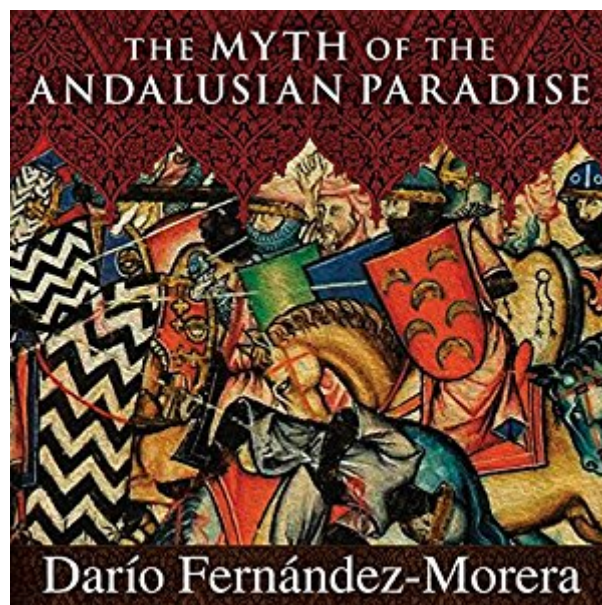




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The Myth Of The Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, And Jews Under Islamic Rule In Medieval Spain



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 Darío Fernández-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", Fernández-Morera sets the record straight - showing that a politically useful myth is a myth nonetheless.

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Customer Reviews

This book is an intellectual boxing match. The author shreds not just one opponent, but a series of intellectual bigots, prostitutes and manipulators of the common man. Fernandez-Morera's biceps gleam as his lightning footwork and peerless preparedness dazzle. Our hero risks much, from hate mail to non-person status. The reader is plunged into vast landscapes, international intrigue, arcane customs, and timeless heroism. One envisions veiled women and bejeweled slave girls, the smoking ruins of churches, enslaved, whipped Christians forced to carry their cathedral bells to be melted down to embellish mosques, heartbreaking suffering and eventual victory. Fernandez-Morera allows the propagandists enough rope to hang themselves. All he has to do is quote them. Harvard,

Princeton, Yale, Columbia, The University of Chicago, Boston University, Sarah Lawrence, Rutgers, Indiana University, Cambridge, Oxford, The University of London, NYU, Norton, Penguin, Routledge, Houghton Mifflin, the Pulitzer Committee, Tony Blair, Barack Obama, Carly Fiorina, children's textbooks, The Economist, The Wall Street Journal, PBS, The New York Review of Books, First Things all are in the dock, tripped up in their own false testimony. The inclusion of First Things might surprise; it is a Catholic publication. In it Christian C. Sahner praises Muslims who "exhibited a surprising degree of religious flexibility" because they waited a few decades before razing the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Damascus, rather than destroying it immediately upon arrival. Really. What is the propagandists' motive? Follow the money. See, for example, Giulio Meotti's "Islam Buys Out Western Academia" See also the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program at Harvard University. Or the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies at Cambridge University. Or the Alwaleed Centre at Edinburgh University. Or the Abdallah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization at Yale. Or the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown. The whorehouse cash register overflows with petrodollars. Follow the pitchforks and torches. In 2008, Sylvain Gouguenheim, a French medievalist, published Aristotle at Mont Saint-Michel, arguing that the West is not in debt to Islam for awareness of Ancient Greek texts; most of those texts were preserved, translated, passed on and used by Christians. For that rather modest claim, Gouguenheim was subjected to an "academic exorcism." And follow the agenda. The Middle Ages matter to propagandists for one reason only: today's projects. Al-Andalus proves that "Islam can effectively navigate a pluralistic world." Al-Andalus proves that there are no "essential differences" between Islam and the West. Al-Andalus proves that Israel can be replaced with a "Palestinian model in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims can live again under [Islam's] protection." And of course the Ground Zero Mosque was dubbed "Cordoba House" after a caliphate in Muslim Spain. What tactics do the propagandists use in their publications? They smear Christians. In one Oxford University Press book, Christians are "a fanatical fringe" resistant to "benefitting" from the great good fortune of living in Muslim Spain. How do the propagandists deal with the forty-eight Christian Martyrs of Cordoba? They mock them, pathologize them, and blame them for their own deaths. These dead were "troublemakers," "self-immolators," guilty of "extremism" for preferring death as Christians to life as Muslims. They were masochists who really wanted to be tortured and killed. Pelagius was a young Christian boy desired by Abd-al-Rahman III. Pelagius, aka Pelayo, resisted. Islam's scholarly apologists don't condemn the caliph's desire to rape a child. They waste no time respecting the boy's pain. A pain that is representational of countless other kuffar boys raped, castrated,

and killed, all in line with the rules of jihad. Rather they condemn Christians for "demonizing Muslims" and having hang-ups about man-boy sodomy. In this academic deflection, one hears echoes of the blame-the-victim response to the mass sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's, 2016, or the 2015 order to US soldiers to ignore "boy play" in Afghanistan. A "boy play" that in one instance involved a child sex slave chained to a bed. "We can hear them screaming," one Marine reported. Respect their culture, he was told. Another scholarly method of obeying Saudi paymasters and distorting the past: leave out significant details. One book, published by an Ivy League University Press, "makes no mention of stoning, female circumcision, crucifixion, beheadings, or sexual slavery." Muslims called Christians "pigs." The peddlers of the Andalusian Paradise myth omit mention of that telling tidbit. They mention "delightful Andalusian love poetry" without mentioning that it was written about non-Muslim sexual slave girls, not about love between free, adult, Muslim men and women. They leave out the market price of slaves; these numbers speak volumes. A male black slave commanded a much lower sum than a white girl. Obviously a man can do more labor than a girl. If these slaves were bought primarily for labor the prices would be reversed. Muslim rulers stockpiled thousands of such slaves in their harems. "Kiz," a Turkish word used for a sexual slave girl, came to mean "Christian woman." "Sakaliba," in Arabic, is from the word for "Slav," commonly the ethnicity of enslaved persons. "All the Slav eunuchs that one finds on the face of the earth come from Spain," a Muslim wrote. Blacks were held in similar contempt. A Muslim in Toledo wrote, "They lack self-control and steadiness of mind and are overcome by fickleness, foolishness, and ignorance." Islam's apologists leave out the ethnic cleansing of Christians, including, in one event, the mass deportation of twenty thousand families to Africa. They omit mention of how hierarchical and stratified Muslim Spain was, with Arab Muslim males at the top and their various victims occupying lower ranks. Non-Arabs who converted to Islam were not equal, nor were their children. Three hundred such Muslims with Christian ancestors were crucified. Five thousand were beheaded. After one such expression of "tolerance," an Andalusian poet celebrated the "massacre" of "sons of slaves. They had as relatives only slaves and sons of slaves." Remember the dead were Muslim. But their ancestors were Christian non-Arabs. Thus the epithet, "Sons of slaves." Another method of airbrushing the past: simply ignore inconvenient material. Ignore material published by a military historian. Ignore material in any language but English. Especially ignore material written in Spanish. And ignore contemporaneous Christian accounts. There's another support for the Andalusian Paradise myth that Fernandez-Morera does not dwell on. Audiences tend to apply to medieval Spain the context of the twenty-first century West. European Christians in 711 were not former

imperialists whose languages, English and Spanish, dominated entire continents. Jews were not powerless, nor were Muslims. Europe in this era was still a place where Christians were murdered for being Christian, by Pagans as well as Muslims. In 614, during a Persian invasion, Jews massacred Christians in Jerusalem. Jews were among the most prominent slave traders. At times, Jews allied with Muslims against Christians in Spain. Propagators of the myth dub Muslim institutions dedicated to memorization and study of the Koran "universities." They weren't universities. They are more properly labeled "madrassas." One might ask, if all the best universities in the world insist that the Andalusian Paradise is truth, not myth, isn't Fernandez-Morera the conspiracy theorist? In the same class as the guy who insists that the government is hiding alien bodies at Area 51? Fernandez-Morera, with the command of an Olympian fencer, deploys the best weapons of scholarship. He rescues the scholarship that Political Correctness has reduced to the status of a streetwalker. He pulls her up, cleans her up, and reminds her of her better days. He uses research and objective facts to make his case. Nothing could be more transgressive in academia today. His facts carry the thunderous voices of long-silenced cathedral bells. Reading this book, I felt as if I were running after a speeding freight train. It's an exhilarating experience.

Fernandez-Morera's exhaustive notes reference material in at least eight languages.

Fernandez-Morera cites ancient and modern works, scholars he agrees with and those he excoriates. He strikes sparks between ancient texts and up-to-the-minute news accounts including the 2016 American presidential race. He uses primary texts, for example Muslim legal documents. He quotes scurrilous satire and epic sagas. Given his breadth of knowledge, all that's missing from the bibliography are citations to the personal emails he exchanged with Cervantes, Maimonides, Teresa of Avila and El Cid. In the midst of his educating his reader about contemporary blatant lies and richly rewarded liars, past massacres and crucifixions, Fernandez-Morera remains, as true scholars do, utterly calm. Never does he resort to hate-mongering, or hyperbole. He acknowledges Catholics' discrimination against Arians and Jews. He does not indulge in a lazy, sloppy, relativism: "Everybody did it." He systematically and frankly compares Muslims, Christians, and Jews, including mainstreams and minorities in each group. There is nothing in Medieval Christian Europe to compare to Al-Andalus' slavery, harems, treatment of women, or huge number of beheadings, he insists. While Jews and Christians also discriminated against each other and against their own minorities, only in Islam does he find the thorough, universal, scripturally protected, implacable structure of dhimmitude. Fernandez-Morera divides the Andalusian myth into seven claims. Quoted material below is found in influential scholarly texts. The movement of Muslims into Spain was a "migratory wave." Jihad "is not a

motivating factor." Jihad is an "inner struggle" "to resist temptation and overcome evil." Christian Europe was "an arena of unceasing warfare in which superstition passed for religion and the flame of knowledge sputtered weakly." The Christian inhabitants of Europe were rednecks. "The men of the woods never strayed far from there." They lived in "gloom and depression," "dramatic decline," "decadence," and "decomposition." Charlemagne could not write his own name. The Muslim Conquest brought "flowering" Islam to Spain. Al-Andalus "was a beacon of enlightenment to the rest of Europe" among its finest achievements was its tolerance in keeping with the principles of the Koran." The Koran is a "monument of tolerance." "Moorish leaders helped to build Christian houses of worship." Unburdened by priests, Muslims were "animated by equality and respectful of all religious faiths." Their Islam was typified by a "pan-confessional humanism." Were it not for its "abortion" by the Spanish Inquisition, today's Islam would reflect Al-Andalus' fully "reformed" version. In short, Muslims were "full of wit and fire, always in love, writing verse, fond of music, arranging festivals, dances, and tournaments every day." The Umayyad Dynasty was "enlightened" and "tolerant." Muslim Spain was a feminist utopia. "Ninety-nine percent" of European Christians were illiterate but Muslim women "were doctors and lawyers and professors." Today it is Western polices that create "the harsh conditions in which distant others live," including Muslim women. "We [the West] are all implicated." "Jews lived happily and productively in Spain." Muslim Spain was a fairyland for Christians. "Neither churches nor monasteries were directly threatened." Muslim Spain was "a place of refuge." Christians "were treated well" and "allowed to worship freely." Muslim Spain "nourished" Christians. Fernandez-Morera corrects these claims. The Muslim Conquest of Spain was a ruthless, religiously-sanctioned Blitzkrieg that was recorded, in the words of one jihadi war criminal, as his bringing "Judgment Day" to his victims. Invaders, not peaceful immigrants, burned all the churches in their path and pilfered the wreckage to build their mosques that were, as Muslim chroniclers attest, inferior in construction and design to the Christian monuments they replaced. Jihadis expressed their lust for sexual slaves as war booty and their "love of death." One "burned in his desire to hurt" Christians. Libraries were burned, as in Zoroastrian Persia and Christian Alexandria. Jihadis butchered Christian corpses and boiled the meat in cauldrons. Crosses were so abhorrent that looting Muslims had to shatter them before distributing their gold as booty. No, indigenous Christians in Spain were not extras in the cast of Deliverance. Their culture was more advanced than that of the invaders; the invaders said as much in their histories, boasting of the eye-popping wealth and meticulous crafts they looted, and the great beauty and refinement of the women they

carried off to be raped. Ibn Khaldun commented on the ignorance of Arabs and the low level of their culture, and how they needed Christians and Jews to handle their affairs. In 981, Al-Mansur demolished Leon. He left one tower standing as testimony to the high quality of the city he was able to destroy. This anecdote tells the reader much about the resumes of jihadis, from Al-Andalus to the World Trade Center, the Bamiyan Buddhas, and Palmyra. Fernandez-Morera writes that the popular idea that Islam preserved classical knowledge and passed that knowledge on to Christian Europe "is baseless." He reports that Arabs were astounded by the knowledge of the ninth-century Saint Cyril. Cyril replied that the Muslim Arabs were like someone who carried around a container of ocean water and thought he was pretty special. Eventually he met a Greek who lived on the coast and who told him that to brag of such a container would be crazy; his homeland possessed an endless abundance of sea water. In his chapter on the daily reality of life in Al-Andalus, Fernandez-Morera pays much attention to Muslim law. Any questioning of Islam or Mohammed could result in being tortured to death. Simple pleasures like wine, garlic, pork, silk and music were condemned. Muslim judges ordered that musical instruments in private possession be confiscated and destroyed. There was music in spite of condemnation. Musicians were often non-Muslim slaves. Christians and Jews were polluting and extra care was taken to avoid contact, even with utensils once used by a Christian or Jew. Christians must not even walk past Muslim graves; in doing so, they pollute the dead. Muslims must not accept Christmas invitations or greetings. Once a Jew took water from a well, Muslims refused to use that well. Physical and cultural alienation of one group from another surpassed co-existence; this is reflected in language. Only six percent of Spanish words have Arabic roots; by comparison, thirty percent of the words in English, a Germanic language, have French roots, as a result of the Norman Conquest of 1066. I often had to take a breather while reading the chapter on the tolerant Umayyads. "The celebrated Umayyads elevated religious and political persecutions, inquisitions, beheadings, impalings, and crucifixions to heights unequalled by any other set of rulers before or after in Spain," Fernandez-Morera writes. They even crucified the dead, disinterring corpses of alleged Christians in order to desecrate them. They crucified fellow Muslims. At one point, seventy-two Muslim scholars of religious law were crucified. Crucifixions were stage-designed to be "spectacular" and cause onlookers to "faint with horror." Some victims were sliced to death slowly: first hands, then feet, then heads. One victim was crucified on the Cordoba palace door. The corpses of black children hung from a well's ropes as a counterweight. Innovation is condemned in Islam and innovators were found out and eliminated. A Muslim historian praised this surveillance: spies "penetrate the most intimate secrets of the people, so that [Abd al-Rahman III] could know every action, every thought of good and bad

people of the explicit and hidden vices of the population of God showered gifts upon him because of his subjugation of men to interrogate the accused and carry out an Inquisition against them terrifying them and punishing them severely." That same Abd al-Rahman III, the "servant of the most merciful," declared that Muslims deviating from strict adherence "deserve extermination." Al-Andalus was no paradise for women. Consider just this one law. A man who buys a non-Muslim sex slave must mutilate her genitals. Does that fact not tell you volumes about Muslim Spain? Muslim Spain ran on slaves; one of its main exports was slaves. Countless thousands were castrated. Islamic law tells the rest of the story: the veiling, the stoning, the paralyzing, silencing, and erasing command that a woman requires a male relative to go out in public or to speak for her. "A Muslim wife" a legal manual instructs, is permitted "to have fun with other women with whom there are not men but only during the day and only once a week." Many of the celebrated women of Muslim Spain were slaves. They were allowed skills and education it would be unseemly for a Muslim woman to exercise. Female "doctors" were probably the ones to perform FGM. Averroes put it succinctly, "Women are used only for procreation." Life for Jews was also not a bed of roses. Islamic law and custom held Jews in contempt. Jews had to know their place. When they rose too high, they and their coreligionists were killed. Muslim Spain managed to extirpate Christian populations in the area under its control. "When Christians entered Granada in 1492, there were no Christian dhimmis in the city." Those Christians and Jews who were allowed to live were not allowed to live out of any concept of "tolerance." Umar was Mohammed's father-in-law, companion, and successor. His title is "Farooq," he who separates right from wrong. Umar explicitly stated that Muslims must keep Christians and Jews alive in order to parasitize them. "The Muslims of our day will eat from these people as long as they live; our sons will eat their sons forever." How? Through jizya, the tax on Christians and Jews.

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* by 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 SÁfÂñchez 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 FernÁfÂñdez-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. FernÁfÂñdez-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 Córdoba, 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 Córdoba as sexual slaves. Maybe FernÁfÂñez-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 Córdoba crossing the Roman bridge was hundreds of severed heads decorating the Azuda gates of the alcázar, 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 Baelona in 811, or after the Battle of UclÁs (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ndez-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ndez-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.

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