BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEW ARTICLE


Detailed studies of the reigns of the early caliphs have been few indeed in the current era, aside of course from a number of pioneering studies by Arab scholars (scarce any of which has been translated into other languages). Among the published works in European languages there exist Henri Lammens' studies, on the Sufyānis, on Mu‘āwiyah, on Yazid I and Mu‘āwiyah II — all written in the early decades of this century (in French) — come to mind. More recently there is (in Italian) F. Gabrieli's *Il Califato di Hisham*. Then there is Abd al-Ameer Abd Dixon's *The Umayyad Caliphate 65–86/684–705*, which, as the subtitle says, is a political study of the reign of `Abd al-Malik.

Into this relative vacuum steps Dr Khalid Yahya Blankinship with, well, not a weighty or judicious contribution, but rather a weird scholarly concoction. Before dealing with *The End of the Jihād State* (hereinafter abbreviated to 'EJS') it must be noted that by virtue of appearing under the imprimatur of SUNY it automatically acquires a scholarly patina which, in this case — as this review will attempt to prove — does not seem quite justified.

The Umayyad dynasty's tenure in power spanned roughly 90 years — from 661 to 750 CE. Two-thirds of this period is covered by the reigns of three caliphs: Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān (661–680 CE), `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (685–705 CE), and Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik (724–743 CE). At the beginning of *EJS* (p. 4) Blankinship writes: "Most modern historical opinion considers the reign of Hishām to have been one of the more successful in the Umayyad period. This opinion owes mainly to the belief that as a personally sober, serious and apparently hardworking ruler, Hishām delivered his enormous realm undiminished and undamaged to his successor, despite severe pressure on it form many sides. In fact, he even enlarged it on several fronts; for example, the Muslims reached farther than ever before in France, the Caucasus, and India during his rule. Likewise, the Muslim tradition about Hishām has pictured him as a conscientious and efficient, if severe and tightfisted administrator. And, medieval Muslim historians unite with the moderns in concurring that, rather than the rule of
Hishām, it was more the brief rule of the prodigal al-Walīd b. Yazīd (125–26/743–44) that exacerbated the underlying problems, leading to a series of revolutions and civil wars which ended with the collapse of Umayyad rule altogether."

In *EJS*, Blankinship attempts to deal with three themes: the position of *jihād* in early Islamic history, the reign of Hishām and the collapse of the Umayyads. Blankinship’s thesis is that Hishām is the villain of the piece and was responsible for the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty. He indeed sets about single-mindedly to demonstrate this and shows scant regard for historical facts or sober handling of the available sources in the attempt.

Blankinship states in the last paragraph of the introductory chapter to *EJS* (p. 9):

> To summarize, at the outset of Hishām’s reign, it could not have been expected that the Umayyad state would unravel so quickly. By the end of the reign, the deterioration was nakedly exposed for all to see. Therefore, as far as the Umayyads are concerned, it was in the reign of Hishām that their fate was decisively sealed rather than before or after it . . . This outcome stemmed, above all, from an unprecedented series of military defeat inflicted on the caliphate mostly by non-Muslim outside powers during Hishām’s reign.

Earlier, in the 'Introduction' (p. 4), as quoted above, Blankinship has himself written that "Most modern historical opinion" and "medieval Muslim historians" considered Hishām’s reign to have been a successful one. Significantly, none of these historians, Muslim and non-Muslim, medieval and modern, failed to detect "the deterioration" that "was nakedly exposed for all to see". But then, of course, they lacked Blankinship’s laser-like historical insight, or to put it differently, blatant disregard for the maze of contradictions which characterizes *EJS*.

**BLANKINSHIP’S USE OF SOURCE MATERIAL**

Here is an example of Blankinship in action (*EJS*, p. 148):

> But trouble was brewing for the Muslims in India, as shown by the story of a Syrian mother’s plea to the poet al-Farazdaq to help get her only son back from the Sindi front, where his unit was being kept in the field (*mujammār*). She had already made a request through official channels but had been turned down, and so had no recourse except to the poet. Al-Farazdaq responded by writing a poem requesting Tamīm b. Zayd to send the young man back to his mother. The governor quickly complied with the request. Finding the young man was serving in Takkayān (Punjab) he had him sent forthwith to al-Farazdaq. This story contains much interesting information. First, it exemplifies how much the troops hated to be held in the field beyond their assigned year. It shows, especially, how service in India was disliked and the lengths to which
some persons might go to avoid it. It also provides our only evidence of a Muslim presence in Punjab under Hishām. This also indicates that the extended Muslim province of Sind was still holding up in the north.

Sherlock Holmes would perhaps be hard put to keep up with Blankinship's powers of deduction. One woman wants the return of her only son from a distant battle front and Blankinship concludes that this shows "how service in India was disliked" and "exemplifies how much the troops hated to be held in the field beyond their assigned year".

Throughout the book Blankinship devotes a fair amount of space to the North African Berbers, but struggles in vain to determine their exact relationship to Islam. In the 'Bibliography' Blankinship does list as one of the source books consulted by him The Muslim Conquest of North Africa and Spain by 'Abdul Wāhid Dhanūn Tāhā. In the second chapter of his book, entitled 'The Conquest and the Establishment of Arab Rule in North Africa' (pp. 55–83), Tāhā lucidly and in chronological sequence deals with the details of the Muslim conquest of the Berber tribes and their conversion to Islam. Tāhā concludes that Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, who was appointed governor of North Africa in 704 CE, accomplished the final conquest of the region. On p. 76 of his book Tāhā ends the second chapter by writing: "Henceforth Mūsā held sway over all of North Africa, from Barqa to the Atlantic. Thus, the conquest of North Africa was accomplished after nearly 70 years of continuous struggle. However, the Arabs could not have achieved this without having adopted the policy of assimilation and cooperation with the Berbers. The conquest could have been realized in a shorter period had the Arabs followed Abū al-Muhājir's positive policy from the beginning". It should be mentioned that Tāhā devotes nearly seven pages (pp. 76–83) to the footnotes listing his sources.

Blankinship, of course, does not bother to evaluate Tāhā's book. Here is how Blankinship refers to the Berbers and their relationship to Islam. In EJS, (p. 68), he writes:

The majority of the Berbers embraced Islam enthusiastically within a generation or two of their being conquered, were enrolled massively in the army, and made the largest contribution to the conquest of Spain. They did this in spite of their being mountain dwellers who were traditionally hostile to intrusive political authorities. Elsewhere in mountainous districts, as in Armenia, Tabaristān and Zābulistān, the Arabs fought bitter wars only to find these areas still wholly or partly unsubdued by the end of the Umayyad times, while the religion of Islam made little or no progress in them. But in North Africa, the Berbers became the first non-Arab people to accept Islam widely. This process had perhaps reached its greatest fruition only shortly before Hishām's time in the reign of 'Umar II, who sent out a number of Missionaries. It is hard to imagine that many of the Berbers could have deeply absorbed the Islamic faith and teachings in only a couple of years. Nevertheless, Berber politics were henceforth entirely within the framework of Islam.
In passing, one might note the ignorance of geography demonstrated by Blankinship in this paragraph, for apart from inhabiting the mountainous fringes of North Africa, the Berbers were (and indeed are to this day) scattered all over the biggest desert in the world, namely the Sahara. Blankinship also conveys the erroneous impression that the Berbers were only converted to Islam in the reign of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Azīz (whose regnal dates are 717–720 CE). In so doing he totally disregards Tāhā, not to mention the early Muslim historians.

Only four pages later (EJS, p. 72), without giving any specific dates but evidently referring to the period following the Muslim conquest of Spain, Blankinship writes:

But the most crucial war front, as it turned out, was that against the Berbers.... It is difficult to determine if it was exclusively a front against recalcitrant or rebellious Berbers who had already become nominal Muslims, or rather, if some or possibly many of the Berbers had not yet embraced Islam at all, which seems more likely. In the latter case, we would have to view the Berber front in Hishām's time as being at least in part, like the other war fronts...

Blankinship sees no contradiction in this statement and what he has written elsewhere (see p. 68): "The majority of the Berbers embraced Islam enthusiastically within a generation or two of their being conquered". But then, such mundane matters as contradictions, do not seem to bother him.

Coming to the period of Yazīd II (reigned 720–724 CE), Blankinship writes (EJS, p. 89): "But by now, many, perhaps most, of the Berbers were at least nominal Muslims..." In EJS, Blankinship refers elsewhere (see p. 100) to the Berber revolt towards the end of Hishām's reign in 739 CE. The primary sources for this revolt, i.e. the earliest Muslim historians are unanimous in describing this as a Khāriji movement, sparked off by specific acts of oppression. M.A. Shaban in his book Islamic History: A New Interpretation (see vol. I, p. 151), expresses the view that the original sources are wrong in identifying the Berber rebels as Ibāḍī Khārījis, though he concedes that there is an opposite view, referring to T. Lewecki's article on "al-Ibāḍīyya" in EP. Tāhā also holds the same view as Shaban. It would take too much space to go into this matter, though to me Lewecki's line of reasoning seems cogent. However, this is just the background, as far as this review is concerned, to what Blankinship writes in EJS (p. 100): "As for North Africa, it is doubtful to what extent the Berber rebels were mawāli assimilated to Islam at all.... Indeed, it is possible that the Khārījī Berber rebels may have actually spread Islam further among those more inaccessible than Berbers who had never hitherto been exposed to Islam at all. In this event, the 'Berber revolt' is more a continuation of a war of pacification against an external enemy than a disturbance inside the Muslim body politic, despite the veneer of Islam the rebels had acquired".

There is a three page section in EJS (pp. 102–104) grandiloquently titled "The External Strategic Situation in 105/724", in which Blankinship casts his lordly eye on the geostrategic situation of the Umayyad caliphate. On p. 103 he writes: "Territories inhabited by independent mountain peoples, proving difficult
to subdue, tended to be bypassed. In fact, the caliphate's appearance on the map was more one of a distended archipelago of holdings rather than a unified mass, an impression which increases when one considers the discontinuities caused by deserts. One would have thought that Blankinship would remember that the Arabs had for centuries been renowned as nomads of the desert. But this is side remark to what he says of the Berbers on the same page after listing a host of non-Muslim peoples on the fringes of the Umayyad caliphate: "Besides these, the imperfectly subdued Berbers of North Africa virtually constituted an independent external enemy, especially those further to the west, who had the least contact with Islam."

On p. 113, Blankinship writes: "Although some of the sources aver that all the Berbers had become Muslims by the time of Hishâm, it is very doubtful that this was the case..." Further along on p. 136, Blankinship refers to "the Berbers' continued enthusiastic adherence to Islam, despite discrimination and obstacles that were put in their way". On the following page he says: "... a kind of compromise was reached which remained in effect for much of Hishâm's reign. First, the caliphal government would henceforth concentrate its control and taxation on the more easterly and coastal regions that had formerly been part of the Byzantine Empire, and which the Berbers had not regarded as their own territory. Second, the Berbers would be left as nominally Muslim and nearly autonomous subject allies. In exchange for their autonomy, the Berbers submitted to Islam and its outward practices, which they probably had to keep up at least while on campaign with the Arab Muslims..."

There is more on this topic, but possibly too much space has already been devoted to it in this review. However, I felt it would be instructive to explore the way in which Blankinship deals with one specific theme and to highlight his failure to deal with the subject as a historian should, that is, sift the evidence available and come to a conclusion, one way or the other. At the outset, on p. 68, Blankinship writes: "The majority of the Berbers embraced Islam enthusiastically within a generation or two of being conquered", but subsequently he refers to them as "nominal Muslims"; their Islam having faded away like the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*.

**BLANKINSHIP'S DIATRIBE AGAINST HISHÂM**
The bulk of *EJS* consists of an unrestrained attack on Hishâm, whose reign from 724 to 743 CE is portrayed as a total disaster for both Islam and the Umayyads. On pp. 233–35 of *EJS*, Blankinship has constructed an elaborate table listing the military disasters which, according to him, befell the Muslim armies during Hishâm's period. There is not one military success listed there. A brief reference to some undisputed facts should be sufficient to deal with this question.

As far as the Byzantine front is concerned, while there were no significant territorial gains under Hishâm, neither were there any major losses. Interested readers can consult any of the major works available in English, not to mention such Arab historians as al-Tabarî. By major works in English, I mean Julius Wellhausen's *The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall*, G.R. Hawting's *The First Dynasty of Islam*, M.A. Shaban's *Islamic History: A New Interpretation*, vol.1, and Hugh Kennedy's *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*. 
Regarding the Caucasian front, where there had been constant battles with the Khazar tribes on its northern foothills and plains, the Muslims did suffer a major defeat in 730 CE (the commander being Maslamah ibn 'Abd al-Malik). Hawting writes (see p. 83) that following this defeat "... the region was placed under the command of another Marwanid, Marwân b. Muhammad b. Marwân, the future caliph. He recruited a large army from the region and in 737 secured an important victory which ended the Khazar threat". Likewise, Shaban writes (p. 147) that: "Marwân b. Muhammad had little trouble in raising a larger army from all the regions of Jazira, and by 737/119 the powerful Khazar were completely defeated and driven out of Armenia and Adherbayjan". However, on pp. 172–74 of EJS, Blankinship virtually portrays this victory into a defeat, and on p. 174 he goes on to say: "The outcome of Marwân's Khazar expedition can hardly have been very pleasing to the Muslims. Indeed, it seems that Marwân's campaign may actually have been less of a success than claimed ... it would be mere speculation to suppose that Marwân's campaign gave them a blow from which they took a long time to recover. Other unknown forces may have intervened to produce such an outcome, if indeed the Khazars' fortunes had suffered much of a setback from Marwân's campaign at all ... However, the Muslim campaigns from 112/703 to 119/737 still may have helped to discourage any further Khazar invasions of Islamic territory". It seems strange that Blankinship seems prepared to concede any possibility except the possibility of an Umayyad military campaign having been effective.

The story on the Transoxanian front, according to Blankinship, is similar. The situation there following Qutaybah ibn Muslim's successes in that region during 705–715 CE is succinctly summed up in his book by Hawting (see p. 85). He lists three main reasons for the difficulties faced by the Arabs — firstly, the emergence from 716 onwards of the Turkish Turgesh tribes who, with Chinese backing, established a kingdom northeast of the Jaxartes (the Sayhun); secondly, vacillation of the Arabs regarding encouragement of Islamization among the local population; and thirdly, growing factionalism among the Arabs themselves. He says: "The result was a long and complex period of generally unsuccessful military operations for the Arabs in the region..." A little later Hawting writes (see p. 87):

The turning point in Arab fortunes in the eastern territories was the battle or skirmish at Kharistan in 737. The ruler of the Turgesh, Su-Lu, supported by al-Harith b. Surayj, marched into Tukharistan with a large army, but apparently failed to receive the local support which he expected. Asad marched out to meet him and came upon him at a time when most of the Turgesh forces were away on various expeditions and Su-Lu only had a relatively small force with him. Asad was able to inflict a defeat on the depleted Turgesh force and Su-Lu had to flee from Tukharistan, his retreat being protected by al-Harith b. Surayj. The expeditionary forces which he had despatched were not, however, so fortunate and Juday` al-Kirmani was able to destroy most of them, only one band of Soghdians, we are told, made good its retreat. In itself this victory may not have been decisive, but on his return to his own capital
Su-Lu was assassinated by a rival and the Turgesh broke up into contending factions. They never again threatened Arab dominance in Transoxiana.

This was the victory about which Hishām was at first unbelieving when news of it was brought to him. Gibb emphasized the importance of Asad’s decisiveness and his making Balkh his capital in achieving it, and he underlined the importance of the skirmish ...

Hawting, in the last sentence, refers both to the shifting of the capital of Khurasan from Merv to Balkh by Asad al-Qasrī (brother of the Governor of Iraq, Khālid al-Qasrī). Likewise, H.A.R. Gibb comments on this battle or skirmish on pp. 83–85 of his book *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*. Gibb calls the encounter at Kharistan both a battle and also a skirmish, due to the fact that only 4,000 of the Turkish Khaqan’s total force of 30,000 was involved. On page 84 of his book Gibb writes:

The Muslims gained an overwhelming success: the Khāqān and Ḥārith, having narrowly escaped capture in the confusion, were closely followed by Asad as far as Jazza, when a storm of rain and snow prevented further pursuit. They were thus able to regain the Jabghu in Tukharistan, with happier fortune than the raiding parties, whose retreat was cut off by the vigilance of al-Karmani, and of whom only a single band of Sughdians made good their escape.

On this skirmish at Kharistan, for it was little more, hung the fate of Arab rule, not only in Transoxiana, but possibly even in Khurasan, at least for the immediate future.

On p. 85, Gibb says:

Kharistan was not only the turning point in the fortunes of the Arabs in Central Asia, but gave the signal for the downfall of the Turgesh power, which was bound up with the personal prestige of Su-Lu . . . in his own country the dissensions long fomented in secret by the Chinese broke out. Su-Lu was assassinated by the Baga Tarkhan (Kursuk); the kingdom fell to pieces... With the collapse of the Turgesh kingdom disappeared the last great Turkish confederation in Western Asia for more than two centuries to come. The battle of Kharistan assured the supremacy of the Muslim civilization in Sogdiana...

Let us see how Blankinship, without the least justification whatsoever, refers to Gibb’s use of the word "skirmish". On p. 182 of *EJS* he says: "The ensuing battle is painted as the decisive turning point on this front, but one must agree with Gibb that it hardly amounted to more than a skirmish . . . not only did the Khāqān and al-Ḥārith both escape, but Asad also was unable to pursue them for more than a short distance ..."

Asad al-Qasrī died a couple of months later, in February 738, and was replaced as Governor of Khurāsān by Naṣr ibn Sayyār who, as it turned out, was
to be the last Umayyad governor of this province. On pp. 182–85 of *EJS*, Blankinship refers to his activities in Transoxiana, and concludes this section with a string of, what seems to me at least, total falsification for which the author is unable to conjure up any evidence worth the name. On p. 185 he says:

But even though the caliphate had nearly reached its earlier maximum boundaries once more, the victory had been bought at too dear a price. Tired of constant campaigning, especially after the Day of the Defile the Khurāsānis had decisively rebelled against the Umayyads and could no longer be trusted. Their rebellion had required the introduction of a large Syrian army of twenty thousand, which further exacerbated relations between the caliphate and most Khurāsānis… As the Syrian troops were not numerous enough ever to enforce their will totally on the Khurāsānis, and as more Syrians could not be spared because of crises elsewhere, the caliph finally had to hand over the province to a Khurāsāni Arab governor. This was an unprecedented move that meant a considerable loss of control for the caliphate, threatened to fracture the caliphate on regional lines, and also presaged the Ābbāsid revolution. Thus, the apparent victories on the Transoxanian front were not what they seemed. Like almost everywhere else, the scene had been set for the Umayyads’ downfall.

Let us pursue this question further. The Day of the Defile refers to an encounter in 731 between the Turkish Khāqān and al-Junayd b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Murri, Governor of Khurāsān. Gibb gives details of the battle (see pp. 73–75) in his above mentioned book. The Khāqān had besieged Samarqand, and al-Junayd marched to its relief with "only a small force". He was engaged *en route* in rugged terrain "when only four farsakhs from Samarqand". Gibb continues:

The (Arab) advance-guard was driven in and the main body engaged in a furious struggle in which both sides fought to a standstill . . . Khāqān renewed his attacks on the camp the next day, all but overwhelming Junayd, and settled down thereafter to beleaguer him. In this predicament there was only one course open to Junayd. Had his force perished, Samarqand would certainly have fallen in the end and two disasters taken the place of one. He, therefore, adopted the more prudent, if unheroic course, the course of ordering Sawra to leave a skeleton garrison in Samarqand and march out to join him by the river. Sawra, however, took the short cut across the mountains, and was actually within four miles of Junayd, when the Turkish forces bore down on him. The battle lasted into the heat of the day, when the Turks, on Ghurak’s advice it is said, having first set the grass on fire, drew up so as to shut Sawra off from the water. Maddened by heat and thirst, the Arabs charged the enemy and broke their ranks, only to perish miserably in the fire, Turks and Muslims together. The scattered remnants were pursued by the Turkish cavalry and of twelve thousand men scarcely a thousand escaped. While the enemy were engaged with Sawra, Junayd freed himself from his perilous position in the defiles, though not without
severe fighting, and completed his march to Samarqand... Junayd remained at Samarqand for some time, recuperating his forces, while couriers were sent to Hishām with the news of the disaster. The Caliph immediately ordered twenty thousand reinforcements from Basra and Kūfā to be sent to Khurāsān...

The Turks, disappointed in their attack on Samarqand, withdrew to Bukhārā, where they laid siege to Qatan b. Qutayba. Junayd now marched (to the relief of Bukhārā) with the utmost circumspection, however, and easily defeated a small body of the enemy in a skirmish near Karminia. The following day Khāqān attacked his vanguard near Tawawis (on the edge of the oasis of Bukhārā), but the attack had been foreseen and was beaten off. As it was now well into November, the Turgesh were compelled to withdraw from Sogdiana, while Junayd entered Bukhārā in triumph on the festival of Mihrjan.

I felt compelled to give this lengthy quotation from Gibb for a variety of reasons. First, Blankinship gleefully dwells on the battle in EJS (pp. 156–60), portraying it as "a military catastrophe of the first rank for the Muslims" (p. 156), even though the Turks were unable to take either Samarqand or Bukhārā. Secondly, I wished to make it clear that I have not misquoted Gibb by summarizing his account. Thirdly, not every reader will find it easy to consult Gibb, whose book has long been out of print. No source that I have been able to consult reports any rebellion by the Khurāsānis following the Battle of the Defile. Gibb further says that the 20,000 reinforcements sent to Khurāsān consisted of Iraqis from Basra and Basra, and does not mention the Syrian troops at all, as Blankinship claims. Regarding the appointment of Nasr b. Sayyār. Al-Ṭabarī (pp. 1660–62, pagination of the De Goeje edition = vol. XXV, pp. 188-190 of the Ṭabarī English Translation series, published by SUNY, and ironically enough, translated by Blankinship) provides details about the reasons for the posting, referring to a conversation on the subject between Hishām and 'Abd al-Karīm. Incidentally, Hawting (p. 86) referring to the Day of the Defile, says that Junayd succeeded in "inflicting a temporary defeat on the Turgesh" because he rescued the beleaguered cities of Samarqand and Bukhārā".

Regarding the famous Battle of Tours (or Poitiers) in France in 732 CE, details are provided by Tāḥā (in his above mentioned book, pp. 192–93). The Frankish army indeed won a victory, but as Tāḥā says, this was due to the fact that there was a weak aspect to the Muslim army, the majority of which consisted of Berbers, who had taken their families with them. "The Franks attacked the camp where the women and children were staying, and the Berbers left the battlefield to protect their dependants and "This was the signal for complete disorder in the ranks of the Muslims, and it was the main reason for their disastrous defeat".

However, Tāḥā notes (pp. 195–97) that this defeat did not send the Muslims reeling south of the Pyrenees, but they maintained their presence in the south of France, and in 735 they advanced beyond the River Rhone, causing Charles Martel to come south to repel them. Tāḥā writes (p. 197): "Nevertheless, Charles could not conquer Narbonne, which remained as a Muslim base in
southern France up to the time of Abdul Rahman I, the founder of the Umayyad Emirate".

It would also be interesting to draw attention to Wellhausen's comment on this battle (see p. 345): "At Tours the Arabs were not repulsed once for all. The Khalifa himself zealously continued the war against the Franks . . ."

SOME OPINIONS ABOUT HISHĀM
It would be interesting to see how other historians view Hishām. We shall attempt to present in the following pages the opinions of several well-known historians. It will be quite obvious how radically Blankinship's view of Hishām differs from those of virtually every recognized historian. G. Levi Della Vida, for instance, has the following to say about Hishām:

... It was undoubtedly to the beneficial activities of `Omar that was due the third period of splendour which the Umayyad caliphate experienced under Hishām. During the twenty years of his reign, the conquests were resumed on the old grand scale, in the west (in spite of the great Berber rising of 123) as well as in the east: the Arabs advanced into the heart of Gaul; the Mediterranean began its transformation into an "Arab lake"; the Turks who had begun to slip off the Arab yoke on the dismissal and death of Kutaiba were subdued for a third time.

"The Umayyad caliphate was at its zenith when Hishām died . . ." (See art. 'Umayyids' in E.J. Brill's EI. The reference to `Umar in the above quotation is of course to `Umar b. `Abd al-`Azīz, and the date is 123 of Hijrah).

Likewise, F. Gabrieli (see his art. 'Hishām' in EI) refers to the uprising of Zayd b. `Ali in Kūfā in 740 CE and continues:

Apart from this revolt and some other small Shi`ī and Khāridjī acts of rebellion, the internal peace of the empire under Hishām was not seriously threatened, although the underground work of the da`wa continued unabated. It was rather in the frontier regions of the empire that the most outstanding events of this caliphate took place.

To the east the Arab offensive had, under Kutayba b. Muslim, made its final advance. After that, it was a matter no longer of further progress but of retaining and consolidating the positions gained, and particularly of containing the pressure of the Turkish counter-offensive which was carried on with vigour at this time . . . After suffering many setbacks and even risking disaster ... the Arabs finally broke the Turkish offensive at Kharistān, near Shuburkān to the west of Balkh (119/737) and, under Naṣr b. Sayyār, advanced in the following year to the Jaxartes.

The empire experienced another grave threat during this period, from the north, with the irruption of the Khazar Turks in Armenia and in Ādharbaydjān . . . The invaders were driven back, however . . . There followed a whole series of campaigns which led the Arabs beyond the
Caucasus as far as the mouths of the Volga (foundation of Derbend by Maslama in 113/731), without, however, achieving any stable conquest to the north of the Caucasus. Further west, the hostilities with the Byzantines continued throughout Hishām's reign, but without any large-scale operations . . .

The final years of his reign were clouded by troubles concerning the succession . . . The accession of al-Walīd II, when Hishām died from a heart attack in his residence at Rusafa after a reign of twenty years, in fact saw the beginning of the fitna, which was fatal for the dynasty. But the long reign of the fourth son of `Abd al-Malik may nevertheless be considered as a period which on the whole was glorious for the Arabs and fruitful in the development of Islamic faith and culture . . .

M.A. Shaban, in his Islamic History: A New Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), vol. I, p. 152, writes: "By the end of Hishām's reign in 743/125 the situation in North Africa and Spain, and for that matter all over the empire, was that of uneasy internal peace. However, it is no small achievement that he succeeded in defeating all the formidable external threats". Hugh Kennedy, in The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (London and New York: Longman, 1986), p. 112, says:

"Hishām died on Rabi` II 125/February 743. He left a caliphate prosperous and secure. It is true that the differences between Qays and Yeman were not healed and that the majority of the people in Iraq and points east, both Arabs and mawālī, remained unenthusiastic about the regime. It is true too that the recent wars in the west had put an additional strain on the Syrian army. It should not be thought that collapse was inevitable or that another Hishām could not have sustained the empire. Such, however, was not to be the case. Al-Walīd II fulfilled Hishām's worst fears . . . Besides the caliph's generally negligent conduct, as offensive to many Muslims as Hishām's had been pleasing, two major affairs brought resentment to a head."

Carole Hillenbrand in the Translator's Foreword to The Waning of the Umayyad Caliphate (vol. XXVI of The History of al-Ṭabarī, SUNY, Ṭabarī Translation Series, 1989, p. xiii), says the following:

The years 121–26 (738–44), which are covered in this volume, saw the outbreak of savage internecine struggles between members of the ruling Umayyad family in Syria. Once the towering figures of the Umayyad caliph Hishām, presented in the sources as a most able if somewhat unattractive and parsimonious figure, and his redoubtable governor in Iraq, Khālid al-Qasrī, had died, the process of decay at the center of Umayyad power, the ruling family itself, was swift and devastating.

SOME BRIEF POINTS
The number of falsifications and distortions which Blankinship has crammed into his work are legion, and I have only touched on a very few points, though at some length. Here are just a few examples of his statements which seem devoid of all justification.

On p. 400 Blankinship writes: "... a great number of the Muslim troops fled to the Byzantines and became Christians because of their misery". Blankinship quotes in this connection the Christian historian Agapius. He refers to Sulaymān b. Hishām's campaign on the Byzantine front in 741 CE, which he describes as a disaster, though it is not considered to be so by Wellhausen, Kennedy, Shaban, Hawting or the relevant entries in either edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

To cite another instance (see EJS, p. 112): "Indeed, even after a millennium, when a substantial proportion of the total population of India had become Muslims, the latter were still unable to subdue the whole subcontinent..." Blankinship does not seem to be familiar with the Delhi Sultanate. During the Sultanate period, especially during the reign of 'Alā'ī-Dīn Khiljī (1295–1315), virtually the whole of the Subcontinent was under Muslim rule, not to mention the later Mughal dynasty in the post-Akbar era.

Let us consider another statement of the kind (see EJS, p. 203): "Never again would the caliphate summon nearly all its neighbours to choose between total surrender and war". One would have thought that Blankinship would have hesitated from making such a blatantly erroneous statement. This is astounding since all historians, Muslim as well as non-Muslim mention that the Muslim doctrine laid down three options before the non-Muslims when Muslims had any encounter: acceptance of Islam, war, or payment of jizyah. This last option enabled retention of one's religion and an autonomous status. This approach would seem to be in keeping with the so called Geneva Accords of this century which, however, are scarcely adhered to by the modern powers. In fact, the policy of total surrender or war was perhaps most blatantly applied on a grand scale in both North and South America in the post-1500 CE period by the Spanish and Anglo-Saxon colonizers, resulting in the destruction of the Aztec and Inca civilizations and genocide of the Red Indian tribes.

In EJS, pp. 31–34, Blankinship puzzles over the reasons for 'Umar b. 'Abd al-`Azīz's stoppage of all offensive action by Muslim armies, including the withdrawal of the army which had kept Constantinople under siege since 716 CE, under the orders of his predecessor, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik. Both the early Muslim historians and modern writers, many of them non-Muslim, are in agreement that he did so because he wanted to concentrate on internal issues. Blankinship, however, writes (p. 33): "The answer might lie in the terrible defeat suffered by the Muslims in the unsuccessful siege of Constantinople of 91–99/717–18. The magnitude of this debacle is quite graphically portrayed by the Byzantine historian Theophanes, quoting from a contemporary Byzantine source, as well as by Michael the Syrian, though the Muslim historians are naturally more reticent". Blankinship here casts slur on Muslim historians, though he gleefully quotes from them extensively while referring to the setbacks of the Muslim armies on various fronts during the earlier period of Hishām's reign. Indeed, contrary to Blankinship's contention, the Muslim historians were not
Reticent about defeats suffered by the Muslims even during the lifetime of the Prophet (e.g. the battle of Uhud) or of 'Umar I (the Battle of the Bridge, 634 CE). In fact, Tabari devotes over two pages (from the end of p. 1314 to the beginning of p. 1317) to the siege of Constantinople by the Muslim army under Maslamah b. 'Abd al-Malik. Tabari, however, does not refer to any "terrible defeat", but gives two alternative versions of how Maslamah was deceived by Leo the Isaurian "by means of a trick that would shame even a woman" into either setting fire to the huge stockpile of food that the Muslims had piled up, or allowing the people of Constantinople to take it away. Blankinship, incidentally, is mistaken when he dates the siege as occurring in "98–99/717–18", which would place it in the caliphate of 'Umar II. Tabari dates it from 716–17 CE. J.H. Mordtmann, in the article "Kustantiniyya" in *EI*2 (vol. v), is more specific: "The siege began on 25 August 716 and lasted a whole year; Maslamah then found himself forced to retire owing to the attacks of the Bulghars and the scarcity of provisions".

A word needs to be said about the 'Bibliography' of the work (see *EJS*, pp. 353–67). In this list of books which the author mentions, there are three glaring omissions which adversely reflect on the quality of the work. The three Omissions are: D. Ayalon, *Black Banners from the East*; Farouk Omar, *The Abbasid Caliphate 132/750–170/786* and D.C. Dennett, "Marwan ibn Muhammad: The Passing of the Umayyad Caliphate" (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Harvard: 1939). These three works are works of careful historical scholarship which seek to explain the downfall of the Umayyads and their replacement by the Abbasids. Each of these works pin points the causes for this momentous event as entirely internal, and none connects it to external defeats under the reign of Hisham, a hypothesis advanced by Blankinship.

In the Preface of his thesis (pp. 6–7), Dennett comments: "When Constantine XI stood on the walls of Constantinople on the night of May 28, 1453, the doom of Byzantium was so apparent that nothing short of a miracle could have saved the city. But when Marwan drew up his troops on the banks of the Zab, on the morning of January 24, 750, it was not obvious that the Umayyads were to wage their last great battle. The army of the caliph was superior to the troops of the enemy in number. There was an abundance of money and of provisions — those essentials without which no commander could rely on the loyalty of his troops—. The caliph and his lieutenants in the field had been waging war for the previous five years against a series of Kharjite rebellions; they had been invariably victorious and had enjoyed the prestige and were entitled to expect that confidence which an army places in a brilliantly successful general. The threat to the integrity of the empire, which was so critical under Hisham when a serious Berber revolt in North Africa and a Turkish counter-offensive in Transoxiana had for a while imperilled the existence of the Arab state, had been overcome, and now on the critical day of Zab, there was no danger of foreign aggression to divert the resources of the government from concentrating all its energy and forces to meet the enemy in Iraq. In the past, a series of crises, of which at least one — the revolt of Ibn Zubeir — was more formidable for the cause of the Umayyads had been suppressed. Indeed, we might even go to the extreme of asserting that the fall of the Umayyads was due entirely to the circumstance that through faulty tactics, and one fatal error in the course of the
To sum up, EJS provides hardly any worthwhile justification to consider Blankinship a careful scholar or responsible historian; or the present work to have contributed anything to a better understanding of the second half of the first century of Islam.

S. Hussain


Various studies have been published on the late Ottoman economy and public finance in Turkey. Most of these studies have dealt with the economic and financial position of the state. The economic and fiscal policies of the state, however, have not been studied to a significant extent. Two books published in Turkish in 1995 have opened a new track in the discussions of the economic and fiscal policies of the late Ottoman State. According to Toprak, the idea of liberalism in the economy was prevalent during the 1908–1912 era. This era was a real "honeymoon" for Ottoman liberalism. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) realized the 1908 revolution with quite liberal efforts. The liberal atmosphere of politics also affected the economic environment. Ottoman citizens were encouraged to develop entrepreneurial skills and suitable conditions were provided for foreign capital. The tradition of regarding liberalism as hand-in-hand with Ottoman nationalism continued among the Young Turks as it had among the New Ottomans. In the second constitutional period, the Unionists tried to keep the state out of economic activity and encouraged conditions for the development of private initiative. *Tesebbus-i Sahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet* (Private Initiative and Decentralization), *Serbest-i Mukavelat* (Freedom of Contract), *Serbest-i Ticaret* (Freedom of Commerce) and *Serbest-i Rekabet* (Freedom of Competition) were the most frequently used terms in the intellectual circles. Ottoman liberalism reached its peak with the formulations of Cavid Bey (Minister of Finance of the Unionists), and he settled a liberal economy in the agenda of the Ottoman State. The journal *Ulum-u İktisadiye ve İctimaiye Mecmuası* (the Journal of Economics and Social Sciences) played an important role in the expansion of liberal ideas in Ottoman lands.

Meanwhile, the Balkan Wars had struck a mortal blow to the idea of Ottomanism. At first, since the main focus was already on the Muslim elements
of the Ottoman Empire, there was not much credit loss for Ottomanism, but the Muslim Albanian uprising changed this situation. The Unionists were forced to reconsider Ottomanism; it was discredited in the eyes of the Turkish Nationalists. In those years, ethnic groups pursued their struggles for independence and the minorities engaging in trade increased their wealth and power in the liberal environment. It were the Muslim craftsmen who suffered the most. The outcome was the development of Turkish nationalism as a reaction to economic liberalism. In this shift from Ottoman nationalism to Turkish nationalism, the national economy idea rose up against liberal economic philosophy.

In the first part of his book Milli ıktisat-Milli Burjuvazi, Toprak builds theoretical framework for the development of national economy. The people in Istanbul were encouraged to shop only from Muslim shopkeepers during the Muslim Boycott of 1913–1914. The main impulse behind this attempt was to create a national bourgeois class. According to Toprak, in the uncertain environment in the second decade of the twentieth century, the national economy was sought as a solution. Under the title of "National Foreign Trade and the State" the author puts emphasis on tariff policies. The foreign exchange market was controlled by a special commission, the Kambiyo Muamelat Merkez Komisyonu. (The Central Commission for Exchange). The Ottoman currency was protected from the existing inflationary environment. In addition, Turkish became the compulsory language in trade relations.

The concept of national economy had originated in Germany under the leadership of List, Fichte, Gentz and Muller and has soon taken up by the German nation. They took the state as an organic mechanism and favoured a closed economy which was totally against liberal economic philosophy. Ziya Gokalp and Tekin Alp (two influential nationalist intellectuals of this era) were the strongest supporters of the German school in the Ottoman Empire. Turk Yurdu journal announced the year of 1915 as the starting date of the national economy.

In the conclusion of the book, Toprak regards the national economy as a merchantalist and etatist economic policy. He argues that the national economy was a response to liberal economic relations and became influential until the end of the Second World War in Turkey. His line of thought regards the 1908–1945 era as an application period of the national economy.

In his second book, İtihat-Terakki ve Devletecilik, Toprak takes etatism into consideration. This second book is addressed to the economists mostly. After the loss of Salonika in the Balkan war, the Central Committee of the CUP moved to Istanbul. This change of location also affected the policy of the CUP. The main trade group in Istanbul was the small tradesman and there was rivalry between the chamber of commerce, with mostly minority members, and the guilds of Muslim origin. This development led the CUP to reconsider its economic policies.

Particularly, the World War I forced the CUP to seek loan. This problem is discussed in the second chapter of the book. The banking policies of the Ottoman State are analyzed in chapters titled "the State and the Banking System" and "National Banking and the Unionists." During the war years, the provisioning of the big cities was organized by the government. Main consumption goods like bread, sugar, and gasoline were provided through government institutions such as
the Heyet-i Mahsusa-i Ticariye (Special Commission for Commerce), Iase Umum Mudurlugu (General Directorate of Provision), and Iase Nezareti (Ministry of Provision).

The 1916 congress of the CUP witnessed important transformations in the ideology and strategies of the party. That congress was also important in terms of war etatism. At that time there was no choice other than etatism for the CUP. This was the first time at which Ottoman society had been faced with such a total war and its impact on the economy. During the CUP congress, state intervention in the economy was also reflected in the decisions taken.

In this way, the CUP government's first important war time policy was the unilateral abolition of the capitulations. The government introduced a new trade regime and undertook protectionist measures. The privileged status of foreign firms was abolished and they were brought under Ottoman jurisdiction and tax legislation. The Ad valorem tax application was abolished and the use of specific tariffs and quotas were introduced. Export commission became responsible for foreign trade applications. Exports were restricted and required food stuffs were not allowed to be exported during the war years.

The last chapter of the book consists of a discussion of the macroeconomic indicators such as production, price and income levels of the Ottoman economy during this time. Consequently, during the war years German romanticism was also reconciled with the oppressive methods of the Unionists. In that respect, the leaning of the Unionists toward the Muslim bourgeoisie was not only economic. They provided guards from the esnaf (artisan) organizations as well. As Toprak points out, the CUP became a nationalist bourgeoisie party with the ideological impact of Ziya Gokalp. The party gained identity with the Turkish nationalism ideal. Firstly, it took inspiration from the liberal ideas of Cavid Bey, and during the war years, it was inspired by Gokalp's sociologism and Turkism and became an etatist bourgeoisie party.

In sum, the books under review are important contributions to the literature on the economic and fiscal policies of the Ottoman Empire. With a few notable exceptions, this area of interest, has been a much neglected area of investigation. In addition, the documents added to the books (booklets, reports, motions, speeches, etc.), extended bibliography and the indexes not only enrich the study but also increase its value in the eyes of area specialists.

Bulent Aras and Cuneyd Okay


This short book has, in some quarters, been described as simple, if not naive. One
can see why. Its structure is certainly simple. Each of the main chapters is on a common theme in the two religions: origins, scriptures, the development of religious thought, law and ethics, worship and spirituality, unity and diversity, spread and history, and modern developments. In each, after a short introduction, the main characteristics of Christianity and Islam are presented, in some chapters followed by a more detailed consideration of one or two particular aspects by way of illustration. The chapter concludes with a usually very brief reminder of areas of similarity and difference. In fact, these conclusions are so short and mechanical that they can easily annoy the more demanding reader. The main parts of the chapters are of necessity concise, given the overall length of the book, and sometimes this conciseness leads to loss of depth and subtlety.

But evaluated like this, the book and its purpose have been misunderstood, and the author's declaration of intent has been ignored: "The hope of the author is . . . . that this may be a book about both Christianity and Islam which will be useful to both Christians and Muslims, and that it may contribute to the development of authentic mutual understanding between the two communities" (p. 11).

Basically, it is the title of the book which is misleading; it describes the purpose of the book, not its content. As Dr Goddard explains in his introduction, the relationship between the two faith communities has over the centuries been poisoned by two things especially. On the one hand has been a deep and often wilful ignorance of what the other faith believes. We have ample studies of the Orientalism (Edward Said) category which documents mis-understanding and ignorance of Islam. The author's own research shows that Muslim ignorance of Christianity is probably as deep-rooted. On the other hand is mutual refusal to 'play fair'. We are always tempted to describe our own faith in terms of its ideals while condemning the other on the basis of the actions of its practitioners. This is the double standard which the author seeks to escape from by presenting Islam and Christianity in parallel terms, parallel in approach without falling into the trap of parallelism of content.

The author is a scholar but this is not a scholarly book — another reason, perhaps, why it has not been uniformly welcomed by his colleagues! It is written for a general, interested and intelligent readership, precisely those people who can best influence the tone and attitudes of communal relations and public opinion. It is therefore also a good introductory text about Islam for Christians and about Christianity for Muslims. The interacting presentations allow the reader to approach the unknown, namely the other faith, with a degree of reference to his or her own faith. The author is clearly also a good teacher.

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