

QUOTATIONS ON MOORISH (ISLAMIC) CIVILIZATION

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The Muslims of the Iberian Peninsula, who ruled Spain between 711 and 1492 C.E., are commonly known as the Moors. They called their land Andalus which in the early period of their history also included Portugal and southern France and in the last period only the Kingdom of Granada. The word Andalusia is derived from the Arabic word Al-Andalus which has several meanings. One of them is 'to become green after a long summer or drought,' and the history of the Iberian Peninsula over the ages attests to this phase when Muslims ruled Spain.

In the earliest setback in southern France, the Muslims were defeated at Tours-Poitiers (about two-thirds of the way to Paris) during the month of Ramadan in 732 CE. This place is known as 'The Pavement of the Martyrs' and in Muslim cronicles as *Balaat ash-Shuhada'*. Muslim control of Toulouse, Narbonne, Lyon and nearby territories varied from time to time, as some of the territories were lost, regained, and then lost. This went on until 975 C.E.

The word Moors is a corrupted word referring to the people who came from Morocco. The Christians of the Iberian Peninsula began to use this term exclusively for Muslims when the Muslims lost administrative control of northern parts of Spain and Portugal. Later, other words such as [Moriscos](#) and [Mudejares](#) were used for them beginning in the mid-thirteenth century.

When Muslims first arrived in Spain in 711 C.E., they constituted mainly Arabs and Berbers of North Africa. Within two decades a majority of the inhabitants of Andalus, especially most of the Unitarian Christians and the oppressed class, accepted Islam freely in recognition of the peace, security and the freedom of religion and expression under the Muslim rule. ([Gothic Princess Sara](#)). By 770 C.E. people of all races from North Africa and Arabia migrated to Andalusia (Spain and Portugal). They intermarried with various nationalities including the native Spanish-Muslim population, with the result that Spain became a fairly homogeneous country within a few generations. During the reign of Abdur-Rahman, the 'Falcon of Andalus' (755-788), they began the work of building an Islamic civilization similar to the one already flourishing in Damascus, Baghdad and its many regional centers. Within a century of their activity, they had developed a civilization far in advance of any in Europe. Their great contribution is commonly known as the Moorish Civilization.

- [Stanley Lane-Poole](#)
- [Conde](#)
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Stanley Lane-Poole in 'The Moors in Spain': Introduction.

"For nearly eight centuries, under the Mohamedan rule, Spain set all Europe a shining example of a civilized and enlightened state. Her fertile provinces rendered doubly prolific, by the industrious engineering skill of the conquerors bore fruit a hundredfold, cities innumerable sprang up in the rich valleys in the Guadalquivir and the Guadiana whose [names, and names only commemorate the vanished glories](#) of their past.

"...To **Cordoba** belong all the beauty and ornaments that delight the eye or dazzle the sight. Her long line of Sultans form her crown of glory; her necklace is strung with the pearls which her poets have gathered from the ocean of language; her dress is of the banners of learning, well-knit together by her men of science; and the masters of every art and industry are the hem of her garments.

"Art, literature and science prospered as they then prospered nowhere else in Europe...

"Mathematics, astronomy, botany, history, philosophy and jurisprudence were to be mastered in Spain, and Spain alone. Whatever makes a kingdom great and prosperous, whatever tends to refinement and civilization, was found in Muslim Spain...

"With **Granada** fell all Spain's greatness. For a brief while, indeed, the reflection of the Moorish splendour cast a borrowed light upon the history of the land which it had once warmed with its sunny radiance. The great epoch of Isabella, Charles V and Philip II, of Columbus, Cortes and Pizarro, shed a last halo about the dying monuments of a mighty state. When followed the abomination of dissolution, the rule of inquisition and the blackness of darkness in which Spain has been plunged ever since.

"In the land where science was once supreme, the Spanish doctors became noted for nothing but their ignorance and incapacity. The arts of Toledo and Almeria faded into insignificance.

"The land deprived of skillful irrigation of the Moors, grew improvised and neglected, the richest and most fertile valleys languished and were deserted, and most of the populous cities which had filled every district in Andalusia, fell into ruinous decay; and beggars, friars, and bandits took the place of scholars, merchants and knights. So low fell Spain when she had driven away the Moors. Such is the melancholy contrast offered by her history."

Conde as Quoted in Prescott, 'Philip II of Spain,' Vol. III.

"And so vanquished for ever from the Spanish territory this brave, intelligent and enlightened people, who with their resolution and labour inspired life into the land, which

the vain pride of the Goths condemned to sterility, and endowed it with prosperity and abundance and with innumerable canals, this people whose admirable courage was likewise, in happiness and adversity, a strong rampart to the throne of the Caliphs, whose genius, progress and study raised in its cities an internal edifice of light which sent its rays into Europe and inspired it with the passion of study, and whose magnanimous spirit tinted all its acts with an unrivalled colour of grandeur and nobility, and endowed it in the eyes of posterity with a sort of extraordinary greatness and charming colour of heroism which invokes the magical ages of Homer and which presents them to us in the garb of Greek half-gods.

"The Arabs suddenly appeared in Spain like a star which crosses through the air with its light, spreads its flames on the Horizon and then vanishes rapidly into naught. They appeared in Spain to fill her suddenly with their activity and the fruit of their genius, and endowed her with a glorious glamour which enveloped her from the Pyrenees to Gibraltar and from the oceans to the Barcelona. But a burning love for liberty and independence, a fickle character disposed to frivolity and merriness, neglect of old virtues, an unfortunate disposition of revolution, provoked always by an inflamed imagination, violent passions and ambitions, a spirit to dominate, and other factors of decay, worked in the course of time, to demolish this grand edifice raised by men like Tariq, 'Abdul Rahman al-Nasir, Muhammad ibn al-Ahmer, and led the Arabs to internal dissention, which sapped their power and pushed them to the abyss of naught.

"Millions of Moors quitted Spain carrying their property and arts - the patrimony of a state. What have the Spaniards created in their place? We could say nothing, but an eternal sorrow fills this land in which the gayest natures breathed before. Indeed there are some ruined monuments which still look upon these gloomy districts, but a real cry resounds from the depths of these monuments and ruins: **honour and glory to the conquered Moor and decay and misery to the victorious Spaniard!**"

Gustav Lebon

"For five to six hundred years general books in Arabic language and particularly on various disciplines have been almost the only source of learning and teaching in the European universities. And we can safely assert that in certain disciplines like medicine the impressions of the Arabs are still at work in Europe. The medical writings of [Ibn Sina \(Avicenna\)](#) have been explained about the close of the last century in Monabilih."

"Roger Bacon, Leonard, Erno Al Felquni, Raymond Lot, San Thoma, and Azfonish X Qashqani have solely depended on Arabic Books."

Renan

"Albert, the Great, is indebted to [Ibn Sina](#) and San Thoma owes it all to [Ibn Rushd \(Averroes\)](#)."

Homeld on Science

"It was the Arabs who for the first time invented the method of chemical preparation of

medicines, and it was from this source that sound advice and the procedure of experiments came to us, which were taken up by the School of Saliram and from there after a long time spread to southern Europe. The medicine and the natural elements on which medication entirely depends became the cause of study of plants' Chemistry. In this way both these studies went on simultaneously in two different ways and thus the door on a new era of the study of this science was opened by the Arabs. Suffice it for the proof of the vast Arab knowledge of the plant kingdom that they made addition of two thousand herbs to those of Zulefuredas. There were many herbs in their pharmacy that the Greeks had not even dreamt of."

Sideo

"During the middle ages, the Arabs alone were the standard-bearers of a civilisation."

"When the Arabs gained expertise in Astronomy, they paid special attention to Mathematical sciences and gained a high degree of excellence and they were really our teachers in this field....When we take stock of all that got transferred from Arabic to Latin, we find that a great doorway was made in the name of Gerbert Sylvester II, through which during the period between 970-980 AD, all those sciences he had acquired in Andalusia had entered Europe."

..."Our searching gaze rests on the Malikite Law, since we have had contacts with Africa, and France had ordered its competent learned men to translate into French the short compendium on Fiqh (jurisprudence) compiled by Ishaq bin Yaqub (d. 1242 AD, his book titled "Kitab-e-Khalil")

..."For full six hundred years his ([Ibn Sina, Avicenna](#)) works held sway over the educational institutions of Europe. His book Al-Qanun (Canon) was translated in five volumes and had repeated reprints, since the instruction in the universities of France and Italy totally depended on it."

Martin Hume in 'Spanish People'

"The Sultan Abd-er-Rahman was one of the Heaven-sent rulers of men. Prompt yet cautious in council and in war, unscrupulous, overbearing and proud, he was as ready to wreak terrible vengeance, as he was politic to forgive when it suited him. Berber and Yamanite alike acknowledged that at last they had found their master....He ruled until his death, in 788, with the tempered severity, wisdom, and justice which made his domain the best organized in Europe, and his capital the most splendid in the world."

S.P. Scott in 'The History of the Moorish Empire in Europe.'

"Yet there were knowledge and learning everywhere except in Catholic Europe. At a time when even kings could not read or write, a Moorish king had a private library of six hundred thousand books. At a time when ninety-nine percent of the Christian people were wholly illiterate, the Moorish city of Cordova had eight hundred public schools, and

there was not a village within the limits of the empire where the blessings of education could not be enjoyed by the children of the most indigent peasant, ...and it was difficult to encounter even a Moorish peasant who could not read and write."

Thomson in 'The Muslims in Andalusia.'

Europe was darkened at sunset, Cordova shone with public lamps; Europe was dirty, Cordova built a thousand baths; ..., Cordova changed its undergarments daily; Europe lay in mud, Cordova's streets were paved; Europe's palaces had smoke-holes in the ceiling, Cordova's arabesques were exquisite; Europe's nobility could not sign its name, Cordova's children went to school; Europe's monks could not read the baptismal service, Cordova's teachers created a library of Alexandrian dimensions. [\(800-1000 C.E.\)](#)

Dozy in 'The Moslems in Spain.'

"Cruel and fanatical, the Leonese rarely gave quarter; when they captured a town they usually put all the inhabitants to the sword. Tolerance such as that accorded by the Muslims to the Christians could not be expected of them."

H. Kamen, 'The Spanish Inquisition.'

"As a result of his (Cardinal Ximenes' coercive) endeavours, it is reported that on 18th December 1499 about three thousand Moors were baptized by him and a leading mosque in Granada was converted into a church. 'Converts' were encouraged to surrender their Islamic books, several thousands of which were destroyed by Ximenes in a public bonfire. A few rare books on medicine were kept aside for the University of Alcala...(Ximenes) claimed...the Moors had forfeited all their rights under the [terms of capitulation \(of Granada\)](#). They should therefore be given the choice between baptism and expulsion...At Andarax the principal mosque, in which the women and children had taken refuge, was blown up with gun-powder...all books in Arabic, especially the Qur'an, were collected to be burnt...Cardinal Ximenes:...was reported during his conversion campaign among the Granada Moors in 1500 to have burnt in the public square of Vivarrambla over **1,005,000 volumes** including unique works of Moorish culture."

H.C. Lea, 'The [Moriscos](#) of Spain.'

"...that cemeteries could be established near the churches changed from mosques, but old Christians were not to be debarred from burial there if they wished...it continued until 1591 when it was ordered that they should be buried inside of the churches, which was so abhorrent to them that they vainly offered more than thirty thousand ducats if king or pope would allow them to be interred elsewhere, even though in dunghills.

"... tailors were not to make garments nor silver-smiths jewels after their (Moorish) fashion; **their baths were prohibited**; all births were to be watched by Christian midwives to see that no Moorish rites were performed; disarmament was to be enforced by a rigid inspection of licences; their doors were to be kept open on feast-days, Fridays, Saturdays, and during weddings, to see that Moorish rites were abandoned and Christian

ones observed...no Moorish names were to be used and they were not to keep 'gacis' or unbaptised Moors either free or as slaves."

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