



**Master of Arts Thesis
Euroculture**

Palacky University

University of Groningen

May 2011

Coexistence: the Burden of Spain?

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MA Programme Euroculture Declaration

I, Bibi Tasleema Rashid hereby declare that this thesis, entitled "Coexistence: the Burden of Spain?", submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the List of References.

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Bibi Tasleema Rashid

New York, 19th May 2011

*“the love we hide,
the love that gives us away” –*

Ibn Zaydun

The Nuniyyah

Table of Content

1.Introduction.....	1
2.They Came. They Conquered. They ‘Left.’ - The Arrival of the Moors.....	4
3.Convivencia: A Most Perplexing Idea.....	19
4.Coexistence in Contemporary Spain: The Return of the Moor.....	34
5.The Burden of Coexistence.....	43
Maps Take from.....	46
Bibliography.....	47

List of Maps

Map 1: Islam's Global Reach.....	6
Map 2: The Islamic World in the Seventh through Tenth Centuries.....	8
Map 3: The Disintegration of al-Andalus into Taifa Kingdoms.....	14
Map 4: The Kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula from 1248-1492.....	16

1. Introduction

“Spain is different.” These are the words of one of the most renowned slogans in Spanish history. These first appeared as a logo of a series of photographic tourist propaganda posters issued in 1929 by the Patronato Nacional de Turismo (National Tourism Board). The slogan became known in its current state since 1964, when Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Minister of Information and Tourism of the dictatorial government of General Francisco Franco, put it on the propaganda posters that marked the official celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Regime in order to promote a program aimed at an economic and ideological renovation of the country via tourism.¹

Spain is (Still) Different is part of the title of a volume, edited by Eugenia Afinoguenova & Jaume Marti-Olivella; consisting of a number of essays that uses “definitions of Spain, along with travel and tourism practices as powerful agents of Spanish nation-building and self-identification.”² The essays in this volume serve to illustrate the fact that Spain is both “different and “still” the same – as an integrated part of the European Union, Spain has officially ceased to be different from the industrialized European nations; (...) yet as the *de facto* border between Europe and Africa, Spain has forced into the role of a border patrol nation, which deeply problematizes its own (...) cultural heritage of its Jewish and Arabic past.”³

Theories abound as to the reasons why Spain is different from the rest of Europe. One of these reasons is the 700 year rule of Muslims in Spain. Muslim rule was in the hands of different Muslim dynasties – Umayyad, Almohad, Almoravid – at the different times. From this period, we have *convivencia*, the much vaunted period of coexistence between Jews, Muslims and Christians. But what is *convivencia*? How did it work? Did it work? Supporters of *convivencia* look to the symbols of the cultural efflorescence characteristic of al-Andalus – the name given to the area of the Iberian Peninsula that the Muslims occupied – as a testimonial to coexistence. Others look to the *dhimma* pact – the Quranic mandate by which Jews and Christians were considered protected People’s of the Book – as proof that the supposed inflexibility of Islam was

¹ Antonio Elorza, “El ‘via crucis’ de la oposicion,” *El Pais*, November, 22nd 2000, www.elpais/especiales/2000/franco/elorza.htm (accessed August 1st 2007). Quoted by Eugenia Afinoguenova & Jaume Marti-Olivella, “A Nation under Tourists’ Eyes: Tourism and Identity Discourses in Spain,” in *Spain is (Still) Different Tourism and Discourse in Spanish Identity*, edited by Eugenia Afinoguenova & Jaume Marti-Olivella, Introduction, xi-xxxviii. Lexington Books, 2008.

² Ibid Afinoguenova, xi.

³ Ibid, xxviii.

not a reality; that Islam was and could be a tolerant religion.

Unfortunately, these testimonials are often attributed to the urban, ruling elites; and often do not tell us anything about the everyday life of the regular individual. While, it is true that there are not many documented anecdotes that would reveal something about the lives of the rural classes for whom *convivencia* was a result of necessity rather than a means of governing; what is known should be given the same amount of attention as the many lauded motifs of intercultural dialogue that are associated with the history medieval Spain. The preoccupation with the period of coexistence in al-Andalus is based on the fact that this period remains one of the only instances when Islam and the West shared the same stage for a prolonged period. Shining another spotlight on this period is not driven by a need to answer some worldwide imperative. Rather, our examination into this period of coexistence is based on the desire to determine whether or not the preoccupation with coexistence is a burden on Spain, especially as the country tries to address contemporary issues regarding its growing Muslim population?

This thesis will be presented with the following structure: three chapters including a closing statement. In the first chapter titled, “They Came. They Conquered. They ‘Left.’ - The Arrival of the Moors,” we set the stage from which the act of *convivencia* takes place. The Moor - term used to characterize the North African Muslims of Arab and Berber ancestry – invaded the Iberian Peninsula for the first time in the year 711. The presence of Jews, Christians and Muslims in al-Andalus; creates what the modern world would describe as a pluralistic society – “where communities often lived in the same neighborhoods, engaged in business and shared ideas with each other; while simultaneously mistrusting and were often jealous of each other.”⁴ It is from this pluralistic society that idea of *convivencia* arises.

The idea of living together brings us to our second chapter, “*Convivencia*: A Most Perplexing Idea;” where we attempt to unravel the complexities of this vaunted coexistence. Our in-depth examinations will involve elements ranging from defining the term to a comparison between policies of both Muslim and Christian rulers. Here we shall also try to determine importance of the topic itself. In the final chapter before the

⁴ Benjamin R. Gampel, “Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: *Convivenica* through the eyes of the Sephardic Jews”, in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain*, edited by Vivian B. Mann, Jerrilynn D. Dodds & Thomas F. Glick, 11-37. New York: George Braziller Inc., 1992), 14.

conclusion, “Manifestations of Coexistence in Contemporary Spain: the Return of the Moor” we look at how *convivencia* is portrayed in contemporary Spanish society. On the one hand, the returning Moor (via the immigration of Moroccans for economic reasons) offers insight into the Spanish psyche; as it plays on Spanish fears of returning ghosts. On the other hand, *convivencia* has become a potent marketing tool for tourism. Finally, in the conclusion, we attempt to ascertain whether or not *convivencia* and the memory of al-Andalus are burdens on contemporary Spain.

If today’s world is an echo of one of those medieval Andalusian villages of the past, where we among other things, hear the cry of the muezzin and cantor and chorister;” then we must do all that we can to understand the past so that we can cope with the present.⁵ As we turn the page to begin our journey back in time, to the arrival of the Moors; we do so ever mindful of the words of Marcel Proust: the remembrance of things past is not necessarily, the remembrance of things as they were.

⁵ Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians and Jews in Medieval Spain*, (Oxford University Press, 2006), 260.

2. They Came. They Conquered. They ‘Left.’ - The Arrival of the Moors

*“There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His servant and messenger.”*⁶

*“Our God and Your God is One.”*⁷

Discussions revolving around the topic of Medieval Spain often evoke a sense of religious tolerance and coexistence; since three monotheistic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam - occupied the same space for a rather lengthy period of time. The conditions that made the intertwining of these faiths a reality were due in large part to the Romans. Followers of both Judaism and Christianity were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, with many of them choosing to reside in Hispania - the name given to the Iberian Peninsula by its Roman rulers. Christianity would eventually become the official religion of the Empire upon the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 313 AD. Therefore, by the end of Roman rule in the peninsula (409 AD), Jews and Christians were already present. It would be another three centuries before Muslim forces, under the command of Tariq ibn Ziyad, entered the peninsula. Islam would maintain a presence in the region for more than seven centuries; and in so doing, complete the religious triumvirate from which contemporary ideas of coexistence has arisen. Allusions to an atmosphere of peaceful cohabitation have often coincided with the presence of Islam in the region, particularly the period of Islamic rule.

The following chapter offers a condensed history of the place that was created during the time of Islamic rule; the place that allows for the possibility of convivencia; the place that its Muslim rulers christened al-Andalus.

The impetus for the arrival of Islam to the doorsteps of the Iberian Peninsula has its roots almost a century earlier with the birth of the religion in 610 AD. Islamic traditions hold that in a mountain cave above the city of Mecca, Muhammad – the last and most important prophet of Islam, then, a forty year old merchant - received the first revelation of the Quran, Islam’s Holy Book. The revelation of the Quran firmly established Islam as a faith. Today, Islam is the world’s fastest growing religion, as evidenced by the 1.57 billion people that profess the faith.⁸ However, at its infancy,

⁶ Islam is a religion based on a foundation of five pillars – the declaration of faith (Shahadah), prayer (Salah), fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm), paying of taxes that goes towards charity (Zakat) and the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). The quoted statement constitutes the Shahadah, the basic tenet of Islam.

⁷ A. Yusuf Ali, (trans.) “Sura ‘Ankabut: chapter 29, Verse 46,” *The Holy Quran* (Amana Corp.: Maryland, 1983), 1042.

⁸ *Mapping the Global Muslim Population*. Washington, D.C.: The Pew Forum on Religion & Public

rapid conversion to Islam was completely non-existent. The Prophet encountered resistance to his message. Eventually, both he and those who chose to follow him were forcibly exiled from Mecca. Returning eight years later in 630 AD, with an army of soldiers the prophet was able to garner victory for Islam when the Meccans chose to surrender without a fight.

Claiming Mecca in the name of Islam did not mean that all Meccans became Muslims. The prophet employed policies that did not require forced conversion to Islam. Policies that “demanded only the destruction of pagan idols,” for example, eventually resulted in voluntary conversions to Islam.⁹ This attitude towards non-Muslims emphasized the duality of Muhammad’s role as both prophet and statesman; as his message was one that carried with it a number of political overtones. It was a message that enjoined traditionally independent tribes to abandon their tribal loyalties in lieu of the creation of a community of believers, an *ummah* – “allegiance to Islam superseded all bonds.”¹⁰ The creation of this community of believers meant that expansion became an outright necessity. And so, in a relatively short period of time, the entire Arabian Peninsula was united under the banner of Islam.

Unfortunately, the Prophet’s death, in 632 AD, left a void in the structure of Islam’s leadership. This void centered around the question of succession; since the Prophet had no male heirs and had named no religious successor. The determination of a coherent line of succession was and remains one of the most highly contested issues in Islam. In fact, as Maria R. Menocal rightly points out, “one of the earliest chapters in this struggle for legitimate authority [resulted in] the massacre of the Umayyad royal family [eventually leading to the establishment] of a rival Islamic polity in Southern Europe;” thereby, making the subject matter being discussed in this thesis plausible.¹¹ This void was filled by a caliph – from the Arabic *khalifa*, meaning “successor,”- who lacked prophetic power and therefore, was incapable of making any decisions regarding religious issues. The internal divisions – Sunni/Shiite, caliphs/emirs, Umayyad/Abbasid

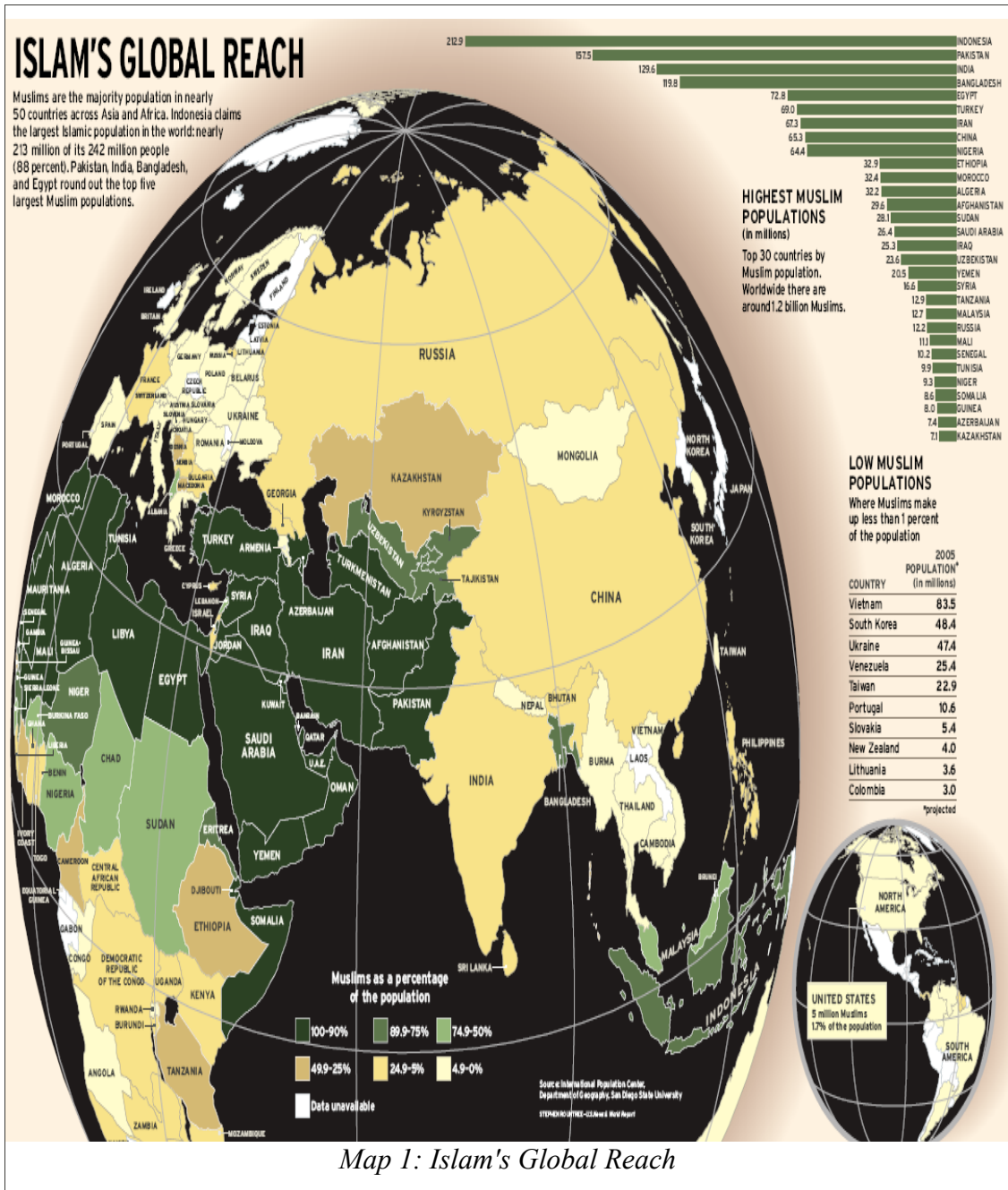
Life, October 7th 2009, <http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles/Topics/Demographics/Muslimpopulation.pdf> (October 30th 2010).

⁹ Alex Markels, “A Mighty Empire and How it Grew: For five centuries, Muslims dominated the world,” *U.S. News & World Report Collectors Editions: Secrets of Islam – A Guide to the World’s Fastest Growing Religion*, (April 7, 2008), 31.

¹⁰ Ibid. Lowney, 34.

¹¹ Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, (Back Bay Books, 2003), 19.

– that have long been a part of Islam since the Prophet’s death were the result of the reign of the first four caliphs. Chosen from amongst Muhammad’s closest



allies; these caliphs ruled for a short period of time, 632-661. It was the assassination of the last of this foursome, Ali, the prophet’s son-in-law; which paved the way for the creation of a new dynasty – the Umayyads.

The Umayyads, who belonged to the same tribe as the Prophet, “symbolized the fusion of a culture, [and by] transplanting the heart of the empire to Syria, which had its

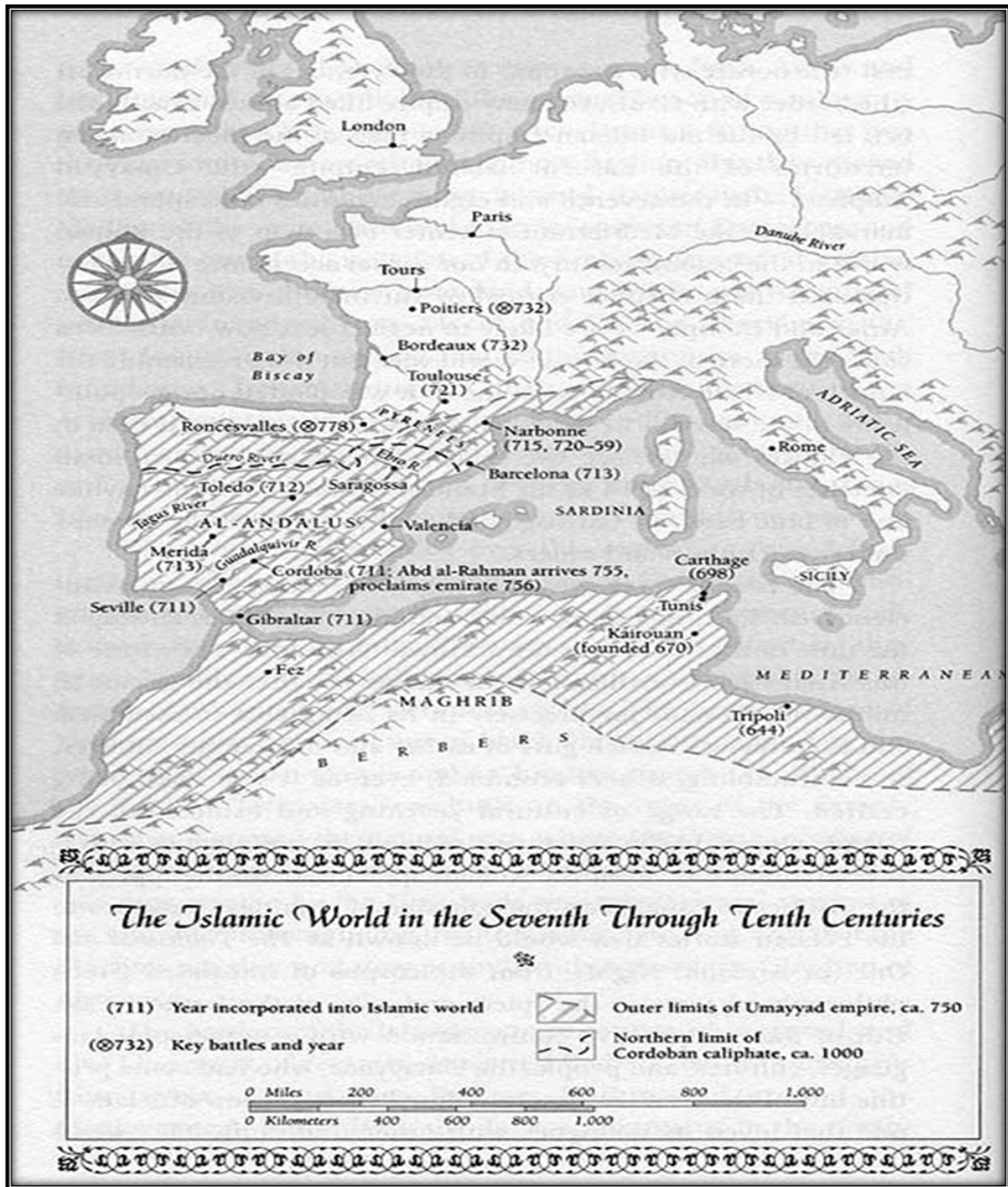
own mixed cultural legacy; [they created] the first significant step in the ill understood, crucial distinction between things Arab and things Islamic.”¹² This distinction became increasingly more crucial as the Islamic world continued to expand at an exponential rate. The spread of Islam altered the ethnic composition of its followers, particularly the armies charged with the task of conquering new lands. Thus, all Muslims were no longer only Arabs. Hugh Kennedy comments on this shift from allegiance based on ethnic identity to allegiance based on religious identity.

In 632, all Muslims were Arabs, and in the early years of the conquests we can use the terms Arab and Muslim interchangeably to describe the armies of the conquest. When we move into the late seventh and early eighth centuries, however, such a usage would be misleading. Arabs formed only a proportion of the armies that conquered North Africa, Spain and Central Asia. What defined these armies was not their Arabness, even if the leaders were Arabs and the language of command and administration Arabic, but their identity as the armies of Islam – that is, religious identity had replaced the ethnic.¹³

This means that the armies that invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 711, while being Muslims; were comprised mainly of North African Berbers (Moors) and Syrians being led by Arabs

¹² Ibid. Menocal, 20.

¹³ Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*, (Da Capo Press, 2008), 7.



Map 2: The Islamic World in the Seventh through Tenth Centuries.

NB: It should be noted that the Islamic World extends further East. For the purposes of this paper, only the part of the map that pertains to the Iberian Peninsula is included.

proper (from the Arabian Peninsula) who were often the minority. The fact that power and control were in the hands of the proper Arab minority undermined the *ummah*, which was “like a large and expanding tribe in the sense that all men were members of

the same group;” and created tension with the non-Arab majority.¹⁴ The emergence of non-Arab Muslims formed the basis of an anti-Umayyad movement. This negative attitude towards the ruling Umayyad dynasty festered until they were eventually ousted by a new group. The Abbasids, who claimed different caliphal legitimacy; overthrew the Umayyads in 750 by massacring the entire family save one prince. The Abbasids ruled over the Islamic world until they too were eventually overthrown and a new group emerged to claim the seat of power. In the interim, the last surviving Umayyad prince, Abd al-Rahman fled to the recently conquered al-Andalus. There, he began the task of separating this most westerly of Islam’s lands from the caliphal seat now situated in Baghdad.

Abd al-Rahman used the fact that he was of half Berber descent to form alliances with the large Berber population that he found residing in al-Andalus. These alliances as well as aid offered by Yemenite and Syrian settlers who were eager to betray their new masters allowed the young prince to quickly declare himself *emir* (governor) of al-Andalus. For all intents and purposes he was “technically nothing more than the governor of a frontier like outpost at the edge of the caliphate, now under the control of the Abbasids,” who left him alone to rule in permanent exile rather than resent his “improbable and triumphal resurrection as a viable leader.”¹⁵ Therefore, for the “first time in the Islamic world, there was a political entity organized in complete independence of the main body of Muslims.”¹⁶

Abd al-Rahman and the subsequent emirs of al-Andalus devoted much of their respective reigns to securing their new territory. The early years of the emirate was marked by a number of minor revolts, mainly along the region’s periphery; that were sprinkled intermittingly between periods of thriving prosperity. A semblance of order and peace was maintained by an army of more than forty thousand soldiers that had been created when Abd al-Rahman first assumed the title of emir. Despite the presence of this army; minor revolts still persisted, particularly during the sixty year reign (852 to 912) of the last three emirs. While internal strife and chaos became the *modus operandi* of the Emirate during its final years; the Umayyad Emirs had to simultaneously contend with the Christian controlled regions in the north that had been consolidating their

¹⁴ Ibid. Kennedy, 56.

¹⁵ Ibid. Menocal, 8.

¹⁶ W. Montgomery Watt and Pierre Cachia, *A History of Islamic Spain*, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 24.

strength during this time. Both the presence and the persistence of these armies reflect the inability of the Umayyad rulers to fully control the entire Iberian Peninsula – a constant factor throughout the period of Islamic rule. And so, when in 912, Abd al-Rahman III became emir; he inherited an al-Andalus that “had barely survived as an intact polity.”¹⁷

His first tasks as emir included reestablishing unity in al-Andalus and halting raids into Muslim controlled territories by surging Christian armies. Between the years 912 to 960, forces under this Abd al-Rahman effectively quelled the advancement of these armies. And so, “from the year 960 to the end of the century, Muslim control of the Iberian Peninsula was more complete than at any other time before or after” – alluding to the fact that this control never quite extended to include the entire peninsula.¹⁸ Regardless of what Arnold Toynbee describes as “the failure to complete the conquest of the peninsula at this period when they had undoubted military supremacy;” Abd al-Rahman III had settled the borders of his territory to his satisfaction and was now turning his attention inwards, towards the governing and prosperity of al-Andalus.¹⁹

Before the advent of Islam to the Iberian Peninsula, conditions there were similar to those experienced in the rest of post-Roman Europe – cultural and material bankruptcy. The institutions necessary for cultural, political and economic prosperity “had yet to be invented or had become degraded beyond viability and agency.”²⁰ Regarding the Iberian Peninsula specifically, the cultural baggage brought to the region during the reign of the Romans, which included an advanced legal system; witnessed great retardation in the interim after the fall of the Roman Empire and the arrival of the Muslims. It can be argued that the relative ease with which the peninsula was conquered was partly due to the fact that its inhabitants welcomed any change from the “hundreds of years of civil discontinuity, [that made the region] politically, unstable, religiously and ethnically fragmented and culturally debilitated.”²¹

Abd al-Rahman III, who by this time had assumed the title ‘*al-Nasir li-din-Allah*

¹⁷ David Levering Lewis, *God's Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe 570-1215*, (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2008), 319.

¹⁸ Ibid. Watt, 44.

¹⁹ Ibid, 34. Taken from Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, viii, 351.

²⁰ Ibid. Lewis, 137.

²¹ Ibid. Menocal, 26.

(Champion of the Religion of God); was able to reverse much of this retardation and propel al-Andalus to new heights. Additionally, he established the Spanish Umayyad Caliphate with Cordoba as its capital. This act reinforced the independence of al-Andalus as well as reaffirmed his place as its ruler – “not the right to rule all Muslims but the independence of the ruler of al-Andalus from all higher Muslim political authority.”²² It was the stability and longevity of the Spanish Umayyad Caliphate that allowed for the reversal of fortunes making statements like James Cleugh’s, “there was nothing like it, at that epoch in the rest of Europe,” a possibility.²³

Cleugh’s statement refer to the multicultural heritage fostered and nourished in al-Andalus under the reign of the Spanish Umayyads; particularly its founder, Abd al-Rahman III. Even though this statement is more than fifty years old; it still retains a certain level of veracity and remains just one of the many accolades attributed to the prosperity of al-Andalus; echoing sentiments expressed by the nun Hroswitha of Gandersheim, who writing in the tenth century stated that, “a brilliant ornament of the world shone in the West.”²⁴ The abundance of these sentiments makes it extremely difficult to answer an otherwise easy question – what made this period great? The difficulty in answering this question reflects the many facets of society that were impacted by Arab/Islamic influence.

A potent example of this influence can be seen in the ability of Arabic – the language of Islam – to seemingly diffuse itself across the imaginary boundaries that separated the religious world from the secular one. Inherent to Arabic are a number of characteristics – “wealth of vocabulary, sonorous sounds and flowing calligraphy” – that made the language an ideal implement for creative endeavor.²⁵ The attention focused on Arabic filled a void, created by the fact that according to strict Islamic traditions, the making of images – the specifically the painting of humans and animals – was (and remains) prohibited. The flowing nature, characteristic of written Arabic, served as a

²² Ibid. Watt, 38.

²³ James Cleugh, *Spain in the Modern World*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1953), 70.

²⁴ Ibid. Menocal, 32. See Katharina Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of Her Works*, (D.S. Brewer, 1998). The nun’s words are a description of Cordoba – the capital of al-Andalus during the reign of the Spanish Umayyad Caliphate. Maria Rosa Menocal uses the phrase in the title of her book – *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Explaining the use of this phrase, she writes “I too use the expression generously; as this book’s title, it means to describe the culture that long survived and transcended the destruction of the caliphate of Hroswitha’s time.” (12).

²⁵ Thomas J. Abercrombie, “When the Moors ruled Spain,” *National Geographic*, (Vol. 174, No. 1, July 1988) 86-119.

decorative tool for the many mosques and palaces that were being constructed throughout the Islamic world. The political independence of al-Andalus did not hinder its rulers from employing similar decorative practices on the archways, fountains, mosques and palaces that were being commissioned throughout their realm.

In addition to its use as a decorative tool, Arabic lent itself to the development of poetry in al-Andalus. Arab poetry, (both pre and post Islamic) was already an established art form long before the arrival of Tariq ibn Ziyad and his forces to the Iberian Peninsula. Once there, Arab poetry evolved; fusing with local tradition to create new genres – the *muwashshah* and the *zajal*.²⁶ On the development of the *muwashshah*, Emilio Garcia Gomez writes that it represented the “marvelous fusion of two literatures and two races (...), and is undoubtedly the most original product of Umayyad culture.”²⁷ In al-Andalus, Arabic had moved beyond the boundaries of religious usage, seeping into the secular everyday life. Words of Arabic origin were adopted into the local language, becoming part of its vocabulary. Countless words of Arabic origin, including algebra, alcohol and others; are globally recognized and remain in use today.

The Spanish Umayyads depended on both stability and longevity to guarantee the prosperity of al-Andalus. An integral factor of this stability was the acceptance of Muslim rule by the Jews and Christians who remained inhabitants of the region. Within the Islamic world, Jews and Christians were known as the *dhimmi* – the protected “Peoples of the Book” – who shared both scripture and monotheism with the Muslims. Kennedy writes that, “the acceptance on Muslim rule was the result of Muslim policy towards the enemy: it was always preferable to surrender to invaders and pay taxes.”²⁸ According to the Quran, the *dhimmi* were not to be harmed but rather should be tolerated.²⁹

The Spanish Umayyads adhered to Quranic mandate by allowing the Jewish and

²⁶ Both genres were structurally similar, with the only difference being the language used to write them. The *muwashshah* was written in classical Arabic while the *zajal*, which developed in the twelfth century, was written entirely in the colloquial language. See James T. Monroe, *Hispano – Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

²⁷ Emilio Garcia Gomez, “Moorish Spain: The Golden Age of Cordoba and Granada,” in *The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*, edited by Bernard Lewis, 225-245. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), 229.

²⁸ Ibid. Kennedy, 376.

²⁹ This can be seen in the Arabic to English translation of chapter 29, verse 46 of the Holy Quran which reads, “And argue not with the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words). See A. Yusuf Ali, (trans.) *The Holy Quran*, (Amana Corp.: Maryland, 1983), 1042.

Christian communities to practice their respective faiths provided that a *jizya* (tax) was paid to the Muslim sovereigns. The prosperity of al-Andalus encouraged conversion to Islam – “the Islamization and Arabization that followed conquest (...) were not direct and inevitable consequence of political conquest. Instead, it was a gradual, almost entirely peaceful result of the fact that more and more people wanted to identify with and participate in the dominant culture of the time.”³⁰

Thus, for a relatively lengthy period of time, al-Andalus remained a thriving success. However, this proved unsustainable as threats to the stability long coveted by the Spanish Umayyads began emerging. Perhaps due to jealousy and/or greed, rival Muslim factions became increasingly discontent with the Spanish Umayyads. Dissension soon ripped apart the unity that had been preserved by the caliphate; a period of self destructive behaviour known as the *fitna* (time of strife). In place of a single, unified al-Andalus, arose a number of *taifas* – individual, independent kingdoms – all vying for the prestige once synonymous with al-Andalus under the Umayyads. While these Muslim *taifas* engaged in power struggles between themselves; the northern Christian kingdoms had combined their forces, becoming more powerful and united. They began moving southward; engaging in the same grab for territory that had now become the modus operandi of their Muslim counterparts. In 1085, the Islamic *Taifa* of Toledo fell to Alfonso VI of Castile. This Catholic monarch proceeded to make the city his new capital and more importantly, “the heir apparent to some of the lost glories of al-Andalus [as he] and his influential successors became the patrons and proselytizers of much of Arabic culture.”³¹

The fall of Toledo to the Catholic forces made the Andalusian Muslims desperate; prompting them to request aid from the Almoravids – fundamentalist, Berber tribesmen from North Africa. The Almoravids, conservative followers of Islam, were extremely “contemptuous of the opulent lifestyle and political

³⁰ Ibid. Kennedy, 376.

³¹ Ibid. Menocal, 42.



Map 3: The Disintegration of al-Andalus into Taifa Kingdoms

laissez faire of the *taifa* kings;” – an opinion which they shared with the Muslim Andalusian masses.³² Requested to act as reinforcements, the Almoravids overthrew the party kings and united al-Andalus for themselves. By pushing back the forces of Alfonso VI in 1086; the Almoravids momentarily quelled any further advancement. The Almoravids ruled Al-Andalus markedly different manner than that of the

³² Jerrilynn D. Dodds, Maria Rosa Menocal and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture*, (Yale University Press: 2009), 130.

Umayyads. This was particularly true regarding their attitude towards Jews and Christians; as the Almoravids favored “restricted interaction with non-Muslims.”³³ Therefore practices that saw the promotion of Jews to positions within government, frequent under the Umayyads were not even entertained by the Almoravids. The Almoravid reign was relatively short lived. Facing pressure from the resurgent Catholic kingdoms, the Almoravids’ grip on al-Andalus weakened until eventually a new group emerged to seize authority.

The Almohads were another fundamentalist, Berber tribe from North Africa. They shared similar opinions with the Almoravids regarding al-Andalus; namely, “contempt for what they viewed as religious and moral laxity, as well as a cultural extravagance inappropriate to their understanding of Islam.”³⁴ However, shared opinions were not enough to hinder the Almohads from leveling criticism against the Almoravids for what they perceived as a very lax interpretation of Islam. The Almohads practiced an even more conservative understanding of Islam than that of their North African brethren. By 1170, control of al-Andalus was in the hands of the Almohads. They proceeded to place more restrictions on Jews and Christians leading to a mass exodus from Almohad controlled territories. Mass exodus had alternating outcomes for both Muslim and Christian controlled territories. In Muslim cities, like Seville, there was a “loss in religious diversity;” while there was an “efflorescence of cultural and linguistic diversity” in Christian cities like Toledo.³⁵ Although its borders were constantly being redrawn, the cultural crossover that had been a part of Umayyad ruled al-Andalus was still ever present. This was particularly true in Christian cities; as both they and the rest of Latin Europe had begun “to reap the material and intellectual rewards of contact with the Andalusian progressiveness, while what had been al-Andalus was itself an increasingly repressive place.”³⁶

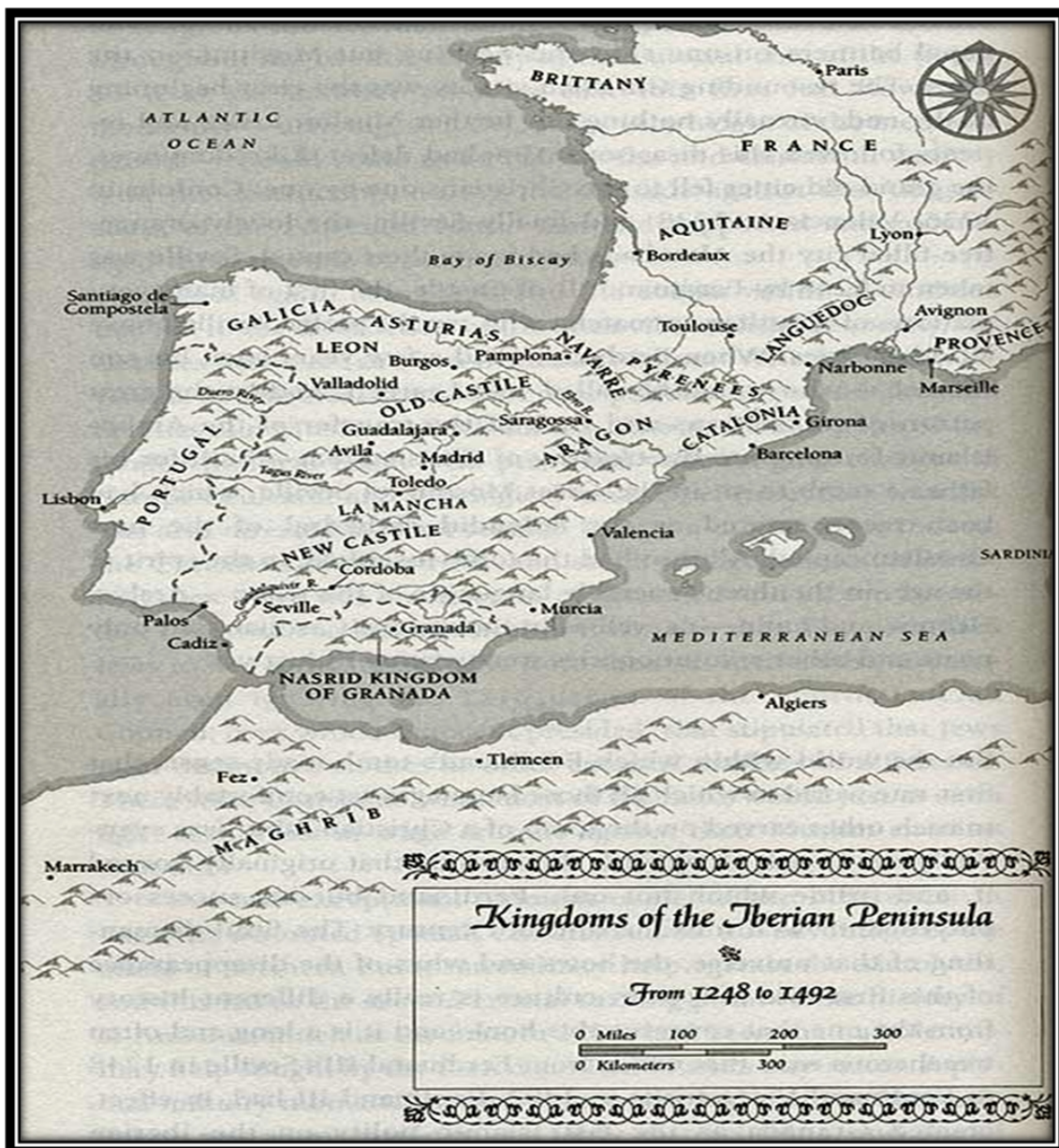
³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 128-129.

³⁵ Ibid. Dodds et al, 128-129

³⁶ Ibid. Menocal, 44.

Both the Almoravids and the Almohads sought to impose their own specific interpretation of Islamic doctrine. The steadfast zeal to recreate al-Andalus by stripping it of what they both believed was a too liberal and too tolerant view of Islam by the Umayyad led to civil unrest. In 1212, Spanish Christians who remained in al-Andalus during the reign of the Almohads, sought aid from the north to decisively deal with their fanatical rulers. The victory at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa by the allied kings of Castile, Aragon and Navarra signaled the beginning of the end of Muslim rule in al-Andalus. Momentum lay squarely with the Christian armies as city after city – Cordoba in 1236, Valencia in 1238, Seville in 1248 – fell from Muslim control.



Map 4: The Kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula from 1248-1492

Granada, the last Islamic city, was created as a reward for services rendered by the Nasr family to Ferdinand III during the battle for Cordoba. The Nasrids ruled Granada for roughly two hundred and fifty years. There, they built the final monument of al-Andalus, the red brick fortress known as the Alhambra. In 1492, the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella (whose marriage in 1469 united the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile); rode to Granada to receive the keys to the city from the last Nasrid Prince Muhammad XII, known as Boabdil. This action effectively ended the period of Muslim rule on the Iberian Peninsula. Although many chose to stay and convert to Christianity, many Muslims migrated at this time. It was not until an official edict in the 1600s that all remaining Muslims were expelled. (An official edict expelling Jews was issued soon after the fall of Granada.)

And so we have it - the rise and fall of al-Andalus or simply put “a brief history of a first rate place.”³⁷ It is within these ups and downs, within the changing of political authorities, and within the constant remapping that the idea of *convivencia* has its roots. But, what does this much bandied about coexistence entail? As we move to the next chapter, we shall attempt to answer this question and much more.

³⁷ Ibid. Menocal, 15. This is the title of a chapter in Menocal’s book, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. (15-49).

3. Convivencia: A Most Perplexing Idea

*“I have kept the Holy Law of Moses. I have kept the law of Jesus Christ, and if right now Saint Muhammad appeared, by God! I would keep all three; and if all were to end tomorrow, I would not fear God because I had walked in all three laws.”*³⁸

Simon de Santa Clara (Calatayud, 1489)

In this chapter, we begin our in-depth examination of convivencia. The chapter is further subdivided into three parts. The first sub-chapter looks at the meaning of the term convivencia itself. The second sub-chapter seeks to ascertain the importance of the convivencia; while the third examines how convivencia worked in both al-Andalus and Christian Spain.

Of Definitions and Meanings

Spanish historians coined and have used the term *convivencia* to describe the relationship between Jews, Christians and Muslims during two simultaneous periods of their nation’s history from the year 711 to 1492 – the Muslim Umayyad Conquest and the Christian Reconquest. Non-Spanish writers translate the term to mean coexistence – “to exist in mutual tolerance despite different ideologies or interests.”³⁹ But what does this mean? At this juncture we examine convivencia, the term before endeavoring to understand it as an epoch from which “heated controversy among the students of the culture and history of Spain” has arisen.⁴⁰

One of the interpretations of convivencia can be found in the work of Famed Spanish historian and philologist, Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968). Writing in *Orígenes de español* (1926), he uses the term *convivencia de normas* (coexistence of norms) to describe the “existence of variant forms in early Romance languages of the peninsula, for example the diphthongs of the open *o* as in the Castilian *puerto*, *puorto*, *puarto*; (...) norms he saw, in conformity with prevailing notions of cultural evolutionism, as competing with one another until all but one were selected.”⁴¹

³⁸ Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*, (Yale University Press: 2008), 43

³⁹ Oxford Dictionaries Online, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_us1234233#m_en_us1234233.005 (accessed March 1st, 2011)

⁴⁰ Ibid. Schwartz, 44.

⁴¹ Thomas F. Glick, “Convivencia: An Introductory Note,” in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and*

From Menéndez Pidal's use of *convivencia*, one gleans an element of competitiveness inherent to his understanding of the term. However, it is the analyses on the subject by Americo Castro (1885-1972), a disciple of Menéndez Pidal and a literary scholar in his own right, which reveal ta decidedly more idealistic understanding of the term. While retaining some of Menéndez Pidal's ideas - namely, portraying "medieval Iberian culture as a field of interaction among all kinds of cultural elements" - Castro conceives that this interaction is "intelligible only if filtered through the collective consciousness of the three castes; (...) that the culture a group projects is something itself recognizes as worthy."⁴² Therefore, *convivencia* implies the "coexistence of the three groups, but only as registered collectively and consciously in the culture of any one of them"⁴³

Castro's concept, with its decidedly utopic essence, is remarkably devoid of any notion of the predictable conflict that interaction within the three castes, (as he called them) - Jews, Christians and Muslims – would have produced. This idealized interpretation of intergroup relations, where the positive outcomes are touted at the expense of the negative ones; forms the basis of on the two schools of thought regarding the subject of medieval Iberian history. Castro found that within the interactions between Jews, Muslims and Christians are the foundations of modern Spanish culture.⁴⁴ James T. Monroe writing in *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship: Sixteenth Century to the Present* sums up the gist of Castro's argument stating that he (Castro), "creates a theory of Spanish history which attributes a decisive and positive role to the interactions between Jews, Christian and Muslims, (explaining) that Spaniards are what they are (...) because centuries ago they belonged to a human group formed by the three castes."⁴⁵

The antithesis of this school of thought is based primarily on the work of medievalist and historian, Claudio Sanchez –Albornoz. He argued that the "Spanish character was forged in the political and cultural conflict of Catholic Spain with its

Christians in Medieval Spain, edited by Vivian B. Mann, Jerrilynn D. Dodds & Thomas F. Glick, 1-9. New York: George Braziller Inc., 1992), 1. This edited volume was published in conjunction with an exhibition (of the same name), held at the Jewish Museum of New York in 1992.

⁴² Ibid. Glick, 1-2.

⁴³ Ibid. Glick, 2.

⁴⁴ Americo Castro, *The Spaniards: An Introduction to their History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 259.

⁴⁵ James T. Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship: Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 259.

traditional opponents, the Muslims and the Jews.”⁴⁶ Referring again to Monroe’s text, one finds that Sanchez Albornoz views Spanish history as a “painful process of comparing an unfortunate reality to what might have been if the Arabs had not crossed the Straits (insisting) on an “eternal” Spain twisted from its true course by the Arab invasion.”⁴⁷ Therefore, even though the negative aspects of social dynamics have eluded Castro; it does not and cannot diminish the extremely probative value of his understanding of the cultural interaction of his three castes.

Despite the evolution of these ideas, the core of this intellectual debate remains a source of heated controversy. Regarding the term *convivencia*, we find that since both Castro’s and Sanchez-Albornoz’s positions on intergroup interactions are polar opposites of each other; any definition of the term must lie somewhere in the middle of these two opposing extremes. It cannot be overwhelmingly positive as in the case of Castro; nor can it be overwhelmingly negative as in the case of Sanchez-Albornoz.

Therefore, it is incumbent on writers and researchers of the topic to carefully couch the interpretation of the term that they employ in their work. For example, Thomas Glick, in his Introductory Note to *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain*, makes a point of clarifying the definition of *convivencia* used by his text. In it he states that “the word as we use it here, is loosely defined as coexistence but carries connotations of mutual interpretation and creative influence, even as it also embraces the phenomena of mutual friction, rivalry and suspicion.”⁴⁸ Similarly, this paper uses the term *convivencia* based on a definition that allows for the interjection of the inevitable push and pull characteristic of intercultural relations to the process of acculturation implied by Castro’s views – “a process of internalization of the “other” that is the mechanism by which we make foreign cultural traits our own.”⁴⁹ Simply put; this paper employs the term in an effort to understand what living together in medieval Iberia meant for Jews, Christians and Muslims. Having answered the question of what; we now move to answer the question why.

The Relevancy of Coexistence

Coexistence joins words like open-mindedness and tolerance in being fruits of a

⁴⁶ Ibid. Schwartz, 44. See Claudio Sanchez-Albornoz, *Spain: A Historical Enigma*, (translated by Colette Joly Dees and David Sven Seher) 2 vols. (Madrid: Fundacion Universitaria Espanola), 1975.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Monroe, 257.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Glick, 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Glick, 7.

modern secular world; what Schwartz describes as “fundamental outgrowths.”⁵⁰ Since, today’s world is one rife with war due in large part to religious conflict and perceived incompatibilities; these words have become increasingly more common in our everyday vocabulary. As a result, the overwhelming tendency is to look to the past for solutions to issues of the present. Employing this “Schindler’s List syndrome: the desire to find in the humane and tolerant actions of a few individuals saving and exculpatory grace that gives one hope for the human condition;” is often misleading, as the “tolerance” ascribed to past individuals was more than likely a result of necessity rather than being driven by a desire to fulfill some lofty ideal.⁵¹

Today, the Spanish populace finds that there is a renewed preoccupation with convivencia; that the remembrance of medieval al-Andalus remains an increasingly relevant and controversial issue. This is particularly true when examined through the consequences of both the events of September 11, 2001 and the “11-M”, the commuter train bombings that resulted in the deaths of 191 people in Madrid on March 11, 2004. These issues have been and continue to be a topic of research; with many endeavoring to prove that conflict does not have to be a reality. Many have shown that there are commonalities between Judaism, Christianity and Islam that should and need to be embraced for there to be peace.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as we know, come from different religious traditions, but have many ties to each other. In fact, all believers of these three religions refer back to Abraham ... for whom they have a profound respect, although in different ways ... If there is not an amiable peace among these religions, how can harmony in society be found?⁵²

Given the current world climate, the words of Pope John Paul II remain remarkably resonant. Terror and violence have unwittingly become associated with Islam. Islam is repeatedly portrayed as being irreconcilable with the modern secular world and with Christianity. Novelist Amin Maalouf speaks of “fighting against the idea that on the one hand there’s a religion – Christianity – destined for ever to act as a vector for modernism, freedom, tolerance and democracy, and on the other hand another religion – Islam – doomed from the outset to despotism and obscurantism.”⁵³ Acquiescing to this

⁵⁰ Ibid. Schwartz, 7.

⁵¹ Ibid, 8.

⁵² Ibid. Lowney, Epigraph. From Pope John Paul II, “Address to participants in Sant’Egidio Interreligious Meeting,” April 30, 1991, Rome, in *John Paul II Spiritual Pilgrimage Texts on Jews and Judaism 1979-1995*, edited by Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki, (New York: Crossroad, 1995).

⁵³ Amin Maalouf, (trans. by Barbara Bray), *In Search of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, (New

idea would be extreme folly. Hence, the preoccupation with medieval Spain and the period of *convivencia*; since for all intents and purposes, it remains a period of lasting compatibility (albeit a need driven compatibility) between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It was a time when power and control were in Muslim hands; thus making Islam seem more flexible and more open. Maalouf writes that “Islam, like any other religion or doctrine, always bears the marks of time and place.”⁵⁴ During the reign of Abd ar-Rahman III, al-Andalus was at its apogee; allowing Muslims to feel “triumphant and to interpret their faith in a spirit of tolerance.”⁵⁵ Unfortunately, the inherent danger of this preoccupation is “seeking refuge in an idealized past.”⁵⁶ The dhimma model itself highlights the fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity – “it is consciously and explicitly a way of life rather than a faith, (...) as such its code is decidedly more demanding and stricter (...) and cannot be flexible.”⁵⁷ Now, with Islam becoming the unwilling symbol of terror, both Muslims and non-Muslims find themselves looking back, searching for that tolerance. Unfortunately for us, “the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”⁵⁸

*Was Convivencia the Triumph of Assimilation over Rebellion?*⁵⁹

*“The toleration of religious minorities was contractual and institutional and it by no means guaranteed the harmonious intermingling of religious groups.”*⁶⁰

Stuart B. Schwartz

In the previous chapter, we focused on the acquisition of the necessary variables from which *convivencia* takes its roots – the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by the Umayyad dynasty which resulted in the comingling of three different religions and cultures. If we acquiesce to the fact that the much vaunted *convivencia* was a result of a unique situation; then we must also acquiesce to the fact that the emergence of this

York: Arcade Pub., 2001), 55.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 64.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Maalouf, 62.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 163.

⁵⁷ Felipe Fernandez- Armesto, *1492: The Year the World Began*, (Harper Collins: 2009),320.

⁵⁸ L.P. Hartley, (introduction by Colm Tobin), *The Go-Between*, (New York: New York Review Books, 2002, c1953), Prologue, 17.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Dodds et al, 17. Here the statement “assimilation largely triumphed over rebellion,” was used in reference to the fact that while Arabized Jews and Arabized Christians were essentially second class citizens within the Islamic polity; the standard of living and worship were such that life was acceptable.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Schwartz, 46, from Mark D. Meyerson, *The Muslim of Valencia in the Age of Fernando and Isabel: Between Coexistence and Crusade*, (University of California Press, 1990), 3.

society was a relatively slow undertaking. The resulting melding of cultures is only understandable if the groups involved are examined individually so that their differences can be made identifiable.

Beginning with the Muslims, we find that there were three groups of varying ethnicities that constituted the Muslim population of al-Andalus. The first of these groups and by far the largest were the Berbers from North Africa. These Berbers (not to be confused with Nomadic Berbers of the same region in North Africa), formed the rural class of al-Andalus and were all Muslims. The second group was the Arabs who made up a considerably small portion of the population but were the majority of the ruling elite. They are credited with bringing elements of culture to the peninsula; their language and their credo, *seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave*.⁶¹ The third group the *muwallads*, Muslims of Iberian descent who traced their origin to marriages between the proper Arabs who conquered the peninsula and the women of Iberia – invading Arabs did not bring females with them. Additionally, native Iberians who converted to Islam were also called muwallads. Therefore, in terms of numbers, the muwallads were more than the Arab ruling elite but less than the Berber rural class. Although, by the time Abd ar-Rahman III became emir in 912, there was no distinction between Arabs and muwallads.

Before the arrival of the Moors, the Iberian Peninsula was home to Christians; who were either of Visigothic or Hispano- Roman descent and members of native Iberian tribes. The noble class under Visigothic rule was a combination of Visigoths and Hispano-Romans. Once the conquering of al-Andalus was completed and in accordance with Islamic law, Christians fell under the category of *dhimmi* – one of the protected Peoples of the Book. This status gave Christians certain rights and privileges, among which was the right to continue practice their faith. Additionally, "Islamic governance provided for a separate civic authority including a Christian judicial system for cases in which only Christians were involved."⁶² Many Christians would eventually become Arabized – the process by which aspects of Arab culture - language, customs and so on; are adopted by non-Arab individuals. Later on in this chapter, we shall examine what the adoption of Arabic customs meant to Christian culture, as well as a

⁶¹ Islamic Tradition holds that that the Prophet (pubh) said “Whoever seeks a way to acquire knowledge Allah will make easy his way to Paradise.

⁶² Ibid. Dodds et al, 17.

more in depth look at the restrictions and allowances afforded Islamic governance. For the moment, we turn our attention to the third and final player needed to complete our trio.

The Jews, were another small but major minority in the Iberian Peninsula; lived under Christian Visigothic rule prior to the arrival of Islam. During this time they faced constant persecution; and therefore, one can argue that they were more readily accepting of their Muslim rulers than the Christians. Similar to Christians, Jews were also categorized as one of the protected Peoples of the Book. Thus, Jews were also afforded rights and privileges; making their experience under the rule of Muslims a marked improvement over that of the previous regime. They were confident in the dhimma system. They believed that adherence to the pact could mean “an expectation of protection and freedom from discrimination.”⁶³ Jews that resided in the cities occupied positions of merchants and bankers. They were invaluable to the early Muslim conquerors of al-Andalus as these they were “desert warriors to whom the minutiae of governing had been initially less than congenial.”⁶⁴ Therefore, the Andalusian Jews became indispensable to the Muslim rulers; as they occupied positions ranging from scribe to clerks and physician to court official. These city dwelling Jews underwent a similar process of Arabization that was seen among many Christians.

Since the beginning of the Islamic expansion from the arid deserts of the Arabian Peninsula; the practice has always been to not compel conversion to Islam by the inhabitants of the conquered lands - “enforced conversion was alien to the Ummah.”⁶⁵ Among the non-Muslims, Christians and Jews have always occupied a place of respect among Muslims. The dhimma pact was “revolutionary tool for the consolidation of conquered lands, allowing for varied cultural interactions.”⁶⁶ Under this pact both Christians and Jews were “protected from injury to their person and property; were allowed freedom of settlement and movement; and granted the freedom to pursue any occupation as long as it did not involve hegemony over Muslims.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Mark R. Cohen, “The “Convivencia” of Jews and Muslims in the High Middle Ages,” in *The Meeting of Civilizations: Muslim, Christian and Jewish*, edited by Moshe Ma’oz, 54-66. (Sussex Academic Press: 2009), 58.

⁶⁴ Ibid. David L Lewis, 204.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 204.

⁶⁶ Ibid, Dodds et al, 17.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Gampel, 14.

While there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that Christians and Jews experienced an extremely high degree of both religious and social freedom under Muslim rule; the same evidentiary proof can be used to demonstrate some of the rights that were reserved only for Muslims. Anouar Majid's views on the dhimma pact, reveal a decidedly negative view - *The dhimmitude, the second class status conferred on Christians and Jews in Islamic regimes (...) does not meet the minimum human rights expectations in nation states.*⁶⁸ For both Christians and Jews, the privilege which afforded them the right to freedom of religion was predicated on the fact that they had to pay a *jizya* – an annual poll tax – to their Muslim sovereigns. One can argue that paying an annual poll tax was a small price to pay for religious freedom. Conversely, one can also argue that this tax was one of many that the Muslim sovereigns leveled at their non-Muslim subjects. In addition to the *jizya*, there was also the *kharaj* – a land tax - that unlike the *jizya* had no basis in Islamic law.

Non-Muslims paid most of the taxes to the rulers while Muslims only had to pay the annual *zakat* - the obligation to pay 2.5 % of one's wealth to assist the less fortunate. Therefore, the adornment of the cities of al-Andalus by Muslim rulers was financed largely by the taxes paid by non-Muslims. For example Cordoba, site of *La Mezquita*, the Great Mosque (now a cathedral) was built over the ruins of a demolished church. Embellishment of Islamic Cordoba under the reigns of both Abd ar-Rahman I (756-788) and Abd ar-Rahman II (822-852), were financed by confiscating properties and increasing the exacted tribute paid by non-Muslims. Finally, under Abd al-Rahman III, Cordoba was "taken to [new] heights of glory (...) financed largely through the taxation of Catholics and Jews and the booty and tribute obtained in military incursions against Catholic lands."⁶⁹ Therefore, "non-Muslim subjects bore the heaviest weight of taxation (...) providing the state with its revenues."⁷⁰

Conversion to Islam was a double edged sword. On the one hand, conversion meant that Muslims were fulfilling the Islamic mandate of spreading the word of Allah. Additionally, it allowed Christians and Jews to be a part of the unfolding intercultural mosaic by aligning themselves with the ruling elite by increasing their opportunities for

⁶⁸ Anouar Majid, *We are all Moors: Ending Centuries of Crusades against Muslims and other Minorities*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 99.

⁶⁹ Dario Fernandez- Morera, "The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise," *The Intercollegiate Review* (Fall 2006), 23-31. 24.

⁷⁰ Richard A. Fletcher, *Moorish Spain*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1992), 35.

social mobility. On the other hand, conversion meant that there would be a reduction in the number of would be taxpayers. Regardless of this “certain disincentive,” there were indeed conversion to Islam by both Jews and Christians.⁷¹

The dhimma pact allowed for “considerable cultural interchange to take place as Christian soldiers gained access to classical authors through Arabic texts on everything from medicine to astrology. Linguistically, as a result of the continuing contact, the Latin based languages of the peninsula added an enormous number of the Arabic words.”⁷² Although overall numbers are unknown, many Jews and Christians became Arabized; with the latter being given the label of *Mozarabs*. Even though the presence of these Arabized Jews and Christians created a sense of homogeneity within certain aspects of al-Andalus; there were still a number of zealots who felt that this homogeneity was an attack on their respective indigenous cultures. This was particularly true amongst some Christians.

An example of the action taken by these Christian zealots can be found in Richard Fletcher’s *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation*, where he writes that in “the 850s a number of Christians in Cordoba, (...) and smaller numbers elsewhere, deliberately and publicly insulted Islam and so brought upon themselves the capital punishment which the *sharia*, the religious law of Islam, prescribes for this offence; (resulting) in these individuals being hailed as martyrs.”⁷³ These zealots could not comprehend the zeal with which Christians were converting to Islam. Their outrage seem to have been a precursor to sentiments expressed by Petrus Alfonsi - a Jewish Spanish writer born in 12th century al-Andalus, who converted to Christianity after rising to prominence – centuries later. He writes, “I have read the books of the Muslims, written their language and was always nurtured by them, but it is not proper that I should follow their religion.”⁷⁴

The actions of these zealots serve to reinforce the fact that in 711 when the first Muslims invaded the Iberian Peninsula many Christians resisted Muslim rule. Many fled north; forming the northern Christian kingdoms that would eventually initiate and successfully carry out the Reconquista. The martyrdoms of the 9th century did not

⁷¹ Ibid. Fletcher, 36.

⁷² Ibid. Schwartz, 44.

⁷³ Richard A. Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation*, (New York: Viking Publishing), 44-45.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Dodds et al, 77.

garner widespread support and the number of executions eventually subsided; thereby, paving the way for the emirate of Abd ar- Rahman III; whose reign is widely regarded as being the zenith of *convivencia*.

In the previous chapter, we saw Abd ar-Rahman III, the relatively young emir who spent the early years of his reign quelling uprisings, firmly reestablishing the borders of his kingdom and would, eventually oversee the flourishing of famed a paradise. It is important to acknowledge that while being ruled by Muslims, al-Andalus would and could never be united under the banner of Islam. The fact that forced conversion was not a part of Islamic doctrine effectively rendered that idea obsolete. Therefore, religion could not be the basis of unity. Neither could ethnicity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the proper Arabs (Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula), though in power were often the minority. Therefore, in the “long term the most fruitful zone of interaction between Christian and Muslim during the crusading epoch lay in intellectual life.”⁷⁵ Luckily, the new ruler was an avid supporter of the arts and sciences; sparking the cultural efflorescence that is, today synonymous with his reign. Additionally, he “stimulated the protected minorities to further their own intellectual interests.” The creation of libraries encouraged the migration to the cities of al-Andalus by numerous learned individuals to further academic interests. The promotion of these intellectual pursuits ranging from but not limited to literature and medicine; became an essential part of the politics of Abd ar-Rahman and his successors.

The reign of Abd ar-Rahman III has often been described as being a testament to the tolerance of a forgotten past; a time when Islam was deemed open and adaptable to others. It is important to remember that this vaunted epoch of tolerance ascribed to the Spanish Umayyad was based on their interpretation of Islam – an interpretation that can be described as being anything but conservative. The Umayyad displayed a liberal vision of Islam. When subsequent regimes from North Africa, the Almoravids and the Almohads took over control they too sought to impose their own respective interpretation of Islam. Both of these interpretations of Islam were extremely conservative and could not sustain any form of the Muslim/Jewish/ Christian dichotomy – the Mozarabs of Toledo found that the “Muslims who had permitted them to retain their distinctive customs, cultures and religion, had been replaced by new masters who

⁷⁵ Ibid. Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 116.

within little more than a year were already threatening to deprive them of all three.”⁷⁶ And even though, both the Almoravids and the Almohads “became more tolerant of art and philosophy once they were part of the everyday life in al-Andalus, they remained fundamentally opposed to religious dissent, and their harsh policies toward the results the People’s of the Book resulted in waves of emigration of both Mozarabs and Jews out of Almohad and Almoravid territories.”⁷⁷

The presence of the Almoravids and Almohads raise another interesting point regarding the presupposed period of peaceful coexistence during the reign of Muslims in al-Andalus. One of the problems with this supposition is that it presumes that Muslim rule was continuous and stable; that the territories ruled by the Muslims were the same for these seven centuries. As discussed in the previous chapter, al-Andalus under the Muslims was never more secure than under Abd al-Rahman III, despite his inability to conquer the entire peninsula. The collapse of the caliphate into taifa kingdoms and the looming presence of the Christian armies in the North (the part of the peninsula never conquered by the Muslims); meant that during the 700 years, the borders of al-Andalus were constantly being redrawn. Christian armies began reclaiming Muslim cities, until eventually al-Andalus became essentially the single province of Granada. The remapping of lands meant that it was now the responsibility of the Christian rulers to create the policies from which they would govern their Jewish and Mudejar - the name given to Muslims who lived under Christian Rule - populations.

It is a common misconception to ascribe tolerance to the Muslim rulers of al-Andalus and intolerance to the rulers of Christian Spain - “Muslim rulers of the past were far more tolerant of people of other faiths (...) [that] the multicultural, multi-religious states of al-Andalus gave way to a Christian regime that was solely intolerant.”⁷⁸ This is an unfortunate inaccuracy because the policies employed by the Christian rulers were similar to the practices of the Muslim rulers. Once a city was conquered by Christian armies, “the regulations for [its] administration were committed to writing by the Christian authorities in a document known as a *fuero*.”⁷⁹ The dhimma model was “borrowed by the Christian rulers but implemented as civil not religious

⁷⁶ Ibid, Dodds et al, 93. From Peter Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 218.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 129.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Fernandez-Moria, 23. From “Islam and the West: Never the twain shall peacefully meet,” *The Economist* (The Economist Newspaper Ltd.: November 15th 2001).

⁷⁹ Ibid. Fletcher, Moorish Spain, 137.

law;” since unlike, Islamic tradition, Christian law does not have any policy that would allow for the toleration of the Peoples of the Book.⁸⁰

When comparing the life of the Christian living under Muslim rule (Mozarab) with the life of the Muslim living under Christian rule (Mudejar), we find a number of consistencies. Essentially, Muslims and Christians reversed roles; with much of the privileges that were granted to Christians by Muslim rulers being reciprocated in the reemerging Christian Spain. Firstly, the dhimma pact, granting Mozarabs privileges made them effectively second-class citizens to the Muslim sovereigns. Conversely, when the situation was reversed, the Mudejars living in Christian Spain were also deemed second-class. Therefore, the decline in status that was a reality for Christians when Muslims first invaded was now a reality for the Mudejars in Christian Spain. Secondly, part of the freedom of religion that the dhimma pact afforded was that neither Jews nor Christians were allowed to entice Muslims to join either of their respective faiths. Similarly, Mudejars were not allowed to make converts of Christians. Dario Fernandez-Morera writing in “The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise,” states that dhimma pact was effectively a tool that Muslim rulers used to “curtail any possibility of sharing power or compromising the hegemonic positions of Islam.”⁸¹ Similarly, the policies of Christian rulers could be understood as way of restricting the power of Muslims - even though, “they (Mudejars) chose their officers for the management of their own communal affairs, they had no say in the general municipal administration of the cities where they lived.”⁸²

Fletcher writes that the “living side by side (...) reached down to levels of intimacy in social life which the documentation of that age rarely illumines.”⁸³ However, it was at these levels, particularly in the rural areas where Jews, Christians and Muslims engaged in mundane, daily activities like laundering and the planting and reaping of crops; that an acute awareness of the differences in cultural customs became increasingly more evident. These differences manifested themselves in simple things like diet, hygiene and marriage. Legislation of the time served to reinforce these tendencies. Therefore, *convivencia* can be understood a tangible outcome of a “legally

⁸⁰ Ibid. Glick, 7.

⁸¹ Ibid. Fernandez-Morera, 25

⁸² Ibid. Fletcher, Moorish Spain, 138.

⁸³ Ibid. Fletcher, The Cross and The Crescent, 114.

prescribed regime of discrimination.”⁸⁴ For example, “segregation was often the rule at the municipal bath houses, with different days for Christian, Muslims and Jews.”⁸⁵ Regarding sexual relations, the “most intimate of all levels of contact and potentially the most explosive;” both Christian law and Islamic opinion were in agreement – transgressing sexual boundaries, depending on the composition of the couple involved; was punishable by death, flogging and/or stoning.⁸⁶

Forgotten in this Muslim/Christian power struggle were the Jews. Often, discussions surrounding Muslim and/or Christian rule; are comparative in nature. Unfortunately, the lives of the Jewish population are often overshadowed by the Mozarab/Mudejar dichotomy. Regardless of place, al-Andalus or Christian Spain; Jews remained the minority. As such they “lacked the natural resources to defend their lives, secure their livelihoods, and safeguard their children’s future.”⁸⁷ Never ruling, and regardless of power and influence; the Jews remained permanently subject to the will of a particular ruler at any given time. Nevertheless, the Jewish community readily availed itself to both the Muslim and Christian courts as “talented merchants and administrators, adept go-betweens who assimilated the cultural and language skills needed to thrive in the dominant Muslim or Christian society.”⁸⁸ The presence of Jews at Muslim and Christian courts serves to enhance the idea of coexistence between these three groups.

As we conclude this chapter, we return to the question that serves as the title of this section “was convivencia the triumph of assimilation over rebellion?” If we define assimilation as “the process by which individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of society; a process involving the taking on of traits of the dominant culture to such a degree that the assimilating group becomes socially indistinguishable from other members of the society;” then one can argue that assimilation was the fear of the Christian zealots of the mid-9th century, who felt that the growing number of Arabized Christians were a threat to the Christian culture.⁸⁹ The presence of Arabized Jews and Arabized Christians under Umayyad rule; does suggest

⁸⁴ Ibid. Cohen, 55.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Fletcher, Moorish Spain, 138 & Fletcher, The Cross and the Crescent, 114.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Fletcher, The Cross and the Crescent, 114 – 115. The example of the affair between the Christian girl, Prima and her Muslim neighbor Ali, quoted by Fletcher on these pages illustrates the punishment of this behaviour.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Lowney, 101.

⁸⁸ Ibid. Lowney, 101.

⁸⁹ “Assimilation.” *Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/39328/assimilation> (accessed 30 March 2011).

that at least on some level assimilation did take place. However, one can argue that overall it was rather a process of acculturation – internalizing the other via the adoption of foreign cultural traits – rather than assimilation (an extreme form of acculturation) that took place. Therefore, we can state that under Umayyad rule acculturation did triumph over rebellion.

Convivenica was dependent on time and place; as the levels of coexistence varied from region to region. Hence our reasons for carefully couching the fact that the triumph of acculturation pertains primarily to coexistence under Umayyad rule. However, there are certain facts about convivenica that are applicable to all regions regardless of the ruling elite. It is an idea that is predicated on these three religious groups living together and interacting with each other for a rather lengthy period of time. Beyond the cultural efflorescence characteristic of Muslim cities like Cordoba and the Christian cities like Toledo; we find that both the Muslim rulers and the Christian crusading monarchs employed similar policies and imposed similar restrictions on each other as well as on the Jews.

In the next chapter we shall examine the portrayal of convivencia as in contemporary Spanish society and the meaning of this portrayal to the relationship between Christians and Muslims.

4. Coexistence in Contemporary Spain: The Return of the Moor.

“No Christian country’s faith has been more intertwined with Islam.”⁹⁰

Anouar Majid

Thus far, our examination of *convivencia* reveals that this was a period of tempered acculturation and mutual friction. The capitulation of Granada, the last vestige of al-Andalus to the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492 signaled the end of this period. With Granada’s surrender, the monarchs initiated a process of compulsory edicts and restrictive statutes aimed at recreating the identity of their kingdom; an identity that was devoid of Jewish or Muslim influence. One of these statutes was the *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) statute - a way that the “state could unite around a faith that would never, in theory be accessible to descendants of Jews and Muslims.”⁹¹ The society, where *convivencia* flourished became a society of discrimination and persecution as the policies of forced conversion and/or expulsion served to divest Catholic Spain of its Jewish and Moorish populace. Thus, Spain became the “only European country to have attempted to consolidate itself over the centuries, not through offering shelter but through a policy of exclusion.”⁹²

The phrase, “the return of the Moor,” refers to the waves of Moroccan migrants that now call Spain home.⁹³ These migrants have been labeled the *Moors*, a reference to North African Muslims of Arab and/or Berber ancestry that conquered the Iberian Peninsula in 711. Daniela Flesler suggests that what we are witnessing is essentially the “double return to Spanish national imaginary of the figure of the “moor;” where in the one hand, fictional representations of the historical Moors have multiplied in the culture industry, while on the other hand, the number of Moroccan immigrants in Spain has increased significantly over the last 20 years.”⁹⁴ Therefore, the goal of this chapter is to

⁹⁰ Ibid. Majid, 26.

⁹¹ Ibid, 6.

⁹² Henry Kamen, *The Disinherited: Exile and the Making of Spanish Culture 1492-1975*, (New York: Harper Collins Pub., 2007), Preface ix-x.

⁹³ Estimates estimates put the Muslim population of Spain at roughly 1 million, of these an estimated 20,000 are thought to be converts to Islam; Spain does not keep census records regarding religion, in Lisa Abend, “Spain’s New Muslim: A Historical Romance,” from *In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past*, edited by Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 133-156.

⁹⁴ Daniela Flesler, *The Return of the Moor: Spanish Responses to Contemporary Moroccan Immigration*, (Purdue University Press, 2008), 3.

examine how Spain's interactions with its current Muslim population shape the resurging theme of coexistence vis-à-vis the return of the Moor. However, before we can assess the relevance of the Moor's return, we first must address where he went.

As late as 1492, Moors were still a part of Christian Spain's population. Years before the surrender of Granada, edicts were issued expelling the Jews from Spain. From 1492 onwards, the Catholic monarchs achieved religious unity by first expelling the Jews and secondly, conquering the Muslims. Despite these persecutions and restrictions, both the Arab and the Jews remained (and remains) ever present in Spanish society – “decreed exclusions could not (and has not) been able to divest itself of those cultures.”⁹⁵ In general, the Moriscos lived within the rules prescribed for them. However, by the 16th century, their status changed as their lives became increasingly more repressed so that they would “conform to what was deemed to be the current national norm.”⁹⁶ Over the subsequent centuries, decrees would be issued ordering the expulsion of these groups starting with the Jews and culminating with the decree signed by Phillip III in 1609 expelling the Moriscos.

Famed historian of Spain, Henry Kamen called the expulsion of Moriscos, “the biggest ethnic cleansing to have been carried out in Western history.”⁹⁷ Today, the persecutions and subsequent expulsions of the Moriscos and Jews influence their portrayal and have often resulted in the refusal to acknowledge their part in the creation of Spanish identity. An example of this refusal can be found in Josep Maria Navarro's 1997 study about the way Islam is presented in Spanish school textbooks.

Since, textbooks today still deny a meaningful relationship between the European and African or Middle Eastern cultural traditions; it should not be any surprise (...) that in Spain we try to abominate our Islamic roots (...) for international prestige purposes – how are we going to get in the ‘VIP countries’ club with such an un-European past? Schools reproduce the discourse of Spanish Europeanness “from an adulterated model of the construction of Spain and the Iberian identity that excludes Islam and Judaism.”⁹⁸

Navarro's study reveals that there is still an element of exclusion regarding Islam

⁹⁵ Alberto Manguel, *The City of Words (CBC Massey Lecture)*, (House of Anansi Press, 2007), 93.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Flesler, 6. Quoted from Deborah Root, “Speaking Christian: Orthodoxy and Difference in Sixteenth Century Spain,” *Representations* 23 (1988: 118-34), 118-119.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Kamen, *The Disinherited*, 56.

⁹⁸ Ibid. Flesler, 20-21. Quoted from Josep Maria Navarro (ed), *El Islam en las aulas: contenidos, silencios, enseñanza*, (Barcelona: Icaria Antrazyt), 20-21.

and Judaism. His suggestion there is an attempt to “abominate Islamic roots” in lieu of a seat at the European table; plays into the ideology that Spaniards are still somewhat ambiguous towards their heterogeneous past. As we will see further down in this chapter, despite their use of the this heterogeneous past to bolster their gross domestic product via the tourism industry; Spaniards are still very much confused as the images that they depict regarding this past are often out of sync with the historical truth.

This confusion stems partly from the categorization of the Moroccan immigrant as Moors. This particular description ties these “current Moroccan emigrant to the traditional enemies of Christian Spain, awakening a series of historical ghosts related to their invading threatening character - when today’s Moroccan immigrants are called “moros” (moors), their identity becomes symbolically collapsed with the concept of that attacking enemy.”⁹⁹ Jacques Derrida states in *Spectres of Marx* that “haunting is historical;” and while he applies his theories to Marx’s ghosts, Flesler uses the term to state that the “Spaniards difficulties with Moroccan immigrants and their perception of them as “Moors” becomes a symptom of the ghostly slippage between the present and the past they produce, and the unresolved historical trauma they awake.”¹⁰⁰ In this case, the past is medieval al-Andalus. Spaniards seem to have bestowed upon the Moroccan immigrants the fear that was a part of their historic past – the fear that these new Moors with their ties to the Moors of history will reclaim what they once owned. Whether or not this fear is warranted is not of immediate relevance. However, what is relevant is that this fear shapes how both Spaniards and Moroccan immigrants interact with each other.

Today, the obsession with *convivencia*, and in fact any remembrance of medieval al-Andalus itself; is often always depicted in terms of a Muslim-Christian dynamic. The Jews, while being an important factor in the history of al-Andalus, particularly in terms of the cultural motifs and intellectual advancements that were made there; remains the silent witness to the struggle for power that Muslims and Christian were constantly engaged in. The renewed interest in *convivencia* is based for the most

⁹⁹ Ibid. Flesler, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 4, in Daniela Flesler, “Contemporary Moroccan Immigration and its Ghosts,” from *In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past*, edited by Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 115-117 & Flesler, *The Return of the Moor*, 55-56.

part on the current global state of affairs that once again pits Muslims against Christians. The worldwide situation is such that “the Jew has morphed into a seemingly natural member of a Judeo-Christian civilization, the Moor has once again reappeared to haunt the West with her troubling presence and resistance to national assimilationist policies.”¹⁰¹

There are many films and books that depict the incompatibility between Muslims and Jews. For example, the thirty minute documentary *Mezquita NO! (Mosque NOT!)* by Alberti Aranda and Guillermo Cruz illustrates a conflict in Santa Coloma de Gramenet (Barcelona, Spain) in October and November 2004. This conflict is one of many that depict the tensions between Spaniards and the new Moors. It centered on the opening of a Muslim oratory in the basement of a building which sparked protests by neighbors who did not want the mosque in one of their buildings. Under the pretext was that the space did not satisfy the necessary physical conditions to be a place of worship; the neighbors staged loud protests at the times when people were praying in the oratory. This went on until the authorities had to “relocate” the mosque to a site outside the city. Taoufik Cheddadi, the spokesman of the El Singuerlin Muslim community, commented, this decision sent the message that it was better to have the Muslims isolated and as far away as possible.¹⁰²

However, lest we think that this relationship between Moroccan immigrants and Spaniards was and is always tension filled; we have *Moros y Christianos* (Moors and Christians) festivals which serve as kind of balance.

In these festivals, Moors and Christians take turns parading their troops through the city and acting as owners of the castle, defending it from the attacks of the invading other, in pairs of ceremonies that contain exactly the same elements. Each group, Moors and Christians, succeeds the other as conqueror (...) defeating the interim owners of the castle and replacing their identifying flag in the highest tower of the castle. The act of taking turns; both sides perform their double role of invaders and invaded of hosts and guests. (...) Every town that celebrates the festivals of Moors and Christians supposes they are celebrating the “Reconquest,” understood as a definitive Christian victory over Islam.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Majid, 122.

¹⁰² Ibid. Flesler, *The Return of the Moor*, 35.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 103-105.

While it is true that we can read these festivals as a reaffirmation of the “Christian victory over Islam;” many choose to see the festivals as a form of dialogue and coexistence. Since the outcome of these festivals is always the same; then the participants focus on the festivity itself rather than on the historical conflict. Regarding these festivals, Eva Borreguero writes:

“Moors and Christians” captures the racial and cultural crossroads of contemporary Spain; it is a point of convergence where past and present, apprehensions and opportunities meet. Although the festival recreates an historical confrontation of the Cross and the Crescent and could be seen as an updated version of the clash of civilizations, the celebration has an essentially playful nature. From the psychological perspective, it helps cope with cultural anxiety through games and reenactments. At the same time, it also endorses closeness to “the other” through the scenic representation of those fears. It is a catharsis for tensions and violent instincts, if any exist: a game in which, although there are champions and defeated, there are no winners and losers, no good guys or bad guys; above all, people identify with one another, as they all participate on both sides. What was yesterday’s conflict, has now been transformed into the celebration of an encounter, or, as a participant pointed out, “a war of friendship.”¹⁰⁴

These *moros y christianos* festivals are extremely popular with tourists, and their presence both in cities with a historical Muslim/Christian relationship and in cities without; brings us to the fact that any emphasis placed on Muslim and/ or Jewish contributions to Spain, are effectively part of a marketing strategy meant to entice tourists to visit Spain.

The marriage of medieval al-Andalus and tourism in some ways creates an ideal situation as it allows Spain the opportunity to confront aspects of their past that they chose to purge. We have already discussed that Spain chose to divest itself of its Moorish and Jewish pasts. They expelled the people and consecrated mosques but kept place names architectural motifs; recognizing their value and in so doing recognizing the people who contributions were invaluable. Just like the creation of *convivencia* was a slow process, so too is the Spaniard coming to grips with the fact of its unsuccessful cleansing— “the country had to come to terms with the influence of the absent (the

¹⁰⁴ Eva Borreguero, “The Moors Are Coming, the Moors Are Coming! Encounters with the Muslims in Contemporary Spain,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 17: no. 4 (October 2006): 417-432, 420.

exiles) in the formation of a character, a culture and an identity.”¹⁰⁵

Dean MacCannell characterized tourism as travel against the space/time divide opened by modernity: a quest for an escape from the separation of work from leisure and the compartmentalization of land, a search for an experience that would allow one to touch the “authentic” in order to “reconstruct a cultural heritage or a social identity,” now removed in time (to history) or in space (to natural, “primitive” or exotic destinations).¹⁰⁶ For many al-Andalus represents this “experience that has been removed from time; what Lou Charnon-Deutsch describes as a “dream world where time could be slowed life savored to its fullest.”¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, the problem of the current commercially motivated promotion of medieval al-Andalus is that it often promotes a skewed version of what actually happened.

Giles Tremlett sees in exploitation of the past, the creation of what he describes as “Moorsihland: the semi fictional version of Spain’s past where exotic offerings of orientalism- with-tapas are combined with “nostalgia” tourism for Sephardic (Spanish-rite) Jews, and where Charlton Heston’s El Cid meets the sun-loungers of the costa del Sol beaches.”¹⁰⁸ The marketing of medieval Spain creates an idealized version of al-Andalus and reveals an unclear relationship with the past; which many a film, novel and popular history can attest.

The common thread that ties all these portrayals of the Moor is the suggestion that “what destroyed al-Andalus was intolerance.”¹⁰⁹ By depicting al-Andalus as a Mecca of intolerance, an image is created which belies the discrimination and persecution that was a part of al-Andalus. Unfortunately, these contemporary depictions do not help to alleviate the tensions real- life tensions between Spaniards and the ‘new’

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Kamen, *The Disinherited*, xi.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Afinoguenova, xi-xii. Taken from Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1976) 11-13

¹⁰⁷ Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy. The History of a European Obsession* (University Park, PA: the Pennsylvania University Press, 2004) 59, in Daniela Flesler & Adrian Perez-Melgosa, “Marketing Convivencia: Contemporary Appropriation of Spain’s Jewish Past,” 63-85, from *Spain is (Still) Different Tourism and Discourse in Spanish Identity*, eds. Eugenia Afinoguenova & Jaume Marti-Olivella, 63-80. Lexington Books, 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Giles Tremlett, Welcome to Moorishland, *In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past*, edited by Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Foreword, xii.

¹⁰⁹ Denise K. Filios, Expulsion from Paradise: exiled Intellectuals and Andalusian Tolerance, 91 – 113, from *In the light of Medieval Spain* Filios offers the Salman rushdie’s novel the moors last sigh as an example of Christsian intolerance; and Youssef Chahine’s film al masir (destiny) as an example of Muslim intolerance.

Moors.

As we have already discussed labeling Moroccan immigrants with the title of Moor, results in the regrettable association of these ‘new’ Moors with the Moors of Spain’s historical past. This is extremely unfair as it puts unwarranted fears on the collective psyche of the immigrants causing them to retract further into their communities. The attitude towards the New Moor has seems to suggests that the Spaniard addresses issues regarding its current Moorish population by using past actions. Despite the presence of a law, that granted rights to Spain’s Muslims; the conditions of most Muslim immigrants – particularly those from Morocco – remain sub-standard.¹¹⁰ Flesler points out that “statistics show that they [Moroccan immigrants] are the ones afforded the least preference in facilitating their permanence in Spain, and those who earn the lowest level of acceptance as neighbors.”¹¹¹

Overall, there is a renewed interest in the Moors, who were primarily seen as “just another quaint, romantic part of Spanish history, [whose] presence in modern Spain (except in language and place names) was solely architectural.”¹¹² This renewal has exacerbated by intertwining of current global and European issues. Globally, Islam is still seen and the face of terror. On the European front the growing Muslim population in a number of its member countries raises the question of whether or not integration of Islam in European way of life can be achieved. Regarding Spain, the renewed interest in the coexistence has its roots both in the post 9/11 world as well as in the aftermath of the Madrid bombings (2004). Additionally, while other European countries were deciding how best to curb immigration practices; the “Parliament of Andalusia, the southernmost part of Spain [had] started the process of establishing a law, granting preferential access to Spanish citizenship.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ “Acuerdo de Cooperación entre el Estado Español y la Comisión Islámica de España.” <http://www.webislam.com/?idt=175%3E> in Flesler, 1. on November 10, 1992, the 500th anniversary of the Christian conquest of Granada; the Spanish state signed a cooperation agreement with the Islamic communities in Spain, which became Law 26/1992. The agreement was made possible due to the changes in the Spain’s 1978 Constitution that assured the rights of equality and religious freedom. As an introduction to the description of the protected rights that Muslims and their places of worship would henceforth have in Spain, the agreement states that Islam which has become “noticeably rooted” in Spanish society has a “secular tradition in our country, with considerable importance in the formation of Spanish identity.”

¹¹¹ Ibid. Flesler, The Return of the Moor, 2. Quoted from Antonio Izquierdo, *La Inmigración inesperada: la población extranjera en España* (1991-1995), Madrid: Trotta, 1996

¹¹² Giles Tremlett, *Ghosts of Spain: Travels through Spain and its Silent Past*, (Walker & Co., 2007), 227.

¹¹³ Ibid. Majid, 167, from “Let us be Moors: Islam, Race, and ‘Connected Histories,’” *Middle East Report*, 229 (Winter 2003): 43.

Therefore, we see in contemporary Spain the unsuccessful attempts of forging an identity without it's forcibly exiled others. Moroccan immigration to Spain has been a source of both fear and concern because these immigrants are linked to the historical Moors who invaded the Iberian Peninsula. As would be expected tension abound between these communities. However, it would seem that in the creation of a skewed version of al-Andalus that the Spaniard has begun the task of coming to terms with its history of unity via expulsion. It is not clear if these often fictionalized depictions help or hinder the Spaniard's progress. One unassailable truth about these depictions is their overwhelming popularity. Festivals like "*moros y christianos*" are popular both globally and domestically. Ultimately, the popularity of these depictions, regardless of their fictional nature serves to illuminate the point that Spain is forever Moor.

5. The Burden of Coexistence

No one can deny that there is something unique about Spain. We have already seen that it is a buffer between the decidedly modern European and the antiquated African continents. It remains the only European country with a prolonged history of interaction with Islam. It is also, the only country to choose expulsion and exile as tools of securing their idea of a purified identity. It is a country that commercially promotes a semi-fictionalized version of its history while simultaneously imposing past fears on new immigrants. Within this mosaic of conflict and controlled acceptance, we find idea of coexistence, what Spanish historians have labeled *convivencia*.

We have discussed that the idea of living together derived from the meaning of *convivencia* is associated with the presence of Jews, Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain. We have seen that this idea is modern term, coined by Spanish historians who sought an avenue from which to explain juxtaposition of their nation's tumultuous past regarding its Jewish/Muslim relationship with the acceptance of the cultural efflorescence – the result of the melding of all Jewish, Catholic and Muslim traditions – that makes Spain different. Henry Kamen writes that “few Europeans have disagreed so much about their own history as Spaniards; the difference of opinion, centering both on culture and on politics, dates back to at least the eighteenth century and is still alive today; affecting the way Spaniards look at their past and write about themselves, their history and their literature.”¹¹⁴

Regarding coexistence, we find that there is renewed preoccupation, due in part to the current global dynamic that pits Islam against the Judeo-Christian world. Islam has become the unwitting symbol of terror; thereby, making its apparent differences a point of contention. Renewed preoccupation with the coexistence in medieval Spain is in response to the idea that during this period Islam was compatible with the Judeo-Christian world. It seems that the *modus operandi* now involves looking to the past to solve the problems of the present. Olivia R. Constable in a speech in 2005, comments on *convivenica* and the dangers of seeking answers to the problems of the present in the past.

People today consider mediaeval Spain's *convivencia*, or “living togetherness,” a positive thing that produced a golden age of

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Kamen, *Golden Age Spain*, 2.

harmony and understanding, along with flourishing cultural exchange. But people living in those times consistently recorded their anxiety about it. They expressed apprehension about young Christians knowing more Arabic poetry than Christian classics, intermarriage, Jews' impositions of power, intergroup sexual relations, conversion or persuading others to convert, and Muslims adopting Christian ways. These anxieties emerged during both Christian and Muslim rule, from both the majority and the minority populations, and across the whole medieval period. The story of a harmonious al-Andalus, or even Christian kingdoms where relations among the three religions were fairly congenial, appeals to modern American sensibilities but distorts the complexities of the historical record. Worse the perpetuation of these myths undermines our ability to address modern world problems because the nostalgia for a lost paradise and the painful memory of its loss function as a lens through which modern situations are viewed, making it more difficult to bring a clear and open mind to new circumstances.¹¹⁵

This passage from Constable's speech succinctly describes the main issues surrounding coexistence. That historically coexistence was a positive and negative; with the idea that the "story of a harmonious al-Andalus or Christian Kingdoms appeals to modern American sensibilities." Therein lies the burden.

We have seen that contemporary Spain is currently embroiled in a situation that sees it trying to reconcile itself with its increasing Muslim – particularly, Moroccan - migrant population; what the Spanish see as the return of the Moor. Derrida's theories regarding the haunting of ghosts of the past are visible in Spain. By assigning the same name to the Moroccan immigrants as they did to the Muslim invader; the former becomes the embodiment of the fears of the latter. Thus, the burden of coexistence is the fact that Spain sees its history skewed while it simultaneously dealing with the ghosts of their pasts. However, since Spain itself often skews its own history in the name of the almighty euro, vis-à-vis the commercial marketing of a semi-fictionalized past; then how much of a burden is coexistence really? It is one thing to label it a burden when outsiders were the ones creating the romanticized past. However, since Spaniards are actively involved in perpetuating an idealized version of their past, then coexistence cannot really be that much of a burden.

¹¹⁵ Olivia Remie Constable, "Is Convivencia Dangerous?" Unpublished paper presented at the International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, MI, May 5 2005. From Anne Marie Wolf, "Juan de Segovia and the Lessons of History, 33-52 from *In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past*, edited by Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 47-48.

Perhaps, it is more correct to state that coexistence is not the burden of Spain but rather the burden of al-Andalus. Vaunted tolerance makes al-Andalus a potent subject for the West's comprehension of Islam. Gil Anidjar speaks of the significance of the burden repeatedly Islam by western intellectuals (modern Flaubert's or would-be orientalist?) when describing the exceptional and ephemeral dimensions of a "culture of tolerance."¹¹⁶ If Islam is being burdened by the tolerance and coexistence displayed in al-Andalus; it stands to reason that al-Andalus will also be burdened by that same tolerance and coexistence. Therefore the answer to the question is coexistence the burden of Spain; is an affirmative in so much that Spain, refers to its medieval past in al-Andalus.

¹¹⁶ Gil Anidjar, "Postscripts: Futures of al-Andalus," *In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past*, edited by Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 189-208, 196.

Maps Take from

Map 1. Islam's Global Reach

From *U.S. News & World Report Collectors Editions: Secrets of Islam – A Guide to the World's Fastest Growing Religion*. April 7, 2008.

Map 2. The Islamic World in the Seventh through Tenth Centuries

Menocal, Maria Rosa. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Back Bay Books, 2003. 22-23.

Map 3. The Disintegration of al-Andalus into Taifa Kingdoms

Menocal, Maria Rosa. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Back Bay Books, 2003. 38.

Map 4. The Kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula from 1248-1492

Menocal, Maria Rosa. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Back Bay Books, 2003. 48.

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