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# Mirroring the Islamic Tradition of the Names of God in Christianity: Ramon Llull's *Cent Noms de Déu* as a Christian Qurʾān

*José Bellver*

University of Barcelona

*jbellver@ub.edu*

## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to call attention to Ramon Llull's *Cent noms de Déu*, or *The One Hundred Names of God*, and its unique place in the history of medieval Christian-Muslim polemics. Llull (1232–1315) was a writer, logician, philosopher, theologian and mystic born in Mallorca shortly after it was conquered by Christians from the Muslims. Initially living the life of a troubadour, he experienced a religious conversion and committed himself, in turn, to convert the “infidels”. With his *Cent noms de Déu*, a versified book written under the influence of the Islamic tradition of the *asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, Llull aimed to refute Muslim claims regarding the inimitability of the Qurʾān (*iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*) which is believed to prove the divine origin of Islam's sacred book. In addition, Llull sought to introduce an Islamic ethos into Christianity by suggesting a similar use in Christian daily worship to that of the Qurʾān in Muslim life, making his *Cent noms de Déu* a unique book in medieval Christian-Muslim polemics. I also provide a new dating and reevaluation of Llull's intentions in writing this book.

## Keywords

Ramon Llull – names of God – divine attributes – Christianity – Islam – Qurʾān – inimitability of the Qurʾān – Christian polemics against Islam – refutation of Islam – Islamic influences upon Christianity

## Introduction

Ramon Llull (b. 1232; d. 1315) was a writer, logician, philosopher, Christian theologian and mystic born in Mallorca shortly after the Christian reconquest of the island. He was raised in a wealthy family and initially lived the life of a troubadour. In his thirties, Llull experienced a religious conversion after seeing visions of Jesus crucified. After a short time considering his objectives, he committed himself to converting the “infidels”, writing the “best book ever” against the errors of the “infidels” and promoting the foundation of monasteries to teach Semitic languages.<sup>1</sup>

In order to fulfill his goals, he produced a vast number of writings fuelled by his *ars*,<sup>2</sup> a combinatorial contemplative and heuristic method aimed at formulating correct propositions in accordance with his own Neoplatonic system. His *ars*, or art, was close to the Sufi doctrine of presences (lat. *dignitates*, ar. *ḥadrāt*) intertwined with Trinitarian theology.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this article is to call attention to Llull’s *Llibre dels Cent noms de Déu*, or *Book of the One Hundred Names of God*, in order to highlight its unique place in the history of medieval Christian-Muslim polemics. In addition, this article provides a new dating and reevaluation of Llull’s intentions in writing *Cent noms de Déu*.

## Ramon Llull and Islam

Islam was a *leitmotiv* in Llull’s life and writings.<sup>4</sup> He was born in Mallorca in 1232 shortly after it was conquered by James I in 1229 from the Muslims.

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- 1 The most updated companion to Llull is Fidora/Rubio (eds.), *Raimundus Lullus*. For additional introductions, see Badia/Bonner, *Ramón Llull*; and Cruz-Hernández, *El pensamiento*. For an anthology of Llull’s work, see Bonner, *Selected Works*.
  - 2 For an introduction to Ramon Llull’s “art”, see Bonner, *Art and Logic*. For the Islamic influences on Ramon Llull’s *ars*, see the classical references by Urvoy, *Penser l’islam*; and Lohr, “Christianus arabicus”.
  - 3 Ramon Llull intertwines Trinitarian theology in his *ars* by means of the theory of correlatives which is akin to the Arabic morphological distinction in *maṣḍar*, *fā’il* and *maf’ūl*, although it may also be traced back to Augustine’s *De Trinitate* and to Plotinus. Llull asserts his indebtedness to the “Arabic way of speaking” in his *Compendium artis demonstrativae*, p. 160. On the doctrine of correlatives, see Gayà, *La teoría lulliana*. On its Arabic background, see Lohr, “Islamic Influences”, p. 154; and Daiber, “Raimundus Lullus,” p. 262.
  - 4 De la Cruz Palma, “Raymundus Lullus contra Sarracenos”, p. 257. For the relationship between Ramon Llull and Islam, see Garcías Palou, *Ramon Llull*.

Before the Catalan conquest, Mallorca was ruled by Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Abī ‘Imrān al-Tinmalālī and was dependent only in name to the Almohads. The fall of the city of Palma de Mallorca resulted in the killing of the city’s Muslim inhabitants, amounting to approximately 15,000 people. Part of the surviving Muslim population escaped to Minorca, later falling to the Christians in 1287, or to North Africa. However, most of the island’s remaining Muslim population was enslaved. Mallorca was then repopulated with Catalan settlers. After the Christian conquest, Muslims represented one third of the island’s total population. Although, at that time, the average Muslim population in al-Andalus was far more literate than the average Christian population in the northern Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, Muslim scholars did not have a strong presence on the Balearic Islands and Muslim erudition in the Mallorca where Llull was born was mostly practical and popular.

Llull was born to a noble family of Catalan ancestry.<sup>5</sup> His father participated in the conquest of Mallorca and was rewarded for his efforts with different possessions throughout the island. Raised in the Mallorcan court where he received a lay education, Llull would soon hold different positions in the chancellery such as tutor to prince James II, the future king of Mallorca, and seneschal. In his early life, Llull sought pleasure and luxuries, writing poetry and chanting, “lo bell amor”, that is, courtly “beautiful love”.

After his conversion in his early thirties, Llull traveled to Barcelona, Santiago de Compostela and Rocamadour. He returned to Mallorca in 1265 where he studied Arabic with a Muslim slave for nine years. It is doubtful that this slave was a learned scholar. Urvoy has shown that educated Muslim elites had fled long before the capture of Mallorca and that, if this slave had been a scholar in Islamic sciences, ransom would have been quickly paid from North Africa for his liberation.<sup>6</sup> Llull was proud of his knowledge of Arabic, and frequently referred to his skills throughout his writings.<sup>7</sup> He wrote at least parts of two of his main books in Arabic, the *Llibre del gentil e los tres savis* (ca. 1274–1276) and the *Llibre de contemplació* (1272), along with the original Arabic version of his *Compendium logicae Algazelis* (1271–1272) and several brief Arabic treatises

5 Biographical data about Ramon Llull mainly stem from his own accounts in *Vita coetanea* dictated to a monk in the Carthusian monastery in Vauvert. There are different editions. To my knowledge, the last one is Ramon Llull, *A Contemporary Life*.

6 Urvoy, *Penser l’islam*, pp. 151f.

7 Lohr, “Christianus arabicus”, p. 59. By contrast, Llull frequently remarked on his ignorance of Latin, although this may be put into doubt considering his education. See Badia, *Teoria*, p. 178.

at the end of his life.<sup>8</sup> In 1276, Llull fulfilled his initial wish of founding a monastery to teach Semitic languages to missionaries at Miramar close to Palma de Mallorca after James II provided him with the necessary endowment. The school at Miramar remained open for 17 years. In addition to his familiarity with Muslims since childhood and his study and command of the Arabic language, Llull also had direct experience with the Islamic world through three different missionary trips to North Africa. In 1293 he traveled to Tunis and in 1306 to Bougie. On both occasions, he was jailed and then forced to leave the country. In 1314, he returned to Tunis for a second time and was allowed to preach for a year. He died in 1316, either in Tunis or in Mallorca, or traveling between both.<sup>9</sup>

The Arabic and Islamic sources of Llull's thought have been discussed at length.<sup>10</sup> Except for the obvious indebtedness to al-Ghazālī in Llull's *Compendium of al-Ghazālī's logic* (a summary of the section on logic of al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* first written in Arabic, then translated into Latin and expanded<sup>11</sup> and ultimately versified into Catalan<sup>12</sup>) and a couple of references to short Christian polemical books originally in Arabic,<sup>13</sup> Llull does not acknowledge any particular Arabic sources in his literary, mystical or philosophical writings.

However, the influence of Arabic and Islamic texts is not limited to those mentioned above. Llull remarked that his *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* (1282–1287) was inspired by the way of the Sufis, although he seems to have adapted a literary genre rather than copying any particular sources.<sup>14</sup> In addition, some of the material in the *Book of the Beasts* (1288–1289) can be traced back to the Arabic version of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*. The book, which is itself a part of Llull's *Fèlix or Book of the World's Marvels*, recalls a similar literary

8 See Lohr, "Christianus arabicus", p. 60.

9 For a summary of Llull's travels throughout the Mediterranean and his familiarity with Mediterranean culture, see Puig Montada, "Ramon Llull," pp. 506–510.

10 Trias Mercant has summed up this debate in "Arabismo e islamologia".

11 Lohr, *Raimundus Lullus'* Compendium.

12 Ramón Llull, *Logica del Gatzel*.

13 The *Risālat al-Kindī* and a *Liber Telif*, which may be identified as the anonymous work known in Latin as *Contrarietas alfolica*. See Lohr, "Ramon Llull"; and Burman, "Influence".

14 For an analysis of the influence of Sufi literature on Llull's *Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, see Galmés de Fuentes, *Ramón Llull*. For the particular reference where Llull holds that he aims to write the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* according to the way of the Sufis, see *ibid.* p. 33.

artifice in the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā.<sup>15</sup> The parallels between Ibn al-Khaṭīb's (d. 776/1374) use of the tree motif and Llull's have also been indicated.<sup>16</sup>

As to his thought, the particular Arabic and Islamic sources influencing Llull have been subject of much debate. Julian Ribera and his disciple, Miguel Asín Palacios, sought these sources in Ibn 'Arabī's intellectual Sufism and, particularly, in the latter's theory of God's presences (*ḥaḍrāt*), i.e. God's attributes as referred to by His names.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Lohr suggests a strong influence by Ibn Sab'īn's *Budd al-ārīf* and the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā on Llull's logic and metaphysics,<sup>18</sup> a position further supported by Urvoy.<sup>19</sup> Bonner points out Llull's indebtedness to Avicenna's logic, without completely dismissing the influence of Ibn Sab'īn.<sup>20</sup> Cruz Hernández, in turn, accepts a global influence of Islamic thought on Llull, but he is wary of seeking influences from specific Islamic authors.<sup>21</sup> Akasoy and Fidora agree with Cruz Hernández in minimizing Ibn Sab'īn's influence on Llull's logic and see a more likely influence by al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā. However, contrary to Cruz Hernández, they consider that the question of specific influences should be addressed, since the parallels with Llull are too close to be explained only by a common milieu.<sup>22</sup>

In any case and notwithstanding the parallels with and influences of Islamic thinkers on Llull, it is important to bear in mind that all of his thought, even that akin to Muslim authors, was aimed at converting the "infidels". Initially, Llull's missionary strategy represented by his *Llibre del gentil e los tres savis* was exclusively based on reason and dialogue in the belief that Muslims would convert if Christian tenets were demonstrated through reason. However, this initially irenic approach to his mission changed over time. The main works in the second period of Llull's missionary strategy are *Liber de fine* (1305) and *Liber de*

15 For Llull's borrowings from *Kalila wa-Dimna*, see Puig Montada, "Ramon Llull", pp. 510–519.

16 See De Santiago Simón, "Raimundo Lulio e Ibn al-Jaṭīb". On the precedents of the tree motif among Muslim authors prior to Llull, see Urvoy, "Le symbole". Asín Palacios had already called attention to Ibn 'Arabī's use of the tree motif. See Asín Palacios, "La teoría," p. 161.

17 See Ribera, "Orígenes"; and Asín Palacios, "La teoría".

18 Lohr considers this influence in a number of places. See, for instance, "Islamic Influences".

19 See Urvoy, *Penser l'islam*, pp. 144–147 and 378–386.

20 Bonner, "Possibles fonts musulmanes". Llull also reveals his familiarity with Avicenna in his *Liber disputationis Raimundi christiani et Homeri saraceni*. See Daiber, "Raimundus Lullus".

21 Cruz Hernández, "El símbolo del árbol", p. 25.

22 Akasoy/Fidora, "Ibn Sab'īn and Raimundus Lullus".

*acquisitione Terra Sanctae* (1309), in which he advocated the use of military force to conquer Islamic territories. This new military strategy towards evangelization developed around 1292, shortly before his first journey to Tunis in 1293, with *Tractatus de modo convertendi infideles* (1292) and *Quomodo Terra Sancta recuperari potest* (1292). Tolan has described this change in Lull's missionary strategy as "from verdant grove to dark prison".<sup>23</sup> To these two periods in Lull's missionary strategy, we can add a third one represented by *Liber de participatione Christianorum et Sarracenorum* (1312).<sup>24</sup> This last period is probably due to changes in the balance of power in the Mediterranean, much more favorable at this time to Christian interests with the ascent of Catalan and Sicilian naval powers. In *Liber de participatione*, Lull proposed an exchange of Christian and Muslim scholars between Sicily and Tunis in order to peacefully debate on their respective faiths and keep Christians from attacking Muslims and vice versa.

### *Cent noms de Déu*

*Cent noms de Déu* is a versified book in Catalan describing the one hundred names of God and written under the influence of the Islamic tradition of *asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, the most beautiful names of God. At some point, Lull's book was translated into Latin as *Liber de centum nominibus Dei*, which, to my knowledge, has not been edited since.<sup>25</sup> There is no Arabic version of Lull's *Cent noms de Déu*, nor any indication that it was ever translated or intended to be translated.

*Cent noms de Déu* consists of a short prologue addressed to the papacy<sup>26</sup> followed by one hundred chapters devoted to each of God's one hundred names. For every name, Lull considers the related divine attributes through the prism of the relationships defined by his *ars*. Every chapter contains ten rhymed, non-isosyllabic, oxytonic three line-stanzas, although there are a few chapters with nine or eleven stanzas.<sup>27</sup> This unmetred rhymed pattern has been linked to

23 Tolan, *Saracens*, pp. 256–274.

24 Tolan, *Saracens*, p. 272.

25 For a comparison of the Catalan and Latin versions, see Peirats Navarro, "El *Liber de centum nominibus Dei*," pp. 305–309.

26 For a partial translation of the prologue, see Romano/De la Cruz, "The Human Realm", p. 454.

27 For a formal description, see Peirats Navarro, "El *Liber de centum nominibus Dei*," p. 303.

the Arabic style of rhymed prose or *saj'*.<sup>28</sup> Every chapter culminates in a refrain praising God, His divine attributes and Personae, Jesus and the Virgin Mary: "Praise and honor be to the Essence of God, His divine Personae and Dignities. And let us remember and love Jesus of Nazareth and Mary the Virgin, His Mother." This final refrain present at the end of each chapter turns this otherwise work of systematic theology à la Lull into a long versified psalter generally catalogued as such.<sup>29</sup> Lull would later rework *Cent noms de Déu* in the first section of his *Proverbis de Ramon* (1296),<sup>30</sup> where *Cent noms de Déu* is quoted at length and by name.

The Catalan version of *Cent noms de Déu* has been edited twice. It was first edited by Gerónimo Roselló in 1856 in *Obras rimadas de Ramon Llull*,<sup>31</sup> and by Salvador Galmés in 1936 in Volume XIX of the *Obres de Ramon Llull* (ORL) collection.<sup>32</sup> There has been some debate regarding the date at which Lull composed *Cent noms de Déu*. Pasqual argues that Lull wrote it in Rome in 1285.<sup>33</sup> In turn, Salvador Galmés initially agreed with Pasqual,<sup>34</sup> but in the introduction to his edition he placed the composition in Rome or Apulia and argued that the end of 1292 was the book's more plausible date of composition since he felt that Ramon Llull composed *Cent noms de Déu* with a view to his trip to Tunis in 1293.<sup>35</sup> However, later scholars studying Lull's Christology disregarded the date of composition suggested by Galmés and agreed with Pasqual, dating *Cent noms de Déu* in 1285.<sup>36</sup> If so, *Cent noms de Déu* would belong to the Lull's *Ars demonstrativa* period which includes *Ars demonstrativa*, *Lectura super figuras artis demonstrativae* and *Liber chaos*. Bonner has pushed the date slightly forward to 1288, a date which has come to be widely accepted.<sup>37</sup> Platzek

28 See Vernet, "Observacions", p. 86; and Rubió, "Sobre la prosa rimada".

29 See Roselló's edition of *Cent noms de Déu*, p. 304, where the editor describes a codex in which every two chapters or psalms were distributed along weekdays in the corresponding daily offices.

30 Ramon Llull, *Proverbis de Ramon*, pp. 1–102.

31 Ramon Llull, *Els cent noms de Déu*, ed. Roselló, pp. 196–304.

32 Ramon Llull, *Cent Noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, pp. 75–170.

33 Pascual, *Vida del Beato Raymundo Lulio*, vol. 1, p. 351.

34 Galmés, *Dinamisme de Ramon Llull*, p. 27.

35 Galmés, "Notícies preliminars," p. xxxi. It is not likely that *Cent noms de Déu* was composed at the end of 1292, since it is addressed to the Pope, and from 5 April 1292 to 5 July 1294 the Holy See was vacant. If it was composed in 1292, it was early in the year.

36 For a list of the authors following Pasqual in dating *Cent noms de Déu* in 1285 after Galmés, see Hughes, "Deification/Hominification," p. 111, n. 2.

37 See Bonner, *Selected Works*, vol. 2, p. 1267.

dated the work to 1289.<sup>38</sup> Hughes, in turn, argues for 1292 as the date of its composition, therefore agreeing with Galmés, based on the evolution of Llull's deification/hominification terminology.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Hughes points out that the slightly later date of 1292 may help explain some pessimistic expressions<sup>40</sup> similar to those found in *Desconhort* (1295), in addition to bringing the date of composition closer to that of *Proverbis de Ramon* (1296). Otherwise, there would be an unlikely ten year-interval, unlikely at least with regard to Llull's personality, between the composition of *Cent noms de Déu* and *Proverbis de Ramon*, a reworking of the former. More recently, Peirats Navarro (2007) opts once more for 1285 as the date of composition, linking it to Llull's *Ars demonstrativa* period.<sup>41</sup>

*Cent noms de Déu* is not polemic with regard to its particular contents. However, it aims to demonstrate the non-divine origin of the Qurʾān by providing a book endowed with more eloquence and beauty than the Islamic sacred book. Ramon Llull does not list the very same names as those in the Islamic tradition, as Vidal i Roca<sup>42</sup> and Maíllo<sup>43</sup> have shown, although some of them are shared.<sup>44</sup> However, Llull parallels the role of the names of God in Islam by envisaging *Cent noms de Déu* to be used by Christians in the same way Muslims include the Qurʾān in their daily worship. Therefore, even though Llull devises *Cent noms de Déu* as a means of rivaling the Qurʾān, he also introduces an Islamic ethos into Christianity.

*Cent noms de Déu* shows Llull's awareness of the topic of the inimitability of the Qurʾān (*iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*). *Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān* refers to the miraculous (*muʿjiz*) nature of the Qurʾān based on its unparalleled beauty, preventing it from being imitated. This is an important Muslim tenet which is believed to prove the divine origin of the Qurʾān. It is rooted in the Qurʾānic challenging verses (Qurʾān 2:23–24; 10:38; 11:13; 17:88; 52:33–34). For instance: "Say: Verily, though mankind and the Jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qurʾān, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another" (Qurʾān 17:88; transl. Pickthall). Some different characters and authors are said to have taken on this challenge: The most famous are Musaylima (d. 11/632),

38 Platzeck, *Raimund Lull*, vol. 2, p. 19, n. 52.

39 Hughes, "Deification/Hominification".

40 See, for instance, Ramon Llull, *Cent Noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, pp. 119–120.

41 Peirats Navarro, "El Liber de centum nominibus Dei," p. 297.

42 Vidal i Roca, "Sobre Els cent noms de Déu".

43 Maíllo Salgado, "Paralelismo e influencia".

44 On the concept of common topics in Llull's thought, see Pring-Mill, "Microcosmo," pp. 48 ff.



Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. ca. 139/756–757), Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. ca. 298/910–911) and Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 449/1058), among other, less well-known authors. Llull included himself in this list, although in a rather distinctive way, since his work attempting to face this challenge was written in Catalan. In order to compare a work in Catalan and one in Arabic, Llull used the concept of *bel dictat*, i.e., beautiful dictation or beautiful literary composition, in which the definition of the composition's literary genre or style is avoided. This allowed him to compare the Qur'ānic literary style, which is usually considered to be a mixture of plain and rhymed prose (*ṣaj'*), with unmetred poetry. For Llull, assuming that his *ars* provides subtlety to the content, the superiority of *Cent noms de Déu* over the Qur'ān is simply based on a rather plain criterion: the fact that poetry, even though unmetred, is superior to a mixture of plain and rhymed prose.

The second element denoting the Islamic background of *Cent noms de Déu* is the tradition of God's most beautiful names (*asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*).<sup>45</sup> In sacred Islamic texts, the main topics regarding the names of God are: (1) the fact that the most beautiful names belong to God (Qur'ān 17:10; 20:8; 59:24); (2) God has 99 names, "one hundred but one", and whoever knows them all, will enter Paradise;<sup>46</sup> and (3) the Qur'ānic command that God should be invoked by using His names (Qur'ān 7:180). These elements and a few others have given rise to a deep and rich tradition of meditation on the names of God in Islam. As to the influence of the Islamic names of God in *Cent noms de Déu*, Llull is inspired by the Islamic tradition as a whole and not by particular works or sources. The Islamic tradition of the names of God acts as an inspiration, as a seed, but Llull independently develops his own insights according to his *ars*, which nevertheless may be loosely based on an Islamic foundation. This does not preclude that Llull would have an in-depth knowledge of the Islamic tradition regarding the names of God, but, based on *Cent noms de Déu*, some familiarity with this tradition can only be assumed. This does not apply to Llull's theory of the names of God, a topic that deserves further study.<sup>47</sup>

45 On the names of God in Islam, see the classical study by Gimaret, *Les noms divins*. For a short comparison regarding the names of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, see Burrell, "Naming the Names of God". For the names of God in Christianity, see Izmirlieva, *All the Names of the Lord*.

46 See al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 9, p. 118.

47 A seminal study in this regard is Lohr, "The Islamic 'Beautiful Names of God'".

### A Final Remark on the Date of Composition

As noted above, there have been two major scholarly trends in establishing when Llull wrote *Cent noms de Déu*. The first one dates it within his *Ars demonstrativa* period (1285–1289), while the second, now commonly accepted,<sup>48</sup> dates it in 1292, prior to Llull's first trip to Tunis (1293).

The reasons adduced by Hughes for choosing the period around 1292 as the date of composition rather than 1285–1289 seem convincing to me.<sup>49</sup> In fact, Hughes chooses 1292 from a time span ranging from 1288–1289, the time Llull composed *Compendium Artis demonstrativae* and in which he tentatively introduced the deification/hominification terminology, to 1294–1295, the time he wrote *Lectura super Artem inventivam et Tabulam generalem*, right before *Proverbis de Ramon* (1296), when the deification/hominification terminology was already mature.<sup>50</sup> However, within this time frame, I would argue that *Cent noms de Déu* was composed slightly later, i.e. at some point around 1294, after Ramon Llull returned from Tunis, and not in 1292.

Since there is neither an Arabic version of the text nor any indication that it was ever intended, it must be assumed that *Cent noms de Déu* was conceived as is, a work in Catalan with a second version in Latin. It is rather unlikely that Llull would write such a work for the sake of amusement, and it makes little sense to write a work in Catalan or Latin in order to engage Arabic-speaking Muslims in religious polemics, claiming that it supersedes the Qur'ān.<sup>51</sup> Llull challenging Arab Muslims with a Christian Qur'ān in Catalan is rather unlikely. Therefore, it must be inferred that Llull conceived it to address Muslims acquainted with the vernacular language and living in Christian kingdoms. In addition to the above, there are a few reasons, although probably not conclusive, that may help date *Cent noms de Déu* around 1294, namely:

(1) There are no references to *Cent noms de Déu* before 1295 while Llull refers to it at various occasions between 1295 and 1296: *Cent noms de Déu* is mentioned

48 Currently, the Llull DB gives 1292 as the date of composition.

49 In addition to the remarks illustrated by Hughes, Llull's reference to reconquering the Holy Land in *Cent noms de Déu* may help date the work in 1292 or later. This is a topic which becomes common in Llull's work after the loss of Acre in 1291. See *Cent noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, p. 164.

50 Hughes, "Deification/Hominification," p. 114.

51 In fact, Llull took pains to translate his *Ars inventiva veritatis* (1290) into Arabic while in Genoa before embarking for Tunis. He would have done the same if he intended *Cent noms de Déu* to be used in his debates in Tunis.

in *Desconhort* (1295),<sup>52</sup> *Arbre de Sciencia* (1295–1296),<sup>53</sup> *Proverbis de Ramon* (1296)<sup>54</sup> and *Medicina de peccat* (1300).<sup>55</sup> A closer date of composition to *Proverbis de Ramon*, a reworking of *Cent noms de Déu*, would also be more plausible than the date proposed by Hughes.

(2) In terms of writings presented to the papacy, *Cent noms de Déu* shares some traits with a number of books written around 1294 and presented to Celestine V in November 1294. *Cent noms de Déu* was written in Catalan and presented as such to the Pope. Within the time span suggested by Hughes, only in the case of Celestine V, all the books that Llull addressed to the Pope had versions in Catalan. Llull presented texts with versions in both Catalan and Latin to Celestine V, i.e., *Petició de Ramon al Papa Celestí V per a la conversió dels infidels* (1294)<sup>56</sup> and *Disputació de cinc savis* (1294);<sup>57</sup> in addition to one work only in Catalan, *Flors d'amors e flors d'intelligència* (1294).<sup>58</sup> This suggests that Celestine V was the only one to whom Llull presented works written only in Catalan before being translated into Latin, as was the case of *Cent noms de Déu*. As regards the works presented to Nicholas IV, these were exclusively in Latin, i.e. Llull's *Tractatus de modo convertendi infideles* (1292) and *Quomodo Terra Sancta recuperari potest* (1292). In the case of Boniface VIII, Llull either presented texts in Latin, i.e. *Petitió Raymundi pro conversione infidelium ad Bonifacium VIII papam* (1295),<sup>59</sup> or intended to translate Catalan-language texts into Latin before presenting them to the Pope, as is the case with the *Apostrophe*, the Latin translation of the Catalan *Llibre dels articles de la fe*.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, one important difference between *Cent noms de Déu* and the books presented to Celestine V is that Llull dated those books in the *explicit*, while *Cent noms de Déu*'s date is not mentioned.

(3) Bonner has shown that, around 1294, Llull began to claim that the *ars* was given to him by God. He does so for the first time in his petitions to the papacy

52 Ramon Llull, *Desconort*, p. 248.

53 Ramon Llull, *Arbre de sciencia*, vol. 2, p. 397.

54 Ramon Llull, *Proverbis de Ramon*, p. 1.

55 See Sari's introduction to Ramon Llull, *Desconhort de nostra dona*, p. 87.

56 For the edition, see Perarnau, "Un text català".

57 For the edition, see Perarnau, "La *Disputació de cinc savis*". See p. 187 for the address to the Pope. The address is only present in the Catalan version.

58 For the address to the Pope, see Ramon Llull, *Flors d'amors e flors d'intelligència*, p. 274.

59 For the edition, see Wieruszowski, "Ramón Llull et l'idée de la Cité de Dieu".

60 Badia/Bonner, *Ramón Llull*, p. 45.

(1294/5) and in *Desconhort* (1295) as a means of stimulating interest in and knowledge of his *ars*.<sup>61</sup> But in fact, Llull does the same in the prologue to *Cent noms de Déu*, a book which is merely an expression of his “art”, claiming that “this book—and every good—is given by God, according to what is deserved to be said [of Him]”.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, either *Cent noms de Déu* should be dated in 1294 or later, or Llull’s first claims of illumination should be dated around 1292.

(4) The way in which Llull refers to himself in *Cent noms de Déu*, “I the unworthy Ramon Llull” (*yo Ramon Llull indigne*), is exactly the same as in his *Peticció de Ramon al Papa Celestí V per a la conversió dels infidels* (1294).<sup>63</sup> It is also the same as in *Desconhort de Nostra Dona*, which Sari has suggested may be dated in 1294.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, variations of “Ramon Llull indigne” as self-reference are common in Llull’s works after his *Disputatio fidelis et infidelis* (1287–1289).<sup>65</sup>

(5) Llull’s pessimistic attitude in *Cent noms de Déu* has already been noted. For instance, expressions such as: “I am saddened, and so am I in thought, because the Trinity of God Almighty is neither beloved nor known to everyone”<sup>66</sup> or “for a long time, I have been endeavoring to accomplish that Christ be honored throughout the whole world, and not many people have helped me”,<sup>67</sup> describe the feelings and the state of mind that one would expect after an unsuccessful trip to the Islamic world, rather than those full of expectations before embarking on his journey.

(6) Llull’s account in *Vita coetania* of his trip to Tunis in 1293 shows that he based his preaching on necessary reason, i.e., on his *ars*, and not on any claim of a book superseding the Qur’ān or on his list of the names of God.

For all of the above reasons, I suggest that *Cent noms de Déu* was composed at the Papal Court in Naples before November 1294 after Llull returned from Tunis

61 Bonner, “Ramon Llull”, p. 60.

62 Ramon Llull, *Cent Noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, p. 79.

63 Perarnau, “Un text català,” p. 40.

64 See Ramon Llull, *Desconhort de nostra dona*, p. 150 for Llull’s self-reference; and pp. 90 f. for Sari’s suggestion.

65 See Bonner, “Ramon Llull,” p. 42.

66 Ramon Llull, *Cent noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, p. 86.

67 Ramon Llull, *Cent noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, p. 164.

and while he was waiting to be received by Pope Celestine V.<sup>68</sup> If this is true, *Cent noms de Déu* should be linked to Llull's *Tabula Generalis* series of work.

### Conclusions

One puzzling element regarding *Cent noms de Déu* is the reason why Llull would have written a book in Catalan to challenge Arab Muslims in Tunis if it were in fact written in 1292. Less problematic is considering that Llull conceived *Cent noms de Déu* as a means to preach to Muslims acquainted with the vernacular language and living in Christian kingdoms, and particularly within the Catalan linguistic domain. Even though I do not believe that Llull wrote *Cent noms de Déu* before heading for Tunis, I do believe that it is linked to this missionary trip. In my view, *Cent noms de Déu* is the result of Llull's experience preaching in Tunis. It talks to us about the arguments used by Muslim scholars in the debates that Llull held with them, although Llull was probably aware of these arguments already in Mallorca. However, Llull most likely came to the conclusion in Tunis that the beauty and inimitability of the Qur'ān was an important tenet to be addressed if one wanted to preach to Muslims. But, since Llull was probably not skillful enough to produce a book in Arabic rivaling the Qur'ān, he wrote a book aimed at superseding the Qur'ān in the language he mastered the most, thus limiting the use of *Cent noms de Déu* to polemics with Muslim minorities in Christian kingdoms. In 1294, after returning from Tunis, Llull preached to Muslims in Castel dell'Ovo in the bay of Naples and in the summer of that year he went or at least intended to go on a short preaching trip to the Muslim colony of Lucera.<sup>69</sup> In addition, on 30 October 30 1299, he was granted permission by the King of Aragon to preach "in the synagogues of the Jews on Saturdays and Sundays, and in the mosques of the Saracens on Fridays and Sundays throughout our lands and dominions".<sup>70</sup> In a sense, *Cent noms de Déu* is linked to Llull's *Liber praedicationis contra judaeos* (1305) in that Llull tried to discredit both faiths though not by resorting to necessary reason, but by attacking the belief in the revealed character of the Sacred Book of Islam in *Cent noms de Déu* or by attacking the accepted interpretation of the Bible among Jews in his *Liber praedicationis contra judaeos* since Llull shared the belief in the divine origin of the Bible.

68 See Ramon Llull, *A Contemporary Life*, pp. 64–65.

69 Badia/Bonner, *Ramón Llull*, p. 43.

70 Badia/Bonner, *Ramón Llull*, p. 66, n. 61.

*Cent noms de Déu* also talks to us about Llull's experiences in Tunisian mosques listening to the Qur'an and about his familiarity with the role played by the names of God in Islam. It talks to us, too, about the enduring impression made upon him by the role the Qur'an plays in Muslims' day-to-day lives, a role that he intended to parallel by providing a book, in his regard, divine in origin, one which was easy to remember, full of virtues (*khawāṣṣ*) and with talismanic properties, as he points out in the prologue to *Cent noms de Déu*.<sup>71</sup>

*Cent noms de Déu* is a unique book in Christianity in many respects. It is unique in that the seed of its structure has to be traced to Islamic sources: the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*. This cross-pollination went beyond apologetics and polemics and led to a work of Christian theology in its own right, detached from any polemical intention with regard to its contents, but structured according to Islamic sources. It also embeds the topic of the one hundred names of God within the construction of Llull's thought and gives rise to a division into hundreds which prevails in other writings such as *Proverbis de Ramon*. In all, with *Cent noms de Déu*, Llull intended to create a Christian Qur'an. For Muslims, he aimed to supersede the Qur'an, while, for Christians, he aimed to provide a powerful vehicle for his *ars*, assuming a role similar to that of the Qur'an among Muslims, so that God could be honored, better loved and known: "Qui est xant vol sovín xantar, amar hi pot multiplicar en conèxer Deu e onrar".<sup>72</sup>

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71 See Ramon Llull, *Cent Noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, p. 81.

72 Ramon Llull, *Cent noms de Déu*, ed. Galmés, p. 170.

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