

Diyāla-Nahrwān system in Iraq, let alone of the Hilmand, Hari-rud or Zayandeh-rud rivers in historical Iran.

Nevertheless, this is the first major re-examination of the rivers of the lower Mesopotamian plain during the early Islamic period since archaeological surveys and satellite images of the region have become available. The original focus of this project was on the Sawād of Iraq; its extension into lowland Khūzistān was opportunistic, having to do with the author's involvement in a project in Khūzistān led by Hermann Gasche and Cécile Baetman that provided new geological and archaeological data.

Apart from the information itself, the main strength of this work lies in its interdisciplinary method. As an avowed philologist, the author's focus is on texts, but he integrates and confronts the texts with data derived from geological corings, archaeological settlement surveys, remote sensing, aerial photographs, satellite imagery, and the accounts of modern travellers. According to Verkinderen the grid provided by tenth-century Arabic geographers is a fiction that floats above the ground. The main aim of his study was to tie this floating grid tighter to the ground by providing more fixed anchor points. He engages in a close critical, judicious and comparative scrutiny of geographical and historical texts to establish the locations of river branches and canals and preserves the options when contradictions cannot be resolved. He makes effective use of historical accounts, especially of the Zanj rebellion, to reconstruct the land- and water-scape in the third/ninth century. Appendix 1 has an excellent illustrated discussion of the maps in the Arabic geographical manuscript tradition.

This is a well-argued work of historical geography that gives a fairly realistic picture of the evolution of the rivers of the lower Mesopotamian plain during the first two Hijrī centuries, and constitutes a useful reference while leaving many questions open.

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MATTHEW PIERCE:

Twelve Infallible Men: The Imams and the Making of Shi'ism.

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In his short but insightful book entitled *Twelve Infallible Men*, Matthew Pierce documents the formation of Twelver Shii identity through an examination of collective biographical works. These sources convey the community's remembrance of its past and reflect its dynamic and evolving beliefs.

In chapter 1, Pierce defines collective biographies through a survey of the different genres of early Muslim historical writing. The chapter ends with detailed descriptions of the five collective biographical works, composed between the fourth/tenth and sixth/twelfth centuries, that lie at the heart of the study.

Chapter 2 focuses on the related themes of martyrdom and consolation. Pierce notes the pervasiveness of these ideas in the source material and connects them to early views of the Imamate. In one section, he argues that poisoning claims surrounding the ninth Imam (al-Jawād) were part of a broad homogenizing project in which the Imams increasingly "functioned as a type" (p. 51). Pierce also connects reports of the grief of the fourth Imam (al-Sajjād) to gendered notions of

emotion/mourning, and emphasizes the consoling function of elegies for the Twelver Shii community.

Chapter 3 interprets treachery/betrayal accounts as means for differentiating the Twelver Shia from their opponents. This view finds support in a number of examples, including: the death of the third Imam (al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī), the community's betrayal of the Prophet after his death, the appointment/murder of the eighth Imam (al-Riḍā), the sixth Imam's (al-Ṣādiq) encounters with extremists, and reports about the brother of the eleventh Imam (al-Askarī). The chapter also includes an analysis of the murder of the second Imām (al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī) in which deception/trickery functions as a "feminine" category that is applied to the enemies of the Twelver Shia.

In chapter 4, Pierce formally addresses issues of body and gender. He contrasts the virtue and manliness embedded in depictions of the Imams' bodies with the perversion of justice characteristic of the ruling authorities (p. 94). The fifth Imam (al-Bāqir) is associated with "masculine" attributes such as love for/protection of his followers and the fathering of male children, while the 'Abbāsīd caliph bears "all the markings of an emasculated leader" (p. 102). Pierce also views the miracles of the seventh Imam (al-Kāzīm) as measures for reassuring the Twelver Shia about their (eventual) triumph over their enemies. The chapter concludes with an examination of female figures (primarily Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet) who serve as models for a "feminized devotion" to the Imams (for men) and as models of femininity (for women) (pp. 123–4).

Chapter 5 explores the cosmological dimensions of the depictions of the Twelver Shii Imams. After a discussion of their primordial existence, Pierce presents a particularly interesting section that details accounts of the Imams' mothers. These reports ignore social and class distinctions and, instead, focus on their protection of "sexual purity" as symbols of their virtue (p. 141). In the concluding section, Pierce convincingly shows that accounts of the Imams' infancy/childhood were designed to justify the community's devotion to child Imams.

The most significant contribution of Pierce's book involves its modelling of a new approach to the study of early Islam grounded in memory studies. Specifically, he highlights the utility of literary biographical works that reflect a community's sense of self at specific moments in time. Such an approach has the potential to provide greater historical insight than studies centred on theological works or political history. Pierce also demonstrates the value of collective biographies which have received considerable attention in other fields (early Christianity) but remain largely unexplored in early Islamic studies. Finally, Pierce displays a mastery of materials from other historical traditions and effortlessly draws on theoretical works that engage memory, communal identity, gender and literary analysis. This is much needed in a field that is often overly dependent on philological approaches.

A few notable criticisms bear mentioning. The first concerns Pierce's attempts at utilizing a gendered framework in his analysis of the sources. This is most problematic in the chapters 2 and 3 where discussions of masculinity/emasculatation and descriptions of feminized characteristics appear out of place and unconvincing. In chapter 2, for example, the association between grief and feminized protest appears strained given that power differentials might provide a more convincing explanation for the depictions of Shii mourning. The jump from a power-based interpretive framework to one centred on gender seems unnecessary and a potentially anachronistic projection of modern categories onto pre-modern texts. A similar criticism may be levelled at the association of trickery with the feminine in chapter 3. The explicit analysis of gender in chapter 4 is more convincing, especially as it pertains to Fāṭima, but there are (again) simpler alternative explanations for reports that emphasize the fathering of male children (e.g. theological necessity) or miracle accounts

(e.g. faith at a time of crisis). Sometimes simple context holds more explanatory power than attempts at discerning larger (gendered) patterns in texts composed in a very different world.

A second criticism (ironic given previous comments) centres on the surprising lack of textual analysis in the book. Although sections within chapters are purportedly devoted to textual evidence, they often veer from this goal and lack copious narrative examples. Given the brevity of the book, there is certainly space for more primary source evidence and it is tempting to consider whether the absence was prompted by the comments of an editor or the publisher. If this is the case, it is unfortunate as the inclusion of additional material would give further flesh to a book filled with compelling and interesting arguments.

Overall, Pierce has written an insightful first book that challenges assumptions about the early history of the Twelver Shia through an innovative examination of previously understudied sources. In the process, it fills a notable gap in the study of Shii Islam and models a disciplinary approach that holds considerable promise for future research. This book is an important addition to the blossoming field of Shii studies.

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ZEYNEP KEZER:

Building Modern Turkey: State, Space and Ideology in the Early Republic.

(Culture, Politics and the Built Environment.) xii, 330 pp. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. \$29.95. ISBN 978 0 8229 6390 5. doi:10.1017/S0041977X16000616

Building Modern Turkey is a meticulously researched and very well written book for anyone interested in Turkey's transition from a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, polyglot empire to a modern unitary nation-state. The strong principal idea that cuts across the six thematic chapters is that modern national identity construction is a predominantly "spatial" concept – that the visual, architectural, urban, infrastructural and geographical strategies by which the new Kemalist regime made its ideology visible and disseminated it across the country were not simply physical manifestations of the Republican idea, but rather its *constitutive* ingredients. Power was not merely represented; it was produced through space and performance. Critical re-evaluations of the Turkish nation-building project (its authoritarianism, its suppression of religious or non-Muslim identities, its militarism and its paternalism) already constitute a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship, but the central role that *space* – especially symbolic and representational space – plays in this process is a relatively new area of inquiry to which the book makes a very significant and most welcome contribution.

The book is divided into three parts with two chapters in each. The first part focuses on the building of modern Ankara as the grand project of inscribing Turkey's regime change onto the landscape, both physically and symbolically. Deconstructing the republican myth of "tabula rasa" (that a modern capital city was miraculously built from scratch), Kezer explains how existing communal and commercial networks of old Ankara were dismantled and scarce resources were channelled to the southward expansion of the new city. She takes us through Ankara's master planning by German experts, the building of foreign embassies