

The book includes an Appendix about *Ghulāt* works surviving in fragments, a Bibliography, and an Index.

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STEPHEN JUDD and JENS SCHEINER (eds):

New Perspectives on Ibn 'Asākir in Islamic Historiography.

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This book is one among the numerous scientific publications following the paper edition in 80 volumes – and the online publication – of the *Tar'īḥ Madīnat Dimašq (TMD)* by the Damascene traditionalist of the time of the Crusades, the famous Ibn 'Asākir (d. 1176). This monumental work opens with chapters on the virtues of Damascus and the topography of the medieval city, but consists essentially of a biographical dictionary with more than 10,000 biographies (*tarğama*) arranged alphabetically according to birth names (*ism*) of men and women, who were born, stayed in or passed through Damascus.

This publication follows *Ibn 'Asakir and Early Islamic History*, a collection of contributions on the *TMD* edited in 2001 by James Lindsay as a contribution to the history of early Islam. Judd and Scheiner's book presents six studies which, after a brief introduction by the editors and a prologue by N. Khalek recording the conditions for editing the text, focus on the historiographic dimension of the *TMD* and the agenda of its author. Each of the articles makes a real contribution to these questions and helps increase our understanding of the composition of the *TMD* as well as its scientific and historiographical importance.

The longest article is written by Scheiner and is entitled "Ibn Asākir's virtual library"; the author endeavours to reconstruct the biographical works and notebooks consulted by Ibn 'Asākir in different places and at different times in his life and which were used in *TMD*. This study lists about 100 books, sometimes with uncertain and fluctuating titles, mainly written between the ninth and eleventh centuries, and half of which are lost today. The places and the circumstances in which these books were consulted are often unknown, making it impossible to reconstruct Ibn 'Asākir's personal library, even though he appears to be one of the greatest compilers of his time.

Three articles focus on Ibn 'Asākir's methods that led him to the choice of characters and information he included in his book. The first of these articles, Z. Antrim's *Nostalgia for the Future*, compares the introduction of *TMD* with that of al-Ḥaṭīb al-Bağdādī's *Ta'rīḥ Bağdād*, its model. Yet the aims pursued by the two authors are obviously not the same: al-Ḥaṭīb al-Bağdādī delivered an idealized image of Baghdad as the economic, political and intellectual capital of the Muslim world, from its foundation to the reign of Hārūn al-Rašīd, whereas Ibn 'Asākir did not build a nostalgic image of the Umayyad past, but around prophetic traditions, the story of the conquest of the town and the reign of the Rašīdūn caliphs marked by the installation of many companions in Syria. It is not the political influence of the city

that he wanted to highlight, nor its rank as capital of the Arab world under the Umayyads, but the sacred and eternal dimension of Damascus as well as the land of Syria.

A similar approach can be found in the long *tarğama* devoted to Khalīd al-Qasrī, governor of Iraq under the Umayyads, studied by Judd. Ibn ‘Asākir strives to rehabilitate this character and to revise the portrait as hitherto drawn by al-Ṭabarī. Ibn ‘Asākir enhances his Damascene roots, his generosity and his interest in Bedouin poetry, rather than his cruelty and tragic end, result of tribal rivalries between Qaysites and Yemenis. Similarly, among the selection criteria used in the last part devoted to women studied by Monika Winet, the link with Damascus is preponderant, as is their proximity to the Companions of the Prophet and the *tābi’ūn*. This *tarğama* seems once again to emphasize the virtues of Damascus while staging Ibn ‘Asākir himself through the very personal choice of his *isnād* and the place given to the women of his family.

The authors of last two articles are more interested in the posterity of Ibn ‘Asākir. S. Murad and J. Lindsay examine the colophons (*samā’āt*) of Ibn ‘Asākir’s booklet bringing together the “40 *hadith* to incite to *ğihād*”. This book was widely found in Damascus, not at the time when the *ğihād* was in full swing under Nūr al-Dīn who had ordered it or under Saladin, but in the 1220s, half a century after its composition, at the time of the Fifth Crusade and the retrocession of Jerusalem to Frederick II, but in a purely local and family context. It was used by the propagandists of the princes of Damascus to denounce al-Malik al-Kāmil, the Ayyubid Sultan of Cairo who had offered Jerusalem to the Franks and who wanted to take control of the city. A final article, written by Dana Sajdi, shows how the *TMD* has emerged as a key monument of Damascene historiography in the late medieval centuries and under Ottoman rule. It weighed heavily on the works of its continuators, from Ibn Šaddād (1285) to al-Badrī (1489) and Ibn Kannān (1740) who tried to stand out without completely succeeding.

The six studies in this book provide a more comprehensive understanding of *TMD*, its composition, and its author’s agenda. Ibn ‘Asākir was not nostalgic for the Umayyad period, but for the image of Syria as a sacred land that was created by the Umayyads. This book opens many perspectives on the work that remains to be done on the new manuscripts of the *TMD*, the studies of the colophons that they carry, and the secondary works of Ibn ‘Asākir. It is thus astonishing that none of these studies quote the *amālī* of Ibn ‘Asākir (D. Sourdel, “Documents sur l’enseignement donné à Damas par le savant et traditionniste Ibn ‘Asākir”, *Revue des études islamiques*, 61–62, 1993–94, pp. 1–17), which provide valuable data on his teaching methods.

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