

ARAB COLONY VERSUS SPANISH COLONY

HISTORICAL BASES OF COLONIALISM UNDER THE MIDDLE EAST AND WESTERN
PERSPECTIVES: DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE ARAB COLONY IN SPAIN AND THE
SPANISH COLONY IN MEXICO

BY

CARLOS ARTURO MACHADO RAMOS

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1492 was a key year in History. The year that meant a significant Cultural shock between 3 different worlds. First of all, the powerful Muslim state in its eager to spread its ideology and way of life in the Middle East and in the Europe of the 15th century; and lastly, the conservative and increasingly prolific Spanish Monarchy that was thirsting for power due to its recent disengagement from the Moors that were settled down in the Iberian Peninsula for almost 800 years; culminating in the unexpected discovery of the new continent, which would be the apex of the proliferation of both cultures, the elimination of the ideological bases of the Indians and the construction of their own identity. That year the Muslim rule over what we know as Spain, came to an end with the fall of the Emirate of Granada and that year Christopher Columbus discovered the new continent, although in the early days it was believed that he had finally found the route to India, hence, the natives were called Indians. The discovery of America, meant a new direction in history for both Spain and the Americas, which set out to conquer the new territories, in pursuit of the Spanish wealth. This work examines the role that Arabs have played in the cultural development of the medieval Spain and its influence in the cultural, economic, religious and linguistic realms and compares it with the features that made the Spanish colony one of the bloodiest interventionisms in world history, by focusing on the State strategies to rapidly spread the European culture as well as the brutal imposition of catholicism all over the Americas. This Essay will discuss the main features colonialism pours in the conquered territory and the elemental differences between Arab interventionism in Spain and the Spanish interventionism in Mexico that had brought to the table a controversial dialogue about the structuralism of both historical facts, by making a contrasting argumentative analysis of colonial essentialism as they present significant discrepancies in the process for the granting of land, as well as their impulse to dominate new territory and the syncretism itself, reflecting two different cultural connotations of Colonialism despite the similar essentialism bases evoked by each.

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Colonialism is commonly defined as a series of actions that one territory applies to another in order to subjugate it and dominate it. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017). It is a way in which one state exercises control over another state that is usually an economic and cultural subjugation, although sometimes also territorial, where a dominant country uses its strengths to coerce an oppressed group of people to its own benefit. In this way, it is generally believed every colony is developed under the same pattern, by utilizing the same control systems for the fulfillment of their purposes. Nonetheless, history teaches us how different historical events beyond representing similar patterns, behave in a contrasting manner.

On the one hand, Arab Interventionism in the Iberian Peninsula where Spain was rapidly islamized and named Al-Andalus (Watt, Montgomery & Cachia, Pierre, 2008), it adopted to the customs, culture and language of the invader and that influence played an important role in its historical evolution. According to Watt and Cachia (2008), the paleontologist and Spanish historian Ignacio Olagüe has even dared to affirm that the Arabs did not really invade Spain since the colony did not originate in a specific military landing and advance, but was the product of a civilizing dynamics as a result of the force of ideas. Furthermore, it was a progressive acculturation, commerce and transit of people and beliefs between the Peninsula and North African's Moors, coupled with the Visigothic weakness [*a kingdom that was settled down in Spanish Territory and in the Straits of Gibraltar*], gave rise to a new Islamic political reality that invented its own past and the violent events of 711 (Watt, Montgomery & Cachia, Pierre, 2008).

On the other hand, Since the Spanish conquest, followed by the colony, Latin America has suffered countless calamities, as the looting carried out by Spaniards that stole most of the riches of the new lands, full of silver and gold, vegetable products and hydrocarbons and other mineral extraction products such as iron. (Galeano, Eduardo, 1997). According to Jonathan Hart (2003), the expansion

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of colonialism in the 19th century was mainly due to the overpopulation suffered by European countries directly threatening the European standard of living, causing high rates of unemployment and a general uncertainty among the working class. In the same vein, the bourgeoisie had a new field to expand its industries and officials could quickly climb the ladder in their new destinations. Then, the Spanish colony in the Americas was presented as the perfect excuse to establish new economic relations, offering great business opportunities thanks to the possibility of investing in plantations, mines and the development of communication routes that would end up reversing great benefits to European investors (Hart, Jonathan, 2003).

First of all, the language is one of the main features that represents any culture and it was the way dominant nations spread their power over the colonized nations. The Arabic influence on the Spanish language has been significant, especially at the lexical level, due to the prolonged Arabic presence in the Iberian Peninsula between 711 and 1492. While 60% Spanish vocabulary is attributed to Latin, the remaining 40% is shared among other languages, in particular, Rafael Lapesa states that more than 4000 words from the Spanish lexicon, including place names, come from Arabic (*Ali Khrisat, Abdulhafeth & Sayyed Mohamad, Majiduddin, 2014*). All the Romance languages of the Iberian peninsula show a certain influence of the Andalusian Arabic, In many regions, especially on the border, people of Romance and Arabic speech coexisted, and likewise according to *Abdulhafeth and Majiduddin (2014)*, the Muslim and Christian kingdoms had numerous commercial and technological exchanges among them. The existence of bilinguals and people who traveled between one region and another produced sociolinguistic situations for mutual influence (2014). What we know today by the name of Castilian, had its origin in Castile when the Arab presence in the Iberian Peninsula was high. This was an important influence on the language since its inception. Spanish has, in many cases, Latin and Arab linguistic doublets with the same meaning, or to refer to exactly the same thing. For example: *aceituna* and *oliva*, *aceite* and *óleo*, *alacrán* y *escorpión* (*Ali Khrisat, Abdulhafeth & Sayyed Mohamad, Majiduddin, 2014*).

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On the other hand, a fundamental stage in the evolution of the language and very explanatory of its present situation. In it converge the evolution, selection and consolidation of the phonological, morphological and lexical tendencies already begun in Spanish peninsular, with the undeniable novelty that involves the implantation of a language in a huge and unknown space and the contact with indigenous languages (Bernstein, Marvin., Bamford, Henry, et al, 2018). With the colony, Spanish faced indigenous languages. The conflict between the language of the vanquished (Mexico) and that of the victor (Spain) promoted the Spanish Language because, since the end of the 15th century, the Spanish Crown continued to exercise the linguistic policy previously practiced by the Catholic Monarchs. (Bernstein, Marvin., Bamford, Henry, et al, 2018). As the *Expansion of Spanish Rule* suggests (2018), the Spanish Crown considered evangelization as well the spread of the Spanish Language the most important and, above all, the most efficient tools to carry out the total domination of its new lands, in this case New Spain (how Spaniards called what now we know as Mexico), since it was thought that with them it would develop, uniformly, a change in social, religious and linguistic habits (Bernstein, Marvin., Bamford, Henry, et al, 2018).

Secondly, Religion played an important role in both colonies being one of the ways of indoctrination. In the lands occupied by Islam, as described by Watt and Cachia (2008), Muslims respected the Christian and Jewish population, for belonging to one of the Abrahamic religions, which endowed them with a certain status. This established that, although they were not part of the Islamic community, they would be protected, have their judges and preserve their rites. These circumstances motivated a policy of capitulation agreements where many visigothic aristocrats were able to preserve properties and even a certain degree of power (Watt, Montgomery & Cachia, Pierre, 2008). The Spaniards on the other hand, destroyed and proscribed the temples, cults, books and doctrines of the ancient Mesoamerican state religions. They thus disavowed the ancient tutelary deities, the patron gods who ruled the ritual and political life of the Mesoamerican States and who

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defined their history, identity and strength, from the fertility of their corn to the might of their armies.

Lastly, the economy was crucial to the motive of the conquest in both colonies. The Moors propitiated a great advance in economic matter after its establishment in Spanish lands. Its economy was primarily of an urban nature and the Peninsula enjoyed great prosperity, which had its base in a very efficient agriculture, which highlighted the irrigation techniques, a very diverse handicraft and an important development of the trade, which played an intermediary role between Europe, Africa and the Middle East. This prosperity meant that the largest European cities of the time had important treaties in Al-Andalus. (Watt, Montgomery & Cachia, Pierre, 2008). On the other hand, Spanish colony was mostly focused on the collection of wealth of Latin American peoples. Eduardo Galeano criticizes the Spanish conquerors in his book *Open veins of latin america* (1997), who, according to him, usurped and plundered the natives and their wealth, and also criticizes the rest of Europeans who reached high levels of development thanks to the underdevelopment to which they condemned the Latin American people. The economy of the American colonies was based on mining of gold and silver, especially in northern Mexico, as well as agriculture and livestock, worked by indigenous or black slaves brought from Africa. The Trade with America was a real monopoly that was carried out through the Indian fleets, which sailed annually with military protection. (Galeano, Eduardo, 1997)

In summary, colonialism implies the domination by force of the local population of a territory of another region or nation by a more powerful nation just as happened in 711 with the Arab interventionism and in 1492 with the Spanish interventionism where the power in question targeted the new world and subjected other people to their political system, their institutions, their culture and even their language and religion, and managed and exploited their economic resources. In 1492, Mexicans discovered they were Indians and lived in a new continent, that they did not wear any

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clothes, that the Sin existed and that they owed allegiance to Kingdom from another world and a God from another and unique religion. (Galeano, Eduardo, 1997).

Thanks to the development of the present work, in which two historical processes as important as the ones that occurred in Spain and Mexico respectively in both colonies, could be crumbled into fundamental pieces for the study, making it possible to elucidate the ambiguous assertions that prevailed in the historical discursive apparatus until now. It was possible to differentiate both historical facts where the Arabs occupied the land of Spain in a very prepared and long-term, as the conquest and colony started even before their arrival to Spain, it is contemplated since the previous years when that the Arabs started designing it, recognizing the land, and preparing, apparently, future alliances that made it easier to rapidly occupy the new territory with less violence as the Spaniards later had in the Americas. The Spanish colony happened in a time Spain was just liberated of a 800-year period of Arab domination, it was a free country and with eager to increase its Empire and become a referent with the protagonist war with the Kingdom of Portugal and England. Spaniards looted the new land (Mexico), as they did in the rest of the colonized lands in Latin America, and exploited its natural resources and in parallel they imposed a universal language and a single religion that would define a new identity for the new Spain.

It was proven that these two colonies were carried out in a different manner being the Arabic interventionism more efficient, than the Spanish interventionism due to its principal motive, as well as its level of planning and organization. I finish with the following reflection by Eduardo Galeano: "Is Latin America a region of the world condemned to humiliation and poverty? Condemned by whom? God's fault, nature's fault? The oppressive climate, the inferior races? The religion, the customs? (...) Latin American underdevelopment is a consequence of alien development, that Latin Americans are poor because the soil we tread is rich (...)

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In this world of ours, a world of power centre's and subjugated suburbs, there is no wealth that does not result, at least, suspicious" (Galeano, Eduardo, 1997). The study of contrasts between two historical events that are apparently similar but at the same time very different in purpose and means of operation is of the utmost importance since it leaves the door open to new interpretations and thus to the construction of new sociolinguistic, religious, cultural and economic archetypes that can be designed for the new generations in an increasingly globalized world.

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