

is entirely free of politics or the hope that the field would develop “some unique or distinctive intellectual paradigm” (xviii).

Other issues are more well-known: the Cold War demand for actionable knowledge, collaboration with governmental agencies, transparency and accountability in foreign funding, the persistent issue of the Arab–Israeli conflict, and the many scandals and unsavory affairs that characterized the early years. Overall, in page after page, we learn of the many difficulties and insurmountable barriers that the founders needed to surpass in order to establish the field as an intellectually viable and organizationally sound and self-sustained community. This is not a linear story of a success. There is much back and forth, endemic pessimism, unbridled optimism, unwarranted caution, and maybe some recklessness as well.

Undoubtedly, Lockman tells an important story. But what does it actually mean? Assuming that facts don’t wear their interpretations on their sleeves, the question is what can young members of the profession do with this fine-grained account? Though Lockman studiously avoids imposing any politically tinged interpretive framework—treating his subject matter as though it were the history of astrophysics—it is perhaps possible to speculate about the real message of his work. In more than one way, the book’s main argument is not necessarily the one about institution building. This and other subtle points only form the exterior framing for a much more important, albeit passive, argument about the deep rhythms of the field. In a way, and without saying so explicitly, Lockman seems to argue that a field which survived the violent upheavals and vicissitudes of the last century should stick to its current structures and culture. It is therefore an argument on behalf of steady institutional continuity and the need to abstain from “rocking the boat” as the best guarantor for the collective well-being of the community. By definition, “continuity arguments” of this nature are conservative. I use that term in the most positive sense possible, as a perspective that calls for moderation and a measured, fine-tuned alteration of established practices and norms. As the antithesis of radical action, *Field Notes* could be read as a call for perspective and moderation by a hugely respected veteran who, in the best of Arab intellectual tradition, is performing the task of the *shāhid ‘ala al-‘aṣr* (a wise elder) for the benefit of *al-jīl al-jadīd* (the young generation).

If that is indeed the intention, I am not sure that the young generation is listening. It has no patience for detailed arguments about institutional histories and their assumed fragility. Instead, it wishes to see radical, decisive, and immediate intervention on behalf of a host of causes and issues, the most prominent of which is that of Palestine and the prospect of a full academic boycott. Lockman does not hint at any of this, and ends his book in the safe territory of the mid-1980s. No doubt it is a very nice ending. But it does raise questions about the complete absence of women among the founders and the possible implications of this gender makeup. Of equal importance, as the reader turns the last page and closes the book, he or she will find themselves sitting next to the elephant in the room, and will have to decide what to do with it. It is a very big elephant indeed; perhaps it is even a mammoth. Only time will tell what the field should do with Palestine and whether Lockman’s strategy of dispassionately laying the facts bare will yield more of the moderate action that is organically in line with his story or, instead, yield action that will divert from this pattern in new and unexpected ways. Whichever choice is made, it will be yet another twist in the long history of an unquiet profession, but certainly not its end.

Wael Abu-ʿUkṣa, *Freedom in the Arab World: Concepts and Ideologies in Arabic Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Pp. 235. \$99.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781107161245

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This an important work, not least because of the existing stereotypes about “Arabs” being incapable of cultivating and maintaining free and democratic social systems. It provides scholarly analysis of the multicultural, ideologically diverse, and politically complex region and its modern struggles. In addressing the lacuna in scholarship on the “idea” and “ideologies” of freedom (*al-ḥurriyya*), Abu-‘Uksa makes a seminal contribution to 19th-century Arabic and Middle Eastern studies. In it, he consults and interrogates key medieval philosophical sources to contextualize the discussion as well as to describe what he calls the “internal aspects of the emergence of modern ideologies” as they relate to the notion of “freedom” and “liberty” (p. 3). He discusses how and under what circumstances freedom and liberty entered the discourse in the Arabic language and thought. Even though Egypt figures prominently because of its importance as the center for knowledge and learning in the Arab world, the book traces the political history of freedom in many of the Ottoman Arabic-speaking provinces within the period ranging from the “French invasion of Egypt in 1798 through the British invasion” in 1882 (p. 2). The notion of freedom became heavily politicized during this period, influenced, as it was, by European thinking (p. 13). It underwent a major change in the “formation period” from 1820 to 1860 when the colonial influence began to increase on the “political entities of the region . . . where the Ottoman control was nominal” (p. 84). Muslims scholars who visited Europe during this time, returned with reformist zeal. Among them the author names Rifa‘a al-Tahtawi whose writings and translations helped transform Arabic into a “practical” language having borrowed many words from European languages. The transition from ideas to ideologies of freedom was on track even as al-Tahtawi’s appeal to European culture was being resisted in some circles. Towards the end of the 19th century the modern concepts of *ḥurriyya* (freedom) and *ishtirākīyya* (socialism), were frequently used in political discourse; the word “liberalism” (Arabized as *librāl*, p. 174) appeared soon thereafter as part of the emerging trends in some Arab countries. The influence of French ideas is particularly noted by the author, Abu-‘Uksa, who argues that as a result, many Arabic words that had simpler meanings received politically suggestive connotations. For example, *jumhūr*, which previously meant “crowd” or “people,” gradually came to mean “republic.” Similarly, two terms that figured prominently among intellectuals in earlier centuries, *tamaddun* (civilization) and *taqaddum* (“being first”), were revived and invested with a renewed understanding for envisioning a new polity. If *taqaddum* previously referred to the past (as *mutaqaddimun* meant “predecessors” and those who were “honorable”), in the newly infused meaning it came to mean the future, and more precisely, toward an imagined future that was to be significantly better socially, politically, and otherwise, and hence “most advanced” and civilized (*tamaddun*) (pp. 69–70). The notion of freedom not only transformed the political discourse, it allowed for the increasing use of related concepts such as reason, equality, secularism, and progress (p. 157). The reformist ideas empowered scholars to speak of freedom as a “utopian ideal” necessary for progress. The social and political reforms that began in the city centers of intellectual learning in the Arab world were largely fueled by the desire to rekindle the spirit of *taqaddum* (progress) and were believed to be measured by the presence of justice and economic prosperity as well as civil rights (*al-ḥuqūq al-jumhūriyya*) (p. 74).

Freedom in the Arab World fills a need, because apart from a handful of studies (by Franz Rosenthal, Bernard Lewis, and a few others), the modern concept of freedom has not received much attention in scholarship on the Arab world. The author notes the criticism leveled against Rosenthal’s study *The Muslim Concept of Freedom prior to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960) which, it was suggested, missed the mark because it isolated “the word from its historical context” (p. 17). The present work expands on the scope that Rosenthal pursued by consulting the historical, literary, sociopolitical, and to an extent, philosophical trajectory of the notion of freedom. Abu-‘Uksa is thorough; he analyzes original sources (in Arabic) on political and personal freedom, and on socialism, secularism, and the emergence of modern nation-states. He juxtaposes the political and the religious aspects of the notion of freedom in a time when these

appeared to be somewhat amalgamated to defend against colonial influences in many Arab societies. And yet it may be said that the present work is incomplete because it does not thoroughly investigate the sources on freedom in a *religious* context. Religious figures and their writings are noted and discussed in this book but the focus remains on the political dimension of their thought. The questions that the author explores here are not insignificant; in fact they are vital for our understanding of the history of ideological and ideational trends regarding personal, cultural, and institutional freedoms, and the civilizational forces that nurtured them over the last two centuries. However, the picture it paints is limited.

Freedom is central to any belief system, and Islam is no exception. For example, the *tafsīr* (exegesis) literature would have been helpful in analyzing the development of the notion by examining relevant scriptural passages that deal with personal moral agency. Even though this work aims to be an in-depth analysis of the *political* meanings of freedom, it is nevertheless important to show the “organic” connections that exist between the religious and the political. It may be argued that the notion of personal freedom or agency is central in any civilizational matrix, especially one that engenders a transnational religion such as Islam or Christianity. The Qur’an proclaims “there is no compulsion in religion,” pointing to the necessity of freedom to choose to believe or not to believe. Of course, for the Qur’an the choice is presented as one between “right” and “wrong.” Nevertheless, the choice is there and so is the inherent notion of freedom. Despite this missing piece, Abu ‘Uksa’s work makes an important contribution to the field by showing the processes (and stages within these) that were instrumental in the transformation of Arabic thought with respect to the concept of freedom.

BESHARA B. DOUMANI, *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Pp. 372. \$28.29 paper. ISBN: 9780521133272

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Beshara Doumani’s new book on Ottoman Syria is a significant intervention into family history, urban history, and legal history. The author is most intensively in dialogue with fellow social historians whose work on the Ottoman Empire relies on local judicial records. Doumani was among an early cohort of scholars who used such records in the 1980s and 1990s to write social history, exemplified by his book on Nablus and its region titled *Rediscovering Palestine: Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). This new publication builds on and extends his earlier work to ask questions about family structures, political economy, and legal practices in the Ottoman Middle East.

Here, Doumani challenges essentialist assumptions of the Ottoman-Syrian past. These assumptions encompass patriarchy, the “traditional” Arab-Muslim family, and the meaning of shari‘a in the precolonial era. Doumani wants readers to realize how little of what is (thought to be) known about these matters is rooted in empirical research. He argues that the expression or manifestations of these concepts cannot be ascertained or understood by deductive reasoning, which produces little more than unexamined tropes and stereotypes. His alternative approach is to use family endowments and lawsuits from the towns of Nablus and Tripoli between the 17th and 19th centuries to understand how families were structured. The local shari‘a courts were central to establishing and adjudicating endowments, and through good fortune, extensive court archives from both places are extant in these years, allowing direct comparisons to be made.