

throughout the book, it is that libraries in the physical sense of designated spaces with exclusively “literary” material never existed. There is always a mix of archival and “literary” material. Moreover, in many cases (see Zand, pp. 69, 76, 97, 102, Parkinson, pp. 116, 135f., 156f., Hagen p. 304, Robson and Stevens p. 352 f., Finkel p. 377, Ryholt pp. 391, 392, 405, 451) those same “literary” documents had the very practical function of enabling an institution to perform its tasks, and thus belonged to their core business. The line between the two kinds of materials is easily blurred and difficult to draw. For example, that the administration of a religious institution includes prayers and hymns is to be expected, but does that make it a library? In both Mesopotamia and Egypt many documents were generated in a school context. The constant copying of curricular works of all kinds served the honing of scribal (Delnero pp. 173 f., 179, 188, Dardano p. 193, Robson and Stevens p. 340, Ryholt p. 395) and memory skills of students (Hagen 264 f., Robson and Stevens pp. 343, 347, 358). Given the overwhelmingly oral nature of all societies considered here, one wonders whether true libraries perhaps only existed in the minds and memories of scholars with the written materials functioning largely as *aides-mémoire*. As teachers and specialists, these scholars curated and selected their knowledge and made it accessible to communities of aspiring scholars.

Because of the restricted audience and the authors’ reluctance to work with their contributors from a common notion of the term “library”, it remains to be seen whether this book can deliver on the hope for “new ... ideas [and] ... new sets of questions”. Readers from farther afield may end up confused. Perhaps we should accept that there were no libraries – certainly no physical ones – “before Alexandria” and see their emergence in the Graeco-Roman period as something new, which evolved out of a long eastern tradition of mostly orally transmitted knowledge.

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THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

DAVID BRAMOULLÉ:

Les Fatimides et la mer (909–1171).

(Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts.) xiii, 762 pp.

Leiden, Brill, 2020. €159. ISBN 978 90 04 40290 4.

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David Bramoullé’s monograph is an addition to the growing number of publications devoted to medieval Islamic and Ottoman maritime history (see, for example, John L. Meloy, *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade: Mecca and Cairo in the Later Middle Ages*, Chicago, 2010; Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, New York, 2010; Christophe Picard, *La mer des califes: une histoire de la Méditerranée musulmane, VII^e–XII^e siècles*, Paris, 2015 [English trans. Boston, 2018]; Hassan S. Khalilieh, *Islamic Law of the Sea: Freedom of Navigation and Passage Rights in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge, 2019). Bramoullé’s book is a very significant contribution to both medieval Islamic naval history and Mediterranean trade. It takes a broad view of maritime history in all its aspects. Bramoullé works with a wide range of Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic sources and literature in European languages, Arabic, and Hebrew.

The book is divided into three parts: the first explores the two maritime settings (Mediterranean and Red Sea) that dominated Fatimid naval activities. Its two chapters discuss the geo-climatic characteristics of these two maritime settings and their repercussions on naval activity, and the changing fortunes of the Fatimid navy when fighting adversaries. Part 2 consists of four chapters and is devoted to the organizational aspects of the Fatimid navy. A wide range of topics is discussed, among them the role of the coastal towns, arsenals and the construction of ships, the recruitment of crews, the ideological context of Fatimid naval power and its representation in Fatimid poetry and sources. Part three is devoted to Fatimid maritime trade and provides a meaningful integration between Arabic sources, especially al-Makhzūmī's *Kitāb al-Minhāj fī 'Ilm Kharāj Miṣr*, and Geniza documents. The author (d. 1189) and the text (partial edition by Claude Cahen and Yūsuf Rāḡib, Cairo, 1986) are relatively well known but, except for Cahen's study of the text (*Makhzūmiyyāt*, Leiden, 1997), little referred to (see, however, Michael Brett's important contribution: "The origins of the Mamluk military system in the Fatimid period", in U. Vermeulen and D. De Smet (eds), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, Leuven, 1995, pp. 39–53). The bringing together of different types of sources is reflected, for example, in Table 8 (pp. 492–4) which summarizes the commercial traffic (exports and imports) that went through the Mediterranean ports of Alexandria, Damietta, and Tinnīs.

Al-Makhzūmī's *Kitāb al-Minhāj* is a difficult text, rich in obscure administrative terminology. Building on Cahen's work, and utilizing sources that were not available to him, Bramoullé guides the reader through the intricacies of terminology and explains the basic terms needed for understanding the text (pp. 496, 588–9, 611–4). The administrative structure and personnel of the Custom House of Alexandria are depicted in Figure 41 (p. 670), and the taxes collected there are listed in Table 10 (pp. 615–6).

As significant as al-Makhzūmī's text is, other important topics are also discussed in part 3. Bramoullé brings the Red Sea to the fore of the discussion of the Fatimid maritime trade and economy, and makes effective use of the recently published anonymous geographical text written in Egypt during the first half of the eleventh century (pp. 530–2). The Red Sea was a very important internal maritime artery for the medieval Muslim rulers of Egypt since it served for the shipment of Egyptian grain to the holy cities of Arabia. The Fatimids continued these shipments and, with the expansion of the Indian Ocean trade, the Red Sea became of paramount importance for Fatimid rulers. Bramoullé also discusses extensively Fatimid relations with the Sulayhid rulers of Yemen with whom the Fatimids maintained religious and political relations during the eleventh century. The author points out that the Fatimids were able to send military aid to the Sulayhid rulers, demonstrating the naval resources available to them on the Red Sea (pp. 529–87, esp. pp. 566–8).

The final two chapters of part 3 are devoted to the question of the Fatimid state and maritime trade. The discussion begins with the observation that the Fatimid state was the biggest buyer and seller of goods capable of influencing the markets (p. 589). State involvement in commerce was through taxation (pp. 603–26) and direct participation in trade. Bramoullé asks whether there was a Fatimid merchant fleet and draws attention to a Geniza document, referring to *mutawallī 'imārat marākib al-dīwān* while an Arabic source refers to *marākib al-dīwāniyya* (p. 645). A partial answer to this question is offered by Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (1130–1220), who refers to a small state-operated flotilla of Nile sailing ships delivering textiles produced in the *ṭirāz* workshops to the court (see A.F. Sayyid (ed.), *Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn*, Cairo, 1992, pp. 102–3).

A less controversial subject is the ownership of merchant ships by the Fatimid rulers, members of the royal family, and people of the ruling establishment. These ships, referred to as the ship of the *sulṭān*, the *amīr*, the *qādī* and the *sayyida*, are widely attested in Arabic sources and Geniza documents, and also known outside the Fatimid context (see Simonetta Calderini, “Women and trade during the Fatimids”, in *Il Fatimidi e il Mediterraneo*, Palermo, 2008, pp. 71–80) The book ends with the question of the relationship between the state and local and foreign merchants, especially the Italians. Obviously, it was a situation of interdependence, and political events such as the internal disarray during the civil war of the 1070s, and the wars of the Crusade, must be taken into consideration. Bramoullé’s contribution lays the foundations for a comprehensive discussion of the Fatimid economy that, it must be remembered, was primarily agricultural but with surprisingly large commercial and industrial sectors. The industrial sectors (textiles and sugar production) were, however, dependent on the agriculture of the Nile.

The book is nicely produced and accompanied by high quality colour maps and diagrams.

Yaacov Lev

SARAH STROUMSA:

Andalus and Sefarad: On Philosophy and Its History in Islamic Spain. (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World.) xxi, 220 pp. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. £30. ISBN 978 0 691 17643 7.
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In this compact and readable volume, Sarah Stroumsa provides a learned and comprehensive depiction of Muslim and Jewish intellectual history in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages. The book concentrates primarily, though not exclusively, on the tenth–twelfth centuries, taking Ibn Masarra (d. 931) and Averroes (d. 1198) as the foci of a detailed discussion of a greatly diverse group of Muslim and Jewish thinkers with vastly diverging views of philosophy, religion, law, politics, and the life of the mind. This book also treats a great number of lesser-known Andalusian thinkers, such as the tenth-century Massarians Khalīl al-Ghaffla and Abū Bakr Yaḥyā Ibn al-Samīna, the ninth–tenth century jurists ‘Abd al-A‘lāb b. Wahb, Muḥammad b. Abī Burda, and Abū Ja‘far Ibn Hārūn, who encountered some forms of Mu‘tazilite thought, the eleventh-century Karaite Abū'l-Ṭaras, the eleventh–twelfth-century Hebrew poets, Qamūna bint Isma‘il and Baruch Ibn al-Balia, the tenth–eleventh-century neo-Platonists, Maslama al-Qurṭubī and Isaac Ibn Ghiyyāth, and the twelfth-century philosophers and physicians, Abū al-Ṣalt of Denia, Mālik Ibn Wuhayb, and Abū Ja‘far al-Dhahābī. Stroumsa weaves her account of these thinkers into accounts of the better-known thinkers of medieval Anadalu, including not only Ibn Masarra and Averroes, but Samuel ha-Nagid, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Baḥya Ibn Paqūdah, al-Baṭalyawsi, Moses Ibn Ezra, Judah Halevi, Ibn Bājja, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Moses Maimonides. In so doing, Stroumsa portrays Jews and Muslims of the period as sharing many intellectual sources and sharing in some of the same intellectual streams, even while maintaining religious and cultural independence.