

المصنوع الواسطي
al-cUsûr al-Wustá

The Newsletter of Middle East Medievalists

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MEM BUSINESS MEETING AT 1991 MESA MEETING

MEM will elect a new Board of Directors-- President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, and a general member-- during its annual meeting at MESA, on Saturday, 23 November, at 8:00 P.M. in the **Lincoln East Room** of the Washington Hilton and Towers (1919 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009).

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As our organization's first and now outgoing president, I want to express my thanks to all those who shared with me the task of getting MEM off the ground, in particular Christopher Taylor, who did such a fine job as Secretary-Treasurer. We are all in his debt. With Chris's appointment to Drew University last June, Paul Chevedden kindly took on the task in the course of moving from Manchester College in Indiana to Salem State College in Salem, Massachusetts. We wish him lots of luck. I have enjoyed my experience as President immensely and hope that MEM will continue to flourish under the leadership of its new Board of Directors. Warmest thanks to all!

MEM SPONSORED PANELS AT THE 1991 MESA MEETING

The Amsâr: New Perspectives on the Early Islamic City

Monday, 25 November 1991, 11:00 A.M.-1:00 P.M.

CHAIR: Donald Whitcomb, University of Chicago

The Muslim conquest inaugurated a new era of urbanization in the Middle East. The archaeological and literary evidence of the earliest Islamic cities, bound with the creation of the *amsâr*, offers a focus for aspects of social organization in this period. It is possible to chart a progression of definition from the simple "military camps"

through a system of small Islamic cities to the broad usage as "provincial administrative centers," the "metropoleis" of Muqaddasî. New excavations of early Islamic sites and re-analysis of older excavations and surveys provide a strong indication that even the earliest *amsâr* were planned urban centers and this urban system was far more widespread than has been considered previously.

The city is more than just a collection of buildings within massive walls; it is rather a focus of social institutions made viable through an economic system. The study of the historical and archaeological aspects of the *amsâr* will lead to a new appreciation of the development of the great capitals of the Eastern Caliphate in the ninth and tenth centuries. Indeed, the strong symbolic value of urbanism in Islam makes the study of city foundation of pivotal importance for the development of Islamic culture.

The Missing Amsâr of Syria: Alternative Urbanization at Hims

Paul M. Cobb, University of Chicago

The phenomenon of the *msr* clearly shows that the early Muslim community was a complex, organized polity with an original approach to urbanization. Yet, curiously, no such *msr* was founded in Syria. The example of Hims suggests an alternative approach to urbanization in Syria, recognized in previous studies of other Syrian towns. This approach is characterized by a general continuity with pre-existing urban forms but showing a slow appropriation and transformation of these forms into a uniquely Islamic urban form.

Historical and cartographical sources are analyzed to elucidate first the topography of pre-Islamic Hims, setting the stage for an analysis of the early Islamic city. What little information exists makes it possible to reconstruct the general street-plan of the classical city, the position of its walls and some of its gates. The position of the agora is also suggested. With the conquest of the city in 16/637, the city remained largely as it was known in earlier centuries, but a number of developments slowly took place as part of the Islamic urbanizing process: the agora was eventually parcelled into *aswâq*, the Basilica of St. John was partitioned into the Congregational Mosque, and a number of important Muslim shrines and other structures appeared.

Rather than seeking one overriding approach to urbanization in the early Islamic period, a plurality of strategies is posited, varying with the historical circumstances of the conquests. The *amsâr* thus show the most original contribution of the early Islamic community to urbanization in the Middle East, but other contributions also existed, each directed by the same esteem for urban settlement.

Early Islamic Urbanism: The Case of Alexandria

John L. Meloy, University of Chicago

Recent studies of cities in the early Islamic Near East have focused specifically on the forms and processes of urbanism within those settlements established by the Muslims themselves. Following Creswell, these studies have highlighted the role of the administrative center, the Dâr al-Imârah, as the focal point of the Muslim city plan. They have also emphasized the need to refine our understanding of the conceptual categories by which the Muslims themselves described the urban process, as well as to define the fundamental role of the city as manifested in the relationship between "palatial" and subordinate space at urban sites.

The notion of Alexandria as a city foreign to the rest of Egypt reflects the city's extreme reliance on long-distance commerce to sustain its vitality as well as the bias of the historical sources. Consequently, the history of early Islamic Alexandria is little understood. With the rise in prominence of the locale of al-Fustât, the country's former Mediterranean capital seems to have slipped into medieval obscurity. Perhaps obscure, but not forgotten by Muslim Egypt's first rulers, the Arabization and Islamization of Alexandria was executed in a deliberate fashion, by means parallel to early Muslim urban foundations elsewhere in the Near East. The establishment of the focal point of the city and the settlement of Arab tribes transformed the topography of the Hellenistic city within at least the first twenty years of Muslim rule. The means by which the Muslims organized their cities were not restricted to those urban settlements they built from the ground up; the case of early Islamic Alexandria suggests that the early Muslims followed definite and consistent principles of urban organization in the *amsâr*, as well as the conquered cities. Discussion of the forms and processes of urbanism in Alexandria serves to broaden our understanding of the early Islamic cities and their pivotal role in the development of the early Islamic state.

The Late Antique Origins of Early Islamic Mosul

Chase F. Robinson, Harvard University

The emergence of early Islam from the late antique cultures of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, remains, certain exceptions aside, uncharted territory. This is especially so in the case of early Islamic cities. If we know a fair amount about Kufa and Basra, we can say disappointingly little about the early history of provincial cities outside Iraq. Certainly *al-misran* are important in their own right; but we should not assume that urban patterns set in southern Iraq held for other areas of the nascent empire. Rather, we must look to specific regional contexts.

Mosul is a prime example. Using both Arabic and Syriac literary sources, along with the little archaeological and numismatic evidence available, I argue that early Islamic civic building in Umayyad Mosul in general, and its emergence as a *misr* in particular, must be understood

within the city's late antique context. The patterns of urban building in the sixth and early seventh centuries reflected the two most important social experiences of the province: large-scale imperial warfare between the Byzantines and Persians, as well as persistent raiding by Arab tribal forces, and the continued conversion to and struggle between the competing Jacobite and Nestorian Christian communities. Thus, building in the Jazīrah in the period immediately preceding the Islamic conquest was largely of two types: defensive structures designed for military purposes, and religious buildings (churches and monasteries) that reflected both the growing Christian communities (especially the Jacobite) and the increased authority of local bishops.

The Arabic sources disagree about the *tamsîr* of the city; while some would credit it to Harthama b. ʿArfaja, others would wait for Marwân II. In fact, the process of urban growth was gradual. It began in the late sixth century during the final years of Sasanian rule, continuing during the early Muslim period. City walls designed and constructed in the context of the Persian/Byzantine wars and nomadic predations in Dara and Amid gave place to Harthama's own walls, as well as to his policy of settling local Arabs; a monastery/church complex dating from the end of the sixth century and reflecting the power of the bishop is eclipsed by Harthama's (and later Marwân II's) congregational mosque, and a governor who, in the apparent absence of a *qâdî*, exercised juridical authority. The establishment of Islamic rule in the Jazīrah thus meant the transformation and acceleration of previously existing urban patterns.

The Misr of Ayla: An Archaeological Perspective from Aqaba

Donald Whitcomb, University of Chicago

The results from the excavations at Aqaba (1986-1989) suggest that this early Islamic city, then called Ayla, was founded as a *misr*. Although evidence for this interpretation is indirect, dependent on new understanding of the concept of the *amsâr*, comparisons with other early Islamic sites in southern Bilâd al-Shâm confirm the viability of this interpretation and its strength in developing hypotheses for understanding the beginnings of early Islamic urbanization.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the site of Ayla was founded in the seventh century, adjacent to the older Byzantine town. Traditional association with the Umayyads and later references to *mawâlî* of ʿUthmân suggest a foundation within the latter's caliphate, ca. 650. The excavated plan of Ayla has similarities with Roman legionary camps. This might indicate a military camp (*misr*), though there is no direct contemporary evidence for the configuration of an Arab military camp. An alternative interpretation is that this urban plan is an example of experimentation for which ʿAnjar and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqî are two of many other examples. Indeed, the Large

Enclosure at the latter site, described by Grabar as a *madīnah*, closely parallels the external configuration of Ayla.

Amsār, such as ^CAnjar and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqī, were settlements of a type intermediate between the theoretical camp and the metropolis; as structures comprising residential, religious and political functions, they may properly be designated as urban centers. In a physical sense, however, each of these urban centers was an example of on-going structural experimentation. What is manifest from archaeological remains should parallel less tangible and often unrecorded aspects in the development of early Islamic culture. Specifically, the orthogonal early Islamic city (or *mīsr*) reflects aspects of a new social order of Muslim communities in the seventh and eighth centuries.

DISCUSSANT: Fred M. Donner, University of Chicago

Columbus and the Islamic World

*Sponsored by MEM and the Christopher
Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission*

Tuesday, 26 November 1991, 8:30-10:30 A.M.

CHAIR: Paul E. Chevedden, Salem State College

This panel will honor the 500th anniversary of Columbus's first encounter with the New World by examining the explorer and his connection with the Islamic World.

Columbus as Standard-bearer and Mirror of the Spanish Reconquest

Donald J. Kagay, Texas Medieval Association

As countless undergraduates suffering through American history classes have been told, Columbus made his voyages into the unknown primarily for gold and spices. Such an assessment may have some validity in regard to Portuguese seafaring around Africa to India. Spain's oversea ventures, except for the short chapter in the Canary Islands, was not the result of a long series of explorations. Instead, Spanish advancement toward Empire was formed in the destructive and backward-looking environment of a century of civil war which reached a positive crescendo with the final upsurge of the *reconquista*.

It is the purpose of this paper to investigate the carry over of Spain's ascending national purpose, capped with the conquest of Muslim Granada in 1492, into the process of overseas exploration. The clear-cut focus for such a study is the leader of Spain's advancement into transatlantic *terra inconnue*, Christopher Columbus. I will thus explore the admiral's role as crusader in the reconquest and neo-chevalric atmosphere of late fifteenth-century Spain. The

paper will be based on the Columbine journals and a number of Iberian chronicles and treatises from the eve of the discovery. From these sources, Columbus projects a self-image of a *miles Dei* acting for Christendom and against Islam. The reward for his efforts will be the recovery of Jerusalem. These sources place Columbus firmly within the intellectual framework of a Spain at once regressive and yet charged with a tremendous energy in the pursuit of an ideal which linked crusading mission and national mission.

Columbus and Piri Reis

Svat Soucek, Princeton University

Piri Reis, an Ottoman mariner and cartographer, was one of the first Muslims to mention Columbus's discovery of America. Piri Reis did so both in the prolific annotation he added to his 1513 map of the world, and in the versified introduction to the 1526 recension of his portolan book, *Kitabi Bahriye*. Moreover, the map itself is an indirect acknowledgment of Columbus as a cartographer, for a map the latter made of the New World is cited as one of the sources Piri Reis used for his own world map. The present paper will first examine the question of how the Turkish mariner may have acquired this information, it will then analyze the manner in which he understood and used it, and his reasons and goals in doing that. Finally, the paper will discuss the response Piri Reis's own community, Ottoman Turkey, gave this unprecedented news. The paper will also investigate the theme on a comparative basis. Who else in Ottoman Turkey or elsewhere in the Islamic world noticed and recorded Columbus's voyages and maps, how and when? How does Turkey's and the Muslim world's reaction compare with Europe's? Did Piri Reis's, or other people's, work generate widespread interest and efforts to learn more about and participate in the discoveries? Finally, the paper will briefly review and evaluate modern scholarly literature on the subject.

Columbus and the Depiction of the West Indies on the Piri Reis Map

Gregory C. McIntosh

The Piri Reis map of 1513 has a long inscription on it that says that the shores and islands shown are copied from a map by "the Genoese infidel named Colombo." An examination of the map reveals that the Piri Reis map is the only map known to have authentically preserved the geographical and cartographical ideas of Columbus. This Columbian cartography is even more rudimentary than that of the Juan de la Cosa map of 1500. The depictions of Hispanola and Cuba on the Piri Reis map, though appearing to have little relation to reality, conform closely to Columbus's ideas about the islands and coasts of China and Japan, which is where he thought he was. A detailed examination of the place names, written in Arabic script, reveals

locations visited by Columbus on his Second Voyage. Many features on the map indicate the Columbian origin of the source map used by Piri Reis for the depiction of the West Indies on the map of 1513. The Piri Reis map displays the earliest, most primitive and rudimentary cartography of the West Indies, more primitive than even the celebrated Juan de la Cosa map of 1500, a primitiveness which indicates that the earliest of all cartographic records of the discoveries in the New World, a map of Christopher Columbus, is preserved in the Piri Reis map. And within the Piri Reis map is, perhaps, the answer to that greatest of geographical mysteries: where was the First Landfall in the New World? This unique surviving map fragment from the Ottoman period is an important source of information about Columbus, his voyages, and the earliest period of New World cartography.

Ottoman Knowledge of Columbus and the New World in the Sixteenth Century

Thomas D. Goodrich, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

The Ottoman knowledge of the discovery of Columbus and of the exploration and conquests that ensued was better in the sixteenth century than in the following two centuries. With the extraordinary 1513 map of Piri Reis and the book of translations, *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi* (c. 1580), a large amount of information was available to Ottomans. Other sources dribbled in: oral, written, illustrative, and cartographic. While such dribbles continued, nothing really could match in quantity and in quality the two works mentioned. Both stand out not only as works about America but, in the Ottoman world, as works about anything in the contemporary period of the sixteenth century outside the Ottoman Empire. It is interesting that such efforts were not continued and expanded and that such intellectual innovations did not foretell a change in the scholarly and intellectual Ottoman world.

DISCUSSANT: Abbas Hamdani, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

MEM REPRESENTATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON MEDIEVAL STUDIES

Donald Kagay, President of the Texas Medieval Association and a regular participant in the International Congress on Medieval Studies held annually in May at Western Michigan State University in Kalamazoo, Michigan has suggested that MEM become associated on a permanent basis with this academic gathering. Dr. Kagay points out that there is no Middle Eastern organization presently represented at the K'zoo meeting, and that the Medieval Institute of Western Michigan University which sponsors the meeting will probably be most receptive to granting MEM permanent organizational status at their annual event, especially since there can only be so many Chaucer sessions before the

ozone layer is seriously threatened. Dr. Kagay will be present at the MEM Business Meeting to discuss this further.

**27th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON MEDIEVAL STUDIES,
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, KALAMAZOO, 7-10 MAY 1992**

Several sessions will honor the work of Robert I. Burns, S.J. at the 27th International Congress on Medieval Studies, which will be held 7-10 May 1992 at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan. For further information, write Prof. Remie Constable, Department of History, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

AHA PAMPHLETS

The American Historical Association has begun to publish a series of pamphlets edited by Michael Adas of Rutgers University, *Essays on Global and Comparative History*. Titles of possible interest to MEM members are William H. Mc Neil, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires, 1450-1800* (1989) and Richard M. Eaton, *Islamic History as Global History* (1990). Each pamphlet is \$4.00 (AHA members)/\$6.00 (nonmembers) and available from the American Historical Association, Publication Sales Office, 400 A St., SE, Washington, DC 20003; tel., 202-544-2422.

RECENT CONFERENCE

Medieval Spain in the Western Mediterranean: A Conference in Honor of Robert I. Burns, S.J., University of California at Los Angeles, 25-26 October 1991

Mark Meyerson (University of Notre Dame), *Religious Changes, Regionalism, and Royal Power in the Spain of Fernando and Isabel*

Jill R. Webster (St. Michael's College, University of Toronto), *Mission and Coexistence: The Franciscans and Non-Christians in the Crown of Aragon*

Jesús Lalinde (Colegio Universitario Abad Oliva), *La Vertebración de la Corona de Aragón en la Monarquía Española*

Elena Lourie (Ben Gurion University), *Conspiracy and Cover-up: The Order of Montesa on Trial (1352)*

Joseph F. O'Callaghan (Fordham University), *Kings and Lords in Conflict: A Comparison of Late-Thirteenth Century Castile and Aragon*

Linda McMillin (Susquehanna University), *Sacred and Secular Politics: The Convent of Sant Pere de les Puelles in Thirteenth-Century Barcelona*

Carme Batlle Gallart (University of Barcelona), *Evolución de la Ciudades de la Corona de Aragón en la Baja Edad Media*

- Mikel de Epalza (University of Alicante), *Islamic Social Structure in Muslim and Christian Valencia*
- Thomas Glick (Boston University), *Berbers in Valencia: The Case of Irrigation*
- David Abulafia (Cambridge University), *Commerce and the Kingdom of Majorca, 1150-1450*
- Clifford Backman (Boston University), *Sicily and the Slave Trade*
- Larry J. Simon (Michigan State University), *Buyers, Sellers, and Majorcan Slaves in the Thirteenth Century: A Sociological Portrait*
- William D. Phillips, Jr. (University of Minnesota), *The Spanish Kingdoms and the Wider World in the Later Middle Ages*
- Barisa Krekic (University of California, Los Angeles), *Dubrovnik and Spain: Commercial and Human Contacts, Fourteenth-Sixteenth Centuries*
- James W. Broadman (University of Central Arkansas), *Ransomers or Royal Agents: The Mercedarians and the Aragonese Crown in the Fourteenth Century*
- Donald J. Kagay (Texas Medieval Association), *The Conqueror as Logician: Army Mobilization, Royal Administration, and the Realm in the Thirteenth-Century Crown of Aragon*
- Paul E. Chevedden (Salem State College), *King Jaume's Artillery*

COMMUNICATIONS

Remie Constable (Department of History, Columbia University) has recently written and offered the following suggestions to improve *al-Usûr al-Wustá*:

1. Expand the section entitled "communications" to be a more comprehensive listing for conferences, seminars, lectures, institutes, language programs, etc. Organize these chronologically.
2. Include a new section on grants, fellowships, prizes, travelling fellowships, jobs, and other items of interest to MEM members.
3. Solicit book reviews, particularly reviews of collected papers and conferences which are rarely reviewed elsewhere.
4. Publish a schedule of upcoming MEM sessions at MEM; then, after the session, publish abstracts of papers delivered, and comments, for those of us who were not there (and even for those who were!).
5. Start a list of current work on editions and translations of medieval texts of interests to MEM members.
6. Start a section on information on archives in Middle East and elsewhere with holdings of interest to MEM members. Profile an archives in every issue (brief data on location, access, basic holdings, etc.).
7. Provide more information on who runs MEM; solicit help and new members; include information on membership and printed application form.

CORRECTION

The title of Prof. Carole Hillenbrand's new book was incorrectly cited in *al-Usûr al-Wustá* 2 (April 1991), 7. The title should read: *A Muslim Principality in Crusader Times: The Early Artuqid State* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1990).

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Middle East Medievalists (MEM) is a professional non-profit association of scholars interested in the study of the Islamic lands of the Middle East in the medieval period. Following a year of organizational planning and outreach, MEM officially came into existence on 15 November 1989 at its first annual meeting held in Toronto. The immediate primary goal of MEM is to increase the representation of medieval scholarship at MESA (Middle East Studies Association) and other scholarly meetings in North America and elsewhere by co-sponsoring panels. The other principal objective of MEM is to foster lines of communication among individuals and organizations specializing in the study of the medieval Islamic Middle East. In its efforts to achieve this goal MEM publishes a newsletter two times per year (April and October). Members are invited to submit news about new resources, future panels they will participate in, or other points of information deemed of general interest to the membership of the organization.

MEM conducts its business meeting annually in conjunction with the Middle East Studies Association. The general meeting is open to all current members of MEM. The Board of Directors of MEM is elected annually at the general business meeting. The current Board consists of Dr. Sam Gellens (President), Dr. Michael Bates (Vice-President), Professor Richard Bulliet (Member), and Professor Abbas Hamdani (Member). The organization has two categories of membership, honorary and regular. Honorary members are senior medievalists who have distinguished themselves in their teaching and research. Current honorary members of MEM include: Professors David Ayalon, Claude Cahen, Bernard Lewis, George Makdisi, and Franz Rosenthal. Regular membership is open to all scholars and students interested in any aspect of the history and civilization of the Islamic Middle East in the medieval period. Annual membership dues are currently U.S. \$12.50. Checks should be drawn on a U.S. bank and be made payable to "Middle East Medievalists". Checks, membership applications, news items, and correspondence should be sent to the current Secretary-Treasurer of MEM, Paul E. Chevedden, 31 Washington Square North, Salem, MA 01970, USA (tel., 508-740-9358).

Middle East Medievalists (MEM)

Application for Membership &
Individual Member Information Form
(Annual Membership: U.S. \$12.50)

Name: _____
(Please Print)

Position or Title: _____

Institutional Affiliation (if any): _____

Mailing
Address: _____

Home Telephone: ____ (____) _____
(Area Code)

Office Telephone: ____ (____) _____
(Area Code)

Areas of Scholarly Interest: _____

MEM is a non-profit association of scholars and students interested in all aspects of the history and civilization of the Islamic lands of the Middle East in the medieval period. Membership is open to all nationalities. Please return this form with your check, drawn on a U.S. bank, for U.S. \$12.50, and made payable to "Middle East Medievalists", to the attention of Dr. Paul E. Chevedden, 31 Washington Square North, Salem, MA 01970, USA.