

editors note at one point, the English translation of the *Ta'rikh* of Tabari has had a major impact, opening up the study of Arabic primary sources to a whole new readership. This translation of Ya'qūbī's work, though clearly on a smaller scale, will also have an important impact, making his work accessible to historians of Late Antiquity, Byzantium and wider intellectual history. And it would be a rash Arabist who asserted that they had nothing to learn from reading scholarly translations like the these alongside the Arabic original.

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JEAN-MICHEL MOUTON, DOMINIQUE SOURDEL (†), and JANINE SOURDEL-THOMINE:

Propriétés rurales et urbaines à Damas au Moyen Âge: un corpus de 73 documents juridiques entre 310/922 et 669/1271.

(Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades 23.) 559 pp. Paris: L'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2018. €80. ISBN 978 2 87754 364 4.

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This volume presents the edition, translation and discussion of 73 Arabic legal documents related to property transactions (especially sale, lease and endowment). These documents cover a period between the early fourth/tenth and the second half of the seventh/thirteenth centuries. The importance of the documents, and thus this volume, centres on three aspects: they refer to the Middle Period (for which the number of edited documents is only slowly increasing), they originated in Syria, specifically Damascus (most documents that we have from the Arabic Middle East come from Egypt), and most importantly they are part of a coherent corpus and thus have a clear historical context. All documents are today part of the *Şâm evrakları* (Damascus Papers) collection held in Istanbul in the *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi* (Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum). In Damascus they had been part of the “Geniza”-style storehouse for disused documents and books, the Umayyad Mosque's *Qubbat al-khazna* or *Qubbat al-māl*. The *Şâm evrakları* have hardly been accessible for research over the past decades, but they form the most important known collection of documents from Syria for the Middle Period.

The present volume is based on photographs that Dominique Sourdel and Janine Sourdel-Thomine took in the early 1960s when they had the opportunity to work on the *Şâm evrakları*. These photographs have led to numerous articles and more recently three books in which documents have been grouped into broad thematic categories: 1) pilgrimage certificates (*Certificats de pèlerinage d'époque Ayyoubide*, Paris, 2006); 2) legal documents related to marriage and divorce (*Mariage et séparation à Damas au Moyen Âge: un corpus de 62 documents juridiques inédits entre 337/948 et 698/1299*, Paris, 2013); 3) assorted documents (purportedly) linked to Şalāh al-Dīn (*Gouvernance et libéralités de Saladin d'après les données inédites de six documents arabes*, Paris, 2015).

In the introduction, the editors give a very useful overview of salient aspects of this corpus and its relevance for historical studies. The 73 documents are on 62 physical items (sometimes recto and verso carry two separate documents).

Among these, we find 16 scrolls (these start to disappear from 600/1200 onwards) and 46 sheets. While parchment was the exclusive support material before the mid-fifth/eleventh century, paper starts to gain importance in the following decades to become the main support from the mid-sixth/twelfth century onwards. The largest sub-corpus is that of sale deeds (39), followed by lease agreements (10) and endowment-related documents (8, virtually all of them linked to *waqf ahli*, “family endowments”). As all documents were preserved in Damascus until the end of World War I, the vast majority indeed refer to transactions that occurred in the city and its hinterlands. Yet we also find some documents referring to transactions in Sicily, al-Andalus, Morocco, Anatolia, Egypt and Mesopotamia. In these documents 334 individuals are named, of whom 300 are from Damascus or the region of Damascus. Fewer than 10 per cent of those named are identifiable from other textual sources. In terms of this corpus’ wider significance, there are some highly interesting suggestions such as that property prices in Damascus were seemingly rather modest if we compare them with those in Cairo as documented in the Geniza material. The only disappointment in the introduction is that we do not get any information on how this corpus of 62 physical items was put together. The *Şâm evrakları* collection contains over 200,000 uncatalogued items (ranging from scraps of paper/parchment to substantial parts of manuscripts); so how did the editors proceed to identify the items that we find in this volume as one corpus? What parts of the collection did they not look at? Future scholarship will embark upon enlarging the corpus, but this volume does not contain any indication of how scholars can avoid going through those parts of the collection that have already been covered by the present editors.

The challenge to edit documents written in sometimes rather inaccessible hands and often highly incomplete (only 17 documents have the full text) is evident. To review and assess the editorial work is somewhat difficult as the reproductions of the black-and-white photos are of modest quality to say the least. Repeatedly, massive documents of more than one metre in length are reproduced on a single page so that the reader has no chance whatsoever to check the editions. For many documents we would have simply needed a set of enlargements. As this is such difficult material where many readings are open to debate this is highly deplorable. To include so many reproductions in this inopportune form is especially problematic as the originals in the *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi* are very difficult to access (it seems that the editors have also exclusively worked from the photographs without returning to the originals). These photographs are thus of outstanding documentary value and they deserved a more appropriate presentation.

However, as far as it is possible to assess, the editorial work is of the highest standard and the editors have to be praised for their diligent work. There are some typos, for instance document II, line 4 has the female name “Muhadhhaba” but in the following the name is repeatedly misspelled as “Mudhahhaba” (lines 8, 9 and 14) and document II, line 4 has *حدوداهما* (correct *حدودهما*). The system for square brackets for illegible or missing passages is not always clear and repeatedly parts of a line which are not legible, but instead additions by the editor are not put into brackets (for instance document I, lines 3, 6, 25). Personal names always pose particular problems in any edition and at some points the readings proposed here are highly debatable or require amendment (for instance document II, line 31: read “al-‘Abbās” instead of “al-Qāsim”; document II, line 33 read “Ja‘far” instead of “Ḥafṣ”; document III, line 24 read “Ja‘far” instead of “Şafar”; document V, line 7 read “Naṣīf” or “Nāṣīf” instead of “Naḍīf”; document XVIII, lines 6 and 10 read “Yusr” instead of “Busr”). There are some minor mistakes such as document X, line 53 (read *للشريف* instead of *الشريف*), document X,

line 57 (read ثلثين instead of ثلثون), document II, line 4 (read كلاهما شرقاً instead of باباهما we find this correct; حل رسعة instead of حل وسعة and document X, line 61 (read شرقياً reading in document XVI, line 14). Sometimes it seems that grammatical “mistakes” in the original were corrected without acknowledgement (for instance document X, line 86 has the grammatically correct “*Abī*”, but the document reads “*Abū*”). On account of the small size of the photographs it is hardly possible to propose additional readings for those passages that the editors marked as illegible (one exception is for instance document XVIII, line 1 (p. 183) where “al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. [...]” can be added).

In short, this is an important contribution to the history of the pre-Ottoman Arabic lands that makes accessible another fascinating set of documents. These documents and thus the book will remain a point of reference for many years. Hopefully, future editions of Qubbat al-khazna material on the basis of the Paris photographs will have adequate reproductions and methodological statements on how the corpus in question was built.

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GREGORY LIPTON:

Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabi.

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The author of this erudite book endeavours to prove that the great Muslim mystic Ibn ‘Arabi (1165–1240) was “strongly misread” (pp. 20, 54, 81, 140, etc.) as a tolerant universalist by the leading representatives of Esoteric Perennialism, such as Ivan Aguéli, René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, William Chittick, S.H. Nasr and Reza Shah-Kazemi. The author’s goal is to reclaim Ibn ‘Arabi for Islam, while also exposing the sinister intellectual roots of Perennialism, especially Schuon’s. The book contains four chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, and notes, but no bibliography, which somewhat obscures the intellectual genealogy of the author himself. In my opinion, Lipton has succeeded in showing that Ibn ‘Arabi is a profoundly Muhammadan thinker, notwithstanding his occasional assertions of religious tolerance. Those who argue otherwise, citing Ibn ‘Arabi’s celebrated verses in which he professes his acceptance of all religious beliefs, are, in Lipton’s view, blinkered by their Perennialist-universalist assumptions not just about Ibn ‘Arabi and Sufism, but religion as a whole (pp. 53–4 and 80–83). In Lipton’s view, the disparate visions of God that Ibn ‘Arabi seems to accept and validate are, in the end, “totally subsumed within the legal authority of both the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad” (p. 81). Therefore, “the religions of the Protected People [i.e. the Jews and Christians] are indeed abrogated by the appearance of Muhammad’s sharia, and their laws are thus technically invalidated” (p. 82). To prove his re-reading of Ibn ‘Arabi as exclusivist as opposed to inclusivist, Lipton analyses numerous passages from Ibn ‘Arabi’s major works, *Ringstones of Wisdom* and *Meccan Revelations*. With the exception of several relatively minor points, this part of Lipton’s discourse is credible and convincing. What strike me as problematic are his constant attempts to relate Ibn ‘Arabi’s ideas and their interpretations by modern-day scholars to recent academic debates over