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REVIEWS

Ier Col·loqui d'Història de l'Alimentació a la Corona d'Aragó: Edat Mitjana (Lleida, Spain: Institut d'Estudis Ilerdencs, 1995), 388 pp.

The eight essays that make up this volume are the products of a 1990 conference in Lleida (Lérida), Spain. According to Antoni Riera i Melis's preface, the conference's purpose was to focus on food and food practices in the medieval Crown of Aragon, continuing the work of earlier southern European conferences that dealt with the Middle Ages generally¹ and with Catalonia specifically.² Potential readers should take note, however, that three of the eight essays, including Riera's own contribution, do not focus exclusively on the Crown of Aragon; this book should, in fact, be of interest to a broader audience than its title suggests. Three of the essays are written in Catalan, four in Spanish, and one in Italian. Medievalists comfortable with other Romance languages should not be daunted by the unfamiliar Catalan; the essays here should prove fairly accessible with the help of a dictionary.

The offerings here are all from Spanish scholars, with the exception of an essay by prominent food historian Massimo Montanari of Italy. Montanari's "Alimentazione, cultura, società nel Medioevo" (pp. 21–37) is for the most part a summary of his earlier work. It serves as a useful introduction to medieval food history, and places the Crown of Aragon within the broader context of what Montanari calls Mediterranean food culture. Much of what he writes here has been published in English,³ although this essay includes an especially detailed analysis of the fourteenth-century *Ordinacions* promulgated by Peter IV of Aragon.

Riera's "Alimentació i ascetisme a Europa occidental en el segle XII. El model cluniacenc" (pp. 39–105) describes the food practices of the Order of Cluny. This essay relies primarily on normative sources, but, noting that Cluniac rules relating to food left much to the abbot's discretion, Riera draws on epistolary, polemical, and hagiographical sources when possible. Riera shows that changes in Cluniac food customs reflect a relaxation of ascetic practice within the order from about 1070 onward. The body of the essay is divided into five sections: (1) an overview of the history of Cluny in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, (2) the Cluniac diet, (3) the logistics of provisioning the monasteries, (4) methods of cooking and preparing food, and (5) rules relating to the refectory, especially to behavior at table. Riera's conclusion that the Black Monks increasingly privileged liturgical observance over asceticism and "productive tasks" (Riera's term) is, of course, not original; but the article should be of interest to historians who wish to know precisely how changes in Cluniac culture were reflected in the order's food practices.

¹*Manger et boire au Moyen-Age: Actes du colloque de Nice, 17 octobre 1982*, 2 vols., ed. Denis Menjot. Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Nice, 27–28 (Paris, 1984).

²*Alimentació i societat a la Catalunya medieval*. Anuario de Estudios Medievales, anejo, 20 (Barcelona, 1988).

³Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food*, trans. Carl Ipsen (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 1994).

Salvador Claramunt's "L'alimentació dels estudiants" (pp. 107–113) also covers western Europe generally, rather than the Crown of Aragon specifically. This brief essay examines the diet of the many medieval university students who depended at least partly on charity for subsistence. Claramunt quotes at length from the statutes of the College of Spain—better known as the College of Saint Clement—at the University of Bologna, and the College of Santa Maria at the University of Lleida. He notes their similarity both to monastic rules and, in Lleida, to the rules of the Pia Almoina, the pious alms endowment that fed the hungry.

Teresa Vinyoles i Vidal's "Alimentació i ritme del temps a Catalunya a la baixa Edat Mitjana" (pp. 115–151) describes what typically was eaten in Catalonia during the late Middle Ages, based on prescriptive sources, paintings, literature, and a miscellany of archival sources, including royal statutes, hospital rules, municipal ordinances, personal letters, and wills. She describes how the Catalan diet varied in times of scarcity, how food was used to emphasize social distinctions, what was eaten on Christian feast days and fast days, the nourishment of infants and young children, the nourishment of the sick, medicinal uses of food, and what was served at wedding banquets and funerals.

Agustín Rubio Vela's "El consumo de pan en la Valencia bajomedieval" (pp. 153–183) deals with bread, the staple of the medieval diet, in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Valencia. He describes the varieties of bread produced and regulations governing the baking and selling of bread. He also attempts to answer the question of precisely how much bread was consumed.

The subject of food consumption and food practices has received less attention for Aragon proper than it has for Catalonia and Valencia. Esteban Sarasa Sánchez's "Los sistemas alimentarios en el reino de Aragón (siglos XII–XV)" (pp. 185–204) presents an overview of the subject. Among the topics discussed are food production, commerce, and consumption; the diets of different social classes; and food in art. Given the current very limited state of knowledge in the field, and the short length but ambitious scope of this essay, the information presented is necessarily sketchy. Nonetheless, the dearth of publications in this area makes this a useful preliminary survey.

Expiración García Sánchez has discovered a medieval Catalan translation, apparently previously unknown, of the *Kitāb al-Aḡḏīya* (*Treatise on Foods*) by Avenzoar (Abū Marwan 'Abd al-Malik ibn Zuhr), a twelfth-century physician of Seville. In "La traducción catalana medieval del *Kitāb al-Aḡḏīya* (*Tratado de los alimentos*) de Avenzoar" (pp. 363–386), she describes the manuscript—which is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris—as well as discussing possible dates for it, listing the contents by chapter heading, and providing an analysis of difficult terms.

I have saved for last the long essay by Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, "Régimen alimentario de las comunidades judías y conversas en la Corona de Aragón en la Edad Media" (pp. 205–361), with which there are a number of problems deriving from Motis's alarming lack of knowledge of normative Judaism. The problems are surprising because Motis writes regularly on the Jews of the Crown of Aragon. Most of his previous work, however, has dealt with the history of interaction between Aragon's Jewish minority and Christian majority, especially with the 1492 expulsion, rather than with the internal life of the Jewish community. Hence, his earlier work did not require an extensive knowledge of Jewish belief and practice. For an essay on the food practices of Jews and *conversos* (Jewish converts to

Christianity), however, a basic knowledge of Judaism surely is a prerequisite. Yet Motis has, in many instances, failed to take the trouble to acquire such knowledge. Moreover, he seems to have misunderstood some of the sources of information on Jewish law that he did use. That leads this reviewer to question whether he may not also have misinterpreted the primary sources—mainly Inquisition records—on which his study is based.

There are also methodological problems with Motis's work here, since he makes little effort to distinguish between the practices of Jews and those of conversos. Rather than seeking to determine how the judaizing food practices of the converted differed from the practices of the unconverted—or, if there was no difference, to demonstrate that fact—he simply states that the conversos continued, consciously or unconsciously, to preserve many Jewish food customs; and throughout the essay he equates the two.

The most egregious errors in Motis's work are those that relate to his understanding of the Jewish religion. For example, in his discussion of the Jewish holidays, he conflates Rosh Hashanah and Shavuot. He does not seem to be aware that Rosh Hashanah is the New Year, but rather describes it as a celebration of the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. He refers to the Sabbath lights as the "menorah," a term generally referring either to the Chanukah lamp or to the lamp in the Temple at Jerusalem. He writes that the holiday of Purim is celebrated in the month of Shevat, rather than in the month of Adar. His understanding of the dietary laws is better than his knowledge of the holidays, but flaws appear even here. He is aware of the use of unleavened bread at Passover, but fails to describe the ritual use of the leavened bread called *challah* on the Sabbath and other holidays; he does mention that challah was baked but does not explain why. He discusses the definition of kosher wine but makes no mention of its ceremonial uses.⁴ This list ought to suffice to give some idea of the extent of the problems in Motis's work. If this essay is used at all, it certainly should be used with caution.

The unsoundness of Motis's essay, however, does not detract from the value of the volume as a whole. The other seven essays should prove useful to those interested in medieval social or religious history and those interested in the history of the Crown of Aragon generally, as well as to specialists in the history of food.

Jennifer L. Green received her Ph.D. in history from UCLA in 1997.

⁴Ignorance of the important role played by wine and bread in Jewish religious ceremonies is not limited to Motis. Montanari, himself demonstrating an ignorance surprising in a scholar of his stature, has written that Christianity's liturgical use of bread and wine "implied...a break with the Jewish tradition, which excluded bread (in so far as it was leavened and so somehow 'corrupt') and wine (in so far as it was a source of inebriation) from the sphere of ritual," *The Culture of Food*, 15–16.