

find is cross-referenced to the illustrations and their captions which comprise pages 259–69. The whole is introduced in chapter 1, “Military–historical background and context”, in which Nicolle carefully and succinctly explains the place of Damascus in the history of the Mamluks and Ottomans and discusses the likely influences upon arms manufacture in the city. In the process he skilfully introduces many of the kinds of objects and much of the language used to describe them which will recur in the more specialized chapters which follow. Some of the most important finds in the citadel were of armour. Islamic illustrations of the various kinds of mail, lamellar, scale and soft armours are rare and difficult to decipher, and the language used to describe them in written sources is imprecise, so to have real examples is very important. Perhaps the most spectacular piece found was half a *qar-qal*, a short jacket of scales covered in beautifully dyed material, designed to be worn either with or without sleeves. This was clearly very like the western *brigandine*, of which a fifteenth-century example found at Xalkis in Greece is illustrated here. The discussion of armour types and their spread across Asia and Europe is very wide-ranging. It is remarkable that fragments of soft armour were unearthed and the short chapter on this illuminates a somewhat neglected form, stressing that European examples, notably the *aketon*, were described by words derived from Arabic. Leather, moulded or layered, was used intensively in medieval armour and much has been preserved in the Damascus material, though some may have been used to protect horses rather than men, as outlined in the next chapter. Archery remains figure large in the finds at Damascus and lead Nicolle into an interesting discussion of the importance of the crossbow, sometimes called “the Frankish bow” (p. 146). A substantial number of whole powder horns or fragments thereof were found in the citadel, and Nicolle’s discussion brings out the importance of such weapons in Middle Eastern warfare in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The whole discussion of the Damascus Citadel finds is characterized by a brilliant grasp of the technicalities of production and use. The comments on the working and use of iron and other metals are particularly impressive, but Nicolle is equally at home discussing other, softer, materials, often in the finest detail. Nicolle has an impressive knowledge of arms and armour worldwide, and his ability to draw comparisons and suggest derivations is compelling. However, although *Aketon* is derived from the Arabic for cotton (p. 100), this does not necessarily mean that padded undergarments originated in the Middle East – they probably had a long existence before the Crusades. Similar needs can, after all, produce similar solutions to problems of protection in different cultures. But overall this is a truly remarkable book and a brilliant start to the sequence of volumes which will eventually describe all the findings of the Syrian–French archaeological investigation of the citadel of Damascus.

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ALLEN JAMES FROMHERZ:

Ibn Khaldun, Life and Times.

xiii, 190 pp. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. £19.99. ISBN 978 0 7486 4483 4.

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It is often noted that no full scholarly biography of Ibn Khaldun has been written, and that the appearance of such a work would, at any time, be most welcome. With

almost a blank slate, beyond a bare and well-known narrative, such a work would be a challenging and important task. It is unfortunate that this book does not rise to the challenge.

The book positions itself directly against the anachronism which has all too often marred studies of Ibn Khaldun. It begins with a chapter sketching an outline of the main events and developments in Ibn Khaldun's world, from Syria to al-Andalus, and then goes on, in a series of chapters, to give an account of his life and activities in the Maghrib and the Mashriq. Emphasizing his sense of foreboding, his perception of history coming to an end, his solitariness and frustrations, and his declared ambivalences, the book attempts to conjugate history with biography. It also attempts here and there to offer interpretations of IK's thought in the light of his life and times.

But for all this, the results are limited by the author's almost complete reliance on Ibn Khaldun's autobiography. A more interesting story might have been told had the author apprised himself of external works which could have been used to check his subject's self-perception, and provide more interesting additional material. Some such works are mentioned, with little evidence of their having been read (for instance, al-Maqqari, p. 176 n. 29, described as "an Egyptian historian" on p. 110) and others when quoted, e.g. al-Sakhāwī, are cited second-hand from quotations in secondary works (112, n. 6, 7). Ibn Khaldun gives many hints and leads, both in his autobiography and in the *Muqaddima*, including ones about his own dream-world, which are not pursued.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that very interesting episodes in Ibn Khaldun's life remain obscure. His adventures and misadventures in Cairo are not explored in detail, and it would have been beneficial to tease out the clues to be found in Ibn Ḥajar, al-Sakhāwī, and al-Maqrīzī (the author is aware that such works exist, pp. 172–3) which convey hints about Ibn Khaldun's relations with the grandees and the 'ulama', and of a possibly *demi-mondiste* side to his private life as well. His activities in the Maghreb and al-Andalus are better accounted for, but their significance in the local context, and to IK's life itself, remains incompletely examined; much mileage might have been had from the *Fürstenspiegel* composed by the Zayyanid sovereign Abū Ḥammū, whom IK knew. There is precious little about IK's intellectual formation, his teaching and judicial activity, and, very importantly, about the composition of the *Muqaddima* and of the *History*, and of the period of residence at Qal'at ibn Salāma. One would also have wished for some controlled imagination, perhaps primed by recent novelistic biographies of IK in Arabic.

Clearly the author, publishing this book hastily between his history of the Almohads (2010) and his history of modern Qatar (2011), had not done his homework, thereby compromising any seemingly sensible points made. There is much egregious carelessness throughout. "Tartar" and "Mongol" are used indifferently and interchangeably with reference to Tamerlane and his armies. *Al-Jafr*, the author believes, designated "secret books written for the Prophet Muhammad" (p. 5); reading the relevant chapter from the *Muqaddima* would have revealed otherwise. It is asserted that the Mamluks took control of Egypt from the Fatimids who had been their owners (p. 9); Ḥaḍramawt is described as "an oasis" (p. 42); and the author believes that Tlemcen, which played a not inconsiderable part in Ibn Khaldun's life and in this book, is a coastal city (77, 80, 120 – its location on the map on p. viii is suggestive but open to interpretation). The author also holds that the Shāfi'ī qadī in Cairo under the Mamluks was "predominant" (p. 99), and that, in the course of a famous revolt, the "Yulbugha clan" supported one al-Nāṣirī (p. 10, in fact, Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī was so called having been a Mamluk of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad). Moreover, we are told that a "rafidi" is a "defector from

Islam” (p. 109), that the main biography of the Prophet was composed by “Muhammad al-Ishaq” (p. 115 and index), that Bourdieu is a postmodernist (p. 130), that *mazālim* designates an officer rather than an office (p. 67), and that Ibn Khaldun had an “argument with Ibn Rushd” (p. 128).

More could be mentioned in this vein. More grievous than incognizance is the evident incomprehension of the *Muqaddima*. It is described as being “highly generalized and philosophical” in nature, betraying “a free form of thinking” (p. 84), using “rules of logic” (p. 116). Matters might have become clearer to the author had he relied more on an analytical reading of the text than on meaningless general statements and on the citation of chapter titles, and had he taken the trouble to read Ibn Khaldun scholarship, some of which is cited in statements so general as to be of little analytical utility. Unsurprisingly, there is too much loose usage of *‘aşabiyya*, tribal federation, tribal names, and so forth, too summary a view and use of IK’s praise for savagery, to the extent of seeing Ibn Khaldun’s complex position to be an “anti-centralized theory [*sic*] of human society” (p. 90).

Finally, the author makes much of Ibn Khaldun and Sufism, and in fact evokes the Sufi notion of esoteric knowledge as a key to unlocking the primary motif of the *Muqaddima*. Unfortunately, his account of IK’s position on Sufism betrays little acquaintance with the issues involved, or with IK’s own writings, and the author’s suppositions carry little conviction. This also skews and obscures the interpretation of Ibn Khaldun’s interesting relationship with Ibn al-Khaṭīb, for whose reconstruction an actual reading of al-Maqqari, which contains correspondence between the two, would have been advisable. It is a pity that, upon reading this book, one has the sense of having been conveyed back to the drawing board.

Aziz Al-Azmeh

PETER SLUGLETT with STEFAN WEBER (eds):

Syria and Bilad al-Sham under Ottoman Rule. Essays in Honour of Abdul-Karim Rafeq.

(The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage.) xxiii, 633 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2010. €187. ISBN 978 90 04 18193 9.

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The modern history of geographical Syria (Bilād al-Shām) has developed into one of the richest and most inspiring fields in Middle Eastern studies. Among the chief reasons for this achievement is the scholarship of Abdul-Karim Rafeq, who has been honoured by the thirty articles of this volume, which represents the most relevant topics in urban, socio-economic and political history of sixteenth–eighteenth-century Syria. Almost all are significant contributions to the field in their own right, but this short review can mention only a few.

Ottoman conquest incorporated Syria into a huge free-trade zone that provided security for foreign traders, considerable growth and a firm commitment to the new provinces, as T. Philipp shows. This situation continued, according to M. al-Mubaidin’s contribution, well into the eighteenth century, when European economic influence was still less strong than is commonly assumed. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Ottoman internal trade encountered difficulties, but still remained far more important than trade with Western Europe. Greek Catholic merchants asserted themselves against French competition, as D. Creelius explains,