Book Reviews

LINDA S. NORTHRUP, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678-689 A.H./1279-1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1998). Pp. 350.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT IRWIN, London, England

This has, I believe, been a long time coming. However, it has been worth waiting for. It is lucid, assiduously annotated, and in quite a few areas it breaks new ground. The opening chapter on sources is exceptionally clear. I note that she is more positive than Donald Little (in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*) in her assessment of Ibn al-Furāt. It is also curious to note that the Copt Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī Faḍā'il appears to have identified so strongly with the anti-Crusader enterprise that he even refers to Qalāwūn as *al-Shahīd.* Her portrait of Qalāwūn, the man, brings few surprises. He was, as earlier historians have judged him to be, capable, cautious, and unusually clement to defeated rivals. What is unusual in Northrup's monograph is her close focus on such matters as the sultan's real and theoretical relationship with the caliph, the phrasing of the *'ahd* or investiture diploma, and the underlying significance of the sultan's entitulature. She points again and again to the ways in which Qalāwūn took care to associate himself with the traditions of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. Also welcome is her use of the *tadhkirah*s, which were drawn up to guide Qalāwūn's deputies during his absences from Egypt, in order to shed light on details of administration and especially the supervision of irrigation and agriculture.

Even more striking is Northrup's repeated emphasis on the strength of civilian hostility to Qalāwūn. It is one of her leading themes. Some of the sources for this are rather late, but she is inclined to believe them (and so am I). According to al-Maqrīzī, Qalāwūn was at first at least so unpopular that he did not dare ride out in a traditional accession procession. The reasons for the antipathy of many of the ulama towards Qalāwūn seem to have been various, but the main issue seems to have been the high-handed fund-raising procedures of Qalāwūn and Sanjar al-Shujā'ī and their ready resort to confiscations and misappropriations of *waqf*s. It is also clear that Syrians resented Egypt's dominance and, for example, the Syrian chronicler Ibn Kathīr stated that Egypt "was a place where wrongdoing was perpetrated with impunity."

Doubtless there were others who suspected that Qalāwūn had not dealt honestly with the sons of Baybars. The death of al-Malik al-Sa'īd, possibly of a fall from his horse, must have looked suspicious. Ibn Taghrībirdī claimed that, because

Qalāwūn poisoned the prince, he was loathed until he started making conquests. Qalāwūn's grand charitable gesture, the building of the Manṣūrī Bīmāristān and Madrasah, was also very unpopular, because of the extravagance and the corvées. It is also interesting to note that, at first at least, amirs must have had reservations about their new sultan, as they threatened to depose him if he did not advance against the Mongols in northern Syria.

Finally with regard to Qalāwūn's unpopularity, on page 155 Northrup notes that Qalāwūn "was met with demands for an end to his rule on what should have been his triumphal return to the city following the conquest of Tripoli in 688/1289," but tantalizingly she does not dwell any further on this final disappointment (unless I have missed it).

Northrup believes that there were commercial reasons for Qalāwūn's final offensives against Tripoli and Acre: "Repossession of the ports of the Syrian Littoral, therefore, gave the sultanate access to a port in which the slave trade had figured and greater control over the trade routes to the interior as well as the revenues from the commerce that passed through the ports and along those routes." Yet the history of the Syrian Littoral and its once great ports for at least the next half century or so was one of desolation. The trade routes to the interior were in abeyance and almost the only revenues to be earned were earned by a small band of troopers stationed at Acre who sold caged birds to the occasional pilgrim. (But Northrup has a much better case when she argues against Meron Benvenisti's contention that the Mamluks systematically destroyed Palestinian agriculture.)

I do have one other substantial reservation. On page 47, in a discussion of the value as a source of the chronicle of Qirṭay al-'Izzī al-Khazindārī she notes that I have raised doubts about its veracity, but does not refer to the article in which I did so. (I did so in "The Image of the Greek and the Frank in Medieval Arab Popular Literature" in Benjamin Arbel et al., eds., *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* [London, 1989], 226-42; also published in *Mediterranean History Review* 4 [1989]: 226-42.) Northrup goes on state that while she believes that "it is too early to dismiss the entire chronicle as fiction, it is perhaps necessary to use it with caution." While I did not dismiss all of Qirṭay's chronicle as fictional, I did note that some of his most improbable and exciting information is not corroborated by other chroniclers and I concluded that the "fact that the pages he devoted to the embassy to England are demonstrably nonsensical should encourage us to look with a colder eye on the other original snippets of information he offers elsewhere." When Qirṭay is the only source, as he is, for example, on Qalāwūn's recruitment of the sons of Baḥrīyah from the riffraff of the Bāb al-Lūq quarter (Northrup, 83), or on Qalāwūn's riding out on an accession procession (Northrup, 84), I think that we have to look on these reported incidents with great suspicion. The question mark over Qirṭay's reliability is not without

importance, as Northrup quotes *in extenso* an account relayed by Qirṭay of how Qalāwūn on separate days successively delegated military power, financial power, and spiritual power to three of his trusted officers. It is a fascinating narrative and one is grateful to see it translated, but I fear that its only value may lie in the light it sheds on the way that Qirṭay, or his alleged source Ibn al-Wāḥid, thought about things. As Northrup herself notes, we know practically nothing about the third officer, Ṭughrīl al-Shiblī, and there is no other evidence at all to suggest he was the supremo over spiritual affairs in Egypt. While on the subject of unreliable sources, I used to believe that the *waṣīyah* of the dying Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was an authentic document. (It is cited by Northrup in a note on p. 163 on the need for military discipline.) But I now believe it should be read more carefully in order to determine, if possible, who forged it.

LI GUO, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: Al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt al-zamān* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998). Two volumes.

REVIEWED BY DONALD P. LITTLE, McGill University

Readers of this journal will be familiar with the name Li Guo as a member of its editorial board and as author of the important review article, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art," which appeared in the first issue.[1] The present work is a revised version of his Ph.D. dissertation on al-Yūnīnī's continuation of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's famous history *Mir'āt al-Zamān*.[2] Since the *Dhayl* has long been recognized as one of the key contemporary sources for Baḥrī history during al-Yūnīnī's lifetime (640-726/1242-1326) spent mainly in Syria, both Guo's edition and translation and his clarification of its relationship to other Mamluk histories should be of considerable interest to scholars.

Unfortunately, publication of the *Dhayl* has been sporadic, piecemeal, and, until Guo's work, sometimes incompetent. The most substantial portion of the text appeared in four volumes some forty years ago, covering the years 654-86.[3] Ironically, this section is of secondary significance, being based for the most part

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[1] *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997):15-43.

[2] "The Middle Baḥrī Mamluks in Medieval Syrian Historiography: The Years 1297-1302 in the *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* Attributed to Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsá al-Yūnīnī; A Critical Edition with Introduction, Annotated Translation, and Source Criticism," Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 1994.

[3] (Hyderabad,1954-61).