

PAUL AMAR, ED. *The Middle East and Brazil: Perspectives on the New Global South*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014. vii + 355 pages, contributors and index. Paper US\$30.00 ISBN 978-0-253-01227-2.

*The Middle East and Brazil: Perspectives on the New Global South*, published in English and edited by Paul Amar of the University of California, Santa Barbara, aims to bring the region and the country of the title into dialogue with one another, seeking to fill a gap in scholarship that has neglected to connect the Middle East to South America's largest nation. Despite longstanding cultural, economic, and political ties, scholars on Brazil have tended to ignore these and instead focus on Brazil's interactions with North America, Europe, and bordering countries, as well as its relations with Lusophone Africa and the African diaspora. The anthology conceptualizes a transnational framework that privileges the analysis of historical and contemporary exchanges between Brazil and the Middle East.

This volume is a product of collaborations that began with a conference in 2003 at the Fluminense Federal University in Greater Rio de Janeiro. Written by twenty scholars based in American and Brazilian institutions, the work's seventeen chapters come from a variety of disciplines, such as political science, history, anthropology, literature, and media studies. Such an approach provides an assortment of techniques with which to imagine and interpret connections between the Middle East and Brazil in its many multifaceted layers. This interdisciplinary viewpoint is one of the publication's strengths, as each chapter significantly contributes to the goal of transregional scholarship. International politics and migration, Islam, race, ethnic identity formation, Brazilian Orientalism, and views of the homeland from abroad are some of the major themes found throughout the volume.

The anthology is divided into three sections. The first, "South-South Relations, Security Politics, Diplomatic History," focuses primarily on Brazil's political and economic interactions with the Middle East from the 1970s onwards and examines the Arab and Muslim presence in the tri-border region between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. The second section, "Race, Nation, and Transregional Imaginations," looks at the interpretation of Sephardic and Moorish influences during the Portuguese colonial era in the works of Brazilian social scientist Gilberto Freyre, explores the history of African Muslim slaves and Arab immigration, and includes a study comparing two distinct Muslim communities located in different parts of Brazil. The final section, "Literature and Transregional Media Cultures," examines the

portrayals of Arabs and Muslims in an immensely popular Brazilian soap opera as well as in literature written in both Portuguese and Arabic by authors of Arab descent.

While the text's interdisciplinary nature is one of its positive aspects, its essays do not always engage in direct dialogue with each other. For example, the chapters on the existence of contemporary Arab and Muslim populations do not seem wholly relevant to the chapters on African Muslims during slavery in the nineteenth century, leaving the reader with the impression that the different time periods should be viewed as unconnected and unrelated rather than historically intertwined. This detachment sometimes makes the compilation feel like a loose assortment of essays rather than one with a definitive purpose. Yet this in no way detracts from the significant scholarly contributions and overall relevance of each chapter, and one can read and understand each essay on its own, making the volume an excellent reference manual for researchers.

The compilation is a groundbreaking collection that serves both academics within the social sciences and humanities, and a broader public with an interest in examining encounters between Latin America and the Middle East. Avoiding approaches that place Brazil within the context of economic and cultural dependency on North America and Europe, its writers aim to study Brazil's rapidly growing links with a different part of the world that scholars have frequently disregarded in discourse. However, this publication, despite its title, gives little insight into the Middle East's perspectives on Brazil, as all the chapters situate the country as the principal point of reference.

This anthology is perhaps the only volume dedicated to the historical and contemporary ties between Brazil and the Middle East, at least in English. Although scholarship on Brazil's Arab and Muslim populations has increased since the beginning of the twenty-first century, much of this is inaccessible to those without proficiency in Portuguese due to the unavailability of translations. Nevertheless, it appears that even within Brazil there is no comprehensive book that attempts to create a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to studying Middle Eastern–Brazilian relations. *The Middle East and Brazil* is a unique contribution to global studies that will undoubtedly foster discussion on the strengthening confluence between two regions. ✦

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2016.101](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2016.101)

Hasan Shahid  
Brown University