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Christians and Others in the Umayyad State. Edited by ANTOINE BORRUT and FRED M. DONNER. Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East, vol. 1. Chicago: ORIENTAL INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, 2016. Pp. ix + 213. $24.95 (paper).

This volume—the first in a new book series, "Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East" (LAMINE), from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago—is a collection of essays following the conference "Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians in the Umayyad State" held at the University of Chicago in June 2011. From the outset, the editors, Antoine Borrut and Fred Donner, point to the haziness of religious and cultural boundaries among late antique and early medieval Islamic communities as the premise of their inquiry. While they note the growing scholarly interest in the different spheres of interreligious encounters, they also refer to what is, to their mind, a relative absence of studies devoted to the question of "non-Muslims *within* the early Islamic state" (p. 2)—given the problematic nature of the extant sources, the Umayyad era is treated far less in this regard in comparison with later times.

Moreover, the Umayyad period heralded a crucial historical moment, during which conceptions of in and out, of believers and non-believers, gradually molded into a clearer vision of a Muslim community. Borrut and Donner belong to a school of historians that for some time now has been arguing that the Muslim–non-Muslim dichotomy only became operative toward the end of the seventh century, when, initially, the threshold of the community established in Medina was broadly termed by belief. The early Umayyads "seem to have conceived themselves as a regime of 'Believers'" (p. 3), a notion that is supported by early administrative documentation. Accordingly, Umayyad conceptions of non-Muslims who ascribed to the idea of the unity of God as believers were likely to dictate a social reality that was governed by a unique set of considerations.

Thus, both methodological shortcomings and conceptual ambiguities have contributed to the relative scholarly neglect of the topic at hand, rendering the eight chapters in this volume, written by a highly distinguished group of scholars, especially welcome. These touch upon a diverse set of questions, and present not only the thematic diversity pertaining to the place of non-Muslims under the Umayyad regime but also a plethora of methods by which the topic can be approached. That said, the editors are well aware of the partial image they are offering—the volume's title has for good reason been changed to Christians "and others."

The first chapter, "Notes for an Archeology of Muʿāwiya: Material Culture in the Transitional Period of Believers" by Donald Whitcomb, is the only one concerned with material evidence. Instead of addressing the question of non-Muslim, or rather Christian, participation in the Umayyad state, the essay looks at the fascinating blend of Arabian, Byzantine, and Islamic features embodied in the architectural enterprises of the founder of Umayyad rule, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 661–680). Thus, for example, the palace of Ṣinnabra, a castle by the Sea of Galilee, which was initially a seasonal residence of the governor of Syria and later of the Umayyad caliph, resembles, Whitcomb notes, the Roman praetorium in Tiberias, reflecting an Umayyad accommodation of Roman imperial edifices. The trend can be seen also in the caliph Hishām's (r. 724–743) hall in Ruṣāfa, where Umayyad governmental and religious centers were erected adjacent to Christian and Roman complexes. In exploring what he terms the "archeology" of Muʿāwiya, Whitcomb presents him as a leader who sought to balance his authority among a mixed religious population. His construction initiatives suggest a transitional phase

of cultural symbiosis that attempted to meet the needs of a nascent Islamic civilization while at the same time sustaining pre-Islamic Arabian and broader Near Eastern cultural features. Accordingly, Whitcomb suggests viewing Muʿāwiya as more "believer than Muslim" (p. 23), a helpful insight for assessing inter-communal dynamics during the first decades of Umayyad rule.

It is perhaps this symbiosis that facilitated the employment of members of the Christian Manṣūr family in the Umayyad government from its start till the beginning of the eighth century. In the second chapter, "The Manṣūr Family and St. John of Damascus: Christians and Muslims in Umayyad Times," Sidney Griffith discusses the possible impact of John of Damascus, a Melkite civil servant in the Umayyad government, on Christian thought and practice of his time. In order to reconstruct John's illustrious career, Griffith works primarily with narrative sources, namely, Melkite historiography and hagiography composed mostly in the ninth and tenth centuries. He also consults John's own theological writings in order to reconstruct contemporary "church-defining concerns of the Christian communities in Syria/Palestine" (p. 35). According to Griffith, Islamization and Arabization not only played a pivotal role in John's motivation, but also shaped his intellectual discourse. At the same time Griffith notes the striking silence of contemporary, non-Melkite Christian writers with regard to John, whose works were translated from Greek to Arabic only in the tenth century. Griffith suggests that an early Christian dislike of John may have had to do with his family's history, specifically its association with the Umayyad court. A Christian family of bureaucrats well situated in the Islamic administration would unfavorably serve a Christian historiographic endeavor to present the first centuries of Islamic government as centuries of Christian hardship under Islamic rule.

In contrast, in her essay, "Christians in the Service of the Caliph: Through the Looking Glass of Communal Identities," Muriel Debié argues that a better historical picture can be attained if we "go beyond the images created by the historical sources, which so often mirror the religious affiliations of their authors" (p. 53). By way of the history of another prominent family of Christian bureaucrats who operated under Umayyad rule, the Syrian Orthodox Gūmōyē of Edessa, Debié shows how Christians made use of Muslim patronage in the context of inter-Christian denominational rivalry. Syriac historiography depicting the affairs of the Gūmōyē family reveals how skill and erudition were bartered for governmental favors. Christian civil servants owed their position in the Umayyad government to a good education and literacy, and they were able to bring about the construction of churches in different parts of the Islamic domain due to their good service. Debié's thesis eloquently completes those of Whitcomb and Griffith. Considering in tandem the late antique policies of the Umayyad regime and Christian internal communal agendas, her analysis underscores the predominance of personal ties over formal categories of communal affiliation and the motivating force of the latter in forging the former. The last section of her essay, focusing on the pitfalls embedded in Eastern Christian historiography, serves to remind us once again that the social setting that the Umayyad caliphs sought to dominate was anything but neatly carved along theological lines.

Mutual benefits between the Umayyad political hegemony and local non-Muslim elites are also at the center of Touraj Daryaee's "Persian Lords and the Umayyads: Cooperation and Coexistence in a Turbulent Time," the only chapter that discusses non-Muslims who were not Christian. Although the argument that the first Muslim political dynasty was dependent on different strands of Iranian nobility has already been made, Daryaee's consulting of numismatic evidence introduces a refreshing approach and serves to strengthen the point. Based on the Middle Persian signs and symbols on coins in this period—the Iranian coinage of the late seventh century presents a mixture of Iranian sentiments, on the one hand, and an acknowledgement of Islamic presence, on the other—Daryaee argues that local Iranian dignitaries showed respect to the sensitivities of the Umayyad regime in response to its policy allowing them to retain their stature and power, and that the numismatic evidence corroborates the general calm that characterized Muslim–Zoroastrian relations in this period.

Pragmatic considerations suggest a link between Daryaee's essay and that of Wadād al-Qāḍī, "Non-Muslims in the Muslim Conquest Army in Early Islam." A debate had emerged in response to an early moment in Islamic history, during which non-Muslims served in the Muslim army, the Muslim fleet, and fulfilled various tasks that assisted Islamic military campaigns, dealing with the question of whether non-Muslims can fight alongside Muslims or serve in the Muslim army. Early Islamic

positions were not unanimous, although, as al-Qāḍī shows, they tended to be favorable. Al-Qāḍī provides a rich selection of historiographic and legal sources, of both Islamic and non-Islamic provenance, in order to survey the military roles of "the Arab Christian tribes, the roles played by the non-Arab non-Muslim groups and individuals, and the nature of the service of non-Muslims in the Muslim fleet" (p. 83). Ninth-century Muslim and non-Muslim historians portray a sequence of events whereby Arab Christian tribes gradually shifted their military alliance with the Byzantine and Sasanian forces to the Muslims. According to these reports, this shift was the result of three main factors: first, Arab Christians were a specific target of the Muslim forces; second, survivors of the early Byzantine defeats only came from the Arab Christian population; and third, there was economic motivation in the form of soldiers' wages. Also according to historiographical accounts of Islamic and non-Islamic provenance, non-Arabs—prior to their conversion to Islam—were part of the Muslim forces. This was the case of former Sasanian soldiers, Armenians, Soghds, Copts, the Christian Jarājima and Anbāṭ in Syria, and the Samaritans. Their exact motivations seem ambiguous. Other considerations than the employment of mercenaries and factors such as the release from the poll-tax and slavery, as well as opportunities of material profit, seem to have been at play as well, namely, "protection of life, children, and property [. . .] promise of military assistance, [and] of non-enforcement of conversion" (p. 101). Finally, papyri administrative records augment the historical record of non-Muslim participation in the Islamic military effort not merely in the form of actual combat. Rather, non-Muslims, particularly Copts and Berbers, took up positions in the Muslims' fleet as craftsmen and sailors, and provided auxiliary services such as the supply of goods and equipment. Beyond the fact that it is seldom treated in modern scholarship, al-Qāḍī's discussion constitutes a fine example of the methodological utility in combining a selection of literary genres of diverse geographic and communal backgrounds.

Given the notable utility of poetry in consolidating and constructing authority in the period under discussion, the career of the Christian poet al-Akhṭal al-Taghlibī (d. 710) in the Umayyad court is yet another example of Christian integration into Umayyad policies. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych's essay, "Al-Akhṭal at the Court of ʿAbd al-Malik: The *Qaṣīda* and the Construction of Umayyad Authority," reinforces the notion of an imperial government that retained late antique Arabian forms of negotiations of power. As Donald Whitcomb noted in his contribution, the Umayyad transfer from Arabia to Syria introduced a convergence of pre-Islamic Arabian and broader Near Eastern cultural trends. This convergence, Stetkevych writes, should be understood in light of a stronger Umayyad claim to "Arab than to Muslim loyalties" (p. 130). Al-Akhṭal wrote his celebrated panegyric to caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–692) upon the completion of the Dome of the Rock in 692, the most powerful architectural message of Umayyad political hegemony, embodying a variety of regional cultural sentiments. As with the impressive construction in Jerusalem, al-Akhṭal's praise of his caliph would be assessed in interreligious terms many years later, but what seems to have been in play toward the end of the second *fitna* and power transition from the Sufyānid to the Marwānid family branch were questions of political authority, legitimacy, and loyalty. The Christian affiliation of al-Akhṭal bore little significance. Just as with the Byzantine builders of the Dome of the Rock, the Melkite and Syriac-Orthodox bureaucrats in the Umayyad court, or non-Muslim combatants who sided with the Muslim army, it was skill that held the upper hand in matters of social allegiances. At the same time, good service came with expectations for reward—the Taghlibite poet sought to exploit his "Jāhilī-style *qaṣidat al-madḥ* to advance and negotiate [. . .] the political-military status of the Banī Taghlib" (p. 136).

The two remaining chapters in this volume should be read together as they both touch upon a common historiographic uncertainly, namely, the policies of caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz (r. 717–720) toward the non-Muslim subjects of the Umayyad state. While acknowledging their highly problematic nature, the two essays offer two different readings of the extant sources. In "ʿUmar II's *ghiyār* Edict: Between Ideology and Practice," Milka Levy-Rubin attributes to ʿUmar II, on the grounds of historical plausibility, a decree that was designed to humiliate non-Muslims by subjecting them to distinct attire and behavior demands. Luke Yarbrough rejects this plausibility. In "Did ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz Issue an Edict Concerning Non-Muslim Officials?" which treats ʿUmar's policy toward the employment of non-Muslim officials, Yarbrough offers historical and textual critiques that call up serious doubts as to the historical veracity of reports attributing anti-*dhimmī* regulations to the caliph.

High levels of non-Muslim social integration in the Umayyad state alongside low levels of Islamic confessional zeal are the frame of reference for Levy-Rubin's argument that "the first code regarding the attire and behavior of non-Muslims in Muslim society," i.e., the *ghiyār* edict, should be attributed to ʿUmar II as "part of a planned and deliberate policy that was the result of his ideology regarding the ascendancy of Islam over the other religions" (p. 158). This is further confirmed, she argues, by the unanimity and linguistic similarity of the reports on ʿUmar's edict and reference to it by his tenth-century biographer, the Egyptian historian, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, as part of the caliph's broader ideology. If we are to accept Levy-Rubin's thesis, then the issuing of the *ghiyār* edict signals a historical milestone, in which the exaltation of Islam was given precedence over polices that facilitated non-Muslim integration in the Umayyad state. This same argument was made in her book *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (New York, 2011), where she located the source of late Umayyad policies in a Sasanian social ethos, which corroborates the suggestion in other chapters in this volume of the dominance of late antique traditions in Umayyad policies. At the same time, Levi-Rubin notes that despite the early origins of this discriminating ideology, its implementation is not confirmed in the Umayyad period. This, however, does not necessarily mean that discriminatory measures toward non-Muslims were absent from Umayyad policy, as the levying of the *jizya* was coupled with sealing the bodies of tax payers, a dual expression of humiliation, according to Levy-Rubin, heralding steps to the Umayyad-conceived and post-Umayyad-implemented *ghiyār* measures.

In contrast, Luke Yarbrough is inclined to view ʿUmar II not only as a historical figure but as a literary one as well. Following careful scrutiny of the available evidence regarding ʿUmar II's edict forbidding the employment of non-Muslim officials in sources of Islamic biography, historiography, and political advice, as well as Christian West Syrian, East Syrian, Melkite, and Coptic historiography, Yarbrough leaves the reader with a highly convincing, yet sadly discomfiting, conclusion: "The evidence is intractable, allowing historians neither to confidently assess the nature of the policy nor to even be certain that it was formulated at all" (p. 174).

Yarbrough's skepticism lies in his conclusion that our information regarding the caliphal edict derives from a pseudepigraphical critique that was composed in a later time—references to ʿUmar II's epistles in which the purported edict was given are found in all the consulted sources—and cannot serve as evidence of either ʿUmar II's policy or of other related events. The methodological endeavor yields different reasons for questioning the reliability of the information, on both philological and factual grounds. For example, the section in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's biography containing ʿUmar II's edict, which was later edited by his son, lacks *isnād*s. At the same time, the corresponding account in al-Balādhurī's genealogical history, *Kitāb Ansāb al-ashrāf*, which is supported by *isnād*s, speaks of specific officials who were dismissed by the caliph rather than a blanket dismissal of officials. The idea of a series of different epistles, issued to different parts of the empires, targeting all non-Muslim officials, and pressing for their dismissal on the grounds of their idealized humiliation is highly inconceivable, as Yarbrough asserts, in an historical moment that witnessed a strong state dependency on non-Muslim administrators, on the one hand, and a rather early stage of Muslim religious professionalism, on the other. Moreover, a decree ordering the removal of non-Muslims from government posts, especially one that is motivated by an agenda of non-Muslim humiliation, is not consistent with later Muslim reports that depict ʿUmar II as favorably inclined toward his non-Muslim subjects. Instead, direct and indirect references to the decree betray a textual affinity to an historical phase and political milieu in which theories of political hierarchy mirrored religious ones. This affinity, between politics and religion, Yarbrough argues, was most pronounced during the time of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861)—thus, Yarbrough's conclusion that the policy attributed to ʿUmar II should be read in the context of an Abbasid endeavor to cast the literary figure of the Umayyad caliph into a plot that was to serve Abbasid concerns.

There is a point of agreement between Levy-Rubin and Yarbrough—Umayyad discriminatory policy toward non-Muslims is barely attested, if at all—which absence confirms the volume's theme of an Islamic political regime vying for political legitimacy and, while consolidating its power, resorting to the exploitation of Near Eastern cultural capital. These resources were best exploited through a convention of mutual benefits between sovereigns and subjects rather than by means of a system governed

by principles of communal segregation. A stylistic hybridity of architecture, governmental allegiances with non-Muslim aristocracies and the utilization of long-standing pre-Islamic traditions of publicity, administration, military, and craftsmanship thus constituted the foundations of yet another late antique imperial dynasty.

URIEL SIMONSOHN
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

The Religious and Spiritual Life of the Jews of Medina. By HAGGAI MAZUZ. Brill Reference Library of Judaism, vol. 38. Leiden: BRILL, 2014. Pp. xvi + 132. $122, €103.

Jews and Judaism matter for Islam, especially for our knowledge of the birth hour of the new faith. If for no other reason, the prominence and the amount of space both receive in the Quran and in our sources for the life and career of Muḥammad would confirm this. Yet we know surprisingly little of Arabian Jewry at all times, in particular of their religious and spiritual life around 600 CE. Anything that promises to add to our knowledge is therefore welcome. In the book under review (and also in a series of recent articles), Haggai Mazuz undertakes to extend our knowledge in this area. In part he does this by close examination of episodes and information that have been looked at in the past, and in part by means of what he describes as a new methodology. Both present difficulties.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first, devoted to "Religious and Social Leadership," does little more than collect together what we know of the leaders of the Jews of Medina in Muḥammad's day. It identifies a large number of Jews and tells us stories attached to them, mainly of the failure of their struggles with Muḥammad. Disappointingly, it says nothing about the character of their names, which would seem to demand discussion, or about their language. The evidence, such as it is, suggests fairly full onomastic assimilation into Arab society; and perhaps even fuller assimilation linguistically. But that leaves us with a question: did they (all? some of them? just their rabbis? any of them?) know Hebrew, to say nothing of Aramaic, without which the Talmud might have been a closed book? We have no evidence from these Jews in either of these languages. Given the subject of the book, and the concern throughout with Medinan Jews' knowledge of Jewish law and practice as revealed in the Bible and Talmud, their linguistic competences and behavior are a matter of more than minor significance.

One example for why this should be so is that Mazuz suggests that the accusation of *taḥrīf*, namely, that Jews (and Christians) had received the correct texts of their scriptures from God but had altered them, is substantiated by the Talmudic practice of *derash*, which he tells us takes the form occasionally of making slight changes to a word or more in the Bible in order to offer a basis for a different—occasionally very different—interpretation from the obvious one. Attractive (at first sight even perhaps plausible) though this suggestion might be, a few moments' thought suggests a problem: we have to envisage a real-life scenario. It is hard to imagine Jews walking around, or sitting, enjoying a discussion of small, often minute, changes to the biblical text without some knowledge of the relevant language. Would they have been doing this in front of visitors or witnesses ignorant of the language? In the presence of Muḥammad? Would he have been there, listening? How would he or they have known and understood what was going on? These and others are real questions that need to be answered before a suggestion like this can be adopted.

Mazuz seems unaware here not only of the linguistic and perhaps also socio-linguistic problem, but also of another one, no less difficult. He writes: "when the Muslims saw the Medinan Jews engaging in practices that were different than the literal meaning of the Bible they argued that the Jews had falsified it" (p. 21). Again, at first sight, this may sound plausible, but for it to tell us anything useful in the present context, it demands, if nothing else, knowledge by the early Muslims (actually, if we are strict about it, Muḥammad) of the content of the biblical text, whether in Hebrew or in translation. Not only do we have no reliable evidence of the presence of the biblical text in any language in pre- and early Islamic Arabia, but Mazuz seems not to be aware of this need. His bibliography includes nothing on this sub-