

The Nasrid Kingdom of Granada between East and West

(Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)

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Contents

Preface IX

List of Figures and Tables XII

Introduction. The Nasrid Kingdom in the History of al-Andalus 1
Pierre Guichard

PART 1

Political and Institutional Aspects

- 1 The Banū Naṣr: The Founders of the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada (Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries) 39
Bárbara Boloix Gallardo
- 2 Political Structures 73
Antonio Peláez Rovira
- 3 Islamic Law and Religion in Nasrid Granada 100
Amalia Zomeño
- 4 Granada and Its International Contacts 124
Roser Salicrú i Lluch

PART 2

Socioeconomic Structures

- 5 The Nasrid Economy 155
Adela Fábregas
- 6 The Nasrid Population and Its Ethnocultural Components 177
Bilal Sarr
- 7 Families and Family Ties in Nasrid Granada 195
Amalia Zomeño

PART 3***Spatial Organization and Material Culture***

- 8 Organization of Settlement and Territorial Structures in the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada 219
Antonio Malpica Cuello
- 9 The *Madīna* and Its Territory: Urban Order and City Fabric in the Nasrid Kingdom 237
Christine Mazzoli-Guintard
- 10 Domestic Spaces during the Nasrid Period: Houses 263
María Elena Díez Jorge
- 11 Productive Activities and Material Culture 304
Alberto García Porras
- 12 The Palatine City of the Alhambra, Seat and Center of Power 327
Antonio Malpica Cuello

PART 4***Modes of Thought and Artistic Creation***

- 13 Art and Architecture 341
Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza
- 14 The Cultural Environment 368
María Dolores Rodríguez Gómez
- 15 Nasrid Literature: Asceticism, Belles-Lettres, and Court Poetry 393
José Miguel Puerta Vilchez
- 16 Science and Knowledge 413
Expiración García Sánchez

PART 5***Posterity: The Conquest and Incorporation of Granada into the Crown of Castile***

- 17 Granada and Castile: A Long Conflict 441
Daniel Baloup
- 18 A New Society: The Castilians 467
Rafael G. Peinado Santaella
- 19 An Old Society. Mudejar Neighbors: New Perspectives 495
Ángel Galán Sánchez
- 20 The Christianization of the Mudejars of Granada and the Persistence of Islam after the Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain (1492–ca. 1730) 519
Gerard Wiegers

PART 6***Sources for the Study of the Nasrid Kingdom***

- 21 Arabic Sources for the History of Nasrid al-Andalus 547
Francisco Vidal Castro
- 22 Christian Sources for the Last Muslim Kingdom in Western Europe 589
Raúl González Arévalo
- 23 Archaeological Sources 630
Alberto García Porras
- Index Nominum 657
Index Locorum 667

Archaeological Sources

Alberto García Porras

1 Introduction

Traditionally, research intended to present an overall view of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada, or of other periods of al-Andalus, scarcely relied on archaeology as a source for reconstructing the history of the period. Only in recent years, and thanks to many projects and increased activity, have analyses of the Nasrid kingdom in general come to rely consistently on the results of such investigations.

Though we can only speak of a modern archaeology, with a precise, recognized, and replicable methodology, since the 1980s, we can date interest in the material and informative results of such research from much earlier, to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Today it is hard to recognize, from an archaeological perspective, the pioneering work that was carried out in the study of al-Andalus in general and the Nasrid kingdom of Granada in particular. In 1752 the Real Academia de San Fernando was founded in Madrid, with the objective of studying, collecting, and recovering what memory existed of Spanish objects and monuments and publishing them to enhance the nation's glory and pride. The Academy soon launched the publication *Antigüedades Árabes de España*, whose first edition appeared in 1787 and its second expanded one in 1804.¹ This work became the mouthpiece of the antiquarianism of the time. The Spanish bourgeoisie felt an increasing need to identify factors that would buttress its social and cultural supremacy, which could be nourished by collecting remnants of the past. The publication focused on objects and remains from the medieval period. In contrast to the rest of Europe, where the antiquarian movement focused on Classical Antiquity and the Greeks and Romans, in Spain interest turned to the nation's rich Arab, Eastern past – a form of Orientalism apparently connected to the rise of colonialism. This mindset created the image of the “Other” and

1 Almagro Gorbea, *El legado de al-Andalus*; Rodríguez, “La fortuna e infortunios de los jarrones de la Alhambra.”

contributed to the national self-definition of European nations.² It was in this general context that Spain's Islamic past became an object of attention.

In *Antigüedades Árabes*, steeped in a nascent Orientalism, it was natural that the Alhambra should play a starring role. The volume presented excellent drawings and engravings of the monument by a local artist, Diego Sánchez Sarabia, and others were made later by artists such as José de Hermosilla, Juan de Villanueva, and Juan Pedro Arnal. The work also proved influential, gathering whatever information about the monument was available at the time, though much of it lay in the realm of fable. King Charles III admired it greatly, and it also had an impact on the foreign travelers who visited Spain, especially Andalusia and the Alhambra, with increasing frequency: Richard Ford, Washington Irving, Charles Davillier, Cavanah Murphy, Girault de Prangey, and M.E. Poitou. They arrived in search of traces of a vanished, fascinating Oriental civilization in the midst of Europe – often seen in ruins that possessed a beauty of their own – inhabited by singular types of human beings. These visitors later wrote of their experiences and spread the word abroad.

Antigüedades Árabes initiated a torrent of interest in the architectural and artistic past of al-Andalus or “Arab Spain,” as it was then defined. Its main focus was on monumental buildings, epigraphic inscriptions, and richly adorned objects: in short, the artistic language of the vanished culture, fragments of memory of a time of splendor, all loaded with an ideological significance strongly inspired by European Romanticism.

Somewhat later, well into the nineteenth century, new studies appeared, following in the wake of a positivism steeped in French and German philological erudition:³ Hübner's monumental corpus (1892–1901) is its exemplar.⁴ A new series of publications, of philological bent, sought to document and study all the epigraphic and numismatic material known so far. Once again it was the learned Academies that promoted such research, which brought especially valuable returns in works on epigraphy by M. Lafuente Alcántara,⁵ Amador de los Ríos,⁶ and A. Almagro Cárdenas,⁷ and others on numismatics by Codera y Zaidín,⁸ Rada y Delgado,⁹ and Vives y Escudero.¹⁰

2 Said, *Orientalismo*.

3 Salvatierra Cuenca, *Cien años de arqueología medieval*, 39.

4 Hübner, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinum*.

5 Lafuente Alcántara, *Inscripciones árabes*.

6 Amador de los Ríos, *Inscripciones árabes de Sevilla* and *Inscripciones árabes de Córdoba*.

7 Almagro Cárdenas, *Estudio sobre las inscripciones árabes*.

8 Codera y Zaidín, *Tratado de numismática*.

9 Rada y Delgado, *Catálogo de monedas árabigo-españolas*.

10 Vives y Escudero, *Monedas de las dinastías árábigo-españolas*.

All these publications, arising from Arabism and its related fields¹¹ in its centers at the Universities of Madrid, Granada, and Zaragoza, represented a spectacular advance in studies of al-Andalus (including the Nasrid Kingdom), especially its epigraphic and numismatic heritage. They also gave an initial impulse to analyzing the material remnants of Andalusí culture – at first, only those that bore Arabic inscriptions, with the object of deciphering and dating them.

At the same time and in a partially related phenomenon, interest grew in certain Andalusí buildings as a result of the disentailment of Church property that took place in the late nineteenth century. These studies were channeled through the *Juntas* and Commissions on Monuments established for the purpose, which took up and even replaced the role previously played by the Academies. Work was also initiated on the remnants of Arabic culture that had begun to disappear as Spanish cities were modernized and expanded, especially in the south. Historical-artistic guidebooks were published in which the Andalusí past received close attention and began to be treated more scientifically. The most interesting of these projects came from Manuel Gómez Moreno, a painter of some renown, in Granada.¹² New periodical publications were founded to announce studies of local history, especially in the same city.¹³ Luis Seco de Lucena's study of the historical topography of Islamic Granada¹⁴ was an initial and intuitive analysis of the subject. To this period also belong the founding of institutions devoted to protecting, preserving, and restoring the patrimony of Spain, including the Andalusí. Museums of Archaeology and Fine Arts were built, and the Alhambra broke with its traditional military past under the Crown to become official Patrimony of the State, as a *Monumento Histórico-Artístico* (1870). In all these cases, however, archaeology was a marginal consideration, whether in the study of objects of artistic, philological, or historical interest, that of the history of Spanish art, or during the first preservation movements.

Manuel Gómez Moreno can be considered the pioneer in purely archaeological research, when he explored the first capital of Islamic Granada, Medina

11 Manzanares, *Arabistas españoles del siglo XIX*.

12 Gómez Moreno, *Guía de Granada*.

13 Without attempting to be exhaustive we can mention as national publications *Revista de Bellas Artes e Histórico-Arquelógica* and *El Museo Español de Antigüedades*, or as local ones *La Alhambra*, *Revista quincenal de Artes y Letras*, *Boletín del Centro Histórico*, and somewhat later *Revista del Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su Reino*, among others.

14 Seco de Lucena, *Plano de Granada árabe*.

Elvira, and directed the first “archaeological excavations” there.¹⁵ Finds of buildings, inscriptions, and metallic and ceramic objects were concentrated in the areas named Pago de la Mezquita and Cortijo de las Monjas. With “an alarming lack of rigor, even for that time,”¹⁶ Gómez Moreno entered into local disputes about the location of Iliberis/Elvira; study of the materials recovered, however, was much better served.¹⁷ Gómez Moreno’s efforts continued a project begun a few years earlier in another principal city mentioned in the texts, Medina Azahara (*Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ*, near Cordova), which Madrazo y Gayangos had begun to excavate in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸ The process of these two sites’ survival, recovery, study, and role in the foundation of the medieval archaeology of al-Andalus was undoubtedly helped by the fact that both ancient complexes were uninhabited and scarcely affected by the expansion of nearby cities. Both excavations sought to “*mythify* the ancient cities cited in the texts,” though they were still “very far from urban archaeology.”¹⁹ Both in preparing his guidebook to Granada and in publishing the results of his excavations in Medina Elvira, Manuel Gómez Moreno González collaborated with his son Manuel Gómez Moreno Martínez. Valdés has revealed the extent of the son’s contributions²⁰ and how they contributed to his career in later years.

Manuel Gómez Moreno (the younger) was unquestionably the father of medieval archaeology in Spain, as a director, researcher, and teacher. He was connected with the School of Arts and Crafts (*Escuela de Artes y Oficios*), the Academies of San Fernando and of History, the Center for Historical Studies (*Centro de Estudios Históricos*), and the University of Madrid, where he defended his doctoral dissertation, “On Arabic Archaeology,” and later occupied the chair in that subject in the early twentieth century.

During this period, constant archaeological activity – promoted by the Academies, the Commissions on Monuments, certain excavation sites (which increased steadily in number), museums and collections founded at the turn of the twentieth century, and other educational institutions – provided a scientific atmosphere comparable to that of other European countries. A crucial factor in consolidating the discipline was the passing of the Law of Archaeological Investigations (*Ley de Excavaciones Arqueológicas*) in 1911, together with the creation of the Supreme Council for Excavations (*Junta*

15 Gómez Moreno, *Medina Elvira*.

16 Acién Almansa, “Arqueología medieval en Andalucía,” 28.

17 Rosselló Bordoy, “Introducció al l'estudi de la ceràmica andalusina,” 24–26.

18 Madrazo, *Recuerdos y bellezas de España*.

19 Salvatierra Cuenca, “La primera arqueología medieval española,” 193.

20 Valdés Fernández, “Manuel Gómez Moreno Martínez,” 195.

Superior de Excavaciones) in 1912; the activity thus fell under the control of the government rather than of the Academies. An academic specialty was also established at centers of pedagogy such as the Center for Historical Studies and the University of Madrid. From there, Manuel Gómez Moreno Martínez helped to form a new generation of archaeologists that included Leopoldo Torres Balbás, Emilio Camps Cazorla, Juan de Mata Carriazo, Cayetano de Mergelina, and Antonio García Bellido, among many others; all contributed to the revival of medieval archaeology in general and Andalusí in particular. The first three maintained the closest ties to medieval archaeology, Torres Balbás especially so in his work on al-Andalus, especially Granada.²¹

These steps began to bear fruit in the 1920s and 1930s. Though the field finally differentiated itself from Arabic philology, it remained closely connected to the disciplines historically linked to medieval archaeology: art history and architecture. It continued to evolve in parallel with them, especially in the area of architectural preservation. Projects meant to preserve the monuments that were now State patrimony required architects to oversee their restoration. It was then that Leopoldo Torres Balbás became chief conservator of the Alhambra (1923–1936) and Ricardo Velázquez Bosco of the Mosque of Cordova and Medina Azahara; both were well grounded in art, architecture, and archaeology. Velázquez Bosco's work was continued by Félix Hernández Giménez, who performed it with "the utmost scientific rigor and attention to detail."²²

A new era had begun, led by a fresh generation of excellently prepared scholars, notably Manuel Gómez Moreno (the younger) and Leopoldo Torres Balbás. The former, the leader, was at home in Visigothic, "Hispano-Muslim" (as it was then called), and Hispano-Christian art; the latter, while keeping a foothold in other areas, soon specialized in Islamic art and archaeology, from his appointment as architect-conservator of the Alhambra in 1923 to his removal in 1936, though he continued his research even after that.

The career of Leopoldo Torres Balbás consolidated archeological practice and research into the legacies of al-Andalus and Granada, with a certain withdrawal from Arabism. As A. Almagro has accurately remarked, "The chief object of Torres Balbás's excavations was not to uncover structures or objects but to try to clarify the different parts of the monument and place them in chronological sequence. He usually did specific samplings, taking note of foundations and locations of structures which would often be covered up again after thorough documentation. Architecture was the prevailing concern, always bearing

21 Salvatierra Cuenca, "La primera arqueología medieval," 201–02.

22 Acién Almansa, "Arqueología medieval," 29.

in mind all its connotations and values.”²³ In effect, Torres Balbás’s archaeology distanced itself from linguistic studies, but his strategy of documentation and contextualization took serious account of information from written Arabic sources – he had studied the language with Simonet in his youth. He handled Arabic sources correctly and gave his support to Arabic studies in Granada and Madrid,²⁴ in part through his friendships with Emilio García Gómez and Manuel Ocaña. Torres Balbás held documentary sources to be fundamental, as he was well aware that the information they yielded was “essential above all when they spoke of palatine and urban areas; the power they project, in addition to other factors, calls for just such an approach.”²⁵

Nonetheless, the incipient field of medieval archaeology was not entirely independent in the scientific sense: it was intensely influenced by other disciplines such as art history and architecture, in which its practitioners were trained. Archaeology was perceived as a source of knowledge essential to the evolution of medieval art, urbanism, and architecture; it was therefore an ancillary discipline, an archaeology “at the service of architecture; an architect’s archaeology.”²⁶ Torres Balbás, aware of the gaps in his preparation, intervened archaeologically only where absolutely necessary; he performed his task honestly and documented it reliably. A study of his journals and the blueprints and elevations he made in his many restoration projects in the Alhambra reveals the architect’s effort to describe the sites, analyze the stratigraphy – essentially architectonic, not depositional –, indicate levels and heights, analyze finds, and document everything graphically. The result is remarkable for such an incipient medieval archaeology; but given his level of preparation it is also far from the methodologies that were beginning to be practiced in other countries or other areas of the discipline, such as the prehistoric.²⁷

23 “Las excavaciones de Torres Balbás no tendrán pues por objetivo primordial sacar a la luz estructuras u objetos, sino clarificar y tratar de ubicar cronológicamente las distintas partes del monumento. Serán principalmente prospecciones puntuales, registrando cimentaciones o encuentros de estructuras y muchas veces quedarán nuevamente ocultas, aunque siempre bien documentadas. La arquitectura prevalecerá sobre otras consideraciones, pero sin olvidar todas las connotaciones y valores de ésta”: Almagro, “Estudios islámicos de Torres Balbás,” 356.

24 Almagro, “Estudios islámicos”; García Gómez, “Mi Granada con Torres Balbás.”

25 “... sobre todo imprescindible cuando se trata de áreas palatinas y urbanas, en las que la dimensión que el poder les confiere, amén de otras realidades, obligan a una aproximación y una lectura desde tal perspectiva”: Malpica Cuello, “Torres Balbás y la arqueología,” 376.

26 Sanz Gallego, “La arqueología en Leopoldo Torres Balbás,” 488.

27 Sanz Gallego, “La arqueología,” 489–90.

It is important to know that Torres Balbás sought not only to recover the edifices but to understand them and make them visible and comprehensible. He interprets architectural structures “as something material and historical,”²⁸ and it is here that archaeology plays an essential role: it is “a useful tool for discovering the truth and searching for meaning,” while the discipline’s stratigraphic analysis is a means of discovering the “hermeneutic cycle” of the building.²⁹ These views mark Torres Balbás’s modern outlook in comparison to that of his contemporaries.

In spite of the limitations of his work – which are, in any case, understandable – its impact was great and allowed the discipline to make great strides in general, and in the study of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada in particular. Since his earliest restoration projects he made sure to publish the results of his research, even while engaged as the architect-conservator of the Alhambra. Early in his career he made only sporadic incursions into the study of Islamic monuments, but once placed in charge of preserving the Alhambra he entered intensely into the field and never relinquished it until his death. Most of his work was published in article form, and only late in his career did he compose the summarizing monographs *La Alhambra* and *Arte Almohade, Arte Nazarí, Arte Mudéjar* (volume 4 of the *Ars Hispaniae* collection). In the journal *Al-Andalus* he initiated and directed the *Crónica arqueológica de la España musulmana* which, from its first appearance in 1934, became the chief expression of the archaeology of al-Andalus. This *Crónica*, which gave pride of place to the architect’s role, would be nationally and internationally admired; it strove to stay up to date in spite of events after 1936, and maintained its contacts with the outside world, particularly with the French scholars Henri Terrasse and Georges Marçais.

The Spanish Civil War changed the picture radically. Torres Balbás was forced to abandon his work on the Alhambra and was replaced by persons close to the Nationalist movement, such as his pupil the architect Francisco Prieto Moreno and the historian Jesús Bermúdez Pareja, a functionary of the corps of museum employees. Study of al-Andalus in general was sharply reduced – to the work of Torres Balbás, Gómez Moreno, and a few others, for instance F. Hernández and M. Ocaña. The flight of intellectual capital and Spain’s desperate condition after the war could not favor the development of archaeology. V. Salvatierra has written of an apparent effort to “reconstruct” a “corps of historians,” but there were no medieval archaeologists among them; their field virtually disappeared,

28 Malpica Cuello, “Torres Balbás y la arqueología,” 377–78.

29 Sanz Gallego, “La arqueología,” 479.

while prehistory and classical archaeology were favored.³⁰ Even within the medieval field studies of al-Andalus were neglected. As M. Ramos Lizana observed, “The centralizing project of Spain’s bourgeoisie had been threatened by the decentralizing tendencies of the Republic; this fact explains the ultranationalist reaction of postwar intellectuals, who now hailed the recovery of a glorious Visigothic past. Once again the Visigothic monarchy was seen as the inheritor of native and Roman traditions and the origin of national unity.”³¹ Studies of medieval archaeology focused on the Visigothic period (under the strong influence of a German school in Madrid headed by H. Zeiss and W. Reinhart), the Asturian monarchy, and the Mozarabic Christians. In the latter dimension the research of Manuel Gómez Moreno found a niche, together with the well-publicized excavations by Cayetano de Mergelina in Mesas de Villaverde, a site believed to be the Bobastro of Ibn Ḥafṣūn.³² Publications on al-Andalus dwindled in number; often, written from the viewpoint of the younger Gómez Moreno, they preferred to search for “Western” or “Hispanic” features in the art and archaeology of al-Andalus, as the then-current term “Hispano-Muslim” (*hispanomusulmán*) shows.

In this context the figure of Leopoldo Torres Balbás gains even greater significance: it was thanks to his efforts that the archaeology of al-Andalus managed to progress, in the face of great obstacles and limitations, during the dark period between 1936 and his death in 1960. M. Acién has noted that thanks to Torres Balbás we find for the first time, in studies of al-Andalus, publications on “fortifications, urban layouts, private homes, and even hygiene.”³³ His death left medieval archaeology in a state of abandonment. Only in the area of “Hispano-Muslim art” was his work continued, more modestly, by Basilio Pavón Maldonado, who in his many publications occasionally turned to Nasrid buildings and monuments,³⁴ including the Alhambra.³⁵ Another researcher in the field was Antonio Fernández Puertas.³⁶

30 Salvatierra, *Cien años de arqueología medieval*, 50.

31 “El programa centralista de la burguesía española se había visto amenazado por el proyecto descentralizador republicano, y esto explica la reacción ultranacionalista de los medios intelectuales de posguerra, que se afanan ahora en la recuperación de un glorioso pasado visigodo. La monarquía visigoda se contempla una vez más como la heredera de las tradiciones romanas e indígenas y como el origen de la unidad nacional”: Ramos Lizana, “Recorrido histórico por al arqueología,” 62–63.

32 Mergelina, *Bobastro*.

33 Acién Almansa, “Arqueología medieval,” 29.

34 Pavón Maldonado, *El Cuarto Real de Santo Domingo*.

35 Pavón Maldonado, *Estudios sobre la Alhambra*.

36 Fernández Puertas, *La fachada del Palacio de Comares*.

The year 1960 saw the beginning of the period that some scholars have called the professionalization of archaeology. “It consisted essentially of the adoption of the stratigraphic method, controlled recovery of excavated materials, three-dimensional sites, exact delineation and subdivision of the area to be excavated, and photographing of cross-sections and layers of both structures and pits. But medievalists would be slow in adopting these practices ... as they clung to the strictly philological or to the traditional field of Art History.”³⁷ In other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, the situation began to change earlier:³⁸ there medieval archaeology showed increasing independence from other disciplines such as history and history of art.

The long drought in archaeological studies of the Middle Ages became clear when, in the late 1960s, the *Congreso Nacional de Arqueología* refused to hold a session devoted to the medieval world. Further, the collection *Excavaciones Arqueológicas en España* devoted virtually no publications to medieval sites.³⁹ The only attempt to strengthen the discipline had Granada as its focus. In the 1960s Manuel Riu Riu assumed the chair of Medieval History in a newly formed department at the university there; he had been a student of Alberto del Castillo, a pioneer of medieval archaeology in the Christian sphere. Though he spent only three years at Granada, 1966 to 1969, he left a deep impact, orienting research toward medieval archaeology. He was unable, however, because of his lack of preparation, to develop a minimal program in Islamic archaeology; his interests lay in Mozarabic sites, and like his predecessors he again searched for Bobastro on the hill of Marmuyas (Málaga).⁴⁰ The results were disappointing, and those who tried to follow in his footsteps⁴¹ did not obtain serious archeological results. As M. Ación observed, “all they accomplished was to burnish their résumés; over and over they presented descriptions of ceramics taken out of context and well-known coins, and paradoxically they did so to an audience of traditional medievalists who neither accepted nor understood

37 “[C]onsistía esencialmente en la asunción del método estratigráfico, la realización de recuperaciones controladas del material arqueológico, con ubicaciones tridimensionales, cuadrículas exactas del área a excavar y realización de fotografías, perfiles y plantas, tanto de las estructuras como de los niveles arqueológicos encontrados. Pero esta práctica aún tardaría en ser asumida por los medievalistas ... que seguían anclados en el marco estrictamente filológico o en el campo propio de la Historia del Arte”: Ramos Lizana, “Recorrido histórico,” 68.

38 Gerrard, *Medieval Archaeology*.

39 Salvatierra Cuenca, *Cien años de arqueología*, 65.

40 Riu Riu, “Consideraciones sobre la cuarta campaña arqueológica.”

41 Espinar Moreno *et al.*, “Nuevos materiales cerámicos y de metal.”

them. Their publications also failed to argue for the seriousness or utility of their discipline.”⁴²

In the late 1960s and early 1970s we find an attempt to relaunch Islamic studies thanks to the work of European researchers such as K.A.C. Creswell,⁴³ who worked on Eastern Islam, and Oleg Grabar,⁴⁴ who occasionally turned to Spanish monuments like the Alhambra.⁴⁵ These scholars’ fundamental interest lay in architecture and its related ornamental Islamic expression, leaving aside the objects and products of these societies. Their approach, still close to that of art history, continued to be essentially positivist, though scrupulously correct in its treatment of data. Publications by members of the German Archaeological Institute of Madrid proved especially relevant. Its chief figure was C. Ewert, who studied the Alcazaba (fortress) of Balaguer in Lérida, palaces such as the Aljafería in Zaragoza and Medina Azahara, and mosques in Cordova, Toledo, and Almería; he extended his reach into North Africa and the Maghreb (Marrakesh, Kairouan, and Tinmal). Occasionally, as in Balaguer, his German colleagues analyzed excavated objects of ceramic and glass.

Dorothea Duda shared in publishing the findings from Balaguer in the late 1970s.⁴⁶ She was already known for groundbreaking studies of ceramics from the Alcazaba of Almería,⁴⁷ many of them from the Nasrid period, and of the decoration of the mosque of Cordova.⁴⁸ All her publications are inspired by a strongly positivist outlook; her presentation of different genres of ceramics is exhaustive, paying close attention to surfaces and not only to decoration. She did not ignore any piece so long as it presented the specific decoration or form that supported her analysis. Her study and detailed catalogue of these items was accompanied by drawings to scale – sometimes only of fragments – and photographs. All this work is of great documentary value, and with its innovative character it shows, in incipient form, the need to modernize the study of Andalusí ceramic materials; these were some of the first Nasrid ceramics to be studied seriously from the archaeological point of view. Duda’s publications, however, exerted only a modest influence on the nascent Spanish school of archaeology devoted to al-Andalus, perhaps because they appeared only in German or because there was no critical mass of specialists who could appreciate their innovative qualities. One of the few to recognize their value

42 Ación Almansa, “Arqueología medieval,” 31.

43 Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*.

44 Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*.

45 Grabar, *La Alhambra*.

46 Duda, “Hallazgos de cerámica y vidrio.”

47 Duda, *Spanisch-islamische keramik* and “Die frühe spanisch-islamische keramik.”

48 Stern et al., *Les mosaïques de la Grande Mosquée de Cordoue*.

was G. Rosselló, who worked from within the museum system with only limited resources.⁴⁹

A second group of foreign scholars began to conduct research in Spain and helped to reanimate the field:⁵⁰ a group of young Frenchmen who, in the early 1970s, began to take an interest in the history and archaeology of al-Andalus. Shaped in the solid historiographic tradition of the *Annales* school, which explored the past through a combination of sources and registers including archaeology, they began to frequent the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid. In contact with Polish historians-turned-archaeologists led by Jean Marie Pesez, they introduced into the meager research context of 1970s Spain two fundamental concepts: analysis of population – a kind of historical geography that traced changes in economic and social structures –, and analysis of material culture.

In population studies they transferred to Spain certain themes, already well developed in France, that would inject new life into Spanish medieval archaeology. One was the study of depopulated areas: for some time, in both the United Kingdom and France, there had been concern for the so-called *villages désertés*. A young Pierre Guichard⁵¹ recalled that “then vaguely aware that the archaeology of former rural settlements could help to develop a history of population, I obtained permission to dig from the *Junta de Excavaciones*. Conscious of my lack of experience in the subject, I asked them to send me a competent inspector who proved to be Juan Zozaya, then the very young director of the Museum of Soria; his scientific career had begun to head in the same direction. We made our first exploratory dig in 1969 in an abandoned Muslim village near present-day Bétera: Bufilla, now called Torre Bufilla,” which was mentioned in several sources.⁵² Neither investigator seemed aware that they were introducing a modern version of medieval archaeology into Spain.

49 Rosselló Bordoy, “Islam andalusí e investigación arqueológica,” 9; Cressier *et al.*, “La cerámica tardo-almohade,” 215.

50 This period has sometimes been termed “La renaissance ibérique”: Sénac, “Histoire et archéologie,” 12.

51 On Guichard and the significance of his work in the field of history, a topic too broad for the present essay, see, e.g., Malpica Cuello, “Estudio preliminar.”

52 “[V]agamente advertido a finales de esos años de las posibilidades que podía abrir una arqueología de los antiguos asentamientos rurales al desarrollo de la historia del poblamiento, obtuve autorización para excavar de la *Junta de Excavaciones* y, consciente de mi poca preparación en la materia, pedí también que me enviaran un inspector competente que fue Juan Zozaya, entonces un jovencísimo director del Museo de Soria, cuya trayectoria científica había comenzado a orientar en el mismo sentido. Juntos hicimos un primer sondeo en 1969 en un poblado musulmán abandonado próximo a la actual localidad de Bétera, Bufilla, conocido actualmente con el nombre de Torre Bufilla”: Guichard, *Los castillos en al-Andalus*, 38.

A little later, in 1972, an especially fruitful collaboration began with another French archaeologist, André Bazzana, who had come to work in the same region of eastern Spain, *Sharq al-Andalus*. Guichard and Bazzana concentrated their research in the central area of Castellón province, with extraordinary results. They launched the study of two features that came to be central to the archaeology of al-Andalus: fortified sites and their origin, and the material culture, particularly ceramics, associated with them. That required them to delve into the structural study of how population was organized – as a phenomenon explicable only by historical development – and also to analyze the material structures that supported the life of Andalusi communities.

Fundamental texts emerged from this collaboration. One was *Châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus*, published in 1989 with the participation of Patrice Cressier, who was working at the time in eastern Andalusia (la Alpujarra, Marquesado del Cenete, el valle de la Almanzora). The work responded to Rafael Azuar's assertions about castles in Alicante,⁵³ revealing an incipient debate within the nascent field of medieval archaeology in Spain. The French scholars' respective *Doctorats d'État*⁵⁴ consolidated the results of their research.

As for material culture, the second aspect developed by this school, it was not until the end of the 1970s that publications began to deal with ceramics in novel and scientific ways. Scholars strove to provide a complete picture of the ceramic register, including every fragment that could provide morphological, functional, or decorative information; they provided a new, appropriate and consistent technical vocabulary and a sequential evolution applicable to other contexts and places within a common cultural and temporal milieu. The scholars who provided this new interpretative paradigm, which included Nasrid materials, were A. Bazzana,⁵⁵ G. Rosselló,⁵⁶ and J. Zozaya.⁵⁷

This new research direction was essential to modernizing the study of Andalusi ceramics and placing it on the same level as in other areas of Europe; its new techniques had remained unexplored in Spain. It was the work of G. Rosselló that exerted the greatest influence on incipient Andalusi archaeology, well beyond his own base in Majorca.⁵⁸ This thoroughgoing change was helped by the three scholars' academic preparation, their long experience as archaeologists, and the materials they focused on: these no longer came only

53 Azuar Ruiz, *Castellología medieval alicantina*.

54 Guichard, *Les Musulmans de Valence*; Bazzana, *Maisons d'al-Andalus*.

55 Bazzana, "Céramiques médiévales" and "Céramiques médiévales II, Les poteries décorées."

56 Rosselló Bordoy, *Ensayo de sistematización de la cerámica*.

57 Zozaya, "Aperçu général sur la céramique."

58 Rosselló Bordoy, "La relación comercial Málaga-Mallorca."

from private collections, museums, or “accidental” finds, as in earlier years. Many of the objects presented in their studies emerged from an exact archaeological context and could be analyzed from a purely archaeological perspective. The authors had to seek external references, and experiences in compatible disciplines or nearby regions, that could buttress their own conclusions.

In short, the work of the French scholars of the 1970s and into the 1980s, when they were joined by Spaniards, had value well beyond the two fields with which they began, population studies and material culture: they managed to separate medieval archaeology, once and for all, from the history of art. No longer were only the finest monuments or buildings the subject of study; so were small settlements and forts, some built with very humble materials. Rural villages received as much attention as cities, and plain, unadorned ceramic pieces were valued as highly as decorated ones. Medieval archaeology had left the realm of the history of art and joined that of history.

This current then met with a new generation of Spanish historians, many influenced by Marxism to a greater or lesser degree; they sought a renewal of Spanish historiography, which had been dominated by a traditional vision of history within rigid and hierarchical academic structures. In the early 1980s, this confluence of the French scholars’ interests and the young Spanish generation produced a blossoming of medieval archaeology in both Andalusian and other fields. Students of prehistory with concerns in the Middle Ages, and medievalists attracted by the rich data from archaeology – as the French had been demonstrating – emerged from their limited silos and entered fully into analyzing the medieval archaeological register and modernizing the discipline. Two factors worked in their favor. The first was the founding of the Asociación Española de Arqueología Medieval (AEAM) in 1982. As R. Izquierdo correctly observed, “This constellation of young, trained medieval archaeologists needed to occupy their proper place – which had sometimes been denied them – in Spanish archaeology. They also required channels of communication and information to coordinate the efforts they were making. Some element had to be found that would bind them together and allow them to express and publicize their works in progress, their results, and any other issues that arose from their activity.”⁵⁹

59 “La pléyade de jóvenes arqueólogos medievalistas que entonces se habían formado, necesitaba ocupar el espacio que les correspondía – y que a veces se le negaba – en el ámbito de la Arqueología española. También necesitaba contar con unos cauces de comunicación y de información para coordinar los esfuerzos que se estaban llevando a cabo. Se hacía preciso buscar un elemento que les aglutinase y que fuese el cauce a través del cual se expresasen y divulgasen los trabajos en curso así como los resultados obtenidos,

The AEAM published the *Boletín de Arqueología Medieval*, which from 1987 onward became the mouthpiece for medieval archaeology in Spain and was comparable to older foreign publications such as *Medieval Archaeology*, *Archéologie Médiévale*, and *Archeologia Medievale*. In the following decade, however, it lost its periodicity and has been sharply interrupted. The Asociación also held five national conferences (Congresos Nacionales de Arqueología Medieval: Huesca 1985, Madrid 1987, Oviedo 1989, Alicante 1993, Valladolid 1999) whose publications have been influential for the development of the discipline. The largely descriptive nature of publications from the *Boletín* and the conferences have stimulated little internal debate or discussion, making it difficult for them to continue, and in any case many more journals have come into existence since then.⁶⁰ In short, since the 1980s we have seen the true birth and consolidation of medieval archaeology as a scientific discipline. In this process the archaeology of al-Andalus, including the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada, has played a central role – indeed a leading one, in the initial stages – and has dealt with particularly stimulating and exciting themes.

The second decisive factor in the field has been the transfer of archaeological affairs from the central government to Spain's autonomous regions (Comunidades Autónomas): in the case of Andalusian studies, to the Junta de Andalucía. As a result new institutions for protection and oversight, more responsive to local needs, have arisen, together with policies that affect a new, active generation of researchers. In the case of Andalusia there were initial attempts to channel archaeological activity through well-designed research projects that gave a strong impetus to the study of our medieval past, especially that of the Nasrid kingdom. There have been some problems in carrying out this task,⁶¹ but these deserve a study that lies outside our present scope.

In what follows we will describe trends in research that we feel have been particularly fruitful. This is not a detailed study, as we have provided one in an

lo mismo que otro cualquier tipo de problemas que surgiesen referidos a esta actividad": Izquierdo Benito, *La cultura material*, 238.

60 A leader has been the University of Jaén's *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*. Publications from certain research groups have played an important role in studies of al-Andalus, e.g., "Toponimia, Historia y Arqueología del Reino de Granada" from the University of Granada. Conjuntos Monumentales, an arm of the autonomous government of Andalusia, has issued *Cuadernos de la Alhambra*, *Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahra*, and *Monografías del Conjunto Monumental de la Alcazaba de Almería*. A broad, diverse, and fragmented range of publications has come from museums, public regional institutions (Junta de Andalucía, Región de Murcia, Junta de Castilla-La Mancha, Comunidad Valenciana), cities or provinces (Valencia, Murcia), and foundations (El Legado Andalusi).

61 Acién Almansa, "Arqueología medieval," 3; Malpica Cuello and García Porras, *La ciudad nazari*.

earlier publication,⁶² but rather a tracing of lines of development without too many bibliographic citations.

2 Basic Lines of Research

2.1 *Changes in Patterns of Settlement*

The work of Pierre Guichard initiated an intense revival of studies on al-Andalus: it contradicted the traditional view that Islam caused only superficial cultural or religious changes in the Iberian Peninsula. From a perspective closely allied to anthropology, he affirmed that Andalusí society showed family and social structures characteristic of the Islamic world, very different from those that prevailed in Christian-feudal areas of the Peninsula; his studies confirmed the great breadth, depth, and social impact of the conquest and invasion of Hispania by Arabs and Berbers.⁶³ While he began with written sources, Guichard, in collaboration with French colleagues,⁶⁴ soon turned to archaeology as a means of observing and interpreting documented changes in the organization of settlement in al-Andalus.

The original nucleus of this research was analysis of the land. Scholars focused on the different kinds of settlements in al-Andalus, and soon began to investigate the relationships among them: in particular those between the fortified castles (*huṣūn*, sing. *hiṣn*) so common in the Andalusí landscape and the peasant communities or farmsteads, *alquerías* (*al-qarya*), that fell under their influence. They were convinced that this organization reflected the society implanted in the Peninsula after the Islamic conquest, as well as its territorial administration.⁶⁵ These fortresses played an essential role in organizing rural areas of al-Andalus, but far from showing a structure and morphology similar to those of feudal castles, they proved to reflect a segmented society organized along tribal lines; at the same time they expressed the fiscal presence of the State in rural regions. This population structure arose from a delicate balance between the Islamic state and the peasant communities that worked the land and defended it in times of danger.

The initial model proposed by French scholars has been revised and expanded, both by themselves and by others, in certain ways. There are documented rural areas with few or no fortified settlements. In some cases a sort of

62 García Porras, "La realidad material en el reino nazarí."

63 Guichard, *Al-Andalus*.

64 Bazzana et al., *Les châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus*.

65 Guichard, *Les musulmans de Valence*.

evolution of the fortresses can be traced throughout the Middle Ages: a social transmission from the Visigothic to the fully Islamic stage, with the introduction of new population groups and the full integration of earlier ones into Islamic society.⁶⁶ In the Nasrid period, new settlements might be introduced and then thoroughly transformed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, after the establishment of the frontier between Granada and Castile. These new castles, called *villas* in contemporary sources, introduced elements and techniques previously almost unknown that reflect the influence of urban areas;⁶⁷ the presence of the Nasrid state is also more visible there.⁶⁸ There were still *huṣūn* whose organization reflected an earlier stage, especially where the influence of the frontier was less strong.

As to rural settlements, the *alquerías* have been little studied from the archaeological point of view and less is known about their evolution. Certain changes are known through the written record, such as the relaxing of tribal ties among the inhabitants of Nasrid *alquerías*,⁶⁹ the strong influence of cities and their residents on nearby territories, the ever-heavier pressure of taxation on peasant communities, and the development of commerce in rural areas. All these could transform the landscapes and structures of these farmsteads⁷⁰ by enlarging buildings and adding new ones,⁷¹ or by modifying domestic habitats.⁷²

2.2 *Population and Exploitation of Resources in the Rural World*

This explanatory model was initially and chiefly directed toward rural settlements, though without excluding cities altogether. In a natural outgrowth of existing research,⁷³ scholars began to focus on the close ties among fortresses, rural communities, and the working of the land, particularly fields that were farmed and irrigated. The result was the burgeoning topic of “hydraulic archaeology” in Andalusí studies, led by Thomas F. Glick⁷⁴ and followed by M. Barceló⁷⁵ and his team, especially H. Kirchner,⁷⁶ who worked in the eastern Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. Following the lines laid down

66 Acién Almansa, “Poblamiento y fortificación”; Malpica Cuello, *Los castillos en al-Andalus*.

67 Malpica Cuello, *Poblamiento y castillos en Granada* and “Las villas de la frontera granadina.”

68 Acién Almansa, “Los *tugūr* del reino nazarí”; García Porras, “La implantación del poder.”

69 Malpica Cuello, “Poblamiento del reino de Granada.”

70 Malpica Cuello, *Las últimas tierras de al-Andalus*.

71 Fábregas García and González Arévalo, “Los espacios del poder en el medio rural.”

72 García Porras, *La cerámica del poblado fortificado*.

73 Cressier, “Agua, fortificaciones y poblamiento.”

74 Glick, *Irrigation and Society*.

75 Barceló, “Los límites de la información documental.”

76 Kirchner and Navarro, “Objetivos, métodos y práctica”; Kirchner, “Arqueología hidráulica.”

by P. Guichard, these scholars have connected the design, construction, and management of these irrigated spaces to peasant communities, usually organized along clan lines.⁷⁷ From this perspective, these spaces respond not to geographic or other variables but constitute a social choice: they are ruled by, and should be explained by, criteria proper to their peasant communities.

The design of such spaces requires a considerable effort of organization by their communities, and they could not be managed without cooperation by the collective. Their development and evolution denote these groups' strategies and formulas for growth, as has been demonstrated for the Nasrid kingdom of Granada.⁷⁸

The creation of these "agroecosystems"⁷⁹ required a thorough modification of the Andalusí rural milieu, which would be continued during the Nasrid period on a local scale. It required applying complex techniques of collection, distribution, and storage, some of them borrowed from the East. New crops previously unknown in the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa were introduced and acclimated, and some of their products could not tolerate lengthy storage. Still being explored is the new economic context for commercializing these products without endangering other activities such as dry farming and herding in the Andalusí rural landscape.

2.3 *The City*

Cities have been one of the features most actively studied in Andalusí archaeology in recent years – also one of the most dynamic, since new data from archaeological exploration have arrived continuously, not always subsumed into a broader vision. The threshold established by L. Torres Balbás in his own day,⁸⁰ with its emphasis on topographic features, tracing of roads, provision of water, and so on, has been amply surpassed.

Most authors who have written on this subject agree on the lack of continuity between cities of Antiquity or Late Roman times and those of al-Andalus, though obviously topography did not change and certain occupations were still practiced. Alterations in the urban fabric were so substantial, and inherited functions so thoroughly erased, that the later cities retain scarcely a memory of their predecessors. Under the early Andalusí emirate some new cities arose from transformations of existing ones, while others were new foundations linked to the ruling power or grew spontaneously out of rural settlements. One

77 See a critical review of their assumptions in Manzano, "Al-Andalus: un balance crítico."

78 Malpica Cuello and Trillo San José, "La hidráulica rural nazarí."

79 Malpica Cuello, "Formación y desarrollo del agroecosistema."

80 Torres Balbás, *Ciudades hispanomusulmanas*.

of the best-studied cases is that of Madīnat Ilbīra: now buried, it lies just a few kilometers from modern Granada. Recent excavations show that it began as a group of separate nuclei.⁸¹

Cities, like fortresses, therefore confirm the great changes undergone by human settlements throughout the Andalusi period. They again reveal stages in the transformation of Andalusi society, which parallel what we observe elsewhere in Islam. Urban areas first appear to stand in direct relationship with the clan structure of the new society. Based at first on kinship, the society developed over time: features like the mosque and the palace – seats of power – assumed a leading and cohesive role as their status as political centers grew more prominent.⁸²

Cities did not remain unchanged, however, in the course of the Andalusi era. Several scholars have recently discussed the evolution of urban areas, with both descriptive and explicative schemes of their topographic growth.⁸³ The eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Taifa and Almohad periods, saw a surge of urbanization that included Granada;⁸⁴ it extended to the end of the Middle Ages and Nasrid times, with specific developments in different areas up to the final conquest of the Peninsula by the Christians.⁸⁵ These cities grew and consolidated their power by exploiting their surrounding territories and becoming the destination for agricultural surpluses. A dense network of cities of different sizes, hierarchically organized, developed in this way.

2.4 *Material Culture. Production of Ceramics*

Another area of study developed in recent decades is that of the production of ceramics in the Peninsula – especially since the 1970s, when G. Rosselló published the results of his work on the ceramics of Majorca.⁸⁶ The field was substantially revitalized with the appearance of many conference papers and journal articles that offered a new panorama of Andalusi ceramic manufacture.

The researchers' first task was to create a new analytic methodology for these materials, as well as a morphological corpus. Later studies built on this firm foundation, such as those on the earliest Andalusi ceramics⁸⁷ or the

81 Malpica Cuello, "La formación de una ciudad islámica."

82 Guichard, "Les villes d'al-Andalus."

83 Navarro Palazón and Jiménez Castillo, *Las ciudades de Alandalús*.

84 Malpica Cuello, "La expansión de la ciudad de Granada."

85 Malpica Cuello, "La expansión urbana de la Granada nazarí" and "La ciudad en el reino nazarí de Granada"; Malpica Cuello and García Porras, *La ciudad nazarí*.

86 Rosselló Bordoy, *Ensayo de sistematización*.

87 Gutiérrez Lloret, *Cerámica común paleoandalusí*.

first ones to be decorated using sophisticated techniques.⁸⁸ By now we can contemplate a diversity of forms and a series of typologies (tableware, cookware, storage pieces, etc.). Well-turned, well-fired ceramics with complex finishes show us that centers of production in al-Andalus applied a complex technology at every stage of production: selection and handling of clays, use of the wheel, glazes, and firing. All this emerged from a new economic and social context. Potteries were founded in both medium-sized and large cities all over the land, reaching its farthest corners only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

From this point until the fall of al-Andalus, ceramic materials and forms achieved their highest level of technological sophistication in both highly decorated luxury pieces and domestic ones.⁸⁹ These products, so well made from the formal,⁹⁰ decorative, and technological points of view,⁹¹ would be commercialized from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, at which point the West entered actively into the trade. The high demand for Andalusí and Tunisian ceramics explains why they are so often found in faraway places (Italy, France, England, the North and Baltic Sea areas, etc.).

In the Nasrid period the impact of commerce on ceramic production becomes clearer: to a certain extent, luxury products followed a different path from domestic ones.⁹² We now find the crowning works of the genre such as the *Jarrones* (oversized jars) of the Alhambra and the tiles that decorate Nasrid palaces, whose techniques would later be adopted elsewhere in the Peninsula.⁹³

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88 Cano Piedra, *La cerámica verde-manganeso*.

89 Fernández Navarro, *Tradición tecnológica de la cerámica*.

90 García Porras, *La cerámica del poblado*.

91 García Porras, "Los orígenes de la cerámica nazari decorada."

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93 García Porras, "Transmisiones tecnológicas."

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