

Mechanisms of Social Dependency in the Early Islamic Empire

The success of Islamic imperialism in the period from the conquests to the Ayyubid dynasty has traditionally been explained as purely the result of military might. This book, however, adopts a bottom-up approach which puts social relationships and local power dynamics at the centre of the Islamic empire's cohesion. Its chapters draw on sources in diverse languages: not just Arabic but also Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Bactrian, showing how different linguistic communities intersected and contributed to a connected yet diverse empire. They highlight how not just literary and historical texts but also physical documents and archaeological evidence should be incorporated into writing histories of the late antique and early medieval Middle East. Social institutions and relationships explored include oaths; petitions, decrees, and begging letters; and financial frameworks such as debt and taxation. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009384261

DOI: 10.1017/9781009384308

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009384308

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-38426-1 Hardback

Digital typeface ALPHABETUM developed by Juan-José Marcos. Freely supplied by the
author for this book.

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