

“Muslim rulers of the past were far more tolerant of people of other faiths than were Christian ones. For example, al-Andalus’s multi-cultural, multi-religious states ruled by Muslims gave way to a Christian regime that was grossly intolerant.”

—*The Economist*

“Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia.”

—President Barack Obama

“The new Islamic polity [in Spain] not only allowed Jews and Christians to survive but, following Quranic mandate, by and large protected them.”

—Yale University professor

María Rosa Menocal

Scholars, journalists, and politicians uphold Muslim-ruled medieval Spain—“al-Andalus”—as a multicultural paradise, a place where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived in harmony.

There is only one problem with this widely accepted account: *it is a myth*.

In this groundbreaking book, Northwestern University scholar Darío Fernández-Morera tells the *full* story of Islamic Spain. *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise* shines light on hidden features of this medieval culture by drawing on an abundance of primary sources that scholars have ignored, as well as archaeological evidence only recently unearthed.

This supposed beacon of peaceful coexistence began, of course, with the Islamic Caliphate’s conquest of Spain. Far from a land of tolerance, Islamic Spain was marked by religious and therefore cultural repression in all areas of life and the marginalization

of Christians and other groups—all this in the service of social control by autocratic rulers and a class of religious authorities.

The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise provides a desperately needed reassessment of medieval Spain. As professors, politicians, and pundits continue to celebrate Islamic Spain for its “multiculturalism” and “diversity,” Fernández-Morera sets the record straight—showing that a politically useful myth is a myth nonetheless.

“Fernández-Morera takes on the long-overdue topic of assessing medieval Muslim Spain’s reputation for ethnic pluralism, religious tolerance, and cultural secularism. Finding this view based on a ‘culture of forgetting,’ he documents the reign of strict *sharia* in Andalusia, with its attendant discrimination against non-Muslims and subjugation of women. **So much for the charming fantasy of open-mindedness and mutual respect.**”

—**DANIEL PIPES**, historian of Islam and publisher of the *Middle East Quarterly*

DARÍO FERNÁNDEZ-MORERA is Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Northwestern University. A former member of the National Council on the Humanities, he holds a BA from Stanford University, an MA from the University of Pennsylvania, and a PhD from Harvard University. He has published several books and many articles on cultural, literary, historical, and methodological issues in Spain, Latin America, and the United States.