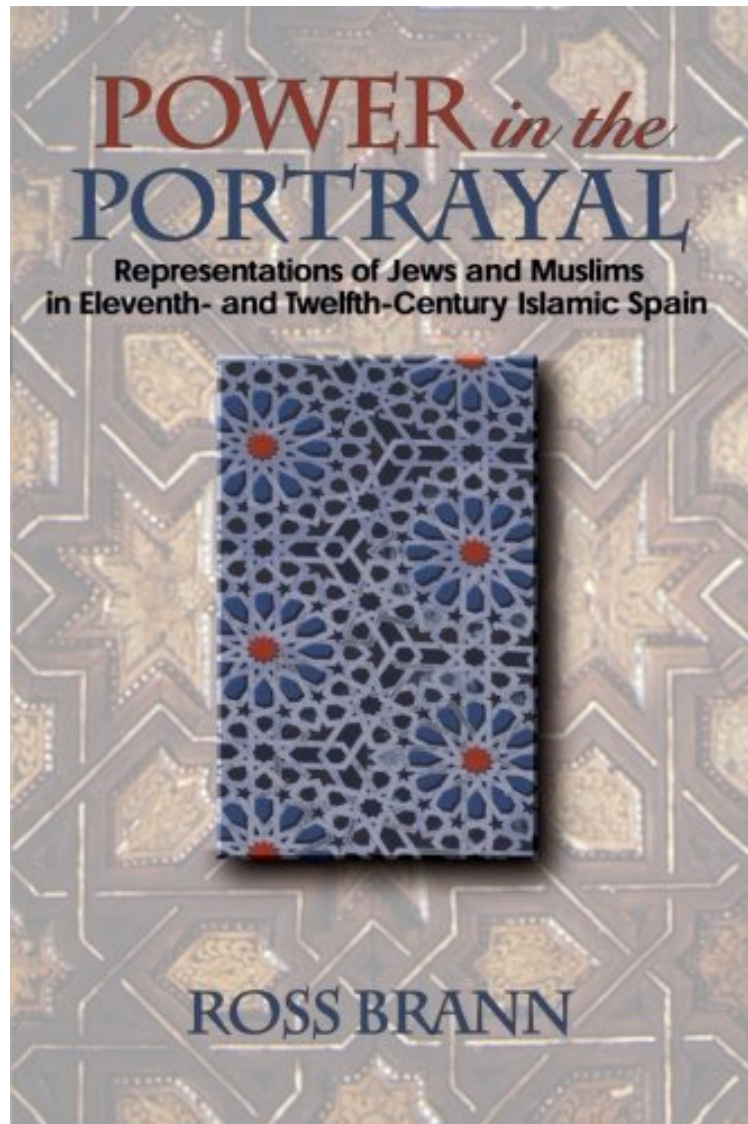


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## **Power in the Portrayal: Representations of Jews and Muslims in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic Spain (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World)**

*Ross Brann*

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order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Power in the Portrayal: Representations of Jews and Muslims in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic Spain* (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent look into early Judeo-Islamic relations  
By Avid Reader  
This scholarly work by Ross Brann is well-researched look into the relations between Jews and Muslims in Muslim ruled al-Andalus (Spain) in the Middle Ages. He looks at and tries to reconcile a Muslim ruled world in which Jews were both persecuted and rose to the greatest heights of government, literature, and philosophy, such as Samuel the Nagrid (Isma'il ibn Naghrila). This book is highly recommended for research or those very interested in the field, but while it is without doubt well-written, it is not a light read for someone who is not familiar with at least Jewish History or Muslim Spain to a small degree.  
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By Amy D. Goldstein  
Very insightful analysis by Prof. Ross Braun. I am finding this book to be extremely informative and useful.

*Power in the Portrayal* unveils a fresh and vital perspective on power relations in eleventh- and twelfth-century Muslim Spain as reflected in historical and literary texts of the period. Employing the methods of the new historical literary study in looking at a range of texts, Ross Brann reveals the paradoxical relations between the Andalusī Muslim and Jewish elites in an era when long periods of tolerance and respect were punctuated by outbreaks of tension and hostility. The examined Arabic texts reveal a fragmented perception of the Jew in eleventh-century al-Andalus. They depict seemingly contradictory figures at whose poles are an intelligent, skilled, and noble Jew deserving of homage and a vile, stupid, and fiendish enemy of God and Islam. For their part, the Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic texts display a deep-seated reluctance to portray Muslims in any light at all. Brann cogently demonstrates that these representations of Jews and Muslims--each of which is concerned with issues of sovereignty and the exercise of power--reflect the shifting, fluctuating, and ambivalent relations between elite members of two of the ethno-religious communities of al-Andalus. Brann's accessible prose is enriched by his splendid translations; the original texts are also included. This book is the first to study the construction of social meaning in Andalusī Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, and Hebrew literary texts and historical chronicles. The novel approach illuminates nuances of respect, disinterest, contempt, and hatred reflected in the relationship between Muslims and Jews in medieval Spain.

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A substantial and methodologically innovative contribution to our knowledge of inter-faith and inter-cultural relations, both in al-Andalus and in the medieval world at large. . . . Few authors could achieve what [Brann] has achieved and broaden the scope of a field of inquiry to the extent that he has done in such an economical [fashion]."--Cynthia Robinson, *The Medieval*  
"Brann negotiates the boundary between literary and historical studies with considerable finesse and graceful erudition."--Mark D. Meyerson, *American Historical*  
"Brann's book is elegantly written, scholarly in drawing on previous studies, yet original in its insights. The author makes his case that medieval Jews and Muslims in al-Andalus admired, scorned, deplored, and were envious of each other in varying measure and that each group's representation of the Other teaches us less about that other than about itself."--Consuelo Lpez-Morillas, *Speculum*  
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"Power in the Portrayal makes a groundbreaking contribution both to Jewish studies and to Islamic studies. Impressively up-to-date on the relevant scholarship in several languages, Brann boldly blends social history and literary study to illuminate texts and figures both Jewish and Muslim. Undoubtedly the most significant of these is the large-scale and sustained re-reading of controversies surrounding Samuel ha-Nagid. We now possess, virtually for the first time, a grounded and contextualized understanding of this leading Jewish personality of Muslim Spain."--Steven M. Wasserstrom, Reed College, author of *Religion after Religion and Between Muslim and Jew*  
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