Micheau Françoise,
Les débuts de l'Islam.
Jalons pour une nouvelle histoire.

Paris, Téraèdre (L'islam en débats),
2012, 255 p.
ISBN: 978-2296575844

This fine book is the product of a seminar on the beginnings of Islam held at the Sorbonne between 2006 and 2009. Initially co-directed by Françoise Micheau and Antoine Borrut, Micheau took sole charge of the seminar after Borrut's departure for the University of Maryland. As the seminar proceeded, Micheau came to understand that the number of scholarly books and articles published on the subject in English is significantly greater than the number published in French. One goal of *Les débuts de l'Islam* is to make this English-language scholarship accessible to the French-reading public. Each chapter concludes with a bibliography of the most recent and most important publications in the field – with special attention to English-language publications. These titles also have been collected into a single, annotated bibliography, supplemented by an index of Arabic terms and of proper names, and published electronically at the following WEB-site:

www.teraedres.fr/supplements/JNHbiblio.pdf.

The book begins with a prologue, a kind of Platonic dialogue between master (no doubt, Micheau) and student (unidentified), during the course of which these two figures review the key sources for the beginnings of Islam, the history of the discipline, and the critical approach to the sources developed in the second half of the twentieth century. As the master puts it, summarizing the argument of *Hagarism*: « The history of the beginnings of Islam, as elaborated in the ninth century C.E., is a totally idealized history [constructed] in the service of a religious vision, properly speaking » (p. 19). Master and disciple proceed to discuss more recent developments in historiography, including the analysis of non-Arabic sources, papyri, and archaeology in an effort to find « traces » of alternative memories of the beginnings of Islam. When the disciple objects that s/he finds it difficult to follow the numerous documentary discoveries, historiographical debates, and methodological issues – written mostly in English – the master responds that it is precisely for this reason that she has written these *jalons* or « signposts » for a new and different history of *les débuts* or the beginnings of Islam.

In Chapter 1 (« Une histoire des fondements: Mémoire, oubli, légitimation »), Micheau discusses the beginnings of historical consciousness among the early Muslim community. Is such an historical consciousness found already in the Qurʾān, which links the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad with that of earlier prophets; or did it develop only during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya, who instructed a certain ʿUbayd b. Sharya to record in writing the history of the ancient kings of the Arabs and non-Arabs; or perhaps not until the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik, who sought to legitimize his position as caliph in the face of fierce political and theological opposition? (p. 31). Micheau answers this question by reviewing the development of Islamic historical consciousness between the rise of Islam and the death of Ṭabarī in 923 CE. The earliest Islamic historical writings, she notes, are characterized by four themes: prophecy, community, hegemony, and leadership; this suggests that the historical consciousness of the early community was *not* appropriated from Hellenistic and Christian models circulating in the late antique Near East – as argued by Abdesselam Cheddadi – but rather was motivated by internal considerations. During the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, historical information was refined through a complex process of selection, omission, preservation, and abbreviation, and successive re-writings of history were shaped by the interests of caliphal legitimacy. It was only after historical « filters » (a term used by Borrut) had been applied to the earliest materials that the Abbasid, standard Sunni version of the Islamic foundation narrative would emerge. By means of « textual archaeology », however, it may be possible to recover the earliest layers of this narrative structure. As the term « filter » suggests, much was removed, eliminated or left out of what would become the Abbasid "vulgate." Because it was the Sunni perspective that came to prevail, the Shiʿi narrative was reduced to that of partisan opposition to legitimate power. It is telling, for example, that the Abbasid massacre of the Umayyad family, treated in detail by Balādhurī (d. 892) and Yaʿqūbī (d. 897), finds only a short and laconic treatment in Ṭabarī, who clearly had access to the accounts of his predecessors. The first chapter concludes with a discussion of « the linguistic turn ». In the final analysis, every historical investigation is a literary exercise. Our sources – whatever they may be – do not allow us to recover the facts themselves but only discursive representations of those facts. By analyzing figures and events as signs or representations and by paying careful attention to narrative strategies, Micheau suggests, historians are laying the foundations for a new history of the beginnings of Islam.

In Chapter 2 (« les Arabes avant l'Islam: entre réalités linguistiques, fictions généalogiques et constructions identitaires »), Micheau addresses questions about Arab ethnicity, language, and identity. Although it is standard practice to identify the first

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Muslims as « Arabs » and their language as « Arabic », the situation on the ground was more complex. In early Greek and Syriac sources, the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula are identified, not as Arabs, but as Sarakenoi, Tayyayê', Hagarenes, and Mhgrâyê – the latter term refers to the soldiers who emerged from Arabia and went on to conquer Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. It is noteworthy that the earliest inscriptions using the Arabic language have been found *outside* of the Peninsula in regions where Syriac was widely spoken. For example, the fourth-century inscription in which Imru'l-Qais is identified as « King of all the Arabs » was found in Namara, southeast of Damascus. Arguably the earliest specimen of Arabic prose and poetry was produced by Christians from Ḥīra, Zayd b. Ḥammād and his son ʿAdī b. Zayd. If we add to this the fact that the Arabic script emerged from either the Nabataen or Syriac script, one notes a strong correlation between the Arabic language and script, on the one hand, and Christian missionary activity, on the other. Based on a review of recent scholarship, Micheau concludes that during the lifetime of Muḥammad, the term *ʿarab* or "Arabs" referred to several distinct groups, on the one hand, and that the majority of the inhabitants of the Peninsula did *not* call themselves « Arabs », on the other (p. 64). Of course, there were « tribes » in the Peninsula, but the social structure of Arabia was not predominantly « tribal » (p. 65). In fact, in the centuries preceding the rise of Islam, the Peninsula was controlled by three large principalities that are best identified as Jafnides, Naṣrids, and Ḥujrids (rather than the standard Ghassanids, Lakhmids, and Kindites). Each of these three principalities was founded or led by historical figures – Jabala, ʿAmr b. ʿAdī, and Ḥujr Ākil al-Murār; each was under the orbit of a different polity – the Byzantines, Sasanians, and Himyarites; and each was associated with one or another monotheistic religious community – Miaphysite Christianity, Nestorianism and Manicheism. Together, these three principalities controlled a vast territory.

In Chapter 3 (« L'impossible biographie de Muḥammad »), Micheau tackles one of the most controversial subjects relating to the beginnings of Islam, to wit, the historicity of Muḥammad and of his *Sīra* or biography. In recent years, historians have developed new approaches to this historiographical crux, based in part on the use of non-Islamic sources, with special attention to the historical context of late antiquity. It has been established that a narrative kernel of the life of Muḥammad – associated especially with ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712) and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 742) – existed, if not by the end of the seventh century, then certainly by the beginning of the eighth. At the same time, careful examination of sources for the life of Muḥammad points to additions, excisions, alterations and interpolations which, together, serve as evidence of a complex literary, theological, and political project. Uri Rubin has argued that the *figure* of Muḥammad, as it appears in the *Sīra*, was constructed on the basis of models of what the first generation of believers – many of them converts – thought that the life of a prophet should look like. And Abdesselam Cheddadi has argued that the early Muslim community produced an account of its founder in an effort to compete with the Gospels and to establish that Muḥammad was equal in status to Jesus without, however, being divine. A different approach has been pioneered by M.J. Kister and his students at the Hebrew University, who seek to recover traces of information that have been pushed to the margins of the historical record and are no longer visible in the standard Islamic foundation narrative.

Another heuristic strategy is to bracket the *Sīra* and try to understand Muḥammad based solely on (1) the Qur'ān or (2) non-Islamic, mostly Christian, sources that are closer in time to the events of the first century A.H. than the Islamic sources are. The first strategy yields meager results: The prophet is mentioned by name (« Muḥammad ») only four times in the Qur'ān (Q. 3:144, 33:40, 47:2, and 48:29) in verses in which he is identified as a Messenger of God, a recipient of revelations, and the Seal of Prophets (in Q. 61:6, he is identified as *aḥmad*, literally, « more praiseworthy »). The second strategy yields more substantive results. For example, a source redacted in upper Mesopotamia in 640 refers to the *Tayyayê d-Mhmat* (« Arabs of Muḥammad ») who were victorious in battle near Gaza in 634, while another source, produced in the 660s, indicates that Muḥammad ordered his followers to conquer the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that the central focus of the early Muslim community was on the Holy Land and that the Hijazi orientation was a secondary development, as argued by Cook and Crone in 1977 and, more recently, by Shoemaker in 2012. The gap between the evidence of the Qur'ān and that of other sources is striking, and Tilman Nagel has argued that scholars must distinguish between: (1) the *man* who introduced a new monotheistic religion in the Hijaz; and (2) the *figure* whose *sunna* or example became a model of ideal behavior.

Our understanding of the Arabian context in which Muḥammad lived has been sharpened by the work of archaeologists and epigraphers. Beginning in the third century C.E. the ancient kingdoms of South Arabia were incorporated into the kingdom of Himyar, which united the region and sought to

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extend its control over the desert Arabs. A local form of Judaism spread among Yemeni aristocrats, some of whom, at the end of their lives, made arrangements to have their bodies transported to a necropolis in Beit Sheʿarim (east of Haifa). These Judaizing monotheists also developed a religious lexicon (e.g. *slt*, *zkt*, and *Rahmanān*) that bears a striking resemblance to the religious lexicon of the Qurʾān (cf. *ṣalāt*, *zakāt*, and *al-raḥmān*). At the same time, as Christianity spread throughout the Near East, conflicts, sometimes bloody, broke out between Jews and Christians. These conflicts attracted the attention of the Byzantines, whose interest in Arabia was threefold: political – to reduce the power of the Sasanians, economic – to control important commercial trade routes, and religious – to check the growing influence of Judaism. In 552, Abraha, an Aksumite general who had become king of Himyar, sought to expand his power by sending a military expedition (which included elephants) to the Hijaz, as confirmed by a Sabean inscription and also by Q. 105 (even if Islamic sources associate the expedition with the birth of the Prophet in 570). Following the destruction of the Himyarite kingdom in the 570s, the Hijaz became an important center of economic activity that linked the southern and northern regions of the Peninsula. Strong commercial ties were established between Mecca and the Nasrid capital of al-Hira, and these two commercial centers competed for control of the caravan trade. The sudden dissolution of the Himyarite, Jafnid, and Nasrid principalities in the second half of the sixth century led to a state of social, economic and political disorder. The resulting political vacuum was filled by a new leader– the prophet Muḥammad, who initiated a new religious community – the *umma*, with a new mission – *jihad*.

The redaction of the Qurʾān is the subject of Chapter 4 (« le Coran à l'épreuve de l'histoire »). The history of the emergence of this sacred text may not be as simple as indicated in the standard Islamic narrative. Epigraphic, numismatic, and codicological evidence combine to suggest that the text developed over the course of the 7th century, that competing texts circulated throughout the nascent empire, and that the consonantal skeleton remained fluid until the end of the 7th century. Sharp divisions within the community, including the decade long struggle between Ibn al-Zubayr and ʿAbd al-Malik, brought home the importance of establishing a single, uniform codex. In all likelihood, the establishment of such a codex was the achievement of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685-705) and his agent al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf.

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to fragments of early Qurʾān manuscripts. Based on the careful analysis of what he calls the "codex Parisino-petropolitanus," produced in the third quarter of the 7th century, François Déroche has shown that there is a significant gap between the consonantal skeleton of this manuscript, on the one hand, and the so-called ʿUthmānic codex, on the other (see his *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l'islam*, Brill, 2009). However, much work remains to be done, and the production of a critical edition of the Qurʾān, based not only on literary evidence but also on manuscripts, is a major scholarly desideratum. Such a project was initiated in Berlin in 2006 under the direction of A. Neuwirth and M. Marx, and, according to current projections, it will be complete in 2025.

Alongside the study of the redaction of the Qurʾān, scholars are developing new methods to study the contents of the text. If one adopts the position that there is no creation *ex nihilo*, then the materials that found their way into what would become the standard codex of the Qurʾān must have a source in this world. Increasingly, the Qurʾān has come to be regarded as a product of late antiquity. As such, it may be analyzed in light of comparisons with the Torah, Psalms, Gospels, Diatessaron, Apocrypha, homilies, patristic texts, Mishnah and Midrash. How were materials from these earlier texts incorporated into what would become the Qurʾān? Drawing on the methods of linguistics, narratology, semiotics, and rhetoric, a growing number of scholars has attempted to answer this question. Alternatively, scholars ask: To whom was the text addressed? And what was the relationship between the voice that controls the text and an emerging religious community?

Is the rise of Islam and its expansion in the Near East better explained as a military conquest by a particular ethnic group or as the spread of a new religion? This question is addressed in Chapter 5 (« conquêtes arabes, domination islamique »). There is no denying that the Qurʾān sanctions military conquest (see, for example, Q. 9:5 and 29 and 33:27) while at the same time providing an ideological justification for the construction of a new polity. As F. Donner has argued, there is a strong correlation between religious ideology and military conquest. Indeed, without the cohesive power of the Qurʾānic message, it is difficult to imagine that the conquests would have taken place. Much of what we know about the conquests is found in the *futūḥ* literature. The choice of the term *fatḥ*/*futūḥ* to describe the conquests is instructive. The literary meaning of this term is "to open up" and, in the present context, it refers to God's opening up of vast new spaces and territories so that submission to Him might prevail throughout the world. The primary functions of the earliest historical chronicles were to encourage believers to engage in *jihad*, to justify

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the domination of Muslims over non-Muslims, and to glorify the achievement of important individuals, families, and clans. These functions are reflected in recurrent *topoi*, e.g. military expeditions were carefully planned and organized, Muslim warriors were motivated by religious zeal, determination, and piety, and victory on the battlefield was a manifestation of divine favor. When one takes into consideration the function of these narratives and the history of their redaction, it should come as no surprise that there is considerable confusion relating to the exact chronology of specific events. How are we to account for these inconsistences? An earlier generation of Western historians attempted to assess the reliability – or lack thereof – of one or another Muslim historian or narrator. Increasingly, however, Western historians are turning to the evidence of texts composed in Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, or Latin. Such texts, of course, must be used with caution, as they have their own agendas – e.g., to explain the conquests as divine punishment for human sins – and their own *topoi*. As L. Conrad and C. Robinson have demonstrated, the conquests did not immediately generate historical data that was accurately transmitted over time and space. Because the Islamic texts were designed to justify the conquests, they manifest a special interest in (1) fiscal policy, which varied according to whether or not a particular city or region was thought to have submitted peacefully, and (2) the regulation of social, economic, and political relations between Muslims and non-Muslims – hence the interest, for example, in the status of churches and synagogues. In both cases, epigraphic and archaeological evidence combine to suggest that the concerns of the Muslim sources reflect the situation on the ground in the late Umayyad or early Abbasid period, not the period of the conquests.

Recently, Donner has argued that the conquests were carried out by a « community of believers » who thought that the escaton or end time was near and who were interested in religious and moral reform. The ideological goal of this new religious movement was to spread a simple message to the inhabitants of the Near East: belief in one God and the immanence of the Day of Judgment. This movement was initially ecumenical and it welcomed monotheists of all denominations and persuasions. For this reason, it encountered little resistance. If Donner is correct, then the phenomenon under consideration is better described as a « takeover » rather than a "conquest." Micheau, who finds this aspect of Donner's thesis "difficult to accept" (p. 147), concludes Chapter 5 by reviewing the emergence of Islamic domination and the rise of new elites in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. She cautions that developments in each region were shaped by local conditions. At the same time, however, certain trends were shared by all three regions, including the construction of garrison towns, the rise of new tribal elites, the gradual Islamization of local administrative structures, language reform, and the development of an Islamic fiscal policy.

In Chapter 6 (« De *fitna* en *fitna:* une histoire califale démythifiée »), Micheau reviews the political history of the Islamic state from the time of the first four caliphs to the rise of the Abbasids. In recent years, historians have challenged the standard Sunni vision of the Islamic foundation narrative, which emphasizes caliphal continuity (from the four righteous caliphs to the Umayyads to the Abbasids) at the expense of « rebels » who are identified in the sources as a source of crisis and dissension (*fitna*). By employing the above-mentioned « literary turn », scholars have called into question the accuracy of this foundation narrative. In an important monograph, Tayeb El-Hibri has analyzed narratives about the first four caliphs from a literary perspective. Rather than looking for facts, El-Hibri analyzes plot, logic, irony, allusion, and meaning. He concludes that these narratives are fictional representations of real-life events that were put into their final form only under the early Abbasids. The underlying principle of this foundation narrative is the *mathal* or parable, i.e., the process whereby God causes history to unfold so that the righteous are rewarded and the unbelievers are punished. The storytellers who crafted this narrative were attempting to demonstrate that the careers of the first four caliphs are modeled on, or are variants of, biblical figures, narratives, themes, and motifs. The result was a « final » version of history that facilitated an evaluation of the behavior and political actions of the four « righteous » caliphs, the Umayyads, and the Abbasids according to widely held moral criteria.

Another way to critique the standard foundation narrative is to study the individuals and groups who are said to have challenged caliphal legitimacy but were defeated. For example, Ibn al-Zubayr is portrayed in Abbasid-period historical texts as a counter-caliph and rebel against legitimate authority. It is striking, however, that the first Islamic coins identify Ibn al-Zubayr as the commander of the believers; and that the first official attestation of Muḥammad's name (« *bismi Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* ») appear on coins minted in territory controlled by Ibn al-Zubayr. As C. Robinson has argued, it makes better sense to treat Ibn al-Zubayr as the leader of the Muslim community from 685 until 692; and to treat ʿAbd al-Malik as a rebel who eventually succeeded in seizing power from the caliph.

The Umayyad state was undermined by tribal factionalism, military defeats on all fronts, and civil

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war. Disputes arose over the division of revenues between the provinces and the central government; the state struggled to maintain its control over territory and tribal chiefs; and non-Arab converts to Islam (*mawālī*) demanded their rights. The Abbasid takeover was not, however, accompanied by a radical change in the manner in which political power was exercised, in the organization of society, or in cultural orientations, and, for this reason, it is advisable not to refer to this event as a « revolution ».

The first signs of the emergence of an Islamic state – inscriptions that open with the invocation of God, a new Islamic calendar, and the development of the Arabic script – appeared during the reign of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634-644). Under Muʿāwiya (r. 661-680) the state assumed responsibility for the payment of military compensation, the collection of taxes, and the minting of coins. In official inscriptions, Muʿāwiya is identified as « the servant of God » and as « the commander of the believers ». The first leader to be identified as « God's caliph », that is to say, as God's representative on earth, was ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685-705), who is the subject of Chapter 7 (« ʿAbd al-Malik, premier calife de l'Islam »). The emergence of a polity that identified itself as "Islamic" arguably was the achievement of ʿAbd al-Malik. The first physical evidence of this new Islamic identity – as expressed in architecture, coinage, and physical objects – was produced during his twenty-year reign as caliph. The Dome of the Rock, constructed in 72/691-2, signaled the triumph of Islam over Christianity: It not only replaced the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as the tallest and most magnificent structure in Jerusalem, but also announced its religious agenda in terms that would have been understood by anyone familiar with Christian doctrine. Drawing on Q. 112, the inscription engraved on the inner band of the dome proclaims, in part, « He did not beget, nor is He begotten » – a rhetorical response to the Nicene Creed, which stipulated that Jesus was « the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father ». It was ʿAbd al-Malik who introduced the first aniconic coins and the message conveyed on these widely circulated objects served to define the identity of the new community: « There is no god but God, unique, He has no associate », « God is one, unique, he does not beget and he is not begotten and he has no equal »; and « Muḥammad is the Messenger of God whom He sent with guidance and the true religion to cause it to prevail over all [other] religion, even though the polytheists dislike that ». The same message was inscribed on milestones set up along the road from Damascus to Jerusalem: "In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate, there is no god but God, He has no partner, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God." The epigraphic evidence of inscriptions, coins and milestones serves to define the key beliefs of the new religious community: the oneness of God, the prophecy of Muḥammad, and the humanity of Jesus. In this connection it is important to recall that it was ʿAbd al-Malik, together with al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ b. Yūsuf, who produced what would become the final, standard text of the Qurʾān – what might be called the Umayyad codex.

The early Islamic community was based on tribal alliances, and the first provincial governors exercised a large measure of independence. The tribal state was eliminated by ʿAbd al-Malik, who appointed his brothers, uncles and sons as the governors of Syria, Egypt, Palestine, and Iraq. By putting members of his family in charge of these provinces, the caliph signaled that the new Islamic state was now the personal possession or patrimony of the Umayyad family. Within Syria itself, the caliph divided his time between Sinnabra, Jabiya, Damascus and Baalbek, and his seasonal movements signaled his control of the entire province. The power of the new patrimonial state manifested itself in a new professional army created by the caliph; the army was composed of professional soldiers who were now paid a regular salary and who were grouped into regiments led by generals appointed by the caliph. It was also during the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik that Arabic, the language of the Qurʾān, became the official language of the administration, replacing Greek and Pahlavi. To facilitate the collection of taxes, the newly centralizing state sent its agents into cities, towns and villages to conduct surveys of the local population – no doubt unwanted. It should be noted, however, that the fiscal administration developed slowly and did not take its classical form until the early Abbasid period.

Chapter 8 (« Rupture ou continuité? l'économie de la Syrie au prisme de l'archéologie ») focuses on « the material turn », that is to say, physical evidence in the form of objects, buildings, inscriptions, coins, and ceramics uncovered by archaeologists over the past quarter of a century. Although this evidence is scattered, partial, and incomplete, it does suggest that the Syrian economy did *not* experience any severe recession in the first half of the 6th century. Indeed, some zones, both urban and rural, including Umm al-Jimal, Qinnasrin, and Palmyra, remained prosperous after 550; and in the Golan Heights, the number of occupied sites increased by 30 %.

Over the course of the 7th century the new community of believers spread out across the Near East. Remarkably, from the perspective of archaeology, the rise of Islam is invisible, that is to say, there is little or no evidence of physical destruction in

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towns and villages. New churches were built, coins continued to be minted based on Byzantine and Persian models, and there was at first little change in land usage or in the urban landscape. The first major economic and political investments were sponsored by the Umayyad family, as evidenced by the so-called desert palaces in northeastern Syria at Qasr al-Hayr East and West. These rich and sumptuous residences were used by the Umayyads as a haven from urban life, as a refuge from contagious disease, as a site where the ruling family could meet with its tribal allies, and as stopping points on trade and pilgrimage routes. Using revenues generated by the conquests, the Umayyads invested heavily in agriculture, stimulating the production of wheat, barley, grapes and olives. (The economic boom in this region was short-lived, however, and by the early Abbasid period, the desert palaces had been abandoned.) In addition, in the Jordan valley and the Jazira, farmers began to grow new crops, including sugar cane, rice, cotton and bananas. In upper Mesopotamia, the caliphs acquired villages and developed them by investing in canals and devices for the diversion of water. In the Hijaz, Medina became a major importer of wheat from Egypt.

As late antiquity gave way to early Islam, changes also took place in the urban landscape. The rise of first Christianity and then Islam was accompanied by the closing of pagan temples, the abandonment of theatres, the construction of first, churches and monasteries, and, subsequently, mosques. Increasingly, shops began to occupy public space at the center of towns and cities, and the souk or market became an important element in the organization of urban space. The importance of the souk is a key sign of the expansion of the market economy. As Islam spread, the demand for consumer and luxury products increased, agricultural products were exported from, e.g. Syria to the Hijaz, naval fleets were constructed, and ports were built or improved. The archaeological record indicates that there was no «rupture» in the economy of the Mediterranean but rather a significant reorganization of patterns of trade and the development of new networks of exchange, both within individual provinces and between and among provinces. In the current state of our knowledge, it is difficult to pinpoint these changes and to document them with any precision. As additional sites are examined by archaeologists, however, it is to be expected that historians eventually will be able to write a true economic history of the region in the period between the 6th and 8th centuries.

In *Les débuts de l'Islam*, Françoise Micheau has succeeded in making recent English-language scholarship on the beginnings of Islam available to the French-reading public. At the same time, however, she has sketched out the outlines of what a new history of the beginnings of Islam might look like. Her book should be required reading for all scholars working on this period, in whatever discipline – and for their students as well.

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