

Orosius' work and is thus highly relevant to its further study and possible reconstruction. The introduction then examines how al-Maqrīzī used his sources, based on detailed and extensive textual comparisons. This section is noteworthy both for what it generally tells us about the working methods of a prominent premodern Islamicate scholar and what it particularly reveals about the accuracy with which al-Maqrīzī quoted his sources – but also his ability to paraphrase if he wished to do so. Furthermore, Hämeen-Anttila demonstrates that al-Maqrīzī's quotation technique changed markedly towards the end of the edited text, his sources becoming ever more strongly abbreviated, a finding of importance to the study of the history of the work. The introduction ends with a description of the manuscripts used, notes on the methods of translation, and the rendering of proper names.

The edited Arabic text deals with the history of Persia from Creation through the reigns of the first three classes of Persian rulers as known to Arabic-speaking scholars of the middle period: the Pīshdādians, the Kayanids, and the Ashghānians. The edition is set in clear and easily readable print, with rubrications in the manuscript indicated in red ink. The English translation of the Arabic text is given on the facing side, with numbered paragraphs allowing for easy navigation.

One can only congratulate the editor and everybody else involved in the publication of the book on its superb quality. The introduction is concise but highly informative, the edition proper accurate and impeccable, the facsimile of high quality, and the translation readable, precise, and richly annotated. The carefully executed layout makes the book pleasant to read, and the multiple indexes allow for easy navigation. The only caveat limiting the value of the volume as a stand-alone work is that readers are referred to other, in part forthcoming publications to gain a more holistic understanding of the text of *al-Khabar 'an al-bashar*; this is in the nature of a multi-volume edition project.

With his masterful edition and translation, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila has set very high standards for future publications in the Bibliotheca Maqriziana series and beyond. On a broader scale, the volume constitutes a powerful demonstration of what philological research can and should look like in the twenty-first century. By showing what is possible, it underlines the urgent need for critical editions in a field that far too often settles for non-scholarly and faulty, albeit easily available “editions” of its primary sources.

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ELIAS MUHANNA:

*The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition.*

214 pp. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018. ISBN 978 069117556 0.

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*The World in a Book* is a well written analysis of one of the largest compendia of Classical Arabic literature, the early fourteenth-century *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition) by the Egyptian scholar and scribe Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333). The author, Elias Muhanna, states in his first sentence that his is “a small book

about a very large book". Al-Nuwayrī's compendium is published in 31 volumes containing "all the knowledge of the world". Muhanna's analysis of this huge compendium is despite its conciseness very thorough and compelling.

Even the length of al-Nuwayrī's text makes you wonder why in the world anyone would compose such a comprehensive book. In his introduction the author formulates his quest for knowledge and his path to writing this book as follows:

I sought out the craft of literature (*adab*) and I became devoted to it, enlisting in the path of its masters. [...] So, I mounted the stallion of reading and galloped in the field of consultation. When the steed became obedient to me and its water sources were revealed, I chose to abstract from my reading a book that would keep me company, that I could consult and that I would rely upon when faced with certain tasks. I called upon God Most High, and produced a work comprising five books, arranged harmoniously and clearly, with each book divided into five sections. (Translation by Elias Muhanna, Penguin Classics.)

He thus seems to suggest that the text was written for himself, as a tool of reference. Yet who else in the world would want to read such a comprehensive work and for what purpose? What models informed the composition of the text? What broader audiences did al-Nuwayrī have in mind while composing his text? How would these other readers be able to consult the text? These are the questions Muhanna deals with in his book. He elegantly reads the work against the background of a broader tradition of encyclopaedism in Arabic literature that had its heyday during the Mamluk period in Egypt and Syria (thirteenth–fifteenth centuries). By answering the questions above, *The World in a Book* forces us to re-evaluate not only this specific classical Arabic text, but also a broader range of compilatory texts of the era and the "writerly" milieu in which they were composed.

The first chapter of Muhanna's study deals with the ambitions and motivations behind the tradition of encyclopaedism in the Mamluk era. Here Muhanna argues against traditional views that the rise of encyclopaedism under the Mamluks was motivated by fear of loss of knowledge brought on by Mongol destructions. He sees the appeal of encyclopaedic texts in line with Thomas Bauer's more recent analysis of the blending of the scribal and Islamic religious culture. The panoramic study of al-Nuwayrī's text, as provided in chapter 2, demonstrates the ways in which the author was motivated to collect the ubiquitous knowledge of his age and combine, cross-reference and organize it in systematic new ways, thus transforming the traditional genres – anthologies, chronicles, biographical dictionaries, administrative manuals – into a new hybrid compendium.

In the third and fourth chapters Muhanna describes the two "writerly" milieus in which al-Nuwayrī operated: the scholarly world (of the *madrasa*) and the world of the state servants (*kuttāb*) employed in the chancery and financial administration. He shows how these worlds were interconnected in al-Nuwayrī himself, but also how the two milieus focused on and valued distinctive types of knowledge. Analysing the overabundance of books upon which the *Ultimate Ambition* draws, Muhanna sketches the buoyant scholarly milieu of Cairo and Damascus in the Mamluk period and the transforming knowledge practices taking place at the time. A small gem is the last paragraph of chapter 3 "Copia and contradiction" in which he analyses the generally ecumenical, but sometimes outspoken, way in which al-Nuwayrī deals

with contradictory truth claims. Muhanna's depiction of the connections between encyclopaedism and bureaucracy in chapter 4 is likewise strong and very convincing, analysing the scribe as a professional archiver, a gatherer of information for the state, and how this collecting mentality influenced the literature these scribes produced. Al-Nuwayrī's emphasis on the virtues of the financial scribes in comparison to their chancery colleagues who were traditionally deemed more prestigious, is refreshing and perhaps can be attributed to the author's own experience at the bureau of the Privy Purse.

The fifth chapter studies the manuscript culture of the era, the strategies and challenges of collation, edition and source management, especially with multi-volume manuscripts such as the *Ultimate Ambition*. By analysing al-Nuwayrī's own working methods as testified by his biographers, the codicological and palaeographical evidence from the autographs of the *Ultimate Ambition* and his copies of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and his exposition on copyists' practices, Muhanna is able to answer some very relevant questions on working methods, including the author's composition schedule and the number of pages he produced each day, his techniques of collating sources, and the prices of the copies he made. The sixth and final chapter of the book discusses the reception of the text by contemporaries and later scholars, especially Dutch Orientalists.

Muhanna's analysis of al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* reaches far beyond this specific text and its author. It opens a window on the scribal and scholarly world of the Mamluk era. Collecting all the knowledge in the world and writing it down as a consultation tool for yourself must have been fun! This enjoyment is noticeable throughout al-Nuwayrī's work. It is also apparent in Muhanna's book which is not only a very erudite analysis of one of the most impressive compendia of the Mamluk era, but also provides the reader with the same joy and excitement al-Nuwayrī must have felt while composing his book.

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REBECCA SKRESLET HERNANDEZ:

*The Legal Thought of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī: Authority and Legacy.* (Oxford Islamic Legal Studies.) ix, 238 pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN 978 0 19 880593 9.  
doi:10.1017/S0041977X19000053

This volume is one of the first monographs to discuss the nature of authority in the thought of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505) and the contemporary period. It is an important contribution to the life and work of this important late Mamluk scholar whose work is generally understudied, despite his prestige and eminence in Muslim thought. The work presents a study of al-Suyūfī's view of juridical and legal authority through a study of his *fatāwa* that deal with these issues and their impact in the contemporary sphere.

The introduction (pp. 1–23) begins with a short discussion of al-Suyūfī's claim to be both a *mujtahid* and *mujaddid* (pp. 1–5), which sets out the basic frame for the work that follows. The monograph is a discussion of al-Suyūfī's claims to authority, the way that claim is manifested in *fatāwa*, and the impact that both his claim to authority and the *fatāwa* have had on contemporary scholarship.