

## Book Reviews

‘ABD AL-BĀSIṬ IBN KHALĪL, *Nayl al-Amal fī Dhayl al-Duwal*, edited by ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣrīyah, 2002). 9 vols.

REVIEWED BY BOAZ SHOSHAN, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

This edition is based on the Oxford MS Huntington 610 and 685, which covers the *hijrī* years 744–896. The author, who—as his *nisbah* al-Malaṭī indicates—was born in 844/1440 in the Anatolian town of Malatia, where his father, Khalīl ibn Shāhīn, a Mamluk administrator and somewhat of a scholar, known for his *Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik*, served at the time as the local *nā’ib*. Moving from there due to the requirements of his father’s career, ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ was educated in Tripoli and, as a young man, settled in Cairo. He spent the rest of his life in the Mamluk capital and died in 920/1515.

Of his numerous works, the most important is his still-unpublished chronicle *Al-Rawḍ al-Bāsim fī Ḥawādith al-‘Umr wa-al-Tarājim*, which covers the years 844–90 and is extant in a single, incomplete, Vatican manuscript. What we have before us is arguably ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ’s less important historical work. What is its value for modern historians?

In his introduction Tadmurī, the editor, claims that ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ was an unacknowledged source for Ibn Iyās, the author of the essential *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr*. This claim is questionable, given the fact that one can find Ibn Iyās, on occasion, narrating events in a more complete form than ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ does in the *Nayl*. Tadmurī also points out that ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ travelled to Syria, Anatolia, the Maghreb and Spain, as opposed to Ibn Iyās, who hardly left Cairo. This fact, however, bears only marginally on content of the chronicle.

As already observed by scholars, contrary to expectations, with the exception of Ibn al-Dawādārī and Ibn Taghrībirdī, chroniclers who belonged to the Mamluk caste, and there are a few of them, hardly used their social origin to the benefit of shining light on the Mamluk elite. This seems to apply to our chronicler as well. As noted by the editor, for the major part of the *Nayl*, in other words, the first one hundred years up to the 840s, ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ relies on al-Maqrīzī’s, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’s, and other standard chronicles, and thus adds almost nothing to the available information.

As for the second half of the ninth *hijrī* century, it can tentatively be suggested that for the 850s–870s the *Nayl* and Ibn Taghrībirdī’s *Ḥawādith*, although to a large extent similar, must be used together, for each provides information that is



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not always to be found in the other. This is the case also as regards al-Jawharī's *Inbā' al-Ḥaṣr*, which covers the 870s. Only when it comes to the closing decades of the century does the *Nayl* largely supersede Ibn Iyās, although it must be stressed that the additional material that 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ provides is of secondary importance and is unlikely to change our basic knowledge of the end of the Mamluk era. His additions are minor and extremely variegated: price data, notes on diseases, or piquancies such as the birth of a deformed child or the conversion of a Jew, curious material devoid of major significance. On the other hand, sometimes 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ does not include information that one may find in the *Badā'i'*, a lack the significance of which is not easy to ascertain, however. For example, in the obituary of Amir Qāṣawh al-Khasīf al-Aynālī (d. 892/1487), only the *Badā'i'* includes information about his dispute with Sultan Qāyṭbāy. Did 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ apply here censorship because of political calculation?

Tadmurī, the editor, presents the reader with a fine edition, which he prefaces with a comprehensive biography of our relatively unknown chronicler and a list of his (mostly lost) works. An additional merit of the edition is a systematic collation of each of 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ's reports with the other available sources, indicating which of the *Nayl's* data are unique. The editor also includes in the eighth and the entire ninth volume a variety of useful indexes.

ANGUS DONAL STEWART, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks: War and Diplomacy during the Reigns of Het'um II (1289–1307)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). Pp. 215. Includes genealogical chart, photographs of castles, and map.

REVIEWED BY PATRICK WING, University of Chicago

The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and its steady decline under military pressure from the Mamluk Sultanate in the late thirteenth century is the subject of Angus Donal Stewart's *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks*. Stewart's stated aim is to address an aspect of scholarship on the Armenian Kingdom which neglects the wider political context in the Middle East, and ascribes a leadership role to the Armenians, arguing that, in fact, they were more often the subject of larger regional powers. The author's solution to this problem is to make use of the rich historiographical tradition written in Arabic under the Mamluks in order to understand the relations between the Cilician Kingdom and the Mamluk Sultanate. The result is a thorough, highly detailed analysis, focused on the period of Het'um II, in which the Cilician Kingdom was weakened by Mamluk military campaigns,



a lack of consistent support from the Mongol Ilkhanate, and internal instability and conflict among the Armenian royal family.

In his Introduction, Stewart identifies the failure to use Arabic sources by scholars of Armenia and the Crusades as one of the major shortcomings in the field. This weakness has limited the view of previous studies on the Armenian Kingdom, which does not reflect an adequate understanding of the non-Christian powers, particularly the Mamluks and Ilkhans. An exception is Marius Canard's article "Le royaume d'Arménie-Cilicie et les Mamlouks jusqu'au traité de 1285,"<sup>1</sup> whose methodology Stewart cites as a model and inspiration for his own work. In his discussion of sources, Stewart emphasizes his goal to demonstrate the potential value of the Arabic sources for the history of the Armenian Kingdom. Limiting his survey to "widely available printed editions," he cites al-'Aynī's *Iqd al-Jumān*, al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, and Abū al-Fidā's *Mukhtaṣar* among his primary sources. For sources from the Armenian point of view, the author relies foremost upon Hayton of Gorigos' 1307 work *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient*, originally written in French for Pope Clement V. The *Chronicle of Smpad* (d. 1276), brother of King Het'um I, and the *Gestes des Chiprois*, composed in Cyprus in the fourteenth century, also reflect an Armenian perspective. The Introduction concludes with a survey of the geography of the Armenian Kingdom.

The main body of the book is divided into two parts. Part One on the Historical Background begins with a chapter on the origins of the four principal political groups active in the eastern Mediterranean in the thirteenth century: the Armenians, Mamluks, Mongols, and Franks. Chapter Two traces the history of relations between the Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluk Sultanate, from the rise of the Mamluks until the truce of 1285, in which King Lewon II was forced to accept a tributary status in the face of military pressure. Stewart analyzes the truce of 1285 in the context of Armenian isolation due to the fall of the Frankish state at Antioch to Baybars in 1268, and the lack of support from the Ilkhans, who were engulfed in a succession struggle following the death of Abāghā Khān in 1282.

The paradigm of gradual Armenian political decline, due to unreliable support from the Mongols and growing Mamluk military pressure, shapes Stewart's description and analysis in Part Two. This section comprises the bulk of the work, and consists of one long chapter on the reigns of King Het'um II, from his accession after Lewon II's death in 1289 until his murder by a Mongol garrison commander in 1307. The focus is on Mamluk military activity in Cilicia in an attempt to take Armenian castles, force the payment of tribute, and punish the Armenian king for his alliance with the Mongols. Stewart deals extensively with Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl's conquests in Cilicia in 1292 and 1293, as well as the

<sup>1</sup>*Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 4 (1967): 217–59.



campaign led by Sultan al-Manṣūr Lāchīn in the summer of 1298. These discussions combine a thorough treatment of the Mamluk histories with a precise knowledge of the physical geography of the region.

Stewart does not neglect the internal politics of the Armenian royal house, and ascribes some of the weakness of the Cilician kingdom in this period to Het'um's vacillations between kingship and a cloistered life as a monk, and the related disputes among his brothers for the throne. Consideration is also given to the role of the Armenian kingdom in the continuation of the war between the Mamluks and Ilkhans during the reign of Ghāzān. Stewart emphasizes the participation of Het'um II in Ghāzān's Syrian campaigns between 1299 and 1303 as motivation for Mamluk reprisals in Cilicia after the Ilkhans had withdrawn. The attention given to the Mongol-Mamluk conflict after the 1281 Battle of Homs provides a useful companion to Reuven Amitai's *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260–1281*. Although Stewart relies on secondary interpretations and translations of Persian sources, he does address the issues in the conflict in the period after that covered by Amitai.

In the Epilogue, a brief summary of the Kingdom of Cilicia is given up to the year 1375, when King Lewon V was captured by the Mamluks and the region was left to the Türkmēn of the Ramazan Oğulları. Stewart concludes that the turn of the fourteenth century was a period of decline for the Cilician Kingdom due to Mamluk pressure after the disappearance of the Frankish Crusader states and a lack of sustained support from the Ilkhanate.

Stewart succeeds in his aim to demonstrate the significance of Arabic sources for the history of the Cilician Kingdom of Armenia, while at the same time drawing the attention of Mamluk scholars to the ways in which the internal developments of the Sultanate related to its policy toward the Armenians. In addition, attention to developments within the Ilkhanate and its military operations in Syria help to emphasize the difficult diplomatic position of the Cilician Kingdom as a subject state between two larger polities. Overall, this work stands as a useful contribution to the history of the Christian eastern Mediterranean, as well as the Mamluk Sultanate.



‘ALĀ’ ṬĀHĀ RIZQ ḤUSAYN, *Al-Sujūn wa-al-‘Uqūbāt fī Miṣr: ‘Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk* (Cairo: ‘Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Insānīyah wa-al-Ijtimā’īyah, 2002). Pp. 193.

REVIEWED BY CARL F. PETRY, Northwestern University

This monograph (likely a revised doctoral dissertation, although unspecified by the author) surveys the proliferation of prisons and diversity of their functions during the independent Mamluk period in Egypt. The author, on the faculty of history in the Teachers’ College of Dumyāt, Maṣṣūrah University, initiates his study with a discussion of primary sources consulted. While Ḥusayn pays lip service to the significance of Quranic, hadith, and literary texts for relevant legal theory or criminal images, his emphasis on narratives compiled by on-site historians of the Mamluk period underscores their centrality as repositories of the concrete evidence on which a credible analysis must rely. Predictably, the eminent but acerbic chronicler Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī emerges as the authority of first rank. Ḥusayn confirms the primacy of his *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk* for reportage of specific criminal episodes, and his *Khīṭaṭ* for its detailed description of jails, background to their construction, and conditions endured by their inmates. The author lists al-Maqrīzī’s disciple and self-styled successor, Ibn Taghrībirdī, next in order of prominence, but dwells on his voluminous yet diffuse *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, and biographical dictionary, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi* (largely unquoted in the text), while passing over his more focused *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr*, which the historian compiled as a continuation of al-Maqrīzī’s *Sulūk* (Ḥusayn refers to the California edition of the *Ḥawādith* edited by W. Popper in the bibliography, but does not mention it among the “encyclopedic” [*mawsū‘īyah*] sources most replete with relevant data). The author goes on to note the works of Ibn al-Ṣayrafī (*Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, *Inbā’ al-Ḥaṣr*) and al-Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā*) but does not acknowledge Ibn Iyās’s chronicle (*Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr*), although he mines it frequently throughout the study (he does list it in the bibliography).

Among the sources the author finds less important are al-Maqrīzī’s treatise on economic and fiscal decline (*Kitāb Ighāthat al-Ummah bi-Kashf al-Ghummah*), al-Subkī’s *Mu‘īd al-Ni‘am wa-Mubīd al-Niqam*, useful for its details on judges and court officials, Abū Yūsuf’s *Kitāb al-Kharāj* for its information on jails and criminal penalties, al-Māwardī’s *Al-Aḥkām al-Sultānīyah*, Ibn Taymīyah’s *Al-Siyāsah al-Shar‘īyah*, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah’s *Al-Ṭuruq al-Ḥukmīyah* for their transcriptions of fatwas and classifications of criminal offenses. Ḥusayn then briefly credits Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddimah fī-al-Tārīkh* for its description of criminal procedures in court, such popular literary sources as the *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* and *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* for their picaresque portrayal of felons, and the *Hazz*



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*al-Quḥūf fī Sharḥ Qaṣīdat Abī Shādūf* for its depiction of rural violence in local villages. None of these works assume a prominent role among sources actually utilized by the author.

Ḥusayn does dwell on modern scholars who have addressed the topic of criminality in medieval Egypt, broadly considered. While limited largely to twentieth-century historians in Egypt, his remarks about their findings are illustrative both for the insights they disclose, and the glaring lack of cognizance among Western authorities of their contributions. First among these Ḥusayn ranks M. Muṣṭafá Ziyādah, who wrote an extensive article on jails published over 1943–44 in three parts (“Al-Sujūn fī Miṣr fī-al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭá,” *Majallat al-Thiqāfah* 260, 262, 279). Since Ziyādah edited the first two volumes of al-Maqrīzī’s *Sulūk*, he drew most of his data from that work, and presumably the *Khīṭaṭ*. Ḥusayn acknowledges one foreign scholar among the significant analysts of Egypt’s unsettled economy during the Circassian Mamluk period: (Eliyahu) Ashtor, depicted here as an “Austrian” historian (p. 13). Ashtor’s *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages* is referenced in its Arabic translation periodically, albeit the author does not list the original in the bibliography. Several other Egyptians have explored the topic of crime and punishment in Mamluk Egypt, with whose assertions Ḥusayn sporadically disagrees.

Ḥusayn’s introduction lists verses from the Quran that refer to criminal activity: reciprocal killing for murder (al-Baqarah, v. 178, al-Mā’idah, v. 45), condemnation of homicide except in retaliation (al-Mā’idah, v. 32), exhortation to base legal judgments on divine revelation (al-Mā’idah, v. 44, 47), and the exercise of patience before imposing punishment (al-Mā’idah, v. 39, al-Naḥl, v. 126) (pp. 16–18). The author subsequently quotes hadith transmitted by al-Tirmidhī and al-Bukhārī that emphasize clemency and repentance over harsh penalties (pp. 18–19). He then proceeds to a short statement on the establishment of shari‘ah courts in Egypt following the Arab conquest, emergence of the prefect (*wālī*) as chief of police, the earliest references to prisons by chroniclers during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, and the marked increase of data on crime in narrative sources during the second half of the Mamluk era. Having set the stage for his first chapter, on prisons and their variants, the author distinguishes two types: houses of detention administered by judges and prefects (*ḥubūs*, *tarāsīm*, *sujūn al-ḥukm*), and “prisons more generalized” (*al-sujūn al-‘āmmah*). Of the latter, Ḥusayn notes four categories: 1) prisons reserved for eminent members of the military elite, primarily amirs and offspring of sultans, such as the Armory (*al-Zardkhānah*) in the Cairo Citadel, or the *Sijn al-Thaghr* in Alexandria; 2) prisons for political criminals from the military caste or civil notables: the *Sijn al-Abrāj al-Qal‘ah*, *Khizānat al-Bunūd*, *Sijn al-Raḥbah*; 3) prisons for violent felons, primarily civilians or Bedouins: *Khizānat al-Shamā’ il*, *al-Maqsharah*, *Sijn al-Daylam*—all in Cairo; and 4) a jail for women:



the *Sijn al-Hajarah*, also in Cairo. Ḥusayn relies primarily on the descriptions listed for these sites by al-Maqrīzī in his *Khiṭaṭ*. The author, while quoting extensively from al-Maqrīzī's comments on several prisons notorious for the inhumane conditions suffered by their inmates, offers an interesting hypothesis behind the chronicler's ambivalence over their efficacy. Ḥusayn (pp. 46–47) speculates that the covert source of al-Maqrīzī's anger was his animosity toward Sultan Barqūq's controversial son and successor, al-Nāṣir Faraj (801–15/1399–1412, with interregnum). Ḥusayn argues that al-Maqrīzī regarded Faraj as an offender far more heinous than many of the hapless officers and notables he incarcerated, frequently without sustainable proof. Ḥusayn notes that al-Maqrīzī counted more than four hundred Mamluk amirs and soldiers detained by Faraj unfairly under dreadful conditions. In an article I wrote on al-Maqrīzī's description of jails (*Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, no. 2 [2003]: 137–44), I mused about al-Maqrīzī's ire over these harsh conditions endured by inmates, but could identify no specific reason behind his anger. Ḥusayn has provided a plausible explanation. Ḥusayn concludes this chapter with the admittedly sparse references he has gleaned on the detention of women (primarily for adultery, debt, and prostitution), exile as an alternative to imprisonment in Cairo, and the responses of inmates desperate over their suffering: attacks on prison guards, self-mutilation, attempts at escape, and suicide. The author acknowledges the infrequency of data on the behavior of jailed prisoners, but claims that its occurrence, however rare in the sources, yields an indication of the individual's capacity to survive in the face of unbearable odds.

Ḥusayn's second chapter considers the "state" (*dawlah*) of prison inmates, under which term he includes the contrasts in status demarcating criminal classes, variations in circumstances of their confinement, and the underlying motives of the authorities who imposed these circumstances. The author claims that, despite the obvious inducement to crime brought on by the flawed trajectory of the economy during the later Mamluk era, its defects nonetheless provided the ruling establishment with multiple opportunities for reaping quick profits. Persons who thwarted these opportunities, in the name of upholding justice and equity, were equally subject to incarceration as repeating felons. Ḥusayn observes that debtors, otherwise guiltless, were often exposed to procedures such as torture, formally reserved for accused embezzlers or convicted brigands concealing their illicit gains—to compel their disclosure. The author links this violation of shari'ah principles to a broader tendency of the sultanate to exploit imprisonment as an expedient for enhancement of its revenues. He sees a clear connection between this tendency and the rise in harsh treatment meted out to inmates, often for allegations unproved in a court of law. Ḥusayn thus reaches the conclusion that imprisonment failed to rectify the growing trend toward lawlessness that plagued



the sultanate in its latter decades. Yet since such rectification was not the sultanate's prime goal, jails proliferated as a symbol of its asserted authority to bypass licit procedures and aggrandize its power. But withal, Ḥusayn claims that the narratives are filled with references to inmates of many stations maintaining a semblance of their social interactions, even under straitened conditions.

The study's third chapter deals with the authorities presiding over criminal prosecution and imposition of penalties. Much of the text treats matters widely studied in the field: officials such as the prefect (*wālī*), market inspector (*muḥtasib*), district inspector (*kāshif*), or judge (*qādī*) and their formal duties, or the distinction between shari'ah and appeals (*maẓālim*) courts. Few original details emerge in this discussion, although the author differentiates between appeals courts open to civilians, those reserved for militarists, and those convened for foreigners. Whether these categories of plaintiffs were consistently recognized in actual practice the author does not demonstrate. But Ḥusayn does dwell on the connection between the final, irrefutable quality of a ruling in the *maẓālim* court and the sultan's growing reliance on it as a means of curtailing the *shar'ī* judges' authority while advancing his own. Ḥusayn considers this trend particularly ominous, a prime reason behind the inexorable corruption of criminal proceedings under the late sultanate. He observes that over time judges were less able to shape criminal justice, their authority insidiously eroded by the sultan and senior amirs. As a corollary, judges were progressively subjected to brutality as a means of coercion toward following the regime's party line. And the civilian masses, largely ignorant of legal theory but street-wise in the ways of power politics, did not challenge the regime's usurpation of judicial authority, but rather emulated those who held the power to influence their fate.

The monograph's final chapter elaborates on typologies of punishments and means of their infliction. Most of the text is taken up with the bland penalties sanctioned by law, in contrast with lurid depictions of punishments meted out as reprisals for violent crimes, treason, or vengeance; devices to force disclosure of assets; or means of settling vendettas between rival troop factions. Ḥusayn's description of bisection (*tawsīt*) (pp. 151–53) is the most graphic I have encountered. Ḥusayn concludes (p. 165) that the frequency of harsh penalties paralleled the growing politicization of criminal prosecution, at the expense of humane treatment mandated by the shari'ah. Yet statistically, incarceration remained the penalty of choice from the regime's perspective, useful for isolating (and thus neutralizing) potential adversaries or rivals, and detaining client officials whose release could be offered as a reward for revealing hidden assets. Ḥusayn discerns an interesting tension between sultans seeking to ameliorate their reputations through periodic proclamations of amnesty or clemency, and senior amirs, subordinates ideally but rivals in fact, who deliberately defied them by callously abusing the prison



population. Overall, augmentation of cruel penalties failed to stem the steady rise in crime rates tarnishing the late sultanate. But, as Ḥusayn argues, the regime's overarching goal was to aggrandize its power in tense times rather than to improve its subjects' lot.

Professor Ḥusayn has produced a worthy, if succinct, study. This writer wishes to close with an observation all too characteristic of the divide between scholarship generated in Arab countries and Western states at present. A cursory glance at this monograph's bibliography will reveal the almost complete dearth of articles and books written in Western languages (those few included are marred by printing errors) that deal with criminality in the Islamic world—not to mention the vast literature on the subject as it evolved in medieval and Renaissance Europe. Yet this deficiency is no less evident in the bibliographies of Western authors. I counted no fewer than fourteen individuals listed among Ḥusayn's secondary sources who have studied crime but write in Arabic. Four of them were known to me prior to my perusal of this monograph, and for topics other than the one at hand. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of a body of scholarship, its merits or defects cannot be ascertained if it remains unread by colleagues from different societies who examine the same phenomena. Our common enterprise of historical research is ill-served.

ALBRECHT FUESS, *Verbranntes Ufer: Auswirkungen mamlukischer Seepolitik auf Beirut und die syro-palästinensische Küste (1250–1517)*, Islamic History and Civilization, vol. 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2001). Pp xiv + 520.

REVIEWED BY PATRICK FRANKE, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

When Sultan Baybars in 1265 captured the Palestinian towns of Caesarea, Haifa, and Arsuf from the Crusaders, he ordered the destruction of their fortresses. Instead of the coastal line of fortifications, which was completely demolished, he established a new line of defence along the foothills deep in the country, more defensible by the Muslim forces. In order to make it impossible for the Franks to effect a new landing, Baybars in 1270 levelled also the last vestiges of Ashkelon, filling the harbor with trees and rubble. It is this successful strategy of "scorched shore" (in German: *Verbranntes Ufer*) to which Albrecht Fuess alludes with the title of his book. Later on in the Mamluk period, the military strategy was transformed into a general policy: as a precaution against a return by the Crusaders, the Mamluks kept the Syro-Palestine coast in a state of devastation.



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In an article published in 1967, David Ayalon had argued that the main reason for the destruction of the Levantine coast by the Mamluks was their naval weakness. It is for this reason that Fuess devotes the first chapter of his book to a general discussion of Mamluk naval policy. He emphasizes that the naval weakness of the Mamluks was not primarily caused by the lack of timber and iron. The fact that in the beginning of the fifteenth century the Mamluks were able to build up a short-lived fleet for their military expeditions against Cyprus and Rhodes shows in his view the general availability of both of these raw materials. Nor was it the lack of maritime expertise that hindered the Mamluks from pursuing a powerful naval policy. The existence of a manual on sea warfare written by a Mamluk officer together with the Mamluk tradition of navigation on the Red Sea proves for Fuess that the theoretical and practical knowledge of seafaring the Mamluk rulers had at their disposal would have been sufficient to serve as a base for a successful naval policy also on the Mediterranean had there only been the political will to pursue such a policy. But since the Mamluk rulers had preference for warfare on horseback rather than in galleys they did not use this naval knowledge, but chose to secure their Mediterranean flank through a policy of alliances with trading European sea powers, at the same time devastating the Syro-Palestinian shoreline in order to make it unattractive for future invaders.

In chapter 2 Fuess discusses the negative effects of this policy for the Levantine coast and the coastal populations. Since the line of defence was moved into the interior of the country, the formerly illustrious harbor towns of the Syro-Palestinian shoreline were left unarmed against attacks and piracy activities of European freebooters. Almost all of them were downgraded to a peripheral political and administrative status. While they still played an important role in the international trade, it was not they who benefited from the revenues of this business, but the towns of the hinterland such as Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo where the Mamluk decision-makers resided. The only town on the Levantine coast which was able to gain a certain political importance during the Mamluk period was the provincial capital Tripoli, but since this city had been moved into the interior of the country by Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn in 1289, when he took it over from the Crusaders, it could not be counted as a classical harbor town anymore.

Notwithstanding the general neglect to which the Levantine coast was exposed during the whole Mamluk era a certain flavor of normality returned to the coastal cities in the second half of this period. This is what Fuess exemplifies by a thorough study of the local situation in Beirut. After its surrender to the Mamluks in 1291, the number of Muslims living in this city gradually increased. As in the rest of the Mamluk empire, daily life in Beirut was characterized by quarrels between local notables and by the repetitive occurrence of epidemics and minor natural catastrophes. A special problem of the shoreline were the recurrent raids



of European corsairs. In spite of these sufferings, the inhabitants of Mamluk Beirut had also some little pleasures, as for instance the annual river festival (*'īd al-nahr*), which was celebrated harmoniously by Muslims and Christians. The revival of international commerce during the fifteenth century which was conducted mainly by the Venetian trading fleet led also to a detente in the greater conflict between Mamluks and Europeans.

For more than 200 pages of his book, Fuess discusses topics concerning the history of Beirut during the Mamluk period: he deals with the administrative structures (ch. 3), the urban topography (ch. 4), the demographic situation and some details of popular culture (ch. 5), as well as the presence of Europeans of different sort (traders, missionaries, pilgrims) in this city (ch. 6). It is regrettable that he has missed the opportunity to expand these parts of his book into a proper history of Mamluk Beirut. A detailed and source-oriented monograph focussing on this little-studied subject could have brought him much more credit than his "combined history," which packs together three different subjects (Mamluk naval policy, Levantine coastal history, local history of Beirut) and by this becomes a kind of grocery store. In his introduction, Fuess justifies his combined description of the different subjects by stating that they are strongly interlaced with each other (p. 6). Undoubtedly Mamluk naval policy had certain effects on the situation in the Syro-Palestinian coastal towns, but was there also an influence in reverse? And, another question, is it really necessary to discuss Mamluk naval policy in its totality, when it was only a detail, the strategy of "scorched shore," which had an impact on the Levantine coast?

In its individual chapters, Fuess's study supplies the reader with a lot of interesting and exciting information. For the inner coherence of the whole book, however, it would have been of great benefit if the author had maintained a stricter adherence to one (e.g., local) perspective. The reviewer cannot help feeling that Fuess, who prepared his study while staying in Beirut, extended it to the other two subjects because he considered the source material for Mamluk Beirut itself too meager for a Ph.D. thesis. A compensation of this meagerness, however, could have been accomplished much better by an enlargement of the theoretical and methodological base of the study and a more profound source criticism than by the strategy of thematic dispersion of which the author has made use.



HELENA HALLENBERG, *Ibrahim al-Dasuqi (1255–1296): a Saint Invented* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2005). Pp. 293, three appendices, index.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD MCGREGOR, Vanderbilt University

Several studies relating to Mamluk-era Sufism have appeared over the last decade. Among the most notable are monographs by Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Eric Geoffroy, and edited collections by Chih and Grill, as well as McGregor and Sabra. Mayeur-Jaouen's *Al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi: un grand saint de l'Islam égyptien* (Cairo: IFAO, 1994) functions as an important precursor to the monograph under review. Hallenberg adopts a similar descriptive approach, one that is heavy on details and light on analysis. At its best, this style can be quite illuminating, bringing much new material to light. The downside, signaled by a dense four-page table of contents, is a disjointed structure that jumps from sub-section to sub-section.

As a contribution to our knowledge of an elusive but very popular Egyptian Sufi figure, this monograph is quite welcome. In scope it surpasses everything done on the topic to date. I will not summarize here the seventy-five or so sub-sections of the book, but will briefly describe the contents of the five chapters. First, however, are the author's forward and introductory comments, in need of an English-language editor, laying out the trajectory of the book. Here and in chapter one she tells us she has chosen the theme "invention" to reflect the variations and evolution in the biography of al-Dasūqī, allowing her to move away from an approach that seeks to reconstruct the original historical figure. The development of the saint's order, the Burhāmīyah, and analyses of his teachings and writings (the few that exist) are not of primary concern to Hallenberg. Her aim in this book is to carefully sort through the biographical material.

The second chapter surveys the available historical material for the life of al-Dasūqī. We learn that the earliest mention of him in written sources does not occur until 787/1385, thanks to Ibn al-Mulaqqin. Another reference is made to al-Dasūqī and his grave, by al-Maqrīzī. Hallenberg will later identify this short passage in *Kitāb al-Sulūk* as the earliest mention of pilgrimage (*mazārah*) to the saint's tomb (p. 139). (I should note here an additional source that likely predates al-Maqrīzī, though not by much. This is Abū al-Laṭā'if, hagiographer to Muḥammad Wafā' and his son 'Alī [d. 807/1405]. In *Al-Minaḥ al-Ilāhīyah*, written around the year 830/1426, he relates an episode in which 'Alī travels to al-Dasūqī's grave.) In addition to a *waqf* document identifying Sultan Qāytbāy as a patron of al-Dasūqī's shrine, Hallenberg wades through a variety of biographical sources, historical and devotional, extending into the twentieth century. An important part of this task is to untangle, as much as is possible, the confusion between three different Ibrāhīm



al-Dasūqīs—individuals from the seventh/thirteenth, eighth/fourteenth, and tenth/sixteenth centuries.

Chapter three presents a synthesis of the saint's hagiography, organized according to typical themes such as miracles associated with his birth and death, and his esoteric knowledge. Of interest also are accounts relating his opposition to Crusaders, Mongols, and Egyptian tyrants, although most of these seem to be of later origin. Drawing further from the hagiographies, using a similar synthetic approach, the fourth chapter describes al-Dasūqī's lofty spiritual status as evidenced by his miracles and gnostic insights. His position as one of the four saintly "poles" is significant, as it is in the hagiographies of other early medieval saints such as al-Rifā'ī and al-Badawī.

Chapter five attempts analysis of a number of key themes and events relating to the veneration of al-Dasūqī. A discussion of his *mūlid*, or saint day, addresses problems in dating and its parallel and likely competition with the much better known *mūlid* of al-Badawī. Hallenberg's analysis here is rather unconvincing. She points to the possible connections between the *mūlid* of al-Badawī and Coptic antecedents—although she notes Mayeur-Jaouen has found no sound evidence for this. The implication here is that perhaps this is relevant to al-Dasūqī's case (p. 216); a few mythical themes are then presented from al-Dasūqī's miraculous life, and related in passing to Coptic art. These connections are not developed, and left quite tentative. On page 223 the quotation from Gilsenan on the tension between the ulama and Sufis flies in the face of the subsequent description of al-Dasūqī as "an ideal Muslim scholar." Hallenberg is on more solid ground when she describes the evolution of al-Dasūqī's image. In brief, the seventeenth-century writers underline the saintly miracle worker, writers in the eighteenth century show him primarily as a learned author, the nineteenth-century sources refine his cosmic position as one of the "poles," and the latest material stresses al-Dasūqī as the opponent of injustice and a defender of Islam. In support of this schema, appendix C presents a useful chronology of texts and themes. (On the expansion of the Burhāmīyah order outside of Egypt in the twentieth century, see the recent article by Michael Frishkopf, "Changing Modalities in the Globalization of Islamic Saint Veneration and Mysticism: Sidi Ibrahim al-Dasuqi, Shaykh Muhammad 'Uthman al-Burhani, and their Sufi Orders," *Religious Studies and Theology* [2001]: 20, I and II.) Appendix B is an exhaustive list and description of the writings attributed to al-Dasūqī.

Hallenberg has given us the first comprehensive treatment of the life of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī. The descriptive approach adopted, one that is admittedly less concerned with the historical retrieval of the real Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, allows us to skip across time periods following the hagiographical portrait as it evolves. Hallenberg has overcome a paucity of sources for the early period, and managed to disentangle



several strands of textual tradition in the later centuries. Although the resulting monograph suffers from a certain disjointedness, and is weak in sustained analysis, we owe the author thanks for presenting us with an impressive collection of relevant materials. She has put all future studies al-Dasūqī on a firmer foundation.

*Making Cairo Medieval*, edited by Nezar AlSayyad, A. Irene Bierman, and Nasser Rabbat (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005). Pp. 266.

REVIEWED BY JOHN RODENBECK

This collection of eleven essays originated as a series of papers delivered during a one-day conference sponsored by the Misr Research Group at Berkeley in 2004. Although its major focus is on Cairo in the nineteenth century, Mamlukologists and other folk concerned with the history of al-Maḥrūsah will find it provocative. The most impressive contributions, moreover, are probably Nairy Hempikian's on Bāb Zuwaylah and the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe (1881–1961), otherwise known as the Comité, without which there would have been little left of Mamluk Cairo, and Nasser Rabbat's on al-Maqrīzī, the great Mamluk-era topologist, a brilliantly expanded version of an essay that appeared in *The Cairo Heritage*, the Festschrift published in 2000 to honor Laila Ali Ibrahim.

As I observed in that same volume, a major element in Laila's formidability was her strategic vision, her "insistence upon regarding the whole city as an evolving ensemble, rather than as a haphazard agglomeration that someone has arbitrarily divided into a modern/'Western' metropolis and an old/'Oriental' madinah, the latter architecturally characterized by its incidental possession of a piecemeal accumulation of 'monuments.'" Such an understanding by no means denies the real historical division of late-nineteenth-century Cairo into "Eastern" and "Western" cities, but urges instead an effort to accommodate these two realities to each other without discomfiture to either. The same division is likewise the chief persistent theme throughout this collection, where it is treated with varying degrees of finesse, acuity, and historical awareness.

A "Prologue" asserts, for example, that "Europeans, through representations of architecture and urban spaces . . . constructed dualities like East/West and modern/medieval which remain with us today." This declaration implies that such a distinction is merely an Idealist or Foucaultian abstraction with no basis in physical reality. Its physical basis is presumed to be real, however, by André



Raymond, the foremost historian of the city, and is the very pivot of Janet Abu Lughod's *Cairo* (1971), which the editors correctly describe as "the classic work in the field." The central section of Abu Lughod's book is actually called "A Tale of Two Cities" and the five chapters within it (pp. 83–166) deal with an inescapable physical and historical fact. But abstract conceptions and brute realities can change places in this collection willy-nilly according to political or rhetorical whim. Raymond and Abu Lughod are thus somehow exempted from the recurrent recrimination of "Europeans," "Westerners," "colonialists," or a generalized "West" for having observed the same physical distinction that both of these authorities in fact not only accept, but treat at length.

Irene Bierman's opening essay, "Disciplining the Eye: Perceiving Medieval Cairo," introduces several alleged agents of perception that will appear in later chapters: the *Description de l'Égypte* (1810–29), E. W. Lane, 'Alī Mubārak, the Exposition Universelle (Paris) of 1867, the Comité des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago) of 1893. Like most commentators, she exaggerates the influence of the *Description* and its illustrations. Fewer than 2000 copies of both editions of the *Description* were printed, only 1490 were ever sold, and there was plenty of competition. The superb graphic collections of Shaw, Norden, Pococke, Luigi Mayer, and Vivant Denon, for example, were all published before the *Description* and were widely owned and perused. Denon's two-volume *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte*, for example, with its 141 large plates, some of them half-elephant size, went through more than 40 editions, translations, and adaptations and was quite possibly the most popular Egyptological book ever written. After the publication of the *Description* came the magnificent collections of Coste, Hay, Roberts, Owen Jones, and Prisse d'Avannes, compared with which the *Description's* renderings were inaccurate, their reproduction technically backward. What the *Description* lacked, of course, was the advantage of two significant inventions that had arrived on the scene during its twenty-year gestation and been ignored: Wollaston's camera lucida and the process of lithography. It might also be noted that 'Alī Mubārak was not born until 1823, a year after the publication of the first (incomplete) edition of the *Description*, and that he therefore certainly does not belong, as Bierman says, "to these same years." Neither did the Comité, despite using French for its deliberations, ever use the outdated proto-Disneyesque interventionist methods of Viollet-le-Duc, now on display at sites like the Cité at Carcassonne, which I see from my house in Languedoc. Nor is there any evidence that tourism entered into the Comité's considerations. Bierman rightly deplores, though, the use of the term "Islamic Cairo."

Nasser Rabbat's chapter, an analytic survey of the life, career, and vision of the indispensable al-Maqrīzī, is suavely impeccable, the more useful and impressive



in that it adduces recent Egyptian scholarship and recent Egyptian literature, concluding with an analysis of al-Maqrīzī's influence on two contemporary novelists, Gamal al-Ghitani and Khayri Shalabi. Such an analysis could be extended into the work of Naguib Mahfouz, whose Cairene cityscape—in *Zuqāq Midāq*, for example, or *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-Kilāb*—has a moral meaning that al-Maqrīzī would obviously have understood.

Nezar AlSayyad's chapter on 'Alī Mubārak, composer of the next most important Egyptian *khiṭaṭ* after al-Maqrīzī's, describes him as "the central character in our story" and treats him with sensitivity and candor. Paralleling "The Modern Vision of 'Ali Mubarak," the ground-breaking paper delivered by B. F. Musallem at the colloquium on the Islamic city held at Cambridge in 1976, it provides the sole instance in this collection of the use of the word "positivist," which defines more concisely than any other Mubārak's background, training, and vision. If Mubārak had had his own positivist way, of course, the entire historic zone would have been leveled, a handful of approved architectural examples being spared solely "for educational purposes." He must have been a thorn in the side of the Comité, of which he was a member from its second year until his death.

Derek Gregory's "Performing Cairo: Orientalism and the City of the Arabian Nights" focuses on E. W. Lane and his ethnographic masterpiece, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, the definitive 1860 edition of which, edited by Jason Thompson, was republished in 2003. Mustering a mass of theory, Gregory attempts to show that Lane's equation of Cairene life in 1835 with the social background of the Arabian Nights became a fixture among nineteenth-century European travelers and tourists, who thus arrived in al-Maḥrūsah expecting to find the Baghdad of Hārūn al-Rashīd. If so, however, these wandering naïfs must have skipped over Lane's remarks in the last chapter of all editions of *Manners and Customs*:

European customs have not yet begun to spread among the Egyptians themselves; but they probably will ere long; and in the expectation that this will soon be case, I have been most anxious to become well acquainted (before it is too late to make the attempt) with a state of society which has existed, and excited a high degree of interest, for many centuries, and which many persons have deemed immutable.

Nor had they read the observations of Edward Stanley Poole, Lane's nephew, in his editor's preface to the 1860 edition, published sixteen years before Lane's death: "To continue [the ethnographic record] would be only to chronicle the gradual disuse of their national and characteristic customs and the adoption of



Western habits that must mark a new era in their history as a nation.”

Countering calumniators (Edward Said and Rana Kabbani) who allege that Lane suffered from pathological sexual repression, Gregory suggests that Lane’s robust description of his own participation in a *mawlid* exaggerates its licentious atmosphere and thus indicates an undue degree of sexual susceptibility. Even contemporary Cairo, however, bears out Lane’s objectivity, as any woman could testify who ever rode alone in a crowded car during the nine decades before the Metro afforded separate accommodation for females. Certain large-scale *mawlids*—those of Sayyidah Zaynab, for example, and Sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī in Tanta—still have well-deserved reputations for unleashed libido of which daintily bred non-participant bourgeois Egyptians may well remain quite unaware, as they apparently did until recently of female circumcision.

Much of this collection is less about Cairo than about European attitudes towards Cairo, a subject that demands as much acquaintance with the history of European taste and culture as with the history of al-Mahrūsah. Caroline Williams’ “Nineteenth-Century Images of Cairo: From the Real to the Interpretative” rests on solid ground in both respects, offers rewarding analysis with minimal theory or speculation, and supplies a consciously aesthetic dimension that is otherwise virtually absent from this collection. She concentrates upon a handful of the most distinguished Orientalist depicors of Cairo: Coste, Hay, Lane, Roberts, Frith (whose photography necessarily excluded human subjects), Lewis, Gérôme, and Deutsch. Her thesis—that artists before 1860 sought to make an accurate visual record, while those afterward created capriccios uniting authentic materials in fanciful and anachronistic ways—is neatly sustained and is perfectly conformable with historical fact: the manners and customs that Lane recorded in 1835 indeed no longer existed in 1860.

Williams’ illustrations aptly tell the tale: the reproduction of Deutsch’s “Le Tribut” (1898), for example, gives us an accurately detailed study of the portico of Sultan Ḥasan, but adorns it, as Williams points out, with some superfluous Turkish tiles and peoples it with personnel wearing the Ottoman costume of more than seventy years earlier. Two small observations: the caption of the reproduction of a print from the *Description* calls it a “lithograph” and Roberts is said to have intended his own work as a corrective to the *Description*’s “views.” None of the illustrative plates in the *Description* is in fact a lithograph (see above) and Roberts’s remark about their inadequacy, quoted here, was made only after he had already been in Egypt for nearly three months. The motives that had brought him to Egypt in the first place obviously remained primary and had nothing to do with mere rivalry over verisimilitude.

David Preziosi’s “The Museum of What You Shall Have Been” bristles with ideas, but many of them are slightly suspect. His guesses as to the motives of the



Comité and his linking it directly with the Egyptian Museum remain particularly unconvincing. Henri Pieron—the same passage from an article of his published in a popular French-language Egyptian magazine in 1911 is quoted as an epigraph later in this collection—may well represent a particular view of the morphology of Arab cities held during that era by certain empire-oriented Frenchmen, probably positivists, whose chief experience was in North Africa, but he can hardly represent the whole of “the colonial order,” as Preziosi claims, and certainly not the views of the Comité or even of the three Frenchmen in it (out of some sixteen members at the time, nine of them Egyptian). The French-North-African urban paradigm—a walled medieval Arab *madīnah* separated from a modern French ville by a *cordon sanitaire*—has had occasional official proponents in Cairo, but they have been Egyptian, rather than European: the Arab Bureau of Design, for example, a public-sector architectural firm, proposed exactly such a model for radical intervention in the historic zone as recently as 1980.

There are also mistakes based on legend and hearsay. The Khedivial Opera House, for example, was not built for the premier of *Aida*, but for the celebration of the opening of the Suez Canal, in the autumn of 1869. (The libretto for *Aida* was not delivered to Verdi until the following year and the opera premiered in Cairo on 24 December 1871.) And what is “the Christian quarter” that is mentioned two or three times? Preziosi’s text suggests that he means Miṣr al-Qadīmah, but in fact al-Maḥrūsah has several other quarters that have long been traditionally Christian, including neighborhoods in Azbakīyah, Shubrā, al-Muskī, al-Jamalīyah, al-Waylī, Rawḍ al-Faraj, and elsewhere.

Heba Farouk Ahmed’s chapter, “Nineteenth Century Cairo: a Dual City?” is burdened with a shaky and ill-defined thesis. Material is squeezed for dubious generalizations, which lead to misreadings, anachronisms, or irresolvable contradictions. One of her illustrations, for example, is a picture dating from 1877 showing an elaborately invented Ottoman doorway and a dim figure seated within who apparently offers something unidentifiable for sale. Her caption refers to “[Western] interest in contemporary Cairenes and their everyday life—a new phenomenon in the nineteenth century.” Such a reading, however, ignores both the far more informative illustrations in the “Arts et Métiers” section of the *Description de l’Égypte*, published shortly after the beginning of the century, but also the fact that the *Description* itself, a classic Enlightenment project, was the last major example of an encyclopædic tradition that had already achieved its finest flower in the great French *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers* (1751–80). What the uninformative picture of the invented doorway thus demonstrates, if anything, is that by 1877 Western interest in Cairene everyday life had dwindled remarkably, as Caroline Williams’s survey (above) very clearly shows.



On the next page Ahmed declares that “among the best known early [sic] European travel writers [sic] were Edward William Lane and David Roberts. Both were inspired to visit Egypt,” she goes on to say, “after reading the mammoth Napoleonic Description de l’Égypte” [9500 pages of text? 1000 plates?—a piece of misinformation which she owes, I’m afraid, to Tim Mitchell’s *Colonising Egypt* (1988, p. 29). Two pages later she reproduces a sensational illustration from a 1913 American edition of Lane’s *Arabian Nights* in the apparent belief that it was actually penned by Lane himself, who died a full generation earlier. (The illustrator even for Lane’s own “standard” edition was not himself, but William Darbey.) On the following page, in a paragraph summarizing the career of the historian Stanley Lane-Poole, Lane’s grandnephew, every statement is untrue. One could point to further errors. It must also be observed that, having been compelled by her thesis to deal with Western subjects, Ahmed was thus condemned to play down far more promising material about Egyptian subjects—al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, ‘Alī Mubārak, and al-Muwayliḥī—which is buried in her footnotes. One will look for something better from this scholar.

In his “Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative,” Khaled Fahmy gives us the sort of tour de force we have come to expect from this scholarly virtuoso, a skilled and gratifyingly readable overview of the legal and bureaucratic apparatus that was so busily transforming al-Maḥrūsah before 1882. His punctilious reliance on archival material leads to at least one strange statement, however, an assertion that the cemetery of Sayyidah Nafīṣah “stopped receiving bodies for burial in the 1870s” and “was replaced by the Imamein cemetery south of the Aqueduct.” In reality, interments at the Sayyidah Nafīṣah cemetery continued—I myself saw several between 1964 and 2002—and the Qarāfat al-Imamayn, otherwise known as the Southern Cemetery, had already been a burial ground since the Abbasid era.

His narrative in general, however, is a star performance, well written, rousing, and sound. He does not embark upon it, though, without setting up a straw horse or two—the idea that “modern” Cairo was the creation of Ismā‘īl and that the entire inspiration for it came from his and ‘Alī Mubārak’s visit to Haussmann’s Paris in 1867—then cunningly knocking them down. Unfairly, he ascribes such notions to Janet Abu Lughod. But no serious historian of al-Maḥrūsah, including Abu Lughod, has ever believed that “modernization” commenced only with Ismā‘īl; and Haussmann’s influence is patent in the “ambitious thirty-four article plan” that was submitted to Ismā‘īl by ‘Alī Mubārak, as Fahmy himself observes, immediately after the latter’s return from Paris. Even if very little of the plan was actually subsequently implemented, it is clear that both Ismā‘īl and Mubārak found the speed and style of Haussmann’s transformations exciting. Both, after all, had known Paris in the 1840s, when much of the Ville Lumière was still composed of



foetid medieval warrens as yet without such urban amenities as sewerage or abattoirs, a city walled (newly, under the Thiers government), but otherwise by no means unlike Cairo.

The major difference would have been in provision for wheeled traffic. No essay in this book notes that when the French landed in 1798, Egypt was a country virtually without wheels or the fact that every major intervention in the historic zone from the reign of Muḥammad ‘Alī to that of Fu’ād was primarily intended to facilitate the movement of wheeled traffic. These interventions included the shift, by seven meters (not thirty, as Bierman says), of the *zāwiyah* of Faraj ibn Barqūq to the south side of what is now Sh. Aḥmad Māhir.

Nairy Hempikian’s magisterial chapter, “Medievalization of the Old City as an Ingredient of Cairo’s Modernization: The Case of Bab Zuwayla,” examines this move in due course during her analysis of the Comité’s work at Bāb Zuwaylah, an analysis informed by her own labors there and elsewhere in the historic zone as an architectural conservationist. Exemplary in nearly all respects, even Hempikian can misread evidence at hand. The fact that the “Palais d’Egypte” at the Paris Exposition of 1900 included Pharaonic elements for the first time at any such an event does not show that European interest in Ancient Egypt was being replaced by interest in contemporary life, but rather the reverse. As Cairene life became more Westernized and less “exotic” (see above), Western tourists became increasingly more interested in Pharaonic monuments than in local culture. This trend, given a big boost by King Tut in 1922, has of course continued; and thanks to “packaging” and a shortage of parking lots for buses, very few Western tourists now see anything of Cairo’s historic zone, while multitudes go gawking in Luxor and Aswan or content themselves with beach resorts. What is also in question here, of course, is the motives for architectural preservation. In Europe this question need never even be asked. In Egypt since the demise of the Comité, however, except among architects and historians, the only motive one usually hears for preserving Cairo’s historic zone—a unique medieval urban complex almost the size of Venice—is Tourism.

Hempikian’s survey of the Comité’s work at Bāb Zuwaylah, which rightly ignores this motive, is authoritative and refreshingly concrete. Her study was intended, as she says, to counter “hasty conceptual and political judgments on its activities,” judgments or prejudices of the sort, in fact, that lurk in the background of other chapters in this collection, which have a heavy ideological coloring. The Bulletins of the Comité, as she points out, are a treasure-house of accurate information. (The complete series is now available on-line, but unindexed.) “The love and care,” she says, moreover, which was transmitted to these monuments through the work of the Comité, the meticulous professionalism by which its members worked, and their sincerity is often under-appreciated. Furthermore, the



seriousness with which these people approached their work is only apparent when one follows its line of thinking with regard to a single structure over a number of years.

She is critical, needless to say, of the insistence of the Comité on restoring monuments to their *aspect primitif*—an aim despised in current conservationist theory—but applauds the Comité for the rest of its program, especially its documentation. Under Ismā‘īl it necessarily employed strategies that paralleled those of Mubārak’s Ministry of Public Works in other parts of Cairo. but its standards and practices were far ahead of the norms pertaining generally in Europe and America.

The final chapter, May el-Ibrashy’s “The Cemeteries of Cairo and the Comité de Conservation,” looks at the Comité from a slightly different angle. Apart from the curious convictions that it was founded only after “extensive lobbying . . . by the European community” (whatever that may have been) and that its major motive was to encourage European tourism, her essay is solid and workmanlike. She corrects, for example, Khaled Fahmy’s comment on the Sayyidah Nafīṣah and Imamayn cemeteries (see above) with information about what actually happened both on and under the ground. The cemeteries have, of course, always been lived in and have been traditional sites of periodical festivities, as cemeteries normally were in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds and in Romanized Europe down to at least the thirteenth century. What this fact means is that the present relative crowdedness in the old cemeteries of Cairo is not due to a poor and under-housed populace being suddenly forced to find new habitation in strange places, but to sheer steady population growth, which has also increased the number of the dead, the richer of whom wanted to be interred in large walled permanent structures that occupied more and more of what had formerly been open space. El-Ibrashy discusses some of the differences between shrines—few of which, having been constantly refurbished, possess any architectural beauty and many of which are not now in any cemetery—and other kinds of monuments, but omits mention of funerary structures such as the Ḥawsh al-Bāshā, the mausoleum of Tawfiq Pasha, or the tomb of Sulayman Pasha, which are not shrines and are not aesthetically distinguished, but possess extraordinary historic and technical interest.

This book is as remarkable for what is left out as for what it contains. Wheeled traffic is one important missing item. (The so-called “traditional” crafts of wheel-making and cart-making in Egypt were entirely nineteenth-century creations, based upon models imported from Turkey, France, England, and Austria. The high-wheeled cart used for moving stone is still referred to locally as a *faransawī*.) One also wonders why the most obvious and important of all recent colonialist ventures in Egypt—the British Occupation—is never even alluded to. I’d have liked to see a specific consideration of the Mamluk inheritance, not only the remnants of the



historic zone, but also the neo-Mamluk architectural style that became the signature of the Muḥammad ‘Alī dynasty. And although the Comité comes in for a certain amount of post-colonialist *afrangī*-bashing, inspired largely by Donald Malcolm Reid, no one touches upon the high-handed depredations that instantly ensued after the Comité was dissolved and that continue to this day: future historians will find it very difficult in relation to many other architectural complexes to duplicate Nairy Hempikian’s history of Bāb Zuwaylah because the necessary documentation will be missing and the physical record will have been altered beyond recuperation. The paradoxical fixation in much of this book on what are supposed to be European attitudes, finally, as if they possessed some sort of validating secret for good or for ill, is bemusing. The attitudes in question are not always well defined or understood, for one thing, and obsession with them excludes much of what Cairenes themselves have had to say, quite often passionately and intelligently (e.g., al-Maqrīzī), about their city.

KHALĪL IBN AYBAK AL-ŞAFADĪ, *Ikhtirā‘ al-Khurā‘*, edited by Fārūq Aslīm (Damascus: Ittihad al-Kuttāb al-‘Arab, 2000). Pp. 142.

REVIEWED BY VANESSA DE GIFIS, University of Chicago

#### THE PRIMARY WORK

Al-Şafadī is perhaps best known for his massive biographical dictionary, *Al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, but he also wrote extensively in other literary genres, such as rhetoric and poetry.<sup>1</sup> His *Ikhtirā‘ al-Khurā‘* belongs in this last category, and, as Brockelmann has indicated, is a tongue-in-cheek parody of poetical analysis.<sup>2</sup> *Ikhtirā‘* can mean inventing, breaking, and deceiving, among other possibilities; *khurā‘* means madness, or a disease that afflicts a camel whereby she collapses. Both words share the root *kh-r-*, which has the sense of limpness or laxity. Combining these various connotative elements, we are faced with a title that foreshadows the playful mood of the work.

The premise of *Ikhtirā‘ al-Khurā‘* is an imagined *majlis* in which someone composes two absurd verses of poetry, which are then analyzed. The resulting

<sup>1</sup>For example, *Jinān al-Jinās fī ‘Ilm al-Badī‘*; *Faḍḍ al-Khitām ‘an al-Tawriyah wa-al-Istikhdām; Al-Kashf wa-al-Tanbīh ‘alā al-Waṣf wa-al-Tashbīh*.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Weimar and Leiden, 1898–1949), S2:29; rev. ed., 2:33.



*sharḥ* is divided into six topics: 1) language (*lughah*), 2) parsing (*i'rāb*), 3) meaning/syntax (*ma'ná*), 4) style (*badī'*), 5) meter (*'arūḍ*), and 6) rhyme (*qāfiyah*). Through this concocted *sharḥ*, al-Ṣafadī parodies contemporary commentary on poetry. His parody targets scholars of Arabic grammar, figurative rhetoric, meter, and rhyme, and incorporates jokes about historians, philosophers, physicians, and politicians.

Clever parody and wordplay pervade every part of *Ikhtirā' al-Khurā'*. Even the opening formula is a play on the *basmalah*: *bismihi subḥānahu 'azza sha'nuh* (p. 27). Then the name of the man al-Ṣafadī imagines as the narrator of this *sharḥ* is hilarious: Abū Khurāfah al-Hudhā' means "the father of superstition, delirium." This name suggests al-Ṣafadī's estimation of the pedantic intellectualism for which this character appears to be a satirical personification. Other names that appear in the text are also occasions for comedy, e.g., Naṣīr al-Dīn Abū al-Hazā'im, "the helper of religion, father of defeats" (p. 28), the components of which (help and defeat) seem incompatible. Also, formulae following names are humorous, e.g., "the commentator, may God forgive him (*'afá Allāh 'anhu*), said . . ." (p. 30).

Al-Ṣafadī deliberately confuses historical figures (e.g., his saying that "al-Saffāḥ [was] the first of the caliphs of the Umayyads" [p. 73], while in fact he was the first of the Abbasids), as well as authors (e.g., his claiming that Ibn Miskawayh wrote *Kitāb al-Luma'* and Ibn Jinnī wrote *Kitāb al-Fawz al-Akbar* [p. 51], while in fact the reverse is true).

Al-Ṣafadī justifies false statements with further false statements or impertinent true ones, demonstrating how erroneous information and reasoning can be made to seem sound if presented in a consistent manner or woven into an apparently obvious argument. For example, in parsing the preposition *fī* (in), al-Ṣafadī contradicts the rules of grammar by explaining that it is a noun, and he proceeds to furnish examples of how this "noun" may be used with the definite article, with *tanwīn*, and in an *iḍāfah* (pp. 54–55). In another example, he defines a word by adding inappropriate information to the right definition: "[a mirror] is that in which one sees his own face if [the mirror] is in his pocket" (pp. 31–32). While the reflective nature of a mirror is correctly described, the additional criterion that it is in a pocket is not a definitive feature of a mirror, and so the proper definition of mirror is falsely qualified.<sup>3</sup>

This combination of truth and falsehood, soundness and absurdity, is the basic thrust of the work as a whole. Given absurd verses, a commentator can apply a

<sup>3</sup>The inclusion of this discussion of a mirror is inappropriate in itself, for it is introduced in the context of the word *mar'ah* (woman), which al-Ṣafadī relates to the word *mir'āh* (mirror). Though these two words appear at first glance to share the same root, they do not. The root of *mar'ah* is *m-r-'*, while the root of *mir'āh* is *r-'-y*.



sound analytical method to arrive at an appropriately absurd commentary, wherein the contents and conclusions of the analysis, though nonsensical, take on a respectable image thanks to the methodical presentation. Intellectual propriety lends an air of legitimacy to the absurd. Yet this does not read like a somber critique on scholarship; rather, it is a light-hearted jab at pedantry. Since al-Şafadī has, in other works, dealt seriously with the science that he parodies here, we are assured that the analytical method itself is not being totally debunked; rather, we see that a respected method is playfully employed in the service of comedy. Al-Şafadī is aware of his ridiculous activity and aims precisely for such ridiculousness as an achievement in cleverness. Indeed, in the opening section, al-Şafadī writes: “[these two verses] require a commentary to join them in strangeness” (p. 28). In other words, the goal of the work is to create a commentary of equal absurdity to the verses themselves. Just like the verses, the commentary comes in the form of a legitimate art/science, while the content is in fact nonsense.

The scenario he has constructed seems like the kind of thing we can imagine a group of scholars doing for a good laugh, having a bit of fun with their skills. Rather than being a mockery of a serious undertaking, we are witnessing a deliberately joking endeavor that is undertaken with full knowledge of the ridiculousness of the task and its results. In light of such absurdity, the fun itself justifies the exercise. It is really a self-parody on the part of the invented *majlis*, and indeed on the part of al-Şafadī himself, who is the real voice represented in the *majlis*. Elaborating on the absurd as if on something serious reflects the impulse of the expert to do what he does best. As al-Şafadī says, “the bow is given to him who knows how to shape it” (p. 28).

Parodying scholarly method requires serious knowledge of the method parodied. Al-Şafadī possesses this knowledge, as his other, more sober, literary works attest. Yet even the less educated can enjoy *Ikhtirā‘ al-Khurā‘*. Although some of the information with which al-Şafadī plays is specialized, a good deal of the subjects, such as lexical items and popular historical figures, are well known to a wider audience; therefore, the jokes played with them can be readily identified. For example, al-Şafadī defines the word *layl* (night) as the time between the rising and the setting of the sun (p. 39), which is, of course, the opposite of its real definition. One need not be a learned *littérateur* to understand and appreciate this and similar jokes. It is possible that al-Şafadī intended his audience to consist of scholars and non-scholars alike, and so wrote this work with something for everyone.

Al-Şafadī’s precision in parodying grammar, semantics, logical argumentation, all in the context of poetical composition, is possible only because he is well trained in these practices and he is intimately familiar with those who also engage in it and their methods and attitudes. His own poetic skill makes his play on the discipline of poetical criticism all the more effective. The parody pokes fun at



literary analysts, and therefore equally targets al-Şafadī himself, who is a willful participant in such analysis. It is this implicit self-parody that most tickles the reader. This short book is a delightful testimony to al-Şafadī's erudition, his intellectual independence, his critical insight into formal scholarship, and above all his clever sense of humor.

### THE EDITORIAL WORK

This edition of *Ikhtirā' al-Khurā'* is based on two photocopied manuscripts. One is at the National Library in Tunis, MS 3742, and is complete. The other is at the Chester Beatty Library, MS 5200, and has three sizable lacunae. The former is dated 1167 A.H., while the latter lacks dating. Through an analysis of the marginal notes, which elaborate upon some of the more subtle and obscure satirical remarks, Aslīm concludes that these two manuscripts are either both derived from a shared source, or that one of them is derived from the other. Aslīm treats MS 3742 as the *aṣl* on account of its completeness. At the end of his introduction, Aslīm provides some photocopy images of both manuscripts.

In the introduction, the editor provides a brief biography of al-Şafadī, gathering biographical information from modern secondary works on the author, as well as from primary sources, including some of al-Şafadī's own writings. Aslīm lists al-Şafadī's teachers in poetry, language, *fiqh*, and political and prophetic history. He points out that al-Şafadī had a reputation for attacking the writings of his contemporaries (p. 7). This point is appropriate in light of the nature of *Ikhtirā' al-Khurā'*, which pokes fun at contemporary scholarly treatments of poetry. At the same time, al-Şafadī was accused of having pilfered the poetry of his teacher Ibn Nubātah.

Although Aslīm mentions al-Şafadī's teachers, he does not give any details about the relationships he had with them. Moreover, he does not orient al-Şafadī's work in the larger context of Mamluk literary activity, so we do not get an idea of how innovative a work like *Ikhtirā' al-Khurā'* may have been when it was composed. Joking and wordplay were not unique to al-Şafadī, but Aslīm does not give any indication of such activity among al-Şafadī's contemporaries.

Aslīm's list of the works of al-Şafadī that have been edited and published numbers seventeen; his list of the unpublished works numbers twenty-three. This list of works, though not entirely comprehensive, clearly reflects the diverse interests of al-Şafadī, which included poetry, epigrams, rhetoric, linguistics, and *adab*. Listed as unpublished is *Al-Tanbīh 'alā al-Tashbīh*, which, as Everett Rowson has noted, must be either the *Kashf* that Rowson reviews or an earlier version thereof.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Everett K. Rowson, review of *Al-Kashf wa-al-Tanbīh 'alā al-Waṣf wa-al-Tashbīh*, ed. Hilāl Nāji and Walīd ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Zubayrī, *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 1



The *Kashf* was published in 1999, a year earlier than *Ikhtirā' al-Khurā'*, which is recent enough to excuse Aslīm for not acknowledging its publication in his own edition. *Rumūz al-Shajarah al-Nu'mānīyah* is listed here, although Franz Rosenthal has pointed out that the attribution of this work to al-Ṣafadī is false.<sup>5</sup> Not listed is al-Ṣafadī's *Tawshī' al-Tawshīh*, a *muwashshahāt* work, which would have been a suitable addition to the list for illustrating al-Ṣafadī's poetical activity.

Aslīm confirms the authorship of *Ikhtirā' al-Khurā'* with Ḥājji Khalīfah (pp. 9–10). He does not, however, confirm this with any indication to internal evidence in the text itself. Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that this is indeed a work of al-Ṣafadī.

Aslīm contrasts the satire of al-Ṣafadī to that of al-Ma'arrī (d. 449), saying that while both men are steeped in intellectual culture and rely on a rich literary heritage, al-Ṣafadī is not as serious as al-Ma'arrī in his satire, opting to take a more humorous approach to mocking contemporary intellectual production (p. 11). I agree with this observation. *Ikhtirā' al-Khurā'* does not exude the pessimistic misanthropy that we sense in the works of al-Ma'arrī.

The edition of the work is well executed. There are copious footnotes, in which Aslīm indicates variations and marginal glosses in the manuscripts and explains many of al-Ṣafadī's jokes. Many of the marginal notes in the manuscripts identify historical figures, define lexical items, and attribute poetic citations to the correct composers. The editor provides his own glosses in the absence of marginal notes, or to supplement or correct marginalia. These glosses offer valuable information that is necessary to fully appreciate the irony and mockery of al-Ṣafadī's jokes. Also in the footnotes are occasional references to other primary sources, such as biographical dictionaries and literary works.

The end matter consists of a bibliography and indices for individuals, groups, places, books, and poetry. The bibliography is arranged alphabetically by title, and includes primary and secondary sources in a single list. The index of names includes real people as well as those whom al-Ṣafadī invents; the invented names are marked with an asterisk. Most names are listed according to the given name or *nisbah*,<sup>6</sup> and cross-listings are provided when necessary. Death dates are not provided. The index of books is arranged by title, followed by the author's name. The index of poetry includes the opening words of a verse, the *qāfiyah*, the number of lines, and the names of both the actual poet and the person to whom the poetry is attributed, when applicable.

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(2004): 321.

<sup>5</sup>Franz Rosenthal, "Al-Ṣafadī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 8:759–60.

<sup>6</sup>"Abū" and "Ibn" are ignored in alphabetization.



‘ALĪ ḤAYDAR, *Madkhal ilá Dirāsāt al-Taṣawwuf: al-Shi‘r al-Ṣūfī fī al-Qarn al-Sābi‘ al-Hijrī wa-al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī wa-al-‘Aṣr al-‘Uthmānī* (Damascus: Dār al-Shamūs, 1999). Pp. 269.

REVIEWED BY PETER HEATH, The American University of Beirut

This is an interesting and useful book, within the rather significant limitations that its author, a professor of Mamluk and Ottoman literature at Tishrīn University in Syria, himself acknowledges. It would be more fitting if the two parts of the title were reversed, since the intent of the book is to study the corpus of prominent Sufī poets from late Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman times and through these works to offer an introduction to their theories of mysticism. The utility of this study is that rather than present these theories as derived from prose texts of these and other authors, the book at least attempts to study them as presented in their poetry first and to refer to prose works secondarily. This approach may be expected in the case of a poet such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235/632), but it is less common among students of his contemporary Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240/638), whose ideas are usually studied based mainly on his prose works. In addition to these two writers, the book focuses on three others: al-‘Afīf al-Tilimsānī (father of the poet Ibn al-‘Afīf; d. 1291/690), al-Būṣīrī (d. 1297/697), and ‘Abd al-Ghānī al-Nabulusī (d. 1143/1731). Other poets and mystics from these periods are mentioned but more in passing than in detail.

The book is perhaps more a series of linked essays than a cohesive study. Individual sections are dedicated to presenting and analyzing the poetry of the five poets mentioned above. These sections are framed by rather general sketches of Sufism as practiced at the time, mention of secondary poets, and some analysis of such important poetic motifs as wine or praise of the prophet Muḥammad. As such the book does provide introductory accounts of the poetry and the ideas of these major writers, but its scope does not extend beyond this. As the author himself admits in his preface, this work is only an “initial preparatory study” (*tawḥī‘ ah*).

While there are advantages to starting with poetry rather than with prose compositions, the more inquiring or ambitious reader is left unfulfilled. For one thing, although the book relies on primary sources it hardly refers to any secondary study, in Arabic or a Western language, on any of these writers. The author, it seems, is either working in an intellectual vacuum or assumes from his readers prior acquaintance with secondary sources. Second, each of the major poets presented easily deserves full-length individual study that more thoroughly examines his poetry and how the ideas presented therein relate to his theories or the ideas of others. Finally, with the exception of an excursus on the motif of wine, there is



little literary analysis of any kind, traditional or contemporary, in this book. Hence, poetry is reduced to representation of theory rather than as a mode of expression in itself.

With these caveats, which will be major or minor depending on the level of knowledge of the reader, the book does serve its introductory purpose. Nonetheless, it also whets one's appetite for a more penetrating analysis of mystical poets from these neglected ages.

FAHMĪ 'ABD AL-'ALĪM, *Al-'Imārah al-Islāmīyah fī 'Aṣr al-Mamālīk al-Zharākisah: 'Aṣr al-Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh* (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, al-Majlis al-A'lá lil-Āthār, 2003). Pp. 388.

REVIEWED BY NASSER RABBAT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

This book is a monograph dealing with the architectural oeuvres built in Cairo (plus one industrial building in al-Ashmunin) during the reign of the Circassian Mamluk sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (1412–21). It surveys twenty-six structures, ranging from the monumental Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh to two sultanic *basātīn* (sing. *bustān*, i.e., a large garden). Three madrasahs among the surveyed structures were built by officials in the court of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh: Amir Qānī Bay al-Muḥammadī, Amir Fakhr al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī, and the qadi (judge) 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl. The sultan himself presumably endowed the rest of the structures since they are all, with one exception, listed in his *waqf* document. They consist of two mosques, one *khānqāh*, one *bīmāristān*, two *ṣihrījs* (water tank, or possibly *sabīl-kuttāb* complex), one *ḥammām*, one *wikālah*, one *ṭibāq* (residential units) above the Zuwayla Gate, a series of shops, and a sugar factory, in addition to five items identified as *makān* (place) and four as *binā'* (construction). Only the non-extant Manzarat al-Tāj wa-al-Khams Wujūh (Belvedere of the Crown and the Five Faces), rebuilt by al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh in 1420, is not listed in the *waqf*. The author extracted its description from al-Maqrīzī's and 'Alī Mubārak's *Khiṭaṭs*.

The survey is followed by two comparative and typologically-organized studies: one on the architectural elements and another on the decorative patterns of the structures of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh. In both studies, 'Abd al-'Alīm extends his purview to famous examples in Islamic history. His main concern is to establish provenance, precedence, and development of the elements he identifies as characteristic of the Circassian Mamluk architecture of the age of al-Mu'ayyad



Shaykh. His knowledge of these structures is amply displayed: he is clearly someone who has examined their minutest details very thoroughly and had access to those upper parts and closed spaces in them that are usually unavailable to other visitors. The most valuable section in this chapter is the one that lists the inscriptions in the four main monuments examined: the Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh and the madrasahs of Amir Qānī Bay, Amir Fakhr al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī, and Qadi 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ. One drawback, however, is that no attempt is made to illustrate any of these inscriptions, nor is any explanation offered for the choice or the significance of their content.

The next chapter is perhaps the most interesting to Mamluk historians. It contains the entire text of the general *waqf* of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, redacted during his lifetime in 1420, minus the substantial part on the *waqfs* in Syria (135 lines out of a total of 954 lines), which 'Abd al-'Alīm unfortunately excluded because it falls outside the scope of his study. The *waqf* text is followed by several glossaries: first, of the architectural terms in the *waqf*; second, of titles and offices; third, of *waqf* terms; fourth, place names; fifth, measures and scales; and sixth, names of cities and villages. The value of this section is less in its new or historically precise readings of the terms and more in its grouping of these terms in the context of one document. The book closes with a bibliography of both Arabic and English sources, 150 relatively clear black and white illustrations, and a hodgepodge of badly reproduced line drawings of plans, sections, and maps copied from various sources and left in their variegated scales and techniques of representation. The drawings are in fact mostly unusable, even in the case of the maps, which are supposed to offer new information on the location of some no-longer-extant structures of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh.

Fahmī 'Abd al-'Alīm worked for many years in the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, first as inspector and finally as director in the Section of the Islamic and Coptic Antiquities of Cairo. This has lent him a great familiarity with the monuments of Cairo and a hands-on knowledge of their recent past and current status, especially after the frenzy of restoration that swept the city in the last ten years and irretrievably changed the appearance of many of its premier structures. 'Abd al-'Alīm had also written an unpublished master's thesis on the Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh in 1975 (no doctorate is mentioned although he is identified as Dr.). This indicates that his interest in the architectural work of this sultan is long-lasting and that he has had the time to revise and fine-tune his student-days observations on al-Mu'ayyad's masterpiece. Only some of these expectations are met in the book under review, which was published in 2003, namely the detailed descriptions of the monuments and their present topographical surroundings, while others are strangely missing or only perfunctorily mentioned. The most glaring lack is in the English-language bibliography, which, besides



being severely incomplete, seems to stop in 1970 (the only exception is Doris Behrens-Abouseif's book on the minarets of Cairo, published in 1985). The Arabic bibliography is only slightly better. It includes a few entries from the 1980s, but nothing later, although a large number of monographs on the Mamluk monuments of Cairo have been published in the last decade, of which the book under review is but one example.

In fact, *Al-'Imārah al-Islāmīyah fī 'Aṣr al-Mamālīk al-Zharākisah* thoroughly exhibits three main conceptual problems encountered in a contemporary type of Egyptian scholarship on Islamic architecture, so that we can use it to illustrate them here. The first is that, notwithstanding the inclusion of photos and line drawings, the study of buildings is primarily textual and is reminiscent of the medieval method and language of historical and *khiṭāṭ* tracts. No use is made of the figures to comprehend or question an aspect of a building. They play an illustrative role to the descriptive passages in the strictest sense and add no information on their own. The second is that architectural history, whether it be presented synchronically as in this book or diachronically as in many other studies, is depicted essentially as an endogenous development suffused with self-conscious nationalism (sometimes expressed as pan-Islamism), which unfolds over time with minimal interaction with the outside world. The third drawback is the absence of critical interpretation that would contextualize the architecture and use it to throw some light on the social, intellectual, economic, political, or ideological factors that contributed to its production and were in turn affected by it. The short (8 pages) introduction of the book under review purports to address these connections, but ends up only repeating some banal, and hugely debated, remarks on the Mamluk class structure and the economic and artisanal basis of the country's wealth.

This is very different from what we expect from a contemporary study on architectural history in Western academe. Why is this so?<sup>1</sup> And how did this difference obtain, especially given that art and architectural history as fields of study were introduced to Egypt and the rest of the Islamic world by Western scholars and via Western academic training and influence? Many explanations can be proposed, but the most important one in my opinion is the rising intellectual split in Islamic studies (and scholarship in general) between the Islamic world and the West that has been intensifying in recent years. Analyzing this situation, a

<sup>1</sup>This is not the first time that reviewers for *MSR* have confronted these issues when reviewing contemporary Mamluk studies published in Egypt. Two examples are: Stephan Conermann's review of N. Maḥmūd Muṣṭafá, *Al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī min Taṣfīyat al-Wujūd al-Ṣalībī ilá Bidāyat al-Hajmah al-Ūrubbiyah al-Thānīyah*, *MSR* 4 (2000): 257-60, and Nasser Rabbat's review of Ḥusnī M. Nuwaysar, *Al-'Imārah al-Islāmīyah fī Miṣr: 'Aṣr al-Ayyūbiyīn wa-al-Mamālīk*, *MSR* 5 (2001): 205-8.



tempting and pressing endeavor indeed, does not belong in this short review. It requires grounding the argument within the larger issue of an Orientalist predicament loaded with overtones of elitism, cultural and religious misgivings, and a perverse nostalgia for the colonial age, which is countered by reciprocally hostile attitudes in the Islamic world.<sup>2</sup> Suffice it to say that both sides are the poorer on account of this state of affairs, with the scholars in the Islamic world missing much more simply because of the top heavy censorship and the shortage in academic books, journals, and funds for research they must endure.

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<sup>2</sup>The predicament of the Arab intellectual in general has been a subject of great concern in progressive contemporary Arabic debates. A sample of recent books is: Samāḥ Idrīs, *Al-Muthaqqaf al-‘Arabī wa-al-Sulṭah: Baḥṭh fī Riwāyat al-Tajribah al-Nāṣirīyah* (Beirut, 1992); ‘Azīz al-‘Aẓmah, *Dunyā al-Dīn fī Ḥāḍir al-‘Arab* (Beirut, 1996); Muṣṭafá Murtaḍá ‘Alī Maḥmūd, *Al-Muthaqqaf wa-al-Sulṭah: Dirāsah Taḥlīlīyah li-Waḍ‘ al-Muthaqqaf al-Miṣrī fī al-Fatraḥ min 1970-1995* (Cairo, 1998). For a devastating and gratuitously cynical indictment of modern Arab intellectuals, see Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs: a Generation’s Odyssey* (New York, 1998).

