

Early Modern Islamo-Christian Dialogue:
Antonio de Sosa and the Mediterranean Polemical Repertoire

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
(Spanish)

at the
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
2019

Date of final examination: 5/7/2019

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation approaches the classic dichotomy of Christianity and Islam in the Mediterranean, and teases out nuances of their relationship during the early modern period. It presents four chapters on religious figures, miracles, holy war, and linguistic capital which demonstrate four mechanisms that Christianity and Islam used as conduits to advance their narratives. Many times these were mechanisms of a polemical nature, but they also demonstrate the parallels that existed between the two worldviews. While certain genres of writing were deliberately structured polemics, polemical arguments conditioned a variety of writers' perspectives and observations in other genres. Because of their polemical history, these two major Mediterranean religions were familiar with the things that separated them, and many times they exaggerated those differences in order to stand out. These parallels and differences are studied departing from a variety of texts produced by Mediterranean itinerants, many of them based out of Spain. The major text of study is Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía de Argel*, published in 1612 but written decades earlier to describe the writer's surroundings and observations during his captivity in Algiers. Sosa's text serves as a point of departure into a bevy of selected topics that elucidate how Islamic and Christian writers and travelers presented themselves and their opposition in their historical artifacts. Sosa very often ridicules local religious figures, the marabouts, as fools, and he furthermore derides the Muslim people who have the gullibility to believe in them; in so doing, he seeks to discredit Islam as a whole. To broaden the focus of these critiques, I place Sosa's comments in the context of Islamo-Christian polemical writings and arguments that stretch from the beginnings of Islam to the early modern period. Subsequent chapters focus on miracles, holy war narrative, and language as linguistic capital as points of departure to better understand the nature of the relationship between Christianity and Islam at this time.

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INTRODUCTION

AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE MEETS AN IMMOVABLE OBJECT: SIXTEENTH CENTURY ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN POLEMIC

An unstoppable force meets an immovable object: two unyielding entities that never seem to gain any ground against one another, and their struggle is destined to go on in perpetuity.¹ Both Muslims and Christians in Spain and around the Mediterranean used persuasion and gumption in their pursuit to make the other see things the way they did during the early modern period. They were two social fabrics that had much in common, but just enough to make them incompatible with each other after many attempts at conciliation. Because of Américo Castro's claim of *convivencia* in his 1962 *La realidad histórica de España*, some confusion and questions have remained regarding the peaceful cohabitation between the three religions of the Book. Medieval historian Jocelyn Hillgarth argues that, instead of peaceful coexistence, distrust, prejudice, and conflict permeated the relationships among the three cultures.² This dissertation will focus primarily on the relationships between Christians and Muslims, and there are a number of questions that will be considered: how was it that these religious practitioners were able to coexist *at all* for a time? How did the fissures between them become manifest in the early modern period? And finally, how did those fissures actually reveal a series of shared assumptions that they each held? Perhaps we may state that this dissertation's genesis is found more so in the parallels between Christians and Muslims than in their differences.

¹ The phrase comes from a superhero movie, *The Dark Knight* (2007).

² See the introduction to Pérez, by Helen Nader. The book she cites is: *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516* [2 vols]. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Christians and Muslims had a complex relationship in the manners that they interacted with each other: in their efforts to convert one another and in their efforts to propagandize victory to their fellow adherents. Barbara Fuchs puts it succinctly: “As the historiography of medieval and early modern Spain puts pressure on older notions of *convivencia* and *mudejarismo*, the field has moved to more nuanced accounts of Iberian identities and cultural production” (1). And nuanced accounts are what I intend to present in this dissertation. Much is known about the early modern text *Topografía de Argel*, and it has been a valuable source of knowledge for writers over the last four centuries. But only since the 1970s has the contention existed that it be attributed to Dr. Antonio de Sosa instead of its original publisher Diego de Haedo. My intention here is to further scrutinize Sosa’s great work to parse out details hidden therein in connection with contemporary texts and events. Fuchs later on writes: “The story of maurophilia must be told dialectically, from within and from without Iberia, and across the cultural spectrum, reading its sophisticated textual productions alongside the habitus of Moorishness that so profoundly marked Spain” (10). In full agreement, this dissertation is formatted dialectically: voices and nuanced accounts are presented from both the Islamic perspective as well as the Christian. Sosa’s text serves as a point of departure into a bevy of selected topics that elucidate how Islamic and Christian writers and travelers presented themselves and their opposition in their historical artifacts.

But the paradigm of the early modern Mediterranean should not be simplified into a strict battle between the two major territory-controlling religions. There are countless examples of crossover. A perfect example is the island of Lampedosa and a certain cave there as described by Alonso de Contreras:

Dicen [que Lampedosa] está encantada y que en esta isla fue donde se dieron la batalla el rey Rugero y Bradamonte: para mí, fábula. Pero lo que no lo es: hay una cueva que se entra a paso llano; en ella hay una imagen de Nuestra Señora con un Niño en brazos, pintada en tela sobre una tabla muy antigua y que hace muchos milagros; en esta cueva hay su altar en que está la imagen, con muchas cosas que han dejado allí de limosnas cristianas, hasta bizcocho, queso, aceite, tocino, vino y dinero. Al otro lado de la cueva hay un sepulcro, donde dicen está enterrado un morabito turco que dicen es un santo suyo y tiene las mismas limosnas que nuestra imagen, más y menos, y mucho ropaje turquesco; sólo no tiene tocino. Es cosa cierta que esta limosna de comida la dejan los cristianos y turcos porque cuando llegan allí, si se huye algún esclavo, tenga con qué comer hasta que venga bajel de su nación y le lleve, si es cristiano o turco; hémoslo visto porque con las galeras de la Religión se nos ha huido moros y quedándose allí hasta que ha venido bajel de moros y se embarca en él, y en el ínter come de aquel bastimento (28).

[They say that the island is enchanted and that there is where the battle between the King Rugero and Bradamonte was waged: for me, fiction. However, what is not fiction: there is a cave that one can enter without stumbling; in it there is an image of Our Lady with a Child in her arms, painted on fabric above an antique table, and it does many miracles; in this cave there is her altar, on which is the image, with many things that Christians have left as alms—biscuit, cheese, oil, bacon, wine, and money. On the other side of the cave there is a tomb where they say a Turkish marabout is buried who they say is one of their saints, and it has the same alms as our image, more or less, and a lot of Turkish clothing; only there is no bacon. It's true that Christians and Turks leave this alms of food so that, when they arrive there, if any slave is fleeing, they have something to eat until a vessel

from their nation comes and takes them away, whether they are Christian or Turkish; we have seen it because with the galleys of the Religion [the Knights of Malta] some Muslims have fled from us and stayed until a Muslim vessel embarks there, and in the interim they ate those provisions.]

Nabil Matar writes about the era that captivity was an international leveler, often bringing together Christians and Muslims in similar plight (52), and Contreras' comments about Lampedosa seem to bear that out. Although there are differences between the Christian and Muslim shrines, they demonstrate a number of affinities. Further parsing this description, we can anticipate many of the components that are to follow in these chapters.

Contreras himself draws parallels between the Christian shrine and the Muslim tomb: “*tiene las mismas limosnas que nuestra imagen.*” The island and the cave represent a shared space between the two religions. Both the shrine and tomb reside together in the cave and each seems to be respected: Contreras does not mention any vandalizing or disrespect—even though he recently finished talking about one of their corsairing expeditions in which they took as captives even women and children. How do these seemingly contradictory behaviors make any sense? On the one hand they rob and enslave men, women, and children from Muslim nations, but when it comes to a marabout tomb that shares a space with a shrine to Our Lady they leave it alone?

This place provides us a glimpse into the complexities and nuances of relations between Christian and Muslim figures around the Mediterranean. There were rules to the game they played—common assumptions that they held—and among these both Christians and Muslims struggled to dominate the other in a variety of maneuvers. The following chapters present four

fields in which the Christians and Muslims struggled to gain the upper hand by either propaganda or force. As Ibn Khaldūn puts it: they both utilized the sword and the pen.

As the Christians paid homage to the image of Our Lady, the Muslims revered the tomb of a marabout. What was a marabout? And did (does) Islam have a system of saints as the Christians do? The first chapter deals in large part with these figures by way of Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía de Argel* and its many mentions of them. Sosa uninhibitedly ridicules the religious figure as a bumbling fool for a bumbling people who have the gullibility to believe in them; and in so doing, he seeks to discredit Islam as a whole.

To broaden the focus of these critiques, I place Sosa's comments in the context of Islamo-Christian polemical writings and arguments that stretch from the beginnings of Islam to the early modern period. The chapter presents the basics of polemics—religions had to be aware of what separated them, and many times they exaggerated and even invented their differences to polemical ends. In the end, they are, then, focused on many of the same themes. Sosa, intentionally or not, seems to be conducting an attack on Islam similar to those that early Christian polemicists leveled against inchoate Islam. An early Islamic theologian, al-Jāhiz, protests these early polemicists and their tactics:

Our nation has not been afflicted by Jews, Magians or Sabeans as much as by the Christians; for in the polemic with us, they choose contradictory statements in Muslim traditions (as the targets of their attacks). They select for disputations the equivocal verses in the Qur'ān and (hold us responsible for) the *Hadiths*, the chains of transmitters of which are defective. Then they enter into private conversation with our weak-minded, and question them concerning the texts which they have chosen to assail. [...] And how

unfortunate that every Muslim looks upon himself as a theologian and thinks that everyone is fit to lead a discussion with an atheist! (Khan 195.)

Al-Jāhiz's protestations could similarly apply to Sosa's writings. In both chapter one and two of the dissertation I reveal how Sosa did not so much attack the mainstream religious practices of Islam (although there are examples of that), but he focused his criticism on the marabouts—mystic religious leaders that were popular in Algiers, where he was held captive. These mystics many times had unorthodox Islamic practices, and thus Sosa used them to show how contradictory and backwards the religion was. Sosa certainly makes these figures out to be “weak-minded,” and that the people of Algiers were similarly so because of their credulity.

The first chapter focuses in greater detail on the polemical aspects of Sosa's text while the second chapter uses the theme of miracles to plunge deeper into various arguments that confirmed or refuted either Christianity or Islam over the other. Notice that Contreras highlights the fact that the shrine to Our Lady in the cave of Lampedosa did “many miracles,” and that no such description is equally awarded the marabout. What were miracles to Christians were artifice to Muslims, and vice versa. But what purpose did miracles serve and why are they ubiquitous in many Christian and Muslim texts? Miracles served a dual purpose: they were used to solidify a belief as proof, but they were also used to construct a ridiculing narrative of the other. In fact, absurdity itself is a theme in the *Diálogo de los morabutos*, which I explore in chapter two, as Sosa observes and examines the quotidian customs and rituals of the Algerians. Both Christians and Muslims used miracles as manners to justify their beliefs and promote fact that they were in the right. And what other parallel can we glean from this cave on Lampedosa? Whether Christian or Muslim, Mediterranean travelers looked for a more mystical, immediate form of religion to

solve their problems and offer them hope. They maintained the belief that they could be rescued by a miracle, and they were comforted by the fact that God was in control of their destinies.

Chapter three covers a variety of topics all focused around the theme of the continuing holy war. The medieval term had been dragged into the early modern period as a talking point, but it no longer sought to retake the holy land by gigantic, unruly crusades. Its praxis changed for both Christians and Muslims. The glorious romanticism of the holy war was certainly evident, as I will demonstrate in the final pages of *Diálogo de los morabutos*, the final section of Sosa's *Topografía*, but in practice this romanticism came face to face with reality. The Knights of St. John no longer kept a fortress in the holy land, nor Rhodes, and were graciously allowed to reside on Malta, and despite these retreats they continued to fight for "the Religion." Christians faced similar disillusion in the North African *presidio* of Orán, which began under Cardinal Cisneros as an auspicious new endeavor to counter the Islamization of Africa.³ The endeavor ended in disappointment, and the remaining soldiers at the *presidio* were forced to raid and plunder for subsistence. But not all holy wars were fought with Ibn Khaldūn's "sword," and Ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī demonstrates this alternative *jihād* of words in his book *Nāṣr al-Dīn*. This alternative form harkens back to the more formal polemical texts covered in chapter one. Each of these texts, concepts, or entities expressed a will to fight in the name of religion, and we will ask to what extent their mission was truly religious compared with their desire to legitimize non-religious ventures with religion.

The final chapter describes how the Arabic language could be used by native and non-native speakers as a form of capital and to gain certain advantages. Arabic also served as a type of cultural code for Muslims and it contains an intimate part of their heritage; this comes to the

³ Sosa remarks in the *Topografía* that the Arabs had essentially stolen North Africa. What began as being controlled by the West (Rome), was now in tatters thanks to Islam.

forefront when discussing the Morisco “problem” of the sixteenth century in Spain. Though the short-lived terms of capitulation of 1492 were lenient, under Cardinal Cisneros the Spanish Church became hostile to Moriscos shortly after and began to prohibit their ways of life—including the use of Arabic. Despite these proscriptions, Church figures spanning the century continued to understand the utility that Arabic could serve in approaching the Moriscos in a meaningful way, and later converting them. Evidently they were unsuccessful, but what did some of these attempts at using Arabic as a conversion technique look like? Was there push-back from the Morisco community? Was Arabic even compatible with Christianity? Being a polyglot was also useful all over the Mediterranean, and I take a nuanced look at a number of other cases such as al-Ḥajarī, Leo Africanus, and other Mediterranean itinerants.

It should be noted that this dissertation focuses almost exclusively on interactions between Muslims and Christians, and that it does not comment on the third religion of the Book: Judaism. It is beyond the scope here to comprehensively treat all three religions. Parallels abound, however, in many contexts. For example, Henry Kamen writes the following about the expulsion of the Jews in 1492: “The tragic exodus of a people who were treated as strangers but had known no other home—both rich and poor, old and young, struggling abroad with the meagre possessions allowed them, cheated and robbed at every stage of their journey—ended the long history of the Jews in Spain” (42). This declaration could easily and equally apply to the Moriscos and their expulsions between 1609 and 1614. Both Jews and Moriscos suffered prejudice and inequality even after they converted, or quasi-converted, to Christianity.⁴

Salient religious figures, miracles, holy war discourse, and the use of Arabic each constitute avenues of more nuanced study into the early modern interaction between Christianity

⁴ Some good places to begin regarding the Jews in Spain are the few pages in Kamen (38-44), and Joseph Pérez, *Los judíos en España* and *History of Tragedy*.

and Islam around the Mediterranean. Many times these were mechanisms of a polemical nature, but they also demonstrate the parallels that existed between the two worldviews. In many ways they were incompatible and they seemed to bicker intransigently—both Antonio de Sosa and al-Ḥajarī even seemed to be having fun at times, laughing derisively at the beliefs of their opponents. However, as Matar said, there were many situations that leveled Christians and Muslims equally—like a Mediterranean form of Saturnalia—and they shared similar plight in a variety of circumstances. This dialectic struggle between the unstoppable force and the immovable object provided a stage for both religions to define themselves in the Mediterranean space, and we continue to refine our cultural understanding of the interaction between them.

CHAPTER I

ANTONIO DE SOSA AND THE MAD MARABOUTS OF ALGIERS

Sansón Carrasco and Don Quixote's other friends were determined to put an end to his madness and his wanderings, though not without a measure of malice. At one point it seems they were jealous of the freedom that his madness awarded him—he had even entered into the hospitality of one of the most powerful dukes in Spain, something that no ordinary hidalgo such as he should have ever dreamed of. But despite their desire, on the one hand, to see Don Quixote back at home and sound of mind, on the other hand they shamelessly took advantage of his madness and found ample enjoyment in his mental fragility. It was a cruel and exploitative laughter. In Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía de Argel* (1612) we witness another kind of cruel, exploitative laughter, the object of which is a North African figure designated as the *morabuto*, or marabout, a major religious leader.

Sosa shows an ideological agenda seeking to discredit and subvert Islam by presenting the religion and its customs as absurd and illogical. While the *Topografía* contains plenty of observable information about the city of Algiers that has been of use to historians throughout the centuries, one would not be surprised to learn that Sosa belonged to the same ecclesiastical bureaucracy responsible for the Inquisition. His Christian perspective conditions the massive work, in which he liberally displays the cruelty of his captors and the backwardness of the Arab civilization that imprisoned him. But before being taken captive in 1577, Sosa had become adept in navigating the church hierarchy, and the connections he made and the adroitness with which he pushed the correct bureaucratic papers helped him during his captivity, saw him through a

professional scandal, and secured his church position until his sudden death in 1587. In an age when church functionaries, from the lowliest priest to the pope, were the targets of criticism and skepticism, Antonio de Sosa dedicated many passages of the *Topografía* to criticizing a major religious figure of Islamic Algerian society.

The discrediting of another's religion was not only a characteristic of Sosa's text, but also of many polemical and non-polemical texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both Islamic and Christian. Norman Daniel says it well when describing the writing strategies of polemicists: "When two societies are at war, or confidently expect to be at war, they must mutually be aware of whatever separates them, especially in belief, in the practices of daily life and in the events of past and contemporary history which they share. There is likely to be a tendency to exaggerate or invent differences" (246). Although stating that Christianity and Islam were "societies at war" overly simplifies the circumstances of the time, we must continuously keep in mind that these writers heavily exaggerated or invented differences, and it cannot be overstated how much a reader should be suspicious of these. Mikel de Epalza tells us about an Islamic polemicist 'Abdallah al-Tarjumān⁵ and his text, the *Tuhfa*, *The Gift of the Scholar to Refute the Adherents of the Cross*, that the overall object of the text glorifies Islam, and that glory departs from the absurdity of Islam's rivals: "Porque la gloria del Islam, 'la mejor de las religiones,' se hace aquí partiendo del absurdo del cristianismo. Es típica actitud de un convertido, pero es también típica actitud polémica. [...] La *Tuhfa*, para exaltar el Islam, muestra sobre todo la absurdidad del cristianismo" [Because the glory of Islam, 'the greatest of religions,' is made here departing from the absurdity of Christianity. This is the typical attitude of a convert,

⁵ Al-Tarjumān's (formerly Fray Anselmo Turmeda) religious odyssey is described in the first portion of the *Tuhfa*. He seemed to have an epiphany in Mallorca while studying for the clergy, traveled to North Africa, and converted to Islam.

but it's also a typical polemical attitude. (...) The *Tuhfa*, to exalt Islam, shows above all the absurdity of Christianity] (103).⁶ At a certain point, a polemicist exhausts many of the possible *positive* arguments of his own religion and, therefore, must reinforce his arguments by bringing down the other religion, and this is precisely what al-Tarjumān does in the *Tuhfa* just as Sosa does in the *Topografía*.

Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía de Argel* constitutes a compendium of genres—parts of it can be described as ethnographical, topographical study, demographic study, military reconnaissance report, history of kings and martyrs, among other things. Sosa's main influence came from Giovanni Leone Africano's (Leo Africanus) volume *Description of Africa*, which seems to have provided some topical format and material that Sosa used. While the *Topografía* includes encyclopedic information about Algiers' geography and demographics, another essential purpose is to ideologically undermine Islamic culture by criticizing the particulars that Sosa indefatigably observed during his captivity. Many captives tended to write about their experiences in captivity, using both fiction and non-fiction as their medium. Miguel de Cervantes, Antonio de Sosa's friend and fellow Iberian native, depicted many captives' woes shortly after returning to Spain through the words of his character Sayavedra in *Trato de Argel*: “Cuando llegué cautivo, y vi esta tierra / tan nombrada en el mundo, que en su seno / tantos piratas cubre, acoge y cierra / no pude al llanto detener el freno” [When I arrived captive and saw this land so well-known in the world, that in its breast so many pirates dwell, I couldn't restrain my weeping] (vv. 396-399). While Cervantes would generally change his tone toward the treatment of Muslims, treating them with equality and decent human dignity—particularly

⁶ Translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

through literary characters such as Ricote and Ana Félix in *Don Quixote*—Antonio de Sosa shows himself less flexible.

To undermine his Islamic oppressors Sosa adopts a variety of techniques and arguments; these are systematic only in the sense that he organizes his book into parts, divisions, and chapters, but the negative treatment of Islam is many times unsystematic and spontaneous because it is connected to whatever cultural observation he is touching on at a given moment. Certain portions recall traditional arguments made by *Antialcoranic* literature, that is, polemical Christian literature against Islam; however, some of Sosa's attacks against Islam are unique to him because of the specific captivity circumstances he underwent. This chapter discusses how Sosa observes and comprehends Algerian marabouts and how he casts them in a negative light as a way of discrediting Islam as a whole. However, the *raison d'être* of the marabouts has much to do with the divisions of the religion, and thus, in spite of Sosa's agenda to rationally dismantle Islam, I will discuss how he also misses the opportunity to exploit these divisions. In order to properly understand his comments, it is necessary to orient them within his historical circumstances, within the tradition of polemical arguments, and within a historical definition of "marabout."

Antonio de Sosa

María Antonia Garcés provides groundbreaking and detailed information about the nature of the text, its publication, and the biography of Antonio de Sosa in her edition of the *Topografía*. These biographical details have been difficult to bring to light for many reasons, one of which being that the text was originally published by Diego de Haedo in 1612, nearly thirty

years after Sosa's death. Garcés never questions the authorship of Sosa, but because of this thirty-year gap, readers should recognize the possibility that there may have been other writers who contributed to the text's contents, possibly Haedo himself.

Sosa's biographical Mediterranean odyssey, studied thoroughly by Garcés, takes nearly as many turns as that of Ulysses. He was a respected figure of the Hispano-Italian ecclesiastical hierarchy, serving as vicar to the Bishop Orozco de Arce in Sicily.⁷ He had obtained the title of *Doctor in utroque iure*, doctor of canon and civil law, as well as a Doctor of Theology. In 1576 his bishop died, providing him an opportunity to rise in the *cursus honorum* of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and he had the clout to personally write to King Philip II for a recommendation—a connection that he would later rue. In 1577, on his way to claim his new ecclesiastical post in Sicily, a Turkish corsair vessel intercepted his ship and he was taken captive to Algiers with his family, which consisted of his “sister” (who was probably in fact his mistress), a nephew, and three household servants.⁸ It is important to note that Sosa traveled in a galley belonging to the Knights of the Order of Malta—the primary rival of Algerian corsairs, and thus it is not surprising that the ransom price for Sosa and his family was three times the price required for Cervantes, fifteen hundred ducats. Philip II took personal interest in Sosa's captivity, writing various letters and orders to secure Sosa's deanship in Agrigento, because he had never made it to his post, and this was important because securing the position meant that he could collect a salary and pay his own ransom. Garcés asserts that Sosa escaped from Algiers after four years of captivity, a tale that he never mentions explicitly in letters, presumably on a European merchant ship (64). But his Algerian captivity was not the end of the troubles he would experience. In

⁷ Many biographical details come from the *Introduction* section “Sosa's Identity” (57-78).

⁸ Cervantes fictionalizes the capture of the *San Pablo*, Sosa's ship, in the second act of *Trato de Argel*. For more information on captivity in Algiers, see Friedman and Rostagno.

1582 he was accused of “being an ordained Augustinian friar who had left the order taking the habit of a lay priest. At the time, an ordained friar could not leave his Order except to enter a more rigorous one, a move requiring a papal dispensation, otherwise he was considered an apostate” (67).⁹ The scrutiny gave rise to another discovery: “he has been living together for years with a woman who is always with him, passing as his sister” (68). Sosa was convicted in 1582 and he undertook the best option available to him—to go to Rome for a papal pardon. Despite receiving the pardon, this shaming saga soured Philip II toward Sosa, and the king sent furious letters to remove Sosa from his post. Ironically, one condition of Sosa’s papal pardon included that he return to Algiers to console Christian captives imprisoned there.

Two Authors

Sosa’s comments seem to present conflicting evaluations of the inhabitants of Algiers. At times he praises them, and other times he unloads a tirade of prejudice. In the introduction to her edition, María Antonia Garcés writes a section entitled “Complexities of the *Topography of Algiers*” and she says: “A second difficulty of the *Topography* emerges from its various and at times contradictory perspectives [...] Indeed, one could infer now and then that we are dealing with two authors. [...] The text abounds in such ambiguities. [...] As a man of the Church, Sosa could not avoid prejudice, as we shall see, and his purpose was in part propagandist” (3-4). Sosa certainly manifested a prejudice toward Muslims and his purpose was, indeed, propagandist, but it does not seem to me that the *Topografía* contains “contradictory perspectives” or supports the notion that “we are dealing with two authors.” Rather, Sosa remains true to his propagandist

⁹ This is ironic because, aside from the marabouts, Sosa ruthlessly attacked the renegades in Algiers; now he was effectively being accused of a similar abandonment of the faith.

objective, yet he is still able to recognize particular aspects of Islamic society that function well in spite of ideological or religious difference. Sosa's seemingly positive comments strike me more as a criticism of Christians for their lack of piety and devotion rather than praise for Muslims. A similar position regarding Islam is described by Ricoldo di Monte Croce much earlier in 1291 about Muslims in Baghdad:

We refer here briefly to some of the works of perfection of the Muslims rather to shame the Christians than to commend the Muslims. Who will not be astounded, if he carefully considers how great is the concern of these very Muslims for their study, their devotion to prayer, their pity for the poor, their reverence from the name of God and the prophets and the Holy Places, their sobriety in manners, their hospitality to strangers, their harmony and love for each other?¹⁰

Given Sosa's strong words against the renegades of Algiers, shaming also seems to be his objective.

Garcés writes that Sosa inserts humorous anecdotes, for example, that of the dwarf marabout (Chapter 35), but she does not emphasize that these anecdotes are inserted cynically with caustic sarcasm intended to elicit laughter from the reader at the ridiculousness of the Islamic customs, not so much at their innocent silliness. She uses a passage from chapter 27 to show Sosa "decr[ying] the religious beliefs" of the Muslims, saying that the Qur'ān is nothing but a book of tall tales dreamed up by Muhammad; then she signals a passage from chapter 37, as proof of the "contradictory perspectives," in which he "praises the piety of good Muslims:" "He who finally determines to live like a good Muslim is indeed a devout one, and the elders are

¹⁰ Cited from Daniel 196.

as observant of the Law and as devout in making the salat at the proper hours, ... fasting, and abstaining from wine and liquor. Christians, God willing, should be as devout in their holy observances of the precepts of God” (4). Instead of admiration for Muslims, this passage seems more like a mirror, addressing the shortfalls of Christians. This appears at the end of a chapter entitled “Algerian Virtues,” which balances the one before it entitled “Algerian Vices.” Although the chapter is about virtues, he begins with certain qualifications that seem to nullify any admiration he may feel: “Along with human nature, God created nothing to which He did not grant some good quality and virtue, although often hidden from us. [...] Although these are not enough to excuse or cover over their great vices, we still wish to list these virtues here” (244). The second “virtue” addressed by Sosa shows the mirror aspect of his comments, indicting the bad behavior of Christians rather than necessarily praising Muslims. He sees virtue in the fact that they never gamble, but then continues on to criticize that the renegades, former Christians, “are the same card sharks in Algiers that they were in their native lands” (244).¹¹ Thus, Sosa simply points out that the Muslims may hold a certain devotion and zeal for their religion that Christians would be wise to emulate.¹²

Topography of Algiers

The *Topografía de Argel* is separated into five divisions: first a series of observations, demographic and ethnographic in nature, contained in forty-one chapters; second what is titled

¹¹ See Hutchinson’s “Topografía de los caminos...” for information on the demographics recorded by Sosa. If correct, the information shows that renegades made up a major demographic of the city.

¹² Henceforth I will refer to part one of the five as the *Topografía*, and citations from this part come from the Garcés edition because it is already translated to English. The other four parts will be referred to by name (*Epítome de los reyes*, *Diálogo de la cautividad*, *Diálogo de los mártires*, and *Diálogo de los morabutos*) and will be cited from the 1929 edition. The translations are my own.

Epítome de los reyes de Argel, which is basically a history of the rulers of the city; and finally there are three *Diálogos*: of martyrs, captives, and marabouts.

Sosa certainly shows interest in describing the physical characteristics of Algiers, its people, and its culture, but he was held under difficult and severe conditions, and records many of his observations through a prism aimed at ideologically subverting what he perceived as Islamic culture. Garcés asserts that part of Sosa's intent was bellicose, providing details to precipitate an invasion of the city (315 n.2). He spends considerable time in his overview of the city dedicating a chapter to its ramparts, another to its gates, and another to its fortifications, and others to the roles of each echelon of the Turkish janissary soldiers. Garcés maintains that Sosa detailed the defenses of Algiers to facilitate a military incursion and that he even provided certain spy information, but Sosa also speaks well of the certain inhabitants and kings of the city in chapter 37 on "Algerian Virtues" and in the *Epítome de los reyes*, particularly Hasan Aga and Hasan Corso (278 and 314 respectively). As mentioned above, Sosa's text is full of these *apparent* contradictions, but I do not find it contradictory that Sosa can praise positive behavior, even coming from a Muslim, and at the same time condemn Muslims for their religion or the renegades for their apostasy.

Much of Sosa's inspiration for the *Topografía* comes from *Delle navigationi e viaggi* or *History and Description of Africa*, written by Africanus and published by Giovanni Ramusio in Venice in 1550.¹³ Sosa admits that he had a copy of this volume in his prison cell in 1579 (Garcés 34). Ironically, it is probable that the hybridity of the *Topografía* owes to Arab literary tradition, given that Africanus' *Description of Africa* was a major influence. Serafín Fanjul says

¹³ For details about the scholarship on Africanus' *Description*, see the introduction to Davis' *Trickster Travels* (3-13).

in the “Introducción” to *Description*: “alguna vinculación tiene la *Descripción* con la literatura árabe, no sólo por el origen del autor, sino por continuar la tradición geográfica árabe anterior y por servirse de expedientes propios de la literatura de *adab*: intercalación de anécdotas, chascarrillos, alusiones personales, comentarios históricos, filosóficos, etc.” [the *Descripción* has some link with Arab literature, not only the origin of the author, but for continuing the previous Arab geographic tradition and serving as an expedient of *adab* literature: the merging of anecdotes, jokes, personal allusions, historical commentaries, philosophy, etc.] (44). If we follow how the leading scholar of Africanus Oumelbanine Zhiri describes his work, we can also get an idea of how Sosa worked. Zhiri writes: “Léon s’intéresse, bien plus qu’à la terre elle-même, à ce que les hommes en font et en ont fait” [Leo is interested in not only the land itself, but also in what men do and what they have made] (40). “Léon décrit longuement la manière dont s’exerce le pouvoir dans tel ou tel royaume” [Leo describes in detail the manners in which power is exercised in this or that kingdom], and Sosa certainly does the same, describing all the ranks of Janissaries and governmental positions in Algiers. Sosa demonstrates clear inspiration from the structure of *Description of Africa* as can be seen by some of the section titles; for example, in the first part of *Description*, Africanus ends with the sections “Virtudes y cosas loables de los africanos” and “Vicios y cosas vituperables de los africanos” (actually, it was his editor Giovanni Ramusio that inserted the section titles, but regardless, the content is there), while chapters thirty-six and thirty-seven of *Topografía* are “Algerian Vices” and “Algerian Virtues.” Africanus shows a clear preference for describing the urban phenomena of the places he visited, another similarity with Sosa (Fanjul 44). Another resemblance between the texts is how Africanus begins providing a macro overview of Africa and its people, the name “Ifriquíá” (an Arabic word that originally referred to the approximate territory of present-day Tunisia), the boundaries of Africa,

and its various divisions; while Sosa, in his own erudite manner, provides a historical overview of the region of Algiers with emphasis on the classical period when the Romans and Carthaginians controlled it.

The bulk of Sosa's descriptions and comments on marabouts appear in the first portion of the *Topografía* and the final dialogue, *Diálogo de los morabutos*. The *Diálogo de los morabutos* is comprised of seven *Divisiones*, and exhibits a conversation between two interlocutors: Sosa himself and a renegade named Amud (it is unclear whether this renegade is a fictional creation of Sosa or a real visitor that he received).¹⁴ While he separates the *Diálogo* into seven divisions, they are completely homogeneous in their content and material, and, in most instances, the dialogue between Sosa and Amud continues unbroken, as if the *División* markers were not even there. In general, the dialogue talks about the marabouts and many of their strange customs, and Sosa constantly inserts sarcastic comments that outright oppose the customs and make them appear laughable and ridiculous. About one custom, Amud finds Sosa laughing to himself saying: “Deso mismo me reía, y aún no me hartó de reír. [...] Ya te lo dixe hartas veces y lo vuelvo a decir ahora, que me maravillo de vosotros, y especialmente de algunos que presumís de entendimiento y juicio, os persuadáis un disparate, o para decir mejor, una ignorancia tan grande y tan grosera como esa” [That is what I'm laughing about, and I still haven't finished. [...] I've already told you many times and I'll say it again now, that I marvel at you, and especially at some of you who consider yourselves learned and judicious, you persuade yourselves of foolery, or better said, such a great and crude ignorance as that] (194). This is a typical comment made by

¹⁴ At the very beginning of the *Diálogo*, Amud is described in this way: “Amud, hijo de renegado y renegada, y yerno del patrón del doctor Sosa, del modo de saludar y consolar al mismo doctor en las prisiones en que está” [Amud, son of renegades, y son-in-law to the master of Doctor Sosa, greeting and consoling the same Doctor Sosa in the prison he was in] (193).

Sosa. And when Sosa is not laughing at the marabout customs, his object is to appeal to reason, many times referring to the metaphor light vs. darkness to illustrate the blindness of the marabouts and those that follow them compared to the clarity of Christianity.

Context of Christian Polemics against Islam

In many regards, the *Topografía* resembles Africanus' *Description* and other travel texts, but it also relies upon trends and conventions of religious polemical literature going back to the Middle Ages. While Sosa's work should not be categorized as strictly polemical, these elements should be recognized within his discourse. Norman Daniel's book *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* is a key authority on examining the origins of Christian polemic, and Daniel basically simplifies the differences between Christians and Muslims to one overarching disagreement: "Islam and Christianity are concerned apparently with much the same themes; fundamentally, they differ about the means that God has used to reveal Himself" (1). What this means in the context of the Christian polemic is that Christian polemicists will attack Islam in two manners: they needed to show that Muhammad and his revelation were illegitimate, and secondly, they needed to show that Islamic institutions were incompatible with reasonable religion (244). This tradition has had such a long life, and continues even today, because neither Christianity nor Islam have changed their fundamental views regarding the nature of God nor the manner of revelation.

The arguments used against Islam originated from writers that lived during the rapid expansion of Islam. Nasir Khan writes that polemical and apologetical works began because under *Dār al-Islām*, the term referring to supplanting Islamic political authority, Islamic

conversions became very common: “To combat this trend, some Christian writers and theologians produced controversial, apologetical literature with a view to stopping their co-religionists from going over to Islam and in this way tried to safeguard their communities and faith” (162). Khan chooses three main writers as representatives of the Christian outlook: John of Damascus, Timothy I, and ‘Abd al-Masīh ibn Iṣḥāq al-Kindī. These writers lived in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D.¹⁵ It is important to note that each of these three writers discussed Christianity and Islam in the form of a conversation, that is dialectically, which is also the form that Sosa uses in the three dialogues found in the *Topografía*.

In J. W. Sweetman’s words: “Perhaps no individual Christian thinker is so important in the comparative study of Islamic and Christian theology than John of Damascus” (I, 63) since he “systemati[z]ed the Christian theology of the earlier centuries” (Khan 162). His most notable books include *De Haeribus* and *Disputatio Christiani et Saraceni*, both written in Greek.

The Patriarch Timothy I records the real dialogue (as opposed to the fictional dialogue in St. John of Damascus’ *Disputatio*) between himself and the fourth Abbasid caliph, Mahdi, and reveals the amazing state of relations between Islam and Christianity. Khan characterizes the subject matter as a bit sporadic, but he distills it into three main topics: the person and incarnation of Christ, the incorruptibility of the Gospel, and the status of Muhammad. Timothy wrote in Syriac and Arabic and even said about the Prophet that he “walked in the path of the prophets, taught the unity of God, led men away from bad deeds and brought them closer to good works, separated men from idolatry and polytheism and taught about ‘one God, His Word and

¹⁵ Khan also mentions the importance of these other writers: the Jacobite Patriarch John I (d. 648), the Jacobite Habib Abu Ra’itah (early ninth century), Theodore bar Kōni, the Jacobite Nonnus of Nisibis, the Melkite Bishop of Harran Theodore Abu Qurrah (d. c. 820), the Nestorian ‘Amar al-Basri (d. 850), the Jacobite Yahya bin ‘Adi (d. 974), the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch Cyriacus (d. 817), and Sa‘id ibn al-Bitriq the Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria from 933-940 (160-161).

His Spirit” (Khan 172). Despite the positive characterization, Timothy still denies that the Prophet was the Paraclete, the supposed spirit of God that was to come. In any case, it was a cordial meeting; therefore, it may be noted that not all polemical encounters between the two religions were hostile.

Finally, a key text, written in Arabic, was the *Risālah*, or *Apology*, by ‘Abd al-Masīḥ ibn Iṣḥāq al-Kindī. The work’s authorship and date of publication are disputed, but it’s thought to be from before the eleventh century (Daniel 6). In the form of two letters, a Muslim character ‘Abd Allah ibn Ismā‘īl al-Hāshimī invites al-Kindī to convert to Islam, outlining its fundamental beliefs, and the latter responds in a lengthy treatise, defending Christianity in quite uncompromising terms (Khan 181). This text stressed arguments that promoted the Trinity, disparaged the Prophet Muhammad’s life, and criticized various practices of Islam. It is key to note that Muhammad is depicted “as sexually self-indulgent and as a murderer;” and one of the main arguments is against the Islamic practice of *jihād*.

In addition to these three writers, others should be mentioned. A work that we only have in manuscript, and in the Latin translation, *Contrarietas alpholica*, influenced the work of Ricoldo di Monte Croce, who was important to the continuation of Christian polemic. This traveler was in Baghdad during the Mongol invasions; Christians had hoped that the Mongols would convert to Christianity and present the possibility of destroying Islam for good, but his observations in Baghdad proved that the invaders instead chose Islam. In his writings Ricoldo made similar arguments against Muhammad, but he also tried to subvert the legitimacy of the Qur’ān saying, in the words of Daniel, it was “a haphazard collection of human documents prepared under highly disedifying circumstances” (35). From there a number of medieval theologians and philosophers enter the fray and add to the genre—a genre that did not change

much over the following centuries, as Bunes Ibarra puts it: “Los tratados de polémica constituyen un género bastante monótono y repetitivo en el que las visiones, postulados e informaciones de unos pasan rápidamente a los párrafos y razonamientos de los otros. Así, en la mayor parte de los escritos de Pedro el Venerable o los de Ramón Llull, entre otros muchos escritos de épocas pasadas” [The polemical treatises constitute quite a monotonous and repetitive genre in which the views, postulates, and information of some pass rapidly to the paragraphs and reasonings of others—and therefore, into the majority of Pedro the Venerable or Ramón Llull’s writings, among many other writings of past epochs] (48).

Ramón Llull (c. 1232-1315) would compose a prodigious amount of work—over two hundred—many on religious topics. Khan writes, “as Lull saw it, the Christian solution to the Muslim problem had to be missionary activity leavened with military force as needed” (302); but judging exactly *when* that military force would have been needed is more difficult since Llull changed ideological positions on this issue many times. As Benjamin Kedar writes: “But it is truly exceptional to encounter a man who ran almost the entire gamut of positions, from rejecting the crusade as essentially unchristian and extolling peaceful persuasion, through simultaneously supporting mission and crusade, to advocating the launching of a crusade against infidels who had refused to convert” (189).

After the conquest of Granada, however, this “monotonous and repetitive” genre saw a resurgence given that Christians looked for ways to either incorporate or exclude Muslims into the newly conquered peninsula. In 1505 two texts were published to encourage the study of Arabic for the purpose of evangelizing the Grenadines, *Arte para ligeramente saber la lengua árabe* and *Vocabulario árabe en lengua castellana*. Over the 16th and 17th centuries a bevy of writers addressed Islam and its inaccuracies, to put it lightly. Miguel Ángel Bunes Ibarra

describes these authors on a spectrum of reasonably anti-Islamic to belligerently unreasonable. There were those that wanted to convert the Moriscos by way of appealing to their reason and logic, thinking that, ultimately, presented with the facts, the Muslims would convert by their own prerogative. These were Martín García and Bernardo Pérez Chinchón. In “situaciones intermedias,” we find Juan Andrés, Manuel Sanz, and Francisco Navarro, who make up the moderate writers. And then there were those that showed no respect for Islam and its followers whatsoever, Jaime Bleda, Alfonso de Espina, Pedro de Aznar Cardona.¹⁶ Below I briefly include passages from two of these writers, Bernardo Pérez de Chinchón and Jaime Bleda, to provide examples of the rhetoric they expressed toward the Moriscos. Related to the anti-Islamic polemicists is another type of text on the justification of the expulsion of the Moriscos—Jaime Bleda constitutes one of these writers—and many of the same arguments against Moriscos and Muslims appear in these texts. Steven Hutchinson sketches the writing of many of these authors in his article “Los apologistas de la expulsión de los moriscos frente a Ricote y Ana Félix,” and he juxtaposes this monarchally approved narrative with the “discurso contestatario” that Cervantes offers in the second part of *Don Quixote* in the characters of Ricote and Ana Félix (II, 54 and 63).

Martín García and Bernardo Pérez de Chinchón were more temperate than others in their treatment of the Moriscos and Islam, yet it is also apparent that they never seriously show any appreciation for Muhammad or Islam (Fuster 26). They already had their minds completely made up, and therefore, while they were intent on exploiting the errors of Islam, it never occurred to them that Islamic polemicists could be correct in some of their criticisms of Christianity.

¹⁶ Soto and Starczewska work in depth with the push by Martín García, Juan Andrés, and Joan de Figuerola in *After Conversion*.

Chinchón tries to evangelize by seemingly finding a middle ground in which Islam and Christianity intersect, and then continues to point out that Christianity and Jesus Christ prevail over Islam and the Prophet. This passage from *Sermón Quinzeno* reveals much about Chinchón's program:

porque vuestro mesmo Alcorán dize que Jesu Christo fue palabra de dios, y gran mensagero de dios e hijo de virgen sin obra de varón: y que truxo espíritu de dios: y que hizo milagros: y que su ley fue derecha y luz de los hombres: y que los hombres que no la guardasen se perderían: y que sus discípulos fueron sanctos y limpios: y que subió a los cielos en cuerpo y en ánima: y que ha de venir a juzgar todos los hombres: y a hazer toda la ley una. Esto todo está en el libro del Alcorán, y en los seis libros de la çuna, como vosotros sabeys y yo lo prové todo arriba en el sermón dozeno y trezeno alegando los mesmos capítulos y dichos de vuestro Alcorán (252).

[because your own Qur'ān says that Jesus Christ was the word of God, and a great messenger of God and son of a virgin without the help of man: and that he brought the spirit of God: and that he did miracles: and that his law was righteous and a light for men: and that men that do not keep it would be lost: and that his disciples were holy and clean: and that he went up to heaven in body and soul: and that he is to come again to judge all men: and to make all the law one. All this is in the Qur'ān, and the six books of the Sunnah, as you know and I proved above in the twelfth and thirteenth sermons, alleging the same chapters and sayings of your Qur'ān.]

One should observe that Chinchón tries to use the sacred Islamic text against itself, saying that the Qur'ān even makes Jesus out to be the chosen one. However, it should be noted that the passage does *not* outright say that Jesus was God, even though from all the descriptions one

could deduce this; rather, Jesus brought (*truxo*) the Spirit, and he was the word of God (*palabra de Dios*). Many theological debates hinge upon every word and all the possible connotations embedded, and Chinchón bides his time to state outright that Jesus was the son of God. These insinuations lead up to sermons eighteen, nineteen, and twenty, which deal with the difficult doctrine of the Trinity.

In 1618 Jaime Bleda published *Corónica de los moros de España* in Valencia, a text that provides a taste of one of the more virulent polemicists. He constituted the most ardent and vociferous proponent of the expulsion. Vincent and Sánchez-Blanco call him the “alfa y omega de la historiografía apologética de la expulsión” (24), and a contemporary of his, Damián de Fonseca, refers to him as “único cuchillo de la nación morisca” [only knife of the Morisco nation] (12). Like many other polemicists, he began the first book of this prodigious volume with a history of Muḥammad and the caliphs. True to its title, he then chronicles the loss of Spain to the Muslims and the wars of the *Reconquista*, and finally books five through eight recount the events of the sixteenth century that led up to the “justa y general expulsión de los Moriscos de España” [the just and general expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain]. Bleda’s partiality is evident from the very beginning. These are the opening words of the first book:

Mahoma engañador del mundo, Profeta falso, nuncio de Satanás, el peor precursor del Antichristo, cumplimiento de todas las heregías, y prodigio de toda falsedad, como otro Hieroboam quitó diez partes a la casa de Daud, esto es, a la yglesia de Iesu Christo nuestro Señor. Este tan grande monstruo parió, y crió el Oriente, tan difforme, que en fealdad, y fiereza excede a todos, los que diuinamente fueron mostrados a Daniel, y a Iuan Euangelista, para significar algún mal grauisimo.

Muhammad, deceiver of the world, false prophet, messenger of Satan, the worst forerunner of the antichrist, the fulfillment of all heresy, and prodigy of all falsehood, as Jeroboam took ten tribes from the house of David, that is, from the church of Jesus Christ our Lord. This so great a monster begot and raised in the East, so deformed, that in ugliness and savagery he exceeds everyone, those that were divinely revealed to Daniel and John the Evangelist to signify a profound evil.]

In their introduction to his work, Vincent and Sánchez-Blanco note that “Ningún adjetivo le parece lo bastante fuerte para calificar a la minoría. Son pérfidos, crueles, perversos y viciosos” [No adjective seem sufficiently strong to categorize the minority. They are perfidious, cruel, perverse, and vicious] (12). Some of these adjectives appear in the various book titles, for example, “Santos martirizados en España por los pérfidos Mahometanos” [Saints martyred in Spain by the perfidious Muslims]. Bleda seems to go out of his way to use the most demeaning adjectives and descriptions possible to begin his history of the Prophet, but in reality his language demonstrates the rising temperature of discourse in the period and continues a long trend of representing Muslims in this manner.

Marabouts

For Christianity and because of the writers just mentioned, the image of Islam solidified over the middle ages and, given the “problema morisco” on the peninsula and the Turkish threat in the east, we must be very cautious and suspicious about all of Sosa’s observations regarding Islam. It is necessary to conceive a historical picture of the marabout in order to properly place them in that context.

“Marabout” is the French corruption of the Arabic word *murābiṭ*, with the root letters ra-ba-ṭa, which generally mean “to link or to tie.” In the early years after the Arab conquest of the seventh century, the Arabs set up structures called *ribāṭs* on the edges of their territories—these were a type of fortified monastery that had both religious and military functions. The Islamic religious figures living in these *ribāṭs* were generally considered holy men by the common people because they recited the Qur’an, transmitted hadiths, specialized in Islamic law, and were ascetics. In his glossary, Trimmingham defines the *murābiṭ*: “Originally, inhabitant in a *ribāṭ*, a warrior for the faith which has become in N. Africa a general term for any kind of professional religious man” (308).

However, it is difficult to construct an accurate and precise historical definition of what is referred to as a “marabout” because of their popular nature and their relationship to other Islamic concepts. Often when writing, scholars need to qualify terminology over and over, recognizing that “Arabic terms often had multiple referents or inconclusive connotations while time itself [...] also caused the meaning of terms to vary” (Lapidus 80).¹⁷ Add to this the fact that, as Norman Daniel’s book title describes, Christian sources throughout the centuries created a completely different and skewed image of the Prophet, Islamic doctrine, and Islamic history. Another Spaniard who lived many years in the Maghreb, Luis del Mármol Carvajal, wrote in his *Descripción general de África* of “la secta de los morabitos,” begun by “Hascen b. Mahamet Mohaydin,” who Mármol identifies as ‘Alī’s grandson, but does not appear on his family tree.¹⁸ Mármol suggests that Sufism began under this Mohaydin, “traen su origen los Sophis que reynan

¹⁷ This is certainly true in the case of “marabout.” See Brett “Arabs, Berbers...,” especially pages 554-557, for a tentative evolution of the term.

¹⁸ With his wife Fatimah, daughter of Muḥammad, ‘Alī had two sons, Hassan and Husayn. Understanding that names get corrupted over centuries and among languages, there still is no one with a name similar to “Mohaydin” in the family tree.

en Persia” [the Sufis bring their religion, who reign in Persia] (fol. 59), which would be an oversimplification to say the least, but it is true that marabouts, like many Sufi leaders, were seen as mystics, seers, and miracle workers (Rinehart 21). A bit later, Mármol also credits the origin of the “secta de los morabitos” to Mohaydin and describes these adherents as ascetics: “a manera de monjes, viven en monasterios, o hermitas en los campos, haciendo profesión de philosophos morales tienen muchas reglas diferentes de las del alcorán del Leshari [the sharī‘a] y reprovadas por los legistas dél, mas el vulgo los tiene y venera como a santóns, porque hazen lícitas muchas cosas a su appetite” [as monks, they live in monasteries, or hermitages in the country, making a profession of moral philosophers, they have many different rules from those of Sharī‘a of the Qur’ān and condemned by the jurists, but the people venerate them as saints because they legitimate many things for their appetite] (fol. 59). This description, other than the identification as “Sophis de Persia,” is almost identical to many observations made by Antonio de Sosa.

During the Middle Ages Sufi movements swept through popular Islamic religious and daily life.¹⁹ Sufism proliferated the element of mysticism, and the concept is frequently presented as the link of reconciliation between the mystical and juristic sides of Islam (Berkey 231 and Rinehart 21).²⁰ However, Sufism also constitutes a term that refers to a wide variety of phenomena and religious practices, sometimes institutionalized and other times not. Beatriz Alonso and Bunes Ibarra also write that marabouts “tienen más importancia dentro de la religiosidad popular islámica del Magreb que en otras esferas del Islam” [marabouts have more importance within popular Islamic religiosity of the Maghreb than in other Islamic spheres]

¹⁹ For more on Sufism, see Berkey, Chamberlain, Hofer, Shoshan, and Trimmingham.

²⁰ Mármol also mentions “Gazuli,” probably al-Ghazali—a key figure in the reconciliation of Sufism and orthodox theology, referring to him as another morabito and a great reformer and conciliator between the morabitos and the “legistas,” or the more juristic Muslim scholars (fol. 60).

(Suárez Montañés 121 n199). Trimingham says that the *ribāṭs*, marabout centers, eventually changed their purpose from one of defense and proselytism to centers of Sufi devotion and teaching (168 n1). And many descriptions attributed to a marabout could possibly fit the description of a local Sufi religious leader, a sheikh.²¹ Therefore, while it must be recognized that Sufi sheikhs and marabouts both constitute major figures of popular religion, many times with mystical elements, the two terms should not always be used interchangeably.

Understanding all the historical and interpretive baggage that the terminology carries, Sosa provides his own valuable observations of these figures in the *Topografía*. Despite many of these observations being tainted by bias, some of the more objective ones show that marabouts were the functionaries in charge of mosques who also performed various religious and maintenance tasks: they kept the buildings clean, lit the lamps, performed the call to prayer (the *ṣalāt*), taught the faithful the ritual of prayer, they would preach during what Sosa called their Lent, referring to the month of Ramadān, and they served as a type of schoolmaster for boys. These are the basic duties that Sosa outlines, but he also scatters several other social contributions throughout the *Topografía* that they provide.

Sosa describes these marabouts as having certain responsibilities in a mosque, but the term may at times be applied more loosely, referring to anyone who has made the *hajj*. Diego de Torres writes about a certain Mahamet Benhamet (a “gran nigromántico y hechizero”) who sent his two sons on the pilgrimage to Mecca. And “como bolviessen hechos Morabitos eran onrados y estimados de aquellos Barbaros como tales” [because they returned having become marabouts they were honored and esteemed by those barbarous people as such] (8). Men and women

²¹ A *shaykh* was a leader of a Sufi order, or *zāwiya*. Boaz Shoshan speaks of a *shaykha*, a woman *shaykh*, in charge of a *ribāṭ* in Baghdad (13), and Sosa also touches on “morabutas” in *Diálogo de los morabutos* (210).

flocked to them to kiss their garments and be blessed by them—a detail noted by at least Sosa, Mármol, and Africanus.

While some marabouts were commissioned with the care of the mosques of Algiers, according to Sosa, others lived as hermits, and the Muslims revered them as holy men, visiting them on special occasions for good luck (recorded also by Mármol). For example, the twenty-first chapter on the Algerian corsairs tells us that before setting sail the corsairs depended on the blessing of a marabout and, “[b]efore leaving the port, every ship, whether of corsairs or merchants, salutes the sepulcher of a dead marabout or holy man. They believe that he lies outside the Gate of Bab ‘Azzun, in a cave like a buried chapel called Sidi Batqa” (154). Another chapter on childbirth and childrearing tells us that mothers regularly took their children to be blessed by marabouts after giving birth. The holy men actively participate in feast days and festivals in chapter 34, and chapter 38 tells of their duties during death and burial ceremonies. Therefore, I believe it safe to conclude that the marabout played a comparable social role for the Algerian Muslims as priests played in Spanish and European society as far as practical services provided—religious rituals concerning birth, death, and spiritual preservation; however, an important difference that should not be forgotten is that marabouts do not appear to have belonged to a structured clerical hierarchy as the Christian priests did, and this distinction is grounds for profound social differences between the two.

Aside from the *Topografía*, texts that speak in depth about the nature of those considered marabouts are limited. Many mentions of marabouts occur only in passing, and therefore only small details of them can be learned at a time. In fact, many times when a marabout appears in a text, it is Diego de Haedo (the authorship of the *Topografía* was credited to Haedo until 1977)

that is cited as the authority. For example, Joseph Morgan, a writer in the early eighteenth century, mentions Haedo in the preface to his *History of Algiers* saying:

Nor am I a little indebted to F. Diego de Haedo, Abbot of Fromesta, whom I frequently mention. He wrote a circumstantial, and not contemptible History of Algiers, which he brought down to near the Conclusion of the sixteenth Century. But, excepting a few good Passages and Remarks, which I occasionally pick out, his three tedious *Dialogues*, in particular, concerning *Captivity*, *Martyrs*, and *Morabboths*, or *Mahometan Santons*, are silly enough, replete with nauseous Cant, and, in many Cases, insufferably partial (vii).

While he certainly is correct about the *Topografía*'s partiality against the marabouts, as this entire chapter seeks to demonstrate, he must have found plenty of valuable material in the volume because, later on, he mentions in passing while describing a historical account that "this part of Mármol's *Narrative*, in particular, I shall soon contradict, from the more generous and less partial Haedo" (396).²²

Other primary texts and subsequent studies confirm many of the basic functions of the marabout in North African society described by Sosa; however, additionally, these sources frame the marabouts as much more a militant than Sosa does in the *Topografía*. Detailed descriptions about marabouts are generally very few, especially in Spanish sources, but Diego Suárez Montañés provides some of the better details in his *Historia del Maestre último...*, a history of the maintenance and government of Orán during the Sixteenth Century under the Maestre de Montesa and Felipe de Borja. Suárez Montañés almost exclusively connects the marabouts to a religious-militant role. In multiple episodes he describes the marabouts stirring up the Arab

²² The editors of the Suárez Montañés text cited in the next paragraph, Beatriz Alonso Acero and Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra, also refer to the *Topografía* when providing helpful information on marabouts.

troops to attack the occupying Spanish forces. In one attack, taking place in 1566, a group of militants was preparing to launch an assault, and Suárez Montañés says:

Acertó a estar allí un grande morabuto nuevamente venido a la casa de Meca de Arabia, a los cuales siempre todos los demás moros tienen gran veneración. Éste, ahora, se metió por medio de los moros dando voces, acaudillándolos y animándolos, sembrando buletas de perdón escritas en papel y cortadas como los dedos, de que traía un grande zurrón lleno. En que decían todas que el moro que muriese peleando con los cristianos llevando consigo aquella buleta iba salvo a culpa y pena de todos sus pecados, al paraíso (198).

[A great marabout was newly there from the house of Mecca in Arabia, for whom all the other Muslims had great veneration. He then placed himself in the middle of all the Muslims crying out, taking charge of them and encouraging them, sowing indulgences of forgiveness written on paper and cut like fingers, of which he carried a pouch full of them. These said that all the Muslims who died fighting with Christians and carrying these indulgences would go to paradise, saved from blame and the penalty of their sin.]

In another account, the Maestre de Montesa defeats the Arab attackers by breaking up their military organization and killing their leader: “Visto lo cual, los demás moros se alargaron de paso y viaje por donde habían venido, dejando muerto a su capitán, que era un famoso morabuto, entre ellos muy estimado” [Seeing which, the rest of the Muslims withdrew to where they had come from, leaving their captain dead, who was a famous marabout among them and very esteemed] (241). Mercedes García-Arenal reinforces this military role of some marabouts talking about a particular marabout, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān: “On commença à parler de Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [...] Il s’adonnait aux sciences occultes, à la sorcellerie et à la divination et il apparaît comme un murābiṭ militant” [Speaking of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-

Raḥmān... He was given over to the occult sciences, to sorcery and divination, and he appeared as a militant marabout] (“Maḥdi, murābiṭ...” 89).²³

Up to this point it may be tentatively deduced that marabouts played either a militant-religious role or simply a religious role depending upon the time period and the location. However, Michael Brett further complicates the issue in his article “Arabs, Berbers and Holy Men...” while describing the deeply convoluted and ever-evolving relationships between Arab and Berber tribes in southern Tunisia. Brett describes a certain holy man that “was a *murābiṭ* in the more peaceable sense which it is convenient to express by the colloquial rendering of *murābiṭ* as *marabout*, that is, the holy man whose function is not so much to change society as to bless and confirm an existing way of life” (551). Furthermore, “maraboutism” is a term utilized by André Louis and Brett to refer to a movement in which poorer nomadic peoples, not racially exclusive to either Arabs or Berbers, ascribed to a holy man as a way out of the oppressive lifestyle of the warrior or the pastoralist for the life of a sedentary peasant (Brett 553-5). This characterization certainly bears out in a section of Mármol’s account:

En este tiempo, un Morabito predicador de aquella seta, llamado Quemín ben Menal, so color de sanctimonia persuadió a los pueblos de la provincia de Temecena, que cae en los confines del reyno de Marruecos, a que no pagassen tributo ni diessen obediencia a los de Idris señores de Fez, diziendo que eran hombres injustos y tiranos que fatigavan las gentes con graves pechos y oppresiones, y no los deffendían ni mantenían en justicia, como eran obligados. Haziéndoles pues en creyente que era profeta, y que venía a librarlos de aquella tiranía, y a declararles las cosas de su ley mejor que otros, pudo tanto

²³ By contrast, in *Histoire générale de la Tunisie: Le Moyen-Age* the authors tie maraboutism to Sufism with no mention at all of military involvement (427-430).

con sus embaucamientos y sanctimonia fingida que en breve tiempo hizo que el bárbaro pueblo supersticioso y amigo de novedades le obedesciese, y se apoderó dél, en lo temporal y espiritual, y juntando las fuerças del pueblo de Temecena [...] movió las armas contra el rey de Fez (fol. 125).

[At this time, a marabout preacher from the sect, named Quemin ben Menal, under the pretext of purity, persuaded the people of the province of Temecena, which falls within the confines of the kingdom of Morocco, not to pay tribute or obey those of Idris, lords of Fez, saying that they were unjust and tyrannical men who oppressed the people and didn't defend them or maintain justice as they were obliged. Making them to believe that he was a prophet and that he came to liberate them from tyranny and to declare that their law was better than others, he was able to make the barbarous town superstitious and a friend of novelty in a short time with his cajolery and false holiness, and he gained control of them in their temporal and spiritual issues; and gathering together the people of Temecena... he moved his forces against the king of Fez.]

This marabout had the social clout to stir up the people of Temecena, convincing them that their tribute was abusive and organizing them militarily against the king of Fez.²⁴ Ibn Khaldūn also reinforces the idea that marabouts, or holy men, were able to rally Bedouin peoples around a religious goal, even though their non-religious aspirations rarely coincided: “When there is a prophet or saint among them [...] they become fully united and acquire superiority and royal authority” (120).

²⁴ The Ouerghamma Confederation is a notable example in southern Tunisia of when maraboutism brings various tribes together for a common goal. Short descriptions of this confederation can be found in Louis (1979) 14 and Morris and Jacobs 404.

In this conversation, the French rendering “marabout” may be anachronistic, but it serves to distinguish between the roles of the Islamic figures. It should be noted that there is no military role ascribed to the marabouts of Algiers by Sosa, other than that there may have been a marabout to go along on corsair expeditions. Therefore, it is possible that the figures Sosa observed operated more in the “marabout” role instead of the “*murābiṭ*” capacity. Given the detail with which Sosa talks about the military aspects of the city and the ranks and roles of the janissary troops, one would assume that he would include their military role if they had any, even in the slightest. This further leads me to conclude that the marabouts Sosa was witnessing may not have been militant, reinforcing the connection of the marabout to *popular* Islamic culture and that the role of the marabout would depend heavily upon wherever he is located and the time period he lived.

“Una gente ciega”

Considering the combination of the distortion of Islam in Christian sources through the ages and the inherent enmity between the religions, it is not surprising that Sosa’s observations of the marabouts are utterly biased and negative. Similarly, Islamic polemical texts, i.e. anti-Christian Islamic texts, traditionally criticized the hypocrisy and foolishness of Christian functionaries, that is, the clergy and the church hierarchy.²⁵ For example, ‘Abdallah al-Tarjumān (Fray Anselmo Turmeda) says this about priests in his *Ṭuhfa*, “Pero sois un pueblo de ciegos y vuestro sacerdote es aún más ciego que vosotros. Y cuando un ciego guía a otro ciego, caen los

²⁵ The slavers believed both Antonio de Sosa and Fray Jerónimo Gracián to be higher functionaries of the church, and therefore suffered more difficult circumstances during captivity because the Turks thought they could receive a higher redemption price for them. Both spent their time listening to the stories of other captives and renegades, compiling them into texts thereafter.

dos en el abismo peligroso” [But you are a blind people and your religious leaders are even more blind than you. And when one blind man guides another they both fall into the dangerous abyss.].²⁶ Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī will also undermine the chief Christian functionary in his book against Christians *Nāsr al-Dīn* by making a list of popes that have changed Christian doctrine, seemingly on a whim, arguing that Christianity surely cannot be the true religion if one man can simply change the rules whenever it was convenient for him. As Mikel de Epalza says in his commentary about al-Tarjumān’s *Tuḥfa*, Islam was considered a religion “without clergy,” and thus attacks on Islamic functionaries were not as traditional in antialcoranic texts. Moriscos especially criticized the clergy because they were the intermediaries of the church and the most visible manifestation of it (Cardaillac 304), thus Sosa, similarly, funnels his criticism toward what he perceived as a possible Islamic clergy, the marabout: the distributors and transmitters of Islamic sacred law and sacred rituals.

While Sosa at times criticizes the marabouts and Islam in a more professional, higher register, his criticism would be better characterized many, if not most times, as outright ridicule and mockery. For example, when describing the marabout duty of showing the faithful the prayer ritual, Sosa takes a small jab at them saying that the marabout performs the same gestures, movements, and bodily dips as those praying, effectively making him a dance master of sorts (175). Comparing them to dance masters is slightly condescending, but not overly demeaning; however, the criticism gets much worse. Another not-so-subtle jab comes when describing the performance of the call to prayer, saying that when the faithful all finally come together at the mosque, “[they] raise their voices in a sound worse than the howling of wolves and dogs” (175).

²⁶ Compare this to what Sosa says in *Diálogo de los morabutos*: “¿Qué os ciega para que sigáis a una gente tan ciega y creáis a una gente tan mentirosa y adoréis a unos hombres tan malos?” [What blinds you so that you follow such a blind people and believe such a lying people and worship such evil men?]

Referring to them as wild animals is consistent throughout his text. While describing the habits of the janissaries and their leisure time he says, “Los demás todos viven una vida bestial, de puercos animales, dándose continuamente a la crápula y lujuria” [All the rest live a bestial life, like pigs, giving themselves over continually to lust and libertinism] (148). And, similarly, about the marabouts and their constant sin of sodomy he says, “éstos profesan una vida bestial” [these profess a bestial life] (180).

Norman Daniel elaborates upon the idea that from the very earlier stages of Islam, shortly after the Arab Conquest of the seventh century after Christ, Christians began to crystalize an image of Islam that remained unchanged. One example important in Daniel’s analysis and picked up by Sosa, and perhaps one of the oldest and most insisted upon attacks against Islam, was, in the words of Daniel, “that Islam permits, or else that it encourages, unnatural intercourse between people of the same or of opposite sexes, and, indeed, any sexual act whatever, for its own sake” (141).²⁷ To Catholicism, sexual intercourse was only for procreation. This line of attack was effective at “demonstrat[ing] the squalor of Islamic law” (139). With a very matter-of-fact tone, Antonio de Sosa adds almost as an assumed universally accepted addendum to the end of his chapter on the marabouts: “In sum, however saintly these marabouts appear to be, they are tremendous sodomites” (180). This accusation was among the most shameful of the time, so whatever redeeming qualities Sosa may have found in the marabouts, he cancels them out with this charge.²⁸ While the seriousness of this sin was indeed one of the most egregious to Christians, Sosa, humanist that he was, may have also been influenced by Greek and Roman

²⁷ Fray Jerónimo Gracián talks about *casques* in “Diálogo Sexto.” These were young boys, *desbarbados*, used for sexual entertainment (97).

²⁸ Nabil Matar points to the research of ‘Aziz al-‘Azme to say that before 1492 there was also a stereotype in poetic and literary traditions of Christian men as “descendants of drunkards and uncircumcised pig breeders” and women as “lascivious and voracious” (7).

rhetoricians when citing sexual deviancy for character assassination. In Younger's *Sex in the Ancient World*, he notes that sexual invective was routinely applied to the powerful, citing examples used by two of the greatest orators—Cicero and Seneca (see “Invective,” 83).²⁹

Other attacks by Sosa seem to parallel and respond to typical Islamic attacks on Christianity. Both the Protestants and Muslims accused the Catholic clergy that most of them could not even read Latin—the language of the Church. Sosa says, “Few are the teachers and marabouts who may understand the Qur'an, although they read it constantly and conduct all their studies through it, because it is written in an ancient Arabic language, although the words themselves are in Turkish or another language. It is obscure to them, even more obscure than the Latin language is to us” (176).³⁰ It seems to me that Sosa says that marabouts cannot read Arabic simply because it was commonly said that many clergymen could not read Latin; however, historical debate has shown that it is possible that in fact few Muslim holy men could read the texts—if texts were written in Kufic script there were no diacritical signs, making only a select few capable of deciphering them. Additionally, we must not forget that Islamic tradition was significantly more reliant upon oral tradition than written texts. In fact, Michael Chamberlain, writing about Muslims of Damascus, found that in the Middle Ages there was debate over whether the Qur'ān and the hadith tradition should be written down at all—asserting that they should remain only oral traditions (138-139). Both Chamberlain and another Islamic scholar Jonathan Berkey write about the cultural contradiction in Islam and the use of books versus oral tradition for the transmission of knowledge. Therefore, was Sosa correct when he said that few

²⁹ Barbara Fuchs elaborates upon Queen Isabel's smear campaign against her predecessor, Enrique IV, by linking his general debauchery with his maurophilia (17-18).

³⁰ It is curious here that Sosa admits that Latin is obscure to the Christians. Perhaps this is a case when Sosa says the hush-hush part out loud, indirectly comparing Catholic clergymen's insufficiencies with those of the marabouts.

could read the Arabic? It may never be known for sure, but it is doubtful that he includes this to provide a historical precision but rather to make the marabouts appear incompetent. This may be a case in which Sosa did not fully comprehend what he was describing. He never questioned why their marabouts could not read the sacred texts and simply attributed it to their ignorance; he likely did not understand that certain currents of Islamic jurists purposefully retained these teachings orally.

The accusation that the marabouts could not read Arabic indirectly indicates a similar charge that runs through many anti-Islamic texts: Muslims are generally completely ignorant of their own religious law. This was especially used against the Moriscos in the sixteenth century. This condescension manifested itself in a variety of comments by missionaries, polemicists, and Sosa. Joan de Figuerola alleged that the *alfaquís* of the Peninsula were ignorant of their faith and interestingly notes that Juan Andrés would “recurrently address his interlocutor as ‘you who read the Qur’ān every day’” (Soto and Starczewska 220). This supercilious comment is paralleled when Sosa uses his reading of the Qur’ān against Islam, indirectly implying that if even he is able to quote from the Qur’ān, how much more should an *alfaquí* or marabout be familiar with a particular doctrine or teaching. Sosa inserts sarcastic comments such as, “si bien me acuerdo haber leído en el Alcorán en otro tiempo” [if I remember having read in the Qur’ān once] (209) or comments with a more conciliatory or informative tone, “es bien que sepas que no hay en cristianos librería principal [...] do comúnmente no se tenga el Alcorán traducido en lengua latina. Lo cual algunos Reyes y prelados de España procuraron se hiciesen en otros tiempos para que ellos y otros que tenían a su cargo tierras y lugares de moros pudiesen mejor darles a entender la verdad de aquella ley” [you should know that in Christian lands there is no important library where one cannot obtain a Qur’ān translated into Latin. Because some Spanish kings and

prelates procured in other times that this be done so that they and others in charge of Moorish lands could better help them understand the truth of that law] (263-4). García-Arenal gets the title of her essay “Mi padre moro yo moro” [My father a Moor, me a Moor] from a complaint by Pedro de León, a missionary to the Moriscos, and another missionary says the same, “After we preach to them, these wretches respond *my father Moor, Moor myself*” (306). Louis Cardaillac records this same attitude. When describing how sometimes, under extreme criticism, Muslims could not sit by idly while their religion was assaulted, they would burst out with a comment that many times led to scrutiny by the Inquisition. One Muslim woman, after someone insulted her calling her “moraperra,” responded “que soy mora, pues mis padres y madre fueron y murieron moros, yo también soi mora, y tengo de morir mora” [I’m a Moorish woman, for my parents were Moors and they died Moors, I also am a Moor, and I’m going to die a Moor] (24).

The severity of the Moriscos’ ignorance of their own religion varied, but there is evidence that at least some Iberian Muslims were well versed and that they carried on the beliefs and practices of their ancestors in hiding. Nabil Matar posits the idea of *nasr* (victory) in *Europe through Arab Eyes* and that Muslim Iberians felt the need to assert their own Arabness after the Christian conquest of Granada. Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī maintained his Muslim identity growing up in Hornachos, Extremadura—a zone that infamously continued to speak Arabic. Another underground expert in Islam mentioned by Matar is Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Muhammad al-Andalusī who went to Christian school during the day and, upon returning home in the evening, learned Arabic and Islam from his father (194-200).

Madness

No doubt the idea of madness was a *topos* used by some of the greatest writers and thinkers of the sixteen and seventeenth centuries, and the question arises here, with constant characterization of marabouts as *locos*, whether or not Sosa had this literary trend in mind when writing. Erasmus wrote *Praise of Folly*, Cervantes used various forms of psychological abnormalities in works such as the *Quixote*, “El licenciado vidriera,” and “Coloquio de los perros,” and Calderón de la Barca explores what a man will do when he believes he is merely dreaming in *La vida es sueño*. Erasmus and Cervantes certainly have a sarcastic and satirical message behind their works and that of Calderón raises other theological and ethical questions. These writers used *locura* to explore and comment on social and religious practices and standards of their time. Their writings, inspired by Lucian of Samosata at least in the cases of Erasmus and Cervantes, work as a mirror to laugh at themselves and their own societies. This mirror points out hypocrisies, inconsistencies, and unfairness in society.³¹

In Sosa we witness a different kind of laughter. In his introduction to Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly*³² Pedro Rodríguez Santidrián says, “hay dos locuras; una es destrucción de conciencia y de costumbres civilizadas; y existe la locura que Erasmo y el humanismo proclaman y que lleva al juicio irónico y complaciente de sí mismo y del mundo” [there are two madnesses; one is the destruction of the conscience and civilized customs; and then exists the madness that Erasmus and humanism proclaim and that leads to an ironic and obliging sense of oneself and the world] (19). In my view, the laughter we see in Sosa is of the first type of *locura* outlined here. But it is not just Sosa, Mármol and Leo Africanus also write very negatively of the marabouts and their

³¹ Sosa only indirectly refers to Lucian once in chapter 2, “Why the city is called Algiers.”

³² I use a Spanish edition, *Elogio a la locura*.

unacceptable behavior—Africanus never uses the word “marabout” but rather “loco.” Sosa characterizes the madness of the marabouts as the destructive kind, leading men away from Christianity and a logical religion. His laughter does not raise ethical questions or reveal social inequalities and hypocrisies, but rather it is sardonic and works as a mechanism to discredit.

Therefore, a recurring attack on the marabouts refers to the fact that certain of these holy men were either utterly mad and out of their minds, or that they at least acted that way as a façade to play a social role. The question he poses to readers is: if these people act so outrageously and exhibit so little logic and common sense, and yet Islam as a religion considers these people as saints, how can such a religion possibly be legitimate?

Sosa’s criticism achieves the goal of making these religious leaders seem ridiculous, but he fails to understand, or at least comment upon, the social reasons for which these mad holy men exist, and he fails to exploit the fact that these figures suggest a disunity in Islam similar to that which the Muslims accused the Christians. Chamberlain writes about similarly outrageous men called *muwallahūn* in Damascus society, and he says that these figures acted the way they did as a form of calculated subversion of the local ‘ulama’, the Islamic scholars, who exerted much of the power during Medieval Islamic social structure and heavily influenced the leaders of the Islamic world, whether they were the caliphs, imāms, or mamelukes (130). Rinehart also says that local North Africans were attracted to the marabouts and mysticism because orthodox Islam was too “arid” for their appeal (21). The question should be raised as to whether or not the marabouts of Algiers were performing for a similar purpose. Sosa’s laughter has a goal, but it is not concerned with providing an explanation regarding the complex aspects of medieval and early modern Islamic society and social movements.

Sosa writes about many examples of marabouts and their improprieties, and it would take time to talk about them all, as he himself states: “Y si yo quisiese contar de otros muchos que han vivido, no digo en otras partes, pero aquí en Argel, los cuales fueron locos y aun grandes y muy desvergonzados bellacos, y que después de muertes los tenéis y adoráis por santos, sería nunca acabar” [And if I wanted to recall the many others that have lived, I’m not saying in others places but here in Algiers, who were mad and even great and shameless scoundrels, and that after dying you have and adore them as saints, it would take forever] (224-25). This quote comes in the middle of a section in which he is venting his rage toward these crazy characters, and he is so passionate about the topic that Amud, his interlocutor, says, “¿Qué es esto, que este día estás tan bravo, siendo de tu condición tan quieto?” [How is it that today you’re so feisty, being such a tranquil person normally?]. Sosa talks about two particular *locos* in his diatribe. The first was named Cid Abdalazis who at once was a captive in Genoa, and later went mad. He returned to Algiers and walked through the streets doing “cien mil desatinos” [one hundred thousand absurdities], talking with trees and rocks, and stealing goods from various market vendors. Sosa was appalled that not only did no one stop him from his irrational and inappropriate actions, but women would go up to him and kiss his hands—actions that he would respond to by kicking and punching them. The other mad saint was Cid Abdalabes. He was already crazy in his mother’s womb, says Sosa, and he lived in a small shack outside the city, stayed there day and night, “y aun también allí hacía todas sus necesidades” [and he also even did all his necessities there], which, when people went to visit him, he would throw in their faces. Sosa asks: and these are the people that the Algerian Muslims look up to as religious leaders?³³

³³ Leo Africanus also complains about religious saint figures in Tunisia who walked about in shabby clothing, threw stones, and yelled erratically. He complains that the people go as far as to construct a beautiful monastery for these people. He uses the word “locos” to describe these people (242). Also see Mármol fol. 61.

A recurring theme in many of Sosa's descriptions of the people of Algiers is that they are constantly *persuaded* and *duped* by the marabouts (the Spanish being *persuadidos* and *burlados*). In chapter 34 on feasts and festivals, Sosa says the following: "The marabouts persuade them that those who keep the fast during these three months [Radjab, Sha'ban, and Ramadan] are sure to go to Paradise and cannot be damned, and that beyond this they will prosper in all their affairs. But those who believe the marabouts end up greatly duped and complain bitterly" (211). He generally views the marabouts as the root of the problem for so many of the Muslims having gone astray and for many of the renegades renouncing their Christianity—the marabouts simply have them duped because they offer them paradise as well as carnal pleasures and riches, that the weak in faith are all too eager to indulge in (this referring to the renegades in particular, chapter 13).

In chapter 35 Sosa describes an example of a marabout who rose to fame and obtained a large following, and he seems a perfect target for Sosa because the account finishes in disgrace for the Muslim religious leader even among other Muslims. Sosa tells us that it was the summer of the year 1579 when a certain marabout arrived in Algiers from Fez, and he revealed that he could conjure an angel from heaven and consult with it (221-22). Crowds would gather and it seems that he would put on a show for onlookers, getting angry at the angel when it would not come, and then eventually it would appear and talk to him, invisible to the onlooker, of course. When the angel finally did arrive, the marabout would take on a passive-aggressive attitude and be "still indignant and discontented, pretend[ing] he did not want to hear him." Then, with some encouragement from the crowd, the marabout and angel would go to the nearest mosque and listen to people's questions, "sending some of them off happy and others unsatisfied." But "the marabout did not remain popular for too long," says Sosa. This marabout had gained a large

following and, as it was quite common for women to visit marabouts and take their young children with them, many women from the city forced their husbands to allow them to visit this angel-conjuring marabout—so many women that “neither the temple of Apollo at Delphi, nor the oak trees and urns of Dodona, nor Mount Parnassus [...] were as frequented as the house of this good man” (221). It was eventually discovered that the marabout was using his angel-conjuring powers as a guise to entertain certain sexual improprieties with these women that visited him, and so the ruler at the time, the Venetian renegade Ḥasan, ordered that he leave the city and never return, under pain of impalement.

The episode is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it exhibits various core issues that Sosa, and other polemicists, emphasize regarding how the religious leaders of the Muslims were obsessed and overcome with sexual desire, not conscious whatsoever of its impropriety and willfully embracing its debauchery, comparing them, in effect, with Sodom and Gomorrah—the example *par excellence* in the Bible of hedonism and corruption.³⁴ Sosa also emphasizes the ridiculousness of the situation, and he uses small, sarcastic comments to add sardonic humor; for example, in the quote above, Sosa says that no one was visited by more women “at the house of this good man.” Sosa seems to suggest that it is by no fault of Christianity that these people have fallen away from the faith, but rather that renegades and Muslims are poorly constituted and are easily lead astray by the marabouts. To Sosa, these “prophets” perform transparently empty acts and miracles, and by repeatedly referring to how the people are duped and persuaded, he aims to provide a sort of warning to his readers, laden with sarcasm though it may be.

³⁴ Both Leo Africanus and Mármol write about how “morabitos” and “locos” publicly “se apoderan de” [take by force] women and are venerated for it. Even the clothes of the violated women become relics. Africanus records a particular account (158) and Mármol speaks more generally (fol. 61).

A final example appears when Sosa describes how the Algerians choose witnesses in civil court cases. These witnesses, naturally, are chosen depending on their moral rectitude and capacity for giving valid testimony; therefore, Sosa says, people that drink wine or neglect the *ṣalāt* would be rejected as witnesses. For one official proceeding they rejected a marabout about whom Sosa says the following, “In the year 1580, a man was rejected as a witness (even though he was a marabout) because he crossed over the tombs of the dead without his breeches. They claim that because he was exhibiting his shameful parts to the dead he showed himself to be neither a man of good will nor a credible person” (230). Sosa makes special note that he was rejected “even though he was a marabout”—implying that the marabout did something so base and so morally detestable that his own political authorities excluded him from the juridical process.

Among these examples Sosa presents the thrust of his argument: it is the use of reason and logic that makes men the noble crown of God’s creation, and these irrational saints do not use their logic, yet they are considered virtuous and holy to Muslims; therefore, Islam does not follow reason and logic and cannot be true. Amud responds to Sosa’s accusations that because these individuals lack reason, they cannot do evil; and if they cannot do evil and are innocent, why shouldn’t they be considered saints? This response leads into Sosa’s trap and he replies that “no está la bondad o santidad en solo no hacer mal, porque de esa manera también diríamos que es santo un caballo, un mulo y un asno, los cuales ni roban, ni matan, etc” [goodness and righteousness are not only in not doing evil, because in that way we would also say that a horse is a saint, or a mule or an ass, all of which do not rob nor kill, etc.] (226). Finally Amud concedes saying, “Confieso que por ahora yo no te sé responder” [I confess that for now I don’t know how to respond to you] (227). Again we must remember that Amud may or may not have

been a real person, and we should assume that even if he were, his words would be doctored to fit Sosa's narrative. However, if Amud were as proficient in his classical sources as Sosa, he would have argued along the lines of Ibn Khaldūn: "Among the adepts of mysticism are fools and imbeciles who are more like insane persons than like rational beings. Nonetheless, they deservedly attained stations of sainthood and the mystic states of the righteous" (86). And he continues on to say that while these men may lack a certain intellect, the information they reveal about the supernatural is extraordinary.

Sosa's main strategy in convincing Amud of his error is by way of logic and reason, and this fits with Sosa's use of the dialogue. This literary genre enjoyed significant success during the Renaissance and Baroque eras. Jacqueline Ferreras, in her exhaustive study of the sixteenth century dialogue, demonstrates the great thematic variety within these works, but if they have one thing in common it is that they are a result of a new consciousness of rationalism.³⁵ The structure of the dialogue works well for Sosa given that he frames the issue into dichotomic terms—Christianity and Islam, and he sets Amud up as the naïve Islamic representative.

Later, Sosa writes that the marabouts considered certain animals as holy, a belief that he capitalized upon to ridicule them. He says the following:

They also consider storks and snails to be marabouts, and it would be a grave sin to touch them or do them harm, let alone kill them. When I inquired why, they said it is not because the stork kills and rids the earth of insects, but rather because, when it awakens each morning and other times during the day, it praises Allah by raising and lowering its neck while making quacking noises. As for the snail, they say it is also a marabout

³⁵ In fact, she talks about a "pre-racionalismo" starting on 77. Also helpful as an orientation in the dialogic tradition is the introduction to José Miguel Martínez Torrejón's *Diálogo y retórica en el Renacimiento...*

because it does no harm, and therefore scrupulous Muslims hold it a sin to eat them (218).

Sosa does not elaborate a significant amount on this, likely assuming that the ridiculous reasoning of it is self-evident, but it is my opinion that there is more to this considering storks and snails as marabouts, and it would be perfectly natural that Sosa leave out other details on the subject that may justify the strange belief; therefore, like many of Sosa's demeaning comments, it is likely that this is another incident in which he exaggerates for effect.

Another type of overly pious marabout that Sosa mentions both in the *Topografía* and in the fifth section, *Diálogo de los morabutos*, are marabouts that play with fire. At this point he refers to the more extreme figures as *deli*. He writes:

Other marabouts out of devotion (as they put it) burn their heads with hot irons and brand themselves with knobs of fire; others slice into their chests and arms with razors, giving themselves great wounds; or they put cotton rags drenched in oil over their arms, which they set on fire and let their flesh burn until the oil and cloth are consumed. But the truth is that they do this out of love for young boys (to whom they are very addicted) when the devil makes them burn with desire and further inflames in them that dirty and filthy lust. And in this way, every man who kisses the head and wounds of these dirty rogues is a holy man (178).

This passage makes the connection between fire, sexual lust, and sodomy to further appall his readers. One might read these descriptions and wonder about the historiographical integrity that Sosa is adhering to and dismiss his observations as outrageous attacks against Islam. However,

many of these behaviors of the marabouts are corroborated by other historians—of course, those historians were also Christians, many times with a similar religious ideology and bias.

The Disunity of Islam

‘Abdallah al-Tarjumān titles chapter two of the polemic section of the *Tuhfa* in this way: “En que se mencionan las divisiones de los cristianos y el número de sus ritos y sectas” [In which are mentioned the divisions of Christianity and the number of its rituals and sects], and Epalza notes that disunity is a common argument against the veracity of Christianity and that it has been used many times before (296 n.1). Throughout the chapter, al-Tarjumān talks about Christianity broken up into seventy-two different sects.³⁶ As mentioned above, al-Ḥajarī also provides specific criticism of Christianity’s disunity, derived from the fact that each pope has the authority to make changes to the religion whenever he feels a certain whim. Al-Ḥajarī says, “Your religion is open to additions and omissions, because every pope has the authority over you to add or take away what occurs to him in matters of your religion” (119). As Sosa has done with other arguments, he also adopts this angle of attack and goes about trying to show that Islam, in fact, is equally as disjointed as Christianity; however, while at times he seems to try to insert a wedge into Islam’s unity, many times it is not certain if he realizes the social phenomena he is observing in a larger context.³⁷

This strategy to expose the disunity of Islam, however, does not seem to be carried out in a systematic manner, but rather he goes about describing how “Many are the marabouts...” and

³⁶ See Epalza 296 n. 2 in which he explains that Ibn Ḥazm’s original criticism talks about the six sects of Christianity and that the number seventy-two probably comes from later hadiths.

³⁷ In his first chapter, Shoshan works with the tentative thesis that there was a “religion of the people” that profoundly differed from that of the ‘ulama’ (9-22). He examines various sermons to read the pulse of the people.

“Some Muslims also hold it as a truth...” (Garcés 220-221), implying that “many” and “some” but not *all* the marabouts agree on the same thing. He does not exploit the various “sectas” that Mármol has referred to. An intriguing passage is found in the chapter “A Miscellany of Muslim Customs in Algiers” in which Sosa says:

Many are the marabouts who feel and say that neither the Law of Muhammad, nor any other worldly law, is necessary for salvation. What is needed is simply to harm no one and do good to all they can in this world. When sick unto death, a man need only remember God and call upon Muhammad, and with this he will enter Heaven (220).

This apparent disunity appears an issue that Sosa failed to capitalize upon. Islamic polemical texts such as the *Tuhfa* certainly take advantage of the schisms in Christianity. While Sosa misses the opportunity, Mármol does characterize “morabitos” as reformers: “el Gazuli [...] vino a concordar los legistas con los Morabitos en esta manera, que los legistas se llamasen doctores y conservadores de la ley y los Morabitos entendedores y reformadores della” [al-Gazuli [...] came to bring together the jurists with the marabouts in this manner, that the jurists call themselves doctors and preservers of the law and the marabouts understanders and reformers of it] (fol. 60).

Fray Jerónimo Gracián goes as far as to call the marabouts atheists. He says the following in *Diez lamentaciones del miserable estado de los atheístas de nuestros tiempos*:

La segunda libertad es la de las leyes, y por exemplo della diré lo que oy día passa en los Marabutos de Berbería. Tuvieron estos principios de dos hijos de Haly, sobrino y sucesor de Mahoma, que se dieron en cierto tiempo a increíbles abstinencias y asperezas de cuerpo; y viniendo un día ante su Padre disfigurados, flacos y en los huesos, díxoles el Padre, que (según la ley de Mahoma su tío), ya estaban libres de todas las leyes, y podían

cessar de hazer penitencia y qualquiera cossa que hiziessen de allí adelante, sería santa y perfeta. Hallose presente un moro llamado Marabutin, y escribió un libro de la secta de los Marabutos en que dize que llegando una persona a cierto grado de perfición (que ellos imaginan se alcança con sus asperezas), está libre de toda la ley, y qualquiera cosa que hiziere será santa. Y assí me contó quien lo vio por sus ojos, que llegando un Marabuto desta secta carnalmente, en una calle pública, delante de todo el mundo a una borrica, acudieron muchos moros a tomar pelos della, para reliquias, como sanctificada por su Marabuto (58-60).

[The second freedom is that of the law, and as an example of this I will say what happens today with the Marabouts of Berbería. They had their beginnings with the two sons of ‘Alī, nephew and successor of Muhammad, and which they gave themselves up at a certain time to incredible abstinences and corporal austerity; and showing up one day before their father disfigured, skinny, and boney, he told them that according to the law of Muhammad, they were already free from all the laws and could cease their penitence and whatever other things they did going forward, they would be perfect and holy. One Moor that was present was called Marabutin, and he wrote a book on the sect of the Marabouts in which he says that upon reaching a certain level of perfection (that they believe they can reach through ascetic acts), one is free from the law, and whatever they do becomes holy. And this is how someone told it to me who had seen it with their own eyes, that, when one Marabout physically touched a little donkey on a public street in front of everyone, they all began plucking hairs from it, as relics, because it was sanctified by the Marabout.]

The friar emphasizes the ascetic nature of the marabouts. Given that Sosa does not talk about Shi‘ism or Sufism, I gather that he was just as confused on Islamic history as Fray Jerónimo Gracián shows himself in this quote. ‘Alī (Haly) was indeed the nephew of Muḥammad, and he was the fourth successor (caliph), and the death of ‘Alī did prompt the first cracks in the unity of Islam, but to suggest that the prophet’s nephew was the first of these ascetics and radical, disfigured deviants is a stretch that skips over many vicissitudes in development of Islamic history from the first caliphs to the many local variations of medieval and early modern Sufism and Shi‘ism. It is curious, though, that Fray Jerónimo Gracián’s account of the beginnings of the “secta de los Marabutos” is very similar to the account of Luís Mármol above, who attributed the beginnings of the “secta” to ‘Alī’s supposed grandson Mohaydin.

Leo Africanus was another writer that was familiar with Islamic “sects.” In fact, Davis writes that, according to Africanus’ catechist Paride Grassi, he was confused by Islam’s “variety” and the “many confusions of its law” (191). Of course, it is possible that Africanus may have been saying this simply to dissimulate, but he did not hide his distaste for Shi‘ism that he found disruptive to the unity of Islam (170). She asserts that the centrality and concentration of power in the pope may have appealed to Africanus in 1519—no doubt before the ideas of Martin Luther trickled down from Germany that would put that concentration into question (192).

What we can label for now as non-mainstream rituals and customs found their way into the mainstream in Islam as a means to re-animate the spirituality of the people and attract them to more pious living. Islamic Sufism served this purpose, and while Sufism came in many forms, it kindled a piety that allowed different factions to assert their beliefs and distinguish themselves from one another. Sufism also became a highway to streamline what were previously considered extreme practices. Jonathan Berkey writes, “The Sufi *ṭurūq* (paths) became a link binding the

religious experience of rural areas to that more common in the cities. [...] The routinization the *ṭurūq* represented invested Sufism with a more catholic appeal, and helped the make Sufism a form of ‘institutionalized mass religion’ in the medieval Islamic world” (239), later he says again, “In rural and nomadic settings, however, Sufi *ṭurūq* provided cover for an astonishing range of religious beliefs and practices” (246). We have exhibited some examples of the astonishing range of beliefs in Sosa’s observations of the Algerian marabouts. Islamic historian Michael Chamberlain writes in his book *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus* about the fluid politics and cultural/political capital that characterized Damascus in the middle ages. One social character that Chamberlain describes in a section entitled “Reversal and Transgression” is the *muwallahūn*, who were particularly zealous religious men known for their uncouth acts, “They achieved fame, and avoided repression, even when they subverted the rituals, performances, and idioms of purity of the learned” (130). A particular example that Chamberlain mentions is Yūsuf al-Qamīnī (1259):

Where the learned marked their status by large turbans and wide sleeves of fine cloth, Yūsuf went bare-headed and let his sleeves drop, ‘giving a bizarre effect.’ Where the learned were known for discoursing endlessly, Yūsuf was famous for his long silences. Where learned men exerted themselves to adopt a moderate gait, of Yūsuf it was said that ‘one of the world’s great oddities is that he would stagger in his gait, without running into anyone, and not care’. (130-31)

Despite his subversive customs, the common people followed him and considered him pious and esteemed. They were considered to have certain esoteric knowledge which has always been very important to the Islamic tradition, particularly for Shi‘ism and Sufism.³⁸

Chamberlain is describing phenomena in Damascus, yet many of Antonio de Sosa’s observations seem to describe these same social characters, and he certainly took the opportunity to exploit what he characterized as ridiculous behavior filtered through his bias. In chapter 35, Sosa talks about the *deli* (Turkish for “crazy”) or the “crazy brave.” These characters performed many similar social acts described earlier by Chamberlain: “They always go about naked, with no more than a pair of pants and an animal skin tossed over their backs [...] To demonstrate their great spirit, they tend many times to wound themselves on the chest and arms” (221). These individuals of Algiers observed by Sosa should not be designated *muwallahūn*, but the phenomenon is observed and analyzed by historians in Damascus and I believe the marabouts of Algiers to be a similar manifestation—similar in that it developed because of the same Sufi, subversive strain of thought that arose in Islamic culture. Already mentioned, Sosa speaks about the *deli* at one point, but at multiple other points he seems to talk about the same type of social character without labeling them “*deli*” and simply referring to them as marabouts. Sosa writes in the chapter “The Marabouts of Algiers:” “All of these marabouts are highly ignorant [...] They generally walk around barefoot, naked, covered with an old and torn overcoat, with a bared head and staff in hand, so that nothing is missing that is required for a seemly exterior and show of sanctity” (177). As one may note, some of these strange practices coincide with the studies of Chamberlain and Berkey.

³⁸ Shi‘i doctrine places high emphasis on the *bātin* and *zāhir*—esoteric knowledge and common knowledge. The caliph/imams were said to be the only ones capable of accessing the *bātin*.

Sosa describes these holy men and their attention catching activities that have little historical analysis, but Sosa also notes other Sufi practices that have long historical precedent, including their continued use today. The best example of this is his observation of the practice of the *dhikr*. The Arabic root is that used in the words for “remember” and “recall.” Berkey describes the *dhikr* as a “spiritual exercise could take different forms, but typically consisted of the repetition, either individually or in a group, of God’s name, a portion of the Koran, or some other litany” (237). Sosa observes this social practice in chapter 27 on the marabouts:

These marabouts have the custom of praying with beads of gall [...] and their prayers are some of the names of God, which they repeat many times as they run their hands over the beads, and some say nothing more than “Allah, Allah, Allah,” which means “God,” or “astaghfiru, astaghfiru,”³⁹ which means “help me, God.” They repeat this so many times and with such great speed, that they drool all over their chests. And in the end, their brains are fried, and they fall to the ground like dead men. And these same men are taken for the greatest of saints. (177)

Earlier Sosa described Muslim prayers as a terrible sound, worse than the howling of wolves and dogs (175), a characteristic that Berkey also describes referring to a particular branch of Sufis: “*Dhikr*, for example, could become a means to a wild and ecstatic religious experience, such as that suggested by the ‘howling’ of the dervishes of the Rifa‘iyya order (*tarīqah*), which became popular over the course of the Middle Period, in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq” (237).

Again, Sosa’s entire objective in describing these *muwallahūn* or *deli* marabouts is to emphasize how ridiculous the holy men of Islam behave—even to the point that they are

³⁹ Perhaps from the phrase استغفر الله meaning “to seek forgiveness from God,” or from the same root غفر that renders meanings such as “to guard someone/something” and “to watch over someone/something.”

laughable. During Sosa's conversation with Amud, in *Diálogo de los morabutos*, Sosa wonders about some of these men who gouge out their own eyes for the sake of piety: “¿Qué espíritu ha revelado a estos vuestros grandes maestros que es muy gran servicio de Dios sacarse el hombre los ojos?” [What spirit has revealed to your great masters that it is a service to God to gouge out one's own eyes?] (243). As the conversation advances, Amud notices that Sosa finds the subject matter quite comical and inquires why. Sosa responds, “Verdad dices que hago mal en me reír, porque, sin duda, no se habían de tratar errores tan manifiestos y en que vivís tan malamente engañados, sin que todo fuese muy acompañado de lágrimas, y porque quieres defender una ofensa de Dios como ésa y decir que es servicio muy agradable a Dios” [It is true that it's bad that I laugh, because, without a doubt, one shouldn't treat such manifest errors in which you live so wretchedly deceived, but all this should be accompanied with tears, and because you want to defend a offense to God as this and say that it is a service to him] (244).

Conclusion

While many authors of *antialcoranic* literature, such as Martín García, Bernardo Pérez de Chinchón, and Juan Andrés, wrote their anti-Islamic treatises while in Christian territory on the Peninsula. Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía* may not be considered strictly *antialcoranic*, but it does rely heavily on undermining Islam and Islamic culture. The unique element that Sosa brings to the genre is that he was a captive in Islamic territory, Algiers, while he wrote, and thus he was able to provide exclusive details that those on the Peninsula could not. Sosa funneled his criticism toward the Algerian holy men, the marabouts, to indirectly discredit Islam as a whole. Soto and Starczweska talk about *alfaquís*, another form of Islamic religious leader, in Spain in this way: “While on the one hand there is a clear interest in addressing the leader in order to convert him and bring with him the whole community, there is at the same time a manifest effort

to diminish this very same authority so as to accuse the Muslim communities themselves of ignorance” (200), and Sosa applied this strategy to his treatment of the Algerian religious leaders. While Antonio de Sosa’s observations were conditioned by an ostensible racial superiority complex and his desire to discredit Islam, his observations were not all necessarily invented fictions; many of these “strange” things he observed have historical precedent and can be understood by the nature of North Africa’s wild decentralization of power at the time. However, it is also true that Sosa is taking advantage of phenomena that are strange to him in order to provoke a negative reaction from his Christian readers back on the Peninsula.

CHAPTER II

HOLY MIRACLE OR DIABOLIC PRESTIGE

*Then the disciples went out
and preached everywhere, and the Lord
worked with them and confirmed his word
by the signs that accompanied it.*

Mark 16:20

*We will show Our signs to them
in the horizons of the external world
and within themselves, until it becomes
clear to them that it's the truth.*

Qur'ān, Sura 41:53

As with many social, literary, political, and philosophical topics of Golden Age Spain, one need not look much further than the *Quixote* to begin a discussion on miracles and supernatural occurrences. Not long into Don Quixote's adventures he begins to blame the wretched and indefatigable *encantador* that would torment him wherever he went and seem to threaten his mission at every turn. While all of the supernatural occurrences in the novel are nothing more than Don Quixote's mad fancies, we can, however, learn a great deal about the effects that the events had upon the actors involved with them. In a similar way, miracles played a role in the religious life of Christians and Muslims of the sixteenth century Mediterranean region, and

Antonio de Sosa, Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī, Diego Galán, Alonso de Contreras, and others write about miracles or supernatural occurrences in some form. Whether truly supernatural events happened was many times less important than the effect they had on religious adherents, and in most cases the events were used to further a legitimizing agenda and to indicate divine authority.

The *Quixote* provides us with questions regarding the perception of miracles. After the *Clavileño* episode when Sancho testifies that they had traveled high above the earth and seen people as ants upon the ground, Don Quixote says to his companion: “Sancho, pues vos queréis que se os crea lo que habéis visto en el cielo, yo quiero que vos me creáis a mí lo que vi en la Cueva de Montesinos” [Sancho, since you want people to believe what you saw in the sky, I want you to believe what I saw in the Cave of Montesinos] (II 41). Did belief in miracles ever include a negotiation aspect, *quid pro quo*, among Christians and Muslims? Regarding Don Quixote’s account of events that happened in the Cave of Montesinos, the narrator, Cide Hamete Beningeli, mentions that he doubts the truth of the *caballero andante*’s account (II 24). How could a witness or commentator of miracles manipulate and skew their message? Even though most characters become privy to Don Quixote’s madness at some point, many continue to play along, and that participation earns them certain benefits. How did Don Quixote’s madness or “miracles” become a refuge or momentary relief to the participants? Various characters not only play along with Don Quixote’s madness, but elaborate their own ways to perpetuate the lie that the knight was living; the dukes, for example, greatly manipulate Don Quixote’s adventures, and at the end of the first book everyone at the inn voted that the *bacía* was, in fact, the helmet of Mambrino—everyone except the barber, the original owner of the *bacía* (I 45). Were invented, intentionally fraudulent miracles ever used, then, to influence the behavior of others? These and

other questions will be considered regarding miracles and superstitions found in Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía de Argel*, al-Ḥajarī's *Nāsr al-Dīn*, and other Mediterranean traveler texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The ubiquity of miracles seems to owe to the fact that, in the Mediterranean, a theater where religious identification carried significant importance, religious adherents latched onto miracles and superstitions to either fortify their beliefs when confronted with another religion or used them to demonstrate the falsity of the other. Here we are concerned with how this happened among Christians and Muslims. We also see a contest-like nature in the way that miracles are handled by the two religions with many similarities to the resurgence of martyrs during the post-Reformation religious wars, and, while this chapter is not about martyrs, it will be important to point out certain parallels to get a greater understanding of the resources the religions used to stir up enthusiasm for their cause.

Context of miracles among Christians and Muslims

The word “miracle” or “milagro” comes from the Latin *miraculum*, meaning something to be marveled at, and is related to *mirare*, to look.⁴⁰ This is significant to remember because throughout the Bible miracles and signs were used to remind the Israelites or the Jews of God's presence and providence. Through Moses God performed the ten plagues of Egypt that were signs of his intervention to force Pharaoh to release them from bondage. In the book of 1 Kings 18 Elijah stages a contest with the priests of the god Baal in which they each were to build altars and sacrifice to their god, and whichever responded would be the true god; of course, Baal did not answer, even after the priests got desperate and began to dance and cut themselves. Perhaps

⁴⁰ Hutchinson reminds us that the etymology of “martyr” comes from the similar sense of “witness” (59).

the most famous case of a visual sign connected with faith is the case of Doubting Thomas, to whom Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Don Quixote proclaims something similar when he crosses paths with some traders from Toledo. He tells them to confess that Dulcinea is the most beautiful *emperatriz* in La Mancha, to which the traders respond that if they could see her they would confess it. Don Quixote offers this rejoinder: “Si os la muestro—replicó don Quijote—, ¿qué hiciéades vosotros en confesar una verdad tan notoria? La importancia está en que sin verla lo habéis de creer, confesar, afirmar, jurar y defender; donde no, conmigo sois en batalla, gente descomunal y soberbia” [If I showed her to you, what merit would there be in confessing so manifest a truth? The whole point is that, without seeing her, you must believe, confess, affirm, swear and uphold it; if not, monstrous and arrogant wretches, you shall face me in battle forthwith] (53). Despite Jesus’ praise for those who believe without the need of a miracle or sign, over and over again, throughout the Bible and History, religious adherents heavily rely on miracles as proof that their religion is the correct one, and the ability to believe in that miracle is enough to put their minds at rest. A miracle is a concrete way to pin the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God down to earth, even for the most fleeting of moments. The Real Academia Española describes a “milagro” as: “Hecho no explicable por las leyes naturales y que se atribuye a intervención sobrenatural de origen divino” [an act unexplainable by natural laws and which is attributed to supernatural intervention of divine origin]. Many of the miracles discussed in this chapter could be considered superstitions, magic, or shamanistic practice depending on the observer, and providing a discrete definition of a miracle is difficult. However, it can be said that the miracles described here were considered as such by practitioners of either Islam or Christianity.

Unlike martyrs, which were unilaterally a Christian phenomenon (Hutchinson 59), miracles were of utmost importance to both Christians and Muslims. For example, while talking about the Moriscos' need to be instructed in Islam after the expulsion, Luis Bernabé Pons writes: "El carácter de religiosidad popular [...] con especial incidencia en la visión impactante de los milagros, resulta especialmente adecuado para el tipo de instrucción religiosa islámica de la que estaban necesitados los moriscos" [The character of popular religiosity... with special incidence to the impacting vision of miracles, proved particularly adequate for the type of Islamic religious instruction that the Moriscos were in need of] ("El Qādī 'Iyāḍ..." 210). Muslim polemicists were particularly interested in them because part of their anti-Christian discourse depended on differentiating the miracles of Jesus from the miracles of the prophet Muhammed. Bernabé Pons mentions in the above cited article just how influential the Qādī 'Iyāḍ was for authors such as 'Abdallah al-Tarjumān in the *Tuḥfa* and for al-Ḥajarī in *Nāsr al-Dīn*. In fact, of the few extant texts that we have of al-Ḥajarī, in addition to *Nāsr al-Dīn*, Bernabé reproduces a translation that the escaped Morisco made of Qādī 'Iyāḍ—the contents of which reveal many miracles of Muhammed.⁴¹

While the etymology of "miracle" in Latin emphasizes the spectacle of the act, the miracles translated by al-Ḥajarī of the Prophet also demonstrate the similar idea that a miracle should have witnesses. Al-Ḥajarī's translation is separated into chapters and categories of miracles: the first chapter dealing with "milagros que hizo el sancto propheta [...] en agua" [miracles that the holy prophet did... with water] (210), the second chapter dealing with miracles and food, and other chapters include miracles on trees, on Allah answering petitions of the

⁴¹ Extensive work has been dedicated to al-Ḥajarī since the discovery of *Nāsr al-Dīn*, much of it either philological or regarding the topic of the Lead Books Affair. See Epalza ("Le milieu..."), Harvey ("The Morisco..."), Sarnelli ("Al-Ḥajarī..." and "Lo scrittore..."), Wieggers ("Polemical Transfers..."), and the "General Introduction" to Ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī.

Prophet, of converting things into other things, on healings thanks to Allah, and others. The translation many times includes the number of witnesses to the miracles: “y eran trezientos ombres” (210), “eran mill y quatroçientos ombres” (210), “Y eran como trezientos ombres” (211). And in this contest of miracles, many of those in the translation of the Qādī contain traits of comparable miraculous occurrences found in the Bible. Take this account for example:

Y hizo Ebi Eyub comida para el sancto propheta y para çeydne Abu Beqrin lo que les bastaba. Y le dixo el sancto propheta: “Llamad a treinta ombres de los prinçpales de los amar.” Y binieron y comieron jasta hartarse, y quedó la comida sobrada. Tornó a dezirle: “Llama a sesenta ombres”. Y hizieron lo mismo. Y lo hizo así y comieron jacta hartarse. Y no salió ninguno dellos hasta que se tornó muçlim y hizo la obediencia al sancto propheta. Entonçes dixo Ebi Eyud: “Comieron de mi comida çiento y ochenta ombres y no se abía hecho sino solamente dos personas.”

[And Ebi Eyub made food for the holy prophet and the señor Abu Beqrin as much as they needed. And the holy prophet told him: “Call thirty of the principal men.” And they came and ate their full, and there were leftovers. He turned to say to him: “Call sixty men.” And they did the same. And he did this like so until he had seen enough. And none of them left until they became Muslims and swore obedience to the holy prophet. Then Ebi Eyud said: “One hundred eighty men ate my food that was prepared by merely two people.”]

This miracle resembles the biblical miracles of the feeding of the five thousand⁴² and perhaps the Pentecost day miracle⁴³ by stating how the witnesses converted to the respective religion (and how many) after the event.

⁴² Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, and John 6.

⁴³ Acts 2.

While comparisons between the miracles of Islam and Christianity certainly occurred, it is necessary to point out that the idea of a miracle varied widely among the different interpretations of Islam. David Weddle writes: “Sunnis relied on the consensual judgment of those trained in Islamic law and tradition; Shiites looked to Imams descended from the family of Ali; and Sufis followed masters of meditation and devotion who also traced their spiritual lineage to Muhammad through Ali. Miracles, as signs of divine authority, took on different meanings within these various communities of interpretation” (181). On the one hand, there are some like al-Ḥajārī that compare Muhammad’s miracles to those of Jesus, but on the other hand many Sunni Muslims would say that the only miracle in their history was the revelation of the Qur’ān to the prophet in the seventh century (Weddle 177). In fact, Annemarie Schimmel says that in Arabic “the general term for anything extraordinary is *khāriq ul-‘āda*, ‘what tears the custom (of God)’” (*Mystical Dimensions...* 206), which implies that the supernatural is opposed to God’s design for nature. Another Arabic word for “miracle” used by al-Tarjumān is *الآية* (*al-āya*) when he describes the ten plagues sent by Moses (343). But this is also the same word used to refer to a Qur’ānic verse or passage, thus it further agrees with the Sunni idea that the greatest miracle of all miracles was the revealed message of the Qur’ān.

Ibn Khaldūn writes cautiously of miracles, admitting their importance as a sign of truth but always connecting them to a prophet with special permission from God: “They thus take the place of an explicit statement from God to the effect that a particular prophet is truthful, and they are definite proof of the truth” (72). Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064)⁴⁴ recognized that miracles played a role in spiritual life, but he also was not fooled by news of just any miracle that spread by word of

⁴⁴ Ibn Ḥazm belonged to the *Ẓāhirī* school of jurisprudence, or *madhhab*, founded by Dāwūd al-*Ẓāhirī*. The other major Sunni *madhhabs* are Hanafī, Maliki, Shafī’ī, and Hanbali. For more on Ibn Ḥazm and the *Ẓāhirī madhhab* see Osman. For more on *madhhab* see Berkey “Modes of justice,” 216-223.

mouth. Julio Caro Baroja interprets Ibn Ḥazm's views as putting great restrictions on "magic," and therefore seeing him much less gullible, not being moved by popular superstitions. Caro Baroja says:

Según éste [Ibn Ḥazm], no hay posibilidad de que sean reales algunas de las operaciones que se atribuyen a los *magos*, tales como andar por los aires o sobre las aguas, crear cuerpos, transmitir sustancias, alterar la naturaleza física de las cosas, etc. Esto sólo es posible a los *profetas* para probar con ello su misión divina, siendo vanidades todas las historias que se cuentan respecto a otras personas que lo hayan pretendido hacer (I 31).

[According to Ibn Ḥazm, it is not possible that some of these actions attributed to *wizards* are real, things such as walking through the air or over the water, creating bodies, transmitting substances, altering the natural physics of things, etc. These are only possible for the *prophets* to prove that their mission is divine, being vanities all the histories that are told with respect to other people that have tried to do it.]

While in Spanish (and English) the words for "miracle" come from *mirare*, as discussed above, in Arabic we get a different sense. In another instance, al-Tarjumān uses the word عجرة (*‘ajza*), which generally means a miracle, but more specifically performed by a prophet.⁴⁵ The roots of the word, interestingly, are mostly connected with a meaning of weakness, insufficiency, and impossibility. Therefore, the insinuation seems to be that the person performing an *‘ajza* would have perhaps a stronger, more prophetic mission. The use of this word, *‘ajza*, would be consistent with the views of Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Khaldūn, given that only a prophet sent from God, someone with strong authority, would be able to perform certain miracles. Ibn Khaldūn also separates "miracles" done by prophets as something grander, such as ascending to heaven,

⁴⁵ Weddle uses the Arabic form *mu‘jzāt* (187).

reviving the dead, or conversing with angels, while wonders of saints are of a lower order such as “making much out of little” (73).

This is where ‘Abdallah al-Tarjumān’s arguments about miracles seem to be founded. In the *Tuḥfa* al-Tarjumān talks about miracles in two contexts, firstly to debunk the “miracles” of priests, but secondly to prove that Jesus was not actually God the Son, as has been previously discussed, but rather a prophet like many others who could perform miracles due to a divine mission, effectively designating him as a certain greater prophet sent from God and able to perform an ‘*ajza*.⁴⁶ Muslim polemicists compared the miracles of Jesus to the miracles of other prophets throughout the Bible in their desire to prove that Jesus was not the Son of God as Christians claimed. Many of the Biblical prophets and their miracles mentioned above were accepted by Muslims as legitimate—they simply denied that Jesus was God’s Son and that God could become disunited in any way. ‘Alī ibn Rabbān al-Ṭabarī (d. c. 860) and Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī give arguments such as the following:

[I]f, as the Christian opponents maintain, the manifestation of miracles by God through Jesus proves that he was God’s Son, then the same must apply to Moses, and it is no defense to say that Moses’ miracles were only made manifest when he prayed for God’s help, because Jesus too prayed and implored God, as in the Garden of Gethsemane. And again, it cannot be claimed that Jesus only prayed to God in order to instruct others how to do this, because the same can be claimed for Moses. There is no intrinsic qualitative difference between the two prophetic figures (Thomas 209).

Moriscos particularly, according to Louis Cardaillac, had an interest in using miracles as a polemical tool, emphasizing the miracles of the Prophet Muḥammad as a counterbalance to the

⁴⁶ For more specific details on miracles used by Moriscos, see Cardaillac *Moriscos y cristianos* 267-271.

miracles of Christ. Al-Tarjumān argues that many prophets in the Bible perform the astonishing kind of miracle that Ibn Ḥazm only attributes to a prophet with a divine mission; he cites, and enumerates, the ten plagues of Egypt that Moses called down as well as the fact that Elijah and Enoch ascended to heaven without dying (344).⁴⁷

In addition to the Arabic words *āya* and *ʿajza* that al-Tarjumān uses and the term *khāriq al-ʿāda* referring miraculous happenings in general, Islamic tradition has differentiated those miracles confirming a prophetic message with acts of grace—*karamāt* (Weddle 187). Later in this chapter we will see that al-Ḥajārī wrote of various acts of grace that he experienced (though he uses the word *niʿma*, نعمة).

Using logic and reason has been an attack strategy used by both Christians and Muslims to fortify one’s own religion or refute that of another’s. Antonio de Sosa uses this technique against the marabouts of Algiers saying that their practices and beliefs lacked logic and couldn’t be true. Other times Christians accused Muslims that they were too logical—not relying on miracles enough. Lotario takes advantage of this generalization in comments to Anselmo in Cervantes’ *El curioso impertinente*:

Paréceme, o Anselmo, que tienes tú ahora el ingenio como el que siempre tienen los moros, a los cuales no se les puede dar a entender el error de su secta con las acotaciones de la Santa Escritura, ni con razones que consistan en especulación del entendimiento, ni que vayan fundadas en artículos de fe, sino que les han de traer ejemplos palpables, fáciles, intelegibles, demostrativos, indubitables, con demostraciones matemáticas, que no se pueden negar, como cuando dicen: “Si de dos partes iguales quitamos partes iguales, las que quedan también son iguales.” Y cuando esto no entiendan de palabra,

⁴⁷ Thomas notes that there were at least 25 prophets considered “messengers” (202).

como, en efecto, no lo entienden, háseles de mostrar con las manos, y ponérselo delante de los ojos, y, aún con todo esto, no basta nadie con ellos a persuadirles las verdades de mi sacra religión (I 33).

[It seems to me, Anselmo, that your mind is in the same state as the minds of Moors, who can't be made to understand the error of their sect with references to Holy Scripture or with arguments involving intellectual speculation or based on articles of Faith, but must rather be confronted with examples that are palpable, straightforward, easy to understand, demonstrable, indisputable – with mathematical proofs that can't be denied, such as 'If equal parts are taken from equal parts, the remainders are also equal'; and if they can't follow the verbal reasoning, as indeed is the case, they must be shown it all using one's fingers, and have it placed in front of their eyes, and even so nobody can persuade them of the truths of our holy religion.]

While Cervantes demonstrates this attitude through parody, Luis de Granada criticizes it more genuinely in *Introducción al símbolo de la fe*: “Su ley... ni fue confirmada con milagros ni con razones, sino con las armas... La Religión Christiana... es confirmada con muchos y grandes milagros... Pues estos milagros son prueba tan suficiente de la fe, que ninguna demostración matemática iguala con ellos” [Their law... was confirmed with neither miracles nor reason, but with arms... The Christian religion... is confirmed with many and great miracles... And these miracles are sufficient proof of faith, which no mathematical demonstration can equal] (II 27). Al-Tarjumān provides us with an example when a Muslim writer logically explains a Christian miracle and exposes it as nothing more than a ploy and deception. At one point, al-Tarjumān describes the sacrament of Baptism and, after his description, while talking about the holy water, he says the following:

Sabed que esa agua que meten los sacerdotes en las pilas de las Iglesias dura muchísimo tiempo y hasta años sin estropearse ni alterarse. Los cristianos se maravillan de ello y creen que es gracias a la bendición del sacerdote y por la bendición de la Iglesia. No saben que es la gran cantidad de sal y aceite de bálsamo lo que conserva la inalterabilidad del agua. El sacerdote mete la sal y el aceite de bálsamo sólo de noche, cuando absolutamente nadie del pueblo cristiano le puede ver (316).

[You should know that the water that the priests put in the pools of the churches lasts a very long time and even years without going bad. Christians marvel at this and believe that it's thanks to the blessing of the priest and of the Church. They don't know that it's the great amount of salt and balsam oil that preserves it. The priest puts these in it at night when absolutely no one from the Christian people can see it.]

We see that the miracle of the holy, unalterable water is nothing more than a result of the chicanery of the priests who sneak the salt and balsam into the water at night—nothing supernatural at all. This use of logic and common sense to debunk a supposed supernatural occurrence will come up again when we observe Antonio de Sosa's treatment of Algerian practices.

Scholars, theologians, and polemicists began to view and interpret religion through a thick logical lens in the middle ages, and this esoteric and academic approach to religion did not always translate to benefits for the common practitioner—one reason Luther translated the Bible to German was so that the common man could have access to the Word again. Similar obfuscations happened in Islam and Judaism as Weddle writes:

As the rabbis surrounded the Torah with dense layers of commentary that they described as building a 'hedge' around the sacred text, so the ulama constructed elaborate systems

of legal decisions that only scholars trained in their schools could understand. [...] But there is a danger in this strategy, as the anthropologist Michael Gilsenan points out. If the system of interpretation becomes so dense and rigid that ordinary people cannot understand or adapt it to their immediate needs, then they may create their own ‘men of authority’ whose views may not conform to the orthodoxy of the scholars (182).

For many, religion constituted one of the main escapes from the hardship and toil of every day labor. Miracles, similarly, presented a refuge from life’s hardships and inadequacies—after all, what miracles did Jesus perform for people? He provided bread to five thousand and he healed the sick—the most basic needs of individuals. In the next section we will see how Antonio de Sosa attacks the marabouts of Algiers not on the basis of their elaborate dogmatic systems, but on the popular level, denying the fact that the marabouts were able to aid the ordinary person in the most basic needs of life. Weddle says about miracles that they were so often a “weapon or refuge of the dominated, an essential part of the discourse, hopes, expectancies, and creations of the poor. It is no wonder that these miracles must be denied, stigmatized as superstition, and denied authenticity by the powerful” (183). If Sosa could prove that the marabouts were nothing but hacks and deceivers he could crush the hopes and expectancies of the Muslims and turn them toward Christianity. And if he failed to convert the Muslims, he at least tried to prevent Christians from becoming renegades.

Although he wrote a couple centuries after the period we are occupied with, Fyodor Dostoyevsky writes a powerful and relevant chapter in *The Brothers Karamazov* questioning the existence of God, “The Grand Inquisitor,” in which the brother Ivan says:

for man seeks not so much God as the miraculous. And as man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create new miracles of his own for himself, and will worship

deeds of sorcery and witchcraft, though he might be a hundred times over a rebel, heretic and infidel. Thou didst not come down from the Cross when they shouted to Thee, mocking and reviling Thee, “Come down from the cross and we will believe that that art He” (237).

This passage deals with a fundamental idea I want to explore in this dissertation chapter. The point is that man needs and wants miracles, and whether they witnessed anything supernatural or not, it is necessary to write about them to substantiate their beliefs. What circumstances prompted writers to bear witness to them? Or invent them? As the last part of the passage says, when Christ was hanging on the cross, those standing below asked him to miraculously descend from it and they would believe—a miracle in exchange for faith. Did they feel that they needed miracles to substantiate their own faith or to provoke faith in their readers? Would miracles make their histories more credible and was there a need to add credibility to their stories, for example, to convince the Inquisition of their fidelity? Dostoyevsky also recognizes the relationship between miracles and sorcery/witchcraft, many times only distinguished from one another depending on the partiality of the observer, and this partiality will present a recurring theme throughout this chapter.

We have established the connection that miracles have with spectacle; the religious contest between Christianity and Islam; the partiality of the witnesses; the strategy of logically explaining away miracles to downplay their veracity; and the simple desire that humans have for a miraculous sign to substantiate their beliefs and provide for their basic needs. The rest of this chapter will work to situate Antonio de Sosa and Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī and their response to miracles into this framework. We will see that miracles served a dual purpose: they were used to solidify a belief as proof, but they were also used to construct a ridiculing narrative of the

other. Caro Baroja sums this up: “El mito mágico tiene en sí una peligrosa doblez. Es santo milagro para uno lo que es prestigio diabólico para otro” [Magic myth itself has a dangerous duplicity. What is a holy miracle for one is diabolical prestige for another] (I 35). This quote accurately describes the difficulty in properly conceptualizing what constitutes a miracle. How is it distinct from magic, superstition, or shamanistic belief? To answer that is difficult because a miracle for one religion may be logically explained by another—but that does not necessarily cancel out the miraculous effect it may have upon an observer or a second-hand listener or reader. Therefore, while a concrete definition of what constitutes a miracle would be impossible, it may be stated that the miracles considered here were perceived or treated as supernatural events by either Christians or Muslims and were subsequently used by writers for polemical ends.

Antonio de Sosa exploits the popular

Ironically for our purposes, the older etymology of *milagro*, before the Latin, comes from Proto-Italic *smeiros*, and Proto-Indo-European *sméyros* meaning “laughing, smiling” (Vaan 382), and in the *Diálogo de los morabutos*, when Sosa is confronted with the miracles of the marabouts, he laughs and laughs heartily. While Sosa showed little hesitation in condemning and ridiculing the marabouts of Algiers in the topographical segment of his work, as seen in the previous chapter, he becomes even more aggressive and sardonic in the *Diálogo*, the third dialogue and final division of the *Topografía*. As seen previously in the work, his entire objective in this dialogue is to make the marabouts out to be laughable hacks and, in so doing, he tries to get his interlocutor to see that following them and their religion is completely absurd. Sosa says near the beginning of the dialogue: “vuélvote a decir otra vez que si este tu gran sabio, y otros tales como él, no

saben más que lo que en esta parte afirman, no sólo no son letrados, pero con perdón unos asnos albardados” [I’ll tell you again that if this your great sage, and others like him, doesn’t know more than what they affirm in this part, not only are they not learned, but, with respect, they are saddled up asses] (195). Absurdity itself is a theme of this dialogue, and Sosa exploits what he observes in the day to day customs and ritualistic goings on of the denizens of Algiers.

Most of the topics of discussion and ridicule have a folk, popular aspect to them:

“Tampoco no trataré agora de lo que ellos os enseñan y predican conforme al Alcorán de Mahoma; [...] Mas hablando ahora sólo de lo que vuestros letrados y morabutos añaden de sus cabezas y de las falsas opiniones o sueños que os tienen persuadidos como dotrina y verdades de Dios” [Nor will I speak now about what they teach and preach to you according to the Qur’ān of Muhammad; ... But speaking now only about what your educated and your marabout fill their heads with and the false opinions or dreams that they have you persuaded of as doctrine and truths of God] (206). María Antonia Garcés writes that *De los morabutos* is a “theological debate between Christianity and Islam” (47) and, while that may be true, it oversimplifies the content. If one were looking for a dialogue on basic Islamic theology he would be much better served reading the second part of *Viaje de Turquía* in which Juan asks Pedro questions such as “¿Y qué confesión tienen? [...] ¿Qué iglesias tienen? [...] ¿Quántas veces al día [rezan]?” [What confession do they have? [...] What churches do they have? [...] How many times a day do they pray?]. But the issues that Sosa covers are not what many would call the official theology of Islam. In a way, Sosa indirectly does what many Muslim polemicists argued against Christianity, and that is exploit the divisions within it, because the polemical argument has always been that a divided religion cannot be the true religion sanctioned by God. As was shown on multiple occasions in the last chapter about Sosa and the marabouts, the appearance of these Islamic

figures is rooted in the popular need for them. They became figures around whom people rallied in difficult circumstances; sometimes those circumstances were political with a militant aspect and other times these figures presented a more palatable form of Islam, a mix of strict doctrine along with mystical Sufism. The marabouts enjoyed popular support because of the immediate, quotidian services they could provide to a community, and many of the practices that Sosa criticizes here in the *Diálogo* deal with the familiar manner that the marabouts “persuaded” and “duped” people into following their version of Islam.

This dialogue is a conversation between Sosa himself and Amud, who is identified at the beginning as “hijo de renegado y renegada, y yerno del patrón del doctor Sosa” [the son of renegades, and son-in-law of the owner of the doctor Sosa] (193).⁴⁸ As Sosa himself is the main interlocutor, the question arises as to whether or not this dialogue was a fictional creation, a real conversation that took place, or a combination of the two. Sosa’s statements are mostly quite polished so, even if the conversation actually took place, it would not be surprising that he embellished or fine-tuned his locutions. Sosa separates the dialogue into seven “divisions,” but there seems to be no rhyme or reason why the conversation is cut off at one point or another. In fact, some conversation topics spill over from one division to another as if there were no partition at all. There also seems to be little structure to the conversation topics, nor much continuity between them. Sosa’s contributions to the dialogue vastly outweigh the comments of Amud and, at times, the *Diálogo* seems much more like a diatribe of Sosa than an actual back and forth. I have my doubts as to whether this was a real dialogue that took place given its aspect as a tirade and the fact that many of Amud’s responses are sycophantic, generally agreeing with Sosa’s objections or giving very weak rebuttals. Despite Sosa’s seemingly aggressive and

⁴⁸ The pagination of *Diálogo de los morabutos* comes from the 1929 edition of the text.

arrogant tone, it is evident throughout the chapter that the two men are friends having a sometimes heated disagreement. There are a couple explanations for this: if, indeed, the conversation actually took place in some form, Amud may have been a familiar visitor to Sosa, who was under harsh imprisonment, and they may have become good friends; if the dialogue is a complete fiction, which is more likely, it would make sense that Sosa create a situation in which a Muslim and a Christian had an amicable and peaceful exchange. After the problems with the Moriscos on the Peninsula and the War of the Alpujarras, Sosa may have wanted to provide a fictional model of how setting the renegades or Muslims straight could be done in a logical, peaceful fashion.

But before delving into Sosa's arguments against the popular practices of marabouts, it is useful to consider Sosa's education. Sosa was very erudite and, depending on the books he had at his disposal in captivity, perhaps became even more so during his years in Algiers. He was a good humanist and very familiar with classical Greek and Roman writings. At one point in their conversation, Amud tells Sosa that he could not deny that even Islamic civilization had a rich history of philosophers and scientists, effectively allowing Sosa to go off on a long discourse that permitted him to show his deep well of knowledge. This is an important tactic in gaining an upper hand in religious polemical arguments because if one could show himself adroit in the culture and sacred texts of the other then he had greater credibility. Near the end of the dialogue, Amud asks Sosa point blank how it was possible that he knew so much about their law if he has never read it, and Sosa responds that "no hay en cristianos librería principal, como muchas que son de los estudios generales y de iglesias catedrales y de grandes monasterios, do comúnmente no se tenga el Alcorán traducido en lengua latina" [in Christian countries there is not principle library, as many of them are general studies and cathedrals and great monasteries, where a

Qur'ān cannot commonly be had translated into the Latin tongue] (263); then he uses the “nosotros” form when talking about how the “curiosos” among them read the entire Qur'ān to know what's in it.⁴⁹ Sosa demonstrates his familiarity with the Qur'ān in other places, but during this discourse he speaks about his familiarity with history, philosophy, and science, and he demonstrates a knowledge of certain societal structures in Islamic culture.

Sosa is never shy about sharing his education with his readers. The first chapter of the *Topografía* deals with “The Founding of Algiers” and demonstrates Sosa's familiarity with classical sources, especially Greek and Roman sources. In her introduction, Garcés mentions that the perspective toward much of North Africa by Europeans was that it was really their territory that was robbed from them by the Arabs and that, ultimately, it would be recovered by them—just as they had recovered Spain in the *Reconquista*. This perspective is apparent in the first chapter here. Sosa outlines a history of the city of Algiers. He talks of how it changes hands a few times but it was always essentially a Roman city: “As Aulus Gellius writes, in all things the Roman colonies were a propagation and part of the very city of Rome; or as others put it, they were living portraits, in miniature, of the Roman people themselves” (97). Years later the Arabs came in and stole what was rightfully European: “The same thing doubtless happened later when in the time of the Emperor Leontius around 697 AD, the Arabs conquered and ruined all Africa” (97). Sosa closes the chapter speaking highly of the area, likely because he saw it as a Roman/Christian zone: “It is hard to believe that this land, wanting in nothing that life and human contentment may desire, would at any time lack people wishing to enjoy such great

⁴⁹ This passage by Sosa contains a number of interesting biographical and anecdotal items. In one comment he implies that he is either learning Arabic from Amud or else he would like to. He also reveals an anecdote of when he arrived to Algiers and saw a “negro moro” carrying a book that he hoped had been from among his collection on the galley *San Pablo*. When Sosa called out to the moro to get a closer look at the book, the moro didn't appreciate his insolence and “[le] descargó tan gran porrazo en la cabeza, que ainas cayera en tierra; tan atordido quedó.”

liberty and such rich bounty from nature itself” (98). When Amud refers to the rich tradition of philosophy and science of the Arabs, Sosa shows the same territorial attitude, saying that the greatest “Arab” philosophers came from Christian territory—Averroes, Avempace, et. al—and, therefore, diminishes their Arab-ness and attributes their knowledge to their inhabitation in Christian lands.

But Sosa does want to be diplomatic, and he cedes that Islamic civilization has made some positive contributions to the search for knowledge. Drawing from his readings of Leo Africanus, he expounds upon some of the greatest “colegios” in the Arab world. These “colegios” refer to *madrasas*, schools of Islamic law that were many times set up and funded by *waqfs*, or charitable donations.⁵⁰ He mentions a madrasa in Morocco set up by Almanzor, others in Fez, another in Kairouan, others in Cairo, and others all across the Arab world, and in the meantime he expands upon some of the historical figures that lead to their establishment, citing, for example, ‘Uthmān, the third caliph (“pontífice y sucesor de Mahoma”), and Sultan Hassan, establishing the great mosque-madrasa of Cairo. All these, he states, are worthy of praise and should be a credit to Islamic culture because of their function as centers of learning and because of their rich architecture and furnishings.

However, despite the compliments, Sosa finds fault with the various Muslim madrasas in that they merely study Islamic law.⁵¹ He says: “No tratando ni profesando las ciencias humanas, como lógica, filosofía, metafísica, astrología, geometría, música, aritmética, sin las cuales no es posible sea un hombre consumado en las cosas divinas y humanas, y como entre los griegos y

⁵⁰ The endowment system and use of *waqfs* to fund madrasas is a fascinating example of how medieval Islamic society functioned. If a sultan established a madrasa it was done by his private funds, and was a way of maneuvering power and influence in medieval society. There was always a need to maintain balance and power among the ruling elite and the ‘ulama’. Read more in Berkey, 203-215, and Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 51-54.

⁵¹ While Sosa seems to be talking about the *madrasas*, earlier we also mentioned the various *madhhabs* of Islamic law, which could also be translated as “schools,” but in the broader sense of a movement of thought. It is unclear if Sosa conflated the two terms at times.

romanos se usó, y como hoy día en Cristiandad se profesan y enseñan en mil partes” [Not dealing with or professing the human sciences, such as logic, philosophy, metaphysics, astrology, geometry, music, and arithmetic, without which it’s not possible to be a man consumed by both divine and human things, and as among the Greeks and Romans they used, and as today in Christendom are professed and taught in a thousand places] (204). Sosa believes that religious law should not be studied in isolation, but that the sciences and the humanities be used as a complement to religious study to better understand the world and man’s relationship to God. And, making this argument, he finally arrives at his thesis and basis for criticism of the marabouts: if the marabouts and Muslim ancestors had studied the sciences and humanities in tandem with religious law, then they would not live in their “grandísima ignorancia y crasísima ceguera” [very great ignorance and crass blindness].

Returning to Sosa’s criticism of popular practices, the first topic of conversation between him and Amud dives right into the subject of this dissertation chapter on miracles and religious superstitions, and it also anticipates the rest of the dialogue to follow. The chapter begins when Amud greets Sosa, asking him how he is. Sosa responds, melancholically, that however he may be, “Nuestro Señor así es servido” [Our Lord is served]. To which Amud basically agrees, responding that yes, the world goes like this and like that, and each person’s path is prescribed for him, written on his head. Sosa then begins to laugh because he knows that Amud means “written on his head” literally, and this launches the two into a conversation about how each individual has the path of his life literally, physically written on the lines of their skulls—a belief that Sosa finds absurd.⁵²

⁵² The fact that this becomes a topic of debate is by no means out of place because one of the main theological arguments of the Reformation and the Spanish Baroque is whether God has predetermined man’s life—see Calderón’s *El gran teatro del mundo* or *La vida es sueño*. Predestination and double predestination marked one of the biggest differences between Calvinism and Lutheranism.

What Amud seems to be referring to are the jagged cracks that run along an old, desiccated skull (or a skull that has received trauma and was cracked). He says: “¿Pues no miraste cómo de la frente hasta casi de la mitad de la cabeza corre y se va extendiendo una raya derecha; y cómo luego cabe esta atraviesa otra en cruz?” [But you have seen how from the front to almost the middle of the head runs and extends a straight crack; and how also another crosses over it in the form of a cross?] (195). Sosa responds that he has seen this “a thousand times,” and Amud then tells him that those lines are written letters that detail the prescribed course of a person’s life.⁵³

Sosa laughs at him, blaming the ignorance of the marabouts for such folly, but he also provides his own explanation for these “rayas,” and he uses his knowledge of the classics and Arab medicine and philosophy against Amud. Sosa says that after seeing and being familiar with many different languages—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldean, Arabic, Egyptian, Phoenician, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese—the cracks of the skull bear no resemblance to any of them. The cracks are nothing more than the work of Nature, he says, because the human stomach serves as such an oven and steaming pot, and the fumes from this steamy concoction go up to our heads and our brains and need a place to vent. Sosa cites various Arab scholars, Juan Mesué, Avicenna, Averroes, Avempace, “y otros.” This is the first example of when Sosa implements the familiar polemical strategy of using reason, logic, and the sciences to explain supernatural occurrences in a natural manner—while Amud believes the cracks were a written language placed there by Allah, Sosa debunks the thought by referring to the scientific theory of the Arabs, Galen, and Hippocrates.

⁵³ In *Viaje de Turquía* we see another instance of one’s actions being literally written upon them. Pedro says that on the Day of Judgment, according to Muslims, the condemned will have their names written on their foreheads and their sins enumerated on their backs (394).

While Amud's "cracked skull" theory may not have been official Islamic doctrine, Sosa tries to tie the superstition with the marabouts, and by extension with Islam. His general view of the marabouts is consistent with typical stereotypes of Muslims and Moriscos on the Peninsula. Sosa says,

All those who take on the profession of marabouts, in general, are also sorcerers, on which their knowledge and reputation chiefly rest. You can ask none of them for a cure of something that he will not cast lots or spells, use necromancy or hydromancy, with all other species of magic. Finally, all of them profess to divine and foretell good fortune, and even to bless with words, names, charms and toys, with bits of paper on which they, or someone else, write mysterious words and characters or the names of Satan and demons.⁵⁴ These items the marabouts throw on the necks of sick children, postnatal mothers, badly married or rejected women, along with an infinity of aromatic substances that they make from frogs, teeth of dogs, eyes of cats, nails of wolves, excrement of monkeys, teeth of swine and other filthy things (179-180).

This paragraph provides a more general glimpse of the particular cases Sosa will work to ridicule that include other mentions of witchcraft, divination, and popular remedies for illness.

It was common to accuse Muslims, Moriscos, and Jews of practicing witchcraft, sorcery, and other strange rituals that could be construed as witchcraft, and since the famed *Celestina* these characters are frequently portrayed in literary works. This theme has also been the object of studies such as Yvette Cardaillac-Hermosilla's *Les noms du Diable: Essai sur la magie, la religion et la vie des derniers musulmans d'Espagne: les Morisques*, which summarizes Inquisitional depositions that provide many details of what Moriscos and Jews were frequently

⁵⁴ Indeed, later on in this chapter we will see al-Ḥajarī write verses of the Qur'ān or the names of Allah on paper and give it to the sick to be healed.

accused of. Cardaillac says: “Les rites de magie analogique et de magie de contact figurent aussi dans tous les documents juridiques, et dans les textes aljamiados concernant la magie, leur variété est extrême” [The rites of analog magic and magic of contact also figure in all the juridical documents, and in the aljamiado texts concerning magic their variety is extreme] (45). There are also many literary mentions of Moriscos practicing witchcraft: in Cervantes’ novela ejemplar *El licenciado vidriera*, it is a Morisca that gives Tomás the *membrillo* that turns him mad (52); in *Desengaño 5* of María de Zayas it is a Morisco that puts doña Inés under a spell (276); and Cardaillac also points to the mother of Pablos in Quevedo’s *El Buscón* as another example of a Celestina style *hechicera* (Chapter 1); Caro Baroja comments that one of the best examples of a literary Morisco necromancer is found in Juan Ruiz de Alarcón’s *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*; and later on Baroja talks about Román Ramírez and his inquisitional process in his *Vidas mágicas e inquisición* (I, 2, 6).⁵⁵

Just like the “cracked skull” debate may have been around a more superstitious, local belief, Sosa makes it a point to continue with these issues. Many of the topics he attacks are shamanistic, popular rituals. Caro Baroja tells us how even Ibn Ḥazm saw through some of the cheaper tricks that local tradition could produce and dismissed them as falsification:

La Magia admitida por Ibn Ḥazm es, pues, también una especie de ciencia o pseudociencia con la que cabe que se asocie de modo engañoso la prestidigitación y el curanderismo. Nada hay en ella de milagroso ni de prodigioso siquiera. Los magos pueden producir apariencias, falsificaciones de milagros; pero tampoco pueden entrar en trato verdadero con el Demonio, como pretenden ciertos conjuradores farsantes (32).

⁵⁵ For more on the subject see Mas *Les Turcs dans la littérature espagnole du Siècle d’Or*; Carrasco Urgoiti *El moro de Granada en la literatura*; and Herrero García *Ideas de los españoles del siglo XVII*.

[The Magic admitted by Ibn Ḥazm is, well, also a type of science or pseudoscience which seems to associate in a deceiving way prestidigitation and folk medicine. There is nothing miraculous in it or even prodigious. The mages can produce apparitions, falsifications of miracles; but neither can they enter into a true deal with the devil, as certain farce conjurors attempt.]

Sosa continually tends to juxtapose this shamanistic belief system with the logical and scientific machine of Western thought. In the second division Sosa recalls to Amud a previous conversation they had had about a girl that was sick with fever. Amud naturally stated that the illness originated from a “ginón,” a jinni,⁵⁶ and that the remedy was quite a complicated dish for the jinni to eat, prescribed by none other than a wise marabout. Sosa is able to enumerate all the ingredients to the recipe as well as the steps of the ritual process to the amazement of Amud, “¿Mas cómo tienes esas cosas en la memoria?” [But how do you have all those thing in your memory?] (213).⁵⁷ The secret ingredient of this tasty dish was to be a rooster, bright red (*bermejo*), and cooked a certain way; after having properly cooked it, the dish was to be taken outside the city near a fountain or a river, and the jinni was supposed to find it and satiate himself to the point that he would leave the girl and she would be healed. Sosa finds this absurd and explains how, rather than the plight of a jinni, the fever actually was the result of an imbalance of humors—consistent with the medieval and early modern understanding of health and medicine. In addition to his recitation of medicinal theory, notice also Sosa’s derisive sarcasm:

⁵⁶ I will use “jinni” as the singular, and “jinn” the plural. Of course, the spelling “genie” also exists in English, but I will follow the Arabic transcription and use the former (الجنّي). However, notice that some of the quotations below also use “jinn” as singular.

⁵⁷ It is at this point where, interestingly, Sosa gives his readers a glimpse into his imprisonment, noting that he would be bored out of his mind if he didn’t constantly observe and think about the things his visitors tell him, “Por harto perdido tendría el tiempo si no me ocupase y pensase en otra cosa.”

Y dime primeramente, ¿en qué medicina o parte de filosofía hallan éstos tus espiritados que toda enfermedad y calentura nace de espíritu, o de algún ginón malo, que atormenta el enfermo, y no como todos los médicos y sabios del mundo afirman, y con la experiencia palpamos del destemplamiento o corrupción de los humores y calidades del cuerpo? Nueva ciencia es ésta en el mundo; cómo ¿y todo se ha de hacer y causar por éstos sus espíritus y ginones, y que fuesen como ellos quieren? Dime por tu vida, Amud, ¿tan amigo es el ginón, siendo espíritu incorpóreo, del comer, que con gallos rojos se ha de aplacar? Antes dime, qué, ¿es posible que sean estos espíritus tan golosos y aun de estómago tan bueno y tan codiciosos de ollas podridas que gusten tanto de comer una tan podrida como ésta y tan rellena de carne, cabezas, pies, plumas y llenos tan hediondos? Y después, ¿tan vergonzosos son esos espíritus que no comerán sino allá fuera a las fuentes y ríos y do ninguno los puede mirar (213-214)?

And tell me firstly, in what medicine or area of philosophy do these your spiritual leaders find that all illness and fever come from spirits, or some evil jinni, that torments the sickened, and as all doctors and learned men of the world affirm, and with experience we feel from being upset or imbalance of the humors and qualities of the body? This is a new science in the world; and is it that everything happens and is caused by these spirits and jinni, and things happen however these want? Tell me, Amud, is a jinni, being incorporeal, such a friend of eating that with red chickens it is placated? And tell me, is it possible that these spirits be such gluttons, have such great stomachs, and are so covetous of rotten stews that they love so much to eat such rot as this, full of meat, heads, feet, feathers, and fetidness? And afterwards, are these spirits so ashamed that they will eat no

other place than outside the city near fountains and rivers where no one else can see them?

Even Averroes talks about the four humors in his *El libro de las generalidades de la medicina* in the twelfth century, thus the idea that a jinni causes the illness becomes even more absurd in the way that Sosa describes it. He uses the important buzzwords *experiencia* and *ciencia* in an empirical effort to debunk Amud's unacademic and rustic understanding of medicine to point back to the marabouts and their false teachings. If even the great Averroes, an Arab, accepted and used the teachings of Hippocrates and Galen in his medical theory, then who were the marabouts to contradict even a great Arab thinker?

There is one more example I'll use from the *Diálogo de los morabutos* that includes components from both the previous examples—false medicine, jinn, and the failure of the suggested marabout remedies. When a certain Señora Axa had the misfortune to lose a great number of her children, all of which suffered “muertes tan espantosas” [frightening deaths] she found herself pregnant again and was determined that the child would not suffer the same fate as the others. She brought together a congregation of marabouts to discuss how she should go about giving birth. They recommended that she give birth outside of Algiers in a garden nearby named Bugivar, where “está una gran cantidad y congregación de ginones y diables” [a great quantity and congregation of jinn are]. And before giving birth, she was to entrust herself and her child to these jinn and devils. She successfully gave birth after following these instructions; however, as to be expected, shortly after returning to Algiers she went out to the *baño* and was told to return quickly because her daughter was dying. When she returned, “halló a la hija negra toda como una pez, retorciendo los miembros, ojos y boca, como todos los otros hijos antes hacían, y tomándola entre los brazos, allí luego la ahogó y mató el demonio” [she found her daughter all

black like a fish, her limbs twisted and her eyes and mouth like all the other children before, and she took her in her arms and right there drowned and killed the demon] (220-221). Experience would show, according to Sosa, that the advice of the marabouts had no effect whatsoever in the woman's effort to protect her children.

Throughout divisions three and four of the *Diálogo*, Sosa ridicules a wide variety of household rituals including one about garlic and a broom, the taboo of sweeping the floor at night, writing with feathers, using one's left hand to clean his behind while using the right to eat, and the sin of using printed books as opposed to handwritten ones.⁵⁸ None of these deal with what would have been considered the official dogmatism (if such a thing existed) of Islam and none of them defend a Christian doctrine. This is what makes Sosa's polemics unique in the *Topografía*. The text is obviously anti-marabout and anti-Islamic, but it does not concretely focus on most of the mainstream issues that Christians and Muslims squabbled over for centuries such as the biography and rectitude of the prophet Muḥammad or defending whether or not the Trinity is three gods or one with three parts, but rather it picks apart the strange local superstitions of the Algerian Muslims, tying their practices to the greater religion and trying to get Amud to see the folly of his beliefs. While I don't think that one should search for allegorical meaning or some hidden interpretation of Sosa's text, I do believe that Sosa uses his Arab, renegade interlocutor Amud as the fall guy for all Muslims, and when he chides Amud for his gullibility he is speaking to all those who follow the marabouts.

At a certain point, Sosa brings up so many strange topics that Amud is not armed well enough to answer and he pronounces: "Alegas tantas razones que me pones en confusión."

⁵⁸ See Davis 121-122 for more information on the greater push for "manners" at the dinner table—at least in Europe. See pages 122-124 on her considerations of the fact that Leo Africanus curiously avoided the topic of the printing press versus handwritten books.

Bástete por ahora, que si a todas no respondiere por desta vez, no tardarán muchos días que lo haga, porque entretanto quiero revolver mis libros y mirar bien lo que puedo oponer a tus razones” [You allege so many arguments and put me into a confusion. Enough for now, because if I respond to all of these at one time it will take many days, because in the meantime I want to flip through my books and take a good look at how I can oppose your arguments] (242).

The family jinni

As shown previously, a regularly occurring element of local Islamic tradition is the presence of the jinni. There are various different words to describe this figure in Spanish sources, and they depend on the religious bent of whomever is speaking them—it could be “ginón” or “demonio.” But while a “demon” always has a negative connotation as being the deputies of the Devil and meant for antagonizing humans, the jinn may have either positive or negative characteristics and functions in society. Therefore, a distinction should be drawn between what Christians perceive as a demon and the jinn. Yvette Cardaillac-Hermosilla tells of Juan de Túnez, who, when confronted with a certain “demon,” said that “c’est un démon berbère qu’aucun Vieux-chétien ne peut chasser” [this is a Berber demon that even old Christians can’t hunt] (56). Caro Baroja compares them to the gods and demigods of the Greeks and Romans—supernatural beings that lived near the earth and had human characteristics and human desires (I 32).⁵⁹ Here we are interested in the jinn that so regularly appear in both Muslim texts and Christian texts about Muslims, particularly al-Ḥajāri’s insistence on the existence of the family jinni and how Antonio de Sosa also observes that some Muslim homes would have this supernatural companion.

⁵⁹ In one of the examples above, a special dish was prepared to achieve a healing and the dish needed to be taken to a certain fountain or river outside the city. Therefore, here the jinn have the human characteristics of physical presence and materiality. Contradictorily, in the case of Román Ramírez (see below), he asks his jinni, named Liarde, to show himself, but Liarde responded that he was a spirit and had no corporality.

The jinn have a long tradition in Spain, al-Andalus, because of the Muslim presence. Robert Lebling and Tahir Shah tell of some of the legends and figures that wrote about the jinn in *Legends of the Fire Spirits*. Ibn ‘Arabī was a Sufi born in Murcia in 1165 and became a well-known mystic, later writing about other prominent Andalusian Sufi masters, many of whom regularly consorted with jinn. In particular he recounts how Allah sends a jinni, named Khalaf, to the town of Loulé, in Portugal, to punish them for their negative treatment of a Sufi leader (51). Another dedicated Sufi was Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Shubarbulī, about whom it was said that he “was accompanied at all times by a righteous jinn who had accepted Islam” (51). Therefore, the jinn apparently also have a free will to accept Islam or to reject it just as humans. Al-Ḥajarī himself speaks of a jinni that followed him around at all times and encouraged his practice of recitation and prayer.

In the course of explaining the “graces” bestowed upon him, al-Ḥajarī also relates his experiences with a jinni. As opposed to the jinn that Sosa mentions, the jinn in al-Ḥajarī’s account are always connected to some sort of religious task that he was supposed to fulfill. While he was still staying in France he was in a room alone and began to hear something knocking on the wall, and it kept knocking at consistent intervals. At first, al-Ḥajarī was skeptical, even fearful that the sound he was hearing was a jinni: “I became so afraid of this that I feared that a jinn was going to possess me” (232). Lebling and Shah characterize jinn as mysterious, frightening, and causing humankind endless grief, but they also have a “spark of goodness” in them as well (1). After this preliminary reaction, he then became angry at the annoying sound, finally he said he had to be patient and it became apparent to him that the jinni was encouraging him to leave the land of the infidels. But even upon returning to the land of the Muslims he was not freed from the jinni’s admonishments. The jinni would start tapping to remind him to

perform the *ṣalāt*; it seemed to try to keep a rhythm when he recited the Qur’ān or it would sound when he made a recitation error. All of this encouragement served al-Ḥajarī well because one day “I discovered that I knew the Quran by heart” (233). For at least twenty-five years the jinni accompanied al-Ḥajarī wherever he went.

After he writes of his relationship with a jinni, he provides a very curious attitude toward the supernatural: he understands that it sounds ridiculous. He writes: “though I did not see it and it did not answer me by giving any sign [...] I thought it was in fact the angel guarding me at my right hand’s side, even though this thought was strange and far-fetched” (234). Over centuries and millennia miracles and supernatural occurrences always signaled divine legitimacy, yet al-Ḥajarī recognizes skepticism of the supernatural as a legitimate reaction to his account—in a book designed to bolster belief in the supernatural, no less. Similarly in the early sixteenth century, Leo Africanus was skeptical of miracles, yet even allowed that they could happen in certain circumstances. Leo had traveled through North Africa and had witnessed plenty of popular religion. In most cases he perceived the signs of the holy men (probably marabouts) much like Antonio de Sosa, saying that they were inventions of simple folk (Davis 169).⁶⁰ Despite that opinion, he supposedly allowed for certain miracles to be valid. As a boy he was taken to the tomb of a holy man that had apparently performed miracles to pacify lions, and twice he escaped being devoured by lion attacks. Later on, he purportedly visited the tomb several times with his own children (170). Therefore, Leo Africanus and al-Ḥajarī both allow for skepticism with regard to miracles and the supernatural, but they also both experienced it first hand and did not back away from their authenticity.

⁶⁰ Davis also notes, however, that Africanus had a special disdain for Shi‘ism (170), which generally identified more often with the mystical aspects of Islam.

Al-Ḥajarī was not the only Morisco to have a personal jinni that accompanied him; Caro Baroja details the famous case of Román Ramírez, a sixteenth century Morisco, in *Vida mágicas e Inquisición I*. Caro Baroja concentrates on the juxtaposition of the historical Román Ramírez and the fictional one created by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, but he also reproduces the Inquisitional process from Cuenca. Here, I'll focus on the seventh section of Caro Baroja's chapter in which describes Ramírez's confession to having been in contact with the family jinni named Liarde. Eventually, Ramírez was made out to be a stereotypical Morisco-sorcerer (*hechicero*), after being instructed by his grandfather, Juan de Luna, at an early age. Then, after having a bit of a faith crisis oscillating between Christianity and Islam during the 1550s, he became renowned for his prodigious memory and ability to recite all the chivalrous acts of the most famous *caballeros andantes*—he even recited for King Phillip II.⁶¹ Finally he was detained by the Inquisition, died in captivity, and was posthumously condemned, having his bones burned.⁶²

Román, while still young, was told by his grandfather that if he was ever in need to call upon his personal jinni. Between ten and eleven o'clock at night, Román was to simply call out and say: "Liarde," and the jinni would attend him. It appears that the first time Román called upon Liarde he was feeling the pangs of jealousy for a woman because he supposedly asked if there happened to be any other suitor in love with a certain Ángela de Miranda, whom he would shortly after marry.⁶³ Román's relationship to Liarde seemed quite strained, however, because on that first invocation the jinni responded, "¿Qué quieres? ¿Piensas que te tenga yo que servir como a tu abuelo? No tienes la habilidad que él. No me tengo yo de andar en cargo de vosotros;

⁶¹ Ramírez denied that his jinni, Liarde, had anything to do with his memory just as al-Ḥajarī does not attribute the fact that he knew the Qur'ān by heart to his jinni companion.

⁶² For an organized and detailed account, see Caro Baroja *Vidas mágicas* vol. I, part 2, IV; and "Proceso inquisitorial de Román Ramírez." For general information and particular details on Ramírez's memory, see Alcalá Galán *Escritura desatada* 46-47 and Díaz Migoyo "Memoria y fama de Román Ramírez."

⁶³ Being short on cash after the wedding, Ramírez would also ask Liarde for money.

no cures a nadie, sino estate quedo, no tengas que hacer como tu abuelo” [What do you want? Do you think that I have to serve you as I did your grandfather? You don’t have the ability he had. I don’t have to wander around in your charge; don’t heal anyone, but be still, you don’t have to do what your grandfather did] (321). The next few invocations rendered the same result, and Liarde did not pay him any attention. However, four or five years later, Román called upon him to help cure a caballero that was mad. Liarde cooperated this time and provided him the recipe to a medicinal concoction. The caballero was cured and Román’s fame began to grow as he continued healing people—at times with the help of Liarde and other times not. Finally, seven or eight years before the Inquisitional process of Cuenca, Román was detained in the jail of Medinaceli. After invoking Liarde, the jinni responded, “Yo no tengo de hacer cosa buena por ti” [I don’t have to do anything to help you] (322). This infuriated Román, who subsequently cursed his companion and told him to go to hell. I suppose the jinni begrudged the fact that Román didn’t follow his first advice: “no cures a nadie, sino estate quedo, no tengas que hacer como tu abuelo.”

We now have seen two examples of Moriscos, al-Ḥajarī and Ramírez, that believed in and had experiences with jinn, and when considering the ubiquity of jinn in the *Arabian Nights* and the prevalence of them in Algiers, it is interesting to see how the tradition of jinn became such a commonplace aspect of popular Muslim culture. This is perfect for Sosa, who intends to exploit these unbelievable and supernatural elements of Islam to prove it illogical and unreasonable.⁶⁴ Just after Sosa tells Amud that he does not want to talk about the teachings of Islam according to the Qur’ān but rather the false opinions and dreams of the marabouts, the first

⁶⁴ Because of his rudimentary control of Arabic grammar, Sosa likely did not know that the Arabic root for “jinn” is the same root used for “crazy” or “mad,” referring to someone demon possessed. Today *majnūn* (مجنون) is still a common adjective for “crazy.” Sosa, therefore, does not exploit this coincidence.

thing out of his mouth is: “¿Negarás que hay poquísimos que no digan y confiesen y aun publiquen y se precien de que lo sepan cómo tienen un demonio en la cabeza que llaman ellos Ginón?” [Will you deny that there are very few who won’t say and confess or even publish and pride themselves that they know they have a demon in their head which they call a Jinni?] (206).

Sosa attacks the idea of appealing to jinn from three different angles. First, his gets personal with Amud and argues the ineffectiveness of the jinn by empirical evidence. Amud himself had a daughter, Ancona, who was sick “de aquel mal que murió” [with that evil from which she died]. And to try to remedy the illness Sosa reminded Amud that he had called in a marabout to provide a remedy because the marabout “tenía un ginón en la cabeza [y que] en virtud de aquel espíritu podía curar a tu hija” [he had a jinni in his head and, with help from that spirit, he would cure your daughter]. Despite this attempt, his daughter died and “todavía se mueren cada día centenarios de personas” [still hundreds die every day] (207). Secondly, Sosa draws a parallel between the Devil and these jinn, getting Amud to admit that conjuring the devil or his demons could not possibly result in a positive outcome given that he is the “espíritu de mentira y maldad.”⁶⁵ Even if the devil seemed to perform positive, healing services, Sosa reminds him that “debajo desa miel dulce ascond[e] la amarga hiel de mil maldades y pecados” [beneath this sweet honey hides the bitter bile of evil and sin].⁶⁶

And the final attack upon the use of jinn conveniently couples with the stereotypical idea that Islam fosters licentiousness. In addition to *morabutos*, Sosa points out that there are even some *morabutas*, female marabouts. And one manner that these *morabutas espiritadas* conjure the presence of the jinn is by a certain dance. “[H]acen un baile en corrillo todas, y la que sale a bailar (en la cual el ginón ha de hablar) no ha de andar derecho, más corvada, retorciendo la

⁶⁵ Sosa gets this discourse from the Bible no doubt, John 8:44.

⁶⁶ Matthew 7:15, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, and Romans 16:17-18.

persona, la cara y la boca, de manera que en sus gestos representan al mismo demonio” [They do a dance all as a group, and the one that begins to dance (through whom the jinni will speak) does not walk straight, but rather curved, twisting her person, face and mouth, in a way that her gestures represent the same demon] (210). If these arguments wouldn’t dissuade Amud from his custom of relying upon jinn, then Sosa certainly appealed to his Christian readers. Any kind of invitation extended to any kind of demon to intervene in a situation would have been condemned by any Christian, but the simple idea of a woman as a religious leader, such as the *morabuta*, would equally chagrin both the clergy as well as laypeople. And, as we have already seen in various sections of the *Topografía*, Sosa picks up the polemical theme that Islam permits and encourages lustfulness, and therefore perpetuates that stereotype by going on about the dance of the *morabutas*. He is not the only observer to mention these seductive dances; Leo Africanus also mentions “female diviners” in Fez who claimed to be possessed by jinn, foretold the future, and worked as healers; and he appears to assert that these lascivious diviners carried out homosexual behavior along with their jinn possession. Davis describes how Africanus uses the Italian word *fregare* to describe their “evil custom,” a word that she writes comes from the Latin *fregator sodomita* referring to male homosexuality (200-201). Curiously, Sosa has no mention of homoerotic activity connected to these *morabutas*, but rather only describes them as lustful and ridiculous, telling instead how they seemed to break into epileptic episodes foaming at the mouth.

While Sosa would use the topic of jinn to cast skepticism on Islam and the popular practices of the Algerians, al-Ḥajarī also uses an artifice featuring a jinni to expose the simplicity of Christians and their pathetic gullibility for miracles. In the year 1600, al-Ḥajarī and a

companion escape the Peninsula and reach Muslim territory in Northern Morocco.⁶⁷ After crossing the Strait of Gibraltar they arrived at a small Christian town al-Burayja (present day al-Jadīda). When trying to escape from this city, which was closely guarded by the Christians because they “are used to watching and investigating every stranger coming to them” (92), they are caught by Spanish authorities. Previously, he and his companion had agreed that if caught, one of them would drop to the ground as if having an epileptic fit or being controlled by a jinni. Al-Ḥajarī’s companion put on quite a show for the Spanish officials, foaming at the mouth and biting a piece of metal to draw blood. The artifice was so successful that the Spanish officials believed him possessed by a demon and took him back to town to be “healed” by a Catholic priest. This of course happened because the companion was never actually possessed, and then all the Christians in town rejoiced at the miraculous healing. He describes the incident with wit and sarcasm, joking afterwards about how the demon and the Devil are having their laugh at the priest’s expense:

[The priest] indeed read to him from the Gospel; (consequently), the jinn and the *shayṭān* disappeared and the (healing power of the) blessing as well as the proof (of the veracity of the Gospel) became evident. The power of the priest became famous there, but the jinn was sharing the joke together with *Iblīs*. The invalid recovered immediately! (95).

Al-Ḥajarī relates this occurrence with no small measure of amusement, mocking how gullible the Christians were and how they were so duped into believing that the priest and God had remedied the fake affliction.⁶⁸ When placed next to Sosa’s constant condemnation of the gullibility of the

⁶⁷ We do not know what prompted al-Ḥajarī to abandon Spain in 1600. Previously we saw that “it became apparent” from his jinni that he should leave, but another plausible explanation is that the inquisitional proceedings against Román Ramírez occurred in 1599-1600 with great fame and notoriety. Perhaps al-Ḥajarī feared a similar fate.

⁶⁸ This episode recalls *Tratado 5* of *Lazarillo de Tormes* in which the officer and indulgence salesman fake a miracle in the middle of church in order to sell more indulgences.

Algerians, we realize that Christians also displayed the same credulity and desire to witness a sign from God to provide them reassurance.

Miracles in Mediterranean crossover figures⁶⁹

During the early modern period, once a traveler sailed out into the Mediterranean Sea, he consciously or unconsciously compromised himself to a world that was much more aggressive and cutthroat when it came to issues of economy and religion—they no longer were surrounded and safeguarded by the familiarity of the Christianity in the Peninsula. Al-Ḥajarī and Sosa both had theological training in their respective religions, which insulated them from the capricious turns of luck that could easier influence the beliefs of others. However, other figures, such as slaves, soldiers, and privateers, were more susceptible to these and they managed them in unique ways. While the texts of these individuals do not directly aim to elaborate upon miracles, their observations around the Mediterranean naturally include some of these. Just as the poor and oppressed Bedouins of North Africa looked to a more mystical, immediate form of religion in the marabouts to solve their problems and offer them hope, so also Christian captives around the Mediterranean had the same hope that they could be rescued by a miracle or they were comforted by the fact that God was in control of their destiny. Seeing miracles was important for these in-between figures and other Mediterranean travelers because it provided visual confirmation of their religion and beliefs. At times they attributed the miracles they saw to their religions, but other times they mention miracles in passing, as if they constituted events that naturally occurred to any other adherent to their beliefs.

⁶⁹ I borrow the term “crossover figure” from Hutchinson, “Renegades...”

Miguel de Castro makes mention of a strange miracle related to the relics of Saint Andrew in his autobiographic *Vida del soldado español*. In the middle of all his descriptions of troop movements, battles, sexual escapades, and street duals, he talks about how the body of Saint Andrew rests in the cathedral of a city he calls Malfe, probably Amalfi, just southeast of Naples. His body lies down below in another *capillita*, and, while it's dark, one can still discern the right knee of the saint out of which flows "un licor" into a small silver pot. This liquor was used for all kinds of medicine, and "aquella vasija ó plato en que cae el dicho licor siempre está llena, aunque se saquen muy gran cantidad de licor cada día; y aunque no se saque nada, jamás se vierte, por lleno que esté, y siempre mana, que es un muy grande y patente milagro" [that vessel or plate on which the said liquor fell was always full, even though a great quantity of it would come out every day; and even when none comes out it never spills, no matter how full it is, and it always flows, which is such a great and patent miracle] (10).⁷⁰ Without elaborating on the religious meaning or questioning whether it was some kind of artifice to trick people, he prosaically continues on to describe the next destination of his company. It is understandable why Castro would find this miracle interesting: he was a soldier, what could be more comforting to a soldier than the idea that if he ever got wounded or injured, there existed a remedy to bring him back to health?⁷¹

Alonso de Contreras also speaks of miracles on his Mediterranean travels as if they were completely natural. Near the beginning of his account he describes a tense naval engagement that his ship had with a Turkish "xelma," probably a long ship with four masts (20 n52). The

⁷⁰ A similar Biblical miracle is that of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. During his stay with the widow and her son, whom he had brought back from the dead, the small containers of flour and oil never were exhausted and they were miraculously refilled each day.

⁷¹ Don Quixote and Sancho had this comfort knowing that drinking the balm of Fierabras could heal them at a moment's notice (I X).

skirmish lasts for a couple days. At one point the Christians take the prow of their enemies, and later they are repelled. At other times the two ships volley artillery shells back and forth, doing equal damage. Contreras sustains two injuries, a musket wound in the leg and a bang on the head. In the thick of describing the battle he mentions that he observed two miracles that day. The first, graphic, miracle happens when a cannonball hits a sailor in the head, making it explode, and one of the bones strikes another soldier who for all his life had “las narices tuertas” [a twisted nose]. We aren’t told how exactly his nose was disabled, but when he was bashed in the face “quedaron las narices tan derechas como las mías” [his nose became as straight as mine]. The second miracle also happened because of an artillery shell. Another soldier complained of pains the entire trip, “echando por vidas y reniegos,” but after a cannonball grazed his butt cheeks he felt completely healed and didn’t complain again the whole trip. He said that “no había visto mejores sudores que el aire de una bala” [he had never seen better sweats than the air of a passing bullet] (21), referring to the custom of “sweating” a patient that had some illness or injury in order to balance his humors. The miracles that Contreras mentions have no connection to Christianity at all, unlike the healing liquor observed by Miguel de Castro, but they again show the attitude of a soldier afraid that at any moment he could be severely injured. The fact that these other men could be instantly fixed provided the hope that some act of God could also help him if he ever needed it.

Not all travelers stayed firm in their beliefs, because one way that these Mediterranean figures handled the fluid religious situation is that they simply converted. In addition to bolstering the narrative of the religion by recognizing another convert, conversion provided many benefits for the individuals. It precluded the use of Christians-turned-Muslim to be assigned as rowers to the galleys of the many corsairs and privateers that based in Algiers and

raided the sea. Muslim converts from Christianity were frequently paraded through the streets in Algiers, or at least their conversions were celebrated as public events to be witnessed.⁷²

Christians did likewise, for example, in the case of Leo Africanus who was baptized in the Basilica of St. Peter's in 1520 and named after Pope Leo X. Cervantes also describes the first time Zoraida actually enters a Christian (Catholic) church in the *Quixote*. When the captive and Zoraida finally arrive to *tierras cristianas* everyone in the town joins them as they visit a nearby church where Zoraida confirms the resemblance between Lela Marién and Mary. The townspeople offer them hospitality as if they were celebrities, and Don Fernando also offers his brother, a *marqués*, to be the godfather for her baptism—an event that would occur with great pomp and circumstance no doubt (I 41-42).⁷³

Nevertheless, many Mediterranean figures did not convert, and their attitudes and reactions resemble much of what we have seen already in al-Ḥajarī and Sosa—a variety of sarcasm, ridicule, disdain, and sometimes sympathy toward the Other. Diego Galán's autobiographical text provides various anecdotes that demonstrate his deriding attitude toward Islam. Galán was only thirteen years old when he was tricked into becoming a soldier in Málaga. Suffering miserably on the high seas because of his inability to endure the nausea of the sea, his galley was intercepted on the way to Orán by the Turks. Upon arriving in Algiers he was sold, but he resisted the temptation to convert to Islam, despite the fact that many of his captive colleagues did convert, saying, “Yo le respondí que mi padre era cristiano y mi madre cristana y que yo no había de ser moro” [I responded to him that my father and mother were Christian, and

⁷² For more on conversion see Bennassars *Los cristianos de Alá*.

⁷³ In Cervantes' *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* Ricla, a convert, makes a similar public spectacle reciting a Christian creed to the company of travelers (I 6).

I was not going to become Muslim] (35).⁷⁴ Diego's owner repeatedly tried to convince him to convert to Islam. On one occasion, a marabout visited their home and he asked Diego if he was a Christian or not. Diego responded positively, and the marabout said with regret that he would be condemned. "Eso le dio a Diego mucha risa, lo cual enojó bastante a su amo, quien dijo, '¿De qué os reís vos, perro? ¿No dice la verdad este morabuto?' y Diego tragó su risa" [This made Diego laugh, which quite angered his master, who said, 'What are you laughing at, dog? Does not this marabout speak the truth?' and Diego swallowed his laughter] (52). This is the first occasion that Diego simply laughs at the notion that Islam was the true religion. But perhaps, much like Sosa, Diego held a certain derision for the marabouts and their practices. Later on, in Constantinople, the sultan died and his son succeeded him to the throne; the son then ordered all the brothers of his father to be executed. Diego was permitted to witness the funeral of the sultan because he had gained favor with his master's family and basically was charged with babysitting his children. During the funeral ceremony, he couldn't resist breaking out into laughter after witnessing a certain event involving a Muslim saint: "[algún santón musulmán] comenzó a dar vueltas alrededor, como los muchachos cuando juegan a la loca... Yo no pude desimular y me dio una risa tan notable que no la pude sufrir..." [a Muslim saint began to twist around, as children do when they play crazy... I couldn't hide it and I let out a notable laugh because I couldn't handle it] (135). In fact, a sudden bout of epilepsy was a common indication of jinn possession, as Cardaillac-Hermosilla says when describing the Morisco Alexos Cavello, "L'épilepsie est pour lui l'agitation que provoque dans le corps du malade un démon" [The epilepsy is from the agitation that the malady of the demon provokes on the body] (60). Diego does not mention

⁷⁴ Some Christians and Muslims therefore had the same idea of sticking with the inherited religion of their parents. García Arenal titles a recent article: "Mi padre moro, yo moro."

anything about jinn, but this observation bears much resemblance to descriptions of jinn in North Africa and indicates that similar Muslim perceptions existed all over the Mediterranean.

In addition to describing his relationship with a jinni, al-Ḥajarī also relates a series of miracles that occurred to him in the land of the Christians. What is notable is that each miracle is directly connected with Islam as opposed to the popular beliefs that Sosa addresses in *Diálogo de los morabutos* that many times were concerned only with immediate needs of people's physical well-being instead of any connection to Islam.

While still in Andalucía, he made an amulet within which was written the *Seven Sanctuaries*.⁷⁵ He wore the amulet when he slept, but one morning he woke up and realized he had lost it and feared that it would be discovered by the Christians, and the Muslims would suffer because of his negligence. He then prayed vigorously to Allah that it might be found, and even before his prayer was finished the piece of paper fell from the air right into his hands (his sister had thrown it away while cleaning). While that predicament was remedied by prayer, al-Ḥajarī also tells how he successfully facilitated the healing of a sick woman with leprosy, a man with dropsy, and another man with paralysis. For the woman with leprosy and the man with dropsy, they had tried all kinds of other remedies to no avail. They asked him for help and al-Ḥajarī then wrote down certain *suras* from the Qur'ān, washed the writing off whatever it was they were written upon, and made the sufferers drink the water. When they quite literally drank the *suras*, they were healed. Similarly, a man complained to al-Ḥajarī that whenever he went to do ablutions his hand became paralyzed. At that particular moment al-Ḥajarī had nothing to write upon, so he took the man's hand and elbow, recited some "random" verses from the Qur'ān, and the man was healed (230-231).

⁷⁵ The *Seven Sanctuaries* could frequently be found in texts from Mudejars and Moriscos according to Harvey, *The Literary Culture...*, 110.

In general, al-Ḥajarī is very tentative and careful when talking about miracles. At first he was afraid to share his experience, perhaps trying to be consistent with the more orthodox Muslim perspective on miracles, “Mahoma en diversos pasajes se cuida de especificar que él no tiene nada de mago y que el único milagro que Dios ha hecho por intermedio suyo ha sido revelar el Corán” [Muhammad takes care to specify in diverse passages that he himself wasn’t any such mage and that the only miracle that God has done with him as an intermediary has been the revelation of the Qur’ān] (Cardaillac 270). Al-Ḥajarī uses a different word when referring to the strange powers he seems to have been given to heal with the words of the Qur’ān. He frequently talks about the “graces” that were given him (ni‘mat, نعمة). He only begins to talk about these “graces” after being reassured by other teachers and by coming across certain Qur’ānic verses that it was acceptable, “I was afraid that should I mention any of the grace bestowed upon by God” (227). This attitude parallels what was mentioned earlier by Luis de Granada that Muslims rely too little on miracles to confirm their religion. But eventually he is convinced that reporting the miracles will bring blessings to others and praise to Allah. Al-Ḥajarī’s account appears to assert a happy medium between the more orthodox perspective that the only miracle was the revelation of the Qur’ān and the more popular belief in the possibility of miracles: those who were healed literally absorbed the words of the revelation for their remedies.

Conclusion

A final passage from Diego Galan’s *Relación* provides an example that illustrates Caro Baroja’s quote from earlier, “Es santo milagro para uno lo que es prestigio diabólico para otro.” While in Algiers, Diego describes a fire that broke out, after which he says, “todos los turcos dijeron que aquel morabuto lo había hecho por arte mágica, porque el bajá no le había querido

admitir sus peticiones. Yo digo que el demonio no tiene facultad para mover tal tempestad y acabar con nube de agua, si no es que sea particular providencia de Dios, como señor de todas las cosas criadas de su mano poderosa” [all the Turks said that that marabout had (caused the fire) by magic arts, because the *bajá* hadn’t wanted to admit his petitions. I say that the devil doesn’t have the capacity to move such a tempest and finish with a rain cloud, unless it is by the particular providence of God, as lord of all things created by his powerful hand] (52). We see how both Christians and Muslims approached the explanation of the phenomenon from opposite perspectives: the Muslims call the sudden fire marabout magic, while Diego, the Christian, maintains it was God’s providence.

A culture of miracles existed for both Muslims and Christians which showed itself in many aspects of early modern life. Common people regarded them as natural parts of daily life, seen in the willingness of the people of Algiers to go to marabouts or to conjure jinn to solve immediate problems of sickness or trouble; and the reaction of the Christian people to the “miraculous” healing of al-Ḥajarī’s companion demonstrates their equally strong appetite to witness the supernatural. Educated writers such as Sosa and al-Ḥajarī also believed in miracles and relied on them in their polemical texts to demonstrate how God approved of their religion instead of the other’s.

Inherent in these polemical texts was also a strong dependence upon reason and logic, and thus they exhibit a peculiar reliance on both the supernatural and reasonable evidence. The early twentieth century Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno wrote often about his famous struggle with faith and religion. He constantly searched to be “convenc[ido] racionalmente de la existencia de Dios” [rationally convinced of God’s existence]. Sosa and al-Ḥajarī’s texts seek to convince using both miracles and rational scrutiny of the other’s religion, but such scrutiny was

highly selective, and the application of skepticism depended upon their agendas. Unamuno's problem was not that he didn't want to believe, but rather that religion could not convince him in a rational, scientific manner, "Y si creo en Dios, o por lo menos creo creer en Él, es, ante todo, porque quiero que Dios exista" [And if I believe in God, or at least I believe I believe in him, it is, above all, because I want God to exist] (11). In the end, it is most likely that people perceived miracles in the manner that corresponded to a belief they already held or a belief they wanted to have, and thus miracles had more success confirming a belief than converting anyone.

CHAPTER III

EARLY MODERN REALPOLITIK

On a day when many unfortunate events occurred, one event at the end of the Battle of Lepanto demonstrates the confused and muddled character of geo-religious politics in the Mediterranean in the early modern period. Two brothers grew up in the small port town of Ulcinj in Venetian Stato da Mar (the term referring to Venice's non-Italian territory), on the eastern Adriatic coast of present day Montenegro. Giovanni Bruni would eventually enter the priesthood and become Archbishop of Bar, north of Ulcinj; he would even be distinguished at the Council of Trent for his arguments in favor of reform. Gasparo Bruni entered another service in 1567—that of the Knights of Malta. As a testament to the family's mettle, while Giovanni achieved the rank of archbishop, Gasparo did similarly well for himself becoming captain of Marcantonio Colonna's flagship galley during the Battle of Lepanto and finding himself near the vanguard.

At Lepanto, one of the slaves on the Ottoman galleys was Archbishop Giovanni Bruni, who had been taken at the surrender of Bar in 1570. His masters were aware of his rank, but because Giovanni was opposed to the city's surrender they publically humiliated him by placing him as a rower. After the battle, a dossier was compiled by the bishop of the southern Italian see of Nardò regarding the "moral failings" of the Christian fleet during the post-battle plunder of the broken Turkish armada. The disturbing dossier reads,

many Spanish soldiers, who were fully armed, killed many poor Christian slaves in order to rob them and to take from them what little booty God had granted them. Among others they killed the poor Archbishop of Bar, who had been made a captive of the Ottoman fleet in the previous August, when that city was taken; although he shouted "I'm a

bishop, I'm a Christian," they refused to believe him, and instead they killed him with a pike. It would not have been so bad if this had happened during the fighting, but it was a long time afterwards.⁷⁶

It also "would not have been so bad" had Giovanni's brother Gasparo not been only a few hundred yards away. The archbishop, as a prestigious captive, was likely on one of the more important galleys at the center of the fighting. Along with Noel Malcolm, I wonder if he would have been less than a mere one hundred yards away from the flagship of Colonna, where Gasparo fought.

This dissertation chapter will show that Christian and Muslim political bodies, while on supposedly opposing ends of the religious spectrum, made decisions and deals with each other during which their religious bent was only a minor consideration. The above account demonstrates one example of many that suggest how a reductive approach to understanding religious conflict in the early modern Mediterranean neglects to consider the abundant evidence undermining the notion that Christians maintained one side of the sea and Muslims the other. After winning the battle, Christians plundered and killed other Christians with disregard, the report even noting that the Christian soldiers "refused to believe" the archbishop when he said he was Christian. The Lepanto account describes Christians killing Christians, and later on I will describe events in which Muslims fought Muslims. Therefore, the essential questions considered in this chapter become: Exactly who was fighting against whom and what were the motives? Were the concepts of "holy war" and "*jihād*," focusing on the recovery of lost territory and

⁷⁶ See Malcolm 168, and for the original Italian language see n25.

spreading religion, still applicable or were they out-of-date?⁷⁷ Was all the fighting for religion or plunder, economics, or military maneuvering?

Using the reductive paradigm of Christians vs. Muslims inadequately describes the politics of the Mediterranean, and as a consequence we should refrain from using similar thinking when considering the concept of holy war in the early modern period. Malcolm points out that while popes continued to use the word “crusade” for their plans to topple the Ottoman Empire, historians generally associate the term with efforts against Islam in the Middle Ages (59). This dissertation chapter will deal with the agents of the holy war and the purposes they served to fight their military and ideological battles. It will also explore to what extent the idea of the holy war remained the same or evolved from the middle ages to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and how the concepts of monk, martyr, *jihād*, and crusade underwent a certain repurposing during this period. Particular attention will be directed toward how these concepts appear and function within Antonio de Sosa’s *Topografía de Argel* and Diego Suárez Montañés’ *Historia del Maestre de Montesa*.

The four terms are all intertwined, some more overtly than others, and perhaps Rabelais provides a famous, humorous example of how this is so in Friar John of the first book *Gargantua*. In chapter 27, Picrochole and his armies are overrunning the land and pillaging as they go when they come upon a monastery. The monks all huddle together praying for salvation from the raiding horde. Meanwhile, Friar John realizes that the army is beginning to burn all the grapes needed for wine production in the following years, and this motivates him to fight with all his heart and soul and mind. He grabs a cross the size of a lance, goes out to meet the invaders, and begins to wallop them, using the cross as a sword, lance, or battle hammer depending on the

⁷⁷ Note that I use the term “holy war” to apply to both Christians and Muslims, while I use the term “*jihād*” only when referring specifically to the Muslim holy war.

need. He succeeds in killing 13,000 men himself, sparing no one who tries to destroy the grapes, and even telling one soldier who tries to surrender, “You can surrender your soul, too, to all the devils of hell” (82) before giving him a final sledge-hammer blow. And if Rabelais’ imagery of monk-turned-soldier and cross-turned-weapon weren’t obvious enough, at the end of the chapter he writes something more overt, “Maugis the hermit, celebrated in the *Tale of the Four Sons of Aymon*, never acquitted himself more heroically against the Saracens with his pilgrim’s crook than Friar John of the Funnels against the pillaging cake-bakers with the staff of the cross” (83). Here he finally makes the parallel that has been in the back of our minds: a comparison based on peregrine monks fighting Muslims. But while Friar John uses overtly Christian objects to wage war, the text is clear that the main impetus for his explosive valor is his fear that the enemies would destroy the vineyards and drink his wine. Thus, in the name of defending religion, Friar John was actually protecting the monastery’s economic (and leisure) assets.

As is usual in the *Gargantua & Pantagruel* series, Rabelais exaggerates all the details surrounding the episode of Friar John, combining the comedic and grotesque and maximizing the stereotypes of monks.⁷⁸ We should then ask if Antonio de Sosa elaborates a similar caricature of marabouts throughout the *Topografía*, although perhaps not to the same extent as Rabelais. In many cases Sosa does seem to exaggerate the antics of these Islamic religious figures, as seen in previous chapters, but a great difference in Sosa’s treatment of marabouts from other sixteenth century sources is that Sosa makes almost no connection whatsoever between marabouts and militancy, while other sources focus particularly on it. These sources, such as Diego Suárez Montañés’ text, also link marabouts with an Islamic crusade. While Friar John’s exploits in the name of the cross carried a non-religious impetus, as did the plundering Christians of Lepanto,

⁷⁸ Bakhtin comments on Friar John in various sections of *Rabelais and His World*.

we should also ask if the *jihād*-waging marabouts had non-religious motives. Mixed motives will be central to this chapter: crusades and *jihād* inherently carry a religious undergirding, but when did economic or military motivations trump those of religion?

As he describes raiding and brigandage on the Ottoman, Moldovian, and Polish borders, Malcolm describes a central notion of this chapter: “But the advantage of a frontier was that it provided a ready-made legitimation for all activities of this kind [raiding], so long as they were conducted against the other side; and even more legitimation was available when that frontier lay between two religions” (328). Raiding—whether it was corsair activity, privateering, brigandage, or state sponsored raids—constituted an indispensable characteristic of the early modern era—even as late as 1799, biographer Andrew Roberts notes that Napoleon’s reforms that cleaned up rural brigandage were taken very seriously and that “not even his Italian victories brought Napoleon more popularity” (241). The sections that follow will consider the notions presented thus far in four areas: *Diálogo de los morabutos*; the nature of the Knights of Malta as monk-warriors; the holy war in North Africa; and Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī’s non-violent form of *jihād*. Though the four topics of study represent heterogeneous circumstances, each of them—texts, concepts, or institutions—expressed a will to fight in the name of religion, and we will ask to what extent their mission was truly religious compared to their desire to legitimize non-religious ventures.

Authorship of the *Diálogo de los morabutos*

The holy war discourse found in Sosa’s *Topografía* constitutes a more conventional presentation of the notion compared to the subsequent sections of this chapter. This portion of Sosa’s text has completely avoided critical scrutiny by scholars, and, given its explicit use of

holy war leitmotifs, it deserves an examination in this chapter. Despite the polemical elements in all other sections of the *Topografía*, it lacks many of the literary markers of holy war but for the very last pages of the *Diálogo de los morabutos*. These problematic pages talk of an episode concerning what later research has dubbed the “Campaña de la Omnipotencia de 939” and which uncharacteristically emphasizes the holy war. But before considering the content of the final pages of the third *Diálogo*, it is necessary to raise the question of whether or not Antonio de Sosa wrote this section. As María Antonia Garcés outlines in her “Introduction,” French historians Ferdinand Denis and Henri-Delmas de Grammont were the first to raise suspicion that Diego de Haedo may not have been the author. In 1949 Luis Astrana Marín posited that the three *Diálogos* were written by Sosa’s hand, and George Camamis conclusively demonstrated in 1977 that Sosa was the author of this entire “monumental work” (Garcés 56-7). While this all may be true, the very final pages of *Diálogo de los morabutos* almost certainly cannot have been written by Sosa.

This final dialogue routinely receives the least amount of scrutiny from scholars in comparison to *De los mártires* and *De la captividad*. For example, Emilio Sola and José María Parreño write very useful introductions to their edition of *De los mártires* and expand upon the contents of that dialogue as well as *De la captividad*; however, the only mention of *Morabutos* goes as follows: “El último [diálogo] es el *Diálogo de los Morabutos*, ya de otra índole. Se trata de una discusión teológica entre el Dr. Sosa y un musulmán en la que se señalan los errores de la secta de Mahoma y el esplendor de la religión cristiana” [The final dialogue is *Dialogue of the Marabouts*, of a different nature. It is a theological discussion between Dr. Sosa and a Muslim in which are shown the errors of the sect of Muhammad and the splendors of the Christian religion] (Parreño 9). And perhaps the foremost authority on Sosa and the *Topografía* is Garcés herself, but in her “Introduction” the most substantive comment she makes about the *Morabutos* is that

it's "a theological debate between Christianity and Islam that stands as one of the richest sources of ethnographic observations and autobiographical allusions in Sosa's work" (47).

The most obvious evidence for why Sosa could not have written this section comes directly after Sosa and Amud seem to say goodbye. Sosa just keeps on talking, saying that he would love to talk another day about the bad counsel given by marabouts. However, instead of saying goodbye and leaving it at that, Sosa then breaks into the account of how a certain marabout, Alfaramī, badly counselled king 'Abd al-Rahman III, mentioning that this account was recorded by don Prudencio de Sandoval, a Benedictine monk, Bishop of Tuy, and chronicler of King Philip III. It would be impossible, however, for Sosa to have written this given that he died suddenly in 1587, while Prudencio de Sandoval was Bishop of Tuy from 1608-1612, and King Philip III's reign spanned the years 1598-1621. Furthermore, Sandoval became Bishop of Pamplona after 1612; since this information escapes his description in *Morabutos* it can be suggested that this section was added to the dialogue during Sandoval's four year tenure at Tuy. The year 1612 is important, of course, because it's the year that the *Topografía* was first published by Diego de Haedo in Valladolid. I think it likely then that Haedo himself wrote the final pages.⁷⁹

Having been originally from Valladolid, perhaps Diego de Haedo and Prudencio de Sandoval were acquaintances, but whether they knew each other or not, the author of this section was at least able to incorporate the spirit of Sandoval into his text. An article by Ulrich Winter on Sandoval's *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V* asserts compellingly that Sandoval tried to "enlazar un elemento narrativo, la muerte cristiana [de Carlos V], con otro político, la monarquía española" [weave a narrative element, the Christian death of Charles V,

⁷⁹ For more on Sandoval's biography, see Castañeda.

with a political one, the Spanish monarchy] (673). In so doing, he imbues the account of Charles V's final days with an exemplary religious tone and makes him into "el ideal del héroe cristiano ante la muerte" [the ideal of a Christian hero before death]. Winter later writes: "El cronista integra el relato del desenlace devoto en toda una narración simbólica de la salvación" [The chronicler integrates the story of the devout denouement into the whole symbolic narrative of salvation] (276). Thus, upon quoting Prudencio de Sandoval, does the author of this final section of *De los morabutos* try to convey the same religious-political agenda, making the Battle of Simancas into a depiction of a religious ideal and symbolic narration of salvation? As we will see in the following section, this battle account idealizes the actions and attitudes of the Christians leaders—upon confronting the upbraidings of God they repent, pray for forgiveness, and are saved.

While Winter shows that Sandoval wrote some history with an agenda, the chronicler demonstrates reasonable diligence in other writings. The account of the Battle of Simancas within the *Morabutos* dialogue comes from one of these more reasonably researched histories of Sandoval. However, while Sandoval may not have had such an overt agenda in his research, the same impartiality is not true for the writer of *Morabutos*.

In 1601 Sandoval published *Fundaciones de los Monasterios del glorioso padre San Benito* in Madrid, and the author of *Morabutos* quotes a section of this work beginning at "folio 46" in a "tratado del monasterio de San Millán de la Cogolla" (Sosa 265). The section he quotes actually begins on folio 49 of *Fundaciones* with the events surrounding the Battle of Simancas, and the author does not directly quote Sandoval's text word for word, but the paraphrasing follows it closely. Furthermore, the section from Sandoval is a translation from Latin of a text from the town of Cuéllar. In fact, in this portion of his text regarding Fernán González and the

Battle of Simancas, Sandoval conducts methodical research regarding the event, considering various sources. On folio 49 he admits the often shoddy work that Spanish “obispos” produced, and he lends more credit to Ambrosio de Morales’ text because it favored the Arab version of events. Sandoval writes: “Ambrosio de Morales lib. 16.C.14. y 16 cuenta esta batalla, dando más crédito a las historias de los Alarabes, y a la cortedad y mal estilo y notable oluido de los Obispos antiguos” [Ambrosio de Morales book 16.C.14 and 16 recount this battle, giving more credit to the history of the Arabs, and to the brevity and poor style and the notable forgetfulness of the old Bishops]. And he continues:

Es verdad, que el papel de Cuéllar dize que la batalla de Simancas fue por el tributo de las cien donzellas, y que mezcla lo de Clauijo con esto de Simancas. Pudo muy bien ser, que el Rey Abderramen soberuio, y poderoso, sabiendo que los Christianos auían pagado tan infame tributo, quisiesse boluer a pedirlo, y de ay se tomasse la ocasión de la guerra. El priuilegio de Cuéllar es declaración y comprobación del de san Millán, y por esso le pondré aquí sacado a la letra, y escusara traduzir el de Latin.

[It is true that the paper of Cuéllar says that the battle of Simancas was for the tribute of the hundred damsels, and that it mixes that of Clavijo with this of Simancas. It very well could be that the sovereign and powerful King ‘Adb ar-Rahman knowing that the Christians had paid the infamous tribute, wanted to ask for it again, and from that the occasion for war began. The privilege of Cuéllar is a declaration and affirmation of that of San Millán, and for that I will put it here in letters, and excuse the translation from Latin.]

Later on Sandoval also admits that, strangely, such an incredible account was not recorded in the chronicles compiled by Alfonso el Sabio; on folio 55 Sandoval writes: “la historia general que

mandó recopilar el Rey don Alfonso el Sabio, escriuiendo las vidas y hechos de los tres Reyes Ramiros, desta memorable batalla, ni de la tradición que della auia en el Reyno, no dize palabra, sino que la passa en silencio, como si nunca huuiera sido” [the general history that King Alfonso the Wise commanded to be compiled, writing of the lives and acts of the three Ramiros kings, of this memorable battle, nor of the tradition of it that the kingdom had, does not say a word, but passes by it in silence, as if it had never been]. Thus, this section of his book *Fundaciones de los Monasterios* does not appear to be agenda driven, as Winter asserts is the case in Sandoval’s history of *Carlos V*. However, the insertion of the Battle of Simancas into the *Diálogo de los morabutos* was certainly intended to prove once again the ineptitude of marabouts and to celebrate a holy war that Christians would eventually win.

The Battle of Simancas in *De los morabutos*

The battle narrated at the end of *De los morabutos* tells the events of the Battle of Simancas in 939 between ‘Abd al-Rahman III and the Christians. It certainly strays from the accepted historical account and has similarities with the Battle of Hacinas in the *Poema de Fernán González (PFG)* and it also appears in Gonzalo de Berceo’s *Vida de san Millán de la Cogolla (VSMC)*. The account begins saying that the sun went dark from the 19th of July of the year 972 until the 15th of October. In most texts such as the *Topografía* and its dialogues, one would commonly disregard the signs from heaven as religious partiality; however, in this case historical sources affirm that on the 19th of July there was indeed a solar eclipse. Sources do not confirm, however, that the eclipse lasted almost three months, as the muddled timeline of the text may suggest, and the year of Simancas was definitely 939, not 972.⁸⁰ The writer of the

⁸⁰ Martínez Díez talks about the campaign in 339-360.

Morabutos account states that the eclipse was a sign from God showing his disapproval of the tribute that the Christians paid to ‘Abd al-Raḥman, which stipulated that each year they were to provide sixty young women.⁸¹ At the celestial sign, the Christians realized that they had forgotten to trust in God and decided to stop the tribute and fight. ‘Abd al-Raḥman also saw the eclipse, thought it was a sign from God, and feared the negative consequences. He called together a council of marabouts to find the answer, but when they couldn’t decipher the meaning they called for a wise marabout from Mecca, Alfaramī. This marabout told the caliph not to worry, that the sign was in his favor, and that then was the time to attack the Christians.

Accounts agree that the army gathered at Córdoba was one of the largest in history, so much so that it was referred to as the “*Campaña de la Omnipotencia de 939*.” With typical exaggeration, the *Morabutos* account even says that for every Christian there were one thousand Moors. Muslim troops came from the Peninsula but there were also “*tropas ya reunidas en el alarde los ribaties o voluntarios norteafricanos*” [already troops gathered from the ribats or North African volunteers] (Martínez Díez 340), meaning that militarized marabouts came from their African outposts with their own forces. The force set out north and planned to attack the fort at Simancas, one of the strongest outposts along the Duero region.⁸² It should be noted that, according to the historical account of Martínez Díez, the eclipse occurred during the *Omnipotencia*’s march north, not beforehand as in the account of *Morabutos*. When the Christian forces, a combination of Ramírez II’s and Fernán González’s troops, saw the great Muslim masses, they prayed to God for aid. That night, the Christian leaders each received dreams in which an angel came to them assuring them that the Lord was on their side and that Santiago and

⁸¹ *VSMC* also records this number as the tribute: “Mandó a los cristianos el que mal siglo prenda // que li diesen cadaño *tres vent* dueñas en renda” (370).

⁸² Simancas is on the Pisuerga River, across from which is the town of Las Aceñas, hence the account in the *PFG* goes by the Battle of Hacinas. *VSMC* the battle goes by the battle of Campo de Toro.

San Millán de la Cogolla would be with them.⁸³ In the *Morabutos* and *PFG* accounts, the battle occurs out in the field and eventually Santiago and San Millán arrive to rout the Muslim forces, but the historical account offered by Martínez Díez shows that the aggressors were unable to penetrate the fortress at Simancas and eventually withdrew. The *Morabutos* and *PFG* accounts likely conflate the Battle of Simancas and the subsequent Battle of el Barranco (which also goes by the name of *al-Jandaq*, or “Alfanden” in *Morabutos*) in which the Christians routed their enemies so badly that they overran the Muslim supply train—‘Abd al-Rahman’s personal items even constituted part of the plunder, including his personal Qur’ān (Martínez Díez 357).⁸⁴ After their crushing defeat, there seemed to have been disputes within the Muslim camp and perhaps even a mutiny, and these disagreements resulted in the end of the campaign.

The events of the *Omnipotencia* campaign served as rich material for the Christian holy war agenda because it precluded the Muslims from advancing farther into northern Spain and Christians were able to defeat perhaps one of the largest Islamic forces ever put together, which included Muslims from all over: Spain, Africa, and, if it’s to be believed, Mecca itself. It exhibits typical elements of holy war and polemics against the Muslims: signs from God, Islamic lasciviousness, Islamic militancy and cruelty, aid from heaven, and the defeat of the greatest Muslim force ever. The account is ginned up to be the Armageddon of the Islamic-Christian struggle to prove the power of one religion over the other; and its position in the *Diálogo de los morabutos* also emphasizes that this great blunder of all blunders was precipitated by the counsel of a marabout from Mecca—the Islamic religious center.

Signs from God and miracles, to the Christians, were clear indicators of the preponderance of Christianity over Islam. As discussed in the last chapter, a common Christian

⁸³ According to *PFG* Fernán González visited a hermitage where he received various visions telling him this news.

⁸⁴ *VSMC* also states that he lost his personal Qur’ān (455).

attitude was that of Luis de Granada: Christianity was confirmed with miracles while Islam was spread by *armas* (conquest).⁸⁵ The sign from God, in this account, appeared because of his distaste for the Christian tribute of sixty women to the Muslims annually. There is no mention of this tribute price by Martínez Díez, but it certainly reinforces the Christian stereotype that Muslims were lewd and lustful, given that all they wanted from the Christians were women instead of commodities or money. Sosa does mention another case in which women were paid as the tribute price. In a section of *Epítome de los reyes*, in which Sosa provides a history of the rulers of Algiers, Sosa writes about the seventh ruler Sala Baxá and mentions that a certain kingdom, “Huerguela,”⁸⁶ refused to pay their normal tribute, but eventually continued to provide the “treinta negras” [thirty black women], and another kingdom, Ticarte, paid fifteen women (301). Sosa does not, however, add any judgmental remarks to the practice.

The greatest dichotomy emphasized in the *Morabutos* account is that the Christians took all their direction and counsel from God, angels, and saints while the Muslims were influenced by Alfaramī, a marabout. I hesitate to assume that the Alfaramī mentioned here actually refers to the Arab philosopher Alfārābī (الفارابي), but the timeline makes sense given that Alfārābī died circa 950, and it is possible to twist Alfarabī’s thought system to fit in with the logic of this episode. Alfārābī’s major contribution to philosophy is continuing the ideas of Plato and Aristotle and making them compatible with revealed religion—saying that divine law is compatible with political philosophy. According to his thought, the virtuous ruler must be the philosopher-prophet-king, but this ruler must also have a capacity for war. Only a few will actually be able to develop their reason in a way that is consistent with virtue and happiness, and

⁸⁵ See “Holy Miracle or Diabolic Prestige” (10).

⁸⁶ Perhaps also “Guerguela,” found near the present eastern border of Egypt, western Libya, and northern Sudan.

these few must persuade the majority of others to follow their behavior—and if that majority cannot be persuaded it must be compelled. Muhsin Mahdi writes the following about Alfārābī:

If we combine his teaching about just or virtuous war and conquest with the idea of a perfect human association extending over the entire inhabited world, we can be led to the conclusion that Alfarabī deliberately modified the teachings of Plato and Aristotle on an important issue with the intention of supplying a rational justification for the Islamic concept of holy war whose aim was to propagate the divine law everywhere on earth (220).

Thus the action taken by ‘Abd al-Raḥman would seem to be justified under Alfārābī’s thought if he is trying to compel the Christians to come under the virtuous regime.⁸⁷ Despite the possibility that this Alfaramī is Alfārābī, there is no indication that Alfārābī ever left the Middle East and traveled to Spain. There also exists the possibility that the writer of this account was making things up for polemical purposes.

The episode can be understood as a competition between the two religions’ saint figures. At first upon seeing the eclipse, ‘Abd al-Raḥman was afraid, but when he arrived Alfaramī quelled his fears and said that the sign was in his favor and that he was to rule all of Christendom. The marabout goes on to give him further counsel:

Mas será acertado eches un bando que a los cristianos que se quisieren hacer moros se les den armas y caballos y se les haga mucho bien y buen tratamiento; los que no se quisieren volver moros, manda a tus capitanes los desuellen vivos, a las mujeres les arranquen las tetas, torciéndoselas; a los muchachos que los tomen por los pies,

⁸⁷ On the other hand, Alfārābī’s thought also leaves the possibility that multiple religions can perfectly co-exist if they promote proper virtue and “happiness.” According to the philosopher revealed religion only exists because of humanity’s incapacity to understand the true nature of being and human happiness (Mahdi 224).

quebrantándoles las cabezas en las paredes y piedras, y desta manera no quedará rastro ninguno de cristianos (268).

[But make sure that you announce to the Christians that those who would like to become Muslim will be given arms and horses and they will be shown kindness and good treatment; those that do not want to become Muslim, command to your captains that they skin them alive, and that they rip off the women's breasts by twisting; the children should be taken by their feet and their head should be broken against the walls and with stones, and in this way no trace will be left of the Christians.]

These harsh tactics emphasize the cruelty of the Muslims. On the other hand, Ramiro, upon seeing the great Muslim hoards, prayed, saying: “Pecador yo a Dios en fuerte y desgraciado punto nací... muy airado está Dios nuestro Señor contra nos” [A disgraced sinner, I was born before a strong God... how angry is God our Lord before us] (269). Because of Ramiro's repentance, he would be transformed from the object of the *ira divina* to the instrument of it. When Ramiro, Fernán González, and García Sánchez looked upon the Muslim army that had them besieged at Simancas, the king turned to the Christians and said: “Yo no hallo consejo humano que nos pueda valer en tan gran peligro sino la virtud de Cristo nuestro Redentor y de un cuerpo santo glorioso que está en mi tierra, señor Santiago... que Jesucristo envió a todas la tierras para convertir las gentes que en él no creían” [I cannot find any human counsel that is worth anything in this great danger other than the virtue of Christ our Redeemer and of a holy and glorious body that is in my land, señor Santiago... who Christ Jesus sent to all lands to convert those that didn't believe in him] (270). In addition to recognizing the need for Christ's help, Santiago is also singled out for aid because he was a “mártir” for Christianity and it was his

charge to “convertir” the unbelievers. Therefore, the idea of the holy war with its evangelizing end is present here.

Similarly, a passage that recalls many instances in the Bible when the Israelites turned from their unbelief back to the Lord was proclaimed to the Christians the morning of the battle: “Si el señor del cielo nos favorece y del peligro en que estamos nos saca, desde ahora le prometemos que nos y nuestra generación que después de nos verná le serviremos hasta la fin del siglo y seremos siervos destos dos gloriosos santos” [If the lord of heaven favors us and aids us in this danger we are in, from now on we promise him that we and our generation that comes after us will serve him until the end of the century and we will be servants of these two glorious saints] (271). The Israelites experienced the cycle of falling away from God and returning most markedly in the book of Judges, which says: “The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them... Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil... so they were severely distressed. Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them” (2:14-16). Finally, as the two armies line up for battle, the Christians bend down on their knees and beg that God “usase con ellos de su misericordia” [use them according to his mercy] (272). Effectively, Ramiro, Fernán González, and García Sánchez function as the “judges” in this account that trusted in God and turned the wandering Christians back to faith and saved them from their enemies. While this section may not have been written by Sosa, this account is consistent with the rest of *Topografía* in that it reproaches Christians for falling away—a theme common when Sosa talks about the renegades.

To a certain extent, the writer draws a comparison between Christian saints and Muslim saints as well. The Islamic saint, Alfaramī is pitted against his Christian counterparts Santiago

and San Millán de la Cogolla, who play central roles in the *Morabutos* account as well as that of the *PFG* and *VSMC*. ‘Abd al-Raḥman asks counsel from his saint, whose aid and divination turned out to be incorrect, while Ramiro, Fernán González, and García Sánchez plead to God and their saints, who actually come down from heaven to drive back the Muslim army. To be sure, the idea of “saint” to a Christian and a Muslim would evoke completely different concepts, but regardless, the *Topografía* and other texts use the word “santo” or “santón” to describe the Muslim saint. There was no established process for becoming an Islamic saint as there was (is) in Christianity. There are similarities, such as that they have performed miracles, but a marabout was considered a saint while still alive while a Christian saint must have already gone to heaven. Just as the object of this account would serve as propaganda to Christians reassuring them that God is on their side and that they would eventually triumph over Islam, it would also reassure them that their prayers to the saints were not in vain.

This account has all the elements of a holy war, crusade narrative except that the struggle took place in Spain instead of the Holy Land. Perhaps this demonstrates an early modern mentality shift with regard to the holy war and frames it more realistically—while it did not appear that Christians were ever going to be able to retake Jerusalem, they could take back the Peninsula, and perhaps that victory would provide the spirit needed to continue the struggle against Islam. That would seem to be an appropriate parting message for the final pages of the *Topografía*.

Warrior monks of Malta

The Battle of Simancas account at the end of the *Diálogo de los morabutos* dips back into medieval accounts and emphasizes the holy war against Islam using great Christian heroes such

as Santiago and San Millán de la Cogolla, and to a greater or lesser extent the accounts in *PFG* and *VSMC* are connected to the monasteries of San Millán and San Pedro de Arlanza.⁸⁸ The holy war often implies an inherent connection with monasticism, and the Mediterranean warrior-monk figure provides us a perfect example to explore the changing complexities of politics and religion from the middle ages to the early modern period. It was no longer as simple as Christians vs. Muslims, but the political struggle gained a new variable, the Protestant, that complicated the relationships between kingdoms and faiths around the Mediterranean. While Christians may have joined forces at some instances, such as Lepanto, they also squabbled amongst themselves and engaged in alliances with Muslim factions just as easily, depending on the economic and political opportunities. Few entities better embody the protean nature of politics than the Knights of Malta.

The Knights began as ‘hospitallers’ in Jerusalem, that is, they provided a place for pilgrims that sought to visit the holy land, but soon they were forced to combine their hospitaller duties with military duties. At their peak they controlled fifty castles in the Middle East. After being forced out of Jerusalem at the end of the thirteenth century, they made their home on the island of Rhodes. They became a maritime power, mostly attacking Ottoman ships on the trade routes between Anatolia and Egypt. They survived a major Ottoman onslaught in 1480 and subsequently signed a treaty with them, but their attacks persisted anyway as they sponsored Christian corsairs in the region. In 1522 the Ottomans finally had had enough and mustered a large force that was able to capture the city of Rhodes. They allowed the Knights to exit the city

⁸⁸ While the poem *VSMC* falls beyond the timeframe of the dissertation, its account of the battle of Campo de Toro (Simancas) thematically complements this chapter’s aim in that Gonzalo de Berceo included the section to cajole donatives to the Monastery of San Millán out of thanks for his intercession. Therefore, Berceo uses a holy war situation to prompt an economic response in favor of the monastery. It praises Fernán González not only for helping win the battle, but also for giving a share of the plunder to the monastery out of thanks (459-462).

with honor, taking their weapons, relics, and archives. Emperor Charles V granted them Malta in 1530. “From that moment onwards the Knights had a dual allegiance: as a religious order they were subject to the Pope, but in legal and political terms they held Malta as a fief from the crown of Aragon” (Malcolm 77).⁸⁹

In theory they existed to counter the Barbary corsairs and, as the Grand Master of the Order put it in 1536, “to fight infidels, and to drive the corsairs away from the coasts and seas of the Christians” (Malcolm 79). But ultimately their main task turned out to be the acquisition of booty. Malcolm’s analysis of their official expeditions from 1532 to 1574 shows that only five destinations were to the Barbary coast, while eighteen went to the Levant, that is, the rich trade route between Egypt and Istanbul. The Greek islands were also a target, and the Knights were able to use Venetian-held outposts when needed—despite the Venetians’ distaste for them.⁹⁰ The booty sought by the expeditions included merchandise, ships, and slaves.

To simply say that the Knights attacked Muslim ships while the Barbary corsairs and Ottomans attacked Christians is, in Malcolm’s words, “wide of the mark.” The Knights would seize ships from Greek Orthodox Christians who were under Ottoman hegemony, but they would also attack those from Dubrovnik and Ragusa, part of Venice’s *Stato da Mar*. “It was claimed, too, that the Knights would seize Christian ships and torture crew members to make them say that the cargo belonged to Muslims or Jews, thereby entitling the Knights to take it” (Malcolm 81). This sounds much like the Christian attitude after the Battle of Lepanto in the aftermath of which Giovanni Bruni was murdered.

Despite both being Christian, the Venetians had an intermittently hostile relationship with the knightly corsairs. In one complaint to the Pope, they referred to the Knights as “cavalieri

⁸⁹ Much of the information on the Knights comes from Malcolm (76-99). See also Schermerhorn and Seward.

⁹⁰ Alonso de Contreras describes his island hopping among the Greek islands while on privateering missions.

ladri” or thieving knights (Malcolm 81). When Rhodes was besieged in 1522 the Venetians impeded their own resources from aiding the Knights, and even sent an envoy to the Ottomans afterwards to congratulate them on their victory. This tension between the two Christian entities was based on the disruption the Knights caused in the Venetian-Ottoman trading scheme. It was natural that many ships leaving the northern Adriatic would have Muslim or Jewish goods intended for Istanbul or originating there, and the Knights happily took advantage of this. The Venetians were in a dually precarious situation: having to deal with the Knightly thorn in their side, on the one hand, and serving as the final buffer state between the Christians and the Ottomans to the east.

In sum, the Knights of Malta represent an example of the fragile web of geopolitical relationships around the Mediterranean in the early modern period: being a religious order they were subject to the pope; occupying Malta made them politically bound to Spain, which, because of their possession of Naples, was always suspicious of Venice; being Christian, they helped deter the Ottoman and Barbary corsairs; as corsairs themselves they plundered ships carrying Muslim or Jewish cargo, even if it belonged to Venetians. And finally, to further complicate the issue, the Knights recruited members and were funded by all Catholic states, even though many of those states carried on regular conflicts with each other, for example, France and Spain. The order was separated into “*langues*” (languages), and each of these sections represented geographical recruiting grounds and administrative units (Malcolm 83). The number of the *langues* varied with time, but they were: Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon, Castile (including León and Portugal), Germany, and England (the langue of England was dissolved after the Reformation). The majority of Knights came from France and, to a lesser degree, Spain. Malcolm observes, “it is remarkable that the Order was never torn apart on national-political

lines.” The reason for this, she continues, was that “it focused on an external enemy” (84). When facing the common enemy, the Knights worked together, just as Spain and Venice worked together against the Ottomans at the Battle of Lepanto.

Though I’ve been depicting the Knights as soldiers and corsairs, they were technically a religious, monastic order. When Gasparo Bruni was inducted as a knight he attended mass at the chapel of St. Catherine, the patron saint of the Italian language. He took the three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty and was told that he must take special care of orphans and widows. And never, under any circumstances, was he to abandon the white cross of Malta that he bore on his new habit. Then the officiating Knight, Admiral Nicolò Orsini di Rivalta, dubbed him three times on the left shoulder with his sword and he became Fra Gasparo, a member of the clergy, but, as the sword indicated, his purpose was to fight (Malcolm 87). While in Rhodes, the order still maintained the appearance of monasticism in that they lived in the “Collachio” (cloister) and were separated from the public.

The Knights existed to fight infidels, which normally took them east, but in 1573, Gasparo Bruni would lead troops in the opposite direction to confront the recently established opposition to the Church—Protestants. The Huguenot uprisings in France were becoming more and more ardent and the papal territory of Avignon was under attack and begging for reinforcements. However, in the convoluted political situation, it was not as simple as merely marching reinforcements to a given area, as the story of Gasparo Bruni will demonstrate.

In August of 1572, the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre unleashed a series of riots and violence against French Protestants and began the “fourth” war of religion (1572-1573), this during the greater segment History remembered as the French Wars of Religion, that spanned from 1562-1598. Meanwhile, unrest also festered in Malta and there was grumbling among the

Knights that resented joining the papal fleet on a campaign to the east.⁹¹ Therefore, it was evident that the Knights not only had anti-Venetian sentiment, but their relationship with the Pope had reached a lull (Malcolm 279).

Gasparo was sent with a contingent of six hundred men to defend the Pope's interests in the enclave of Avignon. During the Council of Trent Pope Pius IV, anticipating complications with the Huguenots, revived the post of General of the Troops in that territory and appointed his cousin Fabrizio Servelloni, who in due course fortified the city (Malcolm 283). On November 27 the small fleet of four galleys carrying just over six hundred men arrived outside of Marseille, but getting from the ships north to Avignon proved to be supremely difficult. In the next several days they sought permission from various Catholic dignitaries simply to be allowed to come ashore, and these requests were also unsuccessful. On top of that, after three additional weeks on board, men were beginning to die of fever. The reason they were not allowed passage was that such a large force would undoubtedly threaten any chance for peace settlements with the Huguenots in southern France. Drastic measures needed to be taken. On December 19 the three captains (Gasparo and two others were each assigned two hundred men) landed their men after dark and began their clandestine journey to Avignon, thirty-five miles north. Some eighty men, including one of the captains, went missing during the night and most of their equipment was left on the galleys, but the next morning the administrators of Avignon were astonished to see that 550 men had safely arrived at their post (285).

How could the political situation have been such that the six hundred soldiers were dispatched in the name of the pope, only to be denied by Catholic authorities the right of passage to defend Catholic interests in Avignon? How could the state of political maneuvering have been

⁹¹ In fact, the grumbling was such that an investigation was launched in November, when the fleet had returned from campaigning (Malcolm 279).

so complicated that the troops were trapped aboard their galleys to contract life-threatening fever?

The Knights would be called upon for a variety of missions throughout the Mediterranean, for example, the convoy that was to take Antonio de Sosa from Barcelona to Agrigento was escorted by a small fleet of the Order's ships in 1577,⁹² but the Catholic Knights were not the only Christian denomination that conducted corsairing missions around that sea. Near the end of the *Historia del cautivo*, a novella inserted in the *Quixote*, Cervantes describes how the captives almost reach the shores of Spain after escaping Algiers, but a French corsair ship suddenly attacks them and takes them aboard. After stripping the captives of all they had, which wasn't much, they needed to decide what to do with them. They had intended to pretend they were Bretons and make a few stops at Spanish ports, but eventually the captain of the vessel decided that they had already taken enough plunder and that they would make for La Rochelle. With the mention of this port city, Cervantes implicates another threat on the Mediterranean and Atlantic seas. La Rochelle was a center for the Huguenot resistance. Richard MacKenney writes of it as a "city state" that was basically independent from the Catholic monarchs.⁹³ In fact, the Huguenots of La Rochelle were particularly anti-Spanish since they backed William of Orange and other Protestants in the Netherlands. They aided Louis of Nassau (brother of William of Orange) and the "Sea Beggars" raid Spanish shipping in the Atlantic, and it was they who captured the city of Brill on April 1, 1572 (Knecht 415). This detail reminds us again that it was not simply Christians against Muslims in the Mediterranean, but rather also Catholics against Catholics (Knights plundering Venetian trade ships), Catholics against Huguenots (Avignon), and Huguenots against Catholics or anyone else—as the Huguenot ship approached the captives

⁹² See chapter 1 of this dissertation.

⁹³ See also Parker, *La Rochelle and the French Monarchy*.

in Cervantes' tale, their renegade tells everyone, "Ninguno responde, porque éstos sin duda son corsarios franceses, que hacen a toda ropa" [No one respond, because these are undoubtedly French corsairs, and they'll take anything] (I, 41, 433).

Whether Catholic, Protestant, Ottoman, or from the Barbary Coast, and whether belonging to a religious military order or not, one element that all the powers of the Mediterranean sought was economic and material advantage. While some of these players had more presence and power in the Mediterranean, the presence of the minor players (Protestants) nevertheless influenced the dynamic of the region and the allocation of resources. Rabelais' Friar John is a revealing example, he was much more concerned with the crop of grapes and the wine than he was with the monastery—so concerned that he was able to kill 13,000 men with his cross as a battle hammer. The Captive provides another characterization of the French corsairs that may very well apply to all of the Mediterranean powers: "Pero los deseos de aquella gente no se extienden a más que al dinero, y de esto jamás se ve harta su codicia, lo cual entonces llegó a tanto, que aun hasta los vestidos de cautivos nos quitaran si de algún provecho les fueran" [But the desires of those people go no further than to money, and their greed for this is never satiated, and it reaches such an extent that they would even take the cloths from captives if they could benefit them somehow] (I, 41, 434). The following section will show that internal squabbling was not only a phenomenon among various Christian kingdoms and entities, but also among the various Muslim groups around the Mediterranean.

Christian zeal in North Africa

In Luis de Góngora's popular *romance amoroso* n. 32 he glamorizes the nature of a soldier's experience in Orán in an episode that pits the soldier's desire for his African lover against his

sense of duty to respond to a nocturnal attack on the *presidio* by three hundred tribesmen.⁹⁴ The poem seems to be a delightful fiction of the Spaniard and his African lover, but Diego Suárez Montañés, a real-life soldier in Orán, reports that such an attempted midnight raid by the surrounding tribesmen was not at all out of the ordinary. He writes on one occasion: “vinieron grande cantidad de moros de a caballo [...] para tomar venganza de los cristianos por los moros que había muerto y cautivado en los campos [...] Y, poniéndose a vista de la ciudad de Orán, comenzaron a llamar [a] los cristianos que saliesen a pelear [...] Y, para esto, llamaban por sus nombres a los más conocidos y señalados de Orán en valentía y destreza de armas” [a great quantity of Moors came on horseback [...] And, coming into view of the city of Oran, they began to call out to the Christians to fight [...] And, in doing so, they called out by name the most famous and distinguished soldiers of courage and skill] (221). The editors, Miguel Á. de Bunes Ibarra and Beatriz Alonso Acero, then highlight that this type of one-on-one call to arms was common in that setting, the inhabitants of North Africa placing much more emphasis on individual honor and exploit.

Orán was captured in 1509 and subsequently organized as a *presidio*. The city, thenceforth, was on the front lines of the early modern struggle between Christians and Muslims. However, in this theater, as in the entire Mediterranean, the conflict could not be understood as simply Christianity vs. Islam. As Góngora’s poem says, the Spaniard protagonist had “dos lanzas” [two lances], that is that he served two interests: his country and his lover. Between Spain and Africa, this Spaniard was a man *entre mundos* with split allegiances between fulfilling the honor he owed to his country and the love, emotional and passionate, that he owed his lover. As Diego Suárez Montañés’ history shows, the Spanish of Orán were also split between their

⁹⁴ For a version of the *romance*, see Rivers (194).

passion for the adventure of *Reconquista* as well as the realities of politics and economics in the North African region. Similarly, the local Muslims were separated into, as Suárez describes them, “*moros de paz*” and “*moros de guerra*” [Moors of peace and Moors of war]; some local tribes cooperated with the Spanish while others were hostile and sometimes even attacked the fortified city of Orán itself, as in the poem. This conflict in Orán is another example of the fragile balance of politics, economics, and religious vision that defined the era. What began for the Spanish as an exciting opportunity to expand Christianity into Africa eventually ran up against reality and was transformed into a struggle for subsistence by means of raiding and graft.

Often we think of the Spanish conquest of Granada as the end of the so-called “*Reconquista*” campaign, but the *Reyes Católicos* had their eyes set beyond Gibraltar as well—especially Isabella, who expressed in her testament that it was her desire to pursue “the conquest of Africa and the war against the Moors” (Kamen 47). The zealous Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros faithfully carried out these wishes of the kings. Cisneros represents another historical manifestation of the monk-warrior figure. He was extremely austere and dedicated to the faith. His policies reversed many of the original, more lenient, policies of Talavera with regard to the treatment of conquered Muslims (Moriscos) after Granada.⁹⁵ He supervised the 1505 military campaign that saw 10,000 troops capture Mers-el-Kebir and, incredibly, at the age of seventy-three he personally led an army of 15,000 to take Orán with funds from his own see. The ambitious cardinal is to have said that “the smell of gunpowder was sweeter than the perfumes of Arabia” (Kamen 47). According to the Trato de Alcaçobas of 1479, Portugal and Castile agreed that the former could expand into Africa within the kingdom of Fez, while the latter could expand into the Canary Islands and the kingdom of Tremecén (Suárez 247 n388). Though the

⁹⁵ To follow the treatment of the Moriscos in the sixteenth century, see García Arenal *Los Moriscos*.

campaign began in Orán with promise of new conquests, by the mid-1500s it became apparent that no such territorial expansion would occur, and by 1578, after the Portuguese were defeated in the Battle of Three Kings in Morocco, the notion that Christianity would dominate in Africa was nothing but chimera.

Orán ended up being the only Maghrebien enclave with a normal, non-military society functioning behind its walls;⁹⁶ however, at least from the perspective of a soldier, the conditions in Orán could be described, in a word, as dreadful. In chapter VII, Suárez describes how Martín de Córdoba defended the fort of San Salvador, situated on a Mazalquivir mountain, and compares his efforts to those of Scipio Africanus and even Alexander the Great. Perhaps exaggerated exploits such as these were used to recruit soldiers to serve on the African frontier.⁹⁷ While at the beginning of the sixteenth century there was enthusiasm for the African conquests, that enthusiasm waned significantly as greater issues of the century confronted the crown. By the time Suárez was writing, the 1570s to early 1600s, the presidio of Orán seemed much like “the Wall” outpost in the *Game of Thrones* series—a place where most of the recruits were the dregs of society, condemned to serve out the rest of their days in obscurity. The two Borja brothers, the Maestre de Montesa and Felipe de Borja, who are the subjects of Suárez’s history, are examples of the quality of soldier sent there, seen, of course, through sixteenth century morality; they were sent to Orán in disgrace, one on charges of sodomy and the other in exile (Suárez 34).⁹⁸ The frequency of mutinies is another indicator of the poor conditions. The “penury” that the soldiers suffered was due to rigid behavior regulations, frequent delays of their pay, and overall insufficiency of provisions. Suárez himself was accused of inciting a mutiny in 1600 (259 n401).

⁹⁶ See Ibarra and Acero’s *Estudio preliminar* to Montañés’ text, 12.

⁹⁷ These comparisons were common, especially linking Charles V with the great conquerors after he went into Tunis. See Suárez 190 n326.

⁹⁸ This comes from the “Estudio preliminar,” which is the editors’ introduction to the text.

On top of that, a most common destination of all those in such a depressed state—alcohol in excess—was unwise option in that region of the world; after relating the death of a fellow soldier from heat stroke, Suárez writes plainly: “No es bueno el vino en la calor sobrada” [Wine is no good in such excessive heat] (265).

Bunes Ibarra and Alonso Acero state in their preliminary study that Suárez’s *Historia del Maestre último* comprises one of the most important African chronicles along with those of Leo Africanus, Antonio de Sosa, and Luis de Mármol y Carvajal (14). Suárez arrived in Orán in April of 1577 and it was not until 1592 that he began to write. What resulted was a text without which, according the Bunes Ibarra and Alonso Acero, it would be impossible to properly understand the Africa of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (14). He was born in 1552 in the mountains of Asturias to a family of poor hidalgos and, much like Cervantes, intended to escape the ennui and anonymity of that life to an option that offered much more honor and fortune—that of the soldier. And when he began writing he also searched for a topic that would make a worthy history; he found that the Spanish activities in Tremecén along with all the fighting and politics between the Muslim factions to be his material. In his prologue, Suárez writes that since his childhood he had been an “aficionado a la milicia y ejercicio de las armas contra moros y turcos por la tradición que oía de mis pasados que sirvieron, y muchos de ellos murieron, en la restauración de España” [enthusiast of the military and the exercise of arms against the Moors and Turks because of the tradition that he heard from his relatives that served, and many of them who died in the restoration of Spain] (72). He was apparently enthusiastic about the theme of religious war and the glory of Spain, but his text also shows surprising attention to detail and minutia that helps researchers understand the complex relationships the *presidio* had with the economy of the region. He regularly consults the registries to inform himself on the relations

with the *moros de paz* that help reveal details on how the presidio was administered and provisions were maintained (32)—Orán was not a high priority for the crown and sufficient provisions were not always reliable. He was just as interested in the happenings among the Spanish as he was the posturing among the Turks and Muslim tribes, among which there were frequently dissensions and squabbles. Suárez was influenced by the texts of Africanus and Mármol, relying on them for certain topographical details (110 n178) thus he, like them, not only presents the events and historical context but he also includes his own opinions and personal experience. For example, in a chapter describing many of the upgrades and building projects of the Maestre de Monesta, Suárez describes a watchtower saying it was where “yo he hecho guarda más tiempo de treinta años continuos” [I have stood guard more than thirty years continuously] (321).⁹⁹

Perhaps some of the most interesting material that Suárez covers are the accounts of the “cabalgadas,” which were cavalry raids against the *moros de guerra*—basically terrestrial corsairing missions.¹⁰⁰ As the city of Algiers’ economy basically depended on corsair activity to survive, Orán similarly depended on these *cabalgadas*. This dependency only increased throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The raids sometimes brought in enormous amounts of plunder that served to pay the garrison salaries (a fifth of the loot went to the crown or the governor), provided slaves to the presidio and the peninsula, made donations to the Church and three religious orders present, and allowed the soldiers personal enrichment (218 n360). Because of this the raids were taken very seriously and all the soldiers wanted to participate, but an unfortunate number of them had to stay behind to guard the city. Suárez writes

⁹⁹ Perhaps it was the same “atalaya” that Góngora later references in the aforementioned romance.

¹⁰⁰ Footnote 344 describes how Christian maritime corsairing from Orán was barely even documented. In fact, the Turkish galley that they were able to capture in the vicinity was taken because of the artillery on land (198-99).

that on one occasion the raiding party executed a false spy who was supposed to lead them to the enemy but merely led them on an unproductive *cabalgada* (219). In theory and according to Suárez, the raids were only against the *moros de guerra*, but the categorization of *moros de guerra* and *moros de paz* was constantly in flux, and it's likely that as the necessity of survival rose the *cabalgadas* plundered whomever was available. The reality was that the Christians and Ottomans enjoyed an unfair superiority over North Africans because of harquebuses (266 n409), so that if the Christians wanted to take, they took.

Cabalgadas occurred before the arrival of the Maestre de Montesa, but his first *cabalgada* serves as an example of what generally took place and what their outcome was.

Suárez sets up the account:

...a nueve leguas de Orán contra occidente en el viaje de la ciudad de Tremecén, estaban asentados ciertos aduare de moros de guerra del linaje de los Alhajeces, que eran de guerra, enemigos de aquellas plazas. Y, queriéndoles castigar y hacer presa en ellos, como enemigos de su Majestad y del nombre cristiano, para les hacer desviar y alargar de los términos de aquel presidio, para cuyo efecto partió [el Maestre de Montesa], miércoles por la mañana a 16 de junio [1568], víspera de Corpus Christi (242).

[...nine leagues from Orán against the west on the road to the city of Tremecén were settled certain camps of Moors of war from the line of Alhajeces, who were bellicose and enemies of the plaza (Orán). And, wanting to punish them and make them prisoners, as enemies of his Majesty and the Christian name, because they strayed from the terms of the *presidio*, the Maestre de Montesa departed on Wednesday the 16th of June, the eve of Corpus Christi.]

Notice how Suárez justifies the attack: these were *moros de guerra*, and thus they are enemies of the king and the faith; and they were encroaching on the agreed terms of the *presidio*. The Maestre and his army made camp on the 17th of June and celebrated mass, then they waited for nightfall. During the night the army approached the *aduares* (Bedouin camps) and they attacked at dawn on the June 18th. Suárez describes it:

Y acometiendo a tres aduares, se dio Santiago en ellos a un tiempo, do se prendieron y cautivaron ciento noventa y tres personas, varones y mujeres de todas edades. Y a otros muchos mataron porque hacían armas, no queriendo rendirse a prisión, de que escaparon algunos, heridos. Tomáronse, asimismo, más de siete mil cabezas de todo ganado, las dos mil vacas y bueyes, lo demás ganado menudo, ovejuno y cabruno, que me afirmaron era el más hermoso y gordo ganado que se había visto en este reino muchos años había (243).
[Attacking these camps, Santiago (the Christians) came over them at once, during which they took captive 193 people, men and women of all ages. And they killed many more because they took up arms, not wanting to be taken to prison, of which some escaped, injured. Also, more than 7,000 head of cattle were taken, 2,000 cattle and oxen, and other smaller livestock such as sheep and goats, which I was told was the most beautiful and fattened livestock that had been seen in the kingdom for many years.]

Therefore, not only did the raid succeed in killing some of the *moros de guerra* and capturing others, but the Spanish took a prodigious amount of plunder—7,000 cattle, sheep, and goats and 100 other “bestias de carga” [beasts of burden]. The army then marched back to Orán. Suárez said that the army was harassed by small Moorish cavalry parties, but these attacks were nothing serious. When they returned they split up and distributed the plunder. The fact that the cattle they had taken were some of the “most beautiful and fattest” that that region had seen in a long time

bears out in the total worth of the plunder: Suárez writes that after selling 184 slaves and other loot, the total worth was 221,823 *reales*. They then proceeded to celebrate Corpus Christi. This is one of the many examples of *cabalgadas* that Suárez describes. Again, notice how the text is casually and constantly laced with holy war references—“se dio Santiago en ellos” is a euphemism for making war against the Muslims. On another trip, they took 420 Muslim prisoners, “la mayor presa y mejor repartida que los soldados de Orán [habían] hecho que se ganaron aquellas plazas a los moros hasta que esta historia se escribió” [the greatest capture and best loot distribution the soldiers of Orán had made that the plaza benefited from up to that point in its written history] (267).

Given that the *cabalgadas* were executed for what they considered a just cause, they were certainly proud of their successes. In the following chapter, Suárez tells us that Juan de Austria, the brother of Felipe II, personally arrived at Orán for updates. The Spanish prince was also proud of the good work being done on behalf of the crown:

En estos días que el señor don Juan de Austria llegó a Orán, estaban todavía por vender algunos esclavos de la presa que el Maestre abía hecho en los campos de Mediona, como se ha dicho. Cuya forma de venta se holgó mucho su Alteza ver en la plaza pública de Orán, a voz de pregonero, y lo mismo de saber la orden que en su repartimiento se tiene, por mando del rey, su hermano (256).

[In those days when the lord Juan de Austria arrived to Orán, many slaves were to be sold who were taken captive by the Maestre at the camps of the Mediona, as has been said. His Highness enjoyed very much the form of the sale in the public plaza of Orán by the voice of an auctioneer, and he was pleased knowing the order of his brother, the king, regarding the distribution (of the loot).]

While using Suárez's account, we have to question whether the holy war motivations were simply the personal beliefs that he imbued into his text or if the Spanish in general considered the religious aspect of their fight a prime motivator. Given the detail that the *cabalgadas* always took along the supplies to celebrate mass out in the open field, it appears that the religious component and mentality were central to their decisions and actions:

Porque siempre el Maestre de Montesa tuvo de costumbre todas las veces que salía de Orán en el campo, mayormente a hacer presa, como supiese que había de amanecer y estar días fuera de las fuerzas, mandaba llevar todo recaudo para decir misa con un pequeño y devoto retablo armado en gonces (242).

[Because the Maestre always had the custom each time that he went out of Orán to the countryside, mostly to take captives, as he knew that he would be a few days outside the fortress, he commanded that the supplies for mass be brought along with a small and devout altarpiece with hinges.]

Not only did he always bring the supplies and a *retablo*, but the idea of celebrating mass in enemy territory was a well thought out orchestration; he also commanded that many of the soldiers worship with their military gear in hand to stay alert in the case of an ambush—just as the Israelites were supposed to alertly celebrate the first Passover with their staffs in hand.

Suárez reports that apparently while don Berenguel, captain under king Jaime of Aragón, “el Conquistador,” and his troops were worshiping in the castle at Quío, a Muslim force caught them off guard and “pus[o] en grandísimo aprieto y escándalo y turbación del sacerdote” [caused great stress, scandal, and discomfiture to the priest] (243). It was also the Maestre's policy to never conduct a mass on the return to Orán, given that the return party was always harassed by

Moorish cavalry. The insistence on celebrating mass even out in the field was likely an extension of a greater policy that was initiated when the Spanish first arrived at Orán and Mazalquivir.

But the fact that the Maestre de Montesa always kept a monk of war present was not unique to Orán, nor even the Christians. Schermerhorn writes that a chaplain always accompanied the Knights of Malta on their galleys and “gave absolution before the conflict opened” (81). The practice of pre-battle absolution seems a direct descendant of the crusades when the pope would issue indulgences to anyone who volunteered. In the first chapter of this dissertation I discussed the oddity that Antonio de Sosa never mentions a military characteristic to the marabouts of Algiers—only that the corsair galleys would always carry a marabout along with them to bless their mission.¹⁰¹

Bunes Ibarra and Alonso Acero note their elevated religious enthusiasm and argue that the Church’s first mission in Orán and Mazalquivir was to maintain the Faith of the Christians that inhabited these *presidios*, both the military and civil populations. “En este sentido, se insta a los habitantes a que celebren con fervor todas las fiestas litúrgicas del calendario cristiano, máxime al tratarse de un territorio de frontera, rodeado de infieles” [In this sense, the inhabitants were urged to zealously celebrate all the liturgical festivals of the Christian calendar, especially because they were a border territory, surrounded by infidels] (245 n383). The editors continue, providing a missive from the city council of Orán to Felipe III in 1602 and reporting their fulfillment of their solemn religious observance of eight days of Corpus Christi:

Los Catholicos Reyes progenitores de V.M. y el Rey don philipe nuestro señor de gloriossa memoria con su acostumbrada piedad y religión nos tienen mandado hazer la

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 1 “Mad Marabouts of Algiers” 13.

fiesta del sanctissimo sacramento del día del corpus christi y sus otavas con mucha solenidad y pompa por estar a la cara de moros y judíos en ververía (246 n383).

[The Catholic kings, progenitors of his Majesty the King don Philip our lord of glorious memory with his customary mercy and religion has commanded us to celebrate the festival of the holy sacrament on the day of Corpus Christi and its subsequent celebration days with much solemnity and pomp because we are in the face of Moors and Jews of Barbary.]

This emphasis on religious observance was initiated not for proselytizing, but for retention: as noted, conditions were bleak in Orán, the brutal *cabalgadas* most times were for subsistence, and soldiers were constantly exposed to death. The church recognized the role it played in maintaining the inhabitants' sanity and, more importantly, Christianity.

Suárez records all these religious activities and even employs holy war rhetoric, but I suspect that many of these details are nothing more than bells and whistles that he adds to his text with a certain nostalgia for the original intent of the African invasion. By the time Suárez recorded these events, there no longer remained any notion that Christians would conquer large swaths of North Africa and return them to Christianity. He recounts the occurrences of the *cabalgadas* dispassionately, undoubtedly leaving out the most unsavory details and framing the attacks as justifiable because they were against Muslims. Perhaps he could keep the notion of the holy war alive in his history, whether or not it was the reality of the *presidio*.

Rayos de guerra

The practice of pre-battle absolution also highlights a major parallel between the Christian concept of holy war and the Muslim *jihād*, and again we see the appearance of the

North African marabout in this conversation. While this Islamic concept of “struggle” implies a push for a certain superiority of Islam in the world, different groups of Muslims take the term in many different directions—some more hostile to non-Muslims than others.

A fascinating portion of text taken from Suárez provides deep insights into the complex relationships among Muslims in Tremecén and Orán as well as into their relationship with the Christians. Suárez begins: “Hubo en [1568] grandes discordias entre los moros del reino de Tremecén, especialmente de la provincia de Orán, con los demás que eran de guerra, enemigos de aquellas plazas” [In 1568 there was great discord among the Moors of the kingdom of Tremecén, especially in the province of Orán, with the rest of those that were hostile and enemies of the plaza] (277). Fighting ensued among the tribes, so much so that one day 150 Moorish cavalrymen died—among them seven “jeques” or leaders. To establish order, it was decided by Uchalí, governor of Algiers, to send for a marabout from Mecca to preach and to persuade all the friends of the Christians to cease from giving them provisions and other aid that facilitated their own conquest.¹⁰² This marabout went around “predicando por entre los moros de paces, amigos de Orán, tratándoles de traidores a su ley y estatutos de Mahoma, y que les caería su maldición y fuego del cielo si no se apartasen de la amistad de los cristianos, contra quien antes debían ser enemigos y rayos de guerra, como su Alcorán mandaba” [preaching among the peaceful Moors, friends of Orán, and treating them as traitors to their law and the statutes of Muhammad, and that they would fall under the curse and fires of heaven if they did not break off their friendship with the Christians, against whom they should be enemies and lightning bolts of war, as the Qur’ān commanded] (278). But despite all of the saber-rattling, Suárez said only a

¹⁰² It appears that marabouts were frequently sought out to go among local tribes and fashion unity. Later on in Suárez there was more quarreling between tribes and he writes: “En que solamente solicitaban poner paz entre ellos por medio de casamientos y treguas puestas por sus morabutos” [They only solicited peace between themselves by way of marriages and truces put there by their marabouts] (312).

few of the *aduares* repudiated their peace terms with the Christians. Perhaps unexpectedly, the *moros de paz* responded that they were not, indeed, violating the Qur'ān by maintaining friendly relations with Christians because history had proven that Christians and Muslims were perfectly able to live peacefully. This enraged the marabout and eventually he left them, “amenazándoles de grande castigo en las almas y de hacer venir a los turcos a castigarles corporalmente” [threatening them with great punishment to their souls and that the Turks would come and punish them physically] (278). Unfortunately for this marabout, the forces they eventually mustered against the Spaniards were handily castigated themselves.

In the previous paragraph I spoke about the resistance of some tribes to fight the Christians, but I have yet to cover the reasons they gave for their persistent peace with Orán. Of the various reasons they give for the peace, most have nothing to do with religious differences in the slightest. Instead of a theoretical religious holy war, the local tribes of Orán maintained peace with the presidio for very practical reasons. Suárez writes that they told the marabout that “se hallaban mejor y vivían más seguros de ellos y de los turcos sustentando la amistad el rey de España que siendo sus enemigos” [they lived better and more securely from them and from the Turks by sustaining their friendship with the King of Spain than by being his enemy] (278). Thus, not only did they live better under the Christians, but they seemed to despise any Turkish affiliation. In fact, they were afraid of both the Christians and the Turks, but determined that maintaining friendship with the former was in their better interest. Previously, these tribes stated that they did not violate the Qur'ān with their peace and justified it with the following comment:

Porque, en España, siendo parte de ella de moros, se había hecho muchas veces con los reyes cristianos. Y lo mismo, después que ganaron a Orán, habían los reyes de Tremecén

tenido paces con España muchos años, antes que los turcos les tiranizasen aquel reino, y lo mismo había[n] hecho los reyes Hamidas de Túnez (278).

[Because, in Spain, part of them being Moorish, peace had been made many times with the Christians kings. In the same way, after they conquered Orán, the kings of Tremecén made the same peace with Spain for many years, before the Turks tyrannized the kingdom, and the kings of the Hamidas of Tunisia had done the same.]

The marabout was trying to convince these tribes to move away from the region and resettle further away under the auspices of other authorities. Their response, as Suárez writes, reveals a level of indignation at such a notion: “no se quisieron ir todos ni desnaturalizarse de su patria, [...] demás de esto, ellos tenían sus tierras y heredamientos en los términos y provincia de Orán, de donde eran antiguos patrones conocidos, y que no les estaba bien ir a conocer nuevas tierras, ni ser pecheros de extraños señores” [they all did not want to go and denaturalize themselves from their mother land, [...] furthermore, according to the terms with Orán, from which they were known patrons, they could keep their lands and inheritance, and it was not good for them to go and find new lands, nor to be lackeys of foreign lords] (278).

Therefore, their peaceful relationship with the Christians had little to do with their Christianity. They maintained it for perfectly human reasons: they didn’t want to repatriate; they simply lived better and safer under the Christians than the Turks; and the premise that such a peace was against the Qur’ān was debunked by recent history, and thus they felt no guilt in their decision. Again, the reason that there were tribal disputes in the first place was also for very human, survivalist reasons: “mayormente la pendencia sobre las posesiones de las tierras en que habían de sembrar sus cosechas de trigo y cebada” [mostly because of the quarrel over possession of the land in which they sowed their wheat and fodder] (277), which is the same

reason that other fights broke out in later chapters: “Estaban en este tiempo grandemente enemistados unos con otros los más principales linajes de moros del reino de Tremecén, por viejas y nuevas pasiones y rencores [...] sobre las tierras en que siembran sus panes y pastan sus ganados” [The principle lineages of Moors of the kingdom of Tremecén were great enemies with one another because of both old and new passions and resentments [...] because of the lands which they planted for their bread and that their cattle grazed] (309). Thus the main reason that these *moros de paz* would not fight the Spanish had nothing to do with grandiose, theoretical ideas of holy war, *jihād*, religious honor, or even political honor—they simply desired to feed their flocks, plant their crops, and remain in their patria instead of submitting themselves as “pecheros” to foreign lords.

Separating the North African local tribes into *moros de paz* and *moros de guerra*, as the Spanish did, also overly simplifies the tribal dynamic. In 1569 among the *moros de guerra* Suárez comments that there were three predominant groups, those from the lineages of Uled Abdala, Uled Muza, and Uled Brahen, and the leaders of these three lineages squabbled for the position of “jeque” (literally meaning sheikh, but also a functioning leader) that would carry the Turkish standard. This position seemed to change each year. That year the position was given to Garduba, of the lineage of Uled Brahen, and the other two lineages felt disrespected by this choice for *jeque*. Garduba, notably accompanied by the previously mentioned marabout from Mecca, had great plans to challenge and fight the Spanish, and the lineages of Uled Abdala and Uled Brahen, including Garduba, gathered near the Spanish territory. Despite this apparent show of cooperation, the leader of the Uled Abdala lineage remained unhappy with Garduba, and Suárez tells us they gathered together “aunque sus jeques [estaban] todos enemistados de callada por la dicha causa, especialmente el jeque mayor que allí venía de Uled Abdala” [even though

their leaders were secretly enemies for the reason mentioned, especially the main sheikh that came with the Uled Abdala] (286). Suárez then muses this aphorism in the margin: “Amistad fingida cuán dañosa es” [How harmful a feigned friendship is], and this because the *jeque* from Uled Abdala had already secretly sent an officer to warn the Maestre de Montesa so that he could come out and punish the offender unexpectedly. The Spanish leader takes the tip and effectively does just that. During the *cabalgada* 177 prisoners were taken and 500 *moros de guerra* perished.

More details follow that demonstrate the shifty alliances and feuds of the region. While the Spanish marched back to Orán with this huge amount of prisoners they passed by the herds of the Uled Abdala. On a normal *cabalgada* the Spanish would have happily absconded with as many of these animals as possible, but here the Maestre de Montesa commands his soldiers to leave them alone in thanks for the secret cooperation. At the same time, the Muslims of the Uled Abdala sighted the marching Spanish along with all their prisoners and went to their *jeque* demanding that they go out and attack and rescue. “Mas como el je[que] amigo de Uled Abdala, que secretamente había vendido la presa y holgádose mucho de que se hubiese acertado y castigado a su enemigo, no quiso salir a los cristianos,” and this *jeque* then responded: “Dejad a los cristianos ir, que nuestro pago tenemos” [but because the sheikh friend of the Uled Abdala, which secretly had betrayed the prisoners and enjoyed greatly that (the Christians) had succeeded and punished his enemy, he did not want to go out to meet them. And he responded: “Let the Christians go, we have our pay”] (289).

Thus, again, even among the denominated *moros de guerra*, it appears that the religious war took secondary importance to questions of honor and political differences.

Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī and alternative *jihād*

In 1566 Suárez writes of an episode when the Maestre de Montesa's predecessor, Hernán Tello de Guzmán, faced a sizable Muslim force ("más de mil moros para cada cristiano," which seems to be a trope). Present in the conflict was another marabout from Mecca. This marabout stirred up the Muslim fighters and "sembr[aba] buletas de perdón escritas en papel [...] En que decían todas que el moro que muriese peleando con los cristianos llevando consigo aquella bulta iba salvo a culpa y pena de todos sus pecados, al paraíso" [he sowed indulgences of forgiveness written on paper [...] on which it said that all the Moors that died fighting the Christians and carrying an indulgence would be forgiven the guilt and pain of their sins and go to Paradise] (198). This, of course, is precisely what occurred between the popes and the crusaders of the middle ages. Thus, for both Christians and Muslims waging the holy war/*jihād* promised forgiveness of sins and eternal paradise. However, a concrete doctrine of holy war/*jihād* never existed and the terms signified different approaches according to time and place. Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī pushes for a much more dialectic approach in *Nāṣr al-Dīn*.

Today the notion of *jihād* can be a semantic quandary, especially because of political issues over the last few decades, but *jihād* should be properly defined before continuing. *Jihād* has been taken to be the term that justifies an Islamic holy war, but this, however, does not adequately nuance the term. Large and authoritative religious texts, such as the Qur'ān and the Bible, often have seemingly contradictory ways of dealing with certain concepts, and opposing arguments may often times use the same term to justify contradictory ends. While it is true that certain passages of the Qur'ān encourage fighting in the name of Islam, it is also true that many of those references denote defensive fighting (2:190-193). Other passages justify defensive fighting not only for Muslims but for Christians and Jews as well; surah 22 verse 40 reads: "And

if God had not restrained some men through some others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where the name of God is honored most, would have been razed.” In accordance with Alfaramī’s interpretation, Ibn Khaldūn also required that any Islamic leader have the “competence” of war: “Competence means that he is willing to carry out the punishments fixed by law and to go to war. [...] All of which is to enable him to fulfil his functions of protecting religion, leading the holy war against the enemy, maintaining the (religious) laws, and administering the (public) interests” (158). A contemporary of al-Ḥajarī, al-Maqqarī, asserts in his book *Nafḥ al-Tīb* (Breath of Perfumes) that participating in the holy war is better than fulfilling the *hajj* because the *hajj* only helps one person, while fighting the holy war will help thousands (Matar 83). But despite all the emphasis on competence of war, the Qur’ān 2:256 says simply: “There is no compulsion in matters of faith,” which would seem to preclude coercive tactics of any kind.

Though the notion of fighting a physical war was also present at the time of al-Ḥajarī, it appears that his interpretation of *jihād* had more to do with helping the truth be victorious, not necessarily in a bellicose sense. Another qur’ānic use of *jihād* promotes simply verifying the truth and refuting falsehood: “That he might verify the truth and prove untrue the untrue, though the guilty were averse to it” (8:8). This passage could provide the basis for al-Ḥajarī’s insistence on debate and refutation.

Notable in his text is the quantity of these debates and refutations that he includes to demonstrate the superiority of Islam over Christianity. These Christian interlocutors would have been hard pressed to find a more able opponent: al-Ḥajarī spoke Spanish and Arabic perfectly and he understood plenty of French conversation; he was deeply acquainted with the Qur’ān as well as the Bible. Nabil Matar writes in *Europe Through Arab Eyes*: “Disputation forced many

Muslims to learn about Christianity and to prepare to encounter the Other intellectually and theologically. Although such disputations were often tense and belligerent, Ibn Qāsim's attitude to the *nasara* changed when he met with Protestants in Holland" (85). Al-Ḥajarī's writing is interesting also because he was one of the first Muslim writers to describe the divided Christendom left in the wake of the Reformation. He realized that, "There were good Christians and bad Christians and the distinction was based not just on theology [...] but also on the history of their relations with Muslims" (Matar 85). Thus we again see that religious differences were not as important to Christian-Muslim relations as political, ideological, or military treatment.

Al-Ḥajarī particularly respected the Protestants in the Netherlands and even seemed to foster friendships with some of the Arabists of the time. Louis Cardaillac dedicates a chapter to the theme of Muslims and Protestants in his book *Moriscos y cristianos: Un enfrentamiento polémico (1492-1640)*. He begins the chapter with a curious reference to Francisco de Quevedo and his *Sueño del juicio final* comparing Muḥammad with Martin Luther: "Digo verdad que vi a Judas tan cerca a atreverse a entrar en juicio y a Mahoma y a Lutero" [I tell the truth that I saw Judas so close to daring to enter into judgement as well as Muhammad and Luther], and thus in the eyes of Catholics the two were equally heretical with Judas Iscariot. Of course, Islam has little in common with Protestantism, but it appears in al-Ḥajarī's text that the two had an affinity in rejecting various practices and traditions of the Catholic Church. Some of these criticisms include clerical celibacy (115);¹⁰³ the notion of indulgences and that forgiveness could be paid for;¹⁰⁴ and the accusation that Catholicism suppressed access to the Bible (125-6).

Al-Ḥajarī criticizes Catholicism in a number of ways that coincide with Protestant views, but none receives more attention than his criticisms of the papacy. He condemns the fact that the

¹⁰³ See also al-Tarjumān (450)

¹⁰⁴ See also al-Tarjumān (362).

pope had the authority to add or omit from the doctrine of the church at his caprice—highlighting the affinity that Muslims and Protestants considering their sacred texts as the only authorities in doctrinal issues. He says to a certain Catholic judge:

If God were to resurrect a Christian from the time of our lord Jesus—peace be upon him!—and then [also] a Christian of each of the centuries passed by, which are sixteen in all, each of them would tell the others that they are infidels because of the additions and omissions he would observe in the religion of the others. But sound reason judges categorically that there can be no additions or omissions in the religion of the Exalted God, like it is [in fact] the case in our religion (119).

Indeed, debate and religious refutation constitute the *raison d'être* of al-Ḥajarī's text. After the first chapter, a section on the lead books, almost all of the chapters are filled with the various debates that he conducted while passing through France and Holland. The text could be equally read as a travel account or a propagandistic argument for the triumph of Islam in Christian lands, given that in each debate he comes out having logically routed his interlocutor. Matar titles a section in his book "*Naṣr*" (victory) and elaborates a theory of discourse that many Muslims seemed to hold, consciously or unconsciously. This mentality of *naṣr* meant that Muslims always saw their religion as superior and that, eventually, it would conquer the entire globe (122). Any setback to this mentality would bring down shame on Islam—this is one reason why there are so few captivity texts from Muslim slaves compared to those of Christian slaves (i.e. Antonio de Sosa, Cervantes, etc.) even though Christendom conducted a prodigious slave market.

Along with the feeling of *naṣr*, Al-Ḥajarī proudly demonstrates that his religious debates represented his contribution to the *jihād* and the defense of Islam in the land of the Christians. In chapter 13 he writes:

The great scholar and excellent and mindful faqih, the Judge of the Muslims, Sidi isa ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Sakti, told me in Marrakesh, that refuting the falsehoods spoken by the Infidels concerning the religions is part of the *jihad*. Praise and thanks be to God, for the struggles I have waged with them! I ask the Almighty God that this book will be an *Unsheathed Sword against Every Infidel* and that its proofs will prevail.

And in almost every single one of his refutations, Islam, effectively, comes out victorious:

Whenever I exerted myself to refute the Christians during my disputes with them, I experienced a [feeling of] exaltation and exhilaration sent upon me from God, so that I was honoured in their eyes by mentioning the Unity of the Exalted God and remembering the graciousness of the Prophet. (113.)

According to him, many times he even left the Christians in awe and without a response. For example, in one instance the French woman with whom he spoke turned to her friends saying, “He has beaten me! I do not know what to answer him” (143).

Nor should we simply conclude that his proselytization never had an effect. After the woman said she was beaten al-Ḥajarī continues, “I looked at her and [noticed that] she became very glad and relaxed, as if a veil had been removed from her heart. She then turned to me with nice words. The anger and fury she had been fostering towards the Muslims had disappeared” (143). Jonathan Burton, speaking about the English anxiety of “turning Turk,” says: “Where English texts indicate that the conversions of Christians to Islam occurred for secular reasons alone, al-Ḥajarī’s narrative raises the possibility that European Christians could have been moved by theological debate” (61). Burton goes on to cite three other cases when al-Ḥajarī’s interlocutors seem to show interest in Islam or they at least soften their anti-Muslim inclinations. Perhaps the best example of this occurs in an episode when al-Ḥajarī speaks to an elderly judge

in Bordeaux who had previously lived in Constantinople. The conversation revolved around many religious themes, including the idea of redemption, and finally at one point the old man remarks, “Never have I heard anyone utter these words!” (157). A few days later, al-Ḥajarī met up with a cousin of the old man who warned him not to visit him again, “Beware! My uncle is an old man, leave him in his faith, do not convert him to Islam!” Obviously this implies that al-Ḥajarī’s words were having effect.

But while it may appear al-Ḥajarī’s proselytizing was having an effect, the only witness to these conversations was al-Ḥajarī himself, and we must raise the question as to whether or not anyone was ever convinced to convert based on the logical arguments presented in texts like al-Ḥajarī’s. What about the texts themselves? Did any Christians ever read al-Ḥajarī? Likely not. We recall that *Nāṣir al-Dīn* was compiled at the behest of one of al-Ḥajarī’s Muslim friends and it was meant for Muslim readers. The same was probably true for Christian texts—Sosa likely wrote for an exclusively Christian readership.

The polemics of these texts have many parallels with the polemics of the burgeoning Islamic empire in the first centuries after Muhammad. As noted in the first dissertation chapter, many of the polemical talking points used by Christians and Muslims in the early modern period originated during the first century of Abbasid rule.¹⁰⁵ Nasir Khan writes the following:

The appearance of strong anti-Islamic polemic in the first Abbasid century can be seen in a social climate when Christians were embracing Islam in large numbers. This development was viewed with apprehension by the Christians as their ranks diminished. To stem the tide of conversions, the Christian community produced apologetic literature against the religious claims of Islam. In Griffith’s view these apologies may appear to be

¹⁰⁵ Also see Khan (194).

addressed to the Muslims, but they were really intended for the Christian audience, to stop them from converting to Islam because they were adherents of the only true faith whose doctrines were worthy of credence (194).

We should parse this and note the similarities between what was happening to Middle Eastern Christians in the early Abbasid period and what was happening to Muslims during the *Reconquista* and the sixteenth century (the aftermath of the fall of Granada). The *Reconquista* could be seen as an equal accomplishment for Christians as the rapid spread of Islam had been for Muslims. Though the *Reconquista* took longer to achieve and covered less territory, the defeat of the final Muslim stronghold in Spain was a significant confidence booster and propaganda tool for Christians. Their victory over Granada catalyzed the desire to continue, resulting in invasions of North Africa such as that led by Cardinal Cisneros. Khan later says of the early Abbasid period: “The notion, that Muslim conquests were a temporary punishment that Christians had to endure for their sins, proved to be illusory. Islam was firmly established and it was expanding. The Muslim Empire was stable and its military successes were at their peak. Christians in their vast numbers were entering the fold of Islam, something which alarmed the apologists” (198). By substituting each reference to Muslims with Christians and vice versa, this passage may closely describe the way the Moriscos felt during the sixteenth century (though the amount of Muslims entering the Christian fold many times was a façade): Christianity was firmly established and consolidating its hegemony in Spain; Christian military successes were at their peak; and Iberian Muslims were entering the fold of Christianity in vast numbers, at least in appearance, making Muslim apologists concerned. We know that they were concerned because of the 1504 fatwā written by the Muftī of Orán that sanctioned the dissimulation of their Islam

and allowed them to supposedly convert to Christianity if it meant they could stay in their homes on the Iberian Peninsula. This fatwā circulated widely among Moriscos at the time.¹⁰⁶

What al-Ḥajarī's *Nāṣir al-Dīn* and Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía* have in common is that, to a certain extent, they both feel the need to write to their own co-religionists with a sense of urgency and out of an impulse to retain as many as possible in their respective faiths. These texts, as most polemical texts, appeal to the *habitus* of their co-religionists: they seek to reinforce the assumptions, dispositions, and reactions that their societies obliged them to believe a priori. One of Sosa's main concerns throughout his work are the *renegados*. And for al-Ḥajarī, Moriscos were either being baptized by force, converting as a façade to remain in their homes in Spain, or actually converting—which Cervantes suggests was the case in at least some Moriscos in his depiction of Ricote's family. By penning a text that reminded his co-religionists that Islam could always win the argument against Christianity, he provided hope that, although things looked bad temporarily, Islam would eventually emerge victorious.

Religious discourse rapidly devolved in the early Abbasid period between Christians and Muslims, and relations saw similar deterioration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Khan writes that during the Abbasid period “Christian apologists were in the forefront of all those who maligned Islam, and their constant hostility to Islam led to the hardening of Muslim attitude toward Christians” (195). By the early modern period, Christians and Muslims had been maligning each other for centuries, but hostile attitudes no doubt swelled during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because of new developments: not only did Christians conquer Granada, they reneged on their promise to be tolerant of Islam in the Peninsula, they force-converted Moriscos, they fought a brutal war of suppression in the Alpujarras, and finally they

¹⁰⁶ See Bernabé “*Taqiyya, niyya* y el islam de los moriscos.”

expelled any remaining Muslims from the Peninsula in 1609. Many expelled or escaped Moriscos, such as al-Ḥajarī, wrote with a certain acrimony because of their seemingly diminished ranks.

It may not be completely accurate to say that al-Ḥajarī and Antonio de Sosa did not succeed in convincing anyone; rather I would say that, if anything, they simply further convinced their co-religionists of truths they already believed—a classical example of preaching to the choir.

Conclusion

In chapter 3 of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn describes the importance of a dynasty's ability to use both "the sword" and "the pen," and this chapter has demonstrated that Christianity and Islam in the early modern period depended on both the ability to fight to defend their interests when necessary, but also to be able to use propaganda and spin circumstances in a way that supported the notion that their religion was winning. The final section of *Diálogo de los morabutos*, likely not written by Antonio de Sosa, and al-Ḥajarī's *Nāṣr al-Dīn* demonstrate that religious polemic was still a robust and useful literary genre. These writers drew from previous convention and incorporated their anecdotal experiences to fashion revelatory early modern texts that focused not so much on proselytizing, but rather on retaining co-religionists that may have desperately needed encouraging news about the state of their religion. Other early modern figures, such as Suárez and Gasparo Bruni, lived through the more bellicose aspects of the Mediterranean. Suárez documented the difficult conditions of the Orán *presidio* and revealed that, while religion played a major ideological role in the soldiers' habits, the holy war they were conducting was more of a battle for subsistence than a campaign to garner souls.

Relationships were tentative on the borders, and realpolitik played a significant role in military maneuvering, resource allocation, and survival. This was certainly the case along topographical borders such as the Mediterranean Sea and the North African front, but also on ideological and religious borders between Christians and Muslims, Catholics and Protestants.

CHAPTER IV

MEDITERRANEAN LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

*It is as if the Arabic letters ensured
the survival of the Arabic Qur'ān.¹⁰⁷*

Nabil Matar

To begin with an illustration, I would like to provide a personal anecdote. A couple years ago, I acquired an Arabic bible and took it home to read over Christmas break. An acquaintance jokingly asked, “What are you, a Muslim now?” This question raises an interesting point about the effect a language can have on a public, even if they don’t understand what is being expressed in it. What messages can the simple *perceptions* (visual or auditory) of a language, regardless of its content, send to a given public? My acquaintance had no idea it was the bible, but the mere fact that it was a text written in Arabic prompted the thought of Islam and the Qur’ān. As my friend was a Christian, the question was not one of interest or intrigue, but rather it was a

defensive question: “are you Muslim now?” was an accusation.

Other examples of the power of the optics of language, particularly Arabic, have been used in the United States recently. For example, this billboard was



¹⁰⁷ *Europe through Arab Eyes* 14.

written in Arabic during the United States' presidential election of 2016. The sign reads in English, "Donald Trump can't read this, but he is still afraid of it."¹⁰⁸ The sign makes reference to the fact that it is in Arabic, and the mere optics of the language prompts fear, insecurity, and a self-defense response—that, of course, is what the sponsors of the sign assume to be the response of Trump and his supporters. Additionally, this sign is also an offensive (as opposed to defensive) tool by its creators—the Arabic language itself is used as a propaganda tool. It signals to those who can read it that Donald Trump is unable to represent them for president because he is afraid of them. It tells Muslims that they will be the object of Trump's fear should he be elected, and therefore encourages a vote against him or face discrimination. This bag is another example, condemning



Islamophobia, saying, "This text has no other purpose than to terrify those who are afraid of the Arabic language".¹⁰⁹

These materials demonstrate a seemingly inextricable tie between the Arabic language and Islam and Islamic culture, independent of the content of the message. When a non-Arabic speaker sees the language, Islam is evoked—whether the content of the writing has anything to do with the religion or not. Even a bible written in Arabic triggers the Qur'ān, as in the case of my acquaintance. It does not seem to matter that the word "Allah" refers not only to the Islamic God, but in Arabic it is the only word for "God," and therefore does not differentiate between the Christian God or the Islamic one: and thus any bible translated into Arabic will still say "In the

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-michigan-arabic-sign-nuisance-committee-super-pac-a7368506.html>

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-arabic-tote-bag-pokes-fun-at-islamophobia/>

beginning, ‘الله’ created the heavens and the earth.” A similar problem existed in early modern Spain regarding the Moriscos and Islam on the peninsula after the conquest of Granada. After nine hundred years of inhabitation, Muslims and speakers of Arabic had left an ineffaceable mark on the geography and cultural heritage of Iberia. This left intellectuals with many difficult questions going forward: Could Islam be driven from the Peninsula without eradicating Arabic? Could the Arabic language be separated from the religion Islam? Was Arabic compatible with Christianity? Could these Arabic speakers have been converted and did their knowledge of the Arabic language inhibit conversion?

The questions that arose around the Arabic debate tell us more about the cultural complexities of language at the time. Furthermore, it is telling that, despite Antonio de Sosa’s long-windedness on many topics, he does not separate the descriptions of Algiers’ languages and currencies into different chapters of his *Topografía*, but rather he keeps them together, suggesting some continuity between economy and speech. Sosa seems to have recognized that language constituted a medium of negotiation and essential for gaining circumstantial advantages or disadvantages. A common form of communication was necessary, in the context of Sosa, to conduct economic business with the merchants of Algiers, but language served in many other contexts as a means of cultural capital.

So far this dissertation has dealt with various mechanisms of religious discourse such as polemical writings (how Christianity and Islam determined their beliefs in contrast with one another), miracles (how each claimed divine intervention on their behalf to bolster their legitimacy), and a consciousness of holy war (how each justified their secular ambitions to realize something spiritual and vice versa). This final dissertation chapter will address one more mechanism that was used in the Mediterranean to make contact between religions—language.

What polemics, miracles, holy war discourse, and language itself all have in common is that they possessed the ability to bind and to cleave; they could be used in a self-interested manner to claim superiority or in an evangelical manner to proselytize.

This final chapter will elaborate upon ways in which the languages of the Mediterranean served this dual purpose, and I will particularly be focusing on Arabic. As a framework for the importance of language I will refer to the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu. According to his work, there are many forms of capital, not just economic capital, which would include things like money, investments, property, and material wealth; but there is also cultural capital, including knowledge, skills, and other forms of education; and symbolic capital, including prestige and social standing. Bourdieu elaborates particularly on the importance of speech in the exchange of these various forms of capital:

Every speech act and, more generally, every action, is a conjuncture, an encounter between independent causal series. On the one hand, there are socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus, which imply a certain propensity to speak and to say determinate things (the expressive interest) and a certain capacity to speak, which involves both the linguistic capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically correct discourses, and the social capacity to use this competence adequately in a determinate situation (37)

All these forms of capital do not function exclusively within their own field, rather there is interplay among them, and each form of capital can be converted into capital in other fields. Arabic and Turkish constituted certain linguistic capital that stretched across all the categories mentioned above: the use of these languages constituted a skill that could be converted into capital for economic, cultural, symbolic, and religious purposes.

Examples abound throughout literature and history of how certain forms of capital were wielded for social means. Near the beginning of *War and Peace* the Russian aristocracy uses more French than Russian to reveal higher social sophistication, but by the end of the book many of these same aristocrats need to take classes to refresh their Russian because the use of their French had become a social stigma. The effects of Arabic on the Iberian Peninsula during the sixteenth century would have even greater social and legal implications, as we will see. While this chapter will focus on one's language as capital, there were many forms of capital that permitted certain benefits to its user. In *Viaje de Turquía* chapter seven we see the case of when Pedro cures the sultana. His knowledge as a doctor gains him access and respect that he would have not otherwise had as a slave. Pedro even reports that the official doctors of the sultan told him, “nosotros haremos todo lo que vos mandáis, y no se le diga nada al Baxá, que sabemos que sois letrado” [we will do everything that you command, and not say anything to the Baxá, because we know that you are educated] (199). His knowledge was also important when it came to healing other captives because saving a captive from dying had economic consequences when each captive could be redeemed for a price.

A purpose of this dissertation has been to approach the classic dichotomy of Christianity and Islam in the Mediterranean, tease out the nuances of their relationship during the early modern period, and show in which circumstances they maintained a hostile relationship as well as other instances when the cultures' religion played a subordinate role in their interaction. As I will show, Arabic marked a non-starter as well as an opportunity for outreach between Christianity and Islam. In the sixteenth century, in an effort to suppress Islam among the Moriscos, the use of Arabic was criminalized, but a short time before various Spanish clergy (and humanists across Europe) showed a great deal of curiosity in the language as a tool to

evangelize and advance other areas of secular knowledge. In describing Bourdieu's ideas, John Thompson writes that "all individuals, whatever their aims and chances of success, will share in common certain fundamental presuppositions. All participants must believe in the game they are playing, and in the value of what is at stake in the struggles they are waging" (14). On the one hand the Spanish were censoring Arabic, but in so doing they were accepting the rules of the "game" of Mediterranean religious politics and were complicit in assigning Arabic importance.

Thompson continues, "The more linguistic capital that speakers possess, the more they are able to exploit the system of differences to their advantage and thereby secure a *profit of distinction*" (18). The following chapter will present examples of religious zealots, ambassadors, renegades, slaves, and corsairs who harnessed the rules of the game and were able to navigate the complex world of the Mediterranean to achieve certain advantages.

Arabic and evangelism

While the lingua franca was useful cultural capital in Algiers and other sectors of the Mediterranean, the knowledge of Arabic became a major asset or liability in the sixteenth century. Some Christians tried to use Arabic as a constructive means to communicate with Moriscos, while others completely eschewed it, showing no tolerance whatsoever. The examples that follow will demonstrate that the relationship between Arabic and Islam could serve both positive and negative purposes; that is to say that both Muslims and Christians used the inextricable relationship between Arabic and Islam for their own means: Muslims used it to retain their cultural and religious heritage while some Christians took advantage of the link by using Arabic as a proselytizing tool, and others preferred to completely erase it from Iberian history.

Throughout the 16th century, since the fall of Granada in 1492, Arabic and debates about the language played an increasingly political role.¹¹⁰ Christian writers comment on the language in non-fictional and fictional texts, such as *Don Quixote*; and Muslims also refer to the language in their writing, mostly glorifying it and tying it to their religion and their God.¹¹¹ Soto and Starczweska explain the situation well when they say, “In this verbal battle pitting Christianity against Islam, words can be as physical as stones [...] Arabic still possessed a very powerful authoritative value [...] even if the language itself was not properly written or widely understood” (227).

In the 16th century the administrators, writers, and scholars of the Iberian Peninsula began to invest a much stronger focus on the language and its use in Spanish society. In 1492 the kingdom of Granada was conquered by Isabel and Ferdinand and initially the Muslims were granted generous concessions under the auspices of Archbishop Talavera, including the freedom to remain in their religion. However, in the century that followed, it was apparent that those preliminary concessions were a combination of the monarch’s overestimated optimism toward the prospect of peace between the religions and an underestimation of how Christians and the Catholic Church would respond to the presence of heretics living in and around them in what was considered a Christian kingdom. Everything changed when Cardinal Cisneros rose to power and in 1502, a mere ten years after the concessions were granted, and Muslims around the peninsula were being forced to convert to Christianity or face discrimination, ostracism, or expulsion.¹¹² Many were baptized against their will in mass baptisms (which were subsequently

¹¹⁰ A good reference for general information on Islam in sixteenth century Iberia is Monroe.

¹¹¹ While my point is that Arabic constituted a more intimate part of Muslim identity than any other language for Christians, it is also true that the early modern period and Humanism pressed the importance of Latin and the Classics. Carlos Alvar et. al write, “La reina Isabel mandó a Nebrija que tradujera al Castellano sus *Introductiones latinae* (1481), manual para el aprendizaje del latín, para que las monjas, que no sabían tal lengua, pudieran aprenderla.” Read 236-239 for more.

¹¹² I write about Cisneros’ religious zeal in chapter 3.

deemed illegitimate by the pope).¹¹³ Beginning in 1511 a series of prohibitions would seek to erode the existence of Arab culture and tamp down Islamic practices in the peninsula. They began prohibiting the manufacture of Morisco dress, requiring that Christians be present to sponsor Morisco weddings—supposedly to make sure nothing heretical was taking place, and denying Moriscos the ability to do their own slaughtering of animals and preparation of ethnic food. The edict of 1526 marked the harshest wave of intolerant proscriptions, but Moriscos were able to displace the implementation of it for forty years. These proscriptions did go into effect on the first of January 1567, however. Some of these are aimed directly at Arabic: speaking, reading, and writing it were prohibited; contracts written in Arabic were nullified; and books written in Arabic had to be presented within three months to be examined—if these books were found to be anodyne they could be kept for three more years (Caro Baroja 158).¹¹⁴

The attitude toward the use of the Arabic language differed among Christians and polemicists, but some recognized its use throughout the 16th century. For example, just as Muslim polemicists routinely used the bible to attack Christianity,¹¹⁵ Christians used Qur’ānic passages to prove Islam internally didn’t make sense, and thus there was an interest in learning the language to become acquainted with its writings. Padre Ignacio de las Casas promoted learning Arabic in order to read texts used by *alfaquís* in order to engage polemically with them (El Alaoui 333). Furthermore, a number of books were published regarding Arabic grammar, vocabulary and usage. Pedro de Alcalá published *Arte para ligeramente saber la lengua aráviga* and *Vocabulario arávigo en lengua castellana* (1505) in the early years of the 16th century, intended to further Talavera’s goal of evangelizing.

¹¹³ Paulinsim was at play here—an idea that was later debunked by empirical evidence, i.e., the fact that Muslims actually did not convert despite their baptism.

¹¹⁴ Márquez Villanueva is also an important resource regarding the Moriscos in the sixteenth century.

¹¹⁵ Similarly, see Al-Ḥajarī and his careful attention to Christian texts for the purpose of debate and *jihād*.

Ethical or not, what is certain is that Spanish Christians wanted to convert the Muslims at whatever cost—either by proselytization or by force—and they sought that end through a variety of avenues. While I already mentioned that under Cardinal Cisneros various groups of Muslims underwent forced baptisms, the Church did try less aggressive ways of preaching Christianity. Soto and Starczewska have researched the attempt to reach out to the Arabic speakers of the Peninsula under the direction of Archdeacon Martín García. In 1515 García became bishop of Barcelona and worked with the Muslims of Aragon for six years until his death in 1521.¹¹⁶ While archdeacon García had some knowledge of Arabic, he also recruited other Arabic speakers to assist him (SS¹¹⁷ 199). Two of these recruits, Juan Andrés (a converted Morisco *alfaquí*) and Joan Martín de Figuerola, adopted the strategy of including Arabic phrases and qur’ānic material in their writings. It is difficult to tell if they ever employed these phrases and passages in their spoken sermons. Seemingly the intended effect was to show that, with the right usage and contextualization of the qur’ānic passages, the Qur’ān did not necessarily differ with Christianity, and this, I surmise, was intended to make the voluntary transition to Christianity more enticing and seamless.

While it may have made sense to try to evangelize the Moriscos by approaching them in the language they felt more comfortable listening to, this also presented various difficulties to Christians unfamiliar with the cultural unwritten rules that accompany the use of Arabic in formal and religious settings. Proper pronunciation of Arabic is incredibly important, especially when reciting the Qur’ān or ḥadīths. It would be a major mark against one’s credibility in the case of mispronunciation. Arabic grammar even has a special word referring to the correct usage

¹¹⁶ Mandatory conversion of Muslims to Christianity took place in Aragon in 1526.

¹¹⁷ SS = Soto and Starczewska. All the Arabic speakers recruited were: Lope de Obregón, Juan Andrés, Joan Martín de Figuerola, and Bernardo Pérez de Chinchón.

of grammatical case markings *al-i 'rāb*, and another word referring to proper recitation, *tajwīd*. According to a treatise preserved from the Aragon communities, incorrect pronunciation of the Arabic phonemes could ruin sacred words and jeopardize the benefits of prayer (SS 207). As seen in the previous dissertation chapter, Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī also needed to pay special attention to his recitations and pronunciation. He states in chapter thirteen of his *Nāṣr al-Dīn* that if he ever made a mistake while reciting he would hear mysterious taps on the wall or the door from his personal jinni, reprehending him for his carelessness. Martín de Figuerola, on the same subject, relates an anecdote showing just how alert some Muslims' attention to detail was. Figuerola took a Qur'ān with him to a mosque for the purpose of debating with an *alfaquí*. The service was still going on when Figuerola arrived and so, while he waited, he paged through the Qur'ān, looking for verses to use in his debate. So distracted was the *alfaquí* who was preaching that, after the service, another Muslim commented to Figuerola that the *alfaquí* had made forty-three errors in his recitations. One of the worshiping Muslims actually took the time to count the errors!¹¹⁸

If the *alfaquí* made so many errors and those errors were considered to be irritating to a worshiper, how much more so would a Christian using Arabic need to pay attention to his pronunciation in attempts to bridge the cultural gap?

Another difficulty for Christians approaching Arabic speakers in an attempt to evangelize was what García-Arenal describes as the “untranslatability of faith.” Could Christianity even be properly translated into Arabic without distorting the concepts or drawing false parallels between concepts that were not the same but *prima fascia* seemed close enough? For example, in composing the mentioned *Arte para ligeramente saber la lengua áraviga*, Pedro de Alcalá had

¹¹⁸ This anecdote is recorded in SS 210-211.

difficulty with the translation of “confession.” There was no Arabic equivalent of the word and no parallel Islamic practice: “Alcalá therefore spent many pages discussing the subject, explaining the confession was a kind of spiritual cleansing with parallels in the Muslim *guadoc* or ritual cleansing of purification” (“The Religious Identity...” 503). Other such Christian concepts were “baptism,” “Holy Spirit,” and “redemption.” He used use words such as *miḥrāb* for altar, *faqīh* for priest, or *ṣalāt* for mass. But some, such as the Jesuit Padre Ignacio de las Casas, thought that drawing parallels between words would muddle the concepts that the Christians wanted to convey. He thought that “neophytes might think that equivalent terms covered equivalent or similar practices, *i.e.* that because the terminology was the same, the practices and beliefs could not be much different” (506).

We must pause for a moment on Ignacio de las Casas as one of the last and most ardent advocates for a “soft conversion” of the Moriscos. This was a dream he would not see come true, but he also would not see the utter opposite come to fruition either because he died in 1608 before the proclamations of expulsion. Las Casas, from a Morisco family himself, was realistic, rational, and even scientific about how to approach the problem of converting the Moriscos.¹¹⁹ He observed that the population was not homogeneous and he separated Moriscos into four separate categories (based on locations). Those in Castile and Aragón should be dealt with differently because those of Castile already dressed the same as Christians and basically lived their lives indistinguishably from them; and in Aragón “la mayoría conocía sus oraciones en árabe pero sin entenderlas, según las Casas, ‘como nuestros viejos y viejas rezan en latín lo que ni entienden ni saben’” [the majority knew their Arabic prayers but didn’t understand them, according to las Casas, ‘just as our old pray in Latin without understanding or knowing (what is

¹¹⁹ Most of the following details come from El Alaoui, “Ignacio de las Casas, jesuita y morisco.” See also Barrios Aguilera.

being said)'] (321). The Moriscos of Valencia and Granada were a different story, however, and they would not be so easy to assimilate. In fact, while it is true that the Morisco population was heterogeneous in nature, las Casas recognized the unfortunate reality:

en realidad, desde el levantamiento de las Alpujarras, ya no se hacía una distinción entre el “buen morisco” y el “morisco malo” sino que se juzgaba que su estado era ‘lastimosísimo y miserabilísimo así por lo que dellos sienten y dizen los demás christianos como por lo que en esto pasa con verdad, [...] que son todos moros y más observantes de su secta que los que están aliende el mar libremente en ella’ (322).

[in reality, since the Alpujarras Uprising, there no longer was any distinction between the “good Morisco” and the “bad Morisco,” but rather the truth is that their condition is “very lamentable and miserable because of how the Christians feel about them and what they say about them, [...] which is that they are all Moors and even more observant of their sect than those that practice it freely across the sea.”]

Despite the reality, las Casas did not give up. Instead he took a look at what was currently being done, then made suggestions on how to improve. The strategy at the time consisted of converting the Moriscos, making them forget their rituals, customs, and religious ceremonies, and control their movements to avoid uprisings and possible alliances with outsiders (323). Las Casas realized that no one is won over to a cause by being controlled, and thus he heavily advocated that use of cultural and linguistic capital to attract Moriscos. His suggestions were an peaceful approach on the one hand, but on the other he refused to compromise on doctrine. He pushed for respect for the Moriscos and education for them based on evangelization; he believed that seminarians should learn Arabic; and he emphasized the fact that it was the next generation, the children, which should be the focus of evangelization and Christian upbringing. And despite the

peaceful approach, he also recommended that clergy engage and refute the *alfaquís*, again, by learning Arabic and formulating ways to counter their teachings.

Not everyone agreed that the use and proliferation of Arabic for evangelizing was a good idea, but rather that it was risky business. Soto and Starczewska write that “such a use of the Arabic language and Islamic sources as tools to legitimate this anti-Islamic enterprise created a proximity that proved far from comfortable, in fact producing a tension that would manifest itself in an unexpected dependency on the opponent” (200). That is to say that using the Qur’ān in sermons was not necessarily well taken by other Christians, despite the good intentions that Juan Andrés and Figuerola may have had. The pushback by the higher power of the Church can be seen in this: materials such as Martín García’s *Sermones*, Martín de Figuerola’s *Lumbre de fe contra la secta mahometana y el alcoran*, and Juan Andrés’ *Confusión o confutación de la secta Mahomética y del Alcoran* were subject to censorship by the Inquisition later in the sixteenth century because they could be used as materials for informing one about Islam (SS 209 n. 34).

While there were a handful of Christians who saw Arabic as an opportunity to reach out, some considered it absurd to try to approach the Moriscos by using the language, and instead thought that they needed to eradicate it altogether if they were to coexist. For some scholars, Arabic had already sullied much of what was considered Spanish culture, and physical evidence of Arab culture and the Arabic language speckled the map when examining the etymologies of geographic places and names (López Fadul 111). López Fadul cites the Valencian Rafael Martí de Viciano (1502-1574) praising the Valencian language, as saying, “in the kingdom of Valencia two thirds [of the people] were Hagarenes that spoke Arabic and to this day one-third are converted [Muslims] who still speak Arabic,” and that, unlike Castilian, “never has the Valencian language taken ... any Arabic word”; “on the contrary, the Arabic language being

such an enemy of Christianity, it abhors it” (112). Viciano rightly states that it was in Valencia that pockets of Arabic-speaking Moriscos were the densest, and despite that, the Valencian language had resisted all Arabic influence. He cautioned that speakers of Castilian should stymie the contamination of their own language while they still could. Juan de Valdés admits in his *Diálogo de la lengua* about Castilian precisely what Viciano asserts:

En este medio tiempo no pudieron tanto conservar los españoles la pureza de su lengua que no se mezclase con ella mucho de la áraviga, porque, aunque recobravan los reinos, las cibdades, villas y lugares, como todavía quedaban en ellos muchos moros por moradores, quedávanse con su lengua, y aviendo durado en ella hasta que pocos años ha, el emperador les mandó se tornassen cristianos o se saliessen de España, conversando entre nosotros annos pegado muchos de sus vocablos (58).

[During this interval, the Spaniards were unable to preserve the purity of their language from having much of the Arabic mix with it. For although they recovered the kingdoms, cities, towns and villages, the many Moors who remained living within them kept their language so that it lasted until a few years ago, when the emperor ordered them to become Christians or leave Spain, and speaking among us they have stuck us with many of their words.]¹²⁰

These scholars preferred that Arabic be “purified” from Castilian, and that Spanish scholars should follow the humanist trends of focusing on Latin, Greek, and Hebrew—the languages of the Bible.¹²¹

Pedro de Valencia’s *Tratado acerca de los moriscos de España* is a text that brazenly articulates the xenophobia that the *Pragmática* of 1567 would eventually codify. His comments,

¹²⁰ Translation from Fuchs 28.

¹²¹ The Bible, of course, was not written in Latin, but most bibles at the time were Latin translations.

reported by Mercedes Alcalá Galán in a similar context, seem to demonstrate the point of the billboard on the first page of this chapter:

La tercera [cosa que nos hace enemigos] es la diversidad de la lengua, y de la letra, y forma de escribir en todo diferente y aun contraria, pues nosotros y todos los europeos procedemos escribiendo el renglón de la mano yzquierda a la derecha, y el suyo viene al contrario, como hilera de soldados que marcha a encontrarse y combatir. Es tan propio para causar discordia y disensión la diversidad de lenguaje, que escogió Dios este medio para estorbar la concordia, con que para mal se había juntados los edificadores de la Torre de Babel. Ellos son de una lengua para conocerse, y comunicarse de secreto, y estar de acuerdo para conjuración, y para apartarse, y discordar de nosotros, y tener contrario corazón (78).

[The third (thing that makes us enemies) is the difference of language and of letters, and the different and even contrary form of writing, for we and all Europeans proceed writing from the left-hand side to the right, and theirs goes contrarily, like a string of soldiers that march to confrontation and combat. It is inherent that this diversity of language is to cause discord and dissention, because God chose this method in order to hinder concord, for it was with bad intentions that the builders of the Tower of Babel came together. They have a language to know each other, and to communicate in secret, and to come together in conspiracy, and to separate themselves, and disagree with us, and to have contrary hearts.]

These comments suggest that Arabic speakers could be praising Jesus Christ, composing sacred Christian poetry, or fervently reciting passages of the Bible, and yet it would be unacceptable because of the vehicle of the utterance. It was not the content that mattered but the language. For

those in favor of whitewashing Arabic from the peninsula, the language could not be separated from the Islam or the Arab ethnicity.

Despite the number of prohibitions of Arabic, the presence of the language did not by any means disappear from the Peninsula. Before the two Arabic grammar books published by Pedro de Alcalá mentioned earlier, Antonio de Nebrija declared in his 1492 *Gramática de la lengua castellana* that Arabic was important in the “establishment of sovereignty” (Fuchs 24). Barbara Fuchs makes an interesting observation from the *Quixote* about the impossibility of separating Arabic influence on Castilian. After Don Quixote is defeated in the second part, the duo considers embarking on a pastoral adventure. Don Quixote mentions the sound of *albogues*, which Sancho says he has never heard of. Don Quixote then goes on to catalogue a whole series of Arabic words adopted by Spanish:

y este nombre *albogues* es morisco, como lo son todos aquellos que en nuestra lengua castellana comienzan an *al*, conviene a saber: *almohaza*, *almorzar*, *alhombra*, *alguacil*, *alhucema*, *almacén*, *alcancía*, y otros semejantes, que deben ser pocos más, y solos tres tiene nuestra lengua que son moriscos y acaban en *i*, y son *borceguí*, *zaquizamí*, y *maravedí*. *Alhelí* y *alfaquí*, tanto por el *al* primero como por el *i* en que acaban, son conocidos por arábigos (1062).

[and this word *albogues* is of Morisco origin, as are all the words in our language that begin with *al*, such as *almohaza*, *almorzar*, *alhombra*, *alguacil*, *alhucema*, *almacén*, *alcancía* and other like them, of which there can't be many more; and there are just three words in our language that are Morisco ones and end in *í*, and they are *borceguí*, *zaquizamí*, and *maravedí*. *Alhelí* and *alfaquí* are recognizable as Arabic words both by their initial *al* and by their final *i*].

Fuchs points out that “our knight never calls the objects he describes Moorish: all that is Moorish is the *nombre*—the word” (26), and thus we see another example of the impact a language can have even when it’s divorced from the content of the message. These Arabic influences would not easily be purged, as the purificationist Juan de Valdés acrimoniously admits:

Y avéis de saber que, aunque para muchas cosas de las que nombramos con vocablos arávigos tenemos vocablos latinos, el uso nos ha hecho tener por mejores los arávigos que los latinos; y de aquí es que dezimos antes alhombra que tapete, y tenemos por mejor vocablo alcrevite que piedra sufre, y azeite que olio; y, si mal no m’engaño, hallaréis que para solas aquellas cosas que avemos tomado de los moros, no tenemos otros vocablos con qué nombrarlas sino los arávigos que ellos mesmos con las mesmas cosas nos introduxeron (58).

[You should know that for many of the things that we name with Arabic words we have Latin words; custom has made us prefer the Arabic to the Latin, and thus we say *alfombra* rather than *tapete*, and consider *alcrevite* a better term than *piedra sufre*, and *azeite* than *olio*; and, if I am not mistaken, you will find that it is only for those things that we have taken from the Moors that we do not have any other words to name them than the Arabic ones with which they introduced those things to us.]¹²²

Don Quixote’s thoughts corroborate what Bourdieu writes: “By structuring the perception which social agents have of the social world, the act of naming helps to establish the structure of this world” (105). This preference for the Arabic words constitutes something like a performative act that recognizes the importance of the Arab legacy and circumscribes it in the Castilian language.

¹²² Translation from Fuchs 28.

As is generally known, the idea of “purification” and “cleansing” was common in Spain since the fourteenth century and the notion of *limpieza de sangre*. Arabic stood at the center of this issue. One more anecdote from Martín de Figuerola illustrates the duality that on the one hand Christians worked to convert their Muslim compatriots, but on the other hand they never let them feel welcome:

Despite the emphasis [Figuerola] places on his preaching activities and engagement in polemics against Islam, very often he seems keener on expulsion, or forced rather than voluntary conversion. For example, on one occasion, the son of the *alfaquí* of one of the mosques where he goes to preach says that he would rather go to Africa than have to put up with Figuerola every Friday. In response, Figuerola writes that ‘I told him to go ahead and do it,’ and later on, ‘The sooner our land is cleaned up the better’ (SS 210).

Figuerola, one of the men entrusted to do the evangelizing, also welcomed the idea of simply getting rid of the problem instead of dealing with it. To give him some credit, so many attempts and failures likely eroded his hope that the Moriscos would ever assimilate, and eventually he was resigned to reality.

Al-Ḥajarī and Arabic

Of the prominent Morisco writings we have, few show such endearment and honor to the Arabic language as Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī’s *Nāṣr al-Dīn*. It’s not surprising that al-Ḥajarī puts so much emphasis on language—he was, after all, a translator both in Spain and Morocco as well as an ambassador around the Mediterranean. In his text I will focus on a few instances: one when his ability to speak, read, and write Arabic gains him acceptance, another when he recites

the quintessential Islamic confession, and another when he speaks of the importance of Arabic as the official language of Islam.

Al-Ḥajarī was a Morisco who escaped from Spain in 1599, about a decade before the Moriscos were officially expelled from the country and dispersed among the Islamic Mediterranean territories. During this time the Moriscos underwent extreme religious persecution. They had to hide any remnants of their Islamic heritage, including the use of Arabic. A revealing example of how many families were forced to keep Arabic clandestine can be found in the writings of another Morisco from that time period, Muhammad ibn ‘abd al-Raḥī. In the following quote he remembered how his father surreptitiously taught him Arabic when he would come home from Christian schools by comparing the Spanish letters to those of Arabic. He says, “When he finished [teaching me the alphabet], he asked me not to tell anyone, not even my mother, my [paternal] aunt, my brother, or the rest of our relatives. He told me not to tell a single soul, and he was quite insistent” (195). Of course he had to be “quite insistent” because the most innocent slip-up by the youngster would have meant possible burning at the stake for their whole family if they were found out.

After what al-Ḥajarī recounted as a quite entertaining and novelistic escape from the Spanish territory in Morocco, eventually he and his travel companion arrived to Muslim controlled territory. Crossing the countryside, some farmers approached them on horses while wielding weapons. Al-Ḥajarī and his companion cried out: “We are Muslims!” and immediately they were treated as countrymen, and the farmers even gave them food. Later, they continued on to the nearby town of Azammur and were approached by the military governor of the town, who asked them many questions regarding Islam in order to procure their sincerity. Then he even asked if al-Ḥajarī could write in Arabic, which he could, and the governor made him write

something to prove it. “What should I write?” asked al-Ḥajarī. “Whatever you like!” responded the governor. He went on to write quote “what was inspired to me by the Exalted God.”

Whatever he wrote must have been impressive, because shortly after he was summoned to the court of Sultan Moulay Ahmad.

When he arrived at the Sultan’s court in Marrakesh he records the following:

he graciously permitted me to enter his court on the day of the public audience. After I had started to say in a loud voice the words I had chosen to say in his lofty presence, all the people present remained silent as if [I was pronouncing] a Friday sermon. The Sultan was delighted and asked: “How can there be someone in Al-Andalus who speaks Arabic this way, as this is the speech of religious scholars?” All the old Andalusians were delighted by this. I was granted safety and prosperity in that country until Moulay Ahmad died (102).

It was al-Ḥajarī’s Arabic proficiency that provided him such prestigious treatment: it allowed him safe welcome by the farmers, he was credited as trustworthy by the military governor of the town, he was summoned to the Moroccan court, and finally he was praised by the Sultan himself because of his linguistic and rhetorical abilities.

Another episode of praise for al-Ḥajarī’s Arabic occurred just before making it to Marrakesh. When he and the servant went to the markets of Dukkala, al-Ḥajarī was met with suspicion by the Muslim buyers and sellers. Various Muslims surrounded him on all sides and forced him to recite the *shahada*. After doing so, al-Ḥajarī writes, “They [the Muslims] said, ‘By God, he said it even better than we do!’” (100). And they let him be.

These two episodes show the importance of proving one’s religion by way of language and creed. Arabic served al-Ḥajarī as his passport, his permission of passage into the Islamic

world from the Christian one. However, he also had to say the *right* words in Arabic—when he was surrounded in the market he obviously would have been communicating in Arabic with everyone that he had contact with, but it wasn't until he could majestically recite the *shahada* that his fellow Muslims accepted him and gained peace of mind, welcoming him into their country and their religion. Additionally, his ability to write Arabic, as well as translate it into Spanish made him immediately useful and valuable to the Moroccan court.

These anecdotes allow us to frame al-Ḥajarī's ability to speak and write Arabic as an important cultural and religious capital in the early modern period. Al-Ḥajarī's knowledge of Islam and abilities with Arabic and as a translator immediately endowed him with a great deal of cultural capital, in the sense that he was proficient in Arabic; symbolic capital because he quickly became a translator in the Moroccan court as well as an ambassador to France and Holland; and religious capital because, according to his by-standers, he could pronounce the *shahada* better than they, and they respected him for it.

This knowledge of Arabic not only produced various forms of cultural and symbolic capital for al-Ḥajarī, a Muslim, but it also applied to non-Muslims. While serving in the court of Moulay Zaydan a Dutch ambassador arrived, and al-Ḥajarī was ordered to translate some of his papers into Arabic. In doing so he noticed that the ambassador had some other books written in Arabic. True to his observant and curious nature, al-Ḥajarī then asked him where he had gotten them and how he had learned to speak Arabic. The ambassador replied that he was earlier commissioned in the East Indian islands, and he noted that thousands of these islands belonged to the Muslims. Al-Ḥajarī was astonished and impressed when he said this. Generally he was very suspicious of what Christians would tell him—the mere fact that Christians were Christians made them unreliable. But, despite the fact that this Dutch ambassador was Christian, al-Ḥajarī

noted various reasons that persuaded him that the ambassador was telling the truth. The first reason he mentions is the following: “First of all, that he reads and writes Arabic” (181).

Therefore, al-Ḥajarī attributed the Dutch Christian more credibility by the mere fact that he could read and write Arabic.

The last passage from al-Ḥajarī that I want to discuss is when he is in the Netherlands waiting for passage back to Morocco. He says that some scholars approached him, brought him a book in Arabic, and asked him to read it to them. When he began to tell them what the book was about, the scholars were astonished saying: “This book was brought along from such and such an island in the East Indies which is only reached by a long sea voyage [...] Between your country and that island there is a very long distance but you understand the contents of the book! This means that Arabic is one, general language in every country” (198). They go on to talk about how all the countries of Europe speak different languages—the French speak French, the Dutch, Dutch, the English, English—and al-Ḥajarī is then able to conclude that, because of its unity among so vast a territory, Arabic was special. He says, “it is a blessed language. Whoever speaks it mentions God perforce.” And if speaking Arabic necessarily mentions God, the opposite goes for Spanish. One Andalusian acquaintance of al-Ḥajarī used to tell him: “There is no Arabic without God and no Spanish without Satan” (198).

Leo Africanus

Al-Ḥajarī crossed into Morocco and became a translator and diplomat in the court of Mulay Zaydan at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but Al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Wazzān al-Fāsī (Leo Africanus) served a similar purpose one hundred years earlier.¹²³ Leo was

¹²³ In chapter 1 I describe some biographical details and a brief overview of Leo Africanus’ *Description of Africa*, 5.

born in Granada around 1494 and his family passed into Morocco while he was still very young. In Fez he studied and began his diplomatic career. With his uncle he traveled to Timbuktu and other areas of “The Land of the Blacks,” as the sub-Sahara was called. When a little older he traveled to Istanbul and spent time in Cairo, perhaps making the *hajj* to Mecca. But in 1518 he boarded a ship to return to Fez and was captured by Christian corsairs. First he was taken to Malta like many other captives and slaves, but once his knowledge and abilities were discovered he was sent on to Rome. His knowledge and adroitness with languages not only saved him from the likely task of galley rowing, but they provided him the prestige to become a client of the pope himself, as well as various other prominent men of Rome.

As in the case of al-Ḥajarī, Leo Africanus provides a bevy of biographical details throughout his book *Description of Africa*.¹²⁴ This work along with Natalie Davis’ *Trickster Travels* shows how important Leo’s knowledge of Arabic and Islamic culture were to his success in Italy, as many of the projects he undertook while there had to do with languages. Even before his arrival to Europe he notes the importance of the proper usage of the sacred language in the Maghreb.

Davis picks up on a fascinating passage that Leo writes about passing through Ummelhefen (Umm al-‘afan), in the sixth part of *Description* that covers Numidia.¹²⁵ Here was a castle built and occupied by “la guardia de ciertos señores árabes” and no one was allowed to pass without paying four ducats per camel and four ducats per Jew. On one occasion, Leo was traveling with a group of fourteen Jews and, when the guard asked how many Jews there were among them, he, naturally, didn’t count himself. The guards then detained two of them and, in order to make sure they were truly Muslims, forced them to say various Muslim prayers. Upon

¹²⁴ The edition I use of *Description* is the Spanish edition, edited by Serafin Fanjul.

¹²⁵ The section is noted in Davis 46 and Africano 271.

doing so they were excused and allowed to pass. Ordinarily, as Davis notes, on diplomatic missions Leo would have carried a letter of safe conduct drawn up by his dignitary, but in this case when he failed to have the document, his language sufficed.

As seen above in al-Ḥajārī's impressive recitation of the *shahada* ("By God, he said it even better than we do!"), the quality of one's rhetorical and expressive Arabic was also important to Leo Africanus. Davis picks up on another occasion when Leo is in the court of the sultan of Fez and an ambassador from a chieftain from an Anti-Atlas population visits, bringing many gifts including one hundred black slaves, ten eunuchs, twelve camels, a giraffe, ten ostriches, sixteen civet cats, ambergris, musk, six hundred oryx skins, dates, Ethiopian pepper, and more.¹²⁶ In addition to these material gifts, the ambassador also brought along a letter, which the ambassador himself read for the court. Leo describes the ambassador as "un negro gordo y bajo, de lengua y modales verdaderamente bárbaros" [a short, fat black, and barbarous in his language], and the letter that he read was "toscamente escrita" [rustically written]. It seems like all those present shared in making fun of the ambassador: "aunque más burdas fueron sus palabras al rey, quien, como todos los presentes, no podía contener la risa, aunque la disimulaban tapándose la boca con la mano o con un borde de la vestimenta" [although his words were clumsy to the king, he, like everyone present, could not contain his laughter, but they hid it by covering their mouths with their hands or the edge of their clothing]. Despite this bit of fun, the ambassador was treated courteously during his visit, but the anecdote provides another insight into the importance of language. In such highly ritualized proceedings speaking Arabic correctly could make a great impression, or not.

¹²⁶ Davis recounts the incident on 50-51, Zhiri mentions it on 41, and it appears in the *Description* on 120.

In North Africa Leo's Arabic was a natural part of his life and it could be used to his advantage in diplomatic settings, but during his years in Italy his Arabic made him a man of curiosity among the church elites. Not only did he personally form a relationship with Pope Leo X (from whom he acquired his new name), but he also befriended a variety of church officials and carried out a variety of translation work for them. One of these was Alberto Pio, prince of Carpi, who served as a diplomat with various European dignitaries including King Louis XII, Emperor Maximilian, and François I. Pio was also a humanist and lover of languages. Leo transcribed and Arabic translation of Saint Paul's Epistles and may also have translated or summarize works by Averroes, Avicenna, and al-Ghazali (Davis 69).

The other most important acquaintance that Leo made was with Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo, who became one of his godfathers upon conversion. Davis notes the many interests of the erudite humanist Viterbo—a poet and scholar of Plato and the Neoplatonists, along with curiosity in working with Hebrew and Arabic (70). “As for Islam,” writes Davis, “Egidio thought that Muslim books, though filled with impieties, could in Christian hands inspire to pious study and the understanding of divine prophesy” (71). In 1518 Viterbo began some preliminary practice with Arabic writing out the letters, but when Leo (al-Wazzān at the time) arrived to Rome he shortly after became his Arabic tutor. Later in 1525 Leo lived at Viterbo's residence and revised and commented on a Latin translation of the Qur'ān that he had acquired in a 1518 visit to Spain.¹²⁷ Viterbo was an active participant in the humanist societies of Renaissance Rome and, while Davis says Leo may not officially been adopted into this small society of elites, there were at least three other men that used his knowledge of Arabic and Islam for their research interests. Angelo Colocci intended to write a volume on weights and measurements as a key to

¹²⁷ This supports Antonio de Sosa's claim in the *Topografía* that many of the libraries of Spain had Latin translations of the Qur'ān.

God's organization of the world, and Leo would have been able to provide insight about these figures in North Africa as well as how symbolic numbers could be interpreted in Arabic (Davis 72). Pierio Valeriano was composing a *Hieroglyphica* and was interested in discussing animal symbolism and ancient Egyptian lore. And finally the renowned historian Paolo Giovio wanted to write about Sultan Selim's wars with Persia and the conquest of Mamluk Egypt.

It seems that the sack of Rome in 1527 provided an opportunity for Leo Africanus to return to *Dār al-Islām* and, other than a possible reference to him living in Tunis in 1532, no more information has surfaced about him. But the details of his time in Italy tell us much about the curiosity that Europeans had in the Arabic language. This was roughly the same time period that Martín García and others were trying to use Arabic to convert Moriscos in Spain.

An interesting detail that Davis shares in a section about how Leo would have been able to improve his Latin and Italian skills while at the Vatican was that the Vatican librarian seemed not to object to the fact that Leo would write his name in Arabic on the manuscripts he borrowed. Before returning them he would write: "Praise to God. Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Fasi, the servant of God, has read this book" (59). Davis does not elaborate more upon why he would do this. Was this an act of Islamic appropriation? A form of symbolic, intellectual conquest in which Leo, instead of staking a standard in the ground, left his mark, in Arabic, on a book written in Latin? As seen above in the section about al-Ḥajarī, the Arabic language had a unique link with God—thus, was his placement of Arabic on those manuscripts to demonstrate some kind of religious superiority? And why did he include his name along with the inscription? Given that we lose the trace of Leo Africanus after 1523, I believe it likely that he never converted to Christianity in the first place. Rather he, like many humanists, was an information addict. Perhaps when he was first captured he used his skills to keep himself safe, but upon

arriving to Rome and seeing the endless opportunities for study he played along until things became dangerous again—absconding back to North Africa in 1527. His manner of leaving inscriptions upon infidel texts may have been a subtle way of documenting Islamic *naṣr* (victory).

Arabic and converting

As Leo Africanus used his linguistic capital to gain prestigious friends and audiences during his bout in Christian lands, so also could many Christian renegades that were taken captive to Algiers or Constantinople use their linguistic abilities to improve their situations. Bartolome and Lucile Bennassar describe the circumstances of many renegades in their book *Los cristianos de Alá*. They studied nearly 1,600 cases altogether, but nine hundred ten cases had to do with abjurations. Of those cases, eight hundred twelve renegades, that is, eighty-nine percent, pronounced the *shahada* upon converting (350). But the *shahada* wasn't something that one could recite in any language: it had to be in Arabic. Along with the *shahada*, renegades many times learned other *ṣalās*, or prayers, and *ṣuras* from the Qur'ān, and they would recite these while praying at local mosques. The level of understanding that the renegades had of what exactly they were saying varied from a perfect understanding of the words, to even the complete opposite. Some renegades, such as Juan Rodelgas, understood the precise meaning of the *shahada*, saying, “Solo hay un Dios y luego Mahoma su mensajero” [There is only one God and then Muhammad his prophet]. However, others don't seem to have a clue, according to the Bennassar's research. The Portuguese renegade Villanova de Algarbe translated it as, “Mahoma es el mayor Dios que haya en el cielo” [Muhammad is the greatest God in heaven], and Antoni Jordi from Mallorca translates it as, “Mahoma resucitará” [Muhammad will come again].

The Bennassar research is based upon Inquisitional interrogations and confessions of renegades when they returned from Muslim lands. This was standard procedure for a couple reasons: they needed to know if the subject could be allowed back into Christian society and they wanted to know details about the enemy—both military movements as well as customs of the Other.¹²⁸ We must also be wary of everything the confessing renegades said because they likely softened their stories in order to appear as if they had never become acclimated to their Arab surroundings. Gutierre Pantoja, who will be discussed shortly, was kept for four years in a Venetian castle before allowed to return, under constant surveillance, to his native Spain.

Juan Rodelgas, mentioned above, is an example of a non-Muslim using Arabic to his advantage. He proves to be incredibly astute at strategically using the Islamic religious capital that he accumulated over the course of his captivity. We are told that he even learned to blaspheme in Arabic, saying “por Mahoma” in order to quell the suspicion of his captors and make him sound like one of them. He was taken captive and converted to Islam in Algiers. Later, he joined a corsair expedition with arraez Mami, and they found themselves fleeing from other Christian corsairs. After a confusing series of events, Rodelgas arrived in Salé—a city full of Moriscos from Hornachos that had been expelled a decade before. While in Salé, Rodelgas made it abundantly known to those he came in contact with that he had converted to Islam five years earlier, even though it had not yet been five years, effectively making them believe that he was a seasoned Muslim, not a new convert. He did this *knowing* that new converts were suspicious to the locals and many times ended up in the service of the king of Morocco—this knowledge gained him privilege that he would not have otherwise acquired, and he used it to his advantage.

¹²⁸ See Matar (44-45).

While Rodelgas used his acquisition of Arabic to his advantage, another renegade studied by the Bennassars, Gutierre Pantoja, denied any knowledge of the language in order to achieve his eventual absolution from the Inquisition. Gutierre, from a Segovian family of hidalgos, was taken to Algiers as a captive in 1620 and quickly forwarded to Constantinople as a gift to the *Gran Turco*—he would not suffer the same fate as most European captives. He was assigned two other renegades, who convinced him also to convert to Islam, and began his path through the sultan's harem. In this case it would be more accurate to use the word “seraglio” (Sp: *serrallo*), which denotes a broader space of imperial residence, not simply what is commonly thought of as the “harem” where the sultan's concubines resided. He served twelve years in the seraglio, passing through the four rooms that composed it. After this the sultan married him to another renegade, Alima, from Moscow. The two had thirteen children together, although Gutierre also revealed that none of them survived the age of seven. Eventually, he solicited a post in the navy and became captain of a ship and eventually an entire fleet. When asked by the inquisitors if he had ever taken any Christian captives, he truthfully admitted that he had taken a countless number.¹²⁹

Despite serving almost fifty years among the highest levels of the Turkish Empire and having a number of implausibilities in his backstory (the Bennassars write: ¡Cuántas inverosimilitudes en su relato!), the Inquisition eventually absolves him. Perhaps the most brazen implausibility, according to the Bennassars, is Gutierre's persistence that after so many years he never learned the Arabic language. When asked about the process by which he converted, Gutierre describes the words he was obliged to speak in Arabic as well as the prayers he was required to say each time he went to the mosque. Always maintaining that he only said

¹²⁹ The story of Gutierre Pantoja can found found in Bennassar (141-163).

these words to play a part and that he never accepted them in his heart, he stated that a eunuch made him raise his index finger and say: “*Vizmila y raman y raim alavir y peyganver*,” which, in Gutierre’s translation, meant: “En el nombre de Dios verdadero y todopoderoso, creador de todas las cosas y de su profeta, que se entiende que es Mahoma” [In the name of the true and all-powerful God, creator of all things, and his prophet, known as Muhammad] (Bennassar 143). Gutierre’s translation, of course, is a bit off; the words above actually read *Bismillah al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*, in the name of God the benevolent and merciful, and the Bennassars say that the next word is possibly *al-Qahir*, meaning the omnipotent, and finally the word *peygamber*, Turkish for prophet. Later the Bennassars explain the process of advancement through the seraglio saying that in the first room, where trainees stayed for six years, they learned the basics such as reading and writing; in the second room they the learned archery, Turkish, and Arabic (Bennassar 148). It is still unclear how pupils were supposed to learn reading and writing in the first room for so many years and *then* learn Turkish and Arabic in the second room. Regardless, these details make it practically impossible to advance so far and be unable to manage these languages.

Before concluding the chapter the Bennassars refer to Gutierre as a “falsario, un tanto abúlico, un personaje confuso, favorecido largo tiempo por la fortuna e incapaz de plantar cara a la adversidad” [a falsifier, a bit apathetic, a confused character, long favored by fortune, and incapable of facing up to adversity] (162). Some of this assessment may be valid, but other parts are unclear. Gutierre was certainly a *falsario*: he was zealous about attending the mosque after converting so that he’d pass as a good Muslim, and when he returned to Spain fifty years later he was zealous about going to mass to be a good Christian. He was certainly favored by fortune: of the thousands of captives taken each year, only a select few had even the opportunity to be taken to Istanbul and trained in the seraglio. I do not believe, however, that Gutierre was *abúlico*,

confuso, or incapable of facing up to adversity. The *segoviano* knew exactly what he was doing by lying so *sinvergüenzadamente* (shamelessly) about his inability to speak Arabic or Turkish. The Bennassars say that the inquisitor of Madrid knew that Gutierre was lying because of the questions he asked, but Gutierre knew that the Inquisition showed a great measure of leniency to repentant renegades that wanted to return to their Christian home (162). He likely knew precisely what to confess to the inquisitors in earnest as well as the things to avoid: knowledge of Arabic and Turkish would have demonstrated a thorough assimilation into the Islamic society. Gutierre knew the importance of what went into formal reports and paperwork, and as long as the record showed that he did not know the language, he would be cleared. It is much more difficult to prove that someone knows something he claims not to, than that he does not know something he claims to. Rather than apathetic, Gutierre was utterly ambitious and knew how to get his way—how else could a captive rise so high through official Ottoman ranks and command an entire fleet? He used his knowledge and ambition as capital to exploit whatever situation he found himself in, demonstrating unique savvy when confronting adversity, as opposed to being incapable of facing it.

The ability to adapt linguistically was most times coupled with the shrewdness to exploit other forms of cultural capital as well. Perhaps other cases of ambitious polyglots can reinforce the significance of Gutierre's case and demonstrate just how much clout could be achieved in relations between the Ottoman Empire and western Christian nations. We turn again to Noel Malcolm's study of the Bruni and Bruti families (the previous chapter discussed two Bruni brothers Giovanni and Gasparo).

Bartolomeo Bruti maneuvered his many connections along with his language abilities to reach the highest levels of politicking with the Ottomans, Venetians, and Spanish. In 1573

Bartolomeo petitioned the Venetian government to enter the dragoman training system in Istanbul. The Bruti family also came from the small city of Ulcinj on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, south of Dubrovnik. Bartolomeo was fluent in Italian, Albanian, the Slav language, and he had studied Latin and Greek at a school in Venice (206). A dragoman, similar to the Arabic *tarjumān*, was a translator that held a permanent position in the Venetian bailate, or resident ambassador of Venice in Istanbul. The dragoman, in addition to his translating duties, frequently had “many opportunities for involvement in lucrative side-business of his own, including commerce, so the position was certainly a desirable one” (206). After about a year in the dragoman training program, Bruti was dismissed from Istanbul, but only a few short months later he had returned and became involved as an important liaison in a prisoner exchange. This exchange included high ranking prisoners on both sides, particularly Gabrio Serbelloni, who was taken captive to Istanbul after the fall the La Goletta; he was a senior general, brother of a cardinal, and cousin to Pope Pius IV (216). At this time, not only was he involved in the orchestration of this high profile exchange, but in between his dismissal from Istanbul and new arrival “he had been recruited to work for the Spanish intelligence service” (207). The bombshell connection that recuperated Bartolomeo’s usefulness after his dismissal from the dragoman program was this his father, Antonio Bruti, was related to Sinan Pasha,¹³⁰ who served the sultan as Grand Vizier. As a summary, Bartolomeo was recommended to be courier for the prisoner exchange because he was “trusted by the Venetians, liked and accepted by the Ottomans, and—secretly—engaged by the Spaniards” (221). Bartolomeo, only in his late teenage years, was in contact with Spanish intelligence (and later Philip II directly), the doge of Venice, and the Grand Vizier in Istanbul. Not bad.

¹³⁰ This is Koca Sinan Pasha, also from Albania originally, who served as Grand Vizier multiple times from 1580 until his death in 1596.

In a subsequent mission, Bartolomeo again used his language ability and connections to salvage a risky situation in Albania. Arriving at the city of Vlorë (eastern coast of Albania), Bartolomeo's travel companion "felt the advantage of travelling with someone who not only spoke Albanian but knew how to deal with this sort of local Ottoman official [the *nazır* or superintendent]" (249). Bartolomeo himself admitted the luck of his talents: "we were in danger, were it not for the fact that I found the Viceroy of that province who was a relative of mine; he received us very politely, and rescued us from the fury of the *levends*, who had risen up against us, Vlorë being a nest of corsairs" (249).

Bartolomeo's younger brother Cristoforo should also be mentioned here. Unlike his brother, he succeeded in completing the dragoman training. Similarly to his brother, his language skills coupled with his connections made him incredibly useful. Malcolm writes: "The bailo wrote that the Venetian authorities should treat him very generously, 'because, [...] he is already well advanced in the Turkish language, [...] and besides, if His Excellency Sinan were to come back to his previous position [he had just been dismissed as Grand Vizier], this young man would be a very suitable instrument for performing productive and distinguished services for Your Serenity'" (363). Other praise for Cristoforo seemingly always includes his linguistics abilities: "this Bruti," says Sinan Pasha, "works to my great satisfaction [...] and has a fairly good command of the Turkish language" (363).

All of these details about the Bruti brothers are to say that Gutierre would have similarly been in position to reap great rewards using his linguistic and capital with the situation he was given. He almost certainly knew both Arabic and Turkish, and the coveted nature of the knowledge of these languages and others used to communicate with western Christian countries

likely aided him in his trajectory from a captive, to a servant in the seraglio, and finally as a fleet commander in the Ottoman navy.

Cultural resistance

The pieces of this dissertation chapter have all been put forward pressing toward the idea that the cultural crisis of the Moriscos in the sixteenth century Iberian Peninsula demonstrates how crucial linguistic identity can be to both resist attempts to erase cultural identities and also build a workable rapport with neighboring belief systems. The first polemical Christian writers wrote during the Umayyad, Damascus, period and the early Abbasid period. These writers were not concerned with losing their linguistic heritage. By the time the Abbasids came to power Arabic was not only the administrative language used in the empire, but most of the inhabitants, many of them Christians, adopted it.¹³¹ Some of the early polemicists such as ‘Abd al-Masiḥ ibn Ishāq al-Kindī wrote in Arabic and Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873), a Nestorian Christian, was charged with supervising the translations of many Greek and Syriac texts into Arabic.

For these Christians, their Christianity was not inextricably linked to these languages. These polemicists were writing to retain souls, not linguistic heritage. The sixteenth and seventeenth century Moriscos, however, wrote to accomplish the retention of both of these. The fabricated texts of the Lead Book affair and the Turpiana parchment constitute a final attempt by Moriscos to vindicate their beliefs and their way of life in the eyes of their Christian rulers. The texts, in my view, propose a brilliant two-part strategy: in the best case scenario the texts would sow enough doubt in the Christian minds that both Islam and the Arabic language would be saved, but in the likely case that Christians would never soften toward Islam, the creators of the

¹³¹ This is an argument used by Núñez Muley and Miguel de Luna in defense of the Arabic language from prohibition (García-Arenal, “The Religious Identity...” 512).

texts hedged their bets by trying to demonstrate Arabic's compatibility with Christianity and thus trying at least to salvage the legitimacy of the language.

Firstly, these strategically placed texts sought to sow doubt, then eventually lead to the conclusion that Islam was the correct religion. Luis Bernabé describes the texts: "Naturalmente no de forma diáfana, sino a través de una redacción que busca en su significado una meditada ambigüedad entre cristianismo e islam y que permite la posibilidad de una doble lectura con igual certidumbre en una u otra religión" [Naturally not in a transparent manner, but through a composition that sought a moderated ambiguity between Christianity and Islam, and that permitted the possibility of a double reading with equal veracity given to each religion] ("Los mecanismos..." 393). An example of a conciliatory passage that permits a double meaning could be a phrase such as: "Nuestro Señor Jesús desde el día de su entrada en Nazaret no cesaba en la humanidad de la memoria de Dios porque era verdaderamente hombre" [Our Lord Jesus, since the first day he entered Nazareth, never ceased in the humanity of the memory of God because he was truly human] (Hagerty 112). This is perfectly compatible with both Christianity and Islam, but Muslims would certainly identify more so with a phrase like this because one of their main problems with Christianity deals with its claim of Christ's divinity.¹³² And this example is a synecdoche of the dogmatics presented in the books: while many passages could be double entendres, they tend to lean toward Islam without forcing the issue too much. As Bernabé writes: "Estos textos, que se anuncian unos a otros, van hondando cada vez con más finura en la instalación del mensaje del islam a través de los primeros personajes del cristianismo y, por ende, en el pueblo cristiano español de finales del siglo XVI" [These texts, which announce each other, gradually go more in depth in the installation of Islam's message by way of the principle

¹³² Topics that the forged texts avoid have to do with the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the worship of images.

characters of Christianity and, consequently, the Spanish Christian population of the later sixteenth century] (“La asimilación cultural...” 331).

These texts not only meant to soften Christians toward Islam, but the writers also designed them to give hope to Muslims. When St. John of Damascus wrote defending Christianity against Islam in the eighth century he was still under the impression that the Islamic phenomenon was nothing more than a vogue that would pass and that Christianity would eventually triumph again. Muslims had the same hope that what was happening to them on the Iberian Peninsula would pass, and thus they held out for the prophecies that said Islam would eventually triumph.¹³³ While the Turpiana text did not announce the final triumph of Islam, it did prophesy the coming of Muhammad.

Among other things, the Turpiana text also asserted a fundamental notion that Moriscos wanted to achieve: it demonstrated that Christianity is perfectly compatible with Arabic. The supposed author of this text was Saint Cecilio, the first bishop of Granada and its patron saint, and much of it was written in Arabic. At the same time, they needed to separate Arabic from Islam. One of the lead books puts these words in the mouth of the Virgin Mary:

os certifico que los Arabes es una de las buenas naciones i su lengua una de las buenas lenguas. Escogiolas Dios para exaltar su santa lei i su evangelio sagrado i su iglesia santa en el final de Tiempo i soi mandada obrar con ella lo que fue obrado por las Tablas de Moisés.¹³⁴

[I certify to you that the Arabs are a good people and their language a good language.

God chose them to exalt his holy law, his sacred Gospel, and his holy church in the last

¹³³ An example of one such prophecy can be found in García-Arenal, *Los Moriscos* (57-62).

¹³⁴ This passage comes from García-Arenal, “De la autoría morisca...” (576).

days and I am commanded to work with it the same as what was worked by the tablets of Moses.]

Mercedes García-Arenal also mentions that they noted that churches in the Middle East used Arabic as a liturgical language, thus making it compatible with Christianity (“De la autoría...” 576).

I view this attempt to at least preserve the Arabic language from proscription a surreptitious attempt to also keep Islam alive. Even though some Morisco sympathizers wanted to separate Arabic from Islam, public sentiment seemed to prove that such a notion was impossible—“Diego de Ordóñez, chaplain to the princess Eleanor, sister of Charles V, complained that the damned ‘sect’ would last for as long as the ‘Mahommedan’ language continued to exist” (García-Arenal, “The Religious Identity...” 508). Al-Ḥajarī writes: “There is no Arabic without God.” Muslims viewed Arabic as the words of God, the language of God, and thus the Islamic religion is embedded in the language. They didn’t expect Christians to understand this: while Christians held the Bible to be the inspired word of God, they did not have the same relationship with the languages of their sacred text—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—as Islam had with Arabic. Therefore, if they could save Arabic from the *Pragmática* of 1567, they would also save Islam, even though they hoped the Christian authorities would believe Islam extinct.

One of the most influential Moriscos of the sixteenth century, Francisco Núñez Muley, argued precisely that Arabic needed to be separated from Islam if the language was to be salvaged on the peninsula. Núñez Muley clearly represents one of the most important Morisco advocates to the Crown throughout the sixteenth century as Garrad summarizes:

...he served three years as a page to the saintly Hernando de Talavera, the first Archbishop of Granada. [...] In 1513 he had an audience with Ferdinand the Catholic on behalf of the Moriscos, as a result of which the president of the Chancery of Granada was ordered to favour their interests. Five years later we find him accompanying the Marqués de Mondéjar at the court of Charles V to negotiate the payment of Morisco taxes and the suspension of Ferdinand's edict of 1511 against the manufacture of Morisco costume. He directed further petitions to the Emperor in 1523, this time against the decrees ordering Old Christians to act as sponsors at Morisco weddings and baptism, and forbidding Moriscos to act as slaughtermen (201).

Thus, not only was Núñez Muley a prominent figure in the Morisco community, he had actually had a great deal of success negotiating on their behalf throughout the century.

After the 1567 *Pragmática*, Núñez Muley wrote a final desperate argument against the harsh measures to stifle Arabic and Morisco customs, and many of these arguments intend to minimize the role the Arabic played in connection with Islam while also elevate its legitimacy and necessity in non-religious aspects of state business and economy. Núñez Muley argues that Arabic inherently does not connect positively or negatively with Islam: “no toca la lengua en la seta ni contra ella” [the language is not in favor or against the sect (Islam)], and that there are many Christians that speak and even write the gospels in Arabic (Garrad 221). Later, while protesting the fact that all books and documents written in Arabic needed to be presented for examination, Núñez Muley underscores the importance that official property deeds were written in Arabic and these were extremely necessary to save for the landowners lawsuits, “especial en lo que toca la comisión del Doctor Santiago” [especially having to do with the commission of Doctor Santiago] (222). This Doctor Santiago was sent to Granada to “reclaim Crown lands

usurped by private individuals,” and he “attempted to check up all title deeds and survey lands.” “These proceedings raised great indignation in Granada [...]. Consequently the Moriscos needed their Arabic title-deeds more than ever at that moment, to avoid confiscation at the hands of the painstaking Doctor Santiago” (222n3). The main reason behind the doctor’s missions, Garrad writes, was to “swell the Royal Treasury,” and Núñez Muley also aims one of his arguments for preserving Arabic at the economy. He asks how the *gelizes* are supposed to be able to do their job without Arabic. Garrad explains that the words *gelizes* and *almotalife* used by Núñez Muley refer to various accounting terms having to do with the silk trade in southern Spain. All of the accounting in this market was conducted in Arabic, and thus it was necessary in order to collect the correct amount of taxes from the vendors and to see which of them were evading taxes (223n2).

Of all these arguments in favor of keeping Arabic legal, Núñez Muley previously makes an argument about Arabic surnames that demonstrates the desperation of this plea. The *Pragmática* would have outlawed the use of Arabic surnames, forcing them to abandon the rich family tradition encoded therein. Núñez Muley argues that indeed these surnames were important for many reasons, including the family’s identity, but the main portion of his argument appeals explicitly to the vanity of the king and *his* family:

¿No le parece a V.S.R. que quedar estas memorias ay grandes ensalzamientos de los Reyes que ganaron estos rreynos, de ver las diuersas maneras que ganaron? Y ésta fué la yntincción de los Reyes Católicos en anparar este rreyno en la manera que lo [ampararon] y los arçobispos pasados; y esta yntencción e voluntad tuvieron los Enperadores e Reyes Católicos en anparar las memorias de las casas rreales del Alhanbra y otras memorias,

tales que quedasen en la misma forma que heran en tiempo de los rreyes moros, para que se manifestase lo que ganaron sus Altezas y se pareçería más claro (219).

[Does it not appear better to his Majesty that these memories remain as great praise to the Kings who won these kingdoms to see the diverse manners in which they won? And this was the intention of the Catholic Kings in protecting this kingdom in the manner that past archbishops have kept it; and the Emperors and Catholic Kings had this intention and desire to protect the memories of the royal houses of the Alhambra and other memories, such that they stay in the same form that they were in the time of the Moorish kings, so that the their Highnesses won would be manifest and would appear more clearly].

Núñez Muley seems to be saying “Where evidence of Moors remains, so much more will be the evidence of the Catholic Kings’ victory.” What an astonishing argument for someone who dedicated his life as an advocate for his people!

But what’s in a name? It was common in the Mediterranean that, upon converting from Christianity to Islam and vice versa, one would change his name. Why was this so important? Michel Foucault considers this in his “What Is an Author?”:

Obviously, one cannot turn a proper name into a pure and simple reference. It has other than indicative functions: more than an indication, a gesture, a finger pointed at someone, it is the equivalent of a description. When one says “Aristotle,” one employs a word that is the equivalent of one, or a series of, definite descriptions, such as “the author of the *Analytics*,” “the founder of ontology,” and so forth. One cannot stop there, however, because a proper name does not have just one signification (981).

Following Foucault’s logic, erasing the Arabic surnames of Moriscos would have erased an entire series of descriptions that referred to their culture, religion, and language. And that, of

course, was the point. Núñez Muley understood this and used it rhetorically to make two arguments: he argued that those surnames would serve as a type of “mark of Cain” and would subsequently evoke the great victories over the Muslims; but secondly, if he could allow Moriscos to maintain their names they would also maintain much of the inscribed cultural heritage and description that Foucault refer to. And when we remember that many Moriscos hoped that their sixteenth century troubles were nothing more than a passing persecution and that Islam would eventually be victorious, carrying this “mark of Cain” for a little while was worth it.¹³⁵ Núñez Muley knew, in his desperation, that the benefit of a little self-deprecation would be worth it if it was necessary to preserve a most intimate part of Morisco culture: he was willing to praise the great victory over his people as long as it meant they could keep their names.

Unfortunately for this argument, the opposing viewpoint existed as well. García-Arenal quotes the scholar Nicolás Antonio as saying: “porque no puede dexar de darle a los buenos castellanos, hallarse en Granada, i ver que se habla de una parte y otra en Arábigo, lengua que nos acuerda los ierros en que la tuvieron los Mahometanos” [it cannot fail to disturb good Castilians to find themselves in Granada and see that on all sides Arabic is spoken, a language which reminds us of the errors in which it was held by the Mahometans] (“The Religious Identity...” 508). Public opinion was firmly against them and it would prevail.

The Morisco writer Ibrāhīm Ṭāybīlī demonstrates the importance that Arabic had in relation to the preservation of their culture in that he insisted upon writing in Spanish, even though much of his content agenda was the re-islamization of fellow expelled Moriscos in Tunis. Ṭāybīlī was originally from Toledo, born approximately thirty years before the expulsion in 1609. He was educated in Spain and was well read in the works of his contemporaries (for

¹³⁵ See García-Arenal *Los Moriscos* (57).

example, he apparently was familiar with Lope de Vega, Garcilaso, and the *Quixote*). After the expulsion, he and many of his fellow Moriscos settled in Tunis, where he became famous as a writer, especially for his polemical works. Epalza characterizes Ṭāybīlī as “l’élément les plus actif des écrivains *moriscos* en Tunisie” [The most active element of Morisco writers in Tunis].¹³⁶

Ṭāybīlī’s insistence on writing in Spanish marks his work as unique but also distinguishes the unique characteristics of this generation of Moriscos. It was a generation that fell between the cracks of history, a generation of transition that found it difficult to belong: while in Spain their identity as Moriscos marked them as outsiders, even though they were 100% Spanish, and while in Tunisia they were immigrants, even though they could finally practice their religion with tolerance. Ṭāybīlī’s writing project demonstrates this transitional phase as he wrote in Spanish about a subject that inherently necessitated Arabic—religious polemics and re-islamization. Luis Bernabé writes:

...los autores moriscos deben hacer un gran esfuerzo en su intento de reislamización de sus compatriotas para hablar de temas religiosos islámicos en una lengua que no es la apropiada para este menester, el árabe. Pero al mismo tiempo muchos de estos escritores o bien no dominaban el árabe, o bien eran bilingües hasta cierto punto, con evidentes influencias entre ambas lenguas.

[Morisco authors had to put great effort into their attempt of re-Islamizing their compatriots to speak about Islamic religious themes in a language which was not the appropriate one for the task, Arabic. But at the same time many of the writers either did

¹³⁶ For a brief biography, see Bernabé *El cántico Islámico...* (64-68).

not understand Arabic well, or they were only bilingual to a point, with obvious influences from both languages] (*El cántico islámico* 71).

Bernabé writes elsewhere that the majority of Morisco immigrants to Tunisia were from Aragón and Castilla, meaning that they definitely spoke Spanish with much fewer instances of Arabic speakers (*Los moriscos* 169). “Este hecho, [...] hace que su integración en el país sea pausada” [This fact... delayed their integration into the country] (170). The importance of Arabic for properly assimilating to the Islamic Tunisian culture is revealed in the fact that the unique re-islamization project of Ṭāybilī and the Muslim authorities in Tunis lasted only one generation. “Enseguida las autoridades tunecinas iniciarían con los más jóvenes de los expulsados y, por supuesto, con sus descendientes, una educación musulmana según los patrones clásicos en árabe” [Right away the Tunisian authorities initiated Muslim education according to the classic Arabic model with the youngest of the expelled people and, of course, their descendants] (177). This preoccupation with educating the young was essential, and everyone knew it: Ignacio de Las Casas also placed heavy emphasis on educating Morisco children about Christianity and saw it as one of the keys to assimilating them into Spanish society (El Alaoui 324).

Conclusion

The Morisco problem provides an insightful example of the influence of linguistic capital. In addition to visible and material objects and cultural artifacts such as the Moriscos’ rituals and customs, and the Alhambra and other forms of architecture, the Arabic language inscribed much of their identity and cultural heritage. Access to this language provided access to them as a people. It was a resilient and central element of Arab culture in Iberia that maintained

the cohesion of Morisco social fabric. Without this ethnic common denominator their cultural legacy and heritage faced serious jeopardy. Christian evangelizers attempted to access this in order to win them over, and Moriscos clung to it as a final form of resistance. But even more broadly, many itinerants of the Mediterranean—be they were captives, emissaries, or evangelizers—recognized the value of using language as an essential means to whatever end they sought.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation does not constitute an exhaustive study of early modern polemical texts, but rather a series of strategies commonly and persistently implemented throughout the long polemic history between Christianity and Islam. These four chapters on religious figures, miracles, holy war, and linguistic capital demonstrate four mechanisms that these religions used as conduits to advance their narratives. They had their arguments and beliefs and they were sticking to them; the question they then dealt with was how to make those arguments to gain superiority over the opposition with the purpose of consolidating their own devotees, and possibly winning over whoever was willing. The major contribution of this dissertation demonstrates that, while certain genres of writing were deliberately structured polemics, such as *Antialcoranic* texts, polemical arguments conditioned a variety of writers' perspectives and observations in other genres.

Because of their polemical history, these two major Mediterranean religions were abundantly familiar with the things that separated them, and many times they exaggerated those differences in order to stand out. Antonio de Sosa's *Topografía de Argel* has been cited abundantly since its publication to describe what the North African city was like as it emerged as a booming Mediterranean metropolis. What I discuss is not so much the topographical and demographical notes that Sosa presents, but rather how he wrote with cruel and exploitative laughter as he observed and examined the marabouts of Algiers as well as the popular beliefs they promoted. Exaggeration was key to underlining the absurdity which he strove to convey: and how could such absurdity legitimate Islam as the true religion? The culmination, the very last pages of the *Topografía*, recount a moment when Christians were able to defeat a Muslim army nicknamed the *Omnipotencia*, taking early modern trolling to its logical extreme: if Christianity could defeat the most powerful Muslim force possible, its superiority was obvious.

However, for every attack made against Islam, an equally humiliating attempt was made against Christianity. Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī writes with another account of first-hand experience detailing religious scuffles he encountered (and most times provoked) as he passed through France and Holland. In each one of these he points out contradictions and absurdities codified in the belief system of Christianity. Though their differences were exaggerated, their methods were many times the same. Just as Sosa attacked Islam by ridiculing its religious figures, so also did Muslim writers such as al-Ḥajarī and ‘Abdallah al-Tarjumān (Fray Anselmo Turmeda) take on the Catholic clergy and the various popes to make the same claim—Christianity was inconsistent and self-defeating. Just as Sosa subverted the miracles of the marabouts and jinn in Algiers, so also did al-Ḥajarī and others mock the ease with which Christians would look to miracles for salvation.

For Sosa and al-Ḥajarī there was little expectation that anything could be said to change their minds, and this mentality was a symptom of social perspectives in the sixteenth century. The treatment of Iberian Moriscos demonstrates this attitude on a larger scale. True, many attempts were made to soften relations with the Moriscos after the conquest of Granada, but after discarding the preliminary capitulations, none of these represented an honest attempt at religious tolerance, and all of them had the final goal of winning Muslims over to Christianity. Christian evangelists, even the most conciliatory ones such as Ignacio de las Casas, only meant to implement Arabic with the finality of enticing Muslims into churches. This attitude manifested itself belligerently near the North African *presidio* of Orán. Forces were originally sent to the outpost with the purpose of a crusade to reconquer North Africa for Christianity—a crusade led by one of Spain’s most prominent and zealous church figures, Cardinal Cisneros. However, any

ideas of easy conquest and mass conversions shortly devolved into exploitative truces and violent raids of subsistence.

Little thought was given to gathering new souls, but by stepping back and examining the trends, one will find that subsistence and existence were many times the goal for the majority. What role did those mad marabouts play in Algiers? They maintained mosques and taught the religious how to pray; they blessed newborn babies and carried out funeral rites; they provided a popular, mystic form of Islam. In other words, they were the approachable representative for spirituality when local Muslims needed providence from a higher power. What were all those miracles for? Algerians called upon marabouts to do things such as heal their sick, just as al-Ḥajarī records having done; the jinn that Sosa and al-Ḥajarī note had the similar function of aiding believers in mundane circumstances such as healing sickness and cajoling them to contrition and more godly living; and similarly when Miguel de Castro, a Christian soldier, saw the healing power of the liquor flowing from Saint Andrew's knee, he hoped for the same thing that every soldier hopes for—healing in the case that he get injured in battle one day. In other words, miracles provided relief for believers' imminent hopes and needs. What was all that fighting in the name of God for anyways? Some of the tribes surrounding Orán were perfectly happy to submit to the Christians instead of joining up with the Turks because all they wanted to do was to stay on their land and graze their animals as they had always done. And language? Captives such as Leo Africanus, Gutierre Pantoja, and Juan Rodelgas did what they needed to do to survive and thrive in whatever circumstances befell them, and if that meant learning Arabic or denying having learned it—no problem.

All the texts I've focused on in the dissertation have been written or have written about Mediterranean figures that had split obligations of some sort between their personal religion and

the religion of the place in which they found themselves. Sosa was a captive in Algiers, al-Ḥajarī an expatriate Morisco, al-Tarjumān a renegade, Leo Africanus an expatriate Muslim, Suárez Montañés a soldier in North Africa, and the list goes on. The circumstances of these Mediterranean figures perpetuated a certain tension between Christianity and Islam in the manner that they used inflammatory language to present one another, and here I have highlighted only four of a number of potential trends that characterized the early modern rhetorical repertoire.

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