

PRESSING ISSUES OF CULTURAL COOPERATION: ON THE EXAMPLE OF MUSLIM SPAIN

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Abstract: Throughout the history of mankind, it is difficult to find examples of the absolutely isolated development of the society without immediate or more distant cooperation and mutual influence between different countries. Unfortunately, wars of conquest and subjugation of one people by another took not the least place in this process – in fact, they became possible only when the development of the society has reached such a level that the enslavement and exploitation of the conquered peoples has become economically possible and profitable. Throughout the history, the synthesis and exchange of both material and cultural values can be observed. As a result of various forms of cooperation, whether they be political (wars, conflicts, conquests), social (resettlements) or economic forms (craft, trade, monetary system), the areas appear, where peoples, not always ethnically related, acquire cultural similarities. In this aspect, the Arab conquests had a great influence not only on the socio-political development of the South-Western Europe.

Keywords: Muslim Spain, Andalusian culture, interaction of cultures, the Umayyad dynasty, the Almoravides, the Almohades, the Emirate of Granada.

INTRODUCTION

The second decade of the 8th century started with the conquest of Spain by the Arabs. This event had far-reaching implications for Western Europe and its culture. The opposition to the Islamic world and a peculiar kind of cooperation with it have become important factors for a few centuries, affecting the development of the Western civilization (Korsunskiy, 1969, pp. 631-632).

We can agree with the opinion of the French scientist Le Bon that “the Arab conquests are of a special nature, which distinguishes them from all other conquests by preceding conquerors. Other peoples, such as barbarians who invaded the Roman lands, the Turks could establish great empires, but they have not managed to create their own civilization, as the nations conquered. On the contrary, the Arabs created a new civilization very quickly, which was strikingly different from all preceding ones, and has achieved that the crowds of people have finally adopted their religion and language along with a new civilization... It seems that this influence has ingrained forever in all the countries of Africa and Asia, where they penetrated, from Morocco to India. New invaders replaced the Arabs: but none of them could destroy their religion and language...” (Le Bon, 2009).

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In his work on the history of the Arab Caliphate, a Russian historian Bolshakov noticed the similarity of the Arabs to the other conquerors, who “conquered more cultural and economically developed countries, while they were a small minority”. At the same time, the Arab Caliphate proved to be a more durable state and had an immeasurably greater influence on the world history (Bolshakov 2002).

A Kazakh scientist, Professor Nurtazina also noted that the Arab conquest has become an event of world importance, the fundamental nature and historical significance of which lies in the fact that there was a major shift of cultural and civilization complex towards the western religious tradition that should be regarded as a progressive phenomenon. This meant that, without rejecting the values of the Classic East, the Central Asian states have opted for rationalism, the most consistently conducted and leading to the unity of humanity (Nurtazina, 2000).

The Arabs occupied most of the north-west coast of Africa, a region called Mauritania in ancient times. The Arab campaign in Spain was fully consistent with the trend of expansion of the Arab power in North Africa. The book of Ahmed ibn Mohammed Al-Maqqari “History of Muslim Dynasties in Spain” (Al-Maqqari, 1840, pp. 23-29) contains a description of the conquest of Andalusia by the Muslims under the leadership of Musa Ibn Nosseyr and his freedman Tariq Ibn Zeyad. “The number of troops taking part in this first expedition amounted to a hundred horsemen and four hundred foot soldiers. They crossed the strait on four ships and landed on the opposite bank in the month of Ramadan in ninety-one (*July, AD 710*), made a raid and returned with trophies. Musa Ibn Nosseyr, a governor of Africa, appointed his freedman Tariq Ibn Zeyad to command the expedition against Andalusia and sent him there accompanied by Ilian, the King of Ceuta. Before setting off on the expedition Tariq divided his army into two groups, one of them was under his leadership and the other group was under the leadership of Tarf an-Nadzhai. Tariq and his soldiers landed at the foot of the cliff now called Jabal al-Fatah (the mountain of invasion), which later took his name and became known as Jabal Tariq (Tariq’s Mountain). At the same time, his friend Tarif landed on the island later named after him – Jazeer Tarif (Tarif’s Island). To ensure the safety of the troops, soon after landing both commanders chose a good place to camp, which was surrounded by walls and moats, for as soon as the news of their landing spread, the Goth troops moved towards them from all sides. Despite the resistance of the Visigoths, the Arabs managed to invade Spain. Thus, the era of the Arab domination started. The Arabs were successfully moving to the east, gradually reaching the north-western boundaries of India. Thus, during the 7th and the first half of the 8th centuries a vast empire of the Arabs – the Arab Caliphate – was formed. It consisted of the territories of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, North Africa and much of the Iberian Peninsula” (Zhuravlev 2003, pp. 94-99).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The fundamental scientific and cognitive principles used in the article are as follows: historicism, systematicity, analysis and synthesis. An integrated culturological approach allows to consider the civilization of medieval Muslim Spain as a system with certain processes of internal and external evolution, as well as the interaction of all its elements. Historiographical sources for writing the work were mainly the works of Western and Russian historians, published in the form of scientific articles and monographs.

STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the Arab conquest of the greater part of the Iberian Peninsula, one of the greatest brilliant medieval civilizations has been developed. The conquerors introduced to the conquered territory (in Andalusia) the Arabic language and a highly developed culture of the eastern regions of the Arab Caliphate, which, in connection with the elements of ancient traditions remained after the short-term reign of the Visigoths and the spiritually rich life of the local Hispano-Roman population, have become a fertile ground for the rapid flowering of literature, philosophy, architecture. Muslim Spain became a mediator in the cultural dialogue of the East, West and South Europe, a transmitter of the important spiritual and artistic impulses stimulated the European medieval thought and art for almost eight centuries (Levi-Provencal 1967, pp. 156-157). All the conquered countries, to a greater or lesser degree, felt an impact of the Arab culture. Throughout the vast territory of the Caliphate, a single Eastern culture with the local flavor has developed, in this tradition new forms and phenomena appeared. The eastern traditions became dominant in the literature. However, the Arab culture does not remain unchanged, it gradually merged with the local cultural tradition (Kudelin 1973, pp. 2-14).

The interaction of the conquerors' culture with local traditions by the example of Andalusia can be divided into the following periods in accordance with the ruling dynasties of the Caliphate, which ultimately determined its development: 1) the reign of the Umayyad dynasty; 2) the reign of independent principalities; 3) the reign of the Almoravid dynasty; 4) the reign of the Almohad dynasty; 5) the reign of the Nasrid dynasty in the Kingdom of Granada.

From 661 to 750, the Caliphate was ruled by the Umayyad dynasty, a branch of the Meccan tribe Quraish. By 717, Cordoba located in the center of the country became a capital (Hoag 1977, pp. 212-214). The capital of the Caliphate was a scientific and industrial center, a center of culture and commerce; by its world-wide significance it can be comparable to the modern capitals of major European states. By the reign of Abd ar-Rahman II (822-852), the Umayyad Emirate was already rather stable and the country prospered. A wide-scale construction is one of the indicators of common prosperity. Among the rich medieval architectural heritage

of the city, the Cordoba Cathedral holds a special place – it is an outstanding monument of world architecture built up over centuries. The features of the Oriental art remarkably manifested in the Spanish city of Córdoba (8th-10th centuries). In the city, there are all the features typical of the Middle East buildings: domes, horseshoe arches with striped masonry of stones of different colors, fine pierced carving, geometrical ornaments with the interlaced Arabic inscriptions. Historians call the Cordoba Mosque the western Mecca (Al-Istakhri 1967). With its dimensions and magnificence, this temple is superior to all religious buildings of the West. The minaret of the Cordoba Mosque has a height of forty fathoms (Ibn Haukal 1967, p. 89). The city palace Madinat al-Zahra was another notable work of art. Despite its intended purpose, the city did not consist of purely utilitarian buildings; it served as a means of expression for the first Caliph. The layout and decoration of the walls correspond to Roman and Byzantine traditions. Besides the majestic architectural monuments and a number of fortified castles of the same period, various small items – utensils made of marble and ivory, complemented by the works of gold and crystal – are also preserved. Decorative motifs had some Hellenistic influence, partly taken from the Hellenized Syrian art. The art of Muslim Spain retained for a long time the features of the Syrian Umayyad art with all influences that it had experienced. Even in times of Abd ar-Rahman III, a new minaret of the Cordoba Mosque was a square in plan – as Syrian minarets constructed after the fashion of church towers. An impact of Baghdad can be seen in the annex to the Mosque constructed by an heir of Abd ar-Rahman III – al-Hakam II. This was the period when some efforts were taken to master the spiritual culture of the central Muslim lands (López Pereira 1980, pp. 116-118).

The development of trade relations with Europe, North Africa and many Asian countries, the safety of roads within the country, ordering duties and taxes contributed to the development of agriculture, especially horticulture, urban crafts and trade. A higher level of agricultural machinery has allowed to learn new cultures. Al-Andalus got known for its magnificent fabrics. Apart from outstanding architectural monuments, the city of Cordoba in Andalusia was famous for the dressing of “Cordoban leathers”, with which the furniture and interior walls were finished in many European cities. Andalusian cities Almeria and Malaga since the 8th century were the main centres of production of embroidered silk fabrics. This Moor art was borrowed from ancient Persia.

The Arabic poetry of al-Andalus basically reproduced the East-Arabic poetry. Plenty of evidence suggests that initially the Arab element dominated. This was quite natural for the state, which initially was a province of the Damascus Caliphate, known for its commitment to the Arab culture. The language and poetry were the main aesthetic category for the Arabs, and in one way or another the Arabs admiration of their own language has passed on to the other inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. It resulted in a growing interest in poetry and philology. However, the

most important steps to support literary and cultural continuity of Baghdad had been taken in the 10th century, firstly by Abd ar-Rahman III, but mainly by al-Hakam II. Abd ar-Rahman III welcomed a great philologist al-Kali in 941. A famous scientist Abu Ali al-Kali came from Baghdad; he was met in al-Andalus with great honor and presented his extensive work "Amalie". These were lexicographical and grammatical topics not related to each other, but, as it was required by the Arabic tradition, they were full of poetic quotations often prompted by al-Kali's own literary tastes. The works of the great East-Arabic poets reached al-Andalus in a remarkably short span of time, they were studied and imitated by local poets.

At the end of the Umayyad period, when Córdoba became a centre of scholarship and the court granted a due favour to men of talent and science, two writers were born in al-Andalus. Their names are known till the present time. Ibn Abd Rabbihi (860-940) was a poet, who is best known for his literary thesaurus "Incomparable Necklace" ("Al-ikd Al-farid"), which remained popular for centuries both in the east and the west of the Caliphate. Undoubtedly, Ibn Hani was also one of the most outstanding Andalusian poets of the time, but he was accused of heresy that forced him to leave Spain at the age of twenty-seven (Pidal 1955, pp. 156-158). The most original genres of Andalusian poetry are *muwashshah* and *zedzhel*. These strophic poetry genres are new and unusual to the Arab classics. *Muwashshah* (literally "*surrounding*") consists of several verses (*gusn*) combined by the internal rhyme. After each verse there is a chorus (*kufi*), which is not repeated, but has a mandatory rhyme, which must be followed in the choruses throughout the poem. A book written by Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Balansi (12th century) dedicated to the most famous *muwashshaham* should also be noted.

The growth of military and political power of the Umayyads coincides with the comprehensive development of spiritual and material culture of Andalusia. Since that time, a true flowering of historical literature began. The growth of historical knowledge was caused by several factors: a rise of social and political consciousness and the resulting interest in the past of Spain since its invasion by Muslims; a common cultural rise, which was closely associated with the development of education and enlightenment; urgent needs of modern politics, which were reduced to serving the ideas of autocracy and political centralization (Orlandis & Ramos-Lissón 1986, p. 76). The ruling elite paid great importance to historical knowledge, appreciated them and encouraged the compilation of historical works. Caliph al-Hakam II, who did much for the development of science and education in Andalusia, was a kind of "organizer" of historiography related to the court. On his initiative, they began to collect the materials concerning both the past and present of the country; the work on drawing up the country's history got started. He established a kind of school of the official historiography. The official historiography is associated with the appearance in the first half of the tenth century of a year-by-year form of presentation of the material in the form of annals. As the

apologists Andalusian Umayya, the chroniclers' main task was the glorification and defense of political unity under the reign of this dynasty. Their narration is focused on the personality of the Caliph and the dignified ruling establishment. In addition, Al-Hakam II decided to make the Caliph Library one of the most extensive and rich in the Muslim world. As a result of the rapid scientific development, the number of books in the Cordoban Library grew to about four hundred thousand volumes (Kennedy 2008, pp. 36 -39).

Soon after, al-Andalus had become a foundation of all the Muslim spiritual life to the west of Egypt. Relationship with Christian courts to the north of Spain, Byzantium, toleration towards Jewish scholars, who have later become translators and intermediaries, an access to Greek and even some Latin sources – all this gave al-Andalus the opportunity to create its own cultural hybrid (Landa 1993, pp. 16-18).

The golden age of the Caliphate of Cordoba, which lasted for a century, was followed by the economic and political decline in the end of the 10th century. Muslim possessions in Spain were divided into many small warring feudal states – emirates. The country, which has reached such a high economic recovery, was in crisis. After the fall of the Umayyad dynasty, a significant part of the territory of Andalusia has lost its national unity. Numerous Arab feudal dynasties divided Andalusia into their ancestral lands, becoming full-fledged rulers of certain cities (Boyko 1976, pp. 174-178). The attack of Christian Spaniards from the north contributed to the weakening of the Caliphate. In the 11th century, the struggle for the liberation of the country, a so-called reconquista, led by the kings of Castile, reached a decisive stage. During this period, the importance of Maghreb countries was rapidly growing. The danger of the Spanish invasion forced the Arab emirs to seek help from the North African Berber Almoravid State (1061-1140). Almoravid troops landed in Spain vigorously repulsed the attack of the European knights seeking the wealth of the country, and captured the territories of Spanish Muslims. However, despite the collapse of the Caliphate, that caused a long period of wars and civil strife, the culture of the Maghreb and Muslim Spain that have experienced its golden age in the recent past continued to develop. In the west of the Arab world the outstanding works on philosophy, medicine, mathematics, chemistry, and natural sciences were created. The Al-Kutubiyya Mosque in Marrakesh (12th century) is an outstanding and specific monument of the monumental architecture of this time. This is a typical colonnaded mosque with 16 parallel naves and 7 domes. Despite the modest mihrab, it looks very elegant with its white columns. The walls are decorated with various patterns, which is characteristic for the art of the Almoravids. In the prayer hall of the mosque, one hundred and fifty pillars form seventeen longitudinal naves completed with a kind of transept, running along the wall with the mihrab. Outside the Kutubiyya Mosque is a low architectural block covered with narrow duo-pitch tile roofs over each of the longitudinal naves. The wavy roof surface is enlivened with small pavilions, marking five domes of the transept, and over all the building there is a minaret tower, one of the largest in the Maghreb.

The Hiralda Tower is the oldest of the Arab monuments in Seville. This building, a square in plan, is built of pink brick. Outside the tower is richly decorated with sculptures; some windows are of vaulted shape, other windows are pointed and decorated with garlands. Seville is also known for its other architectural complex – the Palace of Alcazar. It is an ancient Arabic palace, construction of which was performed at different times. Alcazar, a seat of the Christian Kings, is the only monument of this type, still preserved in Spain.

The Hassan Mosque in Rabat (Morocco) was the most grandiose building of the 12th century: by size it surpassed the Cordoban Mosque, had three courtyards and more than 400 columns. It has the shape of a prismatic tower. Its architect Jaber also constructed a minaret of the Hassan Mosque, as in Seville, he skilfully used the contrast of the wall surface with a delicate decoration of the arches and ornaments, gave a great artistic expression to the strict forms of the tower.

During the Almoravids' reign *muwashshahs* became an officially recognized literary genre; its subjects are no longer limited. Mystical *muwashshahs* at-Tushtari and Ibn al-Arabi became widely known.

Another Berber dynasty that ruled for about a century in al-Andalus was the Almohads, who founded a vast empire consisting of the entire Maghreb and much of Spain with its capital initially in Marrakech (Morocco) and then in Seville, their favorite Andalusian city. Among the secular Almohad buildings, fortifications are particularly numerous. Powerful walls fortified by towers have been preserved in Marrakech, Rabat, Taza and other cities. The city gates, representing, as a rule, a complex defensive structure, were usually decorated with a portal with a horseshoe arch. A large relief ornament concentrically arranged around the arch decoratively emphasizes the gate opening. The architecture of the Maghreb countries is interesting not only by a large number of built secular and religious buildings, but also by the emergence of trends, characterizing a new stage in the development of the medieval art culture of the Arab West.

Works of architecture in this period were made of rich, usually multi-colored ornamental design. A thinnest arabesque pattern covers each architectural detail of the building, each part of the wall surface. Ornaments, inscriptions, stalactite cornices, domes, arches, forming rich decorative dynamic compositions, matching the main architectural lines of the building only in their general contours, emphasize the sophisticated, refined luxury. A perfect example of the new style in the Maghreb architecture is the interior of the Great Mosque of Taza, which was decorated with an ornamented dome in front of the mihrab in the end of the 13th century. The characteristic monuments include numerous Moroccan madrasa preserved in Fez, Marrakech and other cities. These buildings represent rather small buildings consisting of a courtyard surrounded by monastic cells of teachers and students, which is built on one side of the Mosque. Courtyards, which are not only the compositional-planning centres of the buildings, but also the focus of their artistic decoration, are of particular interest.

The Almohades were much more enlightened and more interested in culture. No wonder that their reign coincided with the emergence of the great world-class scientists, including: Ibn Tufail, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Moses ibn Maimon (Maimonides) and Ibn Sabin. Despite the fierce opposition of theologians-traditionalists and the fact that all thinkers have been persecuted for their views, the 12th century was a golden age of the philosophical thought in al-Andalus.

A fierce reaction, that limited the possibilities of cultural development of Andalusia after the Berber conquest, was not irreversible. Among the first Almohade rulers, there were educated people, such as the Caliph Yusuf (1163-1184), whose vizier was one of the most remarkable men of Arab Spain, a philosopher and writer Ibn Tufail, who entered the history of the Arabic prose with his famous "Treatise of Hay, son of Yakzan". This story is the most significant work of the Andalusian prose, which has gained popularity both among Arabic and Western European readers. This rather original work belongs first and foremost to the history of philosophy, reflecting the complex fusion of rationalism and mysticism, which was formed in the medieval Arabic thought under the cross influence of the ideas of ancient Greek philosophers (Peripatetics and Neoplatonics) and the Eastern mysticism. Southern Spain cities Seville and Granada became the centres of cultural and literary life of Andalusia in the final period of its history. The symptoms of the upcoming literary decadence in Andalusia were the same as in the eastern Arab regions: the emergence of artificial poetry and a wide spread of mystical Sufi poetry, which, however, has put forward a number of remarkable creative individuals. Omar ibn al-Farid (1180-1234) was a prominent representative of that time. He spent most of his life in seclusion not far from Cairo; here he kept the past, fell into reflection and prayed. Sufis respected al-Farid as a teacher and a saint. His most popular works are as follows: "Wine qasida", where an ecstatic state of divine inspiration is described in the images of the traditional drinking poetry, and "Big Thaya" ("Poem with a t-rhyme"), a great poem, which contains a story of the mystical experience of the poet (Wat & Kakia, 1976, pp. 156-157).

At the end of the 13th century, after the collapse of the Almohad Empire, the feudal states ruled by local dynasties were established in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the political situation in Spain changed dramatically. As a result of the Reconquista, the Spanish drove the Arabs back to the southern part of the peninsula, to Granada. In this region separated from the rest of the territory with mountain ranges, the Emirate of Granada was formed in 1238. The capital of the Emirate – Granada is located in the foothills of Sierra Nevada, on the slopes of the hills that go down into the valley of the Genil River. Surrounded by high walls and towers, decorated with magnificent palaces and mosques, the city with many libraries and educational institutions was called by the Arabs "a paradise on earth", the poets praised it as "a bright star in the sky". The Emirate of Granada was the richest state in Spain. However, those were the days when the collapse of

the political and economic domination of the Arabs in the Iberian Peninsula became obvious. With all the external signs of prosperity, the Emirate of Granada was full of violent internal conflicts. The historical epoch, when the Arab domination in Spain was at its final stage, has left an indelible mark on the entire culture of the Emirate of Granada. Both scientific treatises and especially poems were full of motives of pessimism, hopelessness, a desire to cut off from the world. At the same time, there were growing trends of a special finesse of the style that is most clearly evident in the main architectural ensemble of Granada – the famous Alhambra Palace. The Alhambra Palace appeared on the site of the old fortification, which existed already in the 11th century. Its construction was started in the 13th century and completed at the beginning of the 15th century; Alhambra consists of three parts called in Arabic Alcazaba (*fortress*), Alcazar (*palace*) and Madinah (*city*). The ensemble of the Palace included rooms, pavilions and halls for official functions, a mosque (destroyed during the late reconstruction), numerous apartments (bath, etc.). Two main courtyards of the Alhambra Palace – Myrtle and Lion ones – are placed at an angle to one another and are connected with an unnoticeable narrow passage. The task of the architect of the Alhambra Palace was to use all means available to create a luxurious palace with rich interiors, designed for entertainment of the East ruler. In 1526, the artistic unity of the ensemble of the Alhambra was impaired with the construction of the palace of Charles V.

In the Iberian Peninsula the effect of the agreements concluded by the Arabs extended to the local population. An agreement of a type “sulkh” (peace) provided for the cessation of hostilities, submission of the defeated. An agreement of a type “adkh” (pact) stipulated the submission “to the will and patronage of Allah”, without “imposing any dominance”, while the defeated population preserved their property and liege rights (Altamira y Crevea 1951, pp. 17-18). They preserved not only the land and property, but also an opportunity to practice Christianity, to adhere to the previous local control procedures. These factors have contributed to the strengthening of the Arabs of the peninsula, the satisfaction of social groups. As a result, representatives of the Visigoth nobility converted to Islam and further became fully legitimate aristocrats. Representatives of other social strata, especially merchants and craftsmen, converted to Islam, as the adoption of a new faith meant the reduction of the tax burden, the conversion to Islam relieved them from this burden. An additional motive for the conversion of the local population to Islam was a distrust of the Christian clergy, which, in the people’s opinion, was associated with unpopular Visigothic reign (Stasyulevich 2001).

An enormous amount of people of other faiths is the main difference between the Muslim Empire and medieval Europe, which was completely under Christianity. This is about so-called protected religions, which initially prevented Muslim nations from forming a single political structure. The Christian church and synagogue (a Jewish prayer house) always remained like foreign states within the Empire

of Islam, they were trying to conclude contracts and achieve the preservation of their rights not to allow Islam to replace them. They ensured that the “Islam House” was always a roughly and hastily built structure, so that faithful Muslims constantly felt only like winners, but not citizens, so that the ideas of feudalism have always been preserved, but, on the other hand, they put forward absolutely up-to-date tasks. The need to get along with each other in some way has created, first of all, some religious tolerance unknown in Medieval Europe. This tolerance has found expression in the fact that in Islam comparative theology was developed and diligently studied. Masse wrote about the tolerance of Islam in his work “The Muslim Renaissance” (Masse 1982): “Having the political talent, which is so rare for the adherents of the new cult, for the first time the caliphs realized that new institutions and religions should not be imposed by force. And it is clearly seen that anywhere they penetrated – Syria, Egypt or Spain – they dealt gently with the population, preserving local laws, institutions, religions, without asking anything in exchange for the peace maintained by them (the Arabs), except for modest taxes, which were often less than the taxes paid by the population before”.

In the sphere of family relations, the situation was as follows. Mixed marriages were not allowed, as a Christian woman, according to the laws of her faith, had no right to marry a non-Christian man, while, according to the Church Regulations, a Christian man could marry a non-Christian woman only if there was a hope that the couple and their children would adopt Christianity. The laws of the Arab Empire also ensured the stability of the protected religions in relation to one another: for example, Jewish people could not become Christian and vice versa, they could adopt only Islam. No Christian could be an heir of a Jew and vice versa, no Christian or Jew could inherit property from a Muslim, while a Muslim also had no right to inherit property from a Christian or a Jew. Submission was particularly difficult for the church, which depended on the Caliph, who assumed himself the right to appoint and depose bishops and convene councils. The Patriarch had the right to disfrock priests and unchurch laymen. The Patriarch was elected by his church, but approved by the Caliph. Upon accession to the rank, the Patriarch received a certificate confirming his status (At-Tabari 1964).

During the last period, associated with the Emirate of Granada and the reign of the Nasrid dynasty, a cultural symbiosis between the eastern traditions and local forms was completed. Since the most of the Muslims occupied the Christian lands, *i.e.* had a status of religious minorities, a further cultural synthesis most clearly manifested in popular forms of Andalusian music cultivated by minstrels (Filshtinskiy 2006, pp. 386-389). In general, the state was prosperous – due to the intensive agriculture, urban crafts and trade. However, there were numerous internal difficulties. Conflicts between dynasties for the rights to the throne, when each dynasty pursued its own interests, were very frequent, especially in the last decade of the 14th century. Consciously an Islamic nature of the state contributed

to the strengthening of the influence of legislators, who, together with African mercenaries and some urban elements, were conducive to war. They were opposed by the ruling elite, merchants and peasants, who were conducive to peace. The end of the Nasrid Kingdom was caused as much by its own internal weaknesses, as by the growing power of the Christians. The scene when Abu Abdallah (Boabdil), the last Nasrid and the last Muslim ruler of Spain, takes leave of al-Andalus has created one of the Spanish folk ballads. The last outstanding writer and poet of Andalusia was a historian Lisan al-din Ibn al-Khatib (1313-1374), a vizier of Granada emirs, who was killed in the Fez prison, where he was imprisoned for his philosophical theories found heretical. Ibn al-Khatib created a number of historical works, letters and poems, among which the most popular was a widely known elegy written in anticipation of his own death and reflecting the feelings of the coming death and despair that the people of Granada had before the final victory of the Spaniards. After the fall of Granada, the most of the Muslims fled to North Africa. However, the Arab culture with its strong age-old traditions has left a deep mark on the life and culture of Spain (Izzati 1976, pp. 246-249).

CONCLUSION

Considering the problems on a specific example of the East and West clash, from the perspective of inter-influence of their cultures, a phenomenon of the synthesis of Arab-Spanish culture can be considered in two ways: firstly, as a product of the Muslim West, and secondly, as a part of the culture of the Muslim East.

Medieval Muslim Spain is a perfect example of the culture that could overcome the isolation of the traditional political, ethnic and aesthetic stereotypes due to the high communicativeness of all subjects. Overcoming the boundaries of "the other" by continuity rather than a complete denial is a distinctive feature of the formation of the syncretic culture. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that in case of long-term contacts an influence of another culture promotes the tolerance and gradual adoption of new influences. As a result, the identity of culture changes, but, nevertheless, it retains its specific structure.

Due to thoughtful actions in the political and social spheres, the Muslim conquerors could lay a solid foundation for the loyalty of the local population, which, in turn, allowed the parties to take an active part in the formation and enrichment of the Arab-Islamic civilization in the territory of the Iberian Peninsula. As for the next level, a household level, there is a synthesis of foreign culture and local deeply rooted traditions. This is reflected both in the language and customs. It should be noted that the process of inter-influence lasts for a longer period than at the socio-political level, as it is associated with a person's private life. At this level, there are changes at the level of consciousness that is directly reflected in the behavior of people. As a result of this synthesis, a new ethnic group with its

own identity, which was manifested in the language, norms, values, etc., has been formed. In the process of interaction between ethnic groups there was a mutual assimilation of different cultural elements. At the same time, a new ethnic identity was consolidating. Thus, the theory of situational ethnicity is confirmed. Ethnicity is based on the political and cultural history of society.

The sphere of art can be identified as the next level of interaction between cultures. Changes in this sphere are closely linked to the level of everyday life. Aesthetic values and norms change simultaneously with the change of consciousness, which leads to the emergence of a new specific art. Upon numerous examples from various fields of art, such as architecture, literature, music, philosophy and scientific knowledge, we can find new specific elements, which were the result of synthesis and interaction of different national traditions. The process of cross-cultural communication has passed all the levels of formation starting from the mutual cultural tolerance to the mutual cultural unity. In our opinion, this level may be considered as a result of the inter-influence and synthesis of cultures.

The mechanisms of interaction and formation of the medieval syncretic culture were shown on the particular cultural and historical example. In this regard, the analysis of peculiar features of not only culture, but also the public, economic and social structure of al-Andalus has been conducted. Despite the uniqueness of the public life and local national traditions, in the interaction and mutual influence there was a synthesis of cultures of the peoples, which have been united by Islam. As a result, there formed a common Muslim culture that created and preserved for many centuries a peculiar worldview, moral norms, behaviour models and social institutions.

The study of Muslim Spain makes an important contribution to the study of the problem of cultural interference, discovering the mechanism of interaction between “us” and “them” before intricately connected cultures form a sophisticated and unique syncretic civilization that has made an outstanding contribution to the world culture.

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