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This is a rich reference resource to most if not all of the work undertaken in several countries in the first decade of the 21st century on European Jewish studies. It is a worthy addition to the series of Arye Maimon »Kleine Schriften«, which have featured the work of such American scholars as David Nirenberg now at University of Chicago (published 2005) and Joseph Shatzmiller now at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina (2008). Another favorite American authority of the Maimon Institute has been William Chester Jordan of Princeton University. Hans-Jörg Gilomen at University of Zürich does credit to the great work radiating from the University of Trier prolific Institute, founded by and in response to the memory of the uniquely frontier-crossing scholar Herbert Fischer who renamed himself Arye Maimon in the traumatic 1930s.

At the core of this 88-page volume is Gilomen’s lecture delivered at Trier on 5 November, 2008. It is enriched by the annual report and gracious (even witty) foreword by Sigrid Schmitt, a full bibliography of Gilomen’s published work, a bibliography of the recent publications of the twenty collegial members of the Institute (Christoph Cluse, Jörg R. Müller, and of course Alfred Haverkamp perhaps the most prominent among them); by lists of the Institute’s visiting scholars, (nine) dissertations in progress, (seven) conferences, and numerous lectures delivered there and elsewhere of interest to Jewish Studies: all of this between 2005 and 2009. This listing is helpful as well as presumably exhaustive, providing inter alia a summary of the contributors and contributions to Müller’s »Beziehungsnetze aschkenasischer Juden während des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit« (2008). This exercise in cataloguing concludes with full bibliographical references (including ISBN numbers) to all the »Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden« published by the Arye Maimon Institut in collaboration with the Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden, and then of the eleven »Kleine Schriften« of which this was the most recent.

Gilomen’s 58-page, opulently footnoted lecture is a tightly argued, densely written continuation and at times reorientation of several scholarly traditions: that of Fischer-Maimon unsurprisingly, of Alfred Haverkamp, of František Graus (especially in conjunction with the critique by Jacques Le Goff and the parallel perspective of Roger Chartier), and more recently of Elliott Horowitz and Christoph Cluse. The magisterial shadow of Salo Baron is (inevitably) usually discernible: one might characterize Gilomen’s intellectual posture as one of freshly innovative reverence.
As he says at the beginning and (with somewhat differing nuance) at the end of his address, Jewish citizen status in the Empire in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries was always peculiar, based on distinctive, particularizing documents, and never led to full inclusion within the Gentile civic community. Indeed, it declined and became more restricted, as he shows through the semantic, juridical, and art-historical interpretation of the course of increasingly oppressive events. He ends with the provocative peroration: »Who could have misunderstood this fore-vision of the experience of the twentieth century?«

Gilomen’s argument blends data, ideational norms, and theoretical hypotheses throughout. Its divisions are roughly as follows: (1) Legal history based on juridical analysis of numerous cases involving Bürgerrecht ranging from the Rhineland to Austria (from Straßburg to Salzburg), in the north from Leiden to Berlin and Breslau, in the south following the northern face of the Alps from Freiburg-im-Breisgau to Salzburg; the citizen status of the Jews of Trento is the sole case from the southern face; (2) Intellectual history, especially Jewish awareness of their worsening situation; (3) Supporting evidence from visual objects of both Jewish self-awareness and mounting Christian hostility. Financial data abounds, though Gilomen appears wary of ultimate explanations from purely economic analysis. For him, the status of the medieval German Jewish community is inadequately explained by its »wirtschaftliche Funktion« (p. 27–29). Nor is much attention given to the narrative of violence. It is not clear to this reviewer whether Gilomen may consider both of those topics well exploited (if not quite exhausted) by the historical discourse of the last century and more.

These three categories of topic do not appear exclusively in clusters. The issue of concivilitas, for instance, appears in the midst of the juridical analysis of Bürgerrecht, yet is also a fine brief demonstration of Gilomen’s ease with intellectual history. It does, however, make the reader regret Gilomen’s exclusive emphasis on the Reich; it is hard at that moment not to recall the vivid assertion of that principle in Toledo in 1212, when the town authorities defended their Jewish concives from the anti-Semitic depredations of frustrated French crusaders. The treatment exclusively of the Germanophone provinces of the Holy Roman Empire is methodologically commendable, but an occasional comparative reference might help place the predicament of the Germanic Jewish communities in perspective.

This reviewer particularly liked the discussion of those communities as »Randgruppe, Minderheit, Sondergruppe?« (p. 43–48). Gilomen makes perceptive use of the insights of Graus, Le Goff, Chartier, and others on marginaux (essentially Randgruppen). He then moves on to extend the contribution of Horowitz (Reckless Rites, Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence, Princeton 2006) to the self-identity of these Jewish communities, which refused to see themselves as hopeless victims. The presentation of contemporary Christians as Edomites, materialistically idolatrous descendants of Esau, in liturgical prayers for the destruction of Christendom, is especially effective. Gilomen extends his persuasive handling of exegesis to a selective discussion of themes displayed in material objects from both Jewish and Christian milieux: his treatment of the hounds (Edomite Christians) chasing the inoffensive hares (Israelites) in the illuminations of the Kaufmann Haggadah (p. 39) is memorable.
The freshness, bordering on originality, of Gilomen’s handling of theory and exegesis, will make this immensely erudite Lecture of continuing value to those working in any aspect of Jewish Studies.