

Roman World', which ended in the publication of fourteen volumes offering a bewilderingly varied collection of views of the problem. Their own book, they claim, is more coherent. The editors assumed that changes in Roman culture ('decline' or 'transformation') and changes in barbarian self-identification (so-called ethnogenesis) were part of the same process; and that this process occurred within a Roman intellectual and geographical-political context. This book is about 'the creation of [a] late antique polyethnic cultural world, with cultural frontiers between Romans and barbarians that were increasingly permeable in both directions' (p. 4). It is not the only way to approach this period, but the debate is one with which every scholar working on this period has to engage, and this volume is a significant contribution.

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*The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World. Vol. I: The Arab Period in Arminiya, Seventh to Eleventh Centuries*, by Seta B. Dadoyan (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011; pp. xxvii + 208. £35.50).

It is one of the more striking paradoxes of the history of the medieval Armenians that they were seemingly everywhere and nowhere. To read their own histories up to the end of the eleventh century gives the impression that they were a nation apart, with little interest in the outside world except where it concerned their temporal and religious autonomy. Yet by 1100 migrant communities of Armenians, some of several centuries' duration, thrived throughout the Near East and are mentioned frequently, if incidentally, in historical records left by all of their Near Eastern neighbours and a few farther afield. Byzantine history is a well-known case in point: many of the emperors of the period, as well as a large proportion of their soldiers, are reputed to have been fully or partially Armenian, but there is very little examination by Byzantine authors of the Armenian communities within the Byzantine Empire itself. The portrait of Armenians as segregated from the world around them cannot stand, and Seta Dadoyan's study is one of the first dedicated attempts to correct it with specific reference to the Muslim world.

Dadoyan begins from the premiss—almost revolutionary in the field of Armenian Studies but utterly straightforward from her perspective as an Armenian of the Lebanon—that throughout their history the Armenians have been regarded as full (if distinctive) constituents of the empires to which they were subject, and that this includes the empires of the Muslim world. This book, the first of the series to appear, covers the period from shortly before the rise of Islam (Armenia became subject to the Caliphate in 652) to shortly after the rise of Turkish power and the loss of Armenian autonomy in the Caucasus c.1050. Central to her argument are the themes of 'borderlands and dissidence'; the great majority of Armenians made their home in the large swathes of territory that were under perennial dispute between Constantinople and the Caliphate. These were the borderlands, the world best known through the Greek poetic epic *Digenes Akrites*, where cultures and faiths must necessarily meet and mix. This provided fertile ground for the syncretistic and heretical movements,

particularly the Paulicians and the T'ondrakians, that attracted so much ire from medieval Armenian commentators. Dadoyan argues that these sects were essentially a long-term dissident movement against the established Armenian nobility and particularly against the Church, which not only represented the Armenians as a whole to outside powers but also held a near-monopoly on education and intellectual activity. She presents the existence and activities of the sects not simply as evidence of class warfare (a thesis that was popular among Armenian historians of the Soviet era) but as the natural expression of syncretistic and fluid borderlands culture. It is a compelling argument, and Dadoyan marshals in its support a deep familiarity with Arabic sources that is rare among Western scholars of Armenian history. Muslim commentators had less reason to suppress information about the sects than Armenian or even Byzantine writers did, and the primary strength of her work is to bring this information, and these perspectives, firmly into the debate.

Dadoyan acknowledges in the introduction that 'this is not a book of history in the traditional sense'; the flow of the book is not a narrative but an argumentative one. As promised, there are multiple interrelated themes that must be treated, and the main narrative incorporates details that other histories might relegate to footnotes but that are, in this case, exactly where the argument lies. This *apologia* for the organisation of the text is well appreciated, and the very complexity of the task Dadoyan has set herself, to find the 'rough patches' and incongruities in the Armenian historical narrative despite the seeming conspiracy of Christian primary sources to smooth them out of existence, does call for the approach she outlines. The book does nevertheless have quite a few defects that arrest the reader's attention. Although there is no reason to doubt that Dadoyan is as familiar with the relevant scholarship as she asserts in her prologue, her drive to 'avoid unnecessary bibliographic embellishment' leaves the reader, who may not have the same depth of awareness of the relevant scholarship, without guidance as to the provenance of several claims and apparent points of fact. There are also several instances of reference to a work of secondary scholarship where a reader might expect a primary source as evidence, which can be problematic if the source is, for example, an Armenian-language history published in Cairo in 1942. Given that Dadoyan's argument is by its nature a conscious critique of prior scholarship on Armenian history, it would also be useful for the reader to know something of her assessment of the scholars upon whom she quite frequently relies for interpretation of the historical record.

One suspects that the primary defect of the book is a lack of serious editorial intervention. This suspicion is supported by the sheer number of typographical and grammatical errors, as well as errors of continuity—several topics are referenced well before they are explained and occasional conflicts of detail creep in, rendering the argument confusing in places and forestalling the reader's comprehension. By and large, however, the book's thesis is sound and well supported, and it is difficult to overstate the importance of its implications not only for Armenian studies but for the history of the entire Near East. I very much look forward to the new, and sorely needed, insights that Dadoyan will bring to the history of the tenth to fourteenth centuries in the two remaining volumes of the work.

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