

that parallels al-Idrīsī's more famous attempt at categorizing geographical information within a mathematical framework.

In the introduction, Ducène notes several other Muslim rulers who have taken a keen interest in science, not least Abū al-Fidā' himself. The Rasulid period in the history of the Yemen is a time of increased maritime trade with India, as demonstrated by Eric Vallet. Commerce may have fostered the sovereign's interest in geography, although al-Afḍal is said to have composed works in several other branches of science, such as agriculture and genealogy. The manuscript as a whole, dated to 777/1375, contains marginal annotations by the Sultan himself, demonstrating that these tables were made for the Sultan's personal use.

The tables appear as two separate sections of the manuscript, which together form a sequence that begins in the Arabian Peninsula and gradually moves away from the central regions of the Islamic world. Given that a significant proportion of localities are from Iranian-speaking regions, Ducène speculates that the original *zīj* was composed in the entourage of the observatory of Marāgha in the late thirteenth century. The descriptive text of the various localities is largely taken from the Balkhī geographers, in particular Ibn Ḥawqal. It contains some previously unknown information on localities in the Red Sea as well as in Central Asia, although the important innovation here is the way in which the two traditions are brought together. Another distinctive aspect, which the author should perhaps have highlighted more, is the designation of groups of localities by racial categories (Arabs, Turks, Blacks, Rūm, etc.). These are reminiscent of categories utilized in Ismaili missionary *da'wa*, and reinforce the association with the observatory established by the Ismaili Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Tūsī.

The edition and translation pose serious challenges, not least because the current location of the manuscript itself is unknown, and the editor had to rely on photographs. Ducène provides very reliable readings and accessible, accurate translation. The numerical values, which so often become distorted in medieval manuscripts, are checked against other works of mathematical geography. This work will be useful for those studying the history of the Yemen in the medieval period, for the development of geographical knowledge in the Islamic world (full indexes in Arabic and in French are provided), and for mapping the history of Arabic-Islamic geography as a discipline.

**Yossef Rapoport**

Queen Mary, University of London

A. C. S. PEACOCK and SARA NUR YILDIZ (eds):

*The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East.* xiii, 308 pp. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012. ISBN 978 1 84885 887 9.

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In contrast to the early Ottoman period, which in recent years has been intensely re-examined in a number of monographs, Seljuk Anatolia is still widely neglected by historians of the medieval Near East. Perhaps one of the most important reasons for this lack of interest is that the Turkish-Muslim principalities of Anatolia can hardly be integrated into the traditional canon of academic disciplines at European universities. Who is actually responsible for this hybrid cultural imbroglio with its strong Byzantine substrate, its Turkish ruling elite, its Persian-Arabic

documents and literary sources, and its Muslim institutions? Of course, things are different in the modern Republic of Turkey, where the Seljuk period is considered the starting point for the formation of the Turkish nation in its newly acquired homeland. This ideological burden, however, seems to impede the development of fresh and innovative approaches. The two editors of the present volume bring together a number of contributions discussing crucial methodological issues and opening new trajectories for future research.

Focusing on the Seljuk court of Konya and its interaction with the multi-ethnic society of Asia Minor, mainly in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, this book is divided in three thematic units examining matters of dynastic identity, the royal household of Konya, and the role of Sufism in the early Seljuk period. An introductory chapter gives a brief overview of the state of the art (pp. 1–22), while Gary Leiser's thoughtful conclusions (pp. 264–75) point out a broad spectrum of unanswered questions concerning the religious, social and economic history of the Seljuk period. He rightly underlines the importance of *waqf* documents which survive in considerable number and still await publication and analysis. The editors' verdict about Turkish publications, the quality of which they characterize as "distinctly poor", is perhaps a little too harsh. There is no doubt that dialogue between Turkish and European historians, owing to linguistic and ideological barriers, is not always easy, but it should not be forgotten that most nationalistic concepts prevailing in modern Turkish historiography draw on older European models, which took a long time and many painful experiences to overcome. Turkish scholars have published and translated an abundance of primary sources and, despite a certain stagnation in recent decades, attributable to the trend towards studying the Ottoman period and its rich archives, they have recently published useful manuals and comprehensive surveys, above all the richly illustrated two-volume *Anadolu Selçukluları ve Beylikler Dönemi Uygarlığı* edited by A. Y. Ocak and others (Ankara, 2006). Another point favoured by the editors is a sharp distinction between the Great Seljuk sultanate and the migratory Turkish groups intruding into Anatolia. Nevertheless, Alp Arslan and Malikshāh's policy of subjugating all Muslim principalities in the borderlands from Caucasia to Antioch heavily undermined the Byzantine defence system in the East and, in this sense, prepared the ground for the penetration of Anatolia by Turkmen warrior groups.

Oya Pancaroglu's article on the dynastic self-identification of the Mengücek ruler Sayf al-Dīn Shāhanshāh (1171–96) is an exemplary study demonstrating the manifold insights to be gained from an accurate analysis of architectural and epigraphic evidence, as is reflected in the two surviving monuments of his patronage, the Kale Camii and the Sitte Malik mausoleum in Divriği. Inscriptions drawing on contemporary usages in Syria and Anatolia and stylistic particularities pointing to the craftsmanship of masters from Ahlat form the basis on which the ideological aspirations of the Mengücek dynasty were expressed. Dimitri Korobeinikov explores the official titles of the sultanate of Konya in search of the sources of inspiration and legitimacy. He concludes that the Seljuk of Rūm mainly resorted to Great Seljuk traditions, but it should not be forgotten that the choice of title words very much depended on the audience they were addressing. The Seljuk image projected towards the Muslim world did not prevent the sultanate of Konya from employing Byzantine elements when communicating with Christian lords. Another aspect of dynastic identity is the promotion of royal virtues and aristocratic attitudes through the presence of men of letters seeking a ruler's patronage. Sara Nur Yıldız examines Rawandī's *Rāhat al-ṣudūr*, a compilation of historical accounts and edifying material on *adab* and ethics dating from 1210, as a work expressing the ideals of Seljuk court life in order to support its author's gaining the favour of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I.

The second part, on the royal household, deals principally with women, specifically the Seljuk harem and the case of 'Iṣmat al-Dunyā wa-l-Dīn, a wife of Sultan 'Alā' al-Dīn Kaykubād. Rustam Shukurov explores the close relationship of thirteenth-century sultans with Greek women, something that points to a strong Greek background and a sort of “dual identity” of the Seljuk court. Certainly, the co-existence of Greek and Muslim–Turkish elements can be observed on various levels in Seljuk public life and thus forms an important subject for further research. 'Iṣmat al-Dunyā wa-l-Dīn is an intriguing case of a sultan's wife involved in intra-dynastic conflicts, the patronage of building projects, and the ideological strengthening of dynastic claims. As narrative sources are silent about her, Scott Redford reconstructs her activities on the basis of architectural and epigraphic evidence surviving in the environs of Erzurum and in Uluborlu. The contributions on Sufism focus on the intersection between political and religious life and the relations of Sufi sheikhs with the Seljuk elite in particular. Ibn 'Arabī, Majd al-Dīn Iṣḥāq, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, and his son Sultan Walad represent different aspects of elite patronage and the close co-operation between Sufi orders and political leaders. In the concluding chapter Rachel Goshgarian examines an Armenian language futuwwa constitution compiled by Yovhannēs Erznkac'i (1230–93) in Erzincan and its similarities to Muslim treatises, thus presenting a case-study of cross-cultural interaction between Muslims and Christian Armenians in north-eastern Anatolia. All in all, this is a thought-provoking collection of articles posing many new questions and offering innovative approaches to the complex field of Seljuk court life in Anatolia.

**Alexander Beihammer**  
University of Cyprus

RUDI MATTHEE:

*Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan.*

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At the time of writing there is much debate and discussion about the Islamic Republic of Iran and its immediate future; perhaps a book about the decline, crisis, and fall of an Iranian polity in terms of a sui generis is of some importance. On this front, Matthee makes no explicit connection in *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*, but one wonders to what degree eighteenth-century Safavid Iran and the current Iranian government do indeed share some characteristics (economic isolationism, inflation, corruption, regional interventionism, aggressive theo-juridical class, and so on). Of course, the world is a far more complex place than it was in 1722, and this comparison, although intriguing, probably remains unworkable.

Nonetheless, this is a book which tackles head on the solidly entrenched historiography of decline in the early modern Middle East and South Asia. Matthee is right to insist that more nuance be brought to this term so as to avoid its totalizing effects in shaping a complex historiographical landscape such as that of Iran. He explores this and other issues in his first chapter (“Patterns: Iran in the late Safavid period”), and here he divides the text into a number of arguments appearing under the headings of “centrifugal” and “centripetal” tendencies. Of course, the topography/geography of Iran earns a “centrifugal” classification, while less