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Rubin, Jonathan. *Learning in a Crusader City: Intellectual Activity and Intercultural Exchanges in Acre, 1191-1291*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-107-18718-4. 234pp. \$105.00 hardback and \$27.99 paperback.

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Learning in a Crusader City represents an impressive, though at times speculative, account of intellectual activity in Acre during its last century of Frankish rule. Through substantial archival research, Rubin has compiled an impressive number of sources composed (or likely composed) in Acre, and synthesized them to show the intellectual vitality of the city. The assemblage of this so-called “Acre corpus” (13) demonstrates that earlier histories of the Crusader states – especially the work of Joshua Prawer – were flawed for overlooking the scholastic output of the city. Rubin further makes the case that negatively comparing the intellectual achievements of Acre to better documented regions like Iberia and Sicily does damage to the former, for it ignores the very real contributions that scholars within it made to the larger intellectual milieu of Europe and the Mediterranean. This argument is undertaken across six main chapters flanked by an introduction, conclusion, and appendix of texts related to Acre.

Chapter One examines the milieu of Frankish and Jewish intellectual activity in Acre. The majority of the chapter concerns Frankish intellectual circles, which are divided into four social groups (clergy, mendicants, nobility, and burgesses) and four occupational groups (lawyers and jurists, scribes and notaries, physicians, and envoys). For each, Rubin outlines their role within Acre and provides an overview of the sources associated with each of them. Members of the nobility, for example, were enthusiastic about histories, French romances, and chansons. Envoys, meanwhile, served as crucial mediators of intercultural exchange and conveyers of knowledge from other lands through their composition of travelogues. Acre was also an important intellectual center for Jews. The diverse communities of Jewish thinkers in Acre, some of whom were from western Europe (especially France) and others of whom were from the Near East, facilitated intellectual dialogue that was sometimes peaceful and sometimes tense. In discussions of all these groups, Rubin acknowledges the limits of what medieval sources can tell us about the roles of these individuals in Acre. In the case of Burchard of Mount Sion, for example, Rubin explains that “it does seem likely that Burchard spent considerable periods of time in Acre, and if this was indeed the case, one may safely assume that he became involved in the city’s intellectual arena” (24). Thus, although this chapter represents an impressive assemblage of texts related to intellectual productivity in medieval Acre, the nature of these sources in question limits at times the conclusions that can be drawn about them.

Rubin is similarly forthcoming about the limitations of surviving sources in Chapter Two, which sketches out the teaching institutions of thirteenth-century Acre and the training that they

provided. The bulk of this discussion focuses on Dominican and Franciscan convents, which likely provided similar curricula in Acre as in other (better documented) convents in Western Europe. While Rubin convincingly shows that convents did exist at Acre and hosted renowned intellectuals like William of Rubric, so little evidence survives from these schools that it is impossible to differentiate them from their counterparts elsewhere in Latin Christendom. Patchy written evidence similarly indicates that Jewish intellectuals taught at Acre and that the appeal of these educators made the city a “stronger” (61) draw for Jewish learners than Christian ones. Rubin’s examination of other teaching institutions is likewise thorough in its approach, though it can only reach so far due to the surviving evidence. Thus, the primary piece of evidence for the existence of a cathedral school at Acre during the thirteenth century is an 1175 letter in which a bishop within the city complains that he has to compete with the Hospitallers for the best students. Rubin then argues it “would be hard to imagine” (55) that such an institution would not exist after 1191, when Acre increased in importance for Latin Christians, and that it is possible one such teacher at the school was a man named Leonius, who was mentioned in a 1218 letter as teaching theology in the city.

Issues of language and translation in Acre loom large in Chapter Three. Here, Rubin is on much firmer evidentiary ground in his examination of Arabic-French and Latin-French translations that point to Acre being a “center of linguistic expertise” (62). He shows that Dominicans likely had multiple *studia* in Acre that encouraged language acquisition, which is supported by the survival of an Arabic medical text with Latin marginalia and the translation of parts of the Quran into Latin by William of Tripoli (or someone in his intellectual orbit). Rubin makes particularly effective use of a 1282 text from John of Antioch to show the importance of Latin-French translations in the city, where writers had an “inclination to use the vernacular” (74-75) more frequently than Latin-centric authors elsewhere. He further argues that John of Antioch broke new ground by developing a lexicon for grammar in the French language itself, as opposed to the more traditional Latin, which elevated the vernacular within Acre to intellectual heights it had not yet seen in medieval Europe.

Chapter Four concerns the law in Acre, namely the dialogue between local legal customs of the Latin East and imported jurists from Western Europe. Rubin provides a useful overview of the ad hoc, primarily oral transmission of legal knowledge among elites in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which stands in stark contrast to the increasingly literate culture of legal scholars trained in European universities. Works like the *Livre des assises de la cour des bourgeois*, which was written in the vernacular but has a basic structure that follows the structure of Roman law, highlight this interplay (and reinforce the importance of translation in Acre as argued in Chapter Three). The sources at the heart of this chapter, however, are the *summae* of John of Ancona, whose writings showcase the productive yet tense intertwining of legal traditions within the city. Rubin deftly navigates three case studies about the boundaries of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the sale of fiefs, and the relationship of the military orders to fiefs to show this dialogue. Through this analysis, he convincingly shows the “fruitful discussions and mutual learning” (113) within Acre that emerged from these divergent legal traditions.

Frankish perceptions of Islam are central to Chapter Five. Although there was not a significant Muslim community living in thirteenth-century Acre (besides those living as captives or slaves), issues relating to Islam are scattered throughout the Acre corpus. Jacques de Vitry, for example, discusses Muslim diets and the legal privileges of Christians and Jews in Muslim lands in ways that roughly align with our understanding of contemporary Islamic practices. Other Frankish authors, though, held questionable views about Islam but were nonetheless curious

about it. These authors could read about Islam through a handful of texts present in Acre, which Rubin tries to parse based on scanty written evidence, as well as poorly documented exchanges between Frankish Christians, eastern Christians, and Jews. William of Tripoli's *Notitia* and Joinville's *Life of Saint Louis* loom large in this discussion, especially a section featuring Yves the Dominican, whose attempts to seek out Muslims provide evidence for how Frankish authors in thirteenth-century Acre might have interacted with religious outsiders.

In Chapter Six, Rubin argues that the last century of Latin rule in Acre saw a gradual hardening of attitudes toward eastern Christians. Writers like Jacques de Vitry were generally curious about their eastern Christian brethren and treated their knowledge with respect. In the mid-late thirteenth century, however, these exchanges "became more formal, were characterized by a stronger emphasis on theological difference and were more firmly tied to attempts to unite the church" (145). The works of Benoit d'Alignan and Thomas Agni, two Frankish visitors to Acre with ties to the Inquisition, provide the foundation for this argument. Both arrived in the Holy Land with a goal of rooting out heresy, and their conversations with eastern Christians revolved around argumentation and condemnation. Thus, although Acre was home to a "vibrant intellectual environment" (167) for the study of eastern Christians, Frankish attitudes toward their coreligionists gradually hardened across the thirteenth century.

Learning in a Crusader City provides a compelling portrait of intellectual activity in Acre, though the nature of the surviving sources means that this portrait is hazy at times. Rubin has nonetheless shown that Acre had more robust intellectual communities than scholars have previously acknowledged. In doing so, he opens the door for future studies on larger intellectual activities in the Latin East and eastern Mediterranean during the age of the Crusades.

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Author's Response

The author was provided with an opportunity to respond to the review, but declined.