***Muslim-Sufi and Christian-Cathar Syncretism and Cross-Pollination in Mosarbic - Spain and Christian France!***

***TROUBADOUR CONTACTS WITH MUSLIM SPAIN AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF ARABIC BY WILLIAM THE IX: NEW EVIDENCE CONCERNING WILLIAM IX OF AQUITAINE!***

The problem of the origins of troubadour poetry continues to be one of the most disputed in the study of medieval literature. However, it is insofar from huge importance in the terms of understanding the origins of feminism as well as the spread of gynocentric misandry in Europe and thus consequently all over the world. In the following discourse we will try to establish a direct link between the earlier prevailing Muslim culture in Spain and will show that the gynocentric worldview of Eleanor of Aquitaine was shaped a lot including her courts of love as well as the code of Pointevin not only by Jewish and Christian Cathar concepts but also Muslim views formerly prevalent in the Iberian Peninsula and that she inherited from her Grandfather William the IX, the duke of Aquitaine and the first troubadour. The lack of clearly identifiable precursors from whom troubadours derived the basic elements of their verse led long ago to the formulation of scholarly hypotheses which attempted to trace those elements back to a number of different possible roots. As we have seen in the research there is no single influence but a fact at least four or five such corpuses where the Arab Muslim influence from Spain is undoubtedly the Arabist thesis which maintains that the earliest troubadours were inspired by, and borrowed from, Arabic poets in Muslim Spain whom they encountered during the Spanish Reconquest of the Xlth and Xllth centuries.

This borrowing explains, according to this view, the striking similarities and resemblances between the love poetry written by the two sets of poets, the Muslim and the Troubadours, which in a wider sense includes also the Esoteric Muslim Sufi. In recent years even more new claims have been made that the first known troubadour, William IX of Aquitaine (1086-1 126), not only did he in fact have contacts with Muslim and Jewish Spain but in fact may have known and at least to some degree had studied and learned the Arabic language. This will be among many others one of our goals in this discourse namely to trace such a direct influence on William the IX and thus the acquaintance with the language requires also an intimate knowledge of the culture consequently also to show how it affected Eleanor of Aquitaine in shaping her courts of love and the code of Pointevin. The first of these points to a similarity between a musical line in William's eleventh song, Pos de chantar, and one in an earlier Spanish sephardic psalmody. To Marie-Henriette Fernandez this implies a borrowing from Jewish circles in Muslim Spain.

Anyway, in1990, a Belgian scholar, Patrice Uhl, expanded on this old controversy by pointing out that three specific lines in one version of the fifth poem of William IX, Farai un vers, are in fact Arabic, thus suggesting that the Duke of Aquitaine knew that language. These three lines had caught the eye of three earlier Arabists too, A. R. Nykl (1931), Robert Briffault (1945), and Évariste Lévi-Provençal (1954), all of whom pronounced them to be Arabic but offered three quite different translations of the passage. In response to these claims the Romanist Istvan Frank countered that the verses in question were not Arabic at all but the result of the rewriting of the original by the XHIth century scribe-copyist from Narbonne. Uhl rejected this interpretation arguing that the uncertainties in the Occitan text, which explain the possibility of three different translations by Arabists, derive from its being an approximate transcription from colloquial Arabic into Latin script. He in turn then proposes a fourth quite different translation which, he maintains, has the merit, unlike the first three, of adhering to and adding to the meaning of the stanza and poem as a whole. What is more he believed that the Arabic lines make direct reference to an episode in the Koran.

Whether or not the three lines are in fact Arabic is not only a linguistic question that will have to be decided by those knowledgeable in the language but in fact are not necessary to establish a connection between the Muslims of Spain and the Cathar toubadours in France. The main influence as we have already proven is theological and conceptual in its nature so the linguistic only adds here another layer of evidence but is not required already for the establishment itself of such connections. But in view of the past attacks on an Arabic interpretation, new ones are of course very interesting as adding more of those layers. In face of this contexts of William the IX possible direct acquaintance of Arabic language and intimate knowledge of its culture I would like to propose a different approach to the problem which may cast some more light on it though. That is a purely historical approach which simply asks the question, is there any historical evidence, independent of the passage in the poem itself, that William IX knew Arabic? No one in the past has found any such evidence that William the IX spoke Arabic. Indeed the search for such evidence seemed (to Romanists, not to Arabists) to point in the opposite direction, i.e., to the conclusion that he had none knowledge of Arabic language not to speak of such an intimate Acquaintance with Arabic and Muslim culture.

But there is not only indisputable evidence that he lived in Spain but thus consequently this evidence unknown to earlier historians is showing, first, that he was much more acquainted and intimately familiar with Islamic Spain than previously thought, second, that Arabic speaking people formed part of the circle of relatives, friends, and acquaintances in contact with him, and finally that he had friendly personal relations with the contemporary Muslim king of Zaragoza, a man who was the last representative of a dynasty which had presided over a court of distinguished Jewish and Arabic scientists, philosophers, and poets in the Xlth and early Xllth centuries. None of this proves that he directly studied Arabic or Arabic poetry, but it does justify, I think, a modification of earlier skepticism on the subject showing that he had more than a general Muslim influence as in regard to his troubadour poetry and indeed a deep and intimate knowledge of both of them whether he was fluent in Arabic or not. I would even proclaim that in the light of all the evidence it no longer seems unreasonable or surprising that he might have known the language himself and more than just basics of it. The remainder of this essay will be an examination of this evidence, beginning with a summary of his relations with Mosarabic Spain.

It has long been known that William IX maintained direct personal ties with the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in northern Spain during much if not all of his long reign of forty years (1086-1126). This came about not as an innovation on his part but as the continuation of a policy begun by his ancestors, the Dukes of Aquitaine, early in the Xlth century. The Spanish interest and journeys of his grandfather, William the Great (William V, 993- 1030) in turn formed part of a growing French involvement in trans-Pyrenean affairs related to the breakup of the great Ummayad Califate of Cordova early in the same century and its replacement by a series of smaller and less stable states called the Taifa or party kingdoms. The weakness and vulnerability of these Muslim states tempted the expansionist tendencies of rising Christian kingdoms in Castile, Navarre, and Aragon. In the second half of the Xlth century these latter began to launch campaigns of subjugation and conquest of their Muslim neighbors to the south in what gradually developed into the movement of the Reconquest. Through their acquisition of the Duchy of Gascony in the 1050's the Dukes of Aquitaine became the greatest territorial power on the northern side of the Pyrenees and began to participate in the Reconquest ever more regularly after that time.

In the course of that intervention they also became enthusiastic promotors of the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella just then emerging as one of the outstanding religious shrines in the West. The Dukes of Aquitaine doubtless profitted from the pilgrim traffic in that all three major routes from the north led through their lands and it was in their interest to aid the kings of Castile and Navarre against Muslim attempts to disrupt movement to and from Santiago. In 1064 Aquitanian interest in Spanish affairs turned into active, full-scale military involvement when Duke Guy-Geoffroi, William IX's father, played a major role in the Barbastro campaign, one of the earliest great victories of a Christian army over a Muslim king in the Reconquest. In this campaign Guy-Geoffroi led an Aquitanian army as part of an offensive against the Muslim kingdom of Zaragoza. Dynastic alliances came to supplement military assistance a few years later when, sometime between 1069-73, Guy-Geoffroi negotiated a marriage between his daughter Agnes and Alfonso VI of Castile. Alfonso's repudiation of Agnes of Poitou in 1077 ended the marriage ties between the houses of Aquitaine and Castile but just a few years later another Spanish monarch, this time, King Sancho-Ramirez of Aragon, arranged another nuptial alliance with the Dukes of Aquitaine.

In this case in 1086 the later King Pedro I (1094-1103) married another daughter of Duke Guy-Geoffroi, this one also named Agnes. Unlike her older sister, Agnes of Aragon bore her husband two sons but both died young and the widowed queen returned to France, with the result that the Aragonese like the Castilian connection was short lived and lacked long range consequences. Nonetheless William IX would have grown up having royal Castilian and Aragonese cousins and brothers-in-law from earliest childhood. Combined with the stories of his father's Barbastro campaign before his own birth, this must have meant that Spanish ties were an ever-present factor in his own outlook. Following the example of his ancestors William himself presumably travelled often to Spain both for the Santiago pilgrimage and for visits to his brothers-in-law but only two such trips can be documented. The first took him to Aragon at the very beginning of his reign, sometime between 1087-89, and was cut short by the unexplained intervention of King Sancho-Ramirez.

Contemporary sources tell more about William's other known Spanish expedition in 1120 when he played a leading role in the Aragonese defeat of the North African Almoravids at the battle of Cutanda June 17, 1120. The Almoravids had first crossed to Spain in 1086 in answer to an appeal from southern Spanish Muslim states alarmed by the great victory of King Alfonso VI of Castile in conquering Toledo in 1085 18. At first allies to their co-religionaries, the Muslim rulers of the Taifa kingdoms, the Almoravids gradually turned into conquerors. An austere people, militaristic, uncultivated and uncompromising in their dedication to their faith, they strongly disapproved of what they held to be the soft, decadent way of life of the Taifa kings, particularly condemning the latter' s widespread practice of paying tribute to Christian kings and princes from the north. With their superior military force they gradually absorbed the Taifa states in a relentless advance northward, taking the capital of the last surviving kingdom, Zaragoza, in 1 1 10. Their successes posed a serious threat both to the survival of the kingdom of Aragon and to the Christian Reconquest movement in general. In reaction papal leadership called for an international crusade to save northeastern Spain and a council was convoked at Toulouse in 1118.

This was followed by a major invasion south led by Alfonso I, king of Aragon, aiming at the Almoravid center of Zaragoza. The capture of that city in December 1118 was a victory of major significance for the Spanish and their French allies 19. Equally important was the defeat and annihilation of Almoravid counterattacking armies at Cutanda, south of Zaragoza, in 1120, a battle often seen by Spanish historians as one of the most decisive in this early phase of the Reconquest. Judging from the silence of contemporary accounts, William IX did not participate in the siege of Zaragoza in 1118, but Spanish and French sources picture him, along with King Alfonso of Aragon, as a leader, commanding 600 Aquitanian knights, of the victorious armies at Cutanda. This brief survey of his Spanish contacts makes clear that through dynastic ties and common interests William IX had close relations with the king of Aragon which led at least twice to military expeditions and perhaps more often to pilgrimages. But these were contacts with Christian Spain and do not at first glance clarify how he might have come to know Muslim Spain and its culture, to learn Arabic, and to become acquainted with Arabic poetry.

It was William of Aquitaine who was the first Troubadour to do such work at was him who spend a significant time and Spain and molded this everything together. Whereas Jewish musician were one of the main roots not only to spread Arab music but also the Jewish and especially the Muslim Arab gynocentric values associated with the troubadours, thus in historical terms, thus also based on the Jewish notion of music as being originated from the Leviim in the second temple in Jerusalmem meaning that practicing music was also a profession that seemed to appearsto be a characteristic of Jewish life in Christian Spain (as one of the services offered by Jewish vassals at the courts of their rulers) it is clear that William was also influenced via this channel. Thus we want now to explore this connection of course in more details. As the jogler lacked the same social status and were considered inferior to the troubadours themselves the question that arises and needs a further research is whether those jogler or at least many of them were not of Jewish origin themselves. Anyway, some names of Jewish instrumentalists active in Christian Spain are while we're on the subject are recorded in historic annals. Alharizi (ca. 1220), for example, dedicated a poem to the Jewish *Ud* player Yshayah (*yode’a nagen be-kinnor*). The famous illuminated miniatures in the manuscripts of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of King Alfonso X depict Jewish musicians. One of the earliest and well documented cases of a Jewish *trovador* is Ha-Gorni, who was active in Provence and probably Aragon during the second half of the 13th century. In his eighteen extant Hebrew poems, he clearly depicts his own persona as a *troubadour*, stresses his proficiency as an instrumentalist and recalls his ties with his contemporary non-Jewish colleagues. But Ha-Gorni was an exceptional case of a combination of Hebrew poet and *troubadour*. Most Jews who engaged in this profession in medieval Spain were mainly involved with the dominant non-Jewish culture. In other words, they were proficient in poetry in Roman languages and its musical performance rather than in composing Hebrew poems. Names of Jewish troubadours and minstrels (*juglares* or *jongleurs which linguistically ties us to the jogler*) appear in royal records. Jews were part of the musical chapel of King Sancho IV of Castille. Annals of the royal court for 1293–1294 mention a Jewish *juglar* and his wife next to Moorish and Christian *juglares*. “*Barzalay judeum joculatorem*” appeared before the court of Jaime II in Barcelona in 1315.159 Bonafas and his son Sento (Shemtov), Jewish *juglares* from Pamplona, received payments from Charles II (1349–1387).

Additionally, Romano gathered remarkable records about Jewish musicians who served in the court of the kings of Aragon in the second half of the 14th century. The Jewish musicians appear in the Aragonese sources with different denominations: *mim*, *jouglar*, *tocador de viola*, *sonador de laut*, *minister*, *minister de corda*, and *ministers d’instruments de corda*. All these Jewish musicians played string instruments. All except for two (Bonafas Gentili Jacob from Navarra and Natan de Molina from Castille) were from Aragon: Simuel Fichell, Bonafas Aven Mayor and Avraham el Mayor were from Saragossa, Jucef Axivil from Borja. Yohanan (no family name) served the bishop of Valencia; Sasson Salom, *minister de corda* *e sonador de laut* served King Juan I and King Martn; Yohanan Semuel Yohanan Baruch served Queen Sibilla de Forti. Romano concludes that Jewish *juglares* and minstrels, local and visiting ones, served most of the kings of Aragon and their families. We cannot know if there were differences between the repertories or techniques of Jewish and non-Jewish musicians. Blasco expanded Romano’s findings by locating other Jewish *juglares* and *sonadores* from the city of Saragossa.163 terms *juglar*, *ministril*, and *sonador* were used interchangeably in 14th and 15th century Saragossa. Jewish minstrels and string players in the courts of Aragon took advantage of their privileged position in order to obtain benefits, favors and even posts in the Jewish community. Some artists moved to other kingdoms due to the animosity of their neighbors. Others combined their art with mundane trades such as clothes merchant. So, the evidences already gathered strongly point to the direction we pointed out above, yet as I have said more research is need to 100% define the jogler as Jews.

Now having this historical back ground in mind, one should remember that at the height of the Andalusi Arabic and Hebrew poetic upheaval, a young nobleman in what is now Southern France began to compose vernacular verses of courtly love. At the end of the 11th century this would be not only accepted but also warmly embraced in Córdoba or Seville, both as a social as well as in the art itself as poets there had been composing vernacular zajals for centuries. Yet, across the Pyrenees where such cross cultural pollination still haven't presented itself, it encapsulated a revolutionary break in poetic practice. Anyway, as we said, it is William IX of Acquitaine, the “first troubadour,” who is credited with writing these first verses of courtly poetry in the Roman vernaculars. Thus the question which arose earlier and has generated volume after volume of scholarly dispute and lots of controversy as to whether and to what extent the two phenomena might be related has been answered. They simply cannot be separated. The so-called "*thèse arabe*" asserts that Andalusi poetic practice crossed the Pyrenees with William VIII of Acquitaine in the form of a troop of Andalusi *qiyan* —technically singer-slaves but in practice closer to indentured professors of music. However, as we have seen above it was not only the technical aspect of the music the mountains but also the cultural, religious and gynocentric legacy of the East.

Anyway, William, the father of the first troubadour had crossed the Pyrenees in the assistance of Sancho Ramírez of Aragon in the Siege of Barbastro (Huesca), then held by al-Muzaffar of Zaragoza. As part of the spoils of this successful campaign he brought back with him to Acquitaine a troop of Andalusi qiyan, who then introduced Aquitainian musicians, singers, and audiences to courtly strophic song in the form of muwashshahat and zajals (Nykl 1946, 371–411; Boase 1977, 62–75; Menocal 1987, 28–33; Robinson 2001, 295–299). As the story goes, young William IX, having been reared on such musical and poetic heritage, simply followed the lessons of his father’s qiyan in composing the first verses of troubadour poetry, thus converting himself into the Muqaddam of Cabra or Dunash ibn Labrat of the north. The poetic movement begun (according to tradition) by William IX soon spread southward into the Peninsula, where poets working in Provençal, Catalan, or Galician- Portuguese performed at the courts of Christian Iberian Monarchs. Even by the thirteenth century, Alfonso X “The Learned” was patron to many poets who performed troubadouresque poetry in Provençal and Galician-Portuguese. These Roman languages, as we have noted, still held pride of place in poetic practice, while Castilian was as yet not used for profane courtly poetry (though by the time of Alfonso X it was already a well-established language of prosaic learning and religious narrative poetry).

Modern literary history makes very little of this important poetic practice at the court of Alfonso X, and the courtly poetry performed in Provençal and Galician-Portuguese receives very little attention in literary histories of the period, particularly in those studies geared toward more general or student audiences (Valbuena Prat 1937; Alborg 1966; M. Alvar 1980; Deyermond 1980), with some exceptions (Filgueira Valverde 1949, 599-603; Deyermond 1971, 10-11). This is to be expected, because the interstitial, the poetic practice that crosses the linguistic and national boundaries constructed in modernity, is often minimized or altogether omitted in the story of what poetry used to be. After all, if literary history is an “act of forgetting” (Gies 2001, 3), something must be forgotten. This can be true even in the case of a single author, such as the iconic King Alfonso X, who himself composed a great deal of verse. His canonical songs of devotion to the Virgin Mary, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, despite being written in Galician-Portuguese (due to their royal authorship) achieved canonical status. The same Alfonso is also author of a corpus of scurrilous invective poetry in Galician-Portuguese, the so-called *Cantigas d’escarnho e maldizer*, that have almost completely evaded the gaze of the literary historiographer (Snow 1990). This is most likely due to the off-color nature more than to the language in which they were written, but the fact that the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* pass muster while the *Cantigas d’escarnho* do not tells us much about how modern literary historiography distorts the data in order to produce neater, more linguistically and culturally homogeneous narratives that serve national and regional agendas. This distortion is even more extreme in the case of non-Romance languages. Literary histories of the court of Alfonso X make almost no mention of the Hebrew poets working in the service of the Learned King, the most notable of which was Todros Abulafia, who wrote a number of poems in which he writes of Alfonso’s liteary patronage and of life at his court (Procter 1951, 130–132; Roth 1985, 440; O’Callaghan 1993, 144–146; Salvador Martínez 2003, 446 n 44). Seen from the angle of Hebrew literary History, Abulafia is an outlier for his experimentation with troudabouresque styles, and as a consequence has received less critical attention than other Hebrew poets of his era who hewed more closely to the Andalusi models favored by Sephardic poets. These models mixed freely in Abulafia’s verse with Biblical, troubadouresque, and other themes, motifs, and techniques of his own innovation, in a massive corpus totaling over 1200 compositions (Schirmann 1956, 2: 416; Targarona Borrás 1985; Doron 1989, 42; Brann 1991, 149; Cole 2007, 257).

If one accepts the "*thèse arabe"* or Andalusi genesis of troubadour poetry in term of art, which was one of at least four or five major roots of legacies that influenced the troubadours and that in fact as we have seen must be broaden to the "Mosarabic (Jewish Arab) Thesis" this mixture of Andalusi and troubadouresque verse performed at the court of a Castilian king is nothing less than a poetic family reunion. In Abualafia’s verse, the Andalusi muwashshah that gave rise to the Provençal *cansó* are reunited in Hebrew back in the Iberian Peninsula, where interstitiality was the norm and was responsible for any number of important innovations. Al-Andalus was home to unparalleled poetic traditions in both Arabic and Hebrew, celebrated to this day as important classical legacies in the histories of both languages. Provençal gave us the troubadours, Galician-Portuguese gave us Alfonso’s great collection of Marian verse, but all that Castilian could manage in the thirteenth century, when the Sicilian poets were inventing the sonnet that would catapult Petrarch to immortality, was Marian and hagiographic verse for priests and the faithful, but nothing actually sung at court (Antonelli 1989; Pötters 1998; Weiss 2006). Castile-León during this period was home to a great deal of poetic innovation by poets working in the interstices of national lingustic traditions, who for purposes of the History of Spanish Literature were not Spanish, despite the fact that they might have lived their entire lives in Castile-León. Similarly, poets writing in the interstices between Hispano-Roman language and Semitic languages or even simply Semitic alphabets have been glossed over in the history of the Peninsula’s literature (and when we say this we often mean the history of Castile-León). A quick perusal of almost any literary history of Spain, Portugal, or Catalonia written in the twentieth century reveals little to no mention of the Hebrew, Arabic, or Hispano-Roman other than the national tradition in question. Even Hebrew poetry written in the full flower of Roman vernacularity does not make the cut, with very few exceptions (de Riquer 1997; Cabo Aseguinolaza et al. 2010; Barletta et al. 2013). Though the Histories of Hebrew literature tend to minimize the contributions of poets who wrote after the flowering of Romance vernacularization in the thirteenth century, Hebrew poets in Castile and Aragon were active well into the fifteenth century. Their work (as demonstrated in the Andalusi period by the Hebrew muwashshahat with Romance kharjat) was in constant dialogue with the Romance literatures of the Peninsula, a dialogue likewise minimized by critics of medieval Hebrew literature, who have tended to focus on what they perceive as the hermetically “Jewish” aspects of the Hebrew literature of the period. Just as the Hebrew poet Todros Abulafia experimented with troubadouresque motifs and techniques, including the cansó (love song) and tensó (invective) forms, other poets working in Hebrew likewise participated in the poetic practice of the day, in ways that would not seem extraordinary among poets working in Romance languages (Sáenz-Badillos 1996b).

Some, like Shem Tov ben Isaac Ardutiel of Carrión (Castile, 14th c., known as Santob de Carrión in Spanish), wrote verse in both Hebrew and Castilian, and carried on an internal dialogue between both languges which, for the modern literary critic, is crucial to fully understanding Ardutiel’s work (Ardutiel 1947; Shepard 1978; Ardutiel 1980; Zemke 1997; Alba Cecilia 2008; Wacks 2012). Others, like Vidal Benvenist (Zaragoza, 14th-15th c.), adapted popular themes and motifs in learned Hebrew compositions. Benvenist’s *Tale of Efer and Dinah* is a rhyming prose narrative gloss on the *canción de malmaridada*, in which a young girl laments her loveless marriage to an older man. Benvenist reworks this topos into a morality tale ostensibly sung —or perhaps produced on stage— for the Purim festival of the Jewish communities of Zaragoza (Benvenist 2003; Wacks 2013). In other cases Hebrew poets borrowed the melodies themselves of popular lyrics for their compositions in Hebrew, as they did in the Andalusi period for the Hebrew and Arabic muwashshah. We have manuscripts of Hebrew poetry both devotional and secular from the fifteenth century that specify, at the end of each composition, the first line of the Castilian popular lyric that lends its melody to the poem (Seroussi and Havassy 2009). In Catalonia we have a collection of bilingual Catalan-Hebrew Jewish wedding songs in which the bulk of each verse is in Catalan, with rhyming words in Hebrew. These *Cants de noces* demonstrate a literary diglossia that (as the muwashshahat and other genres of lyric poetry practiced on the Peninsula crossed both language and register, in this case colloquial Catalan with Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew (Riera i Sans 1974; Argenter 2001). It is not surprising that Jewish or Muslim Iberians sang the songs of their day in their native languages; nor is it surprising that they would produce poems in which elements of their colloquial and confessional languages intertwine. We should remember that at no point in their history did Iberian Jews speak Hebrew as a native language, and that by the fifteenth century there were significant populations of Iberian Muslims whose primary language was Castilian or Aragonese (Harvey 1990, 7; Boswell 1977, 382; López-Morillas 2000, 54–57). However, literary histories that focus on the poetic production of a single dialect of Hispano-Romance or a single Semitic language of the Peninsula tend to obviate these interstitial voices. Just as the Jewish Iberian who wrote in Hebrew, and the Muslim poets who wrote in Arabic have been marginalized in national literary histories, the poetry of the Iberian Muslims who wrote in Castilian or Aragonese, but in the Arabic alphabet have likewise suffered poorly in literary history.

The *aljamiado* poetry of the Morisco authors of the fifteenth through early seventeenth centuries gives us an example of Islamic Spanish literature that, like the poetry by Iberia’s Jews, demonstrates a familiarity and facility with the poetics of the dominant culture while putting these in the service of Islamic religion in a specific ethno-cultural milieu (Harvey 1974; Vázquez 2007; López Baralt 2009, 24-25). While the majority of aljamiado texts are in prose, there is a corpus of aljamiado poetry that bears striking resemblance to the *mester de* *clerecía* genre of hagiographic and Marian verse that flourished in Castilian in the thirteenth century (Barletta 2005, 151-55). Later aljamiado poets, writing at or after the time of the Moriscos’ expulsion from the Peninsula, write sonnets and other popular forms in imitation of the most renowned Christian authors of the day. In similar fashion, the Jews expelled from the Peninsula in 1492 continued to practice poetic forms both popular and learned that they brought with them from Spain well into Modernity and throughout the Mediterranean and the New World. A tour of the “afterlife” of medieval Castilian poetic forms as practiced by Sephardic Jews would take you around the Mediterranean and across the centuries. In the seventeenth century you might attend a prayer service of the Muslim-Jewish donmeh sect of the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi in Constantinople, where they would sing the ballad of “La linda Melosina” as a kabbalistic hymn for welcoming the Sabbath on Friday night (Perets 2006). One hundred years later we join a Purim celebration in Izmir where we hear the story of Queen Esther sung in *coplas de Purim* (Hassán 2010; Romero 2011). In another hundred years, while out walking in Salonika we hear a mother Salonika singing a medieval *romance* (ballad) to her child at bedtime (Díaz Mas 1992, 123). Finally, in current-day Jerusalem we enjoy a drink in a café while a young singer fronting a jazz band performs a program including traditional songs such as *Los bilbilicos* and her own original compositions, likewise sung in a dialect of medieval Castilian mixed with loanwords from Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, and French (Cohen 2011). Other poetic forms forged in the interstices of medieval Iberian poetic practice continue to bear fruit in the present day. In the Arab world, popular singers perform muwashshahat and zajals. Classical Andalusi orchestras in North Africa, France, and Israel perform settings for compositions by Andalusi poets. Many of the popular Iberian poetic forms that were born at the interstices escaped literary history, and were free to live their own lives outside of books and without being linked to the modern national project.

It is under those historical developments that that all of this has culminated during the reign of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the queen and mother of the troubadours and as we have seen at the beginning of the discourse spread first to Italy, then to Germany and from there all over Europe. Eleanor of Aquitaine (1137-1152) was one of the most powerful and influential figures of the Middle Ages. As John Davis elaborates in his book "Inheriting a vast estate at the age of 15 made her the most sought-after bride of her generation. She would eventually become the queen of France, the queen of England and the crusade to the Holy Land. She is also credited with establishing and preserving many of the courtly rituals of chivalry. Courtly rituals of chivalry refer to an actual court system, presided over by Eleanor of Aquitaine herself, her daughter Marie and sixty other women (but not a single man). They were known as “les cours d’amour” - “The Courts of Love.” This amounted to little more than state sponsored feminism. In this “court” system, Eleanor, a woman, and sixty other women were the sole arbiters of customs between men and women engaged in intimacy. If a woman felt aggrieved by her lover, she would bring her complaint to the Court and either Eleanor, or Marie, or other high-born women would “resolve” the dispute. The queen’s resolutions were enforceable by means of the queen’s command over state violence. They were also enforceable through severe social sanctions such as shunning. In addition, literary poets and troubadours of the time, spread gynocentric viewpoints of the powerful Queen Eleanor all across Europe. The literary poets and troubadours were the “mainstream media” of the time. The gynocentric judgments of les cours d’amour (the courts of love), coupled with Eleanor’s political power as Queen of both France and England, insured that the gynocentric attitudes of the Poitevin Code [the courts of love were located in Poitiers in the South of France] became the law and the prevailing gender attitudes across most of Europe. What were the codes of the courts of love?

Davis continues and writes, the most accurate statement comes from a scholar writing in 1937 in a well-respected journal article. Writing in Speculum: A Journal of Mediaeval Studies (January, 1937), Amy Kelly writes: “In the Poitevin code, man is the property, the very thing of woman.”7 Chivalry, therefore, had little or nothing to do with equality between men and women. Chivalry became modern feminism, in which men are merely “disposable property and things,” for women who want to “have it all.” This “Court of Love,” and the Poitevin code, evolved over the ensuing 800 years into what we now know as the “system of family courts.” Although there are many male judges presiding over our system of “family courts,” those males have been subjected to 800 years of gynocentric conditioning and modern feminism. As a result, current “family courts” isolate most Fathers from their children, strip the Fathers of their assets and income (through alimony, property distributions and child support) and routinely seize children to be placed into the “foster home” or adoption system of the State pending the award of sole custody to the mother. Nothing could be more pleasing to modern feminism than this wholesale destruction of the nuclear family by the state. To quote one modern feminist, Linda Gordon: “The nuclear family must be destroyed, and people must find better ways of living together.... Whatever its ultimate meaning, the break-up of families now is an objectively revolutionary process Families will be finally destroyed only when a revolutionary social and economic organization permits people’s needs for love and security to be met in ways that do not impose divisions of labor, or any external roles, at all.”8 However noble chivalry may have been considered in medieval times, what is clear is that modern feminism has used the obligations men feel to be “chivalrous” in a way that imposes only burdens and responsibilities on men, and bestows lofty rights and privileges on women. The concept of chivalry has now evolved (or corrupted) to impose unwarranted and unnecessary privileges upon women, solely at the expense of men.

In response to this it must be pointed out that the Christian kings of northern Spain were not the only channel for an introduction to Spanish Muslim culture at this time. In fact, no Poitevin of the early Xllth century could have avoided having quite a great deal about Muslim Spain even without having travelled there. For Spanish Muslim culture had been penetrating into southwestern France, including Aquitaine and Poitou, in various forms since the middle of the Xlth century, well before William's day and signs of it would have been recognizable as such to any observant individual at the time. Thus the architects of the new Romanesque churches being built in great numbers in Aquitaine in the later Xlth and Xllth centuries, incorporated into their structures a number of elements of design and motifs of decoration which have been traced recently to Spanish Muslim architecture and ultimately to the great IXth century mosque in Cordoba. Though the details surrounding these borrowings are lost to scholars today, they must have resulted from Aquitanian architectbuilders having seen the mosque of Cordoba, or other buildings derived from it, during the course of travels in Islamic Spain. Impressed by what they saw they must have decided to emulate certain features in churches they were then constructing at home.

In other instances, Aquitanian travelers quite likely pilgrims or knights returning from the wars of Reconquest brought back with them highly prized objects d'art of Islamic origin which they had either bought or seized as booty. Examples of this are vases and other portable objects of rock crystal, a few of which still survive today in southwestern French churches, private collections and museums. Additionally, and although ultimately of Indian origin, the game of chess was also introduced into southwestern France in the Xlth century through Arabic Spain. However, as we will immediately see in the discourse below when the game of chess was designed, most probably in India over Mosarabic Spain about more than 1500 years ago, it hadn't adopted the extreme anti male notions of later Gynocentric medieval Europe and was more male friendly. It is only later upon the in Cathar France and Aquitaine that the game over a longer period of time underwent an extreme gynocentric shift that reflected the on growing Cathar – Troubadour misandrist notions and sentiments against men. That were to be spread in course of time over the whole continent.

In that sense we should remember that originally all the pieces on the board were masculine. It was not a matter of patriarchal oppression or misogyny but rather a reflection of male disposability and suffering through the reality of wars and battlefields. In particular, given the empirical facts and evidence of modern primate research which proves that male violence is a female indoctrination of males, it was the horrible reality of war as a form of socially constructed male on male by females that was perhaps structured here through the game of chess as a psychological channeling or transformation of the actual realm of violence into the more intellectual sphere. However, in the modern game of chess, it is no more the king but the queen that is and has become the most powerful piece on the chessboard that reflect now Gynocentric experience of women rather than suffering of men. The queen’s rise to dominance in chess also echoes the general historical pattern of men’s symbolic displacement, mythic effacement of reality, and the rise of gynocentrism including the chivalric culture of medieval Europe putting women on a pedestal. The king's power is now only symbolic; he is the weakest role on the chessboard that has to be defended by his mighty and powerful spouse while the queen is the one who's truly in the possession of all power. It is this context, Gratien in which Dupont has created his *Controverses* that challenge gynocentric oppression with transgressive brilliance.

In early Indian and Persian customs, chess was an implementation modeled on warfare. The Indian form in the early sixth century was called Chaturanga. That meant “four branches {of the military}” that is infantry, cavalry, elephantry, and chariotry. *Chaturanga* included the following pieces:

* *Raja* (king), early form of king
* *Mantri* / *Senapati* (counselor / general), preceding piece for queen
* *Ratha* (chariot), early form of rook
* *Gaja* (elephant), early form of bishop
* *Ashva* (horse), early form of knight
* *Pedati* or *Bhata* (foot soldier), early form of pawn

As we can see these pieces were all either males or military equipment that soldiers used as well as animals that men took into the battle. In the early form of chess there were no female equivalents or counterparts in chess. The early Persian form, called shatranj, followed the early Indian tradition and has not deviated in its form and meaning.[1] In both the early Indian and early Persian forms, the counselor (called in Persian and Arabic the *fers*) moved only diagonally, and only one square per move. While the counselor was more powerful than the foot soldier, that power inequality was much less than that between today’s queen and today’s foot soldier (pawn).

The shift and power imbalance in chess occurred in Europe within the context of Gynocentric culture and has extensively reflected the shift in cultural. Societal and gender power dynamics of Gynocentric life itself. Those were actually Europeans that under the Gynocentric reign and hegemony in medieval Europe have transformed the Indian and Persian chess counselor into a queen and greatly expanded her power on the chessboard in a way that significantly reflected those cultural deviations and the rise of women to social and formal power in medieval times. In actual fact, that's also the exact reflection of Gynocentrism as ideology and a social construct. The first surviving reference to chess in European literature is *Versus de scachis*(“Verses on chess”). A German-speaking Benedictine monk living in a monastery located in present-day Switzerland wrote *Versus de scachis* about 997. At least at that place and time, the queen had already replaced the counselor in chess. This is an important piece of evidence because it precedes the general Gynocentric culture at least for 200 years and that can be traced back to the 11th to 12th century. It can be considered as Proto Gynocentrism. The queen’s movement then was only oblique:

*And the way for the queen is by reason easily revealed:  
That diagonal course, the color {of squares traversed} shall be the same.  
{At via reginæ facili racione patescit:  
Obliquus cursus huic, color unus erit.}*[2]

Another Latin poem, *Elegia de ludo scachorum* (“Elegy on the game of chess”), is attested from second half of the eleventh century. This poem suggests that the queen had become very powerful:

*And if ever he {a pawn} reaches the summit of the chessboard,  
he snatches up the queen’s customary duties,  
Man made woman, he as a fierce arbiter keeps close to the king,  
Commands and rules, here seizes, there yields.  
{Et si quando datur tabule sibi tangere summa,  
Regine solitum preripit officium.  
Vir factus mulier regi ferus arbiter heret,  
Imperat et regnat, hinc capit, inde labat.}*[3]

This is again a quite remarkable piece of evidence as it reflects also the official cultural transition from Proto Gynocentrism (II) into the Gynocentric culture itself around the 11th and 12th century which has begun with the reign of Queen Eleanor from Aquitaine and her courts of love. Thus the changes in chess reflect also cultural changes in the transition of power from men to women and the gender imbalance that has been created under the construction of medieval hegemony of gynocentrism. The poem above indicates the preeminent value of the queen:

*The king by himself remains uncaptured, his spouse taken away  
His spouse taken away, nothing has value on the chessboard.  
{Rex manet incaptus, subtracta coniuge solus,  
Coniuge subtracta, nil ualet in tabula.}*[4]

The description as being dependent on his spouse and having no value without her reflects the medieval devaluation of men and their subordination to women. It is also inherent to the chivalric principles, ideas and concepts as the beaty and the beast, and in particular it is in line with many of the ideas as expressed in Ulrich's "servitude to women". Additionally, men in medieval Europe were socially constructed as persons who fight and die on behalf of women. Not only this dynamic is evident on the European board of chess but as we can see it has long existed before the sixteenth century, when rules of chess changed to give the queen more capabilities to fight on behalf of her king, which also stands in accordance with modern research proving that European queens waged more wars than their male counterparts:

*Other*ferses*{queen-type pieces} move but one square,  
But this one invades so quickly and sharply  
That before the devil {opposing king} has taken any of hers,  
She has him so tied up and so worried that  
He doesn’t know where he should move.  
This*fers*mates him in straight lines;  
This*fers*mates him at an angle {or, in the corner}  
This*fers*takes away his bad-mouthing;  
This*fers*takes away his prey;  
This*fers*always torments him;  
This*fers*always goads him;  
This*fers*from square to square  
By superior strength drives him out.*

*{Autres fierces ne vont qu’un point,  
Mais ceste cort si tost et point  
Qu’ainc qu’anemis ait del sien pris,  
L’a lacié et si souspris  
Ne seit quel part traire se doie.  
Ceste fierce le mate en roie,  
Ceste fierce la mate en l’angle,  
Ceste fierce li tolt la jangle,  
Ceste fierce li totl sa proie,  
Ceste fierce toz jors l’aspoie,  
Ceste fierce toz jors le point,  
Ceste fierce de point en point,  
Par fine force le dechace.}*[5]

Another detailed description of chess preserved in the late-thirteenth-century *Gesta Romanorum* indicates that the queen had the power to move both to squares of different colors and diagonally to squares of the same color. Enumerating chess pieces from one (rook) to six (king), the text describes the queen’s movement:

*The fifth, who in that {game} played and called chess, is the queen. Her move is from white to black, and she is placed next to the king. When she leaves the king, he is captured. When she has moved from her own black square, where she was first placed, she cannot move, except from one square to {another} square, and this diagonally, whether she go forward or return, whether she captures, or is {threatened with being} captured.*

*{Quintus, qui in isto scacario ludit et nominatur, est regina, cujus progressus est de albo in nigrum, et ponitur juxta regem; et quando recedit a rege, capitur. Que cum mota fuerit de proprio quadro nigro, ubi primo fuit locata, non potest procedere, nisi a quadro in quadrum unum, et hoc angulariter, sive procedat, sive retrocedat, sive capiat, sive capiatur.}*[6]

The leading authority on the history of chess called the *Gesta Romanorum*’s account of chess “a hopeless muddle” and declared “the carelessness of the compiler, who was clearly incompetent to write anything exact on chess.”[7] The *Gesta Romanorum*’s account of chess was meant to be morally important and impressively expressed. In describing the king without the queen and the actions of the queen, *Gesta Romanorum* described a relatively powerful queen with echoes of antitheses from the earlier chess poem *Elegia de ludo scachorum*.[8] *Gesta Romanorum* was widely disseminated in Europe. The chess queen across Europe for centuries prior to the late fifteenth apparently had movement capabilities and importance lacking in the *fers* that she displaced.[9]

By the mid-sixteenth century, the chess queen throughout Europe had the movement possibilities we know today. Apparently beginning in Spain and Italy in the last decades of the fifteenth century, the queen gained the power to move horizontally, vertically, or diagonally as far as open space allowed or capturing a piece required. These movement possibilities, which define the chess queen today, make her by far the most powerful piece on the chessboard. Within a half-century, the queen had such power in chess throughout Europe. This new version of chess was called names that highlight the queen: in Spanish, *axedrez dela dama* (“chess of the lady”); in Italian, *scacchi de la donna* (“chess of the lady”) and *scacchi alla rabiosa* (“madwoman’s chess”); in French, *eschés de la dame* (“chess of the lady”) and *eschés de la dame enragée* (“chess of the enraged lady”).[10] The epithets “madwoman” and “enraged” hint at diffuse fear under intensified gynocentrism.

Gratien Dupont de Drusac transgressively challenged the intensified gynocentrism that the new chess queen indicated. Dupont’s book *Controverses des sexes masculin et femenin* (*Controversies of the Masculine and Feminine Sexes*) was published in France in 1534. Among ingenious visual poetry and shocking verbal constructions, it included a lengthy poem with puns on *con* (“cunt”):

*The word*con*appears in every line. In the extract below, it can be read as part of the verb*connaitre*,*‘*to know’, or it can be read as a variation of*‘du con naitre*’ meaning that all humans are ‘born from the cunt.’ Thus*‘nous connaissons*’ can mean*‘*we know’ or*‘du con naissons*’ can mean*‘*from the cunt we are born’. If something is*‘connu*’, it is known, but the*‘con nu*’ is a*‘*naked cunt’. And so Dupont seems to delight in the opportunity for play on words and*double entendre*.*[11]

Protesting the queen’s dominance on the chessboard, Dupont constructed a chessboard with transgressive disparagement of women written within each square. The white squares contain words rhyming in *-ante* or *-ente*: *De vice regente* (“Queen regent of vice”), *Par trop deplaisante* (“Much too displeasing”), *Folle impertinente*(“Foolishly impertinent”), *Cruelle mordante* (“Cruelly biting”), *En bien negligente* (“Very negligent”), etc. The black squares contain phrases with words rhyming in *-esse*:  [*Femme abuseresse* (“Abusive woman”)](https://www.purplemotes.net/2013/06/23/domestic-violence-fabliau-farce/), *En sçavoir asnesse* (“In learning asinine”), *Sans fin menteresse* (“Lying without end”), *Vraye diablesse* (“True she-devil”), etc.[12] Dupont thus created a critical perspective on the queen’s dominant power to cover the chessboard.

Dupont endured fierce backlash for ridiculing dominant gynocentrism. He had sought to remain anonymous, but his name was exposed. A contemporary high French official accused him of folly. A scholar wrote six Latin odes attacking him and suggested using Dupont’s book for toilet paper. Another declared that Dupont was a “detractor of the feminine sex” and urged the public to toss Dupont’s book into the fire. *The Impregnable {sic} Fort of the Honour of the Feminine Sex*, which a man wrote, declared Dupont a “Captain of contempt.” Another book castigated Dupont de Drusac: *Anti-Drusac or Little Book Against Drusac Made in Honour of Noble, Good and Honest Women*. Engaging in their usual name-calling, modern scholars have called Dupont a[misogynist](https://www.purplemotes.net/2015/08/23/blasme-des-femmes-misogyny-patriarchy/) — “one of the most vehement misogynists of the sixteenth century.”[13] A few men who were his contemporaries initially praised Dupont for daring, honesty, and truth.[14] But praise of women was the sixteenth-century European norm:

*It is essential to consider why, in the sixteenth-century*Querelle des femmes*, the opportunity to spread tales about female vice and the inferiority of women seemed to interest so few French writers. Most*Querelle*writers were only willing to blame woman once they had already confirmed their praise of the female sex. … By the mid-sixteenth century, the defender of woman was the literal ‘champion’ of views acceptable for airing on the printed page; the poor ‘mysogynist’ became the underdog.*[15]

Praising women supports dominant gynocentric interests. Just as is the case today, in sixteenth-century France the superiority of women was the accepted opinion in public discourse. [16] In fact, the superiority of women over men as reflected in the history and evolution of chess was already proclaimed by Heinrich Cornellius Agrippa in the same century in one of the most misandrist works in human history namely the "Female Pre-Eminence: Or the Dignity and Excellency of that Sex above the Male". In other words, within the time span of one thousand years the game of chess was expropriated from its original meaning as reflecting the male experience and suffering while now it has become a reflection of medieval subordination of men to women and their rise to dominance over men. It also reflects basic feminist ideas as taking ownership over male experience, manipulatively turning male suffering into a female one and in a way that shows and reflects the infamous compassion gap.

Under those circumstances, Gratien Dupont’s protest against gynocentrism had of course little effect. His protest is scarcely remembered in literary history.As we have discussed and seen in this discourse, the historical transformation of chess in Europe shows a female symbol (the chess queen) displacing a male symbol (the chess counselor or *fers*) and then gaining dominant power within the formerly male space of the chessboard. Today men have no reproductive rights whatsoever. Today paternity is publicly established in patently unjust ways. Today family law is [enormously biased against men](https://www.purplemotes.net/2015/08/09/domestic-violence-child-custody-bias/). Mortal violence against men and rape of men especially by women are more prevalent than the corresponding offenses against women. Yet current affirmative-consent sexual initiatives are squarely targeted at men. Those initiatives potentially could raise the highly disproportionate imprisonment of men much higher. Chess players should understand the broad dimensions of the game they are playing. [17] Perhaps a chess genius can figure out a successful attack on gynocentric oppression configured on the large, vital chessboard of social life.

In another case the Aquitanian chronicler, Ademar of Chabannes, takes pains to tell his readers that among the gifts William, count of Angouleme, made to the local church of Saint-Eparch before his death in 1028 was a massive silver candelabra of Muslim make. Merchants may also account for the importation of Muslim goods, for modern finds of Spanish Islamic coins from this period in southwestern France point to the existence of trading contacts between the two peoples at this time. The peoples of southwestern France did not confine their borrowings to the arts but also sought to appropriate Islamic ideas especially in the realm of the sciences. It was an Aquitanian monk from the Auvergne, Gerbert of Aurillac, the later Pope Sylvester II, who established the first known contacts with Muslim scientific learning during a three years stay at Vich in Catalonia in the 960's. Gerbert's first contact with Arab science in the 960's made enough of a stir that the Aquitanian Ademar of Chabannes noted it down sixty years later in the chronicle he was writing in Angouleme, adding the probably false detail that the future pope had gone to Cordoba in search of knowledge, i.e. Arab knowledge 27. Then in the early Xllth century a number of English, French, and German scholars established themselves in the Ebro region east and west of Zaragoza and began translating and carrying back home Spanish Muslim treatises in mathematics, astronomy, botany, and medicine.

This handful of examples of Aquitanian borrowings from Spanish Muslim art and science should serve to draw attention to the fact that these people were both interested in, and as I already mentioned above informed about, Muslim Spain and its culture. Even more convincing in this regard is the chronicle of anonymous monks of the abbey of Saint-Maixent in Poitou. This chronicle is the only contemporary history to survive from Poitou and northern Aquitaine during the lifetime of William IX and furnishes more information on him than any other narrative source. As such it is also the best available gauge of local Poitevin knowledge of and attitudes toward Muslim Spain, and a rich source it is. No other chronicle north of the Pyrenees contains as much information on Muslim Spain as does this one, and in fact modern Spanish historians have noted that the Saint-Maixent author has recorded information not found in any of the contemporary Spanish sources. Most of the relevant annal type entries in this chronicle describe military encounters between Christians and Muslims in the wars of Reconquest during the period 1060-1130, the lifetime of William IX. The abundance of comments on the military campaigns may be taken to reflect a substantial participation of local Poitevin nobility in those wars but some of the topics the chronicler treats had nothing directly to do with war.

For instance, he twice tells about activities of the Cid (no other French historian mentions these) and on another occasion writes of the conversion of a mosque into a church in Huesca (north of Zaragoza) in 1097 30. Most likely he did so because the local participation in the war had so heightened interest in Muslim Spain as a whole that it seemed perfectly natural for the historian to extend the scope of his coverage into matters other than military. Still another testimony to the interest of the peoples of southwestern France in the Xlth century to Muslim Spain is the Chanson de Roland. This poem far exceeds all the above cited examples in the wealth and variety of its portrayals of Spanish Muslim warriors who fought under king Marsile and descriptions of their capital at Zaragoza. Although the earliest surviving manuscript of this epic, the Oxford manuscript, is in Norman French dating from ca. 1100, this version is believed to be based on a shorter poem composed earlier in the Xlth century in the Loire region of western France, thus not far from Poitou 32. All evidence indicates that this poem was widely known at the time.

Anyway, through the eyes of its unknown French poet, nobles like William IX would have had a vivid picture of Muslim society in Spain to complement what they already knew through other sources. Almost certainly William IX's fellow Aquitanians acquired most of their knowledge of Spanish Muslim culture from returning pilgrims and knights and not directly from Spanish Muslims themselves. And yet this assertion may need qualifying for on rare occasions Arab speaking Muslims from Spain may have come to Poitou. Ademar of Chabannes describes, with a detail which shows his exceptional interest in it, an incident in which twenty Muslim soldiers from Cordoba, who had been captured in a battle for Narbonne in 1020, were taken to the abbey of Saint-Martial of Limoges. The abbot kept two as slaves for himself and distributed the rest to neighboring lords. The French-Spanish success in conquering Barbastro north of Zaragoza from King Al-Muqtadir in 1064 may have led to the importation of Muslim captives into Poitou on a larger scale. Two indépendant sources, one an Xlth century writer from Cordoba, Ibn-Hayyan, the other an anonymous latin historian from early Xllth century Aquitaine, relate that Duke Guy-Geoffroi of Aquitaine brought many captives with him, young men and especially women.

William IX, who was born in 1071, seven years after Barbastro, may thus have grown up knowing or in contact with Arabic speaking Muslims from Barbastro who were servants in his father's court. From the evidence just presented it follows that Poitevins of William IX' s day knew enough about Spanish Muslim culture to admire it, and to borrow and incorporate elements from it into their own. This means that for William IX himself to have had an active interest in it would by no means have been exceptional or unusual. It might also have stimulated a desire to learn more about Muslim Spain, even to learn the Arabic language. But unless he learned it from some of the Barbastro prisoners in Poitiers, and that possibility while not automatically excluded, seems remote, it would not explain how and where he could have acquired a knowledge of Arabic. That he would presumably have to had to have learned in either of the only two Arabic speaking areas where he is known through documentary evidence to have travelled and stayed, namely, the Middle East (Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine) in the 1101-2 crusade, and Spain.

The same documentary evidence shows that through a combination of accident and design his travels and stays in those two regions led to his establishing personal friendly relationships with other romance-speaking Europeans who also knew Arabic. Before discussing these, a general comment on overall knowledge of Arabic among non- Arabic peoples at this time may help to set in clearer perspective what is here at issue, i.e. how and where an Aquitaine prince might have learned that language. For Europeans living outside Muslim ruled lands knowledge of Arabic was very rare yet not unknown. William IX's generation offers some interesting examples. Two members of the great Norman Hauteville family of south Italy, Richard of the Principate of Salerno, ca. 1060-1112, and Tancred of Antioch, both knew Arabic well enough to act as translators for the crusaders armies in the Holy Land during the First Crusade. Both could have learned Arabic either during participation in the Norman invasion of Sicily, or simply through having grown up in a town famed for its medical school and teaching of Arab science. William IX must have known Tancred well (and probably also Richard who had close ties with Tancred and Antioch) for it was the latter who offered him a refuge and exceptional hospitality when the Count of Poitiers appeared in front of the gates of Antioch in desperate straits in the autumn of 1101.

William was one of a handful of crusaders who escaped death in the terrible crusader defeat by the Turks near Adana in southeastern Asia Minor in late summer of 1101. Destitute and living a dangerous life as a fugitive in hostile territory, the count made his way afoot to Antioch where the ruling prince, Tancred, welcomed him, fed and clothed him, and gave him the essentials for continuing his crusade to Jerusalem. There is a good chance that William could also have acquired some Arabic during the winter of 1101-2 which he spent in Antioch. Nonetheless the opportunities for learning that language must have been much greater in Spain than in the Holy Land, at least at the outset of the crusades. At this time few of the crusaders knew the language and relentless hostilities kept the two sides in their separate camps and discouraged the peaceful communications which came later 38. But Spain (and Sicily as well) differed from the rest of Europe in that knowledge of Arabic was widespread there among the non-Arabic population. A very large majority of the Spanish population of over seven million people at this time was non- Arabic by birth yet spoke Arabic.

These people, who were descendants of the pre- Arabic invasion population of Iberians, Romans, and Goths, spoke Romance as their native language, an offshoot of Latin closely related to the vernaculars of Italian and Occitan in which William IX wrote his poems. By the Xlth century the great majority of them had abandoned Christianity and converted to Islam, and in the process learned Arabic and adopted the way of life of their Arabic rulers. But many retained their native romance language just as the mozarabs, their brethren who rejected Islam and continued to practice Christianity under Arabic rule, nonetheless learned Arabic. Thus both elements of the indigenous pre-invasion population were largely bilingual, speaking both Romance and the colloquial Arabic which came to co-exist with the classical Arabic of the Koran. Bilingualism was particularly common in the unclearly defined frontier areas like the kingdoms of Zaragoza and Aragon where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived interspersed even though owing allegiance to different, often hostile rulers. In this kind of setting no strict, rigid boundaries separated either nationalities or languages but people passed easily from one to the other.

The appending of Romance kharjas to Arabic muwashshahas in Xlth century Spanish poetry is an example of the combining of the two languages. Thus for a native Spaniard of around 1 100, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jew, knowledge of Arabic was perfectly normal, not something erudite, obscure, or acquired only with great difficulty and long study. It was precisely to the bilingual Ebro frontier region in northeastern Spain that his family's political interest brought William IX in 1088 and 1 120, and probably more often though only the former two trips are documented. That he would have frequented Arabic speaking Christians on these occasions was inevitable though many such contacts were doubtless casual and transitory. But at least one had much greater permanence and extended directly into his own family circle. This was his relationship with Pedro I, king of Aragon from 1094-1104 and William IX's brother-in-law for nearly two decades prior to his death. Pedro customarily signed his charters in Arabic and was almost certainly bilingual.

Through Pedro I William IX may also have known Rodrigo Diaz of Castile, the Cid, who was the close ally of the Aragonese king for several years prior to his death in 1099. The Cid probably learned Arabic during the 1080's and early 1090's when he was the principle military commander for the Muslim kings of Zaragoza42. Far from being exceptional, his bilingualism was probably representative of Spanish Christian noblemen of his day who lived in the northeastern frontier area of Muslim- Christian Spain. Acquaintance with both languages must have been indispensable for a man like him who fought for long periods in both camps. The same Spanish journeys also brought William IX into contact with a second group of Europeans who had learned Arabic for quite different reasons than warriors, princes, or kings such as Pedro of Aragon and Tancred of Antioch. These were scholar- translators who used their knowledge to translate Arabic scientific treatises into Latin for the benefit of scholars in northern Europe. As mentioned earlier a broad increase in European interest in Greek and Arabic science had led to the beginnings of a movement of translation in the late Xth and Xlth centuries.

Though translators were active elsewhere, and most notably in Salerno in south Italy, by far the greatest concentration was in northeastern Spain in the frontier area between Aragon and the Muslim kingdom of Zaragoza early in the XHth century. At several different places on either side of Zaragoza along the Ebro river valley scholars from France, England, and Germany — Hugh of Santalla, Herman of Carinthia, Robert of Chester, and possibly Adelard of Bath — continued the work already in progress by local Spaniards, most notably Peter Alfonsi, a converted Jew from Huesca north of Zaragoza, Abraham bar Hiyya of Barcelona, and Abraham ibn Ezra of Tudela 43. After 1125 the focal point of activity shifted to Toledo where a group of scholars connected with Abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny labored at Latin translations of the Koran and Arab theological works 44. The northern Europeans in this group of translators presumably came to Spain to learn their Arabic, quite likely at Arab schools such as Zaragoza which were famed for their learning, but they may also have studied under bilingual Christian teachers. Having settled and worked in this frontier zone between the kingdoms of Aragon and Zaragoza, they could live in security on the Christian side while having quick access to Arab manuscripts in Muslim libraries.

Nothing else known about William pictures him frequenting scholarly circles so he may have paid little attention to this kind of activity. On the other hand he must have been aware of their writings if only because one of the translators, Peter of Poitiers, came from his region. Peter of Poitiers achieved a measure of fame in the mid-XIIth century as the author of some Latin poems and letters and as the monk, personal friend, and private secretary of Abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny. He first met the Cluniac abbot in 1125 while a monk at the abbey of Saint- Jean d'Angély in the Saintonge then later joined Peter the Venerable's congregation. William IX had an active role in the affairs of Saint- Jean d'Angély during the last two decades of his life from 1 1 04-26 when Henry, his cousin of Burgundian origin and also a Cluniac monk, was abbot. Through his unscrupulous accumulation of offices on an international scale in France, England, Aquitaine, and finally Spain in 1 120, abbot Henry of Saint-Jean earned a notorious reputation as a pluralist and as what a recent scholar called "an ecclesiastical adventurer".

Anyway, an 1105 charter of the abbey of Saint- Jean presents abbot Henry and William IX confirming a charter of donation to which a monk Peter, possibly the later translator, was witness 48. In the 1 140's the abbot of Cluny sent Peter of Poitiers to become one of the translators in the Toledo school then translating the Koran and other Arab theological texts 49. How Peter of Poitiers could have learned Arabic while a monk in the Saintonge is unclear. One possibility is that he profitted from his abbot's involvement in Spanish affairs and studied the language there 50. However that may be, Peter of Poitiers' story is of interest here in that it provides an example of another Poitevin learning Arabic in the early Xllth century, a Poitevin, moreover, whom the Count must have known, and thus demonstrates that such an accomplishment was not unthinkable for an Aquitanian of the day. The foregoing examples make clear that William IX had acquaintance and kept company with a number of men both in the Holy Land and Spain who knew Arabic. But none of these were native Arab speakers ; instead all were Christians who came from outside the Arab world and who had learned the language for a variety of different purposes and probably to varying degrees of efficiency.

Until now it superficially seemed that nothing in available historical sources suggested that William IX had ever had anything other than hostile contact on the battlefield with anyone from within that world although historically as the Cathar, Bogomil and many other accounts themselves show especially the various crusades that such wars and military operation whether directly or indirectly had brought a lot of cultural exchange. However, a recent discovery now demonstrates that the Count of Poitiers did in fact have a friendly personal relationship with the Muslim king of Zaragoza, Imad al-dawla Abd al-Malik ibn Ahmad ibn Hud (1110-30) too. So, the cross pollination and at times syncretism in some areas was achieved also by direct peaceful means. It was not a written text which established this but a famous rock crystal vase now in the Louvre, the so-called Eleanor of Aquitaine vase. Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis acquired this vase from King Louis VII of France in the 1140's, converted it into a liturgical vessel, and made it a prize piece in the celebrated treasury of his abbey. In the process he added a mounting of precious metals and jewels with an inscription giving the names of four successive owners prior to himself. This tells that Eleanor of Aquitaine received the vase from her grandfather, who was our William IX of Aquitaine, prior to giving it as a wedding gift to her husband Louis VII in 1137. It then passed from the king to Suger and into the Saint-Denis treasury where it remained until the French Revolution when it became part of the collection of the Louvre. Until recently the origins of the vase were a mystery due to the inability of historians to identify the first owner of the vase, the man who gave it to Eleanor's grandfather, a man Suger named in the inscription as Mitadolus.

However that problem was recently solved ; Mitadolus was Suger's latinization of the Arabic Imad al-dawla, the title of the Muslim king of Zaragoza for a few months in 111053. Another perplexing problem, namely, how a Muslim king of Zaragoza in 1110 could have given a vase to a Christian prince from Aquitaine known to have come to Aragon in 1120 but not in 1110, has also been resolved. In 1110, rather than to submit to the rule of his fellow Muslims, the Almoravids, who were then threatening to oust him, Imad al-dawla preferred to ally himself with Christian king of Aragon in hopes that the two of them could drive out the hated North African intruders. A missing portion of a XHIth century Spanish Arabic chronicle recently discovered in Fez, shows that Imad al-dawla joined his forces with those of Alfonso of Aragon to defeat the Almoravids at the battle of Cutanda in southern Aragon on June 17, 1120. As mentioned earlier William IX also led a troop of six hundred Aquitanian knights under Alfonso's command in the same battle. So Imad al-dawla and William IX must have met as allies on this battlefield even if nowhere else. Though the precise circumstances are unknown the vase could well have been given for the purpose of soliciting further aid from the Duke of Aquitaine for his maintenance in power.

However, that may be, the vase incident adds another person, this time a native speaker, to the list of William IX's friends and acquaintances who knew Arabic. The objective of this inquiry has been to see if historical documentation could independently corroborate that William IX knew Arabic, as suggested by the claim advanced repeatedly in the past, most recently in 1990, that three lines in his poem 5 are in that language. The evidence assembled here, some of it new or previously neglected, does not, as emphasized at the beginning, provide explicit proof either that he did or did not know that language and thereby resolve the issue decisively 55. But it did bring out that he must have had some familiarity with the language even if he did not understand or speak it, simply because of his travels, visits, and stays in the Holy Land and Spain where it was commonly spoken. And not just by strangers passing in the street but by friends and a relative such as Tancred of Antioch and Pedro I of Aragon with whom he had more lasting relationships and from whom he could have acquired a taste for the language and learned of the advantages of knowing it. Moreover, his contacts came not just through Christians external to or living on the fringes of the Arab world, but extended to direct personal contacts with Arabs themselves, as in the case of his acquaintance or friendship with the Muslim king of Zaragoza, one of the most important political figures in Muslim Spain.

The same evidence also brought out some of the reasons why an Aquitanian prince of the early Xllth century might have wanted to become better acquainted with Arabic culture. William IX lived at a time when Europeans were just becoming fully aware of the splendors of Arabic-Islamic civilization in the arts and sciences especially as they encountered them in Spain, and were responding with admiration as shown by their efforts to appropriate elements of it into their own culture. William himself could hardly have been indifferent to the enthusiasm of his fellow Aquitanians for Arabic culture and he certainly knew more about that culture than previously thought as, for instance, through stories told about it (the Chanson de Roland) and architectural borrowings made from it and visible in the churches in his capital in Poitiers. The Eleanor of Aquitaine vase indeed shows very nicely how he himself shared that enthusiasm for things Muslim and Arabic. He would not have taken such pains to bring it back to Poitiers and then reserve it as a gift for the most important of family occasions — he probably gave it to his granddaughter Eleanor as a baptismal present — had he not considered it a particularly prized possession. This strengthens even more our thesis and the conclusion of Davis that Eleanor of Aquitaine, the founder of feudal European gynocentrism, was also over her Grandfathers heritage intimately acquainted with Muslim gynocentric legacy which undoubtedly shaped her own gynocentric perception perception including that standing at the courts of love and code of Pointevin

The learning of Arabic was another manifestation of contemporary interest in Arabic culture and William must have witnessed this both in the examples of personal friends, acquaintances, and family, and in the case of the scientific translators. His own dynastic interests led him to the very part of Spain where the movement first got underway at the time of its first beginnings and he almost certainly knew personally one of the translators, a monk of Poitevin origin. In an atmosphere such as this there is no further need to ask what might have motivated a foreign prince to learn Arabic, particularly one interested in poetry and who might have heard of the fame of Arab poets. Such a setting not only provided the incentive, it also provided the opportunity for learning the language. Given the range of his contacts a nobleman like William IX would have had no difficulty finding teachers. Still, no matter how suggestive may be the reflections contained in the preceeding summation, they do not in any way prove that William IX knew Arabic. They merely establish that the milieu was favorable and the motivation and possibilities for learning abundantly present.

At this point, however, it may be appropriate to add a word on the meaning of the expression "to know a language". Most people are not simply either totally ignorant of or fluent in a foreign language but have one of the many degrees of greater or lesser competence falling somewhere in between those two extremes. Perhaps William IX knew just a bit of Arabic, enough, for instance, to have enabled him to incorporate three lines of verse, possibly not even of his own making, into one of his poems. Given the time he spent in places where people commonly spoke Arabic, including his own friends, it is difficult to believe that he did not himself learn at least a few words or phrases, as do soldiers returning home from war in a foreign country. Curiously enough Patrice Uhl, the most recent Arabist to argue that the three lines in poem 5 are Arabic, is cautious about the extent of William's knowledge of that language. He suggests that the poet may have memorized those lines, which he had heard recited in a now lost Arabic poem, and later inserted them in his own composition, possibly without even understanding them. To me this view is strained. It seems doubtful that someone ignorant of a foreign language could have borrowed lines in it containing allusions to another story and then have integrated them in a metrically and thematically consistent manner into his own poem when he did not know precisely what they meant.

Nonetheless it is conceivable that William knew just enough to understand partially, enough to borrow and incorporate words and lines into his own work. Uncertainty about William's knowledge of Arabic does not in any sense detract from the interest of his newly revealed relationship with the king (in exile) of Zaragoza, Imad al-dawla. The latter's gift of the vase (supra, page 35) to William IX provides the first evidence for the existence of direct personal contact between this Aquitanian prince/poet and a Muslim dignitary, something which has been lacking until now. Furthermore, this relationship was an amicable one between two allies whereas until now it had always been assumed that William's only contacts with Muslims were hostile ones. Unfortunately, however, no written sources survive to give any idea of the importance of this relationship and what can be inferred from the vase alone is severely limited. At the very least it opens the possibility that William IX had made contact with the royal court of Zaragoza. Since seizing power eighty years earlier (1039), the Hudid dynasty of kings (Imad al-dawla's ancestors) had transformed the royal court of Zaragoza into the most advanced center for learning and the arts in Muslim Spain 58. Their capital city, Zaragoza, which was noted for its beautiful buildings and figures prominently in the Song of Roland, housed a cosmopolitan population of Christians, Muslims, and Jews who spoke Romance, Arabic and Hebrew interchangeably.

The scholarly and literary interests of the Hudid kings attracted to their court Arabic scientists and poets, some of whom had moved north after the fall of the Califate in Cordoba earlier in the century. Particularly famed for their learning and patronage of scholars were Al-Muqtadir (1047-81), himself a poet and student of philosophy and mathematics, and Al-Mostain (1085-1110), patron of poets and father of the Imad al-dawla who knew William IX. Among the most celebrated of Arabic poets active at the court of Zaragoza were Ibn Ammar (t 1084), Ibn al-Dabbag (reign of Al-Mostain), Abu-Yafar (| 1096), and Al-Jawlani ( 1118) 59. This poetic tradition continued during the brief period of Almoravid rule (1110-18), especially under Ibn Tifelwit (1116-18) whose court was distinguished by the poets Ibn Hasday, a converted Jew, Al-Tutili (f 1 126), and above all by Ibn Badjdja ( 1138) known principally for his philosophical writings, and called Avempace by European latin writers. The possibility that a poet like William IX gained access to a court such as that of Zaragoza at this time inevitably leads one to wonder whether he might not have made the acquaintance of some of the Arab poets at that court, sampled some of their poetry, and made the borrowings of the lines in his poem.

Any, no documentary trace of any such meeting has survived, nor indeed, as mentioned earlier, has anyone found evidence of contacts between any other troubadour poets and their Arabic counterparts. But the possibility of a meeting between William IX and the Zaragosan poet Ibn Badjdja is not so remote as it might seem. Both men had contact with the same third party, Imad al-dawla of Zaragoza, the donor of the vase, in the same region at approximately the same time. The Zaragosan king met William IX at Cutanda in June 1120 and had earlier, sometime between 1115-17, held Ibn Badjdja captive after the latter had come

to him on some kind of diplomatic mission 60. Should there be any doubts that Christian and Muslim dignitaries met peacefully at this time one need only remember that contacts for political purposes — treaties, tribute payments, etc. — were a commonplace between the kings of Castile, Zaragoza, and Aragon of the period. The Cid could not have changed back and forth from Christian to Muslim sides in the 1080's and 1090's if unbending hostility had rigidly divided the two sides. Then there is the celebrated exchange of letters in the 1070's between an otherwise unidentified monk from France and Al-Muqtadir of Zaragoza in which the former sought to convert the latter to Christianity.

Sometimes the authorities from the two sides even met for purely social reasons as in the case of the marriage ca. 1039 between Raymond of Catalonia and the daughter of Sancho of Castile. The Christian ceremony took place in the palace of the Muslim king of Zaragoza, Mundhir ibn Yahya in the presence of a great crowd of onlookers of both religions 62. Nor can there be any doubt about the possibility of a Christian prince borrowing elements of Muslim culture. In his study of Xlth century Arabic love poetry H. Pérès cites two instances recounted by Arabic writers of Christian princes beguiled by the Arabic songs sung to them by Arabic women they kept as household slaves. Nonetheless, since so little is known about it, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the importance of the relationship between William IX and Imad al-dawla of Zaragoza. The bestowal of a gift of great value might suggest a friendship of long duration, perhaps with reciprocal obligations. On the other hand it could simply have been a chance acquaintance made on the spur of the moment under battle conditions, therefore of only limited political significance. In fact the date and circumstances of their meeting may militate against the likelihood that an interest in poetry could have figured in it.

In 1120 William IX, at the age of 49, had only six more years to live and would just have finished his period of creativity according to recent attempts to arrive a chronology of his poems 64. Modern critics, however, are quick to admit that none of this poems can be dated with precision. Thus caution is unquestionably called for in interpreting the Imad al-dawla contact. To sum it up: It is equally unquestionable that the vase incident places William IX much closer to direct personal contact with Xllth century Arab poets than previously thought to have been the case. Consequently the suggestions made by Arabists in the past that he may have known and borrowed from their poetry can no longer be dismissed as absurd, nor can the notion that he may have known some Arabic. At first glance such conclusions may not seem to amount to much, and in fact it may be granted that they would not have justified a similar inquiry about almost any other poet of the time. However, since William IX, as the first known troubadour poet, is a central figure in the controversy about the origins of the poetry of the troubadours and their possible borrowings from the Arabic, it is probably worthwhile exploring every available lead and bringing to light everything that can be known about this man and the Arab world of his day.

Sources

All sources were published under CC – Common Creative license which I used as a basis to expand on them through a meta research approach. They include:

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2. Davis A. Wacks – Jewish Trubadour in Spain
3. Douglas Galbi - Rise of the all-powerful chess queen & Gratien Dupont’s protest