

The Morisco House in Granada: Domestic Space in Cultural Transition

by

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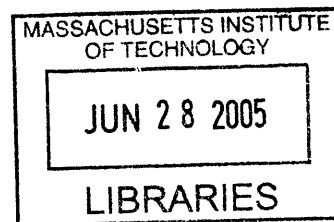
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THE MORISCO HOUSE IN GRANADA:  
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines issues of cultural, religious, and personal identity as reflected in domestic space, with the premise that expressions of the built environment evolve from concepts of self. These themes are particularly apparent in the case of residential architecture of the Moriscos, a cultural group of former Muslims forcibly converted to Christianity in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain following the Reconquest. The Morisco houses of Granada from 1500-1570 reveal architectural forms resulting from acculturation as well as desires to protect identities and traditions in the midst of threat of cultural extinction. The architectural elements of these residences may be read as subversive attempts by a subordinated cultural group to conceal meaning from the dominant Christian population.

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## **The Morisco House in Granada: Domestic Space in Cultural Transition**

### **1. Introduction**

*“How can secret rooms, rooms that have disappeared, become abodes for an unforgettable past?” —Gaston Bachelard, “The Poetics of Space”<sup>1</sup>*

This paper will focus on the issue of identity as it relates to the house. The source for the study will be the houses built by Moriscos in Granada, from 1500-1570. The Moriscos, a rather short-lived and little known cultural group, were Muslims or descended from Muslims who were forcibly converted to Christianity in Spain following edicts by the Catholic monarchy established in Granada in 1492. While some of these conversions were ‘token’, the group was pushed more and more over the following 70 year period to change their habits, rituals, language, clothing, and architecture to meet a new nationalistic ideal of Spanish Christianity, an effort that finally resulted in their uprising and expulsion from the city of Granada. This increasing pressure—affecting social, political, and religious aspects of their lives—created an epoch of threat, confusion, and the division of cultural elements that had previously existed harmoniously. These swift and ultimately serious consequences of social upheaval and the experience of being relegated to a subordinate position of power under the new Christian rule caused a number of sequential changes in the cultural life of the Moriscos, including the reading of visual language and symbols, a system that may be considered as having fractured during this time. Therefore, it seems significant to examine the residential architecture of the Moriscos over the time in which they quickly fell from a dhimmi-like protected status under the new Christian regime, to being completely expelled from the city. Their houses reflect transmission of Nasrid architectural

elements—the preceding Islamic culture of Granada—to elements possibly arising from Christian influences or from elsewhere, with others that seem contradictory or inexplicable. Because cultural identity is essentially the root of the fear of the Christians which caused them to persecute the Moriscos, and because the Moriscos' own identity was mutable and changed over this time, it seems useful to analyze their houses with the issue of identity as the central focus. In order to do this, I am taking a phenomenological approach to the analysis, which is based in the idea that reality is not independent of human consciousness, but that it exists purely in human perception of objects and events. To apply this idea to the understanding of the Morisco house and Morisco cultural and personal identity, I will refer to the concepts of the meaning of the house as promoted by Gaston Bachelard in his essays on the oneiric, or 'dream' house, that which he considers the archetype of personal dwelling space.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to consider the theme of acculturation, as developed by Thomas Glick et al, in the discussion of Morisco houses and identity.<sup>3</sup> Acculturation occurs when distinct cultural groups are in a state of contact; cultural elements are exchanged, such as language and visual styles in clothing and architecture. Usually this exchange flows from the dominant group toward the subordinate group. Because this study focuses on the very end of the story of the Islamic empire in Iberia, it is crucial to note that acculturation affected not only the identity of the various cultural groups living there from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it also affected architecture dramatically throughout that time. An Islamic influence predominated; however, the buildings of Islamic Iberia took on their own character. While religious identities were always understood and expressed, and while building types were also religiously identified, centuries of acculturation created



multiple crossings-over and permeable boundaries in both identity and architecture. Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived for the most part in tolerant societies, where the urban and social fabric was made up of a variety of threads. Amongst Muslims and Christians, clothing styles, societal behavior, religious conversions, and language all went through periods of sharing and changing based on the proximity and tolerance of their contact. New styles developed as a result, and even new languages formed, such as the spoken language of the Moriscos known as *aljamia* which was rooted in Castilian Spanish but infused with Arabic terms and characteristic pronunciations<sup>4</sup>. Architecture is well known throughout the Islamic era in Spain to have often been reused, rebuilt, or stylistically appointed with mixed elements from what might be considered the Christian or Islamic palette. Mozarabic or Mudéjar architecture, meaning Christian works influenced by Islamic styles, abounded, although when examined one may ask questions of the varying identities of the patrons and builders, which further reflects the complexity involved in analyzing these buildings. Mudéjar is still the term in use to designate any Spanish architecture that seems to have an Islamic character, from the buildings of the Christians in 14<sup>th</sup> century Spain, to the architecture the explorers and immigrants to North, South, and Central America built in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even the houses of the Moriscos are often categorized as Mudéjar, because the term is used loosely by scholars. It refers to a style, while Morisco refers to a person; however the Morisco houses seem to present a typology that may be understood as separate, and relevant to the cultural group who built it: the Moriscos.

The reason acculturation is important in the analysis of Morisco identity and their houses is that the Moriscos, as well as the Christians who came to be their persecutors,

were descended from this acculturated worldview; in fact, other than through trade contact with the rest of Europe for the Christians, and with the Maghreb for the Muslims<sup>5</sup> (which intensified toward the end of this period) the acculturated experience was all they could draw from. Therefore, *hybrid identities* were part of everyday life in 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain, as they had been for years. It was only with the fortification of the Catholic Church, the effects of the Reconquest, and the burgeoning modern nationalism of the Christian Spanish that identity became in fact an identity crisis for the Moriscos. The 70 year period in Granada marked an advancing and unstoppable series of forced conversions and multiplying restrictions by the Christians that eventually became unbearable. During this time to threat to their identity—their entire way of life—the Moriscos must have suffered confusion and psychological stress regarding how to react and to save their homes and traditions; they must have faced as well the continual question of whether to stay and fight for their way of life or to leave to rebuild in places unknown. It is in this atmosphere that the Morisco houses in Granada were built. The history of acculturation is significant here, as well. Although clear changes are evident between the Morisco houses and those that preceded them in Granada, the Nasrid houses, as well as differences between contemporary Christian and Morisco houses, the acculturation of visual language, as well as its possible split at the time of social upheaval, makes it difficult to attribute some changes in architectural elements in the Morisco houses to definite sources. It is possible to assume that the Morisco houses' characteristic shift from masonry to carpentry was economically motivated, and that the elimination of the indirect entry to the houses that the Christian strictures decreed are the more clearly identifiable modifications, there are interesting smaller changes that seem to

be ambiguous. The Moriscos' propensity for carving the new wooden elements in their homes in elaborate patterns, sometimes into figural representations, is, for example, not so clear. Two Spanish experts on Morisco houses have both considered these the minimal use of possibly "Christian" styles based on the upcoming predominance of Christian architecture; however in nearly the same breath they refer to these elements of the Morisco house having had the most effect on later Christian buildings.<sup>6</sup> I believe this points to some ambivalence about the attribution of these elements; and perhaps the only method of explaining such incongruities is the understanding of the effects of acculturation. It is possible that when building, Muslim, Morisco, and Christian did not actively think about where a design was coming from, or whether it was identified with a "Christian" or "Muslim" style in a way in which we may be currently too eager to categorize.

## **2. Statement of Purpose and Methodology**

This is effectively a social study based in architecture. The intention of this paper is to be a meditation on the meaning of Morisco house; by this I mean to take a phenomenological approach to the analysis of the houses, rather than a formal one, although form is of course significant in this pursuit.<sup>7</sup> It is relevant to consider the identity, or multiple identities of the Moriscos—inasmuch as we can imagine them now—in the attempt to capture an idea of the dual relationship between home and personal/collective identity. Meaning and architecture have an intricate and subjective relationship; the attempts by scholars to understand that relationship are fraught with possible misconceptions, misapplications, or associations brought by the subjectivity of

the person examining the relationship. However, this delicate relationship, unknowable as it may be, is also rich in interpretive value. What can we expect to learn of the meaning of the home to people long gone, five hundred years past? It can only be conjecture, but its value rests in possibility, connections, as tentative and fragile as they may be; value may be found in the poetic reading of the house, even at this late stage.

This may not be an entirely objective art historical scholarship; however, complete objectivity is impossible to obtain nonetheless. I remain firm in the belief that this sort of exploration has significant merit, as the meaning of architecture is truly a category beyond its typical categorizations. My original and enduring affinity for the history of architecture has arisen out of the conjuncture of architecture, belief systems (religious and other), and meaning. What we, or any society, build is in the image of ourselves; it reflects who we believe ourselves to be. Conversely, we are often reflectively defined by the architecture we have made for ourselves. While this is true in monumental, religious, and public buildings, it is a deep issue in the making of the house, the personal domestic space. Whether people build their own homes, live in, or modify other buildings, the decisions made about the making of the house reflect the attitudes, traditions, and ideas of the people making them. Identity, a recurrent theme of this paper, is here defined as a complex method of defining one's self, one's image, one's social, political, and religious beliefs, where one fits into society, where one fits into the family, and how that individual relates to cultural traditions and outside elements. It is a very broad concept, as is "meaning", thus difficult to ascribe from our current viewpoint to people who lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, with architectural evidence, and with accounts of the lives of the

Moriscos, I hope to bring together some condensation of domestic architecture, identity, and meaning.

With this methodology and intention in mind, a few more points are necessary to establish prior to a description of the Morisco experience and their architecture. Firstly, the Morisco house is something of a misnomer, as any number of houses throughout Spain were lived in by Moriscos during the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Due to the significant concentration of Moriscos into Granada during the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a result of ever southward pushing forces of the Christian Reconquest, there are a number of Morisco houses in Granada available for study, approximately 35 in a complete state, which were built between 1500 and 1570, and as many more in various states of disrepair or major subsequent alteration.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is important to clarify that these houses varied, were open to a number of outside influences, were obviously lived in by different families, and were built during shifting political and social periods. As a group, however, the houses reveal consistencies and a typological coherence that not only link them together formally, but with the people who built them.

As it is imperative to understand the Morisco house as both a collective and individual phenomenon, the Moriscos themselves should not be understood as an unchanging group, but dynamic generations of people who experienced dramatic social changes in their lifetimes. Neither should they be seen solely as a 'cultural group' but as real women, men, and children; families who ritualized their daily lives in the houses I will examine. The people known as the Moriscos were in fact descended from Islamized Christians, and came to Granada from all parts of Iberia, bring different practices with them. Others were the Muslim inhabitants already living in Granada, who may have continued to occupy

houses built during the Nasrid times. With the houses and the people of this study both diverse and heterogeneous, the attempt to connect meaning to architecture becomes all the more remote, yet challenging.

This study is motivated by questions that may be unanswerable, but perhaps the more interesting for that reason. The major themes of this paper touch on issues of the construction of identity, thus identification with places, architectural forms, ideas such as religious beliefs and social practices. However, looking for the ‘unanswerable’ may actually be a way of at least bringing light to the vague and obscured issues that surround the study of architectural history, perhaps the beginning of loosening a knot of inquiry. The Moriscos are an example of a very ambiguous and threatened group historically, as well as a little known one, and it is consequential to examine how their domestic architecture reflected their self concept, identity, and how it was related to place. The relevant issues involve boundaries of cultural groups, how they act in proximity, in relationship to each other, and how we determine identity in those sometimes threatening circumstances.

Another theme is the idea of culture and its boundaries and elements, and how those again are used to create a sense of identity as well as create an architecture. But I am interested in culture as permeable and fluid, as well as the possibility that it may not exist at all.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps culture exists only as a series of self and other definitions, the result of the webs of identifications mentioned above—the building of history by the reconstruction and the examination of the trace.<sup>10</sup> In the subject matter I have chosen, evidence exists, but interpretations are open, in some sense. In order to build valid interpretations based on the Morisco house and its accounts, my work is heavily influenced by a prominent

figure in the discussion of houses and meaning: Gaston Bachelard, as will be evident in the later analysis of this paper. Within the idea of culture, the concepts of Self and Other emerge, through the interaction and dialogisms of “dominant and subordinate” cultural groups. These concepts, too, enforce and construct identity, allowing for binary categorization as a default in some cases. According to Bernard Vincent, “To be Morisco depends permanently on the relation of the majority-minority.”<sup>11</sup>

I’d like to consider these questions by examining a specific architectural form from a well-defined time and place; the house constructed and lived in by a unique cultural group, the Moriscos of Granada, Spain, from the time period 1500-1570, who were composed of both long-term inhabitants of Granada and others who had been forced to move south. By 1501 they were compelled to convert from Islam to Christianity, although many continued to live their lives according to the practices of their religion and culture, in varying degrees of openness. It is important to note that identity, in the terms in which I examine it in this paper, is not based solely in religious identification, neither self identification by the Moriscos nor “Other” based definition by the Christian Spaniards. In fact many sources combine the several generations of Muslims and Jews converted to Christianity in this period simply as “new Christians.”<sup>12</sup> Of course other political and socio-cultural distinctions were present at the time, and all categories of politics, religion, economics, etc. were part of the boundaries between groups that I wish to emphasize as permeable. In fact, the selection of the Moriscos of Granada as a topic of study has been determined by the very fact that medieval Iberia had a long standing history of cultural exchange, blurred boundaries between groups, religious conversions, and shifting power structures in which one group would dominate, then the other, and

back again. The Moriscos were yet another group in this chain of events, who existed at a critical point in time and space: the short post-Reconquest years, in the last regions of Spain to hold the vestiges of the Islamic empire. In that context, their subtle and ambiguous identity is rich with history. Furthermore, following the final expulsion, the issues surrounding identity, cultural exchange, etc. would continue to play a role in the self definition of the Spaniards who remained on the land itself.<sup>13</sup>

To understand the social and political environment the Moriscos lived in, it is crucial to discern their contemporary social identity, as they were seen as ‘Others.’ As de Zayas points out, primarily they were excluded by their identity of being ‘not-Christian’. History considers them descendents of the original ‘invading’ Berbers of the 8<sup>th</sup> century; although in reality the Moriscos of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were mostly descendents of Christians who had converted to Islam in the preceding centuries.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. History of Moriscos**

With the Agreements of Capitulation in 1492, the city of Granada was ceremoniously taken over by the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, following a treaty with the last Muslim ruler, Boabdil, after the Nasrid rule of the city. This marked the official Christianization of the city, but at the time Muslims were promised in the agreements to be allowed to continue to practice their faith. Maria Rosa Menocal considers this a general cultural acceptance, across religious lines, of the idea of dhimmi, which she believes epitomized the tolerance in al-Andalus for centuries; therefore, in spite of periods of conflict, throughout the Islamic dominated period this tolerance had become part of cultural thinking, even for the Christians.<sup>15</sup> She quotes from the Agreements:



“Their highnesses and their successors will ever afterwards allow [the Granadans] to live in their own religion, and not permit their mosques to be taken from them, nor their minarets nor their muezzins, nor will they interfere with the pious foundations or endowments which they have for such purposes, nor will they disturb the uses and customs which they observe.”<sup>16</sup>

However, this promise of religious freedom was short lived; the Archbishop Talavera immediately promoted voluntary conversions. Cardinal Cisneros began to lead an effort to systematically repress Islamic customs before the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the Muslims revolted in 1499, in the city of Granada and throughout the Royaume. Ferdinand the Catholic announced an edict that would pardon those who had revolted if they would be baptized, and those who were baptized in the years of 1500-1501 were not immediately pressed with other prohibitions.<sup>17</sup>

By 1502 the first edict was announced that threatened expulsion. Muslims in the kingdom of Granada were given the choice of conversion to Christianity or to be expelled from the region within three months. In facing this decision, organized groups of Moriscos and converted Jews attempted to negotiate with the Christians, and were able to retain privileges that would maintain a political and economical balance in the community of old and new Christians, including the honoring of contracts made under Islamic law. These negotiations required that the “new Christians” be baptized, but they were promised time to learn the Christian faith without fear of persecution for their possible mistakes.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps due to their contact with the Maghreb, or perhaps due to the pressures of conversions, the Moriscos of Granada were known for having rigidified their practice of

Islam in comparison with the Granadan Muslims of the Nasrid period, and held to traditions even under the specter of the Inquisition.<sup>19</sup>

They were known for having a sophisticated elite class, and spoke the Arabic dialect of *aljamia*. In spite of previous successful negotiations between the groups, in 1526, the Inquisition, inspired by ideologues of the growing Catholic Church, had descended on Granada.<sup>20</sup> Cardaillac says, “At the beginning of 1527, Islam had officially ceased to exist in Spain. What remained to be assimilated were truly the new Christians.”<sup>21</sup>

This movement seemed to be part of both the empowerment of the Catholic Church, and its role in the developing identity of nationalism that Spain was headed toward.

During the Inquisition, a preoccupation with the idea of *limpieza de sangre*, cleanliness or purity of blood, developed, where new Christians, although completely assimilated, were threatened because their ancestors had been Muslim or Jewish. It seems that the Moriscos continued to live their daily lives in ways that were more obviously different from the old Christians, a situation that activated “the feelings of fear” in the Christians.<sup>22</sup> While the Jews were initially the primary target of the Inquisition, sometimes Christians equated Jews and Moriscos based on the fact that their practices both differed from Christian ones. Therefore if there was sufficient reason to expel the Jews, the Moriscos should be as well, according to the reasoning of the *limpieza de sangre* plan. The old Christians also were confounded by the varying practices of days of work and rest, where the new Christians continued to follow Muslim and Jewish practices rather than Christian ones.

It seemed possible that at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, true assimilation and conversion to Christianity could have occurred without a disturbance of the non-religious

cultural practices of the Moriscos. At that point, they were allowed their public baths and traditional clothing, although Arabic books were burned and the Islamic ritual slaughter of animals was banned.<sup>23</sup>

However, Christian authorities came to believe that in order to extirpate the religion, they must act on the entire civilization. From 1511 to 1526, successive measures were taken to constrain the Moriscos, such as limiting the carrying of arms, the choice of godparents. In 1526, under the initiative of the king, an extensive list of customs that distinguished the Moriscos was announced, and these were forbidden, because they were considered Muslim practices: “use of written and spoken Arabic, clothing, jewelry, amulets, Islamic names, public baths; they forbade them the possession of slaves, they controlled their movements.”<sup>24</sup> The Spanish were no longer the tolerant rulers of the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; at this point they were trying to destroy an entire civilization.

However, these strict measures were not evenly applied in Granada. Charles V “understood the complexity of the situation”<sup>25</sup> and that the Moriscos were essential politically and financially to the city due to their roles as merchants, especially of the silk trade. The sovereign even discouraged mockeries and insults against the Moriscos. The Spanish also decided that more time and instruction were needed to ensure sincere conversions to Christianity, and thus formed greater missionary attempts toward the Moriscos.<sup>26</sup>

By 1555, the results of the indoctrination were not acceptable to the increasingly strict regulations of the high clergy, as the Moriscos were not becoming Christianized to the extent the Catholic Church expected; they still practiced most of their traditions and

remained Christian virtually only in name. A provincial Council of Granada reunited in 1565 to enforce the earlier strictures of 1526 that had previously been only vaguely applied. In addition, more extremist measures were created, such as moving Old Christians into Morisco villages and neighborhoods to influence them, and the sending of children of Morisco notables into Castile to raise them as Catholics. A serious development had occurred with this assertion of the strengthening authority of the Catholic Church.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, Spain faced military threats from the French Protestants and was involved in complicated battles in the Mediterranean with Ottoman and North African opponents. The Spanish State chose to follow the propositions of the bishops of the Church in regard to the Moriscos. In 1566, a council in Madrid ratified all proposals by the Church to limit the liberties of the Moriscos, and although they tried to negotiate as they had done many times before with success over the course of the previous decades, their propositions were rejected. Cardaillac emphasizes that this was the essential rupture.<sup>28</sup>

Around 1560, the number of Moriscos in the kingdom of Granada was 150,000.<sup>29</sup> The Spanish involvement in battles on the Mediterranean complicated the Morisco relationship; because Spanish were focused on these battles, a Morisco uprising in Granada in 1570 was successful. At the same time, the Moriscos lived in hope of a reconquest of Spain by the Turks, which would effectively liberate Islam.<sup>30</sup>

The revolt of the Moriscos had religious and political motivations, and was also influenced by an economic crisis in the silk industry, which they had controlled. With the Spanish military stretched thin, the uprising was taken as a major threat to Spanish

power. They reacted with military force, aided by Italy; the Moriscos were aided by some groups of Turks and North Africans, however the Spanish eventually won the battle. The two year war was grueling, and left heightened tensions throughout the country. It also occurred at the peak of the Turk offensive in the Mediterranean. The effect was the decision to deport all Moriscos from Granada. Cardaillac evokes the treacherous and miserable events:

“thousands of people were put into slavery and sent throughout Spain. Some cities and entire villages, nearly 20,000 inhabitants, were deported into Castile before the winter of 1570. In one week 50,000 persons were assembled and sent toward Seville, Cordoba, Albacete and Toledo, on foot, in long rows by military escort. Snow, lack of nourishment, typhus, the weakness of those too young or old to withstand the effort, caused ravages: one out of five died on the way. The survivors were put in small groups in diverse locations. In total, 80,000 left the Royaume.”<sup>31</sup>

The deportation of 1570 marks the end of the Morisco period in Granada; however Moriscos lived dispersed in other parts of Spain until the final expulsion in 1609, when 275,000 people were sent into a diaspora that led them to various locations in North Africa, Turkey, and France.<sup>32</sup>

#### **4. Preface to Architectural Descriptions**

Having isolated the Moriscos as a source for exploration of multiple identity and cultural exchange, I would like to examine these subjects through the medium of domestic architecture built by the Moriscos in the Albaicin neighborhood from 1500-1570. The extant houses may be interpreted as a transmission of the architectural methods, formal elements, spatial configurations, and visual symbols that held cultural meaning—thus a means of establishing or maintaining—identity for the Moriscos who

lived in a city that was increasingly hostile to their presence. As Spanish Christian (or “old Christian”) powers dominated, they advanced regulations on the display of visual symbols and ritual and other practices associated with the Islamic, now Morisco, community. At times economics defined the actual enforcement of strictures on the Moriscos, who were often treated permissively in regards to laws on the books as long as they paid rents; at other times Moriscos organized to present their cases to Spanish Christian authorities and were successful in negotiations. While their presence may have always been tenuous, as shown above, the expulsion was not entirely rooted in an act against their religious practices; ultimately instability in Europe and the Mediterranean caused Spanish authorities to believe they could no longer balance the threat of a Morisco uprising, and the Moriscos were expelled from Granada.<sup>33</sup> While it is crucial to recognize the broad nature of the factors involved in conflict between the Moriscos and the Spanish Christians, it is important also to realize the strength of the role of religion in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it is relevant to consider religion in this case, especially as it is the most *persistently divisive* concept between cultural groups who, throughout the history of Islamic Iberia, often diminished other boundaries in dress, language, trades, food, even architecture.

## **5. Architectural Descriptions/Trajectory from Nasrid to Morisco Houses**

The discussion of visual culture is an important preface to the issues of charged forms in Morisco houses. This implies that parts of the house are imbued with symbolic meaning that remained relatively stable while other factors shifted, and were used to help maintain identity. So, the symbolic quality had to be fairly recognizable and agreed upon by the culture using it for it to continue to be transmitted. These symbols had to be felt to have enough power to support the notion of identity of self. The use of architectural form to recreate the past, thus in an attempt to stabilize and reinforce identity during a geographical or other societal rupture has been a previously demonstrated tactic in Islamic Spain, from the beginning establishment of the Islamic empire at Cordoba and throughout the cities and rural areas the Muslims ruled over 700 years.<sup>34</sup> Architectural form as a means of reassurance and recreation is likely to have been a familiar issue to the Moriscos.

The changes posed to the Morisco house under the influence of the Christian authority are central to the discussion of survival and protection of identity, which will be treated shortly. *However, it is vital to emphasize that elements of the houses built by Muslims then Moriscos may be viewed in terms of both transmission from the earlier eras, and in terms of modification as external pressures grew. These are representative of two types of identity responses, and reflective of the reversal in power as the Islamic culture lost its dominance.*

In order to describe the Morisco house, it is important to trace its evolution in Islamic Iberia. While Lopez Guzman claims that both *Castellano*, or Spanish Christian houses, and Morisco houses evolved originally from a Roman patio type, this may be arguable since similar house forms are found in the Islamic world from where the earlier Muslim

inhabitants of Iberia originated.<sup>35</sup> In any case, the Morisco house is clearly descended from the Andalusí house, a term for the typical inverted form found throughout Spain and lived in by Muslims during the Islamic period, whose ‘basic characteristics [were] its introverted character and desire for privacy,’ according to Orihuela.<sup>36</sup> The existing architecture and houses in Granada were primarily from the 200 year Nasrid rule. Both Castellano and Nasrid houses contained patios, although typically the Castellano houses had porticos on all four sides of the patio, and the Nasrid houses had a slightly elongated patio, with porticos only on the minor sides.<sup>37</sup>

Because the Morisco house was not an entirely new type, but instead the result of changes to the slightly earlier Nasrid house form, an understanding of the features of the pre-existing Nasrid typology prepares the way for a discussion of the meaning of the Morisco developments. In studies on Nasrid houses, Antonio Orihuela Uzal developed a number of characteristics common to the houses, which he defined as a bent *zaguan* or entry, a main room, a secondary room, a kitchen and a lavatory, with a total area averaging 100-150 square meters.<sup>38</sup> While some houses are found without a patio, most have a patio and one or two porticos, and often have a shallow pool, or *alberca*, in the center. Additionally, the rooms have a multifunctional character. Niches known as *tacas* and *alacenas* are common in the thick walls; the *tacas* are small niches in doorways or on either sides of doors or arches, and *alacenas* are large recesses in walls separating the house from the patio. He describes the houses as having an ornamental character and as placing importance on water and the visual creation of axes. Typically the Nasrid houses had a long north-south axis, with mediating symmetrical axes. The main reception space of the house was located at the rear.



Orihuela mentions construction techniques for the Nasrid houses, which in Granada were usually made of mud or adobe, sometimes with brick or *mamposteria*, a mortarless stacking technique for brick or stone. While the walls of the house were solid, the wooden roofs often lacked appropriately supportive beams, which, to Orihuela, “indicate[d] lack of knowledge or interest about the solidity or durability of the construction.”<sup>39</sup> The eaves were created with troughs of wood that frequently provided the necessary additional structural support to the roof, which was tiled.

Other elements of the Nasrid houses were also consistent with the Andalusí tradition but differed from Castellano houses. The stairs were within the enclosed part of the house, rather than visible from the patio, and were built around a brick support, in a square or rectangular form, with an economic use of space. The run of the step was typically shorter than the rise, creating a steep climb.<sup>40</sup> The porticos inside the house featured brick pillars or marble columns that created one, two, or three arched openings; the creation of a palpable architectural space between the supporting walls is referred to as the *crujía*. Those with marble columns showed the highest arches.<sup>41</sup> The porticos in houses had non-structural arches decorated in carved plaster. The most common arches were slightly pointed, with a central *vano*, (a window or false window, or *mashrabiyya*) for each portico. The arches on either side of the central arch tended to have a *peraltado* form, or an ultra semi-circular arch.<sup>42</sup>

Some houses had galleries above the porticos on the second floor; in these cases they were usually supported by brick pillars. Orihuela notes that Nasrid houses with galleries supported by straight, square wood columns (*pies derechos*) were probably additions during either the brief Mudéjar period (in Granada considered only the period from 1492-

1501), or the Morisco period. However, it is interesting that he attributes these formal changes to “later reforms by the Christian conquest.”<sup>43</sup> These wood columns, and their subsequent elaborations, would become central to the identity of the Morisco house.

The above characteristics of the Nasrid house were generally transmitted to the Morisco house of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Granada. What is significant are the two subsequent categories of changes made to the form: *those created by the Morisco builders themselves, and those imposed by the old Christians*, who grew in power and increasingly dominated the lives of the Moriscos over the century. However, the reason, or meaning, behind some of these changes is also of distinct interest to the ensuing discussion of house form, identity, and meaning. (Figs. 1 & 2)

Because the Moriscos first built houses for themselves, prior to the interference of the Christians, it seems appropriate to indicate the formal changes that developed as the Moriscos retained and transformed elements of the Nasrid typology. As Granada became Christianized, the old Christians built houses in the lower part of the city. The Moriscos were concentrated in the Albaicin neighborhood, on the hill to Sacromonte, to the point of being considered “ghettoized.”<sup>44</sup> In an essay on the Morisco Albaicin, Rafael López Guzmán gives descriptions of how the Morisco houses differed from previous Nasrid houses, as well as from the contemporary Castellano houses built in the lower quarters. He initially describes the Morisco house in a way that recalls the Nasrid form; built around an inhabitable patio, with distinct rooms, calling the rooms of the ground floor *palacios* and the second floor rooms *camaras*. The façade is plain, perhaps with a few small *vano* windows, and the door is often marked with a pointed brick arch. (Fig. 3) Inside the house, the porticos have the same height, and typologically can be classified as

either being arched or having dentils.<sup>45</sup> Some arches of the porticos were directly related to the Nasrid tradition; these had *angrelado*, or foliated, arches and were decorated in thinly laced plaster patterns and vegetal motifs known as *ataurique*. The Morisco houses continued to have arched openings in the porticos, varying in height and ranging from one opening, often three; the Casas del Chapiz have five arched openings.<sup>46</sup> (Figs. 4 & 5) The adentilated openings were located on the lateral sides of the porticos, and required structural solutions such as extreme supports in the form of pilasters at the ends, or intermediate supports, which assisted in carrying the main beam of the gallery above. The intermediate supports were usually columns of mampostería. (Fig. 6) This structural change is a departure from the equal load-bearing walls of the Nasrid houses.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of this change in some houses, Lopez Guzman describes a ground floor plan similar to the Nasrid form in some cases, with a main room located beyond a foliated arch, with two or three vanos windows in mashrabiyya in the upper part of the wall, and tacas in the thick part of the wall. (Figs. 7 & 8) In the case of the Casa Yanguas, from this ground floor plan a second story is developed, with open galleries that provide circulation between distinct rooms. Most importantly, the galleries are wood, have a balustrade and the *pies derechos*, straight wood columns, with *zapatas*, or corbels, supporting the roof. He says “these designs [create] a diaphanous and precious space of great aesthetic effect.”<sup>48</sup> (Figs 9, 10 & 11)

The use of wood and carpentry became the distinguishing characteristic of the Morisco house, reaching a refined development and widespread use. The wood columns of the upper galleries were made with bevells and small Mozarabic designs, but the carved elaborations of the eaves and the corbels became distinct. Lopez Guzman calls this to

attention because it would later influence Christian architecture; however it is the intention of this investigation to examine the meaning of the carvings within their own timeframe.<sup>49</sup>

Lopez Guzman subdivides the forms of the wood columns and corbels into five categories: the keel type, those with tracery forming three or four lobules, and those that superpose heralds onto the lobules (or some type of decoration such as blazons, diamond points, or rosettes; all of these he relates to the Gothic tradition.) a type with a typically Renaissance acanthus, one with Mannerist themes in profile, and one formed by a wreath and basket motif.<sup>50</sup> (Fig. 12)

Roofs in the Albaicin had smaller beams than the Christian houses, but in proportion to house size, since the Morisco houses tended to be much smaller. Lopez Guzman calls the Morisco solutions more functional than the Christian ones, notes that they lack excessive decoration, although some were decoratively painted. The rooms follow the Nasrid tradition of being rectangular and have the entry by the center of the major side. The central room was the largest, with two minor rooms in the lateral sides, called *alhanias*.<sup>51</sup> He describes the wooden roofs with artistically interlaced members, known as *alfarjes*, with a single order of profiled beams; additionally he notes examples with banded stretches with vegetal borders, in painting or in decorative tiles with a vegetal motif.<sup>52</sup> (Fig. 13)

The technical design of the upper floors is probably attributable exclusively to the Morisco artistic development, according to Lopez Guzman. There are several variations on the use of the armature, which may be filed decoratively, and in the use of the flat roofs. The roof beams are often painted decoratively, or the central column of the roof

beam may be elaborated with a common design known as “laces of eight” and pairs of beams. The filings and carvings of the wood members are also a Morisco characteristic use of carpentry.<sup>53</sup> There are also functional designs that lack decoration, or exhibit simply filed edged columns. In the Casa de los Mascarones, a very simple armature supports the roof with a two member fork.<sup>54</sup>

Lopez Guzman remarks that “the diaspora of Moriscos after the... Alpujarras uprising marked the beginning of the decay of the Albaicin. The strong density of the area would be diminished until numerous disinhabited spaces and ruins appeared.”<sup>55</sup>

While the carpentry became the most distinguishing characteristic of the Morisco house in its evolution from the Nasrid house, it is perhaps not only attributable to the decline in economic status of the Moriscos, which might have caused them to rely on cheaper materials. Nor do the designs in the wood necessarily reflect a Christian influence. One must remember that carpentry required a certain set of skills, and a number of craftsmen to do the labor. The shift might have been brought on for other reasons. Firstly, the fast immigration into Granada brought Muslims from all over Iberia, including those who could have been practicing carpentry in the Mudéjar style in other parts of the peninsula; this is not unlikely. Another possibility for the shift to carpentry could come from the Moriscos’ increasing trade contact with North Africa, where carpentry in cities such as Fez was elaborate and made very intricately. The desire on the part of the Moriscos to again be part of a larger Islamic community, including the areas around the Mediterranean, could have also contributed to the change.

With this understanding of the methods used by the Moriscos to elaborate and change the form of the houses evolved from Nasrid types, it is next important to examine the

changes to these Morisco houses that were the result of Christian authorities, who enforced architectural changes in an effort to support the conversions of the Moriscos to Christianity. Although they were already “converted” they continued to practice Islamic rituals and their traditional lifestyle within their homes, acts which increasingly were the focus of attempts by Christians to control. Because of the lack of public spaces for the Moriscos to continue their practices, these were restricted to the home. Christians realized this, and therefore sought architectural solutions to control even the previously sacrosanct intimacy of the insides of the Morisco homes. The feature most noticeable in houses built for Muslim then Morisco households was the indirect entry, a form that distinctively modulated the transition from the public street to the privacy of the home.

The Christian houses did not use this method of entry; in their homes the entrance opened directly into the reception area of the house. Evidence suggests that the Christians ordered Moriscos to first keep the doors open to their houses, especially on significant religious days, Christian or Muslim, in order to ensure that the Moriscos were behaving in accordance with the proper procedures for those days: not celebrating Muslim holidays, celebrating Christian holidays, ‘resting’ on the proper Christian Sabbath day of Sunday and ‘not resting’ on the traditional Friday day of prayer and rest for the Muslims.<sup>56</sup> Additionally the Christians hoped to watch for traditional Muslim weddings as well as subversive practices against the conversion, such as the washing off of baptismal oils following a Muslim to Christian conversion. When the policy of keeping doors open did not create a fully panoptic gaze for the Christians into the lives of the Moriscos, the Moriscos were then ordered to rebuild the entrances to their homes in a direct manner, then keeping doors open such that the Christians could walk by and see

directly into the patio spaces of the homes, or even more deeply. Orihuela shows evidence for this architectural event in several of the Morisco houses in Granada and supports this by archaeological evidence from a site in Cieza, where the remains of houses can be shown to have been altered in this manner.<sup>57</sup> (Fig. 14)

Additionally, as Spanish Christian armies patrolled Granada, not only in fear of a Morisco uprising but in preparations for other outside threats, the traditional *ajimeces* shaded windows on the upper floors of the Morisco houses, which created an overhang in the street, were outlawed, for the reason of causing obstruction to the armies which needed to be able to pass through the streets quickly. Although this is attributed to a strictly political motive by Orihuela<sup>58</sup> it may also be understood as yet another enforced change to the Morisco house based on its difference from the Christian type, and resulted in sequestering the Moriscos in their homes, because while the Christians could see well into the ground floors of the Morisco homes, the Moriscos no longer had the advantage to seeing out from the upper floors of their houses.

It is interesting to compare the architectural elements built by the Moriscos which have been suggested to be influence by Christian styles, with the forced spatial displacement of the meaningful entrance to the house. When faced with the ever intruding Christian gaze, with all that implied (further forced deterioration of Muslim practice and ritual and daily life within the home) the Moriscos perhaps resorted to methods of architectural subversion, concealment, and codified languages, such as screening off the newly direct entries to their homes.<sup>59</sup>

At this point, I would like to reiterate the focus of this paper and its questions about the construction of identity, both personal and collective, and the elements of that

construction. Such as identity is made, what is its relation to the cultural group, which may be unstable, ambiguous, threatened, porous, and which always must encounter Self and Other? Furthermore, what architecture is born of these concepts and conditions, especially in the case of the dwelling, which Derrida calls “the essential metaphor for everything”?<sup>60</sup>

The Moriscos are an example of acculturation based on the model Glick develops in his paper with Pi-Sunyer, in which different cultural groups, through contact and propinquity, absorb and merge some aspects of the other cultures. It is clear that Muslims and Christian groups drew from one another, in various ways, over the years, and often this was modulated by which group had the most power. This is highly significant in Spain, where Muslim and Christian populations acculturated nearly 800 years prior to the Morisco period of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Most importantly, however, as Glick points out, these “Muslims” and “Christians” were not two distinct and unchanging groups, but in reality, a number of smaller, variable, differing and dynamic groups that interacted based on their own circumstances, leading to a variety of subtle identities based on cultural experience. The idea that by the time the Moriscos were trying to preserve an identity through architecture, it was a purely Islamic religious identity, is as unlikely as the myth of eternal Spanishness evoked by Sanchez-Albornoz.<sup>61</sup>

Religion, or at least its modulation, did however play a role in acculturation and tolerance, and ultimately in the sequence of historical events. By the Morisco period, a fervor in Christianity developed that tipped the cultural balance. But, according to Glick, “There was, in each [historical period of Islamic Iberia] a play between rigidity and openness, between resistance to assimilation and impetus towards fusion, which created



an effect of pulsation in cultural flow. If demographic variations are imposed upon the temporal, the result is a kaleidoscopic image of play and counterplay of cultural forces.”<sup>62</sup> The complexity of the identity of Moriscos, and their Other—the Spanish Christians—evolved from this centuries long engagement.

## **6. Phenomenological Analysis of the Morisco House**

To proceed with dealing with this dual identity problematic through suggestions created by a phenomenological analysis inspired by Bachelard, I would first like to say that in my reading of these architectural elements, I would like to point out that I am not ascribing these aspects to the religion of Islam—nor to the religious faith of the Moriscos as it was—but reading them as I believe they can be understood phenomenologically. I do not intend to read the Morisco house as another example of some universal “Islamic” house, but rather as trying to understand its specificity to its distinct inhabitants.

In order to analyze a house with the question of identity in mind, I believe it is necessary go beyond formal analysis, to go, as Bachelard said,

“beyond the problems of description—whether this description... gives facts or impressions, in order to attain to the primary virtues, those that reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting. A geographer or an ethnographer can give us descriptions of very varied types of dwellings. In each variety, the phenomenologist makes the effort needed to seize upon the germ of the essential...”<sup>63</sup>

In considering my approach to “reading” the Morisco house, to analyzing it, Bachelard’s associations of memory, imagination, and meaning to the archetypal dwelling have considerable implications in an attempt to interpret a sense of identity

transmitted and protected via architecture. The temporal and acculturative aspects alone of the Morisco experiences, evolving from a context of visual symbols, shifting power structures, and mutability of identity based on non-religious factors, I believe are extremely inviting to explorations of their functions of memory, imagination and meaning.

Bachelard's own investigation into the meaning of the house as an archetype was based on his somewhat universalized view of a tripartite French country house, and its psychological meaning "from cellar to garret."<sup>64</sup> Obviously the Morisco houses are not formally related to this type, however, his methods may be applicable. Given his thesis that our house of birth, even the subsequent homes we live in, serve to create our identity, the analysis of the Morisco house may lead to the same.

Firstly, the Morisco house draws from its Nasrid and other Andalusí precedents an introverted character, a smooth, faceless exterior, an indirect entry, a patio, usually with a pool and side porticoes leading to work rooms, and typically three salons, with one being primary. Upstairs, its now Morisco character gives it wooden galleries to reach other more private rooms. Its continued use of carved plaster arches on the ground floor and the lightly plaster decorated doors to the upstairs rooms are complemented by the new Morisco wooden columns, filed ornately and topped with elegantly carved corbels, which may or may not reflect a Christian influence—whether that be one already felt or one that will be transmitted later is the question. It provides for the intimacy of the family, certainly, as well as creating an indoor oasis from the city. The indirect entry is a beautiful architectural solution. It is graceful, it is modest, it allows one to transition from outdoors in the street to the inside of the house—the home. It is psychological as well as

practical. The home is safe from the street, the home is a retreat from the street: inner life something to be protected. The patio is used for work and relaxation, and the importance of beauty is apparent. The inner rooms, whose exact use cannot be determined,<sup>65</sup> but were functionally flexible, also reflected a desire for beauty in the home. The galleries allowing up to three floors create a possible sense of needing to expand the house internally to protect it more and more from the city, and from the Christian threat. Obviously the inhabitants of these homes would not relate directly to the model devised by Bachelard, but he allows that, “all really inhabited space bears the notion of home.”<sup>66</sup> But what is most important about analyzing the house in this way, although Bachelard shies away from “the problems of description” is to compare the architectural elements, themselves a swift change, and themselves not necessarily attributable to a distinct style other than their own, which is considered primarily an intermediate form, to the social life of the Moriscos. Their life was also still rich, also still full of possibility, while at the same time threatened more and more over time. Perhaps this period of ambiguity and swift change, of concealed and revealed identities, is reflected both in the story of Morisco life and in the houses they built.

The Moriscos were never certain of how to act, displaying Christian symbols, caught up in enacting both Christian and Islamic religious rituals, forced to prove their adherence to Christianity by acts such as eating pork in public, hiding in their homes to wash off baptismal oils after conversions;<sup>67</sup> over time the Moriscos, as individuals, must have had any number of reactions to these events and began to identify themselves in multiple ways. We see proof of this in the fact that many families tried to assimilate, some left of their own accord, others were thrown out, and finally, many families became integrated

to the point that they were not recognized as Moriscos by the Inquisitors, and stayed on in Spain. It may follow, if their houses did indeed reflect the idea that we build our domestic space in the image we have of ourselves, that the Morisco houses of Granada reveal a superposition of multiple and changeable identities, and their forms themselves are the result of a people in transition, no matter where that transition led them after 16<sup>th</sup> century Granada.

Bachelard introduces the concept of “topoanalysis... the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives.”<sup>68</sup> The personal stories of the families who built the houses are not clear, there are questions about those who were moved from other parts of Spain and had to rebuild a life in Granada, how they participated in making the houses their homes, how they thought about them, why they made them the way they did. As I have suggested the idea that we make our houses according to our worldview, whether we work from an existing building or not, by how we use it, change it, live in it, hide things in it, our belongings and our secrets, perhaps this was also true of the Moriscos. As a strong symbol of the protection of the intimacy of the family, thus we also define ourselves by the houses we are born in, according to Bachelard. We may ask: Who are the people who lived there, with patios and porticos and small pools, cool rooms, protected from the city outside their walls; were they different from the people who lived a few generations before them, during Nasrid times, significantly so that their architecture should reflect changes in their lives? Were the changes all brought on by external influences, decline in social status, economic hardship, increasing tensions? How did the house remain symbolic in that time?

In a “psychological study of the sites of [their] intimate lives,” the Moriscos and their houses reveal themes of loss, ambiguity, efforts to preserve traditions, use of rituals, as well as tentative acceptance of change and new influences. Lopez Guzman divides the intriguingly ambiguous carved corbels into different typological categories, but what about their meaning? The Nasrid houses did not have them, yet the Moriscos created them. What was it like for the Moriscos to live with a small carved bird, to touch wood balustrades instead of plaster or marble columns as they went about their daily routines? Perhaps we can imagine these elements as symbols of life, or hope, or simply the filtering of tastes from the newly dominant culture.

If the changes are considered mostly in the material shift from stone and plaster to carpentry, which may be attributed to economic decline, one can also read that new materials did not intentionally result in a new form, but the desire to preserve form can be understood as a decision, an attempt to recreate in a new medium, while retaining cultural identity. The maintenance of the plan and building form in general may be an indication of the desire to keep tradition; or it may be understood by the tendency for building types to not change dramatically without a recognized need for doing so.

Within the confusion and changes of their identity, the Moriscos often had to conceal their identities; as Christians gazed into the privacy of the Morisco home, were the figural corbels a sign of rudimentary compliance? Although there is a long history of phases of figural decoration in Islam, it is notable that the preceding Nasrid houses lacked figures, while the Morisco houses revived the idea. One could argue that this architectural element was a decoy “to pass” as a new Christian. As the Moriscos were forced to open up their homes to the Christian inspection, it can be hypothesized that this stylistic

element would suggest their “Christianity”. The most ornate carvings appear most frequently marking the entrance to the main sitting room, but ornamental painting of figures appear on the second floor, where surely Christians did not enter. Is it as likely that there became simply a taste for the carvings, which held no symbolic meaning for Christianity, nor for Islam, something no different than the taste for bright silk clothing that de Zayas ascribes to the Morisco women?<sup>69</sup>

In the psychology of one’s intimate space, we may ask: Who are you when you enter the home? Your identity is defined by the way the house modulates your presence: your transformative entry, your taste of luxury of the patio, and whether you will be invited to sit in the salon or whether you live there, or how gender determines the house circulation (and vice versa). In a culture threatened with expulsion or conversion, the familiarity of the way the house reinforces one’s own beliefs and cultural, social, and religious roles is very important, especially as those break down outside the home. Some traditions became stronger in the Moriscos practice of religion than they had been in Nasrid times, precisely to constitute a sense of unity among the threatened group.<sup>70</sup> Is it not also possible to imagine that the construction of the house would also be expected to reinforce practices felt to be under fire? It is known that masons, an itinerant group frequently targeted by the Inquisition because they often acted as traveling messengers, would silently leave a religious mark, “invisible to those who didn’t look for it,” in a secret place such as the keystone of a vault.<sup>71</sup> The language is more subtle, it communicates to oneself, perhaps, more even than to others, a reassurance of identity. Therefore, we must be able to read the houses both ways: as both receptive and prohibitive, which perhaps also indicates an

identity uncertain of how to change, what to take on, what to keep, and what to reject in the turbulent social atmosphere.

If we consider, as Menocal does, not only the shifting of identities but their concealment, some architectural elements may also be read as subversive or concealing. Surely the placement of screens in front of the forced direct entries to the houses that the Christians ordered may be understood in this way.

De Certeau, who examines more closely the power balances and survival techniques that become significant to the story of the Moriscos, places importance on the work of Bourdieu in his study of the Kabyle house.<sup>72</sup> While Bourdieu's work departs from the theme of the Morisco house in that it was a living ethnographic study, de Certeau points out that the ethnography becomes also highly theoretical, with the dwelling inverted or interiorized to represent Bourdieu's model of the *habitus*, which "provides the basis for explaining a society in relationship to structures."<sup>73</sup> But the application to the Morisco house is to understand the shift, as architecture becomes a means of covert maneuvers, completing the circle from the "constructed model (the structure) to an assumed reality (the *habitus*)... to an interpretation of *observed* facts (strategies and conjunctures.)"<sup>74</sup> In this theory we can recognize the Morisco house as built; as identified with by its Morisco inhabitants; and as seen by the Christian Other. This cycle becomes important as the questions of the acculturated Morisco culture intersect with the analysis of its products of dwelling, as it is suspended in the fluid of uncertain identities: the Self and Other of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Old Christians and New Christians. As the subordinate culture, in an effort to retain identity, the Moriscos had to be subversive under the dominant Christian culture. Because of strictures about display of public practices and public buildings, domestic

architecture became the most important stage for the subversion of the system. Here the Moriscos had the privacy to express their identity, and even as the Christian panoptic gaze forced open their houses by making laws that doors be opened on feast and wedding days to be certain no “Islamic” practices were entertained, to the demand that the traditional indirect entrance be architecturally modified to allow a straight view into the Moriscos' homes; the Moriscos were still able to subvert the dominant culture through other architectural acts—as the assumed reality led way to the interpretation of the observed facts (or strategies and conjunctures). In this way, the house was neutral, but what the Moriscos understood it to be was not what the Christians saw.

If one can regard the concealed identities of the Moriscos as ‘spirits’ in a sense, consider de Certeau’s statement, “There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can ‘invoke’ or not.”<sup>75</sup> The Christians’ gaze sought to totalize and engulf the privacy of the Morisco home. But de Certeau says that “[h]aunted places invert the schema of the Panopticon.”<sup>76</sup> Ultimately architectural methods became the means of preserving an identity that was threatened; maintaining the interior image of the Morisco house was part of the subversion of continuing to live in the Christian dominated society. Although the houses were altered, doors and windows ordered opened, Moriscos continued to operate as a subordinate group, but as Certeau describes, subverted the order by pretending to follow rules they weren’t really following, through architecture as well as ritual and performed acts.



## 7. Conclusions

In what is both a hypothetical conclusion to the end of the Islamic period in Spain and a questioning of the modern Spanish nationalism that developed, Menocal provocatively asks “Does poetry—or language or philosophy or music or architecture, even that of our temples—really need to dance to the same tune as our political beliefs or our religious convictions? Is the strict harmony of our cultural identities a virtue to be valued above others that may come from the accommodation of contradictions?”<sup>77</sup> Clearly she feels that other, more tolerant forms of interaction were available, but lost; but at the same time she directs the question to the contemporary world as we remain confused about the nature of cultural identity and how to react to it and understand it.

It is difficult to examine the architecture of a 70 year period when enormous social and political changes were brewing and creating numerous and varied effects in the social system of Granada at that time. Although we see a number of changes in the residential architecture of the Moriscos, we must acknowledge the possibility that architecture, which takes some time to create, may have not kept up directly with the pace of other societal changes. It may not be possible to examine a specific element of the house and know with certainty that it evolved due to increasing Christian pressures. What we do know is that all groups living in Granada at the time were descended from a worldview that was created from a centuries long process of acculturation, where although group identification—with religions in particular—was strong, many features of culture had long crossed boundaries and were accepted as part of everyday life, such as clothing, writing, public interaction, and even architectural styles. With the inability to directly relate the more outstanding changes to the Morisco houses such as the figured corbels, to

either a new creation on the part of the Moriscos, or a small influence of Christian architecture that crept in to their houses, it is worthy to ask whether this ambiguity itself is not the answer to our questions of identity, whether it does not reflect the nature of the time itself : confusion, swift changes, the forced taking on of the trappings of Christianity. The Moriscos were building houses at the same time that the Christian authorities were sequentially creating laws to limit the freedoms of the Moriscos, sequentially making more elaborate efforts to create “true” conversions, and at the same time threatening them continually with expulsion if they did not comply. What adds to the psychological crisis that must have been felt by the Moriscos in this period was the fact that the laws were inconsistently applied, and they often negotiated to their benefit, so a tremendous amount of uncertainty ruled the day.

Therefore, to give an architectural analysis of these houses, one might see them as the result of years of acculturation, the attempt to retain traditions, but also the result of a blended and uncertain visual culture of Christian and Islamic elements, which is extremely important to understand in this analysis. Years of Mudéjar building and cross cultural visual cues may have broken down the *visual* distinctions between the artistic works of the groups. What we may read today as being definitely a Christian influence in the Mannerist carving of a boy’s head on the corbel of a Morisco house, may not have had this meaning to the original inhabitant. What it does suggest, however, is the confusion of the time period under the exponentially increasing of insistence of difference based on religion, as mounted by the Spanish Christians from the taking of Granada to the Inquisition. Where differences may not have always been a source of conflict, they became, over a period of 70 years, the most important issue. Cardailiac

states, “It seems that during the modern epoch, the Spanish always needed an enemy, real or supposed, to affirm themselves as a nation against an [O]ther. And this enemy was always felt to be religious as well as political.”<sup>78</sup> In Spain’s first efforts at establishing a modern national identity, one that considered unity of religious ideology essential—not to mention the mania of the *limpieza de sangre* ideology—years of acculturation and its legacy were thrown upside down, a fact that had to create a social crisis for the hundreds of families who were suddenly faced with two options: convert or leave. The Moriscos, the first group who opted to convert, at least in name, to remain in their homes, faced political battles for the next 70 years as they attempted to retain their identity in face of the Christians who wished to transform or eradicate it.

Phenomenology is not a hard science, but it is a valid means of inquiry into this particular architectural study. there are many cases in architectural history of “in between” moments, where one style has clearly ended but another definitive style has not yet emerged. Perhaps in all cases this is reflective of a confusion of collective identity, and in these cases the phenomenologist’s view of reality as filtered through human perception enriches the understanding of a seemingly ‘unlocated’ architecture. In the case of the Moriscos, they were caught between two more distinct identities: that of Muslim and Christian, and during this 70 year period they not only underwent a shifting trajectory of identity change, but most importantly to this study, they *built* during this time. It is very valuable to investigate their architecture created under this period of duress and ambiguity. It seems appropriate, rather than surprising, that the architecture itself reveals varied influences, unclear stylistic elements, and themes of transition and loss. It also

does not seem surprising that the identity they were lurching towards, whether out of choice or circumstance, should also start to appear tentatively in their architecture.

Therefore I believe it is important to understand the examples of the Morisco house as one of the transitional phases of architectural design, and valid to examine the questions of why there are 'in between' types rather than to ignore them and concentrate only on the definitive moments in architectural history, where building elements, styles, and monuments line up clearly with the social historical milieu that produces them. Sometimes even a lack of immediate clarity may be as important in understanding human history and its built environment as those favored architectural embodiments of a zeitgeist which are so often the focus of architectural historiography.

Dominance of certain cultural groups and subversive reactions also inform the making of architecture, as well as remain a relevant theme in the construction (or splitting) of identity. The shifts in power balance following the Reconquest in Spain caused hybrid identities to reorganize, perhaps as new hybrid identities, and led to an era of excessive force confronted by submission, retreat, or subversion. Perhaps these elements even combined in the Moriscos' reaction to the Catholic Monarchy. As the Spanish constructed their own new identity both as a modern nation and a purely Catholic entity, the Moriscos were left to sort out the remains of their former identities and ultimately, suffered the expulsion and diaspora. Visual culture, also previously hybridized, was fractured as well by this inversion of power, leading to an era of Christian architecture strangely influenced still by an Islamic idiom, while beginning to draw elements from Italy. The remaining "Muslim" architecture, reduced to the Morisco houses, may be retrospectively understood as a representation of those events, the people who witnessed

them, and their own efforts to make sense of their lifetimes as they built their homes around them.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 3 ed. (Orion Press, 1958, 1964). p. xxxii. This question summarizes this study in Bachelard's typically evocative manner of speaking, and I would like to place it in the mind of the reader while exploring the evidence of Morisco domestic space, its temporal and physical disappearance, and its reconstruction through interpretive analysis as well as through actual acts of reconstruction enacted in Spain today led by the School of Arab Studies and other Spanish cultural societies.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. In particular the ideas are drawn from the chapters "The House, From Cellar to Garret, The Significance of the Hut", "House and Universe", and "The Dialectics of Inside and Outside".

<sup>3</sup> Thomas F. Glick, and Oriol Pi-Sunyer, "Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11, no. 2 (1969).

<sup>4</sup> Rodrigo de Zayas, *Les Morisques et le racisme d'État* (Paris: ELA La Différence, 1992). 197

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 195

<sup>6</sup> See Julio Navarro Palazón, ed., *Casas y Palacios de al-Andalus* (Madrid: Lunwerg Editores, 1995). 38; and Rafael López Guzmán, "El Albayzin Morisco," *Cuadernos de Arte de la Universidad de Granada XVII* (1985-86). 251-252.

<sup>7</sup> To understand this method, see Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. The theories expressed in these essays will be elaborated in the analyses presented later in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> This information comes from my discussions with Antonio Orihuela Uzal, of the Escuela de Estudios Árabes in Granada, who is currently researching Morisco houses. At this time, his work represents the most specific focus on the architecture of Morisco houses; he is currently in the process of documenting them with architectural drawings and performing other research for an upcoming publication. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude, as his assistance in my research has been invaluable.

<sup>9</sup> The assertion that culture does not exist, but is a method of falsely organizing experience and persons, is a concept brought to light by discussions in a class on Islamic Historiography taught by Professor Nasser Rabbat at MIT. This provocative statement is, I believe, relevant to a more subtle understanding of acculturation and identity as explored in this paper, and I thank Professor Rabbat for introducing me to this viewpoint.

<sup>10</sup> See Derrida, multiple publications, on the examination and the meaning of the trace.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Vincent, "Ser Morisco en España en el Siglo XVI," in *El Saber en Al-Andalus: Textos y Estudios II*, ed. Julia Maria Carabaza Bravo, and Aly Tawfik Mohamed Essawy (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla and Fundación el Monte, 1999). 302

<sup>12</sup> Antonio and Alfonso Gámir Sandoval Gallego Burin, *Los Moriscos del Reino de Granada Según el Síndico de Guadix de 1554* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1996). See several mentions of "new Christians" as a group that does not distinguish their Muslim or Jewish roots.

<sup>13</sup> Américo Castro, *The Structure of Spanish History*, trans. Edmund L. King (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1954). In this volume as well as many others by later Spanish historians, the meaning of the legacy of the mixed Muslim and Christianity continued to be debated and explored throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>14</sup> de Zayas, *Les Morisques et le racisme*. 194-95

<sup>15</sup> Maria Rosa Menocal, *The ornament of the world: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2002). See *Epilogue: Andalusian Shards*, pp. 266-281 for Menocal's views on cultural tolerance in medieval Spain.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 244. Menocal draws this quote from chapter 6 of the Agreements of Capitulation of the City of Granada.

<sup>17</sup> Louis Cardaillac and Jean-Pierre Dedieu, "Introduction a l'histoire des morisques," in *Les Morisques et L'Inquisition*, ed. Louis Cardaillac (Paris: Publisud, 1990). 17

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 16

<sup>19</sup> de Zayas, *Les Morisques et le racisme*. 199

<sup>20</sup> Cardaillac and Dedieu, "Introduction a l'histoire des morisques." 15

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 17

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 17 “Les morisques s’offraient, plus visibles, plus évidemment différents, pour entretenir des sentiments de crainte plus faciles à enraciner dans les détails concrets de la vie de tous les jours.”

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 19

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 21

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 20-21

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 21

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 21

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 22

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 15

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 19

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 22-23

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 24

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 25

<sup>34</sup> For information on identity, architectural form, and the Umayyads in the early centuries of Islamic Iberia, see Glair D. Anderson, "Identity and the Transplanted Dynasty: The Country Estates of Umayyad Cordoba," *Chicago Art Journal* (2003). See also Jerrilynn D. Dodds, *Architecture and ideology in early medieval Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), Menocal, *The ornament of the world: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain*.

<sup>35</sup> López Guzmán, "El Albayzin Morisco." 251

<sup>36</sup> Antonio Orihuela Uzal, "La Casa Morisca Granadina, Último Refugio de la Cultura Andalusí," *VIII Simposio Internacional de Mudejarismo: De mudéjares a moriscos: una conversión forzada 2* (2002). 753

<sup>37</sup> López Guzmán, "El Albayzin Morisco." 251

<sup>38</sup> The following descriptions of characteristics common to Nasrid houses are largely drawn from formulae developed by Antonio Orihuela Uzal, *Casas y palacios nazaries siglos XIII-XV* (Barcelona and Madrid: Lunberg, 1995). See pages 23-38.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 37

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 38

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 38

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 40

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 38 There are two points to be made here. The Mudéjar period, in a strict sense, lasted only 8 years in Granada. This refers to a time when stylistic exchange between Muslim and Christian builders flourished; however the religious conversions that created the Morisco population is considered the point at which Mudéjar ended in Granada. The time periods for Mudéjar exchange varied throughout Spain, and even current scholars use the term very loosely to describe any kind of building with both Christian and Islamic influences over quite a long period of time, including Christian architecture built after the expulsion. Secondly, it is intriguing to note that Orihuela here identifies these formal changes with the Christian conquest, when the *pies derechos* were to become distinguishingly representative of the Morisco houses. I believe this indicates ambivalence about the exact origins of the building techniques emerging at the time.

<sup>44</sup> López Guzmán, "El Albayzin Morisco." 247. “El Albayzin tras la caída de Granada va a sufrir un proceso de aislamiento que, a la postre, reducirá a nivel de ghetto a los moriscos.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 251. This essay is the primary source for description of the Morisco house form and structure, so much of the material comes from it. Specific points and quotes will be cited.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 252

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 252

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 252

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 251-52. The author makes several references throughout the essay on the possible influences of Morisco architecture on the Christian houses. While cultural exchange and reciprocity of styles are central to this study, my attempt is to understand why the Moriscos developed these particular forms at a specific point in time, prior to the filtering of the form to the Christians.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 253

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 253

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 253

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 253

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 254

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- <sup>55</sup> Ibid. 255
- <sup>56</sup> Orihuela Uzal, "La Casa Morisca Granadina, Último Refugio de la Cultura Andalusi." 753-755.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid. 755-766.
- <sup>58</sup> In conversation.
- <sup>59</sup> As mentioned by Orihuela in conversation.
- <sup>60</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*. 247
- <sup>61</sup> Claudio Sanchez-Albornoz, *De la Andalucía islámica a la de hoy* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1983). Sanchez-Albornoz, known as the antithesis to the historiography of Américo Castro, allowed in his writing of history the presence of the Muslims, but expounded a theory of an unchanging Spanishness from Roman times that existed alongside the Muslims and ultimately prevailed. He would be ultimately opposed to the idea of acculturation and to the synthetic thinking of Castro.
- <sup>62</sup> Glick, "Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History." 144.
- <sup>63</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. 4
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid. 3
- <sup>65</sup> López Guzmán, "El Albayzin Morisco." 251.
- <sup>66</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. 5
- <sup>67</sup> Menocal, *The ornament of the world : How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain*. On disguising identities, see chapter "Somewhere in La Mancha" pp 253-265.
- <sup>68</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. 8.
- <sup>69</sup> de Zayas, *Les Morisques et le racisme*. 198.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid. 199
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid. 206
- <sup>72</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984). 50-60.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid. 58
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid. 58
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid. 108
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid. 108
- <sup>77</sup> Menocal, *The ornament of the world : How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain*. 277
- <sup>78</sup> Cardaillac and Dedieu, "Introduction a l'histoire des morisques." 17 "Il semble qu'à l'époque moderne les Espagnols aient besoin en permanence d'un ennemi, réel ou supposé, pour s'affirmer contre lui en tant que nation. Et que cet ennemi ait toujours été ressenti comme religieux autant que politique."

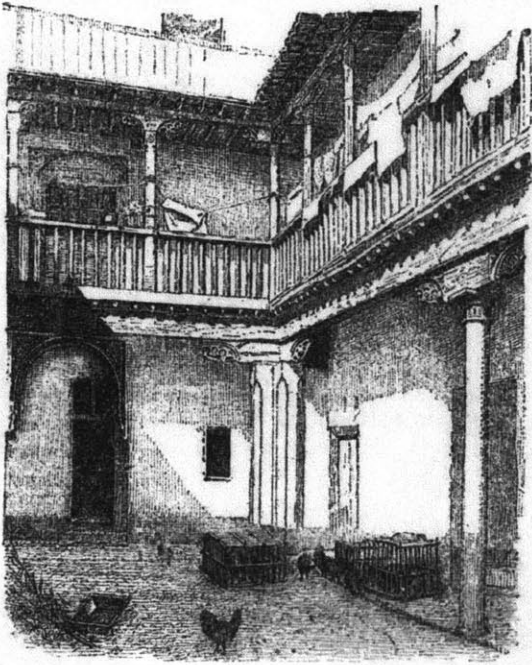
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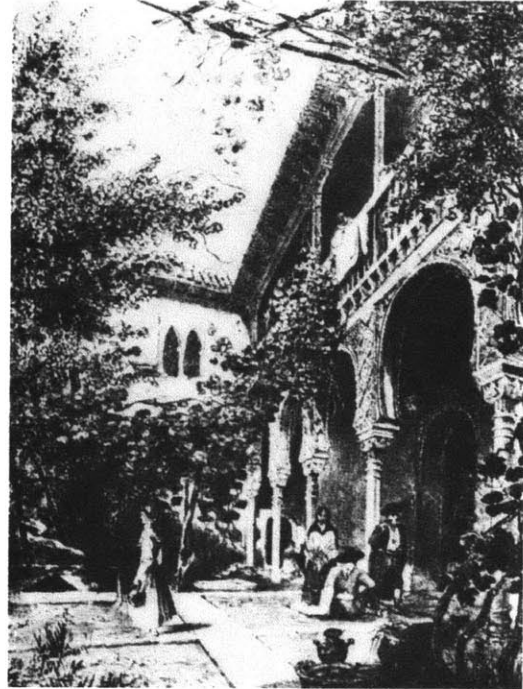
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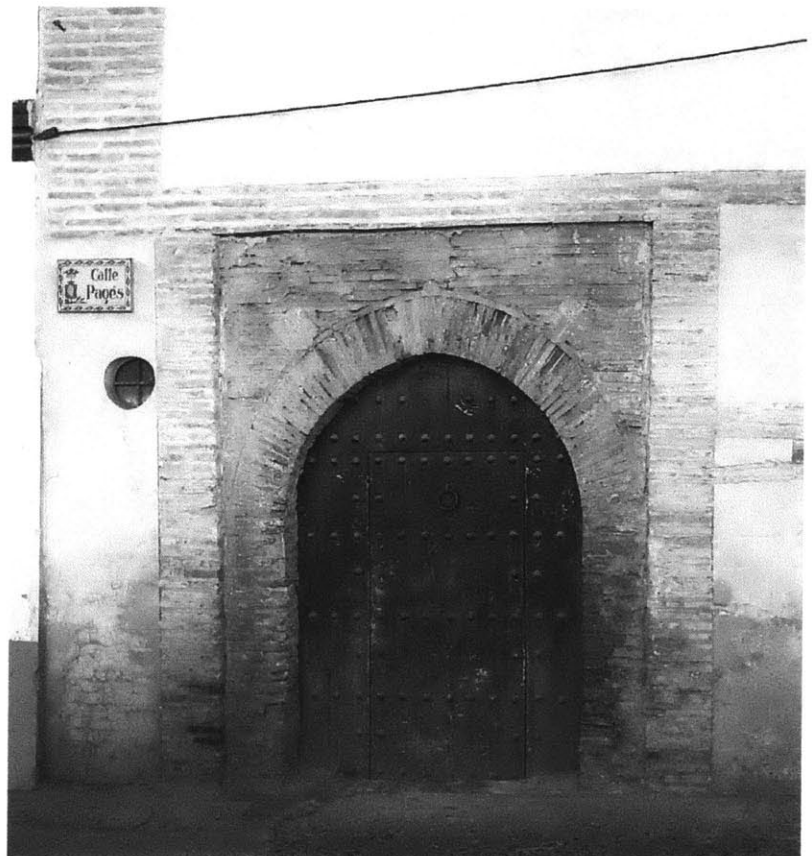
**Figures**



*Figure 1. Late 19th century view of the Casas del Chapiz*



*Figure 2. Early view of patio of the Casas del Chapiz*

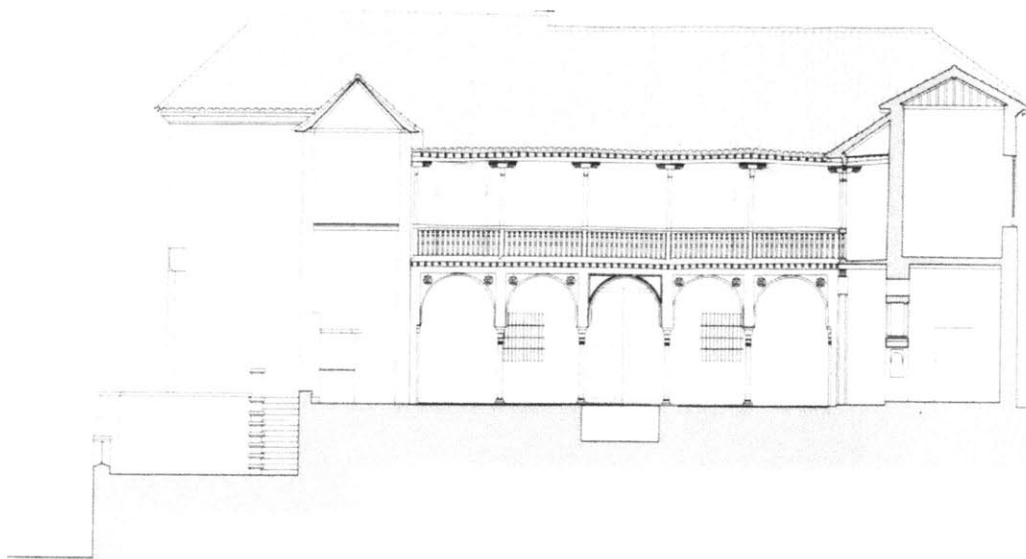


*Figure 3. Typical Morisco doorway in brick with pointed arch, at Calle Pages*





*Figure 4. Patio of rear house of the Casas del Chapiz. Note the five arches..*



*Figure 5. Section through patio of rear house of Casas del Chapiz*





*Figure 6. Wooden gallery supported by brick column. Note ornate carvings.*



*Figure 7. Vanos windows over the door to the main salon*



*Figure 8. Vanos windows, plaster carved arch, and brick columns*





*Figure 9. Example of wooden balustrade, columns and corbels with ornate carving*



*Figure 10. Another example of carpentry in the galleries*







*Figure 10. View of masonry support elements and wooden balustrade with carved corbels*

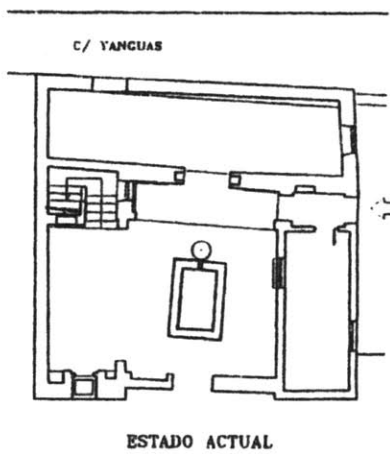
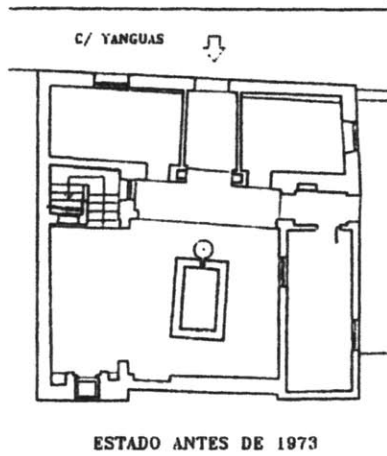


*Figure 11. Columns, corbels, and tiled roof*





Figure 13. Woodwork of the ceiling



CASA C/YANCUAS, 2: PLANTA BAJA  
 ESCUELA DE ESTUDIOS ARABES (C.S.I.C.) A. ORIHUELA, arqto.

Figure 14. An example of a direct entry restored to its assumed original indirect access



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Figure 1. From Manuel Gómez-Moreno Gonzalez, *Guía de Granada* (Granada: Indalecio Ventura, 1892).

Figure 2. From Antonio Gallego Burin and Alfonso Gámir Sandoval , *Los Moriscos del Reino de Granada Según el Sínodo de Guadix de 1554* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1996).

Figure 3. Photo by author.

Figure 4. From Julio Navarro Palazón, ed., *Casas y Palacios de al-Andalus* (Madrid: Lunweg Editores, 1995).

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