

the messages coming across the centuries” (p. 205). Irwin’s book is a welcome addition to Ibn Khaldun scholarship. It has answered many questions that I and other scholars had failed to address. I only wonder, however, that if Irwin had awakened somewhat from Ibn Khaldun’s hypnotic pull, Might he have realized that while Ibn Khaldun was capable of holding secrets, he left abundant clues that pointed to something beneath the surface telling of his life? As Irwin should know, sometimes the unseen is obvious and the obvious unseen.

Allen J. Fromherz
Georgia State University

NEFELI PAPOUTSAKIS and SYRINX VON HEES (eds):

The Sultan’s Anthologist – Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah and His Work.

436 pp. Baden-Baden: Ergon Verlag, 2017. ISBN 978 3 95650 282 8.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X19000090

In 2013, Thomas Bauer received the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize, which is awarded annually by the German Research Society (DFG) to a researcher working in Germany in one of many fields. It is the most prestigious award for the advancement of research in Germany and is endowed with up to €2.5 million per prize winner. This sum can be applied by the winner to any research work in the subsequent seven years, according to one’s own needs and concepts and without any bureaucratic burden. Thomas Bauer chose to use his prize money to establish the Leibniz Prize Research Center entitled “Arabic literature and rhetoric, 1100–1800” (ALEA) at the University of Münster. The texts emerging from this period have previously been largely neglected by researchers, the reason being the dominant idea, originally from Western and colonial thought (which was then quickly adopted by Arabic elites), that there had once been a “Golden Age” that was subsequently replaced by a long period of stagnation and decline. The latter was said to have lasted until the nineteenth century, when the Western colonial powers “breathed new life” into the Arabian countries. Apparently, the ideas of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) concerning the philosophy of history were powerful and efficacious. According to Hegel, history represents the progress that occurs in the consciousness of freedom, thus in the end the self-realization of freedom. The particular “spirit” of a nation blossoms for a time, yet it should be seen only as one link in a long chain. Once it has fulfilled its historical purpose, it is no longer of any use in the world. That nation then leaves the stage to make way for another nation. For Hegel, Christianity was the source of all free thought and precipitated modern European culture. In this narrative, the only task Islam has is to transfer knowledge from ancient Greece to modern Europe. This served as a bridge over the “dark ages” of Medieval times.

In this sense, the entire post-Seljuk era may be seen as mere imitation, epigonal, devoid of any true value. In Islamic studies, this led to – among other things – literary texts from the time of the Mamluks and the Ottoman Empire being neglected entirely. This changed only after Thomas Bauer, in a series of articles, pointed out that, for example, the literary writing of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Syria and Egypt blossomed without parallel, and that this period gave birth to some of the most complex and sophisticated literary writing, embedded within a broad literary culture (Thomas Bauer, “Mamluk literature: misunderstandings and new approaches”, *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9/2, 2005, 105–32; Bauer,

“Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit”, in S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam (eds), *Die Mamluken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur. Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, (Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2003, Asien und Afrika, Vol. 7), 71–123; Bauer, “In search of ‘post-classical literature’. A review article”, *Mamlūk Studies Review* 11/2, 2007, 137–67; Bauer, “Mamluk literature as a means of communication”, in Stephan Conermann (ed.), *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies – State of the Art* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2013), 23–56.

This volume presents the contributions to a conference that took place on April 1–2, 2015, at the Leibniz Prize Research Center. The focus lies on one man: the writer and poet Ibn Abī Ḥajala, who was born in the Sufi centre of his grandfather in Tlemcen in 1325. During his early years, he undertook, together with his family, a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Thereafter, he spent the years 1342 to 1350 studying in Damascus before settling down in Cairo. After having first received entrance to the court through Sultan al-Šāliḥ Šalāḥ al-Dīn Šāliḥ (ruled 1351–54), he developed a close relationship with the well-versed Sultan Ḥasan (ruled 1354–61). He earned his stay as a Sufi shaykh in the *khānqāh* of the Emir Manjak al-Yūsufī (c. 1315–75). Even after Sultan Ḥasan had been murdered, Ibn Abī Ḥajala continued to write for the rulers in Cairo, first for al-Manšūr Muḥammad (ruled 1361–63), then for al-Ashraf Shaʿbān (ruled 1363–77). Like his patron Manjak al-Yūsufī, he died in 1375.

The volume contains 13 very substantial contributions, eight of which(!) stem from the Leibniz Prize Research Center in Münster: those by Thomas Bauer, Syrinx von Hees, Nefeli Papoutsakis, Hakan Özkan, Alev Masarwa, Stephan Tölke, Anke Osigus, and Andreas Herdt. There are four further specialists among the authors: Th. Emil Homerin (Dept. of Religion and Classics, University of Rochester, NY), Beatrice Gründler (Seminar für Semitistik und Arabistik, FU Berlin), Remke Kruk (Professor emeritus of Arabic Language and Culture, Leiden University), and Maurice A. Pomerantz (Assistant Professor of Literature, New York University, Abu Dhabi).

The editors chose to place the articles in chronological order: the contribution by Th. Emil Homerin on Ibn Abī Ḥajala’s post-1368 comment on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s (d. 1235) positions, *Ghayth al-ʿarīḍ fī muʿarāḍat Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (The Sudden Downpour in Opposition to Ibn al-Fāriḍ) is first in line, and Nefeli Papoutsakis’ well-informed comments on Ibn Abī Ḥajala’s letter to his colleagues requesting their sending him material for an anthology round out the volume. The guideline that each contributor should be concerned with only one text bears excellent fruit in this edition: all articles are of outstanding quality, particularly since most texts discussed were previously unedited or even undiscovered. In addition to individual 7-line panegyric poems from his *dīwān* (Thomas Bauer), the following ten texts are dealt with here: (1) *Sukkardān al-Sulṭān* (The Sultan’s Sugar Box) (Beatrice Gründler); (2) *Sulūk al-sanān fī wasf al-sakan* (The Right Path in the Description of Dwellings) (Alev Masarwa); (3) *Dīwān al-Šabāba* (Collection on Passionate Love) (Anke Osigus); (4) *Unmūdhaj al-qitāl fī naql al-ʿawāl* (The Model Combat. On Moving Pawns) (Remke Kruk); (5) *al-Maqāma al-Kutubiyya al-Mawsūma bi-ʿawd al-gharīb* (The Book-Maqāma which is Characterized by the Return of the Stranger) (Maurice A. Pomerantz); (6) *Daʿf al-niqma bi-l-šalāt al-ānabī al-rahma* (Repelling Affliction by Praying for the Prophet of Mercy) (Andreas Herdt); (7) *al-Ṭibb al-masnūn fī daʿf al-tāʿūn* (The Well-Proved Medicine against the Plague) (Stephan Tölke); (8) *Jiwār al-aḥyār fī dār al-qarār* (Dwelling near the Best in the Permanent Abode) (Syrinx von Hees); (9) *Marthiyat al-Iskandariyya* (The Elegy on Alexandria) (Alev Masarwa); (10) *Dawr al-zamān fī ṭahn al-julbān* (The Turn of Fate in Crushing the Mamluks).

Although research on the Mamluk sultans has experienced an enormous boom over the past ten years, not least because it found a definitive home at the Annemarie Schimmel College in Bonn (www.mamluk.uni-bonn.de) over the past eight years (2011–19), many of the key texts from this field have yet to be edited, let alone become the object of scientific contemplation. The volume reviewed here is truly a pioneering effort and sets new standards for the study of the literature and rhetoric of that era. Our understanding of Arabic literary history, and indeed Islamic cultural history in general, will change only when, as Thomas Bauer puts it, we learn “to appreciate the relativity of our own values, standards, and prejudices, and to locate them in their respective historical and social context”. Further, we must set as our goal “to examine the social, aesthetic, and ideological circumstances of any period of Arabic literature and thus to establish the values and standards that the members of the specific literary communities themselves applied to their own literature” (Bauer, “Mamluk literature”, p. 107). At least the latter objective has been fully met by this volume. Let us hope that the Leibniz Prize Research Center in Münster “Arabic literature and rhetoric, 1100–1800” will continue to issue such studies of this nature in the future.

Stephan Conermann

YOSSEF RAPOPORT and IDO SHAHAR (eds):

The Villages of the Fayyum: A Thirteenth-Century Register of Rural, Islamic Egypt.

(The Medieval Countryside 18.) viii, 260 pp. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018. ISBN 978 250354277 5.

YOSSEF RAPOPORT:

Rural Economy and Tribal Society in Islamic Egypt: A Study of Al-Nabulusi's Villages of the Fayyum.

(The Medieval Countryside 19.) 285 pp. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018. ISBN 978 250357518 6.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X19000119

In the year 1245 an Egyptian administrator was called from retirement to survey the economic affairs in the villages of the Fayyum region to the south-west of Cairo for tax purposes. Such surveys were standard, but al-Nabulusi produced at the end of his two-month mission something quite unique for pre-Ottoman Middle Eastern history – a narrative report on the economic conditions in a rural area (or at least its survival is quite unique). Being a man of rather grandiose literary ambition, he called it *Demonstrating the Everlasting Eternal's Design in Ordering the Villages of the Fayyum*. This work has been known to scholarship for more than a century via the 1898 edition of Bernhard Moritz. Yet, while it has since been used, it did not receive the dedicated study it deserved. It needed the acumen of Yossef Rapoport and his team, especially Ido Shahar, to understand the potential of what has lain at our fingertips for so long.

Al-Nabulusi did not like the rural folks he had to work with and his text is impressively condescending towards the local populations who mostly appear as