The Positive Representations of Muslims in Castile in the 13th Century[1]

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The representations of Muslims in medieval Castile have generally been interpreted under a pejorative connotation, in which Christians identified the other as inferior or as negative (bad, sinful, etc.). However, in this particular case, the 13th-century sources show that, although less frequent, there were also positive representations of the Muslims who inhabited the Iberian Peninsula. This article delves into the creation, purpose, and temporal aspects of representations. It explores the positive applications of these representations and, most importantly, examines how they are articulated within the broader representational framework of the "other." This analysis contributes to theoretical discussions on otherness, specifically addressing whether the manifestation of the other to the self leads to a potential loss of their alterity.

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Anti-Muslim discourses that construed the representation of the "other" to legitimize the power and actions of the secular and ecclesiastical elites in the newly conquered territories, such as making war against Muslims, in 13th-century Castile, was at the same time sustained in an imaginary reality.[2] In a system of beliefs, emotions, and imagery, these representa-

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[2]   Regarding the representations of the Muslims in general see Tolan's studies: JOHN V. TOLAN, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York 2002. JOHN V. TOLAN, *Faces of Muhammad: Western Perceptions of the Prophet of Islam from the Middle Ages to Today*, Princeton–Oxford 2019. His historiographical analysis on the topic: JOHN V. TOLAN, *The historiography of Medieval Christian-*

tions were ingrained in the subjects as specific, tangible, and beyond doubt. Consequently, the overarching narrative of the universal conflict between God and Satan played a crucial role in shaping the perceptions and behaviors of individuals in that century.

Parallel to the cognitive aspect, an everyday reality coexisted, molding specific responses and perceptions of Muslims as the "Other". This reality was rooted in the interactions of daily life, involving individuals who came into contact with Muslims through various contexts, such as residing in Christian cities as Mudéjars, inhabiting border regions, or participating in trade relations. This tangible and direct contact fostered a nuanced perception of the "other", marked by adaptability and subtleties.

The scenario described above evokes Levinas' interpretation on the philosophical tradition and idea of diminishing alterity, where the "other" (in this case Muslims) reveals themselves to the self (Christian Castilians), leading to a more intimate and favorable perception of the "other", at least to some extent.[3] This concept is crucial for this article as it suggests that through enduring and intimate relationships, the "other" can coexist with the self while retaining their distinctiveness, fostering mutual understanding, and minimizing hostilities.

Levinas acknowledges the preexisting structure of representation, where the "other" and "self" are in a conflictive relationship, but explores alternatives scenarios where the "other" diminishes in alterity through revelation and interaction. I do not argue that a complete loss of alterity is feasible, but rather advocate for a malleability of alterity. Given the necessity to engage with the "other", it became essential that their representation was not entirely radical. The upcoming paragraph focuses precisely on the concept of diminishing alterity among Muslims, paving the way for positive representations. This shift is attributed to regular daily life interactions and a growing interest in the spiritual conversion of Muslims, prompting a change in representations toward a sphere, where

-Muslim relations (1960–2020), De Medio Aevo 12/2023, no. 1, pp. 115–124 and *Interfaith Relationships and Perceptions of the Other in the Medieval Mediterranean. Essays in Memory of Olivia Remie Constable*, (eds.) SARAH DAVIS-SECORD, BELEN VICENS, ROBIN VOSE, Cham 2021. OLIVIA REMIE CONSTABLE, *To Live Like a Moor. Christian Perceptions of Muslim Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, Philadelphia 2018.

3   EMMANUEL LEVINAS, *The Trace of the Other*, in: Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy, (ed.) Mark C. Taylor, Chicago 1986, pp. 345–359.

the unique essence of the "other" could be redeemed and converted to Christianity.

This, plus other elements that are analyzed below, created a representation of the Muslims in Castile that seems to go beyond the demonization of the political and religious enemy of the Castilian Kingdom.[4] That means that a direct contact with a Muslim who could be a military or commercial ally, and an interest in the idea of conversion, left their mark in the sources, where there are also minor, apparently positive comments about the followers of Islam.

The Iberian Peninsula was characterized by the coexistence of three religions: Christianism, Islam and Judaism. All of them with differences in terms of culture, language, historical narrative, etc. Under this intricate social relation, the dispute over power was much more complex than a war between Christians and Muslims. For example, the first two groups had political and military organizations vying for power against other co-religionists and were willing to make alliances with people from another religion in order to fulfil their goal hence it was a rivalry that went beyond the stereotypical conflict between religions. Despite the political factor, the religious aspect did play an important role, and even the Roman Church tried to be a party in the events in the Peninsula due to its struggle against infidels, heresies (the Islam was considered one of them) and dissident rites, like the Mozarabic one.

It is crucial to underscore three essential factors that influenced 13th-century Castilian society and its diverse perceptions of Muslims, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. Firstly, the coexistence of two opposed ideologies: the Crusade mentality and the mission mentality. These ideologies and the intellectual debate inside the church were accompanied by the transition from the Mozarabic rite to the Roman rite within the newly conquered territories by the Kingdom of Castile. In short, the focus shifted from eliminating the infidels to converting them.

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[4]   Regarding the demonization of the Muslims see among others: J. V. TOLAN, *The historiography of Medieval Christian-Muslim relations*, p. 119, J. SANTIAGO PALACIOS ONTALVA, *Cultura visual e iconografía de la reconquista. Imágenes de poder y cruzada*, Revista de Historia Medieval, Anales de la Universidad de Alicante, 17/2011, p. 342; INÉS MONTEIRA ARIAS, *Las formas del pecado en la escultura románica castellana: una interpretación contextualizada en relación con el islam*, Codex Aquilarensis. Cuadernos de investigación del Monasterio de Santa M. la Real 21/2006, pp. 75–80.

Secondly, the century saw significant military and diplomatic activity.[5] The pivotal victory in the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa established the Castilian kingdom as the dominant power. Castille employed both military and diplomatic means to subjugate Muslim territories on the peninsula.[6] This led to the conquest of cities such as Córdoba and Seville, with the Kingdom of Granada becoming a vassal of Castile. This era of military engagement created not only zones of conflict along the borders but also opportunities for interaction, ean exchange of ideas, human movement, and cultural encounters. The military endeavors required territorial dominance and legitimized warfare itself. Lastly, there is the cultural dimension. The court of Alfonso X, known as the Wise, served as a hub for extensive cultural exchange. The court embraced Muslim and Jewish knowledge and art, seeking to Christianize and incorporate them into the Christian realm. This cultural amalgamation demonstrated the multifaceted interplay between different societies.

The positive face of Islam, did it exist?

Apart from the discourse characterized by anti-Muslim sentiments, social interactions exhibited a remarkable diversity. In this way, Jacques le Goff mentions: "The history of the attitude of medieval Christians towards Muslims is a history of variations and nuances."[7] This implies that opportunities for mutual comprehension were forged, and furthermore, even favourable representations of the followers of Islam emerged.

In this sense, political and economic relations made it possible to understand the Muslims from more nuanced perspectives. This becomes evident when observing the interactions of the Castilians with the Muslim kingdoms. Their approach was not solely adversarial; at times, they

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[5]   INES MONTEIRA ARIAS, *Escenas de lucha contra el Islam en la iconografía románica: el centauro arquero. Su estudio a través de los cantares de gesta*, Codex Aquilarensis. Cuadernos de investigación del Monasterio de Santa María la Real 22/2006, pp. 150–151.

[6]   Francisco Garcia explains the connexion between the military and diplomatic strategies of domination and the representations of the Muslims, displaying that even if this failed, there was an idea of vasal subjugation. FRANCISCO GARCIA FITZ, *¿Una España musulmana, sometida y tributaria? La España que no fue*, Historia. Instituciones. Documentos 31/2004, pp. 240–244.

[7]   JACQUES LE GOFF, *La Civilización del Occidente Medieval*, Barcelona 1999, p. 120.

viewed these kingdoms as powerful and valuable allies.[8] These diverse perceptions facilitated the integration of specific Muslim monarchs into the sphere of Castilian influence. In fact, the conflict between Muslim powers, with Christian kingdoms aligning themselves with one faction or another, was a common strategy during the 13th century. The interaction between Christian and Muslim kingdoms, driven by the necessity of alliances, often resulted in positive representations of Muslim characters in period sources.[9]

Furthermore, as the Spanish historian Santiago Palacios recalls: "The crusade and the *Reconquista* constituted, despite the apparently inappropriate nature of the war context that characterized them, scenarios of contact and relationship between Christianity and Islam and [...] we do not fail to perceive that there was, precisely then, a space of contact without apparent friction." This "gave rise to an image of the Muslim and his world from a peaceful perspective, too".[10] To put it differently, the everyday coexistence facilitated an approach that resulted in a distinct manifestation of the Muslims ("other") before the Christians (the self). This is a topic that I will deal with in greater detail later.

In the first place, despite Muslim-Christian divergent religious stances (these two communities inhabited starkly contrasting realms of faith), they still managed to identify a singular theological element that they could use to bring them together: the Muslims acknowledged the distinct and important role attributed to the Virgin Mary, the mother of

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[8]   In this sense, the case *of El Cid Campeador* is emblematic, as it shows the complex relationships between Muslims and Christians, and the different sets of alliances where at times, the political-economic objectives made religious differences somewhat forgotten. *Cantar de mio Cid, con un ensayo de F. Rico*, (ed.) ALBERTO MONTANER, Barcelona 2011, pp. 257–630.

[9]   This necessary relationship of alliances and continuous coexistence is possibly the determining factor in understanding why this nuanced image is found in Spanish works, while this cannot be observed in French works. RON BARKAI, *El enemigo en el espejo, Cristianos y musulmanes en le España medieval*, Madrid 2007, p. 236.

[10]   J. SANTIAGO PALACIOS ONTALVA, *Imagen e identidad del musulmán en tiempos de Fernando III: El enemigo desde la perspectiva cruzada*, in: *Fernando III, Tiempo De Cruzada*, (eds.) Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Martín Ríos Saloma, Madrid 2012, p. 246. The translation is mine, the original says "La cruzada y la reconquista constituyeron, pese a lo aparentemente impropio del contexto bélico que les caracterizó, escenarios de contacto y relación entre la cristiandad y el islam y [...] no dejamos de percibir que hubo, precisamente entonces, un espacio de contacto sin aparente fricción [...] dio lugar a una imagen del musulmán y su mundo, también, desde una perspectiva pacífica."

Jesus, unlike the Jews.[11] In that way, Alfonso X in the Cantigas de San-ta Maria says about the Jews that they are "unos peores que moros".[12] While the Muslims and the Christians maintained their distinctions, they shared an awareness of Mary's exceptional significance. This, in turn, prompted a contrast with the Jewish perspective,[13] where the absence of recognition for Jesus' mother accentuated their otherness and differences to a greater extent than the existing differences between the Muslims and the Christians. From the Christian sources' viewpoint, this further solidified the perception that the Jews were regarded as a less congenial community compared to the Muslims, who also acknowledged Christian miracles.[14] This observation holds significant value for the scope of this study as it implies that communities categorized as the "Other" do not show the same degree of distinctiveness. It is this variation in the degree of distinctiveness that could foster more refined and nuanced representations.

Secondly, the Castilians' knowledge of the Muslims was limited in many aspects, such as geography; the category was extremely generic and did not go beyond "the land of the Moors" and "the land of the Saracens". However, there was at least some differentiation, since the Castilians distinguished, to a certain extent, the Arab-Muslim, the Andalusian-Muslim and the Berber-Almoravid/Almohads.[15] These dispar-

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[11] DWAYNE E. CARPENTER, *Social perception and literary portrayal: Jews and Muslims in medieval Spanish literature*, in: Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain, (eds.) Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, Jerrilyn D. Dodds, New York 1992, p. 73.

[12] ALFONSO X, ELVIRA FIDALGO RANCISCO (trans.), *Traducción al castellano de las "Cantigas de Santa María" de Alfonso X el Sabio*, Alicante 2022, p. 499.

[13] For more about Jewish situation in a comparative way, see DAVID NIRENBERG, *Communities of Violence, Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, Princeton 1996; TEOFILO F. RUIZ, *Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Late Medieval Society: The Case of Ávila,* in: Interfaith Relationships and Perceptions of the Other in the Medieval Mediterranean. Essays in Memory of Olivia Remie Constable, (eds.) Sarah Davis-Secord, Belen Vicens, Robin Vose, Cham 2021, 227–254; and also: ROBERT G. HOYLAND, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings On Early Islam*, Princeton 1997.

[14] RYAN SZPIEC, *Seeing the Substance: Rhetorical Muslims and Christian Holy Objects in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, in: Interfaith Relationships and Perceptions of the Other in the Medieval Mediterranean. Essays in Memory of Olivia Remie Constable, (eds.) Sarah Davis-Secord, Belen Vicens, Robin Vose, Cham 2021, pp. 131–139.

[15] J. SANTIAGO PALACIOS ONTALVA, *Imagen e identidad del musulmán*, pp. 271–274.

ities provided an opportunity to manipulate temporal remoteness, their origins within the peninsula, and the militant confrontations against the Christians. Within this context, certain subgroups, such as the Andalusis, could be readily linked to harmonious coexistence or portrayed in a more favourable light. In contrast, the Berber-Almohads embodied the arrival of a fresh foreign entity–an aggressor openly antagonistic to Castilian authority. They stood as the primary Muslim adversary for the Christian realms during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

A game of knowledge-imagination was used to create the representations of the Muslims. This does not imply that the ignorance was absolute,[16] since the contemporary testimonies show certain awareness of the surrounding Muslim space, especially in relation to the peninsula. This is reflected in the comments from chronicles that differentiate spaces, and especially their inhabitants. An example is a passage from the *Crónica de Veinte Reyes,* where it says: "Quando Yuçf, el rrey de Marruecos, supo que el Çid avia tomado a Valencia, pesole mucho e alço rrey a Mahomad que era fiio de su hermana e dexole en la tierra que la guardase. E el allego muy grand hueste de almorauides e de alaraues e de andaluzes e fueron por cuenta çien mil omnes de armas e paso la mar e fue cercar a Valencia."[17] This shows not only a relative knowledge of geographical origin, but the Muslims are distinguished as Arabs, Almoravids and Andalusians, as mentioned above.

Thirdly, there is a strong cultural relationship, because just as the Mudéjars assimilated multiple elements of the Castilian culture through coexistence with the Christians, the Christians maintained a strong intellectual relationship and assimilated elements of the Islamic culture. In this sense, among many possible examples, reference should be made to Mudéjar art, the Mudéjar influence in Alphonsine miniature painting, and even the use of Arabic elements as worship objects in cathe-

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[16] In fact, in the military sphere, the channels for exchange of information and knowledge were multiple, from prisoners, merchants, the Jews, to the Christian fighters in Muslims armies and religious emissaries. For more information on this topic, see JULIO GONZÁLEZ, *Reinado y diplomas de Fernando III, 2*, Córdoba 1980, pp. 287–303.

[17] *El Mio Cid Del Taller alfonsí: versión en prosa en la Primera Crónica General y en la Crónica de Veinte Reyes*, (ed.) NANCY JOE DYER, Newark (DE) 1995, p. 109.

drals.[18] It should be added that Mudéjar art and Muslim knowledge[19] had great support during the reign of Alfonso X, with many Jewish and Arab scholars enjoying the king's patronage. And although this was more to be credited to a strategy of domination and submission rather than respect and admiration for the culture of the other,[20] it helped to see different aspects of the Islamic world. The intention behind the earlier statement is to underscore that this particular period represented a moment when interactions between the Muslims and the Christians actively encouraged an explicit manifestation of the "other" in relation to the "self". In fact, according to the historian Flocel Sabaté's perspective on religious identity and the dynamics of "self-other" relationships, it is noteworthy that "otherness" did not necessarily imply exclusion. On the contrary, it often carried a sense of exoticism that had an inherent appeal.[21] This exoticism and attractiveness had a potential to foster rapprochement between different groups, giving rise to nuanced expressions of representation.

In the 13th century sources, certain Muslims are depicted as possessing virtues highly regarded by the Christian society. This portrayal indicates a distinct form of admiration directed toward specific individuals or qualities. Concurrently, the establishment of political and personal alliances played a significant role in shaping this image. Notably, Muslim allies aligned with the Castilian kings were attributed virtues such as being courageous in the times of conflict as well as peace. An illustrative example comes from the *Primera Crónica General de España*, which explicitly underscores the connection between a positive representation and the vassal relationship with a Castilian king. For instance, it recounts how the Muslim ruler of Granada, who also governed Jaen, pledged loyalty and became a vassal to King Ferdinand III. This portrayal highlight-

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[18] See MARÍA JESÚS RUBIERA MATA, *El enemigo en el espejo: percepción mutua de musulmanes y cristianos*, Cristiandad e Islam en la Edad Media Hispana, XVIII Semana de Estudios Medievales de Nájera, Logroño 2008, pp. 355–360. Also GONZALO MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, *La España del siglo XIII leída en imágenes*, Madrid 2003, pp. 43–46.

[19] Regarding the Muslim knowledge and knowledge transmission see JONATHAN BERKEY, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islam Education*, Princeton 1992 and FRANZ ROSEBTHAL, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, Leiden 2007, pp. 46–154.

[20] JOHN V. TOLAN, *Saracens*, p. 226.

[21] FLOCEL SABATÉ, *Introduction: Identity in The Middle Ages*, in: Identity in the Middle Ages: approaches from southwestern Europe, (ed.) Flocel Sabaté, Leeds 2021, p. 19.

ed qualities such as humility, patience, moderation, piety, and a lack of avarice or ill intent.[22] These traits were typically ascribed to the Christians, yet under specific political circumstances, they could be extended to a Muslim who contributed to achieving Castilian objectives: "Para librar sus moros et sus tierras de destroymiento, vinoe meter derechmiente en su poder rey don Fernando et en su merçed, et besol la mano et tornose su uasallo en esta guisa, que fe ziese del et de su tierra lo que fazer quisiese; et entregol luego Jahen. Et el rey don Fernando, llenno de piadamiento et de toda mesura, veyendo en como ese rey moro venia con grant humildat et tan paçiente a plazimiento de quento el de la tierra er del quisiese fazer, nol forçando cobdicia maligna, la qual el nunca ouo, et guiandol mesuramiento et piadança natural, lo que siempre en el fue fallado contra quantos obedeçialmente lo quisieron leuar, reçibiol muy bien et fizol mucha onrra."[23]

As mentioned earlier, another route of interaction was through Muslim knowledge, which had a significant presence in 13th century Castile. This facilitated a level of peaceful dialogue and exchange. This exchange allowed for the absorption and eventual assimilation of such knowledge into the Christian context, which was, as in the case of the favourable representation of rulers, driven by pragmatic motivations.[24] As an example, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada recounts how King Sancho I, acting on the recommendation of Abd al-Rahman, went to an Arab doctor to cure his obesity once the peace treaty was signed. This account, which emphasizes the friendly conduct of Abd al-Rahman and the efficacy of Arab medicine, reads as follows: "Sancho estaba afectado por una inmoderada obesidad, por lo que fue llamado Sancho el Crazo, y su tío le aconsejó que consultara a Abderramán, rey de Córdoba, sobre cómo podía curarse del defecto de tamaña gordura. Y tras haber firmado con él la paz, acudió a Córdoba donde fue ac ogido por Abderramán muy

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[22] ALFONSO X, Las Cantigas de Santa Maria, V 1, Códice Rico, Ms T-I-1, Real biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Madrid 2011, p. 431.

[23] *Primera Crónica General de España, Primera Crónica General de España que mandó a componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1239*, (ed.) RAMÓN MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, Madrid 1906, p. 746.

[24] This may also be observed in commentaries as "se leuanto en los alaraues un moro, que dizien Abuntumet [Ibn Tumart], et era muy sabio en la astronómica, que es el saber de las estrellas, et era muy sabio en las naturas." The Castilian chronicles recognize the high knowledge that the Arabs had of „the sciences of nature", *Primera Crónica General de España*, (ed.) R. MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, p. 658.

amigablemente. [...] Después de una consulta de médicos, y mediante el antídoto de una yerba, se ve libre de su carga y vuelve a su agilidad y compostura normal."[25]

Furthermore, given the enmity with the Almohads due to their expansion in the Iberian Peninsula during the twelfth century and the first half of the thirteenth century, the anti-Muslim discourse targeted its negative representations primarily at this group. The purpose of this was to make a comparison between Arabs and Berbers and in this way, to highlight the maliciousness of the direct enemy, the Almohads. Thus, for example, the sources describe how the Andalusian king Ibn Hud "comenzó a enfrentarse con los almohades, que tenían sometidos a los árabes de la península con tan duro yugo que apoyaron sin más problemas la tentativa de Abenhut"; who "considerándose como monarca en la Andalucía peninsular, hacía gala de generosidad, justicia y verdad, en la medida que lo permite la deslealtad y la artería de este pueblo."[26] While the story explicitly praises the character of the Muslim king, it simultaneously speaks of the disloyalty of the Arab people. The text states that, in comparison to the Almohads, the king embodies generosity, justice, and truth. It strategically highlights the positive aspects of the Andalusian king's personality while providing context for the broader Almohad condition. In this representation, the author avoids delving into the negative attributes of the Almohad rulers. In this scenario, the favourable representations serve as a rhetorical tool to counter the image of the Castilian Muslims' primary adversary.

Although the anti-Muslim discourse created a binary division of good-bad and placed Muslims on the side of evil,[27] the sources do de-

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[25] RODRIGO JIMÉNEZ DE RADA, *Historia de los hechos de España*, Madrid 1989, p. 200. Despite containing historical inaccuracies, what holds significance here is the process of shaping the portrayal of the Muslims in the 13th century. This encompasses both deliberate and inadvertent alterations, which collectively contributed to the formation of an "Other" identity aligned with the prevailing mindset and objectives of that era. Pertaining to historical accuracy, it was not Sancho's uncle but his grandmother, Toda from Pamplona, who offered counsel and support for his journey to Córdoba for medical treatment to address his obesity. It is plausible that one of the overseeing physicians was the Jewish figure, Hasday ibn Shaprut.

[26] R. JIMÉNEZ DE RADA, *Historia de los hechos de España*, pp. 345–346.

[27] Regarding the binary division, the representation of the Muslims and the identification process, see: ELOY BENITO RUANO, *De la alteridad en la historia: discurso leído el día 22 de mayo de 1988*, Madrid 1988, pp. 16–25; MARÍA FLORENCIA MENDIZÁBAL, *Construyendo la "otredad": imágenes y proyecciones teóricas cristia-*

scribe positive aspects in the representations of the "other" from an individual perspective, describing specific characters. Notably, this nuanced portrayal of their negative condition involves attributing characteristics or traits typically associated with the Christians to the Muslims, and, simultaneously, diminishing or obscuring their status as evil individuals. For example, a positive description of Almanzor says: "Almanzor, como era persona juiciosa, valerosa, alegre y generosa, intentaba por todos los medios ganarse a los cristianos, de forma que daba a entender que apreciaba más a los cristianos que a los árabes. Por esta benevolencia era amadísimo por los suyos, hasta el punto de que todos por igual se desvivían espontáneamente por servirle."[28] Here, amidst all the praise, it is said that he was trying to win over the Christians by any means possible, to the extent that it appeared he valued the Christians more than the Arabs. This demonstrates what is being explained: his portrayal diverges from the Muslim perspective and aligns more closely with the Christian viewpoint in order to highlight its positive aspects.

One of the strategies that were widely utilized to present the Muslims in a favourable manner involved deliberate omission or reduction of the Muslim identity[29] of certain individuals. To illustrate this, consider the example of the *Crónica latina de los reyes de Castilla*, which rarely highlights the Muslim ascription of the King of Baeza, even though he was a Muslim ruler. Instead, he is presented in a manner that distances him from his Muslim heritage and aligns him more closely with the Christian

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nas sobre los musulmanes en la España Medieval (ss. XIII–XV), Revista Chilena de Estudios Medievales 2014, no. 5, pp. 54–56; J. SANTIAGO PALACIOS ONTALVA, *Imagen e identidad del musulmán*, p. 277; ANTONIO GARCÍA FLORES, *"Fazer batallas a los moros por las vecindades del reyno": imágenes de enfrentamientos entre cristianos y musulmanes en la Castilla medieval, Identidad y representación de la frontera en la España medieval (siglos XI–XIV),* in: Seminario celebrado en la Casa de Velázquez y la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, (eds.) Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Pascal Buresi et al, Madrid 2001, pp. 268–290; M. F. MENDIZÁBAL, *Construyendo la "otredad",* p. 55; RON BARKAI, *El enemigo en el espejo, Cristianos y Musulmanes en le España medieval*, Madrid 2007.

[28] R. JIMÉNEZ DE RADA, *Historia de los hechos de España*, p. 206.

[29] Concerning the identity within the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages, see FLOCEL SABATÉ, *Introduction,* in: Hybrid Identities, (ed.) Flocel Sabaté, Bern 2014, pp. 7–14 and ADELINE RUCQUOI, *Hybrid Identities: the case of Medieval Spain,* in: Hybrid Identities, (ed.) Flocel Sabaté, Bern 2014, pp. 55–82. For particularly associated with religious minorities see JOHN TOLAN*, Identity and Minority Status in Two Legal Traditions*, in: Identity in the Middle Ages: approaches from southwestern Europe, (ed.) Flocel Sabaté, Leeds 2021, pp. 203–212.

sphere. The narrative unfolds as follows: "Entonces el rey de Baeza y de Córdoba, como quien no confiaba en los moros y había puesto toda su confianza en nuestro rey" And the narrative continues, offering a closer look at the King of Baeza's attitude, as illustrated by this commentary: "Los moros cordobeses, que ni a Dios temen ni al hombre respetan, conspiraron, según es su costumbre, para dar muerte a su señor, el rey de Baeza."[30]

Positive remarks about the Muslims in historical sources usually focus on specific individuals rather than on the broader picture, especially in religious[31] or political contexts. This is because acknowledging positive traits at a collective level would suggest legitimacy in areas such as religion and politics. However, there are instances, where authors highlight the military skills of the Muslims, often based on their experiences in battles.[32] Descriptions of powerful Muslim armies and brave warriors were not exaggerated; it seems they stood out due to their significant numbers in the territories they controlled.

In this respect, some historians, like Dwayne E. Carpenter, argue that "over the centuries of the *Reconquista*, the Christians had developed grudging admiration for the military expertise of their Muslim rivals".[33] However, it is crucial to note that this "admiration,"[34] particularly in the thirteenth century, occurred within a context, where the Muslim powers still posed a significant challenge to the Christian kingdoms on the peninsula. Consequently, what becomes evident in these accounts, wherein Castilian authors exhibit a certain level of exaltation for the enemy's military prowess, is that these accounts were utilized to amplify the perception of the Christian triumphs, underscore the value of their warriors, and emphasize the almost superhuman skills they had to show in combat. Conversely, in cases of defeat, such depictions, which emphasized the

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30 *Crónica latina de los reyes de Castilla*, (ed.) LUIS CHARLO BREA, Turnhout 2010, pp. 132–133.

31 At least in the sources and the consulted bibliography this was not found.

32 J. SANTIAGO PALACIOS ONTALVA, *Imagen e identidad del musulmán,* pp. 256–258.

33 D. E. CARPENTER, *Social perception*, p. 75.

34 Admiration that during the following centuries would continue to increase until the appearance of *the novela morisca* (Moorish novel) in the 16th century, in which the relations between the Christians and the Muslims, and their great warlike capacity, were idealized. Although, it should be noted that this idealization of the 16th century occurred when the Muslim army no longer represented any threat to the Christian powers.

military strength of the enemy, could serve as implicit justification for the actions of the Castilian troops. This is illustrated in passages such as the one found in the *Primera Crónica General de España*, which states: "Mas las de los moros era tantas et tan fuertes et la su muchedumbre tan grand, que unos de los nuestros començaron a couardar, et tornaron las espaldas."[35] This passage indicates that the fear and retreat of the Christians can be directly attributed to the overwhelming numbers of the Muslim fighters. In summary, these narratives that glorify the Muslims as a cohesive military force elevate the Christian army in times of triumph while absolving them from accountability in the face of defeat.

In this way, even though the Chronicles tend to present a positive view, their ultimate purpose is to advance the Christian interests. This becomes especially interesting when examining Alfonso X's ability to express opinions about the Almoravids, for instance: "Se auien leuantado el linnage destos almorauides alla en affrica, et el su rey era señor de muy grand muchedumbre de caualleros, tanto que en ningun tiempo dantes ningun señor que de Marruecos fuesse no ouo tantos nin tan buenos caualleros de armas como el; et dizienle Yuçaf Abentexefin, et por onrra de mayor sennor llamaronle *miramomelin* en su arauigo, et quiere decir en el castellano sennor de los otros sennores."[36]

After mentioning the immense size of the army and military skill of the knights, the description continues to depict the Muslim submission to the Castilian power through the following statement: "Et a este Yuçaf enuio rogar el rey don Alffonso quel enuiasse los almorauides a Espanna".[37] This is not just a casual detail. As mentioned earlier, these positive portrayals of groups served distinct purposes and advantages within the pro-Castilian narrative. Hence, comments like these are not uncommon. In alignment with this idea, the *Crónica latina de los reyes de Castilla* states: "declaró la guerra al rey marroquí cuyo reino era entonces floreciente y temido por los reyes vecinos por su poder y esplendor".[38] While this paragraph strengthens the image of the Muslim kingdom as a prosperous and formidable one, it essentially enhances the portrayal of the valiant and daring Castilian king. This king embarks on a war to

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[35] *Primera Crónica General de España*, (ed.) R. MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, p. 701.
[36] *Primera Crónica General de España*, (ed.) R. MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, p. 554.
[37] *Primera Crónica General de España*, (ed.) R. MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, p. 554.
[38] *Crónica latina*, (ed.) L. CHARLO BREA, p. 73.

free the peninsula from the invaders, showcasing his courage despite the formidable might of the adversary.

Although similar representations can be found in Castilian documents from the 13ᵗʰ century, it is crucial to note that they do not necessarily reflect notions of equality, genuine admiration, tolerance, or sincere respect for the other party and their culture.[39] These representations often align with a dynamics of subordination and marginalization of the Muslims in various aspects, including politics, law, economy, culture, and society.

Moreover, although military and diplomatic interactions were significant during this period, they were not the exclusive channels, through which the elites and subordinate groups interacted with the Muslims. Consequently, the Muslims represented themselves to the Christians in diverse ways, which resulted in nuanced depictions. This was driven by a desire to broaden the understanding of each other's cultures, whether for the purpose of conversion or peaceful coexistence.

Despite the "profound ignorance of the other's culture"[40] and the inherent divide between the two factions, the coexistence with Mudé-jars (Muslims living under Christian rule) and the concept of conversion from the twelfth century laid the foundations for the emergence of positive representations of Muslims.

During the thirteenth century, the Iberian Christendom continued to exist as a relatively closed society, primarily focused on addressing the Muslim situation through forceful means. Concurrently, there was a noticeable and strengthened interest within Christendom in expanding beyond its conventional boundaries and encourage voluntary conversions. This shift marked a moment, in which the idea of Crusades and a more mission-oriented approach coexisted.[41] The groundwork for this change was laid in the eleventh century through the emergence of mendicant orders. Notably, the Cluniac order played a significant role in promoting papal autonomy from secular powers, facilitating the struggle against heresy through appointed representatives who held authority ex-

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39 Regarding the topic of admiration and tolerance see F. G. FITZ, *Las minorías religiosas*, pp. 23–24; J. SANTIAGO PALACIOS ONTALVA, *Imagen e identidad del musulmán*, pp. 246–247 and J. V. TOLAN, *Saracens*, pp. 225–226; 233.

40 F. G. FITZ, *Las minorías religiosas*, pp. 44–45.

41 ROBIN VOSE, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 23–53. And also, this idea can be found in J. LE GOFF, *La Civilización del Occidente Medieval*, p. 126.

tending beyond specific kingdoms and territories.[42] Importantly, these efforts were not directed merely at combating heresy but also aimed at converting pagan populations.

The concept of conversion and mission within both secular and ecclesiastical elites should not be interpreted as a singular voice or approach, nor should it be viewed as a complete replacement of the older perspectives. On the contrary, even segments of the Franciscan and Dominican orders exhibited a tendency to distance themselves from mystical and enthusiastic inclinations.[43] Moreover, maintaining a continuous vigilance against the potential risk of contamination or Christian conversion due to contact with Muslims and Islamic theology remained a persistent concern.[44] This stance is exemplified by personalities such as Pedro Pascual, who authored a text aimed at countering Christian conversions to Islam.[45] When it comes to the practical application of conversion, certain limitations were present. On one hand, monarchs such as Alfonso VI, Alfonso X of Castile, and Jaume I of Aragon may have aspired to govern entirely Christian realms, but they were also aware of the pragmatic challenges associated with mass conversions and of the economic and structural benefits of retaining their non-Christian subjects.[46] Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the evident limitations and challenges associated with conversions, not to mention the lack of success,[47] prompted a shift in the perspective regarding the viability of conversion as a valid strategy.

Despite the opposition to the missions, conversion was not a new concept in the thirteenth century. Its significance as an alternative had already started to gain momentum during the twelfth century. In fact, debates about the conversion of Muslims can be traced back to the eighth century, although many of these instances involved conversions from ex-Christians.[48] Furthermore, during the eleventh century, while

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[42] JOSÉ LUIS MARTÍN RODRÍGUEZ, *Baja Edad Media (siglos XIII–XV)*, in: Historia de España, (ed.) José María Prats, Barcelona 1996, p. 891.

[43] R. VOSE, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, pp. 51–53.

[44] D. NIRENBERG, *Communities of Violence*, p. 127; JAMES M. POWELL, *The Papacy and the Muslim Frontier*, in: Muslims Under Latin Rule, 1100–1300, (ed.) James M. Powell, Princeton 1990, p. 186.

[45] J. V. TOLAN, *Faces of Muhammad*, p. 59.

[46] O. REMIE CONSTABLE, *To Live Like a Moor*, p. 26

[47] J. M. POWELL, *The Papacy and the Muslim*, p. 203.

[48] DAVID M. FREIDENREICH, *Muslims in canon law, 650–1000*, in: Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, (eds.) David Thomas, Barbara Roggema, Leiden 2009, p. 95.

not extensively documented, there were cases of conversion through assimilation in the northern regions of the peninsula, such as that of Zaida, the daughter-in-law of Al-Mu'tamid, the king of Seville. Zaida eventually became the concubine of Alfonso VI and seemingly embraced Christianity.[49]

Thus, in the thirteenth century, the papacy did not abandon its efforts to convert Muslims and Jews; quite the opposite. There was a notable escalation in these efforts, especially considering that conversion was regarded as a means of achieving assimilation.[50] Figures such as Peter the Venerable held a strong belief that Muslims were to be engaged not through weapons, but through dialogue; not through coercion, but through rational discourse; and not with animosity, but with compassion. Moreover, Christian canonists from the thirteenth century onwards asserted that expelling such communities should be avoided as it contradicted the principles of charity[51] and might harm the economy due to the loss of population. An illustrative instance of this phenomenon occurred when Friars conducted concise preaching sessions among the Spanish Muslims of Seville in 1219 while in route to North Africa; and the missionary activities within the realm of Aragon.[52]

The initiative of conversion and mission culminated in the Dominicans and Franciscans assuming pivotal roles within society and actively contributing to the shaping of the perception of "the other". This development was attributed to their increased determination to convert Muslims and engage in missionary endeavours within Islamic territories. Concurrently, they strove to expand their understanding of this religious tradition, aiming to enrich their theological discussions and preaching.

The discussions surrounding Islam and Muslims, influenced by the concepts of conversion and mission, gave rise to two factors that significantly affected the perceptions of Muslims. Primarily, there was

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[49] JOSEPH F. O'CALLAGHAN, *The Mudéjars of Castile and Portugal in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, in: Muslims Under Latin Rule, 1100–1300, (ed.) James M. Powell, Princeton 1990, pp. 46–47.

[50] J. M. POWELL, *The Papacy and the Muslim*, p. 203.

[51] ANA ECHEVARRIA, *"Vassal and Friend". Strategies Of Mudéjar Submission and Resistance to Christian Power in Castile*, in: Jews, Muslims and Christians in and Around the Crown of Aragon, Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie, (ed.) Harvey J. Hames, Leiden 2004, p. 195.

[52] J. F. O'CALLAGHAN, *The Mudéjars of Castile and Portugal,* p. 49.

a presumption that Islam, including its prophet and believers[53], was entrenched in error. Consequently, for numerous polemicists, conversion was perceived as a logical course of action, with a strong belief in the assured attainment of spiritual victory. A compelling illustration of this sentiment can be observed in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, where Alfonso X presents a vivid portrayal of a Muslim individual undergoing a transformation. Swiftly, this individual acknowledges the falseness and limitations of Muhammad, leading to his acceptance of the Christian faith. The passage is as follows:

> aquel sultán creyó,
> ciertamente, que por magia
> lo querían engañar
> los suyos y a Mahoma,
> el falso declarado,
> comenzó a llamar
> para que los viniese a ayudar;
> pero quedó decepcionado.
> aquel Sultán pagano
> se dirigió hacia San Germán
> y le dijo: "Señor, hoy
> quiero hacerme cristiano
> por mano vuestra
> y convertirme
> y dejar a Mahoma
> el falso cobarde."[54]

The discussions also underscored shared elements that had a potential to foster connections between the two religions. However, the authors of these discourses were cautious due to the perceived risk and fear of causing confusion among the Christians. This strategy was consistently employed to demonstrate Christianity's superiority and its ability to draw the interest of Muslims. As previously mentioned, the pivotal role of the Virgin Mary in this context cannot be overstated – she acted as a conduit

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[53] RICARDO DA COSTA, *"Mahoma fue un engañador que redactó un libro llamado Corán": la imagen del Profeta en la filosofía de Ramón Llull (1232-1316)*, Notandum 27/2011, p. 23.

[54] ALFONSO X, *Las Cantigas,* p. 113.

for contact and persuasion. Consequently, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* exemplifies this approach:

> En el Corán dice
> que Santa María fue virgen siempre y ya que sé esto,
> de ninguna manera tendré guerra con ella,
> y de aquí me voy inmediatamente.[55]

The conversion of Muslims was a deliberate effort that varied in degrees of enthusiasm over time. It is important to note that this process was not orchestrated by the church alone; secular authorities, including the monarchs, played an active role in these efforts.[56] In this context, the way Alfonso X defines the Muslims in *Las Siete Partidas* is quite intriguing. He highlights that the Muslims desired salvation for their souls, and despite their misguided belief in Muhammad and a false religion, they still held faith in God. The text reads: "Moros son una manera de gente que creen que Mahomat fue profeta et mandadero de Dios: et porque las obras et los fechos que él fizo non muestran dél tan grant santidat por que á tan santo estado pudiese llegar, por ende la su ley escomo denuestro de Dios [...] queremos aqui decir de los moros, et de la su nescedat que ceen et por que se cuidan salvar. [...] los cristianos por buenas palabras et non por premia los deben convertir á la fe: et qué pena meresce quien los embargare que se non tornen cristíanos, ó los deshonrare de dicho ó de fecho despues que lo fuere."[57]

The author points out that the conversion of Muslims by peaceful means is the ideal approach, as they are perceived to have the potential for conversion despite their shortcomings. Simultaneously, the author emphasizes the necessity to safeguard newly converted individuals in cases, where their local surroundings prevent religious transition. Once these individuals adopt Christianity, they are to be shielded from attack or enslavement.[58]

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[55] ALFONSO X, *Las Cantigas,* p. 402.
[56] This phenomenon was not exclusive to Castile or the Iberian kingdoms; it also extended to the Kingdom of Sicily under Federico II and his interactions with the Muslims of Lucena. J. M. POWELL, *The Papacy and the Muslim*, pp. 192–196.
[57] ALFONSO X, *Las Siete Partidas del rey don Alfonso el Sabio, cotejadas con varios códices antiguos por la Real Academia de la Historia, vol. 3*, Madrid 1972, p. 675.
[58] ALFONSO X, *Las Siete Partidas*, pp. 675–677.

However, what is more important, in addition to the promotion and safeguarding of conversion, is the recognition of the common spiritual essence that underlies this approach. This recognition of the soul seeking salvation represents another point of convergence between these two cultures. As historian Morin points out, even within the portrayals of the Muslims that were intended to depict them as monstrous or animalistic, there existed a nuanced space where Muslims retained their humanity. This nuance facilitated processes such as their assimilation into the Christian armies, domestication, and even the prospects of evangelization and conversion.[59]

The process of rapprochement and interaction between the two groups, fuelled by attempts to convert the Muslims, which subsequently facilitated the emergence of their positive representations, was not solely a consequence of mere contact or coexistence between missionaries and the Muslims. As Robin Vose highlights, the presence of the Muslims, particularly in regions under the Muslim rule, posed a challenge to Christianity and its authority.[60] This challenge required a turn away from disregarding or imposing authority, as intellectual disagreements called for informed discourse. Consequently, understanding and studying Islam became imperative.

Examples of such initiatives are apparent, with Peter the Venerable in the twelfth century,[61] and notably in the thirteenth century through personalities such as Alfonso X. Alfonso X's involvement goes beyond the renowned School of Translators in Toledo. It extends to his support for the establishment of a Dominican school focused on the Arabic language in locations like Murcia and Seville.[62] This shows a deliberate effort to engage with the Muslim world on intellectual terms.

Recognizing the notion of conversion, the proliferation of translations, and the familiarity with the "other" alongside the growing number of individuals well-versed in Arabic and Islamic philosophy/theology is crucial.[63] However, this phenomenon was far from linear; it did not follow a singular trajectory leading uniformly towards positive perspectives. Even among those involved, there was not a unanimous endorsement

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59 ALEJANDRO MORIN, *¿Cynocephalus in commentario? El carácter monstruoso o salvaje de los infieles como argumento jurídico*, Mirabilia 10/2010, no. 1, pp. 48–49.
60 R. VOSE, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, pp. 23–30.
61 J. V. TOLAN, *Saracens*, pp. 315–316.
62 J. F. O'CALLAGHAN, *The Mudéjars of Castile and Portugal*, pp. 50–51.
63 M. F. MENDIZÁBAL, *Construyendo la "otredad"*, pp. 57–58.

of this trend. Notably, the monks responsible for translating these texts, while engaged in this activity, were driven not only by the intention to understand but also to counter Islam, viewing it as a rival ideology.[64] Thus, this historical process did not preclude the reproduction of critical and adverse representations.

Another contributing factor that facilitated the emergence of the "other" preceding the "self," consequently leading to diminishing the alterity of this "other," can be attributed to the presence of the Mudéjars. It is crucial to emphasise that our focus here does not pertain to the mere concept of coexistence, characterizing a somewhat uncomplicated, peaceful cohabitation of diverse ethnic groups simply due to their co-occurrence. Instead, it pertains to a circumstance that lays the groundwork for the interaction between the Muslims (as the "other") and the Christians (as the "self"). In this scenario, the latter group finds the space to intimately reveal itself in relation to the former, thereby giving birth to the formation of positive perceptions. Naturally, this process is far from straightforward; much like the notion of conversion, it unfolds with a range of subtleties, conflicts, and trajectories.

The Mudéjar phenomenon emerged in Castile following the conquest of Toledo in 1085.[65] However, the term "Mudéjar" itself was infrequent and did not come into common use until the 14th century, mainly appearing in Muslim sources from that century.[66] The Mudéjars constituted a diverse population with uneven distribution across the Castilian landscape, and their situation varied over time.[67] Interestingly, even from a Muslim perspective, the Mudéjars faced precarious circumstances due to their subjugation under non-Islamic governance. This predicament

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[64]   BERNARD LEWIS, *Islam and the West*, Oxford 1993, pp. 5–13. Certainly, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada serves as a prime example of the aforementioned surge in knowledge acquisition and translation efforts, and how these activities intertwined with the creation of discourses encompassing both favourable and unfavourable representations. About this character see J. V. TOLAN, *Saracens,* pp. 216–217.

[65]   JOSÉ HINOJOSA MONTALVO, *Musulmanes en los reinos cristianos: una desconfianza permanente*, in: Cristiandad e Islam en la Edad Media Hispana, (ed.) José Ignacio de la Iglesia Duarte, Logroño 2008, p. 335.

[66]   MÒNICA COLOMINAS APARICIO, *The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia Identity and Religious Authority in Mudéjar Islam*, Leiden 2018, p. 1.

[67]   MIGUEL ÁNGEL LADERO QUESADA, *Los mudéjares de Castilla cuarenta años después*, En la España medieval 33/2010, pp. 389–392.

was widely criticized by the scholars of the period who believed it hindered their ability to fulfil their religious obligations.[68]

The Mudéjars, as a minority group, found themselves within a feudal system that managed religious distinctions through levies. These levies, as described by historian Bartolome, derived from the tithe oil of *Aljarafe* and *Ribera*, eventually known as "aloxor" or the royal tithe. However, these fees were exclusive to the Mudéjar population and were not applied to all agricultural goods but rather to a select subset tied to the royal *almojarifazgos* in cities like Toledo, Seville, Córdoba, and Murcia.[69] Although Muslims in Castile were under royal jurisdiction, this did not mean that they were taxed exclusively by the monarch. Conversely, they were also subjected to other levies.[70] This multifaceted taxation system facilitated the continuation of their *aljamas* communities, along with their religious leaders (imams), muezzins (who issued the call to prayer), judges, religious scholars, mosques, schools, and cemeteries.[71]

Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, the Mudéjar presence underwent an expansive phase, where they even constituted a majority in certain areas. However, this trajectory shifted dramatically due to the series of Muslim revolts. Notably, the conflict led by Muhammad I ibn al-Ahmar of Granada against Alfonso X from 1263 to 1264, supported by the king of Tunisia, alongside Ibn Hud of Murcia and the territories of Niebla, Jerez, and other Mudéjars of Murcia and Andalusia, marked a pivotal turning point. This marked the decline in Mudéjar numbers,[72] as they were compelled to reorganize their locations. The result of this reorganization was a reduction in their presence, primarily in areas such

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[68] JOSÉ PASCUAL MARTÍNEZ, *Notas sobre la aculturación y asimilación de los moriscos antiguos murcianos*, Sharq al-Andalus 23/2019–2021, p. 450. Regarding the religious polemics within the Muslim medieval tradition see M. COLOMINAS APARICIO, *The Religious Polemics.*

[69] BARTOLOMÉ MIRANDA DÍAZ, *Mirando a la Frontera Desde la Retaguardia. Pugnas por los Diezmos del Aceite en el Aljarafe de Sevilla: Caso Calatravo de Carrión de los Ajos,* in: Estudios de Frontera 12. Monarquía y ciudades de frontera. Homenaje a Manuel García Fernández, (ed.) Francisco Toro, Jaen 2023, pp. 310–311.

[70] M. COLOMINAS APARICIO, *The Religious Polemics,* p. 3.

[71] M. COLOMINAS APARICIO, *The Religious Polemics,* p. 3.

[72] MIRIAM PARRA VILLAESCUSA, *De la Alquería Islámica a la Alquería Feudal: Unidades de Poblamiento y de Explotación Agraria tras la Conquista Cristiana en el Paisaje rural de Orihuela*, in: La Herencia Reconstruida Crecimiento Agrario y Transformaciones del Paisaje tras las Conquistas de al-Andalus (Siglos XII–XVI), (ed.) Vicent Baydal Ferran Esquilache, Castellon 2023, p. 162 and M. COLOMINAS APARICIO, *The Religious Polemics,* p. 4.

as the newly established feudal lordships of La Daya, Cox, Redován, Albatera, where they transitioned to become sharecroppers on lands held by the Christians.[73] The 13th century thus became a defining historical juncture for the Mudéjars, a population that demonstrated mobility. It is crucial to note that the Mudéjars of this period were distinct from the Muslims who remained in the area after the Castilian conquests. Initially, efforts were directed toward populating the newly conquered cities with Christians, leading many Muslims to migrate either north to the Christian territories or south to the Muslim lands. Only later was there an initiative to repopulate specific locations with Mudéjars, revealing that the Mudéjars of the 13th century were relatively recent migrants.[74] This tendency was particularly apparent in agricultural regions in need of Muslim labour.

Furthermore, the Muslim uprisings not only prompted territorial shifts but also resulted in restrictions on the rights of the Mudéjars.[75] This, combined with the absence of a comprehensive legal framework for Muslims, left them in a vulnerable position.[76] This tumultuous phase possibly contributed to restoring order and stabilization of the Mudéjar situation in Castile by the century's end, stabilization that lasted until their final expulsion.[77]

Along with migration, the liberation of Muslim slaves in the thirteenth century played a significant role in increasing the population and thus the workforce. The liberation of these slaves subsequently led to the formation of new Mudéjar communities surrounding the urban centres. These Muslims, who inhabited mostly secular and religious areas in the northern regions of the peninsula, performed labour-intensive work, including farming, mining, and occasional domestic service.[78] Despite Alfonso X's efforts to reintegrate the Muslim population, particularly in areas such as Murcia, following their Castilianization (due to the Muslim

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[73] MIRIAM PARRA VILLAESCUSA, *De la Alquería Islámica a la Alquería Feudal*, pp. 156–157.

[74] MIGUEL ÁNGEL LADERO QUESADA, *Los mudéjares de Castilla*, p. 390.

[75] This process occurred gradually, as evidenced by the presence of three mosques in Orihuela until 1281. JUAN ANTONIO BARRIO, *Conquista y Organización de un Espacio Fronterizo Alfonso X y la Villa de Orihuela*, Aurariola 2023, no. 4, p. 17.

[76] ANA ECHEVARRÍA, *La "mayoría" mudéjar en León y Castilla: legislación real y distribución de la población (Siglos XI–XIII)*, En la España Medieval 29/2006, p. 24.

[77] A. ECHEVARRÍA, *La "mayoría" mudéjar en León y Castilla*, p. 24.

[78] A. ECHEVARRÍA, *La "mayoría" mudéjar en León y Castilla*, p. 14.

revolts), their presence was temporarily preserved, as evidenced by the preservation of the Murcia madrasa.[79]

Regarding religious practices, initially freedom to practice one's faith was ensured and Muslims were not obliged to hide or conceal their beliefs,[80] although there were limitations. This is exemplified by the mosques that retained their role as places for Islamic worship but eventually they were transformed into churches, as observed in the transformation of the Toledo Mosque. Another instance of restriction was the restriction of the call to prayer.[81]

In terms of their economic contribution, although not on par with that of the Jewish population, the Mudéjars played a substantial role, especially in rural regions[82] and in commercial ventures. As observed by historian Ladero, they worked and were active in various fields: from rainfed farming and gardening in areas such as La Rioja, Valladolid, Burgos, Segovia, Toledo, and notably in Murcia under the jurisdiction of military orders; to specializing in manufacturing, small businesses, local trade, and occasional involvement in fields such as blacksmithing and construction within urban environments.[83] It is noteworthy that certain Mudéjars achieved financial success in Christian territories and rose to prominent positions at the court of Alfonso X without forsaking their faith or cultural heritage. One such instance is Suleiman ben Sadoc of Toledo (in a very influential position in financial and fiscal management during the period of Alfonso X) alongside numerous poets and physicians.[84]

It is important to emphasize the role of the continuous interaction between Islamic and Christian elites. This ongoing engagement facilitated mutual understanding, cultivated a multifaceted view of the 'other' and encouraged cooperation and interaction between the two groups. This

79 J. PASCUAL MARTÍNEZ, *Notas sobre la aculturación y asimilación*, p. 449.
80 M. ÁNGEL LADERO QUESADA, *Los mudéjares de Castilla*, pp. 398–404.
81 A. ECHEVARRÍA, *La "mayoría" mudéjar en León y Castilla*, pp. 13, 27.
82 T. F. RUIZ, *Jews, Muslims, and Christians*, pp. 233–238.
83 M. ÁNGEL LADERO QUESADA, *Los mudéjares de Castilla*, pp. 396–397.
84 FRANCISCO GARCÍA FITZ, *Las minorías religiosas y la tolerancia en la Edad Media hispánica: ¿mito o realidad?*, in: Tolerancia y convivencia étnico-religiosa en la Península Ibérica durante la Edad Media, (ed.) A. Garcíja Sanjuán, Huelva 2003, pp. 22, 37. It can also be seen about the Muslims in Castilian lands who accumulated wealth. FRANCISCO GARCÍA-SERRANO, *La creación de identidad en la frontera medieval hispana y la visión del otro: mudéjares y judíos*, in: Hacedores de Frontera. Estudios sobre el contexto social de la Frontera en la España medieval, (ed.) Manuel Alejandro Rodríguez de la Peña, Madrid 2009, p. 77.

intricate social dynamic, in which the Muslims and Christians coexisted in daily life, provided a platform for expression and appreciation, which contributed to a richer mutual appreciation and fostered the need for cooperation and engagement.

Coexistence certainly did not mean that there was a direct interaction with Christians. In fact, in the thirteenth century, there were deliberate attempts to reinforce divisions between the various groups. This resulted in the establishment of rules regarding clothing[85] and beard styles specific to each community.[86] Additionally, sexual relations were strictly prohibited[87]although these prohibitions were at times circumvented, especially in border regions.[88] Nevertheless, this does not imply an absence of contact between Mudéjars/Muslims and Christians. Connections on a daily basis were formed between these groups both in the border areas and in elite circles. In fact, historian Colominas says that Mudéjars were reasonably well integrated into society.[89] This emphasizes the availability of opportunities for interaction.

Notably, a common strategy of Spanish rulers, whether Muslim or Christian, was to hire people from different religious backgrounds as soldiers, doctors, or translators. These individuals often proved most reliable in troubled times. However, their sustained engagement with the ruling class frequently led to conversions and cultural assimilation into the dominant society or religion.[90] The best example is the Mudéjar elite, who built their wealth through trade and service to the Christian kings and essentially became their vassals.

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85 LOUISE MIRRER, *Women, Jews, and Muslims in the texts of Reconquest Castile*, Ann Arbor 1996, p. 9 and O. REMIE CONSTABLE, *To Live Like a Moor*, pp. 15–62.
86 GONZALO MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, *La España del siglo XIII leída en imágenes*, Madrid 2003, pp. 57–58. Regarding the differentiation based on beards, this distinction is elaborated upon in *Las Cantigas*, where it's stated: "Y en aquella ocasión sucedió / que Dios por su madre hizo / que allí, en lugar de ser heridos / por los golpes que combatían, / se moría la gente de aquel sultán barbudo" ALFONSO X, *Las Cantigas,* p. 112.
87 DAVID NIRENBERG, *Communities of Violence*, pp. 127–130 and O. REMIE CONSTABLE, *To Live Like a Moor*, p. 10.
88 J. HINOJOSA MONTALVO, *Cristianos contra musulmanes*, pp. 344–345 and F. GARCÍA-SERRANO, *La creación de identidad*, pp. 75–76.
89 M. COLOMINAS APARICIO, *The Religious Polemics*, pp. 3–4.
90 A. ECHEVARRIA, *"Vassal and Friend"*, pp. 186–187.

The Mudéjar phenomenon was not the only case that led entire Muslim communities to interact more closely with the Christian environment. A century earlier, the idea of a conquered and tributary Muslim Spain had already influenced the kings of Leon and Castile. This perspective persisted until, as historian García Fitz notes: "En el caso de Fernando III, por el contrario, no puede hablarse del fracaso de su intención de construir una al-Andalus sometido y tributario, al menos durante su reinado. A su muerte, como ya hemos visto, parecía que una España musulmana con aquellas características se había hecho realidad." [91] Even though this concept did not ultimately succeed, it underscores the efforts to address the Muslim question through methods other than military conquest. This approach aimed to represent Muslims in a positive light, while also serving to facilitate these efforts to establish connections.

Conclusion

While the records from the chronicles of the thirteenth century and other sources such as the Cantigas often depict the Muslims in a negative way, they also offer space for presenting a contrasting view. These sources included positive and favourable representations that acknowledged the diversity of Muslim life and the Muslims as such. While most of these depictions are individual in nature, as it is easier to dissociate an individual from their religious community and thus avoid legitimizing their dominance or religion, there are also specific instances of recognition directed towards a group, particularly in military contexts that ultimately exalt their Christian counterparts, whether in victory or defeat.

The conditions that facilitated the emergence of these representations were not based solely on coexistence, but rather on deep and intricate interactions between both groups. The ideas of conversion and the presence of Mudéjars played significant roles in this context. There was a necessity for narratives that allowed space for the development of daily activities and relationships. The desire for a converted or subjugated peninsula confronted with the relentless reality of everyday interactions, where clashes were inevitable, created a fertile ground for the emergence

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[91] FRANCISCO GARCÍA FITZ, *¿Una España musulmana, sometida y tributaria? La España que no fue*, Historia. Instituciones. Documentos 31/2004, p. 241. See also pp. 233–235.

of discursive bridges. Without at least some degree of discourse allowing to view the demonized "other" in a positive way, any such form of inter-action would never have been possible.

From my perspective, after analysing the sources, it is challenging to argue, at least in the case of the thirteenth-century Castile, that a sincere and intimate approach or expression of the "other" towards the "self" could lead to a complete loss of alterity. Instead, it seems apparent that such approaches led to nuances and, in certain cases, the construction of positive representations of Muslims even though these representations still existed within the broader framework of how Muslims were per-ceived during that period.