

COLORADO COLLEGE

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND MULTICULTURE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL SPAIN

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INTRODUCTION

The positive process of assembling an identity is accompanied by the negative process of determining what that identity is not. Progressively knowing a singular identity and the groups associated with it requires the construction and maintenance of the Other. The stronger the central institutional powers responsible for directing the formation of a collective identity, the weaker singular identities on the cultural periphery become. The cultural group increasingly realizes as institutional entities gain more powerful means to project an imagined collective identity onto individuals and assimilate singular identities. Distinct peripheral identities with differing historical narratives and experiences exist in tension with the central collective as the marginal groups resist assimilation or elimination. Imagined identities may exist as pure in the ideal but are inevitably transformed and complicated in reality by social interaction with differing cultural groups and with the distinct performative interpretations of the collective identity by individuals. The anxiety arising from the inability to cope with tension resulting from otherness both within and outside of a collective identity mobilizes individuals and institutions to defend the survival of their identity in the ideal and, thereby, their own existence in reality.

The cultural groups inhabiting the Iberian Peninsula from the decline of the Roman regime through the later Middle Ages provide an intriguing context for the analysis of identity formation and the consequences of otherization. The two defining aspects of identity for people of the medieval Iberian Peninsula were religion and

geographical location. Religion was primary, especially after the introduction of Muslims to the peninsula in the early eighth century, but also before the invasion when Christians chose how to cope with the Jewish population in their midst. However, distinct Christian identities arose in geographical provinces and these provincial groups have resisted total assimilation and submission even to the present day. Not until eleventh-century León and Castile, when the momentum of the centuries-long conflict between Muslim and Christian rulers in Spain finally shifted in favor of the Christian armies for the first time, was there a political-ecclesiastical entity with enough influence over individual subjects within the realm, support from other monarchies and ecclesiastical bodies in Europe, and military might to unify masses of Christian Spaniards under a central, collective identity and mobilize them against the Muslim Other in defense of their identity.

The postcolonial paradigm found in the writings of Homi K. Bhabha provides the analysis of the medieval Spanish-Catholic construction of the Other with useful structure and a contemporary methodological perspective. Although applying the entirety of Bhabha's thought to this issue would be imprudent and would distort past events to fit an anachronistic framework, many of his terms and arguments are very useful when applied to the multicultural of medieval Spain while recognizing that medieval peoples interpreted themselves and their world in ways that will always be somewhat alien and unknowable to moderns. Hybridity is a relevant, key concept for Bhabha; this term refers to new transcultural forms inevitably created by diverse individuals and groups interacting with one another. Bhabha suggests that no identities in a multicultural are essential or isolated; once two cultures have interacted, they have recognized and filled previously unrecognized social needs, internalized the experiences to some degree, and have

changed irreversibly because of these interactions.¹ Negative consequences arise when individuals within a culture wish to return to a mythical historical purity of collective identity through ideological assimilation or elimination because the abstract assimilation of cultural hybridities manifests in reality as violence and oppression.² The discourse of collective identity attempts to assimilate otherness justifies the process of assimilation and its negative, often violent, consequences.³ From this perspective, medieval Spanish Catholics form hybridities with both Muslims and Christian individuals identified with peripheral Spanish culture. As my study argues, Spanish Christians in Asturias and later León who laid claim to the Spanish historical narrative originating in Isidore of Seville's writings possessed control over the construction and maintenance of the central Spanish-Catholic identity. These individuals could not tolerate the long-term existence of the multicultural and wished to return to the 'purity' of seventh-century Toledo-centered Visigothic Spain by vanquishing or converting all cultural hybridities, whether Christian or not.

Bhabha's thoughts on the construction of otherness and colonial discourse are useful in framing relations between the central Spanish-Catholic cultural group, Muslim and Jewish cultural groups, and peninsular cultural hybridities. The Other is an imagined stereotype constructed and maintained by discourse for the purpose of eliminating a threat posed by both singular identities and differing collective identities by cementing the purity of identity in the ideal and the dominance of the cultural group in actuality. Effective stereotypes possess fixity; they consist of certain unchanging characteristics and do not recognize changes in the group symbolized by the stereotype over time.

¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), 3, 4, 16.

² *Ibid.*, 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 100.

Stereotypes are, therefore, paradoxical because they are a form of knowledge and identification asserting established, proven knowledge. They cannot be proven true decisively and must be anxiously repeated to ensure validity.⁴ Stereotypes can then only be used as an effective discursive strategy through a process of ambivalence. That ambivalence must be in excess of what can be empirically proven or logically construed so that the cultural group constructing the Other may embrace repeatable, contradictory beliefs.⁵ The process of ambivalence is also important because of the inherent duality of the Other as an object of desire and derision. The Other is derogated because of articulated difference. However, this discrimination can only sustain itself on the continual presence of difference, just as an identity tied to an imagined myth of origin and historical purity can only maintain validity and relevance in the present through the anxiously repeated recognition of difference in the form of the ambivalent discursive instrument of the stereotype.⁶ Consequently, the Other is desired in order to normalize the presence of belief in a pure historical origin and a contradictory Other in the world. The Other may also be a sexual or material object of desire because of the attractiveness of cultural taboos present within the Other.

The duality of the process of identity construction and of the nature of the Other is elucidated in the medieval context by cultural relations with Muslims from a Spanish-Catholic perspective informed by past experience with Sephardic Jews and provincial, singular identities. As this study suggests, the physical threat of death and impoverishment provided by the occupying Muslim forces combined with the cultural threat symbolized by Andalusí Muslim high culture and religion provoked Iberian

⁴ Ibid., 94, 95, 101.

⁵ Ibid., 95, 115.

⁶ Ibid., 96, 114, 106.

Christian society into adopting a militant nature for the purpose of ensuring security and purity of its identity by maintaining, even augmenting the military and spiritual superiority of Christian political and religious institutions. León and Castile under Alfonso VI's rule embodied a newfound military superiority and cultural dominance within Christian societies of the Northern Iberian Peninsula; it was the vehicle that channeled Spanish Christian anxieties over their identity's integrity and their physical survival into military expansion and massive religious proselytization. The institutional pursuit for the complete exclusion or assimilation of the Other was tempered and complicated in reality because of both the practical necessity of skills possessed by diverse peoples within a multi-cultural society and the differing degrees to which collective identities dictated by institutions manifested in the day-to-day behavior of interacting individuals.

CONCEPTION AND ACTUALIZATION OF IBERIAN CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Unity in the Christian Cultures of the Northern Iberian Peninsula

The Visigoths were the last Christian rulers to have dominion over the entire Iberian Peninsula before Theodemir, a Visigothic lord from the Orihuela region of the south-east, surrendered to the invading Muslim armies in 713. The extent of governing power the Visigothic monarchy was able to exercise in reality varied from great in the central region of the peninsula surrounding Toledo to almost nothing in the northwest. However, the fact remains that the Visigoths laid claim to the right to rule the entire peninsula and maintained it in theory and in legislation for nearly three centuries.⁷

The durability of the Visigothic legacy heavily influenced the Christian kingdom of Asturias and later shaped the character of the kingdoms of León and Castile. The cultural and political dominance that León and Castile experienced in the eleventh century and afterwards influenced and directed to a large degree the construction of collective and individual Christian identity in the northern peninsula. A prominent aspect of Iberian Christian identity, therefore, is rooted in the legacy of the Visigoths and how this legacy was perceived and used in later generations. The Visigoths had been a military, political, and cultural presence on the Iberian Peninsula since the early fifth century. Despite this, Visigothic history could not be incorporated into Christian history until the third council of Toledo in 589, when Reccared became the first Visigothic

⁷Peter Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 73.



Map I. The Iberian peninsula, 711-1031.

Plate 1, the Iberian Peninsula, 711-1031⁸

⁸ Olivia R. Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 28.

king to renounce Arianism and convert to Catholicism. In fact, as Catholic ecclesiastics of the early Middle Ages monopolized the production of historical literature in the West, the Visigoths as Arians “had no history” of their own before 589 and could play no other role in Christian history than as interlopers.⁹

Chroniclers of the peninsula played a key role in redeeming the past of the Visigoths and integrating them as protagonists into the greater narrative of Christian history. The process of weaving the Visigoths into the Christian providential narrative also allowed Visigothic culture and tradition, previously otherized, to be assimilated and internalized into the collective Christian identity. The beginnings of this process of historical integration are to be found most explicitly in the texts of John of Biclaro, a Catholic Visigoth and chronicler of the later sixth century. The structure of his history, adopted by his younger contemporary, Isidore of Seville, empowered his narrative and gave it the ability to affect the construction of the collective Christian identity. The identity of the Spanish-Catholic cultural group then affected the way individuals interpreted and actualized this identity. Rather than writing a wholly independent history of the Visigoths in the Iberian Peninsula, John chose to take after Eusebius of Caesarea, Jerome, Prosper of Aquitaine, and Victor of Tunnuna and continue the universal chronicle elaborated by earlier authors.¹⁰ This appropriation not only allowed him to construct the narrative of the Visigoths in Iberia, but also allowed him to ascribe power and divine favor of the Roman emperors to the Visigothic kings, giving them a prominent

⁹ Kenneth B. Wolf, trans., *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1990), 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

place in the history of all nations and creation in general.¹¹ The newly-acquired governing power and divine support of the Visigothic kings memorialized in John's chronicle also reveal some of the first stirrings of an Iberian Visigothic consciousness seeking independence from and dominance over the Byzantine Empire in both political and religious senses.¹²

Isidore of Seville furthered the work done by John of Biclaro concerning the rehabilitation of the Visigothic historical portrayal and took the process of influential historical construction to new levels.^{13 14} By means of his *Cronica Maiora* and his *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum, et Suevorum*, Isidore not only exonerated the Visigoths of their antagonistic past, but he also constructed honorable origins for them compatible with a Catholic narrative, further shaping the independent and unique status of the rulers of the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁵ Thus, Isidore laid the foundations for the future construction of a Spanish identity independent from that of the Roman and Byzantine Empires. Isidore set out to achieve these goals by reinterpreting key aspects of the Visigothic past. He projects aspects of the military successes and religious legitimacy of the early seventh century Visigoths onto their predecessors.¹⁶ By attributing early Visigothic military victories to divine providence and by reinterpreting their Arianism as insignificant as compared to their internal Catholic virtues, Isidore reformed the historical image of the Visigoths as heretics into one of pious, legitimate, admirable warrior kings.¹⁷ His interpretation rendered the previously abhorrent Visigothic victories over the

¹¹ Ibid., 10.

¹² Ibid., 6, 9.

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ John V. Tolan, *Saracens* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 7.

¹⁵ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 39.

¹⁶ Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 14, 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., 16, 18.

Roman armies seem “impressive and predetermined.”¹⁸

Isidore’s accounts differ from John of Biclaro’s on a few points. Whereas John preferred to downplay the Visigoths’ role as enemies of Rome, Isidore employs it both to reveal the legitimacy of the Visigoths as a ruling entity by right of their military prowess and to justify these past events by explaining that God’s favor truly rested with the soon-to-convert Visigoths.¹⁹ Isidore, unlike John, willingly criticized the Arianism of Reccared’s predecessor, Leovigild, in order to underscore and glorify the accomplishments of Reccared himself.²⁰ Isidore’s criticism not only of Leovigild’s heterodoxy but also of the king’s willingness to fudge religious issues in favor of political unity and peace reveals an aspect of the later scholar’s contribution to collective Christian identity in assuming the primacy of religious doctrine in order to maintain political power and stability.²¹ This contribution embodies the contradictory nature of the desirable and hated aspects of a constructed Other. A further important difference between John and his successor is the way in which Isidore eliminated and reinterpreted the status of chosen people given to the Visigoths. Isidore may have done this in order to make the narrative compatible with King Sisebut’s successors’ less than ideally Christian qualities.²² In fact, the Visigothic monarchy was infamously prone to regicide and instability throughout its history. Isidore attempted to downplay the less desirable parts of the Visigothic past in order to make its kings into appropriate antecedents to Spanish-Catholic culture.

Additions to the Christian narrative and identity made by John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville were influential because they provided the historiographical models for

¹⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹⁹ Ibid., 16, 17.

²⁰ Ibid., 22.

²¹ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 27.

²² Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 23.

dealing with invasion that later Christian historians would apply to interpreting the Muslim invasion.²³ Some notable aspects most likely taken from Isidore include the portrayal of invading pagans as a scourge sent by God to punish sin, the parallels drawn between foreign invaders and Gog from scripture, the importance, nobility, and anxiety of Christian oppression under heterodox and pagan rulers, and the non-critical view of Christian military prowess and conquest.^{24 25 26 27} Although in reality the Christian identity contained heterogeneous elements of the Arian legacy and other provincial cultures, the authors of history managed to represent a unity of Christian identity and reconcile it with past events in theory and religious doctrine.

The eighth century brought with it the Muslim invasion, the destruction of Visigothic hegemony in the peninsula, and a massive number of immigrants to Asturias in the north of Spain. The Asturian historical narrative is formative because it lays the only claim to the Visigothic legacy after their defeat at the hands of the Muslims, and because historians credit the Asturians of the late ninth century with constructing and actualizing the myth of the Reconquest.^{28 29} Asturias before the Muslim invasion was, for the most part, autonomous under both Roman and Visigothic rule and developed a provincial culture unique to its theoretical rulers.³⁰ Our knowledge of the period after the conquest until the establishment of León as capitol of Asturias in 914 depends mainly on accounts from the ninth and tenth centuries which were further muddled by people of

²³ Ibid., xi.

²⁴ Ibid., 19.

²⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁶ Ibid., 20.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁸ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 82.

²⁹ Ibid., 83, 103.

³⁰ Ibid., 84.

later generations, particularly Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo in the twelfth century.³¹

The principal Asturian chronicle that depicts the time period up to and after the Muslim invasion is the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, which survives in two versions. This chronicle probably dates to the late ninth or early tenth century and is closely related to, almost a continuation of, Isidore's account of the Visigoths in Hispania.³² Asturians in the ninth century were seeking to establish ties between themselves and the Visigoths of the seventh century.^{33 34} This intention was realized with differing degrees of success and validity over time because of the utter devastation of Visigothic culture by the Muslim invasion. The thought that "the Asturian kings hijacked a corpse, acquired its papers, and assumed its historical identity" is a fair interpretation.³⁵ That the Asturian kings had inherited the blood and legacy of the Visigoths, possibly brought north by Mozarabic immigrants, is revealed in the *Chronicle of Alfonso the III's* overt attempts at co-opting the Visigothic narrative and ruling legitimacy.³⁶

The chronicle intends, much like Isidore's account, to create a historical context for a successful monarchy.³⁷ It sought to integrate the Asturian identity and the powerful Christian identity tied to the Visigothic narrative so that the Asturians would have the claim of restoring their birthright to justify resisting Muslim rulers and reconquering lands. The Asturian chronicle was able to achieve these objectives by portraying the Visigothic successors of King Wamba as sinners breaking divine law and deserving of

³¹ Ibid., 76, 78.

³² Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 43.

³³ Ibid., 48.

³⁴ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 93, 94, 123.

³⁵ Ibid., 82.

³⁶ Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 45.

³⁷ Ibid., 44.

punishment in the form of foreign invasion.³⁸ It then tells the story of Pelayo, the sword bearer of the last Visigothic kings, who refused to collaborate with the Muslim overlords and fled north to Asturias, apparently to preserve the integrity of the Visigothic monarchy.³⁹

The battle of Covadonga in the eighth century, at which a Christian army positioned far north near the Pyrenees led supposedly by Pelayo defeated and turned back a great Muslim army, is a central point in the chronicle's narrative. Contrast between Oppa, a Visigothic bishop who collaborates with the Muslims, and Pelayo, the heir to the honorable Visigothic past, serves in the text as a catharsis through which the Asturians inherit the Visigothic past, are freed of the sins of the last Visigothic kings, and are prepared and destined to reconquer Spain.⁴⁰ The narrative also forms a bond between the myth of the Reconquest and the primacy of religious motive by focusing on the salvation of God's church, Pelayo's chief goal in resisting the Muslims, and touching on the divinely-determined nature of the Reconquest.⁴¹

The power to maintain and transform the collective Spanish Christian identity can be traced from the Visigothic capital of seventh-century Toledo to the Asturian capital of eighth and ninth-century Oveido, then on to León where the capitol was moved in 914 by King Ordoño II, son of King Alfonso II.⁴² That line of kings was to become extinct by 1037 when Fernando I was anointed King of León. Through the shrewd leadership of Fernando I and his son, Alfonso VI, the political and cultural hegemony of León and Castile increased greatly, as did the Leonese influence on the Christian historical

³⁸ Ibid., 47.

³⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁰ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 50, 105.

⁴¹ Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 50.

⁴² Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 128.

narrative and the collective identity now rooted in the old Asturian interpretation of the past and the imperative of Reconquest.

The Church's Contributions to Identity Formation and Maintenance

Catholic Christianity was among the major forces helping to form and maintain the collective identity of medieval Christians of the Iberian Peninsula. The Church as a modern abstraction differed from the Church as the Middle Ages' groups of churchmen and ritual life; applying the modern concept of the Church anachronistically obscures the role of the bishops and distorts historical interpretation.⁴³ The story of the Church in Spain from the late sixth to the early twelfth is one in which the bishops change from mainly provincial actors with little sense of collaboration in reality to an empowered, structured group capable of pursuing social and political agendas through an increase in ecclesiastical jurisdiction and a higher level of dependence on the monarchy and, later, the papacy.⁴⁴ However, the tension between the centralized peninsular Church, tied ideologically and geographically to the governing power, and the peripheral Church, embodied by provincial bishops, their local communities, and monastics, continued to complicate the ways in which the teachings of the Church affected individual and collective being.

Catholics—especially bishops—in the Iberian Visigothic kingdom under the Arian kings faced resistance and oppression from the dominant Arian culture and monarchy.⁴⁵ Their situation improved after Reccared's conversion in 589 at the Third Council of Toledo, when the Visigothic monarchy began facilitating rather than

⁴³ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁵ Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 1.

obstructing the maintenance and development of Catholicism in its realm. Leander of Seville, Isidore's brother and the bishop who put a great deal of work into converting the Visigothic kings to Catholicism, gave a homily at the conclusion of the Council. Historians have generally considered this homily to be not only an early expression of Spanish nationhood but also a statement revealing the coextensive nature of Spanish nationhood and religious identity.⁴⁶ While this homily assumes the religious foundation present in generally all aspects of the Spanish-Catholic understanding and identity, it does not extend to expressing a unified national identity as constructed by early medieval Spaniards. The primacy of provincial identities, even in terms of religious practice, weakens the image of a widely accepted, homogenous 'Spanish' identity in this period.

The conclusions and decisions made in the Third Council of Toledo suggest that the dominant ideological forces of late sixth-century Visigothic Spain, the bishops and the monarchy, had unified the construction of collective Spanish Christian identity within the Visigothic realm. However, the differing degrees of success that the bishops and monarchy had as vehicles for the imposition of this identity reveal how complex the processes of identity construction and assimilation of the Other actually were. This complexity was brought to light immediately after the Council in Reccared's actions concerning the conversions of Arian individuals to Catholicism. The official policy and common practice after the Council was a small, almost secret chrismal unction and laying on of hands with absolutely no rebaptism.⁴⁷ The assimilation of the Arian Other into the Catholic identity was to be concealed and hushed, almost as if the Other had never been and the Catholic identity had always possessed complete dominance and legitimacy. This

⁴⁶ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

policy was probably supported by those with governing power in order to prevent destabilizing the social order and relations with religious groups of both the centralized and peripheral Church, including the Donatists. The need for the governing powers of both political and religious rule to tread delicately and quietly about the imposition of the new, unified Christian identity sheds light on the continued presence of a powerful Other within the fabric of collective Spanish Christian society under Visigothic rule.

The continual presence of the Other cultivated in the provinces and frontiers of Spanish social groups had created a dynamic tension underneath the surface of Spanish cultural, political, and religious happenings. The loyalty of the provincials to their local bishops and authorities as independent actors undercut the power of bishops as a collective over sixth and seventh century Spain.⁴⁸ Thus, while the Toledan Councils of the sixth and seventh centuries had important and lasting effects on the educated and ruling elites who held the power to craft national and religious narratives and inform the process of identity construction, the limited power of the bishops to pursue a social agenda as a collective in reality led to a huge gap between the theology of the elites and practice of the masses.⁴⁹

Any representation that completely marginalized the bishops of Catholic Visigothic Spain, however, would be inexact. The bishops heavily influenced the beliefs and policies of the ruling elites and the shaping of narratives of identity which in turn would have effects throughout the realm, stronger near the political-religious center and weaker near the peripheral, frontier social groups. In fact, the prestige and religious authority of the bishops of Toledo, especially Julian, was vast in the late seventh century.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29, 31, 44, 47.

Whereas the ‘Isidorian’ series of councils were defined by an “idealistic commitment to the spirit and letter of the law of Toledo IV,” the ‘Julian’ series from 681 to 694 took a more pragmatic approach. During this time as well the Spanish kingdom began to be identified with its increasingly powerful capital, Toledo.⁵⁰ By the beginning of the eighth century Toledo and its church had become so powerful that it brought wider Catholicism almost to a point of schism.⁵¹ Increasing pride in the intellectual and theological legacy of the bishops of Toledo as well as geographical and political distance from Rome allowed an attitude of condescension to develop in the bishops of Spain. J. N. Hillgarth notes that “Julian and his Spanish contemporaries saw no Church in the West that could be compared to that of Spain, not even Rome.”⁵²

The development of unity in the rituals and rites performed in churches throughout Spain during the centuries of Visigothic rule established traditions that would inform later generations and become inextricable from the Spanish Catholic identity. Most of the Spanish Church’s stances on rites and rituals are rooted in the results of the Fourth Council of Toledo in 633. The Church’s concern with how individuals practiced their religion illuminates the centrality of the individual performance of identity to the maintenance and transformation of collective identity; how can one claim to identify with a certain group if the critical aspects of the group’s identity are not exhibited outwardly?

In spite of the bishops’ efforts and accomplishments at Toledo IV, historical evidence suggests that the provincial Church won out over the central Church on the issue of rites and rituals; centuries after the first councils condemned actions like the use

⁵⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁵¹ Ibid., 63.

⁵² J. N. Hillgarth, ‘Coins and chronicles: Propaganda in sixth-century Spain and the Byzantine background’, *Historia*, 15 (1966), 483-508; quoted in Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 63.

of milk for the sacrament and the distribution of moist hosts and grapes at communion, these practices were still quite common in many village churches.⁵³ Only in 693, eighteen years before the beginning of the quick deterioration of Visigothic hegemony, were measures taken to ensure that parishes were informed of the decisions made at provincial councils.⁵⁴ Therefore, because of the overwhelming power of local communities over their own small parishes on the periphery of the monarchy and because of conditions of surrender agreed upon between Christians and their Muslim conquerors “which barely troubled the existing local order of the peninsula,” many communities continued to perform their versions of the Catholic identity well into the ninth century.⁵⁵ Odoario, bishop of Lugo in the eighth century, is an example of such ecclesiastical self-determination and pioneering on the frontier.⁵⁶ Although Spanish provincials continued to complicate the homogenization of identity, the establishment of Oveido as both the Asturian capitol and the new Toledo revived and reinterpreted the Toledan tradition internalized in the later dominant Spanish Christian narrative.⁵⁷

One of the more notable functions of the presence of peripheral bodies of the Church on the frontiers of Christian Spain from the eighth century to the end of the Reconquest in the late fifteenth century was the simultaneous defense and counter-development of the Christian identity. The frontier between Christian Spain in the north and Muslim Spain in the south was geographically present early on in the form of the barren Duero basin. This region’s sparse population eventually migrated north or south to avoid the constant warfare and raids from both Christian and Muslim armies. The

⁵³ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 67, 68.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 67, 68.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 84, 99.

repopulation of this frontier zone became a concern especially after the reign of the Asturian king Alfonso I (739-57), who reconquered cities and removed their Christian inhabitants to Asturias by force.⁵⁸ The tenacious bishops tied to sees on the frontier and monasteries, which remained like bastions defending the existence of the Spanish Christian identity, served as vehicles through which dominant identities were propagated.⁵⁹ By the beginning of the eleventh century, the population of Northern Spain had stabilized and increased enough to spread south and compete with monastics and sparsely-numbered local parishes as shaping forces of identities on the frontier.⁶⁰ This expansion increased the movement from the center to the periphery, extending the arm of the dominant forces shaping Spanish Christian identity at the time, that is the monarchy and submissive bishops of Alfonso VI.

The eleventh century brought about an age of reform that would change the face and essential nature of the Spanish Church. During the reforming ‘Gregorian age’ of the latter half of the eleventh century, the papacy and the monastic reforms of the Cluniacs would insert themselves into the fabric of the Spanish church, leading to an explosion of francophobia in the twelfth century from which Spaniards would never completely recover.⁶¹ The centralization of the Spanish Church severely limited, but did not eliminate, the power of the provincial bishops and native monastics.⁶² Spanish monarchs, including Alfonso VI, effected the adoption of the Roman rite at this time, so forcing some aspects of at least French and Roman identity to be adopted into the Spanish narrative and identity. In changing the parameters of individual performance of identity,

⁵⁸ Ibid., 109.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 111, 113.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 114.

⁶¹ Ibid., 168.

⁶² Ibid., 163.

reformers had thus influenced the collective Spanish Catholic identity in a limited way, but the forces resisting these reforms managed to an extent to maintain the legitimacy of the Spanish rite along side the Roman rite.⁶³ Recognizing that no identities exist in isolation and foreign elements had always been present in medieval Spanish culture, it is still fair to say that the cultural exchange between Spain and other European cultures increased by an unprecedented amount during the eleventh century.

In submitting to Rome on many important issues, the episcopal power and jurisdiction of the Spanish Church increased greatly, shrinking the gap between theory and practice and elucidating the augmented power the central Church developed during the reigns of Fernando I and his son, Alfonso VI. The Spanish Church's changing internal power structure, newfound hegemony, and increased anxiety to fulfill the obligations of Reconquest clarified in the ninth century affected the way it maintained Christian identity; it was at this time that the "ideas of territorial aggrandizement and religious expansion were coupled"⁶⁴ and the governing bodies of Church and monarchy were first able to mobilize the individuals who claimed the Christian identity against the Muslim Other with enough force to change the tide of the peninsular conflict.

Cohesion of Political and Ecclesiastical Powers

The power and influence of the Church in Spain has been tied to the political ruling powers of the peninsula since the Roman Empire's adoption of Catholicism as an official religion reached Spain in the fourth century. Separating the Spanish monarchy from the Spanish Church in modern histories is problematic because no such separation

⁶³ Ibid., 184.

⁶⁴ Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 8.

existed in the Middle Ages, except on perhaps the most formulaic and arbitrary of levels. Therefore, when analyzing the nature of government in the Iberian peninsula of the Middle Ages, it is important to keep in mind that the individuals who formed the Church and the monarchy often held positions in both bodies and took action to further the frequently-overlapping agendas of the respective powers.

The Episcopal power and secular hegemony were symbiotic. The nobles, many of whom were bishops themselves, generated legislation meant to govern their own provinces and the greater Spanish kingdom, but provincial loyalties undercut the ability of the bishops to convert this legislation into action. As Linehan writes, “‘It was the kings, not the bishops, who governed Spain and with it the Spanish Church’. But it was only through the bishops that the kings could govern either.”⁶⁵ Ever since the conversion of Recarred the Spanish kings made efforts in cooperation with those of the bishops to stabilize Visigothic society and unite their subjects within the Catholic community.⁶⁶ The Visigothic monarchy, meanwhile, was constantly unstable and notorious for regicide and irregular successions.⁶⁷ The violent and unpredictable process of succession threatened Spanish independence from Byzantium, for which Isidore of Seville and other architects of the medieval Spanish identity had been working. This fight for independence had made the Spanish Church dependent on the monarchy even as Isidore was painting the royalty in the image of the Roman Emperors of old.⁶⁸ Churchmen, therefore, had a vested interest in stabilizing and strengthening the Spanish monarchy. In spite of the decisions made in various councils, the weak, occupative nature of the Visigothic monarchy

⁶⁵ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 67.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

remained to be resolved by the bishops at Toledo IV who structured an electoral process to limit the absolute rule of the Visigothic kings and prevent usurpers from delegitimizing the entire ruling class, bishops included. The ability of the bishops as a collective body to stabilize and limit the monarchy was nonetheless hindered by the decentralized and provincial nature of the Church in Spain, so the Visigothic king remained at the “summit of the social hierarchy” and the monarchy itself remained violently unstable well into the beginning of the eighth century.⁶⁹

One of the more important consequences of the collusion of Visigothic bishops and kings for the purpose of strengthening the monarchy and the independence of the Spanish identity was the progressive merger of kingly and priestly duties embodied by the king alone. The origins of this merger are found in the unction of Recarred at Toledo III.⁷⁰ King Wamba, who appointed Julian of Toledo to the see of Toledo in 680, took the process of merging to the extreme by trying to join the see and the throne into one ruling agency by forcibly reorganizing bishoprics and appointing new bishops loyal to the king to existing sees. The king mysteriously fell ill shortly after taking this course of action and was tonsured while ill, making him ineligible to retain his royal position. While no conclusive evidence of Julian’s hand in these events exists, his motives in preventing such a power imbalance in the relationship between bishops and their king are implied. Initiatives similar to Wamba’s had been taken by various Spanish monarchs, most notably in ninth-century Oveido, tenth-century León, and eleventh-century Burgos.⁷¹ Visigothic political rule, then, varied by region, had political factions rooted both in religious belief and personal ambition, and exerted a strong, external force on the Church

⁶⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁷¹ Ibid., 60.

in reality and in law while simultaneously identifying as a part of the spiritual, legal, and governing ecclesiastical bodies.⁷² The relationship between Visigothic ruling bodies and ecclesiastical entities in Spain highlights the inseparability of religion and governance in the medieval imagination.

After the Muslim invasion caused the collapse of the Visigothic governing structures, the dominant actors in the development of Spanish monarchical and ecclesiastical rule along with the elite construction of the Spanish-Catholic identity were the Asturians of the ninth and tenth centuries. Tenth-century Asturian historians at the monastic scriptoria of Albelda and S. Millán were busy eliminating two hundred years of Islamic influence and dominance from the Spanish historical narrative in order to graft the idealized Visigothic legacy onto the monarchs and bishops of ninth century Oveido and tenth century León.⁷³ They rhetorically purified Spain of the Muslim Other and co-opted a reinterpreted version of the glorious Visigothic past in order to ensure the historical and ideological survival of the Spanish-Catholic identity.

The narrative of the battle of Covadonga, which historians have concluded was first written down in the early tenth-century Chronicle of Alfonso III, exposes some important developments in the Spanish-Catholic identity as interpreted by the premier Christian ecclesiastical-political body on the Iberian Peninsula.⁷⁴ In the Chronicle's version Pelayo, the Visigothic noble who fled North and organized the Asturians for battle against the Muslim invaders, expresses his primary interest as the salvation of the Church in Spain. He is tempted by the Bishop Oppas, who represents the old corrupt Visigothic establishment and the legacy of king Wittiza under whom Visigothic Spain

⁷² Ibid., 73, 28, 37.

⁷³ Ibid., 93.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 102.

was lost, and his pleas for surrender and collaboration with the Muslims. Oppas argues that Christian Spain has lost the capacity for military and political victories so it must be content with intellectual ones. Pelayo refuses to lose faith in his mission to restore the Church and the Visigothic order.⁷⁵

One rhetorical goal of this representation is the cleansing of the Asturian monarchy of sinful corruption left over from its internalization of the Visigothic past by empowering the monarch with the ability to supersede the Spanish Church and the duty to look after its churchmen as a steward. This result is achieved by the dialogue between Pelayo and Oppas; as Linehan writes, “. . . at the very moment at which the myth of the Reconquest of Spain was invented, Spain’s principal prelate was given a scripture lesson by his king. It was an experience to which Spanish prelates across the centuries would come to be accustomed.”⁷⁶ Another related consequence was the further fusion of the bodies of Church and monarchy. By making the monarchy responsible for the physical and moral well-being of the Spanish Church, Covadonga’s Asturian narrative tied the Church to the counter-Muslim offensive in Spain from the inception of the myth of the Reconquest.⁷⁷ The crafting of history had made the Asturian *regnum* and the Christian *regnum* indistinguishable, rendering the *ecclesia* and *regnum* one.⁷⁸ The third consequence was the construction of the imperative of the Asturian ruling elite and their subjects to resist the encroachment of the cultural Other on both an ideological and military level, as is shown by Pelayo’s rejection of Oppas’ claim that the only battles to be won were those fought with pens, not swords.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 102.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 106.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 105.

Apart from the ideological forces rooted in the manipulation of the historical narrative, organizational and pragmatic forces facilitated the process of monarchical-ecclesiastical merger; these forces were so successful that some historians argue that the Asturian-Leonese church did not exist as an entity separate from the kings.⁷⁹ The Spanish Church's survival was largely dependent on its ability to expand both in territory and in numbers. The bishops of non-Muslim Spain at this point were so few that they played a limited role in the restoration of sees and the creation of new churches.⁸⁰ Instead, lay nobles established churches as they saw fit with very little ecclesiastical oversight.⁸¹ This situation led directly to the Spanish Church's attempts to increase its jurisdiction and institutional power during the era of Gregorian reform in the eleventh century. For the moment in the ninth and tenth centuries, however, the power and very existence of episcopal sees depended on their perceived utility to the king.⁸²

Spanish monarchs sought to increase their control over the peripheries of their kingdoms through various means. Such centralization of government saw significant development after the Reconquest myth took hold in ninth-century Asturias and in the period between 1035 and 1250 when 80% of Christian Iberian territory was regained.⁸³ Both of these periods saw vast increases in frontier territory as Christian armies conquered land held by Muslims, so presenting a challenge to the monarchs seeking to gain power over both their old lands and the new ones being reconquered.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 108.

⁸¹ Ibid., 112.

⁸² Ibid., 117, 120.

⁸³ Stanley G. Payne, *Spanish Catholicism: An Historical Overview* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 14.

One of the results of the attempts to strengthen and stabilize Spanish monarchies was the shift from elective to hereditary monarchy and the broadening of the role of patrimonies. Kings had adopted the practice of unction in order to demonstrate the divine favor and authority of their position to the detriment of the bishops. However, hereditary ties and the passing on of kingdoms to dynastic heirs was the most effective, or at least the most common, way of mitigating the instability resulting from the division of kingdoms after a monarch's death.⁸⁴ Uction as a visible sign of dominance and divine support was used during times of challenge by kings such as Vermudo II and Fernando I, but biological lineage held far more value.⁸⁵ The primacy of hereditary ties over unction is exemplified by the death of Vermudo II, king of León, and the succession of his three-year-old son Alfonso V in 999. This event—and the fact that historical records of the 990's no longer mention the unction of Leonese monarchs—clearly demonstrate that “by the end of the tenth century at the latest the Leonese monarchy was firmly established as a hereditary institution.”⁸⁶ The same trend is noted in tenth-century Navarre.⁸⁷

The augmented power of lineage and patrimonial inheritance as tools for extending the influence and territory of a monarch played a large role during the early eleventh century when the chaotic divisions of the Christian kingdoms would become fewer and fewer under the dominant ancestors of Alfonso VI. When Sancho the Great of Navarre added the king of León and the count of Castile to his growing number of ruler-vassals in the 1030's, he began a process of clearing the field of competition that led to his son Fernando I, king of León and count of Castile, making war on his brother-in-law

⁸⁴ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 121, 152, 159.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 157, 158.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

Vermudo III, so uniting the kingdoms of Navarre, León, and Castile under one monarch; Fernando's kingdoms would be divided among his sons at his death in 1065, only to be reunited after more fratricide with Alfonso VI as the victor and steward of the empire of his patriarchal ancestors.⁸⁸ The progressive unification of the Christian realms and the simultaneous increase in power and influence of the monarchs lent the monarchy, in conjunction with the churchmen, widespread influence over both the ideological and ritual constructions of the Spanish-Catholic identity.

The Spanish monarchs and nobles, including the numerous bishop-nobles of Spain, of the eleventh century often served as channels through whom the foreign influences of Gregorian and Cluniac reform would enter the peninsula and impose themselves with differing degrees of success upon the Spanish-Catholic identity. While Spain had never had a homogenous culture in classical or medieval times, as shown by various trading cultures present on the peninsula and the complications arising from the interaction of Hispano-Romans and Arian Visigoths, the level of isolation from the cultures of northern Europe notably decreased as time went on, especially in the eleventh century.

Of the factors that contributed to the increased "Mediterraneanization" of Spain as opposed to the relative Spanish isolation of the past, the increased occurrences of international royal marriages, the alliances and interactions between monarchs and the papacy, and the influx of French soldiers, churchmen, and pilgrims headed to Santiago de Compostela are particularly notable.⁸⁹ The pool of marriageable women acceptable within the parameters set by the Church grew ever smaller as time went on; eventually,

⁸⁸ Ibid., 171, 172.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 194.

monarchs like Alfonso VI began seeking brides who would both prevent the opposition of the bishops and strengthen their royal power within their realm and among Europe's ruling elite.⁹⁰

Monarchical relations with the papacy of the late tenth and eleventh centuries were complex in that the monarchs both allowed the increased territorial and spiritual hegemony of foreign religious groups in the peninsula to gain power and resources to fuel the Reconquest and resisted the usurpation by these foreign powers of the control of the Spanish historical narrative and direction of the collective Spanish-Catholic identity. The popes' interest in the Iberian Peninsula rested mainly in their desire to see the dubious donation of Constantine developed into a territorial reality; that is, they wanted ownership and ultimate political-ecclesiastical hegemony over Spain.⁹¹ Some monarchs deemed it necessary to make their kingdoms tributaries of the papacy in order to maintain their kingdoms at least in name in the face of challenges of both Christian and Muslim rulers.⁹² On the other hand Alfonso VI, the principal political actor representing arguably the most powerful cultural group of Christians on the peninsula, resisted the encroachment of the papacy on his turf while still managing to keep papal support of his military campaigns against the Muslims. Alfonso VI's adoption of the imperial title has been provided as evidence of this resistance.⁹³ Concessions were necessary, however for Alfonso to maintain both imperial claim over all of Spain and foreign support for his offensives.

⁹⁰ O;Callaghan, *Reconquest*, 24.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹² Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 173.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 201.

The creation of the imperative of Reconquest also generated internal tension within the Spanish-Catholic community concerning its actual method. While the potent monarchy of Alfonso VI and his predecessors took the path of militarization and Europeanization, the bishops and the monastics adopted a critical, more isolationist stance in reaction to the possible corruption of the Spanish-Catholic identity embodied by increased foreign hegemony and presence. The eleventh century saw an expansion of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. More and more churches and local monasteries established and owned by laymen, many of them on the frontiers of Christian Spain, were thus subjected to larger monasteries and cathedral churches which were increasingly controlled by men loyal to Spanish monarchs, the Gregorian and Cluniac reformers, or both.⁹⁴ The forced subjection of the previously self-sufficient churches and monasteries of the frontier had an important effect on the interpretation of the Spanish-Catholic identity of various provinces. The monastics of the Spanish frontier had historically embodied the resistance of both foreign contamination of their collective identity and of collusion between the bishops and the monarchy.⁹⁵ Although the centralized management in the provincial churches would have served to assimilate their populations into the increasingly unified Spanish-Christian collective to some degree, the impositions of the central church in combination with the complicity of the monarchy concerning the increased hegemony of foreign groups in the peninsula fueled a culture of resistance and reactionary military expansion that would have devastating consequences for the diverse cultural groups of Spain.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 180.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 70, 71, 118, 119.

CONSEQUENCES OF ENCOUNTERING THE MUSLIM OTHER

Christian Interpretations of Islam

After Muslim armies invaded in the early eighth century and dismantled Visigothic rule in Spain, the centers of Christian hegemony and collective identity construction shifted from Visigothic Toledo to Asturian Oveido. The holders of peninsular hegemony were replaced, leaving a sizeable Catholic population under the rule of a minority belonging to a culture essentially unknown to peoples of Spain.

Confrontations and social interactions with the invaders and the subsequent separation between the collective Spanish-Catholic identity fostered by Visigothic rule and political, military, and cultural hegemony forced Christians under non-Christian rule to adjust their self-perception accordingly and to construct a Muslim Other to be used for various purposes.

The roots of the Muslim culture brought to Spain in the beginning of the eighth century arose from the fundamental divide in the Islamic community and therefore illuminate the internal tension that remained ever present in the ruling elite of Al-Andalus. Muslims, like early Christians, lacked political and military hegemony in the beginnings of their existence; only after the tribes of Arabia were forcibly united into a single religious polity at the death of Muhammad in 632 did Islam become the unifying foundation of the dominant culture in the Middle East.

Unlike its Christian counterpart, the Islamic polity created by Muhammad was tied to military force and violent factionalism from the beginning. For the most part, Christians resorted to martyrdom rather than military resistance, and the successions of the popes were surrounded with much less internal physical conflict than those of the caliphs.⁹⁶ The early years of the Islamic empire of the mid- to late seventh century were marked by large territorial expansions into Persian and Byzantine lands and by instances of internal, violent rebellions. As a result of the first full-blown civil war, or the First Fitna, the caliph Ali was assassinated in 661 and Mu'awiyah seized power and established the Umayyad dynasty. The establishment of the Umayyad dynasty wreaked havoc on the unity of Islam and sparked the division between the Sunnis, supporters of the caliphs prior to Ali, and the Shi'a, supporters of Ali. This schism brought about the Second Fitna at the death of Mu'awiyah, which ended just before the turn of the eighth century with the ascension of Abd al-Malik to the caliphate, and solidified Umayyad hegemony for about seventy years.⁹⁷

Abd al-Malik and his sons controlled the caliphate until about 740. During this time the capital was moved from the factional, tumultuous city of Medina to the fertile, culturally rich center of Damascus, the Dome of the Rock was built as a physical symbol of the preeminent position of Islam among the Abrahamic religions, and most of the Iberian Peninsula was taken over by Syria Arabs and North African Berbers who were loyal to the Umayyad Islamic empire.^{98 99} The Iberian Peninsula, on the fringes of both

⁹⁶ María R. Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002), 19.

⁹⁷ H.R. Loyn, ed., *Diccionario Akal de Historia Medieval: Edición Española* (Madrid: Akal Ediciones, 1989), 253.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁹ Menocal, *Ornament*, 20.

the European and Islamic worlds, provided a unique opportunity to many early medievals, Christian and non-Christian alike, to conduct themselves with a level of autonomy greater than what could be had nearer to Damascus, Rome, or Paris.

Although Muslim leaders quickly became the peninsula's military hegemony in the early eighth century, the bond between their cultural primacy and the capability to assimilate the Other and direct collective identity formation remained weak. As seen in the treaty of Tudmir of 713, the Muslim conquerors of the early eighth century allowed the non-Muslim residents of the peninsula to continue on nearly exactly as they had under the Visigoths.¹⁰⁰ The only restraints seen in texts like these imposed upon conquered peoples are additional taxes and explicit intent to accede to Muslim rule.¹⁰¹ One factor contributing to the hesitation of the first Muslim rulers to change the existing order of Visigothic societies was that the Muslims were overwhelmingly outnumbered; non-Christians were not a majority in al-Andalus, as the Muslims called their lands in Spain, until around the tenth century.¹⁰² Another factor was that the high culture of the East found in Damascus and later in Baghdad was not effectively transmitted to the Iberian Peninsula until the mid-ninth century. Military force was not powerful enough to assimilate a significant number of Christians into Muslim society. Only in combination with visible and ubiquitous cultural sophistication and impressiveness could the physical threat of Andalusī Muslims be persuasive enough to turn large numbers of Christians away from their old identity and assimilate them into the Muslim collective.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Payne, *Spanish Catholicism*, 6.

¹⁰¹ al-Dabbi, *kitab bughyat al-multamis fi ta'rikh rijal ahl al-Andalus* edited by Fransisco Codera and Julian Ribera (Madrid, 1885), 29; translated by Olivia R. Constable, *The Treaty of Tudmir* in Olivia R. Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 37.

¹⁰² Payne, *Spanish Catholicism*, 19.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 6.

The rivals of the Umayyads, the Abbasids, overthrew and massacred the royal family and established a new government in the Islamic empire in 750. One Umayyad prince, Abd al-Rahman I, was able to escape and fled to the Maghreb, and from there he travelled to al-Andalus.¹⁰⁴ Abd al-Rahman and his army were able to gather support both with and without violence, eventually uniting the warring Muslim factions in Spain under one polity, with al-Rahman as emir, in 756.^{105 106} The establishment of this emirate centered in the growing and ancient city of Córdoba brought with it a political stability within Muslim governing structures that had been absent since the first invasion.

Political stability in combination with al-Rahman's ties to the high culture of the East precipitated population growth, economic revival, and cultural and intellectual development the likes of which had not been seen in Spain for many generations, if ever.¹⁰⁷ A mere two generations later Abd al-Rahman III decided that Andalusī Muslim cultural hegemony had grown strong enough to make the theoretical autonomy of al-Andalus a reality and had himself declared caliph, legitimate ruler and religious leader of all Muslims, in 929.¹⁰⁸ The decision to declare religious and political primacy was spurred on both by the growing wealth and developing culture of the Córdoba emirate but also by the declaration of a rising group of Shiites in Tunisia in 909 that they were the legitimate caliphate. The attempt of the Shiite Fatmids of Tunisia to impose its order and identity on Andalusī Muslims forced the solidly Sunnite Andalusī Muslims to defend their autonomy.^{109 110 111} The rivalry and factionalism of these two powerful Muslim

¹⁰⁴ Menocal, *Ornament*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Payne, *Spanish Catholicism*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Menocal, *Ornament*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

groups of the Far West would continue to be a source of weakness and distraction throughout the duration of Muslim rule in Spain.

The duration of the Córdoba caliphate, which lasted from 929 to 1031, is described by many historians as a time of great economic, literary, philosophical, technological, and artistic wealth. The old Roman trade routes throughout the Mediterranean were reestablished, the thought of the greatest ancient Greek philosophers was rediscovered and reanalyzed by men like Avicenna, new crops and agricultural technology were introduced in the southern peninsula, and Eastern music and poetry inspired artists from all three Abrahamic religious groups.¹¹² The period is generally viewed as a time of great intercultural exchange and tolerance thanks in large part to gracious interpretations of the Islamic imperative concerning the Peoples of the Book, the *dhimmi*, the non-Muslim members of the other two Abrahamic religions. Because these two groups were recipients and keepers of divine revelation of the One God, they were ideally to be tolerated and allowed to practice their religions without fear of persecution or death.

On the surface such a construction seems to be a modern conception of religious liberty. However, historical evidence including the increasingly deteriorating situation of Christians under Muslim rule as time passed suggests that the actualization of the *dhimma* contract in Muslim governance may have been motivated by the pacification and unification of al-Andalus more so than by religious imperative.¹¹³ Many historians,

¹¹⁰ Bernard F. Reilly, *The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain: 1031-1157* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 12.

¹¹¹ Loyn, *Diccionario Akal*, 30.

¹¹² Menocal, *Ornament*, 32-36.

¹¹³ Vivian B. Mann and others, eds., *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1992), 15.

including María Rosa Menocal, construct medieval Spain under Muslim rule as an advanced place of tolerance, scientific development, and cultural enrichment—of *convivencia*. In this essay's view, however, Menocal's thesis in *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* fails to communicate the truth of such a nuanced multicuture and oversimplifies historical events and evidence in order to romanticize the past. Although the peoples of Medieval Spain did create an enriched and inspired culture, the brutal reality of their social interactions belies the total tolerance and peace supposedly facilitated by Andalusian religious and political structures. Literary and documentary evidence suggests that the superiority of living conditions experienced in the southern peninsula as opposed to those in the north has been overestimated; as Bernard Reilly writes, "All in all, and at the level of agriculture, León-Castilla, compared to Muslim Andalucía, probably had the advantage as far as the basic standard of living available to its inhabitants."¹¹⁴ Although the supremacy of Andalusian culture has been simplified and overestimated in some early modern historical accounts, elements of the high culture of Muslim Spain were indeed powerful enough to permeate the collective identities of both Christian and Sephardic cultural groups and to remain as visible proof of their lengthy and sophisticated presence on the peninsula.

While the partial assimilation of Muslim culture into the Spanish-Catholic identity made the Muslim Other a stable and permanent part of the Spanish historical narrative and collective identity, the strong military aspect of the Muslim presence was transient. Muslim military hegemony on the peninsula was established in the early eighth century and reached its pinnacle in the late tenth century due to the political ambition and military

¹¹⁴ Reilly, *The Contest*, 30.

aptness of Almanzor. The succession of children to the throne seemed to be a problem for both Christian and Muslim societies in the tenth century. Almanzor, an Arab noble, quickly gained power in the capitol of Córdoba and was instrumental in the succession of the twelve-year-old Hisham II to the position of caliph in 976. Almanzor was then made *Hajib*, a position similar to Grand Vizier in the East, and proceeded to eliminate all political rivals while becoming the de facto ruler of al-Andalus. He strengthened Andalusian hegemony by executing an extremely successful chain of military campaigns against the Christian north. His conquests, albeit temporary, included Barcelona, Burgos, León, Zamora, and Santiago de Compostela. He also conducted constant raids in the Duero basin which resulted in the near-total depopulation of the area which made it a physical representation of the boundary between Christian and Muslim Spain. Their leader was simultaneously sowing the seeds of Muslim decline by provoking the Christian kingdoms of the North into a single, powerful alliance against him and by weakening the power of the position of Caliph, thereby empowering the factions within Muslim society.¹¹⁵

Fuller understanding of the complexities of the interactions between Muslims and Christians in al-Andalus and the subsequent effects on Spanish-Catholic identity requires attention to the presence of the Muslim Other in European consciousness through history. Christians had been in existence about 600 years before Mohammad spread word of his Recitation. There were already three main categories in which to place the religious Other established throughout the turbulent first centuries after the death of Christ: Jew, pagan, and heretic. When Christians began interacting with Muslims they did not immediately establish a new category, and so they distorted or ignored facts in order to construct the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

Muslim Other in accordance with “preestablished schema.” The construction both of the categorical Other and of the early Christian identity itself was used to impose order and stability during a time of chaos and persecution.¹¹⁶ The use of the constructed Other as a tool to defend the Christian identity both ideologically and in its worldly, institutional manifestations, rooted in the first years of the Church, continued in Catholic, medieval Spain.

Early European writers often depicted Muslims as an ethnic Other, using terms like Moor, Saracen, and Ishmaelite; the last of these terms reveals an attempt to define this unfamiliar cultural group in the context of the Catholic narrative based in scripture.¹¹⁷ The religious aspect of this construction would become explicit first in the texts of eighth-century Spanish writers. The Spanish experience informed the rest of Europe which had, up to the eighth century, had mainly second-hand contact with the Islamic world. The first interactions between the people of Visigothic Spain and Islamic Arabs and Berbers of the eighth century were defined by military conflict and striking visual difference, thus making the first perceptions of Muslims in the Christian consciousness concerned with ethnic and political otherness. The first extant representation of Muslim otherness is the Mozarabic *Chronicle of 754*, in which ethnic terms, such as Moor and Saracen, are repeatedly used while religious terms, such as Muslim, are absent.¹¹⁸ This means that, although Spanish Catholics and Muslims of this time existed in groups where religion was the foundational element in identity, the Muslim Other contained complex elements other than religion in direct consequence of individual interactions. While these other elements continued to influence and reflect direct contact between these groups on

¹¹⁶ Tolan, *Saracens*, 3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹¹⁸ Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, passim.

the frontier of both the Islamic and European worlds, the religious element of the Other eventually gained overwhelming importance and was unable to be made compatible with a multi-religious society in the long term.

Muslims were not thought to be the same as Jews, so medieval Christians often described Muslims as pagans, heretics, or a mixture of both. Spanish writers of the ninth century, from which we now have important accounts such as the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, described Islam “as a worldly, debauched heresy, doomed to a swift demise.”¹¹⁹ As Islam laid claim to the Abrahamic tradition and supported important Christian claims, such as the virgin birth of Jesus, Christians could not oppose it as they would a completely pagan culture; it was therefore thought of as a part of the grander Christian tradition that had been twisted into untruth by the deceitful figure of Mohammad. Thus Islam had become an inseparable part of the Christian narrative and identity. The parallel between the paganism of ancient Rome and Islam of the Middle Ages was drawn by Christians seeking to define and explain Islam in order to illustrate the supposed worldliness of Muslims. A culture of worldliness and debauchery provided a stark contrast to the ideal of Christian collectivity focused on the world to come in practicing self-denial. Christian historians of Spain needed to explain the incredible, visible wealth and culture of a group of people that only seemed to oppose and refute the primacy of Christian culture.

An essential image of Muslims propagated by ninth-century Spanish historians was that of a scourge sent by God to punish the sinful.¹²⁰ By portraying the conquering Muslim culture as such, Christian writers could explain the resounding success of a non-

¹¹⁹ Tolan, *Saracens*, xx.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, xx.

Christian army over a Christian one in a way that would not seem to contradict or call into question faith in the truth of Christian teachings. They could also lay the blame of the invasion squarely on the shoulders of the supposedly sinful Visigothic nobles of the eighth century and cleanse the Asturian kings of their own time of the taint that had provoked God into punishing Spanish monarchs in the first place. Newly-constructed champions of Christian Spain obligated to participate in the Reconquest could therefore rest assured that Muslims did not have the favor of God and that their days of rule were numbered. With the simultaneous construction of the Reconquest myth and the Muslim Other those responsible for forming and maintaining the collective Spanish-Catholic narrative and identity had forged a weapon capable of mobilizing Christian Spain into defending itself and eliminating all threats to its survival.

Influence of Christian Interactions with Sephardic Jews

Religious belief and practice were main components in both Jewish and Christian collective identities. They were also important tools distinguishing Christians from Jews. Early Christians seemed defensive and anxious over their survival both because of oppression by governing powers and because of their need to highlight the distinctiveness and superiority of their beliefs with respect to Judaism as well as other ancient religions.¹²¹ Exchanges and clashes between Jews and Christians of the Iberian Peninsula in late antiquity and the Middle Ages worked to form the collective Spanish-Catholic identity and influenced the general process of constructing a religious Other outside of itself. Even after the invasion of the early eighth century, when the living situation of Jews generally improved under Muslim rulers, the social distance between Jews and the

¹²¹ Mann and others, *Convivencia*, 12.

other two main religious groups of the peninsula remained impassable; social and political conditions were never stable enough to facilitate long-term coexistence. The construction of the Jewish Other in the Christian imagination was based more in theoretical propositions and teachings of churchmen like St. Jerome than in practical observation of everyday interactions with Jews. It led to the fixity of the Jewish Other in the face of dynamic changes in Sephardic practice and culture.¹²²

Spanish-Catholic inability to coexist with a religious Other can be traced back to the formation of the Spanish Church in the late seventh century under Julian, Archbishop of Toledo. Julian of Toledo was crucial to the formation of the Spanish Church as an entity with a distinct collective identity.¹²³ Julian's influential actions and achievements in the Toledan councils were colored by his personal experiences. Born into a Jewish family, he enacted grossly anti-Semitic policies during his tenure.¹²⁴ Although the living conditions for Iberian Jews had been difficult under Roman and, later, early Visigothic rule, the Jewish Other could be constructed within the context of the Spanish-Catholic narrative only after the Toledan church of the late seventh century embodied the Spanish-Catholic identity. Julian's influence on the construction of the Jewish Other was fundamental to the narrative of Toledo and Visigothic Spain, later claimed, internalized, and transformed by the Asturian monarchies and the monarchy of León and Castile.

Throughout the chaotic period of the *taifa* kingdoms in the eleventh century political instability and the reclamation of Christian peninsular hegemony gave rise to changes and fortifications within the Christian construction of the Jewish Other that informed and were informed by Christian-Muslim relations. Jewish presence within

¹²² Tolan, *Saracens*, 15.

¹²³ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 61.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

Christian communities was ambivalent and problematic, as Jews were both necessary and intolerable. They were necessary on spiritual and practical levels. Spiritually, the Hebrew tradition was crucial to the Christian belief system and highly respected. Coronations and unctions of Spanish monarchs reveal this reverence for Old Testament tradition, as it contained implicit and explicit references to King David.¹²⁵ Jews were also necessary because they needed to fulfill their soteriological role. The Christian hope was that the Jews would eventually convert so that the Second Coming and Apocalypse could occur.¹²⁶ This abstract impetus to bring the Jews into Christ's Church, however, was not embraced by Spanish Christians. In fact, it was more common for Northern Europeans to express this sentiment until polemics between Christians and Jews gained momentum in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Spanish Christians generally viewed the only possibility of mass conversion of the Jews divinely compelled, so leaving them free to oppress and expel the Jewish Other in political and social interactions.¹²⁷ Practically Jews were necessary because of special skills they possessed and because of their lack of political power. In Muslim Spain and in reconquered Christian territory Jews were often important intellectuals, artisans, bookkeepers, moneylenders, physicians, and go-betweens.¹²⁸ Muslim and Christian rulers used Jewish officials as middlemen between themselves and their diverse religious subjects, allowing Jews to gain important positions in government while never presenting a real threat to rulers.¹²⁹ Jews were easily manipulated by their institutional superiors because monarchs were the defenders of

¹²⁵ Ibid., 149.

¹²⁶ Kenneth Stow, *Popes, Church, and Jews in the Middle Ages: Confrontation and Response* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 1.

¹²⁷ Mann and others, *Convivencia*, 68.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 22, 6, 21, 66.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 14, 16.

Jewish rights within their realm; if the Jewish official displeased the ruler, the entire Jewish population would suffer.¹³⁰ The stories of Samuel ibn Naghrela and his son Joseph, who served as viziers under Muslim rulers in the eleventh century, illustrate the precarious position held by Jews in Muslim courts.¹³¹ Because Jews often filled essential economic, intellectual, and political roles, they were able to perform a variety of identities depending on the specific context of each interaction.¹³² This fluidity of identity would only be matched by the other two peninsular religious groups on the far periphery of society and culture, as Christians and Muslims had socially accepted and fixed roles in their respective societies.

Spanish Christians as a collective were never able to make peace with the existence of a religious Other in their midst, despite the demonstrable spiritual and practical necessities and advantages of the Jewish presence on the peninsula. Although the three religious groups enriched their respective cultures through daily interaction, they manifested constant mutual mistrust and friction.¹³³ The presence of unconverted Jews in a Christian society was problematic because they instantiated doubt and challenged the absolute and triumphant vision of Catholic history articulated in Isidore's writings as central to the Spanish identity.¹³⁴ Therefore Christians viewed Jewish presence as a contaminant or a corrupting presence and sought to keep Jews separate. In *De comprobatione sextae aetatis*, Julian of Toledo described Jews as a boil or tumor on the body of Christ.¹³⁵ ¹³⁶ ¹³⁷ The Jewish Other was not only guilty of corrupting the

¹³⁰ Ibid., 19, 72, 91.

¹³¹ Amin T. Tibi, trans., *The tibyan: Memoirs of 'Abd Allah b. Buluggin, Last Zirid Amir of Granada* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 62-65, 67-68, 69-71, 74-75 in Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia*, 91-96.

¹³² Mann and others, *Convivencia*, 15.

¹³³ Ibid., xiii.

¹³⁴ Tolán, *Saracens*, 15.

¹³⁵ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 66.

Christian faithful, but also of deicide. Medieval Christians, whose historical narrative had been integrated with the Roman historical narrative since Constantine's conversion, generally placed the blame for Christ's death squarely on the shoulders of Jews across time. The representation of Jews as pollutants justified this separation from the Christian community, the role of Christ-killers justified this unending bondage to Christian masters, along with feelings of hatred and unprovoked violence from their Catholic contemporaries.¹³⁸ Justification of the mistreatment of the Other in medieval Christian Spain concerning relations with Jews is seen in the epic poem, *El cantar de mio Cid*, when el Cid is praised for deceiving and robbing Jews.¹³⁹

Christian fear of what the Jews represented and this inability as a collective to cope with the anxiety for the survival of their identity provoked by the religious Other led Catholic Spaniards to adopt a system of assimilation through conversion and elimination through expulsion or death rather than coexistence.¹⁴⁰ Christian anxiety over the Jewish presence is shown in the increasing number of canons in the Toledan councils concerning the regulation of Jews.¹⁴¹ Christians also feared the Jews as conspirators against Christianity as a whole. One of the earliest, most prominent claims of a greater Jewish conspiracy in Spain by King Egica in the late seventh century. He was so concerned that he condemned all peninsular Jews to servitude, a policy never effectively put into practice in reality because of the weakness of central government and the practical necessity of Jews as literate and skilled social contributors at this time. Later, Spanish

¹³⁶ Stow, *Popes, Church, and Jews*, vii.

¹³⁷ Mann and others, *Convivencia*, 71.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁴⁰ Stow, *Popes, Church, and Jews*, 2.

¹⁴¹ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 65.

Christians would accuse the Jews of conspiring with the Muslim invaders.¹⁴² Spanish anxiety over the Jews was so acute that many monarchs and churchmen took actions against the Jews deemed too harsh even by Rome.^{143 144}

The Spanish-Catholic experience of the Sephardic Jews brought a fear for the survival and purity of Christian identity to the fore. As a defensive move, Christians constructed a religious Other potentially useful as a tool to weaken potential threats to the Christian community and preserve the triumphalist Catholic historical narrative. However, the validity of the narrative rested on the absolute truth of Christian revelation; all human beings would need to convert before the Apocalypse and the ultimate salvation of creation could manifest. The tension created by these conflicting aspects of the Spanish-Catholic belief system resulted in cultural, political, and military practices that made total assimilation possible in the ideal but only rough, temporary societal integration possible in reality.

Christian Identity Under Muslim Rule

Unlike the Iberian Christians of the North, those living further south under Muslim rule experienced the loss of political dominance and complete defeat at the hands of the invading armies with no where else to flee. Everyday living conditions for the Christians of eighth-century al-Andalus essentially did not change at first. As long as they were complacent and paid their taxes they were generally left to govern their separate communities with a large amount of autonomy.¹⁴⁵ Of course Muslim rulers did not leave

¹⁴² Ibid., 66, 75.

¹⁴³ Stow, *Popes, Church, and Jews*, 1, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Mann and others, *Convivencia*, 11, 28.

¹⁴⁵ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 73.

Christians to govern themselves completely and emphasized their power in subtler ways. For example, Christians were allowed to settle legal disputes in their own courts, but if an incident involved a Muslim or the ruler deemed it necessary Christian courts were to cede jurisdiction to Muslim-controlled courts.

Although the Muslims did not have enough numbers or cultural capital to immediately arabize the people of the peninsula, such that much of Christian everyday life remained essentially unchanged, the threat posed by the introduction of the Muslim Other into Christian society to the survival of the Spanish-Catholic identity must have been recognized and feared. Two chronicles from the eighth century, both anonymous and untitled, contain accounts of the Muslim invasion from a Spanish perspective: the *Chronicle of 751* and the *Chronicle of 754*.¹⁴⁶ While both chronicles seek to continue previously-written universal chronicles in the style of Isidore and John of Biclaro, neither attempts to place the Christian defeat at the hands of the Muslims in the grand order of the universe ordained by the divine. The invasion and subsequent loss of political and military dominance proved difficult for Spanish Christians to recognize and assimilate into their collective identity and construction of the external world, as is if the authors were so taken aback by events that the only way they could tell the story of the invasion was by briefly stating naked facts and omitting any reference to the divine. The construction of the Muslim Other as a scourge sent by God to punish sinfulness, as the vehicle through which the Visigothic monarchy could be purified and reincarnated in Asturias, would come only in the writings of the next century.

The divide between Christians who were willing to surrender and coexist to some degree with their Muslim conquerors and those who actively resisted acculturation

¹⁴⁶ Tolan, *Saracens*, 78.

became quickly apparent, as did the consequences of choosing a side; Christians who had surrendered and their descendants were notably better off than those that had resisted until the very last.¹⁴⁷ Enmity and bitterness arose between the laity and many bishops because of the bishops' tendency to surrender to Muslim armies, to avoid active resistance, and to act as mediators between Muslim rulers and their new Christian subjects. The role that the bishops played during the Muslim conquest and the subsequent delegitimization of churchmen in the eyes of their own people would later be used by the Christian kings of the northern peninsula to bring the Spanish Church further under the monarchy's control. This process is expressed by the portrayal of bishop Oppa, antagonist of Pelayo at the battle of Covadonga.

As the Andalusí Muslims settled into their new territory they developed a distinctive, increasingly elaborate and sophisticated identity and culture. Intermarriage, an expected phenomenon when one social group invades and occupies the territory of another, contributed to the creation and evolution of an Andalusí identity that transcended religion, yet even though Christians and Jews were given the freedom to participate in the culture and society of Muslim Spain, they were constantly reminded that Islam held the highest place both in political and spiritual life.¹⁴⁸ The more secure Andalusí Muslims became in their power, especially after Abd al-Rahman I established the independent emirate in the late eighth century, the more the 'arabization' of the peninsula proceeded. The term 'arabization' is meant to describe the growing prestige and power of Muslim culture noted and incorporated into cultural forms, such as the language and architecture, of non-Muslims; this phenomenon is properly called 'arabization' because the Arab

¹⁴⁷ Reilly, *The Contest*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ Menocal, *Ornament*, 29.

ethnicity remained the most aristocratic and elite of Muslim society in the peninsula and so dominated the nature of Andalusí elite urban culture, which poorer Christians, Berbers, and slaves often attempted to emulate. Conversion to Islam became more tempting the more Andalusí-Arab culture influenced the peninsula's diverse populations. The *Muwallad*, or Christian converts to Islam, had practical reasons for wishing to assimilate into the politically dominant Muslim culture, including lower taxes and increased social and economic opportunity.

By the 850's Islamic culture in Spain had become a large enough threat to the Spanish-Catholic construction of history and collective identity that it provoked the first notable movement of active resistance to Muslim rule since the Visigothic armies were defeated in the early eighth century. Christians in Córdoba, the heart of the emirate, began to deliberately seek martyrdom and openly decry Islam. Public performance of faith became highly valued and necessary for total acceptance into the Christian identity, as is shown by the account of the martyrs of Córdoba found in the ninth-century text, *Life of Eulogius*, written by Paul Alvarus.¹⁴⁹ This movement made the divide in the Spanish-Catholic community living under Muslim rule between those who were willing to assimilate to some degree and those who would not tolerate any corruption to their group identity apparent; it also gave “expression to something akin to a sense of collective Mozarabic identity.”¹⁵⁰ The rise of a Christian identity unique to al-Andalus, distinct from Visigothic or Northern Christian identities, and built upon active and absolute resistance to oppression and assimilation complicated the collective Christian identity and

¹⁴⁹ Carleton M. Sage, trans., *Paul Albar of Córdoba: Studies on His Life and Writings* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1943), 201-210 in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, 51-55.

¹⁵⁰ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 89.

challenged powers, both Christian and Muslim, that posed threats to Mozarabic existence. Not only were the Córdoba martyrs directly challenging Muslim authority, but they also criticized Christians willing to assimilate to some degree and bishops who submitted to and cooperated with Muslim rulers. The bishops recognized that the martyrs were destabilizing interfaith relations and threatening the relatively peaceful existence of Andalusí Christians and, in conjunction with the Muslim elite, were successful in quashing the movement within a decade.¹⁵¹

Mozarabs, from the Arabic *mustacrib*, meaning ‘one who wants to become Arab,’ were the Christians who remained in al-Andalus after it was conquered by Muslims in the eighth century.¹⁵² They were mainly peasants, but relatively few in number, first because the order and rhythm of life in Visigothic Spain remained mostly undisturbed after the conquest in the provinces carved out by geographic barriers and in rural communities, so allowing these peoples to retain a Christian identity with strong ties to traditions predating the Muslim occupation. Second, the *Muwallad* converted mainly to avoid the economic and social consequences of remaining a Christian in Andalusí Muslim society, leaving the Mozarabs to economic hardship and social and physical separation.¹⁵³ Mozarabic communities had broad autonomy under the early Muslim rulers, and were allowed to organize and rule themselves basically free of interference. Counts and bishops remained at the top of Mozarabic social hierarchies. Third, Christians migrated north out of Muslim Spain in fluctuating numbers since the invasion.

Although Mozarabs were a rural minority with deteriorating status and far from most institutions of power, they managed to survive both in the North and in the South as

¹⁵¹ Tolan, *Saracens*, 87.

¹⁵² Payne, *Spanish Catholicism*, 11.

¹⁵³ Reilly, *The Contest*, 18.

a distinct social group with stable numbers.¹⁵⁴ An important aspect of Mozarabic culture was the fierce will to defend itself and to resist assimilation, whether into Andalusian Muslim or Northern-Iberian Christian culture. This resistance centered around Mozarabic Christianity and religious practice, as Mozarabic culture itself was an amalgamation of provincial, Visigothic, and Arab culture. Mozarabic bishops and laymen stalwartly refused to abandon or change their religious beliefs or practices when living under Muslim rule. Those who migrated north also resisted change in the face of pressure from both popes and monarchs. Hence the Mozarabic rite still exists within Catholic Christianity to the present day.

Christians under Muslim rule learned to adapt, some slower than others. They adopted Arabic as the language of business, social interaction, and even religious practice by the tenth century.¹⁵⁵ The use of Arabic shows that at least a part of the new elite culture was being assimilated into the Spanish-Catholic identity, causing older conservatives within the Christian community to protest and lament the loss of Latin.¹⁵⁶ The language of the educated elite and of holy texts was crucial to the collective identities of the three Abrahamic religious groups of medieval Spain. Members in each group who were concerned with resisting acculturation. They abhorred cultural hybridities, insisting on the purity of language as a way of controlling the purity of identity and ordering themselves in a disordered world. The contrast between the purity of educated language and the dynamism of the spoken word, increasing the longer the three cultures occupied the same space, caused much anxiety for those who viewed linguistic distance from the past as a departure from the identity itself.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 17, 19.

¹⁵⁵ Payne, *Spanish Catholicism*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Tolan, *Saracens*, 78.

Mozarabs had a great effect on the Christian North, especially the Asturian kingdom of the ninth century. After the martyr movement in ninth-century Córdoba and a large increase in Christian immigration to the North, Mozarabs in al-Andalus existed in relative peace with their Muslim neighbors, albeit in very separate communities and with increasingly deteriorating cultural autonomy. They also never lost complete contact with the Christian North and provided an important link between Muslims and northern Iberian Christians.¹⁵⁷ Mozarabs were diplomatically used by Northern kings like Alfonso III for tasks such as brokering peace treaties. One such Mozarab was responsible for transferring the relics of Eulogius, an important figure in the Córdoba martyr movement, to Oveido, the Asturian capitol, in 884.¹⁵⁸

Northbound Mozarabic travelers and immigrants not only brought important relics from al-Andalus, but also agricultural technology, scientific innovations, religious and philosophical thought, and first-hand experience with the Muslim invaders. They enriched the culture of the North, stagnant for prior centuries, and replenished the populations of the provinces; more importantly, Mozarabs brought with them narratives of history and identity that strongly influenced the development of the *Reconquista* in Asturias and, later, León and Castile.¹⁵⁹ Evidence revealing this influence is found in the *Chronicle of 754* and in the *Crónicas Asturianas*, or *Asturian Chronicles*. The *Chronicle of 754* was composed by a Mozarab and provides us with the earliest surviving first-hand account of the invasion from a Christian perspective. While it demonizes the Saracen invaders and begins the process of detaching moral virtue from military victory, it does not attempt to place the invasion in the grander scheme of Christian history and cannot

¹⁵⁷ Payne, *Spanish Catholicism*, 11.

¹⁵⁸ Tolán, *Saracens*, 98.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

fully assimilate this event into the Christian collective identity.¹⁶⁰

The task of placing the invasion in the Christian narrative while maintaining the integrity of the claims of Christianity was, however, undertaken later by the writers of the *Prophetic Chronicle* and the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*. Both of these chronicles were written in the late ninth century, a time when Mozarabic immigration to the north was reaching one of its highest peaks. The *Prophetic Chronicle* reinterprets prophecies in the Old Testament to predict the defeat and expulsion of Muslims in Spain and uses them to combat the perceived threat to Christianity posed by such a powerful group. The *Chronicle of Alfonso III* takes this reassurance of Christian superiority and adds to the narrative a link to the universal chronicles continued by Isidore and the representation of the Muslim as a scourge to punish sinful Visigoths.¹⁶¹

One historian, John Tolan, goes so far as to call this the development of an ideology of reconquest. The concept of ideology seems just as anachronistic in this context as the concept of an abstract state or ecclesiastical power. Instead, such interpretations of this evidence may be thought to reveal the consequences for the collective Spanish-Christian identity and narrative, maintained of dominant monarchs and churchmen, by the interactions and confrontations of Mozarabic Christians and Asturian Christians.

The Multiculture within Reconquered Territories

The chaos of the eleventh century created by the collapse of the Córdoba caliphate and the consequent rise of the *taifa* kingdoms transformed the Iberian Peninsula

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 80.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 99.



Plate 2, the taifa period.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Menocal, *Ornament*, 38.

into a land full of opportunity, violence, and people without masters. Within this unstable environment opportunistic Christian rulers and soldiers began to gain the advantage over their Muslim enemies. The eleventh century also bore witness to powerhouses like the monarchy of León and Castile and the Almoravids in North Africa working to centralize Spanish-Christian and Western-Muslim identity to new levels. This expansion of the reach of central powers and elite shapers of collective identity existed in tension with the independence experienced on the indeterminate frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain and with the perpetually decentralized nature of the political, religious, and cultural groups and institutions of the Iberian peninsula, which had framed both interreligious and intrareligious interaction for at least six centuries.

While it is true that Andalusí Muslims, Christians, and Jews were able to create a rich culture under the relatively tolerant rule of the Córdoba caliphs, the caliphate nonetheless maintained order by monopolizing legitimate politico-religious power and military action. The cultural, physical, and economic oppression of non-Muslims within Muslim-ruled Spanish realms increased over time, such that assimilation or expulsion, not coexistence, was the inevitable end. The same could be said of Northern Spanish-Catholic societies, where the desire to expel dominated the southern populations and the desire to convert and assimilate the Other came from the North.¹⁶³ The myth of a peaceful, functioning multicultural Andalusian entity was ultimately shown to be false when the caliphs could no longer strong-arm politico-religious dissidents into submission and societal disunity won out. The destruction of Andalusí Muslim political unity by internal weaknesses precipitated the beginnings of the first shift of peninsular hegemony

¹⁶³ O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 10.

from Muslim to Christian groups.¹⁶⁴ Alfonso VI gained the throne of the most powerful peninsular Christian kingdom at the precise time when Muslim Spain had become divided and weakened enough to allow him to make the monarchy, religion, and culture of León and Castile arguably the most powerful force in Spain. Maintaining this dominance over time proved to be difficult. The conflict between Christian and Muslim Spain would flare up for over three more centuries, but the influence exerted on the Spanish-Catholic identity of Alfonso VI's monarchy, Andalusí and Mozarab culture, and Northern European culture in the eleventh century was profound.

The unraveling of the caliphate that began in 1009 with a revolt against Abd al-Rahman was completed in 1031 with the official dissolution of the caliphate and the division of ruling powers amongst Berbers, Andalusians, and slaves-turned-mercenaries.¹⁶⁵ The first and most powerful *taifa* kingdoms were formed by different families gaining control over a territory determined mostly by geographical boundaries and developing stable, dynastic governing mechanisms.¹⁶⁶ The *taifa* kingdoms were generally decentralized and independent, with each one ruled independently of religious sanction or any authority higher than the ruler himself. Each lesser kingdom was essentially modeled after the caliphal court itself, operating under its own authority and seeking to continue the grand cultural patronage that had given the Córdoba caliphate such prestige.¹⁶⁷

The Mozarabic church was able to maintain some stability in the face of this political turmoil as the destruction of sees by Muslim rulers had tapered off for the most

¹⁶⁴ Reilly, *The Contest*, 1, 50, 155.

¹⁶⁵ Reilly, *The Contest*, 25.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12, 23.

part by the end of the ninth century. The highly organized structure of the Church, embodied in the bishops, was able to continue defending Mozarabic interests in both Christian and Muslim societies.¹⁶⁸ The northern kingdoms were only a little less chaotic than the south because of the crippling succession of two minors, Alfonso V and Vermudo III, to the throne of León, traditionally the most powerful Spanish Christian kingdom. Because of this Leonese weakness and through a series of clever marriages Sancho García III of Navarra, the grandfather of Alfonso VI, was able to unite an unprecedented amount of northern territory, including Castile, León, and Galicia.¹⁶⁹ These developments would ultimately give the elites of León and Castile a monopoly on political-religious power on the peninsula and on the ability to construct and maintain strong collective identity.

Important factors leading to the empowerment of the northern kingdoms were the growth in population, aided by Mozarab immigrants, and the increased influence of ecclesiastics submissive to the monarchy over populations remote from the centers of government and culture. The large population surplus experienced in the North made territorial expansion and southward movement a necessity rather than a possibility for Spanish Christian communities.¹⁷⁰ Kings like Alfonso I and Alfonso VI realized that populating the fringes of their territory with loyal subjects, would bring the periphery of their realms under their control and stabilize their rule overall. Thus they repeatedly resettled Mozarab populations, grateful and loyal to their rescuers from the north, from recently conquered former-Muslim territory to newly gained territory further north.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 25-26.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 20.

The Duero basin was an especially “essential base of operations against the world of the *taifas*” that Christian kings sought to occupy and populate.¹⁷² This region remained the remotely populated physical representation of the boundary between Christian and Muslim Spain; even al-Mansur himself could only continually raid the area because Muslims lacked the manpower to occupy the basin for any significant period of time. Two charters of Alfonso VI reveal his explicit intention to annex and occupy this area, which was only possible because of the military exploits of Alfonso’s father and predecessor, Ferdinand I. In the 1070’s Alfonso VI began his campaign against the *taifa* of Toledo to win the Duero territory not already under his control. Alfonso was also in conflict with Toledo because he was allied with the recently ousted *taifa* king, Al-Qadir, who sought Alfonso’s help in restoring his throne. After this conflict, in which several other *taifas* got involved, was temporarily resolved in 1080, Alfonso VI had made significant gains in the Duero basin and also “had assumed the responsibility for maintaining the territorial integrity of the *taifa* of Toledo against attack.”¹⁷³

The gains made in this process would come at a heavy price. In order to maintain and increase expansion into the Duero basin and other southern territories Alfonso would need to conquer Toledo and other important *taifas*. This would end up costing the Leonese monarchy heavily because once a *taifa* was defeated the *parias*, or payments made to the Christian king in exchange for peace, would stop coming in to fund the Leonese war machine. This practical conflict reveals the tension between the spiritual obligation originating in the idea of Reconquest to expel the Muslims from Christian Spain and the material motivation spurred on by the copious amounts of treasure readily

¹⁷² Ibid., 29.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 39, 79, 80.

taken from its frontiers. This tension added another complication to the demand on Spanish Christians to perform their identity by participating in the Reconquest by tempting soldiers of fortune away from spiritual warfare and towards material opportunism.

The *parias* of Toledo were so important that Alfonso VI exiled Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, or el Cid, when he conducted an unauthorized raid against Toledo in order to maintain peace and payment for a while longer.¹⁷⁴ ¹⁷⁵ Once Toledo was reconquered in 1085 the *parias* stopped enriching both León and Cluny, to which Alfonso VI had been paying tribute in order to maintain his ties with the elites of Europe; a short time later, in the early twelfth century, the once-affluent monks at Cluny were lucky to be provided with bread.¹⁷⁶ In terms of ideological motivation, reconquering Toledo was extremely valuable because it was the fulfillment of the Asturian-turned-Leonese desire to co-opt the Visigothic legacy of Spain and build upon it as the legitimate rulers of the Peninsula and the legitimate authors of the Spanish-Catholic narrative.¹⁷⁷ Although Alfonso VI restored Toledo to Christian Spain, he realized that Toledo could not undo centuries of conflict, occupation and cultural ‘corruption.’ Toledo was returned in name but would never again be the political and ecclesiastical center the Mozarabs had hoped it would be; they were repeatedly disappointed and misled by Alfonso’s willingness to disregard their long-defended history under oppression in exchange for placing Northerners and Frenchmen in power to maintain the tenuous alliance between Castile and Northern Europe and to increase the monarchy’s power on the internal and external divisions of

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷⁵ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 228, 212.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 175.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 209.

Christian Spain.¹⁷⁸ Toledo, however, continued to be the center of Christian-Muslim interaction, especially concerning polemical exchanges in the twelfth century; this speaks to the power of the historical legacy of Toledo as a cosmopolitan hub of religious thought and discussion.¹⁷⁹ ¹⁸⁰ The reconquest of Toledo in 1085 was an important rallying point not only for Christian Spain under Alfonso VI, but also for Muslim Spain and North Africa. The *taifas* of Sevilla, Bajadoz, and Grenada formed a unified coalition and collectively turned to the fiercely fundamentalist Almoravids of North Africa for military aid.¹⁸¹ While the Almoravid presence was divisive from an Islamic perspective, it unified al-Andalus politically to a great degree. The Almoravids also are largely responsible for the crushing defeat of Alfonso VI's army in 1086 at the battle of Sagrajas. This in turn caused Alfonso to entreat the French for aid and further tie himself and his realm to Europe.¹⁸² ¹⁸³ Thus, the reconquest of Toledo marked the solidification of an irreversible divide between Spanish Muslims, now tied to more severe North African Islam, and Spanish Christians, now permanently identified to some degree with Europeans.

Relations between Christian and Muslim rulers, and relations between Christian rulers and their newly gained Muslim subjects, or *mudejars*, were complicated during the eleventh century. While the goal of Christians according to the drive of Reconquest was to assimilate or expel the Muslim Other, in practice rulers of both religions often engaged in negotiations and alliances as well as battle.¹⁸⁴ As rulers of particular populations, kings

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 209, 214, 216, 217.

¹⁷⁹ Tolán, *Saracens*, 148.

¹⁸⁰ Reilly, *The Contest*, 82.

¹⁸¹ Loyn, *Diccionario Akal*, 407.

¹⁸² Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 216.

¹⁸³ Reilly, *The Contest*, 89.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 43.

defended the lives and well-being of their subjects, Christians or no.¹⁸⁵ As imperfect as the tolerance of Muslim rulers was, that of the Christian rulers was arguably less so; Christians had no solid theological grounds for showing non-Christians tolerance and willingness to coexist, nor did they have a teaching on the *dhimmi*.¹⁸⁶ *Mudejars*, or Muslims living under Christian rule, were numerous and hostile towards the new Christian leadership for many reasons, including the inability to achieve a constructive dialogue, let alone negotiate coexistence.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, Muslims often revolted when they perceived their ruler to be in league with Christians or when they fell under the rule of a Christian themselves.¹⁸⁸ The unwillingness of the Christians to coexist long-term with other religious groups stood in tension with their desire to imitate high Andalusí Muslim culture. Christians simultaneously worked to eliminate the Muslim Other while learning his language and teachings, imitating his architecture, and recreating his technology and fashions.

The free, lawless environment of the frontier was a place removed from central powers, from social convention and limitations, and from general behavioral restrictions. Any person could perform any identity at any given moment, emphasize certain aspects while downplaying others, or forge and independent identity altogether. To go to the fringes of Christian Spain, in spite of the danger, was tempting for spiritual as well as practical motives. On the frontier, one could come into contact with and battle the Muslim enemy for the glory of God. There too any man with fighting ability could gain social and material capital to his satisfaction. The two strongest forces in Spain at this

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 123.

¹⁸⁶ Tolan, *Saracens*, 103.

¹⁸⁷ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 215.

¹⁸⁸ Reilly, *The Contest*, 76.

time acting upon people were religion and intercultural violence. On the one hand, the monarchs and bishops were pushing for identities to be based primarily in the purity of religion. On the other hand, Christians on the frontier lived lives of violent struggle and greatly respected skilled fighters, regardless of religion. In texts like *El Cantar de mio Cid*, Muslim warriors are contradictorily described as morally inferior cowards and fierce, worthy opponents.^{189 190 191} As the power of the monarchs and bishops grew, the freedom of the frontiersmen and the monasteries on the fringes of society steadily faded.

The Spanish-Catholic perception of the Muslim Other, heavily informed by the violent series of conflicts later dubbed the Reconquest, was also deeply influenced by the eleventh-century initiation of the European crusades to the Muslim East. The monarchy of Alfonso VI co-opted the Asturian legacy which claimed ties to Visigothic Spain and was the origin of the idea of Reconquest, or retaking Spain from the Muslims as legitimate heirs of the Visigothic kings. Through Alfonso's rule and legacy, the foreign construction of crusade entered the institutions of the peninsula. Alfonso himself remade the Reconquest into a unique, Spanish type of crusade with the emperor of Spain, rather than the pope, at its head.¹⁹²

Since the beginning of Spanish Christian resistance to Muslim rule at all levels of society, Christians constructed the Muslim Other in order to create distance between themselves and their military enemies, attribute inhuman and immoral characteristics to those opponents, and justify acts of violence against them in order to defend the purity of the Spanish-Catholic identity and the well-being of the people who claimed this identity.

¹⁸⁹ Rita Hamilton and Janet Perry, trans., *The Poem of the Cid* (London: Penguin Books, 1984), lines 666-714, lines 1221-1235.

¹⁹⁰ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 110 228.

¹⁹¹ Reilly, *The Contest*, 5, 14, 47.

¹⁹² O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, xi, 4.

Crusade was the next stage in the evolution of this process of otherization with the intent to commit violence. The multi-faceted nature of the motivation of Christians of the Reconquest is fundamental to the history of peninsular culture. Some Christians, like kings and other political elites, were interested in the territorial expansion now possible because of the Christian military dominance of the eleventh century.¹⁹³ Others, such as mercenaries, peasants, and low-ranking ecclesiastics, were interested in gaining treasure and titles. Despite the economic and political forces that moved Christian soldiers of the Reconquest, religion remained the prime force moving Christians to resist Muslims in Spain.¹⁹⁴ ¹⁹⁵ This impulsion is evident among the Christian chroniclers of warfare against Muslims, who generally speak of Christian armies and soldiers instead of Portuguese, Castilian, or Navarrese, so underscoring the principal religious division between Christians and their Muslim enemies.¹⁹⁶

The origins of Christian sanctification of warfare can be found in Augustine of Hippo's teachings on just war, drawn on principles found in the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁹⁷ These complex teachings suggest that war, although abhorrent, is sometimes necessary and acceptable within the Christian community. A striking element is the emphasis on the tie between Christianity itself and those who identify as Christian; both must be defended and one cannot survive without the other's integrity. As Joseph O'Callaghan notes, "The defense of Christian values was tantamount to the defense of society itself. Eventually Christians acknowledged that the use of force to achieve that purpose was justifiable."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁴ Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 205.

¹⁹⁵ O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 10.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 1984), book 19.

¹⁹⁸ O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 13.

Such a posture addresses the Spanish situation specifically because Iberian Christians were at high risk, in their own view, of becoming religiously and culturally impure or of being bodily or materially threatened unjustly. It also accounts for the long-standing unity of military and religious obligations to be fulfilled by the Spanish kings.¹⁹⁹ However, although some campaigns in Spain at this time may be called crusades, the Reconquest itself was not a thoroughgoing crusade until the end of the twelfth century, if ever.²⁰⁰

Modern historians are divided on whether or not the Reconquest from the late eleventh century on should be defined as a crusade; traditionalists apply that term only to expeditions in the east seeking to reclaim Jerusalem, while pluralists emphasize the diversity and multiplicity of crusades proclaimed by the popes.²⁰¹ I prefer a pluralist position on the issue of crusade in Spain. Support for this position may be extrapolated from the events at Barbastro in 1064. Many Spanish soldiers were recruited with the understanding that, by publicly displaying their purpose for fighting, such as assuming a cross on their armor and fighting the Muslims, they would earn forgiveness from sin and eternal life in heaven.²⁰² Pope Alexander II (A.D. 1062-73), like his immediate successor Gregory VII, encouraged French knights to aid Spanish Christian soldiers to oppose the Muslims and reclaim Spain for the benefit of the papacy on the grounds of the spurious the Donation of Constantine.²⁰³ Alexander offered these soldiers a plenary indulgence in all but name, as those had yet to be created officially for the purpose of crusade.²⁰⁴ The Christian forces, including Fernando I, reconquered the city of Barbastro and brutally

¹⁹⁹ Reilly, *The Contest*, 55.

²⁰⁰ O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 22.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

slaughtered all the Muslim residents in 1064. This event led the *taifa* king of Zaragoza to massacre many Mozarabs under his rule and halt *parias* to Fernando, as well as to unite with Valencia and Sevilla to take back the city, as they did in 1065. Fernando then invaded Valencia and defeated the *taifa* king, so pressuring the king of Zaragoza to renew payment.²⁰⁵ Two important conclusions derive from the events at Barbastro and their aftermath. First, instead of a multi-cultural tradition of tolerance, both Muslims and Christians were willing to commit atrocities to avenge past wrongs that would never be completely forgiven. Second, this was the first time the Reconquest received direct papal backing and helped inform the people of the peninsula about the crusade experience.

²⁰⁵ Reilly, *The Contest*, 37.

CONCLUSION

Unification and stability forged under the rule of Alfonso VI were only temporary, as the Christian kingdoms of Spain continued to experience division, violent reunification, and rivalry after his death. León and Castile would not be permanently united until the fourteenth century. All of the Spanish Christian kingdoms would not be a single monarchy until the fifteenth century under the Catholic Monarchs, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. The provincialism and regionalism that divided Spanish Christians and decentralized society before the eleventh century maintained afterwards to differing degrees. In spite of this continued instability, however, the events of the eleventh century and the actions of the political-ecclesiastical entity under the power of Alfonso VI had lasting, irreversible consequences for the Spanish-Catholic identity and the Others created in opposition to it.

The regional Leonese-Castilian cultural group, beneficiary of a reinterpreted version of the Visigothic legacy fashioned in ninth-century Asturias, rose during the eleventh century to become the dominant force directing the formation and maintenance of the Spanish-Catholic identity. This consolidation of political and ideological power made the monarchies of León and Castile permanent in principle in peninsular politics and in the dynamics of Spanish collective identity; the linguistic dominance of Castilian Spanish in the present underscores this point. Alfonso VI and his political and ecclesiastical allies empowered governing bodies at the center of society and collective identity formation worked effectively to weaken the power of peripheral identities and

centralized Spanish-Catholic society. The empowerment of Alfonso's monarchy also led to a greater Spanish identification with Europe, more specifically France and Rome, than had previously existed.

Further, Spanish identity was irreversibly merged with the imperatives and traumas of the Reconquest. Anxiety over the survival of Spanish Christian cultural groups led to social and religious militarization and a fierce desperation to eliminate otherness. The tie between material, territorial gain and spiritual hegemony was internalized. The sanctification of warfare, used to justify violence against the Other and order reality according to a certain cultural paradigm, along with the imperative for territorial expansion and total assimilation or elimination of the Other, were essential parts of the Spanish-Catholic identity after the eleventh century. These factors contributed to the ultimate failure of Spanish multiculturalism in the forced conversions and expulsions of non-Christians in Spain in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. More broadly, the legacy of the Spanish-Catholic struggle against the Muslim Other strongly influenced the beginnings of Spanish colonialism. The explicit continuation of the Christian movement outward against the Other in order to prove the absolute validity of Spanish Christianity, among other parallel themes, are seen in Columbus' own account of his voyages.

Although otherness was seen as a pollutant and rejected in the ideal by Spanish Catholics as a collective, no amount of violence or manipulation of historical narratives could erase more than seven centuries of social, military, scientific, linguistic, artistic, and spiritual experiences received in an emphatically multicultural milieu. The multilingual texts, the Visigothic ruins, the mosques-turned churches, the *converso*

artisans, the *morisco* physicians, the Mozarabs, and the intermarried families with mixed, multilingual children stand as testaments to the lasting nature of multicultural interaction and its irrevocable effects on all cultural groups involved. The Other, constructed simultaneously with an identity, can never be completely assimilated or eliminated because it reflects the permanent nature of the internalization of multicultural experience. Pure identities, as this evidence reveals, are wholly mythical.

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