

In summary, the book can be recommended to first-year students and ancient historians as a first step towards learning Hebrew, studying the texts themselves, and engaging in a more serious study of ancient Jewish history and literature, at which stage the handbook itself becomes obsolete.

Catherine Hezser
SOAS, University of London

THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

THIERRY BIANQUIS, PIERRE GUICHARD and MATHIEU TILLIER (eds):
Les débuts du monde musulman, VIIe–Xe siècle, de Muhammad aux dynasties autonomes.

Ivi, 647 pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012. €49. ISBN 978 2 13 055762 3.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X13000529

This is a recent volume in the *Nouvelle Clio* series, a long-standing French academic imprint, designed to introduce readers – researchers and advanced students (e.g. those preparing for the *concours*) – to broad historic regions, eras and topics. The volumes seek to reflect up-to-date scholarship, introduce current debates in the respective field – so, here, for example, the arguments over the origins of Islam – and provide full, secondary bibliographies. No precisely equivalent works published in English come to mind, although one is reminded of a now quite dated series produced by E.J. Brill (*The Muslim World*, 1960, 1969, 1981) and, in some senses, R. Stephen Humphreys' still handy *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, 1991). This work joins the three-volume set (*Etats, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval, Xe–XVe siècle*, eds. J.-C. Garcin et al., 1995, 2000) that deals with the later medieval and pre-modern periods.

The volume, thus, provides a wide-ranging, concisely-written and informative set of essays on its subject, in this case, the first 400 years of Islamic history, thought and society, and does so exceedingly well. The editors, all of whom contribute multiple essays of their own, are joined by a roster of top-ranked scholars in their respective areas. There is a great deal to learn here (even, I warrant, for established scholars); one is reminded, in any case, of how far the field of Islamic history has progressed in recent decades, with respectable reading lists in many (though certainly not all) sub-fields of Arabic and Islamic studies. It is something of a chore to read the entire work – many no doubt will be content with individual chapters – but well worth the effort. This reviewer was especially gratified to have discussion on the late antique period, with individual chapters on the principal confessional communities of the pre-Islamic Near East; a chapter devoted to the spread of Arabic; yet another on the early Islamic Maghreb; and a set of four considerable chapters devoted to urbanization, fiscal matters and travel.

I would signal three concerns. First, because the chapters are written solely in French, a language that too few non-native students, at least in the United States, learn to read easily if at all, the book will not reach as full an audience as it should. The book, or given parts, depending on their use, should work effectively as a

classroom text, in any case, and should be adopted for that purpose. Second, I wondered at the placement of two chapters – one on the initial Arab-Islamic conquests, placed as it is *following* the chapter on the Umayyad caliphate, the second on the contemporary debate over the origins and first developments of the Islamic tradition, which appears towards the middle of the book, when one would think it might come very early on. A small matter unless hurried readers miss finding the chapters where they might expect to find them. Finally, there is the question of shelf-life: decent scholarship, of the sort on display here, reproduces gradually so there is perhaps little fear that the volume will soon grow dated. The editors, to their credit, indicate the intention to construct an online site containing much supplementary material; I was unable to locate such a site, however, and it may be that it remains under construction.

Matthew S. Gordon
Miami University, Ohio

ZAYDE ANTRIM:

Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World.
xx, 212 pp. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. £40.
ISBN 978 0 19 991387 9.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X13000530

How notions of loyalty, belonging, and perhaps especially the tricky related concept of identity, were conceived has become a popular topic of research on late antique and early Islamic history in recent years, as no doubt in the study of other periods and regions. Most studies have addressed these issues by attempting to look at either the formation of ethnic or genealogical identities or religious affiliations; for early Islamic history, think in particular of studies seeking to establish what the term Arab meant in late antiquity, how complex genealogies were constructed for those who came to be known as Arabs over the first Islamic centuries, and the formation of classical Sunnism and Shiism. Zayde Antrim's new book seeks to bring attachment to land, more commonly associated with modern nationalism, back into the picture.

The main concern of her book is to establish the existence of what she calls the "discourse of place" across many different genres of Arabic literature in the third/ninth to fifth/eleventh centuries and, as a result of this, to demonstrate that, "In the early Islamic world, from the Iberian Peninsula to the river valleys of the Indus and Oxus, land was an object of desire and a category of belonging" (p. 8). The author defines this discourse of place as "a conceptual framework I use to bring together a wide variety of formal texts committed to the representation of territory in and of itself, rather than as a setting or backdrop for something else" (p. 1), and through its study Antrim seeks to highlight "the key role the geographical imagination played not only in intellectual endeavors, but also in everyday debates about political and religious authority" (p. 6). She sets about this by focusing on the various ways in which land was both conceived of and used for political and emotive purposes in texts discussing different scales of territory over the three parts of the book: on "Home" (pp. 11–29), "City" (pp. 33–83) and "Region" (pp. 87–142).

It is impossible to summarize here the full range of conclusions reached within the five main chapters which together constitute these three parts of the book. It