

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

*Science in Medieval Islam: An Illustrated survey.* By Howard R. Turner. Austin: University of Texas Press. Pp. 262. Bibliography. Index. \$19.95 (paperback).

When one considers that the *Journal for the History of Arabic Science* is barely twenty years old, it should be clear that earnest European-American study of science as it was practiced in pre-modern Islamic realms is in its relative infancy. Every graduate student in the field of Middle Eastern Studies learns that Avicenna, Averroes, al-Ghazzālī and al-Khwarizmi were prominent medieval Arabic-speaking scientists whose works bridged the temporal space between the classical Greek world and the European Renaissance. However, an appreciation of the history of the exact sciences in medieval Islam, much less a basic understanding of the details of a particular science, generally remains outside the ken of most people, even those engaged in the study of Islamic history and cultures. Those few who do study the physical sciences in the Islamic Middle Ages tend to specialize in one particular field; consequently, one finds that treatises on specific sciences far outnumber general introductions or surveys.

Perhaps the most widely known work of the latter variety is Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Islamic Science: An Illustrated study* (Istanbul, 1989, 1976), with Donald Hill's *Islamic Science and Engineering* (Edinburgh, 1993) a close second. *Science in Medieval Islam: an Illustrated Survey* is an attempt to present to general readers a broad overview of the achievements and contributions in the various sciences by Muslim scientists between the ninth and sixteenth centuries. H. R. Turner, a television and educational film writer, was science curator for the travelling exhibition, "The Heritage of Islam, 1982-1983;" the present work grew from and is thoroughly informed by the author's involvement with that project.

Following a brief historical introduction, *Science in Medieval Islam* proceeds to two discussions of the cultural, linguistic and religious forces in early Islam which facilitated the absorption of classical learning and sparked interest in the investigation and refinement of the ideas found there. These are followed by nine chapters, each devoted to a specific branch of scientific inquiry. Beginning with cosmology and continuing through mathematics, astronomy, astrology, geography, medicine, the natural sciences, alchemy, and optics, the book presents significant developments in each field and

sketches of the Muslim scientists who produced them. Major Muslim contributions to the various sciences are summarized at the end of each chapter. Ninety-five supportive illustrations including photographs of structures, tools, manuscript pages, and museum objects are provided.

Turner concludes with chapters on the decline of scientific inquiry in the later centuries of Islamic history, the transmission of Islamic scientific findings to Europe, and the impact of those findings on the subsequent development of scientific thought in the West. A scientific-historical time line, glossary of Arabic terms, and bibliography augment the volume. Also useful is the list of the sources for the illustrations.

Given the relative paucity of general introductions to the history of the physical sciences in Islam, there is certainly room for books of this type. *Science in Medieval Islam* is perhaps unique among extant works in that it has developed directly out of research for an exhibition of Islamic scientific materials (the extent and composition of which is never made clear). Although the author is not a specialist in any field of Islamic or scientific studies, an examination of his acknowledgments reveals that he has had the able guidance of some of the most prominent scholars in the several fields of Islamic science, including A. I. Sabra of Harvard, Sami Hamarneh, late of the Smithsonian Institution, George Saliba of Columbia and David A. King of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, among others.

As Turner makes explicit in the foreword, this book is intended for the use of general readers. As such, it makes no claim of presenting new, exciting developments in the field. What it does, and what it does quite well, is to reveal the breadth and sophistication of scientific inquiry in the medieval Islamic world. Attention is paid both to theoretical as well as to practical applications of science. By way of example, mathematical theorems, as might be expected, are discussed, but mechanical devices for moving water are also given substantial treatment. Of equal importance, Turner places these contributions in historical context, describing for the reader the conception of a principle in ancient times, how that principle was refined or developed under the Muslims, and what impact such a development had on subsequent research in European lands. Emphasizing points of connection between the Islamic and European scientific communities contributes to an historical appreciation of the importance of Muslim achievements in the sciences and of the role of Arab, Persian and other Muslim scientists in preserving the legacy of the Greek philosophers whose work we hold to be so important to our culture.

One might prefer that the illustrations were in color rather than in black and white, but it is understandable that the cost of such a feature might not be justified in a work whose appeal is to a general readership. In terms of their relevance to the text, the visual materials supplement the subject matter rather well. The bibliography lists only secondary works in English, but the authors, almost without exception, are noted scholars in their respective fields, and general readers turning to the works cited will be assured of finding authoritative information on a given topic. Turner's work offers a sound general introduction to the subject of the history of Islamic science in a clear and cogent manner.

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*Ottoman Lyric Poetry: An Anthology*. Ed. and transl. by Walter G. Andrews, Najaat Black, and Mehmed Kalpaklı. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. Pp. 312. : ill. ; incl. bibliography. Price: \$40 hardcover, \$14.95 paperback.

April is National Poetry Month in the United States. In celebration of the occasion, public libraries and bookstores across the land host authors reading their verse, trendy cafés from the East Bay to Manhattan hold poetry slams, and little magazines put out special poetry issues. Yet, few would argue that poetry—at least of a sort more formal than advertising jingles and rock lyrics—occupies a central place in our culture. Not many adults these days, even among the educated, can recite more than a fragment or two of verse; fewer still actually try to write poetry.

By contrast, in the Ottoman Empire—which for nearly half a millennium covered most of what in post-Ottoman times has become known as the Middle East, as well as much of southeastern Europe—poetry functioned as perhaps the single most important medium of cultural expression. Everybody knew poetry and could recite it from memory. Poetic allusions and quotations were part of daily discourse; formal and informal recitals of verse could be expected at most social occasions. Virtually everyone who had any claim to sensibility or cultivation at least tried his or her hand at composing poetry—to express romantic longing, grief, worry, humor, passion, the search for spiritual truth and mystical union, or the quest for worldly rewards in the form of patronage and employment.

The degree to which poetry pervaded Ottoman society and culture is exemplified by a 648-page volume entitled *Maliyeci şairler antolojisi* [An

Anthology of Poets of the State Fiscal Administration]. It includes selections from the work of 219 Ottoman and 47 Republican-era bureaucrats—who would gather, after a long day of adding up the figures in the ledgers, to compose and recite lyric poetry by moonlight. Included among these poet-bureaucrats are some of the greatest names in Ottoman literature. Could one seriously envision an American companion volume entitled: *An Anthology of Poets of the Internal Revenue Service*? Yet in the Ottoman context the juxtaposition is a natural one, expressing as it does two accomplishments to which any Ottoman *efendi* would have been proud to aspire.

In short, one cannot hope to fully understand the Ottoman era without some appreciation of the place of poetry in society and culture. Yet, for all but a handful of specialists, that appreciation has long been hindered by the lack of readable and accessible translations. In recent years, faculty members teaching courses in Middle Eastern history and area studies have been trying to provide their students with readings that can give them a feel for the cultural context—something to take them beyond the dry discourses of political history, economics, and social science towards a sense of what moved and affected people in a place and time remote from their own.

This is, of course, hard to do if the key texts are not translated well and if the extant translations are not available in print. In the case of Ottoman poetry, the situation could hardly have been worse. The one substantial body of published translations of Ottoman verse into English was E. J. W. Gibb's monumental *History of Ottoman Poetry*, published at the turn of the century when the Ottoman Empire was still a going concern. In his English versions of the Ottoman poems, Gibb sought to imitate the rhyme and metric patterns of the originals and deliberately tried to make them sound archaic, exotic, and obscure—a style of translation unlikely to appeal to modern readers. The only other substantial anthology that has appeared in English since then is the *Penguin Book of Turkish Verse*, which included a section of Ottoman *divan* poetry in new translations by John R. Walsh. Published two decades ago, it is unfortunately no longer in print and was never distributed in the United States.

Thus, the appearance of *Ottoman Lyric Poetry: An Anthology*, the first major translation of Ottoman poetry in nearly a century, could not be more timely or more welcome.

This new anthology is the result of collaboration between Walter Andrews, one of the foremost interpreters of Ottoman literature in North America, the Turkish scholar Mehmet Kalpaklı, and Najaat Black, who

is a poet in her own right. Included in the volume are free-verse translations of 75 lyric poems by 36 authors, spanning a broad range of epochs and styles from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. The translators' achievement is evident in the poems themselves, which are remarkably fresh and poetic, while remaining scholarly and faithful in spirit to the originals.

Rather than "floating the poems on a sea of footnotes," Andrews, Kalpaklı, and Black elected to keep annotations to a minimum and put them in a separate section, letting the translations speak for themselves. Instead, they surrounded them with a cultural "milieu" to aid the reader in understanding these poems and the contexts of their creation and reception. Inserted among the poems are brief prose sections, retelling popular tales and legends frequently referred to in lyric poetry. Another excursus explains the social context of the *meclis*, the parties at which poets and connoisseurs of poetry gathered to celebrate earthly and mystical love in verse. We also find a letter addressed to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent by a fellow poet, critiquing two of the sultan's poems; explanations of the symbolic significance of downy cheeks and of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, and much else that is both useful and illuminating. For those who wish to refer to the original poems, there is an appendix giving the Ottoman texts in transcription. To give the reader some idea of the experience of encountering these poems in manuscripts, the book includes a selection of miniatures (in serviceable black-and-white reproductions) illustrating stories in the poems and examples of Ottoman calligraphy.

Particularly illuminating are the brief biographical entries for each poet, which introduce us to a diverse world of writers. Among them are such fascinating figures as the wandering poet and mystic Nesîmî, skinned alive as a heretic in early-fifteenth-century Aleppo; the lady Mihrî Hatun, the daughter of a kadi who wrote passionate love poems addressed to men of her literary circle, yet never married, and was honored for her poetry with more lavish royal gifts than any of her male contemporaries; Zâtî, the untutored, partly deaf son of a provincial bootmaker, who went to the capital and became famous for his wit and poetic gifts, a favorite of the sultan and his viziers, and the best-loved and most prolific poet of the age; Şeyhülislâm Yahyâ, the chief mufti (Islamic jurisconsult) of the empire and author of works on theology and law, who also gained renown as the author of love-lyrics; Taşlıcalı Yahyâ Bey, conscripted into the Janissary corps from a remote Albanian mountain village, who rose to high rank and fame both on his strength as a poet and of his service in military campaigns from Tabriz to Vienna; Şeyh Galib, scion of a long line of sheikhs of the Mevlevî order and educated in a *tekke* (dervish lodge), who became famous both as

the greatest lyric poet of his time and as a supporter of modernizing reform at the end of the eighteenth century. Although all of the poets appear as individuals rather than types—and exceptional individuals at that—taken together these short biographies give a sense of the richness and variety of the five centuries of Ottoman culture represented in this book.

But it is the poems that are the real *raison d'être* of this anthology and its greatest achievement. Walter Andrews, Najaat Black, and Mehmet Kalpaklı have accomplished the difficult task of making these poems live in English while making the reader feel what it is that makes them great poems in Ottoman Turkish. This is a book that will be useful both to the beginning student and to the specialist. It belongs in every library that deals with the cultures and history of the Middle East.

### References

Gibb, E. J. W. *A History of Ottoman Poetry*. 6 vols. London: Luzac and Co., 1900–1909.

*The Penguin Book of Turkish Verse*. Ed. by Nermin Menemenciöğlü and Fahir İz. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978.

Yücelen, Hilmi. *Türk malî tarihine toplu bir bakış ve Maliyeci şairler antolojisi*. Istanbul: Nilüfer Matbaas, 1973.

ANDRÁS RIEDLMAYER

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*Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century*. By Ali Gheissari. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. Pp. 247.

*Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* is a well written book that describes the 20th century intellectual movements in Iran. It is obvious from the rich bibliography that the author enjoys the knowledge of many languages including Persian, Arabic, English, and some other European languages. Gheissari's book is based on extensive research work. A detailed "Notes" section and a "Bibliography" at the end of the text help future scholars in their study of Iranian intellectual movements and literary history. The style of Gheissari's writing is simple and pleasant. He has made the topic altogether interesting and it is easy to follow the intellectualism, nationalism, and constitutional movements in Iran. The book, although scholarly in nature, can be enjoyed by serious scholars as well as individuals with limited knowledge of Iranian intellectual history.

The book is divided into six chapters: Modern intellectualism in Iran; Intellectuals in the Constitutional Period; Intellectuals and state nationalism, 1921–1941; Politics and literature, 1941–1953; Critique of Westernism and debates over modernity; and an epilogue. Each chapter describes a specific period and the development of nationalism and intellectualism in the light of political changes in 20th century Iranian history.

The author argues that failure to reform 19th century Iran paved the road for nationalism leading to the constitutional movement of 1905. Adherents of the anti-constitutional movement also aired their voices and supported the principles of Sharia over constitutionalism.

Gheissari discusses the overthrow of the Mosaddeq government in the coup d'état of 1953, and how the Shah gradually tightened his grips over Iran.

In 1957 SAVAK (the Iranian secret police) began to eliminate the Shah's opponents. Members of the Tudeh (communist) party suffered the most during this period of time. Between 1953–1979 university campuses became main centers of opposition to the Shah and often their conflicts ended in tragedy and loss of lives. Intellectuals used periodicals as their main channel for spreading their ideology.

Gheissari's book briefly covers the post-revolutionary intellectual literature, and he believes that the intellectual movement of this era could be studied best by reading the October 1977 Iranian Writers' Association poetry and speeches that were held for ten evenings at the Goethe Institute in Tehran. He found their proceedings a good representation of Iranian intellectual thought during that specific period of time. The author mentions that the 59 members of this association, in spite of their diverse ideological views, had a common goal, and that was the overthrow of the monarchy system in Iran. Not long after the return of Ayatollah Khomeini and the departure of the Shah of Iran, Writers' Association members—who believed that the clerical leaders' rule would be temporary and would be replaced with a more "rational" regime—found the situation to be otherwise. Disagreements surfaced among the intellectuals and some members were expelled from the Writers' Association. Gheissari also mentions the effects of the 1979 revolution on intellectuals and their literary works. The reviewer found the book very informative and a good source for the study of Iranian intellectual history.

SHAISTA WAHAB

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*Islam, Democracy, and the State in North Africa*. Edited by John P. Entelis. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, c1997. Pp. xxv, 228. ISBN 0-253-33303-3 (Cloth) \$35.00 ISBN 0-253-21131-X (Paper) \$15.95.

The Maghreb has witnessed a number of political phases since its independence. The editor of this book, John P. Entelis, recognizes six phases: struggle for national liberation; era of optimism and benign authoritarianism envisioning a period of “modernization” and “Westernization”; an increased involvement in the late 1960s and early 1970s of the secret services in politics, suffocating all forms of independent political expression; economic failures in the early and mid-1980s to support the “welfare contracts” which regulated state-society relations, resulting in growing popular unrest; 1989–1991 witnessed initial Maghrebi experience with liberalization and democratization, which gave rise to popular voices, most notably of Islamic movements; the last phase brought forth military backed authoritarian regimes, trying to maintain their hold over society and at the same time benefit from the support of the West, and follow its advice in liberalizing Maghrebi economies.

This book examines the last three phases during the 1980s and 1990s, analyzing the interaction of Islam, democracy and the state in North Africa from the perspectives of political culture and political economy. Among the issues discussed are the implications of modernization and Westernization, aiming at radical secularism, on the rise of popular and politicized Islam; the relation of Islam and democracy; economic reasons for the popular support of Islamist movements; and the interrelation between changes in the political regimes and the need to find new sources of revenue.

The collection constitutes an interesting examination of the political, cultural, social, and economic developments in North Africa from different perspectives, utilizing diverse sources and methodologies. It shows how certain developments are important steps in North African political life, even when viewed with suspicion and hostility in the West. On the other hand, this is not an apologetic analysis of North African politics: just as North African political life is maturing, so is its scholarly examination.

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*The Maghrib in Question: Essays in history and historiography.* Ed. Michel Le Gall and Kenneth Perkins. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, ©1997 Pp. xxv, 258. ISBN 0-292-76576-2 \$40.00

Research on North Africa has greatly increased during the last quarter century in North Africa as well as in Europe and the USA, and the number of monographs, articles, and specialized journals continues to grow. The current collection sets out "...to develop an overview of historiographical production in the years since the Maghrib states won their independence, to assess the quality of the work, and to identify its most salient trends" (p. vii). The contributors are veteran and new scholars of several disciplines, seven from Maghreb and six from the USA, and the coverage is from antiquity to contemporary times. Regarding the structure of the book, the editors decided to bring together "essays focusing on different periods in order to throw into relief important continuities, patterns of interaction, and linkages between eras that might otherwise escape notice" (p. ix). The volume is divided into three parts, and the papers, which include numerous bibliographical citations, are followed by endnotes, but there is no index.

The first part, Reconnoitering the Terrain, covers issues relating to the region as a whole and discusses overall problems by period (ancient, medieval, and modern). The second part, Modern History and Historiography, treats mostly individual countries, and shows how changes in politics are reflected in research. The third part, Theoretical Issues and Case Studies, deals with specific sources, periods, and case studies.

All papers cite numerous studies and reference sources in Arabic and in European languages. The book is a useful tool for further research, presenting a wide range of studies followed at times with evaluation. The absence of an index, though, makes it difficult to find studies on a particular subject (e.g., women or education). Very little is mentioned regarding the study of North African Jews, which has been constantly growing in Israel as well as in Europe and the USA. By now, Attal's 1973 bibliography on the subject (p. 69) has been replaced by his much larger 1993 edition.

The *Maghrib in Question* is a very useful tool for advanced scholars and beginners, as it presents the state of the art in many fields as well as theoretical issues and different points of view. It also shows what areas are less researched and where relevant primary sources are located.

This work should also stimulate scholars in other fields to pay more attention to developments in North Africa for comparative studies and thus help to rescue North African studies from their relative marginality.

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*Palestinian Women of Gaza and the West Bank*. Ed. Suha Sabbagh. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, ©1998. Pp. 262. ISBN 0-253-33377-6 Cloth \$39.35 ISBN 0-253-21174-3 Paper \$16.95

Emergency situations often make people act in unconventional ways, and social conventions regarding acceptable behavior are less strictly adhered to. Once the conditions have changed, pressures to return to previous modes of behavior might appear and encounter strong resistance from those affected because of the possible decrease in their freedoms and authority. A case in point is the condition of Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the late 1980s and the 1990s as a result of the Palestinian uprising (Intifada) which started in late 1987. The changes in the condition, behavior and authority of these women are examined in this collection by Palestinian and American scholars, most of whom are women, and many of whom teach at Bir Zayt University or are active in various Palestinian women's organizations. An important aspect of the book is the authors' open criticism of the Palestinian leadership and the majority of the male population for trying to deprive women of achievements gained during the Intifada and restricting as much as possible women's equality. The book includes an introduction, four parts, an appendix, end notes for most chapters, and an index.

The introduction by the editor, Suha Sabbagh, gives the background to women's participation in the Intifada, the history of Palestinian women's organizations, feminism and nationalism in the Arab world, and writings about Palestinian women. Here, and in several papers, it is stressed that Palestinian women were anxious not to suffer the same fate as the Algerian women, who were active during the Algerian War of Independence, but lost much of their status under independence.

The first part, "Defining the Role of Women", includes four papers detailing and analyzing the involvement of women in the Intifada. Women, especially adults, participated in demonstrations against Israel, at first in order to protect their sons, and later in demonstrations in their own behalf. Women became active in committees and supplied prepared food, first aid,

and other services. Women's involvement in mixed-gender environments became more accepted, and relations within the family started to change favorably for women.

The second part, "How Culture Recorded Women's Roles", examines gender issues in literature. Despite the obvious changes in women's behavior and status, their description in poetry did not basically change, due to the more traditional and conservative character of poetry, mostly written by men. On the other hand, many of the legends which started circulating during the Intifada do reflect the changing position of Palestinian women.

The third part, "The Double Burden of Women: Tradition and Occupation", stresses the fact that women are often twice oppressed: as women by traditional male society and as Palestinians by the Israeli occupation. Thus, women, who were still expected to fulfill all their traditional household tasks, and young women also, often felt that their participation in mixed-gender activities, including demonstrations and committee meetings, would define them as morally lax and deficient. Consequently, such activities could decrease and even nullify their chances to get married. Serving a prison term might cause them to be considered moral outcasts, while young men's esteemed heroism would increase following similar incidents and enhance their social and political status. This part, as well as the fourth, "Anticipations after Oslo", examine the background in Palestinian women's status during the second phase of the Intifada and the beginnings of the deliberations in preparation for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Thus, at the time of compiling this collection, the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian Women's Rights" had gone through several revisions, but had not yet been approved by the Palestinian National Assembly. The text of the third draft of this declaration, followed by an analysis of the various drafts, reflects the aspirations of Palestinian women and the reaction from male politicians, especially in the Islamic movement.

This is an important collection, which combines testimonies of Palestinian women with scholarly analysis. A major strength is that it provides an insider's voice—that of various Palestinian women, both young and adult, workers, professionals, housewives, and scholars. The fact that much criticism regarding the social, economic, and political status of Palestinian women is voiced by these women themselves makes these pronouncements sincere and worthy of attention.

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**Brief Reviews**

*The Sinai : A Physical geography.* By Ned H. Greenwood. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1997. Pp. xii, 148, ill., maps. Includes bibliographical references and index. ISBN 0 292 72798 4 (alk. paper) \$35.00 ; 0 292 72799 2 (pbk: alk. paper) \$16.95.

The author, a professor emeritus of geography at San Diego State University, admits in his preface to having first considered writing "a comprehensive geography of the Sinai," but upon realizing the overwhelming magnitude of that task, he settled on focusing on "the physical aspects of that geography." The result is a fine, succinct book which does an excellent job of meeting its stated purpose.

The book consists of seven chapters. The first, a brief introductory one, defines the Sinai physically and politically. The next four get down to the heart of the matter, describing the Sinai's physical geography: its plate tectonics and geology, geomorphology and drainage, weather and climate, and its soils. It concludes with a chapter on biogeography, and one on the human ecology of the region, with the intriguing title of: "May they eat lamb in paradise," borrowed, the author claims, from an old Bedouin greeting/benediction.

The style is lucid, easily followed by geographer and non-specialist alike. Technical terminology is generally defined in the text, and there is a glossary of Arabic place names. The numerous black and white line maps, despite their apparent simplicity, do much to enhance and complement the text. The black and white photographs are adequate, but doubtless the contrast between different types of terrain, or between terrain and vegetation, would have been greater had they been in colour; but then, that would probably have raised the cost of this reasonably priced book. It has a useful bibliography, and a good index.

All in all, it is a very informative, well-written book that would be a good addition to any Middle East collection.

CATHERINE A. ROCKWELL

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*Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and society in the Middle East.* By Nazih N. Ayubi. London; New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995. Pp. 459. Index, Bibliography, Paperback \$19.95.

This book consists of twelve chapters; in its final chapter, Ayubi concludes, "that the Arab state is an authoritarian state, and that it is so averse to democracy and resistant to its pressures should not, of course, be taken as a measure of the strength of that state—indeed quite the reverse." This is an important study by a well-known Arab author whose works on Arab politics and economics in English constitute an important body of research material. The major theme in this present work is that although most Arab states are "hard" states and some of them are "fierce" states, few of them are really "strong" states.

The author discusses in detail the origins of the "Arab-Islamic" state and the diverse and contrasting experiences of state formation in the Arab world. The author also deals with many questions often raised about the nature of the Arab state and Arab politics, such as: Why did all the attempts at Arab unity fail? Why have efforts at democratization born no fruit? Why the ruling caste is often very narrowly based and non-representative? In presenting answers to these questions the author, who chooses to focus attention on twelve Arab countries, depends heavily on the works in Arabic, by Arab political writers and scholars who have studied their own societies and political systems.

This book, which the author states took ten years to complete, has an extensive bibliography of thirty five pages and a detailed index. Ayubi's book is a valuable contribution to the study of politics of the Arab States.

RAGAI MAKAR

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*Language and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa.* Ed. Yasir Suleiman. London: Curzon, 1996. Pp. 192. ISBN 0-7007-0410-8.

*Language and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa* is a collection of essays by various contributors on the "significance of language in collective identity conceptualization, whether in ethnic or national terms." The essays define themselves in geographical terms and comprise, in addition to the Middle East and North Africa, the Central Asian and Caucasus countries of the former Soviet Union, and linguistically to include, in addition to the Semitic languages, the Turkic, Iranian, and Caucasian families.

The essays were originally presented at the Language and Ethnic Identity Symposium in the Middle East and North Africa held 3–5 July, 1995, at Edinburgh University. Suleiman's introduction summarizes each essay and addresses the common themes among them. Such issues as diglossia, written vs. spoken language, nationalism and language, ethnic and religious identity and language, language and alphabet reform, and language and (ethno-)politics are discussed in the collection, insofar as they bear on Arabic, Turkish and Turkic, Persian (Tajik), Kurdish, Berber, and Hebrew. Each essay concludes with a brief bibliography. Readers of these essays will no doubt turn first to those which deal with their individual geographical and linguistic areas of expertise, but will find on further reading that the conjunction of language and identity is universally applicable, regardless of its particular geographical or linguistic conditions, and that language and identity manifest themselves as powerful and often divisive forces with profound international social and political implications.

Since it is impossible for a brief review to deal comprehensively with a multifaceted collection such as this, with each contribution approaching its topic with its proper disciplinary methodology, a listing of the contents will serve to inform the reader:

Mike Holt, "Divided Loyalties: Language and Ethnic Identity in the Arab World"; Yasir Suleiman, "Language and Identity in Egyptian Nationalism"; Ibrahim Muhawi, "Language, Ethnicity and National Identity in the Tunisian Ethnic Joke"; Sarah Lawson-Sako and Itesh Sachdev, "Ethnolinguistic Communication in Tunisian Streets: Convergence and Divergence"; Muhammad Amara and Bernard Spolsky, "The Construction of Identity in a Divided Palestinian Village: Sociolinguistic Evidence"; Çiğdem Balim, "Turkish as a Symbol of Survival and Identity in Bulgaria and Turkey"; Farida Abu-Haidar, "Turkish as a Marker of Ethnic Identity and Religious Affiliation"; Jacob M. Landau, "Language and Ethnopolitics in the Ex-Soviet Muslim Republics"; Joyce Blau and Yasir Suleiman, "Language and Ethnic Identity in Kurdistan: An Historical Overview"; Mohamed Tilmatine and Yasir Suleiman, "Language and Identity: The Case of the Berber"; Bernard Spolsky, "Hebrew and Israeli Identity".

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