

conquered Egypt. Hence, the trade boom usually attributed to that dynasty is said to have had its origins under the Tulunids and Ikhshidites.

The volume draws upon several historiographical and theoretical models, but the results on that front are somewhat uneven, though consistently thought provoking. Chapter 3's utility of the "long" 8th century (685–830) is certainly the most effective discussion. It is well structured and persuasive, arguing for a fundamental shift in Red Sea trade and the expansion of mining operations at several locations in the Hijaz and Yemen at that juncture. The attempt to expand the parameters of Late Antiquity to include not just the Red Sea, but India and perhaps China as well (pp. 53–59), remains tentative and requires a more thorough discussion. Certainly, at least some of the religious and economic evidence marshaled in support of that thesis is open to interpretation.

The thesis arguing for the existence of a World System by the 10th century will also require a close reading (pp. 21, 38–39, 146, 189–222). There are two issues at play here: one is the scholarly literature pressed to that end, and another is the manner in which the study addresses the historiography of the premodern World System. While Power certainly demonstrates a solid understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the World System model, there is an unfortunate lack of integration of Janet Abu Lughod's work. Time and again, *Red Sea* reaches conclusions that either reinforce or substantively add to those of Abu Lughod's *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) (along with her later publications on that topic).

The second issue also relates to the historiography of the World System, though, ultimately, the degree to which it is problematic will be in the eye of the beholder. The study does not provide a working definition of what it defines or envisions as the World System, taking for granted the multiplicity of challenges faced when applying that theoretical model to interpret the premodern world, and the diversity of academic approaches employed and conclusions reached in pursuit of that goal. Demonstrably, scholars who have interpreted premodern history through the lens of a World System framework, such as A. G. Frank and J. O. Voll, are far from uniform in their conception of the system or when it developed. Fundamental to these issues are older questions, such as whether mere trade—irrespective of power relations, the volume of traded goods, or the nature of the commodities exchanged—constitutes a World System. Such questions have long been divisive among academics, and will continue to influence how any particular scholar will assess this aspect of *Red Sea*. Still, I do not wish to downplay or devalue the utility of the World System framework in this study, some aspects of which the author readily identifies as tentative (e.g., p. 199). The framework does provide a big picture rationale for the rise of the Arabs as a regional power in the 7th century, the mining boom of the 8th century, and subsequent developments under the Fatimids. It also forces scholars to think beyond regional boundaries and sociopolitical factors in accounting for historical developments.

Red Sea is certainly worthy of high praise. It is an important contribution that will be welcomed by any scholar interested in the history of commerce, mining, and slavery, as well as that of any of the empires that surround the sea. It is an engaging work in regard to both its methodology and conclusions.

MEGAN H. REID, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Pp. 264. \$99.00 cloth, \$79.00 e-book.

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Megan Reid's rich and erudite study of the intersection of devotional piety and the culture of Islamic law in Ayyubid and Mamluk urban societies expands our understanding of medieval Muslim religious culture in invaluable ways. At the most basic level, she has opened a window into how the lives of a host of individuals were shaped not simply by their understanding of what it meant to be a good Muslim, but also by the numerous personalized forms of ritual behavior and voluntary body-focused religious activities that they performed. These practices—what she calls bodily devotion (derived from *ta'abbud* as opposed to *taqwā*, God-fearing piousness)—were at the heart of religious life. They were highly valorized and formed the central criterion of who should be considered religious exemplars. The practitioners were no longer the ascetics and hermits of old, but people from all walks of life: Sufis, mendicants, shopkeepers, jurists, military administrators, and sons of amirs. We meet scrupulously devoted men, and sometimes women, fashioning lives that were centered on long fasting regimens, night vigils, subsisting on meager diets, washing their bodies and garments obsessively, making the pilgrimage multiple times (even on foot), or refusing food provided by waqf-supported institutions for fear of being defiled by the moral failures of donors. Reid argues that this type of devotional practice has gone largely unnoticed precisely because it was so common, and because it was not associated with any particular social group.

A critical set of insights that Reid offers centers on the relationship between devotional piety, asceticism, and Sufism. According to an entrenched scholarly consensus, when Sufism rose as a distinct form of piety in the 9th century it spiritualized and absorbed preexisting asceticism, which would henceforth cease to function as an important ideal in its own right. Instead, Reid demonstrates that old ascetic practices of bodily mortification persisted, with new and diverse practitioners both emulating and expanding on the repertoire of earlier exemplars. Moreover, the whole new devotional piety came to have a broader appeal than what might be expected: it was clearly not simply the purview of Sufis. It is in this context that Reid sets out “to render problematic the category of the Sufi, which too often remains a catch-all category for pious persons” (p. 7).

Just as central to the project of *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* is a set of insights concerning the relationship between devotional piety and the culture of Islamic law. The two modes of piety—one prioritizing individual and often solitary behavior, the other centered on the mosque and madrasa and emphasizing collective responsibility—were distinct and sometimes in tension with each other, but they also intersected in important ways. Even recluse ascetics could teach hadith, and sometimes law. Moreover, learning alone could not generate religious authority; one also needed to exhibit excellence in devotional piety. Jurists such as 'Abd Allah Ibn Taymiyya (the brother of the more famous Ahmad), whose story opens and ends the book, doubled as pious exemplars and might wear the label of scholar uncomfortably. Numerous other jurists who were exemplars of world-renouncing piety used bodily ascetic and pious behavior not to overturn the law but to converse with it. Through their behavior they set standards that were observed and emulated and that found their way into the collections of substantive law written by jurists. All of these interactions conferred on medieval Islamic culture a vibrancy that belies an old view of Islam as a religion of textual learning and dry legalism.

Following a line of investigation pioneered by scholars of Islamic law, Reid shows how devotional piety, just like the legal tradition, was an evolving set of norms and attitudes, not a fixed body of practices. She argues that over time piety was subject to change in even more profound ways than Islam's legal traditions. But the two sets of dynamics were also linked in fundamental ways, with piety evolving in response to changing realities, to the ever-growing corpus of exemplary practice available for emulation, and to changes in juridical discourse—and in what the jurists did with their own bodies. While Reid is interested in exploring change in devotional piety—and how it was generated—throughout the medieval period, her focus is

Ayyubid and Mamluk societies of the 13th and 14th centuries. What she finds here, among other things, is a devotional piety that had become more accepting of strenuous practices than before, and that had lost some elements once central to asceticism, such as a preoccupying fear of God. Furthermore, devotional practice was now discussed not only in terms of observance of the Prophet's sunna; it was rationalized in reference to a much wider body of exemplary behavior created over the centuries—and might even be discussed in entirely different terms, including ones derived from a new physiological discourse.

Particularly revealing of changing attitudes to piety are instances of what Reid calls “ethical asceticism,” in which the pious might refuse food (or income) from waqf-supported institutions. Unlike the old asceticism, such a refusal was a matter neither of renunciation nor of avoiding foodstuffs that might be physically impure. Consuming and exchanging food were mechanisms through which individuals of this era negotiated social relationships and social standing. In this case, refusal was an expression of moral scrupulosity in a world that was newly characterized both by increasingly visible corruption in the management of waqf and *iqṭāʿ* properties and by the very large systems of charity that sultans, amirs, merchants, and wealthy women set up. Thus for Reid this form of devotional piety was an example of exercising and exhibiting moral responsibility rather than of renunciation, and an instance of *engaging with the world*, not of retreating from it. In addition, refusing food that might be morally contaminated because it was the end result of newly corrupt systems of production, distribution, and profit is a pleasing illustration of how piety of this period “defined itself in response to gradual changes in the fabric of religious culture, and [to how] the devotees perceived themselves as facing a different set of ethical and social problems” created by new social and political realities (pp. 127–28).

A number of methodological issues underlying Reid's inquiry merit attention. First, part of the originality of this study stems from the decision to organize it around features of piety rather than types of practitioners and their social provenance. Thus, Chapter 1 investigates the persistence of asceticism and its meaning in late medieval religious culture; Chapter 2 explores voluntary fasting as the quintessential embodiment of devotional piety; Chapter 3 examines self-regulation in giving and receiving food; and Chapter 4 focuses on practices of ritual purity, and especially what came to be called “anxiety in ritual purity.” Only one group, the *muwallahūn*, or “mystic eccentrics,” is accorded separate treatment in the book's last chapter, just before the general conclusions. Second, by reading biographical and hagiographic materials, works of jurisprudence, and hortatory literature, among other kinds of sources, imaginatively and against each other, Reid is able to breathe life into people's daily devotional practice while also clarifying long-term changes in piety. She draws on biographical collections both for what their authors thought of pious individuals and as a more generic source of information on exemplary behavior. And she treats jurists as scholars-*cum*-exemplars who influenced society through their writing as well as their devotional bodily practice, which others observed and emulated. The result is a highly textured picture of the kind that is often assumed to be attainable only through the use of better descriptive sources, including court records.

Third, given that Reid's evidence comes almost entirely from the Ayyubid and Mamluk realms, I find insufficiently problematized her assertion that “pious practices were easily understood and transmitted across Islamic cultures,” creating a “shared piety” of wide geographic scope (p. 5). We would have benefitted from a discussion, perhaps in the introduction, of what she makes of recent scholarship on body-centered Muslim piety in other geographic areas, especially Shahzad Bashir's *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam*, which explores a new form of bodily focused Sufi culture that emerged in Persianate societies of Iran and Central Asia between 1300 and 1500, precisely the period of Reid's study. Granted, Bashir's book (like other recent scholarship attentive to Muslim bodily practice) focuses on

Sufis and Sufi culture, categories that Reid seeks to transcend; but if it is first and foremost the *features* of piety that are at stake, then what they have to say must have relevance to her inquiry. Of course, this quibble is not meant to diminish in any way the incredible richness that Reid brings to the investigation of devotional piety in those societies to which her book is devoted.

JESSICA L. GOLDBERG, *Trade and Institutions in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Geniza Merchants and Their Business World*, Cambridge Studies in Economic History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Pp. 450. \$114.00 cloth, \$91.00 e-book.

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Among the vast trove of documents dispersed from the Geniza of Cairo's Ben Ezra synagogue at the end of the 19th century, most of which are now preserved in Cambridge University Library, are roughly 1500 items written by medieval Jewish merchants. Some 900 of these, dating from the years 990 to 1080, form the key body of primary sources exhaustively examined and analyzed here by Jessica Goldberg. This "commercial corpus" (as Goldberg calls it, p. 37) largely comprises letters written in Judeo-Arabic that were passed between merchants based in Cairo's main business quarter of Fustat and their agents and associates located in the ports of the eastern and central Mediterranean basin. As precious witnesses to the history of the Mediterranean economy in a time from whence few other comparable sources survive, these documents have already featured in the pioneering studies of S. D. Goitein, as well as in several contributions by Abraham Udovitch, Moshe Gil, and Avner Greif. Yet while Goldberg readily admits her debt to these scholars' work, and especially to that of Goitein, her study makes a strong case for several critical revisions of their findings.

These revisions result in large part from Goldberg's shift from a European perspective to one seen "through the eyes of Geniza merchants" (p. 337). She is able to do this precisely because she proceeds inductively, letting the evidence of the letters themselves inform her about the actors, relationships, networks, commodities, and kinds of transactions involved. By doing so, she is able to steer clear of the powerful influence of earlier models that assumed the medieval European economy as the norm and that of Islam as a kind of heuristic "other" to be used for purposes of finding precedence, or for providing context and contrast. So in place of an earlier assumption that Jewish merchants in medieval Islam operated in an "informal" institutional context, with little reliance on or interference from Muslim courts and bureaucracies, and in which their own trade arrangements and relationships were based far more on "mutual trust and friendship" than on legal contracts and bureaucratic enforcement, she shows instead that these legal and administrative institutions had a profound impact on how and where these merchants conducted business.

Of even greater significance, however, is Goldberg's challenge to the narrative according to which the growth of the European economy starting in the late 11th century was mirrored in reverse by a corresponding decline in the Islamic world. This story is predicated on the characterization of the Islamic Mediterranean merchant as "middleman," engaged principally in the transit of African gold and Asiatic luxuries to Europe. According to this narrative, moreover, the Jewish merchant was the ultimate middleman thanks to his close ties with other diasporic Jews in Christian lands. Decline set in, however, when their control of transit trade was taken over by Italian Christian merchants at the start of the 12th century. Goldberg's