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Caught Between Cultures? Bicultural Personalities as Cross-Cultural Transmitters in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean

In the midst of the public debate in Germany about the events of 11 September 2001, the sociologist Werner Schiffauer published an article in which he explained why Seyfullah, a young man of Turkish origins and a seemingly ›normal‹ and ›integrated‹ teenager, suddenly became the follower of an Islamist association based in Germany.

Schiffauer regarded this religious transformation as Seyfullah's strategy to cope with an identity crisis produced by the conflict of the ›first generation‹, the ›society of origin‹, and the ›host society‹. According to Schiffauer, Seyfullah was regularly confronted with the demands of his parents, who wanted their son to be as ›Turkish‹ as possible. But he had grown up in Germany, where Turkish origins may involve social disadvantages. German society demanded that he be as ›German‹ as possible, to give up Turkish customs, to abandon Islam, etc. Turkey, the country so cherished by his parents, did not want him either: whenever he and his parents visited Turkey, he was treated as somebody ›from Germany‹. By adopting radical Islam, Seyfullah found a way out: Radical Islam assured him of belonging to a religious elite and provided him with the necessary legitimation to stand up against all three institutions that had so far put pressure on him. When his parents criticized him for not being Turkish enough, Seyfullah retorted that being Turkish was not as important as being a ›true Muslim‹. Additionally, he finally had arguments which explained why he neither could nor would become totally German: according to his newly acquired views, German society offered nothing of worth spiritually and only appealed to the base senses, given its strong emphasis on sexuality and consumption. Seyfullah also found himself in a new position with respect to Turkey: what did it matter if he was neither German nor Turkish, as long as he was a true Muslim? If Turkey did not accept him, he would not accept Turkey. Turkish society should become more true to the ways of the Prophet¹. Thus Seyfullah gained cultural orientation and stability by adopting an exclusivist and elitist identity, secluding himself from mainstream Western society in his newly chosen role as representative and propagandist of a radical Islamic movement.

Needless to say, Seyfullah's conversion to radicalism does not necessarily represent the norm. Every (Muslim) adolescent with a migratory background develops individually. Depending on the relationship with the parents, the host society, the culture of origin, and other factors, different scenarios are possible, as can be witnessed every

¹ Werner SCHIFFAUER, ›Ich bin etwas Besonderes‹. Wie ein junger Türke vom angepassten Gymnasiasten zum provozierenden Anhänger des fanatischen Islamisten Metin Kaplan wird, in: Die Zeit, 4/10/2001, www.zeit.de/2001/41/Ich_bin_etwas_Besonderes (16/6/2010).

day². Schiffauer only treats one variant of how developing personalities manage to master the challenges of being torn between cultures and to handle a situation which threatens to jeopardize their social and mental well-being. However, Seyfullah's case demonstrates the importance of addressing the problematic aspects of growing up and living in and ›between‹ cultures and may serve as a starting point for the discussion of two issues relevant to every society faced with the challenges of multicultural – including multi-religious – coexistence³: on the one hand, the question when, why, and how bi- and multicultural personalities manage to cope with the conflicting demands of distinct cultural heritages without becoming mentally unstable, or even a destabilizing element in society; on the other hand, the question under which conditions such personalities manage to develop their full potential as regards their ability to contribute to the merging of distinct cultural heritages by transmitting, mediating, and building bridges⁴.

Focusing on the late antique and medieval Mediterranean and its peripheries, the present article contributes to the discussion of these issues by looking at them from a historical perspective. It is evident that an analysis of the past cannot provide solutions to today's challenges⁵. However, by considering various cases from the fourth to the thirteenth century which illustrate under which circumstances contemporaries endowed with the keys to various cultural heritages adopted or failed to adopt the role of cultural transmitters, the article intends to raise awareness of certain mechanisms of multicultural coexistence. In view of the fact that several historical processes – ranging from the spread of Christianity over the so-called ›period of migrations‹ and the Arab-Islamic expansion to the crusades and beyond – contributed to the amalgamation of various cultural heritages in this long period under investigation⁶, the present article

- ² See recent studies on the issue such as Maurice CRUL, Hans VERMEULEN, The Second Generation in Europe, in: *International Migration Review* 37/4 (2003) [The Future of the Second Generation: The Integration of Migrant Youth in Six European Countries], p. 965–986.
- ³ For a recent assessment of European policies towards Islam in Europe, see: Olivier ROY, Islam in Europe: When the Debate Misses the Real Practices, in: *EUI Review*, Autumn 2010, p. 5–6.
- ⁴ On different variants of merging these heritages, see ROY, Islam in Europe (as in n. 3), p. 5: »many second generation Muslims [...] want to associate Islamic religious markers to Western cultural markers«; ID., Wie hast du's mit der Religion, Europa?, in: *NZZ Online*, 21/4/2010, www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/kultur/aktuell/wie_hast_dus_mit_der_religion_europa_1.5493885.html (7/10/2010); ID., *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah*, London 2004, p. 205: »If we compare how Muslims organise themselves in different Western countries we may conclude that they express more the dynamics of the host country than of Islamic tradition«.
- ⁵ On the methodical challenges of using the past – in this case, the late antique and medieval Mediterranean and its peripheries – as a repository of historical examples, see Robert L. MILLER, John D. BREWER, *Historical Methods*, in: IDD., *The A–Z of Social Research. A Dictionary of Key Social Science Research Concepts*, London, Thousand Oaks, CA, New Delhi 2003, p. 141–143.
- ⁶ Other examples for various processes of cultural amalgamation are provided, for instance, by Walter POHL, Helmut REIMITZ (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction. The Construction of Ethnic Communities*, 300–800, Leiden 1998; Olivia Remie CONSTABLE, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World. Lodging, Trade and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Cambridge ³2009; Steven A. EPSTEIN, *Purity Lost. Transgressing Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1000–1400*, Baltimore 2007; Margit MERSCH, Ulrike RITZERFELD (eds.), *Lateinisch-*

can only deal with a random selection of examples. These have been chosen, not because they seem representative of certain periods, places, or cultural spheres, but because they seemed appropriate to provide insight into the effects of intensive cultural intercourse on the formation of individual personalities.

BI- OR MULTICULTURAL SKILLS AND THEIR ACQUISITION

Put simply, cross-cultural transfer comprises various human actions which contribute to the transmission, reception, and assimilation of any concrete object or abstract phenomenon into another cultural sphere⁷. But, although it may seem so at first sight, cross-cultural transfer is not necessarily dependent on highly developed bi- or multicultural skills held by the human agents involved in processes of transmission or reception.

The ninth-century Egyptian historiographer, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871), reports that the Muslim invaders captured a group of vinedressers when they entered the Iberian peninsula in the early eighth century. They slaughtered and cooked one of them, pretended to eat his flesh in front of the other captives, and then deliberately sent the latter back home⁸. By doing this, the invaders succeeded in transmitting a message across cultural boundaries, inciting the remaining vinedressers to disseminate the rather negative image of a cruel and frightening force of invaders. Admittedly, we are dealing here with a rather crude form of cultural transmission in which a mere violent action contributed to creating and disseminating a rather unsubtle and stereotyped image of ›the other‹⁹. To transmit this image, the Muslim invaders did not need to draw on bi- or multicultural skills. Nor did the reception and assimilation of this image require such skills on the side of the surviving vinedressers.

But the more sophisticated and elaborate the object and process of transfer, the more qualifications are needed: according to the »kitāb al-ḥadāyā wa ’t-tuḥaf«, the »Book of Gifts and Rarities«, probably written by an unknown Oriental author in the second half of the eleventh century¹⁰, a certain ‘Alī, a eunuch in the service of the North African

griechisch-arabische Begegnungen. Kulturelle Diversität im Mittelmeerraum des Spätmittelalters, Berlin 2009.

⁷ A detailed definition can be found in FRANCEMED (Rania ABDELLATIF, Yassir BENHIMA, Daniel KÖNIG, Elisabeth RUCHAUD), Introduction à l’étude des transferts culturels en Méditerranée médiévale. Aspects historiographiques et méthodologiques, in: IDD. (eds.), Construire la Méditerranée, penser les transferts culturels, Munich 2012, p. 14–44.

⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *futūḥ miṣr wa aḥbārūhā*, ed. Charles C. TORREY, Cairo 1999, p. 206; translation adapted from: Ibn Abd-el-Hakem, *History of the Conquest of Spain*, transl. J. H. JONES, Göttingen, London 1858, p. 19–20.

⁹ However, the relevance of this image for relations between Latin-Christian Europe and the Arab Islamic world can only be denied with difficulty: see Philippe SÉNAC, *Les Carolingiens et al-Andalus (VIII^e–IX^e siècles)*, Paris 2002, p. 23.

¹⁰ The authorship of this document, commonly ascribed to the eleventh century, is debated: see ar-Rašīd b. az-Zubayr, *kitāb ad-ḍaḥā’ir wa ’t-tuḥaf*, ed. Muḥammad ḤAMIDULLĀH, al-Kuwayt 1959, p. 9–17; *Book of Gifts and Rarities – Kitāb al-Ḥadāyā wa al-Tuḥaf*, transl./comm. Ghāda

ruler Ziyādat Allāh b. al-Aġlab (ruled 290–296/903–909), had fallen into the hands of Bertha (d. 925), the Carolingian wife of the margrave of Tuscany, described here as »queen of the Franks« (*malikat al-Ifranġā*). She »resolved to keep him for her use and trained him in her service«, ultimately sending him with a letter to the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Muktafī bi-llāh (ruled 289–295/902–908) in the year 293/906. No-one at court was able to read the letter since it was written in a strange script, »similar to the Greek script but more evenly formed« in the »Frankish« language (*al-firanġiyya*). Eventually, a certain »Frank« was found in the garment treasury who was able to write out a translation in Greek (*wa tarġamahu bi-kitāba ar-rūmiyya*). It was then translated from Greek to Arabic by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 289/910–911), son of the famous translator Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (d. 260/873)¹¹, who – in the service of the ‘Abbāsīds – had greatly contributed to transferring Greek works into Arabic¹².

‘Alī, the unnamed Frank and Ishāq b. Ḥunayn were only able to convey Bertha’s message because they had, by some means, acquired the necessary skills to move between different spheres characterized by a distinct cultural heritage as expressed in language, religion, customs and the like. The ›Frank‹, whose exact origin is impossible to define, seems to have lacked systematic instruction – at least in Arabic. Although he was capable of working in an Arabic-speaking environment, he does not seem to have been able to write out the letter in Arabic, but only in Greek. ‘Alī seems to have received linguistic instruction at the behest of the Carolingian queen Bertha. Ishāq b. Ḥunayn had more or less inherited his linguistic abilities from his father, who had had every reason to transmit his knowledge of different languages and literary cultures to his son, since these provided his offspring with career opportunities in the service of an ‘Abbāsīd court interested in assimilating Greek, Syriac, and Persian scientific culture¹³.

The sources provide other examples of people who acquired such abilities through ›learning by doing‹, by systematic instruction, or thanks to having grown up in a household or social environment which imparted these skills. This can be proved by referring to sources which contain information on various degrees of linguistic proficiency.

We can assume that people were often forced to acquire linguistic skills to survive in a different cultural environment. This applies in particular to those who were abducted to other parts of the world against their will, such as captives and slaves. An example is

al-ḤIJĀWĪ al-QADDŪMĪ, Princeton 1996, p. 11–13. Its authenticity has been questioned by Ann CHRISTYS, *The Queen of the Franks Offers Gifts to the Caliph al-Muktafī*, in: Wendy DAVIES, Paul FOURACRE (eds.), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford 2010, p. 149–170. It should be acknowledged, however, that Bertha’s letter is also mentioned in a reliable source of the tenth century: Ibn an-Nadīm, *al-fihrist*, ed. Gustav FLÜGEL, Frankfurt 2005, reprint of Leipzig 1871–1872, p. 20.

¹¹ Gotthard STROHMAIER, *Ishāq b. Ḥunayn b. Ishāq al-‘Ibādī, Abū Ya’qūb*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2, vol. 4, Leiden 1978, p. 110; ID., *Ḥunayn b. Ishāq al-‘Ibādī*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2, vol. 3, Leiden 1971, p. 578.

¹² Ar-Rašīd b. az-Zubayr, *kitāb aḍ-ḍahā’ir wa ’t-tuḥaf* (as in n. 10), p. 48–54; *Book of Gifts and Rarities* (as in n. 10), § 69, p. 91–98.

¹³ Dimitri GUTAS, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbāsīd Society*, London 1998, p. 134, 139.

provided by Adhémar of Chabannes (d. 1034), who reports that many captives were taken among the Muslims who had raided Narbonne at the beginning of the eleventh century. Unfortunately, the victors were not able to understand their captives who, against all expectations, did not speak Arabic. Communication must have been difficult initially, until the captives acquired the necessary language skills, but we know of two of them who ended up as personal servants to the abbot Geoffrey of Saint-Martial de Limoges¹⁴.

Others occasionally had the privilege of receiving systematic instruction. Missionaries, for example, were in need of linguistic abilities to be able to communicate with potential proselytes¹⁵. Thus, at least some Dominicans active in the Islamic world from the thirteenth century onwards received linguistic training before setting out¹⁶. However, the sources provide examples which imply that systematic instruction had either not taken place or had not procured the desired results: in 1245, the Ayyubid sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Naǧm ad-Dīn Ayyūb (d. 647/1249) wrote a letter to Pope Innocent IV (d. 1254). In this letter, the sultan stated that he would have been delighted to discuss religious matters with the Pope's Dominican envoys. Unfortunately, however, this had proved to be difficult since they were used to disputing in Latin and French, but lacked the necessary linguistic skills in Arabic¹⁷. That people who acquired linguistic skills could eventually become ›successful‹ cultural transmitters is exemplified by the Dominican missionary Riccoldo da Monte di Croce (d. 1320): he claims to have studied Arabic and to have interacted sufficiently with Muslim theologians during his Middle Eastern

¹⁴ Ademar Cabannensis, *Chronicon* (recensiones beta et gamma) III,52, ed. Pascale BOURGAIN, Richard LANDES, Georges PON, Turnhout 1999 (*Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio medievalis*, 129), p. 171: »Ex quibus abbas Jofredus duos retinuit in servitute, ceteros divisit per principes peregrinos qui de partibus diversis Lemovicam convenerant. Loquela eorum nequaquam erat Sarracenisca, sed more catulorum loquentes, glatire videbantur«. Adhémar states explicitly that the language of these prisoners is not Arabic. According to the translators of the chronicle (Adhémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, transl. Yves CHAUVIN, Georges PON, Turnhout 2003, p. 266, n. 471), the captives could have been Berbers or Touaregs whose language was not known in eleventh-century France.

¹⁵ The motivation to promote the acquisition of Arabic language skills is explained in the acts of the Council of Vienne, which decree the establishment of schools for Oriental languages in Rome, Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca: *Concilium Viennense* (a. 1311–12), decretum 24, ed./transl. Giuseppe ALBERIGO, Joseph WOHLMUTH, in: Joseph WOHLMUTH (ed.), *Konziilien des Mittelalters. Vom ersten Laterankonzil (1123) bis zum fünften Laterankonzil (1512–1517)*, Paderborn 2000, vol. 2, p. 379.

¹⁶ Berthold ALTANER, *Die fremdsprachliche Ausbildung der Dominikanermissionare während des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Zeitschrift für Missionsgeschichte* 23 (1933), p. 233–241; John TOLAN, *Porter la bonne parole auprès de Babel. Les problèmes linguistiques chez les missionnaires mendiants XIII^e–XIV^e siècle*, in: Peter von MOOS (ed.), *Zwischen Babel und Pfingsten. Sprachdifferenzen und Gesprächsverständigung in der Vormoderne (8.–16. Jh.)*, Vienna 2008, p. 533–547.

¹⁷ Karl-Ernst LUPPRIAN, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschern im 13. Jahrhundert anhand ihres Briefwechsels*, *Città del Vaticano* 1981, ep. 24, p. 162–163: »Et manifestum est, quod hoc erat ob impedimentum lingue arabice et propter incessum per viam humilitatis ordinis monachatus, et quia nisi in lingua latina sive gallica disputandi consuetudinem non habebant«.

travels that he could refute Islam in his »Contra legem Sarracenorum«¹⁸. His linguistic proficiency has recently been proved by the discovery of a copy of the Qurʾān in Arabic which contains annotations in his hand¹⁹.

Furthermore, we find examples of persons who grew up in a multilingual and multi-religious environment, consequently acquiring the respective linguistic skills almost automatically: the Mozarab Ḥafṣ b. Albar, who translated Jerome's Latin version of the Psalter into Arabic in Umayyad Córdoba in the late ninth or tenth century, explains his method of translation in such detail, and with such expertise and sensitivity for questions of rhythm and melody, that he can only be regarded as a person who had grown up in a multilingual environment²⁰.

However, language skills are only a part of a much broader range of skills and knowledge required of anybody involved in processes of cultural exchange. Access to different cultural heritages is of great importance as well. Cultural heritage can be acquired: Fulcher of Chartres (d. 1127) and Usāma b. Munqid̄ (d. 584/1188) both demonstrate how crusaders gradually adapted to their new Middle Eastern environment by adopting local loyalties, clothing, and eating habits, a certain understanding for local customs, and even language skills in Arabic²¹. Ibn Šaddād (d. 632/1235) and Abū Šāma (d. 665/1268) even mention that Reginald, the Lord of Sidon, had acquired a notion of classical Arabic and Muslim traditions thanks to the fact that he employed a Muslim to read and explain Arabic chronicles to him²².

¹⁸ Jean-Marie MERIGOUX, *L'ouvrage d'un frère prêcheur florentin en Orient à la fin du XIII^e siècle. Le »Contra legem Sarracenorum« de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce*, in: *Memorie domenicane* 17 (1986), p. 1–144, here p. 62: »Vnde cum transmissem maria et deserta, et peruenissem ad famosissimam ciuitatem Saracenorum Baldaccum, ubi generale ipsorum sollempne habetur studium, ibi pariter linguam et litteram arabicam didici. Et legem eorum diligentissime relegens, et studiose in scolis et cum magistris ipsorum frequenter conferens, magis ac magis per experientiam apprehendi peruersitatem predictae legis. Et cum inceperim eam in latinum transferre«.

¹⁹ Thomas E. BURMAN, *How an Italian Friar Read His Arabic Qur'an*, in: *Dante Studies* 125 (2007), p. 93–109.

²⁰ Ḥafṣ bin Albar, *urġūza*, in: *Le Psautier Mozarabe de Hafṣ le Goth*, ed./transl. Marie-Thérèse URVOY, Toulouse 1994, p. 15–18. The date of the translation is defined as either 889 or 989 on p. 20; on the discussion see: D. M. DUNLOP, *Ḥafṣ ibn Albar – the Last of the Goths?*, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 86 (1954) 3–4, p. 137–151, here p. 147, who opts for 989, vs. P. S. J. VAN KONINGVELD, *Christian Arabic Literature from Medieval Spain. An Attempt at Periodization*, in: Samir Khalil SAMIR, Jørgen S. NIELSEN (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics During the Abbasid Period (750–1258)*, Leiden 1993, p. 203–224, here p. 206, who opts for 889.

²¹ Fulcherus Carnotensis, *Historia Hierosolymitana* III,37, ed. Heinrich HAGENMEYER, Heidelberg 1913, p. 748; Usāma b. Munqid̄, *kitāb al-i'tibār*, ed. Philip ḤITTI, Cairo 1988(?), reprint of the Princeton 1930 edition, p. 140 (translation: *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades. Memoirs of Usamah ibn-Munqidh*, transl. Philip ḤITTI, New York 1929, p. 169–170), on the distinction between Franks who had become acclimatized to their surroundings and the recent comers from the Frankish lands.

²² Ibn Šaddād, *an-nawādir as-sultāniyya wa 'l-mahāsin al-yūsufiyya*, ed. Ğamāl ad-Dīn AŠ-ŠAYYĀL, Cairo 1964, p. 155 (French version: *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens orientaux*, vol. 3, Paris 1884, p. 121–122); Abū Šāma, *kitāb ar-rawḍatayn fī aḥbār ad-dawlatayn*, ed./transl. Charles BARBIER DE MEYNARD, in: *Recueil des historiens des croisades*.

However, it should also be considered that circumstances sometimes deprived potential transmitters of their cultural heritage. For example, a manual for solicitors written in the tenth century by the Andalusian scholar Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 399/1009) contains a standard sale contract for female slaves of Galician, Frankish, Berber or other origin, followed by a juridical analysis. Among other things, Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār dealt with the question of what happened if the woman for sale was pregnant²³. It seems reasonable to assume that a child born to a woman who had recently been enslaved would probably never see its mother's homeland, consequently adopting a cultural identity different from the one held by its mother. This would also have been the case with the progeny of a female Christian captive whose captor had taken advantage of her while her father was in search of the ransom money demanded. The *fatwā* by Abū Ishāq at-Tūnisī (d. 443/1051) from Kairouan, which renders judgment in this case, obliges the woman to give birth to the child in Islamic territory and, in the event that she wishes to return to the Christian world (*dār al-ḥarb*), to leave the child – who is considered a Muslim – behind²⁴. In other words, in certain cases cultural heritage could be lost from one generation to the next, thus creating people who might well have been aware of having a different cultural background but who had no or only restricted access to it.

The biography of Ibn Ǧarsiyya may provide insight into the possible psychological effects of such a biographical phenomenon. Born to Christian Basque parents, Ibn Ǧarsiyya was captured while still a child and abducted to the *īā īfa*-principality of Denia, where he was educated around the second quarter of the eleventh century²⁵. He is known as the author of a treatise in which he furiously attacks Arab ethnic pride, the belief obviously held by many contemporary Muslim elites in al-Andalus that they belonged to a superior ethnic group of allegedly Arab stock. Religiously, Ibn Ǧarsiyya defined himself as a Muslim: in his treatise he states that, by sending the Prophet Muḥammad, God had delivered non-Arabs and Arabs from blindness and error²⁶. In his mind, however, this did not justify Arab ethnic pride, for »pure gold is found in the dirt, and musk is a part of the secretions of the gazelle, and sweet drops are deposited

Historiens orientaux, vol. 4, Paris 1898, p. 396; see also Adolf WAAS, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 2 vols., Erfstadt 2005 (reprint of 1956), vol. 2, p. 210–211.

²³ Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *kitāb al-waṭāʿiq wa ʿs-saḡḡalāt* – formulario notarial hispano-árabe, ed. Pedro CHALMETA, Federico CORRIENTE, Madrid 1983, p. 33–36.

²⁴ Vincent LAGARDERE, *Histoire et société en Occident musulman au Moyen Âge. Analyse du Miʿyār d'al-Wanšarīsī*, Madrid 1995, *fatwā* n° 36, p. 24–25.

²⁵ Ibn Saʿīd al-Maḡribī, *al-muḡrib fī ḥūla al-Maḡrib*, § 606, ed. Šawqī DAYF, 2 vols., Cairo 1964, vol. 2, p. 407: »wa huwwa min abnāʾ našārā al-Baškans, subiya saḡīran, wa addabahu Muḡāhid mawlāhu malik al-ḡuzur wa Dāniya«; James T. MONROE, *The Shuʿūbiyya in al-Andalus. The Risāla of Ibn García and Five Refutations*, Berkeley 1970, p. 10, p. 76.

²⁶ *Risālat Ibn Ǧarsiyya*, ed. ʿAbd as-Salām HĀRŪN, in: ʿAbd as-Salām HĀRŪN (ed.), *nawādir al-maḥṭūḡāt*, vol. 1, Beirut 1991, p. 58: »lākin al-faḥr bi-ibn ʿamminā, allāḡī bi-l-baraka ʿammanā, al-Ibrāhīmī an-nasab, al-Ismāʿīlī al-ḥasab, allāḡī intašalnā ʾllāh taʾālā bi-hi wa iyyākum min al-ʿamiyya. amma naḥnu fa-min ahl at-taḡlīḡ wa ʾibādat aṣ-ṣulbān, wa antum min ahl ad-dīn al-mullayyīḡ wa ʾibādat al-awṭān [...]«; transl. by MONROE, *Shuʿūbiyya in al-Andalus* (as in n. 25), p. 27.

in foul-smelling waterskins²⁷. In other respects, Ibn Ġarsiyya defined himself against the Arabs, whom he condescendingly describes as a people of primitive and inferior origins. The non-Arabs, whom he regularly refers to in the first person plural, are in every sense superior to them: they are blond²⁸ and fair-complexioned²⁹, legitimate heirs to Abraham³⁰, Roman–Byzantine emperors (*qayāšira*) and Persian monarchs (*akāsira*)³¹. They are endowed with advanced civilizational skills³², inner virtue, and genealogical nobility³³:

Your mother, O Arabs, was a slave to our mother. If you deny this you will be found unjust. There is no excess in remonstrating, for we never tended monkeys nor did we weave mantles, nor did we eat wild herbs; there is no cutting off your relationship with Hâjar; you were our slaves, servants, enfranchised ones [...]³⁴.

Ibn Ġarsiyya's ethnic identification as represented in this polemic suggests that he did not really have much to show for it, aside from a rhetoric of non-Arab power and glory based on pseudo-historical images and allusions. He seems to have been captured too early to have developed a proper ethnic identity. Consequently, he could only resort to a hotchpotch of clichés to prove non-Arab superiority, which were countered, one by one, in the extant refutations. His aggressive attitude towards Arab ethnicity, although provoked by the genealogical claims and ethnic arrogance of some of his contemporaries, surely also resulted from a defect in his sense of identity which affected his self-esteem, making him attack what he himself lacked.

²⁷ Risālat Ibn Ġarsiyya (as in n. 26), p. 58: »fa fī 'r-raġām yulgā tibruhu, wa 'l-musk ba'd damm al-ġazāl wa 'n-niṭāf al-'iḍāb mustawda'āt bi-musk al-'izāl«; MONROE, *Shu'ūbiyya in al-Andalus* (as in n. 25), p. 27; Görän LARSSON, *Ibn García's Shu'ūbiyya Letter: Ethnic and Theological Tensions in Medieval al-Andalus*, Leiden 2003, p. 175. See also Görän LARSSON, *Mangy Camels, Noble Stallions and the Disreputable Tail Fat of Lizards. Animals in Ibn García's Epistle on the Shu'ūbiyya*, in: *al-Qanṭara* 29/2 (2008), p. 495–503, here p. 501–502.

²⁸ Risālat Ibn Ġarsiyya (as in n. 26), p. 56: »annahum aṣ-ṣahab aṣ-ṣahab«.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56: »allā yakūn lawnuhum sawādan«.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57: »aṭfatuhum 'alaykum ar-raḥm al-ibrāhīmiyya, wa 'l-'umūma al-ismā'īliyya [...]«.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 57: »ḍawū al-ārā' al-falsafīyya al-arḍiyya, wa 'l-'ulūm al-manṭiqiyya ar-riyāḍiyya [...], ḥabasū anfāsahum 'alā 'l-'ulūm al-badaniyya wa 'd-dīniyya, lā 'alā waṣf an-nāqa al-fadaniyya [...]«.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 56: »ḍawū al-aḥsāb wa 'l-maġd wa 'l-'ulā min aṣ-ṣuḥb«, p. 57: »wa 'l-karām banū 'l-aṣfar, al-aṭhar al-aḥzar [...]«.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56: »ummakum li-umminā ama, in tunakkirū ḍālīka taluffū zulma, wa lā tahāyul fī 't-takāyul, fa-mā susnā qaṭ qurūdan, wa lā ḥuknā burūdan, wa lā luknā 'urūdan, fa-lā tuḥāġir, yā banī Hāġar, antum arqā'unā wa 'abdatunā, wa i'tiqā'unā [...]«; transl. by MONROE, *Shu'ūbiyya in al-Andalus* (as in n. 25), p. 24; LARSSON, *Ibn García's Shu'ūbiyya Letter* (as in n. 27), p. 169.

FAVOURABLE AND UNFAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

The anecdote about the letter sent by the Frankish queen Bertha refers to bi- or multi-cultural personalities who did not adopt the role of cultural transmitter on their own initiative. Rather, it was their environment, personified by the respective ruler, which demanded their services. This last point is not only important because it proves that even persons lacking the necessary qualifications could contribute to acts of cross-cultural transfer, provided that they were capable of enlisting the services of others. It also highlights that such processes depend on personal motivation and/or environmental stimulus.

The sources provide us with an infinite number of motivations for people to become involved in processes of transmission and reception between different cultural spheres. For example, the merchants of Verdun, who exported castrated young men called Carzimasians to Umayyad Spain in the tenth century, were in search of profit, as Liutprand of Cremona (d. 970 or 972) tells us³⁵. The retired crusader mentioned by Usāma b. Munqid, who had given up eating pork and deliberately employed Egyptian cooks, had obviously acquired a liking for Middle Eastern cuisine³⁶. The engineer from Jerusalem who claimed to have destroyed several ›Saracen‹ fortresses with his war machines may have been looking for employment when he offered his services to Emperor Frederic Barbarossa (ruled 1152–1190) during the latter's siege of the Italian city of Crema in 1160³⁷. Adelard of Bath (d. after 1146) and other scholars of his generation acquired Arabic language skills because they were in search of knowledge, knowledge that Adelard seems to have employed to question established patterns of thought in his academic landscape of origin, but also – as he says himself – to present his own critical thoughts as having been formulated by others³⁸. Thus, motivations were manifold and escape every effort at classification, aside from the fact that most persons involved probably wished to act in their own interest.

³⁵ Liutprandus, *Antapodosis*, lib. VI, cap. 6, ed. Joseph BECKER, Hanover, Leipzig 1915 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, *Script. rer. Germ.*, 41), p. 155–156: ›ob inmensum lucrum‹; see also Olivia Remie CONSTABLE, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain. The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula*, Cambridge 1996, p. 96–97, 205.

³⁶ Usāma b. Munqid, *kitāb al-i'tibār* (as in n. 21), p. 140; English version: *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman* (as in n. 21), p. 169–170.

³⁷ *Vincentii Pragensis annales*, a. 1159, ed. Wilhelm WATTENBACH, Hanover 1861 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, *Script. in Folio*, 17), p. 677; German version: *Die Jahrbücher von Vinzenz und Gerlach*, transl. Georg GRANDAUR, Leipzig 1889 (*Geschichtsschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit*, 67), p. 57.

³⁸ Adelard of Bath, *Questiones naturales*, in: Adelard of Bath, *Conversations with his Nephew*, ed./transl. Charles BURNETT, Cambridge 1998, p. 82: ›si quando inventum proprium publicare voluerim, persone id aliene imponens inquam: ›Quidam dixit, non ego‹‹; see also Charles BURNETT, *Humanism and Orientalism in the Translations from Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages*, in: Andreas SPEER, Lydia WEGENER (eds.), *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, Berlin 2006, p. 27.

However, motivation had its limits: Usāma b. Munqid, the aforementioned Arab noble from the Syrian town of Šayzar, was part of a political constellation in which cooperation with the crusaders was frequent. Although he regarded most of them as primitive war machines³⁹, regular contact forced him to concede that some of them had certain qualities which obliged him to treat them with courtesy and respect⁴⁰. But when he was invited by a Frankish reverend knight to send his own son to the Frankish lands to be educated there in the different aspects of chivalry, he flatly refused. Participating in such a form of cultural exchange went too far for him. In response to the proposal, he claims to have thought:

Thus there fell upon my ears words which would never come out of the head of a sensible man; for even if my son were to be taken captive, his captivity could not bring him a worse misfortune than carrying him into the lands of the Franks⁴¹.

Usāma's refusal could be interpreted as an expression of arrogance⁴². However, we should consider that people regularly involved in intercultural exchange and cooperation may have had legitimate reasons for not seeing an advantage in rearing a next generation characterized by cultural hybridity.

The case of 'Alī b. Muğāhid elucidates the challenges involved in having a child grow up in different cultural spheres. Around the year 406/1015–1016, Muğāhid, lord of the *īā ḥfa*-principality of Denia (ruled 405–436/1014–1044), was attacked by European Christian powers (*mulūk al-arḍ al-kabīra*) who managed to abduct members of his family, including his son 'Alī. 'Alī became a hostage of the »ruler of the Germans« (*sāhib al-ʿAlmāniyyīn*), who demanded such a high ransom that Muğāhid was only able to raise the money in 423/1031. When 'Alī finally came back, he had turned into a mature young man who spoke the language and wore the clothes of the Christian people among whom he had grown up. At his father's suggestion, he converted to Islam and even »became a good Muslim« (*wa ḥasana islāmuhu*), as the historiographer Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb (d. 776/1375) tells us. But things were not that easy: not only did 'Alī contract a heavy illness as a consequence of his belated circumcision, but the fact that his younger brother Ḥasan had been prepared for several years to rule after his father created tensions between the brothers⁴³. It certainly demanded a lot of energy to install a ruler

³⁹ Usāma b. Munqid, *kitāb al-i'tibār* (as in n. 21), p. 132; English version: An Arab-Syrian Gentleman (as in n. 21), p. 161.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 140; English version, p. 169–170.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132; English version, p. 161.

⁴² See, for example, how Francesco GABRIELI contextualizes the literary output of Usāma b. Munqid: *The Arabic Historiography of the Crusades*, in: Bernard LEWIS, Peter Malcolm HOLT (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, London 1962, p. 98–99, 107.

⁴³ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *kitāb a'māl al-a'lām*, ed. Évariste LÉVI-PROVENÇAL, Beirut 1956, p. 219–222; German version: Wilhelm HOENERBACH, *Islamische Geschichte Spaniens*, Zürich 1970, p. 404–408. A Pisan perspective of events is given in the *Liber Maiolicinus de gestis Pisanorum illustribus*, v. 922–968, ed. Carlo CALISSE, Roma 1904, p. 42–44, p. LI–LII. See also Michele AMARI, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, vol. 3, Florence 1868, p. 6–10, with further references to Latin and Arabic sources in the footnotes; María Jesús RUBIERA MATA, *La taifa de Denia*, Alicante 1985, p. 67–70, 95–98; and Travis BRUCE, *The Politics of Violence and*

who had obviously become estranged from his culture of origin. However, surrounded by people such as Ibn Ġarsiyya⁴⁴, ‘Alī b. Muġāhid eventually managed to assume power and to rule the *īā īfa*-principality until he was deposed by his ambitious neighbour Ibn Hūd al-Muqtadir (ruled 438–475/1046–1082) in 468–469/1075–1076⁴⁵.

Others who suffered a similar fate – in the sense of having to compromise between different cultures – had to bear the criticism and occasionally even the sanctions of those who did not regard bi- or multicultural features as an asset. Describing his visit to Sicily, the tenth-century geographer Ibn Ḥawqal criticizes a group of Muslims called *al-muša miḏūn* for having found a religious compromise with their Christian wives: their sons grew up as rather slack Muslims while their daughters remained attached to the Christian faith⁴⁶. Ibn Ḥawqal’s critical attitude is representative of the stance taken by religious orthodoxy towards such creative forms of Christian–Islamic cohabitation. In the Latin East, ethnically mixed alliances produced a group called Turcoples, who were defined by two historiographers of the early twelfth century. According to the historiographer Raymond of Aguilers, they »were so named because they were either reared with Turks or were the offspring of a Christian mother and a Turkish father⁴⁷«. Albert of Aachen calls them »an impious breed, said to be Christians only by name, not deed, born of a Turkish father and a Greek mother⁴⁸«. In accordance with this derogatory definition, the Turcoples, despite rendering valuable military services to the crusaders, were treated as second-class humans who ranked just above servants: according to the rule of the templars, two brother knights were entitled to as much meat as three Turcoples, and two Turcoples to as much as three servants. It is indicative of their social standing that the Turcoples did not eat together with the brother knights, but sat at their own table; only those brother knights who were doing penance sat with the Turcoples⁴⁹.

One of the most dramatic cases in which society punished the transgression of cultural, and in this case, religious boundaries, is the case of the so-called martyrs of Córdoba. They constituted a comparatively large group of Christians who were sentenced to death between 850 and 859 on the grounds of apostasy from Islam or public

Trade: Denia and Pisa in the Eleventh Century, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 32/2 (2006), p. 127–142.

⁴⁴ LARSSON, Ibn García’s *Shu’ūbiyya* Letter (as in n. 27), p. 176.

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *kitāb a’māl al-a’lām* (as in n. 43), p. 221–222; Pierre GUICHARD, *L’Espagne et la Sicile musulmanes aux XI^e et XII^e siècles*, Lyon 2000, p. 96–99.

⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥawqal, *kitāb sūrat al-arḍ*, ed. Johannes H. KRAMERS, Leiden 1938, p. 129.

⁴⁷ Le »Liber« de Raymond d’Aguilers, cap. vii (170b), ed. John Hugh HILL, Laurita L. HILL, Paris 1969, p. 55: »Turcopoli enim dicuntur, qui vel nutriti apud Turcos vel de matre christiana, patre turco procreantur«.

⁴⁸ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana. History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, lib. V,3, ed./transl. Susan B. EDGINGTON, Oxford 2007, p. 342: »Turcopoli itaque, gens impia et dicta Christiana nomine non opere, qui ex Turco patre et Greca matre procreati [...]«.

⁴⁹ Henri de CURZON, *La règle du temple*, Paris 1886, § 153, p. 119; § 271, p. 166: »Et se il fait penance avec son abit, il doit mangier a table de turcoples sans toailles«; § 370, p. 208; § 375, p. 210–211. See also Kenneth M. SETTON, Norman P. ZACOUR, Harry W. HAZARD, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 5: *The Impact of the Crusades on the Near East*, Madison, London ⁵1985, p. 338.

blasphemy against its Prophet. The hagiographical source which contains their biographies is certainly tendentious, in the sense that it glorifies Christianity and vilifies Islam. Nonetheless, it provides a vivid impression of a multicultural situation that was problematic because it had produced a number of split identities. In many cases, these were young people who had grown up as the children of bi-religious or crypto-Christian couples in a Muslim-dominated society and who posed as Muslims in public while secretly practising the Christian faith⁵⁰. Between the lines of the hagiographical account we can see that this strain proved too hard for many⁵¹. Several future ›martyrs‹ sought relief by voluntarily confronting the Islamic authorities. Openly defying Islam, they refused the offer to escape punishment by abandoning Christianity, with the effect that they were eventually executed. In the society of ninth-century Córdoba there seems to have been no room for compromise in matters of religion, as there was in the case of *al-muša'miḍīn* from tenth-century Sicily, where Christian wives and Muslim husbands were obviously able to negotiate concerning the religious education of their children. Rather, Muslims and Christians in Córdoba pressured or even forced the products of religiously hybrid education to position themselves clearly on one side of the divide – the Muslims by refusing to accept and by punishing conversion to Christianity or forms of religious syncretism; the Christians by firmly propagating an ideal of spiritual purity and penance that threatened half-baked Christians or Crypto-Christians with eternal damnation. In this way, the Christians put psychological pressure on such people to renounce Islam completely, to regard Crypto-Christianity as a spiritually

⁵⁰ Among the martyrs documented by Eulogius of Córdoba [Eulogius, *Memoriale Sanctorum*, ed. Ioannis GIL, Madrid 1973 (Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum, 2)] we find a) Sanctius, who had been born in Albi in southern France, had been captured as a boy, and had been raised within the Cordoban army [lib. 2, cap. III, p. 402]; b) Nunilo and Alodia, daughters of a Muslim father and a Christian mother who remarried a Muslim after the death of her first husband, so that her children had to practise their faith secretly [lib. 2, cap. VII,2, p. 406]; c) Maria, the daughter of a Christian landowner and a Muslim mother, whose mother had converted to Christianity and raised her children in the Christian faith [lib. 2, cap. VIII,12, p. 412]; d) Flora, the daughter of a Muslim father and a Christian mother, who was educated clandestinely as a Christian by her mother and who hid her faith from her Muslim brother and Muslim society for several years [lib. 2, cap. VIII,3, p. 409]; e) Aurelius, the son of a Muslim father and a Christian mother, who, orphaned at an early age, was instructed in the Christian religion by his aunt, but also introduced to Arabic literary studies by his Muslim relatives [lib. 2, cap. X,1, p. 416]; f) Sabigotho, the daughter of Muslim parents, whose mother married a Crypto-Christian after her father's death with the effect that the whole family secretly converted to Christianity [lib. 2, cap. X,3, p. 416–417]; g) Lilioa, the child of crypto-Christian parents [lib. 2, cap. X,4, p. 417]; h) Aurea, the daughter of a Muslim father and a Christian mother, who had grown up and lived with her mother as a nun in a convent for over thirty years [lib. 2, cap. XVII,1, p. 456]; h) Leocritia, the daughter of Muslim parents, who had been introduced to Christianity by a relative [Albarus, *Vita Eulogi*, § 13,1, ed. Ioannis GIL, Madrid 1973 (Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum, 1), p. 337]. See also Kenneth Baxter WOLF, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, Cambridge 1988, p. 23–35. The legal background to such cases is discussed by Ana FERNÁNDEZ FÉLIX, *Children on the Frontiers of Islam*, in: Mercedes GARCÍA-ARENAL (ed.), *Conversions islamiques. Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen*, Paris 2001, p. 61–72.

⁵¹ Ann CHRISTYS, *Christians in al-Andalus (711–1000)*, London, New York 2007, p. 52.

dangerous compromise, and to take a public stand regarding their religious convictions⁵².

These examples – ‘Alī b. Muğāhid, *al-muṣa‘imīdīn*, the Turcoples, and the so-called martyrs of Córdoba – attest to the fact that ethnic, cultural, and especially religious hybridity – the »natural« result of any social constellation characterized by the intensive interaction of different cultural heritages – could be regarded as a problem by the dominant groups of society. Depending on the kind of transgression and, particularly, on the relevant balance of power, the inability or even refusal to fit into established patterns of ethnic, cultural, or religious identity was sanctioned in different ways, thus depriving bi- or multicultural personalities of becoming successful cultural transmitters.

In other cases, however, personal motivation to make use of bi- or multicultural skills seems to have concurred with the demands of society. It appears that this was not only due to the fact that the personalities in question had qualifications deemed useful or necessary by the society in question. It also seems to be of relevance that such people seem to have been deft enough to adapt to the workings of their environment. Making conscious efforts to explain the necessity of their qualification to their contemporaries, they enforced or even created the respective society’s demand for their qualification, accordingly drawing benefit from their multicultural heritage.

A first example leads us away from Christian–Muslim relations back to late antique Anatolia in the middle of the third century. According to the »Ecclesiastical History« of Philostorgius, Gothic groups raided the countryside of the Roman provinces Cappadocia and Galatia between 253 and 260, taking many people into captivity. Among these were Roman Christians⁵³. We are able to reconstruct some aspects of their integration into Gothic society north of the Danube: several sources indicate that they were able to maintain contacts with the ecclesiastical networks of Asia minor, to raise their children as Christians, and even to win some converts to Christianity among the Gothic population⁵⁴. Among their descendants in the third or fourth generation was a certain Ulfilas. His upbringing remains obscure but, judging from his Gothic name combined with the documented fact that he was proficient in Gothic, Greek, and Latin⁵⁵, we can conclude that, in spite of their captivity, Ulfila’s ancestors had successfully integrated into the Gothic lands without completely giving up their Roman identity⁵⁶. Ulfilas

⁵² WOLF, Christian Martyrs (as in n. 50), p. 107–119.

⁵³ Philostorgius, Kirchengeschichte, lib. II,5, ed. J. BIDEZ, F. WINKELMANN, Berlin 1972, p. 17–18; English version: Philostorgius, Epitome of Photius, book 2, chapter 5, transl. Philip R. AMIDON, Atlanta 2007, p. 20. On the date, see Herwig WOLFRAM, Die Goten. Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts, Munich 1990, p. 85.

⁵⁴ Daniel KÖNIG, Bekehrungsmotive. Untersuchungen zum Christianisierungsprozess im römischen Westreich und seinen romanisch-germanischen Nachfolgern (4.–8. Jahrhundert), Husum 2008, p. 45–46, with further literature.

⁵⁵ Auxentius, in: Maximinus Arianus: Contra Ambrosium, cap. 53–55, ed. Adalbert GAUTIER HAMMAN Paris 1959 (Migne Patrologia Latina, Suppl. 1), col. 705–706: »apostolica gratia grecam et latinam et goticam linguam sine intermissione in una et sola ecclesia christi predicavit«.

⁵⁶ Knut SCHÄFERDIEK, Wulfila. Vom Bischof von Gotien zum Gotenbischof, in: ID., Schwellenzeit. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Christentums in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter, Berlin 1996,

reappears in the sources as the leader of a small group of Christians. Because of his ability to speak the languages of the Empire, he was used by the Gothic authorities as an interpreter in a diplomatic exchange which took place in the 330s; and he was later to be consecrated bishop by a group of Roman clerics⁵⁷. Returning to the Gothic lands, he not only continued to preach Christianity but also created a written form of the Gothic language in order to translate the entire Bible⁵⁸.

In many ways, Ulfilas' case offers a ›successful‹ counter-example to the case of Seyfullah sketched in the introduction of this article. Ulfilas was the offspring of a previous generation that had been forced to migrate to a society with a different culture and religion. The first generation integrated into the host society to a certain degree, but remained attached to their country and culture of origin. In consequence, Ulfilas was able to retain the first generation's religion and even to intensify his personal commitment to it – by regarding Gothic society as a missionary terrain and thus demonstrating the mixture of religious elitism and trans-ethnic universalism that is characteristic of missionary Christianity. His dedication to the cause of Christianity may have served as a »strategy of distinction«⁵⁹ which set the Christian apart from Gothic paganism, the educated heir of Roman civilization apart from a ›Barbarian‹ culture. It should be acknowledged, however, that Ulfilas identified sufficiently with Gothic culture to dedicate a great part of his life to its Christianization, by becoming a missionary and Gothic bishop, by developing a Gothic alphabet, and by translating the Bible into this language, allegedly skipping the »Books of Kings« because of their violent character, which he deemed unsuitable for a people too much involved in warfare⁶⁰. It may be noted that he was active in an environment which appreciated his qualifications, at least temporarily: because the Gothic authorities needed people like Ulfilas to communicate with the Roman Empire – the superpower of the day – he must have had a comparatively high social standing, in spite of the fact that his ancestors had belonged to a minority of deported captives⁶¹. The Romans, in turn, needed capable personnel in regions beginning to open up to Roman and Christian influences⁶². Ulfilas' active role as a cultural transmitter only ended when the Gothic authorities began regarding Roman Christianity as a threat and thus decided to persecute Chris-

p. 10; ID., *Das gotische Christentum im vierten Jahrhundert*, in: *ibid.*, p. 118–120, esp. p. 120: »soziale Konsolidierung und ethnische Integrierung«.

⁵⁷ WOLFRAM, *Goten* (as in n. 53), p. 86–87; SCHÄFERDIEK, *Wulfila* (as in n. 56), p. 1–40.

⁵⁸ Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte* (as in n. 53), lib. II,5, p. 17–18; English version: Philostorgius, *Epitome of Photius* (as in n. 53), book 2, chapter 5, p. 20. On the translation, see SCHÄFERDIEK, *Das gotische Christentum* (as in n. 56), p. 143–146.

⁵⁹ On this term, see Walter POHL, Introduction. *Strategies of Distinction*, in: POHL, REIMITZ (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction* (as in n. 6), p. 5–6.

⁶⁰ This could be a topos: see SCHÄFERDIEK, *Das gotische Christentum* (as in n. 56), p. 141; but also WOLFRAM, *Goten* (as in n. 53), p. 84.

⁶¹ WOLFRAM, *Goten* (as in n. 53), p. 85–86; SCHÄFERDIEK, *Wulfila* (as in n. 56), p. 10, n. 41; ID., *Goten. Eine Kirche im Vorfeld des frühbyzantinischen Reiches*, in: ID., *Schwellexzeit* (as in n. 56), p. 101.

⁶² WOLFRAM, *Goten* (as in n. 53), p. 86.

tians within their realm, around the year 348⁶³. Ulfilas and his group of followers appealed for help to Emperor Constantius II (ruled 337–361), who allocated them a piece of land within the Empire's borders⁶⁴.

Petrus Alfonsi (d. after 1130) provides another example of a person who successfully made use of a multicultural upbringing. Born into a Jewish family on the Iberian peninsula, he acquired language skills in Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin and converted to Christianity in the Christian town of Huesca in 1106. Later, he is attested in England and France. His success and widely received acclaim as an intellectual can be measured by the masses of extant manuscripts still at our disposal⁶⁵. His »epistula ad peripateticos«, written some time after 1116, provides insight into how he regarded himself. Addressing the scholars of the entire Latin-Christian world⁶⁶, he criticizes their way of organizing knowledge⁶⁷. Then he evaluates the importance of various disciplines and declares astronomy to be the most important. Finally, he introduces himself as a specialist in this field, who is capable of teaching the Latins what they themselves have not yet understood:

Since I have encountered almost no Latin experts in the art of astronomy, while I myself have been practising it for a long time, I have decided, if this should please you, to impart my knowledge to you and to present it diligently and benignly as something rare, precious, sweet and delicious⁶⁸.

And again:

It has come to our ears that some of those men who investigate wisdom [...] prepare to traverse distant provinces and exile themselves in remote regions in order to acquire a fuller knowledge of

⁶³ KÖNIG, *Bekehrungsmotive* (as in n. 54), p. 48, note 124, with the relevant sources.

⁶⁴ Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte* (as in n. 53), lib. II,5, p. 17–18. English version: Philostorgius, *Epitome of Photius* (as in n. 53), book 2, chapter 5, p. 20.

⁶⁵ John TOLAN, *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers*, Gainesville, FL 1993, p. xiii–xiv, 3, 9–11; Thomas RICKLIN, »Arabes contigit imitari«. Beobachtungen zum kulturellen Selbstverständnis der iberischen Übersetzer der ersten Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts, in: SPEER, WEGENER (eds.), *Wissen über Grenzen* (as in n. 38), p. 53–54.

⁶⁶ Petrus Alfonsi, *epistula ad peripateticos*, cap. 1, in: TOLAN, *Petrus Alfonsi* (as in n. 65), p. 164–165 (translation p. 172): »Vniversis sancte matris ecclesie omnibus, videlicet peripateticis ac per hoc aliis philosophico lacte nutritis, ubique per Franciam quamvis scientie doctrina diligentius exercitatis, Petrus Anidefunsus servus Ihesu Christi, frater eorum et condiscipulus: salus vobis et benedictio ab eo cuius est salutem et benedictionem conferre«. In this context, the term »Francia« applies to Latin Christendom and not to the realm of medieval France: see Charles BURNETT, *The Works of Petrus Alfonsi. Questions of Authenticity*, in: *Medium Aevum* 66 (1997), p. 54–55.

⁶⁷ Petrus Alfonsi, *epistula ad peripateticos* (as in n. 66), cap. 2, p. 165 (translation p. 173): »Invenimus autem nonnullos ex vobis grammatice studentes scientie. Que quamvis inter artes VII nequeat computari, cum neque sit argumentalis scientia, nec in omnibus linguis eadem sed omnino diversa. Valet tamen et ad artes est necessaria«.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, cap. 6, p. 166 (translation p. 174): »Quia igitur fere omnes latinos artis huius astronomie videlicet expertes inveni, ego autem in ea me diutius exercui, et partem inde nonnullam animo mandavi, vobis si placet impartire et quasi quiddam rarum, preciosum, dulce ac deliciosum diligenter ac benigne disposui presentare«.

astronomy. To them I reply without hesitation that since the truth is what they desire to see, they will soon have what they wish, and that which they prepare to seek in remote places is close at hand, unless they have some doubt that we are somewhat gifted in this art⁶⁹.

This is undoubtedly the confident statement of a man who, owing to his cultural background and linguistic talents, was convinced of his intellectual superiority in a specific field of study⁷⁰, a rather self-confident »intellectual emissary between two worlds«, as John Tolan put it, whose »success was due in large part to his ability to bridge several cultures« and »to adapt to the needs and desires of his newfound audience⁷¹«.

CONCLUSION

The sources provide us with ample evidence that people from different cultural backgrounds mixed to a high degree in the late antique and medieval Mediterranean and its peripheries. We find accounts of people who acquired bi- or multicultural skills in various ways and at different stages of their lives, and who ventured to use these qualifications to act as cross-cultural transmitters in the widest sense of the term. But to produce such personalities, certain conditions had to be met: the necessary skills were only acquired if these people had received access to different cultural heritages in the course of growing up, during intensive training, or because particular situations in their lives demanded it. As we have seen, not every potential transmitter received this opportunity to the same degree. Furthermore, we can distinguish between different levels of qualification, for example as regards linguistic abilities.

Even if someone had these qualifications, they only seem to have been put to use effectively if the respective person knew where and how to use them. If this was done in an environment that favoured or even demanded corresponding activities – because these qualifications were needed or because cultural transmission procured certain assets – no or only minor risks were involved. In such cases, and depending on the circumstances, moving between and across cultural boundaries could even enable a person to gain different kinds of social advantages. However, as soon as cultural transmission was considered a transgression that endangered established identity patterns overtly and directly – especially those of an ethnic or religious nature – it involved risks and could even prove lethal. Cultural hybrids (that is, bi- or multicultural

⁶⁹ Ibid., cap. 7, p. 166 (translation p. 175): »Ad nostras enim aures peruenit quod quidam ex eis qui sapientia inuestigant, secundum quod potest per similitudinem comprehendi, longinquas parant peragrarare prouincias et in remotas secedere regiones, ut ad artis astronomice pleniorum possint peruenire notitiam. Quibus utique incunctanter ego respondeo quia uerum est quod uidere desiderant, presto habent quod uolunt et prope est quod remotius parant inquirere, nisi forte eis ueniat in dubium quod in hac arte quippiam ualeamus«.

⁷⁰ RICKLIN, »Arabes contigit imitari« (as in n. 65), p. 53–55: »Was er zu bieten hat, ist für die Lateiner etwas Neues, dessen Besitz ihn als Angehörigen einer anderen Wissenschaftskultur auszeichnet und dessen Vermittlung ihm nicht zuletzt deshalb am Herzen liegt, weil er sich davon einen Kompetenzgewinn anderer verspricht«.

⁷¹ TOLAN, Petrus Alfonsi (as in n. 65), p. 1, 3.

personalities) are among the most prominent victims of such situations because of the mere fact that their very existence questioned the validity and necessity of such patterns and thus of the established order.

Finding an adequate balance between unity and conformity on the one hand and diversity and pluralism on the other challenged past societies just as it challenges societies today. In the late antique and medieval Mediterranean world, inter- and transcultural performance was high if the environment provided sufficient stimulus to generate a multiplicity of motivations to act as a cross-cultural transmitter, if the acquisition of bi- and multicultural qualifications was encouraged, and if constraints, impeding norms, and taboos used to legitimize and enforce the prevailing cultural order were kept to a minimum. Last but not least, it depended on the motivation, initiative, and ability of potential transmitters themselves to convince those around them that their qualifications served the need of the society in question. This seems to be as valid for the past as it is for us today in the current inner-European debate about integration.