Medieval Jewish History: Violence and Coexistence

November 27, 2006

- Housekeeping issues
- Divergent Jewish traditions in Islamic and Christian lands.
- Coexistence: In Islamic and Christian Lands
  - Occasional persecution in Islamic lands
  - Violence, expulsion in Christian lands

Housekeeping

- **Papers due this week**
- Sections are cancelled Dec. 11, 12
- Extra Review Sessions (Open)
  - Monday Dec 11, 11:00 (Key 0120)
  - Wed. Dec 13, 11:00 (Room TBA)
- Extra Credit possibilities

Extra Credit Possibilities: Secondary Sources

- Baskin, Jewish Women
  - Choose one chapter
  - Summarize argument
  - Choose primary sources we studied that either support or contradict the argument.
  - Discuss
- Cohen, Under Crescent and Cross
  - Using JSTOR or MDUSA (UM Libraries’ database) search for reviews of the book.
  - Read five reviews. Try to find at least one positive and at least one negative review. Give FULL CITATION
  - Discuss: What elements appear most controversial? What do reviewers say is the most important contribution?
- 500–700 words. 5 pts. Do only one.
Divergent Jewish traditions in Islamic and Christian lands.

- In the Islamic (and post-Islamic) lands
  - Talmud is protogenomen to a complete education
  - E.g. presuppositions in Maimonides’s Guide
- In the Ashkenazic lands
  - Bible, Talmud, law substantially made up Jewish education
  - Rashi (1040–1105) and Tosafot (a “school” including Rashi’s sons-in-law and grandsons) reflect both the internalist focus, and (esp. Tosafot) some features of wider Christian intellectual tradition (scholastic dialectic)
  - Scholars of So. France (e.g., Ramban = Moses b. Nahman = Nahmanides) harmonize these tradition

Coexistence: In Islamic and Christian Lands

“Convivencia” the idealized coexistence of Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Spain both before and after Reconquista. Idealized because persecution and hostility is assumed.

- But more generally: long periods of coexistence. Current debate: whether coexistence or violence needs special explanation.
- Nevertheless, coexistence of Jews with others takes place within cultures of subordinate status, violence, and hostility

Occasional violence, persecution in Islamic lands

- Some examples
  - 1066 lynching of Joseph b. Samuel ibn Naghrela in Granada
  - Repressive polices of al-muwahhidun (Almohades, 1147–1269: Morocco, So. Spain, Tunisia): destruction of synagogues, enforced conversions
  - Forced conversions also in Yemen (1165), Baghdad (1333, 1344)
Violence, expulsion in Christian lands

- In contrast to Islamic lands, Jews in Christian lands more fundamentally stigmatized
- Crusades (1st Crusade, 1096)
- Expulsions
  - Status as residents is regularly "contractual" rather than fundamental: Charters
  - Even their economic niche is one of a "Pariah people" (Weber). Increasingly linked to protection of "State," but also vulnerable to removal of protection
  - England and France vs. the case of Germany
- Christian fantasies of Jews

Expulsions of Jews from Europe, 1100 to 1500
Sources: http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/0415236614/resources/maps/map36.jpg

Martyrdom and memory: the legacy of the Crusades

- First Crusade, unleashed unexpected violence on Jewish communities in 1096. Authorities ineffectual in protecting
- Martyrdom by Jews unexpected and dramatic
- Later crusades (2nd: 1147; 3rd: 1189) also brought violence with them
- Rituals of commemoration: Poems, prayers, commemorative books.
- Self-identity of Jews as martyrs
  - Pure (E.g., do not emphasize rape of women)
  - Sacrificial
Christian fantasies of Jews:

- Blood libel (reenacting the **crucifixion**)
- Host desecration (**transubstantiation** official doctrine after 1215)
- Black Death, 1348 (frightening Other within)

---

Blood Libels and Host Desecrations (15th C Woodcuts)
Sources: http://www2.kenyon.edu/Projects/Margin/simexp.htm
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9c/Descreationofhost.gif

---

Blood Libels: Distribution
Source: http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/0415236614/resources/maps/map30.jpg
Host Desecrations in Europe: Distribution
Source: http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415238514/resources/maps/map34.jpg