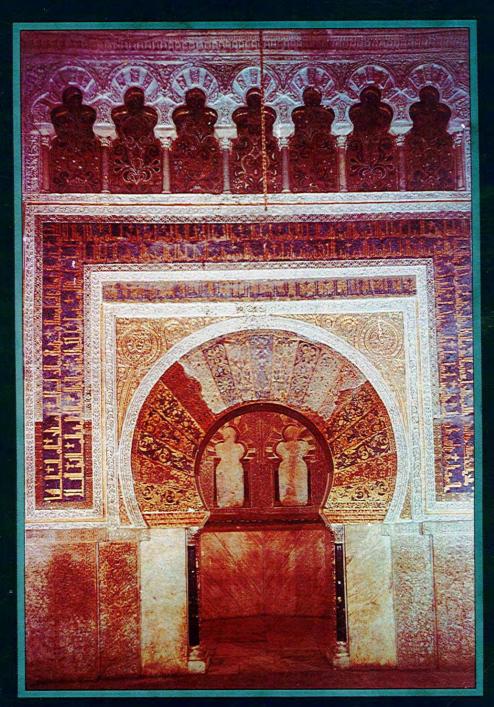
MOORISH CULTURE IN SPAIN



Titus Burckhardt

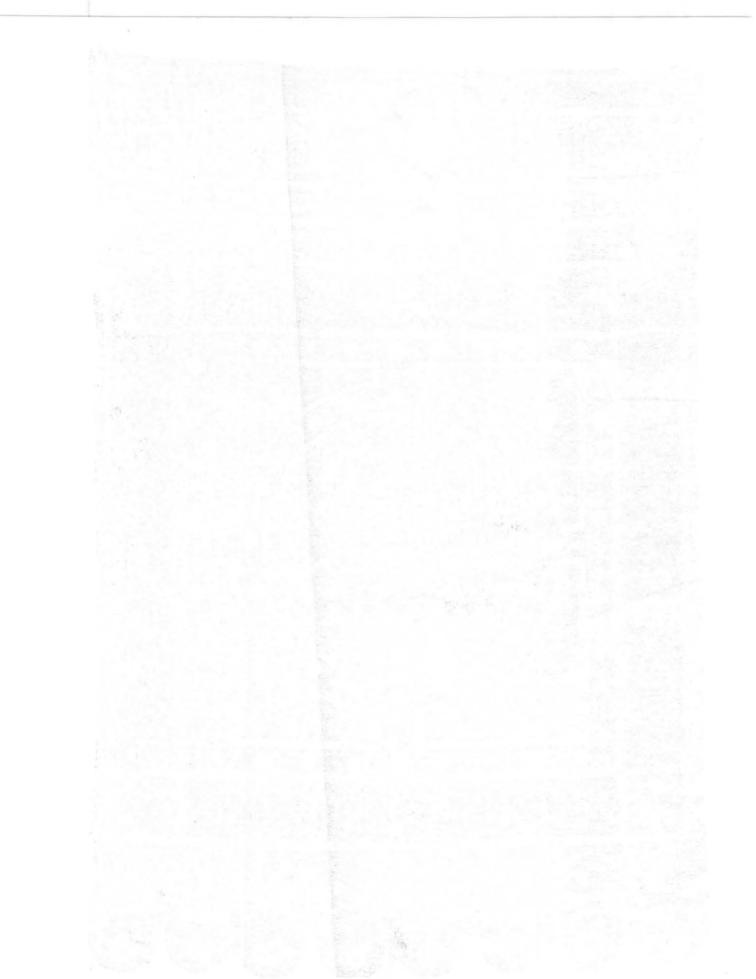
TITUS BURCKHARDT Moorish Culture in Spain

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Moorish war flag from the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. Monastery of las Huelgas, Burgos.



Titus Burckhardt MOORISH CULTURE IN SPAIN

Translated by Alisa Jaffa

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Pronunciation of Arabic Names

In the transcription of Arabic names and expressions, we have kept as far as possible to the signs commonly used in philology. The general rule adopted is to reproduce the vowels as they would be written in Italian, and the consonants as in English.

The – over a vowel (\bar{a} , \bar{i} , \bar{u}) means that the vowel is lengthened. A dot under a consonant (d, h, k, s, t, z) indicates that the consonant is hard and emphatic – the d (dad) is sounded against the palate, the h ($h\bar{a}$) is pronounced as in the Scottish loch, the s (sad) is mute and voiceless, the t (ta) is explosive and the z (za) is halfway between ts and explosive d. The j (jim) is pronounced as in 'John.' Gh (gain) indicates the French r pronounced at the back of the throat, as opposed to the Italian r ($r\bar{a}$) that is rolled on the tip of the tongue. Dh ($dh\bar{a}l$) corresponds to the English voiced th (thing), and th ($th\bar{a}$) to the English voiceless th (the) or the Spanish z; kh ($kh\bar{a}$) is a rough, guttural sound like the Alemannic ch, and sh (shin) is as in English. Z ($z\bar{a}i$) is voiced as in the soft English s (music). The apostrophe ('a, 'i, 'u) indicates the glottal stop ('ain) peculiar to Arabic.

Foreword

In order to understand a culture, it is necessary to feel affinity for its values. These are fundamentally the same in all cultures, at least in those which meet not only the physical but also the spiritual requirements of man, without which life is meaningless.

Moorish culture in Spain lasted some eight and a half centuries, from the time of the Merovingians until the Renaissance. A comprehensive account of its history could easily fill several volumes. Consequently, what we offer here is a selection of certain aspects, chosen for their relevance to those same values mentioned above, which are of more than mere historic interest.

Instead of using the term, "Moorish culture," it would be more accurate to refer to "Arabic" culture in Spain, since its language was predominantly Arabic, or even "Islamic" culture, since it actually belonged to the Islamic world. The word "Moorish" derives from the Spanish word, *moros*, that is "Moors" or "Mauretanians." "Moorish" culture in the literal sense does not exist any more than does "Gothic" architecture. Yet the word "Moorish" has become synonymous with "Arab-Islamic." The Moors were simply Maghrebins, inhabitants of the *maghreb*, the western part of the Islamic world, that extends from Spain to Tunisia, and represents a homogeneous cultural entity.

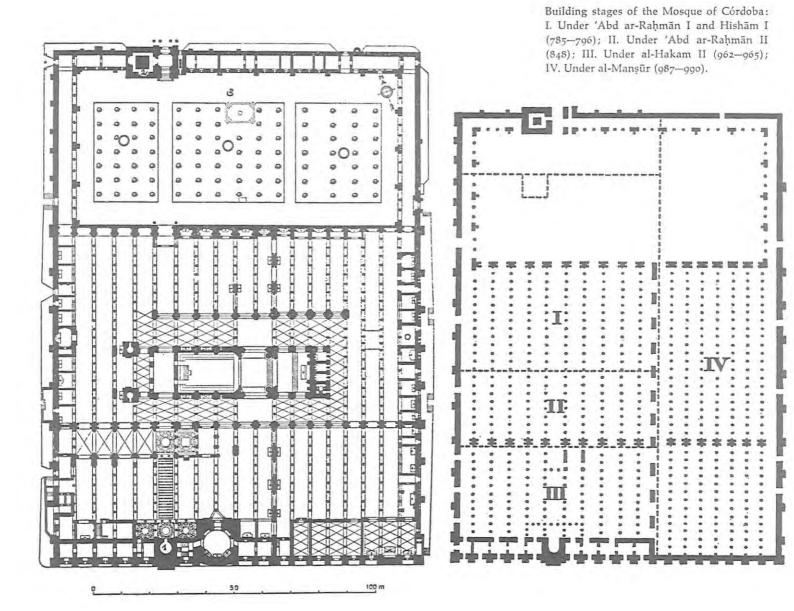
I Córdoba

Nothing brings us into such immediate contact with the culture of a bygone age as certain works of art. Whether it is a sacred image, a temple, a cathedral, or a mosque, it represents a focal point within the culture and expresses something essential. It gives us an insight which neither arguments of history nor analyses of social and economic circumstances can capture. The only other source that is equally as informative about a culture is its writings, particularly those writings dealing with the spiritual life. But such works are often very complex and frequently not intelligible to the modern reader without the aid of detailed commentaries. However, a work of art, unencumbered by distracting intellectual digressions, immediately communicates and provides much information about the nature of a particular culture. For example, it is much easier to comprehend the intellectual and ethical characteristics of a Buddhist culture if one is familiar with the image of the Buddha. Similarly, the religious and social life of the Middle Ages is more readily comprehended by someone who has explored the architecture of a Romanesque abbey or a Gothic cathedral.

A building such as the Great Mosque of Córdoba is characteristic of Moorish culture in its full flowering, at the time when the Spanish-Islamic empire was united under the rule of the Ummayyads. We are most fortunate that it still exists, for little else has survived of the former great capital of the empire, which was unrivalled by any city in the West, apart from Constantinople. Parts of the old city wall and the bridge over the Guadalquivir, (the "Great River" al-wad al-kabir as it was known to the Arabs) still survive. This bridge was damaged repeatedly by flooding, and was subsequently rebuilt. In some places the layout of the streets is reminiscent of the market area as it was in the time of Moorish rule, though today there would never be room for the eighty thousand shops and workshops that it once held. Gone are the public baths and the inns where the merchants and their pack-animals used to rest. The schools, where even the children of the poor received tutoring, and the many bookshops have all disappeared. Scarcely a trace remains of the palaces of the caliphs and the princes. The fabulous royal city Medinat-az-Zahra, to the west of Córdoba, is a heap of rubble, where excavations are at present in progress. Of the many hundred mosques that once graced Córdoba, only the Great Mosque still stands. It is the oldest and largest, but it was altered so radically when it was transformed into a church that it is hard to imagine it in its former glory.

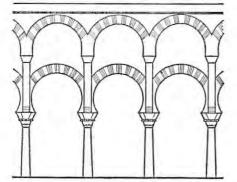
One must try to imagine it without the dark church structure that was built between the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and arbitrarily placed at the center of the light forest of pillars like a giant black spider. No present-day visitor to the *Mezquita* could regard the intrusion at the heart of this glorious building as either acceptable or valid, for it symbolizes not so much the victory of Christianity, as the beginning of a new era when faith and knowledge began to diverge. It is in marked contrast to the clear and innate harmony that emanates from the form of the Islamic structure. Without this foreign element, the hall of pillars would resemble a broad grove of palm trees and provide ever-changing views into the interior of the columned hall. Formerly this "grove" was much lighter. Today the arches facing the courtyard are all walled in with the exception of two gates,

Ground plan of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, with the cathedral at the center. 1. mihrāb; 2. minaret; 3. courtyard.



whereas originally they were open. The courtyard was an integral part of the Mosque, for it contained the fountains for washing the face, hands, and feet for the ritual purification before prayer. Shoes were removed before entering the great prayer hall in order not to soil and desecrate the floor, which was covered with mats on which the worshippers stood, sat, and prostrated themselves in the performance of their religious devotions. It is the place of prayer itself, and consequently the entire room is conceived in relation to it as a place of repose. It is unlike a church, in which everything is directed like a pathway towards the sanctuary of the Altar. A mosque is not built on any such plan, for although the prayer niche (the *mihrāb*) is related in form to the choir in a Christian church, its sole purpose is to indicate the direction of Mecca and to echo the words of the imām. The imām conducts the communal prayers at the prescribed hours of the day. But in addition to these set times any believer can say his prayers in any part of the mosque whenever he wishes, and act as an *imām* for any other worshippers that join him, for in Islam there is no priestly hierarchy as in Christianity, and the architecture of the mosque is planned accordingly, with the endless repetition of the same pillars and bays of arches. Wherever a worshipper happens to be standing or kneeling on a mat, for him that spot is the center of the mosque, indeed of the world. The groined vaults between the arcades were a later addition and should be disregarded, as they divide the hall up into aisles, giving it a directional bias; originally the ceiling was flat above the painted beams, and echoed the level plane of the floor strewn with mats.

The unusual construction of the arches, which fan out from the columns in two tiers, one above the other, like the branches of the date palm, was obviously adopted because the first architect of the Mosque had many columns from Roman ruins at his disposal, which could bear great weight, but were not tall enough to provide a hall of such a great area with a ceiling of proportional height, even when vaulted with arches. The architect overcame this difficulty by capping the columns with heavy abaci and placing square pillars on them, from which spring the arches that support the roof. The pillars are linked by horseshoe-shaped arches immediately above the abaci. The architect may have been inspired by Roman aqueducts or even by the double tier of arches in the mosque in Damascus, but to allow the lower arches to span freely through the open space without any masonry to fill the interstices was an innovation. The upper arches are heavier than the lower ones and the abutments of both increase in size with the height of the pillars. This feature, too, is reminiscent of palm branches - and the whole, contrary to the classical European conception of architecture, rests on comparatively slender columns. Yet the effect of the vaulting is in no way oppressive; the arches appear to be suspended like so many rainbows in the sky. Because the lower horseshoe arch springs from a narrower span than the upper semi-circular one, the whole structure seems to expand and extend outwards as the eye travels upward; the fan-shaped alternation of light and dark voussoirs intensifies this impression — the impression of a room that appears to fan outwards from many centers, and is at once motionless and mobile.



Obviously, the architect of the Mosque did not intend to suggest a palm grove, but to the Arabs it must have seemed like one, for to them the date palm was the embodiment of their homeland. The oldest mosque in Medina had palm trunks for pillars, and 'Abd ar-Raḥmān I, the founder of both the Mosque and of the Ummayyad dynasty, planted one of the first date palms in Spain in the garden of his palace, the *Ruṣāfa*, to remind him of his childhood in Syria. He had fled from Syria to escape from the Abbasids, and established an empire of his own in Spain. In a poem he likened himself, the "immigrant stranger," to this solitary palm. This was in the middle of the 8th century. Two hundred and fifty years later the great chancellor of the last Ummayyad caliph, al-Manṣūr, wanted to extend the Mosque. The expansion involved pulling down a house in whose courtyard there grew a palm tree; the owner, a woman, refused to sell the house unless she was given another, also with a palm tree. For the Arabs, the palm is not just another tree.

From the very beginning of its construction to its final extension, the destiny of the Mosque was closely bound up with that of the Ummayyad dynasty which was to become the Western Caliphate under 'Abd ar-Rahman III. The Mosque was enlarged in stages over a period of more than two centuries, without the unity of its form being disturbed. In about 785 'Abd ar-Rahmān I bought the cathedral from the Christians of Córdoba. It had previously been divided by a partition wall and used as a house of prayer by both Christians and Moslems. He destroyed the church and in its place erected that part of the great hall which is usually entered first from the courtyard. His work was completed by his son Hishām in about 796. 'Abd ar-Rahmān II, who ruled from 822—852, enlarged the Mosque by pushing back the south wall containing the prayer niche facing Mecca, and added many more bays. Al-Hakam II, who succeeded the great statesman and founder of the Caliphate, 'Abd ar-Rahmān III, continued with this project. In about 962 he pulled down the south wall yet again, and built a new one much farther back, which was completed about 965. With the growth of the Caliphate and the flourishing of trade and commerce, the old Mosque could no longer house the massive congregation that assembled on religious festivals. So, between 987 and 990, just before the end of the Western Caliphate, the above-mentioned al-Mansur enlarged the Mosque yet again, this time by leaving the south wall standing (the one built by al-Hakam), and extending the east wall instead. According to Arab chroniclers, this gave the Mosque as many bays as there are days in the year. Silver pendant-lamps hung from the arches, and when al-Mansūr captured the great pilgrimage church of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, he made Christian captives carry the bells from the sanctuary on their shoulders to Córdoba in order to use them as lamps in the great Mosque. However, he left the tomb of St. James untouched, and destroyed only the abbey because it had become an assembly point for the crusades against Spanish Islam. Later, after the recapture of Córdoba by the Christian Monarchs, the bells were returned again to Santiago, this time on the shoulders of Muslim prisoners.

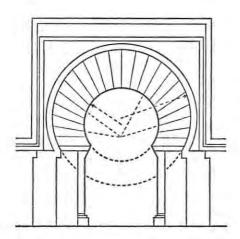
The most magnificent part of the Mosque, consisting of the surviving prayer

niche and the domed cluster of pillars, was built by al-Hakam II. This was no coincidence, for al-Hakam II had inherited a flourishing, secure empire from his father, and had the time and the inclination to foster the arts and the sciences. His library is said to have consisted of 400,000 volumes, many of them containing annotations of his own about their authors and their origin. Al-Hakam requested the Byzantine emperor to send him a master in the art of mosaic, who was to instruct the Moorish craftsmen in Córdoba so that they could decorate the prayer niche of the Great Mosque. This established a link with Byzantine art, although it was not much more than a transfer of techniques, for the forms that appear in the mosaic decorations of the prayer niche in Córdoba belong wholly to the geometric style of Moorish-Islamic art; the plant tendrils on the voussoirs are not intended to resemble nature in the style characteristic of their Byzantine forerunners. They do not convey any impression of spatial depth, but are rather a harmonious pattern of sinuous lines on the frontal of the arch, all in shades of copper and rust-red that contrast brilliantly with the hieratic severity of the inscription surrounding the rectangular frame of the niche in letters of gold against a dark blue background.

The prayer niche, as indicated above, is not strictly speaking a sanctuary, as this is not obligatory in the Islamic religious service. (To compel the inclusion of any elaborate artifices would be at variance with Islamic law, which always bears the poor in mind.) Yet prayer niches have existed in mosques since the earliest times, and if the legal canon keeps silent on this, in name and form it is reminiscent of some of the more mysterious passages in the Koran: of the "niche of lights," a symbol for the divine presence in the heart, and of the holy of holies (*milirāb*) of the Temple of Solomon, where, according to the Koran, the Virgin Mary was fed as a child by an angel. The vaulted niche is, in itself, one of the most ancient forms of sanctuary, the place where God manifests himself. In the Islamic context its ancient function is restored, in that the word of God revealed in the Koran is recited in it. All this explains why the architecture of the prayer niche expresses this feeling, which in Arabic is described as *al-heyba*, an approximate translation of which would be, "fear of the tremendous."

The design of the prayer niche in Córdoba was used as the model for countless prayer niches in Spain and North Africa. The niche is crowned by a horseshoeshaped arch, enclosed by a rectangular frame. The arch derives a peculiar strength from the fact that its central point shifts up from below. The wedge-shaped arch stones or voussoirs fan outwards from a point at the foot of the arch, and centers of the inner and outer circumferences of the arch lie one above the other. The entire arch seems to radiate, like the sun or the moon gradually rising over the edge of the horizon. It is not rigid; it breathes as if expanding with a surfeit of inner beatitude, while the rectangular frame enclosing it acts as a counterbalance. The radiating energy and the perfect stillness form an unsurpassable equilibrium. Herein lies the basic formula of Moorish architecture.

The niche is a seven-sided, comparatively large chamber, with a fluted shell-like vault. This shell may be responsible for the extraordinary acoustics, which make



words spoken inside the niche clearly audible to the worshippers in the body of the Mosque.

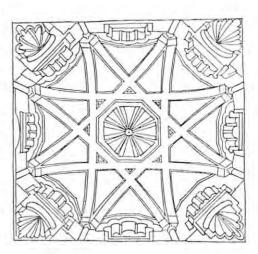
The earliest prayer niches in Syria and Egypt are shell-shaped. They may derive from an earlier Hellenistic form, which has been perpetuated because of some special significance. The shell houses the pearl which is formed, according to legend, when the shell rises to the surface of the water on a spring night and opens up to receive a dewdrop, which develops into a pearl. The shell is in some ways the ear of the heart, which absorbs the dewdrop of the divine word, an appropriate metaphor for the niche, where the word of God is spoken.

It is characteristic of Islamic art that the most sumptuous decoration is used to frame and venerate something which itself is not visible — namely the spoken word. The word takes the place occupied by sacred images in Christian art. Islam rejects devotional images because they tend to commit divine reality overmuch to a limited form. That is not to say that the holy writings are not symbols too. Their way of using metaphorical forms to clothe divine reality makes them symbols too, yet ones which are not "solidified," so to speak.

Written over the vertex of the arch is a verse from the Koran: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. He is God, the one beside whom there is no other divinity, the King, the Holy One, the Peaceful, the Faithful, the Protector, the Glorious, the Victorious, the Exalted. Praised be God beyond all that they [the heathens] attribute to Him." (LIX, 23).

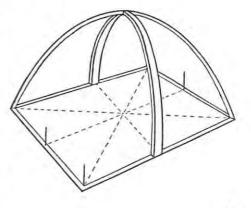
The domes over the cluster of pillars near the *mihrāb* have an unusual architectural form that is without precedent in the East or West. Although at first sight, it appears to be no more than geometric decoration, the structure is in fact the logical solution to the problem of how to set a semicircular dome on the square formed by the supporting walls, while keeping the curves of the ribs equal. For if the ribs are placed crosswise and diagonally over the square, so that they meet at the highest point of the dome, then either the diagonal ribs would be too flat to carry weight, or the crosswise ribs would have to be steeper than the diagonal ones, and form a pointed arch. The latter was, in fact, the Gothic solution to the same problem. But Moorish architecture arrived at a different solution by constructing an octagonal within the square, and joining a semi-circular rib from each of the eight corners to the next corner but one on either side. The lattice effect produced by the intersecting ribs leaves a space in the center, which is just small enough to carry a dome without requiring reinforcing ribs. In Córdoba the dome is fluted. There are later Persian domes similarly built except that the intersecting ribs do not support the dome but reinforce it on the outside; all that can be seen of them from the inside are the arrises between the individual facets of the vaulting.

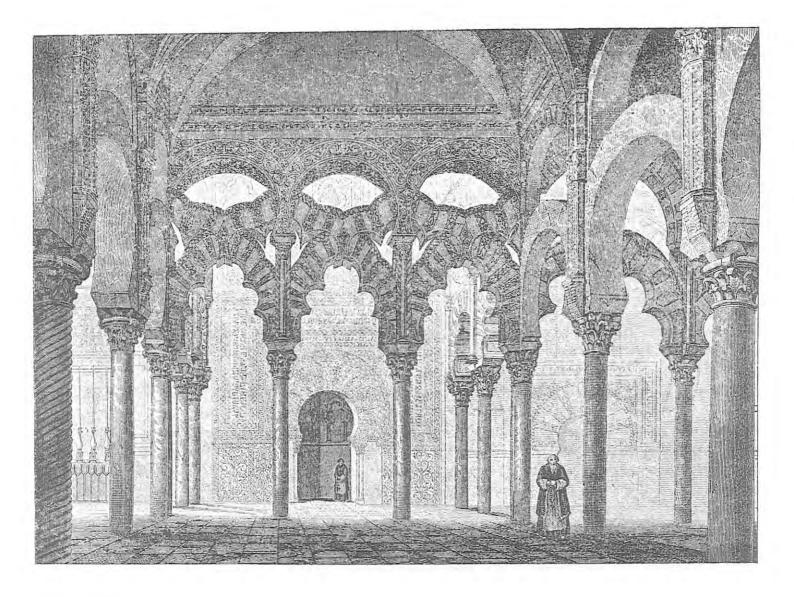
In order to reinforce the bays supporting the domes, the master responsible for the extension of the Mosque in the time of al-Hakam II hit upon the brilliant idea of doubling the number of pillars and intersecting the arches springing from the pillars, as if intending to transpose the formal structure of the domes to the weight-bearing arcades. By using the intersecting arch in addition to the horseshoe arch,



Ribbed vaulting spanning the pillars near the *mihrāb* in the Mosque of Córdoba.

Diagram of the ribs of a Gothic vault on a square base: round arch across the diagonal, and pointed arch over the cross.





Section of the interior of the Mosque of Córdoba which was converted into a cathedral: the intersecting arcades in front of the prayer niche. (The artist or engraver has automatically made the Arabic inscriptions around the niche look like European characters.) he produced an exceptionally rich structure in which everything contributes to the effect of static clarity as well as to the great, pulsating rhythm. It is this combination of qualities that appeals most to the Islamic spirit and to Arab thought. Geometric forms without rhythm are sterile and lifeless, and rhythm without geometric clarity produces discordant emotion. The reality of the world itself consists of the interweaving of perpetuity and rhythmic change, of space and time: "You see the mountains and consider them to be immovable, and yet they pass like the clouds," says the Koran (XXVII, 88).

In the tenth century, at the height of Córdoba's flowering, the mosque pulsated with activity, for at that time the city had more than a million inhabitants, and was surrounded by a cluster of small townships and villages that spread over the fertile plain of the Guadalquivir. To the west, about two hours' travelling distance from the city, lay *Medinat az-Zahra*, the royal residence built by 'Abd ar-Rahmān III; to the north lay the summer palace, *ar-Ruṣāfa*; and shortly before

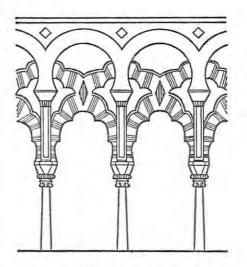
the Caliphate came to an end, the administrative city of *Medinat az-Zāhira* was built east of Córdoba. For the Islamic city the great Friday mosque represented what the cathedral is to a Christian city; religious instruction was also given here and tribunals held.

The teachers always included famous men, many of whom had visited the holy places of Islam, and had completed their education in Arabia, Syria and Egypt. They would sit in one of the lighter parts of the great pillared hall at the foot of a particular column and dispense their knowledge freely, not only to the students who crouched on the mats in a semi-circle before them, but also to passers-by and to learned visitors. They would draw on their incredibly certain memories, or would give a commentary on some fundamental text. All branches of learning that had some bearing on religion were taught, including not only knowledge of Arabic, in which the Koran was revealed, but also the law in all its aspects, for in Islam there is no civil law; the arrangement of human society is covered in every detail by religion.

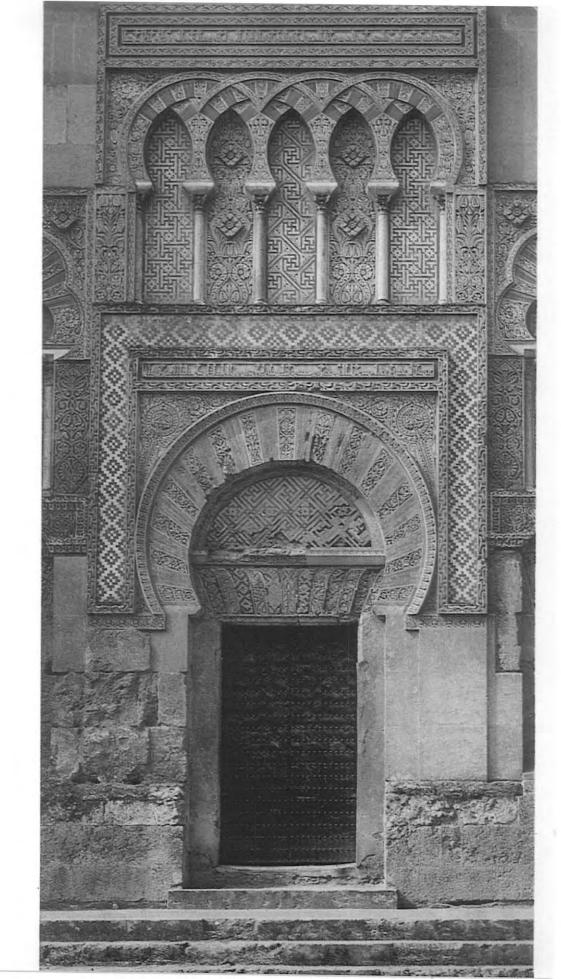
In another part of the great hall the supreme judge of Córdoba would conduct court sessions at certain times. Although he was second in importance only to the chancellor or prime minister, he would receive the disputing parties in as homely a fashion as if he were sitting in a Bedouin tent. He was usually attired very simply without any ceremonial robes, and would be surrounded by only a few advisers and court attendants. Where the case was a straightforward one, he would pronounce judgment on the spot, and this would be irreversible. In cases where the circumstances were uncertain, he would often prefer to leave the matter to God, unless this meant prolonging an existing injustice. Many of the foremost judges of Córdoba were famous for the independence and justice of their rulings.

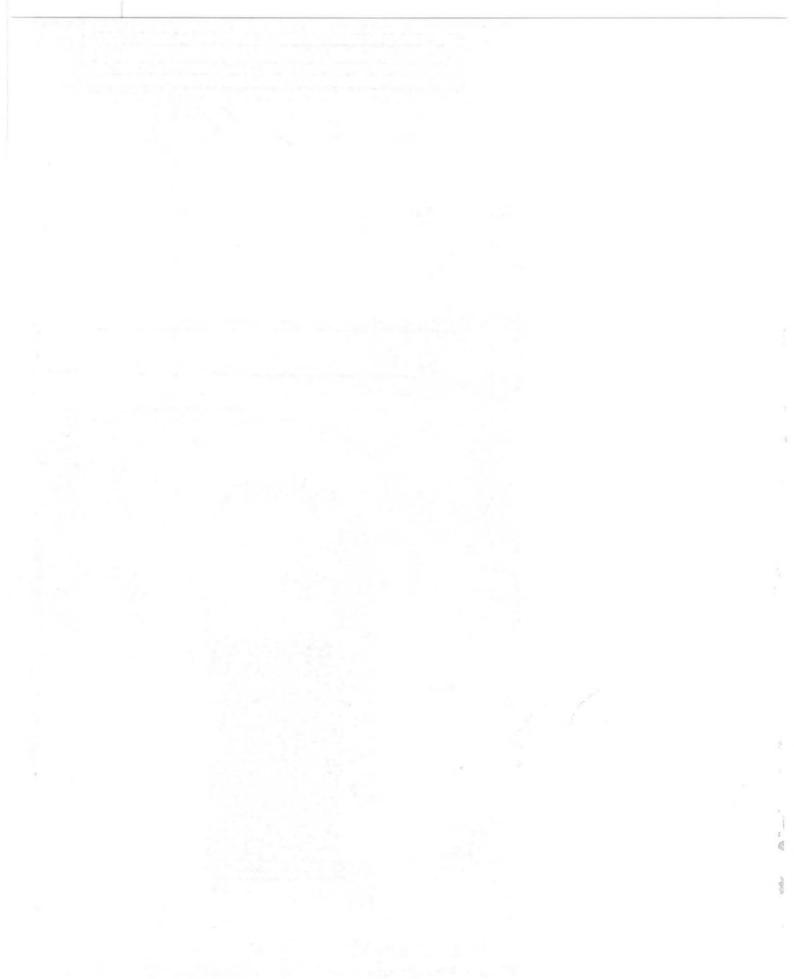
The teaching and the court sessions would break off when from the far side of the courtyard the call to prayer would sound from the minaret of the Mosque. (Today it is enclosed in a church tower). "God is greater! God is greater! Arise to prayer! Arise to salvation! I testify that there is no god but God, and I testify that Mohammed is God's messenger. God is greater! God is greater! There is no god but God!" The people already present in the Mosque, waiting for the call to prayer, and those who streamed in from the streets and nearby markets, moved in the direction of the wall containing the prayer niche, assembling row upon row behind the *imām*. They would accompany him in the recital of the words, either silently or out loud according to the ritual, and repeat his gestures, bowing when he bowed, and throwing themselves to the ground when he did.

The communal prayers were recited five times a day, as they are to this day in Islamic countries: before sunrise, at midday, half-way through the afternoon, after sunset, and at the beginning of the night. This rhythmic repetition of the same ritual, with its eternal, unchanging meaning, implanted an indelible seal on the entire way of life, and despite the disputes and troubles that divided Islamic Spain, the unity of this seal was never broken.



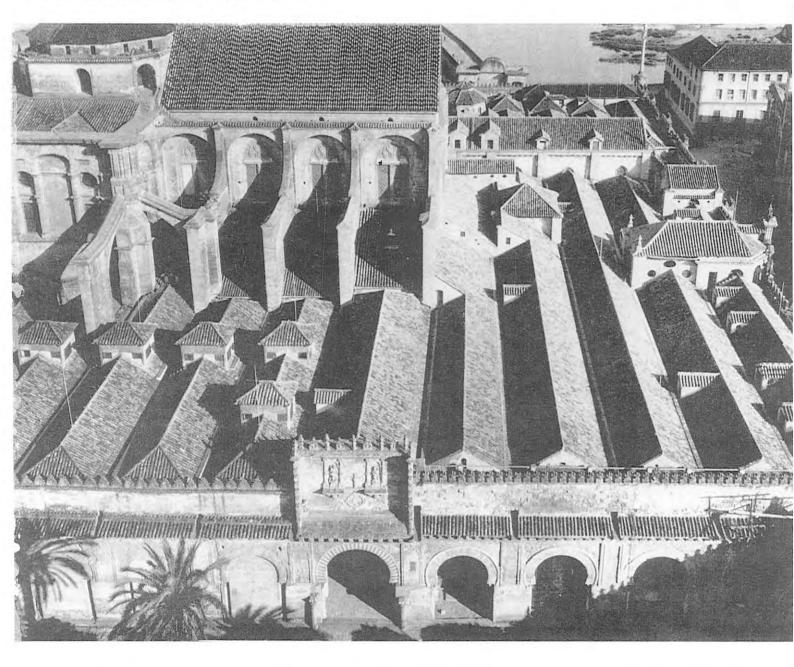
Intersecting arches in front of the mihrāb of the Mosque of Córdoba.



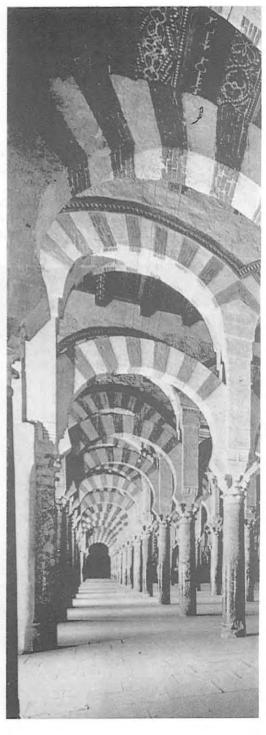


1 (Color plate) These doors of the Great Mosque of Córdoba are one of the finest examples of Islamic decorative art. They were built in the west façade of the Mosque around 960 under Al-Hakam II.

² The Great Mosque of Córdoba seen from the former minaret. Contrary to the will of the Christian population of Córdoba, the cathedral was placed in the middle of the Moorish building. Originally the arcades adjoining the court at the front of the picture were all open. In the background, the Guadalquivir.







3

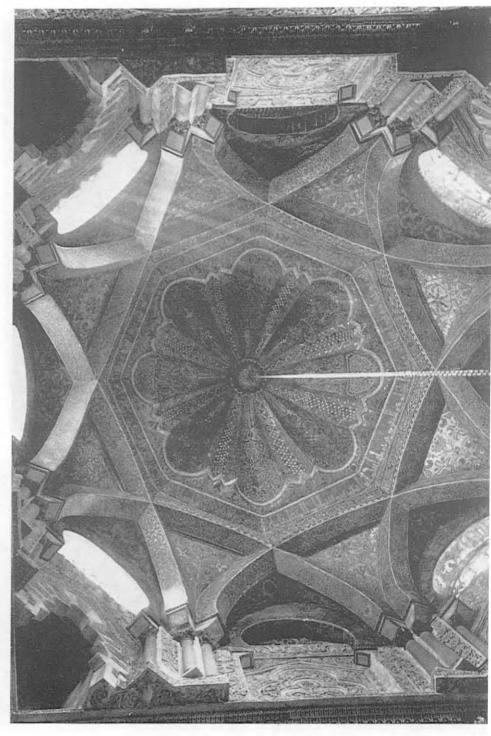
3 Arrangement of pillars in front of the prayer-niche (mihrāb) in the Mosque of Córdoba.

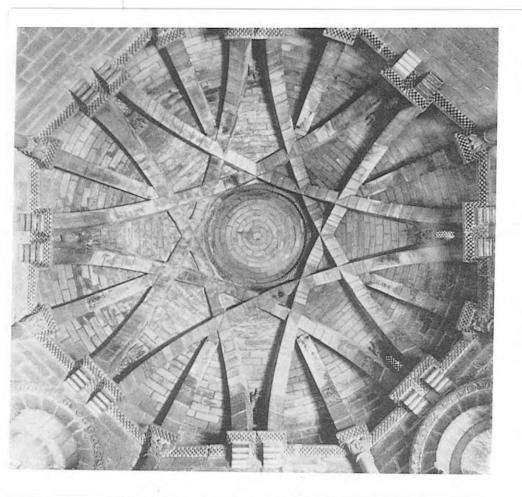
4 View of the interior of the Mosque of Córdoba and the partially restored flat, trabeated ceiling.

5 Dome above interlacing ribs in front of the prayer niche in the Mosque of Córdoba.

4

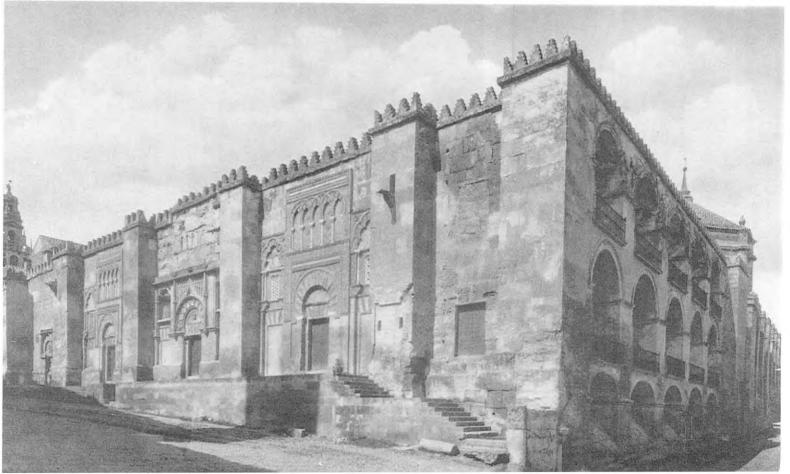






6 This Romanesque ribbed vaulting in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Torres del Rio, Navarre, showing the beginnings of Gothic ribbed vaulting, is visibly influenced by the art of Córdoba.

7 The Great Mosque of Córdoba, seen from the southwest. The Moorish decoration of the doors is partly mingled with late Gothic additions.



II Religions and Races

Part of the greatness of Moorish culture in Spain lay in the harmonious co-existence of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities under Arab rule. The tolerance shown by Islam both here and elsewhere appears to be in marked contradiction to the violence with which it extended its hold. For in the second or third wave of expansion, less than eighty years after the death of the Prophet, Islamic power had spread as far east as the Indus and reached the Pyrenees in the west. The strength of the armies can only be accounted for by religious zeal, the driving force of people who knew God to be on their side. It is all the more remarkable that once the fighting ceased the Muslims treated the Christians and Jews with a tolerance which on the whole neither the Christians nor Jews displayed under their own jurisdiction.

To understand this dual attitude of the Muslims, at once warlike and peaceful, we must try to see things from their point of view. They did not regard Judaism and Christianity as merely alien religions that had unexpectedly and disruptively penetrated their religious world, in the way that Jews and Christians considered Islam a nuisance, a presence that ought not to be there. In Islamic thought, which is based on the Koran, Judaism and Christianity occupy a definite position. For Islam sees itself as the renewal or the restoration of the original religion of Abraham, which according to this vision forms the root of the tree of which Judaism and Christianity are the branches. Its message is simply what we might call the early teaching of Abraham, the foundation of all monotheistic religions the belief in one, absolute God, who while incomparable and supreme, nevertheless constantly reveals himself both in the world He has created, as well as in the form of holy communications, which since the existence of mankind have been delivered from time to time to different nations by His "messengers" or prophets. Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Mohammed are some of these messengers and prophets. Mohammed is the last in the almost endless line of divine messengers and its "seal" in that he proclaims the nature of the prophetic mission as such in its timeless validity. From this it follows that fundamentally Islam recognizes Judaism and Christianity, even though it upbraids Jews and Christians for having forgotten or "concealed" the word received from God. If this were not so, it concludes, they would have recognized in Islam the religion of Abraham. By their hostility to Islam, they have been unfaithful to the heritage of Abraham, giving the Muslims the right to take up the sword against them. The rules of the "holy war" are a natural consequence of this. It is the duty of every Muslim to fight this war whenever the existence of the Islamic community is threatened by an external foe. Anyone killed in the course of the "holy war" dies as a "witness" of the divine truth, and is admitted to paradise. Should an enemy surrender he must be given protection. If he is a heathen, then he must convert to Islam, or else be killed, but if he belongs to the "people of the [holy] book," that is to say if he is a Jew or a Christian, he is free to continue to practice his own religion on condition that he recognizes the sovereignty of Islam.

This should be enough to explain the Islamic attitude towards other religions. Yet there remains the question of from whence Islam derived its exceptional driving force. To the European — or more exactly to the Christian observer, — it would seem on the whole that the doctrine of the oneness of God, inscribed on the banner of Islam, is too simple and too self-evident to arouse any far-reaching, burning zeal. Yet, quite apart from the metaphysical significance of this doctrine (to which we shall return later), one must not forget that the characteristic quality of Islam is the way in which an all-embracing truth, which for the Christians remains a static premise, is presented to mankind in a dynamic and efficacious form. The fundamental declaration of faith, "there is no god but God" (lā ilaha illā-Llāh), which the Muslim never tires of repeating, is in effect a swordthrust, not only against any errors of polytheism - which places the finite and infinite, the absolute and the relative all on one level — but also against everything in the human mind that claims to be just as important or as real as God. It is this that produces a fundamentally militant attitude. It does not, however, preclude either external or internal peace, but can be made manifest at any time if circumstances demand. The Prophet made the distinction between the "Great Holy War," which must be conducted within one's self, and the "Small Holy War" which is waged against external enemies.

To return to the conquest of Spain, we may say that the Muslims fought more courageously than their enemies the Visigoths, and that they accorded those who surrendered far better conditions than victorious armies usually did. But clearly there were other factors that contributed to the incredibly swift success of the Muslims, such as the dissension among the Visigoths over succession, and the assistance the Muslims received from the Jews, who had been oppressed by the Visigothic church. Nevertheless, it still remains a mystery how the whole of Spain could have been conquered in less than three years. By 713, three years after the invasion of southern Spain by Țāriķ, the Berber leader, and the Arab general, Mūsā ben Nuşair, the latter had advanced as far as Narbonne.

There is a surviving text of an agreement, dating from 713, which was drawn up between the Arab commander, 'Abd al-'Azīz, son and successor of Mūsā ben Nuşair, and the Visigothic prince of Murcia, Theodomir, at the surrender of the city of Orihuela. This, and other sources, shows that for the Christian and Jewish inhabitants, living conditions were no worse than they had been under the Visigothic nobility. The Christians were allowed to keep their churches and their monasteries, and the Jews, their synagogues. Moreover, they retained most of their personal possessions. Not only had the Visigoths taken over the Roman system of taxation, with its manifold burdens, but they had also perpetuated the Dirhem from the time of 'Abd ar-Rahman I's rule. In the center are the words: 'There is no god but God; He has no partner.'



latifundia, the large estates worked by slaves. When the Muslims took possession of the land, many of these estates were divided and handed over to local tenants. The slaves were for the most part set free, either by conversion to Islam — no Christian or Jew was allowed to have a Muslim for a slave — or by gradually buying themselves free, something that had not been permitted under the earlier Visigothic laws.

In addition to the general tax paid by all citizens, Christians and Jews had to pay a personal tax in lieu of having to perform military service. Moreover, the tax was on a sliding scale according to one's professional class, while women, children, monks, invalids, the sick, beggars and slaves were exempt.

The Christian and Jewish communities maintained autonomous jurisdiction in all disputes that did not involve the rights of Muslim subjects. They also had their own leaders, bishops or "counts" (comites), who represented them in the Muslim government. When a Muslim ruler had a voice in appointing a bishop, he was simply exercising the same right to which kings and emperors laid claim in Christian lands.

It was, of course, quite different for those indigenous Jews or Christians who resisted to the last. They and all their possessions were regarded as booty, unless they embraced the Islamic faith.

This was not essentially a question of belief, for there is "no coercion in faith" as the Koran says. It was solely a matter of accepting the law of Islam. No one questioned the sincerity of the conversion for it was assumed that faith would grow by itself, depending on the extent to which the God-given laws were observed. This attitude is characteristic of Islam and in particular of Moorish culture. The form of worship, as established by the Koran and the example of the Prophet, was obligatory and inflexible. However, the degree of absorption and the extent of faith or understanding is left to the individual.

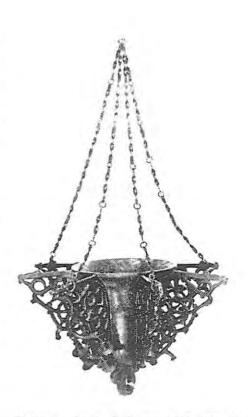


The Mozarabic cloister of San Miguel de Escalada.

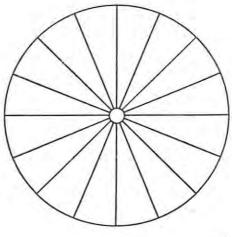
The Muslims reproached the Jews for having slandered Christ and the Holy Virgin, and the Christians for having made Christ into another God. The passages of the Koran containing these reproaches could be considered as a total or a partial condemnation of the other religions, depending on the individual interpretation. The Islamic jurists - theology and jurisprudence are bound up with each other in Islam — were severe in their judgment. To them, the Jews were damned for their defamation of a messenger of God, and the Christians had fallen into grave error by establishing the Trinity. Not all Muslims shared this view. Their co-existence with the Christians and Jews, as well as the high incidence of mixed marriages - a Muslim is permitted to marry a Jew or a Christian - must have produced a feeling that there was a road to salvation within each of the three religions. The Christian ascetics were highly respected. The famous book, "The Lamp of the Kings" (sirādj al-muluk), a treatise on statecraft written in twelfth-century Moorish Spain, contains many edifying examples of Christian asceticism. It was written by Abū Bakr Muhammad ben al-Wālid at-Turtushi, the mystic. Among the exponents of Islamic mysticism, the "inner knowledge" (al-'ilm al-bāțin), there were many who regarded the three religions as different roads towards the same end. The classic symbol of this is a circle with many radii connecting the center with the circumference. The circumference is the world, and the radii are the paths leading to the divine center. They appear contradictory in their directions, yet each represents the shortest distance to the center. This conception of varied religious ways can also be found in Christian writings of Spanish origin. Athough not widespread, the mere fact that it did exist at all must have contributed towards the bridging of chasms between the different religious communities.

As the leading religion, which penetrated every aspect of life, Islam held considerable attractions. No one knows how many native Spaniards became Muslims out of genuine conviction, and how many converted merely to benefit from the privileges thus gained. The Islamic authorities did not coerce people to conversion, especially since it resulted in a reduction in the revenue from the taxes levied on non-believers. Muslims, on the other hand, almost never converted to Christianity or Judaism, for the penalty for abandoning Islam was death.

Under Islamic rule, Arabic became the common language for all educated persons. Jewish philosophers and theologians such as Ibn Gabirol, Ibn Pakūda, and Maimonides wrote their principal works in Arabic. And although the Christians retained their Latin liturgy, they absorbed the Arabic culture to such an extent that they became known as *mozarabes*, which derives from the Arabic *must'arib*, meaning "Arabized." This process of Arabization was not without its opponents within clerical circles hostile to Islam. There is a well-known lament by a bishop citing that the young people showed more enthusiasm for Arabic writings than for those of the church fathers. A massive counter-movement arose in the middle of the ninth century, in the reign of 'Abd ar-Rahmān II, taking the form of a deliberate search for martyrdom. The Muslims never interfered in the straightforward practice of the Christian faith, but when a number of Christians of both sexes began



Christian church bell converted into a mosque lamp. (Museo Arqueológico Nacionál, Madrid)



to revile Islam and curse the prophet, the Muslim judges sentenced them to death.

A characteristic example of this insurgency is the story of Isaac, a young Christian nobleman, who had started a highly promising career as a scribe $(k\bar{a}tib)$ at the court of Córdoba. He then entered a monastery, only to appear one day before the highest Muslim judge asking to be converted to Islam, and requesting instruction. However, no sooner did the delighted Kadi begin the instruction than Isaac interrupted him. He, then, started reviling the Prophet. In vain did the judge attempt to save the fanatical monk from the death penalty by a plea of insanity. Soon after this, at the Sultan's command, a synod of bishops was convened which denounced the provocation to martyrdom as overzealous enthusiasm.

Another reaction to Islam, though of quite a different order, was the "doctrine of Adoption," proclaimed by Archbishop Elipandus, the head of the Visigothic church, at the synod held in Seville in 784. This acknowledged the resentment which the Christian dogma of the Trinity aroused in Muslims and Jews alike. Whereas the Koran does acknowledge the divine nature of Christ for it refers to Him as "the spirit of God and His word," it nevertheless rejects the term, "Son of God," because the Islamic view insists on the incomparability of God. Bearing this in mind, Elipandus distinguishes between the essential "filiation" which alone belongs to the eternal Word, the logos, and the "adoptive filiation," which befits the person of Jesus, and which He possesses in common with all the saints. No doubt his intention was righteous, but his action brought him into conflict with the dogma of the unity of the person of Christ, for which he was severely criticized by an Asturian monk, Beatus of Liebana. Asturias was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Toledo, seat of the archbishopric occupied by Elipandus, but lay outside Arab jurisdiction. The Asturian mountains had been the refuge of political resistance against the Muslims from the start, and were now to harbor the beginnings of a religious opposition to the Mozarabic church, which supposedly was subject to the Muslims. Beatus enlisted the support of Charlemagne, and synods in Rome, Regensburg, Frankfurt and Aachen all condemned Elipandus' doctrine of Adoption. Charlemagne could not forgive the Mozarabic Christians for having sided with the Muslims instead of with the Franks when he had entered Spain with an army six years earlier. The whole controversy concerning Elipandus would have subsided without trace had not Beatus composed a commentary on the Apocalypse which was to become famous throughout the Holy Roman Empire. This work, including remarkable pictures, was copied many times, for the most part in monasteries founded by Andalusian monks who had emigrated to the Christian north. The pictures painted by these monks are a curious blend of early-Christian, Mediterranean, and Asiatic elements, proving that despite their affiliation with Rome the Mozarabic communities were in closer contact with the Christian communities in Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia than with Western Europe.

The greatest beneficiaries of Islamic rule were the Jews, for in Spain

(Sephārād in Hebrew) they enjoyed their finest intellectual flowering since their dispersal from Palestine to foreign lands. The Semitic genius of the Arab tongue and culture held a great affinity for the Jews, and the Islamic doctrine of the oneness of God, with its emphasis on the incomparability and the omnipresence of God, was an inspiration for Jewish theology. But even here there was the occasional sudden and violent resistance against the much-feared "Arabization," the essential point of difference being the Jewish insistence on the preeminence of the historical view of God, bound up with the destiny of the chosen people, as against the, as it were, "Platonic" God of the Arab philosophers.

Two great Sephardic Jews produced works that are central to the confrontation with Islam. One of these, Moshe ben Maimon, or Moses Maimonides as he is generally known, was born in Córdoba in 1135, and always remained in contact with Spanish Jews, although as a result of the Almohad policies his family had to emigrate first to Morocco and then to Cairo, where he was appointed personal physician to the sultan Saladin. His most important works, above all his "Guide to the Perplexed" (*Dalālat al-Ḥairīn*, in Arabic, and *More Nevukhim* in Hebrew), occupy a place in Judaism similar to the works of Thomas Aquinas in Catholicism, for Maimonides took account of the philosophy of the Greeks, which had come down to the Arabs and was developed by them, and he incorporated it into the Jewish religious outlook.

The other leading personality among Sephardic Jews, Bahya Ibn-Pakūda, lived earlier, in the eleventh century. His "Guide to the Duties of the Heart," which was written in Arabic under the title of *Hidayā ilā farā'id al-kulūb* and later translated into Hebrew as *Sefer hovot ha-levavot*, is obviously the outcome of an encounter with Islamic mysticism. The work became famous throughout the whole of the Jewish Diaspora, and had a profound influence on popular Jewish mysticism, particularly in the medieval Rhineland and in the Eastern European Jewish communities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Guaranteeing peaceful co-existence between the three religious communities was not nearly so difficult as overcoming the tensions between the different races, and it was this that constituted the severest problem for the Arab rulers of Spain. Besides the indigenous mixed population consisting of Iberians and Romans, there was also the Germanic minority of Visigoths, who, as the former nobility, expected certain priorities even under Arab rule. The Jewish population was unusually large in Spain. Then there were the Arabs and the Berbers, not to mention all the different elements that had been introduced as a result of the slave trade.

No one knows exactly how many Arabs migrated to Spain, but they remained a comparatively weak minority, although in other respects they were strong, and particularly suited to the role of ruling nobility. They took pride in their clannishness, yet did not hesitate to marry Spanish women. Even to this day some Spaniards display the features of their Arab ancestors. Moreover, the fact that both language and culture were Arabic should not be underestimated, for a strong

culture connected with a particular language will almost always favor the development of certain physically and mentally distinguished types.

The Berbers, who came for the most part from the Riff and central Atlas mountains, settled mainly in areas similar to their place of origin — namely in the Spanish high plateaux, the *mesas*, and in the mountain ranges. They probably outnumbered the Arabs from the start, and with time this certainly became the case, as the Arab sultans were continually bringing fresh Berber auxiliary troops over from North Africa. The preponderance of Berbers can also be deduced from the fact that the Spaniards referred to all Muslims as "*moros*," which comes from the Latin, *mauri* or *maurusci*, the term used for all Atlas Berbers and can be traced back indirectly to the late Greek *mauroi*, "black," or the Phoenician *mauharin*, "Western."

Where the Jews maintained Jewish faith there was obviously no intermarriage, but there were, however, frequent instances of Jews converting to Islam, and these then became one further element in the Spanish-Moorish intermingling of stock. Since it was forbidden to make slaves of children of Muslim parentage, slaves were mostly brought over from "heathen" lands. The word slave itself suggests that most Western slaves came from the Slav countries. In Arabic, the Slavs are called *sakāliba*.

Prisoners of war from Russia or from the lands along the Danube, taken by the Germans or the Byzantines, were brought to Spain by way of Germany and France or through the Mediterranean by slave dealers who were usually Jews. Here they were in great demand as servants or bodyguards to the sultans. Accord-



Dragon-slayer in oriental attire, reminiscent of Persian models, from the Apocalypse of Beatus of Liebana, Gerona, manuscript, approximately 975.

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ing to al- Makkārī, there were supposed to have been 14,000 "Slavs" in Córdoba in the time of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān II, in the middle of the ninth century, all of whom were Muslims and nearly all of whom had been freed. The liberation of slaves is considered one of the most deserving of deeds in Islam. Not all *sakāliba* were Slavs by race, for some of them were prisoners of war who came from northern Spain or Italy, where they had been seized by pirates. The liberated "Slavs" were among the most ambitious people in the land.

Slavery within Islamic culture is not to be confused with Roman slavery or with the American variety of the nineteenth century; in Islam the slave was never a mere "thing." If his master treated him badly, he could appeal to a judge and procure his freedom. His dignity as a Muslim was inviolable. Originally the status of slave was simply the outcome of having been taken as a prisoner of war. A captive who could not buy his own freedom by means of a ransom remained in the possession of the captor until he had earned his freedom by work or until he was granted liberty by his master.

To a certain extent Arab rule, and also Islam which has Arabic as its holy tongue, produced a widespread Arabization of Spain, especially in the south, while the entire culture necessarily took on a Spanish character, which is hard to define because there is nothing with which to compare it. So many of the "typically Spanish" features unearthed by modern historical research looking back to Moorish culture are, in fact, Islamic-Arabic elements, inherited by the Spanish "reconquista." There was, moreover, something in the nature of an interchange of racial characteristics. Thus the Arabs living in Spain gradually lost their warlike character, and became learned scholars, administrators and landlords, while the entire Spanish population adopted something of the proud and unyielding nature of the Arab nomad, which they have never lost.

III The Caliphate

Islamic culture would probably not have been so deep-seated in Spain had it not been for the establishment of the Western Caliphate, which provided it with a spiritual as well as a political center. The derivation of the word "caliphate" is Arabic, from *Khalifa*, meaning representative, and in this context it designates the successor to the Prophet, not in the prophetic sense, but simply the royal office. Thus, the Caliph is not a High Priest or a pope, at least not in the sense of the Caliphate of Sunni Islam — the Shi'ites have a slightly different interpretation and his role is more that of the emperor in the medieval Holy Roman Empire, except that in Islam there is no distinction between religious law and secular law, and consequently no separation between church and state. The Caliph is the ritual leader ($im\bar{a}m$) of the Islamic community, the trustee of the law handed down to him, the highest military leader, and the "commander of the faithful" (*amīr al-muminīn*).

When Spain was conquered by an army of Berbers and Arabs at the beginning of the eighth century, it remained for a while a remote, outlying province of the great empire which the ruling Ummayyad Caliphs in Damascus had just extended as far as Samarkand. The Arabs called Spain al-Andalus, and it continued to be known as such for as long as it remained under Arab-Islamic rule. There were some twenty thousand Arabs and Berbers who had conquered Spain and who subsequently settled there. They took the place of the preceding ruling Visigothic warrior nobility without changing much in the order of things. In principle their leaders were dependent on the government in Damascus, but they did not concern themselves unduly with it, not even during the great change-over in the middle of the eighth century in the east, as a result of which the Abbasids took the place of the Ummayyads, and Baghdad succeeded Damascus as the political center. A fateful event for Spain occurred towards 756, when one of the last surviving princes of the Ummayyad ruling house escaped to Andalusia, and there established a new principality, independent of Baghdad. The dynasty founded by him was later to become the Western Caliphate that ruled from Córdoba.

'Abd ar-Raḥmān, whose name means "Servant of the Merciful," had made his escape from the east, and regarded himself from the outset as the rightful heir to the Caliphate, although he had not dared to assert his claim with the Abbasids. However, he would not tolerate any attack on his domain by them. When the Abbasid Caliph attempted to start an uprising in Spain against 'Abd ar-Raḥmān, the latter captured all the ringleaders, had them beheaded and sent their heads pickled in brine together with the Caliph's original letter to Iraq in the luggage



A Dirhem from the reign of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān I (777—778).

of a travelling merchant. Whereupon the Caliph is reported to have said, "Thanks be to God, for having spread the sea between me and such an opponent!"

'Abd ar-Rahmān was faced with the choice either of spending the rest of his life in flight, perpetually in danger of being handed over to the Abbasids, or to found his own empire, sword in hand. He himself told the story of how, when he fled from the Abbasid bailiffs in the east, he reached the Euphrates, threw himself in and swam across. His younger brother, terrified by the water, turned back, and was beheaded. 'Abd ar-Rahmān fled westward until he came to Tunisia. He hid for five years in Barka, then spent some time among the Berber tribesmen, and finally from Morocco he sent his freed slave Badr across to Spain in order to win over a number of former Ummayyad supporters for his cause. Some fifteen years earlier an Arab army, consisting mainly of Syrians and Yemenites, had been compelled to cross over to Spain as a result of a Berber uprising in North Africa, and had settled on the southern-most tip of land. Badr succeeded in enlisting the support of the officers of this army, who had once served the Ummayyads. 'Abd ar-Rahmān was thereupon brought over from the Moroccan coast by boat. With his new following, he made straight for Seville, attacked Córdoba, besieged the administrators of the Spanish province who were virtually independent princes, and seized power.

The Arab chroniclers describe 'Abd ar-Rahmān as being as kind as he was energetic. But in old age he is supposed to have grown ruthless. In his defense, however, it must be said that he had to contend not only with enemies from outside, such as the Asturian Christians and the Franks, but also with Arabs in his own camp. These warriors, who were still semi-nomadic, gave their primary allegiance to their own tribes, and would obey a leader only if he could prove beyond all possible doubt that he had a divine calling to rule, which would have to manifest itself either in his holiness or in his irresistible strength. Basically, every single one of them was convinced that he himself would make a better ruler than the man at present in power. This attitude must be borne in mind when learning of the frequently gruesome penalties imposed by the princes of those times. The danger of being beheaded did not deter the reckless hot-heads among the Arabs and Berbers from creating uprisings.

It is hardly surprising that in the time of the Ummayyads, Spain occasionally had brutal or even bad rulers. What is surprising is that there was such a high proportion of quite outstanding, and even brilliant rulers. The son and successor of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān, who reigned for only a short time, from 788 until his death in 796, was virtually a saint. He rejected all worldly pleasures and was entirely concerned with salvation. Dressed in the simplest clothes, he would visit the poor quarters of the city and provide for the welfare of the hungry and the destitute. He would often leave his palace in the middle of the night to bring refreshment to some solitary sick person. It is significant that in his reign there was no unrest or uprisings.

These occurred frequently enough, however, under the rulers that followed him, beginning with al-Hakam I — not to be confused with the second Ummayyad

ruler of that name who was responsible for the building of the prayer niche in the Great Mosque of Córdoba. The chief complaint against him was that he was a drunkard and that he surrounded himself with a strong bodyguard of Slavs in order to be independent of the Arab nobility, and this was considered unpardonable. There was discontent among the people as the cost of the state administration began to soar and taxes rose. In addition, there were conflicts between the different, recently established social groups of the population. The Arabs, then as ever, considered themselves to be the nobility with privileges beyond the Berber and those of the native population who had adopted Islam. Meanwhile, the Berbers and the new Spanish Muslims justifiably clamored for equality. Al-Hakam I struck back with unremitting severity, not hesitating to set his enemies cunning traps. As a result of one uprising, several thousand Córdobans emigrated to Morocco, where they settled in Fez, in that part of the city which is still known to this day as the "Andalusian" quarter. In a poem to his son and successor, 'Abd ar-Rahmān II, Al-Hakam I sought to justify his actions as a ruler:

"As the tailor uses his needle to sew together pieces of cloth, so did I employ my sword in order to unite the divided provinces. For ever since I reached the age when I began to think, the fragmentation of my empire was the prime object of my concern. Ask now, what are my frontiers, whether there is any one place that lies in the power of the enemy - they will answer you, no. Yet if they were to answer you with yes, I should fly there immediately, clad in my suit of armor, sword in hand. Ask, also, of the skulls of the rebellious subjects, that lie scattered on the plain, like gourds split in two, shining in the sunlight. They will tell you that it was I who slew them without hesitation. Gripped by terror, the rebels flew to escape death, while I remained at my post, always spurning death. If I spared neither their women nor their children, it was because they threatened my own family; he who does not avenge injustice done to his own family has no feeling of honor, and is despised by everyman. When we stopped crossing swords, I would compel them to swallow a poisonous draught - but what more did I do, than to repay what I owed them? If they met their death, then unquestionably it was because fate willed it . . ."

Under the rule of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān II, which lasted until 852, a degree of harmony was reached between the different sections of the population despite the continued unrest on the part of the Christians. Taken as a whole, the reign of this prince was peaceful and productive.

At that time, too, the first indications of Persian influence reached Córdoba from Baghdad, altering the style of the kingdom, which had hitherto always retained something of the direct relationship between an Arab chieftain and the members of his tribe.

Under 'Abd ar-Raḥmān II's successors, Muhammad I, al-Mundhir and 'Abd-Allāh, whose reigns lasted from 852—912, there were further uprisings, especially in the mountainous region of southern Spain, Sierra de Málaga, where a band, headed by Ibn Hafsun, who claimed initially to be a Muslim, and subsequently



Fragment of eleventh century Spanish-Moorish silk fabric. The motif of the twoheaded eagle originates in Persia. (Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyons)

a Christian, attacked the neighboring areas from his mountain fortress of Bobastro. But all these events had no great impact on the development of Moorish culture. It was the Caliphate of 'Abd ar-Rahmān III that first produced a profound change in the life style of the people.

'Abd ar-Raḥmān III, whom his grandfather, 'Abd-Allāh, had named as successor, was a brilliant statesman and successful general. He put an end to the intrigues of the tribal chiefs by destroying the nobility. Ibn Khaldūn, the great Moorish historian, detects the beginning of the decline of the Ummayyad dynasty in this move, which robbed it of its own tribal basis. Yet in so doing, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān III undeniably granted Moorish Spain its period of greatest unity and its finest flowering. He repelled the Christian kingdoms which had been gaining strength in the north of Spain, and called a halt to the advance of the Fatimids in North Africa.

When in 929 he assumed the title of Caliph, he did so not only in order to crown his own work as a statesman: with the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate in the east, previously considered an unassailable stronghold of Islam by the Spanish Muslims, no alternative course of action remained open for him, especially as a new Caliphate had come into being that was hostile to both the Abbasids and the Ummayyads. Using Mahdiya in Tunisia as their base, the Fatimids conquered the whole of North Africa. As a result, the old conflict between the Sunni and the Shi'ite concept of the Caliphate came within direct proximity of Spain. The Fatimids were Ismāilites, who themselves are an extreme branch of Shi'ite Islam. The Shi'ites are of the conviction that only a direct descendant of the Prophet through 'Ali, the fourth Caliph and his wife Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, was worthy to inherit the Caliphate. For the Sunnites, on the other hand, who included both the Abbasids and the Ummayyads, the models of the Caliphate were exemplified not only by 'Ali but also by the first three Caliphs of Islam, Abū Bekr, 'Omar and 'Othman. These, although not descended from the Prophet, like him belonged to the Kuraish, the most distinguished tribe of Mecca.

'Abd ar-Rahmān III, who was known as *an-Nāsir*, "the helper," was conscious of the spiritual implications of his office, and gave it symbolic expression. The early Caliphs of Islam, who had to be an example to the Spanish Ummayyads, especially in contrast with the Fatimids, lived in simplicity bordering on poverty, whereas the Abbasids, who were a model to the Spanish caliphs in other ways, surrounded themselves with a ceremonial splendor that was indirectly descended from the divine kingdom of the ancient Persians, the Sassanians and their eastern predecessors. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān combined both styles when he built *Medinat az-Zahra* to the north of Córdoba, with its 4,300 marble columns, walls encrusted with precious stones, arcaded halls, fountains and gardens. "Before me," his demeanor appeared to say, "you are all small, but before God, I myself am nothing."

Muhyi-d-din Ibn 'Arabi tells how "a mission of Spanish Christians came from the north to negotiate with the Caliph. The Caliph wished to inspire them with



Small bronze horse from Medinat az-Zahra, tenth century. (Museo Provincial, Córdoba)

awe by showing them the splendor of his kingdom. To this effect, he lined the road leading from the city gate of Córdoba to the gate of Medinat az-Zahra, a distance of one parasange (about 12 miles), with a double row of soldiers on either side who held aloft their naked swords that were both broad and long, with tips touching to form a roof. At the command of the ruler, the ambassadors were led between this double row of soldiers as through a covered way. The terror induced by this display is indescribable. In this way they reached the gateway of Medinat az-Zahra. The Caliph had had the ground from this gateway as far as the area where the reception by the ruler was to take place covered with brocade. At certain intervals along the way, dignitaries were seated, who could have been mistaken for kings, for they sat on splendid chairs, and were clothed in silks and brocades. Each time the ambassadors caught sight of one of these dignitaries, they fell to the ground before them, taking him for the Caliph. Then they would be told, "Raise your heads! This is but a servant of his servants." Finally they came to a courtyard, the floor of which was strewn with sand. In the center was the Caliph. His clothing was coarse and scanty. All that he had on him was worth no more than four dirham. He sat on the ground, with his head bent forward. Before him was a copy of the Koran, a sword and a fire. "This is the ruler," the ambassadors were told, who threw themselves to the ground. He raised his face in their direction, and even before they were able to utter a sound, he said to them, "God has commanded us, O you people, to call upon you to submit to this." With these words, he showed them the Koran. "If you refuse, we shall compel you with this," and he indicated the sword, "and if we kill you, then you will go thither!" and he pointed at the fire. The ambassadors were overcome with terror. At the command of the Caliph, they were led away before they could say anything. Subsequently, they signed the peace treaty, complete with all the conditions the ruler had imposed."

We must not conclude from this account that 'Abd ar-Rahmān oppressed the Christians in his own territory and made them convert to Islam by force. The approach described here was reserved for hostile Christians who were fighting Islam. The Christians living under his protection enjoyed the privileges of guests. He was, moreover, in no way fanatical and could admire people of other faiths, proof of which lies in the story of his friendly relationship with the monk, John of Görtz, the brave emissary of Otto I. 'Abd ar-Rahmān had sent emissaries with a message to the "great ruler of Alamaniya," Otto I, containing among other things the invitation to accept Islam, which as Caliph, he was duty bound to extend. Otto I found the message unacceptable and made the ambassadors wait for three years in Germany before receiving them. Yet he decided to send an emissary to 'Abd ar-Rahman with a letter in Greek abusing the Prophet, which would repay in kind the words that he had received which were so intolerable to Christianity. Accordingly, a messenger had to be found who was prepared to die a martyr. A Benedictine monk from Görtz by the name of John, who later became abbot of his monastery and died a saint, volunteered for this mission. He reached Córdoba in 957 and was received with great hospitality, but was not presented to the Caliph. He was informed that in compensation for the humiliation to which the

Muslim ambassadors had been subjected in Germany, he would have to wait nine years for an audience. In actual fact, the Caliph wanted to avoid having to reply with a further provocation to the Christian ruler's message, the contents of which he either knew or had guessed. However, in order to avoid endless procrastination, he sent a Jew to the monk John and his companion, Garamannus, to persuade them to appear before the Caliph without the dangerous letter. John declined to do so. After some months had gone by, he received a visit from the Bishop of Córdoba, who likewise urged him most insistently to put aside the letter, lest the wrath of the Muslims be directed against the Christian community of Córdoba. John reproached the Bishop, saying that he and his Andalusian co-religionists were concealing the truth from themselves out of fear of the Muslims, while the Bishop tried in vain to make it clear to the Benedictine monk that under Islamic rule the Christians were obliged to observe certain forms in order to be able to live at all. John refused to yield. Now the Christian laity began to seek him out to implore him to give in, lest his defiance, which had by now become known to the Muslim people, unleash a wave of persecution against the Andasulian Christians. Finally, a solution was arrived at that was acceptable to all sides. A Christian official in the Caliph's palace, by the name of Recemundus, who was then made a bishop, was sent to Otto I, with the permission of the Caliph and on the recommendation of John of Görtz, in order to ask him to send a new modified letter to 'Abd ar-Rahmān III. Otto I consented, and in June 959 Recemundus and his retinue returned to Córdoba, accompanied by a new imperial ambassador named Dudo. Instead of the earlier letter, he now brought a proposal for a peace treaty between the German empire and the Western Caliphate, together with a demand that the Caliph should recall the bands of marauding Arabs who were at that time threatening the safety of southern France and the Alpine passes along the Rhône.

When the new ambassador wanted to present himself at the court of Córdoba, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān said, 'No, upon my soul! First let the original ambassador appear. No one shall see my face before that courageous monk, who defied my will for so long." But when several high officials went to seek out the monk, they found him with hair and beard unkempt, and clad only in a coarse monk's habit. He could hardly appear thus to be received by the Caliph, and 'Abd ar-Raḥmān had ten pounds of silver sent to him with which to buy himself court attire. John thanked him for it, and distributed the money among the poor. "It is not that I despise the gifts of kings," he said, "but I can wear only the garb of my Order." "Then let him come, as he wishes," called the Caliph, "for all I care, let him wear a sack. I will not receive him any the less well for it!"

The two monks, John and Garamannus, were conducted to *Medinat az-Zahra* with great ceremony, and led through a series of increasingly beautiful and magnificent halls until they came to the room where the Caliph, who in his old age only rarely allowed himself to be seen, was seated on a divan. He honored the monk by extending his hand to him to be kissed. John was allowed to sit on a chair such as only the Christians used, and after a prolonged silence, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān began



Typical ancient Persian motif of a washbasin hewn from stone, from MedInat az-Zāhira. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid)

to explain his conduct. John replied and in the course of their conversation, which was conducted in the most courteous terms, the Caliph and the monk took a great liking to each other. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān did not want to let John leave the country before he had visited him several times more. In the following conversations which took place informally, the Caliph enquired how things were in the German empire, and criticized the policy of Otto I for not having suppressed the nobility entirely, and displayed such an intimate understanding of human nature, that John went away with the greatest respect for his wisdom and education.

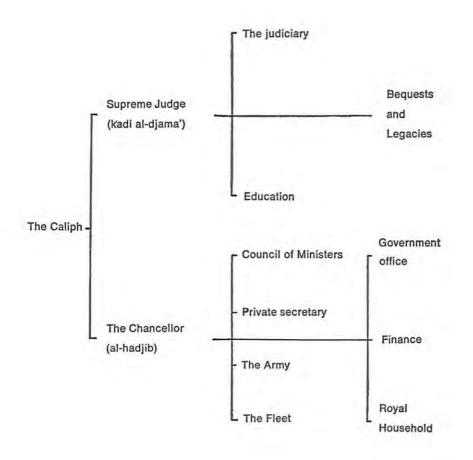
When 'Abd ar-Raḥmān III died in 961, he was succeeded by his son, al-Ḥakam II, the patron of the arts and sciences whose name remains closely associated with the great flowering of *al-Andalus*. If a ruler possesses a library of 400,000 volumes, every one of which have gone through his own hands, then neither his ministers nor his private secretaries will be satisfied to have a collection of their own consisting of a mere one hundred volumes, and as a result the market for books grows to such an extent that neither the parchment makers, nor the scribes, nor the bookbinders, nor even the writers, need ever be idle. Of all these, the profession of scribe was by no means the lowliest, for in Islamic lands calligraphy was developed to such a fine art, that even kings and princesses would spare no pains in copying out some important work, preferably the Koran, by hand.

The Spanish Caliphate came to its famous end with the rule, not of Caliph Hishām II, who succeeded al-Hakam II, but of his prime minister or chancellor, al-Mansur. It was he who in reality wielded all the power, while the young caliph, who was passive by inclination, spent his life in the fairy-tale city of Medinat az-Zahra, as if in a golden cage. This is reminiscent of the Merovingians and their majordomos, and likewise of a similar development in Japanese history, where the Shogun began to take over power in place of the emperor, who continued to sit enthroned in his palace and receive homage. And just as the Shogunate created an administrative city for itself, which was independent of the imperial city, al-Mansūr, too, was to build the administrative city of Medinat az-Zāhira to the east of Córdoba as the seat of his government. Al-Mansūr had risen from the post of scribe to the position of highest power. His real name was Ibn Abi 'Amir, but after his victories over the Christian kingdoms of Galicia, Castile, and Catalonia in the north of Spain, he adopted the honorary title of al-Mansūr billāh, "he who is supported by God." He had a Napoleonic talent for statesmanship and for warfare, and he anticipated certain developments that the remainder of Europe did not discover until after the Middle Ages. He did away with the division of the national army according to tribes. At the same time, he relied upon a mercenary army composed of North African Berbers, Christians from Catalonia, and Slavs. After his death, when they no longer were being paid, these mercenary bands were to become a veritable scourge.

Al-Manṣūr had gathered together all the threads of power into his hands to such an extent that his death could be followed only by general collapse, and he was well aware of this. Under his rule Moorish Spain had attained its greatest and mightiest position. After his death in 1002, and after the short-lived rule of his son, al-Muzaffar, a series of civil wars broke out which led to the destruction of part of Córdoba. *Medinat az-Zahra*, the magnificent royal city, and *Medinat az-Zāhira*, the administrative center, were both burned down. In 1031 an uprising by the people of Córdoba put an end to the sham government of the last Caliph, Hishām III. The Spanish Caliphate ceased to exist.

The political system which had created the Caliphate remained the model for the many petty principalities, which were still to arise during the history of Moorish Spain, as well as for the Hispano-African empires of the Almoravides and the Almohades.

The ruler assumed office by entering into an alliance with his subjects, whereby he undertook to observe the divine law and the subjects pledged themselves to obedience. In the tradition of the alliance between the Prophet and his followers, this bond was sealed by a joining of hands, between the ruler and his ministers at the uppermost level, the tribal chiefs and the highest judges and then between these and their followers from rank to rank, down as far as the humblest subjects. There was never any question of the people choosing their ruler. Nevertheless, a symbolic act such as this imposed certain responsibilities — if the ruler did not discharge his duty, then his subjects ceased to regard their duty as binding. Once installed, the ruler possessed all the power. He formed the peak, as it were, of a pyramid in which all power flowed downwards. Further on we shall examine what counterbalances there were to offset this seemingly unlimited power of the ruler.



The ruler could act as head of state, as commander of the army, or as judge. But in fact he conferred his mandatory powers on two of the highest officials, on the prime minister and the supreme judge. Within the Caliphate these were the Chancellor or $h\bar{a}jib$ and the first judge of the city of Córdoba.

The derivation of the term $h\bar{a}jib$ is from the Arabic hajaba, "to conceal," and refers to the custom whereby at audiences the Emperor would remain concealed behind a curtain, and speak to his subjects only through a high official, the "concealer" ($h\bar{a}jib$). This custom originates not from the early Caliphs but from the ancient Persian kingdom. However, it has a spiritual significance: the Caliph is thus transformed from an individual with whatever personal characteristics he may happen to possess into a representative of a higher law.

There is ample justification for the comparison drawn by Muhyi-d-dīn Ibn 'Arabī, the great Andalusian mystic, when he likens the Caliph to the spirit in the heart, and the prime minister to the externally directed reason.

The Chancellor had both the administration and the army under him. He advised the council of ministers ($wuzar\bar{a}$, singular wezir, cf. vizier), and had the first secretary ($k\bar{a}tib$) as an assistant.

The administration itself was divided into state chancellery, finance, and royal household. As far as taxes were concerned, every Muslim was bound according to Koranic law to pay an alms tax once a year, which the ruler was permitted to draw upon for use in the "holy war." In addition to this there were the taxes on property, personal or poll-tax, which were graded according to religion and rank, and the various tributes, laid down in agreements with non-Muslim vassals. It is recorded that the annual state revenue under al-Ḥakam II amounted to forty million dinars.

The royal household likewise came under the control of the prime minister or chancellor. Then there were estates, whose revenue supported the royal families, and also the market and excise taxes, which the ruler had added to cover special expenses, for his personal policy required him to be at all times in a position to distribute lavish gifts. For this purpose, there were workshops attached to his household, where craftsmen produced precious silk brocades for festive garments, gold work, and ivory carvings. A bodyguard of slaves — these were often "Slavs" and sometimes also Negroes — safeguarded the security of the royal palace.

The religion set the limits of power of the ruler, which he could not transgress without losing the respect of the people, thereby destroying the foundation of his authority. These limits were all the more immovable, since the Islamic religion not only regulates the conduct of the individual, but also extends to the public aspects of community life. The state could never be separated from religion. On the other hand, the ruler was obliged to impose restrictions on himself by naming as supreme judge a man known both for his virtue and his learning, one whom the people respected and trusted to uphold justice in the land, and who was allowed to contradict the ruler. The entire social order depended far more on individual persons than on "organizations."

The following story, is told about one of the many famous judges of Córdoba.

M.C.N. 5

"One day a man appeared before the judge and delivered the following message: 'My Lord, the Chancellor, Mūsā ben Muhammed greets you and would say to you: You are aware of the friendship and the affection I bear you, and the attention I give to all that concerns you. As you know, a charge is being brought in your court against Yahya ben Ishāk. Reliable witnesses are said to have given evidence against him. Nevertheless, I believe you would do better to defer judgment to avoid passing sentence on the basis of the evidence that has been submitted.' 'Send my greetings to the Chancellor,' was the judge's reply to the messenger, 'and tell him that our friendship will only persist so long as it is pleasing to God and is mindful of Him. For me Yaḥya ben Isḥāk is a man like any other man in court. I do, however, have certain reservations in this matter, and shall not, if God wills it, make any decision against Yahya ben Ishāk until I see as much light in his case as that of the sun that lights up the world. For nothing can shield me from the consequences of an injustice that I might do to Yahya ben Ishāk on the day when I myself shall appear in judgment before God." The Chancellor, who was the most powerful man of his day, is supposed to have respected the judge all the more for his reply.

The supreme judge was often also preacher in the Great Mosque, and would lead the congregation in prayer. He had a direct influence on public instruction, and he remained in constant contact with the people. He stood between the people and the ruler, and in order not to have to make concessions on any side, he made it his rule to accept neither a salary nor gifts. Many of the Córdoban judges lived, if not in poverty, in extremely modest circumstances.

Nasir ben Kais, the tenant-farmer of a judge of Córdoba states, "When I entered the judge's house, he stood up to greet me, then sat down and said to the people sitting with him, 'Gentlemen, this is the man, who with God's help, feeds me and my family.' Thereupon he asked me about the year's crops, and I informed him that the seed on his fields would produce seven measures of barley and three measures of wheat. The judge thanked God and praised him. He then began to talk with the man and the woman who were visiting him. The man said to the judge, 'My lord, command this woman to return home with me.' The woman threw herself to the floor, and swore that she would not go one single step with her husband, and said to the judge, 'By the God, apart from whom there is no other God, if you command me to go with this man, I shall kill myself, and you will be to blame for my death!' When the judge heard the woman utter these words, he turned to another man at his side, whom I took for a lawyer, and said to him, 'What do you think of this case?' 'If the judge has no evidence that the man is treating his wife badly,' answered the scholar, 'then he must compel her to go with him, whether she wants to or no, unless the man is prepared to be separated from her in exchange for some form of compensation or for something she is prepared to give him. If, however, he refuses to let her go for anything other than compensation, he is in the right. For a man is entitled to dispose of even his wife's earrings, provided he does not treat her badly.' When the husband heard the words of the learned man, he said, 'By God, she is poor and has no



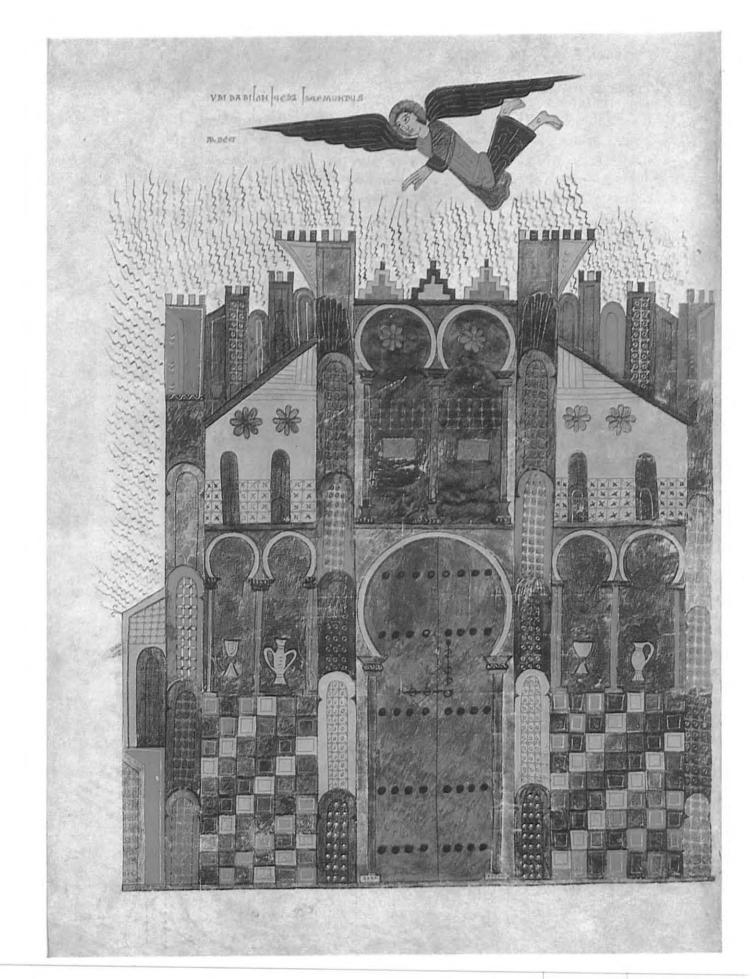
Moorish ivory casket, mid-eleventh century. The metal casing is modern. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

fortune of her own." 'But if,' interposed the judge, 'she were in a position to offer you compensation, in order to be free of you, would you then let her go?' 'In that case, yes, and gladly,' he replied. Thereupon the judge turned to me and said, 'Have you brought supplies with you on this journey?' 'Only one bushel of wheat and two bushels of barley,' was my reply. I saw the judge moving his fingers, as if he were counting. Then he remarked, 'That amounts to nine month's supplies and a little more.' Then he turned to the husband, saying, 'Take what is left on my estate and let your wife go in peace, and so you will be rid of her.' 'I should willingly accept this offer,' the man replied, 'if the supplies were in Córdoba.' 'I can see,' said the judge, 'that you are a man to make the most of an opportunity.' Then he placed both hands on the floor, stood up, went into one of the rooms of the house, and came back with a length of white linen, and gave it to the man, saying, 'This length of linen has been woven here in my house for my own use this winter. But I can spare it. So take it, and sell it. You can then use the proceeds to pay for the transportation of the harvest from my estate to your house.' The man took the cloth and let his wife go. The judge then ordered me to deliver those supplies to the man, and I had no choice but to let him have them."

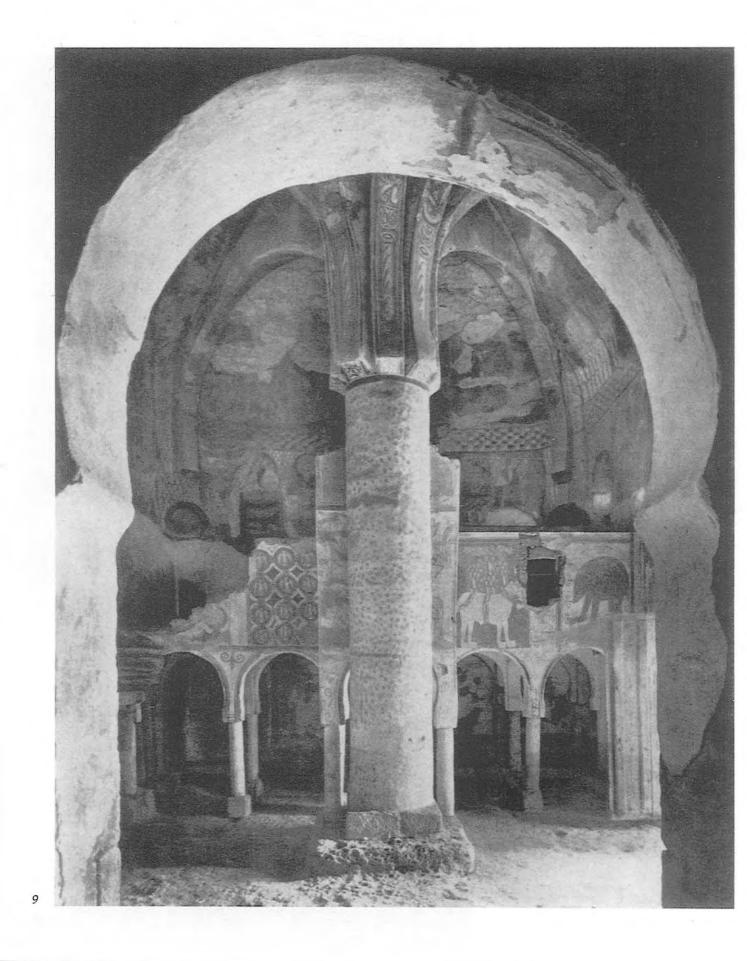
Just as the prime minister or chancellor, who in a sense was the counterpart of the supreme judge, administered public funds, the supreme judge administered the funds of the Islamic religious community that were kept in the Great Mosque. These funds stemmed from religious foundations and from properties bequeathed by deceased persons, and were used for the upkeep of these same properties, consisting largely of mosques, hospitals, schools, baths, fountains and bridges. In emergencies any surplus could be used for the defense of the Islamic community. Thus there was a whole empire of the deceased serving the living which was not subject to the arbitrary power of the ruler.

A modern historian has observed that the Moorish culture of the ninth and tenth centuries, despite its advanced level of development, bears no trace of a communal order produced by the people - unlike the Christian-Latin culture of the Middle Ages. Life in Moorish Spain was completely under the domination of the officials of the absolute ruler and of the rigid foundations bequeathed by the dead, which were likewise "inimical to progress." Yet the "inflexibility" of these same institutions was not considered oppressive, but were regarded as a protection and a safeguard. The Islamic city thereby acquired a semi-monastic character, which, incidentally, was further emphasized by the way that all dwellings faced away from the streets, opening inwards on to an interior courtyard. Family life was withdrawn to escape public prying, in the same way that the estates bequeathed by the deceased eluded interference from the State. This is characteristic of the Islamic state in its purest form. Communal life was ordered within certain, firmly established forms, which could not be altered by the individual. But this is only the outer layer of life, not its substance, which unfolds inside this and is developed inwardly.

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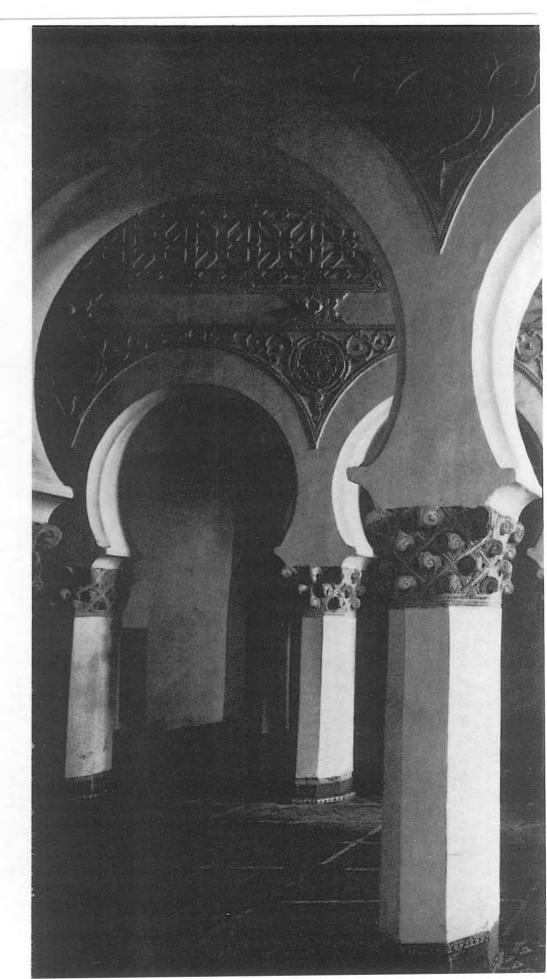
8 (Color plate) A miniature from the Commentary to the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liebana in Gerona, with the representation of Babylon in flames. The walls of the city are clearly decorated with colored tiles of the kind that were used in Moorish architecture for courtyards and interior rooms.

9 Interior of the Church of San Baudilio de Berlanga (Soria Province), with frescoes showing a distinctly oriental influence. Twelfth century. The vaulting supported by a central pillar is unique of its kind.

10 Interior of the synagogue, now the Church of Santa Maria la Blanca. Built in pure Moorish style, it dates from about 1200, the time of the Christian rule.

11 Koran, from Spain. Fourteenth or fifteenth century. Turkish and Islamic Museum, Istanbul.

12 Sixteenth century Koran, written by Yusūf Ibn Dawan of Jativa. From a private collection now housed in the University Library of Basle. The edges of the manuscript unfortunately were damaged in the course of rebinding.





شغرال تا شرع يعد عالا و يبوادو ماكو في موج محرة المشيد المراج المشيد الأفت له و مشر لنصبر به و اضير الع ي بركا حوله للرية -----وما حثوا الأوالية والانتر وعليم المثالقة هوالسميخ البصير ولا قله و حثو مقماً محكرون واقيتا موسر ألكته وجعلنه والله مع الذي تراقعه إوالذي متع شور م العالية مرالية فتر من الراب المعدوام-

بدؤا لخصيم المتسوروا ألعتوات فأجاع عخلوا علمدان معفرت منع والوالالغة بمرجع وتقريع الاستقاعة وتعصر والالعة مريعا الد ولانشك حكواهد الموالص والمسولية الدارسة الدارسة الدارسة فالقد كلمحبسوالاهيطاله نعاجه واتح بواتراها الع والمعادة والألغ والمخاو موالصع والمعام معدى والمرادة المراهدة والشعفورة وحررا والالالا وفي وعدوالماله وازله يحتازو معرما فالتحاوة المعانط حليقة الاز ماعجبهم سالتا سالحوولا تتعالموه فسلط عرسه اللابار منطور عرب اللولغة عدات منه يقنعان وأنوم الحسار في وط حاف السما والاور رومانية مع المسلا عالم مسلوالة وكورا دوالد وصغروا والتاري المتعو الذبر اعتواد يملوا المصلح المفسدين مالاو رام يتحالف و القتري الفتري المعتري المعترين الم الدر المالية مباروالية وتروا الماسه وليه عصر الألواللا لما حد و ومعتاله اود والمعمر العدما تتراوان المجر ورجاته بالعسة المعمد الداء في مقالاتها عبد عد التوركوف وي متواد الحداد المرتومة على فر المعرفة المالشوووالاعداو والدي الماليزوالفيا على المعالية المعالية المحفول وهد الم مال ال العد المديرة والحالية الوهاد والمتعاد المالي في المراجد مت المعاد والشبط بركابتا وتواحد مقربتان الا معامة ما المسلمة المسلمة في اوا عسك معرود. . . وازله عد الزلمو يعشرها بي والا مكر منه ما الحور الحمام ور المسير الترجيب وعاده المراجع

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IV The City

The layout of Moorish cities in Spain was no different from that of other medieval Islamic cities. The nucleus was usually the market, consisting of a tight web of narrow alleyways with row upon row of shops. Beside the various forms of commerce, all the minor crafts were also to be found here, each one in its own street or quarter. The market usually surrounded the main mosque, or lay close by it. There were usually a few wider streets leading from the city gates to the market, but they were rarely wider than was absolutely necessary for two laden pack-animals to pass each other. The residential quarters stretched from the market out to the city walls. They were not built to any specific plan - the clusters of houses simply grew together according to the requirements of families and tribes. The roads leading to the individual house gates were often no more than narrow winding paths. Light and air entered the houses by means of the interior courtyards, which were sometimes extended into walled gardens. With certain exceptions, stemming from the special history of a particular place, the Islamic city, taken as a whole, lacked those features which Roman city architecture had bequeathed to the Christian Middle Ages - namely, the axial plan based on the four points of the compass, with an open square at the center, serving as a market and a place for public assembly. That the market should come first, lying under the shelter of a sanctuary, is typically Arab, as is the way in which the houses cluster about them in the haphazard fashion of a Bedouin encampment, with families and tribes choosing their own places. This arrangement has its own logic. The mosque in the center is the heart of the city's body, the market with its access roads correspond to the organs of nutrition, while the inner courtyards and gardens of the residential areas fulfil the role of the lungs. At the same time, this differentiation between market and residential areas and the enclosed architectural style of the dwelling houses is an expression of the Islamic attitude towards life.

In accordance with oriental custom, the ruler rarely lived within a residential market town. The town sometimes contained a royal citadel — the Arab term for this is *al-kasr*, hence the Spanish Alcázar — but the real residential palace of the ruler, and all that went with it in terms of barracks, stables and gardens, was generally situated outside the city walls. Al-Manşūr, as we have seen, even had the state administration removed to a separate city, outside the walls of Córdoba. The retinue of the ruler, and the troops permanently in his service were kept apart from the town community. They could thus be brought in more easily in the case of popular uprisings.

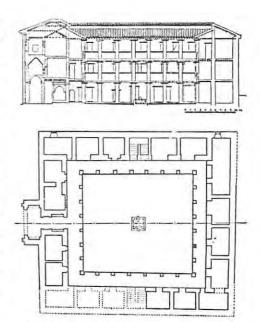
There was a never-ending stream of laden mules, donkeys, riders and carriers passing along the main streets, leading from the city gates to the market, which in Córdoba were exceptionally wide and lighted by torches at night. Alongside these streets lay the caravansaries which in Spain and in the maghreb alike were known as *fondak*. At street level they had stables for the pack-animals, while on the floors above there were guest-rooms. They were also used as warehouses for certain goods, imported or exported in large quantities. Andalusia produced a surplus of skins, oil, wheat, and dried fruits such as figs and grapes, and certain metals such as silver, lead and iron mined in the mountains. Imported from abroad were spices, dyes and barks, rare woods, ivory and fine cotton textiles.

Business in ready-made goods was conducted in the alleyways of the market. The tailors, beltmakers, shoemakers, saddlers, basketmakers, coppersmiths, silversmiths, armorers, and others produced and sold their goods in one and the same place, only the trades requiring larger or special premises, such as potters with their kilns or tanners and their pits, worked outside the market on the outskirts of the town. The inner precincts of the market, which could be locked up at night, were reserved for dealers handling very expensive goods, such as costly fabrics, clothing, furs, jewelry, and perfumed oils. This was the *kaisariya*.

There was a market inspector, called *al-mulitasib* (this is the derivation of the Spanish word, *almotácen*), who supervised the prices and the quality of the raw materials employed. Each trade also had its trustee ($\bar{a}min$), who had to settle industrial disputes. The grouping of the individual trades in designated streets and districts meant that unfair competition was avoided.

Some of the crafts were developed to a fine art. Silk weaving, for example, was as refined in the cities of Córdoba and Seville as in the Islamic East or in Byzantium. Córdoba was famous for fine leather, and the French word for shoemaker, *cordonnier*, comes from the name of this city. The chased and inlaid weapons of Toledo are still copied to this day. The Spanish Moors were also masters at producing pottery with colored glazes, which often had a sheen like gold or copper.

By contrast with modern technology — which has perfected machinery to the point where we can produce infinite numbers of the same soulless object in monotonous uniformity — Moorish craftsmanship was concerned with refining working methods, and producing the rarest effects by the simplest means. This necessitates a perfect mastery, not only of the tools used, but also of the material to be worked, and gave rise to a discipline of an unusual order, as if the craftsman or artist — the two were indistinguishable — was perfecting himself together with the external work he was creating. His professional mastery was more than a technical facility. It gained spiritual significance from the fact that certain professional activities produced the impulse to introspective wisdom. The relationship between "form" and "matter" that is the basis of all art has a universal meaning — for all creation is imprinting an ideal form upon a more or less plastic matter. Throughout the cosmos there are essential forms that express themselves to a



The Corral del Carbón, former caravansary (fondak) in Granada.

greater or lesser degree depending on the matter in which they are clothed. The quality of the form lies in its essential content, and the value of the matter in its plasticity. Form and matter — *forma et materia* — is a distinction that is fundamental to the whole of medieval thinking, and not merely on a philosophical level. "Form" did not merely mean an outline, a spatial or other kind of limitation, but the stamp of an essential unity. In other words, form was understood to be qualitative, and not merely quantitative. Art, however, did not consist of imitating nature or of giving the imagination free reign, but of imparting to everything, whether a building or a drinking vessel, a form expressing an essential unity.

The symbolism of an art or craft lay not only in the forms it produced, but in the process used. To the weaver, for example, the warp threads, which are attached to the yard beam and run all the way down the fabric, represented the unalterable divine law, while the weft, which moves to and fro, linking the warp threads to form a dense fabric, corresponded to the customs handed down by tradition, whereby the divine law is "woven" into life.

On leaving the market and the streets of the craftsmen, and turning towards the residential areas, here and there, tucked away in the recesses of the narrow streets one would find little squares with fountains shaded by vine-arbors. Opening on to them were the gates of the smaller mosques, which at all times offered a refuge where even the poor man could withdraw from the bustle of everyday life into a world of meditation and peace. These were sometimes equipped as schools for children, and there was a large number of them in the old city of Córdoba. At his



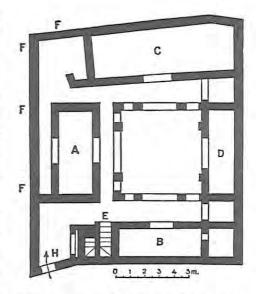
Copper kettle in the style of Granada. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid)

Jug from the time of the Caliphate, Almería. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid) own expense, al-Hakam II supported a number of schools where the children of the destitute were given free tuition and were provided with food and clothing.

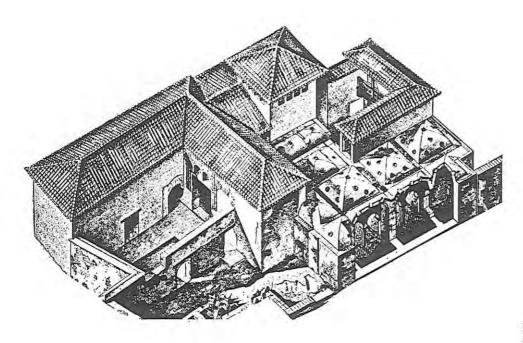
In the main road of each residential district, staple provisions, such as meat, vegetables, fruit, oil, sugar, honey, and spices were offered for sale. There were also shops selling ready-cooked dishes, roasted meats, and confectionery. In one corner of the street was the public baking oven, where dough prepared at home could be baked. Bearers stood about waiting to be hired, and a group of musicians would be waiting at the entrance to a house in the hope of being engaged to play at some feast.

It was not easy to guess whether the grey walls, with only a few windows which were always too high to reveal anything, concealed rich or poor dwellings. The house interiors could not be seen through the gates, for these always opened into curving paths set at an oblique angle to the house. At most, the presence of a magnificent Negro slave or splendidly saddled pack animals waiting at the entrance might indicate the wealth of the occupant.

In this respect the Moorish houses in Spain differed from those that can still be seen today in the old quarters of Córdoba, Seville, Granada, and many small Andalusian towns. Although the general plan of the house has remained the same, with its rooms arranged in a rectangle overlooking the inner courtyard, and its covered walks supported by pillars, the way through to the street has been



Ground plan of a typical Moorish house in Fès, Morocco. Ground floor. A, B, C, and D: rooms dispersed around the inner courtyard, which is surrounded by lobbies. E - stairs to the upper story, which is laid out on the same plan, with balconies over the groundfloor lobbies. H - entrance to the house. F - street. Private houses of the Ummayyad period were probably mostly single-storied.



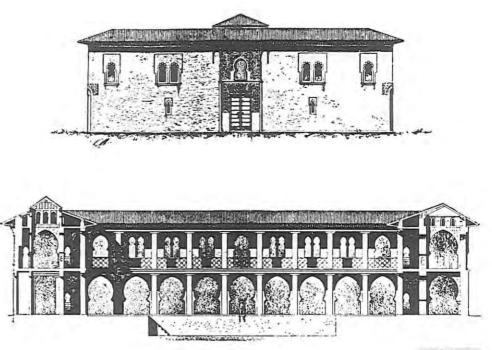
Perspective view of the steam bath that once stood next to the royal mosque in the Alhambra, after Ambrosio del Valle.

opened up to reveal the flower-filled patio behind the wrought-iron gates, and balconies overlook the streets where families stroll in the evening. The Moorish house was more concealed, more "jealous." Jealousy, moreover, in the eyes of the Arab, is a virtue, insofar as it concerns the family — for the family, and above all the women belonging to it, are a sanctuary; the word "harem" (*haram*) has no other meaning.

Other Moorish survivals in present-day Andalusia are the whitewashed walls, banded with glazed tiles at the base, the so-called *azulejos* (from the Arab *azzallij*), and above all, the fountain in the center of the courtyard. Wherever possible, houses had plentiful supplies of water, which was brought either through pipes or by leverage, or there would be either a well or a rain-water cistern. Personal hygiene plays an important part in Islam, and it is known that the Spanish Muslims paid particular attention to cleanliness.

For this reason there was at least one public steam bath, rather like the Roman thermae, in every residential area, which would be open to men and women alternately. These baths were very important for the health of the city population, and it is hard to understand why the Christian kings of the *reconquista* had them all destroyed. Remains of these baths have survived in Granada, and, surprisingly, in Catalonian Gerona.

We know nothing about hospitals in the time of the Caliphate. There were hospitals in Baghdad in the same period, which were equipped to a high standard,



Façade and longitudinal section of the former Moorish lunatic asylum (maristan) in Granada. and until the last century Granada possessed the ruins of a Moorish lunatic asylum, a building which, with its broad inner courtyard and fountain, was laid out on a very generous scale; it is highly probable that similar establishments existed throughout Moorish Spain.

In order to form some idea of what a street scene was like in Moorish Spain, we must remember that the style of dress of the men and women resembled the Persian and Syrian, rather than that of North Africa. The outergarment worn by men was a kind of tunic cut as a rectangle, with wide sleeves. In winter it was sometimes lined with fur. Under this they wore a long shirt and trousers, and sandals or shoes on their feet, depending on the time of year. The head-covering for a man was the turban, or quite frequently a conical hat or an embroidered small cap. In the street it was customary to wrap a fine scarf round the head and shoulders. People loved brightly colored garments, often decorated with stripes. White was the color for mourning.

The women, who also wore a loose, sleeved garment, veiled themselves whenever they went out. Yet it appears that this custom was not always strictly observed, either because of the example of the unveiled Christian and Jewish women, or because in Spain the freer, old Islamic attitude lasted longer than in the East. At any rate, contemporary observers write at length about the beauty and attractiveness of the Andalusian women.

A Moor could determine at a glance the social standing and place of origin of a passer-by. By his dress and his posture, the scholar could be distinguished from the merchant, and the townsman from the Berber or from the countryman. But if a modern European could project himself back into that age and that world, he would be struck not so much by the different ranks and races as by the style of general procedure. He would be surprised by the strange pace of every aspect of life, whose calmness and slowness did not preclude the swift, knife-edged reply in word and deed. People drew upon a spiritual continuity, which only a way of life that is consistent in spirit and form can confer, and for this reason they were both detached and confident in equal measure in their statements — every gesture, every word had a firm, polished form.

In their dealings with each other, people were courteous. Heads of families, scholars, and old men were highly respected, and everyone, even the poorest man, had his dignity. This, too, has been preserved in the Spanish people. Only the excise and tax collectors were held in contempt.

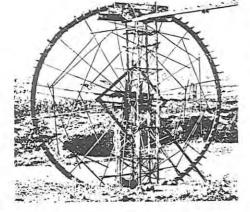
At the time when Córdoba was at its full flowering, it must have seemed that life could not be other than it was. Not that there was no poverty or crime — one had only to go outside the city gates to see the impaled head or crucified corpse of a robber or rebel. But in general there was no shortage of essential goods, and no one would have thought that mankind had to look to the future for an ideal world. The meaning of life was that it was directed towards the Eternal, and it was just this that gave the here and now its quite unmistakable richness.

V Heaven and Earth

"Round-shouldered, towards the earth inclined, It waters the dust with glistening pearls. Like a singing bow, its upper half Shoots streams of water all around Like the spheres of heaven, for its gushings Are like shooting stars, fighting the earth's aridity. A juggler, entranced by the dancing of the branches, Strikes the wheel with naked swords. I do not believe thirst makes it sigh Since the waters flow over its shoulders. It is really a singer and the garden a drinker, And the drink and the song are eternally bound. The bright strands of water against the dark wood Stand out like bright gifts against the darkness of requests." (Abū 'Abd-Allāh ben Abī-l-ŀlusain, minister in Ifrikiya, about 1242.)

Here and there along the rivers in Moorish Spain there were large wheels, often as tall as houses, which were driven by the current. They had scoops like a mill wheel, and compartments in the outer rim carried the water up and, as the wheel turned, poured it into raised channels, through which it flowed into the gardens and fields along the bank. Many Arab poets celebrated these wheels in verse, likening them to the heavenly spheres which carry the stars in a circle, or to the clouds which drink from the sea, and then, rising over the land, distribute rain. The attractiveness of the *noria*, the Spanish word for the scoop wheel (taken from the Arabic $na'\bar{u}ra$), is in the image it presents of an insurpassable and effortless balance between human intelligence and nature.

Arabs were not traditionally tillers of the soil, but nomadic shepherds and merchants. Yet everything they undertook, they did methodically. Moreover, in their wake, farming peoples from the East came to Spain, from Syria and North Africa in particular, where for centuries they had exercised the practice of making dry areas fertile by the use of irrigation canals, cisterns, draw-wells and ditches. There are Spanish scholars who maintain that the irrigation methods still used in southern Spain today, and the customary laws connected with them, are of Roman origin. Yet what is striking is that these same methods and customs occur virtually wherever the Arabs ruled for any length of time, for example along the Rhone and as far as the highest valleys of the Swiss canton of Valais, where to this day



Scoop wheel by the Sebou river in northern Morocco.

there is an irrigation canal hewn out of the rock, known as "le bisse des Sarrasins." The Arabs occupied the Alpine passes of the upper Rhone valley for some considerable time during the tenth century. Several of the place-names still bear evidence of their presence.

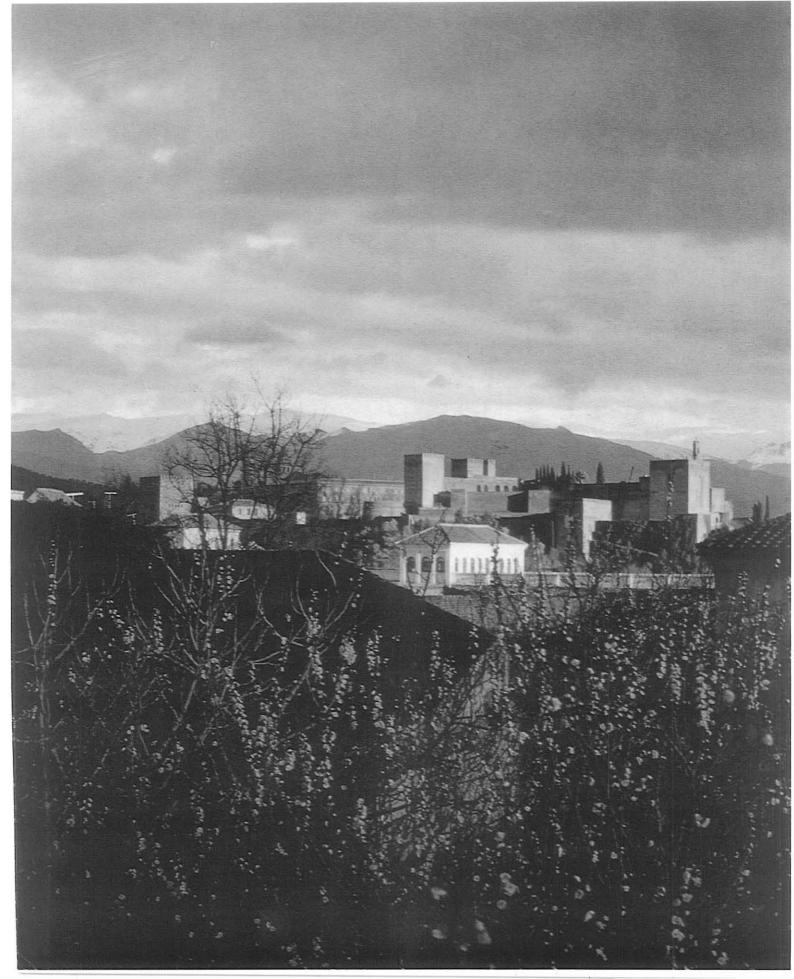
A calendar or almanac, compiled about 961 by the Mozarabic bishop Rabī 'ben Zaid and dedicated to Caliph al-Ḥakam II, contains information about the condition of agriculture at the time when the Western Caliphate was at its height in Andalusia. This, incidentally, was the same bishop, who, under his Latin-Visigothic name of Recemundus, was sent by Abd ar-Rahmān III as an ambassador to the court of Otto I, and who subsequently travelled to Constantinople and Syria, on the instructions of the same Caliph, in order to collect precious works of art to adorn the new residence, *Medinat az-Zahra*.

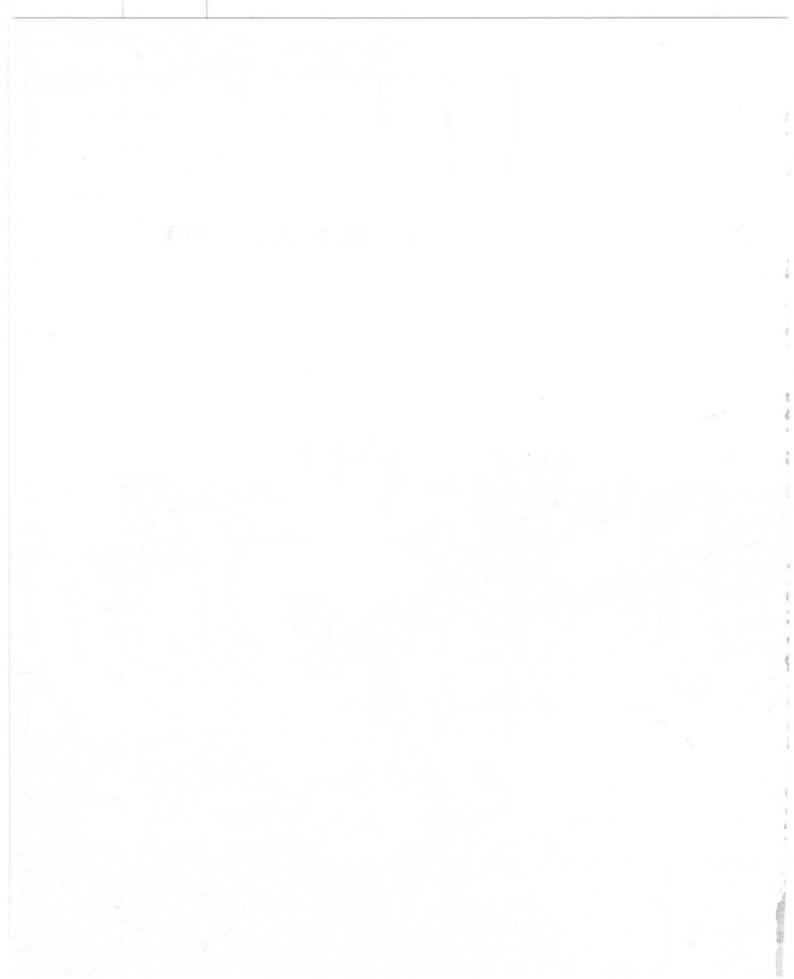
The Córdoba calendar is based on the solar year, which was used by the Arabs for agriculture, although only the Christians based their liturgical year on it. Rabī 'ben Zaid mentions the church festivals, including celebrations conducted at the tombs of certain saints in and around Córdoba, and also refers to churches and monasteries by name. The Muslims follow the lunar calendar for their liturgical year, which consists of exactly twelve lunar cycles, and is several days shorter than the solar year, so that the divisions of the one and the other shift rhythmically in a cycle of approximately thirty-three years.

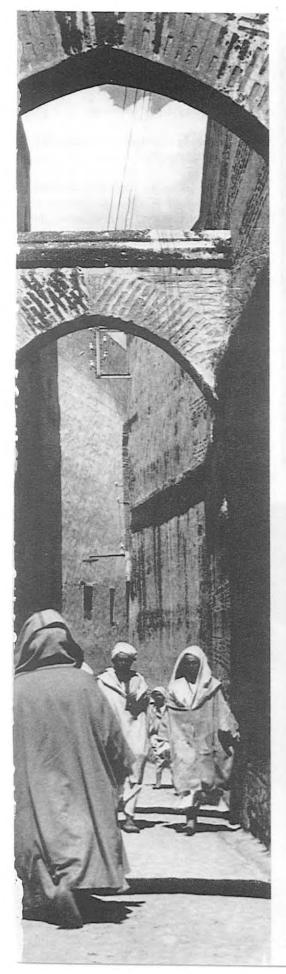
The calendar indicates the position of the stars each month, gives the times at which the sun and the major constellations rise and set, the duration of dawn and dusk — which was important to enable the Muslims to observe the set times for prayer — and what changes in the weather to expect or fear with the appearance of this or that constellation. It also mentions the times at which to plant and harvest various crops, and how domestic and wild animals behave from month to month.

Concerning the month of January, it says, that at this time the water in the rivers feels tepid and vapors rise from the earth. "The sap rises in the wood of the trees. Birds mate. The falcons of Valencia build their nests and begin to mate. Horses feed on young shoots. Cows calve, and the milk yield increases. The young of ducks and geese are hatched. Now is the time to plant grain and the mallow and to put in stakes for the olive trees, pomegranate trees and similar fruit trees. The early narcissi bloom. Trellises are put up for the early vines and other, non-fruiting climbing plants. Purslane should be planted, and sugar cane harvested, beet preserved, and syrup (*sherāb*) prepared from bitter lemons."

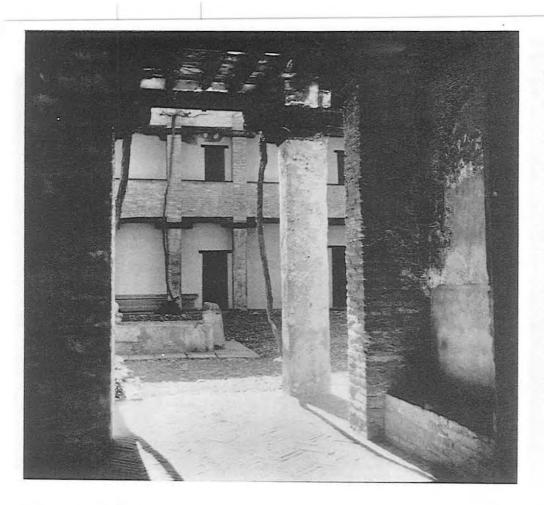
In February "the young birds hatch. The bees propagate. The sea creatures stir. The women begin to tend the silkworm eggs, and wait for them to burst. The cranes make for the river islands. Saffron bulbs should be planted and spring cabbage sown. Some trees already break into leaf. Truffles can be found now, and the wild asparagus grows. Mace begins to send out shoots. This is the time to graft pear and apple trees and to plant saplings. Where necessary and possible without harmful effect, people are bled, and take medicine. This is the month to send out letters to recruit summer laborers. Storks and swallows return to their











13 (Color plate) View of the Alhambra and Sierra Nevada from the balcony of a Moorish house in Granada.

14 Alleyway in Fès, Morocco.

15 Street in Córdoba with Moorish archway, "El Portillo."

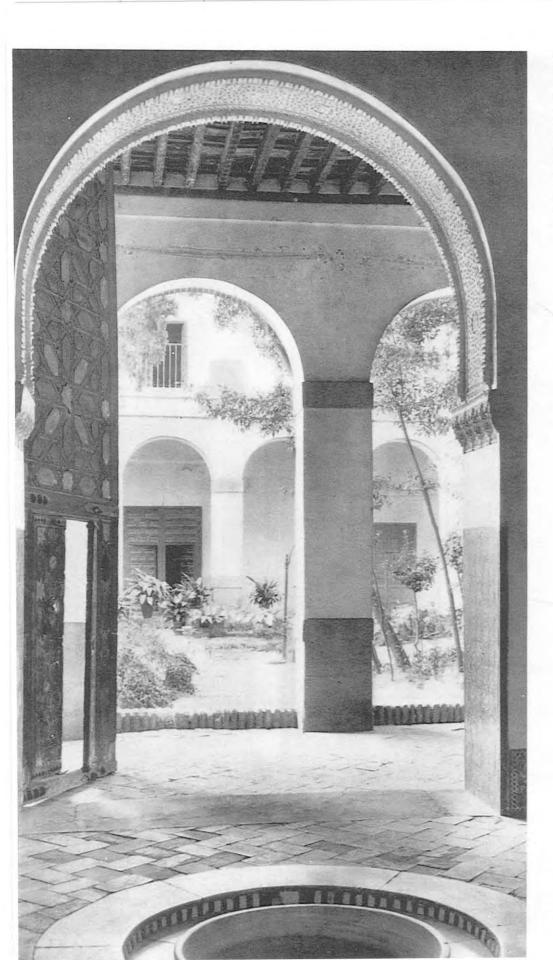
16 Entrance to an old inn and storehouse (fondak) in Granada, known as "Corral del Carbón," and showing the bench for the gatekeeper.

17 Another view of the "Corral del Carbón." Similar inns and storehouses exist in Morocco.

18 Inner courtyard or patio of the monastery of Santa Isabel la Real in Toledo. Built in Mudéjar style, it is reminiscent of a courtyard in a Moorish house.

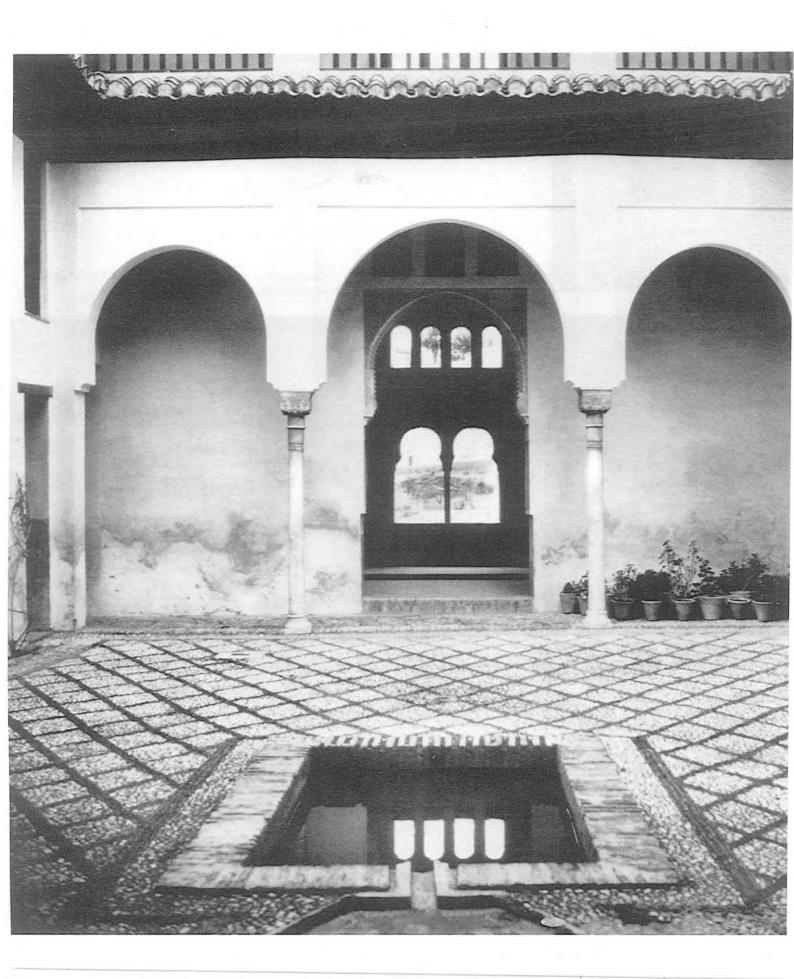






19 The architecture of the monastery of Santa Isabel la Real in Toledo, built in the second half of the fifteenth century, has faithfully preserved many features of Moorish domestic architecture: the layout of the inner courtyard, the form of the doors, with smaller panels set into the larger ones, and the fountains in the rooms. Only the outline of the arcades facing the court are in the Renaissance style.

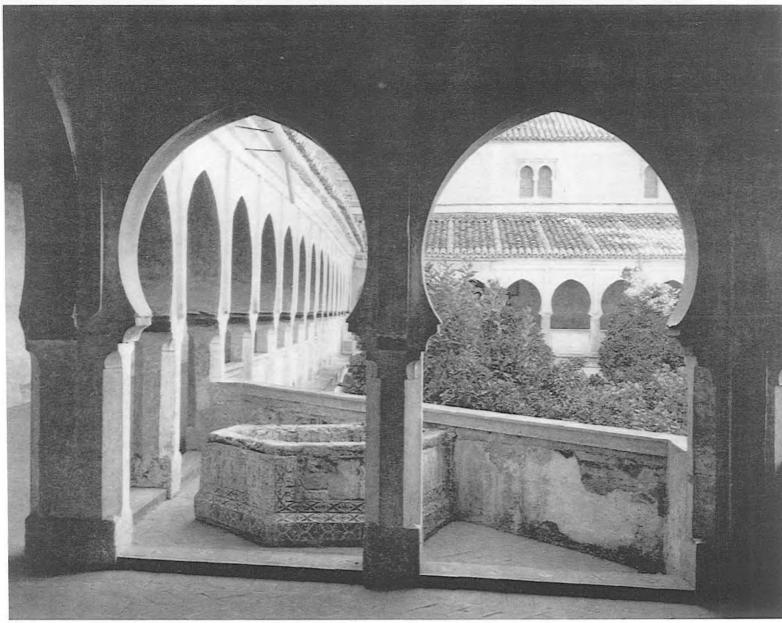
20 Inner court of the so-called "House of the Widow" (dār al-hurra) in Granada, built in pure Moorish style. Note also the view of the city through the orielshaped window.





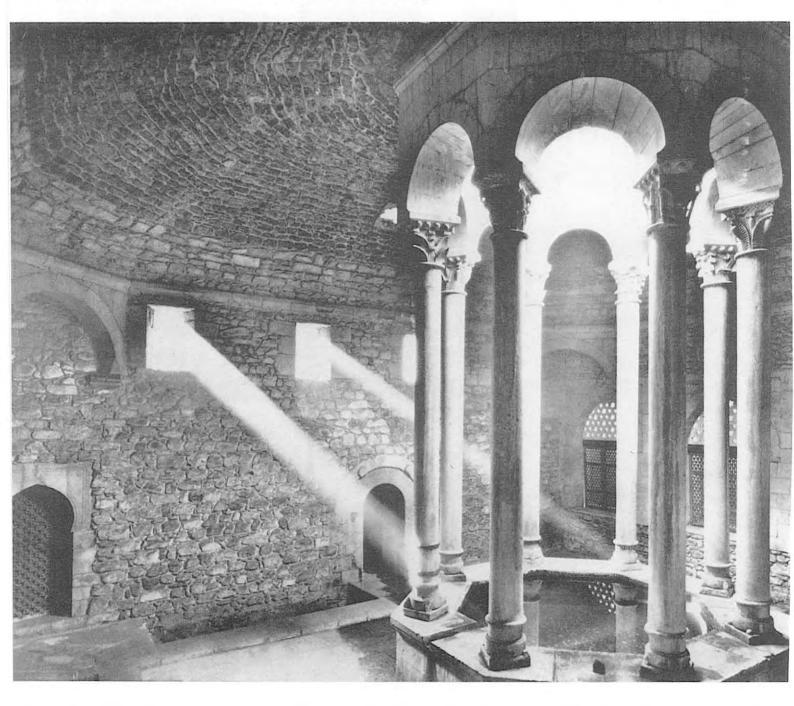
21 This small domestic courtyard built over the south aisle of the Court of Lions is a typical example of the style of a simple Moorish house.

22 Courtyard of the monastery of Guadalupe (Cáceres), built about 1400. The arcades are reminiscent of the Almohad period of Moorish architecture.





23 Courtyard of a mansion in Toledo, dating from the fifteenth century, whose style is half Moorish and half Gothic. 24 The cooling room in the Moorish baths in Gerona, Catalonia. The columns surround a pool and support a so-called lantern which is the main source of daylight since the rest of the dome is closed. Niches are set into the walls providing seats for relaxation after the steam bath. The adjoining bathrooms are heated by hot-air channels in the floor. The entire building was probably built by Moorish craftsmen for a Christian prince towards the end of the thirteenth century.



homes." We see from this the importance of cultivating fruit trees, and that grafting was known. The most important plants, however, were olive trees and vines. "In March," it continues, "fig trees are grafted. The young shoots appear, and most of the trees burst into leaf. The falcons of Valencia lay eggs on the islands, and incubate them for thirty days. Sugar cane is planted. The first roses and lilies come into flower. Garden beans begin to ripen. Quails appear. The silkworms emerge. Sturgeon and shad leave the sea and swim upriver. Cucumbers are planted, cotton sown, garden crocus, eggplant, mint and marjoram... This is the month when letters are sent to managers for the purchase of horses for the princes. Swarms of young locusts begin to migrate, and they must be destroyed quickly..."

There was a profusion of plants growing on Andalusian soil. The ears of wheat already began to form in May. "Fruit appears on the olive trees and vines. Bees prepare honey. The early varieties of pears and apples ripen as well as the black grapes, known as cow eyes, apricots, and cherries. Now is the time for preserving nuts, and the juice is extracted from the *Sh'abiyi* apple. Poppy seed is gathered, and syrup is made from it. In the Orient, the sycamores ripen at this time. Fumitory, celery, dill, houseleek, black poppy seed, mustard, watercress and *tarāthīt* are gathered, and the juices extracted from them. Camomile flowers are also gathered and oil made from them"

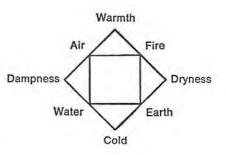
There is no doubt that Rabi 'ben Zaid or Recemundus drew heavily on Spanish customs that existed before Moorish rule. Yet some of the plants that he mentions, such as apricots (*al-barkūk*), peaches and sugar cane were introduced by the Arabs. The astronomic basis of the calendar conforms to Oriental learning, both in content and in the terms used. It probably goes back even further to the cosmology of the Nabateans, a nation related to the Arabs, who made the Jordanian wilderness fertile and possessed extensive knowledge of the relationship between the movements of the sky and agricultural growth. All ancient cultivating nations regarded the sky as the repository of active and productive powers, and the earth as the home of the patient and receptive powers in the universe, and it was not only the Nabateans for whom this duality had a spiritual significance; cultivation of the soil was bound up with the worship of God.

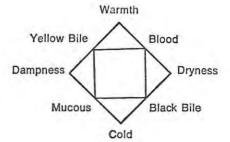
An early translation of a treatise on "Nabatean agriculture" (*kitāb al falāḥat an-nabațiya*) from Greek into Arabic was made by Abū Bakr Ibn Waḥshīya, and according to Ibn Khaldūn it was used as an authority by Spanish-Arab scholars. They extracted the astronomical and agricultural information from it, rejecting the "heathen superstition" of the Nabateans. Abū Zakarīya Yahya ben al-'Awwām of Seville, the famous thirteenth century agronomist and botanist, is said to have drawn on this work.

However that may be, the Córdoban calendar, besides the astronomical and agricultural aspects, also has medical applications. The annual movement of the heavenly bodies produces changes in the four natural properties of warmth and cold, wetness and dryness which not only influence the growth of plants, but also affect the condition of the human body, according to its constitution. "The month of January... belongs to winter; the natural properties intermingled in it are cold and wetness, and accordingly the element allied to it is water and the body humor that predominates at this time, mucous. Consequently, at this time of year the best forms of food, drink, activity, and rest are those that provide warmth and dissolve the surpluses in the body. It suits those that are of a hot temperament and are in their youth, while those of a damp temperament and in their old age are averse to it"

In order to understand these medical counsels, it is necessary to go back to the ancient Greek theory of natural properties, the elements and their corresponding humors. They can be set out in a geometric diagram as in the adjacent illustration. From this it can be seen that the four natural properties that produce all change in earthly nature, oppose each other and unite in pairs in one of each of the four elements - warmth and dryness combine in fire, and cold and wet in water, while the earth contains both dryness and cold, and the air, warmth and wetness. Plainly, the four elements, as they are called in ancient philosophy, have nothing to do with the chemical bodies known as elements today. What is meant, in effect, is not the earth consisting of a mixture of various minerals, and not water that can be analysed as a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, but four fundamental, typical, external forms of physical existence. A substance might have a firm or fluid, or airy, or fiery condition. There is no point in trying to reduce the four elements to a more or less dense arrangement of minute particles or some such similar mechanical concept; what matters is the four unmistakable properties themselves, fire, water, earth and air. They constitute the "corner-stones" (arkān) of a natural science that is qualitative, not quantitative.

But first let us explain what is meant by the four humors, that correspond organically to the four elements. According to the Arab physicians, who agreed with the ancient Greeks in this, the four humors are the fundamental building materials of all warm-blooded living creatures. They are produced from the pure gastric juice, chyle (Arabic kaylūs), during the digestion and after excretion of all nonassimilable matter, and are present in a mixed form throughout the body, even though an excess of one or other humor accumulates in certain organs. Thus the yellow bile in the gall bladder and the black bile in the spleen occupy their own particular place. The blood contains all four humors, even though in differing quantities - mucous thickens it, yellow bile forms its "froth," and black bile its "sediment," whereas the fourth humor constitutes its own essence. None of the four humors appears in a completely pure form, in rather the same way that all four elements are present in each of the corporeal substances, even though only one of them may be apparent. Now the health of the living body depends upon the equilibrium of the humors, which in turn is produced by the cooperation of the four natural properties of warmth, cold, wetness and dryness. A predominating inclination to coldness will, in conjunction with wetness, have a dissolving effect, or, in conjunction with dryness, will lead to hardening; and either mucous or black bile will predominate accordingly. Conversely, an excessive inclination to



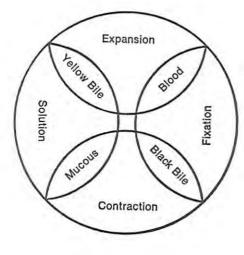


warmth, coupled with dryness, will make the physical condition bilious, but when coupled with wetness will produce thin-bloodedness.

The four natural properties can, however, form different combinations, within certain limits, without damaging the health of the body. These are the various "Temperaments," which in Arabic are termed "mixtures," and they are also the different moods of the body, determined by age, and the season of the year. Illness, however, is a "breakdown of the equilibrium" of the body or life humors. It is the task of the physician to help nature restore this equilibrium. This can be done only by fighting inner heat with cooling remedies, and excessive dryness with loosening agents, in fact applying to every excess its opposite. A modern Spanish physician, F. Fernández, has made some appropriate comments on the way the Moorish physicians treated the sick: "They always preferred simple medicines to compound ones, and of the simple ones, those that are basically foodstuffs and not only pharmacological. If there seemed to be no alternative to using compound medicines, they would select those with the fewest constituents. This is a rule that is repeated in the writings of all Spanish-Islamic physicians . . . The heroic Teriak medicine which was composed of many constituents would only be used in the very last resort, in cases where a king or some other high-ranking individual, or a gravely-ill person, had to be healed at all cost . . . "

The knowledge of herbal medicine was highly developed in Moorish Spain. Almost all the plants that thrive between the Alps and the desert are to be found in Spain, a factor which influenced the development of this branch of knowledge. Historically, it developed as a result of one specific event. Basil Constantine III Porphyrogenetos of Byzantium had sent 'Abd ar-Rahmān III a beautifully illustrated copy of Dioscurides's Materia Medica as a present. At the command of the Caliph, it was translated into Arabic by the Jewish physician and vizier, Hasday ben Shaprūt, in collaboration with one Byzantine and several Muslim scholars. A commentary was added later by Hassan ben Juljul, physician to Caliph Hishām II, and Abū-l-Mu'tarif ben al-Wāfid al-Lakhmī (997–1074) of Toledo. Other Moorish physicians and pharmacologists referred to this work, in particular Ibn Mufarrāj of Seville, known as an-nabātī, the "botanist" (he lived from about 1165–1240), and his famous pupil, Ibn Baytar of Malaga (died 1248 in Damascus), who listed 1400 medicines, 300 of which were hitherto unmentioned, as well as Abu Ja'far al-Ghāfikī (died 1165), whose book about simple medicines forms the basis of many similar works.

The medicines were classified according to their warm or cold, dry or wet properties. As an example, several passages from the reference work by Abū-l-Kasim az-Zahrāwī, known as Abulcasis in Latin, have been included here. They are all the more revealing, since they refer to the simplest medicines which, at the same time, are foodstuffs. The Arab physicians considered a correctly balanced diet as the basis of good health. "The nature of the fig is warmth and wetness of the first degree. The best variety is the white one, with a split mouth. They are used for the kidneys, as they dissolve the sand in them. The drawback is that they are filling and fattening. This effect is countered by brine and drinking vinegar.



"The nature of the plum is cold to the first degree. The dried sweet plum is the best. This is used to evacuate the bile. Its disadvantage is that it is harmful to the stomach. It is counteracted with rose-sugar.

"The nature of the pear is cold to the first degree, and dryness of the second degree. The best pears are the naturally dried ones. They are used for stomach weakness. Their drawback is that they produce colic. This is countered by eating some other fruit after taking the pears.

"The nature of the violet is cold to the first degree, and wet in the second degree. The best variety is the pale blue one with many leaves. The scent of the violet has a soporific effect, and a potion prepared from it encourages the evacuation of the bile. Its disadvantage is that it chills, and produces catarrh. This effect is countered by elder-berries and cloves.

"The nature of lentils is both cold and dry in the second degree. The red, thick ones are the best. These are used to reduce the acidity of the blood and to strengthen the stomach. Their disadvantage is that they have an adverse effect on sexual performance and impair the memory. This is countered by watercress and taking showers.

"The nature of the peach is cold and wet in the second degree. The best is the variety that smells of musk. Peaches are used for a burning fever. The disadvantage of the peach is that it dissociates the humors. This is counteracted with spiced wine.

"The nature of lemon-scented basil is warm in the second degree and dry in the third degree. It contracts, and its juices have a laxative effect. Its adverse effects are countered by vegetable broth and unsalted purslane.

"The nature of mustard is warm and dry in the third degree. The fresh, red, cultivated variety is the best. It disperses gout, but damages the brain. This effect is countered by a potion prepared from almonds and vinegar . . ."

Abū-l-Ķāsim az-Zahrāwi (Abulcasis), who died in 1106, became famous chiefly for his treatises on surgery; in the Middle Ages his works were translated into Latin, Provençal and Hebrew and during the Renaissance they were reprinted many times. Arab surgery was, in fact, far in advance of its Latin-European counterpart. The Arabs were dissecting corpses at a very early stage, and were familiar with antisepsis and anesthesia. Yet they regarded surgical operation as an *ultima ratio*, which should be adopted only in extreme circumstances. In the words of az-Zāhrāwi: "Surgery should never be undertaken until there is proof that the usual treatments are not effective. Under no circumstances should an operation be performed in desperation, since surgery is only allowable if the condition of the patient makes it likely that the outcome will be successful. If the physician has not recognized the nature of the illness beforehand, and has been unable to determine its true cause and still harbors the least doubt in his conscience about it, then it is a crime to attempt an operation, which may endanger the life of his fellow-man."

When we read of the successful cures effected by the Arab physicians, we are bound to conclude that, despite certain shortcomings, their methods were based

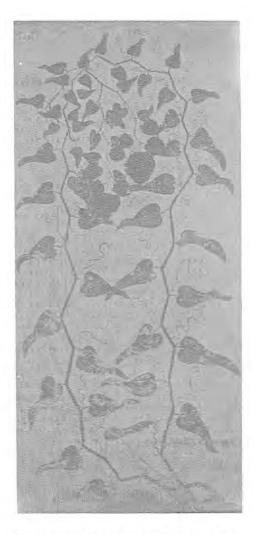
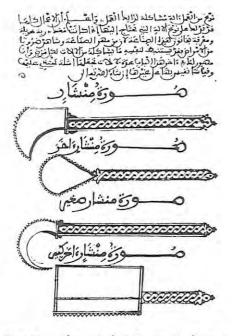


Illustration of a medicinal herb from a Byzantine manuscript, after Dioscorides, the first century Greek physician.



Drawings of surgical instruments, from a treatise on external pathology by az-Zahrāwi. Sixteenth century manuscript from Morocco.

(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. ar. 2953)



on sound premises. This applies particularly to their theory of humors, whereby everything in the human constitution was regarded as part of a labile equilibrium of different forces. We can be less sure of their studies of anatomy. The comprehensive development of this was the preserve of the Latin West, for it was more in accordance with the analytical spirit of the European Renaissance. It was not until then that the human organism began to be regarded as a *fabrica*, a structure made up of diverse mechanisms. This outlook benefited surgery, but undoubtedly had its drawbacks, as it was easy to forget that the composition of the human body. represents an indivisible whole. This was the factor always stressed by humoral medicine, which the Arabs had taken over from the Greeks, and passed on with their own additions to the Latin world.

If we accept the four "natural" properties of warm, cold, wet and dry as the four natural impulses to expansion and contraction, fluidity and solidification, we see how easily these can be applied in the metaphorical sense. For expansion (in Arabic — *bust*) corresponds to pleasure and enjoyment, while contraction (*kabd*) corresponds to fear and anxiety. On the other hand, the soul "loosens" itself or becomes "fluid," when able to absorb every possible form, and it "hardens" if it remains forever in the grip of one single form. The role played by this foursome of natural properties in an art form such as music, can thus be imagined. For the real task of music — and this cannot exist without a spiritual background — is to restore the equilibrium of the soul (which can be either passionate or repressed, diffused or rigid, or one and another at the same time) in much the same way that medicine restores the equilibrium of the body humors.

The four strings of the Arab lute are equivalent to the four humors in the body. They were dyed yellow, red, white and black, and corresponded to the yellow bile, the blood, mucous, and black bile. The black string had the highest pitch, and it corresponded significantly to the lowest element. According to the natural properties, which were paired in the individual strings, the same ones were either related or opposed to each other. The Arab physicians of the Middle Ages used music in the treatment of certain mental disorders.

In 822 the brilliant musician Ziryāb came to Spain from the court of the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad. At the court of Córdoba, he was accorded the highest favors by 'Abd ar-Rahmān II. Not only did he introduce Persian musical forms, which were to survive in Andalusia, and have indeed lingered on to the present day in popular Flamenco music, but he also showed the Córdobans, who had hitherto preserved their simple ancient Arabic style of life, all kinds of Persian-Asiatic customs, such as wearing clothes of different colors according to the season, or the decoration of a table for a festive occasion. Nowadays, he is sometimes portrayed as a fashionable aesthete, a "Beau Brummel," and yet this does not fit into the framework of that age. As at the court of Japan in the Heian period at the beginning of the Middle Ages, in Baghdad, with its strong Asiatic influence, the color for a court garment and the tune for a song could not be chosen without prior consultation of cosmic laws.

This Ziryāb, who taught the ten styles or modi of music according to Ptolemy,

M.C.N. 7

and even composed verses to fit the melodies, invented a variation of the fourstringed lute that was commonly used at the time by adding a fifth string, which was inserted between the second and third, and like the second, was dyed red. It took the place of the breath, and, in the words of al-Makkari, gave "a more delicate feeling and greater effect" to his lute.

The breath (*nafas*) referred to here, does not simply mean a breath consisting of air, but rather its essence, the breath or spirit of life, which the Hindus call *prāna*. This itself is not of a physical nature, but represents the bridge between body and soul. It is the instrument of the soul, through which it works on latent forces present in the body and preserves the equilibrium of the humors. The physical breath is, to some extent, the external image of this relationship, for it causes the rigid body, inclined to solidification, to remain in contact with the quickening force of the atmosphere, just as the living spirit connects the body with the soul. According to the Islamic philosophers, many of whom, like the Persian Ibn Sīnā

(Avicenna), and the Spaniards Ibn Bajja (Avempace) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), were physicians (the Arabic word, *hakim*, means "wise" as well as physician), human nature does not simply divide itself into two distinct constituents of body and spirit, as Descartes claims. For not only does the soul suffuse the body by imprinting on its various parts the form corresponding to its own nature, but

Arabian lute (al-'ūd).

there is also a stepladder of human faculties, those which are more or less bound to the body, and those which are independent of it. On the lowest rung and most deep-seated in the body are the involuntary faculties, which cause the assimilation of food, growth, and reproduction — these are akin to vegetal processes. Higher up are the faculties of observation and action, which man has in common with the animals. These are manifested physically — the sense organs and the limbs — yet at the same time they have an inner, purely psychic aspect. On the highest rung is the capacity for thought, which distinguishes man from all other forms of earthly life. It is fundamentally free of all physical bonds.

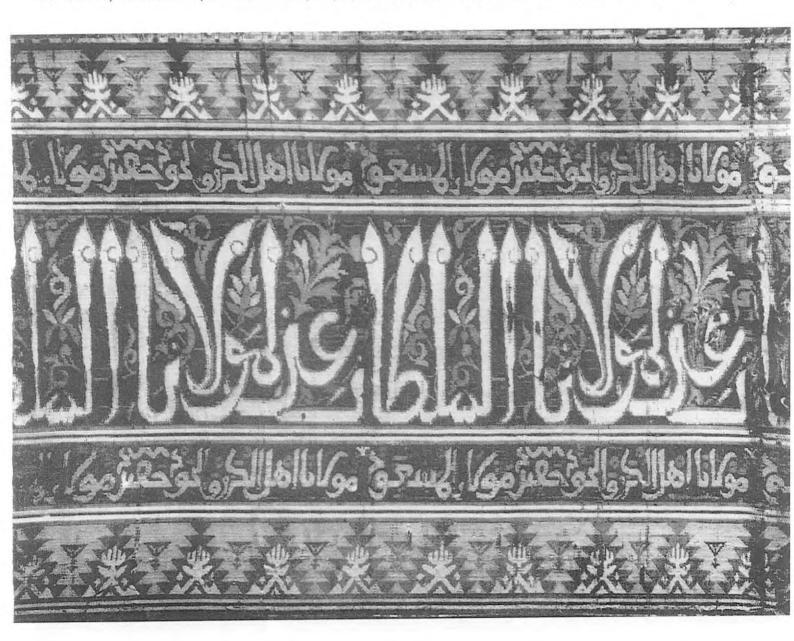
But both the body and the soul alike obey the opposing forces which manifest themselves on the purely physical level as warmth and cold, wetness and dryness, and on the organic level as expansion and contraction, loosening and solidification, and on the purely psychic level as joy and fear, relaxation and torpidity, or even as love and hate, receptiveness and insensitivity. These antitheses and the change of condition which they cause are only exceeded by the intellect, which surpasses mere thinking or reason. Reason functions by mental processes, whereas the intellect possesses the power of immediate recognition. The intellect embraces the entire human nature and mirrors itself in thought insofar as an essential content is harvested from the many thousand images that the senses provide.

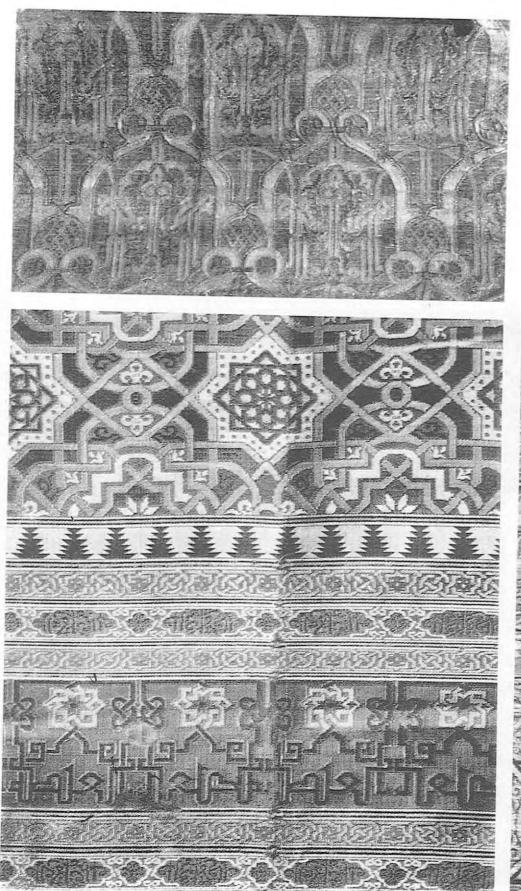




25 (Color plate). Silk textile from the twelfth century with peacocks and a band of script in Kufic characters. This is one of the very finest examples of the art of Spanish weaving.

26 Detail of a Moorish silk fabric with bands of script, probably twelfth century. Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.

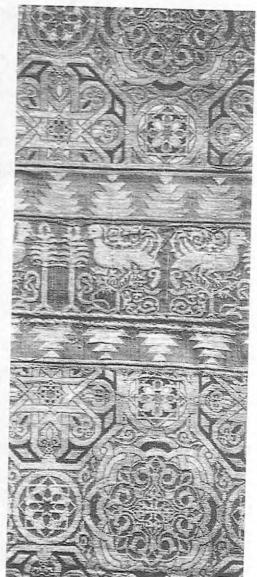




27 Detail of a Moorish silk brocade, probably twelfth century. Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.

28 (Below left). Moorish silk brocade from Granada, fifteenth century. The ornamental patterns are reminiscent of the colored decorative wall tiles. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

29 (Below right). Silk brocade dating from the fourteenth century. Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.





30 Altar cloth from the monastery of Lune. The thirteenth-century silk brocade, made either in Regensburg or in Spain, has griffins, the mythological half-lion and half-eagle arranged in pairs in the spaces between the circles containing the lions.

31 (Following page). Moorish woven carpet from Spain, fourteenth century. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.



VI Language and Poetry

The Islamic culture of Spain can be called an Arabian culture not so much by the place the Arab nobility occupied in Spain, as by the importance accorded to the language of the Koran. This was used not only for religious worship — Arabic was the language of the sciences, of state administration, and of the town markets.

But it was not the sole language. The ancient, indigenous population had preserved its Romance tongue, and a large number of the townspeople (we do not know how great a proportion), spoke Romance at home and in the street. On the one hand, there were Spanish Muslims whose knowledge of Arabic was confined to what they used in their prayers, and on the other hand some of the highest judges are known to have peppered their Arabic speeches with coarse witticisms in Romance. There was also a popular simplified form of Arabic, akin to the language of the Maghreb, in which a few Romance expressions and forms appeared.

Classical Arabic was, however, by no means merely a language of scholars in the way that medieval Latin was, apart from its liturgical use. It was thoroughly alive, even if its application did exercise the constant, tireless efforts of the whole cultured class of al-Andalus. The Spanish Muslims, whatever their race was, were most concerned not to sever their associations with Arabic culture, as they were well aware that they lived on a perpetually endangered bridgehead in a far outpost of the Islamic world. This awareness conditioned their attitude to many things. They were, in general, conservative in outlook and opposed to all innovation that threatened to question the Islamic-Arabic inheritance. There was never any true heretical movement in Islamic Spain. Of the four schools of law recognized by Sunni Islam the Spanish Muslims followed, from the time of Hishām I onwards, that of Imām Mālik, which was strictest in its observance of the traditions handed down by jurists in first-century Medina. Whenever possible their scholars visited the high schools in Arab lands, and a surprisingly large number distinguished themselves for their knowledge of Arabic grammar and rhetoric. We shall see later the role that Arabic poetry played in Spain. Verse was composed at court, among friends, in battle, and while following the plow.

A characteristic of the visual arts of Spain, too, is the exceptional purity with which both the spirit of Islam and the Arab genius are expressed. In Spain, as in Moorish North Africa, the prohibition of figurative art was strictly observed. (This prohibition can, in fact, be variously interpreted, depending on whether it is taken to mean human portrayal as such or only its possible idolatrous associations.) There is hardly a mosque anywhere that is more "Arab" than that of Córdoba. The architecture of the Arab East of the same period contains far more Byzantine and indirect Hellenistic elements, not to mention the Persian and Turkish character of later monuments in Arabia and Syria. In this context, it is appropriate to mention the Andalusian-Arabic script, which survived in that of the Maghreb. It is far more archaic than the contemporary Arabic script of the East, and its especial beauty lies in the hieratic strength of the shapes of its characters which are linked by a forceful rhythm. All this is part of the character of Moorish culture which preserved a singular purity of style in its evolution of the Islamic-Arabic legacy because it was geographically isolated, and was not directly exposed to the influence of the excessively wealthy Asiatic cultures.

The Arabic language is like the breath of life to Arabism. It has a strong coining power, which goes far beyond the mere ethnic influence of Arabism, and arises both from the fact that it represents the sacred language of Islam and one of the original and oldest preserved languages of the Semitic group. Its word forms and the rich gradation of its sounds can be traced back to the time of Abraham. The unchanging way of life of the nomadic Arab was probably responsible for the survival of the Arab language until the birth of Islam, preserving the linguistic heritage better than any city culture in which words are exposed to the same debasement as the things and ideas they describe. It is well known that the nomad nurtures and guards his language as his only safe possession. He is a rhetorician and poet by tradition, and these qualities have been passed on through Islam to those Moorish Spaniards who were not nomadic, and for the most part not Arabic.

Languages tend to become poorer, not richer, with time, and the original character of the Arabic language, unworn by time, reveals itself in its very wealth of words and immense range of expressions. It can describe one object with different words and from different aspects, and possesses words in which different, allied concepts are condensed, without ever being illogical. This equivocal aspect of Arabic in the most positive sense of the word, is without doubt what makes it so appropriate as a holy tongue.

In order to give the reader who has no command of Arabic some indication of what constitutes the special character of this language, and why there is a specifically Arabic mode of thought, we must go further back and point out that a language is governed either by a phonetical or a visual logic, depending on its structure. In each language, both principles are present, but the one or the other always predominates. In a language determined by phonetical logic, each word is derived from a simple combination of sounds, expressing a basic event, or better, a basic action, not by means of any onomatopoeic imitation, but because the word itself is by its nature an event that takes place in time, so that independently of all conventions it corresponds to an action. The word is essentially action, and in accordance with this logic, language comprehends every thing that it names in terms of doing and being done. As for the visual logic which is also inherent in every language, it is based on the fact that every word uttered arouses a corresponding image to the mind, which in turn reacts upon the language, for one image



Blind arch above the prayer niche in the Great Mosque of Córdoba.

gives rise to another. In this way expressions are formed, whose different elements correspond to various visual concepts; at this stage the word no longer develops from out of its own original phonetical content, but is more the servant of the imaginative combinations.

The inner unity of sound and event, or word and deed, is evident in the structure of Arabic. It runs like a scarlet thread through all its word formations, for every Arabic word derives from a root verb, consisting of three consonants, which normally expresses a basic action, such as "unite," "divide," "contain," "penetrate," and so on, while each of these "auditory formulae" include every physical, mental and spiritual application of the same idea. Each of these roots grew with almost algebraic regularity into a whole tree of words, in which the meaning of the underlying action is always echoed, no matter how distantly or closely.

According to Ibn Khaldūn, Arabic is a perfect language because it can not only be declined and conjugated, but because the "what" and the "how" can be derived from an action - in other words, nouns and adjectives can be derived from the verbs. However, this is possible only because in Arabic, the "doing" verbs are far more comprehensive than, say, in English. Much of what we tend to express by using an adjective in conjunction with the verb "to be," such as " to be beautiful," "to be inside," "to be outside" is expressed in a single verb in Arabic. Thus, the basic deed from which a whole tree of expressions grows need not necessarily be an action in the usual sense of the word; it could be a cosmic action, such as the shining of light, or a purely logical action, such as "to be small" or "to be big," and it is this very ability to refer any manner of existence back to basic action, that lends Arabic its extraordinary capacity for abstraction. It has developed virtually its entire theological, philosophical and scientific vocabulary from its own root words, regardless of its "Bedouin" origin. The fact that in Arabic it is always a basic action which forms the link between the particular and the general is crucial to the Arab mentality. Arab thought, quite apart from its content, is essentially active - in its incisive fashion, it may sometimes be lacking in the necessary distance for creative graduation and balance, but never in acuity and immediacy. At the outer extremes it can vary between headlong impetuosity and hairsplitting pedantry. The innate relationship between sound and content - the presence of the three-letter root in all words of the same stem - produce a certain attunement of the hearing, an inborn feeling for rhythm, which, too, is characteristic of the Arab.

There is a close connection between what we have been saying about the inner logic of the Arabic language and the fact that, like all Semites, the Arabs comprehend the divine origin of things essentially as a deed. The divine command, "Be!" is the originating deed from which all else stems, and the act of commanding presupposes power. Platonic metaphysics — to which we shall return later, as it plays an important role in the framework of Islamic culture — sees this divine origin as a radiation, like the emanation of light from a source, and it substitutes auditory symbolism with pictorial symbolism.

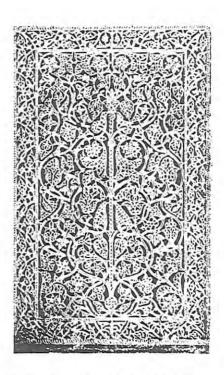
But in addition to the "active" element, there is also a "static" side to the Arabic language. Both are evident in the sentence formation, the former in the so-called verbal sentence, in which the verb comes first and everything else is qualified by it, and the latter in the so-called "nominal" sentence, in which noun and adjective are simply placed side by side, without any linking verb. Thus Allahu karim means "God (is) merciful" - the connecting "is" is unnecessary, for the mere naming of things is evidence that they "are." This makes it possible to express any thought with extreme brevity, as if by an equation. An example of this is the fundamental formula of Islam, the sentence: "(There is) no deity besides God" (lā ilaha illa-Llāh). This sentence appears in Latin on one of the first coins minted in Toledo by Mūsā ben Nusair, in the following form: non deus nisi deus solus. This all too literal rendering has at least the advantage of capturing the comprehensive "synthetic" character of the formula. On closer inspection, here, we are no longer dealing with an equation, based on the formula "being is being," but a reduction, a conversion which can be appropriately expressed by the words "There is no (independent) being besides the one sole being."

Because of the way in which one word expressing an action can be used as a derivation for countless other terms for modes of existence, Arabic lends itself particularly well to describing the emotions and changes of will; it can describe the "subjective" in an "objective" way. This combined with its capacity for succinct statement, as well as its unlimited wealth of vocabulary supplied by the endless derivations from the root forms, not to mention the multiplicity of sounds and the rhythmic alternation of long and short syllables, makes it a poet's language that can translate an image, a situation, a landscape into an inner occurrence, which is melody and rhythm at the same time.

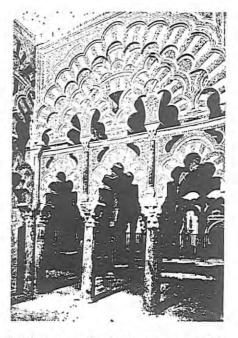
Islamic-Arab education is above all linguistic, if for no other reason than that the Koran in its Arabic wording is taken as the word of God. School instruction begins with the children learning to recite the Koran by heart. In Spain, says Ibn Khaldūn, efforts were made to transmit a general knowledge of the language to the children at an early age, to develop their linguistic style of writing as well as their handwriting, and to teach them the fundamentals of the art of poetry.

There is scarcely a scientific work to be found from Moorish Spain that is not embellished with verses. Among the Moors, virtually every statesman of repute was able to compose verse. A man would frequently be appointed minister because he had chosen the right moment to express the right words in a poem. And part of being a true knight entailed composing a poem before drawing his sword and rushing into the fray.

Moreover, in Andalusia there were a considerable number of renowned poetesses who were prominent at court, among the nobility, and in intellectual circles. One of the most famous of them was Princess Wallada, the mistress of Ibn Zaydūn, who lived at the Abbasid court in Seville. Umm al-Kirām, a daughter of King al-Mu'tamid of Alméria and Hafsa and Nazhun of Granada were also widely known. Great poetic talents emerged from all ranks of the population: from the princes, as for example al-Mu'tamid of Seville, from among the scholars such as



Decorated marble slab beside the prayer niche in the Mosque of Córdoba. Tenth century.



Interlacing arcades in the Mosque of Córdoba, so called "Villaviciosa Chapel."

Ibn Hazm of Córdoba, from among the mystics such as ash-Shusturi, and from among the vagabonds, such as Ibn Guzmān.

There are many instances of the favor found by poets with caliphs and princes, but one example will suffice here. The philosopher and poet, Abū Bakr ben Bājja (Avempace) once wrote a poem, which he had a female singer sing to the Prince of Saragossa, Ibn Tīfalwīt, which began with the words:

"Let your train trail where it will,

And add drunkenness to yet more drunkenness . . . "

And closed in praise of Ibn Tīfalwīt. On hearing it, the Prince cried out, "How moving!," and rent his clothes, swearing that the poet should walk home upon gold. Ibn Bājja, fearing that the Prince might regret his generosity, put some gold coins in his shoes and went home.

Arab poetry follows certain classical models which determine both the form and content of a poem. Among these are the poems in praise of a prince, which must always begin with a very remote lyrical image, and the love poem, in which the abandoned tent place of the beloved must be described. The poets of Spain dealt with these and new themes, and what singles them out from the rest of Arab literature is without doubt their descriptions of nature, the economy and delicacy with which these portrayals of nature were fashioned like jewels. It is as if an artistic talent, which in the Moorish world could not find an outlet either in painting or in representational sculpture, were being expressed in poetry.

A poem such as this one by Abū-l-Ḥassan 'Ali ben Ḥisn, private secretary to King Mu'tadid of Seville is reminiscent of a Persian miniature:

"Nothing saddens me so much as the cooing dove on a branch between the island and the river.

Pistachio-colored was her collar, lapis-lazuli her breast, iridescent her neck and chestnut-brown the tips of her wings.

Lids of gold-edged pearls lowered themselves over the rubies of her eyes.

Black was the tip of her beak, a silver quill dipped in paint.

She leaned back on her bough as if on a throne, her head burrowed under her wing.

But when she saw my tears flowing, she took fright at my weeping and stretched up on her bough.

Unfolded her wings and flew away, taking my heart with her. Whither? I know not."

The elegance of the writing here verges on the precious.

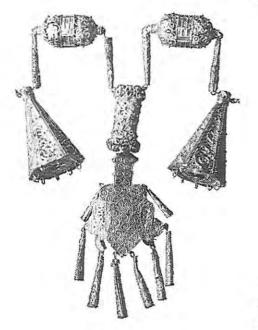
Far more typical of Andalusian verse are the very brief descriptions, such as this one by 'Iyād, the judge (1083—1149):

"The ripened ear sways in the wind

Bursting with seeds, like bands of horsemen

Turning to flight,

And the gaping red wounds of wild poppies."



Part of a golden necklace in the Moorish style, from Mondujar near Almería. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid) Yet Spanish-Arabic poetry does not shy away from the crasser images, as in this description of a battlefield by Abū Tammām ben Rabbāh of Toledo:

"Like sand by the sea, you see the corpses, And the vultures, tearing at their entrails, Are spattered from their food, like old women With braids dyed henna-red."

When Ibn Khaldūn says that poems are made with words, not thoughts, he carries the inherent tendency of Arab verse to extremes. In an Arabic poem it is not so much what is said, as how it is said. The same subject can be treated a hundred times over, but only if the choice of words is apt does it raise a spark. Up to a certain point this applies to every kind of poetry, but all the more in Arabic, as the rhythm and the auditory-symbolic relationship both play a decisive role. However, this is not the sole factor, for if it were, it would obviously be impossible to translate an Arabic poem at all.

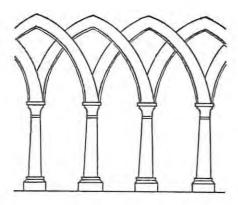
Composing verse required a wide knowledge. There is the immense vocabulary of the Arabic language, and the grammar, then there are the fifteen classical meters, which certain Arab theoreticians have derived from the gait of the camel and the horse, and finally there are also the various ways of combining words which can be compared with the arrangement of a fabric on a loom. Bearing in mind that certain themes had to be treated in a traditional way, this did not leave much room for poetic invention. Yet herein lies the very nature of a highly developed art, and the quality of the work need not be impaired by such restrictions. Far Eastern ink-painting is another example of this, for while it is indisputably brimming with freshness and artistry, yet its style is very confined, and all that is left to the individual inspiration is the final, decisive unification of all the given elements. Admittedly, Arabic verse only attains perfection when its forms are infused with a life that springs from the timeless center of the Islamic-Arabic spirit, that is to say in the verse of the Arabic-speaking Islamic mystics. In the purely secular sphere, it easily loses itself in over-formal decoration.

The rhyme appears in Arabic verse, and it may well have been introduced into medieval European verse from this source, for it is in some way inherent in Arabic verse. Bedouin verse, on which the Arabs continued to base their poems, uses uniform end-rhymes or parallel rhyming half-lines. The lines are long, for each is supposed to express a complete thought. The tenor of the poem is often both monotonous and impressive, like the progress of a caravan in the desert, or the song of the driver who goads his animals on — a song that the Arab poets often conjure up.

But the Spanish Moors were not Bedouins. They were city dwellers, and they required a verse form that was more varied and moved at a faster pace. So they evolved the short poem, the *zajal*, which is arranged in stanzas, each with a different rhyme. The oldest form of the *zajal* is supposed to have been the *muwashshaha*, the "jewel," which was used for the first time about 900 by a blind poet, Mukaddam ben Mu'afa from Cabra near Córdoba. It consists of three-line



Ivory plaque, Spain, thirteenth century.



Interlacing arches in the ruins of the monastery of San Juan de Duero in Soria, a Romanesque building strongly influenced by Moorish art. stanzas with a kind of recurring rhyme, which is introduced at the beginning of the poem, and follows the scheme of aa/ddd/aa/eee/aa and so on.

It is not hard to imagine how this verse form developed from the Arabic rhythm and the Moorish predilection for ornamental forms, or "jewels." In effect the interwoven rhymes represent the exact auditory-rhythmic counterpart of the interlacing arches in the Great Mosque of Córdoba. Both the architectural and the literary forms appear to derive from the same stylistic feeling. There is still some speculation as to whether any kind of national epic in a Romance tongue could have had some influence on the development of the muwashshaha, for some of the poems in this form, and particularly those by the eleventh-century adventurer, Ibn Guzmān, who made the muwashshaha famous, contain recurring refrains in the dialect - a curious mixture of two fundamentally different languages! However, there is no trace of any early Romance poetry, while the early Provençal epic poems, which precede all Christian-medieval vernacular verse, were quite clearly modelled on the Arabic-Andalusian short poem, the zajal. This is hardly surprising, since Moorish culture exercised a strong influence on neighboring southern France, and the first known poet of courtly love to write in vulgar Latin, Prince William of Aquitaine, is almost certain to have spoken Arabic.

Thus the origins of the Minnesongs, or poems of courtly love, which began in Provence and swept through the German-speaking countries, lay in Moorish Andalusia. The Romance and German factions in European philology have long resisted this conclusion as they could not imagine how the actual content of the poems of courtly love, the glorification of woman, and the sacrificial devotion could have anything to do with Arabic poetry. It was Wilhelm Schlegel who wrote: "I cannot persuade myself that poetry, which is based entirely on the adoration of women and on the complete freedom of the married woman in social intercourse, could be influenced by a nation whose women were treated like slaves and were jealously locked away." This concept of the social standing of women among the Moors is quite mistaken. As the Spanish scholar, Ramón Menéndez Pidal has rightly observed, the position occupied by a woman of birth in Moorish Spain was not so very different from that of her counterpart in neighboring Christian countries. The decisive factor lies elsewhere, not in the social role of the woman, but in the image the man has of her, and the spiritual implications this image can have. However, we shall return to this, when we come to consider the origins of the style of life of the knights in the Islamic-Arabic world. For the moment let us merely indicate the typical features of Moorish poetry.

It is true that the Arab love poem is often steeped in a passionate and yet impersonal sensuality; so that one senses the physical presence of the woman, yet is given no inkling of her personal appearance, as for example in this poem by Yaḥyā ben Baķī (died 1145):

"I gave her, as night lowered her mantle,

Wine like clear, penetrating musk.

Then I seized her fervently, like the warrior grasps his sword,

Her braids hung from my shoulder, like a sword belt,

But as slumber numbed her arms

I moved her from me, as she clung to me,

I moved away from my beloved

So that she should not rest upon a pulsating pillow."

Whereas Christian love poetry rises to the spiritual plane by renouncing sensuality, or by showing the stigmata of the Passion, the Arab poet experiences the highest intensification of love, transcending sensuality, in the sphere of beauty. Startling beauty is responsible for the lightning transformation of sensual intoxication into something spiritual, into ecstasy, lulling passion into timeless rapture. This condition is suggested in certain poems, not least by their brevity.

On one occasion a number of *muwashshaha* poets assembled in twelfth century Seville, for a contest for the best poems. Yahyā ben Bakī and al-A'mā at-Tuṭilī were considered the most talented among them. At-Tuṭilī stepped out in front of them all and spoke:

"A laugh, revealing pearls,

A face, beautiful as the moon.

Time is too narrow to contain it,

But my heart does so."

Thereupon Ibn Baki tore up the sheet of paper containing his own short poem, which he had been about to read, and all the others did likewise.

For the Christian-European audience, a love poem must conjure up the face of a particular person; it has to be personal, otherwise it is not considered sincere. Yet this is the very thing that the Arab poet avoids. He conceals the face of his beloved, in much the same way as the Muslim does not in general let his family be seen in public, and even tends to avoid the feminine pronoun in the poem, substituting "he" and "him" in its place. The beloved in Arabic verse remains unapproachable. However, the moment she reveals herself she is transformed into sun and moon, she undergoes a cosmic transfiguration. And it is by this very, as it were, Platonic heightening of sensual beauty that Arab verse inspired the Christian minnesongs. It was this that paved the way for Dante's Beatrice.

This is not to say that Spanish-Arabic lyric verse is lacking in spirit. Consider this poem by Abū-Bekr ben aṣ-Ṣābūnī:

"I swear by the love of her who spurns me —

The night of a man consumed by love has no end;

Frozen is the dawn - will it never come?

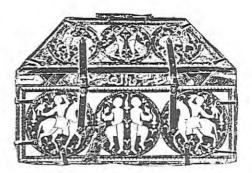
Ah, night - methinks you know no morrow.

Is it true, o night, that you are eternal?

Or have the wings of the eagle been clipped,

So that the stars of heaven no longer wander?"

Yet the most intimate of confessions is lent distance by the preciousness of its jewelled form, such as these words by the famous poet, Ibn Zaydūn (1003—1070):



Casket with inlay work, in the possession of the cathedral of Tortosa.

"Twas as if we had not passed the night with love for our companion, While fortune closed the lids of those who envied us. Like two secrets in the heart of discreet darkness,

Until the tongue of morning all but gave us away."

The Arabic inclination to cast a thought into a very sharply defined mold sometimes led to exaggerations that strike us as contrived. A typical example is the comparison of the ideal female form, which has a supple body and ample hips, with the branch of a willow stuck in a sand dune.

Moorish verse covers the entire range of human emotions, from pure spiritual love, peculiar to mysticism, to the very earthly passions celebrated by poets like Ibn Guzmān. This is hardly surprising, but what does seem strange is the large number of drinking poems in a land where religious law prohibits the drinking of wine. This was the weak spot of the Spanish Muslims. In a wine-growing country such as Spain, the temptations were too great. Moreover, it was often the princes that set a bad example. Yet we must remember that there were famous examples of carousing and drinking songs in pre-Islamic verse, which continued to serve as a model, so that the theme was to some extent a part of classical education. Finally, there is the point that alcoholic intoxication can be a metaphor for spiritual intoxication, just like the intoxication of sexual love. Islamic mysticism used both love poetry and the drinking song in the metaphorical sense. Wine is used as a symbol for the Knowledge of God. There are Arabic-Andalusian poems, such as the one below by Idris ben al-Yamānī (eleventh century) that can be taken in both senses:

"Heavy were the glasses, while still empty,

Yet filled with wine they lightened,

So that they and their contents all but took wing

Just as bodies become light when suffused with the spirit."

As a final example, we include this poem by Abū-l-Ḥassan ben Mālik of Granada, which at first sight is reminiscent of a Japanese quatrain:

"The peel of morning light in the east Turns into a surging ocean. The doves call fearfully to one another, As if afraid of drowning. They cry in the shadowy foliage."

Poetry went hand in hand with song; singing was accompanied by the playing of the lute, the Arabian violin, the flute and the tambourine. And music was an invitation to the dance.

Even before the Iraqi musician Ziryāb introduced Persian music to the court of 'Abd ar-Rahman II, slave girls trained in the art of song and dance had been brought over to Spain from the Islamic east. The Persian influence has survived in the last echoes of Andalusian music. The Moriscoes, (Spanish Muslims) who emigrated to North Africa in the sixteenth century, brought it to Tetuán, Fez, and Tunis, where to this day music is played and sung in "the Andalusian manner."



Jug with ornamental lettering, from the time of the Caliphate. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid) It can still be detected in the *cante hondo* that survives in Andalusia. The piercing falsetto, which begins passionately, swells to a lament, then hovers like the sound of a flute between open and subdued vowels, breaking off on a deep note, then soaring on softly, accompanied by the arabesques of a lute — all this is highly reminiscent of Persian music, especially of the singing of secular or mystical love-songs. The Castilian element emerges in the emphasis of the tragic chords and in a certain heroic defiance, while the European Renaissance influence has largely displaced the gradations ranging from harsh to pleasant tones.

The Andalusian passion for singing and playing the lute existed already in Moorish times. A travelling Arab writer, Aḥmad-al-Yamānī, has left us this description dating from the time of the breakdown of the Ummayyad Caliphate: "In the year 407 of the Hijra (1016—1017) I happened to be in Málaga, when I fell sick for some considerable time, and found myself compelled to remain indoors. Two companions who were living with me provided me with food. Now it so happened that as night fell my sleeplessness would increase, while in the neighborhood, the strains of lutes, drums and harps intermingled with singing would sound all around me, which annoyed me and increased my sleeplessness and my suffering. Finally my irritability and my distaste for all those voices grew to such a pitch that I searched for accommodation where I would not be forced to hear any of them. It proved quite impossible to find such accommodation, owing to the widespread habit of the people of this region of spending the nights singing and playing music.

"One night, as I lay awake after a short, fitful sleep, it happened that those tiresome voices and the irritating twanging stopped, and suddenly mysterious, low, delightful music could be heard, the like of which I had never heard before. My soul was refreshed by it, without my feeling any of the aversion that the other music had aroused in me. No voice accompanied the playing. The melody began to rise by degrees, and my ear and my soul followed it, until it swelled to full pitch, and even then I took such pleasure in it that I forgot my pains, and was filled with joy and sweet excitement. I had the impression that the floor of the room in which I lay was rising and that the walls were swaying about me. And still I could not hear any kind of voice. Then I said to myself, "What unsurpassable music! What must the voice of such a player be like, and where can he be playing?" Scarcely had I spoken, when a woman began to sing in a voice that was fresher than the flowers after rain and sweeter than an embrace for the lover burning with passion. Finally, I could no longer remain where I was, and got up. Both my friends were asleep. I opened the door and followed the voice, which sounded near. From an aisle of my house, I discovered a spacious dwelling with a garden at the center of it. A gathering of some twenty men was assembled here, seated in rows, with drinks and fruit in their hands. By them stood slave-girls with lutes, tambourines, flutes and other instruments, but none of them were playing. The slave-girl, whom I had heard, sat some way apart with the lute in her lap. All present were gazing at her, as she sang and played.

"From where I was standing, I could see everything without being seen myself,

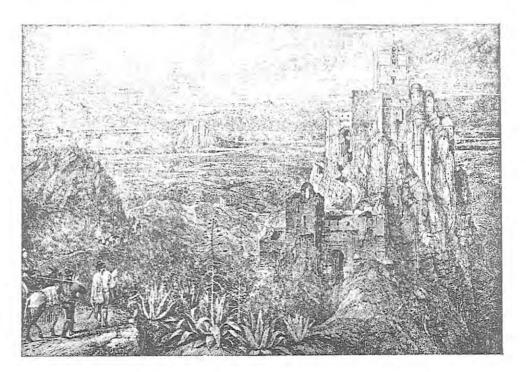
and as soon as the slave-girl sang a line, I would imprint it on my memory. However, she sang a few more verses, and then stopped. I returned to my room, as if — God is my witness — relieved of a pressing burden and cured of all pain . . ."

"The fire - a laughing dancer with whirling sleeves.

She laughs at the wood, whose blackness

Her dancing transforms to gold."

We know nothing about the dances of Moorish Spain. The poem above by Abū 'Abd Allāh ben Abī-l-Khişal suggests a round-dance performed in Persian dress with very long sleeves — at all events, something quite different from the Berber or Arab dancing of North Africa. But this is probably only one aspect of Moorish dancing, for it is very likely that various features that have been preserved in Andalusian folk dancing, the *flamenco*, are survivals of Moorish times. The spiritual mood underlying this dance, which links passion with the nearness of



Ruins of a Moorish fortress near Gaucin, south of Ronda, with a view of the rock of Gibraltar, the Bay of Algeciras, and the Moroccan coastline.

death, and makes the woman a kind of unapproachable goddess, may have both Castilian and Arabic roots. However, there are certain formal elements of *flamenco* which are neither European nor Arabic in origin. These seem to have come directly from India, and include the controlled steps, the way the movement rises from the hips upwards to the outspread arms, the hand gestures, reminiscent of the Indian *mudras*, and not least, the nature of the rhythm. It may have been the gypsies who brought them to Spain from their native India, yet nothing comparable is known among the gypsies of Eastern Europe. If the gypsies did play some part in transmitting this form of dance, it must have been during the great east-west migration that came from the Near East by way of Baghdad to Córdoba. Indian dance spread through the whole of Asia and still survives to this day in the Islamic atmosphere of Java. The only possible explanation for this is that it is more than a folk dance, and more than a dance art in the modern sense. The Indians themselves regard it as a revelation from the god Shiva, who by his dance creates, upholds and destroys the world.

VII Chivalric Love



Handle of a Granadan sword from San Marcelo de León. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid) The image of the knight, and all that this entails regarding manly virtues and the glorification of woman, has a far more general character in Islam than in Christianity. It is a very old concept, dating back to the pre-Islamic model of the knight of the desert. It has an even deeper root, since the spiritualization of the warrior status, of the "Holy War," plays an important role in Islam, while it is only an indirect offshoot of Christianity. There have been Christian warrior-saints, but none of the apostles was a warrior, whereas Islam came into the world, as it were, out of war. It may well be because of its more general nature, that Islamic chivalry never acquired such a distinctive and exclusive style as that which developed in Christian-European knighthood, with its heraldry, its tournaments, and its *cours d'amour*. Yet there were times when the appropriate elements, always inherent in Islamic culture did combine quite unequivocally to produce a chivalric form of life. In Moorish Spain chivalry flourished in the eleventh century — no later — and there is no doubt that it acted as a stimulus to the neighboring Christian countries.

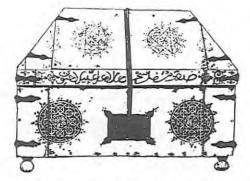
There is an obvious connection between the warlike nature of Islam and the military vocation of the knight. What is not so immediately evident to the Christian-European observer is that the knightly attitude towards woman is Islamic in origin. It is in fact doubly rooted in Islam. On the one hand, it harks back to the desert knights of pre-Islamic Arabia, who were famous not only as good horsemen and audacious swordsmen, but also as poets and often as great lovers. On the other hand, it is a product of the great worth attached by Islam to the relationship between man and woman. "Marriage is one half of religion," said the Prophet, who himself set an example of the utmost kindness and indulgence towards woman. The prejudice against Islam for its alleged contempt for women is based on a misunderstanding. Islam does not despise women, it simply makes a very marked distinction between the sexes, and appoints each its separate role. As a person - as a being with an immortal soul - woman, in the Islamic view, is man's equal, otherwise there would be no women venerated as saints in the world of Islam. As a wife, she is subject to her husband - she must obey the man, not because he is necessarily a better person than she, but because the female nature finds its fulfillment in obedience, just as it is the man's duty to command. Human nature consists of more than just the different nature of the sexes, but man fulfills his human nature through his masculinity, and woman through her femininity. Accordingly, Islam keeps the world of woman separate from the world of man. The home belongs to the woman, and man is only a guest there. This direct opposition of the sexes and the corresponding separation of their different positions in life is, however, the spiritual prerequisite not only for polygamy, but also for the knightly adoration of women, paradoxical as this may seem at first sight. The outward justification for polygamy is, incidentally, that in a warring nation there are always more women then men, and that the surplus women must be given protection and provided with a home. Yet on the spiritual level, polygamy does indeed involve that very distance between the sexes which can, in certain circumstances where there are additional motives, provide the stimulus for a loving transfiguration of woman. Nothing is farther from the Islamic concept of sexual love than the idea of "comradeship" between man and woman, and in reality the relationship between the sexes always amounts to either more or less than that. However close a wife may be to her husband — and in a certain sense she is as near to him as his own soul — in the depth of her womanliness she still remains somehow remote and mysterious. Yet without this element of mystery in woman, there would have been no devotion to the service of woman (Minne*dienst*), no courtly love songs (*Minnesang*), and altogether no heightening of the love for woman.

The lack of respect for woman, or better, her spiritual neglect, is a phenomenon that appears in decadent urban life in Islamic countries. It always goes hand in hand with the despotic role exercised by women within the family. In a nomadic and warlike world, however, where the sexes are like two opposite poles, the man is always inclined to admire the woman, while, conversely, the woman expects the man to be the master. A twelfth-century Christian-Spanish chronicle describes an event which is significant in this context. It happened at the time when Moorish Spain was ruled by the Almoravides, who were Berbers and came from the Sahara, and it brought to an end a military campaign launched by the Muslim kings of Córdoba, Seville, and Valencia against Alfonso VII of Castile, who ruled in Toledo, and called himself Emperor of Christian Spain. The kings had discovered that Alfonso VII had set out with an army to lay siege to Oreja, at some distance from Toledo on the River Tajo. With the aid of the Almoravid ruler of Morocco, Yūsuf ben Tāshufin, they had assembled a great army, and advanced on Toledo, having left a part of the army in reserve on the way. They calculated that at their approach Alfonso VII would abandon his camp at Oreja to go to the aid of Toledo, leaving their concealed auxiliary troops to march to Oreja and take the camp by surprise. But spies betrayed the plan to the Castilian ruler, who decided to remain in the camp at Oreja and await the Moors there.

"Meanwhile," in the words of the chronicle, " the great army of Moabites and Hagarites [meaning the Berbers and Arabs] reached Toledo and attacked the fortress of San Servando, whose great towers nevertheless remained undamaged. Only one outer tower was lost, and four Christians perished in it. Thereupon the Saracens moved on to Azeca, where they set up camp and proceeded to lay waste the vineyards and fruit trees. At this time the Empress Doña Berenguela was resident in Toledo, with a great force of knights, foot soldiers and crossbowmen, who had taken up positions at the gates, the towers, and the walls of the city, and were defending them on the alert. When the Empress saw the destruction caused by the Saracens in the surrounding fields, she sent messengers to the Moabite kings to tell them, 'This is what the Empress, the wife of the Emperor, has to say to you: Can you not see that you are fighting me, a woman, and that this does not bring honor upon you? If you wish to wage war, then go to Oreja and fight the Emperor, who awaits you there with weapon in hand.' When the Saracen kings, princes and leaders received this message, they raised their eyes, and saw the Empress seated on her throne on the royal balcony above the highest tower of the fortress (*alcázar*), bejewelled as befits an empress, and encircled by a retinue of noblewomen, who were singing and accompanying their song with tambourines, guitars, cymbals and psalteries. At this sight, the Saracen kings, princes and leaders were filled with admiration and shame. They bowed in greeting to the Empress, and returned to their own lands, without further devastation, and took the reserve troops back with them."

The formation of the courtly art of love presupposes not only a virile attitude on the part of the man, but also a refined mode of life, extreme tact, and a marked feeling for beauty. This attitude is revealed in the work of a famous Moorish scholar, Ibn Hazm of Córdoba, who lived just at the time when the knightly mode of life was beginning to express itself. Abū Muḥammad 'Alī Ibn Hazm was born in about 994 of an eminent family of Visigothic or Persian descent. His father was minister (*wezir*) at the Ummayyad court. In his youth, Ibn Hazm witnessed the fall of the Caliphate. After participating in the ill-fated attempts at restoring the Caliphate, he withdrew from politics, and devoted himself to the sciences and the art of poetry for the remainder of his life (he died in 1064). He is supposed to have written 400 works, including a history of religions and religious sects. From his book about love entitled 'The Collar of the Dove,' we have chosen the following story about his youth:

"I wish to tell you the following story about myself: In my youth love drew me into a friendly relationship with a slave girl who had grown up in our house and was at the time sixteen years old. The beauty of her countenance, her intelligence, her chastity, purity, modesty and her pleasant nature were beyond compare. She would not consent to flirtation, refusing to sully her honor. Her friendliness was exceptional, yet she was always most careful to keep her face hidden by the veil. Faultless and irreproachable, she was always on her guard, and her face always bore a serious expression. She was charming whenever she appeared, yet possessed a natural reserve, and was delightful in her movements, making a dignified impression. As she sat, she was full of composure, and her aloofness was enchanting. No one would have dared hope to win her, nor to covet her, and no one could hope to expect a favorable hearing from her. Thus, her appearance drew all hearts to her, while her conduct rejected anyone who sought to approach her. Her shyness and reserve in dispensing favors gave her an allure, which no amount of generosity and openness could produce in others. She was of a serious disposition, and had no desire for light entertainment, although she played the lute extremely well.



Casket. Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.

"This girl had won my heart, and I fell passionately and helplessly in love with her. For some two years, I tried with all my energies to gain a hearing from her, and for once to pry from her lips words other than those pass between people in public conversation. However, I had absolutely no success whatsoever.

"Now I remember that one day a social gathering was held in our home, in the way that such gatherings tend to take place in the houses of prominent individuals. The party consisted of the female members of our family and of my late brother's family; then there were the wives of our house-steward and of all the attendants of the neighborhood, all people of elevated rank and good standing. They remained in the house for part of the day, and then there was a move to a belvedere near our house, perched above the garden. There were huge, open windows in the wall niches of the belvedere, which overlooked the whole of Córdoba. The gathering now began to look out through the openings in the wooden trellises across the windows. I remember the joy I experienced at the proximity of the girl, and with the hope of lingering a while at her side, I advanced towards the window where she was standing. But no sooner did she become aware of my presence, than she left this window and at a sedate pace moved on to another one. When I then decided to join her at the window where she now stood, once again she turned away to another one. Moreover, she was aware of my love for her. (You must know that women are most perceptive in detecting the way a person feels about them.) But the other women did not notice our movements, because there were so many of them and they were all going from one window to another, as some windows offered a view of areas that could not be seen from others. After this, they all went down into the garden, and now the older women and the elegant ladies of our circle requested the girl's mistress to permit her to sing us something. The girl took up her lute and began to tune it with such entrancing shyness and embarrassment as I had never seen before. Yes, in the eyes of an admirer, the charm of a thing always appears twice as great! Then she began to sing some lines of al-'Abbas Ibn-al-Ahnaf [composer of love-poems at the court of Harun ar-Rashid] ...

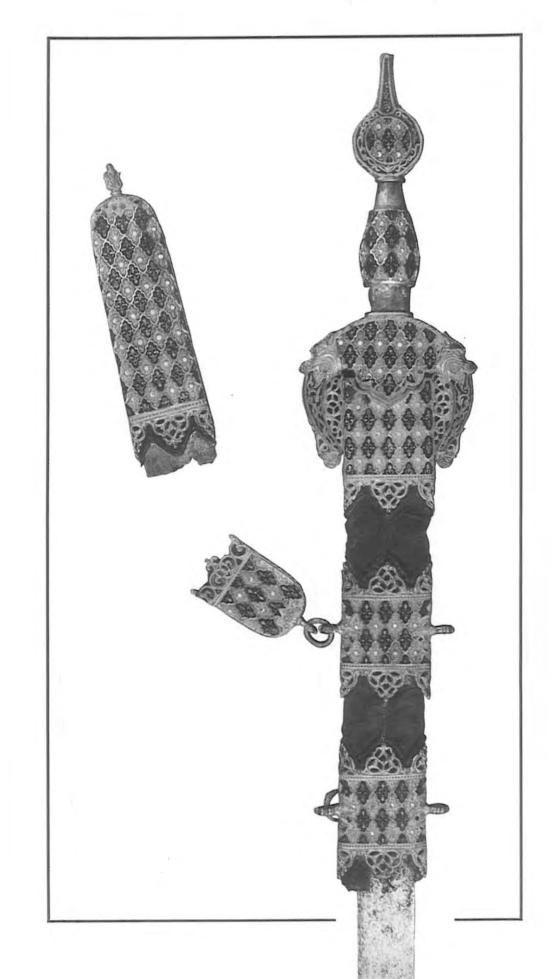
"Upon my life! It was as if the plectron was plucking at my heart, and not the strings. I have never forgotten that day, and I shall not forget it until the day I depart this life. I never found another opportunity for seeing and listening to her.

"After that, on the third day after Caliph Muḥammad al-Mahdī ascended the throne, my father, the vizier, moved from our new palace in Rabaḍ aẓ-Ṣāhira on the east side of Córdoba to our old palace in Balāṭ Mughīṭ on the west side of the city. At the time — this was in 1009 — I moved with him, whereas, as a result of circumstances that made it necessary for her to remain behind, she did not. With the accession of Caliph Hishām III we were treated with unpleasantness and were subjected to open hostility by the Caliph's highest officials. We were hard pressed by arrest, espionage, oppressive extortion, and were compelled to live in hiding. Political unrest raged all about us. It affected everyone, but especially ourselves, until finally in the late afternoon of June 22nd, 1012, my father, the vizier, died,



Casket with inlay work from San Isidoro de León.

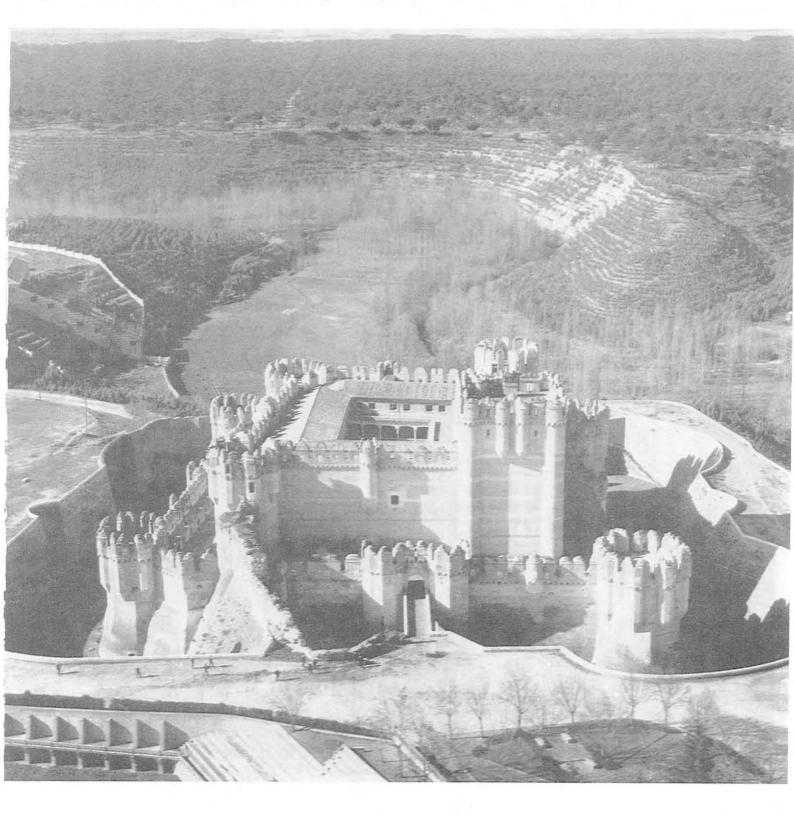
(Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid)





32 (Color plate). The so-called Sword of Boabdil, Granada. Fourteenth or fifteenth century. Landesmuseum, Kassel. This or a similiar sword in the Museo de la Real Armeria, is supposed to have belonged to the last Moorish king of Granada, Abu-'Abd-Allāh.

33 Coca Castle (Segovia Province), fifteenth century. The projecting military towers are an Arabic invention.





34 (Left). Ivory box. Córdoba, dated 964. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

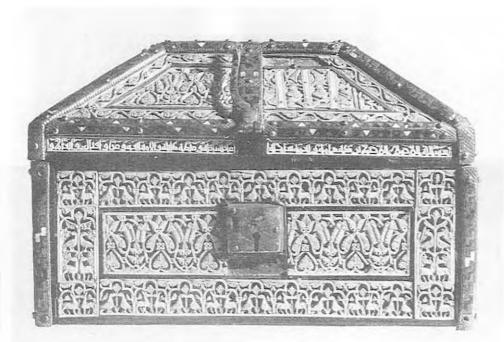
35 (Right). Large Moorish vase from Jerez de la Frontera. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

36 (Far right). Ivory box. Córdoba, dated 968. Louvre, Paris.

37 (Below). Silver casket made about -975 for Hisham II. Treasury of Gerona Cathedral.





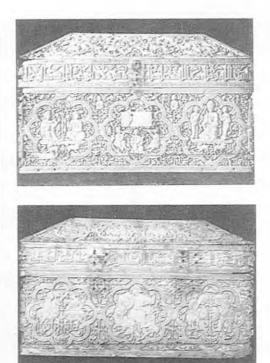


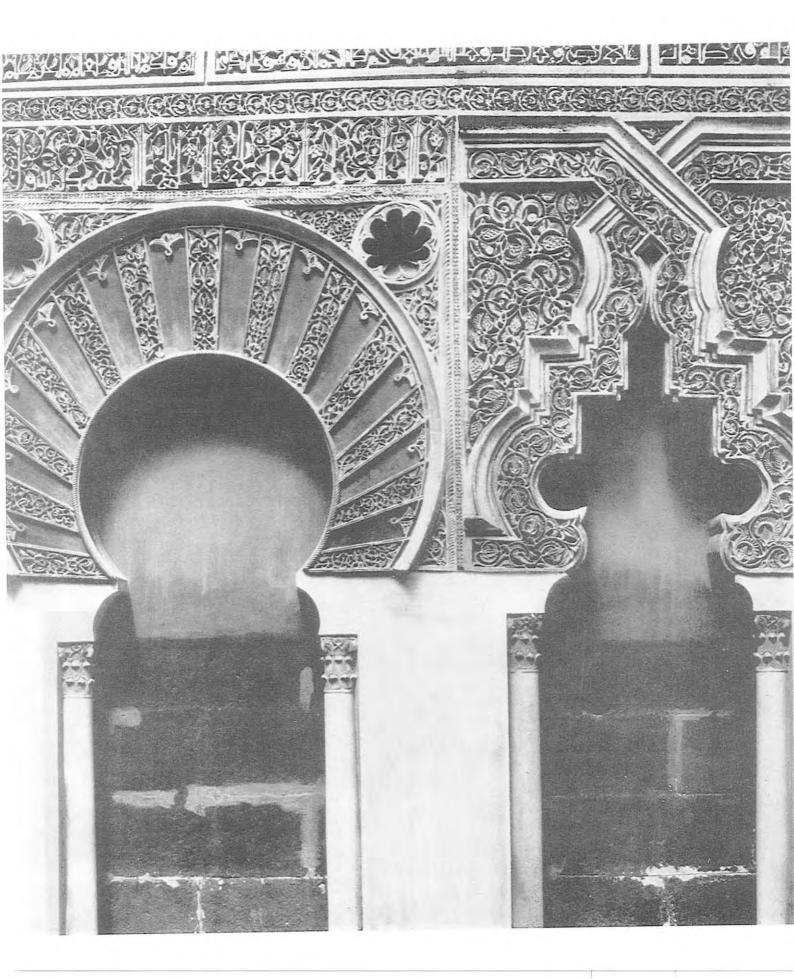
38 (Left). Front and rear view of ivory carving on a Moorish casket, made about 1050, from Taller de Cuenca. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

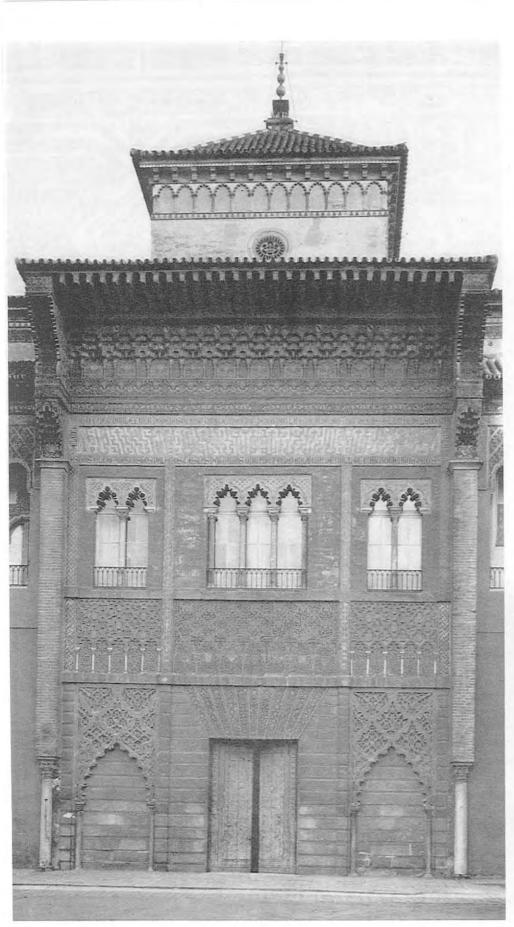
39 (Below). Front and rear view of the jewel-casket belonging to Queen Blanca of Navarre, made about 1005 in Córdoba. Cathedral of Pamplona.

40 (Right). Detail of the wall decoration in the so-called Aljafería in Saragoza, eleventh century. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.







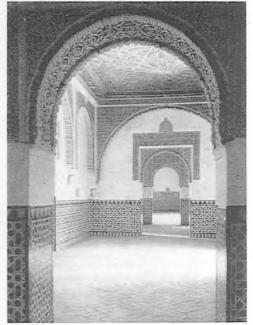


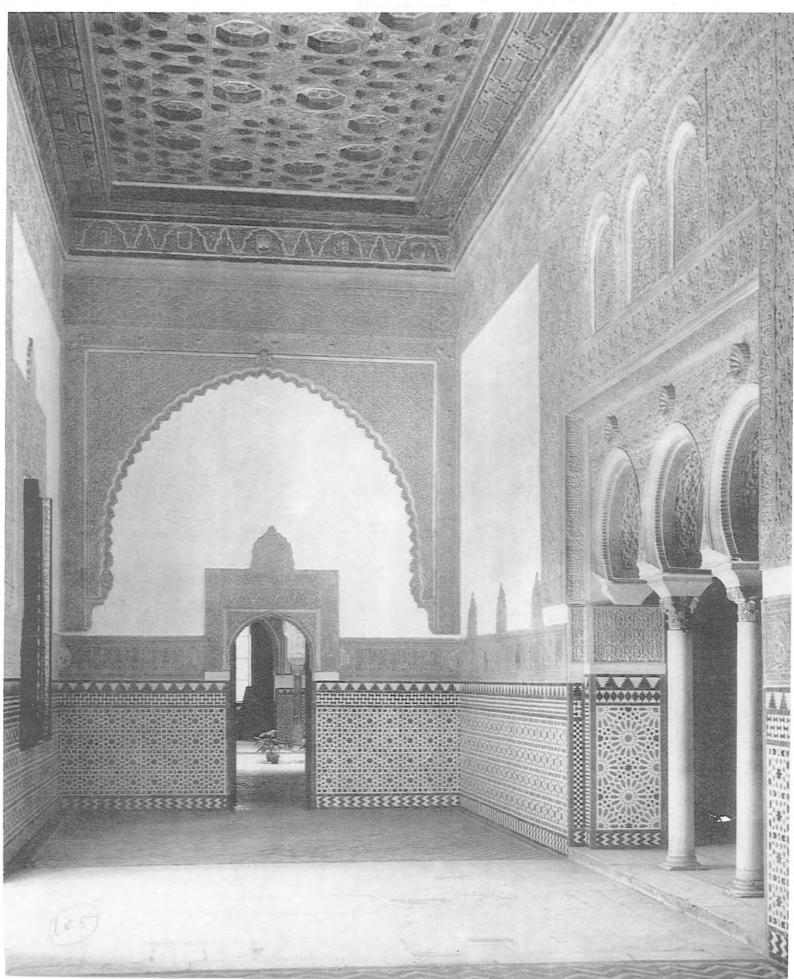
41 (Left). Main portal and façade of the Alcázar of Seville, built in the fourteenth century by craftsmen from Granada for the Christian rulers of Seville.

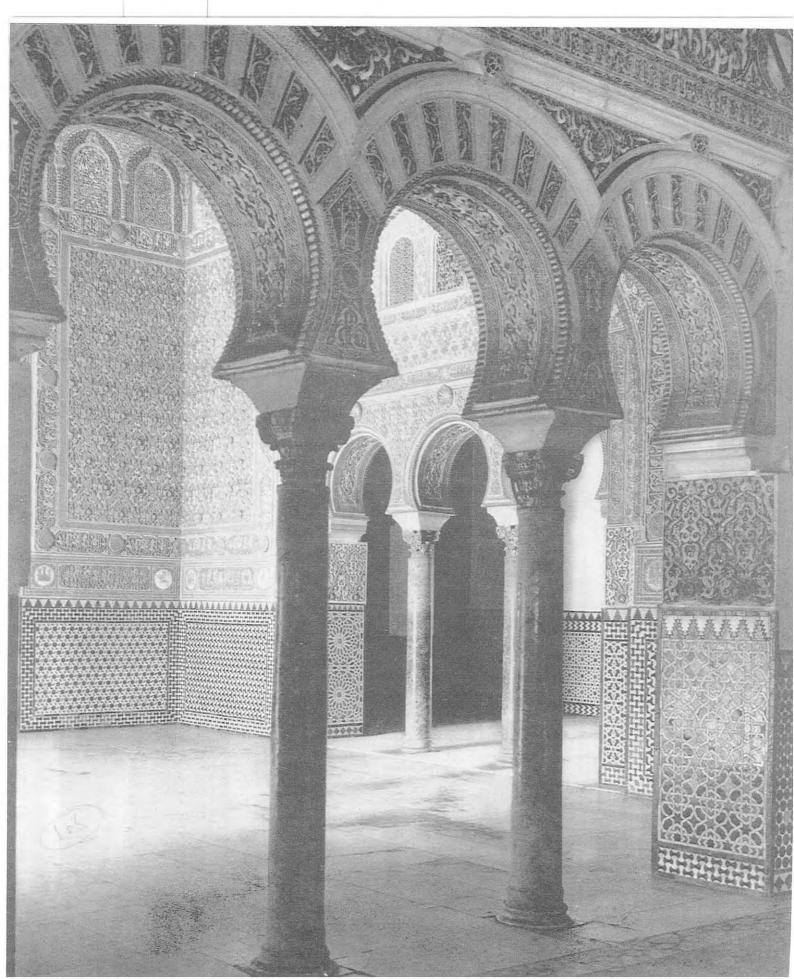
42 (Below). Suite of rooms in the Alcázar of Seville. The decoration is distinctly Granadan and dates from the second half of the fourteenth century. "Departamentos de Maria Padilla."

43 (Right). Same suite of rooms: "Salon de los Reyes Moros."

44 (Following page). The Hall of the Ambassadors in the Alcázar of Seville. The former Abbadid residential fortress was almost entirely rebuilt by Moorish craftsmen from Granada in the reign of Pedro I (the Cruel). However, the arcades are still highly reminiscent of the art of the Caliphate.







and still events around us continued as before. After his death my own situation remained unchanged, until one day when the funeral of one of our relations took place. The lamentations had already begun, when amidst the mourners I caught sight of the girl in the circle of wailing and keening women. Standing there, she reawakened in me a long-buried passion, which had since become tranquil, and reminded me of earlier days, of a former love, a time that was over, a vanished epoch, of months long past, of things now ancient, an age that was gone, episodes finished, and days gone by, and of trails effaced. On that day, when for various reasons I was unhappy and full of woe, she renewed my suffering and reawakened my anguish. I had not lightly forgotten her, and now my torment increased, pangs of love consumed me, and my grief became intense. The pain redoubled, and insofar as my passion had been concealed, it was now all too readily rekindled. I was prompted to make up the following poem:

He weeps for a dead man, who departed with honor.

Yet is it not for the living man that tears should flow?

How strange that his pity goes out to the deceased,

While the innocent victim leaves him unmoved!

"Thereafter, destiny unfurled its store of events. We relinquished our apartments, and were overrun by the Berber army. I left Córdoba on July 13th, 1013, and after this single encounter, she disappeared from my life for more than six years. When I returned to Córdoba in February or March of the year 1010, I settled in at the home of one of our women, and there I saw her. I would hardly have recognized her, had not someone told me who she was. Her attractiveness had for the most part been transformed. Her beauty had vanished. The erstwhile comeliness had gone. Faded was the former luster, that had shone like a polished sword and an Indian mirror, and withered was the bloom that had once drawn and riveted every eye, until, dazzled, the beholder turned away. She had retained only a fraction of her charms, just enough to conjure up a picture of the former whole. She had obviously taken too little care of herself, and had suffered from the want of that sheltering hand and protection she had been given when we were her masters. She could no longer have been concerned with her honor, when she lowered herself to the inevitable, from which she had always been sheltered and preserved in former times.

"For women are just like sweet-smelling herbs, which lose their perfume, if they are not cared for. They are a structure that collapses if neglected. For this very reason it has been said that beauty in men is finer, truer, and more firmly rooted, because it withstands things like noon-day heat, the desert simoom and other winds, weather changes and homelessness, all of which leave indelible traces on part or the whole of a woman's countenance.

"If only the slenderest association with her had been accorded to me, and if she had only had some confidence in me, I should have been delirious with delight or died of joy . . ."

In the same book Ibn Hazm develops a philosophy of love, influenced by Plato, similar to that expounded earlier by a Persian by the name of Abū Dāwūd of

Isfahan. According to this, the mutual attraction of two people for one another, if of a lasting nature, signifies a kinship of souls that is eternal. Moreover, this concept is deeply rooted in Islam and derives from the utterance of the Prophet that certain souls are united from the outset, and that their kinship on earth is merely a rediscovery of one another.

The nobility of this doctrine of love is that it transcends not only the level of common instincts, but also all psychology, in the accepted sense of the word, by detecting a timeless destiny in the loving inclination of the soul. Yet it is not comprehensive, in that it does not take into account the differing character of the sexes. This law of "elective affinity" that draws souls to one another, in fact applies even apart from the relationship between man and woman. Possibly the most profound concept of the love men and women have for each other is to be found in mysticism and more particularly in the work of the famous Andalusian mystic Muhyi-d-din Ibn 'Arabi, to whom we shall return in greater detail further on. He was born exactly one hundred years after the death of Ibn Hazm, in about 1165, and thus belongs to a time when the age of chivalry, under discussion here, had already passed its zenith. Yet his metaphysical concept of love is significant in this connection, if only because it demonstrates how in the Islamic view sexual love can be spiritualized to the highest degree. Clearly, Ibn 'Arabi does not write for the Muslim public at large, but addresses himself exclusively to persons inclined to a spiritual outlook, and expresses himself in terse allusions that are intended to awake the intuition of inner truths. His outlook derives from Islamic premises, and in particular from the example of the Prophet himself. For the latter's attitude to women, which to the Christian may appear secular, is given the reverse interpretation by the Muslim, who sees it as a spiritualization of physical love. The Muslim proceeds from the assumption that every single thing that the Prophet does, no matter how trivial, acquires a special relationship to God as a result, and likewise becomes a vessel of divine presence.

In his book, Versions of Truth, Ibn 'Arabi explains that man loves woman because she provides him with a view of his innermost being. Eve issued from Adam, and this indicates that man in his timeless being possesses something of both the masculine and feminine nature. They both are part of the totality of Adam, created "In the image of God." Accordingly, for man, woman is like a mirror held up to himself, for she reveals to him those aspects of himself which otherwise remain concealed from him. Now self-knowledge leads to the knowledge of God, for in the words of the Prophet: "Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord." For man does not from the outset know himself. He refers to himself as "I," without knowing fundamentally what this "I" is. It is like the eye, that can see everything except itself. "For that reason, because you do not know yourself," says Ibn 'Arabi, "you may rightly conclude that God must remain unrecognizable and unattainable, unless you come to know yourself and thereby know God." On the one hand, woman is more remote from divine origin than man, for she was created after him and it is in her nature to look up to him. Yet on the other hand the mirror of her being reveals to man that which transcends his own nature.

Ivory casket from Pamplona, Navarre.

For man, by reminding him of his original, God-given being, woman is a reflection of God. This is the love of woman in its most elevated form. Ultimately it stems from the love that God bears to man, created in His own image.

The man of spiritual perfection, says Ibn 'Arabi, is not driven merely by passion to love woman, he loves her because he sees in her a reflection of God. We cannot "see" God himself in His Essence that transcends all forms and manifestations, although we are able to recognize Him in a certain, inexpressible way. "Seeing" Him, however, is only possible by means of an image, yet the most perfect image of God is in the totality of Adam, and because man can only recognize this totality through woman, for him she remains the most perfect image of God.

It is in the nature of love to yearn for complete union with the beloved, in spirit, soul, and body. On the physical plane sexual union is the most total. In itself it is a symbol of the extinction of opposing natures in divine unity, whether or not the person performing it is conscious of this. "For it [the nature of love] always has the significance innate in its form, only the man seeking out his wife or any woman solely for lust, without knowing the more profound origin of this lust, remains unaware of this. Such a person is as ignorant about himself as any stranger to whom he has never divulged anything of himself."

This observation has taken us far beyond courtly love. Yet when we discover that the same Muḥyi-d-dīn Ibn 'Arabī was also the author of a series of love poems in which the beloved figures both as earthly woman and as a symbol of divine wisdom, and that at the other end of the line that runs from Arab lyric verse through the courtly romances of Provence down to Tuscany, there is Dante Alighieri with his *Vita nuova*, we realize that we have not strayed from our original subject.

Throughout the Islamic world there were brotherhoods, that may be described as orders of knights, which were more or less enriched by mysticism, as in the case of the Christian orders of knights. Their motto was the Arabic expression $fut\bar{u}w\bar{a}$, which may be translated as magnanimity, comprising the chivalrous virtues of fearlessness, charity, and generosity. L'amor e il cuor gentil sono una cosa — "love and a generous heart are one and the same thing," said Dante.

However, at this point paths and customs diverge. There was chivalric love, with its spiritual background, and love of a more courtly nature, which alternated between the serious and the playful. The same range of attitudes also existed on the far side of the Pyrenees, first among the knight-poets of Provence, and subsequently throughout the whole of the Latin-Germanic world.

Although Islam permits sensuality more outlet than does Christianity, the knightly love-song of the Moors sometimes strikes a curiously Platonic note, in the more specific sense of the word, while the Provençal love poems are frequently just as unconcernedly and unashamedly sensual as, for example, the verses of a poet like Ibn Guzmān. The spiritual summit of Christian chivalrous love was the service of the Holy Virgin. King Alfonso the Wise, who was responsible for introducing Arabic culture to the Christian West, composed his *cantigas* to the Virgin in the form of the Moorish *zajal*.

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VIII Spain in Check

No one understood the reasons for the political decline of eleventh-century Moorish Spain better than 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, even though he lived much later and was born outside Spain. He was born in 1332 in Tunis, and died in Cairo in 1406. His forbears had at times played an active role in the rule of Seville, so that his roots were in Spain, and he was closely acquainted with Andalusian culture.

For Ibn Khaldūn, as for every orthodox Muslim, the perfect state is a theocratic one. Its natural foundation is the monarchy, which exists only so long as it can rely upon a tribal stratum which will lend it support. This stratum, which may be termed the aristocracy, shares in the power of the ruler, and justifiably, so long as it embodies the theocratic law and possesses the military qualities with which to fulfill its obligations. With time, however, power exerts a corrupting influence. The warrior aristocracy gradually becomes an officialdom, with the self-interest and expedient qualities of the latter. Thereafter, the entire ruling class is inevitably ousted by a new one.

Usually this pattern of succession arose out of the constantly shifting antagonism between the settled and nomadic peoples. Every culture ('umrān) reaches its peak with urbanization, and also declines because of it, because city life leads to the loss of all the original virile qualities that the nomads possess to such a high degree — courage, energy, a spirit of solidarity and leadership. But since they were forever surging out from the desert in search of fertile regions, they continually found themselves as the conquerors of cities. They would then become the warrior aristocracy supplanting the indigenous population, and perpetuate their own dynasty until they in turn became settled and urbanized, and with the abandonment of their original character, power slipped from them too.

It is characteristic of Ibn Khaldūn — and it is this that sets him apart from his Greek predecessors as well as from the European Renaissance philosophers — that he does not single out for exclusive praise either the man of the desert (and the nomad is the purest example of this type), or the townsman, who represents settled life in its most advanced form. For all his natural virtues, without which life in the desert would not be possible, the nomad is but a barbarian who can blindly destroy precious cultural treasures, while the townsman, despite his emasculation which ultimately leads to degeneracy, is the true heir of the sciences and art. Therefore the ideal condition is neither the settlement of all nomads, nor the dissolution of all cities. The former would lead to a kind of petrifaction of culture with consequent fragmentation, whereas the latter would M.C.N. 10 be an end to every advanced culture. The only desirable goal is to achieve a balance and cross-fertilization of both elements, and in view of the diametrically opposed tensions that exist, this is bound to be unstable.

The political weakness of the nomads, which in general hinders them from playing a role in history, is the disunity caused by tribal feuds. However, when a leader does succeed in uniting several tribes under the banner of a spiritual mission, he may become the founder of an empire.

The significance Ibn Khaldūn attaches to the antithesis of nomadic peoples and settled peoples appears at first sight to apply only to the desert lands of Africa, Arabia, and Asia Minor. However, bearing in mind that Ibn Khaldūn terms all peoples who are not permanently settled and anchored in city centers, as "men of the desert" or "Bedouins" (which we have simplified in translation as "nomads"), then the same law of the nomads ousting the settled peoples applies equally to all the cultures of the continent of Asia, and extends to pre-medieval Europe as well.

For the Islamic world, however, this theory has a special significance. Insofar as Islam itself contains certain nomadic features which have been converted into spiritual values, unchecked urbanization would rapidly destroy the spiritual as well as natural equilibrium, on which the health of every Islamic community largely depends. The ideal framework for Islamic life — in highly simplified terms — is a holy city with a nomadic periphery, with the city representing the stronghold of learning and meditation, and the nomadic "hinterland" guaranteeing the constant influx of fresh elements, people unspoiled by urban culture.

By modern standards, the urbanization of eleventh-century Moorish Spain was by no means advanced, but it had already reached the point where the Islamic empire's power of resistance against external enemies had been considerably undermined. With the aid of his African mercenaries, al-Manşūr continued to uphold the power of the Caliphate a while longer. But after his death everything disintegrated, and the natural law propounded by Ibn Khaldūn began to take effect.

After the fall of the Caliphate at the beginning of the eleventh century, Moorish Spain split up into many petty principalities and kingdoms. It was so long since the Berber mercenary troops and the "Slav" bodyguard had been paid that they no longer owed anyone allegiance, and their commanders now took possession of the choicest provinces along the Mediterranean — Málaga and Granada fell into the hands of Berber princes, while "Slavic" rulers seized Almería, Denia, Valencia and the Balearics. In the interior of the peninsula, a number of aristocratic Arab families, such as the Banu Hūd in Saragossa, the Dhū-n-Nūn in Toledo, and the Banu 'Abbād in Seville established their own kingdoms of varying size, dividing and realigning themselves by feuds and treaties alternately.

Intellectual life, the sciences and the arts, did not appear to suffer from the partition of the former Caliphate, for in place of the all-powerful state with its army of officials there now emerged authorities that were mostly provincial and



The Moorish principalities after the fall of the Caliphate, approx. 1060.

whose powers were far more limited, so that things were reduced to a more human scale. The princes vied with each other to assemble the greatest poets and scholars about themselves.

The detrimental effect, that was universal in its impact, was in the political arena. All the Christian principalities which had hitherto cowered before the mighty Caliphate — kingdoms like Portugal in the northwest, Galicia, León, and Castile in the north, and Navarre and Catalonia in the east, now stretched and poised themselves at the ready. From a position of defense, they now went over to the offensive. Constant threat of aggression had turned the population of these Christian frontier territories into warriors. The free peasants, who lived in the threatened areas were as eager for battle as the knights, while the Moors in their securely fortified provinces had gradually grown accustomed to leaving the fighting to their North-African mercenaries.

Not that the Christian princes in the north and east were thinking in terms of a "reconquest" of Moorish-occupied Spain at this early stage. They would have been in no position to occupy conquered territories. Their objectives were very limited. When they were not at war with one another, often playing off Muslim allies against Christian foes, they were content to launch marauding attacks on the Moorish kingdoms for the booty they could seize or the tributes they could extract.

However, the no-man's-land that lay between the frontiers gradually moved southwards as far as the River Duero. Since 1017 the Roman Church had been calling for a crusade against the Spanish Muslims. Knights were streaming in from Burgundy, Champagne, and Normandy to swell the ranks of the Christian-Spanish armies. The initiative in the "Holy War" now lay entirely with the Christians. The Spanish Muslims did not rally themselves to a concerted counterstrike. They did nothing to stop Ferdinand I of Castile from uniting the northern kingdoms under his command. When Ferdinand made his will in 1063, two years before his death, in addition to leaving his three sons, Sancho, Alfonso, and García the kingdoms of Castile, León, and Galicia, he was also able to share among them the annual tributes paid by the Moorish principalities of Saragossa, Toledo, Seville, and Badajóz. Fortunately for the Moors, fighting broke out between Ferdinand's sons after his death. Initially Sancho, the eldest, assumed exclusive command, banishing Alfonso, the second son, into exile. The latter was given a friendly welcome by the Arab ruler of Toledo. However, not long after, Sancho was murdered at the instigation of his sister, Urraca, and Alfonso hastened back to Castile to claim the whole of his father's inheritance. As Alfonso VI of Castile, León, and Galicia, he did not leave his Moorish neighbors a moment's peace. Calling himself "Imperator totius Hispaniae," he ravaged the territories of Saragossa, Granada, Seville, and Badajóz, extorting ever-increasing tributes from their princes with a view to reducing them to such a state of weakness that they would ultimately fall into his hands like ripe fruit from a tree. Finally, in 1085, with the death of the Muslim ruler of Toledo who had shown him such generous hospitality, he attacked the ancient capital of the Visigothic Empire, and captured it. The whole of Moorish Spain received a rude awakening. A scholar and ascetic, Abū Mohammed al-Assāl expressed his cry of alarm in verse form:

"Men of Andalusia, put spurs to your horses!

Delay at this time is idle folly.

Garments usually first tear at the hem,

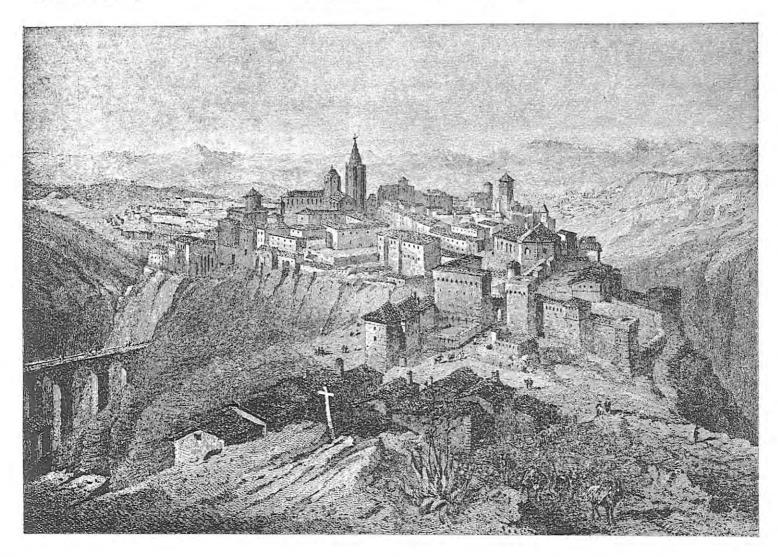
But Spain has been ripped right down the center."

There was a rapid succession of events unfolding like a drama of bold action, each leading up to the next, right to the inevitable end. Emerging in a somewhat stylized form from the contemporary chronicles, the main characters of this drama nevertheless personify the dominating forces of the century so well and so vividly that they are worth examining individually.

In 1068, shortly before Alfonso VI took over the kingdom of León and Castile, al-Mu'tamid 'alā-Llāh, the poet king, became ruler of Seville and the most flourishing of the Moorish kingdoms, while not far away to the south, just across the straits, the mighty army of the Almoravides broke through from the Sahara and seized Morocco. At the time neither Alfonso nor al-Mu'tamid concerned themselves with this event. The leader of this army, who was subsequently to call himself "Commander of the Faithful," was a Berber, Yūsuf ben Tāshufīn.

Linking these three main characters is the fourth figure in the cast, the knight Rodrigo Díaz de Bivar, who became famous under his Arabic-Latin surname of Cid Campeador. Cid comes from the Arabic *seyyid*, "Lord" and Campeador from the Latin *campi ductor*, "leader in the field." Rodrigo Díaz had been the ensign and commander-in-chief of the army of Castile under King Sancho, and had become famous early on for killing the finest knight in the kingdom of Navarre in a duel. When, after the murder of his brother Sancho, Alfonso returned from exile to claim the crown of Castile, the Cid insisted in the name of the Knights of Castile that he should prove himself innocent of the murder of his brother by swearing a solemn oath invoking divine vengeance. Alfonso was compelled to accede to this demand, but he never forgave the Cid for this insult.

A fifth character, who had only a brief role in the drama, is the adventurer Ibn 'Ammār, who appeared at the court of Seville as a penniless poet during the reign of al-Mu'tadid Ibn 'Abbād, the clever, harsh, calculating and gruesome founder of the kingdom. He immediately won the favor of the King and the fervent admiration of the son al-Mu'tamid, a twelve year-old lad, possibly with a poem, in which he celebrated the victory of the Abbadid over his Berber opponents in lines that dance triumphantly as if to a drum-beat. It begins unconcernedly, for a song of praise must not begin with praise:



Cuenca, a Castilian fortress town, outpost of the Christian "reconquest" of southern Spain. Old engraving.

"Hand me the glass, the morning wind awakes.

The star reins in on his nightly course.

The early light pours forth camphor,

While night sweeps up its dark ambergris . . ."

It describes the morning garden scene, but the wind, suddenly driving between the branches, is a reminder of the sword of Ibn 'Abbād, as he puts his heretical foes to flight:

"With your fist for a pulpit, in war

The sword is more eloquent than many a sermon."

Here was praise and balm to soothe the conscience of the harsh Abbadid ruler. He could also be generous, as befitted him:

"He presents the beautiful maid, the naked runner,

And the gem-encrusted sword as gifts."

At the same time he must know that it is the poet who makes the prince great:

"Who can equal me? Your name is aloe,

Which I burn in the incense bowl of my genius."

Ibn 'Ammār was aware of his intellectual superiority, and the young Mu'tamid modelled himself after him. He was so intensely drawn to the poet, that he could no longer live without him. His father had at that time already made him ruler of Silves, and there he courted Ibn 'Ammār with his favor, until one night the latter woke with a start from a dream in which a voice warned him that his benefactor would one day kill him. The father of al-Mu'tamid separated the two. However, when he died and his son succeeded him as ruler of Seville, Ibn 'Ammār was recalled from afar, and al-Mu'tamid appointed him first as administrator of Silves and then as first minister at his court, where the ability to write verse was considered the highest ability an official could possess.

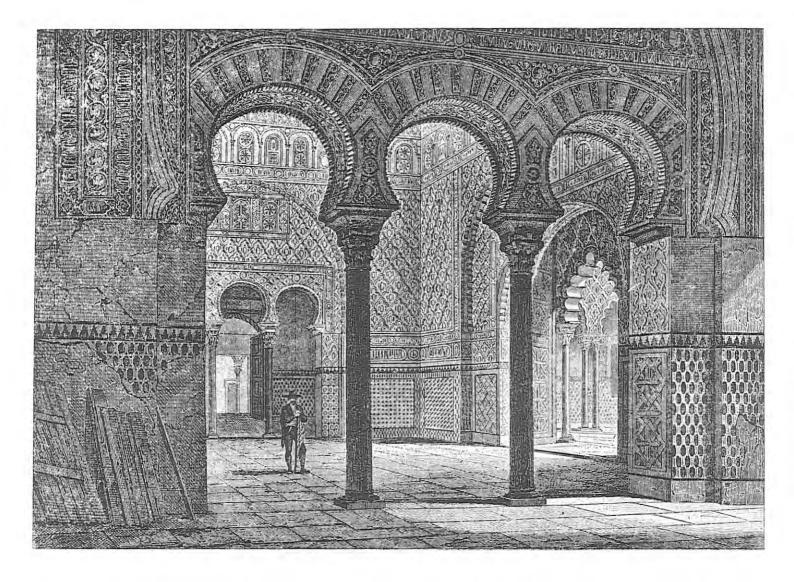
Al-Mu'tamid himself was a talented poet, and more than that, he was the perfect example of the chivalrous person, disregarding the mystical aspect of chivalry. Al-Marrakushi, the historian, says of him: "Of all forms of learning, he favored those that had some bearing on the right way to behave in dealing with people... For all that he possessed so many inborn virtues that it would be impossible to enumerate them — courage, generosity, modesty, and dignity... If one wanted to list all the examples of beauty produced by Andalusia from the time of the conquest to the present day, then al-Mu'tamid would be one of them, if not the greatest of all..."

The story of his marriage to a poetically gifted girl of humble origin has become famous. One evening, as he was strolling along the banks of the Guadalquivir in the company of his irreplaceable friend, Ibn 'Ammār, he tossed the opening lines of a poem at him:

"The wind turns the river

Into a suit of chain mail . . ."

But even before Ibn 'Ammār could take up the rhyme and develop it further, a girl of the people, who was passing by, continued in the correct meter:



Hall of the Ambassadors in the Alcázar of Seville, thirteenth or fourteenth century. As far as we can tell from a postulated reconstruction of the Caliphate palace of Medinat az-Zahra near Córdoba, its horseshoeshaped arcades must have inspired the ones pictured here.

"What a fine suit indeed,

If the frost made it freeze."

Taken aback, al-Mu'tamid looked round for the poetess, and, struck by her beauty, he sent his servant to bring her to him. Her name was I'timād, she said, but she was usually called Rumaikiya, as she was the slave of Rumaik, for whom she drove mules. When al-Mu'tamid asked if she were married, she replied that she was not. "Good," said he, "I shall buy you free, and marry you." She was gifted, beautiful, and ablaze with ideas and impulses. Al-Mu'tamid remained devoted to her for the rest of his life, and indulged her every wish to make her happy. He derived his public name, al-Mu'tamid 'alā-Llāh (he who trusts in God) from his wife's name, I'timād ("trust").

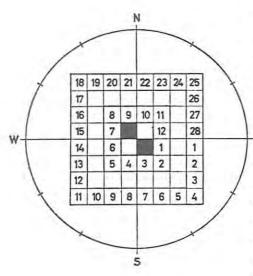
He was not an idle ruler for he succeeded, partly by cunning and partly by force, in annexing the city of Córdoba and the surrounding country to his empire. As a result of this undertaking he lost one of his sons. He had appointed him regent of Córdoba, and he was killed during a attack upon the city. His blood-soaked corpse remained lying in the street, and an unknown man, a religious reader (*imām*) judging by his appearance, covered him with his own coat. "Woe to me," exclaimed al-Mu'tamid in a poem, "I do not know who it was that wrapped my son in his shroud. All I do know is that it was a kind and noble man!" Coming as it did in the midst of a life of convivial banquets and literary feasts, this tragic loss was like a warning of events that lay ahead.

Something was amiss in the flourishing Abbadid empire. Unknowingly, the prince had somehow lost the confidence of the people. Probably too much money was being spent on the court, on poets and guests, and on tributes being paid to Castile, and too little expended on the defense of the country. When in 1078 Alfonso VI advanced upon the Abbadid empire at the head of a huge army, clearly intent on capturing it, the people of Seville despaired and immediately thought themselves lost.

Ibn 'Ammār, the vizier, whom al-Mu'tamid entrusted with the most difficult undertakings, once again saved the day by a ruse. He had an outstandingly beautiful chessboard made, with figures of ebony, aloe and sandalwood, inlaid with gold. When al-Mu'tamid sent him to meet Alfonso, he took this chessboard with him. When he arrived at the army camp, he was received with full honors, for the Christian King had heard a great deal about him, and believed him to be one of the most capable men in the whole of Spain. Ibn 'Ammār made sure that the magnificent chessboard was seen by several of the royal attendants; so that the King, with whom chess was a passion, came to hear about it. Thus it happened that the vizier showed the King this marvel, and also declared himself prepared to play on it with him, provided the King agreed to the following conditions: if Ibn 'Ammār were to lose, then the board and the figures would become the property of the King; however, if the King lost, then he would have to grant the vizier a wish. Eager as he was to own the splendid chessboard, Alfonso paled, for he could not accept such a wager. However, several courtiers, who had been suitably bribed by Ibn 'Ammar, encouraged the King, saying, "If you win, you will gain the finest chessboard ever possessed by a king, and should you lose, why then we are here to put the Moor in his place, in case he should make some outrageous request." So it was that Alfonso allowed himself to be persuaded to play. However, Ibn 'Ammar, who was a champion at the game, reduced him to checkmate.

The expression, "checkmate," comes from the Persian-Arabic *ash-shāh māt* and means, "the king is dead." Shāh is a Persian word for king. Accordingly, the game of chess, which the Arabs took over from the Persians and passed on through the whole of Europe, is the "king's game," not only because it centers round the figure of the king, but because its entire structure is a simile of what may be termed the art of kingship — a mathematical equation revealing the inner connection between freedom of action and the inevitability of fate.

The chessboard represents the world. It originated in India, and corresponds to a *mandala*, a simplified representation of the cosmic cycles, which are reproduced



in a geometrical scheme on the chessboard. The four center squares of the chessboard represent the four basic phases of all cycles, ages as well as seasons. The squares immediately surrounding them correspond to the orbit of the sun, or the twelve signs of the zodiac, while the outer rim of squares represent the twentyeight houses of the moon. The alternatives of black and white is like that of day and night. The whole square board, which the Indians call *ashtāpada*, with its squares of eight by eight, is a "congelation" of the cosmic movements, which unfold in time — it is the world.

The figures that are moved about on this diagram of the world represent two armies, thus turning the board into a battlefield. Originally, it was no doubt intended as a cosmic field of battle on which the *devas* and the *asūras*, the angels and the demons, fought one another. But for the Arabs, to whom the game had come by way of the Persians, it simply represented the two armies known to medieval warfare.

The figures and the rules of the game have changed little since the time when Ibn 'Ammār played against Alfonso VI. The figure which today represents the queen was then the vizier. In Persian it was known as *fersan*, which became *ferza* in Castilian, *fierce* in Provençal, and finally became *vierge* (virgin) in French. In the oriental game the bishops were elephants. Together with the knights and the castles, they represented the armored troops, while the pawns were the foot-soldiers that stood in the front line.

In 1254 the King of France, later Saint Louis, had forbidden chess to be played by his subjects. (It was usually played for money.) But about the year 1283, Alfonso the Wise, the tenth Castilian king of that name, made a study of Arabic sources, and explained the rules of chess and related board games in his book *Libros de Acedrex*, written in Romance. The symbolism of the chessboard, and its significance as a symbol of the universe emerge quite plainly in the so-called "Game of the Four Seasons." The latter is a game in which four different groups of figures, distinguished by the colors of the seasons, the elements or bodily humours, move round in a circle fighting each other.

The spread of chess from Persia by way of the Arab lands to Spain, then through Provence right into central Europe is like the trail of chivalry, which flourished first in Islamic Persia, and then in Moorish Spain. In effect, chess is rather like a "treatise on statecraft," which covers the entire military situation from the standpoint of princes and knights alike. For the player learns to curb his passion. The apparently unlimited range of possibilities open to him before each move provided he has not been driven into a corner — must not lead him to overlook the fact that any false choice will gradually reduce his room to maneuver. This is the law of action, the law of the world, and freedom depends very largely upon knowledge of this law and upon wisdom.

When the defeated king asked Ibn 'Ammār to name his request, the latter asked him to withdraw his army from the frontiers of the kingdom of Seville. Alfonso swallowed his anger, and, turning to his followers, he said, "This is exactly what I feared, and it is your doing." He had no alternative but to keep his word, all the more since his courtiers insisted that he should. In this way Seville was saved once again.

"Ibn 'Ammār am I, known to everyone To whom sun and moon are known. No wonder that my own time has neglected me — Marginal notes capture the essence of books."

Success went to Ibn 'Ammār's head. He began to act autocratically. In order to commit Count Ramón Berenguer II of Barcelona into joining him in a campaign against the principality of Murcia, he promised him ten thousand ducats from al-Mu'tamid's treasury, and in addition offered the King's son, Rashid, as a pledge. When the money was not forthcoming within the agreed period, Ramon took the Prince captive, and demanded a ransom of thirty thousand ducats. In spite of everything, al-Mu'tamid forgave his friend, after he had humbled himself in a poem. But later, after Ibn 'Ammār had succeeded in taking Murcia, and was accepting homage as if he were sole ruler, al-Mu'tamid began to grow suspicious. Once again, the adventurer sought pardon in a poem. Not long after, however, he launched a campaign against the King of Valencia on his own initiative by challenging the Valencians in a series of grandiloquent poems, to rebel against their king. This enraged al-Mu'tamid, and he let Ibn 'Ammār sense his anger by holding the latter's literary challenges to Valencia up to ridicule. Ibn 'Ammār was now provoked into displaying the baser side of his character and wrote a scurrilous poem about al-Mu'tamid and Rumaikiya. Thereupon, much to his surprise, he found himself outside the gates of Valencia, ejected by his own favorite, Ibn Rashik, who had risen against him. He had no choice but to take flight, and went to seek refuge with Alfonso VI, who had once held such a high opinion of him. But the Christian King, who had never forgotten his defeat in the game of chess, coldshouldered him, and remarked contemptuously, "You are just a pack of thieves. The first thief (meaning al-Mu'tamid) was robbed by the second (Ibn 'Ammār), and he in turn was robbed by the third (Ibn Rashik)." So Ibn 'Ammār took flight again, until he was given protection by the Prince of Saragossa, al-Mu'tamin. Meanwhile Alfonso had sent the knight Rodrigo Diaz to the Prince of Seville, in order to collect the customary tribute. At the same time, his ensign and protégé, García Ordóñez and a large retinue of knights were on a visit to the Prince of Granada, 'Abd-Allāh, the Zirid, who likewise owed the Castilian King tribute. However, 'Abd-Allah and al-Mu'tamid were enemies, as the former headed the Berbers in Andalusia, while the latter represented the Arab faction. As a favor to 'Abd-Allāh, Ordóñez and his knights helped the Granadan Berbers to invade Sevillian territory, which obliged the Cid to come to the aid of al-Mu'tamid, his

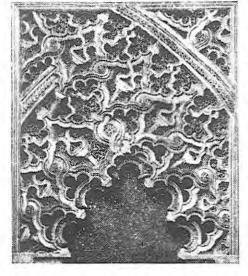
king's "vassal." He wrote to the Prince of Granada and the Castilian knights, urging that in deference to his master, Emperor Alfonso, they should halt their campaign. When this failed, he advanced on them with his own small following, defeated them, and took García Ordóñez prisoner. Having humiliated him, he then set him free. His reputation with the Arabs soared sky-high. Al-Mu'tamid showered him with honors, and handed him the tribute for Alfonso together with many gifts. Ordóñez, however, hurried to blacken him in the eyes of the King.

There is something quite unique and precious in the friendly encounter between these two chivalrous figures, al-Mu'tamid and the Cid. Unlike the Abbadid the Cid was no poet, and he did not rule over such a distinguished literary world. Yet he was every bit his equal in manly valor. While the Arab was endowed with all the refinements of the *adab*, comprising courteousness, tact, and a feeling for ethical values, the Castilian, for his part, was no mere sword brandisher. His every thought and deed were governed by justice as it was expressed in the *fuero juzgo*, the semi-Roman, semi-Germanic law of Northern Spain, in which he was an expert. Thus on the one side there was Arab nobility with all its passion, suffused with the spirit of Islam, and on the other was Germanic valor, softened by Latin form and Christian piety.

Two years later, in 1081, the Cid, and his entire *mesnada*, that is, his household and his own feudal tenants, were banished from their homeland for no apparent reason. According to contemporary practice, he would now have been free to ally himself with the enemies of his former lord, but instead he decided to remain loyal to Alfonso. In search of a new master, he went first to Barcelona, to Count Ramón Berenguer, the "flaxen-haired," who turned him away, and then to Muktadir ben Hūd in Saragossa, who received him warmly, as the Cid was the very man he needed to keep at bay his different neighbors, the Princes of Aragón, Navarre, and Barcelona, all of whom were intent on making Saragossa a tributepaying vassal state. Here the Cid would serve the needs of Castile.

After Seville, Saragossa had the largest and most scintillating court in the whole of eleventh-century Moorish Spain. Abū Dja'far al-Muktadir ben Hūd had surrounded himself with Muslim and Jewish scholars, and had himself written works on philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics. He also built the palace, which is known by the Spanish version of his own first name - Aljafería, the remnants of which, only a few ornamental arches, represent the most important example of Moorish art in that century. These arches are an obvious development of the interlacing, denticulated arches built in the Mosque of Córdoba in the time of Hakam II. The idea of rhythmic interlacing is taken much further here, so that the lines appear to whirl and spin. It conveys the impression of having reached the farthest frontiers of expression, an almost baroque excess, threatening to descend into decadence. Yet from the ornamental details, the delicate tendrils and tracery, inscribed in the arches, the first blooms of that strictly geometric ornamental style emerge, which was to reach its height in the Alhambra. Taken as a whole, the Aljafería probably represents the most fragile and uncertain phase of Moorish art, which is appropriate to the situation of this royal court, in which there was constant philosophizing and versifying, while Christian soldiers were left to keep the Christian foes at bay.

1081 was also the year in which al-Muktadir died, and his oldest son, al-Mu'tamin succeeded him on the throne of Saragossa. At about this time the faithless Ibn



Detail from an arch in the Aljafería. This is probably the most restless, over-decorated and cerebral work in the entire history of Islamic art.

'Ammār must have crossed the path of the Cid in Saragossa, although history has made no mention of it.

Meanwhile a new envoy of the Castilian King arrived in Seville to exact the tribute — Ben Shālib, the Jew, who upbraided al-Mu'tamid for using inferior gold in his coins, and issued so many threats that the Abbadid had him executed then and there, and his followers thrown in prison. To Alfonso VI this meant war. He assembled an army of Galicians, Castilians and Basques, and having ravaged the frontier territories of the kingdom of Seville, advanced right through into Andalusia as far as Cape Tarifa. On reaching the sea, he drove his horse into the waves, with the words, "This is the farthest outpost of Spain, and I have subjugated it." He did not think of the ruler of the Almoravides, whose mighty army was assembling to face him just across the straits.

In Saragossa, Ibn 'Ammār had pledged himself to put down several insurgent feudal lords for al-Mu'tamīn. The first time he succeeded by cunning; having enticed the beleaguered men out to parley, he had them taken prisoner. On the second occasion, however, it was he who fell into the trap. The lord of the Segura fortress offered him to the highest bidder, and the highest bidder turned out to be al-Mu'tamid. Ibn 'Ammār was brought back to Seville in chains and thrown into prison. Once more he attempted to soften his former master and friend with a poem. But al-Mu'tamid no longer trusted Ibn 'Ammār; his treachery had left too deep a scar in the heart of the Abbadid. Yet the Prince was moved. Exploiting his powers of guile, the old adventurer thereupon began to spin a web around Mu'tamid's son and heir. When the King learned of this, he tore his battle axe from the wall, rushed into the prison, where Ibn 'Ammār still lay in chains, and embedded the weapon in his skull. "He has made a *hoopoe* [a crested bird] of Ibn 'Ammār,' remarked Rumaikiya, jesting gruesomely. She had been avenged.

Meanwhile other troubles were closing in. Alfonso had put pressure on the King of Toledo, al-Kādir, for so long that the latter now left the town. This was in 1085. The Christian armies now advanced all along the River Tajo. Alfonso now called himself "Imperator Toletanus" and claimed the entire legacy of the Visigothic kings.

At the surrender of Toledo, it had been agreed that Alfonso should respect the rights of the Muslim population. The one-time cathedral of Toledo, which had been turned into a mosque, would continue to belong to the Muslims. This was not what happened, for once the King left the city, the Christians took possession of the mosque. When Alfonso learned of this, he stormed back in a rage. But as he reached the gates of the city, he was met by a Muslim lawyer named Abū-l-Wālid, who urged him in the name of his co-religionists to let the Christians have the mosque, so as not to arouse hatred against the Muslims. A medieval statue of this lawyer can still be seen in the Cathedral of Toledo.

Alfonso now made deep inroads into Andalusia. In order to win over the people, he let it be known everywhere that he would expect his Muslim subjects to pay no other taxes apart from the one tenth laid down by the Koran as the poor-rate. He was well aware that the Moorish princes tended to impose excessive taxes — and the tribute he had been demanding had been partially responsible. At the same time, he compelled those Andalusian princes who had submitted to his sovereignty to accept Castilian governors at their side. When this demand was put to al-Mu'tamid, while Alfonso referred to himself as "ruler of peoples of both religions," the latter rebelled, and dissociated himself from the Christian King. For some time now the Muslim population of Spain had been looking towards Africa, where the Almoravides were endeavoring to restore the original purity of the Islamic law. Muslim jurists from all areas assembled in Córdoba and agreed to approach the commander of the Almoravides, Yūsuf ben Tāshufin, for assistance against the Christians. The Andalusian Princes were now in danger of being anticipated by a popular uprising. Al-Mu'tamid, who had been exchanging letters with Yūsuf ben Tāshufin for years, consulted the Princes of Granada and Badajóz, and together they sent envoys to the Almoravid ruler. They pressed him to come immediately to Spain with his army, and offered themselves as allies, on condition that he did not encroach upon their own sovereign rights in Andalusia.

This was a critical move that led to a succession of events, and it tied the destiny of the Spanish Muslims once and for all to that of their North African co-religionists. When al-Mu'tamid's eldest son advised his father to follow Alfonso, rather than to bring the intolerant, barbarian Almoravides to Spain, he answered him, "I do not want to be held responsible for handing Andalusia over to the Christians . . . I do not want to be vilified from all the pulpits of Islam. If I have to choose, I would rather tend camels for the Almoravides, than pasture swine under the Christians."

The Almoravides incorporated the one human element that was missing in Moorish Spain. They were nomads from the depths of the Sahara, warlike, hardy and strict in their observance of the Koranic precepts. Ethnically, they were Berbers of the Ṣinhājā tribe, and, like their cousins, the Tuareg, they had the distinctive custom of veiling their faces — that is to say, the men wore the veil, not the women. Their movement originated from a *ribāt*, a kind of fortified convent, which had been founded on an island in the Niger, by a Moroccan ascetic called 'Abd-Allāh ben Yāsīn. Such fortresses were to be found along the whole frontier between the Muslim and the non-Muslim world. As a rule, the garrison of a *ribāt* consisted of volunteers who divided their time between waging the "holy war" and engaging in spiritual exercise. They were known as *al-murābitūn*, which in Spanish became *almoravides*. In the singular, this same Arabic word, *al-marbūt*, reappears in the French word *marabout* for a Muslim ascetic, evidence of the religious role played by the *ribāt* inhabitants of the Sahara until very recent times.

'Abd-Allāh ben Yāsīn had won over the nobility of the Ṣinhājā to his cause, and through them had turned the nomadic tribes, hitherto only superficially affected by Islam, into devout Muslims, strictly observing the Koranic law. United in this manner, the Sahara tribes in all their strength now came up against the hostile attitude of the Zenāta Berbers in the north. "Holy War" ensued, with the result that the whole of northwest Africa, from Agadir to Algiers was subdued by the Almoravides. This event is the classic example of Ibn Khaldūn's theory, that, united by a spiritual mission, the nomads can become founders of great empires. Yusūf ben Tāshufīn was the third commander of the Almoravides. He founded Marrakesh, and governed the lands known to us today as Senegal (the name is thought to derive from Ṣinhājā), Morocco and Algeria. He is supposed to have been a devout and very moderate man. That he possessed great gifts of statesmanship is self-evident.

On June 30th, 1086, the army of the Almoravides landed in Algeciras. Al-Mu'tamid and the Prince of Badajóz, al-Mutawakkil, welcomed Yūsuf ben Tāshufīn, and added their troops to his.

At this time, Alfonso stood outside Saragossa. He immediately assembled his troops, asked all his Christian neighbors for help, and marched against the Almoravides. The two hostile armies finally met in *Zallaka* (Sagrajas), near Badajóz. To begin with, Yūsuf let the Andalusians fight on their own in the front line. It was subsequently said that he was pleased to watch their ranks shrink. Al-Mu'tamid himself fought bravely, and was wounded several times. In the middle of the battle, he remembered his youngest small son, Abū Hāshim, who was sick at home in Seville, and was prompted to compose this verse:

"Swords hacked me about, Abū Hāshim;

Thank God I am constant in the horrors of war.

Amidst the uproar of battle, I remembered your frail body,

But even my love for you would not permit me to flee."

Only when the Andalusians could no longer hold off the onslaught of the Castilian knights, did Yūsuf enter the fray with his own troops.

Hitherto the strength of the Christian armies had always been the heavy cavalry, "clad in iron," which broke through the enemy ranks. The Arabs had favored light cavalry, armed with spears and leather shields, which though swift and maneuverable, could not withstand the iron men. On this occasion Alfonso once again penetrated the enemy ranks with his knights, but this did not help him much, for the ranks that parted before him, closed up again behind his back. Furthermore, Yūsuf brought in Turkish archers, whose great, strong bows sent a flood of arrows raining down on horses and riders. The African troops, the Sinhājā, went into the attack to the hollow boom of drums which made the air and ground quiver. Finally, Yūsuf threw his black guard into the fray, armed with long swords and shields of hippopotamus hide. They opened up a path all the way to the Christian king, who was wounded. Only the darkness of the night enabled Alfonso and a few hundred knights to escape annihilation. Eighty thousand horsemen and twenty thousand foot soldiers of the Christian army are said to have been killed, according to the Muslim chronicles. Up to that time, engagements between the Christian and Muslim Spaniards had been of a political rather than a religious nature. Now it was a matter of whether Spain should be ruled by Islam or by Christianity.

Yūsuf ben Tāshufīn did not exploit his victory by any further conquests in Spain. He put 3,000 horsemen at the disposal of the Andalusian princes, and withdrew to Africa. But Alfonso turned to the Christian kings on either side of the Pyrenees, and bade them come to his aid. He now found it expedient to effect a reconciliation with the Cid, who all this time had been defending the kingdom of Saragossa against Christian and Muslim attackers. The Cid had always remained loyal to his one-time master, on whose instructions he now advanced upon Valencia, aided by the Banū-Hud of Saragossa. Meanwhile, another of the King's men, García Jiménez, was holding the fortress of Aledo in the vicinity of Murcia with 12,000 men, and from there he raided the eastern provinces of Seville, plundering and burning in his path. In vain, al-Mu'tamid tried to cope with this enemy, but the fortress remained impenetrable. The harrassed population began to grow restive. At this point al-Mu'tamid himself set off for Morocco, and asked Yūsuf ben Tāshufīn to hurry to the aid of the Andalusians once again.



A dinar (gold coin) of the Almoravid period, minted in Algeciras, between 1113-1114.

> Yūsuf crossed to Spain in June 1089, and his army was joined by the troops of the Princes of Seville, Granada, Malaga, Almería, and Murcia, for the assault of Aledo. At this time differences arose between individual Andalusian leaders. One denounced the other to the Almoravid ruler, and when he decided in favor of al-Mu'tamid and against ar-Rāshik of Murcia, the latter's forces left the camp and cut the army off from its supplies of food. Meanwhile Alfonso approached with a relief army. Yūsuf had no intention of engaging him with a divided and weakened army, and withdrew, enraged, to Almería and from there back to Morocco.

> Alfonso had sent a message to the Cid, who was holding Valencia, that he should join him on the way to Aledo. Accordingly Rodrigo set out with his warriors in search of the King, but did not meet him, as Alfonso had taken a different route from the one agreed. People were quick to slander the Cid, saying that he had deliberately avoided the King, and in revenge the latter threw the Cid's wife, Doña Jimena and her three children into prison. In spite of this, Rodrigo Díaz still remained loyal to the Castilian kingdom. He alone succeeded in stemming the flow



Almoravid rule in Spain at the death of Alfonso VI.

of the Almoravides by making Valencia an impenetrable bastion when the Almoravides returned. Yūsuf ben Tāshufin had decided to depose the Andalusian Kings, some of whom had left him in the lurch at Toledo. His resolve was strengthened by the complaints of the Andalusian population and the judgment of some of the greatest lawyers of the time. The Andalusian Princes, of Granada and Málaga in particular, had forfeited their right to rule through the laxity of their ways and extortionate taxation of their subjects. In 1090 Yūsuf landed once again in Spain, and his first act was to depose the Princes of Granada and Málaga. Seeing that he would be the next victim of the Almoravides, al-Mu'tamid hastened to put his country in a state of defense, and at the same time attempted to renew his alliance with Alfonso VI. Until then Yūsuf ben Tāshufin had always been bound by his agreement to honor al-Mu'tamid's rights, but when one of the Andalusian King's messages to Alfonso fell into the hands of the Almoravides, he finally felt justified in having al-Mu'tamid outlawed, and declared war on him. One by one the strongholds of the Seville empire fell, some by force, and others because the population was increasingly turning away from their king and going over to the Almoravides. At the capture of Córdoba, another of al-Mu'tamid's sons met his death. On this occasion, the Cid had joined the Castilian army, and for a short while the King was reconciled with him. But it was not to last, for Alfonso could not endure the way in which the Cid's reputation overshadowed his own. Meanwhile the Almoravides were closing in on Seville. Even before the city was stormed

there was an uprising from within, which took al-Mu'tamid by surprise. He rode out of his palace, clad only in a light tunic and brandishing a sword, and cut to pieces the first insurgent to confront him and put the remainder to flight. That same evening, however, the siege began and did not cease until the Berbers stormed through a breach in the fortifications and sacked the city. Al-Mu'tamid, who defended his citadel heroically, finally had to surrender in order to spare the lives of his dependents. He and his entire family were deported to Aghmat in the High Atlas, where he lived out his life as a captive. The poet, Ibn al-Labbānah of Denia, describes how the people of Seville thronged the banks in lamentation, as the royal family was led onto the boat:

> "Never can I forget that throng by the river, As they loaded them on to the ship, like corpses into the grave, Along both banks the people crowded to see those pearls Propelled along on the foam of the river. Maidens absently let fall their veils, There was a rending of faces and garments alike. The moment came — the tumult of farewells, With maidens and youths shouting in rivalry. To the accompaniment of sighs, the ships moved off, Like a sluggish caravan goaded on by the driver's singing.

Ah, many the tears that fell in the water!

Many the broken hearts those unrelenting boats took with them!"

When al-Mu'tamid arrived in Tangier, he was sought out by the poets of the land, and he gave them the last of his money, soaked in his blood, which he had hidden in one of his boots. All the suffering and agony of his captivity did not prevent him from writing verse; indeed, his finest and most profound poems stem from this time of distress. After he was put in chains he wrote:

> "Strange that these irons do not glow And singe the hands of these villains, For fear of him, upon whose grace Courageous men depended, and whose sword Sent some to heaven and some to hell!"

Looking back on his life, he wrote:

"All things come to an end, Even death itself dies the death of things. Destiny is chameleon-colored, Its very essence is transformation. In its hands we are like a game of chess, And the king may be lost for the sake of a pawn. So shake off the world, and find repose, For earth turns to desert, and men die. Say to this lowly world: The secret of the higher world lies hidden at Aghmat . . ." The Almoravides captured the whole of Andalusia. They penetrated almost as far as Toledo in the north, and eastward to Valencia. But the Cid held this city, governing the Christians according to Visigothic law, and the Muslims according to the Koran, and he stopped the Almoravides from advancing any further.

Al-Mu'tamid died in 1095 in Aghmat, the Cid in 1099 in Valencia, Yūsuf ben Tāshufin lived until 1106, and the last to die, in 1109, was Alfonso VI, who towards the end of his life had to endure one defeat after another.

IX The Philosophical Outlook

The Arab philosophers - and this includes all those whose works were written in Arabic - have often been accused with having inextricably woven Platonic elements into the Aristotelian heritage, which they passed on to the Christian West, as if by so doing they were guilty of misrepresentation. In reality, this "mingling" for which they are censured, represents a splendid work of adaptation, a synthesis in the true sense of the word without which the intellectual flowering of the Christian Middle Ages would have been inconceivable. The fertile union of intellectual discipline and contemplative spirit, for which the schools of Paris, Chartres, Oxford, and Strasbourg - to name but a few - were renowned in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is largely the outcome of that very same "mingling" found in the works of the Arab al-Kindi, and the Persians al-Fārābi (Alpharabius) and Ibn Sinā (Avicenna), and their Spanish successors, such as Ibn Gabirol (Avicebron) and Ibn Bājja (Avempace). All these philosophers combined the strictly methodical thought of Aristotle, proceeding from premise to premise, with the contemplative Platonic approach which was directed immediately to the essence of things.

Obviously the Arab scholars were sometimes mistaken about the authorship of Greek doctrines. But what concerned the philosophers named above was not so much the question of which writings should be attributed to Plato or to Aristotle, as from which viewpoint one master or the other reasoned. For the Arabs were convinced that the great sages of antiquity did not simply construct a system of ideas, but that they set out from an immediate view of reality, so that any contradictions were simply like one and the same scene painted by two different artists. If we are familiar with the subject of the painting, it is possible to reconcile the apparent discrepancies of the different renderings. It was possible for the Arab scholars to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with that of Plato, because they themselves possessed a firm axis to which they could refer all fundamental views of reality. This axis was the doctrine of the oneness of God. Moreover, this doctrine had two facets: on the one hand it maintains that God is unique and exalted above the entire universe, and, on the other, it implies that everything that exists necessarily partakes of divine being. There is only one being. Thus although plurality springs from oneness, it never supplants it. There are manifold reflections of the one being, in that it appears by degrees increasingly fragmented, limited, and ephemeral and yet it still always remains one. The Arabs took the outlines of this doctrine largely from the metaphysics of Plotinus, although in essence it is set out in the Koran.

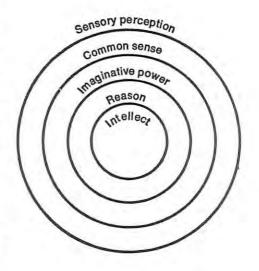
One fundamental ingredient of this doctrine is the hierarchical structure of the universe. Plurality in oneness and oneness in multiplicity — this is the law of hierarchy.

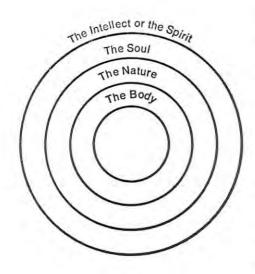
An awareness that reality embraces countless different levels of existence was common to all the cultures of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, whether this was expressed in mythological form or in terms of philosophy. That the whole of reality should consist of the physical world which can be comprehended by our five senses is a very recent concept, and one which is basically contradicted by any knowledge of oneself. For man readily discovers that the "stuff," as it were, of which his soul is made is different from that of his body, and that for all its ties to the physical world, it possesses qualities that the body does not have, such as perception, thought, and independent action. Endowed with these faculties, the soul is not, however, the only non-physical condition of human existence. For the soul, with its constant changes, is itself an object of recognition, and this presupposes that there is something like an inner eye that sees the soul, while itself remaining constant. This is the intellect in the medieval acceptance of the word. To try and comprehend it would be as hopeless as an attempt to see one's own power of vision. It transcends thought, yet it lends all possible certainty to thought. All rational evidence would be nothing without the truths that are a direct "illumination" from the intellect. The medieval philosophers refer to the "active intellect" (intellectus agens in Latin, al-'akl al-fa'-āl in Arabic), because the intellect consists, as it were of the pure act of recognition, and never itself becomes the passive object of perception.

For man, the soul is his inner being, and the intellect is the innermost part of that inner being. The physical world "outside" him is, so to speak, received and transformed into something "inward" by the sensory organs and the corresponding mental powers. Common sense, the *sensus communis*, collates the external impressions, imagination translates them into images, the intelligence sifts and presents them to the intellect, which makes the final distinction between true and false. Accordingly, the various conditions or layers of the human nature can be thought of in terms of a varying number of concentric circles, with the outer circle corresponding to the physical condition, and the center to the intellect.

The advantage of this formula, which was well-known to medieval philosophers, and to which we shall return later, is that it illustrates the order of basic realities in the simplest way. However, its limitations, and its partial fallacy are immediately evident in that the very element representing supra-personal and universal truth — namely the intellect — appears as the smallest thing — a mere point. The reason for this is that the entire scheme with its differentiation between "external" and "internal" is determined by an egocentric or "subjective" outlook. As the object of perception, the physical world appears comprehensive to subjective experience, while the intellect, which is to the physical world as the source of light is to an illuminated room, appears as an elusive, unseeable point.

But taking the different levels of reality, as revealed in man, not in their subjective role, but in their actual existence, it becomes plain that the higher level must





include the lower, that which perceives must include the perceived, the universal must include the personal, and the free the less free. The applied formula can in fact be reversed — so that the intellect then corresponds to the outer circle in the diagram, because in its perception it encompasses everything (not in any spatial sense), just as the soul with its consciousness and its mental powers encompasses the body. This is the sense in which this system of concentric circles, one encompassing the next, was equally applied by the medieval philosophers. They saw in it not only a reflection of the essential structure of man, but of the entire universe, for the various stages of reality existed before the individual beings that share in it. Were the physical world not fundamentally, and by nature of its existence, included in the psychical world, there would be no perception, and the impressions that we receive of the external world would merely be so many random coincidences. And if the physical as well as the psychical world were not encompassed by the intellect, then there would be no universally valid recognition that surpasses the individual. Thus we may refer not only to a physical universe, but also to a psychical and an intellectual universe, and to one encompassing another in metaphorical terms.

In this context it is appropriate to mention the Jewish philosopher, Solomon ben Gabirol, who lived in the first half of the eleventh century, and appears in Spain as one of the first followers of Avicenna. In his book, "The Fountain of Life," he makes a pupil ask his teacher why the sages often represent spiritual substances as circles or spheres, as such figures are peculiar to physical objects alone. The teacher replies that this is a symbol of the relationship between cause and effect or of knowing and being known. He then gives the pupil the following examples and in order to understand them it is necessary to know that the medieval philosophers considered nature as the motive power between the body and soul -: "Observe the power of nature, and you will find that it encompasses the body, because it affects it, and the body is subject to nature, so that it is, as it were, enveloped by nature. Consider, too, the vegetative soul, and you will find that it has an effect upon nature and dominates it, and that nature is enveloped by this soul and is subject to its action. Then, too, consider the rational soul and the intellect. Both the one and the other embrace all the substances subordinate to them, by knowing them, penetrating and dominating them. This applies especially to the intellect, which is finer and more perfect than all else.

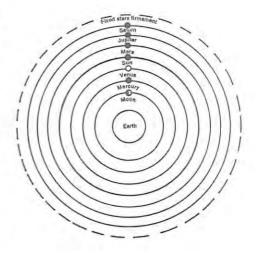
"Proceeding from these qualities peculiar to the individual human being, you will gather that the universal properties likewise exist within one another, in the sense that the soul incorporates the body, and the intellect, the soul — for the lower quality is embraced by the loftier one, which supports and knows it. The universal soul embraces the entire physical world (that is to say, it supports its existence within in its own existence). It forms a visual image of everything within it, and sees it in much the same way that our own particular souls, each with its own corresponding body, imagine their body to be, and see all that is in them. Even more all-embracing is the universal intellect, because of its perfection, its capacity to display itself (in everything) and because of the nobility of its nature. Hence you will also comprehend how the first, sublime and holy Creator (of the world) knows all things, and how they are contained in his omniscience . . ."

In these same metaphorical terms, the infinite space surrounding the outer circle on our diagram, corresponds to divine knowledge. The outermost circle is itself the universal intellect, and the circles inscribed within it represent the universal soul and the entire physical world. In accordance with the teaching of Plotinus, universal nature is frequently inserted between the universal soul, which comprises the individual souls as the sea contains the waves, and the totality of the physical world. It is to the purely physical condition, as is motivity to inert matter.

The totality of physical existence is somehow designated by the all-encompassing celestial sphere. But within this, the hierarchy of different levels of existence is again repeated in the form of the planetary spheres, as they appear from earth. In this context Ibn Gabirol says: "Just as in its essence and form physical existence mirrors spiritual existence, so the enveloping nature of spiritual qualities corresponds to a physical envelopment, since the lower level is always an imitation of the higher one . . . Thus it may be said of the spiritual substance that it embraces the physical, because — by nature of its existence — the latter exists within it, in much the same way that all bodies exist within the one body of the firmament"

This calls to mind Dante's description of the heavenly spheres, and with reason, for in both there is the same vision of the cosmos that goes back through Avicenna to Plato, and even further. The orbits of the planets, which from the earth appear to move in ever-widening circles, offer a natural illustration of the levels of existence. The astronomic heavens do not themselves constitute these levels, but correspond to them, because physical existence, as Ibn Gabirol says, reflects spiritual existence; and Dante means the same thing, when he says: "The physical orbits are wider or narrower, according to the measure of virtue distributed in all its parts . . . Therefore the greatest orbit, that includes the whole great universe, corresponds to the (spiritual) cycle that loves and recognizes most of all" (Paradiso XXVIII. 64–72).

The validity of this symbol does not depend on whether or not this geocentric view of the world, shared by Dante and the Arab philosophers, was scientifically accurate. It is sufficient that it corresponds to a general human experience. Obviously, the assumption that the earth stands still and the planets revolve around it in greater or smaller orbits is based upon an optical illusion. However, this fallacy is, to some extent, inherent in the nature of man — it merely proves that our sensory perceptions are limited and no "exact" science, however advanced, will overcome this — something of an optical illusion will always cling. Yet the more profound meaning of this geocentric view of the world is in its very symbolism. If the divine spirit envelops this world, not spatially, but by virtue of its own existence, then it is no fallacy to compare it with the all-embracing starless heaven, where even space comes to an end. And if this image is valid, then it is also true to regard the hierarchical order of the planets that appear to revolve



in ever-widening orbits, as an illustration of the supra-terrestrial states of existence or consciousness. It is no coincidence that the planets are not only a source of light, but also a measure of time.

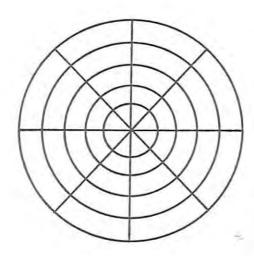
There is a profound reason why this symbol of the universe, represented by the diagram of concentric circles, can be "read" in two opposing and complementary ways. In one sense the outer circle, or rather everything outside it, stands for the ultimate reality, or, alternatively, the center of all the circles represents the divine origin. Both "readings" or interpretations are equally valid for, in effect, pure existence is both that which contains all, as well as being the unfathomable center of all things, but expressed in spatial terms this inevitably sounds contradictory.

Taking the diagram in its "theocentric" sense, and comparing the center (of the circles) with the 'unexpanded' divine origin, then we have an illustration in the simplest terms of the difference between Aristotelian and Platonic thought. It is Aristotelian to consider each of the different circles, or that which they represent, as separate entities, and that makes the center, too, separate from the rest. The Platonic view instead is to consider the analogies which link all the different levels of reality. In visual terms this may be expressed by sending rays or radii out from this center to intersect all the circles. All points on the same radius, on whatever circle they are situated, are thus related; they are like traces of the same essence on different levels of existence.

From this it may be inferred that Aristotelian thought applies chiefly to the logical order or continuity of a certain level of existence, while the Platonic view is to observe the symbolic character of a thing, through which it is connected vertically, to realities of higher planes. The two views can readily be reconciled, provided their differences are borne in mind. It is upon this that the Aristotelian-Platonic syntheses of philosophers like Ibn Sinā or Ibn Bājja are based.

The concentric circles can exist in varying numbers, and the division into the worlds of spirits, souls and bodies, based upon the inner structure of man, is only the simplest one. The world of the soul alone comprises innumerable levels of being or consciousness, and likewise the world of the intellect or spirit can also be subdivided into many levels, even if these cannot be defined verbally, for the differences within this world cannot be assessed in numerical terms.

Similarly, the numbers of the rays, radiating outwards from the center and intersecting the circles, may vary. Understood in terms of the rays of a single light, this light is no less than the universal or first intellect (*intellectus primus, al-'akl alawwal*), which, emanating from its divine source, illumines all levels of existence, and is reflected in more or less diffused form at every level. This, however, is a fundamental feature of Platonic thought, as comprehended and developed further by the Islamic philosophers. The intellect, that activates all perception, illumines all consciousness, and is revealed in varying degress in every form of understanding, is one and the same. The individual souls are multitudinous and different, but not so the intellect, even though it is reflected in different ways. The Islamic philo-



sophers, even those closest to Aristotle, such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes), to whom we shall return later, all support this doctrine of the essential oneness of the intellect.

The philosopher, Ibn as-Seyid of Badajóz (1052—1127) writes of the universal soul: "The level of existence of this soul is included in the horizon of the active (universal) intellect, which embraces it on all sides, in the same way that it embraces the totality of the heavenly spheres (that is to say the totality of the physical world). It can thus be defined by two circles, according to the philosophers, even if only figuratively, since spiritual qualities cannot be qualified spatially. An outer circle touches on the all-embracing sphere of the intellect, and an inner circle surrounds the center of the world. Stretching between these two circles is a connecting line, which the philosophers call the "ladder of ascent," for it is by means of this that divine inspiration reaches the pure individual souls. Angels descend by it, and the pure spirits ascend to the higher world . . ."

This image of the ladder, with angels descending and spirits ascending, is an indication that the Islamic and kindred Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages did not merely regard philosophy as a mental discipline. The goal of wisdom (*hikma*), to which the philosopher (*hakim*) aspired, was union with the "active intellect" (*al-akl al-fa' 'āl*), which exceeds transitory existence. Two philosophers — Ibn Bājja (Avempace), who was born at the end of the eleventh century in Saragossa and died in Fez in 1138, and Ibn Țufayl, who lived in the 12th century and came from Cadiz — attempted to describe the spiritual ascent of wisdom.

At this point, let us turn back to an earlier Spanish-Islamic philosopher, Mohammed Ibn Masarra, who, strictly speaking, was not a philosopher but a master of Islamic gnosis, or mystical knowledge. He lived from 883 to 931. From a very early age he had attracted a following of disciples, and consequently aroused the suspicion of the theologians from whom he fled by setting out on a journey to the east. He returned during the reign of the first Spanish Caliph, 'Abd ar-Rahmān III, and spent the rest of his life in a hermitage in the Sierra de Córdoba, instructing a small group of disciples.

Ibn Masarra adopted the metaphysics of Plotinus, which provided him with a key to certain esoteric meanings of the Koran. At the same time, the legacy of Plotinus led him on to Empedocles, whose teaching he applied as the basis of a comprehensive explanation of existence. It was taken up by many Spanish-Arabic philosophers.

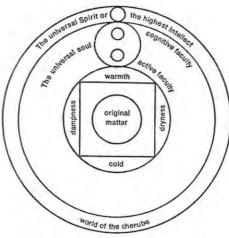
In all creation, the creative act encounters something yielding and receptive, and this quality can be likened metaphorically to a substance, out of which the world is "made." In other words, and in order to avoid the false notion that God created the world of something outside Himself — what happens is that pure act and pure passivity, which are indivisible in the Divine Being, encounter one another as separate entities in finite existence. What, in fact, characterizes the finite or the created, is that action and reception, or activity and passivity, are distinct, opposite poles between which all creatures develop. Moreover, the pure act is always on the side of oneness, like a light that emanates from the one source; whereas the

creative process in art, whereby a form present in the mind is shaped into material substance. All this should not, however, mislead us into thinking of primordial matter as something material, for much earlier Aristotle had said that primordial matter in itself, before it assumes a form, is neither visible nor imaginable. Aristotle is here referring only to the primordial matter of this world, so that the definition applies all the more to what Ibn Masarra meant. The primordial matter of the universe is no thing; it is simply the receptive ground of existence. the highest Inte Incult warmth original matter

The hierarchy of the levels of existence results from the distinction between the active and the receptive poles, insofar as the two poles define each other. The union of the purely active pole with the purely receptive pole produces the first level in the hierarchy, namely a relatively active reality, followed by a second level, a relatively receptive reality. These levels could be described as "materialized form" and "formed matter." This union of the opposite poles repeats itself and graduates downwards as far as the physical matter, which is scarcely receptive at all, and which the Latin philosophers term the materia signata quantitate. Yet the two initial poles, pure act and primordial matter, always remain the same, primordial matter being, in mythological terms, the eternal virgin mother of the universe.

receiving pole, like a mirror that reflects the light, or like a medium that breaks it, is the root of all plurality. For this reason it is also called primordial matter (hyle in Greek, hayūla in Arabic), by analogy with the ancient Greek distinction between "form" and "matter." This distinction is based on the simile of the

As a metaphor for the creation of the world out of primordial matter, Ibn Masarra uses the particles of dust in the sunbeam, which goes back to 'Ali, son-in-law and spiritual heir to the Prophet. Without the sunbeam falling on them as they float in the air, the minute particles of dust would not be visible, and without the dust particles the sunbeam itself would not show; the dust atoms correspond to the primordial matter, which in itself, without the reflection of the divine light, is without reality. This metaphor gives the doctrine of primordial matter a meaning that extends far beyond the horizon of philosophy, insofar as the latter is bound up with deductive thought. Ultimately, the meaning of the metaphor of the dust particles in the sunbeam is that, by comparison with the absolute, the world is without being, it possesses no reality of its own. It is merely a reflection of the one absolute. This concept of reality is reminiscent of the metaphysics of the Hindus, of the doctrine of $atm\bar{a}$, the highest self, and of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, as the cause of cosmic illusion, whereby the inherently indivisible absolute appears to be multiple. But Ibn Masarra had not borrowed from Hindu metaphysics; his spiritual viewpoint grows from penetrating the Koranic assertion that there is "no deity besides God;" the world possesses no independent reality of its own, otherwise it would be a deity besides God. Seen as itself, it is what it is; faced with the absolute, however, it is nothing. This goes beyond the frontiers of rational thought, which is not to say, however, that the truth involved in this doctrine, cannot be comprehended intellectually.



Diagrammatic representation of the Masarrite hierarchy: universal spirit, universal soul, nature and original matter, according to Muhyi-d-din Ibn 'Arabi.

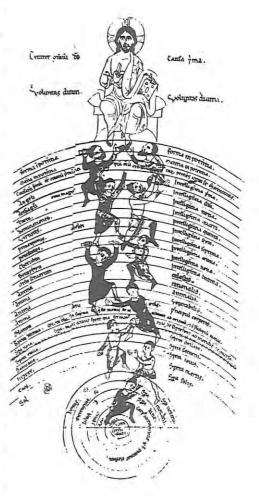
The earlier reference to Dante was an indication of how the doctrine of the levels of existence and its symbolic representation was adopted by Christian thought. A Latin text by an unknown Christian author provides a spiritual link. Today, the sole surviving copy of this text is in Paris, but by all appearances it was written in Spain and copied in Bologna towards the end of the twelfth century. It describes the ascent of the soul through the heavenly spheres, and also includes a diagrammatic survey of the universe, in which all the elements of the Arabic-Moorish cosmology occupy their rightful places.

At first sight, the work appears to describe the soul's journey after death through the other world. However, in reality it is concerned, like Dante's *Divina Commedia*, with the ascent of the contemplative mind through all the states of being and consciousness until it reaches the divine source. Two drawings, which decorate the manuscript, support this interpretation: they show human figures of different ages ascending the ladder of the heavenly spheres.

What has confused contemporary scholars in their studies of the manuscript has been the fact that the hierarchy of the astronomical heavens (which are ten in number, as with the Arab cosmologists) is expressed in apparently contradictory forms. They appear first as degrees of human perfection or of contemplative virtue, in the second instance as levels of the pure knowledge of God, and on the third occasion in a negative sense — and in reverse order — as the graduated fall of the soul in conditions of subjugation and disruption. The explanation for this threefold arrangement is that, according to Avicenna, each of the astronomic heavens represents both a level of the universal soul, as well as a modality of the universal intellect. At the same time, the astronomic heavens are the expression of the natural forces that dominate this earthly world, and appear ominous and tyrannical to the soul that is exposed to them.

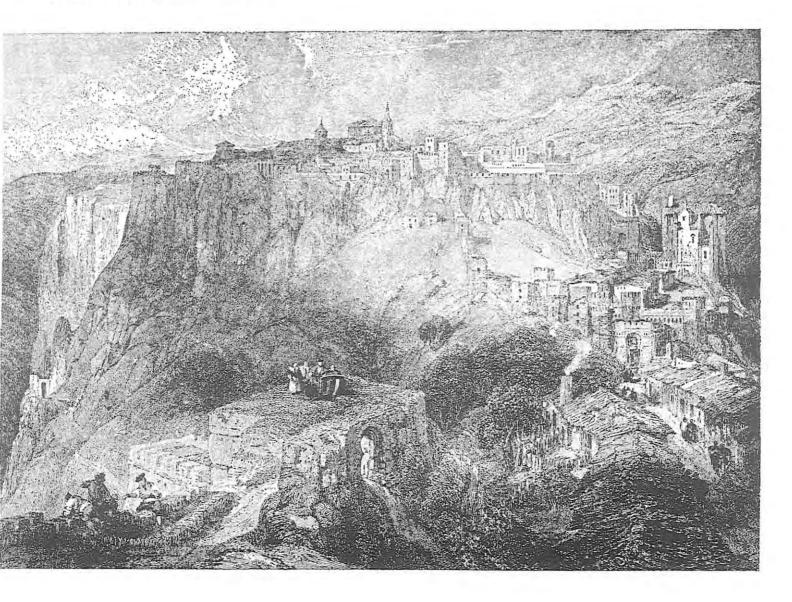
In a diagram that illustrates the manuscript, the degrees of the physical, psychical, and intellectual world appear side by side as a continuous series of concentric circles. The outer circle of this hierarchy bears the inscription: "The first effect, the first created being, the origin of all creatures, in which all creatures are contained." This is none other than the universal spirit (*ruh al-kull*) or the first intellect (*intellectus primus*, *al-akl al-awwal*) of the Islamic cosmologists. From the Christian standpoint, which is not emphasized here, it is the first reflection of the *Logos* in the Creation. Two more circles are drawn outside this one, the inner one marked *materia in potentia*, which corresponds to the receptive pole of the universe, and the outer one marked *forma in potentia*, meaning the active or "formative" pole. This recalls the teaching of Ibn Gabirol, as does the inscription above the circles, which reads "Will of God" — a reminder of the ultimate reason for existence.

The Christian character of the text is beyond question. It emanates from the text at every turn, especially in the use of the words of St. Paul to explain the levels of contemplative knowledge. Pictured above the geometric diagram of the levels of existence is Christ enthroned, with His feet touching the outer circles and the human figures climbing up towards Him.



The curious position occupied by this work, as a connecting link between the Moorish-Islamic world and the Latin-Christian world, is referred to outright in the following sentence, which comes at the end of the description of the stages in the spiritual ascent or descent of the soul: "The ten felicities and the ten afflictions listed here were — as I fervently believe and hold to be true if what has come down to us is true— known to the just and most wise lawgivers, who strove for the salvation of other men, and on whom the light of God descended, so that the knowledge of God and his words were on their lips: Moses, Mohammed, and Christ, the last being mightier than the other two and his speech more compelling . . ."

The small citadel town of Ronda showing the ruins of its Moorish fortress. Ronda was for a time the southern outpost of royal Granada. Old engraving.



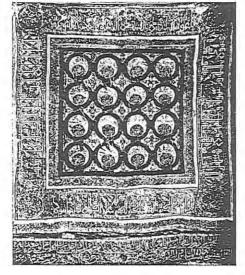
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X Faith and Science

In their zeal for reform, the Almoravides favored the jurists, who were for the most part hostile both to philosophy and to mysticism, so that intellectual life in these areas continued only, as it were, undercover. The richness it displayed immediately after the end of Almoravid rule in the second half of the twelfth century is proof that it did not come to a standstill.

In the fertile and sweet atmosphere of Andalusia the Almoravides rapidly lost their nomadic fierceness. In 1146 they were defeated by the Almohades in Morocco, and thereupon their Spanish empire began to disintegrate into minor principalities. The Almohades were a second Bedouin influx, first spreading across the whole of North Africa as far as Tripoli, soon after to surge across the Mediterranean into Spain. This time they did not start out from the Sahara, but from the High Atlas, and were led by the Masmuda Berbers. These were not pure nomads, like the Sinhājā, but peasants and semi-nomads. The chief difference between them and the Almoravides, however, was their religious attitude, which was connected in a significant way with the Islamic revival in the East. The founder of the Almohad movement, Ibn Tumert, had studied in the east, and had come under the influence of the great Persian theologian and mystic, Abū-l-Hāmid al-Ghazāli. His mission, which had fired the mountain people of his homeland with such zeal, was simply the unitarian doctrine of the Koran, the Tawhid, stripped of all anthropomorphic concepts of God and of the purely numerical interpretation of the oneness of God. The name Almohades is derived from the Arabic al-muwahhidun meaning, "confessors of the (divine) unity." In the eyes of these "confessors," the Almoravides, with their superficial interpretation of the Koran, were heathens, for they thought of God in human terms, as an individual endowed with numerous faculties. As a result they fell into those very errors for which the Koran denounces the heathen. It was this, coupled with the moral lassitude of the Sinhājā Berbers after their acquisition of riches and power, that led the Almohades to believe they had the right to wage a "holy war" against the Almoravides.

Ibn Tumert, the *mahdi* (he who is guided right) was succeeded by 'Abd al-Mumin, who adopted the title of Caliph. He defeated the Almoravides in North Africa. His successor, Caliph Abū Ya'kūb Yūsuf, fell at Santarem in 1185 in the "holy war" against the Spanish Christians. In 1195, the third Almohad Caliph, Abū Ya'kūb al-Manṣūr defeated the Castilians at the decisive battle of Alarcos, and brought the Almohad empire to the peak of its power, but at the same time prepared the way for its downfall, for it rallied the Christian lands on either side



Moorish battle standard, Andalusia, about 1300. Toledo cathedral.

of the Pyrenees into the most desperate resistance against the threat of the "Moorish onslaught." Pope Innocent III summoned a crusade, and in 1212, with King Alfonso VIII of Castile (known as "the Good") at the head of a united Christian army, defeated the Almohades at Navas de Tolosa. By 1230 the last remnants of Almohad rule in Spain were destroyed.

The Almohad empire was much greater and more powerful than that of the Almoravides, and it accomplished the fusion of all the so-called Moorish peoples into one single culture, which can still be detected to this day from the Atlantic coast of Morocco as far as the eastern frontier of Tunisia. Muslim Spain was a part of it; it had given away its intellectual riches to the North African countries and in exchange had been renewed by the Berber influx. The Almohades left their mark on all these countries, the roughness of their Berber character marrying happily with what may best be described as the metaphysical genius of Islam. This can be seen in the architecture of the time, which represents something of a beginning for all that was to appear subsequently in Muslim Spain, Morocco, and Algeria. Even the art of the Alhambra, whose glittering splendor contrasts strongly with the rough simplicity of the Almohad buildings, has a crystalline strength that relates it to these.

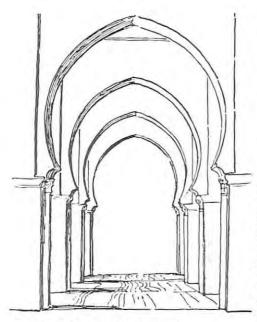
In its deliberate concentration on essential and purely geometric forms, Almohad architecture has a striking affinity with the contemporary art of the Cistercians in Burgundy and elsewhere in France. The Cistercians were the first to use the pointed arch in their vaulting, an element that had been taken from the East by the Almohades and introduced by them into Moorish art.

The most important Almohad monument in Spain is the minaret of the former Great Mosque of Seville, the so-called Giralda. The upper stage and the pillared balconies in front of the windows are additions dating from the Renaissance. Today Seville cathedral stands on the site formerly occupied by the Great Mosque, which was built by Caliph Abū Ya'kūb Yūsuf, and the foundations of the minaret were laid about 1184 under the same ruler. The name of the architect was Ahmad Ibn Baso — "Baso" suggests he was of Romance origin — and he is thought to have been responsible for other similar towers; the minaret of the Great Mosque of Marrakesh, the Kutūbiya, and the minaret of the mosque of Ḥassan at Rabat (now in ruins) are both attributed to him. Decorating these towers is the motif of intersecting arches used in the Great Mosque of Córdoba. Here it is developed into a geometric trelliswork that covers the larger surfaces with an alternating pattern of light and shade.

When the Almohades took over in Spain, they put into practice the writings of al-Ghazālī, which had been banned and burned by the Almoravides. In his main work, "Revival of Theology," al-Ghazālī sought an intensification of general piety, and in this he was meeting a widespread need. Strangely enough, the Almoravides' rejection of this great Persian theologian delayed al-Ghazālī's attack on the philosophers becoming known in Spain. It was some forty years before the dispute came out into the open there, when Averroes, the Andalusian philosopher, replied belatedly to al-Ghazālī's attack. It made little impact on the Islamic



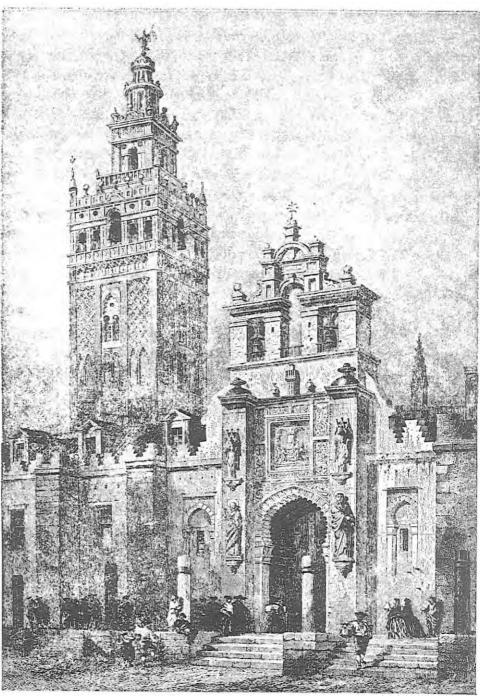
A Murabba' (silver). The square shape is characteristic of Almohad coins, serving as an indication that with the appearance of the 'Mahdi' Ibn Tumert the succession of different historical periods had come to an end, and a new, lasting world order had begun.



Pointed arch in the Almohad style.

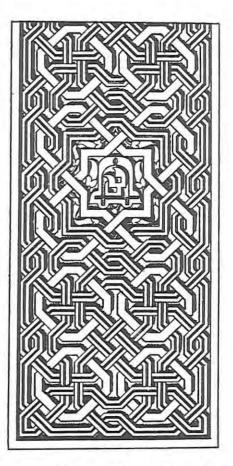
The Puerta del Pardón (Pardon Gate) of Seville cathedral and the Giralda. The Moorish arches over the gate and details of the former court walls of the great Mosque are still discernible. Except for the belfry, the Giralda corresponds to the original Almohad minaret. Old engraving. world as a whole, but is worth mentioning here because it completes the picture of the full range of contemporary thought, with its extreme opposites of theology and philosophy.

Al-Ghazālī was anything but a literalist theologian. Nor was Averroes — or Ibn Rushd, to use his real name — outside the bounds of Islamic belief. Both shared the conviction that the Koran contained the highest truth, and both were equally fond of pointing out that the holy text should not only be taken literally but also



be interpreted symbolically. But it is at this point that they part company. For al-Ghazālī, the more profound meaning of the text is disclosed through mystical experience or through an intuitive approach, but Ibn Rushd applies the reason. In his writings about the accord between religion and philosophy, he explains that there are three types of men: the first, and by far the most numerous, is receptive to ideas that can be expressed in concrete terms; the second type is amenable to persuasion; while the third and rarest type will be convinced by conclusive evidence. The holy texts used a form of expression appropriate to all three types of men. They are clothed in visual images, and yet their content never denies the truth, which can be reached by applying the immediately obvious processes of thought. In the Latin world, this theory earned Ibn Rushd the undeserved reputation of having preached a "double truth," as if he had said: "To the simple masses, you must speak of religion, but to the enlightened few you may disclose scientific truth." In reality, the dividing line between the belief of a philosopher like Ibn Rushd and the mystically based faith of a theologian such as al-Ghazālī is a much finer one. For the former the revealed text is somewhat like an allegory which requires rational interpretation, but for the latter it is a symbol which may be comprehended mentally but can never be exhausted, so that the simple believer, unschooled in philosophy, probably gains as much or more from it than the philosopher relying on rational analysis. Some philosophers of the day doubtless had an inclination towards rationalism, which could lead towards a rejection of revealed religion. This trend is evident in the work of Ibn Tufail, for example, the friend and patron of Ibn Rushd. His Utopian novel, "The Living Son of the Wakeful," became famous in seventeenth-century Europe, influencing certain sects such as the Quakers, and was echoed in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. It is the story of a youth, who grows up in isolation on a remote island, and by mere observation of nature, contemplation and independently discovered intellectual exercises arrives at the profoundest truths, truths that are concealed behind the symbols of revealed religion.

It was against such philosophical trends that al-Ghazālī fought, his defense deriving impact from the fact that he did not merely attack the philosophers from a theological standpoint, as others had done before him, but fought them on their own ground by playing off the various philosophical doctrines against each other. He referred to this as the "self-destruction of the philosophers" (tahāfut al-falāsifa). In his reply to this, entitled "The Self-Destruction of Self-Destruction" (tahāfut at-tahāfut), Ibn Rushd, with a certain bitterness, points out the inadmissibility of al-Ghazālī's approach: "Hurling two contradictory theses at each other does not necessarily result in their destruction; all that this produces is confusion. Most of the evidence brought forward by this Ghazālī consists of nothing more than doubts which arise when isolated parts of a philosophy are taken out of context, so that they appear to contradict the remainder. But this is an unsatisfactory way of refuting an argument. The only acceptable way would be one that successfully shows that the entire system in question contradicts reality as it is . . ." We cannot help agreeing with Ibn Rushd over this.



Ornament from the Alhambra, Granada.

One of the questions over which the theologians and philosophers were at variance, and possibly the most hotly disputed of all, was whether the world had a temporal beginning or not. In very general terms, there were two opposing concepts and allegories, with the Bible and the Koran on the one hand, which describe the creation of the world as an event; and on the other the Greek philosophers, for whom the relationship between divine origin and cosmos is similar to that between a source of light and its diffusion. The philosophers did not dispute that the world had been created, but for them this "being created" simply represented a dependence in being. Just as the rays of the sun would not exist if there were no sun, the existence of the world depends entirely on its divine origin. Accordingly, the world does indeed have a beginning, though not in time, but a purely hierarchical and logical beginning. Such a concept is likely to be misunderstood, and there is no doubt that it involves the danger of an assimilation of God and world, whereas the myth of the temporal creation of the world unequivocally emphasizes the immeasurable gulf between the transient and the eternal. "All things are transient, except for His (God's) countenance" (Koran, XXVIII, 88), is the most direct form of expressing the difference between the unconditional reality of God and the conditional reality of the world, between being and appearance, a difference existing not only for the believing masses. The ultimate proof put forward by the philosophers in defense of their thesis is that there can be no form of change whatsoever in the nature of God. God is creator from the beginning of all eternity, and this is why a world has existed from the beginning of eternity. If the world had been created at a certain point in time, then there would have had to have been a change in God, a transition from potentiality to action, which is impossible. Al-Ghazāli's reply to this is that there is no "time prior to the creation of the world," for time was created together with the world. There is God, as He is in eternity, outside all time, and there is the world, incorporating time, but no Before and After of any duration that would concern God. This argument is indeed a very forceful one, and consequently the opposing positions of the theologians and philosophers could be summarized as follows: the philosophers are right in saying that God has been creator from the beginning of eternity, but they are not right in saying that the world has been created from the beginning of eternity. The theologians, on the other hand, are wrong in placing the creation of the world at a particular point in time, for in so doing they are ascribing a temporal dimension to God himself. They are right, however, in speaking of a beginning of time. Strictly speaking, both the beginning and the end of the world are indefinable in terms of time, for they are outside time. Consequently, the duration of the world is endless, looking back as well as ahead, and yet, confronted with divine eternity - the "eternal Now" of God - it dwindles into an altogether finite period. The comparison of time and eternity involves a transition from one dimension of existence to another, to which neither philosophical dialectics nor theological systematism can do justice.

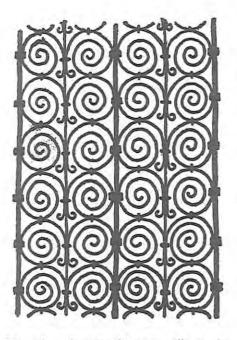
Ibn Rushd counters this interpretation that time itself was created and therefore must have a beginning, with his own cosmology based on Aristotle, which holds

that time is the measure of the first and all-embracing rotation of the heavens, which for its part represents a mid-point between eternity and transience. It is the most general, spatial term for the genesis that takes place in the transition from the potential (potentia) to the act (actus). Now this potential, which because of the rotation of the sky is forever in the process of being translated into action, must, in accordance with the constant and unending nature of this motion, be inexhaustible. In other words, though the individual constituent parts of the world may be transient, their sum total is not. It would be quite wrong to scoff at this cosmology simply because Averroes mistakenly supposes the constant rotation of the earth on its own axis to be the rotation of the distant celestial sphere, for this does not detract from his argument. It remains fundamentally valid if another necessarily constant and unending movement, such as the speed of light (which is in fact used as a constant in present-day astronomy), were substituted for the sidereal rotation still used today in the measurement of time. Ibn Rushd's argument would then go something like this: the fact that the speed of light is always constant everywhere proves that the substance from which it is derived is eternal. In reality, however, the absolute constancy of any movement cannot be proved; all that we ever see is a section of the cosmos, defined by time and space. Ibn Rushd's error is in deducing eternity from transience, as if there were no other approach to eternity.

Al-Ghazālī had rejected out of hand any argument based on cosmology by questioning the law of cause and effect itself. God, he said, in His dealings, is not bound by any such law. He can do whatever He likes. On this point, al-Ghazālī is not pronouncing judgment as a mystic or Sufi; he is simply reverting to the classical theology of al-Ash'ārī, who developed this doctrine to the point of absurdity, producing such statements as, fire does not burn because it is in its nature to burn, but because every time He wishes to do so, God creates the burning in the presence of the fire. Ibn Rushd justifiably seizes on this, claiming that to ruin the law of causality in this way is to reject all logical thinking. At this point, arguments concerned with establishing what is true and false become utterly meaningless.

Ultimately, the entire controversy rests upon the question of whether the creation of the world was necessary or not. For the philosophers, the creation of the world is necessary, because every necessity of a lesser order presupposes the necessity of the world's existence. The fact that twice two is four proves fundamentally that the world cannot be other than it is. The theologians, on the other hand, consider the assertion that the world is necessary as a contradiction of the free will of God. God is neither compelled to create the world, nor to create it the way it is. According to the Ash'arite theology, every alternative is equally valid before the divine will. God does not select either alternative as the best, but simply because it is His wish.

There would appear to be absolutely no understanding between these opposing theological and philosophical viewpoints. The only reconciliation between them lies in Islamic mysticism which regards the world as no less than a self-revelation (*tajalli*) of God, in accordance with the divine pronouncement delivered by the



Moorish style wrought iron grille in the monastery of Ignacel.

Prophet (*hadith kudsi*): "I was a treasure concealed, and wishing to be recognized, I created the world." Consequently, the world is "possible," for its existence is dependent on something other than itself. Fundamentally, however, it is "necessary" for it is the expression of the nature of God, insofar as this can be expressed in finite terms. Thus it is the product of both necessity and freedom, for God is freedom itself.

With reference to the doctrine of possibilities, Muḥyi-d-dīn Ibn 'Arabi says: "In purely logical terms anything is possible, but if it may occur or not. However, whatever actually happens arises out of the nature of the possibility concerned — out of that which this possibility is, in its very essence." For every possibility derives from the mysterious self-determination (ta'ayyun) of the absolute, and is like a place in which it manifests its own infinite reality in a finite way. However, this brings us to the extreme limits of what can be expressed.

Abū-l-Wālid Muḥammad Ibn Rushd was born in Córdoba in 1126. Both his grandfather and his father had been famous jurists. In addition to theology, jurisprudence and literature, which were indispensable to the education of a man intent on a public career, he also studied medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy. He was appointed supreme judge of Seville, which had become the leading city in Muslim Spain after the fall of the Cordovan Caliphate. His friend, Ibn Țufail, the philosopher and physician, presented him as his successor to the Almohad ruler, Abū Ya'kūb Yūsuf, and he remained under the patronage of this ruling house until the jurists hostile to philosophy incited the people against him, obliging the third Almohad caliph, Ya'kūb al-Manṣūr, to take him into protective custody. He died in 1198 in Marrakesh.

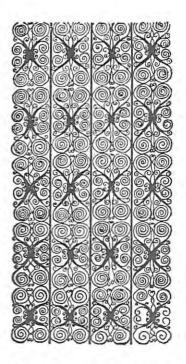
It is often maintained that Averroes (Ibn Rushd) was not only the most outstanding of the Arab philosophers but also the last. This is true only insofar that Ibn Rushd represents the last of the Aristotelian philosophers on a grand scale in the Islamic West. In a certain sense, he is the purest Aristotelian of all the Islamic philosophers, for he diverged from the great line of philosophers (beginning with al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā), who aimed at a synthesis of Aristotelian and Platonic thought. He is something of a solitary throwback, that could probably only have occurred in the comparative isolation of Spain. Islamic philosophy did not cease to develop on the line indicated by Ibn Sīnā. It continued in the East, where Ibn Rushd's main work, his "Great Commentary" on Aristotle scarcely made any impact at all. However, as it had been translated into Hebrew and Latin, it passed into the Christian West, and there, as the most comprehensive rendering of Aristotelian philosophy, it caused an absolute upheaval in academic thought. The Cordovan philosopher was without question the most penetrating and faithful exponent of the great Greek thinker.

He himself was convinced that the Aristotelian theory basically contained all truth that can be assimilated by human reasoning. In one point, however, Ibn Rushd was more Platonic than Aristotelian, namely in that he accepted the universal nature of the intellect — all cognition, whether or not it is objective or subjective, individual, or purely cosmic, is activated by one and the same light, the universal intellect. The pure intellect is the truly cognizant element in all entities, and without its supernatural unity there would be no truth transcending merely subjective impressions.

Setting out from the Aristotelian distinction between potentiality (*potentia*) and actuality (*actus*) which can be applied to all becoming or happening, Ibn Rushd formulates cognition itself as a "translation into actuality." Accordingly, the forms of things potentially contained in substance are brought to light by the intellect. It is only through the intellect that they acquire general, intelligible forms, and are transformed into unity, so that the intellect is, as it were, like a flame, in which the forms of the world are illuminated in the same measure as they are devoured by the flame.

According to this system, the soul, as an individual entity, appears as a form which the intellect or spirit temporarily extracts from substance. Platonic philosophers, like Ibn Sīnā or Ibn as-Seyyīd, however, think differently. For them, the fundamental determinations of all beings, their essences, as it were, are already present in a non-differentiated form in the universal spirit; they become distinct when the spirit or intellect is refracted by the universal soul in much the same way as a beam of white light is refracted by a prism into a spectrum of innumerable colors. However, this conception is in contradiction to the Aristotelian view, which derives form from passive substance. How, then, can the soul, which by its nature is allied with form, be immortal? Ibn Rushd provides no answer. "I believe the soul to be immortal," he says, "but I cannot prove it."

If the philosophy of a man like Ibn Rushd was not taken up in the Islamic West, this did not necessarily imply a victory for the theologians. The explanation lies rather in the extraordinary burgeoning of mysticism in twelfth century Andalusia, which reached its peak with Ibn 'Arabi, the "great master" of the Islamic West. His doctrine, based upon the mystical interpretation of the Koran drew upon all the spiritual elements of philosophy, and especially upon its Platonic inheritance. Small wonder that Ibn 'Arabi was also known as *Ibn Aflatūn* (son of Plato). One might almost say that Moorish philosophy was not defeated by the jurists, but that it drowned in the ocean of the Sufi contemplation of God. It is notable that Ibn Rushd, whose work was to divide the minds of Europe, knew the young Ibn 'Arabi, and predicted his great calling.

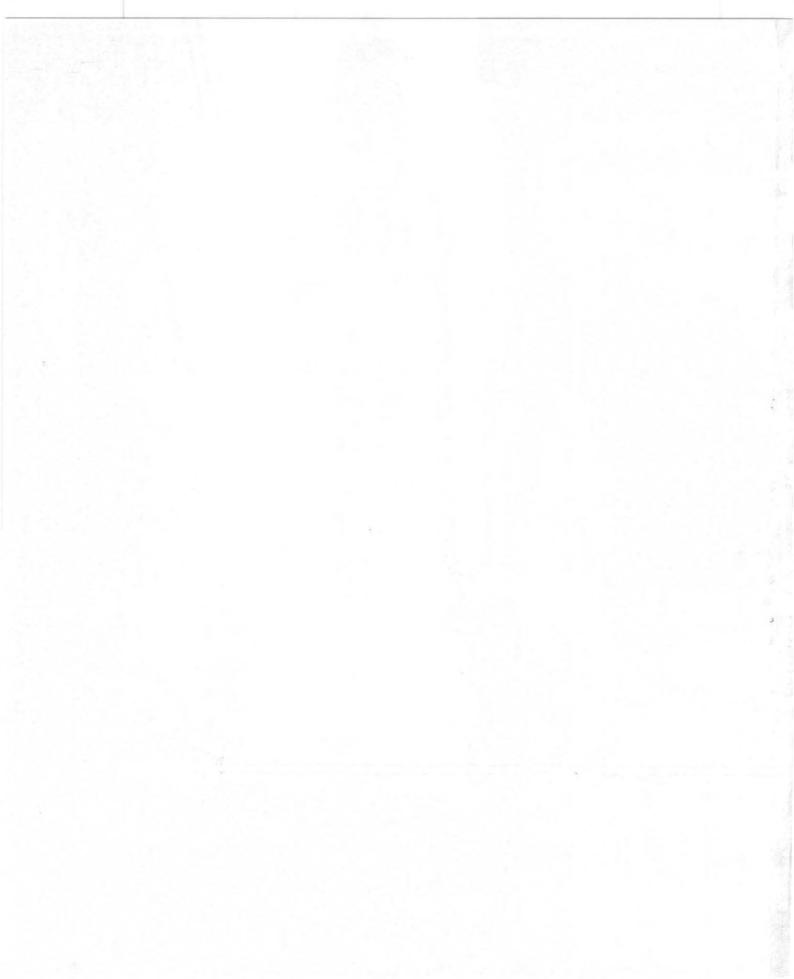


Moorish style wrought iron grille in the cathedral of Le Puy, France.



Colored, Moorish-style bowl, Valencia, fourteenth century. (Museo Arqueológico, Barcelona)



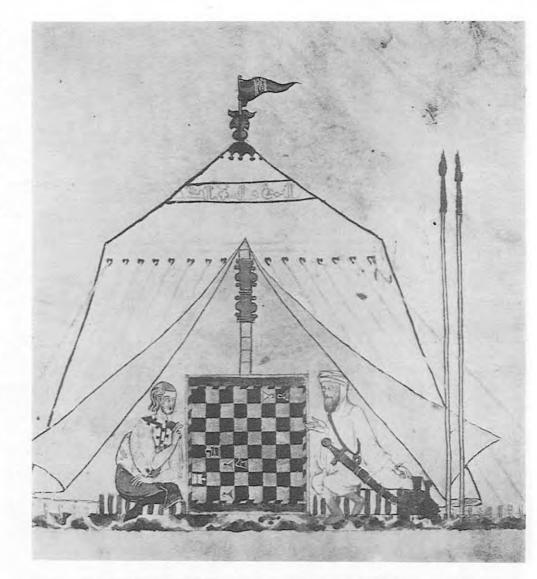


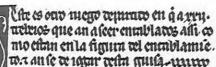
45 (Color plate). The Giralda of Seville, once the minaret of the great Almohad mosque built around 1190 by Ahmed al-Baso. The balconies in front of the windows and the crown of the bell tower date from the Renaissance.

46–48 From the book on chess by King Alfonso the Wise. An Arab knight and his guest, a Christian knight, playing chess. Both their lances are standing peaceably side by side outside the tent. While her maid plays the lute, a Moorish lady plays chess with a Christian lady.

49 (Following page). Arabian astrolabe. Toledo brass work, 1029. Staats-Bibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Oriental Department.

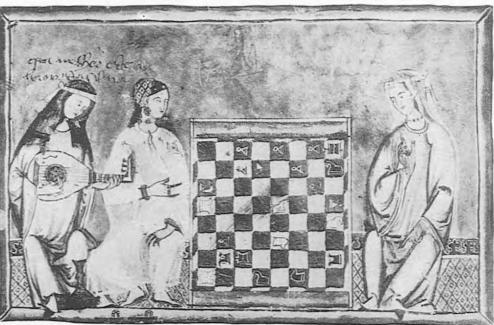
50 (Right). As-safiha (asaphea), the astronomical instrument invented by az-Zarkali. It plots the spatial movements of the constellations on one single surface. Specimen from the Real Academia de Ciencias y Artes, Barcelona.

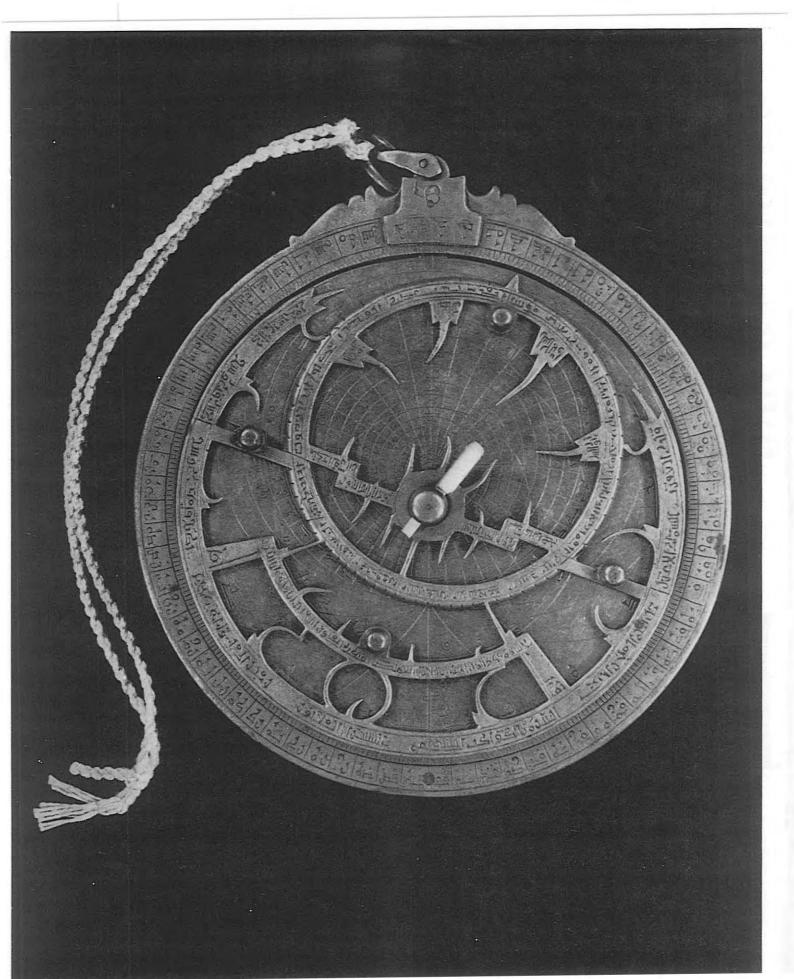




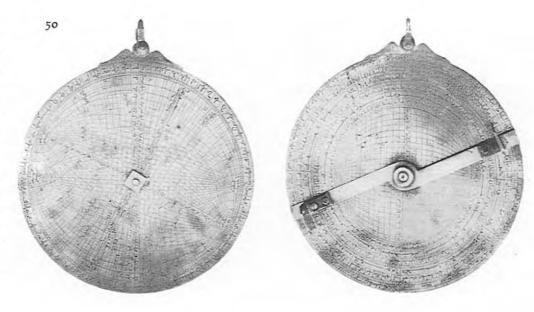
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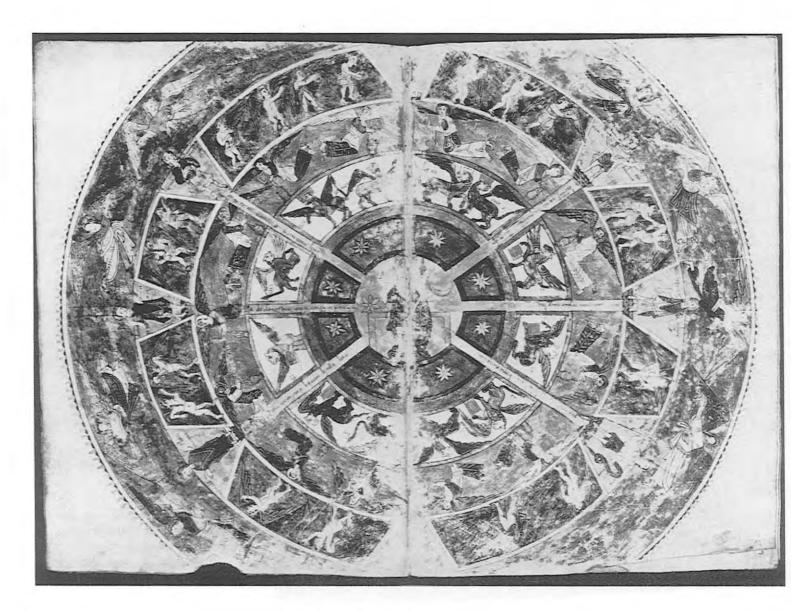
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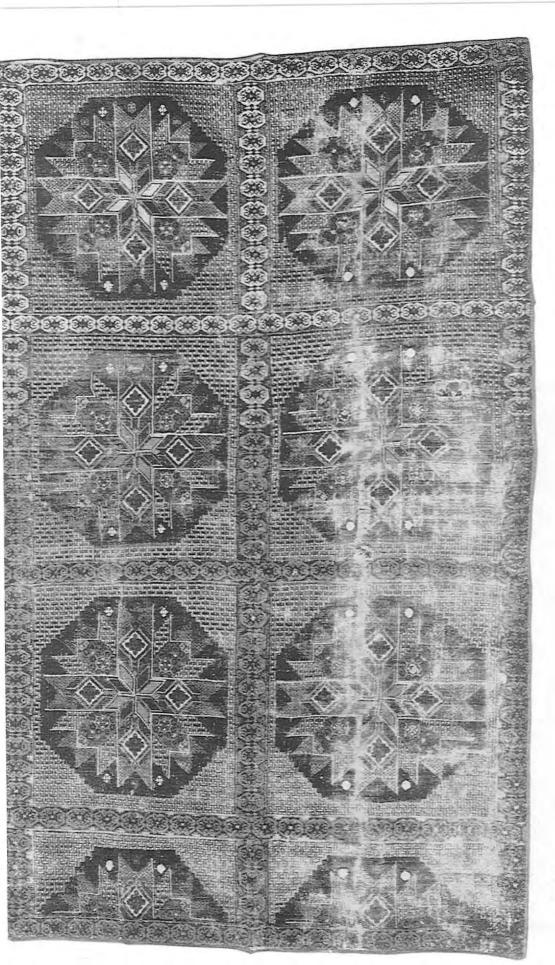




51 A Christian representation of the cosmic hierarchy, which was probably influenced by Islamic models. It is in the Mozarabic manuscript of the Beatus Apocalypse of 975, housed in the Cathedral of Gerona. In the center is Christ enthroned as judge of the world. Leading to him are eight paths that intersect the heavenly spheres, with a human figure standing at the beginning of each path and representing a spiritual virtue. Inscribed on the paths are the words of Christ, showing the interaction of virtue and grace. The outermost circle with flying angels serves as a reminder that the "kingdom of God" is not only "inside," but simultaneously also encompasses everything.







52 Moorish carpet, fifteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913.

X The Mystics

The Sufi, as the Islamic mystic is known in Arabic ($s\bar{u}fi$, singular, $s\bar{u}fiya$, plural) distinguishes between the "exterior" and the "interior" in religion, between the "shell" and the "kernel." By exterior he does not simply mean what would commonly be termed as "outward," that is to say practice and custom, but religion as every man is bound to observe it, as a form of belief or religious law (*shari'a*). This is the "outward" appearance, not only of ethical values, but of divine truth or reality (hakīka), which correlates with the innermost content of revealed belief. The form of belief is the "shell" because it both manifests and conceals its "kernel," for the one is impossible without the other. To manifest implies to clothe with a form, and every form is defined by limits, whereas divine truth as such is limitless.

Between these two, between form and meaning, lies the spiritual path (tarik), which has its own conditions, ways and stages. What religion in its commonly obligatory form implies, in terms of dogma, worship, and communion, is plain to every Muslim. However, its inner meaning is not readily understood by one and all, although the formal aspect of belief gives some indication of it. With discernment, the meaning can be pried from the form, but it is directly comprehensible only to those who seek it with all their soul, following the directions of a master who has trodden the same path before them. Study of the written word is not enough; for together with his oral teaching the master, and which goes back, link by link, to the beginning of the "chain," to the Prophet. This is the reply which Arab mysticism (*at-taṣawwuf*) offers to the questions of its origin.

The inner meaning, the *hakika*, is in itself independent of the outer form (*shari'a*), and the Sufis sometimes have to proclaim this in their words and conduct by breaking the "shell" to get at the "kernel," and this inevitably leads to difficulty. But often it is their very knowledge of the meaning which compels the mystics to affirm and preserve the form which guarantees the meaning on its own level, so that mysticism remains embodied in the form of religion, and thereby more or less concealed. In this respect it is like the lifeblood which activates the visible body of religion from within. Knowing this, we can see that it is virtually impossible to plot an exact course of the historical development and survival of mysticism. If, at certain times and in certain places, such as twelfth and thirteenth century Spain, it flowered in a spectacular way this is not to say that it did not exist beforehand, and elsewhere. Ibn Masarra was without any doubt a Sufi, whose metaphysical doctrine was misconstrued by the scholars of "outer know-



Colored, Moorish-style bowl, Valencia, fourteenth century.

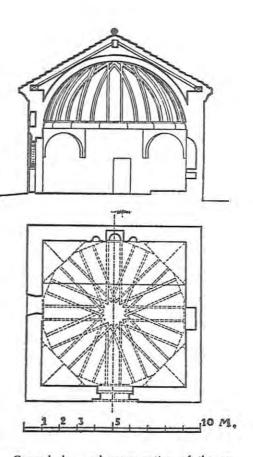
ledge" and even by philosophers such as Ibn Hazm. It is also known that in the tenth century a Sufi from Antioch, and another from Khorasan, visited Córdoba. A fine thread links Ibn Masarra with the Sufi school of Almería, which flourished in the eleventh century, with $Ab\bar{u}$ -l-'Abbās Ibn al-'Arīf as its most outstanding master. He formulated the spiritual way in the form of certain rules applicable to a larger community. This community suffered oppression under the intolerant Almoravides, and a successor of Ibn al-'Arīf, the master al-Kasyī, escaped with his disciples or *muridūn* to the Algarve (*al-gharb*) mountains in the south of present-day Portugal. There, in defiance of the Almoravides, he maintained his position as spiritual head of a chivalric-mystical community for twenty years, until his death in 1151.

Another strong influence was Abū Madyān Shu'aib, who was born near Seville in 1126, and emigrated to Morocco as a youth, where he followed several masters, some of whom derived their spiritual inheritance from the East. Ibn 'Arabi referred to him as his master, and as the "proclaimer of this spiritual path in the west." At the time of his death in 1198 in Algeria (his grave at Tlemcen remains a place of pilgrimage to this day), mysticism was burgeoning throughout the Almohad empire. Compared with spiritual life in the Islamic East, it was a late flowering which occurred in Spain and neighboring North Africa, and yet it, in turn, was to exercise a reciprocal influence on the East. In about 1200, Ibn 'Arabī emigrated to the East; he was later followed by other Sufis, such as Ibn Sab'īn of Murcia and his disciple, Abū-l-Ḥassan 'Ali ash-Shusturī, who died in Damietta in 1269, and by Abū-l-'Abbās al-Mursi, also from Murcia, who, as successor to Abū-l-Ḥassan 'Ali ash-Shādhilī, founder of the famous Maghrebian Order, lived in Alexandria, where he died in 1287. Other Andalusian mystics settled in the isolation of the Moroccan mountains, where their tradition lives on to this day.

In contrast with philosophy, which is always a mental process, even when it touches upon metaphysical truths, mysticism sets out from the premise of the certainty of the absolute and the infinite. This certainty is not, however, to be found on the mental plane, but in the purest spirit, or (in Sufite terms) in the innermost heart, the essential center of man. Here it lies, either hidden or revealed, depending on whether the dreaming of the individual consciousness veils it or whether the timeless memory (*dhikr*), the *anamnesis* in the Platonic sense of the word, reveals its presence.

In this context, Abū-l-'Abbās Ibn al-'Arīf makes God Himself say: "(Inner) knowledge is My royal path, while science is only a reference to Me. The man of science concludes that I am; the man who knows, however, deduces all existence from Me. The former knows with reference to Me; the latter through Me."

Certainty about the absolute inevitably brings with it the consciousness of the relative, evanescent, and consequently illusory nature of the world, and of one's own self. This is reflected in the soul by spiritual poverty (al-fakr), on account of which the travellers along the mystical path are described as the "poor," or more exactly as "God's needy" (al-fukar \bar{a} - $il\bar{a}$ - $Ll\bar{a}h$). Sincerity (as-sidk) is an even more direct reflection of spiritual certainty, and this does not merely mean an absence



Ground-plan and cross-section of the socalled "Rábita de San Sebastian" near Granada, which probably houses the tomb of an Islamic saint. There are similar structures built over saints' tombs along the North African coast.

of hypocrisy; what is meant here is an inner undividedness, introspection unclouded by any egocentric intention, for this is a precondition of knowledge. In his book of spiritual virtues, entitled "Highlights of Meetings" (*Mahāsin al-Madjālis*), Ibn al-'Arīf rejects, or rather looks beyond virtues in the customary "moral" sense of the word. Contemplation should be free of any kind of intention which could indirectly confirm the limits of the human self; it must not aim at any kind of reward, neither in this world or in the next, nor apply any human standards to God. Thus, true gratitude does not merely consist of being thankful for blessings; those who love God are also thankful to him in the midst of suffering, for their gratitude is not for anything specific — it expresses their awareness of the divine origin of their existence. Virtue — gratitude, patience, humility, dignity, goodness, and so on — is thereby transformed from a form of behavior into a form of being, of intention-less being, receptive to inner infinity. Sufi virtue is not social virtue, and it tends to hide itself in the guise of dullness:

> "I hid myself from my own time, in the shadow of its wings. My eyes see this time, but it does not see me. Ask the days what my name is, they know it not, Nor the place where I rest, where I am."

Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn al-'Arabī al-Hātimī, who bore the title of *muḥyi-d-dīn* (reviver of religion), and whom posterity honored as *ash-shaikh al-akbar* (the greatest master), was born in 1165 in Murcia. He spent the greater part of his youth in Seville, where his father occupied a position of high rank at the court. At the turn of the century he travelled by way of North Africa to Mecca and the East. He stayed with a family of Persian Sufis in Mecca, and met a young girl whose beauty and saintliness became for him the living symbol of divine wisdom — as Beatrice was to Dante. Travelling farther eastwards as far as Konya in Anatolia, he came into contact with many famous Sufis. He settled finally in Damascus, where he died in 1240. Today pilgrims still make their way to his mosque tomb at the foot of Mount Kaşyūn.

In his memoirs Ibn 'Arabi gives us graphic descriptions of several of the Sufi masters he knew during his youth in Seville: "The first one that I met on my path to God was Abū Ja'far al-'Uryanī. He came to us in Seville, when I had just taken up the holy path, and so I was one of those who went hurrying to him. I entered his house, where I found a man who was possessed entirely by the remembrance of God (*dhikr*). When I had told him my name and made my intention known to him, he said to me, 'So you have decided to walk the path of God?' To which I replied, "Man proposes, God disposes." Then he said, 'Close the door, cut yourself loose from all ties, and persevere with Him who is the source of unlimited gifts, until He speaks to you directly, without a curtain between you.' Thereupon I served him, until illumination was granted me.

"He was an untutored Bedouin who could neither read nor write; however, when he spoke of the doctrine of the unity of God, one would never tire of listening to him. His strength of will enabled him to influence the thinking of others, and he could mold existence by the power of his word. Always scrupulously clean, he was to be found turned towards Mecca, calling upon God . . .

"Once, as I was sitting by his side, a man came to him with his son, and greeting him, he said to the boy, 'Greet him!' By that time, the master was already blind. 'Our lord!' said the man. 'This, my son, knows the whole Koran by heart, he is a preserver of the Koran.' At this, the master's face became pale, he uttered a cry and fell into a spiritual state of mind, and said, 'It is the Eternal, which preserves the transient; the Koran is preserving your son and us all!' This came from his constant concentration on the presence of God...

"He devoted a great deal of time to meditation, and whatever his circumstances, he was contented with God. The last time I visited him, I was in the company of a host of friends. Some of them would have liked to ask him questions, but did not dare. Then all at once, he raised his head and said: 'Take this question, it is intended for you, Abū Bakr,' and he pointed to me. 'I never stop wondering about this word of Abū-l'Abbās Ibn al-'Arīf: In order that what has never been should come to nothing, and what has never ceased to be should remain eternal [the saying refers to the extinction of the self in God]. Now, after all, we know that he, who has never been, is already come to nothing, and that he who has never ceased to exist is eternal. What could he have meant by this? Give me your answer!' No one in that assembly could answer. Then he turned to me. I was probably the only one who knew the correct answer to the question and was tempted to speak out, but I remained silent, for I kept a firm hold on my tongue, and my Master knew this, too, which is why he did not press any further for the answer . . .

"Our master Abū-l-Hajjāj was a most saintly person. And yet he never ceased to live from the work of his hands until he became too weak to perform any kind of activity. From that time on he lived on what people would bring him . . . He was full of goodness towards people . . . Whoever entered his home was offered something to eat, provided there was still something to offer. He would extend hospitality whether the vistors were many or few, and whether there was much or little food in store. He never put anything aside. Once, when I was with him, a whole crowd of people came to visit him. 'My son,' he said to me, 'bring out the food basket for them.' I went to fetch it, and found that all it contained was a handful of peas; I placed them before the guests, and they helped themselves to them . . .

"In the courtyard of the country house in which he lived, there was a well from which he drew water for his ablutions [as prescribed by religious law]. By the side of the well grew an olive tree, covered with leaves and fruit, and it had a thick trunk. Once my friend remarked to the master: 'My lord, why did you plant this olive tree here by the well, where it gets in your way?' The old man turned round to look — by then his back was already bent with age — and said, 'I grew up in this house, yet by God, to this day I had never noticed that olive tree before!' This was because he was always concentrating on his heart. Neither I nor anyone else had ever visited him without finding him reading the Koran; he never held another book in his hand until he died.



Book-cover. (Museo Arqueológico, Barcelona)

"He owned a black cat, which no one could catch or stroke, and it used to sleep on his lap. He said to me: 'With this cat God has given me a way of distinguishing holy men from others, for this shyness of hers that you observe is not without reason. God has given her confidence in His saints.' And I actually saw her, when certain visitors came, rub her face against their legs and cling to them, whereas she would flee from others. One day, our master, Abū Ja'far, of whom we spoke earlier, entered. It was the first time that he had visited Abū-l-Hajjāj. The cat was in another room; she came out and looked up at Abū Ja'far as our master Abū-l-Hajjāj was saying to him, 'Be seated!' Whereupon, with a single bound, the cat jumped up to the guest, laid her paws around his neck and rubbed her head against his beard. Then Abū-l-Hajjāj stood up, and without a word, motioned the guest to sit in his own place. Later he observed to me, 'The way she acted then, I have never seen her do that with anyone else.' He remained seated beside his guest until the latter left his house.

"One day, when a gathering was assembled at his house, a man entered whose eyes were causing him such pain that he screamed like a woman in labor; the people could hardly bear his cries. When the master caught sight of him, he became pale, and began to tremble; then he stretched out his blessed hand and laid it upon the man's eyes. The latter's pain stopped immediately. He sank to the ground, and lay there as if dead. Then he got up and left with everyone else, free of all pain . . .!"

Among Ibn al-Arabi's Sufi masters was one woman, by the name of Nūna Fātima. He says of her: "When I became acquainted with her, she was already more than ninety years old. She ate extremely little, living on scraps of left-over food that people threw in front of their door. However, when I sat with her, I was embarrassed to look at her face, so comely was the bloom on her cheeks, and so attractive was she for all her ninety years . . . one might have taken her for a fourteen-year old girl, so lovely and tender was she to look on . . .

"She was accustomed to say, 'Of all the people who come to visit me, he is the only one I like' — and she would point at me. When asked 'Why is that?' she would reply, 'Everyone else brings me only a part of himself, and leaves the remainder behind at his business affairs, his home, and his family; only Muhammad Ibn al-'Arabi here — my son, and the light of my eyes — when he comes to see me he is present with the whole of his being, and when he departs, he does so with all of himself; when he sits there, all of him is there, he leaves none of his soul behind somewhere, and this is the way to pursue the spiritual path'

"Once I heard her say, 'I wonder at him who says that he loves God, and yet does not find pleasure in Him; for God is in fact the sole object that he sees in everything that his eyes behold, they see only Him, and He never for even a single instant withdraws from his sight. How can such people declare that they love God, and yet weep?...' Thereupon she turned to me, saying, 'And you, my son, what do you have to say to that?' I replied, "Mother, you say what you must say."

"One day, as we were sitting together, a woman suddenly entered the room and M.C.N. 15

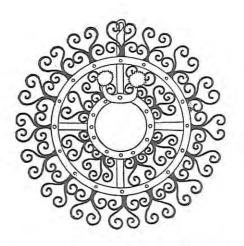


Moorish-style dish, Valencia, fourteenth or fifteenth century. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

addressed me, saying: 'My brother! I have been told that my husband, who is staying in Jérez de Sidonia, has taken another wife there. What do you say to this?' I replied: "Do you wish him to return?" and she said yes. So I turned to my mentor and said, "Mother, do you hear what this woman says?" And she replied: 'And what do you want, my son?' I said: "That you fulfil her wish, which is mine too, namely that her husband should come here." Then she called out: 'I listen and obey! I shall send him the Fātiha (the first sūra of the Koran) and charge her to bring this woman's husband back home.' And as she began to recite the first sura of the Koran together with me, she invested it with a visible form. Then I recognized her spiritual power, for as she recited the sura, it gradually assumed a physical, albeit ethereal form. Once she had formed it, I heard her say to it, 'O Fātiha, go to Jérez de Sidonia and fetch this woman's husband. Do not leave him alone, until he comes with you.' The time it would take to cover this distance had not yet elapsed when the man arrived. Immediately, my mentor took up a tambourine in her hand and began to strike it as a sign of rejoicing. I asked her why she was doing this, and she said to me, 'By God, I am really happy that He takes notice of me; for He has made me one of his trusted friends and drawn me to Him. And who am I, that this Lord should have singled me out from all the sons of my kind? By the glory of my Lord and Master, I swear that He keeps such a close watch over my love, that I myself am unable to measure it. Indeed, if ever I absently cast my eyes on some created object and seek support from it, my Lord never fails to afflict me with some suffering through that very same object on which I fixed my eyes.' Later, she permitted me to witness other miracles of the same nature. I never ceased to serve her. With my own hands I built her a hut of reeds, just big enough to take her form. She lived in it until her death. She was accustomed to say to me, 'I am your divine mother, and the light of your earthly mother!"

In the course of his life, Ibn 'Arabi wrote an almost unbelievably large number of works about the Sufi doctrine and the spiritual path. More than 800 writings are attributed to him. His "Revelations of Mecca" alone comprises several volumes and his recently rediscovered commentary to the Koran consists of fifty-nine volumes. The extent of his output obviously gives no indication of its content, and yet somehow it does show that Ibn 'Arabi incorporated all the spiritual sciences of his time in his comprehensive vision. This vision is entirely focused on the doctrine of the "unity of being" (*wahdat al-wujūd*) or "unity of reality."

Of all his writings, his book entitled "Bezels of Wisdom" (Fusus al-Hikam), is generally considered to be his spiritual testament, and contains a thesis of divine revelation. The twenty-seven chapters of this book are dedicated to as many prophets and messengers of God, all of whom appear in the Koran. Most of them are Old Testament prophets. A few belong to the pre-Islamic Arab world, while the last, chronologically speaking, are Christ and Mohammed. Each of these divine messengers represents a particular "bezel" of divine wisdom that manifests itself according to the human nature of the individual prophet. In spirit all prophets



Moorish-style window grille (almirecero) from Jérez.

are one with the highest, supra-formal, divine wisdom, yet the latter can only reveal itself by adopting the outlines of a certain form. Thus it is that water, which in itself is colorless, adopts the color of the vessel that holds it. But this is only one aspect of the relationship between divine wisdom and human form, for this form (which in the case of the prophets is necessarily perfect) represents the expression of an eternal "archetype" contained in the divine spirit, so that one might say divine wisdom — or divine reality — itself creates the vessel which it intends to fill.

Spiritual law, which takes effect by revealing divine reality in different ways, depending on its human vessel, also applies to the various states of contemplation, which the mystic experiences on his spiritual path. The "vessel" in this case is the heart of the contemplator, his innermost consciousness, and the "form" of the vessel is his receptivity or preparedness (isti'dad). Depending on his preparedness, the divine light reflected in him takes on a different quality; thus here too "the color of the water is that of its vessel." Put another way, the content of spiritual vision is always dependent on the nature of the perceptive subject, and this nature is unfathomable; the subject is not even able to comprehend itself. And yet, it can be comprehended, if, in Ibn 'Arabi's words, it is looked at "in God's mirror." Then it is no longer man's innermost being, his "heart," or his purely receptive consciousness which presents the mirror of divine qualities. God is the mirror in which the essential form of man becomes visible, for the divine reality is the pure "self" which recognizes everything without ever becoming an object of human recognition. In this respect it does resemble a mirror, which reflects the features of the person looking into it and is itself invisible. It is impossible, says Ibn 'Arabi, for a person looking at himself in the mirror to register the mirror itself at the same time, even though he knows that he only sees himself because of the mirror. This is a simile for the highest spiritual vision which man can attain, namely that he can recognize himself in God.

It was in the same spirit that Master Eckhardt said: "The soul regards itself in the mirror of God. God himself is the mirror, which He uncovers or covers at will ... The more the soul can override words, the nearer it draws to the mirror. In it union takes place as pure, undifferentiated equality." This declaration could have come, almost word for word, from Ibn 'Arabi.

Muhyi-d-din Ibn 'Arabi remained true to the Mohammedan example all his life. His spiritual diversity, or universality, is expressed in verses such as these:

"My heart can adopt all manner of forms,

It can be a meadow for gazelles, a monastery for monks,

A temple for idols, a Kaaba for pilgrims,

The tablets of the Torah, and the book of the Koran.

My religion is the religion of love, and wheresoever

Its steeds may wander, there will my religion and faith be found."

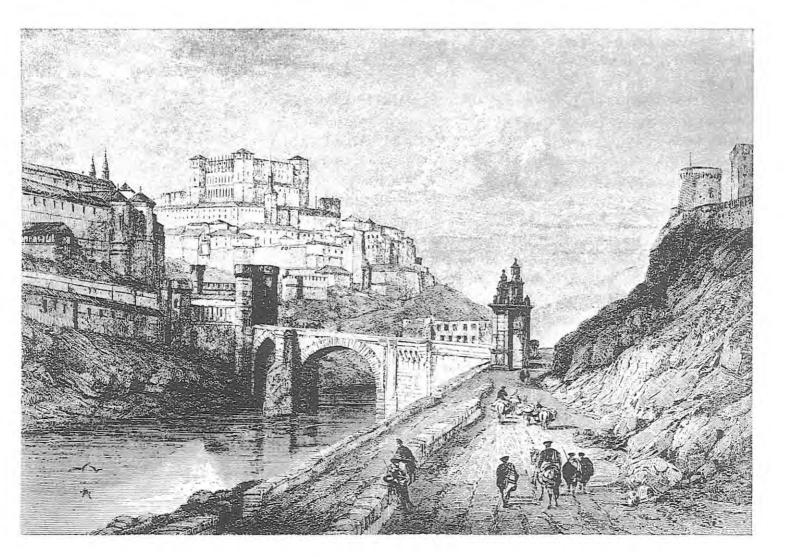


Mosque lamp from the Alhambra, Granada. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid)

XII Toledo

Neither the Almoravides nor the Almohades were able to recapture Toledo. The ancient royal city of the Visigoths remained in the hands of the kings of Castile. This circumstance was to affect the intellectual life of the entire Roman Christian world, for the acquisition of Toledo had brought with it an undisturbed center of Moorish culture, complete with its scholars, artists, and libraries under Christian protection. After Norman-Arabic Sicily, Toledo was the most important entry point for Arab culture which had fed upon Greek, Persian, and Indian sources. From the time of Alfonso VI until the Renaissance the Castilian kings allowed the Muslims living in their kingdom the same freedoms that the Muslim princes

Toledo with the Alcázar (*al-kaşr*), and the part-Moorish bridge across the Tagus. Old engraving.



had granted their Christian subjects. This was by no means to the disadvantage of the Castilians for, just as they had previously grown rich on the tributes of their Moorish vassals, they now prospered from the taxes which they collected from the newly-defeated Muslims.

Toledo was also a center of Jewish learning. Without the Jews, who were equally at home in both worlds, Toledo could hardly have played the part of intermediary in the dissemination of Arab culture. Many Arab works were translated by Jewish scholars - some of whom had converted to Christianity - from the original Arabic text into the Romance tongue, and a scholar of Christian descent would then work out a Latin version. This collaboration between Jews and Latinists was fostered by a canon of Toledo, Domingo Gonzalvo (Dominicus Gundisalvus), who transcribed works by al-Fārābī (Alpharabius), Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Ibn Gabirol (Avicebron), and al-Ghazālī (Algazel) into Latin, and who wrote several philosophical treatises in which he paved the way for the Christian adoption of Arab thought. He was active between 1130 and 1170, and it was during this same period that scholars from all the lands of the Holy Roman Empire were swarming to Toledo to participate in the salvaging of these unprecedented treasures of learning. They included Gherardus of Cremona, who translated Ptolemy's "Almagest" into Latin, and Robert of Chester, who made known the algebra of the Persian al-Khuwārizmī, from whose name (Algoarismus) the expression "logarithm" is derived. It was this work that introduced the Indo-Arabic arithmetical system to Europe.

To detail the full extent of the flow of knowledge that poured from Toledo into the Christian West would take us too far from our purpose. What concerns us here is the part played by Hispano-Arabic culture in this influx. Among the Moorish writers translated during the twelfth century, we find several mathematicians and physicians. Abū-l-Hassan 'Alī ar-Rijāl (Abenragel) was a mathematician and astronomer, who died in 1040, but to the Latin peoples he was known chiefly as an astrologer. Abraham bar Hiyya ha-Nasi, a Jewish mathematician, wrote a work in Hebrew on practical geometry in 1116 which was translated in Toledo by Plato of Tivoli under the title, Liber embadorum. Abū Muhammad Jābir ben Aflah lived in Seville in the second half of the twelfth century and wrote a book about astronomy (kitāb al-haia), which Gherardus of Cremona translated into Latin; it contains a stringent criticism of Ptolemy, and, more important, the fundamentals of spherical geometry. The Latin version of Jabir ben Aflah's name was Geber, not to be confused with the other mysterious writer of the same name, who, in the thirteenth century, compiled several works on alchemy somewhere in Christian Spain, but in close contact with Arab culture. Their double content deals with metallurgy on the one hand, and the science of the metamorphoses of the soul on the other. The qualitative changes of a substance, such as occur during the melting, purification, and refinement of metals, reflect inner processes that relate to spiritual maturity. Among the physicians whose works were translated were Abū-l-Kāsim Khalaf ben 'Abbās az-Zahrāwī (Abulcasis in Latin), mentioned earlier, and Abū Marwān 'Abd al-Malīk Ibn Abī 'Alā Zuhr (Avenzoar), who was



Moorish window grille from Toledo. (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid)

born in about 1092, the son and grandson of famous Seville physicians, and who died there in 1161.

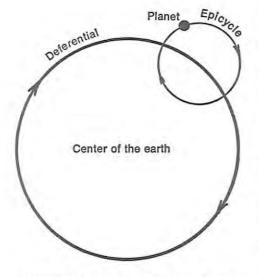
The Andalusian influence suddenly came into prominence when two scholars working in Toledo — Michael Scotus, a Scot, and Hermannus Alemannus, a German — translated Ibn Rushd's (Averroes) commentaries to Aristotle. The effect of these translations is incalculable; they unleashed a movement in Europe that led to the victory of Aristotelian thought over Platonic. From 1251 onwards Aristotle was openly taught in the University of Paris. Ibn Rushd had unintentionally given the impetus to a development which in the final analysis led to rationalism and away from the spiritual world of the Arabs.

Michael Scotus, or Scott, whom Roger Bacon praised for being the prime force in getting Aristotle accepted, also translated the astronomical theory of Abū Ishak al-Bitrūjī (Alpetragius) of Pedroches near Córdoba, who, following in the wake of Ibn Țufail and Ibn Rushd, tried to replace Ptolemy's classical system with another which would not be at variance with that of Aristotelian natural philosophy.

Ptolemy, who lived in the second century after Christ, set out from Platonic premises and tried to reduce all movements of the stars, as evident from a geocentric view of the world, to pure circles. He was very nearly successful in so doing, by dividing every planetary orbit into a main circle, the so-called deferent, and a subsidiary circle, the epicycle. The center of the subsidiary circle in which the planet rotates moves along the circumference of the main circle, so that together they form that loop shape which Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn appear to describe because, seen from our viewpoint, the annual rotation of the earth around the sun is mirrored within the apparent orbits of the planets concerned. Moreover, Ptolemy assumed that the main cycle, the deferent of each planetary orbit including the sun and the moon, was eccentric, thus allowing approximately for the actual elliptical form of the orbit of the stars. Had Ptolemy used the ellipse and not an eccentric circle in his system, it would have been mathematically perfect, because for purposes of calculation it makes no difference whether we take the earth or the sun as the fixed center of the planetary system, provided the correlation between the various movements is correct. (Einstein's theory of relativity, incidentally, justifies this interchange of focal points). Be that as it may, for over a thousand years Ptolemaic astronomy satisfied every requirement for mathematical accuracy; the geometric devices of the eccentric circle and the epicycle were augmented and amalgamated at will in order to reproduce as close an approximation as possible to the actual celestial movements.

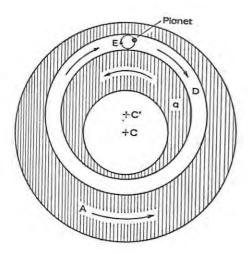
The question of how the interplay of different celestial cycles in one and the same planetary orbit can be explained in terms of physics was left unresolved by Ptolemy. He was merely concerned with establishing a mathematically applicable hypothesis, and in this he was curiously modern. He remarked that it is irrelevant whether the main and subsidiary cycles in which the stars move are thought of as transparent, hollow spheres, or in the form of tambourines, belts, or rings.

Such a relativist approach did not satisfy the Arab philosophers. Ibn al-Haytham

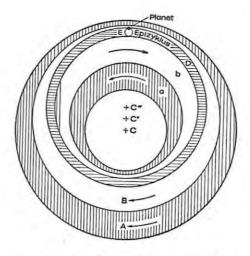


Deferent and epicycle of a planet according to Ptolemy.

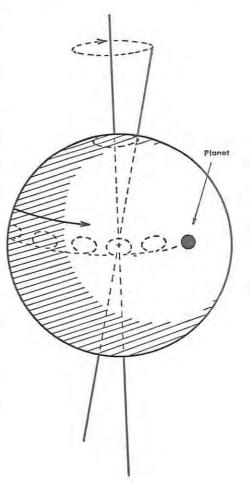
(Alhazen), the great scientist who lived in Cairo at the beginning of the eleventh century, attempted to situate the rotations described by Ptolemy in a series of concentric, hollow balls or spheres of ethereal matter. However, this new celestial physics met with criticism from those cosmologists whose authority was based on Aristotle's view that there can be only one central point around which all celestial rotations turn. For Aristotle, the whole order of the visible world stems from the tension between the constant rotation, specific to the celestial bodies, and the earthly center. Heavy bodies are heavy because they are drawn towards the fixed center, and light bodies are light because they gravitate towards the constantly moving outer circle. However, the body of which the rotating heaven consists is neither heavy nor light; it neither gravitates towards the center nor away from it, and this is why its movement is the only perfect one. This was what the Moorish philosophers, Ibn Bājja, Ibn Tufail, Ibn Rushd, and the Spanish Jew Maimonides believed. What they all objected to in Ptolemy's system was that the so-called epicycles were supposed to turn around merely imaginary shifting centers, like balls rolling around in a groove between two larger eccentric hollow spheres. "The characteristic of a natural movement," writes Ibn Rushd, "must be that it is related to a firm point." He rejects the whole of Ptolemaic astronomy as physically impossible. "In truth, there is no such thing as astronomy today; for what goes by the name of astronomy may be of use in calculation [of celestial movements], but it does not accord with the nature of things ... If God permits us to live long enough, we shall thoroughly examine astronomy as it was known in the days of Aristotle. For in effect, it does seem that Aristotelian astronomy does not contradict the laws of physics. There are certain movements which Aristotle calls vortical movements; they are produced, so far as I know, by making



The spheres of Mars, Jupiter or Saturn, according to Ptolemy. Mass A and mass a move together in the direction of the daily rotation of the heavens. D is the eccentric orbit of the deferent in which the epicycle E moves with the planet.



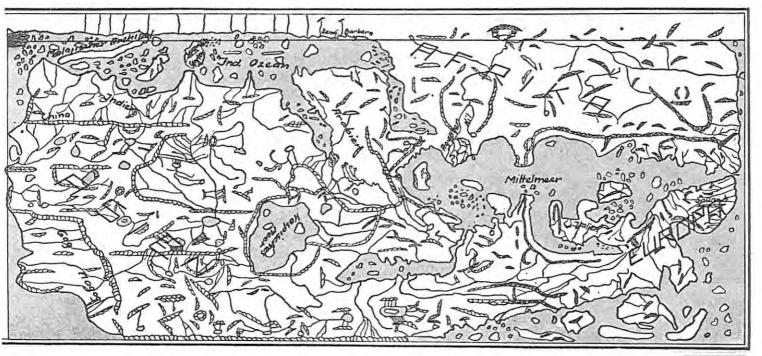
The sphere of Mercury according to Ptolemy: C is the center of the earth. Mass A and mass a move together in the direction of the daily rotation of the heavens. Mass B and mass b move together around C' and contain the deferent D, in which the epicycle E rotates with the planet. The planetary orbit according to al-BitrujI: the orbit of the planet is a sphere or globe, which turns on an axis, the pole of which rotates around another axis, so that the planet produces a loop-like movement.



the pole of one sphere turn about the pole of another, wider, sphere; as a result, one point on the first sphere traces a certain line, of the kind drawn by the movement of the sun in combination with the daily revolution of the heaven. Perhaps this is the explanation for the irregularity of planetary movements . . ."

Al-Bitrūji seized upon this idea. He postulated nine heavenly spheres in the form of concentric hollow balls, with the earth as the common center. The ninth and outermost sphere has no stars, and imposes its east to west rotation, corresponding to the sidereal day, on all other spheres. These, however, fall behind increasingly in their rotation, so that the impulse directed from the uppermost sphere gradually weakens by degrees. With this modification of the rotation corresponding to the sidereal day, Ibn al-Bitrūjī simplified the hierarchy of the spheres considerably by comparison with the Ptolemaic system. Whereas Ptolemy attributes a separate motor to each of the planetary orbits, producing the daily rotation of the stars around the earth, al-Bitrūji requires only one all-embracing motor; at the same time, the independent movements of the planets in opposition to the daily rotation of the sky seem like a mere lagging behind. But to him all this does not have a merely mechanical significance. Inherent in every planetary sphere is the endeavor to emulate the motion of the highest sphere, in which it is never quite successful, and as the highest example, which directly manifests divine unity, becomes more distant, so the rotation of the spheres become slower and their irregularity increases.

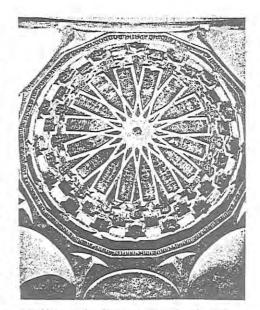
The mixed movements of the planets occur because the particular pole of each planet describes a small circle around the axis of the zodiac from west to east, while each of the spheres simultaneously turns on its own axis. Thus it is easy to imagine that in this way a point on the equator of such a sphere, which would



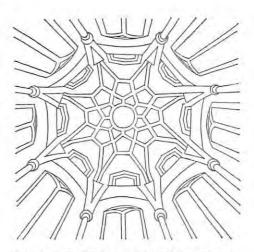
Map of the world, drawn by the Moorish geographer, al-Idrīsī for the Norman king Roger II of Sicily. Compared with Ptolemy's geography, it reveals a considerable advance in geographical knowledge. correspond to a star, completes a multiple loop. The apparent course of any planet can be reproduced with the aid of such spheres, rotating on oscillating axes, but this overlooks one phenomenon — the distance of a star from the earth, which may at times be greater, and at other times, less. Al-Bitrūjī's system offers no explanation, either, for the variable diameter of the disc of the sun, nor for the way in which the brilliance of Venus and Jupiter increases and decreases — all phenomena already known in antiquity.

The digressive nature of this system, which we have been able to sketch only in the broadest outline, is the result of a certain Aristotelian rationalism, which seeks ideal forms in nature itself; whereas, in the Platonic view, nature, as Dante says, is like an artist "endowed with talent, but whose hand trembles." Al-Bitrūji's system played a certain role in Christian Europe up to the time of the Renaissance. Yet it was without further issue, however much it may have influenced Dante. Meanwhile, the physics of Ibn Bājja (Avempace) were reaching Galileo by way of the writings of Averroes. His is the well-known formula whereby the speed of a moving body is equal to that of the moving force, less the environmental resistance. He is likewise the author of the important thesis that the force that causes a fruit to fall from the tree is the very same as that which moves the celestial bodies. Only this comparison has a quite different meaning for the Moorish philosopher than it does for the Renaissance physicist. Whereas, for Galileo, the movements of the planets are of a mechanical nature, for Ibn Bājja gravity is none other than a remote instance of the spiritual, that is to say, substantial and purposeful force inherent in the heavenly bodies, or more accurately, the celestial kinetic order. Indeed, we do not know what gravity basically is. The fact that the way it takes effect can be formulated logically points just as much towards the spiritual as to physical existence. Acceptance of Arab philosophy and sciences might have led to an entirely different view of reality from that which reigns today. The work of the Toledo translators took a fresh turn under the influence of Alfonso X (the Wise), whose aim was to make his own court the same kind of center for scholarship and art as were the courts of the Moorish princes. This explains the choice of texts which he had translated, for he concentrated in the main on the cosmological sciences such as astronomy, astrology, mineralogy, and alchemy. All this belonged to a certain extent within the spiritual orbit of a monarch who knows himself to be the representative of cosmic law on the human plane. The work written by Alfonso on the "royal art" of chess has already been mentioned. In accordance with his aim, Alfonso had most of the translated works "published" not in Latin, but in the Castilian tongue. He wanted his people to be culturally on a level with the Moors.

At one time it would have been unthinkable for a scientific work to be composed in a vernacular tongue instead of in Latin. But the example of Arabic, which was at once a scientific and a living language, produced a change in standards and so, paradoxically, Arabic, which itself was adopted by different peoples and races as their holy tongue, helped to establish the independence of vernacular languages such as Castilian, Provençal, and Tuscan.



Mudéjar style dome in the church of San Pablo in Seville.

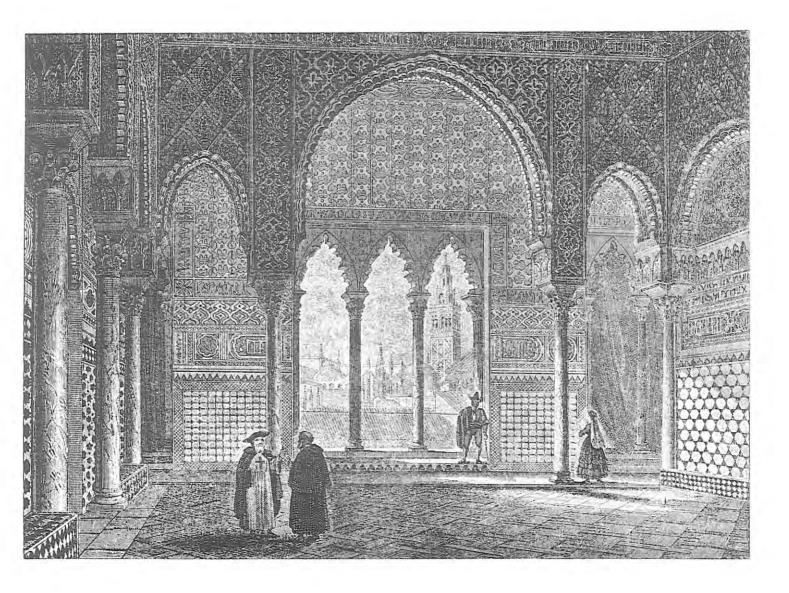


Interior of the late Gothic helm spire in Strasbourg cathedral.

The so-called "Alfonsine Tables" of celestial movements are well-known. Basically they consist of astronomic observations made in Toledo during the eleventh century by Abū Ibrāhīm ben Yaḥyā an-Naķkāsh, known as az-Zarkālī (Azarquiel in Latin). They were still used by Copernicus as the basis of the heliocentric system. Az-Zarkālī also invented an astronomical measuring instrument, aṣ-ṣafiḥa (asaphea), which became known in Christian Europe as a result of the Alfonso translations. The book on alchemy, which Alfonso the Wise had translated under the title of "Picatrix" was probably the work of Abū-l-Kāsim Maslama ben Aḥmad al-Majrītī, who wrote a number of works on cosmology, astronomy, and mathematics, and who died in Córdoba in 1007.

The King also had the Bible, the Talmud, the Cabbala, and even the Koran translated into Castilian, as well as a legendary description of the Prophet Mohammad's ascent to heaven, which was subsequently translated into Provençal and Tuscan, bringing it within immediate reach of Dante.

Hall of Don Pedro in the Alcázar in Seville, with a view of the Giralda. Old engraving.

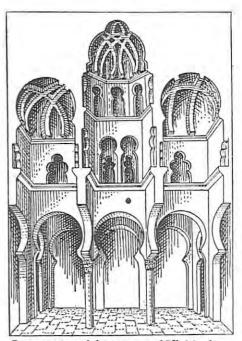


Apart from an unusual, small, late tenth century mosque, the mosque of *Bib Mardüm* — its brick decoration reminiscent of early Iraqi buildings — two magnificent synagogues have been preserved in Toledo which were built under Christian rule in the Moorish style, and doubtless by Moorish craftsmen.

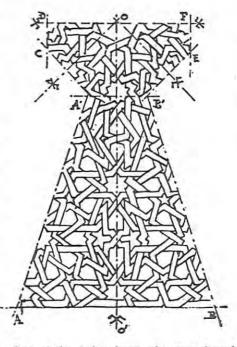
The Muslims living in Spain under Christian rule were known as *mudéjar*, a term that probably derives from the Arabic *mudajjān*, meaning "settled" or "tamed." Up to the time of the Renaissance, *mudéjar* art lent its own character to secular and in part to church architecture and decorative art in Spain. To the Christian conquerors, Moorish art was primarily an expression of the splendid style of life which they sought to emulate. Christian princes and bishops had palaces built in the Moorish style, and clothed themselves in Moorish fabrics. On the other hand, there were certain artistic forms which were closely bound up with techniques of craftsmanship, and remained the province of the defeated Muslims. From the compass and ruler, which were used for measuring materials, there also evolved decorative forms. Underlying every craft was a skill that had both a practical and an aesthetic aspect. Certain craft techniques, such as the construction of ceilings and doorpanels out of joined and intersecting pieces of wood, the so-called "artesanado" work, and the lining of walls with glazed tiles, "azulejos," have retained their Moorish character to this day.

Even before the establishment of the Mudéjar communities, Romanesque art had adopted certain Moorish elements, particularly in the formation of arches and capitals. Gothic architecture, which reached Spain by way of France, in part rejected and in part accepted the Moorish forms. Whereas Gothic architecture developed its ornamental forms almost exclusively from its structure, it was customary for the Moors first to erect bare, undivided walls, and then to cover them with decorated surfaces, rather like tapestry. Common to Moorish and Gothic art, however, was the predilection for geometric patterns. Gothic heraldry and the ornamental decorative art of the Moors formed a particularly felicitous union, which produced an individual, typically chivalric style. Most examples of mudéjar art are to be found in the region of Toledo and the province of Saragozza, where large sections of the Muslim population came under Christian rule at an early date. The art of the kingdom of Granada is distinct from mudéjar art, in that it retained vital links with North Africa, when the center of Moorish culture shifted there. The Alcázar in Seville is a special case, and was built for Peter the Cruel mainly by Granada craftsmen.

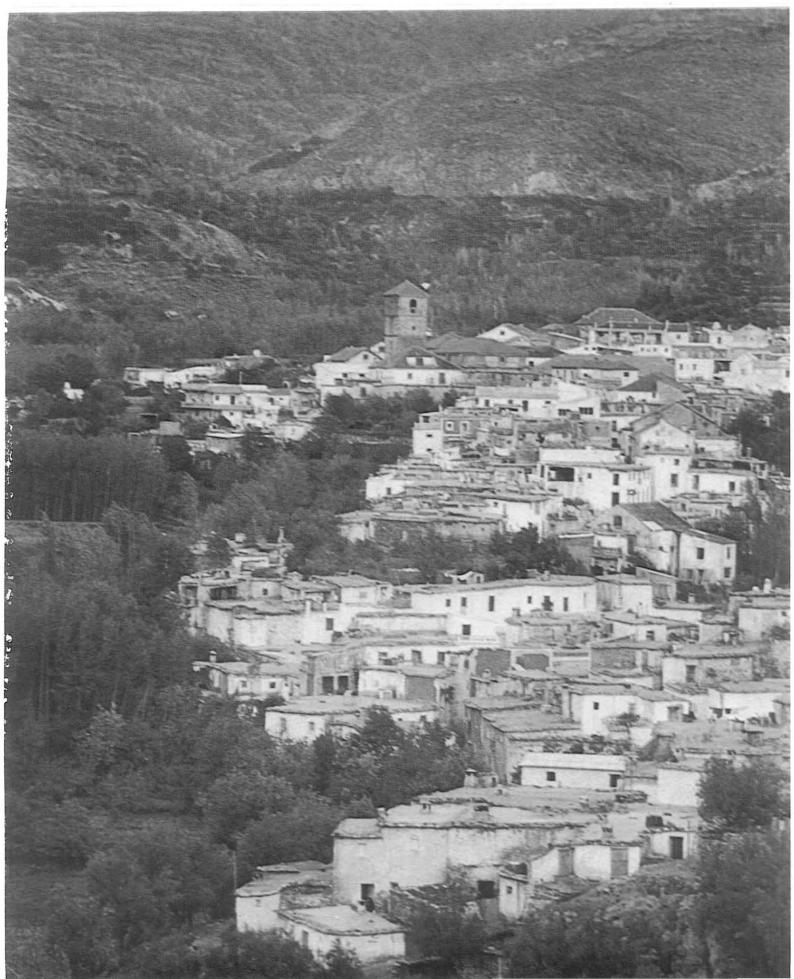
Towards the end of the fifteenth century there was a radical change of climate for spiritual as well as political and economic reasons. The tribute of the Spanish Muslims was now no longer required. Riches came from overseas. But at the same time it was essential to guarantee the political unity of the country. After the Turks had taken Constantinople and challenged the Spanish domination of the Mediterranean, the Mudéjar communities were suddenly suspect as potential allies of the arch-enemy of Christendom. Since the onset of the Renaissance, there was little room for Moorish art. Above all, there was no longer the spiritual bond

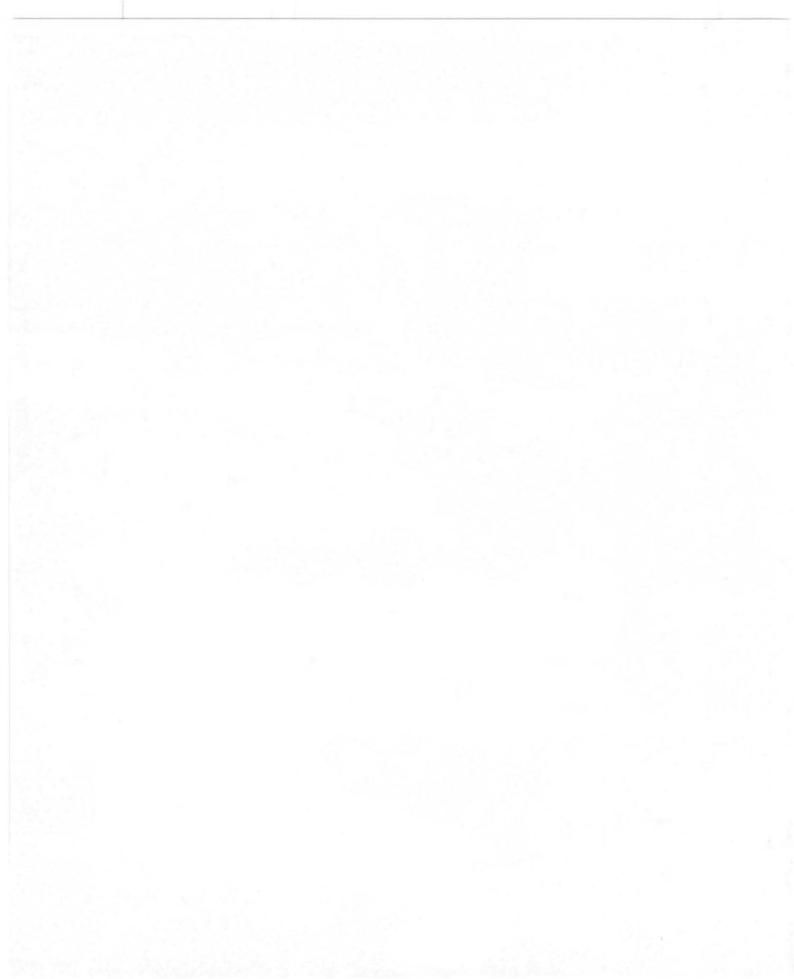


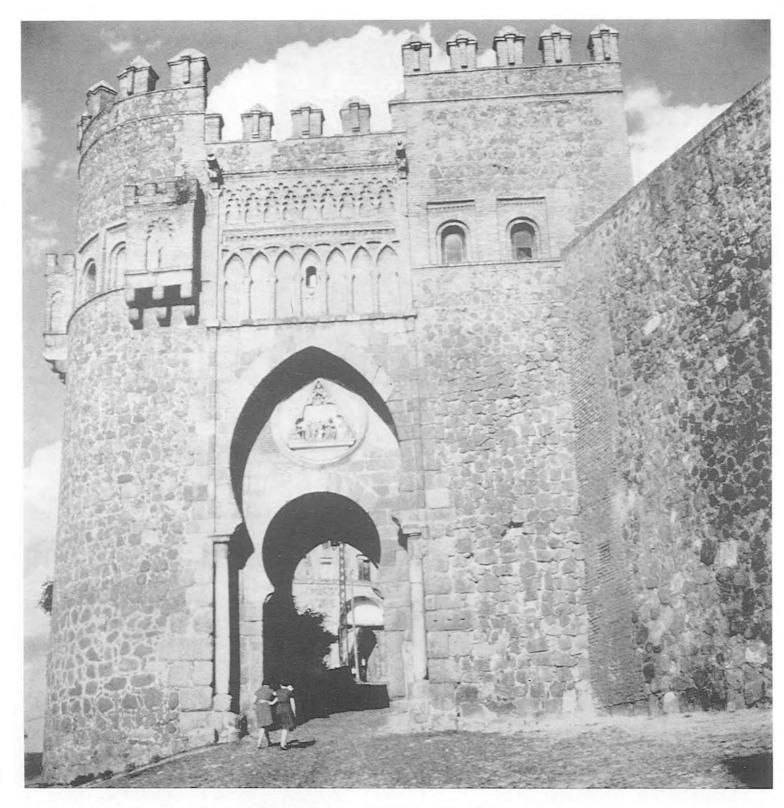
Cross section of the mosque of Bib Mardum in Toledo, according to Georges Marçais. Note the different types of ribbed vaulting in the domes.



One of the eight planes of a tent-shaped wooden ceiling in the Moorish style, according to the Compendium of Lopez de Arenas, published in 1632 in Seville.

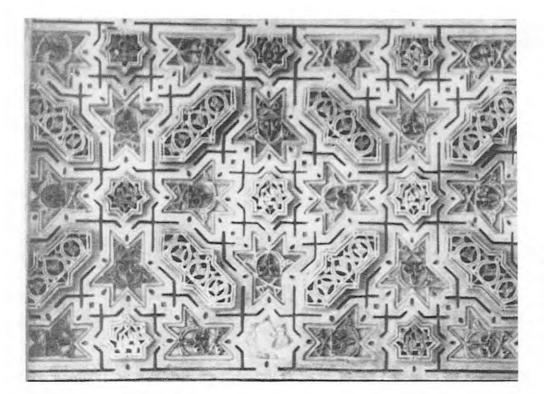






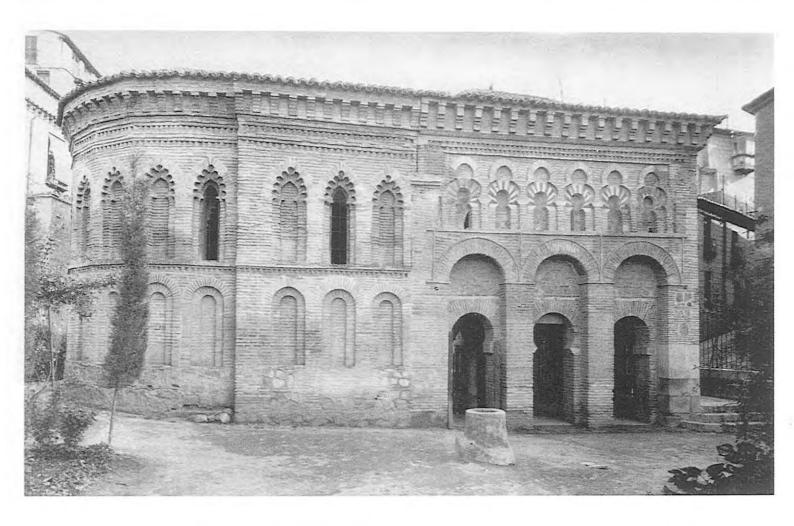
53 (Color plate). The village of Cadia in the Alpujarra, one of the last refuges of the Moors in Spain. If the church tower weren't there, or if in its place stood a minaret, the village would look like those on the other side of the Straits of Gibraltar.

54 Puerta del Sol, Toledo.



55 Moorish stucco relief from Toledo. Archaeological Museum, Toledo.

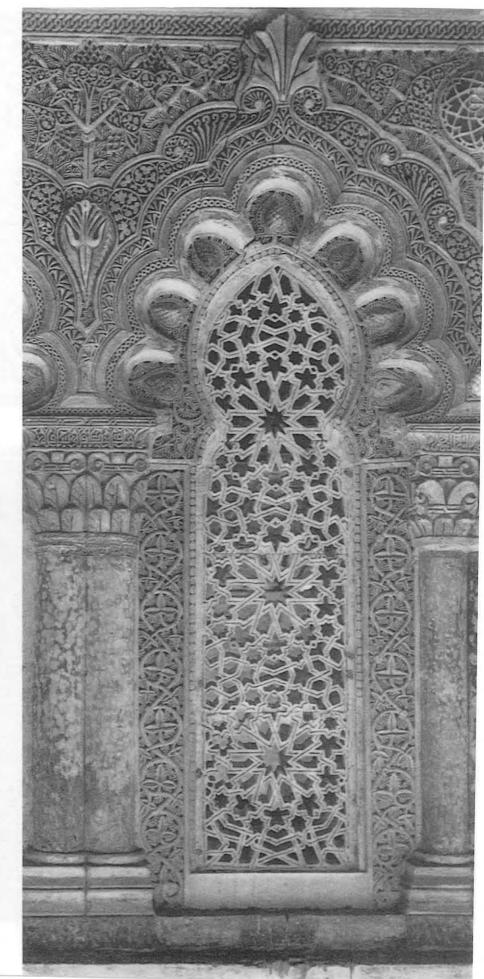
56 Mosque of Bib Mardūm in Toledo. It is thought to have been built around an older Visigothic church. Legend has it that when the Christians recaptured Toledo, an image of Christ with a light burning in front of it was found walled up in a niche, which is why, after the mosque was converted into a chapel, it was given the name "Christo de la Luz."

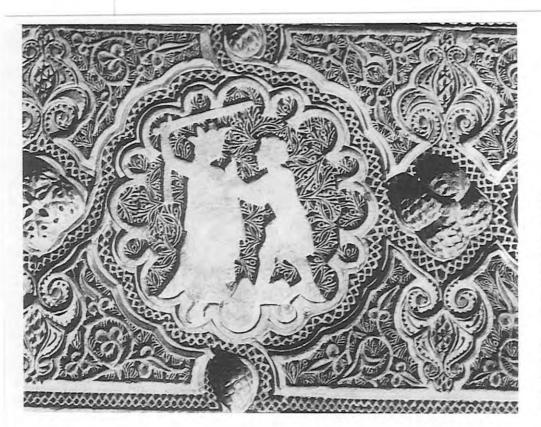


58 Window in the Mudéjar style in the former synagogue of El Transitio, Toledo, about 1365.

57 Portal of the Church of Santiago del Arrabal in Toledo, with Mudéjar style features.







59 Detail of the stucco wall decoration in one of the rooms in the Alcázar in Seville. Moorish craftsmen from Granada carried out this work for the Christian ruler, Pedro I, in the second half of the fourteenth century. It is an example of the intermingling of Islamic and Christian elements in the culture of Spanish chivalry.

60 Coat of arms of Castile; Gothic oak leaves, stylized Arabic characters, and Hebrew inscriptions combine to form an arabesque. Stucco decoration in the El Transito synagogue in Toledo.





61 (Above left). Glazed plate in the heraldic Moorish style, from Manises, fifteenth century.

62 (Above right). Colored plate with glaze in the Moorish style, from Manises, fifteenth century.

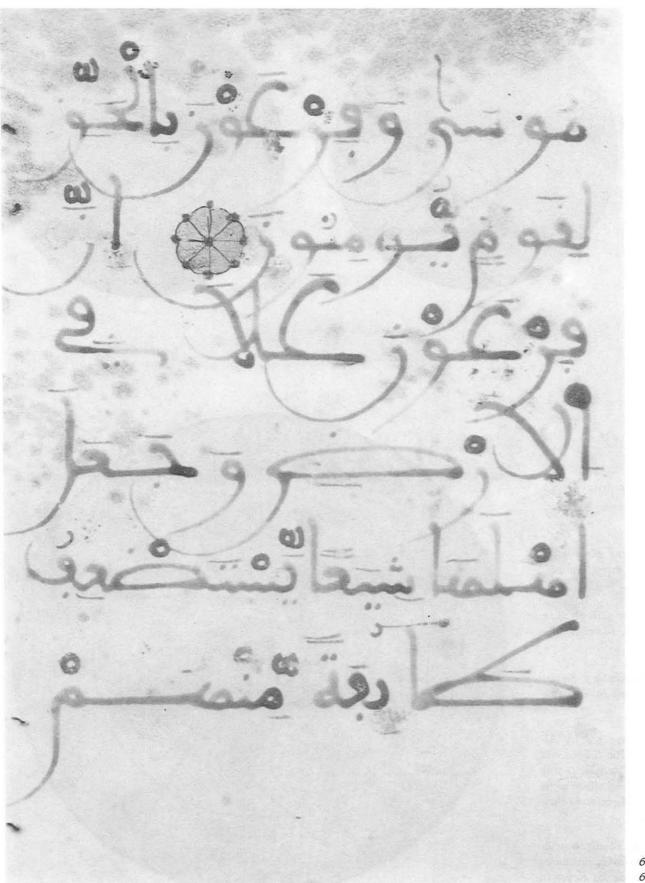
63 (Right). Colored plate with glaze in the Mudéjar style, from Manises, fifteenth century.

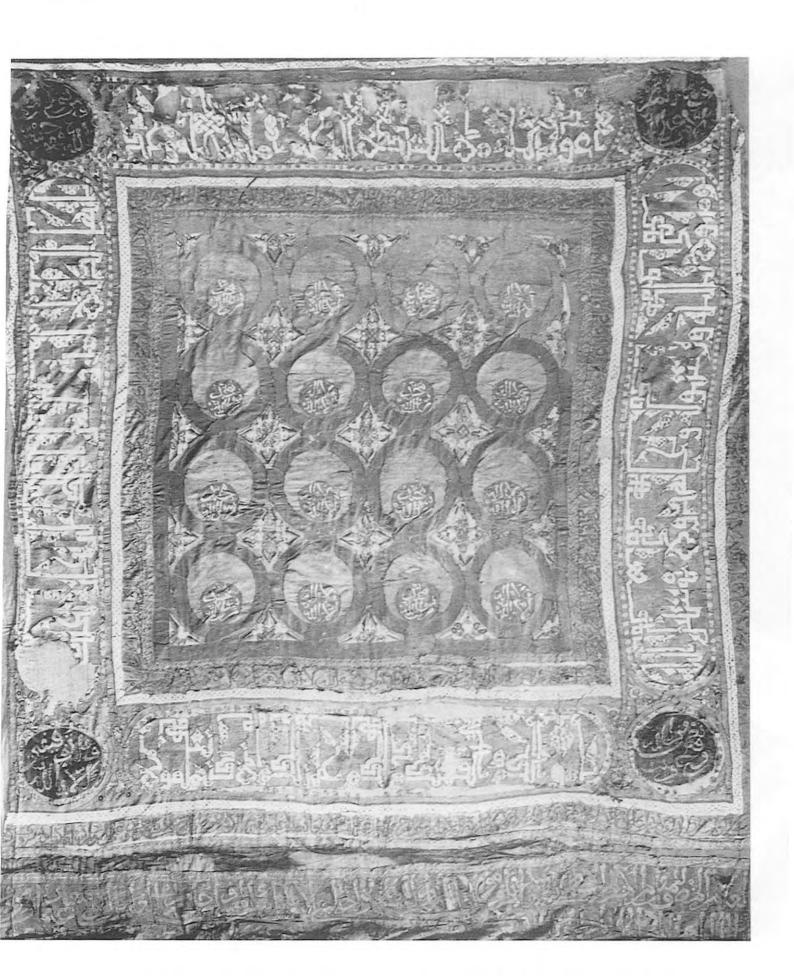
64 Page of a twelfth century Koran from Spain, probably made in Valencia. British Museum.

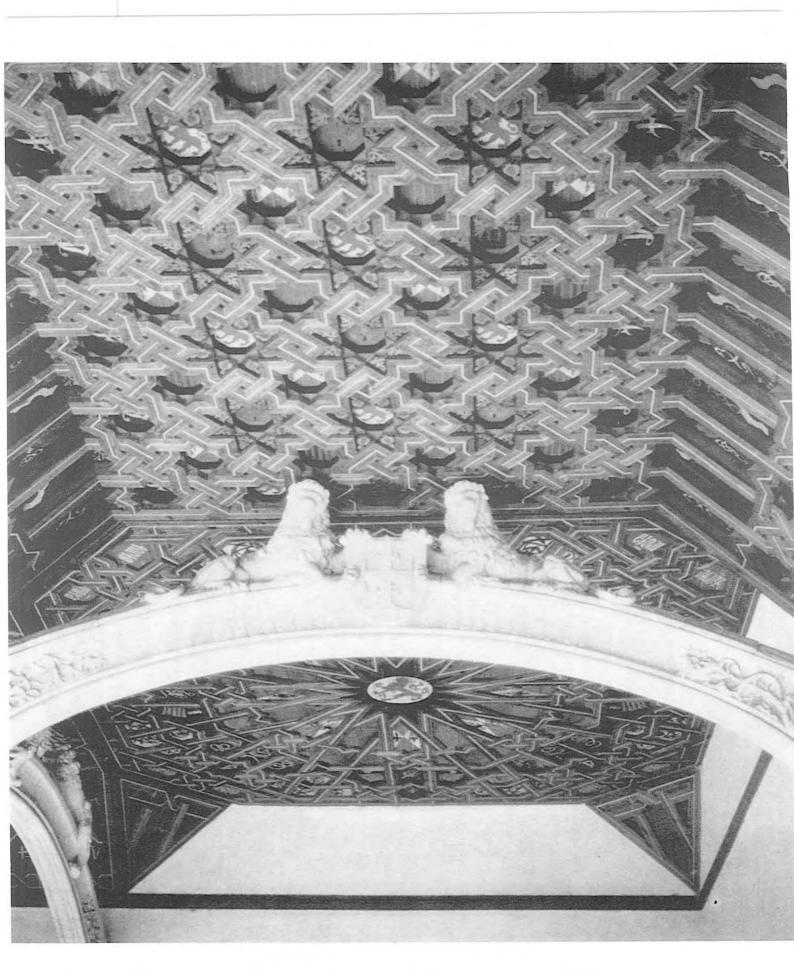
65 Moorish war flag captured by Alfonso XI in the battle of Rio Salado and now in the Cathedral of Toledo. It was woven in silk with gold and silver wefts and was carried by the Merinids in their advance towards Spain.

66 Carved ceiling in Mudéjar style (artesanado) in the late Gothic cloister of the Church of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo.



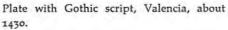






linking the different religious communities. The Christians, Jews, and Muslims of the Middle Ages had all inhabited the same spiritual universe, no matter how sharply their religious differences had divided them. For Renaissance culture this universe no longer existed.







Mudéjar plate with coat of arms, Valencia, about 1420.



XIII Granada

After the defeat of Las Navas de Tolosa, power rapidly slipped from the Almohades. In Morocco, their country of origin, they were supplanted by another Berber tribe, the Merinides, while Moorish Spain was disintegrating into many petty principalities again, which were sooner or later to succumb to the onslaught of the Christian armies. The kings of Aragón, Castile, and Portugal divided up among themselves the territories to be conquered. Aragón attacked in the east, and in 1238 took Valencia; Portugal extended southwards; and from the north Castile broke into Andalusia. In 1236, Córdoba, the former Caliphs' city, fell to the Christians.

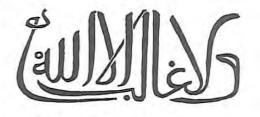
The Moorish kingdom of Granada was able to survive this catastrophe for almost two-and-a-half centuries only by becoming a vassal state of Castile. Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmar, a prince of the Arabic Nasrid tribe, had initially attempted to appropriate for himself a part of the disintegrating kingdom of the Banū Hūd of Saragozza, but driven back southwards he took possession of Granada in 1238. He



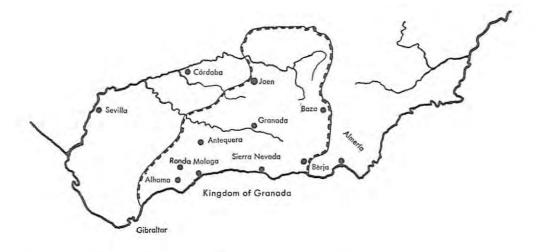
The Almohad empire in Spain, after its defeat at Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212.

was a capable and just ruler, who won the full confidence of the people of Granada. When his empire was threatened by Jaime I of Aragón from Valencia, while Ferdinand III of Castile was besieging Jaén on his northern frontier, Ibn Aḥmar unhesitatingly turned to Ferdinand, and placed himself under the latter's protection. Ferdinand made him his vassal and a member of the Castilian Cortes. Ibn Aḥmar remained loyal to his feudal lord. From then on Granada had to pay an annual tribute to Castile, and even had to perform the bitter task of giving military assistance to Castile during its conquest of Andalusia. In 1248, with the surrender of Seville — the last stronghold of Moorish resistance in Andalusia — Ibn Aḥmar was able to return to Granada and devote himself to peaceful works. On his return from the Andalusian war, the people of Granada are supposed to have greeted him with cries of "Victor! Victor!," to which he replied, *Wa lā ghāliba illa-Llāh* "There is no victor besides God!" This sentence became the battle-cry of the Nasrid princes; it is repeated a thousandfold in the decorative inscriptions in the Alhambra.

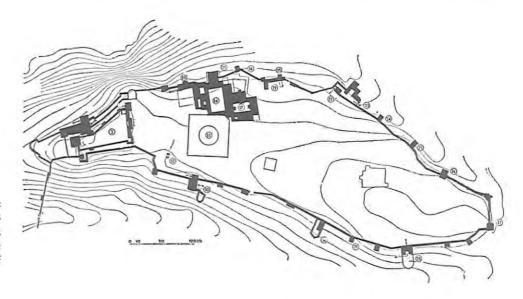
When Ferdinand III died in 1252, one hundred Granadan knights with torches kept his wake. Ibn Ahmar, who had enriched the city of Granada, at that time numbering some 150,000 inhabitants, with schools, hospitals, baths, and fountains, died in 1273. During his reign the Castilian influence had become marked in this last Moorish kingdom in Spain. Subsequently, however, and in particular during the reign of Yūsuf I who ascended the throne in 1333, the Granadans turned increasingly to North Africa. Under constant pressure from Castile and from the frequent incursions by Christian neighbors, they called more than once on the Merinid rulers of Fez for assistance. They attempted to carry the "holy war" into Spain, but suffered several defeats.



wa lā ghāliba illa-Llāh.



Granada, alternately at peace and at war with the Christians, maintained itself owing to the natural fortress of the mountain range which almost completely encircles the high, fertile plateau, on the edge of which lies Granada, and also to a standing army of Berber mercenaries, which North Africa was always ready to supply. Even the landscape of the kingdom of Granada, which extended as far as Almería in the east, in the north to Jaén, and south westwards as far as Gibraltar or Ronda, is like an extension of the Moroccan mountains. There is the



Plan of the walls encircling the Alhambra: 2 old fortress (Alcázaba); 10, 12, 23, 28 gates; 13, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30: defense towers; 14: Court of Myrtles; 17: Court of Lions; 19: Partal; 11: palace of Charles V, (later addition).

same alternation of barren high steppe and fertile river valleys as in the Atlas and the Rif, and there is also the same fan of glowing, burning, precious emerald and silver-green colors. The snow-covered cap of the Sierra Nevada above the white, garden-like Vega is like a glorious concentration of all that is to be found on the far side of the straits where a similar scene exists on a larger scale, less rich and more widely dispersed, in the land of the High Atlas.

Just as the entire kingdom of Granada, with its encircling mountains and forts, represented one vast fortress, so the Alhambra in its midst, built above the city on an outcrop projecting from the Sierra Nevada, was a citadel in itself, and one of the strongest in the whole of Spain. At its center, in the heart of the kingdom and inside the massive walls of the citadel (whose reddish color presumably gave rise to the name, *al-hamra*, "the red") lay hidden a crystalline paradise, the king's palace.

When Muhammad Ibn Ahmar took Granada, only the old Ziridian fortress, the Alcázaba (al-kasba) stood on the outer spur of the hill. Ibn Ahmar began to erect the high walls fortified with towers, which extend towards the mountain, fencing in the broader ridge of the hill. The building of the palace that nestles within these walls, was made possible after the founder of the new dynasty diverted the water of the Darro river that flows through the valley of Granada, bringing it to the top of the mountain, and along the slopes down to the projecting spur of the Alhambra, the Sābiķa. Water is the secret life of the Alhambra. It produces the luxuriant growth of the gardens and the splendor of the blooming shrubs. It reposes in the pools which mirror the magnificent, pillared halls, and cascades in

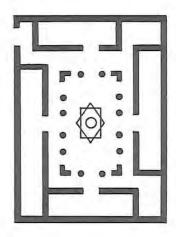
the fountains, and murmurs in the narrow channels that flow through the very center of the royal apartments. "A garden flowing with streams," is the Koran's description of paradise.

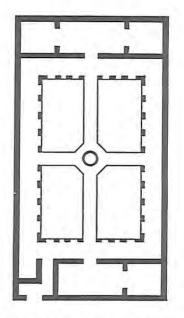
Another valuable advantage of the Alhambra is the way it dominates all the surrounding land. From the chambers built into the towers it is possible to look down almost vertically onto the city below. Even today one can look right into the interior courtyards, and to feel the pulse of public life. Looking across, it is possible to see the hills opposite, the broad plain of the Vega and the distant mountains with their watch-towers on the horizon. Yet for all that one is secluded, in a world of his own, in a palace of pearls.

The Alhambra was more than a palace; it was a royal city in miniature, with its living accommodation and administrative buildings, its barracks, stables, mosques, schools, baths, cemeteries, and gardens. Of all this, only the part that served as the royal residence remains, and it is little short of miraculous that even this much has survived. For all its splendor, the construction is light and almost careless. The fortress as such is certainly strong, for so it had to be, but the interior buildings were not built to last. To the Islamic-Arabic mentality, to their consciousness of the transitory nature of things, the residence of a ruler is a house built for a limited period. This is just one of the many contradictions presented by the Alhambra, when applying to it the same criteria that are usually applied to royal buildings elsewhere in Europe. But it is this very difference that constitutes the character of Granadan architecture.

Unlike all the royal residences of Christian Europe, here there is no façade, and no main axis to which the different buildings relate, no suite of apartments to pass through, beginning at one end, and working up to a climax. Instead, one enters various inner courtyards around which the rooms are grouped almost haphazardly, accessible through tucked-away passages, so that one can never guess what lies hidden on the other side of the walls. It reminds one of the oriental fairytale of the traveller who is thrown down a well, where he discovers a subterranean palace with gardens and maidens, and he lives there happily for twelve years, until one day he opens a little door previously overlooked, which leads him into an even more magnificent palace.

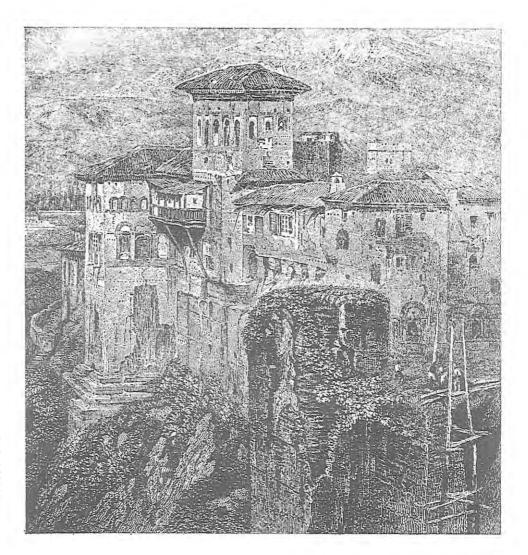
The plan on which each one of the individual groups of seemingly unrelated buildings is built is always the same. It is based on the Moorish dwelling house that always consists of a rectangular inner courtyard surrounded by oblong units, with rooms opening inwards. The inner courtyard is sometimes more squareshaped and enclosed by colonnaded halls, like a monastery courtyard — the Court of Lions in the Alhambra is built thus — or it may extend lengthways, like the Court of Myrtles in the Alhambra, and in this case it usually terminates at both of the short ends in pillared halls, leading through to living apartments, while the two long sides consist simply of walls — as in the Generalife — or of lower wings. One of the four architectural units adjoining the courtyard may have a projecting structure on the ground, facing outwards, rather like a large oriel with windows on all three sides. This provides the house with a room where



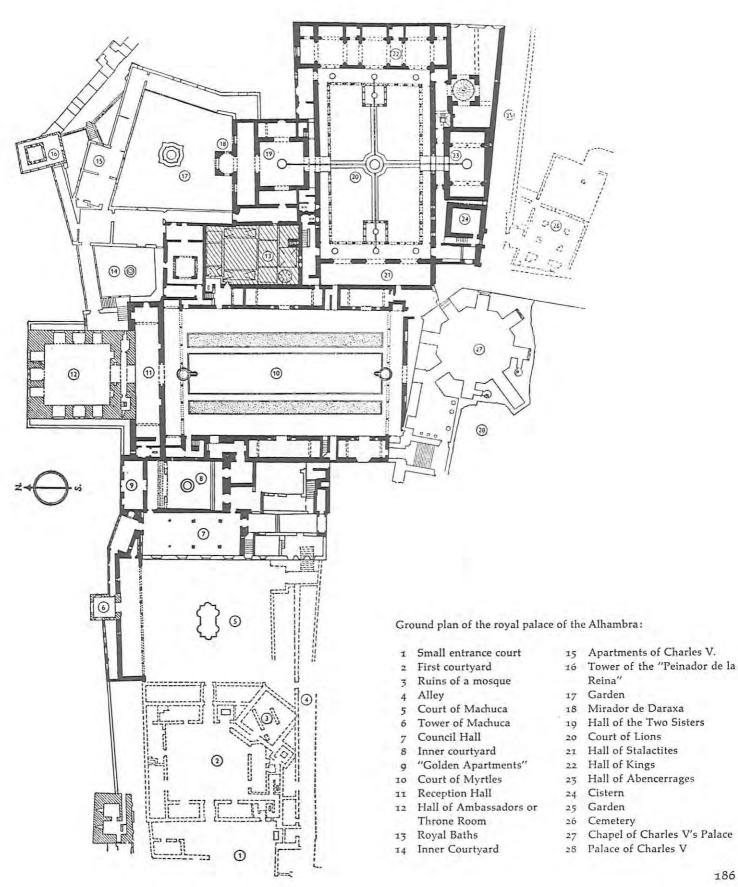


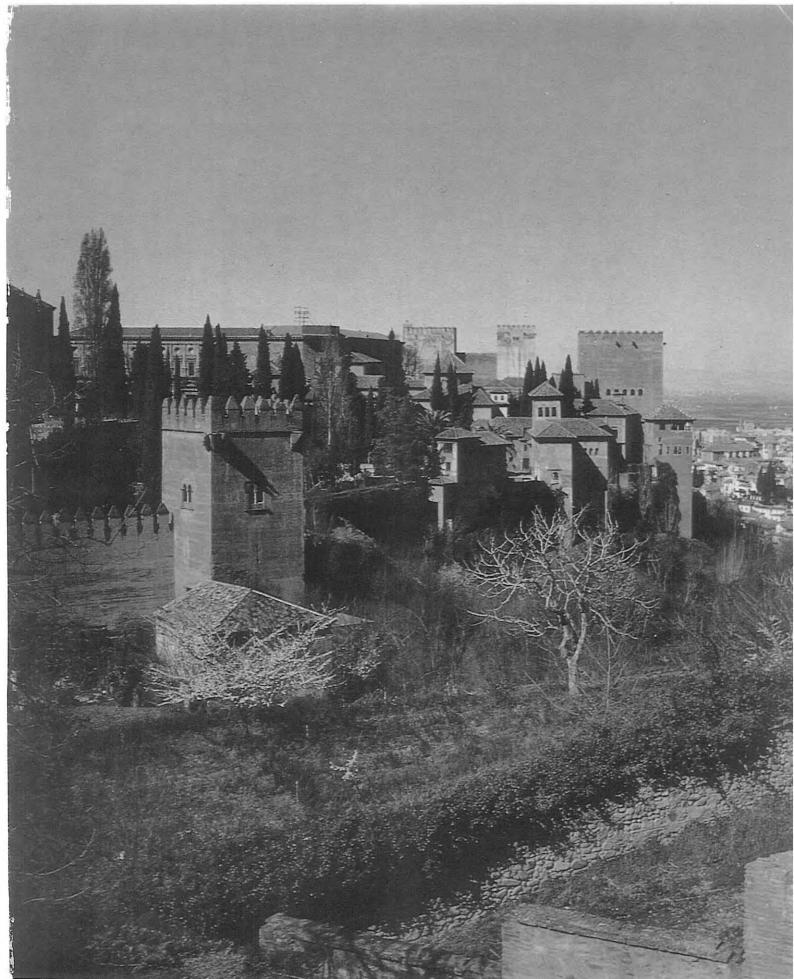
Diagrammatic ground plan of a house with internal courtyard, and a house with an inner garden.

guests may be entertained without disturbing the family life that is centered around the inner courtyard. There are a number of these "oriels" in the Alhambra, which are built into the projecting citadel towers. One of them, the so-called Hall of Ambassadors, or Throne Hall, is built on a very large scale. Access to it is from the Hall of Myrtles, and across a reception hall, and it incorporates one floor of the Comares Tower. A small oriel in front of a larger projecting structure is the so-called Mirador of Daraxa (dar 'Aisha, House of Aisha), which belongs to the group of buildings around the Court of Lions. The so-called Partal, the pillared hall by the large fountain in the Alhambra garden, has an oriel in the Lady Tower (Torre de las Damas). Rising up to overlook the roofs of the Moorish houses, there are often small towers where one can withdraw to enjoy the cool of the evening. At one time, the Alhambra possessed several such "belvederes," but the only ones left today belong to the Partal and to the northern wing of the Generalife. Another characteristic feature taken from the Moorish house is the way in which the inner courtyard has to be approached - not head on, but by a detour.



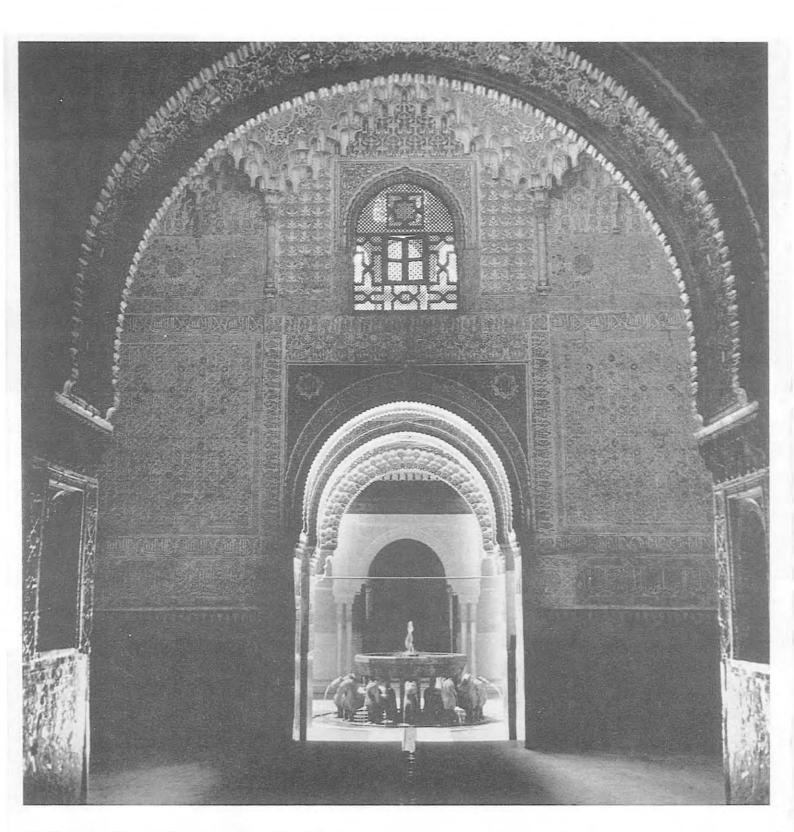
View of the "Lady Tower" of the Alhambra, set in front of the Partal garden; above it, a small tower, a belvedere for summer use; in the background the Sierra Nevada. Old engraving.









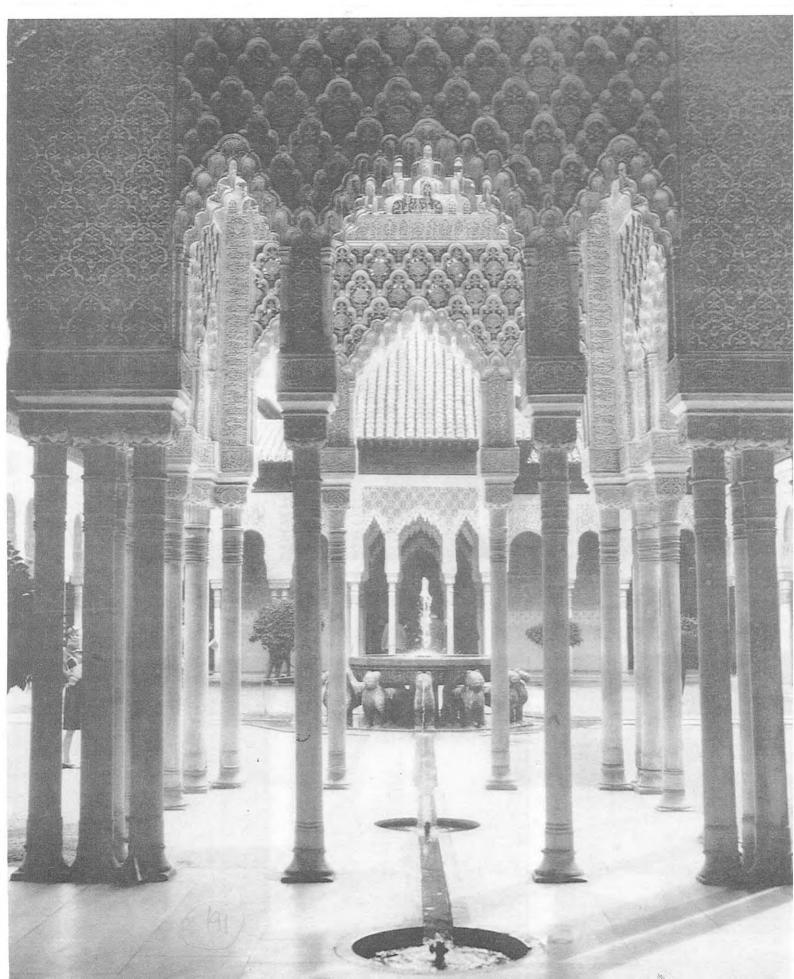


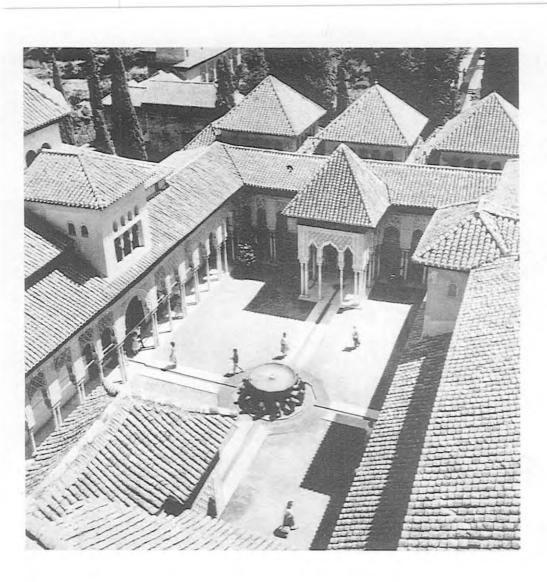
67 (Color plate) General view of the Alhambra from the east.

68 (Preceding page) The Court of Myrtles in the Alhambra, looking towards the Hall of the Ambassadors or Throne Room.

69 (Above). View of the Court of Lions in the Alhambra seen from the Hall of the Two Sisters.

70 (Right). Court of Lions in the Alhambra.

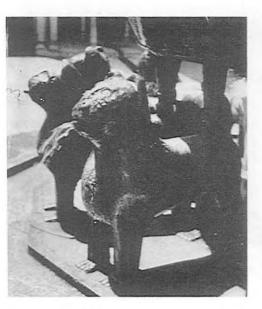




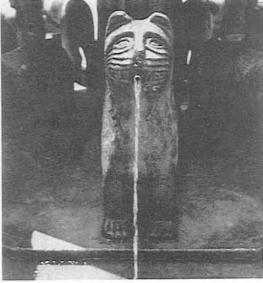
71 (Left) Court of Lions in the Alhambra, seen from above. Rising above the roofs are the "lanterns" containing the mukarnas cupolas, and beyond the court is the garden of the Partal.

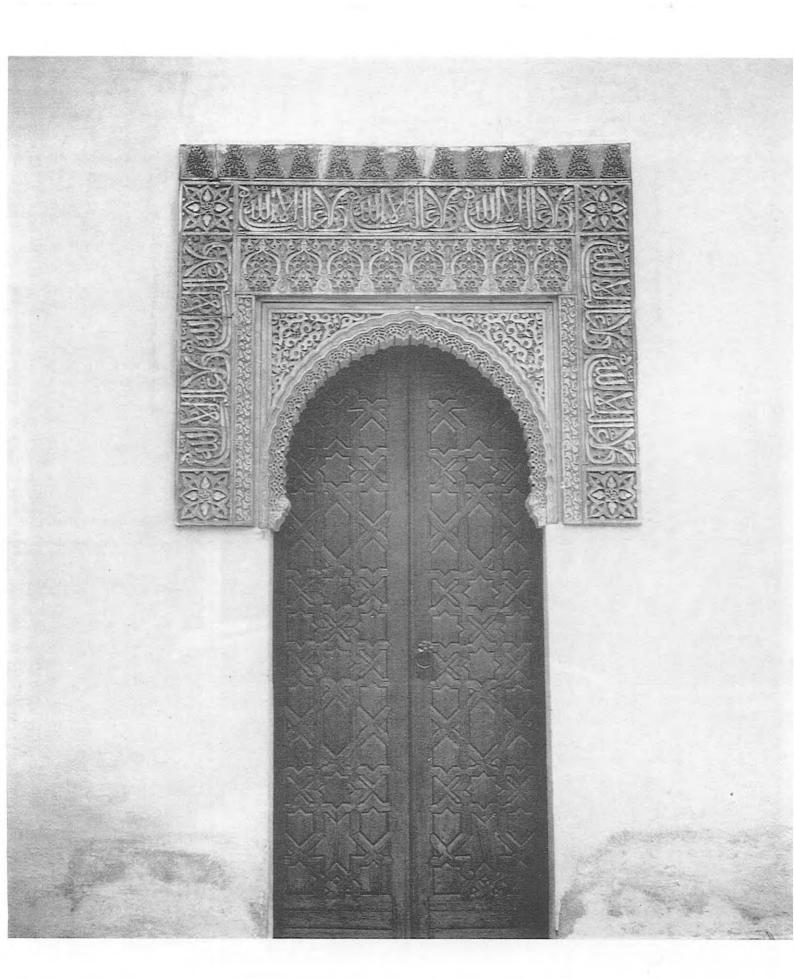
72–74 (Below). The Lion Fountain in the Alhambra.

75 (Right). Small doorway in the Court of Myrtles in the Alhambra, with the sevenfold repeated inscription: wa la ghāliba illa-Llāh ("there is no victor besides God").





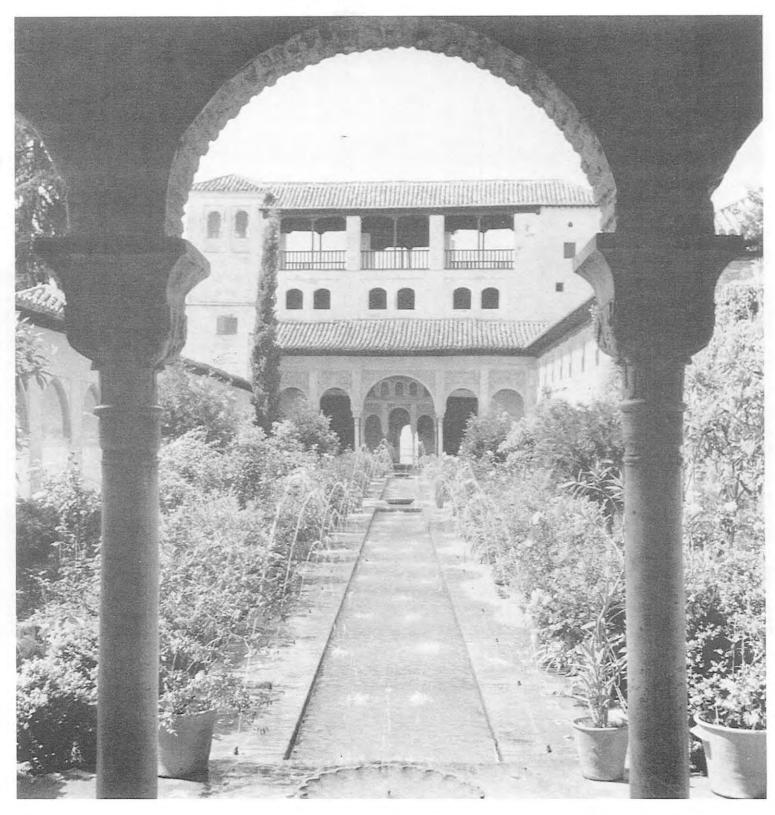


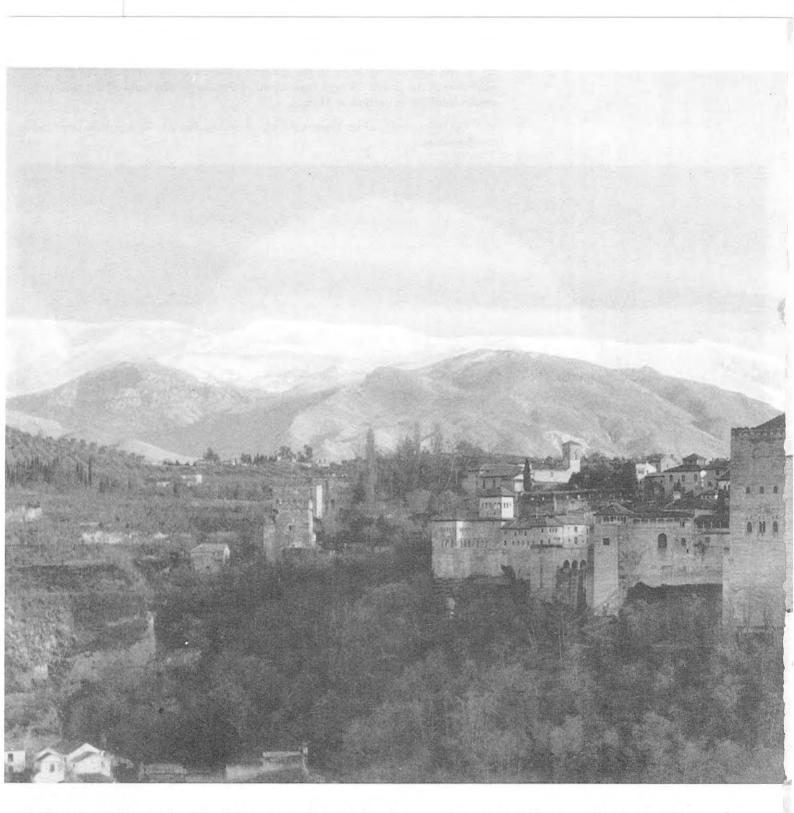




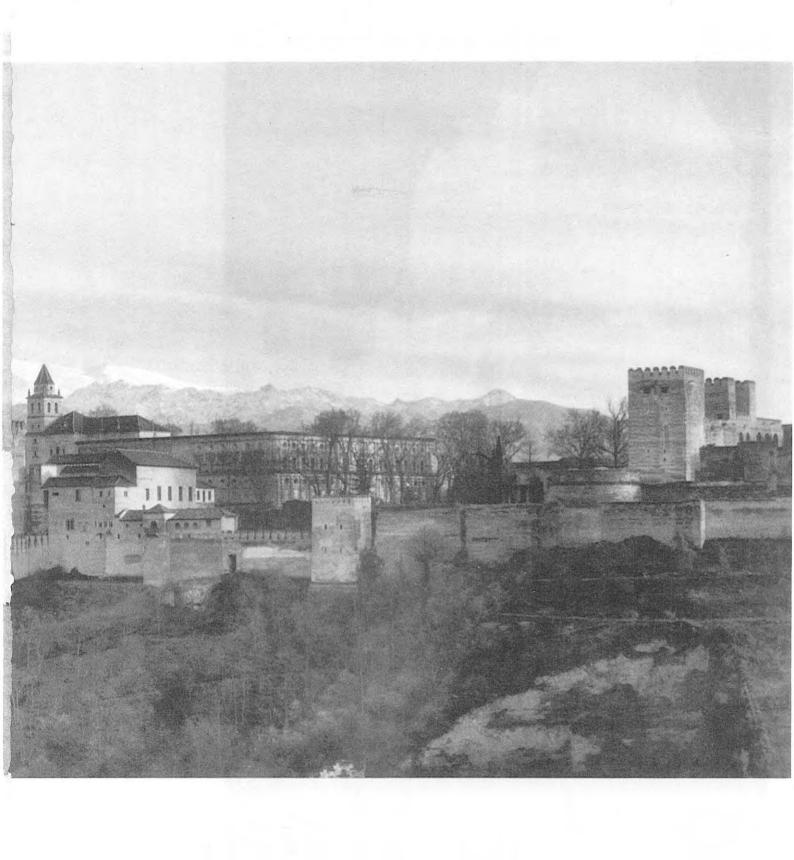
76 (Left). The summerhouse in the Alhambra known as the Partal. It belongs to the older part of the palace. Though reminiscent of Persian garden buildings, it is closest to similar buildings in northwest Africa.

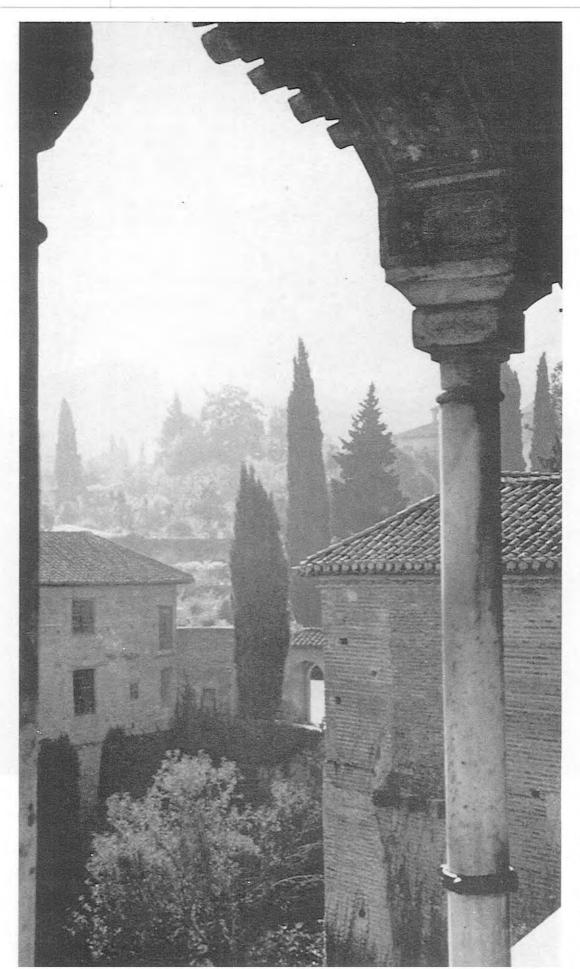
77 The inner garden of the Generalife, the summer palace on the mountain slope above the Alhambra.





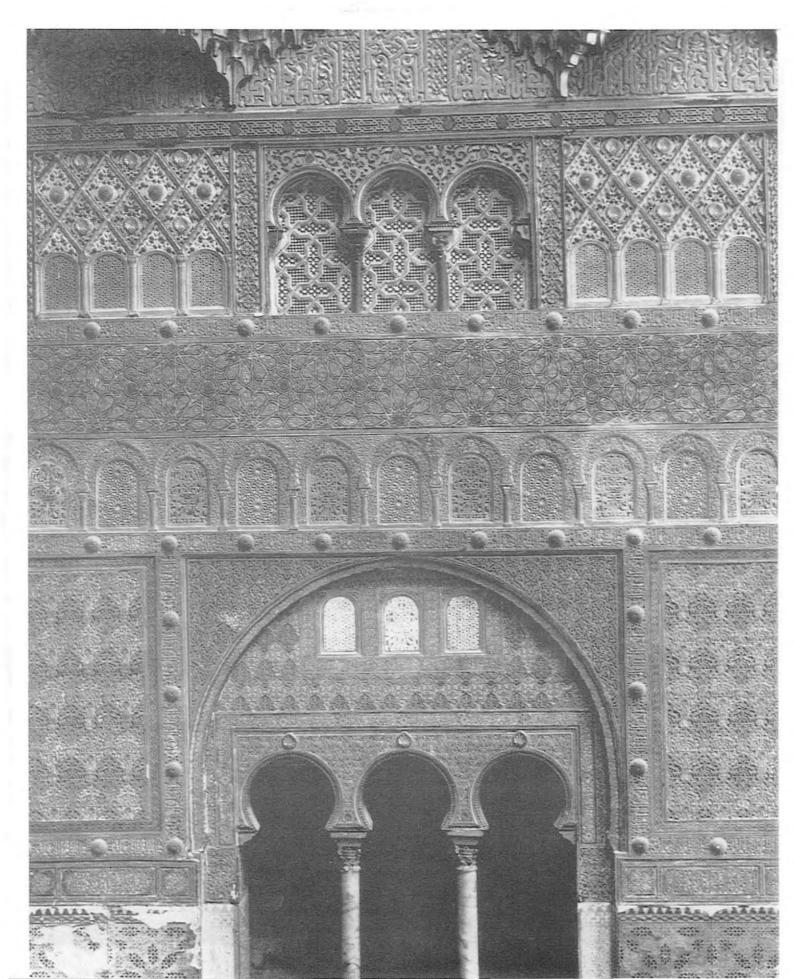
78 General view of the Alhambra, with the Sierra Nevada in the background, seen from the height of the Albaicín. The bell tower in the center belongs to a Franciscan monastery; on the right, the Renaissance palace of Charles V.

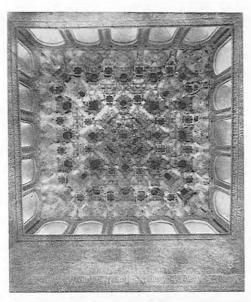




79 (Left). View looking down on the Garden of the Daraxa from a window in the Alhambra.

80 (Right). Model of one of the walls of the Hall of the Ambassadors or Throne Room in the Alhambra.

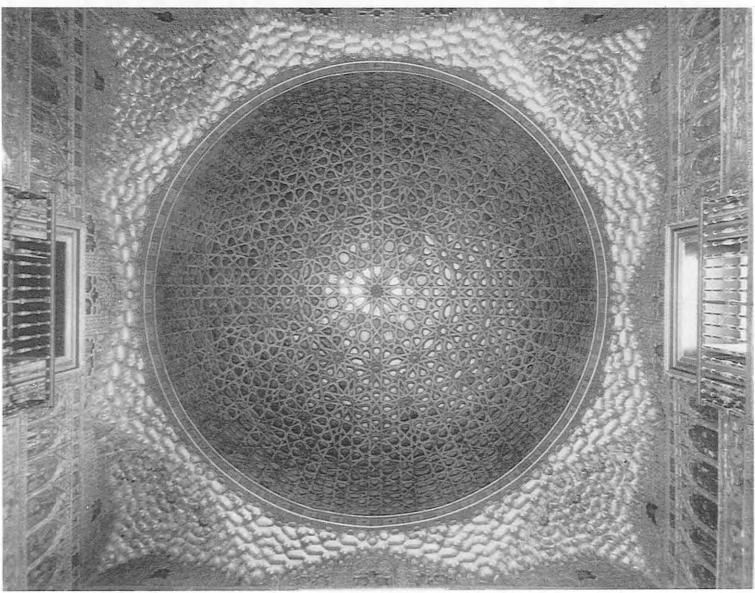


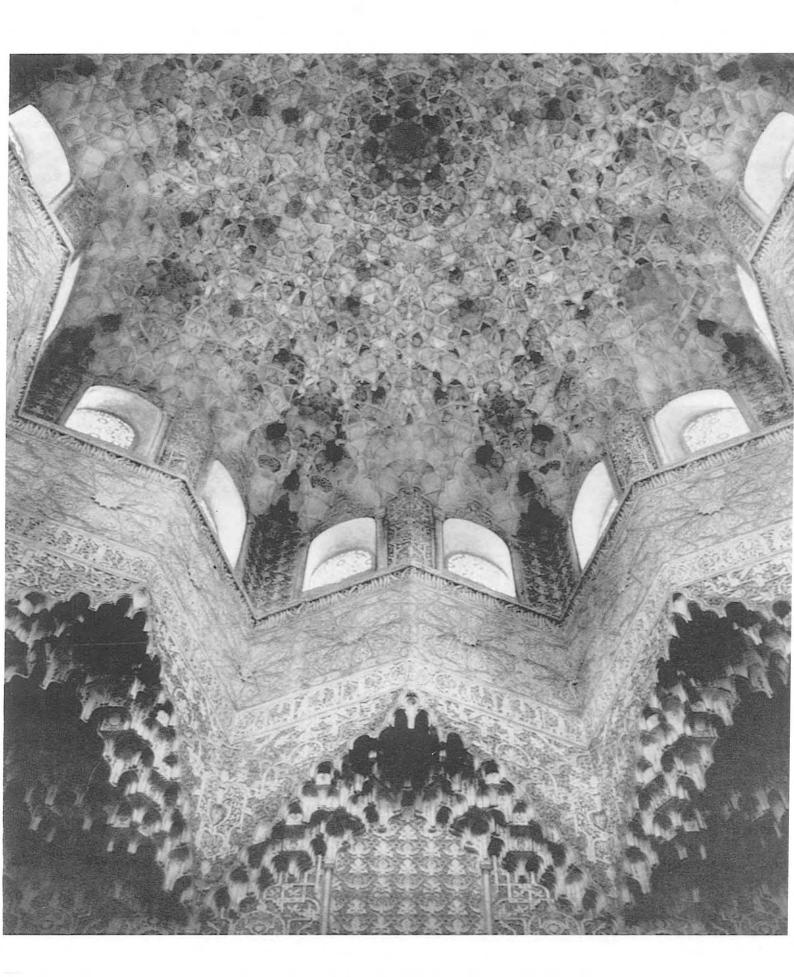


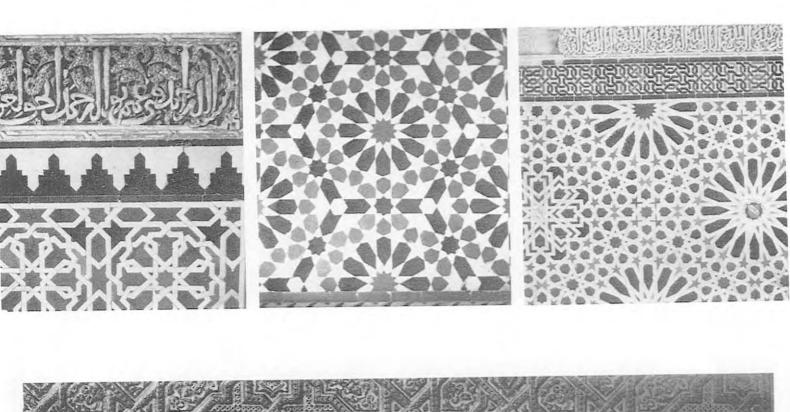
81 (Left). Stalactite vaulting (mukarnas) above the Hall of Kings in the Alhambra.

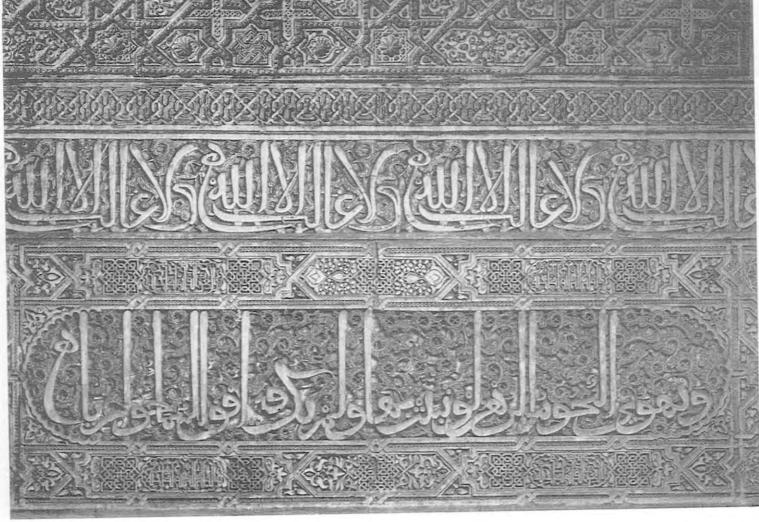
82 (Below). This wooden cupola over the Hall of the Ambassadors in the Alcázar in Seville is an example of the survival of Moorish art and techniques in Christian Andalusia; it was built by Diego Roiz, and dates from 1427.

83 Stalactite vaulting over the Hall of the Abencerrages in the Alhambra.









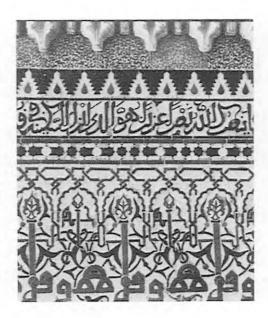
84–86 (Left). Colored wall tiles in the Alhambra.

87 (Left, below). Inscription on the wall decoration of the Hall of the Two Sisters. The upper inscription repeats the battle-cry, "There is no victor besides God"; the lower is a verse by Ibn Zamrak: "The stars themselves long to spend their time there [in the Court of Lions] instead of moving eternally in the heavens."

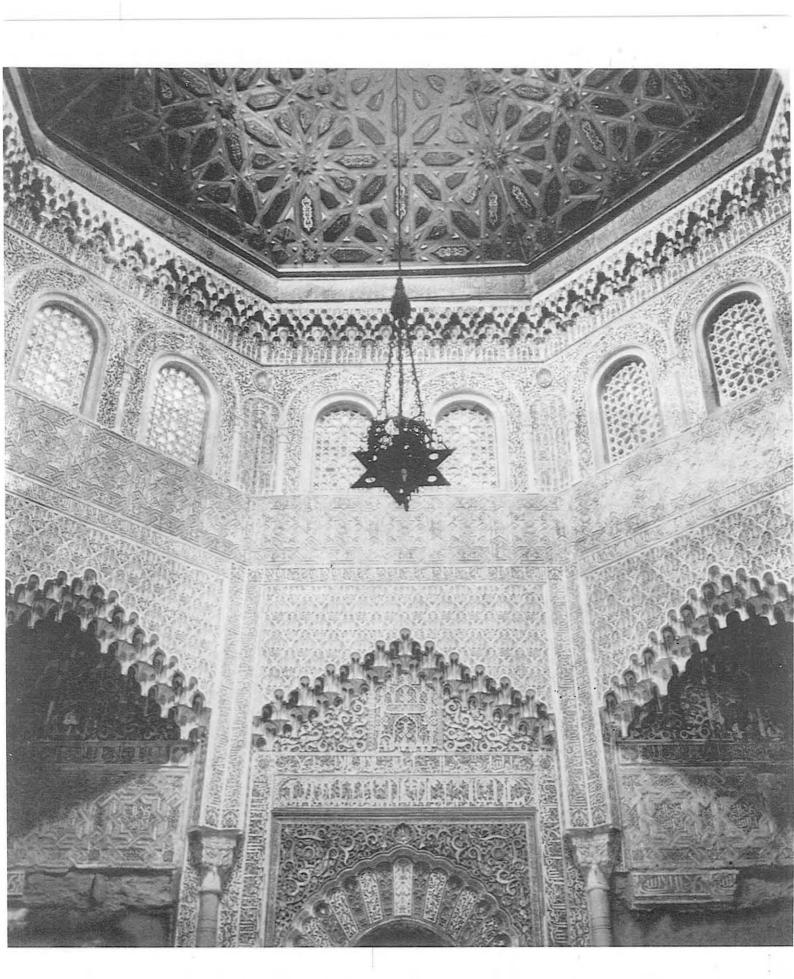
88 (Right). Wall decoration, with inscriptions carved in colored tiles, in the royal city residence (Cuarto Real) in Granada.

89 (Below). Remains of a fresco in the Lady Tower in the Alhambra.

90 (Following page). Mosque of the former madrasa of Granada.







Originally, on entering the Alhambra from the south side to the right of the ancient citadel (Alcázaba), there was a small court with administrative buildings, a mosque and a school. Progressing eastwards one came to the court, known today as the Court of Machuca, leading to the Council Hall, the Mexuar (Arabic: meshwar), where on certain days the prince would preside over tribunals for great and small alike. The common people presumably never penetrated any further than this. Probably only dignitaries and guests of the prince were allowed to enter the Court of Myrtles (attributed to Yūsuf I), and it is significant that the Throne Room could not be approached on the main axis of the complex, because of the pool that occupies the center of the court: a ruler had to be approached unobtrusively. No one knows whether any strangers were permitted to enter the other great interior courtyard, with its adjacent rooms - the Court of Lions built in the second half of the fourteenth century by Mohammed V. It is beyond doubt the most hidden part of the entire "king's city" and has the character of the haram, the "sanctuary" reserved for the immediate family and the women. But it is too large and magnificent to rule out the possibility that the ruler may have also shown this wonderland to privileged guests.

Tucked away between the "square" (cuarto) of buildings around the Court of Myrtles and the one around the Court of Lions are the baths, which are an essential feature of rich houses. Various small mosques or prayer-rooms are scattered about the wings of the palace, but finest of them all is a small, separate building in the garden of the Partal. These sanctuaries are identifiable because their orientation does not conform to the main axes of the palace, but are situated so as to face Mecca.

Higher up the mountain slope is the small summer palace of the garden of the Generalife, which probably takes its name from *djannat al-'arif,''* garden of the architect."

Classical European architecture is always at pains to make the observer participate in the play of the static forces, the column, in particular, which compares to the human body and determines the degree of lifting and weightbearing. Base, pillar, arch, and cornice all emphasize the forces at work in the construction. There is no evidence of any of this in the Alhambra. Where the smooth, weightless surfaces of walls are pierced by doorways, windows and arcades, and their weight had to be emphasized, they dissolve into a fine honeycomb, into sparkling light, and the columns of the pillared halls are so slender that the entire structure rising up above them appears to be entirely weightless.

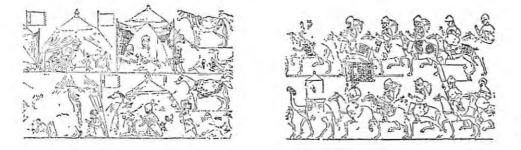
There could be no greater contrast than that between the Alhambra and the ponderous, oppressive Renaissance palace built into it for Charles V. Every block of the façade appears to stand out like a contracted muscle, and the columns at the gates are like menacing atlantes. Every form is animated by a titanic will for power. The architecture of the Alhambra, on the other hand, does not require any dramatic adjustment on the part of the beholder. It does not assault him with any experience of supra-human power. It is as detached, clear, and serene as the



Typical arabesque on the handle of a dagger belonging to Abū 'Abdi-Llāh, last Moorish ruler of Granada. (Museo del Eljército, Madrid)

geometry referred to by Plato, when he says, without it no one can enter the house of wisdom.

The ornamental art of the Alhambra is a science, and in order to appreciate it fully it is necessary to know its underlying principles. One of its elements is the arabesque, which is developed in an almost unlimited variety of ways. It is not merely a substitute for figurative art, which is forbidden by Islamic law, for, apart from the fact that this law is diversely interpreted (there are the remains of figurative wall paintings in the Alhambra), the arabesque, with its rhythmic repetition

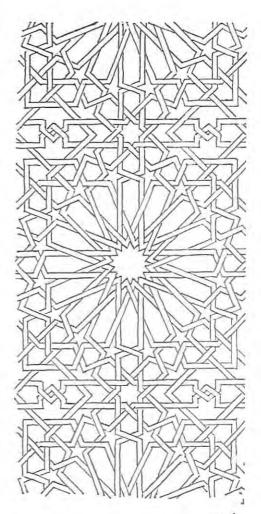


Remains of frescoes in the "Lady Tower" of the Alhambra.

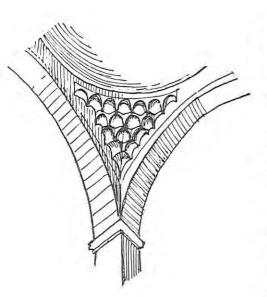
serves quite a different artistic purpose than does pictorial art. It is a direct contrast to it, as it does not seek to capture the eye to lead it into an imagined world, but, on the contrary, liberates it from all preoccupations of the mind, rather like the view of flowing water, fields waving in the wind, falling snow or rising flames. It does not transmit any specific ideas, but a state of being, which is at once repose and inner rhythm. This is abstract art, without any subjective, semi-conscious tentativeness about it — it is composed by entirely conscious rules. The arabesque developed from the plant tendril belongs to the law of pure rhythm — hence its unbroken flow, its opposing phases, the balance of its filled-in and open forms. The arabesques of the Alhambra combine abstract palmettes with stylized flowers and geometric interweavings — tongues of flame, jasmine blossoms, and snowflakes, unending melody and divine mathematics — or spiritual intoxication and spiritual sobriety combined, to use the terminology of the Islamic mystics. Hieratic inscriptions are inserted or interwoven into all this, and sometimes gentle, intersecting arches emerge from their strokes like the diffused glow of candlelight.

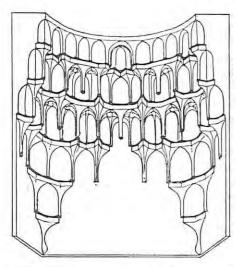
The geometric roses or stars that continuously run into one another and develop out of each other are essentially the product of the Islamic spirit. They are the purest simile for the manifestation of divine reality (*al-hakika*), which is the center throughout, in each creature, and in each cosmos, without any being or any thing being able to claim to being its sole reflection, creating an unending reflection of centers in each other. The "unity of being" (*wahdat al-wudjūd*), however, is expressed in two different ways in these "spiders webs of God" — by being woven from one single band, and in the way they radiate from many identical centers. Work of this kind filled the Muslim artist with satisfaction as none other could.

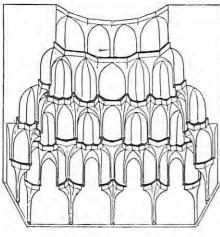
This art has sometimes been called "dehumanised" on account of its abstract and formalistic character. In reality its function is to provide man with a framework



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worthy of his dignity, to make him its center, and at the same time to remind him that he himself is God's representative on earth. The sparing use of the human form in the decoration of the Alhambra stems both from an awe for the divine nature of man, as well as consideration for the inhabitant of the palace, who was to be the sole "gem in the ring." Even today the way in which such an architectural framework ennobles the human figure can still be seen on the rare occasions when Muslim visitors in their traditional costumes pass through the rooms of the Alhambra.

Another feature of Moorish ornamentation are the spatial forms known as "stalactites" — *mukarnas* in Arabic. Basically they consist of a niche, that mediates between a dome and a corner of the walls supporting it. The combination of a dome with a square base is one of the classical problems of architecture, and has already been mentioned in connection with the Great Mosque of Córdoba. The Romans solved this problem by putting in pendentives or spherical triangles as a smooth transition between the circular base of the dome and the square of the walls below. In preference to this Islamic architecture chose a clearer arrangement by bridging the four corners under the dome with simple niches, as in the Mosque of Córdoba. An alternative method, which produced a denser transition, was to use several niches joined together, the top of which touched the base of the dome, while at the bottom they reach down into the angle of the wall. This is the origin of the *makarnas* honeycomb.

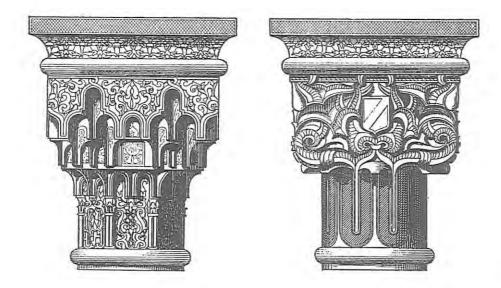
In cosmological terms, the round dome represents the eternally rotating sky, while the square of the walls below corresponds to the earthly world dominated by contrasts. The sky is of ether. The *makarnas* cells, which lead from the undivided dome to the square of the walls to some extent permit the "flowing" ether of the sky to freeze into the firm earthly form. Emphasizing and elongating the edges formed by the meeting of several *mukarnas* niches produces the picture that gave rise to the comparison with stalactites. The individual niches or cells can be joined in a variety of ways, and be bent outwards or inwards. The Granadan craftsmen divided up entire domes into *makarnas* cells, into a honeycomb whose honey consisted of light itself. The magical effect of these formations consists not least in the way in which they catch the light and filter it in an exceptionally rich and satisfactory graduation of shadows, making the simple stucco more precious than onyx or jade.

A similar effect is produced by the trellis or network decoration etched into the walls of the pillared halls, with a further delicate network of flowers or stems at the center of the polygonal shapes. The walls appear to be quite translucent, as if made up entirely of light-filled cells.

The highest meaning of all Islamic art, its actual content, is always the unity, and light is unity, which manifests itself in a variety of graduations, and yet by its nature always remains indivisible.

Certain European scholars have described the art of the Alhambra as "decadent" simply because chronologically it comes at the end of the period of Moorish rule in Spain. However, it displays various features that would be unthinkable in a

declining art. One of these is the perfect harmony with nature, a harmony which is partially due to the fact that the architecture does not seek to imitate nature, nor does nature — that is to say, the original Moorish garden art — seek to imitate the former. Nature, moreover, is a test of the quality of any architecture. One has only to think of the Partal and the magnificent garden of the Generalife. A second proof is the balance of simplicity and wealth, as for example in the Court of Myrtles; great areas of white alternate with "wall tapestries" of arabesques, so that for all the splendor, a certain simplicity is preserved. It is no coincidence that one is constantly reminded of the white stillness of an Islamic saint's grave. Finally, the unfailing quality of Granadan art may be seen in the artistic fullness of individual forms, such as the capitals in the Court of Lions. Never, since the Egyptian lotus capitals, have capitals been more elegantly crowned, if by elegance we mean the combination of the greatest simplicity with the greatest range of forms.



Capitals from the Alhambra.

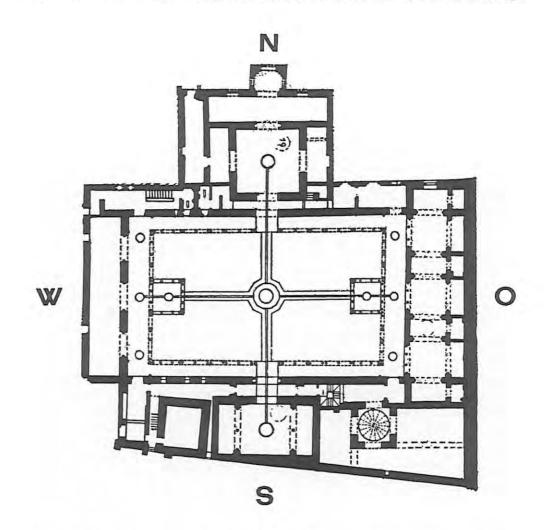
The truth is that in the last hundred years of their empire, the masters of the Alhambra ran out of means, so that they could afford only to pay for poorer quality work. However, there was a direct continuation of the art of the Alhambra in North Africa, where it has remained alive to this day. The Paris Mosque, built by Moroccan craftsmen in the 1920s, still displays all the beauty of Moorish-Granadan art.

There is no essential difference between spiritual and secular art in Islam. A living room can always be a room for prayer, too, in which the same rites may be performed as in a mosque. "The fountain in my midst," runs an inscription in the Hall of Ambassadors or Throne Room, "is like the soul of a believer, immersed in remembrance of God."

The Court of Lions is a symbol of paradise, for basically it is a *hortus conclusus*, a walled garden, and every such garden is in Islam an image of paradise. In the Koran, *al-janna* has two meanings — "garden" and "concealment." One must

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visualize the present-day sand-strewn areas between the four water courses as they once were — beds full of blooming shrubs and sweet-smelling herbs. The plan of the heavenly garden always includes the four rivers of paradise flowing



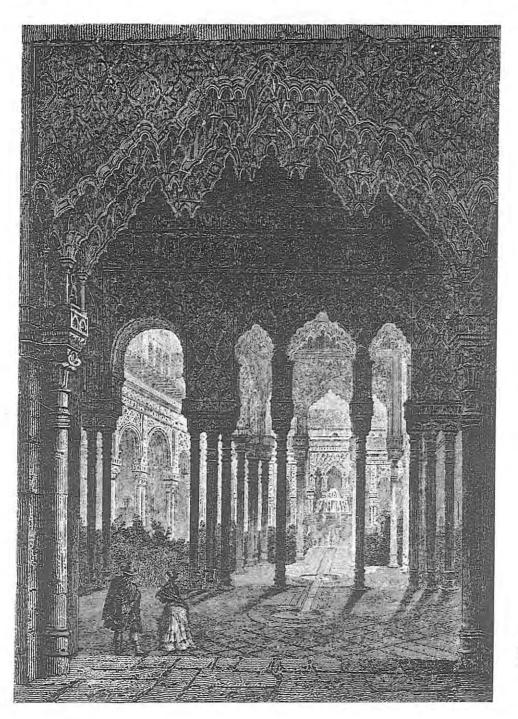
Ground plan of the Court of Lions.



Bronze pitcher in the shape of a lion. Spain, about 1200 A. D.

towards the four quarters of heaven, or from them towards the center. The water courses of the Court of Lions are fed from the two halls to the north and south, and from the two stone canopies at the west and east end. The floor of the halls is set higher than the garden, and so the water, which flows from round basins, runs down over the threshold towards the fountain, where it collects around the lions and soaks away. If one washed at one of these basins, the water always remained clear and clean. The fountain itself with its twelve lions supporting a basin and spewing water, is an ancient symbol which reached the Alhambra from the pre-Christian Orient by way of all kinds of intermediary links. For the water-spewing lion is none other than the sun, from which life gushes forth, and the twelve lions are the twelve suns of the Zodiac, the twelve months which are all present concurrently in eternity. They support a "sea," like the twelve brazen bulls in the Temple of Solomon, and this sea is the reservoir for the heavenly waters. To what extent the builders of the fountain in the Alhambra were aware of this symbolism is hard to say. The stone canopies, too, at opposite ends in the east and west of the garden, belong to the picture of the garden of paradise, for in the description of paradise the Koran mentions high canopies (*rafraf*) or tents. We must look to the East for the model of these awnings swaying on slender columns, and indeed much of this part of the Alhambra harks back to Persian art.

This picture of paradise is composed not merely of murmuring water, the scent of flowers, and the song of birds (and what would the Alhambra be without all these?), but also of the enchanting contrast between the luxuriant vegetation which



View of the Court of Lions in the Alhambra, from an old engraving. Here the court still retains the character of an interior garden. once adorned the Court of Lions, and the crystalline architecture. The true paradise possesses both these qualities in equal measure — the fullness of life and the immutable nature of crystal.

Paradise is created from divine light, and this structure, too, is made up of light. For the forms of Moorish architecture, the frieze of arabesques, the trelliswork etched into the walls, the sparkling stalactites of the arches are all used not so much for their own sakes, but to display the nature of light. The innermost secret of this art is an alchemy of light, for just as true alchemy aims at "transforming the body into spirit, and the spirit into body," so does the art of Granada dissolve the solid bodies of the structure into a mass of shimmering light by transforming the light into immobilized crystal.

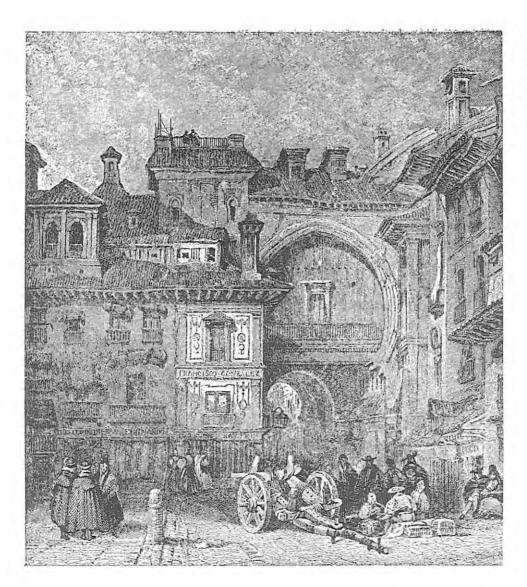
Men are not made to live permanently in an earthly paradise such as the Alhambra. Dispute after dispute broke out in the Nasrid tribe and in the kingdom, and Castilian politicans seized every opportunity to enter into the fray between the different Granadan camps. With the unification of Christian Spain, through the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragón and Isabella of Castile in 1469, the fate of Granada was sealed. The new Spanish state, in which church and kingdom, spiritual and secular power were tightly interlocked, insisted on uniformity of belief from all its subjects. It is always easy to find a reason for war. In 1491 Ferdinand assembled an army of 80,000 men, one of the largest Christian armies of the time, and constructed the garrison city with the telling name of Santa-Fé (Holy Faith). The Moors defended themselves heroically until hunger drove them to surrender. In 1492, the same year that Christopher Columbus discovered America, the "Catholic Monarchs," Ferdinand and Isabella, took possession of the Alhambra, while the last King of Granada, Abū 'Abdi-Llāh -- "Boabdil" to the Spaniards - retreated to the Alpujarras. The Catholic Monarchs had pledged not to violate the Muslims' freedom of worship, but the politics of the new Archbishop of Toledo, Jiménez de Cisneros, soon put an end to this liberty. When, in 1400, he issued the order to burn all Arabic books of religious content, there was a general uprising in Granada, as a result of which the agreement was revoked. The Muslims were now given the choice of either converting to Christianity, or of leaving Spain, and those Muslims who converted only for appearance sake were persecuted with all the apparatus of the Inquisition. When this unleashed an embittered uprising of large sections of the population, the so-called Moriscos the Moors who refused to convert - were driven out of Spain. Some 170,000 Jews had already had to leave Spain before them. The Moriscoes tended to settle in the coastal cities of North Africa, where some of them built corsair vessels for use to revenge themselves on the Spaniards.

Since Granada was handed over to the Spaniards undamaged, the city has preserved much of its Moorish character. This applies particularly to the Albaicín quarter, which takes its name from its population of Muslim fugitives from the city of Baeza (*al-bayizin*). Many of the houses contain Arabic inscriptions, and the inner courtyards are often built in Moorish style. Thomas Münzer, who visited



A fourteenth century vase in the Granadan style (so-called Alhambra vase), which was found in Sicily. (Museo Archeologico, Palermo) Granada in 1494, described the narrow alleyways where two laden mules could not pass each other. The houses, he said, were on the small side, unimposing from the outside, but clean within, and all supplied with running water, with fountains and gardens in the concealed courtyards.

A few splendid city residences still survive — the so-called Cuarto Real, which was annexed by a Dominican monastery, the "House of the Widow" (*dar al-horra*), which represents the purest type of Moorish city house, the Casa de los Girones with its half-preserved inner courtyard, and the Alcázar del Genil, a little palace on the perimeter of the town. At the heart of the old city one can still find the tiny alleys adorned with arcades of the Alcaiceria (*al-haisariya*), the market for fine fabrics and jewelry, and a surviving caravansary, the Corral del Carbón, which might equally well be in Fez or Marrakesh. Unfortunately, the *maristan*, the Moorish lunatic asylum was pulled down in the nineteenth century. At the entrance to Granada, on the bank of the Genil, there stands a simple grave mosque,



The Plaza de Bibarrambla in Granada, from an old engraving. "Bibarrambla" comes from the Arabic, $b\bar{a}b$ ar-ramla, "Gate to the beach," and applies to the old city gate, which has here been built round with houses. Today it has been transferred to the park on the slopes of the hill dominated by the Alhambra. with an interior umbrella dome, which has been converted into a chapel of Saint Sebastian. Similar square-shaped roofs are to be found in North Africa above many a saint's grave.

Only few visitors to present-day Granada are aware that the interior of a Renaissance palace houses a former Islamic college. The college, or *madrasa*, was built under Yūsuf I in about 1349, facing the main mosque of Granada, where the cathedral now stands. Based on an Oriental model that had been adopted in Morocco, it was the only one of its kind in Spain, for up to that time teaching had been done in mosques or houses. The mosque, which forms one wing of the original building, consists of a square, high room, which tapers off through *mukarnas* pendentives into an octagonal, above which there is a story with windows all round — a so-called lantern — topped by a wooden, tent-shaped roof. This was the last refuge of Islamic learning on Spanish soil, but not the final home of Andalusian-Islamic culture. This culture was taken across to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia by Moors who had left Spain long before the exodus of the Moriscoes.

The longing for lost Andalusia has never been entirely extinguished in those lands. Conversely, the Andalusian people have retained something of a wistful memory of the glorious Moorish empire. When the image of the Holy Virgin is paraded at some church festival, a solitary voice will often soar above the multitude of believers into a *saeta*, a jubilant song of praise, which, with its high, swelling melody, lingering on one syllable, is strangely reminiscent to the song of praise sung to the Prophet during Islamic festivals. The assenting cries of 'Olé, olé' of those listening are nothing less than a distant echo of the Muslim call of 'Allāh! Allāh!'

Chronological Table

	Dates in the history of Moorish Spain	Comparative dates in the history of Christian Europe
711	Invasion of Spain by Berber army under Tāriķ Ibn Ziyād	
714	anių ten žijuu	Charles Martel, Mayor of the Merovingians,
		takes on leadership of the Franks
718 719	First Christian uprising in Asturias Capture of Narbonne by the Muslims	Pelayo I establishes a Christian kingdom near Oviedo. Constantinople beseiged by the
/19	capture of rearbonne by the mushing	Arabs
730		Controversy over images results in the rift between the Byzantine Empire and the Pa- pacy
732		Charles Martel defeats the Muslims at Tours and Poitiers
739		Accession of Alfonso I of Asturias
740	Berber uprising in Spain	
742	Berber uprising in North Africa forces a Syrian army to cross to Spain, where it becomes domiciled	
747		Pepin III annointed King of the Franks
750	Collapse of the Ummayyad Caliphate in the East, and the rise of the Abbasids	
755	'Abd ar-Raḥmān I, the Ummayyad, lands in Spain	
768		Charlemagne, ruler of the Franks
778		Charlemagne besieges Saragossa — his rear- guard is defeated by the Basques at Ronces-
784	Archbishop Elipandus of Toledo proclaims his doctrine of Adoption	valles
785	'Abd ar-Rahmān I buys the Cathedral of Córdoba from the Christians, in order to build the Great Mosque in its place	
788	Death of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān I. His son, Hishām I, succeeds him	
789		The Synod of Rome condemns the doctrine of Elipandus
793	Arabs attack Narbonne	
796	Death of Hishām I. Succeeded by al-Ḥakam I	
800		Charlemagne is crowned Emperor. The Franks take Barcelona and found the Cata- lan province
808	Foundation of Fès by Idris II	
814		Death of Charlemagne
817	Uprising against al-Hakam I in Córdoba, and emigration of part of population to Fès	
822	Death of al-Ḥakam I, succeeded by 'Abd ar- Raḥmān II. Ziryāb, the musician, arrives in Spain	

830		The relics of James the Apostle are found in Galicia, and Santiago de Compostela be- comes the new center of pilgrimage tor western Christianity
839	Diplomatic exchanges between Córdoba and Byzantium	
843	 A consistent 	Accession of Charles the Bald and Louis the
844	Seville attacked by Vikings	German
850	Christian martyr movement in Córdoba	
852	Death of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān II. Succeeded by Muḥammad I	
853		Normans seize Orléans and Paris.
866		Accession of Alfonso III of Castile, who extends his kingdom as far as the Duero
886	Death of Muḥammad I. Succeeded by 'Abd- Allāh	
883	Birth of Ibn Masarra	
890	The Arabs settle in Provence, and carry out raids as far as Eastern Switzerland	
900	Mukaddam ben Mu'āfā of Cabra composes the first short verses with alternating rhymes	
905		Foundation of the Kingdom of Navarre near Pamplona
910		Death of Alfonso III of Castile. Foundation of the Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy
912	Death of 'Abd-Allāh. Succeeded by 'Abd ar- Raḥmān III	or me robby of chiny in burgandy
914		León is made capital of Asturias
918	Death of Ibn Ḥafsūn, the rebel leader	
920—24	'Abd ar-Raḥmān III captures Osma, San Esteban de Gormaz, Clunia, Muez and Pam- plona	
929	'Abd ar-Raḥmān III proclaims himself Ca- liph. Beginning of Spanish Caliphate	
931	Ibn Masarra, the mystic, dies in Córdoba	
936	Foundation of the royal city of Medinat az- Zahrā in Córdoba	Otto I
945	Byzantine embassy in Córdoba	
c. 950		Gerbert of Aurillac, later Pope Sylvester II, studies mathematics in Spain
953	John of Görtz sent to Córdoba as Otto I's ambassador	
954	Fatimid fleet at Almería	and the second of the second
955		Battle on the Lech
961	Death of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān III. Succeeded by al-Ḥakam II	
961	Cordovan calendar	
961—66	Extension of the Great Mosque of Córdoba	
	by al-Ḥakam II	
972	Byzantine embassy in Córdoba	
973		Death of Otto I; accession of Otto II
976	Death of al-Hakam II. Succeeded by His- hām II. The power behind the throne is the hājib, Ibn Abi Amir, known as al-Manşūr	
	billāh	
978	The administrative center of <i>Medinat az</i> - Zāhira is set up near Córdoba	
982	State of the state	Fatimid Arabs defeat Otto II at Tarentum
985—88	Al-Manșūr's campaign in Catalonia and the Christian north; capture of Coimbra, León	

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and Zamora

987—88	Al-Manşūr extends the Great Mosque of Córdoba	
994	Birth of Ibn Hazm in Córdoba	
995		Otto III
997	Al-Manșūr takes Santiago de Compostela	
1000		Sancho III (the Great) becomes ruler of Navarre
1002	Death of al-Manșūr. His son, 'Abd al Malik al-Muzaffar, succeeds him	
1007	Death of Abū-l-Kāsim al-Majirītī	
1008	Death of 'Abd-al-Malik al-Muzaffar. Abdic- ation of Hisham II. Medinat az-Zāhira is sacked	
1016	Córdoba taken by the Berber leader, Ali Ibn Hammūd. Destruction of Medinat az-Zahira	
1017		Beginning of the Burgundian crusades to Spain
1017—23	Several princes of the Umayyad house reign in rapid succession. Uprisings of the mer- cenary armies	
1020	Probable year of birth of the Jewish philo- sopher, Solomon Ibn Gabirol (Avicebron)	
1024		Conrad II
1026		Sancho the Great captures Castile and makes it a kingdom
1030	End of the Spanish Caliphate	
1035		Ferdinand I of Castile; in 1037 he captures León. Berengar I of Catalonia
1039	Beginning of the dynasty of Banū Hūd in Saragossa	Henry III
1040	Death of the mathematician, Abū-l-Ḥasan Alī ar-Rijāl (Abenragel)	
1041	Al-Mu'tadid is ruler of Seville	
1045		Birth of El Cid
1056		Henry IV
1058	Probable date of the death of Solomon Ibn Gabirol	
1063	Founding of Marrakesh by the Almoravides	Ferdinand I captures Coimbra
1064	Death of Ibn Hazm	The Norman French capture Barbastro
1065		Death of Ferdinand I and division of his kingdom
1068	Al-Mu'tamid becomes ruler of Seville	
1072		After the murder of his brother, Sancho, Alfonso VI takes over the rule of León, Castile and Portugal
1080	Latest possible date of death of Bahya Ibn Pakūda	
1080	Aljafería is built in Saragossa	
1081		Banishment of the Cid
1084	Execution of the poet, Ibn 'Ammar	
1085	Capture of Toledo by Alphonso VI	In Toledo Alfonso VI proclaims himself emperor of all Spain
1086	Arrival of the Almoravides in Spain and victory of az-Zallāka (Sagrajas)	Defeat of Alfonso VI at Sagrajas
1087	Death of az-Zarkāli, the astronomer	
1088	Birth of Ibn al-'Arif, the mystic	
1089	Siege of Aledo	
1090	Third Almoravid landing in Spain. King of Granada deposed	
1091	Seville taken by Almoravides	
1094	Capture of Valencia by the Cid	

1095	Death of al-Mu'tamid in Aghmat	Proclamation of the first crusade by Pope Urban II
1099	Death of the Cid in Valencia	
1100		Jerusalem made capital of a Frankish king- dom
1106	Death of Yüsuf Ibn Tāshufin. Death of az- Zahrāwi (Abulcasis) the physician	
1109		Death of Alfonso VI
1111	Almoravides capture Santarem, Badajóz, Porto, Evoza and Lisbon	
1115		Saint Bernard founds the abbey of Clairvaux
1118		Saragossa captured by a Christian army
1121	Beginning of the Almohad uprising in Mo- rocco	Foundation of the Order of the Templar Knights
1125	Death of Ibn Zuhr (Abenzoar), the physician	
1126	Birth of Ibn Rushd (Averroes)	Coronation of Alfonso VII in León
1126—54		First "school of translators" in Toledo under Archbishop Raymond
1127	Death of the philosopher, Ibn as-Seyid of Badajóz	
1133—54		Roger II of Sicily invites Arab scholars to his court
1135	Birth of Maimonides in Córdoba	
1137		Union of Catalonia with Aragón
1138	Death of Ibn Bājja (Avempace)	
1139		Portugal declares independence
1141	Death of the mystic Ibn al-'Arif	4
1143		Koran is translated into Latin
1144		Dedication of the choir of the Abbey church of St. Denis, the first "Gothic" church
1145	End of Almoravid rule in Spain	
1146	Almohades in Fès	Bernard of Clairvaux summons the second crusade
1147	Almohades capture Seville	Alfonso of Portugal captures Santarem and Lisbon
1148		Ramon Berengar IV takes Lerida, Fraga and Tortosa
1151	Death of the mystic, Ibn Ķasyī	
1152		Frederick Barbarossa
1153		Foundation of the Spanish Order of the Knights of Calatrava
1157	Almohades capture Granada and Almeria	
1158		Alfonso VIII of Castile
1159	Death of the poet, Ibn Gūzmān	
1162	Death of 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Zuhr (Aven- zoar), the physician	
1163	Death of the first Almohad caliph, 'Abd al- Mu'min. Succeeded by Abū Ya'kub Yūsuf	
1165	Birth of Muhy-d-din Ibn 'Arabi	
1166		Foundation of the Spanish Order of Knights of Santiago
1167	Erection of the Grand Mosque in Seville	Foundation of University of Oxford
1171	Death of the philosopher, Ibn Tufail	And the second
1182	anterna sularit finantfinit, arts arts.	Birth of Francis of Assisi
1185	Death of Caliph Àbū Ya'kūb	
1185	Succeeded by Abū Yūsuf Ya'kūb al-Manşūr	Fall of the Christian Line dow of Townsland
1187 1195	Victory at Alarcos over Alfonso VIII	Fall of the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem Pope Innocent III launches the crusade
1198	Death of Abū Yūsuf. Succeeded by Muham-	against the Muslims in Spain
1190	mad an'Nāşir	218

1198	Death of Ibn Rushd (Averroes)	
1200		Work begins on the main structure of Char- tres cathedral
1204	Death of Maimonides Death of al-Bitruji (Alpetragius)	nes cancura
1212	Almohades defeated at las Navas de Tolosa	
1212	Amonades deleated at las Navas de Tolosa	Death of Alfonso VIII
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		Foundation of the University of Salamanca
1215	Desiste of the UEA in sectors Casta	
1217	Uprising of Ibn Hūd in eastern Spain	Ferdinand III (the Holy) of Castile
1218		Foundation of the Spanish Order of Knights of Alcantara
1226		Death of St. Francis of Assisi
1226		Louis IX (St. Louis)
1230-31	End of Almohad rule in Spain	
1236		Córdoba is taken by Ferdinand III of Castile
1238	Granada taken by the Nasrid ruler, Muḥam- mad Ibn Aḥmar	Valencia taken by James I of Aragón
1225-50	and sentiment	Frederick II becomes a patron of Arab cul-
122))0		ture at his court in Sicily
1240	Muhyi-d-din Ibn 'Arabi dies in Damascus	ture at his court in Steny
	Munyi-u-un ion Arabi dies in Damascus	Fordinand III continues Cavilla
1248		Ferdinand III captures Seville
1248-54		First crusade of St. Louis
1248		Foundation of the University of Cologne
1252		Death of Ferdinand III. Succeeded by Al- fonso X (the Wise)
1254		Alfonso the Wise establishes the new "trans-
		lators' school" of Toledo
1256		Roger Bacon teacher at Oxford
1258	Abū Yūsuf Yā'kub, the Merinid, establishes his rule in Fès	
1265		Birth of Dante Alighieri
1269	Death of Ibn Sab'in the Spanish mystic	
1270		St. Louis dies at the siege of Tunis
1273	Death of the Nasrid ruler, Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmar	
1280		Death of Albertus Magnus
1284		Death of Alfonso the Wise
1310	Imā'il, the Nasrid, becomes ruler of Gra-	
	nada	
1315	Indu	Death of Raimundus Lullus
1321		Death of Dante
	Abū-l-Hasan becomes Merinid ruler in Fez	beam of banc
1331 1332	Birth of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn in Tunis	
	Yūsuf I becomes Nasrid ruler in Granada	
1333	Defeat of Muslims on the Rio Salado	
1340		Pedee the Court subscie Coutling
1349	College built in Granada	Pedro the Cruel, ruler in Seville
1364		Façade of the Alcázar in Seville built by craftsmen from Granada
1406	Death of Ibn Khaldūn in Cairo	
	Death of 1011 Knaluur III Callo	Ceuta taken by John I of Portugal
1415		Union of Castile and Aragón
1479	Granada takan hu tha "Guthal' Maria I."	Columbus discovers America
1492	Granada taken by the "Catholic Monarchs"	
1501		Moriscoes compelled to convert to Christian- ity
1529		Turks lay siege to Vienna
1568		Uprising of Moriscoes in Alpujarra
1609		Moriscoes driven out of Spain

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