

where it did not because of an inevitable Ottoman expansion; rather, it was the culmination of a series of natural events over which the Ottomans had little control, i.e. the heavy rains and disastrous flooding of the river Sangarius in spring 1302 which swamped pastures and devastated flocks at the crucial lambing season, affecting both the wealth and the activities of the tribesmen. The Ottomans were pushed northwards in the search for plunder to make good their losses. The fertile land in which they found themselves encouraged settlement and agriculture at the expense of pastoralism, and a greater interest in capturing and holding urban centres.

It is probably fair to say that the admittedly tentative conclusions offered in this book are less important than the means of reaching them and the spirit of relentless enquiry with which Lindner probes his material. In this sense, the book achieves its aim of keeping open old questions rather than providing clear answers. In raking over the foundations of the dynastic myths once again, it may even succeed in bringing some elusive grains of truth slightly closer to the surface.

**Christine Woodhead**

OTFRIED WEINTRITT:

*Arabische Geschichtsschreibung in den arabischen Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches (16.–18. Jahrhundert).*

(Bonner Islamstudien 14.) 250 pp. Hamburg-Schenefeld: EB-Verlag, 2008. €24.80. ISBN 978 3 936912 74 6.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X09990097

Chronicles composed in the Arabic lands during the Ottoman period have been relatively neglected in scholarship. They are awkwardly situated between the transfer of political power from Egypt to Istanbul in the early sixteenth century on the one hand and the gradual political re-emergence of these lands in the late eighteenth century on the other. Consequently, Arabists have tended to focus either on the period up to 1500 (as in the overview books by F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968), T. Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), and C. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003)) or on the “beginnings of modernity”, typically starting with al-Jabartī’s chronicle. Since Ottomanists have rather focused on Ottoman chronicles produced in proximity to the Empire’s court, those chroniclers active in the Arab provinces have somewhat fallen through the cracks of scholarship.

This makes the publication under review, the author’s Habilitationsschrift (University of Bonn, 2006) an important contribution to the field of historiography. It sets out to give an overview of Arabic historiographical texts produced in the Arabic lands (primarily Egypt with some additions from Bilad al-Shām and Iraq) in the Ottoman period up to the late eighteenth century. It focuses on works produced by the literary elite and excludes “popular” works. The task is, despite these limitations, daunting: these chronicles have largely been neglected and most relevant texts are still in manuscript form; only a few have been edited. Consequently, the author’s primary aim is to give a descriptive overview of the material under discussion by providing summaries of the main works and translating long passages verbatim.

The book has four core chapters that describe what the author terms the historiographical system (*historiographische Systematik*), the historiographical forms, concepts of historical writing, and ethics of governance. Chapter 3 argues that the

historiography under discussion was underlain by a historiographical system antecedent to the practice of writing chronicles, and that this determined the form of these texts. In chapter 4 these forms are described under three main headings: Universal History (*ta'riḫ kabīr*), History of Islam (*ta'riḫ awṣaṭ/mutawassiṭ*), and Contemporary History/Sulṭān-Pāshā-chronicle (*ta'riḫ ṣaghīr*). This is the book's longest chapter, which includes most of the summaries and extensive translations. Chapter 5 discusses those passages in the works that reflect on the theory and practice of historical writing as well as al-Suyūfī's *al-Shamāriḫ fī 'ilm al-ta'riḫ*, the most extensive available text on the subject. Chapter 6 considers the relationship of the ethics of government that are inscribed into historiographical texts with the lines of argument in treatises on this subject.

The book's strength does not reside in the arguments it advances, but rather in the fact of having explored this field for future scholarship. It is characterized by its descriptive outlook and only rarely discusses the arguments in relation to existing research literature. In addition, very interesting arguments are often advanced in brief passages which fail to convince. For instance, one of the central points of the book is that (1) the three historiographical forms Universal History, History of Islam, and Contemporary History/Sulṭān-Pāshā-chronicle are expressions of the system that underlay historiography in this period; and that (2) each of these forms is characterized by distinct qualitative specifics. The author sees this in distinction to previous periods of historical writing in which these terms purportedly had referred to mere quantitative differences, that is they meant simply that works were of different length, but did not denote substantial differences in content. Here, one would have expected a more detailed discussion of earlier periods in order to make the argument plausible. Instead the author refers to some arbitrarily chosen examples (pp. 34–5) that are also unsuitable. Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij*, for example, was not a "a detailed expansion" (p. 34) of his *Ta'riḫ al-Ṣāliḫī*. Rather, the later work is a universal history and it is hardly linked to the *Mufarrij*, the author's chronicle of the Ayyubids. In other words, here we have already in the thirteenth century the quite substantial qualitative differences between universal and contemporary history that the author sees as a characteristic post-1500 development.

Nevertheless, in the course of his book the author makes many interesting observations and indicates several important arguments. In chapter 6, for instance, he convincingly shows that ethics of governance were the principal framework for the authors in order to make sense of the events and that an issue such as legitimization did not play a considerable role. In the same sense chapter 5, on the theory and practice of historical writing, includes an intriguing section on the meanings of the terms *khāṣṣa/ʿamma* (pp. 186–91). Here, the author argues that these two terms are not so much social categories, but rather complementary terms employed to explain how governance could guarantee order.

A further important feature of the book is that Weintritt shows several developments that allow us a better understanding of long-term continuities and breaks in Arabic historiography. Most importantly, his discussion underlines forcefully that, in contrast to previous assumptions, universal chronicles did continue to be produced in this period and that historical writing underwent a transformation from predominantly annalistic to predominantly biographical models. In summary, the author has opened up an under-researched period of Arabic historical writing for future scholarship by studying the relevant manuscript tradition. His important observations and arguments will be essential starting points for future research.

**Konrad Hirschler**