

## Book Review

Title: Mamluk 'Askari 1250-1517  
Author: David Nicolle  
Illustrator: Peter Dennis  
Pages: 64  
Publisher: Osprey Publishing  
Series: Warrior 173  
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I was pleased to receive a copy of this book to review. I am in the middle of building a 15 mm Islamic Persian army and have found the arms and armour of the region in the late medieval period both entrancing and confusing in equal measure so a new book was most welcome.

This slim volume is the latest from both Osprey and David Nicolle in the standard Warrior format. The book contains nine short sections including all those you would expect from the format such as introduction; recruitment; and appearance and equipment etc. The text is well supported by a handy, and much needed, glossary and an index.

As you'd expect from David Nicolle the text is concise, clear and a very easy reading. Nicolle is at pains to address, and dispel, the "European myth" of mamluks as slave warriors and to place their service in the context of Islamic societal norms. I found the author's focus on the cost of maintaining both the number and quality of the mamluks in the army most enlightening. I particularly liked the discussions how "political" purges affected the later army and how the shortage of metal encouraged the re-use of armour and even the importation of western armour.

For me the highlights of the book were the three page chronology of the Mamluk period, and the lavish colour illustrations by Peter Dennis.

The chronology, together with the solitary map, forms a strong framework for the rest of the book; not least because it highlights the shifting nature of the Mamluk empire through its rise and fall. I find such concise and structured information extremely helpful in grasping the essence of a period and I am certain I will be referring to the chronology again and again.

The lavish full colour illustrations by Peter Dennis are clear, detailed and truly inspirational. There are two battle scenes, a training scene and four full pages devoted to arms and armour. For me the three best illustrations are the those of a 13-14th century warrior, a 15-16th century warrior and of early and late horse armour. They show not just the arms and armour but details of both construction and decoration. For a wargamer and modeller they readily highlight the key differences between the early and late periods: a vital reference source.

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There's also a full page illustration featuring "An Amir At Home" and I normally find this type of illustration less useful than the straight military subjects, but not this one. The page contains numerous drawings of the various fashions of headgear and turban styles that I found really helpful when used with Nicolle's section on the subject.

The illustrations are supported by a detailed key but I was pleasantly surprised to see that Osprey had placed the key on the facing page not at the end of the book as with many of the earlier volumes in this series. This greatly increases the value of the illustrations and makes using the book for reference significantly easier. Well done Osprey.

I enjoyed reading this book and would recommend it to anyone with an interest in the period and anyone looking for a primer on this period of Indo-Persian armour.