BOOK REVIEWS


REVIEWED BY STEPHEN FREDERIC DALE, Department of History, Ohio State University, Columbus

It has long been recognized that Iranian silk constituted the principal source of foreign exchange of the Safavid state in the reign of Shah 'Abbas I (1589–1629), and widely appreciated that Armenian merchants of New Julfa, Isfahan, played a critical role in marketing Iranian silk both within the country and abroad. It is all the more remarkable therefore to consider that Ina Baghdiantz McCabe has produced the first major study of the Iranian Armenian community's business organization, their relationship with the Safavid state, and the nature of their involvement in the production and marketing of Iranian silk. Based on Armenian, English, French, and Persian sources, this well-illustrated publication in the University of Pennsylvania's Armenian Texts and Studies series represents an ambitious work of political economy. In it, Baghdiantz McCabe argues forcefully that the Armenians' position reflected the implementation of systematic economic goals by Iranian monarchs; that Armenians during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I became part of the political elite; that Armenian trade, far from being the work of itinerant peddlers, was directed by a highly organized, extremely wealthy commercial elite; and that Armenian merchants operating within the Safavid system were successful in excluding European companies from gaining significant influence in the Iranian silk trade.

Baghdiantz McCabe's analysis of the Armenians' role in the Iranian silk trade is based on her assertion that Shah 'Abbas I intentionally plundered the Caucasus and Armenia for ghulams, or military slaves, and Armenian merchants, groups who would help him centralize the military forces and economy of the Safavid state. She strongly suggests that 'Abbas's grandfather, Shah Tahmasp, had begun this policy when he created special ghulam regiments, although she is careful to observe that there are no records to prove the existence of an explicit policy. She also notes that while Shah Tahmasp deported Armenians, some even to Isfahan, most were women and children—the men having first been killed—who were coerced to convert to Islam. However, this book really begins with the well-documented reign of Shah 'Abbas I.

As other scholars have recently observed, Baghdiantz McCabe points out that Armenians whom Shah 'Abbas forcibly expelled from the Armenian town of old Julfa were not only sent to Isfahan but were dispersed to many Iranian cities. And not all were merchants. Some were peasants who were sent to produce silk in Gilan; others were artisans, many of them sent to Isfahan. She leaves no doubt that the relocation begun in 1603 was brutal, carried out in mid-winter, with little thought given to the suffering of the Armenian deportees. She also points out that Shah 'Abbas treated many poor Armenians badly even after they settled in Iran, forcibly converting even some poor artisans in Isfahan. However, she argues that the wealthy Armenian merchants of Julfa, Armenia, when transplanted to New Julfa, Isfahan, were from the first given special privileges, treated as an autonomous community, and not only allowed to practice Christianity but encouraged to reconstitute the Armenian church administrative structure in their new home.

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One of the most useful sections of this study is the author’s description of the way New Julfa was created and Shah ’Abbas’s relationship with the community there. Counteracting a popular misconception that the suburb was created at one moment, Baghdiantz McCabe shows that it was still being built in 1619. She also demonstrates how Shah ’Abbas was closely involved with the entire process, granting permission to build a cathedral in 1615 and attending many feast days of the church, including one in 1619, the year in which the land of the suburb was given to the Armenians as a gift. This latter date was especially significant, she argues, because it was then the Armenians outbid the English for the recently monopolized Iranian silk production. It was Shah ’Abbas’s interest in the silk revenues and his reliance on Armenian merchants to purchase and market Iranian silk that explain why he created this virtually autonomous Christian mercantile community in his new capital. It was governed by merchants in alliance with the church, which saw to the civil administration of the community—in Isfahan and throughout Iran.

Baghdiantz McCabe persuasively argues that the New Julfa Armenian merchants functioned as financiers of the court, with the kalantar—the administrative head of the community—responsible for delivering profits from the silk trade to the khassa, or royal household. It isn’t absolutely clear from her quite complex discussion how money from the auction purchase of silk compared with the amount the state retrieved from export taxes and profits of the royal mint, through which all foreign gold and silver had to flow. And, of course, the later end to the royal monopoly complicated these finances further. It would have been useful to have had a step-by-step analysis of the finances of silk production and sales from its purchase in Gilan to its sales in Isfahan and abroad, and the Armenian role in producing and marketing silk. However, the author makes the valuable point that this money directly supported the ghulam establishment, the administrative and military core of Shah ’Abbas’s centralized state. And it is a state that Baghdiantz McCabe categorically labels mercantilist.

The author sees the decline of Armenian commercial influence in the silk trade and within Iran generally to date to the reign of Shah ’Abbas II (1642–66). She attributes this primarily to the altered balance of power at the Safavid court, particularly to the loss of influence of the queen mother, who held New Julfa as her personal appanage. The rise in religious persecution and the trouble caused by French-backed Catholics contributed to the decline, which also led many wealthy Julfa Armenians to emigrate to Russia, India, or Europe.

Baghdiantz McCabe’s book represents a major contribution to the history of Safavid Iran, the Armenian community, and the economic history of the 17th century. She has presented important new information on the Armenians themselves and challenging arguments about their relationship with the Safavid court and state. Her analysis of Armenian trading methods and the scope of their international trade provides extremely valuable information for scholars of the period, most of whom do not know Armenian. The comparative discussion of trading minorities in France and Iran is also very stimulating. Unfortunately, the book is extremely difficult to read. The major conclusions are clearly stated, but in many chapters the writing and organization are confusing. Arguments are frequently repeated; subjects are introduced, dropped, then raised again pages or chapters later. Sometimes arguments seem to be contradictory or just not clearly and explicitly stated—as, for example, when the author says on page 141 that “all the silver and gold imported by the Armenians” had to be delivered to the khassa, whereas on page 142 this discussion seems to involve only the fees taken by royal mints. At other times, the point of the argument just is not clear—as on pages 54–59, where the Armenian deportations are discussed. The text shifts back and forth from general comments about the deportations to the privileges of the New Julfa elite to a discussion of infighting within the Armenian church in a way that causes the author’s point to get lost. Some of this confusion may result from what appears to be the author’s conflicted feelings about the Armenians and the Iranian state. Documents are also occasionally presented in a kind of scissors-and-paste fashion, without
effective integration into the argument. The book sometimes does seem to be part of an “Armenian Texts” series rather than a monograph: it needed to be edited much more carefully.

This is an interesting, stimulating, and important work, but may be too ambitious in its attempt to cover so many subjects, not all of which have been mentioned in this review. One of the reasons the book seems so discursive is the author’s attempt to be encyclopedic. Yet it is extremely difficult to discuss all aspects of Armenian trade—even those connected only with Iran—in one book. Baghdiantz McCabe is careful to point out that she wasn’t able to use critically important Russian—Armenian sources, but she also seems to have made very little use of Edmund Herzig’s important dissertation. And the title is misleading in its suggestions that Armenian trade in India is a major focus of the book. India is discussed, but in a peripheral way—and realistically, how could more have been done in a single monograph? After reading and re-reading Baghdiantz McCabe’s book, this reviewer felt that within this volume, there were three or four partly finished books.


REVIEWED BY FARIBA ZARINEBAF-SHAHR, Department of History, University of Illinois at Chicago

The social and economic history of the Qajar period has not received much attention from Iranian or Western scholars. The present book has partly filled this gap by focusing on the biography of a leading Iranian merchant and entrepreneur, Haj Muhammad Hasan Amin al-Zarb. It complements the few existing studies by Issawi (1971), Ashraf (1980), and Natiq (1992) on the economic history of 19th-century Iran. The author shows that the expansion of foreign trade in Iran benefited many native merchants, who successfully used their entrepreneurial skills, experience of the internal market conditions, and family networks to gain an important social and economic place during the 19th century. The Qajar ruler Nasir al-Din Shah encouraged and supported native merchants and provided them with important privileges and concessions. Many leading Iranian merchants, such as Amin al-Zarb, engaged in regional and international trade, set up family firms, and performed important banking functions for the state. Further, they used their capital to invest in manufacturing, mining, communication networks, and education. In the absence of an economic and political infrastructure and state support, their achievements were of limited success. Nevertheless, they left an important legacy of social and political engagement that continued to shape the course of Iranian history in the 20th century.

This biography is primarily based on the Mahdavi family archives. A brief explanation of the content of these archives and their relationship to the subject matter would have been very useful. The book is composed of an Introduction, eight chapters, and a Conclusion, covering the early, middle, and later periods of Amin al-Zarb’s life. It also contains five appendixes that include a biography by his son Haj Muhammad Husyan (Amin al-Zarb II), Amin al-Zarb’s testament to his son, a daily list of household expenditure, a chronology of his life, and two family trees. The book also contains interesting photographs, samples from the Mahdavi family archives, a glossary, and a note on sources.

Muhammad Hasan, later known as Amin al-Zarb (Master of the Mint), was born to a family of merchants and money-changers in Isfahan around 1837–57. He received an elementary traditional Islamic education in the local maktab and soon accompanied his father to his shop in the bazaar. His father died in a cholera epidemic in Kirman that claimed 2,000 more lives in 1846. The family lived in dire circumstances, forcing the young Muhammad Hasan and his two broth-
ers to work as apprentices in the shop of a sarraf (money-changer). He left for Tehran with a small amount of capital to work as an itinerant sarraf and vendor in 1857. He soon managed to attract clients, made a profit, and took his family under his care. Fortune smiled at him when he met and worked for an Ottoman Greek merchant named Panayotti Vassiliadi, who was an agent of the British Ralli firm based in Tabriz. The bulk of Iran's trade with Europe and Russia had historically been carried out by the local Armenians and by European and Russian subjects. Iranian Muslim merchants were latecomers to the scene, although they dominated regional trade in the Middle East. Muhammad Hasan made his first fortune as the agent of Panayotti by exporting cash crops such as opium to Hong Kong, tobacco to Turkey, and sheep wool and silk to Europe. He soon became an independent international merchant and set up his own agents in Iranian cities, Ottoman ports, and European cities such as Marseilles. His success lay in part in his ability to forge a business link with the prime minister (Amin al-Sultan) and become the court banker and Nasir al-Din Shah's personal trader. He became a prominent money-changer and dealt in private bills of exchange and government certificates (barats) drawn on the taxes of provinces. He established shop in the prestigious Saray-i Amir in Tehran's central bazaar. He was appointed master and tax-farmer of the mint (Amin al-Zarb) from 1877–88 and made a handsome profit from these activities. He became a major landowner during the last decades of the century and purchased a park in Yazd, a village near Qum, and another in Mahmudabad, near the Caspian Sea. By the 1880s he had invested in a number of industries, set up a silk-reeling factory in Rasht in 1884, established a porcelain factory, and purchased from the government a concession for an iron-smelting foundry in 1887. He started the project on the Mahmudabad Amul railway in the Caspian Sea area in the same year. He performed two hajj trips in 1863 and 1889. The hajj trips took him from Tabriz to Tiflis, Istanbul, Alexandria, Cairo, and finally, Mecca. He undertook two major business trips to Russia, Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Holland, and Italy in 1887 and 1889. These trips expanded his horizons considerably, and he was impressed by the great progress achieved by Europe, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire when compared with the backwardness of his own homeland. He undertook a private initiative to set up several manufacturing and communications networks with the help of European engineers.

Despite his visionary optimism and considerable efforts, he was aware of commercial conventions imposed by colonial powers such as Great Britain and Russia that undermined local initiative. In a letter he wrote to Nasir al-Din Shah in August 1878, he proposed the establishment of a national bank to undermine the British Imperial Bank scheme. He blamed official corruption, ignorance, and foreign intrigue for the backwardness of his homeland. The aggrieved merchants sent numerous petitions to Amin al-Zarb as the head of the Consultative Assembly of Iranian Merchants in Tehran in 1884 and asked him to plead with the shah to protect their interest against foreign subjects. Whether it was purely out of self-interest or due to the rise of a corporate identity among the native merchants, Amin al-Zarb deeply resented the attempts of foreign concession-hunters to gain control of the Iranian economy. He was adversely affected by the policies of the late Qajar government of Muzaffer al-Din Shah, the successor to the assassinated Nasir al-Din Shah. Both Amin al-Zarb and his mentor, Amin al-Sultan, were dismissed from their posts, and Amin al-Zarb was arrested in December 1896 for his failed policies in the mint. He was soon reinstated as Master of the Mint and was placed in charge of redistributing grain during the famine of 1898–99. He finally became ill with asthma and tuberculosis and died a few months later, at age 63, on 22 December 1898. It is not clear how successful his industrial operations were or how long they lasted in the face of stiff competition with foreign capital and imports. Nevertheless, he died a very wealthy man and passed his wealth and legacy to his son, Muhammad Husayn Amin al-Zarb II. His death coincided with a period of economic and political crisis for Iran, which is not the subject of this study.
This book has made an important contribution to the social history of the Qajar period in Iran. In the absence of a well-organized and accessible national archives in Iran, the use of family archives gains even more importance for this period. A critical appraisal of the contributions of other scholars, especially Issawi, Ashraf, and Natiq, is lacking in the Introduction. Natiq’s work on the Tobacco Regie is also based on the Amin al-Zarb archives and sheds great light on his involvement in the Tobacco Rebellion of 1892. Further, a comparative analysis based on the works of such Ottomanists as Genç, İslamoğlu, Keyder, Pamuk, Kasaba, Quataert, and others would have enhanced the value of the book for a larger scholarly audience engaged in the debate on the world-system theory and the incorporation of the Middle East into the world economy. Nevertheless, the book will enjoy a wide audience among the students and scholars in the field of Middle Eastern studies.


REVIEWED BY KATE FLEET, Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies, Newnham College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, U.K.

This book is a translation and edition of the work written by Spandounes in 1538 and published and edited by C. N. Sathas in Documents inédits relatifs à l’histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge, vol. IX (Paris, 1890). Theodore Spandounes, or Spandugnino, was probably born in Venice and died after 1538. He was sent when young to his great-aunt Mara, widow of Murad II, who was then living in eastern Macedonia, and seems to have visited Istanbul in 1503. At the end of 1508, he was exiled from Venice as a suspected Francophile and was in France from 1509. By 1516, he had returned to Venice.

This book is clearly of much interest for those working in early Ottoman history. However, although the text is presented here, the editing from an Ottoman point of view—and, on occasion, from a Byzantine point of view—leaves much to be desired. It is very surprising that Nicol’s bibliography does not include, for example, Bacqué-Grammont, Kafadar, Köprülü, Lemerle, Mélikoff, Wittek, Vatin, or Vryonis; nor does it include Jonathan Harris’s Greek Emigres in the West, 1400–1520. Ibn Battuta, al-‘Umari, Eflaki, Enveri, Oruç, Bassano, and Iacopo di Promontorio also do not appear in his list of sources. And he does not list Marios Philippides’s translation Byzantium, Europe, and the Ottoman Sultans, 1373–1513: An Anonymous Greek Chronicle of the Seventeenth Century (Codex Barberinus Graecus III).

Many of the terms given by Spandounes simply are not referenced. There is no note, for example, to explain what a paşa (p. 18) was, either in the period in which Spandounes was writing or in the mid-14th century. Nicol makes no comment on the many offices of state described by Spandounes, such as içoğlanı, şarapdar, sancak bey, kapıcı başı (p. 110), çapıncı, hazinedarbaşı (p. 111), or sakka and mirahur (p. 112).

Much of the text is surprisingly absent of footnotes. In the account of the Ottomans’ crossing into Europe as allies of Kantakuzenos (p. 18), Nicol gives no background and makes no mention of the part played by the beyliks of Menteşe and Aydınl. For the passage on a coalition of Christians against the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II, Nicol, in similar vein, gives no notes as to who the people mentioned were, such as the King of Naples, the “conquerors” of the Peloponnese, the house of Tocco, the prince of Gothia, or King Stephano of Serbia (p. 17).

As this text is on the origin of the Ottoman emperors, one would expect a certain amount of Italian rendering of Ottoman words. Nicol sometimes gives the Turkish, sometimes not, and sometimes inaccurately. Cisnairbasi is thus given as casnigir başı (it should be çanıgirbaşı) (p. 111), while nizanzibasi becomes nişançı (i.e., nişancı) on page 116 and nişançı on page
123. Allophanzi is given by Nicol as ulufaji—presumably, ulufeci (p. 119); beichi as peiks (i.e., peyk) (p. 120). Mirahur bassa appears as if this is the Turkish rendering (p. 119), while terzibassi is given by Nicol as terziler, described in the text following this term as the master tailor (p. 120). Zagarizbassi, saravansibassi, cathirbassi, bechlevani, machaiazi (p. 120–21); parachadi (p. 135); cassano (p. 136); sagdz, cozeto, baldacchino (p. 140); and saisma (p. 141) all remain without the Turkish originals.

Nicol’s treatment of Spandounes’s discussion of the origins of the Ottomans is symptomatic of his approach to the whole work. Spandounes explains that “having with the utmost diligence and care searched the historians of the Turks who treat of the origin of the mighty house of the Ottomans, I have found so far as I can see that they are descended from shepherds of Tartary of the race of one called Ogus” (p. 9). He goes on to recount how, during the reign of Sultan Alaeddin Kaykubad, various Tatar families, including “that of Ottoman,” came to live in his territory. In fighting with the Byzantine Emperor Alexios Komnenos, a great favorite of Alaeddin’s was killed by a most valiant Greek knight. “Being much distressed,” Alaeddin called for a volunteer to fight this most valiant Greek, but no one was willing. However, “one of the descendants of the shepherd race of Ogus came forward, a man of peasant stock and of such lowly estate that none of the Turkish writers give him any other name but Pazzo, the fool” (p. 9). Alaeddin turned to his companions, surprised. “How strange it is that from so many warriors I can find no one but a rustic idiot prepared to go to his death to wreak my vengeance” (p. 9). In single combat, the “rustic idiot” killed the Greek and was given as a reward by Alaeddin: “the place called Ottomanzich, from which his descendants took their family name of Ottomans” (p. 10).

This exploit brought the Turk much fame, and thus followers. “It was his wish that they should share everything in common, which made it easier for him to assemble crowds of people around him and greatly to enlarge his territory” (p. 10). During a period of truce, he and his followers plundered and burned a number of surrounding villages, among which was one “called in Greek ‘Dimbos’, which in Turkish means ‘breaking of faith’” (p. 10), and captured a village called Sar. Peace was then made with Alaeddin, who allowed the Turks to “keep the male children of the said village of Sar. It was from them that the name of Janissaries originated, which in Turkish means ‘the young men of Sar’” (p. 10).

Mehmed II, who was not happy with a shepherd origin, according to Spandounes, preferred instead to believe that he was descended from the Byzantine emperor. According to this version, Isaac, a nephew of Emperor Komnenos, went to Alaeddin, who gave him his daughter in marriage and lands, including the village of Ottomanzich. “The Sultan Mehmed believed that this Ottomano, of whom and of whose successors we shall speak later, was descended from Isaac” (p. 11). Spandounes, however, unaided by the work of Christian writers who “have not clarified the matter by their various and diverse accounts of the origin of the Ottoman house,” felt inclined to accept the shepherd origin given by the “Turkish historians” (p. 11).

Nicol makes no attempt to analyze or explain this account of the rise of the Ottomans. He gives no information on who Alaeddin was, or dates, or the significance of this person; nor does he offer any information on where Ottomanzich or Dimbos might have been, or what their names actually were. While Spandounes attempts to give (albeit rather bizarre) translations of Turkish terms, Nicol passes over these in silence and does not even give the origin of the Turkish term janissary. It is particularly interesting that Spandounes refers to the Turk in the story being known only as Pazzo, something again not commented on by Nicol.

Nicol fails to put this account into any context by comparing it with other accounts of the period, Western or Ottoman. Reference, too, to modern scholarship on the origins of the Ottomans would have been most appropriate here. Nicol’s only comment is in his first footnote, for the fourth page of this text, relating to the Fourth Crusade. The first two pages of the text, Nicol tells us, “relate some of the fables and legends about the origins of the Osmanli or Ottoman people and their leaders” (p. 79).
Similarly, in the one footnote for the section of the text on the reign of Osman, Nicol restricts himself to saying; “This account of the emergence of Osman I Gazi (‘Ottomano’) is largely fictitious.” He does not give any information on the people mentioned in this passage, described as the four lords of the Turks near Constantinople, Michauli, Turachan, Evrenes, and Ottomano (p. 15), apart from saying that Osman’s “alleged companions are variously recorded” and giving a reference to Gibbons. Nicol corrects the text where Spandounes claims that Osman ruled for forty-nine years, for, according to Nicol, Osman reigned “rather less” than this, before his death in 1326 (this date being given again by Nicol in p. 81, n. 10). Osman’s death date is, however, not established. This leads Nicol into error again when he corrects Spandounes once more for his dating, saying that Orhan reigned for thirty-six years, not fifty-six as given by Spandounes (p. 81, n. 11). Nicol also corrects Spandounes, who applied the title emperor to Osman. Nicol makes no comment on the election of Osman; nor does he compare this account with that, for example, in Aşıkpaşaşade.

Spandounes interestingly gives a translation for the word gazi, a title he says Murad I applied to himself. Gazi, according to Spandounes, meant “valiant and spirited” (p. 21). Nicol gives no footnote for this, ignoring the decades’ worth of Ottoman scholarship from Wittek’s gazi thesis onward on the significance and meaning of the term in the early period.

This failure to reference the text undermines the value of the edition. Indeed, Nicol’s comment in note 9, on the coalition of Christian forces against Andronikos II, that Spandounes’s account is “too compressed and garbled to be of much value” (p. 81) leads one to question what the purpose of Nicol’s edition is, for surely the value of Spandounes cannot be considered to lie solely in his validity as a “true” account of history? Is not a historian’s job to work with a text on various levels, understanding the writer and the context of the work, and extracting information on the person, times, and setting of both subject and object? A further factor must also be a realization of the limitations of the modern historian. As Faroqhi recently said (Approaching Ottoman History. An Introduction to the Sources [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 172), “This constant dialogue between the researcher and his/her sources would appear to be the very core of our profession.”

From an Ottoman historian’s point of view, therefore, Nicol’s book is useful as a translation rather than as an edition.


Reviewed by Molly Greene, Department of History, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.

Daniel Panzac’s newest book is both refreshing and sad. It is refreshing because, so often, books on Mediterranean commerce tend to paint a picture of the eternal sea, where ships ply their trade in 1700 much as they had in 900. Panzac’s book is a story instead of abrupt shifts and the ability of individuals—in this case, Muslim North Africans—to respond to new commercial opportunities by venturing into previously untested waters. It is a sad book because it documents, in great detail, the ultimate exclusion of this same group of people from the ports of southern Europe, particularly Marseilles. This exclusion was one of the reasons that the North Africans returned to piracy. The French, of course, used the extirpation of piracy as one of the main justifications for their invasion and subsequent occupation of Algeria in 1830.

Panzac’s book, as the title indicates, concentrates on the years 1798–1818. The reason for this is that these were fateful decades whose story has not yet been told. The Napoleonic wars created upheaval in the Mediterranean, as they did elsewhere. This upheaval was a window of opportunity. The North Africans’ initial response was a spectacular revival of the corso, as the long-running pirate war between Christianity and Islam was known. As Panzac documents, the
number of corsairing raids departing from Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers had dropped steadily during the 18th century, but this was reversed beginning in 1798. Very soon, however, by 1806, ordinary commercial shipping overshadowed the corso as North African merchants abandoned the corso in favor of legitimate trade—and, for the first time, began to arrive in great numbers in the ports of southern Europe. This opening to Europe, however, abruptly closed with the return of peace in 1814. European merchants and shippers reappeared in North Africa, and Muslim merchants were not able to maintain the foothold that they had established. The year 1816 marked a turning point. Lord Exmouth’s bombing campaign against Algiers was forceful enough that the North Africans no longer pursued the corso to any extent. Deprived of the revenues of both trade and piracy, the North African leaders tried to exploit the interior of their territories, but without great success. They found themselves marginalized as never before, and their extreme weakness left them open to the European assault that followed.

The book is divided into three parts, which mirror the argument of the book as laid out earlier. In the initial section, after reviewing the history of corsairing in North Africa, Panzac gives a detailed, quantitative account of the sudden burst of corsairing activity after 1798. In the second section, he turns to the new commercial ventures. This section includes a fascinating profile of four different merchant families who were active during this period. The final chapters of the book (there are ten chapters in all) discuss the return of peacetime and its deleterious effects on the North Africans. Panzac relies on a wide variety of sources, and this rich source base gives the book much of its power. European consular sources on North Africa are, of course, plentiful, and Panzac uses them to good effect, as have others before him, although not with such a concentrated focus on these two decades. He has also consulted the health records of the relevant European ports (namely, Livorno, Malta, Marseilles, and Barcelona), which duly recorded the entry of every ship into their harbors. Most originally, Panzac has used local, North African chronicles, both official and private, as well as administrative records from the three regencies. The use of these sources has been made easier, as Panzac himself points out, by the publishing efforts of a number of primarily younger scholars working in France, North Africa, and Egypt.

One of the greatest strengths of Panzac’s book is that he shows how the North Africans were able to marshal their resources and take advantage of the new situation created by the Napoleonic wars. In the mid-1780s, the fleets at Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers consisted almost exclusively of modest ships typical of the Mediterranean. Algiers, the best armed of the three, was equipped with 218 cannons in all. This “naval mediocrity,” as Panzac calls it, was a reflection of the steady dwindling of the corso throughout the 18th century. By 1816, the year of Lord Exmouth’s expedition, all that had changed. The number of Algerian cannon had nearly doubled, to 351, and all three fleets consisted entirely of ships that could navigate year-round; the low-lying “mixed” ships—part sailing, part oared—had become a thing of the past, and ships of the European type were preferred. The first Algerian frigate—armed with forty-four cannon—was constructed at Algiers in 1791 under the direction of a Spaniard.

Panzac points out that this Europeanization of the Maghribian naval forces, hitherto neglected by historians, was carried out before similar programs undertaken in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Many of the ships were built in local shipyards. Others were seized in raids and reworked for the corso or broken up for their wood. A Dutch sea captain seized in one of these raids left an account of this: Peu de jours après, nos vaisseaux capturés, tout à fait vidés, furent complètement démolis; le bois utilisable pour la construction des navires fut soigneusement mis de côté et le reste devint bois de chauffage, ce dernier étant très rare dans le pays. The Tripolitanians imported all the materials they needed to construct their ships, including wood, which came from Albania, southern Greece, Livorno, and the Levant. The Algerians, who were also dependent on imports, however, got their wood from a remote area of eastern Kabylia blessed with vast forests of oak. The government at Algiers was able to establish a reliable supply of oak by cultivating a local family of marabouts and by paying promptly
for the materials furnished. The Tunisians had a similar system, drawing on the forests of Kroumirie.

Just as remarkable is the fact that, in 1806, the North Africans abandoned the corso almost completely to throw themselves into commercial pursuits. Panzac draws a good parallel here with the far-better-known example of the Ottoman Greeks. During the continental blockade, the Greeks were able to further develop their already flourishing merchant marine by taking advantage of the neutrality of the Ottoman flag. The North Africans, both shipowners and merchants, did the same in the western Mediterranean, showing, as Panzac points out, une réelle capacité d’adaptation aux circonstances. For a period of seven years, commerce between North Africa and Marseilles was assured largely through Maghribian ships, a fact that, Panzac points out, has been ignored.

By and large the North Africans developed a commercial fleet out of the corsairing ships. They sailed the same ships, but with fewer cannon and smaller crews. At Tripoli, but not at Algiers or Tunis, the corsair captains and the merchant captains were often the same people. At the height of its activity, between the years 1808 and 1810, the North African commercial fleet was between one-quarter and one-third the size of the Greek fleet. Panzac’s book, then, is an important departure from the overwhelming focus on the Ottoman minorities—the Christians and the Jews—in the commercial history of the Mediterranean. A significant part of that literature takes the commercial endeavors of the minorities for granted; in addition, it assumes that Muslims lacked such a drive. Panzac shows instead that commercial expansion is as much an issue of opportunity as it is of a collective propensity to trade.

In the end, however, the North African merchants met with a very different fate from that of their Greek counterparts. After 1812, the Maghribian commercial presence in the ports of southern Europe fell sharply. Partly, this was due to war between the Barbary states and a devastating outbreak of plague at Malta. But a large part of the explanation, Panzac argues convincingly, must lie with the gradual return of peace and the renewed ability of southern European merchants to exclude the North Africans. The French consuls posted in North Africa at the time themselves protested the treatment meted out to the Maghribians. In 1813, Dubois-Thainville, consul-general in Algiers, wrote the following in a letter: qu’il me soit permis de la dire, les douanes de Marseille et de Livourne ont peut-être exercé envers le Barbareques des rigueurs gratuites qui n’appartiennent nullement au système de l’Empereur. A mon passage à Marseille, en janvier 1811, différents bâtiments algériens y étaient séquestrés: les équipages avaient été arrachés de leurs bords et jetés sur le pavé sans aucune espèce de secours. Ils vinrent me trouver en me disant dans les accès du désespoir: ‘Donnez-nous du pain ou tuez nous.’ The book relates a number of similar incidents. The reversal was sharp and swift. In 1813, Tunisian Muslim merchants were exporting 47.6 percent of Tunisia’s olive oil; European merchants had a 31.8 percent share. By 1819–21, the Muslim share had dwindled to 10.7 percent, while European participation had soared to 82.5 percent. Panzac’s excellent book makes clear what an inhospitable place Restoration Europe would prove to be for the North Africans.


Reviewed by Peter SlagleTT, Department of History, University of Utah, Salt Lake City

This is an exhaustive study of French economic interests in Egypt, the development of a particular type of capitalism in Egypt, and Franco-British relations in Egypt between the British Occupation in 1882 and World War I. It is based on an extraordinarily wide range of sources
from Belgium, Britain, Egypt, and France, including British, Egyptian, and French diplomatic documents and material from a variety of banks and business enterprises, such as the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, Crédit Lyonnais, La Compagnie du Canal de Suez, and La Société Générale. The book was published in 1997, but—and this is the only negative remark I shall make—it is a matter of some regret that (apart from some of the author’s own more recent papers) its very wide-ranging bibliography stops somewhere around the end of the 1980s, possibly because the doctorat d’État, of which this book is “une version réduite” (p. xi) was defended in 1991. There is a warmly appreciative preface by Saul’s maître, Jacques Thobie, author of Intérêts et impérialisme français dans l’Empire ottoman (1895–1914), and Saul expresses his own debt to Thobie and other French historians of overseas investments in Morocco, Russia, and Germany in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Allain, Girault, Guillen, Poidevin).

One of Saul’s concerns is to illuminate the apparent paradox that, although France “lost out” politically to Britain in Egypt in 1882, the volume and value of French economic interests in Egypt always exceeded those of Britain. It is interesting that although on a much smaller scale, much the same thing was to happen in Mandatory Syria, where, as Philip Khoury shows (in Syria and the French Mandate, 1987, p. 48), it was not until the depression that French economic interests “finally overtook” those of Britain. Although under the imperial and colonial control of Britain, Egypt was the sixth-largest recipient of French overseas investment in 1902. Perhaps this is less of a “mystery” than it may first seem, given the particular circumstances of the British occupation. While France remained intensely suspicious of Britain and British motives until, and long after, the entente of 1904, the stability brought by the British occupation, and the virtual impossibility (until 1914) of Britain’s declaring Egypt part of the British Empire, had the joint effect of enabling French investment and trade to flourish and of preventing Britain from establishing the kind of economic exclusivity found in more “conventional” late-19th century colonies.

At the same time, both France and Britain were anxious to restore the full authority of the khedivial regime as a guarantor of the political–fiscal arrangements surrounding the public debt: Les deux s’emploient à mettre l’économie et l’État égyptiens en harmonie avec la service de la dette et la Loi de liquidation. Il y a communauté de vues sur ces points essentiels la politique générale à suivre en Égypte (p. 697). Points of conflict between France and Britain voisinent avec d’authentiques points d’accord, to the extent that, on a large number of key issues, the instructions of British and French diplomats “might well have been drafted by the same hand” (p. 699).

A further factor that is given prominence is the “staticité” of French investments, which were confined almost entirely to the public debt, the Suez Canal, banking, sugar refining, and anything connected with land or cotton. Cotton exports assured the service of the debt (“vache sacrée”), which acted as the main focus of economic activity. This conservatism and a general aversion to risk-taking and the financing of new projects seem to have been a feature of contemporary European overseas investment, as illustrated—as far as the early days of the Imperial Bank of Persia was concerned—in Geoffrey Jones’s History of the British Bank of the Middle East (1986–87). One of Saul’s main themes is that the Egyptian economy at the time is an example of a particular type of finance-capital–dominated imperialism, characterized by close metropolitan control over the capital exported from the metropole.

The book is divided into three substantial parts, each of which could well stand on its own. The first is a history of French economic enterprise in Egypt in the middle and later part of the 19th century, and thus indirectly a study of the process and nature of Egypt’s integration into the world economy. The second, closely linked to the first, combines studies of the three largest French companies—Crédit Foncier Égyptien, Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez, and Sucreries d’Égypte—with a history of Franco-Egyptian commerce. There is a nice echo of Cain and Hopkins’s “gentlemanly capitalism” in Saul’s description of the canal
company: *Fruit du scientisme saint-simonien, c’est aussi une gloire de l’esprit d’entreprise du XIXe siècle, un dilemna sur le plan politique et une grande affaire... Renforçont son cachet de noblesse, le conseil d’adjoint des hommes d’affaires qui passent pour des gentilshommes* (p. 225). The final section is an attempt to assess the objectives of French economic and political activity in Egypt (*L’état français et la politique de l’internationalisation du capital*) against the fluctuations of Franco-British relations, beginning with the hostility of the first couple of years then proceeding through hopes for *une évacuation à l’aimable* (1884–88), *le mirage de l’évacuation* (1888–95), and the subsequent *rupture du dualisme anglo-français* (1896–1904), and finally back to the (at least superficial) warmth of the post-entente period (*La solidarité franco-britannique... 1904–14*).

I found Saul’s account of the course of Egypt’s integration into the world economy especially interesting, and the parallels with 19th century Syria are striking. A similar cast of characters from Chios, Livorno, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire came to both Egypt and Syria, members of some of the same families arriving and opening businesses in both Alexandria–Cairo and Aleppo in the first third of the 19th century. Gradually, the migration of merchants was followed by the export of European capital, and branches of the Crédit Lyonnais (1874) and the Banco di Roma (1880) were opened in Egypt. The process halted briefly during the Egyptian bankruptcy, the creation of the Dual Control, and the early years of the occupation, but by the early 1890s there were substantial numbers of European banks, and, later, department stores, such as Printemps, Galeries Lafayette, and Orosdi Back. By 1911, there were three foreign companies with capital of more than 10 million British pounds (Crédit Foncier Egyptien, the Suez Canal Company, and the Agricultural Bank of Egypt), ten with between 1 million and 5 million pounds, and eighteen more with between 500,000 and 1 million pounds. Total foreign capital in 1911 amounted to some 112.3 million British pounds, spread among 164 companies (pp. 16–17).

Risk-taking was briefly mentioned earlier, but two interesting points about international financial activities deserve to be better known. First, Saul points out that it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that foreign banks began to lend money to Egyptians, and second, that these loans, when they were made, were made largely by German and Italian banks. Indeed, French consular representatives were sometimes critical of, and sometimes astonished at, the facility with which the non-French banks seemed prepared to lend *sans garanties effectives* (p. 21). In Aleppo, French, German, and Italian banks were lending to Syrians at least by the 1890s; the archives of the Marcopoli and Poche family businesses contain a number of letter books replying to queries about the credit-worthiness of individual merchants in Aleppo that they had received from clients of the Crédit Lyonnais, the Deutsche Bank, and the Banco di Roma, in various cities in France, Germany, and Italy. The replies, incidentally, are couched in nicely noncommittal terms: *on dit que..., man sagt...* (i.e., that a certain individual was good for such-and-such an amount of credit).

The immediate imperative of the British occupation was to ensure the service of the public debt, a task carried out enthusiastically by Franco-British Dual Control. As far as French economic interests were concerned, the ideal, more or less realized after 1907, with all its inherent contradictions, was that French capital in Egypt should be subject to French metropolitan control as far as possible: *le contrôle français est présenté comme la sauvegarde de l’épargne contre l’irresponsabilité, voire la manque de scruples, des administrateurs locaux. Sur un plan plus général, il importe de retirer ces masses de capitaux aux étrangers et de les employer comme instruments de la politique française... Est négligé le mal fondamental: le caractère bancal, tronqué de l’économie égyptien, sa surspécialisation et sa sujétion aux intérêts et humeurs de ses bailleurs de fonds* (pp. 218–19).

In a rich and detailed theoretical conclusion, Saul makes a number of original suggestions for new approaches to the study of imperialism-as-export-capital. Although parts of his analysis
are too densely argued for a novice in the field of political economy to follow, I was particularly
struck by the statement that the implantation of capitalism in a Third World or economically
undeveloped society leads, inexorably, either to the control of the capital exported from the
metropole falling into the hands of local elements or to its withdrawal (retrait). This explains
the colonial/imperial power’s desire to maintain its control over the capital exported, for in-
stance, by ensuring that the financial or service institutions created were headquartered in, or
closely controlled from, the metropole. To an even greater extent, it explains the colonial/
imperial power’s opposition to the development of indigenous industry and to investment in
productive economic activities (besides cotton and agriculture). The failure of the Raffinerie
Say—an attempt to set up a sugar-refining industry—described in the middle section of the
book shows some of the contradictions brought about by this kind of economic philosophy.

In the 1820s, various Latin American countries, as well as Greece, Portugal, and Spain,
suspended payment on their national debts. For a variety of reasons—the Monroe Doctrine, the
Holy Alliance—nothing happened, in the sense that the creditors were obliged to ride out the
storm and wait for better days (p. 706). By the 1870s, however, the plight of the creditors of
Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and Tunisia fell on more sympathetic ears, and international debt
commissions were set up in all three states (and in Serbia in 1895, Greece in 1898, and Bulgaria
in 1902), which effectively managed their economies (or, at least, their revenues). This was
clearly a major change of direction—intervention replacing non-intervention—but, most proba-
bly because the control mechanisms were international, they functioned with little disagreement
among the powers concerned. The unraveling of the economic consequences of the internation-
alization of capital in Egypt, and the kind of capitalism that these arrangements created in the
late 19th and early 20th centuries are the central concerns of this pathbreaking and insightful
study.

Kate Fleet, European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: The Merchants of Genoa
and Turkey, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Reviewed by Patricia Risso, Department of History, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Kate Fleet is curator of the Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies, Newnham College, Cam-
bridge. Her book is a study of trade between Genoa and Asia Minor from about 1300 to
shortly after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, a time period corresponding to
commercial strength of Genoa and the development of the Ottoman state toward empire. Citing
the scarcity of Turkish sources, other than chronological lists, Fleet depends heavily on Western
materials, particularly notary deeds in the Genoese archives and published primary sources such
as Balducci Pegolotti’s La practica della mercatura. She also includes, however, some Arabic
and Ottoman Turkish sources.

The central portion of the book paints a detailed picture of commercial transactions. Each of
the central chapters deals with a specific commodity: slaves, grain, wine, alum, cloth, and
metals. The first and last chapters frame this picture with a broad historical overview. There is
also a Conclusion and several appendixes that provide specific price information and texts of
selected documents.

The author modestly argues that pragmatic trade belies any stereotypical dichotomy between
the Turkish Muslim state and Christian Europe (e.g., pp. 11–12). Commercial self-interest may
even have survived the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 (p. 126). Pragmatism rendered
Ottoman trade an integral component of eastern Mediterranean trade (p. 141).

While this basic argument of the book is clear and there is much evidence to support it,
several underlying points are not self-evident. For example, why organize the material by commodities rather than, say, by commercial cities? Is the author’s choice practical or analytic? Another example: the author states in the introductory paragraph to the chapter on slaves that, although Turks and Europeans traded in slaves, “the activities of the Turkish merchants could not be compared with those of the two main protagonists: Genoa and Venice” (p. 37). The substance of the chapter is a fascinating collection of specific examples of the buying, selling, and ransoming of slaves. At least 75 percent of these examples involve Turkish merchants, a circumstance that appears to be at odds with the introductory assertion. Were there numerically more Turkish merchants but a proportionately greater slave trade conducted by Genoese and Venetians? Is the percentage of examples just an artifact of the spotty sources? The concluding paragraph of the chapter says simply that the slave trade was lucrative to both Europeans and Turks but does not return to the introductory point of apparent contrast.

This book represents impressive work with published and unpublished primary sources. I expect that Mediterranean medievalists will be able to mine it for archival gold. I only wish that the author had been more explicitly analytic.


**REVIEWED BY LISA POLLARD, Department of History, University of North Carolina at Wilmington**

In *Women and Men in Late Eighteenth-Century Egypt*, the historian Afaf Marsot has set for herself the task of shattering myths about Egyptian history and the manner in which it is written. To begin with, she attempts to transcend old ideas about the position of women in Egyptian society and to side-step male-authored notions about what women’s roles in that society have been over the centuries. Marsot states that her goal was to write history from the focal point of women and to look at the position of women in Egyptian society as dependent on a multitude of political and economic conditions. This she accomplishes by painting a portrait of 18th-century Egypt designed to transcend another set of notions about Egyptian history. Marsot claims that the decentralized power for which late-18th-century Egypt is characterized (despite Ottoman presence, the Mamluk system prevailed) was actually beneficial to certain members of Egyptian society. Concentrating primarily on the period between the death of 'Ali Bey (r. 1760–75) and the French invasion of 1801, Marsot illustrates that with the state no longer in control of resources, collaborative linkages were created among members of society. Citizens of varied economic levels—Mamluks, affluent merchants and members of the ulama, artisans, *ayan*, village heads, and peasants—were able to play active roles in the economic life of the country, thereby bolstering themselves against political uncertainty. “The acquisition of power—and material wealth which bolstered power . . . were the only constants for males” (p. 21). This was true for women as well as men. “Far from being a stagnant society where the rulers and ruled suffered in silence—where women were merely chattel—Egypt at this time was a dynamic society characterized by change and turmoil, in which women played an important part” (pp. 7–8).

Thus, like the good historian that she is, Marsot has written a book that not only attempts to resurrect the political and economic realities that 18th-century women lived and operated in; it also contextualizes those realities historically. The book’s early chapters paint a rich portrait of power relations in 18th-century Egypt and serve as a background against which she then explains how Egyptians used various economic sources as well as ties to the governing elite to navigate the waxing and waning of centralized power—often to their advantage. By examining
the resources available to different classes (i.e., tax farms, urban real-estate investment, trade, gifts from the ruling elite), Marsot not only illustrates how both ordinary and upper-class Egyptians gained power. She also alludes to challenges awaiting the centralized state in quelling outside sources of influence. Marsot concludes that in the early decades of the 19th century, as Muhammad 'Ali (r. 1805–48) transformed the Egyptian state into a formidable monopolizer of trade, land, and resources, both men and women lost their means of negotiating power. “Concrete changes in the form of government... changes in the means of production, and changes in technology caused changes in the position and role of men and most women in society” (p. 149).

The structure of the book reveals the importance Marsot places on her sources. Indeed, rather than serving as a general primer on 18th-century Egypt, her Introduction acquaints the reader with the numerous deeds she consulted (nearly 800 documents) in order to illustrate the book’s main thesis about power and the exchange of property. Deeds pertaining to notables, ordinary people, waqf and mortmain endowments, court registers, and tax records were consulted to give details about the kinds of property 18th-century Egyptians invested in to acquire and maintain power for themselves. Marsot says that she consulted deeds not only because of what they reveal about commercial and financial transactions, but also because of what they reveal about women’s agency: 30 to 40 percent of deeds registered in the last half of the 18th century were made out by women, revealing a substantial access to property and power. In her use of previously under-examined sources, Marsot provides excellent clues for further generations of historians looking for access to women’s agency as well as illustrations of its import.

Marsot could have chosen a number of titles for this book: “Politics, Culture, and Class in late Eighteenth Century Egypt”; “Property, Prosperity, and Power in late Ottoman Egypt.” The title she did choose belies her real agenda, which is not so much the relationship between men and women, but about relations between Egyptians and the governing elite, regardless of their sex.

Such a critique notwithstanding, it must be said that Marsot’s book is an excellent example of women’s history. Rather than isolating women as exceptional members of Egyptian society, Marsot includes them as part of the fabric of Egyptian culture and illustrates the substantial historical agency that is their due. Marsot rightfully places herself among historians such as Leslie Pierce, Jonathan Berkey, Barbara Stowasser, and Leila Ahmed, whose goal in writing history has been to contextualize rather than isolate women’s political and economic agency.

Paradoxically, however, the book’s strength is also its weakness. “Women and men” can translate into “everyone under the sun,” and often does in Marsot’s research. Although Marsot states that her real goal in *Women and Men in Eighteenth-Century Egypt* was to write women into André Raymond’s master study on merchants and artisans in 18th-century Cairo, in fact it was not only women she ultimately added. Although the book contains great anecdotes about women from different classes, about their relationship to power and money, and about their quotidian habits, women in fact often get lost in the fabric of 18th-century Egypt that Marsot is so keen to chronicle. The book is about so much that the reader sometimes wonders what it is about and how to make real sense of it.

*Women and Men* has, since its publication in 1995, found a welcome place in 18th-century studies (its publication, along with Jane Hathaway’s work on households in Ottoman Egypt, has served to broaden the historian’s understanding of power and how it was constituted prior to the advent of the nation-state in Egypt) and in women’s studies. Its greatest contribution, perhaps—one that Marsot herself seems to downplay—is in alerting the reader to the real destructive power of the nation-state vis-à-vis women’s access to the political and economic arenas. So much has been made over the past two generations of scholarship of the modernizing and reforming forces of the central state that, when centralization appears as the villain at the end of *Women and Men*, readers who have heretofore applauded the state-building programs of
the 19th century are forced to rethink the very meaning of “reform” and “modernity,” especially as they pertain to women’s political and economic agency.

Thus, Marsot has been successful indeed in shattering myths about Egyptian history.


REVIEWED BY SYLVIA WING ÖNDER, Division of Eastern Mediterranean Languages, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Elisabeth Özdalga’s book is an important introduction to one of the issues that has been front-page news in Turkey since the 1980s. The most visible and controversial sign of the increasing participation in public discourse of Islamic revivalists has been the marked increase in numbers of women in urban spaces and institutions who wear the particular form of dress called tesselûr, a public symbol of a personal commitment to a certain form of Islamic values. Özdalga’s focus is timely and of interest to both a Turkish audience and a Western one, although it speaks mainly to the latter. The banning of the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) from Turkish politics since the publication of the book, as well as the internationally noted furor surrounding the election to, and subsequent dismissal of, a headscarf-wearing woman in Parliament, show that what the author calls Turkey’s “large-scale attempt to integrate Islam within the institutions of a modern, liberal democratic polity” (p. viii) continues to be a vitally important and controversial subject. Her book attends both to the symbolic power and legal status of women’s clothing in public debate and to women’s actual participation in the re-formations of public and private definitions of citizenship.

This is a slim volume, with ninety-three pages of text, of which three case studies take up thirty-four pages. Özdalga provides useful photographs of Islamist clothing and illustrations taken from Turkish mass-media sources, and a glossary of relevant Turkish terms. In the Preface, we are given a brief summary of the history of politics in Turkey, with the case of the integration of an Islamist party given as the most serious recent challenge to the strength of Turkish democracy. After a summary of various related historical and sociological factors, the author aims to explore the personal and political aspirations of individual women who have chosen to wear headscarves. Head-covering women, once assumed by the secular elite (of the West as well as of Turkey) to be a voiceless and oppressed rural mass requiring liberation and modernization, have grabbed the national headlines with their active political protests, unmistakably urban presence, educational advances, and modern consumer habits. The author’s main aim is to contribute to an open dialogue on the subject of women and Islamic dress in Turkey by introducing a few personal histories to provide the depth missing in newspaper photographs and to “go beyond the surface of official ideologies” (p. x).

Özdalga’s chapters “Historical Background,” “Official Secularism and Popular Islam,” and “Islam and the Politics of Reconciliation” are all meant to be short summaries of complex issues. The author contributes to the growing literature critiquing the ideology of Kemalism, especially in its emphasis on secularism. The irony of this critique lies in the convoluted history of modernism, which produces Western authors whose prose, even if at times self-consciously, is based on an assumption of a natural progression toward democracy, the separation of religion and politics, and the relativism of open dialogue, while, at the same time, is able to denigrate those in non-Western countries who subscribe to similar philosophies. “As though intoxicated by the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the positivistic thought of the nineteenth century, the Turkish nationalists” (pp. 1–2) and “All through the nineteenth century, Ottoman society
had been under the spell of modernizing reforms” (p. 7). Western historiography and social science continue to claim the advantage over non-Western scholarship in a bizarre post-colonial form of colonialism. “Modern Turkish historiography had generally been reluctant to take a critical stance towards the official, secularist and republican ideology. Research related to the period in question has more often than not been coloured by the evolutionary modernism of nineteenth-century positivism, which constituted one of the pillars of the Kemalists’ worldview” (p. 14). I would argue that the work of non-Western historians has contributed greatly (and simultaneously rather than belatedly) to the worldwide scholarly reaction against “the evolutionary modernism of nineteenth-century positivism.”

The chapter “Legal Aspects of Veiling” is one of the most important contributions of the book. After a brief review of the legal system and of the convoluted history of constitutional changes in the country, Özdalga begins a detailed analysis of the controversies surrounding the legal status of the headscarf, beginning in the 1980s. She convincingly describes the social effects of changing policies and inconsistencies in the enforcement of laws. This is a picture of political complexity, of the necessities of compromise and alliance, and of the disjunctures between official policy and its implementation. This chapter should serve as a handy reference on the political and legal status of the headscarf, especially as current events continue to highlight the symbolic power of this issue.

The weakest arguments of this book come as the author ventures to explain the religious bases for cultural behavior. Although careful to avoid alarmist phrases such as “Islamic fundamentalism,” Özdalga’s examination of what she calls “popular Islam” would be greatly served by attention to the recent careful work by anthropologists such as Vernon J. Schubel and John R. Bowen working in Islamic contexts. (See Vernon James Schubel, Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shi'i Devotional Rituals in South Asia [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993], and John R. Bowen, Muslims Through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993].) She is correct in the idea that the terms Sufism and tarikat need to be examined for their contemporary relevance to the discussion of political Islam in Turkey. However, the author is not an expert in religion, and in fact makes surprisingly simple statements, such as, “According to a common Christian understanding, piety mainly concerns a person’s inner life” (p. 20), and comes close to attributing the Kemalist’s sense of the proper line between personal belief and public secularism to this so-called Christian ideal. It may be argued that this understanding of piety is very common and long-standing in Muslim culture. For example, both secularists and Islamists in Turkey attest that clothing is the most superficial of signs and says little about personal piety. The booming tesseßir fashion industry and the active consumerism of Islamists have undoubtedly drawn moral criticism from religious leaders.

This book missed the opportunity to jettison the weary, ideologically loaded term veiling in favor of terms such as headscarf and covering, which are more appropriate translations of Turkish terms. The author also missed a chance to spell out for a foreign audience the stereotypes held by Turkish secularists about women who cover their heads. Many Turks of the urban elite, coming as they do from a well-established culture of modernist values, European fashions, secular education, and a long-standing tradition of cutting off or obscuring the connections between personal religious values and political life, tend to consider the women they see wearing headscarves to be villagers who have recently moved to the city, who are possibly of non-Turkish ethnic origins, from exceedingly religious and patriarchal families, or are ignorant, passive, or simple-minded and married to brutish, reactionary, and jealous husbands. Özdalga interviews three women who seem to have been chosen carefully to explode these stereotypes. Their histories show them to be conscious actors in their choices, in pursuit of education, upwardly mobile, fashion-conscious, and capable of acting independently of the wishes of their families. Failing to define the stereotypes she wishes to break down, the author also solicits no
concrete information about these women’s ethnic, or regional origins or about their social connections to rural communities. This lack of socio-economic, ethnic and regional background is surprising in work done by a sociologist and leaves room for the continuation of these stereotypes. A clear description of the rural variations of headscarves, including photographs, also would have been an important contribution to the information taken for granted within Turkey but unavailable to outsiders. The difference between the headscarf worn by a villager (usually mass-produced cotton, often decorated with hand-embroidery) and the urban, Islamist headscarf (usually mass-produced polyester or silk, without hand-made edging) is crucial to those women who wish to present themselves as upwardly mobile, publicly and politically active, yet morally chaste city-dwellers. Turkey’s secular elite has had a much stronger reaction to this aggressive clothing choice by young people than they have ever had against rural traditions or the habits of the elderly—both assumed to be on a natural path to oblivion.

This book can be a useful case study for those interested in Islamic revivalism and its impact on the politics of countries in the broadly defined Islamic world. It can also serve as an example of local, situational complexities, breaking down over-arching stereotypes of “Islamic fundamentalism” in the Western media, in which images of women in Islamic garb are used to posit irreconcilable differences between East and West. The case studies of three individual women who have chosen to wear (or, in one case, to give up wearing) the headscarf would be excellent contributions to classes on comparative religion, as they demystify the beliefs of Muslim individuals and provide insight into the complex psychological, social, political, and cultural particulars of a religious faith that is most often studied (in Western scholarship) from official religious texts rather than from personal perspectives. This book joins other recent works from scholars of Turkish culture, such as those represented in the edited volume of Sibel Bozdogan and Reşat Kasaba (Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997]), who are able to address the complex interactions between secular and religious ideologies of modernism and tradition.


REVIEWED BY DONNA ROBINSON DIVINE, Department of Government, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Scholars often acknowledge reproductive behavior as a core issue in Israeli politics but they seldom examine how public policies affect family size. Israel has designed no official government fertility program, but the country’s leaders are nevertheless obsessed with Jewish natality. Israeli women are bombarded with regulations affecting access to contraceptives and abortion procedures and with all sorts of unsubtle massages about the importance of mothering as a factor in the state’s continuing vitality and fulfilling its national purpose. Jacqueline Portugese explains Israel’s ongoing efforts to encourage a high Jewish birthrate by focusing a feminist lens on public discourse, popular culture, and particular policies, all of which, she argues, have a highly pernicious impact on women. Despite the differences in feminist perspectives on the issue of fertility, they share a critical stance toward state regulation of the family, and all aid Portugese’s narrative in uncovering and explaining the large repertoire of relatively intrusive regulatory mechanisms at the disposal of the government. The special insight of Fertility in Israel lies in its clarifications of the connections between seemingly benign welfare benefits and tax incentives and denying women autonomy with regard to the decision to bear children.

State control over reproductive behavior arises, according to Portugese, out of a patriarchal ideology whose imperatives are cast as both religious and nationalist. Jewish religious law—
halakha—considers the bearing of children a sacred obligation and a concrete sign of God’s blessing. Influenced by religious teaching drawn from Judaism’s holiest texts, strongly held beliefs about family and children were only deepened in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the catastrophic destruction of European Jewry. For many survivors, recovery from this tragedy could come only by producing large families.

Zionism, Israel’s nationalist ideology, strengthened the country’s commitment to patriarchy by generating a macho culture that reinforced the kind of familism so hostile to women’s interests and rights. Zionist political leaders always saw children born and raised in the newly developing Jewish society as the foundation of the future state and social order. For much of the 20th century, the patriarchal culture of familism structured political agendas and shaped the direction of policy initiatives. Moreover, the tenacity of familism influenced at the most basic level how people conceived what they wanted for themselves and for others. In Israel, the full force of a not-so-subtle public disdain can fall on those without children as living in entirely unnatural conditions. Not surprisingly, then, Portugese notes that fertility drugs are widely dispensed in Israel, with virtually no objections raised about the inadequate disclosure of possible harmful side effects for the mother.

Patriarchal values are also implanted into Israel’s popular culture by the prestige of the military and the overwhelming dominance of security issues as matters of public debate and concern. Wars create casualties, but they also establish gender-based distinctions between home and front line. In the context of ongoing confrontations and the possibility of violence, home takes on a meaning replete with romantic and idealized views about the family, providing justification for combat and concrete reasons for soldiers to risk their lives in dangerous operations.

Instilled with this credo of patriarchy and familism, politicians across the political spectrum have sponsored or endorsed myriad regulations that attempt to reach and control decisions with regard to having children. In Portugese’s words, “family planning services are . . . both deficient and underdeveloped” (p. 117). Contraceptives became widely available in Israel only in the late 1970s, and for a very long time they were not covered by the national health-insurance system. Although expanded in recent years, government funding for family-planning services is still limited and directed mostly at new immigrants who are perceived as possibly infected with the AIDS virus or as disposed to relying on abortion as a means of holding down family size.

Access to abortion is impeded by cumbersome layers of bureaucratic procedures and varies widely across towns and regions in the country and among hospitals. Portugese observes that Israel’s Labor Party prefers to encourage fertility through welfare and tax benefits, whereas the Likud, which is typically dependent on support from the religious parties, tends to restrict and discourage abortion as a way to increase the size of the country’s Jewish population.

Of course, the pro-natal policies for Jews are countered by a number of measures intended to reduce the birthrate among Israel’s Arab citizens. Resources mobilized to support families with large numbers of children are available only to Jews. Health facilities providing fertility drugs and treatments are generally located relatively far away from areas with high concentrations of Arab populations. The political obsession with declining Jewish birthrates is mirrored in the preoccupation with high fertility levels within the Arab community.

In a country absorbed with its population size, demographic studies are common, and many are excellent. But few interrogate the assumptions of public policy and practice from the point of view of women’s interests and rights. Seen through the prism of Israel’s five decades, this study might be considered part of a larger body of revisionist scholarship engaged in probing the extent to which actions intended to service Israel’s national purpose have actually done so, and at what cost. Fertility in Israel thus expands the scope of critical revisionist work and applies it to new dimensions of society. Portugese’s book draws out the linkages between ideas and actions and shows how patriarchy generated and perpetuated patterns of reproduction that
could accommodate only one family model and one set of conceivable choices about bearing children. Still, Portuguese may have focused too exclusively on Israel’s patriarchal heritage: fertility patterns for the country’s growing middle classes are not so different from trends toward decline in other Western societies and may not be totally constitutive of patriarchal notions. Pro-natal policies may have emerged from a multiplicity of factors rationalized by patriarchal ideological underpinnings, but not entirely reflective of them.

The struggle for a Jewish state has always been a battle for population growth and a secure demographic basis for national self-determination. Confronted by a much larger number of Arabs living on the land they claimed, Zionists were also defensive about the much larger stream of Jewish immigrants making their way to the shores of America, not of Palestine. The size of Israel’s Jewish population has always been assigned a value denoting both viability and legitimacy, turning demography into a national-security issue. According to this reading, Israel’s obsession with fertility is literally a matter of the country’s political life or death.


REVIEWED BY VALERIE J. HOFFMAN, Program for the Study of Religion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Vincent Cornell’s Realm of the Saint is a masterly work, indisputably authoritative, the result of more than twenty years of research on Sufism in Morocco and Al-Andalus. Drawing on a critical reading of a vast array of textual sources, including hagiographies, histories, didactic treatises, devotional works, and poetry, this book brings to light material that has been virtually untouched in academic studies on Moroccan Sufism. As Cornell points out, Morocco has become a paradigm for the anthropological analysis of Sufism, but the vast archival resources of Morocco had been hitherto largely untouched by academicians. Through detailed analysis of the lives of many Sufi saints as presented in hagiographical literature, exploring both the ideological and sociological dimensions of sainthood in the Moroccan context, he convincingly argues that the “doctor” versus “saint” topos that prevails in the anthropological literature does not do justice to the reality of pre-modern Moroccan Sufism. He also deconstructs the centrality of “maraboutism” and rurality in Moroccan Sufism. Cornell compares his findings with studies of saints in Europe by scholars such as Peter Brown and Thomas Heffernan, as well as with the Weberian theories of charismatic leadership that have prevailed among social scientists, displaying an extraordinary range of competence in the literature of several academic disciplines. It is a rarity to find a scholar of Cornell’s deep understanding of Arabic and Islamic tradition who also places his research within the broader context of the study of religion. Nevertheless, scholars outside Islamic studies are unlikely to read this book because of its length, excessive detail, and frequent use of Arabic terms, despite the presence of a glossary of technical terms at the end of the book.

The enormous amount of historical detail in this book grants Cornell’s theses their authority, but it also will undoubtedly detract from the accessibility of the text to a broad audience. This is not a quick or easy read, and it is often difficult, in light of the vast number of “important” scholars described here in such colorful detail, to assess which ones one ought to tuck into one’s mind for further reference. A seemingly endless series of colorful personalities of both religious and political importance play out their dramas on the stage and then depart, leaving one sometimes grasping for threads of continuity or rationales for inclusion. Somewhat problematically, each of the personalities is portrayed as unique, but ultimately they are found to fit into a common paradigm. Although the author does provide helpful summaries that indicate
what he was trying to demonstrate in each chapter and, at the end of the book, in the book as a whole, one cannot help wondering whether the point might not have been made more clearly if there had been less detail. The wealth of detail provided here, however, including often lengthy translations of passages in original Arabic texts, will certainly please specialists in the study of the Maghrib. Cornell’s study should be of interest not only to scholars of Sufism, but also to scholars of Moroccan politics, because he documents very thoroughly the role of Sufi saints and Sufi ideology in Moroccan politics from the 11th through the 16th centuries and ultimately helps fill in gaps in current scholarship concerning the origins of the Sa’dian Sharifian dynasty.

The title of Cornell’s book, unlike that of the dissertation on which it is based, no longer makes reference to the author of Dala’il al-khayrat wa shawariq al-anwar fi dhikr al-salat ‘ala ‘l-nabi al-mukhtar (Proofs of the Good Things and the Radiance of Lights in the Recollection of Blessing the Chosen Prophet), Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Jazuli, who serves as the culminating figure in the book, the point of transition between pre-modern and modern Moroccan Sufism. However, Cornell’s analysis of Jazuli’s ideas and their impact on the development of the centrality of devotion to the Prophet and fanā’ fi ‘l-rasul in Sufism, the development of the Jazuliyya order and its branches, and the role of the Jazuliyya in establishing the Sa’dian dynasty are among the more valuable aspects of the book. Along the way, Cornell cautiously questions the relevance of the notion of “neo-Sufism” to connote modern Sufi orders that emphasize mystical union with the Prophet. He notes that Jazulite shaykhs who wrote on “the Muhammadan Path” relied on Ibn al-'Arabī’s model of sainthood and were not linked to “stark and sober reformism.” My own concurrence with this notion is evident from my article that appeared in the August 1999 issue of IJMES and need not be replayed here. It is unfortunate, however, that although Cornell was aware of the relevance of R. S. O’Fahey’s important work on Ahmad ibn Idris to the challenge to the notion of neo-Sufism, he appeared not to be aware of the important article O’Fahey co-wrote with Bernd Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered,” Der Islam 70 (1993): 52–87. Scholars in Europe have been debating this term for a number of years.

Cornell displays a tendency to belittle the contributions of other scholars and to exaggerate the singularity of his own conclusions. For example, he dismisses most anthropological studies of Moroccan Sufism for their lack of ideological focus, but he sees his recognition of sainthood as a social phenomenon as unique. It is clear to this reviewer that most academic studies of Moroccan saints have been sociological in nature, so this focus can hardly be the “corrective” he intends. However, his work is unique, to my knowledge, in its statistical analysis of the sociological data one can derive from the biographies of saints provided in Moroccan hagiographies, and the depth of his analysis of Sufi writings in Morocco has no precedent. Perhaps the real “corrective” is his combination of these two methodologies, which are too seldom used together. Considering the wealth of data Cornell produces, he is perhaps justified in dismissing anthropological studies of Moroccan Sufism as “impressionistic” and poorly grounded empirically. His analysis of Jazulite ideology also allows him to dismiss the socio-economic determinism in the studies of scholars such as Mohamed Kably.

At times, Cornell seems to pull in contradictory directions: on the one hand, he speaks of Moroccan Sufism as unique, while on the other, he insists that Moroccan Sufism is fully linked to international Sufism, as evidenced by a number of Moroccan Sufis who studied in Iraq and the influence of the works of Ghazali and the Khurasanian futuwwa tradition—not to mention the enormous impact of Muhammad Sulayman al-Jazuli’s Dala’il al-khayrat on Sufi devotions throughout the Arab world. It is not clear to this reviewer how Moroccan Sufism as such is unique, for this is never sufficiently clarified in the book. At one point, it appears as if Cornell sees Moroccan Sufism’s linkage with tribal affiliation and political alliances as unique, but one need only look to the history of the ‘Alawīyya, Sanusiyya, and Khatmiyya, among other orders,
to see ample evidence of the broad geographical range of this linkage. Other features he appears to see as paradigmatically Moroccan are scrupulous observance of the shari’a and sunna, the subordination of mysticism to juridical Islam and the existence of a number of juridical Sufis, asceticism and care regarding the halal origin of the food one eats, and so on—all aspects of the salih, or righteous person, whom Cornell sees as the paradigmatic saint of Morocco—but these features are extremely common among Sufis throughout the Arab world, as the author himself probably realizes. Even the nearly Shi’i bent of Moroccan Sufism, which endorses the notion that holiness is acquired both by specifically Sufi practices and by descent from the Prophet, is not a unique feature of Moroccan Sufism, despite its fame for being linked with the endorsement of Sharifian politics. As Cornell undoubtedly knows, shurafa’ are deeply honored throughout the Muslim world, and the ‘Alawiyya of the Hadramawt, who spread throughout the Indian Ocean region through the migration of Hadramis, again provide an example of a Sufi order that linked these two aspects of holiness. Likewise, Cornell speaks of how Muslim scholars in the Far Maghrib often composed Alfiyyas (poems of one thousand lines) as pedagogical devices, not only for grammar, but in other subjects, as well. However, this is common not only in the Far Maghrib but also in the entire world of Arabic scholarship, even south of the Sahara and on the Swahili coast. The uniqueness of Moroccan Sufism is therefore not clear to the reader who is familiar with Sufism in other parts of the Arab world. Cornell’s success in undermining the prevailing theories of Geertz and Gellner regarding Moroccan Sufism has, if anything, clarified how much Moroccan Sufism has in common with the rest of the Arab world. Perhaps Cornell is merely exercising appropriate prudence by not generalizing from his study of Moroccan Sufism to the Arab world as a whole. His work is, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive treatment of the phenomenon of sainthood in the Muslim world, and as such it should be of interest to all scholars of Islam.


REVIEWED BY CHRISTOPHER S. TAYLOR, Department of Religious Studies, Drew University, Madison, N.J.

In this original and intriguing study, Jonathan Katz explores and analyzes the dream diary of a little-known 15th-century North African Sufi saint (*walî*), Muhammad al-Zawawi of Bijaya (modern Bougie, Algeria). Over a ten-year period (1447–57), al-Zawawi kept a nearly complete diary of his dream encounters with the Prophet Muhammad. Consisting of 109 entries, al-Zawawi’s *Tuhfat al-naẓîr wa-nuzhat al-manaẓîr* traces his visionary career across North Africa from Bijaya to Cairo and back.

Modern scholarship on Sufism is still dominated by studies of the thought and careers of great mystical masters, which makes this book such a refreshing change. Through Katz’s masterly organization and presentation of the material in al-Zawawi’s visions we are introduced to the life, times, and weltanschauung of a minor Sufi saint, who, but for the accident of historical preservation, would otherwise be virtually unknown to us. And what a wonderfully recognizable world it is that al-Zawawi inhabits and tries to muddle his way through, full as it is of subjective understanding, fortuitous victories and setbacks, inscrutable choices, contentious and unappreciative colleagues, and petty quarrels. Muhammad al-Zawawi has a problem: he is a great saint, probably the hidden qutb or axis of the age, but only he and the long-dead Prophet Muhammad recognize this fact. In the meantime, al-Zawawi must cope with a host of indignities and insults flowing from the world’s unfortunate oversight of his identity. That al-Zawawi
still lies in his grave awaiting the recognition he knew was his due makes his dream diary such a treasure for social historians interested in the neglected world of rank-and-file Sufis.

Muhammad al-Zawawi was both a trained faqih, or jurist, and a Sufi, part of the Wafaiyya circle of the Shadhili brotherhood so prominent in Egypt and North Africa. He was the disciple of Sa’id al-Safrawi, himself a student of ’Ali ibn Wafa. Al-Safrawi’s prominence in the annals of Shadhili hagiography is itself not great.

In his earliest dreams (1–24) al-Zawawi’s conversations with the Prophet center mainly on the former’s wish for confirmation of his status as a walı and his exact place among the other disciples gathered around Shaykh al-Safrawi. Clearly, al-Zawawi’s standing with al-Safrawi was not assured, nor was his prestige among the inner circle around the aged shaykh high. In the next set of dreams (25–39), al-Safrawi has passed from the scene, and al-Zawawi faces both the loss of his spiritual adviser and the struggle for succession among the shaykh’s followers. These fourteen dreams also shed light on al-Zawawi’s business affairs and his recurring inner struggle over whether to remarry or purchase a concubine to satiate his carnal desires.

Slightly more than three years separate dreams 39 and 40. When the Tuhiba resumes in July 1451, al-Zawawi is based in Cairo, having already performed the hajj. The largest set of dreams, 52, span the seven-month period of al-Zawawi’s sojourn in Egypt. Although now more firmly confident of his own status among the friends of God, al-Zawawi still struggles against the ignorance that obscures his cosmic importance. His residence in Cairo suggests that al-Zawawi was not the victor in the struggle to succeed Shaykh al-Safrawi. Cairo was a new and larger world filled with many opportunities, the perfect place to be discovered. Although al-Zawawi was modestly more successful in Cairo at attracting a small following, even securing an audience with the Mamluk sultan, he remained frustrated and undiscovered. Business concerns and angst about how best to channel his sexual urges continue.

The last thirteen dreams in the Tuhiba cover two periods: the first two and the second five years after al-Zawawi’s return to Algeria from Cairo. The work concludes as al-Zawawi is finalizing plans to publicize his dream diary in yet another ill-fated effort to win recognition. In the Epilogue, we learn that al-Zawawi died some two decades later, apparently disheartened and still rejected by his peers.

Katz’s study gives us a wonderful view into the mind and world of an average late-medieval Sufi. Beyond the petty squabbling that dominated al-Zawawi’s relationship with his colleagues, there is much rich detail here. For example, the tensions between ‘ilm and amal al-Zawawi had to cope with both as a member of the ulama and as a Sufi are striking. The way in which his profane business and personal affairs weave their way through his esoteric development are also fascinating. The glimpses al-Zawawi gives us of life among the expatriate community of North African ulama drawn to the great city of Cairo are similarly invaluable. Finally, the psychological dimensions of the Tuhiba are limitless.

Most of Katz’s attention, in fact, is attracted to analyzing the psyche of his subject. Although I appreciate his efforts in this regard, I ultimately find Katz’s diagnosis of al-Zawawi as suffering from “severe narcissistic personality disorder” uninteresting at best. Perhaps my own bias here should be acknowledged. I question the possibility and efficacy of psychoanalyzing someone such as al-Zawawi, who has been dead for more than 500 years, on the fragile evidence of his dream diary. Clearly, the Tuhiba is full of fascinating psychological insights, but whether Freudian analysis is the most useful approach is another matter.

Fortunately, Katz has not allowed his own psychological interpretation of al-Zawawi to render this book useless to anyone but aficionados of psychohistory. I found Katz’s observations on the psychological profile of his subject intriguing and unintrusive. Where they seemed to fit well—for example, in al-Zawawi’s penchant for wanting to save prostitutes from a life of sin—I found Katz’s comments useful. In other areas, where I either found the case more tenuous or other questions simply more interesting, it was easy to set aside Katz’s analysis without
One substantive criticism of Katz’s brilliant effort is simply that I feel he overstates the uniqueness of al-Zawawi. Dreams of the Prophet were more common than Katz suggests, and I suspect that al-Zawawi’s claims were not as extraordinary or unusual as this study indicates. Likewise, Katz has not fully appreciated the importance of dreams in a world where post-Qur’anic revelation is impossible. The need is not for new revelation but, rather, for freshly inspired interpretation, and it is in this regard that dreams are so critical. They open doors to vital new ways of seeing old truths. Unfortunately, modernity has left us with too little time for dreams, which is why we too easily dismiss them.

With these minor exceptions, Katz has produced a real gem. This work will be of great interest to specialists as well as to those who are interested more generally in comparative mysticism and psychological aspects of religion. Katz’s fluid prose and clear explanations make this book readily accessible and thoroughly enjoyable to read.


REVIEWED BY MURIEL ATKIN, Department of History, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

This book focuses on the cultural dimensions of the Central Asian form of an Islamic modernist movement, Jadidism, which arose among several groups of Muslims of the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Politics was not an option for the Jadidists until the final years of the czarist monarchy and the early revolutionary period, so the author relegates that aspect of the movement to the later chapters. To the extent that involvement in politics in Russia became possible, Central Asian Jadidists sought to participate, not to pursue either isolationism or separatism. According to the author, Russian officials were the ones who mistakenly assumed that Jadidism posed a separatist threat; subsequent generations of scholars misperceived the movement through the lens of those fears. The author argues that culture is a significant dimension of the movement in its own right. It mattered in Central Asia both in the rivalry between the Jadidists and traditionalists for leadership of the region’s Muslims and as a way for educated Muslims to preserve their distinctiveness within the Russian Empire.

In any event, political activity brought disappointment to the Central Asian Jadidists. They were never able to develop widespread public support. Attempts to work with Russian liberals and Muslims elsewhere in the empire produced unsatisfactory results. This drove some Jadidists into the ranks of the communists after 1917. Most of the Central Asian Jadidists-turned-communists were destroyed in the purges of 1937 and 1938 for such crimes as “bourgeois nationalism.”

Central Asian Jadidism was as much a product of the changes brought by Russian rule as it was a reaction against it. The movement was “a modern ‘response’ to modernity, which sought to reconfigure the entire world, including Islam” (p. 102). The theaters, publications, postal service, new forms of social organizations, and other novelties introduced by the Russians became essential to the transmission of ideas that influenced Jadidist thinking and to forums in which they spread their message. The book’s discussion of the way incorporation into the Russian Empire changed life for the indigenous inhabitants of the governorship-general of Turkestan is one of the best treatments of that subject in print.

The author depicts Jadidism as a form of Islamic revival. For all the Jadidists perceived Islamic practice as it existed in Central Asia in their day as associated with the backwardness and consequent weakness they sought to overcome; they were not anti-religious. By spreading their version of enlightenment, they strove to create a “new elite [that] was to be modern but
also Muslim and Turkestani” (p. 218) and thus would be equipped to uphold the region’s interests in the modern world. Jadidists believed that a purified, reinvigorated Islam could flourish in the modern world and invoked Islam to justify the reforms they proposed. Although they rejected the standard education of the region’s maktab and madrasas as leaving students ill prepared to function in the modern world, they never intended to purge Islam from the curriculum of the new schools they established. The author’s assessment of those traditional schools differs from the usual view, which, like the Jadidist critique, emphasizes the contrast between that approach to education and the modernist approach. Madrasas were not intended to be the equivalent of modern universities, the author observes, and therefore, whatever their shortcomings, they should not be faulted for failing to be what they never sought to be. In the author’s opinion, the traditional education was designed not only to impart a knowledge of Islamic law, but also to instill in members of society the standards of behavior and traditional Islamic culture of Central Asia. The Jadidists themselves were products of that educational system and cultured in the traditional understanding of the term. This is one of the ways that they were different from their counterparts among the Tatars or Transcaucasians, who were more likely to have attended Russian schools.

Although Central Asian Jadidists perceived harmful consequences of the Russian presence, their message contained only limited criticism of the Russians. In part this reflected the constraints imposed by czarist censorship, but it also reflected the Jadidists’ respect for what was Russian or European as embodying progress. At the same time, they were highly critical of Central Asian society, depicting those internal shortcomings as the ultimate cause of the region’s problems. They saw the region’s traditional religious elite as ill suited to leadership in modern times—superstitious, possessing only a superficial knowledge of Islam, and willing to collaborate with the Russian regime for the sake of self-interest. Jadidists were equally critical of the new elite of wealthy businessmen who arose after the region’s incorporation into the Russian Empire. To the Jadidists, the new elite was content to pursue its own enrichment within the empire and saw no need for cultural modernization. The Jadidists also criticized the new elite for squandering its fortune on conspicuous consumption instead of using it for the benefit of society.

A widespread assumption about Jadidists is that their ideas derived from Russian and Western European sources. The author gives a more complete picture. To the extent that Central Asian Jadidists were exposed to such works, the knowledge came indirectly, through publications by Muslims from other parts of the empire or elsewhere in the Muslim world. Moreover, developments in the Ottoman Empire and in Egypt had as much influence on the Central Asians as did Tatar modernism. Some Central Asian Jadidists traveled abroad; some went to Istanbul to study. The importation of books also facilitated exposure to new thinking in the wider Muslim world.

One of the book’s numerous strengths is its focus on what made Jadidism in Central Asia distinctive, despite the influence of other Muslim peoples of the Russian Empire, especially the Volga and Crimean Tatars. For all that ideas circulated among them, the social context that gave rise to Jadidism in Central Asia differed from what existed elsewhere in the empire. The various Jadidist groups did not act in concert, even when new political opportunities arose. Central Asian Jadidists objected to making Tatar or Ottoman Turkish the basis for the language to be used in their textbooks and other publications. Although educated Tatars lived in Central Asia and some taught in Jadidist schools there, they tended to keep to themselves. Russian officials took steps to minimize their influence. Tatar Jadidists focused on their own concerns. “Ultimately,... Tatars wrote for a Tatar audience, in which Central Asians occupied a marginal place. . . . Central Asian Jadids were fully aware of this fact” (p. 91).

Even though the Central Asian Jadidists saw themselves as part of the Muslim world of the Russian Empire as a whole and beyond its borders, they considered Central Asian Muslims a
distinctive community and downplayed the ethnic and tribal differences among the region’s indigenous peoples. Their approach to reform focused on diagnosing the problems particular to Central Asia and proposing remedies. Their concept of the nation hinged on the definition of Central Asians as Muslims, thus emphasizing their common cultural, rather than strictly religious, bonds as a way to overcome the differences among the region’s inhabitants.

The author’s assessment of this quest for a regional identity leads him to conclude that Uzbek national identity had its roots in the ideas of pre-Soviet Central Asian intellectuals, including the Jadidists, rather than being the arbitrary creation of Soviet nationality policy of the 1920s, to which it is often ascribed. The region’s Jadidists were influenced by the publications of intellectuals from the Ottoman Empire and Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire about Turkic identity and Central Asia as the Turkic heartland; they were also influenced by the linkage between race and ethnos-linguistic categories that became part of nationalist thought in general by the early 20th century. This prompted Central Asian Jadidists to focus on Uzbeks, by which they meant the region’s sedentary Turkic-speakers in addition to the Uzbek tribes, as the core nationality of the region. They thought it was important for Central Asians to have their own literary language that was close to the vernacular and came to see this as Uzbek. At the same time, they became increasingly hostile to the Persian-speaking Tajiks as alien and corrupt; their criticism of traditional Islamic education acquired anti-Persian overtones.

The author makes good use of sources in Uzbek, Tajik, Turkish, Russian, and other languages to convey a rich sense of the Central Asian society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Much of what has previously been written about Jadidism has viewed it from the perspective of the Russian Empire. The author does not slight that but balances it with the perspective of the Muslim world, to which it also belongs, and the distinctive characteristics of Central Asia. The author’s insights offer a new understanding of what Jadidism signified in its Central Asian context. This impressive book deserves to be essential reading for anyone interested in Islamic modernism, the history of Central Asia, or the history of Muslims of the Russian Empire.

DAVID MARSHALL, God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers: A Qur‘anic Study (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999). Pp. 204. $75.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DEVIN J. STEWART, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.

This work is a careful examination of the punishment narratives in the Qur’an, focusing on the “triangular drama” among God, Muhammad (along with the believers), and the unbelievers. Expanding the work of Horovitz, Bell, and others, Marshall’s analysis builds on the observation that Qur‘anic narratives concerning earlier prophetic figures often reflect and comment on, more or less directly, the contemporary situation of the Prophet Muhammad. Many passages portray Noah, Hud, Salih, and others addressing their peoples in their capacity as messengers of God. They are rebuked and meet with little success in their efforts to convince the unbelievers of their misguidance and to convert them to worship of the one true God. They then warn the unbelievers of the dire punishment that awaits them should they insist on refusing to believe, but to no avail. God inflicts the threatened punishment upon the unrepentant peoples, annihilating them in a cataclysmic event: the flood in the case of Noah’s people; a raging wind in the case of ‘Ad, the people of Hud; a shower of stones in the case of Lot’s people; and so on. These narratives portray the relationship between the messengers and their recalcitrant audiences in some detail and can therefore serve as the basis for a fruitful analysis of the relationship between Muhammad and the unbelievers among his people, the Quraysh.

The book is divided into four chapters. The Introduction addresses general questions relating to the research on the Qur’an, such as the study of the Qur’an by non-Muslims and the use of
critical theory, then presents the method the author is adopting. He looks principally at the Qur’an itself, without recourse to hadith or other texts such as the *Sırah* of Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham. He assumes the general reliability of the Qur’an as a historical document and analyzes the narratives in the putative order of revelation, essentially following the chronology of the text reconstructed by Weil, Nödeke, and Blachère. While acknowledging Bell’s point that many of the suras are composite, Marshall questions some of Bell’s interpretations of passages in Meccan suras as Medinan revisions. Chapter 2 introduces the topic of punishment narratives; Chapter 3 discusses the punishment narratives during the Meccan period; and Chapter 4 discusses the punishment narratives during the Medinan period. The main points of the analysis are cogently argued and clearly presented. In the Meccan period, the punishment of the unbelievers is undertaken by God alone and is unmitigated by any other agent, including the messenger or the believers. Many passages show that the messenger is torn between his duty to God and devotion to the truth, on the one hand, and his love and concern for his people, despite their recalcitrance, on the other. The Meccan and early Medinan suras, Marshall shows, reflect a gradual shift in Muhammad’s attitude toward the unbelievers. He, at God’s urging, becomes more resigned to the fact that the unbelievers inevitably will be destroyed. As time goes on, he feels less compelled to argue on their behalf or express remorse or compassion for them. In the Medinan suras, however—and particularly following the Battle of Badr—it is envisaged that the punishment of the unbelievers, though still meted out by God in theory, will occur at the hands of the believers. As Marshall puts it, there is a narrowing of the functional gap between God and Muhammad along with the Muslims. The triangle, as Marshall describes it, narrows, and Muhammad’s attitude toward the unbelievers becomes closer to God’s own attitude. The Battle of Badr, where the Muslim army defeated the Quraysh, is thus a crucial turning point in the development of the punishment narratives and in the relationship of the Prophet and the Muslims with the pagan Quraysh. The narratives in later suras implicitly equate the military exploits of the Muslims with the expected act of divine punishment. Although there is a major shift between the Meccan and the Medinan paradigms in terms of the Prophet Muhammad’s and the Muslims’ relationship to the unbelievers, there remains a basic continuity in God’s condemnation of the unbelievers. Here, God’s justice outweighs His mercy, which, as Marshall argues, is contingent on belief.

The overall quality of the study is excellent. It includes many insightful interpretations, among which is the discussion of the Prophet’s and the believers’ participation in divine characteristics evident in certain Medinan passages, such as Qur’an 9:128, where the Prophet is described as *ra’īf, rahīm* (merciful) (pp. 164–85). There are surprisingly few problems with transliteration, an exception being two references to *bākhī‘ nafsaka* (p. 109) for *bākhī‘ un nafsaka* (worrying yourself to death). This is also true of the translations, though it is quite clear, not least from Marshall’s own analysis, that derivatives of the root *nsr, nasra, nastr, anṣār*, and so on should not be rendered as “to help, helper, helpers,” as he and many others have done (pp. 136, 148–52, 176–78). Rather, because they appear in contexts of (military) conflict, they should be rendered as “support, ally, allies,” or using similar terms. The same can be said of *awliya‘* (sing. *wail*), often rendered as “friends” (p. 182) rather than as “allies, supporters.” One might suggest, however, that Marshall’s triangle ought to be a rectangle. Although he does not completely ignore the distinction between the messengers and their loyal believers, the book’s focus on the conflict with unbelievers causes him to confl ate them to a great degree, placing them at the same corner of the triangle. A more comprehensive of the punishment narratives might separate messengers and believers, allowing for a more complete discussion of the relationship between them.

In a short appendix, Marshall addresses the treatment of the punishment narratives in the *Sırah* of Ibn Hisham. He finds that the *Sırah* does not portray the threat of temporal punishment as a major component of Muhammad’s preaching to the unbelievers at Mecca and remarks that
this may be because the content of the *Sīrah* has much more to do with Islam as it took shape at Medina than it does with Meccan Islam. One might counter, however, that discussions of such a temporal punishment would more likely have been found in Ibn Ishaq’s first book of the *Sīrah, Kitāb al-mubtada’,* which discussed earlier prophetic figures in detail and which Ibn Hisham did not include in his own abridgment (see Gordon D. Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet* [1989]).

Marshall admits that his study arose in part as a result of interest in Christian–Muslim relations, and it is this interest that led him to include in his work two Afterwords, one of which discusses reflections of the Meccan and Medinan paradigms in contemporary Muslim thought, and the other of which makes comparative comments about the Qur’an and the Bible. The work can profitably be read without these Afterwords, which are only tangentially related to the main text.


REVIEWED BY BRUCE B. LAWRENCE, Department of Religion, Duke University, Durham, N.C.

This is the slyest, and therefore smartest, assessment of Islamic fundamentalism currently available. The author, a prolific Lebanese political theorist, has offered in this, his fourth monograph on the subject, a well-argued, highly original thesis. Moussalli asks one basic question: does Islamic fundamentalism have a philosophical basis? “Yes, it does,” he replies, “but it is not the same basis for all Islamic fundamentalists.” He then proceeds to demonstrate how particular Islamic fundamentalist theorists have addressed issues such as ideology and knowledge, society and politics, from their own philosophical perspective. The argument is markedly tilted toward politics, as each of the six chapters examines either a facet of political philosophy or the discourse of a particular theorist on the Islamic state. The first three chapters are framed as general overviews, first of the fundamentalism–modernism dyad, then of the epistemological divide between divine revelation and human reason, and finally of the discursive dichotomy between the Islamic state and democratic pluralism. The next three chapters shift to dominant theorists, the three “heroes” of Islamist ideology. Chapter 4 examines Hasan al-Banna on the Islamic state; Chapter 5, Sayyid Qutb. Chapter 6 takes up the most prominent current Islamist: Hasan al-Turabi. Not since Hamid Enayat’s *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Texas, 1982) has any scholar made such a comprehensive effort to trace the patterns of similarity—and the evidence of conflict and disagreement—among the major ideologues of Islamic fundamentalism.

The scholarship is as rigorous as the thesis is original. Moussalli has advanced all his arguments on the basis of primary documents from Arabic (though in the case of Mawdudi, the original language was Urdu, not Arabic). Not only has he thoroughly read the Arabic sources, but he has also provided insights not readily found in other English-language collections, whether monographs or co-written or edited volumes.

The Conclusion attempts a chapter-by-chapter summary of the principal arguments of the book; it also makes a plea for better use of religion at its best. “While capitalism is concentrating wealth in fewer hands and technology is spreading into more hands, religion—whether Islam, Christianity, or Hinduism—is spreading and intensifying to such an extent that it cannot be ignored or excluded in the formulation of new world, regional, and state policies. The basic contribution of religion could very well be its universalist character, providing inspiration and resources for the humanization of the use of technology and the (re)distribution of capitalist wealth” (p. 186).
What is extraordinary about this book is its central analytical strategy: to distinguish moderate from radical fundamentalist discourse. Whether one looks to an academic study such as Johannes J. G. Jansen’s *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Cornell, 1997) or a popular book such as Karen Armstrong’s *The Battle for God* (Knopf, 2000, esp. 218–58), one finds fundamentalists pitted against other believers and only radical Islamists cited as representatives of Islamic fundamentalist ideology. Few before Moussalli have attempted to differentiate internally what too often is bandied about as a generic anti-Western Islamic terrorism, with the assumption that every Islamic fundamentalist harbors a hatred for, and advocates violence against, all versions of a consensual world order. For Moussalli, by contrast, the key interpretive move is to go beneath the broad category and sort out the several groups collapsed within it. “Islamic fundamentalism,” he writes, “is actually an umbrella term for a wide range of discourses and activism, which tends to move from a high level of moderate pluralism, and thus inclusive democracy, to extreme radicalism, intolerant unitarianism, and thus exclusive majority rule. While some fundamentalist groups are pluralistic in terms of inter-Muslim relations and relations between Muslims and minorities, others are not. Again, while some fundamentalists are politically pluralistic but theologically exclusive, others are accommodating religiously but direct their exclusivist programs to the outside, the West, or imperialism. Even at the scientific level, Western science and technology are argued for by some fundamentalists as Islamically sound, while others exclude them because of their presumed un-Islamic nature. More important, while most fundamentalists call for pluralistic democracy and argue for it as an essentially Islamic point of view, the radicals [but only the radicals] brand it as unbelief” (pp. 68–69).

Despite the novel and welcome trajectory of this monograph, it has a few shortcomings that ought to be noted briefly. Principally they are biographical and bibliographical. The biographical background data on each of the theorists, for instance, is not equivalent, so that while all are briefly introduced in Chapter 1 (pp. 20–22), only two, Qutb and al-Turabi, are given an expanded profile at the beginning of chapters 5 and 6, respectively, where their views on the Islamic state are reviewed in detail. Especially overlooked is an-Nadwi (whose name is also consistently misspelled as al-Nadawi throughout), even though he is introduced, correctly, as “the most important fundamentalist writer on the need for Islam as a civilizational force in world politics” (p. 21). One would have welcomed some reference to the long essay that von Grunebaum wrote on an-Nadwi in *Modern Islam* (Random House, 1964), and then the refutation of von Grunebaum’s approach in Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual* (1976).

Concerning the bibliography, there are numerous errors of both oversight and mistaken attribution. Entries for Mawdudi’s numerous writings are especially problematic. Often the Arabic and English translations from the Urdu originals are entered as different writings, with no apparent awareness of their common dependence on Urdu originals or their own overlapping identity. The most glaring replication is *al-Jihad fi al-Islam* (Lahore, 1979), then translated into Arabic in Beirut the next year. More complexly, *Nizam al-Hayat fi al-Islam* is the Arabic translation of the original Urdu *Islami tahzib aur uske usul o mabadi*, which was first translated into English as *The Islamic Way of Life* before being rendered into Arabic as *Nizam al-Hayat fi al-Islam*. No one would expect even the most skilled documentarian to make all these textual connections, but it is the absence of any reference to the Urdu antecedents, along with the double referencing of English and Arabic translations, that will cause mild confusion for the informed reader.

One could also cite other bibliographic lapses, such as the notation of Gilles Kepel’s *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, without reference to its French original, *Le Prophete et le pharaon*, or the listing of Marshall G. S. Hodgson’s three-volume magisterial work, which should be *The Venture of Islam* (not *Venture of Islam*) and was published in 1974, not 1961.

Yet these are minor quibbles from the margins. They do not, and cannot, detract from the central, distinctive achievement of Moussalli’s pioneering work. It is a subtle analysis of a very
complex topic, and as such it bears comparison with the more topically limited, but more theoretically nuanced, work by Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton, 1999). Euben’s work looks only at the radical version of Islamic fundamentalism as represented by the person, and output, of Sayyid Qutb; yet like Moussalli’s broad-gauged project, hers also suggests a dialogic model of interpretation, offering multiple modernities rather than a single Euro-centric teleological model as the surer path to a brighter future of millennial inclusivism. Because students of global politics and trans-national religion as well as comparativists of all stripes are beginning to look beyond the simplistic condemnation of all fundamentalists, especially those labeled “Islamists” or “Islamic fundamentalists,” they would profit from reading both these books, beginning with Moussalli’s.


**Reviewed by Issa J. Boullata**, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal

In this book Geert Jan van Gelder, Laudian Professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford, studies how Arab–Islamic culinary culture was represented in Arabic literature. He thus contributes to our knowledge of both Arabic literature and, indirectly, Arab–Islamic gastronomy and cookery. Although representations of food as such are not the finest aspects of Arabic literature, and the preparation and consumption of food are not the finest aspects of Arab–Islamic civilization, his perspective throws light on little-studied facets of Arab–Islamic culture that are worth noting.

There is far more literature in Arabic on wine than there is on food. Nevertheless, there is a considerable amount of literature on food that begs for attention, and van Gelder has chosen to give it his. He does so with erudition, acumen, and wit. His research takes him through hundreds of Arabic primary sources, including belles lettres, history, travel, geography, lexicography, philology, theology, Qur’anic exegesis, hadith compendiums, poetry collections, folk literature, encyclopedic works, and cookbooks to tease out of them the needed information. He also makes use of hundreds of secondary sources in European languages dealing with Arab–Islamic culture and civilization and some with Western gastrology that tempt him to make occasional comparisons.

Research shows that there have been strong relationships between food and literature in all cultures. Everyday language often unconsciously uses words that can refer to both. The English word *taste* (Arabic *dhawq*), for example, can refer to the degustation or savoring of food and to the appreciation of literature, art, and, by extension in Arabic, spiritual reality in mystical experience. The Arabic word *adab*, now meaning literature and—in classical times—belles lettres, means erudition but also good manners. Works of *adab* have a usually moralistic content that can entertain and simultaneously teach good manners, much as food can nourish and be pleasant-tasting at the same time. Further, there seems to be an etymological link between *adab* and *ma’duba* (banquet), both having *’db* as root (pace K. Vollers, who suggested that the former might be a back-formation from *a¯da¯b*, plural of *da/b*, meaning custom, whose root is *d*b).

Banquets may have become fine expressions of sophistication as Arab–Islamic civilization developed, but one must remember that generosity was a prime Arab virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. Pre-Islamic Arab poets extolled this virtue even before Islam. 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famine (Q. 90:14) as good deeds. The Qur'an also mentions prohibited and permitted foods and which edibles believers are expected to find in paradise and unbelievers in Hell. Lawful food is said to be a blessing from God to be enjoyed. The hadith literature elaborates on these matters and mentions food in the life of the Prophet and his Companions.

But as Arab-Islamic civilization developed, van Gelder shows, food came to be part of a more complex social setting and intellectual ambience. In the longest chapter of the book, entitled “Adab or the Text as a Banquet,” he reviews citations of food in several belletristic anthologies, such as works by Ibn Qutayba, al-Jahiz, Ibn ‘Abd Rabhih, al-Raghib al-Ishahani, al-Zamakhshari, al-Ibshih, al-Tanukhi, and others. He also comments on the kinds of foods referred to therein, on table manners, on differences between refined urban foods and coarse bedouin foods, and on certain types of people, such as misers, gate-crashers, and parasites, and their attitudes toward food. He reviews poems as well as narratives in the maqāmāt genre and analyzes the discourse in them on dishes. He also studies several cookbooks, one of the earliest preserved books being Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq’s Kitāb al-Ṭabkha, which contains many poems that are, van Gelder says, “perhaps the equivalent of the luscious colour photographs of modern cookery-books” (p. 63).

Less delectable is the literature of cacophagy, scatology, and coprology, where food is used in texts of satire, parody, lampoon, and mischievous jesting. Although often imaginative, this adab is no promoter of good manners, as it dwells on filth, excrement, and base references to sex and bestial qualities. In a 1988 book, van Gelder had studied “the bad and the ugly” in classical Arabic invective poetry. In the second-longest chapter of this book’s six chapters, he focuses on how food was represented in abusive discourse and in bawdy stories. He leaves practically no stone unturned as he digs in this literature for examples.

His final chapter, “Alimentary Metaphors”—one of the shorter chapters—is a delightful study of the use of food in the imagery of love, lovemaking, and enjoyment of good things in life. It also contains information on what Arabic books of oneiro-criticism said about dreaming of particular foods and how these were interpreted metaphorically.

Van Gelder has made good efforts to be comprehensive but acknowledges that his study is not exhaustive. I found his book interesting for its contributions to culinary history as a tool for understanding literary texts, even though I do not consider these texts as the finest of Arabic literature. He admits to the riches of Arabic literary history but has chosen this narrow field of it to lament that it “has no Athenaeus with his stunning Deipnosophists or Plutarch with his Symposiaka” (p. 6). Is it the Orientalist superiority complex in him that adds, “Arab readers may find some consolation in the fact that Athenaeus, at least, was born in Egypt”?


**REVIEWED BY OWEN WRIGHT, Department of Music, School of Oriental and African Studies, London**

As the first general introduction to the musical worlds of the successor states to Soviet Central Asia, this admirable work fills an important gap. Moreover, it does so in an individual and highly attractive way, eschewing the would-be objectivity of a dryly analytical monograph in favor of a looser framework of travel accounts, each rich in specific and revelatory detail but, at the same time, developing a series of thematic constants. To cover all of Central Asia in this way would have been an impossible task, however, and what we are presented with is in essence an exploration of widely separated and contrasting urban and rural areas of Uzbekistan.
supplemented by forays into northern Tajikistan. Beginning in Tashkent, the itinerary proceeds successively through Bukhara, Surxandarya, and Qashkandarya in the south, and Khorezm; then to Tajikistan (the Upper Zaravshan and Yagnib, and Shahristan); and finally (following the fortunes of Bukharian Jewish émigré musicians) to New York.

True to its subtitle, the work begins with a description of journeys—in this case, by rail and air, in turn lurid and depressing—from Moscow to Tashkent, and the pace at first appears almost as slow as that of the train. But what seems like digression is purposeful, and we are soon taken into a series of biographical sketches, usually distilled from numerous meetings and interviews, that set up the basic oppositions running through the work. A particular reason for beginning in Tashkent is that the author spent his first, and evidently highly frustrating, period of study in Central Asia as a doctoral student attached to the Tashkent Conservatory in 1977–78. But although it is colored by the author’s early experiences, the book draws more extensively on fieldwork carried out during the period 1990–94, much of it in the company of the Uzbek musicologist Otanazar Matyakubov, with whom the author has evidently established a most fruitful relationship of academic cooperation and who plays throughout a pivotal role as authoritative commentator.

As historical background, we are introduced first to the colorful and indomitable widow of the composer Kozlovsky. A friend of Akhmatova during her Tashkent period of evacuation, Kozlovsky serves to conjure up both the febrile world of a Russian intelligentsia in exile and a particular strand of imperialism that could engage in uneasy transactions with the culture it encountered, exploit it for exotic and atmospheric effect, but not come to terms with it as an equal. Another and more malign strand is evoked through the portrayal of Karomatov, seen as a projection of official Soviet artistic policy as it sought to create artificial national identities and, through the straitjacket of conservatory-style teaching, effectively reduced previously fluid and constantly re-created traditional repertoires to what the author terms “frozen music,” an inviolate notated corpus that did not preserve tradition but, rather, only succeeded in embalming it as a cultural museum exhibit performed by large ensembles that suppress individual creativity and impose bland conformity. But at the opposite end of the spectrum we are exposed to something that for the author is equally distressing: the kind of entertainment music that popular taste increasingly favors for the crucial social event of the wedding celebration. Here we are briefly given a vision of Liberace dress-alikes and audiences pummeled by grossly amplified and distorted “schmaltzy Russian–Uzbek techno-ethnic folk-pop music.”

In opposition to these aberrations is set the musicianship and personal integrity of Turgun Alimatov and Arif Xatamov. It is in particular through the sympathetic and dignified portrait of the former that we are offered a model paradigm: an artist of stubborn individuality who avoided being stifled by institutional orthodoxy; a great respecter of tradition, but, at the same time, a creative innovator who gradually fashioned a personal synthesis of materials from the shash maqâm; and a living embodiment of a culture that, quietly and patiently, somehow endured the rigors of the Soviet period, remaining constantly alive both to its bilingual literary heritage and to a set of ideals of character and behavior grounded in a sober but tolerant Islam. He is the first of a number of musicians who conform in in a variety of ways to the author’s ideal, performing “not for a paycheck but out of a sense of service to community and to God.”

As epigraph, tellingly, stands the third of Rilke’s Sonette an Orpheus, which ends: In Wahrheit singen, ist ein andrer Hauch./Ein Hauch um nichts. Ein Wahn im Gott. Ein Wind.

Part of the journey, then, is a quest for tenacious survivals, of both musical materials and spiritual values. Inevitably, hopes are sometimes dashed, as with the vain notion that a certain elder might be a secret repository of the grand medieval tradition of theoretical knowledge that had in fact petered out soon after its final flowering in Timurid Herat toward the end of the 15th century. But disappointment is immediately canceled by the alternative postulate that he and others like him preserve a different and more ancient tradition of musical science, one that
intuitively evaluates the effect of the conjunction of text and music within an ethical framework that has in the course of time become colored by Sufi values. Perhaps not surprisingly, there are occasional hints of wishful thinking—or, rather, of exaggeration in the starkness of the dichotomies proffered. It is, for example, almost as a conundrum that the reader is presented with the fact that “an instructor at the Conservatory, a conspirator in the official conservation of frozen music” could at the same time be the inspirational teacher of another and much younger “traditional innovator,” Munajat Yulchieva.

An even bleaker contrast is presented at the end of the work, in the person of Talmasov, from a distinguished line of maqām singers, whose performance at a Bukharan Jewish toy in New York consisted of items such as “O sole mio” and Stevie Wonder songs. But here the author ruminates wisely on the mutability of tradition as it responds to shifting social demands, and before reaching this point, he provides a varied and absorbing narrative, its particulars sometimes harrowing, occasionally amusing, but always telling, vividly conveying to the uninitiated something of the sights, tastes, and smells of Transoxania. Musical information is seamlessly integrated into a wider account of social behavior and ideology, and in addition to further investigations of the current state of the maqām repertoire and its practitioners, there are fascinating sections on the baxshi and zhirau bards and epic singers. Sensitive to gender relations and to the frequent hardships of women’s lives, the author also gives welcome and sympathetic attention to female performers, ranging from prominent classical and pop singers to wedding entertainers and even a baxshi healer.

With the stress on musicians’ biographies and social contextualization, relatively little room is left for musical analysis, although contrasting vocal styles are perceptively discussed and several song texts are given (in both transliteration and translation). Occasional examples of notation are also provided, but generally the reader is referred to the accompanying compact disc (which unfortunately was not available for review). Surprising in such a serious scholarly work is the absence of a proper bibliography, but this quibble apart, The Hundred Thousand Fools of God is a book that deserves an unreserved welcome. Probing and wise, it is a work of considerable distinction that should reach far beyond its immediate ethno-musicological audience to anyone interested in contemporary culture and society in Central Asia.


REVIEWED BY MAHMOUD HADDAD, Department of History, Ballamand University, Lebanon

Taha Husain remains a pivotal figure in modern Arab and Egyptian cultural life even after his death in 1973. The present work successfully attempts to study his educational journey and treatment of the cultural encounter between the East and the West. It begins by criticizing Taha’s admirers who assume a consistent writer and fail to see that under the surface, “Taha’s thought is riddled with all sorts of tension and ambivalence.” It also criticizes the structuralist methodology used lately to study Taha’s critical thought because it presupposes that this thought underwent no essential change. Abdelrashid Mahmoudi rather employs a historical methodology in which chronological order is combined with change and development.

The book provides an overview of Taha’s educational journey from a small kuttab (Qur’anic school) in upper Egypt to his education at al-Azhar, then at the Egyptian University, and finally at the Sorbonne in Paris. What is interesting in most of these phases is the conflicting cultural currents amid which Taha found himself. At al-Azhar, he witnessed the raging conflict among the religious establishment and the Islamic reformist trend represented by Muhammad Abduh. As a result, Taha rebelled against al-Azhar’s scholasticism and turned toward literature. Distanc-
ing himself from the religious institution, he was further radicalized when he entered the newly opened Egyptian University and interacted with the secular Lutfi al-Sayyid, on the one hand, and his European professors on the other, a development that interested him in the study of history and positivist thought.

His tendency to see more than one point of view in one certain phase, and the influence of the conflicts in each phase of his education, remained with Taha Hussain in subsequent phases. It is possible to speculate that this recurring paradox had its roots in his own personality, which was profoundly pessimistic and yet optimistic. He was pessimistic due to the loss of his eyesight at an early age, but optimistic because he did not let that infirmity hinder him from engaging in everyday life and enjoying its pleasures. He did not succumb to what he himself thought the blind medieval poet Abu'l-'Ala' al-Ma'arri (the subject of his doctoral thesis at the Egyptian University), succumbed to—that is, a self-imposed solitude and too much self-analysis. The influence of Muhammad `Abduh on him was not, as the author rightly gathers, mainly in the domain of religious reform but, rather, in Arabic literature. `Abduh and another reformist figure, Shaykh Sayyid Ali al-Marsafi, were concerned with the revival of Arabic classics, and both inspired Taha to read primary sources and to break with conventional Azhari commentaries and subjects. This is especially important because it led Taha to fundamentalism of the literary kind, so that his heroes were not the early Muslims but the early models of pre-Islamic Arabic literature. The same concern was shared by the Orientalist professors who arrived in Cairo to teach in the first Egyptian national university between 1908 and 1914. Taha quickly established good relations with them, regarded them as men of integrity, and was receptive to their influence. Mahmoudi provides us with a handy survey of some of those Orientalist professors during that period. We receive insightful and informative synopses about Carlo Nallino (1872–1938), David Santillana (1855–1931), and Louis Massignon (1883–1962).

Taha’s early writings, however, reflected the kind of paradox mentioned earlier. Although he started writing in al-Jarida of Lutfi al-Sayyid in 1908 and was influenced by al-Sayyid’s moderate temperament, legal training, and Egyptian-centric views, he nevertheless was pulled in the opposite direction by Shaykh Abd al-Aziz Jawish. The latter belonged to the National Party and was a militant populist and agitator calling for immediate Egyptian freedom from British occupation within the framework of the Ottoman caliphate and belonged to the Islamic reformist trend of thought. Taha vacillated between those two trends for quite some time, to the extent that he used to publish “his sober pieces in al-Jarida, while reserving his excesses for the papers of the National Party.” Although it took al-Sayyid four years to win Taha over to his line of thought, Taha retained some of Jawish’s influence, especially in the style of his writing. Jawish’s vigorous and flowing diction, which had its roots in Azhari tradition, was embraced by Taha and remained with him. The author makes the point, on the basis of a selection of Taha’s early writings on literary criticism, that his thought tended to be conservative until 1911, when he turned into a modernist. Unfortunately, the present work does not address Taha’s early writings on social and political subjects, although it calls for such an endeavor as necessary to gain a complete picture of his evolution.

Taha’s early positivism started in Egypt in 1911–14. But it was during his second phase of education, when he traveled to France, that he realized that positivist modernism was not homogenous, as he had thought in Egypt, but riddled with fractures. Again, Taha did not choose between the different trends in Western positivist thought; he tried to reconcile them.

At the beginning, however, Taha used this reconciliation or synthesis in a way that emphasized the superiority of the West over the East. Taha sought to unite Durkheim and Seignobos, two Western positivist modernist thinkers, together against the Arab or Oriental thinker Ibn Khaldun (the subject of his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne). Taha combined Durkheim’s method, which was hostile to the philosophy of history and to the introduction of psychological factors in sociological explanation, with that of Seignobos, who held that history is only what...
can be critically derived from written sources. Although Taha considered Ibn Khaldun a highly original thinker and the first Muslim to have “written in an almost modern form the history of their literary and intellectual development,” he nevertheless attacked his enterprise in the *Muqaddimah* as belonging to neither “scientific history” nor to sociology. On the first count, he maintained that the *Muqaddimah* pertained to the philosophy of history, and not to “scientific history,” according to modern schools of history that argued that history is in the main a study of the material traces of the past. On the sociological count, Taha held that Ibn Khaldun’s essential concern was historical rather than sociological, and that he approached history as an account of political events. Mahmoudi perceptively takes issue with Taha here, accusing him of speaking with two voices with no regard for consistency. In fact, Taha condemned Ibn Khaldun’s philosophical speculation without taking into account that Durkheim himself reflected on social facts. In addition, although it is debatable that Ibn Khaldun was exclusively concerned with political history, Taha overlooked the fact that Seignobos, among other spokesmen of “modernity in history,” favored political, not sociologically oriented, history. Another example of Taha’s preference for the West took place in 1919–25 when he held that in ancient times, the Greek mind, which stood to represent the West, was characterized by rationalism and attachment to freedom, while the Oriental mind was characterized by the religious spirit. It was the rational Greek thought that defeated the religious Oriental mind and unified the world.

In 1923, however, Taha opted for a conciliatory paradigm between the East and the West. He suggested that religion serves a psychological purpose and wondered whether religion and science could be combined in a state of equilibrium. Not being confident of such a reconciliation, he tried to assign each side of the conflict a separate sphere of competence. This vacillation demonstrated the beginnings of the failure of Taha’s positivist approach. It was confirmed in the early 1930s when he spoke of the Qur’anic miracle and practically accepted the curtailment of the scope of science. In the late 1930s (1938), Taha produced his well-known book *Mustaqbal al-thaqafa fi misr* (The Future of Culture in Egypt). Here, again, he attempted to find an equilibrium between the Egyptian and European civilizations by forwarding the thesis of the commonality among Mediterranean civilizations. But in so doing, Taha glossed over two sets of problems: the first is the tension between the notion of an Egyptian separate and eternal identity, which he accepted from his mentor Lutfi al-Sayyid, and the European identity; the second tension is one generated by the conflicts between the two sides of the Mediterranean, especially in the period when the Western colonial onslaught was about to enter a new and ugly phase against the Arab world.


**REVIEWED BY CYNTHIA NELSON, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, American University in Cairo**

The attempt to put into words what is fundamentally a visual experience confronts this reviewer with an enormous challenge. Being neither artist nor art critic, I must approach the task through my lens as friend and long-time admirer of Gazbia Hassan Sirry, one of Egypt’s leading modern artists, whose varied and innovative artistic career spans more than fifty years. Perhaps in this way I can create a context within which this book can be read, appreciated, and, I hope, used by those scholars who are interested in the dialectic between art and society, artist and social transformation.

It was just after the 1973 October war that I first met Gazbia Sirry. The circumstances
leading to our meeting were connected to my inviting her to speak at our seminar on “Women Artists in Egypt,” sponsored by AUC’s Open University Symposium devoted to the Decade of the Woman. During our conversation, I learned that one of the few murals that she had ever painted was languishing in the storage cellars of the once active Arab Socialist Union. (Awakening Egypt, c. 1960. A close facsimile is in the book as Plate 26: Life on the Embankment of the Nile). Through a series of fortuitous circumstances, the university was able to procure the mural as part of its permanent collection, and it now proudly dons the walls of the Jameel Center Auditorium. From that time to the present, I have followed her career with great interest.

Gazbia Sirry: A Lust for Color presents the reader with a marvelous portrait of the artist, her work, and the brave struggle that has won her critical acclaim from Egypt to the Arab countries, from Europe to North America and Asia.

Clearly, this book is a major retrospective and appreciation of Sirry's artistic work, which includes more than 180 lithographs, etchings, sketches, oil paintings, and water colors covering the years 1945–97, as well as a number of essays by leading art critics. In the words of the renowned art critic Moukhtar al-Attar, “One does not come across an artist like Gazbia Sirry every day, an artist who embraces life with her unique creativity, extensive culture, and human entity. She had an objective and she set out on a difficult road to achieve this objective. She does not paint but rather pours her soul, talent and intelligence onto the canvas. She was born to be the conscience of the nation, with its hopes and pains, joys and sorrows” (p. 34).

It is not only as “the conscience of the nation” that Gazbia speaks to us through her painting. More fundamentally, she speaks as the conscience of humanity. In her own words, she asserts: “I have had my own myths since my childhood. I feel am fused into various elements of nature and life such as human beings, the desert, the sea, plants, and even man-made constructions. I strive to express the essence of humanity. I try to liberate myself from everything. Trying even the impossible—running all over the world like mad, hoping to reach the edge just to sit dangling my feet in space” (p. xv).

One can discern the interplay and inter-influence between artist and society, showing grief, joy, and sadness, all depending on the events happening around her, through a close examination of the artist’s fifty black-and-white plates (1948–96) and the 130 color plates (1945–1997). Inspired by the problem of social reality of the 1940s and 1950s, Gazbia’s first paintings reflected the imminent revolutionary feeling, and her style represented her reaction to those problems. Her famous paintings of Umm Ratiba (1952; Plate 6), Umm Antar (1953; Plate 9), and Umm Saber revealed in a serious and modern style the strength and nobility of the Egyptian woman. Her painting of Umm Saber was not a mere portrayal of an Egyptian martyr killed by the British occupation. It is a symbol of hidden powers about to explode. Humanity becomes an anonymous force expressing a people’s fatal destiny.

Following the defeat of 1967, Gazbia enters what I would call the period of her “human houses,” reflected in the painting Grief (Plate 41) and described by one critic as “the embryo of a city looking like an imprisoned fetus between walls, over a mass of distressed close-ups” (p. 16). It has a tragic impact and is linked to the theme of social and political criticism. The embryo city appearing in Grief opens the doors to a new pictorial cycle to which Gazbia will dedicate herself without interruption until 1973 (Plates 41–63, variously entitled Disintegrated Houses, Houses with Their Heads on Fire, People-Houses, Frightened Houses, The Silent House and Metamorphic Houses).

Following the October war of 1973, Gazbia set out for the desert and the Red Sea, recording her impressions of the sands, the rocks with their strange shapes that she saw reflecting the human body. Her esthetic vision was of a more abstract nature, optimistic in content and joyful in form. The geometric and peaceful tranquillity of the pyramid form dominates (Plates 64–76). By the mid 1980s, Gazbia had left for Tunisia, where she dedicated her research to new theses—expanses of water, sails, boats, waves rippled by the wind (Plates 88–104). As the Italian critic
Siniscalco noted, “her years spent in Tunisia marked in Gazbia’s pictorial itinerary one of the happier periods, as revealed in the colors” (p. 16).

Her paintings of the 1990s continued to exhibit Gazbia’s visionary experimentation with form and color, expressing an extraordinary individualism. Yet she has never lost her sense of rootedness in her Egyptian culture or in her own society’s struggle to be. Less focused on social realism and social-political criticism, Gazbia became more fully engaged with exploring her inner self, giving vent to the full exploration of her creative being. Flowers and human figures have become the new subjects of her pictures, and her flowers are, in a certain manner, the self-portrait of the artist herself: dynamic, lively, vibrant—still-life pictures expressing a movement that has no pauses (Plates 111–30). The final painting in this book, *Internal Migration* (1997) encapsulates Gazbia’s unique abstract expressionism, displaying the power of her brush and the power of her colors. The human figures are like human symbols, emanating feeling and pulsation.

*Gazbia Sirry: Lust for Color* is neither biography nor autobiography in the traditional sense of these terms. Yet as we gaze upon the magnificent reproductions of her work of more than fifty years and read the bricolage of voices from art critics around the world (pp. 9–51), there is no doubt that we are being allowed an intimate glimpse into the soul of an artist’s journey to penetrate and express the human condition during a period of tumultuous change in Egypt and the world at large. As Gazbia herself declared, “I am obsessed by the human condition. So I see humanity everywhere. In the houses, clouds, plants... painting deserts with human curves and loving pyramids. The human theme becomes expressive with the awareness of the alienation of everyday life.” Gazbia’s painting is Gazbia herself.


**REVIEWED BY HUSSEIN M. ELKHAFIFI, Department of Languages and Literature, University of Utah, Salt Lake City**

In this slim volume, Mohammed Sawaie has expanded and enhanced his earlier work in the field of the lexical history of Arabic. By focusing primarily on the efforts of two distinguished Arab lexicographers, (Ahmad) Faris al-Shidyaq and Rifā’i Raft al-Tahtawi, Sawaie creates a lucid and readable discourse on the state of the Arabic language in the 19th century. He includes material from original contemporary Arabic sources as well as from European writers. Sawaie gives a detailed account of the challenges faced by Arab writers and scholars as their countries were flooded with new ideas. Western innovations in areas already familiar, such as agriculture, as well as modern technological developments created an immediate need for new words to describe and explain these novel concepts.

Sawaie reviews the many and varied attempts of official and unofficial institutions and scholars to translate important new information into understandable Arabic. The greater part of this book deals with the history of Arabic and how the language has handled the problems of terminology throughout the ages, from pre-Islamic times to the 19th century. Sawaie attempts to create an analogy between what is commonly called the Golden Age—that is, the Abbasid period (approximately the 8th to 11th centuries)—and the 19th century. In one sense, the comparison is valid, as intense intellectual activity and extensive translation efforts characterize both periods. However, it should be noted that the accomplishments of translation during the Abbasid era were highly successful, whereas similar efforts during the 19th century, and even up to the present time, have been far less promising.

Sawaie surveys the work of some of the reformers, including two prominent writers and
scholars who advocated the “modernization” of the language, as well as those who resisted the introduction of foreign terminology as dangerous to the purity and integrity of the language. The “crisis,” as implied in the book’s title, is the collision of Western and European ideas with traditional, classical Arabic. The resolution of this crisis is not part of the current work; as Sawaie notes, the questions that arose in the 19th century remain relevant in our time, and “will be so in the future.”

This book boasts three Introductions, in Arabic, French, and English, which promise a rather more in-depth analysis of the subject than is actually found in the body of the work. Although Sawaie purports to focus on the state of Arabic terminology in the 19th century, he in fact ranges far into the history of the language in an effort to identify the developments that took place in the mid 1800s.

This work consists of six chapters, each one focusing on one aspect of the development of the linguistic and lexical crisis of Arabic that became manifest in the early 19th century. Sawaie begins with the general history and condition of Arabic, and moves logically to the specific aspects of the 19th-century Arab world’s response to the influx of Western thought and ideas.

In Chapter 1, Sawaie offers a brief discussion of the pre-modern introduction of Arabic into the Levant and North Africa. Although each area that the Arabs subjugated possessed its own native language, over time, through a combination of custom and official policy, Arabic became the prevailing language to the exclusion of the older tongues.

Sawaie notes in Chapter 2 that issues of innovation and translation, in many ways similar to the 19th-century lexical crisis of Arabic, were common in the “Age of Translation.” During this era, Arab scholars were forced to consider new ideas from contemporary cultures and to try to adapt them to Arabic. It was during this time that many lexical items of patently non-Arabic origin entered the language and remained, as long usage and widespread acceptance conferred legitimacy.

One point that will surely excite considerable debate and disagreement among his readers is Sawaie’s suggestion that, among the difficulties Arabic faced in assimilating new ideas and terminology, Arabic, unlike Greek, is by its very nature unsuited to creating new terms and expressing new concepts because of its paucity of prefixes and suffixes and the absence of compounding as a method of creating new words.

Chapter 3 is an abbreviated but precise account of the intellectual and lexical situation that existed in Egypt prior to the advent of Napoleon’s troops at the end of the 18th century.

In chapter 4, Sawaie begins to examine the work of newly established schools in Egypt. The faculty and students of these schools, which were modeled after European, mainly French, institutions, grappled constantly with the issue of inadequate scientific and technological terminology, sometimes resorting to a simple Arabicization of a foreign term, at other times creating a neologism that might be unique to one school.

Arabic dictionaries and their usefulness in the modern era are the main topic of chapter 5. In this section, Sawaie examines some of the significant opinions and writings of (Ahmad) Faris al-Shidyaq. Al-Shidyaq was an important figure in Arabic letters who advocated the modernization of Arabic, with particular focus on the design of Arabic dictionaries.

In the first part of this chapter, we are told that al-Shidyaq enriched the Arabic language through translations, descriptions of his travels, and coining of terminology, and that these constitute his major contribution to the modernization of the language. However, Sawaie chooses to focus on al-Shidyaq’s criticisms of Al-Fairuzabadi’s dictionary, al-Qamus al-Mahit, rather than to delve deeply into the other important aspects of Faris al-Shidyaq’s work, which relate more closely to the “crisis” of terminology. This chapter could benefit from a more detailed discussion of al-Shidyaq’s labors in the defense of Arabic, including, for example, his tenure as editor of al-Jawa’ib, a journal in Istanbul that served as a vehicle to disseminate new ideas and terminology.
The second scholar and writer whose work Sawaie examines is Rif’i’ Rafi’ al-Tahtawi. Chapter 6 reviews the prolific work of al-Tahtawi, who was greatly influenced by a five-year stay in Paris and was an enthusiastic and articulate proponent of the introduction of foreign scientific and technical terminology into Arabic. As Sawaie explains, al-Tahtawi considered the addition of foreign lexical items as inherently enriching to Arabic, as opposed to many more conservative scholars who regarded the proposed “intrusion” of alien terms as a threat to the traditional purity of the language of the Qur’an.

Throughout this book, numerous lengthy footnotes provide more historical background and detail. In a work of this size, footnotes of this length might be better incorporated into the text, rather than set apart as notes. It is apparent that Sawaie undertook extensive research to compile these notes, and many of the points covered in footnotes deserve a place in the text instead. Additionally, many excellent suggestions for points of departure for additional research appear in the footnotes. For example, focusing on al-Tahtawi’s translation efforts and the works translated by the scholars and scientists of his time would provide broader insight into the methods employed by 19th century writers beyond the simple historical narrative in the present work.

There is a useful index of both Arabic and non-Arabic names and an extensive bibliography, which includes both Arabic and European sources.

This book would be a welcome addition to the personal library of Arabic-language scholars working in language planning and standardization, linguistics, and the history of the Arabic language. It should be an essential part of any academic library in universities where Arabic studies are offered.


REVIEWED BY FRANK TACHAU, Department of Political Science, University of Illinois at Chicago

This book purports to be a study of Turkish foreign policy and decision-making in the post–World War II era. The author declares that her book “explores the contention that Turkish foreign policy has been greatly affected by the end of the cold war” (p. xi). She also “examines the argument that the . . . removal of the Soviet threat diminished Turkey’s strategic importance for the United States and Western Europe” and led “Turkish policymakers . . . to search for new foreign policy partners” (p. xxii). Finally, Çelik suggests that the changed environment of the post–Cold War era entailed a shift from reliance on military power for the maintenance of national security to an emphasis on economic resources and relations.

These propositions are plausible enough in and of themselves. Unfortunately, the book does not go far beyond restating them at frequent intervals, as though mere reiteration constitutes evidence. Essentially, the reader is presented with a spasmodic and often redundant account of Turkish politics over the past half-century. Moreover, although the explicit focus is on foreign policy, much of the discussion deals with domestic affairs. This is not entirely inappropriate. The author’s contention that domestic politics affects foreign policy is perfectly acceptable. The book would have benefited, however, had there been a better balance between the domestic and the foreign arenas in the discussion. At times, the argument strays toward the tendentious, as, for example, when suggesting that Turkish foreign policy in the 1950s was motivated by a desire to please the United States at all cost. In this context, little is said of the persistent concern of the Turkish right with the perceived dangers of international communism.

The book relies overwhelmingly on secondary materials, meaning that very little new information is presented. These materials are also limited in scope, particularly in that each chapter
relies heavily on a narrow range of sources. There are also occasional lapses into seeming internal contradiction—for example, Çelik asserts on one page (p. 159) that Necmettin Erbakan “succeeded in altering Turkish foreign policy quite drastically” during his term as prime minister, but on the next page (p. 160), she contends that “he was not able to alter the country’s foreign policy orientation.” It would have been more accurate, and certainly clearer, simply to suggest that Erbakan’s brief tenure in office did not allow him to follow through on his political rhetoric.

In sum, this book may be informative for uninitiated readers, but it has little to say to those who are seriously interested in the subject.


REVIEWED BY DEBORAH J. GERNER, Department of Political Science, University of Kansas, Lawrence

One of the central political challenges facing numerous African, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries over the past half-century has been how best to maneuver successfully through the related, but not necessarily parallel, processes of creating and articulating a national identity, achieving independence from colonial rule, and developing predictable and legitimate institutions of governance (that is, state formation). How a national community elects to approach these formidable tasks is influenced by a plethora of factors, including the constraints and opportunities represented by the international and regional environment and the attributes of key leaders. Understanding this phenomenon is not simply an academic exercise, as the strategies pursued may have a significant impact on the shape the eventual state takes.

In Countdown to Statehood, Hillel Frisch, a lecturer at Hebrew University, examines the historical evolution of Palestinian state formation from the movement’s early years as a diaspora movement through the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. His study has both considerable strengths and significant weaknesses. Using the Zionist experience in creating the State of Israel as a frequent reference point, Frisch’s analysis focuses primarily on the often difficult relationship between the Palestinian diaspora community, as represented by Yasir Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the territorially based elites, the “insiders,” of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Frisch’s main argument is that under Arafat’s neo-patrimonial style of leadership, the PLO consistently “promoted political mobilization at the expense of institution building, subordinated local leadership rather than incorporate them into the decision-making process, promoted international diplomacy rather than political devolution, and fragmented the institution-building process rather than centralizing it” (p. 108).

That over the years there were significant disagreements between the “inside” and the “outside” political elites is uncontroversial, as is the assertion that these tensions were expressed in a variety of ways, including through intense competition over the control of local institutions. Whether this reached the level of extreme enmity that Frisch suggests, and whether the contest among elites for influence can be understood most successfully through the lens of the insider–outsider distinction, is more debatable. Further, one could accept this description of the nature of the relationship while disagreeing with Frisch on the motivations that led to these patterns of interaction.

The similarities and contrasts between the Palestinian and Zionist experiences is both enlightening and problematic. At its best, the comparison illustrates a set of conditions under which a
diaspora-based movement successfully completed the state-building process. But the immense divergence between the Zionist and Palestinian experiences limit the relevance of the former’s success for analyzing the challenges facing the latter. Frisch is inconsistent in his sensitivity to these differences. He recognizes, for instance, that “the Zionists territorialized under the most benign regime possible, a British mandatory power formally committed to the creation of a Jewish national home [while] the Palestinians who created the PLO in 1964 battled against, in some respects, a much less flexible foe” (p. 4). Yet in his discussion of the period immediately following the 1993 Declaration of Principles, Frisch argues that the Palestinian position at that moment was similar to that which faced Jewish leaders in December 1947, when the British government “announced its intention to withdraw all its troops from Palestine and terminate the Mandate” (p. 125), which completely ignores those same differences. Similarly, Frisch compares the Zionists’ supportive treatment of indigenous Jewish institutions with, for instance, the PLO’s efforts to control student and professional unions at Al-Najah university. This ignores a crucial distinction: the PLO, declared illegal under Israeli law, constantly had to guard against being supplanted by indigenous organizations whose ability to act on behalf of nationalist goals was severely circumscribed by the occupation. The Zionist movement, in contrast, was permitted to function under the British Mandate (notwithstanding the years of conflict between Zionist and British forces) so it could afford to be generous toward Zionist “insiders” without jeopardizing its own position.

A notable and related limitation of this volume is the disjuncture among theory, empirical evidence, and Frisch’s own analysis. It often seems that Frisch is trying to force the evidence into a previously determined, but inappropriate, framework without seriously entertaining the possibility of alternative interpretations. The discussion regarding the conflict over local elections illustrates this failure to consider competing explanations. Frisch argues that this disagreement “epitomized the struggle between the evolutionary state-building approach favored by the territorial Palestinians, and the international diplomatic approach favored by the diaspora-based leadership” (p. 95). According to Frisch, the PLO opposed elections because they would increase support for a local leadership who challenge PLO diplomatic hegemony. An alternative and complementary account that deserves consideration is that the PLO opposed local elections because such elections, held under occupation, would have little legitimacy with the general population but could be used by Israel to illustrate how benign and liberal Israeli rule was. Perhaps elements of both motivations were present; perhaps there is yet another explanation. A second example is the treatment of why Arafat pursued the Oslo back-channel negotiations. Frisch suggests this was due to Arafat’s dissatisfaction with the insider delegation’s attempts at independent action. Arafat’s reasons might also include frustration with the limitations of public negotiations (whether by insiders or the diaspora), the opportunity to break away from U.S. influence, and a certain element of serendipity. The point is that in neither case does Frisch seriously consider any rationale other than the one that most closely fits his theoretical approach.

Frisch is clearly writing for a specialist audience. The book contains a great deal of empirical material about the insider–outsider relationship (particularly in the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s), all meticulously documented from Arabic-, English-, and Hebrew-language sources. For those without intimate knowledge of internal Palestinian politics, this level of detail might be overwhelming, but it does serve to illustrate the breadth of Frisch’s research. At the same time, the emphasis on primary sources means Frisch deprives himself of the valuable insights of numerous scholars whose work might illuminate the Palestinian nation- and state-building processes. This is particularly striking in the discussion of the Palestinian uprising, for which Frisch relies almost entirely on the United National Command’s “Communiques” and a couple of early books, and in the chapter that addresses the Madrid process. The academic literature on these topics, including the quite different studies by Geoffrey Aronson (Israel, Palestinians, and the
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Intifada, 1990), F. Robert Hunter (The Palestinian Uprising, 1993), Don Peretz (Intifada, 1990), Glenn Robinson (Building a Palestinian State, 1997), and Yezid Sayigh (Armed Struggle and the Search for State, 1997), is far more diverse and insightful than Frisch would lead us to believe.

The final chapters in the development of the Palestinian state have yet to be written, so it is unrealistic to expect a definitive historical treatment at this point. Future analysts will find real value in Frisch’s descriptions and his compilation of factual material but may be more cautious in accepting the theoretical arguments articulated here. He may be correct in his assessments, but his treatment in this book is not fully convincing.


REVIEWED BY NADER ENTESSAR, Department of Political Science, Spring Hill College, Mobile, Ala.

This work is a follow-up to Michael Gunter’s earlier book, The Kurds of Iraq: Tragedy and Hope (St. Martin’s Press, 1992). In that book, which was published shortly after the first democratic elections in Iraqi Kurdistan and the subsequent establishment of the Kurdish regional government (KRG), Gunter was somewhat optimistic about the prospects for realizing Kurdish national aspirations in Iraq. The book under review, however, strikes a more pessimistic tone based on political developments in Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1990s. The main focus of the book is on the causes of continuing conflict between the two major Iraqi Kurdish parties—namely, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—since the end of the 1991 Gulf War and the establishment of the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq. The author uses a variety of sources, including interviews with principal Kurdish players and English-language publications.

The book contains six chapters. The first two chapters provide a historical overview of the Kurdish predicament in the 20th century, with a particular focus on the history of the Barzani and Talabani families. As the author points out, these two families have played crucial roles in the development of the Kurdish predicament in Iraq for several decades. For the most part, biographical information on these two families has been gathered through interviews with members of the Barzani and Talabani clans, as well as with other personalities familiar with recent Kurdish history. This is a very interesting, albeit a very short, part of the book, as the author presents anecdotes about the Barzani and Talabani clans and their trials and tribulations in recent decades. The author also demonstrates how the current patriarchs of these two families, the KDP’s Massoud Barzani and the PUK’s Jalal Talabani, have successfully situated themselves at the center of Kurdish political developments in Iraq.

In Chapter 3, Gunter describes the genesis and development of the Iraqi opposition to the government of Saddam Hussein. These groups have included religious and secular, Arab and Kurdish elements, which have sometimes cooperated with one another and at other times sought divergent paths. Much of the religious opposition to the Ba’athist regime in Iraq has been concentrated among the majority Shi’is. Of course, Shi’i opposition to various secular governments in Iraq predates the advent of Saddam. In contemporary Iraq, however, the two most organized Shi’i political organizations have included the Da’wa, or Islamic Call, and the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), which was established in 1982 with Iranian help. The secular opposition to Saddam has represented a heterogeneous mix of groups and personalities that have yet to emerge as a credible threat to the Ba’athist government in Baghdad. The centerpiece of the secular opposition to Saddam was to be the Iraqi National Congress (INC). Despite its grandiose claim of representing authentic opposition to Saddam
and offering a legitimate alternative to the Ba'athist regime, the INC has remained an ineffective, somewhat disorganized, and personalistic entity wracked by internal disputes and constant defections from its ranks. Gunter explains some of the causes of the INC's paralysis. The author also describes the role of the United States and its Central Intelligence Agency in shaping the goals and strategies of the INC and funding its activities. Notwithstanding denials by Ahmad Chalabi and other top officials of the INC, the CIA remains the organization's principal source of funding. Therein lies the dilemma facing the INC and its constituent parts, including Kurdish elements within it. Without a popular domestic constituency, Saddam has managed to portray the secular opposition, especially the INC, as puppets of the United States. When the U.S. Congress passed the so-called Iraq Liberation Act in 1998, it further tainted the Iraqi opposition as traitors. This legislation authorized the disbursement of $97 million to Iraqi opposition groups, including military equipment from existing U.S. stocks, to overthrow the Iraqi government. The funding would presumably allow the United States to use its air power to "protect an opposition army that would capture lightly defended areas in southern and western Iraq and thus encourage mass defections from Saddam's military" (p. 65). Only time will tell whether this venture will lead to the Middle East version of the Bay of Pigs fiasco or to a successful scenario akin to the ousting of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua by the U.S.-funded Contra "freedom fighters."

Chapter 4 deals with the KDP–PUK civil war. After providing a brief background to pre–Gulf War infighting between the KDP and PUK, Gunter focuses on the causes of intermittent fighting between the two Kurdish parties in contemporary Iraq. The author explains various attempts by several intermediaries, including the United States, to bridge the gap between the aspirations of the KDP and PUK. In many ways, the gulf between Barzani and Talabani remains as wide as it was in the pre–Gulf War era. In fact, today one can speak of two regional governments in Iraqi Kurdistan—one in Irbil and the other in Suleimaniya.

The last two chapters of the book deal with the regional factors affecting the Kurdish situation in Iraq, especially the Turkish–Iranian variables, and the prospects for the future. The arrest and subsequent conviction of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of Turkey's Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and the subsequent disintegration of the PKK as a serious military threat to the Turkish state have changed the Kurdish calculus of power in the region. Further, Turkey's increasing assertiveness in micro-managing the affairs of the Kurdish parties in Iraq will undoubtedly bring about other developments in Iraqi Kurdistan. This is especially true on the face of the KDP's apparent willingness to serve as a Turkish surrogate in the region.

In short, this is a welcome addition to the literature on contemporary Kurdish politics and international relations. The book could have benefited from a more extensive discussion of "reclanization" and the anti-democratic nature of contemporary Kurdish politics in Iraq as well as an in-depth examination of the emerging secular and religious forces in Iraqi Kurdistan that are challenging the monopolization of political discourse and institutions by the KDP and PUK. Notwithstanding these points, the book's informative and jargon-free style will make it a very useful resource for academics, journalists, and policy-makers interested in Kurdish political developments in general and Iraqi Kurdistan in particular.


REVIEWED BY REX BRYNEN, Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montreal

I must admit that when I first read this book, I didn’t like it. As the footnotes quickly indicate, the bulk of the research derives from secondary sources, either from the Israeli and Western
press or from FBIS/WNC translations from the Arabic press. Virtually no interview material is used—strange, indeed, when one considers that the author lives within an hour of almost all the major political actors discussed in the study. And although some reference is made to public-opinion polls, it is disappointing that greater use has not been made of the voluminous survey data collected by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies and the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center—the richest such troves in the Arab world.

On top of this, there are the annoying and numerous mistakes. Among others, the Lebanon-based Fateh dissident Munir Maqdah is renamed “Munit” (p. 158); the PLO executive committee member (and head of the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs) As‘ad ‘Abd al-Rahman is confused with the Palestinian Authority (PA) cabinet secretary Ahmad ‘Abd al-Rahman (pp. 97, 218) but semi-correctly identified as head of the PLO refugee “committee” (p. 84). The Palestinian Commercial Services Company gets one reference, but Yasir Arafat’s financial adviser Khalid Salam (also known as Muhammad Rashid and arguably one of the smartest and most powerful people in the PA) is not mentioned at all. The transliteration is at times also rather confusing, with (for example) Ahmad Qurai’ becoming “Ahmed Khuri.”

Elsewhere, the author notes that the refugees (who “tend[ed] to be poorer”) live in “twenty one camps now under the PA’s jurisdiction” (p. 84). In fact, refugees are not significantly poorer than the general population; less than half of the refugees live in camps (43%); and there are actually twenty-seven refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza (of which twenty-one are now under PA control). The book also repeats a common misperception that Arab financial support for the PA has been stingy (p. 144). Although it is true that Arab states have provided less aid to Palestine than have the major Western donors, this reflects their much smaller economies. Relative to gross national product, Saudi Arabia has been about five times more generous than most European states, and about twenty times more generous than the United States.

A second reading of this book, however, convinced me that my first impression was too harsh. There is also a great deal to like here. Rubin presents a generally well-told account of the evolution of the PA. He avoids falling into the black-or-white stereotypes that characterize so much of the writing about contemporary Palestinian politics. In the case of corruption, for example, he notes the extent of this growing problem and the corrosive effects that it is having on the legitimacy of the PA. He also notes, however, that some of the reports are exaggerated or distorted and that much of the financial irregularity is more properly seen as part of a larger web of neo-patrimonial political management. His treatment of the Palestinian political elite demonstrates the extent to which this is much more complex than the “insider–outsider” or “new middle class versus old elites” labels that sometimes are placed on it. In discussing the growth of the PA security forces, he correctly notes that these are not solely, or wholly, for repressive purposes. The multiplicity of security forces also represents an effort by Arafat to counterbalance possible alternative centers of power, while security-force employment has been an important mechanism of employment-generation and patronage, used to co-opt younger activists into a structure in which they are under Fatah/PA control.

In short—and despite factual errors and methodological weaknesses—Rubin’s book still manages to give a much better “feel” for contemporary Palestinian politics than most of what is written in English on the subject. Although I would not recommend The Transformation of Palestinian Politics as a reference work, many will find the book to be a well-written and accessible account that offers a generally fair, nuanced, and insightful portrayal of the complex political dynamics of the Palestinian Authority.