

PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

This book delves into the political and cultural developments of pre-Islamic Arabia, focusing on the religious attitudes of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula and its northern extension into the Syrian desert. Between the third and the seventh century, Arabia was on the edge of three great empires (Iran, Rome and Aksūm) and at the centre of a lucrative network of trade routes. Valentina A. Grasso offers an interpretative framework which contextualizes the choice of Arabian elites to become Jewish sympathisers and/or convert to Christianity and Islam by probing the mobilization of faith in the shaping of Arabian identities. For the first time the Arabians of the period are granted autonomy from marginalizing (mostly Western) narratives framing them as ‘barbarians’ inhabiting the fringes of Rome and Iran and/or deterministic analyses in which they are depicted retrospectively as exemplified by the Muslims’ definition of the period as *Jāhiliyah*, ‘ignorance’.

VALENTINA A. GRASSO is an Assistant Professor at the Catholic University of America. She was previously Visiting Assistant Professor at New York University’s Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, and an affiliate member of the ERC project ‘The Qur’an as a Source for Late Antiquity’.

PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

*Societies, Politics, Cults and Identities
during Late Antiquity*

VALENTINA A. GRASSO

The Catholic University of America



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In memory of Manuela Russo

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Note on Abbreviations

All contractions of classical authors are derived from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, and all mentioned inscriptions can be found in the bibliography. The footnotes and bibliography follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. For the transliteration of Arabic and Syriac I used the American Library Association – Library of Congress Romanization Tables. For Gəʿəz I adopted the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* transliteration system.