Churches and social power in early medieval Europe. Integrating archaeological and historical approaches. Edited by José Sánchez-Pardo and Michael G. Shapland. (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 42.) Pp. xvi + 553 incl. 76 figs, 39 maps and 6 tables. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015. €125. 978 2 503 54555 4

JEH (69) 2018; doi:10.1017/S0022046918000465

Churches, says the introduction to this volume, were 'exceptionally favourable places for the negotiation and display of social power'. At the same time, they were 'one of the few social scenarios common across early medieval Western Europe which were shared by virtually all social strata and which had a set of commonly understood rules and structures'. These sixteen chapters explore the recurrent contributions made by church sites and buildings to the web of social relations in a wide range of western European cultures, from the deeply and enduringly Romanised zones to those completely outside the empire.

The authors were required to discuss churches in the context of 'social power', their chapters being grouped under the main headings of 'Churches as Channels for Power Relations', 'Churches and the Transition of Power', `Churches in Landscapes of Power' and 'Churches as Centres of Power'. This imposed template produces both strengths and weaknesses. To ask the same range of questions about European Christian societies from Italy to Iceland has obvious advantages. On the other hand there is quite a lot of strait-jacketing: many contributions are essentially archaeological (and no less useful for that), and their obligatory nod towards 'power' is perfunctory. The regular reiteration of the rather obvious point that major churches were built by kings and magnates, who thereby acquired status, does not always illuminate.

In reality, one of the main values of this book is its presentation – with many and excellent drawings – of recent excavations and architectural analyses of late antique and very early medieval churches, especially in Spain, Italy and southern Gaul. Many of these buildings are poorly known, and the scale of recent advances through high-quality professional survey is impressive. There is also excellent archaeological work from outside the Mediterranean zone, in northern France (Nissen, Petts), Ireland (Ó Carragáin) and Iceland (Sveinbjarnardóttir).

Some patterns and contrasts do emerge that are substantial and interesting. Everywhere had two and often three tiers of church provision, from the central *via* the regional to the local. In much of the ex-Roman world, baptismal churches coexisted with 'private' ones from as early as the sixth century. Churches in hilltop settlements in southern Gaul bolstered the status of established aristocracies, for instance, and in Ireland both the *túath* churches and the lesser ones had often been founded by the ninth century. Elsewhere the bell-curve of foundation tends to occur later and faster, the extreme case being Iceland, 'where all this development took place in one go in the twelfth century' (p. 528). The examples illustrate how broadly comparable two-tier arrangements – born out of the creative dynamic between governmental authority, aristocratic status-marking and the spiritual needs of local communities – evolved on different chronological trajectories. England still looks rather anomalous in the long gap between the minster/mother-church era (*c.* 670–850) and the local-church era (*c.* 940 onwards): the answer may be that local churches did exist earlier, but were of an unusually ephemeral and informal kind.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046918000465 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The parish – in its high medieval legal sense – is a conspicuous casualty of this volume: few authors make much use of it, though they do have a good deal to say about the various forms of collective spiritual and social engagement that the parish would later embody. These chapters leave one wondering just how much of the post-1150 landscape was particularly new (just as work on the later Middle Ages progressively undermines the assumption that religious activity was subject to effective official monopolies even in that period).

In practice, the legal framework may have mattered less than we think: people wanted devotional *foci*, lords had incentives for architectural patronage, bishops wanted to govern, and as these competing and overlapping interests wrestled with each other they tended to produce an acceptable *modus vivendi*. Negotiations between communities of lay devotion and ecclesiastical or seigneurial authorities have a timeless aspect. In a dispute about a hermitage in Pamplona (pp. 35–6), the archbishopric claimed possession of the church because it had controlled and overseen it 'in continuous fashion and since time immemorial'. The inhabitants, on the other hand, asserted that they 'have taken charge of its administration and maintenance, giving a communal attribute to the catholic cult', and that an inhabitant had earlier been awarded 'the government of the aforesaid hermitage and the distribution of alms collected there', as well as custody of the keys. This sounds like twelfth- or thirteenth-century litigation; in fact it took place in 2011.

THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD
JOHN BLAIR

Jews and Christians in medieval Castile. Tradition, coexistence, and change. By Maya Soifer Irish. Pp. xix + 308 incl. 3 maps. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. $69.95. 978 0 8132 2865 5

JEH (69) 2018; doi:10.1017/S0022046917002184

This book is a welcome addition to the spate of books which has recently appeared on the history of the Jews in medieval Iberia. In contrast to many other publications its main geographical focus is on northern Castile, where Jewish communities flourished before the prominent Jewish community of Toledo became part of the kingdom when the city was captured from the Muslims in 1085. This has allowed Irish to consider the nature of relations between Christian rulers and Jews in this area independently from notions of *convivencia* imported by means of the so-called *Reconquista*. Peaceful relations between Christians and Jews in Castile were an autonomous development of northern Spain which drew on the pragmatic attitudes of the kings of Castile towards Jews whose economic activities were beneficial for the royal treasury.

The pragmatic stance of the kings of Castile and Castile-Léon towards Jews found full expression in the *fueros* (city charters) that they granted to towns. In these charters Jews were more often than not described in terms of being the *servi* of the king. As many have explained before Irish, this did not mean that Jews were slaves. It meant that they served the king, and that it was the king who had legal jurisdiction over them and their communities. This jurisdiction could be granted by the king to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046918000465 Published online by Cambridge University Press