

Muslims In Spain: Between The Historical Heritage And The Minority Construction

Jordi Moreras

*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Barcelona, Spain*

The 2000 survey of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, which assesses attitudes towards minority groups in the European Union,¹ indicates that Spaniards are relatively accepting of immigrants in their country. Respondents apparently regard minority groups as an enrichment of their cultural lives and do not demand their cultural assimilation. Concretely, only 4% record an attitude of intolerance, while over 60% declare themselves to be at least passively tolerant. The figures for Europeans as a whole are 14% and 39%, respectively. When asked more specifically about their acceptance of people from Muslim countries who wish to work in their country, nearly a third of Spanish respondents indicated that they would accept Muslim presence without restrictions, while only 5% would not do so (Europeans registered 17% and 18%, respectively).

How can this apparently greater degree of tolerance within Spanish society than is exhibited in the rest of countries of the European Union be interpreted? Leaving aside the commonplace stereotype of the "natural affability" of the Hispanic character, two interpretations may be suggested. The first has to do with the fact that Spain has only relatively recently become a country that has attracted a significant immigrant population. Until about three decades ago, more people were emigrating out of Spain than arriving to it. The change occurred when Spain began to receive contingents of immigrant manual laborers, coming mainly from South America and North Africa. Social science research on the reality and constituency of the immigrant population is still in the very early stages, and many Spanish citizens have not fully realized the nature of the change in their society.

The second interpretation of the relatively high degree of tolerance for immigrants in Spain, if indeed it is true, is specifically linked to the groups of Muslim origin, which comprise approximately one third of the foreigners in the country. The recognition of the historical legacy left by seven centuries of

Islamic presence, and the cultural, artistic and linguistic inheritance of Arabs in Spain, are important factors in this more tolerant and open attitude to the contemporary Muslim presence in Spanish society. The rest of Europe does not share this same cultural heritage. In fact, the Arab legacy is the subject of frequent official claims.² One of the ways in which it was officially affirmed was through the signing of the Cooperation Agreement with Spanish Muslims in 1992. This agreement established the legal framework for the recognition of Islam in Spain, and represented an advance over other European countries with larger numbers of Muslims. Does this actually mean that the historical legacy is being integrated with present-day reality? It is probably too soon to say a definitive yes, as the relationship of the government to its heritage and to its Muslim population is one full of subtle distinctions.

It is the second of these interpretations, or hypotheses, that is the subject of this article. I do, in fact, have some doubts regarding what appear to be the positive results of the above-mentioned survey. To understand the issue, it is necessary to know something about the elements of the contemporary Muslim presence in Spain, including its heterogeneous character, its associative dynamics and its increasing social visibility. My principal argument is that the identification of the Islamic factor marks a qualitative turning point in the social perception of immigration in Spain (as it was in other European countries during the decades of the 1980s-90s). Because of that factor, the presence of Muslims is now identified as an expression of extreme "otherness." I will briefly comment on the historical background and the composition of this presence, the incorporation of Islam in the public education system, and what I see to be the limitations in the institutionalization process of Islam in Spain, as well as its effects at the local level.³

A Heterogeneous Umma

For Spanish society, the memory of the splendor of the civilization and culture of al-Andalus acts as a burden in the present. Its legacy in Spanish society serves as an historical reference to what it has meant to be Arab and Muslim; but, at the same time, this perception of the past interferes with life in the present. In fact, the images with which Spanish society constructs its perception of "Muslim" are derived from its troubled historical relationship with its neighbor, Morocco. During the course of that relationship, there has been a gradual accumulation of stereotypes that have strengthened antagonisms between the two societies.

Spanish public opinion clearly identifies Muslim presence with immigration, particularly with Moroccan immigration. Often the debate is cast in generalities such as those that reflect on the "problematic consequences of immigration." There is also a revival of the negative stereotype that has been

created throughout history by Spanish society in relation to Moroccans as a group, which can be summed up in the concept of "Moro." Now, a new image has also come into play, i.e. that of Muslim, completing a circle of stereotypes that contribute to Muslims being perceived as a whole with suspicion and unease by Spanish society.

The perception Spanish society has of the Muslim presence is constructed on the basis of a contrast between the relatively invisible and the highly visible. On the one hand, Muslims are not much seen in Spanish "public space," which is not an accident but the result of a clear strategy of concealment and reserve on the part of the grass roots Muslim community. They much prefer to be as little noticed as possible in a social context that is not very favorable toward their presence. But, on the other hand, members of the Muslim community are the subjects of growing notice on the part of the media and of government authorities. Unfortunately, what they see is only the most obvious evidence of Islam and not the inner workings of the community and its members. The contrast between the tendency of the media to focus on Muslims, and Muslim attempts to remain relatively invisible, is worth remarking upon. Muslim community prayer halls offer an interesting example. Barely inscribed in the public space, with hardly an element that would identify their function (these mosques are free of minarets, occupy no distinctive building, appear on no official register and may even not bear any sign outside identifying them), they seem to be marked by their quality of invisibility. This attempt not to be noticed, so to speak, is even more remarkable in light of the fact that some of Spain's most glorious architecture is represented in the mosques that have played such a significant role in its history. The country has great Muslim centers in Madrid, Marbella and Valencia, in addition to Ceuta and Melilla (located in North Africa), and plans for at least ten projects for the re-creation of historical edifices are underway in cities such as Granada, Barcelona, and Malága. The number of Muslim prayer halls in Spain currently being used by immigrant communities is estimated at somewhere between 350 and 400.

Statistical evidence confirms that the majority of Muslims in Spain are foreigners,⁴ although some populations, such as those of Ceuta and Melilla, are of Moroccan origin. Nevertheless, numerous indicators point to the settling-in of such groups: the growing length of time that some immigrant communities have been in the country, naturalization, the reality of second and third generation families, and the development of associations which focus on bringing together converts to Islam. Despite this, the social perception of this presence continues to link Muslims directly with North African, sub-Saharan, and Asiatic migrations, marking Islam as "the religion of foreigners" rather than as a "religious minority."

Four profiles synthesize this presence: (a) *Muslims of Spanish birth*. This includes residents of Muslim origin in Ceuta and Melilla, who represent about 60,000 to 70,000 people,⁵ as well as the children of immigrants, the so-called “new” generations. Among Moroccan families, for example, the population below 15 years of age represents 20% of the total. (b) *Naturalized Muslims*. Between 1980 and 1998, about 30,000 persons of Muslim origin, particularly Moroccans but also Arabs from the Middle East, acquired Spanish citizenship. (c) *New Muslims*, meaning Spanish citizens who have opted for the Muslim faith, whose numbers are difficult to determine but may, according to some sources, lie between 2,500 and 6,000. (d) *Resident foreigners*. This refers primarily and most importantly to immigrant workers—mostly from Morocco, sub-Saharan Africa and Pakistan—whose migratory cycles began in the 1970s and '80s. Data from 1999 records their numbers at some 211,000 persons, to which must be added a significant percentage who are in irregular legal situations. Resident foreigners also refers to those who are living only temporarily in Spain such as businesspeople, students and the like.

The establishment of a Muslim space in Spain is closely related to the development of relations between the state and religious confessions. During the Franco period (1939-1975), the regime's Catholic confessional character prevented the recognition of other religions. It was not until 1967 that the first post-Civil War law on religious freedom recognized the possibility of a monitored practice of religions other than Catholicism. In 1968, the first Muslim association was created in Melilla, a logical product of the cultural substrate of this North African city, and in 1971, the Muslim Association of Spain was formed in Madrid. The political transition opened up the possibility of new freedoms in Spanish society, among them that of religion, which favored the development of Muslim associations particularly among groups of Spanish converts in Andalusia. In the 1980s, the first prayer halls set up by immigrant groups, mainly Moroccans but also sub-Saharans and Pakistanis, began to appear as the result of the process of the settling of incoming migratory flows.

An Incomplete Recognition

The year 1992 is crucial in the recent history of Islam in Spain. In April of that year the Cooperation Agreement between the Spanish State and the Islamic Commission of Spain was signed. This agreement marks a milestone in the recognition of the Muslim presence in Spain, as it allowed for the creation of a specific legislative body to regulate the basic principles of the Muslim community's practice of religion. The legal framework surrounding

this agreement is Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, out of which came the Constitutional Law on Religious Freedom of 1980. The Spanish State is defined as a secular state, but one that guarantees freedom of religion. This principle does not allow the state to promote links with any religious confession in particular, but stipulates that the state is to develop cooperative relationships with all confessions present in Spanish society.⁶

This agreement was to establish a framework that would serve as a guide in organizing all elements of the public practice of Islam, adapting them to conform to legal principles in force in Spain. Among the most noteworthy aspects of the agreement is that it served to define the structure of the Islamic community. It recognized the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE), consisting of representatives of the two major Muslim federations, including the *Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas*, the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI), and the *Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España*, the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE),⁷ the representative and organizing body of Islam in Spain. The CEI was to manage different aspects of religious practice as well as train and appoint religious staff, certify the development and execution of certain religious observances and supervise the incorporation of Islamic religious education into the national educational system.

Created in September 1989, the FEERI is formed basically of associations of Spanish converts to Islam and receives financial aid from Muslim countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iran and Morocco. Notwithstanding, the FEERI would like to represent to the public the image of Spanish Islam without foreign influences. They understand Spanish Islam to be a heterogeneous and heterodox collective (orthodox Sunnis, Sufi inspiration groups and even Shi'a), with a directorate based in Cordova (Andalusia) and strongly linked with Muslim communities in Ceuta and Melilla. Relations between FEERI and government representatives have always been tense. FEERI has raised more demands in negotiations than UCIDE. The resignation of Mansur Escudero, FEERI president, in October 2000 opened a period of uncertainty for this federation. The fact that four candidates competed for the post shows the on-going internal struggle for its control. Two of the candidates are directly supported by Saudi Arabia, which wishes to secure its influence on Spanish Islam. The current leadership under the presidency of Abdelkarim Carrasco as president clearly indicates continuity with the former direction.

The UCIDE, which formed in April 1990, is ideologically close to the moderate wing of the Muslim Brotherhood and includes associations formed by nationals of Middle Eastern countries, most of them now naturalized citizens of Spain. Riay Tatory Bakry, a Syrian-born doctor and founder of one

of the first Islamic associations in Spain (Madrid, 1971), has been the UCIDE secretary general since its foundation. Its relationship with representatives of the State has been far more friendly, and Tatary has been a member of the Advisory Commission on Religious Freedom of the Ministry of Justice, a fact FEERI has criticized repeatedly.

It is clear that for some time there has been a political struggle going on between the two federations for representing Islam in Spain. Until 1989, the point at which the fact that Islam had taken root in modern Spain was recognized, there were a total of twenty associations, most with links to FEERI. Barely a few months later, this number had increased to 37, with nine associations belonging to the newly created UCIS. The signing of the Cooperation Agreement of 1992 provided a further spur to this proliferation of associations, whose numbers went from 51 to 70 between 1994 and 1996, a harbinger of the spectacular increase that has taken place since. In February 2001, there were 176 Muslim religious associations in Spain listed in the Register of Religious Entities at the Ministry of Justice in Madrid. Of these, 60 belong to the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI) and 74 to the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE), while the other 42 are not federated.

In terms of the content of this legal text, one could say that the Cooperation Agreement responded to the interests of the parties signing it. For the State, it served to clarify a situation that had been very complex involving the arrival of Muslim immigrants,⁸ and to determine who represents the Islamic community in its relations with the government. For Spanish Muslims, the most significant factor was recognition by the State of its presence and its social rooting in Spain, and the granting of rights similar to those enjoyed by the Catholic Church as a way of righting what had always been seen as an historic injustice.

Now, ten years after the signing of the agreement, the balance of its application is fairly limited. What reasons are there for the fact that the agreement really has not been implemented? We can identify at least three. The reason most often cited places the blame on disputes between the two constituent federations that make up the Islamic Commission of Spain. These disputes, in turn, are the result of an internal struggle for leadership within the Muslim community going back to before 1989. Even then the evident rooting of Islam in Spain was recognized in its relations with the state. Indeed, the formation of the CIE in 1992, the result of a *forced* unification of the two federations, was the precondition the state imposed for continuing the negotiating process. However, it has brought about a precarious balance of power within this representative entity, a situation that has made it virtually inoperative. Another explanation can be found in the lack of a political

will among authorities (both in central as well as in local government) to promote the development of this agreement. This is evident in the lack of receptivity on the part of the authorities and the evident suspicion toward demands made by the Muslim community. The third reason is to be found in the response of immigrant Muslim communities to the content of the agreement. In general—up until two years ago—those who should have benefited most have not called for its application. Representatives of the two federations have been unable to awaken the interest of these Muslim communities, who have come to believe that the agreement does not respond to their immediate religious needs, needs which at the same time have thus far been addressed by each local community itself.

These three factors in combination, both at the level of negotiations between the government and the Islamic Committee of Spain, and in more concrete regional and local contexts, have had the counterproductive effect of undermining efforts at associational empowerment. Various local governments, in a strict reading of the agreement, have responded to the first demands from Muslim groups by referring to the lack of precise regulations in this area, or by questioning the representative nature of local Muslim entities because they are not included in this federated network of associations.

Islam in the Educational System

Spanish educational legislation gives individuals belonging to the various religious confessions recognized by the State the right to receive an education in conformity with their own religious criteria. In the case of Muslims, Article 10 of the Cooperation Agreement guarantees that in public and grant-assisted private schools, with the previous agreement of parents and educators, Islamic religious education can be provided if and when it does not conflict with the philosophy of the school. The CIE is given responsibility for appointing teachers and preparing appropriate teaching materials, as well as the authority to organize courses and seminars on Islamic issues and to create and run schools and centers for Islamic training.

This principle contains the general bases for defining the religious rights of Muslims. It was necessary, however, to formulate a more detailed statement in order to allow for its concrete implementation. A mixed commission, composed of representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Education as well as those of the CIE, was to set out the steps to be taken for its application. So, following the guidelines of the Law on the General Structuring of the Educational System of October 1990, each federation wrote its own curriculum for Islamic religious education. In 1993, at the first meeting of the commission on Muslim-State relations, FEERI presented a draft curriculum as well as a draft for an agreement on cooperation in education. Two years

later, UCIDE presented its proposal. Finally, on January 18, 1996, after extended consultations, the *Curriculum for Islamic Education in Public and State-Assisted Schools* was approved and published in the Official Bulletin of State. The CIE and the Ministries of Justice and the Interior and of Education and Science signed the *Agreement on the Appointment and Remuneration of Persons Responsible for Islamic Religious Education in Primary and Secondary Schools* on March 12, 1996. This opened the door to the real possibility of Muslim students in public schools choosing to receive Islamic religious instruction.

The first concern was setting out the human and material resources that must be available to cover the demands expressed by Muslim parents, plus the appropriation by the government of funds for this purpose. To this end, and once a survey had been taken to determine the number of students in Spain who might request a Muslim education, the government asked the CIE to prepare a list of qualified teachers. A pilot program was set up and carried out during the 1996-97 academic year in Ceuta and Melilla, where demand for the subject is much greater than in the rest of the country. In this first phase, the teachers were to be paid by the CIE on a provisional basis. Muslim representatives, with certain reservations, accepted these conditions, having received the promise that the agreement would be implemented nationally in the following year with teachers being paid directly by the state.

The agreement, signed by the Socialist government just before the general elections of May 1996, was inherited by the new conservative Popular Party administration. Its first item of business was to deal with the controversy raised by the UCIDE rejection of a list of teachers presented by the Islamic Committee of Melilla, a member of FEERI. For its part, the list proposed by the UCIDE leadership was rejected by FEERI and an impasse was reached. Thus far, the situation in Islamic religious education has become a true *causus belli* both in relations between the two federations and in their relations with the state. The non-implementation of the agreement is a particularly serious matter in Ceuta and Melilla, where many of the students are of Muslim origin. There is ample fulfilment of the criterion of ten students per school, a number established by the Education Agreement as a minimum for the teaching of the subject.⁹ In the rest of Spain, there have been only partial experiments with classes held outside school hours (hence not recognized as part of the curriculum) and bringing together students from various schools.

The fact is that the demand to introduce Islamic education is adding to the intense debate in Spanish society over the role of religion in the schools, an area where decisions of various Socialist governments have set against one another supporters and opponents of the teaching of this subject. Vari-

ous cases have been taken to the Supreme Court. The conservative Popular Party government, aware that it is facing a very sensitive social issue, but at the same time forced to keep the sectors of the society that support it happy, has opted for a strategy of non-confrontation. It therefore has promoted aid for the private educational sector, which is still mostly in the hands of institutions tied to the Catholic Church, to the detriment of the public schools. It is clear that in this context contemplating Islamic doctrine as a school subject further compounds an already complex debate.¹⁰

Immigration and Islam in the New Local Political Agenda

As a result of the process of political decentralization that is occurring in certain European states, it seems evident that the local powers have become the main public spokespersons in terms of Muslim representation, whether they are formal or informal. Because these spokespersons (who often end up with final decision-making authority) operate out of their immediate contexts, they may not always have the broader picture in mind. Thus, the agreements arrived at are not always global or applicable on a national level but tend to be defined in terms of a certain specific context (municipal, regional or local). The dominance of this localized understanding of Islam is evident in both the politicizing of the process of institutionalization that is fostered by the 1992 Agreement of Cooperation, and the problematic demands formulated by the Muslim representatives. Both processes are developed in a local context, but also serve to influence affairs—sometimes inappropriately—at the state level.

The Cooperation Agreement was superimposed on a wide variety of initiatives and models for association that characterized Muslims in Spain. In February 2001, there were 176 Muslim religious associations listed in the Register of Religious Entities at the Ministry of Justice in Madrid. Of these, 60 belonged to the FEERI and 74 to the UCIDE, while the other 42 were not federated. The Cooperation Agreement prioritizes and legitimizes a given dynamic of institutionalization such as that proposed by these Islamic religious associations, while relegating to the background other less socially visible community dynamics. This fact has important consequences at the local level, especially with regard to the political responses of the government to requests made by these groups.

First, as a result of the lack of development of the agreement, no regional or local representation of the Islamic Commission has been established. This has served to exacerbate the struggle between the two federations, as each claims to the authorities to represent the Islamic Commission of Spain to the

exclusion of the other. It is not surprising, therefore, that the response of the local governments has been to question this representation, which the text of the Cooperation Agreement had seemed to establish once and for all.

But there is a second consequence directly affecting local Muslim communities that do not always share associational interests with the federations. The issue is local representation in matters which affect the Muslim community of a specific town: licenses to open prayer halls, the setting aside of space for deceased Muslims in local cemeteries, and access to municipal spaces (like sports centers) for celebrating the end of Ramadan are some of the requests these local groups make. Since the mid-1990s, a period during which federation representatives gradually worked their way into these local contexts as a way of gaining the attention of these groups, one has been able to observe situations where these federation representatives ended up replacing local Muslim representatives in negotiations with the authorities. The immediate effect is twofold. On the one hand, as soon as such requests are reformulated from the perspective of the implementation of the agreement, they become politicized. On the other (as a consequence of this politicization), local Muslim representatives suffer a substantial loss of prestige in the eyes of the authorities with whom they had previously established contacts and arrived at agreements, and who now perceive a radicalization of positions.

It is also the case, however, that the new demands that implicitly or explicitly give visibility to the Muslim communities in the eyes of local administrations lead to a new stage in the understanding and perception of the immigrant presence in the Spanish state. These demands can no longer simply be adapted to a generalized framework created by the political institutions to respond to the growing numbers and social presence of immigrants about whom not much has really been known. Limiting the framework to the social sphere and focusing on education and training, while relegating the issue of the immigrant's culture to the ambiguous sphere of multicultural celebrations and entertainment, has not solved the problem. The demands for opening a prayer room, or the request that some plots in the municipal cemetery be reserved for deceased Muslims, can no longer be accommodated by making adjustments to this kind of framework.

On occasion, these demands have generated a local political dispute. The reaction by neighbors to such demands and the external influence of other actors and organizations condition the kinds of responses that are given within the defined political arena in each concrete territory. Some political discourse, by basing itself on this collective prejudice, has increasingly come to insist that the presence of Muslims is a problem, and has encouraged a public response that wants to place limits on Muslim demands. This dis-

course generally has attempted to confine itself to the boundaries of what is considered to be “politically correct.” Nonetheless, it has resulted in an ambiguous response on the part of the Spanish populace to the presence of Muslims. This is particularly problematic at a time when suspicions about Islam are on the rise as a result of international events and when only a year ago there were openly Islamophobic acts (attacks on mosques and *balal* butcher shops, the painting of racist slogans, attacks on individuals, etc.) in various Spanish cities.

In February 2000, the violent riots against the Magrebian workers in El Ejido (Almeria) evidenced one of the most serious racist demonstrations of Spain’s contemporary history. Some months later, the new setting for such a demonstration was the Ca n’Anglada quartier, a popular suburb of Terrassa (Barcelona). In this case, the racist acts took place in Muslim religious spaces (mosques and *balal* butchers). Over the last year—and specially after September 11th—we constantly see evidence of more negative reactions (e.g. painting racist slogans) to Muslim practice such as the opening of new prayer rooms, women wearing *bijab*, or dietary rules and *balal* menus in the schools. As a political consequence, the Catalan Autonomous Government has received the Parliament’s request to implement a more intense policy on religious matters. For this reason, the Secretariat of Religious Affairs was created in 2000. Such evidence makes it obvious that we must review and question what appear to be the exemplary results in Spain in the 2000 EUMC survey.

Conclusion: the Paradoxes of Integration

Spanish society, as a diverse reality facing the difficulties inherent in the process of transformation into a multicultural society, appears to be having trouble coming to terms with the cultural contributions of certain groups, particularly Muslims. It reacts to expressions of a Muslim “otherness,” which often seems less agreeable than that of some other constituents of Spanish society, by viewing Islamic customs and practices as a kind of folklore that is the opposite of what symbolizes Western society. This perception of otherness, which is a combination of the accumulation of old stereotypes and the introduction of new images and demands, interferes with the carrying out of a debate on the Muslim presence in Spain and the place it is to occupy in Spanish society.

The increasing attention that Spanish society is giving to the Muslim presence signifies—as a first consequence—that this presence has become an object of debate and controversy, and that it will be more and more difficult for preconceived notions and stereotypes to remain unnoticed and unchallenged. It is quite clear that Muslims will continue, and probably amplify,

their demands for certain rights of religious expression that do serve to enhance their visibility in Spanish society and their difference from other citizens. It is significant to observe that those demands that are of most immediate concern, and which often lead to the social rejection of Muslims, are those that are considered within the public sphere, in particular with regard to the appearance of Muslim prayer halls. Requests of this type, which signify the necessity of public expressions of the particularity of the Islamic faith, end up being interpreted as opposed to a model of integration that is based on principles of cultural and religious neutrality.

Here is a paradox that points directly to the obvious fact that Spanish society has failed as yet to construct a model of integration that allows for the incorporation of Muslims and their particular needs for public expression of the faith. If the social participation of immigrant groups is truly accepted— independent of their cultural or religious origins—and this acceptance represents one of the main indicators of integration, such concerns about cultural and religious neutrality would not arise. Instead, too often when Muslims ask for permission to establish a center with a prayer room (permission they seek precisely because they have been advised and wish to maintain good relations with local administrations), they receive angry responses from the neighborhood and its representatives. Why are such occurrences received with a tepid response by local administrations? Are we as Spaniards trying to convince ourselves that certain expressions of a cultural or religious minority must remain invisible in the social realm so that our majority is not made to feel uncomfortable by them? Such questions must be addressed in light of the immigration realities in Spain today, and it is certain that they will continue to challenge those principles of participation on which Spanish society is based.

One crucial factor that makes the full recognition of Islam difficult may be the insistence of many citizens on seeing the Muslim presence in Spain as a result of certain migratory cycles rather than a result of a process by which a religious minority has been created. Islam is still seen as an import, an alien reality, in clear contradiction to the understanding of Islam as a permanent presence, which was one of the motivating factors for the adopting of the Cooperation Agreement. It is clear that the tone of the debate is changing substantially, and that it can go in several directions. If it takes place within the context of a study of migrations, it will be incorporated into a diffuse discussion of the necessity of a social integration in which acculturation is seen to be prerequisite to ensuring successful individual inclusion. If, on the other hand, the debate were to center on the recognition of cultural and religious minorities in Spanish society, not only would the political issue have to be incorporated, but it would make no sense to raise the argument of that

acculturation as necessary for integration. Instead, one would rather need to discuss how to establish mechanisms for protecting the rights of Muslims and promoting their recognition by society.

Seeing Islam under the general rubric of immigration simplifies the scope of the debate by placing it on the same level as that concerning other elements of the population that are labelled non-Spanish. In that way, the issue becomes one of lesser importance, and avoids the real question of whether or not Spanish society has faced the problem of how a multicultural society is built and maintained. Indeed, it raises questions about the very principles that give a multicultural society form and content at a time when, in a singular paradox, Spanish society feels more comfortable laying claim to the cultural legacy of the past than accepting a contemporary and everyday reality as its own.

Endnotes

1. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Attitudes towards minority groups in the European Union*. Vienna: EUMC, March 2001.
2. There have been numerous displays of this political will to show off artistic and cultural aspects of this legacy. We could note, for example, the ambitious cultural project *The Andalusí Legacy* currently being sponsored by the Government of Andalusia or the exposition *Islam and Catalonia*, organized by the Government of Catalonia, that ran from November 1998 to February 1999.
3. This paper attempts to synthesize the most significant aspects of this presence discussed in a more detailed fashion in my work., *Musulmanes en Barcelona: espacios y dinámicas comunitarias*. Barcelona: Cidob Edicions, 1999.
4. As Article 16.2 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 does not provide for an official census of religious confessions in Spain, one must have recourse to estimates. Different calculations as to the number of Muslims in Spain range from 250,000 and 350,000, while the Islamic Commission of Spain states that there are currently about 450,000. These numbers are still modest in comparison with the size of the Muslim population residing in other European countries.
5. The carrying out of a census of the Muslim population of Ceuta and Melilla has always been one of the main political challenges in these North African cities. Since the first official count taken in 1986, the political authorities have refused to do further estimates for fear that the figures would confirm the demographic increase of this population and question the "Spanish" character of these territories. The estimate I propose is based on the application of the percentages obtained in 1986 to the total census of residents in 1998, which would have to be refined even further to deal with the demographic increase experienced in recent years by the population of Muslim origin.
6. These accords preserve not only the principle of state non-intervention in the internal affairs of each religion, but at the same time offer these religions the opportunity to participate in the formulation of their own regulation. Nevertheless, the state reserves the right to decide with which religious confessions it will reach agreements on cooperation. This recognition is stipulated in Article 7 of the Constitutional Law, which states that the

state will reach agreements with those religions "which on account of their extension and the number of the faithful have acquired an evident rooting in Spain." At present, the Spanish State maintains a concordate with the Catholic Church, renewed in 1979, and has had cooperation agreements with Jews, Protestants, and Muslims since 1992.

7. The FEERI, created in September 1989, is formed basically of associations of Spanish converts to Islam and receives financial aid from Muslim countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iran and Morocco. Its relations with the government representatives have always been tense. It has raised more demands in negotiations than UCIDE. The latter, which formed in April 1990, is ideologically close to the moderate wing of the Muslim Brotherhood and includes associations formed by nationals of Middle Eastern countries, most of them now naturalized citizens of Spain. Its relationship with representatives of the State has been far more friendly and its secretary general has been a member of the Advisory Commission on Religious Freedom of the Ministry of Justice, a fact FEERI has criticized repeatedly. The resignation of Mansur Escudero, FEERI president, in October 2000 opened a period of uncertainty for this federation. The four candidacies submitted for the post are evidence of the on-going internal struggle for its control. Two of the candidates are directly supported by Saudi Arabia, which wishes to secure its influence in Spanish Islam.

8. To a certain degree, the model of "top-down institutionalization" was followed, in which it is the states that promote the creation of an entity to represent the Muslim community, a practice now customary in Europe [see Jan Rath et al., *Western Europe and its Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2001)].

9. October 2000 saw publication of figures on drop-out rates among students of Muslim origin in the schools of Ceuta, which showed that barely one-third of them entered high school (see *El País*, October 2, 2000).

10. This debate also has an impact on the schooling of students of immigrant origin and on the charge levelled at private schools, particularly those aided by the government, that they put up bureaucratic obstacles to the registration of these students, who then end up concentrated in public schools. According to statistics for the region of Catalonia for the academic year 1999-2000, 83.7% of these students attend public schools.