The Struggle to be Seen; Muslim-Christian Relations and Religious (In)Visibility at the Hispano-Moroccan Borderland

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The article analyses the ways in which Muslim-Christian relations occur in the Hispano-Moroccan borderland, more precisely, in the North-African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. It argues that, in these two Spanish autonomous cities, the relations between Christians and Muslims are articulated through a symbolic system in which the former exercise the capacity of being apparent, whereas the latter tend to be 'pushed away' from the visible, albeit exerting resistance. This results in a decrease of Muslims' degree of public exposure. The article critically assesses the relational dynamics between Muslims and Christians in Ceuta and Melilla against the *trope* of 'invisibility' by looking at how they use religion to exert these enunciations: a) I briefly contextualize historically the setting, b) I explore how religion is being racialized, c) I look at the use of historical vocabulary and narratives on religion to manifest intergroup conflict, d) I expose how the regime of (in)visibility unfolds and, e) I scrutinise the recent development by which Christians participate in making Islam more visible, and the resulting consequences this have on the relations between the two groups. The article assesses why and how religion provides the language through which these particular forms of othering are manifested.

I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me. Ellison, Invisible Man (1995 [1953], 3).

Anthropologists have for long been concerned with the issue of invisibility and with the processes by which the invisible attempts to become noted. The setting here explored is the borderland that separates, Morocco from Spain, more precisely the two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla. As the liminal character of the cities themselves evoke, being often left outside the national imagination of what is commonly seen as 'Spain', and 'Morocco', the two North-African ports echo Latour's (2010) depiction of invisibilities, which are not simply social constructions, nor are they autonomous realities beyond our reach. Rather, they are both constructed and real; they are artefacts and actors. These invisibilities, together with the vectors that operate to make them noticeable, are what Latour labels 'regimes of invisibility'. I content in this article, that not only the enclaves themselves in relation to the nation, but also the relations between the two main groups 'within' them, work through the lenses of a regime of this type, one in which a group exerts its power by being visible and legible, whilst the other is pushed away, not without resistance, from the 'central stage'. The regime as Latour reminds us, displays an intricate set of practices, technologies, mediators, knowledges, and translations that ascend to illuminate the invisible. Borderlands are by nature places of

encounter; a regime of invisibility is in this context an attempt to erase the heterogeneous character of the frontier by turn it culturally more homogenous.

The data for this research was collected by conducting fieldwork in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla in 2008, 2014 and 2015. My interest begun when I visited the area on the occasion of a fieldwork trip to Northern Morocco to conduct research with members of the Sufi Order Būdshīshiyya in Spring and Summer of 2008. Further information was gathered in telephone interviews conducted with Ceutíes and Melillenses in August and September of 2014 and August 2015. Although I conducted some structured interviews, most of the data was gathered in informal talks with residents of the two cities.ⁱ I propose in this article to analyse the cases of Ceuta and Melilla together, as they are part of a single borderland that separates Spain and Morocco, and share a number of significant features, the most important of which, I argue, is the types of relational dynamics that exist between the two groups that conform the majority of these societies, Muslims and Christians. Yet, the enclaves are 500 km distant from one another and direct connections between the two are only possible via a Moroccan road, which turns the contacts between Ceutíes and Melillenses occasional. Within Spain, the enclaves have the same legal status of *cuidades autónomas*, and have a similar socio-economic profile. Both cities are conformed by two groups, of 'Iberian' and 'North African' origins, respectively, perform the lowest in national economic indexes, are highly dependent from state support and have a weak production base. On the other hand, they also have certain differences worth mentioning: Ceuta is geographically much closer to Spain and Christian Ceutíes tend to have more relation with the Peninsula than Christian Melillenses. More relevant perhaps are their ethnolinguistic differences; in Ceuta the Muslim community is mainly of Arab origin, and in Melilla is both of Arab and Berber origin, with the latter conforming the majority.

In this article I content that religion, more than anything else, plays a key role in enunciating the tensions that exist between the groups of North-African and Iberian origin in Ceuta and Melilla. I content that Islam and Christianityⁱⁱ provide the main vehicles to articulate both rule and resistance to the processes of erasure/becoming apparent. I explain hereafter that this occurs because of the susceptibility of religion for being understood as something immutable, which implies a fixity that makes religionists feel unable to manoeuvre, negotiate and encounter their others; in this way, "*fluid categories of difference [become] fixed species of otherness*" (Silverstein, 2005). Although some attention has previously been drawn to issues of migration, identity and intergroup conflict in this borderland (e.g. Anderson, 2014; Bravo Nieto, 1996; Driessen 1992; Gold 2000; Gonzalez Enriquez, 2007; Meyer 2005; Planet Contreras 1998; Rosander 1991; Soto Bermant, 2015), the role specifically played by religion in articulating the existing animosity between Muslims and Christians has been seldom addressed. The article looks at religious dynamics in the conflict between the two groups. I first introduce the historical background that brings about the current circumstances; Second, I explore how religion is used as a currency to enact the conflictual exchanges between the groups by looking at how religion is being 'racialised'; Third, I look at the use of historical vocabulary and narratives to enunciate this antipathy; Fourth, I consider how the power differences between the two groups are expressed through a regime of (in)visibility in which Christians often attempt at erasing the visibility of their Muslim counterparts, finding resistances along the way; Finally, I look at the more recent development by which Islam is gaining visibility and the negative effect of this trend given that Muslims are often excluded from the making of these representations. Overall I explore how religion is used to express

social conflict in Ceuta and Melilla, and content that it is a language used to manifest the disputed character of the public identity of these unique borderland geographies.

Historical Background

Ceuta and Melilla are two north-African cities located on the Southern shores of the Gibraltar Strait. In both cases, the territories that surround the two cities are Morocco's, yet the two belong to Spain. This atypical spatial arrangement only make sense if understood as a "historical configuration" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997), the result of an often tense relational endeavour between the peoples on the two shores of the Western Mediterranean. The government of Morocco demands obtaining Ceuta and Melilla's sovereignty arguing that the enclaves are a remnant of Spain's colonial past in North Africa that must end, whereas Spain sustains that both ports have been integral part of first, Portugal, and then Spain, since the 15th century, moment in which the local populations were expelled and replaced with people from the Iberian Peninsula. 'Spaniards',ⁱⁱⁱ thus, argues Spain, have made the almost totality of the ports' population for five centuries and only in recent years the demographic appearance of the two cities has begun to change, progressively incorporating more inhabitants with North African origin. Ceuta and Melilla have recently become black-and-white borderlands in which there are two communities internally cohesive and with feeble or non-existent cross-communal interaction (Zartman, 2010). This otherwise unstable status quo is maintained, as Zartman argues, by and large, by enmity between the two power centres, in this case, Morocco and Spain.

Ceuta and Melilla nowadays share certain characteristics; however, the history of the two locations is not the same.^{iv} The Portuguese conquered Ceuta in 1415 and the enclave was finally transferred to Spain in 1640. The territories initially controlled by Spain, however, were smaller; Ceuta only reached its current size in 1860, after a long period of turmoil between Spain and the neighbouring Berber populations that aimed at regaining the territory.^v It is only then that the right to reside was given to Muslims for the first time under Spanish jurisdiction. In 1860, the first residence permits are given to Muslims. Melilla on its side was conquered by the Spanish in 1497 as part of the larger Christian project of *La Reconquista*. Unlike Ceuta, Melilla witnessed thereafter a significant number of attacks from the surrounding Berber populations, attested in the numerous treaties for the cessation of hostilities signed between the two sides between the 18th and the 20th centuries. The permanent settlement of people from the areas surrounding the ports was not allowed until the end of the 18th century, when the general veto was lifted and the registered population with Maghrebi origin gradually begun to increase. By 1950 they were the 8.2% of Melilla's population, and it has continued to grow; by 1965 those with North African background in Melilla were the 17'8% of the population.^{vi} Up to the mid-20th century, the ports, used by Spain in its colonial campaigns in North Africa had been mainly inhabited by army personnel and inmates, mostly coming from Spain's southern region of Andalusia. The hitherto scant Muslim population was up to then composed mainly by people who served in the Spanish Army,^{vii} but this profile changed after 1956, when Morocco gained independence.

This signified a turning point in which the frontier became a border between two nation-states, politically stablished and internationally recognised, in a process that paradoxically also turned the region into a much clearer 'zone of contact' between the two communities.

Since then, most of those Moroccans serving the Spanish Army ended their service and moved back to Morocco whereas an increasing number of economic migrants coming mainly from the former territories of the Spanish Protectorate in Northern Morocco moved and settled permanently in the ports. In 1985, and despite constituting a significant proportion of the population, residents with an Arab and/or Berber background (among whom many had been born and lived their entire lives in Ceuta or Melilla) had less rights than those with 'Iberian' origin, primarily because they were not Spanish citizens. From the 1980s onwards, Ceuta and Melilla became an uneven borderland that confronted an 'inferior' group (I borrow here Turner's terminology), with less rights and privileges, with a 'prestigious' one with higher status (1974, 232). By the mid-1980s, the issue of nationality represented well the imbalance; a survey conducted in 1986, estimated that out of the 15.002 'Muslim'^{viii} residents Ceuta had, only 2.379 were Spanish nationals (Rontomé Romero, 2012, 84), that is only the 16.4% of Ceuta's total Muslim population. In Melilla 'Muslim' holders of Spanish passport represented only the 17.5% (Planet Contreras, 1998). Tension surrounding the question of nationality begun to escalate, ending up in a change of attitude by the Spanish government by which by 1990, 5580 Muslim residents that could demonstrate they have permanently lived in Ceuta, and 5710 in Melilla obtained the citizenship.^{ix} This signified a turning point in the demographics of the enclaves and a noticeable change in the relations between the two communities. Nowadays, each of the groups represent half of the population, yet social and economic disparities continue to be notorious. 2020 is often assumed as the date in which Muslims will become majority. The conflict between the two groups is noticeable in their significant lack of interaction, Ceuta and Melilla are 'transitional zones' (Heifetz-Yahav in Newman, 2003, 19) in which communities despite living side by side resist hybridisation.

The racializing process

I would argue that in order to understand the dynamics of confrontation that exist between Muslims and Christians in Ceuta and Melilla, we need to look at how religion is used as the key signifier to express difference between the two groups, at the expense of other identity markers. According to social identity theory (e.g. Abrams and Hogg, 2016; Greenfield and Marks, 2007), identity markers are used to enunciate conflicts between groups, more often than economic and political factors, even when socio-economic disparities are acute. In particular, religion is frequently used to represent the confrontation, partly, it is argued, because it provides identity-supporting narratives that address certain human needs – including, a search for psychological order and stability- in a more comprehensively and forcefully way than other repositories of culture (Seul, 1999). I suggest that for religion to be used as a signifier of conflict needs to undergone a process of racialisation.

Racialisation refers in this context to the phenomenon of essentialisation, naturalization and/or biologisation of any feature of social personhood (in this case, religion) (Wodak et al, 1999, 180). Islam has been particularly prone to being racialized in European contexts, the category 'Muslim' seen as a result encompassing a combination of religious, cultural and racial meanings (Fernando, 2014), typically occurring in contexts in which immigration is perceived as problem of state policy and national cohesion. The migrant, cultural other is often presented as a threat (Silverstein, 2005, 364) and his/her 'culture' deemed as fix, void of accommodation and thus potentially problematic (366). This kind of perceived fixity is also manifested in Ceuta and Melilla, where Muslims see differences caused mainly by inequalities, that Christians often perceived as 'cultural'. The example of habitation illustrates

this. Both in Ceuta and Melilla, predominantly Muslim areas are placed away from the city centre, lacking often urban planning and basic infrastructure; Christian neighbourhoods are more centrally located, wealthier and better serviced. Yet, whereas Muslim interviewees blame the government for not placing the needed resources into the development of the Muslim *barrios*, Christians may invoke a ‘cultural/religious’ reading,

the Muslim population builds following a ‘Muslim tradition’ [my emphasis added] of narrow and irregular alleys and heterogeneous buildings, whereas the rest of Melilla follows a European urbanization (Miguel, August 2008).

In fact, the General Urban Planning Scheme of 1995 defined ‘Muslim Neighbourhoods’ as “[those] that adopt conditions typical of [the] Northern Maghreb, in which blocks are randomly ordained, without paved streets where cars can circulate.”^x

By appealing to cultural/religious differences, the government can be seen as feeling somehow exempted from its responsibility to cater for the infrastructural needs of deprived areas. Further, by blaming ‘culture/religion’ for the problem, the situation acquires an essentialized tone that renders it, immutable. This idea of irreconcilability between the two groups and its alleged ‘cultural/religious’ roots, is expressed by a Christian from Melilla who argues that

the shanty towns (lit. barrios de chabolas) look like some of the quarters of Tétouan and Al-Hoceima; the local government does not want Melilla to look like Morocco, this Muslim look of the city will be finished by moving them into modern flats. If they are Europeans they will have to live like Europeans (August 2008).

Racialization is also apparent in terms of labelling, as one may note, peripheral areas are referred to as ‘Muslim’, and not as ‘poor’ - or in any other of the multiple ways they could be called. This is something equally observable across Western Europe (e.g. Foner 2015; Eid and Karim, 2014). However, what seems to be peculiar of the Ceuti-Melillense case is that religion undergoes racialization also for the ‘dominant’ group. Thus, ‘Christian’, a term seldom used to refer to the majority in most of the rest of Spain, is a common identity marker in the enclaves. In here, the borderland’s porosity may partly explain the reason, since Spaniards and generally Europeans are sometimes called Christians by people in Morocco.

Yet, ‘Christian’ is also a term commonly used in Spain’s Southern region of Andalusia, where Rogozen-Soltar argues religious terminology is used to create a ‘religious atmosphere’, in which the Andalusians’ use of phrases that “*implicitly align Catholicism with normalcy, health and goodness [...] create something of an unintentional Catholicism ambience*” (2017, 14). Phrases such as “*I am not very catholic today*” used to mean ‘I am sick’, or “*there are no Muslims on the coast*” to mean ‘there is no danger’ are typical examples of this repertoire, that sometimes also adhere to the idea of Muslims being a threat. The fact that a Catholic identity has been central in the building of nationalism, after the mass expulsion of Jews and Muslims between the 15th and 17th centuries, is key to understand people’s stronger identification with it, specifically in southern Spain, where the geographical contact with a Muslim other is constant.^{xi} Albeit Muslim Iberia expanded at a certain periods to the Northern areas of the peninsula, it is Andalusia, Ceuta and Melilla that are more often associated with a Muslim past, the same places where the use of a ‘Christian’ terminology is the commonest.^{xii}

The result is that in Ceuta and Melilla, Christianity undergoes a similar degree of racialization than that experienced by Islam, affecting even people who do not see themselves as ‘religious’

we are Christians because we eat Christian food, go to the processions in Semana Santa [Holy Week] and baptise our children, but we do it to make our parents happy not because we believe in the things Catholics believe (August 2008).

These ‘non-believers’ accept and internalize their religiously-influenced familial culture as an ethno-racial distinction and identity, as it happens, for example to ‘secular’ or ‘cultural’ Jews and Muslims, in other societies.^{xiii}

This is partly related to the use of the religious label ‘Christian’ in relational terms, to basically mean ‘non-Muslim’. In that, we can see how, Christianity and Islam are ‘situational’ terms that map individuals and their position within the wider dynamics of Ceutí and Melillense society. Part of these dynamics can be explained as a result of a historical process because the “*process of racialization [of religion] is a process of attribution which has been unfolding historically, and continues to unfold*” (Meer, 2013, 5).

The racialization of religion can partly be read as a postcolonial by-product of Hispano-Moroccan colonial relations, particularly present in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, whose surroundings were part of the northern section the Spanish Protectorate (1921-1956), the country’s colonial territories in North Africa. In that, again, it resonates with a racializing trend of postcoloniality typical, for example, of French-Maghrebi relations, by connecting with discourses of national anxiety that present Muslims as *the “significant other”* (Triandafyllidou 2003) that adopt an archetypal culturalist discourse on Islam’s assumed incompatibility with ‘European values’ (e.g. Fernando, 2014; Hargreaves, 1995; Nielsen, 1999; Lamchichi, 2004; Silverstein 2005). As it is the case in France, the media plays a pivotal role in the postcolonial racializing of Islam, presenting it as a problem and as a ‘threat’, recurrently connected with issues of security.^{xiv} A young Muslim *Ceutí* complains, “*newspapers are often much more racist than people in the streets*”, she follows,

although we [Muslims] are half of the population most of the press is owned, sponsored and run by Christians [...] and [...] some journalists want to ignite hate, depicting our customs, our language, and ways of dressing as that of the extremists (August, 2015).

The deliberate connection of anything Muslim being cultural customs or language with terrorism is not a type of Islamophobia exclusive of (at least some among) the local press, but responds to the postcolonial pattern of reducing diversity to an archetype of a threatening other, a type of discourse some consider to be only on the rise.^{xv}

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Nevertheless, the use of the Muslim/Christian labels is a reminder of the historical circumstances that have shaped the interactions between the two groups, what means we are called to understand the Ceutí-Melillense case, not merely in terms of the current wave of postcolonial, Western European, anti-Muslim prejudice, but also, and quite remarkably to the specifically Spanish, and even more prominently Southern Spanish connotation that sees Moroccans and their descendants as

the one group most directly implicated in the question of Spanish identity in relationship to Africa. Through their characterization as ‘moors’, they [Moroccans and their descendants] are identified with the Arab and Berber Muslims who colonized the Iberian Peninsula in AD 711 and were responsible for its Arabization and Islamization in the Middle Ages (Flesler, 2008, 3).

An instance in which the historical shaping of current circumstances becomes apparent is in the use of a lexicon of Muslim-Christian conflict and of religious *Reconquista*. A letter published in Ceuta’s local newspaper *El Pueblo de Ceuta* on the 4th December 2015, à propos of the conclusion of a doctorate that analysed “*the conflicts between Christianity and Islam from the time of Ceuta’s conquest (1415) and Melilla’s (1497) until the present*”, shows the use of history in the current racialization of Islam, against the backdrop of Christian’s fear for the upcoming demographic shift - today, 3 of every 4 children in Melilla are born within Muslim families.^{xvi} “*The fights between Spain and Morocco for the two cities’ sovereignty*” the letter states, “*go beyond the political sphere because they are also religious*”,^{xvii} again the religious character is presented to suggest that the conflict is unsolvable and perpetual. A historical lexicon of Muslim-Christian conflict is used to refer to the current presence of Muslims in the cities, which in the letter appears as a religious *Reconquista*: “*coldly, Islam is on its way to reconquering both cities, not by using weapons, but demography*”^{xviii} and the mixing of ethnic and religious categories typical of the racialization of religion, soon follows to enunciate a more racist (rather than Islamophobe) tone,

Clearly speaking, this has happened due to three factors, the inefficacy of politicians in government that have allowed the settlement of Moroccans in both cities, the granting of residence and citizenship to those Moroccans and [due to the fertile] bellies of the women of the Muslim ethnic group^{xix}

Besides, it is worth noticing that the usage of a language that refers to something viewed as a historical fact and the letter’s supposedly ‘scientific’ purpose (giving account of the publication of a new doctoral study) makes possible to enunciate overtly racist comments by presenting them, not as ideologically inspired racial hate, but as presumably observable empirical and scientific facts. The letter is just one episode within a wide imaginary of the “*legend about the loss of Spain*” a line arguing apparent both in society and among conservative intellectual elites that depicts the complexities of an eight-hundred-year period of Muslim presence in terms of Christian owners (of Iberian territory) and Muslim usurpers (see Flesler, 2008).

On being/becoming visible

Some of the Ceutíes and Melillenses with whom I spoke framed the problem in terms of the unequal representation of the two communities across those spaces that constitute ‘the public’. The role of the media in developing this uneven visibility was pointed out by different people, both Muslims and Christians. A Muslim woman, for example said,

even among the well-intended press, check how many articles you find in places such as El Faro de Ceuta about Ramadan and our Eids and how many about las Romerías. The imbalance is outrageous! (August, 2015).

Islam is also less visible in the streets. Both Ceuta and Melilla are divided between a majority Christian centre and a majority Muslim periphery. Yet, whereas the centre is in both cases visibly Christian, the peripheries are sometimes less evidently Muslim from the outlook; ‘Muslim’ areas sometimes conserve symbols of its Christian past (e.g. the church of San Ildefonso at Ceuta’s Muslim quartier of El Principe, where all the residents are today Muslim).

By contrast, Catholicism is more visible. Central Ceuta, for example, is full of mosaics dedicated to the Virgin Mary and to Christ, as noted by Stallaert in her description of the city’s downtown: *“at the centre of the city one can see religious symbols [...] at night the sanctuary gets illuminated and one can regularly see people praying”* (1998, 151). The number of small chapels and the Cathedral itself adds to this Catholic ‘ambience’, similarly to what happens in other parts of Southern Spain, in places like Granada (e.g. see Rogozen-Soltar, 2017). This may, again, be connected to the borderland character of the region, like elsewhere, (e.g. Istanbul, Toledo and Cordoba) ‘conquered’ spaces display religious symbols of the ‘conquerors’ at the expense of those of the ‘conquered.’^{xx} In the enclaves, the historic symbols of Christianity speak of a past of settlement but also of today’s political dominance. Over time, as tensions between the two communities have escalated these religious symbols have become a central aspect on the debate over the identity of the place – who defines the public space and how? Churches and street altars cease then to be part of the field of a familiar, and perceived by the ‘dominant’ group as part of a peaceful, religiously homogeneous and immutable heritage, begin to generate a renewed visibility in the public arena and to awaken religious and political divisions. One must wonder when and what processes are involved in the acquiring of ‘physical presence’ of these religious icons, and *“how a symbol, or an object, which is to us so familiar as to have become imperceptible, becomes one day ‘visible’ [...]to the eyes of a public”* (Göle, 2010).^{xxi}

It is thus, important, to interrogate such processes by which Christianity, even if historically present, has found a reinvigorated appeal as a source of invoked locality and autochthony. In particular, it is quite telling to see how ‘Christianity’s visibility’, is sometimes understood as an active process of ‘Islam’s erasure’. In fact, Ceuta’s Cathedral seems to be one of these examples of contempt, being the Asunción Cathedral, built in 1686, a construction erected on the top of a mosque that dated back from the days of al-Andalus. Nonetheless, the pages of history, for what it seems, have not yet been turned, and thus, the Cathedral represents an antagonism that persists today: Salua mentions that the Cathedral was built on the top of a mosque to illustrate what she sees as the lack of religious tolerance endemic to Ceuta’s Christians – religion, again, it should be noted, is invoked for its capacity to make people attach perpetuity to certain attitudes (Ceuta, August 2015). Christians do not remain silent: a group of archaeologists (paid by the local government)^{xxii} have excavated the site seemingly having identified that the original mosque on the top of which the Cathedral was built, was actually constructed on its turn, on the top of a church from the sixth century (Arcila et. al., 2011, 396).

The attempts by the two groups of erasing the other’s presence are illustrative cases of a Latourian ‘regime of (in)visibility’. Although the geographical emplacement of the cities gives them already an (in)visible character in terms of its recognition within the wider national geographies of both Spain and Morocco, it is perhaps this liminal character that is

key to understand why group dynamics to exert visibility are so acute. Ceuta and Melilla are often left outside the national imagination of what is commonly seen as Spain and Morocco, yet, *within* the enclaves, another regime of (in)visibility operates, one in which a socially and politically more privileged Christian group extensively exerts the control on the visual appearance of the place, claiming the enclaves' identity. By claiming a Christian character, there seems to be an attempt to claim the enclaves belong to Spain, and not to Morocco. Muslims on their side, seem to have no interest in feeling identified with Morocco, but want to gain more visibility to define the identity of Ceuta and Melilla in more pluralistic terms. When Christians argue in favour of the historical weight of Christianity in the city, Muslims defend it is Christianity's intolerance what has historical continuity.

The regime is also reinforced by trends that are national and nationalistic. Soto Bermant argues that Melilla has and continues to be imagined (by non-Muslims) as a Spanish bastion under siege, reason why is filled with references to the military (2015, 455). During the four decades of Spain's dictatorship (1939-1975), Catholicism was used as a central symbol to forge an ethno-religious identity in support of Franco's nationalist agenda; there were two key institutions with the role to guaranteeing this liaison, the Army and the Catholic Church. The closeness between the two has evolved since 1975, yet there is still a connection between them, perhaps more clearly evidenced in places such as Ceuta and Melilla than in the rest of Spain. A military presence in the enclaves, due to its borderland character, is also accompanied to a whole range of military and religious expressions of patriotism. It is worth noticing the intertwining of the religious and the military in these enunciations of national pride, and that they are often exclusionary in nature,

military parades (there are several throughout the year), [...] and religious rituals and iconography (the Easter processions, the Mass for the Virgin of Victory and so forth) go hand in hand in public ceremonies that reaffirm the Spanish identity of the enclave and exclude the Muslim population (Soto Bermant, 2015, 456).

Issues of visibility for some cannot be renegotiated. For example, whereas a Christian woman questioned the display of military power, rendered it excessive, and argued "*it shall become a more diverse institution*", she was more reluctant to question the presence of Catholic symbolism and rituals as disproportionate (August 2015). Similarly, a Christian man suggested that the Easter processions "*are part of the 'culture' [my emphasis added] of the place*" thence, "*cannot be modified*" (August 2008). Religion is often used as a valid mechanism by which the groups can legitimately claim their antagonism and their lack of will to modify the types of relationships that exist between the groups. It is key in enunciating the regime of (in)visibility that celebrates Christianity at the expense of Islam, because, due its religious nature, is treated as sacrosanct, which means cannot be reformulated to make space for forms of visibility produced by 'the other'. The regime is nevertheless resisted and presents a variety of setbacks.

Resisting the regime

Muslims often complain about being 'left outside' (in Spanish, *nos dejan fuera*), of the city (living in the outskirts), of the economy (unemployment rates among Muslims are much

higher than among Christians), of public discourse (lower representation in the media) and so forth. Latour (2010) reminds us that regimes of (in)visibility are not displayed without interpellation. The marginal often refuses to be pushed away from the ‘central stage’. In Ceuta and Melilla, politics is a good illustration of the attempts the Muslim community make to become visible. Muslims first appeared in the political scene during the 1990s. Cases such as that of Ceuta’s first Muslim MP, Mustafa Mizzian Amar, whose political career took place between 1995 and 2007, represented an important step for the representation of Muslims in the political field. In the last decade, Muslim’s political presence has significantly improved in both cities;^{xxiii} in 2007, Fatima Hamed Hossein made the headlines as the first Muslim woman to be elected to the legal assembly of Ceuta. And I will use here her case as a vignette, to illustrate the selective use made of Islam as a racialized category.

When in 2007 Hamed appeared in Spain’s most widely read national newspaper El País, the newspaper published “*to the Assembly with the hijab, Fatima Hamed becomes the first Muslim woman to take office with an Islamic veil*” (El País, 17th June 2007).^{xxiv} No mention was made, as argued by Sarah (Ceuta, 2008), on, for example, her humble background, and on the fact that the lack of socio-economic conditions had made her election unlikely – since most politicians come from more privileged backgrounds. Instead, the stress was placed on the ‘religious’ symbol (i.e. the headscarf) she wore when she accepted taking office. Although Hamed has been a key spokesperson against the economic discrimination suffered by many Ceutíes, she is mainly referred in the press as a Muslim, and as a woman who wears a veil. More recently, we could see her (still, almost a decade after becoming known to the public) at the centre of the ‘hijab debates’, when a grassroots campaign against islamophobia specially directed towards Muslim women *#elhijabnoesradicalismo* (the hijab is not radicalism) was organised *à propos* of a public attack onto her in a local newspaper.

The case also illustrates that Islam seems to be rapidly gaining media momentum (more in line with what happens post-9/11 elsewhere), although the point made by Fatima about the much larger presence of Christianity in the media (something of a peculiarity within the wider European context) seems still valid. One may question with regards to visibility whether not only counts being seen, but how, why and whom makes Muslims appear more visible than ever before? Who write the pieces? And, how are Muslims portrayed in them? Mercedes suggested that Muslims in the press appear often as “*strangers, foreigners, migrants, and outsiders*”. She acknowledges that news about Muslims are more frequent now than they used to be. We may wonder how this affects the relationship between the two groups. She suggests that the growing visibility of Islam in the public sphere is creating a more divided position among Christians with regards to Muslims, particularly because of the association of Islam with terrorism, an issue to which I will refer later.

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The public visibility of Islam is becoming one of the main issues in which the confrontation between Muslims and Christians is expressed. Only in 2010, a Muslim festivity was for the first time included in the calendar of national holidays. Eid al-Adha, for Christians, *la Pascua musulmana* (lit. the Muslim Easter) marks a cornerstone in the history of Ceuta’s Muslim community. However, some within the Christian community question its celebration’s viability because every year is on a different day of the Gregorian calendar (something that applies to all Muslim festivities). A Christian (August, 2015) suggests that if the festivity in a certain year comes close to another one, the Muslim one is maintained at the expense of a

Christian one. One year, he explains, the *Asunción de la Virgen*, the day that celebrates the Assumption of the Virgin Mary became a working day, something unprecedented. In July 2016, Hamed was back at the centre of public debate and in the news when she proposed at the local parliament to declare Eid al-Fitr also an official festivity, and supported by several parties of the opposition, called for more parity in the ways in which the public calendar of holidays is designed; but the festivity that marks the end of the month of Ramadan is still a working day. For some Christians, the challenge of the *status quo* is perceived as ‘unprecedented’.

What is nevertheless recent is the demographic parity between the groups. This in itself brings about new forms of visibility for Muslims that are difficult to turn less visible by their others. Not only Muslims as actors contest this invisibility, the market also does its part. There are more shops selling halal food, which may respond to an increase in the economic status among Muslims, which means some Muslims now live in the traditionally predominant Christian areas, as noticed by Soto Bermant (2015). With the demographic balance rapidly shifting in favour of the Muslim group, it seems reasonable that big retailers also become increasingly more concerned with providing for the tastes of the growing Muslim market. In April 2016, various adverts across the city appeared announcing the arrival of Halal meat to Melilla’s Burger King. With a big picture of a double cheese burger, the ad read: “*At Burger King, we know what you like, Halal meat now available*”. Followed by the address of the famous chain food store in a central location of the city,^{xxv} but things like this that few years ago would have generated controversy are nowadays approached with more normalcy.

Overall, one might argue, that regardless of the results of these negotiations, with their gains and setbacks, their outcome in terms of visibility is undeniable. In fact, as is the case in other border regions, it is through political battles over the legality of certain practices as demanded by the discriminated group that appear to be effective ways in which the groups more successfully renegotiate their ‘visibility’, even if in many cases they do not fully acquire the rights they were asking for (e.g. Gray, Stea and Zech, 2010).

Islamisation and Moroccanization

Racism is both cause and consequence of the racialization of religion. The comments of a secondary school Christian pupil from Melilla show how discrimination against Muslims is sometimes reluctantly being considered racist: “*I am not a racist, because within the Muslim religion there is good and bad people as in within any other religion, but I believe these people [Muslims] will never lead you to do anything good, the majority of them.*”^{xxvi} In Ceuta, the local newspaper refuses to speak about ‘racism’ though discrimination is recognised

there really are two cities of Ceuta and the segregation is evident. We should stop speaking about racism because it is not a question of races, but of religions, which really are the key identity element between ones and others here (El Faro de Ceuta, 2014).^{xxvii}

Meer and Modood (2009) argue that Muslim minorities are subject to racism by virtue of their real or perceived ‘Muslimness’, something met with much less sympathy than the widely accepted notion that other minority groups in Europe can be the victims of racism. Besides,

they suggest that there is something specific about religion, and more prominently about Islam, that make this legitimization possible. They consider that while ethnic identities are welcomed in the public space, there is more unease about religious minorities because there is a perceived ‘choice’ involved in being from a particular identity, whereas there is none about being part of an ethnic group or a skin colour. They claim, there is an understanding of racism that assumes that

the protections afforded to racial minorities conventionally conceived as involuntarily constituted should not be extended to Muslims because theirs is a religious identity that is voluntarily chosen (Meer and Modood, 2009, 335).

This is something also clear in the enclaves where sometimes differences are made between the processes of Moroccanization (considered somehow ‘ethnic’, ‘cultural’, in Meer and Modood’s terms, involuntary) and of Islamization (i.e. religious). Some, like Pedro, use the pejorative ‘moor’ (*moro*) as synonym of Moroccan, and closely connect it with a religious identity: “*I do not go with the moors*” [to explain that despite living in Melilla he has never visited Morocco] “*these people, their religion and their things do not interest me*” (Melilla, August 2008). Yet, some, like Ceuta’s local historian Rontomé Romero, prefer to make a distinction between the cultural and the religious. In his view, Moroccanization and Islamization are not the same thing,

the Moroccanization of the city is not a likely scenario, but it is its Islamisation. We understand by Moroccanization the changing of the identity of the city to make it similar to that of Morocco, and by Islamisation the predominance [...] of Islam in the public sphere (El Faro de Ceuta, 2014).^{xxviii}

Local columnist José Luís Navazo also speaks about Moroccanization and Islamisation, considering the former an already ‘lost battle’, but yet, the latter a process on the making with far worse consequences:

the illegality of most mosques as well as of the supposed Qur’anic schools and[...] the spiral Islamization [occurring in] both cities”, and also he considers that “both cities are openly Moroccanized, but what is yet, worse, they are corsary-islamist cities safeguarded by the Spanish state (El pueblo de Ceuta, 2015).^{xxix}

The tone of Navazo’s articles, who is locally known for his incendiary discourse, is extreme and no longer accepted as normal. In fact, a local politician Abdelmalik Mohamed sued him in February 2017 as a result of an article he published few days before the local elections, which had an effect, the complainant argues, in the bad results his formation obtained in the election results, and he received wide support.

However, it is not only hardliners that use the dichotomy Moroccanization (tolerable) /Islamisation (problematic). By evoking ‘Islamisation as a problem’, Christians sometimes may feel more connected to a wider European narrative,

“we are as any other European society, we face the problems the rest of Europe faces with regard to Islam and [...] the threat of Islamisation of Europe [...] [the problem now] is not their eating of other foods or speaking of another language [i.e. Moroccanization] but their ‘Islamization’ [my emphasis added]” (Carlos, August 2015).

Whereas eating certain foods or speaking in certain languages was not something they considered so publicly apparent, the things Christians often deemed as part of the ‘Islamization’ agenda were mainly visually evident. It is the visibility that is considered problematic. For example, on the occasion of Eid al-Adha Muslims slaughtered sheep at home, 5000 of them is estimated where slaughtered in 2017, yet, two issues had been in this regard contentious, a) the traffic jams with cars coming from Morocco entering the border with sheep, (something that gave ‘Muslim visibility’ to the city), and b) the debates over Melilla municipality’s decision to allow sheep to be slaughtered in public facilities administered by the city council, thus, making the slaughtering visible to the public eye.

Discourses resonate with the claims made elsewhere about the ‘Islamization of space’, in which non-Muslim residents understand the opening of mosques or prayer rooms as the redefining of ‘old’ space with ‘new’ Islamic meanings (e.g. Cesari 2005; Allievi 2009) and see in the creation of these religious spaces, an ‘Islamization’ trend, understood to be “*an ever-expanding Islamic threat*” (Baker, 2017, 1) to the local (read, European) way of life (e.g. Baker, 2017; Eade 1996; McLoughlin 2005). This reading of the ‘mosque conflict’ as a threat is also present in the enclaves. Melilla’s Hamza mosque is one of these cases, in which the premises of a local community were transformed into a mosque and locals accuse the users of “*running a sect*”, “*doing wrong things*” and “*being fundamentalists*”.^{xxx} Although Melilla has sixteen mosques, Muslim respondents claimed the number is insufficient. The Tesorillo mosque in Melilla is one of the facilities that has not enough space for the amount of people it gathers every Friday. I am told that tens of peoples are every week left outside, praying in the streets due to the lack of space, but proposals for the building of new mosques are contentious, especially after 2008, in times of economic crises, when the public purse is significantly tight.

Moroccanization can be viewed as perpetual even, “*from time immemorial*” (lit. *de toda la vida*), but ‘Islamisation’ is regarded as recent. In Spain three of every four detainees for terrorism-related causes live in Ceuta or Melilla. Jihadism is what they are asked about when they speak with people from the Peninsula, it is what they expected me to ask them about. The growing presence of jihadism is recognised as problematic both by Muslims and Christians. Muslims, however, never spoke of jihadism in terms of ‘Islamization’, although they also presented jihadism as something new, culturally alien and that brings about its own visibility, “*these attires [the ones worn by Jihadis] are alien to the culture of northern Morocco from where most of the Muslim community in Ceuta comes from*” and “*although Christians always say jihadism is a Muslim problem, a lot of the girls that wear these clothes are actually Christians who have converted [to Islam]*” (September, 2014); ‘Islamization’, by contrast was the term used by a Ceutí respondent to define “*the growing popularity of the bearded ones (los barbudos)*”. The term ‘Islamisation’ appeared recurrently in my conversation with Christians, yet not even once when I talked to Muslims. I argue therefore that Christians deem Islamisation as problematic because it refers to a greater *visibility* of the Muslim community.

Ceuta’s neighbourhood of El Principe, illustrates the tensions surrounding issues of visibility. Christians seldom visit El Principe, a young Christian girl admitted in 2014 she had never been there, despite receiving media attention after a number of detentions have been made of people on their return from Syria. By contrast, a local resident complains they “*often feel*

abandoned by the authorities”; the fact that most streets are unpaved and narrow is, in his view, the authorities’ ‘excuse’ for the lack of police surveillance they have experienced during years. These anxieties are reflected in a Spanish Action TV series that narrates the love story between a Christian man and a Muslim woman, “*fiction, this is all fiction, these things do not happen in real life!*”, amidst a plot of police corruption and international terrorism. Reappropriation is what defines best the situation. The series popularly referred to as ‘our Homeland’ (in reference to the American series) has a crew of only Christian actors: “*the only real Muslim in the series is the girl, who happens to be from Lebanon! [in reality she is of Libyan-Tunisian ancestry]*” (August, 2015). Indeed, everybody else, from the scriptwriters, to the producers and the actors and actresses happens to have a Spanish sounding name, yet it is thanks to them that the Spanish public have come to know about the existence of this place. As paradoxical as it may seem, a Moroccan friend has told me, the series is also widely watched in Northern Morocco.

Concluding Remarks

In Ceuta and Melilla religion has proven to be a useful signifier to express the undergoing social conflict between the two main existing groups, Muslims and Christians. The article evidences that religion, is a category with capacity for being essentialized, approached as immutable, which means people can use it to legitimise conflicts that otherwise would be urged to try to solve. Because their disputes are considered to be ‘religious’, Muslims and Christians, especially Christians, are excused for not trying to meet their others. Religion is deemed as devoid of potential encounter, renegotiation, and dialogue.

These conflicts expressed with the languages and symbols depleted by religion, are clear illustrations of a Latourian ‘regime of (in)visibility.’ The borderland character of the enclaves plays a significant role in the regime, as Ceuta and Melilla appear as liminal in the national imaginations of both Spain and Morocco, yet *within* the enclaves, exerting a Christian visibility is a way of trying to enunciate their Spanish character. Muslims, by reclaiming their own visibility do not try to imply the enclaves should be Moroccan, but simply more plural. Islam is gaining visibility at a rapid pace. However, this does not always imply a more equal distribution of power, primarily because a good number of the attempts to make Islam more visible come from the Christian group, enunciated in the very same terms of discrimination that the prior invisibility imposed. For Christians, the post-9/11 security era has brought about the possibility to express their animosity in terms that are not only local but recognisable in a wider European context, and Muslim visibility is partially being appropriated by making use of these global narratives of anti-Muslim rhetoric.

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ⁱ All the direct quotations included in the article are the extracted from my notes taken in the field, and are my own translation from Spanish. I have followed the ethical guidelines

produced by the UK Association of Social Anthropologists (2011), which means I have received oral consent from informants to participate in the study and a commitment to preserve their identities, reason why the names of the respondents have been replaced for anonymity's sake.

ⁱⁱ The article only takes into consideration the relations between Muslims and Christians, which together constitute the vast majority of the population, although, it should be said that there also exist three other religious groups. These communities, with a much more reduced presence, are: Sephardic Jews, Hindus, Baha'is and non-Catholic Christians (i.e. evangelical Christians and Jehovah witnesses). The analysis of religious interactions between all the groups is a fascinating topic that deserves further attention, but goes beyond the scope of this study. A detailed study of Ceuta and Melilla's religious landscape, including also the minority groups, can be found in Briones, Tarrés y Salguero (2013).

ⁱⁱⁱ The populations had Iberian origin, but since they were pre-modern were not Spaniards in the modern sense of the term.

^{iv} For a good historical introduction on Ceuta's Muslim population see Tarrés (2013). An in-depth analysis of the historical development of the city has been provided by Gozalbes Cravioto and Vilar, whose works on Medieval Ceuta are particularly relevant, see Gozalbes Cravioto (1995) and Vilar (2003).

^v Spain finally reached an agreement with the Berbers in the 1860 Treaty of Tétouan, a political move that was met with animosity by the Spanish public opinion at the time, as observed by Remacha (1994, 207-208).

^{vi} The CIS of 2012 estimates that 35.5% of Melilla's population of 83762, was Muslim, a number that only considers those that hold Spanish citizenship, there is additionally to be counted the number of Muslim residents and the roughly 30.000 Moroccans that cross daily the border to work in Melilla and return to Morocco at night.

^{vii} *La Guardia «Mora»* was a military unit whose soldiers were Moroccan and that worked as a personal guard of Franco during Spain's Civil War and the first years of the Francoist regime. For more information, see Cardona (2008).

^{viii} They were registered as 'Muslim'; the divide between the two communities is so wide that the term Muslim implies Moroccan origin, being sometimes considered being 'Spanish' and 'Muslim' at the same time an oxymoron. This is a conception that largely prevails among the older generation within the 'Christian' population.

^{ix} A detailed account of the fight for recognition is given by Gold (2000, 91-120).

^x My own translation from Spanish, see the original in http://www.melilla.es/melillaportal/RecursosWeb/DOCUMENTOS/1/0_11970_1.pdf, last accessed on the 3rd October 2015. On the process of urbanization of Melilla, see Saro Garandillas (1985).

^{xi} Some good studies on the uses and misuses of a Muslim heritage in building notions of the nation in Spain and Portugal can be found in the volume edited by Hertel (2016).

^{xii} A good background on issues of Islamophobia in Andalusia is provided by Dietz (2004).

^{xiii} The category of the secular Muslim and the secular Jew posit important questions to the debate on whether Islam and Judaism has been religiously or ethnically defined. For two interesting cases on the makings of secular Muslim subjectivities and its visibility in France's public sphere, see Mas (2006). A discussion on the ethnic and religious nature of Judaism, see Webber (1997).

^{xiv} A good assessment of the role played by French media in the demonization of Islam is Deltombe (2007).

^{xv} See for example the cases presented in Morgan and Poynting's edited volume (2016).

^{xvi} It is forbidden in Spain the collection of data on the basis of religion or ethnicity, yet, this is an estimate given by the Instituto Elcano that has caused uproar among Melillense

Christians, as evidenced for example in this article: <http://www.alertadigital.com/2016/12/05/el-75-por-ciento-de-los-nacimientos-en-melilla-y-son-musulmanes-el-sabado-nacieron-15-marroquies-y-un-solo-espanol/>, last accessed on the 4th July 2017.

xvii <http://www.elpueblodeceuta.com/201512/20151204/201512048201.htm>, my own translation from Spanish, last retrieved on the 14th June 2017.

xviii *idem*

xix *idem*

xx An interesting article analyzing the case of conversion of mosques into churches in medieval Spain is Harris (1997).

xxi See <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/01/13/mute-symbols/>, latest retrieved on the 1st November 2015.

xxii In trying to tone down the already very polemic character of the program, the excavation counts with a mixed team of archeologists both from Spain and Morocco.

xxiii The analysis of Muslim political parties and the role they occupy in Muslim-Christian relations is a fascinating topic that deserves further scholarly attention, yet it falls beyond the scope of this paper. An introduction to the Muslim political scene in Ceuta and Melilla is provided by Tarrés (2013) and Salguero (2013).

xxiv “A la Asamblea con el 'hiyab'; Fátima Hamed se convierte en la primera musulmana que toma posesión como diputada de Ceuta tocada con el velo islámico”, available at http://elpais.com/diario/2007/06/17/espana/1182031209_850215.html, last accessed on the 21st June 2017.

xxv available online at: <https://www.facebook.com/129609950550399/photos/pb.129609950550399.-2207520000.1462917444./577999262378130/?type=3&theater>, last accessed on the 4th July 2017.

xxvi My own translation, see, <http://www.sociedaduytopia.es/index.php/resenas/resenas-publicadas/article/192-musulmanes-y-cristianos-conviviendo-juntos-asi-sienten-los-escolares-de-ceuta-y-melilla>, last retrieved on the 30th October 2015.

xxvii My own translation, see, <http://elfarodigital.es/ceuta/sociedad/112412-la-convivencia-ceuti-se-sustenta-en-el-interes-por-mantener-el-statu-quo-actual.html#sthash.WtDwJHJB.dpuf>, last retrieved on the 30th October 2015.

xxviii Declarations made to a local newspaper a propos of the publication of his book (Rontomé Romero, 2012). See: <http://elfarodigital.es/ceuta/sociedad/112412-la-convivencia-ceuti-se-sustenta-en-el-interes-por-mantener-el-statu-quo-actual.html#sthash.WtDwJHJB.dpuf>, last accessed on the 16th September 2015.

xxix <http://www.elpueblodeceuta.com/201504/20150423/201504238109.html> last accessed on the 16th September 2015.

xxx See el Faro de Melilla, <http://elfarodemelilla.es/2016/11/15/la-batalla-la-mezquita-hamza/>, last accessed the 3rd July 2017.