



Marking the Jews in Renaissance Italy

From the pointed hats and colored badges of the Middle Ages to the yellow star of the Holocaust, many European secular or religious authorities resorted to visual markers to distinguish the Jews from the rest of the population. This book offers an in-depth analysis of anti-Jewish discrimination through sartorial marks across three city-states of the Italian Renaissance: Milan, Genoa, and Piedmont. By comparing the situation in three distinct but neighboring regions, it explores the powerful influence of general and persistent anti-Jewish ideas on Christian society and on Jewish lives, while also highlighting how specific political and cultural conditions could strengthen, subvert, or modify seemingly fixed laws and practices to label Jews in society. This analysis shows that “the Jewish badge” was not a single event with a single meaning but a process – one inextricable from the larger story of Jewish-Christian relations and from the larger process by which the Jews contested, negotiated, made strategic use of, and at least partially avoided being “marked” as a separate people within Italian society.

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Politics, Religion, and the Power
of Symbols

FLORA CASSEN



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