

deities.” Only gradually did he become “a transcendent, cosmogenic and cosmocratic deity during the lifetime of Muhammad” (283). This process is reflected in the text of the Qur’an, whose earliest verses may be monolatrous but do not suggest a developed monotheism. It is also manifested in the early history of Muslim ritual, with its “Abrahamisation” and growing “emphasis on the position of the Quraysh and Mecca” (373). Al-Azmeh stresses the length of time it took for distinctive Muslim ritual practices to define the faith for its adherents. One consequence of this reading is skepticism toward the view of Muhammad’s religious movement as being “fired by an intense and militant piety, and by apocalyptic fears” (407). All that, al-Azmeh says, would come later.

This book is, among other things, an attempt at a history of the Qur’an—something which the field of early Islamic studies currently lacks. Chapter 7, on “The Paleo-Muslim Canon,” is consequently one of the most important in the book. “A constituent element in the cumulative markers of Paleo-Islam,” the author says, “was the establishment of a formal scripture out of Muhammadan revelations” (431). Al-Azmeh rejects the extreme position of those, such as John Wansbrough, who argue that the Qur’an was redacted into its final form much later. The Muslim scripture lacks “tell-tale signs of later composition, especially exuberant and triumphalist indications reflecting the afterglow of the

Arab conquests, and the text shows no attempt to harmonise the linguistic register or to tidy up sequence and content” (469). However, the crystallization of the Muslim scripture was a long and drawn-out process, one that was “inextricably connected” to the emergence of Paleo-Islam, and one that continued well into the Umayyad period. Al-Azmeh gives careful consideration to what a “book” meant to those who encountered the early Qur’an, and what the injunction to “recite” (the word *qur’an* translates as “recitation”) meant to the late antique Arabs who heard it. Nonetheless, the full and accurate story of the Qur’an’s emergence is not entirely clear; the book under review makes valuable contributions to the project without offering a final synthesis. Whatever that synthesis turns out to be, it will likely be built upon al-Azmeh’s insight that it was the community that constituted the book, rather than the book that constituted the community (431).

Unfortunately, this immensely learned and insightful book may not receive the wide readership it deserves simply because many will find it unreadable. The prose is dense, even convoluted; Latinate expressions and neologisms abound; sentences often wind from here to eternity. Still, those readers who persevere will be amply rewarded.

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BRIAN A. CATLOS. *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, c. 1050–1614*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xix, 628. Cloth \$155.00, paper \$39.99.

As Brian A. Catlos rightly observes at the start of this work, medieval European society can often seem, at first glance, to have been remarkably homogenous. With the exception of small pockets of Jewish population, he argues, “the West” is popularly deemed to have been “a land defined by Christian religion and culture” and thus “essentially uniform in terms of religious identity” (xi). To be born into this world was, for most, automatically to become an adherent of what we would now define as the Catholic faith, and a part of the Latin, or Roman, Christian community. Over the last half century, historians have become fascinated by the role of medieval Europe’s religious minorities—be they Jews or heretics—and its societal “outsiders,” from lepers to prostitutes. This work has tempered notions of Western sociocultural homogeneity, revealing a more variegated picture and the tendency for Latin communities to express their collective identities in contrast or opposition to the “other.”

Catlos makes a clear and, it would seem, self-conscious decision to position his book within this broad trend of modern historiography by declaring his intention to present “a new narrative of the history of medieval and early modern Europe from the perspective of Islamic minorities” (i). His expressed aim is to integrate

Europe’s Islamic communities into the broader tapestry of Western history. As such, his work does not offer a grand reappraisal of relations between Islam and the West between the eleventh and the seventeenth centuries. Instead, it seeks to confine itself to surveying and assessing the experience of Muslims living under Latin Christian rule in Europe and beyond, and to tracing the impact of these Islamic minorities on the Latin world.

Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, c. 1050–1614 makes a significant contribution to our understanding, particularly when dealing with the history of Iberia, adding depth and specificity to some of the ideas explored in Richard A. Fletcher’s *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation* (2004). Catlos’s work serves in some respects as a useful companion piece to David Nirenberg’s *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (2014). Nonetheless, this is an imperfect and at times even frustrating piece of work. Part of the problem relates to the volume’s design and what appears to be a degree of equivocation about its intended audience. Catlos states that he set out in the first instance to write a “general survey” of “Muslims in Latin Christian society,” but as his research progressed his approach seems to have become more sustained, serious, and

ambitious (515). Perhaps as a result, his book sits rather uncomfortably in the territory between an undergraduate textbook and a full-blown research monograph, never really fulfilling either remit. Catlos presents a largely synthetic and synoptic view of his subject by incorporating a huge range of modern scholarship. As a specialist on medieval Iberia, having published a notable monograph on Christian-Muslim relations in Catalonia and Aragon between 1050 and 1300, entitled *The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims of Catalonia and Aragon, 1050–1300* (2004), he is most comfortable and competent when dealing with material related to what might be regarded as his native territory—Iberia. In many ways his research expertise is appropriately suited for his current subject, given that the overwhelming preponderance of relevant primary and secondary sources focuses upon the Iberian experience. But, because Catlos's topic requires a comparative approach that surveys material from across the Latin Christian world, he is forced to reach beyond Spain and Portugal, and as the distance from this epicenter increases, his hand becomes less assured.

Catlos's book offers an informed and thoughtful synthesis of modern scholarship on Iberia, and presents a number of valid and persuasive arguments related to medieval Sicily, but largely mishandles the Near and Middle Eastern dimension of his subject. As a result, some of his overarching arguments and conclusions do not ring true. At a more fundamental level, the synthetic nature of Catlos's methodology raises significant questions about the depth and originality of the analysis he is able to offer. As he rightly observes, a long-standing problem within this field has been the distorting effect of engrained bias within modern scholarship. This has often prompted scholars to offer polemical or ideologically driven interpretations of fragmentary and "ambiguous" evidence (519). But Catlos's failure to combine his synoptic overview of secondary historiography with a sustained, direct, and critical engagement with the primary sources limits his own ability to question some accepted wisdoms and paradigms.

As Catlos acknowledges in the introduction, his true intention was to present a general survey, so he purposefully selected sources for the convenience of the general readership. Catlos affirms at the start of his bibliography that "given the nature of this book," he has decided "to cite primary source translations" (540). However, in order for this book to stand up as a deeply researched and profound meditation upon the experience of medieval Muslims living under Latin rule, the author would have had to work closely and systematically with (at the very least) Latin and Arabic sources in their original, untranslated form. Due to Catlos's decision to rely on translations, he has occasionally missed important opportunities to mine precious evidence.

There is also a nagging sense that the primary sources consulted by Catlos have not always been subjected to a sufficiently rigorous or penetrating critical assessment. Quite understandably, fairly frequent reference is made to the fascinating twelfth-century travelogue composed

by the Iberian Muslim pilgrim Ibn Jubayr. His firsthand observations of Muslims living under Latin rule in the "Crusader" kingdom of Jerusalem and Norman Sicily are presented, but Catlos never pauses to consider the forces that might have shaped Ibn Jubayr's account and, by extension, the validity of his testimony. The frequently repeated argument, first made by Claude Cahen in 1934, that Ibn Jubayr's text should be treated as propaganda designed to shame Iberian Muslim rulers into reforming their own behavior is ignored. Law codes also feature prominently in *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom*—from the Concordat of Nablus in 1120 to the *Siete Partidas* issued by Alfonso X of Castile and Leon and beyond—but Catlos generally takes this material at face value, rather than pausing to consider whether evidence of regulation and proscription reflects a controlled society or one in which disorder and transgression were rife. This uncritical approach has a direct bearing upon Catlos's construction of the experiences of Mudejar (free Muslim subjects).

The structure adopted in *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom* also requires comment. Catlos divides his book into two roughly equal parts. The first of these is shaped into a series of narrative chapters focused on the different regions in which medieval Muslims lived under Latin Christian rule. These appear to be designed to familiarize readers with the long history of the Iberian *Reconquista*, as well as the Norman and Hohenstaufen domination of Sicily and the Crusaders' subjugation of the Holy Land (while also offering a brief excursion into medieval Hungary), and to set the scene for the overarching analysis presented in part II. Subject specialists will find few original insights in the opening pair of chapters covering Iberia between the mid-eleventh and mid-fourteenth centuries, while the rather fragmentary narrative might also frustrate history students or general readers. In contrast, Catlos's introductory chapter on medieval Sicily is exceptionally well-handled, offering a coherent and insightful account that should become the starting point for anyone approaching this subject.

Unfortunately, this quality is not sustained in the sections covering the Levant. Occasional slips in detail are perhaps inevitable in a work of this scale and ambition, but in covering the history of the Crusades and the crusader states, Catlos makes too many errors, undermining the integrity and authority of his arguments. Dates are frequently misrepresented: 'Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī is said to have been preaching in Damascus in 1107 when, in fact, he had died in 1106; Ridwan of Aleppo could not have been threatening the principality of Antioch in 1115 because he too was already dead, this time two years earlier; and the famous "Crusader" castle of Krak des Chevaliers fell in 1271, not 1281. Notable figures are also misnamed: the first king of Jerusalem is identified as Baldwin of Bouillon—seemingly an amalgam of the king's actual name, Baldwin of Boulogne, with that of his brother Godfrey of Bouillon. Perhaps, more significantly, at an interpretive level *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom* does not adequately or accurately reflect modern historiography in this field. Catlos presents a

caricature of the history of crusades that serves to exceptionalize this component of his overall study. In his account, the crusaders are almost always fanatics, driven by greed, either for glory or plunder, and their conquests are deemed to have been almost uniquely violent and interruptive. The “near-catastrophic” advent of Latin (or Frankish) rule in the Levant is supposed to have created a sociocultural milieu detached and distinct from that witnessed in Sicily or Iberia (161). This picture downplays evidence of pragmatism in the Crusaders’ approach to the subjection of Near Eastern Muslims, while also failing to offer a clinical comparison of Frankish violence in Syria and Palestine with that enacted by Christian conquerors in Sicily and Iberia. As a result, the Latin East is set apart when it might more appropriately maintain its place within a pan-Mediterranean picture.

Arguably, *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom* only hits its stride in its last two hundred pages. Here, in part II of his work, Catlos adopts a far more innovative and analytically satisfying thematic structure, exploring the nature of Mudejar experience under the broad headings of Thought, Word, and Deed. These sections are primarily devoted to the close examination of Muslims living under Christian rule in Iberia, with intermittent asides or comparative references to the likes of Sicily or the Levant. Catlos even seems to tacitly acknowledge that his real concern is the history of Spain and Portugal by adopting the label Mudejar (normally specific to regions such as Castile and Aragon) as his coverall term for subjected Muslims across the medieval world. His attempt to organize material into a coherent structure is not always successful: there is some repetition of topics and questions, and occasionally one gets the impression that he is amassing and presenting a broad spectrum of evidence without the perspective to offer persuasive insight. Regrettably, he has not been well served by his copy editors, as many of the cross-references made here to the underpinning material in part I are incorrect. Nonetheless, when judged on more limited terms—as a contextualized examination of both the lives and experiences of Iberian Muslims, and of the reaction of Iberian Christians to these Islamic communities—the second half of *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom* has considerable merit.

Catlos’s examination of the critical issue of identity is adept and perceptive. He constructs a nuanced and persuasive picture that suggests that devotional creed functioned above ethnicity, language, and social class as a marker of identity. He also has a keen eye for local variation, noting how the agency of environmental factors—such as geography, topography, and hydrology—combined with political fragmentation to produce a diverse range of communities, and concomitant variegation in practice and experience. Catlos draws together the material assembled in part II to present a series of concluding arguments in a brief, but valuable postscript.

Having comprehensively refuted any suggestion that Latin Christendom adopted a unified, programmatic approach to subjected Muslims, he makes a powerful case for the importance of flexible and often “informal” interactions forged and conducted at a micro-local level. He leaves it to this relatively late stage to incorporate and enlarge upon one of the most influential theories developed in his earlier scholarship—the notion of *convivencia*. Catlos has long maintained that the established historiographical paradigm of *convivencia*, or “living together,” must be discarded, in spite of its ideologically attractive emphasis upon the ideals of altruistic toleration and mutual respect. His proposition, effectively restated here, is that pragmatism and shared interest ruled the day, such that the systems and approaches allowing Christians and Muslims to interact were born of convenience.

Catlos rightly remains cautious about drawing facile parallels between the Middle Ages and the modern world, likening the picture of medieval experience he has assembled to “a distant, shattered mirror” (517). Nonetheless, there is an unavoidable currency to many of the themes and ideas he explores. In this age of mass migration and diaspora, questions about the relative value of multiculturalism and integration persist, and current events in the Near and Middle East, and beyond, have brought the history of relations between Islam and the West into sharp focus. Against this backdrop, scholarly interest in the medieval encounters between Christians and Muslims will likely increase, but the serious study of this phenomenon presents an extraordinary challenge.

To truly master and then advance this field, one would need to evaluate a diverse array of primary texts in their original Latin, Arabic, or European vernacular forms (and, ideally, be able to draw upon a range of material in other languages including Greek, Armenian, Syriac, and Hebrew), while remaining alive to evidence gleaned from archaeology and the study of material culture. One would also have to critically interrogate the vast corpus of recent scholarship exploring the history of contacts between Latin Christians and Muslims throughout the Middle Ages—achieving real expertise, at the very least, in the modern historiography of the *Reconquista*, the Levantine Crusades, and medieval Sicily. Catlos has made some progress through this most daunting program of study and the book he has produced represents a valiant attempt to wrestle with many of the essential questions of Christian-Muslim interaction across a swath of space and time. *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom* sheds new light upon such vexed issues as the nature of human identity and the impact of faith upon cross-cultural interaction, offering findings and arguments that will be of interest to scholars of many different periods and regions.

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