

Michele Lamprakos

Recovering the Great Mosque of Córdoba: The History of an Idea



Fig. 4.1: Córdoba, Aerial view of the historic center with the Mosque-Cathedral (Mezquita) at center, 2007. Photo: Salvatorecoco/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).

For almost eight hundred years, the former Great Mosque of Córdoba—or the “Mezquita” (mosque), as it is still called locally—has served as the city’s cathedral. It was adapted for Catholic worship with relatively minor changes until the sixteenth century, when a massive *crucero* (choir and presbytery) was begun in the center (Figs. 4.1 and 4.2). This strange hybrid structure, however, was inherently unstable: it invited further change

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Fig. 4.2: Córdoba, Mezquita, Interior view toward the piers of the *crucero* from the northwest. Photo: Cornelia Steffens, 2015.

and elaboration. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Islamic architectural fabric around the *crucero* had been obscured by plaster vaults, whitewash, and retablos. But in the era of Romanticism and Liberalism, the process was reversed: bishops and, later, architects working for the Spanish state sought to recover and restore the mosque, an effort that became increasingly politicized in the twentieth century. This essay will focus on the most radical of these efforts: the proposed removal of the *crucero* and the reconstruction of the missing Islamic fabric. The *crucero* was to be disassembled and moved (*traslado*, literally: “translated”) to a new cathedral building designed to house it; while the mosque, rebuilt to its tenth-century state, would become a museum and, in some iterations, open to Muslim worship. Once separated, the mosque and the cathedral would each have its place on the city’s skyline.

The modern history of the Mezquita has been studied in some detail, focusing on the theory and practice of archaeology and restoration.¹ This essay, in contrast, looks at the intersection of architecture, politics, and ideology. During Spain’s long struggle between liberals and the church, historic sites were contested and charged with political meanings. This is especially true for the great Islamic monumental sites that, to different degrees, challenged the country’s National Catholic narrative: Granada’s Al-

¹ See especially Sebastián Herrero, *De lo original a lo auténtico: La restauración de la Mezquita Catedral de Córdoba durante el siglo XX* (Córdoba: Cabildo Catedral de Córdoba, 2018).

hambra, Seville's Giralda, Madinat al-Zahra, and the Great Mosque of Córdoba.² As the city's cathedral, the last was the most highly charged of these sites. A beloved local monument, the mosque-cum-cathedral was also the most visible trophy of "Reconquista" in the country.³ Returning it to its pre-Christian state could be seen as the logical outcome of an antiquarian project or as the recovery of a great architectural space. But it was also a deeply political act that would have undone the legacy of Reconquista—in essence, rewriting the history of Spain.

The *traslado* project, in play for decades under governments of both left and right, has been virtually expunged from the historical record. This essay presents the first full account of the semiclandestine initiative, tracing it from its origins in the interwar period and its links to colonial politics in Morocco to its unlikely revival under Spain's ultra-Catholic dictator Francisco Franco (1892–1975). It serves as a perfect illustration of the ways in which medieval sites have been appropriated and transformed to serve evolving political agendas.

The *Crucero* and its Modern Reception

In the mid-eighteenth century, a visitor to the Mezquita would have been confused by what he or she saw: a presbytery and choir surrounded by a vast hall of columns. The cathedral chapter had recently covered up the Islamic fabric around the *crucero*: they had raised the vast roofs of the mosque, installed plaster vaults and skylights beneath the painted wood (*artesonado*) ceilings, and whitewashed the distinctive red and white voussoirs of the Islamic arcades (Fig. 4.3). But their efforts were only partially successful; inside, the building still looked like a mosque. Indeed, a Moroccan ambassador reported that the Great Mosque greeted him and his entourage like an old friend.⁴

2 For a relevant discussion of Madinat al-Zahra, the great Umayyad palatine city near Córdoba, see D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Historiography and the Rediscovery of Madinat al-Zahra," *Islamic Studies* 30 (1991): 129–40.

3 The so-called Castilian "reconquest" of the peninsula spanned from the eleventh to the late fifteenth century. On the concept of Reconquista in modern historiography see John Tolan, "Using the Middle Ages to Construct Spanish Identity," in *Historiographical Approaches to Medieval Colonization of East Central Europe*, ed. J.M. Pikorsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 329–47; Alejandro García Sanjuán, "Rejecting Al-Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10 (2018): 127–45.

4 Abu al-'Abbas ibn Madhi al-Ghazzal's visit in 1766–67 as recorded in "Ambassade marocaine en Espagne au 18e siècle," trans. A. Gorguon, in *The Umayyad Mosque in Córdoba: Texts and Studies*, ed. Fuat Sezgin, Carl Ehrig-Eggert, and E. Neubauer (Frankfurt: Goethe University, 2008), 1:456–67.



Fig. 4.3: Córdoba, Mezquita, Interior view ca. 1867 showing the arcades before whitewash was removed; albumen print on paper by J. Laurent & Cía. Photo: Biblioteca Nacional de España, Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, 4539064–1001.

By this time, the Mezquita was the only surviving example of a common phenomenon in medieval Iberian cities: mosques adapted for Christian worship. Córdoba's Mezquita was doubtlessly the most magnificent of these "Christianized mosques."⁵ Like Muslim chroniclers before them, Christian writers praised it as a wonder of the world, citing its forest of marble columns that allowed uninterrupted views in all directions. Gradually, however, Christianized mosques were replaced by new cathedral buildings—a process that reached a fever pitch after the 1492 conquest of Granada, the last Muslim polity on the peninsula. During this same period, in the late 1480s and again in the early 1520s, two of Córdoba's bishops tried to radically alter the Mezquita. Córdoba's city council blocked both projects and the matter was referred to the monarchs for adjudication. Finally, in the mid-1520s, the *crucero* was begun in the middle of the mosque. But when Hapsburg Emperor Charles V saw the demolition, he allegedly reprimanded Church authorities, saying: "Had I known what this was, I would

⁵ The term *mezquita cristianizada* is used by Alfonso Jiménez Martín, *Anatomía de la Catedral de Sevilla* (Sevilla: Diputación Provincial, 2013).

not have allowed it . . . because you have done what could be done anywhere; and you have undone that which is unique in the world.”⁶

The design of the *crucero*, which evolved over the course of the sixteenth century, is exceedingly complex and thus beyond the scope of this essay.⁷ The main point is that its initial architect, Hernán Ruiz I, intentionally created a hybrid structure. Rather than demolishing the mosque completely, he retained and even reconstructed much of the Islamic fabric around the *crucero*. When it was finally completed in the early seventeenth century, the *crucero* towered above the roof of the mosque, emblazoning the skyline with a triumphant symbol of Christianity. And yet inside, the surrounding mosque fabric appears intact (see Fig. 4.2 and Fig. 4.4). This strange design solution would have fateful consequences in the modern period, inspiring restorers to recover the mosque—a process that Heather Ecker has called



Fig. 4.4: Córdoba, View of the Mezquita from the Guadalquivir River. From David Roberts, *Picturesque sketches in Spain taken during the years 1832 & 1833*. Photo: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LD-DIG-ds-16252.

⁶ Reported by Juan Gómez Bravo, canon of Córdoba, in 1739; *Catálogo de los obispos de Córdoba* (Córdoba: J. Rodríguez, 1778), 1:419–20.

⁷ See Michele Lamprakos, *Memento Mauri: The Afterlife of the Great Mosque of Córdoba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, forthcoming).

“re-Islamicization.”⁸ In 1767, when the Mezquita was surveyed for a publication on national monuments, the architects tried to deduce the original form of the mosque, even drawing a hypothetical cross section without the *crucero*.⁹ Following the Napoleonic invasions (1808–14), *afrancesado* bishops, encouraged by scholars in Córdoba and Madrid, began to uncover fragments of the mosque beneath the Baroque layers.¹⁰ They focused on the magnificent addition built by caliph al-Hakam II (r. 961–76) which had served as the liturgical heart of the cathedral before the *crucero* was completed. These efforts began with the disassembly of San Pedro Chapel beneath the central dome of the *maq̣sura* (royal enclosure) and restoration of the *mihrab*, the niche that indicates the direction of Islamic prayer (here, a small recessed room; Fig. 4.5). A key moment occurred in the 1860s when Bishop Juan Alfonso de Albuquerque ordered workmen to strip whitewash from the polychrome arcades, a project that would last two decades. Finally, from the late 1870s, the retablo and vault of Villaviciosa Chapel—the entry vestibule of al-Hakam’s addition—were dismantled, revealing the tenth-century dome and the surviving, interlaced arches that supported it.¹¹

Restoration of the Islamic fabric started as an antiquarian endeavor, but with the rise of Spanish liberalism it acquired political undertones. In this era monuments were not dry historical documents: they were alive, with a moralizing and regenerative force. Córdoba’s hybrid mosque-cathedral, in particular, became a covert battleground in Spain’s culture wars, symbolizing the tension between its “two” medieval pasts: Islamic and Christian.¹² For conservatives, Spain was a primordially Christian country that had been destroyed by the Arabs; with the defeat of Granada in 1492, Christianity was “restored” and the country resumed its natural path of development. Liberals developed a counternarrative, praising the Arabs as a civilizing force and Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) as the golden age of Spanish history; the Church and the Inquisition were responsible for the country’s decline and backwardness.¹³ For liberals and Romantics, the *crucero* epitomized

8 Heather Ecker, “The Great Mosque of Córdoba in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” *Muqarnas* 20 (2003): 113–41, at 121.

9 Executed in 1767 for the newly established San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the drawings were finally published in 1787; Delfín Rodríguez Ruiz, *La memoria frágil: José de Hermosilla y las antigüedades árabes de España* (Madrid: Fundación Cultural COAM, 1992).

10 Herrero, *De lo original*, 53. The term *afrancesado* (Francophile) was applied to Spanish elites who supported Napoleon. See James Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 49–50.

11 Manuel Nieto Cumplido, “La arqueología medieval cordobesa en el siglo XIX,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba* 106 (June 1984): 71–102; Herrero, *De lo original*, 53–56.

12 The idea of two competing medieval pasts is from Margarita Diaz-Andreu, “Islamic Archaeology and the Origin of the Spanish Nation,” in *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, ed. Diaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion (London: UCL Press, 1996), 68–89.

13 Diaz-Andreu, “Islamic Archaeology,” 69; Tolan, “Using the Middle Ages,” 333–34; Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs*, 65–67; Ruggles, “Historiography,” 129.



Fig. 4.5: Francisco Javier Parcerisa, “Chapel of the *Mihrab*.” From Pedro de Madrazo y Kuntz, *Recuerdos y Bellezas de España: Córdoba* (Madrid, 1855).

mized Catholic fanaticism. “One’s gaze scans the monument, encounters [the *crucero*], and one’s heart beats with anger at seeing such a sacrilege,” wrote art historian Pedro de Madrazo y Kuntz, adding, “Was there no other place in Córdoba to build this chapel?”¹⁴ He may have been echoing Théophile Gautier, who had visited Córdoba in 1840 and lamented the city’s lost glory: “The life seems to have ebbed from this great body once animated by the active circulation of Moorish blood . . . but Cordoba has her mosque, a building unique in the world and entirely novel.”¹⁵ He regretted, however, that it was

nowadays obstructed by the Catholic church, an enormous heavy mass crammed into the heart of the Arab mosque . . . This parasite of a church, this monstrous fungus of stone, an architectural wart breaking out on the back of the Arab structure . . . does not lack merits of its own; anywhere else one would admire it, but it must forever be regretted that it should occupy this place.

¹⁴ Pedro de Madrazo y Kuntz, *Recuerdos y Bellezas de España: Córdoba* (Madrid: José Repullés, 1855), 63. Madrazo began excavations at Madinat al-Zahra with Pascual de Gayangos, translator of Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Maqqari’s *Nafh al-tib min ghusn al-Andalus al-ratib wa dhikr waziriha Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatib* (Cairo, 1629–30), the most complete known history of Islamic Spain. See Maribel Fierro with Luis Molina, “al-Maqqari,” in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 1350–1850*, ed., Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009), 273–83; Ruggles, “Historiography,” 133.

¹⁵ Théophile Gautier, *A Romantic in Spain*, trans. Robert Anell (Oxford: Signal Books, 2001), 254–5.

Gautier went on to describe the city council's defense of the Mezquita in 1523 and Charles V's condemnation. "These just reproaches caused the chapter to hang their heads," he concluded, "but the harm was done."¹⁶

When the Mezquita was declared a national monument in 1882, church authorities began to lose control over the restoration process. Ricardo Velázquez Bosco (1843–1923)—an eminent architect, master restorer, and expert on what was then called "Arab architecture"—was appointed as the first state architect in 1887.¹⁷ At this time, restoration practice was heavily influenced by French architect and theorist Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79). "To restore a building," he famously wrote, "is not to preserve it, repair or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness that could never have existed at any given moment."¹⁸ Like Viollet-le-Duc, Velázquez sought to recover the idealized form of monuments based on careful research and informed speculation. Although we know little about Velázquez's life, we know that he was a liberal; moreover, his 1891 proposal for the Mezquita clearly reveals his attitude toward the Church. He called for the removal of the "innumerable eyesores" that had accumulated over the centuries and continued to accumulate, completely disfiguring the monument. Unfortunately, he noted, most of these additions had to be conserved "for artistic or other reasons." Nevertheless, it was "urgent to halt . . . desecrations in the most important monument of western Mohammedan architecture, and certainly one of the most notable monuments in Europe."¹⁹ The document was accompanied by a color-coded plan showing Islamic and early Christian interventions in black, Renaissance elements "to be conserved for artistic or other reasons" in gray, and elements to be removed in red (Fig. 4.6).

Velázquez worked at the Mezquita with a team of local collaborators until his death in 1923. Although he was able to complete only a small portion of the work he envisioned, his proposals would guide restoration work for almost a century. Within the building, he sought to recuperate the spatial reading of the mosque.²⁰ To this end, he planned to demolish the eighteenth-century plaster vaults and reconstruct the *artesonado* ceilings, an ambitious project that would only be partially completed in the 1980s. He aimed to reconstitute al-Hakam's addition by disencumbering the *qibla*

¹⁶ Gautier, *Romantic in Spain*, 259.

¹⁷ He would later direct work at Madinat al-Zahra (from 1910) and at the Alhambra (from 1917) where his plans would be implemented following his death by his disciple, Leopoldo Torres Balbás (1923–36). See Herrero, *De lo original*, 56–101; Miguel Ángel Baledellou Santolaria, *Ricardo Velázquez Bosco* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura/Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1990), 118–52.

¹⁸ Viollet-le-Duc, "Restauration," in *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française* (Paris: B. Bance, 1866), 8:14–34; trans. M. F. Hearn, *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 269. For Viollet-le-Duc's theory of restoration, see also the contributions by Bernd Carqué and Kevin Murphy in this volume.

¹⁹ Ricardo Velázquez, "Memoria," 1891, Alcalá de Henares, Archivo General de la Administración, Fondo (05)14.2, signatura 31/8044, expediente 3.

²⁰ Herrero, *De lo original*, 71.

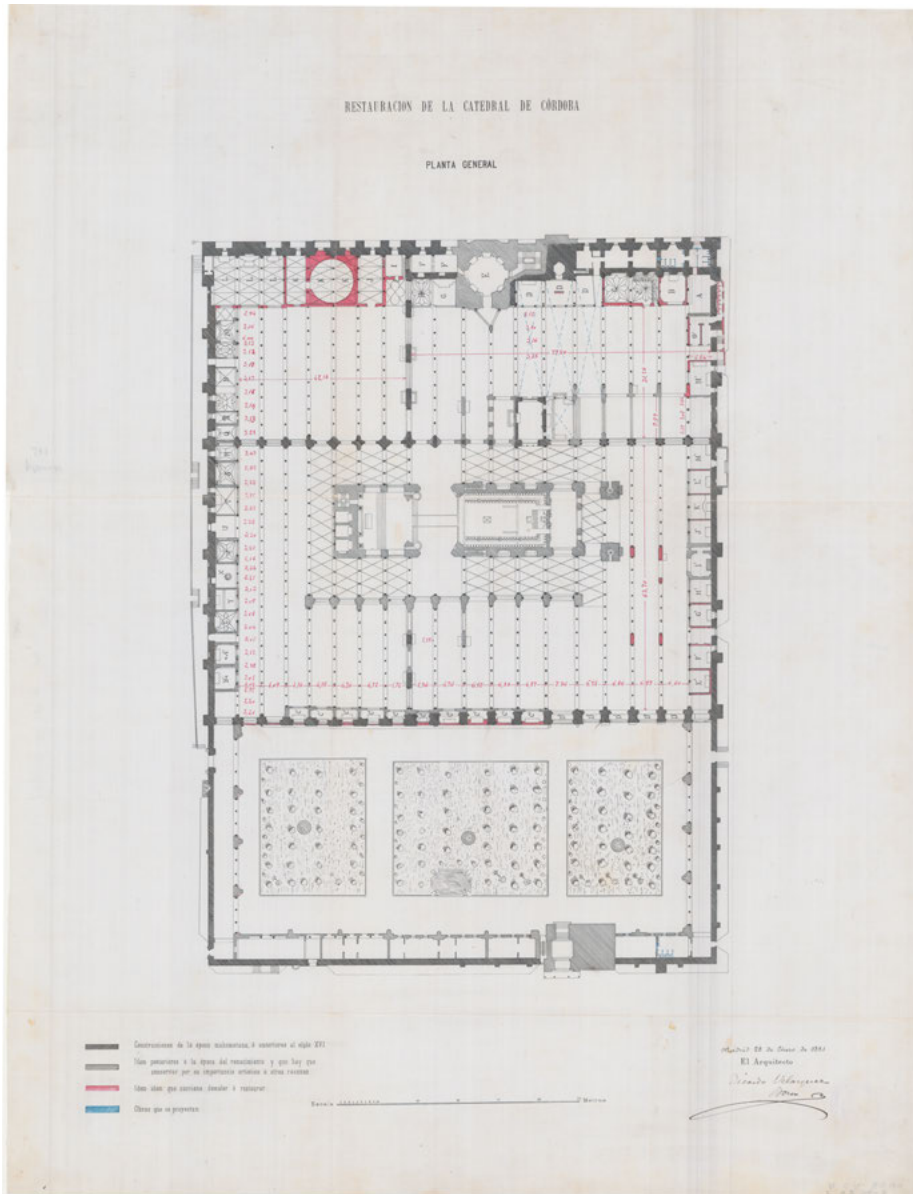


Fig. 4.6: Ricardo Velázquez Bosco, Restoration plan for the Mezquita, 1891. Madrid, Ministerio de Educación, Archivo General de la Administración, IDD (05) 014.002, caja 31/08044, expediente 3.

(south) wall and restoring the *mihrab*, *maqsura*, and entry vestibule, which involved correcting earlier restorations (Figs. 4.7 and 4.8). He also sought to disencumber and restore the exterior facades. His restoration of the magnificent portals on the east facade, in particular, reestablished the image of the mosque in the city (Figs. 4.9 and 4.10).



Fig. 4.7: Córdoba, Mezquita, *Mihrab* nave in the late nineteenth century. From Albert Frederick Calvert and Walter Matthews Gallichan, *Cordova, a City of the Moors* (London, 1907), plate 61.



Fig. 4.8: Córdoba, Mezquita, Restored *mihrab* nave. Photo: Cornelia Steffens, 2015.



Fig. 4.9: Córdoba, Mezquita, East facade, ca. 1870; albumen print on paper by J. Laurent & Cía. Photo: Archivo y Biblioteca del Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife F-05520.



Fig. 4.10: Córdoba, Mezquita, Portal on the east facade restored by Ricardo Velázquez Bosco and the sculptor Mateo Inurria after 1908. Photo: Cornelia Steffens, 2015.

Velázquez's work had a huge impact, acclaimed by the cultural elite in Córdoba and beyond. But his interventions also produced tensions with Church authorities. For example, in some cases reopening Islamic-era doors entailed demolition of chapels and offices on the inside. A particular point of contention was the north facade facing the courtyard, called the Patio de los Naranjos. For centuries the aisles of the prayer hall had communicated directly with the patio via arched openings; but following construction of the *crucero*, chapels were built along this facade and the arches were infilled (Fig. 4.11).²¹ Velázquez and later restorers wanted to reopen them, allowing light to filter into the interior and reestablishing visual continuity between the forest of columns and the garden-like setting of the patio. In his 1891 plan, Velázquez showed all of the arches on the patio facade in red, indicating that chapels and masonry infill would be removed (see Fig. 4.6). But in 1916 he wrote that only a few arches could be opened



Fig. 4.11: Córdoba, Mezquita, View of the patio facade in the early nineteenth century. From James Cavanah Murphy, *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, 1815. Photo: Courtesy of the Digital Library for the Decorative Arts and Material Culture, University of Wisconsin.

²¹ Bernardo de Aldrete, a high-ranking ecclesiastical official and scholar, reported this to King Philip IV in 1637; “Relación de la planta de la capilla real y de su estado temporal y spiritual,” in Rafael Ramírez de Arellano, *Inventario monumental y artístico de la Provincia de Córdoba*, ed. José Valverde Madrid (Córdoba: Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros, 1983), 678.

because the rest contained chapels.²² A decade later the patio facade was still contested.²³

If Velázquez's main goal was to reconstitute the spatial reading of the mosque, the primary obstacle was the *crucero* itself. On the 1891 plan he showed it in gray, that is, as an element that had to be conserved "for artistic or other reasons." But did he dream of removing it?²⁴ In cathedrals across Spain, massive choir stalls—architectural and sculptural elements in their own right—were being removed to allow uninterrupted views of the nave and altar.²⁵ In fact, Velázquez intervened in at least one such project in 1915 while he was working at the Mezquita: he proposed that the Baroque choir of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela be moved out of the nave. We know that he admired Viollet-le-Duc's cathedral restorations in France which aimed at structural clarity, whiteness, and visibility—and which transformed living religious sites into secularized, national monuments.²⁶

Córdoba Reborn

As Velázquez's restorations were underway, the Mezquita became enmeshed in a complex web of interests. In 1912, the city's urban core was declared historic and slated for protection, with the restored Mezquita as its crown jewel. One aim was to promote tourism, playing on Córdoba's exoticism and "difference."²⁷ For Republicans the Mezquita symbolized the new society they were trying to create, free of Church dominance. "We were the greatest country on the planet not under Philip II but under caliph 'Abd al-Rahman III," wrote historian and politician Luis de Zulueta in *El Sol*, Madrid's leading Liberal newspaper. For Zulueta, the destruction of the Mezquita was a metaphor for the tragic destruction of historical memory. "Do you remember the incomparable Cordoban mosque, crudely destroyed by putting a cathedral choir inside it?" he wrote. "In

22 Herrero, *De lo original*, 92–93.

23 Antonio Flórez, who succeeded Velázquez from 1924 to 1926, wrote: "Barely had this work begun . . . when it produced not a few protests because . . . the majority [of arches; *huecos*] are occupied by chapels conceded to private patrons." Flórez, "La restauración de la Mezquita-Catedral," *Diario Córdoba*, 17 February 1925.

24 For a different view see Herrero, *De lo original*, 75, 95–96.

25 Pedro Navascués Palacio, "Coros y sillerías: un siglo de destrucción," *Descubrir el Arte* 15 (2000): 112–14.

26 Belén María Castro Fernández, *Francisco Pons-Sorolla y Arnau* (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2007), 471–74. On Viollet-le-Duc's restoration goals and their effects, see Kevin Murphy, *Memory and Modernity: Viollet-le-Duc at Vézelay* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

27 On the slogan "Spain is Different" (first used in 1929, revived in 1964), see Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella, "A Nation Under Tourists' Eyes" in *Spain is (Still) Different*, ed. Afinoguénova and Martí-Olivella (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), xi n1.

this century we repeat the same moral error when we destroy our history, eradicating the Spanish glories of the caliphate from our national conscience.” Muslims and Christians were both Spanish, he continued; Christians could have continued to worship in the mosque, leaving it “respected and intact.”²⁸ Andalusian nationalists, in particular, romanticized the Islamic past. As officials in local governments and on provincial monuments commissions, they promoted a new Andalusian image in cities throughout the region.²⁹ For some, Islamic monuments reflected a unique, racially mixed culture that could be revived, leading to Spain’s regeneration. In 1916, Blas Infante, the movement’s leader, called the Mezquita “the great testimony to Córdoba’s spiritual and earthly force,” a reminder of a great civilization that had sunk into decay.³⁰

For many on the left, then, the Islamic past was a tool of self-fashioning and political resistance: it was the Orient “within.” But there was also the Orient “without”: notably, the protectorate in Morocco, established in 1912.³¹ With the loss of Spanish colonies in the Americas and the Philippines, North Africa was Spain’s last chance at empire. In 1927, Spanish forces pacified the Rif mountains (with French help) after fifteen years of fighting. Colonial officials portrayed the occupation not as a foreign adventure but as the natural outcome of a shared history.³² To secure the support of traditional elites in Morocco, they built and restored mosques and shrines and even sponsored the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.³³ It was in this context that the idea of removing the *crucero* must have emerged, because in 1931 Shakib Arslan, Druze emir and anti-colonial reformer, reported that “the idea has been around for a long time.”³⁴

In the interwar period, a nostalgia for Islamic Spain inspired anti-colonial Arab and Muslim thinkers; for them, it represented the rebirth of a nation, much as it did for Andalusian nationalists in Spain.³⁵ One of them was Arslan, who by this time was recognized as the orchestrator of the wider Arab-Islamic protest movement.³⁶ When he visited Spain in 1930 intending to write a history of Al-Andalus, he was deeply moved by

28 Luis de Zulueta, “Un olvido nacional—el Millenario del Califato,” *El Sol*, 12 January 1929, 1. Zulueta would serve as Minister of State under the Second Republic.

29 Salvador Cruz Artacho, “A la Búsqueda de un ‘Ideal’ para Andalucía,” in *Bética y el regionalismo andaluz*, ed. Juan José Hurtado et al. (Seville: Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2013), 76–77.

30 Blas Infante, “Conferenza de Blas Infante Sobre el Regionalismo,” *Andalucía* 1, no. 7 (December 1916): 2.

31 The idea of the Orient as both self and other is based on Susan Martín Márquez, *Disorientations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 8–9.

32 Diaz Andreu, “Islamic Archaeology,” 77.

33 Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, *La “hermandad” hispano-marroquí* (Barcelona: Bellaterra 2003), 231–47.

34 Letter to ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna, 14 May 1931, excerpted in Muhammad Ibn ‘Azzuz Hakim, *Ab al-Haraka al-Wataniyya al-Maghribiyya, al-Hajj ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna* (Rabat: al-Hilal al-‘Arabiyya lil tiba’a wa al-nashr, 1987), 2:440–41.

35 Alonso Nieves Paradela, *El Otro laberinto español: Viajeros árabes a España entre el siglo XVII y 1936* (Madrid: Siglo XIX de España, 2005), 141.

36 W. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985), 77.

the Mezquita. A year later, in the tumultuous lead-up to the Second Spanish Republic (1931–39), he urged Moroccan nationalist leader ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna to lobby for the reconstruction of the Mosque of Córdoba—“removing the church from it (*ikhraj al-kanisa minhu*)”—and for its return to Muslims. This was an old idea that had been blocked by the pro-Church monarchy, but “now the freedom of spirit is rising” and pro-Church forces were retreating, so Bannuna should seize the moment. The project was in Spain’s interest: What better way to capture the hearts of the million Muslims in the Rif than “returning this mosque of mosques to the way it was” and restoring Muslim control?³⁷ Significantly, Arslan described this as an act of reparation. “Our Rif brothers should say to the men of the Spanish Republic: the Spaniards took at least twenty thousand mosques and turned them into churches,” but “we’re only asking for this one mosque because of its fame and greatness and fineness and craft.”³⁸

Within weeks Bannuna had organized a delegation to Madrid, and the initial response seems to have been encouraging.³⁹ Soon several proposals for the Mezquita were made on the floor of the Cortes (Spanish Parliament) in the context of a wider discussion about nationalization of church properties. A decade earlier Antonio Jaén Morente, historian and president of Córdoba’s Provincial Monuments Commission, had called the *crucero* a “great artistic profanation.”⁴⁰ Now, as a deputy in the Cortes, he asked that “my Cordoban cathedral . . . an example of liberty, tolerance, and vindication” be opened to Muslim worship.⁴¹ Two weeks later, a motion by Spanish deputies from the Moroccan cities of Ceuta and Melilla went farther, proposing that “the Gothic part of the Mosque of Córdoba, destined for the Catholic cult, be removed [*se traslade*] in order to construct a new cathedral from its parts.” The mosque would be restored to its original form; it could then be converted into a museum and possibly opened to Muslim worship.⁴²

Significantly, some conservative Catholics *also* wanted to undo the Mezquita’s hybridity. In summer 1930 Jean Ybarnegaray, a conservative member of the French Chamber of Deputies from the Basque region, visited Córdoba and must have heard about the debate. He later told the Madrid journal *Estampa*:

37 Arslan to Bannuna, 14 May 1931, excerpted in Ibn ‘Azzuz Hakim, *Ab al-Haraka*, 2:440–1; Tayyib Bannuna, *Nidhaluna al-qawmi fi al-rasa’il al-mutabadala bayna al-Amir Shakib Arsalan wa-al-Hajj ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna* (Tangier: Matba’a Dar al-Amal, 1989), 234–35.

38 Arslan to Bannuna, 12 June 1931; cited in Bannuna, *Nidhaluna al-qawmi*, 240. On Arslan’s interest in the mosque, see also ‘Umar Ryad, “New Episodes in Moroccan Nationalism under Colonial Rule,” *Journal of North African Studies* 16 (2011), 128–9; Eric Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2018), 251–52, 266–68.

39 Ibn ‘Azzuz Hakim, *Ab al-Haraka*, 441–42.

40 Antonio Jaén Morente, *Resumen de la Historia de Córdoba* (Córdoba: Imprenta del Diario de Córdoba, 1921), 145–46.

41 *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes*, 16 October 1931, 1800–1802.

42 Luis Codina and Don Manuel Padrós, *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes*, 27 October 1931, no. 128, 1944.

With regard to Córdoba, I will tell you my opinion in all frankness. I would like to see something done with Córdoba. The Catholics of Spain and of the entire world, friends of the arts, should build a new cathedral, a temple that is truly Christian. The Mezquita cannot be the sanctuary of God; a Christian does not feel at home in the midst of that jungle of Moorish columns. In exchange, for the artist and the aficionado, the Mezquita, converted into a museum, will recover all its character.⁴³

In the interwar period, then, there was a strong sense that something must be done about the Mezquita's dual nature. Several overlapping proposals emerged: removing the *crucero*, turning the building into a museum and a touristic monument, and opening it to Muslim worship. The first two would have required building a new cathedral, while the last could be accommodated in the existing building if Church authorities would allow Muslims to pray there. These ideas faded in and out in subsequent decades, alongside plans for a great Islamic or African exposition in Córdoba.⁴⁴

These discussions were part of a wider international debate about the role of religious monuments in modern, secular societies. In 1935, Kemal Atatürk famously approved the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a museum. (The great Byzantine church had been converted into an imperial mosque by Mehmet I when he conquered Istanbul in 1453.)⁴⁵ Much as the new Hagia Sophia museum embodied the secular and humanistic values of the Turkish Republic, the secularized Mezquita would reflect the values of Republican Spain.⁴⁶ But transforming the Hagia Sophia into a museum did not entail the kind of architectural "surgery" that would have been required at Córdoba, where the *crucero* was intricately interwoven with the mosque fabric.

The debate in Córdoba can also be linked to the interwar politics of mosque-building. The Great Mosque of Paris—erected in memory of Moroccan soldiers who died fighting for the French in World War I—had been completed in 1926, attracting attention throughout the Arab-Muslim world. "Don't you see how the French built a mosque in Paris that is tall and broad?" wrote Arslan to Bannuna. "The Mosque of Córdoba does not have to be built new: it's an existing building. And Spain doesn't have to pay anything to make it a mosque again; if expense is involved in removing the church from the middle, the Muslims will take care of it."⁴⁷ That was an omen of things to come.

43 Jean Ybarnegaray, "Un Diputado de los Bajos Pirineos que es un gran Pelotari," *Estampa*, 12 August 1930.

44 "Una Exposición Hispano-Islámico" *Al-Mulk* 1 (1959–60): 133–34.

45 In 2020, Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, reversed the 1935 decision, converting Hagia Sophia back into a mosque.

46 Ceren Katipoğlu and Çağla Caner-Yüksel, "Hagia Sophia 'Museum,'" in *Constructing Cultural Identity, Representing Social Power*, ed. Çana Bilsel et al. (Pisa: Plus Pisa Press, 2010), 205–25.

47 Arslan to Bannuna, 12 June 1931; cited in Bannuna, *Nidhaluna al-qawmi*, 240.

From the Second Republic to the Franco Regime

In 1936, under the leadership of General Franco, the so-called Nationalists rose up against the democratically elected Spanish Republic, resulting in three years of bloody civil war (1936–39). Nationalists portrayed their struggle as a new “crusade” that would liberate Spain from the “foreign influence” of Marxism. In this narrative Franco was the new St. James, slayer of the “infidel” Reds who were likened to “Moors.” Like most leaders of the uprising, Franco had spent years in the Rif as a high-ranking officer in the Army of Africa. Under cover of German and Italian air forces, he crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with the help of Moroccan legionnaires, recruiting them for jihad (holy war) against atheists.⁴⁸ These two contradictory discourses—one designed for a resurgent, Catholic Spain, the other for colonized Muslims—produced two different policies under Franco’s dictatorship (1939–75). Within Spain, archaeology and historiography, architecture, and heritage were deployed in a massive propaganda effort steered by the Falangists, an influential faction in Franco’s right-wing coalition. Ideologically charged sites were meticulously rebuilt and framed as places of National Catholic memory, linking Franco to the Catholic kings and their triumph over Islam. But within Morocco the regime continued and expanded pro-Islamic policies, organizing the hajj and restoring and building religious structures.⁴⁹ Even during the war, officials instrumentalized Córdoba’s Islamic past. In May of 1939, Foreign Minister Juan Luis Beigbeder (formerly High Commissioner of Morocco, 1937–39) said the city would “rise again from its ashes” to become the locus of a Hispano-Arab renaissance.⁵⁰

It was in this context that Franco’s regime quietly took up the old Republican idea—removing the *crucero*, rebuilding the mosque, and opening it to Muslim worship—as a gesture of gratitude toward the Islamic world for its support in the Civil War.⁵¹ Franco himself expressed this intention as early as 1937, the height of the war. In a speech in Seville to Muslim pilgrims returning from the hajj, he highlighted the historic brotherhood between Spaniards and Muslims who, as people of faith, “must unite against those who have none.” In the Spanish version of his speech Franco said: “Just as today you visit Mecca, the Orient of your faith . . . so too, tomorrow, will you, the Muslims of the world, return to our holy places which I long to revive.”⁵² One of these holy places was doubtlessly Córdoba’s Mezquita, although Franco did not refer to it by name. But he did

48 Rocio Velasco de Castro, “La imagen del ‘moro’ en la formulación e instrumentalización del africanismo franquista,” *Hispania* 74, no. 246 (2014): 205–36.

49 Mosques, cemeteries, and hospitals were also built in Spain for Moroccan troops; these include the Almorábito Mosque in Córdoba (1937), designed by Municipal Architect Carlos Sáenz Santamaría.

50 Juan Luis Beigbeder and Amin al-Rihani, *Discursos pronunciados por Coronel Beigbeder y Amin er-Rihani* (Larache: Artes Gráficas Boscá, 1940) 7–8; Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus*, 162.

51 Juan de Contreras y López de Ayala [Marquis of Lozoya], “La Islamización de la Mezquita no remediaría nada,” *Diario Ya*, 7 November 1972.

52 “La estancia de generalísimo Franco en Sevilla,” *ABC Sevilla*, 4 April 1937.

so in the Arabic version transmitted by Moroccan historian Ahmad al-Rahuni, who was in attendance and whom Franco had appointed to lead the hajj. According to al-Rahuni, Franco pledged to “prepare [for Muslims] the Mosque of Córdoba and its environs so that it can be for them like a Kaaba to which they head from every mountain pass for worship and learning.”⁵³

Following the Civil War the regime studied *traslado* for years, but nothing happened. The official silence surrounding the project suggests that it was highly sensitive and controversial.⁵⁴ Yet, in fact, it was a well-known, open secret: visiting dignitaries and tourists were told about plans to move the “church” to another site. Meanwhile, local boosters sought to capitalize on Córdoba’s past through expositions and other initiatives that celebrated ties with the Islamic world. Especially under Mayor Antonio Cruz Conde (1951–62), various projects amplified the historic core’s Islamic-Andalusian character, preparing the city for the many tourists expected to arrive as Spain sought to rehabilitate its image on the international stage.

The post-Civil War period was a time of brutal repression and severe economic hardship. Spain was isolated because of its links to the Axis powers during World War II; it thus needed the Arab world, although that conflicted with its colonial agenda. In the 1950s, Franco took advantage of the Cold War to move closer to Western democracies. The old Falangist guard would soon be purged and a new class of technocrats would seek to modernize the economy through foreign investment, some of which was expected to come from oil-rich Arab states. In 1956 France withdrew from Morocco, and Arab states pressured Franco to do the same. After obtaining independence, Morocco’s King Muhammad V met with Franco in Madrid and was flown to Córdoba the next day, where he prayed at the Mezquita (Fig. 4.12). The local press recalled a time when “beneath the arches of the Mezquita, our ancestors, Islamic and Christian, prayed together [*sic*]; . . . [now] Andalusians and Moroccans feel united once again by the bond of history.”⁵⁵ That same month, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) visited Córdoba, and the press celebrated the growing number of tourists.⁵⁶ Meanwhile plans were unveiled for a great Hispano-Islamic Exposition, with extensive fairgrounds located next to the historic center. Organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Franco’s approval, the Expo was directed by an interministerial committee that included the leading Arabists and

53 *Al-Rihla al-Makkiyya* (Tetuan: Instituto General Franco de Estudios y Investigación Hispano-Arabe, 1941), 228; translated in Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus*, 162.

54 The Marquis of Lozoya, who served as Director General of Fine Arts (1939–51), wrote: “I opposed it then, insofar as I was able, and I was fortunate to have been heard” (“La Islamización”). For more on the Marquis of Lozoya and his views on restoration and Spanish heritage, see the contribution by Francisco Moreno Martín in this volume.

55 *Diario Córdoba*, 8 April 1956.

56 “La UNESCO en Córdoba,” *Diario Córdoba*, 22 April 1956, 1, 3; “Cada día es mas elevado el número de extranjeros,” *Diario Córdoba*, 26 April 1956, 8. Spain was admitted to the United Nations in 1955.



Fig. 4.12: King Muhammad V of Morocco visits the Mezquita after securing independence from Spain. Photo by Ricardo Rodríguez Sánchez, 4 April 1956. Córdoba, Municipal Archive, FO/A 80-02-17. Reprinted with permission of the Municipal Archive of Córdoba.

archaeologists of the day.⁵⁷ But the event was cancelled for reasons that have never been explained.

During this period, dozens of Arab and Muslim dignitaries were invited to Córdoba. The highlight of every official visit was a tour of the Mezquita, carefully orchestrated to avoid the *crucero*—so as not to offend Muslim sensibilities. Some, like King Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia who visited in 1957, were allowed to pray in front of the *mihrab*. In his memoirs, Cruz Conde recalled that the king's emotional oration unsettled the cathedral canons; but the mayor assured them that the king was praying to the same God and encouraged them to join him. Franco worried that the *crucero* would disturb illustrious Muslim visitors and even considered omitting Córdoba from official itineraries. Yet he saw the conservation and enhancement of the Mezquita as a great responsibility; as such (in Cruz Conde's words) "the triumph of the Cross over Islam seven centuries ago could not prevail." Despite his staunch Catholicism and despite reservations in the Church hierarchy, Franco

considered ending Catholic worship [in the monument] . . . He relished the idea of moving the Cathedral stone by stone to another place, restoring the Mosque to its original state. But he wanted to be very cautious and gather all kinds of opinions, noting how passionate they all were. He also agreed that the matter was very delicate.⁵⁸

Such an enormous and improbable undertaking is more understandable if we recall the large-scale reconstructions going on across postwar Europe and beyond. The 1931 Athens Charter had established new international norms for restoration: monuments were first and foremost documents of the past; as such, not only original fabric but later additions must be preserved as unique expressions of their respective eras. These historicist criteria would be reiterated in more definitive terms in the Venice Charter of 1964. But there was a gap between theory and practice.⁵⁹ Facing the enormous scale of wartime destruction and armed with new technologies and materials, architects rebuilt monuments in their original or idealized forms and, in some cases, moved them to new locations. In Spain, this approach has generally been associated with Falangist ideology. But here, as elsewhere, theories of restoration did not always correspond to particular political alignments.⁶⁰ Many architects of this generation sought to reestablish the lost wholeness and beauty of monuments, which they saw as exemplars that could inform contemporary architecture. And, in fact, in this same period the Islamic legacy was reappraised as an inspiration for a native Spanish modernism, articulated in the famous Alhambra Manifesto (1953). This effort was organized by Fernando Chueca Goitia (1911–2004), a towering

⁵⁷ "Una Exposición Hispano-Islámico," 133–4.

⁵⁸ Juan José Primo Jurado, ed., *Antonio Cruz Conde y Córdoba* (Córdoba: Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, 2005), 181–2.

⁵⁹ See Michele Lamprakos, "The Idea of the Historic City," *Change Over Time* 4 (2014): 8–38, at 12, 22.

⁶⁰ For a nuanced view see Julián Esteban-Chaparría, "The Conservation of Spain's Architectural Heritage: A Balance of Three Crucial Decades, 1929–1958," *Future Anterior* 5, no. 2 (Winter 2008), 34–52.

figure in Spanish architectural history, a restoration architect, and a liberal who quietly advocated removing the *crucero* and reconstructing the Mezquita.⁶¹

The *Traslado* Controversy of 1971–73

In June 1966, King Faysal of Saudi Arabia visited Córdoba and allegedly offered \$10 million to finance *traslado* (Fig. 4.13). Around this time, several developments conspired to make the project possible: the Second Vatican Council (1962–65); Spain's Law of Religious Freedom (1967); preparatory work for the World Heritage convention (1972); and the appointment of Rafael de la Hoz Arderius as head of the General Directorate of Architecture (DGA) in 1971.⁶² His private archive allows us to reconstruct this final reprise of the *traslado* initiative.⁶³

An eminent architect and a modernizer, La Hoz was heir to memories of earlier generations through his father, an architect and Republican politician who had been persecuted by the Franco regime; and through his father's colleagues, including Felix Hernández, conservation architect at the Mezquita and a pivotal figure in its archaeology and history, and Rafael Castejón, self-taught archaeologist and Arabist, former Andalusian nationalist, and long-time advocate of *traslado*.⁶⁴ Moreover, La Hoz had served as Provincial Architect from the 1950s; he would have been privy to discus-

61 Fernando Chueca Goitia, *Historia de la arquitectura española. Edad antigua y media* (Madrid: Editorial Dossat, 1965), 1:105–6; cited in the debate over *traslado* in *Arquitectura* 168 (December 1972): 33. For Chueca's views on the Mezquita, see his *Invariantes castizos de la arquitectura española* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Dossat, 1947), especially 37–38; for his views on the *crucero* see José Ignacio Cassar Pinazo, "Annotaciones al artículo 'Datos para la restauración de la Mezquita de Córdoba,'" *Papales de Partal* 2 (November 2004): 198–200. On Chueca's liberal politics, see Ascensión Hernández, "Guilty by Association? Chueca Goitia's Stylistic Restorations under Franco's Dictatorship," *Future Anterior* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2011), 23–25.

62 By 1972, oversight of the Mezquita had been transferred from the Directorate of Fine Arts to the DGA; Francisco Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950: Rafael de la Hoz como motor de la modernidad* (Seville: Diputación Provincial de Córdoba, 2019), 110n16; S. Herrero, personal communication.

63 Until recently, the only published account was Manuel Nieto Cumplido, *La Mezquita de Córdoba y el ICOMOS* (Córdoba: Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, 1976). Cassar Pinazo, "Annotaciones," 17–44 was the first to offer a reappraisal; see also Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 107–24 and Herrero, *De lo original*, 223–33.

64 For a biographical sketch of Rafael de la Hoz Arderius (1926–2000), see Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 35–42. His father Rafael de la Hoz Saldaña (1892–1949), Municipal Architect (1924) and then Provincial Architect (from 1925), ran in the 1931 municipal elections on the Republican-Socialist ticket and signed the proclamation of the Second Republic in Córdoba. Felix Hernández (1889–1975), active at both the Mezquita and Madinat al-Zahra from the late 1920s, was appointed conservation architect for zone six of the Servicio de Defensa de Patrimonio Artístico Nacional in 1940 (Herrero, *De lo original*, 169–220). Rafael Castejón Martínez y Arizala (1893–1986), a major power broker in the cultural life of the city, was director of the Royal Academy (1957–80). He also founded *Al-Mulk*, published by the Insti-



Fig. 4.13: King Faysal of Saudi Arabia at the Mezquita. Photo by Framar [Francisco Martínez], 19 June 1966. Córdoba, Municipal Archive FO/A 101–11–52. Reprinted with permission of the Municipal Archive of Córdoba.

sions about *traslado* and had seen the project tabled. Now a high-level Franco appointee, he devoted his energies to realizing it.

In his notes and in correspondence with colleagues, La Hoz called the *crucero* an “outrage” and an “architectural crime” against a great building that belonged to the people of Córdoba. He sought to build a case for *traslado* that was architectural, historical, and legal. “The cathedral is not an expression of the era,” he wrote, “but rather a mistake of the era that time has not pardoned.” In other words, the *crucero* was an unauthorized and unmitigated violation that could still be prosecuted: the statute of limitations had not expired.⁶⁵ He dreamt of restoring “the Idea” of the original Muslim architects: those endless vistas through the forest of columns toward an indefinite, fragmented horizon; a building at one with nature, modulating light, air, and water (Fig. 4.14). For La Hoz, as for Chueca, restoring this incomparable space meant recovering a great exemplar of Spanish architecture. But it may have also symbolized some-

tute for Caliphal Studies (1956); a modest step toward a university for Arabic and Oriental studies which Franco had promised to establish in the city, but which was never realized.

⁶⁵ “La catedral no es una expresión de la época sino un error de la época que no ha prescrito,” handwritten notes, late 1972, Rafael de la Hoz Arderius archive (hereafter cited as RLHA).

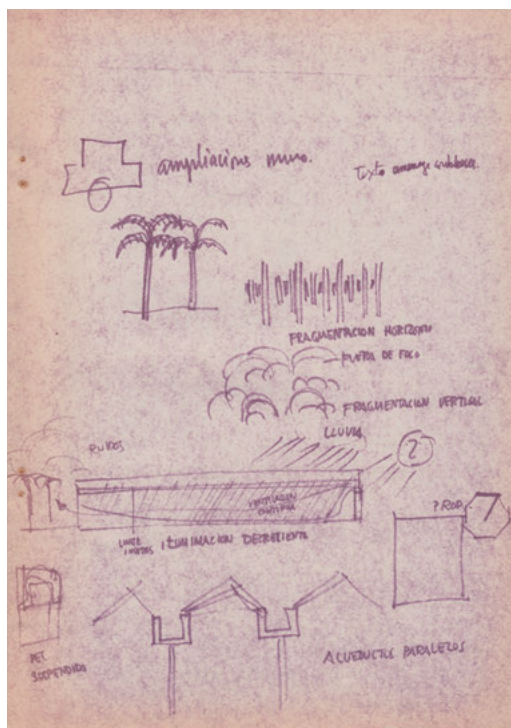


Fig. 4.14: Rafael de la Hoz Arderius, Sketches of the Mezquita, no date. Rafael de la Hoz Arderius Archive. Reprinted with permission of Rafael de la Hoz Castany.

thing deeper: the recovery of a lost regional or local identity, reflected in the unique proportions of (mainly Islamic) buildings in Córdoba and even in the bodies of its natives.⁶⁶

La Hoz developed a careful, incremental strategy, leveraging his connections and working largely behind the scenes. Publicly, he directed DGA staff to document the Mezquita, a first step toward a restoration plan. But privately, he sought to build support for *traslado* at the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, the advisory body to UNESCO on matters of cultural heritage) and among influential architects and academics. The key was to convince ICOMOS to hold a meeting of experts in Córdoba to endorse *traslado*, thus presenting the project's opponents with a fait accompli. La Hoz's meetings with ICOMOS President Piero Gazzola in Paris in spring 1972 and subsequent correspondence with Gazzola and Antonio Alarcón Constant, Córdoba's mayor (1971–79), attest to this strategy. La Hoz must have also met with Ga-

⁶⁶ La Hoz's 1973 essay "The Cordoban Proportion" was later published in Rafael de La Hoz Arderius, *La Proporción Cordobesa* (Córdoba: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Córdoba, 2002), unpaginated. On this essay see Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 290–91.

briel Alomar Esteve, vice president of ICOMOS and president of ICOMOS-Spain, who would emerge as a key arbiter in the ensuing controversy.⁶⁷

La Hoz also asked Felix Hernández to advise him on the “secularization” of the Mezquita and, in June 1972, Hernández replied with a lengthy memorandum. He had been working at the Mezquita for decades and thus had witnessed prior attempts at *traslado*. Although he seems to have opposed the concept, he nevertheless outlined aggressive interventions to restore the transparency (*diafanidad*) of the mosque.⁶⁸ La Hoz’s undated action plan appears to be based in part on Hernández’s memorandum. La Hoz planned to remove the plaster vaults and reconstruct the wooden ceilings, open all the arches on the patio facade, and reduce light from above (that is, coming in through the *crucero* windows). In order to make the choir transparent, he planned to remove the masonry infill and chapels between the piers; he would also remove the monumental eighteenth-century choir stalls. Having accomplished all this, he would go back to ICOMOS to ask them “to consider the possible *traslado* of the cathedral to the eastern site and the total reconstruction of the Mezquita in its original form.”⁶⁹

The few surviving drawings of the *traslado* proposal were likely executed by Francisco Pons-Sorolla, director of DGA’s Cities of National Artistic Interest section and architect of several high-profile projects to relocate monumental architecture—including the long-delayed project, advocated by Velázquez, to move the choir of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela out of the nave (1944).⁷⁰ These drawings include a site plan of the Mezquita and surroundings and before-and-after perspectives drawn from the south bank of the Guadalquivir River, across the Roman bridge—the emblematic view of the city that had been depicted on medieval seals (Fig. 4.15).⁷¹ The *crucero* and other Christian elements would be moved to a site on the east side of the Mezquita, installed in a new structure that would act as a kind of armature for them. The *crucero* would retain its eastern orientation, with the main doors of the new cathedral opening onto the street, while gardens were projected on the north and south sides. As for the mosque, the huge gap left in the middle would be reconstructed to its tenth-century state using antique columns that had been removed in the sixteenth century. The cathedral and the mosque, now separated, would both remain visible from the Guadalquivir. “My father insisted on that location, on the eastern side, to preserve the urban profile,” recalls Rafael de la Hoz

67 Various correspondence, RLHA; Cassar Pinazo, “Annotaciones,” 39–40.

68 “Memoria” 20 June 1972; Córdoba, Museo Arqueológico de Córdoba, FH 7, carpeta 1; S. Herrero, *De lo original*, 226–29.

69 “Notas para ordenar acción sobre la Mezquita de Córdoba,” RLHA.

70 Castro Fernández, *Pons-Sorolla*, 471–74.

71 The following account is based on Pons-Sorolla’s drawings and accompanying memorandum, “Datos iniciales para posible traslado de la Catedral Cristiana,” Madrid, November 1971, RLHA; later published (without drawings) as “La opinión de un miembro de ICOMOS,” *Arquitectura* 168 (December 1972): 30. This account also draws on two articles by Castejón: “La Internacionalización de la Mezquita Aljama,” *ABC Sevilla*, 13 September 1972; “Datos para la Restauración de la Mezquita de Córdoba,” *Arquitectura* 177 (September 1973): 11–17.

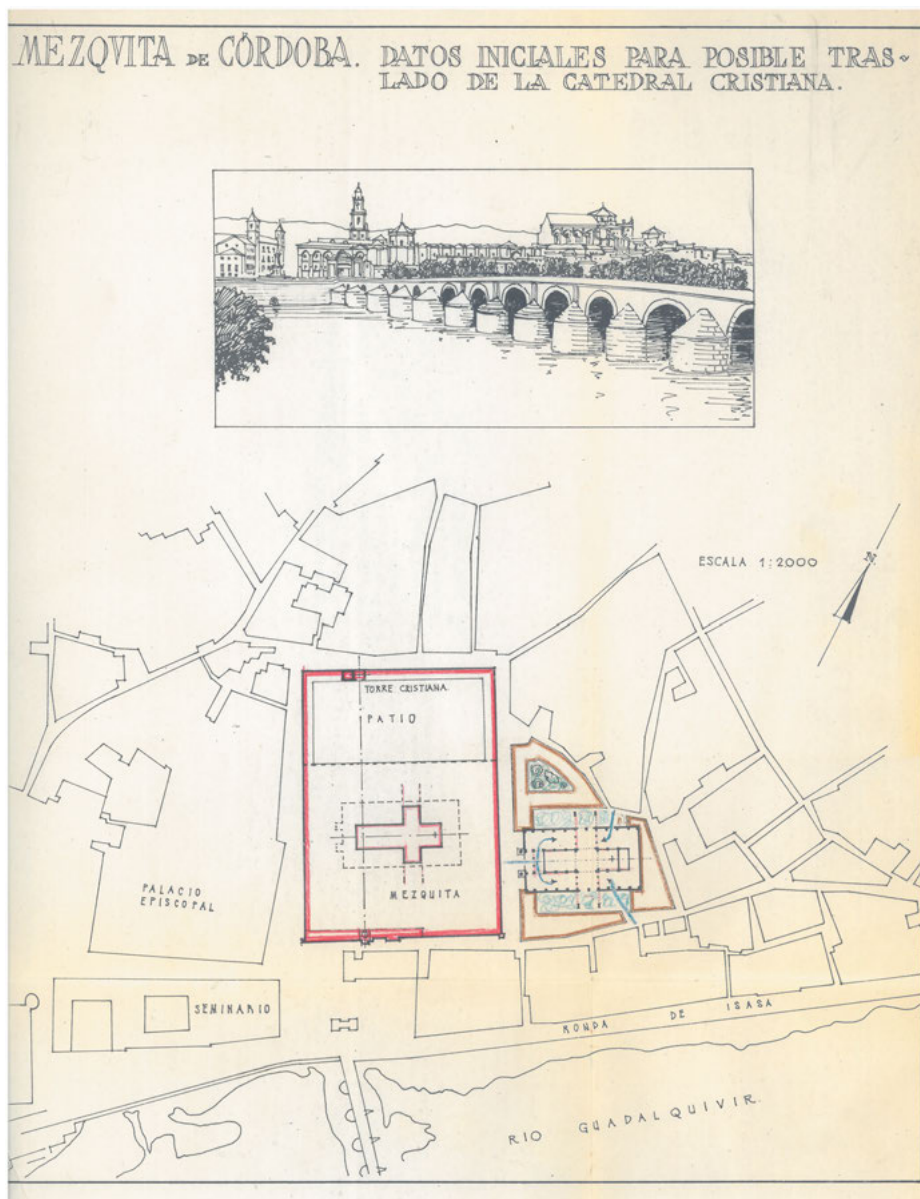


Fig. 4.15: Schematic proposal for “the possible *traslado* of the Christian cathedral,” probably by Francisco Pons-Sorolla for the Dirección General de Arquitectura, Ministerio de la Vivenda, 1972. Rafael de la Hoz Arderius Archive. Reprinted with permission of Rafael de la Hoz Castanys.

Castanys.⁷² But the minaret-cum-bell tower would remain in its historic location and retain its seventeenth-century stone cladding, since there were too few remains to reconstruct it.⁷³

Matters came to a head in summer 1972 when high-level officials alluded to a government-backed plan to separate the mosque and the “cathedral.”⁷⁴ Citing the City Council’s historical defense of the Mezquita, Córdoba’s mayor called for returning the building to its “original purity.” Then in September, Castejón published an article describing the initiative in some detail and noting that ICOMOS experts would study it in situ in October.⁷⁵ This ignited a firestorm of controversy, which in turn set off alarm bells at ICOMOS. Some Church authorities had been amenable to *traslado* “as long as it does not affect revenues,” even discussing alternate sites for the new cathedral. But now they began to resist it.⁷⁶ The most strident opposition, however, came from independent cultural academies. For these critics, the project represented an outdated approach to restoration, contravening the Athens and Venice charters; reconstructing the missing parts of the mosque could only result in historical “pastiche.”⁷⁷ Representatives of the academies wrote to Alomar and La Hoz, wanting to know if the DGA was in fact pursuing *traslado* and, if that were the case, if ICOMOS had already endorsed it. One eminent art historian expressed indignation that foreigners were dictating terms to Spain.⁷⁸

72 Interview, May 2017. Perhaps because of the vast demolition that would be required at this location (an archaeological site with Umayyad remains), Castejón proposed a different site to the northwest of the Mezquita where a former convent, San Pedro Alcántara, had recently been demolished; “Internacionalización”; Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 108–9.

73 Pons-Sorolla, “Datos Iniciales.”

74 Minister of Housing Vicente Mortes Alfonso (La Hoz’s superior), at a press conference in Córdoba in June; La Hoz in meetings with cathedral and city officials in late July. See Francisco Navarro Calapig, “Revalorización de la Mezquita,” *Diario Córdoba*, 29 July 1972; “Visita del Director General de Arquitectura” *Diario Córdoba*, 23 July 1972; José María Cirarda Lachiondo (bishop of Córdoba, 1971–78), *Recuerdos y Memorias* (Madrid: PPC, 2011), 285–6. “Cathedral” is cited from a statement by Mayor Constant, Archivo Municipal de Córdoba (hereafter cited as AM), Libro de Actas Capitulares, 31 July 1972, SF/L – 739.

75 Castejón, “Internacionalización.” For the mayor’s statement, see previous note. In March, the City Council had moved to nominate the Mezquita as an “international monument”; 17 March 1972, AM, Libro de Actas Capitulares, SF/L – 738.

76 On 17 November 1971, Juan J. Rueda Serrano, Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Housing, reported on the Church authorities’ interest. Following meetings with La Hoz in July 1972, they changed course, demanding the right to review and approve any work; Secretary of the Cathedral Chapter to La Hoz, 26 July 1972 (both RLHA).

77 Dionisio Ortiz Juárez, “El incierto futuro del crucero de la Catedral,” *Diario Córdoba*, 29 September 1972.

78 “One of the reasons for this indignation . . . [is the] interference of UNESCO”; José Camón Aznar to Alomar, 9 November 1972, RLHA. Camón Aznar was a member of several Royal Academies, including Fine Arts and History.

Gabriel Alomar sought to mollify the academies while quietly pressuring La Hoz to call off the project.⁷⁹ In November he addressed a special session of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the body historically charged with protection of heritage. He assured members that the purpose of the upcoming ICOMOS meeting was *not* to endorse *traslado*, but rather to develop criteria for the conservation of monuments throughout the world where different cultures and styles have been “superimposed.” The idea of “separating the mosque and ‘the *crucero*,’” however, was again on the table and definitive action must be taken to stop it. “For those of us who believe that this would be an immense error,” he said, “should we not say no, once and for all—in a form so well documented that it cuts off future recurrences of the idea?”⁸⁰

In the end, the ICOMOS meeting was delayed and its agenda quietly reconceived to address the special situation of monuments “belonging to different cultures.”⁸¹ At the final session, held at the Mezquita on 1 May 1973, the experts unanimously agreed that *all* layers of the building should be conserved in accordance with international norms. Their joint document, the “Córdoba Resolution,” emphasized the “enormous interest [of] such masterworks . . . for human consciousness” in the twentieth century. Not only were they artistically unique, but also served as symbols of reconciliation: “overcoming conflicts and rivalries of the past.” The Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba, they concluded, “contains an exceptional expression of the meeting and superimposition of Christianity and Islam.”⁸²

Some advocates of *traslado* described it as a gesture of universal understanding, akin to Atatürk’s transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a museum.⁸³ Separating the mosque and the cathedral would announce a historic reconciliation between the two faiths, transforming Córdoba into a beacon of hope in the postwar world. But the Córdoba Resolution turned that argument on its head: it was the “*superimposition* of Christianity and Islam” in a single monument that allegedly symbolized “overcoming conflicts and rivalries of the past.” Transforming the mosque-cathedral into a symbol of “cultural pluralism,” however, required dehistoricizing and depoliticizing the *crucero*—and the way to do that was through architecture. As Alomar said at the ICOMOS meeting:

The construction of a great nave in the interior of the mosque cannot be interpreted as a *damnatio memoriae* against Islam, nor does it obey religious motives. Rather it was an idea of the time, which required the creation of a large and light-filled space, opposed to that which moved the Islamic builders. *It is only a problem of architectural conception.*⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Alomar was providing blind copies of some correspondence to La Hoz; RLHA.

⁸⁰ “Informe sobre la Mezquita de Córdoba,” 20 November 1972, RLHA.

⁸¹ Gazzola wrote this in a letter to Mayor Alarcón on 6 December 1972; it was published in *Diario Córdoba*, 12 December 1972.

⁸² Excerpted in Nieto, *La Mezquita de Córdoba y el ICOMOS*, 53–54.

⁸³ For example, Castejón, “Internacionalización.”

⁸⁴ Gabriel Alomar quoted by Dionisio Ortiz Juárez, “El Triunfo de Hernán Ruiz I y su calumniado crucero de la Catedral de Córdoba,” *ABC Sevilla*, 15 May 1973, 26–27 (emphasis mine).

Rehabilitating the “Much-Maligned *Crucero*”

In the years leading up to and following Franco's death in 1975, the Mezquita became a stage for performing interfaith dialogue, and attempts were made to erase *traslado* from the historical record. Indeed, even during and immediately following the controversy, key actors sought to cover it up, insisting that the project to separate the mosque and the cathedral “in reality has never existed.”⁸⁵ But the idea was still discussed behind the scenes—part of a massive project to turn Córdoba into a kind of museum-city of Arab-Islamic civilization.⁸⁶ Financed by Arab states and brokered by UNESCO, the initiative ultimately died, like so many projects before and after that sought to highlight the city's Islamic heritage. Ultimately *traslado*, too, was abandoned, and opposition from some in the Church and cultural establishment was not the only reason. Spain had recently emerged from its long isolation and actors there were conscious of scrutiny in international arenas like ICOMOS. Nevertheless, *traslado* had broad support. “The Church had nothing to lose,” recalled Mayor Alarcón, “because the cathedral was going to be next door, just as splendid.”⁸⁷ In fact, observers recall that the main obstacle was technical: the intricate interweaving of mosque and *crucero* made it difficult, if not impossible, to separate them.⁸⁸

By the early 1980s the century-long project to re-Islamicize the Mezquita was more or less complete. Four arches on the patio facade had been opened and infilled with abstract, Islamic-inspired latticework, while plaster vaults had been removed in the western part of the building, replaced by plain wooden ceilings. But the vaults were retained in the eastern part—a decision that signaled a broader shift in policy. Echoing the recommendations of the 1973 ICOMOS meeting, a new restoration plan by Rafael Moneo Vallés and Gabriel Ruiz Cabrero argued that it was necessary “to accept the Mosque of Córdoba as and how it has arrived to our days, coming to terms with its rich and complex history.” The Islamic structure, they maintained, was “capable of assimilating numerous and varied interventions without losing its integrity.”⁸⁹ A year later, in 1985, a series of articles in *Arquitectura* (the same journal that had hosted a

85 Gabriel Alomar, “Coloquio Internacional del ‘Concejo Internacional de Monumentos y Sitios’ . . . Informe,” 6 May 1973, report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Camón Aznar to La Hoz, 17 October 1972 (both RLHA).

86 La Hoz was also involved in this initiative. See Francisco Solano, “Antonio Alarcón intentó hacer realidad una oferta árabe de mil millones de dólares,” *Diario Córdoba*, 10 February 1981, 25, 28; La Hoz, “Evocación de la Mezquita Mayor de Córdoba” transmitted on 1 January 1981 to Pablo Bravo Lzano, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with copy to Cecilio Valverde Mazuelas, President of the Senate.

87 Interview with Rosa Luque, “Cuando se frustró el plan de separar la Catedral y la Mezquita,” *Diario Córdoba*, 14 November 2010.

88 A high-ranking official reported this to the author. See also Rafael Moneo Vallés, “La Vida de los Edificios,” *Arquitectura* 256 (1985): 26–36, at 36n22.

89 “Proyecto de restauración de la Mezquita-Catedral de Córdoba” of 1984, cited in Herrero, *De lo original*, 257.

debate on *traslado* in 1972) consecrated the new attitude: Moneo and others argued that the Christian transformations had kept the building alive.⁹⁰ After a century of vilification, it seemed that the “much-maligned *crucero*” had been rehabilitated.⁹¹ But, in fact, dissension persisted. When the “Great Mosque of Cordoba” was finally added to the World Heritage list in 1984, it was celebrated *not* for cultural pluralism but rather for its attributes as a mosque. The nomination dossier (prepared by the new Andalusian regional government and the General Directorate of Fine Arts) recognized no value in the Christian layers—and even repeated Charles V’s legendary condemnation.⁹²

Few today (including this author) would advocate removal of the *crucero*. But the debate of the 1970s sheds light on deeper conflicts at a key moment in Spanish history: the transition from dictatorship to democracy. On the surface, the debate was about correct restoration practice, in particular how to approach monuments “belonging to different cultures.” But on a deeper level it was about the role of the Islamic legacy in Spain. The Córdoba Resolution and the architectural discourse that evolved from it, erased or sublimated the deep conflicts that had surrounded the construction of the *crucero*—conflicts that constitute one of the monument’s most important stories. It also erased modern conflicts, defusing the emotional and ideological charge that the Mezquita had held for recent generations. For the *traslado* project of the 1970s was a covert reprise of wider, pre-Civil War debates: is the Islamic heritage a living part of who we are, as Spaniards? Or is it a beautiful stage that has been surpassed, an “exotic” that never took root in Spanish soil?⁹³

A coalition of conservative academics and church officials finally defeated *traslado*, this time deploying the new international discourses of heritage and ecumenicism. At the cusp of a political transition that would likely restrict Church privileges, they managed to preserve both the great symbol of Reconquista and one of the biggest sources of tourist revenues in the country—revenues that were sure to skyrocket with World Heritage designation. In the coming decades, however, Church authorities would reject ecumenicism to the point of discrediting and even denying the Mezquita’s Islamic history. But that is another story.

90 Moneo, “La Vida de los Edificios,” 27–36; Antón Capitel, “La Catedral de Córdoba: transformación cristiana de la Mezquita,” 37–46. Ruiz Cabrero was now editor of *Arquitectura*. On the debate in the December 1972 issue see Cassar Pinazo, “Annotaciones,” 18–20.

91 Ortiz Juárez, “El Triunfo de Hernán Ruiz I,” 26–27.

92 “The Mosque of Cordoba,” 30 December 1983 (revised 9 May 1984), Paris, UNESCO Archives, CLT/WHC/NOM 135.

93 The latter idea was expressed by Washington Irving in *The Alhambra* (1832), where he wrote: “The Moslem empire was but an exotic that took no permanent root in the soil it embellished.” Irving’s text was excerpted as a preface to the English edition of Moneo’s article, “The Mosque and the Cathedral,” *FMR* 7, no. 33 (July-August 1988): 98–99.