YOLANDA AIXELA CABRE

Muslims in Spain. The Case of Maghrebis in Alicante[1]

Abstract:

The aim of this article is to describe the social networks of the Maghrebis in Alicante, some of the problems they face in their daily life, and the role played by the "mosque" as a place not only of prayer but also of mutual help and support. At the same time, the analysis shows that Islamophobia has increased in the city, as it has done in other places in Spain and Europe following the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks, with the resulting rejection of the Maghrebis clearly seen in their relationship with local inhabitants and in some of the local authorities' political decisions.

"Islam has definitely passed over to the West"
O. Roy (2003:13)



Yolanda Aixela Cabre
Lecturer at the University of Alicante.
Author of the books:
Género y Antropología Social (2005), El Magrib del segle XXI (2002) and Mujeres en Marruecos (2000). She organized o the following exhibitions (all with cathalog): "Amazighs. Berber Jewels" (2005), "Barcelona, Cultural Mosaic" (2000), "Alí Bey, a Pilgrim in an Islamic Land" (1996), and "The Rif, the other West. A Moroccan culture" (1995).

Key words:
Maghrebi migration, Muslims in Spain, Islamphobia, the Maghrebis

Maghrebis, as perceived by the Spanish

The Maghrebis are becoming one of the most numerous groups in Spain (López García, 1996; López García et al, 2004)[2] but their fusion in the Spanish society is more difficult than that of other migrant groups. There are many reasons for this, but, basically, they come down to the disagreement between Islam and the West[3], in this case illustrated by the controversial relations between the Maghrebis and the Spaniards throughot the recent centuries. Martín Corrales (2002:247) analyzed these with great clarity in his excellent, graphic review of the image of the Maghrebis in Spain over a period of five centuries and declared that "...from an analysis of most of the Spanish bibliography dealing with Hispano-Maghrebi relations, there is no doubt that the image the Spaniards had of the others (in this case, the Moroccans) between the 16th and 20th centuries was mainly negative. This is shown by the fact that stereotypes and clichés coined throughout the centuries are still with us today" and he adds that "it is thus necessary to reveal and, at the same time, neutralize the history of the construction of the image of Moroccans in Spain at the beginning of the 21st century"[4].

Indeed, the disagreement between Spain and the Maghreb has developed over twelve centuries, a period in which the image of the North Africans in our country has systematically become "blackened" (Martín Corrales, 2002:244). This was also verified by Moreras (1999) in his pioneering study on the Muslims in Barcelona and, later, by

Lacomba (2001) in the case of Valencia. In Moreras's view "both are culturally and socially homogeneous entities which history does not seem to have changed... their own definition is formulated based on the negation of their diverse alternatives" (Moreras, 1999:11). Therefore, the Maghrebi migrants may be said to have a socio-cultural representation in Spain that goes way back and is legitimized in their common history[5]. Bartra (1996) and Kilani (2000, 2003) pointed out that the construction of the "other" is always historical and interiorized in our collective imaginations.

The specificity of Hispano-Maghrebi relations is part of the rejection towards Muslims to be found in Europe:

"The image that Europe has of Islam comes from a long history profoundly rooted in every European country's encounter and/or clashes with Muslim countries... These cultural images, then, maintain a certain plausibility and a sort of cultural inertia, even now that, factually, the situation has completely changed due to the immigration and settlement of individuals of Muslim origin –and then families, groups, and communities- in European countries"[6].

This tense relation in the West has been exacerbated by the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in New York[7], March 11, 2004, in Madrid and July 7, 2005, in London. For many, these attacks are solid grounds for denouncing that Muslims are a potential threat and that their values are incompatible with those of Western society[8]. Larson (2005:29) pointed out the impact and implications that 9/11 has had for Muslims in numerous countries: "Most, if not all, Muslim communities in the West were directly or indirectly affected by the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001... For example, after 9/11 Muslims in Sweden became the victims and targets of growing ant-Muslim and Islamophobic attitudes and behaviour"[9]. Suleiman (2006:9) had also made a similar exercise in the case of North America: "However, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks by Muslim Arab extremists, prejudice and discrimination against "Arabs" in the United States intensified greatly"[10]. In Spain, the attack on March 11 in Madrid intensified the negative image of the Maghrebis even more because, although some of the victims were North African immigrants, most of the terrorists were Maghrebis, which has increased the rejection and fear felt towards people from this region.

Another important aspect that distorts the perception of the Maghrebis in Spain and Europe should be mentioned: the fear of the consolidation of a supranational identity, based on Islam, and created separately from the national identity of the country on which it is established.

This idea of the "risk" that Muslims apparently represent has been criticised by some social scientists such as Roy (2003), Kilani (2000, 2003), Amselle (1997), or Taguieff (1995), since they consider that this type of discourse should not be encouraged because it could, on the one hand, lead to xenophobia and social exclusion, and on the other, foment the defence of Islam as a paradigmatic identity. Baumann (2002) also analyzed the discourse used by States and by dominant groups in their contempt of immigrants, in particular that of Western logic and hierarchical subordination. These appeared as the most perverse, sophisticated forms of looking down on others while, at the same time, reinforced one's own identity[11]. Islamophobia[12] is not just a form of rejection that might result in violence, it is the cause of most of the negative cultural images of Muslims generated and activated in daily life. Islam may thus appear as an opportunity to recompose an identity and as a rebel for all those who feel unprotected or not represented by their new State. Amiraux (2003) pointed out that many Arab-Muslim women in France

(some of whom had obtained French nationality or were daughters of nationalized immigrants) have began to use the veil in public in response to criticism of the Muslim identity[13].

At the same time, Islamic networks are characterised by transnationality[14] and a virtual Muslim community has even been created on the Internet. An example of this would be the Sufi neo-brotherhoods, that of the Muslim Brothers or Al-Qaeda itself. Roy (2003:205) believes that "the new forms of expression of Islam are closely linked to globalization, especially as regards reformulation of the traditional fundamentalism".

These questions acquire even greater significance when we consider that there are twelve million Muslims living in Europe; as Al-Shahi and Lawless (2003:100) explain:

At the beginning of the new millennium over seven million people of Middle East and North African background were legally resident in the 15 member states of the EU, together with Switzerland and Norway, about two per cent of the total population. Most of them were Muslims, and they constituted over half of the estimated 12 million people of Muslim culture living in Western Europe. Not all of them were immigrants; a growing proportion was born in Europe to immigrant parents, the so-called "second generation". Indeed, in some countries, a third generation had emerged. Not all of them were foreigners....

The size of this "minority" is crucial to legitimize their vindications: many wish to increase the visibility of Islam, while, at the same time, the wish to maintain their religious practices with the construction of mosques and Islamic places of worship. According to Roy (2003), nowadays, Europe is also Muslim. Hence, the Islam-West conflict, the historical Hispano-Maghrebi disagreement, the exclusive identity discourse, and the tension caused by the supranationality and transnationality of Islamic immigration form the basis of an Islamophobia that is extending throughout the West. As we shall see, it is also present in Alicante: it is subtle and silent but categorical when attempting to dismantle the emblem that reinforces the Muslim collective solidarity and community unity – the mosque.

Maghrebis in Alicante[15]

The ties between the Maghreb and Alicante have been particularly close in the case of Algeria, since the relations between the two dates back to the late 19th and early 20th century, when some Valencians emigrated to work in the Algerian agricultural exploitations or as servants of other Spaniards or Europeans (Monjo and Menages, 2007; Bonmatí, 1992). The independence of Algeria in 1962 saw the return of a large number of these Valencians to Alicante and also the start of Algerian migration to Europe, especially France. A large number of people migrated in the 60s and 70s, and migration has continued somewhat sporadically up to the present day. A tiny number of these migrants moved to Alicante[16].

The Algerian community was the largest immigrant group in the city up to the 80s, although, paradoxically, there was no Algerian registered in the Alicante's municipal census in 1980. In the opinion of Gómez Gil (2006:16) this was due to the high degree of social exclusion of these immigrants in the city even at that time. The early presence of Algerians in Alicante is closely related to the existence of the ferry to Oran, which facilitates a constant flow of people and merchandise. As Sempere tells us (2000:112):

"Algeria and Alicante have maintained very close relations for many years due to the ferry service connecting them. The Algerians nowadays, and the French before Independence (1962), have made up a considerable part of the population of this city in recent centuries". Subsequently, in the late 70s and early 80s, Moroccans began to settle here and found unstable seasonal agricultural work (López García, 1996). In 2004 (the year of the last available census), there were 2,179 Algerians and 2,129 Moroccans registered in Alicante, 6.9% and 6.7% of the total migrant population respectively (Gómez Gil, 2005)[17].

Some comments should be made on the specific characteristics of Maghrebis as compared with those of other immigrants from Europe, Latin America, or sub-Saharan Africa. The Maghrebis in Alicante are a very visible group for the rest of the population. They have their own particular way of dressing - especially the women - with the jellaba and the hiyab, and wear beards; they observe strict dietary rules (for example, the prohibition on the consumption of pork or alcohol); they celebrate certain festivals as a community (such as the most important days of Ramadan) while the faithful constantly practice their religion at the "mosque" (especially on Fridays)[18]. These clearly distinguishable aspects make the cultural specificities of the Maghrebis very explicit compared with those of the rest of the population. Since these aspects are visibly manifested in their daily life, they prevent an anonymity that is essential to favour multicultural intermingling in urban areas. Thus, the indifference towards migrants or "others", which in general is crucial to guarantee their fusion in the new context, is made more difficult[19].

It is generally believed that the ideological, religious, and cultural determinants of migrants influence their chances of promotion in the new context[20]. In this respect, there are certain differences among the Maghrebis themselves, especially between the Algerians and Moroccans. The Algerians migrate for socio-political reasons, whereas the Moroccans do so for economic reasons. *Latifa*[21] is one of those who left her country to get away from the violence after the Civil War[22]: "I am very happy to be here since my country is in a mess. The war!!!...In Algeria there are no opportunities for young people... Here the future is better, I have my family and for the moment we intend to stay here ".The Algerian migrants are better qualified than their Moroccan counterpart, which is explained by the fact that schooling is provided throughout Algeria. However, education is not sufficient to give them access to better jobs; the work they do is as low-paid as that of Moroccans. *Aisha* is an exception[23]. She finished her studies here in Alicante and now has a good, skilled job (cultural mediator): "It was a big effort... Now, I'm appreciated, they are very happy with me and I am pleased because they appreciate what I am worth".

Regarding the employment situation of the Maghrebi migrants in Alicante, there are two types of activities that they do: activities carried out in the formal economy and those belonging to the informal economy. Jobs in retailing, catering and to a lesser extent construction are included in the former, whereas agricultural and building work and street vending form part of the latter. Many migrants describe the difficulties encountered in setting up a business or simply finding a decent job. Of course, after eventually finding a proper job and an employment contract, many families try to regroup, as Latifa tells us: "My son works in Alicante.... He's married. He was the one who brought me and all his sisters and brothers. His father didn't want to come". However, not everyone is as lucky as Latifa's son. *Abdalaziz*[24] explains how it is impossible for him to

regroup his family: "How am I going to bring my family here if I don't even have a place to live!!! What's worse is that I'd need 1,500 euros to bring my wife here and I haven't got any money. I've got enough to do to keep the restaurant going"[25].

Social perception of the Maghrebis: the increase in Islamophobia in Alicante

There are many factors that indicate an increase in Islamophobia in Alicante. Rejection is seen in everyday life but also, specifically, in certain actions of the local authorities or in other sectors of the city. Some of these situations have been reported by Sempere (2000) and Gómez Gil (2005, 2006).

Sempere (2000:112) relates how the town council thwarted the establishment of the Alicante-Nador shipping route in 1990 because they considered that there was already sufficient movement of Maghrebi migrants in the city; or how, later on, it decided to move the Alicante-Oran ship terminus to the new port area to the west in order to make it more difficult for Algerians to move around the centre of the city. According to Sempere (2000:118), these decisions were influenced by the general mistrust towards the Maghrebis and by the incidents and minor offences committed by them that reinforced the negative stereotype of the "Moors" among the population.

Gómez Gil (2005) draws our attention to the criminalization campaigns carried out against the Maghrebis by the town council of Alicante, as well as by some of the economic sectors and media between 1992 and 1999. He also mentions the substitution of the Maghrebi labour by the Latin American labour after 2002 due to the reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, March 11, and July 7. Mohamed[26] describes the changes that have taken place in recent years: "Before 1995, everything was fine here, but now things are bad. There's no work, nobody will give us a job. If you're from Ecuador or Latin America there's no problem but we are Moors... In 2002 many Algerian shops suddenly closed down. Now they're starting to open again". Mohamed also explains his situation and that of others who, after finding employment and bringing their families to Alicante, encountered some serious social problems:

How do they expect people not to steal if there's no work and we have nothing to do, and on top of that nobody will rent us accommodation so we have to pay 30 euros a night to stay in a hostel!!.... Some can manage like that but I've got a family and I need a house. Before, we lived in a building that belonged to an Algerian who didn't charge us any rent. Seventeen of us lived there free for a year. But now the owner needs it and he gave us a month's notice. In the end I found a flat but they wanted a deposit of 2000 euros!!! I'll show you the contract....It's a disgrace. And it was unfurnished. The first ten days I had no electricity or water. Now we just have a TV and a mattress!.

And with respect to his children's education Mohamed adds:

"They wouldn't take my son at the school. He's two and a half years old and even though Spanish children get a place immediately, they gave us an appointment in two months' time. Two months!!! They don't want us!!! What can I do?!... Well, take my son to the mosque where they look after our children when we can't find a school for them!!!."

Abdalaziz also explains that it was much better in Germany than in Spain because

at least they didn't deny them the basic services:

"In Germany I lived very well, I was a manager at one of the McDonalds. Germany is said to be racist but there I had access to all the welfare benefits, healthcare - you could rent a flat simply by making a telephone call, everything was easy. But Spain is very racist. Nobody will rent us a house or anything. Here, opposite the restaurant there was a flat to rent and when I went to ask about it the owner smiled at me and said that she'd decided not to rent it because one of her sons needed it. Then it turned out that she rented it to a foreigner! I can remember how she smiled at me!."

In addition, the local inhabitants tend to perceive the Maghrebis in a homogeneous way, and fail to distinguish between different nationalities or ethnic groups and the problems they face in their country of origin. In general, they are referred to with the derogatory term the "Moors" and only exceptionally are they called "Arabs", "Muslims" or "Maghrebis". Social rejection is widespread throughout society and is expressed in frequent acts of Islamophobia in every day life . In this respect, Mohamed explains: "They call us "bloody Moors". The police also treat us very badly, for them we are "those Moors". They say to us "Moor, why don't you go back to your own country". They reject us because we are Arabs....They treat us like thieves. They say –Moor, you can't work here...". *Ahmed*[28] also feels that the way in which they are perceived does not favour their insertion in society or in the labour market: "Yes, it's true, we have a lot of problems here with the people and with the police". Ahmed's opinion is shared by Abdalaziz: "I feel rejected. How am I going to integrate if they don't give me anything, not even a flat, and what's more they treat me badly... How am I not going to feel hurt? They leave us no alternative other than Arab people!! It's impossible for us to integrate!!!". The social rejection is shown in the isolation mixed marriages have to endure. *Salima*[29], for example, complains about the lack of support from her family: "...when I married him I lost part of my family: my father said –you're going to marry a Moor!!! You're going from bad to worse!! I don't want to know anything about it".

These accounts are not anecdotal and clearly illustrate the difficult integration of the Maghrebi national (Algerian or Moroccan), ethnic (Arab or Berber) and religious (Islam) identity with the national (Spanish) and religious (Catholic) identity of a large part of the population of Alicante[30]. However, the rejection in Alicante is focussed on the religious aspect as shown by the closure of the "mosque" in December 2005[31].

The social exclusion of the Maghrebis favours the establishment of community ties whereby the solidarity of groups of Muslims resolves numerous problems that arise in daily life, thus mitigating the social discrimination in which they find themselves. For example, Salima became isolated from her socio-familial setting when she married an Algerian and converted to Islam: "Some of my family, including my brother, say that I'm dead and they don't want anything to do with me. The same happened with my friends: I've lost them all except the one who was a true friend. I'm still the same person, I haven't changed at all, I don't understand why they treat me like this".

For many years, a place of mutual help and contact with the rest of the community has been the Centro Cultural Islámico de Alicante or "the mosque" in Alicante[32], especially up to its closure in December 2005, and then again later when its activities were renewed. The work done by *Abdel*[33] in this respect, both in the past and nowadays, is remarkable since he has attempted to activate solidarity networks, while, at the same time, he has criticised certain attitudes towards the Maghrebis or "others" and he

has demystified some cultural presumptions: "All sorts of people come to me– the local authorities, the police, the press, etc. I speak with all of them and try to help them ".

Another factor that influences the significant rejection of the Maghrebis is their attire. Many Maghrebi women wear the jellaba and the veil (hiyab). The veil is particularly controversial since in Europe it symbolizes the subordination of Arab-Muslim women and affirms identity by making Islam visible in new contexts[34]. *Merien*[35] describes the suspicion use of the veil causes among the rest of the population: "I always go around with a scarf on my head and everybody's used to it now. It's true that I started wearing it 5 or 6 years ago and my friends were very surprised but I prefer to wear it...Sometimes, on the street, I hear people make comments because they think that I'm not from here and don't understand what they are saying. Once, someone said very rudely: Look at how she's dressed!! But I don't care. I wear it because I want to and because it says so in the Koran". *Malika* also gave her opinion on this matter[36]: "I don't wear a scarf anymore because I'm ashamed of it. All my friends would think it was strange because they're not used to see me wearing it. But I'd like to wear it and one of these days I'll put it on and I won't take it off. I'd prefer to wear it but I'm still not ready. I know that it will mean social rejection and for that reason I don't' wear it".

Finally, it should be pointed out that this group's image is becoming even more distorted due to the media in general and the press in particular[37]: the news reports and articles published give a biased, negative image that induces society to marginalize and criminalize the Maghrebis. They are thus excluded from the possibility of integrating, which would help reduce their differences as compared with the local identities.

Rejection of the "mosque" in Alicante

The first attempt to create a Muslim association and a mosque in Alicante dates back to 1987, but the lack of quorum in the Muslim population itself thwarted this initiative. Subsequently, in 1991, agreement was reached giving rise to the Alicante Islamic Community. One of the main objectives was the opening of a mosque for which they obtained financing from Algeria and a convention was signed by Oran and Alicante in which they were given a central plot of land on the condition that the mosque would be built within five years (Gómez Gil, 2005:16). At the end, the mosque was never built[38]. Soon after, the Centro Cultural Islámico de Alicante was opened between the Juan Bautista Lafora and Jovellanos avenues opposite the Postiguet beach, one of the most popular beaches in Alicante. Religious services and other activities were held there. As Jadiya[39] explains the premises had all the basic facilities: "The mosque has everything, a room for women which is also the children's classroom, a room for men, a restaurant, toilets, study rooms...". For example, classes in Arabic are given in the mosque. Abdel tells us how he collaborated altruistically: "I spent several years giving classes on Saturdays to children so that they would learn the Arab language and culture and the Koran. I taught one of the classes in Spanish so that they would learn that language, too". *Jadiya* describes the help she received from the mosque in exchange for giving classes: "My government's grant has not been renewed but luckily since I spend very little and from what I was able to save from my grant together with what the mosque gives me for giving Arabic classes I have enough to get by on". The "mosque" has had a great influence on the daily life of the Maghrebis and has been maintained thanks to the help it receives from the community. As Abdel tells us: "The mosque gets no money at all

from the local authorities. We haven't paid the rent for months because we don't have the money. The mosque is kept going with what believers donate, some months more, other months less, depending on what they can afford".

The relationship between the "mosque" and the Alicante town council had its ups and downs in the 90s, while the order issued by the local authorities to close the premises in July 2001 was a sword hanging over its head. The terrorist attacks of September 11 coincided with the initiation of proceedings and police searches in establishments run by the Maghrebis, which resulted in the closure of around twenty premises: "Then, a political decision was made in response to the pressure exerted by the inhabitants and the tradesmen"[40]. The mayor's office was criticized for ordering the closure of the only mosque right in the middle of the international conflict, and this halted the proceedings for a while. However, on December 17, 2005, the town council implemented the order and closed the "mosque" alleging that it did not have a licence for activities and the safety measures were deficient. The closure provoked the protest of the Muslim community and 300 believers occupied the Postiguet beach on the Friday of that week and they prayed there[41]. This image of the Maghrebis facing Mecca to pray on one of the busiest beaches in Alicante had a great impact on the population and produced immediate effects. That same day the town council promised to provide them with premises in Alicante and, very soon after, gave them the free use of a building on the Pla de la Vallonga industrial estate as a provisional mosque. The building was several kilometres away from the city and had been used previously as a warehouse for containers and street cleaning vehicles. Some members of the Magrebi community complained about the unsanitary conditions of the premises. Meanwhile, the building work being done on the "mosque" (el Centro Cultural Islámico de Alicante) was at a standstill due to the claim brought by the owners' association, Yoraco III, on the grounds that the work "disturbed the neighbours". In September 2006, the work was restarted when the court injunction was removed. During this period, some Maghrebis complained about how they were treated by the town council and the fact the provisional premises were in poor condition and situated outside the town: "I don't think it's the ideal place to worship but there isn't any other"[42].

The services provided by the "mosque" in Alicante before it was closed down were diverse. As Abdel explains,

"in general, they are services rendered to mixed marriages, the local authorities, schools and Spaniards. Couples in mixed marriages come to resolve their marital problems, the local authorities to ask for things...in fact the police also come here very often and they have admitted that since the mosque opened the atmosphere has become much more relaxed and there are fewer conflicts, although this is something they don't acknowledge in public; teachers come because they have a lot of doubts and want to know more about our religion – we have managed to get them to provide special meals for the children in Ramadan and more attention for this group-; the Spaniards also come to find out more about Islam and we advise them on whatever is necessary."

One of the main reasons why the Maghrebi community went to the cultural centre was to pray (just as they did subsequently at the industrial premises). However, it should be mentioned that not all Maghrebis are practicing Muslims. Some explained to us that their partners never go to worship, others go with their spouse and some unmarried Maghrebis attend services once a week. For example, Salima commented that, after converting to Islam, she went to the mosque regularly without her husband:

"I converted and since then I have come to the mosque. My husband never comes and he laughs because I come so often, but I don't care, it's not that he disapproves; it's just that he doesn't care one way or the other and that's that. He stays home watching football. In fact he only goes out if he goes with me. We always go out together. It's good for me to come to the mosque because when I married my husband I lost some of my family..."[43].

The "mosque" has played a fundamental role in welcoming and helping those who arrived recently and also to those who continue to have the same problems as time goes by. Abdel describes the situation:

"We also collect money for people with the greatest problems, especially women, since many come to the mosque and we know that if we don't help them they'll end up prostituting because when you get to a certain limit there's no other option. We also help people return to their country although we are aware of the problems involved because in some cases we've bought them the ticket to return and they've resold it... We have also signed agreements with the Red Cross that gives us food that we distribute among the most needy."

The "mosque" has brought together a large part of the Maghrebi community and put the members in contact. In this respect, Salima says:

"For me, the mosque has been a consolation because, thanks to the fact that I come here, I've found new friends who are in the same situation and we help each other". Jadiya thinks the same: "Until I went to the mosque I hardly knew anybody, but here I've got to know lots of people, I've made lots of friends...I'm very happy."

Mixed marriages are a specific case since they are a little-known, neglected minority. For example, Merien's daughter is such a case :

"My daughter recently got married to a Spaniard who converted to Islam and they are very happy. When her baby was born, she was only a year away from getting a degree, so now my husband, who's retired, and I look after the baby every day so that my daughter can finish her studies."

In short, the controversial "mosque" in Alicante, in addition to being a place of worship, has become a center for resolving socio-cultural differences, a place where mutual understanding and help are available, and conflicts between the Maghrebi community and Alicante society may be settled. As Abdel states: "The majority of the Muslims who come here do so for many reasons, not just to pray. The mosque plays an important role in resolving social problems both for Maghrebis and for the local people".

Conclusions

The objective of this article was, on the one hand, to describe the daily problems and social networks of the Maghrebis in Alicante and, on the other, to analyse the increase in Islamofophia in the city, a phenomenon that may be found in other places in Spain[44] and in Europe[45]. Fortunately, Islamophobia detected is nothing like the xenophobic attacks on migrants that have taken place in recent years in some cities[46]. As we pointed out in the introduction, it is a type of Islamophobia patent in daily life that rel-

egates the Maghrebi migrants to the lowest step on the ladder and prevents them from merging with the rest of the population. Indeed, most of the authors cited in this study have underlined, in different geographical contexts, that the Arab-Muslim group, or in our case, the Maghrebis, are the object of renewed, constant prejudice and discrimination that have intensified following the terrorist attacks of 2001.

It is possible that equality among people of different cultures would require not having a history, in that history reinforces the stereotypes of the collective imagination and cannot avoid the implied hierarchies over the "others". However, one cannot and should not dispense with one's history. Quite the reverse, it is necessary to foment historical and anthropological reviews that enable us to unveil and make cultural differences relative, studies which explain that any image of the other is a cultural construct in a specific time and space (Martín Corrales, 2002, 2004; Said, 2003; Bartra, 1996). Likewise, Baumann (2001) points out that national, ethnic, or religious identity in multicultural contexts are structured from different logics, such as the "orientalist" or that of hierarchical subordination. Revealing these logics allows for an understanding of the sophistication of a discourse that, while reinforcing the receptor culture, weakens the immigrant cultures. These logics of cultural identification have filtered through in the discourses that reinforce the construction of a supranational, transnational Muslim identity that, for many of these excluded migrants, is the only one that offers a desire for integration.

We should perhaps wonder whether "the failure of the model of (migratory) policies is nothing more than the consequence of the failure of the State-nation model for integration, not only of the different ethnic groups but also of a growingly important part of the national population" (Martín Díaz, 2003:181).

References:

AL-SHAHI, Ahmed; LAWLESS, Richard
2003 "Introduction. Middle East and North African Immigrants in Europe". Immigrants and minorities, vol.22, nş.2-3, pp.99-126.

ALI, Kecia
2004 "American Views of Islam, Post 9/11". Islamic Studies, vol.43, nş2, pp.273-292.

ALLIEVI, Stefano
2003 "Sociology of a Newcomer: Muslim migration to Italy. Religious Visibility, Cultural and Political Reactions". Immigrants and minorities, vol.22, nş.2-3, pp.141-154.

AIXELŔ CABRÉ, Yolanda
2000 Mujeres en Marruecos. Un análisis desde el parentesco y el género. Barcelona: Ediciones Bellaterra.

2002 "Descubriendo velos políticos. Discursos de género e Islam en Marruecos", en Antropología y antropólogos en Marruecos. Homenaje a David M. Hart (A. Ramírez y B. López, eds.). Barcelona: Bellaterra, pp.485-498.

2002 "Multiculturalismo y derecho. El caso de los musulmanes magrebíes residentes en Espańa" en (Fauria y Aixelŕ, eds.) Barcelona, mosaic de cultures. Barcelona: Bellaterra/Museu Etnolňgic, pp..

2006 "Islam and Women; Europe and Islam: Mirror play", Transfer. Journal of Contemporary Studies, 1, pp.67-76.

AMIRAUX, Valérie
2003 "Discours voilés sur les musulmanes en Europe: comment les musulmans sont-ils devenus des musulmanes?". Social Compass, ns 50 (1), pp.85-96.
AMSELLE, Jean-Loup
1990 Logiques métisses: anthropologie de l'identité en Afrique et ailleurs. París: Payot.
1997 "L'anthropologie face au durcissement des identités", en Dire les autres. Réflexions et pratiques etnologiques. París: Payot Laussanne, 1997, pp. 21-30.
APPADURAI, Arjun
1999 "Globalization and the research imagination". International Social Science Journal, ns160, pp.229-238.
BARTRA, Roger
1996 El salvaje en el espejo. Barcelona: Destino.
BAUMANN, Gerd
1999 The multicultural Riddle. Rethinking National, Ethnic, and religious identities. New York and London: Routledge.
2001 "Tres gramáticas de la alteridad: Algunas antropo-lógicas de la construcción del otro en las constelaciones históricas", en Multiculturalismos y género. Barcelona: Bellaterra.
2002 "Multiculturalismo y ciudad: una opción más allá del Estado", en Barcelona, mosaic de cultures (Fauria y Aixelá, coord.). Barcelona: Museu Etnolňgic/Bellaterra, 2002, pp.23-35.
BONMATI, José F.
1992 Los españoles en el Magreb (siglos XIX y XX). Madrid: Mafre.
BLOMMAERT, Jan; VERSCHUEREN, Jef
1998 Debating Diversity, Analysing the discourse of tolerance. London and New York: Routledge.
CEA, María Angeles
2005 La actividad de la xenofobia en Españ a. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.
DELGADO, Manuel (ed.)
1997 Ciutat i immigració. Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporánia de Barcelona.
GÓMEZ GIL, Carlos
2003 La inmigración en Alicante y algunas de sus paradojas. Alicante: Sede Universitaria d'Alacant.
2005 "Evolución de la población extranjera en Alicante". Observatorio de la Inmigración de Alicante. Universidad de Alicante, 22pp. Disponible en URL: http://www.ua.es/es/estudios/seus/alacant/index.html (paper in PDF; consulted 4/2007)
2006 "Inmigración y asociacionismo". Observatorio de la Inmigración de Alicante. Universidad de Alicante, 39pp. Disponible en URL: http://www.ua.es/es/estudios/seus/alacant/index.html (paper in PDF; consulted 4/2007)
HEERING, Liesbeth, ERF, Rob van der; WISSEN, Leo van
2004 "The Role of family Networks and migration culture in the continuation of Moroccan emigration: a gender perspective". Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol.30, ns.2, pp.323-337.
KILANI, Modher,

2003 "Équivoques de la religion et politiques de la laďcité en Europe. Reflexions ŕ partir de l'Islam". Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions, 121, pp.69-86.

KILANI, Modher

2000 L'invention de l'autre. Essais sur le discours anthropologique. París: Editions Payot Laussanne.

LACOMBA,

2001 El Islam inmigrado. Transformaciones y adaptaciones de las prácticas culturales y religiosas. Bilbao: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.

LARSON, Göran

2005 "The impact of global conflicts on local contexts: Muslims in Sweden afer 9/11 – the rise of islamophobia or new possibilities?". Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, vol.16, nş1, pp.29-42.

LÓPEZ GARCÍA, Bernabé (dir.)

1996 Atlas de la inmigración magrebí en Espańa. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

LÓPEZ GARCÍA, Bernabé; BERRIANE, M. (dir.)

2004 Atlas de la inmigración marroquí en Espańa. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid/TEIM.

MARTÍN CORRALES, Eloy

2002 La imagen del Magrebí en Espańa. Barcelona: Bellaterra.

2004 "Maurofobia/islamofobia y maurofilia/islamofilia en la Espańa del siglo XXI" en CIDOB-Afers Internacionals, nş.66-67, pp.39-51. Disponible en URL: http://www.cidob.org/es/content/download/3150/33072/file/martin_cast.pdf (paper in PDF; consulted 3/2007)

MARTÍN DÍAZ, Emma

2003 Procesos migratorios y ciudadanía cultural. Sevilla: Mergablum.

MATEO, Josep Lluís

1996 El 'moro' entre los primitivos. El caso del Protectorado Español. Barcelona: Fundació "la Caixa".

MODOOD, Tariq; WERBNER, Pnina (eds.)

1997 The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe. Racism, Identity and Community. London: Zed Books.

MONJO, J.LL.; MENAGES, A.R.

2007 Els valencians d'Algčria (1830-1962). Valencia: Edicions del Bullent.

MORERAS, Jordi

1999 Musulmanes en Barcelona. Espacios y dinámicas comunitarias. Barcelona: CIDOB edicions.

ROY, Olivier

2003 El Islam mundializado. Los musulmanes en la era de la globalización. Barcelona: Bellaterra.

SAID, Eduard

2003(1978) Orientalisme. Vic: Eumo.

SEMPERE SOUVANNAVONG, Juan David

2000 "El tránsito de argelinos por el puerto de Alicante". Investigaciones Geográficas, nş24, pp.111-130. Disponible en URL: http://cervantesvirtual.com/portal/IIGG (paper in PDF; consulted 4/2007)

2004 "Argelinos en Alicante" en (López García y Berriane, dir.) Atlas de la inmigración marroquí en Espańa. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid/TEIM,

pp.458-459.

SULEIMAN, Michael

2006 "A History of Arab-American political participation" en (P. Strum, ed.) American Arabs and Political Participation. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Internation Center for Scholars, pp.3-26.

TAGUIEFF, Pierre-André

1995 Les fins de l'antiracisme. París: Éditions Michalon.

TAPINOS, Georges Photios

2000 "Globalisation, regional integration, international migration". International Social Science Journal, nş165, pp.297-306.

TAMNEY, Joseph B.

2004 "American Views of Islam, Post 9/11". Islamic Studies, vol.43, nş4, pp.599-630.

Notes:

1. This article is based in part on the report I made for the project "Cultural diversity and citizenship: Alicante faced with multiculturalism" directed by Ana Melis (2003-2004). The main anthropological method used in my field study was that of participant observation. During the study, I visited the areas and places in the city where the greatest numbers of Maghrebis were to be found and carried out numerous interviews, ten of which were in greater detail. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Eloy Martín Corrales for his generous help in reading and commenting on the text of the report.

2. The valuable work being done on Maghrebis in Spain by the TEIM (UAM) under the direction of López García should be mentioned.

3. Said (2003:450) synthesised with great lucidity the confrontation between Islam and the West: "the European interest in Islam is not due to curiosity but rather to the fear of a culturally and militarily formidable, monotheistic competitor of Christianity". One of the main values of Said's work (2003) was that it denounced the sophisticated distortion that qualified academics or privileged Western elites made of the construction of the Arab or Islamic alternative.

4. Martín Corrales (2002:248).

5. Spain and Morocco have experienced periods of tense relations that have played a part in the historical construction of the term "Moor". In this respect, we should mention the study by Mateo Dieste (1997) that makes use of numerous "anecdotes" to illustrate the manipulation of the image of Maghrebis in Spain. For example, Mateo Dieste (1997:25) relates how, when Franco's troops entered Republican Barcelona in 1939, towards the end of the Civil War, their lorries were equipped with loudspeakers that repeated non-stop the Muslim call to prayer "Alá is great". Mateo adds that "since the lorries were empty, it appears that the manoeuvre was intended to frighten the population: they were playing on the cliché that people feared a Muslim invasion because of the cruelty attributed to the Moroccan mercenaries [that fought on Franco's side]".

6. Allievi (2003:141-2).

7. 9/11 also had an impact on Muslims. For example, Ali (2004) reviews some Muslim customs after this attack.

8. The studies by Huntington and Sartori take on greater importance after this date. Huntington, S. P., El choque de las civilizaciones y la reconfiguración del orden mundial, Barcelona, Paidós, 1997; Sartori, G., Pluralismo, multiculturalismo y extranjeros,

Madrid, Taurus, 2001.

9. We might mention Tamney's analysis (2004:603-4) regarding the qualified diversity of political positions after 9/11 in the USA: "The conservative anthropologist, Stanley Kurtz, wrote an essay about the veil, in which he warned that any attempt by the West to force Muslims to abandon the veiling of women would increase support for the fundamentalists. Kurtz claimed that fundamentalism is fuelled by the clash between traditional Middle Eastern family life and modernity. According to Kurtz, Muslim fundamentalists are most alarmed by messages in the Western mass media that imply the acceptability of premarital sex and love-marriages, while also ignoring the value of the extended family...Several points in Kurt's analysis are worth noting. First, similar to other conservatives, Kurtz is not supportive of feminism and thus is not calling for the introduction of freedom and democracy in family life. Second, Kurtz (p.604) blamed the current struggle against terrorism on western media spreading modern ideas about sex and love... In sum, political conservatives tend to see the current conflict as a struggle between civilization and barbarism. While some believe that Islam is incompatible with civilization, other conservatives believe that Islamic societies can westernize..."

10. One of the few advantages of the 9/11 attacks for Muslims was that from that moment they became their own spokespersons with the population and media. As Larson pointed out (2005:29): "it is clear that the terrorist attacks on the United States also gave rise to a new situation in which Muslims became their own spokespersons... For the first time in Sweden, it is now possible to argue that Muslims have become their own experts on Islam and Muslim cultures".

11. Baumann (2002) underlined the segmentary logic inspired by Evans-Pritchard, the orientalist logic based on the studies by Said, and the logic of hierarchical subordination that originated in the studies by Dumont. All of these are used to reject "the others", the migrants.

12. This concept is taken from the update proposed by Larson (2005:35) "I would agree with Tariq Modood (1997) and Steven Vertovec (2002) that Islamophobia is in general very difficult to separate from other forms of racism and discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, gender or skin colour... Modern prejudice against Muslims, according to Modood, is thus based on anxiety about what are perceived to be features of values and practices derived from Islam".

13. Regarding the visibility of Islam through women, see Aixelŕ (2000, 2002a, 2006).

14. For further information, see Eickelman, D, Piscatori, J., Muslim Travellers, University of California Press, 1990. Also Hoeber, S., and Piscatori, J., (eds.), Transnational Religion and Fading States, Westview Press, 1997.

15 The profile of the migrants under study is varied. Some have a complex migratory trajectory passing through various Spanish or even European cities, finally ending up in Alicante. Both men and women who were not related to each other were interviewed so as to ensure a more representative sample. Some of the interviewees worked or owned commercial establishments in the city (for example, a restaurant), others sold various goods (watches, glasses, sports, clothes, CDs, etc.) on the street, some worked for the local authorities, and some were students or had not worked for years. In general, financially, they belonged to the lower-middle class and their income in all but one case fluctuated. One of the interviewees was a woman who was married to an Algerian and had converted to Islam: the objective in this case was to gain knowledge of the religious and social situation of mixed marriages.

16. The objective of this text is to analyze how Maghrebi migrants are perceived in Alicante. Therefore, Maghrebi migrations will not be connected to each other or to the situation in the countries of origin, despite the fact that this is a very important aspect to consider in order to understand the phenomenon of migration in a wider context. As Tapinos (2000:305) rightly points out: "The debate on migration has become indissociable from questions of human rights, political organization, development in the states of origin, and of national cohesion and the future of the welfare state in the host societies".

17. For general data on immigration in Alicante, see Gómez Gil (2003).

18 Martín Corrales (2002:244), Moreras (1999), Lacomba (2001).

19. Delgado (1997), Baumann (2002), Blommaert and Verschueren (1998).

20. As Tapinos pointed out (2000:297) "We will consider emigration as a response to delayed development and the effects that it is likely to have on the economy of the country of origin".

21. Latifa, 64, was born in Oran. She is married and unemployed. She arrived in Alicante a year ago due to family regrouping (her son brought her). She has no family network in Spain apart from her children with whom she lives.

22. According to the data provided by Gómez Gil (2006), the Algerian civil war was also a factor that caused an increase in the number of Algerians arriving in Alicante between 1992 and 1999.

23. Aisha, 30, was born in Algiers. She is single. She lives in Alicante and works for the town council. She arrived in Spain 6 years ago and has no family network in Alicante.

24. Abdalaziz, 43, was born in Algiers. He is married, has a daughter, and his wife in Algiers has asked him for a divorce. He lives in Alicante and is the owner of a restaurant located in the old part of the city. He arrived in Spain five years ago from Germany where he lived for a few years. He has no family network in Spain.

25. For information on family networks established by migrants from the perspective of gender, see Heering (2004).

26. Mohamed, 34, was born in Algiers. He is married with two children (with another one on the way). He lives in Alicante where he works as a waiter. He arrived in Spain 12 years ago and settled here after trying unsuccessfully to settle in Huesca, Lleida and Barcelona. He has no family network in Spain apart from his nuclear family.

27. Mohamed declared: "Here the situation is very bad. Spain is at the bottom of the pile as far as Europe is concerned. It's the worst country of all. Spain is very racist! There is no respect here!!".

28. Ahmed, 31, was born in Algiers. He is single. He lives in Alicante and works as a shop manager. He has no family network in Spain.

29. Salima, 33, is Spanish and converted to Islam. She was born in Alicante and is married to an Algerian. She lives in Alicante and works as a hairdresser.

30. There is a similar situation in many Spanish and European cities. Baumann (1999) found this situation in London and Kilani (2000) in Paris.

31. Allievi (2003: 141) describes the same phenomenon in Italy "The religious presence of Islam in Europe seems to have become an important issue in the public debate. This also relates to the religious visibility of Islam itself".

32. The work done by the Asociación de Amistad Hispano-Argelina is also worth mentioning. This association was set up in the 80's by the Algerian Ibrahim Boulfrakh and the objective was to promote associative initiatives to defend the rights of the Maghrebi population. This association tried to help Maghrebis in the 90s, coinciding with

the Algerian civil war. For further information, see Gil Gómez (2006:18-19).

33. Abdel, 32, was born in a village near Tripoli. He is single but both his family in Libya and the "community" in Alicante want to arrange a marriage for him. He is a student and arrived in Alicante five years ago. He has no family network in Spain.

34. Aixelŕ (2002b, 2006).

35. Merien, 58, was born in Tlemecen. She is married to a Spaniard and has children. She lives in Alicante. Nowadays she is not employed but she used to work as a clerk in Dragados y Construcciones S.A. She arrived in Alicante 27 years ago. She has no family network in Spain.

36. Malika, 20, is Spanish - the daughter of an Algerian father and Spanish mother. She was born in Alicante. She is single and studying to be a beautician.

37. One of the antecedents in Spain is J. Bodas and A. Dragoevich (eds.), El mundo árabe y su imagen en los medios, Editorial Comunica, 1994. An excellent analysis of the impact of the press on the construction of "otherness" is found in T. Van Djik, Racismo y análisis crítico de los medios, Paídos, 1997. Also worthy of mentioning is the research carried out between 1996 and 1999 into the image of Maghrebis in the press in the R&D project of the Ministry of Social Services – Women's Institute by M. Nash, D. Marre, H. Gaggiotti and Y. Aixelŕ: Repensar las imágenes del otro/a: inmigrantes y otras culturas en la prensa española.

38. The same has happened with other promises to build mosques in various Catalan cities such as Barcelona or Santa Coloma. The provisional figures at 1 January 2007 indicate that 13.8% of the Catalan population are immigrants, and the Moroccans are the most numerous accounting for 19.9% of all immigrants (El País, 29/4/2007).

39. Jadiya, 27, born in a village near Oran (Algeria) is single. She lives in Alicante and is a student. She also teaches children in the mosque (when it is open). She arrived in Spain three years ago. She has no family network here.

40. El País 17/10/2001: "Díaz Alperi makes U-turn and says that the mosque in Alicante will not be closed down".

41. El País 24-25/12/2005: "Muslims in Alicante protest at the closure of their only mosque and pray on the beach".

42. El País 3/10/2006: "Ramadan in a warehouse".

43. Merien also: "I go to pray every Friday".

44. The sociologist M. A. Cea (2005) showed in a study based on 2,496 interviews from 168 municipalities that between 1996-2004 xenophobia had increased in Spain from 8% to 32%, and the Moroccans were the immigrants that inspired the greatest rejection.

45. Larson (2005:32) detected a disheartening situation in Sweden, similar to that in Alicante, when he gave a questionnaire to 176 people asking them about the treatment they received: "If you have personally been the target of discrimination since 9/11, in what way or ways have you been targeted?: 1. People have voiced negative opinions about Islam and Muslim, 80 (44%); 2. People have shouted 'terrorist', 'bin Laden', 'go home', 80 (44%); 3. I have been threatened with violence because I have been identified as a Muslim, 13 (7); 4. I have been the victim of physical violence, 7 (4%)".

46. The most serious cases were those from El Ejido in February 2000 and Terrassa in July 1999. U. Martínez Veiga provides us with a very clear analysis, El Ejido. Discriminación, exclusión social y racismo, La Catarata, 2001. Also of interest is the study by E. Martín Díaz, "El Ejido dos ańos después. Realidad, silencios y enseńanzas" in J. De Lucas and F. Torres (eds), Inmigrantes. żCómo lo tenemos?. Algunos desafíos y malas enseńanzas, Talasa, 2002, pp.74-97.