PREFACE

This volume is the first part of an important new account of the species grown for agriculture and forestry under the period of Arabic-Muslim culture in the region of the Iberian Peninsula known Al-Andalus. This was a time of major agricultural innovation as well as social and cultural development and exchange and represents a major heritage which is still poorly known and understood. This book will help fill that gap in our knowledge.

The authors bring together information from the scattered treatises and other sources from the Andalusí period, much of it unpublished, which has had to be edited, translated and interpreted. This first volume covers the Monocotyledons and includes cereal species such as rice, rye, wheat and barley, sugar cane, onions, garlic and leeks, ornamentals such as gladiolus, iris, daffodils and tulips, and banana and date palm.

The main text of the Flora departs from the conventional style in that for each species included, in addition to descriptions, geography and ecology, it has extensive sections on cultivation and uses and the validation of its identification from the literature of Al-Andalus.

As well as the Flora, it includes valuable accounts of the key figures who formed the so-called 'escuela agronómica andalusí' and the multidisciplinary treatises on the practice of agriculture, arboriculture, horticulture including planting times, irrigation, composting and plant health as well as topics such as acclimatization and botanic gardens produced by both Christian and Arabic authors during this most important period for the development of agriculture in the region.

The book also provides useful summaries of the species grown in the region that were native (or nearly so) to the Iberian Peninsula and those that had had been introduced from other parts of the world, notably the East Mediterranean, South West Asia and the Middle East as well as further afield, from Neolithic times to the Roman period. These introductions created the already heavily modified agricultural landscapes into which the new crops and techniques were incorporated, leading to a remarkably diverse and efficient agricultural and rural economy.

The FLORA AGRÍCOLA Y FORESTAL DE AL-ANDALUS is the result of a remarkable collaboration between agronomists, botanists and philologists and will be a valuable and important resource for all those interested in the plant life, agriculture, forestry and rural economy during this critical period in the history of the Iberian Peninsula.

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