

COMPTES RENDUS

A Muslim Manual of War — being *Tafriġ Al-Kurub Fi Tadbir Al-Hurup*.
By 'Umar ibn Ibrahim Al-Awsi Al-Ansari.

Edited and translated by *George T. Scanlon*.

Published by the American University at Cairo Press. Egypt 1961.

This is a valuable manuscript on Muslim warfare written in a clear 9th/15th century naskhi by 'Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Awsi al-Ansari who died in 811/1408. The author was appointed Chief judge of the Mameluke troops in the Aleppo district, northern Syria, and later deputy to his father, the Hanafi judge. In 794/1392 he became a judge in Aleppo and in this position amassed great wealth. He visited Cairo, but cut short his stay when he heard that the Tatars of Timur Lenk were ravaging the Syrian provinces. He was taken prisoner and very badly treated. When Timur withdrew in 803/1401, he attached himself to the entourage of the chief Hanafi judge of Egypt. In 805/1403 he succeeded the latter. Later he had a growing influence at the court of the Mamlukes.¹⁾

The author of the *Tafriġ al-Kurub* says that he pursued his research and wrote his treatise for two types of readers: 1. »... he who chances upon it of the Sultan's noble commanders and the leaders of his armies«, and 2. »He among them who did not experience the path of war, because of the youth of his age...«.

The treatise is a work of the second rank, if compared with other 14th—15th cent. treatises on Muslim warfare. It includes an intro-

duction and twenty books (chapters) as follows:

Book one: About caution in time of peace when the ruler resides in his capital.

Book two: about agents and spies and what is pertinent in this matter.

Book three: about envoys and what is specified about the characteristics of a well-qualified, and that which he who strays from correct procedure deserves.

Book four: about deception and stratagems which obviate war.

Book five: about consultation in the matter of war.

Book six: about the qualifications of the general of the army and those of his troops and how he should handle them.

Book seven: about the explanation of when it is necessary to encounter the enemy and do battle against him.

Book eight: about the scouting party and the organization of its activities and what these activities encompass.

Book nine: about the explanation of matters which require cautiousness when departing and what must be done in the circumstances of marching.

Book ten: about the explanation of that which is necessary of precaution while camping and the period when the army remains in the camp.

Book eleven: about the explanation of when mobilizing and arranging the troops is necessary and what is required in the matter of mobilizing at this time.

Book twelve: about the explanation of the method of mobilizing while threatened in marching and the protection of the treasuries.

Book thirteen: about the description of the method of night attack on the enemy if the opportunity appears.

Book fourteen: about the selection of positions of the battle-rankings and the time to carry this out.

Book fifteen: about the explanation of the setting up ambushes and the management of their affaires.

Book sixteen: about the description of the method of arraying the soldiers when they are mobilized for battle.

Book seventeen: about what should be done while encountering the enemy and fighting him.

Book eighteen: about what should be done while putting the enemy to rout.

Book nineteen: about the description of the practice of taking fortresses and the method of accomplishing this.

Book twenty: a description of the method of the defence of fortified places and their protection.

Passing from the contents of the treatise, the reader finds at his disposal, a comprehensive glossary of Muslim military terms.

A good introduction by Dr. George I. Scanlon, the editor and translator, surveys the literature on Muslim Warfare. The introduction also demonstrates how this particular treatise concurs in the general philosophy of war as practised in the East during the period of the Crusades and the Tatars and immediately after.²⁾

Dr. A. R. Zaky.

- 1) The treatise was written during the reign of the Mamluke sultan Faraj ibn Barquq who ruled between 801 and 814/1399-1411.
- 2) Dr. A. Rahman Zaky: *Military Litterature of the Arabs* (Cahiers d'histoire Egyptienne. 1955, pp. 149-160).