

HISTORY 8350: Research Seminar in Islamic History
Chronicles as Sources for Islamic History

Autumn 2014

W 12:45-3:40

Dulles Hall 235

Class number 13739

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Office hours: Tu, Th 2:00-3:45 and by appointment

Description: This is a graduate research seminar dealing with pre-modern historical chronicles and related primary narrative sources.

Objectives: Students will become familiar with different types of historical chronicles; the evolution of the chronicle genre within the field of Islamic history from transmitters of Prophetic traditions; and the relationship of chronicles to biographical dictionaries, travel accounts, and topographical "gazetteers." We will be considering the medieval Arabic and, to a lesser extent, Persian historiographical traditions, as well as Ottoman-era narrative sources. Students from fields other than Islamic history will have the opportunity to work with narrative sources in their own fields while comparing these sources to those available for Islamic history. Students will learn to use narrative sources in their research and will benefit from peer review in the process of producing original scholarship

Readings: The following book is required for the course and should be ordered from Amazon:

R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); ISBN 978-0691008561

Primary source excerpts, as well as additional articles and chapters, will be distributed in class.

Assignments:

(1) All students must complete all readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. **Possible focus questions** appear at the end of the list of each week's readings to help focus your reading and thinking.

(2) From September 3 through October 15 (with the exception of September 10), two students, selected in advance, will be responsible for **leading the class discussion**. This will consist of presenting **minimal** historical background on the primary source authors and their milieus, posing several key questions and/or problems to guide discussion, and acting as moderators for the discussion. You may also link the issues raised during a particular week to sources or problems that you are interested in researching.

(3) Each week, meanwhile, two students who are **not** leading the discussion will write short (roughly 5 pages) papers discussing the historiographical topic addressed that week. These papers are **due in the Discussion box on the Carmen course page 24 hours before the class at which they will be discussed**.

POSTING TO THE CARMEN DISCUSSION BOX: Click on the "Activities" tab at the top of the Carmen course page, then on "Discussions." Click on that week's topic,

then on "Compose." If you're **uploading a paper**, scroll down to "Attachments" and click on "Add a file." After uploading your paper, click "Done." If you would like to **comment on a paper**, compose a comment in the "Message" box, then click "Post."

(4) On **November 5**, each student will present the research project of a fellow student, based on a reading of a very rough draft, and offer constructive comments and suggestions for improvement. Students will choose "critique partners" in advance.

(5) On **November 19** (and November 27, if necessary), students will make formal **presentations** of their research proposals to the class. Such a presentation should be **no longer than 15 minutes** and should provide factual background on the topic and explain the student's key sources, methods of analysis, and arguments.

(6) Each student will prepare a research paper of roughly 20 pages that uses chronicles or related narrative sources as its chief primary sources. The final paper is due **no later than 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 10**.

Grading:

attendance and participation in class discussion	15%
leading one week's topic	15%
short paper on one week's topic	15%
discussion and critique of classmate's paper draft	10%
research project presentation	10%
research paper	35%

SCHEDULE

Aug. 27 Introduction (MEET IN DULLES 235.)

2:00: Orientation to the Middle East collection, Thompson Library, with Middle East Librarian Johanna Sellman and Associate Librarian Patrick Visel

Sept. 3: Prophetic *sīra* literature, *hadīth*, biographical literature (*tabaqāt*)

Reading:

Humphreys, *Islamic History*, chapter 3 (Recommended, esp. for those with little or no background in Islamic history: chapters 1-2)

Ibn Ishāq (d. ca. 768), *The Life of Muhammad*, ed. 'Abd al-Mālik b. Hishām (d. 834), trans. with an introduction and notes by Alfred Guillaume (Lahore, Karachi, Dacca: Oxford University Press, Pakistan Branch, 1955, 1968, 1970), 3-12, 52-82, 385-86, 553-54

Mālik b. Anas (d. 795), *Al-Muwatta' of Imām Mālik ibn Anas*, trans. Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1989), 388-94

Ibn Sa'd (764-845), *The Women of Medina*, trans. Aisha Bewley (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1995), Preface and 13-21, 43-56, 165-67

Eerik Dickinson, "Ibn al-Salāh al-Shahrazūrī and the *Isnād*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122/3 (2002): 481-505

Possible focus questions: How does the purpose of *isnāds* change over time? How useful are they historically?

Sept. 10 Visit to the Hillandar Research Library and Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies, Thompson Library 105C. Director: Dr. Predrag Matejic. Please meet Dr. Matejic at the benches outside Room 105.

Sept. 17: Al-Tabarī and the narrative of 'Abbāsīd history

Reading:

Humphreys, chapter 4

Al-Tabarī (838?-923), *The History of al-Tabarī*, vol. IX: *The Last Years of the Prophet*, trans. Ismail K. Poonawala (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 126-28; vol. XXX: *The 'Abbāsīd Caliphate in Equilibrium*, trans. C.E. Bosworth (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 111-14, 183-95, 299-304, 305-08; vol. XXXI: *The War Between Brothers*, trans. Michael Fishbein (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 1-20, 173-206, 210-12, 225-50

Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapters 3-5

Possible focus questions: How does al-Tabarī write history? What sources does he credit? What kind of "stamp" does he put on 'Abbāsīd history?

Sept. 24: Seljuk chronicles in the Arabic and the Persian traditions

Reading:

Humphreys, chapter 6

Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233), *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks: Selections from Al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rikh*, trans. and annotated by Donald S. Richards (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), Introduction and 28-45, 99-106, 141-45, 253-58

Kenneth Allin Luther, trans., *The History of the Seljuq Turks from the Jāmi' al-tawārikh, an Ilkhanid Adaption [sic] of the Saljūq-nāma of Zahir al-Dīn Nishapūri*, ed. C.E. Bosworth (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 3-19, 25-46, 57-64

Possible focus questions: How do these two sources compare to each other in terms of their production, approach, style, etc.? How do they compare to al-Tabarī's history?

Oct. 1: Mamluk chronicles and biographical dictionaries

Reading:

Humphreys, chapters 5, 7, 10

David Ayalon, art. "Mamlūk," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

Irmeli Perho, "Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī as Historians of Contemporary Events," in Hugh Kennedy, ed., *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950-1800)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 107-20

Ibn Taghrī Birdī (1411-70), *History of Egypt, 1382-1469 A.D.*, trans. William Popper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954-60), Part VI (1453-61): Preface and 38-39, 107-11; Part VII (1461-68): Preface and 32-33, 46, 71-72, 79-87

Possible focus questions: What is the relationship between chronicle and biographical dictionary in Mamluk historiography? How does Ibn Taghrī Birdī present individual sultans and events?

Oct. 8: Ottoman narrative sources

Guest: Professor Anthony Kaldellis, Dept. of Greek and Latin

Reading:

Laonikos Chalkokondyles (ca. 1423-90), *A New Herodotus: Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium, and the Emergence of the West*, ed. and trans. Anthony Kaldellis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2014), ms. pp. 3-14

Evliya Çelebi (ca. 1611-82), *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels [Seyahatname] of Evliya Çelebi*, trans. and commentary Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim (London: Eland, 2010), Introduction and chapter 1

Al-Jabartī (1753-1826), *Al-Jabartī's History of Egypt*, selections ed. Jane Hathaway from Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann, eds., *'Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī's History of Egypt: 'Ajā'ib al-āthār fī'l-tarājim wa'l-akhbār* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009), Introduction and 111-23, 202-5, 216-17, 285-8

Possible focus questions: Are all of these authors historians? How do their perspectives on the Ottoman Empire compare? Are both Evliya and al-Jabartī "Ottomans"?

Oct. 15: (1) Consultation on research topics

(2) Readings from chronicles assigned by class members

Oct. 22: (1) Databases and online narrative sources

Come to class prepared to demonstrate and discuss a primary source or database of primary sources that you have found online.

(2) Choose partners for Nov. 5 discussion and critique of rough paper drafts.

Oct. 29: (1) Exercise in citation forms and writing style

(2) Modern-day chronicles?

Nov. 5: Discussion and critique of very rough research paper drafts

Nov. 12: Work on research papers.

Nov. 19 and 27 (if necessary): Presentations of research projects

Research papers due by 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 10