
The Civilized Populace

While the loud war-like minority rulers get credit for the civilization, the true builders were the immigrants who settled, built quietly, and paid off exactions to the Moorish rulers to keep them at bay.

The people far away from the Middle East (such as in the Iberian Peninsula) may describe everybody coming from North Africa as “Arabs”. The people from the Middle East who “converted” to Islam were arbitrarily called “Arabs”. The Egyptians are not Arabs. The official language in Egypt now is “Arabic”. But that doesn’t make the Egyptians “Arabs”. In other words, the “official spoken” language does not change the ethnicity of the people.

The records of Arab historians, such as Ibn ‘Idhari, reported a “considerable influx” of immigrants to Iberia, the majority of which came from Egypt. This is confirmed by the evidence of the suddenness in the appearance of excellent works in all areas of society, such as art, literature, science, mathematics, astronomy, botany, philosophy and jurisprudence. The practical work of the field, the scientific methods of irrigation, the arts of fortification and shipbuilding, the highest and most elaborate products of the loom, the graver and the hammer, the potter’s wheel and the mason’s trowel, were brought to perfection by the newcomers. Such suddenness in performance excellence can only be caused by qualified, knowledgeable and experienced people—the Egyptians.

The historical records show that the vast majority of the newcomers to Iberia during the Moorish rule came from Egypt. The Egyptians saw their country collapsing under Islamic rule—the Umayyads of Damascus (661–749 CE) and the Abbasids of Baghdad (749–868 CE). Most of Egypt’s great agricultural wealth was channeled into the coffers of the cen-

tral treasury of Damascus and Baghdad.

The records of Arab historians refer to the new immigrants to Iberia by the Arabic term, *Jund*—which comes from the verb *Janad/Ganad*, which means *to draft/assign for duty*, which could be civilian or military. The careful review of the Arab records reveals that the term, *Jund*, applied to both military and civilians. The account we have, in a report from Ahmad al-Razi (d. 955), explains that the Syrian *jundis*, whose names were recorded in the public records (*diwan*), were divided into two groups—one that went on campaign and the other that stayed at home. Furthermore, the *diwan* indicates that only Yemeni and Syrian (and no Egyptian) commanders were in charge of the fighting forces. The Egyptians throughout their history have never been war-like, and have always employed foreign mercenaries to defend themselves. Egypt is one of the last places on earth to seek fighting soldiers.

The 11th century geography of al-'Udhri included a document describing the taxes paid by villages in the Córdoba area in the early 9th century, which shows that 49.68 % of the revenue came from payment in place of military service. Such a very high percentage shows that non-military *Jund* were required to pay the Syrian rulers of Iberia substantial amounts.

Naturally, people from the same tribal and ethnic backgrounds tend to settle in the same areas where relatives and friends are known, and/or in areas they considered appropriate for their lifestyle (farming, fishing, industries, etc). As such, the new Egyptian immigrants (the largest contingent) went to big cities and cultivatable lands. The newcomers from Egypt settled in areas extending from the Algarve in the west to Tudmir in the east—the lands originally governed by the treaty with the Visigoth Theodemir, as well as Zaragoza and the middle Ebro valley.



Map showing the sites discussed in this text

The arrival of the Egyptians, in the 9th century, began a period of intense economic height. A detailed description of the Egyptian impacts, as a result of this largest contingent of immigrants, are beyond the scope of this book. An example of such impact on Tudmir will be mentioned here briefly. The relationship between Egypt and the region of Tudmir (present-day Murcia, Alicante, and southern Valencia) is deep and very old. The name of the Murcian city *Mazarrón*

(Massarrun) means *Little Egypt*, which was an important mining site in ancient times. The newest Egyptian immigrants in the 9th century controlled the course of the Segura River, to create a complex irrigation network of drains, pipes, waterwheels, and aqueducts. During the Middle Ages, some Arab writers declared that Murcia was “the Egypt of Spain”. The great Algerian historian Al-Maqqari, in his work *Nafh al-Tib*, listed numerous similarities in the behavior of both rivers of Egypt (Nile) and Murcia (Segura), irrigation, and farming techniques. Other authors, like Al-Himyari, repeated the same similarities with Al Maqqari and added that the famed Murcian waterwheels were duplicates of the Egyptian waterwheels, which have been utilized in Egypt since its ancient history.

Many writers and intellectuals from the old Tudmir region traveled to Egypt. The most famed of these is Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), who lived in Cairo and other Egyptian cities for several years, where he learned of Sufi traditions and teachers, especially Dhu-'I-Nun El Massri. [More about him in chapter 13.] Ibn Arabi, in his writings, lauded the role of Egypt as the source of Sufism, and Dhu-'I-Nun, the Egyptian. Ibn Arabi brought back the typical Egyptian strophic poetry to Iberia. [More about poetry in chapter 14.]

The vocabulary in the Tudmir region has more “Arabic-sounding” words than any other region in Iberia. In the next chapter, we will show the Egyptian origin of the “Arabic” language and words.

These excellent farmers in the dry weather farming regions of Iberia and the superior artisans are described as *Moriscos* and *Mudejars*—who came from Egypt. In chapter 1 of this book, we have shown the affinity between the *Egipcianos*, being called Romanys, *Moriscos*, *Mudejars*, and *Mozarabs*. In all these (and other) well-farmed areas throughout the Iberian Peninsula, we always meet these tan/brown-skinned people.