



## **The Muslim Struggle for Civil Rights in Spain (Sussex Studies in Spanish History)**

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# The Muslim Struggle for Civil Rights in Spain (Sussex Studies in Spanish History)

*Aitana Guia*

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This book argues that secular and devout Muslims have fortified rather than compromised, as popular sentiment would have it, Spains fragile democracy since the end of dictatorship in 1975. Despite a broad diversity and often conflicting agendas, Spains Muslims have mobilised as an effective force and thrust themselves into the public arena. In demanding civil rights as immigrants and citizens on par with native-born Spaniards, they have struggled to fill gaps in immigration policy and legislation on religious pluralism, have called into question prevailing Christian interpretations of Spanish history, and have employed such concepts as *convivencia* (peaceful coexistence) and *arraigo* (rootedness) to argue their case, forcing Spanish society to open up a space for them and the government to expand legal protections to the levels of other developed nations. The struggle began in the city of Melilla, North Africa, in 1985 when the enclaves Muslim residents demanded access to Spanish citizenship and challenged what they perceived to be a privileging of Christian Spaniards. In 1989, the movement spread to mainland Spain, where Muslims formed independent organisations, proposed modification to unfair immigration laws, and pushed for the regularisation of undocumented residents. A major focus is how practising Muslims, both migrants and native converts, have worked to institutionalise Islam in Spain, have constructed mosques despite opposition, and have accommodated the states secular vision of womens rights. Another focus examines the ways Muslims have interrogated the iconic image of the Moor in Spanish history and in festivities such as the Festivals of Moors and Christians, and how this has aroused tensions in areas with strong regional nationalist traditions, especially Catalonia. The study concludes with a survey of writings, in Spanish and Catalan, by Muslim immigrants, and how these works have helped to publicise the everyday experience of migration in Spain

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1 pages

Review

"Guias archival work and oral history make for a valuable contribution to a broader understanding of the Transition, and to migration studies in Spain. Of particular note is her shrewd engagement with questions of gender. By highlighting the importance of female activism in Melilla and Barcelona, and exploring various responses to the issue of the veil, she challenges accusations that Islamic culture is inherently discriminatory in this respect...there is much to gain from this innovative approach to Spains relationship with Islam today." Stuart Green, University of Leeds, Journal of Contemporary History, volume 22, issue 4, 2014

About the Author

Aitana Guías research interests include cultural diversity, migration, and regional nationalism. She holds a degree in constitutional law from the University of Valencia, Spain and a doctorate in migration history from York University, Toronto, Canada. She currently teaches contemporary European history at the University of Guelph, Canada and the history of Islam in Europe at Glendon College, York University.

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