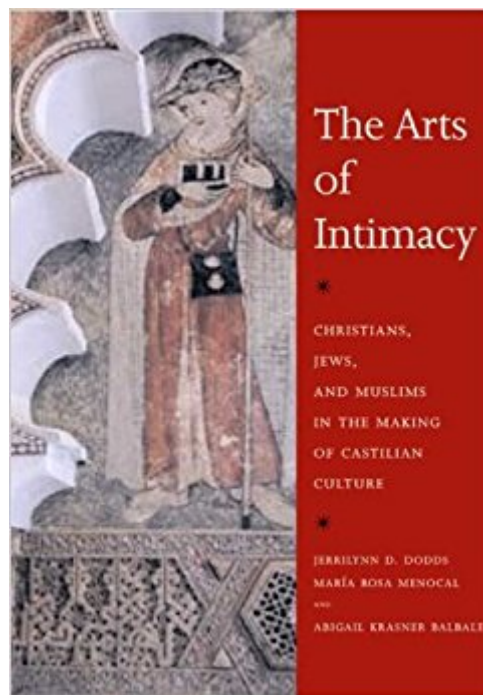


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The Arts Of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, And Muslims In The Making Of Castilian Culture



Synopsis

Named a Book of the Year by the Times Literary Supplement, this lavishly illustrated work explores the vibrant interaction among different and sometimes opposing cultures, and how their contacts with one another transformed them all. It chronicles the tumultuous history of Castile in the wake of the Christian capture of the Islamic city of Tulaytula, now Toledo, in the eleventh century and traces the development of Castilian culture as it was forged in the new intimacy of Christians with the Muslims and Jews they had overcome. The authors paint a portrait of the culture through its arts, architecture, poetry and prose, uniquely combining literary and visual arts. Concentrating on the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the book reveals the extent to which Castilian identity is deeply rooted in the experience of confrontation, interaction, and at times union with Hebrew and Arabic cultures during the first centuries of its creation. Abundantly illustrated, the volume serves as a splendid souvenir of southern Spain; beautifully written, it illuminates a culture deeply enriched by others.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Intimacy here means close contact between communities - in this case, Muslims, Christians and Jews in medieval Spain. It took almost 800 fitful, fractious years for the small Christian kingdoms of Iberia to join forces and recapture the peninsula from the Muslims. In this original, thoughtful study, the authors show how cultures interact and cross-fertilize despite themselves. The tolerance of Umayyad Spain, and the cultural efflorescence it produced, lived on for centuries after Muslim-ruled cities - like Cordoba, Seville and especially Toledo -- were conquered and assimilated by Castile

and its allies. We are all familiar with the period of Christian religious paranoia and doctrinal rigidity that led to expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the removal of Muslims and Moriscos over the next century. What is less well known is how the evolving culture and arts of Castile, particularly from the 11th-14th centuries, were influenced and molded by the achievements of Spanish Muslims and Jews. Alfonso VI, conqueror of Toledo, styled himself "king of the two religions" (Christianity and Islam). His most difficult task was not governing Muslims, the backbone of the city's economy, but rather ruling the Mozarabs, local Arabized Christians who chafed under the control of Latin clergy sent by Rome. Alfonso admired Muslim culture -- the surviving Christian architecture, with its horseshoe arches, Arabic inscriptions and other Muslim features, reveals as much.

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