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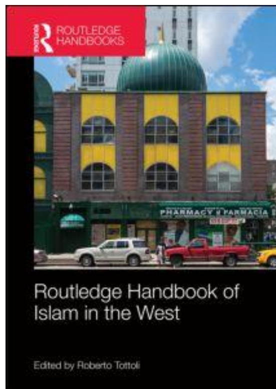

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Roberto Tottoli

The converted Muslims of Spain

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The converted Muslims of Spain

Morisco cultural resistance and engagement with Islamic knowledge (1502–1610)

Mercedes García-Arenal

It would be difficult to find a group of Muslims in early modern Europe of more interest to the social or cultural historian than those known as the "Moriscos," i.e. the Muslims converted to Catholicism by Royal decree who lived in Spain through the entire sixteenth century until their expulsion in 1609–14. This was a group which was subjected to strenuous evangelizing and assimilating efforts by mainstream society but which was at the same time the victim of marginalization and stigmatization and, eventually, a process of expulsion with all the features of ethnic cleansing. Most contemporary European readers will feel a sense of deep discomfort when reading about the treatment of the Moriscos, reminiscent as a process and as a cultural and political problem of much of what occurs today in reaction to the immigration of Muslims into Europe.

Different groups, different options. How Muslim were the Moriscos?

The Moriscos were to a certain extent the product of colonization, especially in Valencia and Granada. Rather than constituting one unified mass, the Moriscos should be seen as a number of subgroups with widely varying beliefs and behavior. After compulsory conversion, one group remained resistant and sought to preserve and observe its original Islamic religion. A second Morisco group clung to Islamic vestiges as a form of cultural identity rather than as a dogmatic set of religious beliefs, many of them because of sheer ignorance of Islamic law. The Islamic sense of belonging of such individuals was linked to the notion of participation in a "community of emotion" which identified with the Muslim world. Both of these groups were inevitably given to dissimulation and secretiveness as well as doubt and the gradual erosion of belief. Finally, at the other end of the range, there were the fully assimilated and Christianized Moriscos, who certainly existed, though they left less of an imprint in the contemporary documents. The extent to which Moriscos held on to Islamic beliefs and culture depended on specific conditions in the kingdoms in which they lived and the length of time since the Christian conquest of the region, as well as demographic particularities such as the number and density of the Morisco population in relation to the Christian population.

The current depth of interest in the Moriscos can be gauged by the amount of historiography devoted to them, especially as a result of the recent 500th anniversary of the Expulsion of 1609,

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which saw a series of conferences, books, and fresh approaches, as well as the presentation of much new evidence (García-Arenal 2009a: 888–920; Amelang 2011). Some of this work has discussed the issue of Morisco identity, i.e. to what extent they were Muslims and whether the accusation launched at them by their contemporaries that they were impossible to assimilate is a stereotype or whether there were in fact large numbers of assimilated Moriscos, or at least Moriscos among whom there was a notable hybridization of cultures and religions. At the same time, there has been a resulting interest in the nature of Islam among the Moriscos, in how possible it was for Moriscos to possess knowledge of Islamic religion and the Arabic language once their religious elites were lost and it was forbidden to own books written in Arabic. In this article I intend to concentrate on precisely these issues, i.e. on what the Islamic culture of the Moriscos was like, on the knowledge, sources, and books to which they had access, on the question of which books they copied and translated in some parts of the Iberian Peninsula as their command of Arabic began to elude them. To this end I will make use of Inquisition material and literature produced by the Moriscos themselves. I propose to show the originality of the Morisco experience and an ability to uphold and transmit, as well as create, Islamic knowledge in a manner which reveals a close interconnection with contemporary Christian Hispanic culture as well as a polemical engagement with it.

Political events and legal dispositions concerning Moriscos

I will begin by outlining briefly who the Moriscos were and the circumstances in which their experience in the Iberian Peninsula took place. During the Middle Ages, part of peninsular territory had been under Islamic political control and had later experienced a long, slow, and uneven process of Christian conquest which contemporaries perceived in terms of the "loss and recovery of Spain." The so-called "*Reconquista*" was followed at the beginning of the early modern period by a powerful movement towards conversion and expulsion with Messianic overtones. On the one hand this movement stressed the need for integration and homogenization, but on the other it argued for expulsion and purification. It was legitimized by a providentialist interpretation of the past of Spain as a "nation" forged during the struggle against Islam.

The sequence of events regarding the Moriscos was as follows: in the early years of the sixteenth century, the Catholic monarchs, who had expelled all Jews from Spain in 1492 – the same year in which they completed their conquest of the Islamic kingdom of Granada – decreed the compulsory conversion to Christianity of all Muslims living in the territories of the Crown of Castile. This decree of conversion of the Castilian Muslims, dated 1502, was extended in 1526 to cover the territories of Aragon and Valencia. The decree brought an end to the legal existence of Muslims in the Christian territories of Iberia, where they had been living under the name of Mudejars throughout the entire medieval period. Thus the long century (until the Expulsion of 1609–14) of what is known as the "Morisco problem," "Morisco" being the name by which the forced converts were known, began.

From 1502 onwards, Islam was forbidden and therefore deprived of all legal or administrative support. Its institutions were dissolved, its religious elites converted or exiled, its mosques closed, its books destroyed. Circumcision ceased to be practiced except in Valencia and, to a lesser extent, in Aragon. The Arabic language also disappeared everywhere except in Valencia – even in Granada, the switch to Castilian Spanish was virtually complete by the 1560s. Accompanied by the decrees of conversion, a series of measures was promulgated which aimed to eliminate the cultural differentiators of the new Christians, such as their music and dress, the way they cut their hair or their use of *hammam*s, and, most specially, the use of Arabic. Measures were also implemented which kept them in a position of social inferiority, such as a ban on possessing arms or slaves. From the Christian point of view, the Morisco problem was further heightened throughout the sixteenth century by the problem of the corsairs of North Africa,

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who frequently attacked and inspired fear in the coastal towns of south and eastern Spain. These attacks meant that Spaniards of the period rarely made a distinction between their conflict with foreign Islam and their relations with Islam within the Peninsula; the struggle was also related to the confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. The Moriscos found themselves under constant observation and were suspected of conspiring with neighboring Muslim countries in the planning of armed revolts, which did, in fact, take place. The most important of these was the Granadan revolt which led to what is known as the War of the Alpujarras (1568–70). This was an uprising which it was difficult for the Christians to suppress and which eventually amounted to a second Christian conquest of the kingdom of Granada. It was a war carried out with extraordinary ferocity on both sides, leaving fear of the Morisco indelibly imprinted on the Christian mind. It ended with the deportation of Granadan Moriscos to Castile in 1570–1, and it erased any chance of integration or acceptance of inhabitants of Muslim origin in mainstream Christian society.

A Muslim European culture

Hispanized or Christianized Moriscos have left very little trace in the records, and this makes it easy to form a distorted image of the "unassimilable Morisco" who remained a staunch Muslim in spite of all the measures adopted by the Christian authorities. Reality was undoubtedly much more complex, as can be deduced from accounts of the difficulties faced by those who were expelled when they tried to integrate into the Islamic societies of North Africa. But this is not the only evidence available: notarial documents from Granada, especially wills, reveal the large number of Moriscos who asked for masses to be said for them after their deaths or who belonged to Catholic religious brotherhoods, took part in processions, left money for the restoration of their parish church, etc. Resistance was not only religious but rather cultural and social, and was fed by rejection of a mainstream society which discriminated against the Moriscos and marginalized them. At the same time, in order to go unnoticed the Moriscos had to adopt the language, ways, and customs of that same society, meaning that they internalized, albeit unconsciously, an entire Catholic cultural world. Probably the clearest sign of this process of hybridization is the literature in *aljamía*: a literature written in the Spanish vernacular but using the Arabic alphabet in which religious terms and concepts were generally expressed in Arabic, as were entire quotations from the Qur'an. *Aljamía* also borrowed syntactic, stylistic, lexical, and semantic structures from Arabic. It was a special language, the Islamic variant of Spanish. Literature in *aljamía* was of a didactic nature, mainly dealing in religious and legal themes, and sought to transmit and preserve among the Moriscos the groundings of Islamic law and belief, as well as stories about Islamic heroes, epic narratives on the beginnings of Islam, stories of the prophets, etc. It was, in other words, what might be described as "sacred history." Together with such themes, we also find in it popular medicine and magic, prophesies, moral sayings, punishments, and itineraries (i.e. instructions for fleeing from Spain). The literature also contains narratives, theater, and poetry from contemporary Hispanic literature which the Moriscos clearly knew and enjoyed, just as they knew and used Catholic devotional works. The use of Christian sources is obvious, for example, in what are probably the most important two works of Morisco literature: first, the *Tafsira* or "Treatise" by the author known as "El Mancebo de Arévalo," an account of a journey in search of knowledge and science which the author conducts throughout different Spanish Morisco communities in the years immediately after the decrees of conversion. This *aljamiado* text was written in the early sixteenth century, and is a Muslim text with interwoven Christian threads of both a devotional and literary nature. Experts on El Mancebo's text have demonstrated his use of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi* and literary texts such as *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas (Narváez Córdoba 2003). The Morisco

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text contains echoes of the Catholic principles of the *devotio moderna* together with the words of Petrarch, which Rojas translates and makes his own and which are in turn a quotation from Heraclitus. Second, a century later, an anonymous Morisco who had already been expelled from the Peninsula was to write, in Spanish and using Latin script, a text in Tunis entitled *Tratado de los dos caminos* ("Treatise of the two paths"), an account of the two paths along which men either lose themselves or accede to salvation. This book includes memorized texts from Lope de Vega, Góngora, and Quevedo, and makes reference to Spanish painting and theater of the period, as well as using and quoting from the usual works by Gazzali, Qadi Iyad, and Ahmad Zarruq. These two works, so far removed from each other in time and space, both contain a spiritual itinerary and a compendium of knowledge which they seek to transmit to those who come after and who will inevitably belong to an entirely new world. In short, *aljamiado* literature is a literature written by Moriscos for Moriscos. It is a "secret literature" (Galmés de Fuentes et al. 2005). The Moriscos were indeed a complex Islamic group, open to the transmission and translation of religious ideas, images, and emotions from the Christian milieu within which they lived. Subjected to the pressure of intense polemic, they could not help but define themselves through their confrontation and interaction with the world around them.

The Moriscos also wrote in Arabic. By far the most interesting example of this is the forgery known as the Lead Books of the Sacromonte, produced in Granada in the late sixteenth century. They were a series of texts written in Arabic on circular sheets of lead, in a supposedly ancient slanting Arabic script without diacritics or vowels, similar to the kind of writing used in talismans and magical writings. These works claimed to be a text from Christian antiquity, a gospel dictated in Arabic by the Virgin Mary to a group of Arab disciples who traveled with Saint James to Spain, where they founded the city of Granada and were martyred. This is a case of an allegedly Christian text constructed from Islamic sources: no references are made in it to any of the aspects of Christianity deemed unacceptable to Islam, such as the divine nature of Christ, the Holy Trinity, worship of images, or oral confession. The stories from the life of Jesus which it contains are taken from the life of Muhammad, and its vocabulary and spirituality are clearly Islamic. The forgery was carried out by Moriscos who had targeted two groups of potential readers. The first group was the Christian Church and civil authorities, to whom they wished to prove that Arabic was a Christian language, or that it could be one, and that there was therefore no reason to ban its use. It also sought to persuade this group of readers that the first Christians in Granada had been Arabs and that the Moriscos were therefore fully fledged Granadans and not aliens who had to be expelled. But the text could also be read from a Morisco point of view as a text of religious polemic directed against Christianity, as well as a way of upholding an eschatological dissimulation (that is to say, until the End of All Time, seen as very close) which spoke of a Christianity that had been cleansed and made admissible to secret followers of Islam. The text of the Lead Books showed a profound knowledge of the boxes that had to be ticked in order to guarantee it the success which it certainly enjoyed among the Christian authorities of Granada and the Spanish population in general. It provided "proof" of Saint James's journey to Spain, it spoke of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and it offered up relics ensuring the sacred origin of Granada. The books were tremendously successful and continued to be considered genuine even after they were anathematized by the Vatican in 1682, a century after their first "discovery" (García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 2010).

It was in an attempt to discover which Islamic texts the late sixteenth-century Granadan Moriscos who created the Lead Books may have been able to use that I first started to examine Inquisition material making reference to Islamic writings, especially books, and such material will be the subject of the main part of my essay. However, I would like first to outline briefly the nature of Inquisition proceedings against Moriscos.

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Inquisition and the erasure of memory

From the 1530s on, the Moriscos were subjected to persecution by the Inquisition as apostates, and were accused of *mahometizar* (lit. "Muhammadizing"). The Inquisition persecuted Moriscos suspected of engaging or shown to have engaged in Islamic activity, and catalogued in great detail the religious practices, prayers, beliefs, knowledge, and intentions of the Moriscos it brought to trial. Because of these trial records we know that a significant part of the Morisco population continued to observe Islamic practices (including some which were as difficult to carry out, given the circumstances, as the pilgrimage to Mecca) within a family and communal structure which in the areas where there were dense populations of Moriscos remained very closely knit.

The Inquisitors were especially keen to track down and persecute those known as *alfaquíes* (Arabic *faqih*), i.e. those with knowledge of the Law, who were accused of being "dogmatizers" who taught and spread Islamic principles or encouraged Moriscos to cling to Islamic beliefs and practices. This was considered the worst crime of all. However, the *alfaquíes* managed to hold on in the well-knit communities of Aragon and Valencia, and their presence was essential not only because of their role in imparting religious teachings but because they were mediators in conflicts and interpretations of the Law or in the arrangement of rituals. They were entrusted, for example, with the task of signaling the start of the month of Ramadan and, during that month, the moment at which "the star was seen" and fasting could be ended. The Moriscos took advantage of their employment in small-scale hawking from village to village or in the transport of merchandise to consult *alfaquíes* in the areas where they happened to find themselves.

The Inquisitors were also especially vigilant when it came to observing the activities of midwives and matrons or the older women who prepared brides or washed the chrism of Morisco children brought back to the community after being baptized. These women were in charge of the ceremony of the *fadas*, by which a child was given a Muslim name, a ceremony very frequently recorded in Inquisition trial proceedings. They were also responsible for teaching children prayers and rites as well as hygienic and feeding customs, a process which started at an age when the child was deemed to be wise enough not to talk about it outside the family home. These older women were therefore, together with the *alfaquíes*, the greatest "dogmatizers" and those who went from house to house upholding cultural habits in a private world perceived by Christians as a threat, like all forms of difference. The fields of humor, food, language, and sex form part of the "polemical confrontation" (to borrow Cardaillac's term) between Moriscos and Old Christians. Sex, and the obsession with how prolific the Moriscos were said to be given that they did not even refrain from "incestuous" marriages between cousins, also came to be seen as an alleged Morisco weapon for infiltrating and destroying Christian society. Such notions were linked to stereotypes of sexual incontinence which anti-Islamic religious polemic delighted in underlining in the biography of the Prophet Muhammad himself.

When the Cortes Valencianas banned the use of spoken and written Arabic in 1564 and Philip II followed suit through a 1567 decree which applied to the territories of the Crown of Castile, the Inquisition launched itself into a campaign directed against all traces of the Arabic language, written or spoken, which were unfailingly identified with the practice of Islam. Inquisition proceedings contain extremely detailed information on the language and its written forms, whether in trial records or reports on visits and confiscations. Books were found as a consequence of denunciations made against those who owned them, by embargo during raids of homes made specifically for that purpose, or accidentally during the course of a search for other things forbidden to the Moriscos, such as weapons. The Inquisition discussed within the bosom of its own institution the question of the status which should be granted to the Arabic books it constantly confiscated.[1] In practice, possession of a text written in the Arabic alphabet or the mere use of

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the spoken language led inexorably to a conviction for heresy. Identification of the language with the religion was unswerving and knew no exceptions (García-Arenal 2009b: 495–528).

Inquisition and Arabic writings

Proof of the eagerness with which the Inquisition sought out and confiscated Arabic texts can be found in the records of every tribunal of the Holy Office, although such records have come down to us unevenly. For example, complete trial records only exist for Saragossa, Toledo, Cuenca, and Valencia (and not all those which were initiated), whereas from Granada or Llerena only the *relaciones de causa*, i.e. lists of summarized cases, have survived. It is therefore impossible to draw a complete and all-inclusive picture. However, the material which we do possess makes it possible to sketch out the following summary. The possession of books written in Arabic was, in Valencia, the accusation which most frequently brought Moriscos before the Inquisition (Halperin Dongui 1980: 115–64). In Saragossa, some 900 Inquisition records of trials of Aragonese Moriscos have survived, dated between 1568 and 1609: 409 of these Moriscos were accused of owning books written in Arabic (Fournel-Guérin 1979: 243–5). Inquisition records show that in Aragon there existed a veritable hive of bookselling activity, which involved the sale, above all, of copies of the Qur'an throughout the last third of the sixteenth century. There were also a number of Qur'anic schools, such as the one which was found to exist in Calanda in 1580 or another in Almonacid de la Sierra. During Inquisition interrogations, Moriscos mentioned schools where as many as fifty young men gathered to learn from a master the rudiments of the Arabic language and Islamic law, and there was also a network of contacts with *alfaquíes* from Valencia and Aragon who provided consultation services and books (Carrasco 1993: 192). It should be noted that the possession of books was not, however, necessarily indicative of knowledge of Arabic, as we will see on p. 47 (Vincent 2006b: 105–17). This was the case in Castile, where there was a clear general decline of both spoken and written Arabic from as early as the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and where Moriscos relied greatly on the communities of Granada and Valencia to obtain sacred books, translations, or instructions on ritual. After the arrival of the Granadan Moriscos who had been deported in 1570, the picture altered and there was a certain revival in knowledge of the language and in the ownership of books and writings, i.e. of Islamic culture in general. References to such items appear with great frequency in Inquisition trial records of the tribunal of Toledo, to which I will refer on pp. 50–1. In Extremadura, pockets of Arabic speakers held on throughout the sixteenth century in places like Hornachos. In 1540, the *alcaide* of the Holy Office of the Inquisition of Llerena made a request for more personnel to manage and supervise the Inquisition's jails because "the Morisco prisoners know Arabic and if we do not watch them very carefully they can talk to each other."[2]

However, except in Valencia, Inquisition material does not always allow us to distinguish between the possession of books or writings and knowledge of the language; nor does it allow us to arrive at reliable estimates of the degree of Arabic literacy in the different communities. An extra difficulty derives from the use of the terms *aljamía/aljamiado* by the Inquisition (and by some contemporary records) to denote either a Morisco who knew Castilian or a piece of Morisco writing which was written in Castilian using the Latin alphabet. For example, when the Inquisition recorded that in 1542 it had confiscated from Lope de Hinestrosa, a Morisco from Daimiel, a "book of polemic written in *aljamía*," this refers to a book written in, and probably translated into, Spanish.[3] Not a single reference has yet been found in Inquisition records to writings in what we now term *aljamía*, i.e. texts written in the Romance language but using Arabic script. This is because everything that was written using Arabic characters was assumed to be in the Arabic language – it must be remembered that the Inquisition only

had employees who were familiar with Arabic in Valencia and Granada (regions where *aljamía* did not exist), and that the items confiscated in Aragon or Castile were not catalogued or studied until much later, generally by individuals who were not familiar with the Morisco milieu and who probably just ignored all those writings which they did not understand. In the sixteenth century the Inquisition's informers and interpreters were often also Moriscos, who limited themselves to following instructions and tried to determine which of the confiscated books were religious. The tag most often used was that of "alcoranes y libros de la secta de Mahoma" ("Qur'ans and books of the sect of Muhammad"). They did not trouble themselves by going any further or providing titles or information about content, since this was not required of them by the Inquisition. Despite this, the information provided by Inquisition records does shed light on some trials connected with Morisco *aljamiado* literature and its features. Let us examine one example which I find particularly interesting because it is related to the affair of the Lead Books of the Sacromonte. It was among these books that Marcus Dobelius, one of the translators who traveled to Spain from Rome to examine them, found reasons to argue that the texts were Islamic.

Libraries and collections of books

In 1631, some twenty years after the Expulsion of the Moriscos, commissioners from the Toledo Tribunal of the Inquisition visited the territories under their jurisdiction. One of the places they visited was the town of Pastrana in La Alcarría, where they were informed that on two previous occasions "a large number" of books in Arabic had been found in houses left behind by expelled Moriscos. The Holy Office of Toledo made an official request for information concerning these findings in Pastrana (García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 2010). The local archdeacon made a sworn statement to the effect that a cache of books had been found some sixteen years earlier (in about 1615) and another one nine years earlier, in 1622, in houses in the district known as Albaicín, which had been mainly occupied by Moriscos from Granada: "books in the Arabic tongue bound and with a bundle of sheaves of blue and red damask and borders of gold, he does not remember how many there were, in a house which the Moriscos left and which was close by the kitchen garden of the friars of San Francisco." The books were found in a cellar, inside bags containing sprigs of lavender (to protect them from the damp), and among them there were also books in Spanish. Another Inquisition document from 1622 confirms this story, stating that the Duke of Pastrana had told the Inquisitor General of the finding of the books, and that he had sent him "six sacks" of them. From the accounts declared by the cartwright who transported them and who charged a price for them based upon their weight, we know that these six sacks of books weighed 28 *arrobas* (approximately 325 kilos), which would seem to indicate a very considerable number of volumes. In highlighting this finding in Pastrana, which proves that books in Arabic were read in Castile right up to the period of the Expulsion, I wish also to show how inextricably interwoven *aljamiado* literature was with the works in Arabic which were acquired, saved, and copied by Arabic-speaking Muslims (both Mudejars and Moriscos) in the Iberian Peninsula and to insist that literature in *aljamía* was basically literature translated from Arabic. The fact that such translation took place raises issues concerning the knowledge of Arabic among the Castilian and Aragonese Morisco populations – for example, who chose the texts to be translated and who translated and codified them? These are questions to which I will return on p. 48.

Pastrana was a town in which many Granadan Moriscos had settled. Inquisition evidence allows us to see that the use of Arabic was maintained there up to the period of the Expulsion and even afterwards, for an indeterminate number of Moriscos stayed on in Pastrana to manage some of the tasks involved in the town's silk production industry. The same Inquisition visit of

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1631 in which statements were made about the findings of books also produced a statement claiming that there were fifteen houses in Pastrana belonging to Moriscos who had not been expelled. The Inquisition emissary wrote that he had no wish to investigate this claim unless he was told to do so.[4] The Morisco problem was over and it was perhaps for that reason that part of the cache of books was preserved and could be studied.

The survival of Arabic language

The books were examined by Marcus Dobelius, a Middle Eastern Christian who traveled to Spain from Rome, where he had been teaching Arabic at La Sapienza. Dobelius had been sent to Spain to translate the apocryphal texts of the Lead Books of the Sacromonte produced by Granadan Moriscos in the late sixteenth century (Rodríguez Mediano and García-Arenal 2006: 297–334). Dobelius recorded that he picked out the best items from among those he catalogued for the Holy Office, but that he, Dobelius, paid particular attention to the books which helped him to understand the context and Morisco sources of the Lead Books of the Sacromonte on which he was working. He wrote that among them were books on "philosophy, geometry, medicine, grammar and different vocabularies." Dobelius speaks of books in both Arabic and Castilian Spanish, but makes no reference to texts in *aljamía*. The books of the Pastrana collection which he mentions in most detail are Arabic books like the *Kitab al-shifa'* by the al-Qadi 'Iyad or the *Kitab al-anwar* by al-Bakri, which he drew upon to show that the stories of Jesus's life included in the Lead Books were in fact stories about the Prophet Muhammad. The books of "necromancy, spells and superstitions" which deal with seals (*sigilos*), the planets "where the seal of the Moon is written hexagonally, as by the author of the Lead Sheets," also enabled him to identify the formal provenance of the circle-shaped Lead Books and their writing system and signs. The sources included a *Kitab al-asrar*, or "Book of Secrets." Judging by Dobelius's description of the manuscript, this was an Arabic book which was exactly the same as an *aljamiado* version found in Ocaña and which was published and studied by Joaquina Albarracín Navarro and Juan Martínez Ruiz in 1987 under the title *Misceláneo de Salomón* (Albarracín Navarro and Martínez Ruiz 1987). This book was not very different from another *aljamiado* title recently published as the *Libro de los dichos maravillosos* by Ana Labarta.

For his study of the Lead Books, Dobelius made particular use of the *Qisas al-anbiya'*, or books of "Stories of the prophets," by al-Tha'labi and by Ibn Wathima which had appeared in Pastrana, with which he collated the story of Solomon's Seal exactly as it features in the Lead Books. He was able to show that this was the legendary Islamic story of Solomon and his signet ring, the object which allowed him to rule over demons and which gave him esoteric knowledge (Roisse 2006: 141–71). Also to be found in the Pastrana cache was an *Apología contra la ley de los cristianos* and a Spanish translation of the well-known *fatwa* of the man known as the "mufti of Oran," authorizing Moriscos to live on in the Iberian Peninsula hiding their beliefs and ritual practices without losing their status as Muslims, in addition to a series of legal treatises. The books of Pastrana thus included titles found in other collections of Morisco volumes, such as the collection of Arabic and *aljamiado* books which appeared in Almonacid de la Sierra.[5] Like that of Pastrana, this included works on magic and divination such as the previously mentioned *Libro de dichos maravillosos* and, in particular, a copy in Arabic of the *Qisas al-anbiya'* by Ibn Wathima and several other *aljamiado* texts also belonging to the genre of stories of the prophets, which had been very common in al-Andalus. The books from the Pastrana Morisco collection used by Marcus Dobelius (a collection which is now lost or is at least no longer a collection as such, although it was probably the source of some items held in the Vatican Library) are clearly of the same kind as those unearthed in other similar findings, i.e. in other caches of books

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hidden by Moriscos, except that in the case of Pastrana the collection seems to have been considerably richer and broader than in other places. It is also one of the few lots of books found in Castile (together with that of Ocaña) to include the aforementioned *Misceláneo de Salomón*. All of these books were probably brought, written, or, as it was then expressed, "*trasladados*" (lit. translated, i.e. copied) and preserved by Granadan Moriscos deported after the War of the Alpujarras of 1570. Let us take as an example other collections of Granadan books, such as those confiscated from Pedro de Mendoza, *capitán* of the Moriscos of Güéjar, in 1570, as is stated in proceedings brought against the Moriscos of Valdeinfierno. The books were taken to the Holy Office of Granada, where they were translated. Most of them contained "the law and sect of the Moors and what they must believe and perform according to the sect and law of the Moors and in the opinion of Muhammad" (Barrios Aguilera 2009: 144ff.). However, they also contained books of magic which dealt with "dreams and sneezing and other superstitious things." Another book found among the belongings of the Morisco leader contained "*nóminas* ('lists') which the Moors perform to bring about certain effects, in which they invoke and speak words with Muhammad; and the first of them is called the list of the messenger of God, with which they say that Muhammad cured all passions and illnesses; the others are for entering upon wars and talking to kings without fear. In all of them they name Muhammad and deny the Holy Trinity." Or there were the books of al-Jayyar, an *alfaquí* from Cútar (Malaga), who had a small collection of three manuscripts of legal and personal papers as well as poems of a prophetic nature, sermons and hadiths, and – inevitably – a manuscript on magic. Or the collection of books held by the Granadan Inquisition which was catalogued by its Arabic interpreter, Francisco López Tamarid (Ron de la Bastida 1958: 210–13).

There is also a resemblance to a collection of eighteen books which appeared in Muel (Aragon) and which the Inquisition attempted to confiscate. These books were catalogued by the Maronite Miguel Casiri, according to records in the Biblioteca Nacional de España.[6] Casiri, who also compiled the catalogue of Arabic books held at the Library of El Escorial, pointed out in his report and catalogue list of 1763 that some of the volumes from Muel were written in a Castilian Spanish "altered and corrupted by Arabic characters with such artifice that one who did not know the secret thereof would believe it to be another unknown language": Casiri is the first non-Morisco of whom we have record that he understood what *aljamía* was about. This collection included, as well as books on "civil and canon law," a dictionary and a grammar, a treatise on physics by Averroes, a work by al-Ghazzali, and another "*Libro de las Luces*" or *Kitab al-anwar* like the one found in Pastrana. This last book was extremely popular among the Moriscos, as can be seen from the existence of several *aljamiado* versions still preserved today, and which come from findings in Ricla, Uclés, and Urrea de Jalón (Lugo de Acevedo 2008). The work was even rewritten in verse form by an Aragonese Morisco, Mohamad Rabadán, and widely distributed in this form (Lasarte 1991: 73–270; Corriente 1990). The *Libro de las luces* is a thoroughly detailed study of the genealogy of the Prophet Muhammad, with the glorious deeds of the Prophet and all his descendants related in a legendary manner. It was a holy lineage which brought the Muslims closer to their Creator than any other people and invoked a series of glorious deeds which spoke of a triumphal past. The widespread popularity of the *Libro de las luces* is also attested to by Inquisition records, which link its success to its emphasis on past Muslim victories, described as "our glorious past deeds" (García-Arenal 1978: 87; Fournel-Guérin 1979: 251).

What did the Inquisition do with all these confiscated books? In many cases, they were burned or were stored in places where they suffered deterioration (or were lost). Such places included the prisons of the Holy Office. Ana Labarta records the curious and significant anecdote of the Morisco prisoners Jaime Alturi and Salvador Zuncar, from whom their prison *alcaide* had taken a Qur'an which they had hidden under a pillow. Zuncar declared that

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he had picked up the Qur'an after being taken prisoner "from a corner where there are many books lying around," and as they were "rotting away in the room they passed some of the time reading from the said book" (Labarta 1980: 125). On a few occasions, though not many, confiscated books were preserved or sold and went on to form part of collections in Spanish and foreign libraries. However, the proportion of books "saved" must have been very low if we consider the extent of ownership and circulation of books attested to in Inquisition records.

Such findings were made in the territories of the Crown of Castile and in Aragon. But *aljamiado* literature must also be understood within the framework of events in Valencia, an area where Arabic was spoken right up until the time of the Expulsion and where *aljamía* was never used. Valencia was, for those living in the territories close to it, a place from which books were supplied, a place of learning where scholars were trained and sought out. Valencia was, like Granada before the War of the Alpujarras, an access route to learning of the written language and to works of grammar. There were workshops where manuscripts were copied, with some centers such as Paterna especially active in this regard; unlike Aragon, the area was Arabic-speaking and in contact with North Africa. Inquisition records of the Castilian tribunals, especially those of Cuenca and Toledo, provide evidence of contacts with Valencia, where Moriscos traveled to learn the written language, to fetch Arabic books, and to receive religious instruction and liturgical guidance.

A fascinating recent book (Barceló and Labarta 2009) containing surviving documents and manuscripts concerning the Moriscos of Valencia from the Middle Ages until the Expulsion reveals a surprising thematic continuity between the items used by the Arabic-speaking Muslims of Valencia and those in the collections of Aragonese books, whether in Arabic or in *aljamía*. First, there were books on the sources of Islamic law: the Valencians had basic and important works of *fiqh* such as the *al-Muwatta'* of Malik and the commentaries of Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Muzayn, the *Risala* of Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani, with the commentaries by al-Jilani and Ibn al-Fajjar, the *Mukhtasar* by Jalil, and the *Mudawwana* by Sahnun. These works all deal with the subject of the doctrinal sources of Islamic law, both Sunni and *shari'a*, although works of applied law also circulated. This is important because it forces us to re-evaluate the traditional notion of the "deteriorated Islam" of the Moriscos. The proliferation and circulation of copies of the Qur'an throughout the kingdom of Valencia is extraordinarily significant. To quote the words of an individual arrested by the Inquisition in 1584: "he has read another Qur'an belonging to Sangarrén, an inhabitant of Segorbe … and another Qur'an belonging to Miguel Marrán – a prisoner – he has read many times, when he and the daughter and all of them lent it to him over the balcony … and he has also read the Qur'an in other places, wherever he went, asking for it from those who had it for it is everywhere," to which the accused added that "some know how to read and others do not, but the good Moor is proud to have it at home; and it used to be only the *alfaquíes* who had them all together but now they can be found in many homes because they are sold cheaply" (Barceló and Labarta 2009: 57). Contacts with North Africa through relatives who had fled the Peninsula made it easier for the Valencians to acquire books. In 1608, one Gaspar Rahech was convicted as an *alfaquí*, because

> he usually carried with him the book of the Qur'an to read out the sect of Muhammad; and he had in his home a mosque for the teaching of it, where many Morisco men and women would go to learn; and twelve *alfaquines* came together and agreed that they lacked a book called Hizbalbac, which was a large book containing in detail all of the sect of Muhammad and it could not be found in these kingdoms but in Algeria, and they decided to send one of the older *alfaquines* for it.
>
> *(Barceló and Labarta 2009: 63)*

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It is striking that the book which the *alfaquíes* felt they needed should be the *Hizb al-bahir* by al-Shadili, one of the most renowned mystical thinkers in Islam, after whom one of the most important mystical brotherhoods in Western Islam was named.

Science was another important field in the culture of the Islamic community of Valencia, with medicine seen as particularly important. Works on medical themes seized by the Valencian Inquisition are second only to those on religion, and the activities of physicians, healers, and surgeons also feature significantly.

Among the documents published by Barceló and Labarta there are a large number which make reference to a series of activities relating closely to science and remedies, and which were known at the time by names such as witchcraft, spells, charms, talismans, treasure-hunting, divination, and so on. Such writings are also related to prophesies, interpretations of dreams, and horoscopes. We now tend to use the term "magic" to cover all such activities, but the Inquisition catalogued them under the title of "superstitions," a label also used by nineteenth-century scholars. All such themes play a prominent role in *aljamiado* literature, as can be seen in the recent book by the *aljamía* specialist Luce López-Baralt (López-Baralt 2009). Such interests show that Morisco Islam was very close to that of the contemporary Maghreb, where the cult of the families descended from the Prophet was highly important. Such a cult derived from and at the same time encouraged extraordinary worship of the figure of Muhammad, the perfect and inimitable example, and the deeds and victorious battles of the Prophet and his followers acquired a special significance for the defeated Moriscos. This was a set of beliefs in which magic, esotericism, and mystical brotherhoods caused worship of the Prophet Muhammad to overlap with that of the figure of Solomon, a hero versed in magical powers and a superhuman figure in the popular mind who must have served as a great consolation to the Moriscos.

Circulation of books and processes of translation

These Valencian findings show that *aljamiado* literature was a fully Islamic literature mainly derived from translations from Arabic, as was claimed as long ago as 1958 by L.P. Harvey and as has been confirmed in more recent work by Barceló and Labarta, Wiegers and others. The thematic coincidences between the two literatures, the systematic matching of their titles, is just one more proof of this idea. There is, however, one aspect of *aljamiado* literature which sets it apart, and that is of course its use of Romance (vernacular Spanish), a language common to Christians and Moriscos. For the latter, the conceptual contents and values embedded in words and idiomatic formulations must have conditioned their thought structures and produced at least a partial or unconscious acceptance of the Christian and Hispanic culture in which they were immersed. Mere use of the language would have forced the person speaking or writing it to establish a tacit dialogue with the culture which he or she rejected, or at least defended himself or herself from. López-Baralt claims that some of the original Arabic texts were transformed when expressed in *aljamiado* and became proselytizing texts and even works of polemic precisely because of this inevitable process of dialogue and participation in that which was being rejected.

If most *aljamiado* texts were translations from Arabic, who made these translations? Clearly, it must have been the *alfaquíes*. The perfection of a technique for translating Arabic into *aljamiado*, the existence of a system of standardized transliteration, and a community of use of religious terminology imply at the very least a series of contacts and agreements among *alfaquíes*, the "guardians of Islam."[7] It also implies that decisions were made concerning what it was necessary or advisable to translate from Arabic (in this context, we must remember Yça de Guebir and his Romance translation of the Qur'an). In the Morisco period these *alfaquíes* were no longer *fuqaha'* in the classical sense of the term but men with a grounding in reading and writing who

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had access to legal and religious works, and who could therefore read out passages from the Qur'an to an illiterate audience. Morisco populations were mainly rural and, like their Christian contemporaries, a high percentage of them were illiterate. Statements made to the Inquisition tribunals of Castile provide ample proof of this action of reading aloud texts which were translated at the same time as they were read out. One example is provided by Juan de Hinestrosa, of Daimiel (Miller 2008). He is said to have met other Moriscos "in a certain gathering-place where they read aloud a Moorish book written in the Arabic language containing prayers of the Moors … and the person who read it out explained in Spanish what was written in Arabic in the said book." Or, as another witness declared, many persons of quality gathered and met in his home:

> new Christians who were Moors and descendants of those he knew well and thus gathered together the said Lope de Hinestrosa and another person read out to them from a book of the Qur'an and from other books of the sect of Muhammad which were written in the script of the Moors, all of which was done with the doors of his home locked and even with a guard on the door so that no-one but those people they desired could enter … the person who read aloud then explained the text in the Castilian language.

Or there is the case of Brianda Suarez, tried in Toledo in 1546–7, who participated in meetings of the same kind as those just described:

> Persons descended from generations of Moors gathered to read a book or quire written in the Castilian language which contained Moorish prayers and other things and the said Brianda and the other persons heard it with attention and devotion because they were believers in the sect of Muhammad and had the intention of Moors and read in the said book or quire a kind of story of how a knight from Axen came asking after Moorish things and their old prophets and the said book or quire also contained Moorish prayers written in Arabic and translated into Castilian, especially the prayer of alhandu and coluha and in the said gathering the said Brianda and other Morisco persons spoke of how the law of the Moors was a good law.

The *alfaquíes* were thus teachers and transmitters of various forms of knowledge to relatives, friends, or neighbors, and their knowledge and wisdom were recognized and acknowledged. In this way a veritable semi-clandestine plot of cultural transmission took shape in the mid-sixteenth century which can be traced through the Inquisition records. As it was put during the trial of Salama ibn 'Ali, an *alfaquí* from Yátova in Valencia, in 1578, the defendant, wanting "the sect of Muhammad to spread and grow, has studied and read Arabic books for many years, and has two panniers full of them so that as an *alfaquí* he may teach new Christians" (Barceló and Labarta 2009: Doc. 98). Contacts with Valencia are frequently mentioned in the Castilian tribunals: for example in the records for Álvaro de Córdoba, a Morisco from Granada who was tried in Toledo between 1589 and 1592 because he "had had in his possession some books of the sect of Muhammad in which there were lists and prayers from the Qur'an and he had read aloud from them in the presence of others of his caste." Moriscos from Toledo are guilty of bringing Arabic books from Valencia.[8] They also received translated Islamic writings from this region. I will cite some examples from the tribunal of Toledo: in the trial records of one Juan de Sosa there is a letter sent by a Morisco from Valencia which related miracles performed by Muhammad and explained the hours at which the five daily prayers had to be said. The letter was written in Castilian Spanish and many copies of it were made for circulation among

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the new Christians of Arévalo.[9] Or there is the case of Antonio Casado, who had a book in which "on one side the prayer was written in Moorish and on the other it was written and translated into Romance, and in such a way were all the prayers in the said book laid out." These Castilian Moriscos, who had no real knowledge of the language, were assailed by doubts about whether to pray in Arabic or in Spanish. In the trial of Juan de Sosa, the accused said that he had asked if it was better for the new Christians who met him in Toledo to pray in Arabic or in Castilian Spanish (although he, apparently, spoke Arabic) and he was given the answer

> that they ought not to pray in Arabic but in Spanish because praying in Arabic, as they did not understand what they were saying they could have no devotion in what they were praying and they would be thinking of other things, and the said Juan de Sosa asked what prayers they should say and was told that they should praise the Lord as well as they could and the said Juan de Sosa, with the belief that he has had and continues to have as a Moor, has always said and continues to say his Moorish prayers in Arabic.

This statement is complemented by another made by Jerónimo de Rojas, who said that the Christians were deceived by their priests and councils, who used Latin which was understood by no one. In any event, the translation process ("*traslado*," as it is expressed in the records) was a constant one. This is confirmed by the same trial of Jerónimo de Rojas, from Toledo, who had told another new Christian that he would like to know whether

> in Toledo he would find very wise men who would sell him books translated into Castilian in such a way that he understood them all very well, and asking if they would be clearly written he was told that it depended on the money available for it, and that there are very learned and wise men who correct them and these men will give him to understand all that the other has written.

He even mentions one Gaspar de Soria, "who was able to give him very good books from his sect translated into Spanish."

This trial of Jerónimo de Rojas reveals the respect and care with which *alfaquíes* and "learned persons" were sought out and treated both in Valencia and Granada. Rojas had found "news of a great *alfaquí* that there is in Málaga or in a little place close to it whose name is García and who knows a lot about the law and has large books." And another witness at the same trial said that "Rojas had been given the news that a great *alfaquí* had been condemned to row in the galleys and was attempting with the assistance of the merchants (Moriscos of Toledo) to raise 500 ducados, for he could not be ransomed for less."

There was, then, a constant need for translation. But the references we find in the Castilian trials are to translation into Castilian Spanish and using Castilian Spanish script. The Inquisition may simply have believed all writings in the Arabic alphabet to be written in Arabic. In any event, very few *aljamiado* books from Castile have survived.

There is also frequent evidence in the Inquisition records of the possession of copies of the Qur'an, which were always deeply prized by their owners, for whom they had an added emotional value: they touched them, kissed them, kept them very close to their persons or in their clothing, very often under the mattress, and they were deeply upset when these books were confiscated from them. Such was the case of Francisco de la Guerra, a Morisco from Osuna, who was found in possession of a Qur'an and tried to recover it by bribing an Inquisition official, whom he also sought to persuade not to file a report on the finding.[10]

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Another inhabitant of Osuna, Alonso de Madrid, had a book in Arabic taken from him, and was deeply troubled by the confiscation. Inquisition experts later decided it was the "Qur'an of Muhammad."[11] There were also many cases among women, most of whom were illiterate. One example is provided by Catalina Mandarán.[12] A neighbor saw her

> leaving her home in an errand carrying a bundle beneath her shawl. And going after her [he saw that] she reached out with her hand to pass the bundle on to another Morisco woman. And not being able to do so, she hid it under her skirts. And taking it from her with great force and in the face of great resistance he saw that it was a book written in Arabic.

Or there was the case of Ángela Magón, an inhabitant of Elda,[13] who

> had placed in her bed, beneath the mattress, a little book like a book of hours and she tried to hide it and keep it from sight, and then they took it from her and saw that it was written in Arabic … and because she cried and protested so much they gave it back to her and then the priests came and took it from her and having found out that the said book contained prayers taken from the Qur'an of Muhammad she was taken prisoner.

All of this goes to prove that the language, especially in its written form, acquired a talismanic force and that the revealed written Word was seen by Moriscos as their best protection. A very large number of trial records make reference to the possession by Moriscos of papers or small fragments written in Arabic and containing *cédulas* ("sheets") or *nóminas* ("lists"), often described by their Arabic name *hirz* ("amulet") in trials. These were amulets or talismans containing a verse from the Qur'an together with magical tables, signs, or symbols which had various protective, preventive, or curative properties. They were generally wrapped in a small piece of waxed cloth like a scapulary and kept close to the body, under the arm, or sewn into the skirts of women. Ana Labarta carried out a study of the important collection of amulets gathered for the trials of Valencian Moriscos, but references to them abound in the records of the Inquisition tribunals of every region (Labarta 1980). Moriscos, and especially Morisco women, put up tremendous resistance whenever Inquisition officials tried to prise such amulets from them. For example, there was the woman called Beatriz Zahori who was found to be carrying a piece of writing in her clothing and who defended herself vigorously from attempts to take it from her, although she later alleged "that she was not defending the piece of paper but was angry with the man because he put his hands on her breasts, and being an unmarried woman she took this as an affront." When she was eventually deprived of the text "she became overwhelmed with grief and crying." In almost every case of the finding and confiscation of an amulet, the owner wept, fainted, struggled, and fought, showing signs of extreme pain and consternation. This was especially true of women.

The woman in this case, as in many others, was illiterate. The function of the written word was not dependent on its being read and understood but was related to the power which the believer assigned to that writing. In other words, the word did not necessarily form part of an act of communication but took on a magical or talismanic character, and was used as such. This magical function of writing was not independent of the work of the *alfaquíes*, who were generally the makers of such talismans. Thus, in Arévalo, Francisco Hernández was said to have given a Morisco woman a whole series of Arabic books in his possession with instructions to keep them safely for him, at a time when Inquisition officials were about to seize them from him. Francisco Hernández had once argued with another Morisco about fasting regimes, and "he said that he had the book of the Qur'an at home and that he was learning to be an *alfaquí*

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in his home town and that he knew more about that law in his sleep than Agustin when waking." We do not know what his home town was, but when Francisco left the Inquisition jail

> he went to Arévalo to ask the converts for help in paying the fine imposed upon him by this holy office and they assisted him with what they could and the said Francisco gave certain *cédulas* in Arabic to many of the converts of Arévalo. The accused says he does not remember the name of these *cédulas* in Arabic … they are good for fevers and other illnesses which people have.[14]

The information provided by Inquisition material sheds a very precise light on the need for translation and on the issue of who carried out such tasks. Above all, it tells us something about the talismanic value of writing in Arabic for the Moriscos. It is also worth noting that in the cultural milieu memory was important and had tremendous prestige, to the extent that different authorities claimed to be (or were said to be) wise because of the books they had memorized, not because of the books they owned.

To summarize, we are faced with the production of copies of books and the process of translation occurring in the heart of communities conditioned by a lack of intellectual elites, by a difficulty in the circulation of knowledge. What we also see is that knowledge nevertheless survived and works circulated up until the time of the Expulsion, and that these works were very much the same as those which were used in the contemporary Maghreb. This survival of the maintenance and transmission of knowledge was merged with the immersion in the Castilian language of the Moriscos, with their knowledge of and participation in Christian culture even in some of its religious manifestations such as processions, burials, and Christmas plays. It is the conjunction of all these elements which makes Morisco Islam such a singular and profoundly interesting phenomenon.

As one last illustration, let us consider a brief anecdote taken from a treatise of religious polemic against Islam: in 1519 (i.e. before the 1526 decree of conversion), Martín de Figuerola, a priest who was preaching to convince the Muslims of Valencia and Aragon to abandon Islam, wrote a treatise entitled *Confutación del Alcoran* in which he reported a story he claimed to have heard from the Muslim *qadi* of Cocentaina (Valencia). The latter had told him that in marriage contracts between local Muslims it was customary for women to demand that their husbands take them to the capital city of Valencia for the springtime festivities of Corpus Christi and those of the Virgin Mary in August. Or another one, which includes, as in all Iberian polemical arenas, *conversos* or new converts from Judaism: in the market of Saragossa, on a Sunday in September 1487, a group of women and men were watching a play (*entremés*). The actors, Moors (Mudejars – the date is previous to conversion), were representing the biblical story of the golden calf. A *conversa* present in the public watching the play exclaimed: "and the Christians let this happen! They let the Moors express contempt for the religion of Moses" (Gutwirth 1996: 273).

This small yet fascinating anecdote points to the existence in sixteenth-century Iberia of a strong polemical milieu which did not impede the existence of transversal currents common to different religious groups, areas of local religiosity in which different religions overlapped, and fuzzy or hybrid sorts of religiosity which indicate the blurring of clear ascriptions, categories, and borders (García-Arenal 2012). These processes remain insufficiently explored and they make the study of the Moriscos a subject of great and multifaceted interest. It is this process which makes Moriscos so relevant for the study of other Muslim groups in Europe and in the West. The case of Moriscos provides the possibility of observing the tension between joint movements of assimilation and resistance, of integration and marginalization, both at the

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intersection and in the interstices in which Moriscos lived. Especially, I think, it gives evidence of how well-defined and generalizing categories (such as "Muslims") do not let us see the wide variety included in the groups so labeled or the differences which are included in a single term which can no longer be accepted at face value but is in need of differentiation by historians.

Notes

1 Archivo Histórico Nacional (from now on AHN), Inquisición, Libro 1239. 411–16.
2 AHN, Inquisición, Libro 574. f.75/96v.
3 AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 3205.2.
4 AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 3105, 1, abril de 1631.
5 Preserved in the Library of the Centro de Humanidades del CSIC in Madrid (as part of the collection known as "Manuscritos de la Junta" because it belonged to the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios before the CSIC, its administrative heir). A catalogue of it has been made by F. Ribera, as well as a digitized version of the whole collection.
6 I am grateful to Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, who is working on these records in the Biblioteca Nacional de España, for allowing me to consult his notes.
7 Fournel-Guérin (1979).
8 AHN, Inquisición Toledo, Leg. 192.3.
9 AHN, Inquisición Toledo, Leg. 197.6.
10 AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2075.14.
11 AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2075.15
12 AHN, Inquisición, Libro 938, f.263r.
13 AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2022.9
14 AHN, Inquisición Toledo, Leg. 192.15.

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