

Rabat – No other slave could ever recreate what Al-Hassan Ibn Mouhamed Al-Wazzan, Al-Fasi, had achieved in Europe, as a writer, geographer and papal adviser. This Moorish serf moved through various roles, at different junctures he was a Granadan refugee, a Moroccan explorer of sub-Saharan Africa, a royal ambassador, a Muslim slave and a converted Moor living in Rome, writing in Italian about Islamic culture and the geography of Africa. It is in this context, therefore, that "Della descrittione dell'Africa" should be read. It is a tome whose writer did not bother himself too much with the religious perception and categorization of the Other, probably due to his astute practice of taqiya (a precautionary dissimulation of one's faith under duress), which enabled him to appear as "a man with a double vision." Deceptively, Al-Wazzan's intellectual, cultural and noble backgrounds helped him to shape an identity that seemed to have been less affected by its ambivalent and liminal state between two antagonistic worlds, Dar al-Islam and Christendom. These multi-faceted threads have been fascinatingly interwoven together to construct a flexible persona constantly moving between margins and centers without showing strong adherence neither to its former world nor to the new one.