

Preface

The relations between the Muslim majority and members of the Jewish and Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire as well as in pre-modern Iran received a series of new impulses from the 15th and 16th centuries onwards, which were reflected in intensified encounters in the intellectual and literary, as well as the social and political spheres. The most important impulse in the Ottoman Empire for a new social and intellectual flourishing of the Jews in particular was the immigration of Jewish exiles from the Iberian Peninsula in the aftermath of the Spanish Reconquista of 1492, while by the mid-17th century it was especially the sweeping but short-lived messianic movement that arose around Shabbetai Zvi (1626-1672) that had a major impact on the Jewish communities within the Empire and beyond, and that affected relations between Jews and Muslims. In Safavid and Qajar Iran, by contrast, it was the increasing presence of Christian, initially mostly Catholic, missionaries that constituted the main impetus for interreligious intellectual encounters. From the 19th century onwards they were joined by Protestant missionaries, mainly from Britain. In the Ottoman Empire, where native Christians of different denominations were numerous, the foreign missionary effort seems to have had less of an impact than in Iran. On the other hand, the Jewish communities in the latter country did not experience the same kind of renaissance enjoyed by their coreligionists in the Ottoman lands.

The purpose of the present volume is to bring into focus new textual materials that shed fresh light on the intellectual and social exchanges between Muslims and non-Muslims both in the Ottoman lands and in pre-modern Iran and to foster intensified cooperation between scholars from a variety of disciplines. One type of source that has hitherto been insufficiently explored is Muslim polemical and apologetical literature and the response it elicited. In more than one respect this genre of writings can supply information about the intellectual as well as the social position of the religious minorities. The arguments used, the events and persons referred to (even if at times only obliquely), as well as the literary sources quoted allow us to draw conclusions concerning the position of the respective minority. Moreover, the statements with which the authors preface or justify their works, the multiplication of polemical and apologetical tracts and the proliferation of manuscript copies of these same tracts, inform us about the socio-historical contexts in which these texts were written, received and subsequently reproduced. Judith Pfeiffer discusses a detailed refutation of Judaism written in Ottoman Turkish that was composed during the late 16th, early 17th century and attributed to Yūsuf Ibn Abī ‘Abd al-Dayyān, a Jewish convert to Islam. The comparatively large number of extant manuscripts and their geographical distribution suggest that the tract, which has so far completely escaped the attention of scholars, was very popular. Camilla Adang offers a translation and analysis of another

evidently widely received polemical tract by a Jewish convert to Islam, *al-Risāla al-Hādiya*, by one ‘Abd al-Salām al-Muhtadī. The introduction to the text includes a brief conversion account by the author who refers to Bāyazīd II (reigned 886/1481-918/1512) as the sultan ruling at the time of composition. Additional polemical tracts by converts from the Ottoman lands are offered in *editio princeps* by Monika Hasenmüller and Sabine Schmidtke. The first is a comprehensive tract against Christians by one Darwish ‘Alī, composed at the beginning of the 18th century; the second is a shorter epistle entitled *Risālat Ilzām al-yahūd fīmā za‘amū fī l-tawrāt min qibal ‘ilm al-kalām* by one al-Salām ‘Abd al-‘Allām, a former Jew who apparently also wrote at the time of Bāyazīd II. Dennis Halft’s contribution is a detailed study of the history and transmission of a popular 17th century Muslim polemical reply to Pietro Della Valle’s *Epistola ad nobilem Persam, Lawāmi‘-i rabbānī dar radd-i shubha-yi naṣrānī* by the Persian Twelver Shī‘ī author Sayyid Aḥmad ‘Alawī. The contribution by Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke likewise focusses on a Twelver Shī‘ī text that was widely received among Iranian readers although it originated in Iraq; on the basis of most extant manuscripts of the account of Baḥr al-‘Ulūm’s (d. 1797) famous debate with the Jews of Dhu l-Kifl the transmission of the account is studied and critical editions of the original Arabic version and its Persian translation are given. Paolo Lucca discusses the messianic movement of Shabbetai Zvi from a highly original point of view: that of two Armenian Christian chroniclers writing at the time of the events. An English translation is added to the Armenian texts, which show one of the authors to be sympathetic with the disillusioned Jews. Elisabetta Borromeo offers a close analysis of a series of 17th century nomination documents for Catholic bishops and archbishops in the Ottoman realm and discusses what these documents tell us about the relations between the Ottoman authorities and the official representatives of a religious minority. Heleen Murre-van den Berg analyses a chapter in the history of the Nestorian Syriac Church of the East, viz. its relations with its Muslim neighbours as reflected in a number of mostly unpublished texts in East-Syriac mainly from the 19th century. Rudi Matthee provides a detailed discussion of the changing attitudes of the Safavid rulers and the Iranian elite to Iberian missionaries. Although at first the latter were admired and appreciated as intellectuals and mediators between Iran and Catholic European rulers, support for them waned as the political and religious reality in Iran changed. Vera Moreen examines a number of representative, yet little studied texts in Judaeo-Persian from the Safavid period for what they tell us about the attitudes of Iranian Jews towards Islam and Muslims.

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The Editors

