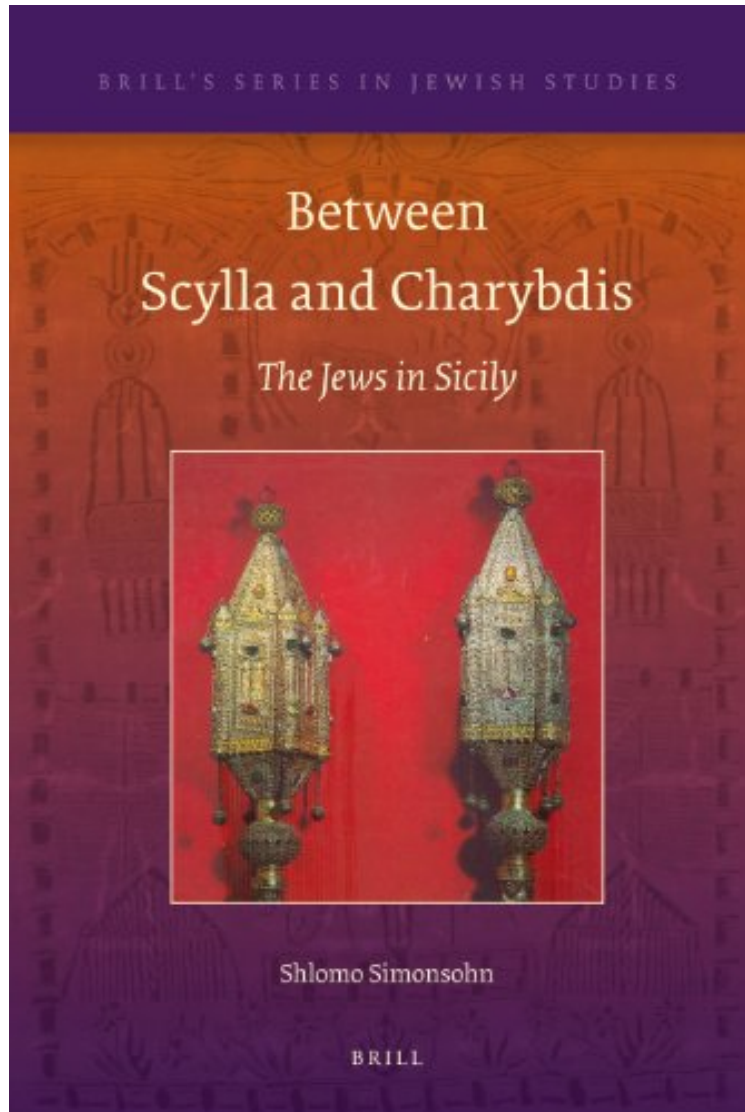


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## Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Jews In Sicily (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies)

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The history of the Jews in Sicily covers a period of over a thousand years, from Antiquity to the Expulsion, based on some 40,000 archival records, most of them hitherto unpublished. It illustrates the political, legal, economic, social and religious vicissitudes of the Jewish minority and its relations with the surrounding majority of Romans, Moslems and Christians. While the antecedents of the Jewish presence on the island are shrouded in mystery, more and more historical records surface with the passage of time. Those become abundant toward the later Middle Ages. At that time the Jews in Sicily were citizens and suffered from relatively few disabilities. This was true in particular in the economic sphere. No discriminatory legislation forced them into moneylending and trade in old clothes. They engaged in agriculture and industry, trade and commerce, including international trade and shipping, and in most professions, which in turn enhanced their social status. There was as an unusually large number of craftsmen and physicians among them. The majority, however, were labourers, on the land and in town. In the fifteenth century the Jewish population reached 25,000 or thereabouts, over half of contemporary Italian Jewry. All this came to a sudden end with the expulsion order issued by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492. Some 80% of the Jews went into exile, while the remainder converted to Catholicism, only to be caught in the net of the Spanish inquisition. This book is also available in paperback.

From the Back Cover The history of the Jews in Sicily covers a period of over a thousand years, from Antiquity to the Expulsion, based on some 40,000 archival records, most of them hitherto unpublished. It illustrates the political, legal, economic, social and religious vicissitudes of the Jewish minority and its relations with the surrounding majority of Romans, Moslems and Christians. While the antecedents of the Jewish presence on the island are shrouded in mystery, more and more historical records surface with the passage of time. Those become abundant toward the later Middle Ages. At that time the Jews in Sicily were citizens and suffered from relatively few disabilities. This was true in particular in the economic sphere. No discriminatory legislation forced them into moneylending and trade in old clothes. They engaged in agriculture and industry, trade and commerce, including international trade and shipping, and in most professions, which in turn enhanced their social status. There was as an unusually large number of craftsmen and physicians among them. The majority, however, were labourers, on the land and in town. In the fifteenth century the Jewish population reached 25,000 or thereabouts, over half of contemporary Italian Jewry. All this came to a sudden end with the expulsion order issued by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492. Some 80% of the Jews went into exile, while the remainder converted to Catholicism, only to be caught in the net of the Spanish inquisition. About the Author Shlomo Simonsohn is Professor Emeritus of Jewish History at Tel Aviv University. He is a former rector of the university and former chairman of the Rectors and Presidents Conference of Israel. He has published extensively on the history of the Jews in Italy, the Papal See and the Jews, and cognate subjects.