

BOOK REVIEWS

SORBY Karol Jr.: *Iraqi Politics in the Shadow of the Military (1936 – 1941)*. Dresden: WELTBUCH Verlag. GmbH, 2014, 163 pp. ISBN 978-3-906212-11-1.

I am following the publications of the Slovak historian and Arabist Karol Sorby Jr., since he in 2006 successfully defended his PhD. thesis of which I had been one of the examiners. I can mention his scientific monograph *The Arabs, Islām and the Challenges of the Present Times* (2007), then he edited a collection of scientific articles *The Arab World in the Changing Times* (2009), afterwards he was co-author of his father Professor Karol Sorby, in publishing a monograph *The Middle East in International Politics* (2011). He publishes on a regular basis, in English and in Slovak, scientific articles relative to the modern and contemporary history of the Fertile Crescent states, especially Iraq and Syria. This activity is very praiseworthy, as in Slovakia there are still only a few specialists who deal with the scientific research of the Arab world where the problems of Iraq belong. It must be stressed that from his publication benefits the learned public in the Czech Republic.

Within this scope is also the author's monograph under review *Iraqi Politics in the Shadow of the Military (1936 – 1941)*, which was published in the WELTBUCH Publishing House in Dresden (Germany). This work in a way puts an end to the author's preparation made in the form of scientific articles and makes it possible for the wider public to become acquainted with the results of the author's research work not only in Central Europe, but in the Anglophone world as well.

Research of the political activities of army officers in the Arab countries, which since 1936 were realised by means of military coups, is still alive, as we can witness in the example of Egypt after the overthrow of President Ḥusnī Mubārak. Karol Sorby Jr. paid particular attention to the classical case of active interference of Iraqi army officers in the course of the country's political events in the years 1936 – 1941. It is necessary to stress that it was precisely the monarchical Iraq which first experienced the classical military coup in October 1936. The author succeeded within a relatively limited space and a known subject in bringing new facts to the examined problems. As well as being a master of detail, the author is also able to change focus on key periods and key events. The deep and close knowledge of the problems are a result of many years of study and personal experience of the Arab East where he spent several long-term stays. It is necessary to appreciate the precise and very reliable scientific transcription of Arab proper names. Considering the great number of personalities listed in the monograph, for better orientation the index of names, the genealogy of the Hāshimī family and lists of Iraqi cabinets in the given period are attached.

Karol Sorby Jr. in his work uses a wide heuristic base: the list of sources and literature points to an extraordinary understanding of all issues related to the subject, and for both the scholars and students will be a reliable guide for further study. In particular it is necessary to appreciate the usage of Arab sources and books which

comprises 33 titles. The author divided his monograph into three chapters. Following the preface, where he analyses the used sources, and the introduction, where he analyses the foundation of the Iraqi state and its army after the First World War, he proceeds to the essence of the problem. In the first chapter he deals with the military coup led by Lieutenant General Bakr Şidqî and follows the subsequent political development inspired by the wave of Iraqi nationalism until the murder of Bakr Şidqî in August 1937 and the following resignation of Prime Minister Hikmat Sulaymân. In the second chapter the author analyses the political development of the country before the Second World War, when the reins of power were in the hands of pro-British politicians. In the third chapter the author deals with the dramatic events that led to the activation of nationalist forces and to the notorious rebellion of the four Colonels, known as the “Golden Square”, at the beginning of April 1941, which was forcibly suppressed by the British military in May 1941.

The work *Iraqi Politics in the Shadow of the Military (1936 – 1941)* fulfils all standards set on a monograph of this kind. This monograph means a qualitative enrichment of our historical literature, and both for scholars and students will be a reliable guide for further study. The Sorby’s monograph under review is an excellent historical work surpassing the standard level of works treating the same subject. It will undoubtedly find its place in the wider scientific research of Near Eastern history in the twentieth century.

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ALYILMAZ, Cengiz: *İpek Yolu Kavşağının Ölümsüzlük Eserleri*. [The Deathless Monuments of the Silk Road]. Ankara: Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2015. X+646 p. ISBN 978-975-442-676-2.

The Silk Road extended from China to Anatolia and was a fertile cultural intermediary and highly important trade road, which reached Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. Many states and civilisations were established along this road over time and have left precious valuable heritage for the history of humanity. East Turkestan mentioned in this work as a crossroads of the Silk Road was the regional connection between China and Central Asia.

This work is based upon two projects. The first project with the title of ‘The Runic Inscriptions in the Turfan Region’ was undertaken between 2009 – 2013 by three researchers: Prof. Dr. Cengiz Alyılmaz (project coordinator) (Atatürk University), Prof. Dr. Luo Xin (Beijing University), Prof. Dr. Li Xiao (Centre of Turfan Studies in Beijing). The other project started in 2013 and was undertaken by the same researchers (cooperative coordinators) titled ‘Epigraphic and Photogrammetric Researches about Inscriptions in the People’s Republic of China, Central Asian Turkic Groups and the Russian Federation’. Overall, this work studies movable and unmovable cultural properties and runic inscriptions in Turfan region.

The book consists of four parts. The part I briefly touch on is the project ‘The Runic Inscriptions in the Turfan Region’ and contributors to this project (pp. 1 – 10).

Part II informs of Turk (突厥 *tu-jue* in Chinese sources) and Chinese relations in the period of the first and second Turk Qaghanate and Uighur Qaghanate (pp. 11 – 22). This part sensitively combines the primary sources written by Turks with Chinese sources in a valuably suggestive way.

Part III and IV discuss written documents and movable and unmovable cultural properties situated in Turfan or the crossroad of the Silk Road. In this part useful high-quality photographs are presented along with pictures and studies of the movable and unmovable cultural properties situated in Turfan (pp. 23 – 216). These cultural properties are examined under eight main topics: 1. petroglyphs, 2. obelisks, 3. cairns and necropolises, 4. sculptures, 5. sanctuaries and places of pilgrimage, 6. town remains and ancient architecture, 7. items for daily use, 8. inscriptions. These cultural properties provide researchers a holistic view of cultural properties in the East Turkestan region, these works show the existence of cultural properties except for written culture.

Part IV contains information, which is especially remarkable for philologists. This part provides publications of inscriptions found in the Turfan region by the author and project team (pp. 217 – 614). Hereunder, a description of 18 inscriptions and their original and ‘reproduction’ photographs were submitted. Besides this, transcriptions of every inscription were carefully prepared and their texts were translated with an explanation in Turkish. Some of the analysed inscriptions are shared with readers for the first time.

In this work these runic are examined (in this book ‘Kök(türk)’) inscriptions: 1. Inscription of Yemiš Tutuq, 2. Inscription of Yorçı, 3. Inscription of Qarı Ćor Tegin, 4. Inscription of Qutlug Qunçuy, 5. Inscription of Šariputri, 6. Inscription of Tudun, 7. Inscription of Ay Täg, 8. Inscription of Ay Bäg, 9. Inscriptions of Körü (I – II), 10. Inscriptions of Yilig Ćor (I – II), 11. Inscription of Ençkü, 12. Inscription of Beš Balıq, 13. Inscription of Ellük, 14. Inscription of Išar, 15. Inscription of Atač, 16. Inscription of Ay, 17. Inscription of Šakyamuni, 18. Other small inscriptions. The Author explains entitling at the beginning of each inscription’s explanation. The problems connected with entitling of inscriptions are thus to a large extent precluded.

The works on runic texts are proceeding at the present time. Philologists should do many researches on this topic. This work without doubt will contribute to literature on Old Turkic philology. Moreover, the work is endowed with quite clear and high-pixelated photographs and this feature increases its value. The topic of the so far undiscovered inscriptions in East Turkestan will certainly arouse interest of researchers working on Old Turkic philology.

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