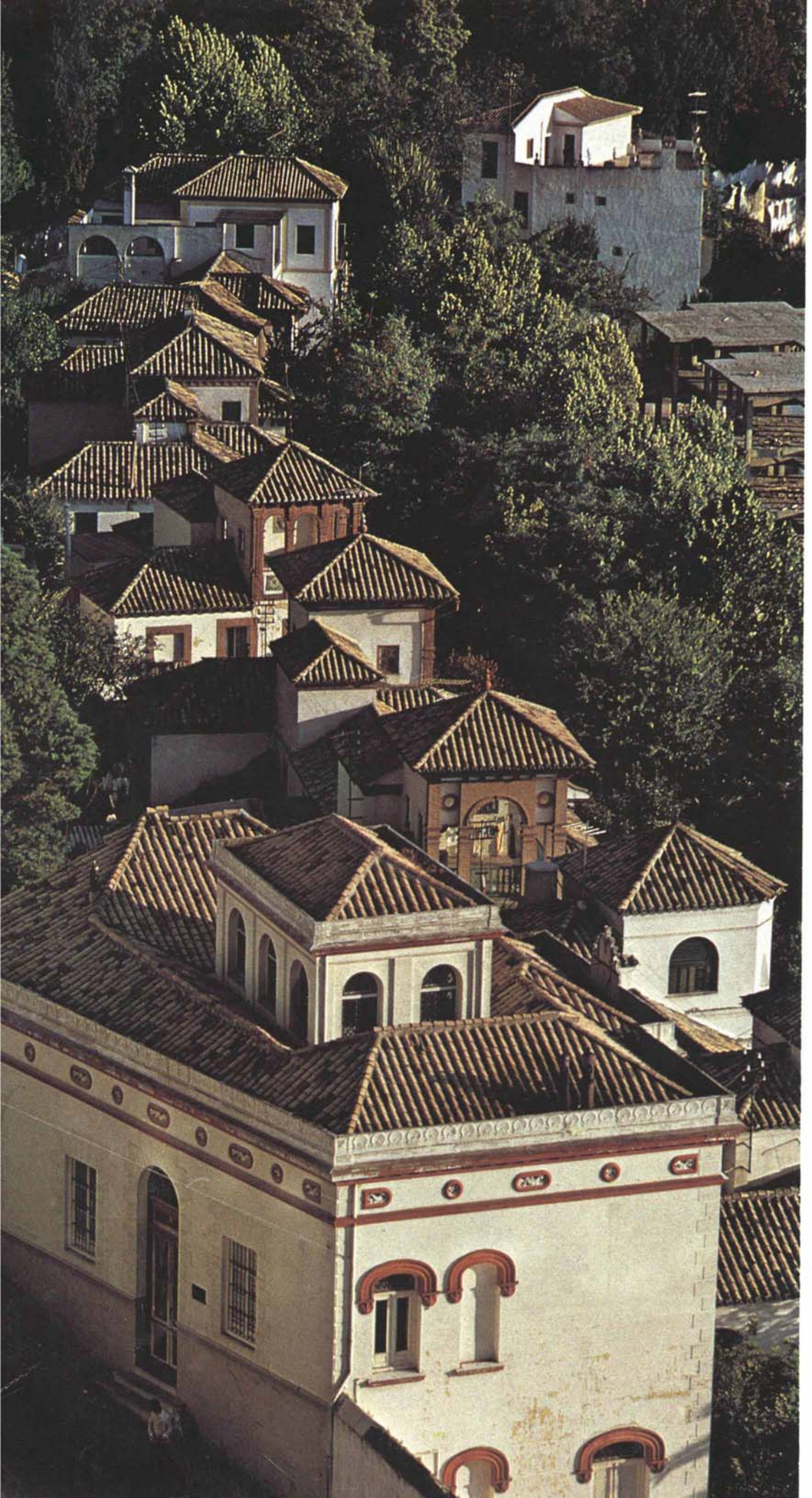

ARAMCO WORLD
magazine

P.O. Box 514, Garden City, New York 11530

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 1976

ISLAM IN AL-ANDALUS

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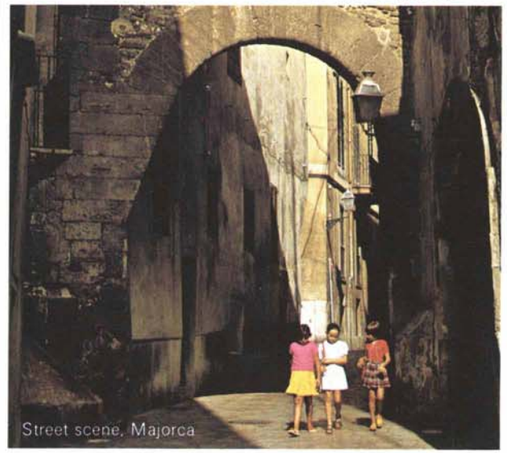
WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOR EIGELAND



Street scene, Majorca

Tor Eigeland, a Norwegian-born American who has lived in Spain since 1970, first saw that country as a 16-year-old sailor, when his ship called at Barcelona. He later learned Spanish in Mexico and Latin America. Eigeland covered the Middle East for five years from Beirut and in recent years has photographed or written about most of the Arab and Muslim countries for such publications as National Geographic, Fortune, Time, Newsweek, Reader's Digest, International Wildlife *and* Smithsonian *magazine. His photographs appear regularly in* Aramco World *and he both wrote and photographed a special issue of the magazine, "Scenic Arabia, A Personal View," in January-February 1975.*

When author Tor Eigeland had finished researching Spain's Moorish history as recounted in this issue, he set out by car to photograph the country and take a first-hand look at the traces of its rich Muslim past. After driving nearly 1,000 miles through al-Andalus, as the Arabs called their beloved land, Eigeland concluded—perhaps not surprisingly—that the traces are to be found almost everywhere.

"Often," he wrote, "my search was a simple matter of driving along back roads or into remote villages and just asking around the local café what the moros *had left thereabouts.*

"I received some interesting answers. One innkeeper in the very Arab-looking town of Fornalutx on the island of Majorca told me, 'Well, the moros *left here quite a long time ago; I don't rightly know how many years. But many of the houses in this town are from those days.' The same innkeeper also offered a perceptive comment on the recent resurgence of the Arab world. 'I'll tell you something else—the way things are going I wouldn't be surprised if they're back within 100 years!'"* THE EDITORS

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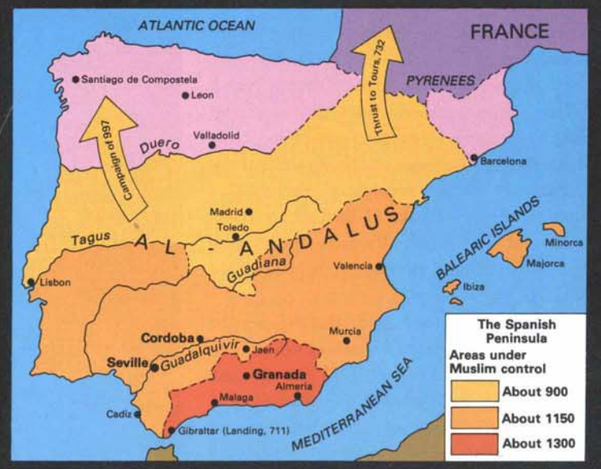

Cover: An Arab tower high above the southern coast of Spain, not far from the shore on which, in 711, Islam came to Europe to endure for nearly eight centuries. Inside front cover: In Seville, two Moorish-built towers — one now part of the cathedral — soar above the Guadalquivir river. Rear cover: In Granada, a crescent of red-tiled roofs curves along the hillside beneath the Alhambra Palace.

ISLAM COMES TO EUROPE

In July 710 a Berber officer and some 400 soldiers stormed onto a beach in Spain, lighting the fuse that was to set off an historic explosion. Less than a century had passed since the flame of Islam had swept out of the faraway Arabian Peninsula. But now, as Tarif ibn Malik led his men on a reconnaissance raid across the narrow, eight-mile strait separating North Africa from the Iberian Peninsula, Islam had come to Europe.

In the year following that exploratory raid the Muslims crossed the strait again, but this time in force. Some 7,000 men led by Tariq ibn Ziyad landed at Gibraltar—Jabal Tariq in Arabic—and caught the Visigothic Christian rulers of Spain off guard. Their king, Roderick, fighting Basques in the north, quickly turned south with his army and, despite Muslim reinforcements from North Africa, soon gained the initiative and launched an attack near the present-day town of Algeciras. The battle was going well for the Christians when, according to Muslim sources, the two flanks of Roderick's army, commanded by Roderick's rivals, broke away and joined the invaders. The Muslims won the day.

Torn by rivalries and dissent at the time—as the invaders themselves would be in later centuries—the people of the Spanish Peninsula offered little further resistance. By 718 Muslim victory was complete, or very nearly. They controlled most of the peninsula except for a small nucleus of resistance behind the forbidding Cantabrian mountains in the cold northwest.

The Muslim advance into Europe essentially stopped in Spain. But raiding parties did cross the Pyrenees and, 21 years after they landed at Gibraltar, the Muslims in some force reached the Loire Valley about 120 miles south of Paris. There, in 732, the Frankish King Charles Martel decisively defeated them in a battle fought near the towns of Tours and Poitiers.

This battle—called the Battle of Tours in English histories and the Battle of Poitiers in French histories—was long considered a significant victory for Europe, but it seems more likely, as some historians say, that the century-long Muslim thrust from Arabia had simply spent itself.

The spark of Visigothic Christian resistance in northern Spain, left alone to smolder, provided the fire that centuries later led to reconquest. Had the spark been put out once and for all, as it probably could have been in 718, Spain might be an Arabic-speaking Muslim country today. As it turned out, the Muslims ruled over much of the peninsula for about three centuries and held on for nearly eight centuries in their last Andalusian stronghold, the Kingdom of Granada. The history of the entire epoch, however, is the story of a protracted series of often inconclusive battles between the north and south, interspersed with long periods of peaceful cultural and trade relations and others of intra-Christian and intra-Muslim feuding.

Spain had seen many foreign invaders before the Muslims stormed ashore in 711. The Phoenicians explored the coastal areas as early as 1100 B.C. and the Carthaginians established trading colonies about 650 B.C. The Romans conquered the entire Iberian Peninsula over a period of two centuries after taking Cadiz in the south in 206 B.C. Spanish literature, law, administration and language still show the Roman influence. They also built some 12,000 miles of highways, as well as aqueducts and bridges, and although many of the bridges still stand today, Rome's empire crumbled, and Spain was invaded by Germanic tribes from the north. First came the Vandals—from whom probably came the name Andalusia—and then, about AD 400, the Visigoths, who were also Germanic, but Christian.

Compared to the Romans, who came before them, and the Muslims, who came after, the Visigoths left hardly a mark on Spain. They came with their families to settle, adopted the highly developed law and administration system they found there and gradually were integrated. Though they ruled for nearly three centuries the Visigoths contributed only about 200 words to the Spanish language, most related to dress and warfare. The Muslims, by contrast, left some 6,500 words—during their domination Arabic became the language of Spain—and a civilization far in advance of medieval Europe.

Spaniards today frequently use the English expression, "Spain is different." They use it sarcastically to describe something they consider too folkloric for their taste or—until recently, at least—Spain's different political situation. But beyond that narrow context this magnificent country *is* different from the rest of Europe, and in my personal view, the proud centuries of Islamic rule in Spain are the main reason why. I see the history of Islamic Spain as centered around three Andalusian cities: Cordoba, Seville and Granada. And to me it is no coincidence that these are still the three most delightful cities in Spain.

A Mini-Dictionary

Al-Andalus:
Originally the Arabic name for the entire Iberian Peninsula. It later came to mean only the regions under Muslim control. The area called Andalusia today comprises the southernmost region of modern Spain.

Moors:
First meant the Muslims of western North Africa. Then it came to mean people of mixed Arab and Berber origins. The definition here and generally has been widened to include the Muslims of Spain regardless of origin. And references to Moorish culture in Spain must include the Arabized Christians, Mozarabs, who lived with the Arab Muslims for centuries and helped give al-Andalus its unique character.

Mozarabs:
Spanish Christians living under Muslim rule who, while unconverted, adopted Arabic language and culture.

Mudéjars:
Spanish Muslims living under Christian rule after the reconquest: from the 11th to the 15th centuries.

Moriscos:
Muslims who converted to Christianity in the 15th and 16th centuries after the reconquest. The Christians were at first tolerant, but later exerted force to compel conversion.

At Tarifa, where Muslim raiders landed in 710, Spanish soldiers sprint along a windswept beach.

NOTES ON AL-ANDALUS

A search for traces of Spain's Islamic past.

Arab towers between Murcia and Valencia.

NOTES ON *AL-ANDALUS*

I set out on my trip to photograph the traces of Spain's Moorish past by driving south, down the coast from my home near Barcelona.

Valencia

In Valencia and its satellite towns of Manises and Paterna I saw some interesting ruins, though in my opinion they are among the ugliest towns in Spain. One attractive aspect of Manises, however, is its ceramics, especially *azulejos*—tiles. The Spaniards have never tired of the tiles that the *moros* brought. The owner of one shop told me that in the little town of Manises alone there are still some 200 ceramics shops or factories. Some, unfortunately, make cheap souvenirs for the tourists, but others still make lovely traditional ware.

There are kilns called *moruno,* meaning "of the Moors," in narrow, ancient back alleys which reminded me of the oldest parts of Cairo. When I asked the owner of a *moruno* kiln whether it was the original Moorish one, he said: "Kilns don't last forever. But this one has been rebuilt exactly as the Moors built them, in the same place, and even with some of the same old materials." He added, "The Spanish way of making ceramics is based on the Arab way."

The most attractive ceramics of Manises still come out of the *moruno* kilns as far as I could see. Some of it is Islamic-style lusterware, which has a metallic sheen, in traditional designs carefully painted on by hand. In one shop several old ladies made friendly conservation with me as they painted, but they absolutely refused to let me photograph them. Since they were not at all shy, I asked them why. One answered with a smile: "We're not modern. It is an old custom here." So we left it amiably at that as I had done so many times in the Middle East.

I inquired about the patterns they were painting. Where did they come from? Did they have anything to draw from? One of the old ladies raised her hand and tapped her index finger a couple of times on her head. "It comes from here."

Nearby Paterna, as far as I could discover, had only one traditional kiln, but I also spotted an interesting old Arab tower. Driving around the town in circles looking for a way to get to it, I came upon some whitewashed buildings where a narrow staircase seemed to lead up toward the tower between two houses. The view from the top was like looking at the surface of the moon.

Surrounding me over three or four acres of land were whitewashed, round chimneys and equally white walls about a yard high, some circular, some square, all jutting out of the ground. And next to the chimneys and walls TV antennas were also planted in the earth. On closer inspection, by leaning over the tower walls, I could see some big holes. Then I understood. There were underground caves and the walls on the surface were to prevent dirt, dust and water from dropping into these air holes. Whitewashed slopes led down from ground level to an open patio, from which gaily painted doors led into the caves.

I never hesitate to approach strangers in Spain and I asked one woman who was passing about the caves. "Oh, the Arabs made them," she said, "and that was the old watchtower right over there." She pointed to where I had been standing a few minutes before. The woman knew people who lived in one of the caves and she took me to meet them. The cave was spacious, spotlessly whitewashed and clean; it had two bedrooms, a dining room, a living room and a small kitchen as well as a battery-operated television and a record player. It was attractive and also, I learned, rent free. The owners told me that their family had lived there for as long as they knew, "probably since the time of the *moros.*"

The Valencia region, as other areas in Spain, has a highly developed irrigation system based on the Arab *acequias,* or irrigation canals. And just over 1000 years ago in Valencia the Muslims started a *Tribunal de las Aguas*—a tribunal that judged and imposed penalties for any abuse of water rights. One such abuse, for example, would occur if a man were to sneak water from a canal on a day when it was his neighbor's day to water his fields. The tribunal still meets every Thursday about noon on the steps of the cathedral of Valencia, although the day I went they met elsewhere since the cathedral is in the process of being restored. Even with my knowledge of Spanish it was impossible for me to understand completely what was going on. The proceedings were held in Valenciano, which is close to the Catalan language. And the place names and irrigation terms, most of Arabic origin, were unintelligible to me. This is a region where almost all the place names are of Arabic origin.

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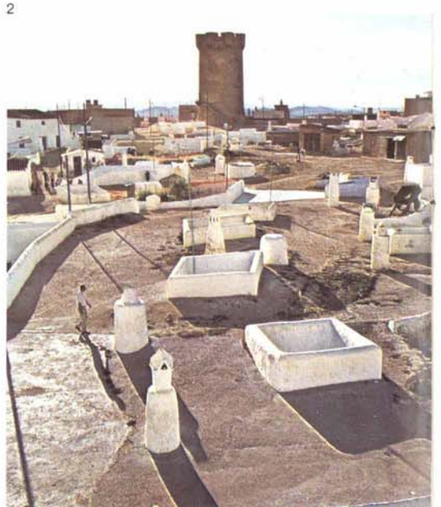

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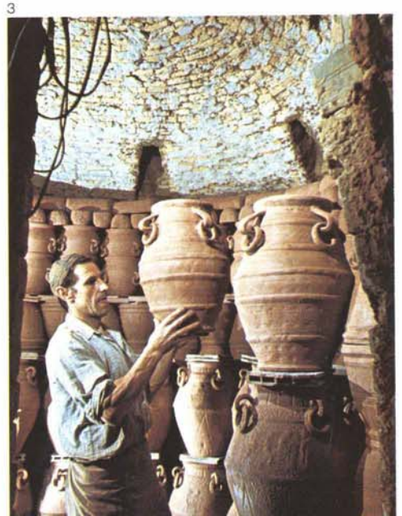

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1. Historic Toledo is almost an outdoor museum. 2. At Paterna, Moorish tower overlooks underground dwellings. 3. Potter in Manises employs Moorish-style kiln. 4. 'The Andalusia feeling': whitewash, red tiles, names of Arabic origin.

NOTES ON *AL-ANDALUS*

ALMASORA, ALMENAR, ALCORA, BENAFIGOS, ADZANETA, ALBUCÁZZAR: I am rattling off some of the road signs in Castellón Province as I head north from Valencia, taking a roundabout route to Toledo. Place names beginning with "guad," as in Guadalquivir, are also Arabic; *Wadi al-Kabir,* from wadi, a river valley, and *al-kabir,* the big one.

There are an estimated 6,500 words of Arabic origin in the Spanish language (See introduction). *Olé!,* the most Spanish of Spanish words is derived from *Wallah!* For God's sake!

In Spanish, most words beginning with "al" are from Arabic: *alcalde* (mayor), *albanil* (builder, constructor), *alberca* (water reservoir or swimming pool), *alcatraz* (gannet, a large sea bird), which passed into English as albatross and then, incidentally, passed back into Spanish as *albatros.*

Arabic was full of technical words for subjects unknown in Europe and for which there was no Latin or Spanish equivalent, words having to do with crafts such as carpentry, botanical words and just about the entire vocabulary dealing with irrigation. Unaltered or altered, these words passed into Spanish and other European languages. Saffron, sesame, coffee, alcohol, alkali, almanac, algebra, zenith and zero are a few examples.

Toledo

Toledo is not an Arabic name, but the city is full of mementoes of the Moorish presence. Mudéjar architecture dominates the city, though it coexists with Gothic, Renaissance, baroque, and neo-classic styles. I saw a small mosque built in the year 1000 and the old Gate of Bisagra (Bib Sagra—Gate to the region of Sagra), and I photographed a group of Christian worshippers who still call themselves Mozarabs and who celebrate mass on Friday, the Muslim holy day.

Explained Don Jaime Colomina Torner, secretary of the First International Congress of Mozarab Studies: "People even here in the home of the Mozarabs know very little about them. They consider them a little mysterious and exotic, and many think they are descendants of the Arabs when in fact almost the opposite is the case. The word Mozarab is Arabic, of course. It means literally adopting the customs of Arabs, becoming Arabized. So it refers to those who stayed in their places and lived with the Arabs, mixed with the Arabs and became like Arabs in many things including using their language. Except for one important thing. Mozarabs remained Christian and their liturgy and rites were never in Arabic. These people predate the Arab invasion, which suggests how very tolerant the Arabs generally were of Christianity." He added, "Of course there were pressures to convert, and even times of persecutions, but many Christians left their faith and became Muslims completely voluntarily."

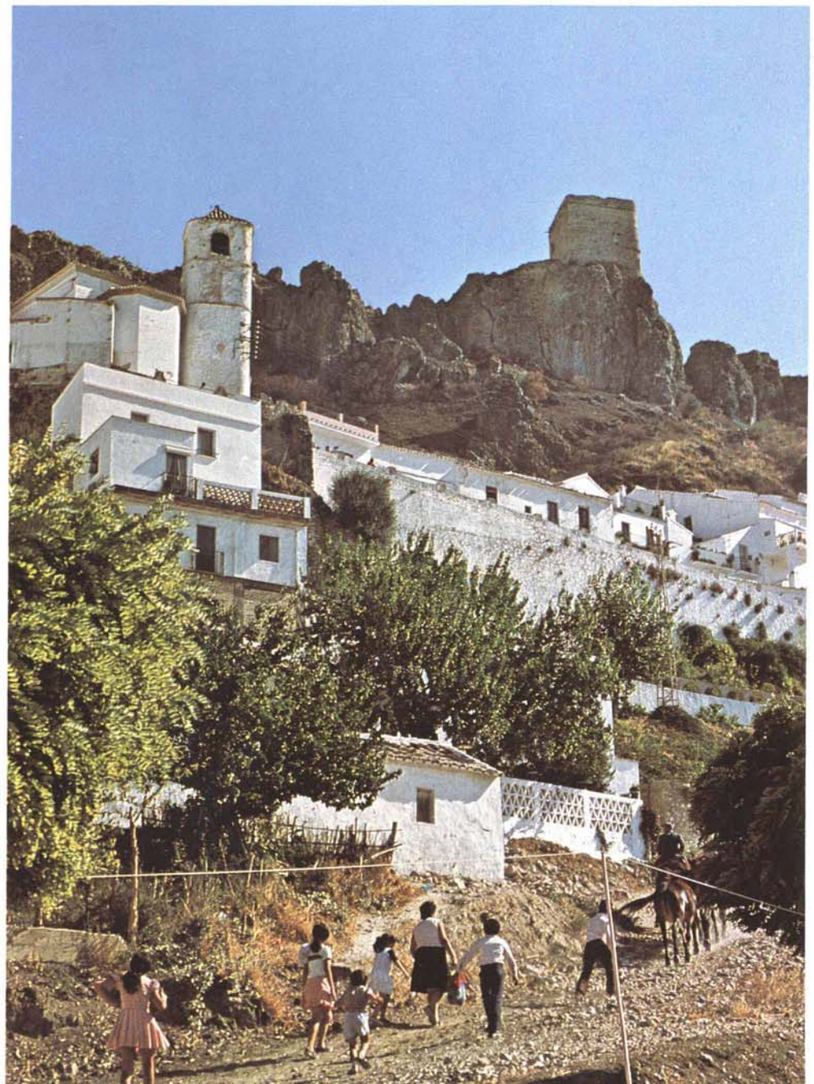
"How many Mozarabs are there today?" I asked.

"Probably about 4,000 persons, of whom some 1,000 reside here in Toledo. The communities have some trouble in developing since Mozarabs only pass their faith on from father to son. Of daughters only the eldest has the option of founding a Mozarab home. Younger women, unless they stay single or marry a Mozarab, lose their status."

I went to the charming little Mozarab church of Santa Eulalia. I found it simple, lovely, warm and with a certain Oriental feeling. It had Moorish keyhole arches, and to me, some of the feeling of a mosque.

South from Toledo

As I drove on I felt myself getting what I call "the Andalusia feeling." To me, it is always a good feeling. I saw more and more whitewashed houses with red tiles. The whole atmosphere is different in Andalusia, more exciting. The people are attractive, but darker complexioned; I noticed more Arabic names. The countryside is gently rolling plains and hills, with abrupt, sometimes snow-clad mountains as a backdrop. I saw grapevines, olive trees and a train of gypsies on muleback with their slim-waisted dogs that reminded me of the graceful salukis I'd seen in the Middle East. I saw the ruins of Arab watchtowers on almost every strategic hilltop, and always within sight of another one. Few are the villages or towns that do not have an Arab castle perched on the highest peak, usually, today, right next to the village church.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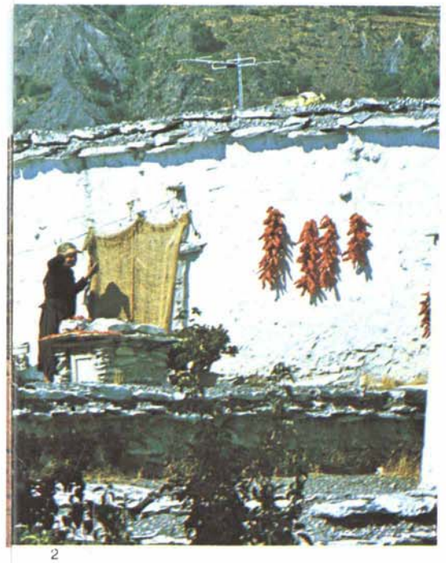
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1. Whitewashed minaret (now a bell tower) and ruined castle bespeak the Moorish past of Zahara in the Sierra de Ronda. 2. Peppers dry on rooftop terrace in Capileira, in the Alpujarra mountains near Granada. 3. A craftsman in Cordoba works on a piece of embossed cordovan leather.

Cordoba

In Cordoba the Christians put a cathedral inside the mosque. The styles clash totally, yet I still find the interior of the building one of the few places in the world that overwhelms me so much I have had goose bumps on my arms when standing in the cathedral section listening to music or chant and looking beyond through the cool, silent forest of columns and arches of the Great Mosque. There is a magnificent *mihrab,* or prayer niche, with intricately ornamented arches and mosaics of gold-flecked glass. The antechamber has a high vaulted dome with a subtly colorful leaf-patterned mosaic.

Cool, shady and spacious, with orange trees and a fountain, the patio of the Great Mosque, now as in Moorish times, is a place for children to play, grown-ups to sit, talk, read, walk, contemplate or rest. Groups of tourists hustle through but no one pays much attention to them.

In the old quarter of Cordoba where the Great Mosque stands, an infinite number of things reminded me of the Moorish past. Narrow streets, glimpses of lovely patios, tiny little workshops and cafés, and the people of Cordoba themselves. To me they are gentle, fine, soft-spoken people. They still dress well and have excellent manners, characteristics which I suppose date right back to the days of the caliphate. Even the young people of Cordoba do not conform to the present rage throughout the rest of Spain and Europe of wearing jeans on absolutely all occasions.

But if I wanted to retain the romantic mood, I shouldn't have walked outside the Arab city walls. Just a few steps away I came across the usual nondescript apartment block, automobile-exhaust style of modern living with its plastic bars, discotheques and supermarkets.

Cordoba and other Andalusian downtown areas, clogged and increasingly smog-filled, did inherit one great gift from the Arabs, and the Spanish have shown their appreciation by taking good care of it. I refer to the big gardens of the Moorish *alcázares,* or royal palaces. Today, where it is most needed, there is another world of water, air, space, shade from magnificent tall trees and a profusion of plants and flowers. And no cars.

I found that pride in the Moorish heritage seemed to increase as I got closer to the source. A Cordoban craftsman told me: "Many people here appreciate their Arab heritage. And frankly, that is what sells Cordoba to the tourists. As for myself, I wouldn't be doing what I am doing if the Arabs hadn't been here. Cordovan leather was once famous all over the world. Embossed leather, I think you say in English. The whole process of making it is still basically as it was when the Moors made huge leather cordovans to cover entire walls. They used wooden molds and a press. Today we mostly make small things such as family crests for the Americans."

Granada

As in Cordoba, it is the Moorish past that sells Granada to its visitors. The director of the Alhambra told me that in 1975 for the first time the palace had more visitors than Madrid's famous Prado Museum, more than one million. The tourists in Granada are whisked around the Alhambra, one tour pushing another out of the way; then they are taken to the Corral del Carbón, an old Arab *funduk,* or inn, which has now been adapted

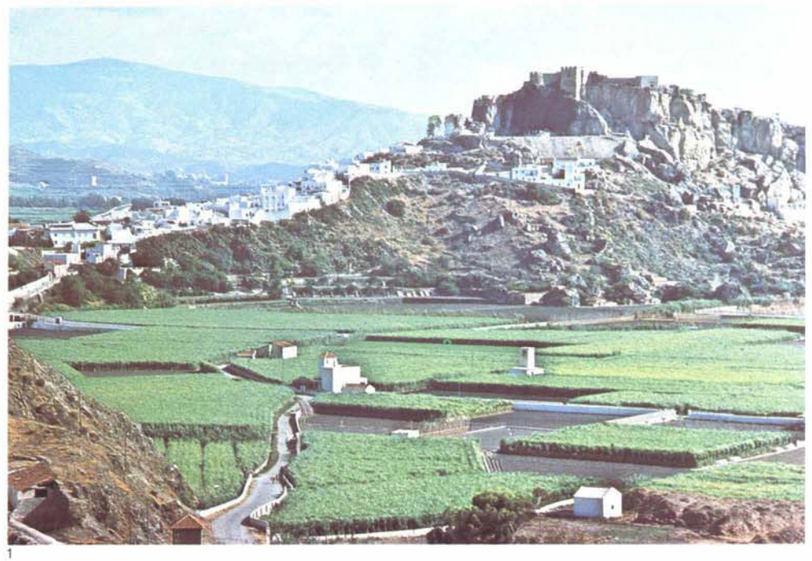
for use by artisans. Then the tour groups forge on across the main street to two narrow lanes called the Zacatin and the Alcaicería where some of the Muslim bazaars used to be. The quarter has been reconstructed in the old style and is still a bazaar where handicrafts are sold. The guided tour of Granada is climaxed with a trip to the Sacromonte, the old gypsy quarter where visitors can drink and shout *"Olé"* to their hearts' desire as they watch third-rate entertainers stamping their feet and clapping their hands. But to me, Granada is so special that even if I had to visit it as part of a guided tour and stick to the itinerary it would still be worth it.

Fortunately, I didn't have to. And given the luxury of a little more time to wander around quietly, Granada becomes something else. At dusk the downtown Bibarrambla Square (from Arabic—Gate of the Sand) is a good place to sit for awhile. The Moors fought bulls on horseback there, and held all sorts of contests. I didn't have to wait long before someone appeared with a guitar, that all-pervasive Spanish instrument that was introduced in Moorish times. Softly, tentatively at first, an onlooker began to clap a rhythm to the music. Then another person, I think a complete stranger, started to sing. For brief periods, when the mood was not crushed by the curse of modern Spain, muffler-less motorcycles ridden by ferocious youngsters, I felt transported into another, gentler, dreamier age.

True Andalusian music without motorcycle accompaniment is not easily available to a casual visitor on a guided tour. But in Granada I know a place called Peña la Platería. It is a private club for professionals and amateurs dedicated to flamenco music and dance, but one or two strangers will not be turned away. Nothing much happens at the Peña till after midnight, but then great events sometimes occur. Nobody danced the night I went, but some of the singers and guitar players seemed to catch on fire. *Tarab* was there. The deep, insistent monotony of the *cante jondo,* coupled with a strange guttural intonation and a quavering in the voice produce a strange, almost hypnotic effect. I felt a strong Middle Eastern influence in the music, though its exact origins lie in the obscure past.

Granada's Albaicín quarter, greatly changed as it may be, retains much of the old flavor. It is like a village within Granada, and a good place for a leisurely stroll. Narrow, cobblestoned streets and stairways that run up and down, twisting and turning, may lead to a dead end, to a magnificent view of the Alhambra across the gorge, to a Morisco or Mudéjar house or even to an old minaret. In this quarter people quietly continue the crafts of the old Nasrid kingdom. I saw craftsmen making marquetry (inlaid wood), brass and copperware, Nasrid-style lamps and wrought iron. Others were weaving the traditional Alpujarra cloth, and still others were making *fajalauza* and *cuerda seca* ceramics, styles which have been handed down from the *moros.*

In one ceramics workshop I watched an old, illiterate man hauling in clay for the day's work. When he signed his name to the bill it



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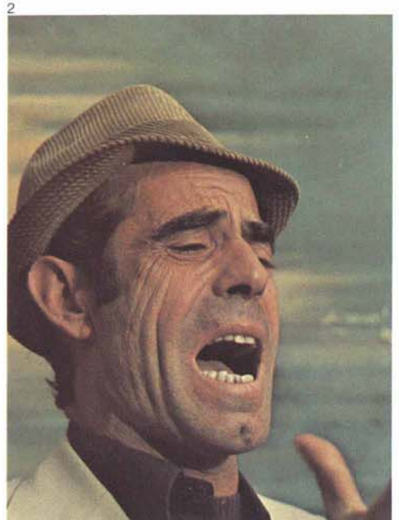

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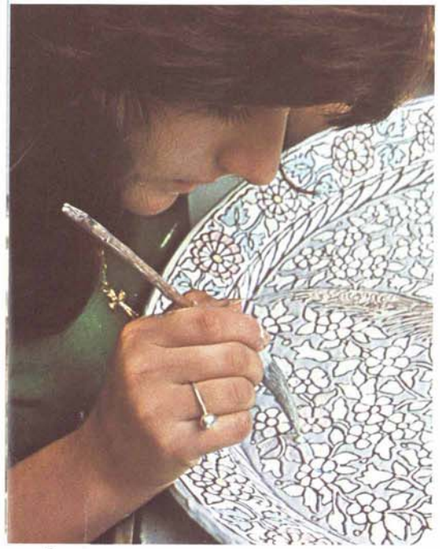

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1. A sea of sugarcane surrounds Arab fortress at Motril 2. *Cante jondo* singer performs in Granada. 3. Flamenco dancers practice in Seville. 4. Copperware gleams at a provincial crafts fair in Villaneuva de Mesía near Granada. 5. Artist paints delicate *cuerda seca* ceramics in Granada. 6. A *noria* lifts water to arid fields near Murcia.

was a barely legible scrawl. His name was José but he signed it in the Arabic fashion, Yussef.

Later, strolling into a sweets shop I asked the owner which sweets he thought might have had a Moorish origin. "That's an interesting question," he answered. "In the first place the Arabs brought sugarcane to Spain and thus sugar. Then they planted almond trees. So it follows that most of our traditional Andalusian sweets, certainly all that contain almonds, must have an Arab ancestor. We really inherited a great sweet tooth from the Moors. Have you noticed how sweet everything is here compared to northern countries?"

Heading Home

Everywhere on my drive through Spain, but mostly in Andalusia, I found traces of the Moor's beloved al-Andalus. And even though I had set out to find the traces I had some surprises.

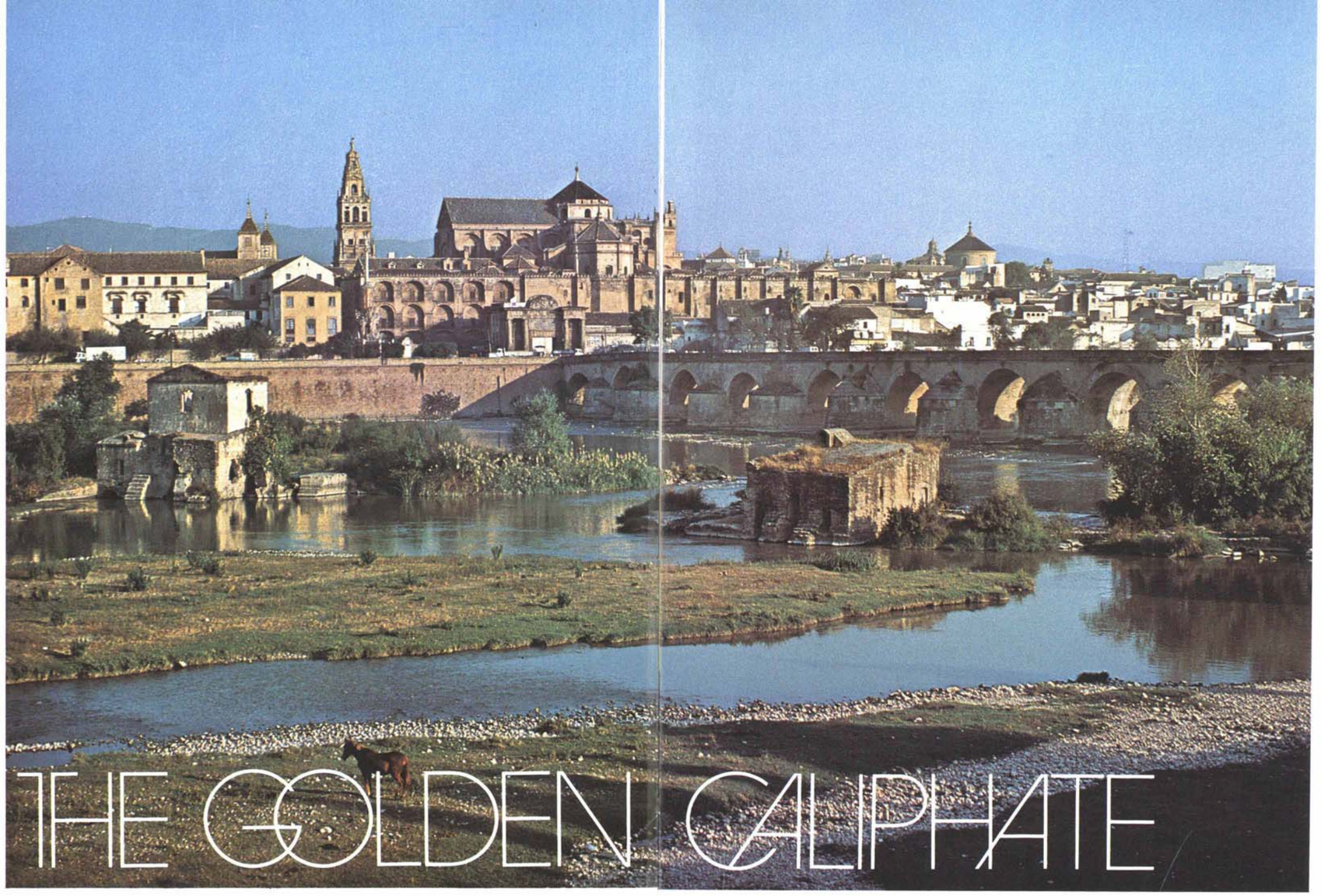
In the Marismas, a marshy area south of Seville, I saw men wearing red-checked head cloths which resembled the *ghutra,* the Arab headdress. In a little village called Montejaque in the mountains near Ronda, an old woman immediately covered her face with a shawl up to her eyes when I glanced at her. A young boy told me, when I asked the reason why, "Oh, she is my grandmother. She is nearly 100 years old and she keeps the Arab custom." Near Murcia I came across a huge *noria,* waterwheel, churning away, irrigating some nearby fields. A caretaker who was cleaning the wheel told me he really didn't know how old it was, but everyone knew it was built by the *moros.*

I know that cultural stereotypes tend to oversimplify and I am treading on dangerous ground, but I can't help mentioning how many similarities I have noticed in the character of the Arabs I've met in previous travels and many Spaniards I've come to know.

Every true Arab feels himself to be a king. He many be nobody of importance, but he has self-esteem and thus has the respect of others. He is proud and highly individualistic. The Arab responds to his emotions and doesn't care as much about tomorrow as so many Europeans or Americans do. He is polite and hospitable and has a streak of fatalism. Religion is of supreme importance to him. I think I have also just described a Spaniard.

Of course centuries of cultural interaction leave traces, some clear and visible, others vague and imponderable. The Moors came from differing cultural backgrounds and the influences on them in Spain were varied and complex. Moorish Spain was an integral part of the Islamic world, even though it had a unique flavor. The bright torch of civilization and knowledge blazed in Muslim Spain while much of Europe slumbered. But the light shone beyond its frontiers and it became an important meeting ground for East and West, a transmitter of classical Greek learning as well as innovative Muslim thought.

As I headed back north toward Barcelona to begin writing the story to accompany my photographs I thought about what I'd seen. The history of al-Andalus may seem today to have happened a long time ago and to have lasted all too briefly. But I couldn't help reflecting—in the year Americans were proudly celebrating a mere Bicentennial —that the Muslim civilization in Spain had, after all, endured for nearly eight centuries.



THE GOLDEN CALIPHATE

Arab mill, the Great Mosque and a Roman bridge in Cordoba.

In the 10th century, Cordoba was the most cultured and sophisticated city of Europe.

By 718 the Muslims had taken control of most of Spain. In the north, tough Berber tribesmen still patrolled disputed areas, but in the central highlands Muslim rule was relatively uncontested and in the area today known as Andalusia the Arab military and administrative leaders had chosen the old Roman city of Cordoba as their capital and were settling in for a long stay.

As they had since the beginning of the century of rapid Islamic expansion, the Muslims, although looking on the conquest of Spain as a jihad, or holy war, did not exert pressure on Spanish Christians or Jews to embrace Islam. This policy, which dates back to the lifetime of the Prophet, is summed up in an injunction in the Koran. "Be courteous when you argue with People of the Book, except with those among them that do evil. Say: 'We believe in that which is revealed to us and which was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one. To Him we surrender ourselves.'"

Admittedly, there were also practical reasons for not forcing mass conversions. Muslims were exempt from taxes while Christians and Jews were not. Nevertheless, the approach of the conquerors was definitely based on a real spirit of tolerance, as one treaty of surrender—of Murcia in 713—illustrates:

"In the name of Allah, the Clement, the Merciful! a letter addressed by 'Adb al-'Aziz ibn Musa ibn Nusair to Tudmir (Arabic for the Visigothic name Theodemir) ibn 'Abdush: This last obtains peace and receives an engagement, guaranteed by Allah and His Prophet, that nothing will be changed in the position of him and his; that his right of sovereignty will not be contested; that his subjects will not be killed, nor reduced to captivity, nor separated from their children and wives; that they will not be burned, nor despoiled of their holy objects; and that this will hold good as long as they satisfy the charges we impose. He is accorded peace subject to the surrender of the following seven towns: Orihuela, Baltana, Alicante, Mula, Villena, Lorca and Ello... He and his subjects will each year pay a personal tribute amounting to a dinar in money, four bushels of wheat and four of barley, four measures of musk, four of vinegar, two of honey and two of oil..."

The policy of tolerance extended to the practice of religion too. The Great Mosque of Cordoba, for example, was built on the site of a Visigothic church, but at first the Muslims shared the church, then bought it—at a good price—so that they could build a proper mosque. And whenever that occurred the Christians were allowed to build new places of worship. Indeed, during the first half century of Moorish rule in Spain, the Muslim conquerors experienced considerably more difficulties with each other than with the Spanish as the mixed armies—Berbers and North African and Syrian Arabs—broke into factions.

In Damascus, meanwhile, the Umayyads —then the rulers of the Islamic empire— were also facing unrest, which in an unexpected way was to transform Cordoba and al-Andalus. In 750, the Abbasids of Baghdad overthrew the Umayyads and replaced them as the ruling dynasty. Only two members of the Umayyad family got away—young Abd al-Rahman and his even younger brother. The escape was described in Abd al-Rahman's own words in the *Akhbar Majmu'a*, a contemporary chronicle:

"Joined by my freed man, Badr, we reached the bank of the Euphrates, where I met a man who promised to sell me horses and other necessities; but while I was waiting he sent a slave to find the Abbasid commander. Next we heard a noise of the troop approaching the farmhouse; we took to our heels and hid in some gardens by the Euphrates, but they were closing in on us. We managed to reach the river ahead of them and threw ourselves into the water. When they got to the bank they began shouting 'Come back! You have nothing to fear.' I swam and my brother swam..."

The brother was caught and killed but Abd al-Rahman—poet, warrior; tall, red-haired, one-eyed, with shrunken cheeks and a mole on his forehead—survived still more adventures and eventually made his way west to al-Andalus. There, only 26 years old, he went triumphantly to Cordoba and claimed his position as surviving head of the Umayyads. His claim did not go unchallenged—either in Cordoba or in Baghdad—and Abd al-Rahman had to quell rebellions and cope with intrigues for more than 20 years before he consolidated his power as leader of the Cordoba emirate, with roughly three-quarters of the Iberian Peninsula, including present-day Portugal, under his control. At one point his personal militia totaled some 40,000 warriors, mostly Berbers and Slavs.

This unrest, which would eventually undermine Islamic rule in Spain, continued under his successors Hisham I and al-Hakam I. But somehow they also found time to reestablish and increase commercial and cultural contacts with the faraway Eastern Caliphate where, under the Abbasids, science and art were flourishing. These continuing contacts would eventually make Cordoba and al-Andalus the cultural center of western Islam and a seat of learning for Christian Europe.

Cordoba's prosperity, and its era of splendor, began in the reign of Abd al-Rahman II. By then the hospitable climate and fertility of Andalusia had begun to mellow the tough desert warriors and a love of books, poetry and music began to replace their infatuation with intrigue and battle. Ziryab, for example, a musician from Baghdad, founded the Andalusian school of music and also brought a taste for fashion with him when he arrived from the East. He prescribed brightly colored silk robes for spring, pure white clothing during the hot season and fine furs and quilted gowns for the cold weather. Ziryab also prescribed hair styles and, some say, even ran a hairdressing salon.

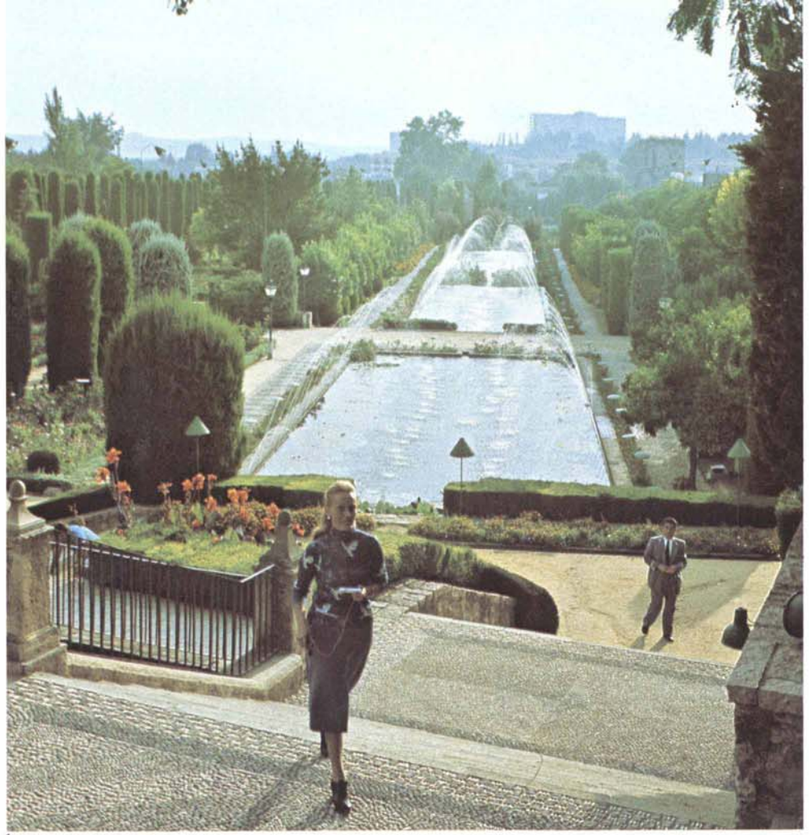
There was also considerable integration with the original non-Muslim populations. As the warriors had come without their women, many married local Christians while others turned to blond and blue-eyed concubines from the north. Reputedly, some of the later Moors, who were especially proud of their North African heritage, had to dye their hair black to conceal their northern ancestry.

The local populations were also, in increas-

ing numbers, accepting Islam. As the wealth and culture of Andalusia grew, those Christians who did not voluntarily embrace the new faith began to complain that their impressionable young people were being unduly influenced by the splendor of Muslim culture. The *Indiculus luminosus*, written in 854, expresses how some of them felt:

"...intoxicated with Arab eloquence they greedily handle, eagerly devour and zealously discuss the books of the Chaldeans (the Muslims), and make them known by praising them with every flourish of rhetoric, knowing nothing of the beauty of the church's literature, and looking down with contempt on the streams of the church that flow forth from Paradise; alas! the Christians are so ignorant of their own law, the Latins pay so little attention to their own language, that in the whole Christian flock there is hardly one man in a hundred who can write a letter to inquire after a friend's health intelligibly, while you may find a countless rabble of all kinds of them who can learnedly roll out the grandiloquent periods of the Chaldean tongue. They can even make poems, every line ending with the same letter, which displays high flights of beauty and more skill in handling meter than the gentiles themselves possess."

In contrast, Spanish Jews, who had been persecuted by the Visigoths, had welcomed, even aided, the Muslim invasion. Though living in close-knit groups they nevertheless played an active and successful role in the life



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of Muslim al-Andalus, working as tradesmen, scientists, scholars and even as advisors and administrators. They were far outnumbered by Spanish Christians, however, as the Christians also came to be outnumbered by Muslims.

In the 10th century, during the reign of Abd al-Rahman III (912-61), probably the greatest ruler of Muslim Spain, this richly diverse society reached a memorable level of affluence and culture. And Cordoba, the most sophisticated city in Europe, was its center. As al-Idrisi, the great medieval geographer, wrote:

"Cordoba is made up of five continuous cities, each surrounded by walls that divide it from the rest, and possessing enough markets, hostelries, baths, and buildings for the different professions. From east to west the city covers a distance of five kilometers (three miles). From the Gate of the Jews in the north to the Gate of the Bridge in the south is a little over one and a half kilometers (just under one mile)."

Another writer of the time once counted all the houses in the city and suburbs and found

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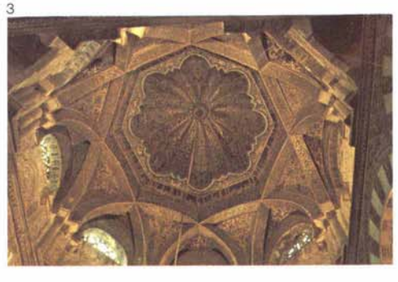

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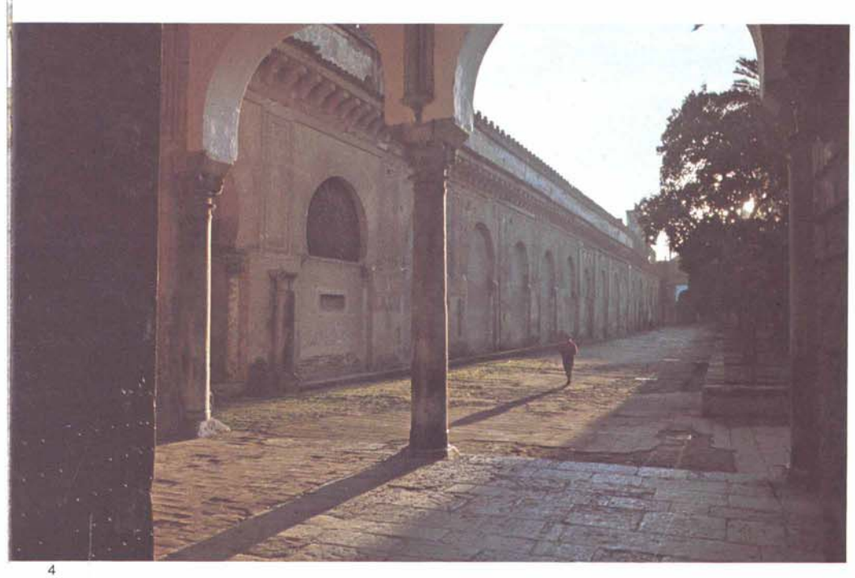
that they came to a total of 213,077. "This figure includes the dwellings of the common people such as workmen and artisans, but excludes the rented attics, inns, baths and taverns. The palaces of the nobles, viziers, officials of the royal household, generals and wealthy citizens, the barracks, hospitals, colleges and other public buildings come to a total of 60,300." The population of Cordoba was about 500,000 compared to about 40,000 for Paris at the same time. The streets were

1. Cordoba's Alcázar gardens are a legacy of open space, water and greenery. 2. Inside, the Great Mosque is a forest of columns and arches. 3. The ornate ceiling of the *mihrab*, which indicates the direction of prayer and (4) a tranquil courtyard of the mosque.



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lighted, there were 700 mosques and some 900 public baths. Many wealthy people had lavatories with running water in their homes.

The houses of Andalusia were typical of those found in the western Mediterranean region since Roman times and the style survives today not only in Spain but in parts of North Africa as well. The exterior was usually whitewashed and plain. As in the Arab heartland, people concealed their private lives and possessions behind their massive, wooden studded doors. Life centered around a sheltered outdoor patio paved with marble or stone, or not paved at all, according to the size of the owner's purse. From the patio, doors led to the bedrooms, sitting rooms and storage areas. Rush mats, wool carpets and cushions covered the floor. Brass lamps or candles supplied lighting and charcoal in braziers supplied heat. At the end of the bedrooms there would be a raised screened niche or alcove for sleeping, which the Moors called *al-kubba*.

The most impressive buildings, of course, were the mosques—especially the Great Mosque, which still stands in Cordoba. Begun by Abd al-Rahman I, it was enlarged and improved by successive rulers. Abd al-Rahman III contributed the magnificent minaret which was later imitated in Seville as well as in Rabat and Marrakesh in Morocco.

In al-Andalus, as in most of the Arab world, the mosque was a center of education as well as worship. But in Cordoba education flowered elsewhere too as the fame of its writers, philosophers, poets, astronomers, physicians and other scientists spread throughout Europe. Indeed, Andalusian intellectual life was years ahead of the rest of contemporary Europe. There was a university in Cordoba and some 70 libraries in which not thousands, but hundreds of thousands, of volumes were amassed. Al-Hakam II's library contained some 400,000 books. And though philosophers of the time complained of the lack of opportunity for the development of women's talents, there were female poets, librarians and book copyists and other women were involved in teaching, law and medicine.

In sum, as geographer al-Idrisi said, the Cordobans were:

"...the most advanced in science and most zealous in piety... They have won fame for the purity of their doctrine, the rigor of their honesty, the formality of their customs in regard to dress, riding accoutrements, elevation of feeling in assemblies and gatherings and finally in often exquisite taste as regards food and drink; add to all this great amiability and perfect manners."

Then, as now, the citizens of Cordoba loved music and song passionately. At times people reached a state called *tarab*, a state of physical pleasure attained through music. According to the famous Spanish Arabist Emilio García Gómez, "Spain, that stronghold of ancient forces, still keeps the *tarab* in its *cante jondo*, an inner room in an Andalusian tavern; glasses of golden wine, a guitar, a voice..."

Outside Cordoba, the countryside was lush with Spain's traditional olives and wheat and also the sugarcane and oranges imported by the Muslims. As a Mozarab bishop, Recemundus, described it in March 961:

"Fig trees are grafted in the manner called *tarqi;* the winter corn grows up; and most of the fruit trees break into leaf. It is now that the falcons of Valencia lay eggs on the islands of the river and incubate them for a month. Sugarcane is planted. The first roses and lilies appear. In kitchen gardens, the beans begin to shoot. Quails are seen; silkworms hatch; grey mullet and shad ascend the rivers from the sea. Cucumbers are planted and cotton, saffron and aubergines sown... Locusts appear and must be destroyed. Mint and marjoram are sown..."

Al-Andalus had not attained this happy state of material prosperity and the peaceful pursuit of knowledge and pleasure without an effort. Abd al-Rahman III, who came to power in 912, was beset by perennial rebellions by minor Muslim rulers and continual skirmishes with Christians from the north, who had begun to raid further and further south.

In a series of brilliantly planned and well-executed annual campaigns the stocky, red-haired, blue-eyed ruler first eliminated the resistance within al-Andalus and, in 929,

THE GOLDEN CALIPHATE

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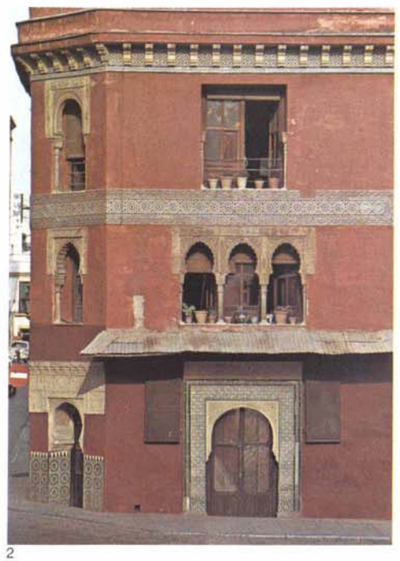

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1. The Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) lived in Cordoba in the 12th century. 2 and 3. Contemporary buildings with ornate arches, stucco work and tiles suggest present-day Cordoba's pride in its Moorish heritage.

proclaimed himself a sovereign caliph under the title of al-Nasir, the Victorious, thus formally breaking what had become only a nominal link with the Eastern Caliphate. Abd al-Rahman then turned his energies against emerging Christian kingdoms.

Initially successful, he organized what he called the "Omnipotent Campaign," in which, at Valladolid, he led 100,000 men into battle with the combined forces of the kingdoms of Navarre, Castile, and León—and nearly lost everything. Abd al-Rahman himself barely escaped with his life, apparently losing a golden suit of armor and his precious personal Koran in the confusion. But as the Christians rarely seemed to follow up their victories, and turned to internal feuding not long after, Muslim forces soon returned to the attack. Before long, as a result, the three Christian kingdoms of Navarre, Castile and León were again paying annual tribute to the Cordoban Caliphate, Abd al-Rahman III reigned supreme and Muslim power reached its zenith in Europe. Ambassadors from throughout the known world came to pay their respects at his court (See box).

Abd al-Rahman's successor, however, was to be the last of the great Andalusian rulers. This was the caliphate's greatest warrior and minister, al-Mansur, the Conqueror, who came to power in 976. Ambitious and ruthless, he established military rule, introduced secret police, employed large numbers of mercenary troops and, although warring constantly with Christian kings, married two of their daughters.

Al-Mansur's most spectacular campaign took place in 997 when he led a great force to the holy of holies of Christian Spain, Santiago de Compostela. This was the site of the tomb of St. James the Apostle (Santiago), whom Spanish Christians believed to be the twin brother of Jesus. Since 830, when relics of St. James had been found there, Santiago de Compostela had been a center of pilgrimage for Catholic Europe.

During the battle the city was sacked and the church of Santiago de Compostela was destroyed. Out of respect for Christian beliefs, however, al-Mansur left the tomb of Santiago itself alone and placed a guard around it. He also spared the life of an old monk found sitting next to the tomb. Al-Mansur asked what he was doing there and the monk replied simply: "Praying to St. James (Santiago)." "Then pray on," said al-Mansur, and gave orders to leave him in peace.

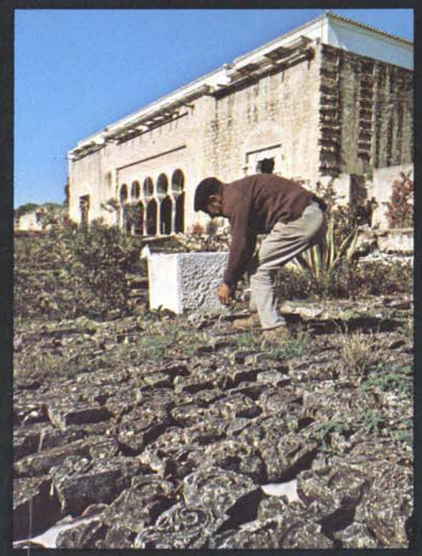
Santiago de Compostela having been a rallying point, its fall was considered a disastrous defeat for the Christians. But St. James was also the symbol that helped maintain Christian faith in the ultimate reconquest of Spain; when al-Mansur died five years later, the Christians credited St. James with having punished the Moors for the rape of his city and cathedral.

As no strong ruler succeeded al-Mansur in Cordoba, and as his military rule had made his reign unpopular, Cordoba itself rebelled and civil war engulfed al-Andalus. Within 20 years the caliphate—previously the emirate—which had lasted nearly 300 years, collapsed. By 1031 it was over, the occasion marked by a riot in the capital.

Andalusians, Berbers and even minor functionaries began to carve out little kingdoms for themselves, called *taifas*, from the Arabic for faction. Some lasted only months; others, like the Berber kingdoms of Malaga and Algeciras, and the Berber Zirids of Granada, founded local dynasties that lasted till the Almoravid invasion at the end of the century. But the long decline of Muslim rule had begun

The palace that was a city...

THE CITY OF AL-ZAHRA



Spanish archeologists and craftsmen are painstakingly trying to reassemble a jigsaw puzzle with some 60,000 pieces. Left: The Hall of the Ambassadors. Above: Stone carving on a pedestal and an arabesque panel.

The most magnificent monument of Islamic Spain was probably not the well-known Alhambra (See page 28) which still stands in all its splendor in Granada, but another remarkable palace complex which once stood in the foothills five miles west of Cordoba: Madinat al-Zahra, City of the Flower, or Blooming City.

Begun in 936 by Caliph Abd al-Rahman III as a country home for his court favorite, al-Zahra, it grew in concept and was not completed until 40 years later by al-Hakam II. In 1010, duringa Berber revolt, Madinat al-Zahra was destroyed. Its stones were quarried for other buildings over the centuries until, covered by earth and vines, its site was nearly forgotten. Only in recent times did the Spanish Government painstakingly begin to restore some of the palace, piece by tiny broken piece.

During the few brief decades of its glory Madinat al-Zahra elicited an abundance of superlatives from contemporary writers. Ten thousand men and 2,500 mules labored to build the palace, which contained some 4,300 marble columns, many imported from North Africa and Italy, and 140 columns sent by the Emperor Constantine VII of Byzantium. Walls were inlaid with ivory, ebony and jasper. An exquisite green marble fountain was imported from Syria and surrounding it were 12 red-gold statues encrusted with pearls and gems. The statues were made in Cordoba and represented a cockerel, a kite, a vulture, a lion, a stag, a crocodile, an eagle, a dragon, a dove, a falcon, a duck and a hen.

Nearly 14,000 people lived in the palace-city when it was finished: servants, soldiers, women and children. The complex included some 400 buildings with inns, schools, workshops and even a zoo. Evidently 1,200 loaves of bread a day were required just to feed the fish in the ornamental ponds.

To dazzle visitors there was a pool of quicksilver in the reception hall which set off a kaleidoscope of flashing light when struck by sunlight. The mystic Muhyi 'l-din ibn al-'Arabi wrote an account of one visit to the palace – by an embassy of Christians from the north of Spain whom the caliph particularly wished to awe with the magnificence of his court. Along their route from Cordoba to Madinat al-Zahra he had stationed a double rank of soldiers, "their naked swords, both broad and long, meeting at the tips like the rafters of a roof. On the caliph's orders the ambassadors progressed between the ranks as under a roofed passage."

Within the gate the caliph had ordered the ground covered with brocades. "At regular intervals he placed dignitaries whom they took for kings, for they were seated on splendid chairs and arrayed in brocades and silk. Each time the ambassadors saw one of these dignitaries they prostrated themselves before him, imagining him to be the caliph, whereupon they were told, 'Raise your heads! This is but a slave of his slaves!'

"At last they entered a courtyard strewn with sand. At the center was the caliph. His clothes were coarse and short. What he was wearing was worth not more than four dirhams. He was seated on the ground, his head bent; in front of him was a Koran, a sword and fire. 'Behold the ruler,' the ambassadors were told."

In a period of factionalism and struggle, commerce and science still flourished in Seville.

THE RIPENING YEARS

Although its history includes times of turmoil and upheaval, as well as periods of glory, Seville was the most important kingdom and city of Spain from the fall of the Cordoban Caliphate until it was conquered by Ferdinand III in 1248.

Seville's history got off to a bad start—under its first independent ruler, the cunning, cruel al-Mutadid, who took control of the *taifa* or little kingdom, and extended it during his reign from 1042 to 1069. But fortunately, he was succeeded by a son, al-Mutamid, a gifted statesman, intellectual and poet. Under the poet-king al-Mutamid, Seville achieved a brief respite from struggle and some moments of beauty that have passed into legend.

Before al-Mutamid became king he met Ibn Ammar, an itinerant and brilliant poet, forged a friendship with him and, when he gained the throne, made him vizier of the kingdom. Together one evening, al-Mutamid and Ibn Ammar were strolling along the banks of the Guadalquivir, bantering and improvising poetry. Al-Mutamid started off with a line—"The wind scuffs the river and makes it chain mail..."—which Ibn Ammar was supposed to complete. For once, however, Ibn Ammar was at a loss for words to end the couplet and a slave girl nearby overheard them and completed the rhyme: "Chain mail for fighting could water avail."

The girl was al-Rumaikiyya, a lovely and charming muleskinner. (For some reason mule drivers often seem to be romantically associated with poetry in Spain.) Al-Mutamid instantly fell in love with her, later married her and, eventually, when war again engulfed the *taifa*, romantically sailed with her into exile.

Another charming story is told about them. They were standing side by side one morning looking at a very rare sight in Andalusia: the plains were covered with snow. Al-Rumaikiyya sighed and told al-Mutamid how much she hoped to see this lovely scene another time. To please her, al-Mutamid had the plains planted with almond trees and to this day, seen from a distance, parts of Andalusia in early spring look snow-covered because of the groves of white blossoms.

Such idyllic interludes, however, were short-lived in al-Andalus. There was constant intrigue in the court, intermittent feuding among the various Moorish *taifas* and a growing menace from the Christian kingdoms in the north: Castile, León and Galicia.

Although Castile, León and Galicia—united under Ferdinand I in 1037—had broken apart again after Ferdinand's death, Castile and León were temporarily reunited under Alfonso VI and Christian raiders were reaching farther and farther south. At last they reached Tarifa—where the first Muslim raiders had come ashore more than three centuries before. In 1085, the Christians retook Toledo, a key Muslim city in the heart of Spain. The road was now open to the underbelly of al-Andalus.

The *taifa* kings of Spain suddenly realized that they were in serious trouble. Because of their quarrels they had waited too long to join forces against the Christians. Now it couldn't be done without outside help and the kings knew that asking for help in the one quarter in which it was available was like choosing between the devil and the deep blue sea.

In North Africa some Berber tribes, the Almoravids (in Arabic *al-Murabitun,* Those Who Live in Religious Retreats) had recently embraced Islam. They were undoubtedly strong, and certainly eager to defend the faith in a new holy war, but they also, al-Mutamid thought, might pose more of a threat to Seville than to the Christians. In the end, of course, he knew that he could only make one decision, and he eventually made it. As he wrote, "I do not want a curse to be leveled against me in all the mosques of Islam, and faced with the choice, I would rather drive the camels of the Almoravids than be a swineherd among Christians."

In 1086, therefore, the Almoravids, led by Yusuf ibn Tashafin, crossed the Strait of Gibraltar. Marching on Toledo, they encountered the Christians at Sagrajas, near Badajoz, and defeated them soundly. The Christians fell back, but due to problems at home the Berber army failed to exploit its victory. It returned to North Africa and, as so often in the history of Spain, the campaign ended inconclusively.

Al-Mutamid's fears, however, were not groundless. Within four years the Christians were again on the march and the Almoravids

1 and 2. Many of Seville's monumental public buildings reflect the continuing influence of Moorish or Mudéjar architectural styles and the love of space, gardens and fountains. 3. The Giralda, a towering minaret now topped by a belfry, looms above the charming Santa Cruz quarter.

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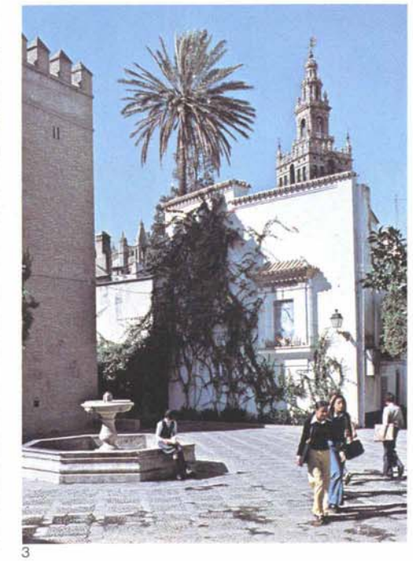

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THE RIPENING YEARS

again crossed the Strait of Gibraltar. This time, however, Yusuf ibn Tashafin came not to help the Moors of Spain, but to add to his own North African empire. In quick succession he seized the kingdoms of Granada, Cordoba and Seville.

For a few years the Almoravids were held in check by a great Spanish warrior who fought fiercely all over the country, inspiring countless poets and writers with his exploits. He was Rodrigo Díaz de Bivar—better known as El Cid, a name derived from the Arabic *sayyed,* originally "lord." El Cid was actually a free lance who fought for both Christian and Muslim rulers. But his basic loyalty was to King Alfonso VI—though Alfonso did nothing to deserve it—and when the Almoravids came the second time it was El Cid who stemmed the Berber tide, winning battle after brilliant battle for the Christians and earning the title Campeador, or Champion. But when El Cid died, in 1099, the Almoravids swept over all of southern Spain and present-day Portugal.

In Seville, meanwhile, the poet-king al-Mutamid had fallen on bitter times. His great friend and fellow-poet Ibn Ammar had ambitiously attempted to establish himself as an independent ruler of the kingdoms of Murcia and Valencia. After his treasonous plans failed, Ibn Ammar and al-Mutamid were reconciled briefly. But again Ibn Ammar enraged al-Mutamid and the king went at him with a flashing axe. Ibn Ammar fell to his knees and begged for mercy, but al-Mutamid's patience had run out.

But so had his luck. Taken captive by the Almoravids, the poet-king al-Mutamid and his love al-Rumaikiyya were sent into exile and poverty in North Africa, an event described by the poet Ibn al-Labbana:

Never will I forget that morning by the Guadalquivir
When they were thrown into ships like corpses into graves.
Along both banks the people crowded
To see those pearls cast into the foam of the river.
Maidens had no wish to cover themselves, they dropped their veils.
Clothes were rent and faces torn with anguish.
The moment came—what a tumult of farewells,
Maidens and young men outdoing one another in lamentation!
The ships gathered way, the sobbing mounted,
Like the driver urging forward his slow caravan.
How many broken hearts those merciless galleys took!

To the newly-converted, zealous Almoravids, the poet al-Mutamid and the other Moorish kings of al-Andalus seemed decadent and slack in their faith. Perhaps they were. But lush Andalusia was seductive, and it was not long before the kind climate, the easy living and the refinements of life softened the crusading fervor of the Almoravids too. Gradually Almoravid rule began to crumble in as great a confusion of rebellions and intrigue as that of the *taifa* kings before.

In North Africa, in the meantime, the Almoravids' homeland had been taken over by an even more zealous Berber group from the Atlas mountains. These were the Almohads ("Asserters of the Unity of God"), whose founder, Ibn Tumart, was a sophisticated theologian who had studied in Baghdad, Mecca, Alexandria and Cordoba. And as earlier factions had invited the Almoravids to Spain, now new factions invited the Almohads to come and protect al-Andalus from the ever-present Christian threat.

Again, North Africans swept into Spain. Again, al-Andalus was unified and the Christians were pushed back. But except for the tiny Kingdom of Granada, which miraculously endured three centuries after their fall, the Almohads were to be the last Muslim rulers of Spain.

The final years were a period of confusion, corruption and violence. Yet, paradoxically, even as military and political affairs went badly, the economic and cultural life of the Moors reached new heights. In Seville trading ships came up the Guadalquivir from the Atlantic Ocean and ferryboats hustled back and forth across the river. In the shade of the Great Mosque, several Christian churches raised their spires. Through open doorways along the streets craftsmen of every imaginable kind could be seen at work, and in the market areas hawkers, beggars, veiled women and tradesmen shouted and whispered over bread, meats, fish, olive oil, melons, figs, oranges, grapes, spices and herbs piled in the stalls. It was a city of smells, ranging from orange blossoms and myrtle to more earthy odors.

Cultural, intellectual and scientific life also flourished as the towering intellects of al-Andalus soared into new realms of thought and experiment in theology, philosophy, mysticism, medicine, astronomy and geography. It was not uncommon for one man to make great strides in several fields, and there were many such men: al-Idrisi, who wrote the most accurate and detailed account of the world available to man at his time, as well as impressive works on botany and medical remedies; and Ibn Rushd, or Averroes as he is known in the West, a distinguished Aristotelian philosopher, whose writings later helped spark a scholastic revival in the rest of Europe and who, in addition, wrote a seven-book medical encyclopedia. Among his insights in medicine: no one is taken ill twice with smallpox.

Another of the period's outstanding intellectuals was Ibn Tufail, a writer, physician and astronomer from Guadix near Granada. His allegorical tale, *Hayy ibn Yaqsan, The Living One, Son of the Vigilant,* anticipated the literature of the Age of Reason and it is said that the 1708 English translation of this book, titled *The Improvement of Human Reason,* influenced Rousseau and Voltaire, and possibly Kipling and Daniel Defoe too. The tale, about a boy brought up by a gazelle and isolated from human beings, raised the philosophical question of whether the child by his own reasoning and intuition would find truth and God. The answer in the tale: he would.

Out of the confused last days of Seville also came the mystical and inward-looking Sufis, whose purist thought dominated the last of the Almohad period. Although Sufism had numerous adherents, many fundamentalists in Islam objected. As Jan Read says in his excellent book, *The Moors in Spain and Portugal,* Sufism, "directed as it was, inwards and to the individual... did nothing to restore the spirit of the jihad. The holy war now became the prerogative of the Christians, and in the hands of the Crusaders and the Inquisition it was to prove a weapon as blunt and brutal as it was essentially irreligious."

The decline in the spirit of the jihad among the Almohads, plus their preoccupation with affairs back in North Africa, promoted still another series of *taifa* secessions, and still more intra-Muslim strife just as, in the Christian north, King Alfonso VIII of Castile and the Archbishop of Toledo were working to reconcile their kingdoms. Their efforts were successful and in 1212 the united forces of Castile, León, Navarre and Aragon at Las Navas de Tolosa delivered Andalusia's death blow. As the *taifa* kings even then continued fighting among themselves, their final downfall was not long in coming. In 1236 Cordoba fell—and its Great Mosque was converted into a cathedral. In 1238 the Balearic Islands were conquered. In 1246 Jaen fell and in 1248 Seville was occupied, with the help of Muslim forces from the *taifa* Kingdom of Granada, where the final —and some believe the finest—chapters of Islam in al-Andalus would be written.

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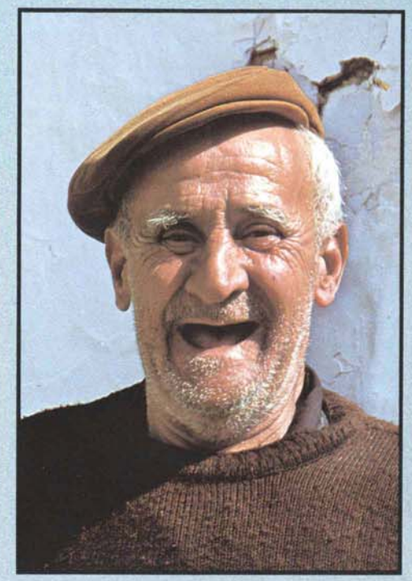
1. Seville's elegant Alcázar Tower framed by an arch of foliage. 2. The walls of Toledo, the first major Muslim city to fall in the centuries-long reconquest. 3. A painting from a manuscript in Toledo's Biblioteca del Escorial shows Moors playing chess, a game they introduced to Europe (Photographed with permission of the Spanish Patrimonio Nacional).

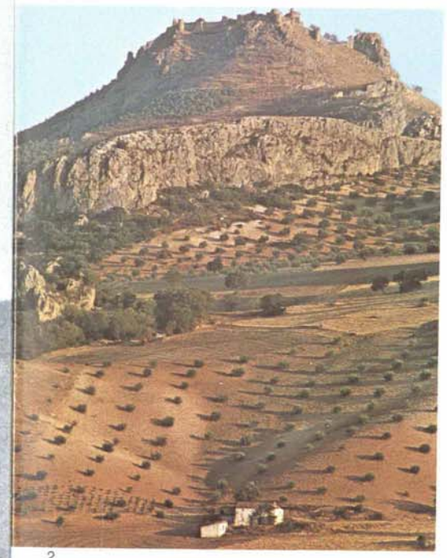
THE FACE OF AL-ANDALUS



Spain's people and landscapes reflect its Moorish heritage.

Arab castle in Olvera, near Seville.

THE FACE OF *AL-ANDALUS*



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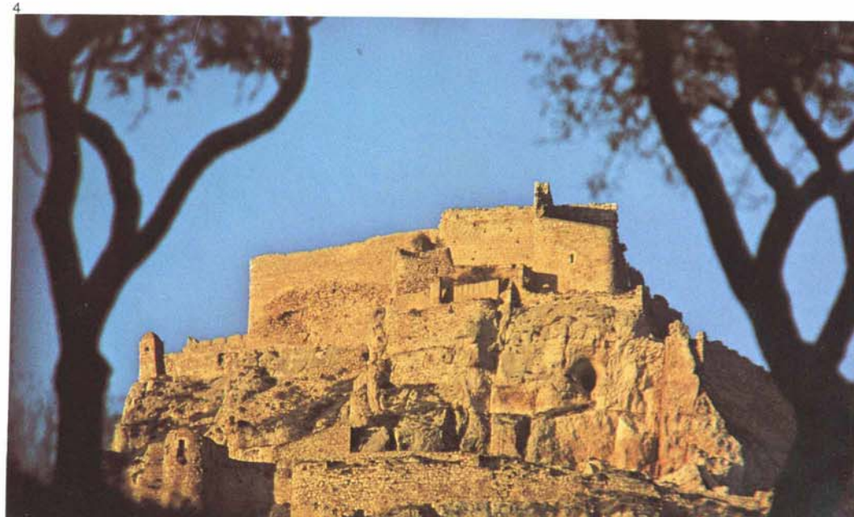

1. Women on doorstep in Almuñecar. 2 Castle and olive groves near Granada. 3. Conversation at a window in Albaicín quarter of Granada. 4. Castle at Morella, between Castellón and Alcañiz.

THE FACE OF *AL-ANDALUS*

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1. Sunset gilds the hair of a girl on a terrace at Granada's Alhambra Palace and (2) the restored Moorish walls of Alcudia on the island of Majorca. 3. Young man in the Marismas, the swampy delta of the Gaudalquivir, wears checked head cloth and (4) school girls in Cordoba wear matching skirts. 5. Benaojan, in the Sierra de Ronda, is a town of flowers.

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THE FINAL FLOWERING

Granada, the last Muslim kingdom in Spain, survived—and prospered—for more than two and a half centuries.

The Alhambra Palace.

That Muslim Seville was captured by the Christians with the aid of Muslim troops from Granada is not as surprising as it might appear at first glance. Political alliances, as well as marriages, between Christian and Muslim were common in Spain, and in any case Granada's *taifa* King Ibn al-Ahmar had little choice. His little kingdom, which reached down to the south coast between Gibraltar and Almeria, could easily have been overrun by the Christians had he refused to join Ferdinand III of Castile in attacking Seville.

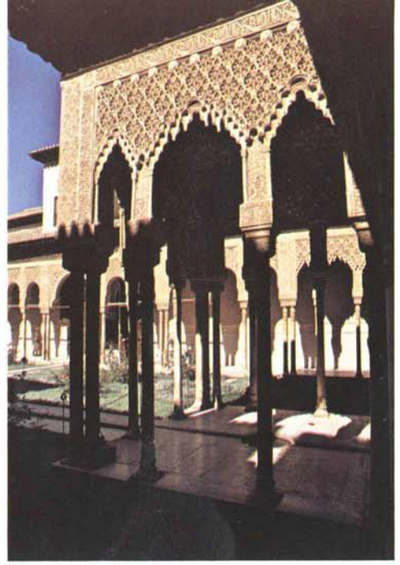
In a sense Ibn al-Ahmar personifies the achievements, the failures and the sad romanticism that pervades the story of Islam in al-Andalus. He was the man who planned the glorious palace-fortress called the Alhambra. He was a petty princeling who like others throughout Islamic Spain diverted Islamic strength into the endless wars that opened the way to Christian reconquest. And throughout his reign, his small kingdom was corroded with intrigue, the political cancer that slowly, over the centuries, consumed both the caliphate and its innumerable offshoots.

Ibn al-Ahmar, king of Granada, was of Arab descent, born in al-Andalus. Starting out as the lord of a castle near Cordoba, he was just a little more successful than the other feuding *taifa* kings and leaders. Gathering supporters as he invaded one territory after another, he captured Jaen about 1231 and then, in 1235, Granada, to which, in 1245, he moved his capital.

By then, of course, Christian Spain was closing in on al-Andalus, and in response Ibn al-Ahmar had become the vassal of the Christian King Ferdinand III. But then he was faced with a cruel choice: join the Christians in their final assault on Muslim Seville—as a loyal vassal must—or risk extinction. He chose to help Ferdinand and Granada survived. But on his return, as the Granadans hailed him as a victor, he gave a quiet reply that hinted at his feelings and was later inscribed in the Alhambra: "There is no victor but God."

Since then, historians have speculated on the reasons why the Christians chose not to take Granada any way. One reason may have been that they no longer saw a threat in this little kingdom. Another could be that it made a convenient "reservation" for the Moors where they could mind their own business and pay taxes. In any case, Granada, the last Muslim kingdom in Spain, survived—for more than two and a half centuries, in fact—and nearly 100,000 Moorish refugees from throughout Andalusia poured in. They doubled the size of the kingdom, enriching it with the artisans, intellectuals, poets and merchants who were to contribute significantly to the final flowering of Islamic culture in Spain.

Ecstatic writers, Muslim and Christian, past and present, have praised Granada and its glories. Perhaps it is because Granada—unlike the beautifully preserved historical city of Toledo, which is almost an outdoor museum—has succeeded in combining its many parts, its cultural past, its pleasant climate, its splendid setting among snow-clad mountains, rivers and fertile plains, to become uniquely itself, alive and lovely. Or



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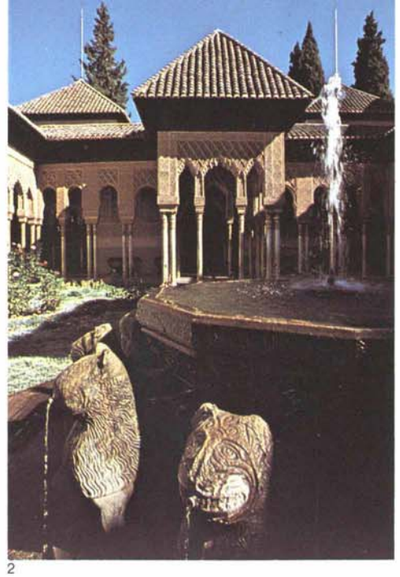

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1 and 2. The *Patio de los Leones* in the Alhambra Palace. 3. A decorative 14th- or 15th-century brass lamp at the Alhambra Museum. 4. The courtyard of an old Arab house in Granada's Albaicín district and (5) a Morisco garden near the Alhambra. 6. The Alcaicería, a restored shopping arcade devoted to crafts.

THE FINAL FLOWERING

perhaps it is because Granada is crowned by that incomparable palace-city, the Alhambra (See *Aramco World,* May-June, 1967).

But whatever the reason, the praise has been profuse and unending. One example is the extravagent description written by Ibn al-Khatib, vizier and historian of Granada, in his work *The Full Moon Splendor of the Nasrid Dynasty:*

"The city is today the metropolis of the coastal towns (Granada is about 30 miles from the Mediterranean), illustrious capital of the whole kingdom, a great marketplace for traders, a pleasing hostess to travelers of all nations, a perpetual garden of flowers, a splendid orchard of fruit trees, an enchantment for all living creatures, the center of public finance, a place famous for its fields and forts, a vast sea of wheat and fine vegetables and an inexhaustible source of silk and sugar. Nearby soar lofty peaks, notable for the whiteness of their snow and the excellence of their water... The area abounds in gold, iron, silver, lead, pearls and sapphires, and its woods are full of blue gentian and lavender... There is not a shadow of doubt that the clothes made of silk surpass the silks of Syria in softness, delicacy and lasting quality."

Writing about the setting, he was equally enthusiastic:

"The great city of Granada with its suburbs lies partly on the hills and partly on the plain. It is not easy to describe the comfort and beauty provided there by the mildness of the winds and breezes, the solidity of the bridges, the magnificence of its temples and breadth of its squares. The famous River Darro rises at its eastern confines and flows through the town, dividing its suburbs, then changes and meets the River Genil which, after lapping the city walls, flows on through the spacious plain, now swollen by other torrents and streams, and finally directs its proud course, Nile-like, towards Seville... The streams flow in different directions, sometimes to supply the baths, sometimes to work the watermills, the income from which is earmarked for the restoration of the city walls... There are about 300 villages and 130 watermills in the immediate vicinity of Granada and 50 colleges and temples within the city."

Housed in this city was the greatest concentration of craftsmen anywhere in Spain at any time—the Muslim artisans who had lived all over the peninsula and had flocked to Granada as the Christians, kingdom by kingdom, drove the Muslims south.

By this time their crafts had become more refined and elaborate than during the Cordoba and Seville ascendancies and their famous silks, gold and silver embroideries, wood veneer inlaid with infinite skill and patience, embossed leather, carpets, ceramics, ivory, filigreed silver and fine arms had won fame—and markets—in Christian Spain, northern Europe and Africa.

Out of this fusion of craftmanship and prosperity, Ibn al-Khatib suggests, came a citizenry that to him seemed physically and socially superior:

"The people of Granada are orthodox in religious matters... They are loyal to their kings and extremely patient and generous. They are generally slim, of medium height and well-proportioned, with black hair. They speak an elegant form of Arabic, and their speech is full of proverbs and occasionally rather too abstract. In discussion they tend to be unyielding and hot-headed. Like the Persians they dress in fine clothes of silk, wool and cotton, striped in subtle shades. In winter they wrap themselves in the African cloak or the Tunisian burnous. In summer they wear white linen. The faithful assembled in the temples, arrayed in their many-hued clothing, present the appearance of a spring meadow covered in flowers... Among the ornaments thought particularly tasteful by the princesses and ladies of Granada are girdles, sashes, garters and coifs, exquisitely worked in faceted gold and silver. Precious stones such as zircons, topazes and emeralds glisten amid their finery. The women of Granada are graceful, elegant and svelte. It is rare to find one who is ill-proportioned. They are neat, take great pains to arrange their long hair and delight in displaying their ivory-like teeth. The breath from their lips is as sweet as the perfume of a flower. Their charms are highlighted by their graceful manners, exquisite discretion and delightful conversation. It is regrettable, however, that we are reaching a moment in which the women of Granada are carrying the magnificence of their attire and adornment to the brink of fantasy."

Describing the Alhambra, which was begun by Ibn al-Ahmar in 1238 and enlarged and perfected by his Nasrid successors, Ibn al-Khatib was oddly restrained:

"The regal residence of the Alhambra presents a fine appearance, rising like a second city. The enclosure is embellished with lofty towers, thick walls, sumptuous halls and other elegant buildings. Sparkling torrents rush downwards, soon to become quiet brooks that murmur through the shady woods. Just like the city below, the Alhambra has so many orchards and gardens that the palace turrets are glimpsed amid a canopy of foliage, like bright stars in the night sky."

But if Ibn al-Khatib was restrained, subsequent writers were not. The Moors left Granada some 500 years ago, but physically the Alhambra is still one of the loveliest palaces anywhere. Its lofty beauty was achieved with simple materials such as wood, carved stucco, tiles in geometric patterns and the repetitive application of Arabic lettering or calligraphy (See *Aramco World,* May-June, 1976). Everywhere water—laughing, bubbling, pouring, sparkling, leaping, or dead still in order to reflect the blue sky, the towers, the flowers, myrtles and the elegant cypress trees. The Alhambra is a perfect fusion of the efforts of man and nature, and a fitting monument to the civilization that even then was crumbling.

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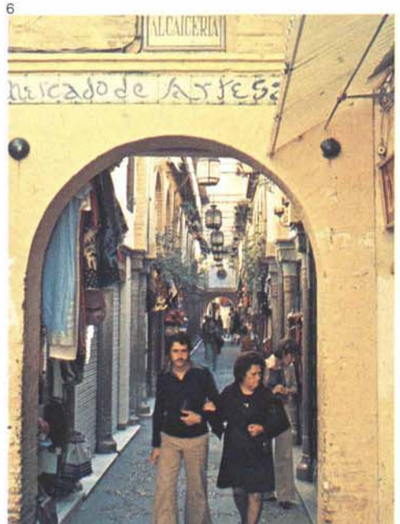

The final years were not unlike the preceding years: there were occasional incursions of Berber tribes from North Africa, frequent raids and counter-raids among rival factions within Spain. But commerce continued as before and, in general, there was extensive mixing between Muslims and Christians.

Towards the end, unfortunately, a new, less pleasant spirit began to grow, especially in the north, as tensions mounted between the Christians on the one hand and the Mudéjars and Jews on the other. Part of the reason for this was simply envy; although the Christians again held political power they saw that their subjects were less prosperous. The Mudéjar population in the north, like the overseas Chinese in so many places today, worked hard, saved their money, paid their taxes and were model citizens. Generally they were much more skilled than their Christian neighbors in the arts and crafts as well as in the cultivation of land. As for the Jews, many had reached high positions within the Christian community as administrators, merchants, doctors and tax collectors.

Then, in 1453, news reached Spain that the Ottoman Turks had taken Constantinople and the old Christian fear of Islam was fueled. It smoldered uneasily through 16 years in which tensions and frontier skirmishing increased until, in 1469, the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragón and Isabella of Castile fanned it into flames.

This marriage constituted a powerful union. Ferdinand was a gifted soldier, diplomat and politician and Isabella had a forceful—some say bigoted—character. The marriage, in any case, signaled the last assault on Granada, a campaign carefully planned by Ferdinand and Isabella and well financed. The King and Queen even convinced the Pope to declare their war a Crusade. The Christians crushed one center of resistance after another and finally, in January 1492, after a long siege, the Moorish king of Granada, Muhammad abu Abdallah, known as Boabdil, surrendered the fortress palace of Alhambra itself.

Observing the surrender were two men.

This page: Wood carvings from the 15th-century choir stalls of Toledo Cathedral depict various battles between the Catholic sovereigns and the last Moorish Kingdom of Granada. Opposite page: The reflecting pool of the *Patio de los Arrayanes* in the Alhambra Palace.

THE FINAL FLOWERING

One, by coincidence, was a man who would make history that same year: Christopher Columbus, who had come to speak to Isabella and seek her royal patronage. Another was an eyewitness who left a vivid account of the surrender in a letter to the Bishop of Léon:

"The Moorish king, with about 80 or 100 on horseback, very well dressed, went forth to kiss the hand of their Highnesses. Whom they received with much love and courtesy (Some historians believe that the contrary was true—the Highnesses were rude and condescending), and there they handed over to him his son, who had been hostage from the time of his capture, and as they stood there, there came about 400 captives, of those who were in the enclosure, with the cross and a solemn proccesion singing *Te Deum Laudamus* and their Highnesses dismounted to adore the cross to the accompaniment of the tears and reverential devotion of the crowd, not least of the Cardinal and Master of Santiago and the Duke of Cadiz and all the other grandees and gentlemen and people who stood there, and there was no one who did not weep abundantly with pleasure giving thanks to Our Lord for what they saw, for they could not keep back the tears; and the Moorish king and the Moors who were with him for their part could not disguise the sadness and pain they felt for the joy of the Christians, and certainly with much reason on account of their loss, for Granada is the most distinguished and chief thing in the world, both in greatness and in strength as also in richness of dwelling places, for Seville is but a straw hut compared to the Alhambra."

The famous Spanish poet García Lorca, himself from Granada, has said of this junction: "It was a disastrous event, even though they say the opposite in schools. An admirable civilization and a poetry, architecture and delicacy unique in the world—all were lost..."

Boabdil sadly rode off into oblivion, but his subjects were allowed to stay on, and for a brief period the future even looked bright for them. Surprisingly, the defeated ruler had obtained very favorable terms of surrender. The Muslims were guaranteed virtual self-government, freedom of movement, complete religious freedom and even a three-year exemption from taxes after the surrender. After that they were to pay no more than they had under Nasrid rule.

Europeans elsewhere were exasperated by the Spanish attitude, and unable to understand why the Moors had not all been expelled or slaughtered after the victory. They failed to realize that, for all their fighting, after 800 years of coexistence and mixed marriages the Christians and the Moors had, in spite of themselves, become very much alike. Also, in the final centuries the Christians had to a large extent lived off taxes paid by their Mudéjar population as well as by the Muslim vassal kingdoms. The Catholic kings, moreover, must have known that if they had thrown the Moors out abruptly, much of the peninsula's flourishing trade would have come to an end. Nor did they want large depopulated areas.

Nevertheless, the end did come soon. In 1499 the primate of Spain, Ximénez de Cisneros, arrived in Granada and was soon applying strong pressure on the Muslims to become Christian. Three years later the Muslims were told simultaneously that they must convert or leave—and that they would not be allowed to leave.

In 1526 the Inquisitor General moved to Granada to speed things up. But the process dragged on for years with many Muslims pretending conversion to survive—they were called Moriscos—and others rebelling. There were, for example, serious uprisings in the Alpujarra mountains near Granada; one was so long and well fought that Philip II of Spain finally had to call in Austrians to put an end to it.

Eventually, between 1609 and 1614, Spain gave expulsion orders to the Moriscos. Only six percent were to be allowed to stay, most of whom were children and their mothers, and some 250,000 to 500,000 Moriscos were driven out.

During the journey into exile, it is estimated, up to three quarters of the exiles died and Henry Charles Lea, writing on Moriscos expelled from Aragon, provided a description of their fate:

"There was one body of some 1,400 souls, that was refused admission to France... They had paid 40,000 ducats for permission to go to France besides the export duties on what they carried and the expense of commissioners in charge of them. Forced to turn back on the long road to Alfaques, so many of them sickened and died in the summer heat that it was feared that they would bring pestilence to the ships."

With that footnote the long history of al-Andalus came to its end.