



(FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX), BY BRIAN CATLOS

Using vigorous prose to tell the stories of numerous influential figures from the Mediterranean region during the time of the Crusades, the author takes the reader on a violent journey from the western to the eastern Mediterranean. Most of the time the book feels like an action-packed collection of adventure stories rather than a historical presentation or argument. The author does a masterful job of highlighting that most of the violence was not a product of religious extremism. Brian Catlos presents the stories of a high-ranking Jew in a Muslim empire, an Armenian Christian ruling an Islamic Empire, and an ethnically and religiously diverse Sicily, convincingly arguing that the complexity of Mediterranean religious interactions and relationships cannot be understated. Rather than follow the path of previous historians, Catlos points to an issue that is still relevant in politics today: the constant struggle for power and self-interest, regardless of religion, as the root of conflict in the Mediterranean. (Anthony Lubetski)

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