

archaeological studies, such as the pioneering studies of Herzfeld or the marvelous, meticulous repositing of the city by Alistair Northedge. All that has now changed. For Matthew Gordon has not merely populated Northedge's brilliant but nevertheless desolate ruins, he has provided the first truly rich portrait of Samarra's elite social and political life since al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ṭabarī, and others made it their job to do so.

In four chapters sandwiched between an introduction and conclusion, Gordon provides a history that is both chronologically and topically organized. In the introduction, Gordon takes issue with earlier, sweeping studies such as those of Ayalon, Pipes, and Crone, which have—rightly or wrongly—tended to see the Samarran military as forerunners of the *mamlūk* institution of the later Middle Ages. Be that as it may, Gordon argues, before any such direct connections can be made, our knowledge of the initial phases of military slavery in Samarra needs to be much more refined. The refinement of our image of the Samarran Turks is Gordon's main contribution. He shows, in particular, the varied fortunes of different segments within Samarran Turkish society, a variance that Gordon attributes to the various means by which different groups arrived in Iraq: as purchased slaves, voluntary—and generally high-falutin'—members, or as members of second and later generations.

Chap. 1 covers the earliest period of the Turkish presence in 'Abbasid Iraq, and Gordon stresses, above all, the importance of the role of al-Ma'mūn (and the crisis of the Fourth Civil War) in cultivating the earliest Turkish guard, early in the ninth century. This is especially important given that that honor is usually bestowed upon al-Ma'mūn's brother, Abū Ishāq al-Mu'tasim. It is also in this chapter that Gordon makes (p. 17) the key distinction between the two main segments of Samarran Turkish society: the "Baghdadi" Turks (Turks acquired in Baghdad from private sources) and "steppe" Turks (those acquired directly from Central Asian sources). Regiments from both sources, as well as the Transoxanian and Maghāribā regiments, helped save the caliphate from collapse during the civil war. Chap. 2 chronicles the further growth of the Turkish guard and details the planning, construction, and settlement of al-Mu'tasim's new capital city at Samarra.

But it is in chap. 3 that Gordon traces the ascent of mere Turkish regiments to key political forces in the caliphate and the emergence of the Samarran Turkish elite, such men as Waṣīf, Bughā, Ītākh, and Ashinās. Chap. 4 then details the sources of this new authority: military and administrative positions, provincial postings, personal networks, and land grants (here Gordon's supposition of a "new style" *iqṭā'* is intriguing). Here Gordon also notes the increasingly shrill response on the part of broader Islamic society and especially the urban intellectuals to the rise of Turkish influence at court, a response that presages the declining influence of the Turkish guard under al-Muwaffaq (r. 892–902) chronicled in Gordon's conclusion. The book is rounded out with two valuable appendixes, one on retainer forces in the early Islamic period and one on some notable families of Turkish origin.

Gordon's book is well written and meticulously researched. By highlighting the role of al-Ma'mūn, by nuancing the diverse experiences of different members of the Samarran Turkish community, and, above all, by approaching his subject with sensitivity and an eye for the human, Gordon's book fills a clear gap in our understanding of an early Islamic community.

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The Persian Presence in the Islamic World.
Edited by RICHARD G. HOVANNISIAN and
GEORGES SABAGH. Giorgio Levi della Vida
Conferences, Thirteenth Conference. Cam-
bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
Pp. xii + 267. \$64.95.

UCLA's Giorgio Levi della Vida biennial conferences offer us impressive discussions on a theme enriched by the honorand during his or her career in Islamics. Unlike most contemporary Arabists and Persianists, Columbia's Ehsan Yarshater is an Iranist with a commendable range and rigor, who through his writings and indefatigable editorship of the Ṭabarī project, *Bibliotheca Persica* series, and the magisterial *Encyclopædia Iranica* (10 vols. to date) truly sharpened our awareness of Iran's contribution to the Islamic ecumene.

Yarshater's *fin-de-siècle* survey of pre-Islamic and Perso-Islamic culture (pp. 4–125), a reading for history's consumption, will long remain the finest introduction to Irano-Islamic studies ever. It precedes six papers by his long-time colleagues on historiography, poetics, painting, astronomy, and philology, all *ustāds* (Ar. *ustādh* < NP *ustād*, *ōstād*; MP *ōstāt*; ManMP *'wyst'd* should have been mentioned in the list of lexical borrowings on pp. 51–54). George Saliba's study of the Persian contribution to astronomy vindicates the eclectic nature of Perso-Islamic culture—Arabic was the medium of treatises in not only the human and natural sciences but also propography, philosophy, and grammar in which Iranians were pioneers. Annemarie Schimmel, recently deceased, demonstrated the resonance of Persian literary expression ranging from Sa'di, Niẓāmī, and Ḥāfīz, as well as 'Urfī and Faizī of the *sabk-i hindī* style, to Goethe, von Hammer, Rückert, and Iqbal across the pre- and modern Occident and Orient. Two reflective studies by Gerhard Böwering and Oleg Grabar deal respectively with the significance of time reckoning in Shi'ite gnosis and the reference and interdependence of illustrations to texts or *realia*. C. E. Bosworth examines the cultivation of historiography by Iranians and the subsequent debt owed to them by their Turkish and Indian counterparts. A carefully sustained argument shows that the skill and reliability of Persian compilers forecloses criticism by those who after H. A. R. Gibb still maintain that Persian historians were stuck in the “wastes of rhetoric.” The late Gerhard Doerfer's discussion of lexical and literary influences in Turkic languages reveals the enduring symbiosis between speakers of Iranian and Turkic from Late Antiquity to our times.

The Manichaean usage of “seal of the prophets” as reported by Muslim authors for Mānī is tenuous (p. 39). Rather than denoting his finality in an apostolic succession, it implies a “sign,” and semantic allusions have been attested elsewhere (G. Stroumsa, “‘Seal of the Prophets’: The Nature of a Manichaean Metaphor,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 [1986]: 61–74). Shaul Shaked has rightly proposed reservations to the *bismillāh* formula (p. 45): antecedents for this were equally evident in Zoroastrian, Manichaean, and Judeo-Christian apotropaic, le-

gal, and epistolary formulas (also cf. Jer. xxvi.9 and Col. iii.17). To MP *gāwmēš* > Ar. pl. *jawāmīs* “buffalo” (p. 52), add also Ar. *kāwmāš* (Jāhīz, *al-Ḥayawān*, vol. 7 [Cairo, 1938–45], p. 243). A few niggles were observed: the mistyped schwa in Amāsha Spēntas and Amāretāt (p. 37) and *činvatō pāratu* (p. 40), Variorum for “Varioram” (p. 41, n. 158), *khandaq* for *kandaq* (p. 52), *sag* for *sang* (p. 53), Tata not “Tate Press” s.v. J. Duchesne-Guillemin (p. 110), Osmanli and Tīmūrids for “Osmali” and Tīmūids” (p. 87, nn. 304 and 306), and 1987 for “1996” as the publication year of the Helmut Humbach *Festschrift* (p. 249, n. 51).

A *caveat emptor* to the prospective “Persian chauvinist” intending to purchase and bolster “his exaggerated and ahistorical views” (p. 3) is applicable to other regional bigots too, who mindlessly rail against neighbor and foreigner, especially the Orientalist.

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The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, and Colonial Powers. By JOHN JOSEPH. *Studies in Christian Mission*, vol. 26. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000. Pp. xii + 290. \$94.

Princeton University Press published the first edition of this book in 1961 under the title *The Nestorians and Their Muslim Neighbors: A Study of Western Influence on Their Relations* (expanded from a 1956 Princeton University dissertation supervised by Philip K. Hitti). The product of extensive research in Syriac, Arabic, and European sources, *The Nestorians* offered a pioneering study in the political and social history of the “Nestorian” or East-Syrian Church. This new edition, much expanded and revised, provides a lucid, reliable, and engaging history of the Church of the East from its origins until the late twentieth century. It is a landmark book that deserves to be widely read, particularly by historians of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Middle East.