

Crossing Boundaries in Late Medieval Mediterranean Iberia: Historical Glimpses of Christian- Islamic Intercultural Dialogue

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ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE TERMS AND CONCEPTS we use to define processes and phenomena in contemporary society can be applied to past situations, a mere mechanical transposition without any necessary contextualization, can easily lead to analytical and interpretative anachronisms. In late medieval Mediterranean Iberia, the internal connections between Christians and Muslims generated transverse figures who were able to cross religious and cultural boundaries in order to facilitate contacts and exchanges, and these people may also be considered as examples of historical intercultural dialogue. Yet, with a few notable exceptions, they approached the ‘Other’ for intellectual reasons and with true convictions or a predisposition to dialogue. They did it merely on a pragmatic level. Hence, intercultural contacts and the crossing of boundaries did not necessarily entail understanding or dialogue. However, these people represented the first step toward getting to know and being able to understand and accept the ‘Other’.¹

INTRODUCTION

Although many of the terms and concepts we use to define processes and phenomena in contemporary society may be applied to past situations, their mere mechanical transposition, without any contextualization, can easily lead to the slippery ground of false presentism, and even to analytical and interpretative anachronisms.

During the mediaeval times the Mediterranean was, just as it is now, a privileged place where meetings and exchange, contacts and interaction between cultures, languages and religions took place. Yet, at the same time, the Mediterranean was, and almost consubstantially,

a place of conflict and hostilities. Indeed, in the mediaeval Mediterranean, conflict and confrontation versus coexistence and communication have to be seen as two complementary realities, inseparable and in no way exclusive: sides of the same coin.

[34] As regards relations between the Christian Mediterranean and the Islamic Mediterranean in the Middle Ages, it is obvious that, traditionally, historians have always placed more emphasis on the negative aspect of the contact and not on its positive derivations. And indeed we have to admit that the evidence of contact that has remained through documents in archives is in the main fundamentally negative. However, we must bear in mind that even nowadays, with respect to any area or aspect of contemporary life, what generates news, concerns and information in the media are above all reports on incidents and disruptions and not on the (supposed) regular and peaceful flow of everyday life.

Thus, to give one example, sources of a marked political-diplomatic nature, like those from the chancellery of the old Crown of Aragon, present us with a number of examples of acts of piracy perpetrated by the Muslims from North Africa and Granada towards Christian subjects. At first sight and without a proper interpretation, they may hide from us the regular pattern of shipping marked precisely by commercial exchanges that, in spite of suffering interference, were assiduous and sustained. However, regardless of whether the complaints were made by Christians or Muslims, close inspection of this negative evidence – the accusations of piracy – may in fact turn out to be extremely valuable examples of positive contacts, such as mercantile relations (clear examples in Sánchez Martínez 1988; Salicrú i Lluch 2002–2003).

And so it is that in study of any kind of boundary and any type of relationship between disparate realities, and, consequently, between Christians and Muslims in the late mediaeval Mediterranean, what often defines the nature of contacts that come to light may owe more to the wishes of a researcher and to the objectives he or she is pursuing when questioning, interpreting and weighing up the sources, than to the sources themselves. In other words, seeing the bottle half full or half empty depends, almost always, on the point of view an individual has taken.



PARALLEL SOCIETIES, TRANSVERSE FIGURES

The so called ‘Three culture myth’ that has been claimed, above all, for Andalusia and Castile in the Middle Ages, refers to a view as idyllic as it is unreal, of the supposed internal harmonic coexistence of Christians, Jews and Muslims (Fanjul 2000). In some cases tolerance, cooperation and friendship may have been apt descriptions but although spaces of social intersection between these worlds in supposed coexistence might have existed, it is more suitable to talk of ‘parallel societies’ (Burns 1996, 17–22)² and of possible shared spaces, in any case interstitial.

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In both the Crown of Aragon and in Castile and Portugal, the Mudejars were, collectively, a segregated and discriminated minority (Ferrer i Mallol 1987; Barros 1998; 2007; Echevarría Arsuaga 2000). Nevertheless, there did exist a Mudejar elite – although this has been disputed (Molénat 2001) –, an elite that came into being due to its position within the bosom of the Islamic community and as a result of its privileged contacts with the dominant Christian society.

Despite the fact that the roles of the rulers and the ruled were always clearly defined, the parallel societies were also, at the same time, frontier societies, though in this case the frontiers were not external frontiers between countries but internal Christian-Islamic and/or Islamic-Christian boundaries.

Like any frontier situation, this internal hinge generated transverse or even trans-frontier figures. Figures who, in short, though they may have come from, belonged to and even been active in one of the two realities, they were nevertheless ambidextrous and, therefore, able to do well in both worlds.

Nowadays a cultural mediator has become an almost inescapable figure in trying to guarantee a correct understanding of immigrants and their suitable relationship as individuals with the institutions and realities of their host country. Yet in the past the groups that, in a more generalised way, moved between neighbouring worlds (such as diplomats, merchants or pilgrims) also needed to be helped by or resort to mediators in order to be able to shape these contacts.

It is these transverse figures, often almost anonymous, that I would like to mention here as an example of what we might without doubt

[36] consider as an important part of true cultural dialogue in history. Practical, not theoretical dialogue, active not philosophical, a dialogue carried out day after day by figures who filter through in the small print, almost invisible and who went virtually unnoticed in the past endeavours of real contacts between Christians and Muslims that are reflected in the documentary sources kept in archives and who, on the other hand, barely poke their heads out among the narrative, literary and philosophical tracts.

They are therefore figures whose reality and everyday life we can only see by reading the archival documents, and which are therefore barely taken into account when one writes about intercultural dialogue in historical periods on the basis of philosophical and intellectual texts.

MEDIATORS OF THE WORD, MEDIATORS
OF INTER-CULTURAL CONTACTS

The large print of the Middle Ages, and most particularly the large print of mediaeval Mediterranean Iberia, allows us to point to some emblematic figures who were characterised by an approach to the 'Other' with the wish to understand him; or, at least, to be able to talk to him, possessing first-hand knowledge of his arguments and his intellectual wherewithal. These figures demonstrate that, in thought or in practice, Christian views of Islam were not monolithic. Moreover, in some cases, they reveal that there was a true desire for inter-religious dialogue, although, in the final analysis an eagerness to preach and convert prevailed in that desire for dialogue and understanding.

At the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, the Florentine Dominican friar Riccoldo de Monte Croce, while resident in Baghdad, learnt Arabic to be able to gain direct access to the Qur'an (Monte Croce 1986; 1997). Some decades before, Ramon Llull, the self-proclaimed *Christianus Arabicus* and a clear example of the meeting of cultures (Raimundus 2007), who has even been considered by some to be the greatest representative of inter-religious dialogue in the Middle Ages (Fidora 2003, 232), learnt the language without leaving his native Majorca from one of previously mentioned anonymous transverse figures, a Muslim slave held captive on the island. Some decades later, another 'Catalan of Majorca', the Franciscan Anselm Turmeda, crossed the line



of no return when he converted to Islam in Tunis, becoming Abdallah al-Taryuman. In his case, he mastered Arabic perfectly in just one year, as a result of the many and continual occasions he had working as an interpreter between Christians and Muslims at the Hafsid customs post (Epalza 1971; 2004).

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Monte Croce, in the Middle East, and Llull and Turmeda, in the Western Mediterranean are extraordinary examples and singular figures of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. They in one way or another, out of their own free will, learnt Arabic and were thus able to get on with or relate to the 'Other' autonomously. Nevertheless, most of the people who came into contact with the 'Other', with any 'Other', needed (at least initially) to resort to interpreters.

The chief advice given in the 14th century by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti's *Pratica della mercatura* to merchants wishing to travel to Cathay following the land route that started from the Black Sea was that they should equip themselves in Tana with a good interpreter regardless of the expense, since the difference in price between a good interpreter and a bad one was more than compensated for by the quality of his services (Pegolotti 1970, 21–2). Similarly, at the end of the 15th century the account of the Flemish merchant Anselmo Adorno's pilgrimage to the Holy Land points out that the greatest precaution that had to be taken before crossing the desert was to have a good guide and interpreter, loyal and prudent, and that for such services it was necessary to pay whatever the price asked for (Heers and de Groer, 1978, 211–3).

Whether or not the interpreter was trustworthy or deceitful in his dealings, not having a good one was a cause of inconvenience and problems. At times, it was a case 'only' of problems with communication and comprehension. Thus, while in the middle of the 13th century in Tartary, William of Rubruck had to interrupt a theological debate about divinity he had begun with some Mongolian Buddhists because the interpreter was unable to translate their reasoning and, weary, he told him to be quiet (Gil 1993, 348), two hundred years later, in Florence, an Armenian interpreter's ignorance prevented Poggio Bracciolini from asking a Nestorian from Upper India the right questions. The Armenian interpreter knew Turkish and Latin, however, about

[38] customs, rites, plants and animals – the things Poggio Bracciolini was interested in – the interpreter was able to speak only in his own language. Nor could Poggio Bracciolini make himself understood to some Ethiopians, as his interpreter knew only Arabic (Poggio Bracciolini 2004, 164–5; *Le Voyage* 2004, 121). In similar fashion, at the beginning of the 15th century, Gadifer de la Salle regretted not having available a good interpreter when he disembarked at the island of El Hierro, in the Canaries, since, according to him if he had had one, he would have been able to obtain what he wanted from the natives (Pico, Aznar and Corbella 2003, 77).

Elsewhere, on the other hand, the lack of linguistic ability had real side effects. The Egyptian traveller Abd al-Basit tells of an example in Tunis at the beginning of the 15th century, in which, following the arrival of a Christian ship loaded with Muslim captives, all of whom were ransomed except one. This prisoner turned out to be a good Muslim of Turkish stock, originally from Astrakhan, who spoke Turkish and had mastered ‘the language of the Franks’ to perfection since he had been a captive among them for over twenty-five years. But, as he knew not a single word of Arabic, upon being interrogated, he was unable to make himself understood and was therefore taken for a Christian (Brunschvig 1936, 73).

The acquisition of a good mastery of languages that in the main might facilitate communication with the Muslims, and the mastery of Arabic in particular,³ was not within everyone’s grasp, so that the groups who had most dealings with them inevitably had to resort to interpreters. Interpreters who were habitually transverse figures, and acted not only as mediators of the word but, if they carried out their duties properly, also acted as cultural mediators (Salicrú i Lluch 2005a).

Those who acted as linguistic mediators and at the same time as mediators in all kinds of inter-cultural contacts were usually a part, in one way or another, of the reality of the frontier or areas where people speaking different languages lived. For the frontier lands were ‘the natural home of interpreters and translators’ (Bischoff 1961, 211), as it was easier for people to be polyglot. Specially, of course, those who belonged to ethnic, religious and/or cultural minorities placed within other realities, namely, in parallel societies like the Jews or Catalan-Aragonese Mudejars.⁴



However, linguistic ability was not enough nor did it guarantee, by any means, good mediation. First and foremost it had to be backed by a complete belief in the mediator by all sides.

Rubruck, who was already suspicious of a certain Mongolian interpreter, especially after realising that in the interpreter's mouth, a long digression was reduced to a few words, upon learning a little of the language later discovered that the Mongolian was translating exactly the opposite of what he was saying (Gil 1993, 311, 315). In the early decades of the 16th century, two Canadian Indians who had been taken to France to be acculturated so they could act as interpreters ended up exploiting the cultural codes they had acquired for their own benefit (Gomez-Geraud 1987, 328).

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Therefore, both Islamic and Iberian Christian powers tried to make the agents mediating in political and diplomatic relations generate the same trust in the receiver that the transmitter was conveying to them. Hence, they chose their messengers and ambassadors conscientiously and deliberately.

From the Crown of Aragon, the diplomatic agents bound for Granada and North Africa were recruited firstly from among the royal officials with posts linked to the frontier and who, as a result, were used to making contacts with Muslims or Mudejars, a practice that, everything seems to indicate, the authorities of Granada also adopted in some cases (Salicrú i Lluçh 2005a, 428–30). Secondly agents were also chosen from among merchants with interests in the Islamic countries or those established in them. These people therefore already knew the ways, customs and possibly the language of Muslims, and were in addition to this in good relations with the authorities (Salicrú i Lluçh 2005a, 430–2). Thirdly, interpreters were also at first Jews, because of their proximity to power and their linguistic skills (Assis 1997; Salicrú i Lluçh 2005a, 433), and then Mudejars (Salicrú i Lluçh 2005a, 432–6; Salicrú i Lluçh, forthcoming A) – that is, they were chosen from among the people of the same religion as those the embassies were sent to. Bearing in mind that the interpreters had to deal with people of the same religion for whom they undoubtedly felt emotional ties, the issuing authorities had to know their emissaries well enough to be certain of their loyalty and not run the risk of betrayals like those of Rubruck and of the Canadian Indian interpreters in relation to

[40] the French. In the same way, the Islamic powers on numerous occasions chose Christian merchants and mercenaries established in their domains as emissaries. (Salicrú i Lluch 2005a, 436–8). They chose Christians worthy of their own trust and who, due to their religious identity, also earned the trust among Christian authorities.

Cultural proximity with the interlocutor and the trust of the sender in the mediator's ability to arouse and appeal to the complicity and empathy of the receiver were thus determining factors in the choice of translators, messengers and ambassadors. And, therefore, in order to try to get more out of the negotiations, the tendency was always to look for affinity and cultural mediation over capability and linguistic mediation proper – although both very often went hand in hand (Salicrú i Lluch 2005a).⁵

CROSSING BOUNDARIES: HISTORICAL GLIMPSES OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Whether Christians or Muslims, many of these transverse figures may be considered perfect historical examples of intercultural dialogue. Because, apart from the consideration of what unhampered contact with the 'Other' might represent, or what might be ground-breaking and extraordinary about such a contact, they experienced it and almost naturally made it come easy, as part of their being and their reality, without this causing them any problems.

The micro-societies of Christian merchants and mercenaries established in North Africa must have been at least minimally acculturated. Grouped together in Tunis, and in the words of Anselmo Adorno, under the name of 'Christians of the *rabat*' or area outside the walls, in the second half of the 15th century, 'they could not be distinguished in any way from the Moors, either by the language, or by the customs and ways of life, [...] despite the fact they observed the Christian faith' (Heers and de Groer 1978, 108–9). Although we know that the Christian mercenaries established in Islamic countries took with them Christian women from their own place of origin (Salicrú i Lluch 2002a, 427–33), we may also attest to the fact that, at least in Tunis, halfway through the 15th century, the Christians living there used to marry Muslim women as well in order to escape from in-breeding (Salicrú



i Lluçh 2005b, 189–90). And possibly due to this, whether across the internal boundary or across the external, we can find Christian interpreters like Manuel de Atienza, for whom we are sure that ‘the African language was virtually their mother tongue’ (Salicrú i Lluçh 2005a, 424), or like the Arabic-speaking Christian trusted by the Hafsid monarch who was, upon a visit to Tunis in 1477, asked by the ambassador of Ferdinand of Naples to translate the Neapolitan Peace Proposals (Cerone 1913, 76).

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Obviously, neither the internal nor the external boundaries with the ‘Other’ were completely watertight sealed compartments – they were clearly permeable. However, at the same time, it is also evident that in the Middle Ages neither the reality nor the perception of the contacts with the ‘Other’ were monolithic and that the view of them depended to a large extent on the proximity and the intensity of the presence of this ‘Other’ and, therefore, on the greater or lesser everyday nature and habit of relations.

In this respect, theory and practice could easily diverge. Being Aragonese, and therefore coming from lands populated with Mudéjars, where contact with them was continuous, it came as no surprise that Pope Benedict XIII, the last great protagonist of the Western Schism, employed Mudéjar craftsmen, architects and builders as a matter of course, regularly and without the slightest qualms for building churches. Something that, despite being the most normal thing in the world in his country, would have been inconceivable in other parts of the Christian Western Mediterranean or even in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula itself. Moreover, Pope Benedict maintained diplomatic contacts with the Nasrid sultanate of Granada (Salicrú i Lluçh 2005c). None of this, however, prevented him, on an ideological level, from fully sharing the then-prevalent outlook of confrontation, traditional and underlying, inherent in relations between Christians and Muslims.

Although proximity did not necessarily lead to coexistence, it could contribute to tolerance of cohabitation and a minimal knowledge of the ‘Other’. Yet distance undoubtedly distorted this knowledge. This can be well seen in the writings of Central and Northern European travellers who, upon visiting the Iberian Peninsula in the second half

[42] of the 15th century, left us with a narrative account of their travels full of distorted reality. This distorted reality was incorporated into their writings which were full of pejorative elements and without the slightest knowledge of what they were talking about, highlighting the point of view of the supposed Islamic influence over people, customs and traditions of all Christian kingdoms on the Peninsula (Salicrú i Lluçh, forthcoming B).

On the other hand, in the same Iberian ambit there may have been contrasting attitudes towards the contact with Islam (Salicrú i Lluçh 2006; Salicrú i Lluçh, forthcoming c), and although, once again, the theory and practice might have been ambivalent or even contradictory, proximity to the 'Other' brought by at least the acceptance of him as a part of the immediate reality.

Mudejar minstrels took an active part in the festivities at the coronation of Ferdinand of Antequera (as Ferdinand I) held in Zaragoza in 1414 (Salicrú i Lluçh 1995, 754–5), while, at the end of the 15th century, almost all musicians who attended the Corpus Christi procession in Tarazona were Muslims, and not only did they parade with the Christians, they also shared the food that was laid on after the procession with them (Sanz 1935, 66). In Madrid in 1481 were in the same way the Mudejars called upon to add a bit of sparkle to Corpus 'with their games and dances' (Torres Balbás 1954, 79; Echevarría Arsuaga 1999, 70). In Ávila in 1474 they attended both the funeral of Henry IV and the proclamation of Isabella the Catholic in the cathedral (Torres Balbás 1954, 41). Further on, in Segovia in 1484, the articles of the confraternity of Saints Eligius and Anthony put down in writing that both Christian and Muslim builders and blacksmiths belonged to it, went to the burials of its members together and also ate there together (Asenjo González 1984, 1–330; Echevarría Arsuaga 1999, 61).

Moreover, it was quite usual, if the occasion so permitted, for Muslim ambassadors from Islamic countries to attend as spectators or to take an active part in all kinds of social and festive events. Once again in 1414 in Zaragoza several ambassadors from Granada were present at the festivities for the coronation of Ferdinand of Antequera, and they even took part, along with the monarch's sons, in the tournaments and jousting that had been organized (Salicrú i Lluçh 1995,



756; Salicrú i Lluch 1998b, 86 ff.). In 1428 in Valencia, other ambassadors from Granada witnessed from a grandstand in the city market jousting and bullfights (Salicrú i Lluch 1999, 181). And also on several occasions Muslim ambassadors joined in chivalrous amusements in Castile (Iranzo 1940, 109; Arié 1997, 9), while their arrival was often celebrated with banquets in their honour (Iranzo 1940, 109; Díez Jorge 2000, 225–6).

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In addition, during the 15th century, quite a few Castilian and Catalan-Aragonese knights chose a Muslim monarch, the king of Granada, to be the judge of their duels or pitched battles (Salicrú i Lluch 2007, 95–6), a clear example of the lack of prejudice in Christian knightly circles and, at the same time, a patent demonstration of the knowledge the Granadans had of the customs and ways of Christian knights. In this respect, we should also point out the many Central and Northern European nobles and knights-errant who from the last quarter of the 14th century throughout the 15th paid purely courtesy visits ‘to exercise chivalry’ towards the kings of Granada and towards the monarchs of North African states (Salicrú i Lluch 2004; 2007).

Nor should we forget the evident influence that Islamic customs and practices had on knights and on the dress of Iberian knights in general and the Castilians in particular. Similarly to horses, the best adornments and trappings came from Islamic countries, and Christian monarchs did not hesitate to ask for them or order them from their Muslim counterparts. And, just as the Muslim states until the beginning of the 15th century trusted the Christian militias in their service (Salicrú i Lluch 2002a), the Castilian kings also trusted Muslim knights: their ‘Moorish Guard’ in the 15th century being a perfect example (Echevarría Arsuaga 2006).

Although, on and around the frontier, raids and incursions may have been frequent, peace was invariably associated with wealth and prosperity. This was understood by both the Islamic authorities (Peinado Santaella 2005, 466) and the Christian population on the frontier who went so far as to refuse to resume hostilities against Granada, offering the excuse of the damages that war had caused them (Salicrú i Lluch 2006, 685). Clearly, in times of peace, any exchange was feasible; from common use of pastureland (Argente del Castillo 1988;

1989; Rodríguez Molina 1996, 517–20) to buying food on the other side of the frontier in order to hold wedding banquets (Salicrú i Lluch 1999, 365), or even participation in them (Salicrú i Lluch 1998b, 433).

[44] However, the best examples of boundary-crossing are people who voluntarily changed their faith. Apostasy, which was often practised among captives and slaves, Christian and Muslim, who tried to improve their living conditions and achieve better integration (Salicrú i Lluch 2000), was condemned out of hand. Nevertheless, the examples of voluntary conversion are certainly not a rare sight and, on the Iberian frontiers with Granada, certain practices were even institutionalised in order to try to guarantee the free will of the apostates (García Antón 1980; Rodríguez Molina 1998). For the renegade was a figure anathemised and considered, possibly, the worst thing about the frontier (Bennassar and Bennassar 1989). Yet, in exceptional cases like that of Anselm Turmeda, in charge of the customs post in Tunis, their former fellow Christians could appeal to them to try to get them to intercede on their behalf before the Islamic authorities (Calvet 1914, 52–3).

The conversion of Fra Anselm, which occurred after a profound theological and intellectual reflection, was as exceptional as it was transparent. On the other hand, we can barely sense the reasons for the majority of the conversions we know about, having been made by ordinary people with no formal training or education. Of course, even in the cases of initially forced apostasy, the convert could end up overtaken by conviction (Cabezuelo Pliego 1996). On other occasions, however, boundaries were also crossed without the need to abandon one's own faith. The example of Joana de Rubiols, a Valencian woman accused of having gone to live in Fez because of her love for a Muslim man, is paradigmatic of the grey areas that, in everyday life, arose from the practical echoes of possible intercultural dialogue between the Christians and Muslims in the mediaeval Mediterranean.⁶

Joana crossed those boundaries and, doubtlessly, got to know and accept the 'Other', but she encountered pressure from her former Christian acquaintances to return to the path of righteousness and from the Muslim ones to renege. People who did business with Islamic lands could establish companies with Mudejars, charter ships



to Muslims from Granada or North Africa, and share with them the confined space on the board of a ship as they sailed together. However, they harboured suspicions that easily came to the surface (Salicrú i Lluch 2002b). Both the Muslim refugees from Granada (Salicrú i Lluch 1998a) and the Christian European knights-errant (Salicrú i Lluch 2004) who wished to visit Islamic countries agreed to let Alfonso the Magnanimous recommend them to North African Islamic sovereigns. And this same king, from his court in Naples, could ask to be sent a craftsman from Granada or Córdoba, working in gold on leather, to be taken into his service, regardless whether the craftsman was a Muslim, Mudejar or Christian (Salicrú i Lluch 1999, 337).

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CONCLUSION

To speak of the existence of intercultural dialogue, in the contemporary sense, in the mediaeval Mediterranean would without doubt be excessive and even anachronistic, because, despite the existence of fluid inter-cultural contacts between Christians and Muslims, the majority of those who crossed boundaries and approached the 'Other' did not do so for intellectual reasons and with a true conviction or predisposition to dialogue but merely on a pragmatic level.

Intercultural contacts and crossing of boundaries – mental ones included – entail neither understanding nor dialogue. But, at least, they constitute, as they did in the Middle Ages, the first step towards getting to know and being able to understand and accept the 'Other'.

NOTES

- 1 This article is part of the research project approved and financed by the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, entitled 'The Crown of Aragon in the Medieval Mediterranean: Bridge between Cultures, Mediator between Christendom and the Islamic World' (HUM 2007-61131).
- 2 Robert Burns did not use the concept to characterize Christian and Islamic Mudejar societies, but Christian and Jewish societies. Nevertheless, applying it to the relations between Christians and Mudejars (i. e., the Muslims who remained in the Iberian Peninsula after the Christian conquest and who, as a result, were subject to Christian rule) is much more appropriate, seeing as the Mudejar population always far

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outnumbered the comparatively small numbers of the Jewish population. For the Kingdom of Valencia, for example, it is calculated that, in the middle of the 15th century, the Muslim and Arabic-speaking population may still have constituted a third of the total and that, at the beginning of the 16th century, in some regions or places, the Muslims may have exceeded and even doubled the numbers of Christians (Barceló Torres 1984, 68–9).

- 3 We must not forget, however, that similarly the Christian world, *dar al-Islam* was not monolingual, and a lack of comprehension was possible between Muslims, too. The captive in Tunis is a good example of this, but Abd al-Basit gives us another one, perhaps more significant: one night, sailing near Bugia on board a Genoese ship, he and other Muslim merchants went on land and came across a group of Berbers who lived in the area; the Berbers, upon seeing them, thought they were Christian pirates dressed as Muslims who wanted to capture them. In order to show them that they were good Muslims and to identify themselves, Abd al-Basit and his companions shouted at them in Arabic the double profession of Islamic faith, however, as the Berbers only knew their own language and were unable to tell Arabic apart from Latin languages they ran away frightened. On the following day, the news spread around that some Christians had landed in disguise and tried to capture Muslims (Brunschvig 1936, 135–6). The travels of Ibn Battuta also offer various examples of linguistic communication problems and a need for translators between Muslims, for example, in Turkey (Ibn Battuta 1981, 401–2).
- 4 This minority accounts for some of the best examples of acculturation, inter-culturality or even trans-culturality. For example, a story of a Mudejar in Valencia who was arrested in 1418, and accused of breaking into a Mercedarian monastery and of taking the monstrance with seven consecrated wafers after killing two friars. Apparently, he was able to pass himself off as both a Muslim and a Christian. When he was arrested, he said he was a Christian, but there were witnesses who claimed that he had a house and two wives in the lands of the Nasrid sultanate of Granada and that, while he was there, he dressed like a Moor and said his prayers with the Muslims. In addition to that they said that when this same man entered Christian lands, he dressed as a Christian and used a Christian name, which made it easy for him to commit crimes with impunity (Salicrú i Lluçh 2005a, 425–6).
- 5 Diplomacy and embassies were undoubtedly, and in many ways, the expression and the structuring of intercultural contacts, for example,



even with regard to the exchange of presents and gifts (Salicrú i Lluçh 2007).

- 6 Archive of the Crown of Aragon, Chancellery, register 2387, folio 51r, and register 2389, folios 12r–13r, 13r and 13v, November 2 1414. Montblanc.

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