

TOWNS AND CITIES OF BARBARY

THE ANDALUSIAN INFLUENCE*

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THE towns and cities of north-west Africa as they are known today owe their foundation, growth, and development to a variety of factors and influences. For several formative centuries after the advent of Islam no single influence was more decisive, extensive, and pervasive than that exerted by the Andalusians. It is their role which, in the short time available to me, I shall attempt to bring into focus. Before proceeding, however, I must first explain what I mean by 'Andalusians', and, at the same time, indicate the precise period of history with which I shall be concerned. In the present context I shall follow the old Arab custom of designating as 'Andalusians'¹(a) the inhabitants of Muslim Spain (al-Andalus), (b) Muslims inhabiting reconquered territories under treaty with their Christian conquerors, (c) those Muslims who, having remained in Spain after the completion of the Reconquest in 1492, were later denied their religion, language, and culture and compelled to submit to baptism and practice of the Christian faith—in other words, the Moriscos. This much said, it is axiomatic that the period of time involved extends from the Spanish Umayyad epoch right down to the seventeenth century.

If we permit ourselves a panoramic view of these nine hundred years, the phenomenon that is most arresting is the part played by Andalusian elements in the building, development, restoration, or revitalization of towns and cities in Barbary. The earliest manifestations of the phenomenon date from the third century of the Hijra, which, but for a dozen years extending into the tenth century of the Christian era, falls within the ninth.² For the Muslims of Spain this was the century in which dreams of expansion, then later the challenge of the Vikings, impelled them to

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¹ Cf. my article s.v. Al-Andalus in *Et*², i. 496 f.

² The third century A.H. corresponds to A.D. 815–912.