Muslim Influence in Spain

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I have already spoken about Muslim influence in the Mediterranean as a whole. In that paper I did my best to avoid talking about Spain because I did not want to repeat myself too much. What I want to do today is to talk about the influence of Islam on Spain and about Spain's rôle as the conduit for the culture of Islam into the rest of Europe which, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was really only beginning to climb out of the Dark Ages. OK, strictly the Dark Ages are the sixth to eighth centuries, and by the twelfth and thirteenth we were reaching what has sometimes been called the medieval renaissance; this is, after all, the period of the troubadours in the Occitan and the trouvères in France, and much other cultural progress. Nevertheless your average northern European baronial castle had rushes on the floor to keep your feet off the stone or out of the mud, a hole in the ceiling to let the smoke of the fire out, and holes in the wall which you could see out of (or shoot arrows out of) and which the wind could whistle into. The reason for the troubadours' success was that listening to them provided something to do in the evenings. Nobody except the clergy could read, and not all of them could, and anyway reading wasn't so easy with weak rush lights or candles with their flames flickering in the draughts that howled in through the holes in the wall – that was why they were called windows, because they let the wind in.

In contrast, your average wealthy Muslim had carpets on the floor and on the walls, glass in the windows to keep the wind out, and while there certainly were equivalents of the troubadours, these were mainly for entertainment because most people could read and there were plenty of good quality oil lamps, well protected from any draughts, to help them do so. The level of general knowledge, especially in the sciences, can be gauged by the fact that almost all the sciences that existed before modern times have Arabic names – alrithmetic, algebra, alchemy, and so on. So most sciences, most comforts, were trickling into Europe from the Muslim cultures to the south and east, and while some of this was coming through Byzantium, most of it was coming through Spain, for this was the one country were Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived, more or less comfortably, more or less amicably, more or less

together. More or less because every so often there was what later generations were to call a pogrom – the Muslims decided to slaughter all the Christians who refused the enlightenment of Islam and recognition of the Prophet, or else the Christians decided to slaughter all the Muslims who refused the gentle mercy of Christ and recognition of the Trinity. The Jews had to do their best to survive under both. On the whole, until the late 15th century campaigns, symbiosis, living together, worked surprisingly well.

So well, indeed, that with some instruments we do not know whether the initiative came from the European side or the Maghribi side. An example is the *rebab*, which today is still played in Morocco and is known there as the *rebab andaluz* , the Andalucian or Spanish rebab, to distinguish it from the Berber *rebab* and from any of the Arab instruments used in the same area. We know that the *rebab* was used in Spain, certainly from the *Cántigas de Santa Maria* in the mid-13th century, and remained in use there certainly well into the fifteenth century, and probably well beyond. With the late fifteenth century expulsions, it went back to the Maghrib, and it remains in use there as one of the memories of the times in Andalucia. As a specific type it seems not to have travelled north of the Pyrenees, but there is no doubt that with little change it became the rebec – the only significant differences are the fact that with northern timbers available it acquired a wooden soundboard instead of a skin one, it added a fingerboard because, on the whole, northerners prefer to stop strings down onto a fingerboard, and it acquired a third string.

The instrument in the *Cántigas* that is closest to the rebec in appearance is a plucked one, for the gittern appears to have a wooden belly (there is no colour change at that point) and three strings. Even though the bow came into Europe through Spain with the Mozarabic fiddles], many instruments remained plucked, and indeed at this early period many instruments could be played in either way with the minimal difference between them in construction or design. We see this with the *guitarra morisca*, for example. There were two types of guitar in use in the *Cántigas* at that period, one the Spanish, which is the ancestor of the instrument we still know as the guitar and which, as we saw in the previous session also became the *vihuela*, the other an oval instrument, often called the *guitarra morisca* which appears to have a different ancestry, for we see it bowed in Mozarabic manuscripts of the early twelfth century, and still in use with only slight change, and not unlike the guitarra, in the *Cántigas*. Indeed it looks as though the bow has been refined more than the fiddle has. In one picture one even sees the two forms of the instrument side by side.

There is no doubt of the origins of another instrument shown with the *rebab* in the miniature from the *Cántigas*. The Arab *'ud*, as I said last time, goes back way before the time of the Prophet in Persia and Central Asia and, as we saw in the previous session, it was one of the most important Muslim imports into Europe for the lute, in northern Europe, was one of the most important instruments from the mid-fifteenth century or earlier certainly up to the late eighteenth century as a well-known painting of the Mozart family shows us, with Wolfgang playing the fiddle and Nannerl on a very small piano whose bass was so weak that Leopold was strengthening it with his theorbo, a form of bass lute often used for continuo playing. Its use is being revived today – I run the Fellowship of Makers and Researchers of Historical Instruments and many of our members are lute makers – at one time there were more lute makers than makers of any other instrument, though in the last few years we have improved the balance by recruiting many recorder and other wind instrument makers as well. The *'ud* is of course still in use throughout the Arab world, with similar instruments throughout the Muslim world, a much wider area, and I have for some time been trying to persuade my members to study techniques and technology of the *'ud* makers there, for the makers of European lutes work too slowly and too carefully – there are virtues in knowing so well what you are doing that you can put instruments together quickly and cheaply. Thus lute making is a craft that we can still learn from the Muslim world today, just as we did 700 or more years ago.

The *Cántigas de Santa Maria* is an invaluable source of information about the instruments of the mid-thirteenth century, and it is one which may, perhaps, sometimes tell us which instruments came from which culture. One has to be very careful about this because all sorts of other factors may be involved. The fact that the harpists wear Jewish hats (this was a compulsory style of hat, analogous to the yellow star which Hitler made all Jews wear in Nazi Europe) might mean that Jews played the harp along with everyone else – it might mean that all or most harpists were Jews – it might reflect on the fact that King David, the Psalmist of the Bible, was usually translated as playing the harp (Catalan is more accurate than Castilian, for the Catalan bible has him playing the *lira*, and the Israelite *kinnor* was indeed a lyre, whereas the Castilian has him playing the *arpa*) – or it might mean that whoever was painting these miniatures thought that it would be nice to have a change of costume. Otherwise the harp is not really relevant to us in this session because that seems to have been an European instrument, and not one that came from the Maghrib. Nor is there

any indication that it attracted any interest among the Muslim for it does not seem to have been one of the instruments that they took back with them.

An instrument that I seem to talk about every time I come here is the shawm. Two reasons, perhaps; one is that I like shawms, whether they are mediæval or whether they are *grallas* and *dolçainas* or *tiples* or *tenoras*. The other is that they were the most important melodic wind instrument in European music from the thirteenth century up to about 1600, and the other is that they were equally important in the Muslim world, so much so that, as I've said here before, both on this visit and previously, wherever you find shawms you can be certain that there has been some contact with Islam, and this applies whether you look at the Scottish bagpipe in the extreme north, the Chinese *sona* in the extreme east, the Javanese *tarompet* in the extreme south, or the Mexican *chirimía* in the extreme west. The Islamic contact with Scotland is a bit of a mystery -- there were many other British bagpipes, and originally they were probably Crusader imports; the Scottish is simply the main survivor of these. The contact with China is a well-known trade route, both by sea and, as the Silk Route, by land. The contact with Java is both by trade and by religious conquest -- Indonesia is now one of the largest Islamic communities in the world. The contact with Mexico is easy – it came from Spain. The Conquistadors took their own instruments with them, and the Mexicans adopted many of them, not only the *chirimía*. And the contact with Spain is, of course, the same one that we've been talking about all this session. There are two groups of name for the shawm, in the east the *zurna*, *zurla*, *sona*, *sha'nai* group; in the west, centred originally in the Maghrib, the *ghaita*, *gaida*, *waita* group, and it was through Spain, where *gaita* is still a current name for both shawm and its bag-blown form, that the Maghribi name came into Europe. Even in England, the shawm band, the town band, was known as the waits and the shawm as the waitpipe, and wait or *waita* is only a pronunciation further forward in the mouth than the guttural form of *ghaita*. From here in Spain the shawm moved up across the Pyrenees and it eventually became in France, in the seventeenth century, one of the main Royal bands, the *grande ecurie*, so-called not because they were horses but because for some odd reason the shawm players had taken over the stables as their base – probably because the noise they made was intolerable in the palace itself! There was a whole family of sizes, and I presume there was here, too, in Spain though whether any survive here I do not know. There is a couple of trebles in the instrument museum here in Barcelona, and another in one of the other museums here that may date from this period, the seventeenth century, but are there any

of the larger sizes? They are very rare anywhere because once the use of shawms goes out of date, they are of no use as instruments, and large pieces of wood burn well to keep you warm in winter.

We see in the *Cántigas*, too, many pictures of bagpipes, and a number of different types, so different that it is clear that there was a wide variety of bagpipes in Spain in the 13th century, just as there is today. These are some of the earliest, in fact I think *the* earliest illustrations of bagpipes in Europe. It is clear from the number of different types in this manuscript that it was already a well-established and a well-developed instrument, and its use spread with remarkable speed, for from the latter part of the thirteenth century, we begin to see pictures and carvings of bagpipes almost everywhere else in Europe. As I have explained before, the bagpipe is a shawm with a bag as an external air-reservoir to avoid the necessity of using the cheeks as a reservoir, and its use is common almost wherever shawms are found. It does have the extra advantage that because the bag can hold more air than the cheeks can, it is easier to put extra pipes into the same bag to have a drone accompaniment, or even sometimes a second chanter or melody pipe.

As you are probably bored of hearing me say, the shawm was, and is, a conical instrument with a double reed, and therefore with a loud and resonant sound, and shawm bagpipes have a conical chanter. The quieter reed instrument was the single reed instrument with a cylindrical bore that I was talking about in the previous session, such as the Basque *alboka* and the *reclam de xirimìa* from Eivissa. I also spoke of the Tunisian *zukra* and its bagpipe equivalent, for the bag is just as useful with these instruments as with the shawms. Like the shawm, the distribution of tis type of instrument is almost worldwide, and like the shawm again, it shouts Islam to the enquiring ethnomusicologist or cultural anthropologist. Like so many instruments we have seen already today, it was known in Spain in the thirteenth century. While it is very commonly a double instrument, with two parallel tubes side by side, played in unison (it is not often a triple instrument), it is quite commonly found with a single tube. I have not as yet tried to produce a distribution map, but one of the more interesting differences in examples of this instrument from one culture to another is that some have the reed cut upwards, and some have the reed cut downwards. Most of the modern Arab instruments have the reed cut upwards so that the whole reed has to go into the mouth so that the free end of the reed is clear of the lips and can vibrate freely. An advantage of the downcut reed is that you can have your lips on the reed and you can tune it by using the lips

as a bridle, moving the reed in an out of the mouth. However, there are also opposing advantages and disadvantages. Any such reed will, as it vibrates, gradually lengthen its slit in the cane. With the upcut reed, as it does so, it will eventually reach the knot in the end of the cane, and this will hold it so that it does not become detached until it becomes very much more worn. The downcut reed, on the other hand, will gradually split its way down the cane until, in the end, it just falls off. So the downcut has advantages in playing, but may not last so long; the upcut will last much longer but has to be held right in the mouth. So far as one can make a survey, it seems that longevity is the more important factor for most instrument makers and players, for the upcut reed is much the more common around the world.

Another Muslim instrument that I should have mentioned earlier while we were dealing with the string instruments is the psaltery or *canon* as it was often known in the Middle Ages – thus even its name links it with the Arab *qanun*. The other manuscript of the *Cántigas* shows a group of differently shaped canons, and these, especially the rectangular one is close in type and concept to the Arab *qanun* that we were discussing in the previous session.

Also in that session I mentioned the long trumpet, *al nafîr* in Arabic and *añafil* in Spanish. Just as I talked in the last session of the long trumpet in Constantinople, so this time I can mention the long trumpets in the Escorial. Already the trumpets were the instrument of pomp and ceremony, for of all the instruments in the *Cántigas de Santa Maria* it is only the trumpets which carry the banners of Castile and Leon. I've never seen any of your state occasions, but in England, and in a number of other countries, even today when royalty appear, there are fanfares of trumpets, and the trumpets more often than not, have banners hanging from them embroidered with coats of arms. So here, too, in the first picture of a European trumpeter that I know, already we have the embroidered banner with the coat of arms. Did the Muslim trumpets also have such banners? The other *Cántigas* manuscript gives us the answer – it shows the Moorish army, and there on the left at the back are the trumpets, and there hanging from them are the banners, square instead of triangular, but without doubt the banners that we see in the Christian army also.

I have I think shown convincingly, perhaps too convincingly, that Spain was the gateway at this period for the introduction of so many instruments, the majority of which have descendants that we hear in our orchestras today. This is in fact where most of the instruments of our music began. Ian Woodfield has proved that the *viola da gamba* began in southern Spain when players started to rub the strings of the *vihuela* with the bow of the

rebab andaluz. It was developed in Italy where it was taken with the retinue of the Borgia popes, but it was in Spain that it began. Our oboe derives from the shawm -- this was a development at the French court around 1650 or 1660. Our clarinet developed via the *chalumeau* from the *reclam de xirimia* – this was the invention of J C Denner in Nuremberg around 1700. Our trumpet, perhaps in Nuremberg or perhaps in Italy, first as a folded natural trumpet and now, of course, with valves and all modern conveniences, was developed from the *añafil*.

So with almost all the instruments that we have seen today – the ancestors came into Spain from the Maghrib, and from Spain they travelled into the rest of Europe. Without this place of contact, where Islam, Christianity, and Judaism lived together, and although I have ignored Jewish influence so far today, remember that the Jews travelled more than most people, certainly after 1492 when they had to travel far and wide from this country, and thus they were a major element in spreading much of this culture to the rest of Europe. As I started to say, it was in this place of contact, where the three great religions lived together, that also the three cultures lived together and they inspired each other and they influenced each other, to create the musical culture of the Europe that we know today.