

Moriscos Lives by Themselves

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ABSTRACT: *This paper explores the religious, cultural, and autobiographical dimensions of Mudejar and Morisco writings, with a particular focus on pilgrimage narratives and personal testimonies. It examines how these texts, shaped by the collective struggles and spiritual devotion of the Islamic communities in Iberia, balance communal obligations with rare glimpses of individual expression. Through detailed analyses of key works, such as Ibn Al-Šabbāḥ's Nišāb al-akhbār wa-taḍkirat al-akhyār, Omar Patón's Memorial de ida y venida hasta Meca, and the writings of the Mancebo de Arévalo, the study highlights how these writings serve as enduring testimonies of resilience and identity preservation. By situating these texts within their historical and sociocultural contexts, the paper underscores their significance as both religious records and personal reflections, bridging the individual and collective memory of Morisco and Mudejar communities under adversity.*

KEYWORDS: Morisco Literature, Mudejar Writings, Pilgrimage Narratives, Islamic Identity, Iberian Historyarticle

RÉSUMÉ: *Cet article explore les dimensions religieuses, culturelles et autobiographiques des écrits des Mudéjars et des Morisques, avec un accent particulier sur les récits de pèlerinage et les témoignages personnels. Il examine comment ces textes, façonnés par les luttes collectives et la dévotion spirituelle des communautés islamiques de la péninsule ibérique, équilibrent les obligations communautaires avec de rares aperçus d'expression individuelle. À travers l'analyse approfondie d'œuvres clés telles que le Nišāb al-akhbār wa-taḍkirat al-akhyār d'Ibn Al-Šabbāḥ, le Memorial de ida y venida hasta Meca d'Omar Patón et les écrits du Mancebo de Arévalo, cette étude met en lumière la manière dont ces écrits témoignent de la résilience et de la préservation de l'identité. En replaçant ces textes dans leurs contextes historiques et*

socioculturels, l'article souligne leur importance à la fois en tant que documents religieux et réflexions personnelles, reliant la mémoire individuelle et collective des communautés morisques et mudéjares confrontées à l'adversité.

MOTS-CLÉS: Littérature morisque, Écrits mudéjars, Récits de pèlerinage, Identité islamique, Histoire ibérique

Introduction

It is often stated that the texts transmitted or created by Mudejars and Moriscos¹, predominantly of a religious nature, are essentially the product of translations and copies of earlier works. To the obvious consequences of this fact (anonymity, a certain impersonality in the copies, etc.), we must add the collective nature of literature made by believers for believers. In this sense, it is difficult for the author's voice to emerge in these texts, drowned on one side by the normativity of the religious texts that must circulate and, on the other, by the urgencies under which the community's life unfolds. On rare occasions, even in these texts, fleeting testimonies of individual contemporaneity appear, lamenting the plight of the Moriscos or affirming their will to remain faithful to the proscribed Islamic faith. However, the norm is for only the inherited cultural and religious messages from ancestors to shine through.

Nevertheless, if we consider certain exceptions to the aforementioned characteristics—such as the supreme exemplary nature, the shaping of the text to pursue goals other than biographical ones, etc.—we can find some works in which the authors recount their experiences, personal narratives, and individuality. These texts are rare within a literary tradition primarily concerned with preserving traditional religious heritage. However, they are valuable insofar as they bring to light the flesh-and-blood Mudejar or Morisco and the world surrounding them—or the world the author claims surrounded them, as in Inquisitorial testimonies (Benítez Sánchez-Blanco 2018).

¹ This work was written as a result of the Research Project "El Mediterraneo de la edad moderna (ss. XVI-XVIII) entre cristiandad e islam: imagenes, espacios y cotidianidad" (CIAICO/2023/266), given by the Conselleria de Cultura, Educació, Universitats y Empleo (Generalitat Valenciana).

Religious and Cultural Context of Mudejar and Morisco Writings

The collective nature of Mudejar and Morisco writings often overshadows individual voices. These texts, primarily religious, are bound by the constraints of their community's struggles and obligations. The normativity of these writings rarely allowed for personal expression, as their primary purpose was the preservation of Islamic knowledge and faith in the face of adversity.

However, rare glimpses of individuality emerge. Fleeting personal testimonies appear within religious texts, offering insights into the struggles and resilience of their authors. These moments are invaluable in understanding the lived experiences of Mudejars and Moriscos.

"My Pilgrimage Will Be Soon": The Pilgrimages of Mudejars and Moriscos

The phrase in the title belongs to one of those rare individualized Morisco authors, the so-called "Mancebo de Arévalo," whom we will discuss later. Residing in Zaragoza, the author awaited the arrival of coreligionists from Castile to begin his pilgrimage or *romeajeas*, it is called in *aljamiado* texts. We do not know if he ultimately undertook the pilgrimage; it was certainly not immediately after writing these lines, as the work in which they appear still had many pages left to be completed. Possibly, if he had made the pilgrimage, he would have provided many interesting pages like those preserved.

However, other travelogues written by Mudejars and Moriscos do exist, presenting a dual perspective: narrating what the author sees while offering a continuous demonstration of what we might call Islamic faith in motion. The hardships of travel, sometimes traumatic, are not excluded—such as those faced by a traveler from Fez who was captured by Christian corsairs during his journey and spent his final days in Tarragona, where Mudejars rescued him. There, he wrote an account of his misfortunes in verse—possibly to bolster his credentials to work as a *faqīh*—and this text was later translated into Castilian, likely by Moriscos. This text from 1407 is preserved in the library of the Dukes of Gor, alongside another, more optimistic account of a pilgrimage to Mecca by a Mudejar from Tortosa, dating roughly twenty years earlier. Written in Arabic prose, it was also translated later ((Epalza 1982).

As the text narrates, apart from describing places and Islamic rituals on the journey to Mecca, the author notes "marvels and fabulous things" such as the pyramids of Egypt, Trajan's Column, and, of course, the features of the Ka'ba. He also recounts legendary stories attributed to the holy sites, prudently concluding with "God knows best." Additionally, he notes the existence of relics between some columns near the Ka'ba: the horn of the ram sacrificed in place of Ismail and the cup of Mary, "concubine of the Prophet," which she offered as a gift to him.

A Classic Pilgrimage Text: Ibn Al-Ṣabbāḥ's Riḥla

A little later, between 1450 and 1460, 'Abd Allāh ibn Al-Ṣabbāḥ Al-Aṣbaḥī, a Muslim from Almería according to most researchers (Francisco 1996)—or from Xàtiva, as argued by A. Constán, who has edited and translated the work into Castilian (Antonio 2022)—undertook his riḥlahijāziyya. Years later, he returned to the peninsula and settled in Almería—already a Christian city.

After its conquest—sometime after 1490. Now elderly, he likely dictated his narrative in Arabic, the language in which it survives in two distinct copies. The text, titled Niṣābal- akhbārwa-taḍkiratal-akhyār, is either the work of Ibn Al-Ṣabbāḥ himself or his scribe.

This is a classic example of a pilgrimage narrative, offering a meticulous description of the places visited and paying tribute to the ajā'ib (wonders) encountered along the way. Ibn Al-Ṣabbāḥ's riḥladeserves further analysis, both for its autobiographical elements and for the insights it provides about the locations he visited. The narrative also highlights distinctions between the Muslims still residing in the Kingdom of Granada in the mid-15th century and the Mudejars he met before leaving Spain (Francisco 1995). Exemplary in nature, the text reflects the fulfillment of a religious obligation that was increasingly difficult to perform. Written many years after the events, it aims to reinforce the faith of believers and uplift their spiritual resolve through descriptions of lands still governed by Islam and sacred sites.

Another significant Mudejar text is the riḥlaof Omar Baṭūn or Patón, titled Memorial of the Journey to and from Mecca (Memorial deiday venida hasta Meca) (Xavier Casassas Canals and all 2017). Omar Patón, a Mudejar from Ávila, undertook his pilgrimage to Mecca between 1491 and 1495, accompanied by another Castilian Mudejar, Muḥammad Corral. This text is

extraordinarily interesting for several reasons. First, unlike the anonymity common in aljamiado texts, the original work has a named and somewhat identifiable author. Second, aside from the expected geographical, sociological, and cultural descriptions, the narrative includes significant autobiographical content directly related to Patón's circumstances as a prominent Mudejar from Ávila.

Challenges of Pilgrimage in the Morisco Era

A member of the well-documented Patón family of Ávila, Omar's *riḥla*, written upon returning from the East, seems to have been well-known among Aragonese and Castilian Mudejars. The Mancebo de Arévalo cites it as a text of great value:

However, my present intention is not to discuss our revered Qurʾān but rather the fall of the Muslims of Castile and, in particular, the island of Andalusia (i.e., al-Andalus). Muhammad Batun, when he returned from fulfilling his *alḥājj*—an obligation for all Muslims, whether on foot or horseback—spoke of the fame of Andalusia's fall throughout the Levant, a renown that lasted many years. Even in Mecca, this pilgrim received numerous inquiries about this island. Along with our honored scholar Malik Zayyir, he recounted these words, which I read in Ávila la Real on a very thick parchment, and they said thus: (...) These were Malik's words about the fall of Andalusia, relayed by Muhammad Patón, whose words were kept as a sacred relic of faith ².

The pilgrimage narrative of this Castilian Mudejar draws the reader's attention primarily due to the hardships endured to reach the longed-for destination. Storms threatened the ships' progress, Christian corsairs posed a significant danger, and illnesses decimated the group of pilgrims, even endangering the life of Patón's travel companion. Undoubtedly, the emphasis on difficulty and suffering to achieve the goal aligns with one of the main themes of Mudejar and Morisco texts: their struggle and efforts to maintain their religious identity and fulfill Islamic rites.

² *Tratado [Tafsira]. Mancebo de Arévalo. Edición, introducción y notas de María Teresa Narváez Córdoba*, Madrid, 2003, pp. 308-309.

Additionally, Patón's account offers valuable information. For instance, Muslims from Nasrid Granada and Mudejars from Castile and Aragon undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca together, though little is known about how these journeys were organized in advance. Other noteworthy elements include historical events, such as the death of the vizier of Guadix, Abu-l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Balāwī, in Çeşme in 1493, or the author's visit to the tomb of the mufti of Segovia, 'Isā Ibn Ŷābir, in Tunis—about whom little is known after 1462.

... and for fear of what I saw in the letter from the alfaquí of Segovia, we dared not enter the deserts between Alexandria and the Barbary territories of Tripoli, where his companion of Don 'Içà died, and he died in Tunis; I visited his tomb (Candás, 321).

The pilgrimage was particularly challenging for post-Andalusian Iberian Muslims, making these preserved texts serve multiple functions: recording the testimonies of the few who went to Mecca and returned, inspiring those unable to visit the holy sites by bringing them closer through these narratives, reinforcing the autobiographical testimony of the pilgrims' faith, and asserting the active presence of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula.

After the prohibition of Islam in Castile, Navarre, and Aragon between 1501 and 1526, it might be assumed that such accounts would disappear among the Moriscos. However, a few texts continue to document the fulfillment of this rite. The Moriscos, particularly those with greater economic resources, continued to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca to the extent possible (Leonard 1998). Once again, this is evidenced by the Mancebo de Arévalo, who composed some of his works while waiting in Zaragoza to join a group departing from Castile:

There, we performed al-sarin congregation, led by Don Manrique of Segovia, who was then in Zaragoza (...). And as my pilgrimage approached—only awaiting the company already prepared in Ávila la Real—Don Manrique, understanding my plight, alleviated part of my need and gave me ten Morisco coins. Other 'ulamā' who were present contributed on my behalf (...). Here, these noble 'ulamā' urged me, seeing the aforementioned distress of our al-dīn, to summarize briefly and concisely a part of our honored Qur'an's essentials before my departure. I accepted this small task of this

tafsīra out of obligation to the Muslim community and at the request of these noble 'ulamā'. May His infinite goodness make it agreeable and beneficial for all until a more extensive tafsīra can be made with the freedom of this land (Narváez, 103-104).

A famous example is an aljamiado text in verse, the well-known *Coplas del Alhichante* (= pilgrim) de Puey Monçón, a narrative poem describing the pilgrimage of a Morisco from El Pueyo de Santa Cruz (Huesca). Although traditionally considered Morisco (Pablo 1890), Mikel de Epalza and Alberto Montaner, among others, have identified the first half of the 16th century as the most probable period of composition, making it a late Mudejar text (Epalza 1990). While it naturally contains biographical elements, its literary nature, spread across 79 minor art couplets, somewhat obscures the author's presence behind descriptions of the places visited and emotional expressions that set it apart from other travel texts. The poem rarely lingers on descriptions of cities, focusing instead on buildings and religious sites. However, the verses gain some intensity when recounting how they nearly suffered a shipwreck (stanzas XV-XIX), although the tone remains fairly restrained overall.

However, there is little concrete information about this activity during the Morisco period. While in the Mudejar era, there are records of Muslims declaring their purpose of travel when embarking, such undertakings were officially impossible during the Morisco period. They had to be clandestine (which does not mean they did not occur) (Salvador Esteban 1975). These circumstances gave rise to a detailed clandestine itinerary from Aragón to Istanbul, passing through France and Italy, used by Moriscos until the expulsion. Additionally, there are accounts of Moriscos in transit across Europe or within Ottoman territories (Sánchez Álvarez 1982). Evidence of the Moriscos' deep interest and fervor for this rite can be found in the preservation of a Valencian manuscript from the late 16th century containing a poetic composition in Arabic, the *Qiṣṣatal-Magārib*, which recounts the pilgrimage of a traveler from Fez to Mecca (Barceló).

Although the degree of biographical content in these travel accounts can be debated— due to their incorporation of obligatory citations and pious rhetorical flourishes—it is clear that the preserved *rihla*s from the Mudejar and Morisco periods were written and perceived as both individual and collective testimonies of fulfilling one of Islam's most deeply felt

commandments. Individually, these accounts were written and undertaken by someone who, in hindsight, felt the need to communicate their profound experience and to elevate their social standing by publicizing their efforts to achieve the status of ḥājjī (pilgrim). These texts were collectively received as representations of a Muslim community far from Mecca and living in difficult circumstances. Sharing with their fellow believers the journey to the Hijāz acted as a catalyst for Islamic spirituality in a challenging environment. As such, these texts served an almost thaumaturgic function, reminding Iberian Muslims of the center of Islam to which they still belonged.

Thus, the biographical element was placed at the service of religious necessity, almost as a substitute for a pilgrimage to Mecca that most readers or listeners of these texts could not undertake.

Morisco Self-Perception

Given the immense weight of religious devotion in Morisco cultural expressions, it is unsurprising that the two clearest manifestations of biographical writings are built upon a structure of spiritual merit. However, each constructs its framework using different premises and tools to achieve a similar goal, making them worth examining separately. They are also excellent examples of how the messages of Islamic spirituality can take diverse and sometimes surprising forms, far from being uniform or unidirectional.

Possibly, the term "biographical writings" would have been written with some reluctance by the first of the writers to be mentioned, as his declared goal was not to narrate his life but to impart doctrine. The figure known as the Mancebo de Arévalo, a Castilian writer who settled in Aragón in the 1530s, authored at least three voluminous doctrinal and spiritual treatises for his Aragonese coreligionists, who implored him to enlighten their ignorance with his religious knowledge: *The Brief Compendium of Our Holy Law and Sunna*, a collaboration between an alfaquí, Bray de Remincho, and the Mancebo de Arévalo; *The Tafsira*, the Mancebo's most extensive work, where he introduces numerous characters encountered throughout Spain; *The Summary of Relation and Spiritual Exercise*, a book that diverges most from the others due to its pronounced spiritual characteristics (Harvey 1958).

In these texts, the Mancebo details the main rituals and acts of Islamic worship, various aspects of the sunna and fiqh, and numerous passages extolling the virtues of his faith. However, one peculiarity stands out: the author intersperses this learned Islamic wisdom with examples from his own biography. No other Mudejar or Morisco in the Peninsula speaks so extensively about their life as the Mancebo de Arévalo, to the point where his life and continuous travels across the peninsula form the foundation of his teachings.

Much of his work can be classified as a *rihla fīṭalabal-ilm*, though with unique features. The Mancebo traveled across Spain seeking remnants of Islamic knowledge and teachers. While he cites illustrious figures from Islamic tradition, his true mentors—those described in his encounters—were venerable elders, men and women he met in Granada (such as José Venegas and the "Moor of Úbeda"), Aragón ('Alī Sarmiento), and along Castilian roads (Nozaita Calderán). These individuals either possessed Arabic books or retained the prestige of living under Granada's Islamic rule.

For instance, one remarkable passage recounts the Mancebo's visit to José Venegas:

I arrived at his home on the last day of the said month, and he welcomed me as a singular and noble man. After our greeting, on the third day, he took out a golden Qur'an of half a folio and asked me to read two *hizb*. Then he took it from my hands and said, 'May Allah bless you and grant you prosperity, as your heart desires.' He did not hesitate to correct me, being very knowledgeable, nor did I resent being corrected.

After many trials (...), one day, which was a Friday, he took me to see his orchard (...). Sitting by a stream, he said: 'Son, I know you lack knowledge of Granada's history and do not be surprised when I recount it, for it echoes endlessly in my heart, and no moment passes without it tearing at my soul (...).

Do not doubt my words, for I am a witness to the disgrace of noble women, both widows and married. I saw over 300 maidens sold in public auctions. I lost three sons, all of whom died defending the *dīn*. I lost two daughters and my wife, and this daughter, who was seven months old, is all I have left for consolation (...).

Son, I do not cry for the past, as there is no returning to it, but for what you will witness if you live in this land, this island of Spain (...). They will say: "Where is our herald? What became of the dīn of our ancestors?" (...) If now, in such a short time, we seem barely sustained, what will happen when the final autumns arrive?" (Harvey)

This text, which allows us to date the Mancebo's visit to Venegas between 1505 and 1510, exemplifies the intriguing biographical passages revealed by the writer. His visits to individuals who embodied the remnants of Spain's living Islam enabled him to acquire knowledge of the faith, which had become precarious in Castile by the early 16th century. From the perspective of the moment of writing—after the forced conversion of Mudejars in the Crown of Aragón in 1526—his narrative becomes an account of the teachers from whom he learned and, in this sense, a declaration of his intellectual and religious authority among his contemporaries.

In these journeys, the Mancebo de Arévalo not only found learned or spiritual mentors but also encountered situations and characters that one would not expect to still exist in early 16th-century Spain. The Mancebo speaks of Muslim spies working for Christian kings while living clandestinely, wealthy Morisco bourgeoisie commissioning luxurious Qur'ans as examples of virtue, communities of Moriscos he knew in his youth that had disappeared by the time he wrote, and elderly women spreading doctrine in roadside inns across Spain (Bernabé Pons 2008). His biography and travels reveal an entire world ... though we may never know his name, a detail he was careful to withhold.

The unprecedented realities he uncovers, combined with the large number of Islamic authorities he cites, have led scholars to question the sincerity of his accounts—and not without reason. It has been proven that he constructs much of his Islamic spiritualist messages from Christian sources. This suggests that he had to base his authority not on Arabic texts, which he likely could not fully understand, nor on refined spiritual literature, which he likely did not possess, but rather on his education in 16th-century Spain ³.

³ The *Imitatio Chriti*, by Thomas à Kempis and *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas are two of the works used and quoted by the Mancebo de Arévalo, of course always without citing the authors: Teresa Narváez, "El mancebo de Arévalo, lector morisco de *La Celestina*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, LXXII (1995), pp. 255-272; Fonseca, *Sumario*,

Is His Authority Based on Falsehoods? It is difficult to provide a definitive answer to this question. Undoubtedly, the Mancebo de Arévalo earned significant prestige among his Aragonese coreligionists, with his name and works cited by Moriscos until the early 17th century. Gradually, some of the fascinating accounts he provides about the remnants of Islam in Granada and Castile have been proven accurate—or at least plausible. However, it is undeniable that his desire to maintain an intellectual position of prestige led him to include doctrinal and spiritual content that was dubious from an Islamic perspective. For example, when he describes events in Mecca, he appears to draw upon texts he had read combined with his vivid imagination:

This account I found in the house of 'Alī Sarmiento in Algecira del Conde, documenting an election as Mālik made in Mecca in the year 803 of the Hegira. This testimony, brought by pilgrims from Granada aboard the royal ship sent annually by the kings of Granada as an offering to Mecca, describes how the ship carried seventy young men to complete the alhaji. In 803, there was no Mālik that year, as he had died nine days before the crescent moon of du-l-hijja. The rite was fulfilled without the election of any Mālik, and al-Hasan Tāriq, the doctor of the safawi, represented him. The council convened at the Ka'ba, with three councils of other schools present, each holding their gilded Qur'an... And after the rite, when the groups had already taken leave of Maka on the twenty-fifth of the said moon, a very honorable man from the descendants of 'Uthman, called Ibrahim Afān, was chosen as Mālik.

This imaginative—and almost Roman—depiction of the election of a supreme leader in Mecca reveals the intellectual flexibility of a man who had to present himself as a scholar among his peers despite the gaps in his Islamic education as someone born among Christians in the late 15th century. Some thirty years later, the Mancebo de Arévalo relied solely on his education and biography to respond to the needs of the Moriscos in Zaragoza, who were deprived of qualified doctrinal leaders. His adept use of Christian spiritualism, Islamic texts he may have encountered, and intentionally obscure language completed the framework of his authority.

26-30, 34-36; Rubiera, María Jesús, “El Islam cristianizado de los moriscos castellanos en época de Carlos V,” en *Carlos V y la quiebra del humanismo político en Europa (1530-1558)*, Madrid, 2001, pp. 469-485

Undoubtedly, this approach to narrating his life served him well in Aragón, granting him an imposing reputation.

Ahmad Ibn Qasim al-Hajari: A Contrasting Narrative

The second major biographical text emerging from the Morisco community follows very different parameters. First, it was written after the grand expulsion of the Moriscos between 1609 and 1615, though its author fled to Morocco before these events. Second, it was produced and read outside of Spain, in Egypt, and the Maghreb around 1637, entirely in Arabic (although the author later translated parts into Spanish).

Third, while structured as a *rihla hijaziyya* (pilgrimage to Mecca) with significant biographical content, its primary objective is anti-Christian polemics.

The *Kitāb Nāṣiral-dīn'alā-l-qawmal-kāfirīn* (The Supporter of Religion Against the Infidels) (Van Koningsveld 2015) recounts the journey of Aḥmad Ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī al-Andalusī, also known as Ehmed ben Caçim Bejarano or Diego Bejarano, a Morisco from Hornachos (Wiegers 1993). Fleeing Spain, he became a secretary and translator for Sultan Muley Zaydān of Morocco. On behalf of the Sultan, he embarked on a journey to France and the Netherlands to investigate complaints from Moriscos who had been robbed during their migration to the Maghreb. During this journey, he engaged in religious debates with some of the leading Arabists of his time.

Around 1635, al-Ḥajarī undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca, and by 1637, he was in Cairo. There, the scholar al-Ujhūrī, upon hearing his experiences and particularly his religious polemics with Christians, requested that he document his life and travels. Al-Ḥajarī subsequently authored his *Riḥlatal-Šihāb ilāliqā'al-aḥbāb* (now lost), of which *Kitāb Nāṣiral-dīn* is a summary.

Later that year, he was in Tunis, where he joined the exiled Morisco community, translated some of his earlier works into Castilian, and expanded sections of his book on the plumed books of Granada. After his time in Tunis, there are no further records of him. However, a marginal note in one of his manuscripts, praising the Ottoman regency's kindness to the Moriscos, suggests that he ended his days there.

Practically all the biographical details provided by al-Ḥajarī—whether about his life in Spain, Morocco, or his extensive journey to the East—can be corroborated or are highly plausible. His involvement in translating Sacromonte's plumbed books is confirmed by the discovery of his Christian name in a translation attribution. Testimonies from other sources verify his meetings with scholars such as Erpenius and Hubert, as well as his intervention to free two Ottoman princesses held in the French court—a case that generated significant correspondence in the French embassy in Istanbul (Hitzel 2011). Similarly, evidence confirms his presence among the Moriscos in Tunis.

Unlike the Mancebo de Arévalo, whose anonymity and enigmatic handling of his sources raise questions about the authenticity of his account, al-Ḥajarī's narrative is firmly grounded in verifiable events. His autobiographical elements reinforce his orthodoxy and provide a sustained critique of Christian beliefs. This purpose is evident in the title of his work (*The Supporter of Religion Against the Infidels*), which portrays him as a model of Islamic virtue and a steadfast defender of the faith.

The autobiographical nature of al-Ḥajarī's work is particularly evident in the first three chapters, where he recounts his time in Granada and his flight to Morocco. These chapters encapsulate themes that recur throughout his narrative, including his talent for refuting Christian dogma, his prudence (even justifying deceit to ensure his safety among Christians), and his high regard for his own intellectual abilities. For example, he writes:

One day, he approached me and said, 'The Archbishop has ordered me to bring you before him.' I thought to myself, 'How will I escape this? Christians kill and burn anyone found with Arabic books or known to read Arabic.' (...) When I appeared before him, he said, 'Father Maldonado has told me you can read Arabic well.' I replied, 'You should know, sir, that I am an Andalusian from al-Ḥayār al-Aḥmar. Our language is essentially Arabic. I also learned to read Spanish. Later, I went to Madrid, where I met an Andalusian doctor from Valencia who taught me to read Arabic, which came easily to me because of my origins.' He then asked, 'Where is your teacher, the doctor?' I said, 'He passed away—may God have mercy on him—two or three years ago.' But everything I told him was a lie because reading Arabic texts unrelated to Islam was permitted for

Valencians but forbidden for the rest of the inhabitants of al-Andalus (Kitāb Nāṣir al-dīn).

This passage demonstrates not only his prudence but also his unwavering sense of intellectual superiority, which underpins his role as an envoy for the Moroccan Sultan. He describes his entrance into the Sultan's court as follows:

After the Sultan entered the city from the outskirts—in the year 1007—he graciously allowed me to attend his public audience. When I began speaking loudly before him, the entire assembly fell silent as if I were delivering the Friday sermon. The Sultan was pleased and said, 'How can someone from al-Andalus speak Arabic so eloquently, with the style of religious scholars?' All the Andalusian elders present were delighted by this (Kitāb Nāṣir al-dīn).

Al-Ḥajarī's biographical narrative thus portrays him as a devout Muslim and a skilled theologian and rhetorician capable of countering Christians. His conduct as an exemplary Muslim aligns with the purpose of his work, which, as the title suggests, seeks to assert the superiority of Islam over other religions.

Al-Ḥajarī's work is undoubtedly the most prominent personal account among all the writings of the exiled Moriscos. While other works include fragments or personal anecdotes, the text of the Morisco from Hornachos stands as the clearest example of a biography in motion, dedicated to a religious cause, especially in its polemical dimension.

Conclusion

Mudejar and Morisco texts stand as a testament to the enduring spirit of a marginalized and persecuted community. By weaving together religious obligations, cultural identity, and personal experiences, these writings offer a profound window into the lives and struggles of their authors. From pilgrimage narratives to autobiographical reflections, these texts demonstrate the resilience of a people striving to preserve their faith and cultural heritage under immense adversity.

The richness of pilgrimage accounts—such as those of Ibn Al-Ṣabbāḥ, Omar Patón, and the Mancebo de Arévalo—not only provide geographical and cultural insights but also highlight the profound personal sacrifices

involved in upholding Islamic practices. These narratives were more than just records of journeys; they were acts of devotion, symbols of resistance, and assertions of identity.

Moreover, the autobiographical works reflect the Moriscos' dual existence: deeply rooted in their Islamic traditions while adapting to the pressures and dangers of a Christian-dominated society. These texts reveal how individuals negotiated their faith, their cultural heritage, and their place in a changing world.

In sum, the legacy of Mudejar and Morisco writings lies not only in their historical and literary significance but also in their ability to inspire contemporary reflections on identity, resilience, and the preservation of cultural heritage. They remain a vital source for understanding how a community navigated its survival amidst profound challenges, leaving behind an indelible mark on the collective memory of Islamic history in the Iberian Peninsula.

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