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Tolerance, Prejudice, and the Ornament of the World

Elijah Zane
Bard College

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Tolerance, Prejudice, and the Ornament of the World

Elijah Zane

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The Rise and Fall of Al-Andalus

Spain is rarely featured in the popular imagination of the Medieval Period. Reading a general history of Europe it might seem as if Spain was born when Columbus landed in Hispaniola in 1492, after Hispania faded with the fall of Western Rome in 476 CE. In the 8th century, Iberia was a Muslim province of the larger Caliphate, and between 711 and 1492 this Islamic region was known as Al-Andalus (Arabic for “Land of the Vandals”). The kingdom of Spain, forged by the union of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, alongside the Kingdom of Portugal, brought an end to Muslim rule in the momentous year of 1492, with the remaining Muslim population forced out of the country at the start of the 17th century. Ever since the death of Muslim Spain, its reputation has been debated in the historical memory of all the Abrahamic faiths, each with their own imagination of the past.

Between 1492 to the late 19th century, the victory of the cross over the crescent was celebrated, with Al-Andalus being imagined as part of the Islamic world, to be forgotten as a shameful shadow of past defeat. More recent scholarship, starting intermittently with the late Enlightenment but more seriously since the fall of Franco in 1975, has looked closer at the medieval kingdom of Al-Andalus and found much there to admire. In a medieval world defined in the West by intolerance, few books, and rigid theocratic limits on free thought, there existed a religiously tolerant, medically advanced, intellectual diverse Islamic culture that boasted the largest library in Europe.

Al-Andalus, for so long only a small facet of Islamic history, since the 1990s is seen as the bridge between Europe and Dar-al-Islam. It was through Spain that algebra, medicine, and

the Greek classics filtered into Europe. Once antisemitism was recognized as a travesty rather than a triumph after the Holocaust, greater attention was paid to how Cordoba was the center of medieval Judaism, and for centuries was hailed as the new Jerusalem. As Al-Andalus began to filtrate into the Western imagination, debates emerged among Western historians, who wished to know how golden the Golden Age of Al-Andalus was, what made it possible, and what role Muslim Spain held in Christendom and Dar-al-Islam? Historians engaged in heated debates over Catholic Spain's expulsion of their Muslim and Jewish populations in the century following the Fall of Granada, debates that were shaped with changing events of the modern day. Most recently, the post 9/11 debates about Islamic terrorism and White Nationalist violence directed against Muslim refugees has brought Al-Andalus into greater scrutiny as it was a medieval dominion famed for its religious tolerance.

This essay chooses six contemporary historians of the Medieval Iberia and examines their understanding of Al-Andalus in the context of each other's work and their period of publication, from 1992 - 2018 . Historians of the Al-Andalus use a unique vocabulary; a glossary of historical terminology is offered below.

Terminology

Reconquista: A deeply controversial term. Traditionally, it refers to the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula starting in the 11th century and culminating in the conquest of Granada in 1492. However, this term is debated among historians, as it suggests a more unified Christian perspective than is historically accurate.¹ Ferdinand and Isabella both use the myth of

¹ Brian Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), pg 6.

Reconquista as a form of legitimizing their land-grab, which is effectively the founding myth of the Kingdom of Spain.² The Reconquista narrative is imagined as a form of crusade, a unified front against the Muslim invaders.³ However, as many historians, in particular Brian Catlos, point out, actual events were more nuanced.⁴ While religion did play a role in the conflict, every battle in the Reconquista saw Christians fighting for the Muslim kingdoms, and Muslims fighting for the Christians. There was never a period of religious unity on either side of the war, especially because these wars were rarely a unified effort. Until the mid 15th century, the Christian kingdoms weren't unified, and they fought each other as much as they fought the Muslim states.⁵ Religion did play a role, particularly after 1250 AD, when Spanish Christians regularly supported international crusaders in their wars. Simultaneously, many Christian armies served as mercenaries for the various Muslim kingdoms, and visa versa.⁶

Old Christians: Technically this term refers to Christian families who remained Christians throughout the Islamic rule, supposedly presenting a continuous faith. In reality however, the majority of people in Al-Andalus were both Muslim and Iberian, meaning that logically the majority of Old Christians must have been former Muslims.⁷ The key distinction is that many Iberians converted back to Christianity in the early days of Reconquista beginning in the mid-12th century, in contrast to the New Christians who converted (often forcibly) after 1492.

² Matthew Carr, *Blood and Faith* (New York: The New Press Publishing, 2009) 8-9.

³ Carr, *Blood and Faith* 26-27.

⁴ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 4-5.

⁵ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 371.

⁶ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 4.

⁷ *Kingdoms of Faith*, 388-391.

New Christians: Officially former Muslims or Jews who converted to Christianity, usually after 1492. In practice however, the category of New Christian was extremely vague, used both to refer to Converso (see below) and actual Christians who continued to be “culturally Muslim or Jewish,” such as speaking Hebrew or Arabic.⁸

Converso: A term used for Jews who had converted to Christianity but were still Jewish in practice. It is important to note that the term was used by Old Christians to describe Jews who kept their faith and those who genuinely converted but were believed to have stayed Jewish.⁹ The Conversos were largely expelled by the early 16th century.

Morisco: The Muslim equivalent of the Converso, Moriscos enjoyed greater rights and privileges, partly by having a much larger population. The term Morisco is very loosely used in a similar manner to *Converso*.¹⁰

Moor: A problematic and inaccurate term used for Muslims of North African origin.

Al-Andalus: The term used within the Islamic world for Muslim Spain. Historian Brian Catlos points out that the term is technically inaccurate, as it implies a unified Muslim political entity when most of Muslim Iberia was divided between different rulers.¹¹ However there isn't a better term since “Muslim Spain” has worse connotations, so I will be using Al-Andalus to refer to Muslim-ruled Iberia from the year 711 to 1492.

⁸ *Blood and Faith*, 7.

⁹ Seth Kimmel, *Parables of Conversion: Conversions and Knowledge at the End of Islamic Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015), 69.

¹⁰ LP Harvey, *Islamic Spain: 1250-1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1-5.

¹¹ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 2-5.

Note on Historiography

Every text featured in this examination was written in English by American or Spanish historians primarily. Thusly, as a set they are all in their own way limited.

Traditionally Al-Andalusian history seems to have had five historiographical perspectives, not all of which are represented in this project. Firstly, there is the Spanish/Portuguese tradition, which views Al-Andalus as the precursor to Iberian history, and has often been part of a Nationalist historical tradition.¹² To this day modern politicians still invoke the defeat of Al-Andalus as a rallying cry.¹³ More recent Spanish historians, like Brian Catlos, reconsider the legacy of Al-Andalus as it affected Spanish history. The second tradition is an Islamic one, which, while largely positive towards Al-Andalus, is not tremendously focussed, seeing it as a peripheral territory.¹⁴ This historical tradition mostly focuses on the scientific, intellectual, artistic, and theological advancements of the period. The third school is founded in Jewish historiography, specifically by the Sephardic Jewish community which emerged from Spain, and the early Zionists who took an interest in the history.¹⁵ The fourth tradition is from a larger Christian history, seeing Spain mostly in the context of changing theological notions and Pan-European religious trends.¹⁶ The last and more recent trend is international, though primarily

¹² *Blood and Faith*, Pg 9.

¹³ *Blood and Faith*, pg XII.

¹⁴ *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, p 11.

¹⁵ Maria Rosa, *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Black, Little, Brown, and Company, 2002) 90.

¹⁶ Kimmel, *Parables of Conversion*, 8-9.

an Anglophone one, and started in response to the War on Terror. It views Al-Andalus through the perspective of its religious tolerance and pluralism.¹⁷

This paper will primarily focus on the legacy of Al-Andalus as a religiously tolerant community and concern itself with questions of bigotry, interfaith relations, and the rise of early nationalism. It is primarily from this tradition (but not exclusively) that I draw most of my sources, since these issues dominate English language historiography.

All of the texts under discussion were published in English, and all the historians are American, British, or Spanish in origin. *Muslim Spain and Portugal* by Hugh Kennedy, and *Islamic Spain 1250 to 1500* by L.P. Harvey, both published in 1996 and 1992 respectively are in the Islamic tradition, albeit by Western writers. *Ornament of the World* by Maria Rosa Menocal (2003) and *Blood and Faith* by Matthew Carr (2009) are some of the most influential examples of the International tradition though both also come from the Spanish tradition. *Parables of Conversion* by Seth Kimmel is a 2015 study in the Christian tradition, aimed at historians and theologians rather than a general audience. Finally *Kingdoms of Faith* by Brian Catlos, published in 2018, attempts to blend all of these traditions, in addition to providing an ambitious synthesis of traditional history with sociology, anthropology, and Gender Studies. Surprisingly it works.¹⁸ Catlos goes further and argues that our entire understanding of Al-Andalus is actually incorrect, marred by anachronistic understanding. As he points out, Al-Andalus is very much a blurry category, Muslim Spain lasted from 711 to 1492, almost eight centuries and a multitude of regime with little unifying them beyond place and Islam. He argues that the notion of a division

¹⁷ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 300.

¹⁸ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 94.

between Christian and Muslim Spain didn't exist until the mid-15th century and, following in the Post-Structuralist tradition, claims that most histories of Al-Andalus cannot help but include modern anachronisms.

Historical Summary

Al-Andalusian history begins in 711 AD with a Berber military commander named Tariq ibn Ziyad, who was based in Tangiers, who effectively went rogue and invaded the Visigoth kingdom, and in the process naming the island of Gibraltar after himself.¹⁹ While later Muslim historians imagined the conquest as a deliberate effort, modern historians universally agree that this was a raid for plunder that went better than anybody involved intended.²⁰ Tariq likely only wanted loot, but he happened to attack just as the Visigoths were suffering from a series of political crises, and found himself in charge of a kingdom. His invasion was followed by more official attacks out of North Africa, eventually conquering most of the Iberian peninsula save a few Christian strongholds in the northern mountains.

The nature of the conquest has been a major topic of discussion among historians, as those who believe that the Al-Andalusian tolerance was unique in the Muslim world look to the conquest for evidence of why this emerged. Maria Rosa's 2003 book *Ornament of the World* focused on how the conquest necessitated local support, since as raiders they didn't have the supply lines necessary for holding territory.²¹ As the invaders rapidly transitioned from raiders to rulers, reliance on local leadership made religious tolerance mandatory.

¹⁹ Gibraltar is the Spanish translation of "Mount of Tariq"

²⁰ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 26.

²¹ Menocal, *Ornament of the World* 28.

Hugh Kennedy's book *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, published in 1996, focuses on the military organization of the province, contrasting it to the earlier Muslim conquests a few centuries earlier.²² The early conquests were based on garrison of Arab soldiers in the major cities, leaving most of the population alone.²³ This wasn't possible in Hispania, both due to the lack of troops and the fact that most of the armies were Berbers who had a different military structure, leading to more cooperation with the local troops. Brian Catlos' 2018 book *Kingdoms of Faiths* highlights this as a primarily Berber affair: while the conquests are remembered as Arab, they were in fact led by a small Arab elite, and the vast majority of the troops were Berbers with connections to North Africa, thus explaining the unique character of the province.²⁴

An interesting side effect of this early history is how it affected French history, specifically the way that historians described the Battle of Tours/Battle of Poitiers in 732. In the traditional Christian version, Charles Martel, father of Pippin the Tall, defeated Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi, and supposedly halted the Muslim advance into Western Europe. Charles Martel has since been credited with saving Western Christianity, and this version of the story was critical to the founding legend of modern France. More pertinent to the historiographical tradition, Charles Martel has been co-opted by modern day Islamophobic White Nationalist groups, once again putting the legacy of Al-Andalus in the realm of modern politics.²⁵ Most contemporary historians reject this narrative however, assuming that Abdul Rahman was following the example of Tariq, and launching a long term raid.²⁶ However, this presentation of the Battle of Tours as

²²Hugh Kennedy *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of Al-Andalus* (University of Michigan, 1996) 3-6.

²³ Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, 16.

²⁴ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 30-33.

²⁵ <https://psmag.com/ideas/how-to-fight-8chan-medievalism-and-why-we-must-notre-dame-christchurch>

²⁶ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 55-56.

the point where France could have turned Muslim has led to endless discussion over whether it would have been better for the Frankish kingdoms to follow the example of Al-Andalus.

Al-Andalus was very much on the periphery of the Islamic world, and was largely regarded as a cultural backwater, and likely would have remained just a military province had it not suddenly become the home of the Umayyad Dynasty. After the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 AD, the community he created required a new leader caliphate (successor) was chosen to lead the Muslim world (Ummah). While the first four (known as the “rightly guided”) were elected, all but one of them were assassinated during various civil wars, which were ended when a single dynasty claimed the title of Caliph, now imagined as a hereditary rank. The Umayyad Caliphate, based in Damascus, reigned over a roughly unified Islamic world from 661 to 744, building off the earlier conquests to create a powerful continent-spanning empire, and it was under their rule that Al-Andalus was added to the Muslim world. However the Umayyad reign was always unpopular among devout Muslims, for their role in the killing of Muhammad's family, and they were overthrown in a sudden revolt, to be replaced by the Abbasid Caliphate. The Abbasid moved their capital to Baghdad and oversaw the larger Muslim Golden Age, but not before killing every member of the Umayyad family. All save one, Abd ar-Rahman, who fled to the remote province of Al-Andalus, which had only been unified in 718 AD. There he integrated himself into local elites and Umayyad loyalists, before seizing power in 756, where he ruled as a semi-independent Emirate with a capital in Cordoba.²⁷ Despite their origins, the Cordoban Emirate was officially loyal to the Abbasids in Iraq while maintaining its own power base. This changed with Abd ar-Rahman III, and the rise of the Shia Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt,

²⁷ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 64-65.

which gave him the cover to declare himself Caliph of the restored Umayyad Caliphate in 929 AD.²⁸

The renewed Umayyad Caliphate, called by historians the Caliphate of Cordoba, oversaw the height of the Golden Age of Al-Andalus. Menocal's *Ornament of the World* argues that this was a deliberate Umayyad policy. With the Abbasid Caliphate falling into chaos, the Umayyad hoped to make Cordoba the center of the Islamic world, and to rival Baghdad's House of Wisdom, the center of Sunni scholarship.²⁹ Traditionally the Caliphate legitimacy was tied to its support of scholars and the arts, and so all three Caliphates patronized intellectuals in the hopes of securing a reputation of greatness. Menocal says this is especially true of the Umayyad because the Abbasids used support of scholarship to justify their revolt. The Caliphate of Cordoba eventually came to an end, however, through a series of dynastic struggles and provincial revolt in 1031. After which Al-Andalus broke into a score or so of independent kingdoms, called the Taifas. These smaller states constantly fought among each other, each claiming to be the heirs to the Umayyad, and regularly employed Christian mercenaries in these wars. Despite their disunity and general low reputation in the Islamic world, the Taifas continued the Umayyad tradition of supporting intellectuals as a way to claim legitimacy.³⁰

The northern Christian states took advantage of this disunity to steadily unify and expand, slowly pushing Islamic control down south. This process was later called Reconquista, though as noted under terminology, the process was nowhere near as unified or deliberate as the term implies. Christian kingdoms fought each other, allied with the Taifas, and traded extensively

²⁸ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 82-84.

²⁹ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 74.

³⁰ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 202-203.

with North Africa. Catlos argues that this narrative emerged when shrewd Christian leaders realized they could reinforce their armies with foreign crusaders if they framed wars of conquest as religious, eventually creating the Reconquista narrative.³¹ In Catlos' telling, *Reconquista* was almost an accidental process until various North African kingdoms invaded Al-Andalus in order to preserve Muslim rule, inadvertently creating a Muslim vs. Christian dynamic.³² These efforts collapsed in the face of Christian aggression and Spanish resentment of Berber rule. Carr instead argues that the dream of *Reconquista* was laid out earlier, but that many lords were inconsistent about applying it. Regardless, by 1250, Al-Andalus had been reduced to a single kingdom in Spain, the Emirate of Granada, which was able to maintain its independence through a mix of diplomacy and military force against divided Christian nations. After Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon unified Spain, their forces invaded Grenada, which fell in 1492.

It is important to note that in "Muslim Spain" there were always Christian and Jewish minorities living in segregation. In fact, under the auspices of Muslim tolerance, the Spanish Jewish community experienced its own Golden Age, to this day called the high point of Sephardi Jewish culture. It was here that Modern Hebrew was first created by the Jewish community in Al-Andalus, which remains a major fixation of the modern Zionist movement. Cordoba was declared a new Jerusalem, and became a major center both for the preservation of Jewish knowledge, and the advancement of theology, poetry, and philosophy. In this tolerant environment many Jews were given the freedom to discuss what it meant to be Jewish, creating the beginnings of later Pan Jewish movements. Some Jews were able to enter the secular world,

³¹Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 4.

³² Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 276.

most famously with Samuel HaNagrid (Samuel ibn Naghrillah) the “Prince of the Jews” who commanded the armies of a Sultan.

A Question of Tolerance

As with most monarchs, bragging came easily to the Caliphs of the Cordoba, who were eager to announce to the world their accomplishments and great deeds. While they happily claimed credit for the cultural achievements, scientific advancements, and intellectual prosperity, all products of the Umayyad culture of tolerance, they did not brag about tolerance.³³ The stability and harmony of the realm was regularly praised, but the notions of tolerance and pluralism were a means to those ends, not ends unto themselves.

Today Al-Andalus is primarily remembered for its religious pluralism, one of the few places in the Middle Ages where Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived in harmony and tolerated each other's beliefs. However, this Golden Age needs to be clarified in several places. Catlos argues the importance of not imagining Al-Andalus as a singular entity with an unchanging history; the policy of tolerance varied dramatically in time and place. Menocal, Carr, and Catlos all point out that the last centuries of Muslim Spain were marked by an increased in persecutions against Christian, as a response to the success of Reconquista. Menocal notes the irony that many Christians were viewed as Fifth Columnists, much as Muslims would be viewed by Catholic Spain. All historians agree that even during the most intolerant periods, Al-Andalus was tolerant and welcoming of the Jews, and none came close to the oppressive rule of a Catholic Spain (there was, for instance, no Christian or Jewish expulsion or inquisition under

³³ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 73-75.

Muslim rule). This is not to say that there were no instances of massacres of Jews by Muslims, such as the Massacre of Cordoba in 1013. Kennedy notes that these instances of violence, however, were rare and usually part of cities being sacked during the numerous civil wars, but the Jewish community was not free of violence.

Kennedy and Menocal agree that Al-Andalus has nothing resembling the anti-semitic violence seen in Europe in the Medieval period, such as the pogroms or the Rhineland Massacres in 1096 as part of the First Crusade.³⁴ Kennedy clarifies that this tolerance should not be equated with an egalitarian mindset.³⁵ Christianity and Judaism were tolerated, and although members of each group could rise to high positions, they were still an underclass. Islam was prioritized over other faiths, and there were limits placed on the rights and privileges of religious minorities. However, compared to almost every other place in Europe, as well as most of North Africa and the Middle East, Al-Andalus stood out in terms of tolerance. This was doubly so for the Jewish population; Spain was the heart of medieval Jewish culture and many intellectuals declared it the new Jerusalem.³⁶

While there were cases of non-Muslims rising to high ranks as the afore-mentioned Samuel HaNagrid (Samuel ibn Naghrillah) the “Prince of the Jews”, his rise was resented by others and his family was eventually lynched by jealous Muslims courtiers. This culture of tolerance was largely the result of pragmatic policies rather than an ideological predilection. Said tolerance emerged in part as a practical result of a Muslim minority to rule over a non Muslim majority. Even after Muslims made up the majority of the population, the tolerance of Christians

³⁴ Kennedy, *Islamic Spain and Portugal*, 118.

³⁵ Kennedy, *Islamic Spain and Portugal*, 134.

³⁶ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, pg 161-163.

and Jews didn't just keep the peace, it also was necessary for the intellectual golden age that was so important to Umayyad legitimacy. Even if this is accepted at face value (ignoring that the Quran encouraged the tolerance of other Abrahamic faiths), the result is still a culture of tolerance which produced a Golden Age of Culture. It is also worth noting that tolerance was actually in the economic best interest of the Catholic monarchs in post Reconquista Spain, and yet they pursued the expulsions against their material self-interest. Thus tolerance can't be understood solely through pragmatism.³⁷

Historians Harvey and Kennedy both claim that Al-Andalus' tolerance was simply an extension of the tolerant attitudes of the larger Muslim world, with its Golden Age being merely a fragment of the greater Muslim Golden Age. Menocal disagrees, arguing due to its remote location, Al-Andalusian rulers made the acquisition of learning and the flourishing of scholarship a top priority, as it granted them legitimacy and showed that they were a player in the Muslim world.³⁸ Catlos says there was a shift, with Cordoba initially a backwater, but that the turning point was the renewed Umayyad Caliphate (929 to 1031). Both Menocal and Catlos assert that once the Caliphate of Cordoba established a reputation for learning, its successors continued this tradition in order to secure their legitimacy.

Thus, the Golden Age continued through every phase of Muslim rule, as the Almohad Caliphate, the Taifa rulers, the Almoravids and the Emirate of Granada sought to continue the Umayyad legacy. Al-Andalus status as a backwater changed with the Mongol Conquest in the 13th century.³⁹ With the fall of Baghdad and the fragmentation of the Muslim world, Iberian

³⁷ Carr, *Blood and Faith* pg 282.

³⁸ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 92-93.

³⁹ Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, 74.

culture stood out all the more. As a gateway to Western Europe, Al-Andalus was a unique crossroads between Christian theology in the north, Byzantine and Arabic science to the west, and Jewish scholarship domestically. The presence of the Jews in particular was a unique element to Al-Andalus, who contributed greatly to the thriving intellectual and artistic life of the region until they were expelled in 1492.⁴⁰

Catlos emphasizes that this tolerance should not be mistaken for a lack of ethnic tension - just that those tensions tended to be between Arabized Spaniards and North African Berbers. Islamic historians tend to put far more emphasis on this ethnic conflict, while Western historians focus more on tolerance than intolerance. The majority of the Muslim population were native Spaniards who had converted to Islam and were culturally Arabic, who identified with the Arab populations from Syria and Berber populations in North Africa, and ethnic tension.⁴¹ These would occasionally break into full scale wars, though none of these can be understood on purely ethnic lines, such as the civil war which ended the Caliphate of Cordoba. Linguistics, cultural, and ethnic differences were a constant source of disunity, especially since North Africa was the closest Muslim ally to Al-Andalus. This tension was exploited by various Christian rulers, and many Arabized Muslims fought with the Christians against the Berber dynasties. This element of Al-Andalusian intolerance focused primarily on Catlos, Harvey and Kennedy, who are as much historians of North Africa as Spain, while Menocal is more of a Middle Eastern historian, with Carr and Kimmel being Christian historians.

⁴⁰ Catlos, *Blood and Faith*, 25-28.

⁴¹ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, pg 359.

The Shadow of Tolerance

The discussion of Al-Andalusian tolerance has always been overshadowed by modern debates about the relationships between the Abrahamic faiths. From the 18th century to the early 20th century, this discussion mostly revolved around Spanish and Portuguese nationhood. The debate raged about what was necessary to make a state; the expulsion of the Muslim and Jewish minorities could be seen as a necessary step in unification by establishing a single Old Christian nationality.⁴² Spanish national history argued that cultural, religious and linguistic homogeneity was necessary to create the eventual Nation-State of Spain.⁴³ The debate changed with the fall of Franco, and led to a reevaluation of Catholic Spain, seeing Isabella and Ferdinand not just as the champions of *Reconquista*, but AS the overseers of horrific atrocities. Their expulsions of the Jews and Muslims in 1492 to be understood within context of Spain's colonial empire, specifically the question of how the treatment of the Jewish and Muslim minority led to the development of the racial categories.⁴⁴

The greatest change in approaches to Al-Andalusian historiography was the destruction of the World Trade Center on 9/11, and the resulting War on Terror.⁴⁵ Overnight, the Western perception of Islam changed and Muslim studies were suddenly were overshadowed by contemporary debates, specifically, the question of religious violence, and the seemingly violent and supposedly intolerant “nature” of Islam. The “Clash of Civilizations” narrative, which posits

⁴² Carr, *Blood and Faith*, IX.

⁴³ It should be noted that Spain did not become a nation until the Liberal Revolt in 1820, which fell three years later.

⁴⁴ Harvey, *Islamic Spain 1250-1500*, 325-327.

⁴⁵ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 296-97.

that Islamic and Christian societies are in opposition, became widely-adopted by many political speakers, including speechwriters in the Bush and Blair administrations. Harvey and Kennedy are both 9/11 historians and their work utterly ignores questions of violence or cultural conflict.

Thus does Al-Andalus suddenly become a counterpoint against Islamophobia, and proof of a tolerant, intellectually open, and culturally-accepting Islamic society. The change can be noted when going back to Harvey's work in the early 90s, where he presents Al-Andalus in a dry academic tone that draws no connection to contemporary events. Islamic history in the 90s is seen as unimportant, not a threat. While Kennedy is writing for a more popular audience, his book spends no time trying to disprove fears concerning Islam, opting to focus on how Islamic culture shaped that of Spain and Portugal. By contrast, Menocal's *Ornament of the World*, written less than a year after 9/11, is trying to push back against such popular notions as Islam as a barbaric threat.

The next historiographical shift came with the European refugee crisis in 2014, with millions of Middle Eastern and North Africa refugees, largely imagined as Muslims, streaming into Europe. This sparked a larger debate about whether it was possible for a "Muslim" minority to assimilate into European culture, as anti-immigration sentiment led to the rise of Far Right racist parties and hate groups. Thus, the focus switched from Muslim tolerance to Catholic intolerance, with greater study put on the expulsions of the Muslims and Jews, and the bigotry towards religious minorities. Carr operates in this world. While he does push back against narratives of Islamic violence, he focuses on questions of integration. While *Blood and Faith* predates the Refugee Crisis, Carr's work is a prediction of this crisis, which makes his work feel

closer to that historiographical era than his own. Even Kimmel, who is writing primarily for Catholic historians, is responding to the crisis, as his work concerns questions of personhood, citizenship, and integration, albeit through a theological lens.

The Expulsions and Blood Purity

The Exclusions of the Conversos and the Moriscos actually have been viewed from a large number of narratives, one of which is the invention of blood purity and by extension race.⁴⁶ Kimmel and Carr note that while Christendom had a long history with religious and cultural bigotry, the modern notions of race did not exist until the 15th century, and it originated in 15th century Iberia.⁴⁷ *Parables of Conversion* spends most of its pages on the question of conversion and theological shifts that emerged in response. Kimmel notes that during Reconquista, large numbers of Muslim and Jewish minorities were forcibly converted in mass ceremonies under pain of death. However these populations largely continued to practice their faith after the conversions, which became a subject of consternation for the Christian rulers. Kimmel and Carr focus on the legal paradox this created, as their technical status as Christians should have entitled them to the equal rights and privileges as the Old Christians, but this was unacceptable to the Old Christians. Officially, this was because many of the New Christians continued to practice their own faith, but it is too simplistic to understand this as a purely doctrinal persecution. All the historians empathize that there is no universal character for New Christians; some were genuine converts, many kept their own faith, and many synchronized both faiths. The New Christians, even those who had genuinely converted to Christianity, spoke Arabic and were

⁴⁶ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, pg 28-32, 120.

⁴⁷ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 189-191.

culturally North African, or spoke Hebrew and were culturally Jewish.⁴⁸ Carr notes that due to extremely segregated communities at the time, each community mostly (though not exclusively) married within their own ranks, and over time the religious bigotry melded into an ethnic bigotry.

Kimmel writes that the forced conversion also led to a legal problem, since forced conversions were a matter of debate in Catholic jurisprudence, and prompted a century of religious discussion on the matter. If the New Christians were to be understood as Christians, then their crimes were heretical in nature, putting them under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition.⁴⁹ Critically, if they were Christians who practiced Islam as apostates, then their actions would delegitimize the Spanish Crown, who were tasked with maintaining Christian orthodoxy. This distinction became especially important during the Reformation when the Catholic church became more theologically strict.

If however the conversions were deemed illegitimate, then they would fall under the purview of the local lords, many of whom were tolerant of Islam, and the state wouldn't be responsible for their souls. This gets thornier because in Augustinian thought conversions are only possible if willing. A Christian could never be twice-baptized. Since the Moriscos were a mix of forced and willing converts, there was no way of telling which individuals had been forced to convert, and those who had done so willingly, since mass re-baptism was not an option. *Parables of Conversion* is entirely focused on the specific question of the theological justifications for conversion.

⁴⁸ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 28-30.

⁴⁹ Kimmel, *Parables of Conversion*, 28-30.

Kimmel concludes that ultimately the church deemed the mass baptisms legitimate because the Muslims could have chosen death instead of conversion, but this didn't solve the legal question. Despite being officially Christian, the Moriscos were not given the legal rights of new Christians, and the Church regularly attempted to "reconvert" them to orthodox Catholicism. These efforts were, however, marred by being half hearted; most Morisco communities were never sent priests, missionaries rarely spoke Arabic, and few funds were allocated to the converted communities.⁵⁰ The 16th century is marked by theologians fretting about the Moriscos and a brief surge of missionary work and persecutions, which quickly petered out, only to be attempted again a few years later. This neglect was partly financial due to the Church's efforts being primarily focused on the New World, but also from the more racial understanding of a faith that had been emerging in Spain since the 14th century.

Carr's *Blood and Faith* posits that a great many of the persecutions came from a national insecurity felt by WHOM? across Spain about their own Muslim origins.⁵¹ Instead of relying on theological arguments, Carr understands the expulsions as an extension of cultural and ethnic bigotry. As much as the Old Christians claimed they had been true to their faith during the Muslim occupation, many of them clearly hadn't, and had opportunistically re-converted to Christianity during early *Reconquista*. Despite the wealth their colonial empire brought them, Spain was viewed internationally as insignificant because of its Muslim origins. Catlos notes that the new Habsburg monarchs often spoke with contempt about their backwards Spanish subjects, especially as the dynasty found an enemy in the Ottoman Empire.⁵² Many Spanish

⁵⁰ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 124-127.

⁵¹ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 73.

⁵² Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 410-411.

leaders hoped to leverage their status as a new Christian kingdom in the larger Catholic world, and the presence of both Muslims and presumed Muslim culture in their ranks was seen as an embarrassment.⁵³ Carr makes reference to French court officials dismissing Spaniards as half Muslim mongrels and supporting Spanish efforts to “purify” the Muslim presence.⁵⁴ Throughout the 16th century, Spanish monarchs and officials regularly expressed the hope to ‘purify’ Spain by removing the Moriscos, and their presence was a form of humiliation or corruption.⁵⁵ Carr argues that this framework effectively made genocide inevitable, as there wasn’t any room in that framework for pluralism. In contrast to Kimmel, Carr focuses less on the theologians' discussions and more on secular writings from the period, looking at letters, diary entries, royal decrees, and fiction books where the desire to expel the Moriscos are clear, even if there isn’t yet a theological justification.

Once bigotry based on blood purity was normalized in Iberian culture, it quickly spread outside a domestic context with Portugal and Spain’s colonial efforts.⁵⁶ Harvey argues that had it not been for Columbus' discovery of America, Spain likely would have had an entirely different relationship with their minority populations.⁵⁷ The wealth brought in by the New World meant that the Old Christians did not have to rely upon them Jewish and Muslim merchants with connections across the Mediterranean.⁵⁸ As Spain and Portugal came into contact with the Native American population and started to participate in the African slave trade, blood purity effortlessly morphed into race ideology, eventually creating the notorious Casta system in Latin

⁵³ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 47-51.

⁵⁴ Carr, *Blood of Faith*, 284.

⁵⁵ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 262-64.

⁵⁶ Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 250-251

⁵⁷ Harvey, *Islamic Spain 1250-1500*, 325.

⁵⁸ Harvey, *Islamic Spain 1250-1500*, 325.

America.⁵⁹ Spain and Portugal were the first colonial powers, and their systems of racial cast set the groundwork for future colonial empires such as Britain and France; the Expulsions are at the root of the racial systems we unfortunately live with today.

Bigotry Triumphs over Self Interest

One of the prevailing debates among the historians of medieval Spain are questions about the outcomes of the Expulsions; in simplified terms, were they a practical measure or simply an expression of bigotry? Older historians like Harvey imagine the Expulsions as an early form of nation building. He asserts that in destroying their minority population, Spain was creating a unifying nationalism.⁶⁰ Thus the exclusions are presented as a cruel causality of the early Modern Period, as feudal holdings slowly transformed into national kingdoms. However, more recent books have been pushing back against a practical understanding of the Expulsions, taking the position that bigotry was itself the primary cause of the persecutions. *Blood and Faith*, in particular, points out how the persecutions were in direct contradiction with the self-interest of the state. The Expulsion of the Jews meant the kingdom lost their banking and long distance trading community overnight, as well as the majority of their tax collectors. Carr draws upon royal accounts and letters from the Spanish aristocracy that acknowledge the ways that loss of the Jewish population hurt them financially. He goes further and posits that it was this loss of Jewish financial expertise that played a major role in the infamous financial ineptitude of the

⁵⁹ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 28-31.

⁶⁰ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 294-296.

Spanish Golden Age.⁶¹ King Ferdinand went so far as to brag about how he was willing to harm the economy to purify Spain: a line that would be repeated in later expulsions.⁶²

Both Carr and Catlos argue that anti-Morisco sentiment escalated once the Habsburg monarchy married into the Spanish Royal Family. Once Spain (and later Portugal) became part of the vast Habsburg Empire, the kingdom became part of the dynasty's rivalry with the Ottoman Empire. With their colonial wealth and navy, Spain found itself part of a vast war against the greatest Muslim power in the world, which led to many Moriscos being imagined as potential 5th columnists. Carr focuses a great deal of energy on the rampant paranoia about an imminent Ottoman invasion, which usually led to pogroms against the Moriscos.⁶³ As can be expected, as persecution increased, some Moriscos communities did call upon the Ottomans for aid, but as Carr ironically notes, the Sultan had no intention of invading Spain as it was logistically impossible. This tension increased as the Habsburg dedicated themselves to crushing the Reformation, and Spain was caught up in the fervor of the religious wars. Kimmel argues that presence of a population of ostensible Christians with some degree of Muslim beliefs was intolerable to a Europe which now more than ever believed that a king's job was to ensure the religious harmony of his subjects. These persecutions led to a series of Morisco rebellions, which ironically were put down in part by other Moriscos hoping to prove their loyalty to the crown. The rebellions only convinced the monarchy that the Moriscos were an active threat, both militarily and spiritually.

⁶¹ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 37.

⁶² Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 37.

⁶³ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 218-219.

Carr and Catlos focus a great deal of space on the self-inflicted nature of the persecutions were even more evident. Carr points out that the Morisco population were the best artisans and specialized farmers in the kingdom, due to generations of specialized training. They also were vital to the trade with North Africa, meaning that many local lords actively stepped in to protect their Morisco populations from persecution, resulting in one Admiral Sancho of Cardona being executed by the Inquisition.⁶⁴ While Kennedy and Harvey simply mention the Expulsion as an event that happened, Carr fixates on how this brutal project would require a massive state effort to execute, and thus require a significant expense on the part of the state. Meanwhile Kimmel focuses on the deeply complicated theological concerns over how such a project could be done. When Phillip III finally went through with the Expulsions, it required massive coordination of the army and navy, and the temporary creation of a kingdom-wide infrastructure, all at great cost. As can be expected, this triggered a massive economic collapse across the kingdom, both from the expense and the loss of skilled Morisco workers. What makes this worse is that the expulsions were designed to deal with an economic downturn, in the hopes that purifying the kingdom would earn God's favor. Carr proves that this was known to Phillip III, who proudly announced that the economic damage they would suffer was proof of their commitment to purifying Spain.⁶⁵ Carr, writing about rising European nationalism as much as he is writing about 17th-century Spain, uses Phillip III to highlight the self-destructive nature of bigotry.

Carr and Catlos are not shy in their views on modern Islamophobia, and both are explicit about the self-destructive nature of the expulsions in the desertification that followed them. One

⁶⁴ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 408.

⁶⁵ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 60.

of the effects of the Conquest was advanced irrigation and farming techniques brought by the North Africans, bringing life to previously uninhabitable regions. After *Reconquista*, the Moriscos mostly lived in the arid parts of Spain producing specialized cash crops, and when they were expelled, the land went fallow once again, as it remains to this day.⁶⁶ The question of motive opens a larger debate between historians in terms of how to view the monarchs and priests who pushed for the Expulsions. Kimmel argues that they should be understood as true believers who took the debate about conversion seriously, and that the fate of the Moriscos hinged upon the debates of the 16th century.⁶⁷ He argues that had certain arguments been made differently at the conclaves, Spain might have a Muslim minority today, in contrast to Carr's view that theology was just a cover for an existing plan for bigotry.

Carr and Catlos draw overt comparisons between their historical perspectives to modern day concerns, specifically targeting the wide use of anti-Muslim rhetoric in contemporary political rhetoric. Carr, in particular, notes how the question of "Muslim Assimilation" was a major question prior to the genocide, and how religious and cultural intolerance quickly morphed into racial categorization.⁶⁸ Catlos, meanwhile, drawing more upon Gender History, focuses on how the behavior of the elites still seem familiar to us today. He discusses Arabic notions of machismo, and its focus on poetry, eroticism, and war. When discussing one of the rulers of Cordoba, he writes

The verse so inflamed 'Abd al-Rahman that he abandoned the campaign and galloped straight back to Cordoba to have sex with Tarub, leaving the command in the hands of his son, al-Hakam. The masculine culture of the Andalusí elite was a ninth-century

⁶⁶ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 281-282.

⁶⁷ The Crux of the Debate concerned the allegedly Christian status of the Moriscos and Conversos, and was effectively an argument between religious bigotry and racial bigotry.

⁶⁸ Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 28-32.

“gangsta”-testosterone-driven, wine-fueled culture revolving around bling, bros and biyathces, of biting freestyle wordplay and conspicuous consumption.”⁶⁹

Catlos is arguing that underneath the cultural differences, medieval people weren't so dissimilar from the reading audience of today, especially in the realms of vice and bigotry. When discussing the expulsions, he directly references the Civil Rights Movement and W.E.B.Dubois's idea of a psychological wage.⁷⁰ The difference is that Catlos does this to humanize the past. Carr references contemporary mores to warn readers about the future.

What Created the Golden Age?

Al-Andalus is primarily remembered today not only for its tolerance, but also for its position as the intellectual center of the Mediterranean. Muslim Spain was renowned for its incredible architecture, poetry, music, and literature, and also for some such intellectual advancements as bringing classical Greek scholasticism into Europe, and for the Arabic intellectual and medical advances during the Caliphates.⁷¹ The earliest European medical academies based themselves on Al-Andalusian texts; in many ways Spain invented our modern conception of a doctor. The first academies that offered degrees were invented in North African and spread to Europe via Spain, along with a revival of traditional learning during the Muslim Golden Age. Most importantly, Al-Andalus is often credited with the birth of secularism, which emerged in the religiously diverse environment of Cordoba. While these ideas did not last in Spain, they spread into Italy and from there into Europe. Perhaps most importantly, Spain was a conduit for the spread of Arabic cartography and scientific knowledge to Europe, allowing a

⁶⁹Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 94.

⁷⁰ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 420.

⁷¹Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 273-275.

young Italian navigator named Christopher Columbus to develop an (incorrect) notion of how to get to Asia by sailing west

As the most celebrated element of Al-Andalus, the Golden Age has been much debated among historians, both for its nature and its reason. A major question posed by contemporary historians is: how unique was the Golden Age? Such historians as Harvey and Kennedy say that it was a famous period primarily because of its connection with Europe.⁷² However, Menocal points out that Cordoba had one of the largest collections of books in the Islamic world by the time of the Spanish Caliphate, so this isn't a purely Eurocentric matter.⁷³ The divide between the historians crosses two lines, Islamic vs. European scholars, and those who predate 9/11 and those who came after. Islamic historians like Harvey, Kennedy, and Menocal tend to downplay Al-Andalus as uniquely tolerant, while European scholars like Carr, Kimmel and Catlos are more impressed by the Golden Age. The Golden Age is focused on far more by post 9/11 historians than those pre-, and they argue that Al-Andalus largely lives up to its reputation as a medieval intellectual haven.

Menocal argues that the Golden Age needs to be understood primarily through the lense of the Umayyad Dynasty and its continuation in Spain. When Abd ar-Rahman arrived in Spain in 755, his court became a focal point for all Umayyad loyalists, who brought with them the education and knowledge of a dynamic court.⁷⁴ Some of the most prominent thinkers and leaders of the Islamic world went from the heart of the Ummah to Spain. Furthermore, in order to increase his prestige and challenge Abbasid legitimacy, al-Rahman and his successors focused

⁷² Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, pg 5.

⁷³ Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, pg 32.

⁷⁴ Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 59-61.

on making Cordoba into a cultural center that would rival Baghdad.⁷⁵ Kennedy focuses less on the Umayyads specifically as he does on Spain's role as a bridge between Europe and Dar-al-Islam, noting that the greatest Golden Age comes once the Abbassids start to fail.⁷⁶

Al-Andalusian history is marked by the tolerance of the leaders as much as it is by the continual disunity of all of its rulers. Be they Emir, Caliph, Sultan, Governor or King, no leader ever had solid control over the peninsula.⁷⁷ Every ruler is beset by constant rebellions as regional leaders take advantage of the notoriously difficult Spanish geography to attempt to assert independence. This disunity was not unique to Al-Andalus, it beset the Christians kingdoms both before and after the fall. This disunity is theorized by historians Harvey, Catlos, and Kennedy as being a factor in the legendary tolerance of the region, pointing to the writings of the many minority sects who fled to Spain for safety.⁷⁸ As there was never a truly central authority until the Spanish crown IN WHAT YEAR?, a single religious identity was difficult to implement, leading to tolerance by default. One understudied element of this issue is the tolerance minority Muslim sects. Spain was a haven for Shia, Khawarij, and numerous Sufi orders and numerous smaller sects. Even if a ruler wanted to implement a uniform religious practice, there was no centralized administration strong enough to support an Inquisition.

Conclusion

Al-Andalusian history is a good example of how historians themselves are shaped by their era. The historiography of the region serves as a fairly good metric of how Islam was

⁷⁵ Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 79-81.

⁷⁶ Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, 44.

⁷⁷ Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 49-50.

⁷⁸ Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, 38.

viewed in the West. In the 1990s, Al-Andalus was largely understood as a precursor to Spain, whose status as the first global Empire obviously played a greater role in terms of history. After 9/11, Al-Andalus began to be understood BY WHOM? as an example of a tolerant Islamic state as contrasted with an intolerant Christian Europe. Following the refugee crisis in 2011, Al-Andalus was studied as a warning of the dangers of Islamophobia and the genocidal conclusion of nationalism. Al-Andalus has no direct descendants; no new civilizations have been founded upon its legacy. Its history has been written by strangers -- geographically and temporally -- looking at its legacy in the context of their times, rather than on its own terms.

Sample Documents

Cervantes, *Dialogue of the Dogs*

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616⁷⁹) is without a doubt the most famous and influential writer in the Spanish speaking world. His novel *Don Quixote* is widely seen as one of the great literary achievements of the early modern period, is often called the first modern novel, and is often considered mandatory reading in any Spanish language nation or advanced Spanish class. However while *Don Quixote* is his most popular and all encompassing work, Cervantes wrote many other works, as well as living a very interesting life. He was a mercenary, a servant of a cardinal, a prisoner of the Barbary pirates, a publishing agent, and even a tax collector before he became best known as a novelist. In 1613 a collection of novellas were published by Cervantes as part of a collection called *Exemplary Novels*, including a Cervantes story called *Dialogue of the Dogs*. At one point in the text the narration describes Moriscos in the following way:

“It would take a miracle to find a single man among so many who truly believes in the Holy Christian laws; their sole intent is to make money and hoard what they make, and to achieve this they work and do not eat...they are amassing and accumulating the largest cache of money in Spain. They are money-boxes, moths, magpies, and weasels; they acquire, hide, and swallow it all. Just think how many of them there are and that every day they earn and hide away some quantity of money, and bear in mind that a slow fever can be as fatal as a sudden one, and they increase in number, so the number of those who hide money away also increases and will surely continue to grow ad infinitum, as experience shows. They do not exercise chastity, nor does any man or woman among them take holy orders; they all marry and they all multiply because sober living favors the propagation of their race. War does not weary them, nor do they overtax themselves in the work they do; they steal from us with the greatest of ease and from the fruits of our prosperity, which they sell back to us, they make themselves rich.”

⁷⁹ His birthday is still in some dispute

--Blood and Faith page 194, from Miguel de Cervantes *Dialogue of the Dogs* in Cervantes, *Exemplary Stories* pg 295-96

Later in the same text, mentions of the Expulsions are made by another character, presented in positive terms.

“Solutions have already been sought for all the injuries you’ve mentioned and roughly outlined: for I’m well aware that those of which you say nothing are graver and more numerous and no proper remedy has yet been found. However, our state is governed by very wise men who realize that Spain is rearing and nurturing all those Morisco vipers in its bosom, and with God’s help they will find a sure, prompt, and effective solution to such a dangerous situation”

-- Miguel de Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*

Cervantes, Miguel, *Exemplary Stories*, trans. Lesley Lipson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Letter from Phillip III justifying the Expulsions.

Phillip III of Spain (Born 1578, died 1621), also known as Phillip II of Portugal, Sicily, Sardina, and Naples, as well as Phillip duke of Milan, was king of all his territories from 1598-1621, inheriting the throne after his father Phillip II of Spain (Phillip I of Portugal ect). His father was nicknamed Phillip the Prudent for his practical administration, focus on the expansion of the Spanish Empire and prioritizing stability over ideology. The high point of the Spanish Golden Age was during his rule in part due to his relatively practical style of governance. While deeply Catholic and a defender of the Church's battles against Protestants and the Ottomans, Philip the Prudent made the choice not to attempt to wipe out the Moriscos as the communities brought in more money than could be justified by their expulsion. Philip III rejected this line of thinking and it was his reign that led to the final expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain, earning him the name Philip the Pious. Phillip III believed that the Spanish Empire could only prosper if it was a pure Christian state, and so he felt he could justify the economically ruinous policy of expelling all Muslims from Spain. For all his piety, Philip III's reign is generally considered a failure, the economy crashed in part due to the expulsion of the Moriscos and starting Spanish involvement in the Thirty Years War, which is why his Reign is often seen as the start of Spain's long period of decline. Here he is writing to one of his advisors justifying the Expulsion, which was in its last days.

“If the precise diligence of the expulsion had not been realized in time, I would have found myself in the pitiful state of never being able to uproot the Sect of Muhammad from my Kingdoms. It was Divine Providence that assisted me and gave me the vision and firmness to follow it through. If those children had grown up, within a few years they would have increased the number of enemies in our Holy Catholic Faith.

-- Letter from King Phillip III to Francisco de Castro, September 16, 1614,
in Boronat y Barrachina, *Los Moriscos*, vol. II, pp.399-400.

Moses Ben Ezra *Longing for Granada*

Moses Ben Ezra/Moses Ibn Ezra (1055-1138⁸⁰) was a Jewish poet, linguist and philosopher born in the province of Granada in Al-Andalus. His poetry is still widely studied within the Arabic, Hebrew and Spanish speaking communities to this day. He wrote extensively about theological concepts, drawing on Aristotle, the Qur'an, the Bible and the Talmud, all of which is reflected in his poetry which often is about the nature of the Divine. He wrote in Hebrew and Arabic, and one of his most famous works, the *Maḳāla bi 'l-Hadīka fī ma 'nāal-madḡāz wa 'l-ḥaḳīka*, gives advice to other Hebrew poets on how to structure their writings in the style of Arabic poets. When Granada was invaded by the Almoravides of North Africa, much of the Jewish community fled, with Moses coming to live in the Christian kingdom of Castile. There he wrote many nostalgic works about his homeland in Granada, and as far as we can tell, died in exile. This is one of the many poems concerning his longing for his homeland in Islamic Spain. I included it as an example of the nostalgia many Jewish intellectuals felt for Al-Andalus.

After the nobles of the west, how can I find pleasure
In sleep, and how can my heart find rest
May my right hand be forgotten if I forget it, and if
I will desire to rejoice not in their presence
If ever God returns me to the Glory
Of the Pomegranate [Granada] my will will be successful
I will quench my thirst in the waters of Snir
Which were clear on the day
That the rivers of Eden were muddy
A land in which my life was pleasurable and the waters
Of the cheeks of time were flat for me...-
*From "Until when In Exile?" in Masarwah and Tarabieh, "Longing for
Granada" 314-315, by Moses ben Ezra*

⁸⁰ There is no exact date as to his death, he was last known to be alive in 1138 CE but when he died after words is unknown. Likewise his birth year is similarly unknown, which accounts ranging from 1055-1060 CE.

Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue Against the Jews*

Petrus Alfonsi (1062-1110) was a Spanish intellectual who gained fame in the fields of medicine, astronomy, literature and theology, with his work existing in no less than 160 surviving medieval manuscripts. He is most famous as a former Jew who converted to Christianity to become an anti-Semitic polemicist. Born in Al-Andalus under the name, Moses Sephardi. He followed the family tradition in becoming a doctor, where he met with enough success to be a court physician in the court of King Alfonso I of Aragon. In 1106, he converted to Christianity taking the name Petrus Alfonsi in honor of St. Peter and his patron Alfonso, who served as his godfather, he later moved to England to work as the physician of King Henry I of England. While he continued to practice medicine and astronomy, he became most famous in this period for his writings on Jews, urging them to abandon their faith for Christianity and attempting to theologially debunk Jewish theology. A very influential writer, his text *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* (*The Dialogue Against the Jews*) was widely circulated, and was used to justify anti-Semitic violence. He wrote in Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic, and he attempted to convert many Jews with little success. In contrast to the previous Augustinian understand of Judaism, which stated that Judaism was incorrect but should be tolerated, as they held true faith. Petrus Alfonsi argued that Jewish leaders were actively trying to subvert Christian theology and Judaism was an affront to the Christianity by its mere existence. While Alfonsi did not imagine Judaism in racial terms, his writings provided a justification for a ramping up of antisemitism across Europe, particularly in Spain. I included this section as an example of the type of antisemitism which provided the justification for both the Inquisition and the Expulsion.

“The Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the Arab theologians and philosophers, not to refute them but to form a correct and elegant Arabic. Where is the layman who now reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, or who studies the Gospels, prophets, or apostles? Alas! All talented young Christians read and study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the christian literature as unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their own language. For every one who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write better poems in this language than the Arabs themselves.” - Paul Alvarus (The Unmistakable

Sign) , as featured in Jerrilyn Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early medieval Spain* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), pg 66.

Ibn Arabi's Poems

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) full name Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Al-Arabi al-Hatimi al-Ta al-Andusi al-Mursi al Dimashqi) was an Arabic poet, scholar, Sufi mystic, and Islamic philosopher from Al-Andalus and is one of the most influential poets in the Muslim world. Nicknamed al-Qushayri and Sultan al-Arifin⁸¹ his views of cosmology and Sufism are still widely studied today. At least 850 works are attributed to him, with a little over 700 being proven to be authentic. He is most famous for *The Meccan Illuminations*, a 37 volume reflection on Sufi conception of God. His writings lead to the foundation of the *Arbiriyya* branch of Sufism, which still exists to this day, though he himself didn't found the movement. Ibn Arabi was born in the Spanish city of Murcia and was said to have visions of god throughout his life. While most of his life was spent outside of Al-Andalus, his understanding of Islam was highly influenced by both Christian and Jewish theology, which continued to play a role in *Arbiriyya* Sufi thought. This is just one of his many poems focusing on intersectional religious thought. I picked this poem because I thought it reflected well on how Al-Andalus was the center of Sufism in the Islamic world and in what way the faith was so open to other Abrahamic theology.

My heart can take on any form; it is a pasture for
Gazelles and a monastery for Christian monks
A temple for Idol, and for the Kaaba of the
Pilgrims, and for the Tables of the Torah, and for the book
Of the Quran

Poem by Ibn Arabi, from James T. Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p 320

⁸¹ Both names are references to Sufi Mystics and centers of Sufi Worship

Textbook Analysis

The first thing one notices about the textbook is its use of periodization, or where Al-Anadalus is framed in terms of its place in history. The textbook has two sections on Al-Andalus, which it calls “Muslim Spain”, one of which was part of its larger chapter on “The Islamic Age”. So Al-Andalus is understood primarily as an extension of a larger conception of “Muslim history”, primarily understood as an extension of North Africa. The second time Al-Andalus appears is in the section on Spanish history, being mentioned primarily in the context of its fall. In both instances Al-Andalus is presented as secondary to other narratives rather than being a narrative on its own.

The textbook was released in 2010, between the two major shifts in Al-Andalusian historiography, following 9/11 but preceding the European refugee crisis. Written by historians for a primarily American audience, it is obvious that the textbook is trying to push back against Islamophobic attitudes at the time. The larger Muslim chapter, and Al-Andalus in particular, was making a conscious choice to dispel bigoted notions of Islam as inherently violent, intolerant, anti intellectual, or anti secular. The “lesson” of Al-Andalus is obviously that Islamic civilizations historically should not be judged through the lense of contemporary news concerning fundamentalist Islam. However there is very little material on the Exclusions, which are simply summed up as “The Christians were being intolerant” rather than any detailed analysis or understanding of the bigotry involved. Had this been published after the rise of Nationalist Islamophobic anti imigration groups, there would have likely been more focus both on the racist nature of the Expulsions, and how Catholic Spain came with a loss of pluralism. There is also no discussion as to why the Expulsions occurred; in fact they are barely mentioned

at all. The Inquisition is mentioned but only in context of rooting out Protestant heresies and the Jews. No mention is made of its role in persecuting Muslims. The Moriscos are not present in this textbook, Muslim Spain ends in 1492 with the success of *Reconquista*.

The textbook also only mentions in passing the Jewish community of Spain, which was among the most vibrant in all of Europe, and one of the four traditional centers of pre modern Jewish Culture. Briefly looking through the textbook as a whole, there is actually very little of Sephardi Jews compared to their Ashkenazi and Mizrahi counterparts. As Al-Andalus played a major role in bringing back Hebrew and the establishment of an earliest form of Zionist thought, its exclusion leaves large gaps in the later development of a Jewish identity. The community does get mentioned later in a section on Catholic Spain when describing the creation of the Inquisition, but it only effectively says there was a Jewish community in Spain that was then eliminated, little is made of the Jewish Golden Age under Muslim rule.

The textbook shows Al-Andalus itself largely positively, making a point to contrast Muslim Spain to the rest of Europe, making a point to highlight how more advanced Al-Andalus was in terms of medicine, learning, culture, secularism, and tolerance. Special attention is paid to Al-Andalus as the bridge between Europe and the Islamic world, and by extension the Greek Classics, which in effect means the textbook is presenting Al-Andalus as a step for European development. Rather than a civilization in its own right, it is primarily understood in its relation to other civilizations. In Western Europe, Muslim reach expanded into Iberian peninsula via Morocco. After the successful Muslim conquest and conversion of North Africa, the region had split into a series of smaller semi independent kingdoms, all officially loyal to the Caliph, called emirates. Tariq ibn Ziyad, a general in the Emirate of Tangiers (modern day Morocco) on his

own initiative launched a raid of 7,000 men into Spain after first conquering the island of Gibraltar (still bears his Spanish name) Spain was then ruled by the Visigoths (see the Fall of Rome), whose regime was shaky due to religious disputes (the Visigoths were Arian Christians ruling over a Catholic majority) and a series of civil wars. Tariq, much to his own surprise, won a series of major battles, and reinforced by forces from Tangier, was able to conquer almost all of Iberia. The invasion was not endorsed by the Caliph, in fact Tariq and the Emir Musa ibn Nasayr were recalled for their invasion, but the territory remained within Muslim hands. The invasion was made up primarily of Berbers, a North African ethnic group, rather than Arabs. The new land was called Al-Andalus, an Arabic term for Hispania.

After a failed attempt to raid into France (See Battle of Tours under France), the territory was quickly split between various Berber warlords. Things changed in 750 with the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate to the Abbasids. Abd al-Rahman, the last heir of the Umayyad, fled Syria to Spain, seeking refuge among loyalists in the city of Cordoba. With the aid of other Umayyad partisans and officials, Rahman was able to unify Iberia under his rule, though he still officially bowed before the Abbasid caliphate, giving himself the title of Emir. The continued Umayyad Dynasty ruled Al-Andalus until the rise of Fatimid Dynasty in the 10th century (see Muslim Egypt). Seeing a precedent set by Cairo, Abd ar-Rhman III declared himself Caliph of a restored Umayyad Caliphate in 929, known to historians as the Caliphate of Cordoba. The caliphate lasted 102 years before it fell to civil war, but presided over Golden Age of Al-Andalus, which had Cordoba declared by European travelers "The Ornament of the World".

As a minority ruling over a majority Christian kingdom, the Muslim leaders adopted a policy of tolerance and acceptance. Jews and Christians could practice their religion openly, and

could get jobs in the various administrations and courts of Al-Andalus. The decentralization which contributed to the regions stability also made imposing religious uniformity difficult, and so Al-Andalus was tolerant even compared to the largely tolerate Muslim world. This tolerance allowed Spain to become one of the great intellectual centers in the Medertarrian world.

One factor that made Al-Andalus stand out in both the Christian and Islamic world was its role as the center of one of the largest Jewish communities in the world. Spain was the heart of Sephardic Judaism, as the tolerance of Al-Andalus meant that thousands of Jews fled there to escape antisemitism. The Muslim community was largely supportive of the Jews, traditional histories had the Muslim invasion made possibly by Jewish communities rising uping against the Visigoths. While this has been questioned by modern historians (these accounts only appear centuries later) there is also evidence to suggest that the Visigoths had planned and active genocide.

New Textbook Entry

In Western Europe, Muslim reach expanded into the Iberian peninsula via Morocco in 711 AD. After the successful Muslim conquest and conversion of North Africa in 709 AD, the region split into a series of smaller semi-independent kingdoms, officially loyal to the Caliph, called emirates. Tariq ibn Ziyad, a general in the Emirate of Tangiers (modern day Morocco), launched, on his own initiative, a raid of 7,000 men into Spain in 711, after first conquering the island of Gibraltar (which still bears his Spanish name.) Spain was then ruled by the Visigoths (who brought about the Fall of Rome in 476 CE), whose regime was shaky due to religious disputes brought on by the fact that the Visigoths were Arian Christians ruling over a Catholic majority. A series of civil wars followed. Tariq, much to his own surprise, won some major battles in 711, and, reinforced by forces from Tangier, conquered almost all of Iberia. The invasion was not endorsed by the Caliph. In fact, Tariq and the Emir Musa ibn Nasayr were recalled, but the conquered territory remained within Muslim hands. The invasion was made up primarily of Berbers, a North African ethnic group, rather than Arabs. The new land, fully conquered in 720, was called Al-Andalus, an Arabic term for “Land of the Vandals.” It is sometimes known as “Moorish Spain.” “Moor” is a term for North African Muslim, but that term is seen as inaccurate today.

After a failed raid into France in 732 that culminated in the Battle of Tours), the Iberian territory was split between various Berber warlords. Things changed in 750 with the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate to the Abbasids. Abd al-Rahman, the last heir of the Umayyad, fled Syria for Spain, seeking refuge among loyalists in the Iberian city of Cordoba. With the aid of other Umayyad partisans and officials, Rahman was able to unify Iberia under his rule, though he still

officially bowed before the Abbasid caliphate, giving himself the title of Emir. The Umayyad Dynasty ruled Al-Andalus until the rise of the Fatimid Dynasty in the 10th century (see Muslim Egypt). Seeing a precedent set by Cairo, Abd ar-Rhman III declared himself Caliph of a restored Umayyad Caliphate in 929, known to historians as the Caliphate of Cordoba. This caliphate lasted 102 years and presided over the Golden Age of Al-Andalus. European travelers at the time declared that Cordoba “The Ornament of the World” due to its advances in medicine, science, and academic as well as its abundant wealth.

As a minority ruling over a majority Christian kingdom, the Muslim leaders adopted a policy of tolerance and acceptance. Jews and Christians could practice their religion openly, and could get jobs in the various administrations and courts of Al-Andalus. The decentralization which contributed to the region’s stability also made imposing religious uniformity difficult, and Al-Andalus was tolerant even compared to the largely tolerant policies promoted in the rest of the Muslim world. This tolerance allowed Spain to become one of the great intellectual centers in the Mediterranean region and should be understood within the context of the time. While Christians and Jews were allowed to practice their faith, this was not tolerance as we imagine it today. Each religious sect was organized into a community with very specific rights and privileges, called a *dhimmi*, where they followed different laws, paid different taxes, and had different legal rights from their Muslim counterparts. This was a form of second-class citizenship, and these communities were both internally and externally segregated. However, *dhimmi* were granted a degree of self-governance and an official voice in the state which gave them more freedom and protections than anywhere else in Europe, meaning that Al-Andalusian tolerance should be understood as comparative. The medieval world was often defined by

religious intolerance and theocratic limitations on knowledge. In this context, Al-Andalus wasn't as much the most *tolerant* but instead the least *intolerant* - a title it would hold until arguably the rise of the Enlightenment in the 18th century.

The reasons for this tolerance were varied. In addition to the general leniency of the Islamic world and the decentralized nature of Spain, the arrival of the Umayyads became a game changer. In Islam, as in Judaism, a major claim to legitimacy for a ruler was their support of scholars and artists. It was to this end that the Abbasids had built the House of Wisdom in Baghdad (see Islamic Golden Age), and the Umayyads hoped to make Cordoba rival Baghdad. Scholars were welcomed, books were copied, and broad tolerance was given, so intellectuals of all sects could mingle and debate. Christians willingly adopted Arabic as the dominant language; communities regularly practiced each other's religious holidays; and ideas were exchanged between faiths. Cordoba was famed across Europe as the "Ornament of the World." It was in this intellectual setting that the notion of secularism first emerged as a coherent ideology. Secularism was seen as quite comparable with Islam, along with the earliest notions of the scientific method. Both would outlive Al-Andalus and spread to Europe.

Despite the Umayyads' efforts however, Al-Andalus was seen as a bit of a backwater by the larger Islamic world, on the periphery of the Caliphate. Cordoba was not as impressive as Cairo, Damascus or Baghdad. Its reputation as the Ornament of the World, while not undeserved, was partly caused by the fact that Iberia was much closer to Europe. Al-Andalus had more cities than anywhere else in Europe, and Cordoba had more books than any city in all of Christendom save Constantinople. With the weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate and the eventual Mongol invasion between 1206-1258 (see Fall of the Abbasids) the Caliphate of

Cordoba began to truly rival its North African and Middle Eastern rivals. Perhaps Al-Andalus' greatest cultural impact was on Europe rather than Dar-al-Islam. Al-Andalus played a vital role as the bridge between the Islamic world and Europe. Thus the greatest accomplishments of the Islamic World as well as the texts of classical Greece came to Europe via the medical advances of Al-Andalus also spread north, In fact, Muslim Spain's medical texts still serve as the foundation of modern medicine. Most influentially, Arabic cartography spread through Spain where it inspired a young map maker named Christopher Columbus, who would forever change Spanish -- and world -- history.

One factor that made Al-Andalus stand out in both the Christian and Islamic world was its role as the center of one of the largest Jewish communities in the world. Spain was the heart of Sephardi Judaism. The tolerance of Al-Andalus meant that thousands of Jews fled there to escape antisemitism. The Muslim community was largely supportive of the Jews. Traditional histories said that the Muslim invasion was made possible by Jewish communities rising up against the Visigoths. While this has been questioned by modern historians (these accounts only appear centuries later) there is also evidence to suggest that the Visigoths had planned to exterminate the Jews. Regardless, many Jews gladly supported Muslim rule, even if they were second class citizens, as they rightly feared persecution under Christian rule. In this environment of tolerance, Jewish culture thrived, Some of the greatest poets, theologians, and philosophers in Jewish history flourished in Al-Andalus, which has been dubbed the Jewish Golden Age. It was here that the long-dead language of Hebrew was finally modernized and restored, providing the basis for modern Hebrew. It was in Al-Andalus that the first notions of a unified Jewish identity were forged. Some Jews were able to scale great social and political heights, such as Samuel

HaNagid (Samuel Ibn Naghrillah), known as the “Prince of the Jews,” who in addition to being a poet, historian, and theologian, was able to rise to the rank of Vizier. The tolerance should not be overstated, however; Samuel's family was murdered by an anti-semitic riot in the Granada massacre of 1066, and his eldest son Joseph ibn Naghrela was crucified. (Joseph had inherited his father's position as Vizier, and jealous Muslim courtiers accused him of plotting to kill the monarch. A mob killed him before turning on the larger Jewish population.) The Granada massacre was the single worst act of anti-semitic violence initiated by Muslims.

Al-Andalus was not just an intellectual and technological center, but a cultural one, and at the time it was most famous for its poetry and literature. Musically, the realm was innovative and in fact it was here that the earliest guitars were fashioned. Some of the greatest poems in the Arabic and Jewish traditions came out of this period -- most famously *The Tale of Layla and Majnun*. This Sufi (see Sufism) poem about a poor man who loves a wealthy woman and dies tragically with her, established the idea of love as a force greater than family, clan, or duty. Some scholars think it was a source for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.) While originally in Persian, this tale spread through Spain to Europe, and it, along with the *Tale of Tristan and Iseult* (which some scholars assert also had Persian origins) inspired the Chivalric Romantic tradition of Europe. A vast majority of the love poetry at the time was homosexual in nature, which was a normal practice among the courts of Spain. The architecture of that period can still be seen in Spain to this day, and much of the painting and sculpture would later inspire the Italian Renaissance artists.

For all of the region's cultural accomplishments, it was still beset by domestic problems. Ethnic tensions between Arabs and Berbers were a constant source of destabilization, and the

decentralized nature of Spain meant every Caliph or Emir had to put down numerous revolts, secession, or coups. These endless civil wars eventually ended the Caliphate of Cordoba in 1031, which caused Al-Andalus to split into a series of smaller kingdoms known as *Taifa*. Each of these kingdoms claimed to be the heirs of the Umayyads and continued to sponsor intellectuals and religious tolerance, but the corruption, incompetence, and endless infighting weakened these rulers' legitimacy internally. They regularly employed Christian mercenaries to fight their wars, and their divided nature meant they were increasingly helpless in the face of the northern Christian states. Even in the 8th century, a small portion of Christian kingdoms retained independence in the mountains of North-Western Spain. While they were imagined by later Spanish historians as Christian holdouts, in reality these kingdoms fought with each other and allied with the Islamic states regularly, with each monarch trying to seize more territory. With the fall of the Umayyad caliphate, Iberian Christians expanded and grew more confident during the decentralized *Taifa* era. The Christian kingdoms started to unify and slowly conquer Muslim territory in the 12th century, beginning the slow process of *Reconquista* (the reconquest of Muslim Spain).

Reconquista was later imagined as a religious war between Christians and Muslims, but, while not incorrect, this is a simplification. The Christian kingdoms usually fought with allies, and Muslim kingdoms employed Christian merchants, and while religion played a part in the conflict, profit and desire for territory played as much of a motive in the minds of Christian Kings. These kings were happy to pitch the war to Europeans as a crusade to hoping to encourage the participation of foreign crusaders and boost their forces. In response the *Taifa* kingdoms also portrayed the war in religious terms to gain aid from North African Muslim states,

greatly reducing the religious tolerance of Al-Andalus. Twice Al-Andalus was saved/occupied by North Berber kingdoms, first by the Almoravid dynasty (1086-1147) and then by the heretical Almohad Caliphate (1180-1212), but once again the Taifa kingdoms came to define Al-Andalus. Both of these regimes were far less tolerant of their predecessors, weakening the legitimacy of Al-Andalus for many Christians. These disunified kingdoms were steadily conquered by the Christians, until only the Emirate of Granada remained in the southern coast. Granada which stayed independent between 1250 and 1492, via a mix of military and diplomatic finesse.

Until the 15th century Christian kingdoms were tolerant of the Muslim and Jewish minorities living in their ranks, as they both wished to avoid rebellion and gain the skills of the expert artisans each community produced. However as *Reconquista* continued, Christians started to imagine their conquest as a form of purification for Spain and grew less tolerant. Many Spanish Christians were deeply ashamed of their kingdom's Islamic past, and this national insecurity was projected on the minority religious populations. The Inquisition, established in 1478, would later become infamous for its persecution of Protestants (see Reformation) was initially set up to persecute Jews, especially those who had converted to Christianity but were believed to still be Jewish at heart (*Conversos*). When King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella unified Spain, they invaded Grenada, finally conquering it in 1492. That very same year, they celebrated both accomplishments by funding Columbus' expedition to India, and expelling the Jewish population from Spain, ending the heart of Sephardi Judaism. Hundreds of thousands were forced from their homes, and tens of thousands died. In 1500, despite a promise of tolerance, the inquisition forced the Muslim population to convert to Christianity under threat of death. While most of the Muslims officially converted under coercion, many of them continued

to practice Islam.

While officially entirely Christian, Catholic Spain was divided between the “Old Christians” and the “New Christians.” Old Christians were supposedly those who had never converted to Islam, but in practice it included many whose families had converted to Islam in the early days of Reconquista, and more importantly were not culturally Arabic. The New Christians were Muslims (Moriscos) and Jews who had officially been converted to Christianity in the last decades of Reconquista, and still kept their traditional culture and language. Some were Christian, but many continued to speak Arabic or Hebrew, and kept their Jewish or Muslim customs. The majority however had been forcibly converted, and so were Christian in name only, while continuing to practice their traditional faiths. These hidden Muslims and Jews were called *Converso*, and they were the primary target of the Inquisition. Despite officially being Christian, they were denied the religious rights of the Old Christians, and legally were treated as if they were still Muslim, regardless of their personal beliefs. Their status as official Christians actually caused a legal problem for Spain, because the Catholic Church traditionally forbade forced conversions but also rebaptisms, trapping many in a legal limbo regarding their faith.

Numerous attempts were made in the 16th century by the crown to “reconvert” the Morisco communities in the hope of making them properly Christian, but these inevitably lacked the necessary financial backing to be successful. Their inevitable failure was blamed on the Moriscos themselves for their faith, rather than the inept bureaucracy of the Church, which never provided enough priests, teachers or bibles to be effective. In fact the Church during this period were far more focused on converting natives Americans in the New World to focus on Moriscos (see *The Conquest of America*). Things became worse for the Moriscos when Spain fell and

became part of the Hapsburg Empire in 1516, who were engaged in a great war with the Ottoman Empire, which led to the Moriscos to be viewed as potential traitors. What is worse, the Reformation led to the Inquisition becoming more zealous in enforcing Orthodoxy during the 16th and 17th centuries, when many church officials advocated mass murder of the the Moriscos to spiritually purify Spain.

Not all Spanish elites wanted to purge the Moriscos, although their motives weren't necessarily altruistic. Many theologians were uncomfortable with the mass murder of a civilian population, while others thought that to expel them was to reject the possibility of true conversion. A great theological debate was triggered because the Moriscos were officially Christian, and how could Christians be expelled from a Christian nation? Even if many Moriscos were Muslim, some were true Christians, and how could one determine the faith of an individual? Many aristocrats were fiercely protective of the Muslim minorities living under their protection, who were the best farmers in the kingdom and produced the only artisans trained in advanced architecture and specific farming techniques.

Finally, many advisors to the Spanish crown thought any purge would be too expensive to organize and carry out. These arguments in favor of preserving the lives of Moriscos, which came from self-interest, ultimately couldn't stand up to the entrenched arguments of bigotry. Between 1609 and 1614, 300,00 Moriscos were expelled from Spain, with tens of thousands dying in the process through starvation, exposure, drowning at sea, or simply massacre. This triggered a major economic crash in Spain in 1610, but King Phillip III saw the economic damage as an acceptable sacrifice for the purity of Spain.

Since the Moriscos were officially Christian, there couldn't be a purely theological

rationale for their persecution, and so Spain instead couched bigotry in the language of Blood purity. Thus the Moriscos were no longer imagined as a religious heresy or even a different culture (as many Moriscos adopted Spanish cultural markers), but instead as a different breed of humanity. Their crimes were newly understood not as different belief, but as impurity of blood. It was through the persecution of the Moriscos that the doctrine of Blood Purity and Race was born. This notion of racial purity would spread to Spain's colonies, and provided the foundation of the racial caste system that defined South American history, and later influencing North America.

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