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The Mediterranean Seminar Review

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This volume, edited and translated by Mayte Penelas is part of the great Egyptian historian, Taqī al-Dīn Abu'l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī's (d. 1442) *Kitāb al-ḥabar 'an al-bašar*, or "History of Humankind." Stretching from Creation to his own day and emphasizing the history of the Arabs and Islamic world, it also contained, in its fifth of sixth volumes, histories of the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Franks, and Visigoths of Spain. These are based largely on the relevant sections of Ibn Khaldun's universal history, *Kitāb al-'ibar* (or "Book of Lessons"), with the exception of the late-fourteenth and fifteenth-century material. To this, Penelas has added a brief note on the Franks that is found appended to some manuscripts of Maqrīzī's other great work, known as *al-Khiṭaṭ*.

This edition begins with a comprehensive technical introduction to the work, including an analysis of its sources, extant manuscripts, and editions. The text itself commences with an account of the common Noetic origins of both the Greeks (al-Yūnān) and Romans (al-Rūm). Alexander the Great (here, *al-Iskandar*, rather than the Qur'anic *Dhu'l-Qarnayn*) and his legacy figure prominently, with the history of the Jews woven in. Next, the focus of the narrative shifts to the Kittīm (Latins) and the establishment of their empire, which is followed through to the reign of Diocletian and the wars with Persia. The next section treats the era from Constantine to Heraclius. For Maqrīzī' Rome attained its greatest glory under the Christian emperors, and he recounts their reigns with considerable detail. The immediate period following the emergence of Islam is recounted in fine-grained detail, both in terms of Byzantine politics and the border warfare in Anatolia, before fast-forwarding to 1071's Battle of Manzikert and the arrival of the Seljuqs. Cue the arrival of the Franks, whose constituent nations are described, and who are presented as the nemeses of the Romans. The circumstances of the Fourth Crusade are described in vivid, if confused, detail, and this provides a segue for a brief account of the Italian trading states: Naples, Pisa, Genoa and Venice, as well as the Iberian powers: the Catalans, Castile and Portugal. Here, al-Maqrīzī concludes with a history of the Visigothic kings, from their supposedly ancient origins, through their conversion from Arianism to Catholicism, and ending with the reign and defeat of the last king, Ruḍrīq, in 711. The short history of the Franks Penelas has appended notes the Biblical origins of the Frankish people, recounting their expansion into the Islamicate Mediterranean, their defeat at the hands of Saladin, and a garbled account of

Sicilian-Byzantine relations just prior to the Fourth Crusade. Remarkably, the *rihla* of Ibn Jubayr is cited.

Altogether, this is an excellent edition, produced to Brill's well-known high standards. The text is effectively introduced and annotated in detail. Studded with anthropological and historical tidbits and digressions, it may not be an accurate historical account, but it is one that is surprisingly complex and reflects in fascinating detail a late medieval Muslim thinker's understanding of the Christian peoples of the Mediterranean and their history.



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