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*Infidel Kings and Unholy Warriors: Faith, Power, and Violence in the Age of Crusade and Jihad* is an ambitious and engaging book written by an enormously productive scholar. Remarkably it appeared the same year as Catlos's monograph *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom*, c. 1050-1614 (Cambridge University Press, 2014). While the subjects of two books differ in chronology and scope, they are clearly related. Each examines the relations of different cultural and religious groups in the Mediterranean. Each challenges the idea of a "Clash of Civilizations," depicting instead a complex world where adherents of different faiths regularly engaged with one another in a variety of forums. While occasional outbursts of religious violence did occur, the supposedly pious motives behind them usually concealed fundamental disagreements over property and power. It is a picture of the Mediterranean with which most medievalists will be familiar, though many of the particulars will surprise. *Infidel Kings and Unholy Warriors*, however, is aimed at audience far broader than specialists and librarians. Like many trade books, it is frustratingly lightly footnoted (no doubt a choice of the editor rather than the author). But it succeeds at maintaining an argumentative purpose while telling its attractive tales. Despite these manifold strengths, the book contains enough errors that it will prove minimally useful for specialists, and generalists should approach it with caution.

Catlos divides his material into five sections of two chapters each. Taken together, they encircle the Mediterranean world of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Each section opens with a deeply imagined and thickly described scene. Snow falls. Dogs bark. A badly decayed body rattles in its casket. A woman on a palanquin looks back regretfully at the city she must abandon. Empirical purists will likely be put off by the more speculative elements in these passages, but they serve Catlos's purpose: They hold eyes to page; they draw readers into intricate narratives that demonstrate the complexities of the medieval Mediterranean. Near the end of each of the first three sections—about, respectively, the breakup of the Ummayyad Caliphate, the career of *El Cid*, and the Norman Conquests of Sicily and North Africa—the narrative voice returns to these opening scenes, thus providing each of the divisions with a sense of historical and artistic closure. The final two sections, by contrast, are more straightforward chronological accounts of Fatimid Egypt and the Crusader States, though they, too, are characterized by rich language and narrative flourish.

The stories Catlos tells are sometimes familiar and sometimes delightfully obscure. The first section about (mainly) al-Andalus takes as its focal point Yusuf ibn Naghrilla, a Jewish man who nearly became king of Muslim Granada. On the eve of his accession, however, crowds rioted, drove ibn Naghrilla from the palace, and killed a number of the city's Jewish residents. Did these events represent a turning point in Muslim-Jewish relations? Catlos thinks not, and argues instead, primarily through the use of anecdote, that such occurrences were "politics as usual in the world of the *taifa*" (64). Religion merely provided helpful rhetoric when one's political enemies happened to hold different beliefs. This model similarly explains the career of Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, the *Cid* of legend, whom Catlos describes as a Christian Sultan. Not a champion of Christianity, Rodrigo was instead a man who knew how to exploit political conflict to personal advantage. The same can be said of the Norman Kings of Sicily and their brief expansion into North Africa. Though they sometimes fought in the name of the pope, they were in essence extremely talented soldiers out for power and profit. Could any of the leaders of the *Reconquista* or the Norman wars against Muslims be called "holy warriors?" For Catlos, the proof is in the politics. Muslims employed Jews in Spain, Christians employed Muslims and Jews in Sicily, and in Fatimid Egypt, Armenian Christians often dominated the governments of the Shi'i Caliphate. The crusades at first seem to test these rules, but all parties involved quickly revealed themselves more interested in controlling trade routes than in holding Jerusalem. Whatever the Franks might claim about piety, their desire to wrest cities like Antioch from the Byzantine Empire reveals "their true motivations" (256).

It is a model that, in addition to being psychologically rather flat, leaves little room for meaningful religious experience. At the outset, however, Catlos professes that religious beliefs of the Mediterranean were not "hollow and Machiavellian" (5). But the spirit of Machiavelli looms large. Of the Umayyad rulers, who proclaimed themselves rightful successors to Muhammad, Catlos observes, "the Umayyad rulers were interested only in power" (22). Ahmad al-Muqtadir of Zaragoza is described as "the epitome of the successful *taifa* king: cultured, epicurean, and Machiavellian" (90). Likewise, Roger II of Sicily "was driven by the same Machiavellian spirit" as other Mediterranean leaders (156). Machiavelli himself would have approved of--indeed could have written--this maxim: "the true lingua franca of Mediterranean politics was power..." (109).

The stated intent of Catlos's argument is to undermine stereotypes of a civilized West and an exoticized East. But in doing so, perhaps inadvertently, perhaps for stylistic effect, Catlos perpetuates other myths. Instead of an exotic East, he gives us an equally exotic North, characterized by rich language and narrative flourish.

When Catlos turns, in the final three chapters of his book, to the crusades, his impulse to exoticize the north dovetails with numerous factual errors. Some are minor. Catlos notes, for example, that at the time of the First Crusade, Jerusalem had been a Muslim city for 300 years (258) when it had in fact been ruled by Muslims for 460 years. He dates the conquest of the Frankish county Fréassou to 1147 (226), instead of...
substantial contribution to that discussion. There are arguments on both sides, whose arguments lead to very different endpoints. But it is a debate worth having, and Brian Catlos is to be commended for making such a contribution to our understanding of medieval Mediterranean. My sympathies on this point lie with, among others, Thomas Sizgorich's *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Christology in the Mediterranean* (1999), along with other scholars, most notably David Nirenberg, he strikes a nice balance between conflict and collaboration. And it is an argument with implications for current events. As Catlos writes his introduction, "through these stories we can begin to understand the conflicts that have played such an important role in shaping the world in which we live."

Toward that latter goal, I would like to address directly the book's central argument about the political character of holy war. In a historiographical context, Catlos's argument about the variety, complexity, and frequency of exchange among Muslims, Christians, and Jews around the Mediterranean is on the mark. Along with other scholars, most notably David Nirenberg, he strikes a nice balance between conflict and collaboration. And it is an argument with implications for current events. As Catlos writes his introduction, "through these stories we can begin to understand the conflicts that have played such an important role in shaping the world in which we live."

The place of religious belief in sparking execrable acts of violence is as crucial as any we face as medievalists or as students of the Mediterranean. My sympathies on this point lie with, among others, Thomas Sizgorich's *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (2005) and Philippe Buc's *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror: Christianity, Violence, and the West* (2006), books whose arguments lead to very different endpoints. But it is a debate worth having, and Brian Catlos is to be commended for making such a substantial contribution to that discussion.