

to control the population. Finally, Petra Sijpesteijn examines the use of overt coercive methods in post-conquest Egypt, showing how the role of local elites gradually gave way to a developing, “increasingly professionalized”, Muslim legal organization.

There is some inconsistency throughout, particularly in the degree to which the individual papers engage with each other and the four main themes outlined by the editors. Only a few authors, such as Ehinger, Munt, Nef and Prigent, and Campopiano, make these connections explicit, leaving much of the “comparative” approach favoured by the editors up to the reader. Nevertheless, the case studies here do much to enrich our understanding of some of the late antique discipline’s major preoccupations, and the extraordinary level of analytical detail in some of the papers, such as that by Yarbrough, ensures that the essays here will remain essential reading for some time to come. Furthermore, some of the contributions do much to illuminate periods and geographical areas, such as the late Sasanian state, for which the source history is particularly difficult. As a collection of essays approaching a deceptively complex subject – authority and control in rural areas – this volume is very much more than the sum of its parts.

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SABINE PANZRAM and LAURENT CALLEGARIN (eds):

Entre civitas y madīna: el mundo de las ciudades en la Península Ibérica y en el Norte de África (siglos IV–IX).

(Collection de la Casa de Velázquez.) xvi, 393 pp. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2018. €49. ISBN: 978 849096216 9.

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This volume originated in the workshop held on 22–24 October 2015, a collaboration between the Casa de Velázquez Madrid and Toletum, an interdisciplinary research network for research on the Iberian Peninsula in antiquity. The latter was co-founded in 2010 by Panzram in collaboration with Markus Trunk, a specialist in classical archaeology at the University of Trier, in response to new archaeological discoveries in recent decades that offer important new perspectives on the cities of the western Mediterranean.

Entre civitas y madīna proceeds from a perspective rooted in studies of the ancient world, in keeping with the research focus of its editors. Panzram (Department of History, University of Hamburg) is a specialist in the Roman Empire and late antiquity with a focus on Iberia, Callegarin (Casa de Velázquez, Madrid), is a specialist on the pre-Roman and Roman periods, specializing in the territories from Southern Gaul to West North Africa via the Iberian world. While the Toletum network’s research is focused on the period leading up to the early eighth-century Islamic conquests of Iberia and North Africa, they advocate for an interdisciplinary approach that crosses traditional periodizations as well as disciplinary divisions. The current volume illustrates such an approach, with essays contributed by specialists in antiquity, late antiquity, and the medieval period, and which bridge confessional divides, as well as those that have long separated the study of ancient and medieval Iberia and North Africa.

The stated aim of the volume is to examine the significance of the cities of Iberia and North Africa from the fourth–ninth centuries, from current perspectives on late antique cities emerging from the new archaeological evidence. An introductory essay by the volume editors, and an essay by Hugh Kennedy reflecting upon his now-classic 1985 “From Polis to Madina” essay, thirty years on, open the volume. The whole is concluded by Patrice Cressier’s essay on the genesis of Islamic cities in the western Maghrib. The main body of the work is divided into two major parts, the first focused on the Iberian Peninsula, the second on North Africa. Each of these two major sections is further subdivided, with framing/overview essays, a series of case studies, and finally essays that take a thematic focus.

For the Iberian Peninsula section, Javier Arce first discusses the transition from pagan to Christian cities in Hispania of the fourth–sixth centuries, followed by Sonia Gutiérrez Lloret’s overview of 20 years of archaeological research on urban transitions from the late antique to the medieval Islamic period. Four case studies follow: on Augusta Emerita between the first and ninth centuries (Miguel Alba Calzado); Carthago Spartaria in the fifth century (Jaime Vizcaino Sánchez); the Straits of Gibraltar as a mediating space of connection between Iberian and North African cities (Darío Bernal Casasola); and finally one on Umayyad Córdoba, focused on the suburb of Shaqunda in the mid-eighth to early ninth centuries (María Teresa Casal García). The thematic essays that conclude the Iberian section begin with an examination of numismatic evidence, examining coins issued from late antiquity through to the Umayyad conquest (Ruth Pliego and Tawfiq Ibrahim). This is followed by an essay on the topic of knowledge of Christian topography of the seventh–ninth centuries (Francisco José Moreno Martín), and a final thematic essay on the Islamization of the Andalusí urban landscape based on burial customs (Christophe Eger).

For the North Africa section, Françoise Baratte surveys recent historiography on its cities between late antiquity and the Arab conquest, followed by Corisande Fenwick’s discussion of the emergence of early Islamic cities. Case studies here are provided on the cities of Amaedara and Theveste (present-day Haïdra, Tunisia, and Tébessa, Algeria respectively) by Elsa Rocca and Fathi Béjaoui; on the island of Jerba between the fifth and ninth centuries (Elizabeth Fentress); and finally on urban life and craft activities in late antiquity (Ridha Ghaddhab). The thematic essays here focus on late antique urban décor and public spaces, statues and urban culture (Lennart Gilhaus), and the role of Catholic bishops in geopolitics following the Vandal conquests.

This volume’s integrated approach transgresses longstanding binaries that have hampered the study of the region, dividing them according to categories such as European/African, ancient/medieval, or Christian/Muslim. This complements other scholarly efforts of the last decade, such as the Spain–North Africa Project (SNAP), founded (like the Toletum Network) in 2010. SNAP was formed by an interdisciplinary group of American scholars of the medieval and early modern periods, with the aim of encouraging studies of the region that could “span the more general divide between scholars of pre-modern Europe and of the Islamic world” and which has so far resulted in three publications: *A Forgotten Empire: The Spanish North African Borderlands* (published in 2011 as a special issue of the *Journal of Spanish Culture*); *Spanning the Strait: Studies in Unity in the Western Mediterranean* (published in 2013 as a special offprint of *Medieval Encounters*); and *Facets of Exchange between North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula* (published in 2014 as a special issue of *The Journal of North African Studies*).

Entre Civitas y Madina is thus a welcome addition to scholarship, one which draws attention to the value of integrated perspectives on Iberia and North Africa

(for example Amira Bennison's *The Articulation of Power in Medieval Iberia and the Maghrib* (British Academy, 2014) and which underscores the significance of the region to other recent critical reassessments of the ancient and medieval Mediterranean and its western shores, for instance *The Aghlabids and Their Neighbours: Art and Material Culture in Ninth-Century North Africa* (Brill, 2017) and the brand new and complementary volume, edited by one of the co-editors of the current volume, titled *The Power of Cities: The Iberian Peninsula from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Brill, 2019).

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NAJIB GEORGE AWAD:

Umayyad Christianity: John of Damascus as a Contextual Example of Identity Formation in Early Islam.

(Islamic History and Thought.) x, 472 pp. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018. ISBN 978 1 4632 0757 1.

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The basic argument of this book, written with both scholarly and personal zeal, is “to bring this great church father *back home*” (p. viii), that is, to Syria, the church father’s as well as the author’s own homeland. In particular, Awad aims to contextualize John of Damascus’s writings not primarily in the framework of Byzantine theology, but rather in the social and intellectual environment of “Umayyad Christianity”, i.e. the Arab Christians living under Umayyad rule in Damascus (661–750 CE). A key formula used over and over again by Awad is *Sitz im Leben*, a phrase coined by the German theologian Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932), who heavily stressed the impact of historical, especially social, circumstances on the production of (religious) texts. This is what Awad calls a “from-context-to-text” method (p. 31). Obviously, considering sociocultural elements as an important factor in text production is beyond question; however, this is not entirely new, nor does it imply an innovative access to texts. Awad, therefore, seems to preach to the converted, so to speak. He is possibly right to point out that the Umayyad context has been underestimated sometimes in the interpretation of John’s writings, but that does not exclude a Byzantine context. Rather, a text is always situated in more than one context, and scholars are (or at least should be) used to take all relevant contexts (history, popular culture, philosophy/theology, literature, arts, sciences, etc.) into account. In other words: the *Sitz im Leben* is of course an important, but not the only, criterion to understand a text.

After introducing the case in chapter 1 of his lengthy book, Awad explains his context-centred methodology in chapter 2, before applying it to John of Damascus in chapters 3 and 4, which cannot be discussed here in detail. Awad, to give some hints, especially focuses on John’s Arabic name, his “Umayyad identity” as a citizen of Damascus, and the level of his conformity to Islamic society (“John’s image as a turban wearer”, pp. 94 ff. – see also the images on pp. 147–152, which are, unfortunately, of poor quality). The core of the book is chapter 5 (over 200 pages long) dealing with John’s writings related to Islam, i.e. the famous chapter 100/101 of *De haeresibus* and, to a lesser degree, the three treatises on the