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Discontinuities in the Vision of Islam Between Medieval France and Castile: A Comparison Between *Les Chétifs* and its Castilian Translation

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Classical historiography defines the Crusades as the military campaigns launched by Western Christians powers to conquer Muslim territory between the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The historical term, though, is still entangled to its current semantical connotations: namely, as a confrontation of two distinct blocs, a joined and often zealous effort towards a common enemy, and ultimately a clash of civilisations.[1] When examined closely, the events and evidence of the period demand nuanced approaches on the monolithic and unchanging perception of Christianity or Islam.

The following article examines the differing perspectives and understandings of Islam held by two related texts, each representing specific layers of French and Castilian societies in the times of Crusades. A careful and detailed comparison of the twelfth century French epic *Les Chétifs* and its late thirteenth-century Castilian version reveals significant interpolations and glosses that upset the notion of a faithful medieval translation. The textual variations here identified and discussed highlight problematic differences in the understanding of certain aspects of Islamic worship and theology from the perspective of late medieval French and Castilian texts, making clear that the alleged common enemy

1. Gary Dickson, Thomas F. Madden. "Crusade as Metaphor" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 9, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/event/Crusades/Crusade-as-metaphor

of both Christian societies is not identical. After a thorough social context of the production of the Castillian manuscript, this paper approaches this problem with a word-for-word comparison of certain excerpts from both texts, and then proceeds to interpret their differences within the literary and historical background of production. This paper is strongly inclined towards the study of the Hispanic text, as it focuses on the variations found in the unedited and oldest copy of the Castilian version.[2] However, these variations are examined before a scrupulous reading of the French text and are solely dedicated to Islamic references.

Texts and Contexts: *Les Chétifs* in Castilian

Around the twelfth century, the French epic genre was limited to poems that sang the deeds of the First Crusade and depicted the relations between Christians and Muslims, both historical and imaginary.[3] The manuscript copies we have today mostly date to the following century, and consequently, we only know them through latter, heavily interpolated, versions. The main text of this article, *Les Chétifs,* is a *chanson de geste* – a song of heroic deeds – positioned between two epic narratives that recount the besiege and capture of Seljuk Antioch in 1098 and the conquest of Jerusalem the next year.[4] As opposed to these two mostly historical accounts, *Les Chétifs* is inspired by historical events but it is

2. The manuscript at the *Biblioteca Nacional de España* (BNE) with the reference mss/1920, dating from the late 14th or early 15th centuries, is the oldest copy we have of the Castilian translation of *Les Chétifs*. It remains unedited and it is digitized. http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000045755

3. Jean Subrenat, "*Les Chétifs et l'idée de croisade" in Plaist vos oïr bone cançon vallant? Mélanges offerts à François Suard* ed. Dominique Boutet, Marie-Madeleine Castellani, Françoise Ferrand and Aimé Petit, (Lille: Université Charles de Gaulle-Lille 3, 1999), 2:879-91; Alexandre Winkler, *"La «* littérature des croisades » existe-t-elle ?", *Le Moyen Age* 114, no. 3 (2009), 603–18. https://doi.org/10.3917/rma.143.0603

4. All copies of the poem are found between two other epic titles: *La Chanson d'Antioche* and the *Conquête de Jérusalem*. Keith Busby, *Codex et Contexte : Lire la littérature médiévale française dans les manuscrits* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2022), 228.

composed of entirely fictional actions and geography.[5] It follows a group of pilgrims supposedly taken prisoner during the Battle of Civetot in 1096, led by Peter the Hermit. Three of these captives (*chétifs*) each appear in an episode where they assist the Muslim King of Oliferne, Corbaran, who captures and later releases them thanks to their accomplishments in duels, fighting a dragon and liberating a toddler from a furious ape.[6] Why, then, was the Castilian version of this fanciful text sponsored by the king Sancho IV in the late 13th century? And why was it included in the compilation and translation of prose historical materials on the Crusades today known under the title of *Gran Conquista de Ultramar* (henceforth *GCU*)?[7]

The period immediately prior to Sancho IV marks a turning point in the production of Castilian and, to a significant extent, European historiography. The cultural blossoming under the reign of his father and political rival, Alfonso X – called "The Learned" for his resolute practice of science, poetry, and especially history – is exceptionally erudite and represents a huge effort in the collection of manuscript sources intended to put together new historic material.[8] This cultural production should be considered as both a necessary framework for the intellectual pursuits of Sancho, the new king, and as a point of inflection in order to distinguish his own achievements from his father's legacy. Sancho's historical project, thus, becomes the banner of an independent political enterprise that opposed his father's works, but it is also indebted to Alphonso's

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5. "*Les Chétifs* is set against an oriental background in which geographical reality shares a common frontier with poetic imagination, and in many cases it is hard to decide on which side of that frontier the action takes place." Geoffrey Myers, *Les Chétifs,* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1981), xxii.

6. *Chétif* means captive, prisoner in old French.

7. It can be translated as *Great Conquest Overseas*. Other materials include the translation of *La Chanson d'Antioche*, the *Conquête de Jérusalem,* the *Eracles* (a vernacular version and continuation of William of Tyre's *Historia*), a Castilian version of the Swan Knight legend, and other Carolingian narratives. Franciso Bautista, "La composición de la *Gran Conquista de Ultramar*", *Revista de literatura medieval* 17, (2005): 34.

8. Kirstin Kennedy, *Alfonso X of Castile-León: Royal Patronage, Self-Promotion and Manuscripts in Thirteenth-Century Spain* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 15; Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980), 110.

models and methods for writing history. I propose that these convergences and divergences with the immediately preceding tradition will shape the translation of *Les Chétifs* and introduce potential discontinuities with its French source, particularly concerning its representation of Islam.

Sancho's tumultuous relationship with his father emerged in the wake of a disagreement over the right to the crown. He rebelled in 1282, his father disinherited him, and the two men would remain permanently estranged. Furthermore, Sancho viewed with disdain the failure of his father's legal and fiscal reforms, as well as the general disappointment that had accompanied a costly and fruitless aspiration to the crown of the Holy Roman Empire. During this period, the failures of the Crusaders in the Holy Land intertwined with Spanish offensives against the Marinid dynasty and the Nasrids of Granada, but the latter experienced a slowdown under Alfonso, who preferred a stable border equivalent to a truce rather than the significant expenses of war against the Muslim kingdoms. Ultimately, Sancho antagonized his father on matters of political ambition and favoured a continuation of the southern conquests of the peninsula.[9]

In this line of thought, several authors support the idea that two key elements clearly distinguish Sancho's historical project from that of his predecessor.[10] First, the questioning of the enterprise of scientific renewal (i.e. astrology) promoted by Alfonso through Arab knowledge, prompted Sancho to pursue an opposite direction and develop a pronounced

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9. Daniel Baloup, "Granada and Castile: A Long Conflict," in *The Nasrid Kingdom of Granada between East and West*, ed. Adela Fábregas (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 444.
10. Olga Pisnitchenko, "Molinismo - modelo cultural na corte de Sancho IV (1284-1295). Em busca de uma nova representação social" *Roda da Fortuna* 8, no. 2 (2019): 110; Robert, Sylvie. "La translation du *Libro del Tesoro de Brunet Latin au cœur des enjeux culturels et politiques sous Sanche IV.» e-Spania. Revue interdisciplinaire d'études hispaniques médiévales et modernes 36 (2020).* https://doi.org/104000/e-spania.35596; Enrico Boccaccini, *Reflecting Mirrors, East and West: Transcultural Comparisons of Advice Literature for Rulers (8th-13th Century),* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 244; Carlos Alvar, Traducciones y traductores: materiales para una historia de la traducción en Castilla durante la Edad Media. (Alcalá de Henares: Centro Estudios Cervantinos, 2010), 38.

inclination toward French sources.[11] Secondly, a turn towards an orthodox religious discourse that subordinated knowledge to piety, which brought political discourse closer to preaching, and which claimed religious war against Islam as praiseworthy.[12] Thus, the main sources used by Sancho in his historical enterprise had a trans-Pyrenean origin and were imbued with a crusading spirit of military mobilization to the Holy Land. This spirit is displayed by already legendary figures like Godfrey of Bouillon – central to the deep structure of the *GCU* – and Louis IX, who was on the verge of canonization.[13]

At the same time, from a practical standpoint, it was more than understandable that Sancho would have used the rich materials gathered throughout the Learned King's reign, as well as the methods used for translation and book composition by his scholars, either to continue his works, with his own stamp, or to undertake new projects. What were these methods and materials? In the Iberian thirteenth century, the norm was that chronicles and histories had a universal and moralizing vocation.[14] They were also constructed through legendary and saintly figures as constitutive elements of the heritage of ancient knowledge and power.[15] Moreover, the

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11. French manuscripts in the 13th century, mostly produced in universities, were models of authority and circulated vigorously with students from the Iberian Peninsula who studied in Paris and had, often, important connections with local courts. William J. Courtenay, "Spanish and Portuguese Scholars at the University of Paris in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: The Exchange of Ideas and Texts," in *Medieval Iberia: Changing Societies and Cultures in Contact and Transition*, ed. Ivy A. Corfis and Ray Harris-Northall, (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2007), 110–19; Chiara Ruzzier, "Les manuscrits de la Bible au XIIIe siècle: quelques aspects de la réception du modèle parisien dans l'Europe méridionale," in *Medieval Europe in Motion: The Circulation of Artists, ed. M.A. Bilotta, (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2018), 288.* It must be acknowledged that Alphonse also used French sources, specially those related to the Ancient world.

12. The influence of the ecclesiastical discourse and the figure of Bernard Clarivaux was a major reason for the opposing relation towards Islamic culture and knowledge. Alvar, *Traducciones y traductores,* 38.

13. Bautista, "La composición," 51.

14. Juan Carlos Conde, "Para una teoría de la historiografía de ámbito universal en la Edad Media" in *Teoría y práctica de la historiografía hispánica medieval,* ed. Aengus Ward (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2000), 167.

15. Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*, 26, 63.

sources from which these stories were drawn, whether Latin or vernacular, were essentially written,[16] diverse in origin and content, and subject to changes and interpolations with clear political biases.[17] Regarding the state of translation practices, the time was imbued with an encyclopaedic atmosphere influenced by the revival of vernacular languages from the previous century, which created a blurred boundary between the task of the translator, author, glossator, and interpreter. This was not only regarding the translation of religious material, as was customary, but also to the translation of historiography.[18]

This historical and intellectual overview allows me to explain why an epic poem like *Les Chétifs* could be considered a reliable source and part of the compilation of historical materials for Sancho IV. Even if it was an authoritative source, the manuscript transmission context of the time does not exclude politically motivated interventions on the part of the translator due to the complex political panorama of the Crusades. Interestingly enough, although *Les Chétifs* can be considered as an intermediate narrative between two historically inspired poems, in political terms, there is nothing at stake for Sancho's ambitions within the poem's imaginary events and characters. Yet, the glosses and interpolations by Castilian hands intervene at points where there are differences regarding Islamic religion. This situation further motivates the study of the variations between the French *Les Chétifs* and its Castilian version.

Les Chétifs and its Translation Face-to-Face

The comparison between *Les Chétifs* and its Castilian translation is not unprecedented. As early as 1940, Suzanne Duparc-Quioc noted that

16. The relation of most medieval historians to historical reality was solely textual. Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique,* 115; Conde, "Para una teoría", 185.
17. Inés Fernández-Ordóñez, "Variación en el modelo historiográfico alfonsí en el siglo XIII : Las versiones de la Estoria de España," in *La historia alfonsí: el modelo y sus destinos (siglos xiii-xv)*, ed. Georges Martin (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2000), 44. https://doi.org/104000/books.cvz.2175.
18. Alvar, *Traducciones y traductores,* 27-39.

many of the sources of the GCU, including *Les Chétifs*, "were reproduced with scrupulous fidelity" and that, in general, "we can be sure of the compiler's fidelity"[19]. Later, Geoffrey Myers did not hesitate to consult the translation of the poem for his own critical edition of *Les Chétifs*, he estimated that "it is nearly a straight translation of the French verse, although the redactor does add, alter, and comment now and again,"[20] but no significant explanations are further developed. Finally, Carol Sweetenham, the English translator of *Les Chétifs*, considers that the *GCU* "translates the B.n. fr 12558 version virtually word for word"[21]. In all cases, scholars focus on the French tradition and relegate the Spanish text to a secondary position, thus overlooking its variants.

Francisco Bautista is the only scholar who, focusing on the Castilian testimonies of the *Les Chétifs* translation, makes a partial comparison between the manuscript, the printed version of 1503[22], and the French poem. He asserts that although there are some additions, comments, and notable differences[23]– which are not systematically studied – "it is a translation very close to the original French"[24]. Bautista transcribes the last three folios of the manuscript in parallel with the printed version and the critical edition of the poem. The present article introduces unprecedented variations of the last 20 folios of the Castilian unedited manuscript in parallel to its correspondent source.

As mentioned, the narrative of *Les chétifs* begins where the account of the capture of Antioch ends. After losing the battle, Corbaran, the king of Oliferne, retreats to Sormasane, the capital of his lord, the Sultan of Persia, to report that the Sultan's son, Brohadas, who was killed in the battle, has been brought back for burial. Upon Corbaran's arrival in the

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19. Suzanne Duparc Quioc, "La Chanson de Jérusalem et la *Gran Conquista de Ultramar*," Romania 66, no. 261 (1940): 323.
20. Myers, *Les Chétifs*, xiv.
21. Carol Sweetenham, *The Chanson des Chétifs and Chanson de Jérusalem: Completing the Central Trilogy of the Old French Crusade cycle* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 22.
22. Louis Cooper, *La gran conquista de Ultramar* (Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1979)
23. Bautista, "La composición", 41.
24. Bautista, "La composición", 35.

kingdom, the Muslims are celebrating the feast of John the Baptist. The French poem reads: "all the Turks of Coroscane had assembled there to celebrate in style the feast of st John, whom they held in great honour."[25]

In contrast, the Castilian version reads: "They gathered there [in Sormasane] with many people from all parts to honour the feast of Saint John the Baptist, which they call *alhanzara*, which they make very rich and with very great devotion, because the Moors [were] very happy with the feast of Saint John the Baptist, and they praised it a lot."[26]

What is the relevance of the Castilian gloss here? Both the poem and its translation refer to the festivities associated with the summer solstice. With respect to feast of Saint John itself, although originally pagan, it was celebrated around the solstice and was established in both the Eastern and Western Christian worlds as early as the fourth century. It is difficult to determine exactly to what oriental scenario does the anonymous author of *Les chétifs* refer. It could be a transposition of Saint John's feast into the Muslim world that are here represented (in this case, the Seljuks of the eleventh century), which would not be surprising within the context of epic poetry, as we will see. Or perhaps it is an indication of solstice celebrations carried out by Muslims (or Eastern Christians) during the time of the First Crusade. Paradoxically, in comparison to the reference in *Les Chétifs*, the Spanish gloss can be traced and explained more easily. Indeed, the mention of *alhanzara* in the context of the thirteenth or fourteenth century in the Iberian Peninsula is quite understandable:

Since the ninth century, in the Islamic-dominated Peninsula, the popular Mozarabic feast of the solstice and the courtly traditions

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25. Sweetenham, *Chanson des Chétifs, 68.* Cf. the original verses 58-60 *: "De Corocane i furent tot li Turc assanblé / Por une rice feste que il ont celebré. / Del baron saint Jehan, qu'il ont molt honeré."* (Myers, *Les Chétifs*, 4).

26. All transcriptions and translations from the Castilian manuscript are my own. I opted for a literal translation in order to conduct a close reading. "Se ayuntaron y con muchas gentes de todas partes para onrrar la fiesta de Sant Johan Bautista a que ellos dizen alhanzara, que la fazen ellos muy rrica et con muy grant devoçion, ca los moros mucho sse alegran estonçes con la fiesta de Sant Johan Bautista et mucho la onrravan." (BNE 1920 fol. Fol. 185 va) The manuscript reads "albacantara", most probably a copy mistake for "Alhanzara" found in the printed version of 1503. Cf. Cooper, *La gran conquista,* 2:299.

brought from the East were assimilated into the feast of al-ʿ*anṣara*[27] or al-*mahraǧān* in Al-Andalus.[28] Several Arabic and Spanish sources testify to the traditions and festivities in honour of John the Baptist shared by members of the three religions that, for centuries, took place in Al-Andalus during the month of June. [29] However, what is notable is that, even at the time of the translation of *Les Chétifs*, the addition of the word *alhanzara* is still the subject of a gloss of encyclopaedic nature. The author thus needed to clarify a well-established fact that might have caused confusion among the Castilian noble circles of the thirteenth century to whom this translation was intended: the feast of the day of Saint John is well and truly the *al-ʿanṣara*. This confirms not only that Muslim festivities were not strange to readers as they were celebrated in the name of John the Baptist with "the greatest devotion," but also, that Islamic references in the original French are to be taken with great care in the Castilian version.

Later in the narration, a Muslim character preaches during the burial ceremony of the Sultan's son: "The apostolic Caliph began a sermon: — Let anyone who already has ten wives give some thought to procreating, that is how we will increase our numbers to fight the Christians. The children who result will be a redoubtable force."[30] The Castilian version, on the other hand, prefers the following reading: "An *alfaje*, so they call their clergymen, and [indeed] he was one of their most important clergymen as well as a bishop of their law, preached to them and told them that those

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27. I follow *Arabica*'s transliteration norms of Arabic.

28. The Mozarabs were the Arabic speaking Christians of Al-Andalus (Muslim ruled Iberia).

29. S. G. Armistead, J. H. Silverman, "La Sanjuanada: ¿huellas de Una Ḫar a Mozárabe En La Tradición Actual*?" Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 18, no. 3 (1965): 436–43. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40297770; Villagra, Mabel. "Celebrar San Juan En Al-Andalus: De La 'Ansara a Los Moriscos." *Historia y arabismo*, June 24, 2015. https://historiayarabismo.wixsite.com/recreahistoria/single-post/2015/06/24/CELEBRAR-SAN-JUAN-EN-ALANDALUS-DE-LA-ANSARA-A-LOS-MORISCOS

30. Sweetenham, *Chanson des Chétifs,* 70. Original verses 149-154 read "L'apostoiles Califes conmence a sermoner: / 'Cil qui a or .X. femes, si penst de l'engenrer, / Si croistera nos pules por crestïens mater; / Li enfant qui venront feront molt a douter, / Des Frans nos vengeront, nel vos quier a celer, / De le gent maleoite qui no loi velt fauser.'" (Myers, *Les Chétifs*, 6)

who had wives should work hard to have many children to avenge their dead."[31]

The religious figure in question is referred to as the "apostolic caliph" in the French poem; an amalgam of Muslim (caliph) and Christian (apostolic) terms intended to designate a high-level priest. While even in the early centuries of Islam's history, the responsibility for guiding the religious community fell, in theory, to the caliph, the association in the poem of a caliph with a high-ranking priest is rather linked to a poetic practice of the French epic, which consisted in describing a strange and exotic Muslim world in terms of a local and known reality that will repeat in further examples.[32]

This is not the case with the Castilian version. The translator decides to use *alfaje*, a rare term and an old version of *faqīh*[33] (a scholar of Islamic law) which corresponds to the translator's subsequent gloss: identifying *alfaje* as a clergyman and a "bishop of their law." This gesture does not only reject definitively the term caliph in the poem, and its uncanny association with "apostolic," but interprets the role of the preacher character, reframing it in a more credible Islamic context for a Castilian reader.

Finally, the omission of the exaggerated number of wives of the Muslim audience corresponds both to a discrepancy between the generic decorum of Castilian historiography and the minstrel hyperbole and

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31. "Estonçe un alfaje que dizen por su clérigo ellos et era uno de los sus clérigos mayores así como obispo de la su ley et predicóles et díxoles desta guisa que aquellos que avíen mujeres que se trabajasen de fazer muchos fijos que vengasen los sus muertos." (BNE 1920 fol. Fol. 187ra)

32. Gerald Herman, "Some functions of Saracen names in Old French Epic Poetry." *Romance Notes* 11, no. 2 (1969): 430-3. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43800568; William Wistar Comfort, "The Literary Rôle of the Saracens in the French Epic." *PMLA* 55, no. 3 (1940): 628. https://doi.org/10.2307/458731.

33. *Diccionario histórico de la Lengua Española* (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1933) 1:420,2. Note that the word "al-faqui" is registered in 16th century spanish as "clergyman or scholar, clergyman of ecclesiastical order", see Fray Pedro de Alcalá, *Vocabulista arávigo en letra castellana. En Arte para ligeramente saber la lengua aráviga*. (Granada: Juan Varela, 1505), 101.

comedy. [34] Indeed, in the French *chanson de geste* the Muslim character was most of the times represented as a lustful caricature that could have dozens of wives, and was a usual protagonists of comic relief.[35] In contrast, the Castilian version must be understood as a truthful account and transmitted in all seriousness as a historical account commissioned by the king.

Like the example of the *alhanzara* festival, and others we'll mention later, the variation in the translation of a French opting for "apostolic Caliph" (accompanied by a gloss) shows that the translator is systematically on his guard when faced with a word linked to the Muslim world. The reason for this? At the time of the translation, between the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula had already had contacts of all kinds with the various Muslim powers that had succeeded one another for half a millennium.[36] In the time of Sancho IV, as mentioned above, although there was an intentional dismissal of Arab sources and sciences, the knowledge and rapport that the Spaniards had of Muslim society was far more tangible and had a firmer basis than that of the French, especially in the context of an epic crusade cycle tradition.

Nonetheless, is worth to note that the translator's work follows broadly the narration of the poem despite the contradictions with the factual Iberian reality. Variations and glosses, in this case, do not seek to resolve these disagreements; they indicate hesitation and manifest the translator's effort to present a text and context that are comprehensible to the trans-Pyrenean audience.

The best example proving this is found in one of the major discrepancies in the Castilian translation of *Les Chétifs*. It involves the confrontation with the literary pantheon of fictional gods inherited from the earliest French epic cycle of the late eleventh century. The *Chanson*

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34. See, for instance, the erasure of insults of verses 203,1534 and 3781 and sexual remarks of verse 649.
35. Comfort, "The Literary Rôle", 636; Herman, "Some functions", 428.
36. Baloup, "Granada and Castile", 441.

de Roland, the eldest and most prominent vernacular *chanson de geste* in France, inaugurates a curious *topos* among the epic tradition according to which the Muslim enemy worships a series of deities who, alongside Muhammad (treated as a pagan god) constitute a polytheistic pantheon that includes names such as: Tervagant, Apollin, Cahu, Jupin, Baraton, Lucifer, Fabur, Tartarin, and many others.[37] Often of disputed origin and etymology, these pagan deities are invoked by Muslim characters or mentioned by narrators in relation to the worship of their enemies which, according to the poetic logic, must be diametrically opposed to Christian faith, as if it were the reversed and distorted image of a mirror.

In *Les Chétifs*, the first four names from the list mentioned above, including Muhammad, are scattered among the interventions and curses of the antagonistic characters. Given the strange and unprecedented nature of this topos in the Castilian context of the thirteenth century, the translator is clearly confused and unsettled by this fictitious pantheon. Indeed, medieval Iberian Christian societies had coexisted with Islam for a long time, which was not the case of the French society. By the time of the translation in the court of Sancho IV, as stated before, at least four centuries of battles, truces, and population movements had occurred in the Iberian Peninsula between Christians and Muslims. This is not comparable with the legendary memories of the battle of Tours between the Umayyad and Frankish troops in 732, or even with the far events of the first Crusade that inspired those of the respective epic cycle. Indeed, the "Saracen" was a distant and eerie character for the public of the *chanson de geste*, but a rivalling neighbour for the historical readers of the Castilian court.

When faced with the poem, the translator finds that this epic and foreign view of Islam casts doubt on a more immediate experience of Iberian society with Muslim powers and populations. Regarding the plot

37. Marcel Françon, " Tervagant," *Revue Internationale d'Onomastique* 5, no. 2, juin (1953) :156. https://www.persee.fr/doc/rio_0048-8151_1953_num_5_2_1336; Francesco Montorsi, *Mémoire des anciens. Traces littéraires de l'Antiquité aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Genève : Droz, 2022), 70-1.

of *Les Chétifs*, the fictional god "Tervagant" appears several times in the first stanzas of the poem. The Castilian version utterly omits the name of the deity when translating the verses 33 and 195 (cf. fol. 184 vb and 187 va, respectively) out of puzzlement or convenience. Between these omissions, the translator encounters again with the obscure name twice and interprets it in two different ways. The first iteration comes up during the burial of the son of the Sultan of Persia, where there is a detailed description of the ceremony, the embalming and the grief of the circumstance: "They had the body anointed with very rich unguent and wrapped up in a golden shroud; then they had it carried to the place right in front of Tervagant. Had you been there you could have seen how the incense-burners smoked [...] They had the body laid to rest in front of Tervagant and had a superbly rich tomb cast for it in gold and silver."[38]

The Castilian version reads: "They carried him and anointed him with an anointing which they called balsam [...] They took him to a very honoured mosque which was in a place they called Corravava [sic] and they lit many censers and candles, and held a service according to the law of Muhammad and gave great offerings for his soul in display of their wealth."[39]

The more prominent elements of the narrative are present in the Castilian version: the sadness of the occasion, the singular embalming, the offerings, and the candles. However, there is an interpretation of the unknown elements from the context of the plot. Firstly, the French word *dïaspre* (golden shroud) is mistaken for a balm; secondly and most importantly, the allusion to Tervagant, translated here as "Corravava,"

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38. Sweetenham, *Chanson des Chétifs,* 69. Cf. verses 138-48 "De molt rice ongement fisent le cors laver, / En .I. dïaspre a or l'ont fait enbausemer; / Tres devant Tervagan ont fait le cors porter. / La peüssiés veïr encensiers enbraser, / Candelabres et cierges et lanpes alumer [...] Tres devant Tervagan font le cors enterrer, [147] Molt rice sepulture d'or et d'argent fonder." (Myers, *Les Chétifs*, 5-6)

39. "Et desí tomaronle et levaronle muy unçiado con la unción que dizen bálsamo [...] et levaronle a una su mezquita muy onrada que era en un logar a que ellos llamavan Corrvava (sic) et fizieron muchos ensensarios et candelarios [...] et fizieron por el sus ofiçios segunt la su ley de Mahomat et dieron grandes ofrendas por su alma tantas que mostraron un grant aver..." (BNE 1920 fol. Fol. 186 vb.)

suddenly becomes a toponym ("in a place they called..."). The translator, based on the ritual context, deduces that the scene takes place in a mosque, which is nowhere to be found in the poem. As a result of the reiteration of the strange term the translator is compelled to gloss the text of his source to explain his public about an unknown and disturbing element.

Further in the poem, a Muslim character, Calabre the mother of Corbaran, swears by Tervagant when referring to the state of the war prisoners (i.e. the characters on whom the narration is built): "—That is of no concern to me, said Calabra. In the name of my god Tervagant, bring them over there for me in front of Corbaran. He wants to talk to them and tell them what he wants."[40] However, the translation reads: "For the sake of the god Çervagan [sic], I do not care if they cry. And here the story calls Çervangan [sic] to a highly venerated temple of a god they worshipped and believed to be holy and powerful. Then the queen commanded the warden to take the captives and bring them to the palace so his son could speak with them."[41]

The gloss here is clear, the name of the divinity, now closer to the original name, becomes the name of a temple that shelters a god. Although the previous semantic similarity to a toponym is maintained to preserve narrative continuity, the translator's confusion is evident in the textual variations with the French poem and, ultimately, does not offer a logical or uniform solution. One can only emphasize the hesitation of the translator when confronted to this pantheon of epic tradition. Like the translator himself, the Castilian readers would likely be disoriented by these deities and the context of their apparition.

Objectively the effect of this *topos* discredits the Muslim religion

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40. Sweetenham, *Chanson des Chétifs*, 74. Verses 337-40 read : "Ne m'en caut! dist Calabre, Par mon deu Tervagant, / Menés les [moi] lasus, tres devant Corbarant, / K'il velt parler a eus et dire son sanblant." (Myers, *Les Chétifs*, 10).

41. "Por el Dios Çervagan non me ynchal de su llorar pues así es. Et Çervangan llama aquí la estoria a un su templo que preçiavan ellos muncho de un su dios que adoraban ellos a quien teníen ellos por muy santo et muy poderoso, et después d'esto mandó la reina al carçelero que tomase los cativos et que los levase suso al palacio a su fijo que quiere fablar con ellos." (BNE 1920 fol. Fol. 190 ra-b)

validly and effectively both in the French and Castilian contexts. That is to say, hostility toward Islamic civilization was a common theme in the literary context of the *Chétifs'* epic cycle, as well as in the context of the Castilian translation within Sancho's court.[42] However, the translator resorts to omissions, deliberately creates glosses, and adaptations, which are signs of the tension between fidelity to the source and the clarity of the translated text; tension which can be extrapolated to the prestige of the literary French heritage and the social Iberian reality that distrusts it.

Conclusion

These examples demonstrate that in the Castilian translation of *Les Chétifs*, there is also a certain appropriation of the original text. Initially, it is undeniable that a narrative poem of fictional nature can, consistent with the textual transmission context of the time, become a reliable historical source. However, alongside the linguistic translation process, there is an effort by the translator to clarify and update the content of this source according to the reality of the contemporary audience.

In the case of the portrayal of certain elements of Muslim civilization by the French epic tradition transmitted in *Les Chétifs*, it is clear that there is a discontinuity between the experiences and knowledge of Iberian societies, specifically Castilian society of the thirteenth century. Such discontinuity is expressed in the variations, glosses, interpolations, and hesitations observed when comparing both texts in the light of social context.

The examples provided do not represent, as one might initially think, a theological reaction between the source and the translator, who as we saw functions as both glossator and interpreter. Rather, these variations

42. The main driving force of the 13th century rivalry with Granada of several European powers was the control of Gibraltar, see Baloup, "Granada and Castile", 444. Although Sancho places himself in the mythology of the first Crusade by means of Godefroi de Bouillon's legendary ancestor: the Knight of the Swan (cf. note 12), his main military objective is the predominance of maritime commerce by controlling the strait.

reflect a tension between the authority of the written source within the context of medieval European historiography (where encyclopedism, glosses, and compilation techniques are fundamental); and the social reality context of thirteenth century Castile, characterized by turbulent politics and a conflicted and ambiguous relationship with the Muslim enemy.

On a broader spectrum, the inherent tension in the translation task and the variations it exemplifies are textual evidence of the discontinuity between France and Castile when it comes to the understanding of Muslim civilization during the time of Crusades. Although the political ambitions of both societies converged in the idea of an armed uprising against the Muslim rival, this does not mean they had the same vision or regard for Muslim society, and specifically for Islam. This Muslim *other* cannot be understood as a singular entity in contrast to a European, Western, and even less Christian antagonist. In the context of the Crusades, this *other* must be understood as changing, situational, and constructed in tension between an authoritative manuscript culture and a given social reality.

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