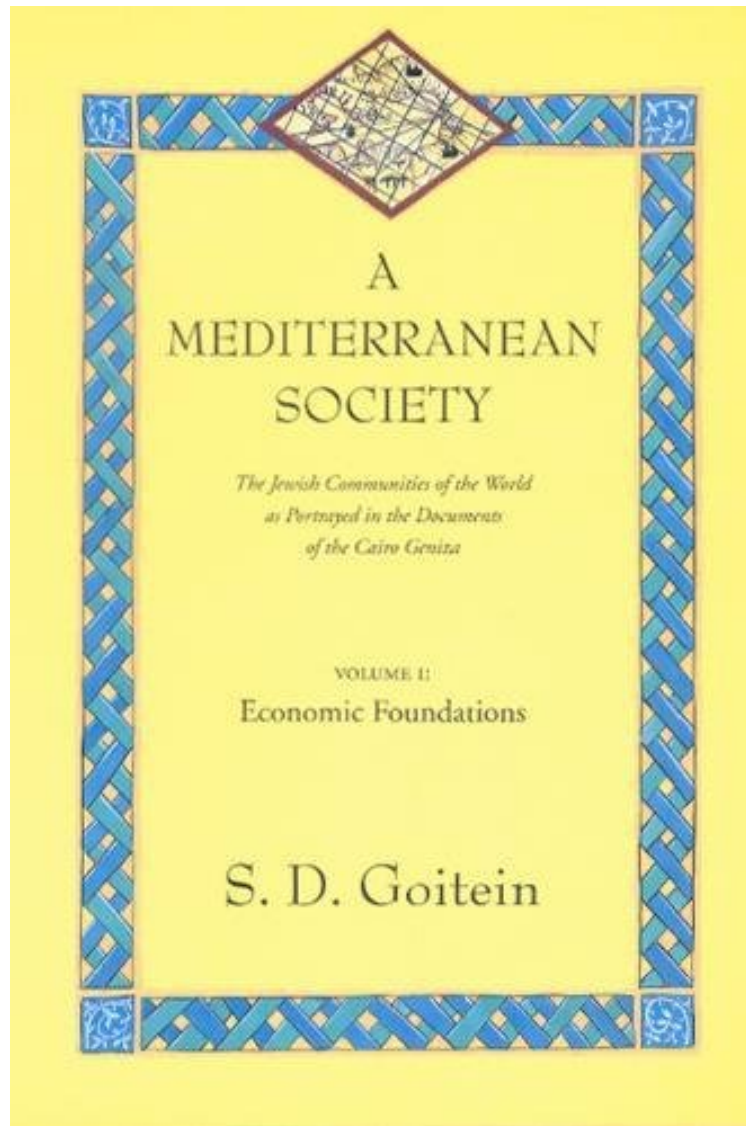


(Mobile pdf) A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. I: Economic Foundations (Near Eastern Center, UCLA)

## **A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. I: Economic Foundations (Near Eastern Center, UCLA)**

*S. D. Goitein*

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**S. D. Goitein : A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. I: Economic Foundations (Near Eastern Center, UCLA)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish

Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. I: Economic Foundations (Near Eastern Center, UCLA):

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Mediterranean Society By M. Mulberg Goitein is an undisputed master of the Cairo Geniza, the eclectic collection of 20,000 documents, including marriage contracts, civil procedure and business contracts, marriage and divorce instruments, all shedding light on the most fascinating Jewish (and Islamic) Mediterranean society extending from North Africa, to Egypt and Palestine in the 10th to 13th centuries. However, unless you're working on a PhD dissertation, skip the above book and get the one volume compilation/synopsis of all of Goitein's five volumes. Volume I alone has way too much detail to be of interest to anyone except the scholar. By the way, if anyone thinks that medieval society was primitive, they should read the high moral standards exhibited by medieval Jewish society, both in terms of charity given to their co-religionists in distant parts of the Mediterranean world, as well as the high business ethical and moral standards exhibited by medieval man. And working for someone as an employee (as opposed to running your own business) was considered an abomination by the Geniza people. Surprisingly too, divorce was fairly common in this era. As Koheles (Ecclesiastes) said with prescience: there is nothing new under the sun.<sup>2</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful. classic of the field. By Igor H. Souza this is a 6-volume set. Goitein's text is entertaining, well-written and full of anecdotes. This is a classic in the field and a good read for non-specialists.

This six-volume "portrait of a Mediterranean personality" is a composite portrait of the individuals who wrote the personal letters, contracts, and all other manuscript fragments that found their way into the Cairo Geniza. Most of the fragments from the Geniza, a storeroom for discarded writings that could not be thrown away because they might contain the name of God, had been removed to Cambridge University Library and other libraries around the world. Professor Goitein devoted the last thirty years of his long and productive life to their study, deciphering the language of the documents and organizing what he called a "marvelous treasure trove of manuscripts" into a coherent, fascinating picture of the society that created them. It is a rich, panoramic view of how people lived, traveled, worshiped, and conducted their economic and social affairs. The first and second volumes describe the economic foundations of the society and the institutions and social and political structures that characterized the community. The remaining material, intended for a single volume describing the particulars of the way people lived, blossomed into three volumes, devoted respectively to the family, daily life, and the individual. The divisions are arbitrary but helpful because of the wealth of information. The author refers throughout to other passages in his monumental work that amplify what is discussed in any particular section. The result is an incomparably clear and immediate impression of how it was in the Mediterranean world of the tenth through the thirteenth century. Volume I, subtitled Economic Foundations, gives an overview of the Mediterranean (history, peoples, culture) during the high middle ages; discusses the working class; the business world, and government's role in commerce; and provides a complete description of travel and seafaring.

"The work is remarkable for its sheer magnitude, but more particularly for the humane sensibility and imagination, the skill, and the formidable learning that it reflects."--"The Haskins Medal Committee From the Inside Flap" One of the best comprehensive histories of a culture in this century." Amos Funkenstein, Stanford University