Food is essential to our daily lives and yet, not many researches have been written on Middle Easterners’ nutrition in medieval times. Paulina Lewicka’s study joins in the scattered studies conducted on the subject so far. On the one hand, from the Mamlûk angle, Amalia Levanoni’s innovative article “Food and Cooking during the Mamlûk Era: Social and Political Implications,” and Boaz Shoshan’s articles on the political aspect of bread consumption and the patronage system in the Mamlûk sultanate. On the other hand we can place Lewicka’s study amongst more general works on the culinary aspects of the vast medieval Middle East, such as the pioneering works of A.J. Arberry and Maxime Rodinson and later these of Eliyahu Ashtor, Charles Perry, Nawal Nasrallah, Geert Jan van Gelder, Manuela Marin, and David Waines. Nevertheless, between the two types of research, the Mamlûk-Egypt oriented and the general medieval Middle Eastern oriented, until now there was no study combining the two—specific place in a wider time frame. Taking into account the slow character of changes in nutrition and food habits, the author is studying Cairo from the Fatimid caliphate (296-567/909-1171) until the end of the Mamlûk sultanate (648-923/1250-1517), when Cairo was the capital for most of the Muslim rulers. Lewicka’s work, therefore, needs to be read in this

context, as a detailed continuation of the studies written before it. Its main objective is to complete them and to fill in some missing gaps on the Cairenes’ menu in medieval time.

Using an anthropological approach to the subject, a manual titled *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* and organizing the material according to main food categories, the book is divided into three main parts and six chapters. At the beginning of the first part, “On Food,” the author explains her main thesis, according to which street cooks played a crucial role in shaping medieval Cairo’s menu. Internally, street food business was well developed in Cairo and influenced the entire food consumption in the city. Professional street cooks and restaurants affected the way in which food was consumed among the urban classes: food was usually bought outside and rarely cooked at home. This characteristic of the Cairene cuisine could have affected further gender-relations, and the Cairene women’s traditional role was challenged. Externally, the Cairene cuisine was influenced from three main general processes: the “Arab agricultural revolution” (A. Watson) and the “commercial revolution of the Mediterranean world” (A. Udovitch), where Egypt was a pivotal link between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Third was the “culinary revolution” that emerged at the same time and space.

Obviously, there were visible differences between “high” and “low” cooking, between the table of the rulers and that of the people. Thus, some basic variations between the two could be traced, but also similarities in adopted ingredients and methods of food preparation. The “low” and “high” food cultures in Cairo influenced one another, either in crop supply and food articles from the markets (street-palace) or in fashions and tastes (palace-street).

The study encompasses two main aspects of the “culinary processes”: first, the “what,” meaning the ingredients that composed the Cairene menu. In the second chapter of the first part, “On Food,” we find a (relatively) rich menu of the Cairene upper-middle and upper classes. Starting with the main cereals on the Cairene table, millet, sorghum, barley, rice and wheat, the listing of the most common articles in the Cairene nutrition continues with meat, fowls and eggs, fish, dairy products, vegetables and legumes, fruits, nuts and seeds, and various flavorings, spices, oils, and condiments. Some ingredients were more

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