and based on immutable principles. It would be accompanied by the advance of education, the reform of the judiciary and the spread of modern communications. He was influential not only through *Yak Kalima* but also through contributions to the press, especially the newspaper *Akhtar*, and through a candid letter to Muzaffar al-Din Mirza (later Shah) at the end of his life in 1895.

Mustashar al-Dawla's work, however, met with criticism on the subject of Islam, most notably from his fellow reformer, Mirza Fatḥ ʿAlī Akhundzāda, who considered all religions inimical to progress. Believing it was not possible to advance reform without making it compatible with Islam, Mustashar al-Dawla argued that the religion embodied all the principles of European law, and the two were thus compatible. To prove his case he attempted laboriously to identify the exact counterparts of principles of French law in the *sharīʿa*, for example linking the concept of legislative assembly to the Islamic endorsement of consultation and graduated income tax to *zakāt*.

At the same time he acknowledged that rationalization and codification on European lines were necessary, but could be achieved whilst keeping the *sharīʿa* as a source of law. This view, which was also argued by contemporary Ottoman reformers, was to have immense influence on both secular and Islamist reformers, and was both to confound the problems of law making in Iran from the Constitutional Revolution onwards and to create possibilities of negotiation and flexibility. To Akhundzāda, Islam was a barrier to progress, and Islamic and Western law were incompatible. Ironically, Islamist reformers such as Aqa Nūrullāh Iṣfahānī in 1909 enthusiastically endorsed the *Yak Kalima* view, whilst the conservative *mujtahid*, Fazlallāh Nūrī, in his campaign against the Majlis in 1907–09, essentially agreed with Akhundzāda. This clear, well-expressed English translation will provide many new readers with the opportunity to judge the issues for themselves.

Vanessa Martin

AMIRA K. BENNISON and ALISON L. GASCOIGNE (eds):
Cities in the Pre-Modern Islamic World: The Urban Impact of Religion, State and Society.
(SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East.) xiii, 231 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. £70. ISBN 978 0 415 42439 4.

All but one of the articles collected here first came to light as conference papers (University of Cambridge, July 3–4, 2004). Each is of real interest, but, as one might expect, several submissions stand out from the mix. As a group, the articles evince the benefits of drawing on written and physical sources alike; at least four were written by professional archaeologists with, it appears, the latest technologies at their disposal.

Attention to urbanism in Islamic history needs little justification: the link between urban life and Islam has been, as Amira Bennison puts it in her handy introduction, "enduring" (p. 1). Her own paper, alongside those of Donald Whitcomb, Simon O'Meara, Jonathan Bloom, and Stephen Blake, makes clear that extraordinary resources were marshalled, across pre-modern Islamic history, in the creation of urban centres. These were often expressions of imperial will and one is struck by the cases (ʿAbbāsid Sāmarrā, say, or Madīnat al-Zahrā') where the result proved short-lived. Urbanism and pre-modern

Islamic society were thus closely tied. Reaching a more precise measure of the linkage is a thornier matter. We know, by now, to eschew the reductionism of colonial-era Western scholarship (e.g. that of the Marçais brothers and von Grunebaum). Janet Abu-Lughod and André Raymond have argued as much in separate discussions. More useful is an acceptance of the "real diversity in [Islamic] urban forms" recognized by Paul Wheatley in his fine survey of urbanism across the tenth-century Islamic world. But all three scholars continued to insist on a linkage, defining it, however, in contrasting manner.

The linkage, however defined, is also taken for granted by the scholars brought together here, though most are content to deal with specific instances (which occur across a great range of periods and locales). Bennison and her co-editor Alison Gascoigne treat the wider question under the guise of "religion", writ, none the less, quite broadly: the "religious" facet of each of the urban projects examined here takes on "myriad manifestations". They have organized the essays into three parts, each occupying a thematic niche beneath the broad rubric.

Part I contains the essays by Whitcomb, O'Meara, and that of Tim Williams. The first of these is the most ambitious and may turn out to have the greatest impact on our thinking about early Islamic urbanism. Whitcomb's innovation is to see the first Islamic settlements across Syria and the Levant, including the so-called Umayyad desert castles, as having been "incipient urban entities", fashioned from a set of structural elements ("morphological features", that included the *balāṭ* or "administrative centre") that were "characteristic of western and south-western Arabian culture". The model, drawn, Whitcomb proposes, from a purely Arabian milieu, gave rise to a pattern of Islamic urbanism centred in large measure on ritual (a point made only in passing). The article is disappointing only for its length: the contrast of reach and brevity leaves open many questions that one hopes Whitcomb will see to elsewhere. O'Meara's essay deals less with urban sites per se than with accounts of what he terms the "foundation legends", in this case of Fez, Wasit, Samarra and other sites. His argument is that each of the accounts of urban genesis draws on a prophetic paradigm as detailed in the *Sīra*. The third article, by Tim Williams, treats Marw (Merv) – today's Sultan Kala, Turkmenistan – and, in the early ʿAbbāsid period, a new area of settlement alongside the ancient, pre-Islamic site. One guesses that the article, of particular interest to ʿAbbāsid specialists, is a summary of the author's forthcoming monograph (Saffron Books).

The four articles of Part II treat the imprint of power, ceremony and the needs of state upon the Islamic urban landscape. Bennison, taking issue with a typology of Islamic administrative centres developed by Jere Bacharach in the early 1990s, surveys the phases of state urban development in the western Islamic world (from the early "Spanish" Umayyads to the Almohads). She argues persuasively for relating the foundation of "royal cities" to the shifting tides of politics and sectarianism of each of the major western Islamic dynasties. If, for example, the construction of Madīnat al-Zahrā' (first half of the fourth/tenth century) gave "spatial expression" to Umayyad caliphal pretensions, as well as a desire to join the new settlement to Cordoba – in both a physical and a ceremonial sense, the Almohads sought out an entirely new style of monumental building (Tinmall then Marrakech). Bloom's essay, also a challenge to received wisdom, argues against a long-held view of the initial foundation of Cairo as a new capital, positing instead that the Fatimids meant it as a stepping stone to the creation of a new imperial domain (to encompass Syria and Iraq). It was only with al-ʿAziz Bi'llāh (r. 975–996) that a concerted

effort was made to create an imperial centre. Capital cities – to wit, Firūzkūh, the thirteenth-century Ghūrid hub, and the capitals of Mughal India (Fatḥpur Sikri) and Safavid Iran (Iṣfahān) – are the respective concerns of the essays by David Thomas and Stephen Blake.

The essays of Part III treat specific institutions and, in each case, the authors argue, Islamic religious needs and sensibilities weighed heavily in shaping the infrastructure of three rather different locales. Gascoigne considers the water supply system on the island of Tinnis (Nile Delta). She posits that the construction and use of water installations mirrored "Islamic social transformation", that is, a gradual transition (from roughly the ninth to the twelfth century) from state-planned development to private initiative seen also in other domains, notably land tenure. Athena Syrakoy treats a prominent fourteenth-century *māristān* of Naṣrid Granada. Much like the remarkable complex of Riḍwān Bey in Cairo – the subject of Warner's excellent paper – the Granada hospital served practical and ideological ends alike. As with the other articles (save that of O'Meara), both essays feature fine illustrations.

Matthew S. Gordon

D. G. TOR:
Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the ʿAyyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World.
(Istanbuler Texte und Studien.) 318 pp. Istanbul: Orient-Institut/ Würzburg: Ergon Verlag in Kommission, 2007. €58. ISBN 978 3 89913 553 4.

Groups of *ʿayyār* played a prominent role in the history of Muslim societies from the third/ninth century onwards. They appeared in different settings (urban/rural), in a large regional area, and occasionally played a crucial role in political conflicts. However, these groups turn up under several designations (such as, especially in Western lands, *fityān* or *aḥdāth*), their social basis appears to be quite vague and their aim in engaging in armed activities often remains unclear. The study under review, which tackles the problem of the *ʿayyār* in the period from the third/ninth to the late fifth/eleventh centuries in the central and eastern Islamic lands, is all the more welcome for this.

Starting with a historiographical critique of previous work on the *ʿayyār*, the author shows that many of the negative characteristics ascribed to them, such as lawlessness, banditry and undisciplined behaviour, have been derived from the limited set of sources consulted. Generally, these sources were Arabic chronicles composed in Baghdad by a circumscribed set of authors with a *ʿulamā'* background. They were written in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/ thirteenth centuries, but have been employed as primary sources for events which occurred some three centuries earlier. Consequently, much previous scholarship has been influenced by an ahistorical understanding of the term that underplayed the groups' mixed social composition, sidelined religious aspects of their outlook and ignored the changing meanings of the term *ʿayyār* over the centuries.

The author sets out to challenge these views, principally by enlarging the source basis by including *adab* literature, Persian chronicles and some numismatic evidence, as well as paying greater attention to non-*ʿulamā'* authors with a courtly background. The resulting argument is that in the