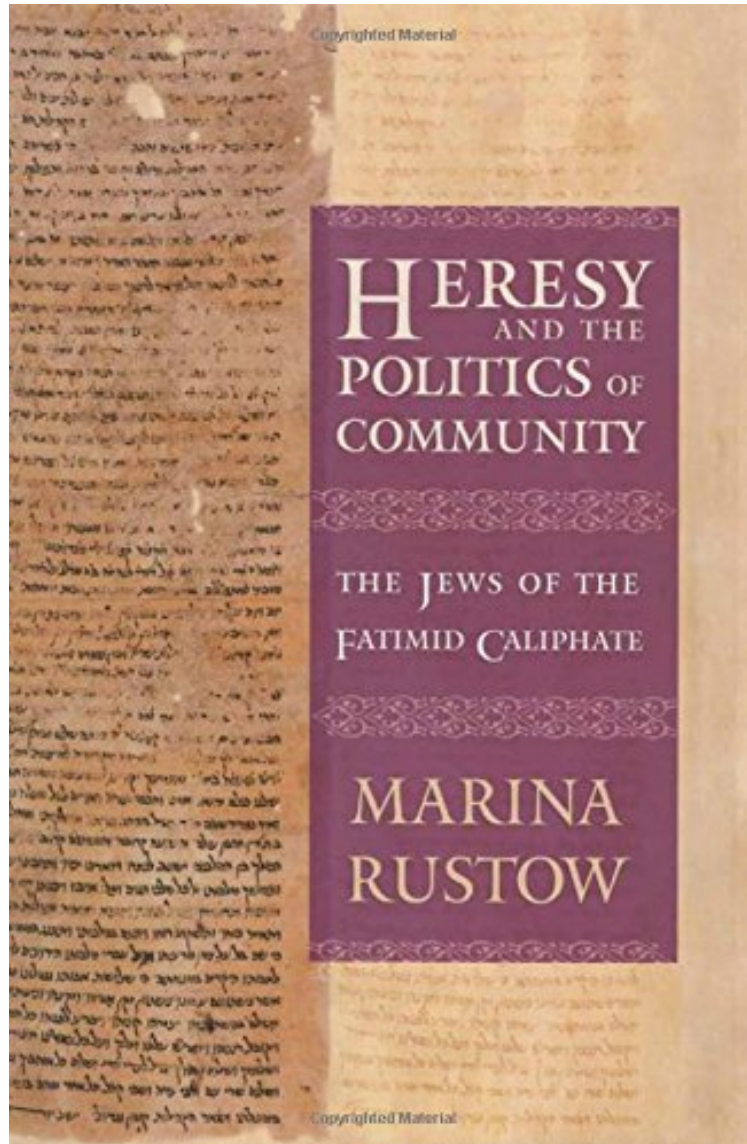


[Pdf free] Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate (Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past)

Heretical and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate (Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past)

Marina Rustow

**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*



#2930958 in Books Cornell University Press 2008-07-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 10.00 x 1.00 x 7.01, 1.96 #File Name: 0801445825472 pages | File size: 55.Mb

Marina Rustow : Heretical and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate (Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my

time, and all praised Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate (Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent research of the relations between Karaites and rabbanites Jews ...By Sami MangoubiExcellent research of the relations between Karaites and rabbanites Jews under Islamic rule during the 9th to 12th century. Very well written and very pleasurable to read.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Stories of Jewish unity (and sometimes not so much)By Michael LewynI had always thought that Karaites and rabbinic Jews were mortal enemies, but this book shows that (in the pre-Crusades Middle East) that this was anything but true. First of all, Rustow shows (based on Cairo Geniza documents) that there were really three major halachic communities in many places: Karaites, rabbinic Jews who followed rabbis based in Iraq, and other rabbinic Jews who followed rabbis based in Israel. We owe the tradition of non-anonymous, grammar-oriented Bible commentaries to the first group, the Talmud (and most modern halacha) to the second, and the Masoretic text of the Torah to the third. Karaites were more likely than other Jews to hold high office in Cairo (the capital of the Fatimid caliphate in the 10th century), so Rabbanites often needed favors from them; for example, rabbinic leadership at the highest levels was appointed by the caliphs, and Karaite courtiers were often helpful in this regard. Rabbanites and Karaites married each other, prayed in each other's congregations now and then, and contributed money to each other's yeshivot (religious schools). I found a chapter on marriage contracts to be especially interesting; where Rabbanites married Karaites, marriage contracts often specified how to negotiate religious differences (usually specifying that each spouse had to respect the other's stringencies, but, surprisingly, saying little about how to raise children). On the other hand, rabbinic leaders had to fight with their own side's zealots; for example, in 1029 a mob of Rabbanites in Jerusalem agitated to excommunicate the Karaites, but were stopped by the leadership. The gaon (essentially, chief rabbi) of the Israel Rabbanites wrote, in words that ring true even today: "[Should we excommunicate] those who spread gossip? But most [engage] in gossip! .. anyone who performs magic? But many-- both men and women--- do it! ... Are there no commandments left for us to uphold except [those dividing Rabbanites and Karaites]?" The book concludes with a comparison to 12th century Spain, where Rabbanites sometimes suppressed Karaites. Why was there so much less religious tolerance in Spain? Rustow suggests that 1) most Jewish courtiers were Rabbanites and Karaites were few and powerless, and 2) because of the constant wars between Christians and Muslims, the rabbinic majority felt that "any successful attack on rabbinic tradition and its exclusive legitimacy would render Judaism and the Jews vulnerable to the attacks of Christians and Muslims." 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A study of Jewish gossip of the middle ages. By Kindle Customer Marina Rustow writes on her subject with considerable amount of Jewish wit (one may even call it Jewish sarcasm). Her excerpt on how Ysuf al-Sijilms, the head of the Iraqi community of Ramla, foresaw the earthquake of 1033 in a dream is hilarious. In this event one can see parallels with the story of how Umar bin al-Khattab and some other Companions dreamt the wording of the Muslim prayer call on a 'communal dream' in Medina along with the Prophet Muhammad. I recommend this book to all interested in the contents of the Cairo Geniza.

In a book with a bold new view of medieval Jewish history, written in a style accessible to nonspecialists and students as well as to scholars in the field, Marina Rustow changes our understanding of the origins and nature of heresy itself. Scholars have long believed that the Rabbanites and Karaites, the two major Jewish groups under Islamic rule, split decisively in the tenth century and from that time forward the minority Karaites were deemed a heretical sect. Karaites affirmed a right to decide matters of Jewish law free from centuries of rabbinic interpretation; the Rabbanites, in turn, claimed an unbroken chain of scholarly tradition. Rustow draws heavily on the Cairo Geniza, a repository of papers found in a Rabbanite synagogue, to show that despite the often fierce arguments between the groups, they depended on each other for political and financial support and cooperated in both public and private life. This evidence of remarkable interchange leads Rustow to the conclusion that the accusation of heresy appeared sporadically, in specific contexts, and that the history of permanent schism was the invention of polemicists on both sides. Power shifted back and forth fluidly across what later commentators, particularly those invested in the rabbinic claim to exclusive authority, deemed to have been sharply drawn boundaries. Heresy and the Politics of Community paints a portrait of a more flexible medieval Eastern Mediterranean world than has previously been imagined and demonstrates a new understanding of the historical meanings of charges of heresy against communities of faith. Historians of premodern societies will find that, in her fresh approach to medieval Jewish and Islamic culture, Rustow illuminates a major issue in the history of religions.

"The Cairo Geniza documents have been at the center of Jewish scholarship for over a century. Rustow has reviewed the medieval and modern models that emerged on the basis of the rich polemical literature and challenges them against the extant contemporary correspondence that describe the actual interactions. . . . This well-written and reader-friendly major contribution is accessible to neophyte and scholar alike, and will engender a new, nuanced view of the social relations among Jews and Muslims in the medieval Mediterranean. Highly recommended." Choice "Rustow's book

provides us fascinating new insights into the history of Jewish Eastern communities of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine during the crucial and politically unstable period of the rule of the Fatimid caliphs. . . . Her focus on documentary and epistolary sources and on the caliphal administration allows Rustow to present a picture of Rabbanite-Karaite relations which differs from the more standard views of modern scholarship . . . that present Karaism as a separatist 'sect' and a threat to Judaism. . . . On the contrary, Rustow shows, the Karaites constituted one among other Jewish groups of the period and were fully engaged in Jewish community life as a whole."Journal of Jewish Studies "Beautifully written and brilliantly conceived, this book is more a voyage of discovery than an academic monograph. It takes us to a timethe Middle Agesand a placethe Middle Eastin which there were many different visions of Judaism's future, and it teaches us that this future emerged out of an infinitely richer dialogue than most of us thought possible. Marina Rustow shows us how the jostling of many peoples has shaped our understanding of the history of rabbinic Judaism's emergence. Her crowd of characters ranges from the sages of Babylon and Palestine to the Sultans of Cairo, from desperate captives pleading for ransom to the proud princes of rival Jewish communities, from pillaging crusaders to modern manuscript hunters. The result of their polyphonic interactions is an extraordinarily learned yet lyrical book that transforms our knowledge of how the various different visions of Judaism dealt with their differences in the distant past, and thereby gives us a new sense of how they might do so in the present."David Nirenberg, Committee on Social Thought and Department of History, The University of Chicago "Heresy and the Politics of Community is a fine piece of historical scholarship, presenting the new and exciting idea that the sectarian divide between Rabbanites and Qaraites in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Middle East not only was not as deep and antagonistic as usually assumed but also hardly existed at all in certain areas. Marina Rustow substantiates this claim through the judicious marshalling of evidence in a book that is highly professional, well conceived, and well executed. It will have a definite impact on the study of medieval Jewish history and is an important contribution to our understanding of Jewish religion and life."Daniel J. Lasker, Norbert Blechner Professor of Jewish Values at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev "Estrangement and rift between medieval Rabbanite and Qaraite Jews is a commonplace of modern scholarship. Through a detailed analysis of documentary sources from the Cairo Genizah, Marina Rustow brilliantly challenges this view. She proposes fresh insights into intellectually diversified Jewish life in Fatimid times."Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, Professor of Medieval Hebrew Palaeography, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris "Heresy and the Politics of Community is a superb book that indicates the remarkable value of the documentary materials in the Cairo Geniza. Using these materials, Rustow brilliantly revises the traditional picture of Rabbanite-Qaraite relations, which was based entirely on literary-polemical sources. In the process, she also amplifies considerably our understanding of Jewish communal functioning in the medieval Mediterranean world and contributes notably to the broader issue of mainstreams and so-called schisms on the medieval scene."Robert Chazan, Scheuer Professor of Jewish History, New York University "Relying on meticulous research of Genizah documents, Marina Rustow rewrites the history of the Jewish communities of the eastern Mediterranean during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Her nuanced assessment of the tripartite communal structure of the Jews of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria places the Qaraites at the very center of Jewish life and redefines the frequently shifting relationship among Babylonian, Palestinian, and Qaraite congregations and communities of that time and place. Heresy and the Politics of Community is a rich and brilliant study of the complex power relations within a minority religious community."Ross Brann, Cornell UniversityFrom the Back Cover"Heresy and the Politics of Community is a fine piece of historical scholarship, presenting the new and exciting idea that the sectarian divide between Rabbanites and Qaraites in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Middle East not only was not as deep and antagonistic as usually assumed but also hardly existed at all in certain areas. Marina Rustow substantiates this claim through the judicious marshalling of evidence in a book that is highly professional, well conceived, and well executed. It will have a definite impact on the study of medieval Jewish history and is an important contribution to our understanding of Jewish religion and life."-- Daniel J. Lasker, Norbert Blechner Professor of Jewish Values at Ben-Gurion University of the NegevAbout the AuthorMarina Rustow is Professor of Near Eastern Studies and History at Princeton University. She is a 2015 MacArthur Fellow and coeditor of Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition.