

**ABSTRACT**

*Ibn al-Naqib: The Poet of the Damascene Natural Landscape in the Ottoman Period*

This 110-page book is based on the notes of a lecture that ʻUmar Musa Basha delivered at the department of Arabic literature in Damascus University about the Damascene poet ʻAbd al-Rahman bin Kamal al-Din Muhammad al-Husayni, known as Ibn al-Naqib, (1638-1670). The author is a renowned professor of Mamlukid and Ottoman Literature at Damascus University and has published several pioneering books on that period.

In the first chapter, the author sheds light on the political, social, intellectual and literary contexts in which the poet lived and produced his work.

The second chapter is an extensive account of the poet’s biography, and an analytical study of his works which mainly consist of poetry in addition to a *maqama* (a picaresque novella genre that arose in Arabic literature of the ninth and tenth centuries), and a play. This chapter
places a special emphasis on poems that celebrate the spectacular natural landscape of Damascus.

The third chapter addresses the other recurrent themes of his poetry such as *ghazal*, wine poetry, panegyrics and occasion-poems.

The fourth chapter defines Ibn al-Naqib’s concepts of poetry and poetics, his poetic and linguistic techniques, and his poetic innovations.

Basing his research on his extensive historical knowledge about early-modern urban Syria and on Ibn al-Naqib’s poetry with its illustrative and wide-ranging references to the topographic, natural and botanic scenery of the city, this Damascene scholar indulges passionately in recreating the panoramic setting of seventeenth century Damascus, mapping out its famous orchards, gardens, trees, flowers, fountains, hills, rivers, birds, countryside palaces, mansions, retreats and recreational spaces. He also reconstructs the social and cultural life that thrived in this context. In the analysis of the poetry, the author highlights the influence of Andalusian poetry and Syrian folk music on Ibn al-Naqib’s innovative poetic forms and rhythms.

This is a pioneering work about an overlooked poet and an understudied historio-geographic setting. Targeting a particular student-readership, the author has intentionally left out two of the major substantial innovations of the poet: his *maqama* and his play. Furthermore, examining extensively the influence of other poetries and arts on Ibn al-Naqib, ‘Umar Basha has no mention of this poet’s influence on the literary life of the following periods that witnessed the first sparks of the Arab Renaissance in Aleppo and Damascus, hence, missing
out on a rare opportunity to do some justice to this underestimated period, polemically still
labelled in cultural historiography as the Age of Decadence.

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