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What's in a Word? Naming 'Muslims' in Medieval Christian Iberia

Abstract: This chapter underlines the various ways in which closer study of the Middle Ages can be relevant to some aspects of Western attitudes towards Islam, past and present. Taking the variability of the terminology used to name Muslims in medieval Iberia as a case study, the paper examines how the nomenclature used to designate Muslims was in specific instances influenced by understandings of Islamic ethnic and political complexities, as represented in works by medieval Hispanic writers and records of the decisions and deeds of leading Christian political figures. Understanding Islam to be a constellation of peoples had an impact on the responses of medieval Spaniards to local Muslim communities and leaders. Such nuanced understandings could also foster notably co-operative political relationships and arrangements. Analysing in particular the refinement of pre-Islamic Christian models for nomenclature with the Hispanic introduction of new designations during the first half of the twelfth century, the chapter shows that Christian authors could conceive of the Islamic world not just as a totalized vision of an abstract enemy, but also as a juxtaposition of peoples, and of political identifications in particular. These distinctions challenge the commonly held idea of the Middle Ages as a period of only crude intercultural understandings. They resonate with contemporary debates surrounding the place of Islam in the so-called modern world, a debate too often fed by a monolithic appreciation of what it is to be a Muslim.

Keywords: Western views of Islam, medieval Iberia, ethnonyms, Andalusis

“Messire! Un sarrasin! Messire, un sarrasin dans une chariotte du diable!” (“Sire! A Saracen! Sire, a Saracen in a devil’s chariot!”). This line from the 1993 French film ‘Les Visiteurs’¹ is intended to illustrate the crude if not comic credulity commonly attributed to medieval people. The comedy featured the nobleman Godefroy de Montmirail (Jean Reno) and his squire Jacquouille (Christian Clavier), whom a sorcerer’s spell transported from the twelfth century to the twentieth. In their attempts to find a way back to their home, the protagonists faced many challenges, including the unexpected appearance of a post-office van driven by a black-skinned employee

¹ Les Visiteurs, dir. Jean-Marie Poiré, perf. Christian Clavier, Jean Reno, Valérie Lemerrier, France, 1993, film.

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(Théophile Moussa Sowié). Terrified both by the man's skin colour and the internal combustion engine, Jacquouille – as the audience was meant to believe – could only identify both through his own knowledge base. This involved concluding, apparently inevitably, the materialization of a “Sarrasin!” was ‘devilish’.

The line made millions of spectators heartily laugh in 1993. When I saw the film as a teenager I, myself, was far from imagining that the Saracens would become, years later, recurrent characters in my professional life as an historian of medieval Iberia! It might even have been the first time I heard the term, and today I do not remember with clarity whether I reacted to the scene or simply laughed along with the rest of the audience. I certainly recall that we had read Corneille's ‘Le Cid’ at school and I might have associated the ‘Saracens’ with the ‘Moors’ whom the Castilian hero Rodrigue chivalrously fought in the seventeenth-century play. Did I then laugh at the archaism of the term? Or at the caricatured rendering of French public services behind the appearance of a debonair post-office employee whose startled verbal reaction at the sight of the threatening “Visiteurs” was uttered with a strong sub-Saharan African accent? I am honestly not sure that my reflections were particularly deep at the time. Was I even aware of how bitterly that scene – the spectators' laughter, and my own poor appreciation of a characteristically xenophobic form of French humour – resonated with many French people in a context of post-colonial racism?² After all, it was not that different from another line that I had heard repeated time and time again in the ‘real world’ of the news, of adult conversations, and even in my school playground. “Rentre chez toi, sale arabe” (“Go home, you filthy Arab!”) was not a quotation from a comic film, but the appalling reality suffered by many among the descendants of North-African immigrants, spontaneously harassed by some of their fellow citizens who held them responsible for the creeping economic crisis.³ This xenophobic attitude towards the parts of the French population of African-immigrant origins, wherever their forebears came from, evolved in its turn at the very end of the twentieth and in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It partially moved from a racial focus to become more centred on religious and cultural questions, and French debates concerning identity crystallized around “le problème musulman” (“the Muslim problem”).⁴ In this context, it is not rare for French Muslims to be held collectively responsible for the terrorist attacks that have plunged the country repeatedly into mourning. Conflating elements of racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia, the use some made of the designations ‘Arabs’ or ‘Muslims’ contain not only questionable assumptions, but also the idea that the communities they name, conceived as monolithic, do not belong. That is, they are othered, as they were in the Middle Ages.

² Sylvie CHALAYE, *Nègres en images*, Paris 2002.

³ Gérard NOIRIEL, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France. Discours publics, humiliations privées*, Paris 2007.

⁴ Abdellali HAJJAT / Marwan MOHAMMED, *Islamophobie. Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le ‘problème musulman’*, Paris 2013.

As they were in the Middle Ages? Over the last three decades, medievalists have repeatedly claimed a place and relevance for their field in the debates that have shaken – and that continue to resonate in – the public sphere of many Western countries regarding the place of Islam in the so-called modern world. Refuting the overly simple theory of a “clash of civilizations”⁵ that supposedly resulted from the globalization of the world from the sixteenth century, medievalists have established their period as the age when multifaceted and complex relations between Europe and the Islamic world began.⁶ Complementing the recurrent calls to avoid generalizations when it comes to Western (mis)conceptions of Islam, they shed light on how the Middle Ages were a formative period in the construction of prejudices against Muslims.⁷ In reflecting on the racism present in contemporary Western societies, they have also questioned their own intellectual practices and have condemned the phenomenon of ‘scholarly islamophobia’.⁸ The Middle Ages therefore emerge as a period of history essential for productive considerations regarding “Islam and the West”,⁹ whether as a point of departure, comparison, or for explication of Western attitudes.

This chapter aims to pursue this reflection on the enduring relevance of the Middle Ages to contemporary perceptions of Islam by extending the investigation into the discursive field of the terminology used to describe the peoples of Islam, and how it impacted on the perception of the Muslim world. It departs from the observation that medievalists often focus their enquiries on how medieval people envisaged Islam in its religious dimensions, neglecting the co-existing contemporary understandings of the Islamic world in its secular aspects.¹⁰ This constraint is certainly understandable because it corresponds to the Christian representations of the world that characterize most of the evidence for the period. However, it also

5 Samuel P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996.

6 Synthesis in Henry LAURENS / John V. TOLAN / Gilles VEINSTEIN, *L'Europe et l'Islam. Quinze siècles d'histoire*, Paris 2009 (Engl. trans.: *Europe and the Islamic World*, Princeton / NJ 2013).

7 Among others, see John V. TOLAN, *Islam in the Mirror of our Phantasms*, in: Nilüfer GÖLE (ed.), *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe*, Farnham 2013, pp. 113–22.

8 See the edited volume by Philippe BÜTTGEN et al. (eds.), *Les Grecs, les Arabes et nous. Enquête sur l'islamophobie savante*, Paris 2009, that followed the publication of the monograph by Sylvain GOUGUENHEIM, *Aristote au Mont-Saint-Michel. Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne*, Paris 2008, in which the author denied the role of the Islamic world in the transmission of Greek philosophy to medieval Latin Christendom.

9 To repeat the title of one of the earliest works on Western perceptions of Islam, written by Norman DANIEL, *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image*, Edinburgh 1960.

10 See Marie-Thérèse D'ALVERNAY, *La connaissance de l'Islam en Occident du IX^e au milieu du XII^e siècle*, in: Charles BURNETT (ed.), *La connaissance de l'Islam dans l'Occident médiéval*, Aldershot 1994, pp. 577–602, who symptomatically stated at the very beginning of her article that “[she would] limit [her] study to the knowledge of Islam as a religion, and this is already a vast subject” (“Nous limiterons notre étude à la connaissance de l'Islam en tant que religion, et ceci est déjà un sujet bien vaste”).

tends to confine reflection and limit its transportability into discussions and debates today. Within such limits, the Middle Ages remain an ‘age of faith’ in which Muslims were an archetypal enemy of Christendom. As a consequence, the period occasionally becomes the focus of anachronistic examinations of modern notions of tolerance and intolerance. Decentring our approach to look at how medieval people observed the world that they shared with Muslims¹¹ allows for more intersectional comparisons, and offers a further example of the relevance of the medieval period for a contemporary audience. Taking the example of medieval Iberia as a case study of inter-cultural encounter, and focussing in particular on sources from the twelfth century, this chapter argues that medieval people could adopt a plurality of viewpoints on Islam, that were not always based on religious antagonism or uniformizing comprehension. Indeed, medieval Christians in Iberia engaged with diverse discursive strategies in their identification of Muslims.

A caricature, and problematic in terms of race discourse, as it was and remains, the line from ‘Les Visiteurs’ nevertheless referred to a historical reality: in the medieval Latin West, ‘Saracen’ was one of the most commonly used words to designate not only a Muslim person, but potentially any person physically or geographically associated with the empire of Islam.¹² Modern scholars have frequently discussed the various potential etymological roots of the term.¹³ In the mind of medieval Christians, its meaning was clearly inherited from an early ethnology based on the evidence of the Bible. Commenting on biblical genealogies in the fourth century, Saint Jerome among others, explained how “Ishmaelites and Hagarenes [are] now called Saracens, having falsely taken for themselves the name of Sarah in order to be seen as descending from a lawful woman rather than from a slave”.¹⁴ He had in mind the people considered by Christian authors as the descendants of Ishmael, first son of the patriarch Abraham and his servile wife, Hagar. Not satisfied with their shameful origin, the Ishmaelites or Hagarenes had tried, according to this Church Father, to mitigate it by appropriating the name of Abraham’s legitimate wife, Sarah. The term ‘Saracen’ thus conveys a pejorative implication of deceit. Other Christian authors from pre-Islamic times, writing on the ethno-geographical history of their world, associated Saracens with the tribes of the pagan Arabs, and this nomenclature passed into the medieval West through

11 For such an approach, see H     SIRANTOINE, *Histories of the Islamic World in the Chronicles of the Kingdom of Le  n (End-Ninth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries)*, in: *Parergon* 35(2) (2018), pp. 119–145. Elements of the ideas presented here are based on the argument developed in this article.

12 Norman DANIEL, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, London 1975, p. 53; Philippe S  NAC, *L’Occident m  di  val face    l’Islam. L’Image de l’autre*, 2nd ed. Paris 2000, p. 14.

13 Irf  n SHAH  D / Clifford Edmund BOSWORTH, *Saracens*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (published online 2012), online (DOI): http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1003 (last accessed 15/05/2019).

14 Jerome, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem libri XIV*, ed. Francis GLORIE (*Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina* 75), Turnhout 1964, p. 335 (VIII 28): *Ismaelitas et Agarenos, qui nunc Saraceni appellantur, assumentes sibi falso nomen Sarae quo scilicet de ingenua et domina uideantur esse generate.*

writers such as Isidore of Seville (d. 636) in his 'Etymologies'.¹⁵ From there, when the time came to name the followers of the new movement arisen in Arabia in the mid-seventh century, a discursive frame of reference was already prepared for use. Later on, the terms 'Saracens', 'Hagarenes', and 'Ishmaelites', in the expression of European writers, denoted an assimilation between Arabs and Muslims, and these identifications that had begun as ethnonyms acquired a religious dimension. They also tended to impose a monolithic depiction of the Islamic world, based on a biblical framework interpreted with pejorative implications.

Although the Iberian Peninsula was the place of a more direct encounter between the Islamic world and Latin Christendom as a consequence of the westward expansion of the *dār al-Islām*, authors originating from the Hispanic Christian kingdoms were generally no exceptions to the ethnographic-commentarial habits described above, which are all apparent in the medieval documentation.¹⁶ But, from the early Middle Ages, they were combined with a store of other terms employed in a variety of contexts. For example, the biblical analogy was expanded upon in the Asturian 'Chronicle of Alfonso III' (early tenth century),¹⁷ where Muslims, in addition to Saracens and Ishmaelites, were also designated as Chaldeans. With this term, the author reminded his audience of the scriptural misfortunes suffered by the people of Israel, and presented the Asturians as the heirs of the Chosen People.¹⁸ In other writings, emphasis was drawn to the paganism that, it was assumed, characterized Saracens. Thus, the Mozarabic cleric Eulogius of Córdoba (d. 857), in his various treatises written in defence of voluntary martyrdom, was scrupulous in referring to Muslims as *pagani*, *ethnici*, and *gentiles*.¹⁹ We also know of some diplomatic occurrences of a term transliterated from the Arabic *muslim* under the Latin form *muzlemite* at the turn of the millennium.²⁰

Admittedly, other terms appeared in Iberian sources that signal a recognition of ethnic distinctions within the otherwise purportedly uniform Muslim community.

¹⁵ John V. TOLAN, *Saracens. Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York 2002, pp. 10–12.

¹⁶ See Dolores OLIVER PÉREZ, *Sarraceno: su etimología e historia*, in: *Al-Qantara* 15(1) (1994), pp. 99–130, whose article proposes an overview of the denominations adopted by Christian Spaniards to designate Muslims up to the 13th century.

¹⁷ *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, ed. Juan GIL, in: *Crónicas Asturianas*, ed. Juan GIL, trans. José L. MORALEJO, and study by Ignacio RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, Oviedo 1985, pp. 113–149.

¹⁸ Kenneth B. WOLF, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, Liverpool 1990, pp. 58–59.

¹⁹ Eulogius of Córdoba, *Memoriale Sanctorum, Documentum Martyriale, and Apologeticus Martyrum*, ed. Juan GIL, in: *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum (Manuales y Anejos de "Emerita" 28)*, ed. Juan GIL, Madrid 1973, vol. 2, pp. 363–495.

²⁰ See Maurilio PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ (ed.), *Lexicon latinitatis Medii Aevi regni Legionis (s. VIII–1230). Imperfectum (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis. Medieval Latin dictionaries 3)*, Turnhout 2010, p. 498.

Arabes and *Mauri* in particular were used in early Iberian texts to distinguish, respectively, the Arab and Berber populations that had settled in the peninsula after its conquest. Such is the case in the ‘Mozarabic Chronicle of 754’, which is attentive to the resentment felt by the Berbers/*Mauri* against the Arab ruling elite.²¹ However, with time ‘Arabs’ was less frequently resorted to, or lost its ethnologic specificity. It was only with the ‘Historia Arabum’ written by the archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Jim  nez de Rada, in the mid-thirteenth century that it regained clearer currency. For ‘Moors’, which became, on the contrary, widely used, the meaning was variable.²² In the ‘Primera Cr  nica General’, promoted by King Alfonso X of Castile-Le  n (1252–1284), ‘Moors’ referred either to those identified as the Arabs from Arabia in early Christian ethnology, or to the Berbers originating from *Mauritania* who had rebelled against the Arabs in eighth-century al-Andalus. But it could also be employed as a synonym for Hagarenes and thus point to Muslims in general.²³ In all, the variety employed in medieval Iberian texts to name Muslim populations creates the impression of a great confusion of terms, at least when these terms are taken together by the modern reader.

It has been argued that, in historiographical material at least, this confusion could be attributed to a historical methodology that favoured in many instances the compilation of previous writings that were not always standardized. However, a decisive and more important reason was the ignorance with which Iberian Christian historiographers regarded their Islamic foe, whom they nevertheless regularly alluded to in their stories. Behind the Saracens, the Moors and the Arabs, medieval people were only given to see the archetype of ‘them’, notwithstanding the respective identifications or allegiances to the Fatimid caliphate, the Cordoban emirate, or an autonomous pirate base. It was a strategic ignorance, insofar as unifying the Islamic world behind a totalizing designation was also an instrument for defining the valorous and virtuous Christian power that combatted it from the Iberian Peninsula. However, such purposes did not prevent Hispanic historians from underlining the significant internal rivalries that weakened Islamic political unity, especially in its Western parts. The discursive emphasis on both a totalist unity and on precarious fragmentation within the Muslim world, which was in operation through various scribal strategies, must therefore be conceived as twinned

²¹ *Continuatio isidoriana hispana = Cr  nica moz  rabe de 754*, ed. and trans. Jos   Eduardo L  PEZ PEREIRA, Le  n 2009.

²²   variste L  VI-PROVEN  AL / Fr  d  ric DE LA CHAPELLE, Moors, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, First Edition 1913–1936 (published online 2012), online (DOI): http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5262 (last accessed 15/05/2019).

²³ Bernard RICHARD, L’Islam et les musulmans chez les chroniqueurs castillans du milieu du Moyen   ge, in: *Hesp  ris-Tamuda* 12 (1971), pp. 107–132, here p. 118.

aspects of a rhetoric employed to glorify the actions of Iberian Christian historical figures as defenders of both territory and faith.²⁴

Once one considers that both the confusion and the genericism observed in the designation of Muslims in Iberian Christian sources could be the result of a calculated (un)awareness, the possibility of other terminological strategies appears a fruitful field of investigation. From such a perspective, a closer look at what could otherwise be interpreted as exceptions in Hispanic sources from the twelfth century reveals their abiding discursive potential and the eruption of characterizations and differentiations of Muslims based on a variety of ethno-political identities.

In this regard, the introduction of a new term among the range of those available to Iberian writers to refer to Muslims can be considered the result of such strategies. Sources from the period testify to the introduction of the ethnonym 'Moabites'.²⁵ The term itself comes again from the Bible as a historico-genealogical resource: in the 'Book of Genesis' Moab is the son whom Lot fathered with his elder daughter, and from there became associated with the eponymous kingdom of Moab, located on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, whose inhabitants featured as foes to Old Testament Israel in various instances. In his 'Dialogue against the Jews', written sometime between 1106 and 1135, the Hispanic polemicist Petrus Alfonsi specifically identified the Moabites with the followers of Prophet Muhammad.²⁶ A few years later, Renallo, author of the 'Life of Saint Olegarius', bishop of Barcelona from 1116, then of Tarragona from 1118 until his death in 1137, offered a synthesis of the new and old biblical genealogies. In a passage where we follow the count of Barcelona, Ramon Berengar III (d. 1131), over a tour of Italy to obtain support in his fight against Islam, we see him stopping at Genoa and requesting the assistance of the city "against the sons of Hagar and Moab".²⁷

However, in many Iberian sources, the term is believed to have been used rather to refer to the Almoravids specifically, the Berber dynasty that took power in the Maghreb in the second half of the eleventh century, and later proceeded to conquer and rule over al-Andalus from 1086–1147. In addition to the biblical explanation behind this choice of ethnonym, we must consider the phonetic proximity of the Latin *Mo(h)abita*e with the Arabic *al-murābiṭ* (pl. *al-murābiṭūn*) as a determining restriction for the term's significance. The reason behind this restriction might also have had to do with the name given in Latin sources to the Almoravid golden coins

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 118, 122.

²⁵ Meritxell BRU, Posar un nom. Els Almoràvits com a Moabites a finals del segle XI, in: Faventia 31 (2009), pp. 129–149.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 135–136.

²⁷ Vita Beati Ollegarii, ed. Martin AURELL, in: ID., Prédication, croisade et religion civique: Vie et Miracles d'Oleguer († 1137), évêque de Barcelone, in: Revue Mabillon 10 (1999), pp. 113–168, here p. 127: *Adversus filios Agar et Moab*.

circulating in the Iberian Peninsula from the last decade of the eleventh century, namely, the *morabetinos*.²⁸

Moabitae, referring to the Almoravids, therefore cohabitated with more traditional terms with a similarly wide meaning and currency. Its status is not entirely clear in the case of the ‘Historia Compostellana’, a text written at the instigation of the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, Diego Gelm  rez (d. 1140).²⁹ Chronicling the history of the Compostelan see but above all the episcopate of his sponsor, the ‘Historia’ dedicated many lines to the repeated warring between Christians and Muslims during this period. The latter were most of the time designated as *Sarraceni*, *Hismaelitae*, and sometimes *Agareni*. But the authors also named the *Moabitae*, whom a passage identified as *Mauri*³⁰ whilst another stated that, “the heat of the sun [had] made them similar to the Ethiopians”.³¹ It might not be realistic to conclude that usage of the term was systematically restricted to designating the Almoravids in this text.³² The evidence provided by the ‘Historia Roderici’ is stronger. In this anonymous Latin chronicle, recounting the glorious deeds of the famous Cid (d. 1099) and composed at an unknown date during the twelfth century,³³ ‘Saracens’ refers to Muslims in general. But among the terminology used, *gens Moabitarum* or more simply *Moabite* is often juxtaposed to *Hysmaelite*, with the Ishmaelites presented as having to collaborate with or submit to the new leading Islamic power of the ‘barbaric’ Moabites, of whom the context allows identification with the Almoravids.³⁴ This juxtaposition suggests that the Moabites were not just a particular group within a whole, defined as ‘the Ishmaelites’, but rather that both terms were referring to a specific group. In this perspective, if *Moabite* referred to the Almoravids, to what group were the Ishmaelites assimilated? It must be noted that, in one instance at least, the Ishmaelites were presented as originating ‘from *Hispania*’.³⁵ Could it be that this text relating the descendants of Ishmael to the Muslims of Spain acknowledged a specific national identity for the Andalusis? Another chronicle certainly did, albeit through a different use of vocabulary.

²⁸ BRU (note 25), pp. 136–138.

²⁹ *Historia Compostellana*, ed. Emma FALQUE (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 70), Turnhout 1988.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, II, XVI: *Moabitarum siue Maurorum*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, I, XXIX: *Moabite, quos estus solis facit Ethiopibus similes*.

³² *Contra*: *Historia Compostellana*, trans. Emma FALQUE (Akal. Cl  sicos Latinos Medievales 3), Madrid 1994, pp. 132–133, n. 315 and 321.

³³ On the dating of the ‘Historia Roderici’ see the balance of hypotheses offered in Alberto MONTANER FRUTOS /   ngel ESCOBAR CHICO (eds.), *Carmen Campidoctoris o Poema latino del Campeador*, Madrid 2001, pp. 77–87. Alberto MONTANER proposes a late date around 1190 for the composition of the text.

³⁴ See the evidence compiled by BRU (note 25), pp. 138–139.

³⁵ *Historia Roderici vel Gesta Roderici Campidocti*, ed. Emma FALQUE, in: *Chronica Hispana Saeculi XII. Pars 1* (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 71), Turnhout 1990, pp. 1–98, here ch. 33.22: *Omnes alii reges Yspanie Ysmaelitarum*.

The 'Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris' (henceforward CAI) was written between 1147 and 1149 by a cleric close to King Alfonso VII of Castile-León (1126–1157), and probably at his instigation.³⁶ The chronicle is dedicated to the narration of his reign, from Alfonso's accession to the throne in 1126 to the preparations for the siege of Almería in 1147. Within the historiographical panorama of its time, this text testifies to a revival of interest in the Islamic world,³⁷ especially its western parts whose contemporary dynamics are clearly described.³⁸ In particular, the chronicler understood and competently rendered the change of rule in al-Andalus in the early twelfth century. In the title to Book II the chronicler specified that he aimed to narrate "the conflicts and battles which he [Alfonso VII] [...] had with King 'Ali, with his son Tāshufin, and with the other kings and princes of the Moabites and Hagarenes".³⁹ The ensuing first chapter elaborated on this title, setting the historical context of the narrative:

Departing from the natural order of things, let us come to deal with the wars which in times past were particularly hard-fought for the Christians. After the death of King Alfonso [VI, in 1109], [...] King 'Ali, who was the most powerful among the Saracens, and who as king of Marrakesh ruled over the Moabites, and on this side of the sea over the Hagarenes far and wide, and over many islands and peoples of the sea, like a serpent thirsting in the summer heat, raised his head and, as if he would triumph everywhere after the death of such a great man, summoned all the princes, commanders and soldiers of the Moabites together with a great army of Arab mercenaries, and many thousands of horsemen, crossbowmen and great companies of foot-soldiers, as numerous as the sand which is upon the sea shore. Having received advice from his experts, he gathered an army and crossed the sea with his son Tāshufin and went to Seville.⁴⁰

36 Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris, ed. Antonio MAYA SÁNCHEZ, in: Chronica Hispana Saeculi XII. Pars 1 (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 71), Turnhout 1990, pp. 109–248; an introduction to the chronicle and an assessment of its place within the historiographical production of the time can be read along with the English translation of the text – from which all the translated excerpts cited in this chapter are borrowed – in Simon BARTON / Richard FLETCHER (trans.), The World of El Cid. Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest. Selected Sources Translated and Annotated, Manchester, New York 2000, pp. 148–263.

37 See Simon BARTON, Islam and the West. A View from Twelfth-Century León, in: ID. / Peter LINEHAN (eds.), Cross, Crescent and Conversion. Studies on Medieval Spain and Christendom in memory of Richard Fletcher, Leiden, Boston 2008, pp. 153–74.

38 For the analysis of CAI that follows, see SIRANTOINE (note 11), pp. 141–148.

39 CAI (note 36), II, praef.: *DE DISSENSIONIBVS ET PRELIIS QVE HABVIT IPSE [...] CVM REGE ALI ET CVM FILIO SVO TEXVFINO ET CVM CETERIS REGIBVS ET PRINCIPIBVS MOABITARVM ET AGARENORVM.*

40 CAI (note 36), II 1: *OMISSO NATVRALI ORDINE AD EA, QVE OLIM CHRISTIANIS ASPERRIMA FVERE BELLA, TRACTANDA VENIAMVS. Post obitum regis domni Adefonsi, [...] rex Ali maximus Sarracenorum, qui rex Marrocorum dominabatur Moabitis et ex ista parte maris Agarenis longe lateque aliisque multis et maris insulis et nationibus, sicut serpens estu sitiens extulit caput et quasi post mortem summi uiri ubique triumphaturus conuocauit omnes principes et duces et milites Moabitarum et magnum exercitum conductitium Arabum et multa milia militum, balistorum et magnas multitudines peditum sicut*

In this passage, which exemplifies a strategy adopted throughout the text, we observe that the chronicler made use of terminology inspired by the Bible to designate Muslims: they were ‘Saracens’ and ‘Hagarenes’, two denominations not unusual at that stage, and ‘Moabites’, a more recent addition to the nomenclature, as we have seen. However, the author also reappropriated this terminology to shed light on the politico-ethnic variety of the Muslims with whom Alfonso VII dealt during his reign. Indeed, a clear distinction is made between the Moabites, here evidently designating the Almoravids from the Maghreb ruled by ‘King ‘Al  ’, that is Emir ‘Al   ibn Y  suf (1106–1143), and the Hagarenes, acknowledged specifically as the Muslims “on this side of the sea”, that is the Andalusis whom the Almoravids overpowered progressively from 1086 onward. Whereas the term ‘Hagarene’ worked as a synonym for ‘Saracens’ in previous texts, it was redefined in the CAI to apply only to the Muslims of *Hispania*, whilst ‘Saracens’ continued to refer to Muslims in a universalizing way.⁴¹ Later in the text, the chronicler even added one more group to this panorama: the Berber Almohads, whose rise to power in the Maghreb between 1120 and 1147 was similarly depicted quite accurately. They first appeared in a chapter relating that King ‘Al   had “to make war on the *Muzmutos* and the king of the Assyrians, called Abdelnomen, who attacked his territories without interruption”.⁴² This designation of the Almohad leader ‘Abd al-Mu’min as “king of the Assyrians”, recalling the biblical Nebuchadnezzar,⁴³ allowed for a continuation of the scriptural tradition for which the author seemed to have particular enthusiasm.⁴⁴ But on the other hand, the term *Muzmuti* had no relation to biblical genealogies, and was a phonetic rendition of ‘Masmuda’, referring to the Berber tribes who first supported the Almohad movement.⁴⁵ In this case, the direct influence of the Arabic language on the Christian perspective should be acknowledged.

Interestingly enough, this attention to both a distinction between Muslims from Berber and Andalusian descent, and the phonetic-linguistic precision in identifying them, also made its way into Alfonso VII’s diplomatic records, around the same period when the CAI was composed. From the mid-1130s, his chancery developed a habit of

arena que est in litore maris et, habito usuque industrium consilio, congregavit exercitum et transfretando uenit in Sibiliam et cum eo filius eius Texufinus.

⁴¹ Ron BARKAI, *Cristianos y musulmanes en la Espa  a medieval. El Enemigo en el espejo*, Madrid 1984, pp. 140–141.

⁴² CAI (note 36), II 10: *Ad facienda prelia contra Muzmutos et regem Asiriorum nomine Abdelnomen, qui expugnabat partes eius sine intermissione.*

⁴³ BARTON / FLETCHER (note 36), pp. 208–209, note 25.

⁴⁴ Maurilio P  REZ GONZ  LEZ, *Influencias cl  sicas y b  blicas en la ‘Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris’*, in: ID. (ed.), *Actas del I congreso nacional de lat  n medieval*, Le  n 1995, pp. 349–355.

⁴⁵ BARKAI (note 41), p. 141.

incorporating into the dating of its records short narrations⁴⁶ showcasing the king's glorious deeds: the reception of a new vassal, for example, or the visits of papal legates, royal marriages, conquests or military expeditions in al-Andalus, and so forth.⁴⁷ From 1146 onward, it is not rare to encounter in these records references to Berber Muslims and/or their leaders. Thus, during the second half of 1146, three diplomas reminded their readers that they were issued “during the year when the Emperor [Alfonso VII] acquired Córdoba and made Abengania, prince of the Moabites, his vassal”.⁴⁸ We can recognize here the Almoravid governor of al-Andalus Yaḥyā ibn Gāniya (d. 1148), who rallied Alfonso VII to face the rebellions weakening al-Andalus at a time when the Almoravid dynasty was threatened in the Maghreb by the rising Almohads.⁴⁹ A few years later, a military campaign launched again against Córdoba – recently overrun by the Almohads – provided the opportunity to repeat on sixteen occasions, from August 1150 to August 1151, that the records were written “in the same year when the Emperor fought the *Muzmutos* over Córdoba and defeated them”.⁵⁰ ‘Hagarenes’, however, are absent from Alfonso VII's diplomatic collection. And yet, two records from July 1150 testify to the fact that Andalusis were nevertheless recognized as a specific ethno-cultural group, at least in the mind of the scribe who drafted the records. Both alluded in their dating formula to the same campaign, mentioning the *Muzmuti* / Almohads. But this time, these were not alone: “This charter was made when the Emperor had Córdoba surrounded and fought there against three thousands *Muzmutos* and many other *Indeluciis* [*Induluciis* in the earliest record, HS], and he defeated them.”⁵¹ Whereas the author of the CAI had resorted to a strategy of redefining the biblical terminology to characterize Muslims from *Hispania*, the scribe responsible for these records chose to build on the possibilities offered by local languages, using a word that was obviously transliterated from Arabic to acknowledge

⁴⁶ Amaia ARIZALETA, who studied these formulas for the reign of Alfonso VIII of Castile (1158–1214), called these texts ‘diplomatic micro-narrations’, see Amaia ARIZALETA, *Les Clercs au palais. Chancellerie et écriture du pouvoir royal. Castille, 1157–1230 (Les Livres d’e-Spania)*, Paris 2010, ch. 3, § 78–99, online: <http://e-spanialivres.revues.org/154> (last accessed 15/05/2019).

⁴⁷ Hélène SIRANTOINE, *Imperator Hispaniae. Les Idéologies impériales dans le royaume de León*, Madrid 2012, pp. 323–324, 336–337.

⁴⁸ *Anno quo predictus imperator Cordubam acquisiuit et principem moabitarum Abinganiam sibi uassallum fecit*. See Bernard F. REILLY, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla under King Alfonso VII, 1126–1157*, Philadelphia 1998, annotated guide to Alfonso VII's documents, pp. 323–398, docs. 531, 538, and 540. In a fourth record, Abengania is labelled *princeps Maurorum* (ibid., doc. 532.)

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 92–93.

⁵⁰ Or similar formulations, see ibid., docs. 670, 679, 681–682, 684, 688–690, 699–703, 705, 707–708.

⁵¹ *Facta carta quando imperator tenebat Cordubam circumdatam et pugnavit cum XXX milia muzmudis et cum aliis multis indeluciis super eam et deuicit eos*. See Hélène SIRANTOINE, *Sobre las primeras fuentes de los términos ‘Andaluz’ y ‘Andalucía’. Cum Aliis Multis Indeluciis y Alandaluf*, unas ocurrencias documentales y cronísticas a mediados del siglo XII, in: *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes 15* (2004), pp. 185–190.

the ethno-political status of the ‘Andalusis’. Did he himself incorporate this new term into the Latin nomenclature? Did he read it somewhere? There is no way to answer these questions, but it is worth noting that no earlier or later diplomatic occurrences of the word are known to this day.

All of these examples manifest a certain consistent tendency among some Iberian authors and scribes from the twelfth century. They were willing to conceive of a Muslim community that was not necessarily a uniform whole, but comprised various groups, themselves constituting a diverse range of ethno-political entities. The chronological coincidence raises in its turn a series of questions. The first relates to the reason why this tendency arose in Iberian documentation at this specific time. Various factors might have served as contextual but also technical triggers. On the broad scale of Latin Christendom, this period – coinciding with the opening of the crusades era – was marked by not only a broader interest in the Islamic world, but also a concerted effort to understand its complexity, though one informed by the aim of refuting Islam or repelling the territorial advance of its followers.⁵² Christian Spaniards were no strangers to that movement, and on the local Iberian scale the impact of the successive Berber invasions likely reinforced combative dispositions. But they might also have benefitted from a technical specificity, which was a result of this movement towards better understanding. The Iberian Peninsula was an enclave where many intellectuals gathered to learn from both the Hellenic sciences, which the Arabs had preserved, and the scientific production of the Arab-Muslim world itself.⁵³ It was there that translators made this work available to a Latin audience,⁵⁴ and translation methodologies might therefore have impacted on the terminology used to refer to Muslims.⁵⁵ In all, more interaction, whether military or intellectual, generated a clearer view and a willingness to name Muslims accurately.

Another question however remains that of the purpose of these tendencies in the Iberian documentation. If, as we underlined earlier, the monolithic term ‘Saracen’ could be deployed to enhance the glory of the Christians who faced such a tremendous enemy, was there some benefit in distinguishing Berbers and Andalusis among

⁵² Richard W. SOUTHERN, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1962, ch. 2: “The Century of Reason and Hope”; TOLAN (note 15), chs. 5 and 6.

⁵³ Marie-Thérèse D’ALVERNY / Charles BURNETT, *La Transmission des textes philosophiques et scientifiques au Moyen Âge* (Collected Studies Series 463), Aldershot 1994.

⁵⁴ Charles BURNETT, *The Translating Activity in Medieval Spain*, in: Salma K. JAYYUSI / Manuela MARÍN (eds.), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, Leiden 1992, pp. 1036–1058.

⁵⁵ This possibility was pointed out to me by Charles BURNETT, whom I want to thank warmly. It is well known that Christian Iberian sources named *Hispania* the territory which in Arabic was called al-Andalus, see José Antonio MARAVALL, *El concepto de España en la Edad Media*, Madrid 1954. However, there is evidence that during the twelfth century this latter designation made its way into the Latin, then vernacular, range of toponyms, see SIRANTOINE (note 51). Work remains to be done to locate the origins of such evolution in the translating activity set in Spain.

their ranks? The testimony of the CAI is particularly revealing in this respect. In this account of Alfonso VII's reign, an important role is given to a certain "King Zafadola", i. e. Sayf al-Dawla, "of the most illustrious lineage of the kings of the Hagarenes".⁵⁶ Last representative of the Huddid family that once ruled the taifa of Zaragoza, he was dispossessed of his kingdom by the Almoravids in 1110.⁵⁷ The chronicle narrated how Zafadola then became a close collaborator with Alfonso VII against the Almoravids, and in the end the leader of the Hagarene resistance against them. Reporting a dialogue that supposedly took place between the Hagarene / Andalusí leaders and Zafadola, the chronicler wrote:

When the princes, commanders and all the Hagarene people saw that miseries were multiplied [...] they said: 'What can we do, since we shall not be able to withstand war with the emperor and his commanders?' Some of them replied saying: 'The Moabites eat the fat of the land, they take away our possessions and our gold and silver from us, and they oppress our wives and children. Let us fight against them [...] for we have no part in King Tāshufīn's palace neither have we inheritance in the sons of 'Alī and of his father Yūsuf.' Others said: 'First of all, let us make a peace agreement with the emperor of León and Toledo, and let us give him royal tribute, just as our fathers gave it to his fathers.' This seemed good in their eyes and they agreed to make ready for war against the men of Marrakesh. [...] Sending messengers, they called upon King Zafadola and all the lineage of the kings of the Hagarenes to come and make war on the Moabites.⁵⁸

This dialogue emphasized an Andalusí nation threatened by the Almoravid foreigners,⁵⁹ and even credits some legitimacy to the Andalusí presence in the Peninsula. But it was also clear that this recognition worked only as long as the Hagarenes submitted to Alfonso VII. Now, the latter was king of Castile-León, but, as can be seen in the excerpts cited here, he also claimed the title of 'Emperor of all *Hispania*'. He was even crowned emperor in May 1135, during a ceremony that Zafadola himself attended, among many other people, according to the CAI.⁶⁰ The attention dedicated by the author of the CAI to the Western Islamic world and the distinction he maintained

⁵⁶ CAI (note 36), I 27: *Et erat rex ex maximo semine regum Agarenorum.*

⁵⁷ On Zafadola, see FRANCISCO GARCÍA FITZ, *Relaciones políticas y guerra. La Experiencia castellano-leonesa frente al Islam. Siglos XI–XIII*, Seville 2002, pp. 82–98.

⁵⁸ CAI (note 36), II 93: *Videntes ergo principes et duces et omnis populus Agarenorum multiplicata mala [...] dixerunt: 'Quid faciemus, quia non poterimus substinere bellum imperatoris et ducum eius?' Responderunt nonnulli eorum dicentes: 'Moabite medulas terre comedunt et possessiones nostras, aurum et argentum nobis tollunt, uxores nostras et filios nostros opprimunt. Pugnemus ergo contra eos et occidamus eiiciamusque dominium a nobis, quia non est nobis pars in domo regis Texufini neque hereditas in filiis Ali et patris eius Iuzeph'. Alii autem dicebant: 'Faciamus in primis pactum et pacem cum imperatore Legionis et Toleti et demus ei tributa regalia, sicut patres nostri dederunt patribus suis'. Quod bonum uisum est in oculis eorum et ut essent parati in prelio contra Marrochinos. [...] Et mittentes uocabant regem Zafadolam et omne semen regum Agarenorum, ut uenirent et bellarent contra Moabitas.*

⁵⁹ See also CAI (note 36), I 27 and 41.

⁶⁰ See CAI (note 36), I 70, and SIRANTOINE (note 47), ch. 8.

between various Muslim ethno-political entities were therefore part of the broader narrative of the ‘Hispanic empire’ in which the Andalusis had a role to play, as long as they accepted client status under the ‘imperial’ authority. In doing so, the CAI was nevertheless one step ahead of the ‘Historia Roderici’, that merely identified an Andalusis community through a fragile restriction of the meaning of the term ‘Ishmaelites’. The CAI, on the other hand, was incorporating the Andalusis into the Hispanic history and narrative implicitly. The Almoravids and Almohads, both groups that had recently arisen in the Maghreb, were external enemies; but the Andalusis community, settled in Iberia for a long time, shared a sense of Hispanic identity which made it possible for them to belong, with more or less negotiation, in the Iberian *imperium* that Alfonso VII wished to federate. They had to be subdued, but they were also shown as having a rightful place in the Iberian Peninsula.

The various cases presented in this chapter illustrate how inventive medieval Spaniards could be when it came to the terms used to characterize Islam and its followers. They were able to conceive Islam as a single world, unified by a religious law and populated by Saracens and / or Moors, but also as a polity comprising of many peoples, territories, and ultimately identities. Iberian sources from the twelfth century show that chroniclers and scribes, in parallel with the traditional vision of enmity towards Saracens, aimed also to distinguish categories of peoples among them: the Berber ‘Moabites’ and ‘Muzmuti’, the ‘Hagarenes’, or *Indeluci*. These distinctions could be and certainly were utilized, and in the CAI they awarded an expedient legitimacy to the Andalusis community that served the chronicler’s political agenda. But these examples also challenge the commonly held idea of the Middle Ages as an age of reductive understandings of Muslims, and they undermine the misguided, simplistic idea of a clash of civilizations; such a thesis bears little relevance to conditions in both the past and present.

Zafadola’s supposed speech stating his and his Andalusis people’s Iberian belonging singularly echoes the distressed replies that some French Muslims feel compelled to reply when they are urged to ‘go home’: “But this is my home.” These words, then and now, show that totalizing perceptions of what it means to be Muslim, past and present, are the result of discourses assumed more or less consciously by societies, and, further, that societies can also choose to refine discourses or adopt alternatives, with sharper distinction and sage discretion, if not assimilation and co-operation, as their guide.