Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

Muslim Identities and Traveling to the South of Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Islamic Heritage Tourism in Southern Spain and Sicily

Bovenkerk, Rosa

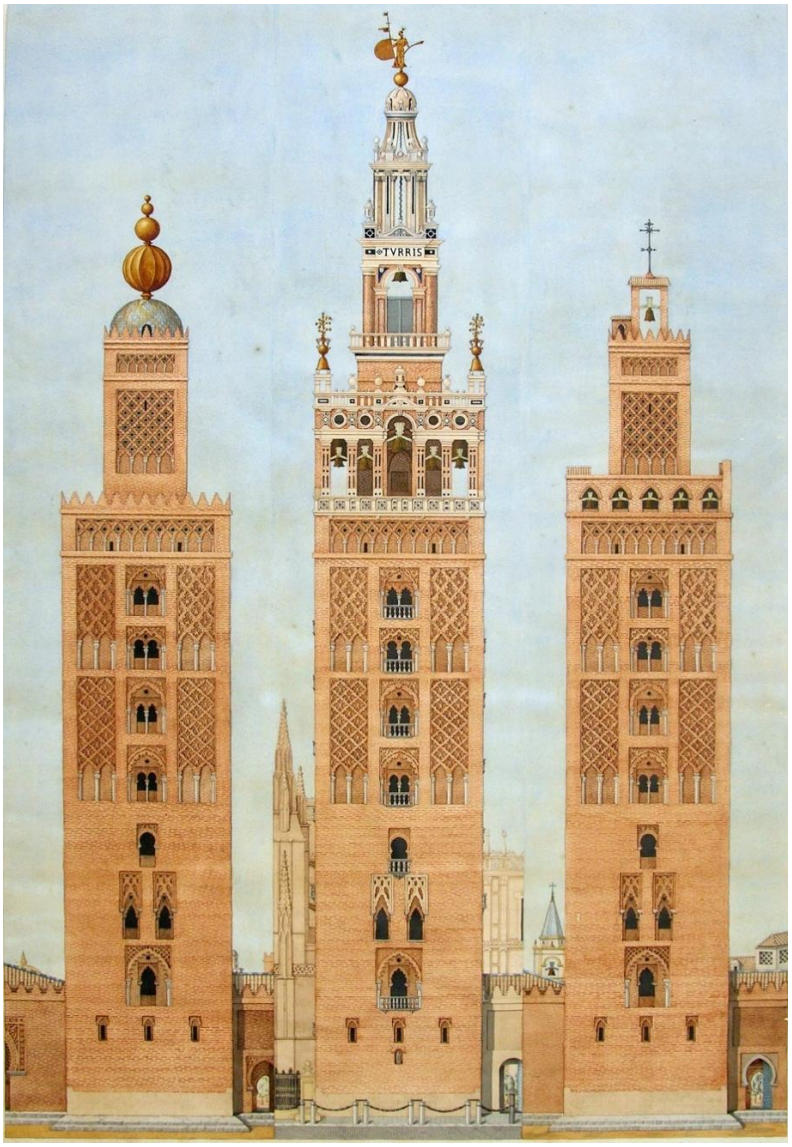
Citation
Bovenkerk, R. (2025). *Muslim Identities and Traveling to the South of Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Islamic Heritage Tourism in Southern Spain and Sicily*.

Version:	Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License:	License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master Thesis, 2023
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4259915

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Muslim Identities and Traveling to the South of Europe

A Comparative Analysis of Islamic Heritage Tourism in Southern Spain and Sicily



Master's Thesis Middle Eastern Studies
Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University

Name: Rosa Linde Bovenkerk
Student number: 1509268
Supervisor: Prof.dr. P.M. Sijpesteijn
Second reader: Prof.dr. M.S. Berger
Date of submission: 23-8-2025
Word count: 20.503 (excl. appendices)

Table of contents

1. Introduction **4**
1.1 Al-Andalus and IH Spain 4
1.2 Sicily and IH Sicily 5
1.3 Tourism 5
1.4 Halal Tourism (HT) 6
1.5 Islamic Heritage Tourism (IHT) 7
1.6 Existing research 7
1.7 Research questions 9
1.8 Theoretical framework and methodology 9
1.9 Outline 10

2. Muslim tourism: the potential **11**
2.1 The relevance of Muslim tourists in the industry 11
2.2 The potential of IHT 12
2.3 Online presence of IHT for IH Spain and IH Sicily 13
2.4 "Trip with all Islamic heritage pearls!!" 13

3. The collective memory of al-Andalus **16**
3.1 Al-Andalus 16
3.2 *Convivencia* versus *Reconquista* 17
3.3 *Negando la Reconquista es falso y ridículo* 18
3.4 Experiencing *Reconquista* in IH Spain 20
3.5 Experiencing *Convivencia* in IH Spain 22
3.6 The middle way of *Mudejar* architecture 23
3.7 Unnoticed Islamic heritage 24
3.8 The presence of other heritage 25

4. Islamic echoes in Sicily **27**
4.1 Islamic Sicily 27
4.2 Collective memory of Islamic Sicily 28
4.3 *Risorgimento* in Arab-Norman heritage 29
4.4 Unnoticed testaments of Islamic heritage 32
4.5 The presence of other heritage in Sicily 33
4.6 Comparison of Islamic history and heritage between IH Spain and Sicily 34

5. Social Identity Theory (SIT) applied **36**
5.1 SIT an al-Andalus 36
5.2 SIT and Islamic Sicily 36
5.3 SIT and IHT 37

6. Conclusion **38**

Bibliography **40**

Appendix I: Figures **47**

Appendix II: Details IHT operators **62**

Appendix III: Webpages **73**

1. Introduction

As a student with a strong interest in travel, both Andalusia and Sicily ranked highly on my list of desired destinations.[1] This was partly due to their affordability, but also because of their cuisine, languages, pleasant climates, and rich cultural heritage. And as a student of Middle Eastern Studies, the Islamic history of both regions added particular appeal, given that each was under Muslim rule during the Middle Ages and retains visible traces of that period. Both Andalusia and Sicily are located in Catholic Mediterranean countries, widely celebrated tourist destinations known for their food and climate. Spain and Italy are only surpassed by France in the top three of most visited destinations in Europe. Worldwide, they are both in the top 5.[2] Islamic heritage is scarce in Europe, with Andalusia and Sicily being known as the only destinations in the South of Europe with an Islamic past and its remaining heritage. In the south-east and east of Europe there is also Islamic heritage as well as Islamic minority populations (most notably Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and North Macedonia). These however historically stem from the Ottoman sphere of influence, and are not included in this thesis due to the limitations of its scope.[3] Sicily and Southern Spain are both home to nine UNESCO heritage sites pertaining to Islamic heritage, suggesting further similarity as Islamic heritage tourist destinations.[4]

Thus, with Spain and Italy being among the most touristic destinations of Europe in general and being home to such unique Islamic heritage, I expected similar levels of interaction with Islamic heritage in the tourism sector. Yet the level of engagement with Islamic heritage in tourism differs significantly for Andalusia and Sicily. I encountered a wide range of travel agencies offering halal-friendly tours in Andalusia, which included access to halal food, prayer spaces, and visits to Islamic heritage sites. This strong online presence was striking since comparable tours in Sicily are rare. The combination of halal accommodations and a focus on Islamic heritage appeared to be virtually absent. This apparent paradox, for which there is no existing academic discussion, prompted the research question of this thesis: how do Islamic Heritage in Spain and in Sicily compare on Islamic Heritage Tourism, considering both online availability as collective memory? How can the differences between them be explained? The next segment primarily sets forth all relevant definitions.

1.1 Al-Andalus and IH Spain

Whereas my original interest was piqued by Andalusia as a travel destination, this term actually refers exclusively to the current day Spanish province. From 711 to 1492 CE the Iberian Peninsula was ruled (partially) by Muslims. Only afterwards the concept of Spain as a nation

[1] This research was made possible by a research grant from the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome (KNIR) and Stichting De Kroon.

[2] World Tourism Organization (2025) UN Tourism Statistics Database, Madrid. Data updated on 24 November 2023, https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/tourism-data-inbound-tourism, consulted 13 July 2025.

[3] Katarzyna Puzon et al., "Heritage, Islam, Europe: Entanglements and Directions. An Introduction," in *Islam and Heritage in Europe: Pasts, Presents and Future Possibilities*, eds. Katarzyna Puzon et al. (Taylor & Francis, 2021), 2-4.

[4] See Chapter 3: The collective memory of al-Andalus and Chapter 4: Islamic Echoes in Sicily for an overview of these UNESCO sites.

started to take shape.[5] Moreover, the region historically ruled by Muslims included parts of modern Portugal. This is why the region will be referred to as the Iberian Peninsula, and to the period of Muslim rule as Al-Andalus. It is important to keep in mind that the term al-Andalus in fact covers several centuries, dominions and territories.[6] As figure 1 in appendix I illustrates, the territories of al-Andalus have shifted greatly over time, from the south to the north of the Iberian Peninsula. Andalusia is central to the territory of historical al-Andalus and home to many of its vestiges such as Córdoba and Granada.[7] Yet as figure 2 in appendix I indicates, the modern province only covers a segment of historical al-Andalus's territory. As Spain and Andalusia would be anachronistic and reductionist terms, from this point onwards IH (Islamic Heritage) Spain is implemented to reflect Spain's wider territory with Islamic heritage, and Spain is used to refer to the country post-Islamic rule. IH Spain describes the current region of Spain with Islamic heritage, which is situated predominantly, but by no means exclusively in Andalusia and the south of Spain.

1.2 Sicily and IH Sicily

In the case of Sicily, this term is used to refer to the geographically demarcated area of the island of Sicily, in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea (see Appendix I figures 3 and 4) in all contexts. When a historical era is of importance (e.g. Islamic or Norman rule), this is explicitly mentioned. IH Sicily is used to refer to the current day Italian Sicily with its surviving Islamic Heritage, and Italy solely refers to the current country.

1.3 Tourism

Tourism is a hospitality industry aimed at satisfying customers, focusing on the enticement, transportation, and accommodation of tourists while catering to their needs and wants.[8] Tourism is primarily oriented toward leisure and pleasure, distinguishing it from other long-distance human movements motivated by work, trade, pilgrimage, hunting, and herding. From the 17th to the 19th century, the Grand Tour became fashionable among affluent European young men, representing one of the earliest known cultural travel tours that were homogenised and mass-produced.[9] The tourism we recognise today emerged in the 20th century as societies transitioned to post-industrial frameworks, with the scope of imperialism and colonisation making distant destinations seem closer. Improved living standards, increased leisure time, and more efficient transportation made travel for tourism more affordable and accessible, leading to exponential growth in the 20th century.[10] This expansion was further supported by advancements in infrastructure, such as air travel and automobiles accompanied by suitable roads, along with cultural shifts that allowed for even more leisure and vacation time.[11] The field of tourism studies emerged in the 1970s, following the swift postwar increase of recreation and travel in

[5] Richard Hitchcock, *Muslim Spain Reconsidered: From 711 to 1502* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 1-2.
[6] Marta Dominguez Diaz, "The Islam of 'Our' Ancestors: An 'Imagined' Morisco Past Evoked in Today's Andalusian Conversion Narratives," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 2, no. 2 (2013): 141.
[7] All figures can be found in Appendix I.
[8] Daphne Halkias et al., "Halal Products and Services in the Italian Tourism and Hospitality Industry: Brief Case Studies of Entrepreneurship and Innovation," *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship* 19, no. 02 (2014): 4.
[9] Eric Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 5-12.
[10] Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism*, 5-12.
[11] Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism*, 9-12.

industrialised nations.[12] In tourism studies it is an academic subject examined through various lenses: cultural, political, economic, historical and social.[13]

A special kind of tourism of importance to this thesis is cultural heritage tourism (CHT): a form of tourism that focuses on the visitation of cultural heritage in a specific area.[14] Cultural heritage is generally understood to include all inheritance from the past that is used in the present day, and consisting of human creation (contrary to natural heritage). Cultural heritage can be tangible (like monuments, art, artisanal objects, cities, villages and gardens) and intangible (like music, dancing, religion, myths, ceremonies, rituals and etiquette).[15] Tangible and intangible cultural heritage are vital tourist attractions, forming a key foundation for the tourism sector.[16] Nearly all destinations, including those focused on "sun, sand, and sea", showcase cultural heritage that reflects local culture. Organised tours often include visits to these sites, highlighting their significance.[17] Thus, cultural heritage is essential to tourism research, especially in regions like IH Spain and Sicily, known for both beach tourism ánd rich cultural heritage. For this thesis, in particular Islamic heritage is relevant. Two specific types of tourism connected to Islamic heritage are explained in the next paragraphs.

1.4 Halal Tourism (HT)

The first type of tourism connected to Islamic heritage is Halal Tourism (HT). Within Islam a special emphasis is placed on a person's religious practice during life, as it impacts the afterlife as well. Religious practice is judged based on categories that are lawful (halal), or unlawful (haram). According to the Encyclopedia of Islam these "binary categories were established by the Quran, … used in connection with ritual acts of worship, dietary laws and family law." Most commonly, but not exclusively, the halal category is used to label food as conforming to the dietary laws (including meat slaughtered in the halal way and excluding impure substances such as carrion, pork, blood, alcohol).[18]

Halal Tourism (HT) provides the conditions to enjoy traveling as a Muslim whilst adhering to halal/haram rules. Traveling often disrupts daily routines, making this challenging, particularly regarding food and drink in non-Islamic countries like Spain and Italy.[19] This concern can be addressed by ensuring that halal products are clearly labelled and accessible.[20] Additionally, the five daily prayers for Muslims, of which three remain obligatory during traveling, can pose a challenge. Providing clean spaces to wash and pray, with a *Qiblah*

---

[12] Matthew Kurtz, Chapter 6 "Heritage and Tourism," in *Understanding Heritage in Practice,* ed. Susie West (Manchester University Press, 2010), 208.
[13] Bill Bramwell et al., "Twenty-Five Years of Sustainable Tourism and the Journal of Sustainable Tourism: Looking Back and Moving Forward," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 25, no. 1 (2017): 1.
[14] See "Heritage and Tourism" by Matthew Kurtz, for the basic principles regarding tourism and cultural heritage.
[15] See *Heritage Studies Methods and Approaches*, eds. Marie Louise Stig Storensen and John Carman (Routledge, 2009), for an extensive overview of methodology in heritage studies. See Chapter 1 "Heritage and Public Memory" by Tim Benton and Clementine Cecil in *Understanding Heritage and Memory*, ed. Tim Benton (Manchester University Press, 2010), for a placement of the tangible/intangible heritage differentiation within a larger framework of heritage studies.
[16] Dallen J. Timothy, *Cultural Heritage and Tourism: An Introduction* (Channel View Publications, 2011), 3.
[17] Timothy, *Cultural Heritage*, 3.
[18] Juan Eduardo Campo, *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Infobase, 2009), 284.
[19] Bailey Ashton Adie, "Marketing Europe to Islamic Heritage Tourists," in *The Routledge Handbook of Halal Hospitality and Islamic Tourism*, eds. C. Michael Hall and Girish Prayag (Routledge, 2019), 157-158.
[20] Majdah Zawawi et al., "Understanding the Concept of Halal for Muslims and Its Impact on the Tourism Industry," *Malaysian Journal of Consumer and Family Economics* 20, no. S1 (2017): 19.

(indicator of the direction of Mekkah) and prayer mats, are helpful services.[21] However, most non-Islamic countries lack the necessary infrastructure to support these needs, making it difficult for Muslim tourists to find halal food and accommodations.[22] Halal tourism (HT) thrives in Muslim-majority countries, and at the same time it presents significant potential in non-Muslim majority nations.[23]

1.5 Islamic Heritage Tourism (IHT)

Secondly there is Islamic Heritage Tourism (IHT). Where HT enables Muslims to travel while observing their faith, IHT involves experiencing heritage linked to Islamic history or culture. In practice IHT is offered within a HT framework, meaning that IHT offers travel to Islamic heritage sites, while providing services for Muslims wanting to observe Islamic duties. IHT can be further expanded by seeing it as a merge between pilgrimage and tourism, religion and leisure. A cultural aspect is often emphasised in describing this merge with tourism and religion, such as: "Muslims travelling to Muslim friendly destinations offering Halal tourism options combining religious and cultural Muslim oriented attractions."[24] This definition demarcates the difference in nuance between Halal tourism and Islamic tourism by including the type of attractions that are visited in the definition.

Both tangible and intangible heritage are included in IHT. Cultural heritage scholar Bailey Ashton Adie defines Islamic heritage tourism as "the purposeful visitation of places of historical and cultural import, with a particular emphasis on those sites which pertain to Islamic heritage, while following Islamic faith principles".[25] It should be noted that the definitions of these terms are not officially demarcated, it is an issue of nuance and emphasis. Hence, IHT overlaps with HT. As the following segment illustrates, within research on heritage tourism HT and IHT are relatively new topics of research, with terms often used interchangeably. This thesis takes both kinds of tourism within research into account. HT is used when the source material does the same, but generally the use of IHT is preferred to match the focus of this thesis on Islamic heritage.

1.6 Existing research

Recent years have seen a profusion of cultural heritage studies within tourism studies, with intangible heritage increasingly taken into account. The topic of cultural heritage within tourism is currently popular, both with international travel agencies as within the affluent existing literature, characterised by a multidisciplinary nature. Studying heritage expression as a comprehensive concept including tourism is becoming commonplace in academia.[26] Furthermore, keyword occurrence of the terms 'cultural heritage', 'heritage tourism' and 'cultural tourism' doubled in the period 2016-2023, compared to 1994-2015. The keyword

[21] Zawawi et al., "Halal and Tourism," 18-19.
[22] Halkias et al., "Halal Products," 4-5.
[23] Halkias et al., "Halal Products," 4-5.
[24] Adie, "Marketing Europe," 158.
[25] Adie, "Marketing Europe," 158-159.
[26] Douglas S Noonan and Ilde Rizzo, "Economics of Cultural Tourism: Issues and Perspectives," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 41, no. 2 (2017): 95-96.

occurrence of 'intangible cultural heritage' was almost nine times as high in the period 2016-2023 compared to 1994-2015.[27]

In Spain cultural heritage tourism sprouted in the 1980s, followed by a rise in academic research of the phenomenon, highlighting the importance of cultural heritage in tourism studies. Especially Andalusia is often studied for the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism, due to its outstanding historical heritage and the promotion thereof by public and private institutions. Cultural heritage tourism in Spain is widely recognised in literature to be essential for the development of tourism, and the maintenance and promotion of cultural heritage.[28] Cultural heritage tourism in Italy is also well-researched within academia. Whereas Italy is rivalled as a beach location by other destinations such as Greece, the consensus is that Italy's unique selling point in tourism remains its cultural heritage, with its historical sites and cultural heritage. This stimulates investing in historical and cultural heritage, communicating Italian identities to the world as an attraction.[29]

A bibliometric analysis done in 2025 on 258 articles in Scopus (a scientific abstract and citation database) from the past three decades indicates that, although on the rise, research on HT specifically remains relatively rare since its first appearance in 1997. The main body of this research is being conducted in Muslim-majority countries, and also has Muslim majority countries as its subject. In recent years the distribution has started to spread out to non-Muslim majority countries, nevertheless remaining an uneven distribution. Spain gets a mention in the list of rare non-Muslim majority countries with HT research, being responsible for 10 articles. For comparison: Indonesia is leading with 101 articles on HT and Malaysia with 73; 10 articles derive from the UAE and no articles from Italy.[30] This concurs with another bibliometric analysis from 2023 indicating a similar increase on HT publications, with 304 publications in English on Scopus from 2013 till 2023. Where in 2013 one publication appeared on the topic, in 2023 the number was 57, as shown in Appendix I figure 5.[31] Importantly, the authors consider treating HT as a separate and significant entity within tourism studies to be a trend of the last decades. They conclude that the connection between heritage tourism and HT is lacking sufficient research and deserves to be investigated.[32] Both studies are limited by English language results on Scopus. There are no English analyses available regarding the state of art of research into IHT.

For my research, the way IHT presents itself in Spain and Italy is of importance. I found no research comparing Spain and Italy on IHT, except for Adie's chapter "Marketing Europe to Islamic Heritage Tourists" in *The Routledge Handbook of Halal Hospitality and Islamic Tourism*, where national tourism websites for several European countries including Spain and

[27] Jaime José Orts-Cardador et al., "Heritage Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis over Three Decades (1994-2023)," *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites* 55, no. 3 (2024): 1169.
[28] Juan J. García del Hoyo and Celeste Jiménez de Madariaga, "Tourist Flows and Protection of Cultural Heritage in Andalusia (Spain): An Econometric Analysis with Panel Data," *Tourism Economics: The Business and Finance of Tourism and Recreation* 31, no. 5 (2025): 1032; 1036.
[29] Nobuko Kawashima, "Introduction: Recent Growth of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Japan and Italy," in *Cultural Heritage in Japan and Italy*, eds. Nobuko Kawashima and Guido Ferilli (Springer, 2024), 5.
[30] Lalu Supardin et al., "A Bibliometric Analysis of Halal Tourism: Future Research Agenda," *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 16, no. 3 (2025): 573-574; 580-581.
[31] Chariyada Chantarungsri et al., "Mapping the Landscape of Halal Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 1 and 6.
[32] Chantarungsi, "Mapping Landscape," 13.

Italy are compared. Spain was found to be the only one marketing itself as a destination to Islamic heritage tourists.[33] There are some studies available regarding the perception of Spain as an Islamic heritage destination and the experience of Muslims that visited Spain.[34] I have not found any other studies regarding the online offer of IHT available for tourists in Spain and Italy.

1.7 Research questions

The apparent paradox between online availability of IHT in Spain and in Italy, for which I could find no existing academic discussion, prompted the research question of this thesis: *how do IH Spain and IH Sicily compare in terms of online representation of IHT and collective memory of their Islamic histories? How can the differences be explained according to Social Identity Theory?*

1.8 Theoretical framework and methodology

Comparing social constructs such as HT and IHT makes more sense when social identity is considered as an important actor. This thesis applies the Social Identity Theory (SIT)[35] as a defining factor in the case studies of collective memory of Islamic heritage and IHT tourism in IH Spain and IH Sicily. SIT is a prevalent social-psychological theory. It explains how individuals form social identities through automatic and subconscious categorisation of others and themselves into social groups, guided by existing stereotypes and beliefs and othering. Not all group memberships become part of one's identity, only those that are salient and personally meaningful, often triggered by specific social contexts or the presence of other groups.[36] As identification with one's ingroup increases, it fosters a sense of superiority over outgroups, leading to the ingroup-outgroup bias. This mechanism enhances the psychological well-being and self-worth of ingroup members, making it a self-enforcing mechanism.[37] SIT's emphasis on situational and spatial triggers makes it a useful framework for understanding social identity in tourism, particularly in heritage-rich regions like IH Spain and IH Sicily.[38]

To analyse SIT in IHT the term collective memory is used throughout this thesis, referring to the recalling and reproduction of a collective past according to the present. In a tourism context it refers to the activation and interpretation of a collective memory, triggered by situational and spatial triggers through the unique symbolism of a tourist attraction. The term acknowledges the emotional bias towards the present of tourists when experiencing history. The narrative of collective memory is not automatically an accurate representation of history, as it is indicative of the behaviours and attitudes of group members in a certain time and place. Thus collective memory as an ingroup-outgroup indicator is perpetually evolving, with cultural

[33] Adie, "Marketing Europe," 157-158.
[34] See Alfonso Vargas-Sánchez and María Moral-Moral, "Halal Tourism Experiences: The Challenge of Diversity and Innovation," in *Handbook on the Tourist Experience*, eds. Dora Agapito et al. (Edward Elgar, 2022), 247.
[35] Donelson R. Forsyth, *Group Dynamics* (Cengage Learning, 2019): 83-85.
[36] Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*, 83-85.
[37] Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*, 88.
[38] See Chapter 5 Social Identity Theory (SIT) applied for an elaboration. See Chapter 3 "Inclusion and Identity" in *Group Dynamics* by Forsyth, for a general introduction to the theory and its placement within social psychology. See "Tourism and Social Identities: Introduction" in *Tourism and social identities: Global Frameworks and Local Realities*, by Burns and Novelli, edited by Burns, Peter M., and Marina Novelli, Routledge, 2006, for the importance of social identity in tourism studies.

heritage being its main mode of transition. Tourists have been found to contribute to the continuing process of passing down collective memory by experiencing history at cultural heritage sites.[39]

As a psychologist ánd a student of Middle Eastern studies I apply my expertise to researching Islamic heritage tourism. There is no academic precedent of SIT being applied in this specific context, but SIT is a heuristically successful theory, universally applicable to situations involving groups of people.[40] Identity formation is essential to the creation of collective memories of Islamic history and heritage. SIT, with its ingroup-outgroup bias, is a useful framework to interpret these collective memories for IH Spain and IH Sicily, as well as their online IHT presence.

This thesis analyses the services and cultural heritage that are available for a specific type of tourist (Muslims) interested in a specific type of tourism (Islamic heritage tourism). This will be done through the comparison of two case studies (IH Spain and IH Sicily). Their Islamic histories are studied through a compact literature review, followed by a more extensive investigation into the collective memory of those histories from the 19th century to the present time. An online content analysis is applied to the presence of organised tours aimed at Muslims and focussed on Islamic heritage. The sampling of online content includes tour operators, tourism websites and travel blogs. It was exclusively performed online and in English. This potentially offers a skewed image of the IHT sector of the case studies, as it does not take offline options or results in Spanish, Italian, Arabic or other languages of importance into account. It is further limited by the fact that it is an individual analysis. Search results were probably influenced by algorithms and search engines. The search engines used were Google and DuckDuckGo. The number of websites analysed is 35. Rather than exhaustive, results are to be regarded as indicative of a certain online status quo regarding organised IHT in Spain and Italy.

1.9 Outline

This thesis continues with four chapters. Chapter 2 (Muslim tourism: the potential) outlines the potential as well as differences in the online presence of IHT for IH Spain and IH Sicily. To explain this difference, I turn to the historical trajectories of the case studies from the 19th to the 21st century in Chapter 3 (The collective memory of al-Andalus) and Chapter 4 (Echoes of Islamic Sicily). Chapter 5 (Social Identity Theory applied) offers a comparative analysis, applying SIT to the collective memories of al-Andalus and Islamic Sicily and IHT. This leads to the conclusion (6) where I intend to explain to satisfaction how the differences in IHT between IH Spain and IH Sicily can be explained through a combination of practical circumstances, collective memory and SIT.

[39] Huizhi Zhou, John Ap, and Huijun Yang, "An Exploration of Collective Memory in the Tourism Context," *Journal of China Tourism Research* 20, no. 3 (2024): 679-680.
[40] Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*, 83-85.

2. Muslim tourism: the potential

2.1 The relevance of Muslim tourists in the industry

Muslims are adherents to the Islamic faith, and in this thesis the term is used in two specific contexts: historically, to refer to the Islamic rulers and inhabitants of al-Andalus and Sicily, and contemporarily, to refer to the tourists of IHT. Muslim is favoured over other common terms such as Arab. In discussing historical al-Andalus and Sicily, the terms Muslim and Arab are often used interchangeably, which can lead to inaccuracies. Historian Richard Hitchcock notes that around 700, most Arabs were Muslims, but not all Muslims were Arabs.[41] This extends to current times. Most inhabitants of the Arabic speaking world are Muslim, but the majority of the Muslim population lives outside of the Arabic speaking world, notwithstanding other significant populations, like the Jewish and Christian.[42] This thesis puts the Muslim tourists central in IHT, allowing for interpretation through SIT and its mechanism of social identification and ingroup-outgroup bias.

In 2024, the Muslim population hovers around 2.12 billion people, which is 26.2% of the world population. It is anticipated to rise to 2.47 billion by 2034, which would be 28.1% of the world population.[43] Furthermore, the global middle class is expected to rise to 5.3 billion by 2030, with 88% of new members from Asia Pacific countries, many of which have Muslim majorities, such as Indonesia and Iran.[44] With over 205 million Muslims in Indonesia alone,[45] the increasing number of Muslims in the middle and upper middle class – demographics typically able to afford travel – suggests a continued growth in the potential for Muslim tourism in the coming years. In regard to potential destinations, the Pew Research Center notes that 52% of Christians reside in countries outside the top 10 with the largest Christian populations, compared to 35% of Muslims. In absolute terms, there are 1.2 billion Christians and 609 million Muslims living in countries not in their religion's top 10, indicating that Muslims are less dispersed than Christians.[46] This concentration enhances potential destinations for Muslim tourists.

International tourism departing from the Middle East is also steadily increasing.[47] As a significant part of the Middle Eastern population is Muslim, this means a steady growth of Muslim tourists from this region looking for international destinations to visit. Interestingly

---

[41] Hitchcock, *Muslim Spain,* 8.
[42] "Muslim Majority Countries 2025," *World Population Review*, https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-majority-countries, consulted 10 August 2025.
[43] "Global Muslim Travel Index" (GMTI), *Mastercard Crescent Rating,* rapport (May 2024): 26, https://www.crescentrating.com/, consulted 14 February 2025.
[44] "Developments and Forecasts of Growing Consumerism," *European Commission*, 27 September 2018, https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/topic/growing-consumerism/more-developments-relevant-growing-consumerism_en, consulted 19 June 2023.
[45] "Muslim Population of Indonesia," *Pew Research Centre*, 4 November 2010, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/11/04/muslim-population-of-indonesia/, consulted 19 June 2023.
[46] Jeff Diamant, "The Countries with the 10 Largest Christian Populations and the 10 Largest Muslim Populations," *Pew Research Center,* 1 April 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/01/the-countries-with-the-10-largest-christian-populations-and-the-10-largest-muslim-populations/, consulted 19 June 2023.
[47] "International Tourist Trips by Region of Departure," *Our World in Data*, 2024, https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/international-tourist-arrivals-by-region-of-origin, consulted 19 November 2024.

enough, the Middle East was the only region with an increase in international tourist arrivals in 2023 (see Appendix I, figure 6), compared with the pre-pandemic tourism numbers of 2019. The Middle East led the recovery by regions in relative terms, being the only region to overcome pre-pandemic levels with arrivals 22% above 2019.[48] Their average annual growth rate of departing tourists is higher than the global average (6.7% for pre-pandemic levels from 1995-2020, with 4.1% being the global average). With Europe continuing to be the destination with the greatest part of tourist arrivals from the world (46% in 2020),[49] and the considerable Middle Eastern Muslim population, this further illustrates the potential of the Muslim tourist for the tourism market in Europe. This specifically includes Spain and Italy, part of Europe´s top three destinations.[50]

2.2 The potential of IHT

Mastercard Crescent Rating (MCR), "the world's leading authority on halal friendly traveling", expects expenditure for the Muslim Tourism market to reach 225 million US dollars by 2028.[51] Moreover, the Muslim population is exceptionally young (see Appendix I figure 7).[52] MCR sets forth what the implications of such a young Muslim population are for tourism: "The projected increase in the Muslim population within the 21-40 age range by 2034 highlights a growing segment of independent and economically active travelers. This group is likely to seek diverse travel experiences, from leisure to business opportunities. (...) The interest in cultural and heritage tourism is likely to grow, particularly as younger Muslim travelers seek connections with their heritage and cultural identity through travel."[53]

According to MCR, Spain's tourism market has a greater compatibility with the needs of Muslim tourists than that of Italy. They measured access, communication (such as destination marketing), environment (such as faith restrictions and general safety) and services (such as prayer places, halal dining and available heritage).[54] The top 20 of highest-scoring destinations are all part of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In the top 20 of non-OIC countries however, Spain is placed fifth (Italy is not featured) and gets special mention as an emerging non-OIC Muslim friendly travel destination.[55] In the total rating, Spain is ranked 35th and Italy 58th, of a total of 143 countries taken into account.[56]

Therefore, as the Muslim population is growing it is increasingly targeted as a significant and profitable audience in the tourism segment, with destinations and tourism both inside and outside of Muslim-majority countries increasing. The rise in Muslim tourists is a driving demand for facilities that cater to their religious needs, especially in non-Islamic countries like Spain and Italy, where this infrastructure is not always developed.[57] Interest in

[48] "World Tourism Barometer: January 2024," *United Nations World Tourism Organization*, 22 February 2024, https://en.unwto-ap.org/resources/worldtourismbarometer-january-2024/, consulted 14 October 2024.
[49] Asad Mohsin et al., "Halal Tourism: Emerging Opportunities," *Tourism Management Perspectives* 19 (2016): 137.
[50] WTO, UN Tourism Statistics Database.
[51] GMTI, 1.
[52] GMTI, 26.
[53] GMTI, 27.
[54] GMTI, 35-37; 56-59.
[55] GMTI, 44; 48.
[56] GMTI, 70; 71.
[57] Adie, "Marketing Europe," 158.

IHT is likely to further increase due to three demographic reasons: the Muslim population is growing, is relatively young and contains an increasing middle class. It is expected that interest in cultural heritage will increase along with the target audience of young Muslim tourists that are interested in connecting with Islamic heritage through traveling, thus potentially increasing the interest in IHT.

2.3 Online presence of IHT for IH Spain and IH Sicily

The difference between IHT tour operators active for IH Sicily compared to IH Spain is considerable. In total 35 operators were found online, of which 34 offer tours to Spain and 8 offer tours to Italy (see Appendix II, Table 1).[58] The vast majority of these tour operators offer tours to Spain (34/35, 97.14%), with 26 out of 35 operators offering tours to Spain but not to Italy (74.29%). In contrast, the proportion of tour operators solely offering tours to Italy is 1/35 (2.67%). The proportion of tour operators that offer IHT Spain tours as well as Italy tours is 8/35 (22.86%).

Organised IHT tours to Spain and specifically Andalusia are abundantly found online and form a stark contrast with the few organised tours to Italy/Sicily, that required specific and persistent online searching in order to be found. The sample size of this individual research is too small to conduct a reliable statistical analysis regarding the significance of this difference. The sample sice of one Sicilian IHT tour is especially small and potentially low in representability. However, besides these and other limitations (see 1.8: Theoretical framework and methodology) these numbers paint a certain picture. The development of the past two years (2023-2025, the commencement and finishing of this thesis) underlines this with a slight rise of organised HT and IHT tours to Sicily, from one tour offered to three. Threefold multiplication is a significant rise in quantity, yet it remains a scarce commodity compared to the dozens of organised HT and IHT tours to Spain that are available online. Noteworthy is that the one tour that was announced in 2023, seems to have been discontinued by 2025.

2.4 "Trip with all Islamic heritage pearls!!"

For the Spanish HT/IHT tours it seems to be the norm to emphasise Islamic heritage and history in their descriptions with gusto. IHT companies offering tours to Spain, sometimes in combination with visits to Portugal and Morocco, always praise the region's Islamic heritage in their advertising,[59] such as "Trip with all Islamic heritage pearls!!".[60] Several companies

[58] For an overview of all tour operators and their destinations, see Table 2, Appendix II.
[59] Examples: (1) "Spain's most pictorial locations with all Islamic Heritage gems!!" by Spain Baraka Tours, https://spainbarakatours.com/packages/bk-g06mama01/, consulted 10th May 2023. (2) "See for yourself how over 700 years of Muslim rule left a legacy of Islamic Spain that remains today in the beautifully ornate mosques and palaces, as well as the rich local culture" by Dar el Salam, https://dstworldtravel.com/tour/spain/, consulted 23 June 2025. (3) "(…) a journey through Spain's Islamic history" and "immerse yourself in the ruins of this great civilization in the southern region of Spain, where Muslims ruled for over eight centuries" by Sabika Tours, https://sabikatours.com/destinations/al-andalus-legacy/, consulted 25 June 2025.
[60] Spain Baraka Tours, https://spainbarakatours.com/muslim-packages/, consulted 10 May 2023.

emphasise the rich historical diversity in their trip descriptions,[61] with some offering an interaction with the current local Muslim community.[62]

The two companies that offer both a tour to IH Sicily and to IH Spain have different descriptions, with one reserving an IHT emphasis for its Andalusia tour,[63] and the other for its Sicily tour.[64] Most notably, the solely-Sicily-tour-operator places itself in the Spanish tradition of colourful IHT descriptions, increasingly so in 2025 as compared to 2023.[65] Furthermore, the 2025 tour is mentioned to take place for the first time since 2022, meaning the 2023 trip never happened. Therefore, the recent increase in quantity of IHT tours in Sicily increases alongside lustrous descriptions of these tours, concurrent with the online fashion of Spanish IHT tours. Several travel agencies offering tours for Muslims with attention for Islamic Heritage do not offer tours to Italy at all, while other less obvious IHT destinations are included in their portfolio.[66] Even when they include tours to Italy or information for Muslim travellers to the country, the focus is on general touristic destinations, as well as on halal traveling.[67]

This concurs with the conclusion of Adie's 2019 case study of the online availability of "the heritage-specific tours offered by several halal and Islamic tourism companies".[68] Being offered by all three companies, Spain was the most favoured location. Italy, Portugal and Bosnia were the runner-up, with IHT being offered by two out of three of the companies. Of these two, only one included a description focussed on Islamic heritage, of which Adie notes that it "appears to have a strong Islamic heritage focus, but currently that section of their tour guide is still being completed."[69] It is striking that in 2025 the Italy/Bosnia tour is still advertised on the

[61] Example: "art, architecture, agriculture, poetry, religion, music, philosophy, science, medicine, technology, navigation, textiles, and even dining etiquette!" and "our guides will provide unique insights into Spain's deep connections with Islam both past and present" by Islamic Travels, https://islamictravels.com/tour-spain/, consulted 10 May 2023.

[62] Example: "meet the new Muslim Spanish communities, reviving this Islamic heritage of Spain, using the Moorish architecture in their houses, having olive trees, farms, gardens, and growing up vegetables and fruits, following the Muslim agriculture of Andalusia" by Ilim Tour, https://ilimtour.com/tours/andalusia-muslim-tour/, consulted 10 May 2023.

[63] "Discover the Muslim Alhambra, the crown gem of the Middle Ages" by Best Halal Trip, https://besthalaltrip.com/st_activity/alhambra-and-generalife-small-group-guided-tour-with-skip-the-line-tickets/, consulted 25 June 2025.

[64] "Embark on a soul nourishing journey through the Islamic history of Sicily (…) designed to connect you with the sacred heritage of Sicily's Muslim past" by Best Choice Tour, https://bestchoicetours.com/8-day-islamic-heritage-tour-in-sicily/, consulted 23 June 2025.

[65] Compare the 2023 description: "Panoramic Tour through the beautiful Sicilian landscapes which is rich of the Islamic History and Muslim heritage" by Muslim Legacy, https://muslimlegacy.com/pages/sicily, consulted 13 May 2023, and the 2025 description: "the island of Sicily was home to a thriving Muslim Civilization for 300 Hundred Years" and "reconnect with the great Imams of this land, the pious people, and our vibrant history in these lands," https://muslimlegacy.com/products/sicily-deposit, consulted 23 June 2025.

[66] For example, the Islamic Travels trip to Peru, where the emerging Muslim community in the central mosque of Lima is visited. Besides Incan heritage many natural sights are included in the itinerary, such as the Amazon jungle, with travellers "marveling at Allah's creation", https://islamictravels.com/tour-spain/, consulted 10 May 2023.

[67] Best Halal Trip offers nine explicit IHT tours to IH Spain, and one tour to Italy. The Italian tour has no IHT component and visits Rome amongst other locations. Interestingly enough, halal tour operators and halal travelling blogs often focus on Rome and its catholic highlights such as the Vatican and Saint Peter's basilica; https://besthalaltrip.com/st_tour/great-escape-of-italy-halal-tour-cinque-terre/, consulted 23 June 2025, https://mrandmrshalal.com/rome-travel-guide-for-muslim-travellers/ and https://muslimtravelgirl.com/readers-stories-our-experience-of-exploring-rome-as-muslim-girls-travelling-alone/, both consulted 8 May 2023.

[68] Adie, "Marketing Europe," 160: i.e. Ilimtours, Islamic Travels and Spain Baraka Tours.

[69] Adie, "Marketing Europe," 161.

homepage, yet the specific page is no longer online.[70] Interestingly, the Bosnian part of the tour featured visits to mosques, *madrasas* and other Islamic heritage sites while the Italian part was limited to Rome and other northern Italian cities, omitting Sicily altogether.[71] It remains puzzling how these locations come to be favoured as destinations over Sicily with its Islamic heritage.[72]

The numbers regarding online organised IHT tours and Adie's study leave an impression of IHT to Spain being a well-established and common tourism market. Spain's reputation as an attractive destination for Muslim tourists gained the country the 2022 Halal Travel Award,[73] around the same time it was reported that Italy by contrast lacks the infrastructure for HT.[74] The association *Italy Muslim Friendly* aims to bridge this gap by collaborating with Islamic tour operators. Unfortunately, no direct links to such tour operators and travel packages are available on their website.[75] *Daily Muslim* posted an article on the association creating the first Muslim friendly tour of Sicily, yet it also does not contain a specific description or link of this tour.[76] This is exemplary for the limited online information regarding HT and IHT on Sicily, especially when compared to Spain's substantial online presence. The market for Sicily seems to be more subject to trial and error, underlined by the online presence of some IHT tours to Sicily that are not actually taking place. The perceived risk of joining the IHT market might be contributing to the lesser degree of IHT for IH Sicily.

Some explanations of the found difference in online IHT presence can be explained by simple circumstances: the amount of heritage that is available, how well it is preserved and how easily accessible, as well the presence of other types of popular heritage. To make sure these circumstantial explanations are adequately expressed the next two chapters deal with Islamic heritage and its collective memory in IH Spain and IH Sicily. Specifically the visibility, accessibility and availability of Islamic heritage is discussed, as well as the historical narratives tourists encounter through them, as these all impact IHT while not necessarily being an explicit part of IHT tour descriptions.

---

[70] "Muslim Halal Packages & Tours," https://spainbarakatours.com/muslim-packages/, and "Bosnia & Italy Muslim Package," https://spainbarakatours.com/packages/bk-g08zami01, both consulted 24 June 2025.
[71] "Bosnia Italy Muslim Package," https://halaltours.org/packages/muslim-package-bosnia-italy-bk-g08zami01/, consulted 10 May 2023.
[72] I have reached out to the 35 IHT tour operators asking about their considerations regarding organising an IHT tour to Sicily compared to Spain, which unfortunately did not illuminate this issue. Of the 36 tour operators, only three replied (none of which offered tours to Italy or Sicily), with al-Andalus Experience and Halal Tours quoting logistic reasons for not offering tours in Sicily. No reply was received on what distinguished logistic challenges on Sicily from other destinations. Zaarvel is considering adding Sicily as a destination and planned an exploratory trip to Sicily later this year by its team. See transcripts of WhatsApp conversations in Appendix II.
[73] Arta Desku, "Spain Awarded Top Muslim-Friendly Emerging Destination of 2022," *Schengen News*, 7 June 2022, https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/spain-awarded-top-muslim-friendly-emerging-destination-of-2022/, consulted 3 April 2023.
[74] Francesco Bongarrà, "Italy Risks Missing out on Halal Tourism Boom: Study," *Arab News*, 8 October 2021, https://www.arabnews.com/node/1943876/world, consulted 3 April 2023.
[75] Italy Muslim Friendly, https://www.italymuslimfriendly.it/eng/, consulted 13th May 2023 and 23 June 2025.
[76] "*Sicily Muslim Friendly Tour*, the First Tour Package for Muslim Tourists in Italy," *Daily Muslim*, 20 August 2020, https://www.dailymuslim.it/2020/08/sicily-muslim-friendly-tour-the-first-tour-package-for-muslim-tourists-in-italy/, consulted 25 June 2025.

3. The collective memory of al-Andalus

To better understand the different IHT situations in IH Spain and IH Sicily, this chapter offers a brief historical overview of al-Andalus, followed by the aftermath of the subsequent Christian conquest. Afterwards it describes the collective memory of Islamic heritage from the 19th century till the present, as this is the era of developing national identity as well as tourism.

3.1 Al-Andalus

The Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula started in 710 and lasted till 716. It was an extension of North-African conquest under the banner of Islam, by an alliance of Arabs and peoples from the Maghreb, the latter becoming relatively more represented as the conquest moved westward.[77] Our knowledge of the conquest is hampered by the absence of contemporary sources, with 10th century anecdotal sources being the oldest surviving sources.[78] The narrative of the conquest was continuously told and retold, depending on the circumstances of the time of telling, often leading to an ambiguous historiography.[79]After the conquest Islamic dynasties followed upon each other, from the Umayyads (end of 7th century- mid 11th century) to the Almoravids (mid 11th century- 1147), followed by the Almohads (1121-1269) and the Nasrids (1232-1492).[80] Besides territorial changes (see appendix I, figure 1) the peninsula remained a geographically distinct area, bordered by mountains in the north, and by the sea in the other directions. With the Pyrenees being hard to pass, the narrow Strait of Gibraltar made sea crossings from North Africa easier than overland access from the north.[81]

The peninsula has a beneficial climate for agriculture, with the warm and moderately rainy Late Medieval Warm Period (950-1150). Under these mild circumstances cereals, olives and chestnuts increased significantly, especially from 1000 onwards, when the Muslims widely implemented agricultural and irrigational techniques.[82] This “green revolution” also included the introduction of crops such as rice, sugarcane, citrus, and hard wheat, increasing the quantity and variety of food staples. The export of which boosted further economic developments, creating an industry of textiles, ceramics, glass and leather and urban development. The capital Córdoba (Qurtuba) had 100.000 inhabitants by the 10th century, rivalled in Europe only by Constantinople.[83]

Beyond agriculture, al-Andalus flourished in science, literature, and philosophy. Astronomy, pharmacy, and botany thrived, while poetry held a central cultural role. Religious policies under the Almoravids and Almohads reinforced scholarly and spiritual institutions, continuing traditions from the Umayyads and their renowned libraries.[84] The 10th-century

[77] Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A political history of al-Andalus*. (Routledge, 2014), 3 & 5.
[78] Kennedy, Muslim Spain, 6 & 7.
[79] Nicola Clarke, *The Muslim conquest of Iberia: medieval Arabic narratives*, (Routledge, 2012), 1 & 5.
[80] See Hitchcock, Richard. *Muslim Spain Reconsidered: From 711 To 1502*, 2014 for an extensive overview of the ruling of Al-Andalus, organized clearly with each century discussed in a separate chapter.
[81] Hitchcock, “Muslim Spain”, 1-2.
[82] Antonio Blanco-González, José Antonio López-Sáez, Francisca Alba, Daniel Abel, and Sebastián Pérez. "Medieval landscapes in the Spanish Central System (450–1350): a palaeoenvironmental and historical perspective." *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015): 3 & 9.
[83] Kennedy, Muslim Spain, 106-107.
[84] Imam Ghazali Said, “The Heritage of al-Andalus and the Formation of Spanish History and Identity,” *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 68.

Umayyad caliphate is often regarded as the peak of prosperity and tolerance, where Christians and Jews were integrated into society through their special (and higher) *jizyah* tax. This image of coexistence, known as *Convivencia*, endures in collective memory.[85] The coexistence of religious groups is deemed to have resulted in reciprocal appreciation, creating a golden era of tolerance, sciences and art.[86]

3.2 *Convivencia* versus *Reconquista*

Convivencia as a multicultural heaven has proven to be a persisting myth. Christians, Jews and Muslims led deeply segregated lives, still visible in the lay-out of the cities with separate living quarters for these populations. Furthermore, the benefits of a golden age of coexistence are not exclusive to al-Andalus' *Convivencia*. These often occur in societies with multiple cultures, even, or perhaps especially, with animosity between these cultures. It is mainly a modern interpretation of al-Andalus that celebrates its diversity up to a point where it is mystified as *Convivencia*.[87]

Another part of Spanish history often interpreted through a modern agenda is the *Reconquista*, the defeat of the Muslims of al-Andalus. From the 9th to the 13th centuries, French religious and political authorities opposed al-Andalus, threatened by its power. By the mid13th century, most of the peninsula had been taken by northern Christian armies, greatly reducing al-Andalus' territory and influence (see Appendix I figure 1). In 1492 Granada, the last stronghold, fell to the Christian conquerors Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon.[88] That same year the expulsion of Jews was decreed, leading to mass migration and later remigration under conversion.[89] This created an immediate legal precedent for the Muslims, who were forced to make a similar choice between expulsion and conversion.[90] The descendants of the Muslim *Conversos (*converted to Christianity) were called *Moriscos* and continued to sustain elements of Islamic cultural heritage despite their nominal integration into Christian society.[91] Tensions rose, there were several *Morisco*-led revolts and the Inquisition hunted for elements associated with their Islamic cultural heritage, such as language, clothing, cuisine, social customs. The presence of the *Moriscos* as a minority group within the newly established Christian nation had come to be regarded as a threat to its identity. This culminated in the 1609 expulsion of the *Moriscos*.[92]

Arguably, the historical events of the revolts and expulsions marked the start of "othering" Muslims in context increasingly common over the subsequent centuries.[93] From the 16th century the concept of a unified Christian Spain consolidated, less marked by separate states on the peninsula. From the 18th century onwards these events became a trope in historical

---

[85] Said, "The Heritage of Al Andalus", 64.
[86] Diaz, "The Islam", 141-142.
[87] Darío Fernández-Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain* (Simon and Schuster, 2023), 8-9.
[88] Said, "The Heritage of Al Andalus", 71.
[89] Chris van der Heijden, *Zwarte Renaissance: Spanje en de wereld 1492-1536* (Olympus, 2008), 33-34.
[90] Roger Boase, "The Muslim Expulsion from Spain: An Early Example of Religious and Ethnic Cleansing," *7th Jewish-Muslim Annual Lecture Series* (2000): 2.
[91] José C. Carvajal, "The Archaeology of al-Andalus: Past, Present and Future," *Medieval Archaeology* 58, no. 1 (2014): 318.
[92] Boase, "The Muslim Expulsion," 3-4.
[93] Said, "The Heritage of al-Andalus," 74.

discourse as almost mythical origins of Spanish identity, concurrent with *Reconquista* narrative.[94] Some scholars even argue that the term *Reconquista* with its current connotations only became popular in the 19th century.[95] At the same time, a new interpretation of Spanish history became fashionable, opposing the *Reconquista* narrative and applying a Romantic frame of interpretation, laying the foundations of shaping the myth of *Convivencia*.[96]

In the 19th century, liberalism and its concept of national sovereignty gained influence in Spain. Rising nationalism required legitimisation of power, with history serving as a key instrument. National Catholicism was presented as the essence of the Spanish nation, juxtaposed to its Islamic past through the concept of *Reconquista*. Popular academic terminology illustrates this: the Muslim conquest is an "invasion," while the Christian conquest is a "reconquest,": implying prior legitimacy.[97] National Catholicism peaked under Franco's regime (1939-1975). His title *caudillo de la nueva Reconquista* (leader of the new *Reconquista*) is indicative of the exaltation of the Christian conquest.[98] As Spanish nationalist identity condensed during the 20th century, so did the narrative regarding its Islamic heritage, which was seen as the essential opposing force in uniting the Spaniards against the Muslims from the Middle Ages onward.[99]

3.3 *Negando la Reconquista es falso y ridículo…*

Spanish academic research of al-Andalus increased along the growth of nationalism from the 19th century onwards, eventually becoming a place to express *Reconquista* ideologies, but certainly also *Convivencia,* increasingly so after Franco's death in 1975.[100] By the 1970s, Spanish academia researching al-Andalus was well developed along its traditional lines: literature, science, archaeology, numismatics, and translation of Arabic texts. After the transition to democracy in 1978, the *Reconquista* narrative waned due to its association with Franco. New disciplines expanded the *Convivencia* perspective, including legal history, cultural sociology, gender studies, and the study of socio-religious minorities.[101] In the 20th century, academic polemics regarding Spain's Islamic tended to implement a combination of the *Reconquista* and *Convivencia* narrative, without realising their inherent contradiction.[102] Geopolitical events of the 20th century contributed to the duality of narratives. Amongst the Arab-Israeli conflict (notably from the Six Day War in 1967 onwards), Arab propaganda benefited from the *Convivencia* narrative, referring to a tolerant society for Jews and Christians

[94] Carvajal, "The Archaeology of al-Andalus," 318-320.
[95] Alejandro García-Sanjuán, "Weaponizing Historical Knowledge: The Notion of Reconquista in Spanish Nationalism," *Imago temporis: Medium Aevum* 14 (2020): 138-139.
[96] Fernández-Morera, *The Myth*, 8.
[97] García-Sanjuán, "Weaponizing Historical Knowledge," 135-139.
[98] Other examples of Francoist Reconquista symbolism are the celebration of Christian warriors such as Pelagius and El Cid, and of Isabella and Ferdinand (r. 1474–1504), incorporating the use of symbols from the monarchy of the Catholic Kings, see Alejandro García-Sanjuán, "Rejecting al-Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2018): 131.
[99] Diaz, "The Islam," 144.
[100] García-Sanjuán, "Weaponizing Historical Knowledge," 138-140; 145.
[101] García-Sanjuán, "Rejecting al-Andalus," 134.
[102] Exemplary of this is the known historian Sánchez-Albornoz' standpoint that Spanish national identity existed due to the *Convivencia*, the coexistences of cultures. At the same time al-Andalus was deemed a coincidental Muslim expression of an inherent and eternal "Spanish" identity, see García-Sanjuán, "Rejecting al-Andalus," 132.

under Muslim rule. Simultaneously there existed the academic effort to counter Arab antisemitism by debunking the myth of *Convivencia* and emphasising the hardships faced by minorities under al-Andalus' Muslim rule.[103]The 21st century witnessed a resurgence in *Reconquista* narrative, as Spanish conservatives implement it to illustrate the perceived danger of Islam [104], connected to the 9/11 and 2004 Madrid terrorist attacks and immigration from the Maghreb.[105] For example, the *Reconquista* narrative is explicitly distinguishable with the ultra-conservative right-wing political party VOX Espana[106], with phrases such as "*negando la Reconquista es falso y ridículo y demuestra muy poco amor por nuestra nación"* (to deny the *Reconquista* is false as well as ridiculous and shows very little love for our nation) in their Tweets.[107]

The veneration of the *Reconquista* narrative is not limited to right-wing organisations in Spain, as it is promoted by the National Catholic Church and prominent Catholic scholars. Even mainstream academia on occasion excludes al-Andalus from discourse on Spanish national history and identity.[108] The rejection of al-Andalus as a significant part of Spanish history is problematic as it covers over eight centuries of its history. Importantly for the tourism sector, some of Spain's most famous historical landmarks stem from al-Andalus, with the UNESCO sites of Granada's Alhambra and Córdoba's mosque creating historical and aesthetic value to Spain as a tourist destination and becoming international icons of Spanish culture.[109]

This is particularly evident in UNESCO's designation of World Heritage sites in IH Spain. Since the late 20th century, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has shaped global understandings of what constitutes World Heritage and how it should be managed. Initially focused on postwar European reconstruction, UNESCO expanded to include global cultural and natural heritage[110]. Since 2003 intangible heritage (such as rituals, craftsmanship, and oral traditions) is also included.[111] UNESCO status typically leads to increased international tourism and economic activity.[112] Taking into account that UNESCO sites are generally identified at the initiative of local communities, tourism becomes an important factor to consider within the collective memory of al-Andalus in Spain. Vice versa, to analyse IHT in this thesis, the narratives of collective memory of al-Andalus (*Reconquista* and *Convivencia)* need to be considered. Such experiences of collective memory are mediated

[103] Mark R. Cohen, "Introduction," in *Under Crescent and Cross the Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 2008), xix-xx.
[104] García-Sanjuán, "Rejecting al-Andalus," 134.
[105] Manuela Marín, "Reflexiones sobre el arabismo español: tradiciones, renovaciones y secuestros," *Hamsa: Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies* 1 (2014): 8-9; 14.
[106] VOX gained its first traction in Andalusia, as they were elected for the first time in Andalusian elections in 2018. It is currently one of the main political parties of the country, see Marc Esteve-del-Valle and Julia Costa López, "Reconquest 2.0: The Spanish Far Right and the Mobilization of Historical Memory during the 2019 Elections," *European Politics and Society* 24, no. 4 (2023): 495.
[107] Esteve-del-Valle and Costa López, "Reconquest 2.0," 496. Examples on X: https://x.com/vox_es/status/1212663682511130625 and https://x.com/vox_es/status/1117738180051124224, both consulted 8 July 2025.
[108] García-Sanjuán, "Rejecting al-Andalus," 136-138.
[109] García-Sanjuán, "Rejecting al-Andalus," 142.
[110] Ian Donnachie, "World Heritage," in *Understanding the Politics of Heritage,* ed. Rodney Harrison (Manchester University Press, 2010), 115-118.
[111] Susie West and Jacqueline Ansell, "A History of Heritage," in *Understanding Heritage in Practice,* ed. Susie West (Manchester University Press, 2010), 41.
[112] Kurtz, "Heritage and Tourism," 206.

not only by the heritage itself but also by external factors, including tour guides, museums, tourism authorities, and visitors' prior knowledge and attitudes. Surroundings trigger the saliency of particular social identities, as described by SIT. While these dynamics are addressed in Chapter 5 (Social Identity Theory applied), it is first necessary to outline the Islamic heritage still present in IH Spain, organised thematically by the narratives most likely to shape tourist experience.

3.4 Experiencing *Reconquista* in IH Spain

Islamic heritage in IH Spain is extensive, with the material heritage of al-Andalus including monumental architecture such as palaces, but also, housing, cemeteries, irrigation systems, agricultural changes to the landscape and artefacts like pottery, coins and metalware.[113] Immaterial heritage includes food culture, storytelling and festivals[114], with some arguing that the entire social system of Europe is heavily indebted to al-Andulus' society.[115]As much Islamic heritage was appropriated and altered by the Christians after their conquest of al-Andalus, these sites present (IHT) tourists with a specific narrative, lending itself to a *Reconquista* interpretation of memory where appropriation is easily framed as reappropriation, the reclaiming of something previously owned. This is illustrated by one of the aforementioned UNESCO sites, Córdoba's church-mosque (see Appendix I, figures 8 and 9).

Generally known as the mosque-cathedral (*mezquita-catedral*) of Córdoba, it was turned into a Christian cathedral after the *Reconquista*, nowadays still in use as such (see Appendix I, figure 10). Up to the late 20th century, the cathedral emphasized the interreligious heritage of the holy site and invited Muslims to pray. Although the call for prayer never sounded from the remaining minarets, and there were no Islami religious celebrations or services, this acknowledgement in word and acts of the importance of the current cathedral as an Islamic heritage site doubtlessly stimulated IHT. In recent decades the church has gravitated towards emphasizing the Christian heritage, omitting information on its Islamic heritage, shifting from a *Convivencia* to a *Reconquista* narrative. Historical legitimacy is sought in the possible Christian Visigoth foundations of the building. From 2000 onwards, it has called itself the cathedral of Córdoba in signs and leaflets in situ, instead of the mosque-cathedral. Furthermore, invitations for Muslims to come pray at the mosque-cathedral have stopped altogether.[116] Thus the case of Córdoba's church-mosque illustrates how collective memory is always in flux. No Islamic heritage will exclusively and statically through time promote one way of collective memory. Pre-Islamic Christian narratives were conceived from the 16th century onwards in what can be considered collective memory projects by the Catholic church. The transformation from the mosque of Córdoba into a cathedral has long constituted a primary example of fabrication of Spanish identity through the monumental and cultural heritage of al-Andalus. Other examples of such Christian appropriation of Islamic architecture are the Renaissance belfry of the Giralda of Seville, and Charles V"s Renaissance palace in the Alhambra of Granada.[117] The Alhambra of Granada is the best-preserved palatine city of Europe, with

[113] Carvajal, "The Archaeology of al-Andalus," 320-321; 328.
[114] Timothy, "Cultural Heritage," 3.
[115] Carvajal, "The Archaeology of al-Andalus," 322.
[116] Mar Griera et al., "Performing Heritage at Cordoba's Mosque-Cathedral," *Cultural Studies* 38, no. 5 (2024): 816-817.
[117] Said, "The Heritage of al-Andalus," 74.

exceptional architecture from al-Andalus' Nasrid period.[118] Its interior features impressive painting, with the vault and its mysterious ten male Muslim figures immediately drawing the visitor in. However, the interior painting of the complex is scattered with Christian coats of arms such as that of Isabella and Ferdinand. These Christian additions signify to visitors the *Reconquista* point of view of the Christian triumph over Islam.[119]

The Cathedral of Seville with the Giralda and the Alcázar offers a similar layered narrative (see Appendix I, figures 11-13). The Giralda, once the minaret of the Almohad Mosque, was later adapted into a Christian bell tower. The Alcázar was originally built as an Almohad and later Abbabid palace from the 10th-11th century. After the Christian conquest of Seville in the 13th century Gothic and Renaissancistic layers were added to the building, resulting in the building currently being an intermingle of styles.[120] The Christian appropriation of Islamic buildings after the *Reconquista* also happened on a large scale with smaller and less prominent sanctuaries. In fact, many fortresses (*alcazáres*) and citadels (*alcazabas*) from al-Andalus are scattered throughout IH Spain, with most including Christian churches or chapels.[121] Other UNESCO listings with a prominent *Reconquista* experience for tourists are the walled towns of Cuence and Cácares, former fortresses on the outposts of al-Andalus.[122] With these towns still being inhabited, the subsequent Christian layers of heritage such as churches are extremely visible for visiting tourists.

In intangible Islamic heritage in IH Spain tourists are likely to encounterthe *Reconquista* narrative as well. Annual festivals and processions are prominently represented, featuring an explicit *Reconquista* narrative. The *Romerías* are a festive pilgrimage where the statue or painting of a Saint is carried to a sanctuary, accompanied by merry pilgrims, music, dancing and other festivities. The annual *Romería* of Andújar is reportedly the oldest, stemming from the 13th century. With over 100.000 attendés the key aspect of the celebration consists of the rescuing of Catholics from the Muslims.[123] The festivals in their current shape and scale find their origins in the 19th century. The past decades have seen a revival of discontinued festivals, the creation of new ones and an overall rise of the participation. Besides being engaging to the participants, these flamboyant spectacles are impressive to the spectators. The crowd consists of other locals, but as these festivals are promoted as the hallmark of cultural identity, they also form a main tourist attraction. Spanish tourist destinations compete with their *moros y christianos* festivals. Notably many festivals gain in popularity and scale áfter becoming a popular tourist destination. Consequently, these festivals will start to account for a significant part (1/10th up to 1/5th) of the net annual tourist revenue of the region.[124]

---

[118] "Alhambra, Generalife and Albayzín, Granada," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/314/, consulted 8 July 2025.
[119] Ana Echevarria, "Painting Politics in the Alhambra," *Medieval Encounters* 14, no. 2-3 (2008): 199.
[120] D. Fairchild Ruggles, "The Alcazar of Seville and Mudejar Architecture," *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 87.
[121] José Santiago Palacios Ontalva, "The Frontier Fortresses and Sanctuaries of al-Andalus: Reconquest, Resignification and Collective Memory in the Iberian Peninsula (Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries)," *Imago temporis: medium Aevum* (2024): 53-55.
[122]"Historic Walled Town of Cuenca," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/781, "Old Town of Cáceres," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/384, consulted 8 July 2025.
[123] Diaz, "The Islam," 156.
[124] Maria J.C. Krom, "Festivals of Moors and Christians: Performance, Commodity and Identity in Folk Celebrations in Southern Spain," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 18, no. 1 (2008): 127-128.

The widespread *Moros y Christianos festivals* are the best known. Even though they are in honor of a patron saint, they are not pilgrimages but rather communal celebrations, containing re-enactments of historical battles between the Christians and the Muslims. Many cities, towns and even villages hold annual *Moros y Cristianos* festivals. The best-known examples are the *Fallas* in Valencia and the *Día de la Toma* in Granada, celebrating the 1492 expulsion of the Muslims from their last bulwark there (see Appendix I, figure 14). These festivals are currently causing societal debates, with those against arguing that they are offensive, and suggesting replacement festivals celebrating tolerance and multiculturalism. Those pro argue that these festivals are essential to Spanish identity and history, and to change them would result in damage to Spanish tradition and pride.[125] Again, the choice for a historical narrative appears dichotomous, between *Convivencia* and *Reconquista.*

3.5 Experiencing *Convivencia* in IH Spain

The city Badajoz chose to represent the opposite historical narrative, *Convivencia*. As a response to the political tensions rising around *la Toma* in Granada in the past two decades, surrounded by the performances of both left- and right-winged statements, hosting a festival with an alternative angle towards Islamic heritage. *Almossasa Batalyos* started out as a private initiative, and has been guided by the municipality since 2007. The founding of the city by Muslim leader Ibn Marwân al-Yillîqî in 875 is celebrated, with a ludic and secular atmosphere. Even though this festival shares similarities with festivals and processions like *la Toma* such as featuring "oriental dancing and dress up" (see Appendix I, figure 15) the narrative surrounding it emphasises the *Convivencia* narrative. Al-Andalus and the living together of various cultures is explicitly included and celebrated in this version of collective memory to be experienced by visiting (IHT) tourists.

There is also tangible heritage available in IH Spain where IHT tourists can experience a *Convivencia* rather than a *Reconquista* narrative. First of all, the *Mezquita Mayor de Granada* is an interesting site for Muslim tourists. Granada has a significant Muslim population, due to both immigration and conversions. The monumental mosque was initiated by local Muslims and inaugurated in 2003. This hardly stems from the times of al-Andalus, yet it explicitly places itself within the Islamic heritage of al-Andalus by featuring similar architectural designs. It is an impressive, whitewashed mosque with an exclusive view of the Alhambra.[126] The discussion surrounding the building of the mosque paralleled the historical narratives of the *Reconquista* (by those opposing the mosque) and *Convivencia* (by those approving of it). With it now being a major landmark for Muslim tourists in Granada as well as an opportunity to interact with the local Muslim community, it displays how collective memory affects the experience of Muslim tourists. Additionally in Granada the Generalife (gardens reflecting advanced Andalusian irrigation systems and the integration of nature into architectural design) and the Albayzín (medieval Islamic quarter exemplifying Islamic principles of spatial organization and community life) are part of the UNESCO heritage list, besides the Alhambra.[127] Together they

[125] Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, "Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain," *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (2007): 863-868.
[126] Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, "Managing Muslim Visibility: Conversion, Immigration, and Spanish Imaginaries of Islam," *American Anthropologist* 114, no. 4 (2012): 616.
[127] "Alhambra, Generalife," UNESCO.

provide a touristic experience of historical al-Andalus, without the layered heritage of later Christian additions. The same counts for *Palmeral d'Elche* (a cultivated oasis with organized palm groves, demonstrating the Islamic irrigation, urban planning and agricultural productivity),[128] and *Medina Azahara* (a 10th-century Caliphate city built by the Umayyad dynasty near Córdoba as a political and cultural center). The *Medina Azahara* was destroyed shortly after its founding, and remained hidden until rediscovered in the early 20th century. The site preserves a complete urban complex, including palaces, mosques, infrastructure, and decoration, offering valuable insight into the peak of Islamic civilization in al-Andalus.[129]

Of the *alcazáres* and *alcazabas* covered by Christian architecture, some survive with remains of its old mosques, showcased as such in the cases of the *Alcabaza de Badajoz,* the *Alcabaza de Mérida* and the *Alcázar de Jerez de la Frontrera.*[130] These fortresses allow tourists to experience the expanse and military prowess of al-Andalus simulteanously with the later additions from the Christians, creating a *Convivencia* experience of heritage. This is in contrast with most of the small mosques, prayer rooms and cemeteries of Islamic fortresses that were either abandoned or completely covered by a new layer of Christian heritage. An example of this is the church of *Nuestra Señora de la Estrella* in Montiel, of which recent excavations have indicated that it was built by damaging and completely covering the underlying Islamic cemetery.[131]

The extensive national academic infrastructure on al-Andalus (see 3.3 *Negando la Reconquista es falso y ridículo…*) is connected to the established IHT infrastructure, overlapping at information centres open to the public. For example the 17th century monastery and tourist attraction *el Escorial* near Madrid, which soon after its establishment became known as housing the largest collection of Arabic documents in Europe and students of the Arabic language, which included the friars.[132] This Christian preservation and translation of Arabic documents is a clear testament to the *Convivencia* narrative, which can also be experienced in the *Biblioteca viva de al-Andalus* (the living library of al-Andalus) in Córdoba, managed by the *Fundación Paradigma Córdoba para la Convivencia* (The Foundation of Cordoba for the *Convivencia*). It is a public library hosting cultural events, situated in the city centre in a historical building (*El Palacio del Bailío*).[133] In a similar vein there is the *Museo Vivo de al-Andalus*, dedicated to the history of *Convivencia* and housed in the historical Calahorra Tower, first built under the Muslim reign of Córdoba.[134]

3.6 The middle way of *Mudejar* architecture

Beyond the *Reconquista* and *Convivencia* layers of memory, the distinct *Mudejar* style warrants attention. Derived from the Arabic *mudajjan* ("domesticated"), *Mudejar* denotes both the presence of Muslims under Christian rule and the artistic fusion of Islamic patterns with Christian architecture. By the 14th century it was recognised as a distinct cultural rather than

[128] "Palmeral of Elche," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/930, consulted 8 July 2025.
[129] "Caliphate City of Medina Azahara," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1560, consulted 8 July 2025.
[130] Ontalva, "The Frontier Fortresses," 54.
[131] Ontalva, "The Frontier Fortresses," 53-55.
[132] Daniel Hershenzon, "Doing Things with Arabic in the Seventeenth-Century Escorial," *Philological Encounters* 4, no. 3-4 (2019): 176-177.
[133] Biblioteca Viva de al-Andalus, https://bibliotecavivadeal-andalus.es/historia/, consulted 15 August 2025.
[134] Torre de la Calahorra/Museo Vivo de al-Andalus, https://www.torrecalahorra.es/, consulted 23 August 2025.

religious style, remaining to be experienced by tourists today in sites such as the Alcázar of Seville, the Santa María la Blanca synagogue in Toledo, and several monuments in Aragon.[135] It originated before the Christian conquest of al-Andalus, when several Christian rulers on the peninsula were caught between the powers of France and al-Andalus. Even when Islamic buildings were rebuilt in Christian styles, *Mudejar* persisted.[136] This hybridity makes *Mudejar* challenging to categorise within either the *Reconquista* or *Convivencia* narratives.

3.7 Unnoticed Islamic heritage

Another category-challenge is the Islamic heritage of IH Spain that often goes unnoticed as such. For example, the aforementioned small fortresses and citadels (*alcazáres* and *alcazabas,* see 3.5 Experiencing *Convivencia* in IH Spain) are scattered over a large area of IH Spain. As they were outposts along the changing territory of al-Andalus they are often not located in a tourist hub and not well known. Furthermore, they can be interpreted both as testament to *Convivencia* (the *alcabaza* in Badajoz) as to *Reconquista* (*Nuestra Señora de la Estrella* in Montiel). This is dependent on the archaeological state of the site as well as its provision of information.

Amongst other things, a tourist abroad often finds themselves confronted with another language and cuisine. The language and cuisine of IH Spain are both indebted to its Islamic heritage, yet will only be noticed by tourists as such if this information is provided. Many words in Spanish and Andalusian find their origin in Arabic words, like the Spanish sounding name *Mudejar* coming from the Arabic *mudajjan.*[137] The Andalusian linguistic landscape is heavily influenced by Arabic, which is known to be used on road signs, street names, and public signs, in particular in Córdoba and Granada.[138] Besides these encounters, toponymy would arguably be one of the language areas that a tourist will be interacting with the most. The south of IH Spain has the most significant Arabic fingerprint on its place names, with noteworthy examples such as Almería (from *al-miraya*, watchtower), Albufera (from *al-buhayra*, lagoon), Alcázar (*al-qalʿa*, fortress) Guadix (*wadi ash,* valley of Ash) and Guadalquivir (*al-wadi al-kabir*, the great river valley), with hydronyms being strongly represented, due to the many enterprises of the Muslims in irrigation and agriculture.[139]

Irrigation and agriculture of al-Andalus had a lasting influence on the Spanish landscape. Sometimes this information is explicitly provided, as with the *Palmeral d'Elche*. However often it will go unnoticed as being Islamic heritage, as with the orange trees. They were originally brought from North-Africa and planted in gardens, courtyards and streets for its vibrant colour and smell, and they have become iconic to the touristic image of Spain. Alongside the development of irrigation and agriculture the Islamic rule brought many new crops and spices that have become exceedingly common in its cuisine. Few tourists will venture into Spain without tasting some of its famous rice dishes, like paella. The integration of rice into the agriculture and cuisine of the Iberian Peninsula can be attributed to the Muslims of al-

[135] "Mudejar Architecture of Aragon," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/378, consulted 01-03-2025.
[136] Said, "The Heritage of al-Andalus," 70-72.
[137] Said, "The Heritage of al-Andalus," 71.
[138] Said, "The Heritage of al-Andalus," 64.
[139] A. Vakhidova, "Traces of Arabic in Modern Toponymy," *Академические исследования в современной науке* 4, no. 25 (2025), 176-177.

Andalus.[140] Another Andalusian classic, that of the cold soup, also finds its roots in the times of al-Andalus. A refreshing soup made of almonds (another crop introduced by the Muslims), garlic, bread, olive oil and vinegar was traditionally made to nourish the grape and olive pickers. Today this is still a common dish, with white grapes added on top and called *ajo blanco*.[141] Among the plants, seeds and spices that found their way into the Spanish cuisine are: spinach, aubergine, asparagus, ginger, dates, hazelnuts, walnuts, almonds, black pepper, coriander, cloves, cinnamon and saffron (also essential to paella).[142] In addition, the fashion of the courts of al-Andalus is responsible for the currently customary order of serving food: first cold appetizers, then soup, followed by fish, poultry and red meat, ending with sweets. This was opposed to the Christian medieval custom of the peninsula at the time of serving sweet, savoury, hot and cold dishes interchangeably.[143]

Culture develops dependent on previous heritage. Regarding IHT, visitors of Granada's Alhambra, Córdoba's Mezquita, or the irrigation systems will leave with a vibrant impression of al-Andalus' heritage.[144]

3.8 The presence of other heritage

As unnoticed Islamic heritage has been discussed within the framework of Spain´s cultural heritage tourism sector, so should the fact that there is also heritage present from other historical times, salient and functioning as tourist attractions as well. There are many Roman remains in Spain, such as the Roman walls and aqueducts of Córdoba and the bridge over the Guadalquivir River.[145] Catholic heritage plays a prominent role within cultural heritage tourism, with Renaissance and Baroque architecture such as the monumental ensembles of Ubéda and Baeza in the north of Andalusia.[146]

As time is limited for tourists, these destinations compete for attention from those culturally interested. However, as Islamic heritage is an established part of Spain's cultural tourism image, this competition does not put its continuation on the line. IHT tourists will inevitably be confronted with this other historical heritage, yet they will often be experienced tied to the historical narratives of al-Andalus: Roman stone (columns and buildings) was often appropriated during Islamic times, as a symbol of power legitimisation and consolidation. Baroque churches are also intrinsically tied to the past of al-Andalus, built over its important (religious) sites, and often in the *Mudejar* fusion style.[147]

Concluding, IH Spain contains a wide array of Islamic heritage that is to be utilized by IHT tour operators. The heritage in question differs in regard to the collective memory it propagates (*Reconquista* versus *Convivencia*), in regards to noticeability for tourists and in competition from other kinds of historical heritage. It should be noted that conceptions regarding the interpretation of heritage are always in flux. Many sites have a simultaneous

[140] M.J. Sevilla, *Delicioso: A History of Food in Spain* (Reaktion Books, 2025), 46.
[141] Sevilla, *Delicioso,* 54.
[142] Sevilla, *Delicioso*, 46; 71.
[143] Sevilla, *Delicioso,* 46.
[144] Said, "The Heritage of al-Andalus," 66-67.
[145] Ann Christys, "'Made by the Ancients': Romanness in al-Andalus," in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds. W. Pohl et al. (De Gruyter, 2018), 385.
[146] "Renaissance Monumental Ensembles of Úbeda and Baeza," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/522, consulted 15 July 2025.
[147] Said, 'The Heritage of Al Andalus," 74.

potential for both narratives. The narrative that is most felt will ultimately depend on the provided information combined with the salient social identities of IHT tourists. The next chapter sets out Sicily's Islamic heritage in a similar manner and concludes with a comparison of the availability of Islamic heritage for IHT in IH Spain and IH Sicily.

4. Islamic echoes in Sicily

The previous chapter highlighted how the collective memory of al-Andalus is juxtaposed in *Reconquista* and *Convivencia*, which in turn influences the experience of IHT in Andalusia. This chapter starts with a brief history if Islamic Sicily and continues to describe its collective memory from the 19th-21st century, when national identity developed alongside tourism, relevant for analysing IHT in IH Sicily through SIT, to take social identity into account.

4.1 Islamic Sicily

From the establishment of Muslim rule over Ifriqiyya with the fall of Carthage in 698 CE, Sicily became a regular goal for Muslim raiders. The island's strategic position at the heart of the Mediterranean offered control over vital sea routes. Raids were not merely opportunistic or piratical but part of a long-term effort to bring Sicily into the Islamic sphere.[148] The Islamic presence in Sicily began in earnest in 827 with the Aghlabid invasion. Palermo (Balarm) was established as the capital, and by the early 10th century, Sicily had become a key strategic asset in the Mediterranean.[149] The Islamic conquest brought significant change including new administrative structures. Churches were converted into mosques, but Christian and Jewish communities retained religious and legal autonomy. Though they paid higher taxes, conversion was not enforced. Islamic Sicily became a dynamic cultural and economic centre in the central Mediterranean.[150]

The Shi´a Fatimid dynasty succeeded the Sunni Aghlabids in the 10th century and ruled Sicily until the mid-11th century. Due to their naval dominance their territory reached across North Africa, the Red Sea, and parts of the Levant. Trade intensified, reflected in a range of historical sources, from business correspondence to the famous Islamic geographical texts and cartography from this time. Sicily and southern Italy saw a boost in production, particularly in linen and silk, and a diversification of coinage, signalling a broader monetary and economic shift.[151]

By the time the Normans assumed control of Sicily during the 11th century, Islamic cultural and political structures were already deeply rooted on the island. Rather than dismantling them, the Normans built upon this legacy.[152] Muslim communities continued to live under Norman rule more or less according to the same conditions that non-Muslims had lived under Islamic dominance.[153] The Norman stance toward Sicily's Islamic heritage went beyond tolerance to deliberate reverence. Norman king Roger refused to join the First Crusade or impose conversion, while Muslim and Greek culture received continuous courtly support; Arabic was used alongside Greek, Norman-French and Latin.[154] Arabic served as a

[148] Anneliese Nef, "Byzantium and Islam in Southern Italy (7th–11th Century)," *A Companion to Byzantine Italy* 8 (2021): 202-203; 207.
[149] Nef, "Byzantium and Islam," 206; 209-210.
[150] Denis Mack Smith, Denis Mack. *A History of Sicily. Vol. II Medieval Sicily: 800-1713*. Ghatto & Windus, 1968, 3-6.
[151] Nef, "Byzantium and Islam," 212-215.
[152] Giovanni Curatola ed., *Eredità dell'Islam: arte islamica in Italia* (Silvana, 1993), 183.
[153] Francesca Maria Corrao, "The Memory of Oblivion: Italian History and the Lost Memory of Arab Influence on Medieval Sicily," in *Claiming History in Religious Conflicts* (Schwabe Verlag), 284-286.
[154] Smith, *A History of Sicily*, 17-18.

governmental language for over a century after Norman conquest.[155] Expression of power followed Islamic tradition: coins and official seals were aniconic and multilingual seals, and interiors and ceremonial garments were inscribed in Arabic.[156] Such dependence on Islamic craftsmanship, administration, and symbolism highlights how Norman rulers appropriated the prestige of Sicily's Islamic past to legitimise their own power.[157]

4.2 Collective memory of Islamic Sicily

The turbulent first half of the 19th century saw multiple Italian movements for independence, culminating in the *Risorgimento* of 1861 where Italy was unified under the Kingdom of Italy. *Risorgimento* became a potent symbol in political discourse, used as a legitimization of power both for the Italian nation-state as its monarchy, resulting in its collective memory becoming myth-like. *Risorgimento* refers to a "re-rise", with the suffix indicating there is a possibility to gain something previously lost (comparable to the term *Reconquista*).[158] From the start of the 19th century, scholars dedicated their work to the ideal of the Italian nation. As history is a key legitimizer of power historical academia boomed, including research into Islamic medieval Sicily, regarded as an historical era explicitly separate from the subsequent Norman rule and peaking before Italy's unification. This was probably due to widespread antiroyalist sentiments, as emphasizing the glory of Muslim rule diminished the historical legitimacy of a Christian monarchy. However after the establishment of the monarchy royalist sentiments prevailed. As history became integrated with national identity certain eras were emphasized and others neglected. This was marked by a glorification of Roman heritage and an exploration of common Christian heritage. Eventually Islamic heritage came to be regarded as something exotic and outside of the national identity framework. Arab elements of Sicilian history became increasingly regarded as an integrated part of Norman legacy and monuments.[159]

The merge of Arab and Norman heritage would come to be regarded as part and parcel to historical Sicilian identity. Research into the Muslim rule separately became stripped of its *raison d'être* as the prevailing paradigm of nationalism continued on into the 20th century. Italy entered the colonial phase and occupied Libya (1912) and more exotic "oriental" artefacts became fashionable. On a IHT level in Sicily this was noticeable as the Arab hall in Palermo's archaeological museum, already increasingly including Norman heritage, was now filled with trophies from colonies. Over the course of the 20th century the Sicilian Arab collection would fade into oblivion.[160]

Popular culture under Mussolini (fascist dictator from 1922-1945) was characterised by a symbolic appropriation of the past, the main symbols being that of the continuation of the glorious Roman empire and of the heroism of the *Risorgimento*.[161] Practically this decreased the representation of Islamic Sicily in collective memory, as due to the intense focus on Roman

[155] Croce, *The Chivalric Folk Tradition*, 40.
[156] Vernon, "Dressing for Succession," 109-110.
[157] Smith, *A History of Sicily*, 8 ;11-12.
[158] Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, "Resurrections and Rebirths: How the Risorgimento Shaped Modern Italian Politics," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 22, no. 3 (2017): 291-293.
[159] Silvia Armando, "The Role and Perception of Islamic Art and History in the Construction of a Shared Identity in Sicily (ca. 1780–1900)," *Memoirs of the American Academy* 62 (2017): 5-6; 34.
[160] Armando, "The Role of Islamic Art," 34.
[161] Forlenza and Thomassen, "Resurrections and Rebirths," 298.

heritage the subsequent medieval history received less attention. Ideologically the narrative of convergence of Arab and Norman heritage concurred with the lines of *Risorgimento* in academics, reinforcing it in collective memory. Palermo's Archaeological Museum became entirely dedicated to ancient collections. By the end of WOII most of its heritage was put to storage or dispersed.[162]

In post-war Italy *Risorgimento* remained as a narrative, symbolising hope and a fresh start after the destruction of the war.[163] From the 1960s onwards the *Risorgimento* narrative lessened, as it was associated with the nationalism of the fascist rule. Identity was now formed on an international scale against the backdrop of the Cold war, after which the *Risorgimento* narrative resurged again, with nationalism regaining traction from the 1990s into the present.[164] Although it is impossible to study medieval Sicily without considering the fusion of two cultural traditions, the last two decades have seen a rise of academic voices critical of the representational balance of the two. The Arab-Norman narrative of heritage typically favours the Normans as the most dominant contribution to the cultural convergence, at the expense of the Islamic past and according academic research.[165] Research into early social relations between Christians and Muslim has surged, having become a hot topic of research amidst current issues surrounding migration into Italy. This recent vein of scholarship aims to provide a positive example of the living together of the two cultural groups of Christians and Muslims (somewhat similar to the *Convivencia* narrative of Spain).[166] In the following segment Sicily's remaining Islamic heritage is thematically organised:reflecting the Arab-Norman framework associated with *Risorgimento* or reflecting unnoticed testaments to Sicilian Islamic heritage.

4.3 *Risorgimento* in Arab-Norman heritage

The presentation of Sicily's Islamic heritage is still mainly organised according to the Arab-Norman framework, as indicated by the UNESCO listings of tangible heritage of the island. UNESCO has included a serial site on Sicily on its World Heritage list featuring secular and religious Arab-Norman heritage. None of these listings are purely Islamic sites, all are a testament of the fusion of Arab-Norman heritage. This indicates the point of view by local communities, as they are responsible for the selection of proposed UNESCO heritage, as well as the common Italian collective memory of *Risorgimento* and its associated framework of combined Arab-Norman heritage. Out of the nine sites that are included, seven are located in Palermo. These seven consist of two palaces (the royal palace, with its Palatine chapel, and the Zisa palace), three churches (the church of *San Giovanni degli Eremiti*, the church of *Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio* and the church of *San Cataldo*), a cathedral (Palermo cathedral) and a bridge (Admiral's bridge). Two structures are included in the serial site outside of Palermo: Monreale's cathedral and Cefalú's cathedral. On top of that, the churches of *San Giovanni degli Eremit*i, of *Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio* and the Monreale Cathedral are appointed National Monuments.[167]

---

[162] Armando, "The Role of Islamic Art," 33-34.
[163] Forlenza and Thomassen, "Resurrections and Rebirths," 302.
[164] Forlenza and Thomassen, "Resurrections and Rebirths," 308-309.
[165] Nuha Alshaar, *Muslim Sicily: Encounters and Legacy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 3-4.
[166] Alshaar, *Muslim Sicily*, 7.
[167] "Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalú and Monreale," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1487/, consulted 20 august 2023.

The royal palace (*Palazzo Reale di Palermo*) was completed in 1149. It is known as a prime example of Arab-Norman fusion architecture, with features like marble inlay *cosmati* floors[168], and Fatimid-inspired mosaic designs with complex geometrical patterns and the crossing bands, and a richly decorated *muqarnas* ceiling with carved protrusions and inlets forming a repeated pattern in the Palazzo´s chapel *Capella Palentina*.[169] Similar Arab influences appear in the other eight UNESCO-listed sites across including gardens, *iwans* (three-walled alcoves), and fountains. The *iwan* of the Zisa palace is a clear example of Arab influences with its muqarnas ceiling and design of geometrics and palm trees (see Appendix I, figures 16 and 17).[170] Norman decorations and inscriptions of monumental buildings are heavily inspired by Islamic traditions, with many Muslim artists responsible for their creation,[171] such as the inscriptions in the *Capella Palentina* (see Appendix I figure 22), and at *la Cuba* (see Appendix I figure 23), built by the Normans as an imitation of *la Zisa*.[172]

An example of architecture within the Arab-Norman narrative of heritage that is not a UNESCO site is the 12th century Byzantine church in Castelvetrano, the SS. *Trinità di Delia*. Like *San Cataldo*, *San Giovanni degli Eremiti* and *la Cuba*, it is a tribute to Fatimid building style with its symmetry and raised dome (see Appendix I, figures 18-20), as well as to fusion architecture: Normans building Byzantine churches in Islamic style.[173]Islamic heritage can also be found outside the Palermo region. The Norman 13th century *Castello Maniace* in Ortigia is built in a style and layout comparable to the many *ribats* (Islamic forts) that were scattered on the Sicilian and North-African coasts at the time. It might have even been used as a mosque for the Muslim troops of Norman armies. Islamic inscriptions have been found on the interior walls, see figures 24 and 21, Appendix I.[174]

The *Risorgimento* narrative is also articulated in intangible Islamic heritage of Sicily, where the Muslim as a stereotype appears in different forms of storytelling. The most eye-catching example are the *Teste di Moro* (see Appendix I, figure 25), a duo of male and female ceramic heads. The name "Moor head" (*testa di moro*) references the Muslim stereotype of the male, with its beard style, elongated eyes and ornate headscarf.[175] It is based on this tale: in Islamic Sicily a local woman falls in love with a Muslim, and a whirlwind romance commences. Upon discovering he has a wife and family back home, she murders him in a *crime passionel* and uses his severed head as a basil pot. Her thriving basil plant inspires neighbours to mimic it with

[168] Francesco Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità degli Arabi in Italia", in Gli Arabi in Italia, ed. Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato (Milan: Credito Italiano, 1979), 58.
[169] Curatola ed., *Eredità dell'Islam*, 187-190.
[170] Irene Trento and Liboria Laura Zabbia, *The Arab-Norman Civil Architecture in Palermo: Enhancement Strategies* (La Scuola di Pitagora, 2013), 2.
[171] Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Diwan* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 298.
[172] Per-Erik Skramstad, "Palermo: La Cuba," *The Wonders of Sicily*, https://www.wondersofsicily.com/palermo-la-cuba.htm, consulted 21-5-2025.
[173] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 230.
[174] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 234-235.
[175] Margaret Renata Neil and Sean C. Wyer, "'Sicily Can Be Very Seductive': The White Lotus and the Transnational 'Making' of the Mediterranean," *The Italianist* 43, no. 2 (2023): 247-248.

ceramic replicas.[176] The tale is often represented art and popular culture over time.[177] Recently the *Teste* made a noteworthy appearance in the series The White Lotus, set in Sicily. The protagonists, tourists, immediately require after their origin. After hearing the story it is concluded: "It's a warning to husbands, babe. Screw around and you'll end up buried in the garden."[178] Tourists confronted with the *Teste* on Sicily and are likely to inquire after them, due to their ubiquity as tourist paraphernalia as well as popularity with the locals, displaying them as an indicator of Sicilian identity. Whereas the *Teste* are notorious for racist associations, the locals portray them as *convivenza*, "co-existence" (similar to *Convivencia*). Recently there has been a surge in popularity of the *Teste*, due to Dolce&Gabbana incorporating it in their designs and the popularity of The White Lotus. The custom seems to have started in the 18th century, with the tradition of depicting the male with a dark skin tone having started in 20th century.[179] This concurs with the historical events of rising nationalism in Italy in the 18th and 19th centuries, followed by fascism in the 20th century, making the *Teste* part of the tradition where Islamic past is selectively highlighted to support the formation of national identity.

Every year in mid-august the *Ferragosto* festival celebrates with walking giant Mata and Grifone statues of 8 metres in a procession (see appendix I, figure 26), a tradition stemming from the 16th century.[180] Multiple cities and villages in the south attribute their foundation to Mata and Grifone.[181] The tale ends differently: the Muslim Hasan converted to Christianity for Mata, changing his name to Grifo. They live happily ever after and their many children become Messina's first inhabitants.[182]

The stereotypical Muslim further features in the Sicilian tradition of the *Opera dei Pupi*, the puppet theatre, was included on UNESCO's ICH list in 2001[183] It became increasingly popular from the 19th century onwards. When the television industry increased in the second half of the twentieth century, the popularity of the puppet theatres declined. The surviving puppet theatres focussed on a different audience: instead of catering to the popular masses aiming at the *bourgeoise*, ánd tourists. The theatre's repertoire includes: life of Christ and saints, and chivalrous, wartime and brigand stories, with the latter often including stereotypical Muslim figures.[184] In Sicilian storytelling the Muslim functions as an individual like Grifone, or as a representation of an attacking force in a procession, similar to the festivals in IH Spain (see 3.4: Experiencing *Reconquista* in IH Spain). This goes back to the 15th century, judging

[176] Neil and Wyer, "Sicily Can Be Very Seductive," 248.
[177] Originally featuring Mata and Grifone, Boccaccio adapted it in the 14th century in his *Decamerone* with other names (Lisabetta and Lorenzo), which inspired Keats' poem *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil* in the 18th century, in turn inspiring various pre-Raphaelite paintings on the subject such as "Isabella" by Millais and "Isabella and the Pot of Basil" by Waterhouse.
[178] *The White Lotus*, season 2 episode 1, 10min46-11min15.
[179] Neil and Wyer. "Sicily Can Be Very Seductive," 247-249.
[180] LoWeb Agency, "Mata and Grifone, History and Legend of the Giants of Messina," *Made in Messina*, https://madeinmessina.com/en/mata-and-griffin-history-and-legend-of-the-messina-giants/, consulted 28 August 2023.
[181] Joseph Pugliese, "Noi Altri: Italy's Other Geopolitical Identities, Racialised Genealogies and Inter-Cultural Histories," in *Literary and Social Diasporas: An Italian Australian Perspective*, eds. Gaetano Rando and Gerry Turcotte (Peter Lang, 2007), 192-193.
[182] Neil and Wyer. "Sicily Can Be Very Seductive," 247-248.
[183] Maurizio Maggi et al., "Conversation Piece: Intangible Cultural Heritage in Italy," in *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, eds. Stefano et al., 242.
[184] Sergio Bonanzinga, "Mori e Cristiani in Sicilia: tradizioni drammatiche e musicali," *Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo* 3/4 (2000): 224-225.

by a description of an Assumption procession in Palermo, featuring "Moors" prominently, racing each other.[185]

These traditions stem from Christian tradition on the island, after the Norman conquest. They clearly portray stereotypical Muslims, but are itself not direct Islamic heritage. The Muslim is always featured as "the other", with Mata being local and Grifone a foreigner, or even as the enemy in processions and puppet war stories. This collective memory of Islamic history befits the *Risorgimento* narrative, as it enforces the Christian Italian nationality at the cost of a nuanced representation of Italy's Islamic history.

4.4 Unnoticed testaments of Sicilian Islamic heritage

The UNESCO monuments on Sicily are all built under the Normans, but there are older remains purely from the Islamic period. The condition and accessibility of these non-UNESCO sites vary greatly, affecting their visibility to tourists. This is evident in Palermo's *Maredolce* and *Scibene* palaces. *Maredolce* was built in the early 11th century and now lies in the city's outskirts. Its gardens are well preserved and offer a glimpse into the intended harmony of architecture, water, and nature. By contrast, the *Scibene* palace from the early 10th century is in a severe state of decay. Its front basin and garden have been made unrecognizable by urbanization, and the upper floor, *iwan* and chapel are gravely deteriorating. Both sites are difficult to access: *Maredolce* lacks a clear pedestrian path and is hidden by buildings, while *Scibene* is nearly invisible and enclosed by urban development, making it almost inaccessible without guidance (see Appendix I, figures 27 and 28).[186]

Besides grand religious and secular buildings reminiscent of the Islamic era there are also remaining civilian structures. Village houses originally from this era share common typical elements, such as underground cisterns, bread ovens, millstones, and vaulted ceilings (see Appendix I, figure 29), which are recognised Islamic heritage, but have gone unnoticed as such for centuries.[187]

The extensive irrigation system established by Muslims in Sicily significantly transformed the island's landscape. Crops such as lemons, oranges, sugar cane, and cotton were introduced, boosting the economy. While many rivers and springs have since diminished, remnants of the Islamic irrigation system, including cisterns and waterwheels, still exist. The economy was further boosted by the innovative fishing and mining techniques, with metals, silk, and salt exported on a large scale. Islamic rule was also responsible for deforestation of Sicily, as wood was exported and the introduction of goats hindered the growth of young trees. Consequently, the olive oil industry declined in Sicily, shifting its prominence to al-Andalus and North Africa.[188] The effects of the agricultural endeavours are still present in Sicily's cuisine, with many popular ingredients such as lemon and pistache introduced under Islamic rule. The effects of irrigation and agriculture remain visible, yet without providing this information it has a high chance of going unnoticed by tourists. A good place to point this out would be Palermo's historical food markets Capo, Vucciria and Ballarò, believed to be on the

[185] Lori De Lucia, "The Exceptional History of a Black Saint in Sixteenth-Century Palermo. And Why It Matters," *Transition* 132 (2022): 64.
[186] Trento and Zabbia, *The Arab-Norman Civil Architecture*, 3-5.
[187] Samantha Desirée Santonocito, "Sustainable Tourism and Carrying Capacity in the Mediterranean Area Focus on Sicily," *3rd IRT International Scientific Conference* (2009), 406.
[188] Smith, *A History of Sicily*, 7-9.

same site as the Islamic markets used to be held. The manner in which the goods are placed on the market shows an identification with Islamic heritage.[189]
Arabic has particularly left its mark on the toponymy of Sicily.[190] Tourists touring the island will be interacting with place names, many of which include "*Gibel*" (mountain) or "*Calta*" (castle) or variations thereupon. Another example is Marsala, meaning harbour of Allah/Ali. In our time hundreds of Arabic words and expressions are still used in Sicily.[191] For example, the word "douane" is the Latinized form of the Arabic word *diwan,* the office of finances and tenure in Sicily.[192] Notably, many water sources have kept their Arabic names throughout the centuries.[193] Examples of these hydronyms are the river Dittaino, stemming from the Arabic name *wadi at-tin* (muddy river), and the Alcantara gorges from the Arabic *al-Qantara* (the bridge).[194] Within the Islamic heritage tourist attractions of Palermo there are also several Arabic toponyms to be found, for example *La Cuba* deriving from *qubbeh,* meaning dome,[195] and *la Zisa* coming from *al-Aziz* (the noble, the shining).[196] In the *Palazzo Reale,* Roger's richly adorned room is called *la Gioaria*, from *al-giawahariyyah* (embellished with precious stones). See Appendix I, figure 30 for its depiction of peacocks, an animal introduced to the island by Muslims.[197]

In Sicily Islamic heritage goes further unrecognised because artefacts were moved away or lost. The famous ceremonial gown of Roger II, a rare surviving medieval garment from the 1130's, made of red silk, embroidered with gold thread, gemstones and pearls, illustrates this. It cannot be researched or admired by tourists in its Sicilian context, as it resides in the Kunsthistorischer Museum of Vienna. This imagery is thought to stem from political rivalry with the Fatimids, an interesting point of view against the harmonious interpretation of Arab-Norman legacy promulgated since the *Risorgimento*. A palm is depicted between lions (Normans) standing on top of camels (Fatimids) (see Appendix I, figure 31).[198] Moreover, Palermo's Archaeological Museum (mis)placed much heritage into storage over the course of the 20th century in favour of other heritage.[199] This illustrates the lack of interest in Islamic heritage disconnected from the Arab-Norman framework of collective memory.

4.5 The presence of other heritage in Sicily

In Sicily, Islamic heritage as a tourist attraction has to compete with significant other historical heritage. As the Roman Empire became a trope of fascist symbolism, supported by vast archaeological endeavours, it became a strong association and attraction for tourists visiting

[189] Marcella Croce, *The Chivalric Folk Tradition in Sicily: A History of Storytelling, Puppetry, Painted Carts and Other Arts* (Jefferson, McFarland & Company, 2014), 12.
[190] Croce, *The Chivalric Folk Tradition*, 40.
[191] Smith, *A History of Sicily*, 12.
[192] Smith, *A History of Sicily*, 17.
[193] Smith, *A History of Sicily*, 8.
[194] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 253.
[195] Per-Erik Skramstad, "Palermo: La Cuba," *The Wonders of Sicily*, https://www.wondersofsicily.com/palermo-la-cuba.htm, consulted 21-5-2025.
[196] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 39.
[197] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 51.
[198] Clare Vernon, "Dressing for Succession in Norman Italy: The Mantle of King Roger II," *Al-Masāq* 31, no. 1 (2019): 95-96; 109-110.
[199] Armando, "The Role of Islamic Art," 33-34.

Sicily.[200] Sicily is home to iconic classical heritage like the *Villa Romana del Casale* with its famous mosaics.[201] Other Roman sites also feature ancient Greek heritage, such as the archaeological area of Agrigento.[202] Sicilian Catholic Renaissance and Baroque heritage is renowned, especially in Baroque towns of the south east of the island.[203] Thus far, although more intense, this is comparable to the competition of classical and Catholic heritage faced by IHT in IH Spain. Contrarily, IH Sicily has two other major attractions. Heritage of the Byzantine era is still present on the island and was also appropriated by the Normans. Furthermore, ever since the popularity of the Godfather films, Mafia has become a touristic trope on Sicily, accompanied by godfather/Mafia tours. Recently anti mafia tours and tourism have steadily been rising.[204] In 2025, Agrigento (a town still affected by Mafia) has even banned Mafia themed souvenirs, amidst a general call to deglamorise Mafia and lessen its international association with Sicily.[205]

Concluding, Islamic heritage on Sicily is treated differently than Roman and Mafia heritage, both historically and contemporarily. Since the 19th century under *Risorgimento* it has increasingly become a "package deal" as Arab-Norman heritage to be experienced by tourists. This is reflected in the current situation, where none of the UNESCO listings are pertaining solely to Islamic heritage, but all to the Arab-Norman fusion, with the purely Islamic heritage often going unnoticed as such for different reasons.

4.6 Comparison of Islamic history and heritage between IH Spain and Sicily

This chapter and the previous one addressed the Islamic histories and heritage of IH Spain and IH Sicily. After the defeat of Islamic Sicily and of al-Andalus , the histories took different turns. In al-Andalus the expulsions first of the Muslims and *Moriscos* caused less physical presence of people enforcing Islamic heritage, and thus less continuation. Even when taking the *Mudejar* architecture into account, the Christian Catholic monarchy by no means referred Islamic heritage to the point the Normans were prone to. Contemporary sources attest to the perceived splendour of Islamic Sicily. The merchant Ibn Hawqal praised the fertility of the lands on Sicily, and was impressed by the hundreds of mosques in Palermo. The only place he had seen more was in Córdoba. His hometown Baghdad still superseded Palermo in terms of size, yet this could be said of few cities at the time.[206] However, contemporary sources do not make a similar comparison with Córdoba to Palermo, but instead to Constantinople, as the only bigger European city.[207]

---

[200] Armando, "The Role of Islamic Art," 33.
[201] "Villa Romana del Casale," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/832, consulted 15 July 2025.
[202] "Archaeological Area of Agrigento," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/831, consulted 15 July.
[203] "Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1024, consulted 15 July 2025.
[204] Cristina Guccione and Tatiana Canziani, "Tourism Discourse Meets Migration Discourse: Godfather Promotional Websites to Sicily," in *Thinking Out of the Box in English Linguistics, Language Teaching, Translation and Terminology*, eds. K. Ackerley et al. (Padova University Press, 2023), 446-447.
[205] Rebecca Ann Hughes, "Sicilian Town Bans Mafia Souvenirs to Clean up Its Image before It Becomes 2025 Capital of Culture," *Euro News*, 26 August 2024, https://www.euronews.com/travel/2024/08/26/sicilian-town-bans-mafia-souvenirs-to-clean-up-its-image-before-it-becomes-2025-capital-of, consulted 15 July 2025.
[206] Smith, *A History of Sicily*, 7.
[207] Kennedy, Muslim Spain, 106-107.

It does not seem likely that the Sicilian Islamic architecture could rival the vast palace structures and religious monuments of al-Andalus. Firstly, Sicily was an outpost of Islamic empires elsewhere along the coast of North Africa, whereas the Islamic rule of al-Andalus was an empire in its own right. Secondly, the territory of al-Andalus is vastly bigger than that of Sicily, limited by its natural borders as an island. Al-Andalus at one point covered the entire Iberian Peninsula (see Appendix I, figure 1). With more surface area, cities and inhabitants, it is a logical assumption that al-Andalus created more heritage, and on a bigger scale. Furthermore, the Islamic rule of al-Andalus simply lasted longer (8th -15th century) than that of Sicily (7th-11th century), with the passing of time allowing for a greater establishment of heritage. It also means that the last monuments built by Muslims in al-Andalus are centuries more recent, and better preserved, predisposing IH Spain as an IHT destination over IH Sicily. The different level of 'competition' for other types of cultural heritage tourism in the areas increases this predisposition. Whereas both areas house impressive Catholic architecture (Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and even *Mudejar* styles), Sicily has other main competitive areas for cultural heritage tourism. The Roman heritage in Spain is present as a tourist attraction, but does not rival the intensity of this cultural tourism market in Italy, nor its bestowed importance by the 19th and 20th century nationalist narratives. Moreover, Sicily specifically has Byzantine heritage and a significant Mafia tourism market, which is absent in Spain.

5. Social Identity Theory (SIT) applied

To account for differences in collective memory of Islamic heritage and IHT in IH Spain and IH Sicily, SIT is applied. SIT outlines how individuals form social identities through automatic cognitive processes, starting with social categorization. This leads to the development of beliefs and stereotypes about groups, influencing both perceptions of others and self-identity. As identification with the ingroup grows, so does the need to compare the ingroup favourably against an outgroup, intensifying ingroup-outgroup bias as social identities become more pronounced. While individuals belong to multiple groups, only the most salient memberships contribute to their social identity, which becomes more meaningful as social identification increases. Triggers in specific situations can enhance the saliency of group memberships, and SIT emphasizes the importance of context in shaping social identity.[208] In tourism, the significance of place and historical context is crucial, particularly at heritage sites, making social identity a paramount factor. Applying SIT to the collective memory of Islamic Spain and Sicily, it shows how Muslims and their heritage have been alternately absorbed, rejected, or reframed in collective memory. These shifting social identities explain both historical narratives and the divergent development of IHT.

5.1 SIT and al-Andalus

After the *Reconquista*, Muslims in Spain became the outgroup, while the Christian conquerors formed the ingroup. This shift was reinforced by expulsions and the appropriation of Islamic architecture, a clear case of ingroup-outgroup bias in which Christian rulers displayed superiority by transforming mosques into cathedrals. Congruently, Christian elites embraced *Mudejar* architecture. In this instance, Islamic forms were not signs of an excluded outgroup but were appropriated to strengthen Christian ingroup identity against rival French Christians. By referencing the flourishing culture of al-Andalus, the ingroup could position itself as superior, even while Muslims themselves were marginalised after al-Andalus was conquered.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, nationalism revived the *Reconquista* as a triumph of the Catholic ingroup over the Muslim outgroup. Under Franco, this narrative was mobilised in propaganda to heighten the favourable comparison of ingroup versus outgroup. After his death in 1975, the *Convivencia* narrative reframed al-Andalus as a symbol of coexistence, now useful for the new democratic ingroup to distance itself from the fascist outgroup. Since the 2000s, terrorism and immigration resulted greater ingroup (Catholic Spaniards)-outgroup (Muslims) bias, reigniting the *Reconquista* narrative in collective memory. See Chapter 3: The collective memory of al-Andalus.

5.2 SIT and Islamic Sicily

In Sicily, Muslims were consistently portrayed as the outgroup in legends such as *Mata and Grifone* or in *pupi* theatre, where Christian heroes stood as the ingroup against foreign Muslim antagonists. Yet the Norman rulers absorbed Arab art, science, and architecture into their own

[208] Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*, 83-85.

social identity, expanding the ingroup to the Arab-Norman synthesis that still defines Sicily's most prominent heritage sites.

The *Risorgimento* altered this balance. The Italian ingroup was now defined as Catholic and national, while Islamic heritage was recast as outgroup, interesting only when tied to Norman legacy. Fascism reinforced this ingroup-outgroup bias, idealising *Risorgimento* and Roman heritage as the highest form of ingroup identity and relegating Arab contributions to the margins. This hierarchy was visible in the removal of Palermo's Arab collection, the neglect of Arab palaces like *Scibene* and *Maredolce*, and the transfer of the Norman ceremonial gown to Vienna. After WWII, political categories such as "democrat" or "communist" temporarily displaced nationalist ingroup-outgroup boundaries, opening space for Islamic heritage beyond the Arab-Norman frame. Yet since the 1990s, the resurgence of nationalism and *Risorgimento* symbolism has once again redefined the ingroup in strictly Christian and national terms, reducing Islamic Sicily's memory to its Arab-Norman layer and leaving other Islamic heritage sites marginalised. See Chapter 4: Echoes of Islamic Sicily.

5.3 SIT and IHT

Collective memory is felt through IHT. In IH Spain, Islamic heritage oscillates between the two dominant frames of collective memory. In a *Reconquista* narrative, Muslims appear as outgroup, manifested in *Día de la Toma* festivals that celebrate Christian victory, or in architectural appropriations such as the conversion of Córdoba's mosque into a cathedral and the addition of a Renaissance belfry to Seville's minaret. In a *Convivencia* narrative, however, Muslims are repositioned as ingroup, as seen in initiatives like Córdoba's Convivencia library or Granada's mosque, which explicitly welcome Muslim visitors and create opportunities for integration with local communities. This duality means that Muslim tourists may experience IH Spain either as part of the ingroup, participating in a narrative of coexistence, or as part of the outgroup, excluded by narratives of conquest and triumph.

In Sicily, by contrast, IHT is limited because the dominant ingroup has been marked by nationalism, defined by *Risorgimento* and Roman heritage, while Islamic heritage has long been placed in the outgroup. Arab-Norman sites receive recognition because they align with Norman identity, but purely Arab sites are neglected or inaccessible, going unnoticed. This selective absorption offers an explanation as to why IH Spain developed a robust IHT sector while IH Sicily did not: in IH Spain, Islamic heritage has remained central to shifting ingroup-outgroup dynamics, while in IH Sicily it has been subsumed under a Norman-Christian frame or excluded altogether. See Chapter 3: The collective memory of al-Andalus and Chapter 4: Echoes of Islamic Sicily.

6. Conclusion

The research question of this thesis asked: *how do IH Spain and IH Sicily compare in terms of online representation of IHT and collective memory of their Islamic histories, and how can the differences be explained according to Social Identity Theory?*

IH Spain has a significantly better developed IHT infrastructure than IH Sicily, as demonstrated by my research into the online presence of organised IHT tours and by relevant literature (see Chapter 2: Muslim tourism: the potential). Several practical factors contribute to this difference. Al-Andalus produced and preserved more Islamic heritage than Sicily. Whereas Islamic Sicily functioned largely as an outpost of North-African empires, al-Andalus was an empire in its own right, coming to cover the entire Iberian Peninsula. Its larger territory, population, and longer duration of Islamic rule (8th–15th century versus 7th–11th century) naturally resulted in more extensive and better-preserved monuments. In addition, while both regions boast significant Catholic architecture, Sicily faces stronger competition from other heritage markets, notably its extensive Roman heritage and the prominence of Mafia-related tourism, which has no equivalent in Spain (see Chapter 4.5: Comparison of Islamic history and heritage between IH Spain and Sicily). However, given the immense popularity of Spain and Italy as tourist destinations, and the rarity of their Islamic heritage within Europe, these factors alone do not fully account for the stark difference in IHT. To explore this further, this thesis examined the role of collective memory and social identity formation in shaping how Islamic heritage has been framed from the 19th century to the present (see Chapter 3: Collective memory of al-Andalus and Chapter 4: Echoes of Islamic Sicily).

In Spain, the competing narratives of *Reconquista* and *Convivencia* kept Islamic heritage central to identity formation. As Chapter 3 showed, expulsions and architectural appropriations cast Muslims as the outgroup versus a unified Spanish Catholic ingroup. Yet *Mudejar* architecture simultaneously re-inscribed Islamic heritage within the ingroup. This continual oscillation created ingroup–outgroup dynamics in which Islamic heritage and its collective memory would continue to be placed in the centre. As a result, monuments and traditions were preserved and ultimately integrated into the tourism product mix, specifically apparent in IHT. In Italy, by contrast, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, the *Risorgimento* narrative recast Islamic heritage as part of an Arab-Norman synthesis, subordinated to other present heritage (Roman, Catholic, and the legacy of the *Risorgimento* itself). Nationalist and fascist projects further emphasised Roman heritage as the dominant ingroup, while Islamic contributions were relegated to the outgroup. Here, as Chapter 5 on SIT clarified, ingroup–outgroup bias determined which monuments were preserved, highlighted, or neglected. This explains why Sicily's Islamic heritage became marginal, lacking a distinct infrastructure upon which IHT operators can build, and why its IHT activity remains limited compared to Spain.

There are, however, reasons to expect the IHT market in Sicily to grow. Chapter 2 already noted the exponential expansion of the global IHT sector, and my research observed a slight increase in IHT offerings in Sicily between 2023 and 2025. At the same time, Sicily appears to be diversifying its portfolio away from Mafia-related tourism, creating space for IHT to emerge as a distinctive niche. Combined with global demand, this context offers an opportunity for Sicily to position itself as home to rare Islamic heritage in southern Europe,

perhaps drawing inspiration from the Spanish IHT model. Yet, as highlighted across Chapters 3–5, collective memory and social identity are never static. Recent years have witnessed renewed emphasis on *Reconquista* in Spain and *Risorgimento* in Italy. The consequences of these resurgent narratives for the representation of Islamic heritage, and thus for the future attractiveness of Sicily's IHT product mix, warrant further research. Such research would be particularly valuable if conducted *in situ* and in languages beyond English.

In conclusion, this thesis has demonstrated that the difference between IH Spain and IH Sicily lies not only in the quantity of heritage or competition from other markets, but in the way collective memory and social identity have shaped their preservation and representation as well. This directly answers the research question: in Spain, the dynamic tension between *Reconquista* and *Convivencia* ensured Islamic heritage remained central to identity formation, leading to its preservation and integration into tourism. In Sicily, by contrast, the *Risorgimento* narrative subordinated Islamic heritage to other legacies, marginalising it in national identity and limiting its role in tourism. Thus, while circumstantial factors partly explain the divergence, Social Identity Theory (SIT) shows how identity processes fortified Spanish IHT and diminished Sicilian IHT. Meanwhile, global tourism trends and the fluid nature of social identities and collective memory narratives suggest that Sicily could increasingly reframe its Islamic heritage as a distinctive asset for future tourism development.

Bibliography

Adie, Bailey Ashton. “Marketing Europe to Islamic heritage tourists.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Halal Hospitality and Islamic Tourism*, edited by C. Michael Hall and Girish Prayag, (Routledge, 2019), 157-168.

Alshaar, Nuha, *Muslim Sicily: Encounters and Legacy.* 1st ed. Edinburgh University Press, 2024..

Armando, Silvia. “The Role and Perception of Islamic Art and History in the Construction of a Shared Identity in Sicily (ca. 1780–1900).” *Memoirs of the American Academy* 62 (2017): 5-40.

Blanco-González, Antonio, José Antonio López-Sáez, Francisca Alba, Aniel Abel, and Sebastián Pérez. “Medieval Landscapes in the Spanish Central System (450–1350): a Palaeoenvironmental and Historical Perspective.” Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies 7, no. 1 (2015): 1-17.

Bramwell, Bill, James Higham, Bernard Lane, and Graham Miller. “Twenty-Five Years of Sustainable Tourism and the Journal of Sustainable Tourism: Looking Back and Moving Forward.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 25, no. 1 (2017): 1–9.

Bellafiore, Giuseppe, *Architettura in Sicilia nelle età Islamica e Normanna (827-1194)*. A. Lombardi, 1990.

Benton, Tim and Cecil, Clementine, “Heritage and Public Memory” in *Understanding Heritage and Memory*, ed. Tim Benton (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press in association with The Open University, 2010), 7-44.

Boase, Roger. “The Muslim Expulsion from Spain: An Early Example of Religious and Ethnic Cleansing.” *7th Jewish-Muslim Annual Lecture Series* (2000): 1-12.

Boll, Jessica R. “Selling Spain: Tourism, Tensions, and Islam in Iberia.” *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 20, no. 2 (2020): 42–55. doi:10.36923/jicc.v20i2.304.

Bonanzinga, Sergio. “Mori e Cristiani in Sicilia: Tradizioni Drammatiche e Musicali.” *Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo* 3/4 (2000): 219-2140.

Bongarrà, Francesco, “Italy Risks Missing out on Halal Tourism Boom: Study,” *Arab News*, 8 October 2021, https://www.arabnews.com/node/1943876/world, consulted 3 April 2023.

Burns, Peter, M. and Novelli, Marina, “Tourism and Social Identities: Introduction” in *Tourism and Social Identities: Global Frameworks and Local Realities*, edited by Burns, Peter M., and Marina Novelli, Routledge, 2006.

Campo, Juan Eduardo. *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Infobase Publishing, 2009.

Carvajal, José C. “The Archaeology of Al-Andalus: Past, Present and Future.” *Medieval Archaeology* 58, no. 1 (2014): 318–39.

Chantarungsri, Chariyada, Nongluck Popichit, Sanasun Rugthangam, Nuanrath Wattana, Jirat Chuanchom, and Monsinee Sukmak. "Mapping the Landscape of Halal Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis." *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 2365507.

Christys, Ann. "‘Made by the Ancients’: Romanness in Al-Andalus." *Transformations of Romanness* (2018). 379-392.

Clarke, Nicola. *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia: Medieval Arabic Narratives*. Routledge, 2012.

Cohen, Mark R, “Introduction” in *Under Crescent and Cross the Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Corrao, Francesca Maria. “The Memory of Oblivion: Italian History and the Lost Memory of Arab Influence on Medieval Sicily.” In *Claiming History in Religious Conflicts*, pp. 281-295. Schwabe Verlag, 2021.

Croce, Marcella. *The Chivalric Folk Tradition in Sicily: A History of Storytelling, Puppetry, Painted Carts and Other Arts*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2014.

Curatola, Giovanni ed., *Eredità dell’Islam: Arte Islamica in Italia*. Silvana, 1993.

Diamant, Jeff, “The Countries with the 10 Largest Christian Populations and the 10 Largest Muslim Populations.” *Pew Research Center,* 1 April 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/01/the-countries-with-the-10-largest-christian-populations-and-the-10-largest-muslim-populations/, consulted 19 June 2023.

Diaz, Marta Dominguez. “The Islam of ‘Our’ Ancestors: An ‘Imagined’ Morisco Past Evoked in Today’s Andalusian Conversion Narratives.” *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 2, no. 2 (2013): 137–64.

De Lucia, Lori. “The Exceptional History of a Black Saint in Sixteenth-Century Palermo. And Why it Matters.” *Transition (Kampala, Uganda)* 132, no. 132 (2022): 54–67.
Desku, Arta, “Spain Awarded Top Muslim-Friendly Emerging Destination of 2022”, *Schengen News*, 7 June 2022, https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/spain-awarded-top-muslim-friendly-emerging-destination-of-2022/, consulted 3 april 2023.

Donnachie, Ian, “World Heritage.” In *Understanding the Politics of Heritage,* ed. Rodney Harrison. Manchester University Press, 2010.

Echevarria, Ana. “Painting Politics in the Alhambra.” *Medieval Encounters* 14, no. 2-3 (2008): 199-218.

Esteve-Del-Valle, Marc, and Julia Costa López. “Reconquest 2.0: The Spanish Far Right and the Mobilization of Historical Memory During the 2019 Elections.” *European Politics and Society (Abingdon, England)* 24, no. 4 (2023): 494–517.

European Commission. “Developments and Forecasts of Growing Consumerism”, 27 September 2018, https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/topic/growing-consumerism/more-developments-relevant-growing-consumerism_en, consulted 19 june 2023.

Fernández-Morera, Darío. *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic rule in Medieval Spain*. Simon and Schuster, 2023.

Forlenza, Rosario, and Bjørn Thomassen. “Resurrections and Rebirths: How the Risorgimento Shaped Modern Italian Politics.” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 22, no. 3 (2017): 291-313.

Forsyth, Donalson, R., *Group Dynamics,* Cengage Learning, 2019.

Gabrieli, Francesco, “Storia, Cultura, e Civilità degli Arabi in Italia”, in Gli Arabi in Italia, ed. Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato (Milan: Credito Italiano, 1979), 15-223.

García del Hoyo, Juan J, and Celeste Jiménez de Madariaga. “Tourist Flows and Protection of Cultural Heritage in Andalusia (Spain): An Econometric Analysis with Panel Data.” *Tourism Economics: The Business and Finance of Tourism and Recreation* 31, no. 5 (2025): 1031-1049.

García, Juan Vicente Navarro. “La Imaginería Festiva en Italia: Giganti e Testoni.” In *III Congreso Internacional de la Bajada de la Virgen: Santa Cruz de La Palma, 9-11 de marzo de 2023*.. Cabildo Insular de La Palma, 2023.

García-Sanjuán, Alejandro. “Rejecting al-Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain.” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2018): 127-145.

García-Sanjuán, Alejandro. “Weaponizing Historical Knowledge: The Notion of Reconquista in Spanish Nationalism.” *Imago temporis: Medium Aevum* 14 (2020): 133-162.

Griera, Mar, Avi Astor, and Marian Burchardt. 2024. “Performing Heritage at Cordoba’s Mosque-Cathedral.” *Cultural Studies* 38 (5): 815-38.

Guccione, Cristina, and Tatiana Canziani. “Tourism Discourse Meets Migration Discourse: Godfather Promotional Websites to Sicily.” *Thinking Out of the Box in English Linguistics, Language Teaching, Translation and Terminology* (2023): 445.

Halkias, Daphne, Emanuele Pizzurno, Alfredo De Massis, and Mirka Fragoudakis. "Halal Products and Services in the Italian Tourism and Hospitality Industry: Brief Case Studies of Entrepreneurship and Innovation." *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship* 19, no. 2 (2014): 145001-4.

Van der Heijden, Chris, *Zwarte Renaissance, Spanje en de Wereld 1492-1536*, Olympus, 2008.

Hershenzon, Daniel. "Doing Things with Arabic in the Seventeenth-Century Escorial." *Philological Encounters* 4, no. 3-4 (2019): 159-181.

Hitchcock, Richard. *Muslim Spain Reconsidered: from 711 to 1502*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

Hughes, Rebecca Ann, "Sicilian Town Bans Mafia Souvenirs to Clean up its Image Before it Becomes 2025 Capital of Culture", Euro News, 26 August 2024, https://www.euronews.com/travel/2024/08/26/sicilian-town-bans-mafia-souvenirs-to-clean-up-its-image-before-it-becomes-2025-capital-of, consulted 15 July 2025.

Johns, Jeremy. "Royal Diwan and Royal Image." In *Arabic administration in Norman Sicily: the royal diwan*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Kawashima, Nobuko "Introduction: Recent Growth of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Japan and Italy." In *Cultural Heritage in Japan and Italy*, edited by Nobuko Kawashima and Guido Ferilli. Springer, 2024, 1-11.

Kennedy, Hugh. Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of Al-Andalus. Routledge, 2014.

Krom, Maria J. C. "Festivals of Moors and Christians: Performance, Commodity and Identity in Folk Celebrations in Southern Spain." *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 18, no. 1 (2008): 119–38.

Kurtz, Matthew, "Heritage and Tourism" in *Understanding Heritage in Practice,* edited by Susie West (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press in association with The Open University, 2010), 205-240.

Our World in Data, "International Tourist Trips by Region of Departure," 2024, https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/international-tourist-arrivals-by-region-of-origin, consulted 19 November 2024.

Maggi, Maurizio, Gerard Corsane, Alissandra Cummins, Christian Hottin, Andrew Dixey, Leontine Meijer Van Mensch et al. "Conversation Piece: Intangible Cultural Heritage in Italy." In *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 8:239–46. Boydell and Brewer: Boydell & Brewer, 2012.

Marín, Manuela. "Reflexiones Sobre el Arabismo Español: Tradiciones, Renovaciones y Secuestros." *Hamsa. Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies* 1 (2014): 1-17.

Mastercard Crescent Rating, "Global Muslim Travel Index" May 2024, 26, https://www.crescentrating.com/ consulted 14 February 2025.

"Mata and Grifone, History and Legend of the Giants of Messina", Made in Messina, at https://madeinmessina.com/en/mata-and-griffin-history-and-legend-of-the-messina-giants/, consulted 28 August 2023.

Mohsin, Asad, Noriah Ramli, and Bader Abdulaziz Alkhulayfi. "Halal Tourism: Emerging Opportunities." *Tourism Management Perspectives* 19 (2016): 137–43.

Nef, Annliese. "Byzantium and Islam in Southern Italy (7th–11th Century)." *A Companion to Byzantine Italy* 8. Brill, 2021, 200-224.

Neil, Margaret Renata, and Sean C. Wyer. "'Sicily Can Be Very Seductive': The White Lotus and the Transnational 'Making'of the Mediterranean." *The Italianist* 43, no. 2 (2023): 241-261.

Noonan, Douglas S. and L. Rizzo. "Economics of Cultural Tourism: Issues and Perspectives." *Journal of Cultural Economics* 41, no. 2 (2017): 95-107.

Ontalva, José Santiago Palacios. "The Frontier Fortresses and Sanctuaries of Al-Andalus: Reconquest, Resignifcation and Collective Memory in the Iberian Peninsula (Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries)." *Imago temporis: medium Aevum* (2024): 45-65.

Orts-Cardador, Jaime José, Jesús Claudio Perez-Galvez, Gema María Gómez-Casero Fuentes, and Carol Angélica Jara Alba. "Heritage Tourism: a Bibliometric Analysis over Three Decades (1994-2023)." *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites* 55, no. 3 (2024): 1164-1173.

Pew Research Centre, "Muslim Population of Indonesia," 4 November 2010, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/11/04/muslim-population-of-indonesia/, consulted 19 June 2023.

Pew Research Centre, "Europe's Growing Muslim Population," 29 November 2017, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/, consulted 14 February 2025.

Prescia, R., and A. Scianna. "Arab-Norman Heritage: State of Knowledge and New Actions and Innovative Proposal." *International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences.* XLII-5/W1 (2017): 535–541.

Pugliese, Joseph. "Noi Altri: Italy's Other Geopolitical Identities, Racialised Genealogies and Inter-Cultural Histories". *Literary and Social Diasporas: An Italian Australian Perspective. Brussels*, eds. Gaetano Rando and Gerry Turcotte. Peter Lang, 2007, 185-202.

Puzon, Katarzyna, Macdonald, Sharon and Shatanawi, Mirjam, "Heritage, Islam, Europe: Entanglements and Directions. An Introduction" in *Islam and Heritage in Europe: Pasts, Presents and Future Possibilities*, edited by Puzon, Katarzyna, Macdonald, Sharon and Shatanawi, Mirjam, Taylor & Francis, 2021.

Rogozen-Soltar, Mikaela. “Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain”. *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (2007): 863-886.

Rogozen-Soltar, Mikaela. “Managing Muslim Visibility: Conversion, Immigration, and Spanish Imaginaries of Islam.” *American Anthropologist* 114, no. 4 (2012): 611-623.

Ruggles, D. Fairchild. “The Alcazar of Seville and Mudejar Architecture.” *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 87-98.

Said, Imam Ghazali. “The Heritage of Al-Andalus and the Formation of Spanish History and Identity.” *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 63-76.

Santonocito, Samantha Desirée. “Sustainable Tourism and Carrying Capacity in the Mediterranean Area Focus on Sicily.” *3rd IRT International Scientific Conference*, 2009.

Sevilla, M. J. *Delicioso: A History of Food in Spain*. Reaktion Books, 2025.

Stefano, Michelle L., Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane, eds. *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Vol. 8. Boydell Press, 2012.

Smith, Denis Mack. *A History of Sicily. Vol. II Medieval Sicily: 800-1713*. Ghatto & Windus, 1968.

Supardin, Lalu, Mohammad Suyanto, Anas Hidayat, and Tony Wijaya. “A Bibliometric Analysis of Halal Tourism: Future Research Agenda.” *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 16, no. 3 (2025): 566-584.

Timothy, Dallen J. *Cultural Heritage and Tourism: An Introduction*. Channel view publications, 2011.

Trento, Irene, and Liboria Laura Zabbia. *The Arab-Norman Civil Architecture in Palermo: Enhancement Strategies*. La Scuola di Pitagora, 2013.

United Nations World Tourism Organization, “World Tourism Barometer: January 2024,” 22 February 2024, https://en.unwto-ap.org/resources/worldtourismbarometer-january-2024/ consulted 14 October 2024.

Vakhidova, A. Traces of Arabic in Modern Toponymy. *Академические исследования в современной науке* 4, no. 25 (2025), 176-177.

Vargas-Sánchez, Alfonso and María Moral-Moral, Kyle M Woosnam, Dora Agapito, and Manuel A Ribeiro. “Halal Tourism Experiences: The Challenge of Diversity and Innovation.” In *Handbook on the Tourist Experience*, 246–62. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022.

Vernon, Clare. “Dressing for Succession in Norman Italy: The Mantle of King Roger II.” *Al-Masāq* 31, no. 1 (2019): 95-110.

West, Susie and Jacqueline Ansell. “A History of Heritage.” In *Understanding Heritage in Practice,* ed. Susie West. Manchester University Press, 2010.

World Tourism Organization (2025) UN Tourism Statistics Database, Madrid. Data updated on 24 November 2023. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/tourism-data-inbound-tourism Consulted 13 July 2025.

Zawawi, Majdah, Noriah Ramli, and Syarafina Zaki Nublan Zaki. “Understanding the Concept of Halal for Muslims and its Impact on the Tourism Industry.” *Malaysian Journal of Consumer and Family Economics* 20, no. 11 (2017).

Zhou, Huizhi, John Ap, and Huijun Yang. “An Exploration of Collective Memory in the Tourism Context.” *Journal of China Tourism Research* 20, no. 3 (2024): 676-707.

Zuelow, Eric. *A History of Modern Tourism*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

Appendix I: Figures

Figure 1

Map of the Iberian Peninsula with indication of the limits of al-Andalus in different periods and of important medieval cities. Map by José C. Carvajal.[209]

Figure 2

Map of the present-day Spanish province Andalusia.[210]

[209] José C. Carvajal, "The Archaeology of Al-Andalus: Past, Present and Future," *Medieval Archaeology* 58, no. 1 (2014): 319.
[210] Vicente Rodriguez, "Andalusia,", *Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/place/Andalusia-region-Spain, consulted 22 August 2025.

Figure 3

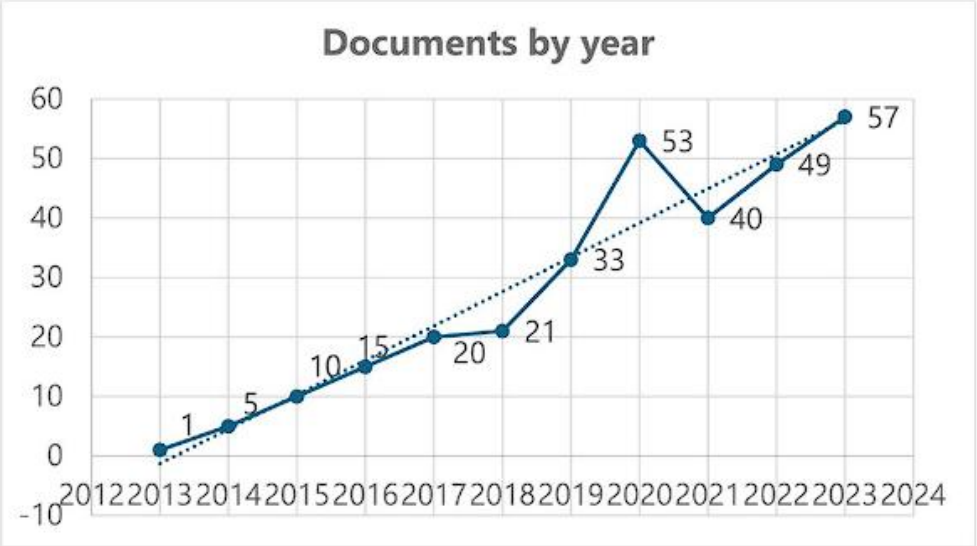
The Italian island of Sicily, situated in the middle of the Mediterranean.[211]

Figure 4

Islamic occupation of Sicily and surroundings.[212]

[211] Globetrot, "Mediterranean Sea Map," blog, 30 November 2011, https://printable-maps.blogspot.com/2011/11/mediterranean-sea-map.html, consulted 22 August 2025.
[212] Francesco Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità degli Arabi in Italia", in Gli Arabi in Italia, ed. Francesco Gabrieli and Umberto Scerrato (Milan: Credito Italiano, 1979), 107.

Figure 5



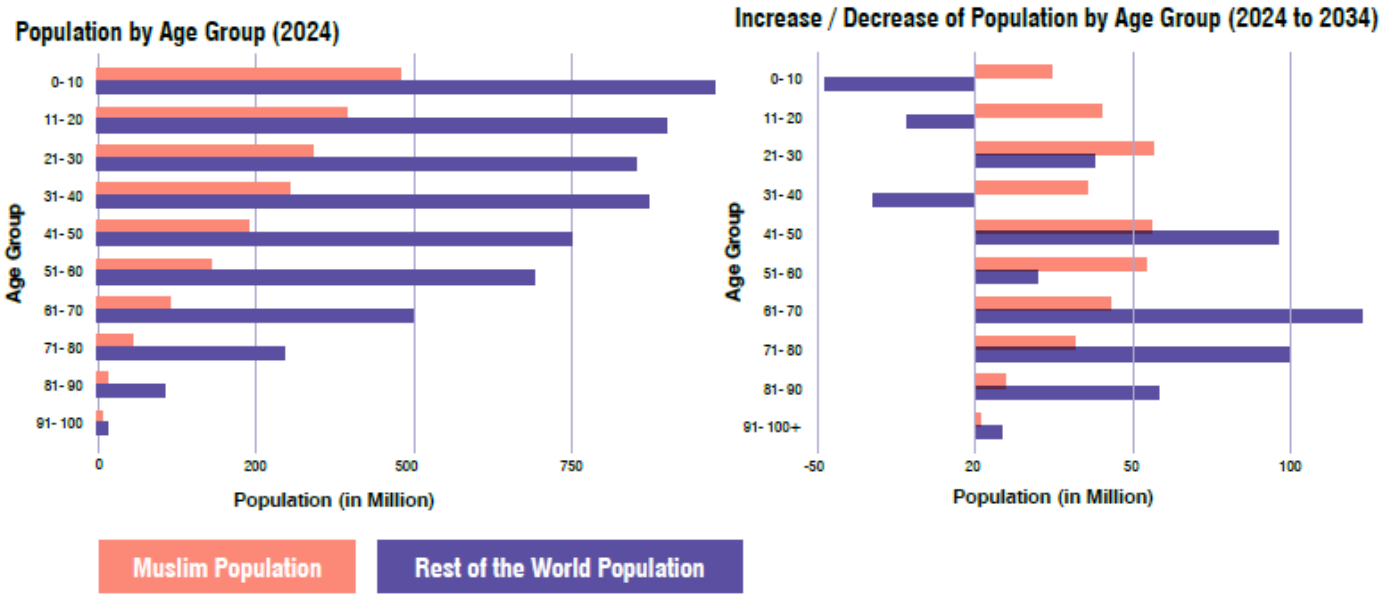
Graph showing the steady increase of publications on Halal Tourism, 2013-2023.[213]

Figure 6

Diagram of the international tourist arrivals per region.[214]

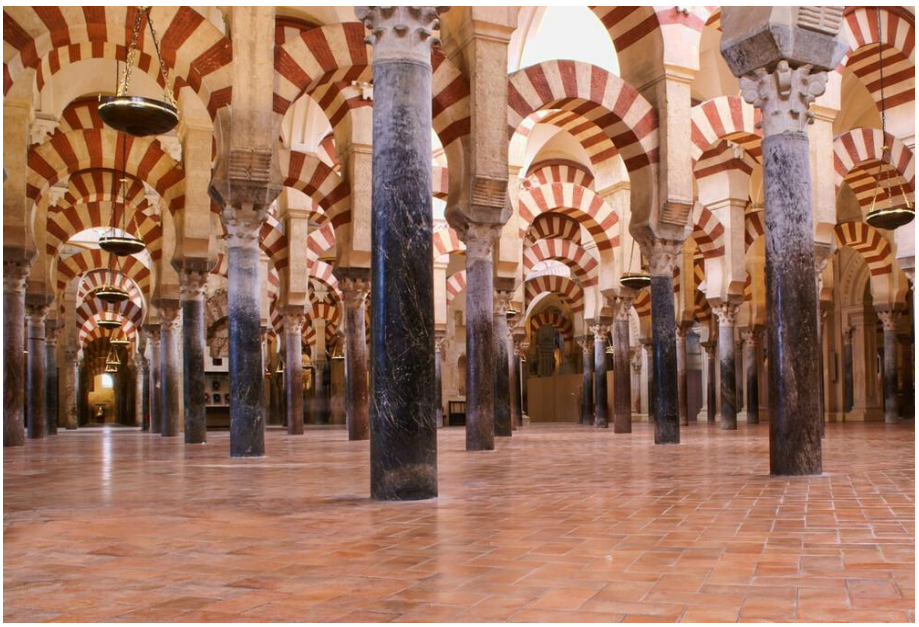
[213] Chantarungsi, "Mapping Landscape," 6.
[214] "World Tourism Barometer: January 2024," *United Nations World Tourism Organization*, 22 February 2024, https://en.unwto-ap.org/resources/worldtourismbarometer-january-2024/, consulted 14 October 2024.

Figure 7



Age (left) and growth (right) of Muslim population relative to world population, Mastercard Crescent Rating rapport.[215]

Figure 8



Interior of the mosque-cathedral of Córdoba.[216]

[215] "Global Muslim Travel Index," 27.
[216] https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/313/gallery/&maxrows=25, consulted 25 August 2025, author Wakkas Akhtar.

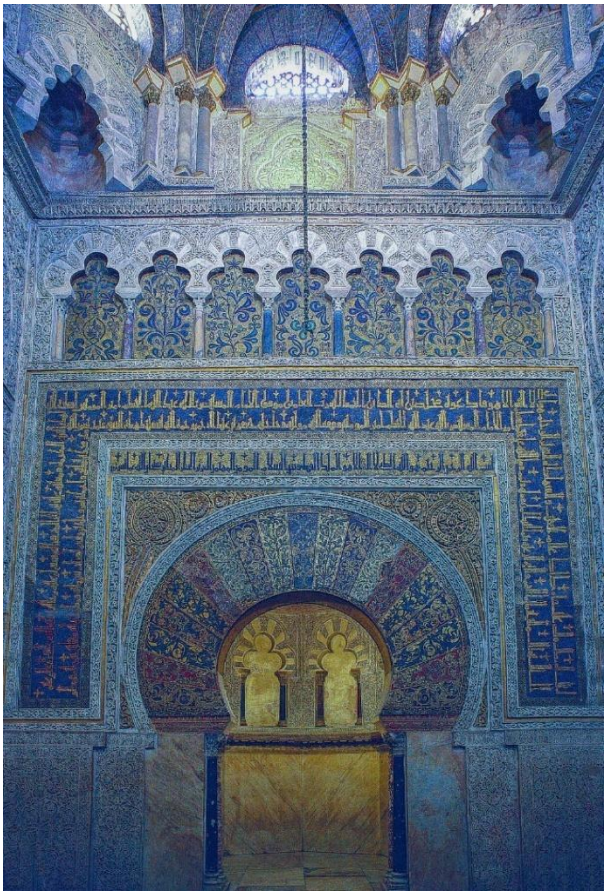


Figure 9

Mihrab with indication of the direction of Mekka (qibla). An indication of layered heritage to be experienced in the mosque-cathedral of Córdoba.[217]

Figure 10

Belltower of the cathedral of Córdoba, transformed from a minaret from mosque.[218]

[217] https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/313/gallery/&maxrows=25 , consulted 23 August 2025, author Ko Hon Chiu Vincent

[218] https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/313/gallery/&maxrows=25, consulted 23 August 2025, author José Puy

Figure 11

The Giralda with Christian belfry added on top of the old minaret, part of the cathedral of Seville, built over Islamic Seville's mosque.[219]

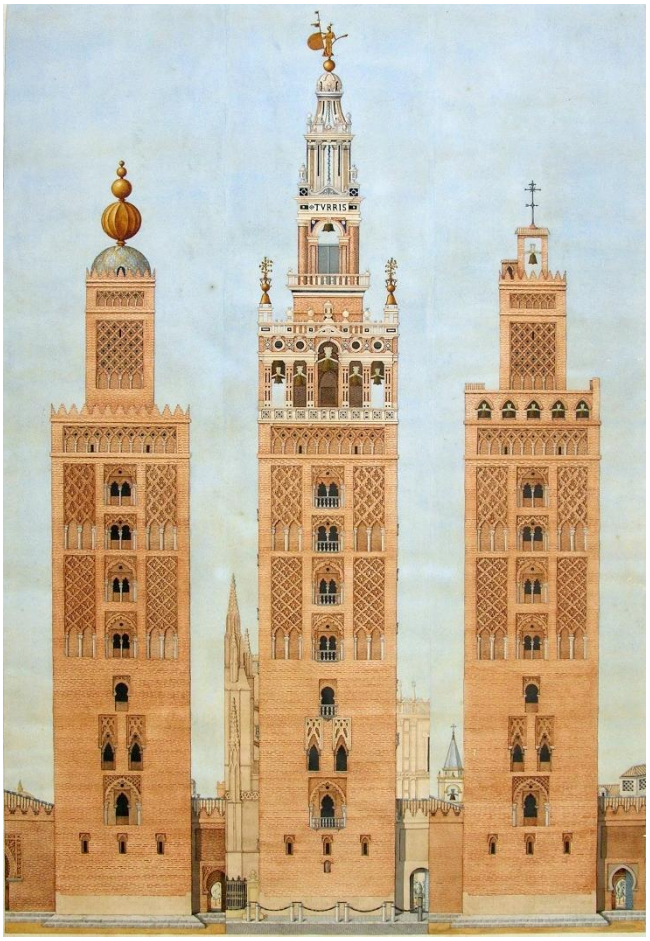
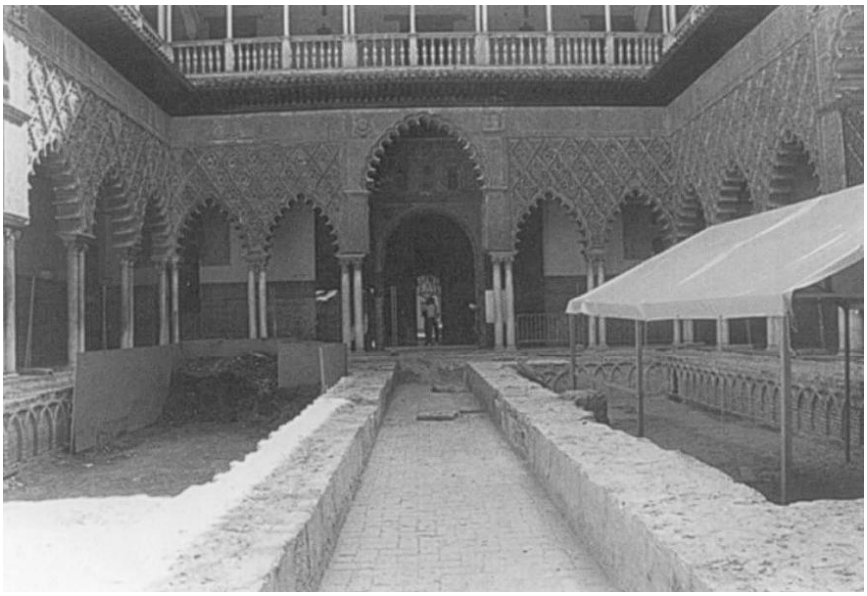


Figure 12

An illustration of the Giralda at its three historical stages: on the left as a minaret as part of the mosque of al-Andalus, on the right as a Christian belltower as part of the cathedral after the Reconquista, and in the middle including the belfry added in the 16th century, which is still present.[220]

[219] https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/383/gallery/&maxrows=33 consulted 23 August 2025, author Pascal Gonzalez.
[220] Alejandro Guichot , "Los tres principales estados de la torre de Sevilla," 1909, watercolour, collection Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares de Sevilla, Google Arts & Culture, https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-three-main-elevations-of-the-tower-of-seville-guichot-alejandro/5QE-FodVvQ7C6g, consulted 23 August 2025.

Figure 13



Ongoing excavations in the Alcazar in Seville: It revealed that below the 16th century Renaissance courtyard was a 14th century Mudejar style garden, below which were remains of an earlier Islamic garden. This is a testament to the layered heritage experience of the Alcazar, with the Reconquista narrative emphasizing that the Christian heritage exists both literally and figuratively on top.[221]

Figure 14

Procession of the Día de la Toma of 2017 in Granada.[222]

[221] Ruggles, "The Alcazar of Seville," 93. Photo by author.
[222] "La celebración del Día de la Toma de Granada de 2017, en imágenes," *GranadaDigital*, 2 January 2017, https://www.granadadigital.es/la-celebracion-del-dia-de-la-toma-de-granada-de-2017-en-imagenes/, consulted 12 August 2025.

Figure 15

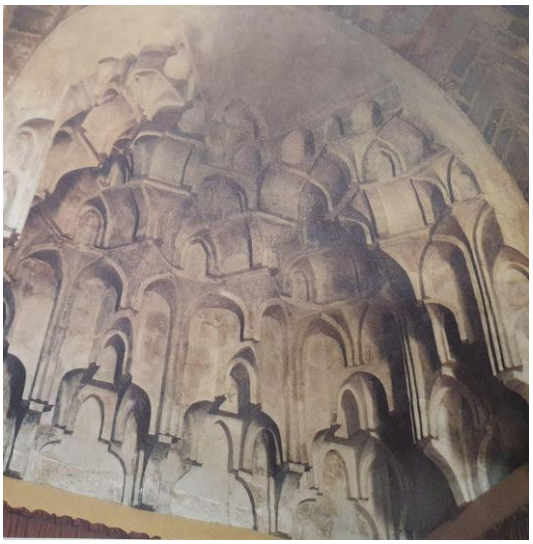
"Oriental" dancing and dress up at the celebrations of Almossasa Batalyos *in Badajoz, photograph by Lluis Blanes.*[223]

Figure 16

Muqarnas ceiling in the royal palace in Palermo. The design is Fatimid inspired with Kufic inscriptions.[224]

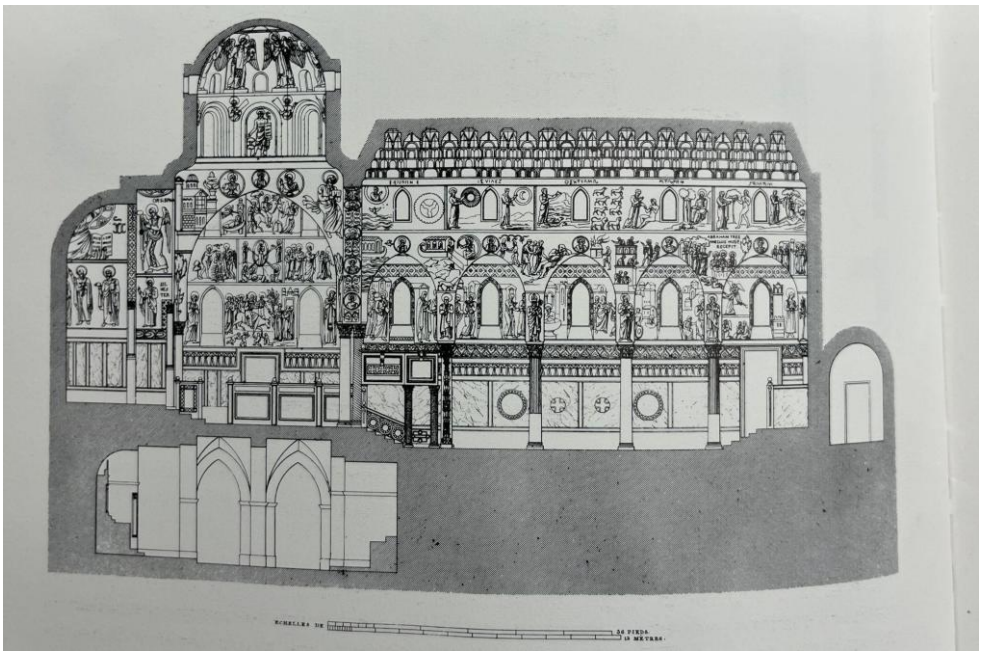
[223] "La Almossassa de Badajoz 2025," MeVoyACáceres.com, https://www.mevoyacaceres.com/almossassa-badajoz/, consulted 12 August 2025.
[224] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 63.

Figure 17



The muqarnas ceiling in the Torre Pisana at the Palazzo Reale.[225]

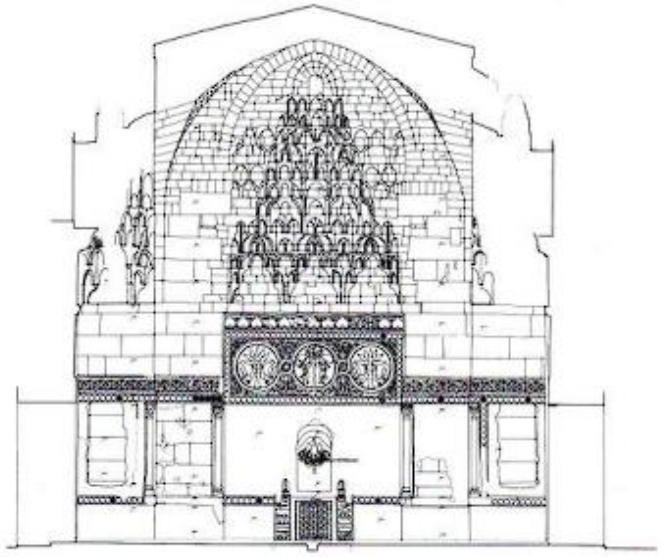
Figure 18



A drawing of the Capella Palatina in the royal palace in Palermo. The architecture of the chapel shows strong influences of the tradition and experience of Fatimid palaces. It is shaped along a vertical line, around which the naves and the sanctuary (with the choir and the dome above) revolve symmetrically.[226]

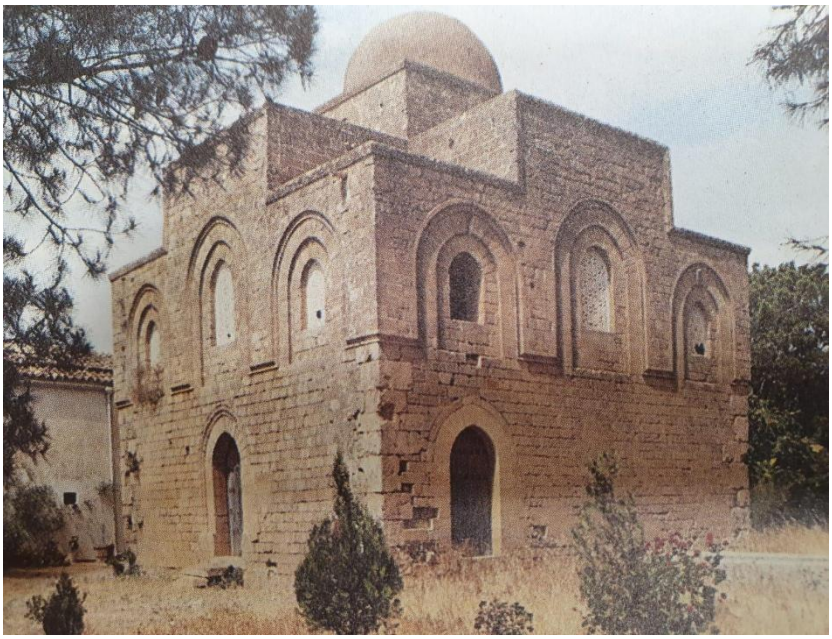
[225] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 51.
[226] Giuseppe Bellafiore, *Architettura in Sicilia nelle età Islamica e Normanna (827-1194)* (A. Lombardi, 1990), 146.

Figure 19



A drawing of Zisa palace's iwan.[227]

Figure 20



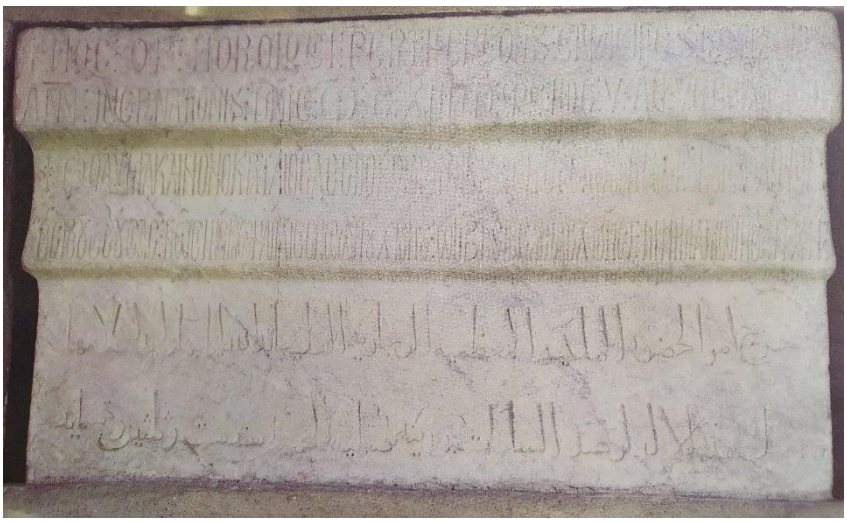
SS Trinità di Delia in Castelverrano, a Norman building imitating Fatimid architecture with its raised dome.[228]

[227] R. Prescia and A. Scianna, "Arab-Norman Heritage: State of Knowledge and New Actions and Innovative Proposal," *International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences* XLII-5/W1 (2017): 537.
[228] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 230.

Figure 21

Aerial view of Castel Maniace, resembling the layout of a ribat.[229]

Figure 22



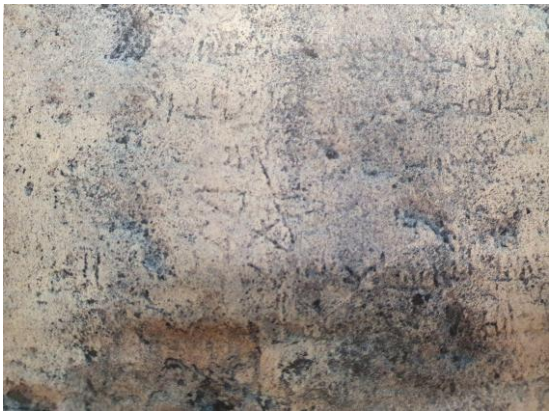
Trilingual inscription in the Capella Palentina in Palermo, it commemorates the installation of a water clock, an automaton moved by hydraulics and engineered by an Arabic mechanic from Malta.[230]

[229] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 234.
[230] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 52.

Figure 23

Arabic inscriptions on the Frieze of la Cuba in Palermo celebrating its beauty.[231]

Figure 24



Arabic inscriptions from the interior of Castel Maniace.[232]

Figure 25

Teste di moro in a Sicilian ceramics shop, private photography by Maarten den Hartog.

[231] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 41.
[232] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 235.

Figure 26

Mata and Grifone in a Sicilian procession.[233]

Figure 27

The contemporary square in the suburb of Palermo Brancaccio, obstructing the view of the Maredolce palace.[234]

[233] Juan Vicente Navarro García, "La imaginería festiva en Italia: «giganti e testoni»," in *III Congreso Internacional de la Bajada de la Virgen* (Cabildo Insular de La Palma, 2023), 248.
[234] Trento and Zabbia, *The Arab-Norman Civil Architecture*, 4.

Figure 28

Aerial view of the indicated Scibene palace and the incursions made by surrounding urbanization.[235]

Figure 29

Remnants of Islamic civilian architecture in the small village Patano. F.l.t.r: cistern, vaulted ceiling, millstone.[236]

[235] Trento and Zabbia, *The Arab-Norman Civil Architecture*, 5.
[236] Santonocito, "Sustainable Tourism," 406.

Figure 30

Roger's room in Palazzo Reale.[237] *The Norman building style not only incorporates Islamic architecture and art, but also very directly imitates Byzantine styles.*[238] *By chance the two styles were even merged, such as with the peacock depicted in Palazzo Reale, a popular motif in both Islamic and Byzantine art.*[239]

Figure 31

Roger II's ceremonial gown displayed in Vienna.[240]

[237] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 63.
[238] "Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalú and Monreale," *UNESCO*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1487, consulted 15 July.
[239] Gabrieli, "Storia, Cultura, e Civilità," 63.
[240] Vernon, "Dressing for Succession," 110.

Appendix II: Details IHT operators

Table 1

Tour Operator Offerings by Destination

Destination	Number of operators (n=35)	Percentage
Offers tours to Spain only	26	74.29%
Offers tours to Italy only	1	2.67%
Offers tours to both Spain and Italy	8	22.86%
Offers tours to Spain (total)	34	97.14%

Table 2

Overview of Tour Operators Offering Islamic Heritage Tours in Spain and Italy

Tour Operator	Spain	Italy	Focus on Islamic Heritage	Notes
1. Acquired Travel www.acquiredtravel.co.za	Yes	No	Yes	Offers Andalusia Islamic Tour (6 days) focused on Islamic heritage. Query sent through e-mail.

2. Al-Andalus Experience www.alandalus-experience.com	Yes	No	Yes	Specializes in Islamic heritage in Spain; no tours to Italy offered. Query sent through Whatsapp. Response received.
3. Al-Fattah Travel al-fattahtravel.com	Yes	No	Yes	Travels across Europe, including Spain, with Islamic heritage theme. Query sent through e-mail.
4. Al-Hidaayah Travel www.al-hidaayah.travel	Yes	No	Yes	Focus on Andalusia and Islamic heritage; Italy not mentioned. Query sent through e-mail.
5. Al Misk Travel www.almisktravel.com	Yes	No	Yes	Offers tours in Spain focused on Islamic heritage; no info on Italy. Query sent through e-mail.
6. Al Wahab Tours alwahabtours.co.uk	Yes	No	Yes	Tours to Spain with Islamic theme; Italy not mentioned. Query sent through e-mail.

7. Best Choice Tours bestchoicetours.com	Yes (Barcelona only)	Yes (Sicily)	Yes (only Sicily)	Sicily tour with deep focus on Islamic heritage; Spanish tour does not reference Islamic heritage. Query sent through e-mail.
8. Best Halal Trip besthalaltrip.com	Yes	Yes	Yes (mainly Spain)	Offers tours to both countries, with Islamic heritage focus mainly in Spain. Query sent through e-mail.
9. Cross Cultural Services www.crossculturalservices.net	Yes	No	Yes	Southern Spain tours with Islamic heritage. Query sent trhough e-mail.
10. Dar el Salam dstworldtravel.com	Yes	Yes (Sicily)	Yes	Offers multicultural tour in Sicily from Islamic perspective; also Andalusia tour focusing on heritage. Query sent through e-mail.
11. Halal Getaways www.halalgetaways.com	Yes	No	Yes	Focus on halal travel to Spain with cultural components. Query sent through e-mail.

12. Halal Tours halaltours.org	Yes	Yes (only the North)	Yes	Tours with Islamic heritage focus in Andalusia. Query sent through Whatsapp. Response received.
13. Halal Travel Guide halaltravelguide.net	Yes	No	Yes	Travel themes with strong emphasis on Islamic heritage in Andalusia.Query sent through e-mail.
14. HalalTrip www.halaltrip.com	Yes	Yes (info only)	Yes	Platform with many blog posts on Islamic heritage; info on Italy (mosques, halal food) but no tours to Italy. Query sent through contact form.
15. Hajj & Umrah Express www.hajjandumraexpress.com	Yes	No	Yes	Andalusia Muslim tours, including mosque visits and historical context. Query sent through e-mail.
16. Ibadah Tours www.ibadahtours.com	Yes	No	Yes	Islamic Spain packages; Italy not offered. Query through e-mail.

17. Ilim Tours ilimtour.com	Yes	No (Rome info only)	Yes	Specialized in Andalusia; background info for Muslims in Rome but no organized tours to Italy. Query through e-mail.
18. Islamic Travel islamictravel.com.au	Yes	Yes (Sicily)	Yes	Sicilian tour focusing on Arab-Norman heritage; Spanish tour in Andalusia with heritage focus. Query through e-mail.
19. Islamic Travels islamictravels.com	Yes	No	Yes (depending on country)	Worldwide tours; Spain tour strong Islamic heritage focus, Italy currently not offered. Query through e-mail.
20. Lets Go Halal www.letsgohalal.com	Yes	No	Yes	Information and tours related to Islamic heritage in Spain. Query through e-mail.
21. Morocco-Fez Festival Tours www.morocco-fezfestival.com	Yes + Morocco	No	Yes	Combines Spain and Morocco with attention to Islamic heritage. Query through e-mail.

22. Muslim Legacy muslimlegacy.com	No	Yes (Sicily)	Yes	Sicilian tour with theological and historical Islamic heritage focus; no Spain tours. Query through e-mail.
23. Omeya Tours omeyatours.com	Yes	No	Yes	Spain as destination with focus on Islamic history. Query through e-mail.
24. Regency Holidays www.regencyholidays.com	Yes	No	Yes	Halal tours in Spain; no info on Italy. Query through e-mail.
25. Sabika Tours sabikatours.com	Yes	Yes	Yes (only Spain)	Spain tour has Islamic heritage focus; Italy tour does not. Query through e-mail.
26. Safar Salama Tours safarsalamatours.com	Yes	No	Yes	Andalusia tour with emphasis on Islamic heritage. Query through e-mail.
27. Spain Baraka Tours spainbarakatours.com	Yes	Yes (Northern Italy)	Yes (only Spain)	Spain tours emphasize Islamic heritage; Italy tour has no Islamic heritage component. Query through e-mail.

28. Taqwa Tours taqwatours.co.uk	Yes	No	Yes	Islamic Spain and Andalusia tours with heritage focus. Query through e-mail.
29. Tazkiyah Tours tazkiyahtours.com	Yes	No	Yes	Offers halal tours to Spain with heritage content. Query through e-mail.
30. TM Fouzy tmfouzy.sg	Yes	No	Yes	Halal tours, including Spain. Query through e-mail.
31. Tripadvisor (6 Day Tour) www.tripadvisor.com/AttractionProductReview-g187514-d26804835-6_Day_Private_Halal_Tour_in_Muslim_Spain-Madrid.html	Yes	No	Yes	Private halal tour in Spain with focus on Islamic heritage. No query sent.
32. Umrah Al Amanah umrah-alamanah.com	Yes	No	Yes	Spain as destination; no Italy info. Query through e-mail.
33. Usrah Travel usrahtravel.sg	Yes	No	Yes	Offers halal tours to Spain. Query through e-mail.

34. Visit Al-Andalus visit-alandalus.com	Yes	No	Yes	Heritage tour in Andalusia with emphasis on Islamic past. Query through e-mail.
35. Zaarvel zaarvel.com	Yes	No	Yes	Various halal tours in Spain, including Córdoba and Granada. Query through Whatsapp, response received.

Table 3

Tour Operators Offering Organized Tours to Spain and Italy

Tour Operator	Spain (1 = Yes, 0 = No)	Italy (1 = Yes, 0 = No)
1. Acquired Travel	1	0
2. Al-Andalus Experience	1	0
3. Al-Fattah Travel	1	0
4. Al-Hidaayah Travel	1	0
5. Al Misk Travel	1	0
6. Al Wahab Tours	1	0

7. Best Choice Tours	1	1
8. Best Halal Trip	1	1
9. Cross Cultural Services	1	0
10. Dar el Salam	1	1
11. Halal Getaways	1	0
12. Halal Tours	1	1
13. Halal Travel Guide	1	0
14. HalalTrip	1	1
15. Hajj & Umrah Express	1	0
16. Ibadah Tours	1	0
17. Ilim Tours	1	0
18. Islamic Travel	1	1
19. Islamic Travels	1	0
20. Lets Go Halal	1	0
21. Morocco-Fez Festival	1	0
22. Muslim Legacy	0	1
23. Omeya Tours	1	0
24. Regency Holidays	1	0

25. Sabika Tours	1	1
26. Safar Salama Tours	1	0
27. Spain Baraka Tours	1	1
28. Taqwa Tours	1	0
29. Tazkiyah Tours	1	0
30. TM Fouzy	1	0
31. Tripadvisor (6 Day)	1	0
32. Umrah Al Amanah	1	0
33. Usrah Travel	1	0
34. Visit Al-Andalus	1	0
35. Zaarvel	1	0

Replies tour operators

1. Al- Andalus Experience (via Whatsapp)

Tour operator: I don't have much time available; I can provide a short answer. We are Spain based because we are locals rooted here. We specialise in al-Andalus and Islamic Heritage mainly, we are not a mainstream travel agency; other partners do do Italy, and we support them in multiple ways through logistics and training, but not visibly to the public.

Me: Thank you so much for taking time to reply to me, it is very informative. Would you mind telling me which partners do organise tours to Italy so I can look them up online? Shukran.

Tour operator: Bin-Firnas Travel but so far they won't have an offer online I don't think.

Me: I see! Thank you. And when they do organise something to Italy, generally, how would people find these kind of tours or know about them?

Tour operator: Currently, Bin Firnas Travel offers tours to Andalusia, but not to Italy.

2. Halal Tours (via Whatsapp)

In Tourism there are a lot of issue important like connectivity, cost, the demand of the market, security and other logistic matters.

3. Zaarvel (via Whatsapp)

Hi Rosa,

Thanks for your message. Your thesis sounds really interesting.

We currently offer tours in Spain because we have a solid ground team there and years of experience running trips in Andalusia. It's a region we know well personally, so we're able to deliver a high quality experience.

Sicily has always been on our mind. It's rich in Islamic heritage, but we want to visit ourselves first before curating a tour to make sure it meets our standards. We're hoping to do that sometime later this year.

Maybe we can meet there if the timing works out.

All the best with your research. Happy to help if we can.

Appendix III: Webpages

https://bibliotecavivadeal-andalus.es/historia/, consulted 15 August 2025.

https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-majority-countries, consulted 10 August 2025.

https://www.wondersofsicily.com/palermo-la-cuba.htm, consulted 21 May 2025.

https://medium.com/the-sundial-acmrs/un-mooring-race-in-sicilian-folklore-the-tradition-of-testa-di-moro-878a9e8cbe20, consulted 21 April 2023.

https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/the-white-lotus-season-2-symbolism-vases, consulted 21 April 2023.

https://collider.com/white-lotus-season-2-heads-legend-explained/, consulted 21 April 2023.

https://www.battutamagazine.com/post/top-5-reasons-to-visit-southern-italy, consulted 21 May 2025.

https://www.eumuslims.org/en/members/members-and-partners/islamic-association-italy, consulted 21 May 2025.

http://www.concordialanguagevillages.org/blog/lago-del-bosco/the-influence-of-arabic-on-the-italian-language#.ZC2WanZByUk, consulted 21 April 2023.

https://www.timesofsicily.com/truth-behind-sicilian-ceramic-moorish-heads/, consulted 21 April 2023.

http://www.viefrancigenedisicilia.it/MVF.php, consulted 21 August 2023.

https://www.sicilyrentcar.it/en/the-legend-of-the-testa-di-moro-a-story-of-love-and-revenge/, consulted 23 August 2020.

UNESCO
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1024, consulted 21 May 2025.
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1487, consulted 20 August 2023.
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1560, consulted 8 July 2025.
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/383, consulted 8 July 2025.
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/384, consulted 8 July 2025.
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/781, consulted 8 July 2025.

"Reader's Stories: Exploring Rome As Muslim Girls Travelling Alone", Muslim Travel Girl, at https://muslimtravelgirl.com/readers-stories-our-experience-of-exploring-rome-as-muslim-girls-travelling-alone/, consulted 8 May 2023.