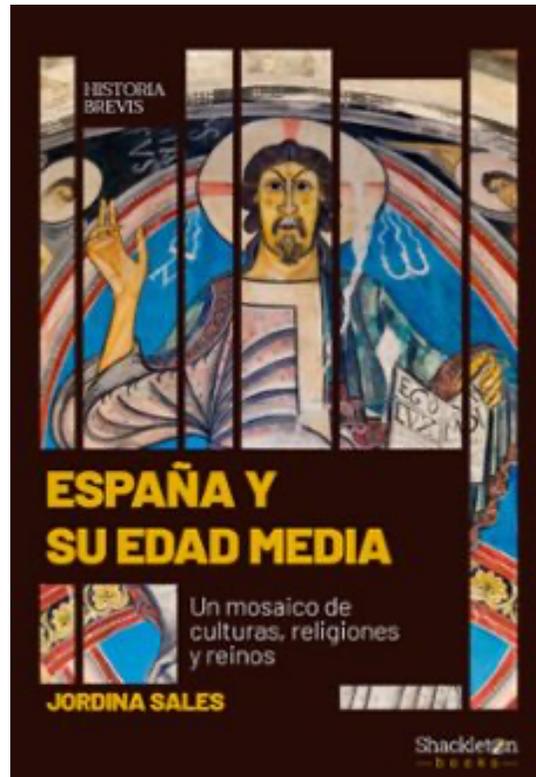


Jordina Sales Carbonell. *España y su Edad Media. Un mosaico de culturas, religiones y reinos*. Historia Brevis. Barcelona: Shackleton Books, 2025. ISSN 9788413613543. 172 pgs.

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We have before us a brief and magnificent compendium of the history of medieval Spain (Hispania), both entertaining and instructive, which reviews in scarcely 160 pages the constitution of the Visigoth kingdom, its conquest by Islam, and the creation of the kingdoms of Asturias-León-Castile, Portucale-Portugal, Pamplona-Navarre, Aragon, the Catalan Principate, and the Crown of Aragon, culminating in the dynastic union of the Aragonese and Castilian crowns in 1469. Likewise, it provides a compendium of the history of Umayyad al-Andalus, the Abbasid emirate, the Caliphate of Córdoba, the Taifa kingdoms, the al-Andalus of the Almoravids and Almohads, the second Taifas, and the Nasrid kingdom. Quite a feat!

After a brief preamble on the explanation for the name "Middle Ages" (created during the Humanist period) and the development of its scientific study (the author highlights the names of Menéndez Pidal and Sánchez Albornoz, though she could have been more extensive had there been more space), she delves into the subject matter by pointing out the chronological boundaries of the object of study—whether, depending on the opinion of different scholars, from the constitution of the Visigoth kingdom or from the Muslim entry into the Peninsula. Without paying much attention to the Visigoth period, the author arranges her study by organizing the chapters to deal alternatively with the Islamic world and that of the Christian kingdoms for each time subperiod.

Sales Carbonell is not interested in a simple narrative of political-military events; rather, her analysis includes references to demographic population movements, economic development

and commercial trade, the constitution and creation of new societies, the contextualization of Andalusian Islam within the general Islamic world, and an analysis of the events of the Spanish March (*Marca Hispánica*) within general Frankish policy.

Especially detailed is the account of the vicissitudes of the political world of al-Andalus and the Islamic kingdoms, their *coras* (provinces), and Muladi allies. Also very detailed (within the general brevity) is the space dedicated to the rivalries and interactions between the different Christian kingdoms, from the Aragonese East to the Galician West (some space could have been devoted to mentioning, at least, the crusading spirit of much of the military efforts, the foreign participation in them, or the key role of the military orders).

Within the analysis of the Christian kingdoms, that of the Crown of Aragon is of particular interest to the author. Here we do observe that she departs somewhat from her own pattern to insistently emphasize the royal character of the Catalan principate, although the same space is not then devoted to marking the identity differences between Valencians, Majorcans, and Catalans in the post-James the Conqueror era. In any case, let us say that this is *peccata minuta* in a book that succeeds, in a very brief space, in presenting us with even some detail the richness of kingdoms and cultures, as well as the political fluctuations that contribute to the constitution of the "Medieval Spain" of the title. The approach is also eminently historical, but perhaps a few more pages could have been intended to explain the cultural landscape of these territories, mentioning some of the leading names in the Christian, Arabic, and Jewish cultures, or the richness of medieval Catalan-Valencian and Galician-Portuguese letters (unparalleled in both cultures until their respective renaissances many centuries later).

The balance that all peninsular kingdoms and cultures receive in the book is noteworthy, and the account of Iberian Islamic exceptionalism within the Muslim domains is very accurate, as is the account of the European connections and Mediterranean expansion of the Crown of Aragon (perhaps something more could have been said about the European connections of Castile, Portugal, and Galicia through the ecclesiastical currents entering the Peninsula since the 12th century). Given the relevance of the Aviz dynasty to the Portuguese world, we have noticed its absence in the book.

Let us recap by noting that the reviewer occasionally becomes a professional "splitter of hairs." In my exercise as such, pointing out minor aspects that could have found a place in this book (always according to my particular taste), I do not want to end without stating emphatically that Jordina Sales Carbonell writes an excellent *vademecum* of medieval Iberian history, sufficiently complete and detailed to provide a full idea of the period studied. Her work, moreover, demonstrates her detailed and profound knowledge of the subject, and this bears fruit in a book that we recommend without any hesitation.