

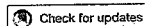
Al-Masag, c. 32, sy. 3, 2020 London.

the reader as to the little-known nature of workshops, Blessing explains stylistic affinities through the suggestion that workshop structure itself adapted to the needs of very different patrons. In this light, a discussion of the possible definitions of workshops and the roles of their members should help clarify aspects such as architects' signatures and levels of mobility, in addition to making explicit any undue assumptions that later, specifically Ottoman, models might be placing on the medieval period.

The current book illustrates vividly that the passage from Saljūq to Mongol power in Anatolia was not a simple matter of supplanting one authority with another. The Islamic architecture of Anatolia does show it to be a distinctive place as well as a frontier. As such, this book enriches the discourses on the meaning of style in architecture as well as on the role of frontiers in the medieval world.³

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The Works of Ibn Wāḍih al-Ya'qūbī. An English Translation, Matthew S. Gordon, Chase F. Robinson, Everett K. Rowson, and Michael Fishbein (Eds), 3 vols., [Islamic History and Civilization. Texts and Studies 152.1-3], 2018 Leiden: E.J. Brill, x, vi, vi + 1384 pp., maps, €375.00/US \$432.00 (hardback), ISBN 9789004356085

Academics have always recognised the importance of the works of al-Ya'qūbī (fl. late 3rd/9th century). He was an erudite figure who led a fascinating career. An Iraqī Shī'ite, al-Ya'qūbī worked in various capacities for several of the nascent (largely Sunni) regional dynasties that challenged and fragmented 'Abbasid authority from central Asia to North Africa. Well-travelled and well-informed, al-Ya'qūbī's writings are among the earliest and most important historical sources for Islamic and Caliphal history. Moreover, as noted in the *Introduction* to these volumes, unlike many of his peers and successors, al-Ya'qūbī avoids repetition of parallel accounts and the lengthy chains of transmission (*isnād*), rendering his prose lively and engaging. In regard to content and style, al-Ya'qūbī is an author who deserves a larger readership.

For over a millennium, students and scholars have been enlightened by al-Ya'qūbī's works. Hence, the publication of his dossier into English has been eagerly anticipated, and the present edition does not disappoint. Produced by a dozen distinguished scholars over the span of two decades, the project was harmonised by an editorial team led by Matthew Gordon; all are to be commended for seeing such a difficult task to its fruition. No doubt the present publication will make al-Ya'qūbī and his works more accessible to a much wider audience than those who can read Arabic or are strictly interested in Middle Eastern history.

Here we have a translation of the entirety of al-Ya'qūbī's extant corpus. *The Book of the Adaptation of Men* (*Mushākalat al-nās*) and the *Geography* (*Kitāb al-Buldān*) are published in the initial volume. Volume two focuses on the first part of the *History* (*al-Ta'rikh*), which surveys creation through roughly the 1st/6th century and a lengthy third volume

³See Abulafia, David and Nora Berend eds., *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*. Aldershot, Hants, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.

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focused on the rise of Islam to the late 3rd/9th century. Significantly, the textual basis for each of these works was carefully scrutinised (pp. 23–27). For the *History*, the translators preferred MS Manchester Arabic 801 (R46158) to M. Th. Houtsma's 1883 standard edition, which is based on a later copy of the same manuscript; still, both texts were meticulously compared. The *Geography* is based on M. J. De Goeje's 1892 edition, though three scholars (P. Cobb, M. Gordon, and M. Fishbein: pp. 218–234) supplied texts to several of the lacunae in that edition based on quotations preserved in other texts. The *Adaptation of Men* is translated here anew by M. Fishbein, who provided ample notation to that laconic work. These diligent efforts provide an additional layer of complexity and authority to this English edition. By consistently searching out the best readings, these scholars have provided translations that are, ironically, more accurate—and in the case of *Kitāb al-Buldān*, more complete—than the published Arabic editions on which they are based. Certainly, the Arabic originals can never be replaced; nonetheless, this scholarly publication has made it all but impossible for anyone to approach the published Arabic texts without consulting it. Beyond textual issues, judicious footnotes throughout these volumes provide the reader with a wealth of expert knowledge, as well as references to textual and thematic parallels in the writings of a host of "medieval" Arabic authors and modern studies.

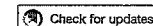
The three volumes (in continuous pagination) contain a concise but important *Introduction* and a *Biographical Sketch* (pp. 1–8, 9–22) that sift through the various accounts of al-Ya'qūbī's career and succinctly summarise his writings. Although relatively brief, both discussions are highly informative and demonstrate the tenor of the whole work. Consistently, received wisdom is carefully scrutinised in light of the evidence at hand, yielding authoritative conclusions. This same proclivity for taking the available evidence and studies into account and carefully reassessing them is evidenced throughout the work (e.g., pp. 218–19; 769 n.939).

Consistently, the translations are accurate and idiomatic, and the accompanying footnotes make the text highly approachable to a wide audience (one of the stated purposes of this publication). On occasion, however, one comes across a clause or reference that brings pause. Certainly, these are few, and by and large, relate to issues left to the translator's prerogative, rather than the question of accuracy *per se*. For instance, in *Kitāb al-Buldān*, which is a challenge to read in Arabic and presented the translators with a Herculean task, one finds repeated references to distance in terms of "farsakhs," "stages," and "Arab miles," which are glossed once (n. 20). Certainly, these are accurate and acceptable translations, but they are not meaningful to all but experts. Estimates, even tentative ones, in miles or kilometres would have been helpful here, particularly in light of the stated goal of making this edition accessible to non-specialists, including undergraduate college students. Among the publication's more laudable features are the thorough indices for proper and geographic names and designations. These will serve scholars and general readers well, though a topical index would have also been welcomed.

My negligible quibbles aside, this publication sets a new standard for the works of al-Ya'qūbī, which will benefit generations of students and scholars to come. It provides an authoritative reading of and commentary on the whole of al-Ya'qūbī's corpus.

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