

The Islamic Ribāt: A Model for the Christian Military Orders? Sacred Violence, Secularized Concepts of Religion and the Invention of a Cultural Transfer

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Introduction

This contribution deals with the historiography of an assumed cultural transfer in the field of religious violence. It tries to retrace the genealogy of a scholarly hypothesis linking the Christian Military Orders to an Islamic model. The supposed model is the institution of the »Ribāt«, generally conceived of as a »fortified convent« populated by Islamic »warrior monks«, or, more succinctly, as a »Muslim military monastery«. According to the hypothesis' supporters, the birth of the first Christian Military Orders around the year 1120 is not sufficiently explained by a merely Christian context. Instead, a Muslim antetype is imputed. The medieval Templars and their likes can, in this view, only be understood as a more or less direct imitation of the »Ribāt«. First suggested at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ribāt hypothesis was fully developed only in the first half of the twentieth. Although direct evidence was never put forward to support it, it has since made its way into the mainstream of academic history. It is not universally accepted, as many scholars remained sceptical or actively rejected it as unproven and improbable. Alan Forey for instance, the leading historian of the Military Orders, bluntly discards it.¹ Still, other major experts in medieval history keep sustaining it as a prime example of Muslim-Christian cultural transfer in the Middle Ages, and most academic discussions on the origins of Christian Military Orders mention it as a possibility.²

1 See Alan Forey, »The Emergence of the Military Order in the Twelfth Century« in: *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), pp. 175–195, esp. pp. 175–178. Equally defiant are Derek Lomax, *La Orden de Santiago (1170–1275)* (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas. Escuela de estudios medievales, 1965), pp. 3 sq., and Joseph F. O'Callaghan, »The Affiliation of the Order of Calatrava with the Order of Cîteaux«, in: *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 15 (1959), pp. 161–193, esp. pp. 176–178.

2 Among those maintaining the genealogy are: Thomas F. Glick, *From Muslim Fortress to Christian Castle: Social and Cultural Change in Medieval Spain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); see also idem, »Did the Islamic ribat (military religious communities) serve as the model for the Christian Crusaders?«, in: *The Crusades, 1095–1291*, ed. by Mark T. Abate (History in Dispute 10) (Detroit et al.: Thomson Gale, 2003), pp. 158–160; Thomas F. Glick & Oriol P. Sunyer, »Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History«, in: *Compar-*

However, thorough research by Orientalists has shown that as well as a total lack of direct evidence for the alleged cultural transfer, there is just as little evidence for the existence of the »model« institution itself, as it has been conceived of in scholarly discourse. Already in 1966, Albrecht Noth raised serious doubts about the conventional use of the concept of Ribāt.³ Three decades after Noth, and independently from him, Jacqueline Chabbi refutes categorically the notion of the »Muslim military monastery«. In her long and meticulous entry on »Ribāt« in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1995),⁴ Chabbi explores the meaning of the term in its respective context and in its chronological development. The arabic word »Ribāt« derives from the root »ر-ب-ت«⁵. The basic meaning of the root is »to bind«. Via the idea of »binding a mount« developed the meaning »to muster the mount«, which lead to a general military connotation of many word forms deriving from the root. Crucial for Chabbi's argument is (as was already for Noth's) the distinction between »Ribāt« as an action and as a place or building. In the first use, »Ribāt« could take on the meaning of (performing a) »prolonged presence on the frontier«⁶ in the ninth century in the confrontation with Byzantium. In the contemporary »ideology of *djihād*«, warriors of the frontier were exalted. However, that ideology didn't correspond at all

ative Studies in Society and History 11 (1969), S. 136–154; Francis E. Peters, *The Monotheists*, vol. 1: *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conflict and Competition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Charles de Miramon, *Les données au Moyen Âge. Une forme de vie religieuse laïque, vers 1180–1520* (Paris: Ceff, 1999), pp. 70–71, note 3; Elena Lourie, »The Confraternity of Belchite, the Ribat, and the Temple«, in: *Viator* 13 (1982), pp. 159–176; Maur Cocheril, »Essai sur l'origine des Ordres militaires dans la péninsule iberique«, in: *Collectanea ordinis Cisterciensium* 20 (1958) pp. 228–250, esp. pp. 242–248.

3 »Man hat bisher – soweit ich sehe – allgemein angenommen, daß die festen Plätze, an denen sich fromme Muslims zum Kampf gegen die Ungläubigen versammelten, den Namen »Ribāt« getragen hätten, und umgekehrt glaubte man aus der Bezeichnung eines Ortes als »Ribāt« darauf schließen zu können, daß dort eine Gruppe von Grenzkämpfern stationiert gewesen sei. Man übersetzte unbedenklich »murābiṭ« (= »einer, der [an der Grenze] Wache hält«) mit »einer, der im Ribāt in Garnison liegt« und nahm keinen Anstoß daran, den Ort, der »murābiṭūn« als Stützpunkt diente, als »Ribāt« namhaft zu machen, auch wenn die Quellen ihm eine andere Bezeichnung geben. Nun muß allerdings zu denken geben, daß die früh- und hochmittelalterlichen arabischen Quellen das Ribāt als Stützpunkt der Grenzkämpfer gegen die Heiden kaum zu kennen scheinen, auf jeden Fall aber keinen Anhaltspunkt für die Annahme einer unbedingten Koinzidenz von »Ribāt« als nomen agendi und »Ribāt« als nomen loci gewähren.« (Albrecht Noth, *Heiliger Krieg und Heiliger Kampf in Islam und Christentum. Beiträge zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* [Bonner Historische Forschungen 28] [Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1966], pp. 66–87, quotation on p. 72). Noth's work has not been received very widely.

4 Jacqueline Chabbi, Art. »Ribāt« in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 493–506. Noth's book is not cited in the article.

5 See Chabbi, »Ribāt«, op.cit. (note 4), p. 493. Every Arabic word form derives from a basic root composed of three consonants. The basic meaning of the root is usually very general.

6 Ibid., p. 496.

to the realities. Because then and later on, in the period of the Crusades, fighting against Christians was done by regular troops and mercenaries, not religious volunteers or »warrior monks«. In the second use, as a place, »Ribāt« could design among others a fortified edifice (a site where one could do »Ribāt«). Chabbi discusses at length the sources for this use, mainly the accounts of the tenth-century travellers Ibn Hawkal and Al-Mukaddasī. Both mention thousands of Ribāts on the Islamic frontiers in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean and describe them as starting points for Jihād action. Yet according to Chabbi, these accounts of Jihād too are to be understood as »an idealized representation of the past«, not as accurate historical accounts.⁷ She further convincingly discards the notion that »Ribāt« as used by Ibn Hawkal or Al-Mukaddasī designed a certain building type. Rather, it could refer to any place used for performing »Ribāt«, and this action did not even necessarily have a military character. Furthermore, Chabbi makes it clear that the urban establishments where Sufis (Islamic »mystics«) lived together in late medieval Islamic cities and which were occasionally dubbed »Ribāts«, had no connection at all with the buildings or actions described by that term in earlier ages, and that the notion of the Sufi Ribāt as a »convent« must therefore not be transferred to those earlier uses, although this is often the case. Consequently, she arrives at the following conclusion: »It can thus be stated with confidence that to define it [i.e. the Ribāt] a »Muslim military monastery« is evidence of extrapolation and misinterpretation, and this applies whatever the period and the region.«⁸ With this statement, Chabbi explicitly rejects the definition of the Ribāt given in the entry on the subject in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* in 1935, written by Georges Marçais.⁹

Chabbi's article represents an extraordinary achievement. It does away once for all with the supposed Islamic model institution for the Christian Military Orders. The notion of the Ribāt as a »military convent« of Muslim »warrior monks« is the result of an illegitimate conflation of spatially, chronologically and conceptually dissociated mentionings in the sources.¹⁰ We now have to draw the

7 All quotes *ibid.*, p. 497, except for the last: p. 500.

8 Chabbi, »Ribāt«, *op.cit.* (note 4), p. 494 (Chabbi gives the conclusion at the beginning of the article). Cf. also p. 501: »It is no longer possible to subscribe, in a global manner, to the definition of G. Marçais, who presents ribāt . . . as »a type of establishment, both religious and military, which seems quite specifically Muslim« and »which appeared at an early stage«. It is no longer possible to retain as »current« the interpretation of a »fortified convent«.

9 »befestigtes muslimisches Kloster« (»fortified Muslim monastery«), Georges Marçais, Art. »Ribāt«, in: *Enzyklopädie des Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1936), vol. 3, pp. 1242–1245, quotation on p. 1242.

10 To measure the extent of Chabbi's destruction of false certainties, compare the statement by Paul M. Wheatley, *The places where men pray together. Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 256: »Ribāt is a term virtually incapable of unequivocal definition« (with explicit reference to Chabbi's article).

consequences of this insight. As a reaction, it has already been proposed that we should reshape our reflections on a Muslim »model« for Christian religious violence by changing the dimensions of our thinking, either by pondering a more general influence of the Islamic concept of Jihād on Christian Holy War¹¹ or by looking for a link in a more limited frame.¹² However, another conclusion seems more pertinent: It consists in putting under historical scrutiny the very emergence and persistency of the hypothesis linking the Military Orders to the supposed Ribāt. For if there never was an institution of a »Muslim military monastery«, we might have reasons to ask ourselves why such a scholarly object was constructed and how it became connected to the Military Orders with such enduring success. In order to answer that question we have to follow the genealogy of the concept of the Ribāt and of the Ribāt hypothesis from their first appearances at the beginning of the nineteenth century through to their full elaboration in the 1920s and further to their use in today's history of cultural transfer. First however it is necessary to give a short summary of the beginnings of the Military Orders and the way they were perceived until the eighteenth century.

11 On Jihād and Christian Holy War see Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 10–13.

12 Alain Demurger, *Chevaliers du Christ. Les ordres religieux-militaires au Moyen Âge (XIe-XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), p. 303: »Compte tenu de ces nouveaux éléments, il me semble que la réflexion sur la question d'un »modèle« musulman ne doit pas être écartée, mais elle doit porter sur la question des rapports *djihād*/guerre sainte, plutôt que sur celle des rapports *ribāt*/ordre militaire, *ribāt* et ordre militaire n'étant après tout que les dérivés du *djihād* musulman et de la guerre sainte chrétienne«. On the other hand, Demurger proposes to look for a link between certain militant confraternities in medieval Spain and a supposed revival of the Muslim concept of performing Ribāt by the Almoravides (the »al-Murābitūn«, a term etymologically related to Ribāt), a movement of Berbers which took power in the Islamic parts of the Iberian peninsula around 1100. On those confraternities see below paragraph »Introducing cultural transfer theory and introducing a missing link: Thomas F. Glick and Elena Lourie (1966/1982)«. On the History of the Almoravides and the meaning of the designation »al-Murābitūn« see Chabbi, »Ribāt«, op.cit. (note 4), p. 503; Fritz Meier, »Almoraviden und marabute«, in: *Die Welt des Islam* 21 (1981), pp. 80–163, and Hans-Rudolf Singer, »Der Maghreb und die Pyrenäenhalbinsel bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters«, in: *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, ed. by Ulrich Haarmann (Munich: Beck, 21991), pp. 264–322, esp. pp. 295–299.

The birth of the Christian Military Orders

When Christians from the Latin West conquered Jerusalem during the first crusade in 1099, the Al-Aqsa-mosque on Mount Temple was badly damaged by military action. It was transformed into the royal palace of the Christian Kings of Jerusalem. Yet in or around the year 1120, King Baldwin II (reigned 1118–1131) gave the building – or at least a part of it – to nobleman Hugo de Paganis.¹³ Together with a handful of fellow-minded knights, Hugo had just taken the three usual monastic vows pledging chastity, poverty and obedience, but had added a fourth new one: to protect pilgrims travelling from the coastal city of Jaffa to Jerusalem against the attacks of the »infidels«.¹⁴ After difficult beginnings, the group soon enjoyed huge success and became known by their original residence as »the Order of the Temple«, the mosque being (wrongly) identified with the »Temple of Solomon«.¹⁵

The Templars were the first Military Order,¹⁶ a completely new, hybrid type of organization merging the hitherto mutually exclusive spheres of monasticism and chivalry into a single institution of sacred violence.¹⁷ Their example was contagious, and soon many groups combining the life of the knight with that of the monk¹⁸ spread all over the Christian-dominated Near East and Europe.

13 The Mosque had been divided into several rooms at the time. Cf. Marie-Luise Bulst-Thiele, *Sacrae Domus Militae Templi Hierosolymitani Magistri. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Templerordens 1118/19–1314* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge 86) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), pp. 19–29, esp. p. 21.

14 The vows were given at an uncertain date in the hands of Warmund, the latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, probably at the concile at Nablus in January 1120. See Hans-Eberhard Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, Berlin & Köln: Kohlhammer, 92000), p. 76f. and Malcolm Barber, *Die Templer. Geschichte und Mythos* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2005), p. 16. However, Bulst-Thiele, *Sacrae*, op.cit. (note 13), p. 21, indicates the date of 1119, shortly after a muslim attack on Christian pilgrims at Easter that year.

15 The second temple had been destroyed in 70 AD. The building of the Al-Aqsa Mosque was constructed in the seventh century AD, after Muhammed's death. The neighboring Dome of the Rock was identified by Christians in the Middle Ages with the »Temple of the Lord« (»templum Domini«).

16 The Hospitalers were founded earlier, but turned into a Military Order only after the Templars.

17 On the novelty of the Templars see the discussion by Nikolas Jaspert, »Frühformen der geistlichen Ritterorden und die Kreuzzugsbewegung auf der iberischen Halbinsel«, in: *Europa an der Wende vom 11. zum 12. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zu Ehren von Werner Goetz*, ed. by Klaus Herbers (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2001), pp. 90–116, esp. pp. 93–97.

18 It is however important to note that the rule of the Templars was not a »monastical« one in the narrow sense of the word, but a rule of canons regular. Also, the fighting members of all Military Orders are more fittingly described as »semireligious« rather than as monks or canons regular. See Rudolf Hiestand, Art. »Ritterorden«, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 7 (Munich: LexMA-Verlag, 1995), col. 878–879, and Kaspar Elm, »Die Ordines Militares. Ein Ordenszötus zwischen Einheit und Vielfalt«, in: *The Crusades and the Military Orders. Expanding the*

They continued to thrive long after the Christian loss of the Holy Land (1291). Although the Templars were eventually abolished by the French king at the beginning of the fourteenth century, other Military Orders like the Hospitallers, the Teutonic Knights or the numerous Iberian orders not only scattered Oriental and Occidental landscapes with their castles (many of which still remain),¹⁹ but also left their stamp on the course of European history.²⁰

Views on the Military Orders from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment period

When the Military Orders were first established in the twelfth century they were not universally welcomed. While many hailed the new fusion of the life of the warrior and the life devoted to god, there were also some who scorned it. Bernard of Clairvaux (around 1090–1153) wrote a famous panegyric on the Templars (»De laude novae militiae«),²¹ but his fellow Cistercian, Isaac de Stella (deceased after 1176) called the new militia a monstrosity (»monstrum«), whose rule of life (»ordo«) must have been drawn from the fifth gospel – i.e. the devil's gospel – because its members forced the infidels to believe in God »by means of lances and clubs«, ruthlessly robbed and killed them in a supposedly »religious way« (»religiose«), and yet claimed martyrdom for those of their own brothers who died while committing this carnage.²² This was certainly a minority voice, but

Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity, ed. by Zsolt Hunyadi & József Laszlovszky (Budapest: Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, 2001), pp. 351–377, esp. pp. 359 sq.

19 See Hugh Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

20 The best comprehensive histories of the Military Orders are Alan Forey, *The Military Orders. From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Basingstoke et al.: Macmillan Education, 1992) and Demurger, *Chevaliers*, op.cit. (note 12). On the Templars see Barber, *Templer*, op.cit. (note 14).

21 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Éloge de la nouvelle chevalerie*, ed. by Pierre-Yves Emery (Sources Chrétiennes 367) (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1990), pp. 48–132.

22 Isaac de Stella, Sermo 48: »Hujus simile, eademque ferme tempestate, cujusdam novae militiae obortum est monstrum novum, cujus, ut lepide ait quidam, Ordo de quinto Evangelio est, ut lanceis ac fustibus incredulos cogat ad fidem; et eos qui Christi nomen non habent, licenter exspoliet, ac religiose trucidet: siqui autem de eo in depopulatione talium ceciderint, Christi martyres nuncupent. Nonne et isti futuro illi perditionis filio contra Christianos crudelitatis suae auctoritatem nutriunt? Quomodo objicietur ei Christi mansuetudo, patientia, ac forma praedicandi? Quare non faciet libenter, quod factum reperit licenter? Quomodo non dicet: Qualia fecit Ecclesia, talia facite illi? Quid igitur? Et hos cum aliis damnamus? Neutros damnamus, sed in hoc non laudamus, nec quia fortasse omnino sunt mala, quae agunt: sed quia fore malorum occasiones queunt. Nam (quod miserabile est) omnia fere mala de rebus

not an isolated one, because others joined Isaac de Stella in his critical assessment.²³ Yet whatever the moral judgement, everybody agreed that the Military Orders were something completely new and unheard of: »a new kind of militia, unknown to the world« (»Novum militiae genus et saeculis inexpertum«), as Bernard of Clairvaux famously put it.²⁴ Beforehand, chivalry and monasticism had been regarded as incompatible spheres. Although an accepted theory of »just war« had been established by Augustine (354–430), killing even in just wars was considered an act that demanded penance. The worldly trade of the soldier was largely disregarded by the church, while monks viewed themselves as the true »soldiers of Christ« (»milites Christi«).²⁵

Already in the course of the eleventh century, efforts were made to distinguish »good« from »evil« chivalry.²⁶ Still, in 1095 Pope Urban II, launching his appeal for the first crusade, actually admonished all knights to let go of »chivalry« at large in order to participate in the enterprise.²⁷ In fact, chivalry was of such ill repute with ecclesiastical authors of the time that Bernard of Clairvaux in his abovementioned panegyric could employ its Latin name, »militia«, in an annomination with »malitia«, i.e. »malice«.²⁸ What is more, he also felt obliged to refute the very fundamental and obviously widespread objection, that »it is not allowed at all to a Christian to kill with the sword« (»percutere in gladio omnino fas non est christiano«).²⁹

Yet the great Cistercian obviously found enough arguments to refute these injunctions and to justify the new order.³⁰ The Templars not only received a life rule at the council of Troyes 1128 (or 1129) and were granted wide-ranging privileges by Pope Innocent II in 1139, but were at the latter occasion officially

bonis inoleverunt; ac virtutes vitia nutriunt, et ab alumnis suis jam grandiusculis effertatae absorbentur«, *Patrologiae cursus completus seu bibliotheca universalis [...]*, Series Latina, ed. by Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: Migne, 1844–1865), vol. 194, p. 1854. Cf. Barber, *Templer*, op.cit. (note 14), pp. 76 sq. for an assessment of Isaac's criticism.

23 Cf. survey by Barber, *Templer*, op.cit. (note 14), pp. 52–64, 74–79.

24 Bernard, *Eloge*, op.cit. (note 21), p. 50.

25 See Ernst-Dieter Hehl, *Kirche und Krieg im 12. Jahrhundert. Studien zu kanonischem Recht und politischer Wirklichkeit* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 19) (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1980), pp. 1 sq.

26 Cf. Aryeh Grabois, »Militia and Malitia: The Bernardine Vision of Chivalry«, in: *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. by Michael Gervers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

27 Jean Flori, *La guerre sainte. La formation de l'idée de la croisade dans l'Occident chrétien* (Paris: Aubier 2001), p. 273.

28 Bernard, *Eloge*, op.cit. (note 21), p. 56.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

30 For thorough analysis of his arguments see Hehl, *Kirche*, op.cit. (note 25), pp. 111–115, and Josef Fleckenstein, »Die Rechtfertigung der geistlichen Ritterorden nach der Schrift ›De laude novae militiae: Bernhards von Clairvaux‹«, in: *Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, ed. by Josef Fleckenstein & Manfred Hellmann (Vorträge und Forschungen 26) (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1980), pp. 9–22.

declared a part of »God's militia« (»Dei militia«).³¹ Soon the Military Orders became an accepted normality of medieval societies. As time progressed, even the historical date and circumstances of their emergence sank into oblivion. The orders were not perceived as a recent novelty anymore but instead came to be understood as a traditional element of Christianity. Thus, in the early modern period, the institution was generally thought of having been »founded well before the period of the crusades«.³²

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, crusading – the general context of the Military Orders' activities – was slowly, but significantly becoming a subject of criticism by Protestants and Catholics alike. However, it was mostly not the enterprise as such, but the base motives that led some to participate in them which were rejected.³³ In the Enlightenment the crusades became the object of much more fundamental criticism. Eighteenth century philosophers like Voltaire and historians like Edward Gibbon began to consider them as a whole as expressions of fanaticism and of perverted aspiration for glory.³⁴ At the same time, Arab and early Islamic cultures were reassessed and seen at least by some as on a par with ancient Greece and Rome.³⁵ Islam was sometimes even held to

31 See papal bull »Omne datum optimum«, 1139, March 29. Cf. *Papsturkunden für Templer und Johanniter. Vorarbeiten zum Oriens Pontificus. Archivberichte und Texte*, ed. by Rudolf Hiestand (Abhandlungen der phil.-hist. Klasse der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, 3. Folge 77) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), Nr. 3, pp. 204–207, quotation on p. 207.

32 Forey, »Emergence«, op.cit. (note 1), p. 175. In addition to the authors cited by Forey see also some datings of Military Orders into late antiquity by the German historian Christian Gryphius, *Kurtzer Entwurf der Geist- und Weltlichen Ritter-Orden. Itzo nach des Hn. Autoris seel. Tode zum andernmahl weit verbesserter, und mit Einrückung vieler vorhin mit Stillschweigen übergangener Ritter-Orden und Gesellschaften vermehrter herausgegeben* (Leipzig & Breslau: Christian Bauch, 1709), pp. 8–24 and passim.

33 For the complex story of early modern views on crusading and Holy War, see Christopher Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 98–113.

34 See Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII* (Paris: Didot, 1805), vol. III, chapter LIV-LIX, pp. 192–250 (the Military Orders are mentioned only shortly on pp. 207 sq, 228, 234 sq, and 244, but with an interesting comparative remark: »les religieux templiers et hospitaliers, qu'on peut en quelque sens comparer à la milice des mamelucs« (chapter LVIII, p. 244)) and Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. With variorum notes including those of Guizot, Wenck, Schreiter & Hugo* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1867), vol. VI, chapters LVIII-LX, pp. 396–573 (here too, the Military Orders are only treated very shortly on pp. 464 sq and with ambivalent judgment: »the strange association of a monastic and a military life, which fanaticism might suggest, but which policy must approve«, p. 465; Gibbon exalts the first generation of the Orders for its braveness, but deplors the decadence of the later ones). On Gibbon's judgement on the Crusades see also Tyerman, *Invention*, op.cit. (note 33), p. 113.

35 Johann Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1955), pp. 97–105; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1998), pp. 26, 77.

be explicitly superior to Christian religion.³⁶ A new, »enlightened« image of the Orient was born,³⁷ and Oriental and Arabic studies liberated themselves from being merely an auxiliary to biblical studies.³⁸ At the end of the century, the Ottoman Empire ceased to be perceived as a real menace, and when modern Western expansion started with the Napoleonic campaigns in Egypt and Syria in 1798 it created a huge new wave of romantic cultural »Orientalism«.³⁹

Linking the Military Orders to Islamic institutions: Joseph Hammer and José Antonio Conde (beginning of the 19th century)

From the newly emancipated discipline of Oriental Studies emerged not one, but two scholars who independently of each other began, around 1820, to link the Military Orders to Muslim institutions – yet to different ones. The first was the Austrian Joseph Hammer (1774–1856),⁴⁰ who had been educated as a professional interpreter (»Sprachknecht«) at the Oriental academy in Vienna and had exercised this profession for – among others – British Admiral Sir William Sidney Smith during the 1799–1800 naval campaign against Napoleon’s forces in the Eastern Mediterranean. After Hammer’s final return to Austria in 1807 he went on to become a major promoter of Oriental Studies,⁴¹ especially by editing the first journal of that discipline in German, *Fundgruben des Orients* (»Mines of Information on the Orient«), published between 1809 and 1818/1820.⁴² In 1818, Hammer – a prolific writer – published two works touching on the Templars:

36 Cf. Magdy Gabriel Badir: *Voltaire et Islam* (Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century 125) (Banbury: Voltaire Foundation, 1974), pp. 60–70.

37 »das neue, von der Aufklärung geformte Orientbild« (Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), p. 165, see also pp. 105, 158).

38 Cf. Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), pp. 105–125.

39 Franco Cardini, *Europa und der Islam. Geschichte eines Mißverständnisses* (Munich: Beck, 2000), pp. 258–262.

40 Only late in his life he took on the title of »Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall«.

41 Cf. the assessment by Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), pp. 158–166, esp. p. 165: »Es bleibt ihm das Verdienst, in Deutschland zu einer Zeit, in der die arabischen Studien in eine Sackgasse zu geraten drohten, das neue Orientbild unermüdlich und tatkräftig verkündet zu haben«.

42 For detailed information on Hammer, his influence as translator of oriental literature into German and his reception notably by Johann Wolfgang Goethe see Sepp Reichl, *Hammer-Purgstall. Auf den romantischen Pfaden eines österreichischen Orientforschers* (Graz & Vienna: Leykam, 1973), Beher Mohamed Elgohary, *Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856). Ein Dichter und Vermittler orientalischer Literatur* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dietrich Heinz, 1979) and Andrea Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus. Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte 35) (Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 2005), pp. 147–152. For a reappraisal

First, a long Latin essay titled *Mysterium Baphometis revelatum* (»The Secret of Baphomet revealed«),⁴³ and second, a book in German, *Die Geschichte der Assassinen aus morgenländischen Quellen* (»History of the Assassins based on Oriental sources«).⁴⁴ In the essay, Hammer presented evidence for a link between the Templars and ancient Oriental cults identified by their alleged common veneration of the idol »Baphomet«. He thus contributed to the conspiracy theories concerning the Templars that were already widespread in his time (and obviously even more so today, although usually not among scholars).⁴⁵ The book was the first monograph about the medieval Isma'ilis, a Shiite sect better known as »Assassins«. Yet it faithfully reproduced the medieval Western myths surrounding the group.⁴⁶ In the book, Hammer several times likened the Assassins to the Templars by highlighting the (allegedly) common features. Thus he described both groups as relying on mountain strongholds,⁴⁷ being dedicated to ruthless murder,⁴⁸ wearing a similar habit, and despising real, »positive« religion. But the most salient fundamental common quality to Hammer was their both being an »order«, as the following quotation demonstrates:

It is especially hard to conceive how European writers [...] and even Orientalists [...] could list the Assassins as an ordinary dynasty of princes, although everything here [i.e. in the histories of William of Tyre and James of Vitry] points to an order, by clearly mentioning the abbot, the monastery, the grand master, the rules of life of the order, and the religion of the Assassins, in the same way as could be spoken of the religion, that is the order, of the Hospitallers or the Teutonic knights or the Templars.⁴⁹

of his contribution to scientific interest in non-European regions in general cf. Osterhammel, *Entzauberung*, op.cit. (note 33), pp. 13, 41, 51, 53 and passim.

43 Joseph Hammer, »Mysterium Baphometis revelatum seu Fratres militiae Templi, qua Gnostici, et quidem Ophiniani, apostasiae, idoloduliae et impuritatis convicti per ipsa eorum monumenta«, in: *Fundgruben des Orients* 6 (1818), pp. 1–120, 445–499.

44 Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Die Geschichte der Assassinen aus morgenländischen Quellen* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1818).

45 See a critical discussion of Hammer's essay and of the supposed Templar's cult of »Baphomet« in Barber, *Templer*, op.cit. (note 14), p. 287.

46 On the historic reality of the group see Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins – A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), and Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1955). On the legendary history see the critical account by Farhat Daftary, *The Assassin Legends. Myths of the Isma'ilis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994).

47 Hammer-Purgstall, *Assassinen*, op.cit. (note 44), p. 199 (the Assassins were based in castles in Persia and Syria).

48 Cf. Hammer-Purgstall, *Assassinen*, op.cit. (note 44), p. 200: »So bekannten sich die Ritter [i.e. the Templars], welche bisher als Verbündete der Ismailiten [i.e. the Assassins] und ihrer geheimen Lehre verdächtig geschienen, öffentlich zu derselben als Meuchler, so floß die Religion der Templer und der Assassinen in dem Blute willkürlichen Mords zusammen«.

49 Hammer-Purgstall, *Assassinen*, op.cit. (note 44), p. 196: »Besonders ist es schwer zu begreifen, wie europäische Schriftsteller [...] und selbst Orientalisten [...] die Assassinen als eine gewöhnliche Fürstendynastie aufführen konnten, während hier Alles auf einen Orden hin-

Hammer drew parallels, but stopped just short of developing a fully-fledged filiation theory leading the Templars back to the Assassins: At the end of his book, he asserted an influence of the Assassins on Christian institutions as there were »similarities [...] which arrived not by chance nor by the same motive, but which were probably transferred through the link of the crusades from the spirit of the Orient into the spirit of the Occident.«⁵⁰ And even though Hammer underlined that no Christian order was completely identical to the Assassins, he declared the Templars to be certainly the most similar Christian organization.⁵¹ Hammer's ideas, however, found little following among scholars.⁵² Yet they are a valuable testimony for the tendency of his time to liken Islamic and Christian institutions and more specifically for doing this by applying the concept of a monastic »order« to Islamic groups.

weist, indem klar von dem Abte, dem Konvente, dem Großmeister, der Ordensregel, und der Religion der Assassinen die Rede ist, wie von der Religion, das ist, dem Orden der Spitalsritter, deutschen Herren oder der Templer gesprochen werden könnte«. The »dynastic« view of the Assassins which Hammer discards here is obviously that of his fellow-orientalist, the Frenchman Antoine-Isaac Sylvestre de Sacy, who in the same year 1818 had published a »Mémoire sur la dynastie des Assassins, et sur l'étymologie de leur nom«, in: Idem, *Mémoires d'histoire et de littérature orientales* (Paris: L'imprimerie Royale, 1818), pp. 322–403. On de Sacy, who was the most influential orientalist of his time, see Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), pp. 140–157.

- 50 »Wir haben zwar im Vorbeigehen mehr als einmal auf die Berührungspunkte hingedeutet, welche die Einrichtung des Ordens der Assassinen mit gleichzeitigen oder späteren Orden darbeut, aber wenn sich auch so manche Ähnlichkeiten finden, die weder zufällig noch aus derselben Ursache entstanden, sondern wahrscheinlich durch die Verbindung der Kreuzzüge aus dem Geiste des Orients in den des Occidents übergegangen sind, so reichen dieselben doch nirgends hin zu einem vollkommenen Seitenstücke mit dem Orden der Assassinen, welchem, Dank dem Himmel! bisher in der Geschichte kein anderer parallel läuft.« (Hammer-Purgstall, *Assassinen*, op.cit. (note 44), p. 336 sq.).
- 51 »Zunächst an demselben [i.e. the »order« of the Assassins] stand unstreitig der der Templer, dessen geheime Satzungen, besonders in so weit es Verschmähung der positiven Religion und Ausdehnung der Herrschaft durch Erwerb von Schlössern und Burgen betrifft, dieselben wie die des Ordens der Assassinen gewesen zu seyn scheinen. Auch ist die Übereinstimmung zwischen den weißen Kleidern und rothen Binden der Assassinen mit dem weißen Mantel und rothem Kreuze der Templer gewiß äußerst auffallend.« (Hammer-Purgstall, *Assassinen*, op.cit. (note 44), p. 337).
- 52 Hammer applied the concept of the Military Orders again to an Islamic institution in a later work: Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der Ilchane, das ist der Mongolen von Persien 1200–1350. Mit neun Beilagen, Textauszügen aus Wassaf und anderen Dokumenten enthaltend und neun Stammtafeln der mongolischen Herrscher* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1974; Reprint of the edition of 1842–43). At p. 323, Hammer describes an outright »islamic military order« (»dieses moslimischen Ritterordens«) in another context: a brotherhood spread all over Asia Minor, with the name of »knight brothers« (»Achewat Fatijan«, Hammer traduces in German: »Brüder Ritter«) and states that it was either modeled on the Christian Military Orders or itself the model for those orders (»waren entweder eine Nachahmung, oder, wenn sie schon vierhundert Jahre früher bestanden haben sollten, das Vorbild derselben«).

The second Oriental scholar had more success with his hypothesis – in the long run at least. This was the Spaniard José Antonio Conde (1766–1820),⁵³ a librarian at the Royal Library in Madrid who had been trained in Arabic. After falling into disgrace because of his allegiance to Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon and King of Spain during the French invasion (1808–1813), he published his major work in 1820: *The Historia de la dominación de los árabes en España, sacada de varios manuscritos y memorias arabigas* («History of the rule of the Arabs in Spain, taken from diverse Arabic manuscripts and accounts»),⁵⁴ a pioneering and very successful work as it was the first one to describe the history of Islamic Spain entirely based on Arabic sources, however in an uncritical fashion and not systematically citing his references. In a small footnote to a passage describing the life of the last Umayyad caliph in Al-Andalus, Hishām III. (1026–1031, died 1036), Conde set the Ribāt hypothesis into the world. At this point Conde briefly refers to a special group of Muslim fighters, called «fronteros» («frontier fighters»).⁵⁵ Conde added the following explanatory footnote:

Those «rabitos», or islamic «fronteros», exercised much austerity in their lives, and they dedicated themselves voluntarily to the continuous use of arms, and they obliged themselves by a vow to defend their borders from the raids, attacks or cavalcades of the «Almogávares» [a class of Aragonese footsoldiers] or Christian warriors. They all were very chosen knights and of high endurance in their labors. They were not allowed to flee, but had to fight intrepidly and to die before giving up their post. It seems very likely that from those rabitos originated in Spain as well as among the Christians of the East the Military Orders which were so famous for their prowess and for the services they rendered to Christianity. The two institutions were very similar.⁵⁶

53 On Conde see Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), p. 182; Manuela Manzanera de Cirre: «Gloria y descrédito de D. José Antonio Conde», in: *Anuario de estudios medievales* 6 (1969), pp. 553–562 and Antonio B. Domínguez Prats, «José Antonio Conde (1766–1820)», in: *Antigüedad cristiana* 23 (2006), pp. 883–897. No copy of Julio Calvo Pérez, *Semblanza de José Antonio Conde* (Cuenca: Diputación Provincial de Cuenca, Sección de Publicaciones, 2001) was available to me.

54 José Antonio Conde, *Historia de la dominación de los árabes en España, sacada de varios manuscritos y memorias arabigas* (Madrid: Imprenta que fue de García, 1820–1821).

55 Conde doesn't indicate his source. Most probably it was Ibn Hayyān, the main primary source for the period (see Peter C. Scales, *The fall of the Caliphate of Córdoba. Berbers and Andalusis in Conflict* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 10–37).

56 «Estos rabitos, ó fronteros musulimes, professaban mucha austeridad de vida, y se ofrecian voluntarios al continuo ejercicio de las armas, y por voto se obligaban á defender sus fronteras de las algaras, entradas ó cavalgadas de los, ó campeadores cristianos. Eran todos caballeros muy escogidos, y de suma constancia en las fatigas; que no debian huir, sino pelear intrépidos y morir antes que abandonar su estacion. Parece verisimil que de estos rabitos procedieron asi en España, como entre los Christianos de Oriente, las Ordenes militares tan célebres por su valor, y por los distinguidos servicios prestados á la cristiandad. El instituto de unos y otros era muy semejante» (Conde, *Historia*, op.cit. (note 54), p. 619, note).

In this note, Conde uses »rabitos« as a synonym for »fronteros« – thus maybe hispanizing an Arabic term used in his source.⁵⁷ Then he goes on to describe the »fronteros«/»rabitos« as Muslim »knights«. Conde finally expresses the assumption that the Christian Military Orders were »very probably« derived from those »rabitos« because the two institutions very much resembled each other. The link between »fronteros«/»rabitos« and the Military Orders is not taken up again in the book. Still, with these few lines in a note, Conde had laid the foundations for the creation of the scientific object of the Ribāt as well as lanced its career as the model for the Military Orders. There was, however, one important element in the concept of the »Ribāt«, which was added only later by others: Conde spoke of a group of persons, but did not mention the notion of a place or building.

Conde's book from 1820 was first universally hailed, translated into several languages, and used as a reference work for the next twenty years. Yet in 1841, it came under heavy criticism by the Dutchman Reinhart Dozy (1820–1883).⁵⁸ In his *Recherches sur l'histoire et la littérature de l'Espagne pendant le Moyen Âge*, he attacked Conde in an almost obsessive manner on nearly every page, not only as an ignoramus, but also as an impostor. This harsh verdict by Dozy, who went on to become the undoubtedly greatest historian of Muslim Spain in the nineteenth century, caused Conde's work to fall into thorough disrepute in the discipline of Oriental Studies.⁵⁹ However, the Spaniard's conception of the Ribāt and of the Islamic extraction of the Military Orders was not totally eclipsed, although it took a certain time – one hundred years – before it was further developed.

Adding the notion of the building to the concept of the Ribāt: William Mac Guckin de Slane and 19th century Oriental Studies

The notion of the Ribāt as a place and a building in the sense of a fortified convent, which was not present in Conde's original hypothesis linking the »Rebatos« and the Military Orders, was mentioned for the first time in a scholarly text in 1842. In his translation of Ibn Hawkal's description of North Africa,⁶⁰ the Irish-

⁵⁷ Most probably, that term was »al-Murābitūn«.

⁵⁸ On Dozy, see Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), pp. 181–185.

⁵⁹ See Manzanares de Cirre, »Gloria«, op.cit. (note 53). Accordingly, Conde does not figure as a founding father of Spanish Oriental Studies in the 19th century in Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), pp. 265–269. Both Manzanares de Cirre and Domínguez Prats, »Conde«, op.cit. (note 53) plead for a reappraisal of Conde.

⁶⁰ William Mac Guckin de Slane, »Description de l'Afrique, par Ibn Haucal«, in: *Journal Asiatique*, 3. serie, 13 (1842), pp. 153–196 and 209–258. On Ibn Hawkal's use of the word Ribāt see Chabbi, »Ribāt«, op.cit. (note 4), pp. 499 sq.

man William Mac Guckin de Slane (1801–1878) pointed out in a note that the Ribāts frequently mentioned by the author were »fortified barracks constructed on the frontiers«. According to de Slane, they were occupied, in addition to regular troops, by pious persons who did military service in order to obtain the merits of pursuing »Holy War« and devoted themselves to religious practices in the buildings. Thus, the barracks took up the character of religious convents.⁶¹ De Slane went on to develop this notion of the Ribāt in explanatory notes to two other translations of medieval Islamic writers, 14th century historian Ibn Khaldūn and 11th century geographer Al-Bakri⁶². In the later and longer note, de Slane defined the institution as »a small fort built on the frontier of the Islamic territory containing a garrison of volunteers«,⁶³ thus silently eliding the presence of regular troops he had still evoked in his first note. De Slane also drew a connection between the Ribāt and two etymologically related phenomena: First, the Marabouts, popular local Muslim »Saints« venerated throughout the North Africa, and second the Moroccan tribal dynasty of the Almoravides, which he understood as a »religious order« formed around a Ribāt.⁶⁴

During the remainder of the nineteenth century, Orientalists once and again touched on the subject in their erudite notes, but did not develop it much further.⁶⁵ Nor did they link it with the Christian Military Orders. Yet outside of

61 »Les ribāts étaient primitivement des casernes fortifiées qu'on construisait sur les frontières de pays. Outre les troupes qu'on y entretenait, des gens pieux s'y rendaient pour se consacrer à un service militaire et obtenir ainsi les mérites spirituels qui sont attachés à la guerre sainte faite contre les infidèles: les pratiques de dévotion y occupaient leurs moments de loisir, et bientôt les mœurs et les habitudes du couvent prenaient la place de celles de la caserne« (de Slane, »Description«, op.cit. [note 60], p. 168, note 2). De Slane was a pupil of Sylvestre de Sacy (see Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. [note 35], p. 153, and our note 49, above).

62 *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale* par Ibn Khaldoun, transl. by Willam Mac Guckin de Slane, vol. I (Algiers: Imprimerie du gouvernement, 1852), p. 83, note 2, and *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale* [by Al-Bakri], transl. by William Mac Guckin de Slane, vol. I (Algiers: A. Jourdan, 1858, Reprint 1913), p. 21, note 1.

63 »Ribat, petit fort bâti sur la frontière du territoire islamique et renfermant une garnison composée de volontaires« (ibid., p. 21, note 1).

64 »Les personnes qui s'attachaient à un ribat prenaient le titre de morabet, mot dont les Européens on fait marabout et qu'ils emploient pour désigner non seulement un homme religieux, un anachorète, mais aussi son tombeau. Les Almoravides, en arabe El-Morabetin, avaient pris ce nom, parce qu'ils formaient un ordre religieux et que les initiés étaient affiliés à leur ribat« (ibid.). On the Marabouts, see Meier, »Almoraviden und marabute«, op.cit. (note 12).

65 In 1894, the Belgian Max van Berchem (1863–1921) announced a more detailed study, which he however never wrote. See Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Première partie. Egypte, I* (Mémoires publiés par les membres de la mission archéologique française au Caire) (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894), p. 408, note 4: »Le mot ribāt désigne à l'origine une institution militaire, puis un couvent de soufis analogue à la khânaqâh [...] j'y reviendrai ailleurs«. For other oriental scholars touching on the Ribāt between de Slane and van Berchem, see bibliographical notes given by van Berchem. On van Berchem, the founder of arabic epigraphy, see Fück, *Studien*, op.cit (note 35), p. 290.

the domain of Oriental Studies, Conde's hypothesis was still at hand: The German historian Heinrich Prutz occasionally took it up in his book on the Military Orders published in 1908.⁶⁶ But Prutz referred directly to Conde and made no mention yet of the Ribāt as a place or building. Still, everything was ready for the concept to evolve at the beginning of the new century.

The School of Algiers: Edmond Doutté and Georges Marcais (1900/1925)

In 1879, France had set up the »Ecole Supérieure des Lettres« in Algiers, which included a major research and teaching centre for Arabic culture in French dominated Northern Africa. At the turn of the century, a scholar from the Ecole, Edmond Doutté (1867–1926), published an essay on the Marabout »saints« in the Maghreb. After refuting a series of erroneous etymologies, he proposed a new one: The Franco-Arabic expression »Marabout« derives from the Arabic term »merâbet« and thus from »ribât«. The original Marabouts had not been popular saints, but »warlike religious missionaries« (»missionnaires religieux combattants«)⁶⁷ connected to the medieval »Ribats«. Of the latter term Doutté gives the following definition:

The Ribats were forts built at the frontiers of the muslim empires, and where a garrison of volunteers defended the territory of Islam against the attacks of foreigners. This action was one form of Jihād, of that Holy War, which was a duty for Muslims. People went to the Ribât to acquire a claim on divine favour, like our people used to commit themselves for a certain time to the knights of the Order of Malta.⁶⁸

66 Hans Prutz, *Die geistlichen Ritterorden. Ihre Stellung zur kirchlichen, politischen, gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1908), p. 32.

67 Edmond Doutté, *Notes sur l'Islâm maghribin: Les marabouts* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900), quote on p. 31. The text was first published in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 40 (1899), pp. 343–369 and 41 (1900), pp. 22–60 and 289–336. For a reappraisal of the anthropological work of Doutté see Abdelmajid Hannoum, »Faut-il brûler l'orientalisme? On French Scholarship Of North Africa«, in: *Cultural Dynamics* 16 (2004), pp. 71–91, esp. p. 81. At first, Doutté was »chargé de cours« at the Ecole. From 1910 on to 1919 he held the newly created »chaire d'histoire de la civilisation musulmane« (see Nabila Oulebsir, *Les usages du patrimoine. Monuments, musées et politique coloniale en Algérie (1830–1930)* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2004), p. 239).

68 »Les ribât' étaient des forts bâtis sur les frontières des empires musulmans et où une garnison de volontaires défendait le territoire de l'Islâm contre les attaques des étrangères. C'était une forme du djihād, de cette guerre sainte qui est un devoir pour les musulmans; on allait dans le

Doutté adds that there had been, in the first centuries of Islam, a chain of Ribāts from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indus river, in which people practiced war and prayer in turn. Later on, however, most Ribāts lost their military character, and the word took on the (sole) meaning of »convent«.⁶⁹ Eighty years after Conde (but without referring to him), Doutté thus renewed the analogy between the Ribāt and the Military Orders, but with an important difference: Ribāt was now essentially conceived of as a building, which was at the same time a fort and a convent.

Yet it took another quarter of a century before a scholarly text was dedicated entirely to the Ribāt. Only in 1925, more than a century after Conde had written his footnote, Georges Marçais (1876–1962) published an article on the Ribāts of the Berber lands, the *Note sur les Ribats en Berberie*.⁷⁰ A colleague of Doutté at the »Ecole Supérieure des Lettres« in Algiers, Marçais was a professor of Islamic archeology. His contribution to the concept of the Ribāt was decisive in a threefold way. Firstly, he connected it to two extant buildings, the huge fortifications in the cities of Monastir and Sousse on the Tunisian East Coast. The one in Sousse is studied in detail at the end of Marçais' essay. Both ensembles contain mosques and were mentioned as ancient places of »Ribāt« by the aforementioned tenth-century writer Ibn Hawkal.⁷¹ The importance of the buildings had been first signalled in 1884 by René Basset,⁷² the former head of the Ecole Supérieure des Lettres, and Marçais' article was published in an omnibus volume dedicated to the recently deceased Basset. Secondly, drawing on every documented mentioning of a fortified place in North Africa by medieval geographers (Ibn Hawkal and others), Marçais created a picture according to which the coastline of the Berber lands from Morocco to Libya was more or less littered with

ribāt' pour y conquérir des titres à la faveur divine, comme on s'engageait jadis chez nous pour un temps parmi les chevaliers de Malte« (Ibidem, p. 29).

69 Ibid., p. 30.

70 Georges Marçais, »Note sur les Ribats en Berberie«, in: *Mélanges René Basset* (Paris: Leroux, 1925), vol. II, pp. 395–430. The expression »School of Algiers«, which I employ here, was coined by André Raymond to label the direction in urbanistic Islamic studies represented mainly by Georges Marçais and his brother William. See André Raymond, »Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views« in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1994), pp. 3–18. On Georges Marçais as a scholar, see also Oulebsir, *Les usages du patrimoine*, op.cit. (note 67), pp. 21 and 239.

71 See the discussion by Chabbi, »Ribāt«, op.cit. (note 4), p. 502. An image of the »Ribāt« of Sousse is displayed on the cover of the present volume.

72 René Basset & Octave Houdas, »Mission scientifique en Tunisie«, in: *Bulletin de correspondance africaine* 2 (1884), pp. 44–161, esp. pp. 168–173. On René Basset and the Ecole supérieure in Algiers see Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), pp. 251 sq.

Ribāts populated with religiously motivated »frontier guardians«. ⁷³ This institution he held to be »the most constant manifestation of the battling spirit of Islam and of the fervor of the Berbers«. ⁷⁴ Thirdly, Marçais deeply moulded the Ribāts in the terms of Christian monasticism, as »convents of the warrior monks«. ⁷⁵ By all these three elements of his essay, it is Georges Marçais who has to be credited with having created the proper scientific object of the »Muslim military monastery« in 1925. Only a decade later, in 1935, he succeeded in inscribing his notion of the »Ribāt« into the standard reference work in the field of Islamic studies by writing the entry in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. ⁷⁶

Marçais also evoked the parallel between the Muslim institution and the Christian Military Orders several times in his essay (but not in the entry in the *Encyclopedia*). Thus, he labels the Templars »our Christian Marabouts«. Yet he does not cite any authority for this parallel. Apparently, the analogy seemed self-evident to him, as it had already been to Doutré twenty-five years before. Yet Marçais went one step further than his colleague by supposing a connection between the two institutions: As he deplored the fact that a study on the Ribāt announced in 1894 by another Orientalist, Max van Berchem, had never been written, he noted that maybe this scholar »even would have shown us the links which connect the Ribāts and our convents of the Holy Land, of the Temple or of Calatrava«. ⁷⁷ However it was not Marçais, but a young Spanish scholar who combined the hypothesis of the Islamic origins of the Christian Military Orders with the object of the Ribāt as constructed by the School of Algiers and developed it fully only a few years later.

Bringing the Ribāt back to Spain: Jaime Oliver Asín (1928)

In 1928, Jaime Oliver Asín (1905–1980) published his doctoral dissertation, a philological study on the Spanish word »rebato« (meaning »surprise coup«) and similar forms. He identified its Arabic origins and linked it to the historical in-

⁷³ See his tour of the coastline, Marçais, »Note«, op.cit. (note 70), p. 398–412, quotation »gardiens de frontières (morabitoûn)« on p. 396. Marçais, however, allows for an exception on the Algerian coast, where he only counts a few Ribāts.

⁷⁴ Marçais, »Note«, op.cit. (note 70), p. 416.

⁷⁵ »couvents de moines guerriers«, Marçais, »Note«, op.cit. (note 70), p. 407.

⁷⁶ Marçais, »Ribāt«, op.cit. (note 9).

⁷⁷ »Peut être même nous eut-il fait voir les rapports qui unissent les ribāts et nos couvents de Terre sainte ou d'Espagne, du Temple ou de Calatrava« (Marçais, »Note«, op.cit. [note 70], p. 398). The quotation »nos marabouts chrétiens, les Templiers« is on p. 422. On van Berchem see note 65 above.

stitution of the Ribāt as established by Marçais.⁷⁸ »Rabita« or »Rapita« being a very frequent Spanish toponym, Oliver Asín asserted – in a close parallel to what Marçais had done for North Africa – the omnipresence of Ribāts on the peninsula,⁷⁹ and he stated »that the Islamic institution of the ribat was so important in Spain that its traces remained in the vocabulary of the peninsula«.

Like Marçais before him, Oliver Asín did not cite Conde. Yet the hypothesis of the Islamic origin of the Military Orders forms the background for his study. Right at the conclusion, Oliver Asín thus claimed that his findings provided strong evidence for the Islamic origin of the Spanish Military Orders in particular, »because the words which a nation takes from the language of another country reflect the imitation of one culture in the other, of the institutions, customs, and things which those words express«.⁸⁰ He is not even held off by the fact that the Spanish Orders were founded only in the second half of the twelfth century, several decades after the ones in Palestine, and were thus likely to be not imitations of Spanish Ribāts, but of Eastern Christian models. According to Oliver Asín, the imitation process simply had taken place independently in the East and in the West. The insistence on the autonomous development of the Spanish Military Orders was a general tendency in Spanish historiography for the most of the twentieth century.⁸¹

78 Jaime Oliver Asín, »Origen árabe de rebato, arrobda y sus homónimos. Contribución al estudio de la historia medieval de la táctica militar y de su léxico peninsular«, in: *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* 15 (1928), pp. 347–395 and 496–542. Oliver Asín first presents »La institución del Ribat« on pp. 358–361. In a bibliographical footnote on p. 358 (note 2), Oliver Asín resumes the authors who previously had written on the Ribāt (De Slane, van Berchem), but it is Marçais whom he cites again and again in his notes. Conde is not mentioned. Yet Oliver Asín points out that the comparison between the Ribāt and the Military Orders has already been noted by »some scholars of Arabic language«. (»Falta un estudio de conjunto sobre el ribat, que sería interesantísimo para su comparación con las órdenes militares, varias veces notada por algunos arabistas«, p. 358, note 2).

79 Paragraph »El Ribat en España«, pp. 364–372.

80 »La institución musulmana del ribat tuvo tal importancia en España, que sus huellas quedaron en el vocabulario de la Península« (Oliver Asín, »Origen«, op.cit. [note 78], p. 540); »Las voces que una nación recoge de la lengua de otro país reflejan la imitación de una en otra cultura, de las instituciones, costumbres y cosas que aquellas voces expresan« (p. 541).

81 Oliver Asín, »Origen«, op.cit (note 78), pp. 541 sq. See Thera M. Vann, »A New Look at the Foundation of the Order of Calatrava«, in: *On the Social Origins of Medieval Institutions. Essays in Honor of Joseph F. O'Callaghan*, ed. by Donald J. Kagay & Theresa M. Vann (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 93–114, p. 97: »The work of Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz and his students has fuelled an interpretation in which the native Iberian military religious orders sprang from local soil, uncontaminated by any touch of Cistercian, Templar, or Hospitaller influence«. On Sánchez Albornoz see below.

Placing the Ribāt hypothesis in the general narrative of cultural transfer in medieval Spain: Miguel Asín Palacios and Américo Castro (1931/1948)

Already in 1931 the Ribāt hypothesis as redeveloped by Jaime Oliver Asín became integrated into a more general account of Muslim-Christian cultural transfer in the field of religion by Miguel Asín Palacios (1871–1944). The uncle of Oliver Asín, a Catholic priest and a renowned professor of Arabic philology and Oriental studies, dedicated almost his entire writings to detecting cultural transfers between Islam and Christianity and vice versa in the Middle Ages, thus continuing the tradition of his academic teacher, Julián Ribera y Tarago, the major figure in Spanish Oriental Studies around 1900.⁸² Asín Palacios' best known work, *La escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia* («Islamic Eschatology and the Divine Comedy», 1919), claimed that Dante's masterpiece had been largely inspired by Islamic texts like the Hadith, the story of Muhammad's ascension into heaven (known in Latin as the »Liber scalae Machometi«) and the writings of Ibn 'Arabī, a Sufi scholar from Murcia (born around 1164, died 1240).⁸³ In 1931, Asín Palacios dedicated a book to Ibn 'Arabī, called *El Islam christianizado* («Christianized Islam»), in which he cited him as evidence for his theory that Islam had adopted elements and forms from Christianity, especially mysticism and forms of monastic life. But cultural-religious transfer was not a one-way street for Asín Palacios: Pointing to the work of his nephew Oliver Asín, he reproduced the hypothesis in its recently fully developed form, describing the Ribāt as a »monastical and warlike institution« (»institución monástico-guerrera«) and as the »pure model of the Military Orders« (»neto modelo de las ordenes militares«).⁸⁴

The hypothesis next – in 1948 – found its way into the most influential work written on Spanish history in the twentieth century. In *España en su historia* («Spain in its history»)⁸⁵ the philologist Américo Castro (1885–1972) proposed a vision of Spain as a culture of fusion between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish elements, marked by the »convivencia« (»living together«).⁸⁶ He thus placed

82 On Spanish Oriental Studies, Ribera y Tarago and Asín Palacios, see Fück, *Studien*, op.cit. (note 35), pp. 265–269.

83 Miguel Asín Palacios, *La escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia* (Madrid: Maestre, third edition 1961), transl. *Islam and the Divine Comedy* (London: Murray, 1926).

84 Miguel Asín Palacios, *El Islam Cristianizado. Estudio del sufismo a través de las obras de Abenarabi de Murcia* (Madrid: Hiperión, 31990), p. 138, note 2.

85 Américo Castro, *España en su historia. Cristianos, Moros y Judíos* (Buenos Aires: Espasa, 1948), published in English as *The Structure of Spanish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954).

86 On this concept, which was not invented by Castro himself, see Ludwig Vones, »Reconquista

himself in opposition to the view of Spain as a nation largely »untainted« by the centuries of Muslim rule in the Middle Ages, that was defended by the equally famous Spanish historian Claudio Sánchez Albornoz (1893–1984). According to Sánchez Albornoz, Christians in the northern part of the peninsula had not come into cultural contact with the Arabs and the Jews of Al-Andalus for a long time, and by the time they eventually did, around 1200, this encounter was too late to leave a deep impression. If there had been any cultural influence, it had worked the other way round, shaping not the Christians, but only the Muslim occupiers. According to Sánchez Albornoz, the latter had been rapidly assimilated and Europeanized after their conquest of Spain in the eighth century because of their relatively small number.⁸⁷

Sánchez Albornoz was only the staunchest and most intelligent defender of the »continuity thesis« of the Spanish nation from the Visigoths on, which reflected the search of a whole generation of Spanish intellectuals for a unified Spanish national identity after the »annus horribilis« of 1898, which had brought the loss of the last big colonies.⁸⁸ It remained the dominant view inside Spain until the death of dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde (in 1975), is still popular with Spanish conservatives, and experienced a revival in the wake of the Madrid train bombings of 2004.⁸⁹ However, there can be no doubt that Castro's general view of the Iberian Middle Ages is foremost among non-Spaniards and is now more popular even inside Spain.

The Ribât hypothesis figures prominently among the evidence given by Castro in his book for the fusion of cultures in medieval Spain. He presents the Military Orders as one of three exemplary Spanish »Christian-Islamic institutions«,⁹⁰ the other two being »holy war« and »tolerance«. Citing the works of

und Convivencia«, in: *Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten, Kongressakten des 4. Symposiums des Mediävistenverbandes in Köln [vom 11. – 14. März] 1991 aus Anlaß des 1000. Todesjahres der Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. by Odilo Engels & Klaus Schreiner (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993), pp. 221–242, esp. p. 223.

87 Sánchez Albornoz' arguments for this Europeanization of Spanish Islam have been convincingly refuted by Pierre Guichard, *Structures sociales »orientales« et »occidentales« dans l'Espagne musulmane* (Paris & the Hague: Mouton, 1977).

88 See the analysis of Spanish historiography in the 20th century by Ludwig Vones, *Geschichte der iberischen Halbinsel im Mittelalter (711–1480). Reiche – Kronen – Regionen* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993), pp. 9–22, on Castro vs. Sánchez Albornoz pp. 11–18.

89 See the statement of the former Spanish prime minister José María Aznar made shortly after the Madrid bombings in March 2004, in a lecture at Georgetown University in Washington D.C.: Aznar maintained that Spain's problems with Al-Qaeda had not begun yesterday (i.e. because of the country's involvement with the invasion of Iraq), but 1300 years ago, »when a Spain recently invaded by the Moors refused to become just another piece in the Islamic world and began a long battle to recover its identity« (21 September 2004; <http://www3.georgetown.edu/president/aznar/inauguraladdress.html>, retrieved 10.01.2008).

90 This is the title of the whole chapter in the English and German version (in the Spanish original

Marçais, Oliver Asín, and Asín Palacios, and adding little further evidence himself, Castro follows the theory of Muslim descent given by Oliver Asín. Like Asín, he maintains that the Spanish Military Orders were not modelled after the Templars. Instead, he proposes that the origins of both Templars and Spanish orders are found directly in »the Oriental model«, albeit with the concession of a formal (yet not essential) influence of the Templars on the Spanish institutions.⁹¹

Introducing cultural transfer theory and a missing link: Thomas F. Glick and Elena Lourie (1966/1982)

In 1966, the American Thomas F. Glick set the hypothesis in a new theoretical frame: the theory of cultural transfer as developed by cultural and social anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber.⁹² Cultural transfer is viewed in this theory not as mere copying or reception, but as a transformatory process. Accordingly, instead of propagating the Ribāt as the direct model of the Military Orders, Glick proposed only a »stimulus« on Christianity by the Ribāt, thus accounting for differences between the Ribāt and the Military Orders. As cultural transfer theory also claims that cultures rather do not admit to having received a stimulus from outside, even the absence of proof for the alleged transfer can be explained by an intrinsic condition. Glick, a leading historian on cultural transfer in medieval Iberia, continues to support the Ribāt hypothesis to this day,⁹³ but a more convincing way to close the evidence gap between the Ribāt and the Military Orders was put forward by Elena Lourie, an Israeli specialist on medieval Aragon, in an article published in 1982.⁹⁴ As she pointed out, around 1120–1140, at the very time of the birth of the Military Orders, some peculiar military-religious confraternities existed in Aragon on the frontier with the Muslims. In those small groups – and only there and then – Christian fighters could take a vow to fight Muslims on a temporary basis, in the same way as Muslims engaging in Holy War against Christians did. In fact this model was so contrary to general Christian principles of religious life that it was abolished after only a few years. Ingenious as Lourie's introduction of a missing link might seem at first glance,

it simply reads »Órdenes militares. Guerra Santa. Tolerancia«). The passages on the Military Orders are to be found on pp. 204–218 (Castro, *Structure*, op.cit. [note 85]).

⁹¹ Castro, *Structure*, op.cit. (note 85), p. 209.

⁹² Thomas F. Glick & Oriol P. Sunyer, »Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History«, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11 (1969), pp. 136–154.

⁹³ See his works cited in note 2.

⁹⁴ Lourie, »Confraternity«, op.cit. (note 2).

it still leaves us without any proof for the alleged cultural transfer. Also, any influence of the small groups in Aragon on the Templars founded already around 1120 in the Holy Land seems most improbable.⁹⁵

Discovering the cells of the Muslim warrior monks: Excavations of »Ribāts« in Guardamar (Spain) and Aljezur (Portugal)

As a result of the establishment by Georges Marçais and Jaime Oliver Asín of the idea that Muslim military monasteries were an ubiquitous phenomenon all over North Africa and Iberia, recent archeological excavations of remains from the Islamic period on the Iberian peninsula tend to identify them as Ribāts, especially when they are situated in isolated sites (above all on the coast). Thus a Ribāt was discovered near Guardamar del Segura on the Mediterranean coast near Alicante (southwestern Spain) in 1984,⁹⁶ and another one in 2002 on the Atlantic coast near the city of Aljezur (southern Portugal).⁹⁷ In both cases identification

95 The link between the militias of Belchite and Montréal and the Ribāt was again taken up and described as evident in 1999 by Miramon. *Les données*, op.cit. (note 5), pp. 70–71, note 3 (without reference to Lourie): »Les milices de Montréal et Belchite fondées par Alphonse le Batailleur sont clairement des essais d'adaptation chrétienne des ribat«.

96 Rafael Azuar Ruiz, »El conjunto religioso del ribat califal de las dunas de Guardamar«, in: *Archivo de prehistoria levantina* 19 (1989), pp. 375–384; Rafael Azuar Ruiz, »Una rābita hispanomusulmana del siglo X (Guardamar del Segura, Alicante. España), in: *Archéologie Islamique* 1 (1990), pp. 109–122; Rafael Azuar Ruiz (ed.), *La Rābita califal de las dunas de Guardamar* (Alicante: Diputación Provincial de Alicante, 1989). For his concept of the Ribāt, Azuar Ruiz refers to Oliver Asín.

97 See Rosa Varela Gomes & Mário Varela Gomes, »O Ribat da Arrifana (Aljezur – Algarve)«, in: *Revista Portuguesa de Arqueologia* 7 (2004), pp. 483–573 (also as offprint Aljezur: Município de Aljezur, 2004), esp. p. 486, where the authors describe how they came to identify the ruins they had unearthed at Arrifana near Aljezur with a Ribāt, and more specifically with that of Ibn Qasī, a Sufi leader and rebell against the Almoravides: »Reconhecemos, de imediato, devido principalmente à presença de invulgar quantidade de mesquitas ou oratórios, tratar-se de *ribat* e, muito possivelmente, do mais célebre do *Garb*, onde se prepararam para a *djihād* os aguerridos *muridun*, seguidores de Ibn Qasī.« (»Mainly because of the presence of a unusual number of little mosques or prayer sites, we immediately recognized that we had to do with a *ribat*, and, very probably, with the best-known of the *Garb* [the west of Al-Andalus, the Algarve], where the bellicose *muridun*, the followers of Ibn Qasī, prepared themselves for the *djihād*.)« See also the conclusion on pp. 569–571, esp. p. 570: »É bem possível que do ribat de Arrifana tenham partido os monges-guerreiros saídos do Algarve para [...] participarem, em 541 H (1147), na conquista almoada de Sevilha [...]« (»It is quite possible that it was from the Ribat of Arrifana that the warrior-monks from the Algarve left, in order [...] to participate, in the year 541 of the Hegira (1147 BC), in the almohad conquest of Seville [...]«). On the same page, see: »O *ribat* da Arrifana, local sagrado e dedicado à profunda meditação religiosa, abrigava numerosos crentes e nele foram instruídos teológica, psicológica e militarmente, os

with the institution of Ribāt seemed evident to the excavators. In each instance the institution is understood in the full sense developed by Marçais and Oliver Asín: In the case of Aljezur, the archeologists even ponder how warrior monks («monges-guerreiros») prepared themselves in their cells in Arrifana.⁹⁸ The discovery at Guardamar led to a blossoming of Ribāt studies in Spain. In 1989 and 1997 international scientific meetings were held in the small town of Sant Carles de la Ràpita, whose toponym has also been linked to the Ribāt.⁹⁹ Even a bibliography on the subject has been published.¹⁰⁰

Conclusions

Our retracing of the scholarly historiography of the Ribāt has clearly shown us that the «Muslim military monastery» had no life of his own. Rather, the scientific object of the Ribāt was constructed in parallel to the Military Orders and in the conceptual terms of Western monasticism. First mentioned by José Antonio Conde in 1820/21, then only as a class of warriors, the Ribāt was from the moment of its birth linked to the Christian Military orders. The analogy between the Muslim and Christian orders formed the self-evident background for the further development, whose major thrusts forward were made by the French Oriental School in Algiers and by Spanish Historians of cultural transfer in the middle Ages.

As Joseph Hammer's simultaneous efforts to link Templars and Assassins

muridūn para a *jihad*.« («The *ribāt* of Arrifana, a holy site dedicated to profound religious meditation, accomodated many believers, and in it the *muridūn* were trained theologically, psychologically and militarily for the *jihad*»). For their conception of the Ribāt, the authors rely only on the works of Azuar Ruiz on the Ribāt of Guardamar (see pp. 560 sq.). For the results of further excavations by the same archeologists see Rosa Varela Gomes & Mário Varela Gomes, «O ribat da Arrifana (Aljezur, Algarve): resultados das escavações arqueológicas no Sector 3 (2003/2004)», in: *Revista Portuguesa de Arqueologia* 9 (2006), pp. 329–352, and the contributions in: *Ribāt da Arrifana. Cultura material e espiritualidade*, ed. by Associação de defesa do património histórico e arqueológico de Aljezur (Aljezur: Município de Aljezur, 2007).

⁹⁸ See note 86.

⁹⁹ See Francisco Franco Sánchez (ed.), *La rābita en el Islam. Estudios interdisciplinares. Congresos internacionals de Sant Carles de la Ràpita (1989, 1997)* (Sant Carles de la Ràpita & Alicante: Universitat d'Alacant, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ Francisco Franco Sánchez, *Rābita-s islāmicas. Bibliografía actualizada* (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 1997). For an overview on the scientific activities around the Ribāts see Mikel de Epalza, «Los estudios sobre las rābitas en la actualidad (1998)», in: Sanchez, *La rābita*, op.cit. (note 99), pp. 29–41.

demonstrate, a Muslim filiation of the Military Orders was, as it were, »in the air« at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Religious chivalry had become inexplicable in the frame of its own culture as it was perceived around 1800 and was now a phenomenon that cried for an external explanation. This was a relatively recent development, for, as we have seen above, up to the seventeenth century the orders were held to be traditional elements of Christian society. Yet under the criticism of the Enlightenment, elements of violence had more and more come to be seen as alien to Christian culture. Islam, on the contrary, was viewed as culture naturally prone to religious violence. This is the epistemological frame in which the Christian Military Orders became an »uncanny« phenomenon. Major supporters of the Ribāt hypothesis have clearly articulated their uneasiness about the orders and at the same time subscribed to the general view that violence was alien to Christianity but innate to Islam. For instance, Jaime Oliver Asín explicitly stated that the Military Orders could not have been invented in Christian culture because the concept of propagating belief with armed violence was essentially »anti-Christian«. For Muslims, in contrast, »holy war« was a religious duty:

Finally, we have to notice in favor of the Islamic origin of the Military Orders in general, that the military character of both institutions, the Muslim one and the Christian one, could originate only from a people that practiced the holy war as a religious duty, as was the case with the Muslim people. Neither here [i.e. in Spain] nor in any other Christian country could a type of war with an essentially anti-Christian spirit have possibly been born: The propagation of religious belief with armed violence.¹⁰¹

Hans Prutz, the German historian of the Military Orders who had taken up Conde in 1908, had argued in a very similar way some years earlier.¹⁰² However, it was Américo Castro, the champion of the »convivencia« hypothesis, who made the most outspoken remarks on the secular and the religious in the East and in the West, when writing about the Military Orders and the Ribāt:

101 »Obsérvese, finalmente, en favor del origen islámico de las Ordenes militares en general, que la indole militar de ambas instituciones, la musulmana y la cristiana, tiene que ser originariamente exclusiva tan sólo de un pueblo que practicaba la guerra santa como deber religioso, cual era el musulmán. Ni aquí ni en ningún país cristiano pudo nacer, por sí solo, un género de guerra cuyo espíritu era esencialmente anticristiano: la propagación de la fe religiosa por la violencia de las armas« (Oliver Asín, »Origen«, op.cit. [note 78]), p. 542).

102 »Der dschihad, d.h. der heilige Krieg, der Krieg zur Ausbreitung des rechten Glaubens und, wenn die Ungläubigen sich nicht unterwerfen wollten, zu ihrer Ausrottung, entsprang aus dem Wesen des Islam und des durch ihn erweckten nationalen Arabertums, während das Christentum vor den Kreuzzügen einen solchen Begriff seinem friedlichen Wesen nach zu entwickeln nicht den Beruf hatte.« (Prutz, *Ritterorden*, op.cit. [note 66], p. 31). See similar passages in Cocheril, »Essai«, op.cit (note 2).

This is the way European Christendom was penetrated by a doctrine and certain habits that had been familiar to Islam for centuries although they were novel and unheard of for the French monks of Cîteaux and Cluny. To give over to mystic asceticism and to spill the blood of the enemy were compatible activities for the Moslem, because in him the distance between the corporeal and the spiritual, between the mundane and the divine, was obliterated.¹⁰³

And a few lines down, Castro continued: »the mixture of religious piety and bloody violence was like an oriental garment of the spirit.«¹⁰⁴ According to him, as the Military Orders brought this »Oriental garment« home from Palestine, it somehow made them strangers in their own world:

There was something in the Templars that was incompatible with French life. [...] Their bellicose piety was tolerated so long as they lived in Palestine. But when they were forced to live once more in the country of their origin, the conflict became patent between church and war, between spirituality and business transactions – opposites which could no longer be integrated in the rationalized life of France, where a banker was a banker and a religious was a religious.¹⁰⁵

Obviously, Castro views France (or Europe in general) as having a sempiternal culture of »laïcité« already in the Middle Ages, as he goes on to speak of the »incompatibility of the Order of the Templars with the neat separation of heaven and earth, faith and reason, characteristic of French life.«¹⁰⁶ In Spain, on the contrary, according to Castro, the religious and the secular were not neatly separated, due to the influence of Islam, which explains the flourishing of the Military Orders there.

The Ribāt hypothesis is clearly a medievalist form of »Orientalism«, if we define the term with Edward Said as »a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ›the Orient‹ and ›the Occident‹«. It is certainly not by chance that the hypothesis was born immediately after the great »Oriental renaissance« triggered by Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, which Said identified as the great leap forward for the development of Orientalism. But it is a very special case of Orientalism, as it operates the distinction between East and West by claiming a cultural borrowing. In fact, all its major supporters were advocates of the existence of broad cultural exchange between Islam and Christianity. The best example is that of Américo Castro himself, whose contribution to the historiography of Spain in the Middle Ages undoubtedly was a major step forward and was deeply esteemed by Edward Said.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Castro, *Structure*, op.cit. (note 85), p. 206.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206 sq.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 207 sq.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁷ See Said's comment in his speech at the reception of the »Premio del Principe de Asturias«

Yet the linking of the Military Orders to the Ribāt is only one element of a more pervasive pattern. There seems to be a whole historiographical tradition of explaining medieval Christian forms of religious violence by cultural transfer from Islam, even when there is no evidence in the sources. Most prominent is the view that the crusades are only to be understood as a reaction to Jihād, supported by leading scholars in the field.¹⁰⁸ But the explanatory stereotype is also applied outside the framework of the crusades. For instance, only recently Islamic influences have been made responsible to explain the brutal repression against pagan Saxons by Charlemagne in the late eighth century. The study, published in a prestigious historical journal, identifies the language of the emperor's harsh laws against the Saxons outright with »the language of *jihad*«. It claims that Islamic policies for dealing with polytheists (like the Saxons) had been transmitted by Visigoth refugees from Islamic Spain to Charlemagne's court.¹⁰⁹ One of them was Theodulf of Orléans, a counselor to Charlemagne, whom the author of the study, Yitzhak Hen, tries to establish as the main influence behind the »Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae«, a famous decree putting the Saxons before the alternative of death or conversion. Hen readily admits that there is no direct evidence whatsoever to support this link.¹¹⁰ Rather, he just stipulates broad cultural transfer from Muslim Spain to Carolingian Francia/Frankland to have taken place and he lays it upon those not convinced to prove otherwise.¹¹¹

A critical historiography of the explanatory stereotype of Christian forms of

(Spain's highest cultural award) in the category of »concord« in 2002: »What was once suppressed or denied in Spain's long history has received its due, thanks to the recreative efforts of heroic figures such as Americo Castro and Juan Goytisolo«. (<http://www.fundacionprincipedeasturias.org/ing/04/premiados/discursos/discurso755.html> [retrieved 10.01.2008]). Said had always practically excluded scholars from nations without a major colonial history in the Arab world – like Spain (and Germany) – from his charge of Orientalism.

108 See the works of the leading French scholar on Holy War in the Middle Ages: Jean Flori, *Croisade et chevalerie, XIe et XIIe siècles* (Paris & Brussels: De Boeck Université, 1998), esp. pp. 195–213 and 389–403; Jean Flori, *Guerre sainte, jihad, croisade. Violence et religion dans le christianisme et l'islam* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), esp. p. 269; Flori, *La guerre sainte*, op.cit. (note 27), p. 357: »La croisade est une guerre sainte qui, répondant au *jihad* qu'elle rejoint au terme de cette révolution doctrinale de mille ans, tourne le dos à la doctrine de l'Évangile et de l'Église primitive pour puiser dans les »Guerres de l'Éternel« rapportées dans l'Ancien Testament des arguments destinés à nourrir sa nouvelle attitude«.

109 See Yitzhak Hen, »Charlemagne's Jihad«, in: *Viator* 37 (2006), pp. 33–51, quote: p. 50.

110 »The main obstacle in proving this assertion beyond any reasonable doubt is the inadequate evidence on the contacts between Francia and the Muslim world in the second half of the eighth century« (Hen, »Charlemagne's Jihad«, op.cit. [note 109], p. 50. Cf. also p. 51). In order to allow for Theodulf's influence on the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, Hen also has to completely reverse the established dating and circumstances of the decree's issuing.

111 »[...] we must assume that he [i.e. Theodulf of Orléans] had a fair amount of knowledge about the Muslims of al-Andalus, their religion, and their civilization. Those who argue otherwise will need to prove their point, and not vice versa.« A few lines down, Hen ends his article with the following claim: »It is time to question our bold tendency to dismiss instantly any

religious violence by cultural transfer from Islam thus seems like an urgent task for the discipline of Medieval Studies. In writing it, special attention should be paid to presuppositions about the distribution of sacred and secular spheres in Islam and Christianity, to the application to Islam of religious concepts coined in the Christian context, and to the explicit or implicit connotations traveling with those conceptual migrants from one religion to its other.

Muslim influence on the cultural, religious, and political history of early medieval Francia» (Hen, «Charlemagne's Jihad», op.cit. [note 109], p. 51).