

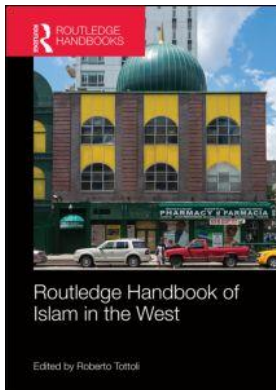
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Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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## **Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West**

Roberto Tottoli

### **The borders of Muslim Spain**

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315794273.ch1>

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**Published online on: 20 Aug 2014**

**How to cite :-** Alessandro Vanoli. 20 Aug 2014, *The borders of Muslim Spain from*: Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West Routledge

Accessed on: 23 Sep 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315794273.ch1>

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# Part 1

## History

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## Part 1.1

# European paradigms

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# The borders of Muslim Spain

*Alessandro Vanoli*

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## **Al-Andalus: an Islamic space and its relationship with the “West”**

The conquest started one day in the summer of 710, but few people in Spain realized it: only a few Arabic sources tell us about the first boats from North Africa that in July arrived on the southern coast of the Iberian Peninsula. It is more evident in the sources what happened one year later, in the late spring of 711, when the governor of Ifriqiya, Musa ibn Nusayr, decided that a military effort on a wider scale would be possible: the troops led by Tariq, governor of Tangeri, reached the point that would take his name: mountain of Tariq, in Arabic *jabal Tariq*, Gibraltar; soon came the moment of the clash with Roderico, the last king of the Visigoths, and in October of the same year the fall of Cordova that opened the way to the north. This is the very well-known starting point of a long history: the history of the farthest Occidental region of the Islamic world, that will take the Arabic name of al-Andalus; the history of the most Occidental frontier with Christian territories.

It is hard to say where the Muslims exactly stopped their advance but it is sufficiently true to say that, after a period of raids in the north of the Pyrenees, the Western borders of Islam would place themselves in the south of the line shaped by the towns of Lugo, Astorga, León, Amaya, la Bureba, and Alava (García de Cortázar et al. 1985: 53) that is immediately to the south of the long chain of mountains that, starting from Asturias, runs as far as the Mediterranean Sea. It is also hard to say if this territorial achievement corresponded to a clear military *limes*: this is actually a complex problem that intimately touches the interpretation of the so-called *Reconquista*, because it touches the interpretation of these physical borders and above all the interpretation (and the religious and cultural “identity”) of the populations that lived there (Manzano Moreno 2006: 240–1). In any case, in the south of the Atlantic mountain chains, the Iberian Peninsula became a province (*kura*, pl. *kuwar*) of the vast empire of the Caliphate of Damascus. And, starting from these very first years, the Christian “West” became a fundamental point of reference for these Arabs and Berbers that probably leaned on the intellectual and social traditions of the conquered people: Visigoths, Christian clergy or Jews.

In a certain sense, also in the new name that the Muslims gave to the conquered part of the Iberian Peninsula, al-Andalus, we can find the trace of this strong relationship with the “West.” As we know, nowadays the etymology is disputed. At least three specific hypotheses have been

proposed by Western scholarship, all three presuming that the name al-Andalus arose after the Roman period: from *Vandalicia*, that is, “land of the Vandals” (this thesis has been proposed by Reinhard Dozy, Christian Friedrich Seybold and Évariste Lévi-Provençal); from the Goth term *landahlauts*, that is, “lot lands” (Halm 1989); and even from the Arabic adaptation of the name Atlantis or Atlantic (Vallvé 1983). But none of these hypotheses are supported by conclusive historical evidence.

In any case, al-Andalus, an emirate under Umayyad guidance, became a prosperous and powerful Islamic space in the Iberian world. At the same time, the first small Christian political spaces were developing at the north of the Peninsula: the first two centers were in a land that had been bypassed by Islamic forces: the mountain kingdom of Asturias and, soon after, the kingdom of Navarre. New geographic and cultural frontiers were defined and in the following centuries they saw continuous changes. The inheritors of the Omayyad caliphs were proclaimed emirs of al-Andalus (756), and in 912, under ‘Abd al-Rahman III, they took the title of Caliphs, inaugurating what will be remembered as the most splendid period in the history of al-Andalus.

## A new society

Therefore, a large part of Spain became Muslim, even if it is not easy to say something certain about the process of the Islamization of the Peninsula; that is, about the numbers and the pace of conversion of the natives. Some indicators, such as the construction of mosques, the proliferation of Muslim cemeteries and textual evidence, furnished by the so-called “biographic dictionaries” (*tabaqat*), show a phenomenon that appears fast enough (Fierro and Marín 1998); a process of conversion that would be increased with the increase of mutual contacts and that became evident in the Caliphal period. In any case what is certain is that, beyond the strictly religious aspect, the Islamic conquest determined, step by step, a new social and cultural space, a process of Arabization that gradually produced a space of cultural unity given by the Islamic religion and the Arabic language – a space connected to a wider world: a social, political, and economic network that extended all over the South Mediterranean and, from there, as far as the Orient.

These Islamized urban spaces of al-Andalus determined not only a class of merchants, artisans, and smallholders, but also a class of experts in religion, *ulama* and *faqih* (it is well known how difficult it is to distinguish between these two categories: Benaboud 1984), that strongly contributed to making the legal and religious culture of al-Andalus conform to the Malikite school of law (Calero Secall 2001).

The complexity of this Arabized space was given not only by the internal distinctions between Arabs and Berbers, or among the many social groups: the upper classes, soldiers, lawyers, merchants, peasants, or even slaves. This Arabization also involved the members of other religions, Christians and Jews, that continued to profess their religion also under Islamic power. Indeed, for Islamic law, people belonging to another monotheistic religion may enjoy an engagement pact of protection, the *dhimma*, by which the Muslims undertake to safeguard the life and property of the non-Muslim in question, called *dhimmi*. This treaty provides them with all duties deriving from it, in particular the payment of a tribute, a fixed poll-tax called *jizya*. These *dhimmis* of al-Andalus, both Mozarabs (as the *dhimmi* Christians will be known in the Latin world) and Sefardies (as the Jews from Spain called themselves), contributed to the cultural and economic growth of this Iberian Arabic space, maintaining their own relationships with the Christian world, in Spain and in the rest of Europe, and with the Jewish Mediterranean network.

From another point of view, due to this Arabization, al-Andalus absorbed the Islamic culture developed in the Oriental lands, developing a high esteem of local literary and scientific production. As has been observed (Vernet 1968; Fierro 2011: 37), the Andalusians began to feel a sense of superiority not only over the Christians (for instance in the field of medicine) but also over the Islamic people of the Oriental lands. A sense of superiority confirmed also by the Byzantine embassies: the presence of the powerful and rich Oriental Romans was a confirmation of the Imperial level reached by al-Andalus.

Andalusian Muslims felt themselves to be an indissoluble part of the “land of Islam” (*dar al-islam*), with which they shared religion, culture, and language. People who went from al-Andalus to the East returned with new knowledge and new books, and with an enhanced feeling of being part of a single religious and cultural community. But al-Andalus was located at the periphery of the Islamic world. And as a land of frontier, it is perhaps possible to perceive in its formation a sense of insecurity, the sense of living on an island surrounded by the sea and by Christians. Maybe it was this condition of “land of frontier” that facilitated trade with the West, and determined its relations with the Islamic world.

### Al-Andalus as a frontier

Al-Andalus as a frontier could be described from different points of view: from a geographical standpoint, but also from a social and a cultural perspective.

Starting from the space, in the Arabic sources the idea of al-Andalus as a frontier is present in many different terms. In the geographical texts, for instance, it is evident how al-Andalus is perceived so close to the Christian territories, called (among other names) “land of polytheism” (*balad al-shirk*) or “land of war” (*balad al-harb*). As the traveler al-Muqaddasi will remember, “the inhabitants of al-Andalus, as the Sicilians, practice the *ghazwa* and are always in *jihad* and in departure for the battle” (al-Muqaddasi 1906: 103). All these kinds of ideas were strictly connected with a particular concept of frontier. Indeed, for all the Arabic sources, the northern frontiers of al-Andalus were technically defined as *thaghr*. With this term the Arabic meant a zone of passage, an opening to pass through; so, from a geographical and political point of view, those particular territories of the Islamic world that are in contact with a non-Muslim space (that is, lands outside the *umma*, the community of believers). These are territories to which the jurists assigned a specific definition: they are “hostile areas”; in a word, territories of the *jihad* (Chalmeta 1991).

To be more precise al-Andalus, taken as a whole, was not a *thaghr*: indeed the Andalusians (perhaps starting only from the Caliphal period: Manzano Moreno 1991: 48–50) used this concept to designate the northern territories close to the Christian reigns. Basically, the Arabic sources distinguished between a farther frontier and a closer one, *al-thaghr al-aqsa* and *al-thaghr al-adna*. But some contemporary Arabic authors proposed a more complex division for al-Andalus, using terms as *al-thaghr al-sharqi*, “East frontier,” *al-thaghr al-gharbi*, “West frontier,” and *al-thaghr al-jaufi*, “northern frontier,” and so on: terms that were used during the Caliphal period and that reflected a perception of the territory closely related to the administration of power (the frontiers are indeed “closer” or “distant” always starting from a focal point, that is, the city of Cordoba, the siege of the Caliph).

However, more than geographical definitions, the frontiers of al-Andalus (the northern regions of al-Andalus, I mean) were shaped by specific social and political forms. Here it is impossible to analyze the complex dynastic history of these liminal spaces. It is a story, in fact, that begins in the early days of the conquest and that has its place in the chronicles mainly owing to the continuous rebellions against the central power. Starting from the ninth century,



in these frontiers we record the exponential increase of indigenous lineages: groups that almost always had relationships of *wala'* (that is, the relationships between client and patron) with Arab families. Among these lineages of the frontiers were the Banu 'Amrus, the Banu Shabrit, the Banu Rashid, and the most famous Banu Qasi, whose domain is attested in the area of contact with the Basques, and that reached the control of the large centers of Huesca and Saragossa. Some of them were from indigenous families, of Gothic or Roman origins, that converted to Islam at the beginning of the conquest; others had Arabic or Berber origins (Sénac 2000a). What is more important for our problem is the fact that these muwallad families of the region also established alliances with their Christian neighbors throughout the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries (for instance, the Banu 'Amrus addressed themselves to the Emperor Charlemagne to affirm their power at the beginning of the ninth century: Sénac, 1999: 349–54). But not only this. A few decades later, Muhammad al-Tawil married Domna Sanzia, the daughter of the Aragonese Count, Aznar Galindez II, and she gave him four sons and a daughter, Domna Velazquita. And we also know that Furtun b. Muhammad allied with King Sancho Garcés of Pamplona after a marriage, and that he fought at his side against 'Abd al-Rahman III during the Mitonia campaign of 918. These families headed societies between two worlds; however, as has been shown (Acién Almansa 1997; Sénac 2000a), they actively participated in the Islamization of their regions (not by chance, the Banu Qasi's decline in power corresponds with the end of 'Umar b. Hafsun's revolt in Andalusia; the Umayyad efforts to reclaim these lands in the tenth century were part of the larger "reconquest" movement led by the caliph 'Abd al-Rahman III in the 930s).

Historians usually refer to these people of the frontier as warriors. This is true in a certain sense; but far from being only the place of a secular clash between Islam and Christianity, and also far from being a structured defensive system (Manzano Moreno 1999: 387), the *thaghr al-Andalus* was obviously a territory of war, with special administrative specificities (for instance, the men of the frontier enjoyed a tax regime which was the lowest in the Muslim territory), but it was also and above all a place with an extraordinary fragmentation and a great capacity of adaptation to local necessities and to historical modifications. This situation was strongly related to an increasing political autonomy, which permitted the people of these border countries, the *ahl al-thaghr*, to define social structures relatively similar to those that appeared in the same period in the Christian context. In these frontiers many Muslims experienced direct, if not sometimes daily, contact with local Christian territories. We know almost nothing about them, about their everyday lives and their habits, and also the archeological data is often contradictory.

The experience of a Muslim life in a Christian land came later, when the fortune of al-Andalus changed. Also this was a long history: the collapse of the Caliphate occurred in the first decades of the eleventh century. These were the years of the *fitna*, the civil war that led to the end of the Umayyad government (1031); and, after, to the years of fragmentation of al-Andalus into a group of small weak Islamic kingdoms, known by the Iberian historiography as *reinos de taifa*. It was the same period in which, in the north, the Christian reign faced a new period of prosperity. The Iberian Middle Ages didn't know the word "*reconquista*" (which is an invention of the nineteenth century), but the pressure of the Christian armies was rising, contributing to transforming the political ideology of the northern Iberian kings.

In 1085 Toledo, the ancient capital of the Visigoth reign, and for centuries one of the greatest towns in al-Andalus, fell into the hands of Alfonso VI. This conquest would be followed by other wars and other Islamic dynasties fighting for the control of the Iberian space: first the Almoravids and then the Almohads. For a number of Muslim people, this period was the beginning of a completely new life in a non-Muslim territory.

## Mudejars: geography and periodization of the Muslims in Christian Spain

In the second half of the eleventh century, with the beginning of the Christian military advance, more and more Muslims started to live as minorities in the newly conquered territories. They are usually defined by historians as Mudejars, a term derived from the Arabic *mudajjan*, “dominated” (and its synonym *dhl al-dajn*, “people who stay”) and used by the Iberian Muslims in a negative sense. Not by chance, this word was first used, at least during the centuries of the Middle Ages, by Muslims, while its Castilian adaptation, *mudéjar*, came into use among Christians above all from the fifteenth century (Ladero Quesada 2004: 105).

It is a very complex and articulated history, in which the experiences of the Mudejars changed depending on the period, the geography, the different politics, and the cultural context. The most ancient Islamic presence in the Iberian Christian territories is related to the conquests at the end of the eleventh century: they are attested in Aragon, Castile y León, and Portugal, even if the historiographic problem of depopulation and population of the Duero valley is not cleared up and it is still difficult to say anything certain about the hypothetical presence of Muslims in the northern regions of Spain (Echevarría Arsuaga 2001–2: 34). In the reign of Castile, a point of no return was certainly the surrender of Toledo, in 1085. But also in this case it is difficult to document this history: for the fifteenth century, the archivist sources certify the presence of Mudejars in approximately seventy centers of the Crown of Castile (it has been calculated that of a total of around four million inhabitants, around 20,000 to 25,000 were Muslims: 35–40 percent in the north of the Central System, 20–30 per cent in Castile la Nueva and in Extremadura; 10 per cent in Andalusia and around 20 per cent in Murcia). We know that they came mainly from the south, becoming part of towns such as Valladolid, Ávila, Arévalo, Palencia, Burgos, or Segovia (García-Arenal 1995: 26–35); but we know very little about the time and the modalities of their displacement: in many *fueros* (the new civic laws) there are no references to any Muslim presence; so it is possible to suppose that in a number of Castilian cities the Muslims arrived long after the conquests, as was the case, for instance, in Ávila (Tapia Sánchez 1991: 49–50).

This kind of doubt has been expressed also for Toledo (Molénat 1997: 27–41), even if an Arabic source such as Ibn Bassam (twelfth century) testifies to the arrival of Muslim people before 1085.

The conquest of Andalusia and the valley of the Guadalquivir, between 1224 and 1264, produced important changes in the geography of the Mudejars. The terms of surrender permitted many Muslims to live in rural zones. This lasted until a great rebellion, between 1264 and 1265, that convinced Alfonso X to change his policy towards this minority, when he decided to expel the Mudejars, deporting them to the cities of the north (but also in this case we know very little about this dramatic process). From that moment on, the few Islamic groups in Andalusia would be concentrated above all in cities such as Seville and Cordoba.

The situation in Navarra and in the territories of the Crown of Aragon was different. The starting point in Aragon was the conquest of Huesca in 1096; then came the time of Alfonso I, el Batallador, and his conquests of many cities in the Ebro valley, among them Saragossa (1118). From this period the Muslim population in the Aragonese territory appears to be concentrated in the fertile valleys of the Isuela, Flumen, and Cinca rivers, in the actual provinces of Huesca, Queiles, Huecha, Ebro, Jalón, Aguas Vivas, Jiloca, and Saragossa; with numerous localities having a Mudejar population only, and others a mixed population.

Some authors estimated that the number of Mudejars in the Ebro valley in the thirteenth century had to be around 100,000; this could be a reasonable estimate, but it is nothing more than a hypothesis (Hillgarth 1976–8, I: 30; Catlos 2004: 119).

In Catalonia, the Mudejar demography is different, this presence being weaker than in other regions of the Crown of Aragon. Also here, this situation is difficult to analyze due to lack of data. For instance, we know almost nothing about towns such as Tortosa and Lérida, but by the end of the fifteenth century historians have calculated that the Mudejar presence could have been around 1 percent of the population (Mutgé Vives 1992; Biarnes Biarnes 1972).

The situation in Valencia was different. The city was conquered in the thirteenth century by Jaime I (1232–45): a great number of Muslims stayed there and in its territory (perhaps 1,000 people inside the city; that is, no more than 3 percent of the population). The submission of the rebel al-Azraq, at the beginning of the reign of Pedro III (1276), put an end to other Islamic revolts and marked a moment of progressive aristocratic control on the *aljamas*, the Mudejar social groups, in the Ebro valley.

### Juridical and social conditions of the Mudejars

The legal basis that regulated Muslim life in the Christian territories was at first the terms of surrender and the royal law, which basically guaranteed the Mudejars their personal freedom, the practice of their religion and their laws, as well as their occupations.

However, these conditions were costly. In Castile, for instance, the *Cortes de Alcalá* in 1348 limited the access of the Mudejars to landholding and to activities related to public administration, the court, medicine, and feeding. The *Cortes* also forbade them to be treasurers and coroners, to make contracts and practice usury.

In Navarra, Aragon, and Valencia the situation was quite different, but it is almost impossible to generalize. From the Aragonese point of view, it has been underlined (Ledesma Rubio 1994b) that, to the south of the Ebro river, the repopulation process had a juridical pragmatic attitude. For instance, the *Fuero* of Alcalá de Selva, one of the first ones, equalized the Muslims with the rest of the *pobladores*: “cristianos, moros y judíos un fuero y una costumbre tengan”: “Christians, Moors and Jews must have one law and one custom.” The same was true in La Cañada de Benatanduz and in Aliaga. But it is also true that this initial equality was the fruit of those first few years after the conquest, in which it was necessary to attract settlers, regardless of their professed religion, but over time, in the thirteenth century, when power was consolidated, there were important modifications for the Aragonese Mudejars, even if the official protection of the king was always maintained. It is also true that the Mudejars were often viewed with hostility and suspicion: in the *fuero* of frontiers such as Calatayud, Daroca, Alcalá de la Selva, Cañada de Benatanduz, and Aliaga, where references to the acquisition of Muslim captives were frequent, but also in the *fueros* of Teruel and Albarracín, that attested to a climate of violence with murders, rapes, abductions, the ban on selling weapons to the Moors, or the forced conversion of the Mudejars to Christianity and so on (as, for example, in the case of Aliaga: Ledesma Rubio 1991). These examples show a context relatively far from the most peaceful coexistence attested to in the central regions of Aragon, where it is confirmed, for instance, that it was essential to have a great number of Muslim peasants to maintain the agricultural economy of these regions.

Scholars agree that there was no common taxation for all the Mudejars, because situations changed according to different aristocratic power or to the specific civic jurisdiction. As usual, sources are insufficient to define the Mudejar taxation in particular and its transformation over time. In general, Muslims were obliged to accept the protection of the king by the payment of special taxes. In Castile, this was named *pecha* or *cabeza de pecho*: an amount that every Islamic group (but also every Jewish group) had to pay in return for the acknowledgment of royal protection. Another similar tax always in Castile was the *servicio y medio servicio*, a kind of

extraordinary payment that was introduced in 1388, and became an annual tax in the second half of the fifteenth century, under the Catholic kings. Something similar was the ordinary *peyta* in Aragon and Navarra, also called *alfarda* in Valencia. But this kind of taxation was more complex: first, as there were sometimes great differences between taxation in towns and in the country (where other taxes on animals or agricultural production were imposed); second, because different taxation between Muslims and Christians was not always the expression of a social separation, and in the Late Iberian Middle Age there were a lot of cases of common civic resistance to the imposition of new taxes (Catlos 2007: 48–5). This last point introduces a series of questions, first about the social nature of the Islamic groups in Christian territories, and second about the relationship between different religious and cultural groups.

### **Aljamas: the Islamic communities**

The most important Mudejar unities formed communities called *aljamas* (the same term also used for Jewish communities). The study of these institutions poses some difficulties, due above all to the absence of internal documentation and to the inaccuracy of the demographic data for the Middle Ages. But the studies devoted to specific *aljamas* are continually increasing in number. Usually, the absence of leaders in Mudejar communities has been highlighted (leaders who would have left the cities immediately after the conquest to emigrate to Granada or to the Maghreb), but this generalization is not so certain. Indeed, if it is true that between the eleventh and twelfth centuries there was an emigration of political and social leaders, this reaction to the Christian conquest was not uniform, and many important people decided to stay in their places of origin (Marín 1995; Molénat 2001). This difference is also the reflection of an inner debate inside Islam: between some jurists who recommended emigration (owing to the impossibility of living in the Christian territories according to Islamic law) and others who recognized the possibility of staying. Moreover, the same concept of “leaders” or an “elite” is difficult to define. It seems that the Islamic minorities made (or were obliged to make) the structure of their leaders conform to the model of the Catholic Spanish elite. Indeed the political elite was made up of Muslims who surrounded the king and his court, such as the *alcalde mayor de las aljamas* in the Castilian reign, or the *alcadí* in Tudela–Navarra and the *alamín* in Aragon. The urban oligarchy was formed by merchants, usually in strict contact with the other *aljamas* all over the Iberian Peninsula. Finally there was also an elite of knowledge, formed by *alfaquíes* and *ulemas*, responsible for preserving the Islamic religion and the Arabic language as a vehicle of sacred expression among the Mudejars (actually, the structure was more complex; for example, the Castilian sources also mention an *almohadar* and a *muecín* responsible for convoking the assembly: Villanueva Zubizarreta 2010: 352).

Something similar is attested to in the Aragonese sources: also there, the *aljama* was the institutional representation of a collective fact and the key to the preservation of Islamic identity. Its functioning was granted by the Crown, even if it is not so easy to determine how these *aljamas* were autonomous. It’s difficult to imagine that these institutions were really independent from the king, owing to the growing interference of Christian functionaries in their activities or because, at the beginning of every new kingdom, the *aljamas* had to spur the king to confirm their privileges (Hinojosa Montalvo 2009).

Also, regarding the Aragonese *aljamas* at the end of the Middle Ages, we know about the presence of elites with different offices, but we also know that they varied notably depending on the different places and the political and economic importance of every *aljama*. The basic authority was the *cadi*, with juridical, civil, and penal competences, basing his judgment on the “*sunna e xara*,” that is, Islamic law. He was usually also responsible for the collection and

administration of taxes, for some business, for weddings, etc. These figures were related to Christian power in many ways. We know, for instance, that at Tortosa in 1263 Abubaquer Avinahole was appointed *cadi* by Ramón Moncada and at Lérida, on May 17, 1263, Muça de Marrochs received the office of *alamin* and *cadí* directly from King Jaime I (Mutgé Vives 1992: 197–8, doc. no. 6). So, as we have seen, an inevitable phenomenon that also occurred in the Jewish *aljamas* was the influence of Christian institutions on the government of the mosque: Christian public officials sometimes acted as *alcaide* to the Muslims, and in the royal *aljamas* the bailiff (*baiulus*) was responsible for administration, whose mission was to collect the rents paid by Mudejars and to resolve some juridical problems inside the Mudejar community.

Despite the frequent absence of an intellectual elite, and despite the limitations imposed by the new Christian government, the Mudejars retained their religious Muslim practices, following them usually with discretion and without public events. It is said that good knowledge of the Islamic religion was increasingly threatened by the almost general loss of the Arabic language. But the textual evidence tells of a more complex situation. Indeed, until the end of the sixteenth century, inside the Islamic communities of Castile and Aragon texts were produced in the Arabic language, but a literary Islamic communication in the local Romance languages was also developing. This requires some consideration.

First, the case of the affirmation of Islamic literature in a non-Arabic language (in this case Castilian) is not exceptional (even today with English). Second, inside this production we must distinguish among Islamic literature written in Arabic (with Arabic or Latin characters), the Islamic literature written in a Romance language using the Latin alphabet, and Islamic literature written in a Romance language using the Arabic alphabet; this last one is the so-called *aljamiado*, that would be used in a massive form, above all by the Moriscos after the conquest of Granada.

Among the first texts of the Islamic Castilian literature (perhaps) there is the well-known *Poema de Yúsuf*, possibly from the thirteenth century (some authors have proposed postponing the dating to the fifteenth or the sixteenth century: Casassas Canals 2009). For other authors, also the *Leyes de moros* can be dated to the same period (considered for a long time an anonymous juridical treaty, it has been shown that it is a partial version of the juridical treaty *al-Taffi* of Ibn al-Jallab: Abboud-Hagggar 1997). We must also add works such as the *Poema en alabanza del Profeta Mahoma* and the *Aljutba de Pascua de Ramadán* to this short list (both in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries).

A special mention must be made of the work of Isa Gebir, mufti of the *aljama* of Segovia in the second half of the fifteenth century: for his Castilian version of the Qur'an, written at the request of the theologian Juan de Segovia, and his *Breviario Sunní*, composed in 1462, that had great importance in Christian Spain. Indeed this book suffered a strong transformation at the hands of the Christian authorities, and the detailed description of the Islamic religious practices became an official part of the arsenal used by the Inquisition against the crypto-Muslims, both in Spain and in the New World.

### The social life of Mudejars: what about the “convivencia”?

The *aljamas*, as institutions, were projected in a space and in a complex society. It is usually said that the Mudejars lived in specific spaces of the city called *morerias*; this is true for certain periods but not in general. Until the fifteenth century the Mudejars in Castile lived among the rest of the population: there were some attempts at segregation (the *Cortes* of Jerez in 1268 or the *Concilio* of Palencia in 1388), but only in the *ordenanzas* by Catalina de Lancaster, in 1412, and later in the *Cortes* of Toledo in 1480, did this kind of enclosure become concrete in many cities

of the reign. Moreover, there's a longstanding discussion among historians about whether this seclusion was only something imposed by the sovereigns, or also something desired by the Mudejars.

In almost all the urban spaces of Castile and Aragon, for centuries we find the presence of Muslims living in the different quarters of the city, with commercial activities carried out by Muslims all over the urban space and the presence of mosques in spaces nominally "Christian." And when there were specific Muslim quarters, they were marked by a new mosque, baths, and commercial activities frequented by Christians too. In Castile, the *morerias* created after 1480 (in a strict relationship with the war of Granada) were more isolated spaces; in some cases outside the city walls. This was, for instance, what happened to the Mudejars of Ávila and Valladolid: the sources inform us about the existence of an *almají*, or house of prayer, and "other houses" for weddings or for the *alfaquí* and other places used by the community of the Mudejars (Moratinos García and Villanueva Zubizarreta 1999–2002). Not far from the urban space, usually outside the walls and near the gates, were the cemeteries, the *maqbars*. Through recent archeological discoveries, we know that the Mudejars maintained Islamic funerary rituals: the corpse was buried wrapped in a shroud, on the right side, the feet to the east and the head to the west, while the face was turned towards the southeast, that is, towards the city of Mecca (Ruiz de Marco et al. 1993).

Similar *morerias*, similar Islamic spaces inside and around the urban context, are also attested to in Aragon and in Catalonia, sometimes defined by walls and gates. But in some cases, as in Huesca, the Mudejars lived inside the wall but not in a precise quarter. In other cases, more definite spaces are attested to but not so enclosed, such as in the Catalan Lérida (Mutgé Vives 1999: 101–11).

Recent studies have shown that Mudejar society was not close. In spite of the prohibitions of commerce among the Peninsula kingdoms and the restriction imposed on the Mudejars, their elites managed to maintain relationships and true networks with the other peninsular Islamic communities and with the rest of the *dar al-islam* too. This happened, for instance, in Valencia, where strong activity by some Mudejar families is attested to. This is the case of the Xupió, the Ripoll, and the Belvís, true "Lords of Moors," "señores de Moros" (Ruzafa García 2000); or the Castilian Albarromoní, who did business on both sides of the frontier between Castile and Aragon.

But the analysis of Mudejar society is a difficult issue that often has been omitted or has produced easy generalizations. One of the reasons for this is the lack of Islamic sources, which has determined the massive recourse to Christian sources, with the obvious simplifications and distortions. Indeed, this society has usually been perceived as homogeneous, without large internal differences, and with a majority of the population composed of humble peasants or artisans. On the contrary, the most recent studies show a complex society that experienced strong changes during the centuries. There were urban elites that often maintained their previous familiar structures and that developed complex relationships with Christian power; there were artisans, intellectuals, slaves, etc. In addition, as we have seen, there were also strong ties with the other Iberian Islamic communities and, in general, with the other parts of the *umma*, the community of believers.

Certainly, it is true that agriculture remained the main occupation of the Muslim population in most of the peninsular kingdoms during the centuries after the Christian conquest. In Aragon this was strongly determined by the preceding system of irrigation and distribution of water during the Muslim period (and it is interesting to observe that the common use of these systems of irrigation forced an important interaction between Christians and Muslims). It is also true that in the urban *morerias* we may register many different artisan activities such as pottery, wood and

metalwork (boilermakers, knifemakers, etc.), weaving wool, linen and silk, and dyers, shoemakers, or the manufacture of soap (this last one being a very typical profession of the Mudejars in numerous territories of the Crown of Aragon, such as Valencia, Xàtiva, or Elche). There were also Mudejars who worked as merchants, both in the inner Muslim context and with Christians outside the frontiers of Aragon and Catalonia. Other Mudejars served the Christian court, sometimes also as translators or interpreters. And it was just in the urban context and in the *morerias* that the contacts between Christians and Muslims were more frequent; and this was due not only to the market but also to the working environment.

The problem of the interethnic relationships in the medieval Iberian Peninsula is an important topic in contemporary historiography. The analysis of the relationships among these different groups and their communication needs has produced studies about, among others, commerce, mixed marriages, the common use of the water, and even war, which in the end can be considered a terrible but very frequent form of communication. The positions of scholars seem ingenuous who in this long period of intercultural relationships see only a moment of relatively peaceful coexistence among Christians, Jews, and Muslims: a period of intellectual and artisanal exchanges, translations or common mystical experiences, in a context of (anachronistic) “tolerance.” To avoid the risk of an overly irenic perception, the contemporary historiographic use of the term *convivencia* is useful, utilized to indicate the quotidian practice of the cultural and social relationships among different groups (Vanoli 2006; Bensoussan 2007; Jaspert 2011).

In this sense, the Mudejars were a normal part of the urban landscape even if the authorities continued to be worried by the contacts, above all by the physical and spiritual ones. Maybe the Christians accepted the Mudejars better than the Jews: apart from the very well-known negative connotation, as “infidels” the Muslims were often perceived as good workers, above all in the territories of Aragon and Catalonia. In everyday life we have much evidence of good relationships between Christians and Muslims. But these good relationships do not exclude moments of difficulty and social tension; including an increase, after the thirteenth century, of pressure for conversions, due also to the great influence of the Mendicant Orders (it is difficult to say how many Muslims decided to convert to the Christian religion; but there must have been many of them, above all in Valencia). Moreover, these “good relationships” do not exclude the existence of a series of measures addressed to recall Christian superiority (e.g. men had to have a long beard and women had to wear the “*aldifara*,” a kind of tunic imposed also on Jews) and to avoid any kind of promiscuity and religious contamination between Christians and Muslims (e.g. the prohibition of mixed marriage or of any sexual relationship between members of the two religions). To respect Christianity, they were obliged not to work publicly on Sundays, to show reverence for processions in the streets, kneeling on their way, not to use blasphemy, and not to go into Christian churches during liturgical acts.

But all these aspects were not always respected, both in everyday life (for instance, there were some Mudejar musicians during the processions of Corpus Christi) and at the highest cultural level. In this last sense, the intellectual relationships between Mudejars and Christians had perhaps already begun at the end of the eleventh century. When Alfonso VI conquered Toledo (1085) he entered a rich city, populated by Muslims and Jews. In that city the cultural memory of the Islamic presence remained strong for some time. That’s why a scholar such as Gerard of Cremona (d. 1188), went to Toledo, on the trail of ancient books and classic culture. There he lived, devoting the rest of his life to the Latin translation of Arabic works of science and philosophy. Also thanks to him, Toledo became the center of intense translation activity. Perhaps it is incorrect to define it as a “school,” and it should be emphasized that recent studies have identified a number of Spanish centers of translation. Regardless of this, however, there is no doubt that the work of these groups led to impressive results. The method of Gerardo stood

out, producing texts perhaps not impeccable from a philological point of view, but often significant for their literalness and, in general, for their effort of reflection on the original Arabic vocabulary. Moreover, the literalness is not to be taken for granted: the most frequent method used by the translators from Arabic texts, presumably, was the simultaneous translation, word by word, sentence by sentence, from Arabic to vernacular and from vernacular to Latin. At least two people participated in this operation: a Mozarab or a Jew and a Christian expert in Latin. This group translated ancient Greek works such as Ptolemy's *Almagest*, but also contributed to the knowledge of Arabic medicine, with the translation of books such as al-Razi's *Introduction to Medicine* or Ibn Sina/Avicenna's *Canon*. This tradition continued for a long time: from Latin authors, such as Dominicus Gundissalinus (the translator of al-Farabi's *Division of Sciences* and Avicenna's *De Anima*) and Marco from Toledo, who translated Galenus and other Arabic medicines such as Hunayn ibn Hishaq; to Michael Scot, who at the beginning of the thirteenth century was in Toledo to translate the zoological treatises of Aristotle.

But this high level of intellectual exchange was the history of an elite. The political changes at the end of the Middle Ages showed another reality.

### The kingdom of Granada and the end of al-Andalus

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Nasrid kingdom of Granada was caught between the Cordillera Bética in the north and the Mediterranean Sea in the south. This last strip of Muslim Spain, which stretched towards Africa, included the cities of Malaga, Almeria, and of course the capital Granada in the mountains of the Sierra Nevada.

The Nasrid had founded, *de facto*, the dynasty with the entry into the city of Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr (1237), but the Emirate of Granada was born as a result of the Christian conquest of the valley of the Guadalquivir in the days of Fernando III. Indeed, this Christian king recognized Granada as a vassal kingdom of Castile in 1246, integrating it into its political sphere. This temporary situation was then prolonged indefinitely: many Muslims fleeing from other parts of Spain decided to take refuge there, while in North Africa the Moroccan dynasty of the Merenides decided to support the emirate. The protection of this little political space was assured not only by its geographical position, but also by the political security derived from the passivity of the kings of Aragon and by the maritime cooperation of Genoa, which left a good deal of diplomatic activity to the Muslims.

In other terms, Granada was strongly involved in the policy of the Christian spaces that surrounded it. In this sense, from the beginning of the fifteenth century this little piece of al-Andalus was increasingly involved in Castilian court intrigues and this led to an explosion of inner tensions, producing a complex plot of conspiracies, vengeance, and political murders.

Regardless of these political troubles, however, the ephemeral existence of Granada was magnificent in many ways. Throughout the fourteenth century, the Nasrid capital was one of the most populous cities in Europe, and, moreover, in the following century the population increased, as the city continued to welcome Muslim refugees: sources attested to the presence of about 200,000 people; more likely there were about 50,000, in any case an enormous number for the period.

But that little Muslim world was coming to an end: worn out by infighting, bereft of any true support from the North African Muslims, increasingly threatened by the ambitions of the Christian sovereigns. In 1453 there came some news that was perceived by the king of Castile, Henry IV, as related to the Iberian situation: to the east, across the Mediterranean, Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks. The idea of the Crusade reappeared in Europe and in Spain, and the king of Castile decided to go back to the conquests. Between 1455 and 1457,



six military incursions were launched against the Moorish kingdom, carried out by mighty forces but without significant results. In any case, the climate was evidently favorable to war, and when Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon came to the throne, the capture of Granada became inevitable.

The attack took place in 1482: each year, or nearly every year, the territory was worn away, stronghold after stronghold. It was a long war of sieges, carried out by soldiers partly recruited in Castile and Andalusia, in part mercenaries, but a large part were also volunteers coming from all over Europe. In 1488, the city of Granada was almost all that remained in the hands of the Muslims. In 1490 the army encamped near the city, a siege operation of such magnitude as to require the building of a new town, Santa Fe. On January 2, 1492, Granada surrendered and the Catholic kings entered the city. Boabdil, the last emir of Spain, offered the keys of the Alhambra to Ferdinand, while the vessels of the Spanish monarchs were shut up in the towers of the city. However, the history of Islam in Spain didn't end with this event. Muslims and their culture continued to be present in the next centuries, until the last expulsion of the Moriscos. The traces of this heritage strongly contributed to the construction of Spanish society and culture. And finally, also in the Islamic world, the memory of al-Andalus continued to feed ideas, culture, and dreams, and continues to this day.

### The memory of al-Andalus in the Muslim world

The end of al-Andalus soon echoed in the Muslim world. As early as 1580, the anonymous Turkish author of a work devoted to the discovery of the West Indies (*Tarih-i Hindi-i garbî*) also wrote about the loss of the last Iberian Muslim territories, remembering the noble mosque of Cordoba, adorned and decorated with the most beautiful things; unique in its beauty and perfection (Gruzinski 2008: 147).

It is also possible to find this kind of admiration of the Islamic Iberian past among later Muslim travelers, such as the Moroccan al-Ghassani (who was in Spain in the years 1690–1), al-Ghazzal (1766), and Ibn 'Uthman al-Miknasi (1779–80). Starting from the nineteenth century, in the Islamic world the interest in al-Andalus was increasingly related to the reconstruction of the past determined by the influence of Occidental policy and culture.

In the year 1863, in Istanbul, the great intellectual Ziya Paşa (1825–80) published the Turkish translation of Louis Viardot's *Essai sur l'histoire des arabes et des mores d'Espagne*, with the title of *Endelüs Tarihi*, "History of al-Andalus." This work obtained stunning success: it was reprinted in four volumes between 1886 and 1887, and it inspired a whole series of poems, plays, and stories set in al-Andalus; for instance the work of 'Abdülhak Hamid (1852–1937), *Tariq*.

This success was not limited to the Turkish coast: on every side of the Islamic Mediterranean and beyond, there was a rapid spread of Moorish nostalgia, memories of the Alhambra, and sentimental descriptions of Cordoba. Of course, also in this case Europe had a lot to do with this change of historical interest: the new Islamic intellectual elite read the Western Orientalists avidly, and they, in turn, began to be interested in Spain (one for all: think about the fundamental *Histoire des musulmans d'Espagne* of Reinhart Dozy, published for the first time in 1861).

So many Arabic authors began to observe the Iberian coast for the first time, searching out the traces of its past. It is impossible to draw up a thorough list, but there are cases and people that should be recalled. First of all, probably, the celebrated Jirji Zaydan, whose work as a novelist was inspired by Dumas and Walter Scott and who is known for his employment of historical material: "We do everything" – perhaps declared with some exaggeration – "for the historical truth to prevail over fictional appearance, in opposition to what the

Westerners do, focusing their interest mainly on the invention of a story.” Zaydan wrote, among other things, a novel about the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, which was focused on the figure of the leader Tariq ibn Ziyad (*Fath al-Andalus aw Tariq ibn Ziyad*, 1965). Other authors went in the same direction: Ahmad Shawqi with *Amirat al-Andalus* (Cairo, 1932), ‘Ali al-Jarim in his *Hatif min al-Andalus* (Cairo, 1979), or ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Barquqi with *Hadarat al-Andalus*; names that may not be very well known but that contributed significantly to the formation of a new idea about the past of the Islamic Mediterranean world. However, this was not only a product of novelists. Many travelers in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries saw the Spanish lands with new eyes, Muhammad Labib al-Batnuni (*Rihlat al-Andalus*, 1927), for example, or Muhammad Kurd ‘Ali (*Ghabir al-Andalus wa hadiruha*, 1923), which strongly contributed to transmitting the idea of a lost Spain. This process was not only tied to the Mediterranean area. The Indian Muslims also perceived the problem in similar terms: inspired by Western studies (and therefore by Western categories), in 1870 they discovered the work of the Andalusian Ibn Rushd, the Latin Averroes. However, starting from this moment there was a plethora of new interest: there were Urdu translations of Andalusian works (e.g. Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Fusus al-hikam*), translations of Western studies such as the work of Meakin, *Moorish Empire* (the translation is from 1904), and the production of original works such as the biographies of the Iberian Ibn Bajja and Ibn Abi Hayyan. Beyond the scientific value of these studies, their importance was in the literary and political mythology that surrounded the memory of al-Andalus. In this sense a good example is the work of the famous poet Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), in which the figures of the heroes of Muslim Spain, Tariq and ‘Abd al-Rahman I, become examples of the virtues of a lost world. His poetry dedicated to the great Mosque of Cordoba, *Masjid-i Qurtuba*, is famous, a tribute to Islamic art which broadens towards the admiration of the creative genius of an entire culture.

In the Islamic world, this attraction to the cultural and historical greatness of Muslim Spain was strongly related to deep psychological and political tensions. Also, it was obvious, both in the poetry and in the historiographic essays, that the Islam evoked by the memories of Spain was reflected in contemporary Islam, fought by the European colonial powers. Al-Andalus was a kind of world upside down: it was from that territory that the Muslims had given science to the West; it was in that land that the cultural and artistic developments were so superior to the miseries of medieval barbaric Europe.

Inside this complex mix of ideas, the myth of the lost Spain started to be linked to the memory of the Crusades. When, in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the Arab lands adopted new political forms step by step – for instance the idea of revolution or the concept of nation – they also necessarily adopted the tools to ground and define these ideas. And among these tools there was also a complex rewriting of their history. Not by chance, in a part of the Islamic culture of that period surfaced the idea that al-Andalus had been lost due to a Crusade. This idea has been spread through literature and, more generally, the literature strongly contributed to shaping the image of the medieval al-Andalus. This process continued until this image became a cultural cornerstone of the identity of lands such as Morocco or Syria. In this sense, the poems of the Syrian Nizar Qabbani are paradigmatic. Qabbani was an intellectual celebrated mainly in Syria and in the Arabic world, but well known in Europe too; his poetry inspired by al-Andalus was read publicly in Spain in 1963, when Cordoba celebrated the millennium of the birth of Ibn Hazm with civic solemnity. In addition to Qabbani, other intellectuals, filmmakers, and writers, such as Radwa Ashour, Tariq Ali, and Mahmoud Darwish, to name but a few, have used al-Andalus “as a backdrop for works that are nostalgic and proud, looking back on a previous time during which Arab culture reigned supreme, and using al-Andalus as a way to depict and discuss contemporary events” (Elinson 2009: 2).

The constellation of ideas offered by similar intellectual and artistic creations is clear in its general sense: al-Andalus was a place of high civilization that nurtured crude medieval Christianity; but it was crushed by a Crusade, which in turn is an expression of the violent and prevaricating Christian imperialism. In this sense, al-Andalus is an integral part of this system of decoding history and interpreting reality: it is the Garden of Eden of the peaceful coexistence of the people of the Book under the protection of Islam. But this myth also works well for all the people who, regardless of religion, see in the Western world and in its cultural tensions a place of despair and the denial of many humanistic values. In this sense, in this deep relationship with the contemporary history of the Muslim people in Western lands, the adventure of the Mudejars and the tragic destiny of the Moriscos are still contemporary signs: part of a narrative and a myth that still contribute to the writing of history.

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