

Hanak conclude, “There may be questions about his true religiosity but there can be no doubt about his patriotism” (339).

The primary value of this volume lies in the wealth of sources, Greek, Latin, and Slavonic, here reproduced or edited and translated into English. The authors have done an enormous service in collecting so many of these documents in one place and in translating them into English. The sources shed light on such diverse topics as the Muscovite Rus’ reaction to the agreement for church union reached at the Council of Ferrara-Florence and the many roles of Genoese citizens in the siege of Constantinople.

The book is dense in both the best and worst senses of the word. It abounds in substantive information on a plethora of topics. On the other hand, the sheer quantity of information can be overwhelming and is sometimes presented in confusing ways. Some of the chronology is presented inconsistently—for example, the events of pp. 295–310 do not correspond to the chronology presented on 39. At times, moreover, the translations especially would have benefited from a careful editor. To cite one of many examples, the following sentence leaves the reader baffled: “All factions stray to support the sacred, which appears to us that your side, the Occidental <ecclesiastical> communion, is drawn to this association in relation to the aural, because the association is hostile to hearing the word, [and] because the sense of hearing, having been prejudiced is able to convey all to the soul of which it is willing to speak” (92–93). Isidore wrote complicated, erudite, and nearly incomprehensible Greek, but surely it made more sense than that translation.

To complain about some of the details, however, is not to deny the tremendous value of this volume. The collection of sources presented here, the thorough presentation of primary and secondary evidence about every facet of Isidore’s life and times, and the erudition of the authors, who are renowned authorities on the late Palaiologan period and the siege of 1453, make this book a signal contribution to the history of the fifteenth-century Mediterranean.

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ROBERT PORTASS, *The Village World of Early Medieval Northern Spain: Local Community and the Land Market*. (Studies in History New Series.) Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2017. Pp. xiv, 225; 4 black-and-white figures, 6 maps, and 1 table. \$90. ISBN: 978-0-86193-344-0.  
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This thorough study of two small spaces (Liébana in Cantabria, 575 square kilometers; and Celanova in Galicia, 508 square kilometers), well contextualized and studied separately, aims for the sum and contrast of both to renew the historiographical knowledge of rural society on the northern Iberian Peninsula between the end of the Roman Empire and the year 1000. The interpretative renewal is a permanent concern of the author, who constantly reminds us that he contrasts his innovations with preceding explanations. Given that the historian’s work consists of combining heuristics and hermeneutics, the major contribution of this book might be the careful analysis of the scarce sources (documentary, archaeological, or any other kind) about these territories in that chronology while avoiding being guided by interpretative theories. Thus, without the help of the hermeneutics used by previous historians who tried to organize the sparse sources, the author rejects traditional national teleological interpretations, the renewal of Marxist theory applied in 1970s and 1980s, as well as more recent explanations attentive to the power of sovereigns. Consequently, he insists that he sees no traces of feudalism in the documents about social diversity; in the pacts, agreements, and donations, both to religious communities and between individuals; in the relationships between peasants and barons; or in the increasing number of documents to organize the society. Nor does he

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perceive aggression by lords against peasants' assets, resistance from the latter, or feudal links in such traditional figures as the *profilatio*.

The starting point of the societies studied here is not a tribal base but a strong Romanization adapted to the Atlantic territories. Small local peasant communities were more important than the public power, which meant a limited presence of kings and their officers. The autonomous communities were made up of free peasant owners who made vigorous business out of buying and selling land on a nonmonetary market as well as through establishing networks of friendship and patronage, all of which enabled the rise of a local elite in the tenth century. Work and prayer characterized rural life in these communities, and the important weight of religion facilitated the emergence of monasteries such as Celanova, which took great care in acquiring and concentrating properties. The comparison between Liébana and Celanova allows one to appreciate the greater presence of unfree people and lords in Galicia.

Although the approach and results achieved are consistent and a worthy contribution, it would not have been difficult to enlarge the geographic scope of the study, given the limited number of sources regarding the territory and chronology. This would better refine the degree and importance of the regional nuances that the author appreciates. In a similar sense, a greater range of bibliography could be commented on regarding works about the northwest peninsula that are not considered or others mentioned whose position would not be contradictory but complementary.

Presented as a book about "Early Medieval Northern Spain," the introduction, entitled "The Making of Medieval Iberia, 711–1031," includes an overview of "the historiography of early medieval Spain." Given that Spain or Iberia is the name of a peninsula, one expects to find that the North extends from the shores of the Atlantic to those on the Mediterranean. However, the scope of the book, including its global overview, is restricted to the northwest side. This could be better delineated by including "northwestern" Spain or Iberia in the chapter and book titles.

Furthermore, the eastern part of the peninsula (with the kingdoms of Pamplona and Aragon, and the Iberian Carolingian counties) should also have been taken into account in the bibliography, in order to establish some comparisons with the results outlined in the present book. In Catalonia alone, more than ten thousand medieval documents dating from before the thirteenth century are conserved, a resource that has produced a vast bibliography in recent decades. Yet the author refers to Catalonia only in reference to Bonnassie and his "Feudal Revolution," a theory that was predominant in the last quarter of the twentieth century, but that had been surpassed by the end of the same century by new theories proposing that feudalism in Catalonia was a more gradual process (see the state of the art on this subject in *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 27 [1997] and *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 49 [2006]). Historians working on the western side of the Iberian Peninsula and those dedicated to the eastern side tend to work independently of, and even ignoring, each other, usually because of the difference in the sources and explanatory traditions. However, as the case of the study under review here demonstrates, discussion of the same peninsula in the same time period, with the same borders between Christian societies in the North and the Muslim al-Andalus in the South, would be greatly enriched by shared knowledge. In fact, many of the doubts, problems, and even conclusions reached in this book on the northwestern part of the peninsula coincide with those already made in different studies about societies in the northeastern area of the peninsula. This is also an issue in the treatment of the complexity of documentation; the interpretations and applications of the law (which was Visigothic on both sides); the different levels of peasantry; the social relations between peasants and lords; and the economic development, or strategies of accumulation of lands, by the monasteries. In any case, besides the geographical distinctions that I have pointed out, which would bring important nuances to the comparisons, the correct analysis of the sources and careful attention given to the studied territories

set this book up as an outstanding contribution that encourages new ways of understanding these societies.

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GILLES ROUSSINEAU, ed. and trans., *Florilège de Perceforest*. (Texte Courant 4.) Geneva: Droz, 2017. Paper. Pp. xxix, 694. €18.90. ISBN: 978-2-600-05831-5. doi:10.1086/705961

The *Roman de Perceforest* is immense: close to nine thousand octavo pages in the remarkable thirteen-volume edition produced with variants, copious notes, and excellent glossaries, indefatigably, by Gilles Roussineau, and brought to triumphant completion over almost thirty years between 1987 and 2015 in the Textes Littéraires Français series from Droz. Roussineau's gargantuan, and single-handed, efforts—we might compare to, for instance, the team effort, under Philippe Ménard, which provided the edition of the prose *Tristan*—have made the *Perceforest* far better known. His edition has permitted, or even inspired, a number of excellent monographs—I might single out Sylvia Huot's *Postcolonial Fictions in the "Roman de Perceforest"* (2007), or Christine Ferlampin-Acher's *Perceforest: Un roman bourguignon* (2009)—and collective volumes such as *Perceforest: Un roman arthurien et sa réception*, edited, again, by Christine Ferlampin-Acher (2012). (I do wonder, incidentally, if Roussineau might have provided a bibliography, to enable his readers to explore the romance further and in more depth.)

But the romance remains a daunting challenge, which must be why Nigel Bryant, in his *Perceforest: The Prehistory of King Arthur's Britain* (2011), came to the assistance of English readers by translating a selection of episodes with a linking summary intended to show the scope of the romance's "history" of Britain. The present *florilège*, published in Droz's new Texte Courant series (designed, says Droz's publicity material, to help the reader "retrouver la plaisir de lire et de comprendre les textes anciens, grâce à une traduction précise et vivante, des notes riches et des commentaires éclairants"), offers us a nice selection of twenty-four short episodes from the romance. His selection is eclectic and focuses largely on the more intriguing and exotic episodes: we have King Aroès, for instance, subjugating his island kingdom with visions of a paradise that he manufactures, ingeniously, with the play of lights on an apparatus of colored glass bottles; we have Le Bossu fighting off the amorous attentions of a race of monkeys on a desert island; we have a quite remarkable description of a witches' sabbath, complete with haunted house and presiding devil, and an early, rather less decorous, version of the story of the Sleeping Beauty; we have a reimagined assassination of Julius Caesar. Each of the episodes has the original Middle French text on the right-hand page (taken of course from Roussineau's own edition, and therefore impeccably edited), with occasional textual footnotes; on the left-hand page is a translation into modern French; at the end of each episode is a series of notes explaining some features of the text proper, along with suggestions for further reading. The volume also has a brief but informative "Présentation" (some twenty-nine pages), which gives a concise overview of the romance's guiding narrative and ideological threads as well as its manuscript and early printed history. The introduction also addresses, briefly, each of the episodes and suggests ways in which its outline and its construction emerge from late medieval cultural, political, and spiritual preoccupations; and discusses the author's own recapitulations and inventions, his political and social orientation.

To select is, of course, always misleading, and perhaps particularly so in the case of the *Perceforest*. The romance overall is a highly ambitious and politically focused attempt to link the ancient world, that first of Alexander the Great, later of Julius Caesar and the Roman occupation of Britain, to the Arthurian world. It is deeply concerned with issues of governance, with the rise and fall of empires, with the purity of a newly instituted Christianity. And although