

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.

EDMUND HAYES is a lecturer in the History of Islam at Leiden University. He leads the ERC Horizon project 'Embodied Imamate: Mapping the Development of the Early Shi'ī Community 700–900 CE'.

PETRA M. SIJPESTEIJN is Professor of Arabic at Leiden University. She has held guest professorships and fellowships in Paris, Munich, Princeton, Doha, Cairo, Alexandria, and Tunis, and in 2022 was elected corresponding foreign member in the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres of the Institut de France. She has published numerous books and articles, including (edited with Jelle Bruning and Janneke H. M. de Jong) *Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean World: From Constantinople to Baghdad, 500–1000 CE* (Cambridge, 2023).

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Edited by

EDMUND HAYES
Leiden University

PETRA M. SIJPESTEIJN
Leiden University





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

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