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Muslim Spain's Collective Memory of al-Andalus

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Spain’s historical memory of Muslim rule on the Iberian Peninsula, *al-Andalus* (711-1492) is complex, with competing narratives on both sides of Spain’s ideological spectrum. While conservatives such as Claudio Sánchez Albornoz in *España: Un enigma histórico* (1975) treasure the centuries-old story of the Reconquest and Spanish Inquisition’s heroism in expelling the Moors, Américo Castro’s *La realidad histórica de España* (1954) lauds Islam’s contributions to Spanish society, privileging *al-Andalus* as an example of convivencia (or “coexistence”) between Muslims, Jews and Christians that left its mark on the Spanish landscape, architecture and people. These arguments for reinterpretation contest the legacy of *al-Andalus* and continue to influence Spanish discourse on issues pertaining to the contemporary Muslim community (i.e. the protection of religious freedoms, the realities of terrorist threats from al-Qaeda and ISIS, and the tensions that arise with an increase in immigration to Spain from Muslim-majority countries — primarily Morocco). By analyzing fictional or semi-autobiographical literature written by Muslims in Spain, we find narratives that frequently complicate the binary of hegemonic memories of *al-Andalus* by subverting prevailing narratives that either demonize Muslims in Spain as “moros” reinvading the Peninsula principally through migration or conversion, or romanticize the tourist-brochure brand of coexistence that often belies enduring social, political and economic inequalities and discrimination in contemporary Spain.

While the autoethnographic texts I analyzed are not meant to be entirely representative of the thoughts and narratives of all Muslims in Spain — who are a part of an incredibly diverse group in terms of religious interpretation, ethnic identity, and migrant or native-born status — they do reflect important and often-voiced opinions that articulate some of the primary ways in which Muslims in Spain selectively remember and forget *al-Andalus*.

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**Christian rulers**

• Abd al-Rahman III of the Umayyad line of rulers declares Córdoba the capital of *al-Andalus* and consolidates his power in 929.

• Alfonso X the Wise unites the Christian kingdoms in 1276.

• Ferdinand and Isabella start a war of reconquest in 1239.

• The Christian kings of Castile and Aragon attack Muslims in Granada to convert them to Christianity and reservous their cultural practices and modes of dressing.

**Important Dates**

- 1248: Spain invades Morocco
- 1482: Morocco declares independence from France
- 1956: Morocco declares independence from France and Spain
- 1975: Moroccan terrorist attack, EDS claims responsibility
- 1999-2014: Anti-immigrant, Maurophobic riots in El Ejido injure at least 30 and wreak havoc on personal property
- 2000: Anti-immigrant, Maurophobic riots in El Ejido injure at least 30 and wreck havoc on personal property
- 2017: Anti-immigrant, Maurophobic riots in El Ejido injure at least 30 and wreck havoc on personal property

**Key Theoretical Phrases**

- Historical Memory
- Autoethnographic Literature
- Maurophobic / Maurophilic
- Convivencia