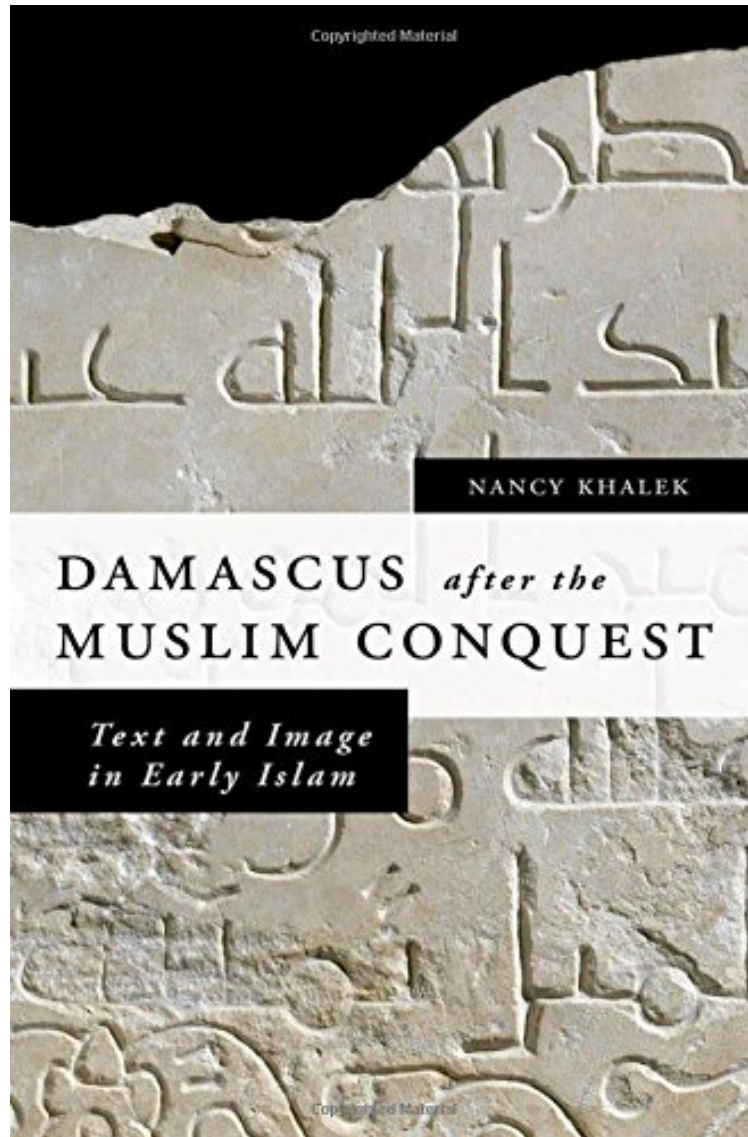


Damascus after the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam

Nancy Khalek

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Before it fell to Muslim armies in AD 635-6 Damascus had a long and prestigious history as a center of Christianity. How did this city, which became the capitol of the Islamic Empire and its people, negotiate the transition from a late antique or early Byzantine world to an Islamic culture? In *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, Nancy Khalek demonstrates that the changes that took place in Syria during this formative period of Islamic life were not simply a matter of the replacement of one civilization by another as a result of military conquest, but rather of shifting relationships and practices in a multifaceted social and cultural setting. Even as late antique forms of religion and culture persisted, the formation of Islamic identity was affected by the people who constructed, lived in, and narrated the history of their city. Khalek draws on the evidence of architecture and the testimony of pilgrims, biographers, geographers, and historians to shed light on this process of identity formation. Offering a fresh approach to the early Islamic period, she moves the study of Islamic origins beyond a focus on issues of authenticity and textual criticism, and initiates an interdisciplinary discourse on narrative, storytelling, and the interpretations of material culture.

"This is an impressive scholarly study based on Arabic sources. Interdisciplinary in approach, it deals with questions of architecture and archeology, historiography and narrative. It shows how the transition from late antiquity to the Islamic era in Syria was not a replacement of a Byzantine-Christian civilization by an Arab-Muslim one, but a subtle transformation and blending of the two. It is well written, and illuminating in its conclusions." --Ira M. Lapidus, Professor Emeritus of History, University of California at Berkeley

"*Damascus after the Muslim Conquest* is a superb study that situates early Muslim Syria in the context of the intellectual, religious, and social trends of the Near East in Late Antiquity, and explains the factors that influenced and motivated medieval Muslims (at the scholarly and popular levels) to shape their attitudes to and perceptions of sanctity, monuments, and space as they relate to Damascus and Syria. Nancy Khalek brings both periods into an active conversation, exhibiting in the process an impressive command of the source material, languages, and theoretical framework. It is an outstanding contribution to the field." --Suleiman A. Mourad, Elizabeth Mugar Eveillard 1969 Director of the Global Studies Center and Professor of Religion, Smith College

"Judiciously uses earlier, fragmented, and lesser-known 'narratives,' some of which have never been questioned, for their portrayal of Syrian-Islamic culture in its earliest manifestations."--*The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*

"*Damascus after the Muslim Conquest* should be required reading for all students of early Islamic history."--*Journal of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, April 2013, by Zayde Antrim, Associate Professor of History and International Studies at Trinity College

About the Author Nancy Khalek is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Brown University.