

JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS
IN THE MUSICAL WORLD OF MEDIEVAL MUSLIM SPAIN
(Dwight Reynolds, UC Santa Barbara)

Zukunftphilologie
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30. Juni 2011

Short texts related to the interaction among Muslim, Jews, and Christians in the musical world of medieval Muslim Spain:

- 1) the biography of an early 9th-century musician in Córdoba who apparently converted to Christianity and later returned to Islam—this is, to my knowledge, the only known account of such a conversion in the early Andalusian period
- 2) the famous Latin letter of Alvarus of Córdoba (mid-9th century) complaining that Christian men no longer know how to write Latin and instead use Arabic, in which he attempts to describe Arabic poetry to his Christian brothers in the North
- 3) a collection of short financial records in late medieval Catalan, from the royal court of Aragon-Catalonia, documenting the hiring of Moorish and Jewish musicians and dancers to perform in the court (1389-1425).

TEXT 1

From Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī (d. 1349). *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*. Eds. Fuat Sezgin and Eckhardt Neubauer. Frankfurt: Ma'had ta'rīkh al-'ulūm al-'arabiyya wa-l-islāmiyya/Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabo-Islamic Sciences, Series C, Facsimile Editions, 1988-2001; Vol. X, pp. 390-91.

The biographical notice of Ḥiṣn bin 'Abd bin Ziyād:

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وَمِنْهُمْ حِصْنُ عَبْدِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ
أَصْلُهُ مِنْ بَنِي الْعَدَوِيِّ وَدَخَلَ الْأَنْدَلُسَ مَتَسَكِّمًا بِالْعَوِيِّ وَكَانَ مُطْرَبًا أوردَ
الأنس الوافيز. ورد السرور النافز. وروى قبل الليل على أنه كافز
وسجع قوى القلب وكان اجن من صافز. ولج بلاد النصارى وتوغل في لوجها
وسكنها وسكن على علوجها. ثم عاد إلى حوز المسلمين ورجع ما كتب إلا الغناء

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بعد طول سنين فاضل بالعالى واتصف باقنا الفالى. فاعلى العالى لهبة ولم شعبة
وكان لايز الحضر في خلوانه وتجنه نزع هفوانه.

ومن اصوانه

• دعنا بكهت دون خفنا، دعوقه على عجل دهما، والركب رايح
• اذا الناس قالوا كيف انت وقد بدنا، ضمير الذى في قلت للناس صالح
• ليرضى صديق او ليرخط كاشح، وما كل من سلفته الودنا صح
• واني للحماني على ان اجسها، رجال تعربهم قلوب صحاح
والشعر لقيم نك مقبل، والغناء فيه مر مومر الرمل
وكذلك صوته

• نام الخلى وما الحن رنادى • والمهر محض رلدى وسادى
• من غير ما قسمر ولا شفقى • همراره قد اصابت فوادى
• ومن الحوادث لا بالذانى • ضربت على الارض بالاسدادى
• لا امتدى فيها لموضع بلغه • بين العراق وبين ارض مرادى
والشعر للاسود بن يعفر النهشلى والغناء فيه ناني القيل

And among them was Ḥiṣn bin ‘Abd bin Ziyād

He was originally from “the other shore” [*barr al-‘udwa*, i.e. North Africa]. He entered al-Andalus as part of the [*‘awna*, i.e. guard, servant, conscripted labor, entourage]. He was a singer who showed great amiability [*al-wāfir*] and displayed abundant gaiety [*al-nāfir*]. **It occurred to him suddenly [in] the heart of the night that he was a *kāfir***¹ and he took heart [lit. emboldened the powers of his heart, reading *shajja* ‘], though he was more cowardly than a bird [lit. “a whistler” *sāfir*]. He entered the lands of the Christians [*bilād al-naṣārā*] and he penetrated them deeply [*wulūjihā*], he settled there and felt at home among the infidels [*‘ulūjihā*]. Then he returned to the domain [*ḥawz*]² of Muslims [*al-muslimīn*], and he returned having earned nothing but the singing/songs [*ghinā* ‘, i.e. that he had learned there] after the long years [*al-sinīn*]. Then he contacted the Emir [lit. “the High One” *al-‘Ālī*], who was characterized by the acquisition of what was valuable [*al-ghālī*]. So the Emir raised his status [*ka‘bahu*] and gathered his people [*sha‘bahu*]. And he continued to [cause him to] attend him in private [*khalawātihī*]. He felt pity for him and dismissed his [earlier] errors/offenses [*hafawātihī*].

And among his songs [= compositions] is: [4 verses] The poetry is by al-Tamīm ibn Abī Muqbil and the music is in *mazmūm al-ramal*.

And likewise his song: [4 verses] The poetry is by al-Aswad ibn Ya‘far [= Ja‘far?] al-Nahshalī [al-Nihshalī?] and the music is in the rhythm of *thānī al-thaqīl*.

* * *

¹There are several possible readings for the critical line here that appears to report his conversion to Christianity:

raffa bihi qalba l-layl ‘alā annahu kāfir

it occurred to him suddenly in the heart of the night that he was a *kāfir* [unbeliever, Christian]

raffa bihi qalbu l-layl ‘alā annahu kāfir

the heart of the night suggested to him that he was a *kāfir*

the wing of the heart of darkness touched him so as to suggest to him that he was a *kāfir*

daqqa bihi qalbu l-layl ‘alā annahu kāfir

He kept the party going at night, *kāfir* though he may have been

²Possibly *jawd* = munificence

A. The Arabic language replaced the Romance language completely. Mozarabs were monolingual Arabic-speaking, or: Romance was spoken on a modest scale

Latin sources

In many studies, recent and not so recent, we find the well-known passage of Alvarus of Cordoba from his *Indiculus luminosus* as proof for the almost total disappearance of the Romance dialects among the Christian citizens of al-Andalus, the Mozarabs. The text is as follows:

Heu proh dolor, legem¹ suam nesciunt Christiani, et linguam propriam non aduertunt Latini, ita ut omni Christi collegio uix inueniatur unus in milleno hominum numero qui saluatorias fratris positi rationauititer dirigere litteras. Et repperitur absque numero multiplices turbas qui erudite Caldaicas uerborum explicet pompas, ita ut metrice erudifiori ab ipsis genibus carmine et sublimiori pulcritudine finales clausulas unius littere coartatione decorent, et iuxta quod linguae ipsius requirit idioma, quae omnes uocales apices commata cola, rithmice, immo ut ipsis competit, metrice uniuersi alfabeti littere per uarias dictiones plurimas uariantes uno fine constringuntur uel simili apice (Gil 1973a:314-15).²

TEXT #2

According to Wright (1982:156-157), the final section of the text is almost 'unintelligible,' since Alvarus wrote bad Latin himself. Wright observes that it is intriguing that here a practice is described in which Christians take over Arabic lines and add bits of their own to the end. The text might be an allusion to the practice of Andalusí strophic poetry, but I think that Alvarus did not necessarily allude to Romance *kharyjas* with the words *fenales*

¹ In the edition of Flórez (*España Sagrada*, XI: 274) we read *linguam*. Aldrete and Wright read *legem*.

² Quoted in Wright (1982:157): "Alas! Christians do not know their own law, and Latins do not use their own tongue, so that in all the college of Christ there will hardly be found one man in a thousand who can send correct letters of greeting to a brother. And a manifold crowd without number will be found who give out learnedly long sentences of Chaldean rhetoric. So that from the more sophisticated song of those people they embellish their final clauses metrically and in more polished beauty with the bond of a single letter, according to the demands of that tongue, which closes all phrases and clauses with riming vowels and even, as is possible for them, the various expressions containing the letters of the whole alphabet are all metrically reduced to one ending or to a similar letter." For a Spanish translation see Flórez, *España Sagrada*, XI: 274; Simonet (1888:1-X). See also von Schack (1877:278), Rodríguez Laga (1934:25), Roth (1994:54-55) and Schippers (1996:221-222).

clausulas; here it seems more plausible that he alluded to the practice of monorhyme. Still, it is intriguing that he used the word *carmen* ('song') which shows that here music is also involved.³

Another Latin source is the comments on Christian language in Muslim Spain from Abbot Samson, who translated letters from Arabic into *latinum eloquium* in the year 863.⁴ Samson was proud of his erudition and complained about the lack of *latinias* of others, which supports the theories of those scholars who maintain that Latin was not used on a large scale. A very important distinction must be made here between erudite Latin and the Latin vernaculars. The fact that some citizens were not able to write correct (classical) Latin does not mean that they ignored the vernacular language completely.

During the Renaissance and in the Golden Age, we find various remarks about the linguistic situation in al-Andalus.⁵ The most conspicuous views are those of Juan de Mariana (1535-1624) and Bernardo de Aldrete (1560?-1641). Juan de Mariana said—following the text of Alvarus—that the use of Latin almost disappeared in al-Andalus and that Christians had a thorough command of the Arabic language. The fact that Juan [Hispalense] translated the Bible into Arabic in order to facilitate access to Christian sources for the Muslims and Mozarabs, was adduced by Juan de Mariana in support of his theory.⁶ Similar views are espoused by Aldrete ([1606] 1972:141), who even said that the Mozarabs were able to compose Arabic poetry.⁷ He also said that Arabic was still used in Valencia and Granada.

³ If Arabic treatises are correct, we must not forget that the *muwāššah* had not yet been 'invented' during the life time of Alvarus. The fact that Alvarus mentioned the use of vowels and of varying consonants in rhyming position is fascinating and possibly can be related to the phenomenon of *ifṣā'*, which will be discussed later in 7.3.4.

⁴ The text is as follows: "Et ut mea retrograder paululum, dum epistole regis Hispaniae ad regem Francorum essent sub era DCCCII dirigende, appellatus ex regio decreto ego ipse, quatenus, ut pridem facere consueeram, ex *Caldeo sermone in Latinum eloquium ipsas epistolas debentem transferre, adfuit et faci*" (quoted by Wright 1982:159).

⁵ For the attitude of Spanish linguists from the Renaissance towards the impact of Arabic in the Castilian language, see Fórneas (1990), and for Nebrija see especially Guerrero Ramos (1989).

⁶ "Juan [Hispalense] (...) tradujo la Biblia en lengua arábica con intento de ayudar á los cristianos y á los moros, a causa que la lengua arábica se usaba mucho y comunmente entre todos; la latina ordinariamente ni se usaba ni se sabía" (Mariana [1601] 1950:195).

⁷ "Esto es digno de considerar, porque quando esto passaba no habia más que

Karla Mallette's translation incorporates suggestions by Suzanne Akbari and Brian Stock, and the third translation was offered to me by Jill Rosso, all of whom I thank for their assistance:

Alas! Christians do not know their own law, and Latins do not use their own tongue, so that in all the college of Christ there will hardly be found one man in a thousand who can send correct letters of greeting to a brother. And a manifold crowd without number will be found who give out learnedly long sentences of Chaldean [= Arabic] rhetoric. So that from the more sophisticated song of those people they embellish their final clauses metrically and in more polished beauty with the bond of a single letter, according to the demands of that tongue, which closes all phrases and clauses with riming vowels and even, as is possible for them, the various expressions containing the letters of the whole alphabet are all metrically reduced to one ending or to a similar letter [Wright: 1982: 157]

. . . so that from *the more sophisticated song of those people* they embellish their final clauses metrically and in more polished beauty with *the bond of a single letter*, according to the demands of that tongue, which closes all phrases and clauses with *riming vowels* and even, as is possible for them, the various expressions containing the letters of the whole alphabet are all metrically reduced to *one ending or to a similar letter*. [Gil 1973: 314-15]

They can even make poems, *every line ending with the same letter*, which *display greater beauty and more skill* in handling meter than the Gentiles [= Arabs] themselves possess. And as the idiom of that language requires, which *ends the hemistiches [commata et cola]* with all vowels [or “long vowels”], in rhythm – or rather, as it befits them, in meter – the letters of all the alphabet are constrained, by means of a very great variety of diverse words [or “inflections” or “styles of speaking”], to *one ending or a similar letter* [Karla Mallette, personal communication, 2/25/08]

They are so learned in the poetry by these people that *they embellish the final clauses by bringing together the same letter*, so that their Arabic displays are *more skilful in meter and more sublime in beauty* than those written by the Gentiles [= Arabs] themselves. And, as the idiom of the language requires, *which ends all vowel phrases and clauses rhythmically, rather than metrically*, as befits them [‘ipsis’ referring either to ‘those people’ or to ‘clauses’], the letters of the whole alphabet are compressed into *one ending or one letter* by means of a great diversity of expression [Jill Rosso, personal communication, 3/07/08]

Text #3:

Various documents relating to the hiring of Muslim and Jewish musicians and dancers to perform in the royal court of Catalonia-Aragon between 1389 and 1425. From -- Gómez Muntané, María del Carmen. *La música en la casa real catalano-aragonesa durante los años 1336-1432*. Barcelona: Bosch, 1979.

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Juan I desea oír unas moras juglaresas

12 Junio 1389

Lo Rey

Batle general. Com nos per nostre deport e per plaer vullam oír sonar e veure jugar la muller de Alfuley e sa mare e les altres moras juglaresses de Valencia les pus aptes, manam vos espessament que encontinent, vista la present letra, les façats venir ab lurs estruments e jochs, e provehits a lur messio necessaria fins aci dels diners de vostre offici pertanyens a la nostra cort... E guardats que en aço per res no haia falla ni triga ni n'esperets altre manament. Dada en Montso sots nostre segell secret a XII de juny de l any MCCCCLXXXIX. Rex Johannes.
Ffruit missa baiulo generali regni Valencie vel eius locumtenenti
(reg. 1958 fol. 22)

(Coroleu pag. 114)

King Juan I wishes to hear play and see perform the wife of Alfuley and her mother and others from among the most skilled female Moorish "juglars" from Valencia, and asks that they be sent to him without delay.

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Orden de pago a favor de unos moros juglares

9 Septiembre 1389

Lo Rey

Batle general. Sapiats que Maçot Fuley, Xamari Mariem e sa muller e los altres moros juglars los quals de manament nostre haviets fets venir aci, se tornen de licencia nostra a lurs cases. Perque us manam que ls paguets ço que rahonable sia per lur tornada... Dada en Montso sots nostre segell secret a IX dies de setembre de l any MCCCCLXXXIX. Rex Johannes.
(reg. 1873 fol. 52v)

King Juan I orders that Mas'ūd Fuley, Shamari Maryam and her mother and the other Moorish "juglars," whom he had caused to come to him, be paid the cost of their journey home, for they are returning with his permission.

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El rey Fernando manda ir en busca de los Alfuleys, juglares moros

22 Diciembre 1413

Lo Rey

Batle general. Manam vos que de continent, vistes les presents, nos façats venir los jutglars moros Alfuleys ab ses mullers los quals acustumaven servir al senyor Rey en Marti, oncle nostre qui Deus haia, e vestits los a tots de continent de una color e trametets los a Saragoça on es mester que sien al XII jorn del mes de janer prop vinent sens tota falla. E aço per res no mudets... Dada en Leyda sots nostre segell secret a XXII dies de deembre de l any MCCCCXIII. Rex Ferdinandus.

(reg. 2403 fol. 167)

King Fernando orders that the Moorish "juglars" Alfuley and their wives, who used to come and serve the King, his uncle, be sent to him and that they all be clothed in a single color, and that they be brought to Zaragoza by the 12th of January without fail.

El rey Fernando reclama los servicios de una mora bailadora
17 Septiembre 1415

Lo Rey
Batle general. Manam vos que ns trametats la mora balladora de Mizlata ensemps ab son sposat, dehint los que vingan cuytat, e donet los diners per messions tro aci. E en aço no y haia falla alguna. Dada en la vila de Perpinya sots nostre segell secret a XVII dies de setembre de l any MCCCCXV. E per nostre accident signada de ma de nostre primogenit. Alfonsus primogenitus.
Dirigitur baiulo generali regni Valencie

(reg. 2408 fol. 67v)

King Fernando orders that the Moorish dancer of Mizlata along with her spouse be sent to him in Perpignan in a hurry and be paid all of the costs of their journey.

Orden de pago a favor de unos juglares moros
12 Enero 1418

N Alfonso etc. Al feel conseller e tresorer nostre en Ramon Fiveller. Salut e gracia. Dehim e manam vos de certa sciencia e expresament que de qualsevol pecunies de nostra cort qui son o seran vers vos, donets e paguets a Moratxo e Uzeys, muller sua, e a Abdalla, fill del dit Moratxo, e na Muzeys, sposada sua, moros balladors de casa nostra, o a qui ells volran en nom lur, vint florins d or d Arago los quals los manam donar graciosament... Dada en Valencia sots nostre segell secret a XII dies de janer en l any de la nativitat de Nostre Senyor Mil CCCCXVIII. Rex Alfonsus.

(reg. 2701 fol. 149)

King Alfonso orders his treasurer Ramon Fiveller to pay Moratxo and Uzeys, his wife, and Abdallah, son of Moratxo, and Muzeys, his wife, Moorish dancers of his court, 20 Aragonese gold florins.

El rey Alfonso desea algunos bailarines moros
19 Abril 1425

Lo Rey
Batle general. Com nos desitjem haver en nostre servey per nostre plaer e deport los moros e mores balladores de Xativa, manam vos que façats e donats manera e orde que los dits moros e mores vinguen de continent en nostre servey, e per ço que millor puxen venir, donar los ets L florins per lur messio e cavalcadures necessaries e fahedores en lo cami car nos vos manarem fer la cautela necessaria. E aço no mudets si ns desijats servir e complaure. Dada en Saragoça sots nostre segell secret a XVIII dies d abril de l any MCCCCXXV. Rex Alfonsus.

(ARV Pec. I fol. 165v)

(Anglés/Alf. V (2) pag. 104)

King Alfonso orders that male and female Moorish dancers from Xativa be sent to him immediately, in the best manner possible, and that they be paid 50 florins for the necessary riding beasts, with all due caution.

Cantidad de dinero otorgada de gracia al judio Juceff Axivil
Agosto 1352

Item done an Juceff Axivil, juheu de Borja, ab albara de scriva de racio, los quals lo senyor Infant li manava donar graciosament per ço com li tochava devant I estrument de ploma appellat viola anant per lo cami de la ciutat d Oscha tro a Saragoça — XX solidos jac.

(RP reg. 566 fol. 39v)

Item – Payment note for Josef Axivil, Jew of Borja, from the Heir Apparent (Prince) for having played before him the string instrument known as a viola and for having come from the city of Heusca to Zaragoza.