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The Making of Catholic Spain, with Brendan McGuire, Ph.D.

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Glossary of Terms

Abbasid—The name of the dynasty that supplanted the Umayyads as rulers of the Islamic world in the middle of the eighth century. Although they expelled the Umayyads from their center of power in Damascus in 750, they never ruled Spain, which became a refuge for the exiled Umayyad prince Abd al-Rahman I.

Abd al-Rahman I—The name of the Umayyad prince who, fleeing the massacre of his family and the overthrow of his royal house, escaped to Islamic Spain, and there established the Umayyad dynasty that ruled Islamic Spain until 1031.

Abd al-Rahman III—Umayyad ruler of Islamic Spain who claimed the significant title of “caliph” in 929.

Al-Andalus—the Arabic name for the Iberian peninsula. Generally, this name is used by historians to refer to those portions of the Iberian peninsula under Islamic rule at any given time.

Alfonso III—tenth-century Christian king of the Asturias; he commissioned chronicles on the history of his Christian border kingdom, linking its foundation with the Visigothic resistance to the Islamic conquest.

Alfonso VI—Eleventh century king of Castile; although a strong ruler who presided over a cosmopolitan court, he was soundly defeated in 1086 by the Almoravids, at the battle of az-Zallaqah (Sagrajas).

Alhambra—Famous palace of the Nasrid rulers of Granada.

Almanzor (Al-Mansur)—Name given to the Umayyad general Muhammad who, in the late tenth century, struck a series of devastating blows against the Christian kings of Iberia. Almanzor’s power and prestige within Umayyad Spain came at the expense of the marginalized caliph; this new balance of power ultimately weakened the institution of the caliphate to the point that, almost thirty years after Almanzor’s death, Umayyad unity simply collapsed and the caliphate was no more.

Almohads—Islamic faction that carved out an empire in northwestern Africa in the twelfth century, capturing Marrakesh from the Almoravids in 1147. They invaded Spain that same year, and ruled the Islamic portions of Spain into the thirteenth century.

Almoravids—Islamic faction that built up a substantial empire in eleventh-century northwestern Africa, invading Spain at the invitation of the Taifa emirs in 1086. They ruled Islamic Andalus until they were conquered by the Almohads.

Amir—see Emir

Aragon—Iberian Christian kingdom that developed out of Frankish dependencies in the northeastern corner of the peninsula. Aragon first became a kingdom in the twelfth century.

Asturias—the first of the Christian border kingdoms, the Asturias was founded in Spain's northwestern mountains along the Biscay coast in the eighth century. It later expanded to include Galicia, Leon, and Castile, and over time the name “Asturias” was supplanted by that of Leon, and then of Castile, as the principal name for the kingdom.

Caliph (also Khalif)—The successor of the prophet Muhammad. In theory, there can only be one legitimate caliph, and he is a political and religious leader. In practice, there were often competing claims to the title. The ancient dispute between Muhammad's adopted son Ali and the Umayyad clan over the caliphate is the source of the split between Shiite Muslims and the rest of Islam.

Castile—Region in central Iberia that was first added to the kingdom of the Asturias in the tenth century. It was later expanded greatly as the Christian reconquest of the peninsula progressed, and eventually lent its name to the kingdom itself. The Kingdom of Castile became the largest and most powerful entity in the Iberian peninsula by the thirteenth century, and in the fifteenth century it was the official sponsor of the earliest explorations in the New World, to which it bequeathed the Castilian language.

Compostela—Location where the relics of St James the Apostle were discovered in the ninth century. Compostela became one of the greatest pilgrimage destinations in the Christian West, and the patronage of St James was later invoked by Iberian Christians in their wars against Islamic Andalus, especially as those wars took on the character of religiously-inspired reconquest in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Conversos—Vernacular Spanish name for Jews who had converted to Christianity.

Convivencia—Historiographical term used to emphasize the peaceful and constructive coexistence of different religious and ethnic groups in medieval Spain.

Emir—A generic term for a Muslim ruler or commander. The Umayyad rulers of Spain bore the simple title of Emir from 754 to 929, when they adopted the more ambitious title of caliph.

Fueros—Documents granting specific local rights to towns and cities, particularly independence from feudal lords. These documents played a very important role in the repopulation of urban settlements as the frontier between Christian and Islamic Spain shifted southwards.

Galicia—region in the northwest of the Iberian peninsula where the kingdom of the Asturias first found natural room for expansion. It was here that the bones of St James were discovered.

Hadith—An authoritative teaching or saying, handed down orally before being placed in a written collection of such teachings. These are usually ascribed to the prophet Muhammad but sometimes also to other early Islamic figures, and their authenticity is attested by the “chain of transmission,” or “isnad,” which describes exactly how a hadith was passed along from one person to the next.

Hajib—Arabic term, common in al-Andalus, for the right-hand-man or head councilor of an emir or caliph.

Las Navas de Tolosa—Site of a decisive Christian victory in the year 1212, in which the combined forces of Christian Iberia—under the auspices of a papal crusade indulgence—destroyed the army of the Almohad realm. The Almohads withdrew from Spain entirely a few years later, and were succeeded by the Nasrid dynasty as rulers of what remained of al-Andalus. Las Navas de Tolosa was the decisive battle of the Christian *reconquista*, as from this moment on Islamic Spain was a withering shell of its former self, unable to hold onto important cities in the south such as Seville, Jaen, and Cordoba. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the might of the dreaded Almohads was a fading memory, and the Nasrid kingdom of Granada a weak client state, subservient to the kings of Castile.

Leon—City and region in the north of the Iberian peninsula; reconquered by the Asturians in the eighth century. It lent its name to the kingdom itself in the tenth century.

Marranos—Another vernacular name, of medieval origin, for Jewish subjects of Christian kingdoms in Iberia who converted to Christianity.

Moriscos—Muslims who converted to Christianity.

Mozarabs—Christians living under Arab rule.

Muezzin—chants the call to prayer at a mosque.

Muwallad—Arabic name for non-Arab converts to Islam.

Nasrids—dynasty that succeeded the Almohads as rulers of al-Andalus. The Nasrids ruled over a politically weak kingdom in the south of the Iberian peninsula, often called the kingdom of Granada, from the thirteenth century until near the end of the fifteenth. Plagued by internal strife and no match for the Christian neighbors, the Nasrid kings of Granada nevertheless presided over some remarkable cultural accomplishments.

Navarre—Christian kingdom in the north of the Iberian peninsula that evolved from the embryonic kingdom of Pamplona. Although the kingdom of Pamplona had its roots in ninth-century efforts on the part of Iberian lords to obtain independence from the Frankish empire, it did not become known as the kingdom of Navarre until much later, in the twelfth century, when the region was ruled by Garcia Ramirez, grandson on his mother's side of the famous El Cid.

Pelayo—Visigothic lord who resisted the Islamic conquerors of the Iberian peninsula, establishing the kingdom of the Asturias in the forbidding Picos de Europa in the eighth century. The legend of Pelayo, and his famous victory at Covadonga, is contained in the chronicle of Alfonso III.

People of the Book—Juridical category for Christians and Jews under Islamic law; the notion of Christians and Jews as “people of the book” is rooted in Qur’anic teaching. As such, Christians and Jews have almost always been allowed a certain freedom of worship in Islamic states, but this freedom is

subject to several conditions, which include the payment of special taxes that many throughout history have found quite burdensome, as well as prohibitions on public statements considered offensive to Islamic teaching or to the prophet Muhammad. In cases of intermarriage between Muslims and people of the book, all offspring are considered Islamic under Islamic law.

Portugal—Founded as a Christian fief during the ninth-century expansion of the Asturias, Portugal became a kingdom in its own right (rather than simply a Leonese county) during the twelfth century. Lisbon, which became its most important city, was reconquered with the help of passing crusader ships in 1147.

Sephardic Jews—Those Jews who trace their lineage back to the Iberian peninsula. A Mediterranean diaspora of Sephardic Jews was created in 1492 when they were expelled from Castile by Queen Isabel.

Sharia—A generic term that refers to Islamic law, broadly considered. Sharia law is subject to a variety of interpretations and has existed in many different forms, and it is misleading to think that Sharia law has anything to do, strictly speaking, with postmodern Islamic fundamentalism.

Shiite—A Muslim belonging to the “shī’a,” or faction that was formed by the supporters of Ali during the first Islamic civil war (656-661). The Shiites rejected the religious and political leadership of Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs alike, and founded their own caliphate (the Fatimid caliphate) in Egypt in the tenth century. There were almost no Shiites in Islamic Spain. Today, Shiite majorities exist in Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain, and a Shiite government is battling rebels in the Sunni-majority country of Syria.

Sunni—A general term for the overwhelming majority of Muslims who reject Shiite claims. The term “Sunni” is derived from *sunna*, or “tradition.”

Taifa kingdoms—The small emirates who formed in the wake of the Umayyad collapse in 1031. The downfall of the Iberian Umayyads resulted in the temporary loss of all Islamic unity in Spain; during the period of the taifas, from 1031 to 1086, Christian kings made enormous inroads into Islamic Spain. The tide of Islamic decline was reversed by the arrival of the Almoravids in 1086; they deposed many taifa emirs, reestablished Islamic unity, and defeated the Castilian king Alfonso VI on the field of battle.

Tariq ibn al-Ziyad—the eighth century Islamic official who directed the rapid conquest of al-Andalus.

Umayyad—name of a clan within the Quraysh tribe. The prophet Muhammad was a member of the Quraysh, but his family belonged to a different clan, the Banu Hashim or Hashemites. The Umayyad clan contributed one of the earliest caliphs, Uthman, and later it was an Umayyad named Mu’awiyah who fought against Ali in the first Islamic civil war. Mu’awiyah’s triumph left him as sole caliph in AD 661, and he established Damascus as his capital. Damascus remained the capital, and the Umayyads rulers of the Islamic world, until they were overthrown in the Abbasid revolution of 750. After 750, the Umayyad banner was raised in Spain by Abd al-Rahman I, and his successors ruled Islamic Spain until the dissolution of their caliphate in 1031.

Visigoths—Germanic barbarians who served as Roman *foederati* beginning in the late fourth century. Like most barbarian *foederati*, they served their own interests rather than those of the empire; they

sacked Rome under the leadership of Alaric in 410. Relocated to Aquitaine and Hispania by a desperate and increasingly impotent Western Roman government, the Visigoths were mostly restricted to their Spanish domains after being defeated by Clovis and the Franks in 506. Their conversion from Arian to Catholic Christianity in 589 removed an important barrier dividing them from their Hispano-Roman subjects. Their kingdom was destroyed by the invading Muslims in the eighth century.

Vizier—Common title, derived from the Arabic *wazir*, for a ruler's second-in-command. At various times and places in Islamic history, viziers handled all the practical business of government.