

LOVE BETWEEN MUSLIM AND JEW IN MEDIEVAL SPAIN: A TRIANGULAR AFFAIR

David Nirenberg

Since the rise of Islam and until modern times, the great majority of interaction between Jew and Muslim has taken place in lands ruled by Muslims, and under Islamic rules of engagement. The most significant exception to this is the Iberian Peninsula. As large populations of Muslims were absorbed into Christian polities in the course of the so-called reconquest, there emerged in the Peninsula what might be termed an Islamic diaspora of Muslim communities under Christian rule. This status, called *Mudejar* by modern scholars, had many interesting consequences.¹ One, of little importance to the history of Islam but quite relevant to the history of Jewish-Muslim relations, is that for the first time since the Jews' encounter with Muhammad in Medina we have Jewish and Muslim populations living side-by-side, engaged in relations that are openly competitive because mediated by Christian and not Muslim power.

Here I propose to study only one small aspect of these relations, namely love (or more accurately, not love but its bureaucratic traces, found in disputes over interfaith adultery, conversion, and marriage). The choice needs some justification, since the number of examples of such relations is vanishingly small when compared with, for example, economic exchange. My first justification is intellectual. In the cultures I am studying here as in so many others, love and marriage were foundational metaphors, ruling allegories capable of expressing "deep truths" about other relationships and forms of exchange.² My second is personal: cross-cultural love seems an appropriate subject

¹ The literature on the Mudejars is vast. For a recent and brief synthesis of the peculiarities of "Mudejar Islam", see my "Varieties of Mudejar Experience: Muslims in Christian Iberia, 1000–1526", in P. Linehan and J. Nelson (eds), *The Medieval World*, (London 2001) pp. 60–76.

² It seems superfluous to footnote something so well known and so widely attested. Those who favor scripture may look to the *Song of Songs*, those who prefer anthropology to C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, (ed.) R. Needham, (trans.) J.H. Bell, J.R. von Sturmer, and R. Needham (Boston 1969) e.g. pp. 67–8.

through which to pay homage to Elena Lourie, whose pioneering observations about Muslim-Jewish relations in the medieval Crown of Aragon helped inspire these researches.

We will soon find that, in affairs of love as in so many others, Muslims and Jews in Christian Spain³ were not in an exclusive dialogue. Theirs was a triangular relationship, in which the Christian suitor, though sometimes silent, was never absent. Nevertheless, it is worth pausing to review the long traditions of Jewish and Muslim legal thought on the topic of sex and marriage with members of other religions. For Jews in particular, problems of sexual interaction with non-Jews have been (and still are) a constant concern in a long history of living among other peoples. Their authoritative texts, like sedimentary strata, preserve varied opinions on the subject, opinions reflecting particular historical situations and very much tied to questions of power and hierarchy. It was one thing to be exogamous in a position of power, quite another in a position of weakness, yet another when the situation was genuinely competitive. The sex of the Jew involved mattered as well: being a receiver of “brides” was different from being a giver. The rabbis who compiled the Mishnah and the Talmud were quite aware of these differences. In one striking passage from the Babylonian Talmud, for example, they wrestled with the fact that the biblical passage upon which Jewish restrictions on intermarriage were based applied explicitly only to intermarriage with people from seven tribes that had ceased to exist shortly after the conquest by the Israelites of the Holy Land, more than a thousand years before:

The biblical ordinance [against intermarriage] is restricted to the seven nations [of Canaan] and does not include other heathen peoples; and [the schools of Hillel and Shamai] came and decreed against these also. . . . Perhaps the biblical ordinance refers to an Israelite woman in intercourse with a heathen since she would be drawn after him, but not against an Israelite man having intercourse with a heathen woman, and they [court of the Hasmoneans] came and decreed even against the latter. . . . The decree of the Hasmoneans was against intercourse but not against private association, so they came and decreed even against this.⁴

³ The term is an anachronism, but I utilize it occasionally for the sake of familiarity and convenience.

⁴ *Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate ‘Avoda Zarah 36b, Soncino translation.

The Talmudic passage is remarkable in that it treats the evolution of sexual boundaries within historical time (a lesson we will attempt to emulate here). Nevertheless, the rabbis tended to level all such distinctions. Living in exile among more powerful peoples, acutely aware of the dangers of assimilation, aculturation, and conversion, the rabbis systematically prohibited nearly all types of sexual relations with non-Jews, often by generalizing quite specific biblical prohibitions.⁵

The sociological and theological importance of these prohibitions were quite evident to medieval rabbis. As Maimonides put it, “. . . it is in these matters that the Omnipresent one has sanctified us and separated us from the heathens, namely in matters of forbidden unions and forbidden foods . . .”.⁶ Like the rabbis whose discussions are preserved in Talmud, Maimonides understood the elaboration of the Torah’s prohibitions on intermarriage to many other forms of intercourse as something of a historical process, and he approved of that elaboration “as a precaution, lest such intercourse should lead to intermarriage”.⁷ He approved as well of zealots who, like Pinehas, kill Jews engaged in public miscegenation, though his equation of public with ten or more Israelite witnesses rendered the approval more theoretical than practical.⁸ Later Iberian rabbis, such as Yehuda ben Asher ben Yehiel of Toledo and Nahmanides, continued to inveigh against Jewish men who practiced “harlotry with the daughter of a foreign God”, and invoked the zealots against them.⁹

⁵ This drive toward endogamy struck a number of ancient non-Jewish observers, the most prominent of which was Tacitus: “They eat and sell apart from others . . . , they do not make unions with alien women”. (*Histories*, V.5)

⁶ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Introduction. (see n. 7) Though for some purposes (and after much debate) the rabbis chose to define Muslims and Christians as non-heathens (e.g., for business purposes such as the lending of money or the selling of cattle), within the context of miscegenation there was no such relaxation. See also J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times*, (Oxford 1961) pp. 32–36, and Chapter Four.

⁷ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Sefer Kedushah [SK] XII.1–10 [L. Rabinowitz and P. Grossman (trans), *The Code of Maimonides, Book Five: The Book of Holiness*, in *Yale Judaica Series* vol. 16, (New Haven 1965) pp. 80–83]. The quote is from XII.2.

⁸ For Maimonides’ approval of the zealots, see SK XII.4–6, 14. For early rabbinic discomfort with Pinehas’ actions, see *Jerusalem Talmud*, Tractate Sanhedrin 27b.

⁹ R. Yehuda ben Asher, *Zikhron Yehuda*, (Berlin 1846) no. 91. In no. 63 he invokes the zealots against such men. For Nahmanides’ “Whoever goes astray with a Gentile woman desecrates the covenant of Abraham,” see H.D. Chavel, *Kitvei Rabenu Moshe ben Nahman*, vol. 1, (Jerusalem 1964) p. 370. Cf. *The Zohar*, II, 3a–b [cited in Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. I (Philadelphia 1978) p. 262], and II, 87b. For additional citations see B. Dinur, *Yisrael ba-Golah*, vol. II, 4, (Tel Aviv 1969)

Muslim men enjoyed a good deal more freedom within their tradition than Jewish men did, at least in theory. According to classical Islamic jurisprudence, Muslim men could have intercourse with and even marry Christian or Jewish (as well as Zoroastrian) women. All children issuing from such relationships were considered Muslim. Muslim women, on the other hand, could not marry or have intercourse with non-Muslim men.¹⁰ This law was predicated, first on the assumption that the male was the dominant force within a “mixed” relationship, and second, on Muslim political superiority, for it depended on the power of Muslim courts to enforce certain hierarchical relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Nevertheless, it continued to be stipulated as normative by Mudejar law codes in Christian Spain, even though it could clearly not be observed.¹¹ Only in handbooks of religious instruction like the so-called *Breviario Sunni*, written by Yçe de Gebir, a Segovian Muslim, in 1462, did Muslim authorities recognize that the situation had changed: “whether men or women, they shall not sleep with nor marry infidels”.¹²

pp. 291–92; L. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism*, (New York 1948) pp. 172–3. See especially Yom Tov Assis, “Sexual Behavior in Mediaeval Hispano-Jewish Society”, in A. Rapaport-Albert and S. Zipperstein (eds), *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, (London 1988) pp. 25–59, here pp. 38–41. See also M. Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth Century Commentary on the Aggadah*, (Cambridge, MA 1980) pp. 96, 246; and I. Epstein, *Studies in the Communal Life of the Jews of Spain*, 2nd ed., (New York 1968) p. 88, citing Rabbi Solomon ben Adret of Barcelona.

¹⁰ For a summary of these rules see J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, (Oxford 1964) pp. 131–32. For specifically Maliki law on the subject (the school of law most influential in Muslim Iberia and North Africa), see D. Santillana, *Istituzioni di diritto musulmano malichita con riguardo anche al sistema sciafita*, (Rome 1925–38) vol. 1, pp. 207f. The Maliki school was perhaps the strictest on the question of mixed marriages, especially if they occurred in lands not ruled by Muslims. See especially K. Abou el Fadl, “Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities”, *Islamic Law and Society* 1.2, (1994) pp. 141–187. There is plenty of evidence that such marriages, even when they were entirely legal, could underwrite a great deal of anxiety in Muslim Spain. A number of Nasrid kings of Granada, for example, were killed by rebels alleging that their Christian maternal ancestry made their loyalty suspect.

¹¹ See for example the fourteenth-century Castilian mudejar law code transcribed as *Leyes de moros del siglo XIV*, (ed.) P. de Gayangos, *Memorial Histórico Español* V, (Madrid 1853) title 14, p. 20. The late fourteenth century Valencian *Llibre de la çuna e xara*, (ed.) C. Barceló, (Córdoba 1989) here p. 90 assigns the death penalty to married Muslim males who commit adultery, no matter what the religion of their accomplices. Similarly, unmarried males who sleep with unmarried females receive the same number of lashes regardless of the religion of the women.

¹² *Suma de los principales mandamientos y devdamientos de la ley y çunna por don Içe de Gebir* . . . (= *Breviario sunni*): “Ni duerman, ni casen con ynfieles, asi hombres como

This unruffled continuity of legal norms masks the profound shift that Christian conquest produced in the possibilities for interfaith sexual relations in Iberia. Normative halakhic texts might insist on endogamy, Shari'a ones on the permissibility of Muslim male exogamy, but in fact new configurations of power encouraged some forms of sexual interaction and discouraged others. The opinion of Yehuda ben Asher ben Yehiel quoted above, for instance, was issued in a context [Toledo ca. 1280] that also produced poems like this famous one by Todros Abulafia:

... Yea, one should love an Arab girl
 Even if she's not beautiful and pure.
 But stay far away from a Spanish girl
 Even if she's radiant as the sun!
 . . . Her clothes are filled with crap and crud,
 Her hems are blotted with her uncleanness.
 Her harlotry is not taken to heart; she is
 So ignorant of intercourse she knows nothing.
 But every Arab girl has charm and beauty
 . . . She knows all about fornication and is adept at lechery.¹³

I quote this well-known poem to make two fairly obvious points. First, whatever the normative position of rabbis, interfaith intercourse was a very real possibility for Jews living under Christian rule in medieval Spain. Second, that intercourse was most likely to occur between Muslims and Jews, and not only because of Todros' claim that in the art of "harlotry", Arabs were erudite and Christians rustic.¹⁴ Probably equally important was the fact that Christians ruled Todros' Toledo, and Christian laws forbidding the sexual mixing of Jew (or Muslim) with Christian were vehemently enforced.¹⁵ With

mugeres". See P. de Gayangos (ed.), *Memorial Histórico Español* V, (Madrid 1853) pp. 247–421, here p. 341. The most recent study of the *Breviario* is that of G. Wieggers, *Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado: Yça of Segovia (fl. 1450), his Antecedents and Successors*, (Leiden 1994) pp. 115–33 and passim.

¹³ Note that this is a polemic in which Yehuda had the upper hand. On Todros' precarious position, see R. Brann, *The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain*, (Baltimore 1991) Chapter Five. The translation of Todros' poem is from Brann, *The Compunctious Poet*, p. 145.

¹⁴ It is true that, as Américo Castro pointed out long ago, there was a literary culture of the erotic in Arabic (and later Hebrew) that was generally lacking in the Latin and vernaculars of peninsular Christians. See his *The Structure of Spanish History*, (Princeton 1954) pp. 318–322.

¹⁵ For some of the issues involved in sexual intercourse between members of

regard to sex between members of minority groups the law was much less clear, the outcome more subject to negotiation. Todros' aesthetic judgments were therefore informed by a taste for safety as well as by a literate eroticism.

Thin though our evidence is, it does allow us to trace across some two centuries (from ca. 1280 until 1492) the negotiations triggered by sexual intercourse, and especially by marriage and conversion, between Muslims and Jews in Christian Iberia. The result is less a single harmonious composition than a diptych, marked by a sharp stylistic transformation at midpoint, that is to say circa 1400. Before the fifteenth century, Muslim and Jewish communities appear to have been comparatively free to compete in the sphere of love, with their competition mediated by Christian fiscal rather than spiritual interests, and the outcome generally dependent on the relative economic and political power of the two communities. For a number of reasons, that balance of power initially favored Jewish access to Muslim women rather than the other way around.

Partly, this was due to the Muslims' status as a conquered people, a conquest that was not only political, but also sexual.¹⁶ Muslims were themselves aware of this, as when the late fourteenth-century mufti Ibn Miqlash exhorted mudejars to emigrate to Muslim lands, since under Christian lords they could not protect the chastity of their women.¹⁷ Partly, too, it was due to the fact that the Muslim communities remaining in Christian lands were predominantly rural and agricultural, their political influence fragmented among a multiplicity of Christian lords, whereas Jews depended largely on the king. Third, and perhaps most important, the important role that war played in justifying slavery meant that Iberian Muslims were much more susceptible to enslavement than either Christians or Jews. Even native mudejars, though protected by law, could legally be enslaved as punishment for a great variety of crimes.¹⁸ One of these

minority and majority communities see my *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, (Princeton 1996) Chapter 5.

¹⁶ For a very general treatment of this issue see R. Trexler, *Sex and conquest: gendered violence, political order, and the European conquest of the Americas*, (Cambridge 1995).

¹⁷ H. Buzineb, "Respuestas de jurisconsultos maghrebies en torno a la inmigración de musulmanes hispánicos", *Hespéris Tamuda* 26–27, (1988) pp. 53–65, here pp. 59, 63.

¹⁸ Cf. J. Boswell, *The Royal Treasure: Muslim Communities under the Crown of Aragon in the Fourteenth Century*, (New Haven 1977) pp. 50–51; R. Burns, *Islam under the Crusaders*, (Princeton 1973) p. 252; E. Lourie, "Anatomy of Ambivalence: Muslims

crimes was, in fact, interfaith adultery, and Muslim communities insisted on the punishment as a way of disciplining the sexuality of Muslim women.¹⁹ Since Muslim slaves were commonly owned by Christians and Jews, and since sexual intercourse with one's slaves was a common practice throughout the medieval Christian and Islamic world, these circumstances virtually guaranteed that most cases of interfaith sexuality would involve Muslim women and Christian or Jewish men.²⁰

The Jews were not, of course, the conquerors of the Muslims, and their status vis-à-vis their *mudejar* neighbors was much less clear, and consequently much more competitive, than that of Christians.²¹ But Jews did have several advantages in this competition, especially in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. First, the Jews were not a conquered people subject to enslavement, except in the theoretical sense that they were in perpetual "servitude" to the monarchy. Second, Jews were frequently owners of Muslim slaves. And finally, because of their service to the monarchy, they could sometimes exercise a good deal of financial and political power over Muslims living in the peninsula's Christian kingdoms.

under the Crown of Aragon in the Late Thirteenth Century", in her *Crusade and Colonisation: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Aragon*, (Aldershot 1990) pp. 62–68. Ch. Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe Médiévale*, vol. 1, (Bruges 1955) and M.-T. Ferrer i Mallol *Els sarraïns de la Corona Catalano-Aragonesa en el segle XIV: segregació i discriminació*, (Barcelona 1987) provide many other examples.

¹⁹ The Muslim *aljama* of Valencia, for example, purchased from King Peter the Ceremonious confirmation of its privilege that whenever a Muslim woman was found guilty of sexual intercourse with a non-Muslim she would be condemned to death without possibility of monetary remission. For the edict of 1347 confirming the execution of Muslim adulteresses, see ACA:C 884:167r–v, published in M.T. Ferrer, *Els Sarraïns*, p. 271. For an earlier example, see ACA:C 61:101v (1283/4/23), in which the Muslims of Xàtiva ask that the prohibition on adultery between Christian and Jewish men on the one hand, and Muslim women on the other, be enforced. The death penalty was almost always commuted in such cases to enslavement.

²⁰ When sex with slaves involved only people from within the household, it did not usually result in disputes at law. Cases involving outsiders to the household were much more conflictual. Hence James II's edict, issued at the request of the city of Valencia and other towns of that kingdom, forbidding anyone from having sex with an owner's slave unless they were of the owner's "parentela" [ACA:C 219:321r (1321/5/1)]. On sex with slaves more generally see J. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, (Chicago 1987) p. 518. Of course the relationships expressed and established through such sex varied greatly within and across the three religious communities we are discussing.

²¹ For a broader treatment of this competition see my *Communities of Violence*, Chapter 6.

This last point deserves some elaboration. In order to exploit their conquests, the conquerors needed trustworthy and bilingual officials. For this they might draw upon Muslim elites in the lands they had conquered, but they could also call upon the Jews. Fluent in both Romance (Spanish, Catalan, Aragonese) and Arabic, without any loyalty to the Islamic polities across the frontier, completely at the mercy of their Christian lords, the Jews were both qualified and dependable (because dependent). Hence we find them in the vanguard of Christian reconquest. The Muslim chronicler Ibn 'Idhārī provided an early example when he complained (somewhat improbably) that in the 1090s the Cid Rodrigo Díaz appointed a Jewish minister to govern the city of Valencia after its conquest:

The Jew—God curse him—caused the Muslims to suffer the most cruel vexations, and others of his coreligionists became enraged against the [Muslim] Valencians, who attained the heights of the greatest humiliation. Jews also were the tax collectors, officials, scribes of the chancery, and those employed in land and sea services. A Jew acted as magistrate, and as such sentenced [Muslims] to punishment of whipping or lashes.²²

Ibn 'Idhārī presented the Jews' behavior as the product of Jewish enmity toward Muslims, but it was rather a symptom of a new political reality, one in which the Jews returned to Muslim lands as allies of, and sometimes administrators for, the Christian conquerors. In such a capacity Jews could come to occupy positions of authority over Muslims. When James I conquered the kingdom of Valencia in the mid-thirteenth century, for example, he did not hesitate to grant some of its lands to Jews, or to utilize their services as bailiffs and tax officials over his Muslim (and Christian) subjects in the kingdom.²³ At much the same time Fernando III and Alfonso X of Castile settled Jews in their newly conquered city of Seville, giving them three mosques to convert into synagogues: a grant whose symbolism would, I suspect, have been particularly galling to Muslim observers (though so far as I know none commented upon it).²⁴

²² Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. 5, A. Huici Miranda (trans.) in *Al-Bayan . . . Nuevos Fragmentos Almorávides y Almohades*, (Valencia 1963) pp. 99–100. The translation is from N. Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain*, (Leiden 1994) p. 134.

²³ On the role of Jews in the thirteenth-century administration of Valencia see R.I. Burns, *Medieval Colonialism: Postcrusade exploitation of Islamic Valencia*, (Princeton 1975) passim.

²⁴ The most recent treatment of this grant (and of a very interesting fourteenth

In short, Muslims sometimes found Jews in positions of authority over their own communities. Even when such authority was indirect (as it most often was), it could be formidable. No medieval Muslim or Jew would have been surprised by the advice of Queen Elionor of Catalonia-Aragon to her son Prince Martin in 1374, when she told him to ignore the complaints of several Muslim *aljamas* about the weight of their debts to the Valencian Jew Jafuda Alatzar. After all, Jafuda alone paid more taxes to the Crown than virtually all the Muslim communities of the kingdom of Valencia combined.²⁵

Of course these asymmetries (in affluence, political influence, and the prevalence of slavery) are only a few of the many that differentiated Muslim and Jewish communities. (Contemporaries, for example, often noted that the Mudejars had powerful external Muslim polities capable of negotiating on their behalf, whereas the Jews did not.) They are, however, the ones that seem to me most important in explaining the prevalent direction of sexual traffic between the two communities in the period before 1400. In the relatively frequent cases where Jewish men had intercourse with Muslim women (most often slaves), their exogamy was generally risk-free. On the other hand, we very rarely find documentation of Jewish women having intercourse with Muslim men. Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel wrote of a young woman named Leah, who had been captured by raiders and taken to Muslim lands, where she converted to Islam and married a Muslim. Other than attempt to ransom the captive before they occurred, there was little that the Jewish community could do about a case like this one, occurring in Muslim jurisdiction. (In fact the dispute submitted to Asher was about the ransom money that had already been collected, now rendered superfluous by Leah's apostasy).²⁶ Within the Christian kingdoms, however, the community could and did bring considerable power to bear, as they did in the case of the Zaragozaan Jewess Oro de Par, threatened with disfigurement and exile for her

century case) is by H. Ecker, "The Conversion of Mosques to Synagogues in Seville: the Case of the Mezquita de la Judería", *Gesta* 36.2, (1997) pp. 190–207.

²⁵ The queen's advice is from ACA:C 1582:107r–108r (1374/11/1). The tax contributions are from a war subsidy request of 1363, ACA:C 1185:219v–221r and 1187:212v–214r. See J. Riera i Sans, "Jafudà Alatzar, jueu de València (segle XIV)", *Revista d'Història Medieval* 4, (1993) pp. 65–100, here pp. 76, 79.

²⁶ *Sefer She'elot w-teshuvot le-ha-Rab Rabbenu 'Asher*, (Zolkiew 1602) no. 32, 6. See the discussion in M. Orfali, *Los conversos españoles en la literatura rabinica*, (Salamanca 1982) p. 23.

transgression with Muslims and Christians.²⁷ Jewish communities were quite successful in using their resources and influence to restrict Christian male access to Jewish women in the thirteenth and fourteenth century.²⁸ As far as Muslim men were concerned, their victory was total.

There was, however, a good deal of sexual intercourse between Jewish men and Muslim women. I have written about some of these cases elsewhere, but it is worth revisiting them so as to heighten the contrast with the fifteenth century material that follows. Such intercourse was, of course, bitterly opposed by Muslim communities. We have already seen how the Muslim *aljama* of Valencia, for example, purchased King Peter's confirmation of its privilege that whenever a Muslim woman was found guilty of adultery (here defined as any sexual intercourse outside of marriage) with a non-Muslim the death penalty would be imposed without possibility of monetary remission.²⁹ In individual cases, action was often taken by the families and communities of the women involved. A Muslim woman of Zaragoza named Amiri was twice caught in intercourse with Christians and Jews. Both times her community intervened on her behalf, preventing her sale into slavery in exchange for her promise to cease committing adultery with non-Muslims. When she was again found yet again in the Jewish quarter committing adultery with Jews, the two communities came to blows, "wishing to kill each other over her". This time she was convicted, and sold to a Christian for 120 sous, with the proceeds divided between the Crown and the informant who had denounced her.³⁰

²⁷ For the case of Oro de Par, which occurred in 1356, see ACA:C 691:127r-v. Circa 1319 a correspondent wrote to Rabbi Asher, asking permission to punish by disfigurement a Jewish woman from the region of Segovia who had born two children (twins?) to a Christian. (The son had died, and the daughter had been siezed by Christian authorities). The punishment was proposed so that the Torah not be dishonored in the eyes of the gentiles. See F. Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, vol. II, (Berlin 1936) pp. 138-9. In both cases the proposed punishment involved cutting off the nose.

²⁸ Thus in 1277 the Jews of Calatayud obtained a charter fining any Christian male caught by witnesses in bed with a Jewish woman 300 maravedis, and giving the Jewish community the right to arrest him. See ACA:C 39:155r-v, published in J. Régné, *History of the Jews in the Crown of Aragon*, (eds) Y.T. Assis and A. Gruzman, (Jerusalem 1978) document X. No Muslim community could have consistently enforced such a privilege.

²⁹ See above, note 20.

³⁰ For the case of Amiri, which occurred in 1301, see C. Orcástegui and

Amiri's case touches on two disadvantages that Muslim communities faced in their struggle to maintain sexual boundaries vis-à-vis the Jews. The first was the prevalence of mudejar prostitutes. The relatively large number of Muslim women involved in prostitution had nothing to do with asymmetries of power between Muslims and Jews. It was rather a complex by-product of the interaction between Christian exploitation of Muslim women and mudejar concerns with the honor of kin-group and community.³¹ But once these women became "public females," there was little Muslims could do to prevent their intercourse with Jewish men. Occasionally one finds cases like the one reported in Huesca in 1444, where a group of Muslims seized a Jew they found visiting a brothel in the Muslim quarter, stripped him, and left him naked in the street.³² Such violence was relatively rare, in part because it was severely punished (the Muslims of Huesca paid a heavy fine); and in part because the activities of Muslim prostitutes did not raise serious reproductive challenges for the community, since the offspring of a prostitute seem to have followed the mother's religion *faut de mieux*. (I know of no specific cases, but there is indirect evidence. St. Vincent Ferrer, for example, criticized Christian patrons of Muslim prostitutes for leaving the souls of the children whom they engendered to languish in the damnation of their mother's religion).³³

E. Sarasa, "El libro-registro de Miguel Royo, merino de Zaragoza en 1301: una fuente para el estudio de la sociedad y economía Aragonesa a comienzos del siglo XIV", *Aragón en la Edad Media* 4, (1981) pp. 87-156, here pp. 111-112. See also Lourie, "Anatomy", p. 71.

³¹ The role of Muslims in the world of prostitution is well documented, though relatively unstudied. The richest treatment is that for the fifteenth century of M. Meyerson, "Prostitution of Muslim women in the Kingdom of Valencia: Religious and sexual discrimination in a medieval plural society", in M.J. Chiat and K.L. Reyerson (eds), *The Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Contacts*, (Minnesota 1988) pp. 87-95. On the fourteenth century see Boswell, *Royal Treasure*, pp. 348-351. On the numerical prominence of Muslim prostitutes in thirteenth century Valencia, see F. Roca Traver, "Un siglo de vida mudéjar en la Valencia medieval (1238-1338)", *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón* 5, (1952) pp. 115-208, here p. 161. See also chapter 5 of my *Communities of Violence*.

³² The case, recorded in Archivo Histórico Provincial de Huesca Pr. 83, ff. 264v-265v (1444), is cited by A. Conte Cazarro, *La aljama de moros de Huesca*, (Huesca 1992) p. 41. The religion of the prostitute is not mentioned, but she is unlikely to have been a Christian, since if she were the Jew would not have dared go to the authorities with his complaint.

³³ St. Vincent Ferrer, *Sermons*, (ed.) J. Sanchis Sivera and G. Schib, 6 vols, (Barcelona 1932-1988) here vol. 5, p. 250.

Amiri's enslavement points to a second difficulty: the prevalence of unfree Muslim women in non-Muslim households. For Muslim women like Amiri who were enslaved as punishment for sexual crimes, sexual exploitation by their new owners was probably a matter of course. Occasionally they might even be made to work as prostitutes, with their earnings going to their owners. But the preservation of sexual boundaries was difficult even for the many Muslim women who came to the slave markets from abroad or by the fortunes of war (as Leah had done in the opposite direction), since owners' intercourse with slaves was a common practice in the Mediterranean.³⁴ Again there was little specific to Muslim-Jewish relations here, but since Christian law did not allow Jews to own Christian slaves, those in the few Jewish households wealthy enough to afford them would have been Muslim or pagan (e.g. Tartars).

Most of the surviving cases of interfaith sex, conversion, and marriage arise from this setting of servitude within Jewish households. Though sharply hierarchical, these relationships could produce strong passions. In one convoluted case from Zaragoza, for example, a Jew was accused of poisoning his son because they were both in love with one of their Muslim slaves. The son, it was said, had threatened to convert to Christianity if the father did not stop sleeping with the slave.³⁵ Nevertheless, the steep differences of status within the household were significant. The inclusiveness of the term *familia* (household) is meaningful, but it should not be forgotten that importance disparities of status (e.g. slavery and freedom) and religion separated Jewish and Muslim members of the household. These divisions could, but need not, be overcome through intercourse. Jewish sex with Muslim slaves could lead to concubinage, conversion, the integration of offspring, even marriage. It could also remain a starkly asymmetrical relationship.

³⁴ See Nirenberg, *Communities*, chapter five, p. 141; and Lourie, "Anatomy", p. 71. On Jewish attitudes toward Muslim concubines in Aragon, see especially Assis, "Sexual Behaviour", pp. 36–40.

³⁵ ACA:C cr. Jaume II, box 30, #3804 (1311/2/15), a similar version of which is published in F. Baer, *Die Juden*, vol. 1, (Berlin 1929) pp. 201–203, from ACA:C 239:18v–19r. Conflicts between father and son over intercourse with a slave had an ancient Mediterranean pedigree, and were often addressed, for example, in Islamic hadith collections. See, for example, the *Muwattāʾ* of Imam Mālik, Book XIV, Chapter 324, nos. 1096–99.

For an example of “integration”, we can look to Chresches de Turri and his kinsmen, Jews of Girona, who purchased a license from King James II in 1321 permitting them to circumcise a Muslim boy who was the child of Chresches by a Muslim slave, and convert him to the Jewish religion. Chresches’ Gironese ancestor Abraham de Turri made a much more horrible choice some forty years earlier, suffocating his two children by one of his Muslim slaves.³⁶ At about the same time, in Huesca, the Jew Cecrim Abraham seems to have attempted to maintain something of an intermediate position. His female Muslim slave had converted to Judaism after bearing him a child. Cecrim was trying to establish ownership over the child, that is, to keep him in the status of slave. He argued that “according to the custom of the city” the children born from the union of a Jewish master and Muslim slave belonged to the master. The convert claimed that her conversion retroactively enfranchised her offspring. Cecrim, on the other hand, insisted on the priority of her servile and non-Jewish status at the time of delivery.³⁷ Assimilation, murderous exclusion, the maintenance of the status quo: all were potential outcomes of these relationships between master and slave.

Nevertheless some outcomes were more normative than others. Wherever contemporary evidence penetrates the timeless condemnations of a Rabbi Yehuda or a Nahmanides, it is apparent that rabbinic authorities favored the regularization of sexual relationships between Jewish men and Muslim women through conversion and through the granting of full legal rights to the concubine/bride. Such

³⁶ For the circumcision, see ACA:C 385:19r: “. . . concedimus de gracia sp[ecialiter] vobis . . . possitis in civitate predicta, videlicet in calle judayco ipsius civitatis, quandam filium cuiusdam sarracene serve et captive vestre facere judeum et ad ritum pervertere judeorum et ipsum facere circumscidi, iuxta legem et consuetudinem ebreorum” (1321/12/17). For the suffocation, see ACA:C 62:136v–137r (1285/3/15), published in Régné, *History*, pp. 428–430: “Item quod tu, dictus Abraham, suffocasti duos infantes natos de quadam sarracena, que a te ipsos suscepit. Item quod tenebas publice in domo tua quandam sarracenam de Palia nomine Axian in tuo contubernio, cum qua habebas rem, quociens volebas et que a te suscepit plures partus”.

³⁷ ACA:C 67:1r (1286/5/1) [= Régné #1543]: “. . . Cecrim Abnabe (?), judeus Osce, genuit genuit (sic) ex quadam sarracena sua quandam prole, et quod fecit ipsam sarracenam converti ad legem judaycam, et quod est consuetudo civitate Osce si aliquis judeus generat prole ex sarracena captiva sua [. . .] proles quam ex ea habeat pertenuit ad [. . .]”. The conversion may well have enfranchised the mother. Cf. Assis, “Sexual Behaviour”, p. 39.

arrangements need not have been rare. We know, for example, that some Jewish communities pronounced bans upon Jews who had Muslim concubines but did not marry them “with betrothal and *ketubah* (marriage contract)”. In one *responsum*, a Jew argued that he should be allowed to continue living with a concubine he had converted from Islam to Judaism and married, even though he had not given her a *ketubah*. Solomon ibn Adret disagreed.³⁸ But despite such attempts at systematization, it seems likely that the majority of these relationships remained unformalized because (as in the case of sex with slaves) they were customary and unremarkable, or because they fell between jurisdictional cracks. When Abulfacem, a Jew of Mula [Murcia], and his Muslim concubine Axona were arrested by the king’s brother and procurator in Murcia, the couple jointly appealed to the king. He ruled that they should be allowed to cohabit unmolested, since neither was a Christian, a ruling which makes explicit the relatively unregulated nature of Muslim-Jewish sexual relations.³⁹

When such relations led to conversion, however, they came up against more structured barriers. We have already seen how Chresches de Turri thought it prudent to purchase a royal license before converting his son by a Muslim slave.⁴⁰ When the conversion involved a free Muslim woman with roots in a *mudejar* community it could be much more conflictual. The case of Maria is the best documented.⁴¹ She surfaces anonymously on the 12th of August of 1356, when, at the request of the Jews of Lleida, King Peter ordered his

³⁸ Adret, vol. 5, #245. The concubine involved in this incident was probably not a free Muslim, at least not before the marriage. For more general comments on Jewish attitudes toward concubinage, see Assis, “Sexual Behavior”, p. 62.

³⁹ ACA:C 110:34v (1298/3/26): “. . . Unde cum supradicte persone alieni [?] sint a lege nostra et non videamus causam propter quod vos de facto huiusmodi intrromitire debeatis. . . .” My thanks to M.T. Ferrer for the reference.

⁴⁰ The purchase of such licenses was not rare. Perfet Gravei of Barcelona bought one in 1292 in order to convert a Muslim slave called Hauha (ACA:C 260:97r [1292/6/25]), as did the community of Barcelona collectively for the conversion of the Muslim Lopello de Serrah Mahomet in 1361 (ACA:C 905:68 [1361/1/4]). That the practice was standard is suggested by a fine levied in 1386 against two women of Alicante for “conversion without license” from Islam to Judaism. They apparently received no other punishment. (ACA:RP, MR 1722:49r, cited in Ferrer, *Els sarraïns*, pp. 82–83).

⁴¹ Maria’s case was first noted, and partially documented, by J. Boswell, *Royal Treasure*, pp. 351 f. See also my “Maria’s Conversion to Judaism”, *Oriin: A Jewish Journal at Yale* 2, (1984) pp. 38–44; *Communities of Violence*, pp. 185–87.

bailiff there to release a Muslim woman arrested for converting to Judaism. The conversion, according to the king, was not a crime punishable by imprisonment.⁴² Two weeks later, the king issued the following privilege to Martin Eiximin:

We hereby grant and concede to you, the said Martius, all rights which we do hold, or might or should hold over Maria, a Jewess who had been a Muslim, both for her having recently abandoned the religion of perfidious Muhammad and embraced the law of the Hebrews, and for the crime of adultery which she is alleged to have committed with Jews while still a Muslim. . . . And we accord and allot to you, the said Martius, full power and authority to settle with the said Muslim on that amount of money upon which you shall be best able to agree with her, . . . as well as [authority for] absolving and sentencing this Jewess for the aforesaid and whatever other crimes may have been committed by her. . . .⁴³

The privilege itself makes no effort to prioritize the two charges, conversion/apostasy and interfaith sexual contact, nor to fix the convert's identity ("said Muslim"/"this Jewess"). But in its two year effort to repeal the lenient treatment accorded Maria the Muslim *aljama* of Lleida proved to be quite aware of where the legal advantages lay. In a document issued in May of 1358, the Muslims asked King Peter to intervene against any Christian who attempted to obstruct the punishment of a Muslim convert to Judaism, as had presumably occurred in Maria's case. They argued that according to a "general constitution of Catalonia recently published and enacted at Tarragona, no Muslim man or woman should dare in any manner to convert to the law of the Jews, and that if any Muslim violates this he shall incur both corporal and financial punishment". According to the Muslims, the license accorded by the king to a recent conversion (Maria's?) harmed the *aljama* by encouraging others who might be thinking of converting.⁴⁴

By focusing on Muslim-Jewish apostasy, where the law was relatively clear, rather than on Muslim-Jewish miscegenation, where it was not, the *mudejars* hoped to raise the barriers between Muslim

⁴² ACA:C 690:31v (1356/8/12).

⁴³ ACA:C 899:60r (1356/8/22), published and translated in Boswell, *Royal Treasure*, pp. 351–2, 442. Adultery here may refer to the practice of prostitution without royal license.

⁴⁴ ACA:C 691:232r (1358/5/18). See *Communities of Violence*, pp. 185–6, and cf. Boswell, *Royal Treasure*, p. 380.

women and Jewish men. The Muslims of Lleida might have found support for their arguments in the opinions of distinguished lawyers like Oldradus de Ponte (d. 1337?), who may himself have spent some time teaching in Lleida, and who asked the following question in a *consilium*: “A Jew went over to the sect of the Saracens. The Question is put, should he be punished”? In the first instance, the question seemed as trivial to Oldradus as Abulfacem’s case had seemed to James II: “Evidently not, since we tolerate both sects. If each is in a state of damnation it does not matter to which sect he belongs because there is no distinction between equivalents . . .”. Oldradus did not stop there, however, and his second argument was much less symmetrical. If apostasy is a turning back, a movement from the better to the worse, then Jewish conversion to Islam was not apostasy, since “the Saracen sect is not as bad as that of the Jews, according to the word of the Lord . . .”. “The Church makes sufficiently clear that they are worse, for when it prays on Good Friday for all people there is no genuflection for Jews, though there is for pagans [i.e., Muslims]”. In the case of Jewish conversions to Islam, Oldradus’ reasoning is clear: they are not to be punished. He left the question of conversions in the other direction ambiguous, since they were not at issue in this case.⁴⁵

A hundred years later that ambiguity would be definitively eliminated, and in favor of Islam. But it is interesting that before 1400, Muslim efforts to criminalize conversion to Judaism were largely in vain, despite the existence of rulings like Oldradus’, and of quite explicit civil laws like the “constitutions of Tarragona” mentioned above. Even in the most conflictual cases, where we know that *mudejar* communities worked very hard to have the convert punished, they rarely succeeded, both because the Jews might pay even more to have the Muslims’ privilege overturned, and because influential Christians might intervene to defend the convert. By the late fourteenth century we find Muslim women like Jamila and Simfa, who converted to Judaism in 1386, facing only the inconvenience of having to pay a fine.⁴⁶ In the long run, however, the Muslim strategy

⁴⁵ On Oldradus, see W. Stalls, “Jewish Conversion to Islam: the Perspective of a *Quaestio*”, *Revista Española de Teología* 43, (1983) pp. 235–251; N. Zacour, *Jews and Saracens in the Consilia of Oldradus de Ponte*, (Toronto, 1990) pp. 21–2, 42–3, 77. The translation here is by Zacour, pp. 42–3. The biblical reference is to *Matthew*, 11:24.

⁴⁶ See the reference in note 39, above.

proved prescient, in that it gave their communities access to an emerging Christian clerical anti-Judaism, with its attendant desire to circumscribe the spheres of Jewish activity in Christian society.

In fact within little more than a generation of Jamila and Simfa's conversion, the situation was completely reversed. After 1400, a Muslim woman's conversion to Judaism and marriage to a Jew, far from going unremarked or occasioning a mere fine, was certain to become a cause celebre. The fifteenth-century cases I have found are few, but they achieved much notoriety and occupied the attention of some of the greatest theological minds of the age. In them the scope of the transformation is amply clear. By the end of the century it was the right of Jewish women to convert to Islam that Christian authorities were defending, not the reverse.

The first case, from sometime in the first half of the century, involves the affair of a young Muslim woman from Talavera with a Jew from that town and her eventual conversion to Judaism, an event which apparently provoked a "great and scandalous discord".⁴⁷ The document contains few details of the conversion itself. The Muslim woman is not named, and we are told only that Yuda, a Jew from Talavera, "took a young moorish woman from her father's house and converted her to Judaism", and that he had been "mixing" sexually with the young woman for some time before the conversion.⁴⁸ Instead, the two sides (Christian clerics on behalf of the

⁴⁷ See Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, ms. Res. 35, ff. 101r(b)-112v(b), which preserves the arguments against the conversion made by the Dean of Talavera, the Prior of Santa Catalina, and Fernando Alonso, a canon of the town; and those in favor of it by the Jews of Talavera and their lawyer. My thanks to Kathryn Miller for telling me of the manuscript and providing me with a microfilm. On this dispute see my *Communities of Violence*, pp. 191-95, and (appearing simultaneously) A. Gómez Moreno, "An unknown Jewish-Christian controversy in fifteenth-century Talavera de la Reina: Towards the end of Spanish Jewry," in A. Menéndez Collera and V. Roncero López (eds), *Nunca fue pena mayor (estudios de literatura Española en homenaje a Brian Dutton)*, (Cuenca 1996) pp. 285-292. The manuscript was apparently copied (at the request of Alfonso de Cartagena?) from the original records of the proceso held in the Archbishop of Toledo's court f. 101r(b): "Recibi una letra . . . en que me enbiava pedir aquel proceso . . . sobre el judio que avia tornado la mora judia . . . sobre la qual fue nacido aquella grande discordia." On the scandal, see f. 101r(b); 101v(a). For a brief description of BNM Res. 35, see H. Santiago-Otero and K. Reinhardt, "Escritos de polémica antijudía en lengua vernácula", *Medievalia* 2, (1993) pp. 185-195, here pp. 193 f.; and, with less detail, H. Santiago-Otero, "The *Libro declarante*: an Anonymous Work in the Anti-Jewish Polemic in Spain", *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, vol. 2, (Jerusalem 1990) pp. 77-81, here p. 77.

⁴⁸ Fol. 101v(b): "...saco una moça mora de casa de su padre e la torno judia,

Muslims on the one hand, the Jews and their Christian lawyer on the other) concentrate entirely on the legal and theological question of whether or not the conversion is permissible. (I will return to the substance of the arguments in a moment.)⁴⁹

Probably at much the same time as the Talavera disputation, the famous canonist and bishop of Avila, Alfonso de Madrigal “el Tostado”, (1410–1455) wrote an opinion (“responso”) on the following subject: “A woman of Sarracen lineage and of the Sarracen faith, at the instigation of a Jewish man with whom she was sexually involved, professed the Jewish faith . . . and was solemnly received into the Jewish congregation or synagogue by Jewish rabbis”. Is such a conversion permissible, and if not, who is to be punished for it? The bishop’s answer occupies 25 double columned folios, and is definitive (as well as repetitive) in its conclusions: the conversion is not to be allowed, and the Jews are to be punished.⁵⁰

Together, these two treatises make clear that Christian attitudes toward Muslim conversions to Judaism had changed dramatically, and that the very highest echelons of the peninsular church were now militantly arrayed against them. How should we explain this shift? The answer is not, I think, to be found in the sociology of power I invoked in order to explain the pre-1400 situation. Despite a series of disasters such as the massacres and mass conversions of 1391 and the proselytizing and segregationist campaigns of the early fifteenth century, many of the economic and social conditions that had facilitated the conversion of Muslims to Judaism in the earlier period still existed. Even in the latter half of the fifteen-century, the

lo qual ser de consentimiento de ella o non no curamos. . . .” If rape or abduction was involved, it is not explicitly stated. That the Jew, “contra Dios e contra su ley, aya seydo mesclado, segund se dize ser notorio, mucho tiempo ante de esta muger. . . .”, is mentioned only as a further abomination.

⁴⁹ That Christian clerics are pleading on behalf of the Muslims is explicit throughout the document. For Christian participation on behalf of the Jews, see *inter alia* the signature of the *letrado* for the Jews on fol. 105r(b), and the reference in the rebutal on 105v(a) to “. . . un escripto que por parte de los judios, non sabemos si por algun cristiano . . .”.

⁵⁰ University of Salamanca ms. 70, ff. 86ra–111vb. The treatise was not included in his *Opera Omnia*, 15 vols, (Venice 1507–30). See P.L. Suárez, “Los manuscritos de Alfonso Tostado de Madrigal conservados en la Biblioteca Universitaria de Salamanca”, *Salamanticensis* 4, (1957) pp. 3–50; A. García y García, “La Canonística ibérica medieval posterior al Decreto de Graciano”, *Repertorio de Historia de las Ciencias Eclesiásticas en España* 5, (1976) pp. 351–402, here p. 354.

Jews of Castile (where these two cases took place) were still more active than Muslims in royal administration. The Muslims of Granada obviously took Jewish power seriously as late as 1491, for as we have seen, they included in their surrender treaty with the Catholic monarchs the clause that "Their highnesses would not permit the Jews to have power or command over the Moors, or to be collectors of any tax".⁵¹ Moreover, throughout the century Jews continued to own Muslim slaves, and to wield the power necessary to enforce their rights over these slaves. In 1469, for example, armed Jews conducted a house-to-house search of the Muslim quarter of Murcia looking for fugitive slaves.⁵²

Without multiplying such examples, let me assert that the changed possibilities for Muslim-Jewish love, conversion, and marriage were not primarily a product of a shift in the relative power of Muslims and Jews. Rather, they reflected changes in the role these two religious communities (or rather, theological categories) played in the Christian theological imagination, and the increasing importance of these theological considerations in the Christian mediation of Jewish-Muslim relations.

A simple comparison of Oldradus de Ponte's position with those of Alfonso de Madrigal or the Talavera lawyers a century later makes the change clear. Oldradus had considered the problem of marriage and conversion in some sense trivial: "If each is in a state of damnation it does not matter to which sect he belongs because there is no distinction between equivalents . . .". But between Oldradus and the mid-fifteenth century there intervened the massacre and forced baptism of thousands of Jews in 1391; the segregations, disputations, and mass conversions of 1412–1416. These waves of violence and evangelization brought a number of conflicting Christian anxieties in their wake. On the one hand, Christians could and did take joy in the fact that through their efforts the ranks of Iberian Jewry had been halved. The disappearance of the Jews through conversion and massacre had long been anticipated as a marker of the advent of messianic time, and there were many who felt that such a time was

⁵¹ Translation of the treaty from L.P. Harvey, *Islamic Spain, 1250–1500*, (Chicago 1990) p. 317.

⁵² Arch. Mun. Murcia, Lib. Actas, 1469–70, fols. 73–4, dated 11 Dec., 1469. Doc. #764 in Luis Rubio Garcia, *Los judíos de Murcia en la Baja Edad Media (1350–1500)*, colección documental II, (Murcia 1997) pp. 14–15.

close to hand.⁵³ On the other, many Christians were becoming increasingly convinced that, rather than being defeated, Judaism had in fact triumphed. Through the nefarious actions of converts to Christianity who remained Jewish at heart, Christian Spain was being “conquered”, corrupted, and judaized.⁵⁴ Either way, a long-standing equilibrium had been broken. The many consequences of this breakage would eventually include the establishment of the Inquisition, the expulsion of the Jews, and the creation of purity of blood statutes, to mention only a few of the more significant. But it is one of the less significant consequences that is my subject here: conversion and marriage between Muslims and Jews now took on a heightened theological significance. If the Jews were believed to be disappearing as the world slouched toward its final battle, then a Muslim conversion to Judaism assumed apocalyptic meaning. And if, to the contrary, Jewish power was thought to be gaining through the conversos an increasing hold on Iberian society, then a Muslim conversion became confirmation of that suspicion.

So far as I know (his writings are voluminous) Alfonso de Madrigal did not engage actively in any of the many debates about Jews and conversos that agitated his age. For example, unlike some of his illustrious episcopal contemporaries (e.g. Alfonso de Cartagena and Lope de Barrientos) he does not seem to have ruled on the legality of the anti-converso violence and discriminatory legislation issuing from

⁵³ On this association in general see most recently R. Lerner, *The Feast of Saint Abraham: Medieval Millenarians and the Jews* (Philadelphia 2001), and specifically chapter 7, on the effects of the mass conversions on Francisc Eiximenis’ millenarian ideas. For another example see the charges made circa 1393 against Antoni Rieri of Lleida, who was accused, among other things, of preaching that the prophetic time had arrived “in quo omnes iudei debant interfici, ut nullus iudeus in mundo deinceps remaneret”. J. De Puig i Oliver, “La *Incantatio studii ilderdensis* de Nicolau Eimeric, O.P.”, *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics* 15, (1996) pp. 7–108, here p. 47. Of course the messianism of St. Vincent Ferrer, architect of the mass conversions of 1412–1416, is well known, and doubtless owed a good deal to the events of 1391. See most recently J. Guadalajara Medina, *Las profecias del anticristo en la edad media*, (Madrid 1996) pp. 232–247.

⁵⁴ These concerns broke violently into public discourse during the civil wars of the 1440s, and particularly during the Toledan revolt and massacre of conversos in 1449. For a detailed if tendentious narrative of these events see B. Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition*, (New York 1995). Two of the most important texts were published by E. Benito Ruano, “El memorial contra los conversos del bachiller Marcos García de Mora (Marquillos de Mazarambroz)”, *Sefarad* 17, (1957) pp. 314–51; and his “La Sentencia-Estatuto de Pero Sarmiento contra los conversos toledanos”, *Revista de la universidad de Madrid* (4th series) 6, (1957) pp. 277–306.

Toledo in 1449. Nevertheless, his “*Responsio in quaestione de muliere sarracena transeunte ad statum et ritum Iudaicum*” is very much marked by the times.

I should note that Alfonso was quite capable of taking love seriously as an explanation for religious *mesaliance*, at least when it occurred far away and long ago. In his commentary on *Judges*, for example, he lingered over Sampson’s transgressive predilection for Philistine women. His conclusions were exculpatory, even empathetic. Sampson suffered from love sickness, a disease that overwhelms volitions, and should not therefore be harshly adjudged for his actions.⁵⁵ He was not responsible. Confronted by the power of love in his own time, however, Alfonso took a very different approach indeed.

His treatise begins with the affair: a Muslim woman, at the suggestion of a Jewish man with whom she had “mixed carnally”, was solemnly converted by rabbis in the synagogue, the conversion attested by a Christian notary. Should this be tolerated, or should the woman, the Jewish lover, the rabbis and synagogue, even the Christian notary, be punished (and if so, how)? Alfonso’s answer is unambiguous: the conversion is not to be tolerated. [86rb] Just as the Jews are not allowed to build new synagogues, so they cannot create new “temples in the spirit,” i.e., new converts. [86va] Indeed it is worse to create new converts than to build new synagogues, for it is the observance of Jewish cult that is damnable, not the place in which the cult is observed. If law restricts the place of cultic observance, so much more should the person who carries out that observance be restricted. [87rb, 87va] Moreover the convert to Judaism is embracing a “detestable observance”, a “lethal sect that leads to eternal damnation. . . . And a cruel sect, . . . for those who observe it are cruel to their own souls”. [87va] It cannot be said that the convert is adopting a valid law (the term was used in medieval Spain for what today we call religion) or rite (*ritus*), for the Jews’ so-called law has been abrogated. [88ra] Through its observance you cannot be saved, and in fact all who participate in it are damned.

Alfonso repeatedly recognizes that there are some who would object, first that no crime has been committed, since as a Muslim

⁵⁵ The Sampson text was published in volume 10 of the *Opera Omnia*, pp. 248–9, but I have seen it only in the version given by P. Cátedra, *Amor y pedagogía en la edad media. Estudios de doctrina amorosa y práctica literaria*, (Salamanca 1989) pp. 189–90.

the woman was already damned and in a state of mortal sin; and second, that the “status of Muslim was more detestable than that of Jew”, so that “in going over to the Jewish rite she did not sin”. [88ra–rb, 93va–vb] His response to these objections is threefold. First, it is the act of choosing damnation that is here condemned, not the state of damnation itself. Those who are born into Islam or Judaism, though damned, are not so contemptible as those who choose such a religion of their own free will. [88va] Moreover, the act of choice itself entails an act of mortal sin that cannot be allowed. “It is like the case of a man who has his sister in concubinage. Then he relinquishes her and takes as concubine a woman to whom he is not related. . . . It is certain that the second status is less detestable than the first”, but nevertheless, “by accepting once more such a woman in concubinage he commits once more a mortal sin”, and such an action cannot be permitted. [88rb, 93vb] Or as he puts it later, we are commanded to choose the good, not the lesser evil. Stealing is a lesser crime than killing, yet we are not permitted to choose theft; homosexual sodomy may be worse than heterosexual rape, but Lot still sinned in handing over his daughters to the men of Sodom. [100ra] It does not matter here whether Judaism is superior to Islam or not. The sin lies in choosing damnation, and damnation cannot be hierarchicalized. [93vb]

Alfonso’s second response is perhaps more revealing: regardless of the relative merits of the two “damned” religions, the conversion constitutes blasphemy against the “true” one, Christianity. By converting to Judaism the Muslim woman explicitly manifests her belief that salvation can be found in Jewish faith and through Jewish ritual, and implicitly suggests that the Jewish faith is better than the Christian, that Jewish works are better than the Christian word. These two terrible blasphemies produced by her conversion are “a detestable sin, and this is the reason that is most pressing”. [88va–89a] Moreover through the conversion Judaism, a “status reprobatus” would seem “approbatus”, and Judaism would triumph over Christianity. To allow such blasphemy is to invite God’s angry retribution upon princes, prelates, and entire congregations. [89rb–89vb]

Thus far Alfonso’s logic seems oriented toward convincing those who are inclined to accept the superiority of Judaism over Islam that such considerations are irrelevant. He even goes so far as to respond to those who say that Islamic conversion to Judaism should be encour-

aged, since the latter is a religion closer to the true faith of Christianity. This argument is dangerous, according to Alfonso, because there is no salvation in Judaism. Would not converts be damned if they died in the intermediate state of Jewishness? [89va] Even if we were all agreed that Judaism was better than Islam, he repeats again and again [e.g. 94rb], nevertheless the act of conversion from Islam to Judaism should be prohibited, with infractions vigorously punished.

But of course Alfonso is far from convinced of such superiority himself. He reminds his readers that previous authorities, particularly Oldradus de Ponte and Ludovicus Pontanus of Rome, ranked Islam ahead of Judaism.⁵⁶ He repeats a number of their arguments, and adds an interesting one himself. The plight of the Jews, he asserts, is due to their murder of Jesus. It is because they crucified the lord that they are condemned by law to be slaves (“seruos”) forever. It is as a consequence of this status that they are oppressed in special ways reserved for themselves alone, “ut se seruos agnoscant et sciant”. [90rb] The badge they are forced to wear, their segregation during Holy Week, the ban on their owning Christian slaves, employing Christian wet-nurses, receiving testamentary bequests from Christians, holding public office: all these are opprobria reserved for the Jews as marks of the servitude they incurred through deicide. Alfonso’s conclusion from these theological commonplaces is novel: how can we allow Muslims, who did not participate in the killing of the Lord, to be brought by the Jews into this status? [91ra]

While Alfonso chose to focus on the problematics of conversion itself, his contemporaries in the Talavera disputation took a different approach, one that highlights the second key change affecting Christian attitudes toward Muslim conversions to Judaism: the heightened tenor of Christian anti-Judaism in fifteenth-century Spain. At Talavera, the central issue is not so much about theological principles (e.g., is it permitted to posit a hierarchy of mortal sin?) as about the relative merits of the two minority religions. Here, the arguments made by the clerics of Talavera on behalf of the Muslims are instructive:

⁵⁶ Ludovicus Pontanus died of the plague at the council of Basel. Many of his *concilia* and *singularia* survive in fifteenth and sixteenth century editions, but I have not yet been able to locate the reference.

... The Jews, in the rites of their religion as they currently practice it, are to a great degree of worse condition and more damnable and more abhorred by the Lord, and more corrupting... of us, than are the Moors who live among us.⁵⁷

The Jews have rejected their prophets and become a synagogue of Satan, losing all title to Mosaic law and to the name of "Jews".⁵⁸ They are blasphemous, blind, and obstinate, willing followers of the Antichrist. The Muslims' "evil way of life", on the other hand, "is only a manner of bestial superstition and blind ignorance". Moreover, rather than blaspheme as the Jews do, the Muslims accept Christ. In fact, if the Church teaches that Muslims are to be avoided as much as Jews are, it is only because Muslims have been contaminated by Jewish ways, such as circumcision.⁵⁹ Muslim opposition to Christianity, in the past (Muhammad) as in the future (the anti-Christ) is the result of Jewish deceit. Being imitative, it is not as deeply rooted as that of the Jews, who are serpents seeking to poison Christendom. [108ra] Hence the Muslims are more easily converted to Christianity than are the Jews, and once baptised, make more sincere converts.

This last argument is revealing, marking as it does the power of new Christian ideologies to transform Jewish-Muslim relations. In making it, the Muslims' lawyers show themselves to be well informed about the key claims and proof-texts of the anti-Converso and anti-Jewish circles writing around Toledo in the 1440s. Converts from Judaism, they allege, are known to be especially prone to "return to their own vomit", and even once converted many are "vaniloqui e seductores". "We do not say this in order to introduce division among the sons of the Church, unitary and immaculate... for all are, after conversion, of equal condition and value... except insofar as the

⁵⁷ 107r(a): "... ca los judios en los ritos de la su observaçio que agora biven son de peor condiçion e mas damnables e al señor mas aborrecidos e a nos mas infestos e enpeçibles en mucho grado que non sean los moros que entre nos biven".

⁵⁸ 107r(a-b). The key reference is to St. Augustine, Sermons on St. John the Baptist: "By denying Christ they denied Moses and the Prophets. Destroying him they destroyed them and lost the law." 107v(a): "...avemos de dezir que estos malditos de dios e obstinados non son judios ni pueblo de dios mas sinoga de sathanas...". (Cf. *Apocalypse* 2.9: "... ab his, qui se dicunt Iudaeos esse, et non sunt, sed sunt synagoga Satanae").

⁵⁹ The frequency of the Christian accusation that the Jews influenced Muhammad has often been noted, most recently by T. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs*, (Leiden 1994) pp. 42, 271-73.

personal virtue and nobility of some raises them, and the error and malice and villainy of others draws them down". Such baseness and error among converts is the "fruit produced by this damned synagogue of Satan", and of all this converts from Islam are innocent.⁶⁰

These claims were radical but chic, very much the latest in anti-*Converso* polemic. The Muslims' lawyers were clearly taking pains to protect themselves against the charge (championed by Alfonso de Cartagena, at whose request our transcript of the Talavera trial was probably copied) that such arguments introduced heretical division into the Body of Christ. They did so by insisting, as a number of Toledan writers had begun to do in the 1430s, that the problem was not one of sacramental theology but of lineage, that is of villainy versus nobility. This is not the place to explore the history of those claims. It is enough to note that the most up-to-date tools of mendicant anti-Jewish polemic were here being deployed on the Muslims' behalf.⁶¹

Of course not all aspects of the lawyers' argument were as novel or radical as the comparison of Jewish and Muslim converts. Claims about Muslim spiritual superiority to Jews had long been made, not only in learned treatises by churchmen like Oldradus, but also in vernacular works like the thirteenth century *Cantigas de Santa María*, where the Virgin works miracles for Muslims and makes clear her preference for Muslims over Jews.⁶² These comparisons often revolved, as at Talavera, around the well known fact that Islam accepted

⁶⁰ 108vb-109ra. "Vaniloqui e seductores": the reference is to *Titus* 1.10: "For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially of the circumcision party . . .". The verse became an important anti-*Converso* proof-text.

⁶¹ Alonso de Cartagena's *Defensorium unitatis christianae*, (ed.) P. Manuel Alonso, (Madrid 1943) was one of a number of treatises arguing that this type of anti-*Converso* discourse was itself heretical. On the emergence of a lineage based critique of the *conversos*, see my "Mass Conversion and genealogical mentalities: Jews and Christians in fifteenth-century Spain", *Past and Present* 174, (2002) pp. 3-41; "El concepto de raza en el estudio del antijudaísmo ibérico medieval", *Edad Media. Revista de Historia* 3, (2000) pp. 39-60.

⁶² The *Cantigas* emphasize Muslim respect for the Virgin. Cf. *Cantigas* 165, 169, 181, 329, 344. For the Virgin's explicit preference of Muslims to Jews, see *Cantiga* 348 "... dos iudeus, seus enemigos, a que quer peor ca mouros". (She sometimes prefers Muslims to Catalans as well, as in *Cantiga* 379). See M. García-Arenal, "Los moros en las *Cantigas* de Alfonso X el Sabio", *Al-Qantara* 6, (1985) pp. 133-151; and the articles of A. Bagby: "The Moslem in the *Cantigas* of Alfonso X el Sabio", *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 20, (1973) pp. 173-207; "The Jew in the *Cantigas* of Alfonso X el Sabio", *Speculum* 46, (1971) pp. 670-688; and "Alfonso X el Sabio compara moros y judíos", *Romanische Forschungen* 82, (1970) pp. 578-583.

Mary's virginity after conception and considered Christ a prophet.⁶³ (The *Qur'an* itself stressed that the Jews had been damned because, among other reasons, they defamed Mary and refused to believe her, rejecting the prophecies of her son).⁶⁴ But these arguments had not previously been brought to bear effectively on questions of Muslim-Jewish sex and conversion. In the earlier period, as we have seen, other discourses had dominated, for example the fiscal one. The Talavera disputation is particularly revealing because it helps us to see how increasing anxiety about the place of Conversos in Christian society transformed an aspect of relations between Muslims and Jews. As the place of Jews in Christian religiosity changed, so did the meaning of Muslim-Jewish love and conversion in Christian eyes. Such relationships were no longer mere "minority affairs". They were now part of a triangular relationship in which the desires of Christian theologians played the dominant role.

In the context of the new religious anxieties and shifting hierarchies of the fifteenth century, powerful Christians had come to question the extent to which Jewish sex with Muslim women was a "natural" and therefore tolerable consequence of social and economic hierarchies. Over the course of little more than a generation, the sexual boundaries between Muslims and Jews had been redrawn, and by the end of the century, the direction of traffic across those boundaries would be reversed. In 1489, the Jewish aljama of Soria complained that a Jewish woman had converted to Islam and adopted the name Marien in order to marry Abrahén Caballete, a Muslim from Burgos.⁶⁵ Christian officials hastened to the defense of the newly

⁶³ See, eg, *Qur'an*, Surah 21 ("The Prophets") 91: "And she who was chaste, therefor We breathed into her (something) of Our spirit and made her and her son a token for (all) peoples" [Pickthall translation]; Surah 19 ("Mary") 27–34; Surah 4 ("Women") 155. Christian polemicists could, of course, exaggerate such affinities, as when the clerics of Talavera stated that Muslims believed that Mary remained a virgin after giving birth, a point not generally accepted among mudejars. On Iberian Muslim beliefs concerning Mary's virginity, cf. M. de Epalza, *Jésus otage: Juifs, chrétiens et musulmans en Espagne (VI^e-XVII^e s.)*, (Paris 1987) pp. 179, 182. Epalza provides an excellent survey of Muslim attitudes toward Jesus and Mary, though he does not ask how such material might be used by Muslims against Jews in a Christian context.

⁶⁴ Surah 4 ("Women"), 156: "And because of their disbelief and of their speaking against Mary a tremendous calumny . . .".

⁶⁵ The case is preserved in the Archivo General de Simancas [AGS], Registro General del Sello, 1489/11/12, fol. 146. The document is published in E. Cantera Montenegro, "Conflictos entre el concejo y la aljama de los judíos de Soria en el último tercio del siglo XV", *Anuario de estudios medievales* 13, (1983) pp. 583–599,

married couple and the Muslim *aljama*. The following year, at the complaint of a Jew from Guadalajara, the Catholic monarchs dispatched an official to arrest a Muslim *faqih* together with a number of Jews he was said to have converted to Islam. The investigation confirmed that a Jew named Salamo Çeano had indeed converted to Islam at the urging of Çide Ačan, “*alfaquí*”. But the Muslims produced documentation in order to support their argument that the conversion was not punishable according to either criminal or civil law. Their claim deserves citation in full:

The said Jew could turn Moor, and the said *alfaquí* and the other moors who solicited him could do so, and that this had been customary in these our kingdoms, and that many Jews had become moors and had not been arrested for it, as it appeared from the said rulings and documents, and that never until now had it been forbidden to them.⁶⁶

The actual number of conversions is as debatable as it is unknowable. The point here, however, is that the Muslims’ arguments convinced the monarchs, who allowed the conversion to stand and absolved the Muslims of any liability, even though they expressly forbade that henceforth any Jew convert to Islam, “under the same penalties as those incurred by moors who become Jewish”.

These conversions are the last I know of before the expulsions of 1492 put an end to such spiritual migrations between Judaism and Islam on Iberian soil. There are many questions one would like to put to the converts themselves, questions about motivation (they did not, so far as we know, involve love or marriage), conviction, belief. What worlds of struggle lie concealed beneath the limpid phrase “many Jews had become moors”? The decision to move between two oppressed communities, each so obviously *in extremis* by 1489, is surely overflowing with meaning. Here we must let much of that meaning escape us in order to keep hold of a simpler point. The conversions make clear just how thoroughly the possibilities for movement across the two communities had been altered over the course of a century.

here 597 f. The case is also discussed in C. Carrete Parrondo, “Judería soriana y morería burgalesa: una historia de amor”, in *Estudios Mirandeses* 8, (1988) pp. 57–61. Marien is the converts Muslim name. Her Jewish name is not recorded.

⁶⁶ AGS, Registro del Sello, 1490–V, fol. 400, 1490/5/15. The document, along with two others related to the case, is published by L. Suarez Fernandez, *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los judíos*, (Valladolid 1964) pp. 335–338, 340–41. The quote is from 341.

This transformation had many causes, some of them internal to the Jewish and Muslim communities. But the most important of these causes had nothing to do with how Jews and Muslims thought of each other, and everything to do with how Christians thought about themselves. By the mid-fifteenth century Spanish Christendom imagined itself engaged in a mortal struggle with Judaism, threatened from without by the Jews themselves, endangered from within by the conversos. In the context of this struggle and the torrent of anti-Jewish theological arguments it produced, conversion between Judaism and Islam took on new meanings and new dangers. Muslims were themselves quick to realize the polemical opportunities of this new world, and they (or in the case at Talavera their Christian lawyers) adopted a strategy of invoking Christ and the Virgin in their competitions with the Jews. Of course such invocations were not completely alien to more traditional Muslim criticisms of Judaism. But classical Islam tended to play down the role of the Jews as killers of Jesus, since according to Islamic tradition God had frustrated the Jews in their designs so that they had not actually killed him. As the Qur'an puts it, "[The Jews] schemed against Jesus, but God also schemed, and God is the best of schemers". [3:54]

Spanish Muslims were not so reticent. They went far beyond traditional Islam both in their devotion to the Virgin Mary, and in their expansion and embroidery of the Jewish role in the killing of Jesus. Numerous *mudejar* and *morisco* manuscripts survive detailing stories of Jewish conspiracies with the Devil to eliminate Jesus, and dwelling on the vengeance that would befall the Jews for this perfidy. By the mid fifteenth century, we can even say that Iberian Muslim polemicists had adopted all the central tenets of Christian anti-Judaism: 1) that the Jews crucified Jesus; 2) that the siege and destruction of Jerusalem were punishment for this act; 3) that the Diaspora and "servitude" of the Jews was evidence of their infidelity; and 4) that these unfaithful Jews would all be slaughtered at the end of Days.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ For a fourteenth century example see the *Tā'yīd al-milla*, Arabic ms., Colección Gayangos 31, Real Academia de Historia de Madrid, also available in an edition by L. Kassir, "A study of a fourteenth-century Polemical Treatise *Adversus judaeos*", PhD dissertation, (Columbia University 1969). One of the boldest examples is much later, from the Granada of Phillip II, where Moriscos (descendants of Muslim forced converts to Christianity) forged Arabic texts purportedly written by Arab disciples of St. James the Apostle and hidden in Granada, that they might be revealed near

It is easy to see why, in Christian Iberia, Muslims in situations of competition and conflict with Jews might adopt Christian anti-Semitic themes that were relatively rare in regions under Islamic rule. We should not, however, forget the obvious. The Muslim deployment of these "Christocentric" arguments was effective only insofar as it coincided with the dominant concerns of Christian society and its rulers. In the fourteenth century the coincidence had been slight, with Christian rulers largely indifferent to *mudejar* concerns about conversion and intermarriage. In the fifteenth century, such issues had migrated to the forefront of Christian consciousness, and now resonated strongly with Muslim arguments. The transformation of the sexual boundaries between Muslim and Jew was only one result of this change in Christian consciousness, and numerically not a very important one. Its significance lies, not in numbers, but in the intimate way it reminds us that relationships between subordinate groups can rarely be viewed in isolation from the ideologies of the dominant.

the end of days as correctives to the corruption and sectionalism of Christianity. The forgeries sought to create a foundational role for Arabs in Christianity, and to represent Muslims and Moriscos as the guardians of true Christian religion and uncorrupted gospel. Aiming perhaps at the *conversos* (descendants of converts from Judaism), the texts explicitly denigrated Jews as deniers of Christ, and invented a prophecy for St. Peter that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of this denial. See M. Hagerty, *Los libros plúmbeos del Sacromonte*, (Madrid 1980) pp. 123–24, 208.

JEWES, MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS
IN AND AROUND
THE CROWN OF ARAGON

Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie

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HARVEY J. HAMES



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