

## A Second Wave of Oppression

In 1525, a generation later, a second wave of oppression began. In that year Charles V (Charles I of Spain) ordered all Muslims in Aragon to become Christians even though most of them received little or no instruction in Catholic dogma and catechism. As the years went on, we can understand that most Muslims in Spain remained Muslims in their hearts.

In 1526, the following year, the Inquisition was moved from Jaen to the city of Granada in order to do its job more efficiently. In the *Albaicin*, the upper town where most Granadine Muslims were now forced to live, midwives could no longer be Muslims: they might circumcise baby boys or whisper Islamic prayers in the ears of the little babies they brought into the world.

We hear of brave women who defied the ban, women like the Qur'anic expert Noceita Kalderan (or Calderon?), and the enigmatic *Moratica* of Ubeda. There in 1212, three hundred years before, following the battle of the Navas de Tolosa, the *Muwahhidin* (or "*Almohades*" as the Europeans deformed this otherwise meaningful name) were decisively defeated; 70, 000 Muslims were slaughtered at the order of the bishops of Toledo and Narbonne, who were present at this battle scene.

So in 1525 the second wave of oppression began. The Mudejars (*al-mudajjanin* or 'the tamed' ones) were Muslims who had submitted to Christian rule in the northern kingdoms centuries before. In the city of Toledo in central Spain, they were told that they had to leave or become Christians (many Muslims had fled there recently from Granada); after that date, they could be summarily jailed and tortured for refusing to eat pork or drink wine, practices that were suspect in the eyes of Spanish Christians, especially churchmen and neighbourhood gossips. Such despicable surveillance ruined a previously prosperous and hardworking community.

These laws are much like Jewish legislation in occupied Palestine today: they destroyed houses and mosques just as Jewish businesses were torched during *Krystalnacht* in Germany, without due judicial procedure. Now this action has been reproduced in Palestine by blowing up Palestinian homes and businesses arbitrarily in towns like, Bayt Sahur and in the Gaza strip.

These Muslim artisans in Spain practised the crafts and agriculture which had brought her to a high level

of prosperity, especially in the Mediterranean trade. These craftsmen lived in northern and north-eastern Spain, in the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, and they contributed greatly to the national economy.

The silk industry which had been brought by Muslim merchants from China centuries before was destroyed in Granada, Seville and Pastrana to the east of Madrid through the harassment of these skilled workmen (Pastrana is the town where the Princess of Eboli was imprisoned).

In 1521 a *Germanic* or brotherhood of Christian workmen in Valencia had raised an urban revolt of the Commoners in that city which led to similar suppression of Islam in and around Valencia on the east coast. Luther's Edict of Worms, we might note, was pronounced in that same year in Germany, as the Protestant Reformation took root in central and northern Europe. Alerich and Alcocer were "Moorish" wards in Valencia which suffered in this movement.

In 1526 the Muslims in and around Valencia (and in Castile, as we have seen) were forcibly baptized, or made subject to civil penalties that went with this official campaign. Those who chose to remain Muslims in Valencia and Aragon were expelled in that same year; from then on, no Arabic could be spoken or written there, and Muslims had to give up their arms.

The harsh *Pragmatica* of 1529 took effect, a civil code regulating the public and private conduct of Muslims, even their behaviour at home. The attempts to catechize and convert the Muslims were absurd since they seldom addressed the essential differences between the two faiths nor explained them rationally.

Under the *Pragmatica* of 1529, a sweeping and arbitrary royal decree that attempted to govern Muslim behaviour both in public and in private, cities and towns were brutalized; the practice of thought control is not new. Cleanliness was no virtue in Catholic Spain, but led to the suspicion that a clean and neat person might be a Muslim who regularly performed his "ablutions" (another ugly missionary and Orientalist word).

Second-class citizenship then prevailed for Muslims (as it did for Indians in the overseas colonies), and eventually meant expulsion for "Moriscos" or baptized Catholics, who were really Muslims at heart, as well as immediate expulsion or death for practising Muslims, either sincere ones who did not submit to brainwashing, or "lapsed" Catholics, who were then legitimate prey to the "Holy" Office.

The victims sometimes wasted their money on taxes called *acofres* (orzo fres) and bribes which dissolute priests solicited from them to feed their own pleasures. The crippled Guatemalan poet Simon Bergaiio y Villegas was jailed early in the last century by the .

"Holy" Office in that country because of his "French" books and ideas; these books and his scanty furniture were sold over his head to pay for his "board and room" in prison, just as happened with the 16th-century Muslims. Later this poor victim was shipped off to Cuba, where he worked as a printer's devil.

Three native heads of state were executed in America during this same period, using similar brutality and the same narrow mentality. Cuauhtemoc, the last emperor of Anahuac or pre-colonial Mexico, had his feet burned off to make him disclose the location of the Aztec national treasure, which he never revealed; finally Hernan Comas, his conqueror, hanged him by the legs so the blood rushed to his head, during the long march to Honduras through the Petkn, the jungle area of northern Guatemala, in order to spare a horse for their transport. Nicarao, the spirited last king of Nicaragua, whose name that country still bears, was fed to a pack of dogs which had been deliberately starved for the occasion.

Caupolican in Chile was made to sit on a sharpened stake, and thus impaled, a sentence which he accepted nobly, to the disgrace of his executioners. Such were the customs of the overseas conquerors during their looting of Mexico, Central and South America; the results took three centuries of colonialism to eliminate, and in many ways are still shown in their political habits today.

Bishops Juan de Zumarraga and Diego de Landa, in Mexico City and Yucatan respectively, burned the Aztec and Mayan books and codices under the same inquisitorial laws, although de Landa later tried to make up for his vandalism by writing his *Cosas de Yucatan* (Things from Yucatan<sup>1</sup>).

Thus Mexican history had to be rewritten by prejudiced churchmen. A half-Inca and half-Spanish noble in Peru, Garcilaso de la Vega Inca (1535-1616) wrote his *Royal Commentaries* to preserve the history of his mother's country. She was an Incan princess, and her circle taught him the traditions of ancient Peru, which he copied down.

The anti-Islamic campaign (as well as that in Meso-America), actually occurred at the same period as the Reformation in Europe, and might be considered as an early phase of the Counter-Reformation in Spain, sponsored eventually by the Council of Trent (1645-63) Miguel Servet, a Catalan Unitarian from the district of Huesca, was burned at the stake in Geneva by John Calvin in 1553 for the "crime" of believing (and refusing to recant) that God was One, and not a trinity.

Shortly afterward an anonymous "Mancebo de Arevalo" or 'Young Man from Arevalo', a town on the highway running from Madrid to Valladolid and lying in the northern part of the province of Avila in New Castile, began to interest himself in the fate of his people.

Barring some archival discovery, he remains anonymous, aware of the legal consequences of his forced baptism; this despite the excellent documents that he drew up in *Al jamiado* or Spanish written in Arabic script, just as Persian or Urdu are written today. These *Al jamiado* writings that the Mancebo de Arevalo and others tried to furnish to their children and posterity, provide us with knowledge and information as authentic literature for the new Muslims who are appearing today in Latin America and Spain.

Was the Mancebo a muleteer in the peninsular transport business? The muleteers and transport people in Spain were largely "Moriscos" or Muslims; they were mistrusted because they carried news as well as merchandise from one end of Spain to the other. The Mancebo's great dream was to make the Pilgrimage to Mecca, which he probably achieved by crossing over from Aragon into southern France,

and from there to Italy, and then by ship from Genoa or Venice to the Holy Land.

One can sense the further dissent in the Spanish body politic and in society at large in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, a realistic picaresque novel that was published in the following decade, in 1535. The author himself remains unknown, like our Mancebo or 'Young Man' from Arevalo, although his dissidence is clear. Philosophy and medicine had been Islamic specialties during Muslim rule.

The Inquisition and petty surveillance killed off Muslim leadership and their upper classes; only the artisans and field hands were left, but without leadership, since these persons had been picked up and jailed, exiled or killed. The quality of Islamic literature deteriorated in Spain; the malice of denunciations in the universities and learned circles, as we witness in the cases of even talented Christians like Fray Luis de Lebn, disrupted true teaching and research throughout Spain, whether Catholic or Islamic.

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