

MIT-EJMES Annual Discussion Forum

The Writing of History

MIT-EJMES 3

Using Present Day Notions Of Imperialism, Globalization And Internationalism: To Understand The Middle East's Late 19th Century/Early Twentieth Century Past

Roger Owen 4

Popular Culture in the “Early Modern” Middle East

GUEST EDITOR

James Grehan

INTRODUCTION

James Grehan 17

ARTICLES

A Room of His Own: the History of the Barber of Damascus (fl. 1762)
Dana Sajdi 19

*Pour une “histoire croisée” de l’occidentalisation et de la confessionnalisation
chez les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*
Bernard Heyberger 36

*Hagiography as a Source for Women's History in the Ottoman Empire: the
Curious Case of Ünsi Hasan*
John Curry 50

Market Culture and the Problem of Money in Ottoman Damascus (ca. 1700-1830)
James Grehan 59

BOOK REVIEWS

Julia Clancy-Smith (editor)

North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War

Reviewed By Sean Monaghan

74

Jean Bethke Elshtain

Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World

Reviewed by Robert Blecher

76

Saghie, Hazim (ed.)

The Predicament of the Individual in the Middle East

Reviewed by Abdel Razzaq Takriti

81

MIT-EJMES Annual Discussion Forum

The Writing of History

The relationship of the past to the present, its impact on historical writing and the writing of history, its significance for understanding present day events and future challenges are but some of the issues that have plagued historians, policy analysts cultural critics, activists, and other academics. This is especially the case in a post September 11th world that is witnessing an almost complete overhaul in long established international and national relations, especially with the ensuing wars on Afghanistan and Iraq and in Occupied Palestinian territory. Recent years have seen a plethora of works that are attempting to wrestle with such issues of historiography and their moral, political and ethical implications. How does one narrate the past and suggest venues for the future? Is this an individual effort of historians with unfettered freedom to narrate the past or should it be as historian Martin Jay suggests “an institution of historians, now more credentialed than not, trying to convince each other about the plausibility of their reconstruction.”¹ Is such an effort to be undertaken solely by historians examining a particular event in time or place or should it really be as Timothy Mitchell suggests an interdisciplinary effort that bring together previously unthought of connections, between incidents, places and peoples, and that may have significant implications on the way we view, understand and even narrate our contemporary circumstances.² In this essay Roger Owen tries to highlight some of the problems with writing about imperialism, internationalism and globalization in the light of contemporary events. In the process he uses this present to ask questions of the past by posing in his words, “new questions, new perspectives and new research strategies.” Using his recently completed biography of Lord Cromer, he suggests ways in which new approaches to the writing of history may inform our understandings of both past and present.

This is the first of a new MIT-EJMES initiative to generate debate around issues of direct relevance to the study and analysis of the geographic region of the Middle East in particular and to questions of interdisciplinary and inter-regional study and research in general. The format to be followed involves commissioning comments from particular academics as well as soliciting responses directly from readers. A selection of these responses will be published in the spring issue of MIT-EJMES with the right of rejoinder guaranteed to the original author. Interested readers should submit their essays of 1,500-2,000 words to the MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies at MITEJMES@mit.edu. Comments should follow the submission guidelines published on our website and should clearly identify the author and his/her affiliations. To be considered for publication, these essays must be received by March 15th 2004. Copies of all the essays/comments received will be forwarded to the author. All further questions should be sent to the same e-mail address.

¹ Martin Jay, “Of Plots, Witnesses and Judgments,” in Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 105.

² Timothy Mitchell, *The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

Using Present Day Notions Of Imperialism, Globalization And Internationalism: To Understand The Middle East's Late 19th Century/Early Twentieth Century Past*

Roger Owen*

Introduction

My title is intentionally full of some of the academic buzzwords of the moment: imperialism, globalization and internationalism. These are also highly charged political words - for reasons which hardly need to be spelled out - except perhaps to some newly awakened Rip Van Winkle. The notion that we are living in a new era of globalization, somewhat like that at the end of the 19th century, has been around for some time. It has already produced a huge outburst of books, both academic and popular as well as providing a rationale for numerous new economic and political initiatives. Then came the revived notion of American empire as an umbrella for the George W. Bush administration's revolution in the conduct of foreign and military policy. And with it, particularly after the drive to effect regime change in Iraq, came the further suggestion that what we are witnessing is a revival of some of the essential features of colonialism. Finally, war on Iraq has also meant war on political internationalism. At least in the form we have come to know it since the Second World War.

For historians of the Middle East all this cannot but help revive memories of moments during the first wave of globalization which, in my judgment, began sometime around 1870 and lasted through the First World War to what is often called the Wilsonian 'moment' of early internationalism - and then mutating imperialism - associated with the establishment of the League of Nations and the creation of the mandate system. This has been particularly striking in the case of the war in Iraq where much of what is going on now could be, and often was, understood and, to a considerable extent, predicted by a wide range of people with some knowledge either of the British invasion of that country beginning in 1914 or of the logic of colonial occupation in general: the forms of resistance it encounters, the problems it faces in trying to create a government pliable enough to meet the occupiers main demands and yet legitimate enough to stay in power long enough to be able to honor those commitments once the foreign troops have sailed away. And we also know a great deal

* This paper is an abbreviated version of a forthcoming (February/March 2004) publication by the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University.

* Roger Owen is A J Meyer Professor of Middle East History at Harvard University.

about the mistakes which are inevitably made along the way: the belief that the occupier understands the people's interests better than they do themselves, the preconceived colonial blueprints which see those same peoples as divided into religious, ethnic and tribal communities led by men immediately identified as shaykhs or notables or imams.

In what follows I would now like to pose some of these questions the other way around; that is not to use the past to try to illuminate the present but to use present concerns to ask new questions of the past. I will begin with some general comments on the way in which such concerns are encouraging the production of a new kind of historiography. I will then proceed to some more specific comments of my own on the ways in which we might use contemporary versions of concepts like globalization, imperialism and internationalism to find new ways to write the modern history of the Middle East - by means of the use of new questions, new perspectives and new research strategies. Finally, some of the appropriate lessons and warnings to be gleaned from this discussion will be mentioned.

General Comments

As is well known, the concept of globalization was first popularized by economists who saw it as, essentially, a technology-driven phenomenon that reduced the cost of global interaction whether in terms of the movement of people and goods or of interactive communication. It was economists too who went on to highlight parallels between the present wave and that of the late 19th century when there was a similar explosion of greater economic interconnectedness.

For their part, a number of historians have begun to try to rethink the ways in which the first wave also coincided with the high tide of Victorian empire, taking this as a challenge to find methods of writing history, which combined the two. One important exponent of this trend is the British historian, Anthony Hopkins - the co-author of the notion of 'gentlemanly capitalism' as the key to the understanding of British imperial expansion.¹ In a chapter entitled 'The history of globalization and the globalization of history?', which forms part of his edited volume, *Globalization in World History*, he argues that globalization is a theme which provides a powerful means for moving world history forward.² More specifically, he writes that it promises to 'resurrect some old lines of historical inquiry, to open up new ones and to stimulate revision to established interpretations'.³ Hopkins then goes on to make the important point that, as far as the writing of history was concerned, internationalism was nationalized during the 19th century and that for most of the national historians who flourished during this period, the international arena only entered the national story at times of war, expansion and empire. The result was a paradox, which has never been satisfactorily resolved: that national history proliferated at a time when international connections were so obviously expanding.⁴ Looking at much recent American history one can see the same paradox at work in the present day.

Another interesting exemplar of much the same line of thought is the international historian, Niall Ferguson, newly transferred from Oxford to NYU. But whereas Hopkins tries to use contemporary themes to re-work the writing of the past, Ferguson's intellectual trajectory in his new book, *Empire*, is the more populist one of proceeding from the present to the past - and then back again to the present bringing

what he suggests are useful lessons for the modern world.⁵ What Ferguson does, in effect, is to revive the old theme of formal versus informal empire to underpin the concept of what he calls Anglo-globalization, that is a process by which empire itself became the agent of an integrative form of global institutional development of markets for commodities, labour and capital, as well as for the extension of the global reach of democratic political practices and of unofficial evangelical sects and missionary societies (or what he calls 'Victorian NGOs').⁶

I should also note a contemporary concern with 19th century internationalism: its institutions, its focus on international law and on something it calls the international society - developments which, although seeking to transcend or to integrate national concerns, often, as Hopkins, Ferguson and others point out, were either led by, or deeply intertwined, with them. As Hopkins argues: 'links across space and cultures could be sustained only by generating common core values and a lingua franca, and these were put in place by a few dominant nations with the power to spread their own diasporas while inspiring imitation and deference in other societies'.⁷ The expanded use of the postage stamp, the metric system and the English language would be examples of one set of these nationally engendered internationalizing processes; the spread of European notions of property, commercial law and business practice another.

Meanwhile, a different type of international historians, social anthropologists and religious historians - often from the non-European world - have been calling attention to the transnational networks which existed prior to Empire but which were then greatly facilitated by it - like the Hadrami diaspora which still has links which stretch all the way from eastern Yemen through the Indian sub-continent to Malaysia and Indonesia - with their own organizational features, based not on imperial institutions but on a pattern of personal and familial and religious connections.⁸ Though based on family or local relationships, they could be used to support huge international projects from the spread of Islam to a concerted resistance to colonialism in its many forms - all the way down to the Soviets, and then the Americans, in Afghanistan.

All this is very welcome. The notion of formal empire never quite fitted the pre-first world Middle East and, so it seems to me, the history of the eastern end of the Mediterranean is better written if the concept of imperialism is held in tension with that of globalization and of several forms of late 19th century internationalism. These included, at the state level, a series of experiments with institutionalized forms of cooperation between two or more European powers; at the economic level the existence of a growing number of transnational banks and companies; and at the popular level loose trans-national networks of like-minded persons devoted to undermining pre-existing structures of authority - consisting of socialists, anarchists, free masons, free thinkers and the like.

Nevertheless, there are still many problems involved in writing such a history. In what follows I will mention three separate sets of them. The first set of problems concerns the fact that when imperialism is identified so closely with globalization it loses much of its ability to describe a system usually identified with unequal power, exploitation, racism and enforced social change. And while it is true that someone like Ferguson acknowledges the dark side of empire, his balance sheet approach - this is the good globalizing aspect of imperialism versus this its bad impact- clearly invites the reader to come down on the side of the former.⁹

A second is that notions of imperialism, internationalism and globalization, like all such large notions, can encourage us to believe that we know more than we know and so to overlook the many areas in which interests are created and power contested in particularly local and specific ways. Here grand theory has to give way to the kind of precise recreations of individual circumstances, which can only be done through a detailed examination of each part of the historical record. An Examination of 20th century Iraqi history can provide some lessons here, the most important being that the use of large notions like colonialism and imperialism can point you in the right direction, but no more than that. History clearly does not repeat itself directly. There are, for example, many differences between the British experience in Basra in 1914 and 2003. One clue to such differences comes when historians amend the labels themselves to account for changed circumstances, as when Michael Ignatieff calls his new book about international interventions in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, 'Imperialism Lite': labels direct you to right area but with many questions.

It is also important to note too that the material used to produce the larger theories was heavily contested at the time. Debate about the reasons for the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 for example, was almost instantaneous, with some claiming it was effected for strategic reasons and others asserting that it was simply undertaken in order to protect the interests of those holding shares in the Egyptian public debt. Therein lie the beginnings of a still lively controversy about the rival role of politics and economics in causing imperial expansion.

Theories, we have to remember, are always at some remove from the lived experience of people on the ground. History may tell Iraqi politicians they have to distance themselves from the CPA if they want to obtain any legitimacy once the foreign troops leave their country. But it does not tell them how to do this, nor does it inform them of when is the best time.

Learning such lessons provides some protection against a third problem. That is danger of simply reinventing and/or re-packaging earlier methodologies which stressed much the same processes of globalization/imperialism/internationalism - for example the histories of the international spread of capitalism from Marx onwards - and so reproducing many of the old difficulties, for example, the ways in which the spread of capitalism was seen almost exclusively as the expansion of western influence.

Beyond this there are a set of problems as yet only partially recognized by contemporary international historians. One is the obvious question of scope: if everything is connected to everything in a global age, and if global forces are present everywhere - in Egyptian villages let's say, just as much as the Alexandrian cotton exchange - where should historical analysis begin and where should it end? While many historians would say that this is a fine way of making sure we are no longer contained by national boundaries - Hopkins writes in praise of the study of a borderless world - it is not at all clear how much further we should move beyond national histories - and to where.¹⁰ The Hopkins/Ferguson approach also poses the perennial question of levels of analysis. In this new borderless world, where everything is inter-connected, does it make sense to stick to the old metaphor that suggests economics is on one level, politics on another and society on a third? Tim Mitchell points to some of these problems in his new book, *The Role of Experts*. In his first chapter, provocatively titled, 'Can the

mosquito speak' he calls for, but knows he can't properly demonstrate, a new history exploring the connections between persons, classes, objects and practices - such as capitalists and capitalism, politics, poverty and medicine, human actors, local knowledge, insects (Egypt's invasion by the malaria-carrying mosquito in 1942), water snails and inanimate forces like the Nile, partially harnessed and contained by the international/stroke British irrigation engineers at Aswan in 1898.¹¹

Middle East

As in all such attempts to elaborate, and then to offer a critique of significant new trends in historiography, I will now move to how I think the writing of Middle Eastern history could benefit from all this. I would like to do this in two associated ways. One is via an argument for the need to use the large notions of globalization, etc., not to reproduce old orthodoxies or to create new ones but simply to free up the mind. The second is to illustrate this through three different historical examples drawn from material collected for my recently completed biography of Evelyn Baring, the first Lord Cromer. The first is the use of a late 20th century perspective to offer some reflections on the role of late 19th century bankruptcy in structuring a particular international dynamic which is easier to identify now than it seems to have been at the time. The second illustration is Cromer's views about contemporary internationalism in the context of an increasingly interconnected world and the third is his participation in what we might now call Egypt's early 20th century 'Green Revolution'.

I should also note that this latter enterprise, the Cromer biography, has done much to convince me that one of the great advantages of the biographical approach is that it provides a way round some of the problems I have just associated with writing about imperialism, internationalism and globalization, in that so many of the issues and forces associated with them present themselves, albeit in a somewhat higgledy-piggledy fashion, in the compass of an individual life. This not only produces many individual surprises but also makes even such a well-known pro-consular figure as Lord Cromer surprisingly hard to pigeon-hole given his activities in so many late 19th century spheres: the diplomatic, the financial, the administrative, the developmental, the military among others, as well as what he himself called 'the government of subject races'. Here perhaps is one possible answer to the question posed by Tim Mitchell and that is, in a world in which everything is connected to everything else, where do you start and where do you stop? The answer, in this case, being that the study of a life is as good a place to jump in as anywhere else. But this is only one of a myriad places to start.

(1) International Bankruptcy

Let me begin with a very spare account of the process of international bankruptcy in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire - beginning with Egypt. Here, as is well known, the county's inability to maintain payments on its external debt in 1875 led, as was usual in such cases, to the negotiation of a provisional financial settlement by representatives of the main groups of creditors notably the British and the French. This was then followed by the creation of an institutional mechanism for the supervision of the collection of the revenues assigned to the debt's repayment, known as the Caisse de la Dette, one of whose members was the 36 year old Evelyn Baring. Baring soon began to play a leading role in the split between those who were simply anxious to collect the

moneys owed by any means possible and those, like Baring himself, who came to the conclusion that the interests of both the creditors and the Egyptians required, a commission of inquiry to find out what the country could reasonably afford and then what financial and other reforms were necessary to ensure smooth repayment. It was at this stage that the whole process began to be pushed in the direction of what is now known as 'conditionality', that is the demand that indebtedness be accompanied by certain changes in financial practice, some of which, inevitably it seems, were destined to go beyond simply technical matters concerned with better financial management to impinge on areas much more directly connected with the exercise of political power.

As we will see shortly, what then followed in Cairo, as well as in Istanbul, was the appearance of rival local agendas aimed either at making use of the conditionality to try to preserve financial independence, or to achieve the same goal by striving to contain the forces pushing for reform or to divert them into other channels. In Egypt the former group was led by Riaz Pasha, an influential government official lent to the 1878 Commission of Inquiry by the ruler, the Khedive Ismail, and destined, almost at once, to use his position to try to find ways to contain his master's powers. The leader of the latter group was, of course, the Khedive himself. For some months in the spring of 1879 it seemed that Ismail would be triumphant. But then, after his deposition in June, the pendulum swung the other way again, and Egypt, under the guidance of Riaz, and with the active encouragement of Baring - returned to Cairo as one of the two foreign controllers of finance - now moved in the direction of something more akin to a constitutional monarchy with a tame ruler, a notion of ministerial responsibility and a reforming government.

Baring's description of the way he and his colleague, de Bligniere's managed the system suggests a situation with many parallels to contemporary arrangements featuring the World Bank and the IMF. The fact that he and de Bligniere's had office contiguous to that of Riaz Pasha, now President of the Egyptian Council of Ministers at the Ministry of Finance meant, he said, that they could be in 'daily and hourly' conversation with Riaz himself. They also had what he called a 'voix deliberative' at the Council of Ministers by which they could give their opinion freely but were unable to vote. And while they left the detailed work of financial management of the officials at the Ministry, no document of 'first rate importance' could leave the Ministry without having been prepared under their personal supervision.¹²

Meanwhile, events in Istanbul were taking a somewhat different turn. There the reform party under Midhat Pasha, which was able to effect the introduction of a constitution in 1876, followed by the calling of the first Ottoman parliament in 1877, was eventually defeated by forces allied to the young Sultan Abdul-Hamid who proved to be better defenders of the Empire's finances. Even though requiring the surrender of important sources of revenue to an international commission, they negotiated a better financial settlement than his predecessor which managed to maintain Ottoman control over its own ministry of finance.

If all this continues to sound somewhat familiar to modern ears it is not just that many groups, either in indebted nations or nations seeking to join international organization like the WTO have behaved, or are still behaving, in much the same manner, but also that the international banking and credit system is structured in such a way as to make such behavior more likely. Then, as now, it was very difficult to

confine negotiations between groups of richer nations and their poorer neighbors to matters pertaining strictly to finance. It is much more likely that issues affecting the local exercise of power will soon be introduced leading those most affected to try to steer the negotiations in directions aimed at either preserving or expanding both their own positions in terms of their own particular version of the national interest. It is also the way of such situations that the persons whose agendas most closely resemble that of the international creditor community will become labeled as reformers and those who oppose them as 'conservatives', 'traditionalists' or simply blinkered and self-serving reactionaries.

Here I think is a very useful perspective from which to re-visit the Egyptian and Ottoman history of this period. The material to support it is already present, for example, in Christopher Clay's mammoth account of the Ottoman debt crisis, *Gold for the Sultan*, but without any comparison with similar situations elsewhere or, indeed, without any focus on one particular dynamic or general explanation.¹³ It should also assume a prominent place in a much-needed biography of Sultan Abdul-Hamid, a man whose own considerable financial skills, largely unrecognized at present, would then find their proper place. And it should allow us to see Riaz Pasha better as what he was, a skilled though single-minded exponent of the view that the best way to get the increasing army of foreign officials to leave was to satisfy them that their country's indebtedness was being properly looked after.

(2) *Internationalism*

As is also well known, the system of managing Egyptian finances just described broke down in 1881/2 as other groups with what Juan Cole has called 'nativist' agendas took center stage, providing the occasion for the British occupation.¹⁴ This was then followed by the return of Evelyn Baring, soon to become Lord Cromer, who had left the country in 1880 for three years service in India. What I would now like to do would be to draw attention to two further aspects of his biography which throw interesting light on his own changing views concerning the national and the international.

Like everyone in his position Cromer was very well aware of many of the central features of the increasing global integration of his time, having experienced a significant number of them himself first hand. But like many of his fellow countrymen he was also increasingly of the opinion that the Cobdenite notion that international free trade would bring peace between the nations had been fatally undermined by a process of growing national self-assertion manifested by Britain's European and North American rivals, leading, among other things, to their drive to stake out exclusive positions in the colonial world for themselves. Hence his own desire to provide Britain with a free hand in Egypt by getting rid of the system of international control shared with the French after 1882, as well as that other system of international interference, the Mixed Tribunals and the Capitulations. The tensions in his thought between the experience of globalization and his urgent desire to mitigate many of its political, administrative and legal effects in Egypt itself is very well demonstrated by a striking passage in the second volume of his *Modern Egypt*, largely completed by the mid-1890s but not actually published until 1908. He writes:

'Of recent years, although there has been no diminution but rather a recrudescence of international rivalry, a tendency towards the

international treatment of both European and extra-European questions has become manifest, not only among theorists but among practical statesmen. This tendency is the natural outcome of the circumstances, which obtained in the latter part of the nineteenth century. There appears little prospect that the Utopia of the early free-traders will be realized. Trade, with its handmaids, the railway and the telegraph does not seem to have bound nations together in any closer bonds of amity than existed in the days of slow locomotion and communication.

'On the other hand, the European body politic has become more sensitive than heretofore. National interests tend towards cosmopolitanism, however much national sentiments and aspirations may tend towards exclusive patriotism. The whole world is quickly informed of any incident which may occur in any part of the globe. Not only in the cabinet of every Minister, but in the office of every newspaper editor the questions to which its occurrence instantly give rise are, how does this circumstance affect the affairs of my country?

'What course should be observed in order to safeguard our interests? It is more difficult than heretofore to segregate a quarrel between two states. In a certain sense, Europeans, in spite of themselves, have become members of a single family, though not always a happy one. They are all oppressed by one common dread, and that is that some accident may perpetuate a general war. If any minor state shows a tendency to light the match which may lead to a general conflagration, the voice of international rivalry is to some extent hushed in presence of the danger, and the diplomatic fire-engine is turned on from every capital in Europe in order to quench the calamity before it can spread.

'A certain power of acting together has thus been developed among the nations and Governments of Europe and it cannot be doubted that the world has benefited from the change. In all the larger affairs of state, internationalism constitutes a guarantee for peace. It in some measure obliges particular interests to yield to the general good of the European community'.¹⁵

This passage raises several interesting issues. Positive internationalism, in Cromer's view, is to be seen at work only in a European context. And its function is primarily as a mechanism for preserving Europe's own security in the face of the possibility of inter-state conflict. We may also note that the mechanisms he describes - the diplomatic fire engines uniting to put out a minor conflagration - singularly failed to work in 1914.

But this is only half the story. Cromer then goes on to discuss the case of non-European countries where the fact that their rulers sometimes possess what he calls 'incomplete' sovereign rights opens the way for the development of a different kind of internationalism. In such countries, he writes, 'some European powers have interests which, they wish to assert without arousing the jealousy of their rivals by too open an assertion of strength'.¹⁶ He then continues that 'cases sometimes arise which involve

prolonged supervision and control in the interests of the European powers but which do not justify exclusive action on the part of any one of them, or which, if they (do) justify it, are not of a kind to allow exclusive action without a risk of discord with respect to the particular nation by whom it might be exercised'.¹⁷ Here Cromer is obviously thinking of Egypt, although there were other parts of the world where the same processes were at work, notably the Ottoman Empire and China. Today, on reading these words, most people would immediately be thinking of Iraq.

Now comes the sting. The results of the experiments in internationalism, he argues, are not encouraging. 'What has been proved there is that international mechanisms possess admirable negative qualities. They are formidable checks to all action, and the reason why they are so is that, when any action is proposed, objections of one kind or another generally occur to some member of the international body'. Hence, for the purposes of action, administrative internationalism may be said to tend towards the creation of administrative incompetence.¹⁸

This, of course, is just one man's version of how the notion of late 19th century internationalism was used in his case as an argument in support of what had become Lord Cromer's main *idée fixe* - how to reduce its power in Egypt in the interests of allowing his administration there a freer hand. As far as he was concerned he was remarkably successful in getting rid of most of the remaining areas of French financial control. But he was completely defeated in his attempt to persuade foreign governments to surrender their capitulatory rights to his Anglo-Egyptian administration. And it was only in 1914 that his aim was achieved by the more direct method of proclaiming a British protectorate as soon as the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War. What this event makes clear is that, just as now, the internationalizing response to late 19th century globalization was highly contingent on the nature of particular crises as well as on different evaluations of its effectiveness in dealing with particular problems. It should also be clear that, as a result, the nature of internationalism itself should be subject to a variety of different understandings and interpretations.

Lets return to Lord Cromer for a moment. How might we use this analysis of one man's approach to late 19th century internationalism in Egypt to suggest new avenues for Middle Eastern research? One, already partially explored approach by Samir Saul in his book, *La France et l'Egypte*, would be to focus on the place of foreign capital in Egypt, particularly that of the French.¹⁹ Cromer himself was well aware of the fact that French private investors were sufficiently well pleased with his management of Egypt's finances - in terms of the rise both in the value of land and of their shares in the public debt - as to put some kind of a break on their own government's obstructionist tactics.²⁰ A second avenue might be to explore the consequences of the fact that, in the 1870s at least, there was no internationally accepted notion of state bankruptcy. In the case of Egypt, this led Evelyn Baring and his colleague, de Balignieres, to argue that the Egyptian declaration of its bankruptcy contained in the Law of Liquidation of 1880 should be based on a European notion of personal bankruptcy, the only model, it would seem, that they had to hand.²¹ There is an intriguing glimpse here of international financiers making things up as they went along.

Now, as I will now try to demonstrate in my final example, there are more unusual ways to move ahead than this.

(3) Green Revolution

My third example is provided by the concerted effort to provide Egypt's farmers with additional water, a process begun by the repair of the Delta Barrage at the end of the 1880s and continued with the completion of the Aswan Dam in 1902. It was the former, which had the most potent effect. Productivity was enormously increased as a result of the large savings in man and animals-power due to greater ease of watering. Instead of having to lift up the water from the system of local canals it was now often simply enough to open a sluice to let the waters rush in.

Meanwhile, the associated introduction of a prolific new strain of cotton, Mit Afifi, allowed yields in the six Delta provinces to increase by at least 60 percent from the late 1880s to the late 1890s. But only at the expense of a serious longer term deterioration of soil fertility due to a rise in the water table and lack of adequate drainage. This was further exacerbated by the fact that the extra water allowed a more intensive form of cultivation and so multiplied the number of host plants for various parasites that attacked the cotton itself. As a result yields began to tumble again, losing all their previous gains if measured by the disastrous harvest of 1908.

The question that poses itself here is what can be made of these happenings? There are various ways these events can be approached other than as an important episode in Egypt's agricultural history for its own sake or, in the case of Lord Cromer himself, one which, for once, he received more praise than blame. One could trace its impact on the lives of the peasant cultivators, for instance, whose average incomes, as calculated by Bent Hansen, may have doubled between 1897 and 1907.²² Or one could follow its international ramifications in terms, perhaps, of a comparison with the Punjab where much the same processes were caused by the activities of many of the same Anglo-Indian irrigation engineers, or in terms of the jolt it gave Britain's cotton merchants to look for alternative sources of supply in Africa and, more specifically, in Sudan.

It would also be possible to make another set of connections through the Green Revolution's impact on land prices to the huge increase in foreign investment in Egypt's land and mortgage companies between 1897 and 1907. Connections may then be drawn to the way in which this same process impacted on the sale of lands known as the Daira Saniya, once owned by the ruling family, then held as security for government debts incurred in the 1870s and finally sold off at what Cromer himself recognized at a bargain-basement price to a company organized by the influential international financier, Sir Ernest Cassel between 1898 and 1907.²³

From there one could go on to see this as an early effort at privatization with many of the problems we can now recognize a little more clearly, from that of setting a fair price for the assets in question to the drain of state officials into the new private sector companies thus created. This issue can also be examined as an occasion for attempts to draw up a code of ethical practice for state officials, something Cromer himself worried about but signally failed to achieve.

Then there is the surprisingly favorable impact on of Egypt's sudden burst of prosperity on Cromer's reputation among the Egyptian elite. In a typical comment on the announcement of Cromer's retirement from Egypt in 1907 Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid

praised the 'magnificent results' of his financial policies while blaming him for his negative impact on educational policy and on the participation of Egyptians in their own government.²⁴ Interestingly this was also the point of view which persisted in Egyptian school textbooks until the 1930s.²⁵ And, if we chose, we could follow Tim Mitchell into world of seeds, chemical and mineral fertilizer, parasites, snails and bilharzias.

The point I'm trying to make here is that Egypt's place in an integrating world order makes it possible to move in almost any way one chooses. This has the great advantage of using the fuzziness associated with the larger notions of globalization, imperialism and internationalism to get round some of the structures and predictabilities associated with the conventional approaches along conventional disciplinary lines while, at least opening up the possibility that, at the end, and when all is said and done, we might have arrived at a better general understanding of the process of greater global integration in a world of unequal power itself.

Back To The Present

In conclusion, what I have been trying to present is not a call to rewrite the history of the Middle East but to pursue certain themes and certain connections more intensively. Nor should what I've been presenting be interpreted as anything like a road map. Rather the opposite. My aim has been to offer a set of suggestions as to how we might use our contemporary concerns with globalization, imperialism and internationalism to free up our mental processes. Some of the suggestions are indicative of certain specific research agendas: for example explorations of the ways in which aspects of late 19th century international relations were structured in such a way as to produce somewhat similar processes in different parts of the globe.

Others are suggestive of ways in which the almost random pursuit of different types of national and international connections might be used to suggest new research strategies. The idea of total history has always been a somewhat illusive concept, and will probably always remain so. Nevertheless, it must also be true that we won't really discover its possibilities, as well as its limitations, until we have a range of examples from which to judge. Many years ago I was much struck by Jacques Berque's attempt to write such a history in what was translated as *Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution*.²⁶ There he used a kind of pointillist method to build up a picture of life in the Nile valley as it responded to occupation, as well as to a variety of projects to develop both its economic and human potential. The study was also informed by a kind of historical sociology by which Berque's extensive knowledge of contemporary Egypt was used to inform a historical reconstruction of the crowded streets and of the other social intensities to be found, say, in the Gamalaya quarter of Cairo. I still think of it as a marvelous exemplar of one important type of historical writing. But there are many others. Ralph Coury, for example, uses his biography of Azzam Pasha to provide an all too brief suggestion of the ferment of ideas to be found among young Egyptians in London just before the First World War and then of the connections, made and unmade, between different groups of Egyptian, Arab, Ottoman and Islamic activists in Europe including, for example, Azzam's own project involving a detailed report on the destruction and desecration wrought by the Serbian and other Balkan armies on the mosques and population of the new Muslim Albania.²⁷

My own suggested response is more free ranging still. That is to assume that global forces were present in almost any location, in almost any form, and then pursue the connections you find in any way that seems to make sense. It may involve, as Tim Mitchell's new book seems to suggest, the need to get to learn more about such things as medicine, chemistry, machinery, hydrology, engineering and so on. I still prefer to search for such knowledge in the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Most other people will find it much more easily on the world wide web.

Finally, to return to the present political context, we can also entertain ourselves - and perhaps instruct others - by drawing sensible analogies between past and present. If what I've said has any particular relevance to such a project, I could refer to its reminder of some of the predictable uses of economic power, to the often unpredictable character of national approaches to international cooperation and international coalitions, to the uses and abuses of such notions as the open door, and to the huge variety of effects produced by the global impact of events like the war in Iraq on just about every person, every society, every economy, every eco-system in the world.

¹ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion: 1688-1914 (London: Longman, 1993).

² Anthony Hopkins, ed., Globalization in World History (London: Pimlico, 2002), p. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, 15

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14..

⁵ Neil Ferguson, Empire: The Rise and demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), 'Introduction', pp. xii-xxix.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

⁷ Hopkins, Globalization, p. 31.

⁸ Enseng Ho, 'Empire through diasporic eyes: A view from the other boat' (Department of Anthropology, Harvard University).

⁹ Ferguson, Empire, pp. xx-xxvi.

¹⁰ Hopkins, Globalization, 1-2, 36, etc.

¹¹ Timothy Mitchell, The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernities (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

¹² Evelyn Baring, Memorandum on the Present Situation of Affairs in Egypt', 30 April 1880, enclosed in Malet to Salisbury, 5 May 1880, Public Record Office (London), FO 78/3142.

¹³ Christopher Clay, Gold for the Sultan: Western Bankers and Ottoman Finance 1856-1881 (London: Tauris, 2000).

¹⁴ Juan Cole, Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-14, 271, etc.

¹⁵ The Earl of Cromer, Modern Egypt, II (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 301-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 302-3

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 303-4.

¹⁹ Samir Saul, La France et L'Egypte de 1882 à 1914: Intérêts économiques et implications politiques (Paris: Ministère de l'économie, des finances et d'industrie/Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1997),

²⁰ *Ibid.*,

²¹ The case is argued in Commission Supérieure d'Enquête, 'Rapport Preliminaire Addressé à Son Altesse le Khédive', August 1878, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Affaires Etrangères: Documents Diplomatiques: Affaires d'Egypte (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1880), pp. 49-50.

²² Bent Hansen, 'Income and consumption in Egypt 1886/1887 to 1937', International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 10 (1979),

²³ Cromer to Revelstoke, 6 December 1903, Baring Archive (London), 203076, 'Parners' File', Supplementary Set.

²⁴ Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, Al-Jarida (Cairo), 13 April 1907.

²⁵ Barak Aharon Salmoni, 'Pedagogies of patriotism: Teaching socio-political community in twentieth century Turkey and Egypt', Ph.D thesis (Harvard, 2002), 853-4, 918.

²⁶ Jacques Berque, Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution, trans Jean Stewart (London: Faber, 1972), 71-5.

²⁷ Ralph Coury, The Making of an Egyptian Nationalist: The Early years of Azzam Pasha, 1893-1936 (Reading: Ithaca, 1998), 63-87.

POPULAR CULTURE IN THE “EARLY MODERN” MIDDLE EAST

Introduction

J. P. Grehan*

Over the past generation, scholarship on the cultural history of the Ottoman Middle East has made tremendous strides. The volume of research has increased dramatically, even for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which had once been dismissed as an uninteresting period of “decline” and “decadence”. Historians are now beginning to uncover the rhythms and complexities of this “early modern” portion of Ottoman history. Many of these discoveries would have been impossible without extensive use of new archival sources, above all the voluminous records of the Ottoman central state and local Islamic courts. At the same time, historians have continued to explore older sources, mostly literary and legal texts, which are now being put to a much broader range of questions. The essays in this issue draw primarily on the latter, more familiar material, ranging from chronicles and biographies to fatwa collections and religious treatises (from both the Muslim and Christian traditions). One of our chief aims is take these sources, which are usually yoked to conventional political and religious history, and make them generate new questions and insights.

The cultural history of the Ottoman Middle East was once a simpler matter. Earlier writings tended to fall back on variations of several well-developed themes, which at their most extreme, saw the region as a seemingly timeless monolith. Modernization theory once contrasted “traditional” society, stagnant and hidebound, with the modern societies of the West, associated with a dynamic and inevitable progress which would soon sweep throughout the entire world. In slightly different guise, this static picture of the premodern Middle East surfaced in the idea of “Islamic society”, whose most important features bore the immutable stamp of Islamic doctrine, law, and faith. Within such a framework, culture is seen as tightly interwoven with religion, which in turn becomes an all-encompassing “way of life”. Even when some evolution was conceded, it was often put in the most negative light and rendered as internal process of exhaustion and decay. In this downward-trending version of history, the Islamic Middle East experienced an early “golden age” which was followed by a prolonged retreat into cultural sclerosis or “fanaticism”. As Bernard Heyberger notes in his own contribution, this story of decline and sclerosis followed by modern rebirth and

* James P. Grehan is visiting assistant professor at the Department of History, Whitman College

renewal became a standard theme not only of Muslim authors, but of Lebanese Christians (particularly in the Maronite community) who had an interest in recasting their own history.

Stripping away these historical preconceptions, which are often bound up in modern nationalist ideologies, we can take a fresh look at the everyday world of the past and begin to explore the beliefs and customs of ordinary people, who have largely been relegated to the background. For historians of the “early modern” Middle East, the task can be daunting. The population was overwhelmingly illiterate and can rarely speak to us directly about their own experiences and perceptions. Nearly all the material which survives from this period was penned by members of the political and cultural elite, who were engrossed in affairs of state or engaged in the production of religious scholarship. The common folk pass, for the most part, beneath their notice. One of the main challenges for historians is to read beyond the limitations of these sources and recreate the broader cultural framework in which the societies of the Ottoman Middle East developed.

Each of our contributions tries, in a different way, to tackle this problem. Using two key narratives in the history of eighteenth-century Syria—one written by an eminent scholar and the other by an ordinary barber—Dana Sajdi looks at differences in perceptions between “high” and “low” literature. The other pieces turn more directly to religious sources. Christian pious literature and ecclesiastical correspondence, says Bernard Heyberger, reveal a great deal about local identity and the reception of Latin Christianity among the Maronites of Lebanon. Exploring Muslim religious traditions, John Curry asks what we can learn from hagiographical texts about the participation of women in Sufi lodges. Focusing on debates within Islamic jurisprudence, my own essay examines market culture and attitudes towards money, especially during times of great monetary stress and instability.

The sweep of our issue is wide—from Istanbul to the Levant—but far from comprehensive. Rather, our main objective is exploratory: to offer new perspectives on old questions and to suggest new lines of research for a period of cultural history which is still being brought to light.

A Room of His Own: The “History” of the Barber of Damascus (fl. 1762)

Dana Sajdi*

Sometime towards the middle of the eighteenth century, a barber in Damascus did something apparently unprecedented for a member of his profession: he decided to write a history. The transgression inscribed in this act is not, of course, the fact of the barber’s will to memory, but rather the barber’s choice of the form of this memory: namely, a chronicle of the events taking place in his own lifetime. Since its inception quite early in the Islamic historiography, this form, which we may call the *contemporary chronicle*, had been reserved almost exclusively by the *‘ulama’* as one of their favorite sites of memory.¹ Regardless of their social background, the *‘ulama’*, as the repositories of and ultimate authorities on religious knowledge, had always functioned as the righteous representatives and jealous preservers of “high culture.” The intrusion of our barber – who, as we shall see, was a self-proclaimed commoner; in his own words, one of the “small people [*asaghir*]” – into the elite scholarly space of the contemporary chronicle in 18th century Damascus begs many questions. Why does the barber appropriate this scholarly genre to preserve his memory? How does he effect this appropriation? Is the barber’s historiographical act merely mimetic of the scholarly form? Or does he draw on available non-scholarly memorial genres? In short, what does the barber do to the contemporary chronicle and what does the contemporary chronicle do for him?

This paper is a study of the chronicle of Shihab al-Din Ahmad Ibn Budayr al-Hallaq (fl. 1762), or simply Ibn Budayr and aims to show how this hair-cutter, beard-shaver, and circumciser trimmed and coiffed the elite literary form of the contemporary chronicle for his own ends (in what is, to my knowledge, not just the only history but the only text in Arabic literature to have been authored by a barber). The paper will explore three aspects of the barber’s historiographical act: first, his manipulation of the standard content of the contemporary chronicle; second, his specific use of literary registers – that is, rhymed prose, and/or poetry; and third, his use of language – meaning his negotiation between classical Arabic and Levantine vernacular. I hope to show how the barber injects the elite chronicle form with elements of the popular oral epic so as not only to render the chronicle familiar to a new audience, but also to enable himself to become a protagonist, or an actor, in the reality of his here and now. This examination of the textual constructions of and the contextual circumstances surrounding the barber’s history will also bring to light a unique “view from below” in 18th century Damascus,

* Dana Sajdi is Assistant Professor of History at the Department of History, Concordia University

and also dig more widely into the almost unexcavated layer of popular culture in the early modern period.

The Texts

The barber's chronicle exists in two versions. The barber's original text was edited and revised by a prominent late 19th century Damascene literary figure, Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasim (d.1900 –whose grandfather, incidentally, was himself a barber) who, in his own words, “deleted the superfluous and kept the essence of this history, and refined (the language), correcting it to the extent possible [*fa-hadhaftu al-qishr min hadhi-hi al-hawādith wa wada'tu al-libab wa hadhdhabtu-ha `ala hasab al-istita'a bi-al-sawab*].” In other words, al-Qasimi significantly altered the barber's text. Al-Qasimi's recension was published by Ahmad `Izzat `Abd al-Karim in 1959, and this is the version of the chronicle that has been used by historians ever since.² Now, given the nature of al-Qasimi's editorial intervention, it would clearly not be feasible to subject his recension to the sort of analysis that we propose above, as it would simply not be possible to separate the respective voices of the commoner author and his genteel editor. This paper, however, utilizes what appears to be the barber's original text as it existed before al-Qasimi's bowdlerizing attentions. The barber's chronicle is preserved in a unique manuscript in the Chester Beatty library in Dublin, and has clearly escaped any editorial “refinement” or “correction”.³ In other words, it *is* the barber's voice, and may duly be interrogated as such.

The differences between the two versions are considerable,⁴ and extend to the rendering of the author's name. In al-Qasimi's recension, the name is given as Shihab al-Din Ahmad Ibn Budayr al-Budayri al-Hallaq, and it is as “al-Budayri” that the barber is usually cited by historians. However, the original version omits the *nisba* al-Budayri altogether, for which reason I will refer to the barber as Ibn Budayr. Unfortunately, like al-Qasimi's recension, the original version also seems to be missing the earlier parts of the chronicle. As such, we are unable to ascertain when Ibn Budayr began his chronicling activity – although the chronicle covers the period 1154-1175/1741-1762. Also, it is not known whether the title given to the chronicle in the manuscript, namely, *Hawadith Dimashq al-Sham al-yawmiyya* (“The Daily Events of Damascus al-Sham”) is the barber's own, if the latter ever intended a title.⁵

Since this paper is directed at identifying and interpreting Ibn Budayr's literary “deviations” from the scholarly form, it is instructive to introduce a scholarly chronicle against which the barber's history may be assayed. An appropriate point of comparison for Ibn Budayr's chronicle is the chronicle of his near contemporary, Muhammad Ibn Kannan al-Salihi (d. 1740). Ibn Kannan's chronicle, entitled *al-Hawadith al-yawmiyya li-tarikh ahad `ashar wa alf wa miyya* (Daily Events from 1111), covers the years 1111/1699-1153/1740.⁶ Ibn Kannan may readily be characterized as an *alim par excellence* who spent much of his time teaching, writing, or in the company of other academics.⁷ Unlike Ibn Budayr, whose chronicle seems to have represented his sole authorial act, Ibn Kannan was a prolific author who was thoroughly versed and proficient in the norms and culture of *`ulama'* authorship.

In addition to the chronicles of Ibn Budayr and Ibn Kannan, this paper will draw upon the genre of the *sira*, the oral epic, as an example of the less rarified, more popular store of memory, whose popularity continued unabated through the 18th century.⁸ A generic comparison between the different memory forms will be made later in the paper; I should, however, make it clear at the outset that it is not my intention to posit the *sira*,

as a popular “low” form, in a relationship of mutual exclusion with *tarikḥ*, as a scholarly “high” form, but rather to identify the bearings of the text of Ibn Budayr in relation to both forms, the results of which will be seen to defy such neat oppositional typology.

The Rise of Commoner Authorial Subjectivity in the 18th Century

Remarkably, the barber was not alone as a commoner in writing history in the 18th century. In the Levant alone, we know of at least six other commoners, or people from marginal backgrounds, who wrote contemporary chronicles.⁹ Since, there is no evidence of this phenomenon for earlier periods, one may characterize this rise of commoner chronicles as a phenomenon of the early modern period. What is it about the contemporary chronicle that made it a genre so readily appropriable by commoners? And what is in the culture of the 18th century that allowed commoners to speak?

The essential feature that made the contemporary chronicle relatively open to all-comers is its constitution as an essentially subjective experience. In writing the chronicle, the individual author himself is the primary source for his history, and the chronicle is his personal testimony. Thus, unlike other genres of historical writing, such as the non-contemporary chronicle (that is a chronicle about the past), or the biographical dictionary, the contemporary chronicle is characterized by the pervasive presence of the authorial “I.” This “I” necessarily renders the contemporary chronicle, by definition, the author’s own. Yet, despite its apparently ready inhabitability, there had been prior to the 18th century formal restrictions that prevented the non-scholarly community from access to the contemporary chronicle. Through the medieval period and up to roughly the early 17th century, the contemporary chronicle had to be written and presented as a supplement (a *dhayl*, literally, “tail”) to a previous work composed by a recognized scholar. Thus, the contemporary chronicle had been perceived as a part of a common historiographical project under the auspices of scholarly authorities whose sequential subjective experience made up history. At some point – and for whatever reason - these formal scholarly ties between individual works were loosened, and the contemporary chronicle came to stand on its own: in other words, the genre became available to *anyone* regardless of whether they were a part of the scholarly sequence. Unhampered by the requisites of authoritative citation and scholarly certification, anyone who lived could write a “history” – anyone who was literate, that is.

Given that literacy had now become the only precondition for history writing, the obvious question is whether there is a relationship between the rise of commoner history and the rise of general literacy. We have some indication that at least some commoners in the 18th century Levant were literate. Judging from an inventory of book ownership in early 18th century Damascus, artisans such as druggists, tailors, tanners, confectioners and, indeed, barbers constituted a part, albeit a minority, of the population of book owners.¹⁰ The problem of taking book ownership as a measure of literacy is, of course, that it is entirely possible that not every literate person owned a book, and that not every book owner was literate. However, we can reasonably assume that at least some commoner book owners must have been able to read what they owned. Thus, while we know that there must have been some level of literacy amongst the urban populace in the 18th century, we do not have evidence for a *rise* in literacy. And even if there was a rise of literacy in the 18th century, the connection between literacy and writing is not so straightforward. There is necessarily a qualitative shift from being a consumer of books to being a producer thereof, as literacy alone does not provide sufficient motivation or justification for writing a book. In the case of writing a

contemporary chronicle, the individual has to have confidence that his own subjective experience is a legitimate subject for a book; that is to say that his is an *authorizing* experience. Thus, while literacy is assumed in the phenomenon of 18th century commoner authorship, it is the rise of commoner authorial subjectivity – the authoring of a book based on subjective experience – that needs to be investigated.

The rise of commoner authorial subjectivity as found in 18th century contemporary chronicles seems to accompany a wider surge in literature that is characterized by the authorial “I”.¹¹ Taking examples from 17th and 18th century central Ottoman lands, and dubbing them as “first person narratives,” Cemal Kafadar draws attention to a host of texts ranging from diaries, to dream log books, travelogues, letters, captivity memoirs, and autobiographies.¹² What interests us in this particular “wave” of literature is the possible link between at least some of these first person narratives and Sufism, this in view of the fact that mystical devotional practices had such a pervasive social significance in the Ottoman world. The central text in Kafadar’s article is a diary covering the years 1661-1665 by a Sufi dervish by the name of Seyyid Hasan (who incidentally starts his diary with a record of being shaved by a barber!). Kafadar alludes to the possibility that the diary’s conception may have been a result of transferring the standard Sufi literary activity of recording a Sufi *shaykh*’s *manaqib* onto the self:

It is clear that recording the worldly and miraculous deeds, words and vision of one’s *seyyh* was a respected activity in Sufi circles. Seyyid Hasan had in a way produced a work of that nature but inverted the process and recorded his own deeds.¹³

A more direct connection between Sufi literary activity and authorial subjectivity may be found in several other genres, such as books recording the author’s dialogues with his/her Sufi *shaykh*, dream log books, and travelogues. Sufism, being the ultimate personal spiritual experience that involved critical attention to the self, produced as a part of its devotional repertoires literary practices that assigned authority to the self. As the Sufi sought harmony between the self and the Divine, he/she recorded personal spiritual activities – whether his/her conversations with a Sufi master, his/her visions, or journey to a favorite Sufi shrine. The privileging of the personal experience in Sufi devotional practice thus found a textual expression that is remarkably subjective. One may hence reasonably speculate that the legitimization of personal experience in the socially pervasive Sufi devotional practices of the 17th and 18th centuries eventually transposed itself to the textual realm. Ordinary individuals seem to have imbibed from the Sufi-laden atmosphere of the time a confidence in the subjective experience and, having now assumed an authorial subjectivity, to have written equally about the spiritual and mundane worlds through that experience. Wherever the self was located in the world, as long as it was a witnessing and observing self, it now had authorial subjectivity.¹⁴

The personal experiential aspect of Sufi devotional practices in the early modern period may have imbued the cultural atmosphere with a certain egalitarianism in which commoners found a voice. The same cultural context that impelled the great Damascene scholar `Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi (d. 1731) to travel to distant cities seeking Sufi shrines,¹⁵ sent the “lowly” barber Ibn Budayr to rub his cheeks with the soil of the tomb of al-Sayyida Zaynab in Damascus.¹⁶ While al-Nabulusi had the means and the connections to finance and arrange such journeys, the less solvent barber had to make do with an expedition to a local shrine. Although Ibn Budayr knew of, and had great respect for al-Nabulusi,¹⁷ the barber’s reverence for the great scholar and mystic did not prevent him from seeing his own devotional experience as equally legitimate and worthy of record. One could even suggest that this shared personal experience of visitation to

the tombs of saints might have led the barber to *identify* with the scholar. Al-Nabulusi left us four much touted travelogues,¹⁸ but Ibn Budayr also celebrated his own short journey, if much more modestly, by chronicling it as an “event” in his “history.”

The Barber’s Location

Ibn Budayr took on the writing of a chronicle while a practicing barber.¹⁹ The disparity between these two activities – writing and barbering – brings out the most striking feature of the barber’s life: his education. Ibn Budayr mentions having studied books on no less difficult and prestigious subjects than theology and jurisprudence under the supervision of various scholars, foremost amongst whom was Muhammad Zayn al-`Abidin al-Ghazzi (d. 1754), the Shafi`i *mufti* of Damascus.²⁰ Since it is unlikely that this level of education was standard for a barber, the question is how did Ibn Budayr pull it off? The clue may lie in the location of the neighborhood of the barbershop where he initially apprenticed, and subsequently set up his own shop. This was the area known as Bab al-Barid,²¹ located at the center of the walled city of Damascus, and where a large number of the city’s educational establishments, the *madrasas*, were to be found.²² Ibn Budayr was a downtown barber in a university neighborhood. Indeed, in his chronicle Ibn Budayr proudly mentions instances when he shaved the beard and cut the hair of this or that *alim*.²³ Ibn Budayr seems, in fact, to have inherited his scholarly clientele from his craft master, Ahmad al-Hallaq Ibn Hashish, who apparently barbered such stellar scholars as the abovementioned al-Nabulusi, the famous Shafi`i jurist Muhammad al-`Ajuni,²⁴ and Murad Afandi al-Kasih (d. 1720) who was the eponymous founder of the Muradis, the most influential *ulama*’ family of 18th century Damascus²⁵. Conveniently located, and scholastically inclined, Ibn Budayr, like his master, might well have been a favorite coiffeur of the scholars of downtown Damascus, who evidently took the role not only of customers in Ibn Budayr’s life, but also of teachers. The location of Ibn Budayr’s shop apparently facilitated his access to learned culture.

However, the fact of Ibn Budayr’s personal location *in a barbershop* is also significant. A haircut and good shave was not a prerogative exclusive to scholars, but was that of perhaps the whole urban male population. Indeed, the barbershop, as an institution, was an open and accessible place where even the poor found room,²⁶ and where males of diverse social backgrounds met and exchanged news, views and gossip.²⁷ This unique situation afforded Ibn Budayr to be exposed not only to the representatives of learned culture, but also to those of popular culture. As we shall see later, someone very dear to Ibn Budayr was a popular epic story-teller by the name of Muhammad Ibn Hashish al-Hakawi. The barbershop, then, functioned as a public site where various cultural discourses intersected, and where the custodians of textual scholarly literary forms sat with beards freshly trimmed next to the practitioners of oral popular forms. It is precisely at this juncture, at this social and discursive crossroads, that Ibn Budayr’s chronicle was apparently conceived.

Sira vs. *Tārīkh*

Before exploring the history of the barber, let us in very general terms compare the two memory forms that intersected in Ibn Budayr’s barbershop: the chronicle (the *tarikh*) and the Arabic popular epic (generally called *sira*).

The term *sira* usually means “biography”, and comes from the verb *sāra*, to traverse or to journey. The popular *sira* is a highly fictionalized biography of a historically true, usually male, personality; famously, al-Zahir Baybars, the Mamluk

sultan famous for his military feats against the crusades, Sayf Ibn Dhi Yazan, the pre-Islamic Himyarite king who put an end to Abyssinian rule in Yemen, Abu Zayd al-Hilali, the clever hero of the Banu Hilal tribe, and `Antar Ibn Shaddad, the pre-Islamic poet.²⁸ As expected of the epic genre in general, the *sira* offers a narrative whereby the protagonist is able to overcome exceptionally challenging circumstances and emerge as a hero. Through his exceptional warrior skills the hero usually engenders the masculine ideal.²⁹ Although the protagonist's formulaic set of roles may distance him greatly from the actual historical figure whose biography the epic purports to narrate, what concerns us here is not so much the authentic historicity of the figure as the simple fact of his remembrance.³⁰ In other words, what is important here is the epic as a *consciously memorial genre*.

The Arabic epic is authorless and is lodged in the collective memory. Given its oral nature, its content is fluid and often accretive.³¹ Structurally, the epic is made of episodes the closure of each of which is achieved by a heroic survival of the protagonist.³² It is publicly recited or sung from memory by a story-teller in verse, or prose. Dwight Reynolds has described its language as a "classicalized colloquial": that is, a "colloquial language ... which includes many words and phrases usually associated with the classical language."³³

In contrast, the scholarly chronicle, or *tarikh*, is not a narrative journey (or a series of them) aimed at a specific goal. It is structured around the regular passage of time and in which the year is the organizing principle. As an account of "real" events, the narrative usually does not achieve dramatic or moral closure – rather, it simply terminates. It is an authored text with a fixed content. While written principally in prose, the chronicle allows for rhymed prose and verse. Its primary language is the classical, and it is read aloud most probably to a restricted audience, usually a group of scholars.³⁴

The Barber's History

Ibn Budayr authored a text that like any regular scholar's chronicle contains a narrative of "real" events arranged annalistically. The barber uses a host of literary devices associated not only with the chronicle but also other historiographical genres: such as the recurrent insertion of the scribal voice, such as *qala al-mu'allif* ("the author said"),³⁵ or the self-effacing interlocutive voice in which the author asks his audience to be lenient in judging his work as he is but a "weak slave" of God³⁶ or the inclusion of *tarajim* (obituary notices),³⁷ a quintessential scholarly form that is closely associated with both the chronicle and the biographical dictionary. Indeed, Ibn Budayr's chronicle has the standard literary equipment expected of the scholarly form and was explicitly declared by the author himself to be a *tarikh* (a history).³⁸ However, as we shall see, behind the façade of *tarikh* our barber has an epic *sira* to tell.

While the barber's text is organizationally and structurally a chronicle, remarkably – given the apparently irreconcilable formal difference between the two genres – the oral popular epic is to be found lurking in the background of his chronicle. It is precisely in the divergences of Ibn Budayr's text from the familiar genre of the *`ulama'*-authored chronicle that we find the tensions between the popular and the scholarly, the oral and the textual, the "fictive" and the "real." A comparison of Ibn Budayr's chronicle with that of the 18th century Damascene *`alim*, Ibn Kannān will not only reveal the tensions present in Ibn Budayr's text, but also better demonstrate the nature and effect of the barber's appropriation of the scholarly form.

The Content

In our examination of the content of the barber's chronicle, we begin at the beginning – that is, at the point at which the chronicle opens. It will be instructive to first consider the opening of the barber's chronicle in its published version which, as mentioned at the outset, is the text as “refined” by the 19th century *`alim* al-Qasimi. It begins with the following paragraph.

In the year 1154 [1741], the governor of Damascus was *`Ali* Pasha of the Turks. This was eleven years after the investiture of our master, Sultan Mahmud Khan the son of Sultan Mustafa Khan, may God support the throne of the state till the end of time.³⁹

This is a standard way for a scholar to begin a chronicle – by announcing the order of the world and by calling on God to sustain that order. As holders of official positions in the judicial, academic, or administrative institutions of empire, the *`ulama`* were beneficiaries of the state, and thus acknowledged their benefactor by invoking the imperial order from the outset. Further, *`ulama`* chroniclers made the imperial order one of the organizing principles of their text. Ibn Kannan, the aforementioned *`alim* and near contemporary of Ibn Budayr, begins not only the first, but every year of his annalistic chronicle with a variation of the same formula that reiterates the underpinning fact of imperial order.⁴⁰

However, this is not how Ibn Budayr's “unrefined” version (that is, in the unpublished Chester Beatty manuscript) begins. The original opening of the chronicle is quite different to the opening passage in al-Qasimi's recension. Apparently devoid of feelings of obligation to empire, Ibn Budayr begins his chronicle abruptly, urgently, and anxiously:

The first day of 1154[1741] was a Saturday. The common people [*a`wam*]⁴¹ were saying that a great earthquake will take place in Damascus as a result of which many places will be destroyed and men will turn into women.⁴²

The barber's chronicle thus begins by speaking in the voice of the “common people” raised aloud in an apocalyptic prophecy about imminent devastation in Damascus. The ensuing *disorder* will be so great that men will be turned into women. Ibn Budayr's chronicle is not about a world ordered securely from top down, but about disaster, violence, poverty, and disorder – indeed, about an *inversion* of the “natural” order.

This is not to say that the representative of the imperial order who constitute a main, if not *the* main, subject of *`ulama`*-history do not appear in Ibn Budayr's text – they most certainly do. However, *al-akabir* (literally, the “big people”), *al-a`yan* (the notables), and the *basha* (the governor) enter the barber's text not to be commemorated and for their feats to be celebrated, but rather to be interrogated. Ibn Budayr explicitly speaks in the name of the *asaghir* (literally the “small people”), *al-`awamm/a`wam* (the commoners), or simply *al-nas* (the people).⁴³ And it is in their name that he holds high officials accountable for a general state of disorder. He constantly demonstrates the official's negligence and corruption in failing to fulfill their responsibility to regulate public space. For example,

The unruly soldiers of Damascus have committed excesses, cursing of religion has increased, the commoners have been oppressed and no one listens to what they say, and the ruler of Damascus, his Excellency As`ad Pasha, ...has not confronted any of these matters. Public order has dissipated... He does not move a thing, but sleeps with the sleeping.⁴⁴

Unruly soldiers, the cursing of religion, and the oppression of the commoners, are all faces of the same phenomenon of disorder, which is unhesitatingly attributed to the indifference of the rulers. The manifestations of this disorder, according to Ibn Budayr, are not only a matter of an unregulated streets, but also unregulated prices in the market place, and unregulated public morality. For example,

High prices have attached themselves to Damascus ... [a list of prices follows] ... the people are sick and dumbstruck, women have become loose and men have melted, and all limits have collapsed. The notables are distracted ... and each of them is busy with himself.⁴⁵

Ibn Budayr's association of soaring market prices with public immorality or ("looseness of women") and with emasculation ("melting of men") reflects the anxieties of the barber, as a self-appointed representative of the "small people", about the threat of his own further diminution and marginalization. The unregulated prices would drive him and other commoners into poverty (or further poverty), and the transgression of women translates into the narrowing of the space of one of the few privileges that his social position accords him, namely his patriarchal authority. Thus, his constant reference to emasculation, whether through the images of "melting men," of "men turning to women," or what he calls "sullied manhood"⁴⁶ serves to remind Ibn Budayr and his male barbershop audience that the state is squarely responsible not only for economic and material deprivation, but also for social disempowerment. By comparison, it is instructive to note that such "riff-raff" as commoners, loose women, and melting men do not even enter the text of the *'alim* Ibn Kannan. In the *'alim*'s imperially-ordered and refined world, such social trespassers do not threaten a scholar sure of his status – hence, they simply pass either unnoticed or unnoted.

As is the standard practice of chroniclers, both the barber and the *'alim* record all kinds of outstanding natural phenomena or disasters, from epidemics, to earthquakes, to floods. However, while Ibn Kannan might record an unusual natural phenomenon, such as when the sun suddenly turns unfamiliarly red for a couple of days, his treatment of the phenomenon is in a distinctly scholarly, if not "scientific" manner,

On Monday and Tuesday [22nd and 23rd Sha`ban, 1126] the sun appeared very red ... and the atmosphere (*al-jaww*) also became unusually reddish. This is considered by the experts (*al-hukama'*) as a known atmospheric phenomenon [*min hawadith al-jaww*] whereby the sun may lighten or darken. This happened in ... the summer, and it was excessively hot. And God knows best the reality of matters.⁴⁷

For Ibn Kannan, then, the unusual behaviour of the sun is an event to be referred to the recorded data of expert observers. While the *'alim* ultimately defers knowledge to God, he attempts to relate the behaviour of the sun to the season and the intemperate weather. Thus, far from perceiving the reddening of the sun as an ominous or apocalyptic sign, Ibn Kannan records the natural phenomenon precisely for what it is: a natural phenomenon, which he finds curious and worthy subject of speculation.

By contrast, Ibn Budayr's interest is not in nature, but rather in the fact of witnessing and of surviving the devastation of nature. Ibn Budayr has the following memory of the aftermath of a rainstorm in downtown Damascus:

I saw with my own eyes al-Marja flooded as though it were a part of a sea, the water reaching the gate of the Takiyya to the point that to get there one would have required a ferryboat. The water groaned and growled, and flowed so fast that it swept away the birds. At Taht al-

Qal`a, the water rose above the foundation stone and washed through the *sugs* and the houses and caused untold damage – it had gathered to the height of a man ... And this is not to mention how swiftly and loudly the water had flowed, terrifying the young and the old alike, turning their hair white ...⁴⁸

Here, an unusual natural event is not recorded as a curiosity, but as threatening, destructive and apocalyptic. Nature itself inverts the natural order by causing young people to have grey hair. The survival of the devastation of nature is in and of itself an accomplishment that Ibn Budayr recorded in the voice of the authorial “I.” In the quoted passage, the barber’s insistent “I” – “I saw it in my own eyes”, which reappears several times in the text – is an authorial “I” that celebrates its own survival of the catastrophe.⁴⁹ It is the “I” that after having survived calamity remembers, and consequently narrates. Indeed, while Ibn Budayr may speak on behalf of the commoners in the voice of an anxious and threatened “we,” it is not the “we,” but the authorial “I” that eventually emerges victorious. This literary phenomenon of the protagonist as survivor is strongly reminiscent of the hero of the popular epic. This is an important point to which I shall return.

The grim theme of death pervades both Ibn Budayr’s and Ibn Kannan’s texts. Both chroniclers record deaths in the classical scholarly form of *tarajim*. The barber’s use of *tarajim* is often conformist to the scholarly model, and he offers many *tarajim* of various scholars, saints, and family members. However, sometimes the barber uses the *tarjama* very differently by elegizing the most unexpected individuals, such as the aforementioned local *hakawi* the popular epic story-teller, to whom Ibn Budayr gives due deference and respect:

Our father, our teacher, our instructor, Sulayman b. Hashih al-Hakawi died – may God have mercy upon him! He augmented his time, and was singular in the arts of his age. He related the epics of al-Zahir, Sayf, and Samar and `Antar in Arabic and Turkish. He had a prodigious memory and sound knowledge of every art, for all that he was illiterate and could not read and write: this is the highest degree of eloquence amongst mankind ... Indeed, he was a bottomless ocean: may God have mercy upon him!⁵⁰

For Ibn Budayr, the illiterate public narrator of popular epics is as much an ocean of knowledge as are his *‘ulama’* teachers. One suspects that this egalitarian attitude of what constitutes learning would not have been shared by Ibn Kannan whose chronicle, of course, has no place for a *hakawi*. The fact of the commemoration of the illiterate popular-epic storyteller in the scholarly form of the *tarjama* is almost a literal reflection of the barber’s appropriation and domestication of the scholarly form. By acknowledging the cultural contribution of the *Hakawi*, Ibn Budayr not only subverts the concept of knowledge but also allows textual space for a person who had historically fallen outside the margins of the written word. Ibn Budayr’s indebtedness to the *Hakawi* is well-founded. As shall be shown at the end of this section, it is the epic heroes narrated by the *Hakawi*, such as the afore-mentioned al-Zahir Baybars, `Antara b. Shaddad, and Sayf b. Dhi Yazan, who inspired Ibn Budayr in molding his own life experience in the chronicle.

Another subject that recurs in Ibn Budayr’s chronicle is food prices. He regularly provides lists of food prices, each of which list is invariably followed by a complaint and an urgent plea.⁵¹ This is not the case in the text of the *‘alim*, Ibn Kannan, who mentions food prices very infrequently – about 5 times – in a chronicle that covers

the span of 41 years.⁵² While accounts of street violence occur in both texts,⁵³ Ibn Kannan's chronicle does not ring the tone of poverty, destruction, and disorder that pervades Ibn Budayr text. Quite the contrary, the *'alim's* text is characterized by a cyclical and stable rhythm of events regular and routine. Ibn Kannan unfailingly notes events that happen regularly, such as the beginning and end of the teaching cycles of the more famous Damascene *mudarrisun*, the change of seasons, and the annual arrival and departure of the respective caravans of the Hajj caravan and of the imperial treasury.⁵⁴ He also records events which he routinely attended, such as literary salons, and Sufi soirées. Among these regular events are what one may call "happy occasions," such as picnics, weddings, and circumcision parties, all of which sprinkle Ibn Kannan's text.⁵⁵ Is there, then, anything regular, routine, or happy in Ibn Budayr's reports?

While Ibn Budayr cannot have been unaware of the cycles ordering natural and civic life in Damascus – the changing seasons and the passages of the Hajj and treasury caravans – he does not stabilize his narrative around their rhythm. Indeed, even these regular events are mentioned by Ibn Budayr only when something unusual happens – such as a particularly successful or disastrous Hajj.⁵⁶ The barber's narrative, in other words, is inherently *unstable*. As for happy events, while Ibn Budayr must have attended some such ceremonials – at the very least some circumcision parties in his capacity as a barber – he actually reports only one wedding and one circumcision party, and even these were distinctly *unhappy* occasions.

The wedding reported by Ibn Budayr was given by a much-hated and notoriously corrupt Ottoman official, the treasurer Fathi al-Daftardar, for his daughter. Ibn Budayr, who probably did not attend the party, described the events of the 7-day wedding at disapproving length, concluding with the remarks:

On the last day of the wedding, they went too far (*badda`u*). In doing so, their intention was to promote bad behavior (*qillat al-adab*), and they publicly performed vulgar acts, and behaved with excessive corruption and immorality.⁵⁷

Similarly, the barber mentions the circumcision party for one of the sons of the governor Sulayman Pasha al-`Azam in which, much to Ibn Budayr's horror, a mock male-male sexual orgy was reportedly enacted.⁵⁸ For the barber, such "happy" occasions were no more than pretexts for the rich and powerful to indulge in immoral behavior and conspicuous consumption.

Among the very few pleasant memories that Ibn Budayr preserves in his chronicle are his accounts of a couple of picnics on which he went, in commemoration of which, as was the custom, he composed verse. However, even when on a leisurely outing, Ibn Budayr noted social disorder remarking with displeasure how women were smoking and drinking coffee in public "just as men do."⁵⁹ As with the "loose women" that we noted earlier, this "irregular" behavior by women denotes their transgression into the territory of permissible behavior for men and threatens Ibn Budayr's patriarchal authority. This female transgression sounds a warning bell for Ibn Budayr as it threatens him with loss of male privilege and hence with disempowerment.

Let us now turn to the last theme that we will treat in regard to the content of the barber's text. As might perhaps be expected from a barber, whose shop must have functioned as a brewery of gossip, his chronicle contains a regular record of tragicomic sexual scandals that today might well make the front page of a popular tabloid. He tells the story of a woman who responded to her husband taking a second wife by cutting off his penis.⁶⁰ There is also the story of a man who, upon his return from the pilgrimage

found that his wife was looking unusually beautiful. He concluded that the only possible explanation was that she must be having an affair, and promptly killed her.⁶¹ While probably intended primarily for entertainment, many of these stories contain underlying political messages, such as the story of the man who, upon discovering that his brother-in-law was having sexual affairs, complains to the notables whose response is to completely ignore him. He thus proceeds to the mosque, prays upon his own soul the prayers of the deceased, ascends the minaret, cries out, "Oh, Community of Islam, dying is easier than pimping with the state in this age," and jumps off the minaret.⁶² In this story, the state's neglect of the appeals of the commoners and its failure to establish a moral order reduces its subjects to metaphorical pimping and prostitution. Of course, such sexual goings-on, whether blamable on the state or not, are not a subject with which the "respectable" *`alim* Ibn Kannan does not deal at all.

To sum up, in contrast to the imperially ordered chronicle of the *`alim* which is about the regular, the normal, and the routine, Ibn Budayr's chronicle is a record of the fragility of existence in the face of poverty, violence, disaster, disorder, and the ever-present threat of "emasulation." And even though the two texts might share some themes, as we have seen, the barber's treatment of these shared themes is critically different to that of the scholar. The barber strips the chronicle of its cyclical regularity and transforms the secure top-down gaze of the imperial order into a world of disorder viewed from the bottom up. As a testimony of a life-experience, the chronicle of Ibn Budayr posits life as a constant struggle against adversity, as a test of perseverance and, as we have seen repeatedly, as a test of his very masculinity. This history then, bears the perspective, and the emotive experience of the popular epic. But it is an epic that achieves narrative closure not in the structurally demarcated points in the epic when the protagonist survives, but in the fact of first-person narration in the voice of the victorious "I". It is this "I" that lives through the apparently insurmountable hardships of the age, but that nonetheless overcomes and survives these hardships. This "I" proves its own survival simply by narrating itself after the fact of survival. It is Ibn Budayr who overcomes the formidable, and it is Ibn Budayr who emerges as a hero of epic proportions.

Thus, while the protagonist of the popular epic gave Ibn Budayr a model after whom to mould his own historical experience, the contemporary chronicle gave him the room to *be* that hero. The chronicle gave Ibn Budayr the authority to speak in his own voice. And while the chronicle transported him temporally and spatially from the heroic tales in distant places in the distant past into the concerns and issues of the here and now, it is the epic that helped Ibn Budayr to transform the chronicle from a site of *`alim*-complacency to one of commoner contestation. In creating for himself a hybrid space, Ibn Budayr empowered himself to directly and poignantly use the chronicle to voice his discontent while simultaneously commemorating his heroic survival.

Language and Registers

The epic aspect of Ibn Budayr's text neither begins nor ends with content, but is actually most transparent in the languages and registers in which he wrote his chronicle. The issue of language and registers also bring us to the important question of the audience with whom Ibn Budayr was an interlocutor.

The primary register in most Arabic historical writing is prose with occasional interruptions of rhymed prose (*saj`*) and poetry (*shi`r*). These latter registers are generally used for a commemorative function whereby an extraordinary event is set apart from the rest of the narrative by the use of a different register. Often, these

registers serve another function, namely the display of the kind of literary virtuosity expected of a scholar. Ibn Budayr uses poetry sparingly and only commemoratively, but his chronicle is unique in that *saj`*, rhymed prose, pervades his text. Ibn Budayr uses rhymed prose for reports on all manner of subjects, from a terrifying flood or a horrifying earthquake, to speech between high officials, to street violence, or simply to animate the image of the definitively quotidian object, the sun: *wa ba`da dhalik tala`at al-shams wa gandalat wa zalat al-ghuyum wa dahikat* (“After that, the sun came out and shone, and the clouds disappeared, and it laughed”).⁶³ In Ibn Budayr’s chronicle, then, the function of rhymed prose is not commemorative, but rather lies in the aural effect of this register. Let us take the example of the following reported exchange between two real political personalities (the underlined words establish rhyme).

*fa arsala al-Zahir `Umar yaqulu min al-maqal irham al-nisa wa al-affal
wa hatk al-huram wa al-iyal wa illa ista`antu `alay-ka bi al-maliki al-
muta`al fa-lamma wasala-hu al-kitab zada Sulayman Basha al-ikhtiyab
wa halla bi-hi al-masab fa-sah “ah” ma `udtu anfa` fa-da`uni ila
Dimashq al-Sham arja` wa idha muttu wa zada nakaj idfinu-ni `inda
waladi thumma innahu mat.”⁶⁴*

The swift repetitive accent of rhymed prose serves to dramatize the narrative. By constantly breaking into rhymed prose narratives, such as the above, Ibn Budayr raises the dramatic pitch of the chronicle and gives it the insistent dramatic quality suitable for the public recitation of the popular epic. This particular passage of rhymed prose was chosen intentionally as an example, precisely because it represents a point of tension in the chronicle where the epic form, generally lurking only in the background, here bursts out of the seams. The following is an unrhymed translation of the passage: the conversation is between al-Zahir al-`Umar, a local strongman and rebel stationed in Acre, and the Ottoman governor of Damascus, Sulayman Pasha al-`Azm, two sworn enemies who had been engaged in battle for years.

Al-Zahir `Umar sent a letter saying, “Have mercy on women and children, (and desist from) abusing ladies and infants; otherwise I will seek the help of the Exalted King [God] against you.” When the letter reached him, Sulayman Pasha grew dejected and was overcome by miseries. He cried out, “Aah! I am no longer of use, let me return to Damascus, and if my misery increases and I die, bury me next to my son.” Then, indeed, he died.

Thus, in reporting the death of the governor of Damascus, Ibn Budayr narrates a story which, like the epic, achieves dramatic closure. Also, epic-like, the story adds fictionalized details to a real historical situation whose *dramatis personae* are real. Simply by the power of his speech, the rebel-hero al-Zahir `Umar manages to cause fatal depression to the governor Sulaymān Pasha, and consequently emerge victorious. Thus, Ibn Budayr’s usage of rhymed prose – a register unfamiliar to the chronicle – serves to render the chronicle suitable for recitation to an audience accustomed to listening to the epic tales of public story-tellers, and for whom the chronicle in its usual register is an unfamiliar form.⁶⁵

This impression that Ibn Budayr’s chronicle might have been intended for public performance is also corroborated by his particular use of the colloquial (*amiyya*) and the classical (*fusha*). In general, the genre of the chronicle acknowledges the literary convention that classical Arabic is the language suitable for the realm of text, and that colloquial Arabic, which is generally assigned to the realm of oral speech, may enter the chronicle only under set circumstances. For example, Ibn Kannan, who wrote his text in morphologically and syntactically unmistakable classical Arabic, included in

his vocabulary the occasional colloquial word in the vein of what one may call, “narrative license.” That is to say, when the word in classical Arabic is not expressive enough for the purpose at hand, Ibn Kannan allows himself the liberty of replacing it with a colloquial word.⁶⁶ This, however, is not the case in Ibn Budayr’s chronicle which privileges neither classical nor colloquial nor assigns them separate realms. Rather, Ibn Budayr altogether ignores the literary convention of the chronicle, that is, that it be written in classical Arabic, for the benefit of writing in the register most suited to public narration: rhymed prose. Let us take the example of the story of the minaret suicide cited earlier. In the following passage, exclusively classical expressions are indicated in italics, exclusively colloquial expressions are written in bold typeface, and those expressions shared by both classical and colloquial are in regular typeface.

wa fi rabi` shahr Ramadan **arma** *rajul* nafsa-hu min a`la madhanat Harat al-Qubaybat wa mata wa kana ismu-hu Hasan Ibn al-Shaykh Yusuf al-Rifa`i fa sa`alna `an *dhalika* al-sabab fa-*qila* la-na anna akhu zawjati-hi **jab** *imra`a* ila bayti-hi wa kanat min al-**dayrat** fa-*naha*-hu `an *dhalika* wa qala la-hu **aysh** *hadhi-hi al-af al tutlifu nisa* [sic]-na wa al-`iyal fa *nahara*-hu wa *arada* darba-hu wa kana mina al-juhhal fa-*dhahaba* ila akabir al-hara wa *akhbara*-hum bi-*dhalika* al-*shan* **fa-ma`yabu-h** wa shaghalu-hu bi-al-kalam li-anna-hum **ghatsin** *jam`an* ila fawq al-*adhan* fa-*dhahaba* ila jami` al-Daqqaq wa salla al-subh ma`a al-imam wa salla `ala nafsi-hi salat al-mawt wa *sa`ida* al-manara wa nada ya ummata al-islam al-mawt ahwan wa la-**al-ta`ris** ma`a dawlat *hadha* [sic] al-ayyam *thumma* **arma** nafsa-hu rahima-hu Allah wa `afa`an-hu.⁶⁷

The first point to note is that Ibn Budayr’s syntax is recognizably classical. However, his vocabulary and morphology are mixed. He uses a number of words that are exclusively classical, and a number that are shared between colloquial and classical, but he also uses colloquialisms. Let us examine the dynamic of the relationship between the colloquial and the classical in Ibn Budayr’s text. In one of the moments of direct speech – *aysh hadhi-hi al-af al* (“What actions are these?”) – the author begins with the colloquialism *aysh* (“What?”). Since Ibn Budayr could easily have used the classical interrogative *ma* instead of *aysh*, his decision to use *aysh* indicates that he is actively giving primacy here to colloquial, perhaps to convey the texture of everyday language in this direct speech report. However, he does not finish his colloquial project, but completes the sentence with the exclusively classical word *af al*, instead of an equivalent colloquial such as *`amayil*. The reason for this switch is simply the requirements of rhymed prose: *af al* rhymes with the last word of the next sentence *`iyal*, and *`amayil* does not. Thus, Ibn Budayr uses classical here not because it is the language suitable for text, but because he needs a rhyme. While in this instance, Ibn Budayr classicalizes the colloquial, there are in this same passage other instances, where he reverses the process and colloquializes the classical. For example, in the phrase **ghatsin jam`an ila fawq al-adhan** (literally, “collectively plunged to the ears,” similar to the English “up to the ears in”) Ibn Budayr substitutes the classical plural *adhan* for the colloquial *adanayn* in the colloquial idiom **ghatsin la-l-adanayn**. Here, Ibn Budayr classicalizes the colloquial idiom, again for the purposes of rhyme. *Adhan* rhymes with *shan* in the previous sentence, but *adanayn* does not. Thus, in his negotiation between the vernacular and classical for the purposes of rhyme, Ibn Budayr is constantly doing one of two things: he is either using the language of the epic which, as mentioned above, has been characterized as a “classicalized colloquial” and with which the audience of the epic is, of course, familiar, or he is “bringing down” the classical language of the chronicle to that same audience who are not familiar with the language of the chronicle, by reversing the process and “colloquializing the classical”.

Ibn Budayr's intentional disregard of the literary conventions of text, in making his chronicle a hybrid text that includes the formal elements of the epic, strongly suggests that he pitched his chronicle not to its conventional audience, that is a restricted scholarly audience convened at a literary salon or a *madrassa*, but rather at a public audience who consumed his chronicle along with their coffee cups in the coffeshop, or to the sound of his scissors in his barbershop. Ibn Budayr, it seems, provided the customers of the *hakawi* a tale with a different flavor.

A Room of His Own

Let us return now to the question posited at the outset of this paper: when Ibn Budayr appeared on the scene of 18th century historiography, what did he do to the chronicle and what did the chronicle do for him?

In the imperially-ordered world of the *'ulama'* the chronicle had been a form that anticipated its content. The structure of the form, which is built around the cyclicity and regularity of time, prefigured its content, which is also about the cyclicity and regularity of events. Indeed, the imperial offerings to the *'ulama'* in the form of official positions gave the scholars a good enough life to remember the regular, the normal, and the banal. Ibn Budayr, whose position was far too low for him to pick the fruits of empire, lived in a world far away from that order, with the result that all he saw was disorder—a disorder, which he directly attributed to the negligence of the state. Thus, when Ibn Budayr appropriated the chronicle, he disturbed the cyclicity of its content by literally turning it into a narrative of disorder. By furnishing it with both the formal elements and the emotive and experiential force of the epic, Ibn Budayr transformed the chronicle into a performance—a performance delivered on a new stage, for a new audience. To this new audience, the barber performed the memory of a troubled existence, not that of a hero in the distant past, but of himself, the barber of Damascus who, like his audience, struggles against the abuses and corruption of the rich and powerful in the here and now.

As for the question of what the chronicle did for Ibn Budayr; with its authorial “I”, it allowed Ibn Budayr to speak. The contemporary chronicle allowed the barber to enter into – and register himself within – textual space. As the *'ulama'* continued to immortalize themselves in biographical dictionaries, Ibn Budayr found in the chronicle an alternative space in which to immortalize himself. The contemporary chronicle gave Ibn Budayr a way to tell history as “his story”, and in it he found a “room of his own.”

¹ The history of the contemporary chronicle is too long and complicated to be included in this article; the subject is addressed in my unpublished PhD dissertation “Peripheral Visions: The Worlds and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers in the 18th Century Ottoman Levant,” (Columbia University, 2002), Chapter 6, 461-510. It will suffice here to note that the arrangement of contemporary events in a systematic chronological order was always the favored form of memory preservation by Muslim scholars, and that from as early as the eighth century, that is, even before the contemporary chronicle became a legitimate historical genre, Muslim scholars kept private diaries – effectively, unpublished contemporary chronicles – that functioned as “aide-memoires,” or sources for the composition of larger scholarly works; see George Makdisi, “The Diary in Islamic Historiography: Some Notes,” *History and Theory* 25.2 (1986), 173-185.

² Ahmad al-Budayri al-Hallaq, *Hawadith Dimashq al-yawmiyya 1154-1175/1741-1762*, in the recension of Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi, ed. Ahmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karim (Cairo?: Matba'at Lajnat al-Bayan al-'Arabi, 1959); 2nd edition, with a study by Muhammad Jamil 'ul'ān (Damascus: Dar Sa'd al-Din, 1997). In this article, I cite the 2nd edition: for the quotation from al-Qasimi, see 81. This version of the chronicle was

translated to Turkish by Hasan Yüksel as Şeyh Ahmet el-Bediri el-Hallak, *Berber Bediri'nin Günlüğü 1741-1762, Osmanlı Hayatına Taşra İlişkin Olaylar* (Ankara: Akçağ, 1995).

³ Shihab al-Din Ahmad Ibn Budayr al-Hallaq, *Hawadith Dimashq al-Sham al-yawmiyya min sanat 1154 ila sanat 1176*. MS Chester Beatty 3551/2, Dublin. I have, however, found no evidence to confirm the statement of the cataloguer that the manuscript is an autograph; see Arthur Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library: a Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 8 vols (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co. Ltd, 1958), 3:24. I am currently editing this manuscript for publication.

⁴ I am preparing a study entitled "Clipping the Barber's Tale: How the 19th century Damascene scholar Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi "refined" the historical vision of the 18th century barber Ahmad Ibn Budayr al-Hallaq."

⁵ Since the abbreviation of the title of both versions is *Hawadith Dimashq*, I will use the name al-Budayri in citing the published edition, and the name Ibn Budayr in reference to the unpublished manuscript.

⁶ The title of the published edition is *Yawmiyyat Shamiyya aw al-Hawadith al-yawmiyya min tarikh ahad `ashar wa alf wa miyya* (A Damascene Diary or Daily Events from 1111H), ed. Akram Hasan al-Ulabi (Damascus: Dar al-Tabba', 1994). Hereafter, I will cite the title as *al-Hawadith al-yawmiyya*.

The autograph of Ibn Kannān's chronicle survives: MSS Ahlwardt 9479 and 9480, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Berlin. In this paper, however, I will refer only to the published edition.

⁷ On Ibn Kannan see, Muhammad Khalil al-Muradi (d. 1792), *Silk al-durar fi a'yan al-qarn al-thani `ashar*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Islami, n.d.), 3:84-85. Stephen Tamari devotes a full chapter to Ibn Kannān in his, "Teaching and Learning in 18th Century Damascus: Localism and Ottomanism in Early Modern Arab Society," (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1998), 180-219. Cf. my reconstruction of the life of Ibn Kannan, "Peripheral Visions," 90-112.

⁸ For a survey of Arabic *sira* literature, see Giovanni Canova, "Gli Studi sull'epica popolare araba," *Oriente Moderno* 57 (1977): 211-226.

⁹ These include a couple Shi'i farmers from southern Lebanon, a judicial court clerk, two soldiers, three priests, and a Samaritan secretary. This phenomenon is the subject of my dissertation, "Peripheral Visions."

¹⁰ Colette Establet and Jean-Paul Pascual, "Les livres des gens à Damas vers 1700," *Revue du Monde musulman et la Méditerranée* 87-88 (1999), 143-175.

¹¹ It is important to emphasize that the subject here is the rise of *commoner* authorial subjectivity, as autobiography, the ultimate form of authorial subjectivity, had a long tradition in the *'ulama'* milieu. See Dwight F. Reynolds, et al, *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹² Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," *Studia Islamica* 69 (1989), 121-150. Kafadar points out that the texts under discussion are of urban provenance and "defy being classified as either courtly or popular," 122.

¹³ Kafadar, "Self and Others," 127-128.

¹⁴ A further elaboration of the possible link between Sufism and the contemporary chronicle is to be found in my "Peripheral Visions," 481-488.

¹⁵ On `Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, see Barbara Rosenow-von Schlegell, "Sufism in the Ottoman Arab World: Shaykh `Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997).

¹⁶ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 71a-72a.

¹⁷ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 7a-b.

¹⁸ On al-Nabulusi's travelogues, see von Schlegell, "Sufism in the Ottoman Arab World," 3, especially note 10.

¹⁹ For a fuller reconstruction of Ibn Budayr's life, sociability, and education, see my "Peripheral Visions" 66-80.

²⁰ See Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 76a. Other mentions of the subjects that the barber studied, see 16b, and 69a.

²¹ For a reconstruction of the spatial locations and moves of Ibn Budayr's residence and shop, respectively, see my "Peripheral Visions," 67-70.

²² See Linda Schatowski Schilcher's social/spatial categorization of 18th century Damascus, *Families in politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries*, 12-16.

²³ For example, Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 43b.

²⁴ See al-Muradi, *Silk al-durar*: 4:38-39.

²⁵ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 7a-b. On the Muradis, see Karl Barbir, "All in the Family: The Muradis of Damascus," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 327-353.

²⁶ In enumerating the kindnesses of his craft master, Ibn Budayr mentions how his master shaved for the poor for no fee. Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 7b

²⁷ There is evidence that the barbershop functioned as an alternate gathering place to the coffeeshop. Kafadar, "Self and Others," 144

²⁸ For a very useful (though difficult to navigate) study which includes an analysis and summary of twelve Arabic epics, as well as a comparative index of shared themes between Arabic epics and universal romances and epics, see M.C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-Telling*, 3 vols., (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1995). Perhaps due to its continued performance down to the present day, *Sirat Bani Hilal* (of which Abu Zayd al-Hilali is the hero) has enjoyed more scholarly attention than any other *sira*. Two excellent studies in English are Bridget Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic and Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Tradition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995).

²⁹ While his heroic feats are often facilitated by supernatural circumstances, or by his own shrewdness, the protagonist's main attribute is the precocity and excellence of his warrior skills. As such, the epic is a celebration of masculinity. To drive the point further, even in the case of the female hero Dhat al-Himma, it is her "mascultation" that provides the initial narrative drive of the epic. Unwanted at birth precisely because she is female, she reverses the disappointment by transcending the limitations determined by her gender: she becomes a warrior thus compensating for not having been born a son. See Lyons' discussion of the identities and attributes of the epic heroes, *Arabian Epic*, 3: 94-109. For a study on Dhat al-Himma (as well as a comparative essay on Arabic and Byzantine popular literature), see Nabila Ibrahim, *Sirat Dhat al-Himma: dirasa muqarana* (Dar al-Marrikh: Riyad, 1985).

³⁰ The Hilali saga, and the epic al-Zahir Baybars seem to have retained some elements of historicity, see Reynolds, *Heroic Poets*, 9, and Lyons, *Arabian Epic*, 1:105, respectively. An interesting study of the various images of al-Zahir Baybars as constructed in the various memory forms, including the chronicle and the epic, see Amina A. Elbendary, "The Sultan, the Tyrant, and the Hero: Changing Medieval Perceptions of al-Zahir Baybars," *Mamluk Studies Review* 5 (2001): 141-157.

³¹ In her discussion of the origin and mode of transmission of the *Sirat Bani Hilal*, Connelly demonstrates that despite the existence of *siyar* in written form not only is the epic of oral provenance and transmission, but also of oral composition. She concludes that such literature is generally non-fixed and is without a single originator. See Connelly, *Arab Folk epic*, 36-47.

³² On the structure of the epic, see Lyons, *Arabian Epic*, 1:73-76.

³³ Reynolds, *Heroic Poets*, 7. Connelly describes the language of the written editions of *siyar* as "popular dialect corrected (often hypercorrected) so as to approach the Classical idiom," *Arab Folk Epic*, 8.

³⁴ On a discussion of the language, registers of the chronicle, see my "Peripheral Visions," 414-446.

³⁵ For example, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 51a.

³⁶ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 3a.

³⁷ For example, Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 15a, and 43b.

³⁸ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 28b, 44b, and 57b.

³⁹ al-Budayri, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 82.

⁴⁰ "And the Sultan of the Turkish, Arab, and Persian lands is...the Grand Vizier is...the Governor (of Damascus) is...the *qadi* of Damascus is...the *mufti* of Istanbul is...the *mufti* of Damascus is...the teachers (of Damascus) are...and the Hajj commander (in Damascus) is..." Ibn Kannan, *al-Hawadith al-yawmiyya*, 7 (and almost every annual entry).

⁴¹ Some of the quotations in this paper include expressions in the Levantine vernacular. I have indicated these with bold typeface. In the instances when standard classical Arabic transliteration fails to convey the vernacular sound, I have rendered those sounds in simple phonetic transliteration.

⁴² Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 2a.

⁴³ For examples of the juxtaposition of the "big people" with the "small people", or "the poor," see Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 17a, and 40a.

⁴⁴ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 28a-28b.

⁴⁵ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 62b-63a.

⁴⁶ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 63a.

⁴⁷ Ibn Kannan, *al-Hawadith al-yawmiyya*, 225.

⁴⁸ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 35b. Also, compare Ibn Budayr's treatment of an earthquake with Ibn Kannan's of a similar phenomenon. Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 49a-49b, and Ibn Kannan, *al-Hawadith al-yawmiyya*, 101.

⁴⁹ Such as Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 25a and 47a.

⁵⁰ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 11b.

⁵¹ Examples are Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 2a, 12b, 51a-51b, 56a. Mentions are too many to cite.

⁵² Ibn Kannan, *al-Hawadith al-yawmiyya*, 13, 106, 154, 382, and 473.

⁵³ See a recent article on that uses both Ibn Kannan and Ibn Budayr's chronicles as sources for a study on street violence in Damascus, James Grehan, "Street Violence and Social Imagination in Late-Mamluk and Ottoman Damascus (CA. 1500-1800)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35.2 (2003): 214-236.

⁵⁴ Steven Tamari also notes the cyclical rhythm in Ibn Kannan's chronicle. See his article, "Biography, Autobiography, and Identity in Early Modern Damascus," in *Auto/Biography and the Construction of Identity and Community in the Middle East*, ed. Mary Ann Fay (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 37-49, beginning at 43.

⁵⁵ On Ibn Kannan's vigorous social life, see my "Peripheral Visions," 98-100; on his obsession with picnics, see *idem*, 298-300, and Tamari, "Biography," 44.

⁵⁶ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 80b, 81a, 86b-87a.

⁵⁷ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 14b.

⁵⁸ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 15a.

⁵⁹ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 58b.

⁶⁰ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 60b-61a.

⁶¹ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 64a.

⁶² Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 22b.

⁶³ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 12a.

⁶⁴ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 20a.

⁶⁵ This is despite the fact that there is neither internal nor external evidence pointing to a public performance of the chronicle.

⁶⁶ About Ibn Kannan's use of colloquial, see my "Peripheral Visions," 430-431.

⁶⁷ Ibn Budayr, *Hawadith Dimashq*, 22b.

Pour une « histoire croisée » de l'occidentalisation et de la confessionnalisation chez les chrétiens du Proche-Orient¹

Bernard Heyberger*

Pendant longtemps, on jugeait de la culture des chrétiens orientaux en les situant sur une échelle des civilisations, en avance sur leur environnement musulman, mais en retard sur l'Occident chrétien. C'était déjà la démarche de Volney, lorsqu'il évoquait les progrès de l'écriture et de la lecture chez les chrétiens.² A la fin du XIXe siècle, les Orientaux eux-mêmes discutaient de leur place sur cette échelle, et prenaient à leur compte la terminologie européenne de « décadence » (*inhiât*) et de « renaissance » (*nahda*), qui est encore couramment employée aujourd'hui. Dans les années 1950 – 1960, au moment de la décolonisation et du concile Vatican II, des voix se sont élevées à l'intérieur du christianisme oriental (en particulier chez les melkites) pour protester contre l'imposition du modèle latin, qui a privé les Orientaux de leurs racines, et revendiquer plus d'autonomie, un retour aux sources, et une recherche de l'authenticité.³ Cette réaction se situait dans un courant plus large, qu'on peut qualifier de « culturaliste », qui visait à mettre en valeur la spécificité locale, à affiner les connaissances sur le fonctionnement différencié des sociétés et des cultures. Elle se fondait sur une vision dualiste, qui postulait une opposition nette entre les Européens et les autres, et présentait ces derniers comme des victimes d'une agression occidentale. Dans le cas particulier du Proche-Orient, elle restait cependant enfermée dans une crispation confessionnaliste, qui veillait à réaffirmer l'identité spécifique non seulement des minoritaires chrétiens dans l'Islam, mais d'une confession chrétienne par rapport aux autres. Aujourd'hui, nous découvrons au contraire des configurations plus complexes, qui conjuguent des traits de diverses origines, et les combinent de manière souvent inattendue. Nous découvrons les effets de retour du contact sur la civilisation européenne elle-même, qui ne peut plus être présentée comme une abstraction monolithique et intemporelle. En prenant davantage en compte la dimension diachronique, nous sommes devenus plus sensibles à la dynamique des situations de contact, en constante transformation. C'est une démarche qui se situe dans ce courant historiographique que nous voudrions présenter ici, à propos des chrétiens du Proche-Orient et de leur relation au catholicisme. Il s'agit d'une « histoire croisée » dans la mesure où nous tentons de connecter des histoires séparées à la suite du cloisonnement de la production historiographique du XXe siècle, et de mettre en évidence « le tissu épais des entrecroisements, à partir des références effectivement mobilisées par les uns et les autres dans l'élaboration de leurs représentations respectives »⁴.

* Bernard Heyberger, is a professor of history at the Department of History, Université François Rabelais.

Chrétiens orientaux et sociétés du Proche-Orient

L'ethnologie et l'histoire coloniales se sont appliquées à dresser l'inventaire et à dénombrer les groupes minoritaires, ethniques, confessionnels, linguistiques. Cette tâche exténuante et constamment inachevée est aujourd'hui abandonnée au profit d'autres approches, plus attentives aux frontières et aux énoncés performatifs générateurs d'identité par exclusion ou par opposition. Ce changement de perspective a permis aussi de s'éloigner de l'essentialisme pour historiciser les situations, en observant que les relations entre groupes, leurs stratégies respectives, leurs discours sur la tradition et l'authenticité, étaient en constant réaménagement en fonction d'un contexte culturel et politique large.⁵ Or, pour ce qui concerne les chrétiens orientaux, force est de reconnaître que ce changement de perspective, malgré des travaux historiques récents remarquables, n'a réussi que partiellement à pénétrer les discours généralement produits, y compris par des universitaires.⁶ Coptes, maronites, arméniens, assyro-chaldéens, grecs, se doivent de se différencier non seulement de leur environnement musulman, mais aussi des chrétiens appartenant à une autre confession, à commencer par les latins. D'où la quête d'origines mythiques et l'affirmation de caractères spécifiques intemporels, quand ce n'est pas d'un destin chargé d'un sens eschatologique particulier. Nous ne donnerons que deux exemples pris chez les maronites. Ainsi, une « Lettre » ou « Charte » de Saint Louis aux maronites (datée du 21 mai 1250), dont il est clairement prouvé qu'il s'agit d'une forgerie du XIXe siècle, continue-t-elle à être reproduite sans autre nécessité d'ailleurs que d'inscrire l'auteur dans une fidélité idéologique.⁷ Dans un autre ouvrage récent, l'auteur, après avoir évoqué le XVe siècle comme un « âge d'or des maronites », fait l'apologie du rôle du patriarche, qui nous semble directement inspirée des idéologies cléricales et nationalistes du XIXe siècle :

« C'est la primauté de la foi qui faisait tourner tous les regards de la Communauté vers une seule personne, la plus haute en dignité ecclésiastique : le patriarche. Le chef incontestable et incontesté, c'était lui. Il était le père. Il était le juge. Ce titre de « patriarche » conférait à la personne qui le portait tout l'honneur et toute la juridiction de l'un des quatre sièges patriarcaux de l'Eglise orientale. Il le revêtait, de plus, de tout le prestige dont jouissaient les patriarches de l'Ancien Testament, maîtres absolus de leurs tribus. Les nombreux évêques qui l'aidaient dans le gouvernement de sa Communauté n'étaient autres que ses assistants et ses vicaires. Ils devaient répondre de tout devant lui. »⁸

Ce genre de commentaire postule une permanence de la croyance et de la pratique religieuses, fondant l'ordre social. Ces éléments échapperaient alors au champ de l'investigation historique, pour demeurer inchangés à travers les âges. Le groupe lui-même se définirait avant tout, et presque exclusivement, par son appartenance confessionnelle, ce qui le distinguerait foncièrement de son environnement, en particulier de la majorité musulmane. Il formerait par ailleurs une entité hiérarchiquement constituée et perpétuellement unie.⁹

Cette vision confessionnaliste des chrétiens orientaux est en réalité une construction moderne, caractéristique de l'ère du nationalisme, qui rend mal compte des réalités qui ont précédé. La confusion des rôles spirituel, temporel, voire militaire, dans une sorte de théocratie, loin d'être une survivance des siècles antérieurs, comme cela a souvent été affirmé, est avant tout la conséquence des idéologies du XIXe siècle. De même, les flambées de violence fanatique ne sont pas, comme l'affirme un historien

libanais à propos des événements de 1958, « un renvoi meurtrier à l'histoire médiévale ».¹⁰

En réaction à cette lecture confessionnaliste et essentialiste de l'histoire, d'autres courants historiographiques ont voulu dénier tout rôle à la religion, ou du moins en réduire la portée, parfois en l'excluant de leurs analyses.¹¹ La religion opérait en fait dans la définition et la discrimination des groupes. Le statut de la *dhimma* désignait les juifs et les chrétiens comme différents des musulmans. Les contraintes de la responsabilité collective en matière fiscale (*djizya*) et judiciaire imposaient une structuration interne aux communautés, du moins localement.¹² Par ailleurs, l'administration des sacrements, l'application des règles canoniques en matière d'alliance matrimoniale, le respect des cycles liturgiques, la participation aux rites collectifs, permettaient de préserver l'identité spécifique menacée de dissolution dans l'islam ou dans un rite chrétien concurrent. Cependant, dans une société dominée par l'oralité, où l'écrit manuscrit était rare et soumis à la variabilité, la norme ne pouvait s'appliquer de manière invariable et ferme, d'autant plus que l'autorité ecclésiastique était constamment placée en compétition avec d'autres systèmes d'autorité, islamique, chrétienne, ou coutumière. D'autres éléments entraient en compte dans la définition du groupe. Les chrétiens d'une même obédience vivaient extrêmement dispersés sur de vastes espaces discontinus. Dans ces conditions, ils épousaient les modes de vie et les valeurs de la société dans laquelle ils étaient intégrés. Leur perception de l'ordre social, leur conception des hiérarchies, des liens lignagers et des alliances, ne les distinguaient pas de leurs voisins musulmans sunnites ou « hétérodoxes ». Montagnards du Liban ou du Kurdistan, semi-nomades de la frontière désertique de Transjordanie, partageaient une organisation et des valeurs communes aux tribus, quelles que fussent leur appartenance confessionnelle. Melkites, maronites ou arméniens d'Alep adhéraient à un système social fondé sur l'ordre ottoman et la souveraineté du Sultan.¹³ Le patriarche melkite Makâryûs al-Za'im, pendant ses voyages, découvrant horrifié la pratique de l'infanticide chez les Géorgiens, « choses qui font pleurer les pierres », fait cette invocation : « Dieu, Louange à Lui, porte assistance à notre Sultan, et nous préserve dans nos foyers ! ».¹⁴ Son fils Bûlus, en visite à Kiev, indigné par les exactions des Polonais catholiques, s'écrie : « Que Dieu fasse durer l'empire turc à jamais ! ».¹⁵ Les chrétiens ne participaient pas seulement à la culture politique dominante, celle des villes ottomanes régulées par la charia ou celle des frontières rurales dominées par la coutume. Ils partageaient aussi pour l'essentiel la mentalité de leurs compatriotes, y compris dans leur perception du sacré et dans leurs pratiques religieuses.¹⁶

Une même communauté confessionnelle se retrouvait généralement extrêmement divisée en fractions qui opposaient la ville à la campagne, ou une ville à l'autre. La segmentarisation, qui caractérisait ces sociétés, aggravait encore les divisions et les rivalités à l'intérieur d'une même confession et d'une même Eglise.¹⁷

Cette situation était favorable aux acteurs extérieurs, et favorisait l'introduction d'innovations, instrumentalisées dans les conflits locaux, selon un schéma qui se vérifie dans bien des situations coloniales. Les décalages et les tensions qui fissurent la société locale préparent et favorisent l'imposition d'une domination économique, politique et culturelle.¹⁸ Les frustrations, y compris au sein des groupes familiaux, peuvent rendre attrayante l'offre culturelle occidentale.

Individualisation, confessionnalisation et « processus de civilisation »

Il arrive souvent que des observateurs peu avertis confondent le christianisme oriental avec le christianisme tout court, voire avec le catholicisme latin. Ce dernier suit sa propre trajectoire historique, qu'il convient d'avoir à l'esprit si l'on veut réfléchir aux phénomènes de transferts culturels, ou plus justement, d'interrelation et d'interactivité, non seulement entre l'Occident et le christianisme oriental, mais aussi entre celui-ci et l'islam. On ne peut par exemple caractériser certains aspects de la spiritualité de la mystique maronite Hindiyya (science de l'ignorant, abandon de soi en présence de Dieu) comme typiquement musulmans, et postuler chez elle une influence du soufisme, que si l'on méconnaît les développements de la mystique catholique au XVIIe siècle.¹⁹ En dehors de ces fausses analogies structurelles, une inspiration musulmane chez Hindiyya reste entièrement à prouver, tandis que celle de Fénelon ou de Sainte Thérèse d'Avila est probable. Ses sources orientales, peut-être non écrites, sont difficiles à établir. Si elle cite Jean Climaque, mystique du Sinaï, il ne faut pas oublier que cette référence est commune dans la spiritualité latine dont elle s'inspire.²⁰ Les cheminements culturels sont décidément complexes, et nous ne sommes qu'à l'ébauche des recherches sur ces questions!

Le catholicisme issu du Concile de Trente, en même temps qu'il se réforme, s'engage dans une démarche d'exploration et d'accumulation de connaissances sur les autres chrétiens, dans un esprit de compétition dogmatique et intellectuelle avec les protestants. Pour qui se plonge dans la littérature missionnaire ou orientaliste du XVIIe siècle, ce qui frappe surtout, c'est la prise de conscience par les auteurs européens de la distance qui les sépare d'un chrétien oriental. Celle-ci vient d'abord de l'application d'une méthode d'observation et de mise en récit ethnographique élaborée en particulier par les jésuites, à partir des recommandations d'Ignace de Loyola lui-même.²¹ Elle vient aussi du sentiment de l'écart entre une culture fondée sur la large diffusion de l'écrit imprimé et une culture traditionnelle dans laquelle le texte manuscrit est rare et les formes orales ou gestuelles de communication dominantes. A cette aune, l'ignorance et la barbarie des Orientaux ne recueillent pas un jugement plus sévère que celles des paysans bretons, dauphinois ou corses à la même époque.²²

La découverte de la différence entre « nous », les Européens, et « eux » les chrétiens orientaux, permet à un orientaliste instruit comme Richard Simon de mesurer le considérable écart qui s'est creusé entre le catholicisme latin moderne et le christianisme des origines.²³ Mais la majorité des latins applique aux Orientaux la grille de lecture post-tridentine, considérant que ces derniers se sont éloignés de la bonne doctrine et de la bonne pratique du fait de leur séparation d'avec Rome, de leur ignorance, de leur négligence, et de l'effet pernicieux de leur fréquentation des « infidèles » et des « hérétiques ». Il convient donc de les ramener vers un christianisme authentique par la réforme des « abus », par la lutte contre les « superstitions », par la restauration de l'autorité ecclésiastique aux différents niveaux, et par l'instruction des fidèles. Ainsi, lors de la première légation des jésuites auprès des maronites, en 1579, le cardinal Carafa écrivait-il au patriarche Rizzî : « On veillera à tenir compte et à mettre ensemble tout ce qu'on jugera utile pour votre aide, tant dans la doctrine, saine, intégrale, et vraie, que dans les rites et l'administration des sacrements, afin que chaque chose se fasse selon la décence qui convient à des ministres du Christ, toute fausse doctrine et tout abus superstitieux étant chassé ».²⁴ Parfois, les dissidents de l'islam (druzes, nusyari-s, yazidi-s) sont également considérés comme des chrétiens dont la foi se serait corrompue à la suite de leur éloignement de l'Eglise, et dont la conversion

serait plus aisée que celle des musulmans sunnites. La méthode suivie pour atteindre les buts fixés à la mission ne diffère guère de celle qui est appliquée ailleurs en terre catholique. Seuls les grands déploiements publics de pompes baroques (processions) sont impossibles en *dâr al-islâm*, sauf exceptions. L'enseignement de la lecture et du catéchisme auprès des chrétiens constitue une des principales activités missionnaires, partout sur le bord de la Méditerranée orientale où la présence des religieux francs est tolérée. Pour les jeunes gens qui ont dépassé l'âge scolaire, ce sont les confréries et les congrégations de laïcs qui offrent un lieu de formation à travers leurs réunions hebdomadaires, dont l'apprentissage de la lecture constitue une des principales activités.²⁵ Les idées et les méthodes de la « réforme catholique » sont pour l'essentiel partagées et appliquées à la suite des religieux missionnaires par le clergé oriental uni à Rome.²⁶

Si nous avons quelques indications sur la fréquentation des écoles et le contenu de l'enseignement, une recherche plus systématique resterait à entreprendre, en particulier sur les manuels et ouvrages de dévotion traduits des langues occidentales employés dans ces occasions, dont les spécimens conservés sont nombreux. Il se pourrait que certaines de ces œuvres n'aient servi qu'à valoriser leur auteur, sans autre usage concret. La qualité de la langue employée et la forme donnée à l'ouvrage pourraient nous éclairer sur ce point. Les traductions sont généralement plutôt des adaptations, dont les écarts par rapport aux originaux pourraient être significatifs. Il faudrait aussi mesurer les œuvres dûes à des catholiques à celles des orthodoxes, comme ces *Commandements très utiles que tout chrétien doit connaître et respecter pour sauver son âme* (*Waṣāyâ nâfi'a jiddan wa yajib 'alâ kull maṣīhî bi'an ya 'rifahâ wa yahfathahâ likay yukhallaṣ nafsahu*), traduits du grec par le patriarche Makâryûs Al-Za'im, qui trahissent une influence latine nette, mais prennent bien soin de se démarquer de la théologie romaine sur certains points²⁷.

Les ouvrages mis à la disposition des chrétiens alphabétisés visent aussi la lecture individuelle et silencieuse. Celle-ci doit amener à intérioriser des conduites nouvelles, encouragées par l'examen de conscience quotidien et le dialogue régulier avec le *murshid*, le directeur spirituel. L'ensemble de ces lectures et de ces pratiques vise à rationaliser la vie personnelle et sociale des individus. L'introduction de nouvelles règles de sociabilité, fondées sur les principes de la politesse (*tartīb*) et de la décence (*iḥtishâm*), pose les bases d'un véritable « processus de civilisation » qui tend à éloigner le fidèle catholique de son univers familial, partagé avec les musulmans et les autres chrétiens.²⁸ Les images, imprimées ou peintes, largement diffusées à la même époque, visent les mêmes objectifs didactiques.²⁹

Il est difficile d'évaluer la portée de ce conditionnement. On peut néanmoins relever que des individus, particulièrement des femmes, commencent à parler de leur « moi » en empruntant pour l'essentiel les grilles d'interprétation et la terminologie de la psychologie occidentale.³⁰ En même temps que l'éducation catholique tend à une intériorisation des règles, et donc à une affirmation de l'individu, elle participe aussi à la bureaucratisation de la vie sociale, qui se caractérise par le renforcement de l'autorité institutionnelle au dépens des liens primaires, et par la domination de normes juridiques s'imposant à tous et mises en œuvre par une classe de professionnels, selon le schéma wébérien.³¹ La voie du Salut elle-même se déplace alors « de la fuite contemplative hors du monde » vers « la transformation du monde » par l'ascèse active.³²

L'influence catholique se traduit par un renforcement et une légitimation du pouvoir ecclésiastique, conçu comme une pyramide hiérarchique, dont le pape est le sommet incontesté. Les prélats orientaux qui s'unissent à Rome, ou ceux qui demandent

une confirmation après leur élection, se voient imposer un serment d'obéissance à la personne du souverain pontife qu'il aurait été impossible d'exiger d'un évêque français du XVIIIe siècle.³³ Le patriarche maronite Yûsuf Istifân, suspendu par l'autorité romaine à la suite de son rôle dans « l'affaire Hindiyya », se vit soumettre pour son rétablissement une formule de rétractation qu'il refusa de signer telle quelle. Il devait y déclarer qu'il ne voulait « dans l'avenir, n'être que l'enfant soumis et obéissant au Saint Siège Romain et Apostolique et à Sa Sainteté le Souverain Pontife régnant Pie VI, à ses successeurs, et à la Congrégation pour la Propagation de la Sainte Foi ». ³⁴ Ce modèle catholique très hiérarchisé a pu inspirer les constructions communautaristes ou protonationalistes du XIXe siècle, issues d'ailleurs des idéologies cléricales et contre-révolutionnaires européennes : aussi bien la vision confessionnaliste intemporelle de la communauté maronite, telle que nous l'avons évoquée plus haut à travers une citation, que l'idéal-type de l'organisation des *milla*-s (millet) tel qu'il est généralement admis. Selon ce schéma, chaque communauté confessionnelle chrétienne se serait trouvée sous l'autorité centralisée d'un patriarche, cumulant les pouvoirs que le Sultan lui aurait généreusement attribués.

A un niveau inférieur, le catholicisme issu du Concile de Trente insiste sur la dignité et l'autorité de la fonction sacerdotale. En valorisant la pratique des sacrements, en plaçant l'Eucharistie et la confession auriculaire au cœur de la spiritualité du chrétien, il fait du prêtre le médiateur privilégié et exclusif entre le fidèle et Dieu. Le recueil du synode libanais de 1736, comme d'autres textes réglementaires ou dogmatiques, consacre l'essentiel de ses prescriptions aux sacrements, et insiste sur les qualités pratiques, intellectuelles et spirituelles exigées du prêtre qui les dispense.³⁵ L'effort d'encadrement et de formation aboutit au XIXe siècle à une certaine émancipation du clergé par rapport aux familles de notables. Avec un recrutement d'origine plus modeste, une éducation reçue sur place ou en Europe, de vastes réseaux d'information et de soutien, des ressources propres plus assurées, le personnel ecclésiastique, du moins dans l'espace libanais, aspire alors à jouer un rôle plus actif dans la société et la vie politique.³⁶

Les nouveaux ordres religieux qui se forment à partir de la fin du XVIIe siècle dans les obédiences unies à Rome s'inspirent toutes des *Constitutions* de la Compagnie de Jésus ou de celles des Visitandines, rédigées par Saint François de Sales. Il s'agit d'introduire dans la vie consacrée une rationalisation des comportements totalement absente de l'ascétisme oriental jusque-là. Ainsi, la règle de la congrégation du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus dictée par Hindiyya divise minutieusement le temps, prévoit la distribution architecturale des lieux conventuels, fixe des prescriptions d'hygiène, formalise l'élection de la supérieure au scrutin secret, établit une codification proportionnelle des châtiments... La volonté de dépasser les systèmes traditionnels de relations, fondés sur la parenté et le clientélisme, pour instituer un groupe homogénéisé, guide le texte. On retrouve la même préoccupation dans tel règlement de confrérie destinée aux jeunes gens catholiques d'Alep, et fondée par les jésuites.³⁷

Au même moment, la justice ecclésiastique s'affirme face à la justice coutumière ou au recours, assez fréquent, à la justice du *cadi*. Le maronite 'Abd Allâh Qarâ'alî, fondateur de l'ordre des Moines Libanais, originaire d'Alep, rédige des manuels de droit inspirés de la législation musulmane concernant différents aspects du droit civil personnel. Le synode du Liban organise le tribunal ecclésiastique et donne l'ordre au patriarche de doter les évêques d'un recueil canonique et de droit civil. Les ouvrages de Qarâ'alî sont adoptés à cet usage en 1744.³⁸ A Alep, les Melkites catholiques se dotent en 1753 d'un tribunal présidé par un prêtre *wakîl* de l'évêque, assisté de quatre prêtres et de quatre laïcs, devant siéger deux heures tous les matins

pour examiner et régler les affaires spirituelles et temporelles qu'on lui soumet. Il s'agit d'éviter les recours au tribunal de la charia, mais aussi de faire front face à une offensive orthodoxe.³⁹ Le droit se formalise. Les actes sont enregistrés, et le document écrit a la préférence du juge sur le témoignage oral. Le Synode maronite du Liban insiste sur la tenue de registres et l'organisation d'archives par les évêques et les patriarches. A la fin du XVIIIe siècle, l'émir Bashîr confie la justice de la Montagne à des évêques, qui appliquent en matière civile la charia, non sans contestation, lorsque celle-ci contredit la coutume maronite en matière de succession.⁴⁰ A l'intérieur même des Eglises, les questions disciplinaires prennent une importance particulière : ainsi, le rythme et la nature des jeûnes et des abstinences imposées au fidèle dans l'année liturgique, ou les prohibitions matrimoniales en matière de consanguinité et d'affinité. Il s'agit de fixer des règles claires et universelles là où très souvent le droit canonique devait auparavant composer avec la coutume ou le rapport de force. Le but visé est le renforcement et la centralisation de l'autorité ecclésiastique dans chaque Eglise, mais aussi la distinction avec les musulmans et avec les autres obédiences chrétiennes rivales, dans une atmosphère de compétition non seulement entre catholiques et orthodoxes, mais aussi entre maronites, melkites et latins. L'introduction de la pratique latine des dispenses en matière de jeûne comme en matière matrimoniale apporte pouvoir et ressources supplémentaires aux prélats qui les accordent.⁴¹

Cette évolution rencontre celle des autorités ottomanes, qui tentent de centraliser et de formaliser davantage leur autorité. Cléricalisation et confessionnalisation participent donc à la « modernisation » de la société, fondée sur la délégitimation de la coutume et des solidarités lignagères ou claniques. Il est vrai que ce processus s'est engagé dans certaines communautés chrétiennes de l'Empire bien avant qu'il ne soit mis en oeuvre par l'Etat ottoman.⁴²

Configurations de l'échange et de la confrontation

Le processus que nous décrivons se comprend sur un temps extrêmement long. Si notre attention, pour des raisons pratiques, se concentre essentiellement sur le XVIIe et le XVIIIe siècle, il est bien clair cependant qu'il faudrait en suivre l'évolution sur une période beaucoup plus étendue, au moins jusqu'à la Première Guerre Mondiale. Dans l'ensemble, le XIXe siècle poursuit et renforce l'œuvre initiée aux siècles précédents.⁴³ Même l'entreprise missionnaire protestante, à bien des égards, agit dans le même sens que la catholique.

Il ne s'agit cependant pas d'une évolution linéaire. L'acculturation n'est jamais un cheminement unique, d'une culture indigène à la culture européenne, et elle consiste moins en des résultats définitifs et mesurables qu'en un processus sans fin, éternellement inachevé.⁴⁴ C'est la dynamique de l'échange et de la confrontation qu'il nous faut tenter de saisir, au risque d'apparaître, comme d'autres, fasciné par « les ratages, l'inattendu, l'affectif ».⁴⁵

D'abord, l'Occident n'apparaît pas comme une entité monolithique. Au XIXe siècle surtout, la compétition entre catholiques et protestants est un des principaux mobiles de l'activité missionnaire dans l'empire ottoman. A l'intérieur même du catholicisme, l'Eglise romaine et la principale puissance « protectrice » (la France), sont loin de partager le même point de vue, et de viser toujours les mêmes objectifs, ce qui se répercute aussi sur l'activité des ordres religieux, généralement rivaux entre eux. Alors que sous l'Ancien Régime, jésuites et capucins sont français, et attachés à la politique

française, il n'en va pas de même des Frères de la Terre Sainte, d'origine espagnole et italienne. Les rivalités « nationales » entre les ordres se doublent de querelles sur les méthodes. Encore faut-il préciser que les missionnaires de la fin du XVIII^e siècle sont assez éloignés par leur motivation, leur nombre, leur âge, leur formation, de ceux des premières décennies du XVII^e.⁴⁶ Ajoutons que les missionnaires, qui ont souvent quitté leur pays depuis longtemps, véhiculent généralement une image désuète de leur propre patrie et de leur propre culture. L'Eglise elle-même, avec sa tête romaine, n'est pas systématiquement cette institution arrogante et immuable que les historiens du christianisme oriental se plaisent à dépeindre. Elle est traversée de crises, de contradictions, de changements d'orientation. Ainsi, Benoît XIV (1740 – 1758), attaché à la *regolata devozione* à un moment où la rupture du catholicisme avec les Lumières n'est pas encore évidente, se montre-t-il réservé envers une religiosité sentimentaliste comme celle qui s'exprime alors chez les maronites, avec Hindiyya et sa dévotion au Sacré Cœur de Jésus. Ses successeurs se laissent davantage emporter par un courant qui caractérisera le catholicisme contre-révolutionnaire à partir du traumatisme de la suppression de la Compagnie de Jésus (1773). De plus, la bureaucratie romaine a généralement du mal à recueillir des informations fiables et à faire ensuite appliquer de façon ferme ses décisions, en l'absence de pouvoir temporel sur place, qui lui apporterait son appui.⁴⁷

En Orient, les innovations que nous avons rapidement esquissées plus haut ne sont pas reçues sans confrontations ni sans oppositions. Certaines prescriptions du synode maronite du Liban (1736), comme celle qui exige la suppression des monastères mixtes, mettront presque un siècle à être appliquées. La pyramide hiérarchique de l'autorité, du pape au patriarche, aux évêques et aux curés, est longtemps instable, et donne lieu à des conflits sans fin entre pontife romain, patriarche et évêques, aussi bien chez les maronites que chez les melkites. La volonté d'imposer le respect de principes comme le consentement des filles et le contrôle ecclésiastique pour les alliances matrimoniales soulève des oppositions parfois vives. La réforme de la pratique du jeûne provoque de rudes querelles chez les melkites. Les règles des nouveaux ordres religieux, tendant à rationaliser la vie individuelle et collective des religieux, ne sont souvent que lettre morte, au vu des querelles qui déchirent les couvents, révélant la persistance d'une mentalité patrimoniale et d'attachements clientélares et lignagers. Ainsi, la congrégation du Sacré Cœur de Jésus fondée par Hindiyya est-elle minée presque dès ses origines par l'opposition Alépines / montagnardes, qu'on retrouve de même chez les Moines Libanais. Elle est d'ailleurs une des causes principales de la tragédie qui se joue finalement au couvent de Bkerké.⁴⁸

Il n'est pas possible pour autant de lire ces conflits de façon simple, comme des affrontements entre traditionnalistes et innovateurs. D'abord parce que l'innovation se présente généralement comme une restauration d'une antique tradition, comme la correction d'un abus qui se serait introduit dans la bonne doctrine ou la bonne pratique, selon l'enseignement du Concile de Trente. Ainsi, lorsque Aftîmyûs Sayfi, évêque melkite de Saïda (1643 – 1723), allège les jeûnes pour ses fidèles, il prétend supprimer de mauvaises habitudes installées dans son Eglise après le schisme de Photius, par quelques manichéens. Lorsque Maksîmûs al-Hakîm, archevêque melkite d'Alep, instaure la fête typiquement latine du *Corpus Domini*, il la dote d'un rituel byzantin, et prétend avoir exhumé une antique liturgie. Et lorsque le patriarche maronite reproche aux Moines Libanais d'enlever leur capuchon pour dire la messe, contrairement à la tradition, 'Abd Allâh Qarâ'alî réplique que l'usage de célébrer la tête couverte est un « abus » introduit par « l'impie Dioscore ». ⁴⁹ A plusieurs reprises, le texte du Synode libanais invoque la coutume. Il affirme, par exemple, que : « Nous ordonnons aussi, sous peine de sanctions ecclésiastiques, de conserver la vieille coutume, à savoir que les gens

d'Eglise portent les différends entre eux et les civils devant le tribunal de l'évêque. Celui qui oserait passer outre au pouvoir de l'évêque pour recourir aux magistrats civils [...], qu'il tombe sous le coup de l'excommunication ipso facto, car il aura porté atteinte à la liberté ecclésiastique ». ⁵⁰ Il faut évidemment voir dans ce genre de formule une projection idéalisée dans le passé plutôt que l'attestation d'une authentique « vieille coutume ». La confrontation avec l'humanisme occidental amène les Orientaux à se pencher sur leur propre histoire pour la construire dans un esprit avant tout apologétique. Cette « invention de la tradition » contribue par la suite à conforter leur propre identité confessionnelle. ⁵¹ Soulignons que le même phénomène s'observe chez les orthodoxes, soucieux de condamner les « innovations » et « déviations » latines en les opposant à leur respect prétendument fidèle de la tradition.

Le même groupe ou la même personne peut d'un côté s'attacher à introduire une innovation, et d'un autre se faire le défenseur d'une coutume ou d'une tradition. Les moines melkites shuwayrites s'opposent au patriarche Cyrille Tānās et aux moines salvatoriens, en refusant tout allègement du jeûne et de l'abstinence sur le modèle de l'Eglise latine. On ne peut pour autant les qualifier de traditionnalistes : ils ont amplement contribué à introduire un nouvel état d'esprit et une nouvelle spiritualité, notamment à travers des ouvrages de dévotion composés ou imprimés par leurs soins.

Si on se situe au niveau des individus pour tenter de saisir la cohérence de leur comportement, il faut bien reconnaître qu'ils font souvent preuve d'ambivalence, et qu'ils sont amenés à des retournements spectaculaires suite à des enchaînements de circonstances. Hindiyya, éduquée par les jésuites, et promue par eux dans une carrière de sainteté, finit par s'opposer violemment à ses maîtres, ce qui ne l'empêche pas de faire appel à son frère, lui-même jésuite. Ilyās Fakhr, melkite de Tripoli, embrigadé jeune au service des missionnaires latins et de la cause catholique, mène un moment double jeu avant de passer ouvertement à l'orthodoxie et se faire ardent polémiste pour réfuter la propagande latine. Cela n'exclut pas qu'il se soit peut-être réconcilié avec l'Eglise catholique à la fin de ses jours. ⁵² Antūn Khabiyya (Kobié, Cubié), fils et petit-fils de prêtres melkites de Damas, fervents partisans du catholicisme, est reçu au Collège Urbain à Rome en 1725. Il revient dans sa ville natale en 1732, après avoir raté ses études. Il se montre par la suite violemment hostile aux cardinaux et aux missionnaires, ce qui ne l'empêche pas de rester mêlé aux affaires religieuses, d'accueillir l'Européen de passage, et de gagner sa vie en pratiquant la peinture apprise à Rome. ⁵³

Pour comprendre ces attitudes, il nous faut tenter de saisir tout le système de relations d'une personne ou d'un groupe, afin de reconstituer autant que possible sa logique d'action. En grande partie, les processus que nous avons évoqués doivent être appréhendés au niveau le plus élémentaire, celui de l'individu. Nous sommes alors devant « un système ouvert, en perpétuelle transformation, et déterminé par des dynamiques et des mécanismes micro-sociaux de type interactionnel ». Cette approche permet d'insister sur la dimension de l'incertitude ou de l'imprévisibilité dans les comportements. La signification d'une institution ou la valeur d'une règle est donnée alors dans la négociation des acteurs sociaux concrets. ⁵⁴ Nous avons déjà tenté de reconstituer le système de relations et la logique d'action d'un Aftīmyūs Sayfī, dont le zèle catholique s'éclaire mieux à l'examen de sa stratégie sociale d'ensemble. ⁵⁵ Si l'on prend le cas du patriarche maronite Yūsuf Istīfān, ⁵⁶ il ne peut certes être qualifié de « conservateur », encore que l'ensemble de son œuvre mériterait une étude attentive. Par son éducation romaine, par ses relations à la cour de France, par son adhésion active à la nouvelle dévotion du Sacré Coeur de Jésus, et par certaines de ses prises de position en faveur du pouvoir des évêques et de l'autorité éminente du Saint Siège, il pouvait passer pour un « innovateur », au point de se faire traiter de « franc » par ses adversaires. Il

avait gardé de son passage au collège de Rome le goût pour la communication écrite, les lettres circulaires et les mémoires saturés de références érudites qui faisaient appel au droit canon et à l'histoire. Jeune évêque, il menait le parti de l'opposition au patriarche Tûbiyâ Al-Khazîn, qui endossait le rôle du notable « conservateur ». Mais une fois patriarche, il invoqua à son tour la tradition pour justifier sa volonté d'innovation en matière d'organisation du culte et de discipline ecclésiastique. Il rappela l'antiquité du trône patriarcal d'Antioche dont il s'estimait le seul légitime titulaire et la perpétuelle fidélité des maronites à l'Eglise catholique, pierre angulaire de l'identité confessionnelle alors en construction, pour revendiquer sa pleine souveraineté sur son peuple.

On comprend mal cependant le personnage et son évolution par la suite, si on ne tient pas compte du fait qu'il appartenait à une dynastie ecclésiastique, qui perpétuait un comportement patrimonial. Ainsi, il hérita très tôt du couvent familial de 'Ayn Warqa, et fut promu très jeune à la tête du diocèse de Beyrouth, à la suite de son oncle. Une fois patriarche, il réunit un synode dans son village de Ghûstâ (1768), où il fut affirmé que « les relations de parentèle ne conduisent pas à la gloire de Dieu », et que les fonctions et les rangs dans l'Eglise ne devaient pas être transmissibles par héritage, mais devaient être attribués sur la base du mérite. Ce qui n'empêcha pas que durant son règne (1766 – 1793), six des quinze évêques qu'il consacra étaient originaires de Ghûstâ, où il séjournait le plus clair de son temps. L'un de ces six était son propre frère, et trois autres appartenaient à une seule famille. Sa politique fut en grande partie dictée par son hostilité irrépressible envers Mikhâ'il al-Fâdil, qui avait suivi un cursus proche du sien, et qui lui avait même un moment servi de maître à Rome. Fâdil avait obtenu l'évêché de Beyrouth contre Istîfân, en s'appuyant sur un autre réseau de solidarité.

Une innovation institutionnelle comme la structure confrérique fut instrumentalisée par les deux adversaires pour élargir et organiser le cercle de leurs partisans. Le patriarche encouragea la fondation et la diffusion de la confrérie du Sacré Cœur fondée par Hindiyya et liée à elle par un vœu exigé des adhérents. L'évêque de Beyrouth répliqua en fondant une congrégation de l'Immaculée Conception de la Vierge, avec l'approbation du supérieur général des jésuites. Celle-ci déborda immédiatement de son diocèse, ce qui provoqua sa condamnation officielle par Yûsuf Istîfân. On pourrait donner encore d'autres exemples d'instrumentalisation de ces associations dévotes. Plus tard, une procédure « moderne », comme celle de l'aveu, « une des techniques les plus hautement valorisées pour produire le vrai », selon Michel Foucault,⁵⁷ fut employée pour venir conforter le charisme contesté de Hindiyya et l'autorité chancelante du patriarche.

L'adhésion au catholicisme, ou l'adoption de certaines innovations culturelles ou institutionnelles inspirées par l'Occident, offrait, comme nous l'avons déjà affirmé plus haut, de nouvelles opportunités de pouvoir et d'action dans un univers social extrêmement instable, dans lequel les réseaux de relations se recomposaient sans cesse. Affîmyûs Sayfî, Yûsuf Istîfân et Mikhâ'il Fâdil, comme dans une moindre mesure les religieux latins et les envoyés de Rome eux-mêmes, étaient plongés dans un système clientéliste dans lequel la relation entre les personnes et les groupes était fondée sur des modes de domination de type patriarcal : le lien personnel, la solidarité du lignage, du village, derrière le leader local, l'emportaient en définitive sur des considérations plus larges d'intérêt collectif, et ce malgré la volonté affichée de formaliser et de rationaliser le pouvoir. Le charisme de Hindiyya et la relation très forte qu'il établit entre prophétesse et adeptes aurait pu permettre de fonder un nouveau pacte entre maronites et de dépasser le système social traditionnel. Il finit en fait par être subordonné à ce dernier. On peut rapporter ce fonctionnement à la 'asabiyya khaldounienne, qui caractériserait la société arabe. Mais on n'est pas très loin de mécanismes décrits dans

d'autres contextes vers la même époque.⁵⁸ Une société fondée sur le lien lignager, clanique ou clientéliste ne doit pas nous apparaître comme figée dans un immobilisme archaïque. Elle contient au contraire des ressources de dynamisme et d'adaptation qui lui permettent d'intégrer des éléments culturels ou institutionnels nouveaux, fût-ce au prix de crises et de conflits parfois graves.

On peut arguer que le processus que nous avons discuté ici ne concerne qu'une infime minorité de chrétiens ouverts sur l'Occident. Mais nous savons que cette minorité a occupé une place particulière dans les échanges avec les « Francs », aussi bien que dans la « renaissance » littéraire arabe et dans la construction d'une identité arabe, égyptienne, syrienne ou libanaise.

Des objets ou des pratiques en contact sont non seulement en situation d'interrelation, mais se modifient réciproquement sous l'effet de leur mise en relation.⁵⁹ Les orthodoxes ne devraient pas échapper à notre investigation, car ils appartiennent également à cette « histoire croisée ». Ils ont dû polémiquer et se structurer en réaction à cette « occidentalisation », souvent en recourant à des méthodes et des arguments proches de ceux des catholiques. Les tentatives de centralisation grecque, à partir du patriarcat de Constantinople au XVIIIe siècle, sont à cet égard significatives. Il est d'ailleurs remarquable que beaucoup de controversistes grecs orthodoxes ont étudié en Occident, ou fréquenté les missionnaires en Orient. La recherche historique souffre d'un déséquilibre en faveur des catholiques. Car un des traits caractéristiques de la modernité catholique, c'est le goût pour le texte écrit et pour la conservation de l'archive : nous disposons d'une documentation beaucoup plus abondante concernant les obédiences catholiques que les autres obédiences chrétiennes, ce qui facilite l'enquête d'un seul côté.

Un débat a eu lieu sur la modernisation dans l'islam à partir du XVIIIe siècle, dans des termes en partie similaires à ceux que nous avons traités ici.⁶⁰ La question de la réaction à l'occidentalisation ne se pose pas de la même façon chez les musulmans que chez les chrétiens, mais il se pourrait que les processus d'adaptation, de rejet, de compromis, surtout saisis au niveau microsocial, présentent des similitudes. Il est certain par ailleurs que les réformistes islamiques du premier vingtième siècle s'inspiraient directement des méthodes de propagande missionnaire chrétienne, et menaient des combats à bien des égards analogues à ceux du clergé catholique (éducation moderne, lutte contre les « superstitions », renforcement de l'identité confessionnelle et de la séparation avec les « infidèles » et les « hérétiques / schismatiques »). Ils étaient par ailleurs amenés à réfléchir à leur rapport à la tradition et à l'innovation dans une démarche de construction de l'identité qui mériterait la comparaison avec celle que nous avons évoquée.⁶¹

¹ Michel Werner, Bénédicte Zimmermann [2003], « Penser l'histoire croisée : entre empire et réflexivité », *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 2003, 1, p. 7 – 36.

² Constantin François Volney [1959], *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte pendant les années 1783, 1784, 1785*, rééd. Paris / La Haye, Mouton, 1959, p. 227, p. 410 – 411.

³ Bernard Heyberger [2002], « Saint Charbel Makhoul, ou la consécration de l'identité maronite », Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (dir.), *Saints et héros du Moyen-Orient contemporain*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 2002, p. 139 – 159. Le melkite Père Joseph Hajjar est représentatif de cette manière d'aborder les problèmes : Joseph Hajjar [1980], « L'activité latinisante du lazariste Nicolas Gaudez en Syrie », *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise*, LXXV, 1980, 1, p. 40 – 83. Joseph Hajjar [1968], « La question religieuse en Orient au déclin de l'Empire Ottoman, 1683 – 1814 », *Istina*, 1968, 2, p. 152 – 236. Joseph Hajjar [1956],

L'apostolat des missionnaires latins dans le Proche-Orient selon les directives romaines, Jérusalem, 1956, 48 p.

⁴ Michel Werner, Bénédicte Zimmermann [2003], p. 7 - 8. Serge Gruzinski [2001], « Les mondes mêlés de la monarchie catholique et autres « connected histories », *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 56^e année, 1, janv.-fév. 2001, p. 86 - 87.

⁵ Voir le désormais classique Fredrik Barth (éd.) [1969], *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Boston, Bergen/Londres, Universitets forlaget / Allen & Unwin, 1969. Pour une discussion bibliographique plus large et une synthèse de cette problématique, nous renvoyons à Lucette Valensi [1986], « La tour de Babel : groupes et relations ethniques au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Nord », *Annales ESC*, juillet-août 1986, 41^e année, n° 4, p. 817 - 838. Pour une solide mise au point sur les « démarches relationnelles » et une discussion récente de « l'histoire croisée » par rapport au comparatisme, à l'étude des transferts culturels, et la *shared ou la connected History*, voir Michel Werner, Bénédicte Zimmermann, [2003].

⁶ Voir la défense consciente de la méthode essentialiste appliquée aux Druzes du XVI^e siècle, citation de Hegel à l'appui, par un historien de l'Université Libanaise (Phanar) : Jean Charaf [2001], « Introduction à l'histoire sociale du Mont-Liban au XVI^e siècle », Charles Chartouni (édit.), *Histoire sociétés et pouvoir aux Proche et Moyen Orients*, Paris, Geuthner, 2001, p. 11 - 26. Il est curieux que, dans le même volume, un autre auteur, professeur à la faculté de théologie de l'Université du Saint-Esprit (Kaslik), analyse la naissance historique du mythe de « l'éternelle orthodoxie maronite » entre le XVI^e et le XVII^e siècle : Paul Rouhana [2001], « Les versions des origines religieuses des Maronites entre le XV^e et le XVIII^e siècles », *ibidem*, p. 191 - 211.

⁷ Elias Atallah [2001], *Le Synode Libanais de 1736*, Antélias, CERO / Pairs, Letouzey et Ané, 2001, T. 1, p. 284. Pour la critique de ce faux et sur les conditions de son apparition, Youssef Mouawad [2002], « Aux origines d'un mythe : la lettre de St Louis aux Maronites », Bernard Heyberger, Carsten Walbinder (dir.), *Les Européens vus par les Libanais à l'époque ottomane*, Beyrouth, Orient Institut der DMG, 2002, p. 97 - 110.

⁸ Hector Douaihy [1993], *Un théologien maronite. Gibrâ'il ibn al-Qalâ'î. Evêque et Moine franciscain*, Kaslik, 1993, p. 162 - 163.

⁹ Bernard Heyberger [2002], art. cit.

¹⁰ Toufic Touma [1971], *Paysans et institutions féodales chez les Druses et les Maronties du Liban du XVIII^e siècle à 1914*, Beyrouth, 1971, p. 16 - 29. Citation p. 29. Pour une critique de cette vision, voir Ussama Makdisi [2000], *The Culture of Sectarianism. Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Londres, 2000, 259 p.

¹¹ C'est une des critiques qu'on peut formuler à l'égard de l'ouvrage de Ussama Makdisi [2000]. A propos de ce courant, voir l'introduction historiographique de Bruce Masters [2001], *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World. The Roots of Sectarianism*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 1 - 5.

¹² Bernard Heyberger [1994], *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique*, Rome, Ecole Française de Rome, 1994, p. 39 - 62.

¹³ Voir différentes contributions dans Bernard Heyberger (dir.) [2003], *Chrétiens du monde arabe. Un archipel en terre d'Islam*, Paris, Autrement, 2003, 269 p.

¹⁴ Carsten Walbinder [1995], *Die Mitteilungen des griechisch-orthodoxen Patriarchen Makarius Ibn az-Za'im von Antiochia (1647 - 1672) über Georgien nach dem arabischen Autograph von St. Petersburg*, Diss. dactyl., Université de Leipzig, 1995. Texte arabe p. 166, trad. allem. p. 206.

¹⁵ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 394. Autres manifestations du légitimisme ottoman dans le journal d'un notable melkite catholique d'Alep : Yûsuf Bin Dimitrî Bin Jirjis Al-Khûrî 'Abbûd Al-Halabî [s.d.], *Al-murtâd fî târîkh Halab wa Baghdâd*, édit. par Fawâz Mahmûd Al-Fawâz, Thèse, Magistère d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine, dactyl., Université de Damas, Faculté des lettres, s. d., p. 13, p. 114, p. 32 - 35, p. 55.

¹⁶ Bernard Heyberger [1994] p. 155 - 177. Bernard Heyberger [2001b], « Frontières confessionnelles et conversions chez les chrétiens orientaux (XVII^e - XVIII^e siècles) », Mercedes Garcia-Arenal (dir.), *Conversions islamiques. Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen / Islamic conversions. Religious Identities in Mediterranean Islam*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose / European Science Foundation, 2001, p. 245 - 258.

¹⁷ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 63 - 107. Bernard Heyberger [2001 a] *Hindiyya, mystique et criminelle 1720 - 1798*, Paris, Aubier, 2001, p. 85 - 98, p. 239 - 324.

¹⁸ Nathan Wachtel, *L'acculturation*, Pierre Nora (dir.), *Faire de l'histoire*, vol. 1, *Nouveaux problèmes*, p. 199.

¹⁹ Bruce Masters [2001], p. 111 - 115.

²⁰ Bernard Heyberger [2001a], p. 151. Jad Hatem [2001], *Hindiyyé d'Alep : mystique de la chair et jalousie divine*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001.

- ²¹ Charlotte de Castelnuovo-L'Estoire [2000], *Les Ouvriers d'une Vigne stérile. Les jésuites et la conversion des Indiens au Brésil 1580 – 1620*, Lisbonne-Paris, Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian / Commission nationale pour les commémorations des découvertes portugaises, 2000, p. 58 – 81.
- ²² Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 140.
- ²³ [1675] *Voyage du Mont Liban, traduit de l'italien du R.P. Jérôme Dandini, nonce en ce pais-là. Ou il est traité tant de la créance et des coutumes des Maronites, que de plusieurs particularitez touchant les Turcs, et de quelques lieux considérables de l'Orient ; avec des remarques sur la Théologie des Chrétiens du Levant, et sur celle des Mahométans par R.S.P.*, Paris, Louis Billaine, 1675, 12°, 402 p. Il s'agit de la traduction française amplement commentée par Richard Simon, du *Voyage* du jésuite italien Jérôme Dandini. Richard Simon [1684], *Histoire critique de la Créance et des Coûtumes des Nations du Levant*, Francfort, Frédéric Arnaud, 1684.
- ²⁴ Sami Kuri (éd.) [1989], *Monumenta Proximi-Orientis*, vol. 1 (1523 – 1583), Rome, 1989, p. 189.
- ²⁵ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 453 – 509. Bernard Heyberger [1996], « Un nouveau modèle de conscience individuelle et de comportement social : les confréries d'Alep (XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles) », *Parole de l'Orient*, 21, 1996, p. 271 – 283. Bernard Heyberger [2000], « Entre Orient et Occident, la religion des dévotes d'Alep », Louis Châtellier (dir.), *Religions en transition dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2000, p. 171 – 185. Bernard Heyberger [à paraître], « Individualism and Political Modernity : the Catholic Devout Women in Aleppo and Lebanon (17th – 19th Centuries) », à paraître dans *A History of Her Own: Muslim Women and the Deconstruction of Patriarchy*, Syracuse University Press.
- ²⁶ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 385 – 548. Voir les prescriptions du synode maronite de 1736 : Elias Atallah [2001], T. 2, p. 21 – 28, p. 357 – 377.
- ²⁷ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Sbath 356, f. 192r – 232v. Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 396.
- ²⁸ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 494 – 548. Bernard Heyberger [1996]. Bernard Heyberger [2001a], p. 63 – 68, p. 151 – 156. Norbert Elias, *La civilisation des mœurs*, Paris, Le Livre de Poche, 1977, 447 p. (1ère édition franç. , 1973).
- ²⁹ Bernard Heyberger [2003], « De l'image religieuse à l'image profane ? L'essor de l'image chez les chrétiens de Syrie et du Liban (XVIIe – XIXe siècle) », dans Bernard Heyberger, Silvia Naef (Dir.), *La multiplication des images en pays d'islam : De l'estampe à la télévision (17e – 21e siècle)*, Istanbul, Orient Institut der DMG, « Istanbul Texte und Studien », 2003.
- ³⁰ Bernard Heyberger [2001], p. 53 – 82, p. 144 – 166. Bernard Heyberger [1996].
- ³¹ Max Weber [1996], *Sociologie des religions*, Paris, Gallimard, 1996, p. 374 – 377.
- ³² Max Weber [1996], p. 363. Andreas Buss [1995], « The Individual in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition », *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 91, 1995, p. 259 – 275. Louis Dumont [1983], *Essais sur l'individualisme. Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne*, Paris, Seuil, 1983, 268 p.
- ³³ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 234.
- ³⁴ Bernard Heyberger [2001a], p. 284 – 285.
- ³⁵ Elias Atallah [2001], T. 2, p. 39 - 195. Voir aussi la troisième partie, « Des diacres, des prêtres et des supérieurs », p. 199 – 356.
- ³⁶ John P. Spagnolo [1977], *France and Ottoman Lebanon 1861 – 1914*, Itaca Press, Londres, 1977, p. 17.
- ³⁷ Bernard Heyberger [2001a], p. 151 – 153. Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 506.
- ³⁸ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 70 - 71. Elias Atallah [2001], T. 2, p. 273 – 286.
- ³⁹ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 69.
- ⁴⁰ Richard van Leeuwen [1994], *Notables and Clergy in Mount Lebanon. The Khâzins Sheikhs and the Maronite Church (1736 – 1840)*, Leiden, New York, Köln, Brill, 1994, p. 198 – 202.
- ⁴¹ Bernard Heyberger [1994].
- ⁴² Ussama Makdissi [2000], *passim*. Selim Deringil [2001], « Conversion and ideological reinforcement : the Yezidi Kurds », Mercedes Garcia-Arenal (dir.), *Conversions islamiques. Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen / Islamic conversions. Religious Identities in Mediterranean Islam*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose / European Science Foundation, 2001, p. 419 – 443.
- ⁴³ Chantal Verdeil [2001], « Travailler à la renaissance de l'Orient chrétien. Les missions latines en Syrie (1830 – 1945) », *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 51, 2001, fasc. 3 – 4, p. 267 – 316.
- ⁴⁴ Nathan Wachtel, p. 184, p. 199.
- ⁴⁵ Carmen Bernand, Serge Gruzinski [1992], *Histoire du Nouveau Monde*, Paris, Fayard, 1992, T.1, p. 9.
- ⁴⁶ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 241 – 271.
- ⁴⁷ Bernard Heyberger [2001a], *passim*. Bernard Heyberger [1997] « *Pro nunc nihil respondendum*. Recherches d'informations et prise de décision à la Propagande : l'exemple du Levant (XVIIIe s.) », *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome Italie et Méditerranée*, 109, 2, 1997, p. 539 – 554.
- ⁴⁸ Bernard Heyberger [2001 a], p. 85 – 98, p. 122 – 132, p. 185 – 219.
- ⁴⁹ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 239.
- ⁵⁰ Elias Atallah, [2001], T. 2, p. 285.
- ⁵¹ Paul Rouhana [2001]. Youssef Mouawad [2001]

-
- ⁵² Bernard Heyberger [1999], « Sécurité et insécurité : les chrétiens de Syrie dans l'espace méditerranéen (XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles) », Meropi Anastassiadou, Bernard Heyberger (édit.), *Figures anonymes, figures d'élite : pour une anatomie de l'Homo ottomanicus*, Istanbul, Isis, Travaux du CeRATO, n° 4, 1999, p. 147 - 163. Bruce Masters [2001], p. 76.
- ⁵³ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 418 – 419.
- ⁵⁴ Maurizio Gribaudi [1996], « Echelle, pertinence, configuration », Jacques Revel (dir.), *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris, Hautes Etudes / Gallimard / Le Seuil, 1996, p. 113 – 139. Voir aussi Giovanni Levi [1989], *Le pouvoir au village*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989, 230 p.
- ⁵⁵ Bernard Heyberger [1994], p. 120 – 126.
- ⁵⁶ Bernard Heyberger [2001a], p. 185 – 196 et *passim*.
- ⁵⁷ Michel Foucault [1976], *La volonté de savoir*, T.1 de *Histoire de la sexualité*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. 79 – 84.
- ⁵⁸ Giovanni Levi [1989]. Christian Windler [1997], « Clientèles et Etat en Espagne au 18 siècle », *Annales ESC*, mars- avril 1997, p. 293 – 319. Juan Luis Castellano, Jean-Pierre Dedieu (dir.) [1998], *Réseaux, familles et pouvoirs dans le monde ibérique à la fin de l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 267 p.
- ⁵⁹ Michel Werner, Bénédicte Zimmermann [2003], p. 12.
- ⁶⁰ Reinhard Schulze [1990], « Das islamische 18. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer historiographischen Kritik », *Die Welt des Islam*, 30, 1990, p. 140 – 159. Bern Radtke [1994], « Erleuchtung und Aufklärung. Islamische Mystik und europäischer Rationalismus », *Die Welt des Islam*, 34, 1994, p. 46 – 66. Tilman Nagel [1996], « Autochtone Wurzeln des islamischen Modernismus. Bemerkungen zum Werk des Damazeners Ibn 'Abî-dîn 1784 – 1836 », *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 146, 1996, p. 92 – 111. Ira M. Lapidus [1997], « Islamic Revival and Modernity : the Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms », *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 40/4, nov. 1997, p. 444 – 460.
- ⁶¹ Selim Deringil [2001]. Différentes contributions dans Anne-Laure Dupont, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (dir.) [2002], « Débats intellectuels au Moyen-Orient dans l'entre-deux-guerres », *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 95-96-97-98, 2002, 551 p.

Hagiography As A Source For Women's History In The Ottoman Empire: The Curious Case Of Ünsî Hasan¹

John Curry*

As a general rule, the literary sources that focus on religious figures in Ottoman society usually looks at the lives of famous figures from either the perspective of a respected member of the religious establishment or a member of the elite classes. Such records often fail to address difficult questions about how religious interaction took place among the early modern Ottomans. How did Sufi masters and their disciples relate to each other? What qualities distinguished a great shaykh, and guaranteed his longevity as a focus for the religiosity of future generations? Perhaps one of the most problematic questions about Ottoman religiosity is the way in which women interacted with the noted religious figures of the period. In the course of a research project dealing with the noted saints of the Halveti order of dervishes in the early modern Ottoman period, I discovered a hagiography of a little known saint, Ünsî Hasan, that hints at some of the popular expectations and attitudes toward women's participation in a Sufi lodge. What makes this work even more interesting is the fact that Ünsî Hasan seems to have failed to stimulate the imagination of most of his contemporaries, making him a rare example of a failed saint.

Several studies of Sufism in Islam have noted the hostile attitude of the Muslim religious elite towards manifestations of "popular religion" during the medieval period, such as the trope of the popular preacher who caters to the needs of hordes of undiscerning women. None other than the well-known Jamal al-Din al-Suyuti of Egypt was once menaced by a mob of Cairo's citizenry, made up primarily of angry women, for ordering the public whipping of a popular preacher whom he felt had strayed into error.² J.S. Trimingham, despite recognizing the existence of some female saints, conveniently divided the gender of Muslim spirituality as males going to the Friday mosque for communal prayer while their womenfolk headed for the tombs of the saints.³ Nevertheless, the complaints of medieval scholars about mixed-gender participation in religious gatherings are proof that this type of gender division should not be accepted without extreme caution, especially when dealing with subsequent periods in Ottoman history.⁴

Before embarking on this case study of Ünsî Hasan's relations with his female followers, and the reasons for his eventual failure as a saint, I feel obliged first to offer some clarification about just what the term "sainthood" meant in the Muslim context of this particular period. When discussing the idea of Muslim saints, known in Turkish as *evliya*, we are not talking about a canonized set of holy personages that characterize the historical development of a Christian institution like the Catholic Church. In the Islamic tradition, the Turkish term *evliya*, derived from Arabic, does not exactly correspond to the meaning of the English term "saints." The word itself literally refers to the "friends"

* John Curry is a Doctoral candidate at the Department of History, Ohio State University

of God on earth. While time constraints do not allow me the luxury of describing the development of the concept of Islamic sainthood in full, it is important to recognize that throughout Islamic history, the cult of saints has often generated controversy. The strict monotheism inherent in the Qur'anic ethos implies that to recognize any partners to God is to commit a grave sin, and it forms part of the polemical criticism leveled at Christianity. In addition, the idea of an individual able to establish such a powerful link with God could and was sometimes seen as challenging the pre-eminence of the prophets as the primary focus of religious devotion, a basic tenet of Islamic belief.⁵ Thus, activities centering around a cult of saints, especially in more recent periods, have often been criticized as deviations from Islamic orthodoxy. Nevertheless, since Islam has tended toward a decentralized approach to religious hierarchy that is not so dependent on institutional control, there is no supreme authority that can perform a function of canonization. If such a thing occurs in the Islamic context, it came about largely through the consensus of the community, rather than any form of religious authority.

The development of Islamic mysticism, generally known as Sufism, and its practitioners, broadly known by the term Sufis, may have begun as early as the late 8th century, and both were firmly established as a more-or-less accepted component of many Muslim societies by the 10th century. By the time we reach the heyday of the Ottoman Empire after its conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Sufi groups and movements had become an essential feature of religious life in all parts of the Empire. One of the most widespread and influential of these groups was the Halveti order. Originating in the area of what are today Azerbaijan and northwestern Iran toward the end of the 14th century, their representatives spread westward throughout the Ottoman Empire, especially after the rise of the Shi'ite Safavid Empire in Iran in 1501, whose leaders persecuted many of the members of the Sunni mystical groups. Some of their representatives even managed to secure the direct patronage of the Ottoman Sultan himself, or members of his royal household. However, the controversies that had always followed Sufism and its practitioners from the time of its origins began to gather new strength by the end of the 16th century, and groups with an increasing amount of intolerance for Sufi ritual and practice appeared on the religio-political scene that directly attacked the Halvetis and others as guilty of deviation from proper Islamic belief and practice.⁶ Their power and influence reached a crescendo in the latter half of the 17th century, and it was in this historical context that our failed saint, Ünsî Hasan, began his career.

In 1645, in a small town near the provincial center of Kastamonu in north-central Turkey, a son was born to Recep Efendi, a shaykh of the Bayrami order. The young man, known as A`rec Hasan Efendi (his poetic pen-name, Ünsî, would come later), acquired a knowledge of Islamic religious law very quickly, and was soon teaching Qur'anic exegesis and lessons in mystical philosophy at the great Ayasofya mosque in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul while still a teenager. However, after meeting one of the great religious leaders of his time, Karabaş Ali Efendi, he left his position as a teacher at the mosque to become a full-time mystic in Üsküdar, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, in the Mihrimah Sultan Halveti tekke near the Atîk Valide mosque.⁷ By the time he was twenty years old, Karabaş Ali had annointed him as one of his successors, and given him permission to teach independently in the capital. He even sent Ünsî Hasan in his place to the Sultan, Mehmed IV, to read prayers and bring about a divine cure for one of his favored attendants.⁸ It would seem at this point that despite the turbulent times, Ünsî Hasan was destined for a distinguished career as one of the greatest mystics of his era. Yet he died in relative obscurity some six decades later, having alienated or lost many of his followers, and was known only as a local saint tied

to the mosque of the Aydınoğlu Tekke in the area of Tophane, a district of northern Istanbul.⁹

Complicating the matter is the fact that we draw almost all of our information about Ünsî Hasan's life and character from a single source, the *Risale-i Menakıb-ı Ünsî*, of which only a few copies exist.¹⁰ Its author, İbrahim el-Hâs, is a very mysterious figure. I have found no mention of him in any biographical dictionary or historical chronicle to date, and most of what we know about him comes from allusions or remarks he made in his own hand in this hagiographical work. We do know that when he finally wrote the work, his shaykh had been dead for at least twenty years, and in the intervening period, he had, "by reason of his scribal skills (*kitabî*)," left the order and taken up some kind of a chancery position. The fact that he was offered a house, a slave girl, and other things as compensation for his work implies that the position was not without status and power in his society, and İbrahim laments the political intrigues that came with the job at one point in his writing. He claims he did not again achieve happiness until he finally was able to return to Sufism as a way of life.¹¹ His stated aim in writing the work was to stimulate interest in his shaykh, by creating a simple work that could be read aloud at the tomb of his master as a remembrance of the shaykh's life and deeds, and as a stimulus to visitation of the tomb.¹² He compiled anecdotes about the shaykh and those associated with him from various oral accounts provided by various members of the order, some of whom eventually left the shaykh's service. Some of them, however, were also women who had established a working relationship with the shaykh on various levels.

It is especially noteworthy that one of these informants was İbrahim's own mother, a devotee of the shaykh who was instrumental in bringing her son into Ünsî Hasan's service. About her, İbrahim remarks:

My mother was a female initiate of the shaykh...She was a master of ascetic exercises. She never used to get undressed, and never used to stretch out and lie down. She always used to sit up day and night. She used to sleep in the place where she sat during the day. She never slept at night, nor did she light a candle. She always abstained from forbidden things. Her tongue was always offering prayers, and she passed 60 years in this fashion. She was among the noted female Sufis of the shaykh, and she manifested acts of grace; in fact, even after her death her acts of grace manifested themselves. Alas and alack for me that I was not able to be that which she was!¹³

Such a description locates İbrahim's mother squarely within the model of female sainthood the Ottomans had inherited from previous generations. But despite his mother's influence and his own labors on Ünsî Hasan's behalf, İbrahim's relationship with his shaykh was somewhat troubled, even by his own admission. He was repeatedly admonished for his preference for fine clothes, and İbrahim presents as miraculous his shaykh's ability to catch him in a lie or an attempt at deception. He even attributes his twenty-year "exile" in a worldly position after his shaykh's death to his disobedience to the codes of the order on wearing fine clothing instead of the ascetic garb of the Halveti order. Interestingly enough, the shaykh's most powerful reproach of İbrahim on this matter was initially directed to his mother, and not to her son. İbrahim was aware of his transgression only after she called him inside to explain it, and only then did he come to the shaykh and repent of his action.¹⁴

İbrahim el-Hâs clearly revered his shaykh, and sought to affirm his sainthood. In addition to his hagiography, he also compiled a manuscript of remarks that his shaykh

made to guide his adepts during their meetings.¹⁵ Nevertheless, one cannot help but feel that a certain level of impropriety attached itself to this particular hagiographical project. At times, the reader senses that İbrahim is trying to explain away or spin some potentially negative aspects of his shaykh's life. Perhaps the most gripping anecdote in the entire text is an account of the birth of Ünsî Hasan's daughter and first child, Fatima. When the shaykh moved to Tophane at the age of around 40, his followers and supporters wanted him to marry, as he had been single for many years as a result of ascetic exercises tied to the Halveti path. They found a pious woman, and in short order the two were married and Ünsî Hasan's wife became pregnant. The women Sufis were excited by this development, especially as the pregnancy became more and more advanced, until one day one of the women could restrain her exuberance no longer. Perhaps narrating on the authority of his mother, İbrahim describes the result of this encounter:

[She] entered upon the shaykh, out her own great joy, and said "Your wife's pregnancy became visible, praise be to God. All of us rejoiced!" The shaykh replied, "How would it have been had she not come forth? How would it have been had I not married? Does one praise a calamity?" and made an angry face. That woman regretted that she had spoken...and went back inside.¹⁶

When word of this began to spread amongst the dervishes, men and women alike, a great sense of unease developed amongst the community. This was not helped by the fact that the shaykh withdrew from public view, and often looked sad and angry. When a baby girl was born, a woman came to the shaykh to try and give him the glad tidings. She said:

"My Lord, you have a daughter." The shaykh replied, in turn, "Would that she had given birth to a stone in place of her, it would have been more auspicious. Look at this, her life is also a long one." That woman was troubled, and said, "My Lord, what name shall you give her?" He replied, "That kind of child is no good to me, whatever name you give her, so be it." The male and female Sufis were astonished at these words of the shaykh. They used to say amongst themselves, "The shaykh spoke these kinds of words to a little angel of paradise, what kind of talk is this?"¹⁷

The problems only got worse. The shaykh would not acknowledge the presence of his daughter, and as she grew older they would always fight if they were brought together. Despite the best attempts of the women of the order to advise her on how to become a pious Muslim, she rejected all advice, and upon reaching maturity promptly left the shaykh's household. What happened next would have been shocking to any pious Muslim.

...[S]he left the shaykh and went to become a masseuse in a bathhouse. The shaykh publically disowned her. She worked as an attendant in the Yamalu bathhouse in Tophane; they called her "Fatima Usta."¹⁸ When the shaykh departed for the afterlife, she put in an appearance and sought her inheritance. After taking that which was her legal right, she started major fights and harassed and annoyed the Sufis greatly. She lived until the year 1154 (1741); to a ripe old age.¹⁹

Such an account would have been difficult to reconcile with model portraits of saints and their family members that Ottoman listeners received from earlier generations.²⁰ It is clear from İbrahim's own narrative that these events caused a great deal of discomfort amongst his followers. İbrahim seems to be stretching credibility by

setting up the narrative as an example of the shaykh's power to predict the future—one can hear the potential objections lurking in the background even centuries later. After all, a more successful saint would have been able to save his daughter from such a fate, would he not?

One wonders how this traumatic event would have affected the shaykh's wife, but unfortunately, the hagiography does not dwell on that issue. However, it is clear from other parts of the narrative that Ünsî Hasan was a very stern authority figure, who quickly disciplined his followers for offenses—male and female alike. A Halveti dervish by the name of Ömer related a story about his mother to İbrahim that suggested the short temper of their spiritual guide. Some relatives were visiting their home, and there was an infant among them who became sick. Dervish Ömer's mother suggested that they bring it to Ünsî Hasan to receive his prayer, and when they arrived at the lodge, Ünsî Hasan agreed to help. After reading a prayer for the infant, he puffed up his cheeks and blew air on the child. The child was cured shortly thereafter. Later on, while having fun with her relatives, Ömer's mother made fun of the shaykh by puffing up her cheeks and blowing air at everyone, which drew a lot of laughs. But this proved to be an ill-advised bit of humor. After everyone went to sleep in the evening, the family was awakened in the middle of the night by a commotion. Lighting a candle, they realized it was Ömer's mother. She had turned purple in the face and was thrashing around in apparent agony on the floor. The family didn't know what to do, and only after several hours did her condition improve, and she came to her senses. In response to their worried questions, she replied:

...I still had not closed my eyes when I saw that the shaykh who had read to the child yesterday had come forth. He immediately grabbed my neck forcefully and said, "Why did you make fun of me? Am I your fool?" He squeezed my throat so firmly that I wanted to cry out, but I couldn't; I wanted to be saved, but I couldn't be saved, until I passed out and knew no more.

The following morning, the terrified woman brought a gift to the shaykh in an attempt to make amends. Before she could even make a proper entry to greet him, the shaykh asked her whether or not she had come to make fun of him again. After a promise to repent and much embarrassment on her part, the shaykh let her go with a firm warning: "Watch it, and beware! Don't make fun of anyone. Even if it is an unbeliever, it is a reason for regret."²¹

Yet in comparison with some of the shaykh's other male followers, Dervish Ömer's mother got off comparatively easy. After a warning, the shaykh threw one of his followers, Tavşan Dervish Mustafa, out of the lodge for missing morning prayers. When his colleagues tried to intercede on his behalf, the shaykh said, "Three days he has not come to morning prayers. We warned him; he was not attentive. Tomorrow it will spread to all of you. A man who prefers his own comfort over the command of God most high is not appropriate for our lodge; let him come no more." Some 30 years after this incident, İbrahim once again ran into Tavşan Dervish Mustafa at the gate of a garden in Istanbul, and found that he was a homeless vagrant.²² Another follower, Sıdkı Abdullah Efendi, also managed to get himself thrown out of the order. After the shaykh warned him about following the longings of his carnal soul, he made him one of his successors and sent him to Kefe in the Crimea to act as his deputy there. Abdullah was fairly successful there, and attracted a number of followers, but after a year he longed to return to Istanbul, so he appointed one of his Crimean followers in his place and returned to the capital. However, after he was seen by one of the Sufis in Ünsî Hasan's lodge, it became known that he had returned without permission. When he tried to pay a

visit, the shaykh rejected him and refused to accept his excuses. He subsequently became a judge, and lamented his failure to İbrahim some years later.²³ A second disciple who refused to travel to the Black Sea coastal city of Sinop to spread the order, largely at the instigation of his mother, died shortly after his refusal. These stories suggest that in the early 18th century, Halveti shaykhs were finding it increasingly difficult to recruit followers who were willing to spread the order's teachings to far-flung locales, in accordance with the order's early pattern of development.²⁴ However, when compared with the case of Dervish Ömer's mother, they also suggest that female indiscretions were treated less sternly than those of the male members of the order.

Based on these narratives, the question lingers whether or not Ünsî Hasan and his hagiographer İbrahim were complete failures. After all, the Islamic world is full of tombs about whose occupants we know far less than Ünsî Hasan, even though most of our sources for the period do not mention him. In addition, unlike many of the young Sufis of his generation, he managed to survive the attacks of groups opposed to the practices of the Sufis in the latter half of the 17th century relatively unscathed, despite attempts to assassinate or banish him.²⁵ His hagiographer did feel there was already an audience for his material in the form of visitors to the tomb, and also felt that there was potential scope for a revival of his saint's cult, perhaps under his own guidance. In addition, there are hints that his brand of spirituality may have resonated more with female followers than with the men attached to the order. With this document, then, might we be witnessing a subsequent revival of a saint, rather than textual proof of his failure?

The level of this saint's posthumous fame in our historiography might signal a lack of interest among the men who generally produced and perpetuated such written materials. We can see that Ünsî Hasan's overly perfectionist attitude towards the realization of the Sufi path drove many of his male followers away. When measured against a male-oriented yardstick, Ünsî Hasan had clearly failed, as İbrahim's hagiography never really seemed to take flight among the wider Ottoman public of his era. Even İbrahim himself was forced to admit that few of Ünsî Hasan's male followers succeeded in propagating the order after his death. One can compare him with another contemporary successor of Karabaş Ali Veli, Nasûhî Efendi (d. 1718), who was far more successful at winning a following and whose legacy was far better known.²⁶ It may be telling that İbrahim's hagiography tells of an argument that broke out between the two saints shortly before Nasûhî Efendi's death, when Ünsî Hasan criticized his fellow shaykh for permitting his followers to drink coffee and smoke tobacco, practices that Ünsî Hasan personally detested.²⁷ While İbrahim feels compelled to look for an esoteric meaning hidden in the unfriendly words between the two, it is hard for the audience to miss the potential for professional jealousy between two competing personalities who had been declared successors of the same noted saintly figure. In sum, this manuscript suggests that we have been left a rare source describing the anatomy of a failed candidate for sainthood among the early modern Ottomans—at least from a male perspective.

This suggests that popular opinion played a powerful role in the creation of branches of the Halveti order based on Sufi figures. In the case of Ünsî Hasan, austere piety and miraculous events were not enough. This biographical work suggests that to cement his cult among subsequent generations, a saint had to have a certain degree of "people skills," and be able to establish personal bonds both with and among his followers. Ünsî Hasan comes across in this work as a stern and unforgiving personality who, perhaps intentionally, managed to alienate both respected members of Ottoman society and the rank-and-file of the lodge's own members. Even his own daughter

rejected him, in a most spectacular manner that clearly tarnished his reputation. Among the early 18th century Ottomans of Ünsî Hasan's time, believers may have ultimately favored the friendlier, more accommodating form of piety that figures like Nasûhî Efendi represented. The characters in İbrahim's narrative, in contrast, often found their saint's behavior strange and inappropriate, and clearly clashed with him on the inflexibility of his spiritual path. The situation suggests that Ottoman religious life, at least in this time and place, was fairly relaxed, and that the more successful Halveti saints were those who were able to come to terms with the culture around them, and some the less pious aspects of their followers' existence.

Nevertheless, the question still remains as to whether or not the shaykh's female followers might not have responded to these issues more successfully than the men did. Perhaps because of Ünsî Hasan's failure as a saint amongst his male followers, and the limitations this placed on the composition of İbrahim's work, we have been left with an unusually vivid depiction of a saint told from the perspective of the women whose lives were intertwined with his order. Through the intermediary of his mother and others, he was able, if not required, to exploit these narrative reports to construct his hagiography. This would have translated into a greater receptiveness among female followers who were probably the majority of the constituency that continued to visit the tomb. It has also made this short manuscript a unique source for the social and cultural history of the Ottoman period, and it remains to be seen whether further research into other Ottoman hagiographies may find that they are an unusually rich source for the history of gender in Ottoman life during its pre-modern periods.

1. This article comes out of a presentation first given on May 10, 2003, at the 38th International Congress on Medieval Studies, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The paper was originally entitled "The Curious Case of Ünsî Hasan: An Unsuccessful Muslim Saint in the Ottoman Empire," as part of a panel dealing with "fake, failed, or would-be saints." The author would like to extend his gratitude to the participants of that panel, and also to Professor James Grehan for evaluating and offering insightful comments on this piece during its evolution.

2. Éric Geoffroy, Le soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans: Orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1995), p. 165. See also the account from an 18th-century Halveti dervish's life in Ernst Bannerth, "La Khalwatiyya en Egypte: Quelques aspects de la vie d'une confrérie," Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'études orientales du Caire 8 (1964-1966), p. 17, where the unlucky Shaykh Dardir requires a miracle from God to escape the clutches of an immoral female admirer reminiscent of Potiphas.

3. J.S. Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 232.

4. Jonathan P. Berkey, Popular Preaching & Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), pp. 31-32.

5. Alexander Knysh, Islamic Mysticism: A Short History (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), pp. 58-59.

6. For more on the movement that came to be referred to as the Kadizadelis, see Madeline Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," Journal of Near Eastern Studies 45: 4 (1986), pp. 251-269; Madeline Zilfi, The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), and the subsequent dissertation of Semiramis Çavuşoğlu, "The Kadizadeli Movement: An Attempt of 'eri'-at-Minded Reform in the Ottoman Empire" (Princeton University, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1990).

-
7. Mustafa Tatcı and Cemâl Kurnaz, Tasavvufî Gelenekte Miyârlar ve Karaba - Veli'nin Miyâr' (Ankara: Bizim Büro Basım Yayın Dağıtım, 2001), p. 8. It should not escape the reader's attention that the tekke was founded by one of the daughters of the Süleyman I's royal household.
8. Necdet Yılmaz, Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf: Süfîler, Devlet ve Ulema (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmalar Vakfı, 2001), p. 111.
9. The great work cataloguing the mosques and other religious structures of the Ottoman capital of Istanbul, the Hadikatü'l-Cevâmi', mentions Ünsî Hasan in conjunction with its entry on the Aydınoğlu Tekke where he is buried. See Ayvansarayî Hüseyin Efendi et al., Hadikatü'l-Cevâmi': İstanbul Câmileri ve Diğer Dini-Sivil Mi'mârî Yapılar, ed. Ahmed Nezih Galitekin (Istanbul: İnkilap Yayınları, 2001), p. 71. It mentions him only as being a contemporary of the better-known Nasûhî Efendi, however.
10. For this source, I refer to the original text of the manuscript written by its author during the 1740s, İbrahim el-Has (d. 1175/1761-2), Risale-i Menakıb-ü Ünsî (Istanbul: Süleymaniye Ktp. MS Hacı Mahmud Efendi #4607), hereafter referred to as Menakıb-ü Ünsî.
11. Menakıb-ü Ünsî, fol. 92b-94a.
12. *Ibid.*, fol. 4b.
13. *Ibid.*, fol. 94b-95a.
14. *Ibid.*, fol. 90b-91b.
15. This manuscript survives in several copies, including one in the Atatürk Library in Istanbul, İbrahim el-Has (d. 1175/1761-2), Kelâm-ü Aziz (Istanbul: Atatürk Kitaplığı MS Osman Ergin #413).
16. Menakıb-ü Ünsî, fol. 32b.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 33a-b.
18. This term implies that she became one of the primary people responsible for the functioning of the bathhouse. The narrative perhaps implies, by naming the actual bathhouse itself, that her place of employment had a sketchy reputation.
19. Menakıb-ü Ünsî, fol. 33b-34a. Dates in the narrative would imply that Fatima was born sometime around the year 1685, meaning she was well into her 50s when she died—a fairly long lifetime in a pre-modern society.
20. See, for example, the description of the female members of the family of the noted Egyptian shaykh İbrahim-i Gülşeni and his son Ahmed el-Hiyali in Muhyi-yi Gülşeni (d. 1014/1606), Menakıb-ü İbrahim-i Gülşeni ve emelîzâde Ahmed Efendi İve-i Tarikat-i Gülşeni, ed. Tahsin Yazıcı (Ankara: Türk Tarih Basımevi, 1982), pp. 15-16.
21. The full anecdote occurs in Menakıb-ü Ünsî, fol. 69a-71b.
22. *Ibid.*, fol. 51b-52a.
23. *Ibid.*, fol. 56a-58b. The position of *kadî*, or Islamic judge, is often presented in Ottoman literature as being a fount of corruption and an impediment to spiritual progression in Sufî circles, thus Abdullah's fate was a serious one.
24. Yahya-yi İrîvani, one of the critical founders of the Ottoman branches of the Halvetî order, was said to have trained thousands of successors and sent them all over the Islamic world. B.G. Martin, "A Short History of the Khalwati Order of Dervishes," Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Institutions Since 1500, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 276-278. This pattern continued to replicate itself, particularly in the Balkans, well-documented in Nathalie Clayer, Mystiques, état et société: Les Halvetis dans l'aire balkanique de la fin du XVe siècle à nos jours (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).

25. For anecdotes revolving around Ünsî Hasan's conflicts with the Kadizadelis and their supporters, many of whom had formerly been his followers, see Menak b- Ünsî, fols. 22b-25b and 27a-29b.

26. For more on the life, career, and literary works of Muhammed Nasûhî Efendi, see Kemal Edib Kürkçüo lu, eyh Muhammed Nasûhî: Hayat , Eserleri, Dîvân , Mektuplar (Istanbul: Alem Ticaret Yay nc lî k, n.d.).

27. Menak b- Ünsî, fol. 46a-48b. For more on Ünsî Hasan's attacks on smoking and drinking coffee, including his prohibition against spending time at the barber shop, see İbrahim's Kelâm- `Aziz, fols. 54a-b and 59a-b.

Market Culture and The Problem of Money in Ottoman Damascus, ca. 1700-1830

J. P. Grehan*

Several times over the six centuries of its existence, the Ottoman Empire suffered through prolonged stretches of monetary turbulence. Perhaps the most famous episode occurred in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries and accompanied profound structural transformations within Ottoman state and society. Ömer Lütfi Barkan turned these events into the centerpiece of his thesis about Ottoman decline, which proceeded, he argued, from the corrosive forces of monetary debasement and inflation that progressively undermined the old Ottoman social order.¹ As traumatic as these decades proved (even if most historians have grown skeptical about assertions of Ottoman “decline”), an even worse monetary debacle overtook the empire in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Surpassing its better known predecessor in length and magnitude, it too occurred at a time of profound social and political upheaval, most visible during this second period in the rise of powerful notables and warlords in the provinces. In both cases, historians have first turned to the big questions in monetary history: the realignment of trade routes, adjustments in fiscal policy, the management of the military, and the overall authority of the central state. This research has deeply enriched our understanding of broader currents in Ottoman political economy and generated lasting debates on questions such as the timing of Ottoman integration into the world economy.

But how did money figure in the lives of ordinary people? And how did local society react to the onset of an empire-wide monetary crisis, as the money that moved through its markets progressively (and sometimes quite suddenly) lost much of its value? This everyday perspective on monetary disruption, embracing the social and cultural aspects of money, has hardly been explored. Nevertheless, it constitutes part of the essential background to everyday consumption, savings, and investment. Just as the study of money has contributed to our knowledge about so many of the broader trends in the empire’s history, it can reveal critical details about microeconomic history, the vast and largely invisible realm of subsistence and routine where most economic activity really took place.

One place where we can start to look for clues is the legal literature produced by Muslim jurists, who received a wide range of questions about nearly every topic that might come under the purview of Islamic law. The collections of legal opinions (*fatwa*) and treatises on jurisprudence represent a rich vein for the study of social and economic history that has hardly been exploited. Couched in abstract and legalistic language, and more often concerned with the establishment of legal norms than the resolution of particular problems, these sources have to be treated with care. But if properly handled, this literature can illuminate deeper assumptions and values within the economic culture

* James P. Grehan is visiting assistant professor at the Department of History, Whitman College

which are often hard to bring to light. To place their debates in a concrete social setting, we can look at the Ottoman monetary system as it functioned in one particular time and place—in Damascus during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The town had a large population (approximately 80-90,000 residents), served as a major center of regional trade, and as one of the most prestigious centers of learning in the Islamic world, harbored a large community of scholars. In recreating the market culture in which Damascenes lived, we can begin to see how they used money, faced the practical difficulties of early modern currencies, and towards the final decades of the century, tried to cope with ever steeper depreciations of their coinage.

Monetary Realities

In the Ottoman Empire, like other parts of western Eurasia, money circulated as metallic coins of varying quality and description. The marketplace was fairly indiscriminate. It welcomed nearly any currency that could find takers and maintain its credibility (which is to say, its metallic content). The Ottoman state made no attempt to impose a single medium of exchange. Foreign coins, almost entirely of European provenance, circulated alongside domestic ones. No law forbade their importation or use. Sellers would almost never object as long as customers offered good coin of sufficient value. Business proceeded, above all, with an air of pragmatism. Damascus and other Ottoman towns had a vibrant commercial culture which was comfortable with the pursuit of gain and reluctant to hinder profit. Easy money was recognized as one of the essential lubricants to the smooth operation of markets.

Within this welter of coins lay a hidden division of labor. At the top of the economy, where huge sums of money and goods were put into motion, commerce required gold and silver coins. Values were loosely regulated. The Ottoman Empire never had a bimetallic standard that set official ratios of exchange. From a very early date, it had adopted (and until 1844, was to retain) what could more accurately be called “silver monometallism”. In the eighteenth century, the official coin of the state, in which the administration calculated and settled accounts, was the silver *kuruş* (known locally as *ghurush* or *qurush*), first issued in 1690. All other coins, whether gold or silver, were allowed to circulate freely, mostly in the hope that additional currency would facilitate trade throughout the sultan’s domains. Monetary policy was therefore quite permissive and flexible. Reluctant to commit itself to direct intervention and management, the state was content to let the market dictate the relative values of precious metals.²

Within this relatively open system, gold was the favorite metal. It was more precious, held its value better against the depreciations of the early modern period, and was better suited to store wealth. If one looks, for example, at the inheritance records from eighteenth-century Damascus, gold coins appear far more often than silver ones (see Table). The proportions cannot be defined exactly, mostly on account of inconsistent scribal practices, which more often than not, merely listed “money” (*nuqud* or *naqdiyya*) instead of specifically identifying each and every coin; but the bias remains unmistakable and testifies to the enduring confidence that people placed in gold, particularly as a means of savings. Many of the gold coins that turn up in estates had undoubtedly been stashed away in private hoards, patiently accumulated as the ultimate assurance against sudden need and adversity. Some were so worn and dated that inventories referred to them only as “old gold” (*dhahab`atiq*, or in Turkish, as *eski altun*), revealing the stubbornness with which Damascenes held onto them. Most of this

gold came out of Ottoman mints, for in spite of official adherence to the *kuruş* as the currency of account, the state periodically introduced gold coins as well. The early decades of the eighteenth century alone saw the appearance of the *zincirli*, *findık*, and *zer-i mahbub*,³ which progressively displaced their European rivals such as the Venetian ducat (*bunduqi*; Tk. *yıldız*) and Hungarian crown (*majar* or *ankalis*).⁴ As long as the imperial monetary system preserved its stability, these Ottoman currencies retained their preeminence in local markets. Only with the financial shock of the wars against Russia did European gold coins begin to return in significant numbers.

Among silver coins, the Ottoman piaster seems to have achieved less success than its gold relatives. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Ottomans had just launched their new piaster, but the most common silver currency in the markets of Egypt and the Fertile Crescent remained the “lion crown”, a Dutch coin identified in local documents as *ghurush asadi*.⁵ The piaster gradually gained the upper hand, but its victory was never complete. Even after a long period of stability through the middle decades of the eighteenth century, it continued to face competition from other European coins. The turning point was the first war against Russia (1768-1774), which threw the empire into a series of financial emergencies and severely undermined the piaster, which entered a prolonged decline. A massive influx of silver coins from Europe, drawn by their rising purchasing power, poured into the eastern Mediterranean, which soon became an active monetary dumping ground.⁶ The trade in bullion proved so lucrative that some European merchants gave up hauling goods and began dealing exclusively in coin, particularly the Spanish real (*riyal*) and Austrian thaler (*riyal abu taqa*). The piaster eventually lost so much of its value that it came to function primarily as a currency of account used by merchants and shopkeepers to express prices.

The slow collapse of the piaster whetted an already pronounced appetite for gold. By the final decades of the eighteenth century, it seems that people had begun to lose their trust in silver coins, and even state officials might hesitate to accept them as payment for taxes and other levies. Most extreme was the rapacious warlord Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, who stopped at nothing to flush unwanted silver from his coffers. During one of his terms as governor of Damascus, he forced a mass exchange of currency on the entire city (1791).⁷ In return for three thousand “cases” of Spanish reals and assorted change (*masari farata*), he demanded a payment in “old gold coins,” which in the monetary confusion of the times, had managed to retain most of their value. So scarce was gold in local markets that it was difficult to find sufficient quantities; as townspeople insisted, “there were no gold coins in the country worth more than half a piaster”. After several days, an organized search that extended as far as Aleppo, Jerusalem, and the coastal cities of the Levant produced little relief. Drained of essential reserves of bullion (almost certainly exacerbated by severe hoarding), commerce soon began to stall. Townspeople could remember nothing like this edict in their history.

In the immediate aftermath of this shakedown, most Damascenes would probably not have noticed a big difference in the everyday supply of money. The gold and silver coins, it is true, were the lifeblood of long-distance and wholesale trade. But there was a whole sector of the economy—petty and humdrum, and largely undetectable in written documents—which did not need them to function. Inventories leave the most vivid impression of this submerged, nearly invisible layer of exchange: only about one-quarter of estates contained caches of the big, full-bodied coins. Men were nearly three times as likely to hold this money, whereas women tended to store their wealth in jewelry and other precious objects that could easily be converted into cash.⁸ This imbalance undoubtedly arose from the limited opportunities available to women in the most lucrative pursuits like tax-farming and trade, where large deposits and transfers of

money were routine and unavoidable. For small purchases, gold and silver were so valuable that they would, in fact, have been downright unwieldy. In the neighborhood market, Damascenes needed nothing more than the various small coins at their disposal, which facilitated exchange on a more modest scale. Among the most common denominations was the silver *misriyya*, in which the prices of basic commodities like food were normally quoted. Alongside it circulated half-piasters (*nisf*), quarter-piasters (*rub*), and what were literally called silver “pieces” (pl. *qita*). Even more important was the ubiquitous copper coinage (*fuls*; pl. *fulus*) which acted as the petty change of the day and were taken so fully for granted that, in Damascus, inventories almost never bothered to count them. One can see this indifference, which bordered on contempt, in the thieves who murdered an anonymous beggar one evening in 1745. Realizing that their victim had been carrying only cheap copper coins, not gold ones as they had first thought, they scattered them across his body and left the scene in disgust.⁹ As they were well aware, a fistful of change held little more than a fraction of the purchasing power of a single gold coin.

The metallic value of copper coins was indeed very low, well beneath the nominal value at which they circulated. And yet this overvaluation was a big part of the secret which made them work. Copper was a base enough metal to discourage hoarding, and at the same time, proved suitable for the wear and tear of petty commerce, which could not function without it. In setting the value of *fulus*, the state enjoyed considerable discretion, but had to be careful, for overly high rates would defeat the very purpose of small change. In 1752, As`ad Pasha al-`Azm tried to ban all *fulus* except those minted in Istanbul, whose value he doubled by decree. His policy, in spite of the best intentions, unwittingly caused a “great contraction” in business, presumably from a sudden shortage of coin. Shopkeepers immediately organized a strike, and within a day, the governor was forced to reverse himself.¹⁰ He had, however, recognized an underlying problem: like other currencies, copper coins were vulnerable to inflation and various forms of tampering. In 1736, a *misriyya* minted in the reign of Ahmet III (r. 1703-1730) was still the equivalent of nine *fulus*. By 1750, the rate had already fallen to twenty-one, and at the time of As`ad Pasha’s action, slipped further to twenty-four, where it was still hovering as late as 1759.¹¹ The *misriyya*, as a silver coin, underwent its own long-term devaluation. For most of the eighteenth century, it was fixed at forty to the piaster, but by the early nineteenth century, the actual exchange rate had crept up to fifty.¹² The erosion of these lesser coins, of course, took place in conjunction with the piaster’s decline, which was one of the biggest concerns of the imperial treasury. In a period of roughly forty years, ca. 1770-1810, its value against other currencies fell by half, primarily due to successive debasements carried out by the Ottoman state.¹³ Both the central government and provincial administration might try to freeze exchange rates at acceptable levels, especially during the most precipitous devaluations of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.¹⁴ But nearly all these measures proved futile in the long term. The market, not the state, nearly always had the final say in determining the true value of currencies.

As monetary instability grew, so too did the manipulation of coinage. Unlike modern paper money, which carries virtually no intrinsic value, eighteenth-century coins were very much dependent on the content of precious metal. Debasement directly diminished worth. And since the metal itself had a value, which could easily be redeemed in other forms, there was sometimes a strong economic incentive to shave and clip coins. These tactics might become a form of self-defense; as the number of false or dubious pieces rose, an owner of good coins might either keep them out of circulation (in conformity with “Gresham’s Law”) or pare down their metal, thereby closing the gap with the bad money.¹⁵ Even in the best of times, the quality of coins was highly

variable. Counterfeiting was a perennial problem, and in the eyes of the authorities, ranked among the great moral scourges of the day. In 1702, one governor lumped counterfeiters together with “catamites and pimps” as reprobates to be expelled from the city.¹⁶ These actions were fruitless. At mid-century (1750), the chronicler al-Budayri, a humble barber who very carefully watched the movements of the market, was still lamenting the proliferation of false coins.¹⁷ As a matter of routine, shopkeepers found it necessary to examine each piece of money. During his tour of Syria (1786), the Frenchman Volney noted:

The practice of weighing money is general in Syria, Egypt, and all Turkey. No piece, however effaced, is refused there; the merchant draws out his scales and weighs it, as in the days of Abraham, when he purchased his sepulcher. In considerable payments, an agent of exchange is sent for, who counts paras [i.e., misriyyas] by the thousands, rejects a great many pieces of false money, and weighs all the sequins, either separately or together.¹⁸

The scale of this tampering grew ever more severe at the end of the century as the crisis in the Ottoman monetary system deepened. An entire village in Lebanon, Bayt Shabbab, dedicated itself to counterfeiting. The ringleaders purchased coins from all over the empire and reportedly paid 400 piasters in counterfeit currency for every one hundred genuine pieces hauled to their village. As the devaluation of the piaster gained momentum, they grew emboldened and began operating inside the Khan of Sulayman Pasha in Damascus itself. Their favorite target was a new gold coin, the *selimi*, issued briefly by Selim III (r. 1789-1807). In a doomed experiment, the governor tried to impose it as the only valid gold currency in the city. Local merchants, aware that it contained one less *qirat* of gold than previous issues, often refused to accept it. The governor ordered merchants to stop using their scales and weighing coins, but the prohibition had no effect. As disputes over exchange multiplied and every coin came under suspicion, the Lebanese counterfeiters found new opportunities. They took the *selimi* and began producing imitations which were short of gold by two *qirats*. They were stopped only when the governor discovered their whereabouts and had them executed.¹⁹ Most counterfeiters were more fortunate and escaped with little more than public humiliation, probably because they were not as well-organized and represented less of a threat to commerce. The standard punishment was to blacken their faces, mount them backwards on a donkey, and parade them through the streets of the city.²⁰ The ritual has few counterparts in Ottoman or Islamic law and testifies to the depth of official frustration.

One reason that counterfeiters were willing to operate inside the city itself, disregarding the obvious dangers, was that money was so difficult to transport. Carried in bulk, metal coins were extremely heavy, took up considerable space, required numerous pack animals, and could not move from one town to the next without a large escort of soldiers. The costs were prohibitive. Only the Ottoman state could afford to organize regular caravans that carried so much coin and bullion. To take one of the most extensive operations: the Egyptian administration had to send a large tribute each year to Istanbul. In most years, it proceeded overland through Syria and Anatolia, bypassing the pirate-infested waters of the eastern Mediterranean. The passage of these caravans (*khazanat misr*; Tk. *irsaliye-i hazine*) was one of the noteworthy events recorded in the journal of the Damascene barber Ahmad al-Budayri.²¹ Merchants had to find more creative solutions. They relied on networks of partners and agents and used various techniques for long-distance borrowing such as bills of exchange. In the event that they accumulated large reserves of cash away from home, they might very well leave it with a trusted associate rather than exposing themselves to the uncertainties of

the road. Anyone suspected of carrying cash was liable to attack, even in the vicinity of towns.²² Rural security in Syria did not improve until the latter part of the nineteenth century, which saw the unprecedented extension of state authority during the era of centralizing reforms.

All these techniques for transferring money answered another fundamental problem: there was never enough of it. Taken as a whole, the economy had not yet been fully monetized—or perhaps it is better to say, did not yet require a larger stock of money. Even in Damascus and its immediate environs, cash was not always plentiful. At the end of the nineteenth century, itinerant peddlers (*haddar*) wandering the Damascene hinterland still had to conduct much of their business by barter.²³ If villagers were driven to these lengths after decades of integration with the world economy, which had stimulated an unprecedented expansion in the supply of money,²⁴ these straightforward exchanges in kind must have been all the more necessary in earlier generations.

Recourse to barter, even if irregular, brought unavoidable complications. In the interlude between sale and actual payment, well-informed buyers (most likely merchants) might try to take advantage of fluctuations or regional differentials in prices. Though the Ottoman monetary system was demonstrating a growing unity and coherence by the eighteenth century²⁵, disparities continued to arise from the vagaries of local markets, which were sensitive to political conditions, the protection of trade routes, and the overall growth and decline of regional economies. In Damascus, jurists always upheld the principle of local primacy: the value of commodities should be determined by the prices prevailing at the time and place of sale.²⁶ The same rule applied to exchange rates, which always varied from one region to another.²⁷ As mufti of Damascus, Hamid al-`Imadi (d. 1759) once received a question about a merchant who had bought cloth in Damascus and then tried to peg the value of the piaster, in which the deal had been concluded, to the rate at Aleppo. Al-`Imadi reassured his petitioner that this blatant attempt at price manipulation was quite illegal. Only local rates were to be honored.²⁸

Ibn `Abdin and Market Culture

By the last decades of the eighteenth century, questions about the relative value of currencies had begun to acquire a new urgency. Under the pressure of mounting budget deficits, brought on mainly by costly military defeats, the Ottoman state resorted increasingly to debasements of its coinage. The fiscal crisis reached its climax in the early nineteenth century, ca. 1808-1834, as the piaster lost most of its value. In the 1820s alone, the central treasury issued no fewer than five new gold pieces, most of which were quickly debased and withdrawn.²⁹ The monetary confusion was unprecedented—the severest in Ottoman history—and created new difficulties for trade. The social and economic repercussions soon touched the debates of scholars, mostly in their role as the custodians of the legal system. However distant they may have stood from the din of the marketplace, they ultimately found themselves grappling with the same practical problems of trade and finance as merchants and officials. The discussions which emerged in the legal literature throw light on the economic understanding of Ottoman townspeople.

One of the most incisive responses came from the pen of Ibn `Abdin, a leading figure in Islamic jurisprudence in late-Ottoman times. In a treatise written around 1815,

he examined the practical complications caused by the great convulsion in prices and currencies that coincided almost entirely with his lifetime (1785-1842). Particularly troublesome were advance purchases, which allowed time to elapse between the exchange of goods (or services) and final payment; as inflation and debasement took their inevitable toll, sellers were often compensated in coin whose value had plainly diminished since the date of sale. The potential for disruption and inconvenience to commerce was obvious.

Ibn `Abdin found a certain degree of confusion in scholarly tradition. The first problem, he believed, was economic. The scale of devaluation was unprecedented and lay outside the experience of earlier generations of jurists, who had not fully anticipated the commercial and legal complications which would emerge by the end of the eighteenth century.³⁰ They had agreed on a few general doctrines shaped largely by the legacy of the medieval past, such as the effect of coin famines on commercial transactions. But when the question turned to depreciating coin, conflicting opinions immediately arose. On the whole, scholars had tended to settle on one of two positions. The first was, in effect, to side with the seller by ordering the buyer to pay the full value of the coin (either with another currency or in gold or silver) according to exchange rates prevailing on the day of the original sale. Writing a generation ahead of Ibn `Abdin, the Damascene mufti al-`Imadi took precisely this position, reasoning that if the value of a currency rose or fell, the beneficiary (whether buyer or seller) was obligated to make good the difference.³¹ In periods of devaluation, these adjustments would mean that the buyer, who had also been harmed by the plummeting currency, had to make up any loss in the coin's value from his own funds—that is to say, with more coins. The alternative position, much more favorable to the buyer, was to uphold the price at face value on the day of the sale. But this would be tantamount to forcing the seller to absorb a loss: in the interval between sale and payment, the real value of the currency had dropped. The task, as Ibn `Abdin saw it, was to resolve this dilemma and find a solution which would consider the rights of both buyers and sellers without inadvertently punishing either side.

The second problem with the legal debates was conceptual. Many jurists of his time, he charged, had failed to understand value—specifically, to recognize the distinction between the real and nominal values of currencies in a systematic way. In the case of Ottoman Damascus, the confusion was most visible in the treatment of the piaster, which functioned as the currency of account. In other words, people used the piaster, above other currencies, as the standard benchmark for prices. “The piaster has become for them a declaration for the measure of a price among circulating coins of different denominations, not for itself or its own kind [of coin]...” (*fa-sar al-qirsh `indahum bayan al-miqdar al-thamn min al-nuqud al-ra`ija al-mukhtalafat al-maliyya la li-bayan naw`ihi wa la li-bayan jinsihi...*) The Hanafi legal tradition, which was favored by the Ottoman state, accepted that every place would have such a currency, which was treated as a matter of “oral custom” (*`urf qawli*).³² Whenever people quoted prices, they implicitly fell back on one standard that everyone would have recognized. Inflation or debasement was always a danger, but only eroded the value of actual coins, not the currency of account in which most reckoning took place. Thus the purchasing power of a real piaster, crippled by every debasement, began to vary widely from its nominal value, which in the words of Ibn `Abdin, became nothing more than a “convention” (*istilah*).³³ This decline could be measured in the plummeting exchange rate of the piaster against other gold and silver coins. The same erosion, as noted earlier, also overtook lesser coins such as the misriyya. By the early nineteenth century, it had fallen to fifty against the piaster; but in calculating prices, people still used the

old equivalencies (i.e., one piaster to forty misriyyas).³⁴ It was, after all, simply a method for keeping accounts and establishing comparative values.

The large number of currencies that circulated in Damascene markets was a potentially huge complication. It was not enough to quote a price in piasters; to remove all ambiguity and fix the value of commodities concretely, one had to designate the specific coin in which payment would be made. Commercial custom was not always helpful. The choice of coin was a prerogative of buyers, and remained so even if they delayed payment.³⁵ The real problem was that, in the latter case, rampant inflation and debasement might inadvertently open a huge legal loophole. Buyers might try to offer compensation in a depreciating currency such as the Ottoman piaster and claim that they had thereby satisfied all their obligations. Sellers might then counter that all payments should be calculated according to exchange rates at the time of the original sale; buyers who insisted on paying in a diminished currency, they might argue, should be entitled to a reduced share of the commodities (or services) under contract.

Against these blatant attempts at currency manipulation, Ibn `Abdin demanded more equitable rules for trade, which had now entered an era of unusually vexing technicalities. As he disapprovingly noted, "some of the muftis in [his] day" (an oblique reference to authors like al-`Imadi and even the seventeenth-century mufti Khayr al-Din al-Ramli) had issued rulings which failed to recognize fluctuations in exchange rates between the time of sale and the time of payment. They had essentially come down on the side of sellers and recognized only the later (and therefore lesser) value of depreciating coins, whose effective purchasing power was formally curtailed precisely at the moment when buyers were ready to make their payment.³⁶ Ibn `Abdin wondered why the latter, who had done nothing unscrupulous or dishonest, should suffer all the harm. As the best hope for a just and practical solution, he advocated the principle of compromise (*sulh*).³⁷ His objective was to have buyer and seller share the loss inflicted by evaporating currency. If no coin had been designated as the specific means of payment, buyer and seller were to examine the present value of all the currencies that had been available to them at the time of sale. The two should then compare the various exchange rates (versus the nominal piaster), and within this range, choose the median currency, between the most and least valuable, so that the loss would be spread more evenly. Only by seeking out this middle ground, no matter how crudely established, could the marketplace rectify a problem which seemed so mysterious and sinister. People held money and tried to conduct normal business with it, and yet through no fault of their own, its value slowly drained away. Within the confines of his own economic imagination, Ibn `Abdin recognized that he could do nothing to address the problem at its source. He believed, however, that if properly considered, the resulting damage could be minimized.

Ibn `Abdin's arguments make more sense if placed within the wider market culture of the times. Even in its pettiest forms, commerce could be cutthroat and unforgiving. The prevailing assumption was that all parties to transactions and exchanges were liable for their own decisions and should take extreme care. The wide latitude given to buyers and sellers can be seen in a ruling issued by `Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (1643-1731), the pre-eminent scholar of his day in Ottoman Syria. He once fielded a question (1690) from a merchant who had purchased twelve *qintars* of olive oil, and then realized that he had been cheated when it failed to make the expected quantity of soap. Al-Nabulsi's reply is illuminating: the sale remains valid, and the buyer is not entitled to any refund of his money. It had been the buyer's duty to weigh the oil at the time of purchase; he alone bore the responsibility for poor judgment and misplaced trust, and any subsequent charges of false dealing could not be

substantiated.³⁸ The purpose of his ruling was not to condone cheating, but to insist on the need for vigilance in a culture which accepted exhaustive, white-knuckled bargaining as one of the rituals of commerce. Economic agents were expected to strive for maximum advantage and exploit every opportunity at hand.

Many jurists provided very little cushioning to the unwary, naïve, or inept. In principle, they opposed price-gouging and deliberate overcharging and were willing to abrogate the most exploitative sales. One recurring theme is the importance of knowledge—specifically, of market conditions. A transaction could only be valid if both sides of an agreement were aware of going rates—i.e., the “price of the people” (*si`r al-nas*, also phrased as *bi-mithl ma yabi`u al-nas*); if one side was obviously preying on the ignorance of the other, the sale was not viewed as binding and legitimate.³⁹ Sellers who exceeded these limits, which were presumed to be common knowledge, were committing outright fraud (*ghabn fahish*). In the interest of fairness to sellers, some jurists tried to offer more precise definitions. Writing in the seventeenth century, Khayr al-Din al-Ramli (d. 1671) cited one authority as denouncing a profit margin in excess of five percent as abusive; another offered a sliding scale, setting a limit of five percent for “merchandise” (*urud*), ten percent for “animals” (*haywan*), and twenty for “real estate” (*aqar*).⁴⁰ Authors might quibble over the details, but within this general range (especially under five percent), sellers were free to pursue the most rewarding deals, which were seen as entirely legitimate and reasonable.

The safeguard for buyers seems fairly broad and secure, but in application, could be quite weak and restricted. In another case reviewed by al-Nabulsi, he makes a distinction which effectively dilutes much of this protection. In response to a question, presumably from the butchers of Damascus (1692), he allows flexible pricing for meat (which is really to say, overpricing), and bases his reasoning on a narrow interpretation of the concept of “the price of the people”. His initial premise is that some prices are much better known than others, and that people were undoubtedly much better informed about essential commodities than luxury items. He sets up a comparison between bread and meat. As the staple of the diet, bread was a commodity that nearly all townspeople followed very carefully from one week to the next. An “outsider” (*gharib*), too, would be privy to the same information, which was so common that, on entering a new town, he would “in most cases, first ask about the price of bread there.” Meat was an entirely different matter; as one of the great symbols of luxury and affluence, it stood out as a privileged and more restricted item of consumption whose price did not necessarily circulate within the domain of public knowledge. As a result, an “outsider” was protected against overcharging at the bakeries, but not at the butcher shops, where proprietors could impose higher prices on non-residents.⁴¹ What was al-Nabulsi’s underlying motive in composing the treatise? Were the butchers trying to obtain formal concessions in pricing?⁴² True to the spirit of legal discourse, which confined itself to abstract and universal reasoning, he mentions nothing about the immediate social context. One can only note that the language of this ruling is very interesting, openly inclining to “local” buyers and sellers over “outsiders”. The point is not that al-Nabulsi was advocating a kind of veiled protectionism; more specifically, he linked social status with access to market information, which, in turn, was one of the critical factors in establishing economic rights. Within the framework of his argument, it was almost inevitable that “outsiders” (however broadly this term might be defined) would have to buy certain goods at a disadvantage.

Jurists like al-Nabulsi seemed to accept that commerce inevitably bred inequalities that no legislation could correct or overcome. They were not willing to assent to naked cupidity or corruption, but laid down only minimal guidelines for buying

and selling. Economic justice was important, but mainly had to do with the opportunity for licit gain. More pointedly, al-Nabulsi was content to place most of the burdens squarely on the shoulders of buyers, who needed to exercise extreme caution and prudence. They had to keep their wits and recognize the marketplace as difficult and potentially treacherous terrain. His vision was very much an ethic of *caveat emptor*—"let the buyer beware".

One can immediately grasp the implications for the use of money, which performed a dual role. On the one hand, it acted as a medium of exchange, fixing the value of commodities at the moment of sale; on the other, it moved through the market as a commodity in its own right, whose value was subject to constant bargaining and redefinition. In both capacities, all the usual standards would apply—which is to say, a subtle bias in favor of sellers. One need only consider the earlier ruling by al-`Imadi: in the event of a deferred sale, the value of any currency would be determined at the time of payment. Implicit in this position is the assumption of risks by buyers; if they tried to pay in depreciating currency, then they alone would be responsible for any loss of value and would have to cover the resulting deficit themselves. Sellers were thereby shielded from the vagaries of the monetary market. In other words, al-`Imadi was perfectly willing to accept an imbalance of rights and protections.

Against the one-sidedness of this scholarly tradition, Ibn `Abdin presents himself as a dissenter. His call for compromise and shared burdens can be understood as a critique of a commercial culture that was already tolerant of sharp dealing and predatory guile. He was well aware that the unusual monetary instability of his times could easily turn customary prerogatives, which had received the sanction of jurists, into highly disruptive impediments to commerce. His main objectives were to counterbalance advantages which had become almost punitive, and to enforce a stricter standard of economic justice, which in the unsettled conditions prevailing under the Great Debasement, had become a more salient issue. Were his recommendations, like the monetary fluctuations at the turn of the nineteenth century, a sharp departure from earlier economic thought and experience? Though Ibn `Abdin marshals a substantial body of scholarship, the outlines of this debate are only beginning to emerge. Fortunately, the relevant legal literature is abundant, ranging from major fatwa collections to treatises in jurisprudence. A broader investigation of the sources, covering both the medieval and 'early modern' periods, should turn up more definitive answers and could very possibly reveal variations in commercial and legal culture from one time and place to the next.

TABLES

The Mixed Coinage of Eighteenth-Century Damascus

A. Coins in Damascene Estates (ca. 1718-1732)

<i>dhahab `atiq / (Tk.) eski altun</i>	(1650)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>zinjirli</i>	(1581)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>ankalis / majar</i>	(598.5)	[Hungarian gold coin]
<i>bunduqi / yildiz</i>	(443.5)	[Venetian gold coin]
<i>turalii</i>	(386)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>para</i>	(246)	[Ottoman silver coin]
<i>riyal</i>	(226)	[Spanish silver coin]
<i>zolta</i>	(188.33)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>dhahab mustafawi</i>	(149)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>dhahab qastantini</i>	(75.5)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>findikli</i>	(75.5)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>ghurush `atiq</i>	(73.5)	[Dutch(?)silver
coin](a)		
<i>sharifi</i>	(42)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>altun saghir</i>	(42)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>[ghurush] `adadi</i>	(41.5)	[Ottoman silver coin]
<i>(Tk.) akçe-i altun</i>	(31)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>dhahab maghribi</i>	(7)	[Moroccan gold coin]
<i>(Tk.) misir altunu</i>	(5)	[Egyptian gold coin]
TOTALS by origin:		
Ottoman	(4471.33)	
Foreign	(1390)	
TOTALS by bullion:		
Gold	(5274.33)	
Silver	(587)	

B. Coins in Damascene Estates (ca. 1750-1767)

<i>zer-i mahbub</i>	(3135.5)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>riyal</i>	(2991)	[Spanish silver coin]
<i>findiq</i>	(1332)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>ghurush</i>	(715.5)	[Ottoman silver coin]
<i>dhahab `atiq</i>	(477)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>dhahab qastantini</i>	(108)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>zinjirli</i>	(94)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>majar / ankalis</i>	(74)	[Hungarian gold coin]
<i>yildiz</i>	(25)	[Venetian gold coin]
<i>dhahab ifranji</i> coin]	(15)	["European" gold

TOTALS by origin:

Ottoman coins	(5936)
Foreign coins	(3105)

TOTALS by bullion:

Gold coins	(5260.5)
Silver coins	(3706.5)

C. Coins in Damascene Estates (ca. 1770-1798)

<i>majar / ankalis</i>	(1871)	[Hungarian gold coin]
<i>dhahab qastantini</i> coin]	(1748.5)	[Ottoman gold
<i>riyal abu taqa</i>	(1648)	[Austrian silver coin]
<i>yildiz</i>	(1277)	[Venetian gold coin]
<i>findiq</i>	(966)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>mahbub misr / (Tk.) mısır altunu</i>	(865)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>riyal</i>	(549.5)	[Spanish silver coin]
<i>ghurush</i>	(283)	[Ottoman silver coin]
<i>rub`findiqli</i>	(172)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>dhahab`atiq</i>	(120)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>zinjirli</i>	(33)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>(Tk.) mısır nıfsiyesi</i>	(27)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>ghurush`atiq</i>	(12)	[Dutch(?) silver coin]
<i>dhahab turali</i>	(4)	[Ottoman gold coin]
<i>(Tk.) islambol nıfsiyesi</i>	(1)	[Ottoman gold coin]

TOTALS by origin:

Ottoman	(4219.5)
Foreign	(5357.5)

TOTALS by bullion:

Gold	(7084.5)
Silver	(2492.5)

Source: al-Mahkama al-shar'iyya li-dimashq

(a) On the assumption that the "old" *ghurush* must have been the *ghurush asadi* from Holland.

¹ See the arguments in Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: a Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East," (trans. Justin McCarthy), *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6(1975), 3-28.

² For a discussion of "bimetallism" in relation to the Ottoman economy, see Haim Gerber, "The Monetary System of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 25(1982), 308-24; see also the discussion in Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge, 2000), 70-74.

³ Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 167.

⁴ For Damascene currencies of the late seventeenth century, see Colette Establet and Jean-Paul Pascual, *Familles et fortunes à Damas: 450 foyers damascains vers 1700*, (Damascus, 1994), 60. In eighteenth-century, European gold coins suffered a similar decline in importance, particularly after the 1720s. See André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, (Damascus, 1974), 19-20.

⁵ Establet and Pascual, *Familles*, 61-62.

⁶ Daniel Panzac, "International Trade and Domestic Maritime Trade in the Ottoman Empire during the Eighteenth Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24(1992), 204.

⁷ Raslan ibn Yahya al-Qari, *al-Wuzara' aladhina hakamu dimashq*, (ed.) Salah al-Din al-Munajjid, *Wulat dimashq fi al-'ahd al-'uthmani*, (Damascus, 1949), 88-89.

⁸ From a sample of one thousand inventories (1750-1767), coins appeared in only 257, the great majority of which (204) belonged to men. To break down the distribution differently: whereas one-third of the men (33.7%) in the sample were listed as owning money at the time of their death, the figure was less than one-seventh (13.7%) for women. This disparity is overwhelming with the largest caches of coin (i.e., those whose coins were worth more than one hundred piasters): 74 out of 82 (90.2%) are to be found in the estates of men.

⁹ Ahmad al-Budayri, *Hawadith dimashq al-yawmiyya*, (ed.) Ahmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karim, Cairo, 1959, 51.

¹⁰ al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 173.

¹¹ See Ibn Kannan, *Yawmiyat shamiyya*, (ed.) Ahmad al-'Ulabi, (Damascus, 1994), 473; al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 108, 149, 151-52, 221; Abd al-Karim Rafeq, "Economic Relations Between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside, 1743-1771." In A.L. Udovitch (ed.), *The Islamic Middle East (700-1900): Studies in Economic and Social History*, (Princeton, 1981), 660.

¹² Ibn 'Abdin, *Tanbih al-ruqud 'ala masa'il al-nuqud min arkhas wa ghila wa kasad wa inqita'*, in *Majmu'at rasa'il Ibn 'Abdin*, (Beirut, n.d.), 2: 65. The value of the *misriyya* was already slipping by the 1750s. As'ad Pasha formally devalued it from sixty-four to seventy against the Spanish real; al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 105-06.

¹³ Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 163, 168, 170-71.

¹⁴ See for example Cevdet Darphane, 436, 1801, Başbakanlık Arşivi, Istanbul.

¹⁵ Halil Sahillioğlu, "al-Nuqud fi al-bilad al-'arabiyya fi al-'ahd al-'uthmani", *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adab*, 11(1971), 115.

¹⁶ Ibn Kannan, *Yawmiyat*, 78.

¹⁷ al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 151-52.

¹⁸ C.F. Volney, *Travels in Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783, 1784, and 1785*, (London, 1794), 2: 425-26.

¹⁹ Mikha'il al-Dimashqi, *Tarikh hawadith al-sham wa lubnan, aw tarikh Mikha'il al-Dimashqi (1782-1841)*, (ed.) Ahmad Ghassan Sabbanu, (Damascus, 1982), 161-62.

²⁰ See for example al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 133-34, 162.

²¹ al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 24, 87, 108, 132, 148, 149, 164, 175, 179.

²² See for example the two shepherds who were attacked by Moroccan mercenaries in the Ghuta. The bandits had heard that their victims were keeping large amounts of coin, which turned out to be nothing more than half a riyal and some small change. See al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 158.

²³ Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi, *Qamus al-sana'at al-shamiyya*, (ed.) Zafir al-Qasimi, (Damascus, 1988), 94.

²⁴ Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 205.

²⁵ Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 164; On the specific case of Damascus, see Establet and Pascual, *Familles et fortunes*, 69.

²⁶ See for example Hamid al-'Imadi, *al-'Uqud al-durriyya fi tanqih al-fatawa al-hamidiyya*, (ed.) Ibn 'Abdin, (Beirut, 1882), 1: 243, 246.

²⁷ On the different values of European coins from one town to another, see Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750*, (Albany, 1988), 152.

²⁸ al-'Imadi, *al-'Uqud*, 1: 251.

²⁹ Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 195-96.

³⁰ Ibn 'Abdin, *Tanbih*, 2: 62: "...wa lam yazhar hukm al-nuqud al-khalisa aw al-maghlubat al-ghashsh wa ka'annahum lam yata'aridu laha li-nadrat inqita'iha aw kasadiha lakin yakthiru fi zamanina ghila'uha wa rakhsuha fa-yahataju ila bayan al-hukm fiha wa lam ara man nabbaha 'alayha min al-shirah wa Allahu a'lam...."

³¹ al-`Imadi, *al-`Uqud*, 1: 255. One of the hidden ironies is that Ibn `Abdin had a very high regard for al-`Imadi's work and actually edited the latter's fatwas as models to be emulated by all jurists.

³² Ibn `Abdin, *Tanbih*, 2: 65. For a general discussion of his distinction between coins and currencies of account, *Ibid.*, 2: 65-66.

³³ Ibn `Abdin, *Tanbih*, 2: 64. Ibn `Abdin took the idea directly from the early Islamic jurist Abu Hanifa (*al-fulus wa al-darahim al-ghalibat al-ghashsh athman bi'l-istilah la bi'l-khalqa*).

³⁴ Ibn `Abdin, *Tanbih*, 2: 65.

³⁵ Ibn `Abdin, *Tanbih*, 2: 66. In his words: "...*fa-yatakhayyiru al-mushtari fi daf` ma sha'a min al-nuqud al-ra'ija wa in imtana`a al-ba'i*".

³⁶ Ibn `Abdin, *Tanbih*, 2: 66. He does not criticize al-Ramli directly, but says merely that the latter's remarks had not been sufficiently "clarified"; *Ibid.*, 2: 64.

³⁷ Ibn `Abdin, *Tanbih*, 2: 66-67.

³⁸ `Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, *Ajwiba `an khamsat as'ila*, unpublished manuscript, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, Esad Efendi 3607, 198b-200b.

³⁹ See for example al-`Imadi, *al-`Uqud*, 1: 254.

⁴⁰ Khayr al-Din al-Ramli, *al-Fatawa al-khayriyya li-naf` al-barriyya*, Beirut, 1974, 1: 219.

⁴¹ "al-Risala fi mas'alat al-tas'ir." In `Abd al-Latif al-Farfur (ed.), *Alam al-turath*, (Damascus, 1984), 39-44. The term "foreigner" is further clarified in the text as "one who is not from the population of the country" (*huwa aladhi laysa min ahl al-balad*).

⁴² It is entirely possible that the butchers were seeking legal cover for irregular practices. Their request seems to foreshadow the pricing racket run by the butchers of Aleppo for at least fifteen years in the mid-eighteenth century; see Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*, (New York, 1989), 172.

BOOK REVIEWS

Julia Clancy-Smith (editor)

North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War
Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. (London, Portland, 2001)

Reviewed By Sean Monaghan*

There is a disorderliness in *North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War*, its long look at North Africa and the Mediterranean World is broad and diverse. The book is one of a series of publications by Frank Cass Publishers that seeks to reveal often-overlooked aspects of the Islamic and Mediterranean world. The avowed aim of this well-referenced collection is to “de-centre” the resonating *idées fixes* that delineate space and histories along the lines of the greater “civilizational” divides and national boundaries, and to destabilize easily formulated essentialisms and dichotomies. A vast nexus of cultures, religions, topographies and economies, the Mediterranean Sea has lapped upon the shores of so many different and varied civilizations and cultures over the centuries that its ebb and flow is one of the few consistencies that can unite it and act as a agent for boundary-crossing pollination. As this book demonstrates the trajectories that arched out of the bustle of the Mediterranean world and North Africa had far-reaching influence and effect, from bringing the gold of sub-Saharan Africa to the economies of Mediterranean rim, to exciting intellectual debates in the post-war republics of France.

The books opens with a piece of *longue durée*, Amira K. Bennison’s “Liminal States: Morocco and the Iberian Frontier between the Twelfth and

Nineteenth Centuries.” The fluctuating Iberian Christian/Islamic divide gave rise to solidification of alliances based less on political expediency than on religious differentiation and “assertions of orthodoxy.” (p.17). The disparate populations were subsumed into “reconquista” and “jihad” wholes that became paths of authority for political movements. Further, the need to emphasize validity mirrored both the Moroccan desire to see in itself a “purer” version of Islam, and the competition on the Iberian Peninsula with the cult of St. Peter of Rome as a site of pilgrimage. Centralized state power used the legitimacy of religious identity to justify their authority while competing sites of power in local contexts sought this same legitimacy. While events in the “New World” would eventually shift Spanish focus away from North-west Africa, continued friction through the 17th and 18th centuries would result in colonial expansion of the nineteenth century re-enacting earlier perceptions of “again manning the frontier of *dar al-Islam* against Christian aggression” (p. 13).

In James A. Miller’s view, the march of the gold of Ghana northward is directly tied to the southern expansion of Islam from Morocco, and he argues for the interconnections of the city of Sijilmasa, Ghana (today on an east-west axis along the Niger River) and the Almoravid Movement, with the Sahara desert mirroring the Mediterranean Sea as an instrument of interconnectivity. The initial force and attraction of marginalized Berber populations to the radical Kharijite conception of Islam would lead to the rise of the anti-Shi’ite Almoravid Sunni orthodoxy who in turn succeeded in transforming Sijilmasa and established trans-Saharan trade that swept over the entire Maghrib. The next chapter re-visits the advent of the Almoravid reign and challenges Ibn Khaldun’s well-known paradigm that the rise and fall of dynasties follow “a virtue to corruption narrative”

* Sean Monaghan is an independent researcher based in Toronto.

(p. 59) with Ronald A. Messier arguing for a re-evaluation of Khaldunian interpretations. He conceives the fall of the Almoravids not as a loss of tribal loyalty through urbanization, but its opposite, the trap of such loyalty impeding the passage into a powerful dynastic urban life of lasting stability.

Emerging inter-Islamic schools would also affect relations between Maghribis and Mashriqis. For all the convenience and temptation that simplified binary views offer, Mohamed el Mansour's "Maghribis in the Mashriq during the Modern Period: Representations of the Other within the World of Islam" evokes a world where the "other" was not always the unbeliever or the outsider to the civilization of Islam" (p. 81). Maghribi peoples uninterrupted contacts with the Mashriq, and in Egypt in particular, brought into play regional and religious identities, especially that of the school of Malikism which dominated the Maghrib. The cultural and religious mosaic of the Mashriq often led, el Mansour argues, to Maghribi belief that their eastern co-religionists lacked piety and respect for Islam, with the latter group not averse to demonstrating their repugnance to Cairene attitudes with acts of violence. Yet as the author notes, in spite of regional cultural differentiation, the centrality of the Holy Lands to the faith acted as a site of legitimisation that overrode the political spheres of influence of the Ottoman and Sharifian empires, as well as those of the local *ulema* in the Maghrib proper.

The two following chapters focus on unique political institutions that developed in Tunisia. Ottoman penetration into Tunisian space led to the embrace of the local political institute of the *mahalla*, a mobile military camp and royal procession in one, used to control populations, especially those of the unruly hinterland, and as a method of tax collection. The "interfacing" of a local, recognizable form of central political power with the Ottoman office of the Bey reveals a unique form of power structure which would have long-reaching influence

on future state-formation in Tunisian space. The rise of Tunis as a hub for trade and commerce led to an urban cosmopolitanism that reflected the corsair activities of the population and the conduit that the port city acted as for the export of local products. Captured Maltese, Greeks, or Italians may have entered Tunis as hostages, but conversion and economic opportunity led to many remaining and joining the ranks of those who partook in the pirating business. The nineteenth century intrusion into this "model of an open city" (p. 118) of disease, drought and European gunboat diplomacy, transformed Tunis' *belle époque* into a proto-colonial city during the first half of the nineteenth century with the *ville moderne* now dominating the medina.

A stand-out piece in this collection is Edmund Burke III's compelling and delightful "The Mediterranean Before Colonialism: Fragments from the Life of 'Ali bin 'Uthman al-Hammi in the Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." We follow Burke on a quest to trace the life of Ali bin 'Uthman al-Hammi - which the author readily acknowledges as implausible upon first reflection - who, from beginnings in the Jarid oases, would join the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt as a translator, spend 14 years in the Mamluk Imperial Guard and participate in many of Napoleon's campaigns in Europe, only to escape with his life in Marseille during the White Terror. We meet Ali in 1836 as he greets a Dr. Loir Montgazon on his way to assess reports of an epidemic in the Jarid area wherefrom our intrepid traveler had originally set out into the world. While re-imagining a world where possibilities of cross-cultural encounters and re-inventions may very well have existed, he subtly undermines accepted practice of deferral to European archives, and hints at hidden domains that have escaped their self-reflective punctiliousness.

The two final essays in the collection move the reader into the colonial period proper, and shift the focal point toward the sequence of events whose origins are firmly in the *métropole*,

relating two episodes of colonial historiographies and attitudes. The tragicomedy of the murder of Dr. Emile Mauchamp in Marrakech in 1907, his dedication to the *mission civilatrice*, and his contempt for all things “native,” shows how relations between the French and Moroccans were often enigmatic to each of the parties. Self-representation, miscomprehension, cultural unfamiliarity, all led to great upheaval and strife that the author frames in nuances that look beyond the simple power dynamics of the colonized and the colonizer. “De-colonizing ‘French universalism:’ Reconsidering the Impact of the Algerian War on French Intellectuals,” strikes a discordant note. While it may easily be assimilated into the broader theme of the centrifugal influences of North Africa, its account of the schisms among intellectuals in France while the war raged seems overwrought. Though the author James D. LeSueur is right to remark that there is “a tendency among many historians of the twentieth-century France (until recently) to marginalize colonial history,” (p. 168), one suspects that *nombrilisme* is one of the principle causes of it.

The editor Julia Clancy-Smith remarks that while “regarded as the preserve of French scholars and audiences due to its centrality in France’s empire, North Africa is increasingly recognized for its own singular importance as a cross-roads region” (p. 1). That North Africa has remained in the French sphere for too long, this work throws up a series of beacons to guide and urge on the student of a whole host of hitherto exclusive and excluding spheres of scholarship to see in the Maghrib a nexus of economic interaction and cultural mediation. North Africa viewed as a nodal point might forego the idea that its geo-political positioning as economic and cultural facilitator constituted a reactive role to more high-profile historical constructs to the north or east of it. As Edmund Burke observes, while “not quite African, not quite Arab, not quite European, the Maghrib inhabits a space between the essentialisms evoked by each” (p. 1). It is to the credit of this book that it succeeds in

convincing that, if improbability there is, it stems from the long-held notions that the history of the region could be anything but disorderly and implausible.

Jean Bethke Elshtain
The New World Era
Review of Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World
Basic Books (US, 2003)

Reviewed by Robert Blecher*

The New World Order has finally arrived, one Gulf War and one George Bush behind schedule. The eviction of Iraq from Kuwait announced America's global hegemony, but remaking the region's political landscape had to wait for over a decade. Only since 9/11 has the project of the radically reconfiguring the Middle East taken shape. “In the images of fallen statues,” Bush proclaimed aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, “we have witnessed the arrival of a new era.” Touting the military's precision war-making capabilities, he vaunted the American government's newfound ability to topple leaders without decimating their countries. Yet if pre-emptive regime change is a new dimension of US strategic doctrine, it is only one of a panoply of transformations that have occurred in the past two years. New threats, new challenges, new opportunities, new hopes: Bush's recent speeches have left no doubt that this American century will be fundamentally different than the last.

In *Just War Against Terror*, Jean Bethke Elshtain, a professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School, commends the Bush doctrine, promoting a muscular defense against “those [who] plot in darkness and secrecy, who operate stealthily and refuse

* Robert Blecher is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Virginia, Richmond.
The author thanks Elliott Colla for his insightful contributions.

to take responsibility for their wrongdoing." Elshtain, modeling herself after the Christian theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, praises the "war against terror" as a measured and careful response to the 9/11 attacks. If the war had ended with the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan instead of moving on to Iraq and other targets unrelated to Al Qaeda, it might have found support even among some on the left. But Elshtain, a just war theorist of conservative bent, views the war in Afghanistan as the opening salvo in a much broader, and, in her opinion, wholly justified fight. Because global freedom will never flourish without security, and because only the United States can overcome murderous regimes, she holds that the Bush administration has not only the right but the duty to wage war against the US's radical enemies.

Elshtain's insistence on the importance of preserving basic human freedoms is welcome. And she is certainly right that neither Osama Bin Laden nor Saddam Hussein have been friends to democracy or feminism (or gay rights, or abortion rights, or a host of other rights that Elshtain herself frowns upon). Yet the newfound enthusiasm for Arab democracy—whether issuing from Bush's lips or Elshtain's pen—is rooted in a perception of civilizational clash and an emboldened Christian chauvinism that are in fact quite familiar. Elshtain tries to nuance these points and retreat from their full implications, yet the more she struggles to defuse them, the more deeply she digs herself in.

Elshtain's book essentially boils down to the proposition that this war is just since it must be fought. This was clear in the case of Nazi Germany and ought to be clear now: "[O]ne fights back against those who have declared one a mortal enemy unfit to share our beautiful earth." Yes, she admits, arguments for change in foreign policy should be heard and might even have desirable outcomes. But faced with an enemy implacably opposed to the freedoms we hold dear, we cannot negotiate. In words reminiscent of George Bush, they "hate us for who we are not for

what we have done." Even if the US were to withdraw its troops from Saudi Arabia, now looking likely, and somehow settled the Israel-Palestinian conflict, Bin Laden and his followers would not be appeased. Their wholesale antagonism to US values—most pointedly, their antipathy for secularism and their brutal treatment of women—transcend narrow political goals and obviate compromise or coexistence. These crucial differences between "us" and "them" ought not be hidden under the specious veil of cultural diversity but rather described in language that is adequate to the cruelty in question. Bin Laden and his followers are murderers, not martyrs; terrorists, not freedom fighters; the US seeks justice, not revenge.

In light of these threats, democracy must fight to defend itself within the limitations imposed by the just war tradition. War inevitably involves tragic losses, including the death of innocents, but Elshtain insists on the essential difference between "terror" and the "just war against terror." Al-Qaida's murder of innocent civilians, she holds, must be distinguished from what she believes are the US's extraordinary efforts to spare civilian lives. "Our" violence, she insists, is different from "theirs." Of course, this is precisely the argument invoked by Islamic radicals, who assail US and Israeli repression while hailing their own attacks on civilians as sacred resistance. Elshtain details how the US has met the necessary conditions with regard to the war's intention (to "punish wrongdoers" and "prevent them from murdering civilians in the future") and the war's means, which have been proportionate (using a level of force commensurate with nature of threat) and discriminate (differentiating between combatants and non-combatants). Given these characteristics, she argues that the United States has undertaken a "just war against terror" out of the desire to keep the peace, not for the sake of aggression or aggrandizement.

The US has an obligation to defend itself, but happily for Elshtain, US self-interest also benefits the world. International peace rests on a secure civic order,

which the United Nations and non-governmental organizations have not been able to protect: "America bears the responsibility to help guarantee ... international stability, whether much of the world wants it or not." Despite talk of globalization, strong states are still the *sine qua non* of the international order. When a nation-state fails, the entire system is imperiled. In this understanding of international relations, defending international stability and protecting the safety of peoples throughout the world are, in fact, a single project. Bush, she believes, understands this in a way that Bill Clinton did not. Elshtain takes Bill Clinton to task for pursuing a zero-casualty policy that sacrificed the lives of Kosovars in the interest of preserving his public opinion ratings at home. On September 11, Clinton-style liberal internationalism, which sought global power without accepting global responsibility, was revealed as a sham. Unable to confront ruthless enemies of peace, it had no way to prevent the political disintegration of the developing world.

Elshtain does well to condemn the shortcomings of US policy, yet in her narrative, moral stocktaking begins and ends with Clinton. This historical myopia is convenient, since it obscures the fact that the US has long been in the business of making the Middle East a less democratic place. CIA-supported coups in Iran in 1953 and Iraq in 1958 stand out as especially egregious examples. More generally, one can point to ongoing US support for governments with atrocious human rights records, including Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. All have worked assiduously to close off democratic participation and frustrate meaningful self-determination. Because Elshtain's account isn't steeped in this sordid history, it fails to address the roots of Islamist violence, which lie, at least in part, in US support for dictatorships and Israel. In her decidedly ahistorical account, violence emerges instead from fanaticism, ignorance and envy.

Elshtain wipes this ignoble slate clean, advocating a new kind of imperialism based, rhetorically at least, in the selfless intent of nation-building. This project's "primary objective" would be the construction of democratic civil society to forestall failed states. Lest this seem like an external imposition, Elshtain cites actors on the ground, including local activists and Hamid Karzai, who have requested more US intervention. If the New World Order never materialized under Bush the Elder or Clinton, it was because they were unwilling to undertake the bold action necessary to usher it in. Now, in committing troops to the pursuit of global freedom, a determined president has taken a decisive step toward harmonizing US national interests, the international order, and the well-being of individuals the world over.

Bringing together just war theory, conservative feminism, and democratic theory, Elshtain's writings on the "war on terror" are a natural extension of her earlier work. Over the past decade she has expressed anxiety over the state of US democracy, lamenting the attenuation of the democratic fabric and the collapse of the family. Before September 11, the dangers to democracy principally came from within: "No outside power will take us over and destroy our freedom. We are perfectly capable, my nervousness tells me, of doing that ourselves, all in the name of more freedom." On September 11, external threats surpassed the internal, recalling for Elshtain the days of World War II. Her heavy reliance on critics of totalitarianism like Reinhold Niebuhr and Hannah Arendt adds a note of moral rectitude to her attack on political Islam; Hitler and Stalin are predictably pressed into service as familiar touchstones of evil, creating the impression that Elshtain is more at home in the 1940s than the present. In the introduction to her book *Democracy on Trial*, she approvingly cites a comment made by one of her colleagues that the title has a "very 1940s ring to it." Yet whether threats are contemporary or of 1940s vintage, Elshtain's solution

remains the same: a mobilization against the forces that threaten democracy.

Once upon a time, Elshtain was more ambivalent about the use of military force. She opposed the Vietnam War, and expressed considerable reservations about the 1991 Gulf War. Taking Bush, the father to task for his "moralistic trumpeting," she wrote: "Just War theory offers no definitive answer to the question 'But was it just?'" Just war theory ought not soothe, but rather "vex and trouble." In 1992, she could not abide how "just war criteria [were] brought forward and proffered as vindication for one side in so cavalier a manner: not so much wrapping oneself in the flag as in the moral mantle of purity." Yet in the wake of September 11, Elshtain is neither vexed nor troubled by the way the US brandishes its military might, or by "moralistic trumpeting" and "wrapping oneself ... in the moral mantle of purity." Shortly after the attacks, Elshtain authored a "Declaration of Sixty Intellectuals" in favor of the war on terrorism that Bush espouses, a manifesto that was widely published in newspapers throughout the world. In promoting Niebuhr's dictum that "we should be humble hawks," she has aligned herself with neo-conservative hawks who are anything but humble. She has joined the ranks of Daniel Pipes, Fouad Ajami and Bernard Lewis, intellectuals who were formerly disdainful of US-led democratization, yet now have placed their formidable skills in the service of American Empire.

The champions of Bush junior's "new era" (as opposed to his father's New World Order) evince a fierce faith in a refashioned international order, based on freedom and democracy for all peoples. For this order to take root, Elshtain suggests, Islam will have to be tamed. Although she identifies "Islamist fundamentalism" as the target of the war, she vilifies Islam writ large. In Elshtain's accusatory description, "the Islamic tradition has incited engagements with the world that have earned it a reputation as 'the religion of the sword.'" Elsewhere, she portrays the Crusades in largely

sympathetic terms as a reaction to "four centuries of conquest and attack by an expansionist and energetic Islam." True, Elshtain (like Bush) accompanies these categorical statements with more careful remarks that distinguish "moderate" Muslims from the Islamists, but her praise for certain acceptable Muslims only reinforces the impression that other Muslims are a threat. Consider, by way of comparison, how unthinkable it would be to talk of "moderate Christians" or "moderate Jews." In echoing the "general disappointment many people felt when the attacks were not emphatically and specifically condemned by Muslim leaders," Elshtain makes it clear that her grievance is not limited to the radical fringe of the Islamic world.

While Elshtain takes great care in explicating the positions of Christian theologians, her discussions of Islam—and especially the putative target of the war—show far less sensitivity to nuance. The phrase "Islamist fundamentalism" is imprecise both doctrinally and politically. Doctrinally, Elshtain's specification that she means "those who believe in a literal understanding of Islam" makes little sense, since all believing Muslims hold that the Quran is the literal word of God. Moreover, since Muslims the world over—unlike Christians in the West—read their holy book in the original language, they arguably have a stronger case when they present theological arguments based on literalist interpretation.

Politically, she defines "Islamist fundamentalists" as those who deny secularism and hold "there can be no distinction between civil law and the strict, fundamentalist Sharia law, the ancient Islamic holy law." Yet once again, it is unclear who is being targeted here. Does Elshtain's "just war against terror" target groups in countries that are allied with the US, such as Pakistan? Is the war to be fought against all Muslim groups that seek a theocratic government or only groups that employ violence? What about groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the Reform Party in Turkey, which seek to establish an Islamic state by democratic,

nonviolent means? And given the serious reversals that Bin Laden's particular version of political Islam has suffered in Bosnia, Egypt and Algeria, will this "just war" rejuvenate the very enemy that it seeks to vanquish? Even if the US does face a threat in radical Islam, it hardly seems likely that an endless war stoked by chauvinistic self-righteousness (of the same sort that characterizes al-Qaeda) will solve the problem. One would think that a proponent of a "just war against terror" would engage these questions, if only to assess who the enemy is, the relationship of means to ends, and what the chances for victory are.

To ask such questions is not to whitewash Bin Laden's crimes, nor to explain them away as a mere reaction to US foreign policy. Elshtain, in fact, is at her most convincing when she chastises those on the left who see religion as "epiphenomenal," thereby reducing political Islam to a social protest movement. Religious rhetoric ought not be dismissed in favor of paternalistic arguments that imply that "we" know "them" better than "they" know "themselves." Islam, she points out, is not mere "window-dressing" that disguises "colonial ire or antiglobalist chagrin." Yet Elshtain suffers from precisely the same blind spot as the left she criticizes: a failure to understand that many people in the Middle East, for perfectly logical reasons, oppose US policy and cast that opposition in religious terms. Both the right and the left often fail to deal seriously with Islam, which figures either as a scapegoat that accounts for everything or as empty rhetoric that explains nothing. A more nuanced encounter with political Islam would need to explain why and how Islam has become the chief voice of opposition in Middle East today, recognizing both its religious content and political claims.

Elshtain's incisive critique of the left's failure to take religion seriously suggests a line of inquiry about her own book. If religion ought not be dismissed too quickly, what about the role that Christianity plays in her own text? Ethics

are not inevitably religious, but in this book they are, and relentlessly so. In making her case that the "just war against terror" is consistent with Christian ethics, she enlists theologians like Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. "Tillich's greatest wartime contribution," she writes, "was to remind all of his radio listeners that it is not Christian to permit the cruel destruction of the civil peace that occurs when violence is not confronted." She praises "Niebuhr's hard-hearted insistence that Christianity is not solely a religion of love." Throughout her book, she underlines the Christian dimensions of the war she advocates. "One way or another, Christians, together with other citizens, face moments when they are asked: Where do we stand?" "As a way to honor the cause of both justice and mercy, political restorative justice is shaped significantly by Christianity."

There is, of course, something to be learned from just war thinkers (notably Richard Falk, a just war theorist who sits on the left). They have made a rich, if not unproblematic, contribution to debates about the use of force in the twentieth century. Yet Elshtain's emphasis on the Christian aspects of ethical judgment, combined with her harsh words about Islam, leaves the impression that Christian goodness and right-thinking have come to save the world from the Islamic menace—and that her "just war on terror" is another name for the clash of civilizations. Even many who support the war will be uncomfortable with the implication that they are fighting it because it's the Christian thing to do. (Needless to say, Elshtain's understanding of the Christian tradition is not likely to persuade liberal Protestant religious leaders, who have reached diametrically opposite conclusions about the Bush doctrine and who opposed the Iraq war precisely on the grounds of Christian ethics.) What is more, the moral coding of state violence as just and "terrorism" as unjust has been a longstanding staple of political discourse, requiring no grounding in the Christian tradition. Ariel Sharon, for one, has never found it necessary to invoke medieval Christian theology to justify the Jewish

state's brutal measures in the Occupied Territories.

A deeper problem with Elshtain's book is its profound parochialism. Elshtain consistently mistakes the specific tradition in which she is working for a universally valid one. Her error begs important questions about her intended readership. What about non-Christians who oppose (or support) US policy and invoke ethical traditions that conflict with Elshtain's vision of Christian justice? What about other Christians - who like Elshtain advocate war - but do so from the fundamentalist, literalist convictions that Elshtain denounces in Islam? What about Muslims whose understanding of Islam leads them to support a war-against, not with, the US-in protest of American foreign policy, and who view their own struggle as a "just war against terror?" In her scant (and tendentious) consideration of Islamic war fighting doctrines, she discusses Islamic notions of justice only within the parameters set out by Christian just war theory, thereby reducing Islam to a foil for Christian virtue.

Elshtain has no answer to these questions, since to answer them would be to admit the central but unspoken tenet of her argument: that her Christian cosmology is superior to other religious (and agnostic) understandings of our world and its conflicts. What this means, sadly, is that the only readers who are likely to be convinced by her arguments about the justness of US power are those who already believe that the Christian faith is uniquely righteous, singularly capable of defining the meaning of justice.

Elshtain's faith in the essential goodness of the United States is apparently boundless. Religious leaders who do not share this faith are dismissed as naive pacifists, while academics are accused of espousing the heretical creed of "oppositionism": "Somewhere along the line, the idea took hold that, to be an intellectual, you have to be against it, whatever it is. The intellectual is a negator." But to be critical of one's leaders is no sin, nor is it evidence of knee-jerk

"oppositionism," though Elshtain's credulousness toward those in positions of institutional authority leads her to make this error. In exposing hidden assumptions and holding up political leaders to public scrutiny, intellectuals may reveal distrust of authority and perhaps even a streak of reflexive skepticism. Yet skepticism about government claims is necessary for placing limits on the exercise (and preventing the abuse) of power-an objective that stands at the very heart of the just war tradition.

Of course, Elshtain's relative indifference to this dimension of the just war tradition fits well with the country's political mood, offering as it does an erudite version of Bush's own rationale. Invoking the justness of the war one and a half years later obscures the fact that the president never sought the guidance of philosophy and theology before the war was launched. What we read in Elshtain's book is an ex-post facto justification for a policy already in motion. This is an example of philosophy in the service of the state, not the state seeking wisdom in philosophy.

Saghie, Hazim (ed.)
The Predicament of the Individual in the Middle East
Saqi Books (London, 2001)

Reviewed by Abdel Razzaq Takriti*

Good polemics are like tasty curries, bad ones are like canned corned beef. The former, in their wide variety, spicily arouse the senses; the latter dim the soul- and they moreover always taste the same. The supermarket of ideas is currently overstocked with corned beef cans of the neo-liberal brand. *The Predicament of the Individual in the Middle East* is one more can in the pile. It is a collection of essays that overflows with clichéd notions and has little to contribute to one's understanding of the

* Abdel Razzaq Takriti is a graduate student of Political Philosophy at York University, Toronto.

region. Lacking the thrill of journalistic works and the thoroughness of academic ones, it makes for a less than interesting read. Nevertheless, it is important to consider, if only because it is representative of a wider body of thought that is currently prominent amongst elite circles in the Middle East.

The collection's conceptual premises are revealed in the epic introduction. Its hero is the individual and its realm is global history. Readers get to visit the glossy pages of *The Economist*, the famous thoughts of Thomas L. Friedman as well as more traditional academic destinations such as the theories of Max Weber. Internet, globalization, Smithean gains, Promethean leaps and the pre-Islamic *sa'aliq*; Hazim Saghie scarfs it all. "From every garden a flower," as the Arabic proverb has it, and the nectar is offered in the first three lines. Advancement and progress, we are told, are not feasible "nowadays for a nation, any nation on our planet, without a parallel development in individualism..." (p.7).

How does Saghie support this opening conclusion? He appeals to the majesty of the "West" which, he informs us, is a world permeated with individualism. Since the advanced west is individualist, individualism must be a pre-requisite for "progress." Apart from its triteness, Saghie's reasoning misses the point. It doesn't support his claim that development cannot occur without individualism. In fact, the South East Asian experience conclusively proves the historical erroneousness of that claim. Saghie anticipates this obvious objection and he therefore states that the Asian merger of "economic liberalism and political patriarchy, became very difficult to sustain as such, and even more difficult to imitate or duplicate" (p.8).

Whereas he accepts that history contradicts his claims, Saghie maintains that they are validated by the present. We are living after all, in the internet age. Computers "must lead and information must spread everywhere" if markets and economies are to function well (p.7).

Barriers and state control would be "eradicating" by this trend and hence "tolerating individual choices and political freedoms will become, sooner or later, a precondition for wealth" (p.7). What is Saghie telling us? Information Technology leads to wealth. Information Technology leads to individualism. Therefore, individualism leads to wealth. Trees produce apples. Trees produce leaves. Therefore, leaves produce apples. It's neat, but it's also wrong.

In a work centered upon individualism, one would expect to find a thorough explanation of the term. What Saghie offers instead are disjointed statements left for readers to connect. Upon finishing this laborious task, they are rewarded with what amounts to a simplified version of the *Washington Consensus*. Small government, self-regulating markets, accountability and "democracy"; Saghie avoids getting caught up in old-fashioned discussions about the Enlightenment and emancipatory dreams and speaks instead of concrete projects. The fact that such projects have been the main cause of developmental disasters in the past three decades seems to be of little concern to him. Why would it be? Things have changed and we now have the internet.

Saghie's individualism is directed towards facilitating the smooth flow of market relations. As the individualism of the privileged, it is the task of the elite to introduce it into their countries. Towards that end they must "unify with their colleagues in the advanced countries. The sooner and faster they do it, the better... A globalized west... cannot for long tolerate the continuation on the west-east fragmentation, on nation states and the seclusion they imply" (p.11). In fact, this process of elite consolidation is already ongoing. As the esteemed international political economist Robert Cox observes, the globalization of production is producing a "three-part social hierarchy that is world-wide in extent":

The top level comprises those people who are integrated into the global

economy. This stratum runs from the ...managers in public and private sectors to relatively privileged workers...in reasonably stable employment. A second level includes those who serve the global economy in a subordinate and more *precarious* way. This is the potentially disposable force, the realm of 'flexibility', 'restructuring' and 'outsourcing'... The bottom level comprises those who are *excluded* from the global economy. Here are... many of the people living in... those countries that have little prospect of making a go of the global economy.¹

Most people living in the Arab world belong to the lower two strata. Saghie's elite, who belong to the first, are none other than the national bourgeoisie that were portrayed by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Their function is the *intermediary* function that Fanon describes. As members of an underdeveloped-capitalist class that is alien to its own community, their survival depends on their role as mediating participants in global arrangements of exploitation.

The injustice of this status quo is masked by the liberal mythologists whose greatest invention is the *atomized* "individual"; a character that lives in the enchanted land of the self-regulating market. Claims on behalf of this fantastic being have historically resulted in the subjection of society to the brutal rule of serendipity. The self-regulating market, which presupposes the false dichotomy between private and public spheres, has historically been antithetical to the individual, as well as the collective, rights of the oppressed. As Karl Polanyi demonstrates in *The Great Transformation*, these rights were generally won out of *resistance* to this "stark liberal utopia."

Just as Saghie's "individual" is a figment of the liberal imagination; his "Arab World" is a construction of the Orientalist. He portrays Arab existence, in its totality, as one massive failure. The Arab anti-colonial struggle led to "the rise of anti-western values as an ideological

extension of its political activism" (p.54). The Arab language is "the language of a group, not of an individual, a language inherited from the age of aristocracy and not a democratic one" (p.56). Arabic Television announcers "look so serious, stiff and impersonal that any personal gesture or joke sounds rude, if not completely out of place" (p.57). Arab education "does not embody any opposition to authority" (p.58). The Arab is nothing more than a member of a failed robotic culture.

Bernard Lewis fans will enjoy Saghie's essay, but they will truly delight in Hausayn Amin's "The Crisis of the Individual in Egypt." Only the keys of the ancients can unlock modern doors, and hence, half of this essay is spent on discussing the Pharaonic, Hellenic, and imperial Islamic eras. The "psyche of the Egyptian individual," we are told, was negatively affected by the anti-Akhenaton reaction (p.62). The problem was severely compounded with the killing of Hypatia of Alexandria (p.63). The final blow to the individual came with Islam. This "sweeping sea of values coming from the desert and the Bedouins" paralyzed subjectivity and creativity (p.65).

Amin is a generous man. He drops a gem or two in every line. Some are worthy of Her Majesty's collection: "Westerners always found a special magic in the unknown, for they saw in it a challenge that invited them to adventure and experiment, to discover and invent, but in the Islamic world, the guiding principle among the majority was: what you know is safer than what you do not know" (p.64). It maybe passé, but Amin's self-Orientalizing rhetoric has a comical quality to it that enlivens its otherwise dull lines.

Due to its incoherent nature, reading *The Predicament of the Individual* is an unsatisfactory endeavor. Each of its fifteen essays addresses the question of "individualism" in particular contexts, and no context is examined in any real depth. This is unfortunate, for, some of the essays- especially the ones on culture- deal

with interesting topics. For example, Emmanuel Sivan's "The Peripeteia of Commemoration" discusses the Israeli literature of military commemoration. Like the rest of the essays in this collection, it is built upon the crude binary opposition between the individual and the collective, and it further accepts founding Israeli myths concerning the "socialist" nature of the Zionist project. Nevertheless, it raises important questions about the operation of the Yizkor literature as a "socio-cultural mode of action" and its effects upon the "organization of memory" in Israeli society (p.174). These questions could and should have received a fuller treatment. However, as with many other questions in the collection, they were given the short shrift.

There is much to be said about internal liberation in these dire times. Patriarchy, classism, homophobia, nepotism, and comprador politics are pervasive challenges that need to be countered. Had *The Predicament of the Individual in the Middle East* focused upon addressing these aspects of oppression, it might have redeemed the book. Unfortunately, it is not: reading its pages is like visiting a cultish temple. Upon its altar, focus is sacrificed for the sake of breadth. Within its hallways the deities of neo-liberalism are hailed and the adventures of the mythic hero, the individual, are celebrated, its dungeons abounding with the flagellation rites of the self-Orientalized.

¹ Cox, Robert. *The Political Economy of a Plural World*. New York: Routledge, 2002. p.84.