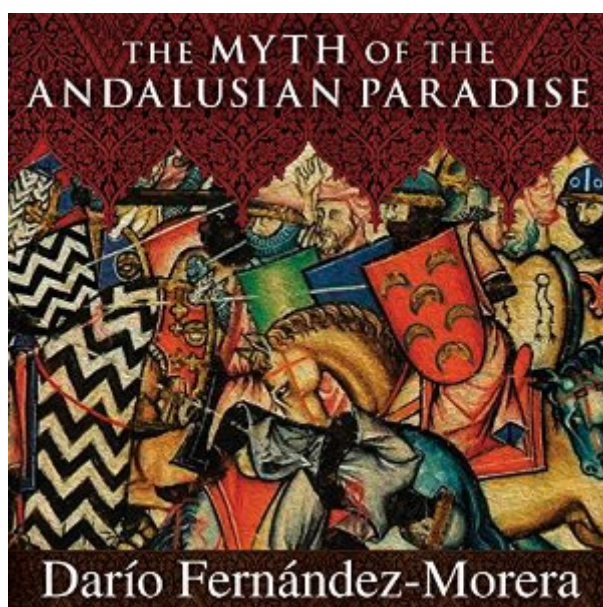


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The Myth Of The Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, And Jews Under Islamic Rule In Medieval Spain



Synopsis

Scholars, journalists, and politicians uphold Muslim-ruled medieval Spain - "al-Andalus" - as a multicultural paradise, a place where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived in harmony. There is only one problem with this widely accepted account: It is a myth. In this groundbreaking book, Northwestern University scholar Dar'ad al-Faraj o Fern'ad al-Faraj-Indez-Morera tells the full story of Islamic Spain. The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise shines light on hidden features of this medieval culture by drawing on an abundance of primary sources that scholars have ignored, as well as archaeological evidence only recently unearthed. As professors, politicians, and pundits continue to celebrate Islamic Spain for its "multiculturalism" and "diversity", Fern'ad al-Faraj-Indez-Morera sets the record straight - showing that a politically useful myth is a myth nonetheless.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an outstanding scholarly work. Scholars, journalists, and politicians uphold muslim-ruled medieval Spain-"al-Andalus"-as a multicultural paradise, a place where muslims, Christians, and Jews lived in harmony. There is only one problem with this widely accepted account: It is "The Big Lie". The author covers all areas of this history: the interactions between muslims, Christians, and Jews at all levels. The muslims were the Alphas, top of the pecking order. Jews and Christians were at the bottom and at all times were made aware of this situation by humiliating laws to keep them in their "place". Think of blacks in the American South before the civil right laws. This book is also about the treatment of women under muslim laws. This includes all women in this society, muslim

and non-muslim. The author shows the interactions among themselves within each individual group, muslim, Christian, and Jew. This was a violent society for everyone. Muslims killing each other for power, the violent treatment of the Christians and Jews to keep them down. In the end the muslims would expel all the Christians as possible 5th columnists to Africa so they could not help their fellow Christians from the north in their wars of liberation, to expel the muslims from Spain. This should be familiar, the Spanish, learning from their former masters, after 1492, would expel the Moriscos (closet muslims) left after the liberation of Granada for these same reasons. The Moriscos helped their coreligionists in North Africa to raid Spain. The author is most courageous in debunking this "Lie". I most highly recommend this book.

In *Al-Andalus au Miroir du Multiculturalisme; Le Mythe de la Convivencia dans quelques Essais Nord-Américains Récents*, the Arabist Bruna Soravia has reflected about the total absence of references to recent studies in books and articles published in the USA about Muslim Spain, including the important advances in essential fields such as archaeology, numismatic or epigraphy, as well as the lack of any work published in Spanish, French or Portuguese in the bibliographies of these American authors. Outside the United States, nobody doubts that the essential investigations in this subject are published in those languages, but the multiculturalism apologists obviously scorn any advance that proceed from their Spanish or French colleagues; they have paradoxically converted in a epitome and paradigm of intellectual endogamy. The myth of that paradise of peaceful coexistence and cultural enlightenment had its origin in the long shadow that Américo Castro left in the United States (always copied, rarely cited), something obvious due the repetitive use of the Spanish word *convivencia*. A term created by Castro that gives the false impression that it was actually used in Spain during the Middle Ages. Today, there is no specialist who takes seriously the ideas of Castro, a Spanish scholar specialized in medieval literature that wasn't actually a historian and openly admitted his lack of interest in the scientific methodology. Darío Fernández-Morena not only demonstrates a remarkable knowledge about the modern European investigations in this subject but also a great knowledge of the primary sources. This is a well-written book that destroys, one by one, almost all the myths about al-Andalus repeated by those who pretend to refute the ideas of Samuel Huntington and his followers just modifying the history in a declared desire to extract a pre-established moral. *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise* follows the path of Serafín Fanjul's works and present some similarities with *Al-Andalus y la Cruz* by Rafael Sánchez Saus, also published this year, although independently. Both books reach the same conclusions, something that is not strange as

both have the virtue of proving something that any Spanish historian has learnt in the first year at the university. I would say Fernandez-Morera has done a better work, and his book has a great importance because it is an opportunity for the English readers to get the historical information that use to be conveniently omitted by the mainstream publications. Fernandez-Morena wrote a courageous introduction citing 'political incorrect' but true facts, as the financial dependence of many Western historians to foundations controlled by the governments of some Arab countries, the millionaire donations to American and British universities from Saudi and Muslim sources, the censorship that exists in the Muslim academic world and the risk that any investigator has to be labeled as 'islamophobic' if his publications refute the idyllic narrative about the medieval Islamic world. As happened with the academic lynching of Sylvain Gouguenheim, after the publication of his excellent *Aristote au Mont Saint-Michel* in 2008. Just to summarize, during the High Middle Ages the Iberian Peninsula was the most militarized territory of all Europe and the Islamic world, where it was actually known as Dar Djihad, 'the house (land) of the jihad'. The Christian kingdoms were involved in an almost constant war with the emirs and caliphs of Cordoba, that organized annual military expeditions to the north to get prisoners and looting; something that Roger Collins has defined as 'an economy based in institutionalized banditry' ('Caliphs and Kings: Spain, 796-1031'). Just during the government of Al-Mansur (977-1002), the hajib of the caliph Hisham II (controlled by him as a puppet ruler), were organized 56 military raids, and only in the campaign towards Barcelona of 985, according to the Arab sources, 75,000 prisoners were made, mainly women sold in Cordoba as sexual slaves. Maybe Fernandez-Morera should focus this chapter in the socio-economical and institutional implications of this state of constant war that created, using the words of James F. Powers and Elena Laurie, 'a society organized for war'. The records in the Muslim and Christian textual sources about the great amount of severed heads are true anyway. The first thing any traveler saw when he visited Cordoba crossing the Roman bridge was hundreds of severed heads decorating the Azuda gates of the alcazar, the fortress of the caliph situated 100 meters from the great mosque. The textual sources even describe muezzins calling to oration over a mound of severed heads after the raid of Ubayd Allah to Bacerlona in 811, or after the Battle of Uclos (1108). Regarding the domestic policy, Christians and Jews of Al-Andalus lived into an authentic apartheid. The Dhimma implied the legal interiority of the 'protected peoples', their judicial defenseless against any Muslim, their fiscal exploitation and their constant humiliation; something that forced the conversions and the mass emigration of the Mozarabic population to the Northern Christian kingdoms. The Muslims become majority during the Umayyad caliphate (929-1031) and soon the mass killings

began, as the slaughter of 4,000 Jews in Granada in 1066. During the period of North African domination, the conditions for the "peoples of the book" were even worse and ended with the mass deportation of the Christians to the Magreb in 1126. Since the middle of the 12th century, there are no Christians or Jews in al-Andalus. As Fernandez-Morena pointed out, Andalusian society was a theocratic state (or 'states', during the Taifa period) dominated by the ulema of the Maliki school of jurisprudence, the most strict of all after the Hanbali (now used in Saudi Arabia), that controlled every aspect of the daily life. It's really hard to understand why any historian with a basic knowledge of the primary sources can ignore these facts that have so many implications in all the aspects of the Andalusian society, politics, economy and culture, and instead prefers to focus his research in the 'spirit' of the poetry and literature created in (and for) a courtesan context. Finally, another important myth that maybe Fernandez-Morena should consider deeper is the transmission of the Ancient knowledge through the Arabic translations, that supposedly were the foundations of the European Renaissance. Anyway, as I have said, this book is essential for any English reader who wants to know the reality of the Medieval Islamic Spain.

This has got to be one of the most important history books written in recent history. Dr. Fernandez-Morera has done the work of serious scholarship in demythologizing the supposed tolerant and benevolent Islamic civilization in Spain. The politically correct academia and media establishment will hate this book as expected because it will not feed into their official orthodox narrative. The author deals with myths dealing with Islam's supposed rediscovery of the Classical Greek texts that were supposedly lost. Of course he deals with the supposed harmony that was to have existed among Islam and its non Islamic subjects. The actual treatment by Islam belies such a claim. I say this is one of the most important books written because the myths dealt with are not just academic points of contention among scholars but are myths that control how many view current events in the Middle East and how we view the origins of that crisis. Our current and past presidents have put forth these myths to the public as part of policy speeches. This book will provide a much needed reorientation for those not stuck in PC dogma and are willing to be educated.

At the risk of repeating other reviews I must point out that this is a very important book. We live in a time when "historians" -- i.e. college professors -- are trying, quite literally, to rewrite history in support of trendy, politically-correct campus myths. The story of medieval Spanish society is hardly the only example of this but is a particularly relevant one given the present importance of Islam. Fortunately, as this book by Dr. Fernandez-Morera shows, some historians still believe that opinions

should be based on facts, not the other way around.

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