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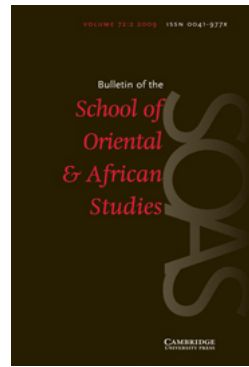
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Youssef M. Choueiri (ed.): *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*. (Blackwell Companions to World History.) xvii, 602 pp. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. £85. ISBN 1405106816.

Nelida Fuccaro

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Aspects of Islam's intellectual history are presented accessibly, with a certain inevitable tendency to allude to issues and phenomena without in-depth discussion. Particularly useful are the chapters on law and Sunni theology; the former provides a succinct account of the intellectual environment within which early Islamic jurisprudence was formed, while the latter gives a very accessible overview of the rather complex theological problems discussed in early Islam. Some of the book's chapter headings are fairly unusual and respond to contemporary stereotypical perceptions of Islamic beliefs and practices. The chapter on paradise (pp. 145–54) must be seen as a response to the sensationalist media coverage of Muslim afterlife beliefs which, through their sensuous imagery, seem to portray paradise as a place fulfilling male sexual fantasies and have apparently provided suicide bombers with particularly strong eschatological motivations for their actions. Lohlker, in response, provides a discussion of various interpretations of the woman's place in Islamic eschatology. The chapter on Muslim women (pp. 234–40) illustrates the complexities enshrined in any non-Muslim discourse on "the Muslim woman" and counters common stereotypes by pointing at the diversity of Muslim women's experiences.

This book does not aim to provide the ultimate intellectual history of Islam, but rather alludes to various intellectual discourses within Islamic symbolic structures – discourses that are presented as dynamic, flexible and diverse. Particularly useful are not only the inclusion of topical issues and debates but also the up-to-date bibliography with the latest publications within the field and informative web resources. Although the fragmentary style of the book can sometimes be challenging, it is certainly a good example of a textbook that takes seriously the postmodern insistence on difference and scepticism towards totalizing discourses and their creation of "Otherness" in its account of Islam's intellectual history.

Oliver Scharbrodt

YOUSSEF M. CHOUERI (ed.):

A Companion to the History of the Middle East.

(Blackwell Companions to World History.) xvii, 602 pp. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. £85. ISBN 1405106816.

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Conceived with the most recent scholarly efforts in mind, this *Companion to the History of the Middle East* includes a balanced collection of essays on subjects from the early Islamic to the contemporary periods covering the Arab World, Iran, Turkey and Israel. As the editor suggests in the introduction, the study of the history of the modern Middle East has incorporated a number of different paradigms since it emerged as a separate field of study after the Second World War. These paradigms have ranged from Orientalist modes of historical explanation of regional cultures and societies to approaches which construed processes of modernization as the exclusive domain of Western influence. This edited volume is particularly timely as the field is undoubtedly more sophisticated and varied than it has ever been. It charts the historical development of the region from the world of early Islam and Islamic Empires to that of colonialism and nation building. Several key themes constitute its overarching framework: the evolution of political structures, institutions and state systems, and of the societies and ideologies which produced them. In providing a variety of insights into new scholarship on the region in a lively

and succinct manner, this *Companion to the History of the Middle East* is particularly useful for undergraduate teaching.

Contributions which include historiographical surveys deserve special mention as short introductions to specific topics. Gerald Hawting's discussion of the Western scholarly tradition on the rise of Islam is lucid and thought-provoking. Alexander Knysh's parallel survey of the historiography of Sufism is equally stimulating. The articles by Michael Bonine and André Raymond on the city discuss and challenge traditional paradigms on Islamic urbanism, while clearly signposting the importance of urban milieus as units of analysis of past and present Middle Eastern politics, societies and cultures. Other contributions provide valuable overviews of themes which do not regularly feature in their own right in textbooks dealing with modern Middle Eastern history. This is the case for the articles on Pan-Arabism by Youssef Choueiri and on Turkish and Iranian nationalisms by Ioannis Gregoriadis and Ali Ansari. The survey on political parties and trade unions by Raymond Hinnebusch and that on colonialism and independence by Peter Sluglett provide incisive cross-regional overviews of topics which are often handled in more specific geographical contexts.

For those readers inclined to consider the past in the light of current developments (and vice versa) this edited volume also features a final chapter on topical issues and contemporary challenges including oil, gender, ethno-nationalism and civil society. This chapter consists of panoramic, yet cogent, views on themes which tackle the issue of legitimacy from a variety of perspectives, posing crucial questions on the future of the region in the twenty-first century. These issues are also similar to those which have engaged political historians dealing with the twentieth century. In this respect this volume is particularly suited for a multi-disciplinary student audience as is reflected in the profile of some of its contributors. It provides an informed historical context to students of politics, religious studies and international relations, among other subjects, while also catering for non-specialist readers interested in the Middle East.

Nelida Fuccaro

DAWN CHATTY (ed.):

Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century.

(Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section One, The Near and Middle East.)
xliii, 1060 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006. €185. ISBN 90 04 14792 6.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000615

This is a juggernaut of a book, consisting of thirty-seven papers, some photographs and an extended introduction. Such a compendium is, perhaps inevitably, enormously varied and somewhat uneven. Many of the contributors to this volume will be well known to students of pastoral nomads in the Middle East; they include: Frank Stewart writing on Bedouin customary law; Bruce Ingham on Arabian dialects; Donald Cole on the Al Murrah of Saudi Arabia; William and Fidelity Lancaster with an impressive survey on rural tribesmen of Bilād al-Sham; Soraya Altorki and Donald Cole on land and identity among the Awlad Ali of Egypt; and Lila Abu-Lughod on their love poetry. Many of the other papers will also be of considerable interest to specialists and others who take a serious interest in the region.