

La convivencia, la mezquita and al-Andalus: An Iqbalian vision

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This article offers a critical close reading of the Urdu poet philosopher Muhammad Iqbal's poem "Masjid-e Qurtaba" (The Mosque of Cordoba), written in 1933 when the poet travelled to Spain. He was officially invited there to pray, a unique occurrence since the Mosque's conversion into a cathedral. The poem is illustrative of the period known as Al-Andalus, celebrated for its cross-cultural spirit of *la convivencia* (co-existence) under the sovereignty of the Umayyad dynasty. The article argues that the secular and the religious are not diametrically opposed ideas in the Indo-Islamic tradition of Urdu, and that Iqbal's poem articulates a historic cultural conversation at a time of political national identification in the 1930s.

Keywords: Al-Andalus; Iqbal; *la convivencia*; Cordoba Mosque; Urdu poetry; Indo-Islamic

Koi qurtaba ke khandar ja ke dekhe, masjid ke mihrab-o dar ja ke dekhe
Hijazi amiron ke ghar ja ke dekhe, khilafat ko zer-o zabar ja ke dekhe
Jalal un ka khandaron men hai yun chamakta

(One may go and see the ruins of Cordoba, the arches and doors of the mosques,
The houses of noblemen from the Hijaz. One may go and see the Caliphate overturned.
Their glory shines forth in the ruins, like pure gold glittering in the dust.)
(Altaf Husain Hali [1886] 1997, 133)¹

Ai harm-e qurtaba! 'ishq se tera vujud
'ishq sarapa dovam jis men nahin raft-o bud

(Oh Mosque of Cordoba, your existence is from love – love completely unending in
which there is no past.)
(Muhammed Iqbal 1993, 101)²

A few years ago I was visiting Cordoba with my family and we stayed opposite the Mezquita-Catedral, originally built as the Great Mosque in the 8th century by the Umayyad caliph of Cordoba, Abd Al-Rahman I (731-788) who had escaped the Abbasids

in Syria. We were in the final stages of writing our book *Framing Muslims* (Morey and Yaqin 2011) and the trip couldn't have come at a better time. It was an opportune moment to reflect on the *longue-durée* of Muslim cultural representations in Europe. We were also tourists in a historical city. On the day we went for our much-anticipated official visit to the Mezquita-Catedral (as advertised in the tourist brochure) my husband was wearing a hat. This caused an unforeseen problem with the guards at the entrance who wouldn't let him in until he took his hat off. Having thought that a hat was appropriate for visiting a mosque, we were taken by surprise. The guards/custodians of the tourist attraction were adamant that we were visiting a cathedral, for which the dress code needed to match. We were only allowed to go in and see one of the greatest attractions in Europe when the offence-causing hat was removed.³ The renowned Professor of Anthropology Akbar S Ahmed (2015) has in a recent article noted that the Spanish authorities self-consciously "claim the building as a cathedral and Muslim prayers are specifically banned". In 2014, while carrying out research for his *Journey into Europe* project, looking at the history of Islam, immigration and empire, the Professor and his team discovered that they could not pray in the mihrab, as it was tightly-guarded and enclosed by steel railings. (See Figure 1) He proposes that it is that "idea of *la convivencia* that we desperately need in the twenty-first century" (Ahmed 2015). So where did *la convivencia* (co-existence) originate?

It is part of the legacy of al-Andalus in the Iberian peninsula, whose period of Muslim rule lasted from 711 until 1492, when it ended with the expulsion of the Muslims and Jews by the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. Abd al-Rahman I, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain, fled from Abbasid capture in

Syria initially to Palestine, Egypt and Morocco, eventually arriving in Al-Andalus, Spain. He established his kingdom in exile in al-Andalus, and at the age of 26 made Cordoba his capital. Successfully fighting off attempts at a Christian Reconquest, he ruled for over 33 years and became known as *al-Dakhil* (the immigrant). In 785, he began the construction of the Great Mosque in Cordoba at the site of a former Roman pagan temple and a Visigothic 8th-century Christian church of St Vincent, thus visibly marking Umayyad sovereignty in Spain. To this day the Mosque, known as the “*Ka’aba* of the west”, remains an architectural centrepiece of the city. It was extended and added to by Abd al-Rahman’s successors Abd al-Rahman II (792-852), Abd al Rahman III (891-961) and Al-Hakam II (961-976) and later its central part was reconverted to a Christian cathedral (Read 1974; C.F. Seybold 1987; Walker 2003). Abd Al-Rahman II was a patron of the arts and during his prosperous rule he brought scholars from across the Islamic world to Cordoba, nurturing the cosmopolitan outlook of the city’s inhabitants. Abd Al-Rahman III added a large, square Syrian-style minaret to the Mosque and built a new palace, Madinat al-Zahra. Although he was not as committed to the arts as his predecessors, the court at Madinat al-Zahra became a meeting place for poets, scholars and artisans from the Muslim world. Marilyn Higbee Walker (2003) claims that under Abd Al-Rahman III, “cosmopolitan Cordoba began to rival Constantinople in terms of population, and no other western European capital came close to Cordoba on any terms” (7). Given the attention paid to arts and culture by the sovereigns, this period is referred to as the “golden age” of learning and culture in Spain and is particularly remembered for the peaceful co-existence of Muslims, Christians and Jews. The highlights of this co-existence include the intellectual contributions of the Cordovan-born Muslim and Jewish

philosophers Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (1126-1198)⁴ and Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), and the flourishing of notable libraries, including the one at Cordoba which is reputed to have been one of the largest in Europe at the time, with over 400,000 manuscripts. As an example of successful Muslim sovereignty, al-Andalus was idealized and romanticized in the 19th century, during the height of European colonial rule over Muslim territories (Irving [1832] 2005). It was considered in the context of the cosmopolitanism of Muslim empires and seen as a classical past in touch with the Hellenistic period.

In this article I will consider how al-Andalus is represented cross-culturally⁵ by the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal in his Urdu poem "Masjid-e Qurtaba" (The Mosque of Cordoba) in the context of an early 20th-century cultural landscape that was critical of colonial rule and looking for an alternative model of civilization to that offered by Enlightenment Europe.⁶ The idea of culture has been defined by scholars and theorists as a complex formation; according to Mahmood Mamdani (2004) the period since the Cold War has seen the "ascendancy and rapid politicizing of a single term: culture. [...] Culture talk assumes that every culture has a tangible essence that defines it, and then explains politics as a consequence of that essence" (16-17). Reflecting on cultural difference after 9/11, Mamdani describes culture as something that becomes synonymous with a progressive idea of modernity. Mamdani's reference to the essence of culture as politics suggests that there is a universalization and authenticating of one national culture over multiple cultures. As the cultural critics Jean-Francois Bayart (2005, 33) and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (2006) have both noted, the insistence on placing valorized cultural difference at the heart of identity claims carries with it as much potential for separatism, arrogation of privilege and violence against the Other, as it does for

enfranchisement and liberty. It is these contexts of cultural authenticity and national sovereignty that provide a fascinating backdrop to the contemporary re-appropriation of Al-Andalus by different groups, and the necessity of a historic contextualization.

Since the terrorist attacks on the twin towers and the resulting War on Terror, Al-Andalus has become both a source of inspiration as an alternative model for multicultural citizenship, tolerance and a foundation of cultural co-existence amongst Muslim leaders, intellectuals and militant activists. However the multicultural recasting is difficult, because the sovereignty of Muslim Spain did not conform to modern models of citizenship with equal rights, and there were expulsions and forced conversions (Cohen 2014, 28-38). Boyd Tonkin (2013), the Literary Editor of the *Independent*, writing in the Al-Andalus Special Issue of the journal *Critical Muslim*, notes that events and gatherings, “all in various ways devoted to promoting a revival of medieval cross-cultural harmony or ‘convivencia’, have flourished across modern Andalusia over the past twenty years, often boosted by funds from foreign governments such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar” (204). He argues that such a nostalgic memorializing of a golden age tells us more about the “dreamers than the dream” (206) and concludes that any “future golden age of harmony and tolerance will have to be built without any phantom assistance” (210). This somewhat pessimistic reading of a pan Arab sponsorship of a singular cultural authenticity is countered by the contemporary Muslim thinker, and editor of the same special issue, Ziauddin Sardar (2013), who signals a move toward a plurality of cultures and likens the project to the Cordoba Mosque, as something that “can be reimagined and relocated, liberated ‘from the wounds of history’” (6, 23). The context of Al-Andalus is self-consciously reclaimed by Sardar from the revenge-tinted lens of Osama bin Laden

and Ayman al-Zawahiri in post-9/11 broadcasts, who seek to mobilise their global jihad with the cautionary tale of the tragedy of Al-Andalus. Sardar's inclusion of Tonkin's article within the Al-Andalus Special Issue of *Critical Muslim* shows that he as editor wants to raise critical awareness of the knotty issues of cultural authenticity from within Muslim nations. The diasporic historic "return to Al-Andalus" can thus be read as an intercultural⁷ quest tinged with the nostalgia for a golden age and the desire for a new modernity. Interpreted in a unique categorization of religion as culture, Al-Andalus is represented as part of a collective migrant Muslim cultural memory in Europe that offers resistance to "westernization", and also as a place where cross-cultural harmony can be recovered to negotiate the trauma of the modern Muslim self. This intercultural appropriation of Al-Andalus is therefore not determined by a culturalist view that is representative of "a stable, closed corpus of representations" (Bayart 2005, 33). Contemporary diasporic writing about Al-Andalus (which was itself founded by an immigrant) in a postcolonial context indicates a historic search for a Muslim narrative of tolerance, in order to convey the co-existence of secular thought and religious tradition as part of its ancient heritage.⁸ This dialogue is not a new phenomenon and its earlier occurrence can be traced in another period of confrontation between coloniser and colonized -- namely in India during the pan-Islamic Khilafat movement (1919-26) that sought to restore the Caliphate in Turkey and in exchange promised Muslim solidarity with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement in opposition to British rule (Minault 1999).

In my research I have looked at the crossover value of Urdu poetry as a signifier of national, local and gendered cultures, forming an intercultural mosaic across multiple identities and identification. You will find examples of phrases and poems cited and

quoted from a variety of places: television channels will devote hours of prime time viewing to cultural discussion programmes and performances of poetry and song; politicians will quote well-known poems in the certainty that their significance will be broadly understood; and even the drivers of rickshaw taxis will have poetic phrases from celebrated Urdu, Punjabi and Pashtun poets painted on their vehicles. Other cultural forms, including religious music such as the qawwali song tradition, folk art and music, and street theatre engage a cross-section of society and offer a cultural aesthetic that draws from the “practice of everyday life” (to borrow a phrase from Michel de Certeau [2011]) and an alternative politics to that of the state’s culturalist landscape. It is in this spirit that I turn to the genre of Urdu poetry to search for the earlier narrative of Al-Andalus. Interestingly, Al-Andalus comes to prominence as part of a late 19th-century reformist drive in Urdu poetry. In literature, part of this process involved recovering a unique civilizational “Muslim” aesthetic, a political revisioning that went alongside the preservation of the familial traditional “inner domain of national culture”, while responding to the discourse of the British colonial state as progressive and modern (Chatterjee 1993). Modernity was being represented and understood as a European condition and adopted by early Indian reformers as part of a necessary shift for local communities, but this progressive chronology was being challenged in the literary sphere, where alternative modernities were brought to the fore alongside didactic and prescriptive texts. It is at this key historical juncture between reform and modernity that we find new ideas of community being formulated in Urdu literary culture, and popularized through a simplified language.

The modernist reformists and critics advocating enlightenment for an Indian Muslim community came out of the Aligarh Movement, spear-headed by a new *sharif* service gentry reshaping the literary tradition of Urdu and adapting it to a European sensibility. The founder of the Aligarh movement, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98), worked closely with poets and Urdu intellectuals such as Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914) and Shibli Naumani (1857-1914) to modernise Urdu language and literature (Lelyveld 1978). Hali, a devoted follower and biographer of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's ideas, penned his epic poem *Musaddas Madd-o Jazr-e Islam* (The Flow and Ebb of Islam), an elegy on the decline of Muslim rule, its intellectual and scientific advancement and the need for a new moral code conversant with western values. Using the form of a six-line stanza known as the *musaddas*, Hali deploys the preferred form of the *marsiya* (the lament) to present a moving account of an ailing Muslim community. Sayyid Ahmad Khan is known to have wept while reading it, and to have said that when asked by God to present his good deeds, he would offer Hali's *Musaddas* as his "crowning achievement" (Jalal 2008, 174). The *Musaddas* is thus representative of the Aligarh spirit of Muslim reform and it is in this epic narrative that we find Muslim Spain represented as a lost paradise:

Hua Andalus un se gulzar yaksar jahan un ke asar baqi hain aksar
Jo chahe koi dekh le aj ja kar ye hai bait-e hamra ki goya zaban par
Keh the al-e adnan se mere bani
'arb ki hun men is zamin par nishani

(Through them Spain was entirely turned into a rose-garden, where many of their memorials remain.

Anyone who wishes may go and see them for himself today. It is as if these words were on the tongue of the Alhambra,

‘My founders were of the Umayyad clan. I am the token of the Arabs in this land’.)

(Hali [1997] 1997, 133)

Hali’s reference to Spain has the hindsight of Mughal decline and the optimism of the golden age of Islam, which touched the globe from Arabia to Dailam: “from the summit of Adam’s Peak to the Sierra Nevada, you will find their traces wherever you go” and is tinged with the pessimism of an elegy (131, 53). According to Shackle and Majeed (Hali 1997), Hali’s memorializing of the rose-garden marks a shifting landscape in the poem from the “symbolic geography of Persian gardens” to the Arabian desert, signifying Hali’s ambivalent response to the “flow and ebb of Islam” from a transregional Islamicate civilisation to a more orthodox Islam that distanced itself “from the ornate legacy of Indian Persianate Islam” (61).

Hali’s legacy as a poet and critic is that of a modernizer who advocated a move toward *necharalism* (i.e. nature) because he felt a new style of poetry was essential to show progress and innovation.⁹ He was influenced by his interaction with English books in translation during the time he worked in the Punjab Government Book Depot at Lahore, and the *Musaddas* was written at the suggestion of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who established the Aligarh Muslim College as part of his reformist drive to cultivate a closer relationship

to English values. Hali left a lasting influence on the field of Urdu poetry with his new aesthetics of “*sadagi* (simplicity), *josh* (emotion) and *asliyyat* (truth)” in the love lyric, advocated through his pioneering work on Urdu literary criticism in the *Muqaddima sher-o shairi* (Poetics of Poetry) (Ahmed 2013, 87). He imbued the *Musaddas* with community-based sentiment in 19th-century India, cultivating nostalgia for a return to Hijaz.

Hali’s new aesthetics cast a long-lasting influence on future generations, and the next poet who would make the legacy into his own was the Sialkot-born Muhammad Iqbal. As a poet, he is claimed by many; that great scholar of Islamic literature Annemarie Schimmel described him as a “talisman in Pakistan” and the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khomeini, claimed an Iqbalian heritage in 1986 with the proclamation that the Islamic Republic of Iran is “the embodiment of Iqbal’s dream” (quoted in Majeed 2009, xxiii-xxvii). Hafeez and Lynda Malik place Iqbal at the heart of Lahore’s 19th-century performative tradition, embodied in a regular *mushairah* poetry symposium organized in the Bazaar Hakiman inside Bhati Gate (Malik and Malik 1971, 69-107). He is celebrated nationally, along with Mohammad Ali Jinnah, as a founding father of Pakistan. Active in politics, Iqbal gave two Presidential addresses in 1930 and 1932 at the Annual Sessions of the All India Muslim League and was a delegate at the second and third Round Table conferences of 1930-32 to discuss India’s constitutional future. He was well known to Jawaharlal Nehru and Jinnah, and his political involvement in minority politics is evidenced through his involvement with the Muslim League. Iqbal’s philosophic interventions on the modern meaning of Muslim community were born out of his experience and political involvement with minority politics in India. In his search for

a utopian Muslim community, Iqbal looks toward the intercultural mix of Al-Andalus as an alternate space. Over a period of time, his poems shifted from a territorial recognition of the self to a deterritorialized homeland, and offered alternative readings of the Muslim holy land of Hijaz.¹⁰

The political scientist and scholar Robert Lee (1997) in conversation with a political and philosophical understanding of authenticity across Muslim cultures in the modern period, argues that Iqbal is a proposer of a general authenticity “seeking to liberate humanity from the clutches of both tradition and modernity, from the mysticism of the East and the reason of the West, from the imperialism of the West and the submissiveness of the East” (58).¹¹ This transcultural reading of authenticity suggests that Iqbal was looking for a middle ground between Indo-European secularism and religious tradition, and not simply a civilizational difference. The history of Al-Andalus, with its mixed Muslim descent, and complex settlements from the eastern Mediterranean and northern Europe, appealed to his philosophical thinking for that reason. Given Iqbal’s engagement with modern western philosophy, Al-Andalus presented a center ground from which to negotiate the colonized Muslim self and the notion of freewill through the philosopher, Ibn Rushd. For Ibn Rushd, “humanity is an active agent in Islam, and not a passive, predetermined one” (Bahrawi 2013, 52).¹² Ibn Rushd is recognised for his contribution to the formation of secular thought, which became a major force in the European Renaissance. While Iqbal did not propose secularism as a way forward for Muslim communities, he was interested in developing a cross-cultural strategy as part of the reconstitution of a new Muslim personal and cultural identity.

This idea of human agency and the pull toward a greater moral force is touched on in Iqbal's memorable and well-known poem "Masjid-e Qurtaba" (The Mosque of Cordoba). Hali's representation of Al-Andalus as a place where Arab and Muslim civilization was at its height is extended by Iqbal's transnational journey. "Masjid-e Qurtaba" was written in the 1930s, when Iqbal travelled to Europe for the third round table conference in London. He visited Spain as a tourist in January 1933 and in Madrid was accorded the honour of being specially invited by the Minister of Education to pray at the mosque in Cordoba in Spain (Anjum 2014, 174-176). The poem is part of his second collection of poems *Bal-e Jibril* (Gabriel's Wing), published in 1936. A note below the title of the poem confirms that it was written in Cordoba.

In his close reading of the poem, the comparative literature scholar Yaseen Noorani (1991) argues that the poem reveals itself as a national imaginary and reflects the ideal Muslim community as envisioned by Iqbal, "transforming erotic desire into political sentiment by projecting it onto the masterworks of Andalusian architecture" (31). Noorani is of the view that to participate in this nation "one must first become a citizen of Al-Andalus". Noorani's reading is suggestive of a turn toward authenticity in Iqbal's poetry, as he puts al-Andalus at the centre of an inversion of European history. "Masjid-e Qurtaba" is, according to this reading, an example of anticolonial resistance that turns into nostalgia for the lost paradise of Al-Andalus. Noorani's analysis is centred on a reading of authenticity, which he states at the start of his essay: "the individual quest for self-realisation becomes the means of restoring an authentic communal identity and envisioning a utopian political order" (1991, 238). Reading the form of the poem as partly *wasf* (ekphrasis -- a form that responds to objects of art) and *qasida* (panegyric -

- a praise poem), Noorani argues that the monument of the Great Mosque is turned into an inverted Freudian “narcissistic object that signifies the poet’s self and its desire” (239). For Noorani, the use of classical form imbues the subjectivity of the poem with a desire for a return to a classical past, and a civilizational connection. In his reading of the poem,

eros is the force that animates history and civilisation, present in both the poet and the beautiful form upon which he gazes. The result is a mystical, apocalyptic vision of vision that sees through beauty to the political reality, past and future, that it signifies. (240)

While Noorani’s reading of ‘*ishq* translated as eros is suggestive, I am not entirely convinced that it is an erotic representation of the anti-colonial national self or a civilizational yearning for the past. In my analysis of the poem below, I argue against this position by suggesting that in Al-Andalus Iqbal looks for an alternative to territorial anti-colonial nationalism, in the cosmopolitan intercultural mix of Christian, Jewish and Muslim influences and the heritage of Hellenism. Iqbal’s referencing of ‘*aql* reason in the poem is an equally powerful force that mediates an all-consuming ‘*ishq*. This juxtaposition is significant, as it conveys Iqbal’s ambivalence toward communal identity formation in India drawing on Al-Andalus as a utopian intercultural ideal that offered an alternative model for a society in flux. In the close reading below, I analyse shifts in mood, tone and form to interrogate the subjectivity of the poem, and how it might be read cross-culturally.

“Masjid-e Qurtaba” opens with the phrase “silsila-e roz-o shab” (Repeating pattern of day and night, O creator of events/Repeating pattern of day and night, the reality of life and death) (Iqbal 1993). The start of the poem is thematically set to the notion of the passage of time and the phrase “silsila-e roz o shab” is used in the manner of a refrain in the first three opening lines and then in the fifth and the eighth line, establishing a circular and rhythmic sense of time. Iqbal maintains a varied linking verse form, using the Persian *tarkib-band* (composite-tie) to compose his poem. This consists of eight stanzas of a nearly equal number of couplets, using a single rhyme and separated by a series of verses at the end of each strophe.¹³ The first stanza of the poem establishes the pattern of day and night, the metaphysical explanation of time and space, and confirms Iqbal’s linkage to a rich poetic heritage; as the Urdu scholar Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (2004) has noted, it lets the reader tap into a variety of poetic traditions such as Arabo-Persian, Indo-Persian, Indo-Sanskrit and Urdu. Its references to natural and cosmic objects, its rhyme scheme and metre allows the eternity to be captured, as in the lines “Chain of days and nights, the lament of the instrument of eternity, from which the Being shows the low and high pitches of possibilities” (Iqbal 1993, 97). Faruqi is of the view that Iqbal’s poetic aesthetic draws its unique heritage from Vedic and Islamic philosophies of Time and Being to represent a hybridised literary tradition, and this is what makes him immensely readable and distinctive as a modern poet (Faruqi 2004). With an emphasis on intertextuality, Iqbal’s first stanza sets the tone for the rest of his poem.

In the second stanza, Iqbal turns to the theme of eternal love, deploying a Sufi aesthetic to convey a universal emotion:

‘ishq dam-e jibra’il, ‘ishq dil-e Mustafa

‘ishq khuda ka rasul, ‘ishq khuda ka kalam

‘ishq ki masti se hai paikar-e gul tabnak

‘ishq hai sahba-e kham, ‘ishq hai kas ul-karam

(Love is the breath of Gabriel; love is the heart of Mustafa; love is the Prophet of God; love is the word of God.

From the intoxication of love the form of the rose is radiant; love is raw wine; love is the generous cup.) (Iqbal 1993, 99)

He infuses the Mosque of Cordoba with this meaningful theme of love that is set around “‘ishq faqih-e haram” (love is the jurist of the mosque) and “‘ishq amir-e junud” (commander of the army) -- a nod toward the Umayyad rulers. The earlier framing device of cyclical time and eternal love deriving from a hybridized worldview is now fully focussed on the mosque itself. This stanza also has, toward its end, the often-quoted line “kafir-e hindi hun main, dekh mera zauq-o shauq” (I am an Indian infidel, but see my enthusiasm and love) (99), representing the persona of the poet of the east whose emotions touch the deep devotion and commitment of a Muslim community. Notably, at the start of the stanza the poet has disconnected from the narrative of history, proclaiming that “‘ishq se tera vujud, ‘ishq sarapa dovam jis men nahin raft-o bud” (your existence is from love – love completely unending in which there is no past) (99). The ascendancy of the true feeling of love closes the stanza in a trance-like mood: “shauq meri lai men hai, shauq meri nai men hai / naghma-e allah hu mere rag-o pai men hai” (Love is in my

melody: love is in my flute. The song of 'He is God' is in every fibre of my body) (101). Importantly, the body becomes the receptacle of divinity and the reader may recognise echoes of the philosophy of *wahdat-ul wajud* (the unity of being) associated with another Andalusí thinker, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240). But this consuming love is contrasted with the corporeality of the body of the Indian infidel whose identification is marked at the heart of the poem. He is the intermediary between the Sufi and the Sovereign, the coloniser and the colonized, a spokesman for a global community.

Iqbal celebrates the Great Mosque as a "mujiza-e fun" (miracle of art) and pays homage to the beauty of its endless columns and the minaret. The Mosque was built by Byzantine craftsmen and is a stunning example of architectural syncretism with its borrowing of complete columns from Roman buildings and use of the Visigothic horseshoe arch. Inside the Mosque, a forest of columns extends upwards into stone and red brick-coloured double horse-shoe arches. (See Figure 2) The geometrical design creates an illusion of an infinite space with no specific centre. The architecture of the Mosque is reflective of the diversity of its location. It is a historic example of hybridity; as Shohat and Stam (2014) have noted in their critical discussion on syncretism, "the great mosque at Cordoba hybridises the diverse styles that passed through Spain: Carthaginian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab-Moorish" (43). In Iqbal's verses there is no mention of the Christian cathedral that is part of the Mosque's reconversion in the 13th century. (See Figure 3) Instead, Iqbal locates the heroic spirit of the "mard-e muslim" in the Mosque's aesthetic form. He too is eternal:

Mit nahin sakta kabhi mard-e musalman, kih hai

Us ki azanon se fash sir-e kalim-o Khalil

Us ki zamin be-hudud, us ka afaq be-sughur

Us ke samundar ki mauj, dajlah-o danub-o nil!

Us ke zamane 'ajib, us ke fasane gharib

(The Muslim hero can never be erased,

for by his prayer-calls the secrets of Moses and Abraham are revealed.

His land is without borders, his horizon is without bounds; the waves of his sea are the Tigris, the Danube, the Nile.

His times are amazing, his stories are wonderful. He gave the call of departure to the ancient world.) (Iqbal 1993, 101)

This sea-led Muslim hero travels across rivers that are peopled with Arabs, Kurds, Muslims, Jews and Christians, crossing civilizations and challenging an inward-looking marginal existence.¹⁴ His spirituality is elastic and his travel transformative. The theme of divine love and the Muslim hero are signifiers of a Sufi poetic heritage that Iqbal borrowed from the Persian poet Jalaluddin Rumi and the thinker Ibn 'Arabi, and made into his own by developing the unique concept of the self *khudi* including influences from the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Annemarie Schimmel interprets Ibn 'Arabi's philosophy of *wahdat-ul wujud* as central to Islamic mystical thought and his theory of the Perfect Man as an ideal fit for the Prophet as the "exemplar of humanity par excellence" (1963, 235).¹⁵ Iqbal's representation of the Perfect Man is not a replica of the classical Islamic model and the reader has to look beyond the ending of the fourth stanza's "'mard-e sipahi hai, voh is ki zara la illaha /saya-e shamshir men is ki pinha la

illaha” (He is the soldier hero; his armour is la ilah./ In the shadow of the scimitar, his refuge is la ilah) to the ending of the fifth stanza ““aql ki manzil hai voh, ‘ishq ka hasil hai voh / halqa-e afaq men garmi mahfil hai voh” (He is the goal of intelligence; he is the harvest of love./ He is the heat of the assembly in the ring of the heavens) (Iqbal 1993, 103) to see that the experience of love is tempered with intellect. For Iqbal, the Mosque’s aesthetic beauty epitomises the deep connection between the message and the messenger of Islam. The heroic Muslim figure is cast beyond spirituality to the political discourse of citizenship, arguing for an accommodation of the borderless individual, a time traveller and a storyteller. This is the figure of the Muslim moderniser who wishes to explore beyond the local networks of the *‘ulama* and communitarian politics to form a society based on principles of equity. He interprets for his community the ethics of belonging in a modern fragmented world. But as the religious studies scholar John Eposito (2003) has noted in an overview of the poet’s oeuvre, Iqbal saw the

quietism of the Indian Muslim as a radical departure from the true spirit of Islam. [...] Rejecting the static universe of Plato and those aspects of Muslim mysticism which denied the affirmation of the self in the world, Iqbal, basing himself on the Quran, developed a dynamic Weltanschauung in his theory of selfhood (egohood) which embraced all of reality, self, society and God. (437)

This analysis is attuned to Iqbal’s “condemnation of speculative mysticism and inactive quietism” and is illustrative of his activist commitment to forging a modern political Muslim community, self-aware and committed to the notion of free will.¹⁶

The fifth stanza reaffirms the Great Mosque as a signifier of the eternal beloved and reflective of the godliness of the *momin* (true believer) and his intellect. The poet emphasises the purity of the true believer and of his actions, representing a modern believer whose authenticity is changing from metaphysics to individual subjectivity. His high station is determined by his *khayal-e azeem* (advanced thought). There is a particular juxtaposition of love and reason in this stanza, emphasising through the symbolism of the Great Mosque a Muslim history that attained great heights through its intellectual contribution to knowledge and reason.

Nuqta-e purkar-e haq, mard-e khuda ka yaqin

Aur ye 'alam tamam vaham-o tilism-o-majaz

'aql ki manzil hai voh, 'ishq ka hasil hai voh

halqa-e 'afaq men garmi-e mahfil hai voh

(The certainty of the man of God is the central point of the compass of righteousness, and this whole world is superstition, magic and illusion.

He is the goal of intelligence; he is the harvest of love. He is the heat of the assembly in the ring of the heavens.) (Iqbal 1993, 103)

In the sixth stanza, the poet refers to the Mosque as the "Kaba-e arbab-e fun" (The Holy Land of aesthetics) conveying that this particularity has given to the people of Al-Andalus the status of a site for holy pilgrimage and "Hai teh-e gardun agar husn men teri nazir / qalb-e Musalman men hai aur nahin hai kahin" (If under the firmament anything is comparable to you in beauty / it is in the heart of the Muslims and nowhere else) (103).

By referring to the Mosque as *Kaba*, the poetic voice infuses a deeply spiritual sentiment but remains careful with his representation lest he be accused of idolatry. Instead, he compares the pure Muslim heart to the Mosque and turns his attention to the Arab traveller -- "Ah vo mardan-e haq! Voh 'arbi shah sevar / hamil 'khalq-e azeem', sahib-e sidq-o yaqin" (Ah those men of righteousness! Those Arab horseman! /Transmitters of the "noble nature", people of truth and certainty) -- whose legacy was a people's sultanate of *faqr* (humility) and not of grand sovereignty, "Jin ki nigahon ne ki tarbiat-e shirq-o gharb /zulmat-e yurap men thi jin ki khird rah bin" (Whose watching eyes educated the east and the west; / whose wisdom pointed out the road in the darkness of Europe) (105).

This stanza accentuates Iqbal's commitment to a democratic Islam that is not idealized through a dynasty but is formed around shared values of tolerance and humility. The poet links this type of society to the cultural renaissance of Al-Andalus and its lasting influence on Europe, bringing light to darkness and neatly inverting the colonial representation of Arabs. He sees the heritage of a great civilization in many places: in the warmth of the Spanish people; in the land, which is permeated with the nostalgic "Bu-e Yemen aj bhi is ki havaon men hai" (perfume of Yemen in its breeze); and in "rang-e hijaz" (the colour of Hijaz) that is present in its songs.

The nostalgic mood is carried over into the seventh stanza, as the tone of the poem turns to dissatisfaction and a lament is voiced that, in the Great Mosque, "Ah ke sasion se hai teri fiza be-azan" (Alas! For centuries the call to prayer has not sounded in your skies) (Iqbal1993, 105). This mood turns to despair, as the poet-narrator does not know where to find a certainty of devotion that will reinvigorate passion and belief. From

this anguished position, he offers a comparative summary overview of Western European nations and their religious reforms:

The Germans have seen the upheaval of the Reformation of religion, which left no trace of the old order behind it.

The purity of the elder of the church was seen to be a mistake, and then the frail boat of thought trailed off.

The eyes of the French also have seen a Revolution, by which the world of the westerners took on a different complexion.

The community of the sons of Rome, the oldest in the worship of the past, also became young by the Renewal. (105)

These comparative examples are critically presented to illustrate the necessity for change and a shift from a civilizational narrative. The poet sees the soul of the Muslim in a similar turmoil but is unable to express this uncertainty out loud and retreats in silence claiming it to be "raz-e khudai hai ye keh nahin sakti zaban!" (a secret of the self known only to God). He turns again to the sea "dekhiye is bahar ki teh se uchalta hai kiya" (let's see what comes out of the rising tide of this sea) (Iqbal 1990, 427) for the rise of the new Muslim community. The sea can be read as a metaphor for the passage of personal growth.

The last stanza of the poem ends on a mixed note of resignation, optimism and triumphalism. It turns from the Mosque to the valley and a pastoral imagining of the simplicity and melodic quality of the song of a peasant's daughter, symbolising hope.

The poet addresses the “Ab-e ravan-e kabir!” (The River Guadilquivir!) (Iqbal 1993, 427) as witness to a poetic visionary who dreams of another age:

‘Alam-e nau hai abhi parda-e taqdir men

meri nigahon men hai us ki sahar be-hijab

parda utha dun agar chahra-e afkar se

La na sake ga farang meri nava’ on ki tab

(The new order is still hidden behind the veil of fate; in my eyes its dawn is without a veil.

If I should lift the veil from the face of thoughts, the European could not bear the heat of my songs.) (107)

The poet-narrator affirms that the future is veiled because of the ambivalence toward change. Letting go of nostalgia and echoing the spirit of anti-colonialism, he emphatically categorises a life without revolution as akin to death, and calls for a nation that is committed to action, bravery and revolution. The reference to the hijab veil in this concluding stanza is significant, because it can also be read as the hegemonic narratorial impulse that guides the poem. This impulse chooses not to unveil to the reader the physical qualities and description of the aesthetic features of the Mosque -- how it incorporates a fusion of styles and cultures in the various extensions and alterations that have taken place over time.

There is a worldly cosmopolitan vision embedded in the poem “Masjid-e Qurtaba” and my analysis has focused on the poet’s cross-cultural interpretation that gravitates

toward a politics of the self, free will and a utopian *la convivencia* (co-existence) and is not culturalist in its scope.¹⁷ Iqbal's rendition of the poem seeks an alternative intercultural model to counter the colonial subjugation of Muslim subjectivities in India and the wider Muslim world. His position has elements of authenticity but is not completely dependent on it. The geographical location of South Asia, with its hybrid and cosmopolitan cultures, is significant and offers a necessary counterpoint to the cosmopolitanisms of the Ottoman empire and Al-Andalus. It also fractures the idea of a normative universal civilization. In my reading of the poem, Iqbal does not appear to advocate a civilizational discourse of Muslim sovereignty and a singular utopian good life; instead, his poetic voice suggests, through its silences, lyrical rendition and hybrid aesthetics of what a cross-cultural community might be. The Andalusian narrative of co-existence is a major influence on the Iqbalian vision and he uses the metaphor of travel in his poem to convey alternative ways of seeing local cultures through the eyes of an "Indian infidel".

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Notes

¹ Translations from the work of Altaf Husain Hali are by Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed. See Hali ([1886] 1997).

² Translations of the poetry of Muhammed Iqbal are by D. J. Matthews. See Iqbal (1993).

³ The disagreement over ownership of the mosque as cathedral was recently reported in *The Guardian*. See Kassam (2014).

⁴ For on-line introductions to Ibn Rushd, see Leaman (n.d.) and Hillier (n.d.).

⁵ By cross-cultural I mean from two or more different cultures. I am indebted here to Bennett (2013).

⁶ Iqbal published a range of poems on Spain in his collection *Bal-e Jibreel* including a dua (prayer) that precedes 'Masjid-e Qurtaba'; 'Hispania', 'Tariq ki dua' and a translation of verses from Abdal Rahman I.

⁷ Here I am using the term intercultural from a communication perspective something that Milton Bennett describes as "how collective worldviews interact across cultural contexts" (2013, 14). See also the comparative analysis of interculturalism and multiculturalism by Modood and Meer (2012) and Cattle's (2012) research on interculturalism.

⁸ However it should be noted that the recent turn to the Iberian peninsula and al-Andalus in postcolonial scholarship to seek examples of multicultural tolerance and Robert Young's (2012) suggestion that Islam is a new issue for postcolonial studies is not entirely accurate, as there is strong evidence from scholars working on colonial discourse analysis of a longer engagement with Islam, such as Nabil Matar and Gerald Maclean's excellent edited volume on *Britain and the Islamic World 1558-1713* (2011). Donna Landry (2015) has pointed out the significance of comparative imperial contexts such as the Ottoman Empire for a sustained historical understanding of toleration and cosmopolitan communities. Also see Mufti (1991), Brennan (1992), Suleri (1989) and Lewis (2004).

⁹ Christopher Shackle (1996) is of the view that Hali's representation of Spain was borrowed from his readings of English textbooks on the topic and part of his deliberate move from a Persianate style to make his mark as a poet of note after Ghalib. To illustrate this argument, he refers us to Hali's *qasida* or ode addressed to Queen Victoria, in which he writes, "Although every people is richly endowed by the favour of the Empress/It is Islam which is the most deeply indebted to her/ We know what happened to the Moors in Spain, When Isabella was crowned Queen there" (244).

¹⁰ Javed Majeed (2009) has examined the tensions between the national and global in Iqbal's early poetry, suggesting a transnational transportation of the sacred space of Hijaz and the Prophet Muhammad to other parts of the world. Iqbal also drew on the imagery of the Persian rose garden as part of his aesthetic, reflecting patterns of tradition and innovation (1-18). While geographic remapping was one part of Iqbal's poetic repertoire, the majority of his musings were concerned with establishing the notion of *khudi* (the self) through the medium of Urdu poetry.

¹¹ Lee (1997) uses the lens of authenticity to interrogate the "dominant elites who [...] use elements of authentic thought to sustain their hold on power and reinforce their nation-states. Senghor drew on negritude, Nyerere on African Socialism and democracy, Nasir on Arab Socialism, and Khomeini on the idea of the Islamic state" (19). He undertakes a close analysis of key Islamic thinkers Mohammad Iqbal, Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shari'ati and Mohammed Arkoun to complicate that binary division between tradition and modernity, liberal democracy and civil religion.

¹² Bahrawi (2013) explains Ibn Rushd's middle position between al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina's (Avicenna) debate on secularity and free will.

¹³ A helpful explanation of the different forms of Persian, Arabic and Urdu poetry can be found in Houtsma, Arnold, Basset, and Hartmann (1987).

¹⁴ I am particularly drawn to Miriam Cooke's (1999) essay "Mediterranean Thinking: From Netizen to Medizen", where she puts forward the idea of aquacentric thinking that challenges the homogenization of interregional diversity in the Mediterranean.

¹⁵ However, as critics have noted, Iqbal's development of the idea of *khudi* (the self) responds critically to Ibn 'Arabi's pantheistic model. See Iqbal's (1915) *Asrar-e khudi* (The Secrets of the Self) and *Rumuz-e Bekhudi* (The Mysteries of Selflessness) ([1918] 1953).

¹⁶ See Iqbal's letter to Dr R. A. Nicholson (dated January 24, 1921, Lahore) quoted in Zafar M. Iqbal (2015).

¹⁷ Due to constraints of space I have not been able to delve into a critical definition of cosmopolitanism. I am aware of the complexities that surround this term and have touched on it in an earlier article, "Cosmopolitan Ventures during Times of Crisis: a Postcolonial Reading of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's *Dasht-e tanhai*" and Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*" (Yaqin 2013).

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