

those ideals and ideas are infused with a strong dose of religion. One chapter, 'Sacrament', is specifically devoted to the religious rituals practised by guilds, but most chapters deal with ideals that straddle the religious and the secular. Even though Christianity had much to offer in all these areas, Rosser reminds his readers that there were also important pre-Christian roots, rediscovered during precisely the late Middle Ages. These values, the author seems to imply, were as such not unique to the period; the guilds were, however, the historically specific form in which they were expressed and practised.

Chapter titles imply that Rosser very much sees the guilds as the embodiments of a set of ideals: 'Ethics', 'Friendship', 'Trust' and finally 'Community'. Guilds emerged from the 'social instability' of the age, but also a 'new ethical perspective' in the late Middle Ages (p. 37). This perspective came from Aristotle as much as from Abelard. The congruence between their ideas and the practices in guilds is indeed striking, but one wonders how many of the guildsmen and women had actually read these authors – or had otherwise become acquainted with their ideas. This is an important question, because joining a guild was a voluntary act, and if the number of guilds was as high as Rosser claims, hundreds of thousands must have done so. The ethical perspective was that of mutuality. As the regulations of the fraternity of St Anne, established in 1342 in the church of St Lawrence Jewry in London, expressed the guild's purpose: 'in maintenance of good love and for to nourish good and true company in destruction and amendment of men of wicked fame and evil bearing by way of alms and charity' (p. 107).

The guilds, in their religious form, came to an end with the Reformation and the establishment of the Church of England. This next phase of communal life falls outside the scope of the book, but it does raise an issue about the role of these many voluntary associations: if English society could manage without them, what does this imply about the part they played in the preceding centuries. Or, phrased differently: what took their place after the mid-sixteenth century?

Rosser's book is unfashionable in an attractive way. It does not defend a Grand Thesis. It takes seriously forgotten historians from nineteenth-century Germany. Even if the chapters' titles chime with modern discussions about 'community', the author refuses to fall for easy connections with the present. The compact text, dense but easy to read, constantly invites reflection. Historians will ignore this book at their own peril.

Maarten Prak

Utrecht University

Dennis Romano, *Markets and Marketplaces in Medieval Italy, c. 1100–c. 1440*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015. viii + 272pp. 100 figures. Bibliography. £35.00 hbk.

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Late medieval Italy is often regarded as the birthplace of a modern commercial outlook, with market exchanges increasingly dominated by the profit motive and economic pragmatism. However, as Dennis Romano comments in this book on the markets of medieval Italy, 'more was at play in the marketplace than the mere accumulation of monetary profit' (p. 6). Profit was undoubtedly a motive for

most market participants, but Romano argues that this was not just measured in money but also reputation, status, salvation and the common good. The market was not perceived as a 'morally neutral space' for commercial transactions; it was instead hedged by concerns about human fallibility and the dynamics of social relations. In a period when buying and selling were becoming a growing part of everyday life, the marketplace remained a forum that encapsulated a variety of ethics, customs, political gestures and social relations. Romano provides an engaging insight into the organization and regulation of the medieval Italian marketplace. In particular, his spatial and material approach provides a fascinating dimension, with its focus on the layout, architecture and art of the marketplace. This was integrally linked to regulatory oversight but also performative or artistic aspects that were loaded with meaning. In many ways, these were 'moralized spaces' that embodied broader concerns about good governance, sinful behaviour by individuals and God's benevolence.

For medieval Italians, 'a thriving marketplace is a sign of a just society' (p. 226) and thus also an expression of civic identity. Romano's broad-based approach highlights comparisons between various Italian cities, such as the differing intentions in Bologna and Pistoia towards the placing of commercial activities vis-à-vis prominent government or ecclesiastical buildings. Whether or not a distinct civic piazza was created away from ecclesiastical or communal offices was perhaps dependent upon dominant political groups and their principal aims. Strong merchant or guild presence was thus influential in shaping market space, such as in Florence, even if property rights, geography, demography, custom and pragmatism also played their part. The marketplace was also an arena for political contestation, underpinned by an ostensible concern for the 'common good'. The notion of the common good might mean something slightly different for a city controlled by the *popolo* rather than by magnates, with the former perhaps keener to protect the commercial reputation of the city than the honour of its officials. Nevertheless, concepts of 'bene comune' were invariably embedded in the urban grain supply, where plenitude demonstrated beneficent rule and divine favour. Romano examines a number of Italian markets that contained female sculptures (or images) representing abundance and justice, like 'Bonissima' in Modena. Alternatively, murals, such as that by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in Siena, might highlight the dearth that resulted from bad government, inhibited commerce and self-interest.

The marketplace could be a site of conflict for numerous clashing interests, and much of the regulation was intended to temper such disputes and overcome distrust. This was reflected in the arrangement of the space and built environment and also in the ritualized negotiations that were daily enacted. It was usually a public, open and visible space, but nonetheless subject to distinct hierarchies and civic controls. Romano provides a thoughtful chapter on the 'choreography of buying and selling' that draws upon anthropological insights in order to outline the unspoken rules that shaped market activity, whether this was inspecting the goods, haggling over price, the means of measurement or the final agreement of a deal. The discussion is largely theoretical, drawing upon commercial regulations and literary evidence (such as dialogues in grammar books) rather than documents such as court records that might outline what happened when such rituals were transgressed. Nevertheless, it provides an insight into the intended workings of the market and some of the ongoing problems that laws sought to address.

Romano clearly illustrates that at the heart of the marketplace was a continual tension between the need to establish trust among its users while still allowing the legitimate pursuit of business and profit. He notes that the phrase 'bona fide, sine fraude' (in good faith and without fraud) was recurrent in medieval laws and contracts, and there was an understandable preoccupation with fraud in a trading society where standardization and valuation were difficult to achieve. However, ultimately fraud was the result of avarice and this shifted the medieval perspective into a dissection of the merchant's intentions and whether they were deliberately undermining the promise of trust. Romano argues that: 'Tension between the common good and individual interest shaped every aspect of life' (p. 11). It moulded medieval commercial ethics, and meant that exchanges were not simply about determining economic equilibrium but also the social and moral factors that underpinned the marketplace and relations between market users.

The final chapter of the book notes that many medieval markets contained artistic reminders of both the dangers of fraud and the justice that was dispensed by civic authorities and by God. This was intended to exemplify the confidence that buyers and sellers could have in a particular market, as highlighted by the inscription on the church of San Giacomo di Rialto in Venice: 'Around this temple let the law of merchants be equitable: let the weights not bend and the contract be not crooked' (p. 217). Such a rich vein of material evidence allows Romano to illustrate vividly the dominant mentalities and expressions of ideal behaviour within the marketplace. The extent to which everyday market users internalized such moral norms is difficult to determine, but this book admirably depicts the complex cultural, social and political contexts that undoubtedly shaped the environment of the medieval Italian marketplace.

James Davis

Queen's University Belfast

Jesús Á. Solórzano Telechea, Beatriz Arizaga Bolumburu and Jelle Haemers (eds.), *Los grupos populares en la ciudad medieval europea*. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2014. 574pp: il.col; 24cm. 12.00 €. doi:[10.1017/S0963926816000183](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926816000183)

For the last 10 years, the Spanish town of Nájera has hosted yearly international medieval meetings, making the town a renowned forum for academics in urban medieval history. Supported by the University of Cantabria, these meetings have dealt with issues such as urban governance, urban space, the territorial scope of cities, as well as urban social co-existence and the role of women in the medieval city. In 2013, the meeting was titled 'The Commons in the Medieval European City' and discussed the social meaning and the political scope of popular groups in late medieval cities. The proceedings were published within less than a year and include 19 articles in Italian (1), Portuguese (1), English (2), French (2) and Spanish (13).

The volume opens with a theoretical introduction by Solórzano and Haemers where a claim is made for the need to establish more nuanced definitions of the so-called 'popular groups', which we generally identify with those that were