RESÜMEE


Taking up this volume’s stated theme of examining the “labeling of self and other in historical contacts between religious groups,” the following article proposes to provide some thoughts on perceptions of Latin Christianity in the “medieval” Arab-Islamic world of the seventh to fifteenth centuries. In this context, the analysis of labels is regarded as a tool which can contribute to understanding the phenomenon of intercultural perception. Consequently, the first part of the article is dedicated to methodological reflections on the reconstruction of perception and the role labels play therein, while the sec-

ond part concentrates on the terminology used by Arab-Islamic scholars to circumscribe Latin Christianity. “Latin Christianity” can only be regarded with certain reservations as referring to a “religious group”: with respect to the late antique Mediterranean, the term connotes a specific form of Christianity represented by the exponents of patristic literature in Latin. Concerning medieval Europe, it serves to label a specific form of Christianity centered, to a certain extent, on the pope in Rome. In a medieval context, “Latin Christianity” – used interchangeably with terms such as “the Latin West” – is also understood as a cluster of medieval European societies with common characteristics, including a specific form of Christianity. Rather than defining a community of people(s) adhering to a certain cult and belief system, it is treated as a “cultural sphere” or “civilization” in contrast to neighboring civilizations in time and space such as “Rome,” “Byzantium,” and “Islam.” Thus, “Latin Christianity” is a scholarly construct: although we do find late antique and medieval texts which contain Christian forms of self-identification in Latin also referring to the Roman heritage, sources produced within the Latin-Christian orbit do not use a Latin equivalent of the term. The traditional way of beginning an article on Muslim perceptions of Latin Christianity would be to state that the medieval Islamic legal distinction between “the abode of Islam” (dār al-islām) and “the abode of war” (dār al-ḥarb) must be regarded as the core of medieval Muslim perceptions of the non-Muslim world, including medieval Europe. Having


8 B. Lewis, The Muslim Discovery of Europe, New York 1982 (reprint 2001), p. 171: “For the Muslim, religion was the core of identity, of his own and therefore of other men’s. The civilized world consisted of the House of Islam, in which a Muslim government ruled, Muslim law prevailed, and non-Muslim communities might enjoy the toler-


10 Since we lack Arab-Islamic sources for certain periods and places, e.g., the first two centuries of Islam or the raiding activities in Italy and Southern France, outside perspectives can help to reconstruct Muslim perceptions. The tenth-century historiographer Rodulfus Glaber, for example, informs us about how Latin Christians felt they were perceived by Muslims. In his chronicle he relates how “Saracen” raiders abducted Maiolus, abbot of Cluny, with the explicit aim of receiving a high ransom. During the abbot’s captivity, one of the captors purposely trod on Maiolus’s Bible with his foot. On account of Maiolus’s protest, the transgressor was severely reprimanded by his fellow raiders, who criticized him for not showing the respect due to the prophets. This provides Glaber with the opportunity to comment on how the “Saracens” regarded the prophets of the Jewish and Christian tradition. See: Rodulfus Glaber, Historiarum libri quinque, ed. and trans. by J. France, in: Rodulfus Glaber Opera, ed. J. France/N. Bulst/P. Reynolds, Oxford 2002, p. 20.
the attribute “Muslim” with an unchanging, stereotyped perception of Latin Christianity and a decisively bipolar worldview. Such an approach adds fuel to a public debate about the relationship between “Islam” and “the West” which is not devoid of unquestioned assumptions of an ideological nature. A macrohistorical approach to the sources – legitimate as such and inherent to the work of most historians – is not open to critique. The problem lies rather in the fact that most writings on the subject lack methodological reflection on how to deal with the phenomenon of perception on such a large scale.

1. Reconstructing Perception: Methodological Considerations

In contrast to natural scientists, philosophers, psychologists, and art historians, most historians analyze the phenomenon of perception on the basis of texts. Texts provide insight into perceptions on different levels:

1.1. Perception and its Documentation in Texts

On a first level, texts document the perceptions formulated by the author(s) of a specific corpus at the time of writing. The author can be defined as the “subject of perception” while the text contains elements that can be labeled as “objects of perception.” A common method of distilling perceptions is to analyze the terminology employed by the author to identify certain objects of perception, such as individuals, groups, or institutions (e.g., “the pope,” “infidels,” “Franks”) in a given text. If the geographer Yāqūt (d. 626/1229) explains that “the pope is the leader of the Franks” or the geographer Abū ’l-Fidā’ (d. 732/1331) writes that “the Galicians […] do not wash their clothes,” they make use of specific labels (pope or Galicians) which are linked to a definition. Yāqūt defines the term “pope” explicitly whereas Abū ’l-Fidā’ defines “Galicians” by attributing a certain behavior and character to them. Yāqūt’s definition is of a rather “factual” nature, while the description rendered by Abū ’l-Fidā’ carries a judgment. In both cases, however, the combination of label and description provides insight into perceptions which – even if they are based on written or oral statements by others – seem to have been regarded as valid and thus shared by the authors of the respective text.

On a second level, the author of the text claims to reproduce the perception of others. In this case, the “subject of perception” in the text is distinct from the author. For example,
al-Qazwīnī (d. 682 / 1283) purports to have received information about the city of Rome from travelers who had set out from Baghdad and whose description of the city he reproduces. Although it is often difficult to prove the veracity of the respective account, the documentation of external perceptions suggests that the author believed them to be of relevance to the public he addressed.

On a third level, the author provides information on the interaction of persons or groups without referring to the perceptions involved. This is the case, for example, when Ibn Hayyān (d. 469 / 1076) relates that ʿAbd Allāh, the son of the amīr ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān proceeded to flee until he reached Charles (Qārluh), the Frankish king.” We can infer from the text that the situation obviously entailed an encounter and mutual appraisal of two persons in a certain phase of Umayyad–Carolingian relations at the end of the eighth century. However, Ibn Ḥayyān’s description does not specify how the persons involved perceived each other, but rather leaves us with a vague notion of how a Muslim seeking political asylum at the court of a Christian ruler may have regarded his host. One could argue that this kind of imprecise evidence should be disregarded. However, in order to reconstruct bygone realities and to avoid eclipsing great parts of the past, it is not sufficient to restrict analysis to labels and explicit statements which grant direct access to the perceptions of authors and those cited by them. Implicit evidence contains relevant information on objects of perception as well as on the relationship between subjects and objects of perception. In many cases, it represents the only key to the perception of those whose vision of the world has not been immortalized in writing.

Approached in this way, source material concerning Muslim perceptions of Latin Christianity gains considerable depth: in his “risāla fī taḥrīm al-ğubn ar-rūmī,” a treatise on the interdiction of “Christian” cheese, the Malikī jurist ʿAṭ-Ṭurṭūšī (d. 520/1126) informs a group of Muslim questioners in Alexandria that it is not advisable to eat cheese imported to Alexandria in ships by the “Rūm,” whom he may have regarded as merchants from the Latin-Christian sphere in this context. In the text, the jurist draws a clear dividing line between non-Muslim impurity and the demands of orthodox Islam, stressing that the cheese in question may have been produced or transported in an impure environment...

---

19 The editor of aṭ-Ṭurṭūšī (d. 520/1126), risāla fī taḥrīm al-ğubn ar-rūmī (Treatise on the Interdiction of “Christian” Cheese), ed. ‘A. aṭ-Turkī, Fās 1997, p. 128, footnote 1, points to the fact that references to places in the text concern only Sicily and al-Andalus. Later geographers such as Ibn Saʿīd al-Maqāribī (d. 685/1286), kitāb al-ḥuṣrafiyya (The Book of Geography), ed. L. al-ʿArabi, Beirut 1970, p. 170, as well as Abū ʿI-Fīḍāʾ (d. 732/1331), taqwīm al-buldān (The Calendar of Countries), ed. J. Reinaud / W. MacGuckin de Slane, Paris 1848, p. 195, mention, however, that cheese and honey were exported to Alexandria from Cyprus, ruled by the Lusignan family since 1192.
soiled by pork fat or alcohol. On the first level, the document allows us to understand the perception of its author. Although the text seems to indicate that at-Ṭurṭūšī held a superior attitude towards representatives of Christianity, we must consider that he is not necessarily hostile to the merchants as such. He does not argue for a general boycott of their merchandise as others have done, but merely insists on the necessity of respecting Muslim norms of purity. On the second level, the document grants access to the perceptions of others: at-Ṭurṭūšī reproduces the opinions of others, stating that he had taken considerable pains to gather the information necessary to form his opinion by asking several people involved about how the cheese in question was produced and transported. On the third level, the text implies that additional perspectives were relevant: it attests to the fact that this cheese had thus far been sold in Alexandria, thereby suggesting that a certain number of Muslims had not regarded buying, perhaps not even selling the product, as problematic. Here the text encourages speculation: the traders who asked the opinion of the Malikī jurist may have had qualms about the commodity’s ritual purity, as at-Ṭurṭūšī claims. It is equally imaginable, however, that they wished to clamp down on a rival product or ruin a rival trader by mobilizing religious arguments. Thus, the document proves that the import of Christian cheese was regarded differently by the various groups concerned. However, because of the implicit character of the textual evidence, it is not possible to define the exact nature of every perception relevant in this context.

1.2. Reconstructing Patterns of Perception on a Macrohistorical Scale

Having dealt with both the possibilities of and constraints on gaining access to perceptions via texts, it is now necessary to consider how to reconstruct patterns of perception on a macro-historical scale. By compiling, arranging, and summarizing appropriate statements, it is possible to define certain patterns of perception characteristic of certain individuals, groups, institutions, and other larger social organisms. However, the larger and the more persistent the social organism to which a certain pattern of perception is

---

20 at-Ṭurṭūšī, risāla fi tahrīm al-ğubn ar-rūmī (as in note 19), p. 125 et passim. I would like to thank my colleague Yassir Benhima for having drawn my attention to this text. For further reading on the question of impurity, see: M. Cook, Magian Cheese: An Archaic Problem in Islamic Law, in: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 47.3 (1984), pp. 449–67.


22 at-Ṭurṭūšī, risāla fi tahrīm al-ğubn ar-rūmī (as in note 19), pp. 128–30.

23 It may be noted in this context that – according to ecclesiastical documents damning the export of strategic material to Muslim societies – the latter never seem to have had any qualms about importing and using weapons and other military equipment imported from Christian Europe, see Concilium Lateranense IV (1215), § 71, in: J. Wohlmuth (ed.), Konzilien des Mittelalters: Vom ersten Laterankonzil (1123) bis zum fünften Laterankonzil (1512–1517), Paderborn 2000, pp. 270, 272–79; Raymond de Penyafort, Summae, vol. 3, Responiones ad dubitabilia, § 1–5, ed. X. de Ochoa / A. Diez, Rome 1976–78, pp. 1024–26; Guillelmus Adae, De modo Sarracenos extirpandi, in: Recueil d’Histoire des Croisades, Documents arméniens, vol. 2, p. 523.

24 at-Ṭurṭūšī, risāla fi tahrīm al-ğubn ar-rūmī (as in note 19), p. 125.
attributed, the more interpretative capabilities are needed. Selection and categorization can produce unacceptable distortions if they are applied without prior reflection. This becomes apparent if one reconsiders the “traditional view” that Muslims of the seventh to the fifteenth centuries generally adopted a superior and hostile attitude towards Latin Christianity and its representatives. It is fairly easy to find material corroborating this assumption: one could cite passages from al-Maṣūdī (d. 345/956), according to which the Franks (al-Ifrānḡa) and other peoples of the north (ahl ar-rubaʿ aṣ-ṣamālī) “are large, their natures gross, their manners harsh, their understanding dull, and their tongues heavy. […] Their religious beliefs lack solidity, and this is because of the nature of coldness and the lack of warmth. The farther they are to the north the more stupid, gross, and brutish they are.”25 The works of al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094) and Abū l-Fidāʿ comment on the primitive character of the Galicians (al-Ḡalāliqa), a perfidious people who never wash,26 while the cosmography of al-Qazwīnī lends itself to illustrating how Muslims looked down on the barbarity of judicial procedures in the innermost “Christian regions” (bāṭin ar-Rūm).27 The Andalusian historiographer Ibn Ḥāyyān (d. 469/1076) describes how victorious Muslims near Barcelona in 197/812–13 called to prayer from above a pile of “infidel heads” (ruʿūs al-kufra) collected after a battle with Carolingian forces, defined as “Franks” (al-Firanḡa) and “enemies of God” (aʿdāʿ Allāh).28 Latin sources seem to confirm the general picture: Albert of Aachen (d. after 1158), for example, tells us that the “Saracens” urinated on crosses in full view of the Crusaders during the siege of Jerusalem.29 Thus, selecting passages which characterize “an Other” in a negative way allows us to reconstruct a particular pattern of perception. But it is self-evident that it is not legitimate to impose a single pattern of perception on all representatives of Islamic civilization at all times and in all places. The Arab-Islamic and the Latin-Christian worlds were not as homogeneous and static as the categories we use might seem to suggest. Speaking in macrohistorical terms, the nature of the “subject of perception” changed considerably between the seventh and the fifteenth centuries: new groups were constantly being integrated into the vast and diverse world of Islam, whose military, political, economic, religious, and social features displayed a certain degree of continuity but were at the same time subject to perpetual modification and change. Accordingly, prevalent perception patterns necessarily evolved all the time. In turn, the “object of perception,” i.e., “Latin Christianity,” can in no way be described as a monolithic, unchanging, and static entity prone to produce uniform impressions in the minds of outsiders.

26 al-Bakrī, kitāb al-masālik wa l-mamālik (The Book of Highways and Kingdoms), § 1530, ed. A. P. van Leeuwen / A. Ferre, Carthage 1992, p. 913; Abū l-Fidāʿ, al-muṭtasar fi aḥbār al-baṣar (as in note 15), vol. 1, p. 120.
27 al-Qazwīnī, aṭḥār al-bilād (as in note 16), pp. 410–11.
28 Ibn Ḥāyyān, as-sufr at-tānī min kitāb al-muqtabīs (as in note 17), p. 136 (fol. 102 alif); Ibn Ḥāyyān, Crónica de los emires (as in note 17), pp. 51–52 (fol. 102r).
The legitimacy of propagating the notion of a single “Muslim” perception is even more questionable if one acknowledges the existence of “third spaces” and “hybrid phenomena” in the contact zones of both cultural spheres. Describing his visit to Sicily, the tenth-century geographer Ibn Hawqal criticizes a group of Muslims called “al-Mušaʾmiḏūn” for having found a religious compromise with their Christian wives (nasrāniyya). Their sons grew up as rather slack Muslims while their daughters remained attached to the Christian faith. Ibn Hawqal’s critical attitude could be regarded as representative of the stance taken by Muslim orthodoxy towards such creative forms of Christian–Islamic cohabitation. One should bear in mind, however, that polemics and juridical measures against hybrid phenomena do not prove merely that boundaries existed, but also that they were transgressed regularly. The group “al-Mušaʾmiḏūn” obviously perceived things differently, but did not put down their vision in writing and are only known to posterity because they were criticized. Along with others — e.g., Muslim women who married Christian men, Muslim children and adults who opted for Christianity, and Muslims who helped the Crusaders (al-Faranī) to vanquish their coreligionaries — they represent a “product” of Christian–Muslim relations whose perception necessarily failed to conform to the normative order proposed by religious orthodoxy on both sides. It is necessary to acknowledge that several centuries of contact in an area reaching from the Iberian Peninsula to the Middle East inevitably produced a diversity of relations between a multitude of subjects and objects of perception. The character of relations was not only dependent on the ever-changing geopolitical situation but also on the specific context. Different contexts can only be categorized or distinguished from each other with difficulty, and the large array of differing constellations makes an exhaustive enumeration impossible. It should be considered, however, that military, political, economic, intellectual, religious, personal, emotional, and other forms of relations were maintained by actors fulfilling various roles: soldiers, diplomats, merchants, scholars, believers, siblings,-bootstrap_paragraph


35 Every manual on the topic will confront the reader with the diverse character of relations between different actors (individuals, groups, institutions, etc.) regarded as representative of both cultural spheres, see, for example: Tolan / Josserand, Les relations des pays d’Islam avec le monde latin (as in note 4).
and lovers, to name only a few, personify a different range of “functional” behavior. It is impossible to determine such behavior, which is necessarily dependent upon individual constellations. Furthermore, it is evident that defining a context according to corresponding roles does not automatically determine a specified set of perceptions, as if applying a mathematical formula. However, generating such an – admittedly artificial – typology forces us to consider a broader range of possible perceptions than the simple and selective analysis of a textual corpus containing explicit statements on, or a specific terminology characteristic of, “the Other.”

1.3. Comparing Variants of Perception

With this in mind, it is possible to approach the sources from a different point of view. A method used to master the intricacies of early medieval Latin hagiography, i.e., the comparison of variants, serves to elaborate similarities, differences, and even contradictions in order to gain insight into a wide range of different possible perceptions.

The juxtaposition of three examples taken from Latin and Arabic sources produced in Muslim al-Andalus between the eighth and the tenth centuries may illustrate how different “subjects of perception” – i.e., a Muslim governor, a marriage-minded Muslim woman, and Muslims involved in the trade of slaves – perceived, from differing perspectives, a specific “object of perception,” in this case Christians under Islamic rule. The continuatio hispana, a Latin-Christian chronicle written around 754, roughly one generation after the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, points to the fact that there was a fiscal dimension to perception. It describes the measures taken by the Muslim governor al-Ḥurr (who ruled 715–19) to establish a working fiscal system in the newly conquered territories, as well as his initiative to restore property to Christian subjects with the aim of raising government revenues in land and property taxes.

Sketching the biography of a Muslim woman who ran away from her family to marry a Christian man and to raise Christian children, the ninth-century priest Eulogius of Córdoba implies that Christianity could hold a certain attraction for some Muslims. A manual for solicitors written in Córdoba by the tenth-century scholar Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār treats representatives of Latin Christianity as “merchandise” whose functional characteristics and value are of primary importance: the manual contains a standard sale contract for a female slave (mamlūka) of Galician (ǧalīqiyya), Frankish (ifranǧīyya), and other origin, followed by a juridical commentary. Among other things, the contract provides for the name of the slave, a comparatively exact physical description, as well as the price paid. The commen-

---

tary not only implies that prices differed for slaves of different ethnic origin, but also treats problematic questions: e.g., what happens in cases where the seller has lied about the slave’s ethnicity, or what is to be done if the woman is pregnant, thus causing the owner trouble and expense. \(^{39}\) It follows that Muslims from al-Andalus perceived Latin Christians differently in accordance with their respective “functional” roles and the general context of encounter.

But if passages are selected in which the “functional roles” are comparable, perceptions vary according to context. The juxtaposition of three different Latin-Christian narratives provides insight into the range of perceptions applicable to a specific “subject of perception” – i.e., Muslim authorities – in contact with a specific “object of perception” – i.e., Latin-Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land: Traveling in greater Syria between 724 and 726, the Anglo-Saxon monk Willibald was first arrested on the grounds of being a spy, then acknowledged as being a harmless pilgrim, eventually equipped with travel documents, and subjected to rigorous customs control before leaving the region via the port of Tyre. \(^{40}\)

Traveling in the late ninth century from Rome via Bari and Egypt to the Holy Land, the monk Bernard became the victim of administrative oppression and was forced to pay for travel documents several times. \(^{41}\) The Annales Althahenses and Lambert of Hersfeld (d. before 1085) report how a large group of pilgrims fell prey to brigands on their way to Jerusalem in 1065, but were saved and escorted to ar-Ramla by troops sent by the responsible Muslim authorities. \(^{42}\)

Finally, a comparison of different passages describing a specific, in this case, military context, opens up another range of perceptions concerning Latin Christians regarded with a view to their strategic utility, the booty they provided, their strategic and technical skills, as well as their fighting spirit. Relating how the Muslim invaders of the Iberian Peninsula captured a group of vinedressers (karrāmīn), slaughtered and cooked one of them, pretended to eat his flesh, and then sent the other vinedressers back home, the ninth-century Egyptian historiographer Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam (d. 257/871) illustrates how Latin Christians were used as tools serving the strategic aim of demoralizing the military opponent. \(^{43}\)

Dwelling extensively on the topic of looting, Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam also insinuates

---

39 Ibn al-ʿAttār, kitāb al-waṭṭāʾiq wa ʿ-saḡḡalāt (The Book of Documents and Archives) – formulario notarial hispano-árabe, ed. P. Chalmeta / F. Corriente, Madrid 1983, pp. 33–36. It has been argued during the discussion of this paper that a “Frankish” female slave’s adherence to Christianity must be regarded as a pre-condition for her status as a slave. However, Islamic law, multifarious and inconsistent, did not automatically regard Christians as potential slaves, and even contains legislation that exempts the “people of the book” such as Christians and Jews from slavery. As always, reality was much more complex, so that even Muslims were occasionally enslaved by their coreligionaries. See: W.G. Clarence-Smith, Islam and the Abolition of Slavery, Oxford and New York 2006, pp. 36–48, under the title “A Fragile Sunni Consensus.” For further reading, see J.C. Miller, Muslim Slavery and Slaving: A Bibliography, in: Slavery and Abolition 13 (1992), pp. 249–71.

40 Hugeburc, Vita Willibaldi, § 4, ed. O. Holder-Egger (MGH Scriptores in folio 15), Hanover 1887, pp. 94–95, pp. 100–101.


42 Annales Althahenses maioris, a. 1065, ed. E. von Oefele (MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 4), Hanover 1891, pp. 68–70; Lampertus Hersfeldensis, Annales, a. 1065, ed. O. Holder-Egger (MGH SS rer Germ. in us. schol. 38), Hanover 1894, pp. 94–98.

that Latin Christians were regarded from an economic perspective as a population that provided booty. In certain passages, the historiographers Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 469/1076) and Ibn al-Aṯīr (d. 630/1233) focus on the military techniques and strategies employed by the enemy. Ibn Ḥayyān describes how “Christian forces” (ḡalā‘ib an-naṣrāniyya) in Northeastern Spain protected themselves from Muslim attack in 200/816 by making use of the terrain, i.e., a steep river gorge and several small inlets, which they secured with beams and trenches, while Ibn al-Aṯīr describes how the Crusaders (al-Faranḡ) constructed a solid wooden tower with a protective covering against fire and stones during the siege of Sidon in 504/1110. The historiographer Abū Šāma (d. 665/1268), in turn, cites a letter in which Saladin heartily criticizes Muslim inertia, opposing the Muslims’ apathy to the religious zeal of the Franks (al-Faranḡ), which made the latter sacrifice their property and lives for their religion (millatiḥim).

Finally, Ibn Ḥaldūn (d. 808/1406) explains that some rulers of the Maghreb tended to employ European Christian mercenaries (ṭa‘īfat al-Ifranḡī ǧundihim) in their internal wars because of the latter’s ability to fight in closed formation.

Thus, confronting and comparing the testimonies of several texts concerning specific “subjects” and “objects” of perception permits us to identify the various differing contexts and context-dependent relationships that necessarily produced many different variants of perception.

Even if only a single subject of perception is concerned, we cannot automatically conclude that one specific perception is dominant. Although we seem able to confirm the existence of individuals whose perception of a specific phenomenon remained consistent over the course of time, it is necessary to acknowledge that human perception is rather flexible and prone to change. This is easily forgotten, considering that perceptions are “locked into position” when formulated and documented, thus conveying the impression that they are static. The impression that a categorical and stereotypical way of thinking was prevalent is reinforced by the fact that, in the context treated here, the majority of extant texts were written – on both sides – by (religiously trained) scholars,

---

44 Ibid., p. 209: He describes how the population of Sardinia prepared for an attack in 110/728, hiding their valuables by burying their gold- and silverware in the waters of a local port and by building an additional roof on one of their churches, storing their money in between both roofs.
45 Ibn Ḥayyān, as-sufr at-ṭāni min kitāb al-muqtabis (as in note 17), p. 139 (fol. 103 alif); Ibn Ḥayyān, Crónica de los emires (as in note 17), pp. 54–55 (103r).
49 See: A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-Jawab al-Sahih, ed. and trans. T.F. Michel, Ann Arbor 2009, pp. 73–74: “Viewed in retrospect from the standpoint of Al-Jawab al-Sahih, Ibn Taymiyya’s attitude towards Christianity developed very little during his lifetime. The course of his life was not like Al-Ghazali’s, with dramatic shifts of position and direction. He demonstrates, rather, a consistent theological synthesis, which he applied in all situations from early in his life as teacher in the Hanbali madrasa in Damascus until his final years when he was imprisoned in the citadel of the same city.”
who thought and wrote conceptually, often stressing the existence of an “Other” in legal, social, economic, political, ethnic, dogmatic, or other terminology. But even in such texts, perceptions change in accordance with the reception and intellectual processing of available information by the respective author in a specific context. In some cases, the available source material obviously influenced the way in which a specific phenomenon was perceived and depicted. As mentioned above, the polymath al-Masʿūdī defines the Franks (al-Ifranḡa) as northern barbarians who have not, due to the climate they live in, developed the intellectual facilities characteristic of civilized peoples. This passage in his historiographical work kitāb at-tanbīh waʾl-iṣrāf (The Book of Admonition and Revision) is clearly based on theories formulated much earlier in ancient Greek ethnography and geography. In his ethno-geographical work “murūḡ ad-dahab wa maʿādin al-ḡawhar” (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems), in turn, al-Masʿūdī depicts a comparatively favorable image of the Franks as a powerful and well-organized people. This description is, as he himself explains, based on a Frankish chronicle which became accessible to him in the Egyptian town of al-Fustāṭ in 337/947 and probably conveyed a more positive image of the Franks.

We can also observe that the context and topic of writing affected the way an author depicted a specific phenomenon: written in the pre-Crusade era, the work of al-Masʿūdī contains no invective against the Franks at all and thus differs considerably from later works written during the period of Latin-Christian expansionism in the Middle East, such as the travel account of Ibn Ǧubayr (d. 614 / 1217). As somebody deeply disturbed by the loss of Muslim territory to Latin-Christian expansionism, Ibn Ǧubayr curses the Franks (al-Ifranḡ) more than once. Nonetheless, the lovely bride which he saw on the occasion of a Frankish wedding (ʿars ifranḡī) in Tyre, the Genoese captain (raʾisuhu wa mutabbiruhu ar-rūmī al-ḡanawī) who expertly steered the ship used by the traveler, as well as King William of Sicily (malik Ṣiqilliya Ġulyām), who saved Christian and Muslim passengers from shipwreck and even surrounded himself with Muslims at court, escape his invective. Juxtaposing the statements of a single subject of perception thus

50 al-Masʿūdī, kitāb at-tanbih (as in note 25), pp. 23–24.
54 E.g., his description of Frankish Acre: Ibn Ǧubayr, riḥla (as in note 33), pp. 276–77.
56 Ibid., p. 285.
points to the fact that it is also necessary to differentiate concerning the perceptions and opinions formulated by a single person. It should have become obvious that limiting Muslim perceptions of Latin Christianity to a single perception pattern is reductionist. It cannot be taken for granted that every Muslim living in the period between the seventh and the fifteenth centuries from the Iberian Peninsula to Central Asia generally held a condescending view of Latin Christianity, or held such a view at every point of his or her life. It is equally difficult to organize perception patterns into a hierarchy, claiming that religious and cultural arrogance always dominated and thus downgraded the importance of other perception patterns. While it seems perfectly possible that such a hostile and superior attitude influenced and even dominated perception and behavior in certain contexts, it seems undeniable that other concerns and attitudes were of greater importance under other circumstances. Radically put, a fixed pattern of Muslim perceptions of Latin Christianity did not exist. Rather, different contexts produced different relationships, which, in turn, gave rise to different perceptions. What we can reconstruct are ranges of perception that apply to specific “subjects of perception” as regards their – by no means consistent – views on a well-defined “object of perception” in a given moment or period, place, and context.

Approaching “Muslim perceptions” of “Latin Christianity” from this angle produces different results and opens up additional perspectives, as will be demonstrated in the following section. Focusing on the evolution of terminology used to circumscribe “Latin Christianity,” it will deal with the question how Muslim scholars writing in Arabic between the seventh and the fifteenth centuries perceived and conceptualized this religious and cultural sphere in the north and northwest of the Islamic world.

2. A Concept of “Latin Christianity” in Medieval Arab-Islamic Scholarship?

2.1. The Lack of an Appropriate Terminology

When referring to Christians, early Islam, as represented by the Qur’ān, already used a differentiated terminology⁵⁸ that was then enriched in the ensuing generations of interpretation.⁵⁹ In the Qur’ān, Christians are occasionally defined toponymically as “Nazareans” (an-naṣārā).⁶⁰ When the common adherence to revealed scripture and the existence of a shared spiritual past is emphasized, they are regarded as “people of the book” (ahl al-kitāb), together with the Jews.⁶¹ When dogmatic differences are highlighted or con-
demned, Christians are included among the “unbelievers” (al-kuffār)\(^{62}\) and are identified as the ones who have “said that God has begotten a son”\(^{63}\) or who have “taken their scholars of scripture, the monks and the Messiah, the son of Mary, as their lords.”\(^{64}\) However, the Qur’ān fails to distinguish between different forms of Christianity. Being a seventh-century text whose essence was formulated in a historical context that predates the Arab-Islamic expansion\(^{65}\) and thus the earliest regular contacts of Muslims with Christians from the northwestern hemisphere, the text is not concerned with a specific form of “Latin Christianity.”

It is evident from contemporary Latin and later Arabic sources that representatives of “Arab-Islamic” civilization were directly brought in touch with various phenomena of “Latin Christianity” during the Muslim expansion into the periphery of the western Mediterranean in the seventh and eighth centuries.\(^{66}\) In view of the fact that the earliest Arab-Islamic accounts of the expansion date from the ninth century, reconstructing contemporary Muslim perceptions of Latin Christianity raises methodological difficulties. It should be considered, however, that – as concerns Western Europe – the geographical horizon of these accounts is restricted to Mediterranean islands, the Iberian Peninsula, and the “lands of the Franks.” This stands in stark contrast to the information provided by geographical works of the late ninth and early tenth centuries, which include other regions further afield such as the British Isles\(^{67}\) and proffer more details, e.g., on the city of Rome.\(^{68}\) Thus, it seems as if the early historiography on the expansion is based on impressions collected earlier and reproduces the limited but expanding worldview of a bygone period.

The early accounts tend to use ethnic and toponymic terms to define the inhabitants of those western regions that had been subject to raids, conquest, or had simply entered the geographical horizon of the expanding forces. In many cases, the fact is acknowledged that these inhabitants adhered to the Christian faith. The Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 238 / 853), for example, refers to a dispute between the last king of the Visigoths (al-Qūṭiyūn), Roderic (Luğrīq), and the Christian populace, the bishops, anddeacons of his

---

\(^{63}\) Qur’ān 2:116: “wa qalū ittāḫaṣa ʾllāhu waladan (…)”.  
\(^{64}\) Qur’ān 9:30: “ittāḫaṣu aḥbarahum wa ruḥbānahum arbāban min dūni ʾllāh wa ʾl-masīḥ ibn Maryam (…)”.  
\(^{65}\) This claim has been questioned by scholars such as J. Wansbrough and P. Crone. For a refutation see F. Donner, Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing, Princeton 1998, pp. 22–63.  
\(^{67}\) Ibn Ḫurrādaḏbih (late ninth cent.), kitāb al-māsālik wa ʾl-mamālik (The Book of Highways and Kingdoms), ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden 1889, p. 231; Ibn Rustah (d. after 913), kitāb aʾlāq an-nafīsa (The Book of Precious Valuables), ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden 1892, p. 130; al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), mūrūq ad-ḡāhab, § 188 (as in note 52), p. 99 (Arab. ed.), p. 75 (French ed.).  
realm (an-naṣrāniyya wa ʾš-šamāmisa wa ḏ-asāqifa). The Egyptian historiographer Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam (d. 257/871) describes how Muslim raiders uncovered the hidden treasures of Sardinia’s populace (ahl as-Sardāniyya) in a church. Possibly referring to Christian artwork, the Iraqi scholar al-Balāḏūrī (d. 279/892) mentions that Muslim raiders found “idols of gold and silver studded with pearls” in Sicily (Siqilliya), which were sent to India in order to receive a higher price for them. The so-called pact of Tudmīr, a rare example of a written agreement between Muslim conquerors and a subjected Christian population in the Western hemisphere, documented in many later sources, guarantees the inviolability of churches and grants a community on the Iberian Peninsula the right to freely exercise their religion (dīnihim). The examples imply that the expanding Muslims did not regard the Christians they encountered in Western Europe as representatives of a specific faction of Christianity which encompassed the entire Western hemisphere and was distinct from Oriental forms. In fact, the extant texts on the topic suggest rather that Muslim scholars of the seventh and early eighth centuries still lacked the necessary knowledge and conceptual tools that appear in later writings.

An early form of categorization, the Arabic term for Europe (Awrūfa) can be found in Arab-Islamic geographical texts of the ninth century which go back to Greek geography. In later centuries, the category “Europe” was not used anymore. Instead, European toponyms and ethnonyms were positioned within the northwestern quadrant of the inhabited world or classified according to their position within one of seven climate zones. A combined religious and geographical definition as in the term “Latin Christendom” does not seem to have existed.

Muslim refutations of Christianity, which were produced in large numbers over the centuries, never define Latin Christianity as an entity in its own right. This is valid even for those scholars who can be considered the theologians nearest to the Latin-Christian orbit. In his treatise entitled “Detailed Critical Examination of Religions, Heresies, and Sects,” Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), who was directly involved in polemic discourse with Christians from Córdoba, has recourse to the “classical” categories known from other theologians from the Eastern parts of the Islamic world. Besides mentioning defunct

70 Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam, futūḥ miṣr wa ʾabārīhā (as in note 43), p. 209.
73 See König, Arabic-Islamic Historiographers (as in note 6).
74 For an extensive but incomplete list of Muslim theological writings on Christianity, see M. Accad, The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part 1), in: Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 14.1 (2003), pp. 68–69. Even more extensive, but also including material which is irrelevant in this context: M. Steinschneider, Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache, Leipzig 1877 (reprint Hildesheim 1966).
historical forms of Christianity, he divides the Christians of his time into the groups Melchites (al-malkāniyya), Nestorians (an-naṣṭūriyya), and Jacobites (al-yaʿqūbiyya). An anonymous Imam from Córdoba (early thirteenth century) does not care to categorize different forms of Christianity in his book on the corruption of Christianity and the merits of Islam but rather attacks various fundamental Christian concepts in response to the anti-Islamic Christian apologetic literature written in the Iberian Peninsula of his age. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 / 1328), who seems to have been in direct contact with the Crusader kingdom of Cyprus, also concentrates on the early dogmatic formation of Christianity as well as fundamental Christian concepts in his treatise “The Right Answer to Those Who Manipulated the Messiah’s Message,” and thus refrains from defining a specific form of Christianity practiced by the Crusaders. Historiographical, geographical, and ethnographical texts written in various regions from the late ninth century onwards repeatedly define various peoples of Europe as Christians, suggesting that Muslims were increasingly aware of the fact that the European continent had been christianized. If they care to do so at all, their authors employ the classification used by the theologians mentioned above. They define eminent personalities, institutions, or peoples from the orbit of Latin Christianity such as the Frankish king Clovis (Qulūdūwīh) and his wife Chrodechild (Guruṭ̣īḷḍ), the Frankish king Charles the Bald (Qarluš b. Ludwig), the pope (al-bābā), the Franks (al-Ifranğ), or the inhabitants of Northern Spain (al-Ǧałāliqa) as Melchites, along with certain groups of Oriental Christians in Byzantium and the Middle East. Thus, a specific form of Christianity does


78 A Muslim Theologian’s Response (as in note 49), pp. 71–78.


80 See D. König, Christianisation of Latin Europe (as in note 66), pp. 453–65, on the Christianity and Christianization of Visigoths, Galicians, Basks, Franks, the inhabitants of the British Isles and Ireland, the Normans, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Germans, Lombards, Syriacs, Venetians, Genoese, and the inhabitants of Rome, as described in Arab-Islamic sources.

not seem to have been regarded as a defining feature that clearly distinguished medieval Europe from other Christian places and groups classified as Melchite.

2.2. A Notion of Cultural Unity? The Franks, the Pope, the Emperor

The emergence, rise, and specific character of “Latin Christianity” seems to have been acknowledged in terms which are not essentially religious. From the tenth century onwards, one comes across certain works of a historiographic, ethnographic, and geographic nature which imply that the northwestern hemisphere was increasingly regarded as a separate entity: al-Iṣṭaḥrī (tenth century) and Ibn Hawqal (d. after 378/988) included the Franks (al-Ifranǧa) and the Galicians (al-Ǧalālifya) in their description of Byzantine territory (balad ar-Rūm), claiming that all three peoples formed a united realm (wa ’l-mamlaka wāḥid) and practiced the same religion, even though they differed in language.82

Writing in the same period, al-Masʿūdī (d. 345 / 956) informs us that this unity had broken up during his lifetime. According to al-Masʿūdī, the city of Rome had been ruled by Constantinople long before the rise of Islam. Although the governor of Rome did not have the right to wear a crown or to hold the title of king (malik), he felt strong enough around the year 340 / 951–52 to usurp the insignia of power reserved for the emperor in Constantinople. The troops sent out to put down the rebellion by the ruling Byzantine emperor, Constantine, were vanquished, forcing the latter to plead for peace. al-Masʿūdī continues to report that all other Frankish peoples (sāʿir al-ağnās al-ifranǧiya) – the Galicians (al-Ǧalālifya), the people of Jáca (al-Ǧāsaqaqas), the Basques (al-Waškans), most of the Slavs (aṣ-Ṣaqāliba), the Bulgars (al-Burǧar) – and other peoples adhered to Christianity (an-naṣarrīyya) and recognized the authority of Rome’s ruler (ṣāḥib Rūmiyya). Rome, he claims, had always been the capital of the Frankish realm (dār mamlakat al-ifranǧiya), from ancient times up to the present.83 This anecdote about the “secession” of the Western hemisphere from Byzantium was reproduced with slight variations by the Andalusian scholar Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī (d. 462 / 1070), who exchanged the ethno-

---


83 al-Masʿūdī, kitāb at-tanbīḥ (as in note 25), pp. 181–82: “Rome is and has always been the capital of the great Frankish kingdom” (“wa Rūmiyya dār mamlakat al-ifranǧiya al-ʿuzmā qadīman wa ḥadīṭan”).
nym “Franks” with the term “Latin” (al-Laṭīnīyīn). Roughly one and a half centuries later, in a work clearly aware of European expansionism as manifest in the Norman conquest of Sicily, the “Reconquista,” and the Crusades, the Syrian historiographer Ibn al-ʿĀṯīr (d. 630/1233) repeated the story of secession and again used the ethnonym Franks (al-ʾIfrānḡ), explaining that the latter rose to such power after the secession that they were able to conquer the Levant at the end of the eleventh century and even take over Constantinople in 601/1204, an explanation repeated later by Ibn Ḥalduṇ (d. 808/1406). In spite of the large variety of European ethnonyms documented in contemporary Arab-Islamic sources, historiographers reporting on the Crusades tend to use the ethnonym Frank as a generic term applying to a broad range of peoples from the northwestern hemisphere. However, it should be emphasized that there is neither a terminological consensus nor a systematic equation of “Franks” with “Latin Christians” or “Europeans” in the many volumes that constitute the corpus of Arab-Islamic sources on the Crusade period. That “the Franks” were regarded as Christians who followed the authority of

---

85 See the passage in which Ibn al-ʿĀṯīr links the conquest of Toledo 1085 with the Norman conquest of Sicily and the beginnings of the Crusades: Ibn al-ʿĀṯīr, al-kāmil (as in note 34), AH 491, vol. 10, p. 272; ibid., AH 505, vol. 10, p. 490.
87 Ibn Ḥalduṇ, tārīkh (as in note 48), vol. 5, p. 209.
89 In the works of Usāma ibn Munqīḍ (d. 584/1188) and Ibn al-ʿĀṯīr (d. 630/1233), for example, the term Franks is used to describe the Crusaders regardless of their origin, even though other ethnic terms are employed as well: Usāma bin Munqīḍ, kitāb al-ʾitībār (The Book of Contemplation), § 8, ed. P. Hitti, Princeton 1930, p. 132; Ibn al-ʿĀṯīr, al-kāmil (as in note 34), AH 497, vol. 10, p. 372. The earliest sources on the Franks, dating from the end of the ninth century, hardly mention more than the fact that they constitute the northeastern enemy to the Muslims of al-Andalus or that they live in the northern regions: Ibn Ḥurraḍāqīḏīḥ, kitāb al-māsālik wa l-mamālik (as in note 67), p. 90, p. 155; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, futūḥ wa ʿaḥbārāḥ (as in note 43), pp. 216–17; al-Balāqūrī, kitāb futūḥ al-buldān, § 270 (as in note 71), p. 231; al-Yaʿqūbī, tārīḫ al-Yaʿqūbī (The History of al-Yaʿqūbī), ed. ʿA. al-Muhannā, 2 vols, Beirut 1993, vol. 1, p. 199. Later sources of the pre-Crusade period mostly refer to Merovin- gians, Carolingians and early Capetingsians: al-Masʿūdī, mūrūq aḍ-ḥarah, § 914–16 (as in note 52), pp. 147–48 (Arab.), pp. 344–45 (French transl.); Ibn Ḥaṣyān, al-muḥtaqībīn min ābānāʾ al-Andalus (as in note 81), pp. 130–31; al-Bakrī, kitāb al-māsālik wa l-mamālik (as in note 26), § 567, p. 340. However, the term Franks already seems to acquire the character of a generic term in the tenth century: al-Masʿūdī, kitāb at-tānībī (as in note 25), p. 182. On the terminological development also see: F. Clément, Nommer l’autre: qui sont les Irfranc des sources arabes du Moyen-Âge?, in I. Reck and E. Weber (eds), recherches 02. De mots en maux: parcours hispano-arabe, Strasbourg 2009, pp. 89–105. The fact that the Crusaders – in spite of their different origin – were regarded as “Franks” by the Muslims is also confirmed by Raimundus de Aguilers, Historia Francorum, § 168b (as in note 33), p. 52: “inter hostes autem omnes Francigene dicebantur”; see: T. Haas, Kreuzzugschroniken und die Überwindung der Fremdheit im eigenen Heer, in: M. Borgoite/A. Seitz/J. Schiel/B. Schneidmüller (eds), Mittelalter im Leben. Die Mediävistik testet Wege zu einer transkulturellen Europawissenschaft, Berlin 2008, pp. 86–95.
90 In a chapter on “The peoples who entered the Christian religion,” the historiographer and geographer ʿAbū l-ʿĀṯārī, al-muḫṭāṣar fī ʿaḥbār al-baṣār (as in note 15), vol. 1, pp. 119–20, for example, distinguishes between ‘Germans’ (al-Almān), Burgundians (al-Burḡān), Genoese (al-ʿAnāwiyīya), Venetians (al-Baṇāḍīqā), Hungarians (al-ʾBaṣqīrīd) and Franks (Ifrānḡ) – and the latter including the inhabitants of France (Faransa), Sicily (Ṣiqillīya), Cyprus (Qubrus), Crete (Iqrīṭīs) and other Mediterranean islands as well as the conquerors of Muslim al-Andalus. In the middle of the chapter, he defines the Rome as “the residence of their caliph who is called the pope,” without explaining exactly whose caliph the pope actually was. See Yāqūt, muʿṣām al-buldān (as in note 14), “Rūmiya,” vol. 2, p. 867,
the pope in Rome is clearly expressed in a letter written by Saladin around 586/1191–92 and documented by the historiographer Abū Šāma (d. 665/1268). Saladin contrasts “Frankish” unity and religious zeal with the Muslims’ factionism and lack of religious enthusiasm, claiming furthermore that the pope in Rome (al-bābā allāḏī bi-Rūmiyya) had threatened the Franks with excommunication if they refused to contribute to the deliverance of Jerusalem. If this “damned one” (al-malʿūn) set forth, no one would dare to stay behind: Every Christian, defined here as “everyone who claims that God has a family and children” (kullu man yaqūlu anna ‘llāha ahlan wa walad) would accompany him.91

The pope, described as the late antique patriarch of Rome (batṭraṣ Rūmīya) and local authority93 in ninth- and tenth-century sources, is clearly acknowledged as an internal Christian authority from at least the eleventh century onwards.94 However, he is not necessarily regarded as the leader of a specific Christian faction. If this is the case, he is defined as “patriarch of the Melchites” (batriyak al-Malikiyya) and “the one who manages the affairs of the Melchite Christians in the city of Rome” (al-qāʿim bi umūr dīn an-naṣārā al-malikāniyya bi madinat Rūmiyya), e.g., by al-Qalqašandī (d. 821/1418).95 In the passages of the latter’s manual for secretaries that are dedicated to the correct way of addressing the pope in official letters, al-Qalqašandī lists several papal titles in Arabic. These titles – “Mighty One of the Christian religious group” (ʿāzīm al-milla al-masīḥiyya), “paragon of the community of Jesus” (qudwat at-ṭāʿīfa al-ʿīsawiyya), “refuge of patriarchs, bishops, priests, and monks” (milāḏ al-batārika wa ’l-asāqifa wa ’l-qusūs wa ’r-ruhbān), “follower of the gospel” (tālī al-inǧīl), “the one who informs his community about what is forbidden and what is permitted” (muʿarrif ṣāʿatīhi bi ’t-tahrīm wa ’t-taḥlīl) – depict the pope as being an authority among Christians in general and not only as the spiritual leader of a certain Christian faction.96 The terms milla and ṣāʿatīma, which both denote groups (of a religious and confessional nature, among others) forming part of a larger whole, are never linked to a specific “Latin-Christian” attribute. Equally, al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349) asserts that Rome, residence of the “greatest idolator / tyrant / rebel” (tāqūtīhim al-akbar) and the largest agglomeration of “worshippers of the crucifix” (ʿubbād aṣ-ṣalib), can claim the allegiance of every Christian.97

who claims that Rome, the residence of the “Franks” and ruled by the “king of the Germans” (malik al-Almān).

91 Abū Šāma, kitāb ar-rawdatayn (as in note 47), p. 480: “wa qāla man lā yatawaḏḏahu ilā al-Quds mustaʿṭlisan fa-huwwa ’ndi muṯyarama (. . .) wa iḏa nahada hāḏa al-maʿlūn fa-lā yaqʿuudu ’anhu aḥadun, wa yaṣṣu maʿhu bi-ahlihi wa waladihin kullu man yaqūlu anna ’llāha aḥlan wa walad (. . .):” Also compare another letter by Saladin on p. 429 which also emphasizes the Franks’ religious zeal.

92 E.g., al-Yaʿqūbī (d. after 292/905), tārīḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (as in note 89), vol. 1, p. 198.

93 Ibn Rustah (d. after 913), kitāb aš-šāq an-nafisa (as in note 67), p. 128: “madinat Rūmiyya wa ḥiyya madina yudabbir amrāh malik yuqāl al-bāb.”


95 al-Qalqašandī, kitāb subh al-ʿaṣā (as in note 81), vol. 8, p. 42; ibid. vol. 5, p. 472.

96 al-Qalqašandī, kitāb subh al-ʿaṣā (as in note 81), vol. 5, p. 472; ibid., vol. 8, p. 42. For an alternative translation see Lewis, Muslim Discovery of Europe (as in note 8), pp. 178–79.

97 al-ʿUmarī, kitāb masālik al-abṣār (as in note 81), p. 306: “wa bilād Rūma wa ḥiyya mamālīk ’ubbād aṣ-ṣalib (. . .)
It is tempting to declare the form of address used in a letter written by the Almohad caliph Abū Haš’ūrīm al-Murtaḍā to Pope Innocentius IV in 648/1250 as an acknowledgement of Latin Christianity on the part of the Muslim ruler. He refers to the pope as “the one obeyed by the Christian rulers and most revered by the dignitaries of the Roman nation/people” (muṭā’ mulūk an-naṣrāniyya wa mu’āẓẓam ‘üzāmā’ al-umma ar-rūmiyya). But since in Arabic the adjective rūmiyya can be applied equally to the Romans, the Byzantines, and the city of Rome, one cannot be sure if al-Murtaḍā really distinguished between Latin and other forms of Christianity. Unfortunately, we do not have recourse to other letters to the popes in Arabic. The titles used in Latin translations of letters sent by Muslim rulers to the pope during the thirteenth century tend to depict the pope as the leader of all Christians, using titles such as “Pope of all Christians in the world” (papa omnium per orbem terrarum Christianorum). Occasionally, however, the pope is depicted as holding a special position of power among the “Franks.” Yaḥūṭ (d. 626/1229) calls him “leader of the Franks” (raʿīs al-Afrān) and Ibn al-Aṯīr “ruler of the Franks in Rome” (malik al-Faranī ar-Rūmiyya). According to al-Qazwīnī, all Franks obey the pope. Abū ‘l-Fidaʾ and Ibn Wāṣil (d. 697/1298) refer to him as “caliph of the Franks” (ḥalīfat al-Faranī), the latter claiming that, “in

wa ʿṣīr al-kāmil tāqūtihi al-akbar wa maḍīma ʿaddidīhi al-aḵṭar yahḍa laḥa kulla saḥīb salīb wa salbūt” (Italian translation on p. 312).

For the Arabic original text and an alternative (French) translation see E. Tisserant/ G. Wiet, Une lettre de l’Almohade Murtaḍā au pape Innocent IV, in: Hespéris 6.1 (1926), pp. 30 and 34: “souverain incontesté des rois de la chrétienté, respecté des princes de la nation romaine.”


K.-E. Luprian, Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschern im 13. Jahrhundert anhand ihres Briefwechsels, Città del Vaticano 1981: a) May 1234, Konya, ‘Ala’ ad-Dīn Qaṭībāḏ to Gregory IX: “Sanctissime et angelis equalis (…) archiepiscopio magne Rome et magne papa omnium per orbem terrarum Christianorum” (ibid., p. 133); b) June 1245, Cairo, as-Sāliḥ Naǧm ad-Dīn Ayyūb to Innocentius IV: ‘Presentie pape nobilis, magno, spiritualis, affectuosi, sancti, tertii decimi apostolorum, universalis loquele Christianorum, munutenentis adoratores crucis, iudicis populii Christianii, duontis filiorum baptismatis, summi pontificis Christianorum’ (ibid., p. 151); c) December 1245, Homs, al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm in the name of as-Sāliḥ Naǧm ad-Dīn Ayyūb to Innocentius IV: “Sancto, illustri, puro, excellenti, temporalium contemplatori, dei cultori, venerabili, sublimi, scienti, magno, capitati secte Christiane et duci filiorum baptismatis, sedenti super sedem Symonis, ornatum habenti intellectum sanctis theologis, pape Rome’ (ibid., p. 159); d) December 1245, Homs, al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm in the name of as-Sāliḥ Naǧm ad-Dīn Ayyūb to Innocentius IV: “Sancti, gloriosiori, magni inaccessiblei contemplatoris mundi, colentis deum et ei gratias agentis, principis legis Christiani, prepositi filiorum baptismati, sedenti super cathedram Symonis Petri, pape Rome’ (ibid., p. 166); e) August 1246, Salt, Fāḥī ad-Dīn in the name of as-Sāliḥ Naǧm ad-Dīn Ayyūb to Innocentius IV: “Sedis altissime domino, excelsa, reverendo, sancto, spirituali, beato, qui est fidicia sacerdote et religiosisor, pape excellentissimo […] scriptura largissime sedis et altissime domini regnantis, spiritualis, beatissimi, iusti, sancti, abstinentis, venerabili et honorabili, regis patrum sanctorum, substinentis filios obedientienti, refugii gentis Christiane, victorie legis Christi, auxilli prelatorum et clericorum” (ibid., pp. 173–74).


al-Qazwīnī, ʿṯār al-bilād (as in note 16), p. 397.

their legal system” (fi šarī‘atihim), all affairs are administered by the pope. This kind of terminology is also employed in two letters addressed to the pope by Muslim rulers which only survive in Latin translation. Here the pope is defined as “the one who rules the necks of the Franks” (dominanti cervicibus Francorum) and as “glory of the multitude of Franks” (gloria multitudinis Francorum). While Arab-Islamic scholars increasingly applied the ethnonym Frank to persons and groups of different European origin and linked the pope with the “Franks,” they also introduced a new term into their writings from the thirteenth century onwards. Beginning with Ibn Sa‘id al-Magribī (d. 685/1286), several authors use and explain the term “emperor” (al-inbarāḏūr, al-inbarāṯūr), defined – always in a European context – not only as ruler of “Germany” (al-Lamāniya), “ruler of princes” (malik al-umārā‘), potente at the head of forty rulers (arba‘in malikan wa sulṭānuhā), and “ruler of rulers” (malik al-mulūk), but also as “ruler of the Franks” (malik al-Faranḡ). It is Ibn Ḥaldūn who combines the three elements of the Franks, the pope, and the emperor, explaining that the pope urges the Franks to submit to one ruler called “emperor” whose function it is to calm factionalism (al-‘aṣabiyya) among them. Looked at from this point of view, it seems justified that Franz Rosenthal, in his translation of Ibn Ḥaldūn’s Muqaddimah, chose to render the word Franks (Ifranḡa) as “European Christians,” or, alternatively, “Latin Christians.”

**Conclusion**

The present article on Muslim perceptions of Latin Christianity between the seventh and the fifteenth centuries demonstrated that Muslim perceptions cannot be reduced to a single pattern of perception characterized by a “Muslim” attitude of superiority and

105 Ibn Wāṣil, mufarriṯ al-kurūb (as in note 104), AH 626, vol. 4, p. 249.

106 Lupprian, Beziehungen (as in note 100): a) November 1245, Baalbek, as-Ṣālih Isma‘īl to Innocentius IV: “Presentie excelse, sancte, dominative, apostolice, venerabili, dominanti cervicibus Francorum, ductori capistorum legis Christiane, vivificatori secte Christianitatis” (ibid., p. 155); b) August 1246, Salt, an-Nāṣir Šalāh ad-Dīn Dāwūd to Innocentius IV: “domini pape, reverendi, magni, religiosi, credentis, temperantis, animosi, virtuosi, honorabilis, Innocentii, qui est honor orthodoxorum et patriarcharum, continens loquelas Christianorum, gloria multitudinis Francorum, corona gentis crucis, maior predecessorum sedentium in cathedra apostolica Rome” (ibid., p. 171).


111 Ibid.


hostility towards the Christians of Europe. Hence, the first section elaborated on the possibilities of reconstructing different vantage points held by various “Muslim subjects of perception” regarding a large number of “Latin-Christian objects of perception.” On the one hand, this was done by presenting different examples of the large variety of terms used to designate Latin Christians. As could be observed, the terminology ranges from single words including personal names, functional titles, “socionyms,” ethnonyms, and terms of religious invective to elaborate descriptions and definitions. This terminological variety proves the existence as such of varying patterns of perception. On the other hand, juxtaposing several passages concerning the same or comparable objects of perception served to prove that various aspects of Latin Christianity were approached from many different angles. Differing terminology conveying various shades of judgment was employed for one and the same “object of perception.” The pope, to cite just one more demonstrative example, could thus be classified as “the damned one” (al-malʿūn)\(^ {114}\) by one source and as “caliph of the Franks” (ḫalīfat al-Faran)\(^ {115}\) or “friend of kings and sultans” (ṣādiq al-mulūk wa ʿs-salāṭīn)\(^ {116}\) by another. The first section therefore argued that the eventful and complex history of relations between the Arab-Islamic and the Latin-Christian world can only have produced a multitude of varying patterns of perception. The second part of the article set out to illustrate this hypothesis by tracing the conceptual terminology used by Arab-Islamic scholars to refer to the religious and cultural sphere of Latin Christianity as a whole. The expansion during the seventh and eighth centuries had confronted Muslims with various Christian peoples in the West. However, Arab-Islamic scholars still seem to have lacked the intellectual tools to conceptualize the “Latin West.” Until about the tenth century, certain historiographers seem to have regarded the common Roman heritage uniting Byzantium and the West as more important than the separation of both spheres. This is not so surprising if one considers that a cultural sphere characterized by a “Latin” form of Christianity only slowly emerged between the seventh and the eleventh centuries as a result of several important processes, inter alia, the spread of Christianity beyond the northern and eastern frontiers of the former Roman Empire from the late seventh century onwards,\(^ {117}\) the Roman bishops’ dissociation from Byzantium from the eighth century onwards,\(^ {118}\) and the church reform of the High Middle Ages with its aim of ecclesiastical unification and standardization on a “European” scale.\(^ {119}\) Thus, the character as well as the boundaries of Latin-Christian

\(^{114}\) Abū Šāma, kitāb ar-rawdatayn (as in note 47), p. 480.


\(^{116}\) al-Qalqašandī, kitāb ʿašā in: K.-U. Jäschke / R. Wenskus (eds), Festschrift Helmut Beumann, Sigmaringen 1977, pp. 26–87;
Europe shifted continuously in this period.\textsuperscript{120} In addition, different forms of Christianity, especially those on the Iberian Peninsula and in the zones bordering the Byzantine sphere of influence, made it difficult for Arab-Islamic scholars to form an image of a European continent united through religion and distinct from other Christian regions because of a specific and standardized form of the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{121} Nonetheless, Merovingian and especially Carolingian rule had already created a polity that encompassed great parts of the European heartland. Reaching beyond the early medieval “Francia,” it included parts of the Spanish Levant, the Apennine Peninsula as well as vast territories east of the Rhine. The Carolingians not only contributed to the northern orientation of the Holy See in the Early Middle Ages,\textsuperscript{122} they also cultivated diplomatic and commercial contacts with Muslim al-Andalus, North Africa, and the Middle East,\textsuperscript{123} successfully projecting an image of themselves as the most important political players of the northern hemisphere in the Muslim world. Medieval Arab-Islamic scholars seem to have acknowledged this situation to a certain degree, consequently imposing the ethnonym “Franks” on other European Christians, even more so as soon as the notion of a “united Christian Europe” was reinforced by European expansionism in the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean islands, North Africa, and the Middle East from the eleventh century onwards. As a result, the ethnonym “Franks” became a generic term for several Christian peoples of Europe who were closely associated with the pope in Rome and, occasionally, with an institution known as the “emperor.” In varying constellations, written references to these institutions served to circumscribe a larger religious, cultural, and political sphere that can to a certain degree be regarded as being approxi-

\textsuperscript{O. Hageneder, Die Häresie des Ungehorsams und das Entstehen des hierokratischen Papsttums, in: Römische Historische Mitteilungen 20 (1978), pp. 29–47.}

\textsuperscript{120} Sicily, for example, belonged to the Byzantine zone of influence up to the ninth century, was under Islamic rule up to the eleventh century, and was integrated into the orbit of Latin Christianity with the Norman conquest in the second half of the eleventh century; see A. Metcalfe, The Muslims of Medieval Italy, Edinburgh 2009, pp. 10–16, pp. 93–108.

\textsuperscript{121} On cultural “transit zones” see M. Borgolte / J. Schiel, Mediävistik der Zwischenräume – eine Einführung. in: M. Borgolte et al. (eds), Mittelalter im Labor (as in note 89), pp. 16–17; M. Mersch, Kulturelle Diversität im Mittelmeerraum des Spätmittelalters, in: M. Mersch / U. Ritzerfeld (eds), Lateinisch-griechisch-arabische Begegnungen (as in note 30), pp. 8–12.

\textsuperscript{122} R. Schieffer, Die Karolinger, Stuttgart 2006, pp. 63–64.

Muslim Perception(s) of “Latin Christianity”: Methodological Reflections and a Reevaluation

Muslim theologians did not really need to refute a specific form of the Christian faith if fundamental aspects of this religion – the gospels, the dogma of the Trinity, the cult of saints, etc. – were regarded as sufficiently assailable. The fact that they regularly treat the early ecumenical councils extensively in their writings while ignoring later developments suggests that the intricacies of internal Christian debates mainly interested Muslim theologians if they were of relevance to understanding the emergence of basic Christian dogma. Not even the pope was always recognized as a “Frankish” alias “European” authority by historiographers. This probably has to do with the papacy’s range of activity. During Late Antiquity, the patriarch of Rome had been part of a Roman Empire centered on the Mediterranean. During the Crusades, the pope sought to unite Christians under Rome’s spiritual sovereignty, thus promoting the Holy See’s influence in Europe, the entire Mediterranean, the Latin East, and among Oriental Christians. The inconsistent terminology in Arab-Islamic sources as regards the pope’s “sphere of responsibility” attests to the
fact that Muslim scholars were not in agreement on how to classify an institution whose
activities had never been confined to the European continent.
In view of the complex history connecting the European continent with the Mediter-
ranean sphere in late antique and medieval times, Arab-Islamic scholars were not capable
of developing a precise terminology, either to define a cultural sphere or “civilization” in
and beyond the north and northwest of the Mediterranean, or to define a religious group
linked to this sphere and subject to the pope in Rome. Although Arab-Islamic scholars
had a notion of “Latin Christianity,” this notion seems to have been as vague and impre-
cise as their “Latin-Christian” contemporaries’ sense of cohesion.128

128 On this sense of cohesion see T. Haas, Kreuzzugschroniken (as in note 89), pp. 86–95.