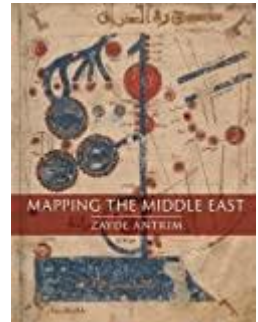


**Zayde Antrim.** *Mapping the Middle East*. London: Reaktion Books, 2018. 336 pp.  
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On February 6, 2023, one of a series of earthquakes and flooding disasters devastated communities across Turkey and Syria, with thousands of aftershocks felt across the Middle Eastern region, including in Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Cyprus. The first earthquake was recorded at magnitude 7.8 in the Gaziantep region and was followed later that day by another tremor at Ekinözü with a magnitude of 7.6. Two weeks later, on February 20, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake compounded the enormity of the search and rescue mission in the area. Notably, nearly 80 percent of the city of Antakya, known in the ancient world as Antioch, the capital city of Syria and now a major city in south-central region of the Republic of Turkey (Türkiye), was demolished, a profound loss to human civilization, memory, and culture. The World Health Organization estimates that 26 million people may have been affected by these natural disasters: 15 million in Turkey and 11 million in Syria. More than 48,400 deaths have been confirmed in Turkey and an additional 7,200 in Syria. Civil discord and the displacement of millions of

refugees across the region have compelled nations worldwide to respond to this ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Communities worldwide are called to silence and deep reflection, pausing to mourn the losses we share as a human family, and to grapple with the realities that shape the region's options for the future. Zayde Antrim's book, *Mapping the Middle East*, provides an exceptional survey of the tumultuous, multidimensional history of this superregion referred to as the Middle East. Antrim provides a thoughtful *point d'entrée* for readers wishing to better understand the complex transformations and impacts of Islam and the Middle East in the second millennium. This volume makes a welcome contribution to Arabic and Islamic studies and the growing canon works of contemporary scholarship dedicated to facilitating a better understanding of the Middle East and its profound multicultural influence on human civilization.

Contemporary maps of the Middle East portray a transcontinental region located around the southeastern periphery of the Mediterranean Sea, encompassing the countries of Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. To this day, the term “Middle East” evokes the region’s position as a critical hub connecting the three continents of the ancient world: Asia, Europe, and Africa. Complex trading relationships and the material and spiritual cultures they supported over thousands of years continue to resonate in the rich and diverse multiculturalism of the region. Extensive travel and cross-cultural dialogue to the present day have created streams of information and knowledge contributing to the slow realization of our common humanity.

*Mapping the Middle East* presents an intellectual history of the Middle East as a geographical concept, connecting ancient worldviews to contemporary geopolitical realities. Antrim demonstrates exceptional familiarity with the scores of manuscripts and maps that structure the development of her narrative, adding to the record her own valuable commentary regarding myth and memory and how they are preserved in the cartographic record of this region. In keeping with the scholarly traditions of early world cultures, ancient maps were embedded in literary annotations and commentaries. Nevertheless, the layout and detail of individual plates provide unique impressions of the early cartographers’ craft, the cultures that inspired their work, and the wealth of information that was compressed into a two-dimensional plane with astonishing degrees of technical skill and detail. The differentiation of space and time is essential to the analysis of the cartographic record of a region. In five chapters, Antrim explores these relationships and how they influenced the process of cartographic representation of the Middle East in the second millennium.

In the introduction to her book, Antrim gives a quick sketch of the scope of the materials she is presenting. Stretched across the millennium is a rich series of illustrated cartographic documents that represent developing regional and superregional constructs and identities. Visual and narrative interpretations are intertwined, preserving the twin processes of discovery and synthesis that were indispensable dimensions of the early cartographers’ craft. Antrim uses the tools of critical cartography to engage the reader in the process of deconstructing the layers of meaning and purpose that permeate the visual records of the Middle Eastern region over time.

The intellectual concept of “encounter” is an enduring theme in Antrim’s work. The role of discourse, observation, and the rapid assimilation and transfer of human knowledge throughout the ancient *oikumene* contributes to Antrim’s delicate synthesis of Arabic and Islamic memory and provides a parallel narrative for understanding the diaspora of cartographic ideas that followed the Enlightenment and the “discovery” of the New World. These ideas were introduced in her first book, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (2012). In this earlier analysis, Antrim used the concept of a “discourse of place” to explain the early Muslim geography and imaginative representation of territory. The deeply human desire for belonging and identity is examined at multivariate levels, including concepts of homeland, city, and region. Visual representation often provided a very different context, sometimes at odds with the accompanying text narrative of a region.

Antrim’s hierarchy of “belonging” is developed in the sequel, *Mapping the Middle East*. The concept of Mamlakat al-Islām, a superregional entity embraced as the Realm of Islam, is introduced in the first chapter, “Mapping the ‘Realm of Islam.’” The opening chapter sets the context for the complex chronicle of Islamic history and civilization from the eleventh to the fifteenth century.

Key to Antrim's narrative is the concept of mapping as metaphor, connecting people and places across great distances. In this chapter, Antrim emphasizes the intent of period cartographers and geographers to visually communicate the spacious inclusivity of the lands embraced by Islam "creating a superregional category of belonging" (p. 36). The well-documented atlas tradition of tenth-century scholars Abu-Zayd al-Balkhi, al-Istakri, Ibn Hawqal, and al-Muqaddasi is compared with the works of the twelfth-century scholar al-Sharif al-Idrisi and the visual guides and itineraries so familiar to travelers and pilgrims of the age.

This first chapter establishes the foundation for understanding the rise of the Ottoman Empire, introduced in chapter 2, "Mapping in the Ottoman Empire." From the rise of Osman I in the early 1300s to its dissolution in the aftermath of World War I, the Ottoman Empire exerted a profound influence over a vast territorial landscape surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and including the central European nations of Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. Ottoman cartographers worked within a multifaceted social and cultural space, giving rise to unique handwritten and pictorial traditions. The creation of these cultural artifacts was superseded by standardized maps and surveys in the modern era, normalizing Western cultural encroachment and geopolitical interests. In her second chapter, Antrim devotes attention to three mapping traditions: the Mediterranean portolan atlas, the itinerary map, and printed world atlases. The cartographic works of the Ottoman mariner Piri Reis (and his renowned world map, including the Western lands documented by Christopher Columbus), and the portolan conventions of rhumb lines and compass roses made important contributions to the development of mapping traditions that made transatlantic voyages and exploration a reality.

The first two chapters of Antrim's book describe a specific worldview from which to interpret the tide of events that unfolded during what

is commonly known as the "Age of Exploration," and their effects on a global scale. Chapters 3-5 look at how the concept of "Middle East" was modified during successive encroachments of Western colonial expansion and geopolitical reconstruction, a time period extending from "the long nineteenth century" to the present day. Chapter 3, "European Colonial Mapping in the Long Nineteenth Century," is a thoughtful commentary and review of the inexorable advance of the modern era and its influence on Middle Eastern identity, culture, and socioeconomics. In this chapter, Antrim focuses on four colonial mapping efforts, following Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, the French conquest of Algeria in 1830, the British relationship with Palestine, and British cartographic representations of the Middle East prior to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919—documenting European hegemony from 1798 to the beginning of the First World War in 1914. Colonial mapping strategies revealed the ambivalent power relationships between competing European colonizers and a region's inhabitants. In this context, a new set of superregional toponyms were introduced, establishing a West-East dichotomy and its cultural connotations that assert the dominance of Western models of governance and socioeconomics.

In chapter 4, "Enclosure and Exclusion in National Mapping," Antrim emphasizes the power of maps to restrict spatial autonomy within a region or territory bounded by external agency. This chapter sets the stage for interpreting superregional identities within the fraught narratives of competing nation-states. Estate and enclosure maps were popular in the eighteenth century, as farmlands and common lands throughout Europe were demarcated for large-scale agricultural production. Within nation-states, the mapping of national enclosures enforced new conceptions of a bounded territory, one enclosing a "racially, ethnolinguistically or religiously majoritarian population" (p. 175). In this chapter, one cannot escape Antrim's intent to guide the reader's attention to the deeper systems of disenfranchisement that the

visual record both masks and reveals. Maps speak a language and possess a utility of their own, and it is the viewer's duty to discern critical shifts in meaning, both implicit and explicit, as preserved in the printed record. Key themes and terms that Antrim develops in these later chapters include territorial enclosure and deconstruction, homogeneity and ethnic marginalization, cultural appropriation, nationalism, subdivision, and self-determination.

By the time of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was occupied by British, French, Italian, and Russian interests, "reduced to a stretch of about 150 miles (240 km) between Edirne and Istanbul in Thrace. It still controlled most of Anatolia, Syria and Iraq, but no longer had any real power in North Africa" (p. 157). The secretive Sykes-Picot Agreement, initiated by Sir Mark Sykes, a British diplomat, and François Georges-Picot, a French diplomat, anticipated the complete European assimilation of the empire into British and French spheres of influence in the postwar period. Antrim presents the maps that accompanied the predatory agreement as artifacts of a deeply controversial policy that continues to undermine the autonomy and self-determination of this region.

The aftermath of the two world wars prompted broad divestitures of colonial holdings. This process accelerated in the Cold War era as nations around the world established their independence with varying degrees of success. At the same time, the Charter of the United Nations was ratified in October 1945, establishing a new forum for international dialogue and cooperation. Middle Eastern delegates played decisive roles in the drafting and ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People in 1960, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (published in 1966, effective in March 1976), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), the first

UN International Conference on Human Rights in 1968 (held in Tehran), and three International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990-2000, 2001-2010), and 2011-2020), strengthening the rule of law and establishing principles of autonomy and self-determination throughout the world.

Nevertheless, the boundaries of nation-states enforced during generations of colonial rule continued to support systems of inequality and disenfranchisement that contradicted and undermined efforts to establish a prosperous region of peaceful coexistence. In chapter 5, "Mapping Alternative Geographies," Antrim highlights the role of contemporary hegemonies in perpetuating violent territorial disputes and aggressive sectarianism, the subject of media maps that too often communicate partisan views of events. Secular citizenship and the racial and religious equality it implies are paradigms that heighten tensions as nations worldwide grapple with Middle Eastern diversities and traditions.

In this chapter, Antrim presents a candid narrative that explores new and flexible indigenous visualizations of Middle Eastern identity and connectivity. The Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (2010-2012) raised new questions and forged new alliances of solidarity in the region's search for political and cultural autonomy and socioeconomic well-being. Arab homeland maps and atlases are examples of contemporary superregional constructs that transcend territorial nationalism to communicate the persistence of Arabic identity and culture. Nevertheless, the human desire for belonging and inclusion and the enduring psychic power of "homeland" that the visual record portrays stand in stark contrast to conditions on the ground as millions of refugees struggle to find their place in the context of a deeply divided worldview.

Nearly ninety UNESCO World Heritage Sites are located in the Middle East. The upheavals of the twenty-first century highlight Antrim's deep

regard for homeland, for cities, and for regions and nations that define our common global heritage of the past and present. As the devastation of Turkish and Syrian communities are featured in news videos worldwide, *Mapping the Middle East* reminds us of the fragility of the present moment and the tremendous value of the cartographic records that preserve intact the deep memory of places and histories too easily forgotten or destroyed by nature or human intent.

This volume is beautifully illustrated and should not be read without careful reference to the meticulous footnotes provided, as well as to the detailed bibliography and index. This book will be particularly valuable for scholars and professionals supporting humanitarian and human rights outreach programs, and political scientists engaged in community-based comparative studies.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at

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