The Barrio Rivalry, its origins

Barrio rivalries are a de-facto part of Spanish life, they range from good-natured competition to general non-association and rarely get out of control. The Alquerian model however is more acute, more venomous and extremely disruptive. The feud's 'terminus post quem' is the fateful year of AD932. Before this time Alqueria occupied a hill-top position, the enlightened population lived in a single barrio contented and at peace.

In AD932 Caliph Abd-ar-Rahman III ordered the Village moved stone by stone from its favoured position into the dark valley below. Just why the Caliph took this step is not recorded in detail but the essence of the story has been pieced together by archaeologists. The venerable gentleman was so incensed with a particular Alquerian male known as El Potente, whom he caught brightening up the life of one of his wives ordered the relocation. El Potente, the wayward young lady, an amphora of olive oil and a sheep's bladder of Remitroot wine formed the essentials of the tale.

After relocation the villagers lived in the grim shadow of the Sierra Alhamilla. Bad drainage and a vicious temperature inversion caused by the sheer cliff face made Alqueria a desperate place to live. Alqueria became a repository for anyone who displeased Abd-ar-Rahman so populating the Village with all the undesirables of his Caliphate. These new arrivals became known as *Los Recién Llegados* or The Newcomers. The original people of Alqueria adopted the title of *Los Gente del Cerro,* The Hill People.

This is the origin of the two barrios. The Hill People residing in the east of Alqueria with the Newcomers living in the western barrio. Just how they became so enraged with one another is a matter of speculation.

Some say the Newcomers supported the French during the Spanish War of Independence while the Hill People sided with Wellington and the British. Others say

the feud is more recent. The Hill People being Republican and the Newcomers Nationalist.

Perhaps it is because the two groups are different in appearance, religion and aspiration, that's usually enough to start most conflicts. The relish with which the barrio rivalry is savoured suggests that the anarchic people of Alqueria just enjoy getting up each others noses.

The feud could be pure invention, invented to legitimise the rivalry. If this invention is their creation then they have a responsibility to care for it, which they certainly seem to have done. The splendour and ingenuity of the internal Alquerian conflict is a masterpiece of applied anarchy. A warning or perhaps a beacon for others to follow.