



Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain

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The Middle Ages in Spain—the the period from the Muslim conquest of 711 to the expulsion of the Jews and the defeat of the last Muslim ruler in 1492—witnessed an extraordinary "Golden Age" through the intermingling of its Jewish, Muslim, and Christian inhabitants. This volume explores the nature of their coexistence (termed *convivencia* by Spanish historians), which embraced not only ideological interchange and cultural influence, but also mutual friction, rivalry, and suspicion.

The cultural and social dynamics underlying *convivencia* powerfully influenced the creation of poetry, art, architecture, and the material culture of Spain, as well as the transmission and absorption of scientific ideas and technology from East to West. Explored by leading scholars in each of these fields, the cultural treasures of *convivencia* range from Hebrew biblical manuscripts illuminated with Islamic stylistic motifs, to astrolabes with Latin inscriptions, to the first examples of secular Hebrew poetry. More than one hundred of the objects are united for the first time in an exhibition at the Jewish Museum, New York.

At a time when the study of cultural fusion is receiving increasing attention, this volume offers a fresh and comprehensive view of Spain's pluralistic medieval society. Moreover, it celebrates an inspiring history of cultural achievement in the context of intergroup relations that were both negative and positive. 36 color and 60 b/w plates.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The coexistence or convivencia of Jews, Muslims and Christians on Iberian soil from 711 to 1492 produced a remarkable cross-fertilization of ideas, as revealed by this splendidly illustrated catalog of an exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York City. One provocative essayist contends that Arabs and Jews, through exchanges in astronomy, philosophy and mathematics, "introduced a new epistemology to the Latin West." Another contributor traces how Arabic poetry helped to inspire the first Hebrew secular poetry since biblical times. The Mudejar architectural style, developed by Muslims under Christian rule, was grafted onto Sephardic Jewish synagogues and Christian churches. Other essayists discuss Hebrew illuminated manuscripts, articles of daily use, and stereotypes of Muslims and Jews in Christian literature. Scores of plates (36 in color) accompany an accessible text. Mann is a scholar at the Jewish Museum, Dodds a City University of New York art historian, Glick a Boston University history professor.

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From Library Journal

This beautifully illustrated and produced catalog examines the cultural coexistence (convivencia) of the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian populations in Islamic Spain, who jointly created a civilization that was one of the most glorious in Islamic history. The topics range widely. In a provocative and insightful essay, convivencia is examined through Sephardic eyes. Other essays consider Hebrew poetry and Hebrew illuminated manuscripts that use Islamic motifs. All the topics examined are important to the history of medieval Spain, and the volume as a whole is an important addition to the scholarly literature on the subject. The items reproduced here are of the highest quality, and the reproductions themselves are very well done. A valuable bibliography is included. This volume effectively complements the exhibition yet can stand alone, for it offers a unique perspective on the cultural history of Spain.

- *Martin Chasin, Adult Inst., Bridgeport, Ct.*

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About the Author

Vivian Mann is the Morris and Eva Feld Chair of Judaica at The Jewish Museum, and is Director of the Bernard Manekin Institute for Jewish Art. **Thomas Glick**, Professor of History at Boston University, is the author of *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages*, and is co-editor of *Historical Dictionary of Modern Sciences in Spain*. **Jerrilyn Dodds**, Associate Professor of Art History at the City University of New York and a specialist in medieval Islamic and Christian art, is the author of *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*.

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