

ARABICA

EARLY MODERN HISTORY OF BILĀD AL-ŠĀM

COORDONNÉ PAR

THOMAS PHILIPP

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policy in the late Ottoman empire" (p. 125) and that a certain 'Ubaysī had always had good connections to the Qādirī-friendly merchants' network in Aleppo "because his old school friend 'Abd ar-Rahmān al-Ḥaḡḡār was married with a wife from the Ṭabbāḥ family which was clearly linked to that network" (196).

One of the major advantages of network analysis—says Eich—is its open-endedness (p. 9), but historical contingency has a hard day in this book. All acts and processes being described here seem to be machinated by a coolly calculating agency called 'network'. Abū l-Hudā's political actions, his positions seem to be exclusively be caused by and owed to his position within the local and regional networks of the Fertile Crescent. But what about the rest of the Ottoman empire? Why was Abū l-Hudā getting more and more isolated in the 1890s, why not earlier, why not later? Although Eich gives us rich information on the downfall of Abū l-Hudā's own networks and the upsurge of those of his adversaries, one cannot really grasp why Abū l-Hudā was able to diversify his network in the 1870 and 1880s (and thus to maintain his power), but not in the 1890s.

At the end Eich himself states that the network of Abū l-Hudā hardly was a real network. Nothing in the relations of Abū l-Hudā to the Rifā'īya does indicate that there existed "any kind of organisation" (p. 216) and only very few persons owed their contacts to each other to the initiation into the order.

The last chapter (4) on the late works of Abū l-Hudā after 1900 turns to a history of ideas and discusses his ideological relationship and proximity to the Salafiya. (Eich might have found here a rewarding task for his network analysis approach by asking whether Abū l-Hudā's ideological rapprochement to the Salafiya might be possibly interpreted as the attempt to build new networks amongst the leading Salafīs.) Eich finally comes to the conclusion that Abū l-Hudā, as a "cautious reformer", and the *Salafīs* "found themselves in an open dialogue carrying on for years and showing in most aspects identical positions" (258f).

Thomas Eich's dissertation would have been even stronger and more convincing if it had abstained from a somewhat hypertrophic kind of network analysis, had chosen a sharper focus and been written in a more readable style. In principle, however, this study has dared to step out onto the still remaining white spots in our mental map of Middle Eastern history.

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X Dalal ARSUZI-ELAMIR: *Arabischer Nationalismus in Syrien. Zaki al-Arsuzi und die arabisch-nationale Bewegung an der Peripherie Alexandretta/Antakya 1930-1938* (Zaki al-Arsuzi and the Arab National Movement at the Periphery Alexandretta/Antakya 1930-1938). Münster/Hamburg/London: Lit Verlag 2003. ii, 338 pp. (= Studien zur Zeitgeschichte des Nahen Ostens und Nordafrikas, vol. 9)

Despite the fact that quite a number of important studies about the history of the Arab East under European mandatory rule have appeared, there is still ample room for enhancing our knowledge of crucial aspects of that history and the unusu-

ally complicated, multi-faceted and protracted evolution of Arab nationalism that accompanied it. In both respects, the present study is an important contribution. It gives, on the one hand, a narrative of how the district of Alexandretta as an integral part of Syria was called into question and finally severed from mandatory Syria and annexed by Turkey. On the other hand, it tackles the person and the actions of Zaki al-Arsuzi (1900-68), the most prominent figure in the nationalist agitation during the Alexandretta crisis and the source of inspiration for a group of people that later became one of the main constituent elements of the Baath party.

The Alexandretta issue remains a trauma for Arab national consciousness: Turkey could revise the post-Ottoman Turkish-Arab border in its favour, something that would most probably not have happened had it not been for foreign mandatory rule—cause and symbol of Arab weakness at the same time. Thus, the present study, by tackling this sensitive yet neglected issue, may also contribute to a sound view of the recent Arab past, for a sober analysis and proper understanding of a trauma is the first precondition for coming to terms with it.

After two introductory chapters discussing the state of the art and presenting the Alexandretta issue in all its importance, the author traces the life of Zaki al-Arsuzi up to 1934 when he was thrown out of his job as a school teacher for his nationalist leanings and when the group of nationalists around him began to prepare for the fight against the separation of the district from Syria. Al-Arsuzi appears as a keen young man who became so much of a nuisance that the authorities sent him to study philosophy in Paris just to get him out of the way but who returned to Syria even more nationalist than before and was eventually kicked out of school service for that very reason.

The bulk of the book is a quite detailed account of the unfolding of the Alexandretta crisis from the Turkish-French Ankara Treaty of October 1921 that gave Turkey a certain foothold in the district till the final annexation of the district by Turkey in June 1939. The author explains that outcome by looking also at the interests and actions of several international and regional players: Britain, Germany, France, Turkey, and Syria. The attempt of al-Arsuzi and his fellow nationalists to prevent the loss of the district for Syria was doomed to failure. France who still wielded power in Syria gave way to Turkish demands because, in the pre-war situation, she wanted to keep Turkey in the Western fold. That much is accepted wisdom. What is new here is the emphasis on the Syrian dynamic of the crisis. In Arsuzi-Elamir's view, Arab interests in the district were the victim not only of France's conciliatory stand towards Turkey but also of the Syrian government's conciliatory stand towards France—it wanted to rescue the French-Syrian treaty of September 1936 and the prospect of independence enshrined therein. That stand in turn is explained by the preponderance in the government of largely Damascus-based forces prepared to sacrifice the periphery to the point of truncating national territory. In relation to the centre, the much more ardent nationalists of the Alexandretta district were too weak to prevail against that trend. The explanation of their defeat by placing them in the tension between centre and periphery is arguably the most provoking feature of the book.

In a final chapter, the author gives a sketch of al-Arsuzi's life after the defeat which he spent in Damascus—a disappointed, bitter, rather isolated man who never again engaged in practical politics but who nevertheless continued to be revered

as some kind of a national hero and whose writings inspired much of the ideology of the Baath party. She also draws a sketch of a revisionist reading of the origins of the Baath in which al-Arsuzi's group and thoughts are given more prominence than usual.

As a niece of al-Arsuzi, the author takes a strong personal interest in her subject. Being aware of the risks that entails for the objectivity of her study, she tries—and largely succeeds—to keep them in check by putting events and persons in their historical context, as she herself says (p. 13). The study draws on a broad variety of sources. In addition to published materials—among them al-Arsuzi's own writings—the author used documents from (mostly British, German and Syrian) public archives as well as documents from private collections of al-Arsuzi's colleagues and interviews with those persons. In a documentary annex (curiously called "Register"—index—here), the author provides some important League of Nations documents relating to the question as well as some letters of contemporary militants in the Arabic original and German translation.

By and large, the study draws a sharp and lively picture of its two subjects and thus contributes a great deal to our knowledge of the Alexandretta issue and al-Arsuzi's life. If there is anything to be desired it is to see if and how all this was reflected in his writings and to what extent they in turn influenced Baath ideology and practice. That might be explored in a further study. For the time being, let us hope that the book will be published in English and thus accessible to a wider audience of Syria scholars.

Bremen

ALEXANDER FLORES

Christoph SCHUMANN: *Radikalnationalismus in Syrien und Libanon. Politische Sozialisation und Elitenbildung 1930-1958*. Schriften des Deutschen Orient-Instituts, Hamburg 2001, 354 pp.

Within the last decades, the modern Middle East has been the subject of a vast number of studies in history and political science. Rarely, however, are these issues tackled with such an elaborate methodological approach as in this study. Christoph Schumann sets out to consider the mediating principles between social origin, higher education and political way of thinking. He primarily focuses on the relation between social and political socialization and long-range character patterns of individuals and groups. His material consists, mainly, of autobiographical accounts, written by men who were deeply involved in national Arab movements from the thirties of the 20th century onward.

Among historians, the value of autobiography as a historical source is a controversial issue. Some scholars cautiously examine autobiographies as "ego-documents" in order to purge them from their subjective, literary, or—*horribile dictu*—fictional elements. Others, less apprehensively, believe that autobiographies add to our knowledge of historical processes a layer of dimensions which other branches of historical sources are unable to represent. The tensions between the two "schools" of thinking are ages old; one of the earlier combatants was Benjamin Disraeli,

whose high esteem of (auto-)biographies as a historical source in its purest form, unhampered by the involuntary additions of second-hand transmitters, strengthened the second "school" for a while.

Schumann, too, belongs to the second of these "schools", but he is not one of its naive adherents, as can be seen from his sub-chapter "Autobiography as a Historical Source". On the contrary, he starts with a long theoretical chapter, "On Theory and Method", in which he clarifies the most important of his theoretical points of reference and practical tools of interpretation. Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as "invented" and Pierre Bourdieu's notions of "field" and "habitus" rank high in the development of his argument. Unlike many a researcher, who at the outset of his work drops current names and theories only superficially, Schumann actually reconsiders the mentioned theories time and again.

This becomes obvious in the second chapter of his research, in which he deals with four autobiographical case-studies: with the Druze Sa'īd Abū al-Ḥusn (b. 1912, Djebel Druz), the Lebanese Muṣṭafa 'Abd as-Sāṭir (b. 1922, Baalbek), the Palestinian Hishām Sharābī (b. 1927, Jaffa), and the Syrian Aḥmad 'Abd al-Karīm (b. 1928, Hawran). In this chapter, Schumann's limitation of his research to the years 1930-1958 makes full sense. These years were, on the one hand, formative years for the individual autobiographer, on the other hand, and probably more importantly they were, formative years for state-building in Lebanon and Syria. The SSNP (Syrian Social Nationalist Party), the small but influential party of Anṭūn Sa'āda, favouring the unification of "Greater Syria", plays a major role, as two out of the four autobiographers served as active members in it. The remaining two belonged to the "League of National Action", a branch of radical pan-Arabism, and the Syrian Ba't-Party.

The third chapter, "Collective-biographical cross-section I" is based on over a dozen autobiographic and deals with class-structure and power-relations in Lebanon and Syria in the first half of the 20th century, but at the same time shows the emergence of a special "habitus" among the growing intellectual elite. Therefore the results of the fourth and last chapter, "Collective-biographical cross-section II", devoted to a study of the relation between the individual and his party, comes as no surprise. It argues in favour of the thesis, that political radicalism and intellectual "habitus" fused easily in the given period, despite different social milieus, educational preconditions and social hopes of the individuals.

For the historian and political scientist the study is of great value, as it brilliantly exposes an inner, subjective and self-justifying perspective of the political process, which is usually lacking in works dealing with the emergence, nature and fate of Arab nationalism. For a literary historian, too, the study is of interest, especially for the reflections of the "I" on his childhood years, family life and formative periods. Compared with autobiographies of writers or intellectuals of an academic milieu, however, these political self-accounts are usually more restrictive, less personal or concerned with private matters, not to speak of intimacy, as they are aiming at the formation of a collective (party-)identity rather than an individual perspective. Obviously they are closer to "memoirs" than to autobiography proper, as memoirs are by definition political recollections that present the individual as a witness, sometimes even active participant, of his life-time. But this observation rep-