‘Immersed in the Snares of Apostasy:’ Martyrdom and Dissent in Early al-Andalus

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Introduction

Over the course of a decade in the mid-ninth century, the Muslim judge of Córdoba sentenced to death more than fifty Christian men and women who had willfully invoked the death penalty in their hearing before him. These Christians had descended from across the Cordoban mountain range, with the majority hailing from various monasteries while the rest came from within the city. According to our only source for their deaths, a Cordoban bishop named Eulogius (d. 859), these Christians had sought out the Muslim judge (known as the qadi) in order to disparage the prophet Mohammed and exalt the Christian faith. The qadi offered each Christian the legal option to recant and embrace Islam and thus receive an official pardon; upon their refusal, however, the judge carried out the prescribed execution and nailed their corpses onto gibbets before throwing them into the Guadalquivir. Their actions caused turbulence among Córdoba’s Christian clerical elite, which was divided on whether to praise these individuals as glorious martyrs or to denounce them as insurgent troublemakers. The emir ‘Abd al-Rahman II (r. 822-852) even took note of these professed martyrs and promulgated an edict formally punishing all blasphemy against Islam with execution. After more Christians came forth to their deaths, he ordered Córdoba’s Christian community to convene and deal with their dissident coreligionists, to Eulogius’ great indignation. So began the alleged “martyr movement” of the 850s and the intense juridical and theological debates engendered by their deaths.

The details of the martyrs’ lives and deaths have been the subject of lively debate extending all the way back to Eulogius’ own martyrologium. In his view, these martyrs
came forth to proclaim their Christian faith and were unjustly executed at the hands of hostile Muslims persecuting all of Christendom. Indeed, he writes:

And these [martyrs], authentically following the footsteps of those before them, have intrepidly professed God and our Lord Jesus Christ in the assembly of princes […]. And for that reason, the mob of infidels, breaking out in an unheard-of and savage fury, executed and sent all to heaven: presbyters, minor clergymen, ascetics, and saintly women; and to those [martyrs] who in their confession came to publicly defame their prophet and to ridicule their religion, [the Muslims] struck them down at once by cutting off their heads.1

Eulogius’ narration is steeped in anti-Islamic polemic and parochial in its presentation of the Umayyad administration’s handling of the Christians involved with the martyrdoms. Moreover, he only provides a partial representation of the reality of Christian life in Córdoba and the actual place of non-Muslims under Muslim dominion.

This thesis analyzes Eulogius’ writings and the Cordoban martyrs within the sociopolitical context of al-Andalus (also known as Islamic Iberia). It argues that the martyrs were active members of Andalusi society and the Islamic legal system who simultaneously disrupted and undermined the sociopolitical order of the Umayyad regime. Wary of the pitfalls of the Spanish nationalist conception of “Muslim” vs. “Christian” Iberia, the thesis argues that the Islamic legal system and al-Andalus’ sociopolitical layout prompted the martyrdoms and subdued the martyrs as internal dissidents within the Umayyad regime.2 A survey of the political and legal institutions in place by the mid-ninth

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1 Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.17, trans. by Pedro Herrera Roldán in *Obras Completas de San Eulogio de Córdoba* (Madrid: Akal, 2005), p. 84. Citations will refer to the book and chapter (or, when applicable, section number), followed by the page number in Roldán’s translation. I have relied and translated from Roldán’s Spanish translation in consultation with the Latin text published in *Corpus Scriptorum Musarabicorum*, edidit Ioannes Gil (Madrid: Instituto Antonio de Nebrija, 1973).

century reveals the broader context in which Eulogius, the martyrs, and the Muslim administration operated. Furthermore, the study of the sociolegal dynamics surrounding the martyrs’ deaths demonstrates the variances between the martyrdoms, countering Eulogius’ unified depiction of the martyrs as a singular, united “movement.” Similarly, the thesis examines the Islamic legal system’s role in exacerbating Christian religious and political loyalties while impacting the lives and religious identities of Córdoba’s Christian community during the 850s.

The phenomenon of the Christian martyrs of Córdoba provides a unique case study in the history of al-Andalus. Much of the previous Anglophone historiography on al-Andalus has focused on what scholars have conceptualized as the supposedly pluralistic and tolerant society of Iberia’s new Islamic context. Nevertheless, in the words of Jessica Coope, “anyone who is attracted by the image of a diverse and tolerant medieval Islam is bound to find the martyrs and their supporters a singularly repellant group.” Indeed, the martyrs emerge as a striking counterexample to the historiographical trend of overtly reflecting the relative tolerance characteristic of the Islamic legal system’s management of non-Muslims. These martyrs and their supporters instead appeared as vocal opponents to any form of tolerance in the religiously diverse city of Córdoba, which increasingly yielded to the Muslim environs’ push toward acculturation and integration. This interpretation finds support among recent scholars who have analyzed the events of the 850s in relation to


to the changing sociocultural atmosphere of early al-Andalus.  

In her examination of religious dissension and communal exclusion within Muslim society in al-Andalus, Maribel Fierro states that “there was no part of pre-modern life that religion did not touch, and none therefore that did not touch religion.” The legal and political dynamics of the martyrdoms cannot be disengaged from the theological lens through which Eulogius and the communities of ninth century Córdoba understood the martyrs’ predicaments. Coope and Wolf, among others, have called for separating Eulogius’ polemical construction of the martyr narratives from the actual events that transpired in the course of the 850s and the factors that influenced them. Together, they have presented various sociocultural sources to explain the martyrs’ actions, ranging from tensions in interfaith families to internal penitentiary motives. The legal dimension of the martyrdoms, however, has remained comparatively unexplored and disconnected from the scholarship of the sociocultural and political factors that encouraged the martyrdoms. Maribel Fierro has studied the Cordoban martyrs for the significance of some martyrs’ legal apostasy, which, because of their legal status as Muslims, had forced the martyrs to live anxiously as crypto-Christians prior to their deaths. Similarly, Adriano Duque has

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argued for the centrality of the legal procedure of the martyrs’ executions, highlighting law’s constitutive role in bringing about martyrdom. This thesis aims to provide a more focused examination of the role of law and the social order it bolstered in the case of the Cordoban martyrs.

The sources that preserve the events of the 850s reveal much about the nature of Cordoban society in the mid-ninth century and Christian reactions to those events. Our main primary sources consist of Eulogius’ *martyrologium*, comprised of the *Memoriale Sanctorum*, the *Documentum Martyriale*, and the *Liber Apologeticus Sanctorum Martyrum*. Eulogius’ biography, written by his close associate Paul Albar, has also survived and offers further details concerning the martyrdoms and Eulogius’ own death in 859. Uriel Simonsohn proposes that such martyrologies written throughout the Islamic Empire “should be seen first and foremost as legendary tales designed to uphold Christian confessional ranks against the backdrop of an ever-expanding Islamic environment.”

Furthermore, as Robert Cover argues in relation to martyrdom and judicial violence, “whenever the normative world of a community survives fear, pain, and death in their more extreme forms, that very survival is understood to be literally miraculous both by those who have experienced and by those who vividly imagine or recreate the suffering.”

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result, we can study Eulogius and his martyr rhetoric as a response to a perceived assault to his normative worldview—in his eyes, at the hands of the Islamic regime, and instigated most violently through the judicial execution of valiant martyrs.

An analysis of the decade-long episode of the Cordoban martyrs requires a sensitivity to al-Andalus’ historiography and its modern implications. As Ksenia Bonch Reeves acknowledges:

The uncompromising nature of the martyrs’ movement, and the incendiary character of Eulogius and Alvar’s anti-Islamic polemic allowed modern-day nationalist scholars of Spain to claim that the Cordovan martyrs heroically preserved Visigothic culture and values, which would be later transferred intact to Asturias and León by northbound Mozarab migrants.¹¹

Such views loom dangerously close to Spanish Catholic nationalist conceptions of al-Andalus as a foreign imperial invasion of a “Christian Iberia” that consequently portrays the martyrs’ actions as an anticolonial resistance against the Umayyads.¹² More recent scholarship has remained cautious in its assessment of the martyrs’ place in both al-Andalus’ history and legacy. Wolf, for example, constructed his arguments regarding the martyrs’ motives in opposition to previous claims that the martyrs reacted against direct persecution from the Islamic regime. These claims, he argues, inaccurately portray life in Córdoba in the mid-ninth century while simultaneously supplanting al-Andalus’ Islamic


¹² A well-known example of scholarship that adopted Spain’s Catholic nationalism approach to the history of al-Andalus is Francisco Javier Simonet’s *Historia de los Mozárabes de España: deducida de sus mejores y más auténticos testimonios de los escritores cristianos y árabes* (Madrid: Viuda é hijos de M. Tello, 1897).
context with Eulogius’ own polemical interpretations.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, Spanish scholars such as Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala and Ana Echevarría have focused on the shifting communal boundaries that both Muslims and non-Muslims negotiated, and the impact they had on different Andalusi communities.\textsuperscript{14}

The thesis is organized according to the multilayered structure of Andalusi society in the eighth and ninth centuries. The first chapter offers a bird’s-eye view of the construction of Iberia’s sociopolitical order under its initial Muslim conquerors and later jurists. It describes the broad contours of early al-Andalus’ legal and political systems from the conquest’s treaties to the formulation of the emirate’s authority in the ninth century. The second chapter zooms in on Córdoba’s authorities, specifically clerical elites and the emirs, through the texts of Eulogius and Albar, to elucidate their reactions to the martyrs. It demonstrates how the sociopolitical climate divided Cordoban communities and influenced Eulogius’ fabrication of the martyr narrative. The chapter also distinguishes between Eulogius’ unified narrative and the different experiences of the martyrs it commemorates. The final chapter is a bottom-up approach to these different experiences, focusing on their sociolegal dynamics. The examination of the martyrs’ interactions with the \textit{qadî} and the various legal factors that worked to implicate them highlight the role of the Islamic legal system in shaping martyrdom and dissent within early al-Andalus.

\textsuperscript{13} Wolf, \textit{Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain}, pp. 107-119
Chapter One:

\textit{Constructing a Sociopolitical Order}

The Political Layout of al-Andalus in the 8\textsuperscript{th} Century

The first years of the Arab-Islamic Conquest marked the formation of a nascent administrative structure in al-Andalus that would continue to develop throughout the course of the 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The tumultuous first decade of the conquest witnessed Arab-Islamic governors subjugating the cities of the former Visigothic kingdom through force and the negotiation of treaties. The conquerors settled the terms of subjection and rule amid local contestations of authority and subsequent rebellions after the Conquest. These terms nevertheless followed the pattern of domination Arab rulers had established in the Near East and North Africa, particularly in regards to the management of non-Muslims. The establishment of the Emirate of Córdoba in 756, however, commenced a new administrative period that saw the formalization of a distinctive Andalusi model of Umayyad rule. Following Abd al-Rahman I’s separation from the Abbasid caliphate based in Baghdad, al-Andalus came under the rule of independent emirs vying for stability and legitimacy. The efforts to restore order and assert authority in al-Andalus throughout the eighth century would shape the sociopolitical order of Umayyad Iberia for the following two centuries.

Muslim Arab and Berber governors set up the initial administrative order of Arab rule in the peninsula throughout the first decade of the Conquest. According to Miguel Cruz Hernández, the period prior to the Emirate constituted a form of Muslim “occupation” in which Muslim governors established their rule over local forms of authority; however,
during the Emirate, Muslim rulers began an “integrated conquest” in which they merged their sovereignty with local administrative structures.\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, the first decade of military occupation entailed the extension of certain Umayyad forms of territorial and social administration over the peninsula’s old and new inhabitants. The first extant Iberian source for the Iberian Conquest, the *Chronicle of 754*, reveals that already by 718 the governor Al-Hurr “sent the strong arms of the judges throughout Spain,” while other governors established various forms of taxation.\textsuperscript{16} Although it is uncertain whether the judges referred to in the *Chronicle* are Islamic judges (qādis) or civil officers similar to the *iudices* of the Visigothic period, governors at this time nevertheless instigated orders to legally punish soldiers who had hidden loot from the Conquest period.\textsuperscript{17} Similarly, the Christians and Jews of the former Visigothic kingdom became liable to taxes for the Arab treasury.\textsuperscript{18} In turn, the imposition of regulations on the conquerors and the diffusion of laws and taxes constituted the beginnings of Arab administration in the “occupied” Peninsula.

The majority of the newly formed al-Andalus experienced a period of pacification and the development of a new order in the decade following the conquest, despite continued military action in the regions of Septimania and southern Aquitaine.\textsuperscript{19} Taxation systems


\textsuperscript{19} Collins, *Arab Conquest of Spain*, p. 48.
restored previous patterns of estate-ownership as Christians regained their estates by paying new taxes to Arab governors.²⁰ Breaking with the pattern of setting up Umayyad capitals in previous, conquered capital cities in the southern Mediterranean, the governors established Córdoba instead of Toledo as the new seat of power in al-Andalus.²¹ While violence slowly subsided, local and regional treaties continued the subjugation of the peninsula and order returned with the restoration of local forms of governance and with the occasional direct rule of governors over conquered territories. Between 718 and 722, however, the most significant obstruction to the unification of Iberia came with the victory of the Visigothic nobleman Pelagius against Muslim troops in the Battle of Covadonga and the establishment of the Kingdom of Asturias.²² This development ended the political unity of the peninsula achieved in the Visigothic period and commenced a long period of antagonism between the new Christian and Muslim states.

The relationship between local Muslim governors and the broader administration of the Umayyad state centered in Damascus shaped much of the political management of the emerging Iberian province. Not only were the governors seen as subordinates of those in Ifrīqīya, the Umayyad province of Tunisia, but they were also initially elected by the wali in Kairouan.²³ Iberian governors raised taxes on non-Muslims in accordance with tax increases throughout the Umayyad state, demonstrating how the aims of the caliph in Syria extended to al-Andalus as well.²⁴ Consequently, however, the overthrow of the Umayyad

²⁰ Collins, Arab Conquest of Spain., pp. 46-47; Chronicle of 754, trans. in Wolf, Conquerors and Chroniclers, p. 137.
²¹ Collins, Arab Conquest of Spain, p. 43.
²³ Collins, Arab Conquest of Spain, pp. 44-45.
²⁴ Collins, Arab Conquest of Spain, p. 82.
regime by the Abbasid dynasty necessarily altered the nature of rule in Muslim-occupied Iberia. When the fugitive Umayyad prince ‘Abd al-Rahman I declared himself emir in al-Andalus, supported by a pro-Umayyad Syrian clan, he established a new monarchy that refused to recognize any Abbasid legitimacy. Indeed, from 757 onwards, al-Rahman I omitted the name of the Abbasid Caliph from the Friday prayer in the Mosque of Córdoba as a subtle withdrawal of political and military allegiance. Nevertheless, with al-Rahman I’s defeat of rival sources of authority, such as the local governor Yusuf or the Abbasid appointed governor al-‘Ala’ ibn Mughit in the 760s, emirs would now give de jure recognition to the previously de facto administrative powers of the Andalusi governors.

Following ‘Abd al-Rahman I’s establishment of the independent Emirate, the second half of the eighth century witnessed the emergence of new forms of consolidating and reinforcing the Umayyad state. Certain fiscal and legal structures instituted prior to the arrival of Abd al-Rahman I indeed stayed in place after the establishment of the Emirate of Córdoba. Nevertheless, according to Acién Almansa and Manzano Moreno, the Andalusi state at the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth century manifested its authority primarily in the development of tools for social control. Indeed, the Arab-Muslims since the early eighth century had established and negotiated the social order of al-Andalus through the regimentation of the legal, socioeconomic, and political statuses of the different populations under their control. These populations consisted of Arabs, Berbers, muwallads (local converts to Islam), and the Christians and Jews of the former

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26 Collins, Arab Conquest of Spain, p. 127.
Visigothic Kingdom, which all occupied separate positions in the new social hierarchy of Andalusi society. Negotiations of the social position of each population originated in the treaties made between Arab conquerors and local elites, following pre-established Islamic traditions regarding the treatment of non-Muslims. Consequently, as the peninsula became increasingly Arabized and converts to Islam grew in number, Arab-Muslim elites set up more extensive legal regulations for non-Muslims, known as the *dhimma* system, which served to uphold Arab-Muslim dominance and Umayyad political legitimacy.

The Formation of the *Dhimma* System in al-Andalus

The Muslim conquerors who constructed the new administrative structure of al-Andalus laid out the terms under which the non-Muslims in the peninsula were to be subjugated. Early Islamic jurists had elaborated a legal conception of Jews and Muslims, considered People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), through a theoretical divide between those residing in Muslim territories and those outside of it. After 711, the Jews and Christians in the former Visigothic Kingdom entered the *Dar al-Islam* (‘domain of Islam’), while those residing in unconquered lands remained in the *Dar al-Harb* (‘domain of war’).29 Throughout the Arab-Muslim state in North Africa and the Middle East, jurists categorized Christians and Jews in the *Dar al-Islam* as *dhimmīs* (‘protected persons’) subject to the *‘ahd al-dhimma* (‘pact of protection’).30 In al-Andalus, the legal structure handling

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*dhimmīs* commenced with the initial treaties made between the Muslim conquerors and the local elites, and came to fruition throughout the course of the eighth and ninth centuries.

One extant copy of a treaty made two years after the Muslim arrival between ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Mūsā ibn Nusair and the local ruler of Merida, Theodemir (or Tudmīr in Arabic), sheds light on the initial regulations imposed on the *dhimmīs* of Iberia. The treaty, known as the *Treaty of Tudmīr*, dates from 713 and highlights the terms under which the people of the city of Merida were to establish peace with the new Arab-Muslim conquerors and subsequently become protected peoples. The treaty not only stipulates that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz would neither depose Theodemir nor harm those under his rule, it also holds that the Christians of Merida “will not be coerced in matters of religion, their churches will not be burned, nor will sacred objects be taken from the realm,” if Theodemir complies with the treaty’s demands.\(^3\) Additionally, the pact specifies the yearly tax to be paid in kind to the Muslim regime, which consists of measures of wheat, barley, juices, and other products and is known as the *jizya* tax of the *dhimma* system.\(^4\) Consequently, in exchange for a yearly payment and a declaration of loyalty to the Muslim administration, the *dhimmīs* of Merida received religious autonomy and protection.

Historians often point to the *Shurūt ‘Umar*, or ‘*Pact of Umar*,’ to understand how Islamic jurists and Muslim governors crafted the initial structure of the regulations placed on *dhimmīs* throughout the early Islamic Empire. The *Pact* is believed to prescribe the terms imposed upon non-Muslims in the expanding Arab-Muslim state in the Middle East,

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particularly in Syria, and is prescribed to the mythological caliph and conqueror ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb (r. 634-44).\textsuperscript{33} Nevertheless, various versions of the document exist that date back to the eighth century before it became a canonized text for governing eastern Muslim-\textit{dhimmī} relations later in the ninth century.\textsuperscript{34} As a result, the \textit{Pact} is significant for studying jurists’ initial debates concerning non-Muslims and for tracing the formation of \textit{dhimmī} status. According to Janina M. Safran, however, the \textit{Pact} cannot be considered an applied code that delineates the full legal composition of \textit{dhimmī} status in al-Andalus nor a static template from which Muslims transplanted its terms into an Iberian context.\textsuperscript{35} Instead, due to the scarcity of local sources from the Iberian conquest period, I suggest a view of the \textit{Pact} as a coherent analogue through which to understand how Muslims conceptualized the relation between conqueror and conquered in the eighth century and how this conception regimented the \textit{dhimma}.

The \textit{Pact of Umar} that appears in Andalusi scholar Al-Turtūshī’s (1059-1126) \textit{Sirāj al-Mulūk}, a text on political theory, contains parallels to the terms of the \textit{Treaty of Tudmīr}; nevertheless, it contains additional terms imposed on non-Muslims that are present in later sources on \textit{dhimmīs} in Iberia. Presented as a petition from a Christian community to ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb, the \textit{Pact} stipulates that the Christians accept a list of obligations in exchange for safe-conduct (\textit{amān}). These obligations included restrictions regarding proselytizing, teaching the Quran, imitating Muslims in dress or character, and preventing kin from

\textsuperscript{34} For more information on the various versions written throughout this century and current scholarship on them, see Levy-Rubin, \textit{Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire}, pp. 58-87.
\textsuperscript{35} Safran, \textit{Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus}, pp. 11-16.
converting to Islam. It included laws on non-Muslims’ appearance and clothing, by which the Christians promised, “we shall clip the front of our heads” and “we shall bind the zunnār (a distinctive belt) round our waists.”\textsuperscript{36} Similarly, it included restrictions regarding the construction and repair of “new monasteries, churches, convents, or monks’ cells.”\textsuperscript{37} The matter of dhimmī buildings of worship appears frequently throughout sources from the ninth century, such as Eulogius’ writings and the legal text the Al-Mustajraya, which refer to Muslim rulers prohibiting dhimmīs from constructing or rebuilding churches after the entrance of the Muslims into the peninsula. Consequently, then, Islamic jurists in the following century after the conquest incorporated comparable measures on issues laid out in versions of the Pact of Umar into the dhimma structure of al-Andalus.

An additional, earlier treaty known as the “Pact to be Accorded to Non-Muslim Subjects” appears in Al-Shāfi’ī’s (767-820) Kitāb al-umm, a compendium of Islamic law used authoritatively by the Shafi’i school of Islamic jurisprudence. This version of the Pact seems to date from before the Pact of Umar’s canonization and it primarily sought to ensure submission to Islamic law and the protection of Muslim society from Christian insult and influence.\textsuperscript{38} Furthermore, it reveals the range of matters concerning Muslim-dhimmī relations that Muslim conquerors strove to regulate in order to organize the societies of the expanding Muslim empire. More elaborate restrictions are prominent in Al-Shafī’ī’s Pact, such as additional sumptuary laws stating, “you shall differentiate yourselves by your saddles and your mounts, and you shall distinguish your and their headwear [agalansuwa]

\textsuperscript{37} Al-Turtūshī, Sirāj al-mulūk, trans. in Lewis, Islam, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{38} Levy-Rubin, Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire, p. 79.
by a mark which you shall place on your headgear.” Additionally, certain terms demonstrate how Muslim conquerors subjugated the conquered to their laws and sovereignty, such as the following stipulation:

We shall supervise all your dealings with Muslims. If there is anything in which you are engaged which is not lawful for a Muslim, we shall reject it and punish you for it. If you sell a Muslim something we hold forbidden, such as wine, pig, blood, or carrion, and the like, we shall annul the sale, confiscate the price if it has been paid, and not return the thing to you if it still exists, but pour it out if it is wine or blood and burn it if it is carrion; if the purchaser has already consumed it, we shall not oblige him to pay for it, but we shall punish you for it.40

As in the Treaty of Tudmīr, the Pact leveraged these stipulations with a promise to provide dhimmīs with protected status and religious, but not entirely legal, autonomy. Consequently, throughout the Muslim Empire as in al-Andalus, Muslim conquerors constructed an initial set of terms and regulations that governed Muslim-dhimmī interactions and formed the fundamental proponents of dhimmī status.

During the conquest period, treaties such as the Treaty of Tudmīr and others comparable to the Pact of Umar served to extend the dhimma system into the peninsula as it had similarly been established throughout the Dar al-Islam in the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Not only were the non-Muslims in Iberia brought under the authority of new Muslim rulers, they now were also subsumed into the system of Umayyad administration as protected persons, forced to pay the jizya and subject to Islamic legal regulations. Nevertheless, the expansion of Islamic law and the Umayyad state in al-Andalus during the eighth and ninth centuries further altered and developed the sociopolitical status of non-Muslims in the peninsula. Legal efforts to consolidate distinctions between the statuses of Muslims and non-Muslims increased as large numbers

of Andalusi inhabitants gradually converted to Islam and tensions grew between *muwallads* and Arab lords. Subsequently, Islamic jurists elaborated the *dhimma* through negotiations regarding intercommunal relations between Muslims and *dhimmīs*, such as intermarriage and apostasy, and restrictions on *dhimmī* inclusivity within the Muslim community. As conversions increased and Muslim-*dhimmī* interactions became a daily social reality, Islamic jurists would further regiment the Islamic legal structure of al-Andalus into the ninth century to consolidate the social hierarchies and political order of the Muslim and *dhimmī* communities under Umayyad rule.

**Andalusi Developments in Islamic Law during the 8th and 9th centuries**

By the tenth century, the *qadīs* and jurists of al-Andalus formally followed the legal tradition of Mālik ibn Anas (d. 795), whose teachings guided the development of *dhimmī* regulations within the jurisprudence of the peninsula. According to Maribel Fierro, Malikism spread in al-Andalus throughout the eighth century while Mālik was still alive with assistance from Andalusi scholars who studied directly with Mālik in Medina; after his death, the Umayyad regime adopted Malikism, because the support of Maliki jurists helped legitimize their authority.\(^4\) For ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, formalizing Malikism as the ‘official’ legal school of the new Andalusi Umayyad caliphate after 929 allowed his regime to assert his legitimacy by imposing a single legal order.\(^2\) *Muwallad* rebellions and large

\(^4\) Maribel Fierro, “Proto-Malikis, Malikis, and Reformed Malikis in al-Andalus,” in *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution, and Progress*, ed. by Peri Bearman, Rudolph Peters and Frank E. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 61-63. It is important to note that Islamic law, broadly speaking, was still under development throughout the Muslim-ruled world and tended to follow local variances in its formalization.

scale conversions to Islam nevertheless led to the consolidation of Malikism’s connection to the Umayyad administration prior to the caliphal period. Indeed, throughout the eighth and ninth centuries, the elaboration of a legal order that defined ‘orthodoxy’ for Andalusi Muslims and regulated measures of social inclusion for dhimmīs ultimately solidified the sociopolitical order of Andalusi society.

The few surviving sources from the eighth and ninth centuries do not allow a full assessment of the spread and development of Islamic law in al-Andalus. As suggested by the Chronicle of 754 and argued by Fierro, however, a juridical authority was already in place during the time of Abd al-Rahman I.43 This authority followed the ra’y ahl al-Shām (“the opinion of the Syrians”) as introduced into the peninsula by the Syrian scholar Abū ‘Amr al-Awzā’ī (d.774), who served as Abd al-Rahman I’s doctrinal authority in legal matters.44 After al-Awzā’ī’s death, the Andalusi scholar Ghāzi ibn Qays (d. 814) introduced the first copy of Mālik’s legal text, the Kitāb al-Muwatta’, into the peninsula after he visited Medina.45 Although his copy is lost, numerous Cordoban scholars met Mālik during a pilgrimage and studied with him, transmitting additional copies of the Muwatta throughout al-Andalus by the end of the 8th century.46 Consequently, the students of Mālik’s disciples spread Malikism in the following century and adapted its teachings to an Andalusi context.

A useful source for analyzing the development of Maliki jurisprudence in al-Andalus is the Al-Mustajrāya, also known as the Al-‘Utbiyya in reference to its compiler,

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43 Maribel Fierro, “La islamización de las ciudades andalusíes a través de sus ulemas (s. II/VIII-comienzos s. IV/X),” in Genèse de la ville islamique en al-Andalus et au Maghreb occidental (Madrid: Consejo de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998), p. 70.
44 Alfonso Carmona, “The Introduction of Mālik’s Teachings in al-Andalus,” in The Islamic School of Law, p. 42.
46 Ibid., p. 44.
the Cordoban jurist ‘al-Utbi (d. 869). ‘Al-Utbi was a student of the Andalusi ulema (legal scholar and theologian) Yahyà ibn Yahyà, who himself was a disciple of Malik ibn Anas. The Al-‘Utbiyya is al-Utbi’s collection of juridical debates from Andalusi and non-Andalusi jurists providing legal opinions on issues pertinent primarily to al-Andalus. The text reveals the sociolegal concerns of Islamic jurists regarding the social composition, economic affairs, and general behaviors of Andalusi society during the ninth century. Ana Fernández Félix analyzed the ‘Utbiyya to assess what it reveals of the Islamization process of al-Andalus and the localized development of Islamic law during this period. Her work demonstrates how Islamic jurists questioned such peculiar matters as the difficulty for Andalusi Muslims to reach Mecca, whether Muslim soldiers in the Iberian frontiers could eat fruit from the Dar al-Harb, and how Muslims should interact with dhimmīs. The latter reveals how Muslim scholars strove to set the boundaries of Andalusi society and consequently gave shape to a local social order governed by the distinct legal statuses of Muslims and dhimmīs.

The juristic discussions concerning dhimmīs present in the al-‘Utbiyya reveal the continued development of the dhimma system in the ninth century. The text contains 280 questions proposed as debates (masā’il) between two or more scholars regarding dhimmīs, ranging from matters such as the impurity of Christian clothing to restrictions on conversion and apostasy. Many of the ‘Utbiyya’s legal opinions in these matters permit an assessment of the boundaries of the Andalusi social order vis-à-vis its Muslim and non-

Muslim populace. In one *mas'ala*, for example, it was asked what should be done in the case of a Christian who prayed with Muslims without their knowledge of his true faith. Sahnūn responded:

If the Christian were in a position where he feared and disguised [his status as a Christian] to protect himself and his money, then there would be no remedy and the group of Muslims ought to repeat the prayers they prayed with him. But if the Christian were in the position where he felt protected (*amān*), and he appeared to belong to Islam, when he was discovered, if he converts to Islam, the group of Muslims would not have to repeat their prayers and their prayers would be considered complete. However, if he did not convert to Islam, he ought to be beheaded, and the group of Muslims must repeat their prayers.49

This passage not only shows the difficulties for differentiating between Muslims and non-Muslims in the absence of external distinctions, it also demonstrates the strict measures in place to ensure conformity with Andalusi social divisions. In the case of a Christian who posed as a Muslim and refused to fully convert to Islam, Muslim jurists could call upon capital punishment to resolve such crossings of interfaith and intercommunal boundaries. Similar discussions abound on prohibitions concerning a Christian’s possession of a Muslim slave, the marriage between a Christian man and a Muslim woman, and the conversion of Muslims to Christianity or Judaism.50

Alongside measures regulating *dhimmī* life, the developing legal structure of al-Andalus defined forms of inclusion and exclusion for Muslim inhabitants of the peninsula. The close interconnection of religious identity with social status and communal membership permitted the formulation of religious orthodoxy to shape the measures for societal exclusion and persecution. According to Fierro, “in some Islamic texts, deviation

49 Ibid., pp. 466-467.
50 For an example of an early document that discusses these matters, see Al-Shāfiʿī, *Kitāb al-umm*, trans. in Lewis, *Islam*, pp. 221-222.
from fundamental religious principles in the form of apostasy and heresy was regarded as
treason against the state and revolt against the social order.”

In certain cases, Muslims holding heterodox views were theoretically assimilated to other religious groups, through statements such as “the Shiites are the Jews of our community,” in order to discredit their doctrines. Accusations of heresy or secret apostasy (zandaqa) also socially alienated individuals and could lead to execution. Consequently, Islamic law instituted measures to allow individuals to amend their exclusion from the Muslim community through repentance or, for dhimmis, conversion. Both were instigated through the imprisonment of those accused of heresy or apostasy so they might consider their repentance or conversion (an option legally termed al-istitaba), as was offered to the martyrs of Córdoba in the 850s.

Ultimately, the Islamic legal structure that developed in al-Andalus served to regulate the sociopolitical order through its dhimma system and its regulation of orthodoxy. For Muslims, self-censorship and conformity to orthodoxy served as the best strategy for inclusion into the community; for dhimmis, obedience to the legal boundaries established by their Muslim rulers served to ensure their continued protected status. Islamic law in the eighth and ninth centuries developed these regulations and provided means through which individuals could reincorporate themselves into the community. Consequently, Islamic jurists working to craft the social order of al-Andalus utilized legal means to force

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53 Ibid., pp. 474, 480-482.
55 Fierro, “Religious Dissension in al-Andalus,” pp. 466-467;
apostates or religious dissidents back to Islam or to establish a form of social inclusion that did not permit religious difference. The Maliki jurists of the ninth century even used their authority to persecute adherents of other legal doctrines, such as those who followed the *ahl al-hadīth* and Shafi’ism.\(^5^6\) Thus, as Maliki law spread and solidified itself as a tool for social control, the legal system consolidated the interrelation between religious identity and political status in al-Andalus, and connected the regulation of the social order to the Umayyad state.

**Law, Orthodoxy, and Political Legitimacy**

The Islamic legal order of al-Andalus increasingly intertwined with the administration of the Muslim emirs following the establishment of the Emirate of Córdoba and the propagation of Malikism across the peninsula. In the Muslim sociolegal conception of communal membership, the breaching of orthodoxy led to social exclusion and could be met with legal persecution. Accordingly, the expanding emiral administration exerted its authority over the social and legal powers of the *qādī*’s courts. Various *Muwallad* rebellions, local uprisings, and *dhimmī* resistance to the Muslim regime all contributed to a growing instability for the emiral administration.\(^5^7\) In response, the emirs throughout the ninth century gradually conjoined their rule with the Islamic court systems so as to quell dissent and provide legitimacy and security to their reigns. Indeed, the interrelation between religious identity and political status permitted the emirs to counter political

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opposition to their regime through the legal persecution of religious dissidence. Consequently, through labelling rebels as apostates or heretics (and vice versa), emirs mobilized the Islamic legal system to quash insurgencies, legitimize their authority, and further institutionalize the Andalusi sociopolitical order through its administrative judicial structures.

Throughout the reign of the emir ‘Abd al-Rahman II (r. 822-852), the Andalusi-Umayyad administration underwent a clear transformation to further secure the legitimacy and stability of the regime. The reign of his predecessor al-Hakam I (r. 796-822) had witnessed the brutal execution of 72 men who conspired to replace him as well as the suppression of a revolt in 818 in which he razed a suburb across the Guadalquivir for marching on the palace. In response, ‘Abd al-Rahman II implemented measures to discourage further resistance to his regime’s rule. Not only did he execute al-Rabi’ ibn Theodulfo for abusing his office as tax collector, he also created a council of jurisconsults known as the *shūrā* as a formal accord between rulers and Maliki scholars. Prominent *ulema* and jurists, such as Yahyà ibn Yahyà, partook in the revolt of 818, leading the emir to realize the necessity of their support for the security of the emirate. Consequently, the institution of the *shūrā* ensured the collaboration of the jurists and the regime, which “institutionalized the exercise of [the emirs’] authority as guardians of the faith and yoked the development of Islamic law, as well as the exercise of justice, to the regime.” With the *shūrā*, emirs not only oversaw the dispensation of justice under their authority, they

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58 Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus*, p. 43.
59 Ibid., pp. 44-45.
61 Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus*, p. 45.
also tied the persecution of religious dissent and social deviance to their image as legitimate religious rulers.

The legitimacy of Muslim rulers and support for their rule frequently rested on their ability to uphold religious orthodoxy and serve as protectors of their religion. ‘Abd al-Rahman III (r. 929-961), to ensure his legitimacy after naming himself caliph in 929, for example, proclaimed himself “the defender of the true faith against deviance, of the religion of the Prophet against false prophecy, of the sunna against heretical innovation, and of the Quran against corruption.”62 Similarly, ‘Abd al-Rahman II instituted measures to assert his status as a religious ruler, such as the destruction of a wine market in Córdoba; in the same way, his presiding over the judicial system served to promote his commitment to legal-religious issues concerning orthodoxy and social stability.63 Consequently, the proximity between the Andalusi administration and the judicial system provided emirs with a powerful tool to persecute those who they classified as religious and political dissidents. As the legitimacy of their reigns became tied to their promotion of orthodoxy, emirs became more invested and cognizant of the social affairs of their subjects. Through the link between the Umayyad administration and the courts, then, emirs could mobilize the legal system to suppress political opposition through the persecution of political rebels as religious dissidents.

The sociopolitical order of al-Andalus as solidified through Islamic law and the emir’s role in the courts interconnected religious identity with political allegiance.

63 Safran, Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus, p. 44.
Umayyad rulers frequently prosecuted or delegitimized political opponents through accusing them of being religious deviants. In 851, for example, when an accusation of blasphemy was waged against the nephew of al-Hakim I’s favorite concubine, ‘Abd al-Rahman II disqualified any jurist in favor of acquitting the defendant instead of enforcing a death penalty for his own political reasons.\textsuperscript{64} Cases of zandaqa allegations throughout the ninth century also reveal how emirs enacted their political will by means of their power in courts through accusations of religious deviance. Mālik described zindīq (pl. zanādiqa) in his al-Muwatta‘ as “an apostate who has secretly fallen away from Islam under the cloak of outward conformity” and must exclusively receive the death penalty.\textsuperscript{65} Maribel Fierro has highlighted how emirs such as ‘Abd Allāh in 895 and qadīs have used zandaqa allegations to persecute heterodoxy as well as conspirers against the regime. ‘Abd Allāh in particular ordered jurists to accuse his son of zandaqa to put him to death for allegedly conspiring to kill him.\textsuperscript{66}

In terms of the political legitimacy of rebels, Umayyad-Andalusi rulers frequently discredited opposition through using the religio-political ideology of orthodoxy. Since the legitimacy of the emir’s regime rested on his image as defender of the Islamic religion, Umayyad rulers devised rhetorical and propagandistic means to present their enemies as religious deviants who must be persecuted. Accusing Muslim rebels of being “Christianized” or expressing “Christian” behavior because of their allegiance to Christians who fought in their armies, for example, served as a poignant way of attacking opponents

\textsuperscript{64} Fierro, “Accusations of ‘Zandaqa’ in al-Andalus,” p. 253.
\textsuperscript{65} Fierro, “Accusations of ‘Zandaqa’ in al-Andalus,” pp. 251-252.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., pp. 253-257.
and obscuring any possibility for popular support. Similarly, Ibn Hafsun’s rebellion against ‘Abd al-Rahman III in the first decade of the tenth century became defined in the historical narrative by his religious identity as a muwallad. Since many muwalladun converted from Christianity, the allegiance of Muslims and Christians in Ibn Hafsun’s army led the Umayyad regime to disparage their social and political statuses, which consequently made them suspect in Muslim society and in the political community. As a result, ‘Abd al-Rahman III presented his defeat of the rebels as a justified and legitimate “holy war” against polytheists (al-mushrikūn).

The evident interrelation between religious identity, legal status, and political standing served to uphold a sociopolitical order in which jurists, in unison with the emir, delineated the boundaries of tolerable behavior in Andalusi society. The emir involved himself in the judicial process to assert his authority “before those subject to his rule in the circle of the court and beyond to the street.” Political dissidence and religious deviance were closely entwined through the rhetorical and legal efforts of emirs and qadīs to legitimize the Andalusi-Umayyad regimes and preserve their authorities. The sociolegal layout of al-Andalus consequently became strongly politicized as an individual’s conformity to religious orthodoxy, itself entirely legalized, secured their safety from the juridical machinations of the Islamic legal system. Similarly, allegiance to the emir’s regime prevented any targeting from qadīs working alongside the Umayyad rulers in their positions within the shūrā. For dhimmīs, this meant that the emir could mobilize the courts

68 Safran, Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus, p. 65.
70 Safran, Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus, p. 39.
at his will in any instance of non-conformity to the *dhimma* regulations or if the administration perceived any political tensions within the non-Muslim communities of al-Andalus.

**Dhimmī Status and the Reinforcement of the Sociopolitical Order**

By the ninth century, Islamic jurists devised numerous legal regulations for non-Muslims, which served to establish *dhimmīs* as second-class citizens in the sociopolitical order of al-Andalus.71 These regulations imposed restrictions on *dhimmīs* concerning their interactions with Muslims and the public display of their religion. Not only were *dhimmīs* forbidden from owning Muslim slaves or taking Muslim wives, they were also subject to sumptuary laws and theoretically prohibited from constructing new churches. As a collective, the *dhimmī* communities of al-Andalus paid the *jizya* tax to their Muslim rulers and most likely outnumbered the Muslim population up until the tenth century. As protected peoples under the *dhimma* structure, the security of *dhimmī* populations rested both on the mercy of the emir and on their own ability to keep the sociopolitical order undisturbed. Nevertheless, the position of *dhimmīs* in the Islamic legal system granted the Umayyad administration the power to assert its authority over *dhimmī* communities and eradicate any disruption to the regime’s political and social stability.

Despite the strict measures in place for the regulation of *dhimmī* affairs, sources from the ninth century suggest that the laws designed to define the social boundaries between Muslim and *dhimmīs* frequently went unenforced.72 Kenneth Baxter Wolf argues

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71 Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, p. 10.
72 Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus*, p. 11.
that, prior to 851, Córdoba maintained a relaxed legal climate in which Christians took office, constructed additional churches, and held funeral processions in Muslim neighborhoods. Regardless of local Muslim dissatisfaction, the emirs and local authorities used their discretion in the enactment of the strictures of the dhimma system. In practice, the Umayyad administration regularly left the dhimmī community unperturbed and usually refused to encroach on the autonomous organization of their internal affairs. Islamic law, for example, held that a Christian judge, instead of a Muslim judge, had the right to judge conflicts regarding Christian divorces, manumissions, and religious crimes. Similarly, in cities with a majority non-Muslim population, bishops often had ministerial roles alongside local Muslim governors. Dhimmīs nonetheless still obeyed the strictures on the jizya tax, restrictions on blasphemy, and prohibitions on certain gendered arrangements in interfaith marriages. However, the enforcement of all but the jizya tax still rested on the Muslim community’s policing of dhimmīs or the emir’s concern to eradicate such intercommunal interactions.

In moments of increased political tensions, the emirs mobilized the juridical and political setup of the Umayyad administration to repress dhimmī dissent through the

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76 Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, p. 11.
reinforcement of *dhimmī* regulations. During the episode of the Christian martyrs of Córdoba in the 850s, as will be discussed further in the next chapter, the emirs ‘Abd al-Rahman II and his successor Muhammad I both cracked down on the Christian population by deposing all Christians from the emiral court and destroying newly constructed churches.\(^77\) In Eulogius’ view, Muhammad I imposed the *dhimmī* regulations because “on all sides rebellions and wars arose which caused him great anxiety […] and he saw his army vanquished and rejected from all sides and he lamented that he was weakened from all sides and given to ruin.”\(^78\) In other words, Eulogius believed the martyrs and their repression came about as an extension of the suppression of rebellions taking place across al-Andalus that similarly preoccupied and threatened the Umayyad administration.\(^79\) In such cases, it would be expected that authorities would display the corpses of dissidents, which “warned of the swift and relentless justice of the regime, as did the public humiliation of offenders against law and order.”\(^80\) In moments of political necessity, then, the emir drew on *dhimmī* restrictions and judicial displays of violence to simultaneously quell non-Muslim opposition to his regime while reinforcing a normative social order.

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\(^{77}\) Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, pp. 16-17; Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 3.1-2, pp. 146-147.

\(^{78}\) Ibid. p. 148.

\(^{79}\) Reilly, *Medieval Spains*, p. 80-81. In reality, Emir Muhammad I’s rule began in a relatively peaceful period; nevertheless, the reigns of ‘Abd al-Rahmān II and his father before him witnessed their own share of revolts and *muwallad* uprisings so that the fear of rebellion still lingered in the 850s. Consequently, in 854, a revolt in Toledo accompanied growing tensions between Berbers and *muwallads*.

\(^{80}\) Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus*, p. 86; Collins, *Arab Conquest of Spain*, pp. 133-134. Roger Collins mentions the early Emirate’s use of Visigothic and Late Roman forms of public humiliation, such as the shearing of defeated rebels’ hair (‘decalvation’), during triumphal entries. These were followed by executions via crucifixion. Whether such executions were meant to affront Christianity or not, they nevertheless still represent early forms of public assertions of the emir’s enactment of punishment and justice.
The efforts of the emirs to call upon the *dhimma* strictures to temper the non-Muslim community reveals the constitutive role of the Andalusi legal system for the composition of the social order and the sovereignty of the Umayyad regime. Whereas the *dhimma* system placed non-Muslims on the lower end of the social hierarchy and theoretically disenfranchised them from the political community, only the actual imposition of *dhimma* regulations cemented their inferior status. The emirs regularly refused to enforce the *dhimma* laws to their full effect; yet when the political climate turned turbulent, these laws ensured that non-Muslims remained vulnerable and subject to the will of their Muslim rulers. During Muhammad I’s dismissal of Christians from his court, for example, Eulogius narrates how a Christian tax collector who worked with the Umayyad administration fell in disfavor because of his religious identity.\(^81\) This man had gained his position by means of his skills in the Arabic language despite his Christian status, which demonstrates the significance of Arabization for one’s status in Andalusi society. Nevertheless, he reacquired his office and status when, “immediately depreciating the faith of the Holy Trinity, he ceded to the perverse sect and no longer [wanted] to appear Christian.”\(^82\) By converting to Islam, the Christian tax collector evaded the legal regulations that worked to disenfranchise the *dhimmī* community. At the same time, however, his conversion meant a tacit acquiescence to Muslim identity’s dominant social and political position, and to the *dhimma*’s pull toward upholding it in Andalusi society and the Umayyad administration.

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The case of the Christian tax collector that Eulogius described shows how tightly entwined religious identity, the Umayyad-centered juridical system, and the sociopolitical order of al-Andalus were in the middle of the ninth century. The emir’s efforts to crack down on Christian dissent during the 850s led to the strict enforcement of the *dhimma* rulings that had been developing throughout the eighth and early ninth centuries. The Christian tax collector found his status threatened as a result of his religious affiliation, which put his political allegiance under suspicion by the emir. Consequently, his decision to apostatize from Christianity placed him outside the reach of *dhimma* regulations and ensured his safety within the Muslim political community, but out of favor with the Christian community. Indeed, for Christian authorities such as Eulogius, the legal option to convert out of fear for their safety or for “earthly glory” formed a snare by which the emir’s persecution of Christians forced them to apostatize.\(^{83}\) Conversion nevertheless constituted a politically charged form of social mobility that involved changes in one’s legal status alongside one’s religious affiliation. Indeed, in ninth century al-Andalus, conversion became a significant social and legal mechanism through which to escape subjugation, or even execution, under the *dhimma* by means of embracing a Muslim-dominated social order promoted by the Umayyad administration.

\(^{83}\) Ibid., pp. 146-147.
Chapter Two:

Eulogius’ Martyrs & Córdoba’s Response

Christian Status in Mid-Ninth Century Córdoba

[A]nd as regards Córdoba, which was once called Patricia and now goes by royal city for the residence of the monarch, [Abd al-Rahman I] had elevated her to the highest, exalted by honors, expanded in glory, filled with riches and increased enormously with an abundance of all the world’s delicacies, beyond what can be believed or said…, while under its very heavy yoke the Catholic Church groaned and was battered until its destruction.  

With these words, the Cordoban bishop Eulogius set the backdrop to his account of the Christian martyrs that sporadically came forth to their deaths throughout the 850s. He describes an opulent city flourishing in earthly delights as the Church and Christian community suffered from the emirate’s affluence. His view of a battered Church permeates his perception of Christian life in Muslim-ruled Córdoba, where he holds that “no one of us walks safely among them, no one marches calmly, no one passes through a precinct of theirs if not dishonored.” Based upon the impression from Eulogius’ statements, Christian life under the Andalusi-Umayyad regime in Córdoba was fraught with maltreatment and repression at the hands of its Muslim inhabitants. At the same time, however, in the Memoriale Sanctorum, Eulogius reproaches a certain group of coreligionists who considered it “no harm the destruction of churches, insults to priests, and the tribute which we [Christians] pay with grave pain every lunar month.” According to him, these same Christians considered the martyrdoms unwarranted, because the

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84 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 2.1, pp. 101-102.
85 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 1.21, p. 88.
86 Ibid., p. 88.
deceased allegedly experienced no persecution.\textsuperscript{87} Evidently, Eulogius paints a bleak picture of Church unity in the middle of the ninth century, and reveals clear disagreements in the Christian community regarding the nature of Christian life and dhimmitude in Muslim Córdoba. Amid such internal discord and discursive contention, Eulogius’ narrative of the martyrs emerged as both a reproach against a new caste of compliant Christians, and as a polemical attack on the Muslim administration of Córdoba.

By the middle of the ninth century, the Andalusi emirate had reigned from Córdoba for more than a century and, as Eulogius notes, the emir had exalted the city with wealth and political prestige derived from its status as the seat of Umayyad authority. The city’s eminence attracted Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike from across al-Andalus and the Muslim world, as Córdoba consolidated its position as a governing and learning center.\textsuperscript{88} According to Bernard Reilly, al-Andalus had caused a resurgence in the Iberian Peninsula’s population, economy, and agricultural production that would surpass its peak during the Roman period. Such prosperity transformed Córdoba into a burgeoning city of 90,000 inhabitants by the tenth century and altered the commercial, political, and social activities of Cordoban communities.\textsuperscript{89} The emiral court provided numerous opportunities for Muslims to acquire high standing in the Andalusi-Umayyad court. Similarly, prior to 854, Christians as well as Jews occupied certain administrative offices overseen by the emir. Christians additionally benefitted from local ecclesiastical structures, which provided them with the prestige and advantages of the church hierarchy.\textsuperscript{90} For both Muslims and dhimmīs,

\textsuperscript{87} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 1.18, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{89} Reilly, \textit{Medieval Spains}, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{90} Wolf, \textit{Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain}, p. 11.
then, life in Córdoba in the mid-ninth century did indeed offer opportunities to acquire high status, political influence, and socioeconomic prestige.91

Before the beginning of the martyrdoms of the 850s, the strictures of the dhimma system went relatively unenforced and the social boundaries it strove to uphold appeared to be blurring as the Christian populace integrated into Muslim society. Neither Arabic nor Latin sources from the time, for example, mention laymen following the tenets of the dhimma’s sumptuary laws, which nonetheless coincide with the jeers and derision that priests suffered in Muslim quarters while in their clerical garbs.92 Similarly, Eulogius mentions at least thirteen different monasteries and Christian institutions of worship, with at least two having been established during his own lifetime.93 The emirs ignored the restrictions on dhimmīs holding office, as is seen with the first voluntary martyr, Isaac, who was promoted to the office of exceptor republicae for his fluency in Arabic.94 Despite the relaxed legal climate, however, Cordoban Christians in the middle of the ninth century were still subject to the jizya tax as well as laws against blasphemy and apostasy. Eulogius himself decries the monthly tribute so burdensome that “it is preferable to us the


92 Wolf, Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain, p. 12. As discussed in Chapter 1, these laws included regulations on specific clothes expected of Christians (such as the zunnār, a distinctive belt) and regulations against Christians wearing distinctively Muslim apparel.

93 Wolf, Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain, p. 13.

94 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 2.2, pp. 106-107; Wolf, Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain, p. 13. Although the exact responsibilities of this title are debated, Wolf argues the office of exceptor republicae was equivalent to the title Arabs referred to as kātib adh-dhimam (“secretary of the covenant”), who oversaw the protection of the Christian and Jewish communities.
interception of death than the painful danger of a long indigent life” and describes how the martyrs suffered capital punishment for charges of blasphemy and alleged apostasy.  

Nevertheless, besides taxation and restrictions on affronts to religious boundaries, the Christian community lived among Muslims mostly undisturbed by the legal order. Members from both religious groups likely mingled in the emiral court, conversed in Arabic, and could well have looked alike in the absence of sumptuary regulations.  

The loosely regulated interactions between Muslims and Christians permitted the gradual acculturation of Córdoba’s Christian community to Arab-Islamic culture just as the dhimma’s partial enforcement maintained a social order that privileged Muslims and encouraged Christians to convert. According to Jessica Coope, the increasing prosperity of the Andalusi-Umayyad regime enticed Christians to adopt elements of Arab Muslim culture for their financial and social advantages, and in many cases conversion to Islam was the main pathway to these benefits.  

The example of the martyr Isaac, who acquired his office because of his linguistic abilities in Arabic, stands as a clear example. Similarly, the case of the Christian tax collector who converted to Islam, as mentioned in the previous chapter, reveals how converting to Islam could prove politically, financially, and socially advantageous in Muslim Córdoba.  

Indeed, although relaxed, the dhimma structure in place in mid-ninth century Córdoba still worked to “maintain a stable, pluralized society

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95 Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.21, p. 88.
96 Echevarria, “Translocating Religion in the Mediterranean Space,” pp. 114-115. Indeed, Echevarria notes how sources from both the East and the West about dhimmis have critiques on their efforts to resemble Muslims. Monastic habits and beards, in particular, caused distress, since Christians saw the cloak and beard as markers of the Muslim elite.
97 Coope, *Martyrs of Cordoba*, p. 3.
with a clearly defined ruling elite.” Although there are no records of the conversions taking place at the time, there was a clear shift in cultural power that followed the flourishing of the Umayyad regime and tied with the *dhimma* to assert Muslim dominance. While Arab-Muslim culture grew in authority and privileges, the impassioned Christians Eulogius and Albar denounced converts and those embracing Muslim culture, which indeed suggests an increased acculturation and conversion rate in Córdoba’s Christian community.

The shift in cultural power in Córdoba and the rise in conversions to Islam elicited diverse responses from Christians who disagreed on the nature of their status under Muslim rule. Because the primary sources for examining Christian life in mid-ninth century Córdoba come from Eulogius and Albar, an analysis of Christian opinions concerning their social status is limited to what can be assessed from their own views and reproaches to those they disagreed with. Nevertheless, the nature of Eulogius’ writings, particularly the first book of the *Memoriale Sanctorum*, overtly presents his responses to the criticisms of other Christians, which were primarily directed at the martyrs. From their differing stances concerning the martyrs, one can extrapolate broader impressions of contemporary attitudes.

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99 Coope, *Martyrs of Cordoba*, p. 3.


102 Similar divergent responses arose within Muslim and Jewish communities in Muslim-ruled regions. For more on these, see García-Arenal, “Jews of al-Andalus,” p. 113.
to Christians’ dhimmī status, their social position vis-à-vis their Muslim counterparts, and their religious identity in al-Andalus. Furthermore, Eulogius’ defense of the martyrs against the critiques of fellow coreligionists reveals how the martyrs emerged as a divisive force within the Christian community of Córdoba.

A Church Divided: Córdoba’s Response to the Martyrs

The beginning of the voluntary martyrdoms in 851 exacerbated tensions between the Muslim regime and the Christian community, inducing the latter to splinter along the lines of their divergent reactions. The first voluntary martyr, Isaac, instigated the turbulence when, in May or June of 851, after leaving his position as exceptor republicae and spending three years at the monastery of Tabanos near Córdoba, he returned to the emiral court and appeared before the qadī. He exhorted the judge to explain Islam’s tenets to him so that he might “become a vigorous follower of [his] faith.” Before the qadī could conclude his exposition, Isaac spoke out to condemn the judge’s beliefs, his refusal to join Christianity, and the prophet Mohammed himself. According to Eulogius, the qadī responded with such astonishment and furor that he “wept copiously” and illegally struck the martyr. After incarcerating him and consulting the emir, he charged Isaac with blasphemy, beheaded him, and had him hung upside down across the Guadalquivir. In response to the crime, Abd Al-Rahman II issued an edict similarly penalizing all future blasphemers with the death penalty. When around ten more martyrs appeared in the following months, the emir applied

103 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum, Preface, 2, p. 67.
104 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum, Preface, 2-4, pp. 67-69.
pressure to the Cordoban Church leaders, who promptly arrested clerics believed to be linked to the martyrs, with Eulogius prominent among them.\(^{105}\)

The incarceration of notable figures such as Eulogius was one measure among a few adopted by the Church to discourage more martyrdoms and compromise with the emir’s demands.\(^{106}\) In early 852, Abd al-Rahman II sought a solution to the sporadic emergence of martyrdoms by compelling the secular leader of Córdoba’s Christian community to convene a council of bishops in which they could internally condemn and cease the voluntary martyrs.\(^{107}\) Although the Acts of this council have not survived, it can be deduced from Eulogius’ writings that the bishops did indeed reproach and condemn the martyrs with ecclesiastical censure. Eulogius tells Albar in a letter that he had set out to write the *Memoriale Sanctorum* in response to those who, “frightened by the ire of the enraged tyrant, changed their minds with unheard-of fickleness and censured, cursed, and declared as instigators of great crimes both those who acted and those who supported [the martyrs].”\(^{108}\) Nevertheless, the Christian leaders failed to discourage future martyrs, as the summer of 852 witnessed seven more martyrdoms, with these continuing intermittently.


\(^{106}\) Eulogius’ connection to the martyrs has been a point of much scholarship, particular in Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, pp. 62-74. Some have argued that Eulogius was a ringleader in the martyrdoms and that he was imprisoned for that reason. Nevertheless, it must be noted that despite Eulogius’ affinity to the martyrs, the Christian community imprisoned notable supporters of the martyrs for the very purpose of silencing allies, not instigators, of the martyrdoms. In Wolf’s words, “if we treat Eulogius’ martyrology as a frame for a personal protest against the policies of his ecclesiastical superiors, we can account for many of the discrepancies between the instigator role so often attributed to the priest and those textual references that do not support such an active assessment of his part in the martyrdoms.”

\(^{107}\) Hitchcock, *Mozarabs in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, pp. 31-32.

until 859. Upon Abd al-Rahman II’s death in 852, the emir Muhammad I acknowledged the inability of his predecessor to quell the waves of martyrs and further instituted measures against the Christian community. In an effort to dissuade more Christians from martyrdom, he enforced the full measures of the *dhimma* system, including banishing Christians from his court and leveling their religious monuments.\(^{109}\)

The measures taken by the Church and the emirs against the voluntary martyrdoms only served to divide the Christian community of mid-ninth century Córdoba, and the martyrs stood at the center of the conflict. Eulogius and Albar’s writings reveal that the martyrs lost popular support following the emirs’ and Church’s denunciations of their actions. Indeed, Eulogius wrote with particular fervor against “the many faithful and—oh, how grievous!—even priests, who in their imprudence do not fear to take glory away from these confessors.”\(^{110}\) In their eyes, the martyrs were not worthy of praise and were even false martyrs because they failed to produce miracles and experienced no persecution to merit their deaths.\(^{111}\) For many of these Christians, however, the disfavor received by supporters of the martyrs meant potential targeting from Christian leaders or even the emir himself. As a result, according to Wolf, “any Christian who felt he had too much to lose by being categorically linked to the martyrs had little recourse but to disassociate himself from them by openly criticizing their actions.”\(^{112}\) Consequently, Eulogius and any sympathizers to the martyr movement stood at odds with the Church and the majority of

\(^{109}\) Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 3.9, p. 157. Eulogius mentions here that a female congregation had been forced into the city by Muhammad I’s destruction of their convent. Roldán suggests it occurred during the summer of 853.

\(^{110}\) Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.18, p. 85.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., p. 85; for a broader discussion on Eulogius’ discourse on martyrdom without miracles, see Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, pp. 77-85.

\(^{112}\) Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, p. 64.
Córdoba’s urban Christian community, who appeared to conceive of the martyrs as a danger to the delicate balance struck between the Church and the emir to maintain a safe and relaxed legal climate.

The centrality of the martyrs in the discourse surrounding Christian stances to Córdoba’s Muslims and what appears to be disagreements on the nature of dhimmī status strongly influenced contemporary opinions of the martyrs, and Eulogius’ own view of their detractors. The mainstream Christian community, in opposition to more radical Christians such as Eulogius and Albar, had “held that a martyrdom of this type was extraordinary and impious because no violence of the authorities had pushed them to revoke their religion or had separated them from the cult of their saintly and pious religion.”113 Prior to Muhammad I’s crackdowns on Christians in an attempt to dissuade any future martyrs, the emirs had indeed not established any persecutory measures against Christian religious practices. The dhimma structure had ensured that non-Muslims could retain their religion without any enforcement of conversion or affronts to communal boundaries. Nevertheless, these critiques in part countered Eulogius’ exaltation of the martyrs as saints equal to the martyrs of the early Church, who suffered persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire.114 Consequently, in their defense of the martyrs, the martyrs’ supporters constructed an image of a persecuted Church simultaneously intended to denounce Islam, the Umayyad regime, and these Christians who disassociated from the martyrs and opted for assimilation to Muslim society.

113 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 1.18, p. 85.
114 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 1.17, p. 84.
Eulogius and Albar stand as two particularly vocal opponents to what appears to be, at least in part, the result of the increased assimilation and integration of Córdoba’s Christian community into Arab-Muslim society. As discussed above, Córdoba prior to the mid-ninth century had experienced a gradual growth in wealth tied to the emirate’s prosperity in al-Andalus and the consolidation of Islamic culture’s political dominance.\textsuperscript{115} The shift in cultural power from Latinate Christianity to Arab-Muslim culture ushered the Christian community’s increased adoption of Muslim cultural elements; at the same time, conversion rates in Córdoba likely escalated as Christians turned to the political and financial benefits of Muslim society and the Umayyad court.\textsuperscript{116} Indeed, Albar more strikingly echoes Eulogius’ own sentiments on the perceived Arabization and Islamization of Cordoban Christians in his \textit{Indiculus Luminosus}, where he complains:

Do not all the Christian youths, handsome in appearance, fluent of tongue, conspicuous in their dress and action, distinguished in their knowledge of Gentile lore, highly regarded for their ability to speak Arabic, do they not all eagerly use the volumes of the Chaldeans, read them with the greatest interest, discuss them ardently, and, collecting them with great trouble, make them known with every praise of their tongue, the while they are ignorant of the beauty of the Church and look with disgust upon the Church’s rivers of paradise as something vile.\textsuperscript{117}

While Albar deplores the knowledge of Arabic and Islamic literature possessed by Christian youth, Eulogius expresses similar discontent towards Christians who worked with the Umayyad regime:

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\textsuperscript{115} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 4-6.
\textsuperscript{116} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 7.
And [the emir’s] will is favored by the wickedness of some Christians, if after all they must be called Christians and not operators of iniquity, those who, to obtain the privilege of collecting taxes, buy the [emir] with their services and crimes to the clergy and the community of the faithful, and load the neck of the miserable with an unbearable weight of tribute.\textsuperscript{118}

Evidently, Eulogius and Albar’s writings contain clear invectives against coreligionists who were entrenched in Córdoba’s new social, political, and cultural climate. It is these same Christians that Eulogius refutes because they, “out of fear of losing [their] earthly dignity, declared as heretics those they did not worship as martyrs.”\textsuperscript{119}

Once the Church denounced the martyrs, Eulogius and Albar’s writings in favor of the martyrs, against Christians interacting with Muslims, and against Islam itself, all emerged as radical positions to hold in mid-ninth century Córdoba. The Church, under pressure from the emir, strove to mitigate the turbulence caused by the martyrs, and the Christian populace subsequently turned against them for their own protection. For many of these Christians, keeping their religious preferences under the Muslim populace’s radar served to diminish any impositions of their second-class status; these assimilated Christians were not likely to support the martyrs once they began to draw attention to the Christian community, since they benefitted from the safety that assimilating into Cordoba’s Muslim society could offer.\textsuperscript{120} Under Eulogius’ more radical stance, however, such Christians, “like salt without taste, ought to be thrown out of the Catholic community and trampled by all, cut out by the evangelical axe like trees without fruit and condemned to eternal flames.”\textsuperscript{121}

For him, Christians associated with Muslim society and all detractors of the martyrs were

\textsuperscript{118} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 3.5, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{119} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 1.28, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{120} Wolf, \textit{Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain}, pp. 64-65.
\textsuperscript{121} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 1.27, p. 94.
“slipping easily into the sacrilege of impiety.” Consequently, as Coope argues, this divided the Cordoban Christians into the “pragmatic” integrationist Christians, who assimilated to and were even dependent on the Muslim community for social, political, and economic gain, and the radical Christians, who refused any assimilation or integration into Muslim society, championed the martyrs, and viewed Islam as intolerable for a Cordoban Christian society.  

**Anti-Islam Polemics, Christian Persecution, & Religious Identity**

The attitude of the radical Christians toward Islam and the Muslim regime was a crucial divisive factor for the different sides of the Christian community, and their stances served to estrange Eulogius and Albar considerably from the urban Christians of the metropolitan Córdoba. As previously mentioned, both groups fundamentally disagreed on the nature of their oppression under Umayyad rule and the capability of Christian integration into Muslim society. In the eyes of Eulogius and Albar, the martyrs served as virtuous upholders of Christianity and Christian identity, which was now threatened by both Islamic culture and Christian assimilationists. At the time, not only had numerous Christians turned to Arab-Muslim culture for social, economic, and political gain, but some even went so far as to adjust their conception of Christ’s divinity to accommodate Islamic beliefs. The moderate Christians of Muslim Córdoba clearly developed measures to establish more similarities than differences with their Muslim counterparts, which their radical

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122 Ibid., p. 94.
coreligionists saw as a complete affront to Christianity. Furthermore, whereas the mainstream Christian community of Córdoba held no sympathy for voluntary martyrs claiming to be persecuted prior to Muhammad I’s measures against them, Eulogius and Albar found the Muslim regime oppressive and worthy of resistance. A closer look at the radical Christians’ polemic against Islam will serve to highlight the position under which the martyrs divided the Christian community and to understand how Eulogius constructed their narrative as a reproach to the Umayyad regime and an integrationist Church.

The stance of Christians who opposed the martyrs and tolerated the Muslim regime stemmed from the precarious position in which the Umayyad regime had placed the Christian community at the time of the voluntary martyrs. In the absence of outward hostilities and repressive legal strictures prior to 854, the urban Christians of Córdoba lived fairly comfortably, benefitting from the political and economic opportunities provided by Islamic culture. As previously mentioned, for the “pragmatic Christians” of Córdoba, integration into Muslim society proved advantageous and safer than bringing attention to their community as a second-class population. Consequently, Muhammad I’s reinforcement of the _dhimma_ and renewal of hostilities to Christians after the martyrdoms marked the martyrs as the instigators of violence, responsible for bringing persecution onto the Christian community. For the radical Christians, however, not only did such a view detract from the image of the martyrs as virtuous saints, but it also sacrilegiously presented Islam and life under the Muslim regime as subjects that Christians and Christianity could compromise on.

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125 Ibid., p. 47.
In defense of the martyrs and in opposition to Islam, Albar and Eulogius refused to tolerate a stance of religious compromise and crafted numerous arguments to present Muslim society as overtly corrupt, oppressive, and dangerous for Christians. The radical Christians argued that the prophet Mohammed was a precursor to the Antichrist and was in certain ways comparable to the Antichrist himself.\textsuperscript{126} Muslim society, they believed, corrupted Christians and was fraught with worldly, bodily concerns tied to sensual pleasure, economic gain, and bodily purity, as opposed to spiritual matters.\textsuperscript{127} For Albar, a form of Christian persecution manifested itself in the tense Muslim-Christian social relations that came out in the public attacks of Christians by Muslims:

And woe again and a third time, innumerable times woe to us, who bear this derision of their mockery, and doubt of the time of the persecution of the Antichrist. Thus in the same way when by chance in the streets they come upon the priests of God, they roll stones before their labored steps and insult them with an outrageous and infamous name, defaming them with vulgar sayings and disreputable songs […] and they attack and deride with curses both sexes, all ages, and the whole flock of Christ the Lord, not with one mockery but with a thousand insulting infamies.\textsuperscript{128}

Additionally, to those Christians who considered the martyrs the cause of persecution, Albar refuted their claims by citing the case of the martyr Perfectus to place blame on the Muslims instead. Perfectus had purportedly entered a “friendly pact” with a group of Muslims who invited him to speak freely about Christianity’s view of Mohammed. Once Perfectus told them, the Muslims supposedly broke their oath and dragged him to his execution, which to Albar was evidence enough that the Muslims were “the instigators of evil, the champions of error, the inflictors of pain.”\textsuperscript{129} Furthermore, in Eulogius and Albar’s view, God had brought the persecution of Muhammad I onto the Christians not due to the

\textsuperscript{126} Albar, \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, pp. 286-290.
\textsuperscript{127} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Cordoba}, pp. 48-51.
\textsuperscript{128} Albar, \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, p. 276.
\textsuperscript{129} Albar, \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, p. 274.
martyrs’ actions, but because the Christian community had in fact failed to champion the holy martyrs.\textsuperscript{130}

Albar and Eulogius’s polemics against Islam illuminate how the radical Christians conceived of Islam as a religion that was fundamentally incompatible with, and antagonistic to, Christianity. Our sources reveal that, by the mid-ninth century, the Muslims and Christians of Córdoba had reached some degree of consensus on doctrinal matters, particularly in terms of reconciling similarities between Christian and Muslim conceptions of Christ.\textsuperscript{131} Albar’s correspondence with bishops from across al-Andalus reveals the presence of Christian “heresies” taking root both within and beyond Córdoba. They particularly spoke out against Adoptionism, a religious ideology that strongly divided the lines between Christ as human and divine and permitted a vision of Christ that was comparable to Mohammed and thus reconcilable with Islam.\textsuperscript{132} Less compromising, yet non-radical, Christians, on the other hand, held that Islam itself was a heresy that had stemmed from Christianity.\textsuperscript{133} These Christians found Islam to deviate from Christianity to varying degrees, occasionally allowing room to form a theological balance between both religions. The radical Christians, however, disapproved even further of this view and discredited Islam as far worse than a heresy. In Albar’s words, “All previous heresies and errors came from Judea or the Church. Only Mohammed opposed a reign against that of Christ, making use of rebellion and the sword. With good reason is he called Antichrist who is the most open defamer and the most subtle destroyer of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{134} In other

\textsuperscript{130} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{131} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{133} Albar, \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, p. 272; Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, pp. 45-48.
\textsuperscript{134} Albar, \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, pp. 298-299.
words, Eulogius and Albar believed a theological compromise with the Muslim populace was fundamentally an attack on Christianity.

Ultimately, for the radical Christians, assimilation and compromise with Córdoba’s Muslims signified persecution and the erosion of an orthodox religious and communal identity. Indeed, the ecclesiastical learning and intellectual circles of Eulogius and Albar, as well as a considerable number of martyrs, provided them with a vastly different and incredibly insular notion of Christian culture. As Albar notes in his biography of Eulogius, both men grew up learning from the abbot Speraindeo in the monastery of Saint Zoilus; there, they discussed doctrine and scripture and, as Albar notes, “where were the books in metric poetry, in prose, or of history that escaped his attentive examination?” Through his later travels, Eulogius even brought back to this monastery such works of classical Latin and Church literature as Augustine’s *The City of God*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and Juvenal’s *Satires*. Consequently, in the eyes of the radical and uncompromising Christians, cultural changes such as the increased adoption of Arabic by Christian youth and familiarity with Islamic writing signaled specifically poignant attacks on Christian faith and culture. As a result, they adopted a stance notably different from mainstream Christians and denounced Christian assimilation and Islamic culture’s encroachment over the former preeminence of Latinate ecclesiastical education in Christian identity.

The gradual acculturation of Córdoba’s Christians to Arab-Muslim culture indeed constituted yet another sign of Islam’s danger to Christian identity protested by the radical Christians, fixated on a ‘purely’ Christian Cordoban society as they were. According to

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135 Albar, *Vita Eulogii*, pp. 134; 140.
136 Albar, *Vita Eulogii*, p. 141.
Coope, the cultural shift of the first half of the eighth century and Córdoba’s relaxed legal climate had made the mutual acculturation of Muslim and Christian society appear “more like assimilation—that is, a one way cultural shift pulling Christians into Arab Muslim culture.” Consequently, alongside his rebuke of the Christian youths who held more knowledge in Arab-Islamic literature than in Latin ecclesiastical writings, Albar includes a strong invective against the Christians adopting Muslim culture and integrating into Islamic society:

Everyone opens his mind to Antichrist (Mohammed) almost continuously. Christians have his mark on them when they neglect their own ways, proven by the Fathers, and follow those of the Gentiles. They have his name on their foreheads when they forget the Sign of the Cross for the expression of the Muslims […]. When Christians undergo circumcision to avoid Muslim scorn and despise the circumcision of the heart which the Lord has commanded, what else do they do but bear his mark in their minds and on their bodies?138

Christian anxieties concerning circumcision in particular point toward Córdoba’s cultural shift and the fears of the clerical elite due to its significance as a permanent “physical mark of collaboration with the enemy” that served to integrate Christians into the Muslim court at the expense of their inner religiosity.139 Such methods of assimilation appeared to be deliberate affronts to Christianity and their notions of a ‘pure’ Christian identity.

Those Christians who integrated into Muslim society by keeping their religion concealed received the brunt of the anti-assimilationist Christians’ reproach. Albar, for example, considered “half-hearted Christians” those who, to gain favor in the emiral court, “do not say their prayers openly before the pagans; they do not fortify themselves with the Sign of the Cross when they yawn; they do not profess Christ as God openly before them

137 Coope, Martyrs of Córdoba, p. 3
138 Albar, Indiculus luminosus, pp. 299-300.
139 Coope, Martyrs of Córdoba, p. 58.
but in surreptitious words.”¹⁴⁰ The radical Christians believed Islamic society enticed Christians to hide their religion, to integrate, to assimilate, and ultimately to convert for their political and economic convenience. It was this encouragement to hide one’s religion in order to not only gain favor in court, but also to not call attention onto their second-class status, that purportedly constituted persecution at the hands of the Muslim regime. In the radical Christians’ opinion, “what persecution could be greater, what more severe kind of suppression can be expected when one cannot speak by mouth in public what with right reason he believes in his heart?”¹⁴¹ In truth, the political dominance of Islamic culture, the tense social relations between Christians and Muslims, and the emir’s ability to repress the Christian community at his will all served to encourage integration by means of direct conversion or the concealment of one’s Christian identity. These enticements signaled a Church at danger and an eroding Christian culture in Córdoba for Eulogius and Albar. The biggest concern of the radicals—eventual Christian conversion to Islam—lay at the heart of their anti-Islamic anxieties regarding assimilation, and the dhimma system played a significant sociopolitical and cultural role in exacerbating these communal boundaries.

**The Dhimma, Conversion & the “Snares of Apostasy”**

As discussed in the previous chapter, Andalusi Muslim jurists had developed Islamic legal rulings on conversion, apostasy, and the crossing of religious boundaries throughout the course of the eighth and ninth centuries. By the 850s, the dhimma system had elaborated intricate regulations against Muslims who apostatized, dhimmīs who passed

as Muslims, and certain dhimmī-Muslim marriage arrangements, among other transgressions. According to Janina Safran, these laws served to uphold a status quo of Arab-Muslim political and religious dominance that converts to Islam disrupted in the first centuries after the Iberian Conquest.\(^{142}\) Uriel Simonsohn is one among many to write recently on the social, legal, and political significance of conversion in the first centuries of Islam’s expansion. He argues that, not only did converting to Islam provide opportunities for tax exemption, emancipation, and state employment, but it also involved new commitments to certain practices and shifts in one’s communal membership.\(^{143}\) Throughout the course of al-Andalus’ history, conversion and apostasy proved to be critical points of intercommunal discourse and tension due to their implications for community members’ political and religious allegiances. Nevertheless, the social and cultural turn to assimilation in mid-ninth century Córdoba aggravated the Christian community’s concerns involving apostasy and the maintenance of interreligious boundaries.

Modern discussions on conversion in the late antique and early medieval periods have highlighted how the progress of changing one’s religious affiliation constituted “not a swift and absolute process, but rather a progressive and an incomplete one.”\(^{144}\) The paths dhimmīs took to fully join Islamic society at the time involved ideological and practical motives, uncertainties regarding property and legal status, and the expectation of adherence to new rituals and social behaviors.\(^{145}\) In many cases, converts repented and returned to

\(^{142}\) Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus*, p. 60.
their former religions; a great number of apostates from Islam were in fact such converts who reverted.\(^{146}\) According to Simonsohn, however, “the movement of people from one religion to another and back is often not addressed directly in our sources but rather is reflected in them.”\(^{147}\) In the sources for mid-century Córdoba, the most notable signs of reverting apostates appear in allusions to the qadi’s efforts to force certain martyrs to convert to Islam as repentance for their actions. Consequently, concerns regarding the legal enforcement of apostasy point to political and cultural tensions surrounding the fluidity of intercommunal boundaries, and such concerns are evident in Eulogius’ own writings.

Islamic law, although never outright forcing dhimmīs to apostatize, did construct a series of rulings that threatened individuals to leave their religion or suffer the death penalty. In the case of born Muslims who apostatized from Islam, Islamic jurists disagreed on whether capital punishment should be applied immediately or after a period of imprisonment in which the prisoner might reflect and revert.\(^{148}\) For dhimmīs who converted to Islam and then returned to their former faith, jurists restricted their leniency and held that continuous apostasy merited immediate death.\(^{149}\) The dhimma ultimately expanded regulations against conversions, and these in practice resulted less clear and straightforward than an Islamic jurist might hope. Although Islamic law forbade the marriage between a Muslim woman and a dhimmī man, for example, there were no prohibitions on the opposite arraignment due to the expectation that a patriarchal Muslim

\(^{146}\) Ibid., p. 207.
\(^{147}\) Ibid., p. 207.
\(^{148}\) Ibid., pp. 207-208. This legal option to repent and reconvert is known as the al-\(\text{al-istitāba}\), see Fierro Bello, “Accusations of ‘Zandaqa’ in al-Andalus,” p. 251-252.
\(^{149}\) Ibid., p. 208.
husband would convert a subordinate wife.\textsuperscript{150} At the same time, jurists expected the children of such lawful relationships to be born and raised as Muslims. In reality, however, having a Muslim father did not necessarily equate to an adherence to Islam’s tenets. As was the case of a select few martyrs, children of interfaith marriages indeed did grow up to the religious affiliation of their non-Muslim parent (usually the mother).\textsuperscript{151} Accordingly, these children were treated as apostates and equally put to death should they refuse to repent and “re-convert” to Islam.

The radical Christian martyrrologists of Córdoba believed that these legal restrictions on Christians leaving Islam were oppressive and persecutory, forcing true Christians to practice their faith in hiding.\textsuperscript{152} In the third book of his \textit{Memoriale Sanctorum}, where he reproaches the emir Muhammad I for his attack on the Christian community, Eulogius mentions “those who, disabled by their enormous carnal fear, still serve the orders

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\item Fierro Bello, \textit{La Heterodoxía en al-Andalus}, 56-57. Fierro notes that \textit{dhimmī} mothers or other female relatives tended to exert the most influence on women martyrs. For more on the female martyrs and their connection to female relatives, see Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, pp. 77-78.
\item The next chapter will delve deeper into the practical impact these restrictions might have had on the Christians Eulogius describes. Nevertheless, as it relates to Eulogius’ construction of his martyr narrative, it suffices to point out that Christian martyrrologies from the Islamic context frequently describe such hidden Christians going to their deaths for “divine forgiveness.” In the words of Simonsohn, “Quite often, these figures were described as individuals who were born Christian, converted to Islam, and eventually, in their quest for divine forgiveness, returned to Christianity, thereby knowingly subjecting themselves to torment and effectively giving up their lives.” Simonsohn, “Conversion, Apostasy, and Penance,” p. 206.
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of Christ the King under a disguise with a painful contrition in their hearts.” One of his shorter martyr stories is that of the elderly Witesindus, who, according to Eulogius, “out of I do not know which persecution, had fallen into an apostasy of the saintly faith” and refused to practice Islam once he was urged to do so. Eulogius concludes his few lines on Witesindus simply stating the outcome of his action: “And at that exact moment in which he professed his confession he was killed with a quick punishment on the aforementioned year [855].” For Eulogius, Witesindus’ death occurred as the result of his decision to no longer practice Christianity in hiding and, as a Muslim by law but not confession, to face the legal order’s prescribed penalties for legal apostates. Such penalties thus constituted the “fierce persecution” that Eulogius characterizes as coming “from every side [immersing] so many into the snares of apostasy.” Consequently, it was Witesindus’ execution for having practiced and affirmed his Christian faith amid such calamitous harassment that made him a martyr.

Conversion and apostasy, as legal, performative, and incomplete processes, caused varying degrees of concerns for religious elites on all levels of Córdoba’s political sphere. These concerns manifested themselves not only in fears regarding acculturation and interfaith relations, but also in the social and legal treatment of those crossing and exacerbating intercommunal boundaries. For the Muslim regime, the different martyrs committed various crimes ranging from blasphemy to apostasy for their confrontational and subversive behavior. As a result, the qadi and the emir tightened dhimma restrictions

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153 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 3.4, p. 148.
154 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 3.14, p. 162.
155 Ibid., p. 162.
156 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 3.1., p. 146.
and dispensed the death penalty as prescribed by Islamic law to repress what they perceived as threats to their religious and sociopolitical order. In the eyes of Eulogius and Albar, alongside concerns about Christians suppressing their Christian identity for favor in the socioeconomic realm, the laws on apostasy were such that they led even more faithful into hiding out of fear of punishment.\textsuperscript{157} For these radical authors, there was no stricter form of persecution than forcing devout Christians to conceal their identity and work complacently with their Muslim oppressors. In Eulogius’ view, the martyrs emerged as a group who both suffered and challenged such an intolerable regime.

**Eulogius’ Conception of the Martyrs**

Understanding Eulogius’ grievances against the Christian and Muslim populace of Córdoba, one can deduce several of his purposes for writing his hagiographies of the martyrs. As previously noted, he strove to uphold their sanctity in the face of ecclesiastical and emiral censure instigated for political, economic, and social necessity by the Cordoban community. At the same time, he spoke out against those he considered “bad” Christians: those who embraced Muslim culture and rejected the martyrs, whereas “good” Christians supported the martyrs and refused any non-Christian practice or affiliation.\textsuperscript{158} Consequently, Eulogius considered dedicating the *Memoriale Sanctorum* to the monasteries from which the first martyrs had come from, but instead opted to write for the universal Christian Church once martyrs came forth from across al-Andalus.\textsuperscript{159} In directing his work for the broader Christian community, Coope argues, Eulogius worked to reveal

\textsuperscript{157} Albar, *Indiculus luminosus*, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{158} Coope, *Martyrs of Córdoba*, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{159} Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum*, Preface, 1, p. 67.
the Cordoban Church’s oppressed state to religious communities outside the city. In his narration of the martyrs’ lives and deaths, he used both the martyrs and the image of his beleaguered Church to make a statement against the Umayyad regime and life in Muslim-ruled Córdoba.

Ksenia Bonch Reeves argues that we should view Eulogius’ writings as “a desperate attempt to re-establish social cohesion in the face of ongoing and accelerating social, religious, and linguistic disintegration of the Andalusi Christian society.” Indeed, the invectives of Eulogius and Albar reveal their concerns regarding the impact of rapid social and cultural change on the communal bonds and religious identities of Córdoba’s Christian community. Within these concerns, one can discern a call to strengthen religious and cultural boundaries between Muslims and Christians, and consequently to reassert a purely Christian identity. Albar, for example, expounded on his perception of the differences between Islam and Christianity in the Indiculus Luminosus in a way that presented Islamic practices as intrinsically harmful to Christian values and beliefs:

Mohammed spurned the celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection on Sunday and chose instead to dedicate Friday to gourmandizing and lust, a day which Christians commemorate with sorrow and fasting because of the Lord’s passion. Where Christ taught peace and patience, Mohammed taught war and violence. Christ purified his followers with virginity and chastity, Mohammed besmirched his with lust and

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160 Coope, *Martyrs of Córdoba*, p. 53-54; Monferrer Sala, “Mitografía Hagiomartirial,” p. 416-417. By the end of the 850s, word of the martyrdoms had indeed spread outside of Córdoba and the Iberian Peninsula. Two monks from Paris managed to obtain some of the martyrs’ remains to bring back to Charles the Bald after the Bishop Saul convinced Cordoban Christians to hand them over. Similarly, note of the martyrs was better received in northern Spain with King Alfonso III claiming Eulogius’ relics in 883. The political atmosphere of Córdoba clearly denied the martyrs the possibility of local support, but their renown proliferated among European and northern Spanish Christians once removed from the Cordoban context.

161 Bonch Reeves, *Visions of Unity after the Visigoths*, p. 118.
incest. Christ taught marriage, Mohammed divorce. […] Christ promises an angelic and spiritual heaven, Mohammed a carnal and bestial paradise.”\textsuperscript{162}

Alongside representing Islam as the antithesis to Christianity, these attacks were not aimed toward converting Muslims, but instead to persuading Christians to dissociate and scorn Islam and Córdoba’s Muslim society.\textsuperscript{163}

Eulogius indeed had the distinct purpose of declaring the resilience and supremacy of Christian identity while separating Muslim cultural practices as incompatible with Christianity. As a result, he saw the martyrs as stalwart saints who gave their lives for denouncing Muslims’ cruel exercise of political and cultural dominance while they stood firm in their Christian status. He constructed an image of the martyrs in which they were complete opposites from Córdoba’s urban Christians who denounced them and opted to integrate into Muslim society through concealing their religious affiliation. To these Christians, Eulogius reproached, “it must be confessed that it is a crime to hide if it is a remarkable merit to step forward voluntarily when the confession of our faith demands its preaching and claims its testimony.”\textsuperscript{164} Consequently, Eulogius narrated the actions of the martyrs as motivated by a “same agreement to fight […] the multitude of saints ran to the combat arena and repudiated the rival of God and enemy of justice, praising Christ with their highest words.”\textsuperscript{165} And in doing so, Eulogius holds, they refuted Mohammed, glorified Christianity over Islam, and revealed to their detractors their worthiness to be worshipped as martyrs.

\textsuperscript{162} Albar, \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, p. 298.
\textsuperscript{163} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{164} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 1.25, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{165} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 1.10, p. 80.
As combatants against the Muslim regime, the martyrs in Eulogius’ eyes also stood up against the legal and political forces that the emir had allegedly instituted to oppress and persecute the Christian community. To those who countered his assessment of an oppressive Andalusi-Umayyad regime by claiming it is “among the privileges of their reign” to remain Christians freely, he denounced it “as if we had to attribute to their tolerance living among them without damage to our faith, and not better to attribute it to divine Providence….” Beyond finding nothing praiseworthy in the religious freedom afforded by the emir and Islamic law, he argued that the emir’s administration played a significant role in making Cordoban society threatening to Christians. When the emir Muhammad I expelled the Christians from court, Eulogius believed it was done for further enticing the Christians to convert, in the same way that the aforementioned unnamed tax collector did to remain in office. “He was replaced in the palace,” Eulogius says about the tax collector, “with the end of being a rope and hook to attract the rest and to be for everyone an occasion for apostasy, he, who for earthly glory became a snare for himself.”

The martyrs, in opposition to the tax collectors and all converting for “earthly glory” in Muslim Córdoba, refused in every way to fall into Eulogius’ conception of the “snares of apostasy.” Many of the martyrs, characterized as religious deviants for either disparaging Islam or shedding their legal status as Muslims, appeared before the qadi and were offered the opportunity to denounce their errors and embrace Islam. The sisters Nunilo and Alodia, for example, brought forward for having a Muslim father and being

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166 Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.30, p. 95.
raised Christian by their Christian mother, were even sent to Muslim female instructors on the qadi’s orders.\textsuperscript{168} According to Adriano Duque, the decision to appear before the judge and refuse abjuration reveals the martyrs’ deliberate knowledge of how the legal procedure both materialized their complaints and legitimized their deaths.\textsuperscript{169} For Eulogius, such an action meant that the martyrs had faced and stood up to the emir’s persecutions. He describes these martyrs as:

“[Those who] carry the standard of Christ with bare face having endured for their zeal toward the Redeemer so many cruel tortures, when truly they could escape apostatizing from the damage of that torment, and for thinking that the harm of their flesh is better than the ruin of their souls [they] have not consented to estrange themselves from the religion of Christ by articulating one single word.”\textsuperscript{170}

Consequently, Eulogius saw, and wrote of, the martyrs as having willingly dissented against the Muslim regime’s pressures for them to apostatize and subverted the qadi’s goals by using the death penalty to affirm their own Christian faith and identity.

Both Eulogius and Albar, as holders of radical views in the Córdoba of the middle of the ninth century, deemed the martyrs as heroic warriors against the encroaching dominance of Islamic culture and the emir’s persecutions. According to Coope, the connection between the radical authors and the martyrs “was a determination to assert Christian identity and to deny the possibility that this identity could be set aside, or made compatible with Arab Muslim culture, or kept secret.”\textsuperscript{171} Nevertheless, the authors, enveloped in the political climate of their city, constructed the martyrs’ narratives as intrinsically tied to a fight against Islam, the Umayyad regime, and those Christians who compromised their religious identity for material benefits. Ultimately, Eulogius believed

\textsuperscript{168} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 2.7, pp. 112-113. \\
\textsuperscript{169} Duque, “Claiming Martyrdom in the Episode of the Martyrs of Córdoba,” p. 28. \\
\textsuperscript{170} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 2.10, p. 123. \\
\textsuperscript{171} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 14.
that these efforts to reproach an integrationist Christian community and subvert the
sociopolitical order served to undermine the authority of the Umayyad regime. He
characterized the Muslim community of Córdoba as “shaken by the enormous fear that so
many people running to martyrdom gave them, they believed imminent the ruin of their
reign once they were warned that even youths were equipped with similar valor.”172 In
reality, however, most of Córdoba—both Muslims and Christians—appeared to have
opposed the martyrs and, with Eulogius’ own martyrdom in 859, to have succeeded in
silencing them. Eulogius conversely championed the martyrs as exemplary Christians beset
by the emir’s oppression, but nonetheless triumphant in their united fight against the
Muslim regime and Islamic culture’s subjugation of Christian society.

172 Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 2.12, p. 137.
Chapter Three:

Christian Martyrs of the Umayyad Regime

The Plight of the Martyrs

In July 856, a Christian woman named Aurea appeared in the courts of Córdoba after a group of Muslim men apprehended her on the qadi’s orders during one of her “visible and valiant” visitations to the local church. Eulogius describes her as a virgin woman “adorned with the enormous splendor of her Arabic stock,” linked to the judge “by birthright […] from a close kinship,” and a deeply devout Christian.\footnote{Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 3.17, p. 163.} She had lived undisturbed in a convent at Cuteclara, west of Córdoba, for thirty years prior to her first encounter with the qadi. According to Eulogius, rumors of Aurea’s religious life eventually reached her Muslim family members so that they immediately “feigned a visit to greet her.” Shocked to discover the veracity of their relative’s non-Muslim lifestyle, they brought her to the courts of Córdoba, where the qadi exhorted her to explain why she had “stained with her despicable way of life the glory of such a lineage.”\footnote{Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 3.17, p.163-164.} Upon the qadi’s threats to have her killed should she refuse to embrace Islam, Eulogius states she “yielded under the judge’s admonitions and promised to carry out everything she had been ordered.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 164.} Aurea, having promised to convert and leave behind her Christian life, nevertheless returned to her convent and persisted in her Christian practices. The qadi subsequently sent forth men to seize her. Brought unwillingly to court for the second time, Aurea steadfastly professed...
her Christian faith, and the emir himself ordered that her body be hanged upside down over
the Guadalquivir on the following day.

Five years before Aurea’s execution, in June 851, two men from the same convent
at Cuteclara had come forth before the qadi alongside four other Christian men from across
Córdoba. According to Eulogius, the martyrs Peter, Walabonsus, Sabinianus,
Wistremundus, Habentius, and Jeremiah all together “came down at once to attack the evil
enemy.” They entered the judge’s court, and openly exclaimed in unison:

We, too, judge, remain in the same profession of faith in which a short time ago our
most holy brothers Isaac and Sancho fell. Execute your sentence, accumulate your
cruelty and burst in vengeance for your prophet with all your fury, because we
confess that Christ is in truth God, we declare that your prophet is the precursor of
the Antichrist and the author of an impious dogma…. 176

Immediately, the qadi ordered that all six men be beheaded, with Jeremiah condemned to
receive an additional flogging before his execution for some unknown declaration he had
made. The martyrs, Eulogius states, went to their deaths in good spirits, their corpses nailed
to gibbets before they were burned and their ashes thrown into the Guadalquivir.

The episodes of Aurea’s and the six men’s executions comprise only a fraction of
the more than fifty martyrdoms that took place throughout the course of the 850s. Eulogius
incorporates these martyrs’ stories into his Memoriale Sanctorum, proclaiming that they
died alongside a group of men and women who had “launched themselves forward from
towns, cities, villages and fortresses for this combat” showing that “nobody feared the
judge’s court.” 177 They all had chosen to die without hesitation for “the testament and laws
of our God.” 178 Numerous martyrs, such as the group of six men who berated the judge

177 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum, Preface, 1, p. 67.
178 Ibid., p. 67.
together, did indeed strategically seek out their deaths in the qadi’s court by advocating for the supremacy of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, as Aurea’s narrative reveals, not all the martyrs took up the “combat” resolutely or even willingly. Whereas some martyrs blasphemed against Islam to achieve martyrdom, other martyrs who had apostatized and later reverted to their Christian faith met their expected death reluctantly. Evidently, in the martyr narratives, despite Eulogius’ uniform organization of the martyrdoms into a single movement, no two cases are equal, and many differ in their sociocultural and legal components.

Scholars have put forth various arguments to explain the religious, political, and social causes and motives of the different martyrdoms. Wolf offers one theory to explain the martyrs’ behavior in an effort to counter the claims of previous Spanish scholars that the martyrs were simply responding to persecution, which Wolf states is nothing more than an extension of Eulogius’ own polemical arguments. Wolf’s hypothesis focuses on martyrs such as Isaac and the group of six men—those who came forward voluntarily to disparage Islam and bring about their own execution. He does not examine “reluctant martyrs” such as Aurea. He asserts that Cordoban monasticism contained a penitential system focused on voluntary penance and spiritual anxieties about the security of their soul’s salvation. The martyr Isaac, he argues, became the initiator of a wave of imitators once he sought martyrdom in the qadi’s court as the final step to his penitential program. Consequently, since penance necessarily entailed the rejection of the secular world, such

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180 Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, p. 112.
an action meant a rejection of Islam in Muslim Spain, and blaspheming in court provided the ideal avenue.\textsuperscript{181}

Wolf offers a convincing hypothesis for the motives of certain voluntary martyrs, particularly the martyr Columba and the spouses Sabigotho and Aurelius. His argument, however, does not clarify the situations of non-monastic and reluctant martyrs. For these latter martyrs, Jessica Coope’s arguments on the causes of the martyrdoms shed more light on their encounters with the \textit{qadī} and the Islamic legal system. In Coope’s view, the martyrdoms were expressive of Córdoba’s changing cultural climate, resulting from the increase in conversions to Islam and Christian assimilation to Muslim society.\textsuperscript{182} Córdoba’s system of familial monasteries and the growth in mixed Christian-Muslim families consequently heightened the social and religious anxieties that led to monastic self-abnegation and family conflict. Martyrdom thus became a method for the assertion of Christian identity and securing access to heaven while simultaneously rejecting Islamic society.\textsuperscript{183} Moreover, Coope argues, the martyrdoms resulted from familial strife like Aurea’s in which an increasingly tense social climate brought mixed families into conflict. In such instances, the \textit{qadī} maintained the prerogative prescribed to him by Islamic law to have the final say in the resolution of these interreligious disputes.\textsuperscript{184}

Wolf and Coope’s arguments provide two theories that together present internal concerns regarding salvation and sociocultural pressures as the primary reasons for

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p. 117.
\textsuperscript{182} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{183} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 55; Wolf, \textit{Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain}, pp. 116-118.
\textsuperscript{184} For more on the \textit{qadī}’s authorities, see Christian Müller, “Judging with God’s Law on Earth: Judicial Powers of the Qaḍī al-jamā’a of Cordoba in the Fifth/Eleventh Century,” \textit{Islamic Law and Society}, 7:2 (2000), 159-186.
Córdoba’s martyr movement. According to Adriano Duque and Ksenia Bonch Reeves, these martyrs found their roots either in the early church concept of martyrdom or the more recent tradition of Christian martyrdoms throughout the Islamic empire.\textsuperscript{185} Reeves asserts, however, that the former case wrongfully presents Islam “as an environment that ensures the social exclusion and public execution of the martyr but is otherwise not related to the martyr’s motivations.”\textsuperscript{186} For Coope, on the other hand, an assessment of the radical Christian authors as writers in the Roman tradition means that “their purpose in writing about the Cordovan Christians who were executed was to establish that they were not just unfortunate victims of the Islamic legal system but martyrs in the heroic tradition of the early church.”\textsuperscript{187} Conversely, authors such as Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala defend the notion that the Christians of al-Andalus most likely knew the hagiographic texts about eastern martyrs and therefore possessed a model of martyrdom through which to openly oppose their Islamic environs.\textsuperscript{188} Ultimately, the mutual influence of Córdoba’s cultural climate and the politics of dhimmitude on the martyrs counter any suggestion that the Islamic context failed to affect the martyrs—indeed, as I aim to argue, the Andalusi legal system in particular played a hugely influential role in enabling the martyrdoms.

Adding another universal theory is not the aim of the present study. Instead, a focused exploration of the sociolegal and political dimensions of Córdoba’s martyrdoms will demonstrate how the martyrs contended with a regime that pushed them into their particular predicaments. al-Andalus’ legal order played a pervasive role in the lives of the

\textsuperscript{186} Bonch Reeves, \textit{Visions of Unity after the Visigoths}, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{187} Coope, \textit{Martyrs of Córdoba}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{188} Monferrer Sala, “Mitografía Hagiomartirial,” p. 426.
Cordoban martyrs, and its effects permeated the social, cultural, and political fabric of ninth century Córdoba. Through an analysis of the martyrs’ varied interactions with the Islamic legal system, a clearer image will emerge of the broader sociolegal causes that brought the martyrs into the qadi’s court and their diverse attitudes regarding their predicaments and the option of martyrdom. To better examine the intricate legal workings of the more than fifty martyrdoms presented by Eulogius, I have separated the martyrs into three loose categories: monastics; crypto-Christians (or nominal apostates); and repentant converts.  

189 These categories overlap in certain regards (and some martyrs, such as Aurea, fit into more than one), but they nevertheless represent the three main types of Christians that appeared before the qadi—respectively, penitent monks from Cordoban monasteries, legally-classified Muslims living as Christians, and Christian converts to Islam who repented their conversion. Legal and sociopolitical factors influenced all three types of martyrs, and their deaths derived meaning from such legal contentions with the Islamic regime.

**Varieties of Christian Martyrs under Islam**

The executions of the martyrs Cristopher and Leovigild are exemplary of the first category: the monastics. According to Eulogius, the “monks and martyrs” Cristopher and

189 Various scholars have categorized the martyrs in various ways, depending on the topic of their study, but usually either in terms of their crimes or their sex. The most similar to my own appears in Fierro Bello, *La Heterodoxia en al-Andalus*, p. 53-57, in which the martyrs are listed (not distinguishably) as voluntary martyrs, crypto-Christians, blasphemers, and apostates. Safran similarly categorizes the martyrs as ecclesiasts, those accused of blasphemy and apostasy, and those who “defined themselves as Christian but were considered legally Muslim by parentage” in Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus*, pp. 93-94.
Leovigild descended from two different monasteries in the Cordoban mountain range.\textsuperscript{190} One day, Cristopher “ran quickly into the city and did not fear to present himself at once before the judge.”\textsuperscript{191} In the qadi’s court, he preached the gospel and declared that all Muslims would “suffer the eternal flames alongside the false author of their religion.”\textsuperscript{192} Immediately, the qadi incarcerated the monk and rendered the proscribed punishment for blasphemers of the prophet: execution. Leovigild, on the other hand, entered Córdoba and supposedly sought out Eulogius’ support and blessing before he also professed his faith to the qadi “according to the consistency of the others.”\textsuperscript{193} After a brief incarceration, on August 20\textsuperscript{th}, 852, he died beside Cristopher, the two having “animated and reciprocally fortified each other with mutual council.”\textsuperscript{194} Individually, they fit into the first category of martyrs: monastics who deliberately approached the qadi and determined their executions by flouting the legal prohibitions against blasphemy.

The laws on blasphemy played a crucial role in the majority of the martyrs’ executions. Nevertheless, for the first category of martyrs, blasphemy constituted the main legal device through which they achieved martyrdom. Laws forbidding blasphemy against Islam date back to the initial treaties negotiated between the Muslim conquerors of Iberia and its inhabitants; ‘Abd al-Rahman II’s promulgation of an edict establishing the death penalty as the official punishment for it demonstrates a clear reassertion of the dhimma’s full regulations in the mid-ninth century. For the monastic martyrs, consequently, it served

\textsuperscript{190} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 2.11, p. 136-137. Although Eulogius mentions that Cristopher hailed from the monastery of Saint Martin, he only describes Leovigild’s monastery as that “of the saints Justo and Pastor.”
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., p. 136.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., p. 136.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., p. 137.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., p. 137.
a key role in their outward rejection of Islam, their commitment to die for their faith, and their completion of a penitentiary program that necessitated both these elements. Consequently, the invocation of the death penalty through their blasphemy entailed the qadi’s call for the martyrs to recant and embrace Islam or simply accept execution. Such legal maneuvering from the martyrs reveals one particular way in which they subverted the legal system to their advantage, since such a refusal to save themselves through converting to Islam solidified their martyrial cause.

The second category of martyrs, crypto-Christians, may also be called nominal apostates because of the legal and familial circumstances that forced them into hiding their Christian status. While the martyrs in this category generally possessed predominantly Muslim family members, the martyrs themselves grew up Christian and were thus legally classified as apostates despite never having formally converted. Such cases occurred primarily because classical Islamic law ruled that “intermarriage between a Muslim man and a Christian or Jewish woman was entirely permitted, so long as any children born to the couple were also brought up as Muslims.” If a child of a mixed marriage grew up to be a non-Muslim, they were considered an apostate in the dhimma for refusing their father’s religion. Both Eulogius and Albar referenced Christians in their writing who hid their religion because of the rigor of Islamic law, with a particular emphasis on the externally imposed legal apostate status. Nine martyrs, all of which Eulogius describes as children of mixed marriages, appeared in court at one point to answer for the faith they shared secretly and illegally.

196 Coope, Martyrs of Córdoba, p. 12.
197 Albar, Indiculus luminosus, p. 282.
The crypto-Christians’ experience with Islamic law and the *qadi* differed greatly from that of the monastic martyrs. This second category of martyrs, which produced some of the most vivid of Eulogius’ narratives, primarily found themselves face-to-face with the Islamic legal system because of familial tensions. Due to the *dhimma*’s rulings on interfaith families, around eight of the twelve martyrs from such families were women, and it is in regards to these martyrs that Coope states that the connection between religious conflict and family tension was most notable. The story of Flora, the Christian child of a Muslim father, serves as an example. Flora, Eulogius tells us, had hidden her Christian faith from her Muslim brother ever since her father’s death. She opted one day to flee from her home to live with a Christian relative, which prompted her brother to “tear through the Church of God with a harsh persecution” in search of her. Eventually, after he arrested clergy and mistreated the Christian community, Flora confronted him and proclaimed her Christian faith. Her brother beat her and then brought her to court, where the *qadi* further struck her. The judge entrusted her “half alive and almost lifeless” back to her brother’s care to convert, and told him to return should she persist in her faith. In contrast to Cristopher and Leovigild, Flora did not initially enter the legal arena of her own volition nor did the prospect of martyrdom guide her decisions once in court; instead, family

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198 Coope, *Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 75-79.
199 Flora is a significant figure for understanding Eulogius’ relation to the martyrs and his view of women born from interreligious families. He wrote the *Documentum Martyriale* as Flora and Maria were imprisoned after they confronted the *qadi*, exhorting them to remain strong and not vacillate in their resolve to achieve martyrdom. Furthermore, Eulogius points out the significance of her Muslim parentage in her eyes, and the importance of her struggle as a woman. For discussions on this, see Coope, *Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 25-27.
201 Ibid., p. 116.
conflict dragged her into court, and the incompatibility of her faith with her legal status brought her to martyrdom.

The remainder of Flora’s story reveals the sociolegal realities that the second category of martyrs contended with in Córdoba’s sociopolitical atmosphere. Under her brother’s custody, she found herself under pressure to keep her faith hidden and/or formally convert to Islam. She eventually ran away from her brother again and hid among Christians outside of the city. She remained there until the soon-to-be fellow martyr Maria found her in a church in Córdoba “invoking and begging the martyrs for their aid.” She had apparently been “inflamed with a renewed wish to combat” and decided to acquire the “palm of martyrdom.” She, alongside the nun Maria, then sought out the qadi and made an open profession of her faith, adding insult to injury by even denouncing Mohammed as a false prophet, an adulterer and a sorcerer. The qadi, “shaken by a crazy fury and incensed before those terrible words,” incarcerated Flora and interrogated her until he executed her for her obstinate adherence to Christianity. Flora’s status as a nominal (unofficial) apostate, conferred upon her by her father’s legal status as a Muslim, forced her to choose between conversion, an exclusively private Christian lifestyle, or martyrdom. Instead of giving in to pressures from external political and familial authorities, she chose death as her counter to a sociopolitical climate that jeopardized her chances of salvation by enforcing a potentially sinful Crypto-Christian life.

202 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 2.8, p. 120.
203 Ibid., p. 120. This particular instance of the martyrs Maria and Flora strengthening their resolve to embrace martyrdom together echoes studies on the influence Cordoban monasteries had in encouraging martyrdoms in the 850s. See Wolf, Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain, p. 108-112 and Coope, Martyrs of Córdoba, pp. 18, 71-72 for more on how monasteries were hubs for radical Christian education.
204 Ibid., p. 120.
The third category of martyrs, the repentant converts, suffered from similar confrontations with al-Andalus’ sociopolitical climate and legal system as the Crypto-Christians. As mentioned above, these Christians had previously converted to Islam and then repented—as a result, they were legally forbidden from “re-converting” to their former Christian status and thus forced to either embrace Muslim status, remain crypto-Christians, or face the legal consequences of returning to Christianity. Although the repentant converts category provides the least number of martyrs (Eulogius is only certain that two martyrs had once embraced Islam), their legal circumstances separate them from the other martyrs due to the distinct predicament in which they found themselves. In practice, these martyrs found themselves forced to conceal their Christian faith for having crossed interreligious boundaries one too many times. As discussed in the previous two chapters, the dhimma had constructed specific legal barriers that limited conversions among the Muslim populace. Numerous schools of Islamic law, including the Hanbali and Maliki traditions, believed that if a born dhimmī convert repented, “if he kept on apostatizing after he had repented, there was no escape from executing him.”205 The short episode of the martyr Witesindus, who had once turned to Islam and later on repented, epitomizes this category: forced to hide his Christian faith, “when exhorted to practice his newly embraced cult, he refused to remain stained with such a sacrilege” and was executed for his decision.206

The case of the martyr Felix highlights both the complex sociolegal factors interwoven into the different martyrdoms as well as the fluidity of the three categories of martyrs. Felix, Eulogius tells us, was a reverted convert who “profoundly regretted the

206 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 3.14, p. 162.
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error of his apostasy." He was a relative of the martyr Aurelius, who was a crypto-Christian born from a Muslim father and a Christian mother, and he had married another crypto-Christian named Liliosa. Eulogius narratively ties Felix’s martyrdom with that of Aurelius, Liliosa, and Aurelius’ wife Sabigotho; nevertheless, as a reverted Christian, Felix found himself in a slightly more serious situation than his relatives. Together, the four martyrs devised a plan to be arrested for apostasy in order to no longer keep their religion hidden and achieve martyrdom. The two wives then went to church with their faces unveiled, prompting officials to question their motives and that of their husbands. Once discovered, the qadi sent forward soldiers to apprehend the group of newly exposed Christians; at the martyrs’ door, the soldiers are said to have shouted:

Come out, miserable lot, come out to die immediately, you who hold as tedious your present lives and consider death a glory. Come, the judge summons you, he threatens to cast the order of punishment; he wants to destroy those who move away from the cult, disposed as he is to cut rebel necks. March down immediately to pay your debt with death and the pending judgment for your apostasy.

The martyrs then “marched forward jubilant, as if invited to a banquet” and Eulogius holds that they went to the qadi as if to find their prize with him, they “who could have no other things than torments.” Some days later, all four martyrs met their deaths on the qadi’s orders.

A few notable events emerged in between the martyrs’ arrests and their executions. George, a Christian from Bethlehem, became involved with this group of martyrs and disparaged Islam once he noticed the soldiers seizing his fellow Christians, but not himself. He was legally a Christian, therefore he had committed no prior transgression to merit his

207 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 2.10, p. 122.
208 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 2.10, p. 133.
209 Ibid., p. 133.
incarceration. George consequently turned to the Muslim soldiers and asked, “why do you impose this privilege on the faithful and obligate those who the holy faith has reclaimed as its own to worship a false divinity by force?” In part, such a statement demonstrates Eulogius’ masterful insertion of his own perception of the Muslim regime’s persecution into the martyr narrative. Similarly, George’s words hint at various levels of meaning the martyrs attributed to their executions: first, martyrdom was a privilege for its ability to secure salvation; second, they understood Muslim society’s pressures to enforce Muslim status onto those who improperly crossed interreligious lines. Such compulsions manifested themselves in the qadī’s handling of these martyrs, for example, once he later offered them riches and honors in exchange for their professions of the Islamic faith. Felix and his fellow martyrs, however, found the sociocultural and legal pressures to maintain an external Muslim status at the expense of their inner beliefs simply unbearable. For George, as a component of the first martyr category, the qadī let him leave unscathed, until the monk refused and further disparaged Islam. In court, the martyrs thus resolved the personal and legal strains produced by Córdoba’s legal system while simultaneously following a path reconcilable with Córdoba’s monastic penitential system.

The Qadī’s Court: A Legal Space for Theological and Political Contestation

A crucial feature of the Cordoban martyrdoms that determined how the qadī handled the martyrs’ legal cases was the willful, even suicidal nature of their executions. Disapproving coreligionists, Eulogius states, refuted the martyrs because they had “offered themselves to danger by their own volition and, killed for their own arrogance, which is

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210 Ibid., p. 134.
the ‘beginning of all sin,’ turned into parricides of their souls.” As noted in the previous chapter, such critiques forced Eulogius and Albar to reconcile some of the martyrs’ voluntary deaths with the executions of the early church’s martyrs by insisting on the persecutory nature of Córdoba’s Islamic society. According to Candida R. Moss, “voluntary martyrdom” can be described as “the bringing about of martyrdom either by presenting oneself to authorities or by the unsolicited disclosure of one’s Christian identity.” Duque similarly argues for the centrality of an authority, the qadi, in the Cordoban martyrdoms, since the martyrs’ invocation of the death penalty “instead of committing suicide, […] indicated a deliberate knowledge and use of the legal procedures in place, in order to legitimize his/her own death.” Consequently, the legal realm in which all three categories of martyrs operated redefined the instigation of their own executions into legitimate martyrdoms, simultaneously providing external agents and pressures for them to symbolically overcome.

The role of the qadi, as the representative and medium of the Islamic legal system, in the martyrs’ deaths constitutes one of many ways in which the sociopolitical order exerted its influence on the martyrdoms. In part, the qadi and the legal order he personifies provided Eulogius with the theoretical tools he needed to discredit any accusations of suicide or unprovoked violence in the martyrs’ deaths. According to G. W.

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214 On more regarding the moral-legal role of the qadi in the Andalusi context, see Müller, “Judging with God’s Law on Earth,” 159-186. Similarly, for more on the moral and educational requirements for one to become qadi, see Al-Māwardī, “On Qādis (Eleventh Century)” trans. by Bernard Lewis in Lewis (ed.) *Islam*, pp. 40-42.
Bowersock, a martyr’s enthusiasm to be killed in the name of their religion “comes very close to a desire to commit suicide—a suicide to be arranged by an external agent but with the clear complicity of the victim.”

For the Cordoban martyrs, such an agent appeared in the form of the qadī, whose own authority stemmed from the emir and the tenets of Islamic law. The martyrs’ interactions with the qadī, Islamic law, and (on specific occasions) the emir thus both materially and symbolically defined and imbued meaning to the martyrdoms.

Eulogius expends much effort in his narration of the martyrs’ lives leading up to their executions. As seen, he describes their family backgrounds, the internal struggles of the martyrs before they embraced martyrdom, and their valiant (although sometimes unintentional) efforts to reach the qadī. Concerning their actions and behaviors before the judge, however, Eulogius appears relatively undescriptive in comparison. For Lucy Grig, the “courtroom dramas” that characterized early church and late antique martyrdoms formed a crucial part of the martyr narratives’ performative and polemical discourses.

She has argued that these scenes of judicial contestation, which usually included moments of intense violence, shaped the stories and symbolic meanings of the martyrs’ deaths. Nevertheless, save for brief mentions of the judge’s enraged, spontaneous beatings or ordered lashings of a martyr, Eulogius’ narratives scarcely present the qadī’s court as an arena of physical violence in the fashion of the early Christian martyrologists. In the

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215 G. W. Bowersock, Martyrdom and Rome (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 61. Bowersock’s study focuses on the second century martyrs, but his main discussion on the contentious ideological connection between martyrdom and suicide in the history of the early Church is directly applicable to the Cordoban martyrs.

216 Lucy Grig, Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity (London: Duckworth, 2004), pp. 59-78.

217 Grig, Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity, p. 59.
absence of brutal depictions of judicial violence, Eulogius’ portrayal of the martyrdoms focuses instead on the martyrs’ discursive clash with the qadī and their ultimate decision to die for Christianity rather than succumb to Islam’s pressures and temptations.

Prior to Eulogius’ writings, there had been a longstanding martyrological tradition of voluntary martyr narratives that stressed the persecutor’s legal authority and the symbolic theological disputation between a judge and a martyr.\textsuperscript{218} The death of the Donatist martyr Maximian in 347, for example, contains extensive descriptions of the Roman proconsul’s ordered torturing of the martyr, who willingly and defiantly appeared before the authorities. Macrobius, the narrator of this martyrdom, views in these violent scenes the judge’s unholy fury expressed in the attacks of Maximian’s torturers. Consequently, through the martyr’s suffering and eventual death, he is said to have triumphed in his battle against the judge’s worldly evils. Indeed, Macrobius writes:

Maximian did not suffer these things passively but he acted like a person estranged from his own body, triumphing over all these tortures. Thus a war was waged between his body and the tortures, between sacrilegious people and a devout man, between strength of soul and butchers, between a soldier of Christ and soldiers of the devil, between an enduring person and his judge.\textsuperscript{219}

Within the paradoxical victories of the executed martyrs, the use of violence that empowered the perpetrator now symbolically reversed the equation: as a judicial authority inflicted punishments on the martyr, “a denial, transformation, or transfer of pain shifted the locus of power, in the arena and in the text.”\textsuperscript{220} Similarly, martyr narratives that extend all the way back to the early church martyrs utilized formulaic and symbolically charged

\textsuperscript{220} Grig, \textit{Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity}, p. 71.
encounters with a judge to construct both a distinctive martyr ideology as well as an early Christian identity.\footnote{Grig, \textit{Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity}, p. 67.}

The encounter between the judge and the martyr-to-be in martyr narratives indeed tends to be full of symbolic meaning generally associated with competing religious beliefs and power differentials. In the case of Maximian, for example, his death at the hands of the proconsul’s torturers symbolized his spiritual and theological triumph over unholy persecutors and temporal powers. Similarly, all three categories of martyrs used the death penalty to transform their deaths from plain cases of suicide into legitimate and victorious martyrdoms in their clash against the \textit{qadi}.\footnote{Duque, “Claiming Martyrdom in the Episode of the Martyrs of Cordoba,” p. 28.} Through their blasphemy of Islam or refusal to recant by means of conversion, the Cordoban martyrs symbolically transformed their deaths into victories by subverting Islam’s legal and political power in order to acquire personal salvation and reinforce a particular notion of a solid communal Christian identity. As Duque argues, the confrontation between the Christian martyr and the Muslim \textit{qadi} “constitutes mainly a declaration of principles, a confrontation between Islam and Christianity.”\footnote{Duque, “Claiming Martyrdom in the Episode of the Martyrs of Cordoba,” pp. 41-42.} Indeed, the broader tensions between Christians and Muslims in Córdoba’s changing sociopolitical climate reached their apex in the \textit{qadi}’s court and erupted in the disputes between the Muslim authority and the Christian martyr.

In October 851, Córdoba’s \textit{qadi} ordered soldiers to bring the sisters Nunilo and Alodia before him. They were the young daughters of a Muslim father and a Christian mother and had inconspicuously grown up to be devout Christians. Because they were crypto-Christians, they consequently experienced the same legal and familial conflicts as
all martyrs in the second martyr category. According to Eulogius, their father’s death led
their mother to marry a Muslim man who forbade the sisters from freely practicing their
faith. Forced to flee their home, they found refuge in their aunt’s house and continued
practicing Christianity there so much so that “the rumor of their sanctity had filled almost
the entire province, and all were surprised that among brambles sprouted two beautiful
roses.” Eventually, the Muslim community took note of their unlawful departure from
Islam. The qadi then sought to entice the sisters back to Islam by offering them riches and
marriages to illustrious Muslim men. He declared to them, “if you turned your hearts from
the religion of Christ, you would return without a doubt to your proper lineage and will
additionally be enriched with enormous profusions of wealth.” For the qadi, encouraging
the sisters to deny their Christian faith served his goal of returning them to their ‘proper’
community through conversion and marriage; departure from Islam constituted an
unacceptable religious offense and a social transgression.

For Nunilo and Alodia, the qadi’s concerns meant nothing in their eschatological
conception of their Christian identity and their encounter with him. Once the judge
threatened to torture them to death should they refuse to convert, the sisters merely
responded:

How do you order us, judge, to turn from the religion of God, whose holy piety
illuminated us with his light and informed us that there is no greater richness than
Christ…? Without Him there is no life, without Him reigns an eternal death;
remaining alongside Him and living alongside Him is the true comfort; separating
from Him is eternal perdition.  

\[224\] Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 2.7, p. 112.
\[225\] Ibid., p.112.
\[226\] Ibid., pp. 112-113.
Upon professing their dedication to die for their savior, they scorned the material goods promised them, which further symbolized their refusal of the worldly attractions that so worried Eulogius about Islamic society:

As to the benefits of the perishable goods that you think to seduce us with, we hold them as nothing and we depreciate them for the reason that we know all is vain beneath the sun. And the warnings of punishment do not disturb us, which we know matter little; in truth, the same death which you present to us as an extreme threat we desire with much more eager pleasantness that we believe we will rise through it without delay to heaven, we will arrive before Christ and unite unshakably in his arms.²²⁷

As in the martyrdom of Maximian, the confrontation between the sisters and the qadi here transcends the simple exercise of judicial authority to punish unlawful behavior. Beyond that, Nunilo and Alodia represent the direct confrontation of model Christians with Islamic rule in its most brutal form. The court served as the site through which they resisted Islam’s enticements—material wealth and prestige—for their beliefs, subverting the qadi’s and Islamic society’s power by utilizing that power to reach Christianity’s otherworldly promises.

Nunilo and Alodia’s encounter with the qadi is relatively unique in its abundance of detail in comparison to many of the briefer martyrdoms recounted by Eulogius. Generally, the life and actions of the martyrs prior to their executions take center stage in Eulogius’ writings; nevertheless, it is in the inevitable clash between the martyr and the qadi that the symbolic triumphs of the Christians appearing in court are expressed and legitimized. As G. W. Bowersock states in his study of the Roman martyrs, “obviously a martyrdom could not occur unless a Roman magistrate chose to impose a death penalty on a confessing Christian.”²²⁸

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 113.
²²⁸ Bowersock, Martyrdom and Rome, p. 42.
a prominent role in producing the Cordoban martyrs and imbuing their executions with a meaning that transcended their deaths. Duque views this confrontation as a rewriting of interreligious social and theological relations in which “the judge is the agent that sanctions the new relationship and recognizes the role of the martyr as a negative reflection of Islam and a depositary of Christian faith.” Consequently, not only do the martyrs force the qadi into a theological debate concerning the nature of Christianity and Islam, they also negotiate (and denounce) the sociopolitical relations contested by these communities in Cordoban society within the court’s legal arena.

*Dhimmīs, Dissidents, Saints: The Martyrs & the Andalusi Sociopolitical Order*

In September 852, still during the reign of ‘Abd Al-Rahman II, two notable Christian adolescents born in Córdoba named Emila and Jeremiah appeared before the qadi to disparage Islam and the prophet. They were the children of noble Cordoban families and had “learned their letters” in the church of Saint Cyprian and acquired a fluency in the Arabic language. One day, when Emila began to hurl insults against the prophet in Arabic, Eulogius tells us that all present “forgot the insults of the preceding martyrs once they saw that these declarations were harsher for their lord.” Evidently, a martyr’s use of Arabic to denounce Islam alarmed the Muslim regime. Immediately, the Muslim authorities “not only began to contemplate the death of those who confronted them, but they also considered eradicating the entire church.” Such a statement stands in line with Eulogius’ sometimes apocalyptic assessment of life under Muslim rule. Nevertheless, his explanation

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231 Ibid., p. 137.
Cintron provides a lens into what he believes the Umayyad regime’s response to the martyrs might have been:

…the pagans, shaken by the enormous fear that so many having run to martyrdom imbued in them, believed the ruin of their reign was imminent once warned that even the youths who they mortified by means of incarceration and finally killed with a vengeful sword were equipped with such valor.\(^\text{232}\)

Although it is uncertain how much of Eulogius’ view is accurate or simply speculative, his statement highlights how the martyrs’ actions disrupted the social and political order of al-Andalus in the mid-ninth century.

The priest Fandila rose as the first martyr in the reign of Muhammad I during the summer of 852 and his death was no less alarming to the Muslim authorities than those of his predecessors. He appeared before the qadi, openly attacked the prophet, and declared that the Muslim community, “mixed with the impurities of a noxious cult,” would suffer the eternal flames should they refuse to convert to Christianity.\(^\text{233}\) The qadi, after incarcerating Fandila, sent news of his actions to the emir, who responded with fear and fury. According to Eulogius, Muhammad I ordered that Fandila be burned alive, which the priest escaped because of a previously prescribed sentence; then, the emir commanded that his soldiers “destroy all the Christians and disperse their women by means of a public auction, except for those who looked down on their religion and turned to their cult.”\(^\text{234}\) The emir’s dignitaries convinced him to reconsider, but Eulogius states such an act would have extinguished the Christian community completely “in part by the sword, in part by apostasy.”\(^\text{235}\) Fandila died beheaded, his body hung on a gibbet across the river.

\(^{232}\) Ibid., p. 137.  
\(^{234}\) Ibid., p. 151.  
\(^{235}\) Ibid., pp. 151-152.
The intense concern Eulogius imparted to the Muslim authorities points to a critical feature in the episode of the Cordoban martyrs, which is also highlighted in the qadi-martyr encounter. Although the martyrs of the 850s never made a large ripple in Muslim society’s collective memory of their history in the following centuries, the martyrs clearly troubled Córdoba’s inhabitants and the Muslim administration at the time.\textsuperscript{236} For the mainstream Christian community, as discussed in the previous chapter, the eruption of martyrdoms endangered the fragile balance struck between Christians and Muslims that maintained a relaxed legal order. For the Muslim regime, the actions of the martyrs indeed disrupted a particular sociopolitical climate in which Muslims remained dominant while non-Muslims accepted their subordinate position. Consequently, the emir repressed the Christian community because of his perception that the martyrs broke the dhimma pact that had been carefully negotiated throughout the prior century.\textsuperscript{237} Consequently, the dhimma legal system and the sociopolitical order it strove to uphold played a central role in the events of the 850s and guided the Islamic regime’s response.

The involvement of the emir in attempting to quell the wave of martyrdoms reveals the extent to which the martyrs confronted and destabilized a previous political order. According to Janina Safran, the emir ‘Abd Al-Rahman II considered the first martyr a single rebellious Christian; yet, once more Christians appeared before the qadi, the emir saw the martyrs as a communal problem and Muhammad I later took more aggressive

\textsuperscript{236} Safran, \textit{Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus}, p. 96; Monferrer Sala, “Mitografia Hagiomartirial,” pp. 416-417. Indeed, as Monferrer Sala points out, there is no Arabic source that references the martyrs of Córdoba. Scholars have looked at Al-Khushani’s \textit{Kitab al-qudat bi-Qurtuba} (\textit{History of the Judges of Córdoba}) to try to pinpoint the specific qadis of the period, but the source too says nothing of these specific martyrs.

\textsuperscript{237} Eulogius, \textit{Memoriale sanctorum} 3.6, p. 150; Safran, \textit{Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus}, p. 98.
measures to punish them.\textsuperscript{238} In Safran’s view, the martyrs challenged the emir’s authority publicly and their violent executions “disturbed the social order but perhaps also expended subterranean tensions and anxieties and allowed for the reformulation of social relations and the establishment of a new modus vivendi.”\textsuperscript{239} Nevertheless, a sociopolitical order championed by the church’s moderate majority ultimately won out and the Muslim authorities successfully suppressed the martyrs’ contestations against their regime.

The legal system in place by the 850s permitted the emir and the \textit{qadī} to snuff out the martyrs for the sake of maintaining their desired social order. In practice, laws against blasphemy, interreligious marriage, and conversion all served to counter the martyrs’ dissent and bring about their executions. Whereas this execution meant triumph and salvation for the martyrs, the death of another rebellious martyr simply represented the social and political dominance of the Umayyad regime for the Muslim authorities. The ability of the \textit{qadī} to impose the death sentence, which had previously been negotiated with the emir, signified a strong reassertion of \textit{dhimma} principles that invariably appeared persecutory for radical Christians.\textsuperscript{240} For that reason Albar decried Córdoba’s sociopolitical climate, proclaiming: “behold, the public law hangs over our heads and a legal order courses through their whole kingdom to the effect that those who blaspheme are flogged and those who denounce are killed.”\textsuperscript{241}

\textsuperscript{238} Safran, \textit{Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus}, pp. 91-98.
\textsuperscript{239} Safran, \textit{Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus}, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{240} Wolf, \textit{Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain}, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{241} Albar, \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, p. 274. Colbert leaves the end of this quote in Latin as \textit{qui blasphemaverit flagelletur, et qui percusserit occidatur}. According to him, Albar is referring to the martyrs John and Perfectus and distinguishing between their affronts. For John, swearing falsely by the prophet Mohammed merited flogging—he was executed only once he defamed (\textit{derogare}) the prophet. Perfectus, on the other hand, openly denounced (\textit{percusserit}) Mohammed and received the death penalty in retaliation.
The “public law” that Albar references, while serving to repress the Christian community in his eyes, also served to engender much of the martyrdoms of the 850s. The second and third category of martyrs, the nominal apostates and repentant Christians, found themselves particularly at the mercy of Córdoba’s legal system. Whereas most non-Muslims could easily conceal their dhimmī identity and remain secure in their religious practice, the Christians forced into crypto-Christianity by their fathers’ legal status or their previous conversions witnessed firsthand the legal and social forces governing Córdoba’s sociopolitical order. This order exerted itself in the martyrs’ lives in a variety of ways. For the nominal apostates, it forced Muslim status onto children of interfaith marriages; for repentant Christians, it criminalized the conversions they required to return to their original religious community. As a result, these Christians either found themselves forced into the qadi’s court or found reason to join the other martyrs. In the words of Coope, “some of the secret Christians, those people who would be vulnerable to charges of apostasy if they practiced openly, became afraid that their secret worship was hypocritical and that only an open profession of faith would save them from hell.” Consequently, it was the qadi and his enforcement of the legal order that offered these martyrs the option to convert or die for their faith, and many faithful accepted the offer.

The first category of martyrs held a much different relation with the laws of al-Andalus and they consequently confronted the sociopolitical order much more aggressively. As previously discussed, the first category of martyrs, the monastics, were exemplary of the heroic martyrs Eulogius exalted the most—those who “armed with the breastplate of justice leapt forward to the forum preaching the gospels to the princes and

242 Coope, Martyrs of Córdoba, p. 70.
nations of the world.” Nevertheless, these martyrs had numerous motivations for achieving martyrdom, which were not limited to penitential achievements and personal salvation. For many, such as Eulogius himself, the sociolegal order had encouraged an erosion of Christian identity that strict dhimma restrictions and increased Islamization simply exacerbated in mid-ninth century Córdoba. The qadi’s push to get Christians to join Islam to escape punishment, the emir’s repression of the Christian community, and the Islamic administration’s general privileging of Muslim society all served to ensure that so many were “immersed in the snares of apostasy.” Consequently, the monastic martyrs found in the worldly rejection of Islam, which was intrinsic in the action of seeking out martyrdom, an opportunity to directly profess their religious identity.

The interconnected relation between the martyrs, the Muslim authorities, and the sociopolitical order are all prominent in the death of the martyr Aurea that started this chapter. As previously mentioned, she belonged to an Arab family, and her father was a Muslim, making her a nominal apostate of the second category. When her Christian identity became too unbearable for her Muslim family, they brought her forward to the qadi. She had disrupted a social order that now her family resorted to a judicial authority to correct. The judge immediately invited Aurea back into the Muslim community, asking her to convert and threatening to punish her should she refuse. Eulogius states that Aurea then gave in to his threats, speculating that she did so “either due to a carnal fear or to put family matters in order.” After she promised to follow the tenets of Islam, the judge permitted

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243 Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.6, p. 76.
244 Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 3.1, p. 146.
her to leave in peace. So far, he successfully used his authority to reestablish the legally supported sociopolitical order, rectifying a misguided member of the Muslim community.

When Aurea opted to continue her Christian life by attending church and joining Christian congregations, complications inevitably arose. Some Muslim men discovered her conforming to her previous life and immediately sent for the qadī to “strike with his legal authority such presumptions.”247 The judge indeed confronted her, asking why she had failed to respect the mandate of their laws, to which she responded with a strong declaration of her Christian faith. “Despite having fallen by words into the snares of apostasy,” she tells him, “nevertheless I carried my heart sheltered by a lively perseverance of the holy faith.”248 Aurea deliberately defied the qadī, the Muslim authorities, and the social order that strove to push her to embrace the Islamic faith. Hearing her words, the enraged judge incarcerated her and requested instruction from the emir, Muhammad I, most likely because of the nobility of her lineage. At this moment, the Muslim authorities deliberated what should be done with another more notable instance of an insubordinate Muslim-turned-Christian brought before the qadī having disrupted the legal and social norms of the community. The emir refused to leave her transgression unpunished, so he had Aurea killed the following day. Whereas the qadī failed his duty to reestablish peace in the community through his court, the emir used force as the absolute solution to eradicate dissension and reassert the normative sociopolitical order of al-Andalus.

247 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 3.17, p. 165.
248 Ibid., p. 165.
Conclusion

The deaths of Córdoba’s martyrs took place in a century marked by key developments in the history of al-Andalus. The ninth century witnessed the centralization of Umayyad political power in Córdoba, the exponential growth of Iberia’s Muslim urban population, and the consolidation of Islam’s sociocultural dominance over al-Andalus’ Christian populace. Córdoba, as al-Andalus’ political and intellectual center, experienced the formation of Islamic rulership in a concentrated way that made its inhabitants increasingly aware of their submission to Muslim authorities.  

249 Already in the immediate post-conquest period, the Muslim conquerors had established legal and fiscal means of imposing their authority over the conquered, most strongly in the form of the jizya tax. Consequently, the Christian populace underwent a process of Islamization and Arabization tied to increased conversion rates to Islam; similarly, the Umayyad state’s formalization of its ideologically-defined sovereignty under the emirs further encouraged Christian integration to Muslim society.  

250 The subsequent cultural and demographic shifts of the ninth century imbued the Christian communities of al-Andalus with a general sense of disunity and fragility. 251 On one side, growing urban Christian factions adopted a stance of acculturation to reap the economic, social and political privileges of Islamic culture. On the other side, those who saw themselves as bulwarks of their religion and community

249 Safran, Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus, p. 86.
250 Bulliet, Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period, pp. 115-125; Kassis, “The Arabization and Islamization of the Christians of al-Andalus,” p. 139-140.
worked to erect tighter boundaries between their own “orthodox Christianity” and any sociocultural and religious assimilation to Muslim society.\(^{252}\)

The grievances of Christian religious leaders such as Eulogius arose within the dual context of al-Andalus’ changing sociocultural layout and the Umayyad regime’s intensified assertions of a normative sociopolitical order. Throughout the eighth and ninth centuries, jurists such as Al-‘Utbi, in tandem with different qadās applying the law on the ground, crafted legal rulings that regulated intercommunal interactions and divisions between Muslims and dhimmīs. As the emirs began to officially proclaim Islamic political rule, these legal rulings further shaped a judicial, political, and social order that upheld Muslim dominance and the subjugated, “protected” status of non-Muslims. The alliance of the emir ‘Abd al-Rahman II with the council of jurisconsults known as the shūrā eventually established a strong link between the emir’s authority and the Andalusi legal system; such a link tied the repression of political opposition to the suppression of any form of religious heresy and dissent against the social order. Consequently, by the time of the martyrs of Córdoba, the Umayyad regime possessed a legal system that oversaw and checked political insubordination, religious heterodoxy, and disturbances to the social divisions between Muslim and dhimmī communities.

It was in this context that Eulogius perceived a persecutory movement within the Umayyad regime and wrote his martyrlogium. Ana Echevarría notes that the years 852-854 in particular witnessed an extension of dhimmī restrictions in al-Andalus, which Christian communities reacted to “not only against the Muslim government, but also trying

\(^{252}\) Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus*, p. 81; Monferrer Sala, “Mitografía Hagiomartirial,” p. 427.
to redefine their own, internal divisions.” Consequently, Eulogius’ martyr narratives stand out as texts representative of both Christian anti-Islamic sentiment as well as the infighting among Cordoban Christian factions. They reveal the struggles, both material and ideological, that certain Christians in Córdoba experienced upon the encroachment of a politically and culturally solidified Islamic regime. Both Eulogius and Paul Albar condemned the growing adoption of Arab-Islamic culture among Christians; they both spoke out against the social and legal pressures that harassed them and pushed many into the feared “snares of apostasy;” and they denounced all Christians who supported or otherwise associated with the Muslim regime. Ultimately, their complaints were directed against a changing cultural and political climate that favored acculturation and threatened Christian identity and “Catholic integrity.”

A study of the sociolegal and political dynamics present in Córdoba’s martyrdoms reveals the martyrs contending with a regime that encouraged them into their predicaments and facilitated their martyrdoms. Eulogius’ remonstrance against Islamic society’s persecutions fails to describe Cordoban life in the ninth century accurately. Nevertheless, the legal setup of the dhimma system and the sociocultural environment it fostered did indeed permit a limited number of recalcitrant Christians to fall through the cracks of the Andalusi social order. The Islamic legal system and the legal authorities applying the law on the ground had the objective of enforcing intercommunal boundaries. As a result, those who failed to conform to the social and legal expectations of Muslim and dhimmī society’s proper divisions were met with judicial and political repression. Consequently, all of

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Córdoba’s martyrs—recognized by Muslims and Christians alike as nonconformists and thus dissenters—received the death penalty for their deviant behavior. Through their deaths and prior confrontation with Córdoba’s judicial and political authorities, these martyrs exposed the limits of the Umayyad regime’s flexibility and tolerance while simultaneously challenging it.

The martyrs’ legal circumstances and their contestations with the qadi highlight the full extent of the legal system’s role in supporting al-Andalus’ sociopolitical order and provoking the martyrs. Laws against apostasy and interreligious marriages both constituted crucial elements of the dhimma system that regulated the social and legal status of non-Muslims. In theory, these restrictions strove to protect intercommunal boundaries and Muslim dominance through limiting conversions from Islam and rigidly defining who could claim legal Muslim status. In practice, they placed those caught in the sociocultural mix of Cordoban society in a dilemma regarding the discrepancy between their inner religiosity and their prescribed legal status, occasionally pushing some to become crypto-Christians. The martyrs who appeared before the qadi for their defiance of the legal strictures that either refused prior converts to Islam or children of interfaith marriages from showing outward devotion to Christianity suffered the most from these laws. These are the Christians whom Eulogius described as “disabled by their enormous carnal fear, they still serve the orders of Christ the King under a disguise with a painful contrition in their hearts.”

In the qadi’s court, these hidden Christians were forced to choose between converting to Islam or facing execution for persevering in their Christian faith. Around a fifth of the martyrs found themselves in this predicament, and opted for martyrdom.

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255 Eulogius, Memoriale sanctorum 3.4, p. 148.
Those martyrs who voluntarily appeared before the qadi to flaunt the laws against blasphemy and achieve martyrdom confronted the Andalusi sociopolitical order directly. As Duque has argued, the martyrs’ knowledge of the legal procedures and religious implications of disparaging Islam before a qadi transformed their deaths from suicidal acts to legitimate martyrial assaults on Islam and the Muslim community. Alongside the penitentiary motives that Wolf analyzes, these martyrs committed what they considered to be an ultimate statement of religious identity tied to an outward rejection of the Islamic regime in Córdoba. According to Coope, “the martyrs’ supporters understood the movement as a reaction to the horrors of Muslim rule, a radical but justifiable form of protest.” Indeed, they purposefully subverted the dhimma structures that subjugated non-Muslims to the social, religious, and political dominion of Islam, losing their lives in defiance of the very sociopolitical order the dhimma upheld. Nevertheless, because of the nature of the dhimma system, these Christians perished at the hands of Muslim authorities seeking to preserve social order through judicial violence. Through the exertion of the full influence and power of the legal system, the qadi and emir together repressed the martyrs’ dissent against al-Andalus’ climate of Christian acculturation and Muslim predominance.

Ultimately, the martyrs’ actions had little immediate effect beyond further dividing the Christian communities in Córdoba. As Bonch Reeves states, they were a “minority within a minority Christian community” who could not garner widespread support under

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257 Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, p. 117.
258 Coope, *Martyrs of Córdoba*, p. x.
the order of Muslim rule.\footnote{Bonch Reeves, \textit{Visions of Unity after the Visigoths}, p. 120; Echevarría, “Translocating Religion in the Mediterranean Space,” p. 103.} According to Eulogius, the mainstream Christian community criticized them for aggravating their Muslim overlords and consequently “being more concerned about their own salvation than about the fate of the Andalusian Christian community as a whole.”\footnote{Wolf, \textit{Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain}, p. 116.} Nevertheless, the ideological and political confrontation between the martyrs and the Muslim authorities extended beyond ninth-century Córdoba as northern Iberian and European Christians took note of the martyrs’ circumstances. The writings of Eulogius and Albar, on one hand, erected a strong ideological and cultural division between what would later be conceptualized as Christian and Muslim Spain.\footnote{Bonch Reeves, \textit{Visions of Unity after the Visigoths}, p. 151.} On the other hand, the martyrs permitted a new Christian religious tradition in the form of the martyr cult that circumvented Islam’s pull toward acculturation and assimilation.\footnote{Echevarría, “Translocating Religion in the Mediterranean Space,” p. 118.} As a result, although their actions failed to achieve any reformulation of the Cordoban social order, their assault on the political and ideological structure of the Muslim regime swayed later discourses concerning al-Andalus and Spain’s national history.
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