

THE  
**Ornament**  
*of the* **World**

2 x 54, 1 x 116 **HD**



**PBS**  
INTERNATIONAL

# THE Ornament of the World

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*The Ornament of the World* tells a story from the past that's especially timely today: the story of a remarkable time in history when Muslims, Christians and Jews forged a common cultural identity that frequently transcended their religious differences. The film retraces a nearly 800-year period in medieval Spain, from the early 8th through late 15th centuries, during which the three groups, though they competed and sometimes fought, managed to sustain relationships that enabled them to coexist, collaborate and flourish. The film blends evocative location cinematography with dramatic and lifelike animation to take viewers on a fascinating journey through the cities at the center of the story: Cordoba, Seville, Toledo and Granada. We will discover what made this rare and fruitful collaboration possible and what ultimately tore it apart.

As Yale Professor Maria Rosa Menocal writes in her book, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, "This was the chapter of Europe's culture when Jews, Christians and Muslims lived side by side and, despite their intractable differences and enduring hostilities, nourished a complex culture of tolerance." This culture of coexistence has come to be known as La Convivencia. Though the story begins over a thousand years ago, its lessons about faith, tolerance, fear and exclusion resonate strongly today.

The story is told through a series of portraits of the figures and moments that defined medieval Spain, highlighting stunning architectural wonders such as the Great Mosque of Cordoba, medieval synagogues in Toledo, the Alcazar in Seville and the Alhambra in Granada. The historical areas of these cities have changed little over the centuries; their cobbled streets, ancient mosques and tiny synagogues bear powerful witness to the culture and people that constructed them. This footage is woven together with beautifully illustrated animated sequences that depict parts of the story for which there are no images, such as Abd al-Rahman's flight from Damascus to what is now Spain in the mid-8th century, or Hasdai ibn Shaprut's interactions with the Muslim court in Cordoba in the 10th century. The documentary also draws upon a rich trove of arts and artifacts from the various cultures and periods, such as illuminated manuscripts, frescoes, tiles, objects and paintings preserved at the Spanish National Archeological Museum in Madrid and elsewhere.

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## CREDITS

*Director:* Michael Schwarz

*Executive Producer, Producer:* Kiran Kiki Kapany

*Executive in Charge for Thirteen/WNET:* Stephen Segaller

*Image:* Brave Planet Films for Thirteen Productions LLC, National Archives



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