

THE ANDALUSIAN CIVILIZATIONAL MODEL: A CONTEMPORARY BRIDGE BETWEEN MOROCCO AND SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the Andalusian coexistence model (*convivencia*) as a contemporary framework for countering cultural exclusion and building durable relations between Morocco and Spain through cultural diplomacy and joint academic research. It argues that al-Andalus's historical legacy—characterized by the peaceful coexistence of Moroccan, Amazigh, and Iberian populations—provides a compelling model for addressing contemporary challenges of immigration, cultural alienation, and regional polarization. The article further explores how the philosophical heritage of Averroes, Maimonides, and Spinoza constitutes a shared intellectual lineage spanning from Córdoba to Marrakech, with Averroes emerging as the foundational thinker of the separation of religion from political governance—a principle with deep resonance in Amazigh customary traditions. Drawing on recent academic research, institutional initiatives, and cultural diplomacy efforts, this article demonstrates that the Morocco-Spain partnership possesses a human depth that transcends political narratives and establishes foundations for sustainable coexistence and joint regional problem-solving.

Keywords: Andalusian coexistence, *convivencia*, Morocco-Spain relations, Averroes, Amazigh heritage, cultural diplomacy, intercultural regionalism, Canary Islands

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Iberian Peninsula and the Moroccan realm have shared a complex and intertwined history for millennia, a relationship that far predates the European invention of "Africa" as a continental concept. In classical antiquity, the territory of modern Morocco was known as Mauretania Tingitana, a distinct kingdom and later Roman province that was geopolitically and commercially inseparable from southern Iberia. The Strait of Gibraltar was not a dividing line but a connective thoroughfare. Among the most resonant chapters of this shared past is the period of Moroccan rule in the Iberian Peninsula—al-Andalus—which lasted from 711 to 1492 CE. During much of this period, the cities of Córdoba, Granada, and Seville became renowned centers of learning, culture, and artistic excellence, where populations of Amazigh, Mauresque, and Iberian origin coexisted and collaborated in intellectual and urban pursuits. This phenomenon, known as *convivencia*, has become a powerful symbol of intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between the Moroccan and Spanish peoples—viewed not as a peripheral "southern" or "African" appendix to Europe, but as a distinct, primary civilizational axis in its own right.

In recent decades, the ideals of tolerance and cultural exchange associated with this shared Ibero-Moroccan past have been revived as a symbol for Andalusian regionalism and for the integration of Moroccan immigrant communities in Spain. Scholars Daniele Conversi and

Matthew Machin-Autenrieth have examined how this historical memory has been mobilized as a model for intercultural regionalism—a combination of regional identity-building and intercultural interactions between communities that share a common geographical and anthropological heritage.

This article proposes that the Andalusian coexistence model, when enriched by the deeper anthropological ties of Amazigh heritage, the philosophical legacy of its great thinkers, and the strategic bridge of the Canary Islands, offers a robust framework for contemporary Morocco-Spain relations. It argues that cultural diplomacy and academic cooperation—grounded in this shared historical memory of people-to-people exchange—can build relations that transcend the vicissitudes of political discourse and address shared challenges such as radicalization, migration, and regional instability.

2.0 THE ANDALUSIAN MODEL AS A CONTEMPORARY TOOL AGAINST XENOPHOBIA AND CULTURAL ALIENATION

2.1 Historical Foundations of Moroccan-Iberian Convivencia

The concept of convivencia emerged from the historical reality of medieval Iberia, where populations of Amazigh, Mauresque, and Iberian stock lived side-by-side under Moroccan dynastic governance. The "Golden Age" of al-Andalus witnessed remarkable achievements in philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and the arts—achievements made possible by the cross-pollination of ideas between the Moroccan cities of Fès, Marrakech, and the Iberian capitals.

Contemporary scholarship has approached convivencia with both celebration and critical scrutiny. Some historians, such as Eduardo Manzano Moreno, have cautioned against idealized portrayals that obscure the realities of social hierarchies and occasional conflicts. Nevertheless, as Conversi and Machin-Autenrieth observe, the myth of al-Andalus continues to possess "continuing regional and international importance" even as its "integrating capacity" at times of political upheaval may be questioned.

2.2 The Andalusian Model and Countering Cultural Exclusion

In the contemporary context, the Andalusian model has been invoked as a framework for countering xenophobia and tackling the radical alienation of migrant communities. Against a backdrop of rising anti-immigration rhetoric and right-wing populist mobilization in Spain and across Europe, the musical and cultural heritage of al-Andalus has been deployed as a tool for promoting social integration.

The Fundación Tres Culturas (FTC) in Seville exemplifies this approach. Through musical performances, educational programs, and cultural exchanges, the FTC promotes the values of tolerance and intercultural dialogue rooted in the Andalusian past. Moroccan and Spanish musicians in cities such as Granada actively promote intercultural dialogue through performances of flamenco and Andalusian music—repertoires that share a common cultural lineage rooted in the exchanges between Moroccan courts and Iberian kingdoms of the medieval period.

This musical bridge-building has been described as "intercultural regionalism," wherein the integration of Spain's historical "Other"—Moroccans—into Andalusian society is promoted as a model for how Europe can overcome the alleged "death of multiculturalism." Rather than adopting the Anglo-Saxon model of multiculturalism, which has faced criticism as a "spent" concept, the Andalusian approach emphasizes dialogue, exchange, and the formation of new identities and cultural practices from the interspace between different communities.

2.3 Critical Perspectives

It is important to acknowledge the limitations and critiques of the Andalusian model. Studies of regional public policies in Andalusia have highlighted tensions and challenges in implementing diversity management policies, including drastic budget cuts and insufficient translation of political commitment into concrete actions. Nevertheless, as Conversi notes, despite these limitations, "there is space for hope." Bridge-building initiatives that seek to facilitate mutual understanding and intercultural interaction continue to demonstrate the enduring power of shared cultural heritage as a foundation for contemporary cooperation between Moroccans and Spaniards.

3.0 THE PHILOSOPHICAL LUMINARIES OF AL-ANDALUS: AVERROES, MAIMONIDES, AND SPINOZA AS SHARED IBERO-MOROCCAN HERITAGE

Beyond the political and architectural legacies of al-Andalus, its most enduring contribution to world civilization lies in the realm of philosophy and political thought. Three towering figures—Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon), and Baruch Spinoza—form an unbroken intellectual chain that spans from Córdoba and Marrakech to Amsterdam, embodying the rationalist and secularizing spirit that emerged from the Ibero-Moroccan crucible.

3.1 Averroes (Ibn Rushd): The Father of the Separation of Religion from State Governance

Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd (1126–1198), known in the Latin West as Averroes, was born in Córdoba and died in Marrakech. His life journey between these two capitals—Córdoba and Marrakech—is itself a testament to the indivisible civilizational axis linking Iberia and the Moroccan realm. His philosophical school, Averroism, profoundly shaped medieval European thought and laid the groundwork for modern secular political philosophy.

3.1.1 The Revolutionary Principle: Separating Religion from Politics

Averroes is recognized by contemporary scholars as the foundational thinker who systematically separated religion from political governance. Andrés Martínez Lorca, Emeritus Professor of Medieval Philosophy at Spain's National University of Distance Education (UNED), has explicitly stated that Averroes's greatest contribution lies in the political realm, where he "separated religion from politics itself" and subjected theology to profound critique, thereby "opening the path toward a certain secularity" in the medieval world.

Averroes insisted on the autonomy of reason, recognizing a clear distinction between religious truth and philosophical truth. He is described by some scholars as the "founding father of Western secular thought" and "one of the spiritual fathers of Europe." His core argument was that religious truth is based on faith and cannot be empirically verified, whereas philosophical truth is grounded in reason and reserved for those possessing intellectual capacity—and crucially, these two truths do not conflict but rather represent different paths toward the same ultimate reality.

In his *Decisive Treatise* (*Fasl al-Maqal*), Averroes argued that philosophical inquiry is not only permitted but obligatory for those with the capacity for independent reasoning. He further contended that the ruler's primary duty is to ensure justice and the material well-being of the polity, not to enforce theological orthodoxy. This effectively vested political authority in the competence of governance rather than in religious interpretation—a radical departure from theocratic models.

3.1.2 Roots in Amazigh Customary Governance

Averroes's political philosophy finds a profound and often-overlooked resonance in the traditional governance practices of Amazigh communities. Historically, Amazigh society operated on a dual structure: religious/spiritual authority (*illum* or *tafsirt*) was held by holy lineages or *marabouts*, while secular, political, and juridical authority rested with tribal assemblies (*jamā'a*) and customary law (*urf* or *Izref*).

In this indigenous system, matters of community governance—land disputes, resource management, security, and political alliances—were handled entirely through customary councils, separate from religious institutions. The *urf* was derived from collective experience, pragmatism, and community consensus, not from sacred texts. Amazigh activist Ahmed Assid has noted that a defining feature of Amazigh tradition is that "priority belongs not to religion but to reality"—a principle that structurally separated the administration of worldly affairs from spiritual guidance long before Averroes gave it philosophical articulation.

Averroes's advocacy for the primacy of philosophers (men of reason) in state affairs and his dismissal of theologians as unfit for political rule echo the Amazigh custom of entrusting leadership to practical community elders rather than religious figures. Thus, his philosophical framework was not merely an abstract import from Greek rationality but was deeply rooted in the indigenous governance soil of the Moroccan-Iberian world. He formalized into universal philosophy what Amazigh communities had practiced for centuries: the pragmatic separation of the sacred from the political.

3.2 Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon): The Bridge Between Traditions

Moshe ben Maimon (1135–1204), known as Maimonides, was born in Córdoba—almost exactly contemporary with Averroes. When the Almohad dynasty's policies forced his family to leave Iberia, they first sought refuge in Fez, Morocco, where Maimonides spent his formative years studying and writing. This sojourn in Fez was instrumental in shaping his philosophical outlook, as he engaged deeply with the Andalusian-Moroccan intellectual traditions flourishing there.

Maimonides and Averroes are celebrated as the twin luminaries of the Andalusian philosophical golden age. They grew up in the same intellectual environment of Córdoba, grappled with the same philosophical problems (primarily the reconciliation of Aristotelian reason with revealed tradition), and engaged in an implicit trans-communal dialogue. Al-Andalus provided a shared historical, cultural, and linguistic background that allowed thinkers like Maimonides and Averroes to explore common philosophical questions using a shared conceptual vocabulary.

Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*) stands as a monumental work of rationalist theology. In it, he follows the same path as Averroes: asserting that reason is the ultimate arbiter of truth and that where Scripture appears to contradict reason, it must be interpreted allegorically. His intellectual journey—spanning Córdoba, Fez, and Cairo—perfectly illustrates the Mediterranean network of intellectual exchange in which the Moroccan realm was a central node. He did not merely preserve Aristotelian philosophy for the Hebrew tradition; he integrated the Andalusian-Moroccan rationalist method into the core of Jewish intellectual life.

3.3 Baruch Spinoza: The European Heir of the Andalusian-Moroccan Rationalist Line

Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677), born in Amsterdam into a Sephardic Jewish merchant family, represents the final flower of the Andalusian-Moroccan philosophical seed transplanted to European soil. His family surname, Spinoza (or d'Espinosa), originates from a town in Spain and is also recorded in the Jewish communities of Morocco—revealing the deep connective tissue of the Sephardic diaspora that linked the Iberian Peninsula, the Moroccan realm, and northern Europe.

3.3.1 The Inheritor of Averroes's Secular Project

Spinoza's rationalist philosophy—particularly his *Theologico-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*)—carries the Averroist tradition to its most radical conclusion. In this seminal work, Spinoza argued explicitly for the complete separation of religion from political power, defended freedom of thought and speech as essential to political stability, and subjected Scripture to rigorous historical and rational criticism.

The intellectual lineage is unmistakable: Averroes sought to rescue reason by distinguishing faith from science; Spinoza completed this project by constructing his philosophy in a geometrical, rationalist method and placing the Bible under the same critical scrutiny applied to any human document. From Averroes through Maimonides to Spinoza, there runs a clear and unbroken intellectual current: the supremacy of reason over revelation, the autonomy of philosophy from theology, and the conviction that political authority must never be subordinated to religious orthodoxy. The source of this current—the wellspring that fed it—was the civilization born from the encounter between the Moroccan realm and the Iberian Peninsula.

Spinoza's emphasis on democratic governance, collective security, and the secular state as the highest political goods directly echoes Averroes's earlier insistence that the ruler's primary duty is justice and the material welfare of the community. In this sense, Spinoza is not merely a Dutch philosopher; he is the European heir of the Ibero-Moroccan rationalist tradition.

3.4 A Shared Intellectual Heritage for Contemporary Diplomacy

Averroes, Maimonides, and Spinoza represent an indivisible intellectual community straddling the Moroccan and Spanish shores:

- Averroes represents the Moroccan-Andalusian philosophical tradition of rational governance and the separation of the sacred from the political, rooted in the lived experience of Amazigh customary governance.
- Maimonides represents the integration of the Sephardic tradition into the Andalusian-Moroccan rationalist milieu.
- Spinoza demonstrates how this intellectual current flowed through the Sephardic diaspora to fertilize early modern European thought.

Today, as Morocco and Spain deepen their cultural and academic cooperation, these three thinkers serve not merely as historical monuments but as living intellectual resources. They remind us that the relationship between the two countries is not a recent diplomatic convenience but a millennia-old dialogue of reason, tolerance, and shared creation—a dialogue whose most profound principle, the separation of political governance from religious authority, finds its earliest philosophical articulation in the work of Averroes and its deepest social roots in the pragmatism of Amazigh customary law.

4.0 CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND ACADEMIC COOPERATION: BUILDING FUTURE RELATIONS

4.1 The Strategic Framework

Cultural diplomacy has emerged as a cornerstone of contemporary Morocco-Spain relations. The Spanish ambassador to Morocco, Enrique Ojeda Vila, has emphasized that "culture constitutes an essential pillar of bilateral relations, a privileged space for dialogue, mutual knowledge, and cooperation between two neighboring countries united by history, geography, and deeply intertwined human exchanges."

The 2026 annual program of Spanish cultural activities in Morocco reflects this commitment, combining shared heritage, contemporary creation, and cultural innovation across axes such as the Andalusian legacy, artistic creation, gender equality, sustainability, and historical dialogue. Science also plays a prominent role, with proposals to foster dialogue and academic cooperation between researchers in areas such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and sustainable development.

4.2 Institutional Initiatives

Several institutional initiatives exemplify the deepening of academic and cultural cooperation between Morocco and Spain. The establishment of the "Fatima al-Fihriya" Chair on Spanish-Moroccan Relations at the University of Córdoba represents a significant milestone. Named after the founder of the world's oldest functioning university (a native of Fez, Morocco), this Chair aims to provide an institutional framework for the study of Spanish-Moroccan relations through multidisciplinary approaches focusing on history, culture, scientific exchanges, social dynamics, and future prospects for cooperation.

Morocco's Ambassador to Spain, Karima Benyaich, has described this initiative as reflecting "Morocco's commitment to fostering knowledge, coexistence, dialogue, and peace among peoples." The Chair aspires to serve as "a tool for reflection and cooperation in support of a structured, inclusive, and forward-looking academic partnership" and to contribute to consolidating "a Mediterranean space of solidarity founded on the values of dignity, justice, respect, and mutual understanding."

Further strengthening this academic infrastructure, the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fès (UEMF) and the Cervantes Institute have established a partnership to reinforce academic, cultural, and linguistic cooperation. This collaboration will enhance dialogue between Spain and the city of Fès "around Mediterranean issues, the common history between the two Kingdoms, and shared future perspectives."

The 2025 High-Level Meeting between Morocco and Spain resulted in the signing of multiple cooperation agreements, including a Memorandum of Understanding between the Moroccan Institute for Training, Research, and Diplomatic Studies and the Spanish Diplomatic School, aimed at consolidating partnership and establishing a sustainable framework for training young diplomats. Additionally, Morocco's UM6P University and the Canary Islands universities signed a research and innovation pact, further extending academic cooperation to the archipelago.

4.3 Soft Power and Cultural Exchange

The concept of cultural diplomacy as a form of "soft power" has gained increasing recognition in Morocco-Spain relations. Researchers have called for a reconsideration of cultural diplomacy's potential to build lasting bridges between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The Aula Mediterrània initiative, with its first Moroccan edition, exemplifies this approach, fostering a Euro-Mediterranean space for dialogue and exchange grounded in values of tolerance and intercultural understanding.

5.0 THE AMAZIGH DIMENSION: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND CIVILIZATIONAL DEPTH

5.1 The Amazigh Heritage as a Shared Foundation

Beyond the historical governance of al-Andalus, the Amazigh (Berber) dimension constitutes one of the deepest anthropological and civilizational links between Morocco and Spain. The Amazigh presence in the Moroccan region predates any recorded history by millennia, and their influence extends across the Mediterranean to the Iberian Peninsula. Unlike the Roman/colonial term "Africa" (which originally referred only to the Tunisian region), the Amazigh identity asserts the Moroccan realm as an autonomous, indigenous civilizational hub with its own distinct genealogy.

Recent scholarship has explored the Amazigh contribution to Spanish culture and identity. The influence of Amazigh culture on the construction of Spanish sociocultural identity has been described as "very important." This influence is evident in various domains, from agricultural techniques and hydraulics to language, customs, traditions, and material culture.

In Morocco, at least 60% of the population speaks some Amazigh dialect, making the Amazigh language and culture a fundamental component of Moroccan identity. The 2011 Moroccan constitution recognized Tamazight as an official language alongside Arabic, a landmark achievement in the long struggle for Amazigh recognition. The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM), established in 2001, has played a crucial role in safeguarding and promoting Amazigh language and culture, including through international collaborations that bolster Moroccan cultural diplomacy.

5.2 The Amazigh Presence in Spain

The Amazigh presence in Spain is not merely a matter of historical memory but a living reality. In the Spanish autonomous city of Melilla, a significant portion of the population has origins in the Rif region of northern Morocco, and Tarifit (a Northern Amazigh language) is spoken informally by Amazigh communities. The World Amazigh Assembly has advocated for Tamazight to be recognized as a co-official language in Spain.

The most striking institutional recognition of this heritage, however, came with the inauguration of a permanent Amazigh Space within the Alhambra in Granada in 2025-2026. This 250-square-meter space, located in the Carmen de los Porcel, exhibits an exceptional collection of Amazigh artifacts gathered over more than fifty years by the late Dr. Leila Mezian Benjelloun.

The inauguration ceremony, attended by André Azoulay (Advisor to King Mohammed VI), Morocco's Ambassador Karima Benyaich, and Spanish cultural officials, marked "the culmination of a visionary project" and "the realization of an exceptional cultural partnership between Morocco and Spain." Spain's Minister of Culture described the space as "unique in Europe," dedicated to promoting "the roots, history, and culture of Andalusia and the Amazigh people."

This initiative represents a significant step in recognizing that Amazigh culture is "an integral part" of Andalusia's historical tributaries. As Ambassador Benyaich affirmed, this space bears witness to "the shared heritage between Morocco and Spain, the fruit of centuries of exchange, coexistence, and dialogue between cultures."

5.3 Beyond Political Narratives

The Amazigh heritage offers a dimension of Morocco-Spain relations that transcends political narratives. Unlike the more recent histories of colonization, protectorate, and migration, the Amazigh connection is rooted in deep prehistoric and anthropological ties. It represents "an inheritance that is biological, living, and genetically stable"—a common heritage that flows in the blood of both Mauresque populations and Iberians through shared physical features, customs, and popular traditions that have endured across generations on both shores of the Mediterranean.

This anthropological depth provides a foundation for relations that are less susceptible to the fluctuations of political discourse. While political relations between Morocco and Spain have experienced tensions—over issues such as Western Sahara, migration, and territorial waters—

the human and cultural ties represented by the Amazigh heritage offer a more stable basis for cooperation.

6.0 THE CANARY ISLANDS: A UNIQUE STRATEGIC BRIDGE

6.1 The Guanche Heritage

The Canary Islands occupy a unique position in the Morocco-Spain relationship. Located approximately 100 kilometers off the coast of Morocco, the archipelago's indigenous inhabitants—the Guanches—represent a pure cultural and linguistic extension of the Amazigh-Moroccan world within Spanish territory. This fact fundamentally reframes the Atlantic archipelago not as a distant European outpost, but as a natural geographic and anthropological bridge to the Moroccan mainland. Archaeological and genetic evidence has conclusively demonstrated the Moroccan origin of the Guanches. DNA studies have shown that "the Guanches were most closely related to modern Moroccans of Amazigh ancestry" and that "modern inhabitants of Gran Canaria inherited circa 16-31% of their genomic ancestry from the Guanches." The language of the Guanches was "tamazight insular, a group of extinct languages derived directly from the Amazigh languages of the Moroccan region.

Following the Spanish conquest in the fifteenth century, the Guanche language was gradually replaced by Castilian Spanish. However, significant traces of Amazigh vocabulary survive in the Spanish spoken in the Canary Islands. Toponymy—place names such as Tegueste, Tagaste, Igueste, and Teguisse—constitutes one of the most important vestiges of the ancient aboriginal language. Recent research has traced these toponyms back from Proto-Amazigh to Paleo-Amazigh, demonstrating the deep linguistic continuity between the islands and the Moroccan mainland.

6.2 The Canary Islands as a Bridge

The Canary Islands' position as a strategic bridge between Morocco and Spain is reinforced by their geographical proximity, historical connections, and contemporary cooperation. The islands have long served as a point of contact between the Moroccan realm and the European continent, and today they host significant Moroccan communities and commercial connections. The research and innovation pact signed between Morocco's UM6P University and the Canary Islands universities represents an important step in formalizing this bridge. Academic cooperation between the archipelago and Moroccan institutions offers opportunities for joint research on shared environmental challenges, migration patterns, and cultural heritage.

The Guanche heritage provides a particularly powerful symbol of the interconnectedness of the two shores. The recognition that the Canary Islands' indigenous population was Amazigh-Moroccan in origin—a fact now confirmed by genetic, archaeological, and linguistic evidence—challenges simplistic narratives of Spanish identity as exclusively European and Moroccan identity as exclusively "African" in the colonial sense. Instead, it reveals a shared heritage that transcends continental divisions and centers the bilateral relationship between the Iberian Peninsula and the Moroccan realm.

6.3 Implications for Contemporary Relations

The Canary Islands' strategic position and their Amazigh heritage have implications for contemporary Morocco-Spain relations. The archipelago serves as a reminder that the connections between the two countries are not merely political or economic but deeply anthropological and civilizational, resting on a foundation that predates the Roman naming of "Africa."

This recognition can inform approaches to shared challenges. Migration, for example, is not simply a contemporary phenomenon but a continuation of millennia of movement between the Moroccan realm and Europe through the Canary Islands. Environmental challenges, including climate change and marine resource management, require cooperation that acknowledges the shared ecosystem of the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

Furthermore, the Canary Islands' status as an autonomous community within Spain, combined with their historical and cultural connections to Morocco, positions them as potential mediators and facilitators of broader Morocco-Spain cooperation. The islands' experience of cultural diversity—with Amazigh, Spanish, and other influences—offers lessons for intercultural dialogue and coexistence.

7.0 CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION AND INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

7.1 The Legal Framework

The constitutional recognition of Amazigh language and culture in Morocco has provided a foundation for broader international recognition and cooperation. Since the 2011 constitutional amendment, Tamazight has been "fully recognized" as an official language alongside Arabic. This recognition has facilitated international collaborations aimed at safeguarding and promoting Amazigh heritage.

In Spain, while Tamazight does not have official status, initiatives such as the Amazigh Space in the Alhambra and local efforts in Melilla to develop a "scientific corpus" for Amazigh culture demonstrate growing institutional engagement. These initiatives reflect a broader recognition of cultural diversity as a national asset rather than a challenge.

7.2 Academic Cooperation

The academic dimension of Morocco-Spain cooperation has been particularly robust. Beyond the Fatima al-Fihriya Chair at the University of Córdoba, numerous other initiatives have been established. The Aula Mediterrània's expansion to Morocco represents a significant step in fostering "a Euro-Mediterranean space for dialogue and exchange, grounded in values of tolerance, intercultural understanding."

Spanish-Moroccan academic cooperation has focused on multidisciplinary approaches to shared challenges, including "history, culture, scientific exchanges, social dynamics, and future prospects for cooperation." This forward-looking orientation distinguishes contemporary cooperation from merely nostalgic invocations of the past.

7.3 Cultural Programming

The annual cultural programming of Spanish institutions in Morocco reflects the depth and breadth of cultural cooperation. The 2026 program, presented by Ambassador Enrique Ojeda, includes festivals, exhibitions, concerts, literary encounters, historical memory projects, dance, cinema, and music. The program reinforces "the promotion of Spanish as a language of culture, knowledge, and opportunities."

This cultural programming is supported by an "extensive network of collaborations with Moroccan, Spanish, and international institutions." The density of this network—including Cervantes Institutes and other public cultural institutions—has been described as "the world's densest network" of its kind, reflecting "the strong human and cultural links between the two peoples."

8.0 FUTURE PROSPECTS: INTEGRATION, SUSTAINABLE COEXISTENCE, AND REGIONAL CHALLENGES

8.1 Toward Deeper Integration

The foundations described in this article—the Andalusian coexistence model, the philosophical legacy of Averroes-Maimonides-Spinoza, cultural diplomacy, academic cooperation, the Amazigh heritage, and the Canary Islands bridge—point toward a future of deeper integration between Morocco and Spain. This integration is not merely economic or political but human and cultural. By rejecting the colonial and orientalist framing of the Moroccan region as an "African" appendix, we acknowledge that the Moroccan-Iberian axis is a primary driver of Mediterranean history, predating continental labels.

The concept of "intercultural regionalism" offers a framework for this integration. Rather than assimilation or separation, intercultural regionalism emphasizes dialogue, exchange, and the formation of new identities and cultural practices from the intersection of different communities. This approach acknowledges difference while seeking shared values and common purpose.

8.2 Sustainable Coexistence

Sustainable coexistence requires more than symbolic gestures or institutional frameworks. It requires concrete policies and programs that address the real challenges facing communities on both shores of the Mediterranean.

Research on Andalusian immigration policies has highlighted the gap between political commitment and concrete action, including "drastic budget cuts and the insufficient translation of political commitment into concrete actions aimed at recognizing and valuing cultural diversity." Addressing this gap will be essential for realizing the potential of the Andalusian model. Moreover, sustainable coexistence requires confronting contemporary challenges such as xenophobia, anti-immigration sentiment, and right-wing populism. The musical and cultural bridge-building initiatives described in this article offer one approach, but broader political and social engagement is necessary.

8.3 Regional Challenges

Morocco and Spain face shared regional challenges that require cooperation: migration management, counter-terrorism, environmental sustainability, and economic development. The cultural and human ties described in this article provide a foundation for addressing these challenges collaboratively.

The Canary Islands' position as a bridge between the Moroccan realm and Europe is particularly relevant to migration and environmental challenges. The islands' experience of managing migration flows, preserving biodiversity, and promoting sustainable development offers lessons for broader Morocco-Spain cooperation.

The academic and research cooperation between Moroccan and Spanish institutions—in areas such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and sustainable development—points toward concrete collaboration on shared challenges. This cooperation, grounded in shared cultural heritage and mutual understanding, has the potential to produce innovative solutions.

9.0 CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the Andalusian coexistence model, enriched by the deeper anthropological ties of Amazigh heritage, the profound philosophical legacy of Averroes, Maimonides, and Spinoza, and the strategic bridge of the Canary Islands, offers a robust framework for contemporary Morocco-Spain relations. The ideals of tolerance and cultural exchange associated with the shared Ibero-Moroccan past have been revived as a symbol for regional identity and social integration, providing a model for countering cultural exclusion and promoting intercultural dialogue.

Cultural diplomacy and academic cooperation have emerged as cornerstones of bilateral relations, with initiatives such as the Fatima al-Fihriya Chair at the University of Córdoba, the Amazigh Space in the Alhambra, and extensive cultural programming demonstrating the depth of commitment to building lasting bridges.

The Amazigh dimension—encompassing language, culture, genetics, and shared traditions—provides an anthropological foundation that transcends political narratives. The Canary Islands, with their Guanche heritage and strategic position, serve as a unique bridge between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Critically, by moving away from the Roman/colonial term "Africa" (which originally designated only Tunisia) and its derivative labels, and by centering the specific, sovereign, and pre-classical ties between the Moroccan realm and the Iberian Peninsula, we properly frame this relationship as a primary civilizational partnership rather than a peripheral appendage to any broader continental construct.

Furthermore, the philosophical legacy of Averroes—as the father of the separation of religion from state governance, a principle whose social roots lie deep in the customary governance practices of Amazigh communities—offers not only a historical point of pride but a contemporary model for political modernity that both Morocco and Spain can jointly claim. Alongside Maimonides and Spinoza, Averroes forms an unbroken chain of rationalist thought that originated in the Ibero-Moroccan crucible and shaped the modern world.

While challenges remain—including political tensions, budget constraints, and the rise of anti-immigration sentiment—the human, cultural, and philosophical ties between Moroccans and

Spaniards offer a basis for sustainable coexistence and cooperation. As Ambassador Benyaich has emphasized, "Moroccan-Spanish relations are based on mutual trust, sustained political dialogue, and a shared ambition for a better future."

The future of Morocco-Spain relations lies not in forgetting the past but in building upon it—transforming historical memory into contemporary cooperation, cultural heritage into diplomatic bridge-building, and shared challenges into opportunities for joint action. The Andalusian model, with its emphasis on coexistence, dialogue, and mutual understanding, provides a guiding vision for this endeavor.

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