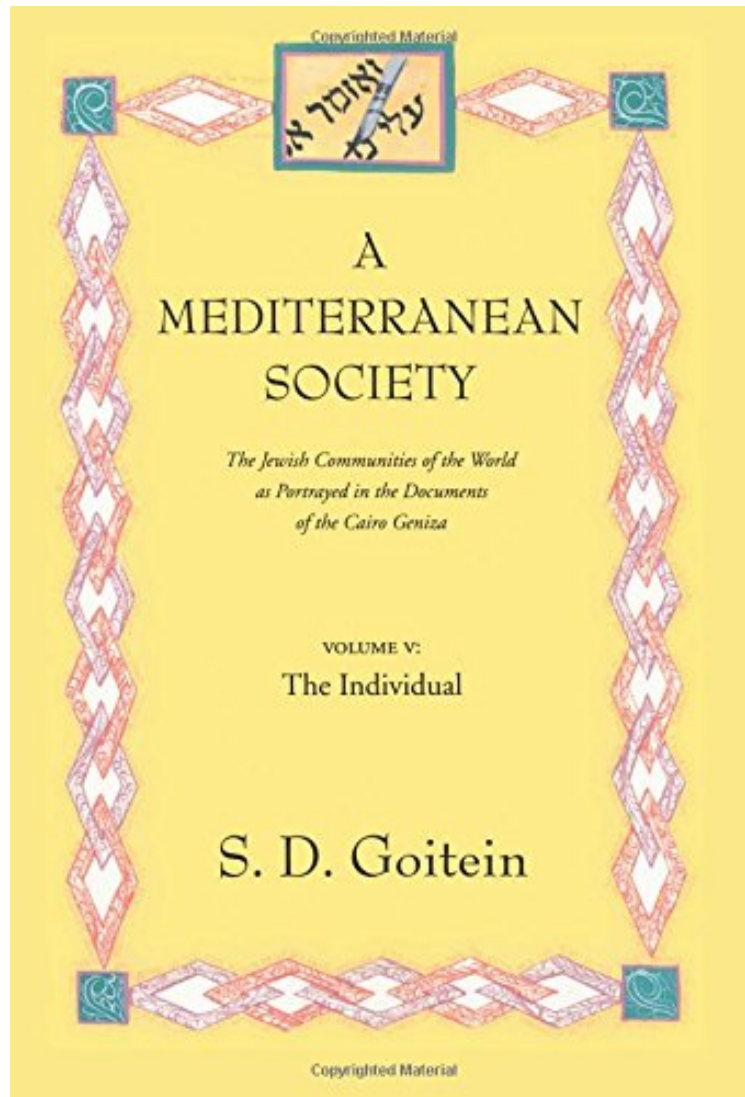


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A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. V: The Individual (Near Eastern Center, UCLA)

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. V: The Individual (Near Eastern Center, UCLA) before purchasing it in order to gauge 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. V: The Individual (Near

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1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. MasterpieceBy Prof Chibli MallatA masterpiece by any standard: scholarship, humanism, style.If you want to live Cairo around 1000 AD, this is your trip down nonfictional memory lane.Destined to be the model of archival work in the classical Mideast for at least two hundred years.

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 V, subtitled *The Individual*, draws a portrait of the individual a social person who mingled within the community; addressed the challenges of poverty, illness, aging, and death; possessed friends, enemies, and lovers; prayed and responded within a religious community; learned, created, thought and taught.

"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 CommitteeFrom the Inside Flap"One of the best comprehensive histories of a culture in this century."Amos Funkenstein, Stanford University