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was not involved in the 1970 *coup*, since he first arrived in Oman to head the air force in 1974. Moreover, the town of Tanuf was not bombed by the British RAF in 1957 but dynamited on the direct orders of the sultan.

There is a wealth of information and insight between the covers of this book, and a solid grounding in comparative politics theory, which makes it unfortunate that the 'trees' sometimes tend to get lost in the 'forest' of convoluted political science jargon. One might quibble with the author's negative view of social cohesion and his contention that cleavages are growing rather than diminishing. But he makes a valid point that the perpetuation of these cleavages has been deliberately manipulated to the regime's advantage. In particular, he contends that Dhufar's integration into the Sultanate remains ephemeral and crucially dependent on Sultan Qabus's personal ties to both parts of the country (although his paternal family is from the north, Qabus was born in Dhufar and his mother was Dhufari). Given the progress in melding north and south over the past 30 years or more, and given Dhufar's untenable alternatives of adhering to Yemen or going it alone, this conclusion may be too pessimistic.

Despite the reservations observed above, this is an important work and it provokes a multitude of questions and thoughts about the nature of the Qabus regime in Oman, its impact on the development of the Omani state since 1970, and a glimpse of the legacy that Qabus will leave his country. It makes an excellent starting point for further inquiry.

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NOTE

1. Marc Valeri, *Le sultanat d'Oman: Une révolution en trompe-l'œil*. Paris: Karthala, 2007.

Stefan Weber. *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808–1918). Vol. 1: Text, Vol. 2: Catalogue*. Proceedings of the Danish Institute in Damascus, Aarhus University Press, Copenhagen, 2009. pp. 463 and pp. 657. Index. Illust. Maps. Notes. Bibliog. Hb. €201.95. ISBN 9 7887 7934 4242

These are magnificent volumes, with the quality of scholarship and presentation that will last a century. Stefan Weber has studied the buildings of the late Ottoman Empire and has recorded every building of note built in the last

century of Ottoman rule in Damascus – over a thousand of them. Not only buildings still extant, as he also catalogues buildings that are no more and are known only from the archives or from old photographs. Every archival detail is noted. These volumes supplement the work of two other very different historians of Damascus. In 2000, Brigid Keenan, with the help of the stunning photography of Tim Beddows, drew attention to the extraordinary architectural heritage of the houses of (mostly) 19th-century Damascus in a book reviewed in *Asian Affairs* in 2001. And, in 1985, Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, in *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, presented a panorama of the leading Damascus families and their connections in religion, trade and politics – the families that were responsible for the rich architectural heritage so lovingly described in these two volumes.

But Weber's work is more than an architectural catalogue. In the first volume, he is illuminating about the relationship of Damascus to the Ottoman imperial capital. In the late 19th century – after the restoration of Syria to Ottoman rule from temporary Egyptian rule and after the riots of 1860 – the Ottoman authorities reasserted control with the appointment of good governors who reformed local administration and provided services such as gas, electricity and tramways. To the west of the old city, a planned urban space asserted the imperial presence. The Hamidiya Suq, so familiar to the citizens of the city and to every tourist, was constructed on the model of a contemporaneous European arcade. It still bears the name of the presiding Sultan, Abdul Hamid – just as the modern quarter of Aleppo, Aziziya, bears the name of Abdul Hamid's predecessor, Sultan Abdul Aziz. The square, officially Martyrs' Square, but popularly known as the Merje, was laid out as gardens by the river Barada. To this day, it is dominated by a column, itself a legacy of late Ottoman Syrian history. The column was erected to celebrate the completion of the telegraph linking Istanbul with Damascus and Mecca, and was designed by Sultan Abdul Hamid's favourite architect, the Italian Raimondo D'Aronco. The model of the mosque on top is of the Hamidiya Mosque, near the Yildiz Palace in Istanbul, where Sultan Abdul Hamid publicly prayed each Friday.

To the south of Martyrs' Square is a huge building, a heavy neo-classical multi-purpose construction. It replaced official buildings and was the investment of a man who symbolised the close link between Damascus and Istanbul: Izzat al-Abid, known in Turkish history as Arap [Arab] Izzat. Izzat was a close confident of the Sultan and helped to bind around the Sultan the Arab world in general and Greater Syria in particular. With the loss of the largely Christian Balkan European provinces, Sultan Abdul Hamid turned to stress the Islamic nature of the Empire. His title of Caliph, khalifa, was used to extend authority over all Muslims. Izzat was behind the building of the Hejaz railway from

Damascus to Medina. Damascus had always been a major setting off point for the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. The railway brought prosperity to Izzat's family and also to his fellow citizens. Izzat al-Abid's building overlooking the square served as offices, shops and hotel. It is, to this day, one of Damascus's finest modern buildings. The architect, Fernando De Aranda Gonzales, was Spanish in origin but had spent much of his childhood and youth in Istanbul, the son of a musician and director of the military band. Izzat al-Abid gave the commission to the young Fernando who was only in his mid-20s when the Abid Building was built. De Aranda stayed on in Damascus for 60 years, becoming a Muslim and dying in 1969. He was a prolific architect during the rest of the Ottoman years and throughout the period of the Mandate. He designed the Hejaz railway station during the First World War and the Zenobia Hotel at Palmyra in the 1920s. (He was also the Spanish Consul in Damascus and gets a mention, though not by name, in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.)

The architectural links with the imperial capital went beyond just a handful of people. Damascus prospered in the late 19th century and private houses in the old city and in the suburbs were rebuilt and/or extended. In scores of buildings, artists drew scenes of Istanbul. Some were idealised. Others stressed the modernity of the city with steamboats on the Bosphorus. But the reality and the idea of Istanbul was of overwhelming importance to the Damascus elite. Stefan Weber describes parallel developments in other areas. The middle and upper classes of Damascus adopted Western furniture and Western dress at the same time as their Istanbul contemporaries. The language of reform and of science in Damascus paralleled simultaneous developments in Istanbul. Indeed, contrary to received views, Westernisation reached Damascus directly from Istanbul and was not filtered through Beirut.

In the last 20 years, Ottoman historians have undermined the notion of a vertical division of Ottoman society into Christians, Muslims and Jews. Confessional affiliation was important and determined where you worshipped and whom you married. But, in many other areas, social divisions were horizontal. Weber demonstrates how the horizontal divisions also applied to provincial Damascus. Rich Muslims, Christians and Jews shared the same space. They adopted the same fashions – in dress, furniture and architecture – as each other. There was little to differentiate the salon of a wealthy Jewish family from that of a wealthy Christian or Muslim family.

There is so much in these volumes. They are sumptuously produced. Anyone resident in the city of Damascus will benefit from reading and re-reading the book. Furthermore, they are published at an interesting time in Syria's history. That symbiosis between Istanbul and Damascus was destroyed

immediately before and during the First World War. Under the last sultans, public education in the Empire expanded enormously, but the Ottoman authorities insisted on Turkish being the main language of instruction. This went down badly in Greater Syria when there was a renaissance in Arab literary culture. And the Ottoman governor during the war, Jamal Pasha, who himself made contributions to the physical landscape of urban Damascus, permanently alienated the Ottoman Syrian elite by hanging young men from leading families in the new Martyrs' Square. Since then, Syrians have viewed their northern neighbours in a negative light. Indeed, Syria's independence and identity have been tied up with a rejection of the non-Arab Ottoman Empire. But, in the last ten years, there has grown a cordial friendship between Turkey and Syria. Turkish style was always seen as rather chic. Today, there is also a more sympathetic re-evaluation of the Ottoman years, and of the last century that saw the Damascus-Istanbul relationship, socially, administratively and architecturally at its closest. Stefan Weber's work documents that relationship magnificently.

PETER CLARK © 2011

Penny Young. *Ups and Downs along the Black Sea in the Reverse Footsteps of Xenophon.* Twopenny Press, Diss, Norfolk, 2010. pp. 228. Map. Pb. £10. ISBN 9 7809 5617 0316

In 1997, Penny Young, a journalist who had worked on an English-language newspaper in Istanbul, decided to throw caution to the winds and cycle by herself along the Black Sea coast. Thirteen years later she has produced a book from her diaries, and what a fascinating volume it is. Penny Young knows Turkey and speaks the language. She has read widely in the literature of travel, and is particularly aware of classical accounts of travel along the coast. She has all the qualities of a good journalist: inquisitiveness and an ability to communicate with people and with the reader. Her own mishaps and adventures are recounted with neither embarrassment nor false modesty. It is also a portrayal of a stretch of rural Turkey which is not well known to foreigners, but is ripe for tourist development. In particular, Turks who have made money in Germany have returned to invest in the area.

Development has been patchy and is certainly not friendly to cyclists. Penny Young can convey the grimness of an erratically developed town. "Doğanyurt felt like the end of the world. Most of the shops were empty, the tea houses were all full, the roads were smashed and strewn with rubbish and nearly every