A NOTE
ON TRANSLITERATION
AND NOMENCLATURE

One of the obvious problems to be solved by the editors of such a work as this, intended both for general readers and for scholars in many different disciplines, is how to render the names of persons and places, and a few other terms, originating in languages and scripts unfamiliar to the English-speaking reader and, indeed, to most readers whose native languages are European. In the present volume, and presumably in the entire work, these comprise principally Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Armenian, none of which was normally written in our Latin alphabet until its adoption by Turkey in 1928. The analogous problem of Byzantine Greek names and terms has been handled by using the familiar Latin equivalents, Anglicized Greek, or, occasionally, Greek type, as has seemed appropriate in each instance, but a broader approach is desirable for the other languages under consideration.

The somewhat contradictory criteria applied are ease of recognition and readability on the one hand and scientific accuracy and consistency on the other. It has proved possible to reconcile these, and to standardize the great variety of forms in which identical names have been submitted to us by different contributors, through constant consultation with specialists in each language, research in the sources, and adherence to systems conforming to the requirements of each language.

Of these, Arabic presents the fewest difficulties, since the script in which it is written is admirably suited to the classical language. The basic system used, with minor variants, by all English-speaking scholars was restudied and found entirely satisfactory, with the slight modifications noted. The chief alternative system, in which every Arabic consonant is represented by a single Latin character (t for th, h for kh, q for dh, s for sh, g for gh) was rejected for several reasons, needless proliferation of diacritical marks to bother the eye and
multiply occasions for error, absence of strong countervailing arguments, and, most decisively, the natural tendency of non-specialists to adopt these spellings but omit the diacritical marks. The use of single letters in this manner leads to undesirable results, but the spellings adopted for the present work may be thus treated with confidence by any writer not requiring the discriminations which the remaining diacritical marks indicate.

The letters used for Arabic consonants, in the order of the Arabic alphabet, are these: ', b, t, th, h, kh, d, dh, r, s, sh, š, ẓ, 'gh, f, q, k, l, m, n, h, w, y. The vowels are a, i, u, lengthened as ā, ī, ū, with the alif bi-ṣūrati-l-yā' distinguished as ā; initial ' is omitted, but terminal macrons are retained. Diphthongs are au and ai, not aw and ay, as being both philologically preferable and visually less misleading. The same considerations lead to the omission of l of al- before a duplicated consonant (Nūr-ad-Dīn rather than Nūr-al-Dīn). As in this example, hyphens are used to link words composing a single name (as also ‘Abd-Allāh), with weak initial vowels elided (as Abū-l-Ḥasan). Normally al- (meaning the”) is not capitalized; ibn- is not when it means literally “son of,” but is otherwise (as Ibn-Khaldūn).

Some readers may be disconcerted to find the prophet called “Mohammed” and his followers “Moslems,” but this can readily be justified. These spellings are valid English proper names, derived from Arabic originals which would be correctly transliterated “Muḥammad” and “Muslimūn” or “Muslimīn.” The best criterion for deciding whether to use the Anglicized spellings or the accurate transliterations is the treatment accorded the third of this cluster of names, that of the religion “Islam.” Where this is transliterated “Īslām,” with a macron over the a, it should be accompanied by “Muslim” and “Muḥammad,” but where the macron is omitted, consistency and common sense require “Moslem” and “Mohammed,” and it is the latter triad which have been considered appropriate in this work. All namesakes of the prophet, however, have had their names duly transliterated “Muḥammad,” to correspond with names of other Arabs who are not individually so familiar to westerners as to be better recognized in Anglicized forms.

All names of other Arabs, and of non-Arabs with Arabic names, have been systematically transliterated, with the single exception of Šalāh-ad-Dīn, whom it would have been pedantic to call that rather than Saladin. For places held, in the crusading era or now, by Arabs, the Arabic names appear either in the text or in the gazetteer, where some additional ones are also included to broaden the usefulness of this feature.
Large numbers of names of persons and groups, however, customarily found in Arabicized spellings because they were written in Arabic script, have been restored to their underlying identity whenever this is ascertainable. For example, Arabic “Saljūq” misrepresents four of the six component phonemes: s is correct, a replaces Turkish e, for which Arabic script provides no equivalent, l is correct, j replaces the non-Arabic ch, ẓ substitutes a non-Turkish long u for the original ū, and q as distinguished from k is non-existent in Turkish; this quadruple rectification yields “Selçük” as the name of the eponymous leader, and “Selçukîd”—on the model of ‘Abbasid and Timurid—for the dynasty and the people.

It might be thought that as Turkish is now written in a well-conceived modified Latin alphabet, there would be no reason to alter this, and this presumption is substantially valid. For the same reasons as apply to Arabic, ch has been preferred above ç, sh above ş, and gh above ẓ, with kh in a few instances given as a preferred alternate of h, from which it is not distinguished in modern Turkish. No long vowels have been indicated, as being functionless survivals. Two other changes have been made in the interest of the English-speaking reader, and should be remembered by those using map sheets and standard reference works: c (pronounced dj) has been changed to j, so that one is not visually led to imagine that the Turkish name for the Tigris—Dijle/Dicle—rhymes with “tickle,” and what the eminent lexicographer H. C. Hony terms “that abomination the undotted i” has, after the model of The Encyclopaedia of Islam, been written i.

Spellings, modified as above indicated, have usually been founded on those of the Turkish edition, İslam Ansiklopedisi, hampered by occasional inconsistencies within that work. All names of Turks appear thus emended, and Turkish equivalents of almost all places within or near modern Turkey appear in the gazetteer.

In addition to kh, Middle Turkish utilized a few other phonemes not common in modern Turkish: zh (modern j), dh, ng, and ā (modern ā); the first three of these will be used as needed, while the last-mentioned may be assumed to underlie every medieval Turkish name now spelled with e. Plaintive eyebrows may be raised at our exclusion of q, but this was in Middle Turkish only the alternate spelling used when the sound k was combined with back instead of front vowels, and its elimination by the Turks is commendable.

Persian names have been transliterated like Arabic with certain modifications, chiefly use of the additional vowels e and o and replacing d and dh with ẓ and ž; so that Arabic “Ādharbaijān” becomes Persian “Āzerbajjān,” more accurate as well as more recog-
nizable. Omission of the definite article from personal names was considered but eventually disapproved.

Armenian presented great difficulties: the absence of an authoritative reference source for spelling names, the lack of agreement on transliteration, and the sound-shift by which classical and eastern Armenian b, d, g became western Armenian p, t, k and—incredible as it may seem to the unwarry—vice versa; similar reciprocal interchanges involved ts and dz, and ch and j. The following alphabet represents western Armenian letters, with eastern variants in parentheses: a, p (b), k (g), t (d), e, z, ē, i, t, zh, i, l, kh, dz (ts), g (k), h, ts (dz), gh, j (ch), m, y, n, sh, o, ch, b (p), ch (j), r, s, v, d (t), r, ts, u or v, p, k, ō, f. Many spellings are based on the Armenian texts in the Recueil des historiens des croisades.

In standardizing names of groups, the correct root forms in the respective languages have been identified, with the ending “-id” for dynasties and their peoples but “-ite” for sects, and with plural either identical with singular (as Kirghiz) or plus “-s” (Khazars) or “-es” (Uzes). In cases where this sounded hopelessly awkward, it was abandoned (Muwaḥḥids, not Muwahḥidids or Muwaḥḥidītes, and certainly not Almohads, which is, however, cross-referenced).

The use of place names is explained in the note preceding the gazetteer, but may be summarized by saying that in general the most familiar correct form is used in the text and maps, normally an English version of the name by which the place was known to Europeans during the crusades. Variant forms are given and identified in the gazetteer.

Despite conscientious efforts to perfect the nomenclature, errors will probably be detected by specialists; they are to be blamed on me and not on individual contributors or editorial colleagues, for I have been accorded a free hand. Justifiable suggestions for improvements will be welcomed, and used to bring succeeding volumes nearer that elusive goal, impeccability in nomenclature.

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