The religious polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia

Identity and religious authority in Mudejar Islam

Colominas Aparicio, M.

Citation for published version (APA):

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Chapter One: The Connection between Religious Polemics and Notions of Identity and Religious Authority among the Mudejars

Introduction

The religious treatises which are the basis of this dissertation belong to the vast literature of Muslim polemics with the Christians and the Jews. The Qurʾān and the sources about the life and acts of Muḥammad (Sunna) record the earliest confrontations between Muslims and the members of other religions; later accounts provide evidence of a prolific literature of polemics which appeared in the first centuries of Muslim history and developed throughout the Middle Ages.¹

The public sessions or majlis held in some eastern cities such as Baghād or Cairo served as important platforms for the debate of religious matters, and seem to have fostered the production of written polemics, known as munāẓara, muṣākhara, muḥāwara and mujādala.² These sessions were eventually followed by the conversion of the Muslims’ religious opponents.³ Nevertheless, certain scholars, among them the Andalusī traveller Abū ʿUmar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Saʿdī, voiced their strong disapproval of the contacts between Muslims, Christians and Jews and of the use of ratio in the discussion with unbelievers. A point illustrated in the biographical report by al-Humaydī.⁴

¹ Many pages have been written about Muslim religious controversies in the Middle Ages. See inter alia Adang, 1996; Lazarus-Yafeh, 1992; and the annotated bibliography on interreligious polemics in Snoek, 2004, 517–588. The number of publications which deal directly or indirectly with religious polemics in the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa in this period is also extensive. Some monographs focus on Arabic-speaking Christians in al-Andalus, and, as we shall see, their polemical works are closely connected to those among Muslims in Christian Iberia. See on this subject Berman, 1994, Aillet, 2010, Potthast, 2013.

² See for the majlis, Lazarus-Yafeh et al., 1999. In particular, the article by Sklare, who finds in the public sessions in tenth-century Baghād the most probable background from which a number of Jewish treatises of polemics against Islam emerged and discusses the use in them of earlier Muslim anti-Jewish works. Sklare, 1999, 146. See the article by Sidney Griffith in the same volume for some examples of how Christians put them into writing, after these sessions. For munāẓara, see Wagner in Elz. As Wagner notes, munāẓara and its synonyms were used not only to refer to the disputes with the Christians and the Jews but also to the internal disputes among the adherents of different schools of law in Islam. For the answer to an adversary, designated as radd, see Gimaret in Elz.

³ Sklare, 1999, 141.

authors have sought an explanation for Ibn Sā‘id’s negative attitude in the fact that he belonged to the Mālikī School of Law, which rejected the exclusive use of rational methods in exegesis. The pre-eminence of Mālikism in al-Andalus in the eleventh century could have contributed to a religious climate in the Muslim West which was unpropitious to polemical activities. Such debates seem to have been virtually non-existent until the fall of the Caliphate of Córdoba in 1031 CE.\textsuperscript{5}

However, Ibn Sā‘id’s distaste for the use of ratio in inter-religious polemics should also be explained in the light of the broader discussion among Christians, Jews and Muslims about the religious authority granted to philosophy, logic and natural philosophy in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula. While some claimed that Revelation alone served to approach God and to understand how He created the world, others argued that sciences based on human knowledge were in harmony with the divine and essential in searching to understand these issues. From their introduction in the twelfth century, rationalistic-philosophical sources in the exploration of theological matters shook the foundations of Iberian Christianity.\textsuperscript{6} Within the Jewish communities, Moses ben Maimon’s (Maimonides), 1135-1204 CE) \textit{Mishne Torah} turned philosophy into a matter of polemics and spawned a long-lasting confrontation between those who supported and those who opposed its use, arousing occasional heated debates until the early fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{7}

In al-Andalus, in his \textit{Ṭabaqāt al-umam} ['The Generations of Nations'] Ša‘id al-Andalusi records how al-Manṣūr (938-1002 CE) burned a large number of books of logic, astrology and other ancient sciences from the library of his predecessor “in order to gain the sympathy of the general population of al-Andalus and to denounce the attitude of the Caliph al-Ḥakam towards these sciences as shameful, because they used to be obsolete among their ancestors […] Whosoever studied them was suspected of apostasy and rejection of the Holy Law”.\textsuperscript{8} At a later period, the religious reform of Ibn Tūmart and the subsequent Almohad policies emphasized rational reasoning as opposed to tradition (\textit{taqlid}).\textsuperscript{9} During the apogee of philosophical inquiry in al-Andalus, Caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf (1163-1184 CE) commissioned Ibn Ṭufayl to comment on the treatises of Aristotle and to make them more accessible to him. Given his advanced age, Ibn Ṭufayl handed this huge task over to his young friend Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 CE). The latter fell into disgrace when the new Almohad Caliph, Yāqūb al-Manṣūr (1184-1199 CE), launched a campaign against

\textsuperscript{5} Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, 1994, 194.
\textsuperscript{6} Szpiech, 2013b, Chapter Two, particularly 62-76.
\textsuperscript{7} The debate lasted throughout the Middle Ages, albeit with less virulence. For the Maimonidean controversy, see Sarachek, 1935; Silver, 1965; Stroumsa, 2009.
\textsuperscript{8} Van Koningsveld, 1994a: 441 and n. 79.
\textsuperscript{9} Ela s.v. “al-Muwaḥḥidūn” (Shatzmiller).
philosophers, presumably with the purpose of gaining the support of the Andalusi scholars, the ṭalaba, in his war against the Christians. However, the Caliph changed his mind as soon as he returned to his court in Morocco and Ibn Rushd was restored to favour.

These events show that attitudes towards philosophy changed over time and that the terms of discussion in the Iberian Peninsula were not set by internal disputes alone but could also be influenced by political circumstances and intercommunity dynamics. Szpiech convincingly shows that, in the case of the Christian territories, the change in the attitudes of Christians towards the authority of sources based on human knowledge such as philosophy was stimulated by conversions (mainly of Jews) to the dominant religion. He speaks about a crisis of auctoritas, the latter being the Latin term for what Szpiech defines as the capacity of an author to create – although God is always seen as ultimately responsible for human actions. Auctoritas also refers to that author’s legacy as it is passed on to future generations. Szpiech argues that before the twelfth-century auctoritas was derived almost exclusively from divine sources such as the Bible, and the individual author remained in the shadows. Slowly but steadily, however, such approaches were challenged by reason (ratio) and auctoritas needed to be supported by rational proof. The crisis of auctoritas prompted the use of biographies of converts in polemical literature and placed the question of whether or not reason rather than scripture was the most suitable way to preach, teach and convert in the foreground of Christian concerns about religion. In the light of these considerations, the religious authority attributed to texts emerges as an important tool in inter-religious debate. This seems to provide significant insights into the negotiation of religious identities in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula.

Later in this dissertation, we shall see that Mudejar polemics also address questions about the authoritative status of philosophy. Despite the fact that most Arabic manuscripts on Islamic law (fiqh) which were in circulation in the Iberian Christian territories dealt with Mālikī doctrine, it will be noted that not all Mudejar religious scholars agreed with the views proposed by the Andalusi Ibn Sa’dī mentioned above. The analysis of Arabic and Aljamiado polemics below reveals that some authors of polemics not only sanctioned engagement in disputes with Christians and Jews, but also seem to have held various approaches towards the authority of texts as a means to help them construct their religious identities as Muslims. Consequently, whereas some polemicists seem to have

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10 Macdonald, 1972, 156. See also, Fierro, 1999.
11 Szpiech, 2013b, passim.
12 As Harvey notes, most Morisco Arabic works on fiqh previously owned by the Mudejars are concerned with Mālikī doctrine, with the exception of one work written in Latin characters which had, according to that author, circulated in North Africa but not in the Iberian Peninsula. Harvey, 1958, 168. However, it does not follow that Mālikism was the only school of jurisprudence with followers in the Iberian Peninsula, as is shown by the example of the well-known eleventh-century Andalusi polemicist Ibn Ḥazm, who was a Zāhirī.
regarded speculative theology, philosophy and natural sciences as sources of religious authority in their own right, with which they could build their arguments, others appear to have shifted the burden of proof from the canonical sources of Islam to the Christian and Jewish scriptures and accepted their authority on condition that the latter were subject to a different reading. It is a major contention of this thesis that the use of different sources by various authors finds its rationale in the different ways in which they understand the authority of texts. On the basis of the discussion of the different approaches to this issue in Mudejar polemics, in the final chapters of this dissertation we shall be able to offer a characterization of the leaders of their communities and their reliance on the knowledge produced in the Muslim centres of their time.

In order to put the ways in which the Mudejars articulated ideas of identity and religious authority in their treatises of religious polemics into perspective, our first step is to address religious authority in Mudejar Islam. This chapter is guided by the assumption that religious authority is relational or, as Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke propose, is the “projected, perceived and put into practice in any given context”. Therefore, I address some contexts in which this authority was exercised, namely: 1.1.) the Mudejars’ own understandings of a main source of authority in Islam, the Sacred Law, or sharī‘a; 1.2.) the relationship of Mudejars with the Christians and the Jews; and 1.3.) the place of religious polemics in Mudejar communities.

1.1. The Sacred Law, or Sharī‘a

The first context of religious authority which I would like to address here is the normative framework provided Mudejars by Sacred Law or sharī‘a. From Arabic and Aljamiado sources we know that the religious obligations, or acts of worship prescribed by sharī‘a, the ‘ibadāt, of Mudejars and later Moriscos were similar to those of other Muslims. They are summarized in the following passage, taken from a late fifteenth-century manuscript:

The salvation of an individual is dependent on his performance of the prescribed prayers, salawāt, five times a day. The servant of God who is faithful, humble and patient also cannot forget scrupulously to perform the ablution, wudu‘, to observe the Fast, ramadān, to give generously without excuses the obligatory alms, zakāt, to the ‘ulamā’

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13 Krämer and Schmidtke, 2006, 1.
14 Sometimes the majority Christian society did not respect the religious rights of Mudejars and there are examples of Mudejars not being allowed to perform the call to prayer for a certain period. These cases and the reactions of the international Muslim community will be discussed below.
These obligations belong to the body of moral norms and rules of conduct prescribed for the virtuous Muslim, and one of the tasks of the Muslim legal scholars is to determine how they should be implemented. The major role of sharī'a in Mudejar polemics is evidenced by the claims of one Mudejar author who says that sharī'a rests on the Unity of God (tawḥīd), which is its fundament (aṣl), "in the same way [...] that the foundation of a wall is essential to the existence of a wall, so sharī'a cannot exist without the unity and the prescriptions too, which are the branches". Such an approach is consistent with the fact that, although they lived in a situation in which it was not possible to implement Islamic law in its entirety, Mudejars do not seem to have ceased their efforts to produce a legislative corpus to govern their communities and to ensure that Islamic laws were respected in Christian courts. Evidence for this is the composition of such works as the Leyes de moros ['Moorish Laws'], the Book of Sunna and Xara ['Libro de Sunna y Xara'], and the Sunni Breviary ['Breviario Sunni']. They did not always achieve this goal and Christian authorities often reversed Islamic rulings, for instance, those involving capital punishment, on the grounds that they "would entail [...] damage to or destruction of royal property". Limitations on the application of the sharī'a constituted one of the reasons provided by the 'hard line' Muslim scholars discussed in the Introduction to question both the legitimacy of Mudejar religious scholars and the Mudejars' residence in Christian territories. What compromised religious authority in the Mudejar aljamas is precisely the understanding of sharī'a by some scholars as an ideal legal system which regulated all aspects of Muslim life and whose enforcement could only be guaranteed by a Muslim ruler. However, it remains to be seen whether the

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55 "La salvación del hombre está en un estricto cumplimiento de las oraciones canónicas ṣalawāt, cinco veces al día. El siervo de Dios, fiel, humilde y paciente, tampoco se puede olvidar de efectuar escrupulosamente la ablución wudū', de observar el ayuno ṣawm de Ramadán, de dar sin remilgos la limosna obligatoria zuqāt a los ulemas y la limosna voluntaria ṣadaqā a los pobres y los menesterosos de manera generosa, de ir en peregrinación ḥajj a la Meca si su peculio lo permite y de luchar en la senda de Dios ūḥd contra los infieles para ganarse el cielo y morir como un mártir." Hofman Vannus, 2001, 12/95-13/95. In this passage, Hofman Vannus summarizes various folia of this manuscript. This treatise was found with many other manuscripts between the walls of a house in the town of Ocaña and, judging from a letter in one of the manuscripts, they are to be dated after 1483 CE. Loc. cit., 8-12.

56 MS AF 58, f. 48v.

57 However, it should be noted that, notwithstanding the fact that the Castilian religious scholar Ycà Gidelli wrote the Breviario Sunni to make sharī'a available to his co-religionists, he seems to have adopted this perspective as he was living in the Muslim territories of the dār al-Īlām, in which Mālikī fiqh was dominant and, in this way, he warns against living in the land of the infidels ["No biuas en tierra de ynfieles"]. Wiegers, 1994, 132. For requests for the enforcement of the Islamic law by Mudejars dating from as late as 1492 CE, see Pascual Cabrero, 2013.

58 Catlos, 2004, 222. See also, Nirenberg, 1996, 136 and n. 35.
religious beliefs and practices of the Mudejars did not have a place within Islam and whether, in their treatises on religious polemics, the Mudejars’ religious leaders departed from the normative views on Sacred Law (sharī‘a) held in majority Muslim lands. In other words, an evaluation needs to be made to assess how specific Mudejar Islam was. The answer to this question requires thinking about the meanings of sharī‘a to the Mudejars as a first step.

In this context, the meaning of sharī‘a or sacred law seems to have come close to the Islamic concept of religion or dīn, also called “el adín del alislam” [the dīn of Islam] by the later Mudejars, and to have been understood primarily as the ritual obligations prescribed by the Islamic faith (farā‘īd). The importance attached to the farā‘īd is illustrated by the composition of such works on the subject as a treatise on the Five Pillars of Islam according to the Malikī School of Law written at the end of the fifteenth century by the faqīh Abū’ Abd Allāh Muḥammad Espinyel at the request of Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al- Raḥmān b. al-Mustajab. That the faqīh could have been a Mudejar is suggested by the complaints in the introduction about the difficult conditions of life in the “jazīra al-ghariba” (the distant/western Peninsula). Mudejars might have sought the approval of their interpretation of this pious topic of Muslims in Islamic territories, which is suggested by the fact that, in the same introduction, the faqīh dedicates his work to the fuqahā’ and to dhū al-wizāratayn (‘the holder of the two vizierates’, a function which was introduced into al-Andalus by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in 939 CE). Besides this example, we find similar questions about the fulfilment of the pillars of Islam, such as the paying of the annual alms tax (zakāt), well into the fifteenth century. That doubts about the fulfilment of the farā‘īd persisted is evident from the questions posed to the fifteenth-century Mudejar Granadan female mufti and mystic ‘la Mora de Úbeda’, who helped her co-religionists find ways to perform the zakāt even when there was no Islamic government to collect the tax.

Sharī‘a was framed within the Mudejar aljamas and was formed by their inter-religious polemics and interpretations on the subject provided by contemporary Christians and Jews. In this regard, it should be noted that sharī‘a was often translated as ‘divine law’ in the Middle Ages and, more specifically, as a synonym of ‘revealed Book’. This is illustrated by the following passage from the beginning of a sermon attributed to the Jewish

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19 See the entry “Dīn” by Gardet in El2. Dīn also appears in the title of an anonymous Aljamiado work MS BNE 5252, Tratado y declaración y guía para seguir y mantener el addín del alislam [‘Treatise, and Declaration, and Guide to Following the addín of alislám’]. Wiegers, 1994, 75. See also an example in Harvey, 1958, 363 quoting MS J12. See also, Glei and Reichmuth, 2012.

20 MS 26-IV.7 (Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid), f. 4v.

21 El2 s.v. “Wazīr”. One of the holders of this post was Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1375 CE) who called for jihād against the Christians in one of his khatbas. Jones, 2012, 148. Also, El2 s.v. “Ibn al-Khaṭīb” (Bosch-Vilà).

22 Harvey, 1958, 329.
convert to Christianity Alfonso de Valladolid (known as Abner of Burgos before his conversion):

Among all of us Christians and Jews and Moors there is a great debate about the law of God, because you Jews say “We have a better law”, and you Moors say, “We have a better law”, and we Christians say that our law is better and truer than either of yours, and about this is the debate between us and you’. Each side is said to have an authoritative book, the Gospels, the Talmud and the Qur’an respectively, and ‘these three books are opposed to one another’.23

Afonso’s view is that the ‘law’ of God as it was revealed to the Prophets provides the grounds for the religious obligations of these communities. Such an understanding is also found in Mudejar polemics. Hence, a Mudejar polemicist claims that it is better to marry than to remain a bachelor (‘la virginidad’), because the Prophets (whom he identifies as the Patriarchs, ‘los Patriarcas’) were married and they are those “from whom people (an-nās) have received the Sacred Law (shārī‘a)”.24 Minor and major ablutions, circumcision, divorce or consumption of pork and wine are subjects of controversy in Mudejar Arabic and Aljamiado polemics with Christians and Jews, and their authors touch on the role of the religious obligations ordained by God to each of these communities in divine history. Mudejars held a view on abrogation (naskh) which averred that Muḥammad was the last of the Prophets sent by God (‘Seal of the Prophecy’) and Islam was the religion which corrected and completed the previous revelations. As a Mudejar polemicist puts it: “You [namely: the Jews, MCA] may also know that the nation of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, continues to uphold his religion (din) and Sacred Law (shārī‘a) after his death, to our own day; they have neither altered nor changed one item thereof.”25 Another polemical treatise quotes the views of the Christians and the Jews, who either separately or together, claim that they have a Sacred Law (shārī‘a), unlike the Mudejars, who have none. The Mudejar author repeats the same argument once again later in this treatise, with the difference that Christians and Jews now explicitly mention that the Mudejars have no law sent by God.26 This addition, sent by God, indicates the distinction between this kind of shārī‘a and other possible uses of the term by the author elsewhere.

The fact that Islamic law was a subject of polemics and that, as we have seen,

24 MS AF 58, f. 55r.
25 I have made extensive use of Kassin’s PhD thesis which I have sometimes slightly adapted. In these cases I have also referred to the second volume in which he gives the Arqabic text. Here, Kassin, 1969, I, 194; II, 357 (f. 55).
26 MS AF 58 f. 55r.
conditions did not always allow its full implementation, does not mean that Mudejars entirely abandoned the ideal concept of *sharīa*. We shall see below that they placed especial emphasis on the ethical individual responsibility which this major source of religious authority in Islam entails. This is in line with one particular quotation from a Mudejar polemic by the well-known philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes or, according to the author of this work, referred to as the ‘Comentador’ among the Christians). Ibn Rushd claims that there are two types of knowledge: “knowledge by revelation (ash-samā‘iyya), which is the Sacred Law (*sharīa*) and is accepted by people as it is revealed to them, and rational knowledge (al-aqīliyya), which is knowledge acquired by education by proof (*‘ilm al-ta‘līm bi-l-burhān*).” The analysis of Arabic and Aljamiado polemical sources, to which we shall turn later, will make clear that education, ethics and individual judgement taken in conjunction with the *farā‘id* underpinned the Mudejars’ ideas of *sharīa* and of religious authority in Islam more generally.

1.2. The Relationship of the Mudejars with Jews and Christians

The discussion so far shows that the relationships of the Mudejars with the Christians and the Jews seem to have been an important context in which the members of the Mudejar communities framed their ideas of identity and religious authority in their treatises of religious polemics. In this section, I would like to look more deeply into the connection between the polemical discourses of Mudejar authors and the contemporary shifts in power between communities. The main reason for this is that, as I mentioned in the Introduction, on occasion, Mudejar arguments about religious polemic seem to have reflected the competition for the unequal distribution of power and wealth between the communities.

Before entering into this question, I would like to say a few words about the most important scholarly approaches to the nature of relationships between communities in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula. Scholarly debate on the subject has been principally dominated by a politicized and polarized interpretation of *convivencia* or co-existence and by the cultural legacy it left behind. Upholders of essentialist views, such as Américo Castro and Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, have claimed ‘Islam’ to be either a permanent and far-reaching element in Iberian history or an alien and foreign influence on an emerging

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28 MS AF 58, f. 45r.
Religious Polemics and Notions of Religious Authority and Identity

‘Spanish’ and, above all, ‘Christian’, identity. Moreover, scholars disagree about whether convivencia should be seen as a specifically Iberian phenomenon or rather as a broader feature in European history. This debate has taken a different course in recent years, as historians, sociologists, anthropologists and other social scientists have adopted a more critical and methodical approach to it. Among the most influential models proposed by scholars to address inter-communal dynamics in everyday life in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula, there is a functionally based approach focused on balance and social cohesion. This approach emphasizes local context and assumes that the reciprocal interests of the communities involved have characterized inter-communal relations. The changes experienced by the Muslim population in Aragon and Catalonia, for example, have been reinterpreted according to this new model, with particular attention paid to social and economic interests which seem to have prevailed over religious differences and to have contributed to securing Christian dominance. In his groundbreaking monograph, Nirenberg argues that it was not so much convenience as the functional, ritualized and systematic use of violence which defined the relationship between Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Crown of Aragon during the first half of the fourteenth century. In the next chapter, I shall argue that violence does not seem to account fully for the Mudejars’ own understanding of controversy, especially if we move beyond the particular conceptualization of violence as inherent in processes of “othering” through language.

Nirenberg argues that the discourses the Mudejars and the Jews levelled against each other were related to the power relations between the Christian majority and the two minority communities, and were therefore influenced by the increasing bias of Christians against Jews. He locates a shift in Christian attitudes around the turn of the fifteenth-century, and suggests that, whereas before 1400 CE Christians had favoured Jews in their disputes about processes of apostasy with Muslims because of economic interests, after that date theological considerations led Christians to favour Muslim communities and prevent conversions to Judaism. Christian mediation would explain the change in the relationship between communities; a change which has nothing to do with “a shift in the relative power of Muslims and Jews. Rather, they [namely: the examples given by David Nirenberg] reflect changes in the role of these two religious communities (or rather, theological categories) in the Christian theological imagination.” Mudejars would have done their utmost to come

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29 A recent article on the topic is Soifer, 2009.
30 One of the main proponents of such a view is Brian Catlos, who is much in line with the scholarship of Burns. See inter alia Burns, 1975; Catlos, 2004 and 2014.
32 Nirenberg, 1996, passim.
closer to the views conveyed by the majority, therefore adopting a Christian anti-Jewish discourse. For their part, Jews would have attacked Christianity indirectly in their polemics against Islam. Nirenberg also argues that the attitude of increasing rejection exhibited by Christian society towards the Jews would have been reflected in the writings of Iberian Muslim polemicists, who would have adopted “all the central tenets of Christian anti-Judaism” in their works by the mid-fifteenth century. He claims that the condemnation of the Jews in the fourteenth-century polemic against the Jews entitled Ta’īd al-Milla ['The Fortification of the Faith, or the Community'] is an early example of the entanglement between violence on the social and economic levels, and strategic moves in the Mudejars' polemical discourses. Later, I shall discuss whether the claims made by Nirenberg are relevant to the case of the Ta’īd.

What concerns me at this point is that Mudejar treatises of polemics were used as instruments to secure or manipulate ideas and social behaviour and certainly sometimes they did reflect a Christian anti-Jewish bias. We shall also discover that relationships in the Iberian Peninsula seem to have been interconnected, and that the Mudejars’ mechanisms and strategies of adaptation and resistance in polemics were influenced not only by Christian policies towards their communities but also by the relationship between Mudejars and Jews. This tallies with the views of scholars from various disciplines, who have drawn attention to the multifaceted and essentially ternary nature according to which individuals and groups construct identity and emphasize otherness. As I shall explain in more detail in the next chapter, Gerd Baumann has suggested three ‘grammars’ or strategies by which to construct identity and has argued that, although these grammars seem to be binary – because they oppose the Self to the Other – they are all in fact ternary. Coming from a different discipline, post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha has also stressed the ternary nature of processes of “othering”. In a slightly different way to Baumann’s, he suggests the existence of a Third Space which is defined as an intermediate stage which breaks away from the duality of the Self and the Other.

Taking into account these considerations, it is possible to address social relations between Muslims, Christians and Jews from a historical perspective as triangular, that is to say, as an integrated system, the variables of which cannot be understood independently of one another. Triangularity', as it will be shown in later chapters, also serves to discuss literary references to a third party (generally acting as a witness) in the arguments of

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34 Nirenberg, 2014, 54.
35 Nirenberg, 2014, 54 n. 64. On the Ta’īd, also Nirenberg, 1996, 196-198, especially 196 n. 120.
37 Bhabha, 1994. Some authors use this term to refer to the conceptualization of al-Andalus in Spanish historiography – Christiane Stallaert, for instance, has used the term “hybridized ‘third space’”. Stallaert, 2013, 119.
religious polemic between two groups\textsuperscript{38} and, moreover, ties in closely with religious authority, namely with the particular approaches to sources and to leadership of the Mudejar authors of polemics.

1.3. The Mudejar Aljamas

At this point, I would like to turn attention to another context of religious authority, and to discuss how polemics provided the Mudejar religious leaders with tools with which they could manage the government of their communities. I shall first address the polemical activities and restrictions imposed on the Mudejars (1.3.1.) by the Christians; and then I shall consider religious authority and polemics in the Mudejar aljamas (1.3.2.).

1.3.1. Christian Proselytism and Restrictions on the Mudejars

The Christian mendicant orders established language schools or \textit{Studia Linguarum} of Arabic and Hebrew both in the Christian territories of Iberia and in various European cities and in North Africa; and of Greek, Tatar and Armenian in the Eastern regions of the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{39} Some preachers became very well versed in Arabic\textsuperscript{40} as well as philosophy and theology, which were also part of the curriculum of these \textit{Studia}. Mastery of these disciplines provided preachers with the erudition essential to the propagation of Christian doctrine, but it was not necessarily viewed in the same way by the various religious orders. Whereas the Franciscan Raimundus Lullius (Ramon Llull, c. 1232-1315 CE) conceived a method by which conversion was achieved not only by demonstrating the error of the opponent's arguments but also by convincing him with rational proofs, the Dominicans believed that rational argumentation could not prove the essence of Christian revelation.\textsuperscript{41}

There are, indeed, good reasons to believe that the proselytizing campaigns led by the flourishing mendicant orders against Jewish and Muslim communities from the thirteenth century constituted an important challenge to Mudejars. The activities of

\textsuperscript{38} For Muslims as 'witnesses' for the Christians, see Szpiech, 2013a.
\textsuperscript{40} Versteegh, 2014, Chapter One, especially p. 2. Echevarría Arsuaga, 1999, Chapter Four, especially the example of Alfonso Buenhombre on p. 92.
\textsuperscript{41} See Cortabarría Beitía, 1998.
Christian missionaries in the Crown of Aragon and in Castile were intensive, and the proselytizing campaigns, explicit provocations against Islam and subsequent martyrdom of Franciscans, for example, are well attested in their documents. Certainly the goal of the Dominican missions was the propagation of Christianity among Muslims and Jews, but they also placed a strong emphasis on defeating Judaism. This particular aim is reflected in some of the demands they made to King Jaume I of Aragon in the period after the Disputation of Barcelona in 1263 CE between the Dominican Paul Christiani and Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides), in the presence of King Jaume I himself. The Barcelona Disputation is, as were the Paris Disputation of 1240 CE and the Tortosa Disputation of 1413-1414 CE, one of the best-documented examples of a late medieval Judaeo-Christian controversy. At the request of Dominican preachers, Jaume I issued a series of restrictive measures against the Jews, for instance, the requirement that all copies of Book XI of the Mishneh ha-Torah ['Repetition of the Torah'] be surrendered so that it could to be burnt, with severe penalties imposed on those who refused to follow the royal command. Since Islam too was considered a heresy, Muslims of all ages, both men and women, were forced, as were the Jews, to listen to the Dominicans' sermons in silence.

Sermons became important tools for building the case for the superiority of Christians and for disciplining the religious minorities not only physically but also in terms of their religious education; they can be compared to a certain extent with polemics which have silenced the opponent – now, in truth, by coercive measures.

Christian restrictions on the religious life in the aljamas were sometimes contested by the Muslim rulers outside the Christian territories, who occasionally acted on behalf of the Mudejars. Such was the case when the Aragonese King Jaume II banned the call to prayer (adhān) from the Mudejar mosques. James had merely applied the rules on this matter which had been issued by the Council of Vienne in 1311 CE. These forbade under pain of death the intonation of the prayer or ʿalā (salā) and the proclamation of the name of Muḥammad. The Council of Vienne produced regulations not only for the call for prayer but also for the pilgrimage of Muslims to shrines, the ʿziyāra. Although the veneration of holy places was not unanimously accepted as a Muslim practice, ʿziyāra enjoyed great popularity in North Africa and Spain during the later Middle Ages, especially among the

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42 The martyrdom of Franciscan missionaries in al-Andalus is well documented. See Ferrero Hernández, 2011b. For an interpretation of how Franciscan narratives on martyrdom in Muslim lands could have been used to strengthen the idea of Christianity and Islam as worlds apart, see MacEvitt, 2011.

43 Valle Rodríguez, 1998, 281. However, the king annull the last decree in the following days as a result of pressure from the Jews.

44 The idea of silencing the opponent is not foreign to polemics, as is illustrated by the titles of such works as Iḥām Al-Yahūd ['Silencing the Jews'] by Samaw'al al-Maghribī (1132-1174 CE). Perlmann, 1964, provides an English translation of the text. EI2 s.v. “Samaw’al al-Maghribī” (Firestone).
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mystics or ṣūfīs. A number of shrines were located in Christian territory. These places became extremely popular among the Mudejar communities, as short distance pilgrimages were often considered a substitute for the pilgrimage to Mecca, the hajj, by those who could not afford the vast expense which such a long journey entailed. The ziya'ra favoured the mobility of individuals inside the Peninsula and the contact between local Mudejar communities and Granadan Muslims. The prohibition on intoning the çal·la seems to have lasted a few years. In 1322 CE, the sultan of Egypt, Qalāūn, wrote to Jaume II urging him to abrogate the ban, in his turn committing himself to treating the Christian communities of Egypt well. Qalāūn’s intervention in peninsular matters was as a religious leader, namely: amīr al-mu'minin (‘commander of the faithful’), an authority which was not restricted to politics. Although his spiritual concern here had obvious political overtones, notably the explicit mention of an ‘exchange of favours’, it might be argued that religious polemics were not only a catalyst for moving religious concerns into the political sphere but also that authority over religious minorities was used more generally at times in the struggle for political supremacy in Iberia and the Mediterranean.

The activity of Christian missionaries in the Iberian Peninsula did not take long to penetrate Muslim polemical discourse, a point well illustrated by the polemic of al-Qurṭūbī (1182-1258 CE) to which I shall return below, in which at a certain point he refers to the views of the “priests of Aragon” and exclaims “may God curse them!” Abū ʿAlī ibn Rashīq al-Ṭaglibī (fl. mid. 13th c.), a young Mudejar who eventually emigrated to Muslim territories, provides a detailed characterization of the activities of those Christian missionaries. He wrote the following in the aftermath of the Christian conquest of Murcia in 1243 CE:

I was in the city of Murcia – may God return it to Islam – in the days when its inhabitants suffered the trial of the tribute [ad-dajn] [...]. There had come to the city, on the orders of the ‘tyrant of the Christians’ [tāḥiyat ar-rūm], a group of priests and monks, consecrated, they say, to the devotional life and to the study of science, but mainly interested in the sciences of Muslims and in translating them into their language in order to criticize them – may God Most High frustrate their purposes – for the purpose of engaging in polemics with Muslims and the malicious intention of attracting the weakest among them.

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46 Barceló Torres, 1984, 102 referring to Masiá de Ros, doc. 54 who provides the complaint of the sultan as it has been preserved in Catalan. Masiá de Ros, 1951, 329, n. 54 (A.C.A. C.R.D. Jaime II. Caja 101, núm. 849). For a detailed explanation of these regulations see, Constable, 2010.

وقد سمعنا هذا النوع عن بعض أئمة أراغون فعلهم لنعمة الله

48 Here I provide a slightly adapted translation of Granja, 1966, 67. The Arabic version of this story can be found in the edition by Muhammad Hajji of the Mi'yār by al-Wanshariṣī, 1431-1433 H/1981-1983 CE, Vol. 11, 155-158.
This paragraph is taken from the introduction to Ibn Rashīq’s longer autobiography, in which he describes a polemical encounter with one of the preachers who was in the city. His words illustrate the importance that the Christian missionaries attached to the knowledge of the sources of their opponents. Ibn Rashīq held a polemic with one monk who, he says, came from Marrakesh.99 The monk was the leader of the group and the subject of the polemic was the inimitability of the Qur’ān (i’jāz). The Christian monk used the maqāmāt by al-Ḥarīrī to make his point. The verses by al-Ḥarīrī could not be imitated either, however they were not considered to be the product of divine revelation. After a great effort, Ibn Rashīq succeeded in producing a similar verse to those in the maqāmāt and defeated the Christian.

The fact that the monk travelled to Murcia provides evidence of the itinerancy of the Christian missionaries, and their active intellectual networks across the Mediterranean. Christian missionary efforts in Muslim lands could benefit from the international alliances between Christian and Muslim rulers. One of the various examples is the letter of Raymond of Penyafort (OP) to the General Master of the Order, Juan Teutónico, in 1246 CE, in which Raymond praises the positive attitude of the Tunisian sultan towards Dominican missionary activities in his land.50

The overseas activities of these missionaries had a lasting impact on the polemical imagination of Christians. As late as the sixteenth century, we find an account of a polemical contest involving one of these preachers, the convert Anselm Turmeda (Abd Allāh al-Tarjumān 1355-1423 CE), inserted into a partial Catalan translation of Martí’s De Seta Machometi.51 Likewise, the Franciscan Ramon Llull mentions the encounter between the Dominican Raymundus Martí (fl. mid. 13th c.) and the ‘king’ of Tunis, whom Llull

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99 “min bilād Marrakūš”. Granja, 1966, 68. Mi’yar, al-Wanshariši, op. cit., 155 (Arabic). This might explain his wide knowledge of Islamic sciences.

10 This reflects the solid relationship which Jaume I of Aragon (1228-1276 CE) maintained with the Ḥafsids and the mutual respect entertained between the two lands. Cortabarría Beitia, 1998, 264. In his letter, Raymond of Penyafort refers to “una puerta que parece abierta a un futuro inestimable” [a door which seems to be open to a priceless future’]. Coll, 1944, Appendix 2, 138. At times the members of the Mudejar elites were involved in the overseas diplomatic contacts of Christian Iberian rulers, and this was not always in the interest of their Muslim co-religionists. In 1432 CE, for instance, two members of two well-known Mudejar families, Ali de Bellvís and Galip Ripoll, were sent to Granada to conclude a pact between the Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon, and Muhammad IX of Granada. Their goal was to prevent an alliance between Juan II of Castile and the Ḥafsid sultan at that time, which intended to give Sicily to Fadrique de Luna. Salicrú i Lluch, 2008, passim.

51 The print made in Valencia in 1520 CE contains De la venguda de l’anticrist by Joan Alemany and a “Capítol que mostra la causa per què de necessitat se ha de seguir la destrucció e trànsit de la çuna e xara’. I discussed this ‘capitol’ in more detail at the 1st International Medieval Meeting Lleida, 2001 and I hope to publish an article about it in the future. So far, it has escaped the attention of scholars that this “capitol” is a translation of the De Seta by Martí. Cf. for example the edition by Hernando i Delgado of the De Seta (Hernando i Delgado, 1983), with the edition of this “capitol” by Eulàlia Duran. Duran, 1998.
identifies as Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad I al-Mustanṣir (1249-1277 CE). Martí presents a refutation of the faith and law of Muḥammad in Arabic ‘to the king’ and pleads in defence of the Christian faith. Moreover, the account by Ibn Rashiq above shows that the writing of religious polemics in the Iberian Peninsula was an activity which often aroused a response by the community to which they were addressed. Ibn Rashiq mentions that Christians also rushed to write an account of the polemical encounter in which he took part.

1.3.2. Religious Authority and Polemics in the Mudejar aljamas

The Christian missionary efforts and social constraints upon the Mudejars are key to understanding the religious polemics within their communities. Christians restricted the Mudejars’ proselytism, not only towards Christians but also towards Muslims and Jews, and imposed harsh penalties on those who uttered blasphemies. The treatises preserved show that, these restrictions notwithstanding, the Mudejars did indeed engage in religious polemics. They did so not merely to defend themselves against the arguments against Muslims and Islam put forward by the Christians and the Jews, but also to preserve the religious and social integrity of their communities. Some Christian rulings on the Mudejars which have been mentioned, such as the obligation to listen to Christian sermons, could have consequences which were not restricted to individuals but also affected the religious education of the members of the Mudejar minority communities. The first thing to be noted is that Mudejar leaders could be expected to extend their religious authority beyond the confines of their individual persons in the neighbourhoods (morerías) by using such platforms of advanced religious education as madrasas, but the sources are silent about formal institutions of learning in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula. Van Koningsveld argues that the madrasa of Zaragoza (Aragon) was the only one of its kind and

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29 Llull, who was convinced of the possibility of converting Muslims by rational methods, criticizes Martí’s failure to provide the ‘king’ with “necessary reasons”. When the ‘king’ asked for a proof of the Christians’ faith, Martí claimed: “The faith of the Christians is so transcendent it cannot be proved (by necessary reasoning); (it can only be believed) nothing else.” This information is found in Lavajo, 1985, but here I am using the unpublished publication/essay on al-Ṭūfī by Van Koningsveld, 29-33. This echoes the words of Aghushṭīn in the Kitāb al-Mujādala quoted in Chapter Six, to the effect that the ‘fe católica’ (Sp.; Eng. the Catholic faith) must not be disputed but accepted as it is.

30 Granja, 1966, 72.

31 In her article about fifteenth-century Castile, Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho argues that, out of the various provisions in the Siete Partidas by Alfonso X (1252-1284 CE) “en el terreno religioso se niega a los mudéjares cualquier posibilidad de hacer proselitismo, incluso entre moros y judíos.” [‘in the religious field, Mudejars are denied any possibility of proselytizing, even among Moors and Jews’] Montes Romero-Camacho, 2002, 392 and n. 81 and n. 82.

also that, when Ibn al-Khaṭīb referred to a madrasa in Murcia, he was actually talking about a language school (studium linguarum) founded by King Alfonso X of Castile. Be it as it may, Mudejars and Moriscos did succeed in transmitting Islamic knowledge from one generation to the next, as evidenced by the large number of manuscripts dealing with religious subjects which have survived. Although Van Koningsveld’s argument is essentially correct, it is my contention that a broader definition of the term madrasa might be more useful in studying Mudejar and Morisco communities. I would suggest that a definition of madrasa as any place in which Islamic education is provided on a regular basis, regardless of whether the level of education and the curriculum taught correspond to that provided in majority Muslim lands, might be more appropriate to the socio-historical circumstances of these communities. The Mudejars preserved Islamic knowledge, which presupposes that at least periodical educational gatherings functioning at a local level were held. In this context, the modest production within some branches such as hadīth among the Moriscos illustrates the difficulties experienced by these communities in providing a ‘standardized curriculum’ but, on the other hand, the marginal notes on manuscripts such as those containing the Morisco works studied by Vincent Barletta suggest that knowledge was still shared by the members of the aljamas and taught to young Muslims.

Kathryn Miller argues that oral authority and guidance in the aljamas began in the Mudejar mosque, “commonly a small, unassuming structure, a place for prayers, sermons, teaching and discussions”. Linda Jones makes the compelling argument that sermons or khutbas (not only the canonical Friday sermons but also the para-liturgical sermons (such as those after the petition for rain) and the hortatory sermons) were powerful tools of religious authority in this context: they were often performed ritually and followed the Sunna of Muḥammad; they were preached in the mosque and their different parts (introduction, profession of faith and blessings to the Prophet) had to follow a fixed order if they were to be considered valid. Moreover, “[a]lthough the khaṭīb recites from sacred texts to invoke the authority of a mythic past, his attention and goals are ultimately focused

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56 Van Koningsveld, 1992, 81-82.
57 For a later period, Jacqueline Fournel-Guérin discusses, the instruction of Moriscos in Islam in clandestine Qur’anic schools and private gatherings in which the male adults taught the younger ones and the important role of books in these processes. Fournel-Guérin, 1979, 245ff and passim. The survey by Van Koningsveld offers us information about how the Arabic literary production was transmitted in the Christian territories by discussing who were the copyists of the manuscripts. Van Koningsveld, 1991 and 1992.
58 Harvey, 1958, 197.
59 Barletta takes the Libro de las Luces ['Book of Lights'] as a case study to address time and temporality in Morisco literature. In this particular chapter, he relates them to the processes of religious learning and the socialization through language of young Moriscos. Barletta, 2005, 89-103.
60 Miller, 2008, 132. Unfortunately, Miller does not provide the sources for her description.
on the present, on persuading the congregation to act out, project and apply the *khutba*’s message to its own particular social, cultural, and political reality.\(^62\) The performative contexts of the Mudejar preachers known in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula as zabalâ\(^63\) are partly disclosed, for example, in references to the submission to Christians in some late-medieval Aragonese Mudejar Arabic sermons\(^64\) and in the questions posed by certain Mudejars to the four judges of Cairo at the beginning of the sixteenth century, in which they asked about the language they should use to address an audience with a poor command of Arabic.\(^65\) The legitimation of "the existing custom of preaching in a Romance language" was probably one of the reasons for their demands,\(^66\) but I would argue that these Mudejars not only cared about Arabic as the language of Islam but also feared that their sermons would not be properly understood, thereby losing the didactical function which Jones attributes to them.

Sermons could certainly enhance religious education in the Mudejar communities. Jones discusses the educational and public role of the *majlis al-waẓ* (assemblies of exhortation) in al-Andalus, citing the example of the well-known muḥtasib (market censor) of Seville, Ibn Abdūn, who asked the judge of the city to appoint a *faqīh* to the post of preacher.\(^67\) Preachers employed Islamic narratives to "articulate communal identities and values, to buttress their own authority, or to contest the political leadership and its policies."\(^68\) It is because they were able to convey a political message that, as Jones notes, Muslim scholars debated whether it was appropriate to make a supplication (*dāˈa*)
and to mention the name of the contemporary Muslim ruler – particularly in the *khutba*. The acknowledgement of political and religious authority could assume historical importance in the context of political disputes or in the case of the Mudejar communities, which, by definition, lacked a legitimate Muslim ruler. However, I have not come across any explicit references in Mudejar sermons. The four Rightly Guided Caliphs are, nonetheless, mentioned in the sermons of Ibn Nubāta, a sixteenth-century paper copy of which was in circulation among the Moriscos.70

The religious leaders of the Mudejars copied and composed sermons and other texts which generally had a religious content, but they also copied and (as will be shown below) composed treatises on religious polemics. In these manuscripts, we find additional data confirming that their authority within the Mudejar *ajamas* was framed both against events which occurred within and outside the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula.

A good example of this is Jaume II’s measure regulating the *viva voce* intonation of prayer and the reaction to it by the sultān of Egypt, which has been discussed above. Both need to be explained against the background of a Council, which dealt largely with the question of whether or not to abolish the Order of the Knights Templar. I shall not discuss in detail the reasons behind the decision taken in Vienne to suppress the Order, nor shall I look at its aftermath.71 However, it is worth noting that internal dissensions among Christians and international events seem to have excited the imagination of the Mudejars and that they did use them as a source for their polemics. This is illustrated in the polemical work of Muḥammad al-Qaysī, *Kitāb Miftāh ad-Dīn* [‘The Key of Religion’], the composition of which has been critically dated by Van Koningsveld and Wiegers to around the expulsion of the Templars from France in 1306 CE and their banishment in 1312 CE. As a captive of war, al-Qaysī provides a narration of these events, which he probably witnessed. He argues that the Templars were expelled because they secretly preached the doctrine of the Unity of God: in other words, because they affirmed the truth of Islam.72

Muslim polemics against Christians and Jews were gradually banished from the ‘public sphere’ in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula in the course of the later Middle Ages, as exemplified by the inquisitorial process against Yuçe de la Vaçia, who was accused of attempting to convert Christians and of gathering them to listen to his sermons

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69 Jones, 2012, 74. See Chapter Four for the competing views on naming the ruler.


71 There are several publications on the suppression of the Knights Templar. A recent publication on the topic is Burgtorf, Jochen, Paul F. Crawford, and Helen J. Nicholson (eds). *The Debate on the Trial of the Templars (1307–1314)*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010.

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shortly after the fall of Granada.\textsuperscript{73} Even if the allegations were true, Yuçe was certainly not alone in maintaining the hope of attracting new believers. Other Mudejars, for instance, the already mentioned Granadan ‘la Mora de Úbeda’ are recorded as having preached to Christians in 1499 CE, some years after the fall of Granada.\textsuperscript{74} However, it is important to bear in mind that, even though ‘la Mora de Úbeda’ might have preached Islam to a Christian audience, she did not polemicize “against Christians”.\textsuperscript{75} The increasing restrictions imposed on publicly held polemical debates did not necessarily mean that Mudejar and Morisco leaders refrained from conducting polemical activities within the 

aljamas. In fact, Muslim treatises against Jews were still copied and adapted several decades after the Jews had been expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. This shows that these texts must have been particularly successful in combining emotional appeal\textsuperscript{76} with indisputable proofs of the truth of Islam; two ways by which the esteem and authority of the Mudejars’ religious leaders could be increased.

Conclusions

Following the claim by Krämer and Schmidtke that religious authority (and, hence, identity in Islam) should be regarded as relational, in this Chapter I have dealt with various contexts of religious authority and identity which are connected with the analysis of Mudejar treatises of religious polemics in the present dissertation. I have examined the approaches of the Mudejars to Sacred Law, or 

sharī‘a; the nature of their relations with the Christians and the Jews; and the place of polemics within the frameworks of religious authority in the Mudejar 
aljamas.

I have shown that 

sharī‘a was subject to various interpretations by Mudejar authors of religious polemics, and that, even though the subjection of Mudejar communities to Christian political structures appears to have conditioned the full implementation of Islamic rulings, it seems not to have lead to their total abandonment of 

sharī‘a as an ideal for Muslim life. I have also argued that restrictions did not prevent the Mudejar religious leaders from effectively governing their communities and from guiding their co-religionists.

\textsuperscript{73} “intentaba supuestamente convencer a cristianos de que cambiaran de religion y les invitaba a la mezquita a oir sus sermones” [‘he allegedly tried to convince the Christians to change their religion and invited them to the mosque to hear his sermons’], Labarta and García-Arenal, 1981, 129.

\textsuperscript{74} Harvey, 1958, 314.

\textsuperscript{75} Harvey, 1958, 314, with emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{76} In this respect, polemics come close to sermons. An example of the emotional appeal of sermons is the reaction provoked by the preaching of Abū ʾĪṣāq al-Mayūrī on ’Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Āzkhānī (d. after 593 CE). Jones, 2(2007), 73.
in their Islamic beliefs and practices. In discussing how religious authority and identity were articulated in the context of the relationships of the Mudejars with the Christians and the Jews, I have stressed the importance of ‘triangularity’ in inter-communal dynamics and I have suggested that the relations between two communities and the changes which these relationships underwent could have had a perceptible impact on the third group. Therefore it is proper that this impact should be taken into account when discussing the approaches to authority of some Mudejar authors in the analysis below.

The examination of religious authority within the *ajamas* in relationship to the proselytizing campaigns and restrictions imposed by Christians on the Mudejars has revealed that polemics appear to expose the mechanisms by which the members of the Mudejar minority communities actively constructed their religious and political affiliations in a period in which Christian domination of the Iberian territory was neither homogeneous nor complete. I argue (and I shall return to this later) that religious authority in polemical treatises is oriented in two ways. On the one hand, they show how minority groups ‘governed’ or structured their fields of action. On the other hand, Mudejar polemical discourse will uncover the ways in which Mudejar minority communities participated in the processes of exclusion and inclusion of religious minorities in Iberia and how their fields of action were governed or fixed by the growing Christian majority.