

This volume of the Documentary History of the Jews in Sicily is the eighteenth volume of the two series and concludes them. It is a monograph describing the last centuries of the Jewish presence on the island, under the rule of Aragon and Spain, and a sequel to the introduction at the beginning of volume one. It is based on the documents contained in volumes 2–17 and illustrates the political, legal, economic, social and religious history of the Jewish minority and its relations with the Christian majority.

The records show that 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. All this came to a sudden end with the expulsion order issued by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492. Some 80 percent of the Jews went into exile, while the remainder converted to Catholicism, only to be caught in the net of the Spanish inquisition. This volume is provided with additional bibliography and indexes.