

Foreword

This book came into being in response to a threefold need: scholarly, political, and pedagogical.

In the first place, we noticed a gap in international historiography. Although many studies have been published in various countries on the fate of the Jewish communities in one Islamic context or another, far fewer attempts have been made to provide a comprehensive view of the history of the Jews in the Islamic world. The most recent and most remarkable of these is an enormous enterprise, published in six volumes by Brill in 2010, the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. But there was still no major survey that placed the story of the relationship between Jews and Muslims within a global history where Christendom, and then more generally, Europe and the West, was constantly interfering. Above all, no book had focused on that *relationship* or explored the thousand and one modalities of mutual influence that it covered.

Such a scholarly orientation also has a political dimension, which we will not deny. Our conviction is that only by tracing the historical *longue durée* with the methods of the human sciences and by means of an interdisciplinary approach can we shed light on the vicissitudes of the present and counter the generally negative representations of the Other.

The *History of Jewish-Muslim Relations* is therefore the “biography” of a living and complex relationship, which we have chosen to present within a pedagogical perspective. In that aim, this book aspires to be as accessible as possible to the non-academic reader. It consists of four parts, easily identifiable by their dominant color: three chronological sections (medieval period, modern period, contemporary period), followed by a long section called “Transversalities,” which provides syntheses of the religious, philosophical, artistic, and sociological themes. The incessant interference between synchrony and diachrony is thereby neutralized, as much as was possible in this extraordinarily rich history.

We wanted this book to be intelligible when read from beginning to end but also when consulted at random. Two modules of short texts are intercalated among the long, comprehensive articles: the “Nota bene,” against a colored background, provide portraits or focus on one particular subject or another; the “Counterpoints,” indicated by quotation marks, present excerpts from historical texts. Many cross-references and text boxes defining vocabulary, as well as two indexes at the end of the volume, allow readers to move around in the book by following developments around a word, an individual, or a theme.

The decision to create a richly illustrated book belonged to the same threefold necessity. In the first place, it fulfilled the scholarly need: reproductions in the margins of the articles have the value of historical evidence. To meet the political need, a collection of documents and works presents the full range of relations between Jews and Muslims, from the most extreme antagonism to the remarkable parallels, to the most advanced artistic cooperation. As for the pedagogical need, how better to train the eye to read the present than by running through the images—negative or positive—that enriched the past?

Also of note, this publication has had an international dimension from the start. Conceived and edited in France, the book is appearing simultaneously in English, courtesy of the prestigious Princeton University Press. Beyond the importance of this translation, which will be able to reach other audiences (and, in particular, readers in dozens of the countries dealing with the problems under discussion), this decision highlights a peculiarity of the book. It is well known that the Anglo-American mode of writing history differs appreciably from that of continental Europe, and each mode has influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, the historiography of the countries in question here. In the case at hand, the choices of the editors and of the scholarly board allowed a subtle mix of styles and methodologies, thus enhancing the collective nature of this publishing venture.

This book, then, aspires to be a beginning as much as a definitive work, a foundation for future research and, let us hope, a catalyst for future dialogue.

Jean Mouttapa and Anne-Sophie Jouanneau
Éditions Albin Michel, Paris