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# Monstrous Muslims? Depicting Muslims in French Illuminated Manuscripts from 1200-1420

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# Monstrous Muslims? Depicting Muslims in French Illuminated Manuscripts from 1200-1420

## **Abstract**

This paper examines depictions of Muslims in illuminated manuscripts produced in France between 1200-1420 that feature images of Christian-Muslim interactions. The study specifically looks at three popular manuscripts from the time: the *Histoire d'Outremer*, the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, and the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose*. By examining the depictions of Saracens in these three manuscripts I attempt to gain an understanding of the artists' perceptions of Muslims. I argue that through analyzing the topoi employed by these artists we can understand how they and their audiences viewed Muslims. These images demonstrate that these artists understood Saracens to be very different from themselves but could also recognize admirable qualities and see similarities to them. This implies a nuanced understanding of Muslims that comes out in many of the depictions of Christian-Muslim interactions shown in these manuscripts.

## **Keywords**

Muslims, Illuminated Manuscripts, Saracens, France, Gothic Art, Alterity

## **Subject Categories**

Medieval History

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Depicting Muslims in French Illuminated Manuscript Art from

1200-1420

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## Introduction

### **Introduction**

In the eighth century the Christian writer John of Damascus (A.D. 675-749) explained to his readers in *A Disputation Between a Saracen and a Christian*, that the followers of the law of Mohammad called themselves “Saracens,” because they were claiming to be the sons of Sarah, Abraham’s legitimate wife. His Christian audience would have known that the Muslims were lying about this. For they were the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Sarah’s slave Hagar, who had been cast out after Abraham’s legitimate son Isaac was born.<sup>1</sup> Of course it was John of Damascus who was mistaken for the Muslims would have proudly attested that they were the sons of Ishmael. The false etymology that John of Damascus wrote of would be propagated for hundreds of years and was even used by Charlemagne’s biographer Einhard.<sup>2</sup> For centuries after becoming aware of Islam, western Christians grappled with this strange race and attempted to understand it.

There was no single European response to Islam, or to Muslims, during the Middle Ages. Rather, in different places and at various times Christian writers put forth a number of theories about this people that both fascinated and terrified them. At times writers such as Peter of Cluny defined Saracens as heretics, who had been deceived by Muhammad to follow a perverse form of the Abrahamic religions.<sup>3</sup> Western writers put Saracens into the mold of pagans in order to fit them into the tradition of Christians

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<sup>1</sup> John Victor Tolan. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 51-53.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas F. X. Noble. *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: The Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009. 132.

<sup>3</sup> John Victor Tolan. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. 158-159.

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combating pagan enemies. In fact they were thought to be polytheists who worshipped a kind of dark trinity that included Muhammad and the Greek god Apollo, often through the veneration of idols.<sup>4</sup> This is ironic of course, as Muslims have often considered Christians themselves to be polytheists because of their devotion to the Holy Trinity. Muslims were vilified in the *Chansons de Geste* such as the *Chanson de Roland*, where the titular hero remarked, “Christians are right, Pagans are wrong.”<sup>5</sup> Edward Said noted in his seminal work *Orientalism* that for Medieval European writers Islam represented, “terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians... a lasting trauma.”<sup>6</sup> The term Saracen was usually applied to Muslims, as John of Damascus’ etymology indicates, although some authors have noted that it could be applied to other non-Christian groups. For my purposes I will use the two terms interchangeably, but will also examine some instances where these other non-Christians were considered to be like Muslims. Saracens were depicted as alien and foreign in countless ways throughout the Middle Ages, but this was hardly the only depiction of them.

In his article, “On Saracen Enjoyment,” Jeffrey Jerome Cohen noted that Saracens both frightened and captivated Western audiences because of their otherness.<sup>7</sup> Many other scholars who study the Western understanding of Muslims have examined this interest in the exotic and fascination with the foreign. Elements of this depiction of

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Camille. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 147-148.

<sup>5</sup> C. K. Scott-Moncrieff, trans. *The Song of Roland*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959. Accessed April 04, 2015.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/391/pg391.html>. Line 1015.

<sup>6</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. 59.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. "On Saracen Enjoyment." In *Medieval Identity Machines*, 188-221. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 188-189. 113-46. doi:10.1215/10829636-31-1-113. 218.

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Muslims can be seen in their representation in the art of illuminated manuscripts. The artists of these works depicted Saracens in certain ways that can be examined to reveal how they perceived Muslims during the period. For all the polemical views of Muslims expressed by Western Christians, there were still occasions where the good qualities of Muslims could be acknowledged, and even admired. Fictional Saracen knights sprang to life in the pages of Romance such as the *Chansons de Geste*, in the company of legends such as Charlemagne and Arthur.<sup>8</sup> These fictional figures could be seen as symbols of knightly virtue even if they had once been wicked Saracens. Indeed as historian John Tolan noted in his article “Mirror of Chivalry: Salah Al-Din in the Medieval European Imagination,” even the frightful figure of Saladin, Sultan of Egypt (1137/8-1193) could be held up and admired as a model of virtue.<sup>9</sup> Although these are the exceptions rather than the rule, these examples of palatable Saracens still present an intriguing aberration from the typical representations of Muslims. If Muslims could be a source of fascination and terror for Christians in Western Europe, how might they be depicted in illuminated manuscripts from the period?

This study will examine manuscripts from France that were created between 1200-1420 to attempt to identify the patterns in depicting Muslims in manuscript art and how this can inform modern scholars about their understanding of Muslims through the ways that they chose to depict them. The period in question was selected for two reasons. First, a great deal of manuscripts produced at the time depicted Saracens and several

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<sup>8</sup> Siobhain Bly Calkin. *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 59.

<sup>9</sup> John V. Tolan. "Mirror of Chivalry: Salah Al-Din in the Medieval European Imagination." Edited by David R. Blanks. In *Images of the Other: Europe and the Muslim World before 1700*, 7-39. Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 1997. 86-87.

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popular manuscripts from the time addressed Christian-Muslim interactions. Second, throughout this period there was a pronounced interest in crusading to replicate the glorious victories of the past. This was often expressed through manuscript illuminations, particularly for those manuscripts that were produced under royal patronage. The study concludes in 1420 because the copies of the manuscripts produced after this date differ starkly from the previous manuscripts and rely upon different topoi to picture Saracens. In these later manuscripts western figures are increasingly depicted with oriental costume such as turbans. At this time the depiction of eastern figures began to develop and change to accommodate more nuanced understandings of eastern culture. The fascination with the exotic evolved, and it became more fashionable and desirable to western audiences.<sup>10</sup> Rather than attempt to document a further development in the depiction of Muslims I have chosen to limit myself to the previous period in order to engage in a more thorough study. This study examines three manuscripts produced in this 220 year period and analyzes the ways that they depicted Muslims.

The manuscripts selected for this study are 12 copies of the *Histoire d'Outremer* of William of Tyre, 12 copies of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, and 9 copies of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose*. These manuscripts were produced in France, largely in and around Paris. In the late Middle Ages the center of illuminated manuscript production was France, specifically the city of Paris.<sup>11</sup> It was because of this that the writer Dante Alighieri wrote in his *Purgatorio* that manuscript illumination was a

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<sup>10</sup> Kubiski, Joyce. "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cité Des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)." *Gesta* 40, no. 2 (January 01, 2001): 161-80. Accessed April 03, 2015. 172-176.

<sup>11</sup> Snyder, James, Henry Luttikhuisen, Dorothy Verkerk, and James Snyder. *Snyder's Medieval Art*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006. 367.

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Parisian art.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries many books were created in France that have been studied extensively by art historians for their depictions of Saracens. This was largely due to an interest in crusading that had been inspired by the successes of Louis IX and many manuscripts were produced that emphasized combat with the Muslims as a theme. In fact one copy of the Romance of Alexander has been described as a “recruiting poster” for crusading efforts.<sup>13</sup> For these reasons I chose to examine manuscripts from France and selected three popular manuscripts from the period for this study

The first two manuscripts, the *Histoire d’Outremer* and the *Grandes Chroniques de France* are chronicles that relate accounts of armed conflicts with Muslims. Although these manuscripts sometimes include sensationalized conflicts between Christians and Muslims, they are for the most part grounded in historical events. They feature accounts of Crusaders combating Muslims for control of the Holy Land and depict the conflict between the Christian and Islamic faith through battle. For this reason they include rich accounts of various battles such as the Battle of Jerusalem in 1099 during the First Crusade.<sup>14</sup> They also feature remarkable Christian heroes such as Godfrey de Bouillon (1060-1100) and the valiant kings of France such as Charlemagne (748-814) and Louis IX (1214-1270). The illustrated copies of these manuscript abound with images of battles and sieges, many of which feature images of Saracens whose alterity is emphasized through iconographic indications such as skin color and clothing. However each

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<sup>12</sup> Dante, *Purgatorio*. XI. 81.

<sup>13</sup> Cruse, Mark. "Costuming the Past: Heraldry in Illustrations of the "Roman D'Alexandre" (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264)." *Gesta* 45, no. 1 (January 01, 2006): 43-59. 54.

<sup>14</sup> William of Tyre. *History of Outremer. 1300-1325*. MS BNF FR 2824, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Northern France. F. 45.



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manuscript includes a Saracen figure who seems to transcend the standard characterization of his race: Saladin in the *Histoire d'Outremer* and Ferragut in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. These two chronicles provide valuable insight into the depiction of Saracens in these manuscripts through the artists' depictions of Muslims.

The final text examined for this study is the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose*, a romance that offers a different look at the topoi used to depict Muslims. Although Muslims themselves are scarce in these manuscripts, the romance deals with Alexander's many encounters with the foreign world of the east. Dating back to Classical times the east had fascinated western Europeans, and Alexander's adventures abroad include meetings with strange and fascinating race, monstrous and human.<sup>15</sup> In some richly illuminated copies of this romance Alexander's exploits and conquests are depicted in a world that is altogether foreign for their audiences. His adventures were often compared to those of the Crusades, as well as to travelogues and stories of the wonders of the East.<sup>16</sup> Frequently these manuscripts also included accounts of Crusader chronicles and stories such as Marco Polo's exploits abroad. The encounters with foreign races, as well as monstrous races such as Cyclopes, providing examples of how other races were viewed and how the depiction of Saracens played a part in the artists' depictions of these.

I owe my examination of various kinds of Saracen iconography to several scholars who have done similar research in the past and identified some of the ways that artists depicted Muslims to represent them as "the other." Perhaps the most important is art historian Ruth Melinkoff, whose remarkable study *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in*

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<sup>15</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003. 184-186.

<sup>16</sup> Cruse, Mark. *Illuminating the Roman D'Alexandre: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264: The Manuscript as Monument*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011. 175.

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*Northern European Art of the Middle Ages* has been integral in all subsequent discussions of identifying alterity.<sup>17</sup> This book is an invaluable tool for understanding how European artists used certain physical traits to depict marginalized groups in Medieval art. Her work establishes the pejorative nature of traits such as skin color, as well as the implications of sartorial signs such as headgear that clearly delineated one figure from another in European art. Another remarkably important scholar is art historian Deborah H. Strickland, whose book *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*, was at least partially the inspiration for this study. Her work discusses the relationship between physical ugliness and deformation and moral impurity.<sup>18</sup> Similarly English Professor Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's work regarding Christian understanding of race, particularly Saracen race, through art and literature from the time was fundamental to my thinking. These scholars examine the Medieval artists' means of depicting Muslims and relied upon elements of the topoi that differentiated them from Christians. Although I of course consulted the work of other scholars, these three proved to be the most helpful for modeling my methodology to examine the images.

My practice was to examine each image to attempt to identify both how Saracens were depicted by the artists, as well as how the images represented the views that Christians held towards Saracens. For this reason I paid particular attention to images where the artist had clearly attempted to show differences between the Muslims and Christians. I specifically examined the elements of the topoi that were used to depict Saracens and specifically those that were used to depict them as different from Christians.

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<sup>17</sup> Ruth Melinkoff. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. 17-20.

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Some of these carried inherent moral judgments, such as dark skin or particularly gruesome visages, but others were noted simply because of the contrast that they created between Christians and Saracens who were depicted. Often sartorial characteristics such as turbans or other elements of eastern costume were essential to this. Although depicting figures with turbans did not necessarily mean that they were evil, it created a distinct difference between the “normal” Christians that could produced fright. As Melinkoff noted in her book this difference induced, “The fear of the unknown oriental or, for that matter, of any uncommon person whose mores and beliefs differed from the Christian majority’s.”<sup>19</sup> This discomfort with individuals who were radically different in appearance has been a major component in my research into these images.

Now it stands to reason, logically, that if medieval artists were attempting to highlight the alterity of Muslims by depicting them as physically or sartorially different from Christians then the inverse must be true as well. My study also focused on the depictions of Muslims where the artists depicted them as identical or similar to the Christian figures in the manuscripts. This is a slightly more complex subject, as the depictions of Saracens are not always consistent throughout individual manuscripts that sometimes represent them as western figures and sometimes as eastern figures. Nonetheless I have, for the most part, interpreted these images to be indicative of attempts to acknowledge similarities between the Christians and Muslims and even admirable aspects of Saracens. This appreciation for the similarities in the artists’ depiction of Muslims and other foreign races was noted in one scholar’s work regarding the depiction of the Mongol khans in the manuscript Royal MS 19 D I, an illustrated copy

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<sup>19</sup> Ruth Melinkoff. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. 63.

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of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose*. Although the khans were sometimes depicted with dark skin and turbans, they were just as frequently depicted as western kings with fair skin and regal attire. This was interpreted as a recognition that the foreign ruler could be acknowledged and embraced for behavior that was befitting a Christian king.<sup>20</sup> Similarly I attempt to discuss the same pattern in artists' depictions of Muslim figures who received particular acclaim or respect in the sources and manuscript art and to analyze what this implied about western perceptions of Muslims.

Through this study I hope to understand the representations of Muslims in these illuminated manuscripts, to gain insight into how the artists chose to depict them and what this depiction meant for their understanding of Saracens. The manuscripts that I selected are from a period of abundant manuscript production that created a wide variety of images featuring the Muslim-Christian interaction. I will examine these images from the 33 manuscripts in this study to identify patterns in the depictions of Muslims from 1200-1420. Furthermore using the methods described above practiced by art historians such as Melinkoff and Strickland I will analyze the depictions of Muslims that emphasize their status as the "other," and those that emphasize their sameness. Through these images I will attempt to gain an understanding of the artists' perceptions of Muslims expressed in the three manuscripts in this study.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 202-203.

## Chapter Two: The *Histoire d'Outremer*

### **Chapter One: Historiography**

Many scholars throughout history have studied the depictions of Muslims and “the other” in medieval art and manuscript art. Historians and other writers have conducted a number of studies to understand how illuminators and other artists represented them as monstrous figures that were rejected by Christian audiences. Often these scholars focus on the elements of topoi that artists used to depict Saracens and why the artists employed these characteristics and how they came to be associated with Muslims. These iconographical elements of Saracens often focused on the importance of race as a means of understanding Saracens. Other scholars examine how the depictions of Saracens reflect the perceptions of them in the minds of Medieval artists and audiences, often building upon the work of scholars such as Edward Said to understand the fear and fascination with which Christians viewed Muslims. The final section of art historians and historians whom I address discuss different aspects of the foreign world and how these were connected to Saracens through images from the period. The work of these scholars helped me to identify the proper questions, and the work that they did regarding the same issues helped to guide my own research.

#### Dark Skin

One incredibly important historian who wrote about understanding depictions of foreigners and other marginalized figures in the Middle Ages is Ruth Melinkoff, whose two volume work *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in the Middle Ages* has been remarkably influential. She examines Flemish, German, Dutch, English, and French late medieval

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manuscripts to identify signs used to belittle populations on the outskirts of society.<sup>21</sup>

Although her book focuses primarily on Jews and peasants, she does acknowledge how these images cross over to Muslim figures as well. Almost no writer discussing the depiction of otherness in the Middle Ages neglects to include a citation to this seminal work. Her book shows a variety of different markers of identity used by medieval artists to indicate that a figure belonged to a certain group or possessed certain characteristics. These range from physical traits, such as red hair or bulbous noses, to objects or articles of clothing such as turbans that help to provide a context for the viewer.<sup>22</sup> She also acknowledges the importance of different kinds of headdress for identifying characters in Illuminated manuscripts. In the context of depictions of Muslims, she is mostly cited for demonstrating the association of dark skin with moral corruption.<sup>23</sup> It establishes a kind of alterity in the images of Muslims through these two different traits that were common before 1400. Her book identifies these traits and examines how artists used them in their work to “deprecate those people whom society detested and belittled.”<sup>24</sup> Melinkoff’s work is an invaluable tool for helping to understand the context of images from the Middle Ages.

Another important text that discusses the iconography of Medieval images and the history of depicting Muslims is Michael Camille’s *Mirror in Parchment*. His book is a close examination of the many images that make up the representations and the margins of the fourteenth century English manuscript the Luttrell Psalter. Although the book has

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<sup>21</sup> Ruth Melinkoff. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. LV-LVII.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 126.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 229.

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a wider scope, Camille focuses a chapter upon the images that are clearly attempting to depict figures from the Arab world and figures that are clearly shown as being outside of social norms and are clearly “others.” He examines the depiction of these figures, looking specifically at some of the characteristics that define and identify them. Dark skin, or more accurately a deviation from expected skin color, is shown to be a sign of how the other is depicted.<sup>25</sup> He also focuses upon the use of clothing, weapons, and other notable characteristics for identifying the other. Similarly he examines a kind of turban-like headdress, with a four-pronged tail extending out from it, shown on an example of an Arabic man. This man from Tyre wears this headdress, but it is also associated with other figures in the text that are clearly deceitful.<sup>26</sup> Camille looks specifically at these kinds of iconographical similarities between the Muslims, but he also extends this comparison to other kinds of “other” in the text. He draws comparisons to the Scots, whom he argues are linked in the Medieval European mind. He goes further however to show a similarity between the two in a pair of iconographical similarities. These are the physical trait of beards, which is shared between Scots and Saracens in their representations. The other trait that connects the two is the round shields and curved swords that were traditionally associated with Saracens and are also incorporated into Scottish figures in the Luttrell Psalter.<sup>27</sup> Camille’s chapter on Saracens demonstrates how skin color and other similar signs of alterity were common to depictions of Saracens and other marginalized figures in the Luttrell Psalter.

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Camille. *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.282

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 278.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 287-291.

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One important writer who has discussed the issue of the depiction of Muslims in Illuminated manuscripts is Deborah H. Strickland, who examined the subject in her book *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. This important work discusses the depiction of non-Christians and monsters in illuminated manuscript art. Although she examines other kinds of art such as paintings and stained glass she gives particular attention to manuscript art from the 11<sup>th</sup> to early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>28</sup> Her study is focused upon Northern Europe, largely France and England, and encompasses the Middle Ages up to the Renaissance. Throughout the book she discusses these groups, specifically: Demons, Ethiopians, Jews, Muslims, and Mongols. The depictions of these different groups, she argues, is connected to the depiction of monsters and monstrous races in that their moral and spiritual failings were expressed through their ugliness.<sup>29</sup> She points to certain physical characteristics such as dark skin and monstrous or deformed features, which are common to both Muslims and monsters.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore she argues that this expression of otherness through physical characterizations was also grounded in a classical understanding of race and barbarity.<sup>31</sup> However she acknowledges that the depictions of monsters could be positive as well as negative, and points to examples of figures like the wild man who could be viewed in admirable contexts.<sup>32</sup> Strickland's book examines the nature of monstrous depictions of Saracens and other groups to shed some light on how Muslims were viewed in the late Middle Ages.

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<sup>28</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003. 9-13.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 254-255.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 182-184.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 37-44.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 247-250.



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Historian Nadia Altschul has done some excellent work discussing the characterization of Muslims in illuminated manuscripts in her article *Saracens and Romance in Roman de la Rose Iconography*. As the title might suggest, she examines the depiction of the Saracen figure Dangier in the *Roman de la Rose*, a popular manuscript and romance from the Middle Ages, specifically the copy held by the Bodleian Library at Oxford from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the text Dangier is depicted as something of a brute at times, although he does have redeeming moments. In the manuscript that she examines, the characterization of Dangier in the scene is reflected in the way that the artist illustrates the Saracen figure. The portrayal of Dangier is fluid and sometimes emphasizes his admirable qualities with western characterizations, and his poorer qualities with a Saracen depiction.<sup>33</sup> The trait that the author focuses on most specifically is that of skin color, which varies among the different portrayals of Dangier. Although the variation in skin color is somewhat subtler than other depictions of foreigners, there is still a perceptible difference in the physical traits.<sup>34</sup> However she notes that there is a more obvious depiction of a stereotypical black figure, an African warrior who stands out prominently in one of the battle scenes depicted by the artist.<sup>35</sup> The other characteristic that varies the most strongly throughout is the appearance of Dangier's hair, which is shown to be especially wild and curly in scenes where the artist wishes to heighten his status as a Saracen.<sup>36</sup> Her article intended to show the importance of this particular

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<sup>33</sup> Nadia R. Altschul, "Saracens and Race in *Roman De La Rose* Iconography: The Case of Dangier in MS Douce 195." 2-4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 5-6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 6-7.

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Saracenizing of the figure, and she succeeds in reinforcing the importance of these characteristics as well as to establish the role of the concept of race in the Middle Ages.

### Turbans

Relating to costume, Joyce Kubiski, a professor of art history at Western Michigan University, wrote a fascinating article on the proliferation of different types of Eastern headdress in her article "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth Century Manuscripts." She examines the depiction of Eastern costume in the art of several French artists from the period, the *Cité Des Dames* master, the Limbourg Brothers, the Boucicaut Master, and the Bedford Master. These images were focused primarily upon different variations on the traditional headdress, the turban. She examined the depiction of eastern figures in 15<sup>th</sup> century French manuscript art and how the different masters gained information about eastern costume.<sup>37</sup> These artists denoted the images of exotic figures through different kinds of headdress, largely turbans both fictional and historically accurate. In fact early in her article she discusses a certain picture from the *Cité Des Dames* Master and details how figures in the image are identified by their headdresses.<sup>38</sup> She argues that the increased depictions of eastern figures indicates a kind of fascination for oriental images in 15<sup>th</sup> century, and that this exhibits a kind of fascination paired with a fear of them.<sup>39</sup> Kubiski's article examines both the importance of turbans for the changing topoi for representing foreign races and the changing perceptions of the exotic that went along with this development.

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<sup>37</sup> Joyce Kubiski. "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cité Des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)." 162-163.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 161-162.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 176.

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One scholar author who has written about specific physical and costume related markers for depicting Muslims is Nabil I. Matar, whose work was entitled “Renaissance England and the Turban.” This article traced the history of the turban as a symbol for the Muslim world in England during the Renaissance. He argues that over the course of the period the turban slowly but steadily supplanted the scimitar as the primary indication of the Muslim world.<sup>40</sup> Although this is somewhat out of the period that my research examines, it proved an important aid in looking into the nature of visual symbols and imagery for the western world. He also points to the rise of orientalized images in English literary sources and how English culture reacted to the turban.<sup>41</sup> He notes how the presence of turbans as a symbol of the Muslim world was introduced through sources such as travelogues and plays.<sup>42</sup> Matar’s work shows the importance of the turban as a symbol for Islam, although his article does extend a bit beyond the Middle Ages.

### Heraldry

In “Costuming the Past: Heraldry in Illustrations of the ‘Roman d’Alexandre,” historian Mark Cruse looks at how heraldry was key in the depictions of Muslims and of the other in the 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript Bodley MS 264. He discusses how certain heraldic symbols appear throughout the work and would have been understood by the audience as connecting the images to Saracens. For example he points to a depiction of the King Porus in this manuscript with a boar’s head on his shield, which he argues is a

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<sup>40</sup> Nabil I. Matar. "Renaissance England and the Turban." In *Images of the Other: Europe and the Muslim World before 1700*, Edited by David R. Blanks. 39-55. Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 1997. 39.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 41-43.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 46-50.

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direct attempt to connect this king to Saracens.<sup>43</sup> This is part of an attempt by the artists to link Alexander in this manuscript, like several other Alexandrian Romances, to the crusading ideal. He also points out the presence of the widespread image of the Ethiopian head, which will be discussed in greater detail later, to establish a connection to the Arab or foreign world.<sup>44</sup> These examples of heraldry create a connection between the foreign lands being depicted and the Saracen threat with which the Christian audience would have been familiar.

Cruse expanded on his work in his book, *Illuminating the Roman d'Alexandre*, which provides a more thorough examination of the images of the manuscript Bodleian MS 264 and its production. He closely examines the images in the manuscript as well as the other conditions that went into the creation of the manuscript. Cruse expands his discussion of the images to study the influence of crusade ideology in the illuminations and writes about the depiction of Alexander's enemies. Cruse, like other scholars before him, notes the importance of the Alexandrian Romance as a piece of crusading propaganda to encourage a crusade, and he writes about the connection between the Saracens made through heraldry. He notes the importance of the cultural trends for influencing manuscript production and the cultural attachment to Crusading in the region of the book's creation.<sup>45</sup> One particularly interesting point that he makes regards the depiction of the people of Gog and Magog, who are represented with a similar depiction

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<sup>43</sup> Mark Cruse. "Costuming the Past: Heraldry in Illustrations of the "Roman D'Alexandre" (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264)." 45.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 55-57.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Cruse. *Illuminating the Roman D'Alexandre: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264: The Manuscript as Monument*.161-162.

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as Saracens in Bodley 264.<sup>46</sup> He argues that the depictions of Alexander's foes in this manuscript serve as a kind of warm-up for the apocalypse that would come in the future. Similarly he acknowledges the claims of Strickland and Saurma-Jeltsch's that Muslims were rolled into a larger non-Christian identification of Saracen that included the Tartars and Ethiopians for their depictions and would have been included in the efforts to encourage crusades.<sup>47</sup> Cruse's book provides an excellent in-depth examination of the manuscript Bodleian MS 264 and the ways that the foreign opponents of Alexander were related to crusading and apocalyptic media.

French scholar Fany Caroff wrote on the subject in her article "Diferencier, caracteriser, avertir: les armoires imaginaires attribueés au mondes Musulman." This article examines the various differences in armor that are shown being wielded by the Muslim soldiers in western manuscripts. She looks particularly at manuscripts of the *History of Outremer* that depicted these figures battling the west from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Using these manuscripts as a basis, she argued that there was an association in the images between the Muslims and certain kinds of heraldic symbols. These symbols she claims came in a couple of different variations. Usually the depictions were of an animal, as well as different colors that became important for their connection to the Muslim world. The animals were those that one might typically think of associating with evil, or even with the devil: snakes, frogs, and pigs to name a few.<sup>48</sup> There was also the use of the crescent as a heraldic symbol that was commonly attributed to Muslims, and

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 170.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 173.

<sup>48</sup> Fany Caroff. "diferencier, caracteriser, avertir: les armoires imaginaires attribueés Au mondes musulman." *Medievales* 38 (2000): 137-47. Persee. 142-143.

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other geometric symbols were used as well.<sup>49</sup> Colors formed an important part of Caroff's argument, and she identifies red, black, and yellow as some of the colors that were a key part of this imagery as a means of catching the reader's eye.<sup>50</sup> Caroff argues that the artists of these manuscripts created a kind of system of imaginary heraldry to depict Saracens that established these symbols as indicative of the Muslim world.<sup>51</sup>

### Understanding Saracens

English Professor Jeffrey Jerome Cohen discussed the Medieval understanding of Saracens specifically in a chapter in the book, *Medieval Identity Machines*, "On Saracen Enjoyment." In this he examines the ways in which Saracens were viewed in the Middle Ages through art and literature from the time and attempts to use psychoanalysis to come to terms with their understanding of the "other."<sup>52</sup> Cohen notes that written sources from the period as well as artistic representations acknowledged the physical variation with those known as "Saracens," but that they still understood them as a race and people opposed to Christianity. Skin color plays an important role in this, and he argues that this concept of race and skin color has not been given enough attention by other historians.<sup>53</sup> He traces the history of Saracens and race from the classical period to the Middle Ages and argues that the Saracens represented a major depiction of alterity based in race.<sup>54</sup> Although he acknowledges that there were variations on the depiction of Muslims, he discusses how racial characteristics played a role in the "otherness of Saracens."

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 139-140.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 145-146.

<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. "On Saracen Enjoyment." In *Medieval Identity Machines*. 188-189.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 189-193.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 195-199.

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Furthermore he discusses pictorial representations of Saracens in manuscripts such as the *Chronica Majora* and the *Grandes Chroniques de France* from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries that present the Saracens as a threat to the Christian world.<sup>55</sup> Finally he examines an English romance called the *Sultan of Babylon*, and examines how the depiction of Saracens seems to indicate a kind of enjoyment of categorizing them as the “other.”<sup>56</sup> He argues that when encountering something that is defined as distinctly foreign and alien from one’s self such as a racial “other,” there is a kind of pleasure derived from the experience of engaging in this alterity. This is an integral part of understanding how the western world dealt with the Muslims and how they were so important for their world-view at the time.

Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch’s “Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity” is tremendously helpful in understanding the depictions of Saracens and the topoi for representing them in art. Saurma-Jeltsch, a professor of art history at Heidelberg University, examines the history of depictions of Saracens in Europe from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and focuses on the nature of images of alterity throughout this period in art from Europe and the Holy Land. She notes an increase in the interest in depicting exotic figures in art and more accurate depictions of the figures whom they were representing.<sup>57</sup> Saurma-Jeltsch, like many other scholars, notes the importance of understanding that the Saracen could be seen with both “admiration and horror.”<sup>58</sup> Throughout the article she examines the depictions of Muslims and non-Christians filling various different roles

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 200-204.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 215-218.

<sup>57</sup> L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch. "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." *The Medieval History Journal* 13, no. 1 (2010): 55-95. doi:10.1177/097194580901300103. 90.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 55.

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such as “Chivalrous Warriors,” and “Berserkers.”<sup>59</sup> In fact she also examines the elements of the Saracen topos such as dark skin, turbans, and even curved swords. Saurma-Jeltsch also examines how the exotic was depicted and how certain individuals could alternate between a depiction as a western or eastern figure.<sup>60</sup> She argues that the Saracen topos was not used specifically for Muslims but was rather employed for non-Christians and was only used for depicting Muslims in specific circumstances.<sup>61</sup>

Art historian Jens T. Wollesen’s chapter “East Meets West and the Problem with These Pictures,” in the book *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World* examines depictions of Muslims in Europe and specifically in Cyprus. He begins by examining depictions of Muslims in a variety of different western manuscripts such as the *Grandes Chroniques de France* and the *History of Outremer*. In the works preceding 1300, he argues, the depictions of Christians and Muslims are based upon stock pictorial models and then take on a more realistic bent after this period as individuals’ actual experience was replacing fictitious models.<sup>62</sup> Wollesen attempts to address the issue of whether or not there was a kind of amicable relationship between Islam and Christianity in the Holy Land and whether this can be seen in the images created from around 1300.<sup>63</sup> Later into the chapter he notes a number of aberrations from the normal separation of Muslim and Christian culture and a variety of examples of artwork such as the Freer Canteen, a piece of

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 60-64.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 75-77.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 91.

<sup>62</sup> Wollesen, Jens T. "East Meets West and the Problem with Those Pictures." In *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, 341-64. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 345-348.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 349-350.



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metalwork that seems to combine elements of Christian and Muslim art.<sup>64</sup> Wollesen does not feel comfortable stating that these images establish some kind of cultural exchange or blending, but does feel that they demonstrate an ambivalence that was felt between Christian and Muslim cultures.<sup>65</sup>

### Related Topoi

One text that discusses the presence of topoi connected to Saracens is *The Gothic Idol* by Michael Camille, in the chapter “Idols of the Saracens.” This chapter examines a variety of sources, literary and visual, from throughout the Middle Ages that depict idols as related to Saracens. Camille describes the connection between the Saracens and idols as forming a part of their typical depiction as pagans and idolaters. He notes the efforts of writers such as Ralph of Caen to establish them as such in his Crusader chronicle the *Gesta Tancredi*.<sup>66</sup> He similarly discusses a number of images, including one from a manuscript of the *History of Outremer* by William of Tyre, that represent Saracens worshipping idols.<sup>67</sup> The idols provide a way for the artists to heighten the strangeness and the monstrosity of the Saracens by connecting them to other pagans. For example a depiction of idol worshipping *cynocephali* is juxtaposed to Saracens in order to establish a connection between them.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore the destruction of these idols is important for the depiction of Saracens being defeated by Christians.<sup>69</sup> Camille’s book demonstrates how things such as depictions of idols could signal to the audience for these images that

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 355-356.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 364

<sup>66</sup> Camille, Michael. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 142.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 137-138.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 153-156.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 149-150.

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they were grounded in the Eastern world and that certain characteristics like idols could be strongly identified with the Muslim world.

Another source that discusses the issue of using iconography to contextualize figures is in "Romantic Geography and the Crusades" by Maureen Quigley. In this article the author looks at how certain images were used to convey the concept of Crusading in certain manuscripts. For example she argues that in the images in the Romance of Alexander the titular king was depicted battling his foreign foes because it was expected that the crusaders would encounter similar foes on their own forays into the eastern world.<sup>70</sup> She relates the production of manuscripts in the 14<sup>th</sup> century that use these images to the Valois kings' renewed interest in crusading.<sup>71</sup> This analysis is similarly used on images meant to convey the idea of travel by emphasizing the placement of the means of transportation.<sup>72</sup> She also argues that the actions of the figures in this art are key to the audience's understanding, because they are seeing the same kinds of experiences that contemporary crusaders would engage in.<sup>73</sup> Quigley also addresses the moments where the depiction of the foreign is normalized into something that was more palatable for medieval audiences. Certain images in one manuscript of the Romance of Alexander depict the khans as being strikingly similar to western rulers while at other times they are distinctly different.<sup>74</sup> She argues that this is an indication of the fact that to the audience of these manuscripts the king's actions would sometimes be

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<sup>70</sup> Quigley, Maureen. "Romantic Geography and the Crusades: British Library Royal Ms. 19 D I." *Peregrinations* 2, no. 3 (2009): 53-76.

[http://peregrinations.kenyon.edu/vol2\\_3/current/fa3.pdf](http://peregrinations.kenyon.edu/vol2_3/current/fa3.pdf). 58-59.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 55-56.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 67-68.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 72-75.

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understandable and sometimes not. When the king's actions are alien then he is depicted in a way that emphasizes his foreignness with depictions that focus on his darker skin and foreign dress. Quigley's article argues that these Medieval French artists attempted to understand the foreign world through a "geography of experience," with fantasy to give them some idea of what the Holy Land would be like.<sup>75</sup>

### Conclusions

The scholars who have examined the depictions of Muslims manuscript illuminations and other kinds of art have attempted to use these pictures to understand the illuminators and how they chose to picture Muslims. Works like Melinkoff's *Outcasts* and Camille's *Mirror in Parchment* studied the specific visual signs that identified Muslims and expressed their negative qualities. Several different kinds of visual identifiers have been established, such as dark skin and kinds of heraldry, as ways that artists represented Saracens. Other scholars such as Strickland and Saurma-Jeltsch used these images to gain insight into the ways that western depictions of Muslims reflect cultural impressions of Muslims. These scholars agree that the images of Muslims demonstrate that their artists had a complex understanding of these foreign subjects and that their representation in Medieval art reflect this. Quigley's work on romantic geography and Camille's study of Gothic idols also shine light on examples of depictions of the east that reflected Saracens. These scholars' work reflects the importance of visual imagery for the depiction of Saracens and the prevalence of nuanced perceptions of Saracens.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 76.

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This study is primarily concerned with the depiction of Muslims in illuminated manuscripts from the Middle Ages. Manuscripts that commonly include images of Muslims are Crusade chronicles, telling the stories of the Christian crusaders combating Saracen enemies in the Holy Land. One such manuscript is the *Histoire d'Outremer*, which recounts the history of the Holy Land and focuses on the threat that Islam presented.<sup>76</sup> Throughout this chapter I will examine how the artists of this manuscript depicted Saracens and what specific imagery was used to differentiate them from Christians. Because the manuscript was reproduced rather extensively throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it provides insight into the way in which depiction of Muslims changed during this period of time; I will examine how the representations of Saracens developed. In these images I will attempt to identify which depictions of Muslims were distinctly different from Christians and those that gave Muslims western appearances. Furthermore I will examine how the depictions of the prominent Muslim Saladin developed, in order to show how representations of Saladin were affected by artistic trends and what they can reveal about the artists' perceptions of Saracens. By examining these images, I hope to gain insight into the medieval artists' understanding of Saracens and their depictions of them.

The *Histoire d'Outremer* was written by William of Tyre in Jerusalem between the years 1170 and 1184 and was intended as a history of the Holy Land up to the present

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<sup>76</sup> Giulio Cippolone. "William of Tyre and the Muslim Enemy." In *Tolerance and Intolerance: Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades*, edited by Michael Gervers and James M. Powell, 125-32. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001. 125.

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day.<sup>77</sup> William was born and raised in Jerusalem and received an excellent education in the liberal arts that secured him the position of tutor to King Amaury of Jerusalem's (1136-1174) son Baldwin IV (1161-1185) in 1170.<sup>78</sup> Shortly afterward he was appointed both Archbishop of Tyre and chancellor, although there is evidence to suggest that he did not play as important a role in the politics of the time as this might suggest.<sup>79</sup> He was however involved in political and secular affairs and had first hand knowledge about many of the issues and events that he chronicled.

Comprised of 23 books, the *Histoire d'Outremer* tells the story of the region from the beginning of the First Crusade in 1095 through 1184.<sup>80</sup> Although the chronicle begins optimistically with the success of the First Crusade, it becomes increasingly less so as he relates the rise of Saladin (1137/8-1194) and the increased success of the Muslims in fighting the Christians. In fact the author questions whether this turn in the tide of the fortunes of the Christians of the Holy Land was a divine punishment for some moral failing.<sup>81</sup> Although he feared the threat presented by Saladin and his armies, William did not live to see the consequences of this threat; he died shortly before the Battle of Hattin.<sup>82</sup> The *Histoire d'Outremer* portrays the Crusade as a cleansing war with divine support for the destruction of the unfaithful Muslims. It has been suggested that William's chronicle was an effort to rouse the people of the Holy Land to fight back

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<sup>77</sup> P.W. Edbury, and John Gordon Rowe. *William of Tyre, Historian of the Latin East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 26.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 13-15.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 19-22.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 157.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

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against the Muslims and to engender overseas support for the region's plight.<sup>83</sup> This would explain the many depictions of combat between Muslims and Christians found within the illuminated copies and the manuscript's popularity.

The original manuscript was written in high style Latin; its heavy use of classical and biblical references reflected William of Tyre's excellent education. Although William served King Amaury it is unclear whether he was commissioned to write his history. However it seems unlikely, partially because he does criticize the king within it and also because it seems to have been written for an ecclesiastical audience due to his esoteric theological discussions.<sup>84</sup> In its original form the manuscript was not terribly popular, and in fact was not widely circulated or produced in the period. It received considerable success and popularity, however, after it was translated into vernacular French. In fact, it was produced widely throughout Western Europe and the Holy Land.<sup>85</sup> It is this version of the manuscript that was frequently illuminated; copies of these were examined throughout this study. Some versions even include continuations that extended the time range of the history, such as Yates Thompson MS 12, created sometime between 1232 and 1261 in Northern France, which updated the history to the year 1232.<sup>86</sup> Today fifty-nine manuscripts of William of Tyre's history still exist. I was able to access twenty-four of them through online resources, and focused specifically on the twelve of these that originated in France between 1200 and 1420.<sup>87</sup> These

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 159-160.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 4-5

<sup>86</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire D'Outremer. 1232-1261. MS Yates Thompson 12*, Yates Thompson, British Library, Northern France. British Library.

<sup>87</sup> P.W. Edbury, and John Gordon. *William of Tyre, Historian of the Latin East*. 4.

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manuscripts provide insight into the artistic representation of Muslims and the ways this depiction developed and changed over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

### The Thirteenth Century Topos

The early manuscripts of the *Histoire d'Outremer* present an interesting representation of Muslim soldiers battling the Christian heroes. Early manuscripts, written before 1300, do not depict the Muslim armies with any of the phenotypic characteristics that differentiate them from Christians. They are depicted as physically almost identical to the Christian soldiers except perhaps for the occasional presence of beards on some Muslim figures when Christians were clean-shaven. In fact the images also rarely include individuals wearing the turbans or headscarves that would become an integral part of the Saracen topos.<sup>88</sup> The images of Muslims are sometimes very like the depictions of Christians, and they are shown with similar armor and weaponry. It is interesting that this is common in manuscripts such as BNF Français 2630, created in Paris in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and BNF Français 2824, made in Northern France in the first quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, since the Muslims in these narratives are the staunch opponents of the Christian world.

William's chronicle clearly views the Saracens as the enemies of Christendom, although some scholars argue that he was actually surprisingly tolerant given the situation.<sup>89</sup> Despite the clear ideological bent against the Muslim world, the manuscripts are commonly illustrated without obvious differences between the two peoples. In lieu of

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<sup>88</sup> L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch. "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." 90.

<sup>89</sup> Giulio Cippolone. "William of Tyre and the Muslim Enemy." In *Tolerance and Intolerance: Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades*. 130-132.

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these more obvious characteristics, the artists often rely on other sartorial characteristics and heraldry and weaponry to depict Muslims.

The most common differentiating feature for Saracen soldiers in the 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts is a tall, peaked helmet. These helmets are worn almost exclusively by Saracens in the manuscripts, although some Muslims are also occasionally shown wearing only mail coifs or round caps. The contrast between Christians and Saracens is created by the consistent depiction of Christian soldiers with a helmet that is square in shape and covers the whole face. This is particularly noticeable in the manuscript Yates Thompson MS 12, created between 1222 and 1261 in northern France, which consistently depicts the Christian and Muslim forces in this manner. The manuscript's depiction of the Battle of Antioch features Muslims in tall helmets and mail coifs being slain by Christian knights.<sup>90</sup> (Figure 1) In fact the unique type of helmet used by the artist to depict Muslim leaders was actually not observed in any other manuscript. Other manuscripts such as BNF Français 779, which features many views of Muslims and Christians fighting with precisely these types of armor, further enforce this depiction of Muslims. In fact BNF Français 9081, made in Paris in the second quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, includes a dramatic depiction of the taking of Antioch that is an excellent example. The Christian knights in their square helmets scale the walls with ladders and put Saracen soldiers in pointed helmets to the sword.<sup>91</sup> (Figure 2) Later in the manuscript the topos appears again in the depiction of the Battle of Gezer, where Christian knights

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<sup>90</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1232-1261. MS Yates Thompson 12, British Library, Northern France. F. 29

<sup>91</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1350-1375. MS BNF FR 9083, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 44



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give chase to fleeing Saracen soldiers, one of whom is struck by a Crusader's lance.<sup>92</sup>

(Figure 3) The conical helmet was one means of depicting Muslims in the *Histoire d'Outremer*, but it was hardly universal to every manuscript.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that this was not the case in every copy of the *Histoire d'Outremer* from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In some manuscripts such as BNF Français 2824, made in the first quarter of the fourteenth century in Paris, the Saracens are depicted without the conical helmets that many of the other manuscripts include. Instead the Saracens are typically without helmets whereas the Christian knights are depicted in full armor and astride a horse. This manuscript's depiction of the taking of Antioch is a fine example of this, as the Christian knights face a group of armed Saracens wearing round caps.<sup>93</sup> (Figure 4) Another copy of the text, BNF Français 2630, produced in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Paris, further confuses this with a depiction of Christians wearing similar tall helmets, albeit closed, in the siege of the citadel of Antioch. In fact the same image includes a Saracen standing among the forces in the citadel with a square closed helm. However it should be noted that BNF Français 2630 also has an image of Muslims with conical helms atop the walls of Nicaea during the Crusaders' siege<sup>94</sup> and again when the Turks fight the Christians.<sup>95</sup> (Figure 5) These manuscripts indicate that the topos of the conical helmet was not necessarily universal, although it was quite common.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid. F. 260r.

<sup>93</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1300-1325. MS BNF FR 2824, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Northern France. F. 46v.

<sup>94</sup> William of Tyre. "Histoire d'Outremer." 1350. MS BNF FR 2630, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 22v.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. F. 210v.

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Interestingly, this same depiction of the Muslim figures with peaked helmets can also be seen in a window of Chartres Cathedral created in Chartres, France, in 1225.<sup>96</sup> The Cathedral has beautiful stained glass windows and the one featuring these images is known as the Charlemagne Window. It depicts Charlemagne going to war with the Muslims in Spain in what has been referred to by some as a kind of crusade.<sup>97</sup> In this window all of the Muslim enemies with whom Charlemagne and Roland do battle are depicted with tall peaked caps, while the Christians have square closed helmets.<sup>98</sup> (Figure 6) The window is from the thirteenth century, it is important because it establishes a precedent for these depictions even outside of the *Histoire d'Outremer*. Though the images depicted in the window draw upon a different artistic history, this is at least significant because it establishes that the image of the Saracen with a conical helmet and a round shield was one that was available and understood outside the contexts of these manuscripts.

The 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts of the *Histoire d'Outremer* have another common trait for Muslims: the round shield that is typically associated with Muslim soldiers. In the manuscripts that depicted the Muslims with noticeably different equipment from the Christian forces, the round shield was almost always included. This is evident in several

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<sup>96</sup> Clark Maines. "The Charlemagne Window at Chartres Cathedral: New Considerations on Text and Image." *Speculum* 52, no. 4 (October 01, 1977): 801-23. Accessed April 03, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2855375?ref=no-x-route:0ed53fb488c910b4a7536b8e3163ec73>. 801.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 804.

<sup>98</sup> "Chartres Cathedral Stained Glass - Bay 07 Key (The Legends of Charlemagne)." Chartres Cathedral Stained Glass - Bay 07 Key (The Legends of Charlemagne). Accessed May 13, 2015. [http://www.medievalart.org.uk/chartres/07\\_pages/Chartres\\_Bay07\\_key.htm](http://www.medievalart.org.uk/chartres/07_pages/Chartres_Bay07_key.htm). Grandes Chroniques de France. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 2813, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

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battle scenes in the manuscript BNF Français 2824, depicting the round shield of Muslims as contrasted with the triangular shields of Christians along with the difference between helmets previously discussed.<sup>99</sup> (Figure 7) This is an interesting example because although the Saracens of this manuscript have some different helmets than the pointed cap, the round shield is consistent throughout. There are some aberrations, specifically examples where particular Saracen individuals were shown with triangular shields rather than round ones. Examples of this however are the exception and not the norm and likely have little bearing on the shield's association with the Muslims. Of course the round shield is not distinct to the Muslim world, but it was often used in these early manuscripts to differentiate Muslims from Christian soldiers. In fact, scholars have noted how this shield was associated with depictions of Muslim soldiers in other art such as in a piece of furniture from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>100</sup> The images from the Charlemagne Window at Chartres also depict the distinction between the shields of Christians and Muslims, indicating that the trend was common beyond these manuscripts.<sup>101</sup> (Figure 6)

One possible reason for the depiction of the Muslim foes in this way could be that expounded by Saulma-Jeltsch in "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." Saulma-Jeltsch believed that the 13<sup>th</sup> century artists chose to depict the Muslims as similar to Christians in order to present a more worthy adversary. This was done in order to highlight the martial virtues of the Christians by presenting them with a foe who is on

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<sup>99</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1300-1325. MS BNF FR 2824, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Northern France. F. 80v.

<sup>100</sup> C. M. Kauffmann. "A Painted Box and Romance Illustration in the Early Thirteenth Century." *The Burlington Magazine* 134, no. 1066 (January 01, 1992): 20-24. Accessed April 18, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/884964?ref=no-x-route:08d794606b808c2588562b7dbc3cb8a5>. 20.

<sup>101</sup> *Charlemagne Window*. 1225. Chartres Cathedral.

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their level. In Saulma-Jeltsch's words the Christians artists chose to "level up" the Saracens by choosing to depict them as an enemy whom the Crusaders can be proud to defeat.<sup>102</sup> Although Saracens are sometimes shown without helmets or only wearing mail, and therefore being somewhat less well equipped than their Christian foes, they are for the most part on equal footing with the Christians who fight them. As we will see in some of the later manuscripts, this was not always the case. These are likely explanations for the way in which representations of the Saracens in these manuscripts seems to be virtually identical to the Christians except for differences in equipment such as helmets and shields. This "leveling up" of the Muslim enemies in the 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts of the *Histoire d'Outremer* is a radical difference from the later 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts.

### Heraldry

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts of the *Histoire d'Outremer*, the depictions of Saracens were often differentiated from their Christian foes by the heraldry ascribed to them by western artists. The kinds of heraldic symbols illustrated on their shields tend to fall into the categories described by Fany Caroff in her article "Différencier, Caractériser, Avertir : Les Armoires Imaginaires Attribuées au Monde Musulman" and are primarily certain geometric symbols or depictions of animals typically associated with evil.<sup>103</sup> For example one of the most common symbols is a kind of segmented circular geometric symbol, almost resembling the inside of a grapefruit, which was inspired by actual

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<sup>102</sup> L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch, "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." *The Medieval History Journal* 13, no. 1 (2010): 55-95. doi:10.1177/097194580901300103.64.

<sup>103</sup> Fany Caroff. "Diferencier, Caracteriser, Avertir: Les Armoires Imaginaires Attribueés Au Mondes Musulman." 142-143.

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Muslim designs, albeit reproduced by westerners.<sup>104</sup> These symbols appear frequently in manuscripts such as BNF Français 2824,<sup>105</sup> (Figure 7) and were often accompanied by animal symbol heraldry. Another rather obvious symbol frequently shown on Saracen shields was the crescent, which even then was associated with Islam.<sup>106</sup> In addition to these geometric symbols, other blazons were depicted on shields that had particular meaning for western audiences.

Heraldry featuring animals or monsters was also particularly common in these manuscripts; the animals were typically snakes, dragons, and frogs. The snakes and frogs had particular import because they were directly associated with Satan, particularly the frog as it was thought to be the heraldic symbol for Lucifer himself. This association arose from the prevalence of frogs spewing pestilence in the Book of Revelations.<sup>107</sup> In one instance what appears to be a mantichore heraldic symbol appeared in the manuscript BNF 2824.<sup>108</sup> (Figure 8) Later manuscripts also incorporated the boar and the Ethiopian head as a prominent heraldic symbol in manuscripts like BNF 9083, made between 1350-1375 in Paris, used to emphasize the savage uncivilized nature of the Saracens.<sup>109</sup> (Figure 9) These heraldic symbols were common to the depictions of Muslims in these works and helped to differentiate them from Christians.

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<sup>104</sup> Mark Cruse. *Illuminating the Roman D'Alexandre: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264: The Manuscript as Monument*. 177.

<sup>105</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1300-1325. MS BNF FR 2824, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Northern France. F. 15v.

<sup>106</sup> Caroff, Fany. "Diferencier, Caracteriser, Avertir: Les Armoires Imaginaires Attribuees Au Mondes Musulman." 141.

<sup>107</sup> Dennys, Rodney. *The Heraldic Imagination*. New York: C.N. Potter, 1976. 111.

<sup>108</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1300-1325. MS BNF FR 2824, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Northern France. F. 45r.

<sup>109</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1350-1375. MS BNF FR 9083, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. f. 19

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Clearly heraldry played a major role in the depiction of Muslims in these manuscripts, particularly in the early manuscripts that had no physical markers to distinguish Christians from Muslims. Furthermore the prevalence of heraldry such as the frog and serpent that directly connected the Muslims to ideas of evil and paganism were important because they seem to express the Christian world's feelings about their Muslim foes. By equipping Saracens with shields emblazoned with symbols carrying particular meaning for the Christian world, and juxtaposing them to Christians with identifiable heraldry, such as crosses or eagles, the artists established them as their enemies.<sup>110</sup> The contrast between Christians and Muslims was heightened by the depiction of Christian soldiers with symbols that would have identified them. This also implies that the audience for the art would have understood the connections behind these emblematic symbols and would have been able to identify the Muslims, in part, by their heraldry. In later manuscripts of the *Histoire d'Outremer* the prevalence of heraldry is even greater, as well as other markers that distinguish the Saracens visually from the Christians.

### 14<sup>th</sup> Century Manuscripts and a Changing Topos

The art of the manuscripts of the *Histoire d'Outremer* produced in the thirteenth century is fairly consistent. This begins to change in the later manuscripts, particularly those from the early and middle 14<sup>th</sup> century. Of the fourteen manuscripts examined for this study, four were from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and all of these evidence this change. In these later manuscripts the artists begin increasingly to depict the Muslim enemies of Christendom with darker skin and turbans, another prominent symbol of the Eastern

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<sup>110</sup> Jens T. Wollesen. "East Meets West and the Problem with Those Pictures." In *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, 341-64. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 363.

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world. The previous topoi for Saracens with conical helms and round shields seems to disappear. Frequently, in these later images they are shown to be physically similar to Christians or to be shown with racial and eastern characteristics. These latter images depict the Muslims with dark skin, wild hair, beards, and heavily distorted facial features. The overall effect is to make them appear more radically different and even frightening when compared to the Christian figures that they oppose. It should be noted, however, that there is some degree of inconsistency within many of these manuscripts and that they seem to alternate between depictions of Muslims with dark skin and turbans and representations of them as identical to Christians. The appearance of the turban as a marker for Saracen identity is interesting because it seems to bridge the gap between when figures are depicted as dark-skinned or light skinned and even seems to appear before this topos develops.

Dark skinned Muslim figures appear in five different copies of the *Histoire d'Outremer* that were examined for this study. All four of these: BNF Français 9083, BNF Français 2634, BNF Français 22495, and BNF Français 24209, were created in the early to middle fourteenth century in Paris and illustrate the beginnings of the depictions of dark skin on Muslim forces. Five manuscripts may not seem significant, but they appear to indicate a trend that is also prevalent in the manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* discussed below. The depictions of Muslims with dark skin seem to indicate an attempt by the artists to demonstrate the otherness of the Muslim figures. Several scholars have noted that the depiction of dark skin color was not only biological, but also represented a moral component. Ruth Melinkoff noted this in her remarkable survey of the different characteristics used to establish otherness in medieval

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iconography.<sup>111</sup> Deborah Strickland commented on this as well and noted the moral implications of the comparison between dark skin and light skin. She argued that this was more than an attempt to simply depict Muslims as they understood them biologically.<sup>112</sup> In the later copies of the *Histoire d'Outremer* the characteristic of dark skin is a common and important element of the Saracen topos.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts also introduce an interesting depiction of Muslims that gives them highly distorted facial features, portraying them in a more barbaric fashion. Saurma-Jeltsch noted this characterization of Muslims in his article “Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity,” and describes them as berserkers. By this she means that they were presented as mindless, savage warriors, not that the artists were literally co-opting ideas of berserkers from Scandinavian countries. In manuscripts such as BNF 22495 the Muslims are depicted in ways that highlight their comparative primitiveness and savagery. Whereas the Christians in these images are decked out in full armor with helmets and surcoats, the Muslims wear only tunics and headscarves wrapped around their foreheads.<sup>113</sup> (Figure 10) In fact these distorted, darkened faces also litter the ground beneath the horses’ feet to signify that the Muslims are falling before their Christian foes. Images like this, of Muslim soldiers with almost caricatured faces, appear frequently in these manuscripts and particularly in BNF 22495. A depiction of the Battle of Antioch shows a similar representation of Saracens and shows them being

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<sup>111</sup> Ruth Melinkoff. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Age*. 26.

<sup>112</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. 84-86 & 173-174.

<sup>113</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1337. MS BNF FR 22495, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 154



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slaughtered by the crusaders, for heads and feet cover the ground.<sup>114</sup> However it is also notable that in all of these depictions the Muslims with dark skin are also wearing a turban or headscarf of some kind.

Out of the *Histoire d'Outremer* manuscripts examined for this study, six depicted Muslims with turbans or some variation of Saracen headdress at least once. As Joyce Kubiski pointed out in her study "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting," many variations of the turban were exhibited in medieval manuscript art.<sup>115</sup> As depicted in these manuscripts the turban was either a wrapped headdress around the head, somewhat like a bandana, with fabric running out the back, or a kind of representation of a headscarf that consisted of a single strip of white fabric tied around the forehead.<sup>116</sup> This variant of the turban has been identified by Deborah Strickland as a "tortil" and is perhaps the most common representation of an eastern headdress.<sup>117</sup> In the *Histoire d'Outremer* turbans and eastern headdresses were depicted on figures with dark and light skin. For example in the manuscript BNF 22495 Saladin's soldiers are presented with fair skin and turbans, although the king himself is not depicted as such. The other variation, that of the single wrap around the forehead, was often used to adorn the more barbarian-like depictions of Muslims that show them with wild and savage appearances. This depiction can be seen in the image of Christians battling

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. F. 145

<sup>115</sup> Joyce Kubiski. "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cité Des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)." 161-162.

<sup>116</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1350-1375. MS BNF FR 9083, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 45

<sup>117</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. 181.

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Saracens in BNF Français 9083 that features the Muslim soldiers fighting Christians in a pit.<sup>118</sup> These images demonstrate that the turban played an integral part in the iconography of Saracens in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and were a means of identifying the subject as Muslim even when skin color was not depicted. This sartorial sign appears well before the appearance of dark-skinned Muslims in the manuscripts BNF Français 779<sup>119</sup> and BNF Français 2824.<sup>120</sup> The turban and the presence of dark skin appear in the *Histoire d'Outremer* and prove to be important indicators of Saracen identity in other 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts.

It is important to note that the introduction of this depiction of Muslims with dark skin, turbans, and noticeably distinct racial qualities seems to replace the topos of Saracens with round shields and conical helmets that is common in the 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts. Although conical helmets appear in all of the manuscripts from this century, this type of headdress does not appear once in the 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts depicting Muslims. The only image that includes such iconography is BNF 2824, which is from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and exhibits the same kinds of depictions as the earlier copies. However it should be mentioned that the Saracens do use round shields in the manuscripts from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but there are also examples of them using triangular shields, as in one image from BNF 22495.<sup>121</sup> Other images from the same

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<sup>118</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1350-1375. MS BNF FR 9083, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 145

<sup>119</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1350-1375. MS BNF FR 779, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 134r.

<sup>120</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1300-1325. MS BNF FR 2824, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Northern France. F. 119r.

<sup>121</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1337. MS BNF FR 22495, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris.F. 19.

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manuscript depicting them as more savage even depict the Saracens with no shields whatsoever.<sup>122</sup> (Figure 10) Elements of the topoi from the 13<sup>th</sup> century seem to be evident in the later copies of the *Histoire d'Outremer*, but for the most part the depiction of Saracens as being physically identical and wearing conical helmets seems to have disappeared.

In the *Histoire d'Outremer*, it is possible to see a shift in the depiction of Muslims from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 14<sup>th</sup> century that includes two unique examples of topoi. The early manuscripts are for the most part devoid of obvious physical characteristics for the Saracens being depicted in the manuscripts. Rather than relying on phenotypical differences, the illuminators of the *History of the Outremer* in the thirteenth century chose to depict Muslims wearing a type of equipment that was different from the equipment worn by Christians. However, these illuminators did not invariably depict the Muslims utilizing this equipment. There are some images in which the identity of the two sides must be established by the context of the scene, and by reference to the text. In addition there were manuscripts featuring heraldry that was used to identify Saracens based upon the images depicted on their shields. Later manuscripts, however, have images where the artists have clearly chosen to differentiate the Muslims from Christians and stress the “otherness” of Muslims. These differences in phenotype appear only at the end of the period and make a clear contrast between the western and eastern figures. Furthermore the kinds of heraldry presented tend to focus on negative characteristics of the Saracens. For example the Saracens depicted with shields adorned with frogs, snakes, and dragons are clearly negative because they are quite literally directly associated with

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. F. 43.

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the devil.<sup>123</sup> Although the Saracens are shown with similar physical characteristics to their Christian foes, their depictions are still colored with negative connotations because of these examples of heraldry.

### Saladin and a Nuanced Understanding of Muslims

Of all the Muslim figures that captured the western imagination, perhaps none excited as much confusion and fascination as the Egyptian leader Saladin. As the sultan of Egypt, Saladin launched a *jihad* against the Christians living in the Holy Land which resulted in major losses, including the city of Jerusalem itself. This resulted in the Third Crusade, in which Saladin would come face to face with Richard the Lionheart, whose own personal mythology would heavily incorporate Saladin.<sup>124</sup> Initially Saladin was viewed as a tremendous threat to the Christian world and rightfully so given his victory over the Christians at the Battle of Hattin in 1187.<sup>125</sup> However, over the years public opinion shifted somewhat towards Saladin, as John Tolan noted in *Sons of Ishmael*, and the sultan began to be viewed with more and more respect.<sup>126</sup> This was largely because of his interactions with Richard the Lionheart, and many chivalric stories were spun about the two kings interacting with all the honor and decorum of Knights of the Round Table. Indeed later the western world viewed Saladin as a model of chivalric virtue; he was regarded as a Muslim who was regrettably born into the wrong religion and should

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<sup>123</sup> Fany Caroff. "Diferencier, Characteriser, Avertir: Les Armoires Imaginaires Attribueés Au Mondes Musulman." 141.

<sup>124</sup> Roger Sherman Loomis. "Richard Cœur De Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art." 512.

<sup>125</sup> Hans Eberhard Mayer. *The Crusades*. London: Oxford University Press, 1972. 135-136.

<sup>126</sup> John Victor Tolan. *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages*. 92.

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have been a Christian. In his *Divine Comedy*, in fact, Dante Alighieri reserved a special place for Saladin in Limbo, a place of Dante's own design that was meant to serve as a resting place for the honorable pagans of the ancient world. To include Saladin, along with a few other Muslim figures, was a tremendous show of respect. He was viewed in the same light as Plato and Virgil.<sup>127</sup> The western world was both terrified and fascinated by Saladin, and could depict him in radically different ways based upon the circumstance.

Saladin was often depicted in manuscript art, and he appears several times in the copies of the *Histoire d'Outremer* that I examined. The negative depictions of Saladin emphasized his foreignness and his threat to the Christian world, depicting him as a figure with distorted and almost stereotypical features. Several examples of the portrayal of Saladin exist within the manuscripts of the *Histoire d'Outremer*, and they exhibit both positive and negative portrayals. In Yates Thompson MS 12 Saladin himself is not shown, but his soldiers are shown destroying the Holy Land and taking Christian prisoners, demonstrating his power and influence even if Saladin himself is not in the image.<sup>128</sup> The sultan himself makes an appearance in BNF Français 9083, where he is again shown capturing Christian prisoners. He is dressed as a Christian king but has dark skin and is surrounded by turbaned soldiers. (Figure 11) He towers over the other figures in the image, presumably to assert his dominance and power. In fact he is a head taller than the Christian king whom he is capturing.<sup>129</sup> BNF 9083 presents a stark contrast to the first image. After depicting Saladin and his forces capturing Christians the

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<sup>127</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, IV. 129.

<sup>128</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire D'Outremer*. 1232-1261. MS Yates Thompson 12, Yates Thompson, British Library, Northern France .F. 161v.

<sup>129</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1350-1375. MS BNF FR 9083, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 263v.

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manuscript also presents the king standing before his army, as a western king would have stood before his soldiers.<sup>130</sup> (Figure 12) The power of Saladin's personality and his personal mythos was enough to transform him in the eyes of Christian artists into a western figure in some manuscripts.

These depictions of Saladin hint at a nuanced understanding of Muslims that can be missing from images simply depicting them as the enemies of the Crusaders. In these images it is possible to see that the artists could interpret and understand their subjects to be both Muslim and also have redeeming qualities as Saladin did. His regal nature and his considerable ability and skill were acknowledged in these manuscripts through his depiction as a western king. The images from BNF 9083 are of particular interest because they demonstrate both the contrast between Saladin and the western kings as well as his own admirable qualities when he is with his army. This indicates that although Saracens could be represented as the quintessential enemy of Christianity they could also be regarded as similar to Christians. The artists, and their audiences, understood Saladin and the Saracens in more than one way and could see the positive qualities of these figures as well as the negative.

### Conclusion

The *Histoire d'Outremer* manuscripts include many images of the crusaders battling Muslims. Manuscripts from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century provide two distinct examples of iconography in the depictions. The early manuscripts feature representations of Muslims with conical helmets and round shields that do not have any examples of racially distinct characteristics. They did however include some interesting examples of

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<sup>130</sup> William of Tyre. *Histoire d'Outremer*. 1350-1375. MS BNF FR 9083, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 269

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heraldry that were displayed on the Saracens' shields. 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts however adopt a different kind of topos emphasizing the use of dark skin and different forms of turbans to depict the Saracens. These images emphasize a contrast to the Christian world that was further heightened by the highly caricatured and distorted facial features of many of the Muslim soldiers. Finally, the depictions of Saladin in the 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts present an interesting parallel between portrayals as distinctly foreign, and those that seem to depict him as a western figure. These manuscripts show two distinct types of iconography that were extended to Muslim figures that developed over the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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*The History of Outremer* is an excellent example of the representations of Muslims from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, I will examine manuscripts that are specifically from the fourteenth century. I will examine how Muslims were depicted in the various images from this manuscript and attempt to identify any patterns or changes that arise. In these images I will discuss the instances where the artists chose to depict Saracens with western rather than eastern appearance. Furthermore I will examine how the ideals of the majesty of French kingship and of crusading were expressed through the images in this manuscript. The analysis of these images provides valuable insight into the ways in which the artists perceived Muslims and came to represent them in the illuminated manuscripts.

*Les Grandes Chroniques de France* is an account of French history based upon the Latin chronicles of the Abbey of St. Denis, and is often referred to as *Les Grandes Chroniques de France ou de Saint Denis*. This chronicle, written in the vernacular, was begun during the reign of King Louis IX of France by a monk named Primat. The first copy was produced in 1274 for King Phillip III and related the history of the kings of France from the supposed beginnings of the kingdom after the fall of Troy to the death of Phillip II. The monks of Saint-Denis continued the chronicle for the next hundred years; the later copies of the manuscript extend the story up until 1380.<sup>131</sup> Primat and his successors wrote for a royal audience, but the nobility in Paris also had access to the

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<sup>131</sup> Hedeman, Anne Dawson. *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France, 1274-1422*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. 3-5.



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text.<sup>132</sup> It has been noted that because they were a part of the audience, the chronicle discusses the aristocracy's place in French history.<sup>133</sup> However the history is primarily a royalist text highlighting the power and prestige of the French kings. This served a dual purpose: it gloried the French sovereign and also proved a model of good kingship for a contemporary king.<sup>134</sup>

In this story of the lives and reigns of the rulers of France, conflicts with the Muslims are often depicted in an attempt to elevate the position of the king. This is hardly surprising, as the chronicle was first composed at the behest of Louis IX, or Saint Louis, who is held up in later copies of the manuscript as a model for French kings. Since Saint Louis was famous for his crusades against the Muslims, such activities would seem to be ennobled for other monarchs. It only makes sense that other rulers would wish to aspire to this. Furthermore the history stresses the concept that the French kings are the "most Christian kings," both supremely powerful and virtuous.<sup>135</sup> Thus this model connects them to the glory of the great rulers who did battle with the Saracen world, establishing the French kings as the protectors of Christendom. This emphasis on conflict with Saracens connects with the goal of launching another universal Christian Crusade against the Muslim world, a concept that became popular in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>136</sup> Not all illustrated manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* depict Muslims

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>133</sup> Elizabeth Morrison, Anne Dawson Hedeman, and Elisabeth Antoine. *Imagining the past in France: History in Manuscript Painting, 1250-1500*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010.p. 49-50.

<sup>134</sup> Anne Dawson Hedeman. *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France, 1274-1422*. 15-17.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 63.

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amongst their images, but those that do reveal interesting examples of representations of Muslims.

About 130 manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* still exist today, of which about 75 or more are illuminated.<sup>137</sup> Of these I was able to access 32 manuscripts through different institutions, all of which were illustrated. Out of these 32 manuscripts, 18 were within the time period of this study, and 12 of these manuscripts included some depictions of Muslims. All of these manuscripts were from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and were created in central France in and around Paris. In the past manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* have largely been used to examine the prestige of French kings and the coronation scenes depicted within it. One example is Anne Hedeman's remarkable study of the manuscript images, *The Royal Images: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques Des France 1274-1422*. Some art historians such as Deborah Strickland, however, have studied images from the illuminated manuscripts such as the copy produced for Charles V.<sup>138</sup> I would argue that the depictions from the various manuscripts can reveal the nature of contemporary perceptions of Muslims. For that reason most of the interactions between the Christian and Muslim world are meant to emphasize the power of the French rulers. The Muslims depicted fall into a few categories: either they are portrayed as the enemies of the Christian world, and thereby the French kingdom, or they are in a position to supplicate before the rulers as messengers or submissive kings. Because of this, the chronicle depicts Muslims in a way that is meant to elevate the French kings.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid. xx.

<sup>138</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. 170.

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### Dark Skin in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*

The manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, like the later manuscripts of the *History of Outremer*, include many images of Saracens with dark skin. A perfect example of this can be found in Royal MS 16 G VI, created for King John II in Paris between 1332-1350. In this manuscript, the Moorish king Agolant attacks a city in Spain. He and his Moors are depicted with remarkably dark skin that is almost charcoal grey in color.<sup>139</sup> (Figure 13) This is actually quite interesting because dark skinned figures are rarely depicted with such dark skin because it is difficult to depict facial features.<sup>140</sup> Several other scenes from this manuscript include Saracens with dark skin, but in these images they are shown with brown skin, which is somewhat more common.<sup>141</sup> The opposite end of this spectrum can be seen in BNF 10135, produced in Paris in the fourth quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, where the Saracen king Mustansir Billah encounters Philip III, and the Muslim figures have only slightly darker skin than the Christians.<sup>142</sup> (Figure 14) Although this may seem a marginal difference, a similar difference in pigment was discussed by Nadia R. Altschul in “Saracens and Race in

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<sup>139</sup> *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1332-1350. MS Royal 16 G VI, Royal Library, Paris. F. 167r.

<sup>140</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. 83.

<sup>141</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2606, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 122v.

<sup>142</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 10135, Bibliothèque Nationale de France F. 353v.

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*Roman de la Rose* Iconography.”<sup>143</sup> Eight of the manuscripts that I examined included figures with dark skin; almost all included some example of a Saracen with a highly distorted, caricature-like face. This is illustrated nicely in BNF Français 2606, where the soldiers of the king Judicial have dark skin and pronounced bulbous noses.<sup>144</sup> Although some of the manuscripts were inconsistent in their depiction of Saracens with dark skin, almost all of them include some form of turban as well.

Similarly, an important trope prevalent in the art of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* highlights the presence of the racial depictions of Muslims by including a dark-skinned head or even a single individual amongst a fair-skinned western appearing army. This identifies these forces as Muslim and demonstrates the power of these racial images to identify the entire group as a foreign army. Moreover the inclusion of one individual could have the same effect in the manuscript Royal MS 16 G VI, where one dark skinned individual serves to identify the entire group as Saracen soldiers.<sup>145</sup> (Figure 15) Another example appears in the manuscript Royal 20 C VII, made in Paris sometime after 1380 but before 1400, where the King of Bohemia is depicted doing battle with a group of Austrians and Saracens.<sup>146</sup> Although most of the figures are shown without noticeably eastern or Muslim characteristics, one prominent figure wears a turban with a beard and robes. (Figure 16) He is clearly meant to represent some eastern influence in the image and the presence of such figures in the battle scene. Although there is only one eastern

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<sup>143</sup> Nadia R. Altschul. "Saracens and Race in *Roman de La Rose* Iconography: The Case of Dangier in MS Douce 195." 2.

<sup>144</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2606, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 122r.

<sup>145</sup> *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1332-1350. MS Royal 16 G VI, Royal Library, Paris. F. 117r.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* F. 62

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individual depicted in the entire battle scene, this is enough to ground the reader and give them the context to understand the scene. Such was the power of the symbolism of Muslim characters that the appearance of a single individual in a crowded scene projected a strong message to the medieval audience.

Despite the prevalence of dark skinned depictions of Muslims in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, it should be observed that there were exceptions. In fact sometimes the artist of the same manuscript used dark skin and light skin to depict Saracens. For example in Royal 16 G VI the enemies whom Roland battles at Roncevaux, as well as his enemy Ferragut, are depicted with light skin.<sup>147</sup> This is surprising, as one would assume that the enemies of this particular French hero would be depicted as stereotypes of foreignness and evil. Another example can be found in a scene where Charlemagne punishes Saracens. The Saracens are illustrated in the act of violating Christian churches, and there are Muslim figures who appear identical to Charlemagne's soldiers.<sup>148</sup> Similarly the Saracens that capture Jerusalem are depicted with fair skin and western armor and are essentially identical to the western knights that are depicted throughout the manuscript.<sup>149</sup> (Figure 17) A similar scene from the manuscript Bodley Douce 217 depicts the Battle of Roncevaux and shows the Saracens to be identical to Roland and other western soldiers depicted throughout the copy.<sup>150</sup> These images indicate that the depictions of Saracens could be understood as white skinned as well, although the dark skin was common.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. F. 172v. & 173r.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. F. 185v.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. 155r.

<sup>150</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS Bodley 217, Bodleian Library. F. 112r.

Chapter Three: *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*  
Turbans and Eastern Dress in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*

Turbans and other variations of Eastern headdress are very common in the depictions of Saracens in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. Every manuscript that included a depiction of a Saracen with dark skin also included at least one image that represented them with a turban or eastern headdress. Moreover there were several examples of manuscripts that did not feature dark-skinned Saracens but depicted them with turbans instead. For example Bodley Douce 217, made in France between 1375 and 1400, which includes only one depiction of a Saracen that is distinctly different from Christians, does this through the turban. In the depiction of Roland and a Saracen fighting on horseback, the Saracen king Judicial and the giant are depicted as almost identical to their Christian counterparts Charlemagne and Roland. However the Saracens in the background have turbans on their heads, and this is the only depiction of alterity between the Saracens and Christians in the manuscript.<sup>151</sup> A similar scene appears in BNF Français 2606, created in Paris at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in a depiction of the Battle of Tunis, with Saint Louis himself dying in the background. (Figure 18) Although most of the Saracens have wrapped headdresses, two of the Muslims, one alive and about to strike at the Christians and the other lying dead on the ground, have dark skin and caricatured faces.<sup>152</sup> There was also a somewhat broader variety in the kinds of turbans that were depicted in the images.

While the images of turbans and eastern headdresses from the History of Outremer were largely the two variations that resembled modern bandanas or the *tortils*

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. f. 108v.

<sup>152</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2606, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 319v.

### Chapter Three: *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*

meant to represent headscarves, the *Grandes Chroniques de France* images have somewhat greater variety. The depictions of Muslims in BNF Français 10135, created between 1375 and 1400 in Paris, feature a very slight tortil-style headdress, such as those depicted on the Saracens at the Battle of Poitiers.<sup>153</sup> However the manuscript Royal 20 C VII features a taller, more modern looking turban on one of the Saracens whom the King of Bohemia is killing.<sup>154</sup> (Figure 16) A similar version of the turban can be seen in BNF 2606, worn by some of the Muslims atop the walls of the city that Ferragut and Roland appear before. This appears again in the same manuscript among the soldiers who observe the conference<sup>155</sup> between the two knights.<sup>156</sup> Perhaps one of the most interesting variations on the turban comes in the depiction of Ferragut in the manuscript BNF 2617, produced at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The headpiece has an almost conical appearance and has a long tail running off of the end. It is prominently displayed on several of the Muslims in the background of Roland and the giant's battle and Ferragut himself wears one as well.<sup>157</sup> The manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* show an interesting variation in the depiction of eastern headdresses.

Another interesting sartorial characteristic of the Muslim individuals in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* is a kind of Saracen dress that appears in several manuscripts. The dress is usually depicted in some pale or very light color, split down

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<sup>153</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 10135, Bibliothèque Nationale de France f. 98

<sup>154</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France ou de St. Denis*. 1380-1400. MS Royal 20 C VII, British Library, Paris.F. 62.

<sup>155</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2606, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 122r.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* F. 116v.

<sup>157</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2617, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.F. 123r.

### Chapter Three: *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*

the middle of the body and also split at the elbow so that the sleeves trail below the arms. It appears in the manuscript Royal 20 C VII in the previously discussed image of the Saracen battling the King of Bohemia.<sup>158</sup> (Figure 16) This kind of dress appears again in two of the manuscripts depicting the battles between Ferragut and Roland. The first, BNF Français 2617, shows Ferragut wearing this kind of dress, although it is not possible to make out what the other Saracens in the scene are wearing.<sup>159</sup> (Figure 19) However another depiction of Ferragut and Roland from the manuscript BNF Français 2606 does depict the rest of the Muslim figures wearing a similar kind of robe as the one that Ferragut wears.<sup>160</sup> (Figure 20) This robe is an example of another kind of sartorial markers of Saracens other than the turbans, although they are usually paired with eastern headdresses in most cases.

#### The “Most Christian Kings”<sup>161</sup> and Their Muslim Foes

Throughout the various depictions of Muslims in the copies of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, the majority of the images are of figures depicted in battle against the Christian armies of the French kings. The battles between the Christian and Muslim forces are focused on the battles fought under Charles Martel (686-741), Charlemagne (742-814), Saint-Louis (1215-1270), and Philip III (1245-1285). These leaders engage the Muslim forces, and are usually shown at the head of their armies; their foes are portrayed as suitably fearsome in appearance. It is here once again that contrast is

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<sup>158</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France Ou De St. Denis*. 1380-1400. MS Royal 20 C VII, British Library, Paris. F. 62

<sup>159</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2617, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.F. 123v.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* F. 116r.

<sup>161</sup> Anne Dawson Hedeman. *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France, 1274-1422*. 3.



### Chapter Three: *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*

remarkably important, as the Saracen soldiers are juxtaposed to the French usually through skin color and dress. Because of this, the images of the Saracens engaging the Christian world in battle are often made to appear more alien to the western audiences that are viewing them. This is not always the case, and in fact there are some manuscripts where the depictions of Muslims are identical to those of Christians, although these are less common. In addition there are some manuscripts that alternate between depictions of Muslims that are distinctly different and representations that are similar to Christians. However in almost every manuscript that does depict a battle with the Muslim world they do have at least one example of a dark-skinned and visibly foreign looking Muslim figure.

One manuscript that provides excellent examples of conflict between the French kings and the Muslim armies is Royal 16 G VI. The first combat shown between the two faiths is with Agolant and his Moorish armies in Spain, who are depicted taking and defending fortifications.<sup>162</sup> Charlemagne is shown besieging Agolant's castle, wearing a surcoat with the combined heraldry of the French kings and the Holy Roman Empire, leading a group of Christian knights.<sup>163</sup> (Figure 21) The conflict continues later in the manuscript when the artist depicts the crusades of Louis IX, whose personal piety and reputation as a crusade hero were often emulated. Three more images from the manuscript depict dark skinned Saracens going toe-to-toe with Christian knights, all of which show them in a negative light. Two prominent examples appear towards the end of the manuscript, one depicts Saracen soldiers capturing French knights in a tower and

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<sup>162</sup> *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1332-1350. MS Royal 16 G VI, Royal Library, Paris. F. 167 & 168.

<sup>163</sup> Anne Dawson Hedeman. *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques De France, 1274-1422*. 1991.

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the other shows Muslim defectors attempting to be baptized by Christians but being chased by other Saracens.<sup>164</sup> (Figure 22) In the latter image the menacing Muslim soldiers tower above their submissive fellows and hound them with swords. These two images represent a serious threat to the Christian world and are depicted in a racial and distinctly eastern light. The images also enforce a certain contrast between the French and the Saracens, whose simple clothing and beards are juxtaposed to the smooth faced and armored knights. (Figure 22) Jens T. Wollesen observed that this seems to be an attempt at “realism” by the artists to depict the western and eastern figures as something close to how they actually exist.<sup>165</sup> Royal MS 16 G VI is an excellent example of a manuscript that demonstrates the importance of the conflict between the French kings and the Muslim world that was expressed in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.

Of all the depictions of French kings squaring off against negatively depicted Muslim foes, perhaps none has received more attention than the image of the Saracens of Cordova from BNF 2813. The image depicts Charlemagne encountering a group of Muslim soldiers who have donned devil masks and who beat drums hoping to frighten Charlemagne’s soldiers and their horses.<sup>166</sup> (Figure 23) Although the Saracens themselves are not being depicted as devils, the connection between these two kinds of figures, who are often similarly depicted in art, has been the subject of significant scholarly attention. Deborah Strickland argues that this depiction gives “visual form” to

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<sup>164</sup> *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1332-1350. MS Royal 16 G VI, Royal Library, Paris. 450-452.

<sup>165</sup> Jens T. Wollesen. "East Meets West and the Problem with Those Pictures." In *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*. 346

<sup>166</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 2813, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 119

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the crusader belief that Saracens were the servants of the Satan.<sup>167</sup> She emphasizes how this would have resonated to a contemporary Christian audience and reinforced the hatred of Saracens. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen also examines this image and focuses on the highly racial and subhuman portrayal of the Saracens with their masks. He argues that the Muslim soldiers are essentially disguising themselves as themselves, in a similar kind of characterization that the Christians would have already applied to them. In fact he claims that without context from the narrative they might even have been conceived of as Muslims anyway.<sup>168</sup> This image has fascinated scholars because it makes the comparison between Saracens and devils more concrete. The implicit negative feelings directed towards Muslims expressed through their depiction is given an explicit form in an image that clearly establishes them as subhuman.

These depictions of Muslims with dark skin and foreign features are quite common in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* and are an integral part of establishing the French kings' authority and power. By representing the kings battling and defeating the Muslim threat they establish themselves as defenders of the faith. It also should be noted that these depictions of Muslims fall into the same period as the renewed interest in Crusading from the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover it was an attempt to connect them to the glorious history of St. Louis, which was particularly important for the early kings of the Valois dynasty. Because their claim was based upon their connection to St. Louis it was important to establish this through manuscripts such as BNF 2813. This was created for John II, the son of the then-king Philip VI between 1375 and 1380, and was intended to

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<sup>167</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. 169-170.

<sup>168</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment." In *Medieval Identity Machines*. 202-203.

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enforce the association between the Valois kings and the glorious crusading past.<sup>169</sup>

Heavily racial depictions of Saracens that play up their alterity provide a foe for the historical French kings of old and to prove the strength of their nation and their faith against the enemies of Christianity.

### The Saracen Mirror

An interesting trend appears in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* manuscripts, one in line with the concept of the Muslim world as a dark mirror to the western world. This is shown, often quite literally, in the case of the depictions of Muslim kings and soldiers that often relied upon the application of Muslim markers of identity to existing topoi. These images frequently have a direct, literally face-to-face, contrast between various different examples of Christian and Muslim individuals. In these cases a trait typically associated with the Muslim world, such as dark skin or the wearing of turbans, is attributed to a traditional depiction of a figure that would exist in the Christian world. Sometimes this is the case in depictions of soldiers, who are given dark skin but virtually identical armor to the Christian enemies whom they face. The image of the Battle of Roncevaux from BNF 2813 demonstrates this, as the Saracen figures wear western armor but have visor-less helmets to display their dark skin.<sup>170</sup> However it is a very common occurrence for Muslim soldiers to be depicted with the same armor and weaponry but with a kind of turban or headscarf added or affixed to their kit. For example in the manuscript BNF Français 10135 the soldiers are virtually identical to their Christian foes

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<sup>169</sup> Maureen Quigley. "Romantic Geography and the Crusades: British Library Royal Ms. 19 D I." 55-56.

<sup>170</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 2813, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris F. 121r.

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but they have a *tortil* wrapped around their helmets to denote their Saracen identity.<sup>171</sup>

(Figure 14) These examples demonstrate a kind of blending of the various topoi to create something that would be immediately recognizable to the audience as an individual who was both a Muslim and a soldier. If anything it confirms the importance of these varieties of identifiers because they are so important to the depiction of Muslims that they can be applied without needing a full depiction of a Muslim.

In addition to depicting soldiers in battle, this mixing of different topoi was also seen in depictions of Muslim kings. The pattern of depicting Muslim kings as a reflection of Christian kings but with Saracen characteristics is even more common in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. This is often shown with a direct interaction between the two kings of their differing religions in order to heighten the contrast between the two. The aforementioned interaction between the King of Tunis and Philip III is one such example, extending the wrapped headdress to the top of the king underneath his crown. Other manuscripts, however, include this interaction between the two kings and portray the Muslim king as essentially a dark skinned version of the king.<sup>172</sup> (Figure 15) It should be noted however that the Muslim king in this image does have some noticeable differences; for example he has a markedly stereotyped face with somewhat distorted features and a more bulbous nose. He also has a fuller beard and is slightly more portly, although the latter likely has little to do with his depiction as a Saracen and is simply meant to reflect well on Charlemagne. (Figure 24) Another example of these meeting kings appears in the manuscript Bodley Douce 217, where the two kings Charlemagne

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<sup>171</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 10135, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 371r.

<sup>172</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 2813, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris F. 115v.

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and Judicial are almost identical, although Judicial's soldiers are clearly depicted as Saracens.<sup>173</sup> There is another example of a Muslim king being depicted as such that does not feature a direct interaction between the two, the Moorish leader Agolant in the manuscript Royal MS 16 G VI. Agolant is something of a mirror of Charlemagne, and although the two never directly interact it is clear that the artist has modeled his appearance on that of traditional Christian kings.<sup>174</sup> (Figure 14) This reflection of traditional topoi with a certain Saracen flair seems to indicate some effort by the artists to show the similarities and differences between the two cultures.

This blending of the topoi of Saracens and traditional Christian figures is an interesting combination of the different characterizations. By combining traditional depictions of kings and soldiers with Saracen qualities such as eastern headdress and dark skin they acknowledge implicit similarities between the two cultures. Although they are demonstrating that they are the other in so far as their faith and their physicality, they still operate with the same institutions of kings and soldiers as Christians. Furthermore this can help to heighten the depiction of the Muslim enemies as a mirror of the French figures that they combat, albeit distorted. By using this technique it also invites direct comparison of the two peoples, both their rulers and their warfare. For example the images of Charlemagne meeting with Agolant lead the audience to compare the two, and of course Charlemagne will come out favorably by this comparison. Presenting Saracens and Christians juxtaposed in this way allows for the audience to be shown the superiority of the Christian people.

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid. F. 108v.

<sup>174</sup> *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1332-1350. MS Royal 16 G VI, Royal Library, Paris. F. 167r.

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Ferragut and the Admirable Saracen

One of the most interesting figures who appears in images from the *Grandes Chroniques de France* manuscripts is the giant Ferragut. Ferragut, almost Saladin-like in the manner in which he is depicted, was also known by a variety of different permutations of the name. According to the Chronicle and the other stories in which he appears, Ferragut was a Saracen knight and a giant who fought Roland for his country and his faith.<sup>175</sup> However they eventually came to respect each other, and in fact Roland not only allowed his opponent to rest and sleep in the middle of their combat, he also engaged him in a theological discussion to attempt to turn him from Islam and convert him.<sup>176</sup> As Siobhain Bly Calkin points out, Ferragut refuses Roland because of his pride and his inability to open his mind to Christianity.<sup>177</sup> She also notes that the giant knight is something of an aberration and a blending of the two types, which commonly depicted Saracen enemies for Christian knights as magical giants or as honorable knights although Ferragut is both.<sup>178</sup> Eventually Roland defeats Ferragut, finding a way to defeat the spell that protects him and stab his sword into his foe's stomach.<sup>179</sup> Because of the respect that Ferragut commands from Roland, and because of his honorable nature, the depictions of him in manuscript art represent a blending of characteristics similar to those of the images of Saladin.

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<sup>175</sup> Siobhain Bly Calkin. *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript*. 17

<sup>176</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. "On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race in Late Medieval France and England." 204-205.

<sup>177</sup> Siobhain Bly Calkin. *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript*. 52.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>179</sup> *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1332-1350. MS Royal 16 G VI, Royal Library, Paris. F. 172v.

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Because of the close relationship between Roland and Ferragut and the chivalric tradition, depictions of Ferragut often show him to be a western figure. In Royal MS 19 G VI Ferragut is depicted for all intents and purposes as a Christian knight, and is only visibly distinguishable from Roland by his height. (Figure 25) These images show an amicable relationship between Roland and Ferragut; their debate, as well as the Saracen's chance to rest, are depicted. There is also a fascinating depiction of Ferragut in BNF 2813 that also shows him as a western figure.<sup>180</sup> (Figure 26) Once again he and Roland are depicted with identical armor and weaponry; indeed, the only distinguishing feature between the two, other than the giant's height, is that Ferragut has a beard while Roland is clean shaven. It is important to note that both of these manuscripts also include depictions of Muslims that emphasize their alterity through physical characteristics, implying that a conscious choice was made not to do so for the giant. The lack of any eastern characteristics in these scenes demonstrates that Ferragut is seen to be virtually a western figure because of his status as a knight and a worthy opponent for Roland.

Many more images, however, play up the eastern, foreign qualities of Ferragut, demonstrating his connection to the Saracen world. Very commonly these images feature not only the combatants Roland and Ferragut, but also their respective kings and armies, who line the sides of the images like spectators viewing the battle. They represent the worlds that are doing battle in this struggle. This is demonstrated well in Bodley Douce 217, where the two fighters are armored identically, although Ferragut holds a large curved sword. The two rulers and their armies observe from the sidelines, and the Muslim

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<sup>180</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 2813, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris F. 118.



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forces are dressed in turbans. Charlemagne and Judicial however are virtually identical as they watch their two champions fighting.<sup>181</sup>

The image from BNF 2606 also depicts Ferragut and Roland battling outside the walls of a city, with turbaned and dark skinned onlookers atop the walls of the city. (Figure 19) Similarly Charlemagne and his men observe from the side, while the two duel in the middle. However the artist is careful to enforce the emperor's prestige by making Charlemagne stand just a bit higher than the giant. Ferragut himself has dark skin and robes, with a tall peaked cap on his head and a similarly large scimitar in hand that once again reaches outside of the picture. He even holds a shield with a human face on it, a piece of equipment typically associated with eastern warriors and giants.<sup>182</sup> In a second image, the two are shown engaging in their debate while the armies continue to look on. The Saracen forces watching them are stereotypical, with dark skin, bulbous noses, and turbans on their heads. The dark-skinned Ferragut, however, has a western facial structure, suggesting that he is different and more civilized than the other Muslims. In BNF 2617 there is a similarly racial depiction of Ferragut with dark skin and robes and a turban on his head. (Figure 20) Although his sword is smaller, it still hangs menacingly over his head as Roland battles with him. This image contributes to the depiction of Ferragut as a Saracen figure closely tied to the Muslim world.<sup>183</sup> These images clearly depict Ferragut and Roland as locked in a battle that seems to transcend them, applying not only to their respective countries but also to their faiths.

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<sup>181</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1375-1400. MS Bodley 217, Bodleian Library. F. 108v.

<sup>182</sup> John Block Friedman. *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000. 157-158.

<sup>183</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2617, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 108v.

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In these images, the various artists depict Ferragut in ways that run the gamut of the different depictions of Saracens. Although some representations of the giant show him as a Christian knight, others choose to emphasize his foreignness and play up his eastern characteristics. As a figure who is at once admirable and monstrous, a Saracen, a giant, and a knight, Ferragut occupies a curious place in the audience's mind. The artists recognize this and attempt to contextualize his curious combination of positive and negative characteristics. These depictions of Ferragut demonstrate how westernized iconography was contrasted to the standard topos of Saracens and how they were applied to figures such as Ferragut who had positive qualities. This reflects the complex understanding of Saracens that both respected the occasions where their behavior was like that of good Christians and also when they viewed them as monstrous.

#### Conclusions

The expansion of the different characteristics that were used to identify Saracens is quite noteworthy in the manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. Although the increased number of depictions of Saracens with dark skin is one of the more prominent examples, others are also important. Throughout these manuscripts the turban and the headscarf are prevalent and appear in many shapes and sizes. As with the depictions of Muslims from the *History of Outremer*, the images from the *Grandes Chroniques de France* commonly rely on the turban to depict Muslims. Other markers include the eastern robe-like garment that was commonly attributed to Saracens in images such as the image in BNF Français 2606 of Ferragut and his people.<sup>184</sup> Overall throughout the copies of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, Muslims begin to be

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<sup>184</sup> *Grandes Chroniques de France*. 1400. MS BNF FR 2606, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. F. 116r.

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depicted in a richer and more varied way, implying a different understanding of the Muslim world. In contrast to the depictions from the *History of Outremer*, which were almost identical, the Muslims in this chronicle are more complexly illustrated and have been portrayed in such a way to differentiate them even further from the Christians whom they encounter.

Despite the emphasis on contrast and on the threat of Muslim soldiers and kings found in many manuscripts, there are still images depicting the Saracens as almost identical to the Christian figures. Clearly the Christian artists, and by extension their audience, could recognize that Saracens did not always have to be depicted with leering dark faces in order to identify them in the manuscripts. These kinds of depictions appear in many of the manuscripts and also use the depictions of certain figures that cross the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the Christians and Muslims. Ferragut stands out as a noble Saracen with a variety of different degrees of eastern characteristics. This demonstrates that the Christian artists, like the writers, could comprehend a complex understanding of Saracens, one that allowed for positive and even noble depictions. To a certain extent this is even seen in the paralleling of the different roles of Christians and Muslims that extend Saracen qualities to Christian topoi in order to lend these figures the attributes of, for example, a Muslim and a king. These images indicate an acknowledgment by medieval thinkers of a more complex understanding of Saracens that could accept similarities between the two faiths and peoples

**Chapter Four: The *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose***

So far in this study the two manuscripts that have been examined were chronicles, historical accounts of Christians combating Muslims. But the romances from the same period can also shed light upon the ways that artists chose to depict Muslims in the 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. For this reason I also studied the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose*, one of the more popular romances from the time, which includes many images of the marvels of the East. Since classical times Western writers had attempted to understand this strange and wondrous land, and medieval artists were also called upon to find a way to make this unknown world make sense to their audience. In this chapter I will be examining how the artists depicted Saracens in these manuscripts, as well as other foreign races, to better understand the perceptions of Muslims and how this affected their understanding of the foreign world.

Derived from the poem and history by Pseudo-Calisthenes and based upon a contemporary Latin translation of the text, the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* was translated into the vulgate sometime between 1260 and 1290. It relates the story of Alexander the Great's life and his many accomplishments, military and otherwise. Although many romances of Alexander's life were produced in the Middle Ages, this manuscript has been described as the "most important."<sup>185</sup> This was likely because the text was extremely popular throughout the Middle Ages as a prose, vulgate translation of the famous poem. It abbreviates some of Alexander's achievements and adventures, however, such as his Greek campaign and his discussions with the Brahmin pygmy king

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<sup>185</sup> George Cary. *The Medieval Alexander*. Cambridge: University Press, 1956. 46.

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Dindimus. Many of the manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* were illuminated, and often in particularly lavish fashion. Today sixteen illuminated copies of the manuscript are extant, although some have only a handful of images. Of the total manuscripts I was able to access, nine fit the parameters of this study, most of which fall into the 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Because there were fewer available manuscripts for this manuscript my focus will be more narrow and specific. The narrative spans the entirety of Alexander's life from his conception by the Egyptian Pharaoh Nectanebus through his conquest of the known world and up to his death and the distribution of his kingdom amongst his generals.<sup>186</sup> For the purposes of this research the most relevant section of the story is the king's adventures and conquest in the east.

#### Alexander's Eastern Campaign

It is in Alexander's eastern campaigns that he comes face to face with many exotic foreign races and monsters. It is in these images that we see Alexander as a representative of the western world confronting the east. Many of the races he encounters are monstrous or some kind of hybrid of normal men. For example, the king encounters a race of sword-horned men and races of men and women who live only in the water.<sup>187</sup> He also faces several classical monstrous races such as blemmyae, cynocephali, and Cyclopes, who are illustrated in several of the manuscripts. His interactions with the Eastern world are primarily armed conflicts or some kind of peaceful interaction between the two peoples. One of the most important races Alexander encounters is the Brahmins, a race of civilized pygmy men. Alexander has a famous interaction with their king

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>187</sup> "Le Livre Et Le Vraye Hystoire Du Bon Roy Alixandre." 1420. MS Royal 20 B XX, British Library, Paris. British Library. F. 78r.

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Dindimus wherein they discuss philosophy.<sup>188</sup> The most famous story surrounding Alexander and the foreign world, however, is that of Alexander and the people of Gog and Magog, whom Alexander forces behind the Iron Gates to keep them from the rest of the world.<sup>189</sup> According to a popular legend, dating back to the Classical period, this race would resurface at the end times and sally forth to ravage the world. Alexander's encounters with the various monsters of the east are coupled with his encounters with other foreign races in his conquests.

In his campaign to the east, Alexander traveled to and conquered many countries, and his adventures are chronicled in the illuminated images. Alexander's travels in the manuscript take him through the Holy Land, and he visits and conquers sites such as Tyre and Jerusalem. This is an important facet of the comparisons that would be drawn between Alexander and later crusaders. The Macedonian king also encountered the Amazons, the Classical tribe of warrior women. One of the most notable stories from the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* describes the real battle between Alexander and the king of Porus, the king of India. In their first battle, Alexander subjugates Porus' kingdom and later defeats him in battle after the Indian king betrays him.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore Porus and Alexander's wars also famously included the defeat of his elephants by Alexander's Macedonian spearmen. This battle helped establish elephants as something of a universal symbol for the east in the western world.<sup>191</sup> Porus is prominently depicted in most of the

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<sup>188</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1344. MS Bodley 264, Bodleian Library, Belgium. Bodleian Library.

<sup>189</sup> John Victor Tolan. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. 49.

<sup>190</sup> Mark Cruse. "Costuming the Past: Heraldry in Illustrations of the "Roman D'Alexandre" (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264)." 55.

<sup>191</sup> Rudolf Wittkower. *Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters*. London: Warburg Inst, 1942. 86-87.

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illuminated copies of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* such as BNF Français 24364, produced in France between 1275 and 1300.<sup>192</sup> Alexander's encounters with the eastern world helped to provide a model for medieval audiences attempting to understand the foreign world.

The manuscripts of this Alexandrian Romance were often paired with other books that created a connection between Alexander and contemporary events and issues. In *Illuminating the Roman d'Alexandre* Mark Cruse noted the relevance of the Crusading manuscripts in understanding the depiction of Alexander in the context of the Crusading frenzy of the fourteenth century.<sup>193</sup> This interest in conducting another universal Christian Crusade was popular and inspired the producers of the manuscripts to include stories of heroes such as Alexander with chronicles of the Crusades. It has been argued that the inclusion of these stories, and other stories of heroic characters such as Judah Maccabee, created a connection in medieval minds between the adventures of Alexander and the Crusades and elevated the goals of the Crusaders.<sup>194</sup> The inclusion of the stories of travels to the east served a similar purpose: to attempt to give some sense of what the foreign world was like. Some manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* are included among other manuscripts of travel and of the marvels of the east. For example the travel narrative of the monk Odoric of Pordenone was included, as well as the popular albeit fictitious account of Sir John of Mandeville. Two of the more prominent manuscripts, Royal MS 19 D I and Bodley MS 264, also include the writings of Marco

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<sup>192</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre." 1375-1400. MS BNF FR 786, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, France. Bibliothèque Nationale De France. 56v.

<sup>193</sup> Mark Cruse. *Illuminating the Roman D'Alexandre: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264: The Manuscript as Monument*. 161-162.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* 175.

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Polo and lavishly depict his travels in China. In the Marco Polo sections of these manuscripts Muslims are often depicted as one of the races whom the adventurers met in their travels.

##### Depicting Saracens and Other Races

Although the copies of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* do not always depict Muslims directly, they are important for understanding how the artists conceptualized the East and the many peoples who resided there. A literal depiction of Saracens appears in a few of the manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre*. They appear for example in the manuscript Royal MS 19 D I, created between 1333 and 1340 in Paris for King Philip VI of France, where they are shown with dark skin, turbans, and bare feet.<sup>195</sup> (Figure 29) These Saracens of Compision are depicted in a kind of primitive light, as evidenced by their bare feet and their befuddled faces as they encounter Alexander. They appear later in the manuscripts as well, with swords drawn to combat Christian crusaders in a later section of the book.<sup>196</sup> A similar almost identical depiction can be seen in Bodley MS 264, which was made in modern day Belgium in 1344 for Philip VI of France, (1293-1350) which shows the Saracens encountering Alexander in much the same way. These representations of Muslims in the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* are important for understanding the depictions of other races in the manuscripts.

The depiction of other foreign peoples in these manuscripts borrows heavily from the contemporary Saracen topos and uses characteristics like dark skin and turbans for other races in addition to Muslims. Although the races being depicted are not themselves Saracens, they often had elements of the typical Saracen topos included in their

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<sup>195</sup> Royal MS 19 D I F. 6r.

<sup>196</sup> Royal MS 19 D I F. 189v.



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iconography. This is likely an attempt to understand foreign races with whom the medieval audience might not be familiar. By using the typical depiction of Saracens to represent other eastern races the artists of these manuscripts made them palatable to their audience. Although they may not have a concept of what a Tartar is they can easily project the Saracen topos onto them and get at least some understanding of what they are like.<sup>197</sup> Examples of this can be found in several manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* throughout period of this study. In BNF Français 790, made in Paris in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, Alexander encounters two Indian figures depicted atop the walls of a castle as typical Saracens with dark skin and eastern headdresses.<sup>198</sup> (Figure 30) Another image from the same manuscripts depicts the same topos being applied to the Babylonian soldiers in the Battle of Babylon, including their king, who wears an eastern headdress underneath his crown.<sup>199</sup> This trend is common in two of the most densely illustrated copies of the manuscript, Royal MS 19 D I and Bodleian MS 264.

The first of these manuscripts, Royal MS 19 D I, includes many images of foreign peoples like the Tartars being depicted with Saracen appearances. For example in the manuscript the artist depicts both a battle with the Saracens and the legendary king Prester John, and many depictions of Mongols who are very similar to the depictions of these Saracens.<sup>200</sup> The early depiction of the Muslims battling Prester John features the imaginary king adorned in western armor facing off against an army of dark-skinned

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<sup>197</sup> L.E. Saurma-Jeltsch. "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." 90.

<sup>198</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre." 1400-1425. MS BNF FR 790, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 54

<sup>199</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre." 1400-1425. MS BNF FR 790, Bibliothèque Nationale De France, Paris. F. 93

<sup>200</sup> Saurma-Jeltsch, L. E. "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." 57.

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Saracens with eastern dress.<sup>201</sup> This is a clear juxtaposition between the allegedly Christian king who would save them from the Saracens and the enemy themselves. Later in the manuscript the narrative turns to the history of the Khans, specifically Kublai Khan whom Marco Polo encountered in his travels. In these depictions, the Mongol leaders are often depicted with dark skin and traditionally Saracen characteristics such as turbans and other kinds of similar headdresses.<sup>202</sup> In fact they are similar to depictions of the Saracens of Campision encountered earlier in the text. Interestingly in these images the Mongol kings are often depicted with a unique kind of turban that appears to be some attempt to create a hybrid between the turban and the western crown.<sup>203</sup> (Figure 29) The other manuscripts in this study did not have anything resembling this headdress and, thus it is an interesting aberration.

Interestingly the depictions of the Mongols in this manuscript are fluid, sometimes showing the Mongols with dark skin and eastern appearances and sometimes as traditionally western figures. In some of the images of the khan fighting his uncle Nayan, the Khan's armies are depicted as Prester John's were earlier in the manuscript, with full western plate armor and helmets. Despite his western looking soldiers the khan himself is depicted with eastern characteristics, specifically dark skin and the curious type of turban previously discussed. The changes are seemingly random and the king swaps characteristics several times throughout the manuscript. In fact, during one of the depictions of the coronation of one of the Khans, he is depicted in traditional western

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<sup>201</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1340. MS Royal 19 D I, British Library, Paris. F. 77v.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. F. 76.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. F. 83r.

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attire and even has a Christian priest present to provide a blessing to the event.<sup>204</sup> (Figure 30) Later he and his followers, and in fact his wives, are shown in a variety of different images such as feasts where they are clearly situated in the western world. This vacillation between the two depictions is a fascinating trend in this manuscript; different theories have been put forward regarding it. One of the most convincing arguments for this is that in the images that are the most similar to the actions of Christian kings the artist depicts them as such.<sup>205</sup> When Kublai Khan is executing his uncle Nayan,<sup>206</sup> or when Genghis Khan is depicted before the Saracens,<sup>207</sup> they are depicted as typical Saracens. In fact in *The Gothic Idol*, Michael Camille noted that Genghis Khan sits before an idol, the traditional pose for a pagan tyrant before his subjects.<sup>208</sup> (Figure 31) However when he is shown hunting,<sup>209</sup> or receiving taxes and tribute from his kingdoms,<sup>210</sup> he is presented as a western king. This flexibility for depicting the khan helps to situate the audience in the world and to help them understand his actions in the way that they understand their own world.

The other manuscript that also includes depictions of races depicted like Saracens is Bodleian MS 264, which also has an interesting depiction of Mongols that is similar to Saracens. The manuscript has been called the most extensively and beautifully illuminated of all the Alexander manuscripts and features a great number of images of Tartars living in their nation. These figures have dark skin and are usually depicted

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<sup>204</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1340. MS Royal 19 D I, British Library, Paris. F. 97r.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. F. 70v.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. F. 85.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. F. 76.

<sup>208</sup> Michael Camille. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*. 153.

<sup>209</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1340. MS Royal 19 D I, British Library, Paris. F. 90

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 115.

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wearing some kind of turban and robe that resembles the depiction of Saracens earlier in the manuscript. Although the kind of turban that they wear is somewhat different from the Saracens depicted earlier, it would still have been understood as a turban.<sup>211212</sup>

(Figure 32) To further emphasize the foreignness and strangeness of their people they are depicted without shoes, and the beards of all the individuals are white even when their hair is black. The examples of the Tartar world also share another connection to the Muslims depicted earlier: they are both shown worshipping idols. The idols depicted are virtually identical, commonly identified as the “Mars” variant of the idols with a naked figure depicted with a shield and spear.<sup>213</sup> This was done to demonstrate a connection between the two peoples as well as to provide the audience with context to ground themselves in the foreign world the artist is depicted.<sup>214</sup> Interestingly the depictions of Genghis Khan in this manuscript are quite the opposite of the images from the Royal MS 19 D I. Whereas in the other manuscript the khans were depicted as being either western or Eastern, he and his soldiers are depicted as dark skinned in Bodley MS 264, albeit in western armor.<sup>215</sup> (Figure 33) These images reveal a parallel between the characterization of Muslims and other races such as Tartars in Bodleian MS 264.

These images from manuscripts such as Royal MS 19 D I and Bodley MS 264 reflect the similarities between the depictions of Saracens and the depictions of other

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<sup>211</sup> Joyce Kubiski. "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cit  Des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)". 162.

<sup>212</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1344. MS Bodley 264, Bodleian Library, Belgium. Bodleian Library. 248r.

<sup>213</sup> Michael Camille. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*. 135.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. 153-156.

<sup>215</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1344. MS Bodley 264, Bodleian Library, Belgium. Bodleian Library. 231v.

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foreign races such as Tartars. They share the dark skin and turbans that were traditionally attributed to Saracens at the time and serve to establish some context for the races being depicted. The variety of these different races, from Indians to Babylonians to Mongols, shows the importance of the Saracen topos as a means of understanding foreign races. It should be noted that the term Saracen could be applied to many different foreign, non-Christian races such as the Mongols.<sup>216</sup> Moreover they are commonly directly compared to the Saracens in the images by showing them worshipping idols in the same way that the Muslims do. The variations between different depictions of Kublai Khan and other figures reveals that like Saracens, other races could be understood in ways that embraced both a foreign and westernized conception. The prevalence of this topos for Saracens and other races reflects how deeply ingrained the idea of Muslims as the other was for the artists of these texts.

Royal MS 19 D I has another important incorporation of the adventures of Alexander and Marco Polo to Muslims in the final section, which features a history of crusading. This manuscript was once described as a "recruiting poster" by art historian D.J.A. Ross, and it features fascinating depictions of the foreign world as understood by its artists.<sup>217</sup> These images depict Christians traveling to foreign lands and battling Muslim foes that are similar to the Saracens encountered earlier in the book as well as many of the depictions of the Mongols. Although there are only two such images, they depict Saracens with dark skin and wrapped headdresses doing battle with Christians who

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<sup>216</sup> Saurma-Jeltsch, L. E. "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." 62.

<sup>217</sup> Cruse, Mark. "Costuming the Past: Heraldry in Illustrations of the "Roman D'Alexandre" 54.

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are armored almost identically to Alexander.<sup>218</sup> (Figure 34) Beyond that they are even remarkably similar to the depictions of Prester John doing battle with Genghis Khan's armies or Alexander fighting his own foes. In fact it has been observed that Prester John is even given similarly colored heraldry as the depictions of Alexander earlier in the manuscript.<sup>219</sup> This establishes a rather clear connection between the heroic pre-Christian Alexander and his enemies to the modern conflict between Christians and Muslims. The inclusion of other heroic, or at the least sympathetic, figures such as Prester John, serves to heighten this as well. It is the duality established by these images and the depiction of Muslims and other eastern foes throughout the manuscript that has led to individuals claiming that it is a kind of propaganda piece for the Crusading movement.

#### The Influence of Saracens

Saracens are depicted in some versions of the manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose*, but more importantly, the influence of Saracens is demonstrated through artistic elements such as heraldry. As many scholars have noted, the depictions of Indians and other races, monstrous or not, are sometimes linked to the Muslim world through traits other than racial ones. For example the depiction of King Porus in Bodleian MS 264 features prominent images of the king with boar heraldry associated with him.<sup>220</sup> (Figure 35) This boar's head was associated with the Saracen world, and one scholar claims that it not only connects him and his soldiers to Saracens, but also serves to forecast to the audience that he is an antagonist who will inevitably betray

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<sup>218</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1340. MS Royal 19 D I, British Library, Paris. F. 189v. & F. 233r.

<sup>219</sup> L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch. "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." 62.

<sup>220</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1344. MS Bodley 264, Bodleian Library, Belgium. Bodleian Library. F. 59r.

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Alexander.<sup>221</sup> This is demonstrated as well by the heraldry of the Ethiopian head that looms prominently in many images later in the manuscript as the heraldry of the Babylonian emir.<sup>222</sup> (Figure 36) Mark Cruse argues that these symbols establish the otherness of the foes and connects them to the Saracens as both a racial and geographic other to contrast against the western Alexander. He also notes the common appearance of these symbols in manuscripts such as the Luttrell Psalter.<sup>223</sup> This can be found in Royal MS 19 D I as well, with a depiction of King Porus of India and Alexander fighting prominently displaying a soldier with crescents on his shield.<sup>224</sup> Although the Saracens are not necessarily shown themselves, these draw connections between the races that Alexander encounters and the Saracens.

Several manuscripts, Royal MS 19 D I,<sup>225</sup> and MS Bodleian 264,<sup>226</sup> relate the story of Alexander's encounter with a wild man who lives in the wilderness and is covered in hair. (Figure 37) Upon realizing that the wild man is devoid of reason Alexander has him burned, and this is depicted in both of these manuscripts. This is significant because Wild Men, a certain kind of monstrous race, were typically associated with the Muslim world. In fact they were often portrayed with turbans, one of the typical characteristics of Muslims; it has even been said that they were essentially turned *into* Muslims by this connection. The medieval audience would have understood this

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<sup>221</sup> Mark Cruse. "Costuming the Past: Heraldry in Illustrations of the "Roman D'Alexandre" (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264)." 55.

<sup>222</sup> Mark Cruse. "Costuming the Past 45 and 'Roman D'Alexandre En Prose.'" 1344. MS Bodley 264, Bodleian Library, Belgium. Bodleian Library. f. 90v.

<sup>223</sup> Mark Cruse. "Costuming the Past and the 'Roman D'Alexandre En Prose.'" 55-56

<sup>224</sup> L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch. "Saracens: Opponents to the Body of Christianity." 62.

<sup>225</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1340. MS Royal 19 D I, British Library, Paris. F.

31r.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. 95r.

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connection and seen the comparison between the wild men and the Saracens as evidence of their presence in these images.<sup>227</sup> These subtle connections to the Muslim world were interwoven into the Alexandrian romances and draw parallels between the adventures of Alexander and the Christian world's interactions with Muslims.

These examples of sartorial and heraldic references to Saracens in the manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* establish the influence of Saracens in the images. Although figures like King Porus are not traditionally depicted as Saracens, they are given iconographical connections to the Muslim world. This is important for establishing the Crusader context for the manuscript, as Mark Cruse noted, as well as the depiction of these figures as "the other." It indicates that Saracens were viewed as such a ubiquitous symbol of alterity that simply connecting a figure to them in art was enough to lead the audience to understand them as a foreigner and an other. This is only compounded by the connections that can be drawn between Saracens and the monstrous races in the Alexandrian Romances.

#### Saracens and the Monstrous Races

Similarly something must be said about the traditional depiction of the other races of men that Alexander encounters. For the most part many of the monstrous races are depicted with their traditional appearances, although as we shall see there is some variation. The other races that Alexander encounters who are not typically depicted as commonly as other monstrous races but are rather unique to the Alexandrian Romance are shown with few of the characteristics that are usually attributed to Saracens. Most of them are depicted with fair skin and blonde hair, and are very close to the traditional

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<sup>227</sup> Nadia R. Altschul. "Saracens and Race in *Roman De La Rose* Iconography: The Case of Dangier in MS Douce 195." 3.



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depictions of westerners. However they are usually shown without clothing, one of the traditional means of depicting a people as less civilized.<sup>228</sup> For example one depiction of the people of Gog and Magog depicts them as western men and women, albeit without clothing, as they are forced beyond the Iron Gates by one of Alexander's soldiers with a club.<sup>229</sup> (Figure 38)

Interestingly these monstrous races are usually identified as their particular race based upon the individual characteristics that make them unique. For example cave dwellers are within their homes,<sup>230</sup> the race that resides in water are also depicted in their element.<sup>231</sup> These monsters that are fairly close to the western depictions are also those races with whom Alexander deals peacefully. The others, largely the hybrids such as horseheaded men and cynocephali, are the races with which Alexander is usually shown battling in the manuscripts. It has been suggested that the difference between these fair skinned figures and the dark-skinned depiction of Saracens is that the Saracens were actually more readily understood by the readers and that therefore there was a method of contextualizing them. The other races however were unique to the Alexandrian Romances and therefore were not usually depicted using elements of the Saracen topos.

One interesting theme that arises in some of the manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre* is the connection between Saracens and the monstrous races. This was commented on by Deborah Strickland in *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, and many of the

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<sup>228</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. 55.

<sup>229</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1400-1425. MS Harley 4979, Harley, British Library, Southern Netherlands. British Library. F. 47

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. F. 56v.

<sup>231</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1300-1325. MS Royal 20 A V, British Library, Northern France/Southern Netherlands. British Library. F. 68v.

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images from the manuscripts are consistent with this. This is particularly prevalent in manuscripts Royal MS 20 B XX, made in Paris in 1420, where several of the monstrous races are depicted with distinctly eastern and even Saracen characteristics. For example, in one manuscript from the former, the monster Cyclopes are shown with turbans, beards, and distinctly curved swords.<sup>232</sup> (Figure 39) A later image from the same copy shows giants in a similar light, with sartorial eastern characteristics such as beards and eastern clothing and headdresses. They also have dark skin, which seems to contribute to the connection between them and the Saracen world.<sup>233</sup> However it also has an interesting image of the group of horse-headed men encountering Alexander and fighting him with clubs, a weapon often associated with Saracens.<sup>234</sup> As Strickland and Friedman noted in their work, this creates a connection between the Saracens and the monstrous races as well as the other foreign races whom the western world did not fully understand. It also establishes the presence of the Muslim world in the images of Alexander's story and his experiences in the east even if they are not shown themselves. Furthermore the prevalence of these images in manuscripts such as the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* demonstrates the fascination with both these monsters and more human variants that is present in the different images. The Alexandrian manuscripts are also interesting in that they were paired with other narratives, such as Crusading chronicles and tales of exploration such as Marco Polo's.

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<sup>232</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1400-1425. MS Harley 4979, Harley, British Library, Southern Netherlands. British Library. F. 72v.

<sup>233</sup> "Le Livre Et Le Vraye Hystoire Du Bon Roy Alixandre." 1420. MS Royal 20 B XX, British Library, Paris. British Library. F. 63.

<sup>234</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1400-1425. MS Harley 4979, Harley, British Library, Southern Netherlands. British Library. F. 72r.

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There is one fascinating element of Bodleian MS 264 setting it apart from others and with important ramifications for the depiction between the Muslims and other races: its depiction of the people of Gog and Magog. These fictional races often appear in the Alexandrian Romances, but are not usually give Saracen attributes. However in the image from Bodleian MS 264 the race is shown with dark skin and turbans, traditional Saracen characteristics that bind them to this depiction.<sup>235</sup> (Figure 40) This also serves to heighten the comparison between the Saracen world that Christians of the day struggled with, and the races that Alexander encountered and fought. The people of Gog and Magog have particular importance because they are traditionally associated with the apocalypse, so linking them to Muslims becomes particularly important. Fighting against this race is imperative not only because they are the enemies of Christ; it is also a way of protecting the world from the apocalypse. In fact it is hardly surprising that the artists depicted them this way since Muslims were often thought to be connected to the apocalypse. In fact it was sometimes supposed that Muhammad himself was the anti-Christ and that the Muslim world would be the reckoning that came with the apocalypse. The depiction of the people of Gog and Magog in Bodleian MS 264 demonstrates the close ties between the fictional races and Saracens, the latter of which are demonized by the comparison.

#### Conclusions

The *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* presents a somewhat different look at the depiction of Saracens and conceptions of the east in illuminated manuscripts. Saracens themselves only rarely appear specifically depicted in the different copies of the

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<sup>235</sup> "Roman D'Alexandre En Prose." 1344. MS Bodley 264, Bodleian Library, Belgium. Bodleian Library. F. 61r.

Chapter Four: The *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* manuscript. However the topos of Saracens, featuring dark skin and turbans, can be seen throughout many of the manuscripts to depict other races that Alexander confronted and are almost identical to the images of those Muslims who are depicted. Similarly the depictions of the monstrous races contain elements of Saracen iconography that link these subhuman foes to the Muslim threat. Furthermore depictions of the king's eastern encounters also include subtle connections to Muslims through the inclusion of markers such as heraldry. This being said, not all depictions of the eastern figures whom Alexander fought and met were characterized in a similar way as Saracens. However this does not discount the importance of the presence of Saracen iconography in the images that feature it. The illuminated manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* do not always depict Saracens, but the presence of Saracen iconography demonstrates the importance of Muslims in the minds of western audiences.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

### **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

I initially began this study with the intent of researching the depiction of curved and straight swords in illuminated manuscripts to discern whether or not the curved sword was specifically associated with Muslims. I was expecting to find a simple and clear distinction between the two: straight swords for Christians and curved swords for Muslims. However, as I have found in most aspects of western artists depicting Saracens, the issue was much more complicated than I had expected. Although some art historians such as Saurma-Jeltsch and Strickland gave significant weight to the curved sword as an element of the Saracen topos, I did not find enough examples to speak with authority about it. Furthermore there was hardly a clear distinction between the curved and straight sword and the Christian and Muslim faiths. In fact, I found as many depictions of Christian soldiers with curved swords as I did of Muslims with similar weapons. Ultimately I chose not to pursue the issue of curved and straight swords in this research, but it led me to examine depictions of Muslims in manuscript art and question how this reflected the thinking of artists from the time.

This study began with two questions. How were Saracens depicted from 1200-1420, and what can this tell modern scholars about the way that western artists and audiences viewed and depicted Saracens? By studying three manuscripts from the period and examining the many depictions of Muslims within, I have attempted to answer these questions with respect to each text. This study has examined 30 books in total, spanning a period of some 220 years and almost exclusively produced in France, mostly in Paris. Although each specific manuscript presented slightly different depictions of Muslims and artistic specifics, certain patterns did become apparent through my analysis. There is

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always more work to be done regarding a subject such as this, but I believe that I have gathered a great deal of evidence from these sources. My only regret is that my research could not cover a broader geographic area.

Throughout the images created in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries it is possible to discern a noticeable change in the depiction of Saracens. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century they are clearly depicted with almost no physical differences from Christians, and they must be differentiated through the use of equipment and heraldry. This might be an example of artists attempting to create a contemporary struggle for their audience to relate to, or perhaps it was a means of creating adequate enemies for the crusaders to battle. Regardless of the reason, this seems to change in the later manuscripts from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout this period, in both the *History of Outremer* and the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, the depictions of Muslims become more and more focused on racial differences. Furthermore the depiction of Saracens begins to lean upon eastern headdresses such as turbans, and the variations, to depict Saracens. The topos for depicting Saracens that appears is then based almost entirely on dark skin and turbans. This artistic means of representing Saracens was by no means the only way of doing so, and as I have mentioned several times throughout this study there were very frequently images that showed Saracens as virtually indistinguishable from Christians. However this depiction of Muslims is informative as it helps to establish many of the Christian artists' views regarding Muslims.

Representations of Saracens as “the other” abound in these manuscripts, from the earliest manuscripts of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the copies of the early 15<sup>th</sup> century books. These images reinforce stereotypes of Muslims that depict them as barbarians, berserkers,

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idol worshipping pagans, and nothing less than the enemies of God and mankind. Highly racial and pejorative depictions of these figures highlight their negative qualities through dark skin and distorted facial features. This can be seen in the highly caricatured depictions of Saracens that abound in 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts of the *History of Outremer* and the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. The artists of these images further establish these figures as foreign and alien to western audiences by giving them distinctly eastern attributes, sartorial or otherwise. Even images that depict them as similar to Christians can establish a connection to the negative qualities associated with Saracens through heraldry highlighting their more monstrous attributes. This constrains starkly against the Christians also depicted in these images who battle with the Muslims to establish the superiority of their faith. These depictions of Saracens that establish the alterity and difference between them and their Christian foes highlight the valor and bravery of the western Christians who defeat them.

Despite this there are also many images from the manuscripts examined in this study that depict Saracens and Christians similarly and acknowledge certain admirable Saracens. The depictions of Saladin and Ferragut as western figures, kings and knights no less, establish a different kind of representation of Saracen than the biased views of other depictions. Although individuals like Saladin and Ferragut are rare, this demonstrates that the artists of these manuscripts understood that these figures could be received favorably by their audiences. Furthermore there were examples of representations of Muslims that extended a western topos such as the king or the soldier to Saracens. By depicting them with western characteristics these figures were elevated from the standard Saracen topos and honored by the extension of a kind of pseudo-

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western status to them. This is hardly an example of tolerance, for the favorable depiction of them is entirely on standard Christian terms, but it still displays a kind of nuanced understanding of the figures that is important to note. It demonstrates that Christians from the time understood Saracens as more than the monsters that they so often depict them with in the other manuscripts examined in this study.

The images of Saracens and foreigners in the *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* add another dimension by showing the prevalence of the Saracen as a means of understanding other foreign races. The depictions of Saracens is not terribly common in these manuscripts, but they provide a means for creating images of other races that would make sense to the audience. By representing races such as Indians as sharing in Saracen characteristics the artists extend the depiction of the other to include these other foreign peoples. Manuscripts that include these depictions of races that have been “Saracened,” also include images of monsters and strange races having distinctly different characterizations. The artists depict them as such because unlike the other foreign peoples they are not understood through the Saracen topos, but are rather something different entirely. However images featuring monstrous races that have clear connections to the Saracen topos further emphasize that the Saracens were seen as monstrous and unnatural. The *Roman d'Alexandre en Prose* helps to shed light on the depiction of Saracens and foreign races and to show a different perspective on the depiction of Muslims.

These various depictions of Muslims help to present a picture, pardon the pun, of the views of Muslims held by Christians in France between 1200-1420. Through these images captured and preserved in the pages of illuminated manuscripts these artists speak



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to contemporary audiences, presenting their perceptions of Muslims through their depictions of them. These images show Saracens as the monsters that one might expect the contemporary Christians to have portrayed, but also demonstrate a degree of nuance and complexity by finding instances when Muslims can be understood as being like Christians. Despite this, representations of foreign races relied heavily upon Saracen characteristics, showing how deeply ingrained this perception of Muslims as the “other” truly was. It has been said by many scholars who have written about the depictions of Muslims in manuscripts such as these that Saracens were understood in many ways and that it is impossible to sum it up easily. Perhaps contemporary scholars will never fully understand how Christians from the Middle Ages understood and interpreted Muslims, but through images such as those examined in this study it is possible to see as they saw and come to experience the effect of these images that were used to represent Muslims to Christian audience.



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