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Islam, Art, and Architecture in the Americas: Some Considerations of Colonial Latin America

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Figure 1. Simon de Barrientos (?), Santiago Matamoros (St. James as Slayer of the Moors), detail of lateral portal, church of La Compañía, Arequipa, Peru, 1654.

# Islam, art, and architecture in the Americas

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## *Some considerations of colonial Latin America*

THOMAS DaCOSTA KAUFMANN

In the millennium after the Hegira Islam spread all over the Eastern Hemisphere, but traces of Islamic culture should not have been found at all in the vast areas of the Western Hemisphere ruled by the Spanish and Portuguese during the period between the first voyage of Columbus and the independence of modern Latin American states, 1492 to ca. 1820.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish crown repeatedly placed restrictions on the immigration of “Moors,” including those newly converted to Christianity, as well as on their children and descendants.<sup>2</sup> From the year 1569 the Inquisition worked in the Americas to make sure that only Christians (i.e. orthodox Catholics) practiced their religion. Extensive archival data attests to the presence in the New World of the Holy Office,<sup>3</sup> whose widespread activity is also suggested physically by buildings known by the name of *Casa del Gran Poder*, some of the largest extant structures that are not churches or monasteries erected in places such as Sucre (formerly known as Chuquisaca and La Plata), now in Bolivia, and Cartagena de las Indias, now in Colombia.

These restrictions should have assured that the effects of Islam and its cultural products would have been absent in the Americas. But historians and art historians have often noted that the transculturation of Iberian culture in the New World also involved Islam in multiple and at times complex ways. Attitudes, ideas, and products engendered by longstanding contact with Moslems and their culture left many marks on the European colonies in the Americas.

How can it be that motifs and ideas found in art in the Americas reflect the impact of Islam? This paper

assembles and comments on some of the diverse information concerning this impact, direct, and indirect, on monuments of art and architecture in the colonies of Latin America. It addresses the question of how it may be that motifs and ideas that were created in one culture may appear and be used, consciously or unconsciously, in another culture. It investigates how objects, forms, and attitudes forged in Iberia became absorbed and reused in the iconography, techniques, and forms of the cultures of the Spanish colonies. The question of Islam’s impact, conscious and unconscious, on the arts of the Americas raises the more general issue of how cultural products created in one culture may be transferred to and then adapted in another.

Historians have long related the Christian (re-)conquest of the Iberian peninsula to the “discovery” and conquest of the Americas. The series of events connected with both historical phenomena have been viewed as associated aspects of European interaction with the wider world, in which Christendom ultimately expanded beyond the bounds of Europe.<sup>4</sup> It is notable that the year 1492 that saw the fall of the Nasirid kingdom of Granada and the expulsion (or forced conversion) of Jews and soon of Moslems from Spain also experienced the landfall of Columbus in the Bahamas. The spirit of religious crusade that led Christians against Moslems in the Iberian peninsula has thus long been regarded as contributing to the launching of Columbus’s first voyage.<sup>5</sup> As is well known, Columbus’s expedition was conceived as a missionary venture and also designed, like the Portuguese voyages that eventually led around Africa to India, to find a way to circumvent the dominions of Islam by discovering a way to the east. Military and religious rivalry between two Old World faiths has consequently been counted among the factors that attended the European “discovery” of the New World.

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1. My thanks to a reader of this paper for *Res*, who offered some critical remarks that have been incorporated into the framing of the published version.

2. Louis Cardaillac, “Le problème Morisque en Amérique,” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velásquez*, 12, 1976, pp. 283–303, especially pp. 285–291, details the royal decrees relating to restrictions on immigration of Moslems.

3. There is of course a large literature on the subject: for a comprehensive overview with reference to archives see *Historia de la Inquisición en España y América*, ed. Joaquín Pérez Villanueva and Bartolome Escandell Bonet, 2 vol., Madrid, 1984ff.

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4. See J. H. Parry, *Europe and the Wider World* (London, 1966 [3rd revised edition; first ed. London, 1949]), pp. 8–11.

5. See for example J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469–1716* (Harmondsworth, 1970 [first ed. London, 1963]), pp. 60f.

Yet, as is also well known, the age-old struggle between Christendom and Islam also brought about interchange between the two cultures in Europe, including images and artifacts; here the effects are examined of how this sort of cultural exchange was also evinced in the Americas. These effects appear to be manifested, for instance, in the way the conflict with Islam may have conditioned Christians' attitudes toward what they saw in the Western Hemisphere. Europeans' encounters with other faiths and cultures in the Old World seem to have predisposed some of their responses toward alien civilizations, especially religious monuments and practices, in the New World. Early European accounts of the conquest of Peru refer to Inca shrines as mosques; Inca rulers are described as sitting in the manner of Turks and Moors; pilgrimages to Pachamac, the pre-Conquest holy site near Lima, are equated with those to Mecca.<sup>6</sup> Similarly the conquistadors of Mexico described the first temples they discovered as mosques.<sup>7</sup> According to Bernal Díaz, the first large city seen on the Mexican mainland was named "the Great Cairo" by those on the expedition of Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba.<sup>8</sup>

It thus seems possible to relate the appearance of the symbols of the conflict of European and indigenous peoples in the New World to the transference of attitudes and institutions that had been forged in the *reconquista* of Iberia. Most familiar among these symbols is the recurrence of the apostle St. James, *Santiago*, whose shrine in Compostella was a famed goal for pilgrims in medieval Europe. "Santiago" became part of the battle cry of the reconquest, since the saint was believed to have appeared at the battle of Clavijo (930) to intervene on the side of the Christians, leading them to victory. Hence Santiago became the battle cry of the conquistadors in the New World. The saint was also believed to have intervened to help break the siege of Cuzco by indigenous rebels under Manco Inca, when he was thought to have fallen like a ray of lightning upon the fortress of Sacsahuamán, which then fell to the Spanish.<sup>9</sup>

6. According to the evidence noted in Sabine MacCormack, "The Fall of the Incas: a Historiographical Dilemma," *History of European Ideas* 6 (1985): 422–423.

7. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, 1987, p. 108.

8. Bernal Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. and intro. J. M. Cohen, Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 17.

9. MacCormack, "Fall of the Incas," p. 423; Alfonso Rodriguez G. de Ceballos, "Usos y funciones de la imagen religiosa en los virreinos americanos," in *Los Siglos de Oro en los Virreinos de América*, Madrid (ex. cat.), 1999, p. 105.

Santiago did not only appear in his familiar guise in the New World, however. The arts of the Americas replicated a familiar iconography of the saint, but they adapted his image into a form more appropriate to the geographical transposition of beliefs. The different character that he sometimes assumed raises the question of how cultural products may be transfigured in different circumstances.

On the one hand, imagery that depicted St. James as slayer of Moors (*Santiago Matamoros*) that originated in Spain traveled with the conquistadors to the New World. Matamoros became a place name for towns in the Americas, for instance in Mexico. The image of the saint on a white horse trampling down Moslems is found frequently in Spanish colonial art. This depiction appears in the art of the Peruvian viceroyalty,<sup>10</sup> and quite often in that of New Spain.<sup>11</sup>

Significantly, in the New World this image of St. James also seems to have become syncretized with an indigenous deity. Accounts and images associated with the story of the siege of Cuzco indicate that Santiago not only appeared as the Christian saint who rallies the Spanish against the infidel: he was also equated in Peru with the indigenous god of lightning, Illapa. The conflation of Santiago with Illapa thus suggests one way in which the image of St. James could be adapted in the New World as protector of Christians.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to reconsider the image that is projected of St. James as slayer of the Moors. The picture projected of the Moor is obviously a negative one. It may be compared to the monstrous creatures being slain in works of late medieval sculpture from Northern Europe, such as the great ensembles by Bernt Notke in Stockholm or Henning von der Heide in Lübeck that show St. George on horseback in combat with a dragon. In taking the place of the dragon, the Moor stands for evil. More specifically, as in other familiar contemporaneous European imagery of serpents or hydras, the Moor may stand for the evil of heresy or disbelief.

In the Americas this negative image could also be transformed, and with it also that of the saint himself. While the image of Santiago could be syncretized with

10. See Gustavo Navarro Castro, "De Iconografie van Santiago Matamoros in Spaans-Amerika," in *America. Bruid van de zon. 500 jaar Latijns-Amerika en de Lage Landen*, Antwerp (ex. cat.), 1992, pp. 189–196.

11. Elisa Vargas Lugo, "Imágenes de la Conquista en el arte Novohispano," in *Sentido y Proyección de la Conquista*, ed. Leopoldo Zea, Mexico, 1993, pp. 132ff.

an indigenous deity, the Moor could be merged with an Indian. Santiago Matamoros could thus become *Santiago Mataindios*. In numerous images St. James appears riding on a white horse, sword in hand, trampling down Indians. But how to account for this process of transformation?

The image of Santiago Mataindios appears in drawings, originating before 1560, at a time when it might be assumed that preconquest beliefs had survived and the elision of evil/heresy = Moor = Indian could be readily made. It is thus reasonable that in some recent discussions of hybridity and syncretism in the contact between Christian and indigenous beliefs the role of St. James and other Christian images in the New World has been raised. St. James has been seen as conflation of Illapa, the god associated with lightning.

Yet this interpretation seems questionable. Images of the saint shown as an enemy of the indigenous are found not only in the Andes, but also outside of contexts where the Andean god was revered. The image of Santiago Mataindios crops up in regions where preconquest ideas can not be related solely to his appearance in the guise of Illapa.<sup>12</sup> He appears not only in paintings and sculpture in the viceroyalty of Peru, but also in New Spain, where he was even conflated with the conquistador Cortes.<sup>13</sup> While this last association suggests another idea of how transculturation may occur in a Spanish colonial context—the conquistador who conquers the pagan takes on a quasi-divine aspect—the transformation also does not support the interpretation that some form of syncretism has occurred between Christianity and indigenous beliefs.

This issue of interpretation leads to a consideration of the way in which the construction of negative images in the New World may have affected its arts. Indians could be substituted for Moors as enemies of Christians, but the Moor still maintained his role as the archenemy of Christianity. Moors so appear in Andean imagery long after 1492, or even the conflicts with Moriscos in Spain, and for that matter long after open battles between Christians and non-Christians in the Americas had ceased, or rather passed over into campaigns for the extirpation of heresy. The image of the Moslem as Enemy Other figures in later seventeenth-century painting in South America, in works produced in Cuzco

and near Lake Titicaca that show King Charles II of Spain as defender of the Eucharist. Saracens, or Moors, shown wearing turbans and robes and brandishing scimitars are the most prominent among the enemies who seek to topple the Eucharist displayed in a monstrance.<sup>14</sup> A curious Peruvian version of this image portrays Saint Rose of Lima supporting a monstrance on her head.<sup>15</sup>

In the light of these traditions of pictorial imagery, which speak for a deeply rooted negative stereotype, it is also possible to reconsider the interpretation of the development of some distinctive forms of architectural iconography in the New World. These involve the problem of the so-called fortress monastery or church. As represented by numerous churches and complexes in New Spain, including those at Tepeaca, Tepoztlán, Huejotzingo, Tula, Cholula, Acolman, and many other places, these are structures whose features suggest a military character. The features include massive walls with small high windows; buttresses topped at times by small structures resembling sentry boxes; crenellated parapets placed atop the churches; ledges outside windows or roofs; and walls, again often topped by merlon cresting, around the circumference of the atrium of the convent.

The evidently military features of these buildings have provoked a raft of interpretations. For example, while some of these characteristics such as buttresses and even the massive walls of churches have obvious structural purposes, others have seemed to lend support to an inference from early ecclesiastical instructions that churches were intended to double as forts. The interpretation that the “fortress” monastery possesses a military character, however, has long been thoroughly refuted. George Kubler traced formal antecedents for these buildings to churches of the fortress type in the Mediterranean region, where they may have been intended to function as fortified churches. Kubler declared that in Mexico fortified temples were so in appearance only, and that their military aspects were merely chivalric or symbolic, and rarely utilitarian.<sup>16</sup> In the most extensive analysis of the question John McAndrew also concluded that “battlements and heavy

12. For the origins of the image of Santiago Mataindios, as well as its relation to Illapa, see Tera Gisbert, *Iconografía y Mitos Indígenas en el Arte*, La Paz, 1980, pp. 197–198.

13. Rodríguez G. de Ceballos, “Usos,” *loc. cit.*; Navarro Castro, “Iconografía”; Gisbert, *Iconografía*; Vargas Lugo, “Imágenes,” pp. 134ff.

14. José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la Pintura Cuzqueña*, Lima, 1982 (2nd ed.), vol. 2, fig. 594; *America, Bruit van de zon*, p. 434, cat. no. 245, ill.

15. *Los Siglos de Oro* (see note 9), pp. 358–359, ill.

16. George Kubler, *Arquitectura Mexicana del Siglo XVI*, Mexico City, 1983 (trans. Roberto dela Torre et. al.; 1st ed. New Haven, 1948), p. 315.

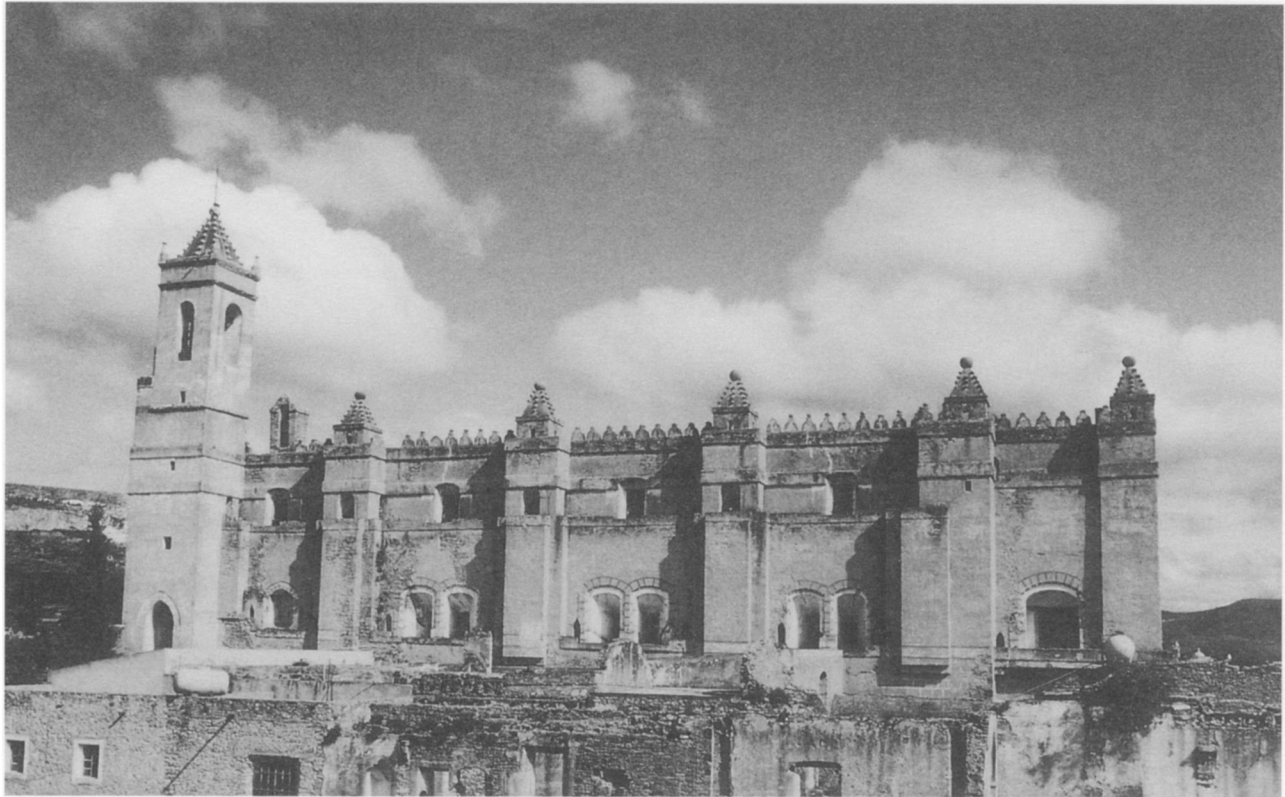


Figure 2. Franciscan Monastery of San Francisco, lateral facade of church, 1543–1580, Tepeaca, Mexico.

walls" in Mexican ecclesiastical architecture were to be interpreted more symbolically than realistically, as signs of "militant faith."<sup>17</sup>

More recently Rafael Cómez has elaborated another sort of interpretation of the fortress church as a symbolic expression of the monastery. Cómez has related the symbolic aspect of the Mexican *convento* to the actual defensive as well as symbolic connotation of medieval monasteries. He has noted especially in relation to the latter point some comparisons St. Benedict made of monks to soldiers, of the monastery to a military fort, and of the monastic family to a kind of military unit. Accepting Kubler's view that sees the military features of convents as a Mexican continuation of medieval forms, Cómez views these features as decorative.<sup>18</sup> According to him, the placement of merlons on objects such as the

bases of crosses or interior stairway railing clearly argues that they possessed a decorative, rather than a defensive function.<sup>19</sup>

Although apparently military motifs may thus have functioned as forms of decoration, the decorative does not of course exclude the symbolic. This seems evident not only in the recurrence of the actual forms applied to the structures of churches, but also in their ground plans. Recently it has been confirmed that a well-known surviving massive "fortress" church complex in sixteenth-century New Spain in fact resulted from the transformation of a preexisting monastic complex. At Huejotzingo the original church that preceded the present structure was apparently laid out according to a basilican plan.<sup>20</sup> This layout has been regarded as

17. John McAndrew, *The Open-air Churches of Sixteenth-century Mexico. Atrios, Posas, Open Chapels, and Other Studies*, Cambridge, Mass., 1965, p. 278.

18. Rafael Cómez, *Arquitectura y Feudalismo en México. Los Comienzos del Arte Novohispano en el Siglo XVI*, Mexico City, 1989, pp. 108–109.

19. See for this point McAndrew (see note 17), p. 268.

20. According to Mario Córdova Tello, *El convento de San Miguel de Huejotzingo, Puebla: Arqueología histórica*, Mexico City, 1992, cited by Clara Bargellini, "Representations of Conversion: Sixteenth-century Architecture in New Spain," in *The Word Made Image: Religion, Art, and Architecture in New Spain and Spanish America, 1500–1600* (Fenway Court 28), p. 102, n. 30.

possibly symbolic of the “Early Christian churches of Rome in the Early Christian period in New Spain.”

The transformation in form from that of the preexisting church has raised the question of why the shift was made.<sup>21</sup> If the form of the earlier building had a symbolic significance, is it not then possible that the shift to the fortress form also involves symbolic connotations? Christian responses to Islam may well provide the basis for such a hypothesis.

In the context of what may be seen as continuously combative character shaped by conflict with the Moors, a further explanation for the meaning of the shift to a fortress plan may be proposed. The militant, fortress-like character of the plan and form of New Spanish monasteries may have involved more than decorative carryovers from medieval antecedents, or a general recollection of the idea of the church militant. Although in New Spain many conflicts with the indigenous had in effect already ended by the time of the construction of fortress churches, conflicts with Islam continued in the Mediterranean basin throughout the sixteenth century and beyond, and they involved both Spanish and Portuguese. The threat of a Turkish advance into Europe continued to exist into the eighteenth century in Europe. Spaniards were drawn into military conflict with the Ottomans, most notably in the battle of Lepanto of 1571. Conversely, Spanish and Portuguese continued Christian crusades into North Africa well into the sixteenth century, exemplified by the campaigns of Charles V at Tunis in 1535, and the ill-fated efforts of Sebastian of Portugal in Morocco, where he died at the battle of Alcázarquivir in 1578. The conflict with Islam must therefore have remained very much alive in the Iberian mentality. Many European images reflect these conflicts with the Moslem Other, including a variety of images of the Ottoman Turks.<sup>22</sup>

These conflicts may also have had an effect on the response to Islam in the New World. The continuing struggle with Islam has been seen as one of the reasons why so many instructions were made for restricting immigration, and seeking out Moslem heretics in the New World.<sup>23</sup> Is it not possible that the fortress church, like the image of Santiago Matamoros, may also



Figure 3. Juan de Alameda, Franciscan Monastery of San Miguel, main facade of church, Huejotzingo, Mexico.

represent another such response, of a church embattled with its enemies, foremost among them Islam?

Seen in this light it seems to be more than coincidence that the actual forms that parapets and merlon cresting assume in Mexican fortress churches were derived from *mudéjar* decoration. In this context the term *mudéjar* is used to describe features of ultimately Islamic provenance in a Christian context, or to mean late medieval Christian buildings in Spain with Islamic elements. While the definition of this term has also been a matter of much discussion,<sup>24</sup> regardless of its validity

21. See Bargellini (note 20), especially p. 95f.

22. For the variety of imagery of Turks in Europe see Alexandrine N. St. Clair, *The Image of the Turk in Europe*, New York, 1973; *Münster, Wien und die Türken*, ex. cat. Münster, 1983; *Im Lichte des Halbmondes. Das Abendland und der türkische Orient*, ex. cat. Dresden, 1995.

23. See Cardaillac (note 2), especially pp. 299ff.

24. See for this question the relatively recent discussions in Rafael Cómez Ramos, “Una aproximación al arte mudéjar,” reprinted in

as a description for a distinctive or coherent style it seems that the origins of some forms found in New Spain are undeniably to be sought in art in Spain, in works that have Islamic origins or antecedents, and are associated with what is usually called *mudéjar*. For example, the idea of decorating a parapet with such cresting may itself be related to *mudéjar* conceptions; the specific forms that the crenelation of parapets take, of squares with pyramid tops, are commonly found in *mudéjar* architecture.<sup>25</sup>

Many other such forms with *mudéjar* provenance adorn Mexican monasteries. At Huejotzingo, for example, *mudéjar* forms appear in the *alfiz*, or rectangular box enclosing an arch seen on the *posas*, the corner chapels of the atrium before the church, as well as in the mixtilinear arch of the main church portal. The ornamented portal to the church sacristy in Huejotzingo with its rug-like repetition of geometrical and floral motifs may also be related to *mudéjar* decoration.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to such decorative details, several structural elements in the architecture of New Spain derive from the *mudéjar*, most notably wood ceilings. These ceilings are based on the type of *par y nudillo* (rafter beam, or coupled rafter) construction found in Spanish architecture. They may be built as *alfarajes*, in which decoration is placed over the tie beams or couple beams, or they may be formed in the manner of *artesonado*, or coffered ceilings. They may adopt various decorative patterns, at times assuming interlaced patterns called *laceria*. All derive from *mudéjar* antecedents. Moreover, in a few isolated instances the ground plan of a church in New Spain emulates a mosque: in the destroyed chapel of San José de los Naturales, formerly at San Francisco, Mexico City, or in

the church at Cholula, where so-called open chapels have often been regarded as resembling a mosque in elevation or construction.<sup>27</sup>

Numerous artistic phenomena have been traced to *mudéjar* antecedents, not only in Mexico but also more generally in the art and architecture of Latin America. Similar materials, technique, and forms apparently deriving from the *mudéjar* appear in secular as well as ecclesiastical contexts. These include the use of techniques and materials employed for decorative purposes, among them *yeseria*, or plasterwork, *azulejos*, or tiles, and decorative brickwork; the latter, however, found rather infrequently. General forms or patterns of decoration (such as carpet patterns and arabesques) are found throughout Latin America. Certain other structural forms such as enclosed wood balconies (*ajimeces*), as seen conspicuously in Lima<sup>28</sup> and also in the Caribbean and its litoral, have also been convincingly traced to *mudéjar* ancestry.

Forms of *mudéjar* architecture and decoration have thus been found in most of the countries of Spanish and Portuguese America. Their examples are indeed too numerous to recount in detail here. Suffice it to say that since the pioneering work of Diego Angulo and Manuel Toussaint, the presence of such elements has gained ever more scholarly attention. They have been studied in specialized essays, in symposia, and in exhibitions.<sup>29</sup>

Consequently, the *mudéjar* has been recognized as an important component of Ibero-American art and architecture. It is thus relatively clear that elements derived ultimately from Islamic art, or its traditions as represented by Islamic artists, or the *mudéjar*, may be found in monastic (and parochial church) architecture

*Andalucía y México en el Renacimiento y Barroco. Estudios de arte y arquitectura*, Seville, 1991, pp. 11–20; Gonzalo Borrás Gualis, “El arte mudéjar: estado actual de la cuestión,” in *Mudéjar iberoamericano. Una expresión cultural de dos mundos*, ed. I. Henares and R. López Guzmán, Granada, 1993, pp. 9–19, and Ignacio Henares Cuéllar, “Perspectiva historiográfica finisecular del mudéjar en la Península, Archipiélagos Atlánticos e Iberoamérica,” and Santiago Sebastián, “Existe el mudéjarismo en Hispanoamérica?,” in *Mudéjar iberoamericano. Una expresión cultural de dos mundos; El mudéjar iberoamericano. Del Islam al Nuevo Mundo*, ex. cat., Granada, 1995, pp. 17–33, 45–49.

25. These points are frequently made; for the argument about the source of the cresting see for example especially McAndrew (note 17), pp. 173, 267.

26. For a description of the stylistic elements in Huejotzingo, see Marcela Salas Cuesta, *La iglesia y el convento de Huejotzingo*, Mexico City, 1982.

27. For terminology see the fundamental study by Manuel Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar in América*, Mexico City, 1946. A substantial literature has grown up on *mudéjar* architecture in New Spain: for a review of the historiography and the manifestations of the phenomenon, see Rafael López Guzmán, “El mudéjar en la arquitectura mexicana,” in *Mudéjar iberoamericano. Una expresión cultural de dos mundos*, ed. I. Henares and R. López Guzmán, Granada, 1993, pp. 189–212. See further for an overview *idem*, *Arquitectura y carpintería mudéjar en Nueva España*, Mexico City, 1992.

28. Barbara Dalheimer, “Die geschlossenen Holzbalkone von Lima,” in *Europa und die Kunst des Islam 15–18. Jahrhunderts (Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte. Wien 4–10 September 1983)*, ed. Oleg Grabar and Elizabeth Liskar, Vienna, Cologne, Graz, 1986, pp. 87–90.

29. See for example *Mudéjar Iberoamericano. Una expresión cultural de dos mundos; El Mudéjar Iberoamericano. Del Islam al Nuevo Mundo*, ex. cat., Granada, 1995, with extensive essays and bibliography; and the edition of *Artes de México*, 2001.

and some secular examples. And these may be related to the impact, even if mediated, of Moslem culture.

The question remains of how to interpret the significance of these comparably well-known phenomena, beyond noting their ultimately Islamic roots. Undoubtedly there are many ways of accounting for monuments which appear on two continents as well as the islands of the Western Hemisphere, and were made over the course of three centuries. Obviously not all explanations apply to all such occurrences. To mention but some of the explanations that have been advanced, *mudéjar* monuments in the Americas may simply represent a transference of medieval practices that were prevalent in medieval Spain. The *mudéjar* had become a common phenomenon in Spain, because of the emulation in Christian buildings of Islamic features admired for their richness, luxury, exuberance, and dynamism.<sup>30</sup> Then again, it may simply be that techniques of carpentry and forms of decoration of ceilings common in Iberia may have been brought over without further thought to the New World, where they were utilized especially in circumstances where wood was readily available. In the New World wood may also have been a preferred building material in areas that were often subject to seismic shock.<sup>31</sup>

While such explanations may fit early instances of the *mudéjar*, other arguments may apply to the appearance of *mudéjar* elements in later periods. If they do not simply represent a carryover of earlier practices, later, especially seventeenth- and eighteenth-century instances of the *mudéjar* may be traceable to other causes. It is known, for example, that seemingly *mudéjar* features such as the design of *artesonado* ceilings in fact eventually became codified and were available in books. They may thus have been passed on by carpenters' handbooks and architectural treatises in the New World. This seems to be a viable explanation for the occurrence of phenomena related to the *mudéjar* that appear in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century in the Americas, when treatises were known in the New World that showed how *laceria* in the manner of the *mudéjar artesonado* could be made.<sup>32</sup> Treatises

30. Pilar Mogolon Cano-Cortes, "Repercusiones del arte Mudéjar en América," in *Relaciones artísticas entre la Península Ibérica y América (Actas del V Simposio Hispano-Portugués de Historia del Arte [11–13 Mayo 1989])*, Valladolid, 1990, p. 173.

31. As seems to be suggested by several essays in *Mudéjar Iberoamericano* (note 29).

32. See Enrique Nuere, "La carpintería en España y América a través de los tratados," in *Mudéjar Iberoamericano*, pp. 173–187; *Arquitectura y carpintería mudéjar en Nueva España, passim*; Sebastián, "Existe," pp. 48f.

with these forms seem in fact to have been used in actual buildings starting already in the late sixteenth century both in Mexico and in Ecuador.<sup>33</sup>

Ultimately the process of assimilation may have been so complete that the appearance of *mudéjar* elements may have meant no more than the employment of traits that were generally regarded as Iberian. It has also been suggested that appearances of *mudéjar* elements in later times in colonial Latin America may have even stood for Spain itself.<sup>34</sup> For all these reasons, it appears to be one issue to identify a motif that has its origins in Islamic Spain, and another to suggest that its appearance in the Americas might even indirectly be linked to an understanding or awareness of Islamic art.

Nevertheless, one other explanation needs to be reconsidered. Is it possible that people of Moslem origins were actually involved in the making of monuments with *mudéjar* features in the New World? The term *mudéjar* refers initially to those under submission, in this instance to Christianity, and many unconverted Moslems who could be called *mudéjares* were still living in Christian-dominated parts of Spain at the time that the final parts of the peninsula were being conquered. These people were being persecuted and forced into baptism, in Castille in 1502, but the last mosques were closed there only in 1525, and the last Moslems forcibly baptized in Aragon only in 1526, whereafter the remains of the Moslem population in Iberia may properly be called Moriscos. Moriscos survived in Iberia until they too were forced out in 1609 and 1610.

Although contemporaneous Spanish literature denies them a place in the colonization and conquest of the Americas, Moors, either secretly still as Moslems, or like many other *nuevo Cristianos*, new Christians of Jewish origins, and then later as Moriscos as well as *mudéjares*, may have come to the New World.<sup>35</sup> An extreme version of this hypothesis is given by what seems to have been a Moslem legend, which in its own way curiously echoes that of the Book of Mormon. According to it, thousands of Moriscos came to the New World, where they openly declared their Islamic faith and tried to convert Amerindians, only to be persecuted and sent to

33. For a review of this question in regard to the possible issue of their use on the early *artesonado* ceiling in San Francisco, Quito, see Alfonso Ortiz Cresp, "Influencias Mudéjares en Quito," in *El Mudéjar Iberoamericano*, pp. 229–230.

34. As suggested by Marcus Burke, "Mudéjar and the Doctrine of Right Names," Lecture given at the 99th annual meeting of the College Art Association of America, February 21, 2002.

35. The general problem of determining how this might be reviewed by Cardaillac (see note 2).

the scaffold by the Inquisition. The problem is that there is no evidence for these latter assertions, and little firm evidence for the presence of any openly practicing Moslems anywhere in the American colonies.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, the names of several conquistadors indicate their Moslem descent.<sup>37</sup> And some Moorish customs, whether imitated by Christians or carried on by New Christians, such as the wearing of turbans, were maintained in the New World.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, a royal decree of 1540 that prohibited the passage of Moriscos to the New World was apparently ineffective; in any event a document of 1543 made reference to the numbers of Moorish slaves and converts who were already present in the colonies, and were a potential source of difficulty there.<sup>39</sup> Many slaves of Moslem faith slipped through the net in any case. The recent confirmation of the identity of the so-called *China poblana* of Mexican legend makes clear that even in the seventeenth century people of Moslem origins continued to come to the Americas, whither they may have been brought as slaves: the *China poblana* was a Mughal princess who had converted to Christianity, but who seems to have come as a slave to New Spain.<sup>40</sup>

The possible presence of Moslem (or rather formerly Moslem) workers or their descendants might account for some earlier appearances of *mudéjar* forms in the Americas. Spanish conquistadors, upholding the spirit of *hidalguia*, the ideal of aristocratic deportment that disdained manual labor, were notoriously unwilling to work with their hands. Besides indigenous labor, slaves would have carried out many tasks, and among them there may have been Moslem slaves, brought over from Africa as well as from southern Spain. Then again New Christians, who may have been Morisco or *mudéjar* artisans, may have carried out the work. Although the plan was not realized, there is evidence that Moriscos prized for their skills, in this instance the ability to

cultivate the silk industry, were to be brought over to the Americas.<sup>41</sup> It is thus possible that carpenters and ceramists also came.

Several problems, however, still attend these hypotheses. First, evidence for the presence of Moriscos or *mudéjares* is hard to obtain. In contrast with cases the Inquisition brought against Moriscos in Spain, or even against Judaizers in the New World, very few cases are recorded against suspected Moslems in the Americas. For example in contrast with the 1,759 cases brought against Judaizers in Spain, and 78 in Peru, and the 9,354 cases brought against Moriscos in Spain, only two such cases against Moors are evinced in Peru.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, an argument that Moriscos were involved in the early construction of churches or other buildings with *mudéjar* elements must follow from the possibility of giving a firm, and early enough dating for such features in these monuments. Yet few such traits seem to be firmly datable before the middle of the sixteenth century in New Spain, or even slightly later in Peru, although some such mid-sixteenth-century examples, perhaps the ceiling in the church of the Merced in Potosí, may exist.<sup>43</sup>

A problem for further research for historians, hardly resolved, thus remains: to ascertain the presence of actual Moriscos in the Americas,<sup>44</sup> as well as their possible involvement in structures with *mudéjar* features. Similarly, art historians and archaeologists must continue the difficult process of dating the constructions found in the New World. However these questions are resolved by future scholarship, the *mudéjar* features that they investigate still will attest to an extraordinary extension of the process of transculturation that occurred within the Iberian peninsula as well as the Americas. They constitute one aspect of a remarkable process of cultural exchange, whereby there appeared in the New World a variety of iconographic, formal, and technical features that may be associated with the reaction to Islam and Islamic art. This question remains of interest not only for those concerned with Islam, or with the Americas, but also for those addressing the more general problem of interpretation of cultural exchange and transformation.

36. Raymond Delval, *Les Musulmans en Amérique Latine et aux Caraïbes*, Paris, 1992, p. 27, citing an otherwise unidentified author, Ali Kettani, and for the general problem, Cardaillac, *ibid.*

37. As pointed out by Toussaint (see note 27), p. 9, n. 5.

38. See McAndrew (see note 17), p. 389.

39. The *cedula* is remarked upon by Cardaillac, "Le problème Morisque," and a letter of 1543 indicating the problem still existed in part there, and more fully in Guadalupe Avilez Moreno, "El arte mudéjar en Nueva España en el siglo XVI," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 38, 1980, pp. 656–657.

40. See Gauvin Alexander Bailey, "A Mughal Princess in Baroque New Spain. Catarina de San Juan (1606–1688), the *china poblana*," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, 71, 1997, pp. 37–73. Cardaillac, *ibid.*, also discusses the issue of Moslem slaves in the Americas.

41. See Toussaint, *Arte Mudéjar*, pp. 9–10.

42. According to figures published in the *Historia de la Inquisición en España y América*, vol. 1, p. 926.

43. As dated after 1570 by José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Monumentos de Bolivia*, La Paz, 1992 (2nd ed.), p. 139.

44. The last thorough study of the problem seems to have been that of Cardaillac, published over a quarter century ago; Cardaillac sees problems, and indeed the anti-Moslem mania he notes may have obscured as well as clarified evidence pertaining to the issue.