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The Mediterranean Seminar Review

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Review Editor: Andrew Devereux (History: University of California San Diego)

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Almagro Vidal, Clara, Jessica Tearney-Pearce, and Luke Yarbrough, *Minorities in Contact in the Medieval Mediterranean*. Cultural Encounters in the Medieval Mediterranean, 33. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. Pp. 388. 1 Figure, 7 Maps. ISBN 978-2503587936. Hardcover \$130

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The editors of this volume of essays, the fruit of two separate conferences held at Cambridge and at Saint Louis University, define “minority” quantitatively, but in the broadest terms – not only in reference to confessional identity as we so often consider it, but in terms of ethnicity, profession, linguistic community and any number of other intersecting criteria. The result is a collection of essays by both well-established and more recently-minted scholars covering a range of themes stretching from the seventh to the fifteenth century, spanning the larger Mediterranean world from the Iberian Peninsula to the Abbasid East. Annaliese Nef begins by interrogating the category “minority,” suggesting refinements for this otherwise ambiguous term. Simonsohn next examines how marriage between non-Muslim women and Muslim men blurred the lines of confessional identity and maintained ties across confessional lines. Cuffel for her part shows how Islamic jurists turned a blind eye to cases of inter-minority conversion, particularly among women, revealing engagement and competition between Jewish and Christian minorities in medieval Egypt. Next, Stamper shows how this competition was expressed in Jewish-Christian theological polemic under Islamic rule, while Roggema turns specifically to Arabic language anti-Jewish polemics written by Christians. Vandeburie’s chapter focuses on relations among Christian denominations by examining Jacques de Vitry’s assessment of the native Christians of the Latin East. This larger theme is also studied by Boyadjian, who looks at how an Armenian lament for the loss of Jerusalem was meant to mobilize Latin Christendom in the service of the Kingdom of Cilicia. Armenians also figure prominently, alongside Coptic Christians, in Montferrer-Sala’s study of the depiction of the Fatimid *wazir*, Badr al-Jamali’s portrayal in an Arabic-language apocalypse. Bosanquet turns to the Muslim view of such powerful *dhimmi* functionaries, specifically, the hostile reaction of the Mamluk-era jurist Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Complementing this, Yarbrough presents the case of a contemporary Christian official in Syria, Ibn al-Ṣuqā’ī, who sought to legitimize such minority functionaries. This theme continues in García Sanjuán’s essay on the famous Banu Naghrila, the ill-fated family of Jewish *wazirs* of Zirid Granada. Here, the volume shifts to socio-economic relations in the Christian Mediterranean, as Almagro studies intercommunal relations as seen through land transactions in the territories of Castile’s Order of Santiago. Smarandache is also interested in intercommunal relations but relating to Muslim settlement in the Latin East, and the role of Christian holy sites as *loci* of interaction. Echevarría takes us back to Castile in the late Middle Ages with a comparison of the experience of Jewish and Muslim minorities as evidenced in legal and notarial

records, a comparative thread taken up also by Barros, but in reference to the neighboring Kingdom of Portugal. All together this is an excellent collection of essays which illuminates a whole range of questions relating to cultural, social, economic and political contacts among “majorities” and “minorities,” particularly in respect to the various ethno-religious communities who, whether they liked it or not, found themselves living together in the lands of the Middle Sea.



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