

Three Faiths, Frigiliana; photo, courtesy of the author



FRIGILIANA

ALAN RACE

Situated in the foothills of the mountain range Almirajara Sierra, and about 5 kms inland from the south Spanish coast near Nerja, is the breathtaking village of Frigiliana. It has won several awards for its stunning beauty. Archeological remains have revealed a prehistoric settlement and there was once a significant Roman presence.

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Firmly established on the tourist map, Frigiliana nevertheless cannot hide a certain sacredness. If you follow a route through the old quarters, keeping track of the 12 ceramic mosaics placed on the walls of houses which make up the narrow winding streets, you will read of the “battle of the rock of Frigiliana”. The mosaic tiles tell of the final stand of the Moors of that area against their Christian rulers in the mid 16th century. They were created by two women artists, the potter Amparo Ruiz de Luna and the glass painting artist Pilar García Millán.

As we know, Spain came into Christian rule at the end of the 15th century. But Moorish life continued in many places. In the plains of Almirajara Sierra some Moors rebelled against the strictures imposed on them. The Christian rulers put the rebellion down but the people took refuge in Frigiliana and the final battle took place in 1569, with the spilling of much Christian and Muslim blood.

But in recent years a small gesture has been made to recognise better times in an earlier Frigiliana. Just two years ago a metal sculpture was erected, depicting the three religions of the region, recalling a time when “three cultures” lived side by side under Muslim rule prior to the 15th century. This sculpture sits in a quiet public street, witnessing to the past, yes, but, more importantly, acting as a pointer to a future that needs to be built on a new dynamic relationship of traditions in change.

The sculpture shows the three religions firmly entwined, each recognisable, yet each intimately juxtaposed with the others. Surely, here is a sacredness calling us to new relationships.

Window Detail, Frigiliana; photo, courtesy of the author.

