



The Religious Polemies of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia.
Identity and Religious Authority in Mudejar Islam
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This dissertation investigates the politics of identity of the Muslims in Late Medieval Christian Iberia, Mudejars, expressed in their literature of religious polemics against the Christians and the Jews. Mudejars had sworn allegiance to the Christian authorities through treaties of surrender and could practice Islam publicly in exchange for paying taxes. At the outset, treaties were generally respected but starting in 1499 CE in Granada, and continuing in 1516 and 1526, the Mudejars of the northern Crowns of Navarre and Aragon were forced either to convert to Christianity or to emigrate. Together with the pressure exerted by the Christian majority society, the Mudejars also faced the criticism from their co-religionists in Muslim lands who contested their exceptional subjugation to Christian rulers, who regarded their dwelling among and their loyalty to the 'unbelievers' with contempt; some of them even demanded their immediate emigration. To these problems, we need to add their direct competition with the Jewish minorities for the favours of their Christian lords.

The central question addressed in this study is how Mudejar authors of polemics articulated notions of identity and religious authority in relation to the Christians and the Jews, and importantly also to other Muslims in their works in the period prior to the forced conversions and persecutions in the sixteenth century. In order to answer this question, I examine the corpus of polemical literature preserved in Arabic and in Aljamiado (Spanish in Arabic characters) codices in the light of the processes of inclusion and exclusion and the power asymmetry just described.

I begin by inquiring into the characteristics, production and consumption of treatises of polemics by the Mudejars and into the identity of the authors of these works. I also place this literature in the tradition of medieval Muslim polemics with the Christians and the Jews in the Middle Ages. Moreover, I discuss the various ways in which polemical discourses provided authoritative frameworks of Islamic normativity which helped to legitimize the residence of the Mudejars in the Christian territories. I argue that alongside the primary aim of the polemics which was to refute the views of their



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religious opponents, the discourses against the Christians and the Jews in Mudejar treatises were also a tool to advance Islamic knowledge and to strengthen the government and social cohesion of their communities. My analysis of this literature takes an interdisciplinary approach whose purpose is to counterbalance the often biased outsider views found in the contemporary Christian sources which disregard the agency of the members of these Muslim minority communities in constructing their self-image and their share in the shaping of interreligious Iberian narratives.