

scholars of the Western Armenian diaspora did not enrich Armenian culture alone, but, as Shapiro remarks, this output constituted one of the many contributions of non-Muslim communities to Islamic civilization (291).

Overall, by studying the creation of the Western Armenian diaspora, Shapiro introduces a new important topic of research for Armenian and Ottoman history, especially considering the current scholarly interest in mobility and cross-cultural interactions in the premodern world. Hopefully new studies will expand the research started by Shapiro by focusing on different contexts of Armenian immigration and on social and economic interactions between Western Armenians and other Ottoman groups as well as Europeans.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2024.35

Towns on the Edge in Medieval Europe. Matthew Mark Stevens and Roman Czaja, eds.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 282 pp. \$90.

Multiauthored books represent an ever-expanding but widely disparate genre. Their success depends on multiple factors, among which rank clear and attainable objectives, choice of contributors, editorial input, and overall cogency. Not only does *Towns on the Edge* score remarkably high on all of the above, it is conceived and delivered according to a truly collaborative blueprint. It comprises nine chapters, preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion. Firmly grounded in firsthand knowledge of the complexities and unevenness of the archival record extant in Poland, Germany, Estonia, and the British Isles, the eleven essays that make up this substantial contribution to the urban history of Europe's medieval peripheries (ca. 1150/1200–ca. 1500) are authored by twelve scholars, ranging from doctoral candidates to full professors. Interestingly, ten of the essays are coauthored and the remaining one is signed by three academics—an unusual feature that the editors, Matthew Mark Stevens and Roman Czaja, have made possible by coauthoring, respectively, five and four contributions. Anna Maleszka cosigns four and Aleksandra Girsztowt two. Focusing on the historical territories of Ireland, Wales, Prussia, Livonia, and Franconia, this book has benefited from the sort of international scaffolding best suited to innovative studies in comparative history. Four academic institutions reappear in the short vitas of the contributors: Nicolaus Copernicus University at Toruń (6), Swansea University (3), the University of Gdańsk (3), and Trinity College Dublin (2), with no less than four contributors linked to two of them at some point in their careers.

The endpoint of a longue durée shift from Mediterranean to Northern shores, modern Europe's urban and demographic backbone—the celebrated Blue Banana stretching

from Milan to Liverpool—reflects a socioeconomic reality largely shaped in the last three centuries of the Middle Ages, the period with which *Towns on the Edge* engages. The dense tapestry of this book is made of pertinent case study comparisons between European peripheries of three basic types: Western/Eastern (as in Wales/Prussia, chapters 2 and 4; and Ireland/Prussia, chapters 5 and 7), Western/Western (as in Wales/Ireland, chapters 3 and 10) and Eastern/Eastern (Prussia/Livonia and Franconia/Prussia, chapters 8 and 9, with a comparison between the Baltic towns of Marienburg and Stockholm in chapter 6). Not surprisingly, two protagonists emerge from the series of comparative analyses: the English Crown, supported by its Anglo-Norman administrative apparatus, and the Teutonic Order, with its peculiar blend of ecclesiastic and civic authority. I fully agree with the editors' claim that the value of this book is greater than the sum of its constituent parts (xx). For one, the authors' shared interest and specialist knowledge of the legal framework (appropriately listed on 28–29 and relevant for the following chapters) is instrumental to the volume's praiseworthy consistency.

The methodological range displayed by the twelve contributors is as impressive as it is purposeful. Readers shall encounter pointed comparisons of the extent to which native/local populations were integrated/segregated in chartered towns. These lay stress on legal, socioeconomic and/or socio-professional matters. Properly communal concerns such as defensive bodies and structures, the ordering and division of urban space, and modes of participation in municipal governance are broached according to a “core-periphery” colonial model. A distinct vocabulary is consistently used throughout the volume, with ethnicity figuring prominently. Gender compounded with ethnicity is the subject of the brilliant chapter 4, by Aleksandra Girsztowt and Deborah Youngs, on Welsh and Prussian townswomen of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Medievalists will find themselves in both familiar and unfamiliar turf reading about the central role of women brewing ale and their shrewd use of the legal system to live more expansive lives than they were theoretically supposed to.

The editors ask how native populations perceived and interacted with urban settlements (35); Sparky Booker and Stevens wonder how ethnicity was perceived (62); Girsztowt and Youngs question whether women, who were not a homogeneous group, considered themselves peripheral (90); and Juhan Kreem, Krzysztof Kwiatkowski, and Maleszka inquire about the self-perception of new settlers (167). To the credit of both the editors and all the contributors, such questions arise from measured and intelligent comparisons based on the historical record, rather than from predetermined agendas.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.546