

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES IN AL-ANDALUS

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ABSTRACT

The research deals with the policy of religious tolerance shown by the Moslms who ruled Spain in the Middle Ages. This tolerance included a number of issues. Muslims did not interfere in Christians administration and their religious rites, or prejudice private affairs and worship. This tolerance included also respect the terms of lenient treaties held with the people of the country. The Muslims did not impose Islam on them; so many of them remained Christians.

The research focuses also on the conditions of those people, and their own free will within the Muslim community. They spoke Arabic and rad Muslim books. Some of them embraced Islam without undue influence or coercion, others stayed on their religion, and they were left free to organize their own affairs as they wish. Among other things tolerance also allwed Christians to assume positions of service devoured, including the post of judge.

The research includes also details of the old Spanish Church organizations, which Muslims did not interfere in. As a result of the tolerance of Muslims, the Spanish Church organization remained after the conquest unchanged. Also all institutions of a religious character , such as, monasteries, public and private chapeles, remanined as they used to be. The clergy kept their clothes and uniforms, and then gradually changed it without interference by the Moslms. One of the manifestations of this tolerance, was the respect for private property, which belonged to the indigent population, while the Muslims, after they became Masters, were able to controle it, but they did not do so, and left the right to dispose of them.

This example shows the honorable way in which Muslims dealt with the concored people of the country. Because of this tolerance Muslims gained respect of those people and their hairiness to embrece Islam.

Key Words: Religious, tolerance, Al-Andalus.

This research deals with the policy of religious tolerance shown by the Muslims who ruled large parts of the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages, which had a major impact in facilitating the mission of conquest, and the entry of large numbers of the population to Islam. This tolerance included a number of issues. Muslims did not interfere in Christians administration and their religious rites, or between prejudice private affairs and worship. The places of worship were respected, and the churches existed everywhere, and sometimes were adjacent to the mosques.

This tolerance included also a respect for the terms of lenient treaties held with people of various parts of the country. Moreover, Muslims lived with people of the country in peace without making the others feel that they were Masters. They did not impose Islam on them; so many of them therefore remained Christians, and were called *Mu'ahdin* and *Muzarabes*.

The research focuses also on the conditions of those people, and their own free will within the Muslim community. They spoke Arabic and read Muslim books. Some of them embraced Islam without undue influence or coercion; others stayed on their religion, and they were left free to organize their own affairs as they wish. There was ongoing cooperation between Muslims and them, and they had a superior responsible for them, who was called the (*qawmas*) of Al-Andalus (the word *Comte Cont*).

Among other things, tolerance also allowed Christians to assume positions of service devoured, including the post of judge of (*agam*) who called (*Alcalde*), similar to the mayor of our time. The research includes also details of the old Spanish church organizations, which Muslims did not interfere in. So they did not communicate the Chair of the Greater diocesan from Toledo to Cordoba. As a result of the tolerance of Muslims, the Spanish Church organization remained after the conquest unchanged. Also all institutions of the religious character, such as, monasteries, public and private Chapels remained as they used to be. The Clergy kept their clothes and uniforms, and then gradually changed it without interference by the Muslims. One of the manifestations of this tolerance, was the respect for private property, which belonged to the indigent population while the Muslims, after being Masters, were able to control it, but they did not do so and left the right to dispose of them. This example shows the honorable way in which Muslims dealt with the concord people of the country. Because of this tolerance, Muslims gained respect of those people, and their hairiness to embrace the religion of Islam, which occurred by wisdom and sage advice, without coercion, and thus stayed in that country for nearly eight centuries.

Al-Andalus concord by Muslims in 91 A. H/ 710 A. D, the Arabs and Moroccan tribes who completed the Conquest had a significant impact on integrating and mixing with the local population. The settlement of Muslims included almost all parts of the Iberian Peninsula, and the Islamic rule, lasted about eight centuries. In this long era, we find that Muslims did not impose Islam by sword on the people of the country, but Islam spread through wisdom and good counsel.

The policy of religious tolerance shown by Muslims towards the people of the country had the greatest impact in attracting those people to Islam. This tolerance has praised by many of Europeans, who regarded it as one of the basic causes for the spread of Islam in Al-Andalus. Thomas Arnold says: "In fact, the policy of religious tolerance displayed by these Conquistadors about Christianity had a great effect in facilitating the capture of this country."¹ Muslims did not interfere in the administration of the Christian religious rites, nor also in their own affairs, and places of worship. They did not prevent them from resorting to their religion. "They had been providing sacrifices-sounding bells, burning incense, and other Catholic religious rituals, as well as Intonation Psalms, preaching, and celebration of Christian holidays as they were celebrated before the Conquest."² The places of worship, were respected, churches scattered, sometimes adjacent to the mosques. Muslims did not take churches as mosques except in the case of replacement or abandoned after the entry of people in Islam, or purchased from Christians as Abdul Rahman I did with the Church of Cordoba. He compensated them, and authorized them to build another church instead of the old one which became the Whole mosque of Cordoba. The Christians had their own churches in their own neighborhoods in Cordoba, Toledo, Saragosa, Seville and other cities of Al-Andalus, and they started beating their bells although it caused inconvenience to Muslims. Beating bells is a clear indication of the tolerance of Muslims who left Christians to practice their religion in complete freedom. Ibn Hazm Al-Andalusi mentioned in one of his books the bells of the Christians, he said : ³

You came to me while the moon shines before Christians beating their bells.

¹Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, Arabic translation, Cairo, 1970 : 157 P see also : J. Reinaud, *Incur-sions of the Muslims into France, Switzerland, Italy and Mediterranean Islands*, Arabic translation, Beirut, 1966 : 156 , 291.

²Arnold, *OP.CIT.*, 158.

³Ibn Hazim al- Andalusi, *Tawq al- Hamama fi al- Ilfa wal Alaf ed*, Hasan. Al-Sayrafi, 133

أَتَيْتَنِي وَهَلَالُ الْجَوِ مُطْلَعٌ قُبَيْلَ قَرَعِ النَّصَارَى لِلنَّوَاقِيسِ

Muslims allowed the Christians to build several new monasteries in addition to many prosperous monasteries constricted by monks and nuns who lived in security and tranquility with the Muslims. There was no reason to hide their badges pastors religious. Religious posts or integration in higher hermitage did not prevent Christians from undertaking high positions in the State or carry out the tiles. ⁴

Muslims follow the policy of tolerance since the first days of their presence on the land of the Iberian Peninsula. Their leaders applied this tolerance before all, although they faced full different Society, customs, and traditions. Their treatment and behavior with the indigenous population shows clearly this kind of tolerance. It is better to look at the commander Abdul Aziz bin Musa bin Nusair, how was sent to conquer the south-eastern region of the Iberian Peninsula. He met the ruler of this region, called Duke (Theodemir), who resisted the Muslims. Nevertheless they recognized him and all the rights of his people in the seven cities under his command. They reached a unique treaty which took place in the month of Rajab in the year 94 of Hijra/April 713 A. D⁵.

This treaty contained some very appropriate conditions, aimed from the outset to create a kind of cooperation with the indigenous population to run the country after the conquest. The Muslims had pledged not to kill or take the property of anyone of the country's people, or to divide between children and their womenfolk, and to allow them to practice their own religion, and also pledged to respect the churches. Senior witnesses of the leaders accompanying the campaign singed this treaty to ensure the sincerity of its implementati ons. Those included Uthman bin Ubayyda el-Qurashi, Habib bin Abi Ubayyda el-Qurashi, Saadan bin Abdullah Al-Rabi, Sulaiman Bin Qais al-Tamimi, Yahya binYamur Al-Sahmi, Bishir bin Qais Allkhmi, Yaish bin Abdulah Alazdi,and Abu Asim Alhdli.

⁴ Arnold, **OP.Cit**, 159.

⁵ For further details and discussions about Theodemir and the circumstances of this treaty see :al- Udhri, Nususan al-Andalus, ed. Abdulaziz al-Ahwani, Madrid, 1965: 4-5; H. V. Livermore, **The Origins of Spain and Portugal**, London, 1971 :296 ; Abdulwahid Dhanun Taha, **The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain**, London, Routledge, 1989: 97.

The Muslims respected the terms of that treaty which contains the freedom of belief and religious practice of the Christian population. Even though we do not have other similar provisions of this Treaty, but it is likely that the Muslims had implicated the same policy in other regions of Alandalus. For example, Musa bin Nusair also held other treaties with the Andalusian cities, including the Peace Treaty with the inhabitants of the town Merida which ensured the safety of the population, and not to hurt any individual decides to stay in the city or intended to leave anywhere.⁶

We have another example of the moral of Muslims army, and its finest treatment of the local population, who decided not to be subjected to them. When Muslims arrived to the city of (Huesca) in the upper north-east of the Iberian Peninsula, people sit inside their city walls. The Muslims surrounded the city, and built around them, without any fighting, and built homes outside the walls and embedded chromium, and tilled the land for their livelihood. This lasted seven years, and the people of Huesca watched them and seeing their actions without any attempt to abuse them. So they came done by themselves and their children and their money. A number of them embraced Islam. Others remained Christians, and played tribute.⁷

A good relations occurred between Muslims and Andalusian Christians, because Muslims were aware of their rights and the rights of others. They did not intend to live as masters, but settled with the people of the country and lived in peace without intervening in their way of life, or changing their religion.

Islam putdown all injustice and exploitation, and carried the banner of freedom and equality for all elements of the population. Muslims also left to the people of the country the right to follow their laws and submitting to their own judges, and continue to practice their faith. The performance tribute is imposed on Christians and Jews for protection and exemption from military service. Small sums compared with the old tax that was paid to the Goth. It imposed on the position of men; many were excluded from it such as; women ,children, ,elderly, monks, blinds, disabled, needy, and Slaves. When anyone embraced Islam, he became one of the Muslims and not to pay any tribute. Slaves and the rest of the population who belonged to different social assets hurried to convert to Islam.

As for these who remained on the Christian religion they were named as Agam dhimmah. But those who had a treaty have been branded as

⁶ Taha, *Op.Cit.*, 96

⁷ Ibn Idhari, *al-Bayan al-Mughrib*, ed, G. S. Colin and Levi-Provencal, Leiden, vol. ii.; 56-57.

Muahiden, or Muahiden Christians. They learned Arabic and used the colloquial language (Alagamiya). They were called Arabized (Muzarabes), and have Arabic names; many of them circumcised, and imitated Muslims in matters of food and drink, and the spoken language of the conquerors. The study of Arabic language replaced Latin language throughout the country.⁸

It became necessary to translate the old Spanish church laws and the Bible into Arabic, to be easy to use by the Christians. Some of those Arabized embraced Islam gradually, and some of Spaniards almost demounted superiority in Arabic language. We can cite Ibn Al-Faradi, in the translation of one of these, namely : Abdullah bin Omar bin al-Khattab (died in 276 AH/889 AD) to demonstrate this, as it says : “He was from the Masalimat Aldhimh, who was famous in Seville because of his knowledge, eloquence and his tongue, so that he honored by the Arabs.”⁹

The rest of the Arabized or Mozarabes who remained on Christianity were left free to organize their affairs as they want. Cooperation continued between the Muslims and them. Their supervisors oversee everything connected with them, they appointed judges, who heard their problems as in the time of the Goths, and oversee the churches and serve affairs. The Muslims appointed on the dhimmah Chairman’s, a (Comes) Qawmas of Al- Andalus, or leader of Christians, , and they gave him full respect. In addition to this, each aspect of Al-Andalus had its own Comes elected by people. Their authority was not limited to those cities elected them, but extended to every point within the scope of those cities.

Muslims allowed Christians to assume positions of the other service to their community, including the post of judge Qadhi al-Ajam, who judged with the “costume of the Christians,” along with the judge of the Muslims who judged according to the law of Islam. The Christians judge was called (Alcalde) distorted from the Arabic word; judge. This meaning has evolved with time, and became something like (the mayor) in our time. It is likely that this development happened when Islam wildly spread and the authority of the judges decreased gradually. Then this post has come to resemble elected Honorary President of the Christian Community.

Although our information on the conditions of the Jews and their systems and its evolution after the conquest of Al-Alandus is very slim, yet such information is available heavily on Christians and their organizations and

⁸ Arnold, **OP. Cit.**, 160 .

⁹ Ibn al-Faradhi, *Tarikh Ulama al- Andalus*, Cairo, 1966: vol I. P 216.

church laws. It is clear that Muslims did not intervene in the old Spanish church organizations, so they were not transferred chair of the diocesan Greater Toledo to Cordoba, after it became the latest country's capital. But they were keen to hold the councils for the church in Cordoba. Muslims also spared a Spanish church spiritual, material and financial resources from Rome, and made it a separate entity in al-Andalus. That is why the religious ceremony of the Andalusian church became different from that prevailed in the Catholic Church generally as a result of the entering of the church in the Al-Andalus into the scale of the East.

As a result of Muslim tolerance, the organization of the church remained after the conquest unchanged, except for the names of posts which changed depending on the Arabize of the tongues of the people. Muslims kept all institutions of religious character without touching or hurting them, such as men and women monasteries, small churches, public and private Chapels. Clergy kept their clothes and uniformed, and then gradually changed it without interference by the Muslims, after they Arabized in tongue and lifestyle. But many of them took Arab names known by the people, and keep the church name from the Spanish or Latin origin on their behalf. The Christian groups in the cities and countryside, convoluted around their bishops and priests, without any intravenous by the Muslims in their relationship with them. The churches performed their functions in addition to social and religious functions. Priests was conducting marriages, baptizing births and, and choose their names, registered selling and contracts between people.

In addition to the respect of religious rights of the local population, Muslim also respected private property, while they were able to control it in that they mastered the country, and their authority became unchallenged. We can take one example from the Era of Governors. Directly after the Conquest, there were strong persons living, like Sumayl Ben Hatem Al-Kilabi, Syrian Clients, and some influential Governors, such as Abdul Rahman bin Abdullah Al Ghafiqi, Abou Alkhtar Al-Kalbi, and others. But they were not subjected to the property of Christians and did not approach the previous Royal family property which was more than three thousands estate. Some of those Muslim leaders visited Artabas (Ardabast) the son of Witaza, the former king of the Goths, and they asked him some of his estates. On one of those occasions, the Muslim historian Ibn Al- Quttya tells us that Ardabast donated hundred estates to ten of these leaders. He also tells another story of a similar meaning, : that a Syrian Client asked

Ardabast to give him an estate to cultivate it and the profit will be shared equally between them, Ardabas refused this offer, and donated him tow estates.¹⁰

This shows the Muslim respect for the indigenous population's property, and also demonstrates the onset and mutual respect and cooperation between the Muslims and Christians.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Qutyya **Tarikh iftitah al-Andalus**, ed and translated into spanish by julian Ribera, Madrid, 1926, 3840.