



West of Eden (WE)/Al Oeste del Edén interrogates critically the boundaries between Muslims and Jews in the Western Mediterranean, aiming to shed new light and advancing knowledge on their interactions. The main goal is to identify and explain the most salient practices, beliefs and ideas that emerged in those contact zones between Jews and Muslims where mutual and self-perceptions were negotiated in different contexts of the Western Mediterranean.

The project will look afresh at the available evidence and search for new data for the long period encompassing the 13th to the 17th centuries — roughly between the establishment of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada in 1238 and the expulsion of the Jews from Oran in 1669. The focus of study will be Muslim and Jewish primary and secondary sources such as treatises, diplomatic correspondence, personal letters, archival materials, travelogues, narratives and poetry, visual artefacts, and objects (crafts, utensils, tombstones, ...), which are related to contested “discursive sites” on origins, conversion, the body, messianic hopes, exegesis, and religious polemics.

The case studies that the project addresses are well-known examples of social contexts characterized by the complexity and coexistence of different religious groups: the Iberian Peninsula (Muslim and Christian areas), the south of France, Morocco, the Italian peninsula and its islands (Venice, Genoa, Naples, Sicily), Tunisia and Algeria.

An analytical framework will be designed to specifically address the needs of this research, where approaches and notions from cultural and social anthropology, history, religious studies, and discourse analysis will be combined.

Meeting Agenda

12 p.m.:

- Brief introduction of the Project Team
- Presentation of project background and objectives
- Proposed focus, sources, methodology, and expected outcomes
- Focused Q&A

12:45–13:00: Coffee Break

13:00–13:45: Discussion of Research Challenges and Concepts

* Discussion of Research Challenges and Concepts:

- Emphasis on geographical and temporal frameworks, focusing on shared themes and spaces of Muslim–Jewish cultural encounters
- Analysis of how groups perceived, represented, and engaged with one another
- Theoretical considerations on intergroup shared spaces, practices and discourses, including the risk of drawing parallels without evidence of direct contact
- Geographical focus on Mediterranean-connected regions, including Valencia, Aragon, Balearic Islands, Provence, and North Africa