

ŠEDINOVÁ, Jiřina et al. *Dialog myšlenkových proudů středověkého judaismu: Mezi izolací a integrací*. [The Dialogue of Intellectual Currents in Medieval Judaism: Between Isolation and Integration] Praha: Academia, 2011. 580 p. ISBN 978-80-200-1910-3. In Czech.

This volume is a collaborative undertaking of a new generation of Czech scholars of Judaism, raised under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague. Some of the contributors are already established scholars with published monographs (Dita Rukriglová, Daniel Boušek, and Pavel Sládek), and others are advanced PhD students. An eminent Czech historian of Judaism, Jiřina Šedinová, contributed an introduction and an excursus; the English foreword was provided by Hillel Kieval, an American scholar of modern Jewish history in East Central Europe.

According to Šedinová, the purpose of the volume is to explore various facets of Jewish interaction with majority society in the course of the Middle Ages and to draw a balanced picture of tendencies towards isolation and integration in both Jewish and non-Jewish thought and practices. Six extensive chapters – two of them over one hundred pages long (ch. II and ch. V) – cover a period of over one thousand years and discuss areas on no less than three continents. Markéta Pnina Rubešová's contribution (ch. I) is an ambitious attempt to offer a methodologically thoughtful and balanced outline of the Jewish legal status in medieval Europe, firmly rooted in the context of general history. Rubešová interprets various facets of the Jewish status in Christendom by placing it in the nexus of social, economic, and cultural relations between groups and individuals on national and regional levels, claiming that the '[h]istory of the Jews does not start in the Jewish community, but rather outside of it' (p. 23). Furthermore, she highlights the role of legal sources for our understanding of identity formation on both sides of the imaginary barricade. Yet, symbolic significance notwithstanding, medieval legislation had to manoeuvre between theological principles and down-to-earth considerations of everyday life. In the absence of a unified juridical system, medieval legal practice was constantly re-born as a result of negotiation between conflicting normative systems and claims to power. Rubešová shows that entanglement in various webs of interests and evolution of Church doctrine was at the root of Jewish vulnerability in medieval Christendom.

In contrast to Western Christendom, Islam offered its 'unbelieving' subjects an equally theologically underpinned, yet less volatile system of institutionalised tolerance. Unlike their co-religionists living 'under the rule of Edom' (the name of a Canaanite nation used in Late Antiquity to denote the Roman Empire and later the Christian West as a whole), the Jews in Muslim countries were not singled out as a unique group of outsiders – rather, they were part of a class of legally acknowledged religious communities, *ahl al-dhimma*. As a result, their existence *qua* Jews was never questioned; it was merely their subordination that had to be enforced, on both practical and symbolic levels. Daniel Boušek's exhaustive overview of legal principles underlining the status of non-Muslims in Muslim-dominated societies provides a framework for what ultimately becomes a lively description of the social history of Jewish-Muslim relations (ch. II). Focusing mainly on the classical period of Islam, Boušek's contribution illustrates in great detail various ways in which the basic tenets of

Islamic theory of inter-religious co-existence, such as *dhimma*, Umar's covenant, *jizya*, or *ghiyār*, were interpreted and applied in practice across the Muslim dominion, often highlighting the differences between individual *madhāhib*. He also examines Jewish perceptions of their own status in Muslim lands. Particularly interesting is the discussion of seemingly secondary, yet symbolically powerful, ways used to highlight the differences between religious communities in situations when otherwise clear-cut social boundaries might become blurred, such as in a crowded marketplace or steamy public bath. They reveal Islam's preoccupation with proper order in the society rather than attempts to isolate minorities from majority culture. In fact, segregation and integration could even go hand in hand and yield surprising results.

One of the best examples of the sort of Janus-faced quality that Jewish intellectual life under Muslim rule could acquire is presented by Dita Rukriglová (ch. III). Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/1022 – 1058) was for generations known only as one of the most accomplished Jewish poets of the Iberian Golden Age. His masterpiece, the liturgical hymn *The Royal Crown* (*Keter malkhut*), is not unfamiliar to the Slovak reader.¹ However, Ibn Gabirol had an unexpected 'alter ego'. Until two pieces of seemingly unrelated manuscript evidence were put together by Solomon Munk in the mid-nineteenth century, no one would have guessed that Avicbron, a mysterious Neoplatonist whose queer theories of universal form and matter had provoked sharp condemnation from Albertus Magnus, and Ibn Gabirol were actually one and the same person. Living as a professional poet fully integrated into Andalusian court culture, Ibn Gabirol left behind a vast oeuvre at the time of his premature death at the age of thirty seven. He wrote religious and secular poetry, ethical treatises, and philosophy. Despite the seemingly disparate nature of his interests, Rukriglová argues convincingly for the presence of a unifying principle underlying Ibn Gabirol's thought and literary activity. In a brief excursus, Jiřina Šedinová discusses the appropriation of motives and formal approaches used in non-Jewish literature and art by the Jews, focusing on the disparity of attitudes towards this type of integration in various areas of Jewish settlement. She also presents examples from her translations of works of some of the most important Sephardic poets.

The intellectual activity of Jews in medieval Bohemia and the level of their linguistic integration in broader society is explored by Lenka Uličná (ch. IV). The chapter is appended by a valuable list of Old Czech glosses in Hebrew religious writings. Pavel Sládek offers a meticulous analysis of the so-called 'Prague Jewish Renaissance' in the wider context of both external and internal intellectual developments influencing Jewish thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (ch. V). He discusses controversies surrounding the emergence of *Halachic* (legal) codes in the sixteenth century and their social and institutional repercussions. He also explores points of contact with 'Greek wisdom' (philosophy), humanism, and the ultimate triumph of Lurianic *Kabbalah*, Jewish mystical teaching moulded by a group of 'religious virtuosos' settled down in the Palestinian town of Safed. The upheaval of Jewish mystical thought in Central and Eastern Europe was fuelled by the activities of these mystics and their followers. Sládek

¹ *Koruna kráľovstva rabi Šlomo ben Gabirola*, transl. by Mária Mičaninová et al. Prešov: Michal Vaško, 2003; Praha: Bergman, 2010.

discusses the role played by Isaiah Horowitz (ca. 1570 – 1626) in the process of the dissemination of Lurianic *Kabbalah* in Ashkenaz. Offspring of an important Prague Jewish family, Horowitz eventually immigrated to the Land of Israel and is buried in Tiberias, only a stone's throw from the grave of Maimonides. The final chapter by Pavel Čech is dedicated to the history of Sephardic Jews in early modern Amsterdam (ch. VI). Special attention is paid to strategies of dealing with forced converts to Christianity, *conversos*, and their re-appropriation by the Jewish community.

It is not easy to pin down the relationship between isolationist and integrationist tendencies in a group fostered by an exclusivist culture which is at the same time engaged in constant interaction with broader society. For the historian of Judaism, most studies in this volume present little new data. Hence, more emphasis should have been placed on its analysis rather than mere description. Some chapters would also have benefited greatly from paying closer attention to discussions in recent historiography (especially ch. I and III). Still, the authors of this volume have succeeded in presenting the Czech reader, including non-specialists, with an important resource for understanding the complexities of Jewish medieval history. On top of that, some chapters provide information and insight relevant for students of the history of the Middle East and Islam as well.

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WANNER, Jan. *Ve stínu studené války. Střední východ v letech Eisenhowerovy doktríny 1956 – 1960*. [In the Shadow of the Cold War. The Middle East in the Years of the Eisenhower Doctrine 1956 – 1960.] Prague: Lidové noviny Publishing House, 2011. 568 p. ISBN 978-80-7422-094-4. In Czech.

Few books will so fully and comprehensively guide the reader with their depth, breadth and mastery of argument as Jan Wanner's new monograph of the political developments in the Middle East during the second term of Eisenhower's presidency. In more than 500 pages the author has managed to tell the story of the Eisenhower Doctrine and its impact on the Middle Eastern Arab countries. The book is truly a detailed account of the trail of American foreign policy in the region. It focuses on Arab-superpower relations from 1957 until the end of 1960.

The book is divided into two parts, each of which contains five chapters each. The first part is entitled "Containing the Arab Nationalism". This period began with the US introduction of the Eisenhower Doctrine for the defence of the Middle East and ended with the merger of Egypt and Syria in a unitary state called the United Arab Republic. In the interval, two crises occurred in Jordan and Syria. Analyzing them, the author shed light not only on the application of the doctrine but also on the genesis of the Egyptian-Syrian union.

The Suez War helped Jamal Abd an-Nasir fully appreciate the radical shift in the international balance of power. No longer could Britain and France, the two traditional