Janina M. Safran: *Defining boundaries in al-Andalus*. Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Islamic Iberia, Ithaca (NY.)/London: Cornell University Press, 2013, IX + 247 pp.

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Janina Safran explores interreligious relations under the Umayyad caliphate in Iberia, making some comparisons with material from Baghdad under the ‘Abbāsids and relevant material from the Cairo Genizah. She begins by drawing attention to indications of shared practices and religious spaces in al-Andalus during this early period, and then notes the paucity of sources for socio-religious history in al-Andalus in contrast to Christian Iberia, which possesses rich archival material. As an alternative though not direct corollary to such archival sources, Safran proposes Muslim legal texts, which may be used in combination with chronicles, Muslim biographical dictionaries, and Christian martyrological texts. She carefully notes the drawbacks of such legal sources, namely that one has little sense of individual cases, since often those being discussed are unnamed or used as a model problem. Furthermore, these legal decisions were written by Muslim religious elites, and thus provide no clear evidence as to what ordinary Muslims, let alone Jews and Christians thought about the situations and practices being depicted by Muslim jurists. That being said, Safran argues for the importance of these sources for social history, combining North African and Andalusian collections, and indications from other genres, or materials outside of the Maghreb/Andalusian ambit.

In her introduction, she provides a very useful overview of the development and arguments regarding the Pact of ‘Umar and its usefulness as a source for understanding the status of Christians and Jews (and Zoroastrians) under Muslim rule. While some of the arguments she cites are long-standing and well known, she brings them together in a meaningful manner, and proceeds to show how inter-religious relations in Umayyad Iberia need to be reconsidered if the Pact of ‘Umar, in the version that is customarily cited among scholars, was not known or used in the period and place covered in her book. She argues that employment, taxation, and placement and condition of synagogues and

churches were up for negotiation during this period and did not follow pre-determined regulations during this period.

Her book consists of four core chapters, which are organized thematically rather than according to any chronological development. Chapters one and four, which she describes as ‘bookends’ to one another (p. 33) both deal with political authority and identity and the ways in which both were intertwined with boundary-making policies. The first chapter, “The structures of Umayyad rule”, examines the ways in which Umayyad rules and jurists obtained and maintained power. She emphasizes the importance of symbolic iterations of hierarchy in establishing legitimacy, whether praise poems, processions, public festivals, celebrations of victory or submission by former rivals, or executions and public display of crucified enemies of the state. Political legitimacy was linked to religious orthodoxy, and could be readily evoked when getting rid of troublesome individuals, such as ‘Abd ar-Raḥman II’s execution of his predecessor’s Christian commander, ar-Rabi’ ibn Theodulfo, under the pretext that he had abused office through tax collection. He also ordered the destruction of Cordoba’s wine market; acts, Safran argues, asserted specifically Muslim principles and domination (p. 44). She notes that the patronage on the part of ‘Abd ar-Raḥman II (r. 822–852) and Muḥammad I (r. 852–886) of Mālik’s disciples established Mālikī legal dominance, but even there, caliphal patronage insured the precedence of some jurists’ teachings over others, and that these jurists in turn used accusations of heresy, “zandaqa”, in defence of their personal and political interests. Conflicts between the ruling Arab elite and the “muwalladun”, sponsored local converts to Islam, who in turn allied with Christians, combined political, ethnic, and religious issues, but she also underscores the continued connection between converts and Christians, which such alliances suggest.

Chapter four, “Borders and boundaries”, looks at the conceptualization of “dar al-Harb” (‘land of war’) and “dar al-Islam” (‘land of Islam’) as a starting point for discussing borders between Muslims and “dhimmi”. She argues that the existence of “dhimmi” and “dhimmi” status complicated neat divisions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, and that in the borderlands between Christian and Muslim Iberia, such questions were further complicated as these lands and the Christians (and Jews) dwelling in them continuously changed hands and status. Safran shows how such issues spilled into legal debates, for example, arguments over how to deal with spies, children of converts who become Christian in Christian lands, or whether a Byzantine delegation was allowed to take members of their delegation who had converted to Islam while in Iberia back with them. Particularly vexing was the attempt to determine whether Christians were “dhimmi” or “harbi” (of the land of war) and under what circumstances. She

follows these debates into later authors, such as the jurist Ibn Rušd (d. 1198) and early Almoravid policies.

Chapters two and three leave politics in the background in favour of more clearly social and even individual relationships. Chapter two, “Society in transition”, addresses several issues: space and buildings; festivals; the martyrdoms of Christians who had abandoned Islam in favour of Christianity; language; inter-marriage and conversion. While her discussion of all of these topics is careful and well informed, her analysis of space as a factor in inter-religious relations is particularly thought-provoking. Safran traces the shifting patterns of the spaces of interreligious interactions. She traces the slow evolution of settlement space, from Muslims living fairly separately from Christian dwellings and towns, to Muslims settling in predominantly Christian towns. Continuing her examination of spaces of interaction, she discusses the impact of public ceremonies, festivals, and punishments whether Christian or Muslim, and then the symbolic capital of building and the decoration of buildings, for example the Cordoba mosque, but also the greater concern to diminish the ornamentation of synagogues and churches. The martyrdoms become a kind of extension of this analysis, for the very public nature of their renunciation of Islam and their subsequent execution becomes part of the interreligious negation of space, even as those events serve to segway into the other topics under analysis for this chapter.

Chapter three, “Between enemies and friends”, despite her protestations that Muslim legal sources serve poorly to give any sense of individual interpersonal relations, manages to come as close as possible to doing precisely that. Here continuing with some of the themes of the previous chapter, she details cases involving daily interactions with which Muslim jurists wrestled, such as giving or accepting gifts on non-Muslim holidays, attending one another’s marriages, what to do if a Christian mother and wife of a Muslim man, wishes to bury her child among her own people, or how to deal with Muslim business partnerships with Christians or Jews. She also points to ways in which Muslim jurists used arguments of purity and pollution to mark the spaces used by non-Muslims as problematic, seemingly to discourage their use and any concept of their validity to a Muslim audience.

All in all, Janina Safran’s book is carefully researched, well written, and impressive in the number and depth of details she was able to draw from her chosen sources. Her analysis is thoughtful and thought-provoking without overstepping the bounds of what her sources can indicate. One may lament that the book is predominantly about Muslim-Christian relations, but, as she warned in the beginning of her monograph, most of the Jewish sources for al-Andalus, post-date the period under consideration. Her book serves as a model for anyone wishing to draw from Muslim legal texts as sources for pre-modern history.