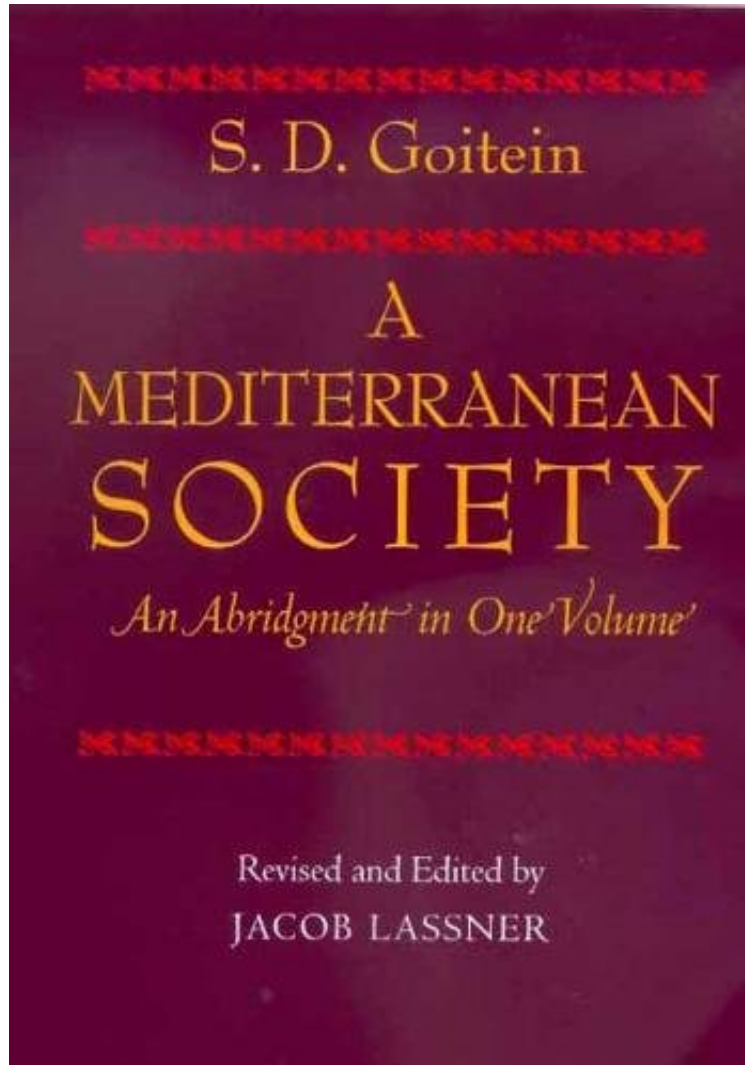


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## A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgment in One Volume

*S. D. Goitein*

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**S. D. Goitein : A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgment in One Volume** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgment in One Volume:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A rare view into another worldBy John G. BennettThis is on the one hand a relatively specialized book. It is a condensation of a purely scholarly work which originally filled 5 volumes, and which in turn was distilled from tens of thousands of fragments of documents dating from old Cairo, between about 970 CE and 1250 CE. Prof. Goitein made it his life work to turn these fragments into a coherent picture. What makes it mesmerizing for a layman like me is the rich view into another way of life. A life where every ordinary

thing - family, love, commerce, property, religion, law, travel, taxes, education, slavery, ambition, scholarship - it all just comes together differently. The documents are not merely made coherent, but you come to appreciate how, and why, people 1,000 years ago organized their society and themselves to survive and prosper in a difficult, closed, and risky world. When you finish you will have a new insight into not just the world of antiquity, but some societies even today where the social norms resemble old Cairo more than they do the western tradition. Still alien to me, but less incomprehensible. 1 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Goitein condensed By Peter Ellinger Thoughtful but boring. Still, you can find in it information needed, for instance on figures like Ibn Ezra and Maimonides.

S. D. Goitein's magisterial five-volume work on Jewish communities in the medieval Mediterranean world offers an unparalleled view of how people lived, traveled, worshiped, and conducted their economic and social affairs. Living under Muslim rule, the Jews became increasingly urbanized and played a significant part in an expanding world economy. As major actors in the flourishing intellectual life of the period, they forged much of what constitutes traditional Judaism today and served as a conduit of Islamic learning to the Christian West. Goitein's masterpiece is now abridged and reworked by Jacob Lassner in a single volume that captures the essential narratives and contexts of the original. To understand the value of this distillation, we need to picture the remarkable, all-but-impenetrable cache of unique letters and documents found by accident in a geniza, or repository of sacred writings, in Old Cairo. These materials, unlike historical chronicles and literary texts of the time, represent the living experiences of people in a wide variety of settings throughout the entire Mediterranean and stretching as far east as the Indian subcontinent. Goitein explored and interpreted these texts as no other scholar had. Lassner, in turn, makes Goitein's findings available to a wide audience and then moves on to raise a host of new and tantalizing questions about the Jews of the Geniza and the relationship of their community to the hegemonic Muslim society.

"The abridgment is excellent, and the treatment of the topics ought to have a wide appeal to students and scholars alike.... Lassner has brought to vibrant and new life a great scholar's masterpiece." From the Inside Flap "Lassner has done a great service to the community. . . . The greatest value of this outstanding contribution is in making the vast geniza data accessible, while providing contextualization." Reuven Firestone, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion "The abridgment is excellent, and the treatment of the topics ought to have a wide appeal to students and scholars alike. . . . Lassner has brought to vibrant and new life a great scholar's masterpiece." Rudi Paul Lindner, University of Michigan