Convivencia as "Cultural Openness:"
Examining Christian Visigothic Churches in al-Andalus

Harrison Grant Final Paper
Advisor: Professor David Gies

John B. Brake
CLAS 2018
Submitted April 2017

Abstract

The six Christian Visigothic churches still standing in southern Spain and Portugal symbolize the unique interfaith dynamic that existed during the Muslim occupation of al-Andalus from 711 to 1492. These structures confound the historical narrative that Christianity and its practitioners were excluded from public life in Muslim Iberia, as well as the assumption that Christians—even those who did not convert to Islam—assimilated to Muslim culture and Islamic forms of artistic expression. These churches propose a dual mystery because (1) they were not destroyed by the Muslim invaders, and (2) they were not updated in the hybrid *Mozarabic* style that came to dominate Christian architecture in al-Andalus. The overlooked stories of these structures support a narrative of the Muslim occupation as a remarkable period of interfaith cultural openness.

0. Foreword and Acknowledgments

This research project has been quite an adventure. I explored novel evidence in the uncharted corners of a well-mapped historical debate. Put simply, the six Visigothic Christian churches that were the focus of this project have never been interpreted contextually, to provide clues about life in medieval Iberia. It has been rewarding to have my interest in these structures validated by their clear relevance to such important questions as, "How tolerant were the Moors?" and "How much freedom did the Christian population of al-Andalus actually have?"[1] These questions are not merely of historical interest; in the modern age, interfaith tolerance remains as elusive as ever.

This project was an adventure in more than just the intellectual or metaphorical sense. I traveled throughout remote parts of southern Spain and Portugal, by car, for the better part of a month trying to find the six Visigothic Christian churches that have survive there. In two cases, I arrived to find only partially-excavated ruins. But in four cases, the churches were phenomenally preserved, and various cultural commissions (regional, national, and European) had archived detailed information about their histories, information which was critical to my research.

Even these four churches were difficult to find. I logged over 5,500 kilometers from Toledo to Granada to Braga and back, with plenty of wrong turns in between. I was not the first person to for whom these churches were difficult to find. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Count of Cedillo described his own journey to Santa María de Melque, outside of Toledo:

---

[1] A note on terms. I will refer to the Moors and (Andalusian) Muslims interchangeably unless specifying a context outside of medieval Iberia.

…tras un viaje que tiene poco de cómodo, particularmente desde la importante villa de Gálvez, en que, abandonándose la carretera que de Toledo conduce a Navahermosa y Los Navalmorales, se atraviesa por pésimos caminos, que más bien son sendas, una árida comarca en que abundan encrucijadas y peñascales, y desde la que, para mayor confusión del viajero, no se divisa ni un pueblo. (…after a journey that has little comfort, particularly after the important village of Gálvez, where the road that leads from Toledo to Navahermosa and Los Navalmorales ends, Toledo is spanned by very poor roads, which are really paths, in an arid region where there are many crossroads and rocky hills from which, for the greater confusion of the traveler, it is impossible to see a single village.) [2]

A century after the Count visited Melque, the routes there have not improved much, and this was one of the most accessible churches I visited. Still, while hard to access, these churches were well preserved and often had many resources attached to them. The preservation and study of these buildings was made possible by, and is a great testament to, the European Union's National Operational Programme on Culture, which provides funding to regional cultural bodies for the preservation of sites deemed of extraordinary significance to the cultural development and history of Europe. These Visigothic churches— all of them between twelve- and fifteen-hundred years old— certainly qualify. My project would not have been possible without the preservation and maintenance efforts of organizations like the Diputación Cultural de Toledo and the Andalusian Ministry of Culture.

---

[2] Conde de Cedillo, "Un monumento desconocido: Santa María de Melque," *Revista Cultural Española*, 4 (August 1907): 815.

On a more personal level, I would like to thank several people without whom my research would have been impossible. Chief among these is my advisor, Professor David Gies, who provided invaluable support, feedback, and logistical help from the genesis of this project through its fulfillment. Professor Gies's exceptional knowledge of Spain and Spanish history helped me both to sharpen my research question and to plan for an ambitious, fast-paced experience abroad. I would also like to thank Professor Michael Gerli who provided advice early on in the process, and Sra. Miriam Font Ugalde of the Escuela de Estudios Árabes in Granada for her help in connecting me with various resources and experts in Visigothic architecture.

One advantage of this project to me has been the opportunity to interact with a rich, active, and discursive literature about the validity of "convivencia" (or "living-togetherness") as a historical frame for the nearly eight centuries during which Muslims ruled much of the Iberian Peninsula. Yet while this literature has frequently considered the symbolic, social, and political value of religious art and architecture, it has mostly focused on works realized during the occupation while ignoring the relatively few and humble Christian churches constructed by the Visigoths centuries beforehand. Art historians and scholars of medieval architecture have studied Visigothic churches for their artistic, architectural, and aesthetic value.[3] Scholars of convivencia have examined major works of Islamic and Mozarabic architecture, such as the Great Mosque of Córdoba, as telling examples of cultural syncretism. Yet no one has combined these two veins of scholarship to ask, "What happened to the Christian churches that the Moors found in their

---

[3] See, for example, Dodds, Jerrilynn Denise, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1990. Print.

4

newly conquered Iberian territories, and what does the fate of these religious buildings say about the (in)tolerance of the occupiers?" That is the question this project aims to answer.

I.   Introduction: Christian Churches and "Cultural Openness"

In 711, Muslim armies from the Maghreb region in North Africa crossed what are now known as the Straights of Gibraltar and invaded the Iberian Peninsula. The Moors, as these North African Muslims were called, quickly overwhelmed the Christian Visigoths, who had ruled the region they called "Hispania" since the fifth century. Within a few years, the Visigoth armies had been swept from the entire peninsula save a small Christian stronghold in the mountainous north, what is today Asturias. The Moors soon seemed poised to eradicate the remnants of this resistance until, in 722, the Visigoth nobleman Pelagius won a striking victory at the battle of Covadonga, launching the famed "Reconquista" of Iberia, where the Muslims established a series of powerful and culturally rich polities collectively known as al-Andalus.

The Reconquista lasted nearly eight-hundred years, but it did not progress linearly. Indeed, the conflicts in medieval Iberia were not dyadic, and they did not always cleave along religious lines. Christians fought Christians, often seeking the support of Muslims to do so. Muslims fought Muslims, and they too sought the support of Christian armies at times. Rather than a clear and constant clash between two opposing civilizations, the eight centuries of Muslim occupation were marked by the breakdown of ethnic and cultural distinctions through the processes of intermarriage and interfaith cultural melding.

This phenomenon— evident in art, literature, and especially architecture— has led some historians to posit that the Muslims of al-Andalus were remarkably tolerant towards their

5

Christian and Jewish subjects. Professor Américo Castro coined the term "convivencia" (or "living-togetherness) in 1948. Writing later in *The Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History*, Castro related religious freedom and the transference of Muslim culture to an accepting Christian population:

> Great masses of Christians became subject to the ruling Arabs, while retaining the liberty to practice the Christian religion, and these Christians—called Mozarabs— went on living under the protection of Moorish tolerance for four centuries… Christians by faith but Arabic with respect to certain tendencies and dispositions of their inner life.[4]

The conception of Muslim tolerance wrapped up in convivencia has consistently been linked to the predominance of hybrid modes of artistic expression and the respect this arrangement supposedly indicates. Consider how María Luisa Menocal, one of the most enthusiastic proponents of convivencia, puts it in her book *Ornament of the World*:

> This was the chapter in Europe's culture when Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived side by side and, despite their intractable differences and enduring hostilities, nourished a complex culture of tolerance… This only sometimes included guarantees of religious freedoms comparable to those we would expect in a modern "tolerant" state; rather, it found expression in the often unconscious acceptance that contradictions—within oneself, as well as within one's culture— could be positive and productive.[5]

---

[4] Américo Castro, *The Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History*, trans. W. King and S. Margaretten (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 214.

[5] María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created*

In hindsight, some of those contradictions are quite glaring. Mosques that were triumphantly erected on top of Christian churches highlighted key aspects of church architecture like the horseshoe arch that had not previously been a distinctive part of mosque construction. Cathedrals constructed as monuments to victory in holy war bore Arabic inscriptions praising Allah. Examples of cultural adaptation and syncretism were everywhere in al-Andalus, and scholars like Castro and Menocal have extrapolated from them to propose an ethic of interfaith openness and even tolerance.

Many revisionist scholars reject this narrative. Without rejecting evidence of syncretic adaptation, revisionists reinterpret it as the regular result of an eight-century occupation during which a highly cultured minority came to fill the cultural vacuum that had existed under the Visigoths. Critics essentially charge that convivencia fails to account for the ways in which Christians were systematically discriminated against— i.e. forced to pay the *jizya*, or special tax only levied against non-Muslims— and excluded from public life— i.e. barred, on pain of death, from proselytizing, proclaiming their faith in public, challenging the legitimacy of Mohammed or his teachings, ringing bells, or processing in funerals through Muslim neighborhoods.[6] Critics also point to the prominent executions of Christians who sought martyrdom by blaspheming the Prophet and his teachings in public. The unfailingly severe response of the Muslim authorities to any perceived offense against Islam is taken as proof that the rulers of al-Andalus were far from tolerant.

---

a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2002), 11.

[6] Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 12. See also Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 73.

The purpose here is not to elaborate fully the convivencia debate, nor to adjudicate it, but merely to establish its limits and outline as an important introduction to the research question at hand. The recent trend has been away from an enthusiastic embrace of convivencia and towards a more skeptical position along the lines elaborated above. The purpose of this essay is, in part, to arrest that trend by introducing some novel evidence in favor of convivencia. We should not reject completely the attribution of historical exceptionalism to medieval Iberia, especially with respect to a certain ethic of cultural openness that facilitated the transference of artistic modes across religious and ethnic lines.

The evidence offered in support of this contention consists of six Visigothic Christian churches scattered throughout the region once ruled as al-Andalus: Santa María Melque in San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo; María de Batres in Carranque, Toledo; Santa Lucía del Trampal in Alcuéscar, Cáceres; San Miguel de los Fresnos in Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz; Saint Frutuoso Chapel in Braga, Portugal; and Sao Giao in Nazaré, Portugal. These churches support the convivencia thesis in a number of compelling ways. First, they are bold, tangible declarations of Christian faith that survived for centuries under the control of Muslim occupiers who were supposedly intent on banning Christianity from the public sphere. If Iberian Muslims only tolerated Christianity to the extent that its practitioners remained in the shadows, why did they not seek to destroy these public manifestations of the Christian faith? Second, these churches were constructed prior to the Muslim invasion, by the Visigoths, and were not updated in the Mozarabic style that later proliferated. If Christians living under Muslim rule largely submitted to the aesthetic modes of the ruling elite, why were these churches not updated in the Mozarabic style, or at least abandoned in favor of structures that reflected Christians' new aesthetic preferences? These questions are puzzling and their answers are surely multifaceted. However, it

is clear that a radically skeptical view of interfaith interaction in medieval Iberia cannot fully account for these six churches and the surprising proposition, which they support, that life within Christian religious communities continued after the invasion much as it had been before.

Before elaborating the histories of these churches in detail, I will more fully sketch the history of medieval Iberia and the debate about convivencia. I will discuss the role that art and architecture play as evidence of convivencia and offer several prominent examples of cultural syncretism that reflect Menocal's point about the complexity and contradictions of al-Andalus. Finally, I will introduce the extant Visigothic churches I visited and establish the ways in which they symbolize the Andalusian ethic of cultural openness.

II.   Historical Overview: al-Andalus, 711 – 1492

When the Moors crossed the Straights of Gibraltar in 711, they were confronted by a Visigothic kingdom that was, in many ways, heir to the legacy of Rome. Though they had actually conquered Roman Hispania in the fifth century, the Visigoths had gradually been "Romanized" by the majority of the Peninsula's citizens, who had lived under Roman rule for centuries. By 711, the Visigoths had adopted the Roman language (Latin), religion (Christianity), and law (codified in the "Liber Iudiciorum").[7]

The Moors, on the other hand, were representatives of the Umayyad Caliphate, the second dynastic Islamic empire to emerge after the death of Muhammad in 632. The Arab and Berber tribesmen that comprised the Moorish armies had been gradually incorporated into the

---

[7] Edward James, ed., *Visigothic Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 9, 51, 139.

Caliphate and "Islamized" over the preceding century.[8] They were part of a civilization that dwarfed the contemporary kingdoms of Christian Europe in terms of military prowess and cultural complexity: the Umayyad dynasty controlled, at its apogee in the eight century, all of North Africa and the Middle East, including a large part of modern-day Turkey and Afghanistan, and constructed such architectural marvels as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Great Mosque of Damascus.[9] Deposed by the Abbasids in 749 – 750, the Umayyads fled Damascus and made their way west. By 756, Muslim forces under Umayyad leadership controlled roughly the southern two-thirds of the Iberian Peninsula. The Umayyads established a largely independent emirate centered in their capital of Córdoba, which became the cultural hub of Iberia and one of the world's most impressive cities, with over 500,000 citizens, 3,000 mosques, 300 public baths, and 1,000,000 volumes in its legendary library.[10] In contrast, it is estimated that no other European city had a population exceeding even 70,000 citizens during this period.[11] The Great Mosque of Córdoba, begun in 756, is widely considered an unsurpassed masterpiece of Islamic architecture. Equivalent Christian edifices— such as the Gothic cathedrals of Notre Dame, in Paris, and Westminster, in London— were not constructed until two and a half centuries later.

---

[8] Maribel Fierro, *'Abd al-Rahman III: The First Cordoban Caliph* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 8.

[9] Janina M. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in Al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 61.

[10] Ibid, 172-5.

[11] Tertius Chandler, *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census* (Lewiston, NY: Saint David's University Press, 1987), 15, 129.

The Emirate of Córdoba's cultural and military achievements allowed Emir Abd al-Rahman III to take a historic step in 929, when he proclaimed the fully independent Caliphate of Córdoba and challenged the Abbasid Caliphate centered in Baghdad for supremacy of the Muslim world. Until 1031— when internal divisions contributed to the Caliphate of Córdoba's dissolution— one of the few nuclei of Islamic art and politics, claiming spiritual authority over all the world's Muslims, was centered in modern-day Spain. The Umayyad caliphs Abd al-Rahman III and al-Hakam II held themselves to be direct representatives of the Prophet Muhammad in political and spiritual matters, and they were deeply committed to preserving, institutionalizing, and spreading Islam.[12]

This goal was complicated by dissension among Muslims themselves, including intense infighting among the Umayyad emirs, who wanted to centralize power in Córdoba, and the provincial Muslim rulers who were charged with garrisoning and governing most of the extensive Iberian territory. Indeed, when "Abd al-Rahman III ascended to the throne in 912[,] thirty years of rebellion throughout the peninsula had completely undermined Umayyad authority and reduced the dynasty's effective power to the capital city of Córdoba and its immediately surrounding region."[13] The Umayyads were also forced to deal with Islamic factionalism abroad, most notably in North Africa, where the Fatimids emerged as a breakaway Shi'a sect in the early tenth century. The Umayyads considered the Fatimids to be heretical, and devoted considerable resources to waging an ultimately unsuccessful campaign against them in the Maghreb.[14] In this environment of intense intra-Muslim struggle, Abd al-Rahman III, the first

---

[12] Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, 3, 9.

[13] Ibid, 8.

[14] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 37.

Córdoban caliph, prized unity and "articulated his legitimacy in terms of his prosecution of holy war, but more particularly, emphasized his aggressive defense of the faith and the community against deviance and factionalism."[15]

Crucially, the Umayyads apparently did not believe that being good and faithful Muslim rulers, or strong defenders of the Islamic faith, required them to exterminate the other Abrahamic religions throughout al-Andalus. They apparently adhered to two passages in the Qur'an that regulate the treatment of Jews and Christians. One verse, in part, declares that, "Any who believe in God / And the Last Day, / And work righteousness, / Shall have their reward / With their Lord: on them / Shall be no fear no shall they grieve."[16] That is not to say, of course, that fighting along religious lines did not take place. Christians and Muslim armies repeatedly battled for control of important cities and territories, and while the Christian kingdoms of the north gradually won territory for themselves, by 1000 AD the Moors still controlled over two-thirds of the peninsula, having repeatedly captured and sacked important Christian cities including Barcelona, Léon, Pamplona, and Santiago de Compostela.[17] Yet medieval geopolitics was more complicated than the binary "Christian vs. Muslim" dynamic that contemporary readings of the Reconquista often suggest. The Muslim emirs and caliphs that ruled al-Andalus had to contend with considerable dissension in their own ranks, and to repair the schisms within Islam at large. Furthermore, many of the weaker Christian kingdoms in the north sought protection from intense

---

[15] Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, 25.

[16] Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim*, 7.

[17] Ulick Ralph Burke, *From the Earliest Times to the Death of Ferdinand the Catholic*, vol. 1, *A History of Spain* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1895), 128-9.

infighting by allying themselves with powerful Muslims.[18] Thus the lines dividing friends and enemies were blurry and prone to shifting.

The cultural and religious lines were perhaps even more blurred. Islamic culture—art, architecture, science, and language—quickly permeated the Iberian Peninsula, especially (but not entirely) where Muslims ruled directly. An entire class of people, the Mozarabs, maintained their Christian religion but nonetheless adopted the Muslims' language and culture, traveling throughout and further Islamizing Iberia.[19] It is telling that the legendary Christian king Alfonso X, who lived two centuries *after* the Caliphate of Córdoba dissolved, is most revered for his efforts to have the wealth of Islamic thought in astronomy, medicine, mathematics, and history translated from Arabic into Spanish, thus allowing the Western world access to the fabulous advances that had been achieved by Muslim thinkers in Iberia and the rest of the Islamic world.

Much of this cultural melding resulted from the voluntary conversion of Christians to Islam. Sometimes conversion was intended to avoid the special taxes levied on non-Muslim religious groups, but often it simply was due to intermarriage or cultural appropriation. Whatever the impetus, "Within a few generations, a vigorous rate of conversion to Islam from among the great variety of older ethnic groups, and from the Christian and pagan populations, made the Andalusian Muslim community not only vastly larger, but one of thoroughly intermarried and intermixed ethnic and cultural origins."[20] There was "conmingling of languages, religions, and styles of every sort—food, clothes, songs, [and] buildings."[21] With respect to architecture, the

---

[18] Burke, *From the Earliest Times*, 117.

[19] Ibid, 115.

[20] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 14.

[21] Ibid, 41.

Mozarabs adopted many of the styles of the Moors, including the Arabic calligraphy that commonly adorns the facades of mosques and Moorish palaces. For their part, the Moors adopted the Visigothic "horseshoe arch" ("arco de herradura" in Spanish), which has become a defining characteristic of Islamic buildings. Menocal describes this architectural syncretism with respect to the Great Mosque of Córdoba, the most iconic building in al-Andalus:

> The singular new look is also a distinct and loud echo of the earlier forms of this land and its characteristic styles: the horseshoe arch that has come to seem to us prototypically Islamic was representative of the indigenous church-building tradition of pre-Muslim Spain, and the doubled-up arches, with their distinctive and almost hallucinatory red-and-white pattern, are visible in Roman aqueducts, one prominent in Merida, no great distance from Córdoba.[22]

These are merely a few examples of undebated historical phenomena, namely cultural melding, transference, and syncretism.

Perhaps even more surprising, religious syncretism took place as well. While many Andalusian Christians converted to Islam or emigrated to the Christian north, many also remained in Muslim-occupied Iberia and continued to practice their religion freely, at least under the Umayyads.[23] The hybrid Mozarabic culture both incorporated elements of Islamic culture, such as Arabic, and retained elements of Visigothic culture, such as the liturgical rite, which was

---

[22] Ibid, 60.

[23] After more fundamentalist sects arrived in the mid-eleventh century, it was not always guaranteed that Christians could openly practice their religion. These sects—known as the Almoravids and Almohads—sometimes forced the Peoples of the Book to convert, and in fact viewed the Umayyads as theologically corrupt.

gradually abandoned in other parts of Christendom during the high Middle Ages. Thus, ironically, the political situation in al-Andalus insulated and preserved elements of Visigothic culture, including the liturgy, which became known as the Mozarabic Rite. According to the Cultural Ministry of Toledo (Diputación Cultural de Toledo),

> La vieja iglesia hispana, su rito y buena parte del saber relacionado con el cristianismo antiguo sobrevivieron gracias a comunidades de creyentes radicadas en ciudades como Toledo o en monasterios rurales… que recibieron el nombre de mozárabes. Estas comunidades gozaron de una amplia libertad religiosa que, curiosamente, empezó a peligrar con la reconquista de la ciudad de Toledo en el año 1085 por Alfonso VI. Su victoria supuso la llegada de las influencias ultrapirenáicas y, muy especialmente, de las procedentes de Roma que planteó un auténtico pulso con las comunidades mozárabes toleradas al tratar de suprimir su rito relacionado con la vieja iglesia hispana, a la que se relacionaba con determinadas corrientes heterodoxas. (Much of the knowledge related to the old church of Hispania, its rite, and early Christianity survived thanks to communities of the faithful in cities like Toledo or rural monasteries... These communities enjoyed broad religious freedoms that, curiously, came under threat with the reconquest of the city of Toledo by Alfonso VI in 1085. His victory signaled the arrival of influences from outside the Iberian Peninsula, especially from Rome, that made a major effort to suppress the rituals of the old church of Hispania, which were associated with various heterodoxies.)[24]

---

[24] "Archaeological Investigation in Melque," Museum Infographic, 2016, Santa María de Melque, Diputación Cultural de Toledo, San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo.

After the Reconquista, papal authorities set about instituting the Roman rite across Iberia. However, the Mozarabic rite has been maintained across southern Spain and Portugal and is still practiced in many of the region's most iconic cathedrals, including in Toledo.

Américo Castro points to another fascinating possible instance of Islamic influence on Christianity, with respect to the mysticism that became a defining element of sixteenth-century Spanish Catholicism. Scholars such as Castro and Miguel Asín Palacios have endeavored to "probe beneath the surface of the history of religious sensibility" to demonstrate that "the mysticism of the most exquisite of mystics, St. John of the Cross, is not to be explained outside the mystic *Shadhiliya* tradition preserved by the Castilian Moriscos [i.e. descendants of the Moors]."[25] Thus Moorish influence on Iberian Christianity expressed itself not only with respect to the celebration of mass in Arabic and similar stylistic elements, but also with respect to the unique development of theology and faith.

This story of syncretism and blurred lines – geopolitical, cultural, artistic, architectural, and religious – is necessary to dispel the common perception of the Reconquista as a linear and binary clash of opposing, separate, and incompatible civilizations. The clear evidence of cultural melding and mutual acceptance of difference is itself extraordinary, and it has, more than anything else, drawn scholars to posit the existence of convivencia, "living-togetherness," and its constitutive ethics of respect and openness.

III.   Convivencia: The Fault Lines of Debate

Prominent proponents of convivencia have observed the striking evidence of multidimensional syncretism in al-Andalus and derived from it a narrative of tolerance, respect,

---

[25] Castro, *The Spaniards: An Introduction*, 217.

and openness. Thus Menocal calls the Moors "near-captives of the culture they had conquered"[26] and, perhaps most clearly, writes that "[s]tylistic openness, the capacity to look around, assimilate, and reshape promiscuously, was chief among the cardinal virtues of Islamic style, and had come west as a key part of the Umayyad aesthetic."[27] Castro made much the same point with respect to "[t]he Christian peoples who finally came to be called Spaniards[, who] were the result of an attitude of submission and wonder in the face of a culturally superior enemy, and of the effort to overcome this very position of inferiority."[28] In many ways bitter enemies engaged in a centuries-long series of religious conflicts, the Muslims and Christians of medieval Iberia were simultaneously (and consciously) open to appropriating for themselves certain elements of each other's culture.

Proponents of convivencia go even further, positing that this ethic was reflected in the tolerant policies of the Moors towards the *dhimmi*, often called "covenanted peoples" or "Peoples of the Book." A *dhimma* is a contract between Muslims and members of the other Abrahamic faiths recognizing their common belief in God and their shared theological roots. This was the primary basis on which Iberian Christians and Jews were allowed to practice their faith in lands occupied by Muslims. As Menocal writes,

> In principle, all Islamic polities were (and are) required by Quranic injunction not
> to harm the dhimmi, to tolerate the Christians and Jews living in their midst. But
> beyond that fundamental prescribed posture, al-Andalus was, from these
> beginnings, the site of memorable and distinctive interfaith relations. Hence the

---

[26] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 42.

[27] Ibid, 60.

[28] Castro, *The Spaniards: An Introduction*, 215.

Jewish community rose from the ashes of an abysmal existence under the Visigoths to the point that the emir who proclaimed himself caliph in the tenth century had a Jew as his foreign minister. Fruitful intermarriage among the various cultures and the quality of cultural relations with the dhimmi were vital aspects of Andalusian identity as it was cultivated over these first centuries. It was, in fact, part and parcel of the Umayyad particularity vis-á-vis the rest of the Islamic world.[29]

This is an enthusiastic and eloquent instantiation of convivencia, such as Menocal's book *Ornament of the World* offers repeatedly. Christians and Jews were allowed to practice their religions freely, and many even rose to positions of prominence within Muslim lands, which were permeated by a sense of common identity and cultural familiarity.

Yet even Menocal often describes the relationship between Islamic and Christian culture in the violent terms of a "culture war" that saw, "every day, [a] tide of converts [moving] from the Church toward this new religion of those who were fully and more powerfully in control…"[30] Thus she unwittingly strays into the territory of skeptics who reject the link between cultural blending and an ethic/politic of tolerance. In his detailed account *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, Kenneth Baxter Wolf speaks of the "ambiguous" status of Christians and Jews in al-Andalus. "Though tolerated and protected on the basis of their monotheism, they suffered political subjection and the stigma of a special tax, the jizya, as a penalty for their rejection of Mohammed's prophethood."[31] In other words, the dhimmi were protected, but not respected.

---

[29] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 30.

[30] Ibid, 66.

[31] Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim*, 7.

They were forbidden from publicly expressing their faith by ringing bells, displaying crosses, building new churches or synagogues, praying in public, or proselytizing. These two last transgressions prescribed death, as did anything perceived as blasphemous against the Prophet or his "one true faith." Wolf offers several arresting accounts of the Muslims' decidedly intolerant responses to blasphemy:

> In the spring of 850, a priest named Perfectus was arrested and later executed for publicly expressing his opinions about the errors of Islam to a group of Muslims. Months later a Christian merchant names Joannes suffered a severe lashing, public humiliation, and a long prison term for invoking the prophet's name as he sold his wares in the marketplace.[32]

Similarly, in 851, "when eight Christians in five days came forward to pronounce judgment on Islam, [Emir Abd al-Rahman II] reacted swiftly by ordering the arrest of the clerical leadership of the local Christian community."[33] Such martyrdoms were not anomalies. They began essentially as acts of individual rebellion in the early ninth century when a Córdoban Christian named Isaac openly defamed the prophet to an Islamic judge in front of the emiral palace. This began a spate of forty-eight such martyrdoms that took place in Córdoba from 851 to 859. Detailed primary accounts were related by Saint Elogius of Córdoba, who was later martyred himself for publicly insulting the Prophet.[34]

---

[32] Ibid, 12.

[33] Ibid, 16.

[34] Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 57-8.

These martyrdoms are one of the most oft-cited examples of Muslim intolerance and interfaith violence that are taken as endemic. Indeed, they seem to undermine the most optimistic tenet of convivencia, i.e. that al-Andalus witnessed a universal (or nearly universal) ethic of interfaith respect. Yet again, the evidence is not quite so clear. Consider the court official's response to St. Elogius when the latter intentionally denounced Islam:

> 'If stupid and idiotic individuals have been carried away to such lamentable ruin, what is it that compels you… to commit yourself to this deadly ruin, suppressing the nature love of life? Hear me, I beseech you, I beg you, lest you fall headlong to destruction. Say something in this the hour of your need, so that afterward you may be able to practice your faith.'[35]

According to both Wolf and Lowney, the Muslim authorities frequently offered would-be martyrs the opportunity to claim drunkenness or momentary insanity as an excuse for their blasphemy, which would have spared their lives. And according to the German nun Hrowwitha, who visited Córdoba in the tenth century, it was well known that, while Jews and Christians might continue to practice their faiths, the Muslims upheld the single condition that blaspheme against the Prophet would not be tolerated.[36] In light of these caveats, the execution of the Christian martyrs appears much more ambiguous as evidence of Muslim intolerance. Furthermore, "though diligent in their enforcement of laws against blasphemy, the emirs… were willing to let more venial violations of the ban on public displays of Christianity go unchecked. Bells rang in Córdoba to indicate the canonical hours for the benefit of the faithful" and

---

[35] Ibid, 59.

[36] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 70.

"Christian funeral processions passed through Muslim neighborhoods."[37] Yet such forbearance was curtailed at times, such as when Muhammed I responded to a spate of martyrdoms by "reactivating" a dhimma restriction that "had long gone unenforced," namely that "newly constructed churches be destroyed, as well as anything in the way of refinements that might adorn the old churches added since the time of the Arab occupation."[38] Clearly, the dynamics of (in)tolerance were more complex than an isolated consideration of the martyrdom movement would allow.

Such complexity may seem to thwart efforts to construct a general narrative of religious tolerance in al-Andalus. The social and political history is complicated, and it seems that the best one can do is to identify moments of tolerance and moments of intolerance as separate phenomena stemming from particular circumstances. A relatively limited, middle-of-the-road version of convivencia explains this inconsistency by couching the Muslim policy towards the dhimmi in prudential, political terms. Put simply, the Muslims were, at least through the tenth century, a relatively small elite ruling over a population that did not share its religion or culture. Mass conversion of that population was not undertaken because it would have been impossible. Instead, Christians and Jews were "tolerated," not because the Muslims respected these Peoples of the Book, but because they could not possibly do anything about them. Wolf articulates this theory, arguing that

> The Qur'an was not the only, or even the most significant, factor influencing Muslim policy toward subject religious communities. The fact that the Muslims were vastly outnumbered by the Christians in the Mediterranean basin limited

---

[37] Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim*, 12.

[38] Ibid, 17.

21

their options. They could not, even if their scriptures had demanded it, effect a mass conversion of local populations. On the contrary, their early policies suggest that the Muslim rulers and jurists were more concerned with protecting their own people from the potentially polluting effects of close contact with large Christian populations.[39]

In this view, the Moors practiced toleration, not tolerance, meaning that they allowed other religious groups to exist but did not really respect them or intend to acknowledge them socially, politically, or culturally.[40]

This interpretation of convivencia has certain advantages over the emphatic, enthusiastic version articulated by Castro and Menocal. For example, it can better incorporate notable incidents of intolerance and religious violence. But the middle-of-the-road version jettisons one of the most interesting and appealing elements of the emphatic version, namely that the clearly-documented cultural syncretism that took place in al-Andalus was not subconscious or

---

[39] Ibid, 8. See also Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain*, 169, as quoted in Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*, 59.

[40] See Kenneth Baxter Wolf, "Convivencia and the Ornament of the World," in *Revisiting Convivencia in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Connie L. Scarborough (Newark, DE: Juan de Cuesta, 2014), 114. Wolf criticizes Menocal specifically for only focusing on snapshots of Iberian history while ignoring both widespread instances of popular violence against Christians and Jews on the part of Muslims, and failing to take into account "how thin the Muslim occupation actually was and to realize that, far from trying to convert the locals, the invaders were preoccupied with protecting their own nascent religious identity form excessive contact with the Christian majority."

accidental, but the result of conscious cultural curiosity and a conspicuous ethic of openness that found expression in the melding of various forms of artistic expression. It may be possible to describe the relationship between Andalusian Muslims, Jews, and Christians in purely prudential/political terms, but that narrative is incomplete because it fails to account for culture. Indeed, there is ample evidence of a genuine cultural appreciation that existed between the Muslim minority and the Christian majority, which bolsters the convivencia narrative. The remainder of this essay will be dedicated to elaborating certain pieces of that evidence that are especially compelling from among the period's architecture.

Architecture is, of course, only one mode of artistic expression. Yet that mode lends itself particularly well to this study for a number of reasons. First, buildings are durable, and many of the most significant monuments constructed during the high medieval ages are still standing today and thus capable of being examined and studied. Second, major, monumental, architecture in the medieval period was most often religious, in the form of churches, cathedrals, and mosques. This establishes a direct relationship between these buildings-as-works-of-art and questions of religious tolerance. Not only did religion motivate the construction of these buildings, but they were intended as political monuments to the dominant religion of the land and/or victory in holy war. They were historically inhabited by congregants, and still are today. Thus religious architecture provides a unique space in which to observe artistic and cultural syncretism and parse its symbolic and historical significance.

IV.   Religious Architecture of Medieval Iberia: Cultural Syncretism Embodied

Historians have long recognized architecture as key to navigating and interpreting the evolution of culture. Architecture provides particular insight into medieval Iberia because of the

clear transference of styles between the Visigoths, the Moors, the later Christian kingdoms. The remainder of this essay examines new evidence in this vein, namely four Christian Visigothic churches that survived in Islamic Iberia and still stand today. Before introducing these churches, however, it is helpful to review some of the better known examples of architectural syncretism in major religious and political buildings throughout the peninsula. Especially prominent examples are found in the three cultural centers of Islamic Iberia: Córdoba, the Umayyad emiral/caliphal capital; Toledo, the former Visigothic capital; and Seville, the capital of the later Almohad polity in the twelfth century. Each of these three cities boasts impressive buildings constructed before, during, and after the Islamic occupation that highlight the melding of cultures and the transference of artistic styles across faith lines.

The clear point of departure for this (and any) discussion of architectural syncretism in medieval Iberia is the horseshoe arch (Spanish: arco de herradura), found in many of the most striking churches, cathedrals, mosques, and palaces of al-Andalus. Perhaps the most famous example is the Great Mosque of Córdoba— to be discussed more fully below— with its distinctive doubled arches. Indeed, Muslim architects so embraced the horseshoe arch in their Andalusian constructions that it has come to be considered a quintessential element of Islamic style. "Horseshoe arches are those where the arch starts to curve inwards above the level of the capital or impost…" and while a few arches of "slightly horseshoe form" have been found in archeological sites in the Middle East dating to as early as the fourth century CE, "the area where horseshoe arches developed their characteristic form was in Spain and North Africa where they can be seen in the Great Mosque of Córdoba."[41] The cultural and historical significance of the Great Mosque of Córdoba should not be understated. It was the "principal mosque of Spain

---

[41] Andrew Peterson, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 24.

under the Umayyads," and expanded multiple times from 786 to 964 to reflect the "change in status of the Umayyad rulers from emirs to caliphs."[42] The most distinctive element of the mosque was, and continues to be, its veritable forest of internal arches, which give an impression of endlessness to the expansive mihrabs. In many ways, the Great Mosque of Córdoba and its horseshoe arches represent the pinnacle of Islamic architectural achievement in al-Andalus.

Yet the horseshoe arch had a presence in Visigothic Hispania that preceded the arrival of the Moors by centuries. As we shall see, some of the best preserved examples of Visigothic architecture contain multiple horseshoe arches that are nearly identical to the ones later incorporated by the Moors. All of the churches examined in this project contain examples of the horseshoe arch from the seventh or early eighth centuries. These sources are a "characteristic" feature of Visigothic church architecture.[43]

In effect, it was not until Muslim armies conquered the Iberian Peninsula and came into contact with Visigothic church architecture that Islamic architecture fully incorporated the horseshoe arch, later considered one of its iconic features. The "Moorish arch" (as the horseshoe arch is also called) may have found its most elegant and enduring expression in the construction of Islamic buildings like the Great Mosque of Córdoba, but it originated in its fully-developed form with the Visigoths two-hundred years before the first brick of the Great Mosque was laid.

This story of stylistic transference does not end with the Moorish appropriation of this one prominent element. Indeed, there is ample evidence of Moorish and Mozarabic influence on later Christian architecture. We have already seen how Christians living under Muslim control

---

[42] Ibid, 56.

[43] Kathleen Kuiper, "Visigothic art," in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2016), last modified September 6, 2007, accessed July 28, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/art/Visigothic-art.

during the eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries became increasingly Arabized, adopting Muslim culture and elements of the Islamic aesthetic. Gradually, these Mozarabs found themselves back under Christian control after they emigrated north or after Christian armies succeeded in reconquering large swaths of al-Andalus. The Mozarabs then played an important role in spreading the influence of Muslim culture even into the Christian populations that never lived directly under Muslim control. This transference of Muslim culture is of course evident in Christian architecture that was undertaken in important cities like Toledo, Seville, and Córdoba, even centuries after they were reconquered.

Consider the Cathedral of Toledo, which was begun in 1226, more than a century after Alfonso VI of Castile reconquered the old Visigothic capital in 1085. The cathedral was built on the same site where a Visigothic church and mosque has successively stood, and it incorporated materials from both of these structures. Most notably, the cathedral's choir contains red marble columns from the mihrab of the mosque.[44] Furthermore, the main chapel and ambulatory both contain the characteristic doubled, intertwined arches of the caliphal style.[45] These borrowed elements from Islamic architecture seem especially discordant given the historical context in which the Cathedral of Toledo was built: as most Gothic cathedrals in Iberia, it was intended as a monument to the victory of Christianity over Islam in the Reconquista. Among the kings who are commemorated as statutes at the cathedral's main altar is a humble priest who fought with the Christian armies to reclaim Toledo. At the end of the fifteenth century, after the conquest of

---

[44] "Archaeological Investigation in Melque," infographic.

[45] Pedro Navascués Palacio and Carlos Sarthou Carreres, *Catedrales de España* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1999), 28.

Granada effectively ended the Reconquista, the choir was further decorated with scores of wooden reliefs depicting the surrender of that last Muslim stronghold. These reliefs are less than one hundred meters from the cathedral's most prominent chapel, which since the fifteenth century has accommodated the Mozarabic Rite. In sum, the Cathedral of Toledo presents us with a paradox common to similar buildings across Iberia, namely that it incorporates both Islamic architectural styles and the distinctive materials of a former mosque, while consciously proclaiming victory over Islam. The paradox certainly evokes the point that both Castro and Menocal make about "cultural captivity." Even in victory, Iberian Christians found themselves incapable of fully escaping the pervasive influence of Moorish culture.

This same phenomenon is evident in another important Andalusian city, Seville, which was reconquered by Ferdinand III of Castile in 1248. The main Gothic cathedral was begun shortly thereafter on the site of the mosque that had marked the center of Almohad power in Iberia when they established Seville as the center of their caliphate in the mid-twelfth century.[46] Ferdinand's tomb – which his son, Alfonso X, had constructed in the Cathedral of Seville – is inscribed in four languages: Latin, Castilian (Spanish), Hebrew, and Arabic.[47] So ingrained was the Arabic language (a critical component of Islamic culture) in the Iberian experience that it marked the tomb of a warrior king whose life had been dedicated to conquering the Moors and extirpating their religion from the Iberian Peninsula.

Another striking example of architectural syncretism in Seville is the Alcazar— the

---

[46] Antonio Collantes de Terán Sánchez, "Seville, City of," in *Medieval Iberia*, ed. E. Michael Gerli, paperback ed., Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8 (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015), 751.

[47] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 47.

fortress, palace, and residence of the Christian monarchs. The "Façade of the king Don Pedro" at the Alcazar is the "great Mozarab contribution" to Seville's architecture, in which "Arab and Christian design elements perfectly coexist."[48] An inscription on the façade, in Arabic, pronounces "The Empire for Allah" and declares that, "The highest, noblest, and most powerful conqueror Don Pedro, by God's grace King of Castile and Leon, has caused these Alcazares and these palaces and these facades to be built, which was done in the year 1364."[49] Again, the inconsistency of celebrating Christian dominance over Islam with buildings that promoted Islamic designs – including Islamic fresco patterns and Arabic inscriptions praising Allah – apparently never occurred to the Christian rulers, perhaps because the Andalusian ethic of cultural openness allowed them to separate aesthetics and politics, or perhaps because the process of aesthetic appropriation was so complete that the Christians identified these styles as their own.

However, the boldest example of architectural syncretism in al-Andalus was undoubtedly the Great Mosque of Córdoba, which was constructed beginning in the mid-eighth century and ultimately expanded during the apogee of caliphal Umayyad power in the late tenth century. When Christians reconquered Córdoba in 1236, they began to construct a Cathedral on the site of the Great Mosque that fully incorporated two of its Mihrabs and maintained its warren of iconic doubled columns and horseshoe arches. The Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba perfectly demonstrates the process of cultural melding in al-Andalus and the symbolic significance of

---

[48] Ibid.

[49] For translation and transcription see "Archaeological Investigation in Melque," infographic.

religious architecture.[50] The mosque was originally built on the site of a Visigothic church, the Basilica of St. Vincent, which the Moors shared with Córdoba's Christian population for the first half-century of the city's occupation, until the Christians voluntarily gave up their claim to half of the church in exchange for a large cash payment and permission to rebuild another church outside of Córdoba's walls.[51] This episode has been of particular interest to many scholars of convivencia. One scholar has written that,

> Purportedly constructed on the site of a church, the Great Mosque of Córdoba became a visible symbol of the dominance of Islam on the peninsula, particularly under Umayyad rule. The story of its foundation reports that the conquerors first divided and shared the space of a church in the city with the Christian population until Abd al-Rahman I bought out the Christians and razed the building in order to build a more substantial mosque. This story commemorates the [emir's] sponsorship of the faith as it established his just treatment of the Christian population.[52]

The same scholar connects the emirs' just treatment of the Christian population to the appropriation of Christian designs in their own religious buildings and monuments: "The use of local materials and the incorporation of elements from church architecture, such as the horseshoe

---

[50] This significance was recognized by the Muslims themselves, whose prohibition on the construction of new churches evidenced a sensitivity too religious buildings as the "practical and symbolic witness[es] of cultural life and practice." See Dodd, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain,* 61

[51] Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim*, 6.

[52] Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, 61.

arch, gave the mosque a distinctive quality and reflected the Umayyads' adaptation to a new environment."[53] An attitude of political tolerance and an orientation to cultural openness thus go hand in hand. Menocal makes a similar point with respect to the Great Mosque in *Ornament of the World*, writing, as we have seen, that

> The singular new [architectural] look is also a distinct and loud echo of the earlier forms of this land and its characteristic styles: the horseshoe arch that has come to seem to us prototypically Islamic was representative of the indigenous church-building tradition of pre-Muslim Spain, and the doubled-up arches, with their distinctive and almost hallucinatory red-and-white pattern, are visible in Roman aqueducts, one prominent in Mérida, no great distance from Córdoba.[54]

The story of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, then, reveals not only that the Moors treated their Christian subjects equitably, but that they were open to adopting cultural and stylistic elements form the conquered population. This is incompatible with the narrative that the Umayyads merely tolerated the Peoples of the Book because they were practically incapable of converting them to Islam.

This general review of some of the most iconic examples of Islamic and Mozarabic architecture has demonstrated striking instances of cultural syncretism and pointed towards an ethic of cultural openness in al-Andalus. Building styles (and sometimes, building materials themselves) passed from Visigothic Christians to Muslims and back to Christians again after the Reconquista, thanks to hybrid groups like the Mozarabs and Mudejars who served as cultural bridges. We should note, though, that such transference did not only occur between Muslims and

---

[53] Ibid, 62.

[54] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 60.

Christians. Jews occupied a slightly different position in medieval Iberia because they were always and everywhere a minority religious group. However, archeological and architectural evidence suggests that Jews also incorporated key elements of Visigothic church architecture, including the horseshoe arch, into their own religious buildings, including the extant synagogue of Santa Maria la Blanca in Toledo.[55] A particularly clear demonstration of the complicated and multifaceted cultural exchange that convivencia proponents like Castro and Menocal theorize is the fact that at least four Sephardic (i.e. Iberian Jewish) synagogues from medieval Iberia are technically considered "Mudejar," i.e. pertaining to an "artistic style and tradition of construction that was developed by the interaction of Muslim patrons and craftsmen, and then appropriated by new Christian rulers and patrols."[56] In other words, Jews, whose own position within Christian society was tenuous and insecure throughout the medieval period, also copied certain elements of Muslim design that had been adopted in Christian lands.

This section has sought to contextualize the importance of architecture, and religious buildings in particular, as evidence of cultural transference, appropriation, and syncretism in medieval Iberia with the goal of demonstrating that relatively simple political oppositions (such as Christian vs. Muslim) are often subverted by the significantly more complex processes of aesthetic expression. Thus Muslim occupiers who sought to memorialize the dominance of Islam did so by appropriating a characteristic of Visigothic church architecture, and Christians who sought to mythologize and monumentalize their own victories in the holy wars of the Reconquista incorporated Arabic script and calligraphy, the geometric designs typical of Islamic

---

[55] Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynn D. Dodds, eds., *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: George Braziller, 1992), 115.

[56] Ibid, 114.

tilework, and, in the Cathedral of Córdoba, even the better part of the Great Mosque itself. These are the "contradictions" and "complexities" from which Menocal extrapolates an ethic of openness in al-Andalus. Whether such extrapolation is warranted remains up for debate; the evidence so far presented cannot fully dispel the skeptic's assertion that most of medieval Iberian history was marked by interfaith violence and intolerance, despite remarkable moments of respect and cultural melding.

V.   Visigothic Christian Churches: New Evidence of Convivencia

This stalemate in the convivencia debate motivates us to examine new sorts of evidence. When historians have considered architecture as a window into medieval Iberia, they have largely focused on buildings that the Muslims built after the invasion or that the Christians built after the Reconquista. Historians have largely ignored the Christian churches built by the Visigoths in the seventh and early eighth centuries. Indeed, a few of these churches not only survived the Muslim occupation, but are still standing today throughout southern Spain and Portugal. For this project, I looked at six churches in particular that are situated in the part of the Iberian Peninsula that was occupied by Muslims for most of a millenium. They are Santa María Melque in San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo; María de Batres in Carranque, Toledo; Santa Lucía del Trampal in Alcuéscar, Cáceres; San Miguel de los Fresnos in Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz; Saint Frutuoso Chapel in Braga, Portugal; and Sao Giao in Nazaré, Portugal. Some of these churches have been studied by architectural and art historians to establish when they were founded, note important characteristics, and catalogue any later additions or detractions. Such studies, while intensive, have failed to connect seventh-century Visigothic churches to the debate about convivencia in the following centuries.

Two points immediately stand out about these churches with respect to convivencia. First, they were not destroyed by the Muslims at the time of the invasion or in the subsequent centuries. Second, the relatively primitive Visigothic structures were mostly not updated in the Mozarabic style. In conjunction, these initial observations challenge the skeptical views that (i) Christians were completely excluded from public life in Islamic Iberia, and (ii) convivencia is merely a misinterpretation of Moorish cultural dominance whereby the politically stronger group also succeeded in imposing its aesthetic and religion upon the majority of its subjects. This section will first briefly review the history of the Visigoths in Iberia. It will then introduce the six Visigothic churches as independent cases before drawing general conclusions about their existence under Muslim rule and relating the findings back to the larger debate about convivencia.

V.i: The Visigoths in Iberia, 409-711

The Visigoths were a Germanic tribe (one of many collectively referred to as Goths) that achieved military prominence in Western Europe during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, especially with their defeat of the Romans in 378 at Adrianople and the sacking of Rome in 410. Over the next century, the Visigoths defeated the Romans in Iberia and came to control the entire Iberian Peninsula. Later, during the 570s, the Visigothic king Leovigild established the capital in Toledo.[57] In 587, Leovigild's son Recaccared converted to Catholicism, motivating the ruling

---

[57] Roger Collins, "Visigothic Kingdom, Toulouse and Toledo," in *Medieval Iberia*, ed. E. Michael Gerli, paperback ed., Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8 (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015), 964.

elite to adopt the religion of the peninsula's Latin-speaking majority.[58] This paved the way for a "new common ethnic identity" to form between the Hispano-Romans and the Goths, who had remained largely separate during the sixth century. During the seventh century, the Visigoths were able to consolidate more fully their control of the peninsula, and it was during this time that most the extant Visigothic churches were constructed. However, a combination of dwindling external military threats and a series of civil wars at the beginning of the eighth century meant that "the general preparedness of the army to face invasion from Africa in 711 by Arab and Berber forces was not great."[59] When the Moors invaded, they did not encounter much resistance and quickly defeated the Visigoths.

V.ii: Visigothic Christian Churches, Case Selection

As already noted, the invading Muslim armies did not destroy all of the Christian churches that they found throughout the Visigothic kingdom. Four such churches still stand throughout the region that was occupied by the Muslims for centuries,[60] and two other churches have been identified by archeologists and partially excavated. These last two churches are Santa María de Batres, in Carranque, Toledo, which is partially excavated but largely in ruins, and São Gião in Nazaré, Portugal, which is not open to the public and to which significantly fewer

---

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] I have intentionally excluded from this study a few notable Visigothic churches in the Iberian Peninsula—e.g. San Juan de Baños, San Miguel de la Escalada, and San Pedro de la Nave—because they are located on the edge of the territory ruled as al-Andalus and thus not part of its primarily cultural orbit.

resources have apparently been devoted for its preservation and study. The four churches that will be the focus of the remainder of this essay are: Saint Frutuoso Chapel in Braga, Portugal; San Miguel de los Fresnos in Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz; Santa Lucía del Trampal in Alcuéscar, Cáceres; and Santa María Melque in San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo.[61]

V.iii: Saint Frutuoso Chapel

Located just outside of Braga, Portugal, Saint Frutuoso Chapel is one of the best-preserved and most iconic examples of extant Visigothic architecture. Its history is also fairly well established. The church was built as a funerary chapel and mausoleum in 660 on the orders of Saint Frutuoso, the Bishop of Braga, to accommodate his body when he died.[62] Its architectural style is typically Visigothic:

> Not more than thirteen metres at any axis, built of solid granite ashlars set in regular horizontal rows, the mausoleum is in the form of a cross with arms of the same length[:] one to the east covered by barrel vaulting and the other three with horseshoe arched apses and composite roofing. At the centre there is a lantern tower, finished with a semi-spherical brickwork cupula.[63]

Contemporary descriptions of the chapel stress its prominent horseshoe arches, reinforcing that the advent of this particular element of Visigothic architecture occurred long before the Muslim invasion in 711.

---

[61] See Index for a map of the churches.

[62] *The Chapel of São Frutuoso de Montélios* (Braga, Portugal: Instituto Portugués do Património Arquitectónico, 2003), 2.

[63] Ibid, 3.

In the context of convivencia, the most important aspect of Saint Frutuoso's history is the proof of religious activity there during the Muslim occupation. Documents dating from the ninth century verify that in 883 the chapel was consecrated to Sao Salvador.[64] Put simply, the fact that the church was reconsecrated during this time means that it continued to house an active Christian community after the Moorish invasion and during the emiral period. Many contemporary sources confirm that Christians did indeed continue to worship freely under the Moors, as provided in the *dhimma* contracts. Yet this measure of religious freedom allowed to Andalusian Christians seems all the more striking when one considers that the Moors did not seek to destroy or alter the Visigothic churches that stood out as public monuments to the religion against which they were engaged in a bloody holy war. Instead of destroying the Visigothic churches, the Muslim invaders incorporated some of the most distinctive elements, such as the horseshoe arch, into their own religious architecture. This supports the remarkable conclusion that the Moors refrained from the violence and intimidation common to invading armies and instead practiced a measure of cultural openness.

V.iv: San Miguel de los Fresnos

The three remaining Visigothic churches generally support this conclusion while providing additional color to the history of Christian religious communities during the Muslim occupation. San Miguel de los Fresnos— located in Badajoz, Extremadura, just miles from the

---

[64] Isabel Sereno, Paulo Dordio, and Joaquim Gonçalves, "Capela de São Frutuoso de Montélios/Capela de São Salvador de Montelios," in *Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico* (SIPA, 2004), last modified 2016, accessed July 29, 2016, http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=1903.

Portuguese border— has several similarities with Saint Frutuoso. It was constructed in 612, also as a funerary chapel dedicated to a major figure. Conflicting sources identify San Miguel as the resting place of either a famous abbot in the Iberian Church or "San Exuperancio."[65] San Miguel was located at the heart of a large monastic community that drew pilgrims form around Hispania, in part because of the "aguas medicinales" (medicinal waters) that were thought to flow through its grounds.[66] Like many of the other Visigothic churches, it was also located at a critical "cruce de caminos" (crossroads) between Mérida, an important city from Roman times, and Portugal.[67]

Architecturally, San Miguel exemplifies typical elements of Visigothic style, including the horseshoe arch. Berrocal and Amador provide a detailed description of one of its windows (ventanas), which adheres to "los clásicos cánones… visigodos, alargada y culminada en arco de medio punto, destacado por las salientes impostas. Debemos anotar que el arco se encuentra tallado en un sólo sillar que, a modo de dintel, ha sido realizado, o fajonado, mediante la ajustada adición de otros menores hasta conferirle un contorno de 'herradura'" (…the classical Visigothic canons, elongated and culminating in a semicircular arch, distinguished by its exterior faces. We should note that the arch is found carved in a sole ashlar that, in lintel fashion, has been conferred by other minor adjustments into the shape of a horseshoe"). [68] Other sources suggest that the church's foundation deviated from the traditional cruciform style and was itself laid out

[65] Luis Berrocal Rangel and Rafael Caso Amador, "El conjunto monacal visigodo de San Miguel de los Fresnos (Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz)," *Cuadernos de Prehistoria y Arqueología Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, no. 18 (1999): 305.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid, 314.

[68] Ibid, 309.

in the "herradura" form.[69]

There is also archeological evidence that San Miguel continued to be inhabited and maintained throughout the centuries of the Muslim occupation by a large "población hispanogoda residual"[70] (residual hispano-gothic [i.e. Visigothic] population). Furthermore, the "ausencia generalizada de restos islámicos" (general absence of Islamic remains) and the lack of any apparent modifications to the church's structure such as would have been necessary to transform it into a mosque suggest that the inhabitants of San Miguel in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries continued to be Christians.[71] Archeological evidence also suggests that these Christians undertook extensive renovations to the church in the late medieval period, while still under Muslim control, including the addition of Gothic elements such as triangular arches and vaults.[72] Clearly, the Mozarabs did not simply succumb to the overwhelming influence of Moorish art and architecture. Rather, while Andalusian Christians were certainly influenced by Islamic culture, their own distinct artistic styles continued to evolve parallel to architectural trends within larger Christendom, such as Gothicism, which filtered into al-Andalus from France in the thirteenth century. The addition of distinctly non-Islamic elements to San Miguel

---

[69] Pedro Mateos and Luis Caballero Zoreda, *Repertorio de arquitectura cristiana en Extremadura. Época tardoantigua y altomedieval* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003), 49.

[70] E. Cerillo, "Las ermitas de Portera y Santa Olalla. Aproximación al estudio de las cabeceras rectangulares del s. VII," *Zephyrus* XXXII-XXXIII (1981): 242-3.

[71] Luis Caballero and Juan Bueno, "De nuevo a propósito de la basílica de Recópolis," *Archivo de Arqueología Española*, no. 62 (1989): 113.

[72] Mateos and Caballero Zoreda, *Repertorio de arquitectura cristiana*, 50.

undermines the skeptical narrative that convivencia – and the process of collective, reflective cultural growth that it entails – merely misinterprets Moorish cultural domination.

V.v: Santa Lucía del Trampal

Like the two previous churches, Santa Lucia del Trampal, discovered in 1980, was located at a crossroads:

> El Trampal se sitúa en las estribaciones de la serranía de Montánchez. Al norte de ésta se encuentran Trujillo y Cáceres, con territorios muy poblados en época romana; al sur, las tierras de Mérida, antiguamente vacía de población… Esto hace pensar que en el territorio emeritense había una dehesa pública donde se situaba el lugar del Trampal. En sus cercanías se cruzaban los caminos que unían estas ciudades, uno de ellos el célebre "Camino de La Plata." (Trampal is situated in the foothills of the mountainous region of Montánchez. To the north are Trujillo and Cáceres, with territories that were heavily populated in Roman times; to the south, the lands of Mérida, which in ancient times were practically uninhabited. This makes one think that the territory of Mérida had been public lands in which Trampal was situated. Several roads cross in its vicinity and connect those cities, one of which is the famous "Road of Silver"). [73]

Perhaps because of this strategic location, the site of Santa Lucía had been populated since the third century, before the Romans general conversion to Christianity, by worshipers of the cult to

---

[73] L. Caballero Zoreda and J. Rosco Madruga, "Iglesia visigoda de Santa Lucía del Trampal, Alcuéscar (provincia de Cáceres). Primera campaña de trabajos arqueológicos. 1983-1984," *Extremadura Arqueológica* I (1988): 234.

the goddess Ataecina.[74] By 700, on the eve of the Muslim invasion, the Visigoths had built a large church at the center of a thriving monastic community. "La iglesia de Santa Lucía, con su campanario, dominaba el valle donde se situaba la explotación agrícola" *(The church of Santa Lucía, with its bell-tower, dominated the valley where agricultural production took place)* of vegetables, legumes, and, later, fruits like oranges that arrived with the Moors.[75]

Santa Lucía features some of the same prominent elements of Visigothic architecture found in these the previous examples. Its characteristics are:

> Cubrir el edificio enteramente con bóvedas sobre muros construidos con material reutilizado; decorar con motivos geométricos y vegetales determinados elementos arquitectónicos como frisos, cimacios y canceles; y abrir vanos con arcos de herradura de curva muy cerrada. (To cover the entire building with vaults over walls constructed with recycled materials; to decorate certain architectural elements such as friezes and cymatia with geometric and vegetal motifs, and to open some spaces with horseshoe arches with very tight curves.)[76]

Furthermore, certain architectural elements added to the church in the late-eighth and ninth centuries clearly demonstrate Islamic influence, such as the construction of a Mozarabic funerary shrine. Indeed, Mozarabic monks continued to use the church as a monastery (and pay the special jizya tax required of them) well after the Muslims established themselves in al-Andalus.[77]

---

[74] Dipitación cultural de Extremadura.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Caballero Zoreda and Rosco Madruga, "Iglesia visigoda de Santa," 244.

[77] "La construcción de Santa Lucía, monasterio cristiano," infographic, 2016, Santa Lucía del Trampal, Diputación Cultural de Extremadura, Alcuéscar, Cáceres.

While the monastery was ultimately abandoned around 850, archeologists have been unable to determine the cause, and since the buildings were neither destroyed nor modified to accommodate Muslim worshipers, the prevailing theory is that the remaining monks voluntarily emigrated north, either to avoid the religious tax and other restrictions or simply to once again live among a majority Christian population.

V.vi: Santa María de Melque

The same story of voluntary emigration to the Christian north – but only after centuries of living and worshipping under Muslim rule – applies to Santa María de Melque, located near the town of San Martín de Montalbán, south of Toledo.[78] There are many striking similarities between Melque and the Visigothic churches examines so far, which establish a number of patterns.[79] First, Melque inhabited a strategic position along roads that connected the central plains to the western cities of modern-day Extremadura, including Mérida. Second, the church was established as a funerary chapel for an important member of the Visigothic court in Toledo. Etymologically, sixteenth-century records identify Melque as "Velatalmec," from the Arabic "Balat abd al-melic" or "Palace of the King's Servant".[80] Third, Melque also served as the center of a vibrant monastic community, including sixty acres of farmland that supported the church and its dependencies. These patterns reveal that Christian religious life continued after the invasion much as it had before. While the "llegada de los musulmanes en 711 puso fin al reino

---

[78] "Archaeological Investigation in Melque," infographic.

[79] See Dodds, J. D. (1990). Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

[80] Cedillo, "Un monumento desconocido: Santa," 4.

visigodo en Toledo[,] la comunidad monástica de Melque continuó con su vida aunque adaptada a la nueva realidad política" (the arrival of the Muslims in 711 ended the Visigothic reign in Toledo, the monastic community of Melque continued with its life while adopting to the new political reality).[81] That adaptation took for the form of a six-meter high wall the monks built around the church, and records show that they also paid the jizya tax.[82] There is no evidence that the church ever came under attack, and no records to show that the Christians were forced to leave.

However, archeologists are confident that Christians abandoned Melque in the mid- to late-ninth century and that, after a period of disuse, it was reoccupied by Muslims. For the most part, the architecture typifies the Visigothic style, particularly "La disposición de la sillería, lejano recuerdo al parecer de un arte en que residía una técnica más perfecta y la presencia de los arcos ultrasemicirculares, tan peculiar de las escasísimas fábricas godas que nos restan" (the arrangement of the ashlar work, a distant memory of a peculiar technique and the presence of the semicircular arches, which are characteristic of the few Visigothic artefacts known to us).[83] A more detailed description of the structure's interior references several elements of Visigothic architecture that are now familiar:

> La planta de la construcción viene a ser una cruz griega, con sus cuatro brazos poco desiguales, terminados en forma rectangular. El edificio está orientado según la más constante tradición litúrgica a partir del siglo V[,] es decir, de Oriente a Poniente, y tiene su único ingreso hacia este último punto cardinal… Su aparejo

---

[81] "Archaeological Investigation in Melque," infographic.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Cedillo, "Un monumento desconocido: Santa," 10.

es, en total, de sillería bastante irregular y sillares de distintos tamaños al parecer sin mortero alguno… En el paramento del brazo lateral derecho que mira al [Oeste], hay abiertos otros dos arcos de herradura, uno pequeño y sencillo, y el otro mayor con sus impostas análogas a las que exornan el edificio. (The floor plan was a Greek Cross, with its four arms slightly unequal, ending in a rectangular shape. The building is oriented according to the most typical liturgical tradition from the 5th century, that is to say, from east to west, and has its only entrance towards this latter cardinal point [i.e. west]. Its appearance is completely of very irregular ashlar work [i.e. masonry] and ashlars of different sizes, seemingly without any mortar. In the facade of the right lateral arm that looks towards the west, there are two open horseshoe arches, one small and simple, and the other with its faces analogous to those that adorn the building.)[84]

Yet there are also elements of Melque that suggest its occupation by the Muslims – who constructed higher walls around the original structure and converted it into a fortress[85] – before Christians ultimately returned after the reconquest of Toledo in the eleventh century.[86] Thus Melque experienced all three stages of the Reconquista as it passed from Christian control to Muslim control and back again.

It is not entirely clear why the Christian monastic community abandoned Melque. There is no evidence of any discrete pressures to leave. The church was not attacked and its inhabitants were not harassed. Still, some modern scholars reference "el clima político poco favorable" (the

---

[84] Ibid, 5.

[85] Ibid, 15.

[86] "Archaeological Investigation in Melque," infographic.

unfavorable political climate) that "provocó el éxodo de muchas de las comunidades monásticas hacia el norte Cristiano" (provoked the exodus of many monastic communities to the Christian north).[87] Yet was the political climate really so unfavorable for Christians? In fact, Christian monastic life continued largely uninterrupted throughout al-Andalus after the Muslim invasion,[88] as it did at Melque for almost two centuries. The motivating force behind the mass exodus of Christians towards the North was not necessarily Muslim intolerance, but rather a fear that Christian culture was being subsumed by Moorish influence. It was not until the arrival of more fundamentalist Muslims from North Africa in the eleventh century that Andalusian Christians sometimes came under pressure to abandon their religion entirely. Before the arrival of the Almoravids, the pressures Christians faced were mostly cultural. Many Christians resisted the trend towards "Arabization." Consider the prominent Christian polemicist Alvarus, who decried the adoption of Arabic by the Mozarabs and lamented the decline of Latin as a critical part of Christian identity.[89] Thus the exodus of Christians to the north, when it occurred, does not necessarily support a narrative of Muslim intolerance. The emigration likely represents the rejection by some Christians of the ethic of cultural openness and mixing that existed in al-

---

[87] Ibid.

[88] See Lawrence J. McCrank, "Monasteries, Crown of Aragon"; Bernard F. Reilly, "Monasteries, León and Castile"; and José Mattoso, "Monasteries, Portugal" in *Medieval Iberia*, ed. E. Michael Gerli, paperback ed., Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8 (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015), 570-580. While some scholars propose evidence that Mozarabic refugees fled north in large numbers (574), there is strong evidence of "continual monastic life" (571) in al-Andalus throughout the Reconquista.

[89] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 85-6.

Andalus, and which motivated the Muslims to adopt Christian architecture at the same time that the Mozarabs adopted Arabic and Islamic aesthetics.

VI. Conclusion

These four Visigothic churches stand after fourteen-hundred years as testaments to a fascinating and complex moment in Iberian history. Scholars have not taken full advantage of these churches as works of art with great symbolic significance within the broader debate about convivencia. Like all works of art, these churches provide insight into the social and political dynamics of their day, and even more so because of their religious nature when religion— whether Christianity or Islam— dominated both society and politics. If anything should represent the cultural expression of "holy war" it is the buildings that were intended as monuments to victory in that struggle.

That is not what these churches express. Visigothic churches around the Iberian Peninsula (as well as later examples of Islamic and Mozarab religious architecture) evidence a clear tradition of cultural melding. At the same time, the fact that various Visigothic churches were neither destroyed nor updated in the Mozarabic style undermines critique that convivencia misunderstands a coercive process of Moorish cultural domination. Despite contemporary anxieties about the subsumption of Christian identity, Visigothic cultural influence endured in al-Andalus through the continued use and existence of sixth-century churches. Christian churches stood out as defiant icons of a majority religion against which the Muslim occupiers intermittently found themselves at war for centuries. Not only did the Muslims generally refrain from destroying these structures, they apparently imitated them, or at least key elements of them, and therefore realized the ethic of openness that convivencia implies.

The simple fact that the Moors did not systematically destroy the Visigothic churches during or after their invasion of the Iberian Peninsula is especially striking in context. During the First Crusade in the eleventh century, the destruction en masse of Levantine mosques by Christian forces was well-documented. In the twenty-first century, Christians in Central Africa and radical Islamic groups like Islamic State in the Middle East have sought to destroy each other's religious buildings in order to establish the supremacy of their own faith. Indeed, the religious strife in the Middle East today puts the stakes of the convivencia debate into stark relief. As one scholar has written, "In the post 9/11 world, the idea that there might have been a historical moment when Christians, Muslims, and Jews actually got along has been particularly seductive."[90]

On the one hand, we want to avoid a biased, presentist interpretation of history, which is what many skeptics have taken the enthusiastic iteration of convivencia to be. On the other hand, while we might back away from some of Menocal and Castro's most sweeping claims, such as the idea that medieval Iberia had a "complex culture of tolerance," we should not also reject instinctually the related claim that al-Andalus witnessed an "unconscious acceptance that contradictions – within oneself, as well as within one's culture – could be positive and productive."[91] This second claim is not about tolerance; it is about openness. The cultural transference and appropriation that took place in al-Andalus, especially with respect to religious architecture, is evidence of a remarkable relationship between conviction of faith and respect of culture. Muslims were certainly not willing to accept that the Christian faith might be as legitimate as Islam, but their conviction that Christians were infidels (i.e. in error about their faith) did not prevent them from respecting aspects of Christian culture. The Muslims of al-

---

[90] Wolf, "Convivencia and the Ornament," in *Revisiting Convivencia in Medieval*, 42.

[91] Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 11.

Andalus did not universally condemn the Visigothic population as barbarians without anything to contribute in the realms of art or culture. The same could be said for Andalusian Christians and, though they are not discussed as much in this project, Jews. Surely this is a much more measured conclusion than some of the most emphatic proponents of convivencia like Menocal want to draw. Yet it is one that nonetheless positions al-Andalus as historically exceptional with much to teach modern proponents of all creeds about the possibility of mutual respect even within a context that does not allow for more complete tolerance.

Index:

Bibliography

Araya, Guillermo. *El pensamiento de Américo Castro: Estructura intercastiza de la historia de España*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1983.

"Archaeological Investigation in Melque." Infographic. 2016. Santa María de Melque. Diputación Cultural de Toledo, San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo.

Barkai, Ron. *Cristianos y musulmanes en la España medieval*. Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, S.A., 1984.

Burke, Ulick Ralph. *From the Earliest Times to the Death of Ferdinand the Catholic*. Vol. 1 of *A History of Spain*. London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1895.

Caballero, Luis, and Juan Bueno. "De nuevo a propósito de la basílica de Recópolis." *Archivo de Arqueología Española*, no. 62 (1989): 283-91.

Caballero Zoreda, L., and J. Rosco Madruga. "Iglesia visigoda de Santa Lucía del Trampal, Alcuéscar (provincia de Cáceres). Primera campaña de trabajos arqueológicos. 1983-1984." *Extremadura Arqueológica* I (1988): 231-50.

Castro, Américo. *The Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History*. Translated by W. King and S. Margaretten. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1971.

Cedillo, Conde de. "Un monumento desconocido: Santa María de Melque." *Revista Cultural Española*, 4 (August 1907): 851.

Cerillo, E. "Las ermitas de Portera y Santa Olalla. Aproximación al estudio de las cabeceras rectangulares del s. VII." *Zephyrus* XXXII-XXXIII (1981): 233-43.

Chandler, Tertius. *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census*. Lewiston, NY: Saint David's University Press, 1987.

The Chapel of São Frutuoso de Montélios. Braga, Portugal: Instituto Portugués do Património Arquitectónico, 2003.

Collins, Roger. "Visigothic Kingdoms, Toulouse and Toledo." In *Medieval Iberia*, edited by E. Michael Gerli, 964. Paperback ed. Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015.

———. *Visigothic Spain 409-711*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

Dodds, Jerrilynn Denise. Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1990. Print.

Fierro, Maribel. *'Abd al-Rahman III: The First Cordoban Caliph*. Makers of the Muslim World. Oxford: Oneworld, 1995.

Gilman, Stephen, and Edmund L. King, eds. *An Idea of History: Selected Essays of Amérco Castro*. Columbus: Ohio State U P, 1977.

González Zymlya, Herbert. *Año 929: El califato de Córdoba*. Años Decisivos en la Historia. Mardid: Ediciones del Laberinto, 2011.

James, Edward, ed. *Visigothic Spain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Jayyusi, Salma Khadra, ed. *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. Leiden, Germany: E.J. Brill, 1992.

Kuiper, Kathleen. "Visigothic Art." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2016. Last modified September 6, 2007. Accessed July 28, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/art/Visigothic-art.

"La construcción de Santa Lucía, monasterio cristiano." Infographic. 2016. Santa Lucía del Trampal. Diputación Cultural de Extremadura, Alcuéscar, Cáceres.

Lowney, Chris. *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

———. *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Mann, Vivian B., Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynn D. Dodds, eds. *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*. New York: George Braziller, 1992.

Mateos, Pedro, and Luis Caballero Zoreda. *Repertorio de arquitectura cristiana en Extremadura. Época tardoantigua y altomedieval*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003.

Mattoso, José. "Monasteries, Portugal." In *Medieval Iberia*, edited by E. Michael Gerli, 578-80. Paperback ed. Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015.

McCrank, Lawrence J. "Monasteries, Crown of Aragon." In *Medieval Iberia*, edited by E. Michael Gerli, 570-74. Paperback ed. Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015.

Menocal, María Rosa. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2002.

Navascués Palacio, Pedro, and Carlos Sarthou Carreres. *Catedrales de España*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1999.

Owen, John M., IV. *Confronting Political Islam: Six Lessons from the West's Past*. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2015.

Peterson, Andrew. *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Rangel, Luis Berrocal, and Rafael Caso Amador. "El conjunto monacal visigodo de San Miguel de los Fresnos (Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz)." *Cuadernos de Prehistoria y Arqueología Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, no. 18 (1999): 299-317.

Reilly, Bernard F. "Monasteries, León and Castile." In *Medieval Iberia*, edited by E. Michael Gerli, 574-77. Paperback ed. Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015.

Safran, Janina M. *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Islamic Iberia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015.

———. *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in Al-Andalus*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Sereno, Isabel, Paulo Dordio, and Joaquim Gonçalves. "Capela De São Frutuoso De Montélios/Capela De São Salvador De Montelios." In *Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico*. SIPA, 2004. Last modified 2016. Accessed July 29, 2016. http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=1903.

Soifer, Maya. "Beyond convivencia: critical reflections on the historiography of interfaith relations in Christian Spain." *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 19-35.

Tejero Robledo, Eduardo. *Convivencia hispana*. Madrid: Sociedad de Educación Atenas, 1979.

de Terán Sánchez, Antonio Collantes. "Seville, City of." In *Medieval Iberia*, edited by E. Michael Gerli, 751. Paperback ed. Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 8. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2015.

Terron Albarran, M. "Historia política de la Baja Extremadura en el Período Islámico." *Historia de la Baja Extremadura* I:285-557.

Weitzmann, Kurt, ed. *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*. Catalogue of the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977 through February 12, 1978. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Wolf, Kenneth Baxter. *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*. Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

———. "Convivencia and the Ornament of the World." In *Revisiting Convivencia in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, edited by Connie L. Scarborough, 41-76. Newark, DE: Juan de Cuesta, 2014.

Wood, Jamie. *This Politics of Identity in Visigothic Spain: Religion and Power in the Histories of Isidore of Seville*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012.

Ziegler, Aloysius K. *Church and State in Visigothic Spain*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1930.