

ARTICLE

The Martyrs of Córdoba: Debates around a curious case of medieval martyrdom

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Abstract

Historians have long been fascinated by the almost 50 Christians who were sentenced to death by the Islamic authorities in mid-ninth century Córdoba, in most cases for wilfully and publicly blaspheming against the Prophet. Since the single manuscript account describing the lives and actions of the so-called martyrs of Córdoba was 'rediscovered' in the 16th century, interest in this seemingly singular movement has grown, as the Cordoban martyrs became symbols for everything from an undying Spanish, Christian identity under a brutal Islamic occupation to fanatical extremism in a tolerant Muslim society. Research in the last decades—particularly after the literary, spatial and material turns—has nevertheless complicated our understanding of the martyr movement, looking beyond the motivations of the actors to the social and religious context in which they were operating, as well as the cultural and literary currents that shaped the martyrdom accounts. This article traces the historiographical record that has sought to make sense of the Cordoban martyrs, leading us to question the very definition of 'martyr', how and why such individuals are formed.

The movement that saw almost 50 Christians sentenced to death by the Islamic authorities in mid-ninth century Córdoba for blaspheming against the Prophet has been the source of considerable fascination for historians. This article traces the historiographical record that has sought to make sense of the Cordoban martyrs, leading us to question the very definition of 'martyr'.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Few terms in modern discourse can elicit the same controversy as that of 'martyr'. In the face of regular suicide attacks worldwide, "martyrdom has become one of the most pressing theological and religious issues facing the contemporary world," according to a relatively recent survey, and discussion of the phenomenon, particularly the causes and motivations behind it, dominates our news feeds. (Middleton, 2011)¹ But martyrdom has never been a straightforward or unproblematic concept, something recognized by sociologists struggling to find definitions; "it is not at all clear who or what actually makes a martyr," concludes one of the most well-known attempts. (Weiner, 1990) Because it presupposes a strict dichotomy between righteous individuals sacrificing themselves for a higher cause and their persecutors, martyrdom by needs divides opinion between the community of the faithful (whether religious or secular) and those accused of creating (i.e. killing) the 'martyr' in the first place and who would therefore deny them the title. Recent studies have highlighted the extent to which, just as with their present-day equivalents, historical martyr movements were the site of considerable dispute: martyrdom and terrorism, for example, have been intertwined throughout history.² Most of this research into historical martyrs, at least in the West, has focused on late antique Christians and Jews, although the middle ages has also been recognized as an important period in the development of the ideology of martyrdom, although namely in the context of holy war (be it crusade or jihad).³ Throughout these studies, the difficulty in dealing with martyrs is nevertheless matched by the opportunity martyrs present for studying the complex social dynamics of the societies that give rise to them.

One unusual group of medieval 'martyrs' has nevertheless long captured the imagination of historians: the so-called martyrs of Córdoba. Between 850 and 859, 48 Christians apparently died for their faith in the capital of Umayyad al-Andalus. Significantly, a large number of these seem to have been what Paul Middleton has termed 'radical martyrs', voluntarily presenting themselves before the Muslim authorities and blaspheming against the Prophet, thereby bringing the prescribed capital punishment onto their own heads.⁴ Our only accounts describing the lives and deaths of these individuals come from a series of writings by a Cordoban cleric named Eulogius, himself eventually martyred in 859, and his lay friend, Paul Alvarus (d. 862/3).⁵ Eulogius' texts include: the *Memoriale sanctorum*, a series of hagiographical texts describing the martyrs' lives and deaths between 850 and 856; the *Passio Georgii, Aurelii et Nathaliae*, a shorter version of the lives of four of these martyrs, which ended up at the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés;⁶ the *Documentum martiriale*, a text written to motivate two imprisoned Christians, Flora and Maria, in their pursuit of martyrdom; and the *Liber apologeticus martyrum*, providing a more complete set of arguments for the phenomenon, and an update of the martyrdoms up to 857, in addition to a series of letters to Paul Alvarus and to the bishop of Pamplona, Wilesindus.⁷ Alvarus penned a hagiography of his late friend, the *Vita Eulogii*, and the *Indiculus luminosus*, a polemical text encouraging Christians to rally around the martyrs against Islam, alongside his own letters.⁸ News of the martyrs reached the Frankish Empire thanks to Usuard (d. ca. 877), a monk from Saint-Germain-des-Prés, who collected several of the lives of the Cordobans in his *Martyrology*, and the monk Aimoin, who described the trip on which Usuard allegedly encountered these martyrs in his *Translatio SS. Martyrum Georgii monachi, Aurelii et Nathaliae ex urbe Corduba Parisios*.⁹ The sources for the so-called movement are therefore not insignificant but are produced entirely from the Christian perspective, a fact that has not prevented considerable speculation about this unique group of individuals.¹⁰

Despite their interest for modern historians, the literary efforts of the above-mentioned authors seem to have met with relatively little contemporary success in al-Andalus, something the few surviving manuscripts of the above-mentioned works and the silence of other Andalusi sources suggest. Only because of the apparent interest shown by Alfonso III of Asturias (r. 866-910) in obtaining the relics of Eulogius, is the single known manuscript of Eulogius' texts thought to have ended up in Oviedo Cathedral.¹¹ There it remained relatively unremarked upon until discovered in the 16th century by the bishop of Palencia, Pedro Ponce de León, who passed it on to the historian Ambrosio de Morales. Morales published the first printed edition of the texts in 1574, restoring what he took to be a work corrupted by scribal error.¹² Basing himself on a manuscript that was apparently in very poor condition, written in a Visigothic script that proved difficult to read, Morales admitted to making changes to the text, mainly, he says, to

correct what he saw.¹³ The original manuscript has since disappeared, and all subsequent editions of the text have relied on Morales, including those of Enrique Flórez, Cardinal Francisco Lorenzana y Butron (which ended up in the *Patrologia Latina*), and Juan Gil (the basis for all modern translations).¹⁴ A recent translation into English by Kenneth Baxter Wolf has a detailed introduction that contextualises the corpus with the most up-to-date studies, and usefully includes extensive explanatory notes, a glossary and lists of the martyrs.¹⁵ Despite Morales' interventions, historians have nevertheless largely trusted his edition and those based on it, and relied on these collectively as witnesses to Cordoba's ninth century history and the lives of Christians in al-Andalus.

A clear historiographical divide quickly emerged when extrapolating from Eulogius' text on the question of the martyrs.¹⁶ Morales' own *Corónica general* took Eulogius' side in hailing the Cordoban Christians as martyrs and heroes for standing up to an oppressive Islamic regime.¹⁷ The following year, however, Louis Turquet de Mayerne, in his *Histoire générale d'Espagne*, cast the Cordobans as rebels who had been unscrupulously memorialized by Eulogius as martyrs.¹⁸ The next few centuries saw competing interpretations, between those who saw legitimate martyr saints and those who considered them foolish and even dangerous radicals. A group of mainly French scholars criticized the Christians for their misdirected zeal, treating them as suicidal fanatics in what they described as a generally tolerant Islamic regime under which Christians enjoyed protected *dhimmi* status.¹⁹ The Arabist Reinhart Dozy was especially influential in setting Eulogius' account against the Arabic sources and concluding that the Cordobans who presented themselves for martyrdom were a small minority of largely clerical extremists who baffled the Islamic authorities but had acted out of a sense of humiliation before both the Muslim and more moderate, Arabicizing Christian population.²⁰ Creatively reimagining the lives of the Cordobans on the basis of Eulogius' account, Dozy commented on 'cet étrange fanatisme' that moved Christians living in relative freedom to force the Muslims' hand in killing them.²¹ Dozy's student, Évariste Lévi-Provençal, went so far as to almost pass over the episode of the Cordoban martyrs, considering it hardly important enough to devote more than a short section in his history of Spain: an exceptional rather than representative moment in Andalusí history.²²

South of the Pyrenees, however, views of the Cordobans were significantly different. Around the time of Dozy's writing, José Amador de los Ríos claimed the deaths as true martyrdoms resulting from religious and patriotic resistance to Arabic rule.²³ The same position was taken up most notably by Francisco Javier Simonet, who sought to dismantle Dozy's picture of a tolerant Muslim Andalusí culture, and rather argued that the 'intolerable despotism' of the Islamic regime inflicted myriad injustices on Christians. Such persecution led to an inevitable conflict between the state and the 'invincible squadron' of martyrs, "Christian heroes fallen and sacrificed for the brute force and tyranny of Islamism enthroned in the Alcázar of Córdoba." (Simonet, 1983)²⁴ Following in a similar if more secular line, Isidro de la Cagigas' sociological study of Christians in Cordoba framed their struggle as one of Spanish nationalism and independence against Muslim religious intolerance and Arab racial discrimination.²⁵ Ramón Menéndez Pidal, from his literary perspective, likewise referred to the ninth century in al-Andalus as one of "rebellion, heroism and martyrdom ... the period of maximum national exaltation of the Mozarabs." (Menéndez Pidal, 1929) Nationalism, religion and the Cordobans merged in a tradition that imagined an unbroken Spanish (Christian) identity from the Visigoths through the Islamic 'occupation', of which the Cordoban Christians were pre-eminent figureheads. Even scholars outside the peninsula seem to have been drawn to such views, with Edward Colbert's extensive and generally measured doctoral study of the Latin sources nevertheless concluding that it was difficult to take the Muslims' side against the Christians, and declaring the martyrs 'blessed and genuine.'²⁶

Scholarship in the latter half of the 20th century moved away from the ideologically charged attempt to assess whether these were justifiably martyrs: heroes or fanatics. Instead, Eulogius' accounts have been mined for their socio-historical value, seeking to understand what in the context of ninth century Córdoba could have given rise to the martyr 'movement' in the first place.²⁷ In a lengthy study aiming to explain the intellectual motives of the martyrs, Franz Franke pointed to a general context of military despotism and high taxation of minorities in al-Andalus as an important influence.²⁸ A desire to win over embittered *renegados*, recent converts to Islam who suffered from discrimination, was what Allan Cutler thought explained the martyrdoms as a primarily missionary movement, shaped by apocalyptic hopes of overthrowing Islam in Iberia.²⁹ Norman Daniel has written of no greater hatred between

Christendom and Islam than in ninth century Cordoba, where an *odium theologicum* (theological/religious hatred) was bound up with “the hatred of the unprivileged for the privileged, of the once-privileged for their successors, of a minority for their surroundings ...” (Daniel, 1975)³⁰ Such subjection of Christians is thought by some scholars to have increased during the time of the martyrdoms, for example James Waltz, who has argued that there was a more rigorous application of the law under the emir Abd al-Rahman II which led to increasingly severe restrictions placed on Christian and Jewish activity;³¹ Eulogius' own text suggests that it was rather as a reaction to the martyrdoms that the emir's successor Muhammad I (as of 852) carried out a campaign to severely curb the rights of Christians, which nevertheless may have led to the creation of yet more martyrs.³² Heavier taxation in this period on Christians and Jews has likewise been considered a potential catalyst of Christian resistance to Muslim rule.³³ Given the frequency of revolts against the Umayyad emirs, including one by Toledan Christians and *muwallads* in 852, the martyrs have also been seen as just one more group rebelling against a periodically repressive regime.³⁴

If martyrdom is in the eye of the beholder, however, so too can be persecution. Most scholars now argue that rather than Muslim oppression of the Christian population, the martyr movement was the product of rather the opposite: the attraction presented by Arabic culture. While the arguments of scholars such as Dozy had already progressed down this path, an influential new approach was that of historian Thomas Glick and anthropologist Oriol Pi-Sunyer. In a 1969 article, they applied the anthropological concept of acculturation to the situation of Andalusian Christians, taking it to mean a process by which cultural contact inevitably leads to cultural change, in this case reviving Christian society through interaction with Islamic culture.³⁵ Glick and Pi-Sunyer were not concerned with the martyrs specifically, but the idea of Christians adopting many aspects of the Islamic culture under which they were living has since been seen by most scholars as having strong explanatory force for the actions of the martyrs. Most now see Eulogius and his fellow martyrs as reacting defensively to a general trend of Christian assimilation to Arabic culture. Eulogius and Alvarus themselves lament Christians abandoning Latin-learning for Arabic poetry, and adopting Islamic dress and even undergoing circumcision for professional and/or cultural reasons.³⁶ While some scholars treat such complaints as hyperbole, the idea that the threat of ‘cultural erosion’ or ‘dilution’ would have prompted certain hard-line Christians into making a violent statement against acculturation, is now broadly accepted.³⁷

Importantly, such an approach posits the existence not of one cohesive Christian community in ninth century Cordoba, but of a society fractured along moderate-radical lines. Dominique Millet-Gérard observed a clear separation between a majority Christian population open to Arabic culture, and the minority rebels, “intransigent, entirely refusing everything that had to do with Arabs and their culture, fed with biblical and patristic texts,” (Millet-Gérard, 1984) what Manuel Díaz y Díaz has called a ‘combative minority.’³⁸ For some historians, this minority was small indeed, an elite group drawn from the former Visigothic nobility that was seeing its political and economic power severely eroded by the replacement of feudal structures with new contractual arrangements under the Umayyads.³⁹ Seen against the backdrop of a non-homogenous Christian community in Al-Andalus – a key feature stressed in recent studies of ‘mozarab’ (Arabized Christian) identity – the martyr movement becomes one of internal Christian struggle, directed not against the ruling powers but rather within a divided society.⁴⁰ Putting the conflict in post-colonial terms, John Tolan has appealed to what Edward Saïd called ‘anticolonial resistance culture’ in describing especially monasteries as strongholds against acculturation, which resorted to (self-inflicted) violence “to demonize the occupying power and discredit those who collaborate with it.” (Tolan, 2005)⁴¹

Monks were nevertheless not the only members of the so-called martyr movement, whose diversity has been emphasized especially by Jessica Coope.⁴² She has underscored the variety of backgrounds and therefore personal motivations of the Cordoban Christians killed between 850 and 859. While a significant majority of these individuals (35) had been born and brought up Christian – many becoming priests or monks/nuns – eight were the offspring of Muslim or mixed couples, yet had espoused Christianity, generally in childhood.⁴³ Like the four converts to Islam who then turned on their decision, these individuals were executed for apostasy rather than blasphemy. Coope's study seeks to explain their actions by looking at the complex family dynamics resulting from high rates of conversion to Islam in ninth century Cordoba, based on Bulliet's famous curve.⁴⁴ The appearance of ‘radical Christians’, in

her words, is therefore a reflection of political, social and cultural developments manifested within families particularly in the important urban centres, where the draw of professional advancement through conversion to Islam was most keenly felt. It is worth noting, however, that use of Richard Bulliet's findings has been cast into significant doubt by scholars such as Alwyn Harrison, and that numbers of converts may need to be revised.⁴⁵

Whatever the number of Christians who converted to Islam, the need to establish boundaries between communities as a result of cultural mixing lies behind the assessments of Janina Safran and Charles Tieszen, who, like Coope, have emphasized processes of acculturation as central to the martyrdoms – if from very different perspectives.⁴⁶ Taking the Islamic legal sources as the basis for her analysis, Safran describes Islamic attempts to build barriers between communities in a time of significant social change. She argues that the legal sources (of the Maliki school) reflect concern with protecting the integrity of Islam in a context of contact with Christian beliefs and practices, which may in turn have sparked a reaction among Christians.⁴⁷ The very same fears on the part of the Christians themselves are the subject of Tieszen's work, who also approaches the problem of the martyr movement from the perspective of boundary formation.⁴⁸ In his work, however, the focus is on the Latin texts, and the efforts of both Eulogius and Paul Alvarus to establish firm distinctions between Christians and Muslims in order to define a clear Christian identity.⁴⁹ Engaging in vituperative anti-Muslim polemic, the Cordoban authors deployed a 'strategy of communal identity' that used Islam as a foil for the kind of Christianity they idealised. Martyrdom was then framed as an act of 'holy cruelty' that would bring about a cleansing damnation of Muslims for having killed the holy martyrs.⁵⁰

What this idealised form of Christianity might have looked like, and how it may have inspired the martyrs, has been the subject of numerous studies. Although Franke had raised the possibility several decades earlier, Kenneth Baxter Wolf expanded on the theory that a particularly stringent form of asceticism among the Christian Cordoban community lay behind the martyrdoms.⁵¹ Since many of the martyrs came from monasteries, this suggests an especially strong desire to renounce the world which, in the martyr's case, manifested itself in renouncing (and denouncing) Islam.⁵² Wolf added that *poenitentia*, a form of penance done once in one's lifetime after which no further sacraments could be taken until death, was still being practiced. As a result, in his view, Cordoban Christians would have suffered from acute insecurity with respect to their spiritual salvation.⁵³ Without needing to frame the choice for martyrdom as "a religious veil for indirect suicide" provoked by despair, as suggested by Clayton Drees, it can be thought of as an extension of a peculiar religious trend within Christian Cordoba, and one that was focused more on personal salvation than the good of the Cordoban church. (Drees, 1990)⁵⁴ In the same vein, Amanda Patey has emphasised the monastic obsession with the body evident among the martyrs, whose voluntary deaths were a physical renunciation of the world taken to its logical extreme.⁵⁵ Interpreting the body of the martyr as symbolic for the Christian community, she nevertheless argues that the martyrs sought the public annihilation of their individual bodies in order to stop the cycle of cultural extinction suffered by the Christian body in al-Andalus as a whole, seeing themselves as representatives of that community. Such stringency manifested itself also in an aggressive stance towards Christian heresy – whether it was considered 'Islamizing' or not – by which some in the Christian community were particularly concerned, as can be seen in a number of ninth century councils.⁵⁶

One increasingly prevalent and important corrective trend in scholarship on the Cordoban martyrs is to see them not as an isolated movement, but as part of a wider Mediterranean phenomenon across the early Islamic world. The contributions here of Islamists and Byzantinists capable of placing the martyrs within a larger context have been crucial, bridging the linguistic and disciplinary divides that has seen the Cordoban martyr accounts predominantly studied by Latinists. Maribel Fierro, for example, often includes the martyrs in her discussions of evolving Islamic attitudes towards heresy and apostasy, based in the Arabic legal and literary traditions; Safran has followed her example.⁵⁷ Such considerations are also not limited to the world of al-Andalus. According to Eulogius' account, several of the Cordoban martyrs themselves came from the East, including Servus Dei (a monk from 'the East') and George (a monk from Mar Saba near Jerusalem), and some have argued they may even have been instigators of the Cordobans.⁵⁸ Pointing to the numerous examples of martyrs at Mar Saba, Milka Levy-Rubin and Benjamin K. Zedar underline their similarities with those in Cordoba, arguing that "like the movement in Cordoba, they too aimed at

fortifying the Christian spirit in face of the temptations of Islam," with the ultimate goal of resisting processes of assimilation and conversion. (Levy-Rubin & Zedar, 2001)⁵⁹ The most extensive discussion of this phenomenon is Christian Sahner's comprehensive study of Christian martyrs across the Islamic world, looking at them as windows onto wider processes of Islamization. Covering a wide range of hagiographical texts from across the Near and Middle East as well as North Africa, Sahner's study illuminates the Cordoban martyrs as responding similarly to other Christians under Islamic rule, a combination of the changing status of Christianity under Islam (increasingly seen as 'a fifth column'), a growing Islamic orthodoxy (supported by a legal sharpening on issues of apostasy and blasphemy), and the threat of mass conversion and assimilation.⁶⁰ What distinguished Córdoba from these other regions, particularly in producing so many martyrdoms for the crime of blasphemy, may have been a greater cultural chasm between Christian Iberians and Arab conquerors that led to a stronger sense of potential cultural loss, and increased efforts (on both sides) to maintain a stricter social order.⁶¹

The most significant change in the last few decades of research is that, with some few exceptions, scholars have been turning away from reading Eulogius' works purely as social history.⁶² As Dominique Millet-Gérard stated, "we are dealing here, in any case, with an apologetic text, rather than a historical testimony, and it is in this way that it must be read." (Millet-Gérard, 1984)⁶³ The fact that Eulogius and Alvarus wrote their works to justify and legitimise claims for the dead Christians as martyrs – either for the benefit of sceptics⁶⁴ or for those already sympathetic to the cause and potentially inspired to follow suit⁶⁵ or to unite a divided Christian community⁶⁶ – increasingly informs modern studies.⁶⁷ The texts' apologetic nature has important implications for judging various issues raised within them. These include the degree of persecution reportedly suffered by the Christian community, the motivations Eulogius ascribes the martyrs, and the cohesiveness of the 'movement'; Ann Christys has suggested that Eulogius textually created a sense of a unified group by lumping together individuals killed for a diverse and potentially unrelated set of reasons.⁶⁸ He may have done so for personal reasons, Daniel argues, driven by his own grievances against the institutional Cordoban church.⁶⁹ At least two scholars have gone so far as to argue that the entire episode was essentially Eulogius' invention, in this case to wake Christians up to the dangers posed by Islam and to encourage pilgrimage to Córdoba, although few other scholars have cast quite so much doubt on the account.⁷⁰ Generally, however, scholars are much more cautious now about taking Eulogius at his word concerning the situation of Christians in Córdoba.

Regardless how much creative license Eulogius took with his accounts, treating them as hagiographies significantly alters our interpretation of them. It means considering them as examples of a particular genre, one dictated by its own literary conventions.⁷¹ New insights into Eulogius' texts are being gained by bearing in mind the rich tradition of late antique hagiographical writing that may have influenced him, exemplified by Prudentius' fourth century hymns to late antique martyrs in the *Peristephanon* and the so-called Hispanic *Passionarium*, a (non-uniform) collection of lives and deaths of martyr saints of which many are Iberian.⁷² Scholars have highlighted how these earlier texts served as templates for Eulogius' narrative, providing motifs and tropes.⁷³ But these texts did not just shape Eulogius' works; they also dictated the expectations of the Christian community in terms of what martyrs should look like, expectations that seem not to have been satisfied by the ninth century examples in the eyes of most of the population. As Kenneth Wolf has explained, "both sides were laying claim to the same primordial narrative of martyrdom rooted in the imagined experience of the bona fide Roman-era martyrs, even though they interpreted it in different ways." (Wolf, 2019, pp. 147) Eulogius' apology for the martyrs would therefore seek to address criticisms emerging from the majority Christian population, which Wolf explores in some detail: the lack of miracles produced by the martyrs' bodies, the lack of persecution suffered by the Christians under Islam, and the greater legitimacy of Islam as a monotheistic religion as compared to Roman-era paganism.⁷⁴ With respect to the last of these, Eulogius' picture of a persecuting, heretical Islam would not result from a lack of understanding of the religion but from thorough knowledge of an existing anti-Muslim polemical tradition and a deliberate misrepresentation aimed to shame moderate Christians for tolerating Muslim rule.⁷⁵ Byzantine hagiographies of Christians martyred in other parts of the Islamic world have likewise been highlighted as potential models for Eulogius' narrative, as have Eastern works of anti-Muslim polemic.⁷⁶ Taking into account the possibility that such texts circulated widely acknowledges that the

Eulogius was part of a much wider and connected Mediterranean world and culture, one linked as much by literary tradition as by a common social context.

Perhaps most importantly, consideration of Eulogius' works as literature as opposed to history has highlighted the degree to which martyrdom was culturally constructed. Thinking about martyrs in this way opens up new possibilities for exploring the Cordoban martyrs that takes us beyond Eulogius' corpus. First of all, as much as Eulogius may have been influenced by the hagiographies of late antique martyr saints, his works may also have been shaped by the liturgical commemoration of these same saints, the web of additional texts and ritual action that framed the public reading of the hagiography on the saint's feast. The performed nature in a liturgical setting of texts such as Prudentius' hymns has not been considered in discussions that focus instead on their literary relationship.⁷⁷ Taking in the liturgy which Eulogius and his fellow Christians may have practiced could significantly enrich our understanding of the devotional world in which their ideas of martyrdom developed. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the distinct liturgical tradition celebrated in Iberia between approximately 600 and 1080, referred to now as the Old Hispanic rite.⁷⁸ This opens the way for detailed study of the liturgical celebration of martyr saints, and not just through text, but also music, a crucial consideration given that many liturgical texts were sung. Of course caution must be exercised, as surviving liturgical evidence for al-Andalus is scarce.⁷⁹ But first steps can be taken by examining the manuscripts produced in the northern Christian kingdoms; because some of these manuscripts may have had southern models, there is scope for hypothesizing about liturgical practice in al-Andalus.⁸⁰

Studies of liturgy are additionally complemented by the immense growth in archaeological research that has been revealing important findings about material culture in early medieval Iberia, including the location of churches, epigraphy, and the production and transmission of objects of religious art.⁸¹ The material cult of the late antique Iberian saints, through worship of relics housed at various Cordoban churches (Zoylus, Acisclus, the Three Martyrs, Eulalia), has recently been pointed out by J. Wood as an important potential source of inspiration for their ninth century 'heirs'.⁸² C. Aillet has done important work tracing the locations of Christian worship in Córdoba on the basis of Eulogius' texts in dialogue with archaeological evidence.⁸³ The Cordoban martyrs seem themselves to have been the focus of local cults with relics held at several Cordoban churches, and evidence found in the well-known if complex document, the liturgical Calendar of Córdoba (961).⁸⁴ There is even greater potential in exploring how these cults were constructed in the Christian north – in Iberia and in Francia – as has been done in part by Javier Pérez-Embida Wamba; it is worth recalling here that royal interest brought the bones – and likely books – of Eulogius (and his fellow martyr, Leocritia) to León.⁸⁵ The transfer of relics out of Córdoba to northern centres as well as the foundation of churches in their name – on the Iberian Peninsula and even further north – can reveal the ideological role martyr culture played in relations between Christian and Muslim spheres.⁸⁶ The sources are indeed varied, presenting the challenge of grappling with different disciplinary demands. But interdisciplinary study holds great promise for unlocking how martyr cults were built, what meanings they were ascribed in different localities, and how they were transmitted from place to place, as books, objects and people travelled. Looking beyond Eulogius to the place of his works as part of a wider culture of martyrdom has the potential to reveal important social and cultural meanings of martyrdom, performative and material as well as literary. Perhaps this could go some ways in delivering on Ann Christys' request for a "radical reappraisal of the martyrs of Córdoba." (Christys, 2002)

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Here, I count all forms of claims to martyrdom – not just those put forward by radical Islamists, to which the discussion is often, unjustifiably, restricted; martyrs have been emerging in a variety of cultures and contexts. For introductory work on the topic, see (Middleton, 2014).
- ² Janes & Houen (2014), p. 4.
- ³ There is a large and growing body of research on late antique martyrs, beginning most notably with Delehay (1912), but including more recently (Boyarin, 1999; Castelli, 2004; Castelli, 2006; Middleton, 2006; Middleton, 2011; Middleton, 2014; Moss, 2010; Moss, 2012b; Moss, 2012a; Moss, 2013; Cooper, 2014; Bergjan & Näf, 2014). The most recent explorations of martyrdom as part of the crusading movement is given in Buc (2015), but see also Smith (2003), Nicholson (2014), Cobb (2014), Afsaruddin (2014) and Afsaruddin (2015). A general survey of martyrdom in Christian history is Wood (1993). There has been significantly more research on Eastern Christian martyrs under Islam, which will not be discussed in detail here apart from its relevance to the Cordobans, but see for example Griffith (2008) and most recently Sahner (2018).
- ⁴ Middleton (2006).
- ⁵ Lost works by Eulogius and Alvarus' teacher, Speraindeo, also seem to have described earlier Christians killed by the Muslim authorities, as mentioned by Eulogius in his *Memoriale Sanctorum*, Book II:8-9 (Gil, 1973), p. 412, henceforth referred to as CSM.
- ⁶ Eulogius' authorship of this text is argued in Jiménez Pedrajas (1970).
- ⁷ Defending this last letter in reaction to scholars who doubted its authenticity is Yaben (1944).
- ⁸ Bibliography on these texts and their authors is listed in Thomas and Mallett (2009) and Codoñer Merino (2010), pp. 269–274 and 277–284.
- ⁹ Dubois (1965)). An account of the supposed trip Usuard took during which he retrieved the relics is given by Aimoin (1841). For diverging ideas on the transmission of texts to Saint-Germain, see Effros (1990), Nelson (1993) and Christys (1998).
- ¹⁰ The dangers of working with 'single-source' records are highlighted in Stroumsa (2018).
- ¹¹ Deswarte (2003), pp. 144–145.
- ¹² Morales (1574).
- ¹³ Morales argues he changed as little as possible, mainly grammar and spelling: "Nos religione quadam reverenter tacti, nihil emendare volumus tantum fictorum et novatorum verborum ... genera confusa, casus perversi, numeri in nominibus et verbis neglecti et tota in de Latini sermonis structura dissipata, de scribentium, non authoris fuisse vitia, est manifestum. Idcirco nos omnia eiusmodi emendavimus cum in reliquis nihil nobis promiserimus." Morales (1574), 5v. For discussion, see Wolf (2019), pp. 114–116.
- ¹⁴ (Flórez, 1753), X, pp. 233–471 and XI, pp. 3–62; (Lorenzana, 1793), pp. 391–642, used in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, (1851), 115: 731–870, (Ruiz, 1959) and Gil (1973), the latter of which has been translated as Aldana García (1998), Herrera Roldán (2005), and Wolf (2019). Early manuscripts (10th century) of Paul Alvarus' works nevertheless exist, on which see CSM I, pp. 143–144.
- ¹⁵ Wolf (2019).
- ¹⁶ The early historiography has been surveyed by Colbert (1962), pp. 1–16, and briefly by Franke (1958), p. 3, and Pochoshajew (2007), pp. 18–33, which selectively surveys the literature until 2007. Only the most important authors and positions will be discussed here. Another more recent survey can be found in Aillet (2010), pp. 7–13.
- ¹⁷ Morales (1586), Book XIV, pp. 89–141.
- ¹⁸ Mayerne de Turquet (1635), Book VI, p. 236.
- ¹⁹ For a list, see Colbert (1962), p. 4.
- ²⁰ Dozy (1861), pp. 102–174.
- ²¹ Dozy (1861), p. 134.
- ²² Lévi-Provençal (1950), 2nd ed., pp. 235–239.
- ²³ Amador de los Ríos (1861–1865), pp. 69–126.
- ²⁴ The work was originally published in 1897–1903. In this, he was likely influenced by Menéndez y Pelayo (1880), pp. 389–390.
- ²⁵ Cagigas (1947), pp. 179–211.

- ²⁶ Colbert (1962).
- ²⁷ For a short review of some of the literature on this point, see Albarrán Iruela (2013), pp. 38–41.
- ²⁸ Franke (1958), pp. 6–9.
- ²⁹ Cutler (1965). Cutler is nevertheless not a strictly neutral observer of the movement, stressing the ‘Christian-baiting’ engaged in by Muslims influenced by the fanatical Malakite legal school, which in his view caused the Cordoban Christians to suffer in silence until the first martyrdoms. Although he says little on the Cordobans, James Waltz though Cutler’s evidence for Christian mission unsubstantiated: Waltz (1971), at p. 180.
- ³⁰ Daniel repeats the idea of hatred of Islam as “natural in a socio-religious minority,” in Daniel (1994), at p. 365. The ‘clash of civilizations’ idea is to some degree preserved in Collins (2014), pp. 1 and 88–89.
- ³¹ Waltz (1970), at pp. 152–153.
- ³² *Memoriale Sanctorum*, 2.16.2, 3.1 (in CSM, pp. 435–436, 439–440).
- ³³ Lapedra mentions this as a possibility (462) based on Dozy (1861), pp. 134–137, but dismisses it as much less important a factor in the Cordoban case compared to the case of Christians in Baghdad, pp. 461–463.
- ³⁴ Manzano Moreno (2006), pp. 317–359.
- ³⁵ Glick and Pi-Sunyer (1969), at p. 142.
- ³⁶ Millet-Gérard (1984), pp. 50; Collins (1983), pp. 213–214; Tolan (2005), p. 96; Herrera Roldán (1995), p. 42.
- ³⁷ Cyrille Aillet argues that such complaints are rhetorical exaggeration to make the situation appear worse, arguing for a still vibrant Mozarabic church and education in Latin: (Aillet, 2010), pp. 135–139, and supported to some extent by (Díaz y Díaz, 2008), at pp. 7–8.
- ³⁸ “... intransigeant, refusant net tout ce qui se rapporte aux Arabes et à leur culture, vivant dans la tour d’ivoire de leurs monastères, nourris de textes bibliques et de patrologie.” (Millet-Gérard, 1984), p. 69. Such a clear division is questioned by Pérez Marinas (2012), at pp. 195–196.
- ³⁹ Ación Almansa (2009), pp. 29–30.
- ⁴⁰ Some good recent examples are Aillet (2010), Aillet et al. (2008) and Hitchcock (2008).
- ⁴¹ The same monastic character of the movement is further articulated in Tolan (2001a), at p. 365.
- ⁴² Coope (1995).
- ⁴³ On these individuals, see also Fierro (1987), pp. 54–57; Fernández Félix and Fierro (2000), at p. 418, and Barton (2015), pp. 21–22.
- ⁴⁴ Bulliet (1979). On conversion, see also Epalza (1994) and Kassis (1997).
- ⁴⁵ Arguing for misinterpretation of Bulliet’s data, see Harrison (2012), and for questions about the representativity of his findings, Penelas (2002). The difficulty in distinguishing between Arabized Christians and converts to Islam has been highlighted by Fernández Félix and Fierro (2000), pp. 425–426.
- ⁴⁶ Safran (2013).
- ⁴⁷ Safran (2001), p. 575. These sources were previously discussed in Fernández Félix and Fierro (2000) with much the same focus.
- ⁴⁸ Tieszen (2013).
- ⁴⁹ This type of juxtaposition between Christianity and Islam in Eulogius’ texts (divine love vs. lust, the happiness of the martyr vs. the unhappiness of apostasy, etc.) is also pointed out by Aldana García (2000)
- ⁵⁰ Also Tieszen (2012).
- ⁵¹ Wolf (1988), pp. 107–119, expanding on Franke (1958), pp. 19–25.
- ⁵² Colbert nevertheless wonders if experience of sufism may have inspired the martyrdom movement as a quasi-mystical religious expression. Colbert (1962), p. 189.
- ⁵³ Wolf (1988), pp. 108–110.
- ⁵⁴ Drees’ attempt to psychoanalyse the martyrs is risky not to say unjustifiable, given that only Eulogius’ and Alvarus’ accounts are extant. The possibility that the movement was more concerned with personal rather than communal salvation was raised by Millet-Gérard (1984), p. 141, and Tolan (2005), p. 95.
- ⁵⁵ Patey (2015)
- ⁵⁶ The importance of policing heresy among the martyrs was raised by Waltz (1970), p. 155; Monferrer Sala (2004), at p. 415; Bonch-Reeves (2016), pp. 120–121.

- ⁵⁷ Fierro (1987), where she discusses the martyrs under the heading of apostasy in Islam, pp. 53–57.
- ⁵⁸ *Memoriale Sanctorum*, 2.13.1, 2.10.23 (in CSM pp. 432, 425–426). On which see Bonch-Reeves (2016), pp. 129–133.
- ⁵⁹ For the opposite view, see Lapiedra Gutiérrez (1994), at p. 462.
- ⁶⁰ Sahner (2018). The Cordobans have entered into wider discussions of Christians living under Islam (eg. Griffith, 2008, pp. 151–155).
- ⁶¹ Sahner (2018) pp. 154–159.
- ⁶² A good example of a scholar alive to both approaches is Sahner (2018).
- ⁶³ “il s’agit bien, ici en tout cas, d’un texte apologétique, plutôt que d’un témoignage historique, et c’est en ce sens qu’il doit être lu.” (Millet-Gérard, 1984), p. 31.
- ⁶⁴ Wolf (1986), at p. 293; Monferrer Sala (2004), p. 444; Millet-Gérard (1984)), p. 34.
- ⁶⁵ Wood (2015), at p. 49. For Aillet, this would include reintegrating converts into the Christian community should they reveal themselves and be martyred: Aillet (2010), p. 105; Aldana García (1995), at p. 12.
- ⁶⁶ Bonch-Reeves (2016), p. 118.
- ⁶⁷ Given the discrepancies in Eulogius’ description of events, Ann Christys wonders if these texts were not written for posterity rather than for contemporary Christians, who would not have found them convincing: Christys (2002), p. 79.
- ⁶⁸ This is the argument of Ann Christys concerning Nunilo and Alodia, whose death may have taken place in Huesca as early as 813, well before the Cordoban martyrs. Eulogius may have altered the date and location to make it appear that they were part of the same movement. (Christys, 2002), pp. 74–78.
- ⁶⁹ Daniel (1975), p. 38.
- ⁷⁰ Monferrer Sala (2004) based on a series of unconnected arguments, including the fact that Arabic sources are silent on the martyrs (416) – this being also the argument of Stroumsa (2018) – that Eulogius and Alvarus’ complaints do not correspond to the reality of life in al-Andalus (427), that crypto-Christians would have been shown more leniency than described in the texts (442), as well as the appearance of hagiographical *topoi* which are discussed below.
- ⁷¹ Language use in the text has been especially studied by Aldana García (1991) and Aldana García (1999).
- ⁷² Fabrega Grau (1953). On this approach, see especially Wood (2015) but also Sahner (2014). Millet-Gérard ventures that the ninth century Cordobans would have been reading these texts in preparation for martyrdom: Millet-Gérard (1984), p. 143. Taking the same approach is Henriët (2002).
- ⁷³ Aldana García and Herrera Roldán (1997), Wood (2015), and most recently Wolf (2019), especially pp. 105–106, but also *passim*.
- ⁷⁴ On Eulogius’ seemingly contradictory approaches to the importance of relics and the miracles they perform, see Guiance (2017).
- ⁷⁵ González-Muñoz (2008) and Wolf (2019), pp. 93–100.
- ⁷⁶ Monferrer Sala (2004), pp. 429–437, Duque (2011), who points specifically to the 40 martyrs of Sebaste as a model, although he also indicates the Augustinian influence on Eulogius’ conception of martyrdom. On the Byzantine hagiographies, see Vila (2003) and Vila (2004). The similarities between Eulogius’ ‘life of Mohammed’ and that of John of Damascus, potentially transmitted to Córdoba by George of Mar Sabas, have been pointed out by Wasilewski (2008) and Aldana García (1995).
- ⁷⁷ Aldana García and Herrera Roldán (1997) and Fontaine (1979).
- ⁷⁸ The rite has previously been referred to as ‘Mozarabic’ or ‘Visigothic’, neither of which reflects the full geographical and chronological scope of the practice. Previous staple studies of the tradition include Pinell (1998). The new forms of study engaging with this tradition are perhaps best exemplified by the work undertaken under the ERC project, *The Old Hispanic Office*, led by the University of Bristol. Important publications include: Hornby and Maloy (2013), but also individual case studies in the collection Álvarez Martínez et al. (2014).
- ⁷⁹ Although at least one surviving book catalogue from Córdoba (in El Escorial R. II 18) indicates the presence of liturgical books, these are not extant, and we are limited to the Calendar of Córdoba (Dozy, 1961), Arabic Psalm translations (on which see, for example, Martin, 2017) and later Arabic Gospels (Roisse, 2008).
- ⁸⁰ One example is London, British Library MS Add. 30845, which is thought to have been copied from a southern model, on the basis of liturgies for numerous Cordoban saints found in it. See Díaz y Díaz (1995), pp. 143–144, and more generally Díaz y Díaz (1996).
- ⁸¹ Studies of individual sites are too numerous to mention. For recent general works on Iberia in this period, see Moreno Martín (2011), Walker (2016), Jiménez Martínez, Sastre de Diego, and Tejerizo García (2018). On the Cordoban

archaeological evidence for late antique churches, specifically, see the work of Antonio Arjona Castro (e.g. Arjona Castro, 2001). An exception to this useful archaeological work is the heavily coloured 'archaeological study' of the bones found in a reliquary in Cordoba cathedral, by Fernández Dueñas (2004).

⁸² Wood (2015).

⁸³ Aillet (2010).

⁸⁴ Dozy (1961).

⁸⁵ Pérez-Embid Wamba (2002) nevertheless did not consider liturgical sources and shows limited engagement with wider bibliography on saints' cults. On the better known cults of the Cordoban martyrs in Francia, see e.g. Tolan (2001b).

⁸⁶ Study of the cult of Pelagius, a tenth-century Cordoban martyr, is revealing in this direction: Pick (2017), pp. 62–103.

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