

MARTÍNEZ GÁZQUEZ, J. – TOLAN, J.V. (eds.), *Ritus infidelium: Miradas interconfesionales sobre las prácticas religiosas en la Edad Media*, (Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 138) Casa de Velázquez, Madrid 2013; 321 pp., ISBN 9788496820944.

This book is the outcome of the scientific meeting that took place in Barcelona from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010. As one of the organizers, José Martínez Gázquez, points out in the Introduction, the provided studies share the fact of presenting and analysing examples—all from the Medieval Ages—that turn their eyes to the «Other», because of the phenomenon of cohabitation, journeys' experiences or due to literary recreations. These narrations about the other show a significant variation, as can be appreciated in the articles, gathered in five thematic sections:

In the first section, «I. Reinterpretar los ritos», François Déroche («Présenter la Parole de Dieu: pratiques et ornements») deals with a particular testimony of a Christian (Coptic) copy of the Pentateuch, ms. Arabe 128 from Bibliothèque Nationale de France, from 1353, written in Arabic, which presents the appearance of a Coranic text. Maravillas Aguiar Aguilar («Los precedentes no árabes del calendario islámico») presents a very diverse case. The author also underlines the

importance of the comparative study (390-391/1000) of al-Bīrūnī's Chronology to appreciate the influence of pre-Islam knowledge on medieval time calculation as well as the divergences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam in dividing and countering time during that period. Antoni Biosca i Bas («Sine aqua salvari non valeamus») takes into consideration water's rituals and their common use for purification in Jewish, Christian and Islamic cultures. The article specially deals with some Christian testimonies on Islamic water's ritual, as that of Robert of Ketton (first translator of the Qur'an), Ramon Martí, Riccoldo of Montecroce or Alphonse Buehombre, whose *Disputatio Abutalib* gives an innovative and benevolent regard on Mohammed, nearly presented as a defender of the Christian baptism. Next, Alexander Fidora («Ramon Llull aproximándose a la mirada del 'otro'») set out the game of mirrors in some of Ramon Llull's works (mostly in the *Llibre de Contemplació*) where the lack of dialogue is based on misguided perceptions of the "other" beliefs. This means, according to Fidora, that Llull mainly explains the lack of religious understanding by means of a gnoseologic malfunction which provokes a gap between self-perception and the perception of the 'other', and, in consequence, a great misunderstanding among religions.

In next section, «II. Los viajeros describen su percepción», Juliette Sibon («Itineraria juifs du XIIe siècle») deals with the Jewish *itineraria* to Holy Land (*sifrei masa'ot*) composed by Benjamin of Tudela, Petahiah of Ratisbonne and Jacob ben Nataël há-Cohen during the second half of the twelfth century. Despite their differences, these *itineraria* share not only the purpose of entertaining but to show the superiority of Jewish practices and faith. In order to do that, the 'other' rituals are characterized either as exotic or extraordinary, as well as silly and ridiculous. Among these works, Benjamin of Tudela's *itinerarium* is outlined as a less polemic work. Christine Gadrat («La description des religions orientales par les voyageurs occidentaux et son impact sur les débats théologiques»), addresses her attention to these narrations of journeys to Orient done by Christians which were used by authors such as Nicholaus of Cusa or Henri of Dissen within their works and theological discussions. Next article, by Rita George-Tvrtković («Riccoldo da Montecroce on bismillāh and ṣalawāt») is about Riccoldo da Montecroce's *Liber peregrinationis* ambiguity forward Islam, which resulted, on the one hand, by its polemic intention; on the other hand, it reflexes Riccoldo's appreciation of some notable attributes of Muslims from Bagdad. Unfortunately, this more benevolent narration about Muslims received historically less attention than his *Contra legem*, very much polemic. In turn, Roser Salicrú i Lluç («Entre la *praxis* y el estereotipo») provides documental sources on Muslims living

in the Crown of Aragon in the end of the fourteenth century, which underline Muslim place within the established order. In addition, the article analyses narrations by travellers who went to the Iberian Peninsula during the second half of the fifteenth century, testimonies of the coexistence between Jews, Christians and Muslims. These texts reveal nevertheless a tension between own traveller's prejudices and what they really lived and experienced.

The third section, «III. Representar el Islam», focuses on representations of Islam from a Christian point of view. Conclusions by Inés Monteiro Arias («El Islam como paganismo en la escultura románica») indicate the recuperation, during the twelfth and thirteenth century, of several pagan iconographical features applied on Muslim subjects in order to establish a correlation between the struggle against Islam and the historical struggle against paganism. The article by Óscar de la Cruz Palma («Las cinco oraciones islámicas diarias (ṣalawāt) en las fuentes latinas medievales»), in turn, presents Muslim prayer features and analyses some Latin texts which deal with this ritual, namely al-Kindi's letters and the *Llibre del gentil* by Ramon Llull, where it is shown not only a certain degree of knowledge but also a favourable opinion. Pedro Bádenas de la Peña («El diálogo cristiano-musulmán del arzobispo Gregorio Palamás durante su cautiverio en la Nicea otomana»), provides the narration by Gregory Palamas during his captivity in Nicea just conquered by the Ottoman Empire. His pastoral letter reflects his close contact with Ottoman society and it shows an erudite and tolerant milieu, with even some influential Christians, and where Jesus was considered an important eschatological figure.

The fourth section, «IV. La polémica judeo-cristiana», starts with John Victor Tolan's article («The rites of purim as seen by the Christian legislator: Codex Theodosianus 16.8.18»), which presents the Theodosian Codex as a testimony of the prohibition of Purim celebration, where was burnt a crucified effigy of Haman, in order to ridicule Christian faith. This Codex, concludes Tolan, shows clearly the intention to establish Judaism and Christianity as two differentiated religions. The article by Claire Soussen («La nouvelle polémique juive au XIIIe. La dénonciation des rites chrétiens par les sages de Languedoc et des territoires aragonais») analyses changes in the literary Jewish polemic during the thirteenth century, whose purpose, avoiding conversions to Christianity by showing its falsity, was pursued not only by rational arguments but also by means of the use of Christian texts. In this sense is revealing the work by Jacob ben Reuben, who wrote the first systematic refutation to Christianity. Sean Eisen Murphy («On enduring impurity of menstrual blood and semen. Leviticus 15 in William of

Auvergne's *De legibus*) focused on the medieval interpretation of Levitic 15, a source of big polemics between Christians and Jews, which deals with human's body discharges and ways to treat their impurity. In contrast with Christians who denied this texts as prescriptive, William of Auvergne, his *De legibus*, seems to be favourable to accept the text literally. Therefore, he agrees in practising purification's rituals, in contraposition to Jews, who didn't follow biblical prescriptions in the correct way. Harvey J. Hames («Urinating on the cross. Christianity as seen in the *Sefer Yoseph ha-Mekaneh* (ca. 1260) and in light of Paris 1240») takes as object of study the *Sefer Yoseph ha-Mekaneh* (ca. 1260), the first anti-Christian polemical work in northern France, compiled by Joseph ben Nathan Official, who was editor as well of the Hebrew version of the disputation in Paris in 1240. There appear some episodes of the everyday life of Jews and Christians, and some ideas and critics of Jews on Christian rites and believes, such as their use of rings, the sacrament of confession, the Pope's power of absolving sins, the Cross as sign of salvation or the baptismal rite. Usually, all those Christians realities were considered as ridiculous, futile, nonsense or resulting from a misinterpretation of the biblical text. The work, shows Hames by some of its passages, is clearly connected with the process against Talmud in Paris.

In the fifth and last section, «V. asimilación y negación», José Martínez Gázquez («Utrum infidelium ritus sint tolerandi?»), elucidates the conclusion by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* (Secunda secundae, qq. 10, 11) about the possibility of tolerating infidel rituals. Aquinas's argumentation refers not only to the Bible and the Patristic positions but also to the historical *praxis* of the Church, which from both Canonical and civil Law is contrary to permit them. Nora Berend («The villainous deeds of Ishmaelites. Muslim rites in Christian Hungary») analyses the historical situation of the Muslim minority in Hungary, from a tolerance *de facto* to a forced evangelization. The last article of the book, by Cándida Ferrero Hernández («*De habitu et lingua relegandis*. Los ritos de los moriscos según Pedro Guerra de Lorca»), provides the polemic work by Peter Guerra of Lorca, which seems to be in clear accordance with the political programme of Philip II. The work aims to educate catechists who deal with moriscos, people that are described mainly by their external features, such as their way of speaking or clothes. According to Peter, those external features should be eliminated in order to achieve their real acculturation and Christianization.

Finally, the set of articles is followed by the final remarks by the other book's organizer, John Victor Tolan, who underlines the variety and ambiguity of medieval perceptions and perspectives on rites and believes of Jews, Christians and

Muslims from an external, but coetaneous, point of view. John Tolan's remarks are followed by a general bibliography of sources as well as by the bibliography used by the aforementioned studies.

Summarizing, the book provides a great number of little-known texts, most of them from the Iberian Peninsula, which permit to acquire more knowledge not only on how some medieval religious rites were but also on their interpretation by some non-coreligionists. Indeed, the information and analysis provided by this book is a great contribution which helps to improve the comprehension of the religious phenomenon, in its social and cultural aspects, during the Middle Ages.

Celia López Alcalde  
(Instituto de Filosofia da Universidade do Porto)