

Tormented by “the annoyance of the most insolent flies” at Basra (p. 130) or those of Lar in Persia who were “the most insolent and biting I have ever experienced” (p. 294), Bembo suffered from the intense heat, in particular in Surat where “without any exercise I was sweating like a fountain, something that leaves a person very tired” (p. 186). In Persia the sun gave him nose bleeds, something very uncomfortable, especially while riding (p. 295).

Bembo wrote at the beginning of his account: “I have wanted to set down in these pages in a smooth and easy narrative so that the bother that I suffered alone during long wanderings, attempted by few and to few granted, may bring pleasure to all those who, during the leisure of domestic tranquility, may want to spend only a little time in reading them” (p. 35). Thanks to this translation and edition this ambition has been realized.

**Kate Fleet**

FARHAD DAFTARY and ZULFIKAR HIRJI:

*The Ismailis: An Illustrated History.*

262 pp. London: Azimuth Editions and The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008. £39. ISBN 978 1 898592 26 6.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000639

The text is a judicious exposition of the place of the Nizari imamate in the history of Shiism and of the Shia in the general history of Islam. Perhaps the most interesting part covers the Nizari revival, first in Iran and then in the Indian sub-continent under Shah Nizar (1680–1722) and his successors, culminating in the emergence of the Ismailis as a global community. The book is sumptuously, if rather fussily, designed. That, and the fact that the illustrations are often generally rather than specifically relevant to the subject, suggest that they were for a picture-book directed at the Ismaili community, rather than to the non-specialist public, who will, however, find it an informative account of this venerable sect.

**J. M. Rogers**

MARCUS MILWRIGHT:

*The Fortress of the Raven: Karak in the Middle Islamic Period (1100–1650).*

(Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts 72.) xvii, 445 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. €134. ISBN 9789004165199.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000640

The citadel of al-Karak is the best preserved fortification in central and southern Jordan and is arguably one of the most impressive surviving examples of military architecture in the Middle East. The present structure was initially erected by the Crusaders and subsequently modified, most notably under the Mamluks, but written evidence suggests that earlier fortifications had existed on this site. Al-Karak was, from the citadel’s construction in the twelfth century until its seventeenth-century demise, the regional capital of central and southern Jordan. It controlled strategic lines of communication (such as the King’s Highway) and functioned as the

administrative, military, and economic hub of the region. Its history has not been subject to a monograph yet, which makes the book under review an important contribution to the history of the Middle Period in the Syrian lands.

The book focuses on the castle of al-Karak itself, but includes – despite the modesty of the title – a discussion of the dependent territories. It is divided into two parts, discussing the historical (Part I, pp. 25–134) and the archaeological evidence (that is ceramics, Part II, pp. 137–272). The first part is divided into three chapters on the political, administrative and economic history of the castle and its surrounding areas. The second consists of two main chapters discussing respectively unglazed and glazed ceramics from al-Karak. Appendix 1 is a catalogue of these ceramics (pp. 273–383) and Appendix 2 identifies the sites that have been subject to archaeological publications or surveys (pp. 384–401). Over forty black and white plates support the discussion.

A strong feature of the book is its broad periodical coverage, which allows it to bridge not only the Crusader and Ayyubid periods but, more importantly, the Mamluk and Ottoman eras. This broad periodical outlook enables the author to discuss continuities and breaks across such arbitrary borderlines. The overview of the political history and the discussion of economic development in particular are the first accounts that offer such an integrated view of the region.

The most important part of the book, however, is the analysis of the over 8,200 pottery shards recovered from within the citadel, the slopes around its walls and sectors beyond the boundaries of the old town wall. The recovery was the result of previous work conducted by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the Miller survey. The major challenge in the analysis of this material comes down to dating: as the larger parts of the analysed shards are from unstratified deposits, the author had recourse to data from other sites in the Levant in order to date them. In consequence, the two main steps undertaken in this work are the creation of a ceramic sequence in order to identify the fluctuations in pottery consumption and an analysis of the distribution patterns for individual pottery types. Milwright has done impressive work on this material and is to be commended for the meticulous discussion in these chapters. The arguments the author advances on the basis of this material are manifold. He shows, for example, that the distribution of different types of ceramics reflects to some degree the socio-economic divide between urban and rural areas, but that it also reveals the relationship between consumption patterns in the town and the surrounding regions. This distribution of ceramics also allows the author to identify the existence of secondary markets in the region.

The central argument of the book is a methodological one, namely the necessity of integrating historical and archaeological evidence in order to establish a meaningful picture of the political and economic history of al-Karak in the Middle Period. This argument is put into practice in chapter 9, where the author skilfully combines his results based on analysis of the ceramics with our knowledge of the written sources. The ceramic evidence supports, for example, the impression of an economic decline in the region during the later Mamluk period – which is particularly relevant as the existence of this decline has been challenged recently.

While Part II is excellent, the first part is much more problematic. It relies to a strong degree on secondary sources and those Arabic primary sources that are used are often inappropriate. For the Crusader and Ayyubid periods, for example, the sources date mainly to the Mamluk period. The rich historiographical tradition of twelfth and thirteenth-century Syria, in contrast, is hardly taken into account. For instance, Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij al-kurūb* is rarely referred to, yet this author has a great deal to say about al-Karak, where he spent several years and held administrative positions in the early 1230s. Further, the biographical tradition is hardly used in

the study and the author seems to assume that the relevant written tradition is limited to chronicles and geographical works. For instance, his remarks on the town's notables are tucked away in a short footnote (p. 16, n. 40) whereas easily available sources such as al-Dhahabī's *Ta'rikh al-Islām* would have given a much broader picture. In contrast to the author's statement that "there exist few detailed descriptions of the bureaucratic and military personnel who occupied the town and castle through the periods of Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman rule" (p. 17) the material that we have, at least on the civilian elite, is much richer.

There is a similar contrast between Parts I and II in formal terms: while the latter is formally of a high standard, the former is problematic in several ways. Erroneous transcription pervades the text and the bibliography: the feminine plural has a short vowel (p. 416: *mufradat* > *mufradāt*; p. 426: *makhlūqat* > *makhlūqāt*), the initial hamza is confused with the *alif* (p. 415: *āmṣār* > *'amṣār*), short vowels are mistaken for long (p. 404: *bashār* > *bashar*), long vowels are mistaken for short (p. 417: al-Shafī'ī -> al-Shāfī'ī), and incorrect letters are chosen (p. 416: *hawādith* > *hawādith*; p. 417: *Ḍiyā'* -> *Ḍiyā'*; al-Muzaffar > al-Muzaffar). In addition, the article is constantly erroneously omitted or inserted in personal names (p. 417: *Idrīsī* > al-*Idrīsī*; p. 426: *Qazwīnī* > al-*Qazwīnī*; p. 422: *Maqrīzī* > al-*Maqrīzī*, etc.) and in grammatical constructions (p. 417: *fath al-qudsī* > al-*fath al-qudsī*). The problem can be summarized with the transcription of al-Muqaddasī's work: (p. 423: Muqaddasī [sic]: *Kitāb ahsān* [sic] *al-taqāsim* [sic] *fī-ma'rifat* [sic] *al-aqālim* [sic]).

Nevertheless, the narrative is still valuable because it is the first detailed account that we have of the political, administrative and economic history of al-Karak and will serve as the basis for future studies. The second part is without reservation excellent and will remain the standard work on this issue.

**Konrad Hirschler**

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## SOUTH ASIA

NALINI BALBIR, KANHAIYALAL V. SHETH, KALPANA K. SHETH and  
CANDRABHAL BH. TRIPATHI (eds):

*Catalogue of the Jain Manuscripts of the British Library: Including the Holdings of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.*

*Vol. I. Introduction, Bibliography, Appendices, Indexes, Plates. Vol. II. Catalogue (Nos. 1–687). Vol. III. Catalogue (Nos. 688–1425).*

xx, 254 pp., 16 plates, 1 CD; 491 pp.; 532 pp. London: The British Library and The Institute of Jainology, 2006. £125. ISBN 0 7123 4711 9. doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000652

These three magnificent volumes encompass an admirably complete descriptive catalogue of the British Library's and associated collections of Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Gujarati Jain manuscripts, "in some ways the most significant ... outside India". The project was instigated and largely supported by the Institute of Jainology (Perivale, Middlesex and Ahmedabad). The publication brings to fruition work which was begun in 1994–96 by the late Candrabhal Tripathi who, having studied codicology under Ernst Waldschmidt, published the exemplary *Catalogue of the*