

of a creative redefinition and negotiation of that "past," not a reproduction of a fixed set of immortal Persianate signs and symbols. We need an analysis of the multiple, changing heterodoxies as well as the Islams, the Shi'isms (tribal, rural, urban; folk and legalistic), and the Sunnisms in each historical period. Shi'i clerics such as al-Karaki sometimes faced accusations of *ghuluww*, and defended *tabarra'iyyān* against both Sunni and Shi'i clerics in Safavid and Ottoman territories—one group casting the practice as reckless, and the other as *ghuluww*. In addition, it is unclear how one is to identify what and who is "Persianate." Babayan notes, for instance, that Qarmati Arabs entertained Persianate notions of cyclical time even though they did not invoke "the Iranian genealogies in which these precepts had converged." Babayan defines "Persianate" as a multiracial cultural category, but it appears at times to be a religious category of a racial origin—namely, Alid/Shi'i/heterodox of Iranian qualities. There is also little consideration of socioeconomic factors. Does a Sunni Persian aristocrat from Qazvin share and have access to the same sets of cultural meanings as a Shi'i/Alid guildsman from Isfahan in the late 15th century?

Overall, Babayan's attempt to shift the emphasis from shari'a-based Islamic narratives to heterodox experiences in understanding Islamic history is a praiseworthy task, and a challenging one. Despite the questions I have raised, Babayan's study is a welcome attempt to integrate millenarianism and "unorthodox" notions of time and prophecy into the trajectory of Islamic history.

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DALAL ARSUZI-ELAMIR, *Arabischer Nationalismus in Syrien: Zākī al-Arsūzī und die arabischnationale Bewegung an der Peripherie Alexandretta/Antakya 1930–1938*, Studien zur Zeitgeschichte des Nahen Ostens und Nordafrikas 9 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003). Pp. 340. €39.90 paper.

REVIEWED BY PETER WIEN, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Al-Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco; e-mail: p.wien@alakhawayn.ma

The cession of the Alexandretta region to Turkey in 1938–39 is one of the key events of French colonial policy during the Mandate period in Syria. France's favorable treatment of the Turkish minority in the so-called Sanjak fit well into its "divide and rule" policy of strengthening communal and confessional identities to weaken feelings of Syrian unity. Furthermore, the final cession of the region was a concession to Syria's strong northern neighbor at a time of heightened international tensions that finally led to World War II.

While the history of Arab nationalism in Syria has been written primarily from the perspective of the Syrian metropolis, Damascus, Dalal Arsuzi-Elamir's book now provides students of Arab nationalism with an in-depth study of resistance activities against the respective French and Turkish policies and the international and domestic implications of the Alexandretta crisis in the 1930s. Arsuzi-Elamir follows a dual approach in writing this history. In the first part of her book, she uses biographical material on the life of her uncle, the Arab nationalist leader Zaki al-Arsuzi, as a starting point to inquire into the special conditions of Syrian Arab nationalism in the multiethnic and multiconfessional environment of the Alexandretta region. In the second part, she makes extensive use of Arabic-language material—scholarly as well as autobiographical material and interviews—and archival sources of multiple origins to write the political history of the events and developments preceding the Alexandretta crisis and the cession of the Sanjak to Turkey. The last section of the book is dedicated to

al-Arsuzi's life and political activities in Damascus after he migrated to Syria together with a large number of Arab inhabitants of the Alexandretta region following the events of 1938.

Arsuzi-Elamir's merit is that she shifts the point of focus away from the Syrian capital toward the specific conditions of the periphery. Her research makes clear that these conditions made the Arab nationalist movement in the Alexandretta region more committed and focused and provided it with a wider appeal than in the rest of Syria. On the one hand, this was due to the existence of a clear opponent embodied in Turkish Kemalists in the Sanjak. On the other hand, the personality and the teachings of al-Arsuzi himself promoted a form of Arab nationalism that entailed socialist principles. Arsuzi-Elamir describes her uncle as a charismatic leader who turned Alexandretta's branch of 'Usbat al-'Amal al-Quami into a popular movement reaching beyond the small intellectual circles that the same organization appealed to in Damascus. Apparently, al-Arsuzi rejected the exclusive and intellectual appeal of the 'Usbat in Damascus.

A weakness of the book is that it is a biography of al-Arsuzi and a political history of the Alexandretta crisis at the same time. Arsuzi-Elamir tries to localize her main protagonist in his sociopolitical environment, but her approach lacks the necessary theoretical foundations for an in-depth interpretation of the biographical material. Many quotations of al-Arsuzi's and his followers' accounts pass without analytical comments. The reader has to accept the statements at face value. An interpretation of the statements in the light of contemporary discourses or the hermeneutical implications of an autobiographer's perspective would provide interesting answers to a variety of psychobiographical questions. There is a tendency in many of the cited quotes to glorify or even mystify the "grand teacher." These psychosocial aspects of the sources are largely overlooked, even though they would lead to an interesting level of interpretation. An example of where this would have been fruitful is a section in which Arsuzi-Elamir mentions her uncle's metaphysical tendencies, which apparently helped him bring secular nationalism into line with the people's religiosity.

One of the book's strengths lies in its comprehensive grasp of the existing Arabic literature. Too many researchers in the so-called West still do not make the effort to gain an overview of such sources that otherwise remain closed to Western readers. Thus, the book contains very interesting material, such as the account of the French practice of creating schools in Alexandretta that were divided along confessional lines to discourage Alawite students from obtaining higher education (to serve "divide and rule" principles). With the same goal, the Mandate authorities seem to have favored Turkish institutions of higher learning. Some of these accounts, however, are based solely on Arab historiography, which gives rise to the question of whether this is a biased point of view. Finding this out would have required more source critique.

Arsuzi-Elamir offers a deep insight into the complex international and domestic implications of the Alexandretta crisis in the late 1930s based on her extensive research in German and British diplomatic archives and Syrian private and public collections. Some sections could have been presented in a more concise way, especially those that look beyond the Alexandretta region to describe the context of Syrian Arab nationalist politics. Some lengthy passages simply paraphrase existing studies.

The book closes with an appendix that reproduces several of the quoted documents together with a German translation, among them some handwritten letters by al-Arsuzi. To sum up, the study offers a lot of interesting material on the life and political activities of Zaki al-Arsuzi as well as on Syrian politics in the period between the two world wars. Thus, the book will be an important source for all researchers of Arab nationalism and Syria who read German.