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# *IMAGES OF EUROPE AND EUROPEANS IN SOME MEDIEVAL ARABIC SOURCES*

"Europa," or the fair *'Orphah* ("the girl with a full mane") as she was known in some early Semitic languages, was the daughter of the Phoenician king of Tyre (modern Lebanon), who was abducted by Zeus and for whom she bore three sons. Her brother Cadmus was sent by her father to fetch her; but instead of bringing her back, he settled in Thebes, where he taught the Greeks the alphabet of his people, the Phoenicians. 'Orphah's name, adapted to "Europa" as it was unpronounceable to the Greeks, came to be applied first to the Greek mainland and subsequently to the land mass behind it.

Unlike their Greek predecessors and mentors (particularly the second-century [Christian era] Egyptian-born astronomer / geographer Ptolemy, whose writings gained wide currency in Arabic sources), Arabic[1] geographers initially paid little attention to "Europe" (as a continent) and the "Europeans" as such. They tended to focus more attention on regions within the vast Islamic world itself (stretching from Central Asia to the Atlantic Ocean), as well as on parts of Asia and Africa that were outside the "house of Islam." "Europe," by contrast, attracted them less. This may have been due to the fact that there was little in Europe to interest the Muslims and, consequently, Arabic writers. This was certainly different with Byzantium, India, or China, which fascinated them and captured their creative imagination.

Arabic writers had some acquaintance with "Europe"; the toponym appears in the adaptation of Ptolemy's *Geography* by al-Khwārizmī (d. 847),[2] and is mentioned in passing in some other early Arabic geographical works. For example, Ibn Khurdādhbīh (d. 911?) refers to Europe in his geographical work as *arūfá*, and defines it as follows: "The inhabited world has been divided into four parts. One of these is Europe [*arūfá*], which comprises Spain, the habitation of the Slavs, the Romans, and

the Franks, as well as Tangier and beyond, as far as the boundary of Egypt" (Ibn Khurdādhbīh 155 [Arabic], 116 [French]).

He may have been followed by the late tenth-century anonymous Persian author of *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* ("The Regions of the World"), who calls it *urūfá* and defines it as follows: "The third part has on its east the Straits of Constantinople; on its south, the sea of *rūm* [the Mediterranean]; on its west, the Western Ocean; and on its north, the limit of the cultivated land of the north. This part is called *urūfá*, and forms one-quarter of all the cultivated lands of the world" (*Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 83).

One of the earliest and most detailed references to "Europe" in Arabic writings is to be found in the translation of Paulus Orosius' *Historiae adversum paganos*, which was carried out in Muslim Spain in the course of the tenth century.[3]

Succeeding writers in Arabic copied and elaborated on Orosius' terse account, which is confined to the definition of boundaries and the description of various regions of Europe and some of its cities. They tended to echo the same type of information about Europe, albeit with some variations, calling it by diverse names and defining its boundaries differently. For example, the tenth-century geographer al-Iṣtakhrī called it "the land of the *rūm*" (the "Romans," see below) and defined its boundaries as follows: "The boundaries of the land of the *rūm* ["Romans"] extend from the [Atlantic] ocean to Constantinople, and encompass Galicia, the land of the Franks (*ifranjah*), Rome (*rūmiyah*) and Athens, and reach as far as the land of the Slavs" (al-Iṣtakhrī 8). He set the southern limits of the continent at Cyprus and Sicily, both of which at the time were under Muslim rule, saying that Sicily was "adjacent to *ifranjah*,"[4] and describing the inhabitants of Cyprus as being of the "people of *rūm*" (meaning "Greeks") (al-Iṣtakhrī 70-71).

As their knowledge of Greek geography was enriched by that of pre-Islamic Persia, Arabic writers (a number of whom were of Persian descent) increasingly shifted their emphasis to the different peoples of Europe, and to the lands and cities they inhabited, rather than simply focusing on land masses. This was more in harmony with their latent inclination to emphasize relationships and affiliations of kinship. In other words, as geographers they became more inclined towards human rather than physical geography. But, regardless of which methodological approach was employed, information about Europe and the Europeans in early medieval Arabic sources remained scanty and perfunctory.

This reluctant interest in European lands and peoples was gradually stirred, however, as Latin Christendom and the world of Islam locked in

battle. Whether this was at the Battle of Poitiers (in 732), the unsuccessful invasion of Muslim Spain by Charlemagne (in 778), the occupation of the southern coast of France by pirates from Muslim Spain (890-973), the sudden appearance of Vikings on the banks of the Guadalquivir in Muslim Spain (ninth century), the proto-crusade against Barbastro (1064), the fall of Toledo into the hands of Alfonso VI (1085) and its rapid conversion by the Cluniacs into a city with a Christian character, or the Crusades (as of 1096), these and similar events awakened the world of Islam to the reality of Europe and the Europeans. And while it was descriptive of the various peoples and regions of Europe, such information as was assembled, whether drawn from earlier sources, from travel reports–their own or others'–or from a close observation of the conduct of Crusaders and their families, was also indicative of the attitudes the Muslims maintained towards the different peoples of Europe. As Europe was inextricably associated with Christianity, any description of the Europeans inevitably mirrored the image of the Christians of Europe that was held by the Muslims. Such an image was invariably delineated by the prevailing state of relations between the two religious polities.

We should emphasize here that the encounter with Europe was not Islam's first meeting with Christianity and the Christians. From the onset of Islamic history, two Christian communities had played a significant role in the development of Arabic society. The first of these communities were the *naṣārá*, the Christians as they appeared in the Qur'ān and in the experience of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Together with the Jews, the Muslims were enjoined to protect them (*ahl al-dhimmah*, "People of the trust") as they were the earlier recipients of Divine revelation (*ahl al-kitāb*, "People of the Book"). Subsequently, the term referred as well to the indigenous Christian population living under Muslim rule and protection. But in spite of this, description of them as a group in Arabic sources is scanty. This may be due to the fact that they were left to manage their religious and civic affairs on their own. One does encounter the occasional reference to individuals among them in biographical dictionaries relating their particular achievements in any of the various areas of learning or service. For example, the biographical dictionaries of Ibn Juljul, and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah are replete with references to Arabic Christians who excelled in medicine.

The positive attitude towards the indigenous Christians, the *naṣārá*, was not relegated to a nostalgic prophetic past. It is noteworthy that at the peak of Crusader domination in the Near East, the Andalusian / North African traveller, Ibn Jubayr (who journeyed to the Near East between 1182 and

1185), reserves praise for the indigenous Arabic Christian population. He describes them as being hospitable to Muslim hermits, sharing with them their food. He boldly adds the comment, "If this is the manner in which the *naṣārá* [the indigenous Christians] treat the opponents of their religion, what would you say of the treatment the Muslims give to one another?" (Ibn Jubayr 260-261).

The second group of Christians identified by Arabic writers were the *rūm*, who in comparison with the *naṣārá*, attract more attention in the written sources. Depending on the context, the term refers to the Greeks, the Romans, or even the people of the Holy Roman Empire. However, in its more immediate application, the term refers to the Byzantines, the body politic presided over by an alien ruler, the Byzantine emperor, who was at once an enemy of Islam and a source of supply of some of the craftsmen and artisans of its building programme. The defeat of a contingent of the *rūm* (Byzantines) during the prophetic age merited the Qur'anic reference, "The *rūm* are vanquished,"[5] and was seen as a sign of the divine vindication of Islam and its perpetual triumph over the disbelief (*kufr*) of Christendom represented by the Byzantines. The Caliph in Damascus would have felt justified when he brazenly demanded of the Byzantine Emperor that he dispatch skilled craftsmen for the construction of the Mosque in Damascus in 706, threatening the destruction of the churches at Edessa, Jerusalem and Lydda if the Emperor failed to comply. But although the *rūm* were the enemy, they merited the respect of Muslims in general.

By contrast, European Christians were imprecisely defined in Muslim perception and were generally recognised by what was seen as the ethnic grouping to which they belonged. Such labels included the *'ajam* (non-Arabic speaking, "barbarian"), *ṣaqālibah* (Slavs, and occasionally, Scandinavians), *al-majūs* (originally "Magi," but applied also to peoples of the north of Europe, namely, Scandinavia and the British Isles), *jalāliqah* (the Galicians of north-western Spain), *washkunsh* (the Basques), and *ifranj* or *al-firanj* (Franks). The latter term was generally applied to those encompassed by the Carolingian empire and subsequently to Latin Europe as a whole. As France, by virtue of its geographic location, was in the forefront of the confrontation between Islam and Latin Christendom, the *ifranj* (Franks), without necessarily being limited to France, occupied more attention than other European people in Arabic travel or geographic writing.

The *ifranj* (Franks) were viewed differently from either the *naṣārá* or the *rūm*. Their overall portrayal in Arabic sources was that of a people not dissimilar from other remote barbarians, who lacked sophistication as well

as the creativity of either the Byzantines or the indigenous Arabic Christians. The limited curiosity they did arouse was based more on their behaviour and customs than on their creative qualities. This may be explained by the fact that they came into clearer focus, in Muslim perception, only when they appeared as a ferocious enemy in the course of the eleventh century. The inventiveness of monastic centres had no appeal to Muslims as it concentrated mainly on issues of doctrine and included concepts (for example, matters pertaining to Christology) with which Islam and Christianity are at variance.

As a result primarily of reports of travellers, some Arabic writers viewed the *ifranj* and their territory, prior to the eleventh century, as a subject of intellectual curiosity but with little precision. One such early description is the account of Ibrāhīm Ibn Ya'qūb, an Andalusian Jew from Tortosa, who travelled extensively in the land of the *ifranj* as an emissary of the Caliph of Córdoba in 965. Although his account, which constitutes a description of the land and its peoples based on first-hand experience, is regrettably lost, it is quoted by later Muslim geographers such as al-Bakrī, of whom more will be said further on.

The most extensive extant source of information on the *ifranj* from this early period is that of al-Mas'ūdī (d. 957), who has been described by some Western scholars as the "Herodotus of the Arabic world." Speaking of the *ifranj* in his work entitled *Murūj al-Dhahab* ("Meadows of Gold"), Mas'ūdī gives an impression of a settled warrior people inhabiting a vast land. He identifies them as a northern people who were different from the Byzantines (*rūm*), the Slavs (*ṣaqālibah*), or the Basques (*washkunsh*), and paints a picture of them as well-equipped and terrifying in warfare. However, although they were more able fighters than most northern peoples, they remained inferior to the Galicians (*jalāliqah*), one of whom could brave several Franks. They possessed a large number of cities, of which *barīzah* (Paris) was their capital.[6] The *ifranj* were Christians who were very orderly and obedient to their rulers, united in their word, and without partisan divisiveness (al-Mas'ūdī 2: 5-11).

Mas'ūdī's work had a definite influence on subsequent Arabic writers, and on the image of Europe that they portrayed. Some of these writers limited themselves to a rather cursory description of the terrain, others were intrigued as well by the structures of its more important cities, while yet others included an account, at times vivid, of the customs and behaviour of these "foreigners" (as the term *ifranj* has come to mean in modern Arabic). One writer who merits mention in this regard is the eleventh-century

Hispano-Arabic geographer al-Bakrī (d. 1094), who blended together different methodologies and utilized information drawn from both al-Mas'ūdī and Orosius, among other sources. He gives a more expansive description of Europe, which he calls *ifranjah*, and employs the common Biblical view of the origins of diverse ethnic groups: the human race descending from Noah's three sons. He says, in paraphrase, that the people of Europe (the *ifranj*) are Christians of the Catholic (*malkāniyyah*) rite, and are descended from Japheth, son of Noah. They include Franks, Galicians, Slavs, Lombards (*al-nūkbard*), Spanish (*al-ishbān*), Turkic peoples, Khazars, Burgundians (*al-burjān*), Alans (*al-lān*), and Gog and Magog (*Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj*).[7] The confines of their land extend southward to the Syrian Sea (another name for the Mediterranean), and northward to the Ocean, requiring the journey of two months in any direction. It is separated on the north and the east from the land of the Slavs by mountains (the Alps) "that project between the two seas." These mountains stretch as far as the land of the Basques as well as the land of *al-amānīsh* (undoubtedly a corruption of the name of the Alemanns), who speak a language different from that of the *ifranj*. Al-Bakrī describes the land of the Slavs as attached to the land of the *majūs* (the Vikings or Norsemen), who are known as the *anqilish* (the Angles). Speaking of its physical characteristics, he writes that Europe suffers from bad weather due to cold temperatures, although its summers are temperate. It is abundant in fruits and rivers and possesses well-planned cities whose walls are well-constructed (al-Bakrī 143).

Occasionally, the description of European cities in Arabic writings goes into considerable detail. The early tenth-century writer Ibn Rustah (writing between 903-913) described the route from Constantinople to Rome; after giving a rather vivid depiction of the Byzantine capital, his narrative leads us through the land of the Bulgars and the Slavs until we reach

> a village called *bunduqīs* [Venice], whose inhabitants live in a flat land resembling a desert. They possess neither cities nor other villages, and their houses are built of carved boards of wood. They are Christians, in whose land you may travel the distance of twenty days, living in their midst, eating their food and provisioning yourself until you reach *rūmiyah* [Rome].
>
> (Ibn Rustah 128)

Ibn Rustah then describes Rome, beginning with the statement that it was administered by a king call *al-bāba* (the Pope). The city, whose dimensions measure forty Roman miles square, is traversed by a river the base and banks of which were paved with brass (bronze). Bridges over the river were

also constructed with the same material. Intriguingly enough, Ibn Rustah then concentrates his attention on "the great church which is at the centre of the city." His reference appears to be to St. Peter's Basilica as, according to his account, it contains the burials of two of the Apostles (of Christ) whom he names as Peter and Paul (*sic*), "made of gold, one of which is at the east end of the church while the other is at the west end." He is very impressed by the number of crosses in the church, six hundred by his report. At first glance, this interest might seem surprising, for to a Muslim, such as Ibn Rustah, the cross symbolizes a point of dogmatic disagreement with Christianity in the Qur'anic assertion that Jesus was not crucified.[8] In fact, Ibn Rustah appears to be swayed not so much by doctrinal issues as by the amount of gold and precious stones present in the crosses in this and other churches.

A similar image of Rome, based on information derived from earlier sources but rich in fanstasy, is presented by the twelfth-century Andalusian writer, al-Zuhrī, who writes of the city,

> One of the wonders of this city is the church known as the church of gold. It was thus named because it contains forty columns, twenty of which are made of gold while the other twenty are made of silver. These support arches and domes of coloured glass mosaics. In every panel of these domes, as well as at the top of each column, a magnetic stone was placed. These maintained the chandeliers in place as they hung in the air by leather cords. If the priests wished to say mass (?) on behalf of someone, they chose a windless day and cut the cords holding the chandeliers. These would remain suspended between heaven and earth [the ceiling and the floor], held in place by the magnetic stones, without either adhesive or nails.
>
> (al-Zuhrī 233)

It should be remembered that Ibn Rustah, like other Arabic writers, relied for his depiction of Europe either on earlier sources or on reports of travellers who not infrequently mingled fact with fiction, the real with the imaginary. Consequently, reality is occasionally peppered with fantasy in his and other writers' accounts of places they had not examined in person. For example, Ibn Rustah recounts a practice which, he says, occurred for nine centuries. Every Maundy Thursday, he tells us, the "king" (the Pope) enters the tomb of St. Peter in order to shave the saint's head and beard, and to clip his nails. The relics thus gathered are distributed among the people of his kingdom (Ibn Rustah 129).

What appears to be gold to Ibn Rustah is described as brass by al-Bakrī, who adds further details on the matter of the shaved beards of the people of Rome. According to his information, these Romans shave their beards as a symbol of being Christian. Here is how he explains the practice:

> Their learned ones said that the reason for this practice arises from the fact that Simon, the Rock, and other disciples came to them. 'They were poor people, each carrying nothing but a walking stick and a travelling bag. We [the Romans] were kings, wearing silk brocade and sitting on golden chairs. They [the disciples] called us to Christianity, but we did not heed their summons. Instead, we seized and tortured them, we shaved their heads and their beards. Then, when the truth of their message became evident to us, we shaved our beards as an act of contrition.' (al-Bakrī 205-206)

Such details are largely absent from the work of the twelfth-century al-Idrīsī (d. 1165?), whose geographical masterpiece may have been written as a companion commentary to the silver planisphere he had prepared for his patron, Roger II, the Norman king of Sicily (al-Idrīsī 723-807). Idrīsī's work, which is also known as *Kitāb rujjār* ("The Book of Roger"), is noted for its terseness as well as precision in areas with which he had first-hand acquaintance or drew upon reliable sources. While he does not mention "Europe" either by that name or any other, he deals with its different regions and cities, and the distances between them. But in spite of the concise nature of his coverage, some commentary slips in occasionally. For example, speaking of England he says, "The island of *inqiltārah* [England] resembles the head of an ostrich. It has populous cities, high mountains, overflowing streams, level ground, and abundant prosperity. Its people are patient, determined, and resolute. But its weather is that of endless winter" (al-Idrīsī 944). Elsewhere, he writes that that island (England) is separated from the continent by "a rough sea, ugly in colour, very deep, endlessly dark, with huge waves. It is stormy and difficult to traverse. Its western limits are not known. It is rare that people sail across it. Those who do are daring and have knowledge of it . . . . The people who sail on it most are known as the *inkilīsīyīn* [the English]" (al-Idrīsī 859).

In al-Idrīsī's estimation, the English are acutely different from their Irish neighbours, and from the Bretons. Speaking of the land of the Bretons and adjacent areas, he concludes that "these lands are comparable in their characteristics and conditions. Their built-up areas, regions, produce and abundance are all analogous. The inhabitants are characterized by their

ignorance and coarse disposition. In summary, it is a land of abundance, comfort, and insensibility" (al-Idrīsī 859).

He cites one of his Arabic sources as saying that Ireland is a big island in which there are three, unnamed, cities. He adds,

> The people who inhabit these cities engaged in trade in amber and coloured stones. Then malevolence broke out among them as one of them wanted to be ruler over them. He and his people fought against them and enmity fell among them. Thus, they annihilated each other, while some of them fled across the sea to the great land mass [Continental Europe]. Thus, their cities were ruined and they perished. (al-Idrīsī 947-948)

Details about the inhabitants of Europe were limited but varied, depending on the author and his sources, as well as on the prevailing circumstances at the time of the construction of the images. We have already pointed out that, in this regard, the eleventh century must be seen as a major turning point. Until then, the prevailing image created of the Europeans by Arabic writers was simple and limited. The prevalent portrayal was that they were descended from Japheth, son of Noah, which placed them in the second category in the hierarchy of peoples (descendants of Shem being the first). They were Christians of the Melkite tradition (Catholic), and very powerful prior to the rise of Islam. Writers such as al-Bakrī included certain historical details about some of them, such as that "their first king was *qulūduyuh* (Clovis), who was Christianized by his wife *ghurṭilah* (Clotilde), and that their king now, in A.H. 332 (AD 944), is *lathurīq ibn qārluh* (Roderick son of Carlos), which names are often used by their kings" (al-Bakrī 139, 141).[9]

By the end of the eleventh century the tide turned. The first Crusade culminated in a series of events in Spain that included the fall of Toledo in 1085, and the victory of Yusuf Ibn Tashfin over Alfonso VI in 1086 at the Battle of Zallāqah and subsequent victories over his Frankish allies, notably at Lisbon in 1094. A Qur'anic verse was inscribed as a legend on the golden coins of the new rulers of Muslim Spain, the Berber Almoravids. It declared, "Whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him and in the hereafter he shall be among the losers" (*Sūra* 3:79). Because of the shortage of gold and silver in Europe, these coins were in great demand in Europe. While the Qur'anic passage was intended for internal circulation and directed against those Muslims presumed to be digressing from the faith, Christians saw in it a blatant religious assault. Islam in North Africa and Spain was undergoing a major revival, its first attempt at a return to orthodoxy (Kassis 78-110.). But, given the perception of Islam that prevailed

in Europe, the revival movement as well as the legend on the golden coins were seen as an indication of yet another frustration by Muslims of God's will. The Cluniacs had designated Spain–all of Spain–as a land belonging of old to St. Peter, and the task now was to bring about its liberation from the infidel as well as its integration into the fold of Christianity. Franks and Castilians joined hands in the attempt to dislodge Islam from the Iberian Peninsula. This turn of events was in harmony with the billowing wind of war against Islam in the Near East. The trumpet was sounded on either side of the battlefield, in the east and the west, for battle for "God's cause."

It is here, therefore, that we begin to see the beginnings of a change in the attitude of Muslim writers towards the *ifranj*, from one of intellectual curiosity to that of an interest rooted in practical necessity. This did not, however, lead to a greater degree of precision in the knowledge that most Arabic writers had of the people or their territory. The *ifranj* remained largely uninteresting to them. One point, however, was certain, namely that they and their Castilian allies were now regarded as the enemies of God and of Islam, with the same intensity that Christian writers saw Islam and Muslims as such an enemy. Henceforth, the *ifranj* are frequently cursed when they are mentioned in the literature, and their lands are considered to be the domain of disbelief (*kufr*). God's power is invoked to destroy them and their cities, including Muslim cities conquered by these "worshippers of the Cross," and is invoked equally to protect Muslim cities from their assault.

In this new atmosphere, however, Arabic writers had the opportunity to observe the *ifranj* in the reality of their religious and daily lives. Alternatively, they were able to draw upon sources that witnessed this reality. Such first-hand observation was based mainly on the encounter with the *ifranj* in the Near East, their newly-conquered habitat. For example, the Andalusian writer al-Zuhrī, who visited Jerusalem, reports an account by al-Ruwayt,[10] who witnessed the following scene:

> On Christmas eve in Jerusalem, when the Christians [*rūm*] were taking communion, I saw one of the patriarchs of the Christians–this title [patriarch] is applied only to the most learned among them–seated on the Rock.[11] He was shaven in head and beard and was wearing a woollen robe decorated with red gold. On his head was a crown of gold embossed with pearls and rubies. His clavicle [clerical collar?] was pierced by a golden ring to which was attached a golden chain three cubits long. At the end of the chain was a golden chalice. [The Patriarch] fills it with baptismal [sanctified] water and baptizes

> patriarchs, bishops, priests and monks. Some would give 1000 dinars to drink [from this chalice], others 500; the least amount given would be 100 dinars. Those who have drunk of this water, bring out the communion host (*qurbān*), as it is known by them.[12] He [Ruwayṭ] asked his companion, 'Who is that?' 'This is the mighty king, in the language of the Franks and the Syrians [the local Christians], and [he is also] the Patriarch .... People learn the sciences of the Christians from him.' It is claimed that whosoever drinks from that chalice, no sin shall be recorded against him, for the Patriarch had absolved him of his sins. It is also said that in the Christian religion, neither deacon nor bishop take office until they have been given to drink of that cup and have in turn given it to seven others. (al-Zuhrī 236-237)

Other writers give us detailed impressions of the *ifranj* as they encountered them. What is interesting is the fact that these writers tend to be more factual than propagandistic in their reports. In their observations, they seem to agree that at times the *ifranj* behaved in a manner which, measured against the strictures of Islamic or Islamicised society, appeared startling, if not reprehensible, to Arabic writers. One example of this is the description of the details of a wedding among the *ifranj* in the Near East by the Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubayr (Ibn Jubayr 278, Broadhurst 320).

Such also were the observations of Usāmah Ibn al-Munqidh (1095-1188), a member of a noble Syrian family, who spent a great part of his life in close contact with Crusader society, recurrently engaged in war against them, but equally often in friendly association with them during periods of peace. His impressions of the *ifranj* as he encountered them are preserved in his memoirs entitled *Kitāb al-i'tibār* ("The Book of [my] Point of View"). In this work he remarks that the *ifranj* were a people lacking in sense and rough in their comportment. This was particularly true of new-comers, some of whom, nonetheless, acquired the refinement of the East after settling there. He observed that they lacked jealousy or a sense of propriety in matters pertaining to sexuality. He was astonished at their judicial procedures, of which, for example, he found particularly curious their settlement of disagreements by duels, among other means. But, in spite of these peculiarities, he noted that they possessed curious medical "knowledge" (Ibn al-Munqidh 161-170).

These and similar opinions were occasionally reflected in subsequent writings, maintaining an image of the *ifranj* as being stalwart in battle, vulgar in their demeanour, and lax in matters of sexuality. Such an image is,

perhaps, best summed up by the fourteenth-century Arabic writer al-Ḥimyarī (d. 1348):

> The swords of the *ifranj* are superior to those of India. Precious slaves are brought from their land [*ifranjah*] while they import slaves from the land of the Slavs. There is hardly to be found among the *ifranj* an aging or handicapped person. Intercourse with unmarried women is not forbidden to them. If their elders or rulers break their word they are disgraced and are constantly rebuked for this disgrace. Children of their nobility are nursed away from their parents, not knowing them until they [the children] reach maturity, at which time they return home and treat their parents as lords to whom they are but slaves.
>
> (al-Ḥimyarī 50, Lévi-Provençal 32 [French])

In the course of image-making, individuals or groups tend to emphasize or, at times, fabricate negative qualities about the other. Apart from some positive glimpses in secular writings (*Aucassin et Nicolette*, as one example), medieval Latin literature formulated an intensely negative image of Islam and the Muslims, based on little or no real knowledge.[13] Arabic writers, as well, engaged in representing Europe and the Europeans, positing them in the realm of the exotic, but found them less stimulating to their curiosity than the peoples of Asia or parts of Africa. Such impressions of Europe and the Europeans as had initially been based on the reports of others, were subsequently expanded once the two groups encountered each other during the period of the Crusades. Arabic writers such as Usāmah ibn al-Munqidh found it possible to speak of the good qualities of the *ifranj* and to describe them as hardy and industrious, orderly and obedient. But they somehow did not fully meet the standards of what was perceived to be a civilized society. The reasons for this attitude were not religious, in spite of Islam's rejection of certain, but by no means all, of the doctrines of Christianity. These doctrinal differences were the premise for Europe's rejection of the Muslims. Rather, for Arabic writers measuring the Europeans against the refinement of the Persians or the Byzantines, or that of the pre-Islamic peoples of the Near East, the *ifranj*, to whomever the term applied, weighed lightly in the scales. But in balance, neither Latin nor Arabic writers were able or willing to fully explore and discover the rich qualities of the other.

## Notes

1. I use the term "Arabic" rather than "Arab" in order to emphasize the philological rather than the "ethnic" (or religious) affiliation of the various writers. Regardless of their regional or "ethnic" background, the writers utilized Arabic, the language of Islam, as their medium of expression. "Arab" as an ethnic term has very little to defend or substantiate it. The components of Arabic society were descendants of the people of the Arabian Peninsula (who identified themselves by reference to their respective tribes, and for whom the term "Arab" simply meant "nomad" rather than "city-dweller"), the semitic-speaking peoples of Syria / Lebanon / Palestine / Iraq, the Egyptians (non-semitic speaking), the Berbers of North Africa, the Romano-Iberians of the Iberian Peninsula, the Persian-speaking peoples of modern Iran, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia, and–at a later time–Turkic and other peoples.

2. For a biography of this and other Arabic writers in this essay, see the relevant entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam: A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Mohammadan Peoples* and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new ed.). A concise identification of these writers may be found in the "*tableau des auteurs*" at the beginning of André Miquel's indispensable work (Miquel 1, xi-l).

3. This was one of two books sent by Romanus, the Byzantine co-emperor with Constantine Porphyrogenitos, to 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, the caliph in Córdoba (912-961). The first book was an illuminated copy of the Greek text of Dioscorides' botanical treatise. The second was the Latin text of Paulus Orosius' *Historiae adversum paganos* (trans. as *Ta'rīkh al-'Ālam* [*History of the World*]). The translation took place during the caliphate of the bibliophile al-Ḥakam II (961-976), and was carried out by two Arabic Christians in Spain (Mozarabs). The text has been edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Ta'rīkh al-'Ālam: al-Tarjamah al-'Arabīyah al-Qadīmah*. Beirut, 1982.

4. Generally a reference to the "land of the Franks" (*ifranj*), but as we shall point out, the terms *ifranj* and *ifranjah* refer as well to peoples other than the Franks or their land.

5. *Sūrah* 30 of the Qur'ān, entitled *al-rūm* and translated variably as "The Romans" or "The Greeks."

6. Erroneously transcribed as *bawīrah*. This error in transcription may be better understood if one bears in mind the closeness in form of the consonants w / r / z; short vowels are normally not written in Arabic.

7. The names and details of Gog and Magog are based on Biblical accounts: Genesis 10:2, where they appear as descendants of Japheth, and Ezekiel 38-39, which point to their eschatological role. The Arabic form appears in the Qur'ān (*Sūra* 21:96) and is incorporated in Arabic / Islamic eschatology, not dissimilar from that encountered in the Bible.

8. The dogma is expressed in the Qur'anic passage, "Yet they did not slay him [Jesus], neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them"; *sūra* 4 ("Women"), vs. 157, in Arberry's translation (Arberry 1955).

9. Al-Bakrī, copied the information from al-Mas'ūdī who reports that he derived his information from a book he saw in Cairo in A.H. 336 (AD 948), written by the Bishop of Gerona, which was then in Christian hands, and presented to the Andalusian caliph in Córdoba (al-Mas'ūdī 2, 7). We have set aside for the time being the discrepancy in the dates in these accounts. Bernard Lewis is of the opinion that this is in reference to Louis IV (936-954), son of Charles III, the Simple (Lewis 8).

10. According to al-Zuhrī, he was a man of learning who was taken prisoner and accompanied a priest to Constantinople and Rome in 1146. He was freed by 1154, when al-Zuhrī met him in Spain in Segura de la Sierra (*shaqūrah*).
11. He refers to the rock under the cupola of the Dome of the Rock, which at that time had been converted into a Crusader church, *Templum Domini*.
12. The inaccuracies contained in the description of the rite are apparent. I presume that al-Ruwayt is describing the rite of communion, with which rite he is not acquainted. The description, therefore, may be that of the presiding celebrant giving communion (both elements) to the assisting administrators, who in turn offer it (one element) to other worshippers within and outside the structure of the "church," the converted Dome of the Rock.
13. This problem has been best treated by the late Norman Daniel in several of his writings, particularly in his *Islam and the West*. See also his essay "Spanish Christian Sources."

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