

# FOREIGN AND MEDITERRANEAN: INTEGRATION AND REJECTION

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Date of reception: 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 2007

Final date of acceptance: 27<sup>th</sup> of November, 2007

## ABSTRACT

Was there a Mediterranean identity in the Middle Ages? This was the area that had been the birthplace for outstanding ancient and medieval cultures, but where travellers felt foreign, in the midst of cultural and political fragmentations, on both the north and south shores and within each of these. From the northern side, especially after the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was wished to seize the Mediterranean by expelling the schismatic Byzantines and the infidel Muslims, while in the Muslim area, the Mediterranean was perceived more as a political and strategic construction than as a reality. It was with the discovery of the New World that the Mediterranean, by opposition, took up again a new common vision, which would be used to justify and legitimate de facto situations or ones that had been experienced throughout history on one shore or the other.

## KEY WORDS

Mediterranean, Islam, Europe, Culture, Mentality.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Mare Nostrum, Mahumedana gens, Europa, Eruditio, Idiosynchrasia.

## 1. Introduction

Being foreign and Mediterranean in the Mediterranean world: this subject is only developed with the notion of positive and negative interaction between the natives and the foreign migrants as individuals or in groups. It also raises the question of a definition of Mediterraneity, a fashionable concept that is used in many senses.

Nowadays, the Mediterranean is taking on a new colouring. It seems to be losing its reality as a natural space to become a cultural field that presents belonging to this geographic area as an element of identity. This concept is understood as a transcendent identity that is shared by various peoples. To the media, scientific as well as non-specialized, we are faced with a current that is carried along by men and women, cultivated and less cultivated, for whom belonging to the Mediterranean is proclaimed loudly and often with a certain Irenism based on feelings more than reason. We are all Mediterranean, not all in the same way or, quite simply, we are not.

This vision of the notion of belonging to a Mediterranean world as a transcendent identity masks differences and tries to emphasise the similarities.

This is what urges us to question the notion of Mediterranean and foreign in the Mediterranean world. Who is Mediterranean? Who is foreign in this space that extends from the Pillars of Hercules to the gates of Pont-Euxin or the Arab *Bahr buntos*? What relationship do all those who class themselves as Mediterranean have with each other? Rejection, acceptance, is it possible to talk about a Mediterranean conscience in the Middle Ages?

The Mediterranean is a geographic space that has experienced a unique history insofar as most of the ancient and medieval cultures have been built on its shores. Ibn Fadhl Allah al-'Umari (1300-1348), Chancellor at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and expert in Mediterranean affairs due to the relationships he maintained with ambassadors and emissaries of different represented powers in Mameluke Cairo, said about this sea "Know that science is concentrated on its shores..."<sup>1</sup>

This is what gives the Mediterranean the privilege of having been, due to its anteriority, the cradle of ancient and medieval cultures and the meeting place for different men, most often guided by the search for gain or by the desire for hegemony and domination. The meetings came about through confrontation but, despite this, led to —be it only nowadays— a feeling of belonging to a Mediterranean world, even if the Middle Ages allowed a few glimpses, a few moments of mutual recognition and acceptance of difference.

To be Mediterranean is not only belonging to this vast space that the term Mediterranean covers, it is above all being conscious of this sense of belonging. Living there is not enough. Mediterraneity supposes the integration of geographical and cultural factors at the same time vast and diverse, different and similar, into the patterns of thinking and their application in the everyday lives of the populations.

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1. Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed, dir. *Le Maghreb et la mer*. Paris: Éditions Hétérodox/Kadmos, 2000 [*Mésogeios*, VII (2000)]: 9.

Furthermore, we discover in the similarities of the languages and customs imposed by the shared environment and brought about by the different forms of contact, be they violent or peaceful, a common mark of identity that allows people to feel the same even though they are different. Even in the absence of a feeling of unity, one can find part of oneself in a different other. On the subject of people who live by the sea and make a living from its resources, many Historians and researchers of similar disciplines, and even distant disciplines, agree that, "Although the words often differ, the languages of people who live by the sea have the same style of speech, the same energy, the same conciseness [...] the habit of taking the same chances, of going to the theatre and watching the same scenes, all this gave sailors of all countries the idea of the same tropes. Poetry is one of them and its expression barely changes."<sup>2</sup> This enables us to recall the similarities which marked, and still mark, customs of people from the Mediterranean rim, comparable techniques of going to sea in times of calm as in times of stormy weather, the shared fear of the sea and the frequent magical and religious customs of coastal populations. The different Mediterranean cultures similarly invoke the Saint Protectors and make them a votive offering. Are not Saint Nicolas for the Byzantine culture, Sidi al-M'jahid or Sidi al-Mahrsi perceived as the protectors of sailors? Waiting for fishermen to return is the same everywhere. The symbolism of the sea in non-religious literature as well as in religious literature, for Christians and Muslims alike, brings to mind a Mediterranean spirit that transcends borders and cultural spheres.<sup>3</sup>

But at the same time, living on the edges of the Mediterranean does not mean that this membership is felt everywhere and experienced in the same way. To become a foreigner, one only has to go from one zone to another. Regional specificities present a series of hurdles such as language, customs, eating habits, religion, economic or strategic interests, dress and its uses, the past which is divided into the dominant and the dominated. What this means is that what is presumed to be Mediterranean is in fact foreign to another Mediterranean. Did the people of the Mediterranean in medieval times perceive this space in the same way?

Firstly, the different perceptions of the Mediterranean by Mediterranean people themselves, those from the northern shores and those from the southern shores, should be highlighted.

2. Augustin Jal, cited by Matvejevitch, Predrag. *Bréviaire Méditerranéen*. Paris: Payot, 1995: 251.

3. Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Introduction", *La Méditerranée médiévale. Colloque tenu à la Faculté des Lettres de Sfax (16-18 avril 1998)*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2002: 13.



## 2. The Mediterranean viewed from the North<sup>4</sup>

The Mediterranean, this geographical space today claimed as an identity, is in fact a space of conquest, if not a space of borders. This space has never been perceived in the same way in the North as it has in the South.

In the West, reference to Mediterraneity is dependant on Roman domination. The Romans said —and this is significant— *mare nostrum*, which became in the Middle Ages, above all after European expansion like in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, “our Mediterranean”. This, at least, is what appeared in the portulan chart from Pisa in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the *liber existencia reveriarum et forma maris nostri mediterranei*<sup>5</sup> in which the author talks of the *mare nostrum mediterraneum*<sup>6</sup> to describe the Mediterranean. This appropriation of the Mediterranean space, started by the Crusaders, would be continued by colonial states like the Italian fascists who dreamed of building an Empire identical to that of Imperial Rome.

The Romans had included the Mediterranean in their policies and had made it a means of communication, emphasising administrative and military domination to secure the shores. The western Mediterranean's claim is based on this historical episode. This claim makes the Mediterranean into an object of reconquest, a means of domination and a monopolised space. In the worst-case scenario, the Mediterranean is a front between the Christian World and the Islamic world, if we stop in the medieval period. It becomes a frontier between poor and rich countries if we place ourselves in contemporaneity, even a protecting shield of “good” against “evil” if we refer to its immediate reality or even a barrier against castaways who think of fleeing from fruitless soils in search of an imaginary, welcoming land.

Despite such considerations, the Greco-Roman world attached an instinctive fear to the sea, essentially resulting from dangers that could happen to all who ventured there. Most of the expressions relating to this fear, often formulated as maxims and adages, were analysed and presented by Jean Delumeau.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the fear of the sea, at least during a large part of the Middle Ages and the modern period, is explained by the danger or the chance of the sea.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the sea is also condemned by Greek and eastern European literature. Plato conceived of his republic being far from the sea and if that was not possible, “truly divine legislators” were needed “to prevent it, in that situation, from allowing in all sorts of colourful and perverted customs”.<sup>9</sup> Christian morale saw in it a source

4. The doctoral thesis that discusses this theme is by Mollat, Michel. *L'Europe et la mer*. Paris: Seuil, 1993.

5. Gautier Dalché, Patrick. *Carte marine et portulan au XIIe siècle, le liber existencia reveriarum et forma maris nostri mediterranei*. Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1995: 13, where the Muslim presence in Pisa in the XIIth century is place in doubt.

6. Gautier Dalché, Patrick. *Carte marine et portulan au XIIe siècle...*: 20.

7. Delumeau, Jean. *La peur en occident. XIVe-XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1999: 31.

8. Boiteux, Louis Augustin. *La fortune de mer, le besoin de sécurité et les débuts d'assurance maritime*. Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1968.

9. Cited by Planhol, Xavier de. *L'Islam et la mer, la mosquée et le matelot*. Paris: Perrin, 2000: 469.

of changing the morality of its believers, as it is "the sovereign refuge of the desolate who do not have faith."<sup>10</sup> The sailor is not a good citizen or a good believer like other people. He is, in all ages, a rebel and disrespecting of social norms, even politics. Does he not wear stripes to distinguish what he wears from others, stripes often reserved for Cagots, heretics, prostitutes and the like?<sup>11</sup>

Despite the reprobation and fears, the Mediterranean remains a "European-Christian" space even if some regions manage to avoid the systematic control of a Christian authority. And what of the south?

### 3. The Mediterranean viewed from the South

In the founding texts of Islam, the Koran and the Hadith, the sea is perceived as a nourishing and beneficial sea because it provides resources that are fresh and thus in accordance with the spirit of the Koran. It is also a manifestation of divine power as God is master of it. It is by his grace that it allows people to sail on its liquid plains and it is by his will that it can swallow up all the infidels and fickle-minded.<sup>12</sup> There is therefore an undeniable familiarity with the sea in both of these first two Islamic sources. Conversely, modern historians have often emphasised the Arab fear of the sea, explaining it as the absence "of a particular inclination for maritime activities"<sup>13</sup>, a state of mind or mentality which kept Arabs and Berbers from being sailors and achieving Mediterraneity.<sup>14</sup> In X. de Planhol's eyes, "Christianity triumphed over the sea, Islam could not adapt to it."<sup>15</sup> The history of relations between Muslims and Islam and the sea is reduced to a series of failures, refusals and missed opportunities which led, according to the author, "to the correct admission of the intrinsic incompatibility of Islam and maritime life."<sup>16</sup> This series of admissions denied the Muslims all sea practices and all maritime knowledge. Because of this, it is an at-

10. Cited by Planhol, Xavier de. *L'Islam et la mer...*: 468.

11. Robert, Ulysse. "Les Signes d'Infamie au moyen-âge, juifs, sarrasins, hérétiques, lépreux, cagots et filles publiques". *Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, s. 5<sup>th</sup>, IX/49 (1888): 57-178. Pas-toureaux, Michel. *L'étoffe du diable, une histoire des rayures et des tissus rayés*. Paris: Seuil, 1991.

12. Planhol, Xavier de. *L'Islam et la mer...*: 16-19; Fehri, Abdelkader. "La mer dans le texte sacré: le Co-ran et le hadith", *La Méditerranée médiévale...*: 223-245; Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Perceptions arabes de la Méditerranée médiévale: De la maîtrise à la crainte", *Sailing ships of the mediterranean sea and the arabian Gulf*, Christos G. Makrypoulas, ed. Athens: Koweit, 1998: I, 51-63; Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Déplacement force et deportation de populations sur les frontières orientales entre Byzance et l'Islam", *Migrations et diasporas Méditerranéennes (Xe-XVe siècles)*, Michel Balard, Alain Ducellier, dirs. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002: 108-112.

13. Planhol, Xavier de. *L'Islam et la mer...*: 13.

14. Mitchevitch, Predrag. *Bréviaire Méditerranéen...*: 94; See Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Le Maghreb et la mer à travers l'histoire", *Le Maghreb et le mer*, Mohamed Tahar Mansouri, dir. Paris: Hérodotos/Kadmos, 2000 [*Mésogeios*, VII, (2000)]: 10.

15. Planhol, Xavier de. *L'Islam et la mer...*: 10.

16. Planhol, Xavier de. *L'Islam et la mer...*: 13-14.



tempt at exclusion from all maritime or naval knowledge and, reading between the lines, exclusion from any Mediterranean claim.

This point of view is based in large part on the history of the conquest of Cyprus and the second caliph's stance on sea expeditions.

In response to a letter from Omar who sought to find out about the reality of the Mediterranean, while being pressured by Mou'awiya, then governor of Syria, to order his troops to attack the island of Cyprus, 'Amrou Ibn al' As, governor of Egypt, answered:

"I saw a huge creature, ridden by a small creature, when it is calm, it breaks hearts and when it moves it drives people mad. On the sea, certainty declines and doubt increases."<sup>17</sup> Omar's answer was made in the light of his governor in Egypt's description and was given in these words, "We have learnt that the Syrian sea stretches along the longest part of the land. It asks Allah, every day and every night, for his permission to break onto the land and submerge it. How do you expect me to allow soldiers to launch onto this indomitable infidel? In the name of Allah, a Muslim is worth more to me than all that the Byzantine Empire owns. I warn you not to disobey me."<sup>18</sup> So, if the sea in Western Pagan and Christian literature is a source of vice and dangers, it is, in the first Arabic texts, a heretic, an infidel creature and is described as an "indomitable infidel". It is therefore possible to perceive the existence of a certain amount of reluctance towards the Mediterranean, but this was only temporary if not theoretical. The Arabs, in their triumphant surge managed to master the sea and sail in complete liberty until the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> The Mediterranean became until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century an "Arab sea or Muslim lake", indeed, to the point where Christians could not even "let a plank float on its waters" according to the expression by Ibn Khaldoun<sup>20</sup>.

[وكان المسلمون لعهد الدولة الإسلامية قد غلبوا على هذا البحر من جميع جوانبه وعظمت صولتهم وسلطانهم فيه فلم يكن للأمم النصرانية قبل بأساطيلهم بشيء من جوانبه، وامتطوا ظهره للفتح سائر أيامهم فكانت لهم المقامات المعلومه من الفتح والغنائم وملكوا سائر الجزائر المنقطعة عن السواحل فيه مثل ميورقة ومنورقة ويابسة و سردانية وصقلية وقوصرة ومالطة وأقريطش وقبرس وسائر ممالك الروم والإفرنج... وأساطيل المسلمين قد ضربت عليهم ضراء الأسد على فريسته وقد ملأت الأكثر من بسيط هذا البحر عدة وعددا واختلفت في طرقه سلما وحربا فلم تظهر للنصرانية فيه الواح...]

17. Tabari, Tarikh; Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. *Chypre dans les sources arabes médiévales*. Nicosie: Centre de Recherche Scientifique, 2001: 29.

18. Tabari, Tarikh; Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. *Chypre dans les sources...*: 30.

19. From the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Byzantines under the reign of Nicephore Phokas were able to take back certain straights and dominate a large part of the eastern Mediterranean. So much so that Nicephore Phokas, after taking the island of Crete, said "today control of the sea is mine" (Christides, Vassilios. *The conquest of Crète by the Arabs (ca 824), a turning point in the struggle between byzantium and islam*. Athens: Akademia de Atenas, 1984).

20. Ibn Khaldoun. *La Muqaddima*. Beyrouth: Meca Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-taqafiyya, 1988: 254.



However, this domination was perhaps not in their minds and in their feelings. How did Muslims in the Middle Ages before the Crusades behave towards the Mediterranean? Were they aware of belonging to this space or the feeling of taking possession of it?

Firstly, it is necessary to highlight that this sea in its entirety is given the name *bahr al-Rum* and that historical Arabic literature has left us with a fragmented picture of this space. Even when certain chroniclers wanted to claim ownership by qualifying it with *bahr al-Sham*, it was only a witticism. For example, al-Zuhri (middle of the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century, contemporary of al-Idrissi and Abu Hamid al-Gharnati) named it "sea of Syria, it starts beyond the Maghreb at *zuqaq*/ the straights that separate the country of Andalusia from that of the Berbers and ends on the Syrian coast."<sup>21</sup> The other zones are named *bahr al-Daylam* (the Caspian Sea) and *bahr al-Qustantiya* (the Sea of Marmara). However, each time that he mentions an event that took place in the Mediterranean or on its shores, the generic name is *bahr al-Rum*.<sup>22</sup> This is no different to other sources which continue to qualify this sea with the term *bahr al-Rum* or *al bahr al'Rumi*.<sup>23</sup>

At no point has it born a different name. Furthermore, it has never been grouped under a single nomenclature, but is broken up into the names *bahr al-sham*, *bahr Ifriqiya* or *bahr al-Maghrib*, or *al bahr al-malih* in contrast with *bahr al-Nil*.<sup>24</sup> That also goes for the iconographic representations of the Mediterranean by the Arabic cartographers who gave a picture of many seas. For example, in the Portulan charts drawn up by Ahmed Ibn Ali al-Sharfi al-Safaqusi,<sup>25</sup> in 1551 and in 1579, his Mediterranean is read in pieces from a collage of maps. Not one map brings together its different shores and even the world map that is only a poorly crafted copy of the one drawn up some centuries before by al-Idrissi. Other representations exist of this sea that we know through chroniclers' texts or which were inserted into works of geography like those contained in the *Muqaddima* d'Ibn Khaldoun (copy by Topkapi Saray) or that of al-'Umari (published in facsimile by Fouad Sezguin) or that of Abou al-Abbes al-Mursi. All of them more or less go back to al-Idrissi's map which is a map of the world, not of the Mediterranean. The patched map made by Muhammad b. Ahmed b. Ali al-Sharfi al-Safaqusi in the year 1601, does not stray from the Idrissian tradition.

21. al-Zuhri, Kitab. "al-Djaghrafiya, Mappemonde du calife Al-Mamun", ed. Mohammed Hadj Sadok. *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales*, XXI (1968): 3.

22. al-Zuhri, Kitab. "al-Djaghrafiya"....: 38, 73.

23. al-Umari. *al Ta'rif bi al-Mustalah al-Sharif*, ed. M. Husain Shams al-Din. Dar al-kutub al-Ilmiyah, Beyrouth: 1988: 31, 235.

24. Our colleague and friend F. Mahfoudh, we thank for his comments. He points that it is the same in antiquity, this is certain but with the exception of the appropriation of the Mediterranean by the Romans, making it their *mare nostrum*, which is not the case in Arabic literature which gives it the name *bahr al-Rum* / Sea of the Rums.

25. Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Un famille de cartographes", *La Méditerranée médiévale*....: 263-277.



It is possible to say then that the Mediterranean, from the point of view of the East, is more a political and strategic construction than an actual reality,<sup>26</sup> even more so in the modern period than in the medieval period, in spite of certain contributions that the Arabs and Muslims left in terms of practical and theoretical knowledge and *savoir-faire* in the field of navigation and its inherent techniques.

#### 4. Foreign in their space and Mediterranean elsewhere

Any traveller in the Mediterranean world was effectively a foreigner. The medieval states had regulated journeys, granting "safe-conduct under the name of, visits, passage, passports, *salvamenta*, *salvaguardias*, protection but also *seuretés*",<sup>27</sup> imposing on foreigners, mainly merchants, confinement to cities in particular establishments that were reserved for them: *fondouks*.<sup>28</sup> These travellers also wore distinctive clothing and, in certain cases, could not put on the local dress necessary for their negotiations without the authorisation of the port town.<sup>29</sup> Treaties signed between medieval European powers and various Muslim powers, in the East as well as the Maghreb, emphasised the national security of the signatory states.<sup>30</sup> Differences were highlighted, whether about identity, denomination or food. This was valid for the Muslim world and Christian world alike. In particular, the religious differences were highlighted all around the Mediterranean. It is therefore possible to say that in the Middle Ages people were more aware of the differences than the similarities. However, this was no more the prerogative of a cultural sphere than another sphere and was also expressed within one culture or one geographic and cultural sphere.

In the West, affiliations, were first of all on a larger scale, and sometimes blurred because they overlapped. It is necessary to distinguish the Eastern or Byzantine Christians and their Diaspora within the Western Christian world: for example, in Albania, the urban elite leant more towards Rome than people living in the country, who leant more towards Constantinople. In the land of Islam, the Melkites recognised Constantinople and fought against Rome. Elsewhere, the Jacobites were closer to Rome than Byzantium. In addition, difference was often felt within the same form of Christianity: the Venetians and Genoese did not like one another and only agreed when defending shared interests as was the case around 1350-1351 when Jean VI Cantacuzène tried for the first time to "nationalise" —the term was not used at the

26. Sadok Boubaker. "La perception de la Méditerranée en Tunisie", *La Méditerranée tunisienne*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2000: 19.

27. Boiteux, Louis Augustin. *La fortune de mer...*: 25.

28. Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Les communautés marchandes dans l'espace mamelouk", *Coloniser au Moyen-âge*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1996.

29. Cahen, Claude. *Orient et Occident au temps des croisades*. Paris: Aubier, 1983: 224.

30. Voir Cahen, Claude. *Orient et occident...*: 137; Gautier Dalché, Patrick. *Carte marine et portulan au XIIe siècle, le liber existencia reveriarum et forma maris nostri mediterranei*. Rome: École Française de Rome, 1995: 13 où il est question de la présence des musulmans à Pise au XIIe siècle.





time— trading activity and demanded the payment of the egalitarian *kommerkion*. Before Jean VI Cantacuzène's decision, this tax, paid on trading activities, reached 10% of the value of traded products for the Byzantine merchants and 2-6% for the Western merchants. Faced with this policy of commercial levelling which was without a doubt the result of a realization of the economic danger and, eventually, the political and military danger, the Genoese and Venetians joined forces to successfully overthrow Jean VI Cantacuzène. A part from these exceptions, competition was rife between the merchants. How many times a trading community chased out another on the dual basis of interests and affiliation! How many times in their negotiations with a Muslim state they referred to the privileges granted to another community in order to gain the same advantages!<sup>31</sup> So the Genoese pushed the Pisans out of the Maghrebian market little by little,<sup>32</sup> the Venetians and the Pisans took the place of the Amalfitans, settled at least since the 10<sup>th</sup> century in Constantinople. The Venetians sought, in their negotiations with the Sultan Mamelouk in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, to be awarded the same privileges granted to the Florentines and the Byzantines and dispatched an ambassador to Cairo in 1383 to ask permission to open a consulate for the Byzantine merchants, following the example of the Genoese.<sup>33</sup> It is possible to say, definitively, that in the West differences were still obvious in the national and regional space. They were also a significant element of the Byzantine political discourse which opposed the capital or the *Stein Polin* in other cities or the European and micro-Asian part of the Empire.

Indeed, the Western world appropriated the Mediterranean as a shared sea opposite the foreigner that was considered an adversary to be kept out: Byzantine schismatic or heretic and Saracen infidel. The European perception of the *mare nostrum* was like a legacy that they did not share: this legacy could only be European and likewise could only be Christian since the common denominator in the Middle Ages is Christianity.

From the Muslim point of view, the Mediterranean Sea was often perceived as fragmented and divided up and in Arab-Muslim heritage did not have the unity that it is awarded nowadays.

Firstly, in the classical Middle Ages, that is, between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Mediterranean was always associated with the shores that mark its boundaries. The islands are the best example of this. The Mediterranean islands, though integrated into the Arab-Muslim sphere and the economic, political and military system, were unable to have links between each other. Sicily was attached to Ifriqiya, just like Kerkennah and Djerba, whereas the Balearic Islands and Cyprus were submitted to a type of condominium system and were each attached to the continent facing them. Crete, under Andalusian control which had formed an autonomous principality and lived under the protection of the Abbassids. No direct link seems to have

31. Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Les communautés marchandes dans l'espace mamelouk"... See Wansbrough, John. "Venice and Florence in the mamelouk commercial privileges". *Bulletin of the school of oriental and African Studies*, 28/3 (1965): 504.

32. Amari, Michel. *Diplomi arabi del re archivio Fiorentino*. Firenze: Le Monnier, 1863-1867. See also Gautier Dalché, Patrick. *Carte marine et portulan...*: 12 (conflict between Genoa and Pisa in 1284).

33. Tahar Mansouri, Mohamed. "Les communautés marchandes"...



been formed between the Mediterranean islands, while, since the Crusades, they had become essential to Western navigational systems; obligatory crossing points for Genoese, Venetian, or other sailors. One has only to read Ibn Jobeir's account of the crossing to understand the extent to which the Islands were necessary markers for ocean-faring navigation or even the account of Guillaume de Nangis who accompanied Louis IX on his ill-fated expedition against Tunisia.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the political environment of the Islamic world did not seem in favour of the idea of integrating the Mediterranean world into Medieval Arab-Muslim culture: fratricidal struggles, the absence of an alliance against a common enemy represented by the Crusader. The defensive organisation was not made in the sea but on the continent. In most cases, the Muslim armies waited for the Crusader to land before defending their lands, believing that the sea did not belong to them. For example, Abu al-'Arab Mus'ab b. Muhammad al-Zubairi, an Arabic poet from Sicily who refused to honour an invitation from his friend the poet and prince in Seville, mentioning "the difficulty of going by sea, because it belongs to the *Rums* and the sailors take considerable risks by going there, while the land belongs to the Arabs."<sup>35</sup> As an example, one only has to think of al-Mustancir al-Hafsi who commanded, like Louis IX going to Tunis, the restoration of the Constantine walls and storing food there with the intention of taking refuge there. In the same way, during the Lusignan campaign against Alexandria in 1365, al-Nouwairi al-Iskandarani, eyewitness to the events, has left us a pathetic image of the confrontation between the Cypriots and their allies and the Alexandrians. The Alexandrians put up no resistance at sea, organising themselves, in the general confusion, on the coast and resulting in the town suffering massacres and pillaging for five days without any defence. They would have to wait until 1415 to see the Sultan Barsbey attack Cyprus and submit it to a form, though temporary, of dependence. Then, the Ottomans would submit the Cypriots and Egyptians to their power from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted that sea practices were not always and everywhere the same. Indeed, the Almoravids and the Almohads were great sailors and great ship builders, to such an extent that the Almoravid fleets stood up to various Genoese, Pisan and Spanish expeditions, and even, managed to successfully lead the war against Norman Sicily or the Balearic Islands which they submitted to their authority. The Almohads were not lacking in Mediterranean strategy,<sup>36</sup> their fleet was such that their attacks were dreaded in the West and their help expected in the East.<sup>37</sup>

34. Kamal, Yusuf. *Monumenta Cartographica Africae et Aegypti*. Cairo and Leiden: Brill, 1926-1951: III, 1035.

35. Quoted by Salim A.; Abbadi, M. *Al-Bahriya al-Islamiya fi al-maghrib wa al-andalous*. Beyrouth: Dar al-Nahda al-'Arabiyya, 1969: 237.

[ لا تعجب لراسي كيف شاب أسى واعجب لأسود عيني كيف لم يشب  
البحر للروم لا يجري السفين به إلا على الغرر والبر للعرب ]

36. Picard, Christophe. *L'océan Atlantique musulman, de la conquête arabe à l'époque almohade*. Paris: Maissonneuve et Larose, 1997.

37. Ambassador to Ibn Munqidh to the Almohad Caliph, asking for naval support against the Crusaders in the East.

One could retort that effectively, in this regard, the Muslim world was integrated into medieval Mediterranean trade, but it must be stressed that this actual integration was not free integration, as the trading towns on the coast of Ifriqiya like the Eastern Syrian-Egyptian towns were dependent, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, on the arrival of western fleets to sell and buy and even to go on pilgrimage.

## 5. Conclusion

In the Middle Ages and at the beginning of modern times, the Mediterranean does not have this name in Arabic literature. It is given the names of its shores or important towns like *bahr Ifriqiya* or *khalij al-Bunduqiya*, *bahr al-Qustantiniya*, the Constantinople Sea or *bahr tarabuls* or even *bahr al-banadiqa*.

It only becomes an entity with the discovery of the New World. The term *Mésogeios* that the Greeks gave it seems to have been lost during its Romanisation and the Romans taking possession of it, which became *Rums* in Arabic texts. At the start of the modern age, the Mediterranean becomes a *noumene* separating Africa, Asia and Europe due to the balance of forces imposed by the Hispano-Ottoman confrontation and the discovery the New World. The first *conquistadors* of the New World would have said, after settling in the West Indies, "Until today we have not discovered in the New World any Mediterranean like there is in Europe, Asia and Africa ..." <sup>38</sup>

The genesis of belonging to the Mediterranean and its use is questioned. Is it an identity that is acquired and felt or an identity that is granted and earned outside the Mediterranean world?

Mediterranean identity, if it exists, is often used to justify and legitimise situations or indeed discounted texts:

It was used to legitimise the Crusade and the colonisation of the West coast.

It was used to legitimise the Romanity of Byzantium and justify its aspiration to be recognised as the only heir to the Roman Empire that had disappeared in the West, be it institutionally, until the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, it serves to justify the Arabs' presence and past hegemony in the Mediterranean. It is also used as a means of integration and a means of acceptance, both culturally and politically, by the surrounding world.

Today, all peoples living on the Mediterranean claim to be part of the Mediterranean world "to be part of a community and a brotherhood" like Nicolas Mystichos, Patriarch of Constantinople, had already written in a letter written around 913 to the Abbasid caliph, not "living in community does not become the greatest penance / *maxima penitentia vita communis*" as the Christian expression goes.

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38. Acosta, Joseph. *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias*. Seville: 1590 (Braudel, Fernand. *La Méditerranée et le monde Méditerranéen au temps de Philippe II*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1966: I, 94).

