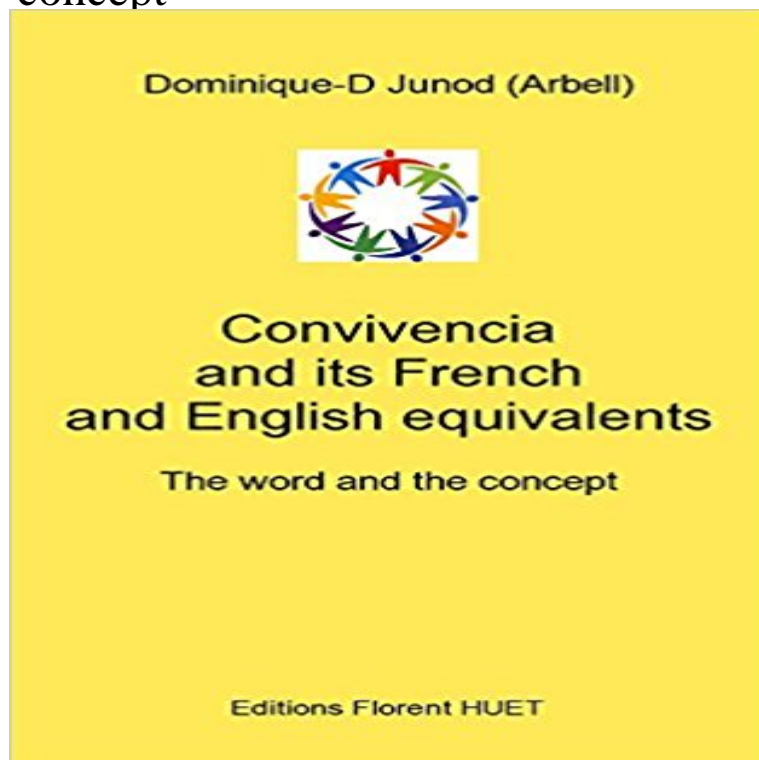


## Convivencia and its French and English equivalents: The word and the concept



The word *convivencia* is often used in Spanish, French and English especially by historians to refer to the relatively harmonious coexistence (allowing for temporal and circumstantial fluctuations) between Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities during the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and Septimania to the north, prior to the Reconquista (711-1492). This region, and the civilisation that developed there, were known as Al-Andalus and its capital was at Cordoba. This peaceful coexistence between different religious communities was a key feature of the Emirate of Cordoba, and the subsequent Caliphate of Cordoba, based on teachings from the Quran. Non-Muslims mostly Jews and Christians were invited or even forced to accept protected subject status (*dhimmi*), covering their religious, cultural and economic practices. The peaceful coexistence between residents from different communities (i.e. their *convivencia*) was not without its own difficulties, and has been the subject of much debate among historians. What remains certain, however, is that this arrangement produced remarkably effective intercultural and economic results, with major religious, artistic, medical and economic works from all three communities continuing to have an influence to this day. This initial model of *convivencia*, as established in Cordoba, was then and remains today a key contribution to the history of humanity, notwithstanding the inevitable disagreements, rivalries and conflicts between communities. These days, this Golden Age of *convivencia* now seen by many as a legendary and somewhat blessed period of history is often referred to in connection with successful dialogue or action that results in peaceful coexistence between individuals or groups, where the parties concerned have a desire to live

together in harmony while respecting each others differences. In this study, we will look at the words convivencia in Spanish (and Catalan), convivance in French (convivencia in Occitan) and convivence in English, as well as the concept underlying this term. We will adopt a different approach for each language concerned, as the word has its own specific connotations and evolution in each, thereby demanding a differentiated research and questioning strategy. In this small-scale research project, conducted online, we will also suggest areas of further research and consideration. This is a research topic that certainly merits further development, and the conclusions drawn herein are purely indicative in nature.

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