

The role of Andalusian heritage in the legitimization of the Alaouite dynasty in Morocco: a comparative analysis between Hassan II and Mohammed VI

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ENG Abstract. This work explores how the Alaouite monarchy in Morocco has used Andalusian heritage (both tangible and intangible) to legitimise their rule. While previous scholars have mainly focused on the traditional sources of legitimization, this work focuses on cultural heritage as a new approach within these sources to analyse legitimacy in the Moroccan monarchy. This comparative analysis between Hassan II (1961-1999) and Mohammed VI (1999-present) will help us understand why a Moroccan ruler decides to foster tangible, intangible heritage, or both, depending on the socio-political situation present in their reign. Hassan II focused on large national monuments, such as the Hassan II National Mosque or the Mohammed V Mausoleum, in order to assert his religious and political legitimacy through its link with a glorious Islamic and Andalusian past, while Mohammed VI rather relies on smaller-scale projects, such as several Jewish museums across the country, with a higher interest in promoting Andalusian music in line with his narrative of tolerance, *convivencia*¹ and modernisation. By integrating theories of legitimization with the case of Andalusian heritage in Morocco, this work contributes to a deeper understanding of the political use of heritage in modern Morocco.

Keywords: Alaouite monarchy; Political legitimacy; Andalusian heritage; (in)tangible heritage; Moroccan nationalism; Cultural identity; Contemporary Morocco.

ES El papel del patrimonio andalusí en la legitimación de la dinastía alauí: un análisis comparativo entre Hassan II y Mohammed VI

Resumen. Este trabajo explora cómo la monarquía alauí de Marruecos ha utilizado el patrimonio andaluz (tanto material como inmaterial) para legitimar su gobierno. Mientras que estudiosos anteriores se han centrado principalmente en las fuentes tradicionales de legitimación, este trabajo se centra en el patrimonio cultural como un nuevo enfoque dentro de estas fuentes para analizar la legitimidad de la monarquía marroquí. Este análisis comparativo entre Hassan II (1961-1999) y Mohammed VI (1999-actualidad) nos ayudará a comprender por qué un gobernante marroquí decide fomentar el patrimonio material, el inmaterial o ambos, en función de la situación sociopolítica presente en su reinado. Hassan II se centró en grandes monumentos nacionales, como la Mezquita Nacional Hassan II o el Mausoleo de Mohammed V, con el fin de afirmar su legitimidad religiosa y política a través de su vínculo con un glorioso pasado islámico y andalusí, mientras que Mohammed VI se basa más bien en proyectos a menor escala, como varios museos judíos en todo el país, con un mayor interés en promover la música andalusí en línea con su narrativa de tolerancia, convivencia y modernización. Al integrar las teorías de legitimación con el caso del patrimonio andalusí en Marruecos, este trabajo contribuye a una comprensión más profunda del uso político del patrimonio en el Marruecos moderno.

Palabras clave: Monarquía alauí; legitimidad política; patrimonio material e inmaterial; nacionalismo marroquí; identidad cultural; Marruecos contemporáneo.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Legitimation in the Arab world. 2.1. Legitimation and cultural heritage. 3. Methodology. 4. The Andalusian heritage and the legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy. 4.1. Background of the Andalusian identity. 4.1.1. Andalusians and the Moroccan monarchy. 4.1.2. Andalusian identity perception by non-Andalusians. 4.1.3. Andalusian identity perception by Andalusians. 4.2. Background of Moroccan nationalism. 4.3. Andalusian

¹ The term *convivencia* refers to a historiographical concept employed to describe the coexistence of religious communities in medieval al-Andalus. Rather than signifying sustained interfaith harmony, it captures a historically contingent arrangement marked by pragmatic tolerance, asymmetrical power relations, and intermittent conflict.

recognition. 4.3.1. The reign of Hassan II. 4.3.2. The reign of Mohammed VI. 5. Comparing the two reigns. 6. Final conclusions. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction

This work aims to analyse how the Alaouite monarchy has understood and used the imaginary of al-Andalus for its own legitimization. In this sense, the focus will be on two key figures in modern Morocco, Hassan II (1961-1999) and Mohammed VI (1999-present), both of whom have managed to hold on to power not without major challenges to face. This work has as a reference a new approach within sources of legitimization that is increasingly studied in authoritarian contexts: cultural heritage. The importance of this new approach will be addressed, detailing its correlation with the case of Andalusian heritage in Morocco, whether tangible, such as landmarks, or intangible, such as music. With these clarifications in mind, the following research question will be considered: *"How do the reigns of Hassan II and Mohammed VI use the promotion of Andalusian heritage, both tangible and intangible, as a legitimization strategy to reinforce their rule?"*

2. Legitimation in the Arab world

Legitimation is the process by which individuals validate or authorise certain social behaviours, serving as justification for these actions, whether mental or physical. The act of legitimising or justifying is intrinsically goal-oriented, which is usually to gain the support and approval of others.² In the Arab world, legitimization has not only relied on material performance or coercion, but also on symbolic resources drawn from history, collective memory and cultural heritage. In this matter, there are four key sources of legitimization, which vary considerably depending on whether it is a republican or monarchical regime:³

Firstly, religion serves as a strong source of legitimacy in monarchies like Jordan or Morocco, where the monarchs assert their direct lineage from Prophet Muhammad, granting them religious authority. This claim to religious legitimacy is simultaneously a historical one, as genealogy, lineage and descent function as narratives of continuity linking present rule to a prestigious past. Nevertheless, religion does not function as a tool for mobilising broader segments of society in these countries, since both monarchs contend with growing opposition from Islamist groups that claim to uphold Islamic norms and principles, attracting a sizable following and sympathisers and diminishing the regimes' ability to secure religious legitimacy effectively.

Secondly, tradition is a significant factor in the legitimization of many Middle Eastern regimes, particularly in the Gulf Arab monarchies, in which tradition figures as a crucial element in guaranteeing regime stability. Tradition consequently is not merely inherited but actively constructed and represented through selective references to the past, cultural practices and heritage narratives. In these contexts, religious legitimacy, if effective, is largely indirect, as Islamic values are viewed as embedded in traditional rulers. More significantly, current rulers often portray themselves, sometimes not entirely historically accurate, as the rightful successors in a lineage of esteemed ancestors who transmitted the wisdom of governance from generation to generation, thus transforming historical memory and heritage into key tools of political legitimization and thereby asserting their unique qualification to rule. Additionally, several Gulf rulers have successfully linked the economic achievements facilitated by oil revenues directly to their leadership.

Thirdly, ideology has long been a central source of legitimacy in Arab republics. These ideologies mainly embraced Arab socialism, often intertwined with Arab nationalism or pan-Arabism. These ideological frameworks also relied on particular interpretations of history and collective memory, presenting the nation as the culmination of a shared historical struggle. Nevertheless, the eventual shortcomings of socialist-nationalist ideologies within these Arab republics inadvertently bolstered the legitimacy of the Arab monarchies. The narrative suggested that history had validated the traditionally pro-Western foreign policies of these monarchies, along with their emphasis on fostering robust private sectors and market economies.

Lastly, when it comes to material legitimacy, differences in welfare levels have been identified as an important source of legitimacy. First and foremost, this is connected to the Middle East's endowment of exportable natural resources, consequently highlighting the rentier nature of many Arab states. Arab countries, even those with limited oil resources, have implemented robust social welfare systems, subsidised essential goods, and guaranteed public sector jobs for university graduates thanks to their strategic alliances with major superpowers, receiving substantial financial aid packages as rewards for their allegiance, and intra-regional financial transfers, which are often framed within broader narratives of state benevolence and historical responsibility towards the population, allowing many Arab regimes to offer unprecedented welfare benefits to their populations, surpassing those available in many other developing regions.

² Antonio Reyes, "Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions." *Discourse & Society* 22/6 (2011): 782.

³ Oliver Schlumberger, "Opening old bottles in search of new wine: On nondemocratic legitimacy in the Middle East." *Middle East Critique* 19/3 (2010): 241-245.

The durability of Arab monarchies, especially after analysing the Arab Spring, is mostly explained by some of the four aspects mentioned above. However, beyond material and institutional factors, symbolic legitimacy grounded in history, tradition and heritage has played a crucial role in sustaining monarchical authority. Furthermore, rentierism, foreign patronage and cross-cutting coalitions of popular support as three central aspects in explaining monarchical durability in the region.⁴

On the one hand, rentier income and extensive family involvement are crucial in explaining monarchical stability in the Gulf (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE). On the other hand, however, they point to factors such as external military and financial support, along with claims of religious-traditional legitimacy, often articulated through historical narratives and symbolic references to the past, as the key elements in Jordan and Morocco.⁵ Similarly, Oman occupies an intermediate position: the Sultan's legitimacy is based on traditional claims and a strong connection to the religious sector, but, unlike the Gulf dynastic monarchies, he rules without the backing of close relatives, presiding over a rentier state that, while less prosperous, does not perfectly fit either the rentier-dynastic monarchy model or the typical central axis monarchy of Jordan and Morocco.

While the Arab Spring posed a serious new challenge, it prompted both old and new measures, sometimes different in scale or approach. The oil-rich Gulf dynastic monarchies continued to rely on extensive family rule and their established distribution methods, notably by increasing public spending and social benefits of state employees even when protests had not occurred in their own countries.⁶ In addition, they provided diplomatic and financial support to other poorer monarchies such as Morocco, Jordan and Oman, and, in the case of Bahrain, even military aid.⁷ By contrast, those monarchies lacking the resources to quell opposition by financial means, despite generous loans from GCC states or Western actors, have increasingly resorted to symbolic strategies of legitimization, including the mobilisation of history, heritage and national identity.

2.1. Legitimation and cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is defined as "works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view".⁸ On the other hand, intangible cultural heritage is defined as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith, that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, being constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity.⁹

The reinterpretation of history, the reconstruction of the past and the revitalisation of traditions are intertwined with economic globalisation and post-industrial modernisation. The celebration of popular traditions, the representation of regional identities and heritages through symbolic practices connected to a common past, and the production of legitimacy through languages and practices of preservation and essentialization strengthen the notion that "old" or "original" is equivalent to "good", being often described as characteristic practices of contemporary societies.¹⁰

Classic works in nationalism studies and heritage anthropology suggest that what is selected as "heritage" reflects specific social representations, which serve to construct and legitimise collective identities rather than merely preserve an objective past. Traditions can be deliberately framed or even invented to reinforce social cohesion and authority.¹¹ Similarly, heritage is mediated by memory, context, and power, functioning as a symbolic resource for identity formation. Therefore, incorporating these perspectives would allow for a more critical understanding of how heritage practices are mobilised to produce meaning and legitimacy in contemporary societies.¹²

In this context, several symbolic constructions and metaphors must be considered, such as "roots", "homeland", "motherland" and "soil". These create a culturally encoded cognitive system through which people categorise the social world into "domestic" and "foreign", "ours" and "theirs".¹³ Contemporary notions of cultural heritage can and should be understood as a symbolic extension of these older concepts. Like their predecessors, modern concepts of cultural heritage act as symbolic constructions that territorialise cultural differences and contribute significantly to the symbolic formation of nations, while reconsidering the connections between cultural heritage and the present.

⁴ Sean L. Yom and Gause F. Gregory, "Resilient royals: How Arab monarchies hang on." *Journal of Democracy* 23/4 (2012): 74-88.

⁵ André Bank, Thomas Richter, and Anna Sunik, "Durable, yet different: Monarchies in the Arab Spring." *Journal of Arabian Studies* 4/2 (2014): 166-167.

⁶ Nadine Shawki, "The Impact of Rentierism on Authoritarian Durability in the Gulf." (2024): 30, American University in Cairo, Master Thesis. AUC Knowledge Fountain, <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3334&context=etds> (accessed 20 January 2026)

⁷ Hassan A. Barari, "The persistence of autocracy: Jordan, Morocco and the Gulf." *Middle East Critique* 24/1 (2015): 110.

⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage". Adopted by the General Conference at its Seventeenth Session, Paris, 16 November 1972: 2.

⁹ Damna A. Alzahrani, "The adoption of a standard definition of cultural heritage." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 3/1 (2013): 10.

¹⁰ Michi Knecht and Peter Niedermüller, "The politics of cultural heritage". *Ethnologia Europaea* 32/2 (2002): 89.

¹¹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹² Llorenç Prats Canals, *Antropología y patrimonio*. 3rd ed. (Ariel, 2014).

¹³ Liisa Malkki, "National geographic: The rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees." In *The Cultural Geography Reader*, ed. Timothy S. Oakes and Patricia L. Price, (Routledge, 2008), 287-294.

a) Tangible heritage

In Muslim-majority societies, political and economic elites often chose to display their prominence and piety by building great mosques, in order to enhance the importance or significance of a particular place.¹⁴ The construction of monumental buildings has sought to glorify the nation, especially with the rise of nationalism. On this matter, political elites have generally sought to visually assert their dominance and authority over religion by creating prominent architectural symbols of state power. This strategy was intended to visually reinforce their own power and legitimacy and, simultaneously, diminish that of the Islamist opposition. The approach to nation-building is consequently shifted by the construction of a national mosque, embedding Islam and the public sphere so as to define it as a central element of national identity.¹⁵

On the other hand, museums are another important factor within tangible heritage, since they, as cultural representations, contribute to the construction of national consciousness and help create imagined communities.¹⁶ They are evocative objects that foster emotional connections to the past.¹⁷ Contact with these objects enables the integration of information in the embodied brain and in the object itself, facilitating the construction of personal or collective memories. Consequently, “if the collective memories that form a person’s cultural identity are distributed, then cultural identity is also distributed”.

b) Intangible heritage

Participatory festivals are designed to embody and rehearse the narratives of national belonging since this collective engagement with a shared cultural past fosters episodic memory. Through the act of reminiscence, especially during sports events, festivities, and cultural celebrations, experiences are relived, enhancing this type of memory.

In contrast, collective semantic memory refers to past repertoires that we have not personally experienced and that encompass general knowledge or events from a more distant past. When analysing how these generationally distant experiences become relevant and accessible to contemporary citizens, while cultural artefacts and institutions serve as repositories of collective memories, festivities act as transmitters, both horizontally within the same generation and vertically from one generation to another. Thus, cultural or collective identities are formed when these collective memories are accessed and reconstructed by integrating information from biological memory with data from artefacts and the experiences of others through shared practices (acts), whereby individuals actively participate in the past through imagination and the exchange of feelings.¹⁸

3. Methodology

In order to answer the research question, this work will employ a Qualitative Content Analysis, an approach which aims to identify patterns in recorded communication, collecting written, oral or visual data.¹⁹ A combination of primary and secondary sources has been used. The primary data sources include a set of several speeches and interviews given by both Hassan II and Mohammed VI regarding Andalusian heritage. The secondary data sources include an analysis of Moroccan state media programs and scholarly works on the topic, including studies on Moroccan identity, the role of Andalusian identity in the country and the political use of cultural heritage to reinforce regime legitimacy, providing us with the methodological explanation of why the different (in)tangible examples of this study were chosen for Hassan II or for Mohammed VI.

Similarly, the following hypothesis will be used in relation to the research question: *Hassan II and Mohammed VI have different approaches in promoting Andalusian heritage to reinforce the regime legitimacy, where the former focused on a more tangible heritage with strong state guidance, while the latter has emphasised a more intangible heritage, with greater inclusiveness.*

- Independent variable: socio-political context of each reign (Hassan II vs Mohammed VI)
- Dependent variable: Type of Andalusian heritage promoted (tangible vs intangible)

This hypothesis seeks to understand to what extent the strategy used by Hassan II and Mohammed VI with respect to Andalusian identity is similar or different, with a special interest in its connection to the historical and socio-political circumstances of each reign and how this has influenced the focus on the tangible, intangible, or both, parts of Andalusian heritage.

¹⁴ Annette R. Sheline, “Constructing an Islamic Nation: National Mosque Building as a Form of Nation-Building,” *Nationalities Papers* 47/1 (2019): 116.

¹⁵ Kishwar Rizvi, *The Transnational Mosque: Architecture and Historical Memory in the Contemporary Middle East*. UNC Press Books, 2015.

¹⁶ Aseel Al-Ragam, “The politics of representation: The Kuwait National Museum and processes of cultural production,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20/6 (2014): 663-674.

¹⁷ Richard Heersmink, “Materialised identities: Cultural identity, collective memory, and artifacts,” *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 14/1 (2023): 5-13.

¹⁸ Thomas Demmelhuber and Antonia Thies, “Autocracies and the temptation of sentimentality: repertoires of the past and contemporary meaning-making in the Gulf monarchies,” *Third World Quarterly* 44/5 (2023): 9.

¹⁹ Steve Stemler, “An overview of content analysis,” *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 7/1 (2000): 1.

4. The Andalusian heritage and the legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy

4.1. Background of the Andalusian identity

Andalusians arrived in Morocco from the end of the 15th century onwards in groups united by their local origin in al-Andalus. They arrived identified within relatively large family groups and with individual names and settled in Moroccan cities where the al-Andalus presence still survived, such as Fez, Meknes and Marrakech. At the same time, they founded their own Andalusian cities or re-founded others, such as Tetouan or Rabat or settled among the Berber villages of northern Morocco.²⁰

Over time, the memory of the massive immigration from al-Andalus lost its local character and a general memory of al-Andalus took over, which surpassed local, urban and rural sub-identities. These immigrant groups, especially the elites, eventually merged with the local populations, forming new civic identities in which their Andalusian origin was still remembered. In short, this meant that most families soon lost the memory of Andalusian sub-identity and were content to maintain a general Andalusian identity.

Local Andalusian elites have been able to maintain their status and power thanks to their economic prosperity associated with trade, crafts and land ownership. Besides, they have historically served in the Alaouite administration prior to the establishment of the Protectorate in 1912 and they have always supported the religious importance based on the descent of the Prophet and the provision of the ulema.²¹ Andalusian in Morocco is a quasi-ethnic identity distinct from Arab, Amazigh and other Moroccan ethnicities. Thus, in modern Morocco, the label "Andalusian" refers to specific geographic places (neighbourhoods), populations (a quasi-ethnic group linked to elite culture) and a culture (or set of cultural norms and values). Therefore, "it is the pluripotentiality and polysemic nature of the Andalusian label that gives it such power to symbolise at once a discrete, elite class segment of the Moroccan population."²²

The image of the nation is highly connected to the Andalusians' prestige in the government, as well as their popular culture throughout Morocco. In this sense, there are three main sources for the production of Andalusian heritage as a national identity: the Alaouite monarchy, the Moroccan public in general and the Andalusians. It is the interrelation between these three factors that confers legitimacy to the Andalusian identity in the national sphere.²³

4.1.1. Andalusians and the Moroccan monarchy

The nation is portrayed by the King in two ways: metaphorically as a tree and directly as a nation with a bright past and a progressive present.²⁴ For instance, at his last published memoirs, *La Mémoire d'un Roi*, published in 1993, Hassan II said:

From the flow of people [in Morocco] we are aware that we belong to Africa and at the same time we are given to breathe the air of Europe, in Spain.... [Morocco]... resembles a tree whose roots are embedded in the soil of Africa and whose branches and leaves extend to Europe.²⁵

The tree, as a metaphor for the Moroccan nation, attempts to represent all the various cultural groups that make up the Moroccan population. First, the Shurufat, whose importance lies in their descent from the prophets. Second, various Andalusian families such as the Fassi, who have an Andalusian origin from the 9th century settled in the city of Fez, as well as other Andalusian families from Rabat and Tetouan. Third, the other Arab, Amazigh and Jewish populations. Finally, various groups tracing their ancestry to sub-Saharan Africa.

The Moroccan monarchy consequently makes references to the past of Islamic Spain. On this subject, there is a presumption that the Andalusian civilization is among the most civilised heritages of Morocco and is only surpassed by the Shurufat identity, which is the most important identity of the Moroccan nation and the Alaouite dynasty. Therefore, the Andalusian identity can elicit perceptions of being European, Arab, Amazigh and African, all in the same identity. Andalusian identity is therefore often an important element of Moroccan national identity, as it can embrace not only all the historical forces that have shaped Morocco, but also all the modern forces in which Morocco, as a modern nation, is embedded.

Furthermore, many Andalusian families²⁶ are known to be part of the *Makhzen*, the monarchy's most important support bases, ranging across the country from the inner circle of palace advisors to regional governors and local officials appointed by the king.²⁷ Through the Makhzen, the king and his royal advisors establish "political agendas and shape debates through the palace's party elites, parliamentary committees, state-controlled media, security services and business allies." This is one of the main reasons for the prestige of the Andalusian identity. These merchant families from Fez, Tetouan and Rabat are therefore part of the so-called second circle of national elites. They are

²⁰ El Haj Soulami and Ben Jaafar, "Familias y notables marroquíes de Fez de origen malagueño y rondeño." In *Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Historia de la Serranía de Ronda: Entre al-Ándalus y los inicios de la Edad Moderna. Siglos VIII-XVI*. (La Serranía, 2019), 186-187.

²¹ Mark Tessler, *Morocco: Institutional Pluralism and Monarchical Dominance*. In *Political Elites in Arab North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt*, ed. William I. Zartman (New York: Longman, 1982), 35-91.

²² Jonathan Holt Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean* (Indiana University Press, 2015), 91.

²³ Beebe Bahrami, *The persistence of the Andalusian identity in Rabat, Morocco* (University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 220-274.

²⁴ Eric Laurent, *Hassan II: la mémoire d'un roi* (Presses Pocket, 1993), 66.

²⁵ Laurent, *Hassan II: la mémoire d'un roi*, 66.

²⁶ There exist many lists of Andalusian family names and among all of them, between 45-60 names overlap enough so as to distinguish the most commonly known and persistent name. See Beebe Bahrami, *The persistence of the Andalusian identity in Rabat, Morocco* (University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 142.

²⁷ Haim Malka, "Power and authority in Morocco." In *North Africa in Transition*, ed. Ben Fishman (London, Routledge, 2018), 63-66.

men who form a privileged club and whose power and influence are maintained within their circles, which are very homogeneous as they share the same origin and educational background.²⁸

4.1.2. Andalusian identity perception by non-Andalusians

The perception of the Andalusian identity by the rest of Moroccans is very relative, as many non-Andalusian citizens both respect and resent the power and influence of Andalusian Moroccans.²⁹ On the one hand, they respect the Andalusians due to their ancestral connection to Islamic Spain, which is traditionally related to knowledge and civilization. On the other hand, the Moroccan Andalusians benefit from this situation to assure themselves high and stable positions in the society.

It is therefore difficult to measure to what extent there is more resentment than admiration, as many Moroccans would like to possess the attributes of an Andalusian in order to be able to improve their social and economic situation on many occasions. The Andalusian identity has been maintained to this day thanks to its homogeneity and interest in preserving their own culture and traditions,³⁰ as well as the almost non-existence of marriages with non-Andalusians. This is why, although it is highly difficult to access Andalusian culture through marriage, many non-Andalusian Moroccans participate in the aura of Andalusian identity through the consumption of the culture and heritage attributed to the Andalusians and their heritage. This material culture is indeed a significant part of the symbols of public culture and of the nation, being abundant and varied in the contexts in which they are found.

Andalusians embody for many Moroccans, particularly the educated middle class and upper class, the high culture of Morocco and the sense that Morocco was once part of a prominent Islamic civilization. Consequently, the involvement of Andalusian attributes engages the values of the middle and upper class. The only Moroccans of lower-class origin who viewed a significance in the Andalusian identity, either as something positive in that they wished to emulate those values, or as something negative in that they felt those values stood them apart from the upper classes, were ambitious and upwardly mobile Moroccans.

4.1.3. Andalusian identity perception by Andalusians

It is important to understand that this identity depends on each person and that this change is directly related to four factors: the person's class, education, ethnicity, and ambition for class mobility. As an example, many Andalusians in Rabat consider themselves more European than the rest of the Moroccan population, arguing that they are also descended from the Arab conquerors of the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, Andalusians take pride in both their ties to European culture and classical Arab culture, although they rarely mention the Berber and African aspects of Moroccan culture. However, their identification with Spain often translates into a more general identification with being European, which, in turn, given the current high status associated with French culture in Morocco, gives them leverage to consider themselves more French than other Moroccans.³¹

Al-Andalus also occupies a central place in the national educational system, since it is perceived as a summit of the Moroccan past and every Moroccan knows it and has ideas about the glory it brought to the country.³² Therefore it is the relationship between these different Moroccan groups that gives the Andalusian identity legitimacy in Moroccan society. "How non-Andalusian Moroccans relate to Andalusians and the Andalusian heritage of Morocco is a class-defining issue".³³ Accordingly, upper- and middle-class Moroccans had the most to say about the Andalusians and their heritage while lower class Moroccans did not, except for those from lower classes who were aspiring to move upward in the class structure.

All in all, the so-called "Andalusian identity" should not be understood as a fixed ethnic identity or as an immutable heritage maintained in a homogeneous manner since the 15th century. On the contrary, it is a social and historical construct, shaped through processes of memory selection, symbolic representation and reinterpretation of the past. References to al-Andalus have been progressively reinterpreted and mobilised in different contexts, especially within the framework of the postcolonial Moroccan state, as it will be explained in the following section, where Andalusian heritage has functioned as a symbolic resource for legitimisation, associated with cultural prestige, historical continuity and social hierarchy. In this sense, Andalusian identity should be understood less as an inherited reality and more as a symbolic category whose meaning has been continuously negotiated in relation to power and the construction of national identity.

4.2. Background of Moroccan nationalism

Morocco has a historical identity that has been connected politically to the continued existence of a national monarchy that stretches back almost eight hundred years with the Idrisid dynasty, as well as having the same ruling dynasty since the mid-17th century: the Alaouite. This historical continuity, both in geographical and political terms,

²⁸ Bahrami, *The persistence of the Andalusian identity in Rabat, Morocco*, 225.

²⁹ Bahrami, *The persistence of the Andalusian identity in Rabat, Morocco*, 252.

³⁰ María José Cano and Beatriz Rueda Beatriz, "Flujos culturales a través del estrecho: al-Andalus/España. El Magreb/Marruecos." *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos. Sección Árabe-Islam* 52 (2003): 88.

³¹ Fatima Sadiqi, *The Shifting Status of Moroccan Languages in Morocco: Berber and Language Politics in the Moroccan Educational System* (University of Fez, 2014), 6.

³² Norah Karrouche, "National narratives and the invention of ethnic identities: Revisiting cultural memory and the decolonized state in Morocco." In *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 304.

³³ Bahrami, *The Persistence of the Andalusian identity in Rabat, Morocco*, 256.

has helped to provide the modern Moroccan state with a sense of identity and a basic legitimacy that many of its neighbours' lack, yet also suffering from tumultuous internal politics.³⁴

European colonial forces progressively took control of all North Africa between the late 19th century and the early 20th century. This international context together with internal instability led to the Treaty of Fez of 1912, turning Morocco into a protectorate divided into three zones of influence: the international zone of Tangier, the French Protectorate in the south and the Spanish Protectorate of northern Morocco.³⁵

The Spanish colonial project in Morocco was founded on the idea of fraternity. This narrative was grounded in the fact that the multicultural legacy of al-Andalus had profoundly shaped both Spain and North Africa, and due to these cultural and historical ties, Spain had a legitimate colonial claim that could not be contested by any other colonial powers. This narrative of brotherhood forged by Spanish colonial forces became a keystone of Moroccan nationalism. The range of cultural material fostered by the Spanish authorities, from literary and political texts in both Spanish and Arabic to the visual arts, architecture and music, became its greatest strength, so much so that by the 1930s and 1940s, Moroccan nationalists no longer presented al-Andalus as both Spanish and Arabic, but rather as a legacy belonging to modern Morocco.³⁶

Regarding the French colonial project in Morocco, they highlighted Morocco's social and political divisions and their lack of a nation, defending their role in the cohesion of the country. Moroccan nationalists actively contested the French quasi-monopoly of the colonial state for the next two decades, advocating Moroccan sovereignty by building a rival definition of the Moroccan nation, which was considered unified since the establishment of the Idrisid dynasty at the end of the eighth century.³⁷ These urban nationalists originated in the cities of northern Morocco, such as Fez and Tetouan, the historic centres of Morocco's Arabic-speaking intellectual and commercial elites, including many Andalusian families.

It is in this context and considering that the structures that made up the Makhzen were not eliminated during the Protectorate, that nationalist political parties were founded and raised the figure of the Sultan as the unifying and vindicating element of a nation divided into three different administrations. Therefore, after gaining independence in 1956, the foundations on which the new Moroccan state was built were based on the traditional pre-colonial Makhzenian system, which was adapted and modernised to the new circumstances and interests of the ruling elite, not without encountering internal struggles over the distribution of power.³⁸

4.3. Andalusian recognition

4.3.1. The reign of Hassan II

Hassan II reigned from 1961 to 1999, although prior to his rise to power he served as Commander of the Armed Forces, exerting great pressure on the opposition to the regime and to several riots all over the country. This approach would continue during his reign, especially during the so-called *Years of Lead*, a historical moment in which the monarch violently suppressed any kind of opposition to the regime, which provoked great internal instability and a series of different coups d'état against the monarch himself. Domestically, he could co-opt members of various parties, squelch dissent, crush enemies, and still be regarded by many as a beloved monarch.³⁹

Regarding his legitimacy, Hassan II explained the following in an interview after referring to a gold-plated ceiling which contained a series of names in the Royal Palace of Fez:

Those are the names of my ancestors, every one of them, dating back to the Prophet Muhammed [...] Do you know what that means? That means I have legitimacy. I am both temporal and spiritual ruler of my people.⁴⁰

Hassan II had serious legitimacy problems during his reign, especially after the various economic crises that hit the country, as well as the strong political repression exercised by the monarch. In this sense, the Green March in 1975, and the subsequent invasion of Western Sahara, as a political strategy orchestrated by the king in order to divert attention from the growing internal dissent over his autocratic rule symbolises his attempt at populism. Despite these unstable years, Hassan II managed to carry out several reforms and soften his policies after 1989, especially due to the geopolitical context at the time after the collapse of the Communist bloc. In this regard, the multicultural Moroccan society as the determining factor for this new strategy in the light of a new threat: Islamism. On the one hand, "Islam and 'multiculturalism' are the sacred foundations of Moroccan society, which play an important role in the formation of elements of political culture" and on the other hand, "at a time of the increasing international terrorism phenomenon, primarily under Islamic slogans, the minimization of the Islamist threat became one of the most important achievements of the head of state".⁴¹

³⁴ Michael Willis and Messari Nizar, "Analyzing Moroccan foreign policy and relations with Europe." *The Review of International Affairs* 3/2 (2003): 155.

³⁵ Margarita Andreu, "The archaeology of the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco: a short history." *African Archaeological Review* 32/1 (2015): 3.

³⁶ Elisabeth Bolorinos Allard, "Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture." *History: Reviews of New Books* 46 (2018), 167.

³⁷ Jonathan Wyrzten, *Constructing Morocco: The colonial struggle to define the nation, 1912-1956*. (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2009), 135.

³⁸ Rocío Velasco de Castro, "La monarquía alauí, símbolo identitario de la nación marroquí: legitimidad histórica e instrumentalización política." *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea* 16/4 (2013): 2.

³⁹ Patricia J. Campbell, "Morocco in transition: Overcoming the democratic and human rights legacy of King Hassan II." *African Studies Quarterly* 7/1 (2003): 39.

⁴⁰ Pranay Gupte, *The Blood of the Prophet* (1999).

⁴¹ Renata Salamova, "The Role of Leader in Monarchy Evolution: Morocco Under King Mohammed VI." In *2021 International Conference on*

4.3.1.1. Andalusian tangible heritage

a) The Mausoleum of Mohammed V

Hassan II is considered to be the great promoter of large symbolic post-independence architectural projects, combining the concepts of tradition and modernity in his speeches. In this sense, the Mausoleum, whose construction began in 1961 and was completed in 1971, was commissioned by Hassan II in memory of the late Mohammed V, a symbol of Moroccan independence. The Mausoleum of Mohammed V sought to become a symbolic monument in the country's political and administrative capital, Rabat.⁴²

The location of the mausoleum is also no coincidence. Directly opposite is the Hassan Tower, an Almohad⁴³ symbol of the city of Rabat and its most famous monument. The tower stands 44m high, yet it was never finished and is decorated with several layers of arcades topped with classical architectural lacemery, with motifs of rising arches resting on small marble and stone columns crowned with capitals, "some of which come from al-Andalus and date back to the Caliphate of Córdoba (AH 4th/10th century)."⁴⁴ By the time of the inauguration in 1971, Mohammed V's remains were transferred to the complex, as well as being used as the burial place for Hassan II after passing away in 1999.

The façade of the building is characterised by porticoes of Moorish⁴⁵ arches. In addition, a museum of the Alaouite dynasty and a mosque were built to the west of the site, creating a monumental complex consisting of: the historic Hassan tower, representing the country's history and its connection to al-Andalus; a new mosque, representing the Islamic character of the state; and a mausoleum and museum in reference to the country's national symbol: the Alaouite dynasty.⁴⁶

Both the establishment of the Mausoleum right in front of this landmark and the different sites built within the historical complex could also help us understand the postcolonial Moroccan image that Hassan II was aiming to portray through architecture. Therefore, the creation of this national pantheon provides an interesting insight of the importance given to this landmark, and to architecture in general, by Hassan II, who aimed to symbolically combine the past and the future of the Moroccan nation.

b) The Hassan II National Mosque

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 has been portrayed as the main trigger for the increase of repression towards Islamist activism by several regimes in the Arab world. These events also led to more religion-oriented rhetoric and policies. In the case of Morocco, the Hassan II National Mosque in Casablanca, which was announced to be built in the late 1960s, yet the construction only started in 1986 and was completed in 1993.⁴⁷

The building's form was designed in a way to reflect traditional Moroccan heritage, the so-called Hassanian style, which is described by the Moroccan Ministry of Cultural Affairs as "a ritual replication of architectonic artifacts that contain centuries of memories of the Moroccan people, memories that represent the king as the only possible glue that can bind together the society's past, present, and future."⁴⁸ One of the most controversial points about this landmark has been the fact that it was built and financed almost exclusively with Moroccan materials, companies and individuals. The national contribution process for the construction of the mosque was launched by the king during the Youth Festival on 9 July 1988.⁴⁹

There have been several television appearances by Hassan II on this matter. On the one hand, when construction began in 1986, Moroccans were persuaded to contribute to a 40-day subscription campaign that lasted five years, claiming that the mosque was imagined to welcome prayers from all over Morocco:

I also wanted the person praying to be in it. The one who prays, the one who remembers, the one who is thankful, the one who kneels, and the one who prostrates. Carried on the ground. But wherever he is placed. He meant it. Find Heaven, my Lord.⁵⁰

Social Science: Public Administration, Law and International Relations (SSPALIR 2021). Atlantis Press, 2021: 3, <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/sspalir-21/125960992> (accessed 20 January 2026)

⁴² Khalid El Jaouhari, Larbi Amhamdi, and Larbi Bouayad, "Crafts ascendance in contemporary project Design in Morocco's context: Toward a critical understanding through architectural discourses." *African and Mediterranean Journal of Architecture and Urbanism* 5/3(1) (2021):143-155.

⁴³ Berber confederation that created an Islamic empire in North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula (1130-1269), founded on the religious teachings of Ibn Tūmart. See (Britannica, 2024).

⁴⁴ Karim Lakhdar, "Hasan Mosque." Discover Islamic Art, Museum With No Frontiers. 2021, https://islamicart.museumwnf.org/database_item.php?id=monument;ISL;ma;Mon01;8;en (accessed 20 January 2026)

⁴⁵ The term Moorish continues to be widely used to describe the art, architecture, and high culture of Muslim Andalusia and North Africa dating from the 11th century onward. See (Britannica, 2024).

⁴⁶ Jonathan M. Bloom, *Architecture of the Islamic West: North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, 700-1800* (Yale University Press, 2020).

⁴⁷ Jocelyne Cesari, *The Awakening of Muslim Democracy: Religion, Modernity, and the State* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁴⁸ Nnamdi Elleh, *Architecture and power in Africa* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2002), 112.

⁴⁹ Khalid Taouil, "Hassan II Mosque: The Architectural Jewel Open to the Sea and the Sky." *Atalayar*, 15 de abril de 2024, <https://www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/society/hassan-ii-mosque-the-architectural-jewel-open-to-the-sea-and-the-sky/20240415111424198710.html#:~:text=Named%20after%20the%20late%20King,Atlantic%20and%20half%20on%20land.&text=Mosque%2C%20Casablanca%2C%20Morocco-,It%20was%20inaugurated%20on%2030%20August%201993%2C%20an%20event%20that,from%20all%20over%20the%20world> (accessed 20 January 2026)

⁵⁰ Société Nationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision. «الأسرة الأولى». <https://www.snrt.ma/ar/qst-qbt#> (accessed 20 January 2026)

Moreover, one of the main reasons given by both the king and the official Moroccan media for the location of the mosque in Casablanca was based on a verse in the Qur'an: "God's throne is on the water." The programme Al'uwlaa (الأولى), belonging to the state media SNRT, picked up on this argument:

And His Throne was on the water, a noble Qur'anic verse. As soon as Moroccans hear it, the divine logo of the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca on the water of the sea immediately comes to their minds. It is impossible for anyone standing on the outskirts of this towering interpretation not to conjure the greatness of the Creator, the wisdom of the King, and the genius of the creative Maker. It is the mosque that people visit from all cities in Morocco and even from all over the world.⁵¹

Despite having an official version, the choice of Casablanca instead of other cities such as the capital of the country is highly contested. Rabat was characterised as a quiet administrative city, as opposed to Casablanca, the country's largest city and home to several *bidonvilles* (slums) that posed a greater potential threat to the king's authority, as seen in the massive Casablanca student riots of 1965. These riots, along with the various coups d'états that sought to end the Years of Lead, as one of the most important challenges of Hassan II's reign, to which he responded with a brutal repression of any opposition to the regime.⁵²

In 1981 new riots broke out in Casablanca, again unlike in Rabat, due to the government's decision to remove subsidies on basic commodities such as flour, sugar and butter, which affected about a quarter of the city's 3.2 million inhabitants, who were disproportionately affected by these policy changes.⁵³ Despite this, these riots were also heavily suppressed, and hundreds of demonstrators were killed. Therefore, Casablanca needed a visual reminder of the king's spiritual and temporal authority. Despite this perspective, the construction of a mosque of such magnitude in Casablanca also sought to provide new revenue to the city from both the construction of the monument and the arrival of thousands of tourists, an approach that would help make the local population less susceptible to the messages of the Islamist opposition.⁵⁴

Regarding the inauguration of the Hassan II Mosque in 1993, Hassan II held a sumptuous ceremony to inaugurate the mosque, which was attended by religious and political figures from all around the country, with thousands of men in white, dressed like the king himself, conducting a ceremony with many parallels to the one conducted by Sultan Mansur in 1593,⁵⁵ four hundred years earlier.⁵⁶

In this sense, while spending on such projects in low-income countries such as Morocco may lead to anger from a certain section of society, the goal of political elites may have been achieved simply by building a space that conveys the Islamic character of the nation, a physical bulwark against Islamists' efforts to assert a monopoly over religious legitimacy. As an example, when the regime first allowed Islamist political participation in the elections of 1997, Islamists knew that any challenge to the king's religious authority would be equivalent to heresy.⁵⁷ Despite spending frustrations, King Hassan II inherited a legacy of religious authority to his son and successor, King Mohammed VI, which opposition activists still abstain from questioning.

4.3.1.2. Andalusian intangible heritage

As explained above, al-Andalus has strong genealogical and historical roots in Morocco. In reference to Andalusian music, also called Al-Ala, it sonically connects Moroccans to mediaeval Spain, emphasising the set of histories and genealogies that link them to Europe and European culture. "Andalusian music is a social institution linked to a wide range of centres of power and authority: state, religion, ethnicity and commerce."⁵⁸ Thus, the importance of Andalusian music in Morocco lies not only in the links, both real and affective, between Morocco and Al-Andalus, but also in the importance of the genealogical imagination that continues to include Al-Andalus within Moroccan society.

The affective and historical ties to al-Andalus are performed in Morocco's Andalusian music, which serves both as a sonic link to an idealised and prestigious past [...] and as a vital component of contemporary cultural politics that trade in the currency of a reflective nostalgia.⁵⁹

Moreover, this nostalgic rhetoric is mainly carried out in the context of festivals. Indeed, the festivalisation of Andalusian music enables it to be a powerful sonic symbol of the Moroccan nation.⁶⁰ In this way, "contemporary Andalusian music in Morocco performs a dwelling in nostalgia that is very much directed at the present moment."⁶¹

⁵¹ Société Nationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision, *الأولى . قصة بة*.

⁵² Ann Marie Wainwright, *Bureaucratizing Islam: Morocco and the War on Terror* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁵³ Jamal Bahmad, "From Casablanca to Casanegra: Neoliberal globalization and disaffected youth in Moroccan urban cinema." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 6/1 (2013): 17.

⁵⁴ M. Elaine Combs-Schilling, "Casablanca 1993: Negotiating Gender and Nation in Performative Space." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 10/1 (1996): 1-35.

⁵⁵ Ahmad al-Mansur was a sultan of the Saadian dynasty in Morocco, known for his diplomacy, his wealth from trans-Saharan trade, and his patronage of the arts. In 1593, he celebrated the completion of the El Badi Palace in Marrakesh, conceived as a symbol of his power and splendour.

⁵⁶ Combs-Schilling, *Negotiating Gender and Nation in Performative Space*, 1-35.

⁵⁷ Avi Max Spiegel, *Young Islam: The New Politics of Religion in Morocco and the Arab world* (2015): 49.

⁵⁸ Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: music and nostalgia across the Mediterranean*, 87.

⁵⁹ Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean*, 87.

⁶⁰ Deborah A. Kapchan, "The Promise of Sonic Translation: Performing the Festive Sacred in Morocco." *American Anthropologist* 110/4 (2008): 56.

⁶¹ Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean*, 88.

Andalusian music has therefore been festivalised since the time of the Protectorate and during the post-independence period. In this sense, a sense of distinction has been sought, strongly influenced by the cultural infrastructure inherited from the colonial powers and maintained after independence.⁶² Thus, as explained above, Andalusian heritage was added to Moroccan nationalist rhetoric at the behest of the Alaouite monarchy, which has used Andalusian music in state rituals since independence.

Hassan II consequently promoted Andalusian music through the creation of state conservatories, especially in the north of the country, such as those in Tangier, Tetouan, Fez, Oujda and Rabat, which use pedagogical practices focused on memorising the repertoire.⁶³ After Moroccan independence in 1956, the Ministry of Culture saw the need to introduce Al-Andalus music into the music conservatory as an independent musical branch. These state conservatories then fostered several cultural events related to Andalusian culture. As an example, in 1997 Hassan II inaugurated the Festival of Andalusian Music of Fez alongside the state conservatory of the city, which still takes place annually in partnership with the Fez-Meknes Regional Council and the city's Heritage Foundation.

4.3.2. The reign of Mohammed VI

Mohammed VI has been ruling Morocco since the death of his father in 1999. He presented himself as a reformer king, with a special focus on improving living conditions for many unprivileged citizens of the kingdom and presenting Morocco as a tolerant and multicultural country.⁶⁴

The establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in 2004 is a clear example, since it aimed to investigate many cases of disappearances and arbitrary detentions during the Years of Lead, as well as compensating economically to the victims.

Despite the various limits, the establishment of the Truth Commission was an important event for the country [...] giving visibility and legitimacy to a part of the country's history that had been obscured by official history.⁶⁵

Despite this, it is also important to consider that Mohammed VI's accession to the throne coincided with two major historical moments. On the one hand, the arrival of the internet to a large part of the Moroccan population and the impact this had on the ways in which the state could control information. On the other hand, an increase in Islamic terrorist attacks, such as the events of 9/11 in New York and 3/11 in Madrid, which put the Moroccan state under international pressure.⁶⁶ Therefore, one of the new monarch's political objectives was to reinforce the idea of a tolerant Morocco where there is no room for Islamist extremism. This vocation was expressed by the king himself during a speech in 2023:

Our work to serve our people is not limited only to internal issues, but we are also working on establishing strong relations with brotherly and friendly countries, especially neighbouring countries.⁶⁷

However, it can be said that Mohammed VI's reign prior the 2011 uprisings was characterised by two conflicting tendencies: democratic reforms on the one side and repression to the other, positioning Moroccan within the political grey zone of hybrid or mixed regimes. This situation was abruptly altered by the 2011 uprising throughout the region, which removed several Arab leaders from power. In the case of Morocco, the so-called *20 February Movement*, which consisted of young people protesting against corruption, economic instability and rooting for greater social justice.⁶⁸ Moreover, protestors were also advocating for democratic reforms, yet the movement never questioned the monarchical system of the country.

In this context, on March 9, 2011 the king announced in an unprecedented speech the beginning of a constitutional reform, yet the regime repression continued towards specific individuals considered threats for Moroccan territorial integrity. Despite these small tensions, the protests were on a much smaller scale compared to other countries in the region since the monarchy's popularity remained stable. A survey carried out in 2009, in which the king's first 10 years of reign were considered "positive" or "very positive" by 91% of Moroccans.⁶⁹ Among the reasons for his popularity: 1) the already mentioned religious authority of the king as the Commander of the Faithful; 2) the fact that Mohammed VI carried out democratic reforms in previous years right after becoming the king, and 3) the conception of the king as a "unifying role", without whom the country would not be governable and would eventually collapse.⁷⁰ Besides, the king managed to control the protests thanks to the early response to the requests presented by the movement.

More than a decade after the 2011 uprisings, a speech by Mohammed VI in 2023 gives us a glimpse of how the monarch himself understands his role and that of Moroccan citizens in unstable times such as those protests:

⁶² Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (University of Chicago Press, 2014).

⁶³ Jonathan H. Shannon, "Composition, Tradition and the Anxiety of Musical Influence in Syrian and Moroccan Andalusian Musics." *Conference on Music in the world of Islam. Assilah*, 8-13 de agosto de 2007: 10.

⁶⁴ Francesco Biagi, "The pilot of limited change: Mohammed VI and the transition in Morocco." In: *Political and Constitutional Transitions in North Africa*, ed. Justin O. Frosini and Francesco Biagi (London, Routledge, 2014): 52-55.

⁶⁵ Pierre Hazan (trad. Sarah Meyer de Stadelhofen), *Judging War, Judging History: Behind Truth and Reconciliation*. (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010): 122-123.

⁶⁶ Bouziane Zaid et al., *Mapping digital media: Morocco*. (Open Society Institute, 2011).

⁶⁷ AlArabiya., "كلمة للعاهل المغربي الملك محمد السادس." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFoISCoqGYE> (accessed 20 January 2026).

⁶⁸ Irene Fernández Molina, "The Monarchy vs. the 20 February Movement: Who Holds the Reins of Political Change in Morocco?" *Mediterranean Politics* 16/3 (2011): 435-441.

⁶⁹ Ahmed Benchemsi, "Mohammed VI, despote malgré lui." *Pouvoirs* 145/2 (2013): 24-25.

⁷⁰ Marina Ottaway, *Morocco: Can the Third Way Succeed?* (2012).

Moroccans are known, thank God, for their qualities of honesty, optimism, tolerance, openness and pride in their ancient traditions and unified national identity. In many crises, we are in dire need of clinging to seriousness in its authentic Moroccan sense. Firstly, clinging to religious and patriotic words and to our immortal slogan God, the Homeland, the King.⁷¹

4.3.2.1. Andalusian tangible heritage

While the two great architectural projects carried out during the reign of Hassan II sought to emphasise the Andalusian legacy of the Moroccan nation, the vision of Mohammed VI was to change the paradigm. Casablanca already had a visual reminder of royal authority, the mosque of Hassan II, so the new king's vision was not so much to continue building grand national monuments, but rather to create a new network of cultural institutions that linked the Andalusian legacy to the new vision the monarch had for the country.⁷²

In this regard, he has founded different Jewish cultural centres and museums. In the first years of his reign, Mohammed VI took it upon himself to put the legacy of al-Andalus at the centre of the national tourism project, highlighting the history of cultural tolerance in Morocco, especially in places with a large Andalusian presence such as Fez, Essaouira, Tetuan, Tangier or Casablanca.⁷³ In this sense, Mohammed VI is carrying out these works within the new narrative of *Convivencia*.

These projects have indirectly invoked the mediaeval frame of tolerance and interfaith dialogues that have been taking place in the Arab world. Jews and Muslims coexisted in Medieval Muslim Spain and before they found final refuge in Moroccan cities such as Tetouan, Fez, Sale and Rabat. During Mohammed VI's reign, "Jewish voices in Morocco are often highly choreographed, appearing as representatives nationally and internationally of Morocco's commitment to diversity and religious tolerance".⁷⁴ As clear examples, the restoration of Jewish synagogues across the country, like the Isaac Ben Walid Synagogue in Tetuan or Beth Yehude in Tangier; the establishment of Jewish museums in Essaouira or Casablanca; or the funding of research centres for the study of Islam and Judaism. The focus on Islam and Judaism is an attempt to move the discussion to academic and civil discourse about conflict resolution, tolerance and human rights, especially during the last few years, as Morocco is defined as a site of moderate Islam.

4.3.2.2. Andalusian intangible heritage

As previously mentioned, Mohammed VI's accession to the throne coincided with a broader access to the Internet. Therefore, the presence of Andalusian orchestras increased considerably not only on State and TV Radio broadcasts, but now also on the Internet and social platforms.

On the other hand, the international climate of danger in the face of Islamist terrorism defined how Mohammed VI wanted to present himself. In this context, the way al-Andalus was traditionally understood in Morocco assumed new meanings, now based on the already mentioned *convivencia* strategy.

The use of the Andalusian past to evoke the traumas of the present has a long prehistory, as we have seen in the works of earlier poets and Arab nationalists in the Middle East, North Africa, and the wider Muslim world, as well as for Europeans for whom the Andalusian past served as a model for interpreting the present and crafting a future.⁷⁵

Thus, the legacy of al-Andalus now not only symbolised Morocco's glorious past but was also used by Moroccan elites as a visual reminder of a time of supposed coexistence in the face of the current threat of intolerance from Islamist terrorist groups.

The Andalusian choir Kinor David Maroc from Casablanca is also relevant to be mentioned, which consists of different liturgical poetry synagogue singers. The component of al-Andalus and the re-enactment of historic *convivencia* narratives is thus brought back to life through performed voice and the sonic embodiment of what has been accepted as indigenous Jewish sounds, the contemporary sonic al-Andalus heritagized to buttress a national brand of diversity which supports international diplomacy and tourism not only regarding Moroccan-Spanish relations, but also the European Union on a broader scale.⁷⁶

It is also through this idea that we can better understand the organisation of two concerts in Rabat and Casablanca of Muslim-Jewish Andalusian music by the recently founded Moroccan Association of Andalusian Music and the Israeli-Andalusian orchestra of Ashdod, both of them taking place in 2022. Furthermore, these festivities may also be interpreted as a means of legitimizing the rapprochement with Israel after the 2020 Abraham Accords. Thus, Mohammed VI sees in Andalusian music an opportunity not only to legitimise his political measures, but also to create a narrative in which the king promotes Morocco as a modern, multicultural country.

This idea is also seen in the creation of the Atlantic Andalusian Festival of Essaouira in 2003, in which Israeli artists, such as the aforementioned Israeli-Andalusian orchestra of Ashdod, had already participated before the

⁷¹ AlArabiya, كلمة للعاهل المغربي الملك محمد السادس

⁷² Laura Guarino and Stefano Portelli, "The political implications of urban displacement: Notes from two fieldwork research projects in Casablanca", *Studi magrebini* 19/1 (2021): 10.

⁷³ Aomar Boum, "Branding Convivencia: Jewish Museums and the Reinvention of a Moroccan Andalus in Essaouira." In *Exhibiting Minority Narratives: Cultural Representation in Museums in the Middle East and North Africa* (Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Press, 2020): 209-213.

⁷⁴ Vanessa Elbaz, "Imagining a sonic al-Andalus through sound, bones, and blood: the case of Jewish music in Morocco and Spain", *Jewish Culture and History* 22/4 (2021): 347-348.

⁷⁵ Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean*, 164.

⁷⁶ Elbaz, *Imagining a sonic al-Andalus through sound, bones, and blood: the case of Jewish music in Morocco and Spain*, 347-348.

agreements between the two countries, as well as various Spanish artists and organisations to deepen their relations. In this regard, with the arrival of the new King, “the festivalisation of Moroccan urban spaces was partly about the foregrounding of the spirit of al-Andalus, which is believed to survive in Moroccan music, architecture, crafts, clothing, dialect and religion”.⁷⁷ Thus, even if Essaouira was primarily marketed as a city with African connections instead of Andalusian links, the new narrative focused on the foundation of the city by different Mediterranean cultures and religions, like Muslims, Jews and Christians. This shift is also connected to a regional and global performance of *convivencia* in which Morocco tried to be an active and leading actor. In 2004, the Festival of the Atlantic Andalusias was inaugurated, leading to a new debate about Morocco as the new Seville, where Jews and Muslims would seek refuge in the same way Jews sought protection in Morocco after the Inquisition.

The last example of the promotion of Andalusian music by Mohammed VI is the Andalusian Music Festival in Casablanca, which has been held in the city since 2023. This festival is another visual example of the connection between Andalusian music and the Moroccan monarchy, since an image of the king and the Moroccan flag is always included behind the artists while playing the national anthem right before the beginning of the festival.⁷⁸

5. Comparing the two reigns

Hassan II sought to create a religious and historical connection between the grandiose monuments commissioned and his figure as a leader, in order to sustain his narrative of religious and historical continuity. Mohammed VI, while still claiming his religious figure in a largely Muslim society, focuses much more on rehabilitating and promoting small spaces as a way to portray the monarchy as modern and welcoming, as well as continuing his father’s policies of neutralising potential Islamist threats.

Therefore, the hypothesis of this work is correct to a certain extent, since the main difference between the two kings, when it comes to promoting the tangible Andalusian heritage, refers to the dimensions of their works. The Andalusian landmarks built by Hassan II sought to create a visual reminder of his political and religious legitimacy for the whole nation, while Mohammed VI promotes Jewish identity by drawing on the legacy of *convivencia* in al-Andalus and the shared Jewish-Muslim past forged through migrations to current Morocco, functioning as a strategy to project his modern leadership and to legitimise his new international relations.

On the other hand, both monarchs understood Andalusian music as a cultural pride and a means of national unity, which was necessary to promote and preserve due to its glorious past. Hassan II focused more on its preservation for future generations, with a more classical approach to it at state conservatories, whereas Mohammed VI strongly fostered its festivalisation as a way to deepen cultural relations with other countries, such as Spain or Israel, highlighting the cultural bridges of Andalusian music and its connection with the new modern and open Morocco under his rule. Consequently, this hypothesis is fulfilled, but these important clarifications must be taken into account.

6. Final conclusions

After analysing all this data, the following remarks can be highlighted: On the one hand, the historical context of each reign has strongly marked the promotion of the Andalusian heritage. Hassan II came to power after the sudden death of his father and at a time of nation building after independence. The different political forces and the monarch were in the midst of negotiations over the role of the monarch in Moroccan politics. Hassan II’s strong rejection of a concession of political powers, and the subsequent revolts and coups d’état against him, were responded with strong repression, especially during the Years of Lead, increasing internal instability.

Therefore, this historical context led Hassan II to see the construction of great works of tangible Andalusian heritage as the best way to reinforce his power and seek both political and religious legitimacy, especially targeted towards an increasing Islamist threat. However, the fall of the Communist bloc led to the end of the Years of Lead, making the regime more stable, and the monarch himself began to preserve and festivalise Andalusian music with the creation of the Fez Andalusian Music Festival in 1997, although his death in 1999 made his focus much more centred on tangible heritage.

On the other hand, Mohammed VI’s historical context is totally different. The country’s political structures were much more consolidated than when Hassan II came to the throne, leading to more stable internal politics. Despite this, the international context was deeply marked by jihadist attacks in several Western nations that shook the geopolitics of the Arab region, and the king himself sought to present himself as a reformist king even when he did not initially want to reform the constitution.

The key moment in Mohammed VI’s reign was the Arab Spring, where he aimed to enhance his legitimacy by reinforcing the idea of a modern and tolerant Morocco under his rule, promoting a *convivencia* narrative through the restoration of small-scale tangible Jewish heritage and more specifically, the festivalisation of Andalusian music throughout the country.

All in all, this work has consequently sought to study the legitimacy of the Alaouite monarchy from a new approach, the cultural heritage, providing interesting information to continue with the topic.

⁷⁷ Eric Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 11.

⁷⁸ Shannon, *Composition, Tradition and the Anxiety of Musical Influence in Syrian and Moroccan Andalusian Musics*, 10.

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