

---

 I N T R O D U C T I O N
 

---

## Power in the Portrayal

Despite its reputation as a singularly tolerant premodern society and its romanticized popular image as an interfaith utopia shared by the three monotheistic religious communities, al-Andalus, or Muslim Spain of the (European) High Middle Ages as it is more commonly known, was torn repeatedly by tribal and ethnic social cleavages, and socioeconomic struggles and factional rivalries among Andalusī Arabs, Berbers, the *ṣaqāliba* (the so-called Slavs), and Mozarabic Christians. For their part, the Jews of al-Andalus prospered materially under Muslim rule and apparently ranked among the most acculturated and politically complacent groups in the society. They readily accepted Muslim political and cultural hegemony over al-Andalus. And, until the rivalries between “the party kings” (Ar. *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif*; Sp. *los reyes de taifas*) of the eleventh century, the Jews seem to have had little or no stake in the various internecine religious and sociopolitical disputes among Andalusī Muslims. Nevertheless, on occasion, encounters between Muslims and Jews in al-Andalus seem to have been highly charged and, it appears, marked by contradiction. On the one hand there were extended periods of sociopolitical calm and mutual economic and cultural productivity; on the other there were sporadic outbreaks of tension, reaction, and deteriorating relations between members of the Muslim and Jewish communities of al-Andalus.

Paradoxically, the supposed contradiction in the nature of relations between Andalusī Muslims and Jews is most evident during the politically turbulent but culturally productive “Golden Age” of Jewish civilization in al-Andalus (c. tenth to twelfth centuries). The very period during which the Jews attained greatest material prosperity, visibility, and influence in Andalusī Muslim society and achieved uncommon cultural productivity in the religious, literary, philosophical, and scientific spheres was also punctuated by three significant intervals of violence increasingly devastating to their religious community.<sup>1</sup> A full-scale and murderous public riot was unleashed against the Jews of Granada and an especially powerful Jewish official in the Zirid administration of that

<sup>1</sup> Only the first of these episodes was directed exclusively against the Jews. Lewis, 1984a, p. 52, observes the irony of the Iberian exception to the rule of tolerance in classical Islam west of Iran.

Muslim state in 1066. The general sociopolitical upheaval surrounding the collapse of *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif* rule, and the new pressures exerted on Andalusī Islam by the Christian kingdoms of northern Iberia led to the invasion, occupation, and rule of al-Andalus by Almoravid Muslim revivalists from the Maghrib beginning in 1090.<sup>2</sup> These trends and events brought widespread but temporary desolation to the Jews of al-Andalus.<sup>3</sup> Finally, annexation of al-Andalus to the Maghrib and its incorporation into a single state under the banner of Almohad political revolution, religious reform, and a program of forced conversions swiftly and summarily ended the aforementioned “Golden Age” (c. 1146–47) and all but destroyed Andalusī Jewish communal life.<sup>4</sup>

Inquiry on this complex relationship has relied primarily upon the “direct testimony” of Arabic historical chronicles, biographical dictionaries, *adab* and travel literature, Islamic and Jewish legal codes and responsa, literary-religious polemics, and documentary materials pertaining to the Jews of al-Andalus preserved in the Cairo Genizah.<sup>5</sup> To a lesser extent research has also culled information from Andalusī Arabic and Hebrew poetry and elevated rhymed prose of the period. Yet for all the attention specialists pay to the cultural production of the Jews in eleventh- and twelfth-century al-Andalus, the social and political history of the Andalusī Jewish community, and by extension its place in Andalusī-Muslim society, has remained elusive.<sup>6</sup> That history is occasionally subsumed within the comprehensive narrative of the Jews under the orbit of Islam and presented as conforming to the broader narrative’s typical patterns of coexistence and conflict. Alternately, and much more frequently, the history of the Jews of al-Andalus is cast as an aberration from the patterns prevalent in the Muslim East and set apart as the marginal experience of a minority community on the remote

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of this period, see Makki, 1:60–68.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 68–77, and Kennedy, pp. 154–88.

<sup>4</sup> See A. S. Halkin, 1953.

<sup>5</sup> On the extent of *genizah* materials pertaining to Iberia, see Goitein, 1967–93, 1:21, 70. On business partnerships among Jews and Muslims in al-Andalus, see *ibid.*, 1:428.

<sup>6</sup> The standard work is Eliyahu Ashtor, *Qorot ha-y<sup>e</sup>ḥudim bi-sfarad ha-muslimit*; trans. *The Jews of Moslem Spain*. Ashtor’s work, while not without many merits, is now regarded as marred by his tendency to fill in many historical gaps and to embellish his narrative presentation. David Wasserstein devotes a chapter of *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain, 1002–1086*, pp. 190–223 [“The Jews in the Taifa States”] to the sociopolitical position of the Jews and sociohistorical aspects of their culture in eleventh-century al-Andalus. Similarly, Gerson D. Cohen’s still important analysis and interpretation of *The Book of Tradition by Abraham ibn Daud*, Abraham ibn Daud, pp. 149–303, discusses the Andalusī Jewish sociocultural and socio-religious milieu that produced *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* and provided it an audience.

western frontier of Islam.<sup>7</sup> That is, despite the social, legal, religious, political, and cultural structures it shares with Muslim societies of other times and places, eleventh-century al-Andalus and the venture of its Jewish community are thought to present and reflect a most unusual if not unique set of circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

Whether isolated or incorporated into the larger historical picture, the experience of the Jews of al-Andalus has been inflected on an interpretive continuum defined by two fundamentally adverse paradigms, just as that of the Jews of all the lands of classical Islam. Transparently ideological authors with a wide audience in mind along with several social and political historians of the Jews of Muslim lands and a few historians of classical Islam have been engaged in parallel efforts to define the “essential” nature of the relationship between Muslim society and its Jews. Their radically contrasting perspectives regarding the quality of Jewish life under Islam have embroiled some of them in a contentious, high-stakes debate that frames their subject around assessing the extent of “anti-Semitism” in Muslim society.<sup>9</sup> Among those disposed to describe Muslim society in general and Mediterranean Islam in particular, with its characteristic ethnic and religious diversity, as an “interfaith utopia,” al-Andalus naturally occupies a central place in the narrative. But those who contest an optimistic view of al-Andalus and the place of Jews in its society also seem to find sufficient evidence to support their assertions to the contrary.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Andalus looms just as large in the inspired lyricism of Ammiel

<sup>7</sup> Stillman, 1979a, pp. 62, 66, 68.

<sup>8</sup> An excellent summary of the ways in which Andalusí Jewish society and culture were unusual is Raymond P. Scheindlin, 1992. Similarly, Wasserstein, 1995, identifies the particular problems the historian faces in studying the elites and elite activities of Jewish scholars, merchants, physicians, and court officials in al-Andalus.

<sup>9</sup> This frame tends to define the issue of Jewish life in Muslim lands comparatively, that is, was Christendom or Islamdom relatively more hospitable or hostile to the Jews? See Mark R. Cohen, 1994, pp. xvii–xix.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 3–8; and Stillman, 1979b, pp. xvii, 62–63. For the discussion *cum* debate, see Mark R. Cohen, 1986, May–June 1991; and Stillman, May–June 1991.

Bernard Lewis, “The Pro-Islamic Jews,” in Lewis, 1993, pp. 147–48, observes:

Some romantics, however, like the young Disraeli, seem to have dreamed of such an alliance [between Jews and Turkish Muslims] and seen its fulfillment in the golden age of Muslim Spain, “that fair and unrivaled civilization” in “which the children of Ishmael rewarded the children of Israel with equal rights and privileges with themselves. During these halcyon centuries, it is difficult to distinguish followers of Moses from the votary of Mahomet. Both alike built palaces, gardens, and fountains, filled equally the highest offices of the state, competed in an extensive and enlightened commerce, and rivaled each other in renowned universities.”

For a recent study of this aspect of Disraeli, see Rozen.

Alcalay. Alcalay's reading of documents from the Cairo Genizah and his application of S. D. Goitein's notion of "interfaith symbiosis"/"creative symbiosis" reveals "the assumed familiarity of Muslims and Jews, and lack of either animosity or barriers between them as such."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Nissim Rejwan's vision of Israel's place in the modern Middle East speaks of Muslim Spain as an "unprecedentedly congenial environment" for the Jews, and of "the Jewish-Muslim encounter in Spain" as "fractious and durable" in nature.<sup>12</sup> Both Alcalay and Rejwan are keenly attuned to the service an edifying narrative of Jewish life under Islam might play in the twenty-first century.

Continuing Goitein's labors and simultaneously revisiting his work and revising some of his conclusions, one set of historians broadly characterizes the relationship of Muslims toward Jews as "tolerant" "benign neglect" bordering on indifference. As expressed by Moshe Perlmann: "For Muslims, Jews and Judaism were an unimportant subject."<sup>13</sup> Jacob Lassner offers an intriguing, supporting observation of what the social historian can expect to learn from reading of the Jew in the Arabic text: "At best the Jews are shadowy figures in the pages of the Muslim chronicles, geographical writings and belletristic texts."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, it appears that most Muslims barely noticed the Andalusi Jews' cultural development and achievement. The Jews' "Golden Age" that was so significant in establishing a powerful sense of communal identity down to the last Andalusi and Maghribi Jewish scholars of the premodern period was a mere blip on the panoramic screen of Andalusi Islam.<sup>15</sup>

Muslim indifference to Jews is explained by Mark R. Cohen and Bernard Lewis, respectively, who have written what are arguably the best comparative study of the Jewish experience under the orbit of Islam and Christianity and the most balanced appraisal of Jewish life under Islam. According to Lewis minorities were "far less noticeable" in Muslim society—a society that is defined by its exceptionally "diverse and pluralistic" character. Furthermore, belligerence toward Jews ap-

<sup>11</sup> Alcalay, pp. 119–94.

<sup>12</sup> Rejwan, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> Perlmann, 1974, p. 126.

For Jews, Islam was a subject of considerable importance, not so much in and for public debate but rather in numerous, scattered remarks, references, and allusions intended, on the one hand to weaken known Islamic arguments and objections against Jewish texts, beliefs and customs, and on the other hand, to expose to opprobrium matters felt to be weak points of Islam.

<sup>14</sup> Lassner's remarks appear in his addendum ("Genizah Studies in the United States: Its Past and Future Links to Near Eastern Historiography") to Goitein; Lassner 1999, p. 478.

<sup>15</sup> This important observation belongs to Wasserstein, 1997.

pears to have been “incidental, not essential” in the everyday life of the Muslim because Judaism never posed to Islam the theological challenge it supposedly presented to Christianity.<sup>16</sup> On those occasions when it is manifested, such hostility to Jews is decidedly nonideological but “rather the usual attitude of the dominant to the subordinate, of the majority to the minority.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, one tends to read rarely about Jews in Arabo-Islamic sources, but when Jews are mentioned, it is often on account of a real or perceived but geographically and temporally localized problem involving their community or one of its members. That is, at specific times and in particular places, individual Jews, groups of Jews, or the entire Jewish community could be perceived by Muslims as a nuisance, an obstacle, a social, economic, or political threat to the prerogatives of the majority in Muslim society on account of their religious otherness. But even when circumstances strained their relations with Muslim society, the Jews retained the religiously mandated politically protected status of *dhimmīs* so long as they “accepted the supremacy of the Muslim state and the primacy of the Muslims.”<sup>18</sup>

Recently, Steven Wasserstrom, a historian of religion, developed another very different approach to Jewish-Muslim interaction that refines Goitein’s notion of a “creative symbiosis” connecting Jewish and Muslim cultures and societies. Wasserstrom rediscovers the deepest significance of Goitein’s conceptualization in the ebb and flow of structures of thought, religious ideas, and socioreligious movements Jews shared with Muslims in the East during the formative period of Islam.<sup>19</sup> That is, the social and economic contact Goitein documented seems to produce the sorts of cultural interaction Wasserstrom studies. Wasserstrom’s work thus crosses the borders many scholars observe strictly between the study of Judaism and Islam on the one hand and the consideration of the various sorts of social, economic, political, and religious-intellectual relationships between Muslims and Jews on the other.<sup>20</sup> Wasserstrom demonstrates just how compromising it can be for scholarship to reflexively separate social and political from cultural and religious history. For Wasserstrom, “*Jew* served as a . . . catalyst in the self-definition of Islam; and *Muslim* likewise operated in synergy with a Jewish effort at self-legitimation.”<sup>21</sup>

Reading many of the same sources as their counterparts, another

<sup>16</sup> Mark R. Cohen, 1994, p. 161.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, 1994a, p. 85.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> In this respect Wasserstrom seems to build on A. S. Halkin’s notion of an intellectual-cultural “fusion” among Muslims and Jews. See A. S. Halkin, 1956.

<sup>20</sup> See Udovitch, p. 657.

<sup>21</sup> Wasserstrom, 1995, p. 11.

group of writers,<sup>22</sup> as well as more than a few scholars, depict Jewish life in the lands of Islam, including al-Andalus, as stamped by pervasive degradation and nearly unqualified suffering. They ascribe this oppressive experience to the unyielding hostility toward Jews and Judaism that is supposedly fundamental to Islam going back to its origins in the time of the Prophet.<sup>23</sup> The effort of these scholars, with obvious implications of its own for the contemporary Middle East, is marked by a passionate identification with the Jews' subordinate status, humiliation, suffering, and religious and political aspirations as a social and religious minority in the lands of Islam.

To put the historians' dilemma another way: Should one gauge the nuances of the Jewish condition in Islam according to their Muslim neighbors' most extreme and hostile literary testimonies about them and by the measure of the most violent historical events in which they were victimized by the Muslim majority? Or in venturing an interpretation of the Jewish experience in classical Islam should one give greater weight to other sorts of testimony: (1) the testimony of commonplace documents, (2) the Jews' ingrained literary silences toward Muslims, (3) the extended intervals of relative calm apparently prevailing in relations between the communities, and (4) the Jews' economic prosperity, vigorous institution building, and cultural achievement? As Jane Gerber observes, "so varied is the historical experience of Jews in Muslim lands that virtually any thesis, be it negative or positive, can be buttressed by historical evidence."<sup>24</sup>

In this study, we will purposely set aside the historians' effort to arrive at a meaningful generalization of the Jewish experience in al-Andalus as well as their interest in pinpointing the extent and depth of anti-Jewish sentiment in Andalusian Islam. Similarly, we will relinquish their attempt to utilize primary sources principally in order to "set the record historical straight." Is it possible for us to employ other methods of reading the range of textual "evidence"? William Brinner's keen assessment of the portrait of the Jew in Arabic *adab* literature ("the rich and extremely varied genres of Arabic literature of the European medieval period, roughly from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries") suggests

<sup>22</sup> For an example of this position, see Bat Ye'or, 1985; 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Mark R. Cohen, 1994, pp. 9–14, labels this general approach as "countermyth" to the competing myth of "interfaith utopia." For examples in the scholarly literature, some subtle, others not so subtle, see Gil, 1974; Fenton; Grossman, 1988; Ben-Shammai.

<sup>24</sup> Gerber, 1986, p. 74. So, too, Udovitch, p. 657: "It is exceedingly difficult to formulate meaningful and comprehensive generalizations to characterize the main features of the Jewish experience under medieval Islam." A new synthetic work by Courbage and Fargues, 1997, pp. 1–43, attempts to strike a genuine balance in assessing the welfare of Christians and Jews in the Muslim East and North Africa.

that it is indeed possible. Brinner finds that “the attitude among Muslims [to the Jews] was one of constant ambivalence,” an ambivalence reflected in texts: “[H]ow varied, too, are the images of the Jews as projected in that literature, ranging from negative to neutral to positive.”<sup>25</sup> Brinner’s synthetic observation mirrors an uncensored statement of Jewish ambivalence toward Muslims Goitein discovered in a Genizah document from the turn of the twelfth century—a business letter sent by a son in Fez to his father in Almeria notes: “‘Anti-semitism’ [Heb. *sin’ab*] in this country is such that, in comparison with it, life in Almeria is salvation. May God in His mercy grant me a safe departure.” But Goitein adds: “He [the letter writer] mentions, however, incidentally friendly personal relations with Muslims and a lot of business done in the inhospitable country, as well as his intention to proceed to Marrakesh, then (around 1100) the capital.”<sup>26</sup>

Various Andalusī-Arabī sources tell of Jews serving as officials of the Muslim state and as physicians tending to the elite strata of Muslim society. We find erudite Jews engaged as discussants with educated Muslims on scientific and literary topics.<sup>27</sup> Less frequently, we encounter Jews as interlocutors with Muslims in open and rational debate or as informants for Muslims about Judaism.<sup>28</sup> So how did the social and literary imagination of Andalusī-Muslim and -Jewish literary religious intellectuals represent their counterparts and rivals, elite members of one another’s communities during the eleventh and twelfth centuries? For example, we read the slavishly fawning lyrics of an Andalusī-Arabī poet in praise of a Jewish government official and the positive representation of Jewish intellectuals in an Arabic history of science. These texts

<sup>25</sup> Brinner, p. 229. See also Sadan, 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Goitein, 1967–93, 2:278, on TS 12.435v (ll. 24–27).

<sup>27</sup> For instance, Ibn Bassām, 1:233, relates that a Jew named Joseph ibn Ishāq al-Isrā’īlī apparently belonged to a literary circle led by the distinguished eleventh-century Andalusī poet Abū ‘Āmir ibn Shuhayd. The master poet is said to have appreciated the Jew’s intelligence and literary talent, especially after he bested a Muslim in a poetic contest. See Ashtor, 1992, 3: 98; and Wasserstein, 1985, p. 221.

<sup>28</sup> An interpretation of these aspects of the Andalusī-Jewish experience is offered in Brann, 2000. Apart from several we will study, there are other reports of intellectual encounters between Jews and Muslims in the Muslim West. For example, Joseph ben Judah ibn ‘Aqnīn (b. Barcelona, twelfth century), p. 490 (126b), relates an incident (reported to him by the physician Abū Ibrāhīm b. Moril) involving the Andalusī-Jewish physician Abū l-Ḥasan Meir b. Qamaniel. The latter witnessed yet a third Jewish physician present an exoteric view of the biblical Song of Songs before the Almoravid *amīr* Yūsuf Ibn Tāshufīn. Appalled at what he viewed as an ill-informed colleague’s foolish performance, Ibn Qamaniel interceded to convince the *amīr* of the sacred text’s properly spiritualized reading according to *ta’wīl*, the interreligious hermeneutical method familiar to Muslims and Jews alike. Ibn Qamaniel appeals to the *amīr*’s deep sense of respect as a Muslim for the “author” of the biblical text, namely Solomon, son of David.

seem completely at odds with notorious polemical attacks on the Jews devised in Arabic prose and poetry during nearly the same time and in the same place. Despite differences in tone and approach attributable to genre, the texts we will examine all prove to be concerned with issues of sovereignty, power, and control of knowledge and are reflective of concerns and paradigms internal to Islam for which the Jew serves as a speculum. For their part, Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic texts from the period oscillate between a rare willingness to represent trenchant Muslim foes in a negative light but without reference to their religious identity and a deep-seated reluctance to portray Muslims in any light, almost to the point of silence. That social and textual practice, which amounts to a kind of self-censorship, is indicative of the Jews' underlying cultural as much as social conflict. It appears to be a sign of the Jews' sensitivity to and ambivalence about their status as a subcultural minority in Andalusian society.<sup>29</sup>

The purpose of this study is to examine textual manifestations of the ambivalence with which Andalusian Jewish and Muslim literary and religious intellectuals thought of, or more precisely, imagined one another during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. My aim in analyzing the literary representations of these counterparts and natural rivals is not to advance broad or unsupportable claims for the experience of the Jews under all of Mediterranean Islam. Nor do I hope to settle the historians' questions as they pertain solely to the Jews of al-Andalus during their "Golden Age." My inquiry into the forms and significance of the literary ambivalence Brinner notes will be necessarily programmatic and selective rather than exhaustive. It focuses on a few exemplary figures and a cluster of interrelated texts emanating from or reflecting upon and interpreting paradigmatic moments of the encounter between Muslim and Jewish elites in al-Andalus at the height of Jewish creativity and social and political prominence. My readings of this select group of texts thus makes use of Dominick LaCapra's insight that "what happens to the individual may not be purely individual, for it may be bound up with larger social, political, and cultural processes that often go unperceived."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, I will attempt to demonstrate that the words and behavior of personalities articulated in historical genres and of characters depicted in imaginative literature represent structures of sociocultural and historical signification beyond the figures themselves. That is to say, focused textual study of the sort represented in this work does not signify a turn away from history. On the contrary,

<sup>29</sup> For a fine study of the Andalusian Jews' expressions of ambivalence toward Islam, see Alfonso, 1998.

<sup>30</sup> LaCapra, p. 171.



such study signifies investigation of the traces history leaves in various forms of cultural discourse.

The texts that have come down to us are significant materials for writing the political, social, and cultural history of al-Andalus. Yet they seem insufficiently utilized as sources for exploring the nuances of how Muslims and Jews of al-Andalus imagined one another and sought through their discourses to control one another during the (European) High Middle Ages. Relinquishing some historians' principal methodological concerns with the accuracy and reliability of texts, we will find much to interest us precisely when texts might appear inaccurate and unreliable in the conventional sense.<sup>31</sup> In the words of Brian Stock:

Accounting for what actually happened is now recognized to be only part of the story; the other part is the record of what individuals thought was happening, and the ways in which their feelings, perceptions, and narratives of events either influenced or were influenced by the realities they faced.<sup>32</sup>

If we apply the poststructuralist methods and insights critical to literary study to a variety of Andalusí texts we are likely to generate new readings of the sources. These readings emphasize the *construction of social meaning* and the reciprocal way in which texts both reflect and shape the attitudes of the society in which they are produced and consumed. For instance, we will want to think about how the texts contribute to fostering both Andalusí-Muslim and -Jewish identity, in large part by examining how they confront and construct religious "otherness." Indeed, study of Muslim and Jewish representations of religious others reveals to the reader more about the cultural situation of the scriptor's textual community than that of the depicted subject. Such issues of identity, otherness, and power relations among social groups, in particular, are frequently played out in textual representations of individuals and events, crisscrossing the imaginary textual boundary between the supposedly objective and the allegedly subjective, the "real" and the imaginary."<sup>33</sup>

W. J. T. Mitchell explains that "representation . . . can never be

<sup>31</sup> Lassner (1999, p. 474) for one, describes medieval Arabic historiography as "a history that should have been, or rather, a history that was or might have been."

<sup>32</sup> Stock, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Some of the most important contributions to the discussion of how to approach historical texts as literary texts may be found in collections of essays by Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. I have benefited especially from "The Historical Text As Literary Artifact," pp. 81–100; "Historicism, History and the Figurative Imagination," pp. 101–120; and "The Fictions of Factual Representation," pp. 121–34.

completely divorced from political and ideological questions; one might argue, in fact, that representation is precisely the point where these questions are most likely to enter a (literary) work. If literature is a “representation of life” then representation is exactly the place where “life,” in all its social and subjective complexity, gets into the literary work.”<sup>34</sup> The notion of representation thus collapses the aforementioned dichotomy identified with the previously inviolate categories of the “historical” and the “literary.” Again, to cite Stock’s keen formulation of the two orders of the textual experience:

The historical is not isolated from the literary as fact and representation. The two aspects of the textual experience are multidimensional, and the objectivity of the alleged events spills over into the alleged subjectivity of the records, perceptions, feelings and observations.<sup>35</sup>

The fabulous aspects of Latin and Arabic accounts of the Muslim conquest of Spain (711),<sup>36</sup> for example, and the marvelous representations of Almanzor (the tenth-eleventh ‘Āmirid dictator of al-Andalus, al-Manṣūr) have been recognized and studied.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the literary-historical transformation of the twelfth-century Ayyubid leader Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin) in the Christian imagination from the Crusaders’ “scourge of the Lord” to the epitome of the valiant knight, and the shifting images of Muslims in romance texts have been examined.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, the literary construction of the Jew and the Muslim in Andalusī-Arabīc and Hebrew historiography, polemical and *adab* literature, narratives, and poetry has not been studied extensively. We may thus re-read Arabic and Hebrew annalistic, polemical, and literary sources as texts, by reckoning with the conditions of the texts’ production and by investigating the conditions of textual meaning. We must reconsider what the texts choose to report and not to report and examine how they relate. That is, we must analyze their discursive language, narrative and rhetorical strategies, and their historically contingent relationship to other forms of cultural discourse.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Stock, p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> See Collins, pp. 17–18, 23–36; and Tāha, pp. 84–93.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see the Latin account (preserved as an appendix to the *Historia Turpini*) of al-Manṣūr’s affliction with dysentery in Colin Smith, 1988, pp. 76–79.

<sup>38</sup> See Tolan, 1997, pp. 7–38.

<sup>39</sup> The literature of religious polemic amounts to a self-contained genre with its own methods of argumentation and specific subjects. The classic work as it pertains to polemical literature among the three scriptural communities is Mortiz Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literature in arabischer Sprache: zwischen Muslimen, Christen*

By eleventh-century al-Andalus, traditional forms of cultural discourse pertaining to religious otherness had penetrated deeply the mental landscape of each community—informing, shaping, and circumscribing the spectrum of ways in which Muslims and Jews could think of one another. Each community, of course, had long since developed a fairly coherent historical and theoretical approach to the other religion, its scripture and theology, including a systematic legal approach to interactions with its adherents. We find abundant expressions of complaint against Islam in late rabbinic midrashim (homiletic literature),<sup>40</sup> *piyyuṭim* (liturgical poetry),<sup>41</sup> biblical commentaries,<sup>42</sup> responsa literature, occasional writings,<sup>43</sup> and works of theology reflecting the sometimes contentious but always intimate relationship between Judaism and Islam in the latter's classical age.

Reciprocally, Qur'anic discourse, *tafsīr*,<sup>44</sup> *ḥadīth*,<sup>45</sup> *fatwā* literature and works of heresiography reflect the disdain for Jews and Judaism sometimes felt by Muslims as well as the Muslims' periodic annoyance with the irksome visibility of prominent Jews in their society. At the same time, all of the Muslim sources, including the most extreme, appear to accept or embrace the presence of the Jew in Muslim society as

---

*und Juden*. For more recent research see, Adang, 1996; Lazarus-Yafeh, 1992; Stroumsa, 1997. A good summary of the polemical issues, particularly as they pertain to the social position of the Jews of Islam, is found in a chapter devoted to inter-religious polemics in Mark R. Cohen, 1994, pp. 145–51, 154–61.

<sup>40</sup> Late midrashic collections such as the pseudepigraphic *Pirqei d'e-rabbi eli'ezer*, chapters 31–32, deliver disparaging comments about Islamdom and Muslims in the form of pejorative or caustic references to the biblical Ishmael and his descendants. *Piyyuṭim* and biblical commentaries follow suit in this regard.

<sup>41</sup> Hebrew devotional poetry from al-Andalus provides some excellent examples. Antipathy toward or complaint about Islamdom and Christendom, usually mentioned together, are conventional topoi of this poetry. See Scheindlin, 1999a, pp. 52–53 (Judah Halevi, “*Yā'alat ḥen*”), pp. 64–65 (Moses ibn 'Ezra, “*Maharu na'*”), pp. 104–105 (Solomon ibn Gabirol, “*Shā'ar p'taḥ dodi*”), and pp. 108–109 (Halevi, “*Namta w'e-nirdamta*”). Only the latter poem by the twelfth-century poet Judah Halevi speaks solely of Islamdom (l.3 “Hagar's son”; l.6 “desert-ass”).

<sup>42</sup> Joseph ibn 'Aqnīn, pp. 274 (70b), 276 (71b), 414 (108a), for example, refers to Islamdom as inimical to the Jews but always in the same breath as Christendom.

<sup>43</sup> Moses Maimonides' statement in *Iggeret Teiman l'e-rabbenu moshe ben maimon* (*Epistle to Yemen*), Maimonides, 1952, p. 94 (trans. Stillman, 1979b, p. 241), is perhaps the best-known (certainly the most widely cited) passage from any textual genre concerning the Jews' misfortunes under Islam: “No nation has ever done more harm to Israel [than the nation of Ishmael]. None has matched it in debasing and humiliating us. None has been able to reduce us as they have.” For a study of Maimonides' complex attitude toward Islam, see Schlossberg. For a study of an interesting Jewish tradition related to the subject, see Septimus.

<sup>44</sup> See the sources cited in Bashear.

<sup>45</sup> See Vajda, 1937.

a protected subject in accordance with Islamic law.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Islamic tradition served as an important source of and textual resource for Muslim ambivalence toward the Jews. On the one hand the Qur'an (9:10) speaks of the *dhimma* (agreement guaranteeing security) extended to non-Muslims in Islam as parallel to *ill*, a "contract of mutual protection." On the other hand, the same *sura* (9:29) (*al-Tawba/Barā'a*) enjoins believers:

Fight against those who disbelieve in God and the Last Day, who do not account forbidden what God and His Messenger have forbidden, and who do not follow the religion of truth, *from amongst those who have been given the Book, until they pay the jizya in exchange for a benefaction granted to them, being in a humiliated position (wa-hum ṣāghirūna)* [emphasis mine].<sup>47</sup>

Built into the very structure of the Jewish position in the lands of Islam, then, is the assurance of their protection and religious autonomy for their community, as well as a socially subordinate status projected in visible and humiliating signs of their subservient condition. Not surprisingly, the apparent ambiguity of Quranic discourse on the proper place of Jews and Christians (actually, *ahl al-kitāb*, "peoples of the Book") in Muslim society is also reflected in two contradictory trends of legal thinking in Islam. Matthias B. Lehmann verbalizes the problem as follows:

Some jurists tend to stress the mutually obligatory character of the institution of the *dhimma* and the principle of toleration towards non-Muslims; another trend . . . insists on the humiliation of the *dhimmīs* and interprets any attempt of escaping from their humble status as a breach of the 'Pact of 'Umar.'<sup>48</sup>

Apart from the varieties of religious literature and the images of religious otherness painted by religious tradition, the picture turns even messier and arguably more interesting when we reflect on literary representations of Jews and Muslims in eleventh- and twelfth-century al-Andalus.

In the first three chapters of this study I have divided the Arabic texts into "sources nearly contemporary" with the Jewish figures they

<sup>46</sup> Even extreme offenses by Jews against Islam could be overlooked. See Koningsveld, Sadan, and al-Samarrai, pp. 73, 128, 166.

<sup>47</sup> See Bravmann; and Cahen, 1962. Of course, it was left to scholars of traditions and Quranic commentators such as Ibn Kathīr, 3:364–65, to unravel and define the complex relationship of these Quranic utterances.

<sup>48</sup> Lehmann, 1999a, p. 40.

depict and “post–twelfth century sources.”<sup>49</sup> This simple division reflecting temporal considerations draws our attention to related and even more significant geographic and cultural-historical considerations. The latter follow directly from the mid-twelfth-century turning point in the history of al-Andalus and the Maghrib and the history of the Jews in the Muslim West. Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, Ibn ʿIdhārī al-Marrākushī, Ibn al-Khaṭīb, and to a certain extent even al-Maqqarī, all wrote during a period in which North African scholars were attempting to formulate or reformulate the identity of Maghribi Islam and Muslim society and culture in relation to al-Andalus and its legacy.<sup>50</sup> Their political, religious, and cultural reevaluation (in which Andalusis held Berbers accountable and North Africans blamed Andalusī moral laxity for the failures of Islam in al-Andalus) was prompted in part by the political demise of al-Andalus as a significant center of Western Islam. The influx of Andalusis into the Maghrib in the wake of the Iberian “Reconquista” was also an important factor. Social and political events that the Spanish later came to call by that name thus resulted in a demographic development that effectively turned North Africa into the guardian, transmitter, and interpreter of Andalusī tradition. This process was never more significant than in the thirteenth century when the political unity of al-Andalus and the Maghrib established during the twelfth century was severed and all that remained of al-Andalus was Nasrid Granada.

Writing during the eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively and thus before these developments, ʿAlī ibn Ḥazm (chapter 2) and Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī (chapter 3) served as the most important Andalusī sources for the later North African authorities. Ibn Bassām died just as Almoravid rule was giving way to Almohad control, during a time of heightened concern and anxiety regarding Islamic piety, the legitimacy of Muslim rule in al-Andalus, and the stability of what remained of Andalusī Islam. He served as a transitional source between the era of Andalusī cultural ascendancy and the period of Andalusī eclipse and North African supremacy in Western Islam. Other important eleventh-century Arabic sources are examined in chapter 1. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss Jewish “responses,” such as they are, to the Jews’ social, cultural, and textual condition constructed and suggested by sources of Andalusī-Muslim provenance. Indeed, the topos of the Jews’ silence predominates where we find or expect to find representations of Muslim figures in texts authored by Andalusī Jews.

How have scholars read the specific texts in question? In his inimitable fashion the historian Eliyahu Ashtor attempts to write a definitive

<sup>49</sup> See table following notes to Introduction.

<sup>50</sup> See Shatzmiller, 1988, pp. 205–206.

narrative account of the life and times of several prominent eleventh-century Andalusī-Jewish figures, including Ismāʿīl [Samuel] and Yūsuf [Joseph] ibn Naḡrīla, for which he relies heavily on two Andalusī-Arabīc texts.<sup>51</sup> The Hebrew literary historian Ḥayyim Schirmann, by contrast, is primarily interested in and impressed by the Arabic sources as evidence of Samuel [the Nagid] ibn Naḡrīla's social and political prominence.<sup>52</sup> For his part, the philologist-textologist Judah Ratzhaby mines the same (Arabic) sources for reliable details on Samuel and Joseph that are not found in Jewish sources such as Samuel's Hebrew poetry, Moses ibn 'Ezra's *Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wal-mudhākara*, or Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*. While focusing principally on expressions of Muslim hostility toward Jews, Ratzhaby further offers a straightforward digest of the Arabic texts, labeling some as accurate and others as completely unreliable.<sup>53</sup>

None of the aforementioned scholars are inclined to treat their Arabic sources as documents of Andalusī-Muslim culture except insofar as they testify to Muslim anti-Jewish attitudes. Instead they only scrutinize the texts according to their respective "commonsense" views of what is conceivably authentic, accurate, and "historical" as opposed to what is manifestly untrue and the fanciful fabrication of a particular Muslim writer. Both Schirmann and Ratzhaby attribute whatever is unflattering, excessive, or offensive in the constructions of Samuel and Joseph ibn Naḡrīla to the Muslim authors' trenchant hostility toward the Jews.<sup>54</sup> The sole exception is Joseph's alleged character flaws. Arabic reports of these faults are accepted uniformly as believable by Schirmann, Ratzhaby, and the others because they are "confirmed" by a Jewish text, Abraham ibn Daud's account in *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*.<sup>55</sup>

The parameters and focal points of these studies are biography in the first instance and the history of anti-Semitism in the second. It is thus no coincidence that Schirmann and Ratzhaby attach such importance to Samuel ibn Naḡrīla's supposed literary polemic with the Muslim scholar 'Alī ibn Ḥazm and afford complete credence to the allegation that Samuel actually composed an Arabic treatise attacking the Qur'ān.<sup>56</sup> The image of a supremely emboldened Ibn Naḡrīla (the Jew-

<sup>51</sup> Ashtor, 1992, 2:41–189. Ashtor's narrative is based largely on the detailed account provided in *The Tibyān* by 'Abd Allāh b. Buluggīn (on which see chapter 1) with additional "information" drawn directly from the sources presented by Ibn Bassām in *Al-Dhakhīra* (on which see chapter 3).

<sup>52</sup> Schirmann, 1995, pp. 183–84.

<sup>53</sup> Ratzhaby, 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Schirmann, 1979, 1:234–46.

<sup>55</sup> Abraham ibn Daud, pp. 53–57.

<sup>56</sup> Schirmann, 1995, pp. 197–99. So too, Baron, 1952–83, 5:95, among other works. What survives of the Nagid's polemical work, in their view, is found cited in Ibn

ish Nagid, Samuel or Joseph) mounting a frontal literary assault on the foundation of Islam would appear to serve the particular nationalist and religious purposes of those modern-day scholars themselves. But they are not alone in taking this particular leap of faith as readers of the Arabic sources. Concerning Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī's allegation that Joseph planned to turn the Qur'ān into a *muwashshah* (strophic poem/song) for public performance, Ashtor concludes: "Considering other statements about Joseph in various sources, there is no basis for disqualifying Ibn Saʿīd's account."<sup>57</sup> Even the brilliant polymath Samuel M. Stern essentially reads the texts in the same way. Aside from his contribution to their source criticism, Stern's positivistic assumptions lead him to dismiss the importance of a critical passage in Ibn Bassām, because, he avers, it contains only a "few interesting details but is of no real significance."<sup>58</sup>

David J. Wasserstein stands alone among all the readers of the texts pertaining to the Jews of al-Andalus in general and to Samuel the Nagid/Ismāʿīl ibn Nahrīla in particular. He has made clear that he appreciates how limited the historian is by the paucity of sources and how hampered he is by the various problems they present.<sup>59</sup> Other scholars never saw fit to cast doubts on the assumption that Samuel (the Nagid) ibn Nahrīla actually composed and "published" an Arabic polemical treatise devoted to exposing supposed inconsistencies and theological problems in the Qur'ān. But Wasserstein exercised his typical insight as a reader and arrived at a judicious reckoning of the evidence for and against the universally accepted tradition.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Wasserstein recently raised important questions about the nature and extent of Ibn Nahrīla's poetic claims to an unspecified battlefield role in the military campaigns of Zirid Granada.<sup>61</sup>

Is the historian of Islam any more likely to be satisfied with the questions posed and the approaches adopted by social and literary historians of the Jews? Certainly not. She or he will want to know more about the historiography of each of the Arabic textual genres that could explain why, how, and who is borrowing from whom and for what purpose.<sup>62</sup> She or he will note that in general the sort of power Samuel (the Nagid) ibn Nahrīla exercised over Muslims in Granada was not

---

Ḥazm's "*Radd*" ("Refutation"), which undertakes its refutation. But this text nowhere mentions Samuel, as discussed in chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup> Ashtor, 1992, 2:166 and 2:331 (n. 260).

<sup>58</sup> Stern, 1950, p. 141.

<sup>59</sup> Wasserstein, 1997.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1985, pp. 199–205.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1993b.

<sup>62</sup> My thanks to Maya Shatzmiller for her helpful critical suggestions during an early stage of this project about how an Islamicist might approach the texts.

unique to him or even to al-Andalus but was relatively common in Muslim society. For example, at least six other Jewish *waz̄irs* served prominently in various *ṭāʿifa* states during the eleventh century.<sup>63</sup> And the careers of the Banū Ruqqāša in thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Marinid Morocco and of Hārūn b. Batās in the fifteenth century provide relevant parallels from North Africa a few hundred years after the Ibn Naghrīlas. Additionally, the social historian of Islam will be interested in the role of Jews as tax collectors and their political and social position in the lands of Islam. In such contexts tensions may appear to exist between “foreign” rulers and the local citizens, as with the Fatimids in Egypt and the Zirids in Granada. Along these lines, it is observed in a case study of the *dhimmī* condition in the fifteenth-century Maghrib that “sometimes Muslim rulers would use *dhimmīs* to undertake for them unpopular tasks, such as tax-collection, which only aroused the ire of the taxed population, exposing *dhimmīs* as a community, to violence and despoilment on the death of such a ruler or on other occasions of breakdown of law and order.”<sup>64</sup>

From the point of view of the history of Islam, one also would want to consider the episode of Yūsuf ibn Naghrīla’s downfall in 1066, say, with that of Ibn Dukhān, a high-ranking Coptic financier in twelfth-century Egypt who was deposed and executed.<sup>65</sup> As in the case of Ibn Ḥazm and Samuel ibn Naghrīla, the episode involving Ibn Dukhān seems to lie at the intersection of personal ambition and politico-religious conflict between members of majority and subcultural minority groups. In Ayyubid Egypt, the discontent of the *ʿulamāʾ* and *fuqahāʾ* at the elevation of a *dhimmī* to high office in the financial administration of the state apparently coincided with their fear of the Crusaders. As in Zirid Granada, the political prominence of *dhimmīs* in contravention of Islamic law became a touchstone for pious concerns about the well-being of Islam and Muslims as well as a focal point of the personal discontent and frustrated ambitions of Muslim religious elites.

Two sets of themes defined seemingly by their own binary oppositions (learned/ignorant, powerful/weak) circumscribe the parameters of Andalusī (and Maghribī) Muslim constructions of the Jew:

1. (a) The Jew, usually a dignitary working in the state financial administration, a physician giving care to members of the Muslim elite,<sup>66</sup> or a scholar mingling freely among Muslims, possesses learning and expertise useful to and/or admired by Muslims.

<sup>63</sup> Wasserstein, 1985, pp. 209–213.

<sup>64</sup> Hunwick, 1991, p. 135.

<sup>65</sup> See Catlos.

<sup>66</sup> According to the picture of religious minorities in Muslim society drawn by the ninth-century essayist al-Jāhīz, Jews apparently did not become prominent as physicians in Islam until late in the century. See the sources cited by Sadan, 1986, pp. 362–65.



- (b) Conversely, said Jew is gravely ignorant of religious truth. Because he is cunning and deceitful, while appearing knowledgeable, he poses an especially dangerous threat to Muslims and Islam.
- 2. (a) The Jew is empowered because of his knowledge, expertise, or usefulness to Muslims, but such empowerment is against the natural order of Muslim society.
- (b) The Jew is enfeebled and humbled by a pious representative of Islam in accordance with God's holy law.<sup>67</sup>

Three of the four themes (insubordination, sedition, apostasy, learning and ignorance) that I have identified as critical to Muslim representations of Jewish figures are found in an anecdote reported in the name of a prominent Mālikī jurist of eleventh-century Qayrawān, Abū 'Imrān al-Fāsī. The anecdote is preserved in *Ma'ālim al-imān fī ma'rifaṭ ahl al-qayrawān*, a biographical collection devoted to Mālikī scholars by Abū l-Qāsim ibn Nāǧī (d. 1435). The text relates an incident in involving al-Fāsī and Abraham ibn 'Aṭā' (Abraham b. Nathan), a Jewish physician of high social standing and the Nagid of Tunisia.<sup>68</sup> Because it supposedly originates from the early eleventh-century (eastern) Maghrib rather than al-Andalus, the account suggests that the parameters for Muslim representations of Jews were relatively well established in Western Islam even before production of the Arabic texts we will examine in the first three chapters. More significant still is that the anecdote was preserved and transmitted precisely because it spoke to contemporary eleventh-century Islamic concerns Maghribis shared with Andalusis. In North Africa the times were rife with religious discord, political disorder, and social unrest. The Muslims of the eastern Maghrib (Tunisia) under the sway of the Banū Zīrī had resisted missionary efforts to impose Ismā'īlī doctrine upon them, rejected Fatimid hegemony, and asserted their independence from Cairo.<sup>69</sup>

Abū 'Imrān al-Fāsī is said to have played a significant role among religious reformers in the genesis of the Almoravid movement before it

<sup>67</sup> Addressing the prominence of Jewish physicians in Ayyubid Egypt, Ashtor-Strauss, 1965, p. 313, observes that entries in '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a's standard biographical dictionary of physicians in Islam (down to the thirteenth century), repeatedly report that Jewish physicians were in "a high position" and that they "enjoyed great influence." Such was the importance of physicians in Islam that social status nearly always accompanied its practice, placing Muslims in the intolerable position of dependence upon non-Muslims. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), the great religious reformer, encouraged Muslims to take up the study of medicine and displace Jewish and Christian physicians. See Lazarus-Yafeh, 1975, pp. 444–45.

<sup>68</sup> Ibn 'Aṭā' was apparently the first person to hold the title of Nagid as head of the territorial community. Hayya Gaon conferred the title upon him in 1015. See Goitein, 1967–93, 2: 24.

<sup>69</sup> Abun-Nasr, pp. 83–86.

came to pursue political ambitions in North Africa and al-Andalus.<sup>70</sup> For his part Abraham ibn ‘Aṭā’ enjoyed influence as a trusted physician in Qayrawān at the court of Bādīs and al-Mu‘izz. Like other Jewish officials in the lands of Islam, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ took full advantage of his professional skill, social stature, and easy access to the *amīr* in order to serve as a protector of the Jewish community and a guardian of its interests.<sup>71</sup> But the text reveals a very different Ibn ‘Aṭā’ than the commanding figure of *N<sup>e</sup>gid ha-golah* (“Prince of the Diaspora”) apparent in documents of Jewish provenance from the Cairo Genizah.<sup>72</sup> In this account, the Jewish dignitary, court physician, and scholar is humbled and denounced by the Muslim jurist. Ibn ‘Aṭā’ is also terrified and humiliated by Abū ‘Imrān al-Fāsī’s like-minded sovereign (the *amīr* Bādīs) because the Jew exercised an exemption from the *ghiyār* (distinguishing/differentiation),<sup>73</sup> the sign of non-Muslim identity in the form of distinctive clothing required of *dhimmī* subjects. Because of the symbolic honor associated with clothing in Islam, the Jew’s violation of this stipulation of the *dhimma* is especially egregious:

Al-Mu‘izz ibn Bādīs sent his court physician and confidant, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ the Jew, to Abū ‘Imrān al-Fāsī [the jurist] in order to ask for his opinion on a question of Islamic law. When he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’] entered the *shaykh*’s [learned religious scholar] home, the *shaykh* thought he was dealing with a court dignitary, and one of his attendants said: “God honors you in that he [the visitor] is among the best of his religious community!” The *shaykh* replied: “What exactly is his religion?” He answered: “It is Ibn ‘Aṭā’, the Jew.” Abū ‘Imrān was furious and said to Ibn ‘Aṭā’: “Don’t you know that my house is [as sacred] as my mosque? How dare you enter!” and with that had him thrown out. He [Ibn ‘Aṭā’] departed trembling in fear. Since he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’] had been without the distinctive mark [of the *dhimma*], the *shaykh* had the edge of his [Ibn ‘Aṭā’]’s turban dyed on the spot and said: “Go back to whoever sent you and tell him to send me a Muslim to receive the response to his question of Islamic law, for I disdain to have you carry back [a message] containing the name of God with even one of His sacred laws.”

When the Jew returned to al-Mu‘izz he related the affair to him and declared, “By God, my lord, I never thought until today there was any other sovereign in Ifrīqiya [Tunisia] but you. On occasion

<sup>70</sup> Idris, 1955, p. 54; and 1962, 1:178–79.

<sup>71</sup> Goitein, 1967–93, 2:24.

<sup>72</sup> Goitein, 1965, pp. 166–69; and Hirschberg, 1:112–13, 198–99, 211–13.

<sup>73</sup> On which see Perlmann, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 2:1075–76.

I have been present at some powerful outbursts of yours, but I've never known such fear as that which gripped me today." Al-Mu'izz then told him: "In acting as I did, I wanted to show you the power of Islam, the reverence of Muslim scholars, and the signs of sanctity which God has granted them, all for the purpose of converting you to Islam."<sup>74</sup>

For our purposes the text can be read as a paradigmatic confrontation between Muslim and Jew staged between two eminent members of their respective social and religious establishments. The Jew's standing at the *amīr*'s court, earned on account of his medical acumen and sage counsel for the *amīr*, is undone and reversed by the *amīr* himself. As befits a pious ruler, al-Mu'izz ibn Bādīs manipulates his own courtier and restores Muslim society to its properly ordained order.<sup>75</sup> But it is not enough to simply revoke the Jew's privileges. A figure of Ibn 'Aṭā's ilk gives offense to Muslims and appears to undermine Islam because other Muslims deem his intellectual accomplishments and practical skills desirable and useful. In other words the Jew's intelligence and talent seem to compromise the Islamic requirement of his social humiliation in favor of social and political expediency.

In this anecdote as elsewhere, the Jew serves as a relational term for the Muslim, and the dramatic power of the incident stems from a serious concern internal to Islam: the uneasy relationship between the representatives of religious scholarship on the one hand and political authority on the other.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the policy failures Muslim pietists attributed repeatedly to political authority in Islam turned men of reli-

<sup>74</sup> The passage is from Ibn Nāji, 3:201–202. It may also be found in Idris, 1992, p. 219. See also Idris, 1955, pp. 55–56. I am indebted to my former student Ann Brener for calling my attention to Idris's French article.

<sup>75</sup> There are many parallel reports involving Jewish physicians and their relationships with various Muslim political figures. The latter are obliged to demonstrate their public piety because of their involvement with the Jew. For instance, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Marzūq, pp. 314–15 (fol. 92r), relates that Abū l-Ḥasan, the fourteenth-century Marinid sultan, devotee of religious scholarship and architect of the Marinids' *maghribī* empire, once required medical attention in Tlemçen. He received a prominent local Jewish physician and offered him a post if only he converted to Islam. When the Jew declined to convert, Abū l-Ḥasan is said to have refused his services, preferring to remain in pain than be treated by a non-Muslim. Cited by Shatzmiller, 1983, pp. 159–60, 163. See also Shatzmiller, 1978. An incomplete version of the Arabic text appears with a précis in E. Levi-Provençal, 1925. Ibn Marzūq's observations about Abū l-Ḥasan's strictures regarding employment of *dhimmīs* appear on page 30 of the text in Levi-Provençal's article. I wish to thank Esperanza Alfonso for drawing my attention to Ibn Marzūq.

<sup>76</sup> For the most part I have found it unnecessary to reproduce Marshall Hodgson's important terminology, 1:57–60, for differentiating the social, cultural, and political from the religious aspects of Islam. When it is necessary for the sake of clarity, I employ Hodgson's term for the Islamic polity.

gion into political activists.<sup>77</sup> They challenged those holding temporal power to conduct themselves in accordance with Islamic law and to associate themselves unambiguously with the interests of Islam as articulated by representatives of its religious establishment.<sup>78</sup>

That learned and socially prominent Jews with close ties to political authority are the source of much vexation to pious Andalusī Muslims is apparent in a story concerning an unidentified Jewish *wazīr* of eleventh-century Almeria.<sup>79</sup> An important biographical dictionary by the twelfth-century Andalusī Abū Jaʿfar al-Ḍabbī relates that a Jewish savant identified only as the *wazīr* of the ruler of Almeria entered a public bath accompanied by a Muslim youth. Witnessing this untoward intimacy, the Muslim scholar Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Sahl b. Yūsuf (d. 1087) reportedly became enraged at the *dhimmī*'s uncouth disregard for Islam, whereupon he crushed the head of the Jew with a stone.

The fifth chapter of ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿUmar al-Jawbarī's *Kitāb al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār wa-batā al-astār* (*Revealing the Secrets and Disclosing the Concealed*), a thirteenth-century work devoted to unmasking the tricksters and swindlers around and about the landscape of urban Islam, draws the reader's attention to another agenda. "Disclosing the fraudulence of the Jewish sages" ("*fī kashf asrār kadhbā aḥbār al-yahūd*") puts the reader on strict notice regarding the chapter's subject, one closely related to our anecdote:

Know that these people are the most cunning creatures, the vilest, most unbelieving and hypocritical. While ostensibly the most humble and miserable, they are in fact the most vicious. . . . Understand this. They are the most unbelieving and most perfidious of men. They have no belief or religion.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> For the Umayyad period, when this pattern was supposedly established in al-Andalus, see Mones. Some of the complexities of the evolving relationship between men of religion and politics in eleventh-century al-Andalus are discussed by M'ḥammad Benaboud, 1994. For a different assessment of this relationship in the *taifa* states, see Wasserstein, 1985, pp. 149–51. Wasserstein contends that Andalusī men of religion were actually associated closely with *taifa* political authorities and as a rule did not assert themselves independently in political life until the end of the period.

<sup>78</sup> Humphreys, pp. 137–39, identifies this kind of activism as one of three paradigms of political behavior Muslims have followed. He observes that these patterns of political action and thought "have grown out of two contradictory and probably irreconcilable attitudes that Muslims have about their religion."

<sup>79</sup> Abū Jaʿfar al-Ḍabbī, pp. 332–33, cited in Wasserstein, 1985, pp. 210–11, and Ashtor, 1992, 2:298, 366.

<sup>80</sup> ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Jawbarī, p. 55; Damascus ed. (1885), trans. Perlmann, 1972, p. 316. Perlmann also cites traditions brought by the fourteenth-century North African scholar Ibn al-Ḥājj (al-ʿAbdarī) (ed. 1929), 4:107–114, a treatise on unacceptable innovation, including the following line of verse: "They become physicians and accountants to control our lives and wealth."

Language as truculent and uncompromising as al-Jawbarī, the purpose of which is to invert Jewish learning into utter ignorance, was applied to Andalusī-Jewish figures in several eleventh-century texts, as we shall learn in the second chapter.<sup>81</sup> And *Al-Sayf al-mamdūd fī l-radd ʿalā aḥbār al-yahūd* (*The Extended Sword in Refutation of the Jewish Sages*), a polemical work by the Moroccan scholar ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī, suggests that the pious agenda directed against learned and thus influential Jews was very much alive at the turn of the fifteenth century.<sup>82</sup>

In times of religious turmoil and political crisis, pious Muslims perceived Islam as failing rather than as triumphant. The *fitna* of eleventh-century al-Andalus and the “Reconquista” of twelfth-century Iberia certainly meet both these criteria. And in such circumstances Muslim hostility toward Jews, especially their erudition and the social status it earns, draws upon a reservoir of negative sentiments toward Jews going back to the first generation of Muslims and the beginnings of Islamic religious scholarship. Even then, the Jew remains a chimerical, slippery character as conceived in texts, a figure whose cultural and religious otherness is inconsistent, mutable, and fluctuating. He is never quite what he appears to be. Like Kristeva’s “uncanny foreigner,” he serves the Muslim social imagination in times of crisis as the most available and most vulnerable religious “other” upon whom the majority may project its anxiety and hostility.<sup>83</sup> The crisis of Andalusī Islam during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was mediated in part through Arabic literary representations of Jews. Accordingly, we will find in this study that we can read these representations as a textualization of the shifting and ambivalent relations among Andalusī Muslim and Jewish elites.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> In particular, we will return to the theme articulated by al-Jawbarī of the Jews as “the most unbelieving” (*ashaddu kufr[an]*) and “They are the most unbelieving and most perfidious of men. They have no belief or religion” (*fa-hum aktharu l-kbalq kufr[an] wa-khidā[an] . . . wa-mā lahum qawla wa-lā dīna*).

<sup>82</sup> Esperanza Alfonso, 1998. See Perlmann, 1940.

<sup>83</sup> Penny, p. 128.

<sup>84</sup> Wasserstein, 1985, pp. 142–45, draws attention to the use of *khāṣṣa* (local elites) as a class of Andalusī Muslims and in one important eleventh-century text to *mashyakha* (learned people or communal leaders) in the Jewish community of Granada.

### Arabic Sources on Ismā'īl and Yūsuf ibn al-Naghriḷa

#### Sources Nearly Contemporary

Author:	Ibn Ḥazm	Ibn Ṣā'id al-Andalusī <i>qāḍī</i> , Toledo d. 1070	Ibn Ḥayyān	‘Abd Allāh b. Buluggīn last <i>amīr</i> of Zīrid Granada d. 1095	Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī Seville d. 1147
Text:	1) <i>Al-Fiṣal fil-mīlāl</i> 2) <i>Al-Radd</i> ("Refutation")	<i>Ṭabaqāt al-umam</i>	<i>apud</i> Ibn al-Khaṭīb, d.1375 <i>Al-Iḥāta fī akhbār ghamāta</i>	<i>Al-Tibyān</i>	<i>Al-Dhakhīra fī mahāsīm ahl al-jazīra</i>
Genre:	1) heresiography 2) religious polemic	history of science	historiography	memoir	literary & historical miscellany
note:	1) relates encounter with Samuel (1013) 2) typological construction of Andalusī Jewish courtier		history of Islamic Granada	defense of Zīrid dynasty	

*Post-Twelfth-Century Sources*

Author:	Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī Granada&Tunis d. 1286	Ibn 'Idhārī al- Marrākushī Fez 14th cent.	Ibn al-Khaṭīb <i>wazīr</i> of Nasrid Granada d. 1375	al-Maqqarī Tlemçen d. 1632
Text:	<i>Al-Mughrib</i>	<i>Al-Bayān al-mughrib</i>	<i>A'māl al-ā'lām</i>	<i>Nafī al-ṭīb</i>
Genre:	literary & biographical anthology	historiography	historiography	historical & literary miscellany
note:			source of Abū Ishāq al-Ilbīrī's <i>qaṣīda</i> ; history of al-Andalus	

---