

RÉKLAITYTÉ, Ieva (ed.), *Water in the Medieval Hispanic Society: Economic, Social and religious implications*, Helsinki, Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2019, 284 pp. ISBN : 978-951-41-1133-4.

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*Water in the Medieval Hispanic Society: Economic, Social and religious implications*, edited by Ieva RéKlaityté, is another excellent book that adds more knowledge to water issues in medieval times. As Ieva RéKlaityté refers in his preface, this book appears in the framework of the 20th International Medieval Congress that took place in Leeds in 2013, which extended the themes and interest to an increasing number of researchers working in the field.

*Water in the Medieval Hispanic Society* stands out for the attention given to water issues in its diverse perspectives. The multiple thematic articulated with religious, economic and social implications, makes this book a central work in the different and diverse forms that water assumes in different contexts, in different spaces and different practises in the medieval Iberian Peninsula.

This book is a compilation of studies that, in the words of the editor, “provide a glimpse into the rich complexity of approaches to water in medieval and post-medieval Spain.” In fact, water create a vast assortment of possibilities and open important and interesting debates around the multiple perspectives of the social, economic, political and religious medieval Hispanic society.

The diversity of themes worked in this book is recognized and the expectations confirmed. The urban structures, the quotidian of the rural and the urban worlds, the religious questions of Al-Andalus, the path of times from the Roman period to the borders beyond the late medieval ages, the ecology, pollution and hygiene, the natural disasters, the hydraulic constructions, among others, opens new perspectives in countless domains.

This book published in 2019 by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, is clearly a milestone in the actual knowledge about water in medieval times. For another point of view, all those studies open this issue to a common awareness of the importance of this natural and cultural resource that faces strong threats on our days. To know the History, the values and the significance of this essential natural resource to Life, is a way to develop a sensitivity on the present related with the water character as an essential and irreplaceable asset on planet Earth.

With this book, we continue with a strong focus on territorial studies where water is the main actor and the main element in the new understandings and findings of sciences and societies.

It should also be notice that the book exposes the excellent labour that archaeology has done in this field. Thereby, this work, also behaves as an excellent disseminator of archaeological works carried out around water heritage elements. The archaeological studies presented in various articles, allow us to get to know in detail the peninsular spaces and territories and clearly understand their daily lives. The cross between archaeologists and historians is an important base to the better understanding of medieval times and medieval places.

This book brings together several authors from the Medieval History of Iberia, names that are already familiar to us for their excellence as specialists in the Middle Ages and, in particular, for their enormous contribution in the themes of water in multiple and solid approaches.

The book begins with a presentation by Belén Vazquez Navajas that introduces hydraulic structures and systems, in particular those related to the water supply, storage, drainage and sanitary installations on the western suburbs of Umayyad Cordoba. The author frames the study by making a clear and objective state of the question that prepares us for her case study.

Guadalupe Pizarro Berengena allows us to know the growth of the medieval city of Córdoba through the water supply system, starting the study in the Roman period, going through the Islamic age to the medieval Christian city. The temporal perspective allows us to know the passage of time and the water history and water technique presents in Cordoba.

Continuing in Cordoba, Carmen González Gutiérrez and Manuel Cobo Aguilera express his approach about the use of water in religious spaces in Al-Andalus and expose the recent archaeological findings in a Mosque in the suburbs of this city. This study details this Mosque and its ablution room that open a new vision about the ablution places, its uses in Al-Andalus and the respective rituals practices. It is evident the narrow link between water and religion.

Creating a framework on environmental issues in the Middle Ages, Ieva Rēkļaitytė presents a work around the urban environment of Al-Andalus associating water, pollution and ecology. The study highlights the issues of water connected with pollution, in particular that derived from urban sanitation, domestic and labour wastes evacuation, which is highlight as urban contamination and a health question. The author centralize also the attention in the impacts of natural disasters documented in the natural history of Al-Andalus, in particular floods, torrential rains and earthquakes that emphasise the environmental and health problems.

Reinforcing the theme of hydraulic constructions in the Almoravid period, María Marcos Cobaleda, explores the North Africa and Al-Andalus in the 12th century based on archaeological and documental sources. The study reveals an exhaustive survey of the network of khattaras and the ablutions complex of the Yusuf Mosque of Marrakech as well as the outstanding hydraulic network of Fez. The study highlight also hydraulic works in Al-Andalus, in particular in Granada, Almeria, Cordoba, Malaga.

María Aurora Molina Fajardo presents the case of Acequias in Valle Lecrín, Granada, in a perspective that relates the urban water network and the position of the medieval Andalusian religious places. The hydraulic structures built in water points and the urban planning in the Nasrid period are in fact object of revision and considerations. The documental sources and the fieldwork demonstrated the relation between religion and the water landscape. The focus is on the rural places as the case study highlights.

Moving from the rural to the urban world, Eduardo Jiménez Rayado, focuses his study on the Islamic heritage under Christian rules on Madrid origins. This thematic is characterized by the difficulties that arise from the lack of historical documental information. Focused on a linear historical perspective, his attention shifts to water symbolism and the Islam and the relief that they hold in the origins of Madrid.

Returning to the themes of everyday life, Caroline Fournier allows us to know the vapour baths (Hammām) from Al-Andalus to the Christian kingdoms, centred on documental and archaeological sources information. The study exposes the bath and its structure as an organizer of spaces, in fact as a new territorial organization in a process of Christian conquest. In this study, the bath is an important element in the social landscape of the Middle Ages in Palaces or in rural and urban spaces. Those sanitary, religious and social practices manifest a temporal continuity despite the different religion of the two kingdoms.

Diana Pelaz Flores based on *The Book of Paradoxes* by Alfonso Fernández de Madrigal, studies the water and its significance and symbolic value. The author analyses water in a multiple vision as a precious element in life, in sacramental values, in symbolic field, in ideals, rituals, but also, in everyday life, in relation with human physiology as a definition of the human condition of Christ. The author centralize the study in the water related with the narrative contexts and messages.

Germán Gamero Igea, who explores a Sea of possibilities in the political uses of water in the last years of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th, also transmits this diversity of water values and its plurality. The study explores the image of the king and his connection with water, in particular, with the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean – the political domination *from sea to sea* that characterize the Catholic Kings reign and the political ideals and strategies has in water a vehicle of expression.

José Rodríguez Fernández presents the water landscape in the Basque Country between Medieval Ages and Modernity through the case study of Laguardia (Alava). In this work, water landscape is characterized taking into account the “Rio Principal”, the main water flux in the studied territory, the water infrastructure and the relation of the water and the agriculture use. In this landscape, the water structures and systems and its control are assumed as a local political dispute. This study reveals the patrimonial value of this water structure that permits to highlight the most forgotten heritage promoting its safeguard.

María Isabel del Val Valdivieso analyses, through the narrative of the chronicles, the presence of the water, substantially through precipitation, in Castille in the Late Middle Ages. The study explores the multiple water expressions associated with its physical presence in places that support or ravel the most diverse events of this period. It is evident that the presence of the rainfall marked the duality that underscore human virtues or human imperfections and weaknesses. In general, water is used by the narratives to accentuate the message and the contents and is often used by the chronicle writers to explore the Divine election.

The perspective of water as an economic resource is explored by Francisco Hidalgo, who localise his study in Granada between Castilian interests in the emirate of Granada. The study connect the war at the last years of the “Reconquista” to the available hydraulic resources. The complex irrigation system of the territory enriched and fertilize the soil and permits to obtain abundant agriculture products and industrial raw materials, such as, for example silk. In this context, we understand clearly the economic and political water values that join other motivation for the impulse of the military conquest.

The book closes with a highlight of keywords and abstracts that transport our memory to the most diverse themes and authors that, over 262 pages, hold our attention around new knowledge, new discoveries, new documental readings, new highlights and new prospects.

A mandatory book for those who study water issues and relate them to religion, society, economics, politics and medieval daily life.

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