

From: **The Medieval Review** tmr@indiana.edu  
Subject: TMR 15.06.04 Catlos, Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom (Vose)  
Date: June 2, 2015 at 8:46 AM  
To: tmr-l@list.indiana.edu

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Catlos, Brian A. <i>Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, c. 1050-1614</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xix, 628. \$108.95. ISBN: 978-0-521-88939-1.

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This is an ambitious, impressive, and timely book; one that sets out to redefine and establish a new standard in its field. The fruit of many years' work in the archival collections and libraries of Europe (above all Spain) and the US, often in collaborative partnership with high level international research projects, its rich and detailed findings will undoubtedly serve as the starting-point for a great deal of future scholarship on Muslim-Christian relations in the Middle Ages and early modern period.

Histories of such relations (both real and imagined) appear at a brisk pace these days, but this book's close scholarly examination of the long and complex history of Muslim life under Christian rule is particularly valuable. As the politics of fear and exclusion continue to claim ever more air in European and North American public discourse, Islamophobic mythologists insist that Islam and Christianity somehow manifest inherently oppositional worldviews, and that modern policies of immigration or multiculturalism necessarily result in a murderous "clash of civilizations." Ironically, similar rhetoric has been embraced by fringe peddlers of exclusionary Islamism such as ISIS or Boko Haram, who agree that true Muslim life is simply not possible under "infidel" rule (i.e., any rule the speaker happens to oppose) and that coexistence is therefore never an option.

Well-intentioned but equally distorted counter-myths of <i>convivencia</i>, the lost utopia of interfaith toleration once supposed to have characterized medieval al-Andalus, are trotted out on occasion to oppose these sorts of claims. But the truth serves much better as a historical argument. Islamic populations did exist--unequally and imperfectly, and frequently in serious tension--within multiple Christian-dominated territories throughout pre-modern history (and the same is true of Christian and other subject populations living under Islamic rule). They experienced high and low points, as did their Christian and Jewish neighbors, under regimes that were hardly models of good governance for anyone. Yet they lived nonetheless, often remaining by choice, and in many cases enjoyed a multigenerational stability of abode and societal integration unknown to many present-day Americans or Europeans. Both their resilience in coping with a wide variety of challenging situations, and the shifting circumstances which ultimately did lead to communal breakdown and dissolution, are worthy of serious close study not only for medievalists, but for anyone with an interest in the dynamics of intergroup relations.

What Brian Catlos has undertaken with this comprehensive tome could easily have resulted in three books. Part narrative overview, part socio-political analysis, and part revisionist provocation, few stones are left uncovered or assumptions left unquestioned by his exhaustive and rigorous approach. And the topic is huge: no less than the entire history of Islamic experience within territories spanning from Portugal and Spain to Poland, Hungary and the Crusader-dominated Levant over a period of nearly six centuries. It is thus first and foremost a history of the wide diversity of treatments received by Islamic subject populations at the hands of Latin Christians (and their Jewish, or Muslim, agents), both at the levels of high policy and of day-to-day social interaction. Region by region, with impressive attention to detail and a breathtaking deployment of colorful examples, it traces the evolution of those relations through all sorts of contradictory twists and turns. But it also goes still further, making comparisons and developing carefully nuanced explanatory theses for the resulting range of different trajectories and outcomes.

After a quick introductory synopsis noting patterns of Islamic-Christian interaction in earlier centuries, Part 1 provides a largely chronological series of regional narratives running from approximately 1050 CE (the beginnings of the so-called "Reconquest" in Iberian lands, closely followed by Norman occupation of Islamic territory in the central Mediterranean, and the establishment of Crusader principalities in the Levant) to the iconic year 1614 with its final expulsion of Moriscos (converted but still stigmatized descendants of former Muslims) from Hapsburg Spain. The main focus, due in part to the author's specialized knowledge but more importantly to the unequal distribution of extant source materials, is on medieval Iberia and especially on <i>mudéjar</i> communities in the document-rich Crown of Aragon (chapters 1, 2, 5 and 7). Chapter 3 turns to the three-hundred year period (c. 1050-1350) of Muslim life under Christian rule in parts of Italy and (briefly Norman-dominated) North Africa, while chapter 4 covers the Latin-ruled Holy Land up to the fall of Acre in 1291. Chapter 6 is a bit of a grab-bag, dealing with more obscure episodes of Muslim life scattered throughout other parts of Latin Christendom from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries; focused for the most part on little-known Hungarian and Tatar communities, it also devotes a couple of pages to the still-extant Lipka of Lithuania and Poland before turning to discussion of isolated individuals by class and occupational category: soldiers and envoys, exiles and merchants, travelers and slaves.

Having laid out this tremendous variety and diversity of experience by region and over time, Part 2 takes a thematic approach to the overall problem of Muslim life under Christian domination in the pre-modern period. Catlos breaks this section down into three basic classes of factors at play in any manifestation of unequal intergroup relations. Though each has an important role, these are presented in a sort of hierarchy and receive differential amounts of attention. Chapter 8 on "Thought" (a macro-level analysis focusing on the images and ideals of "official" religion vis-à-vis unbelieving Others) is covered in a mere thirty-seven pages, while chapter 9 on "Word" (the legal, corporate, and administrative frameworks that were actually imposed on subject communities) receives nearly twice that number. In chapter 10, consideration of "Deed" takes up still more space with nearly a hundred pages devoted to the micro-historical complexities of everyday life in cross-confessional situations. Here a whole range of experiential categories are considered and mapped, as far as the sources will allow: from economic transactions and professional relations to linguistic and bodily markers of identity, all of which intersected with grids of class, clan, and gender.

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One of the book's most welcome qualities is its engagement with the best, most up to date secondary scholarship for each area--not only in English but also in Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Italian and French. It also displays mastery of a wide range of primary-source materials, both published and unpublished. Arabic sources are generally cited in translation (often Spanish), but the vast bulk of evidence stems from Latin or Romance Iberian texts, and above all the Aragonese royal archives which Catlos himself has used so effectively in the past; the author's own publications are cited with regularity, as is only fair since he has indeed contributed a great deal to their study over the last decade. In all cases the quality and extent of surviving source materials is taken into consideration, and non-Aragonese comparators are sought when possible. Overall the treatment is cautious, even-handed, and clear-eyed.

The danger with such a wide-ranging and comprehensive study is that it can risk saying too much--and so nothing at all. And there are indeed times when readers may be overwhelmed by the author's tendency to qualify nearly every positive statement about subject Muslim life with a recognition that its opposite was sometimes also true. The fact is that history written on this scale naturally oscillates between seemingly endless processes of both continuity and change. But the alternative of imposing a tidy narrative on the messiness of history brings its own dangers, and Catlos does not claim to present a simple "realist" portrait of what remain largely unknowable past events. His approach is rather to examine his subjects (whenever possible, given the availability of sources) from multiple angles and perspectives in order to develop a frankly abstract (or "cubist," in his terms) image. The resulting picture must be closely scrutinized and may be subjected to differing interpretations, but it is in the end both truthful and helpful.

Religion is naturally a central aspect of interfaith relations, but while it is subjected to serious examination at times theology is not the main focus of this book. As Catlos repeatedly notes, blunt readings of religious texts can indeed suggest the impossibility of accommodation for unbelievers. Yet accommodation there was, and its promoters included the very religious authorities and Crusading Orders whose *raison d'être* was presumably the upholding of exclusionary religious dogma. Catlos' response to this seeming paradox is to treat the religious or other ideological underpinnings of intergroup dynamics with a healthy skepticism, emphasizing instead the importance of *realpolitik* and pragmatic self-interest in the workings of the real world. Adopting for the most part a frankly materialist approach, Catlos concludes that political and/or financial utility was ever the key to out-group success, and that medium-term institutional factors--as opposed to timeless ideals or fleeting events--ultimately "played the greatest role in shaping...the material circumstances, socio-economic potential, and physical experience of religious minorities" (527).

Written in a clear and engaging style, this is for the most part an accessible study--if inevitably somewhat repetitive at times. Specialized terminology (including unfamiliar Arabic plurals) is explained in a glossary. And far from being dry or pedantic, Catlos is not shy about expressing his own opinions about events both past and present. Throughout, his presentation is thought-provoking, occasionally eyebrow-raising, always informative and at times elegant. It is also honest, and the concluding Postscript is particularly refreshing in its reflections on the intellectual and political challenges of the subject at hand.

In conclusion, this book provides a lucid and convincing portrayal of medieval and early modern Islamic life under Christian rule--with all its diversity and nuance, its awkwardness and contradictions, and all the glories and the ugliness to be found in such "a world of visceral generalized violence" (157). It sugar-coats nothing, and draws some bold links between medieval and modern problems. It is a tremendous scholarly accomplishment, with much to teach experts and beginners alike. It will long remain an invaluable reference for those researching any one of its component parts, whether alone or in comparative perspective, as well as an authoritative general analysis of minority and subaltern life under alien rule.

