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English Abstracts

From the Diary of a Muslim Notary, Damascus 1480-1500

Boaz Shoshan

This article is based on a partially-survived diary, covering the years 1480-1501, written by Damascene Notary, Shihab ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Tawk (1430-1509). This diary is an unrivalled primary source for the pre-modern Islamic world, not only due to its sheer scope (about 200 pages in printed edition), but for containing an everyday account on a myriad of issues concerning life in Damascus and its region; and mainly since its author included in the diary long extracts and information from documents which he notarised and that were in his possession, which shed unprecedented light over the society in which he lived. The article focuses on two of the phenomena on which little is known, but much is learnt about from Ibn Tawk's unique source. The first is the question of divorce, its circumstances, and the accepted financial condition during Ibn Tawk's days. The second deals with personal rivalries and debates over Sharia law between scholars of the legal schools of thought in Damascus. Ibn Tawk's accounts on these issues, as on various others his diary deals with, reveal quite a bit about daily lives in a central city in the Islamic world, on the eve of Ottoman occupation, and are a source for 'everyday history' or micro-history.

‘Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?’: The Religious-Political debate in the Arab World on Ziyarat to Jerusalem

Dotan Halevy

Are non-Palestinian Muslims allowed – according to Sharia law – to visit Al-Aqsa Mosque while the latter is under Israeli control? In recent years there has been a growing engagement with this question amongst muftis, politicians, and public opinion makers throughout the Arab world, following Mahmoud Abbas’ bold call in 2012 to all Arabs and Muslim to perform the commandment of Ziyarat (visitation) to Jerusalem. This article deals with the discussion that has aroused around this issue, maps the various sides that partook in it, and explores its complexity. The article argues that the question of visiting Jerusalem exposes deep conceptual gaps dividing the Arab and Muslim world. First, through the rhetoric use of the categories ‘religion’ and ‘politics’: whilst supporters of Ziyarat to Israeli-controlled Jerusalem mobilise religious arguments in favour of Palestinian political goals, in principal they advocate separation between religion and politics. In contrast, opponents of Ziyarat to Jerusalem see these categories as representing one set of principles – in a similar fashion to political Islam movements – and utilise a hybridised religio-political argument to sustain their stance. Second, through the meaning which is afforded to ‘normalisation’ with the State of Israel: Ziyarat proponents hold a flexible and pragmatic understanding of resistance to normalisation, while Ziyarat opponents see it as an unalterable, nonnegotiable condition.

Cui Bono: Arabs, Football, State

Amir Ben Porat

Soon after its renewal in 1949, football clubs from the Arab sector began to partake in the Israeli Football League. At first they participated in lower leagues, but as time passed and Arab clubs multiplied, they began to advance upwards – and, in 1997 Hapoel Tayibe was promoted to the National League (top flight). Football has always been present in the Arab community in Israel. The question this article deals with is: what did football contribute to Arabs in Israel? The answers to this question is discussed in three levels: players, local community, and national Arab community in Israel. The player level clearly shows that football granted Arab players prestige and income. Football created mobility paths which by-pass ethnic-national boundaries: Arab players joined Jewish clubs, played for the Israeli national team, and even for European clubs. Regarding the second level, the article shows that football contributed to the modernisation of the local Arab community, to cultural life (mainly for younger people), and to local and sectarian pride – as seen, for instance, when the whole Arab sector took pride in the success of Bnei Sakhnin United Football Club. Where else do Arabs face Jews on equal terms, and often the former prevail over the latter? In third level, football contributed to solidifying the ethnic-national awareness of the Arab community in Israel. Encounters with anti-Arab, Jewish supporters in football stadiums also ‘forced’ a re-thinking among Arabs who wished to flatten their ethnic-national identity-components – as awareness and protest became tools for attaining integration, sans preconditions. There is no longer need for one to self-identify as a Zionist to feel included when the national team enters the football pitch.

