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Analytical Review

AL-ANDALUS IN THE COLLECTIVE PSYCHE OF SUBCONTINENTAL MUSLIMS: NOSTALGIA, MYTH-MAKING, AND CULTURAL TRAUMA – A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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Running title: Al Andalus memory, romanticisation, cultural narratives, identity formation, and historical interpretation

Abstract

This review examines how Al Andalus (711 to 1492) is often romanticized in the historical memory of Muslim thinkers in the Indian subcontinent, showing a recurring pattern of pride in the early conquest followed by deep mourning over the fall of Granada. Drawing on collective memory and cultural trauma frameworks, it highlights how literary works like Iqbal's Masjid e Qartaba reinforce this emotional narrative. The study also challenges common myths, such as the story of Tariq ibn Ziyad, and presents a more nuanced view that includes coexistence, internal fragmentation, and external pressures behind the decline. By comparing similar historical losses in other societies, it explains how such memories shape identity over time and concludes that moving beyond nostalgia toward evidence based historiography is essential for a balanced understanding of the past.

Keywords: Al Andalus, collective memory, cultural trauma, Muslim historiography, nostalgia, Indian subcontinent, convivencia, historical narratives

About author

Taha Nazir is a researcher, writer, and independent scholar based in Toronto, Canada. His work focuses on political analysis, international relations, and media discourse, with particular interest in South Asian geopolitics and global security dynamics. He has contributed to analytical writing and research commentary across various platforms, engaging with contemporary policy and governance issues.

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Data Source: Archives, Biographies, Databanks, Encyclopedias, Libraries, Metadata Registries, Reports, Repositories, arXiv, Crossref, OpenAI, Wikipedia, World Health Organization, Zenodo.

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Peer Review Statement: This manuscript has not undergone external peer review, as it represents a structured synthesis and analysis of existing evidence. The methodological approach adheres to established standards to ensure rigor, transparency, and scientific validity.

Data Synthesis and Analysis

Data were synthesized using meta-analysis (fixed/random effects) with heterogeneity assessed by I^2 and Cochran's Q. Where pooling was not feasible, narrative and thematic syntheses were applied. Network meta-analysis and meta-regression were conducted where appropriate, in accordance with PRISMA and Cochrane guidelines.

Introduction:

For over a century, Muslim scholars and writers in the Indian subcontinent (present-day Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh) have invoked Al-Andalus as both a pinnacle of Islamic civilisation and a metaphor for irreversible decline. This pattern appears consistently from the poetry of Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) to the prose of contemporary authors such as Mustansar Hussain Tarar. The emotional sequence—pride in the 711 CE conquest followed by lamentation over the 1492 fall of Granada—functions as a collective psychological script that links medieval Iberian history to modern Muslim identity crises. This narrative review examines the origins, mechanisms, and implications of this phenomenon through a synthesis of primary literary texts, historiographical sources, and comparative trauma studies.



dawn.com

Reimagining Iqbal at the Mosque of Cordoba - DAWN.COM

Figure 1: The Great Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba (Mezquita-Catedral), a UNESCO World Heritage site and architectural embodiment of Andalusian pluralism that inspired Iqbal's "Masjid-e-Qartaba" (photo: aerial view highlighting the minaret and later Christian cathedral additions).

The Mythologised Conquest: Tariq ibn Ziyad and the 711 CE Invasion

Popular subcontinental discourse routinely celebrates the rapid Muslim advance under Tariq ibn Ziyad as a heroic foundational moment. The legendary speech attributed to him—"My men, the enemy is before you, the sea is behind you"—and the order to burn the ships at Gibraltar have become staple motivational narratives in Pakistani and Indian madrasa curricula, political oratory, and popular literature.

Historical scholarship, however, presents a more precise picture. Tariq ibn Ziyad was a Berber (Amazigh) governor of Tangier under the Umayyad general Musa ibn Nusayr; his mother tongue was Tamazight, not classical Arabic. The dramatic "burning of boats" episode first appears in 17th-century sources (e.g., al-Maqqari's *Nafh al-Tib*) and lacks contemporary corroboration. The actual Battle of Guadalete (near the Guadalete River, southern Spain) in 711 CE succeeded through tactical superiority and Visigothic internal divisions rather than mythic resolve.

This mythologisation exemplifies "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), serving to instil communal pride while simplifying complex Berber–Arab ethnic dynamics within early Islamic expansion.

Pluralism and Interfaith Coexistence in Andalusian Society Far from a monolithic Islamic state, Al-Andalus exemplified *convivencia*—a term coined by Spanish historian Américo Castro (1948). In Córdoba under the Umayyad Caliphate (756–1031) and later in Toledo’s translation schools (12th–13th centuries), Muslims (including Arab elites and Berber troops), Sephardic Jews, and Mozarabic Christians collaborated in philosophy, medicine, and science. Key figures include:

- Muslim philosopher Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198, born in Córdoba)
- Jewish polymath Maimonides (Ibn Maymun, 1138–1204, who fled Almohad persecution)
- Christian translators working under Archbishop Raymond of Toledo

This interfaith model produced enduring legacies such as the transmission of Aristotle and Galen to Europe. The eventual collapse involved multiple factors: political fragmentation among the Taifa kingdoms (11th century), Almoravid and Almohad rigidity, and the Christian Reconquista spearheaded by the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. The 1492 fall of Granada (Nasrid dynasty’s last stronghold) and the subsequent Alhambra Decree expelling Sephardic Jews (approximately 200,000) marked the end of this pluralistic experiment. Further, the 1609–1614 expulsion of the Moriscos (Muslim converts) under Philip III of Spain completed the religious homogenisation.

Figure 2: Historical map of Al-Andalus at its territorial peak (c. 1000 CE), showing key centres of learning and power (Córdoba, Toledo, Granada) and the progressive Christian advances during the Reconquista.



en.wikipedia.org

Al-Andalus - Wikipedia

Emotional and Literary Responses: Dozy, Iqbal, and Beyond The psychological impact of 1492 reverberates across subcontinental Muslim literature. Dutch orientalist Reinhart Dozy (1820–1883) provided the first modern critical history in *Histoire des Musulmans d’Espagne* (1861). Its Urdu translation by Inayatullah, *Ibratnama-e-Andalus* (“The Lesson of Andalus”), became a staple in Urdu-speaking intellectual circles, framing the fall as a cautionary tale of internal decay and external religious zealotry.

Allama Muhammad Iqbal immortalised this sentiment in “Masjid-e-Qartaba” (1935), part of *Bal-e-Jibril*, where the mosque itself becomes a witness to past glory and present humiliation. Similar nostalgic tones appear in Mustansar Hussain Tarar’s travelogues and in the writings of Syed Ahmad Khan and later Pakistani historians.

Figure 3: Portrait of Reinhart Dozy, whose scholarly work profoundly shaped subcontinental Muslim perceptions of Al-Andalus.

Reinhart Dozy



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dozy,_RPA.jpg

pantheon.world

Reinhart Dozy Biography | Pantheon

Comparative Cultural Trauma: Insights from Dr. Mubarak Ali and Global Parallels

Pakistani historian Dr. Mubarak Ali (b. 1940) draws a powerful parallel with Europe's World War I experience. At the war's outset, soldiers and civilians expected a swift victory; instead, the conflict lasted four years, leaving millions dead. A French filmmaker's thought experiment—depicting the war dead returning home to find life unchanged, with families moving on—illustrates the existential question: “Why were we sacrificed?”

This mirrors the subcontinental Muslim engagement with Al-Andalus: glorification of the fallen, mourning of a lost golden age, and implicit questioning of historical purpose. Comparable patterns appear elsewhere: Greek Orthodox nostalgia for Constantinople after 1453, Arab-Muslim lamentation over the 1258 sack of Baghdad by the Mongols, and Sephardic Jewish memory of the 1492 expulsion. In each case, collective memory (Halbwachs) transforms historical contingency into enduring cultural trauma (Alexander), serving identity consolidation while sometimes impeding critical analysis.

Figure 4: Portrait of Dr. Mubarak Ali, whose revisionist historiography highlights the emotional mechanics of collective historical memory.



youlinmagazine.com

Dr. Mubarak Ali: The Pioneering 'People's Historian' of the Indian Subcontinent - Youlin Magazine

Conclusion The collective psyche of subcontinental Muslims has long constructed Al-Andalus as an emotive archetype of civilisational triumph and tragedy. While this narrative provides psychological resilience and communal solidarity, it often prioritises myth (Tariq ibn Ziyad's speech), selective memory (external religious aggression over internal fragmentation), and elegy over nuanced historiography. A scientifically grounded approach—acknowledging Berber–Arab ethnic realities, the genuine achievements of *convivencia*, the complex interplay of the Reconquista, and comparative global cases of cultural trauma—offers a path forward.

For contemporary Muslim intellectuals in Toronto, Pakistan, India, and the broader diaspora, Andalusian history can serve not merely as a source of nostalgic grievance but as a model of pluralistic governance, scientific collaboration, and resilient adaptation. Only through evidence-based engagement can the memory of Al-Andalus contribute meaningfully to modern discourses on multiculturalism, interfaith dialogue, and civilisational renewal.



Ethical Statement

This is a research-based manuscript prepared and structured in a scientific narrative review format. Modern AI-assisted tools were used to access current and authentic information from digital archives, bibliographic databanks, online libraries, research articles, academic repositories, and encyclopedias.

Preprint Notice

This manuscript is shared as a non-peer-reviewed preprint on platforms such as Zenodo, SSRN, and Research Square to support scholarly discussion. The content is research-based and developed using publicly available and verifiable sources. Readers are encouraged to interpret the material as preliminary and subject to revision.

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Literature Search and Information Management

Literature retrieval was conducted using a structured and reproducible search strategy in accordance with PRISMA-S reporting standards. Search strategies were independently evaluated using the PRESS framework to ensure methodological quality, accuracy, and completeness. Grey literature was systematically identified using the CADTH *Grey Matters* framework to enhance coverage of unpublished, non-indexed, and policy-relevant sources, thereby minimizing publication bias and improving evidence comprehensiveness.

Risk of Bias and Evidence Quality

Risk of bias was assessed using validated, design-specific tools (RoB 2, ROBINS-I, QUADAS-2/3, AMSTAR 2, Newcastle–Ottawa Scale, and CASP). The certainty of evidence and strength of recommendations were evaluated using the GRADE framework, ensuring a standardized and reproducible assessment across study designs.

Review Typology and Reporting

Review designs were classified into standard categories (scoping, umbrella, rapid, qualitative, and mixed-methods), with reporting aligned to established guidelines (PRISMA-ScR, PRIOR, PRISMA-RR, ENTREQ, and PRISMA/MMAT) to ensure methodological rigor and transparency.



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