

with arguments for and against the historicity of “historical omens”, the author retraces the genesis of modern scholars’ interpretations with a spectrum of views (chapter 10, pp. 254–6), from those who understand them as evidence for the beginning of an empirically based divination, those who see them as the product of Babylonian literary creation, or who do not associate them to facts because the stories they tell could not have occurred. Views that question the modern criteria used to define the veracity of historical references in omens close this review by raising the issue of the “historical omen” category itself, and our modern definition of historical facticity. It is on this premise that the author then presents his own insights, and argues for interpreting omens as factual hypotheses whose conditional tense is used to bring the addressee into the realm of the possible (p. 592). For the diviner, the event recorded in an omen was always held true even if it was not factual, with no difference drawn between the characters of legends, and actors in history (p. 258). In the case of Mesopotamia, the author cautions against our ability to distinguish at a distance of 4,000 years “between what in fact happened and what was legend” (p. 258), reminding us that History is not an objective knowledge but a scholarly reconstruction based on a relative science, and the prose of the historian records only one possibility among many reconstructions of the past.

AMD 16’s examination of how “history guided the action of the living” (p. 270) and diviners’ compositions functions both as an additional tool for specialists and as an enriching point of entry into ancient Mesopotamian divination and history for readers new to the subject. The author’s corpus of historical omens, together with extensive citation of primary data spread throughout the book, giving updated readings of reference omens and insight into as yet unpublished omens (see for example omen 43 taken from a sentence in the unpublished text BM36302, or omen 121 based on K15100) provide new material with which to continue exploring divination in ancient Mesopotamia.

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THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

ALAIN DELATTRE, MARIE LEGENDRE, and PETRA M. SIJPESTEIJN (eds):

Authority and Control in the Countryside: From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (6th–10th Century).

(Leiden Studies in Islam and Society 9.) xviii, 594 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2019. €69. ISBN 978 90 04 38635 8.

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The 17 essays in this fascinating volume address the varied ways in which different types of government managed rural populations and resources. The volume is the result of a collaboration between Leiden, Oxford, Princeton, and UMR-8167 (Paris), dating back to 2010. Four key themes unite the different essays: 1) the disparate and complementary perspectives that different types of sources can bring; 2) the control of territory through documents and the built environment; 3) the use or denial of resources, including taxation and land-grants, as mechanisms of control; and 4) the function of different local groups, such as Jewish, Christian, or Muslim elites. These four themes are complementary, encouraging links to be

made between the different papers, and all are brought together by the volume's overarching methodological concern, namely to place all the papers within a broad chronology as well as a wide territorial limit that stretches from Balkh to Medina, from Iraq to Egypt, and from Spain and Sicily to the Tur Abdin in Mesopotamia. This approach brings familiar themes to the fore: questions of periodization, and of continuity and change; of the role of elites and church institutions; similarities and differences between the late antique east and west; and tensions between centre and periphery.

The editors organize the contributions within four sections corresponding to the different themes. In the first section, "A question of sources", Khaled Younes examines Arabic papyri to show how the names of "governors and financial directors" could be used to enforce authority and create links between elites in the towns and cities and the people of the countryside. Luke Yarbrough explores how certain *hadiths*, whose anecdotes were set in the countryside, prohibited the employment of non-Muslim soldiers, concluding that these *hadiths* allowed "imagined rural spaces" to be used as an early way to enforce authority. Both of these essays address the ways in which differing sources or document types could be used to assert control.

The second section, "Territoriality", contains six discrete contributions that range across the Mediterranean. Javier Martínez Jiménez ties the fortunes of the countryside to the strength of the Visigothic state, showing how the changing relationship between centre and periphery influenced the nature of rural control. James Howard-Johnston shows that even while tensions between centre and periphery led to resistance and conflict, the external threat menacing Byzantium ultimately favoured the power of the state in the countryside. Elif Keser-Kayaalp provides a fascinating analysis of church architecture in the Tur Abdin, revealing the emergence of a discrete architectural vocabulary that provided local, rural Christian communities a distinctive position vis-à-vis the Muslim authorities. In an extremely detailed article Marion Rivoal and Marie-Odile Rousset turn the reader's attention to Northern Syria, concluding that the management of the *chora* in the Syrian steppe was intertwined with the development of Qinnasrin. A very different approach is taken by Jessica Ehinger, who examines the role of the *ghazi*, ascetic soldiers on the fringes of Byzantium and the caliphate, in creating a certain type of Muslim character in the countryside. The final paper in this section, by Arezou Azad and Hugh Kennedy, explores the evolution of Balkh in the early Islamic period and emphasizes the way that military protection offered by the city's troops to the people of the countryside was, in its own way, a mechanism of control.

In the third section, "Land use and resources", Anliiese Nef and Vivien Prigent survey the persistence of estates in Sicily and their role in the local fiscal system. Turning to early Islamic Egypt, Sobhi Bouderbala investigates the stubborn tension between the army in Fustat and tribesmen settled on the agricultural lands. Bouderbala's document-focused chapter is complemented by Marie Legendre's contemporaneous examination of the identity of landowners in Egypt and their relationship to the caliphal authorities, while Gesa Schenke explores the monastery as a local control unit in the Egyptian countryside. Harry Munt turns to Medina, demonstrating how Umayyad control of the land around the city could be used to weaken rivals. Shifting to Iraq, Michele Campopiano discusses land taxation and the conflict between producers and exploiters, while Peter Verkinderen focuses on the region around early Islamic Basra, demonstrating how land reclamation projects extended the power of urban political elites over the countryside.

Two essays in the fourth section, "Local rule and networks", complete the volume. Alain Delattre returns to issues of documentation to explore how safe-passage texts and letters of protection were used by Arab authorities in eighth-century Egypt

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.