

In spite of the fact that Sorby's manual offers a number of highly interesting innovative features, some grammatical phenomena, though included and rightly treated in the book, would perhaps deserve separate treatment under their own headings or, at least, be linked together by way of cross-references. In the case of transitivity and its modified manifestations (causativity, factitivity), for instance, the relevant derivational procedure is treated in Part-I (233–252) as part of the 2–10 derivational system of derived verbal and verbonominal stems (‘*alima* > ‘*allama*, ‘*a‘lama*). In Part-II, the particle *bi-* is presented, correctly once again, as a transitivizer / causativizer of verbal predicates involving intransitive / reflexive verbs (V intr./refl. + *bi-* > V trans./causat.), as in: *taqaddama* “to present oneself” > *taqaddama bi(hi) = qaddama (hu)*). In view of the relative complexity of this feature, it would perhaps been helpful to the student to be cross-referenced back to the derivational rendering of causativity. The same holds for the verbs of the type *ġa‘ala*, operating as both inchoative (*ġa‘altu ‘uġanni*) and causative/factive (*ġa‘altuhu yuġanni*) verbs. When cross-referenced, the phenomenon would have been presented as part of a trichotomous system of derivational, syntactioc and lexical procedures.

Of course, remarks of this type reflect only a rather subjective point of view and an alternative solution of the problem, and they do not lower the soundness of the methodology applied by the author or the merit of the general arrangement of the book.

The manual will be of invaluable help to the Slovak and Czech university students of Modern Written Arabic. With an additional Key to the exercises or other self-control aids, it would become an excellent teach-yourself device in this domain of language instruction, as well.

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GOMBÁR, Eduard: *Moderní dějiny islámských zemí* (Modern History of the Islamic Countries). Prague, Charles University, Karolinum Publishing House 1999. 427 pp.

The number of scientific works dealing with the history of Asian and African countries is still insufficient in Czech and Slovak historiography. The more must be welcomed this original synthetic work by a prominent Czech Arabist and historian, expert on Arab and Islamic history, associate professor in the Institute of Near East and Africa at the Faculty of Philosophy in the Charles University in Prague.

Eduard Gombár set himself a difficult task in writing the modern history of the Near and Middle East and North Africa from the middle of the eighteenth century up to the end of the First World War. This comprehensive history of Islam during a period of nearly two hundred years is divided very thoughtfully into twenty four chapters. It is undoubtedly the result of many years of a successful symbiosis of the author's teaching and research work at the university. The reader can witness also his intimate acquaintance with the region under consideration due to his frequent shorter and longer stays in many Middle Eastern countries.

The core of the work is the exposition of the political, social and economic development of the Ottoman Empire (that from the beginning of the sixteenth century included greater part of the territories inhabited by the Arabs) and Persia, comprising the three circles of civilization: Arab, Turkish and Persian. The process of the decline of the Ottoman Empire starting in the seventeenth century is seen as irreversible despite sincere efforts of different rulers to introduce reforms or modernization. The author skilfully pointed to the crucial reasons for this unwelcomed development. In his explanation he delicately brought together problems concerning internal development (modernization,

secularization and nationalism) in the countries under consideration with the external pressures influencing that development for example the policy of European Powers, into a smooth and balanced text.

Dr. Gombár combined the requirement for a straightforward, factual account of the modern history of Arabs, Turks and Iranians, such as would be useful to students, with the desirability of providing an introduction to various ideas – some fairly well developed, others only half formed – about the nature of the regional development during the period. He throws light on the “Eastern Question” with iron regularity from its beginning at the end of the eighteenth century – so that the reader can easily follow the effect of internal and external forces on the eastern society – until its end with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the postwar arrangement of the Near and Middle East. The author’s evaluation of historical events is unbiased and he sharply reveals overt and covert interests of the Powers which their own historiography (e.g. British, French or Russian) often tactfully keeps silence on, or tries to improve it by modifying the facts.

An important part of the book is the explanation of the factors negatively influencing the Ottoman economic development: the impossibility of further territorial expansion, the shift of long distant trade from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic shores, explosive population growth and a high inflation rate caused partly by the price revolution in Europe, this all started the crisis of the classical Ottoman feudalism. The author discusses the effect of Ottoman commercial relations with the West on Ottoman economic development. Despite increasing ties with and knowledge of the West, Ottoman efforts to compete with European imports by developing native industry failed. The Ottoman Empire missed the process of the capitalistic changes in Europe from manufactured goods to industrial production, and its delayed and reluctantly introduced reforms could not lead to the expected success.

Although the bibliography is limited to a list of selected works, it shows a creative and wide-ranging use of primary and secondary sources and can serve both historians and those interested in history as a sufficient guide. Keeping in mind that a synthetic work of this type cannot answer every question it suggests, it gives a sound basis for further reading.

One does not normally expect a 427-page book to be a page-turner, and indeed many readers would ordinarily approach volumes of this size with some trepidation. However, this is an extremely readable book, and in fact one which is often hard to put down, so well written is it, so beautifully produced, and so coherent in its presentation of what in other hands might be a tedious subject. In sum this important and challenging book will be an excellent stimulus for students of the modern Islamic history. More generally, it should be of great interest for all those concerned with this significant period of Middle Eastern history which at the same time provides the background for understanding the contemporary problems.

The reader finishes this substantial book with a firm grasp of the main tendencies of the historical development. The impressive part of it is its comprehensiveness. The author has put together a fascinating account of continuity and change and succeeded on every score.

*Karol Sorby*