

## Analyzing 1937 AD Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange through the Hispano-Arab-Islamic Mecca Pilgrimage

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### Abstract

This research employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to delve into the historical interactions between Spain and the Arab-Islamic world during Franco's regime, with a focus on the 1937 pilgrimage to Mecca. This initiative exemplifies the use of cultural and religious diplomacy to enhance bilateral relations, revealing efforts to portray Spain as respectful of Islamic practices. By examining unpublished documents, including Francisco Limiñana's detailed planning of the pilgrimage, the study highlights the complexity of colonial and post-colonial relationships, blending cooperation and power dynamics. The analysis underscores the intertwining of Spain's internal policies with its external posture, aiming to bolster national identity and Franco's legitimacy. The findings challenge oversimplified narratives, offering a nuanced view of Western-Arab-Islamic interactions, essential for understanding contemporary challenges and fostering intercultural dialogue. Significantly, Limiñana's role transitioned from organizing the pilgrimage to becoming Spain's first ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 1956, illustrating the evolution of Spanish-Arab relations.

**Keywords:** Hispano-Arab relations, cultural diplomacy, 1937 Mecca pilgrimage, colonial policy, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

### Introduction

Hermeneutics, focusing on the cultural context of textual and cultural production, informs interpretative qualitative research, with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) being a prominent method for understanding significant experiences.<sup>1</sup> Spatial semiotics and landscape hermeneutics highlight their educational value in sociocultural training,<sup>2</sup> while environmental hermeneutics explores analogies between space and narrative.<sup>3</sup> The adaptation of classical philosophy to digital and globalized environments is also examined from a hermeneutic perspective.<sup>4</sup>

Religious hermeneutics is key in interpreting sacred texts, contributing to the understanding of beliefs and practices in Islamic and Western contexts.<sup>5</sup> This approach promotes overcoming stereotypes and prejudices, fostering mutual understanding and respect between cultures, which is crucial in intercultural relations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers and Michael Larkin (2022), *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*, 2nd ed. London, England: SAGE Publications; Jonathan A. Smith and Isabella E. Nizza (2021), *Essentials of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

<sup>2</sup> Olga Boyko et al. (2022), "Spatial Semiotics and Landscape Hermeneutics in the Professional Training of Managers of Socio-Cultural Activity," *Socio-Cultural Management Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 80-102.

<sup>3</sup> Martinho Tomé Soares (2021), "From Ricœurian Hermeneutics to Environmental Hermeneutics. Space, Landscape, and Interpretation," *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 85-101.

<sup>4</sup> Yuliia Butko, Leonid Mozhovi and Viktoriia Slabouz (2021), "Philosophical Hermeneutics by H.-G. Gadamer: Transition from Interpretation to Understanding," *Wisdom*, Vol. 1, No. 17, pp. 6-13.

<sup>5</sup> Adekunle O. Dada (2021), "Culture in Biblical Interpretation: The Use of Yoruba Cultural Elements in Adamo's African Cultural Hermeneutics," *Old Testament Essays*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 428-444; Saiqa Jabeen Shouket and Muhammad Shakeel Ahmad (2019), "From Text to Context: Hermeneutics of Sacred Texts and Gendered Public Sphere in Islam," *Global Social Sciences Review*, Vol. IV, No. III, pp. 462-469.

<sup>6</sup> Jess K. Albers, Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin (2018), *Human Communication in Society*, 5th ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Hermeneutics enables the interpretation of international crises and the analysis of modernization and secularization, illuminating the relationships between religion and politics.<sup>7</sup> Ricoeur<sup>8</sup> and Gadamer<sup>9</sup> provide frameworks for understanding identity and tradition within educational paradigms, highlighting the importance of critical introspection on the voice of tradition.<sup>10</sup> The hermeneutic interpretation of historical and cultural documents is essential for contextualizing texts and cultural manifestations, relevant in studying the complex relations between the Arab-Islamic world and the West.<sup>11</sup> Hermeneutics examines the perception and evaluation of Arab-Islamic culture in the West, analyzing its representation in modern media (Al-Mulla 1997) and the influence of legal literature on the development of divinity in Transoxiana.<sup>12</sup> These studies underscore how hermeneutics, applied to various contexts from the interpretation of religious texts to intercultural communication and political analysis, contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural, religious, and sociopolitical processes, facilitating dialogue and cooperation between different cultures.

The objective of the study is to analyze and understand the intercultural dynamics between the Arab-Islamic world and the West during the pilgrimage to Mecca organized by the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco in 1937, through a detailed hermeneutic study of unpublished documents, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the main tool. This study seeks to explore the historical and cultural contexts surrounding the organization and execution of specific pilgrimages, particularly focusing on the era of the Spanish Civil War and the colonial policies in Morocco in 1937. It involves a comprehensive textual and semiotic analysis, where documents will be dissected into significant textual units for a closer examination of symbols, metaphors, and cultural elements to decode the constructed meanings. Additionally, the research will undertake a cultural comparison, contrasting the representations and perceptions evident in the documents with the concurrent mutual expectations and perceptions between the Arab-Islamic world and the West, thereby identifying both cultural divergences and convergences. Through hermeneutic methods, the study aims to interpret the underlying meanings of the texts and reconstruct the original intentions of their authors, taking into account how historical events and cultural views might have shaped their creation and subsequent interpretations. The research will also include a critical reflection on potential cultural biases that may influence the document interpretations and assess the contemporary relevance of these interpretations in fostering better understanding between the Arab-Islamic world and the West. Finally, the study intends to illustrate how hermeneutic analysis and the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) can enhance our comprehension of historical intercultural events and promote dialogue and cooperation in a globalized world, thereby making a significant contribution to intercultural research.

## Historical Context

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) marked a period of intense internal confrontation in Spain, pitting republican forces against the Francoists, with significant external support from Axis powers for the latter.<sup>13</sup> This conflict was characterized by its brutality and episodes like the bombing of Guernica,<sup>14</sup> reflecting deep ideological divisions and foreign intervention.<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously, the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco experienced escalating tensions, exacerbated by the war and the colonial ambitions of foreign powers, contributing to Spain's political and economic instability.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Rosen (2018), *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Michael J. Shapiro (1998), *What If They Gave a Crisis and Nobody Came?: Interpreting International Crises*.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Ricoeur (1981), *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>9</sup> H. G. Gadamer (1998), *Truth and Method*, Bloomsbury Academic: Continuum.

<sup>10</sup> Wilna A. J. Meijer (2004), "Tradition and Reflexivity in Religious Education," in H. Lombaerts & D. Pollefeyt (eds.), *Hermeneutics and Religious Education*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, pp.121-138; W. A. Meijer (2006), "Plural Selves and Living Traditions: A Hermeneutical View on Identity and Diversity, Tradition and Historicity," in Marian de Souza et al. (eds.), *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, pp. 321-332.

<sup>11</sup> Marian de Souza et al. (2007), *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, Dordrecht: Springer; John A. Fossa (2021), "On the Hermeneutics of Reading Historical Texts in the Mathematics Classroom," *REMATEC*, Vol. 16, pp. 232-244.

<sup>12</sup> I. Bekmirzaev (2014), "Hanafi Legal Documents in Transoxiana," *The Advanced Science Journal*, No. 5, pp. 55-58.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Preston (2007), *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge*, W. W. Norton; Ángel Viñas (2006), *La soledad de la República*, Crítica.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Preston (2012), *La muerte de Guernica*, FLASH.

<sup>15</sup> Antony Beevor (2005), *La Guerra Civil Espanola*, Debate; Enrique Moradiellos (2003), "La Intervención Extranjera En La Guerra Civil: Un Ejercicio de Crítica Historiográfica," *Ayer*, No. 50, pp. 199-232.

<sup>16</sup> María Rosa de Madariaga (2019), *Marruecos ese gran desconocido - Breve historia del protectorado español*, Alianza Editorial; Abel Paz (2000), *La cuestión de Marruecos y la República española*, Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo.

In this context, Francisco Limiñana emerged as a key figure in diplomacy and the spread of Spanish cultural influence in the Arab world.<sup>17</sup> His diplomatic career,<sup>18</sup> marked by a deep specialization in Arab affairs, culminated in his role in organizing a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1937, evidencing Franco's regime's effort to cement political and cultural ties with the Arab-Islamic world.<sup>19</sup>

Specifically in 1937, the relationship between Hispanic and Arab communities was profoundly influenced by the broader geopolitical and cultural exchanges facilitated by the Spanish Civil War and colonial interests in Morocco. This period saw a complex interplay of diplomacy and cultural engagement, where Spain's political strategies were intertwined with its interactions with the Arab-Islamic world. The 1937 Mecca pilgrimage, in particular, served as a significant cultural bridge, enhancing mutual understanding and fostering a unique diplomatic rapport between these communities. Evidence of this is found in a press comment from the Arab newspaper "EL RIF," issue 39 dated January 14, 1937.

#### THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA.

An appeal to the faithful to journey to Mecca and fulfill the duty of pilgrimage, urging them to disregard the preachings of other nations, including Turkey which advises that saving money in Turkey is better than spending it on the pilgrimage, thereby placing many obstacles to prevent Turks from fulfilling this duty.

However, the sentiment in Morocco is different, and soon the Muslim world will be surprised to see the Moroccan flag hoisted on a Moroccan ship named "El Mogreb El Aksa." Should anyone seek an explanation of this ship under the leadership of a Muslim scholar, with the Muezzin on the bridge of the ship calling the faithful to the five prayers, it can be responded: "This ship is the one that this year is carrying Moroccans and non-Moroccans alike to fulfill the duty of the pilgrimage." If we Moroccans are unaware of the moral value of this ship, the Muslim world will not be, and certainly, in the hearts of the colonized Muslim nations, a fire of encouragement will be kindled for the future use of ships under Muslim administration.

Signed: "The one who invites to the pilgrimage."

This pilgrimage, conducted in a wartime context, sought not only to foster Islamic solidarity but also to demonstrate Spain's commitment to the Muslim world, contrasting with the perceived attitudes of other colonial powers.<sup>20</sup> Limiñana's selection for this mission reflects its strategic importance, both for his knowledge of Arabic and his previous diplomatic experience in North Africa.<sup>21</sup>

The success of the journey, measured by both its execution and the positive reception among Muslims, suggests a successful maneuver within Francoist propaganda politics, attempting to strengthen ties with the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco and the Arab world at a time of Spain's international isolation.<sup>22</sup> This event, therefore, lies at the intersection of diplomacy, colonial politics, and religion, underscoring the complexity of Hispano-Arab relations during the Civil War period and beyond, towards the establishment of Francoist Spain on the international stage.

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<sup>17</sup> B. L. García and M. H. de Larramendi (2010), *España, El Mediterráneo y El Mundo Arabomusulmán: Diplomacia e Historia*, Icaria; Irene González (2007), "La «hermandad Hispano-Árabe» En La Política Cultural Del Franquismo (1936-1956)," *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, Vol. 23, pp. 83-97.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Pablo Arias Torres and Manuel C. Feria García (2012), *Los Traductores de Árabe Del Estado Español: Del Protectorado a Nuestros Días*, Eds. Bellaterra.

<sup>19</sup> Ignacio Alcaraz Cánovas, *Espanoles y marroquíes en el Protectorado: historia de una convivencia* (Editorial Catriel; Rocío Velasco de Castro (2012), "La represión contra la población civil del protectorado español en Marruecos," *HISPANIA NOVA Primera Revista de Historia Contemporánea on-line en castellano Segunda Época*, No. 10, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Paz (2000), *La cuestión de Marruecos y la República española*.

<sup>21</sup> Salvador Fontenla Ballesta (2017), *La guerra de Marruecos (1907-1927)*, La Esfera de los Libros; Daniel Macías Fernández (2021), *A cien años de Annual: La Guerra de Marruecos (Historia de España)*, Desperta Ferro Ediciones.

<sup>22</sup> Octavio Díaz-Pinés (1953), *Marruecos: el protectorado español*, Publicaciones españolas; José Luis Villanova (2010), "La organización territorial del Protectorado español en Marruecos," *Revista de estudios internacionales mediterráneos*, No. 9.

**Figure 1. Photograph of Francisco Limiñana, as the first Ambassador of Spain to Saudi Arabia, and his wife, in official ambassadorial attire, in the early 1960s.**



Source: Pablo Rosser Collection

### **Unpublished Documents**

The original administrative file, titled “Report on the first pilgrimage to Mecca in a Spanish ship under the auspices of the generalissimo, year 1937. High Commission of Spain in Morocco” was preserved among the personal documents of the diplomat mentioned and was found by one of the authors of this publication, as a grandson on the mother’s side of the mentioned Limiñana. It contains all the information related to the trip, from press clippings to technical reports, accounting for the trip, etc., making it a document of great relevance that can shed light on cultural interactions and mutual perceptions between the parties involved. Auxiliary information is preserved in the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AGA, 000590-R).

### **Methodology**

The study implemented Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to probe how meanings are constructed in historical documents, focusing on cultural interaction during the Spanish Civil War and colonialism in Morocco in 1937.<sup>23</sup> This qualitative approach, based on phenomenology, allows a deep understanding of subjective experiences through a meticulous analysis of texts, including press articles and technical reports, segmented into meaningful units to identify symbols, metaphors, and cultural elements.

The methodology included data collection and transcription, followed by initial annotation to develop emerging themes using the ATLAS.ti software, facilitating a reflective and iterative analysis. Interpretation focused on unraveling deep meanings and their relationship with existing literature, while the presentation of findings sought to accurately reflect the subjects’ perceptions, relying on direct quotes to illustrate key themes.

This hermeneutic process extended to cultural and textual analysis, contrasting documentary representations with mutual perceptions between the Arab-Islamic world and the West, revealing historical and cultural influences on the creation and interpretation of texts. Critical reflection on personal biases and the current relevance of findings emphasized the importance of improved mutual understanding, highlighting how this interpretative approach contributes to intercultural research and facilitates dialogue between cultures in the contemporary global context.

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan A. Smith et al. (2012), *Research Methods in Psychology*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.; Smith and Nizza (2022), *Essentials of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*; Michael Larkin, Paul Flowers and Jonathan A. Smith (2021), *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*.

## **Results**

From all the documents in the file, we will bring here only two from the beginning of the whole process as a practical example of the methodology.

### ***Document 1***

Dahir by which H.I.M., the Caliph of the Spanish Protectorate Zone in Morocco, grants a Navigation Patent to the motor vessel “El Mogreb el Aksa.”

Praise to the One God:

(Large seal of H.I.M., the Caliph Muley El Hassan Ben El Mehdi Ben Ismail Ben Mohamed)

It is made known through our exalted letter glorified by God, that our Imperial Highness the Caliph, having granted permission to the Caliphal Treasury of this Northern Zone of Morocco, for the vessel named “EL MOGREB EL AKSA,” folio 15 of the 1st list of ships of the Rio Martin District registration, measuring one hundred and nineteen meters and forty centimeters in length, sixteen meters and forty centimeters in beam, and eight meters and eighty-five centimeters in depth, may navigate and trade in all seas and ports of the globe, duly advised by the competent Bodies of the Protecting Nation:

HAS DECREED THE FOLLOWING:

I order all Authorities under my jurisdiction to assist or facilitate what is necessary for its regular navigation and legitimate trade, for which purpose I have ordered to dispatch this Caliphal Patent, which shall serve and have force, considered in all circumstances as exclusively pertaining to the vessel named “EL MOGREB EL AKSA,” as long as this vessel flies the Moroccan flag and does not vary in capacity and form in the hull and rigging.

Given in Tetuan, on the 24th of Chual of 1355 (corresponding to January 7, 1937).

### ***Cultural Semiotics***

The cultural semiotics of the document presenting the Dahir (decree) by which the Caliph of the Spanish Protectorate Zone in Morocco (Hassan ben el Mehdi ben Ismail had been appointed Caliph on November 8, 1925) grants a navigation patent to the vessel “El Mogreb el Aksa” is saturated with symbolism and reflects a web of cultural, religious, and political meanings.

#### ***a. Symbols and Metaphors***

The use of “Praise to the One God” at the beginning is a common praise formula used in Islamic documents, underscoring the sovereignty of God over all human affairs, including those of state and administration. It is an acknowledgment of the Islamic faith that underpins the Caliph’s authority. The Caliph’s seal, referred to as “large,” not only confirms the document’s authenticity but also symbolizes his power and authority. The chain of names traces the genealogy and divine right of the Caliph to rule, reinforcing his legitimacy within Moroccan culture and the Islamic world. “El Mogreb el Aksa,” the name of the vessel, means “The Far West,” which can be interpreted as a reference to Morocco’s geographic position as the westernmost point of the Islamic world. It may also suggest a sense of reach or mission, in terms of extending Moroccan cultural and economic influence across the seas.

#### ***b. Construction of Meanings***

The decree not only grants permission to navigate and trade but also instructs all relevant authorities to assist and facilitate the vessel’s needs. This reflects a governance and protection system under which the Caliph’s authority extends beyond terrestrial borders to maritime ones, offering a sense of security and state backing. On the other hand, the mention of “legitimate trade” underscores the importance of trade as a regulated and protected act, reflecting the value of honesty and legitimacy in commercial transactions within Moroccan culture and, by extension, Islamic law (Sharia).

Moreover, the document ties the vessel to the Moroccan flag and highlights that the granted status remains as long as the vessel maintains its Moroccan identity in form and capacity. This underscores a sense of national pride and the importance of visual and cultural identity in international navigation and trade.

On a deeper level, this Dahir is a document encapsulating the intersection between faith, politics, and commerce, illustrating how these elements are intertwined within the fabric of Moroccan society and its interaction with the wider world at that historical period. Interpreting this document in a contemporary context can offer enriching insights into the continuity and change in cultural and political practices between the Arab and Islamic world and the West, as well as the sustained relevance of such documents in constructing national and commercial identities.

### *Cultural Comparison*

The Cultural Comparison of the Dahir granting the navigation patent to the vessel “El Mogreb el Aksa” involves considering the cultural representations within the document and comparing them with mutual perceptions and expectations between the Arab and Islamic world and the West in the pre-World War II period. This comparison may uncover cultural differences and similarities that influenced interpretations on both sides.

#### *a. Cultural Representations in the Document*

The invocation of God and the inclusion of the Caliph’s seal reflect the fusion of divine sovereignty with earthly authority, common in Islamic states. The Caliph is presented not only as a political leader but also as a spiritual leader, in a culture where religion and state are often intertwined. In such a sense, the chain of names legitimizing the Caliph suggests a continuity and legitimacy derived from lineage and divine right, concepts deeply rooted in Islamic tradition. On the other hand, the mention of “legitimate trade” signals the importance of moral and legal norms in transactions, reflecting a society that values religious law and ethics in economic affairs.

#### *b. Perceptions and Expectations in the West*

In contrast to the Arab and Islamic world, many Western societies of the time were moving towards a greater separation of religion and state, with more secularized legal and governmental systems. However, the dictatorial regime that Franco was establishing was moving closer to that symbiosis between civil and religious power, not so much in assuming a single authority for both fields, but in creating a society where civil aspects were deeply mediated and influenced by religious ones, as occurred during the forty years of his dictatorship.

The same could be said of Legitimacy and Heritage. While in the West political legitimacy often came from democratic or parliamentary structures, the document shows that legitimacy can emanate from religious tradition and lineage. It was valid for the Muslim tradition, but also for the new Spanish dictatorial regime where Franco titled himself “Generalissimo by the Grace of God.”

Lastly, the Western emphasis on capitalism often prioritized efficiency and economic profit, possibly at the expense of the moral considerations emphasized in the document through the notion of “legitimate trade.” In this case, contrasts between the Western vision and Franco’s regime, which was based on a model of autarky that caused a deep economic crisis in the country, can also be appreciated.

#### *c. Cultural Differences and Similarities*

The main difference lies in the integration of religion into political and economic affairs, which was more prominent in the Arab and Islamic world than in the West, though not in Franco’s new regime as we just discussed. Additionally, authority derived from heritage and lineage differs from the democratic trends of the time in the West, which is nuanced in the case of Franco by the intention to link it with a quasi-divine destiny.

Despite differences in the source of authority, both in the West and in the Arab and Islamic world, there was a strong emphasis on legitimacy and order. Moreover, although the underlying foundations differ, both Western and Islamic societies valued trade and navigation as means for economic expansion and influence.

#### *d. Influence on Interpretation*

The different cultural perspectives would likely lead to different interpretations of the same document. A Westerner might focus on the decree’s functionality and its commercial impact, while a reader from the Arab and Islamic world might see it as an affirmation of cultural and religious identity. These differences underline how mutual understanding can be hindered by divergent interpretations based on

*Analyzing 1937 AD Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange through the Hispano-Arab-Islamic Mecca Pilgrimage* distinct cultural contexts, and how a consideration of these differences is essential for a complete and nuanced interpretation of historical documents.

However, curiously, these differences with the West dissipate in the face of the new Francoist regime that adopts models - albeit with differences - closer to the medieval Spanish and even Muslim traditions. It is, therefore, albeit subtly, a message of rapprochement and unity of Spain, and its new political regime, with the Arab world as the only Western country that can understand them.

### *Contextual Interpretation*

Proper hermeneutics of the Dahir granting the navigation patent to the vessel “El Mogreb el Aksa” requires immersion in the historical and cultural context, as well as an understanding of how these contexts inform the text’s meaning.

#### *a. Historical Context*

The document is from 1937, a time when Morocco was under Spanish protectorate. Spain itself was in the midst of a Civil War, as we have been discussing, which affected its politics both internally and externally. On the other hand, the reference to the Islamic year 1355 raises the continuation and influence of Islamic traditions in the political and social life of Morocco, despite the colonial presence.

#### *b. Contextual Interpretation*

At a time when the legitimacy of power might be in question due to the colonial presence, the use of titles and religious references in the Dahir reinforces the Caliph’s authority not only as a secular leader but also as a religious authority figure. The act of granting navigation patents is a demonstration, more apparent than real, of autonomy and self-governance, a significant aspect of national pride and sovereignty, even under protectorate. The Vessel’s Name, “El Mogreb el Aksa,” reflects a rooted cultural identity and Morocco’s geographic position. It can be interpreted as an assertion of Moroccan identity and its role in the Islamic world and beyond.

#### *c. Cultural Perspectives*

From a cultural perspective, the document emphasizes the importance of faith, tradition, and law in public life. This could be seen as a contrast to the increasing secularization in many Western societies of the time.

#### *d. Influence on Creation and Interpretation*

The document was likely created with the intention of affirming the Caliph’s authority and legitimacy at a time of change and turbulence, seeking to balance respect for traditions with the practical needs of trade and navigation. For contemporaries from the Arab and Islamic world, the document could be seen as reinforcing cultural and religious identity and a symbol of resistance against colonial influence. For Western observers, it might be seen as a mere administrative procedure or even as a concession of colonial authority to local power structures.

### *Reconstruction of Meaning*

#### *a. Original Intent and Purposes of the Document*

The Caliph, through this Dahir, affirms his authority and the sovereignty of Morocco under Spanish protectorate. This document acts as a reminder to both Moroccans and Spaniards that the Caliph maintains, at least in appearance, specific powers and the right to govern maritime and commercial affairs within his jurisdiction.

The use of the phrase “Praise to the One God” and the Caliph’s seal are clear indicators of the Islamic identity that the Caliph and his government sought to project and maintain. This focus on religious identity could also have been intended to strengthen unity and loyalty among Moroccan citizens during a period of change and challenge.

#### *b. Expectations of Understanding among Authors and Recipients*

The authors of the Dahir, which would include the Caliph and his officials, would expect the document to be received as a legitimate testimony of their authority and ability to regulate maritime affairs. Moreover, they would expect the document to be respected by all relevant authorities and to facilitate

the free movement and trade of the vessel. Moroccans, witnessing this act of governance, might interpret the Dahir as a sign of the continuity of their autonomy and traditions, even within a colonial context.

For the colonial administration, the document would be an indication of the limits of their power and a reminder of the concessions granted to the Caliph, who still exercised a degree of autonomy. Internationally, the document would serve as a formal statement of the vessel's status and its protection under international law, which was important for safe navigation and trade.

### *Critical Reflection*

An informed and conscious reflection on biases can lead to a more nuanced and balanced interpretation of the Dahir. This includes appreciating the autonomy and cultural identity that the Caliph and Morocco sought to maintain, as well as recognizing the document's relevance in its specific historical context. By actively questioning our biases and expanding our understanding of non-Western values and systems, we can approach a more authentic and profound understanding of historical documents and the cultures they represent.

### *Current Application*

#### *a. Lessons in Governance and Autonomy*

The way the Caliph handles governance and maintains a degree of autonomy within the Spanish protectorate can offer a historical perspective on struggles for sovereignty and self-determination, which remain relevant in the context of current international relations. Understanding this balance between foreign influence and internal autonomy can help inform modern policies of international cooperation and respect for national sovereignty.

#### *b. Understanding of Cultural and Religious Identity*

The central importance of Islamic identity in official documentation of the time underscores the relevance of religion and culture in national identity. In a world where Islamophobia and misunderstandings about Islam are prevalent, recognizing the historical continuity of Islam's integration into the social and political fabric can promote a deeper and more respectful understanding of these traditions.

#### *c. Diplomacy and Intercultural Dialogue*

The way the Caliph communicates and exercises his authority can serve as an example of cultural diplomacy in action. In times where intercultural dialogue is increasingly necessary, understanding how these interactions were managed in the past can offer strategies for effective communication and cooperation today.

#### *d. Education and Historical Awareness*

Including this analysis in educational curriculums could improve students' understanding of the history of relations between the Arab and Islamic world and the West and foster a critical attitude towards historical narratives. This is essential for building a knowledge base that respects diversity and promotes mutual understanding.

### **Document 2**

Written by the official, Francisco Limiñana, responsible for organizing the boat pilgrimage of Moroccan Muslims to Mecca, dated January 1937.

#### **PREPARATIONS FOR THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA**

(...) As the Command decided on the choice of the ship to transport the faithful Muslims, we outlined the work plan to successfully fulfill our mission, dreaming of transforming the pilgrimage ship or ship of divine grace, as later called by "La Gaceta de África," into a small floating Muslim city where our Moroccan brothers would not encounter anything foreign to their customs and practices. We envisioned a floating mosque, its Imam, Jatib, Muezzin, the Moroccan kitchen with Moroccan cooks and waiters; the "Hayyan" Tetouani, barber, dentist, and surgeon in one; the religious leader of the expedition; the Kaid or Muslim governmental authority of the Moroccan pilgrims; the Supervisor, the medical clinic, and finally, the Mejanía, so that our pilgrims would not miss their medinas or aduares, with their prayer places and Majzen institutions.



We also studied the international sanitary convention of Paris, June 21, 1926, regarding individuals and groups undertaking pilgrimages to Mecca, and the Health Inspection of the Zone provided their report on this matter (...)

### *Cultural Semiotic Analysis*

#### *a. Symbols and Metaphors*

The document describes transforming a ship into a “floating Muslim city,” symbolizing a microcosm of Moroccan culture. References to elements like the floating mosque, Imam, Jatib, and Muezzin, as well as the Moroccan kitchen and other cultural and religious figures, are metaphors for Islamic identity and practice. This shows deep consideration and respect for the pilgrims’ traditions and practices.

#### *b. Cultural Elements*

The detailed planning reflects careful attention to the customs, traditions, and religious needs of the Moroccan pilgrims. Mentioning the “Hayyan” Tetouani, who combines roles of barber, dentist, and surgeon, as well as including the religious leader and the governmental authority (Kaid), illustrates the integration of daily aspects and leadership within the Muslim community.

#### *c. Construction of Meanings*

These cultural and symbolic elements create a sense of continuity and familiarity for the pilgrims in an otherwise foreign and disorienting setting. Transforming the ship into a miniature of their usual environment is not only a practical strategy but also a powerful assertion of identity and belonging during a period of intense political and social turbulence.

#### *d. Historical and Political Context*

Organizing this pilgrimage by Spanish officials during Franco’s regime in the Civil War is crucial for understanding the power dynamics and political relations of the time.

#### *e. Perspectives for Analysis*

From this and other documents in the file, one can explore how it reflects the intersection of religion, culture, and politics at a crucial moment in history. Analyzing how the spiritual and cultural needs of the pilgrims are balanced with political considerations can offer valuable insight into the complexity of the relationships between Spain and Morocco during this period.

### *Cultural Comparative Analysis*

#### *a. Cultural Representations*

The document shows an effort by Spanish authorities to create an environment that reflects and respects the traditions and religious practices of the Moroccan pilgrims. This includes installing a floating mosque, the presence of Islamic religious and cultural figures, and adapting everyday services (like cooking and medical care) to Muslim customs. This effort reveals recognition and, possibly, respect for the cultural and religious identity of Moroccan Muslims, significant in the context of colonial policy.

#### *b. Mutual Perceptions and Expectations at the Time*

During the 1930s and 1940s, relations between the Arab-Islamic world and the West were marked by colonial dynamics and political tensions. Often, there was a lack of mutual understanding and prevailing stereotypes in both directions. In the West, there was a tendency to perceive the Islamic and Arab world as monolithic, exotic, and sometimes backward, while in the Arab-Islamic world, the West was often seen as dominant, intrusive, and sometimes disrespectful of local traditions.

#### *c. Comparison and Contrast*

The document reflects an awareness of cultural and religious differences, common in relations between the West and the Islamic world at that time. Attention to religious and cultural practices shows a parallel with the perception in the Arab world of the importance of maintaining cultural identity in the face of Western influence.

Unlike many other examples of colonial interaction, where the imposition of Western values and practices often prevailed, this document shows an attempt at adaptation and respect for Muslim traditions. This contrasts with the general tendency of the time to impose Western practices in colonial contexts.

*d. Influence on Interpretation*

These efforts by Spanish authorities, as previously discussed in the document, could be interpreted as a means to secure loyalty and cooperation from Moroccan Muslims during a politically turbulent time, reflecting a pragmatic policy rather than true intercultural understanding. Alternatively, it could be seen as a rare example of recognition and respect for cultural diversity in the context of European colonialism.

*Contextual Interpretation*

*a. Historical and Cultural Context*

The Spanish Civil War Era (1936-1939): During this period, Spain was deeply divided, with conflicting factions fighting for control of the country. Franco, the leader of the Nationalists, sought to consolidate his power. The Spanish Protectorate in Morocco was crucial for Franco, both for its strategic value and for the resources and Moroccan soldiers who significantly contributed to his cause in the Civil War. Maintaining a favorable relationship with the Moroccans was essential for Franco's regime.

*b. Contextual Interpretation of the Text*

The effort to transform the Ship into a "Floating Muslim City" goes beyond mere logistics; it reflects an attempt by Franco and his administration to show respect and consideration for the traditions and beliefs of Moroccan Muslims. It can be interpreted as a political strategy to win and maintain the support of Moroccans, crucial for Franco's war effort. The detail with which the journey is planned, ensuring that pilgrims encounter "nothing foreign to their customs and practices," can be interpreted as acknowledging the importance of religious and cultural identity in Morocco. This could be seen as an attempt to legitimize Franco's regime in the eyes of Muslims, showing an attitude of respect and tolerance. Within the framework of colonialism, such efforts could be viewed as an attempt at "pacification" or winning the "hearts and minds" of the colonized population, a common tactic among colonial powers.

*c. Hermeneutic Considerations*

In interpreting this document, it is important to consider not only the text itself but also who wrote it and for which audience it was intended. Was it a form of propaganda intended to show a benevolent image of Franco's regime? Or was it a genuine reflection of a desire for intercultural understanding? Furthermore, we must consider how this document might have been received by Moroccans and other contemporary readers. Was it seen as a sincere gesture or as a superficial political maneuver?

In conclusion, the hermeneutics of this document reveals a complexity of intentions and perceptions that are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of the time. The interpretation of these gestures and decisions is not simply a matter of logistics or religion; it is inextricably linked to politics, colonialism, and the struggle for power and legitimacy at a critical moment in the history of Spain and Morocco.

*Reconstruction of Meaning*

*a. Author's Purpose and Perspective*

In 1937 and 1938, Spain, under Franco's command, was immersed in the Civil War. Franco's regime, therefore, as previously mentioned, sought to consolidate its power and legitimacy, both nationally and internationally. Within this context, the Spanish protectorate in Morocco played a significant strategic role.

Regarding the Author's intention, Limiñana, an official of Franco's regime, seems to aim at documenting and possibly promoting the efforts made to respect and accommodate the cultural and religious practices of the Moroccan pilgrims.

**Figure 2. Photograph of Francisco Limiñana at the Consulate in Uxda (April 26, 1926) from where he participated as a member of the Spanish Delegation at the Hispano-French Conference held in this border city to resolve issues with Abd-el-Krim**



Source: Pablo Rosser Collection.

*b. Expectations of the Recipients*

The pilgrims, as direct recipients of these actions, likely expected the pilgrimage to Mecca to respect their traditions and religious beliefs. The detailed description of the ship transformed into a floating Muslim city could be interpreted as a reassuring message, showing that their religious and cultural needs would be attended to. For the broader audience, including other Muslims in the protectorate and possibly international observers, the document could serve as evidence of Franco's policy towards religious and cultural minorities under his regime.

*c. Interpretation of the Message*

The careful planning and adaptation of the ship suggest an acknowledgment of cultural and religious diversity, something that might have been unexpected in the context of colonialism and the Civil War. In this sense, we emphasize that the detailed description of the measures taken could be interpreted as an attempt to legitimize Franco's regime in the eyes of Muslims and secure their support, showing a degree of respect and consideration for their traditions.

*Critical Reflection*

As previously pointed out in the documents, critical reflection requires a balance between recognizing our contemporary perspectives and biases and understanding the historical and cultural context of the documents. This involves an effort to comprehend the complexities and nuances of the past without falling into the trap of judging it solely through the lenses of our current time and values.

*Current Application*

*a. Understanding the Historical Roots of Current Relations*

Understanding historical interactions between the West and the Arab-Islamic world, especially in the context of colonialism, helps to contextualize current power dynamics. Awareness of how past policies have shaped current perceptions and attitudes can encourage a more informed and sensitive dialogue. Similarly, the analysis of these documents underscores how colonialism has influenced intercultural relations. Recognizing this legacy can help the West better understand the perspectives and responses of the Arab-Islamic world to contemporary Western policies.

*b. Recognition of Complexity and Diversity*

The effort to accommodate the religious and cultural practices of Moroccan pilgrims reflects a complexity often overlooked in simplified narratives. Highlighting this diversity can encourage contemporary societies to avoid generalizations and stereotypes. Therefore, despite colonial power dynamics, efforts to respect and accommodate cultural and religious differences are valuable examples of cooperation and mutual respect. These examples can serve as lessons for current relations.

### *c. Lessons for Diplomacy and Intercultural Policies*

The study of how Spanish authorities attempted to adapt the journey to Islamic cultural and religious practices can offer lessons on the importance of cultural diplomacy and respect in international relations. Similarly, recognizing the significance of cultural and religious inclusion in policies and practices can improve relations between the West and the Arab-Islamic world. This can be particularly relevant in managing cultural diversity within Western societies.

### *d. Promoting Dialogue and Mutual Understanding*

Historical efforts to understand and accommodate religious and cultural practices can inspire deeper interreligious and intercultural dialogue today, which is essential for peaceful coexistence. In this sense, disseminating these findings can raise awareness of the importance of understanding cultural and religious differences, which is crucial in an era of globalization and interconnection.

## **Discussion**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has been extensively applied in research, addressing subjects from motivation in language teaching<sup>24</sup> to professional development in STEM.<sup>25</sup> It has also explored social identity in the transition to retirement<sup>26</sup> and learning perceptions among engineering students with ADHD.<sup>27</sup> In the religious realm, the adoption of Buddhism by Westerners<sup>28</sup> and its application in coaching<sup>29</sup> have been examined. Interpretatively, Kelly<sup>30</sup> employed a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach to investigate teaching experiences, while Nasution<sup>31</sup> analyzed Dilthey's hermeneutic methodology. Arriazu<sup>32</sup> emphasized hermeneutics as crucial for critical thinking in the post-truth era, analyzing narratives of the Charlie Hebdo attack. Boden & Eatough<sup>33</sup> proposed a multimodal approach based on Merleau-Ponty to understand lived experiences, and Pozdeev<sup>34</sup> applied hermeneutic methods to the study of M. Gorky's literature. These studies highlight the versatility of IPA and hermeneutics in exploring a wide range of phenomena, from individual perception to the interpretation of texts and cultural events.

## **Conclusions**

Hermeneutic analysis provides a detailed insight into the historical interaction between Spain and the Arab-Islamic world, showing how Franco's regime's cultural and religious diplomacy sought to strengthen bilateral ties, especially during the Spanish Civil War and thereafter. This effort was manifested in initiatives such as sending pilgrims to Mecca, reflecting the use of culture and religion to enhance Spain's image and expand its political and economic influence in the region. The examined documents highlight the complexity of colonial and post-colonial relations, showing a mix of cooperation, mutual understanding, and power dynamics. Moreover, they underscore the connection between Spanish internal policies and its external stance, where the promotion of national identity and the regime's legitimacy intertwined with diplomatic efforts. These findings challenge simplistic narratives, offering a more nuanced perspective on interactions between the West and the Arab-Islamic world, crucial for understanding contemporary challenges and fostering intercultural dialogue.

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<sup>24</sup> Mehmet Sak and Nurdan Gurbuz (2022), "Unpacking the Negative Side-Effects of Directed Motivational Currents in L2: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis," *Language Teaching Research*, p. 13621688221125996.

<sup>25</sup> Pamela Martínez Oquendo, Kristin VanWyngaarden and Christine E. Cutucache (2022), "Lived Experiences of Former STEM Undergraduate Mentors of an Afterschool Mentoring Program: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis," *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 27, No. 10, pp. 2157-2173.

<sup>26</sup> Anca M. Miron et al. (2022), "An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Social Identity Transition in Academic Retirement," *Work, Aging and Retirement*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 82-97.

<sup>27</sup> Arash E. Zaghi et al. (2023), "'It Seems Like I'm Doing Something More Important'—An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Transformative Impact of Research Experiences for STEM Students with ADHD," *Education Sciences*, Vol. 13, No. 8, p. 776.

<sup>28</sup> Li Laurent, David Sheffield and Fiona Holland (2021), "Exploring Buddhism as a 'Tool' to Support Well-Being: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Western Adopters' Experiences," *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 70, No. 5, pp. 471-485.

<sup>29</sup> Duminda Rajasinghe (2020), "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a Coaching Research Methodology," *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 176-190.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Dale Kelly (1992), *Understanding the Experience of Teacher Development*.

<sup>31</sup> U. Nasution (2022), "Wilhelm Dilthey's Hermeneutical Methodology in Understanding Text," *Kawanua International Journal of Multicultural Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 1-4.

<sup>32</sup> Rubén Arriazu (2018), "A Research Methodology in the Service of Critical Thinking: Hermeneutic Approach in the Post-Truth Era," *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Vol. 26, pp. 148-148.

<sup>33</sup> Zoë Boden and Virginia Eatough (2014), "Understanding More Fully: A Multimodal Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Approach," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 160-177.

<sup>34</sup> Viacheslav Pozdeev (2019), "Hermeneutic Approach to the Research on Maxim Gorky's Literary Works," in *Proceedings of the 2019 International Conference on Pedagogy, Communication and Sociology (ICPCS 2019)*, Paris, France: Atlantis Press.

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Interestingly, Francisco Limiñana, a central figure in these initiatives, was appointed the first Spanish Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 1956, marking the beginning of a consolidated Spanish Pan-Arabism.

**Figure 3. Photograph of Francisco Limiñana, as the first Ambassador of Spain to Saudi Arabia, seated to the left of King Faisal, who is accompanied by the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fernando María Castiella, on his official visit to Spain in 1962**



Source: Pablo Rosser Collection.

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