

Sara Cabibbo and Maria Lupi, eds. *Relazioni religiose nel Mediterraneo: schiavi, redentori, mediatori* (secc. XVI-XIX). Studi e ricerche 28. Rome: Viella, 2012. 264 pp. € 22.10. ISBN: 978-88-8334-411-4.

by **Stefan Stantchev**

Relazioni religiose nel Mediterraneo's nine essays employ the prism of religious difference and so-far-unexplored or little-used material to address the interplay of political, social, and cultural factors that shaped human experience in the Mediterranean. "The Religious Dimension of Slavery," the larger first section of the bipartite volume, opens with four essays on the Order of Merced, which specialized in the redemption of Christian captives in North Africa. Stefano Defraia, the Director of the Istituto Storico dell'Ordine della Mercede, offers a carefully constructed guide to Mercedarian sources and outlines the *Opera Omnia* which will make them easily accessible.

Three essays provide glimpses into this material. A microcosm of Philip II's Spain, Mercedarian account books expose, among other things, the interaction between the friars that carried out the ransoms and the state that sought to control the process. They also offer us an opportunity, Enrique Mora González argues, to analyze the cycle of captivity and redemption as an industry. Sara Cabibbo and Maria Lupi turn the reader's attention to the works of redeemers by presenting Ignacio Vidondo's *Espejo católico de la caridad divina*. The *Mirror* reveals the mechanics of redemption: royal licenses allowing the export of cash, ecclesiastical ones for preaching, issuance of passports by the viceroy of Valencia, a solemn liturgy and procession prior to departure, and so on. It provides us with the name, age, origin, and years spent in captivity for each of the eighty-two persons redeemed during Vidondo's mission to Algiers in 1654. What chiefly worried Vidondo himself, however, was the demonstration of his order's indispensability in the face of criticism (Is the outflow of souls more concerning than that of the cash for their redemption? Is the latter anything but another tax? Are not the sums collected better used in support of a patrol fleet?). The *Espejo* reveals an uneasy collaboration between friars, with their salvific economy, and bureaucrats, with their reason of state.

María Berta Pallares Garzón's work on Padre Fray Gabriel Gómez de Losada concludes the essays on the Order of Merced and is followed by a less coherent, yet stimulating series of snapshots. Turning from the captivity of Christians to that of Muslims, Francesco Russo explores Maltese notarial and parish records focusing on conversion in the context of

fluctuating legislation, including orders to have newborn children of Muslim slaves baptized. Celia Cussen offers a comparative study of the reception of Catholicism among slaves of African origin in Latin America centered on devotional practices, narratives of piety, and the functions of confraternities.

"Religious Coexistences and Political Mediations," the book's short second section, turns the page from corsair activities and slavery to colonialism. Francesco Corrales outlines the relations between the Sultanate of Morocco and the Kingdom of Naples. Largely cordial and unhindered by cultural misunderstandings in the 1780s, these were less friendly and marked by nascent imperialism in the 1820s. Focusing on the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the Apostolic Mission, France, and the Kingdom of Sardinia, Anthony Santilli discusses the protection of Catholics in Egypt (1820-50) against the background of competitive relationships between European institutions. Giuseppe Continiello and Stefano Minetti argue, lastly, that Masonic lodges and an Arabic-language journal (printed in Cagliari from 1880 until 1881, when it was suspended under French pressure) scrutinized Tunisian institutions and society for the purpose of proposing reforms, spreading the values of the Italian Risorgimento to Tunisian high society.

While *Relazioni religiose nel Mediterraneo* features mostly preliminary research, a number of broader themes do take shape. The relationship between processes operative over the long period and their highly contextual outcomes is just one example. Given that the essays are broadly connected not only by their (mostly) Mediterranean ambiance, but also by their authors' emphasis on interconnectedness and human agency, the volume might have benefited more from an explicit dialogue with Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* than from an all-too-expected homage to Fernand Braudel's masterpiece. Minor gripes notwithstanding, *Relazioni religiose nel Mediterraneo*, well produced by Viella (at an affordable price), offers rich and diverse content to a broad range of scholars. The volume might well prove indispensable for those working on the redemption of captives in the early modern Mediterranean.

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