1 Summary

In an early sixteenth-century treatise, Martín de Figuerola, who had been preaching to the Muslims of Aragón, reports a story he claims to have heard from the Muslim judge of Cocentaina (València). The latter had told him that, in marriage contracts between local Muslims, it was customary for women to demand that their husbands take them to the capital city of València for the springtime festivities of Corpus Christi and those of the Virgin Mary in August. Simply put, the purpose of this project is to unravel the complex interplay of all the ingredients that this apparently trivial yet fascinating anecdote encapsulates. It will bring under close analysis the existence in sixteenth-century Iberia of cross-currents common to different religious groups, areas of local religiosity in which different religions overlapped, and vague or hybrid sorts of religiosity which indicate the blurring of clear ascriptions, categories, and borders. At the same time, it will also scrutinize the efforts made by different social actors (and generations of scholars after them) to establish clear, essential differentiations, to define neat categories and ascriptions, and thus to separate, reject, and stigmatize individuals and groups. Many of those nevertheless were involved in high levels of local accommodation, adaptation and negotiation. The project will study adversarial relationships, reconceived as dependencies, against a complex backdrop of dramatic religious change: shortly before Martín de Figuerola wrote his text, Iberia’s Jews had been expelled, and a few years later, its Muslims would be forced to convert to Christianity, only to be expelled in their turn a century later. The multi-faceted analysis of these phenomena will involve unearthing new archival material, most notably Inquisition trials, as well as numerous sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts (both manuscripts and early modern editions) ranging from new translations of the Qur’ān and other Jewish and Islamic classics, to a rich polemical literature (disputes,
controversies, apologies, polemical hagiographies), as well as theological treatises on new converts, both in Latin and Spanish. It will unearth unknown archival materials, and will bring into the discussion alternative and previously disregarded sources crucial for the understanding of modern intellectual history. The project will show that part of those texts were complex products with a capacity for shaping long-term intellectual change. The project, in a nutshell, is concerned mainly with the intellectual consequences of mass conversion.

2 Description of the Project

The European Research Council, under the auspices of its Advanced Grant Programme, authorized in 2012 the project CORPI (AG 323316, FP7/2007–2013), which is funded for five years (2013–2018). This project is concerned with questions of religious change and specifically of the change brought about by forced mass conversion in late medieval and early modern Iberia. It takes as its point of departure two convictions: Firstly, that new converts constituted complex groups, in dialogue both among themselves and with Old Christians, and were open to the transmission and translation of ideas, images, and religious emotions. Secondly, that the desire to eradicate difference within the majority society was always combined with the fear of infiltration and contamination, and that the disappearance of differences exacerbated the search for allegedly essential characteristics in those with Jewish and Muslim ancestors, who were generally seen by Christians as crypto-Jews or crypto-Muslims.

The project is at the same time concerned with the impact that forced conversion had on intellectual life, and with the emergence of shifting identities and new religious attitudes. It will recalibrate the traumatic transition that led to the birth of the Inquisition and a mono-confessional Spain, and will convey the incredulous reaction of those who had to live through it, establishing what they read and what solutions they proposed including imitation, contradistinction, forgery and invention of origins.

Both aspects of overlapping and redefinition will be viewed in connection with the increasingly intense polemical engagement which was taking place in Europe, and against the backdrop of the movements of proselytization, migration, and religious conflict stimulated by the Reformation and by the Ottoman invasions. The role of the latter, one of the main factors contributing to sectarian awareness in Europe, has actually been overlooked in scholarship. This broader framework urgently needs to be taken into account in order properly to assess the nature of many phenomena that took place in late
medieval and early modern Iberian intellectual and social history, and which have been exclusively attributed to the existence of Jewish and Muslim minorities in the Peninsula.

This project is structured into four major interconnected research hubs:

a. Search for cross-currents common to different religious groups in Iberia, involving the areas of local religion in which these groups overlapped. Among these transversal currents, the following are particularly worth exploring: Prophecy, providentialism, and insistence on the miraculous. Members of disparate groups found in these three overlapping areas a common ground of interaction, and at the same time used them as a repository of materials to claim exclusivity as ‘chosen peoples’ who would prevail at the end of times, and to create myths of exclusion. Also illuminism, “alumbrados”, quietism and other forms of interior religiosity. Members of different groups shared a common rejection of rules, rituals, and ceremonies, which often gave rise to a radicalism that ended up invalidating all signs of recognition or belonging.

b. The main difference between the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period is the existence, in the previous period, of legally recognized groups of Muslims and Jews. Segregation was part of the system that disappeared with the enforced conversions. As a backlash there were, from the end of the fifteenth century, efforts made by different actors to establish clear, essential differentiations, to define neat categories and ascriptions and therefore to separate, reject, and stigmatize both individuals and groups and maintain the old ascriptions. By ‘ascriptions’ I mean the genealogical categories used at the time – Old Christian, New Christian, Muslim, Jew – and the precise, yet changing and overlapping, meaning of each of these labels. The categories that the Inquisition and other Christian authorities established should not be accepted at face value, and their much-needed revision is a fundamental part of the project. This revision will involve examining the tension between Inquisitorial epistemology and taxonomy, on the one hand, and the phenomenology and practices of local religion, on the other.

It is clear that a. and b. are but two sides of the same coin that work in conjunction with each other. In the same way, c. and d. are intertwined and feed each other:

c. The projection and repercussions of the confrontations within and among Islam, Judaism and especially Christianity in Iberia on the rest of Europe, as well as the connection between debates and sectarian movements in Iberia and those taking place outside the Peninsula. This project aims to open new windows to consider the influence of conversion on the adoption of sectarian or dissident
forms of religiosity. At the same time, it will explore the ways in which Christian reformers, dissidents or sectarians used the sacred texts and polemics of Judaism and Islam. Points of focus will be:

- religious doubt and scepticism as consequences of enforced indoctrination within the related processes of persuasion and doubt
- unbelief or even atheism considered as religious indifference
- criticism of the Church, anticlericalism, rejection of authority, advocacy of direct access to Scripture, and mutual accusations about the corruption of Scripture, including rejection of the dogma of the exclusiveness of salvation.

d. Disagreements over the authority of the Church centred on the language and chronologies of Scripture. The project regards this discussion as a leading concern, since language and genealogies served as a central site for the elaboration and contestation of social, cultural, and religious boundaries. Polemics over languages involved multiple dimensions: the identification of Hebraist erudition with crypto-Judaism, or Arabic with Islam; debates over the languages to be used in evangelization; the legitimacy of the use of texts written in oriental languages or of the texts of other religions. The arguments concerning biblical explanations of human origins include the problematic reception of alternative traditions, and emerged as a consequence of that very debate. All these aspects gave rise to religious polemics and at the same time served as areas of contact and interdependence not only within the Inquisition materials, but also in polemics and theological debate. One important point of focus will be:

- the connection between polemics and the origins of Arabic and Hebrew studies. The project is particularly interested in understanding how the knowledge of other religions influenced the birth of the concept of religious tolerance among European élites.

By means of these four hubs (each of which will be the subject of an international conference conveyed by CORPI), the project aims to present late medieval and early modern Iberia as a productive historical case study and a methodological laboratory for the comprehension of similar processes that are very much at work in the interactions of communities (both secular and sacred) in a globalizing modernity. Showing how these communities produced a religious and social culture together and in relation to one another, and describing the discourses by which these same communities attempted to suppress those processes of co-production, can only help us to engage similar processes in the present. The Iberian example has the potential to unravel new interpretations of the foundations of European traditions and identities.
3 State-of-the-Art and Bibliography

The vast majority of scholarly energy in the field of late medieval and early modern Iberian social and intellectual history has been devoted to classifying and segregating Iberian religious communities, rather than taking seriously the study of their interdependence. Questions like ‘Were ‘conversos’ really Christians or really Jews?’, ‘What was the essence of Old Christian religiosity?’, or ‘Why and how did the Moriscos cling to Islam?’ continue to constitute the polemical heart of the discipline. During the last few decades, however, there have been attempts, albeit mostly individual, to move away from this well-trodden path, to recalibrate, to raise other questions and to point to new directions in scholarship. The following are the most significant examples:

In his book *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*, published in 1981, William A. Christian called attention to the existence of foci of ‘local religion’ in sixteenth-century Spain.¹ In these areas, New Christians (of Jewish and Muslim origin), as well as prophets and “alumbrados” (illuminist mystics), used to attend and even participate in Christmas pageants or dramas held during the celebration of Corpus Christi. Along the same lines, in *Religion and society in Spain, c. 1492*, published in 1996, John H. Edwards pointed out the existence of a sacred landscape that the professional functionaries of the Church never fully controlled.² Both books counter and defy the long-held view that ‘Old Christian’ religiosity was radically separated from ‘minority cultures’, and that Church and Inquisition controlled both.

In an article published in 1982, Eleazar Gutwirth argued that modern historians had, in a sense, emulated sixteenth-century observers, inquisitors included, in formulating their questions, priorities and definitions and in determining the main lines of inquiry.³ Both inquisitors and historians – Gutwirth contended – shared a common anxiety to assign exclusive ‘identities’ to individuals and groups. In a work, published a decade later, Gutwirth highlighted the common ways in which individual Christians and Jews fiercely opposed clerical and rabbinical authorities in Iberia, again countering traditional scholarly narratives that opposed both groups.⁴ This overlap – he argued – called for alternative ways to explain conversion as well as for new readings of key religious texts. The pioneering efforts found in Gutwirth’s works, however, have not been generally pursued, among other reasons, due to the fact that the number of Inquisition studies have dwindled since the 80s.

1 Christian 1981.
2 Edwards 1996.
In *Communities of violence*, published in 1996, David Nirenberg argued that forced conversion was the decisive factor that precipitated a major broader crisis in early modern Christian identity.\(^5\) In a series of very important articles published in the subsequent years, Nirenberg further elaborated on this idea and suggested that fifteenth-century Christianity is to be understood in terms of this crisis, which gave new sense to institutions such as the Inquisition, and ideologies like “limpieza de sangre”, with which Christian society sought to re-stabilize itself. These efforts of the Christian society to re-stabilize itself and reject polluted origins identified with heresy has led to an identification of heterodoxy with converts. It was again John H. Edwards, in a well-argued article published in 1988 and included in his collected papers *Religion and society in Spain, c. 1492*, who first rejected the long-standing notion that religious dissent among converts should automatically be attributed to a continuing attachment to Judaism or Islam, and who first linked inquisitorial material on Judaizers with the general incidence of heresy and scepticism across Europe.\(^6\) Recent Italian studies of similar cultural and religious phenomena, such as the “Illuminati”, have further developed this argument. The work already carried out by Stefania Pastore, Carlo Ginzburg, Adriano Prosperi and Massimo Firpo strongly suggests that the “judeoconverso” element should not be seen as the only important factor, and that “judeoconversos” were not the only social group to advocate reform.

Particularly interesting, and worth mentioning as some of the previously mentioned positions converge in it, is Felipe Pereda’s book *Las imágenes de la discordia*, published in 2009.\(^7\) In this book, Pereda explored the borderline and the interaction between theology, on the one hand, and popular religious sentiment and devotion, on the other. He analyzed the convergence of late medieval polemic against Judaism and to a lesser extent against Islam, the Church’s internal debates over the cult of icons, the opposition of Erasmians, Lutherans and “alumbrados” to this cult and to the establishment of the Holy Office and finally the reaction within the Church to Morisco iconoclasm. Pereda’s precise and stimulating argument reveals multiple ways in which minorities can ‘influence’ the majority, obliging it by their very existence to modify particular standpoints, theological trends, and even religious doctrines.

Stefania Pastore has demonstrated that behind the accusation of Judaizing there is often an attempt to reconcile Old and New Law, Hebrew and Christian beliefs. In her book *Un’ eresia spagnola*, published in 2004, she gives examples

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\(^5\) NIRENBERG 1996.  
\(^6\) EDWARDS 1988.  
\(^7\) PEREDA 2009.
of an eclectic theory of salvation, which is very characteristic of Iberia at that moment with its need to compare different laws. This eclecticism is also the subject of Stuart Schwartz’ book *All can be saved*, published in 2008. It is based on what the Inquisition called “propositiones”, such as that every man can be saved in his law. Schwartz interprets the “propositiones” uttered at these trials as evidence of a ‘popular tolerance’, which has gone unnoticed until now, because historians have focused on the process by which religious identities were inculcated during this period, rather than looking into the cracks that opened up in that process.

In sum, the above list of works challenges the polarized description of majority-minority groups on multiple levels, and questions scholars’ reproduction of those polarized patterns. This project takes its inspiration from all these mostly individual new directions in research, and will build upon their foundations. It will also continue the paths suggested by Mercedes García-Arenal Rodríguez and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano in *Un Oriente español*, published in 2010 and translated into English in 2013, a monograph dedicated to a well-known forgery of lasting impact, that of the so called *Lead Books of Granada*, considered as an intercultural artefact which produced a whole series of unpredictable changes, among which the erudite study of the Arabic language, and questioned the official historiographic approach of the time. It opened the discussion as to the inclusion of the Islamic past into the history of Spain and the need to use Arabic sources for the knowledge of the past.

## 4 CORPI Team

The Principal Investigator of CORPI is Mercedes García-Arenal Rodríguez. The project counts the following members: Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, as PostDocs Carlos Cañete, Sinem Eryilmaz and Kasia Starzewska, as Early Stage Researchers writing their Ph.D. Javier Albarrán Iruela, Eduardo Fernández Guerrero, Carla Ramos García, Teresa Soto González and Jesús Téllez Rubio (all funded by ERC), furthermore Mónica Colominas Aparicio, Jessica Fowler, Yonatan Glazer-Eytan, Manuel Montoza and Gloria Vezzosi (various scholarships), and as External Collaborators Esperanza Alfonso Carro, Fernando Bouza, David Nirenberg, Stefania Pastore, Felipe Pereda, Pier Mattia Tommasino and Gerard Wiegers.

8 PASTORE 2004.  
9 SCHWARTZ 2008.  
10 GARCÍA-ARENAL RODRÍGUEZ/RODRÍGUEZ MEDIANO 2010.
CORPI runs an individual homepage where all research activities of the team members and latest news, publications and upcoming activities may be followed.\footnote{http://proyectos.cchs.csic.es/corpi/en.}

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