The religious polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia
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Chapter Seven: Mudejar Polemics as a Discursive Tradition

Introduction

In the course of this dissertation, I have analysed the Taʾyīd al-Milla and the Kitāb al-Mujādala as a representative of a discursive tradition which, in Asad's words, "seek[s] to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice." I have looked at the contexts in which they were used as well as the intellectual milieus and the audiences addressed by the authors of these treatises. I have shown that the audience at which these polemics were directed was not confined to Christians and the Jews but that they were also addressed to the Muslim communities themselves. I have also argued that the polemicists lent authority to sources which they felt fell outside the normative corpus of Islam but had a wide circulation in their immediate environment and had become part of the Islamicate culture of the Mudejars and the later Moriscos. To the way they approached the authority of the Gospels, the Torah and philosophy helped them to counter the claims made by the Christians and the Jews and to distinguish between temporal and religious authority, a distinction which allowed them to live as minorities under Christian rule. I have also provided evidence that a triangular approach to polemics and an inquiry into language from the perspective of Social Identity Theory enhances our understanding of how the Mudejars negotiated their identities as groups and their relations of power with the Christians and the Jews.

In this chapter, I go a step farther and endeavour to incorporate my findings into the wider discussion of how Islam was articulated through the social claims made between religious groups, which formed the basis of “an instituted practice [...] into which Muslims were inducted as Muslims.” In this exercise, the notion that the identity of the Self is always shaped in opposition to the Other and expressed through claims of membership to a

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1 Asad, 1986, 14.
2 At times after their expulsion, the Moriscos would expand their polemical repertoire with arguments drawn from Protestant treatises or would find inspiration in the poetry of their time. See Cardaillac, 1977, Second Part, Chapter One (153-207), specially 161-164 and 180-183.
3 Asad, 1986, 15. Emphasis in the original.
particular group takes central stage. What I propose to do is to elaborate on distinct but interrelated aspects of Islam in Mudejar polemics. My first step is to address the question of what the claims of the Christians and the Jews which have been discussed in the previous chapters tell us about Mudejar identity in treatises of religious polemics. In so far as the attacks of these groups on Muslims and Islam originated from particular systems of thought and discipline, the joint discussion of such claims could provide a clearer sense of the kind of answers given by the members of the Mudejar communities, and hence of their strategies of identity construction. I argue that positive group distinctiveness and Baumann's grammar of encompassment are significant to the definition of Muslim identities as groups (7.1). Secondly, I provide an outline of religious authority and leadership as these are described in Mudejar polemics (7.2).

The last issue to which I shall pay attention is how the Mudejars dealt with notions of minority in their polemics. It will be shown that the Mudejars' claims to membership of the community of believers rested on the notions of ethical behaviour and religious authority which have been discussed above, and that the Mudejars seem to have retained a degree of autonomy in governing their communities and deciding who and what were part of Islam (7.3).

7.1. Mudejar Identity in Polemics

The social construction of the Mudejars' identity in polemics can be deduced from the claims put into the mouths of the Christians and the Jews in the *Ta’īd* and in the *Kitāb al-Mujādala*. The attacks on Islam by the Jews in “the meetings and dwellings” of the Christian territories in the *Ta’īd* are the following three: the Jews slander and defame Muḥammad and his law; they claim to be the only ones who have received a ‘law’ or Scripture; and they argue that Hagar was not the wife of Abraham but his concubine. Furthermore, they assert that they will inherit the land of Canaan. The *Kitāb al-Mujādala* also quotes the claim by the Jews that Hagar was not the wife of Abraham and that Abraham was a Jew. This treatise stresses the fact that the Jews see man’s tribulations as the result of the sins of the forefathers and relatives. Moreover, they claim that God will send them a prophet from the tribe of Israel to continue the kingship of the Jews since it is foretold “the sceptre shall not depart from Judah” (Gen 49:10). Besides all this, they argue that God’s laws about purity are only valid in Canaan, which implies that they do not need to observe them in the Christian territories. Turning to the claims of the Christians in the *Kitāb al-Mujādala*, their arguments

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4 See my discussion of this verse in Chapter Three.
emphasize doctrine, especially the Trinity, the divine nature of Jesus and the salvational nature of baptism. The Christians also assert their political and religious dominance in the territory and, hence, also over the Mudejars.

From the perspective of Social Identity Theory, it seems that positive group distinctiveness and encompassment played a role in the way the Mudejars dealt with such claims. The Jews in the Ta'yiš show a strong interest in achieving a positive and distinctive image of the Jewish in-group, which might explain why they do not attempt to bring the Mudejars closer to Judaism but spend most their time attacking them. In the discussion in Chapter Five about the influence of the anti-Jewish discourses of the Christians on the Mudejars, I have suggested the possibility that the social ascent of the Jews in the Christian society stirred the Mudejars' animosity towards them. Although the evidence at our disposal makes it difficult to provide a conclusive answer to this question, their claims against Islam clearly underscore the importance of prestige in Muslim-Jewish polemics. The Jews claim that their lineage is traced from Sarah and hence they despise the sons and daughters of the woman who in their eyes was Abraham's concubine, Hagar. They are not bastards but the Muslims are. Quite the contrary, they are God's chosen people to whom He revealed His law.

The Mudejars' answer to these claims also emphasizes positive distinctiveness and attempts to demonstrate the excellence of their communities compared to those of the Jews. Unlike the Jews, the Mudejars aver that they are able to understand not just the Qur'an but also the revealed laws of their opponents; they respect the prophets; they keep God's prescriptions as they should be kept; and God has not cursed them. The extolling of the Muslim community and of its religious leader, Muḥammad, was also to be a characteristic of the literature in Aljamiado, in which we witness an explosion of stories about the miracles of Muḥammad and the first battles of Islam.5 The emphasis chosen by the Moriscos on these issues was not to have much to do with an opposition to Judaism that, as argued, was losing its strength as we approach the Early Modern period. It was more likely a response to the Christian rhetoric about Jesus already present in such polemics as the Kitāb al-Mujādala, which was to acquire and ever greater prominence in society.6 The Mudejars were to take their purpose to excel over the Jews so far they even made up genealogies and claimed that, Potiphar, the captain of the palace guard of the Egyptian Pharaoh, was a descendant of Ismā'il. This implies that Joseph, a descendant of Ishāq from

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5 Guillén Robles, 1885-1886; Galmés de Fuentes, 1975.
6 The Moriscos' idea of Muḥammad as the expected Saviour, or Messiah, is addressed by Wiegers. Wiegers, 1996b and 1997.
whom Jews claim to descend, would have been the servant of a descendant of Ismā‘īl from whom Muslims claim to descend.7

Turning our attention to the claims of the Christians, we see that they were also seeking to achieve positive group distinctiveness, as the arguments above about wine and marriage regulations underline quite clearly. However, my understanding is that their claims are illustrative of a more relevant grammar of identity/alterity, namely, encompassment. In his discussion of encompassment as practised by the Rmeet and the Lowland Lao societies, Sprenger notes that, “issues of hegemony and political power come into focus more obtrusively in the encompassment model than in the other grammars.”8

The Christians’ incentive in instructing the Mudejars in the Christian dogma and for suppressing Islam in the Christian territories is aptly explained in Baumann’s ‘polemical’ definition of encompassment which he boldly defines as: “You may think that you differ from me in your sense of values or identity; but deep down, or rather higher up, you are but a part of me.”9 It is in this sense that grammars of encompassment are “only enacted as monologues or in contexts involving a clear-cut power relation”,10 and can be regarded as “non-dialogic”,11 even as an “anti-grammar”.12 Although by encompassment a group is brought within another group to form a unity, the differences between the two on the lower level are partially kept by the dominant group on the higher level.13 This is consistent with the conceptual and factual divide established between Old Christians and converts, or ‘encompassed’, New Christians, which persisted until the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609-1612 CE. Old Christians never outgrew their suspicion of New Christians and New Christians were never fully accepted by the majority Christian society.

I would like to suggest that the Christians’ emphasis on Jesus’ redemption of mankind from sin, which as we have seen characterizes the Christian discourses in some Mudejar treatises of religious polemics, might have rested on just such a grammar. Jesus’ divine nature and, hence, His salvific role at the End of Time is a highly significant difference between these two religions. Nevertheless, they also share much common ground, and Islam recognizes Jesus as a prophet Who preceded Muḥammad and accords sin a central place.14 Consequently, we have seen that the Ta‘yīd discusses all the violations of God’s rules by the Jews at length, and that in the Kitāb al-Mujādala the Mudejars

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7 Kassin, 1969, I, 131.
14 For the Muslim views, EI2 s.v. “Khaṭṭī‘a” (Gardet and Wensinck).
mention the Christians' offences before God as an argument to counter Christians' insult of calling them 'dogs'. Likewise, in the Kītab Muftah ad-Dīn, al-Qaysī claims that, after Jesus was dead, the Christians began "to eat everything which God forbade [...]", committing sins, lighting lamps, mixing men and women [...]"\(^4\) Baptism, the Christians argue, absolves the sins of mankind and, moreover, protects people from committing new ones. On these grounds, as a plausible explanation for the claim by the Christians that they killed Jesus, I would like to propose that by saying this they might have been attempting to put themselves on a level with the Mudejars: no matter what each religion has, all human beings are sinners. Everyone needs God's forgiveness.

The endeavour to convert all Muslims to Christianity by encompassment is perhaps even more evident in the Christians' joint claim with the Jews in the Kītab al-Mujādala: "You, Muslims, have accepted the Torah and the Gospel. So, why do not you observe the faith of the Jews and the Christians?"\(^5\) The common element between these religious groups is based on the fact that they believe in the written revelations sent to mankind by God, both accepted by Islam. Although Jews and Christians disagree about many points, these are here so obviously disregarded by the author to the point that someone with little religious knowledge could be confused by the statement "the Christians and the Jews". As I have argued above, this author seems to have had a thorough knowledge of Christianity, so it is safe to assume that he knew the differences, but to use them as a polemical tool did not suit his goals. All things considered, we observe that the movement of the Christians throughout the Kītab al-Mujādala is of one of dominance. The thinking behind this seems to be: if the differences between our religion and Islam are so small, learning the dogma will lead to the conversion of the Mudejars.\(^6\) Such rhetoric might have helped Christians to 'incorporate' Islam into Christianity, that is to say, to convert the Mudejars. Conversion was of the utmost importance to them because it placed them one step closer to their ultimate goal: a Christian hegemonic society with no place for Islam and Muslims.

There are various ways in which the Mudejar author of the Kītab al-Mujādala attempts to counter the Christians' discourse. The critical analysis of the discourse in these treatises shows that one of them was building partnerships between groups. In line with the analysis in the previous chapters, triangularity again appears to be central: the mere presence of a third group (even on a rhetorical level) establishes resilient alliances between

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\(^4\) Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, 1994, 172.

\(^5\) MS AF 58, f. 51r.

\(^6\) This was, for example, the position adopted with regard to the Moriscos by Fray Hernando de Talavera. Ingram, 2009, 11, and Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, 2012, 80.
a polemicist and his religious opponents. We observe that in many places the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews are mentioned together, meaning that the author does not oppose one group to the other but opposes two religious communities against the third instead. We read that, “the Christians and the Jews” or “the Muslims and the Jews” reject the arguments of the remaining group, namely: Muslims and Christians respectively. The notion of re-categorization offers an apposite explanation of these strategic moves, since in all the cases referred to, the Mudejar polemicist puts two of the three religious communities together by emphasizing the commonalities between their members and concomitantly de-emphasizing the points of disagreement. He does the opposite with the remaining group, and boundaries are strengthened. This shows that bonds between groups are subject to the authors' strategic considerations in such a way that the Mudejars' polemicists do not always approach their adversaries as foes regardless of the circumstances, but address them as 'mates' to reach particular goals. We see this when the author of the Ta’yid claims that the Jews killed Jesus and did not show his mother proper respect. His support of the Christians is in line with the special consideration in Islam shown to Īsā as a prophet and to his mother Maryam. So, he quotes the prophecy of Amos 2 and claims: “For three sins I will forgive the children of Israel, but for the fourth I will not forgive them”. Now ask them, “What is the fourth sin [...]?” The rejection of Īsā as a prophet is one of the many offences of the Jews before God which explain why “Allah destroyed and annihilated them and put them in the Ghālūt [namely: the state of submissiveness, MCA] which will endure to the Day of Resurrection.” Similarly, in the Kitāb al-Mujādala the Muslims support the Christians on one occasion when the Mudejar author comes close to the Christian arguments against the Jews. He does this when he claims that they attempted to crucify Jesus, but this is a double-edged claim, because it is included in the passages in which the author denounces the divine nature of Jesus! The author's attitude towards the Jewish community in this polemic is ambivalent: although he occasionally associates with them, we have seen above that they are also the recipients one of the few expletives in this polemic: “God damn the Jews when they say to the Muslims: 'You have no shā'ān (sacred law)'. This harsh attack suggests that he might have used the Jews in this polemic as a wild card, whose value is determined by the argumentative context.

19 Kassin 1969, I, 222; II, 365 (f. 63). On the need to accept the message of Īsā, see Kassin, 1969, I, 242-244.
20 MS AF 58, f. 31v.
21 MS AF 58, f. 51r. See the Arabic quotation above. This utterance represents an inflection in the otherwise even-tempered tone used by the author through the work.
In short, the way the Mudejars negotiate their identity in treatises of religious polemics appears to have reflected the power relations between communities in the Christian territories. Mudejars refute the Christians and the Jews with equal vigour but, whereas they seem to have a vested interest in discrediting the members of the Jewish religious minority with whom they are in direct competition, they show a greater concern with countering the Christians’ teachings of the ‘true’ faith and about showing that they are more knowledgeable about God and the world than Christians. The Mudejars’ use of different sources to approach the Christians and the Jews is consistent with the idea suggested by Asad that, “forms of interest in the production of knowledge are intrinsic to various structures of power”, and also with the premise of Critical Discourse Analysis that language is a social practice which not only reveals the power relations between individuals but also can be used to influence them.

7.2. Religious Leadership

So far I have addressed various aspects of Mudejar Islam in the Ta’īd and the Kitāb al-Mujādalā as a discursive tradition. My next step will be to discuss religious leadership in these works. Mudejar authors of polemics belonged to the Muslim elite who were in charge of governing the Mudejar communities and we have seen that they used different sources to support both the discourses they used to underpin their authority as leaders and in their discourses against their religious opponents. These differences are linked to different approaches to Islam and are the clue which allows us to distinguish between different profiles of religious leadership.

From the analysis carried out so far, it can be argued that the profile of the author of the Ta’īd corresponds to that of a traditional scholar. He legitimizes his views on the abrogation of God’s previous revelations to mankind by referring to “the school of thought of our authorities” as noted above, in this context most probably the Mālikī School. We have seen that he might have been acquainted with scientific views, as he refers to knowledge of Hippocrates’ theories about the bodily humours among “men of knowledge and wisdom”. Nonetheless, he seems to give preference to scriptural sources and, unlike the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādalā, he does not incorporate scientific knowledge as an integral part of his polemical discourse.

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Asad, 1986, 5.


By contrast, the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala emerges as a rationalist who questions the study of religious sciences by the traditional, in his own words, ignorant, scholars – here again most probably the Mālikis. Rather than following what the author of the Ta’yiḍ calls “the school of thought of our authorities”, he rebels against the blind acceptance of the dictates of this school. He was convinced that the practice of fiqh and its application (fiqrū) in the Christian territories should rest on the interpretation of the Divine Revelation supported by philosophical and scientific inquiry, not on tradition.

Both authors are aware of their position as leaders and as models for their communities. This is made evident in the Ta’yiḍ when the author refers to the sins committed by the religious leaders of the Jews, and quotes Leviticus 4:3: “And you certainly know that if any of the elite sins, the rest of the children of Israel are partners in the sin.”

Surely we are not mistaken in assuming that the author is also applying this maxim to the elite of his own community. Moreover, the way in which these authors of polemics exerted their leadership in their communities can be appreciated in their warnings to their communities and in their claims that their rendering of their sources is unaffected by interpretation or mistakes. The author of the Ta’yiḍ provides an example of this when he urges: “the one who studies this treatise to study it diligently, and to meditate about its topics. He ought not to entertain any doubts about anything in it, for it is absolutely true.”

Similar claims are found in the Kitāb al-Mujādala, in which the copyist al-Raqili claims that whoever reads this book will find the absolute truth as it is found in the author’s sources, and will also find reflection and individual judgement on the lessons drawn from these sources. These ideas underline that they are the ones who are setting the agenda of what their communities should learn and how they should learn it. In other words, their respective communities must follow their teachings. Certainly they can reflect on them, but they should not doubt the truth of the sources of their authority as religious leaders and, hence, their legitimacy.

The knowledge they expound in their treatises of polemics is intended to guide the community as a whole, but any study of their contents seems to be reserved for just some of their members. We have seen in the previous chapter that the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala follows Ibn Rushd and argues that the common people should not engage in the study of philosophy. This injunction is consistent with the level of knowledge of Arabic, philosophy and science required to understand the sources of this work; a knowledge which only some socially and economically privileged Mudejars could have had. This is

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26 Kassin, op. cit., I, 281; II, 434 (f. 132).
27 MS AF 58, f. 31r.
suggested by the warning issued by the author of the Ta’ṣīd at the end of his treatise that, “notwithstanding the smallness of its size, it has treated all the rules and topics which are a sine qua non for the assiduous reader who wishes to debate exhaustively with them (the Jews).” It follows from this that the Ta’ṣīd is not intended for the ignorant to indulge in Muslim polemics against Judaism, but this should be left to the man who is well acquainted with the subject (probably assuming that he has read about other subjects, too). From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, such claims show that these authors did not have an inclusive perception of their readership but one most probably restricted to the members of the elite.

One important remark still remains to be made. Both the Ta’ṣīd and the Kitāb al-Mujādala were copied by the faqīḥ al-Raqilī in his town of Pedrola, and were bound together in one miscellaneous codex. This suggests that, notwithstanding the different approaches to religious leadership and attitudes towards knowledge just signalled, these approaches did not necessarily exclude each other. I would prefer to contend that both were meaningful to the Mudejars and should be regarded as complementary in the construction of their identities as Muslims.

7.3. Notions of ‘Minority’ and Government among the Mudejars

One last point I want to pay attention to in this dissertation is how notions of ‘minority’ were put to work in the Mudejars’ polemical discourses vis-à-vis the Christians and the Jews. As noted in Chapter One, Muslim legal scholars (faqīhs) generally disapproved of the Mudejars’ dwelling in Christian lands and consequently did not develop an independent branch of Islamic law (fiqh al-aqallīyyāt) to deal with a situation they considered both anomalous and temporary. From their legal point of view, the Mudejars were not juridical ‘minorities’ but ‘exceptions’ to the norm and, although on occasion they claimed that residing in the land of the Infidels was “the greatest of sins”, they never called into question the Mudejars’ belonging to the wider community of believers (or umma). Furthermore, there is some evidence that the religious leaders of the Mudejar communities did eventually approve of their living in Christian lands. This is the case of one Mudejar mufīṭ quoted by the thirteenth-century Cordoban jurist Ibn Rabi’ (d. 1320 CE), who relies on prophetic traditions to claim that living in Christian lands was allowed as long as the

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central duties of Islam, the ḵibādāt, could be observed. As far as this Mudejar muftī was concerned, much as did the author of the Kitāb al-Mujādala, practice took precedence over place of origin or residence. Hence, this sort of argument is aimed at proving that it is possible to be a believing Muslim outside Muslim lands and, moreover, it recognizes religious difference in the Christian society.

The works of religious polemics with the Christians and the Jews discussed so far seem to tally with the legal views of the Mudejar scholars just mentioned. The fragment about Toledo in the Kitāb al-Mujādala quoted in Chapter One in which the author refutes the claims by the Jews and the Christians that Ibrāhīm was a Jew because “he was born in the land of the Jews, that is to say, Judea” by arguing that “not everyone who lives in Toledo is Jew; in [the city] live Jews, Christians and Muslims” underpins the claim that the place from which a person originates does not determine his religious affiliation. These views are part of a much broader exposition by the author who, as has been shown in the preceding chapter, argues that the most important element in determining whether someone is a Christian, a Jew or a Muslim is his manner of adherence to God’s commands. Elsewhere he claims that the Christians present themselves as the followers of Jesus, who, in their view, was called the Nāṣīrī because he was born in Nazareth. They err, claims the author: Jesus was not the Nāṣīrī because He was born in Nazareth but because He fulfilled the rituals originally prescribed by God, without altering them. As the Christians no longer comply with these prescriptions, they are not worthy worth of being called Nāṣīrīs.

None of these sources explicitly addresses the concept of ‘minority’ and, yet, it is present de facto in the Mudejars’ polemics and in other sources including the already mentioned Leyes de moros [‘Moorish Laws’], the Book of Suna and Xara [‘Libro de Sunna y Xara’] and the Sunni Breviary [‘Breviario Sunni’], all of which provide tools for the government of the Mudejar communities within a Christian society. This form of government was a major driving force underlying the Mudejars’ views about religious leadership and might explain why, for example, whereas the polemicists make a clear separation between religious and political power to downplay their political subordination to the Christians, some authors have no qualms about connecting the political subordination of the Jews to the inability of the Jewish leaders to govern their communities according to God’s commandments.

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31 Ms AF 58 f. 41v.
32 These rituals correspond with Jewish rituals, and it seems that the author is referring to what is known today as the Jewish-Christian sect of the Nazirites.
33 See my note in Chapter One about the approach to living in the Christian territories of the author of this last work, Yça Gidelli.
We see that political submission and control over the land play a central role in a hierarchy of religious excellence which places Muslims in the first place, followed by Christians and then the Jews. The position of the Jews in the last place recalls King John’s dispositions discussed in Chapter Five. The King states that on any formal occasion or in a procession Muslims should march in front of the Jews.\(^34\) In the Ta’\(\text{\textacute{y}}\)\(\text{i}\), the author puts the Jews in the last place and provides various arguments to demonstrate that they do not have ownership of the land and that their political submission to both Muslims and Christians is attributable to God’s wrath occasioned by their sins and disobedience. Most of the author’s arguments show this assertion is based on the Torah. He refutes the claims by the Jews that they “will inherit the land (Canaan) when the Messiah […] comes”\(^35\) by referring, for example, to God’s commands to the Jews in Genesis 13 not to go beyond the land of Canaan, and to divide it according to its boundaries. Although the Jews should remain in Canaan, nonetheless, they are not the heirs to this land since as it says in Genesis 16:12 “[T]he intention of the Lord was to bequeath the land [of Canaan, MCA] to none save the sons of Ism\(\text{\textacute{a}}\)\(\text{\textacute{\textacute{i}}}\)l.”\(^36\) The author reinforces his argument by making a clear allusion to the Muslim conquests in his provision of a slightly modified version of Numbers 24 which says: “A nation shall issue forth from the Romans and subject the Assyrians and Hebrews; they, too, shall perish forever.”\(^37\) These biblical verses establish the primacy of the Muslims before God and their superior position to the Jews.

Not only do the Jews have no dominion over Israel: they cannot claim the lands of the Christians. The author bases this argument on Deuteronomy 2 which reads: “Charge the sons of Israel that they should not provoke the sons of Edom or contend with them for their land. For I will not give the sons of Israel of their land (so much as) a foot can tread on.” And he points out: “By the sons of Edom, he means the Romans.”\(^38\) It is important to note that here again the rendering of the verses does not correspond to the canonical Genesis text, in which the sons of Esau, not the ‘sons of Edom’, are mentioned. Clearly, the author is implicitly referring to the submission of the Jews to the Christian kings, for he claims:

\(^{34}\) Nirenberg, 1996, 266-267. It is also known the attack against Islam by the Catalan cabbalist Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi (fl. Mid-14\textsuperscript{th} century) in his polemics with the rationalist Jews. Nirenberg, 1996, 250 trn. Vadja, 1957, 135.

\(^{35}\) Kassin, 1969, I, 122.

\(^{36}\) Kassin, 1969, I, 125; II, 313 (f. 11); Ism\(\text{\textacute{a}}\)\(\text{\textacute{\textacute{i}}}\)l is consistently translated by Kassin as Ishmael.


Verily Allāh blessed Isaac; but it is possible that the blessing with respect to the sons of Edom be greater than it is with respect to the sons of Israel. For there had been kings amongst the sons of Edom whilst amongst the sons of Israel there is no king.\(^9\)

From the author’s point of view, in the (original) Torah God grants dominion over the whole world to Ismā’īl and his descendants, and, then, to the Christians. The state of submission, ghalūṭ, in which the Jews find themselves, claims the author, has endured to present time (I quote): “Your father Jacob was a servant to his brother Esau. […] And so we see it today: the Christians subject the Jews.” As a whole, the evidence shows that the notion of ‘minority’ in the sense of a diaspora was critical to determining the place of the Jews in a Mudejar hierarchy of religious excellence in which their own communities were pre-eminent.

Conclusions

Let us return to the issue of the Mudejars’ Islam as a discursive practice. The discussion of the Christian and Jewish claims against Islam and Muslims shows that group distinctiveness and encompassment exerted a predominant influence on the way the Mudejars constructed their identities in polemics. Irrespective of whether these claims were reformulated by the Mudejars, it is safe to argue that they reflected the concern among the members of their communities for what they seem to have believed were the two biggest challenges to be faced in the Christian territories: their economic, social and religious competition with the Jews and the preaching campaigns and political domination of the Christians. Mudejar identity discourses in polemics are directed towards providing positive value judgements about their communities – as the Ta’yīd al-Milla [‘The Fortification of the Faith, or Community’] reads, at strengthening social cohesion – and, following the logic of re-categorization, at breaking the hegemony of the Christians’ discourse.

It has been demonstrated that, in the context of their use and intellectual milieu in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula, the Mudejars’ discourses in the Kitāb al-Mujādala and the Ta’yīd work in the way one expects them to do. That is to say, they present their communities as superior to the others regardless of whether this corresponded to the political hierarchy in the Christian territories. Interestingly, however, the Mudejar authors do not avoid talking about political authority and, therefore referring


to their subordination to the Christian rulers; they engage in the discussion of these issues and do their best to steer circumstances into their favour. Each in his own way, the authors of the Kitāb al-Mujādala and of the Ta’īd stress the overall importance of following the right religion, Islam, and they place government in religious issues at the heart of the debate. Whereas the purpose of the conceptualizations of the authority of the sultan in the Kitāb al-Mujādala discussed in the previous chapter was to demonstrate the Christians’ inability to understand the Divine and to rebuke the Christians’ claims that political superiority involves religious superiority, the Ta’īd, in its turn, quotes the Torah extensively and claims that it reveals the truth of Islam but that Jews have tampered with its meaning (tahrīf al-ma‘nā). Moreover, the Torah provides evidence of the sins of the Jews and of God’s punishment visited on them, including their dwelling in the lands of their religious opponents, the Christians and the Muslims. This emphasizes their minority status and the inferiority of their religion.

‘Notions of minority’ play an important role in the polemics of the Mudejars and this sometimes unfolds in unexpected ways. If legally and numerically speaking the Mudejars were a religious minority in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula, they often presented their religious identities to Christians and Jews as superior, just as they would have done were they in majority Muslim lands. The same impression is found in the “demandas” discussed in Chapter Five, in which the Jews approach Muhammad, the head of the rising Muslim empire, finally to convert or ‘submit’ (aslama) to his victorious religion, Islam. As a whole, the evidence seems to stress the importance which the Mudejars attached to their ability to govern themselves in religious matters under non-Muslim rule and the role of treatises of religious polemics in this respect.

The analysis reveals that, in these treaties, the Muslims claim a space for Islam within a predominantly Christian society. Their principal argument is that political domination does not involve religious domination and, therefore, even though as lords they have the upper hand, the Christians should not impose their religion on the Mudejars. From this standpoint it follows that the leaders of the Mudejar communities seem to have adhered to the pragmatic line of their co-religionists in Muslim lands and, even more, they are legitimizing their residence in the Christian territories. The Mudejar authors achieve this by relating to the past and to the future, and above all, to the present, a ploy which provides evidence of Islam as a discursive practice. In this sense the findings are consistent with Asad’s insightful claim that, “wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy.” Asad, 1986, 15.

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of the Mudejar polemicists in providing a conceptual framework for dealing with the day-
to-day challenges of being Muslim outside the dār al-Islām nuances the idea that the
members of their communities depended only on the guidelines derived from majority
Muslim territories and this conclusion undermines the perception of Mudejar Islam as
peripheral Islam.