

Peace and penance in late medieval Italy. By Katherine Ludwig Jansen. Pp. xxii + 245 incl. 34 ills. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017. £32.95. 978 0 691 17774 8
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This new book by Katherine Ludwig Jansen, professor at the Catholic University of America and an expert in the religious and social history of the late medieval Italian city communes, must be set in the context of a major recent shift in the historiography of late medieval Italy. In the last two decades, scholarship on conflict and peace-making in these polities has made remarkable progress, thanks to which the normality of feuding and of infrajudicial practices of dispute settlement in communal society is now widely recognised by the scholarly community. At the same time, historians of late medieval spirituality have thoroughly investigated how ideas of justice and peace changed in this period, especially after the watershed represented by the Fourth Lateran Council and its emphasis on pastoral care. Nevertheless, only recently have historians started to associate the study of political and judicial practices of conflict and peace-making with that of religious texts on the same themes.

Jansen's book, together with Glenn Kumhera's recent work on peace-making in late medieval Siena and Rome, is a pioneering attempt to close this historiographical gap. By using a wealth of sources that, as she rightly remarks, are not usually examined together, such as sermons, notarial documents and artworks, Jansen demonstrates the clear influence of penitential spirituality, central to the most important late medieval Italian religious movements, on civic peace-making and legal culture. Her analysis of Florentine peace contracts in the period from 1257 to 1343 shows how the kiss of peace, a ritual gesture crucial in the structure of the medieval mass, was featured in the overwhelming majority of the documents. This is a clear example of how visions of civic peace derived from a coalescence of interconnected discourses on this theme, promoted by a variety of religious and lay actors. Nevertheless, the author also hints at elements of competition between different discourses on peace, for instance when she mentions practices of forced peace-making enacted by the government of Florence to stop on-going feuds between powerful families, or when she suggests that preachers, such as Giordano of Pisa, did not always consider a peace contract as the outcome of a spiritual conversion of the parties involved. This aspect is however not examined in depth; nor is it completely clear what the relationship was between the centuries-old practice of the *osculum pacis* and the new theological trend towards the interiorisation of penance, visible from the twelfth century onwards (and whether the arguments of Mansfield and Bossy, according to which public penitential practices maintained their importance well after the Fourth Lateran Council, would suit Jansen's findings equally well). The reader should see these aspects, however, not as shortcomings but as signs of the seminal nature of Jansen's book, which offers sound conclusions while at the same time paving the way for many new debates and avenues of research in the field of the legal and religious culture of late medieval Italy.

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