WE AND THEM – MUSLIM MINORITY IN CHRISTIAN MAJORITY AND CHRISTIAN MINORITY IN MUSLIM MAJORITY IN XIII AND XIV CENTURY SPAIN

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Abstract: *From XIII to XIV century process of reconquest in Spain was in its finishing stages and during that process we encounter two different communities that are trying to live alongside the Other. Community of Christians that are in every cultural aspect more Arabs than Christians but that are living in a changed world where the fabled tolerance of the ages long gone has passed and community of Muslims that were rulers and now are ruled by Christians in two different kingdoms with different stands on their future. The objective of this paper is to analyze the continuity in the discontinuity in the lives of the communities that are living in the time of total dissolution of their cultural and social identities and to observe their usefulness in nation-building plans of Aragonese and Castilian rulers. Following the changes in their jobs, dresses, language and literature we can determine the similarities to their old life, difficulties they encountered in these challenging times and importance they had for the thriving Christian countries stepping into maturity.*

Keywords: *Mozarab, Mudejar, Morisco*

When speaking about European identity we cannot evade mentioning Islam and the formation of European identity that faced Islam on the East and the West and that Europe built its identity as Christian countries during the Crusades. As is common knowledge these crusader wars were majorly directed to the East in hope of releasing the Holy Lands of the Muslim dominion. It is often neglected that there were wars against Muslim in the West as well and that they were led with much more furor and success because they were led to retake or reconquest the lands occupied by Muslims and from that came the name of La Reconquista. Before we start to explain Reconquista and its influences on the Medieval Spain and its societies we should explain what led to the Reconquista movement. Visigothic Spain that existed since 5th century became part of Muslim dominions in 711 and for the next eight centuries Muslim lands in the Iberian Peninsula will be called Al-Andalus, the name that we will be using to differentiate Muslim lands from Christian dominions in the north of Iberian Peninsula. During this Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula never did all of it end up in the Muslim hands and the natural boundary of the Muslim cultural influence was for most of the time Duero River. For the first four centuries of the Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula Al-Andalus became the centre of culture and science in Europe and therefore we can understand why Europeans thought of Cordoba as the Ornament of the World (Menocal, 2002: 12). In this Andalusian society we find the example of cultural coexistence and interreligious tolerance that was never matched in Medieval and Early modern times[1]. Muslims, Christians and Jews were living by each other's side following the Muslim sharia law of the dhimmis or of the protected Peoples of the Book, Ahl al-Kitab. According to this law infidels could profess their own religion freely inside their communities if they obey certain rules that were proscribed by Quran. There were

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[1] Some scholars claim that there was no peaceful coexistence in the Muslim Spain and the most renowned of them are Fernandez-Morrera, Cohen, Novikoff.

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periods when these rules were enforced more liberally and there were times when they were enforced more strictly, but still they were rules that couldn't be changed by the will of a ruler and the protected people were really protected of the rulers and the governing officials. Sometimes, when the political conditions where favorable Christian and especially Jews could occupy important offices in the emirate and caliphate. As were Arabic language and culture promoted by the ruling class they became the leading language and culture of the educated classes in towns no matter if their members were Christians or Jews.

This overwhelming process of arabization led to the formation of a new social entity in the Al-Andalus society that came to be known as musta'aribun that is to say arabized people. Musta'aribun or Mozarabs accepted Arabic language and culture (that is to say dress, etiquette, daily routines, hygiene, culinary approaches-especially not eating pork, etc.) but held to their religion. We must here note that Christians that were under Muslim rule in Al-Andalus were holding to their old Visigothic rite, that was translated into Arabic and in this traditional form it remains until present day[1]. Sometimes Mozarabs immigrated to the Christian north where they could live with their coreligionist, and this was especially noted in the second half of ninth century because the pressure on Mozarabs in the south begun to mount. Mozarab immigrants played a major role in diffusing sophisticated cultural forms from Al-Andalus throughout the northwest. Most important community of Musta'aribuns was settled in the city of Toledo which was ancient capital of Visigothic kingdom and was first major city that Christians or more precisely Castilians took and by doing so in 1085 they marked the beginning of the most intense period of the Reconquista in the Peninsula.

Although this year was very important for the Christian expansion and Muslim political instability, we will place our work in the XIII and XIV century because they are ideal for underlining the acculturation, influences and usefulness of the Mozarabs and the borderline communities that will come into existence in the newly conquered Christian lands. The ideal beginning for our paper would be the year 1212 after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in which Christian forces led by Alfonso VIII triumphed over Muslim Almohad forces that signaled the end of this Moroccan dynasty that brought about the end of Muslim dominance on Iberian Peninsula by its repressive government towards Christians and especially Jews. Las Navas de Tolosa was the first battle fought by Christians and Muslims exclusively as Muslims and as Christians – a battle between civilizations. Stanley G. Payne presents Reonquest of the Iberian Peninsula in 7 steps but for us the most interesting ones are the 5th and the 6th step that are

> 5. Thirteenth century: climactic period of the reconquest, with the conquest of the Balearics, Valencia, all the south-central peninsula Cordoba, Murcia (1243), Jaen (1246), Seville (1248) and most of the south, save for the emirate of Granada and a few coastal points that were in vassalage and 6. Early fourteenth century: minor extension of Castilian territory along the southern coast (Payne, 1973:56-57).

We see here that in the 13th and 14th century extensions of the northern countries occupied large territories with Muslim population. In these new Christian lands a major part was played by the Mozarabs as they were easily accepted into society

[1] In November 1982 Pope John Paul II was greeted by representatives of Toledo's surviving Mozarabic community. (Miller, 2000: 417)

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and "used as assistants to the administration and the army, (and) were rapidly assimilated in terms of both language and intellectual life" (Villanueva, 2009:31).

In this time, Iberian Peninsula experienced the emergence of two new communities that appeared in Christian dominions and those were Mudejars and later on Moriscos. The term Mudejar represents Muslims that live under Christian rule and accept non-Islamic sovereignty in return for guaranteed cultural and religious freedom. Mudejars were used by Christian rulers to exploit "to the maximum everything that could be used from the Andalusi legacy" (*ibidem*, 36). Christian rulers of newly occupied territories had to retain as many of the Mudejar population that they could, because otherwise their conquest would be unfruitful due to the lack of demographics, economic and cultural resources. The Mudejars took on industrial tasks and the most productive agricultural jobs as only they were versed in using irrigation systems that were truly complex. In this aspect we can perceive the major difference between kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. Castile's economical base was centered around livestock and herding and for that reason it was easier for them to expel the majority of Muslims from their dominions and to keep and use only a small part of them for their cultural advancement. In 13th and 14th century Castile we see the manifestations of this acculturation in many public monuments built with Mudejar labor in the architectural style also known as Mudejar[1] in the school of translators of Alfonso X centered in Toledo, and the fact that most of the Arabic loanwords in Castilian entered the language during this epoch (Glick, Pi-Sunyer, 1969:153). In kingdom of Aragon the situation was double layered. Generally Mudejars played a major role in agricultural and economic stability of the kingdom. In the northern parts they remained on the fields and took care of the irrigation systems, but in the southern parts, for example Valencia, they were compelled to train the Christians to maintain the irrigation systems and then were forced to settle in the mountainous non-irrigated zones. The reason for this was probably that the majority or some 2/3 of the population of Valencia was Muslim. And this is the situation that came to a change only in 1500. Although thanks to the mudejar population in Valencia its textile manufactures especially silk became one of the best in Europe. Valencia remain a culturally and religiously divided region for four hundred years, down to the final expulsion of the Muslim in 1613 (Payne, *op. cit.*, 100-101).

Moriscos are a group of Muslim converts to the Christianity that came to the existence from the end of the XIII and in the beginning of XIV century due to the increased Christian rigidity and mounting pressure towards assimilation of the minorities. Here we see a major difference between Muslim protection of the minorities and that of the Christians. As the protection of the religious minorities in Islam is proscribed by Quran and is part of the sharia law, no one could change that the People of the Book had rights to profess their religion. In Christian kingdom this protection was based on ruler's will and Mudejars depended totally on royal favor (Glick, 1979: 170). Influential European countries like France and Italy or rather their medieval counterparts, urged Christian kingdoms of Iberian Peninsula not to allow the existence of infidels on their soil that caused the religious intolerance. According to the dictionary of The Spanish Royal Academy "Morisco se dice del moro bautizado que, terminada la Reconquista, se quedó en España" (http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=morisco), that is to say Morisco is a baptized Muslim which stayed in Spain after the Reconquista. The

[1] "In this style taste did not constitute the expression of a religious boundary, […]it rather bore witness to shared culture as it must have existed in most cities in Al-Andalus before the twelfth century." (Dodds, 2000:93).

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majority of Moriscos were converted to Christianity only nominally and in the privacy of their homes they continued to fallow Muslim religious traditions. For this reason they were used to be called Crypto-Muslims. In the XIV and the beginning of XV century they were able to use their Arabic language and dress traditional, but as the process of the formation of Spain as a unitary nation-state took place they were forced to renounce their language and their traditions. Their stubbornness to preserve their identity and culture represents a final stage of Islam's presence in Spain. One of their last cultural product was a special literature called Aljamiado, that was in Castilian, but written in Arabic script (Lopez-Morillas, 2000: 34-37). This type of literature was their last connection with the language that they had already forgotten save the letters which remained the last remnants of their culture(Menocal, 2000: 15).

This was in short the period in which convivencia was replaced by reconquista, but none the less it made this period in its largest part example of cultural mutual influences. This period is depicted by Glick and Pi-Sunyer as a "constant play between rigidity and openness, between resistance to assimilation and impetus towards fusion, which created an effect of pulsation in cultural flow" (Glick, Pi-Sunyer, *op. cit.*, 144).

And for the end we would like to quote an anonymous balladeer from the 17th century that said:

> What good is it for Gazul/To throw his lance at the other,/When today a nymph of Lethe/Wants to undo his zambras?//As though Don Pedro were/More honorable than Amenábar,/Or Doña María better/Than the beautiful Celindaxa./If Don Rodrigo is Spanish,/Spanish is the strong Audalla,/And the lord Mayor should know/That so is Guadalara./If Doña Juana wants to dance,/A Spanish gallarda,/The zambras are that too,/For Granada is Spain.// (Fuchs, 2011:85)

and with that he suggested that "the Moors are part of Spain – not as an alternative, Other, history, but inherent in the nation's past" (*ibidem*) and we would add identity.

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