

STUDIES IN LATINO/A CATHOLICISM

**Mozarabs, Hispanics,
and the Cross**

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Rediscovering the Mozarabs of Toledo

“Some people in Toledo don’t even know anything about us or that we even exist. Some think we are the Moors. We are not the Moors, we are the Old Christians,” asserted Doña Justa Córdoba Sánchez-Bretaño.¹ It takes an extraordinarily interesting bit of sleuthing to uncover the story of how so many inhabitants of one and the same Spanish city can have become completely unaware of the existence, never mind history and faith practices, of a once dominant part of their population. But such is the story of the Mozarabs of Toledo.

Present-day Mozarabs claim to form a community comprised of the descendants of those Hispano-Roman and Visigothic Christians who held onto their Catholic faith despite the vicissitudes of Islamic invasion and the need to adapt culturally to the dominant culture.² Through the centuries they mingled and intermarried with subsequent conquerors and inhabitants of Toledo including the Arabs, Berbers, Syrians, Castilians, Galicians, and French who made their home among them. During the more than 370 years of Islamic domination they spoke Arabic and acquired the cultural characteristics of the dominant Arabic culture: their building styles and techniques, agricultural methods and products, clothing styles and materials, stress on learning, and religious outlook. Thomas Burman notes that in the course of becoming Arabicized, Mozarabs became partially Islamicized through their familiarity with Islamic books, religious language, and patterns of thought; this is especially evident in their religious-apologetic literary output.³ Since the reconquest of Toledo in 1085, Mozarabs have blended with the general Spanish populace due to the social pressures that occur when a subaltern population enters into the realm of a more dominant one. This process can be traced partially through the change from Arabic to Romance names during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁴ Over the course of time, many Mozarab

families were subsumed into the dominant culture and disappeared as part of a distinct cultural group or forgot their origins, as Doña Justa asserted in the opening quotation. For long periods of time those who despite everything maintained their sense of identity have suffered marginalization and domination, as I will recount.

Since 1996 I have come to know personally various Mozarabs through interviews, and I have been present at some of their community events. Who, then, are these people? Mozarabs speak modern-day Castilian, though they at one time spoke a particular Romance dialect.⁵ Both adult males and females work as shopkeepers, professors, government officials, lawyers, and in other professions. Economically they appear to fall within various economic levels, but those I have met range from the middle income to wealthy. Some own estates or farms, while others work as craftsmen or are in various ranks of the Spanish military. In terms of social class they rank in the upper-middle to the titled classes. I think of a widow I met at a ceremony in June 2000, a marquesa, whose husband had been a high-ranking military officer under Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Nonetheless, in language, appearance, dress, lifestyle, occupation, education, religious practice, and so forth they otherwise appear to differ little from the general population of Toledo, and in fact, as Doña Justa reminds us, many of them feel that most of their compatriots do not even know they exist.

So what makes them different from their compatriots? The key difference is their liturgy and the social status they have received. Both of these derive from their self-identification as the original Old Christians of Spain. Ildelfonso, Juan, and Salvador, the sons of a couple who are prominent lawyers, when asked what it meant to be Mozarab, answered, “We feel proud because it means to be descended from Old Christians; to be heirs to (and carry) a tradition that is so ancient (and has been passed on for so many generations).”⁶ Because of their ancestors’ cooperation in the Christian reconquest of Toledo, King Alfonso VI of León-Castile (1065–1109) entered into an agreement or *fuero* with the Mozarabs of Toledo.⁷ Alfonso’s *fuero* granted them notable exemptions and immunities and also raised their social status to that of *nobleza e hidalguía*.⁸ In order to identify Mozarabs and to ensure their support of the parishes, a system of *tazmías* (registers) and *diezmos* (tithes) was established under Alfonso VI and developed by subsequent rulers and church officials. The members of the community were taxed yearly and their support subscribed to the parish to which they were assigned. In this way a system of identification was kept in place until it was eliminated by the *desamortización* (divestment) of 1834. Doing away with it then necessitated significant reconstructive work later on, as we shall see.⁹

Over the course of time the original six parishes have come to be housed at two sites, Santa Eulalia y San Marcos and Santas Justa y Rufina. Nonetheless, all Mozarabs are still identified with one or another of the six parishes. Those ascribed to the parishes of San Marcos, Santa Eulalia, and San Lucas are assigned to the parish Church of Santa Eulalia y San Marcos. Those ascribed to the parishes of San Sebastián, San Torcuato, and Santas Justa y Rufina meet at the latter's church.

Despite a long history of conquest, despite cultural, social, religious, and ecclesial conflict, and despite suffering caused by alienation and limited resources, Mozarabs have persisted. Mozarabs of Toledo tend to be conservative politically and religiously. This was a trait upheld by various of my older informants, although some of my younger ones gave evidence of this in terms of a desire to pass on their heritage intact. Mozarabs call their conservatism *conservadurismo*.¹⁰ They have worked at conserving a sense of self by appealing to the past as well as rallying around Mozarabic Catholicism. Mozarabs call this sense of self *mozarabía* (mozarabicity).

But how does a minority culture maintain this sense of self amid all the forces of change and even repression? The people passed on their *mozarabía* from generation to generation by means of the *tazmías*, the system of registers first established by Alfonso VI. Once these were eliminated, their family histories helped them remember. This was especially the case between the period from the end of the *tazmías* in 1834 until the 1950s; during this time grandparents told the stories of their ancestors to their grandchildren.¹¹ Various informants told me their grandmothers and great-aunts especially spoke to them of their *mozarabía*.

Through my interactions with them and by examining their literature I have discovered that the shape, purposes, and meanings of the contemporary Mozarabs of Toledo are particularly expressed in the following institutions, arts, and learning: the *Hermandad Mozárabe* (Mozarab Brotherhood); the Hispano-Mozarabic rite; the Mozarabic rite parishes of Toledo; the charting of genealogies; the recourse to Spanish and Mozarab history; Good Friday processions; the emblem they have created for themselves named the Cross of Alfonso VI; the Lignum Crucis reliquary; Mozarabic architecture and artwork in churches; the images of saints they have installed in the Mozarabic rite parishes; Mozarabic chant; the annual gathering of the members of the *Hermandad* (called a *capítulo*, chapter); and periodic congresses at which both Mozarab and other scholars make presentations about Mozarab culture, some of which have been published and which I cite in this book. This short list gives an idea of the depth and range of the institutions, arts, and learning that are being generated by Mozarabs. Together these institutions and rituals

have helped Mozarabs form a social group or community that shares common characteristics and interests as well as perceiving itself as distinct from larger Spanish society.¹²

The construction of contemporary Mozarab culture is, of course, the result of the power exercised, and the choices and responses made, by the members of the community in relation to the larger Spanish society and church. And, of course, certain members of the community and of the larger society and church wield greater power in this realm. Among them is the archbishop of Toledo, who functions as the ecclesiastical superior of the Hispano-Mozarabic rite as well as of the *Hermandad Mozárabe*. This puts him in a position to check the exercise of power by those who rank below him in regard to Mozarabs, both clerical and lay.

And yet, for all of the archbishop's power, a certain negotiation of power nevertheless takes place between the archbishop and those subject to him. For the male and female officers of the *Hermandad* are able to influence decisions made about who is identified as a Mozarab and what is considered as *mozarabía*. Don Mario Arellano García¹³ in particular has great power as the one who keeps the register of members; he also frequently publishes scholarly and popular articles, and edits the community's official chronicle, the *Crónica Mozárabe*. The original *Crónica Mozárabe* was written in 754 by an anonymous author who probably lived in Córdoba; it was written in Latin and intended as a continuation of Isidore of Seville's chronicle.¹⁴ The Toledan community began the contemporary *Crónica Mozárabe* in 1968 in order to maintain contact among the Mozarab parishioners in "diaspora" as well as in Toledo.¹⁵

Others who wield extensive power in the construction of Mozarab culture include the Mozarabic rite chaplains, particularly those assigned as pastors to the parishes. Chief among these is Don Enrique Carrillo Morales, pastor of the parish of Santa Eulalia y San Marcos, who also functions as the co-prior of the *Hermandad Mozárabe*. But even regular members of the community and certain outsiders engaged in the study, promotion, and publication of works on Mozarab culture contribute to the construction of the culture. Likewise, in the civic realm, Mozarabs have acquired prominence through their interactions with city and provincial governmental authorities. Some of this is the result of asserting their status through the *Hermandad* as well as through their granting of *Hermandad* membership to high government officials by reason of their office.¹⁶

The gradual loss of Mozarab self-identity was to result in tremendous reconstructive detective work later on. In the early 1950s Mozarabic rite chaplains Don Anastasio Granados and Don Luis Casañas encouraged Mozarab parishioners to reaffirm their *mozarabía* and their canonical

rights to the rite.¹⁷ They began to gather names of Mozarab families and to visit them. In 1957, led by newly named pastors of the Mozarabic rite parishes Don Jaime Colomina Torner and Don Balbino Gómez-Chacón, members of the community continued this initiative by means of a census. They went from house to house to remind people of their Mozarab heritage and to encourage their registration in one of the parishes. They identified at that time five hundred parishioners of Santa Eulalia y San Marcos and fifty of Santas Justa y Rufina. Most Mozarabs still lived in Toledo then.

The census takers drew upon the network of relatives as well as on the surviving parish registers and records of marriages. Their work was made considerably easier by Colomina Torner, who discovered the *tazmías* of Santa Eulalia dating to 1830.¹⁸ This facilitated the construction of family genealogies and the revival of interest in Mozarab history among the parishioners. By studying marriage registers and phone books, the register of Mozarab families with canonical rights to the ancient personal parishes of Toledo slowly came to be reconstituted. Yet of almost ten thousand families recorded in the first one-third of the nineteenth century, only five hundred families were counted in a census taken in 1958. This was because, first, people had lost interest in their old parishes when they were no longer required to pay tithes; second, their old noble status had been degraded under the Bourbons; and third, the Roman church had decided to count only the eldest daughter as Mozarab.

So in 1966 the community reorganized itself as part of the effort to identify Mozarabs and began to revitalize its old brotherhood as a way to help them recover their cultural and liturgical heritage. Don José Antonio Dávila García-Miranda (Dávila) reconstituted the register on behalf of the revival of the old *Hermandad*; he describes how he studied the marriage register of San Marcos from the end of the 1800s until 1966, thereby creating a genealogical record.¹⁹ The original brotherhood was founded in 1513 as a confraternity at the parish of San Lucas. It was formed to foster devotion among Mozarabs to the Virgin by means of the Rosary and the *Salve* on Saturday evenings. In 1867 the city of Toledo became the official civil protector of the Mozarab confraternity, then called *La Ilustre y Antiquísima Cofradía-Esclavitud de Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza de San Lucas* (The Illustrious and Ancient Servitude of Our Lady of Hope of San Lucas). It ceased to exist shortly thereafter.

The community renamed the brotherhood *La Ilustre y Antiquísima Hermandad de Caballeros Mozárabes de Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza, de la Imperial Ciudad de Toledo* and its feminine branch, the *Damas Mozárabes*. The name was revised in 1999 to include the *Damas Mozárabes* in the title.²⁰ The new name of the confraternity translated

into English is The Illustrious and Ancient Brotherhood of Mozarab Gentlemen and Ladies of Our Lady of Hope of the Imperial City of Toledo. The *Constitutions* of the *Hermanidad Mozárabe* state that its purpose is “to perpetuate the piety and the ancient traditions of the Mozarabs.”²¹ The brotherhood also aims to gather Mozarabs in Toledo and elsewhere for the purpose of repairing the harm done materially and morally by the Spanish Civil War (1936–39); maintaining, dignifying, and actualizing the ancestral liturgy, including the use of Spanish in its celebration; and recognizing the nobility of its members.²² Upon its reestablishment in 1966, the archbishop of Toledo resumed his role as titular head of the brotherhood and the mayor of Toledo resumed the role of its civil protector.

Another aspect in the reorganization of the community has been to record again the names of families and individuals who are members of the community “by birth” or lineage. The leaders of the community have taken periodic censuses based on the census of 1957 as well as the work done on behalf of the *Hermanidad*. The names gathered through this process were recorded in provisional *Padrones* (census registers) in 1971 and 1973.²³ A definitive *Padrón de las Nobles Familias de Caballeros Mozárabes de Toledo* (*Census Register of the Noble Families of Mozarab Gentlemen of Toledo*) was published in 1982 with the approval of Cardinal González Martín.²⁴ Since then, three appendices have been published as part of the *Crónica Mozárabe*.²⁵

Mozarabs wishing to claim membership must prove descent from families listed in the official register of the Mozarab families.²⁶ To describe categories of membership they use the terms *nato* (born or natural), *de estirpe* (by stock), *linaje* (lineage), *ascendencia* (descent), *ius familiae* (by family right) and *ius sanguinis* (by blood right). If their forebears are not listed in the official register and subsequent appendices, they are to solicit “rehabilitation” (*rehabilitación*) through the pastor of one of the Mozarabic parishes by submitting appropriate birth or baptismal records and a detailed genealogy that show direct Mozarab descent either through the father’s or mother’s line.

The keeping of the *Padrón* has become the means to record the names of those who have rights to the rite by descent. It is updated periodically by Arellano García who, together with his wife, Doña Justa Córdoba Sánchez-Breñaño, engages in genealogical research in order to verify *calidad mozárabe* (Mozarab authenticity). This has resulted in the identification of over thirteen hundred Mozarab families so far in the world. The majority of the families live in Spain, and most of them, approximately one thousand, have been identified as members of Santa Eulalia y San Marcos. Arellano García estimates five hundred Mozarab families

actually live in Toledo, another three hundred to four hundred families live in Madrid, and the rest are scattered throughout Spain.²⁷

Initially Mozarab nobility and personal membership in the parishes were transmitted in Toledo and elsewhere to all of the descendants of the first generation acknowledged by King Alfonso VI's *fuero*, whether male or female. This was confirmed by the Sacred Roman Rota in 1551.²⁸ However, Pope Julius III in 1553 restricted this to Mozarabs living in Toledo.²⁹ As a consequence, only descendants in the male line could claim the right. This was done to resolve conflicts between Latin and Mozarabic pastors in Toledo regarding tithes due the parishes. In another reversed decision, Archbishop Luis María de Borbón of Toledo in 1815 restored *calidad mozárabe* once again to those living outside of Toledo.³⁰

Today, adult male and female Mozarabs who wish to affirm their *calidad mozárabe* are invited to become members of the *Hermanidad Mozárabe*. They are required to present genealogical proof of descent from any of the parishioners of the six Mozarabic parishes.³¹ Their children may also become members of the *Hermanidad* when they come of age. *Calidad mozárabe* is transmitted according to regulations set out by canon law.³² Namely, Mozarabs must be direct descendants through the male line either of a Mozarab father or the eldest married daughter of a Mozarab family. All sons of a Mozarab family are considered to be Mozarabs. Daughters are also Mozarabs, but they retain their *calidad mozárabe* only if they marry a Mozarab or if their non-Mozarab spouse opts for membership in the Mozarabic rite at the time of marriage. He can acquire *parroquialidad mozárabe* (membership in a Mozarabic rite parish) at the time of marriage. The children are then considered Mozarabs as well. If the spouse decides not to join a Mozarabic parish, the children of the Mozarab daughter are not considered Mozarabs. However, if the wife is widowed, she may recover her *calidad mozárabe*.

Calidad mozárabe is dependent on descent and membership in one of the six parishes. Thus, recovery of status as a Mozarab requires enrollment in a Mozarabic rite parish, even if one lives outside of Toledo. The Mozarab is expected to support the parish and its assistance programs for needy members. Mozarab men and women who are members of the *Hermanidad* may participate in the Good Friday processions and other public religious acts that are of importance to the community, especially if they are celebrated in the Hispano-Mozarabic rite.³³ Non-Mozarab men and women who contribute to the welfare of the community or promote knowledge of it and its rite can also join the *Hermanidad* as honorary members after application and acceptance by the *Cabildo* (governing body) of the *Hermanidad*. They do not, however, acquire *calidad mozárabe* nor *parroquialidad mozárabe*.³⁴

THE LITURGY AS A SOURCE OF IDENTITY

The requirement that those wishing to recover their *calidad mozárabe* must enroll in one of the Mozarabic parishes raises the issue of the rite's role in the community's identity. Through speaking with various Mozarabs of Toledo I learned that they very much link self-identity to what they claim as their liturgical heritage. For example, Alicia Arellano, a Mozarab, wrote an open letter to the community calling upon it to take responsibility for passing on *mozarabía* by participating in the liturgy and by getting involved in its promotion.³⁵ Or as Doña Justa put it: "There is no difference in religiosity and culture; the difference is the liturgy and the fact that the Mozarabic parishes are personal and not territorial like the Latin ones."³⁶ This was affirmed by Don Felipe Jurado Puñal, who declared to me that being Mozarab "means to be the descendant of people who maintained their rite; the link is the rite."³⁷ The *Crónica Mozárabe* affirms this notion as well noting that the community is "conscious of the historico-liturgical treasure that encompasses the symbolism of Mozarabism."³⁸ Another member of the community, Don Antonio Muñoz Perea, declares in an article in the *Crónica Mozárabe* that "the defense and survival of Mozarabism depends basically on us; as long as there are faithful there will be worship and parishes; if one day there are no faithful it will be the end of the Hispano-Mozarabic rite."³⁹ He goes on to declare that if "our churches are filled we will be able to ask for the approval of our sacramentals so that we can celebrate the Sacraments in our proper rite, to which we have a right especially to Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, and Anointing of the Sick."⁴⁰ So that the community is aware that the rite is for its use and forms part of its religious and cultural heritage, the 1984 *Constitutions* of the *Hermandad* explicitly attest to the importance of the liturgy to its identity, with Article 1 declaring that one of the main purposes of the *Hermandad* is "the conservation of the traditions of the historico-liturgical Mozarab community."⁴¹

The pastors of the community have encouraged it to hold on to this liturgical heritage as well as to participate in the rite's updating. In 1987 Cardinal González Martín affirmed the community's efforts by authorizing the Mozarabic rite parishes to celebrate the Mozarabic Mass on a regular basis. Since the approval of the new *ordo missæ* in 1991, Santa Eulalia y San Marcos does so every Sunday at noon as its only eucharistic celebration. By contrast, Santas Justa y Rufina only celebrates the Hispano-Mozarabic rite Mass on the first Saturday of the month.⁴²

Mozarabs attribute the link between liturgy and their culture to the Islamic conquest.⁴³ The Mozarabic liturgy became the “all-encompassing literary expression of Mozarab culture, the best dispensed to all the social classes, and the fount and source of collective life, the living center of the community’s resistance to the diverse centrifugal forces of assimilation.”⁴⁴ Although they succeeded in living with the Muslims, their own culture, particularly in the ninth century, was centered upon and unified by the church, “which was not only the custodian and purveyor of learning and tradition from the past but also the educator and trainer for immediate tasks confronting the Christians.”⁴⁵ Don Cleofé Sánchez, also a Mozarab, writes that “in *mozarabía* there is a line that has threaded its way through the melody of life’s ups and downs and those difficulties inherent in a culture and that is the liturgy.”⁴⁶ It appears that Mozarab genealogy, law, history, and art have revolved around and been subordinated to the Mozarabic liturgy. This link between the community, the church, and the liturgy has been strengthened over the centuries. What were the cultural forces that occasioned this link, and what efforts were made to preserve the liturgy?

PRESERVING THE CULTURE THROUGH THE LITURGY

Over the centuries the Hispano-Mozarabic rite has remained the distinctive liturgical celebration of Mozarabs. Even after Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros (1436–1517) installed a corps of Mozarabic chaplains in the Corpus Christi chapel of the cathedral in 1502 for the express purpose of celebrating the rite, Mozarabs continued to celebrate it in their parishes. Cardinal Marcelo González Martín had the celebration by Mozarab parishioners in mind when he authorized its actualization in the 1980s. The rite is primarily destined for them. A commission established by González Martín is making efforts as far as possible to bring up to date the sacramental and other liturgical celebrations that compose the rite.⁴⁷ The eucharistic celebration has been the starting point. In addition, the marriage rite has been updated and has become an optional rite for all Spanish Catholics.⁴⁸ Currently the other sacraments are celebrated according to the Roman rite usage. Mozarabs themselves are keenly aware they are the canonical subjects of the rite and have made their thoughts and desires known in the efforts to update the rite. It is precisely the self-consciousness of Mozarabs of Toledo that is a key factor both in the actualization of the rite and its potential for continued survival.