

Desislava Vladimirova*

ON THE MEDIEVAL ARABIC POLEMIC AGAINST THE BERBERS AND THEIR PRACTICE OF ISLAM

(Summary)

The group of Arabic medieval authors critiqued and condemned the practices of Islam among the Berber tribes in North Africa. This article delves into the medieval debate surrounding Berber Islam, exploring key themes and interpretations of Arab-Berber relations and the unique aspects of intra-religious dynamics in the medieval Islamic West. Through a comparative analysis, it examines medieval Arabic perspectives on the origins of the Berbers, the nature of Berber Islam, accusations of heterodoxy, and the perceived absence of urban culture. The essay also explores Arab authors' perspectives on Berber rule during the Almoravid (1054–1147) and Almohad (1121–1269) periods. By examining polemical examples, it sheds light on the intricate political landscape of the Maghreb. A detailed investigation into the characteristics of Berber Islam provides insights into the Arab approach to governance in the region, as well as the successes and shortcomings thereof. The consistent negative portrayal of Berbers in Arabic narratives underscores underlying issues within the medieval Islamic politico-religious framework.

Keywords: Berbers, Arabs, Maghreb, al-Andalus, Sicily, origin, Islamization, Berber Islam.

* Assist. prof. Desislava Vladimirova, PhD - St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University, Faculty of History
Web of Science Researcher ID: AAS-1876-2020, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5311-3581,
e-mail: dsstoichko@uni-sofia.bg