Ethnicised inter-religious conflicts
in contemporary Granada, Spain

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Abstract

In the city of Granada in Andalusia (Spain), formerly the cradle of the Nazari (Nazarite) dynasty, and all of a symbol of a peaceful and harmonious inter-religious community, there has been a perceived “return of Islam” as of a few years back, possibly as the result of the convergence of two different processes. On the one hand, as has occurred in the rest of Spain, the city has been experiencing a marked increase in the immigrant population, amongst which there is a large and significant percentage of Muslims from the Maghreb. On the other hand, parallel to this increased immigration and as of the end of the Franco regime, there has been a growing trend, in Andalusian cities such as Córdoba and Granada, for the local population to convert to Islam, plus a steady increase in the number of foreign immigrants setting up residence in Granada for religious reasons. Both of these phenomena have given rise to attendant anti-Muslim and anti-Moor movements, which reflect the varying dimensions of discrimination widely prevalent in broad-ranging sectors of the Spanish public.

An ethnographic study of the old “Arab quarter”, el Albayzín, and of the various areas of inter-relations bringing Muslims and non-Muslims together, has allowed us to analyse the formation of Muslim and neo-Muslim communities in the light of the Regionalist policies of local elites, set on generating an “Andalusi” identity of multi-mix religions. Such multi-faceted identity can then be exploited to good effect for cultural tourism, above all targeting the significant numbers of “Oriental” tourists who visit the city. The current context of generalised “Islam-phobia” has only served to exacerbate an existing grievance provoked by the growing visibility of the Granada Muslims, which has not only produced reactions of repulsion on the part of the local Catho-
lics and the ecclesiastical institutions, but is also categorically rejected by such sectors as are fighting to establish lay, non-religious communal spaces. In the process, the local school of Islam, its communities and its representatives become “ethnicised”, symbols and markers of an “otherness” which is, hypothetically, incommensurate with the modernisation and “Europeanisation” of the Andalusian culture. This creates serious challenges for the management of religious diversity, one of the great outstanding tasks, still to be tackled by Spanish society in itself increasingly multi-cultural and multi-religious.

Introduction: the return of Islam

Spain, which for many centuries was a country of emigration, has become a country of immigrants as of 1986 and the entry into, what was then known as, the European Economic Community, with growing numbers of foreigners moving into the country to stay, of which the Muslims from Maghreb represent a significant percentage (Izquierdo, 1992; Cornelius, 2004). The history of migration and exile for the Muslim population dates back to 1492, at the time of the Re-Conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs. This wave of expulsion lasted through to the years between 1601-1617 when the Moriscos were finally thrown out of Spain, which marked the beginning of the Andalusian and Sephardic diasporas throughout the Mediterranean basin (Viñes, 1995). History, however, has changed this situation radically. Spain is now a country of immigrants, much like most other countries in the European Union. Although the proportion of immigrants is low in comparison to neighbouring countries, and indeed in comparison with classic countries for immigration such as Australia, Canada, or the United States, the increase in migratory flow in recent years has been very marked. This has led to concern amongst some people, who go as far as to suggest that such immigration has now acquired the dimensions of a national problem, despite the fact that the proportion of foreigners in Spain is still under 2.5% of the total population (Gil, 2004). Moving away from the well-worn “mono-directional” perspective of migratory processes and analysing the data qualitatively, we can observe that we are being witness to a very heterogeneous model of migration, with, at least, four different strands which, at times, intertwave, and with different source and target destinations (Dietz, 2004).
These migratory processes are the following.

In the first place, there are Spanish emigrants, who had been living and working in the North of Europe. There is a whole new generation of sons and daughters of Spaniards, who are living and working in Northern Europe, wishing to return in order to seek out their Mediterranean roots and those of their ancestors (Ruiz, 2001). In the second place, there are the Spanish workers who migrated legally to North Europe, but did not manage to fully integrate into the host society. When they retire, they try to return to their roots, thereby establishing a second migratory process. In the third place, there are the people from the North of Europe themselves, mainly pensioners or retired, who decide to migrate to Spain, attracted by the climate, the tourist services and the cost of living. And, finally, in the fourth place, there are the non-European immigrants who choose Spain more and more as their target destination, with the flows from North Africa and Latin American countries of particular significance.

Immigration from Latin America is a clear reflection of the post-colonial ties which still exist between the mainland of Spain and Latin America, favoured, in part, by the Spanish state policies to regulate and contract workers in their country of origin through special work permits (Izquierdo 2002, Gil 2003). Immigration from Latin America, at present, represents almost 40% of the total immigration in Spain. For the first time in many years, Morocco has been toppled from top place as the source of migrants to the peninsula.

However, to all “intents and purposes”, the perception and visibility of the Muslims who are settling in various regions of Spain is, for a large part of the “local” population, far superior to any other migratory process, for example, much more than the aforementioned Latin American influx. A large part of the immigrant population which gets to Spain, in general, and to the region of Andalusia, in particular (García Castaño, 2001, Gema Martín 2003), is made up of Muslims, most of whom are Arabs. They form part of a heterogeneous process of migratory flows, generated directly by the demand for labour (Gil, 2004) in sectors characterised by high seasonality and lack of regulation. Therefore, we have to distinguish, on the one hand, between Arab Muslims who have residence permits, or are in the process of getting their papers sorted and, on the other hand, the “unknown number” who are, at present, “illegal” immigrants in Spain. Likewise,
we have to add to the total, the Moroccan students who decide to study in Spain rather than in their traditional “alma mater”, France. The number of these is on the up, with almost sixty thousand qualified students/immigrants living temporarily in Granada, who have begun to generate their own trans-national migratory process (González and Dietz, 1999). On top of this, there is the Muslim population that resides permanently in the Spanish “enclaves” in the North of Morocco, Ceuta and Melilla.

Nevertheless, the visibility of the “Muslim immigrant population” is not the only factor which has contributed towards the upsurge of ethno-religious communities in cities like Granada. A whole series of other factors of a completely different order have intervened in these circumstances, such as the appearance of neo-Muslim Spaniards and “Muslimophile” activists, which are essential factors to be taken into account when analysing the various spaces of inter-relationship which are opening up, between the Muslim communities and the “natives” at a local, regional and national level.

The first communities of “converts”: somewhere between sub-national regionalism and provincial localism

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 is a decisive reference point in the process of the growing presence of Muslim communities in Spain, and in various regions such as Andalusia. On the one hand, it establishes the first system of relationships between the State and religions outside Catholicism, which had not been acknowledged up until then. The Constitution guarantees under article 16: ‘freedom of religion and devotion for all persons and communities’. The process was completed in June 1989 with the declaration of the notorious roots of the Islamic religion. On the other hand, by opening the possibility of sub-nationalisation and the federalisation of the Spanish Nation-State, a whole process of sub-national policies of identity was created, often clearly distinct from the hegemony of the national identity. This led to unique historical circumstances being emphasised to maintain the apparent distance between ‘national and regional identities, distinguishing two political forms of access to autonomy, via the fast lane or the slow’ (Ver-
lot and Dietz, 2000). Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country made immediate access to full devolution and autonomy, since they were able to “prove” their historical, cultural and linguistic past, apart from the fact that they had already passed their Statutes by referendum, and had provisional autonomous regimes.

However, in Andalusia, there was no such clearly differentiated identity, no different language nor a distinctive past. Its own history had been “manipulated” both in the times of the dictatorship of Franco, and years before, by the very history of the Nation-State and the pro-Andalusian doctrine, which refused to recognise the historical existence of the Andalusians as a differentiated ethnic group. Without a different language, “history” or “differentiated doctrine”, the Andalusian identity “invented” by the pro-Andalusians had little clout with respect to the overpowering identity of the Nation-State, Spain. Finally, Andalusia was able to take advantage of the fast lane after the referendum in 1980, but the elites and the political leaders then doggedly pursued the perceived need to justify the unique history of Andalusia, and exploited the stereotypes of popular Andalusian culture, such as bullfighting, flamenco and religious celebrations. As a result of the creation of these autonomous communities, regionalist movements became consolidated, both in the “historical communities” and in Andalusia, taking advantage of what Hobsbawm (1992) called “the invention of tradition”.

Two separate groups emerged which considered that “conversion to Islam” might be an effective means through which to establish a distinct self-identity for the region, grounded in a flourishing history of cultural pluralism and tolerance based on religious precepts in the Iberian peninsula (Al-Andalus). Initially, the first Spanish converts, or neo-Muslims, appeared as a direct consequence of their lack of satisfaction with the socio-political situation of the day. ‘Men and women who, then, were between 20 and 30, belonged to the middle class, with a high academic level, and who generally had militated in left-wing parties or flirted with Oriental philosophies, took up Islam’ (Tarrés, 1999). Second, there were “movements”, generally of minority groups of left-wing academics, poets, artists and singers from Granada, Córdoba and Seville, etc. who did not embrace Islam de facto, but who recognised, in it, differentiating and identifying characteristics which had vanished centuries back from the “history of the Andalusian region”. They vin-
icated the need to re-adopt these values and Islamic norms in order to re-construct Andalusian identity.

Parallel to this, in Andalusia, political and social movements arose whose differentiating nature consisted in a special “religious feeling”, of proximity to Islam, which gave rise to the political party, Liberación Andaluza (LA), the ‘first and only political proposal of Islam in Andalusia or, for that matter, in Spain, up until the present time’ (Del Olmo, 1997). The advocacy role of the political movements articulating Islam in the region began to lose steam, and they soon changed their former process of local visibility for a certain form of internal involution. These groups of Muslim and Neo-Muslim converts, began to make reference to a process of population which was a thing of the past, considering that “Islamic Andalusia” transcended the values of Al-Andalus, and offering an alternative which was more cultural than political. It was then that the Spanish Federation Of Islamic Religious Entities (la Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas (FEERI)) appeared on the scene to offer cohesion for most of the “Neo-Muslin communities”.

Around the Nineties, this type of movement began to grow, thanks to the international impact of migration. As of that moment, mosques, schools of Koran, organisations etc., began to appear, generating the first meeting place between the Spanish converts to Islam, and the immigrant Moroccan workers. The search for an identity which can be observed in this process is intimately linked to the social construction of a common shared space, forging “characteristics and identifying signs” which brought similar groups together and, at the same time, marked their external differences.

Together with these phenomena, in broad sectors of the Spanish society, anti-Islamic and anti-Arab attitudes prevailed, in what was a mixture, in varying degrees, of ethnic discrimination, religious bias and Nationalism (ASEP, 1998). These attitudes are, in fact, deeply rooted, and are manifest in the historical stigmatisations of the “other”. As Stallaert has shown (1998), since 1492 and the first Spanish project of a Nation-State, the latter has been based on a mixture of “Arab-phobia” and “Islam-phobia”, legitimised in the “laws of purity of race” which constantly switch between, supposedly, biological, ethnic and religious discourses, giving rise to what we will call, as of here, “Muslim-phobia”.

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The dynamics and emerging impact of the ethno-religious communities

The upsurge of new ethno-religious communities, together with the migratory processes, created international diasporas with a common imagery and cultural code of what had been lost. This also produced a constant tension between the sense of belonging to a Nation-State and of belonging to locality or community (Elbaz & Helly, 1996). These processes triggered off in the local population a widespread localist movement which sought desperately and constantly for an identity to oppose to the “other”, to what was strange and/or foreign in the urban context, and at odds with the social and political movements of a regionalist nature. The confrontations which arose as a result, far from expressing themselves frontally and radically in all the Spanish cities, bar in a few exceptional cases, were met with constantly growing social and institutional alarm, which had the effect of reproducing existing prejudices and the historical stereotypes of the Muslim community of Al-Andalus. The “hypothetical” rebirth of the process of Islamic re-Conquest was confronted with the hypothetical Christian roots of the local community in ways which were to permanently affect the day-to-day life in the city, and the various neighbourhoods, producing a constant process of daily negotiation, based on difference.

It was the irruption on the scene of the immigrant population, this “new actor”, that was to de-structure the bases of centralist and localist philosophy, and was to “gum up the works” of the already intricate political structures which, over time, had been appearing in the region. The Morisco legacy, which, in its day, had served to differentiate the historical identity of the Andalusian from the rest of the Spanish people, clashed head on with the ethnicising localist groups, whose idea was to create a multi-religious Andalusian identity, to play to the significant gallery of “Oriental-type” tourists they were receiving (Said, 1978) in the city. As a result, the contemporary processes of ethno-genesis and ethnic reaffirmation via cultural re-appropriation or re-invention necessarily generated “hybrid cultures” (García Canclini, 1989). These cultures have seen their practices and representations profoundly transformed, both as a result of the modification and

PART 4: TRANSFORMING IDENTITIES: IMAGINATION AND REPRESENTATIONS
re-interpretation of intra-cultural relationships, and due to the incorporation of inter-cultural elements which have been submitted to a process of “ethnic re-touching” to be assimilated, later, as their own (Dietz, 2003). These hybrid figures have created, in the city of Granada and in the neighbourhood of El Albayzin, an awareness of an identity that we can analyse and describe from various different perspectives.

First, the social alarm was sounded when the Muslim communities who had settled in several of the different neighbourhoods, were no longer merely anecdotal, a handful of invisible persons, but became a visible force, both in the public and the private sphere. This growing visibility of the “other” awakened a slumbering, but deeply rooted, historical “Muslim-phobia” which is growing in strength, and palpably so, in broad sectors of the Granada society. The new communities of converts, together with the Moroccan immigration, are basically being used, initially, to arouse the old stereotype of the return of the “Moors to our shores” and which, at present, as a result of the terrorist attacks of the 11th March (Madrid), 11th September (Twin Towers) and the 7th July (London), merely bolsters the ‘essential stigmatisation of the Muslim world’ (Gema Martín, 2003). The immigrant population in the neighbourhood, overnight, is converted into the “lurking terrorist”, producing something of a national psychosis and, therefore, of the repulsion shown towards these communities, and to everything relating to Islam. Second, the appearance of communities of converts, has added more coals to the fire of the historical movement against Islam, and has only increased the sense of frustration, leading to the new converts, who are “dissidents” from the perspective of the Christian world, being considered by the locals as “deserters” or “outlaws”. Third and last, there is the growing importance of the immigration from the Maghreb, in the process of consolidation of the so-called “Muslimophile” mentioned previously, celebrated by the Andalusian intellectuals as the seeds of the “re-Discovery” and “re-invention” of the Muslim roots of the Al-Andalus region.

“Muslim-phobia” is met with “Muslimophilia”. The “problem” which arises between the new diaspora communities and the “locals” is mainly a political problem of recognition and historical memory. This historical memory is evoked whenever there is a significant need for community groups attempting to integrate into the social structure of life in Granada, to protest, against the people whose idea it is to
exclude them from national identity and culture (Elbaz & Helly, 1996). This is exemplified in the Granada society, in the appearance of the new social actors who emerged in the final hours of the Franco regime, in the process of political transition. The new Spanish Muslims, Spaniards “converted” to Islam, have shaped the roots of a new Islam at a local level, and laid the foundations for future organisations and federations of Muslims at the level of the State, as a whole. In this conflict, both the neo-Muslim community, and the immigrants, have been exposed to a process of external ascription, with both the Muslimophiles and the Muslim-phobes submitting them to ethnic discrimination.

We are going to use the case of El Albayzin, where the stage is being fought over by three different actors: the Muslim community, sectors of the population with leanings towards the Muslim community, and those actors who are completely opposed to the Muslim community. This will enable us to analyse the political–migratory framework of the “ethnicising” of this neighbourhood, and the foreseeable radicalisation of ethnic trends in Granada. All of this is reflected in the cultural dynamics of the present society, through their constant struggle to consolidate an identity which will unify the group from within, whilst clearly manifesting their external differences with others.

Muslimophilia vs. Muslim-phobia: ethnic-religious conflicts in the neighbourhood of El Albayzín

Not only is it that, in the present context of generalised Islam-phobia, the growing visibility of Islam has produced rejection on the part of the local Catholics and ecclesiastical institutions in Granada, but this is also accompanied now by the protests from lay groups, who are searching to create true “open” public spaces. Throughout this process, the local Islam, its communities and its representatives have ended up being “ethnicised” as symbols and markers of a hypothetically limitless “otherness”, in opposition to the modernisation and “Europeanisation” of Andalusian culture. This has created serious challenges for the management of religious diversity, one of the great outstanding items on the agenda of an ever more multi-religious and multi-cultural Spanish society.
In the course of the process of construction of the Muslim communities, both immigrants and converts began to concentrate in the neighbourhoods in the centre of the city, such as the neighbourhood of El Albayzin, which, before, had been largely abandoned, due to the process of sub-urbanisation of the middle classes. However, as of the early Nineties, these neighbourhoods, submitted to processes of gentrification and exploitation of cultural tourism in the city, began to regain population (Latiesa Rodríguez, 2000).

The neighbourhood of El Albayzin is well-known for its characteristic Arab architecture and its Moorish legacy. It is now beginning to be re-discovered and re-used by an emerging elite of Moroccan immigrants, and the “great minds” of the community of Muslim converts, activists and intellectuals (Rosón, 2001). Paradoxically, these groups, both the Muslimophiles and the Muslim-phobes, focus habitually on the “oriental” legacy to defend the unique nature of their neighbourhood, and to claim for it the common roots of the Al-Andalus culture. The Muslim-phobes, however, perceive the “Return of Islam” to the neighbourhood as a constant threat, not only to their own religious identity but also to the “quality of life” in the neighbourhood, although, at heart, they too make constant and reiterative use of the “myth of the Past”.

With the initial process of religious-cultural ethno-genesis as part of the vindication of a re-invention of Al-Andalus, not only are these factions of Andalusian regionalism running full face into anti-regionalist centralism, but also into such other factions of Andalusian regionalism as are opposed to Islam as an “ethnic marker” of the Andalusian culture (Eriksen, 1993). Thus, the dialectic mechanism which has arisen between Muslim-phobia and Muslimophilia is not a mere microcosm of the conflict between the centralised Nation-State and sub-national regionalism. But, at least Granada and in the neighbourhood of El Albayzin, it represents a strange and ill-defined “coalition of interests” between the centralist Conservative nationalists, on the one hand, and localist movements, on the other.

The empirical study of the conflict between nationalist, regionalist and localist ideologies, in the context of migration, affords us an interesting analysis of the structural similarities of nationalism and ethno-genesis. Both use similar strategies of territorialisation, temporisation and substantiation to legitimise their demands (Dietz, 2000).
Strategies of territorialisation

Strategies of territorialisation transform space into territory, converting peripheral areas of interaction between groups, into clearly defined frontiers of separation. The spatial expansion of the Nation-State clashes with previously established local and regional entities, upon which the nationalist argument of the indivisible “sovereignty” of an emerging “nation” is appropriately deployed, and is returned by the counter-hegemonic ethnic movements. The group that is responsible for the national project, thereafter, defines the centre as the nation, and the periphery as the sub-nation.

There are various examples which can demonstrate the strategies of territorialisation in action in the neighbourhood of El Albayzín, where the “local” people are facing an accelerated process of “gentrification”, and the Muslim population is beginning to develop the necessary infrastructure for the progress of their community. Amongst many other protests, we should perhaps highlight the permanent grievance on the part of the Neighbourhood Association in respect to what they consider to be an abusive occupancy of the streets in some areas of the neighbourhood. In particular, they mention the street of Calderería Vieja y Nueva, where tables, stalls and the merchandise of street vendors, whom they define as “immigrants and Spanish converts”, invade the streets, terraces and pavements. This gives the impression of a souk, projecting a negative image of the city to the visiting tourists and causing locals to manoeuvre with skill their passage through the stalls of the Moors’. Not only do they protest about this occupancy or mis-appropriation of public space, transformed into territory, but also about the lack of public safety, associated with the Muslim community and all of their attendant stereotypes – thieves, criminals, illegal immigrants, drug-dealers, fanatics and intransigent, etcetera.” (Tarrés, 1999).

The Muslim community, together with the centre for immigrant youth, the Bermúdez de Castro, is blamed for all the problems relating to public safety and robbery in the neighbourhood. The localist forces in the neighbourhood have even gone so far as to declare in official institutions, such as the Town Council, and over and over again in the Neighbourhood Association, that “to set up a centre for immigrant youth in the Cuesta de Chapiz, in the centre of the Albayzín, is putting temptation in harm’s way”. (Diario La Opinión de Granada, 02/10/2005).
These problems, which may appear to be momentary and passing, can be observed with all their force in the process of construction of the first Mezquita Mayor, the Grand Mosque, in Granada, and the celebration of the return of Islam to the Albayzín, five centuries after the Catholic Monarchs defeated the “Nazarís” and took possession of the kingdom, in 1492.

The Mezquita Mayor of Granada

The Mosque, which was recently inaugurated in the neighbourhood of El Albayzín, where the heritage space is hypothetically shared, is giving rise to a whole series of cultural prejudices of the local people of the neighbourhood, in defence of what is “traditional” and “really theirs”. On the one hand, the community and the Muslimophiles reacting to the cultural rejection to which they are being subjected locally, have accused the neighbours of xenophobia and racism. The Muslimophobes, on the other hand, that is, the residents who represent the Catholic parishes and various neighbourhood associations, have presented various measures to the local politicians, calling upon them to block the creation of the mosque, which they consider to be more a problem of visual and heritage contamination, than one of “culture clash”. The “schism” now appearing in the localist control mechanisms, which had been successfully used in the past to paralyse new construction, has given rise to a political problem of substantial dimensions, with decisions being taken as to whether or not to give building licences.

This phase can be clearly observed in the “public analysis” (Modood, 1999) of the re-vindications of both sides, where it is evident that a majority have assimilated the process of construction and the creation of infrastructure for the Islamic Community, and have established a clear time-line for the process. This has led to a series of attitudes and protests, spread out over time and space, by, on the one hand, the neighbours and associations who are opposed to the construction of the mosque, and, on the other hand, the Islamic Community.

Once the mosque was inaugurated on the 10th July, 2003, a decade after the land had been purchased by the Islamic Community of Spain, far from representing a place of worship and devotion for the Muslims of Granada, and a place of encounter (Lacomba, 2001), it has rather become a place of mis-encounter. This is felt to be the case by
both the “sensitised” neighbours and the rest of the Muslim-phobes, as well as the local Muslims themselves.

**Temporisation strategies**

Territorialisation is closely linked to temporisation, with the “Nation-State” imposing one sole interpretation on “invented tradition”. Or rather, the Nation-State re-interprets tradition in order to achieve its national project. In the sub-national ethnic discourses, this metaphorical “possession” of a given territory is based on the “invention of tradition”, which uses the justification of the age of the counter-hegemonic ethnic actor as opposed to the dominant national actor. The politics of “local roots” is projected as of a remote and mythical past, as is demonstrated by its many witnesses, authors of multiple strands of discourse (Estefermann, 1998, Strubell, 1998).

**The Conquest of Granada and the Celebration of the V Centenary of the Death of Isabel la Católica, the Catholic Monarch**

Parallel to the debate which arose as the result of the construction of the Mezquita Mayor in Granada, serious ill-feeling began to be made manifest with respect to the professed historical roots and the identity of Granada. The commemoration of the last Muslim dynasty in 1492, has proved to be a bone of contention between those in favour, the Muslimophiles, and those against, the Muslim-phobes.

Countless political attempts have been made over the last decade to modify the Commemoration of the Conquest of Granada, by making explicit mention to the legacy of the “three cultures” of Spain. However, the Nationalist Union of Spain, and various local forces, such as the fraternities of the Catholic parishes, has always defended the single, non-modifiable version of the commemoration, considering it to be a static element, a “traditional” tradition, without any type of possible evolution.

At present, there are various chinks to be seen in the traditional armour. The celebration of festival of music and poetry, called the “Festival de las Culturas”, or the “Day of Reconciliation”, is celebrated in the Mezquita Mayor. In addition, there are the activities organised
by the citizens’ platform, in conjunction with the Association in Defence of Human Rights in Morocco, called “Granada for Tolerance”, “Granada por la Tolerancia” as a counter and alternative to the Commemoration ceremony.

These celebrations, with their divergent interpretations of the Past in the light of a constructed Present, will be accompanied this year by the Commemoration of the V Centenary of the Death of Isabel La Católica. Parallel to the re-vindications with respect to the celebration of la “Toma”, the Conquest, these and other “traditional celebrations” are confronting two radically opposed groups. On the one side, there are the “Muslimophiles”, representing Andalusian nationalism and regionalism, the Nación Andaluza, who consider that “there is nothing to celebrate and a lot to regret” in the whole process of the Re-conquest of the Kingdom together with the consolidation of “Spanish Imperialism”, led by Isabel la Católica. On the other side, there are the groups in favour of the Commemoration, Democracia Nacional, España 2000, etc, who have articulated the totally opposed discourse, highlighting the value of “differential tradition”, and who consider that the celebration of the historic event is vital for the formation of a strong and united Spain.

The aforementioned “Fiesta de la Toma”, or its counterpart, the “Día de la Reconciliación”, are becoming more and more, not so much events where “civilisations clash” to quote Huntington (1996), but rather a process of formation of antagonistic groups, differentiated in time, which are shaping civil society in Granada. These groups make allusion, both to the past and to the living present of the presumed traditions of the city, using different strategies of invention and re-invention of time and space, attempting, thereby, to reinforce their control over history and historical memory. This will allow them, in turn, to construct their own identity, which will be culturally and socially differentiated from that of the other. Given the point of “intransigence” reached, the celebrations are progressively losing their hypothetical “tradition”, to become an unbeatable and novelty showcase of the protests against the Muslim population.

These events which form part of the cultural and identity construct of any given population are gradually becoming, to an ever greater extent if such is possible, the object of the rejection and negation of the public space of the other, and have begun to divide the civil so-
ciety of Granada in two. Both the citizens who celebrate the “Toma de Granada” in the Plaza del Carmen, and those who celebrate its counterpart, “sin Toma”, stigmatise the Muslim population which is resident in Granada and in the neighbourhood of El Albayzín. Both groups construct themselves as differentiated segments which desire ‘to maintain a certain distance with respect to those others with whom they must share the same social space, and with whom’ (Delgado, 2000) they do not desire to mix, although daily life obliges them to do so.

Likewise, this process of struggle for a collective cultural identity has been confounded with the recent appearance and growing presence of the immigrant population. The importance of the migratory process from South to North, and the recent “return of Islam” in Spain, are seen in Andalusia, and ever more so, to be a perceived threat to the growing “contest” for autonomous identity and decentralisation. The immigration, which is basically from Morocco, and recent events which have affected national security, such as the terrorist attacks in Madrid, New York and London, have all awoken the old stereotypes, and converted them into a pretext for the evident and growing xenophobia, whose seeds were planted over five centuries back.

Substantiation strategies: institutions and organisations

Finally, there is a third strategy of the substantiation of difference, which re-interprets social relations from a biological perspective, in order to confer solidity on the project of the Nation-State. This process can be observed in the creation of institutions and organisations that channel Muslim-phobia and “Muslimophilia” in the city of Granada. The institutionalisation and centralisation of the Nation-State is challenged by the persistence, re-invention and re-vitalisation of “communities”, “regions” and regional units, increasingly substantiated at a sub-national level (Stavenhagen, 1989). Often these new emerging entities take advantage of the impact of globalisation, generating supra-national alliances with similar actors to produce “self-empowerment” in the face of hegemonic nationalism (Dietz 2003, Squires, 1999).

On the one hand, institutions have appeared, such as the Catholic parish fraternities, brotherhoods, etc., who joined forces with the
local organisations to defend the Christian faith and their distinctive traditions. On the other hand, the neo-Muslim groups have begun to approach the recently established migrant communities to promote a common identity. One example of this was the creation of the Islamic Council of Granada, formed both by representatives of the immigrant community and by Spanish neo-Muslims. At present, there are various associations and institutions associated with the University of Granada which are trying to bring together the local antagonistic forces and encourage a public debate between them, thereby challenging and channeling the strategies of temporisation and territorialisation articulated by the various contesting groups.

Likewise, the Foundation “Mezquita de Granada”, set up by the Islamic Community of Spain, the United Arab Emirates, and the Arab Emirate of Sharjah in 2002, is attempting to spread information with respect to the Islamic culture and religion, as well as attending to the religious life and spiritual needs of all Muslims living Spain and in Granada in particular.

Conclusions

Since the Seventies, the arrival of the first Spanish Muslims in the neighbourhood of El Albayzín, together with the increased visibility of an immigrant population in the lower part of the district, in the Calle Calderería and Calle Elvira, the presumed conflict between Islamic tradition and the values of the Spanish society is becoming more and more apparent. This confrontation between the “traditional values” of local residents and those of newcomers to Granada is one of the great challenges to be faced by the so-called multi-cultural societies. This is especially so in a place that has been historically acknowledged by some as the paradigm of peaceful and harmonious community life, of three cultures living side by side: the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims.

The “idyllic” vision of a multi-cultured society presupposes that goodwill and tolerance are basic ingredients of harmonious life for different cultural communities sharing social space and common politics. However, the concern caused by the increase in immigration has generated contradictory responses in Andalusia. Such responses include the commemoration of the events of la “Toma” and its counter-celebration, the “Sin Toma”, as well as the current celebration of the V Centenary of

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the Death of Isabel la Católica. All these are factors of great importance in understanding both the demand for religious rights by minority groups and the reactions of the dominant group, whether it be Muslimophile or Muslim-phobe (Del Olmo, 1997).

In conclusion, the essentialisation of the “other”, practised both through policies of identity promoted by groups of Muslim-phobes and through movements in favour of Islam, seem to come together to produce a potentially risky attitude. The “time policy” (the invocation of the historical memory of conflict), and the “politics of space” (the territorial dimension of cultures), converge in their efforts to generate a collective identity. The relationship established between ethnicity and culture, through contact with various groups – communities anchored in local Catholicism, migrant workers and neo-Muslims etc. – is to be observed through the selective use of intangible cultural heritages marking difference between locals and outsiders.

Perhaps this is not a “re-invention” of historical roots, as affirmed by Stallaert (1999), but rather a reproduction of historical baggage, the opinions and prejudices which led to the Granada Moriscos being expelled from the city over 500 years ago. This and other potential conflicts, which are appearing in the urban context of the neighbourhood of El Albayzín, are the object of dispute between three different actors: the Muslim community, the Muslimophile sector of the local society and the local Muslim-phobes. In the course of this conflict, centred round the mosque as a symbol, and not only a religious one, Islam is being instrumentalised, by each of the groups, to forge its own respective collective identity.

Thus, far from the hypothetical ideal of harmonious community life among different residents, where shared values predominate and means of integration are actively sought out, the neighbourhood has shattered into two “ethnic communities” at loggerheads, sharing the same urban space but who, at a symbolic level, challenge and question their respective essentialist definitions of said space. In the broader context of the conflicts over historical heritage, the example of El Albayzín does not appear to open new perspectives upon the multi-cultural life of a shared Past for Christians and Muslims in Granada. On the contrary, the dividing line of religion which is structuring the emerging ethnic communities at a local level, eradicates all possibilities of the social actors contributing towards an inclusive re-interpretation of two
powerful historical myths, that of the “harmonious life in Al-Andalus” and that of the “glorious Christian Re-Conquest”.

Notes

1. At that moment, the Unión de Comunidades Islámicas (UCIDE) appeared, on the 10th April, 1990. Both the UCIDE and the la FEERI were to fight for the control of representation of the Muslim communities in Spain, but not before having gone through a process of criticism and self-evaluation, which is still ongoing. For more details, see Rosón, 2001.

2. Years back, Muslimophile intellectuals grouped together in an organisation called Asamblea Civil, which demanded the transformation of this event into a “multi-cultural festivity”.

3. Platform made up of different local associations and political parties: Izquierda Unida, Human Rights, SOS Racismo, ASPA, Granada Laica (the Lay Society of Granada), Centro de Estudios Históricos de Andalucía, Manifesto 2 de enero (the 2nd January Manifesto – the 2nd January is the date of the Commemoration ceremony) and Granada Acoge.

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