-Ahrāmihā” (MS Berlin 6115). Neither of them has hitherto been the subject of scholarly analysis. Al-Suyūṭī’s *Kawkab al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah* is just another typical *faḍā’il* work. We should read it as a supplement

<sup>2</sup>Ed. in *Maqāmāt al-Suyūṭī al-Adabīyah al-Ṭibbīyah*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Salīm (Cairo, 1988), 161–80.

<sup>3</sup>Ed. in *ibid.*, 181–93, and by Nabīl Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Aḥmar (Cairo, 1981).

<sup>4</sup>Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Kawkab al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah*, ed. Muḥammad al-Shishtāwī (Cairo, 2002), 16.

<sup>5</sup>See Stephan Conermann, “Der Nil während der Mamlūkenzeit (1250–1517),” in *Wasser—Lebensmittel, Kulturgut, politische Waffe: Historische und zeitgenössische Probleme und Perspektiven in asiatischen und Afrikanischen Gesellschaften*, ed. Ulrich Hübner and Antje Richter (Schenefeld, 2004), 15–60, esp. 46–53.

<sup>6</sup>On this topic, see Syrinx von Hees, “The Astonishing: A Critique and Re-reading of ‘Aḡā’ib Literature,” *Middle East Literatures* 8, no. 2 (2005): 101–20.



to his *Husn al-Muḥādarah fī Tārīkh Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*<sup>7</sup> which, like Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudṣī's (d. 888/1438) *Al-Faḍā'il al-Bāhirah fī Maḥāsin Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*,<sup>8</sup> puts the main emphasis on the description of Cairo and the Nile.

Another quite remarkable text is a sermon on the Nile (*khutbah fī al-Nīl*) which can be found in 'Abd al-Raḥīm Ibn Nubātah's (d. 374/984–85) *Dīwān al-Khutab al-Minbariyah*. But serious doubts have been raised as to whether these pages are really from his hand or whether someone else incorporated them into this collection much later.<sup>9</sup>

How is a representative *faḍā'il* work structured? What can be said about its constituent elements? Let's take al-Suyūṭī's *Kawkab al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah* as an example: after having quoted the related verses from the Quran and the traditions, the author explains the word "Rawḍah." Then he continues with a description of the island's fortifications, buildings, palaces, mosques, and bridges. Then follows a survey of the Nile and the wonders connected with it like the rising and falling of the floods and the Nilometer. The next things al-Suyūṭī finds interesting enough to speak of are the flowers, plants, and fruits on al-Rawḍah. After a detailed analysis of these things he quite suddenly turns to the history of his subject: all rulers who did something for the glory and reputation of the island are mentioned. Poems and verses, including his own, are added to the facts. Finally he gives the reader a list of all the sultans who visited al-Rawḍah.

By and large, this kind of *faḍā'il* literature can be seen as a very clever and skillful compilation of sayings, myths, verses, and historical information about the Nile taken from the works of many Muslim scholars and writers. Against this backdrop, it is quite normal that al-Suyūṭī quotes extensively from the books of Ibn Bayṭār (d. 646/1248), Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871), Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), Ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 378/988), Ibn Wardī (d. 749/1349), al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), and above all from al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442). In addition to this, he includes numerous passages from his own treatises in his new work. For a modern scholar this whole procedure seems to be neither honest nor creative, but we should keep in mind that the technique of compilation which we can find in many pre-modern literatures should not be mentioned in connection with what is nowadays called plagiarism. A compilation is an innovative and original work which in general belongs to a different genre than source materials.<sup>10</sup> We should direct our thoughts about al-Suyūṭī's *Kawkab*

<sup>7</sup>Ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1967).

<sup>8</sup>Ed. Muṣṭafá al-Saqqá and Kāmil al-Muhandis (Cairo, 1969).

<sup>9</sup>See Sabine Dorpmüller, "Und Er goß aus das Wasser in Strömen . . ." Eine Nilpredigt von Ibn Nubāta al-Haṭīb?" in *Alltagsleben und materielle Kultur*, ed. Bauer and Stehli-Werbeck, 137–62.

<sup>10</sup>On the art of compilation, see Kurt Franz, *Kompilation in arabischen Chroniken: Die Überlieferung*





*al-Rawḍah fī Tārīkh al-Nīl wa-Jazīrat al-Rawḍah* (and about *faḍā'il* literature in general) more in this direction, if we want to come to a better understanding of his interesting text(s).

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*vom Astand der Zang zwischen Geschichtlichkeit und Intertextualität vom 9. bis zum 15. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2004).



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