

Moorish Spain: An Islamic Or Multicultural Paradise?

By Sidney Secular



One of the anti-European and anti-Christian left's most cherished delusions, and one embedded in the establishment's versions of history that we all have been subjected to is that "al-Andalusia" or Moorish Spain(AD 711-1492) was a more civilized and enlightened entity than the backward contemporary civilization of Medieval Christian Europe. With the recent establishment of the cult of multiculturalism, contemporary Muslim countries, especially Moorish Spain is held up as a successful multicultural society in which Christians, Jews, and Muslims flourished together beneath the tolerant eyes of enlightened Islamic rulers, vice the boorish, crude, and unenlightened monstrosity that it actually was. Moorish Spain, if no worse than the other Muslim-controlled societies of its time, was certainly no better.

The first point to grasp is that the Muslim invasion of AD 711 did not encounter a backward cultural wasteland on the Iberian Peninsula. Spain had been under Roman control and influence longer than any Western land outside of Italy and produced more Latin scholars and emperors than any other Roman province. The Visigothic inhabitants were the most Romanized of all the peoples that took over from the Latin Roman Empire. Visigothic leaders spoke Latin and had spent many generations in military and political service to Rome. The several centuries that followed the fall of Rome saw a blending of Roman and German elements creating a new civilization. This new civilization produced a wealth of sacred art and music and men learned in all the academic disciplines. Visigothic law also demonstrated a typically European concern for limiting the power of the ruler, and produced a series of documents

similar to the Magna Carta.

While a promising Christian Hispano Visigothic civilization was developing in Spain, Islam was born amid the tents of largely illiterate Bedouin nomads on the Arabian peninsula. In the latter half of the seventh century, Muslims overran the northern coastal area of Africa, destroying the Christian kingdoms that had existed there. In 711, a mostly Berber Muslim army (The "Moors") invaded and conquered almost the entire Iberian peninsula within ten years.

Arab chroniclers recorded the astonishment of the uncultured Muslim invaders at the splendor of the Spanish cities, and were mesmerized by the huge treasures of gold and jewels of inestimable value they were able to carry away. In response to the plundering, the Christians buried or hid various articles from the marauding invaders, and archaeologists and treasure seekers today still come across these valuables.

Spanish Jews, who had been subjected by the Christian Visigothic rulers to significant legal restrictions, allied themselves with the invaders in the hope of improving their condition. For a time, the Jews were recruited to become viziers to protect the newly conquered areas for the Muslims, but once the Muslims were firmly in control, the Jews were reduced to a position similar to the Christians, and their condition began to steadily deteriorate.

Muslim commanders offered high posts to Christian lords who agreed not to resist the invasion, and they were allowed to keep their lands, servants, and religion because of the numeric inferiority of the Muslims, and not out of any "tolerance". These agreements were broken as soon as it was convenient to do so.

The Jihad was an important element of the conquest. Burning down and flooding infidel towns occurred, as well as cutting down their fruit trees, killing their animals and destroying their buildings. Whether the defeated were allowed to live or were massacred was up to each individual victorious Muslim commander, and there were a number of recorded cases of outright extermination.

A favorite gambit of Islam's apologists is to equate Muslim Holy Wars with the Christian Crusades, but the latter were instituted because of the depredations of the former. A "Crusade" was a unique event that only a pope could proclaim,

whereas Jihad is a permanent state of being decreed by Islamic law.

Beginning about forty years after the conquest, the Umayyad Dynasty was in control of Moorish Spain from 756 to 1031. The court historians usually cite this period as the pinnacle of Andalusian civilization. Actually, this period was marked by religious and political persecutions, beheadings, impalings, and crucifixions. The level of these depredations has never been exceeded in Spain. The Moors were coarse, uneducated and not very skilled at writing or mathematics. The Moorish mobility was especially ignorant, and was proud to be labelled with that distinction. Thus, they used Jews, Christians, and freed foreigners to handle their administrative affairs.

Non-Muslims were given the choices of converting, being killed, or accepting the status of "dhimmis", a class obliged to pay a special tax called the "jizya" with all sorts of other additional, arbitrary, taxes added in increments. All these taxes supported the pashas' ostentatious palaces, harems, slaves, and city embellishment programs. Keeping people in this status was preferred to making them slaves.

Muslims required Christians and Jews to be confined to their own neighborhoods, except for economic transactions. Christians were required to either stand or kneel in the presence of Muslims as a sign of respect.

Christians were usually not permitted to build new churches, and were required to obtain permission to repair existing churches. The muezzin loudly called Muslims to prayer, but churches were forbidden to ring their bells. Displays of crosses were not permitted on persons or in churches and buildings.

Any disparagements of Islam or attempted revolts against Muslim rule (and there were several) were met with reprisals including beheadings, being impaled, being flogged to death or being boiled alive. Property was taken from dissenters, especially the Christians. Christian martyrs against Islam have received little sympathy from modern historians who dub them "troublemakers" and "self-immolators".

The situation of the Christians and Jews under Islamic rule gradually deteriorated over time punctuated by massive anti-Jewish riots that broke out in Grenada in 1066. The picture of a multicultural paradise in Spain painted by establishment

historians is meant to foster the idea that since Jews and Arabs are similar genetically and are "People of the Book", they are capable of getting along with each other. Transposing this idea to the modern multi-culti dispensation results in the conclusion that we can all get along if we try, so that the Muslims are now invited to migrate to the Western nations without a care or concern. The Muslims will somehow now become benevolent and a positive influence when added to the ghoulish goulash stew being created.

The populations of most of the Jews, Christians, and even Muslims in Moorish Spain suffered under the most stifling and strict rules governing cultural, religious, and social life found in any Muslim domain then or now. Music was prohibited, except for playing tambourines, and Muslim clerics were empowered to enter any home where music could be heard in order to confiscate or destroy the musical instruments. Christian slave girls were the only people allowed to play musical instruments.

Chess, backgammon, and dice games were prohibited. Muslims certainly enjoyed higher status than Christians and Jews, but not any more freedom, autonomy, or power than non-Muslims.

Moorish women from aristocratic families were permitted to enter the legal, educational and medical professions.

However, then as now, Muslim women generally spent their lives solely within the family circle, and their relationships were restricted to their parents and other women.

By the year 1200, most of the Christians and Jews had escaped or immigrated to the northern slice of the Iberian peninsula still controlled by Christians. Gaining support from these newcomers, the Christians slowly advanced against the Moors, and gradually pushed them southward, and by 1492 they were unable to resist the royal decree that expelled them from Spain altogether, ending nearly eight centuries of their domination of the peninsula.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Islam did not play an important role in preserving classical learning and transmitting it to Western Europe. The classical Greek and Roman texts were studied and preserved by the Christian monks and lay scholars of the Western Roman and Byzantine Empires. They were never lost and recovered by by the Muslims.

Arab scholarship in Moorish Spain hardly existed. Arab

intellectuals were ignorant of Greek. What scientific and philosophical works they read were Arabic translations made by Christian scholars. Many Arab rulers disapproved of the study of such works altogether. At one point, all philosophy and logic books in the Cordoba region were publicly burned.

The gorgeous Moorish architecture, such as the famed Alhambra, so admired by modern tourists, conceals an origin unflattering to its builders. Islam has little in the way of a native architectural tradition. It started out with nomads in the Arabian desert who had few permanent structures of any kind. As the area conquered by the Muslims expanded, however, it appropriated and converted Christian houses of worship into mosques and gradually began incorporating Romano-Christian architectural styles into its own constructions. Constructions built by the Arabs themselves in North Africa did not last long because of the Arabs' sloppiness, poor materials, and lack of knowledge of building techniques.

In Spain, Muslim rulers constructed buildings by cannibalizing columns and other building components and materials from Roman and Visigothic churches. For example, much of the Great Mosque of Cordoba was built with materials taken from demolished churches. Even the technique of alternating red brick and white stone used in the Great Mosque of Cordoba is adopted from the Roman technique called "opus vittatum mixtum" that can be seen in the surviving Roman aqueducts in Spain. The Mosque's mosaics are actually Greek-influenced.

Popularizers of the myth of the Andalusian paradise like to emphasize all the things we can "learn" from the history of Moorish Spain. This endeavor consists of trying to find, at all costs, evidence that the said entity was a bastion of tolerance, feminism, and multiculturalism, and therefore worthy of emulation. Such a mindset only guarantees that we will never be able to learn anything from the study of the past. Academic proponents of the "Andalusian Paradise" are perfectly frank about their desire to employ historical scholarship in the service of the contemporary multicultural project.

Part and parcel of this academic fetish is a conscious effort to downgrade the West, often culminating in a denial of its very existence. In this irrational and senseless conception, the Spanish Christian population subjugated by the Muslims in

the Eighth Century did not have enough in common with the Christians across the Pyrenees or elsewhere to consider them all as parts of a single civilizational entity that might be called, "The West", or used to be called "Christendom".

Islam inexplicably escapes critical examination and somehow is considered worthy of being embraced despite all evidence to the contrary, as are all non-Western cultures no matter how depraved or backward they may be.

Contemporary historiography concerning Muslim Andalusia is thus yet one more front in the great struggle of our time; that of reversing the decline of White European civilization in the face of an unremitting assault from a multitude of enemies, both internal and external.

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