Walker Bethany J.,
Jordan in the Late Middle Ages: Transformation of the Mamluk Frontier.

Chicago, Middle East Documentation Center (Chicago Studies on the Middle East 8), 2011, vii + 338 p. , 5 maps, 1 fig., 26 plates.
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The book jacket states that this study provides "a provincial perspective on imperial decline, reform and rebirth that sheds new light on the mechanisms of socio-political and economic change through the experiences of ordinary people living on the 'margins' of empire." It is a testament to Walker's mastery of a wide-range of sources as well as to the growth of the field of Mamlukology that her book delivers this promise. Adding the knowledge gleaned from archaeological work in Jordan—much of which comes from excavations in which the author participated or led—to the usual written sources of chronicles, documents such as the Egyptian *waqfiyāt* and the Ḥaram al-Šarīf materials, and travelers' accounts, as well as the pertinent records from the early Ottoman period, Walker has produced a valuable study of a Mamluk hinterland and its ever dynamic relations with Cairo.

The work is organized into three substantive chapters sandwiched by a brief introduction and conclusion. (Unfortunately, there is an editing error on p. 31 which refers to six chapters rather than the actual five. An echo of this error appears at the end of chapter 4 [p. 271], where there is a reference to two subsequent chapters when in fact there is only one). Chapter 1, "A Medieval 'Global Moment'", sets the geographical and chronological parameters of the book, identifying four reigns as particularly important in understanding the relationships between the Mamluk center and Jordan: those of Baybars, the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Barqūq, and Faraǧ. It also establishes the theoretical background and identifies the importance of provincial studies as well as delineates the challenges—especially those of sources—encountered when researching the history of peripheral areas. Walker situates her project in the context of previous scholarship, acknowledging in particular the contributions of Jordanian scholars such as Yousef Ghawanmeh. She builds upon their work to move into a wider perspective, that of how micro and local histories can shed new light on our understanding of the Mamluk "decline" in the post-plague era.

The next two chapters provide the heart of Walker's analysis. They are also the longest, as Walker provides numerous case studies to support her arguments. In both chapters, Walker extends her analysis beyond Kerak, admittedly the largest and most important Mamluk center in the region, to smaller localities such as Ajlūn, Salt, and Ḥisbān. Chapter 2, "Mamluk Administration of Jordan," focuses on Jordan from the imperial perspective. Building upon administrative infrastructures inherited from the Ayyubids, Mamluk governance and investment in this for this borderland changed as Cairo's emphasis shifted from security to economic development. Walker details the various administrative structures the capital put in place to govern and exploit the regions. During the Mamluk era, these administrative units were not static. Walker demonstrates convincingly how they were affected by economic, social, political, tribal and even personal concerns. That these many concerns were not just Cairene or Damascene in origin is made clear in the following chapter.

Chapter 3, "Structure and Character of Jordanian Society," shifts perspective to the local, using archaeological data in particular to supplement the sparse references in the works produced in the Egyptian and Syrian urban centers. There is a consensus amongst archaeologists that the population of Jordan in the Mamluk era reached numbers not seen since the Byzantine period. This chapter moves beyond an analysis of how that population interacted with the state—although it also does that—to analyses quotidian life. It opens with a succinct discussion of the tribal nature of Jordan society and the challenges that society posed to central control. It subsequently analyzes aspects of daily life. These range from matters of domestic architecture to food consumption, justice-seeking, and the economies of local life. All are analyzed in the wider context where *waqf*-s increasingly replaced the *iqṭāʿ* system. The impact of this latter development on agricultural practice is then discussed in detail. This chapter deftly blends information gleaned from the *al-Haram al-Sharîf* collection, the St. Catherine's documents, and sixteenth-century Ottoman *siǧillāt* with that from archaeological excavations and surveys. The latter evidence in particular sheds light on questions of population intensity and distribution, allowing Walker to move beyond the inconsistent use of settlement terms in the written sources.

Chapter 4, "Jordan's Economy at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century," focuses on the economy of the region via the documentary, archaeological, and numismatic evidence. Central to the picture that emerges is the phenomenon of transfer of property from the public fisc to *waqfiyāt* seen earlier in Jordan than in Mamluk Egypt. In the case of Jordan, however, Walker demonstrates how sultanic *waqf*-s established in the Jordan valley and northern hill country to support institutions outside Jordan (and

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which thus alienated funds from the public treasury), resulted in large coherent estates which survived intact and prosperous into the Ottoman period. As in chapter 3, Walker here avoids a simple prosperity/decline paradigm, demonstrating instead how instances of decline could reflect shifts not only in types of economic activity but in where such activities actually took place.

Chapter 5, "Ottoman Jordan and the Mamluk Legacy," in addition to providing a concise summation of the conclusions found in the preceding chapters, traces elements of continuity and disjunction in the transition from Mamluk to Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century as well as suggesting avenues for future research. In addition to looking forward, however, this book provides an opportunity to look back. The beginning of this review mentioned that the field of Mamluk studies has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. The survival of so many varieties of source material in quantities far greater than contemporary Islamic polities has surely fueled this expansion, as have the cooperative projects established at the University of Chicago in the 1990s and at Universität Bonn today. While still exploiting the surviving chronicles, the field has moved beyond a reliance upon them, and the current international community of Mamlukists is varied in its interests and interdisciplinary in its approaches. One need only look at bibliography utilized by its author to see evidence of these expansions.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning two ways in which this book is designed with its readers in mind. First, the maps, figure and plates are fully integrated into the text, appearing where they—or the issues raised by them—are discussed and not inconveniently separated into some prefatory or appended section. Second, this is a work that will undoubtedly be used as subsequent scholars mine it for insights and resources or for conclusions to reexamine. Thus it is very convenient that the 903 notes supporting this book are found on the pages where they are needed, and not relegated to an inconvenient endnotes section.

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