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EDICIONES COMPLUTENSE

Introduction

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This special issue brings together nine articles under the rubric "Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages: between coexistence and conflict". The articles explore various aspects of the intellectual, social, legal and ideological aspects of relations between Christians and Muslims. The title of our issue might seem to suggest binary oppositions which in fact the articles dissipate. In the Middle Ages, Muslims are in fact a numerical minority amongst the populations of what we tend to call the "Islamic world", where a plurality of Christian communities and churches flourish (alongside communities of Jews, Zoroastrians, and others). In fact, a Christian in the "Muslim" world was arguably much less likely to face religious persecution than a Christian in Latin Europe, where religious elites defined an increasingly narrow orthodoxy and marginalized those outside of it through what one historian has dubbed "the formation of a persecuting society".[2]

Coexistence and conflict are also often posed as alternative readings of the relations between Medieval Christians and Muslims. For some writers, from the nineteenth century to today, the period is marked by jihad, crusade and Reconquista, and initiates a "clash of civilizations" in which we are still living today. Gisèle Littman, who writes under the nom de plume Bat Ye'or ('gift of the Nile' in Hebrew), has written a series of books on what she calls 'dhimmitude': the inferior status of Jews and Christians in premodern Muslim societies, which she depicts as all but slavery, in which *dhimmīs* live in fear and humiliation. This is of more than academic interest, for Littman: she argues that European societies are being gradually, insidiously islamicized, and that this will result in a 'new universal caliphate' that will impose dhimmi status once again on non-Muslims. Her books are best sellers among right-wing populists in Europe, Israel, and North America and help nourish conspiracy theories about collaboration between European leftist multiculturalists and Muslim fundamentalists. They also inspired Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik who murdered seventy-seven people in 2011 to stop, he said, the 'Islamization' of Norway.[3]

There is a rival myth widely in circulation, that of a Golden Age of *convivencia*: the dhimmi system, according to this narrative, is not oppressive, but on the contrary embodies tolerance and respect. This vision is first seen in writers of the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire, who contrasted the tolerance and sophistication of medieval Muslim rulers such as Saladin or his nephew Al-Kamil with the savage fanaticism of the Catholic Church, embodied in the Crusades.[4] This vision is subsequently picked up by nineteenth-century Ashkenazi Jews, some of whom idealized medieval Islam, in particular al-Andalus, as a haven of tolerance that allowed the flourishing of Jewish culture. This mythicized, tolerant Islam became a foil for contemporary Christian Europe, stained with antisemitism.[5] In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, a wide variety of writers have picked up on this theme, painting the society of Abbasid Baghdad or of al-Andalus as a sort of multicultural paradise where Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived in harmony and mutual respect. This is the picture of medieval Islam that one gets from reading the novels in British writer Tariq Ali's Islam Quintet, or from glowing descriptions of Andalucia's golden past in travel brochures. Specialists know well the inanity of these myths: yet they are persistent and produce biases that can color scholarship. In this issue, we have chosen to explore a few examples of the complex, intertwined cultural and intellectual relations between Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages.

Science, of course, is neither Christian nor Muslim. We can speak of Greek or Arabic science, in the sense that the two languages were dominant (but by no means exclusive) vehicles of scientific learning, respectively in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Those who wrote works of astronomy, medicine or other sciences in the Hellenistic world wrote largely in Greek, though many of them were Egyptian, Syrian or Persian. Similarly, many of those who translated and wrote scientific works in, for example, ninth- and tenth-century Baghdad were Persian or Syrian, and they were a mix of Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews.

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[2] R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society : Power and Deviance in Western Europe : 950-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

[3] Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, « When the Elders of Zion relocated to Eurabia: conspiratorial racialization in antisemitism and Islamophobia », *Patterns of Prejudice* 52 (2018): 314-37.

[4] John Victor Tolan, « Sons of Ishmael : Muslims through European eyes in the Middle Ages » (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), chap. 6.

[5] John Tolan, « The Prophet Muhammad: A Model of Monotheistic Reform for Nineteenth-Century Ashkenaz », *Common Knowledge* 24, nº 2 (1 avril 2018): 256-79, https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-4362457; John M. Efron, « German Jewry and the allure of the Sephardic » (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

Vicente Llamas Roig explores the "Mathematical syntax of the pre-Copernican sky". It has often been said that astronomical theory sought to "save the appearances", to explain in particular the movement of the planets from the perspective of an earth-centered cosmos. The problem is dual: first, astronomical theory posited that movements of celestial body in the super-lunar realm were perfectly circular (when in fact their trajectories are more ovoid); second, planets seem at certain moments to move backward or "retrograde" (when the earth in movement goes past them). Llamas Roig shows how various authors from antiquity through the late middle ages grapple with these problems, in Greek, Arabic and Latin, building on each other's works in an attempt to find universal laws of causality via the mathematization of the natural order. On the basis of this work and in response to it, Copernicus and Galileo abandoned the geocentric model and Kepler jettisoned the notion of circular movement of the planets. Newton imposed the same laws of physics on the superlunary and sublunary spheres. The geocentric Aristotelian worldview, the intellectual framework of Greek, Arab and Latin scientists in the Middle Ages, was shattered, giving way, concludes Llamas Roig, to "a non-homocentric logos appears in the world, opening a path in the modern age of the self."

Rafael Ramón Guerrero also illustrates how scientific and philosophical knowledge migrates between cultures and languages, looking at the example of the court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen, Holy Roman Emperor (1220-1250) and king of Sicily (1198-1250). Frederick granted patronage to some of the outstanding scholars of his day, including Michael Scot, Jacob ben Anatoli, Theodore of Antioch, and Leonardo Fibonacci. These men variously served Frederick as court astrologers, physicians, authors of imperial correspondence in Arabic, or ambassadors to Arab rulers. They also were able to pursue their scientific research, writing and translation (in Arabic, Hebrew and Latin) in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and other disciplines.

Various Jewish, Christian and Muslim thinkers sought to reconcile Aristotelian and Ptolemaic conceptions of cosmology scriptural descriptions of the creation of the world by God. Others used the story of the creation of the world in 6 days for polemical purposes: for some Muslim exegetes, Jews and Christians erroneously suggest that God needed to rest on the seventh day, as if He could become tired. As Shafique Virani shows, the eleventh century Persian Ismaili poet and exegete Nāṣir-i Khusraw develops an allegorical, mystical reading of the Quranic story of the creation in six days, linking those days to the six great prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad). The seventh day announces the arrival of the Mahdi, or Qa'im al-Muhammad, who will usher in an age of truth, light, and peace: and, who will usher in an age of truth, light, and peace by revealing the inner meaning hidden in the external forms of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim revelation.

Christian polemics against Islam were often based on hostile legends concerning the prophet Muhammad and the revelation of the Quran, but also at times on the study of the Quranic text, notably based on the first Latin translation by Robert of Ketton in 1143.[6] Yet perhaps the first translation of the Qur'an, now extant only in fragments, was into Greek in the eighth or ninth century. It was used by various authors, notably by Niketas of Byzantium in his ninth-century polemic against Islam. Manolis Ulbricht proposes a method for analyzing and categorizing the Greek translations of Quran fragments. Some passages are translated verbatim, others transformed (knowingly or unwittingly) at times with polemical intent, other passages are paraphrased or merely alluded to.

Beyond the intellectual endeavors of scholars in sciences and theology, Christians and Muslims lived cheek by jowl in the same towns, from Baghdad to Barcelona. Muslim law, as it evolved in the first several centuries after the hegira, defined a protected but inferior social and legal status for Jews and Christians as *ahl al-kitab,* people of the book, and in practice often allowed their communities a broad legal autonomy to regulate internal conflicts. In Latin Europe, notably in the Christian Iberian kingdoms, a similar inferior legal status with juridical autonomy was accorded to Jews and subsequently extended to Muslims.[7] Ana Echevarría shows how in late fourteenth-century Spain, jurists continued to extend to Muslims legal restrictions which had previously concerned only Jews. She presents a study of the Muslim community of Toledo based on the analysis one inheritance lawsuit that dragged on for years in the 1390s and 1400s and which left 400 pages of transcripts. The court calls on a mixed group of witnesses (Muslims, Christians, and Christian converts from Judaism and Islam) to establish the legal precedent among Toledan Muslims concerning the rights of a Muslim woman to inherit when there were no male heirs. While Muslim law and the legal tradition of the mudejars of Toledo both prescribed that only Muslim heirs could inherit the goods of their Muslim parents, over the long course of the trial, and through pressure brought by bishop and king, Castilian law finally triumphed over Muslim law, and the Christian heirs were accorded their share of the inheritance. A telling example of the fragility of minority legal autonomy and of the gradual affirmation of Castilian Christian law and identity to the detriment of those of Jews and Muslims.

Antonio Musarra revisits the historiography of the crusades, and in particular the first crusade, situating Pope Urban II's call to arms at the council of Clermont (1095) into the larger perspective of papal policies of Urban and his predecessors. The term "crusade" was invented in the thirteenth century, in large part by canonists, and hence it

[6] Cándida Ferrero Hernández et John Tolan, éd., *The Latin Qur'an, 1143-1500 Translation, Transition, Interpretation.*, The European Qur'an (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021).

[7] John Tolan et al., *Religious minorities in Christian, Jewish and Muslim law (5th-15th centuries)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017); Maribel Fierro et John V. Tolan, éd., *The Legal Status of Dimmī-s in the Islamic West (Second/Eighth - Ninth/Fifteenth Centuries)*, vol. 1, Religion and Law in Medieval Christian and Muslim Societies (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Ana Echevarría, Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, et John Victor Tolan, éd., *Law and Religious Minorities in Medieval Societies: Between Theory and Praxis = De La Teoría Legal a La Práctica En El Derecho de Las Minoría Religiosas En La Edad Media*, Religion and Law in Medieval Christian and Muslim Societies (RELMIN) 9 (Law and Religious minorities in Medieval Societies: between theory and praxis, Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

is somewhat futile to try to classify eleventh-century papally endorsed military activities against Muslim forces in Spain, Sicily and the Levant as "crusades", "pre-crusades" or "proto-crusades". For Musarra, these papal policies are part of a coherent strategy of reaffirmation of papal power in the wake of the Peace of God movement and in the context of the ongoing schism in the Roman church, as rival Pope Clement III had the support of Emperor Henry IV. Urban sought to encourage monarchs to recover lost Christian territories from the hands of Muslims, "Turks in Asia and Moors in Europe", and to reestablish bishoprics that recognized papal authority.

Emir Filipović studies the contrasting images of the Ottoman Turks in archival sources from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Ragusa had for centuries alternated between political autonomy and subjection to Venice or Hungary. In the fourteenth century, as Ottoman troops raided and subsequently conquered large swaths of the Balkans, Ragusa established diplomatic and economic ties with the Sublime Porte and with regional Ottoman officials, finally becoming a tributary of the Ottoman sultan in 1442. The shifting nature of the relationship explains the changing tone in Ragusan sources descriptions of the Turks: from feared marauders and potential conquerors, to economic and diplomatic partners. But much of the differences also result from the varied nature of the sources: letters to Ottoman officials are filled with solicitude and affirmations of friendship and confidence, while missives sent to Catholic figures (the pope, the king of Hungary) tend to depict the Turks as fierce barbarian enemies of Christendom.

Daniel König reflects on the potential benefits of adapting methodologies from communication studies to the study of sources on Christian-Muslim relations. He looks at a wide variety of types of sources testifying to acts of communication between Christians and Muslims: direct written communication in the form of letters, symbolic communication in the form for example of coins. Oral communication left traces in legal, narrative and other texts, though the extent to which they were preserved, distorted or altered is difficult to ascertain. Focusing on communication, opines König, "seems to represent one of our best keys to understand the historical dimensions of human interaction in and beyond the field of interreligious relations."

My contribution takes a broad look at the historiography of Medieval Christian-Muslim relations over the last sixty years, specifically since the publication of Norman Daniel's *Islam and the West* in 1960 and Richard Southern's *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (1962). I contrast their approaches: Daniel extensively catalogues negative portrayals of Islam, its prophet and its holy books, denouncing them as products of their authors' ignorance. Southern, on the contrary, attempts to place Latin writers' often polemical responses into perspective by trying to understand the military, cultural and intellectual challenges that Islam posed to Latin Christians. Subsequent research has navigated between these two poles: Edward Said largely followed Daniel in portraying a "West" fundamental hostile to Islam, stuck in a sort of eternal orientalism, while other scholars have built on Southern's intuitions and tried to carefully contextualize the variety of Christian portrayals of Islam and Muslim (and Muslim portrayals of Christianity and Christians). Recent decades have seen a burgeoning of new texts and studies in the field, with a broadening the kind of texts studied (legal texts, for example). Fundamental to escaping the constrictive paradigm of an East/West divide has been the highlighting of the variety of Eastern Christianities and their profound implication in Islamicate societies.