The Muslim West | The Co-existence of Three Cultures

Religious institutions as custodians of property

There are examples of religious institutions keeping holy objects from other religions, sometimes because of their historical value, occasionally because they could be reused and often simply because of their material value. This phenomenon tells us more about the varied culture and heritage of the Muslim West.

Name: Qarawiyyin Mosque
Dynasty: Hegira 3rd–4th centuries / AD 9th–10th centuries Idrisid
Details: Fez (Old Town), Morocco
Justification: Under the Marinids, Christian bells were turned into lamps to illuminate the prayer room of the Qarawiyyin Mosque in Fez.

Name: Zamora Cathedral chest
Dynasty: Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century Almoravid
Details: National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain
Justification: This Islamic chest, now kept in Zamora Cathedral, was adapted for Christian religious use by the addition of paintings.

Name: Font
Dynasty: Hegira 8th–9th centuries / AD 14th–15th centuries
Details: City Museum
Lisbon, Portugal
Justification: This font was taken from a demolished mosque and used in the construction of a Christian building.

Name: Carpet with flowering tree motif
Dynasty: Hegira 8th century / AD 14th century Nasrid
Details: Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany
Justification:
This carpet was kept in a church in Tirol, Austria, until the late 19th century, possibly having arrived there from a Spanish synagogue.