



BRILL

MEDIEVAL ENCOUNTERS 27 (2021) 293–307

Medieval
Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture
Encounters
in Confluence and Dialogue
brill.com/me

Introduction



Money Matters: Individuals, Communities and Everyday Economic Interactions between Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe

This special issue of *Medieval Encounters* offers new perspectives for studying the activities and the roles of Jews in the medieval economy.¹ Scholarship to date has tended to approach these subjects from a communal perspective, discussing the activities of Jews as an organized group rather than as individuals, and emphasizing collective norms, legislation, ideologies, and policies. In such studies, the status of Jews as a tolerated religious minority was the point of departure and religious difference was paramount.² While these perspectives were undoubtedly a defining feature of medieval Jewish life, a top-down communal perspective is just one facet, albeit an important one, of the economic activities of medieval Jews. In addition, most studies focused on moments of change, tension, and crisis, rather than on the ongoing roles of Jews both within their communities and in interaction with their Christian neighbors.

This collection of articles looks at the Jews' everyday economic interactions, primarily with Christians, shining a particular light on the choices and

1 This volume originated in a conference held in Jerusalem in Dec. 2019. Some of the papers were reworked and appear here in revised form. My thanks to all the contributors to this volume, and particularly to Nureet Dermer, Aviya Doron, and Andreas Lehnertz who helped plan and organize the original conference and commented on this introduction. A special, additional, thanks to Nureet Dermer and Aviya Doron who also accompanied the process of preparing this collection. Thanks as well to Judah Galinsky, Daniel Lord Smail, Ryan Szpiech, and the anonymous reviewer of the journal for their comments and suggestions on this piece. The publication of the entire volume, including this article, was supported by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 681507).

2 These issues are discussed at length below.