Fünfundzwanzig arabische Geschäftsdokumente aus dem Rotmeer-Hafen al-Quṣayr al-Qadīm (7./13. Jh.) [P.QuseirArab. II]. By ANDREAS KAPLONY. Islamic History and Civilization, vol. 109. Leiden: BRILL, 2014. Pp. vii + 208, illus. $120, €93.

During the excavations in the sea harbor town of old al-Quṣayr between 1978 and 2003, hundreds of paper fragments of Arabic documents were found in one of the buildings (the actual number of documents varies with whoever is writing about them; for Kaplony it is seven hundred [p. 1], while Katherine S. Burke gives the number of 1500 in her 2007 Chicago dissertation ["Archaeological Texts and Contexts on the Red Sea: The Sheikh's House at Quseir al-Qadim," 224]). These fragments turned out to be the remains of a thirteenth-century archive of a family of long-distance traders, who were part of commercial networks stretching from the Nile Valley to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The originals, of which photographs were made by the excavators, are now kept in the Museum of Ismailia and the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. Pioneering work on the texts has been done by Li Guo, who, after two articles (*JNES* 58 [1999] and 60 [2001]) containing twelve edited and translated documents, published a book with eighty-four of them and a comprehensive introduction (*Commerce, Culture and Community in a Red Sea Port in the Thirteenth Century: The Arabic Documents from Quseir* [Leiden, 2004]). A great deal of stratigraphical information of the provenance of the paper fragments has been collected by the aforementioned Burke. Archives of documents found in their original sites yield knowledge beyond the information offered in the texts themselves and are rare in Egypt (for a list of such Egyptian archives, see Burke 2007: 211–23). The al-Quṣayr collection is therefore beyond doubt of great importance for the social and economic history of Egypt. The importance is even greater because the archeological context has been studied intensively.

So far only about one hundred of the original fragments have been edited and translated. In *Fünf-undzwanzig arabische Geschäftsdokumente aus dem Rotmeer-Hafen al-Quṣayr al-Qadīm* (which, curiously, does not offer twenty-five documents—the last document of the book is numbered 24 and document 13 is missing; see n. 103), Andreas Kaplony has selected, edited, translated, and commented on twenty-three documents of business letters and notes, using the photographs made by the excavators. The volume includes the photographs so that the edition can be checked with the original. The presentation of the texts is immaculate: the discussion of each document is preceded by an introduction on the external description of the document (material, measurements, ductus, etc.) and notes on its contents, followed by the edited text, its German translation, and comments discussing proposed problematic readings, using a wide range of parallel texts, including those from the Geniza. Fourteen of these documents are newly edited and translated; nine (nos. 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 23) were published previously by Guo. Guo's editions, however, have been criticized (W. Diem, *ZDMG* 158 [2008], 164–70; M. Friedman, *JAOS* 126 [2006], 401–9) and Kaplony offers new readings. The book ends with a number of indices. Extremely useful are the lists of words and terms and of new readings.

I have three quibbles. The first is related to the introduction, which is restricted to a philological study and does not pay attention to context. Since recent publications on the port of al-Quṣayr and its economic role exist, this may seem superfluous, yet including some of these historical findings in the introduction would have been helpful for a better understanding of the edited texts. A second criticism concerns the complete lack of mention as to the selection process; the reader has no idea why Kaplony selected these particular documents and why he combined new texts with already edited ones. A final minor comment is related to the organization of the documents as presented. The first section of eight documents has the heading *Geschäftsbriefe* (business letters); the second, consisting of Document 9, *Aus einem Ehevertrag* (from a marriage contract); the third (Documents 10–12, 14–19) *Geleitschreiben* (covering letters accompanying cargoes); the fourth—Document 20—*Laufzettel* (notes, *tadhkirāt,* kept in storehouses, specifying the persons who had delivered cargoes and those to whom they must be handed over); and the last section, of the remaining Documents 21–24, *Weitere Geschäftsbriefe und Geleitschreiben* (further business letters and covering letters). Why were these last five not included in the preceding chapters?

These minor complaints, however, do not detract from the book's value. Kaplony's study is an excellent example of meticulous philological handling of texts that are difficult, not only to read but also to understand and interpret.

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Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World. By MICHAEL PHILIP PENN. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia: UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS, 2015. Pp. v + 294. $59.95, £39.

Michael Penn's *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* is a welcome contribution to the rapidly growing body of research on the Christian communities in the Muslim-ruled Middle East. It offers an insightful survey and analysis of the earliest (seventh- through ninth-century) Christian writings about Islam in Syriac, many of which are now conveniently available in Penn's own translations in the companion volume *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Oakland, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2015).

These sources, ranging from scribal colophons and marginalia to theological treatises, apocalypses, hagiographies, martyrologies, and historical works, allow Penn to challenge the widespread assumption—prevalent in modern popular discourse—of a perpetual and inevitable "clash of civilizations" between Christendom and Islam. Penn is careful to emphasize, however, that by denouncing the "clash of civilizations" model, he does not intend to endorse the opposite and equally flawed view that Islamic rule ushered in "a golden age of religious tolerance." Rather, his aim is to offer "a more accurate depiction of how the first Christians experienced Islamic rule" (p. 13). Penn argues that "Christianity and Islam's relationship to each other" was "characterized by a multiplicity of complex, heavily negotiated interactions occurring in a rapidly changing and highly permeable environment" (p. 13); that "Christianity and Islam no longer seem to have been locked in an inevitable conflict"; and—most significantly—that they have "exhibited too much permeability, interdependence, and convergence to be defined as firmly bound, independent entities, to say nothing of clashing civilizations" (p. 186).

Penn's study includes an introduction, four chapters—dealing with "memories of the Islamic conquests," "narratives of religious identity," "narratives of Islamic rulers," and "the continuum between early Christianity and early Islam" respectively—and a conclusion. Extensive endnotes (pp. 187–250), a comprehensive bibliography, and a helpful index add value to the volume.

Chapter one discusses how Syriac memories of the Islamic conquests changed over time, from the matter-of-fact eyewitness account of Byzantine losses and casualties, drafted as early as 637 (a fragmentarily preserved scribal note in the manuscript British Library Add. 14,461), to the *Chronicle* of Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē, written ca. 842. Of all the sources examined, Dionysius's account is the only positive assessment of the Islamic conquests: uniquely, this author presents the conquests as a liberation from oppressive Byzantine rule. Penn points out that, unfortunately, many modern writers have read Dionysius's account "uncritically as an objective description of the conquests and their reception" and, as a result, have maintained that "Syriac Christians conspired with Muslims against the Byzantines and welcomed the Arabs with open arms" (p. 49). As Penn shows, this view is groundless and misleading, because it overlooks the evidence of the Syriac sources earlier than Dionysius, all of which regarded the Byzantine defeat to the Muslims as a catastrophe, a divine chastisement that befell the Christians on account of their sins. Dionysius's idiosyncratic assessment of the Islamic conquests tells us more about his own worldview and circumstances of writing than about seventh-century realities.

Chapter two surveys how Syriac conceptualizations of Islam and the Syriac terms used to describe Muslims evolved over time. It offers a helpful account of the history of such designations of Muslims as *ṭayyāyē* (an ethnonym derived from the Arab tribe of Ṭayyiʾ; originally a generic term for "nomadic Arabs," which gradually came to mean "Muslims"), *ḥanpē* (pagans), *bnay Ishmāʿēl* or *Ishmāʿēlāyē*