Spain

Spain enjoys an unusual position among the countries of Western Europe and North America, in being the only country apart from Portugal where Muslims developed and maintained for any length of time an indigenous culture and civilization. The Arabs and Moors who settled in the Iberian peninsula — known throughout their rule as Al Andalus — eventually saw themselves not as conquerors and aliens but as legitimate citizens of the peninsula, and while recognizing that their religious and cultural values originated from the East, none the less believed that their society was well looked in local values and customs and that they themselves were part of the wider Western Islamic experience.

The Arabs first landed in southern Spain in 711, and the last independent Moorish kingdom ceased to exist in 1492. Yet it was not until 1609 that all Muslims were finally expelled from Spain, and a specifically Spanish Islamic presence came to an end. During the nine hundred years during which Islam was established in the peninsula, Spanish Muslims created a brilliant and dynamic culture, one which produced not only the great Caliphate of Cordoba (922–1031), but also the Kingdoms of Seville, Granada, Valencia and Malaga, culminating in the final flowering of Islamic culture under the Nasrid dynasty of Granada (1238–1492). Although Islam had reached Spain with the armies of Tariq Ibn Ziyad in 711, it did not remain long as an adjunct of the military presence, but soon spread out to the population at large, and with the arrival of further contingents from the East — both military and civilian — quickly established itself at all levels of Spanish society and culture.

In the centuries that followed, Al Andalus became one of the wealthiest and most cultured parts of the entire Islamic world, with cities such as Cordoba rivaling even the Abbasid capital of Baghdad. Scholars and intellectuals flocked from all over Europe and Asia to the court of the Caliph Abd ar-Rahman III, and his successors, Hakim II and the Grand Vizier, Al-Mansur. Following the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate in 1031 the culture of Muslim Spain continued to flourish at the courts of the 'Reyes Taifas', the Princes who ruled the small city states such as Seville, Almeria, Valencia and Granada that now replaced the fragmented Caliphate.

Central to the development of Spanish Muslim culture was the written word. From the earliest days of the Arab conquests, books were imported from the East. The Cordoban scholars Abd Al-Khushani (d. AD 899) and Bagi

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Spain

ibn Mahklad (d. 890) are examples of the many Spanish Muslims who brought in books from Iraq, Egypt and Syria. As the stability and prosperity of Muslim Spain increased, princes, merchants and scholars were active in encouraging the development of an indigenous book industry, as well as scouring the markets of the East for the rarest and most valuable works that they could find. Cordoba became known as the book capital of Spain, famed for its highly literate citizens and its great thirst for the written word. Ibn Rushd, himself a Cordoban and never one to miss an opportunity of stressing his city's literary aspirations, wrote: 'When a learned man dies in Seville they send his books to Cordoba... when a musician dies in Cordoba they send his instruments to Seville.'

But throughout the whole of Al Andalus, the desire for the written word manifested itself in a flourishing literary culture and in the rapid development of libraries. Numerous Spanish Muslim writers paid tribute to the popularity of books. Ibn Al-Haddad considered his manuscripts to be better than friends: 'I have yet to meet a friend who is as precious to my spirit as is my book.'

Ahmed Ibn Rida al-Maliqui wrote: 'My sole pleasure is the books which I read. They are my only support!'

Cordoba, as capital of the Umayyad Caliphate, was home to the Royal Library of the Umayyads, the finest library in Muslim Spain. It was built up over a long period of time, reaching its apogee in the reign of the Caliph Al-Hakim II (962–76). Al-Hakim was a noted scholar, and at the beginning of his reign united into one the three principal Royal Libraries — the Palace Library, his own private library and that of his brother Prince Muhammad. He employed special agents who travelled all over the Muslim world — to Iraq, Persia, Syria, Egypt — with the sole purpose of buying copies of the finest books on sale in each country. The Royal Library was reputed to contain a collection approaching 400,000 volumes. A library catalogue running to 404 volumes was created by the Royal Librarian, Talid. Foreign scholars were employed to collect books on the Caliph's behalf notably Ibn Sabin of Egypt and Ibn Ya'qub Al-Kindi of Baghdad. In these final years of the Caliphate's existence, Spanish Muslim culture was bathed in a confidence and security which provided the basis for a rich flowering of literary works and creations. There was Abu al-Hasan Arif ibn Said (d. 980), who wrote outstanding books on astronomy and calendars, Muhammad al-Khushani, the author of more than 1,000 titles, including the Tarikh Qutad al-Qurtubih, Mutarrif ibn Isa (d. 987/8), author of a history of Granada, and Muhammad Yusuf of Guadalajara, responsible for a major geography of Africa.

Apart from the Royal Library of the Umayyads, many other libraries flourished throughout Muslim Spain. In Cordoba, one of the most important was that of Ibn Futays. The Futays ranked among the principal Cordoban families, and their library at one time employed six full-time copyists, as well as one of the best-known literary figures in the city, Abu Abdullah al-Hadrani (d. 1005/6), who acted as Librarian of the collection. The library of Abu al-Walid ibn al-Mawsti (d. 1041/2) was famous for its high calligraphic
standards. Women also took the lead in developing and encouraging the spread of the written word. One of the most famous libraries was that of Aynun, a poetess, and other collections were established by such people as Jadiya and Lubia, who were secretaries and copyists in the Royal Caliphal Library. Al-Maqqisi estimated that 70,000–80,000 volumes were copied every year in Cordoba, and by the end of the tenth century its book markets and libraries were renowned throughout the Islamic world.

In 1031, the Umayyad Caliphate collapsed. Cordoba had been sacked by the Berbers in 1010, and had never really recovered from this catastrophe. By the middle years of the eleventh century, a large number of city states had arisen on the ruins of the Caliphate, each with its own independent royal family. The Caliphate would never be restored, and the pattern of political fragmentation that would last till the final days of the Kingdom of Granada had now been set. Nevertheless, Muslim Spain, although shaken by the savageries of the Berber occupation and increasingly under pressure from the Christian armies to the north, was able to achieve a new lease of cultural life and at the courts of the ‘Reyes Taifus’, as the city states became known, literature and the arts flourished. In Seville, the royal house of the Beni Abbad (1023–91) was noted for its great love of books, and the Sevillian scholar Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi was famous for falling asleep, fully clothed, surrounded by all his manuscripts. In Almeria, Ibn Abbás, the Vizier of Zuhair of Almeria (1028–38), was noted for his pride, greed, and his immense library of over 400,000 volumes. He was so concerned never to be parted from his collection of books that he used to carry it into battle with him, and finally, when brought captive in chains before the King of Granada, Badis (1038–73), he was warned the King to respect his books, as they were more important to him than his life. Interred in a tower of Alhambra in heavy chains, he was murdered within two months of his capture, his books surviving as part of the Royal Library of Granada long after his death. In Valencia, scholars and booksellers fleeing Christian advances around Zaragoza and Calatayud helped establish a number of important libraries, particularly under the rule of the royal family of Beni Dhu'n-Nun, who ruled in Valencia between 1065 and 1075.

Inexorably, the Christian advance into Muslim Spain continued. Split by internal rivalries, harassed by the arrival of Moorish Berbers called the Almoravids, and the Almohades, who had landed in Al Andalus in 1082 and 1146, ostensibly to support the Muslim kingdoms, but staying on to take control of them, the cities of Islamic Spain fell one by one into Christian hands. In 1085 Toledo was captured. It was followed by Zaragoza in 1118, by León in 1149, Cordoba in 1226, Valencia in 1238, Jaén in 1246 and Seville in 1248. By the middle of the thirteenth century, only the southern city of Almeria, Malaga and Granada remained in Muslim hands, and these were to survive as the Kingdom of Granada until the closing years of the fifteenth century.

Granada had never ranked as one of the great literary centres of Islamic Spain before it inherited the role of the final redoubt of Muslim culture. But it assumed this new mantle with distinction and enthusiasm. Under the Nasrid sultans of Granada, a fragile and delicate Muslim culture flourished, reaching its finest physical expression in the filigreed halls of the Alhambra and the water gardens of the Generalife. The Nasrids built up a Royal Library covering numerous subjects, and possessing many rare and valuable manuscripts. As befitted a city which was the last refuge of Spanish Islam on the Iberian peninsula, Granada was home to Muslims from all the lost Moorish towns and cities in the south and east of the country, and a tolerant regime ensured that literary ideas were freely expressed. The libraries of Granada — royal, public and private — together with the numerous book markets contained manuscript volumes covering every subject of interest to Islamic Spain. Works on philosophy, medicine, religion, history, botany, astronomy, mathematics and geography were all popular. Men like Ibn Farsūn, Abu Abd al-Qasim al-Qalibi, Abu Abdullah Ataraz, Al-Zubaydī and Abdul Malik Ibn Habib were famous for the large private collections which they established, and the Nasrid sultans also took a keen interest in patronizing the poets, historians and calligraphers of their small kingdom.

But the artistic and cultural renaissance of the Kingdom of Granada marked a political malaise. While literature, art and the sciences flourished, the kingdom itself was dying. Yusuf I was stabbed at prayer by a madman; Yusuf II died in agony after eating a plate of poisoned figs. Muhammad V twice had to flee his throne to go into exile. Meanwhile the Catholic kings tightened their grip around the shrinking Muslim enclave. In 1488 Malaga, the Kingdom's principal seaport, fell to the armies of Ferdinand and Isabella, at the end of a cruel and pitiless siege. The majority of the population were sent into exile. In January 1492, the Catholic armies entered Granada. After 781 years the Muslims in Spain were completely under Christian dominion.

The terms of the capitulation treaty agreed upon between the last Nasrid Sultan — Boabdil — and the Catholic kings were generous, at least on paper. It was explicitly stated that Muslims would retain their religion, manners, usages, customs, language and dress. Within a few years, the clauses of the treaty were ignored, overridden, and then deliberately swept aside. It soon became clear that the Catholic monarchs were not going to tolerate what they saw as a potentially dissonant Muslim minority in their midst. Islam was proscribed as a religion, and the authorities moved against all vestiges of Islamic culture, determined to erase in a few decades eight centuries of Arab and Moorish influence.

A tragic attempt was made in 1568–69 to resurrect the Kingdom of Granada, when an unsuccessful uprising broke out in the Alpujarras mountains near Granada, led by the self-styled King of Granada, Ahen Abu. The rising, seen by Christians as proof of the degeneracy inherent in Spain's southern population caused by their secret adherence to Islam, was in fact a direct result of the oppression and insensitivity that had followed the capitulation of 1492, and the lack of tolerance extended to the Muslim population of the former Moorish kingdom. A further uprising in the early years of the
seventeenth century led to the wholesale expulsion of the Morisco population in 1609, an episode which traumatized the social and economic fabric of southern Spain and led to its impoverishment for centuries to come. The final scene left us to the end of Islamic Spain is a drawing by Vicente Carducho, executed in 1627, showing men, women and children, many in chains, being brutally herded by armed soldiers towards the galleys waiting to take them to North Africa, where death and exile awaited them.

Arabic manuscripts were to share a similar fate to the population which had created them. The new Catholic order which triumphed in Granada in 1492 had no place for what it saw as the products of an alien and heathen culture. Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros was sent to the newly conquered Muslim territories to launch the war against Islamic culture, and help convert the population to Christianity. In the year 1499, only seven years after the departure of Granada’s last Muslim King, a massive bonfire was organized in the Plaza de Bibarrambla. In this auto da fe, the number of Arabic manuscripts burnt numbered at least a million, probably nearer two million. The great libraries of Granada were reduced to ashes in a matter of hours. Centuries of Muslim culture and scholarship, books which had been handed down from the golden days of the Umayyad Caliphate and the Reyes Táifas, were destroyed at the order of a fanatical and vindictive Catholic cleric, anxious to erase all material evidence of Islam’s deep roots in Spanish culture. Further edicts banned the import into Spain of any Arabic books. Writing in Arabic was forbidden. Collections when and wherever they were found were ruthlessly destroyed. It has been rightly said that Ximénez de Cisneros worked to annihilate the record of eight centuries of Muslim culture in a single day.13

Of course, this was not the first loss of Arabic manuscripts in Spain. The vizier Al-Mansur had been responsible for burning many important philosophical manuscripts on the grounds that they were heretical. Many libraries had been destroyed in the Berber sack of Cordoba in 1010. But these had been spasmodic, largely uncoordinated episodes, and nothing to compare with what happened now. Ximénez de Cisneros and his followers sought deliberately to erase all trace of an entire culture by attacking it through its written heritage. He worked on the principle that to destroy the written word is to deprive a culture of its soul, and eventually of its identity. In their desperation the subject Muslim population sought to hide their Arabic books, but ever harsher laws ensured that these were handed over for destruction. This annihilation of Moorish culture was so complete that by 1609, when the Moriscos were expelled, scarcely a single collection of Arabic manuscripts remained intact in Spain. The new Catholic order had triumphed, and Muslim Spain had ceased to exist. Only the empty palaces and converted mosques remained as mute witnesses to the tragedy that had befallen the once flourished Islamic civilization of Al Andalus. Some Arabic books survived to form the basis of the present collection of Islamic resources in modern Spain, but for the most part, Muslim written culture had been destroyed, scattered, or simply lost. It is a suppression almost without parallel in history.

From the fires at the Plaza Bibarrambla, Cardinal Cisneros is reported to have spared approximately 300 manuscripts in philosophy, history and medicine.14 These were given to the University of Alcala de Henares, outside Madrid, but have now vanished. Other manuscript collections which managed to survive the destructions of 1499 passed into the care of the newly established royal cathedral of Granada, whence they were ultimately to be transferred to the Escorial Palace Library of Philip II. Spanish Muslim refugees fleeing the victorious Catholic armies also managed to carry some manuscripts to Morocco, Tunisia, Syria and Egypt. Many of these are to be found in libraries in Cairo, Damascus and Fez to this day. Some few have even found their way back to Spain, principally to Madrid. By such tenuous threads, the links between Muslim Al Andalus and modern Spain are maintained.

Following the conquest of Granada, Spain turned its attention to the New World. The energies of the country were now to be consumed in a series of fantastic colonial adventures which eventually led to the complete destruction of the Aztec and Incan Empires, and the creation of the viceregalies of New Spain and Peru. The Habsburg kingdom of Philip II and his successors looked West, not East. These were the years of the Counter-Reformation, the Inquisition and the Armada. Spain was Europe’s leading Catholic power. It is no wonder that there was no room whatsoever for the remnants of Islamic culture in Spain, and what little remained was seen as incompatible with the country’s new role and identity, a potential threat and a continuing embarrassment. Where Spain did make contact with the Muslim world — principally with Ottoman Turkey or with the Moroccan sultans — it was usually in a confrontational role. It was, after all, Don John of Austria, the nephew of King Philip II, who defeated Turkish forces at the Battle of Lepanto, and became the hero of Catholic Spain. Spain now had no compunction in ruthlessly eliminating her Muslim past, and in deliberately turning her back on whatever role she might have had as a builder of bridges between East and West and between the cultures of Islam and Christianity. The Crusader mentality, often not in evidence in the long centuries during which Muslims and Christians had coexisted in the Iberian peninsula, now became the dominant theme in Spanish-Muslim relations. The obscurantism of men like Cisneros and their hostility to Arab culture coloured the whole approach of the Spanish intellectual and ruling establishment for years to come. It was not until 1674, for example, more than a hundred years after it was written, that the first edition of Diego de Mendoza’s classic and startlingly compassionate history of the final days of the Moors in Granada, The War in Granada, was published in Spain. Not until the eighteenth century was any really serious attempt made to catalogue the Arabic manuscripts held in the Escorial Library. There was not a single Chair in Arabic studies in any Spanish university until the nineteenth century.

As Spain’s American empire crumbled and the country began to face up to a new future, no longer based upon its previous imperial role, there was at long last a growing interest in Spain’s earlier Arab links. The first sign of this
development can be traced back to the eighteenth century, when Mariano Pizzi, a doctor who became Professor of Arabic in the School of Royal Studies in Madrid, translated a treatise, later revealed to be a fraud, on the Medicinal water of Salam Bir, commonly called Sasedon (1761). This curious and rather farcical episode marked the birth of Arabic studies in modern Spain. Throughout the nineteenth century, interest in Arabic studies and Islamic culture gathered momentum, with scholars such as Pascual de Gayangos, Moreno Nieto, Francisco Coder, José Antonio Conde, Esteban Calderón and Francisco Tubino leading the way. Gayangos, who became one of Spain’s leading collectors of Arabic manuscripts, was the translator of Ahmed Al-Maqari’s (1590-1632) important history of Muslim Spain, History of the Mohammedan dynasties in Spain, published in 1840-43. José Antonio Conde was the author of the Historia de la dominación de los Arabes en España, published in Madrid in 1820. This work is considered one of the first serious Spanish attempts to examine the country’s Muslim past, and marked the beginning of a new era in Spanish Arab scholarship. Francisco Coder was author of a major work on the Almoravide dynasty (Decadencia y desaparación de los Almoravides en España, published in Zaragoza in 1899), as well as a series of essays on Spanish Arab history. Francisco Tubino, a great collector of Arabic manuscripts from North Africa, was author of the Litteratura Moghrebiana, published in 1861. There were many others, including Emilio Laffuente y Alcántara, translator of the Akhbār Majmua, published by Madrid’s Real Academia de la Historia in 1867, and Nemesio Morata, responsible for an important supplementary catalogue of Arabic manuscripts held in the Escorial Library. Amador de los Ríos published his important work on the Arabic calligraphy of Seville under the title of Inscripciones árabes de Sevilla (Madrid, 1875). Foreigners were also active in the rehabilitation of Muslim Spain in the consciousness both of Spain and the world. Reinhardt Dozy’s classic work Histoire des Musulmans d’Espagne first appeared in 1861. It remains to this day one of the most impressive pieces of historical writing on the Islamic dynasties of Al Andalus, using many original Arabic sources. In his preface Dozy wrote: ‘I believe I can justly claim to have examined nearly all the manuscripts extant in Europe which bear upon the history of the Moors.’ Although the book only covers the period of Muslim Spain up till the early twelfth century, and does not deal with the final years of the Kingdom of Granada, it is none the less comprehensive in its survey of the political, intellectual and artistic developments that characterized the Muslim presence in Spain. Other foreigners, notably Hartwig Derengour and E. Lévi-Provençal, were active in working on the cataloguing of Arabic manuscripts held in Spanish libraries. This major resurgence of interest in Spain’s Muslim past was also encouraged by new links being established with the Arab world, particularly Morocco, stimulated by a new phase of Spanish colonial interest in North Africa. It was in the Moroccan campaigns of General Diego de los Ríos in 1859-60 that Francisco Tubino would collect many of his manuscripts. This interest in Morocco would intensify as the nineteenth century drew to a close. In 1898, Spain lost what remained of its once large overseas empire, when both Cuba and the Philippines were seized by the United States. Only the Spanish Morocco towns of Ceuta and Melilla, together with some other African outposts, now remained in Spanish hands. In 1904, Spain managed to force an agreement on France, whereby they would both share in the task of ‘protecting’ the Sultan of Morocco. The growing sense that Spain had a mission in North Africa, linked to its rediscovery of its own Muslim past, created the impetus for the collection of many Arabic manuscripts from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, most of which found their way into libraries and private collections.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century it is clear that there was also a growing need felt by Spanish scholars and historians to try to understand their Muslim past through recourse to the original Arabic manuscripts produced in Al Andalus, and men like Francisco Coder were sent on specific missions to Tunis and other parts of North Africa to try to recover Arabic manuscripts on Muslim Spain that had been scattered abroad following the collapse of the Moorish kingdoms. Although no more than the smallest fraction of these would ever be identified, none the less their return was an important psychological link between the Spain of the modern world and the Spain which had once been home to one of the most vibrant of all Muslim cultures. Many scholars sensed that not only was it necessary for historical research purposes that some of these original Spanish Muslim manuscripts should return to their country of origin, but that it also provided a form of spiritual and cultural reintegration, an acceptance that part of Spain’s soul and identity lay in its Islamic heritage and in its Moorish past.

In the twentieth century, Spain’s links with the Islamic world, specifically with the Arab world, have been strengthened, and contact established with countries throughout the Middle East. Despite the civil war years, and the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, scholarship concerning Islamic Spain has continued to flourish and develop. By virtue of its strong historical Arab connections, Spain’s Islamic resources and scholarship have been, and continue to be, almost exclusively biased towards the Arab world. Collections of books or manuscripts in Islamic languages are therefore almost entirely in Arabic, and Spanish scholarship tends to concentrate on its own Arab past, or on relations between Spain and other countries in the Arab world. As a result of its colonial involvement in the Americas, and the Far East, Spain never had the chance to develop any real contact with other parts of the Islamic world apart from the Arab-speaking countries. Today, therefore, Spain’s primary Islamic resources are either drawn from its own Arabic heritage or from North African sources.

The finest collections of original Arabic manuscripts to be found in Spain today are largely located in Madrid, with smaller collections in Seville, Granada, Cordoba and Toledo.
Madrid

El Escorial

By far the largest collection of Islamic material in Spain is that of the Escorial Palace Library, north of Madrid. The Escorial was founded in 1563 by Philip II in order to serve as both a palace and as a monastery. In this grim, austere fortress set in the rolling granite hills of the Sierra Guadarrama, Philip retired to rule his far-flung empire, and it was here that in 1575 he established his library. The first Arabic manuscripts brought to the library originated from Granada, where they had survived the famous burnings of Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros. It is difficult to know much about their exact origins, apart from the fact that they all probably came from the old libraries of Muslim Spain. Only a fragment of the original Latin catalogue now remains, hence the difficulty in identifying from which precise place they came.

In 1612, during the reign of Philip III, this collection of manuscripts was enriched — at a single stroke — by the acquisition in its virtual entirety of the library of the Moroccan Sultan of the Sadienete dynasty, Mulay Zaidan. Altogether 3,980 Arabic manuscripts passed into the Escorial Library as a result of this episode. Why and how this occurred remains the subject of some debate. One story has it that the manuscripts were seized originally as part of a plan to free Christian Spaniards held in the jails and harems of Morocco, but since none of these ever reappeared, the manuscripts stayed on indefinitely in Spanish hands.

Briefly, the known facts surrounding the seizure of the manuscripts are these. In May 1612, Mulay Zaidan, as a result of troubles with the rebel Abu Mahalli, sought refuge at a town called Safi, from where he gathered his forces for an attack on Sousse. Worried about his private library falling into the hands of the rebel armies, he decided to hire a ship called the Notre Dame-de-la-Garde, captained by a Frenchman called Jean Philippe de Castelane, and for a payment of 3,000 ducats asked him to sail to Agadir. Castelane agreed, and reached Agadir without mishap. Before unloading his cargo and other treasures Castelane decided that he would ask for full payment from the Sultan. A long delay followed, and the Frenchman began to fear that he would hand over his cargo and never receive any payment for his services. Under cover of darkness, he therefore set sail for Marseilles, doubtless intending either to sell the manuscripts in France or wait there for a suitable payment from the Sultan. En route he was intercepted by three Spanish ships, which gave chase and seized his boat. The manuscripts were moved up to the Escorial, and negotiations now ensued with the Moroccan Sultan, but seem not to have progressed very far, because of a combination of continuing civil war in Morocco, and a reluctance on the part of the Spanish to hand back books on Islam and Islamic history. In fact, the Council of State went even further than the Inquisitor General, who had recommended that all the manuscripts relating to astrology, medicine, mathematics and history should be returned, and demanded that the entire collection should be burnt. Others felt that only the manuscripts dealing with religion should be burnt. Such views are not all that surprising when it is considered that the capture of the Sultan’s library took place only three years after the expulsion of the last Muslims from Spanish soil and barely a century after the literary holocaust at the Plaza de la Barranquilla. Fortunately King Philip III decided to take much more sensible advice and moved the manuscripts into the safe keeping of his personal library.

Soon after this, Francisco de Guarmendi produced a report for the King in which he stated that out of the 3,980 manuscripts, approximately 2,000 were copies of the Qur’an and its commentaries, and the other 2,000 were on such subjects as philosophy, mathematics and medicine. The religious manuscripts were shelved in the Escorial Library separately from the others. Over the following years, the Moroccans attempted, but without any luck, to recover the valuable library of Sultan Mulay Zaidan. In 1651, a delegation was dispatched to Madrid by Muhammad Mulay, the son of Mulay Zaidan, and headed by Fr Pedro de Alcántara, the Guardian of the Franciscans Descalzos of Morocco, in order to persuade Philip IV to return the manuscripts. Wild rumours began to circulate in Madrid that the monks who accompanied Fr Pedro on his mission were in fact Moors disguised as holy fathers, and that they were planning a secret robbery of the Library of the Escorial by night. The Council of State and the Inquisition were divided in their opinion as to what should be done about this latest mission. Most of the members argued that the copies of the Qur’an should not be returned, but be burnt. Only a small minority were in favour of returning the entire collection. Once again, negotiations collapsed and the delegation returned home without a single success.

On 11 June 1671, all the agonizing about what should be done about the manuscripts was partially solved in a most unexpected and terrible way. A fire broke out in the library of the Escorial. Several thousand manuscripts were destroyed, including valuable items from the Sultan’s library, and many from the earlier Granada collections. To this day, it is possible to see traces of smoke and of the water poured on the manuscripts to save them from the fire. During the Napoleonic wars, further manuscripts were lost when the Escorial Library was moved to Madrid for safe keeping.

Today, the collection of manuscripts numbers about 2,000. The provenance of the great majority of the manuscripts is Maghrebi; they originated either in Spain or Morocco, and are written in the flowing cursive Kufic script so characteristic of western Arabic calligraphy. Many of them date from the final years of the Moors in Spain (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), and others were produced in Morocco at about the same time. A wide variety of subjects are covered, including grammar, rhetoric, poetry, philology, philosophy, lexicography, geography, history, mathematics, medicine and Islamic law. Many of the Qur’ans originally held by the library, including some used in the great mosques of Islamic Spain, perished in the fire of 1671.
Among the most important manuscripts are Al-Kitāb Ākriyat al-sufan of Abū Qasim Khalaf b. Afрас, Al-Kitāb al-Naफ]aq of ʿUmar b. Rashiq and Al-Kitāb Munafa al-Haywan of ʿAli b. Muhammad b. Abdul Aziz. The first manuscript is a beautifully illustrated history of animals.

Various catalogs of the collection exist. The first one was compiled by a Syrian Maronite Christian called Michel Casiri between 1749 and 1753. He produced the first ever analytical catalogue of the Escorial’s Arabic manuscripts. His work covered 1,852 manuscripts and was published in two volumes in Madrid between 1760 and 1770 under the title Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispano Escorialensis. It was not until over a century later in 1880 that another attempt was made to catalogue the collections. This was carried out by Hartwig Deroisbour, a member of the Institute of France. He was sent on a mission to Spain to carry out a new description of the Arabic manuscripts held in the Escorial Library, and in 1884 he published the first part of his researches under the title Les manuscrits arabes de l’Escorial I. This was concerned with the first 708 manuscripts of the collection, mainly those dealing with grammar, poetry, lexicography and philosophy. Deroisbour planned to produce a second volume covering the remaining manuscripts, and prepared many notes on the manuscripts. This second volume was never given to the printer, apart from the first fascicle relating to manuscripts on morals and politics, which was prepared in time for presentation to the Twelfth International Congress of Orientalists, held in Rome in 1899. This fascicle was published in 1903. At this point it appears that Deroisbour took the decision to publish not just a partial catalogue but a complete description of the Arabic manuscripts held in the Escorial Library. In the course of a new mission which was begun in 1905 he revised the notes which he had made 25 years before, and was finally able to complete the catalogue for all the manuscripts which remained to be examined. Unfortunately his death a few years later left the rest of the research unfinished.

At the request of the Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes, Lévi-Provençal, Director of the Institute of Moroccan Higher Studies and Professor in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Algiers, was asked to follow through the job that Deroisbour had left unfinished. As he worked through all the notes that Deroisbour had left he found himself more and more moved by what he read and felt that he was in the shadow of a great and inspired master. In later years, when reflecting on the work that he had carried out, and the debt that he owed to Deroisbour, he wrote about the great reverence with which he had approached the numerous notes left by Deroisbour ‘written in red ink’, notes which had been compiled with ‘enthusiasm and passion’ as steps towards a catalogue that was almost a sacred mission. As a result of Lévi-Provençal’s efforts, Volume II of Deroisbour’s catalogue was finally issued in 1928. Deroisbour’s great contribution to the Escorial collection, apart from his revised catalogue, was to prove that a large part of the Arabic manuscript collection was in fact of Moorish origin, a fact hitherto overlooked by many orientalists. These were the manuscripts seized from Sultan Mulay Zaidan in 1612. To this day the Deroisbour–Lévi-Provençal catalogue remains the standard catalogue for the Arabic manuscripts held in the Escorial Library.

The final story associated with the Arabic manuscript collections of the Escorial is that of its most famous Librarian, the colourful José Antonio Conde, author of the Historia de la dominación de los Árabes en España (1820). Conde influenced a whole generation of historians interested in Spanish Islam before being largely discredited in the mid-nineteenth century by Reinhardt Dozy. Using many of the original manuscripts held in the Escorial Library, Conde began working on his history of the Arabs in Spain in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately political events were to overtake him before he could complete his great work. When the French invaded Spain in 1807-8, Conde was one of those willing to cooperate with the occupying authorities. He was appointed interpreter to Joseph Bonaparte. After the French were driven out of the country, he was regarded as a traitor, and exiled from Spain by the government of King Ferdinand VII. His name was struck off the list of members of the Spanish Academy and of the Academy of History. In 1813 he fled to France, and did not visit Madrid again until 1816. He had lost his post as Librarian of the Escorial, and was thus deprived of access to the Arabic materials he needed in order to complete his book. In 1820, he died. Friends gathered up his uncompleted manuscript and published it, leaving the editing and correction of the text to a man called Don Juan Tineo, scarcely renowned for his scholarly interests or knowledge of the Arabic dynasties of Islamic Spain.

Nevertheless the book was a sensation, both in Spain and Europe, and held a pre-eminent position for over 40 years until displaced by Reinhardt Dozy’s Histoire de Musulmans d’Espagne (1861). Dozy also launched a highly critical attack on Conde’s book, and his use of the original sources, and in Recherches sur l’histoire politique et littéraire de l’Espagne pendant le moyen age (1849) he accused Conde of ‘forging dates by the hundred, and facts by the thousand — always under the false pretence that he is faithfully translating Arabic texts’. Dozy was unjustly harsh. Conde had made many serious errors, it is true, but his overall grasp of the subject was sound, and he was very much a pioneer — no other European had ever written a comparable history using original texts. Nor could Conde be blamed for errors which may have crept in during Don Juan Tineo’s highly idiosyncratic editing.

Dozy was also not prepared to make any allowances for the fact that Conde had been exiled from Spain in the last years of his life and denied access to the Escorial’s Arabic manuscripts which he had been using for his research work. Befitting a man who had himself been exiled, Conde’s own private manuscript collection did not remain in Spain long after his death. It was auctioned in London in 1824, most of the purchases being made by Lord Kingborough, who donated the manuscripts to the Royal Asiatic Society.
Stephan Roman

The National Library

The Islamic collections of the National Library (Biblioteca Nacional) rank next in importance after the Escorial collections. The National Library is located in Madrid and began life as the Royal Library. It first opened to the public on 1 March 1712, with a collection of about 8,000 books. Its collection was gradually expanded throughout the eighteenth century, with the addition of books and manuscripts from the private library of the Archbishop of Valencia. In 1836 it became officially known as the National Library of Madrid. The library had a small collection of Arabic manuscripts, and these were placed in a separate room and not issued to readers without the permission of the pope. Islamic history, philosophy and theology were still, even 350 years after the fall of the Kingdom of Granada, considered highly suspect and potentially subversive.

Most of the original Arabic collections of the library are drawn from Morisco sources, augmented by later acquisitions made during the nineteenth century, principally in 1859, by D. Emilio Lafuente y Alcántara, who was dispatched to Tetuan by the Spanish government in order to acquire Arabic manuscripts for the National Library. He produced a catalogue of these purchases which was published in Madrid in 1862 under the title Catálogo de los códices árabes adquiridos en Tetuan por el Gobierno de S. M. However, it was not until 1889 that the first full catalogue of the National Library collection appeared. This was compiled by Guiller Robles, and covered over 600 original Arabic manuscripts held by the library. The manuscripts cover a wide range of subjects, including philosophy, astronomy, music, Hadith and theological literature, and also copies of the Qur'an, some of which date back to the early years of the Islamic calendar (fourth or fifth centuries AH). Over a third of the collection was acquired by Lafuente y Alcántara in 1859, the principal subjects being religion, law, history, biography, grammar, lexicography, poetry and medicine. Most of those acquisitions are in the Maghreb African script, often dating from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, though there are some of earlier origin, including a manuscript dedicated to the Moroccan Sultan, Abu Yacoub Yusuf (1286-1306). Lafuente y Alcántara's report on his visit is an interesting reflection on the growing interest in nineteenth-century Spain both in the Arab world and in its own Islamic and Moorish past. The introduction to his report is largely taken up with a physical description of Tetuan, from where he acquired all the manuscripts, and in commenting on the fact that it was to such cities that Spanish Muslims had fled following the collapse of Granada — hence Morocco was for a while the legitimate successor of the Spanish Islamic tradition. However, he bitterly laments the fate that overtook the Spanish Muslims who arrived in Morocco, believing that African values and culture were in the end too strong for them to cope with, and that their unique culture was eventually distorted and then destroyed. This thesis is more interesting for the ideas and attitudes which it conveys about the way nineteenth-century Spanish scholars were now beginning to look upon their own

Arab past than for any particular historical accuracy.

Other valuable manuscripts in the National Library collections are the various documents relating to the Moriscos, mainly compiled in Christian Spain in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, and including devotional works. Morisco manuscripts are not common, and often when they did come to light, as happened in the town of Almonacid la Sierra in 1884, when hundreds of original folios were discovered in a house undergoing renovation, they were scattered and lost before proper conservation work could take place. The National Library collections are therefore valuable as examples of a Muslim subculture that has now completely vanished.

The Royal Academy of History

The Royal Academy of History in Madrid (Real Academia de la Historia) was founded in 1738. Its Arabic manuscript collections were largely developed by two nineteenth-century scholars, Pascual de Gayangos and Francisco Codera. Pascual de Gayangos deposited a collection of 289 Arabic manuscripts with the Royal Academy. Religious themes are the subject of most of the manuscripts, many of them being fragments of the Qur'an. Many of the manuscripts were copied in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and several are fine examples of Morisco calligraphic design. One of the most famous of the Morisco manuscripts is a commentary on the Qur'an called Al-Tahhil al-Qur'ān al-Azīm. Another remarkable work found in the collection is that of an unknown Morisco writer living in Huesca in fourteenth century with the title Tayīd al-milha, or 'Defence of the Faith'. It was prepared for use in discussions with Jews and Christians, and is proof of the religious tolerance that existed in many parts of Spain in the late Middle Ages before the centuries of intolerance ushered in by Cardinal Cisneros in 1499. Yet another important manuscript is Al-Kitāb Fadilat al-Ijwān, a text on cookery. It was written by Ali ibn Mohammed ibn Wazir al Andalusī, a Spanish Muslim, who explained the different dishes of Muslim Spain. He discussed all the main foods, including wheat and milk dishes, meats, poultry, fish, vegetables, fish, cheeses and sweets. Gayangos noted on the manuscript itself: 'I bought this in Tetuán from a Moor called Al-Senussi, who sold it to me for 25 mitaces or 250 reales españoles. Tangier, 5 October 1850.'

Gayangos was assiduous during his travels in Morocco in trying to track down manuscripts that would have a bearing on Spanish Muslim history and culture. Like Lafuente y Alcántara, he believed that he was engaged in a mission to reconstruct the soul and identity of Islamic Spain, and in this saw the historian Ahmed al-Maqqari (1590-1632) as his great mentor and guide. Other important manuscripts which Gayangos managed to acquire include the treatise on veterinary science of the Granadan Ali ibn Abd-ar-Rahman al-Fazari, dedicated to the twice-exiled King of Granada, Muhammad V, the Jarīdat al-ayābat of Ibn al-Wardī, relating to the geography of Spain, the famous Al-Īthār of Ibn Al-Jalīb, dealing with the history of Granada during
the Moorish era, and the grammar book Al-Kitāb al-farsī, composed by Ibn Malik of Jaen. Most of Gayangos’s acquisitions date to the period between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, and two-thirds have their origin in the Western Islamic world. His collection also includes several manuscripts in Berber, Turkish and Persian, but these number only around thirty altogether.

There were accusations at the time that Gayangos had not obtained all his manuscripts in a strictly legal way, and some rumour-mongers even went so far as to maintain that they had been stolen from the National Library in Madrid. Gayangos furiously denied these stories, and it would seem that he was the victim of a strange and largely unexplained smear campaign. It can easily be proved that his manuscripts were acquired either from Morocco, or else from private collections such as those of José Antonio Conde, Don Manuel Basas Merino and Fr. Patricio de la Torre.

The other great collector of Arabic manuscripts on behalf of the Royal Academy of History was Francisco Codera. Codera was dispatched to Tunis by the Royal Academy on several journeys (the first of which was in 1888) in order to identify and purchase books and manuscripts about the history of Muslim Spain. Among the important manuscripts which he brought back was the History of the Wise Men of Al Andalus, by Abu al-Walid al-Azdi, and the Ḥihāl of Abū Jaḥībah, concerned with the reigns of Muhammad V and Muhammad VI of Granada. Throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century, Codera was travelling throughout Europe and North Africa on his mission to acquire Arabic manuscripts. He went to Leiden in The Netherlands and made contact in Cairo with Sidi Ahmed Zequi, who acted as his agent in Egypt, identifying such manuscripts as the twenty-second volume of Ahmed ibn Abdulwahab’s Universal History, which largely deals with Spain and North Africa during the Moorish era. Codera, like Gayangos, was a great scholar of Islamic Spain, and was the author of a classic work on the final years of the Berber dynasty of the Almoravides.

Other Madrid collections

Other libraries in Madrid with collections of Islamic manuscripts include the Instituto de Miguel Asin, which has a collection of the Risālah of Ibn Hazm of Cordova (eleventh century), and manuscripts by Abū ʿAllāh bīn Futhah of Alpuente in Valencia province. There are also the libraries of the Egyptian Institute for Islamic Studies and the Hispano-Arab Institute, both of which have original Arabic manuscripts as well as useful collections of printed books. Outside Madrid, in the once-great cities of Muslim Spain, collections are small, and scattered. In Cordoba, manuscripts are to be found in the city’s municipal archives, where 61 codices are preserved. Among these is a fourteenth-century Granada copy of Ibn Rushd’s famous treatise on law. Most of the other manuscripts are mainly Moroccan in origin and date from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. The script is usually African Magrebi.

Subjects covered include jurisprudence, religion, law, grammar, philosophy and mathematics.

Seville

In Seville, another collection exists in the university library. This was donated in 1869 by Don Francisco Maria Tubino y Rada y Delgado, who accompanied General Diego de los Rios in his campaigns in North Africa during the year 1859–60. While engaged in these adventures, Tubino still found time to collect Arabic manuscripts, all of which were eventually bequeathed to the university library. The subjects covered include Islamic theology, mystical literature, astrology, poetry and belles lettres. His description of the collection and how he came to acquire it is contained in a book he published in Seville in 1861 called Literatura Magrebiana: memoria de los códices árabes cedidos a la Universidad Literaria de Seville. Most of the manuscripts are of Moroccan origin, dating from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. From his introduction it is quite clear that Tubino—like Gayangos and Codera—believed that he had a duty to try to educate Spaniards about the Moroccans, their religion and culture. A combination of imperial zeal and genuine cultural interest led him to believe that his acquisition of Arabic manuscripts was in some way building bridges between Spain and the Muslim world.

Granada

In Granada, the final bastion of Islam on the Iberian peninsula, few manuscripts now survive. The University of Granada has a School of Arabic Studies which has a library containing a number of original manuscripts. The library of the Alhambra also has a small collection. One of the strangest stories surrounding the Granada collection is that linked to the Arabic manuscripts of the religious college of Sacromonte, a district of Granada. These only number about twenty, but have a history that is both extraordinary and melancholic. They are believed to have originated in the libraries of Islamic Spain, and some date back to the eleventh century. It is likely they were spared from the fires of the Plaza Bibarrambla in 1499 because they dealt with non-religious subjects. At first it seems that they found a home in the Royal Chapel of Granada Cathedral, and were preserved there for some years, survivors of the literary holocaust that followed on the heels of the Catholic triumph in Granada.

In the reign of Philip II, a bizarre episode occurred which led to their transfer to the newly founded religious studies college of the Sacromonte. In 1588, following the unsuccessful uprising of the Alpujarra, some Muslim citizens of Granada announced that they had made an amazing discovery. In a cave on the Sacromonte they had come across some lead books of divine origin which stated that God wished Christians and Muslims to live together in peace. For a brief while the Catholic authorities were thrown off balance, and
decided that the lead books should be sent to the Pope in Rome for verification as to whether they were indeed the work of God’s hand. Before this happened, however, it was decided to translate the text of the ‘lead books’ into Arabic. The work of translation was to be carried out at the Sacromonte College, and the surviving Arabic manuscripts were transferred there, because three of them were dictionaries, which it was felt would help in the work of translation. Once moved there, they were to remain in the care of the college for another 200 years. The ‘lead books’ were sent on to Rome (where they remain to this day), and when finally proved to be forgeries, the persecution of the Muslims redoubled, culminating in the mass expulsions of 1609.

This, however, was not the end of the manuscripts’ adventures. In the late eighteenth century they were caught up in the equally strange case of the forged archaeological treasures of the Alcazaba district of Granada. At the centre of this great criminal farce was a man called Flores, then working at the cathedral. He was supported in his extraordinary claims by various canons of Sacromonte College and an array of Granadan citizens who were either willing dupes or accomplices. Flores claimed that many original Roman bronzes and precious stones had been discovered during excavations in the Alcazaba, and also what appeared to be authentic Arabic manuscripts. These claims awakened memories of the famous case involving the lead books, and when the bronzes were discovered to be fakes, the resulting scandal and trial aroused the interest of the entire country.

The Sacromonte manuscripts were once again brought into the public gaze, when they were used during the trial successfully to disprove the supposed authenticity of the Alcazaba Arabic manuscripts. Unfortunately, they were then consigned, together with some of the forged Roman pieces, to a vault in the offices of the Royal Chancellery, and locked away in an iron safe, with a double lock. There they were promptly forgotten about and not until 1870, 93 years after the trial, was the safe opened again. In that century of oblivion, damp and corrosion had damaged or destroyed many of the manuscripts. The decision was immediately taken to transfer the surviving ones back to the Sacromonte College, and nearly 400 years after they had been rescued from the fires at the Plaza Bibarrambla, the last written remnants of Granada’s once-great Muslim libraries finally found a great safe and peaceful home.

Today, Spain’s links with the Islamic world are firmly established. Arabic is now studied in universities in many of the cities of Al Andalus — Granada, Seville, Malaga, Almeria, Valencia, Cordoba and Alicante. The most important of these is undoubtedly the School of Arabic Studies established in Granada University in 1933. In Madrid, there is a Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Autonomous University, as well as Arabic sections in the Philology Faculties in both the Complutense University and the University of Madrid. Arabic can also be studied in universities in Valladolid, Burgos, Barcelona, Oviedo and Salamanca. There are also a wide variety of other institutions concerned with Arabic and Islamic studies. In Madrid, there is the Institute of Oriental and African Studies which is located in the Autonomous University of Madrid, the Egyptian Institute of Islamic studies, which publishes the well-respected Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos. The Hispano-Arab Institute of Culture is Spain’s largest organization concerned with Islam and Arabic studies. It is based in Madrid and is responsible for a wide variety of publications, including Arabismo and Awaq. The Institute runs courses on all aspects of Islam and Spain’s links with the Arab and Muslim worlds. It has an extensive research library, and sections concerned with cultural, technical and scientific co-operation with Islamic countries. The Instituto ‘Miguel Asín’, also located in Madrid, was formerly the school of Arabic studies, but was absorbed in 1940 into the Higher Council for Scientific Research. The Instituto ‘Miguel Asín’ is responsible for publishing the journals Al Andalus and Al Qantara. It also has a fine library, with an impressive collection of books on Arabic studies. In Cordoba, there is the Institute of Caliphal Studies, which is responsible for Arabic-language instruction, conservation of Arabic architecture in the city, archaeological excavations at the Umayyad Palace complex of Medina Azahara (7 km outside Cordoba) and publication of the journal Al Muhak.

Many other associations and organizations also flourish in the field of Islamic and oriental studies. There is the Spanish Association of Orientalists, the Association of Studies of the Hispano-Arab Tradition, the European Union of Arabic and Islamic Scholars, and even an Islamic Association of Andalusia. In 1983, proposals were made for the establishment of an Arab-European University, to be set up in southern Spain. The aim of this university is to create opportunities for European and Arab scholars to meet and work together on joint projects in subjects of mutual interest and concern. The idea has won the support of the Spanish and Tunisian governments, the European Community, and the Pascual de Gayangos Foundation. Clearly, Spain is moving once more to adopt its role of a bridge between the Muslim and Western worlds, a role so tragically destroyed in the years following the reconquest of Granada. The Islamic manuscripts now in Spanish libraries and archives are a reminder of the links which bind Spain to the Muslim world, an enduring testimony to Spain’s awakened interest in her own historical legacy, and in her present and future role as a channel of communication and understanding between Arabs and the West. The scholars and historians who worked hard to preserve and rebuild Spain’s shattered collections of Arabic and Islamic manuscripts knew that they were doing more than acquiring valuable written records from another age. They were restoring to Spain her identity and her soul, and reconstructing a part of that bridge which once connected the West with the East.

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