

## THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JUDAISM

Volume 5 examines the history of Judaism in the Islamic world from the rise of Islam in the early sixth century to the expulsion of Jews from Spain at the end of the fifteenth. This period witnessed radical transformations both within the Jewish community itself and in the broader contexts in which the Jews found themselves. The rise of Islam had a decisive influence on Jews and Judaism as the conditions of daily life and elite culture shifted throughout the Islamicate world. Islamic conquest and expansion affected the shape of the Jewish community as the center of gravity shifted west to the North African communities, and long-distance trading opportunities led to the establishment of trading diasporas and flourishing communities as far east as India. By the end of our period, many of the communities on the “other” side of the Mediterranean had come into their own – while many of the Jewish communities in the Islamicate world had retreated from their high-water mark.

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## THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JUDAISM

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# THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JUDAISM

VOLUME V

JEWES IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WORLD

EDITED BY

PHILLIP I. LIEBERMAN



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been more than twelve years since a committee of scholars convened to commission what would become volumes 5 and 6 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. In their proposal to Cambridge University Press, these scholars noted the need for a new, collaborative synthesis of Jewish life in the medieval period – a need made particularly pointed by the “ever-expanding corpus of primary materials and the ever-growing body of scholarly studies.” Those scholars – Elisheva Baumgarten, David Berger, Mark R. Cohen, Jane S. Gerber, Anna Sapir Abulafia, and Raymond P. Scheindlin – made these two volumes possible. In their proposal, they expressed the hope that these volumes would draw on “leading scholars in the field, who have produced definitive statements in their respective areas of expertise,” and so it is more than fitting that when the chapters in these volumes were ultimately commissioned, they themselves would each come to contribute at least one chapter to them. As the editor of volume 5, I thank them for conceiving of these volumes and their dedication to this cause.

As volumes 5 (*Jews in the Medieval Islamic World*), and 6 (*The Middle Ages: The Christian World*) complement one another, I have had the privilege of working closely with Robert Chazan, editor of volume 6. I am deeply in his debt for his supportive counsel, his sage advice, and for his unflagging confidence in my ability to bring this volume to completion. Our brilliant editor at Cambridge University Press, Beatrice Rehl, has been a fount of wisdom and an expert hand, always thoughtful and helpful with her guidance. It has truly been an honor and a pleasure to work with her. This volume also has the significant impress of Marina Rustow upon it, as she commissioned most of the chapters (including my own contribution!) and provided invaluable editorial feedback. One could not ask for a more generous colleague, and I offer her my thanks as well.

This volume would not be what it is without the patience and commitment of the scholars whose writing graces its pages. It has been a joy to collaborate with them. Often, upon reading the draft of one or another chapter, I would be in awe of the depths of understanding revealed by the writing before me – not simple erudition, which scholars often foolishly

imagine to be displayed by the composition of copious footnotes, but genuine insight into the lives of the Jews of the medieval Islamic world and into the study of the Jews of the medieval Islamic world, unparalleled elsewhere in the literature. I hope that the publication of this volume brings them as much joy as it brings me. It is, therefore, with sadness that I note that two of the contributors to this volume – Ángel Sáenz-Badillos and Vivian B. Mann – will not be able to share in this joy, as they have both gone on to their eternal reward. This volume serves as a testament to their enduring impact as scholars. I thank S. J. Pearce and Shalom Sabar for picking up the quills laid down by these two individuals who modeled in their work and in their personal characters the best of what it means to be a “humanist.”

I greatly appreciate Ross Brann and Arnold E. Franklin’s willingness to go above and beyond their own contributions and to provide critical feedback on my own introduction. To the extent that errors remain there – or elsewhere in the volume – the responsibility lies with me, of course. I beg the reader’s forgiveness for any such errors.

Over the course of the past two years during my service as editor for this volume, there have been some surprises. For instance, when I opened the chapter sent to me by Christian Julien Robin, I realized that he had written his chapter in French. My thanks go to Jason Harris for translating this chapter speedily and expertly. It has been my good fortune to have an office on the floor directly below his.

I offer my final thanks to my family for surrendering me to the computer during the long hours I was sequestered working on this project. It means the world to me that my family – particularly my wife, Yedida Eisenstat, and my son, Gabriel Isaiah Ackerman-Lieberman – seem to take as much joy and pride in my stewardship of this project as I do. I lovingly dedicate this volume to my daughter, Sadie Meira “Calculus” Lieberman, who for the entirety of her days thus far has had to share me with *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 5*. It is my great hope that she will do more with this volume than simply tear out its pages for fun.