

understanding of the social phenomena in the country. The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia should also be applauded for publishing this work.

History and Historians

Approaches to the History of the Middle East: Interviews with Leading Middle East Historians, edited by Nancy Elizabeth Gallagher (New York: Ithaca Press, 1994). ISBN 0 86372 185 0

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In the preface, the editor spells out the purpose of the book in the following words: "I have often wanted an introduction to Middle Eastern historiography that would be lively... to this end I settled on the methods of oral history." (p.viii)

The study consists of interviews with eight leading historians, who have participated in, and to a large extent shaped, the major historiographical transitions of post-World War II era. The list includes Albert Hourani, Charles Issawi, Andre Raymon, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, Maxime Rodinson, Nikki Keddie, Halil Inalcik and Abdul Karim Rafeq. They were asked almost identical questions which were about each of the scholar's "formation" (family background), early interest in the Middle Eastern history, and their philosophy of history as it evolved over time. They were also asked to comment on the on-going debate about the nature of orientalism and the issues which were raised by Edward Said in his work *Orientalism*. Finally, the editor asked each of the scholar in this study about the impact of the School of Annales d' Histoire Economique et Sociale on their work.

The introduction of the editor is a very informative discussion on the modern Middle East historiography. Here the editor reviews the major trends which have emerged in post-World War I in the West in the field of orientalism with special emphasis on the School of Annales. The latter was a very prominent trend in historiography in the West in late 1920s. It was developed by a small group of scholars, mainly French, who were, "steeped in Weberian and Marxist political

theories.” These French scholars (who have been profoundly influenced by the findings and methodologies of other scholars in anthropology, sociology, and economics) developed a new approach to the study of history, which emphasized the need to point out the underlying structures that govern historical evolution, through the examination of events during a long period. In their writings, the Annaliste scholars showed strong disagreement with the traditional approach to history which was oriented to diplomatic and political events. They called and for a “new total history, one which truly encompassed all of human life.” The main exponents of the School of Annales, which was founded in Strasbourg in 1929, were Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) and Marc Bloch (1886-1944). The historians who were influenced by this school are known also as “social historians.”

Gallagher goes on to describe in the introduction the efforts of the early Orientalists to make the findings of the Annales School relevant to the study of the Middle East. The editor considers the *La Syrie du Nord à l'époque des Croisades et la Principauté d'Antioche* (by Clayde Cahen, a French historian of medieval Islam), a pioneering work in this regard. After World War II, there was increasing interest in the School of Annales among the historians of the Middle East. The School of Oriental and African Studies in London became the centre for the social historians. This trend in historiography continued to have its influence on the Middle East historians during the last few decades. The willingness of the Middle Eastern governments to open their archives to historians has facilitated the task of the social historians (pp.3-4).

The findings of the social historians, especially those of the historians with the Middle Eastern background, have contributed to the revisions, modifications, and even refutations of numerous basic assumptions of the early orientalism about the Middle East. In this study, Gallagher traces these developments. She cites Abdel Malik, an Egyptian Marxist historian who believed that a critical re-evaluation of the general conception, and methods used for the understanding of the orient need to be undertaken.

According to the editor, Abdel Malek hoped that the paradigms and methods of orientalism would be replaced by such disciplines as history, sociology, anthropology, and political science. This is essential for the liberation of the Middle Eastern studies from the Eurocentrism of the orientalist (p.11).

Gallagher quotes A. Tibawi (a Palestinian scholar at Harvard Centre for Middle Eastern Studies), who expressed a similar concern. Tibawi maintains that Western scholars of Islam had an unconscious "urge to fit Islam and Muslim peoples into Christian, or rather Western moulds." Some of the early orientalists claimed that Islam would (and should) go through a Protestant reformation, as did Christianity (p.11).

Both Abdel Malek and Tibawi were hopeful that better acquaintance with the languages of the Middle East, improved human relations, and finally the ability to transcend the dictates of unequal political power, would enable Western scholars to be more objective. Gallagher seems to be in sympathy with this view.

However, neither Gallagher nor the scholars whom she interviewed in the study under review have any sympathy for the radical revisions which Edward Said has called for in the above mentioned work. Said argues that the Orientalist had, perhaps unintentionally, created the oriental, the dehumanized other, who thereby became "suitable and ready for the diminution by Europeans" (p.12). The editor thinks that Said did not differentiate between early and late orientalists. This differentiation is essential in the evaluation of orientalism. She also argues that the orientalism of journalists and travellers cannot be viewed in the same way as the orientalism of scholars. Albert Hourani expresses a similar, but rather harsh, disagreement with Said. He was quoted by Gallagher as saying, "I rather regret that Edward Said gave the book that title. Orientalism has now become a dirty word. Nevertheless, it should be used for a perfectly respectable discipline" (p.40). Issawi has also tried to underestimate, or even belittle the issues raised by Edward Said. He maintains that Said should have known that "everybody is imperfect, everybody is biased, everybody sees only part of the truth...why should the Orientalists be an exception?" (p.62) Maxime Rodinson describes Said's critique of Orientalism as "polemic," and not worthy of the attention which it has received (p.124). The study would have been more serious and lively had Gallagher given Said an opportunity to respond to his critics.

After a close scrutiny of the views of the scholars interviewed in this work, one can hardly fail to realize that Gallagher (being herself a social historian) edited the work under review in order to highlight and even disseminate the views of the School of Annale. Her selection of historians for the study is an indication of this. All of them have identified themselves as social historians who have been following the methodology of the School of Annales in their studies. Albert Hourani

maintains that he has always been interested in social theories. Issawi, had this to say about the School of Annales: "I read Lucien Febvre in the early 1940... I read Braudel's *Le Monde Me'diterane'enne*... and got very excited about it." Issawi believes that the social historian's approach is the only viable approach to history (p.60).

Affaf Lutfi al-Sayyid expresses a similar opinion: "The Annales School believed that history is a history of peoples and not of rulers...now I believe that while personalities are very important, one must take into account the social and economic structure. That came from the Annales School"(p.105). Halik Inalcik, a leading Turkish historian of the Osmanlı era, pointed out that he had been profoundly influenced by the writings of the School of Annales, especially those of Mark Bloch and Lucien Febvre. Inalcik was quoted in the study under review as saying, "The influence of the Annales School can be seen through out my work" (p.181). For these reasons, what Gallagher presents in her study is a social historian's approach to history. Thus, it would have been more appropriate for Gallagher to use "The Annales School's Approach to the History of the Middle East" as the title for her work instead of the present title, which is a misleading one.

The Annaliste scholars' approach to the study of history is not only unsuitable for the study of Muslim world, but also has serious shortcoming for the study of Western civilization. In their eagerness to reject traditional historiography, the Annaliste scholars have, in practice, grossly under-estimated the role of individuals in historical changes. However, the major shortcoming in Annaliste historiography, which contradicts, its claim to total history, is the much too radical diminution of the role of all things political. This was also an over-reaction on the part of the Annaliste to the past dominance of political history. Therefore, the Annaliste scholars have unduly relegated the studies of power and power relation to a secondary position.

Marxist critics have also pointed out several flaws in Annaliste historiography. Although the latter has viewed the economic factor as an important one in historical change, it has not considered it as the driving force of history. Marxist scholars reject the Annaliste's emphasis on the concept of communication and exchange, because this has led to the emphasis on commercial, rather than on the total mode of production. Similarly, the American and English historians of World War I have shown strong disapproval of the Annaliste historians. The former argue that the latter have failed to develop a proper synthetic interpretation of the history of Western civilization,

because human ideals, motives, and actions have been considered insignificant. According to American scholars, their French colleagues in Annaliste fell under strong influence of the structuralist school—another French school in historiography—which maintains that there is a continuity in change in time and space in human history. According to the structuralists, the change—whether social or economic—is mainly an adjustment aimed at preserving an eternal system of structures; it is not a step in a development towards progress. Therefore, despite their claim to have a totalistic approach to history, Annaliste historians were essentially structuralist. In my opinion, it is only in Islamic paradigm for the study of civilization that one can find a holistic (*tawhīdī*) approach to history. It is a pity that none of the leading historians interviewed by Gallagher in this study showed any appreciation of Islamic epistemology. It is interesting to observe how leading Western scholars of Islam and Muslim world were openly confessing that they had been following the Annales school's approach to history. This school, as indicated above, was not deemed suitable even for the study of Western civilization.

Nevertheless, in view of its unique methodology, the book is, in many ways, an important contribution to the Middle Eastern historiography. However, the editor can not be credited with creating this oral approach to history. Before the publication of this work, there were already several similar works in the field. The most notable study in this regard is *Paths to the Middle East: Ten Scholars Look Back* edited by Thomas Naff.

The book is useful for students, as the leading scholars of the Middle East have offered a lot of invaluable advice to students of the Middle Eastern history. In addition, the book sheds some light on Orientalism and on the lives of the leading orientalist of the post-World War II era. The study is useful for students of history, historiography, orientalism, and sociology.

Accountability in Islam

Accountability: A Comparative Study of Human Responsibility Between Islam and Man-made Doctrines, by Sheikh Osman AbdulKader al-Safi, translated by Muhammad Badawi. Selangor, Malaysia: WEB Printer, 1992. Pp. 103. ISBN 983-9668-18-8.

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