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

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After 1191, Acre served not only as the capital of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, but also as the headquarters of the kingdom's military, religious, and intellectual institutions. It was also home to sizeable populations of Latin Christians from a variety of European language groups, Greek and various Eastern Christians, Jews, and at least some Muslims (though perhaps only the enslaved). Some of these men and women were permanent residents (a population which increased significantly in the late twelfth century), while others were just passing through the city (such as pilgrims and merchants). This is the background for Jonathan Rubin's investigation of the intellectual life of Outremer, which seeks to counter traditional narratives that dismiss the Crusader states as isolated from larger trends in Latin scholarly culture and insignificant as a site of intellectual exchange or borrowing from Arabic texts and thinkers. While this is a worthy goal, the problem of source scarcity means that nearly all of Rubin's conclusions are based on likelihood and circumstantial rather than direct evidence. Some of this circumstantial evidence is strongly suggestive, however, and Rubin has done a service in putting together various bits of evidence to construct an image of a city with a far more active intellectual culture than has previously been understood.

Rubin's study is founded upon a body of existing manuscripts either definitely or probably produced in the city, calling it the "Acre Corpus" (an appendix explains what is known about each manuscript). These manuscripts were produced by the city's Christian and Jewish communities alone, since Rubin finds no evidence of an elite Muslim community, mosque, or other institution of learning in the city. There was also no Latin university or royal court dedicated to intellectual production, and so Rubin divines many answers from social context—the makeup of the city population itself. Chapter 1 looks at the Frankish and Jewish communities in turn, asking what types of texts and ideas they were most interested in. Among the Franks, he finds that both high-level clergy and mendicants were active in supporting and producing texts, and that the nobility were avid consumers of texts (especially of histories, romances, and chansons). The city was filled also with jurists, scribes, notaries, physicians, and envoys, all of whom would have been interested in new ideas and textual cultures. Among the Jews, from both Europe and the Near East, were found poets, scholars, exegetes, and Talmudic scholars. Most prominently, Nahmanides settled in Acre from 1268 to his death in 1270, and there he both continued to work and teach and consulted manuscripts that were new to him.

Chapter 2 moves from people to institutions, but Rubin's evidence is just as scanty as in chapter 1. Mendicant houses were well known as centers of study so, although he has no specific evidence for Acre's mendicants as producers of knowledge, he extrapolates from comparative evidence from elsewhere. Doing so, he suggests that the mendicants and also perhaps a cathedral school were charged with teaching Christians and converts, while Jewish students traveled to Acre to study under the masters there (such as Nahmanides himself).

Chapters 3 and 4 treat topics that might have occupied the city's intellectuals: specifically, language instruction and translation, and jurisprudence. Tidbits of evidence suggest that a Dominican *studium* offered language training in eastern languages, and also that certain Arabic-Latin translations may have been produced in the city. Firmer evidence points to a Latin-French translation project and a high valuation of the vernacular as a language capable of expressing complex ideas. Similarly, various vernacular common-law traditions dominated the city's juridical arena until the arrival from Europe of newly revived learned Latin legal traditions. At that point, discourse between the traditions arose. Rubin explores these debates through specific examples that arose in juridical discourse.

The final two chapters examine intellectual transfers across religious and sectarian lines. Here Rubin's evidence is strongest, as he collects references to either Islam or eastern Christianity from across the manuscripts produced in Acre and transmitted from there to western Europe. Despite interest in the tenets of Islam, Frankish authors did not necessarily have accurate information about the religion. Truths mixed with falsehoods and exaggerations, and depended upon both knowledge and intention to be conveyed accurately. Some information about Islam came from authors who could read the Qur'an and some from personal interactions with local Muslims, Jews, and eastern Christians. While Rubin concedes that Acre's Frankish intellectual output was not responsible for a major transformation in European knowledge of or attitudes toward Islam, he argues that the city was a place in which curiosity about the religion and its culture could be profitably indulged. In regard to eastern Christianity, Acre does seem to have represented a significant advance. Frankish writers (many newcomers to the city) demonstrate a stronger interest in formal exchanges with eastern Christians, much of which was spearheaded by the Dominicans. Aimed primarily at refuting what were perceived to be the errors of these sects, several of the city's prominent thinkers wrote tracts and held disputations against eastern Christians. He finds in these texts an increasingly punitive attitude toward non-Latin Christians.

Even though Acre offers the scholar a very incomplete evidentiary basis for inquiry, it is still worth asking how the various linguistic, cultural, and religious communities thought and wrote about each other, and what they shared and learned from the other traditions. And Rubin does well to shift the conversation from asking whether Acre measured up to Sicily or Iberia in terms of cross-cultural transfers, to asking what topics and ideas interested the residents and visitors to that city. He also constructs a picture—albeit one with many elements missing or blurry—of a city with a much more active intellectual culture than it has previously been given credit for. Future work can use this picture as a foundation and context for examination of specific debates or manuscripts from Crusader Acre.

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