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Colominas Aparicio, M.

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Mònica Colominas Aparicio

Disputes about Purity in Late Medieval Iberia. Interreligious Contacts and the Polemical Language of the Mudejars

Abstract: The state of ritual purity, known as “ṭahāra” in Islam, has often been the subject of religious controversy between members of the various religious communities in the Iberian Peninsula. In this paper, I examine the religious language in Mudejar polemics by looking at the use of specific terms such as “ṭuhr” (‘purity’), “istinjā” (‘ablution after relieving oneself’) and “manjūs” (‘unclean’). My analysis shows that, although we find some returning passages from the Torah and the Gospels in these texts, the form in which these are discussed depends both on the period in which each polemic was written and on the particular target audiences. The language and terminology are found in Arabic, Hebrew, and sometimes in Romance written in Arab characters; or even a combination of all three. The approach and language utilized to talk about purity in these Mudejar polemics depends on whether the Mudejars address the Christians or the Jews (they used a harsher tone in the latter case). These differences are probably connected to asymmetrical power relations between the Mudejars and these two groups.

Keywords: Muslim-Christian-Jewish disputes, ritual purity (“ṭahāra”), religious language, Mudejars, Late Medieval Iberia

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Mònica Colominas Aparicio, Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen, Capaciteitsgroep Religiestudies, Universiteit van Amsterdam, M.ColominasAparicio@uva.nl

1 Introduction

‘Is it possible that God could have dwelt in flesh and blood, and in the unclean entrails of a woman?’¹ This question was allegedly posed by caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (682–720 CE) to the Byzantine emperor Leon III (680–741 CE) in an exchange of letters recorded by the Armenian historian Leontius Ghevond

¹ JEFFERY 1944, p. 278.

(end of the ninth century),² in which the two rulers attempted to prove the superiority of their respective religions. Their correspondence – I will not deal here with the question of its authenticity³ – reproduces one of the earliest surviving controversies in the East between a Muslim and a Christian. The caliph's words express his disbelief in God's incarnation and, moreover, his disgust at the possibility that God had been brought into contact with substances considered to be defiling in Islam, such as blood. In her celebrated study on pollution and taboo, Mary Douglas showed that in Judaism, purity and holiness are two closely linked concepts. For, although according to its Hebrew root קדש ("kdš"), holiness means separateness, according to Douglas it also means completeness and wholeness. The observances of purity received by Moses from God, and recorded in the book of Leviticus, could be explained by the fact that 'the idea of holiness was given an external, physical expression in the wholeness of the body seen as a perfect container.'⁴ The body thus appears to be central to the Jewish system of religious thought in so far as it demands physical perfection to approach the Holy. It is the pursuit of this physical perfection and the way in which certain animals are classified as exceptional within their category⁵ that explains both the divine prohibitions to eat certain foods or to touch certain objects or persons, and the rituals through which man is brought back into a state of purity after contact with defiling substances. It is not only in Judaism that purity matters. Christians and Muslims also consider it to be a key element in the believers' relationship with God.⁶ In Islam, this is illustrated by the fact that purification, or "ṭahāra", is needed for a ritual act to be considered valid

² Ibid., p. 275 sq.

³ It is quite possible that the correspondence between Leon and 'Umar was composed in a later period. Moreover, there seem to be both Christian and Muslim recensions written in Latin and Armenian and in Arabic and "Aljamiado" (Romance in Arabic characters), respectively. On these points, as well as on the dating of the latter, see GAUDEUL 1984. Perhaps the correspondence between Leon and 'Umar never took place and we should talk about a pseudo-Leon and a pseudo-'Umar. However, I do not consider this to be relevant here: the dialogues are attributed to these two characters and, the author, whoever he might be, thus had a particular historical period in mind when he wrote. Regardless of how close the "Aljamiado" version of 'Umar's letter is to the Arabic original, it is still a translation of the same and, as such, this question is irrelevant. Hence, we must bear in mind the possible influence that its environment may have had on it.

⁴ DOUGLAS 1966, p. 8 and 52 sq.

⁵ Ibid., p. 41–57.

⁶ Generally speaking, it can be said that Christians are less concerned with bodily impurity and put more emphasis on the 'purity' of their spiritual relationship with God. See ARNDT 1992; STURLESE 1992a; STURLESE 1992b for the Middle Ages. Some specifics on Christian views on the subject are given below.

and, moreover, is handled at the very beginning of any book of Islamic jurisprudence, or “fiqh”.⁷

But even though Christians, Jews and Muslims agree on its importance, each group maintains that the rules of purity which, they believe, God sent to their own community are the ones that have validity. Moreover, each community has different concepts of what purity is, and carries out different rituals accordingly. In a well known article on purity in Islam, Kevin Reinhart focuses on these differences and stresses that while Judaism understands impurity as something that can be contagious, and thus as potentially defiling, impurity in Islam only prevents the believer from carrying out ritual acts, but does not change his very nature. Hence, impurity in Islam is not considered to be contagious; in other words, a defiled human being cannot pollute others through physical contact.⁸ Bearing this in mind, it can be argued that concepts of purity play a crucial role in regulating what and who belongs to a religious community, be it Christian, Jewish or Islamic. Questions about purity are part of the identity discourse of the members who belong to this system, and strengthen the boundaries between religious groups.

Because of this differentiating function, purity has often been the subject of religious controversy between Christians, Jews and Muslims, and the language used to dispute this subject has been produced at the interface of the contact between these three religious communities.⁹ The Iberian Peninsula is an exemplary region of this contact. In the Later Middle Ages, the Muslims living under Christian rule, or Mudejars, shared the ‘public sphere’ with both the Christian majority and the Jewish minority communities. In the social fabric of the day, the Christians held the highest position, whereas the Jews and the Muslims were competing for prominence in the margins. Disputes about pollution were frequent and part of everyday life, as is illustrated by the fact that about seven hundred years later the question posed by ‘Umar was included by the Mudejars in their polemical literature. Elena Lourie notes that at the end of the thirteenth century the Jews under the Crown of Aragon ‘were treated as unclean’ by the Christian majority and ‘compelled to buy the food they had touched in the markets.’¹⁰ In fourteenth-century Aragon and France, lepers were accused of poison-

⁷ REINHART 2000.

⁸ REINHART 1990, p. 15.

⁹ CUFFEL 2007.

¹⁰ LOURIE 1990a, p. 58 with n. 178, quoting the views of Maurice Krieger. NIRENBERG 1996, p. 115 n. 56 notes that the Jews were not the only ones affected by these ordinances and that ‘some market regulations forbade *anyone* to touch certain foodstuffs.’ Muslims, too, referred at times to the contacts with non-Muslims in terms of impurity. The North African scholar al-Wansharisi

ing the water wells and, on a few occasions, Jews and Muslims were too for being their accomplices. These accusations led to riots, mostly directed against the lepers and the Jews.¹¹ The polemics written by Mudejars were influenced by a similar anti-Jewish bias and they often pictured the Jews as impure, although, as we will see, they did not attribute to Jews the power to defile others. Mudejar polemicists reformulated the Christian views on this subject in their own words and accused the Christians of putting too much emphasis on the soul rather than on the body. They argued that by doing this, Christians were not following Jesus' example with regards to purity, or "ṭuhr" as they refer to it in their polemics.¹² These examples suggest that, in order to understand the Mudejars' approach to purity and the language they used, the role of contact between religious communities and the Christian and Jewish discourses on the subject should be taken into account.

In this paper, I will analyze discussions about "ṭuhr" in Mudejar polemics. Particular focus will be placed on the religious language used by the Mudejars to discuss purity with Christians and Jews, and on the influence of interreligious contact on their polemical language. Four polemics will be discussed. These are

(d. in Fez in 1508 CE) issued a "fatwa" ('legal opinion') where he states that to remain in the Christian territories was 'not allowable, not for so much as one hour a day, because of all the dirt and filth involved, and the religious and secular corruption which continues all the time'; see HARVEY 1990, p. 58 sq. Recently Jocelyn Hendrickson has placed the "fatwas" of this scholar within their North African context and has argued that they were addressed to Muslims living under foreign occupation rather than to Mudejars exclusively; see HENDRICKSON 2009. Other contemporary "fatwas", such as those of the chief judges of the four Sunni legal schools (or "madhhabs") in Cairo around the year 1510 CE, seem to have been a response to questions about the position of Muslims living under Christian rule. Most probably the questioners were members of the Maghribī community in Cairo or pilgrims temporarily staying in the Egyptian capital on their way to Mecca. These "fatwas" held more pragmatic viewpoints about the presence of the Mudejars in Christian lands than those of al-Wansharīsī or the fourteenth-century Andalusī scholar Ibn Rabi' (d. 1320 CE); see VAN KONINGSVELD/WIEGERS 1996, p. 39; MILLER 2000.

11 Lepers were accused of throwing powders in the water wells and of spreading their disease through water wells. Nirenberg notes that, with regards to the Black Death, he has found no textual evidence from the Crown of Aragon indicating that Jews and Muslims were accused of spreading this plague through poison. On these points as well as on the relationship between disease, sin, poison and contagion see NIRENBERG 1996, p. 93–124 and 231–249. On contagion, both from Muslim and Christian perspectives, see STEARNS 2011, p. 91–105 for the Iberian Peninsula.

12 As I will argue, in the polemics discussed here, the Mudejars use different terms to talk about purity such as "ṭuhr", "ṭahūr" or "ṭahrār" but, surprisingly I have not come across the term "ṭahāra". From here on I will refer to it as "ṭuhr".

to be found in three manuscripts written both in Arabic and in “Aljamiado”.¹³ For the sake of structure – and also because the authors address them separately – the dispute between the Mudejars and the Christians will be dealt with first, followed by the dispute between the Mudejars and the Jews.

2 The Dispute with the Christians on “Ṭuhr”

The first passage to be discussed here is from Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Ms. 4944 (= M), an “Aljamiado” codex probably copied in Aragon. M is a miscellaneous work that contains an adaptation of the Arabic polemic against the Jews entitled *Ta’yīd al-milla* (‘The Fortification of the Faith’) and some polemical treatises against the Christians. Denise Cardaillac dates this codex in the first half of the sixteenth century, but it is likely that the polemical works in it were already in circulation among the Mudejars before that time.¹⁴ In the controversies with the Christians and the controversy with the Jews in M, we find the name ‘Alī al-Gharīb (“[di]senos ‘alī al-gharīb, sepas que hājar madre de ismā’il”, fol. 1v lower margin). Van Koningsveld and Wiegers have shown that ‘Alī al-Gharīb is the adapter of the Mudejar polemic *Kitāb Miftāḥ al-dīn* (‘The Key of Religion’),¹⁵ and Gharīb must be understood as synonymous with Mudejar.¹⁶ In the controversy with the Jews in M, we read that the Jews have been in captivity and out of the Holy Land for 1300 or 1400 years.¹⁷ This fact situates us between the years 1370 to 1470 CE and suggests that, as in the case of disputes with Christians, the controversy with the Jews in M is a Romance adaptation of an Arabic work written by Mudejars.¹⁸ The letter of the caliph is one of the anti-Christian polemical treatises in M. Therein, the question posed by ‘Umar is restated as follows:

¹³ Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Ms. 4944; Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ms. AF 58; Zaragoza, Fondo Documental Histórico de las Cortes de Aragón, Ms. 8 (Calanda).

¹⁴ CARDAILLAC 1972, 1, p. 59.

¹⁵ Alger, Bibliothèque Nationale d’Algérie, Ms. 1557.

¹⁶ VAN KONINGSVELD/WIEGERS 1994, p. 192 n. 104. See also for the polemic *Disputa con los cristianos* (‘Dispute with the Christians’) in this manuscript my entry in *Christian-Muslim relations. A bibliographical history 6: 1500–1600*, ed. by DAVID THOMAS/JOHN CHESWORTH (The History of Christian-Muslim Relations 22), Leiden/Boston 2014 (forthcoming).

¹⁷ “mil trezientos o quatrozientos años que son en el catiberio i son fuera de la tierra santa”, M, fol. 7r/v.

¹⁸ For further arguments, I refer the reader to my forthcoming dissertation on Mudejar polemics.

‘You [sc. ‘the Christians’] allege that ... Allah, blessed be He!, descended from his throne, his kingdom, his power, his honour, his clarity, his honesty and his greatness, and that he entered into the body of a woman, between the (human) thought and the blood, the moisture and the narrowness, and stayed nine months in her womb. Then he was born in the same manner as the sons of Adam are born, he sucked during two years as an infant sucks, he did as the infant does, and he grew as the infant grows, year after year, crying and being afraid, sleeping, eating, drinking, being hungry and thirsty.’

The polemicist concludes his statement by asking:

‘If Jesus was God, who was in charge of the heavens and the earth while He was in the womb of Mary?’¹⁹

It is noteworthy that the words of ‘Umar are developed *in extenso* – in comparison with the version given by Ghevond – and, nevertheless, the explicit reference by ‘Umar in Ghevond’s history to the ‘uncleanliness’ of the entrails of a woman is left aside.²⁰ The two main subjects underlying the arguments of the Mudejar author are, firstly, God’s debasement by becoming human and, secondly, the impossibility that the world existed during nine months without God ruling it. Although the contact with blood and with some other bodily fluids is considered to be defiling in Islam, here the author does not pay any more attention to it than to the fact that God suckled, was afraid, hungry or tired: he considers all these to be human conditions.

Let us now take a look at a similar passage in a Mudejar polemic written in Arabic, *Kitāb al-Mujādala ma’a al-yahūd wa-l-naṣārā* (‘The Book of the Disputation with the Jews and the Christians’). This treatise is found in Ms. AF 58, a miscellaneous manuscript copied in 1405 CE in Pétroula and kept in the

¹⁹ “I razones ... ke Allah ꝑbendicho es! ke devalló de su-si.ego i su reísmo, i de-su-potestad i de su onra i de su-k.laredad i de su onestad i de sa g.randat, i ke se metió en-el ku.erpo de una muller, ent.re el-pi.enso i la-sang.re, i la eskomedad i la engostura, i finkó en-su-vi.ent.re nu.eve meses; depu.és salli.ó por do sellen los fillos de Adam, i mamó komo mama la-k.ri.atura dos años i faba komo faze la-k.ri.atura, i k.reçi.ó komo k.reçe la-k.ri.atura, año enpu.és año, p.lorando i.-abi.endo mi.edo i durmi.endo i komi.endo i bebi.endo i.-abi.endo fanb.re i set”, M, fol. 98v–99r, CARDAILLAC 1972, 2, p. 255–257. All transcriptions and translations are mine if not indicated otherwise. I do not correct possible mistakes in the manuscripts’ texts. In the translations, my additions are placed between [].

²⁰ GAUDEUL 1984, p. 127–129 argues that in M the “Aljamiado” version of ‘Umar’s letter is a faithful translation of an earlier version written in Arabic of the questions posed by the caliph. This Arabic *vorlage* is until today unknown to us. The letter of ‘Umar would have preceded the answer of Leo, as is suggested in Ghevond’s Armenian history. The fact that we could be dealing with two different versions of the same letter, one Christian and one Muslim, may explain the shift of the caliph’s emphasis on certain aspects.

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (= W). In W we also find an Arabic version of the anti-Jewish polemical treatise *Ta'yīd al-milla*. The author of W is unknown to us but the codicological and textual analysis of the treatises strongly indicates that we are dealing with a codex copied by Mudejars living in Christian Spain. Like M, the polemic against the Christians in *Kitāb al-Mujādala* repeats the arguments of 'Umar's letter:

'The Christians claim that God came into the womb of Mary and was covered with flesh. He was in a place and remained [sc. 'there'] nine months. He sucked the blood and grew, and was in a position of sorrow.'²¹

According to the Christians – the Mudejar polemicist claims – God was not only in contact with blood but he sucked the blood and grew from this blood while being in the womb of his mother. This detail is, nevertheless, not mentioned in the Bible. What are the sources underpinning the Christians' arguments in this passage? And why does the Muslim author not refer to the defilement of being in the womb of a woman as 'Umar does? The answer to the first question is that, in order to support their views, the Christians used Greek philosophical and scientific sources that were translated in their centres of knowledge.²² The Mudejars also used these sources and in many passages of W the views of Aristotle and of his well-known commentator Averroes are quoted. On fol. 57r, Aristotle is quoted as saying that sucking the blood in the womb is one of the natural processes in human beings. The Mudejar polemicist claims:

'Aristotle says in his philosophy that the woman takes a greater part in the progeny than the man because the embryo in her womb grows from the blood of her menstruation. The embryo sucks the blood of its mother during nine months and after her childbirth, it sucks [sc. 'from the breast'] for two years and by the very nature, the offspring must resemble their mothers the most.'²³

²¹ W, fol. 32r.

²² See the various articles on this topic in BURNETT 2009. Still, we do not know all the places where Christians, Muslims and Jews translated or copied their manuscripts. In the case of the manuscript mentioned above, W, we read in its colophon that the copy was completed in Pétrola (a town near Albacete) but we have no record of any other literary activities carried out by Mudejars or Moriscos (i.e. the Muslims who had converted to Christianity in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula) in this area. There was, however, an educational institution ("madrasa") in the city of Murcia with an intellectual activity in the thirteenth century; see VAN KONINGSVELD 1992, p. 81 sq.; MARTÍNEZ GÁZQUEZ 1995; VAN KONINGSVELD/WIEGERS 1996, p. 36 n. 66; MARTÍNEZ GÁZQUEZ 1998.

²³ W, fol. 57r:

However, in *De generatione animalium* Aristotle argues the opposite and says that men are ‘in charge in the production of offspring, while women are secondary’, since the menstrual blood is only ‘the material that the male semen fashions.’²⁴ It is Hippocrates who in *De genitura* brings forth the theory of the resemblance between the child and its natural parents.²⁵ With regard to the embryo’s growth, Aristotle argues indeed that the embryo grows from menstrual blood and also that at the end of the pregnancy the embryo needs less nutriment and that the surplus of blood is collected and transformed into milk.²⁶

It must be noted that Islam not only considers the contact with blood unclean: its consumption is prohibited (Qur’ān 2, 168–173). The same prescriptions can be found in the Torah (Leviticus 17, 10) and in the Bible (Act 15, 29). Moreover, the three monotheistic religions consider menstrual blood impure.²⁷ Hence, the theories of Aristotle on progeny and the claim of the Christians that God grew in the womb of a woman are both tainted with enough ‘uncleanliness’ to be attacked by Muslims using arguments from an Islamic discourse on purity. Yet, here the strategy of the Mudejar author to rebuke the views of the Christians is to use arguments that were significant to a Christian audience, rather than to one only composed by his Muslim coreligionists. This is illustrated in his answer to the Christians’ claim that God entered in the womb of Mary:

قال ارسطوا في فلسفته ان المرأة اكثر حظا في الذرية من الرجل لان المرأة يربي جنينها في بطنها من دم طمئها ويمص الجنين دم امه تسعة اشهر وبعد نفاسها يررضيه سنتين كاملين وبطبيعة حقيقة ينبغي الذرية ان يشبهها الى الامهات

²⁴ ANWAR 2006, p. 31. *De generatione animalium* 1, 19, 1, 20 and 1, 21, ARISTOTELES *De generatione animalium*, p. 36 l. 31–33, p. 40 l. 28–33 and p. 41 l. 12–14.

²⁵ *De genitura* 7, 2–8, 2: ‘For in those who had female children, the stronger (i.e. seed) was overcome by the weaker, which happened to be present in a greater amount, so that females were engendered. ... In the uterus the seed of both the woman and the man comes from their whole body ... so that the child must be formed accordingly. Wherever more of the man’s body enters the seed than of the woman’s, in this part the child will look more closely like its father, whereas wherever more comes from the woman’s body, in that part of its body the child will look more closely like its mother’, HIPPOCRATES *De genitura* 2012, p. 17 l. 10 – p. 19 l. 3. Most Muslim exegetes hold male’s superiority in progeny. Ibn Qayyim (1292–1350 CE) is an exception to this and, following Hippocrates’s theory of resemblance, he denies in his *Tuhfat al-mawdūd bi aḥkām al-mawlūd* that women play a secondary role.

²⁶ *De generatione animalium* 4, 8, ARISTOTELES *De generatione animalium*, p. 168 l. 15 – p. 171 l. 27.

²⁷ For a thorough survey of the Christian-Jewish debate on the purity of Mary’s womb see CUFFEL 2007, p. 117–155.

‘You [sc. ‘the Christians’], know that, as it is said in all books, God does not fit in a place, and he does not take a place. If this were so, He would only know what is inside this place and hear with his ears.’²⁸

In this passage, the author echoes the discourse of the Christian majority in two different ways. On the one hand, he uses logical reasoning instead of revealed religion to object to a Christian discourse that, in the Later Middle Ages, mainly relied on Aristotle and Averroes. The authority of Aristotelian views was such that Iberian Jewish philosophers such as Judah ben Solomon ha-Cohen, also known as Ibn Matqa (b. Toledo 1215 CE), or Shem ʿTov ibn Falaquera (1225–1290 CE) felt the need to compose encyclopaedic works to give their fellow Jews the knowledge necessary to dispute with the Christians.²⁹ The Christians also rely on the authority of Aristotle to explain the conception of Jesus. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, argues in his *Summa theologiae* that Jesus is like any child that is conceived from menstrual blood, as Aristotle maintains, but in his case it was from the purest kind of blood because Mary experienced no lust. How can we explain why the fragment quoted above has no reference to the question of purity? Could the Mudejars have been acquainted with similar views to that of Aquinas and have taken these into account in their polemics?³⁰

On the other hand, if rhetorically speaking the Mudejar author here relies on the dominant methods of learning in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula, his syntax is influenced by the Romance dialects spoken in the Christian territories.³¹ We see a good example of this phenomenon in the sen-

28 W, fol. 32r:

وقد علمتم ايضاً انتم بحق يقين كما قال في جميع الكتب ان الله ليس كبا موضع ولا ءانبرغا موض وان كان الله ءانبر غشا موضع إكباسا موضع فليس يعلم هو الا الذي حضر فيه او سمعه بإذنه

The dispute on God’s measures is one of the “topoi” in interreligious medieval polemics.

29 On Ibn Matqa’s *Midraš ha-Ḥokhma* (1247 CE) see FONTAINE 2000. On Shem ʿTov ibn Falaquera’s *De’ot ha-Filosofim* see HARVEY 2000b.

30 III 1, qu. 31, § 5, 3: “Sanguis autem menstruus, quem feminae per singulos menses emittunt, impuritatem quandam naturalem habet corruptionis: sicut et ceterae superfluitates, quibus natura non indiget, sed eas expellit. Ex tali autem menstruo corruptionem habente, quod natura repudiat, non formatur conceptus: sed hoc est purgamentum quoddam illius puri sanguinis ... Habet tamen impuritatem libidinis in conceptione aliorum hominum ... Sed hoc in conceptione Christi non fuit ... Et ideo dicitur corpus Christi ex castissimis et purissimis sanguinibus Virginis formatum”, THOMAS AQUINAS *Summa theologiae*, p. 328.

31 As Alex Novikoff has recently argued, the dialectical and rational methods used in the Christian universities were part of what he calls a ‘culture of disputation’ that found its expression in many spheres of daily life; see NOVIKOFF 2013. See also the important study of SZPIECH 2012. Even though Muslims had a rich philosophical tradition, the number of philosophic works

tence: “laysa kabe mawḍi‘un wa lā enbargue mawḍi‘un”, or ‘[sc. ‘God’] does not fit in a place, and he does not take a place.’ Here there is a combination of Arabic nouns and Spanish verbs.³² These two characteristics of the religious language of the Mudejars are the outcome of their contact with the Christians and the Jews and the power relations existing between them.³³ Living in a mainly Christian society, the Mudejars could not help but adopt the Christian discourse if they wanted to dispute with them, and all the more, if they wanted to avoid the risk of being at a disadvantage with the Jews, who, as we have just said, gradually incorporated the Arabic knowledge, which had a wide circulation among Christians.

Nevertheless, the degree to which the Mudejar author of *Kitāb al-Mujādala* uses rational argumentation and/or Romance varies throughout the polemic, and Christians are also accused of being impure. This occurs, for example, when the Muslims receive insults from the Christians, who call them ‘dogs’. To be a ‘dog’ was a common vilification in the disputes between Muslims, Christians

owned by Mudejars and Moriscos is negligible; see VAN KONINGSVELD 1991; VAN KONINGSVELD 1992.

³² It is difficult to determine the precise dialect used in W because the manuscript is mainly written in Arabic, but the linguistic analysis suggests that it might be one of the variants spoken in the region of Murcia. In Z the Navarro-Aragonese and North-Western Catalan dialects are most probably being used.

³³ The animadversion between the two religious minority communities is manifested in the fact that one of the few insults in W is against the Jews: ‘God curse the Jews when the Muslims say: ‘you [sc. ‘the Muslims’] have no sacred law (‘shar’an)’”, fol. 51v: مسألة اخرى لليهود لعنهم الله اذا قال اليهود للمسلمين ليس لكم شرعا Muslims overtly refused to have Jews placed above them. This is illustrated in one of the agreements of the Capitulations of Granada signed in 1491 CE between the last sultan, Muḥammad XII (Boabdil), and the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, in which it is stated that the Jews can not collect taxes from Muslim communities: ‘Their highnesses would not permit the Jews to have power or command over the Moors, or to be collectors of any tax’, see HARVEY 1990, p. 317. We find similar views in earlier surrender treatises of Muslim territories to the Christians. However, circumstances were often different from expectations. The Jewish neighbourhoods (“aljamas”) in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula seem to have had well-organized elites and their members had occupied positions of responsibility. One was that of tax collectors of the Mudejar “aljamas”; see MEYERSON 2004, p. 13; CATLOS 2014, p. 409 sq. In comparison, the Christians’ exercise of power over the Mudejars seems to have been less problematic, and we occasionally find Mudejars collaborating with the Christians. This is the case of the Valencian Muslims who volunteered to join the Christian vigilant guard during the war of the two Peters (1356–1375 CE); see BOSWELL 1977, p. 174. For other examples of cooperation with the Christians see ECHEVARRÍA ARSUAGA 2002; GALÁN SÁNCHEZ 2010.

and Jews. As regards purity, the “ḥadīth” literature, or the collections of the sayings and actions of Muḥammad, has a negative attitude towards dogs, even though the Qur’ān contains no specific prohibitions related to dogs.³⁴ The Mālikite school, which was the main “madhhab” or school of law in the Iberian Peninsula, is not very strict with regard to dogs, as evidenced by the fact that it considers it unnecessary to wash a pot that has been licked by a dog seven times.³⁵ The language used by the Mudejar author of *Kitāb al-Mujādala* to counter-attack the abuse of the Christians is based on Islamic concepts of ritual purity and claims:

‘In their land, the Christians vilify the Muslims and call them dogs. Say to them that dogs are the ones who resemble dogs because of their state (“en lures condiciones”).³⁶ Look who are the ones who consume blood, walk around without being circumcised, without being in state of ritual purity and who eat carrion!’³⁷

To eat blood, to be uncircumcised and to remain in a state of impurity, are all practices to be avoided by Muslims and by Jews. But not all of these were significant to the Christians with whom the Mudejars had daily contact. According to the Acts of the Apostles, after the death of Jesus a conference took place where the Apostles discussed which practices non-Jews who would convert to Christianity should follow. During this conference, circumcision was abrogated, but the consumption of blood remained disallowed (Act 15). The author of *Kitāb al-Mujādala* knows this and claims that the Apostles, in particular Peter and Paul, changed the practices of the first Christians, that is to say, the practices introduced by Jesus to complete, though not to change, the laws of Moses. Cir-

³⁴ WENSINCK 1993.

³⁵ WYMAN-LANDGRAF 2013, p. 123. As has been noted above, this does not mean that the Mudejars did not consult the opinions of jurists of other schools of law on various issues. It must be noted that – with only one exception – all works on the Islamic jurisprudence (“fiqh”) of the Moriscos dealt with Mālikī doctrine, however; see HARVEY 1958, p. 168.

³⁶ The manuscript is damaged and difficult to read at this point but one can distinguish the first letters of the possessive pronoun “lures” (English ‘theirs’). At the time when the copy of W was made (1405), “lur/lurs” in the Navarro-Aragonese dialect had increasingly been substituted by the Castilian pronouns “su/sus” but its use had been kept in the Occitan and Catalan dialects; see PATO 2010. The Aragonese and Catalan dialects had had an important influence during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period on the language spoken in Villena, a village that was located in the seigneury, and later duchy and marquessate, of Villena – together with Pétrola; see DOMENE VERDÚ 2010.

³⁷ W, fol. 60r/v:

[قال النصا]رى للمسلمين في ارضهم بشتمة ياكلاب قل لهم الكلاب التي يشبهون [كلاب انلر]اش قندسيوناش انظروا من ياكل دما ويمشي بغير ختانة بغير طهر وياكل الميتة

cumcision and ritual purity belonged to these laws and may not be changed.³⁸ We find the same arguments in the “Aljamiado” version of a letter of ‘Umar in M:

‘They [sc. ‘Moses and Jesus’] did not make your [sc. ‘Christian’] sacrifice, they did not perform the ‘šalā’ [‘prayer’] towards your ‘qibla’ [‘direction of praying’], they did not make a cross nor a figure, and they did not leave the ‘khatānar’ [‘circumcision’]. Neither did they eat pork, nor did they place in their mosques graves, nor did they the ‘ṭahrar’ [‘purification’, ‘sanctification’] of the bones of the dead.’³⁹

In the history of Ghevond, ‘Umar states that Christians have abolished circumcision in favour of baptism,⁴⁰ but neither M nor *Kitāb al-Mujādala* establishes a link between them. We read in *Kitāb al-Mujādala*, however, that in Rome Paul had removed circumcision and put nothing in its place.⁴¹ These two polemics, as we shall see below, equate baptism with the rites of purification prescribed by God to Moses instead. This shift in terminology is buttressed by a change in the context in which the arguments of ‘Umar are used. Whilst the caliph wrote his letter as the ruler of a Muslim majority society in which the Jews and the Christians had the legal status of “*dhimmi*”, or protected minority communities, in the Iberian Peninsula the Christians were at the top of the hierarchy. Circumcision, a ritual practice among Jews and Muslims, had secondary importance before the greatest challenge to Mudejars: conversion through baptism.

It may have been of great importance to the Mudejar polemicists to downgrade the meaning of baptism as a new ritual practice and incorporate it into an Islamic conceptual framework. In *Kitāb al-Mujādala* we read:

³⁸ W, fol. 35v–36r, here fol. 36r:

قال يسوع في انجيل متى في الباب الرابع يعني قبطول حيث يقول اني لم ابعث ان نقص شي من الكتب يعني تورة موسى بل اكمله

³⁹ “... pork-ellos no-fizi.eron vu.est.ro sak.refiçi.o ni fizi.eron a.ççalāt enta vu.est.ra alqibla, ni fizi.eron k.ruç ni-fegura, ni-deron el-khatānar, ni-komi.eron pu.erko, ni-pusi.eron sus meçkidas fu.esas, ni su ṭahrar con los wesos de los mu.ertos”, M, fol. 90r/v, CARDAILLAC 1972, 2, p. 221.

⁴⁰ As JEFFERY 1944, p. 314 sq. n. 66 notes, this was the usual charge of Muslims against the Oriental Christians.

⁴¹ W, fol. 36r:

وبؤلوش هو الذي يطلق في أرض الرومة الختانة ويقول في ذلك لا يسوي شيء

‘Say to the Christians that the baptism of Jesus, ‘al-Nāṣirī’, that you Christians claim, is not baptism but ‘al-ṭuhr’ [i.e. ‘state of purification’] similar to the one carried out by Moses and Aaron and all the prophets of the Banū Isrā’īl.’

The Mudejar author also claims that John the Baptist did not use the cross nor oil to anoint the forehead when he baptized Jesus as contemporary Christians do. Instead, he used water, the waters of the river Jordan.⁴² Baptism is thus a rite of purification of the body, and water is necessary for baptism. Not to use water would be to change Gods’ precepts. Although in Islam it is accepted that some regulations are no longer valid through the principle of abrogation, or “naskh”, this only applies to Qur’ānic verses that are abrogated by new ones (“al-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh”) and to the Sunna, or the practices of Muḥammad. According to Islamic views, Christianity came to complete Judaism but not to abolish it and Islam is the latest revelation of God, which completes the previous two.

The “Aljamiado” polemic against the Christians in M says in this respect: ‘Know that ‘Īsā [sc. ‘Jesus’] commanded the ‘ṭahūr’ and the ‘waḍu’!’. Yet the Christians, its author argues, do not see any benefit in purifying the body with water and understand the “ṭahūr” metaphorically. In doing so, they are changing (“tabdil”) the laws of God. The “ṭahūr” is to Christians to “ṭahrar” (‘clean’) the heart with penitence and to turn away from sins. If the heart is clean and clear of sins, then the body is also clean.⁴³ They hold the same ethical approach with regard to the “wuḍū” (‘minor ablution’) and claim that the “istinjā”⁴⁴ does not require the use of water. Not touching and not committing sin with the genitals of the body suffices.⁴⁵ It is significant that, although the arguments in this

⁴² W, fol. 51r:

قل للنصارى ان التغتيس يسوع الناصري التي زعمتم النصارى ليس هو تغتيس الا طهر كما فعل موسى وهرون وجميع انبياء بني اسرائيل كما يامر كتاب التوراة لان في تغتيسكم التي علمتم الان تجعلوا انتم في المعبودية صليب وزيت وتدهنوا بذلك الدهن رأسه وجبهته ومن ذلك كله لم يعملوا شيئا الناصري وتجريب ذلك الانجيل حيث يقول وعمد يحيى ابن زكرياء ليسوع الناصري في واد الاردون

⁴³ “I sabed ke ‘Içá les mandó ell-a.ṭṭahūr i.-ell-alwaḍu” and “mas ellos dizen k-ell-a.ṭṭahūr es ṭahrar el-korazón kon-la-penetenci.a, i. -el apartami.ento de los pekados chicos i g.randes; k-el-korazón ku.ando es linpi.o i k.laro de los pekados, es todo el-ku.erpo linpi.o”, M, fol. 65v, CARDAILLAC 1972, 2, p. 119. Note the change of the Arabic verb “ṭahara” into the Romance form “ṭahrar”, with the first conjugation ending in “-ar” (for example Spanish “andar”, “contemplar”).

⁴⁴ This is the ablution after relieving oneself. “Istanjā, i.e. ‘he washed, or wiped with a stone or a piece of dry clay, the place [of exit] of his excrement’, LANE/LANE-POOLE 1863–1893, 8, p. 3028.

⁴⁵ “dizen k-aḷiçtinjā es ke se warde la-persona de fazer voltoryo ni-pekado kon-su-natura”, M, fol. 66v, CARDAILLAC 1972, 2, p. 123.

passage are directed against the Christians, this ablution, the mention of which is put in the mouth of the Christians, is referred to using its Arabic term, as are the terms for ritual purification (“ṭahūr”) and minor ablution (“wuḍū”). The author keeps in Arabic the concepts that have an important religious meaning for his fellow Muslims. The author of *Kitāb al-Mujādala* does the same when he deals with “istinjā”. Throughout the text we find the Romance translations of difficult words preceded by the formula “ya ‘anī” [for example: “al-tafsīr ya ‘anī glosa”].⁴⁶ And yet, when the author refers to “istinjā”, which is a quite specific term, he gives no Romance translation. This suggests that here, as well as in the anti-Christian “Aljamiado” polemic in M, the author’s targets were not only the Christians but also the Mudejar communities.⁴⁷ The language used here seems to have as its main objective finding a compromise between the religious languages of these two communities. The Mudejar polemicist keeps “istinjā” in Arabic, and at the same time he uses arguments based on hygiene and not on Islamic purity. Thereby he could approach more easily a Christian audience, to which “istinjā” is unknown as a ritual practice, while at the same time he appeals to the Mudejars’ religious duty to perform this ablution. The arguments of the author are that the hands mirror the body and that if the hands are clean, the body is also clean, and vice versa. If someone sleeps naked and touches his excretory orifices the whole night with his hands, he will wake up and his beard will take on the colour of excrement and urine. He concludes that it is necessary to perform this ablution with water and that it is not an unnecessary waste, as the Christians maintain.⁴⁸ These examples show that the subject of water was an essential component to the polemical literature of the Mudejars with the Christians about purity.

⁴⁶ ‘The ‘tafsīr’, that is to say, the gloss or comment’, W, fol. 32v.

⁴⁷ Taoufik Liman notes a similar phenomenon among the Moriscos, and argues that they generally did not translate terms that had an “intrínseco contenido espiritual islámico que tienen equivalentes en el léxico religioso romance, por temor a que éstos los contaminen con sus connotaciones cristianas”. Liman provides a list of these terms; see LIMAN 2002, p. 80.

⁴⁸ M, fol. 56r:

إذا انام في سريره بالليل وهو عريان يحمل يده بجميع جسده حتى الى موضع الاستنجا ثم يحمل يده لحيته يوقرها من الخر كل ليلة حتى يخبثها بالخر و بهذه السبب هو احسن ان يغسل موضع الاستنجا بالماء

3 The Dispute with the Jews on “Ṭuhr”

Let us now turn our attention to the dispute between the Mudejars and the Jews about purity. In this case, the Mudejars deal with different topics and use a different kind of language than in their dispute with the Christians. In this section, four anti-Jewish polemics will be examined: *Kitāb al-Mujādala* and the Arabic original of *Ta'yīd al-milla*, both in W; the “Aljamiado” version of *Ta'yīd al-milla* in M and an “Aljamiado” polemic against the Jews and the Christians in Zaragoza, Fondo Documental Histórico de las Cortes de Aragón, Ms. 8 (Calanda) (= Z).

Kitāb al-Mujādala dedicates a short chapter (“bāb”) to the purity of the Jews. In only eight lines, the author claims that, according to their own laws, the state of purity (“ṭuhr”) is compulsory to Jews. He then recounts the Jews’ arguments for this and finally refutes their views on purity. He begins by saying that, as found in ‘the laws of Leviticus about leprosy’, ritual purification is commanded to the Jews after sexual intercourse or a nocturnal ejaculation. Sexual intercourse or ejaculation brings men into a state of major impurity, called “janāba” in Islam. The Mudejar polemicist accuses the Jews of not performing the rituals of purity when they are in the state of “janāba”. The Jews, according to the author, retort in turn that these and other precepts such as not drinking wine were only valid in the ‘land of the Pact’ (“arḍ al-‘ahd”) and in the land of Canaan.⁴⁹ This Jewish response implies that they consider these obligations to be void in the context of the Iberian Peninsula. The Mudejar author retorts that both Moses and Aaron died in the desert before entering the land of Canaan. They too prohibited to Jews to come close to wine and to pork and made purification obligatory before entering the Temple of Jerusalem (“al-bayt al-quds”) and Jerusalem itself (“bayt al-maqdis”) if they were in the state of major impurity (“janāba”). To the author of *Kitāb al-Mujādala*, this is proof that

⁴⁹ W, fol. 40v:

باب في الطهر اليهود وذلك موجود في التوراة في شريعة البصر حيث يقول كل رجل يضاجع مع امراته مضاجعه انسال او يحلم ويخرج منه النطفه فهو منجس وينبغي له ان يطهر بماء ويكون منجس الى المغرب زعم اليهود في ذلك ان الشريعة الطهر واشياء اخرى مأمورة في كتاب التوراة مثل الخمر ليس هي مأمورة ان يفعلوها الا في أرض العهد وفي أرض كنعان قل لهم ان موسى وأخيه هرون لم يدخلوا أرض كنعان وماتا في البرية كما قال في كتاب توراة حيث يقول الرب لموسى وأخيه هرون ببنيه لا تقربوا الخمر ولا شي يخرج منه ولا تدخلوا في البيت القدس يعني قب الزمان وانتم اذا أصابتم جنابة فطهر واقبل ان تدخلوا بيت المقدس

Note that in Judaism there is no general prohibition against the drinking of wine; see BERENBAUM/SKOLNIK 2007.

the Jews do not comply with what God commanded them to do. The chapter on the purity of the Jews ends in this way and, some short passages on dietary laws aside, these eight lines are the only direct reference to purity in a polemic against the Jews and the Christians that consists of about a hundred and twenty-four folia.

The “Aljamiado” polemic against the Jews and the Christians in Z dedicates three and a half folios to the Jewish laws on leprosy in the book of Leviticus. The same passages appear in the Arabic *Ta’yid al-milla* in W and in its “Aljamiado” version in M. The Arabic version of *Ta’yid al-milla* quotes the passages about leprosy in more detail and I therefore will look at this first.⁵⁰ The author claims that the Jews make offerings, use frankincense and do other things that are incomprehensible and irrational. These practices were introduced by king Zerubabel to meet the Jewish need to worship idols and to ask their favours through offerings and anointment-rites. To sustain his claims, the Mudejar polemicist provides an almost literal rendering of Leviticus 15 and a detailed survey of the ritual offerings a priest should make to purify a leper. He also includes the rituals that should be performed when leprosy develops in a house, in a cloth or in a leather skin. The Mudejar author expresses his rejection of these practices and asks, astonished: ‘Now, how can leprosy develop in a house or in cloth or (in) skin?’⁵¹ The same passages and the same question are repeated in the “Aljamiado” version of *Ta’yid al-milla* in M and in the “Aljamiado” polemic against the Jews and the Christians in Z. We can see, however, that the language used in these passages is different in each of these polemics.

As we have mentioned above, the Arabic version of *Ta’yid al-milla* provides a rendering of Leviticus in Arabic, too, and the author seems to be addressing the Jews alongside the Muslims. In M, however, these passages are written in Hebrew, Arabic and “Aljamiado”. In order to understand the language used here, the views of Ryan Szpiech are instructive. Szpiech looks at the *Pugio fidei*, a polemic against Jews and Muslims written by the Dominican Ramon Martí in which Martí used Hebrew characters for the Arabic quotations in his text. According to Szpiech, Martí did this to show his knowledge of Jewish sources and to protect himself from the criticism of his Jewish adversaries. By doing so, Szpiech argues, Martí tries to figure out how the Jews understood Islam, or in other words, what a ‘Jewish perspective’ of the Qur’ānic authorities was.⁵² M follows the same procedure as Martí in so far as it renders the passages from

⁵⁰ KASSIN 1969, 1, p. 204–208; KASSIN 1969, 2, p. 366–370 (Text: *ibid.*, p. 64–68).

⁵¹ KASSIN 1969, 1, p. 207.

⁵² SZPIECH 2011, p. 82.

Leviticus 15 in Hebrew but written in Arabic characters.⁵³ Every one or two sentences, the author translates the Hebrew in Arabic characters into Romance.⁵⁴ These are the only passages in the whole polemic that are written in Hebrew, which seems to indicate that here the author has a special interest (probably the same interest that Ramon Martí had) in demonstrating his knowledge of the Torah to his Jewish audience and protecting himself from possible criticism from the Jews. He also makes these passages accessible to a Muslim audience which could read Arabic characters but not Hebrew. It is interesting to note that the Romance translation of the Hebrew passages sometimes includes words in Arabic. For instance, ‘unclean’ is rendered in Romance and in Arabic, and the translation of the Hebrew passages about a leper reads: ‘he is unclean, that is to say, ‘manjūs’.’ “Manjūs” means impure and is the opposite of “ṭāhīr”. It is a passive participle of the Arabic verb “najas” commonly used to designate an object or person who has been defiled. Being pure is central to Islam and, therefore, we may assume that the author made a conscious decision to use the term “manjūs”, probably to emphasize the importance of avoiding uncleanness. In this way, he, as Martí, is not only presenting what could be called an Islamic perspective of the Torah and addressing the outer-group; he also addresses a Muslim audience and encourages other Mudejars to remain faithful to their Islamic practices. In the polemic contained in Z, Leviticus is also quoted. Here, the language used is a hybrid form of “Aljamiado” and Arabic.⁵⁵ An example of this is:

53 It must be noted that writing Hebrew in Arabic characters seems to be highly exceptional in Muslim literature and I have not (yet) found any other examples.

54 For example, we read M, fol. 34r: ‘That says this in Hebrew: ‘wa-s kī-tasī miminu ṣafkhafaṣ (ḏ) zarā wa-raḥaṣ bi-ṣarru yamī’ir wa-ṭamī’, which means: ‘the one who would sleep with a woman or in dreams, everything that come out of him is ‘manjūs’, that is to say, unclean’. Compare with ‘we-’ish ki-teze’ mimenu shikhvat-zera’ we-raḥaz ba-mayim’ et -kol-besaro we-ṭame’ ‘ad-ha-’erev’ (Leviticus 15, 16), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 184 [‘When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain unclean until evening’, *Leviticus*, p. 242]. For the Muslim knowledge of the Bible during the Middle Ages and the main Muslim arguments against, see LAZARUS-YAFEH 1992.

55 There are various approaches towards the use of “Aljamiado” and Arabic and its significance among the Mudejar and Morisco communities. While for a long time scholars have understood this phenomenon mainly as a consequence of the cultural decline and progressive assimilation of the members of these communities to the Christian majority society, recent studies have pointed out that “Aljamiado” was most probably used as early as the fourteenth century. Moreover, the production of documents in Arabic has proven to be greater than previously thought, which seems to indicate the Mudejars’ strong attachment to Islamic culture; see HARVEY 1958; GARCÍA-ARENAL RODRÍGUEZ 1984; WIEGERS 1994; BARCELÓ/LABARTA 2009. I refer the reader to the various bibliographies on the subject by Luis Fernando Bernabé Pons and Mikel

‘and anoint with it the one who gives the ‘baraş’ [i.e. ‘leprosy’] six or seven times ‘wa ḥasibhu naqīyan ṣabiḥan thumma ‘aṭlaq’ the living bird in the uncultivated land. ‘Thumma ba‘da dhālīka ...’.⁵⁶

In Z, the same linguistic phenomenon takes place as in W, wherein the main language was Arabic, interspersed with Romance words. Yet, here Arabic is used instead. As occurs in M, the passages on leprosy in Z are the only ones in which another language is used alongside “Aljamiado”. A leper is called “baraşiento”, a combination of the Arabic “baraş”, or leprosy, with the Romance suffix “-siento”, meaning ‘the one who is infected with ‘baraş’, the leper’. What is interesting here is the author’s answer to the Jews:

‘It is true what the learned in physics [say], that the ‘baraş’ is generated in the human body because of a damaged humour ... and that occurs to men because if a man sleeps with his woman when she has her ‘flur’⁵⁷ (menstruation), and she becomes pregnant of him, then the ‘baraş’ would generate in the body of the embryo.’⁵⁸

It is true that the rabbinic interpretations of Leviticus considered children born from sexual relations during the menstrual period of a woman (“nidda”) to be impure and they claimed that leprosy in these cases was a punishment from God. Medieval Christian physicians and theologians also believed that leprosy could occur if a woman conceived when she was menstruating.⁵⁹ But leprosy, he

de Epalza-Ferrer, and to the important recent publication of Luce López-Baralt on Morisco literature; see BERNABÉ PONS 1992; BERNABÉ PONS/DE EPALZA-FERRER 1995–1998; LÓPEZ-BARALT 2009. I argue throughout my dissertation that manuscripts like W were probably the Arabic originals of the later polemical literature of the Moriscos. See for the Morisco polemical literature CARDAILLAC 1977.

56 “i-unte con ello el que de-l al-baraş seis o siete vegadas wa ḥasibhu naqīyan ṣabiḥan thumma ‘aṭlaq el pasaro vivo en el yermo thumma ba‘da dhālīka ...”, Z, fol. 156r [‘And spread with it the one who has leprosy (the leper) six or seven times and consider him radiantly pure. Then set the living bird free in the uncultivated land. Then, after that ...].

57 “‘tammath’, romanisch ‘fulur.’ span. ‘flor’, auch mit der Bedeutung ‘menstruación de la mujer’ DRAE 689c”, KARBSTEIN 2002, p. 162.

58 “que cierto es açerca de los sabidores de la fisica que-l al-baraş se-ngendra en el cuerpo del onbre por umor dañada ... i-aquello viene al onbre por razon que-l onbre quando se icha con la muller abiendo ella su flor i se-npreña de-l estonce se-ngendrara el al-baraş en el cuerpo de la criatūra”, Z, fol. 157v–158r.

59 CUFFEL 2007, p. 260 n. 66; SHALEV-EYNI 2009, p. 195; RESNICK 2012, p. 118. NIRENBERG 1996, p. 96 notes more generally that ‘women could also be hidden sources of leprosy, first because they were believed more resistant than men to the disease, and second because they could transmit it sexually. Though women who had sex with lepers would not themselves be infected ..., the sperm would remain within the woman, infecting the next male to have sex with her ...’.

argues, can only occur in a body composed of four humours and not in a simple body, such as earth. Obviously, the author of Z does not refer here to the opinions of the rabbis but to those of the “sabidores de la física”, that is to say, ‘those learned in physics’: physicians who were most probably Christian, if not Greek. By setting off Jewish ‘fancies’ and ‘true’ knowledge against one another, the author further highlights that Jews, unlike Christians or Muslims, are unable to properly understand scientific or logical reasoning.

4 Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn. The Mudejars’ approach and the language they use to talk about purity do not only depend on Islamic views on the subject but on whether they dispute with the Jews and/or with the Christians. This means that even though their understanding of the subject falls within what can be called ‘normative Islam’, the local contexts in which the Mudejars lived shaped the way in which they ultimately conceptualized purity and argued about it. The first aspect to be noted in the works discussed here is that the Mudejars address the Christians and the Jews separately and use different arguments in their attacks. The differences in the ways of addressing both groups appear to be connected to the asymmetrical power relations between the Mudejars and these two groups. The Christians were at the top of the hierarchy, whereas the Jewish minority communities competed directly with the Mudejars for the Christians’ favour. Accordingly, the language used by the Mudejars when they dispute with the Christians is more moderate and their arguments are closer to that of their addressees. They do not just attack Christian views on purity but try to convince the Christians that they have abandoned the teachings of Jesus, who remained faithful to the Jewish practices. They also try to claim that the Christians’ religion has been altered by the Apostles. Therefore, the best thing for Christians to do is to convert to Islam. The Mudejars do not use Islamic arguments about purity and mostly object to Christian rituals by using logical reasoning. The polemic with the Jews, however, is directed against their revealed scriptures, that is to say, the Torah. The tone is harsh: the Jews have not been misled by their spiritual leaders but have abandoned the laws of Moses on their own initiative and have argued that God’s commands are not valid in the Iberian Peninsula. Their stubborn attitude towards God is illustrated by the fact that Zerubbabel had to change the rituals and adapt them to Jewish needs. The changes introduced by Zerubbabel can be seen in the passages on leprosy, and these are absurd in the eyes of the Mudejars. The use of Hebrew in Arabic

characters and perhaps also that of Arabic in “Aljamiado” texts seem to parallel the Christian missionary polemical techniques in which a knowledge of the adversary’s sources was central. The Mudejars, too, wanted to show their knowledge of Jewish sources. At the same time, they wanted to make these sources available to their own communities, so that they could, in turn, dispute with the Jews. This, however, does not explain the use of Arabic in the “Aljamiado” polemic in Z. More research is needed at this point, but one might argue that, since the verses from Leviticus deal with rituals, the copyists of this codex could have been more inclined to keep the language of an earlier Arabic translation of the biblical text.⁶⁰ It can be explained, moreover, by the fact that the Mudejar communities were most probably present among the audiences of these polemics, as it is suggested by the use elsewhere of specific Arabic terms and not of their Romance equivalents. It also must be taken into account that, at the time when these controversies were copied, the Mudejars had most probably not yet developed a Romance vocabulary for these terms. The literary production of the Mudejars was halfway between the Arabic literature and the Romance literature that would be widely cultivated some centuries later by the Moriscos, and this might explain the linguistic hybridization of some texts. The analysis presented above suggests that we need to understand the language use of the Mudejars not only as the result of cultural decay, but also on the basis of the Mudejars’ strategic aims and agency in constructing their religious identities.

Finally, in Islam impurity is not contagious and this is also visible in the Mudejar polemics. Whilst the Christians forced the Jews to buy the food they had touched in the markets, the Mudejar polemicists never refer to defilement by contact when they address purity in general terms, nor when they specifically refer to blood and bodily fluids. Much to the contrary, they laugh at the Jewish belief that leprosy, and thus pollution, can spread into a house or a leather skin. From all this, it seems that, though purity was a prerequisite for Mudejars in order to perform ritual acts, it did not worry them excessively in their everyday contact with Christians and Jews. The few references to purity in the Mudejar polemics I have looked at suggest that it may not have been a central issue but it certainly was an important one in the religious disputes of the Mudejars with the members of these two communities.

⁶⁰ This aspect has not been covered here, but it must be noted that Sa’adia Gaon’s Judeo-Arabic translation of the Bible, known as *Tafsir al-Tawrā* (see SA’ADIA GAON *Targūm*), was very influential in North Africa and al-Andalus. Moreover, we must not forget the oral component in the transmission of the biblical texts when studying the Middle Ages.

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