

العصور الوسطى

AL-‘UŞŪR AL-WUṢṬĀ 26 (2018)



THE JOURNAL OF
MIDDLE EAST MEDIEVALISTS

About

Middle East Medievalists (MEM) is an international professional non-profit association of scholars interested in the study of the Islamic lands of the Middle East during the medieval period (defined roughly as 500-1500 C.E.). MEM officially came into existence on 15 November 1989 at its first annual meeting, held in Toronto. It is a non-profit organization incorporated in the state of Illinois. MEM has two primary goals: to increase the representation of medieval scholarship at scholarly meetings in North America and elsewhere by co-sponsoring panels; and to foster communication among individuals and organizations with an interest in the study of the medieval Middle East. As part of its effort to promote scholarship and facilitate communication among its members, MEM publishes al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā (The Journal of Middle East Medievalists).

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ISSN 1068-1051

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Editors, Antoine Borrut and Matthew S. Gordon i-iii

MEM AWARDS:

Remarks by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych,
Recipient of the 2017 MEM Lifetime Achievement Award iv-ix

ARTICLES:

Mecca and Macoraba
Ian D. Morris 1-60

Thematic Dossier:

“Formulating the Caliphate in the Islamic West: Umayyads, Ḥammūdids, and Almohads”
with Guest Editors Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier

Introduction

Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier 62-79

Writing for the Caliphate: The Unique Necklace by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih

Isabel Toral-Niehoff 80-95

Facing the Mahdī’s True Belief:

Abū ‘Amr al-Salālijī’s Ash‘arite Creed and the Almohads’ Claim to Religious Authority

Jan Thiele 96-112

The Jihād of the Caliphs and the First Battles of Islam:

Memory, Legitimization and Holy War, from Cordoba to Tinmal

Javier Albarrán 113-150

Preparing the Almohad Caliphate: The Almoravids

Pascal Buresi 151-168

The Ḥammūdīd Caliphate: A New Look through the Lens of Numismatics

Almudena Ariza Armada 169-200

NOTES AND BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS:

Early Arabo-Islamic Epigraphy and the Positivist Fallacy: A Brief Communication

Sean W. Anthony 201-207

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONT.)

CONFERENCE REPORTS:

| | |
|--|---------|
| <i>Navigating Language in the Early Islamic World (The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 6-7 April 2018)</i> Alison M. Vacca | 208-214 |
| <i>Post-Eurocentric Poetics: New Approaches from Arabic, Turkish and Persian Literature (American University of Beirut, 21 May 2018)</i> Helga Seeden | 215-218 |
| <i>Approaches to the Study of Pre-Modern Arabic Anthologies (Beirut, 10-12 May 2018)</i> Louise Gallorini | 219-224 |

BOOK REVIEWS:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Muriel Debié, <i>L'écriture de l'histoire en syriaque. Transmissions interculturelles et constructions identitaires entre hellénisme et islam</i> Peter Brown | 225-231 |
| Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābiʿ, <i>Dīwān Rasāʿil al-Ṣābiʿ</i> Maurice A. Pomerantz | 232-236 |
| Lena Salaymeh, <i>The Beginnings of Islamic Law: Late Antique Islamic Legal Traditions</i> Christopher Melchert | 237-239 |
| Sabine Schmidtke, ed., <i>The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology</i> John Renard | 240-242 |
| Diego R. Sarrío Cucarella, <i>Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean</i> Uri Shachar | 243-248 |
| Michael Brett, <i>The Fatimid Empire</i> Paul E. Walker | 249-251 |
| Matthew S. Gordon and Kathryn Hain, eds., <i>Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History</i> Kecia Ali | 252-257 |
| Vanessa Van Renterghem, <i>Les élites bagdadiennes au temps des Seldjoukides</i> David Durand-Guédy | 258-269 |

OBITUARIES:

| | |
|--|---------|
| <i>In Memoriam: Ehsan Yarshater (1920-2018)</i> Elton L. Daniel | 270-272 |
|--|---------|

Letter from the Editors



The contributions to this fourth issue of *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (*UW*) in its new (online, open-access, peer-reviewed) format includes, alongside a set of article-length studies, eight book reviews, including a contribution by Peter Brown (Princeton University); three conference reports; a short notice by Sean Anthony; and Elton Daniel’s obituary of the late and much lamented Ehsan Yarshater. We are particularly delighted to introduce a new feature, a thematic dossier guest edited by Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier, entitled “Formulating the Caliphate in the Islamic West: Umayyads, Ḥammūdids, and Almohads.” The dossier comprises five full-length articles preceded by a substantial introduction. Given that the Islamic West—the Maghreb, Sicily, and al-Andalus—has seldom received the attention it deserves in Anglo-American scholarship, we are particularly glad to present these studies.

We are, as always, forever grateful to our colleagues for their response to our invitations to submit current scholarship,

write reviews of new books and other pertinent items, and participate on the editorial board. Special thanks are due, once again, to our uniquely talented managing editor Christiane-Marie Abu Sarah. To simply restate our central guiding principle from previous letters, we remain committed to using *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* as a platform from which to bring out important and groundbreaking new scholarship. We seek, with each issue, to produce the journal in expeditious a manner as possible, thus providing our contributors the opportunity to bring their ongoing work to a broad audience in timely manner. We are no less committed to the publication of longer and more substantial research articles and book reviews. The present roster of articles, book reviews and conference reports speaks, we believe, to these aims. In addition, with the dossier on the Islamic West by colleagues in France and Spain, we are following up on our determination to promote non-Anglophone scholarship. Our hope is to publish our first article in French in the

(Photo of Antoine Borrut by Juliette Fradin Photography)

near future, and we strongly encourage our readers in the Middle East, Europe and elsewhere to submit their work to us.

We open with a solicited comment by Suzanne Stetkevych (Georgetown University), the 2017 recipient of the Middle East Medievalists Lifetime Achievement Award. Professor Stetkevych, as readers of this journal know well, has played a critical role for years in the production and promotion of scholarship in Arabic poetics and literature. She has also been mentor to any number of students, many of whom went on to join the ranks of our respective disciplines of Arabic, Near Eastern and Islamic studies. I know we speak for the MEM board and membership in extending our warmest appreciation to Professor Stetkevych on the occasion of her award.

The six article-length studies begin with an extended study by Ian Morris on a long-standing problem of identifying the ancient toponym “Macoraba” with Mecca. The dossier on the Islamic West follows. It contains five research articles and an extended introduction by Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier. The five papers emerged from what is an ongoing project launched in 2015-2016 under Fierro and Cressier’s directorship, “The Caliphates of the Islamic West” (*Los califatos del Occidente/Les califats de l’Occident islamique*), sponsored by the Casa de Velázquez and the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC).

The first article, by Isabel Toral-Niehoff, considers Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih’s important fourth/tenth-century compilation, *al-Iqd al-farīd*, and its likely connection to the Umayyad court in Cordoba. Jan Thiele, in a discussion of Almohad claims to religio-political authority, underscores the

ideological peculiarities of these claims. In a close reading of the politics of the Islamic West, Javier Albarrán considers the appeal to *jihad* on the part of the Andalusian caliphs, all in the context of seeking legitimation. Pascal Buresi’s topic is the Almoravid caliphate: he argues that, despite differences in the political histories of the Almohad and Almoravid states, it is important to keep in mind critical continuities from one dynastic period to the next as well. The final paper in the dossier, by Almudena Ariza Armada, takes up the significant numismatic evidence regarding the history of the Ḥammūdīd dynasty, a polity little studied in modern scholarship.

Alongside the articles, we are pleased to include eight book reviews. On display is an impressive range of scholarship, in the reviews and in the publications discussed therein. We can only reiterate our plea to colleagues across the disciplines to not only keep us posted regarding forthcoming and newly published works, but to agree to publish their reviews here. In addition, we have three reports of conferences held, respectively, at the American University of Beirut (two of the events) and the Marco Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville).

As we continue to develop the journal a new milestone has been reached this year: *al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* will continue its life online but also becomes available in print, through a print-on-demand option. Issues of the new *UW* from 2015 onwards will be obtainable through our website shortly, while hard copies will be presented at MEM’s business meeting in San Antonio.

We close on two familiar notes. First, we continue to rely on your financial support.

Letter from the Editors

Our journal is online, open access, and peer-reviewed, but it is certainly not free. To cover costs of publication and the work of our part-time managing editor, among other expenses, you provide valuable support by keeping your membership in *Middle East Medievalists* up to date. For information on membership and the fund, please proceed to the MEM home page at <http://islamichistorycommons.org/mem/>

and click on “MEMbership. Second, as we noted in a previous issue (*UW* 24 [2016]), the full run of the journal is available online. We are deeply grateful to Professor Fred Donner (University of Chicago) for his assistance in this regard. The full archive can be accessed on our website:

<http://islamichistorycommons.org/mem/volume-index/>

Sincerely,

Antoine Borrut and Matthew S. Gordon

MEM Awards

**Remarks by the Recipient of the 2017 MEM Lifetime Achievement Award
Given at the Annual Meeting of Middle East Medievalists
(Washington DC, 18 November 2017)***

Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych
*Sultan Qaboos bin Said Professor of Arabic & Islamic Studies,
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I am honored and grateful to be the 2017 recipient of the Middle East Medievalists Lifetime Achievement Award. I will first say a word about the distinguished previous recipients, most of whom I have known for years, not only through their influential and often groundbreaking academic work that has shaped our disciplines—Arabic, Middle East and Islamic studies—as we know them today, but also as friends and colleagues who offered kindness and support over the years.

Pierre Cachia took over as my dissertation chair after my marriage to Jaroslav Stetkevych, and encouraged me to publish one of my early articles, “Toward a Redefinition of *badī‘* Poetry” (*Journal of Arabic Literature* 12, 1981: 3-29). George Scanlon invited my husband and me to lunch at his lovely Garden City apartment in Cairo a couple of weeks after the birth of our first child—most welcome as I was

still in shock at new motherhood. Jere Bacharach, who has known my husband since their Harvard days, must have been on the same sabbatical schedule as me as we repeatedly spent time together in Cairo over the years, in addition to graciously hosting us while I was the Solomon Katz Distinguished Professor at University of Washington in the spring of 1999. In Cairo, too, I remember us sitting at the Gezira Club with Richard Bulliet, now many years back. Then of course, there is the University of Chicago connection, where I intersected over the years with Stephen Humphreys, Fred Donner and Wadad al-Qadi. I regret that I never met Patricia Crone, whose work brought so much life to our field but who died so early. In brief, I am honored to be in such company.

I am also a bit surprised, partly because I am still laboring under the illusion that I am too young to fall under the

* This essay is based loosely on my notes for remarks made at the MEM Members’ Meeting held during the MESA conference in Washington, DC, in November 2017.



“lifetime achievement” rubric and partly because I have so many projects I still hope to complete. A glance in the mirror belies the first misconception. As for the second, I can only hope that my current much anticipated—at least by me—magnum opus on Abū al-‘Alā’s al-Ma‘arrī’s poetry will not meet the fate of becoming an opus posthumous.

Middle East Medievalists has asked me to take this occasion to give a brief retrospective on my academic career. As I am a person who looks forward more than back, it has been a useful if somewhat stressful exercise. Although I have recently been exploring the post-modern Arabic prose poem (*qaṣīdat al-nathr*), I have thought it better on this occasion to attempt to impose some narrative coherence on my somewhat chaotic academic career—although that may ultimately prove to be a fictional exercise.

I entered the field of Middle East studies almost entirely by accident when, as an Art History major at Wellesley College, I had to fill in an elective course my junior year, and *Introduction to Islam* fit the available time slot. That led, however, to a course in Arab history; and when taking my senior year at Johns Hopkins University, to the study of the Arabic language and the writing of my senior thesis on Arab Maqāmāt illustrations. Intrigued by this, to me, new world and civilization, I applied to graduate school with the idea—and a rather convincing application essay—of studying the modernization of Islamic law.

I chose the NELC department at the University of Chicago on the strength of its Arabic program, and settled into what we would now term an Orientalist course of study, of languages—Arabic, Persian and Syriac (and a bit of additional Greek and

Latin)—and the close reading of texts in a variety of fields, or what we would now call disciplines (history, theology, Qur’ān, Kalām, philosophy, Sufism, literature, but never, however, law!). When it came time to think of a more focused field, I thought first of cultural history. However, when studying history texts with Wilferd Madelung we came across a couple lines of poetry. I dutifully looked up the words I didn’t know and translated the lines—completely wrong as Prof. Madelung informed me. And that was the reason I decided I’d better study classical poetry in graduate school, because I couldn’t read it on my own. The rest is (literary) history.

The greatest advantage of the University of Chicago approach was that it covered a variety of disciplines and focused on the mastery of close reading of original texts. This was before the advent of the age of literary criticism and the age of “disciplines.” It is not accidental then that one of my most important critical breakthroughs was in the linking of the high rhetorical *badī‘* poetry of the Abbasid age to *‘Ilm al-Kalām*, a science whose abstract thinking was expressed in terms remarkably similar to the “far-fetched” metaphors of *badī‘* poetry at the caliphal courts. Nor is it merely coincidental that one of my earliest publications—which still manages to get hits on Academia.edu—was “The ‘Abbāsīd Poet Interprets History: Three Qaṣīdahs by Abū Tammām” (*Journal of Arabic Literature* 10, 1979: 49-65).

That early article set the stage for much of my subsequent work, particularly in exploring the means by which poets and poetic conventions created cultural memory of historical events, transforming them into perduring hegemonic myths of what I later termed “Islamic Manifest

Destiny,” that is, a teleological ideology of history along the lines of the 19th century US expansionist idea. This formed the groundwork of my dissertation (1981), which I subsequently developed into my first book, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ‘Abbāsīd Age* (Brill, 1991).

By the time I obtained my Ph.D., the age of theory was upon us and with it the move to abandon the broad text- and language-based Orientalist studies for a particular discipline. For me, that was Arabic poetry, clearly text-based and grounded in a variety of Islamic and Middle East Studies fields, but now engaging as well a wide range of exhilarating ideas, from linguistics to literary theory, from structuralism to ritual theory, that held the promise of bringing classical Arabic poetry out of the Orientalist closet and engaging and integrating it into a broader humanistic enterprise.

My first big step was both backwards and forwards. Backwards, in that I wanted to understand the pre-Islamic roots and origins of the 1500-year tradition of the Arabic *qaṣīda*, and forward, in that I wanted to engage current anthropology- and religious studies-based theories of ritual to explain why a particular poetic form—seemingly arbitrary and distinctly non-narrative—could dominate a literary culture for so many centuries. To me, ritual, with its tradition-rooted repetition of formal structures and symbolic sequences, laden with inexplicit but profound meaning and capable of producing spiritual and social transformations while still serving as a bulwark of the social structure, seemed an obvious place to look. I began with Victor Turner’s and Mary Douglas’s revival of Van Gennep’s rites of passage, and proceeded with Mauss’s formulation of

ritual exchange, as the foundation for my subsequent work, including my book *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Cornell UP 1993) and article “Pre-Islamic Panegyric and the Poetics of Redemption: Mufaḍḍaliyyah 119 of ‘Alqamah and Bānat Su‘ād of Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr” (in *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, Indiana UP, 1994, 1-49).

In the course of these works I incorporated as well work in the field of orality and literacy studies, especially that of Walter Ong and James Monroe, to integrate the formal structure of the Arabic *qaṣīda* into a scheme of oral-formulaic poetics and to conceptualize the effect of literacy on the abstracted rhetorical expressions of the Abbasid period. Further, I was able to dispense with the textual isolation—quarantine—that the Structuralists had imposed on the *qaṣīda* to examine poetry within a tribal or court social structure, and within a historical and cultural setting. I except from this general critique of Structuralism in Arabic poetry, the fine and influential study of Stefan Sperl.

My engagement with the ritual aspects of Arabic poetry left me perfectly poised to absorb and apply the work that appeared in fields as diverse as the classics, folklore, linguistics and literary theory on rituals of royalty and court ceremony, together with performance and performative (speech act) theory. This allowed me to deepen my understanding of the *qaṣīda* and further integrate it into its political and cultural environment, particularly as that setting is presented in the literary *akhbār*, anecdotes or notices, that accompany so many poems in the classical Arabic literary compendia. These texts not only evaluate the poem

in terms of verbal art and performative success, but also show the poet pledging—or retracting—his allegiance, and negotiating for rank and status in complex religious and political settings. Above all, the awareness of this exceedingly delicate political role or negotiation that the *qaṣida* performed alerts us to fine points of imagery, rhetoric, metaphor, etc. that had otherwise been overlooked. The further exploration of the *qaṣida* in this light led to my book, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Indiana UP, 2002), whose chapters range from the pre-Islamic royal ode to the Cordoban court panegyric of al-Andalus.

Then things got out of control. Some colleagues suggested that since I had written on the first ode to be given the sobriquet of “Mantle Ode” (*Qaṣīdat al-Burdah*), that is, Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr’s renowned Bānat Suʿād poem of apology to the Prophet Muḥammad, that I should also write about the even more renowned *Qaṣīdat al-Burdah* of al-Būṣīrī, the 13th century master-poem of Prophetic praise (*madīḥ nabawī*) from Mamlūk Egypt. Why not? I thought, it’s only one poem.

Little did I know that this poem is the centerpiece of an entire world of post-classical devotional poetry. Then, too, the same well-meaning colleagues insisted that if I were to write about al-Būṣīrī’s *Burdah*, then I had to write about the neo-classical poet Aḥmad Shawqī’s (d. 1932) anti-colonial response to it, *Nahj al-Burdah*, famed throughout the Arab world to this day through its performance—you can find it on Youtube—by Umm Kulthoum. Of course, I am a believer in life-long learning, but what was supposed to be couple of one-off articles on a couple of poems

turned into a book-length study on the three center-pieces of Islamic devotional poetry—the two *Burdahs* of Kaʿb and al-Būṣīrī and *Nahj al-Burdah* of Aḥmad Shawqī—and a plunge into the poetics and politics of the post-classical and colonial periods. My book, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad* (Indiana UP 2010) is the result of these endeavors.

Far from being a dead end, however, this has led me to study some of the multitude of poetic offspring of al-Būṣīrī’s *Burdah*, such as the 14th c. al-Fayyūmī’s *Takhmīs al-Burdah* (a poetic amplification in which a new poet adds his own lines to incorporate the original) and the 14th c. Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī’s *Badīʿiyyah* (an imitation of al-Būṣīrī in which each line exemplifies a particular rhetorical device). So, by some strange providence—or curse—my earliest work on the first *badīʿ* rhetoric in the Abbasid poet Abū Tammām has led to the *badīʿiyyah* of the post-classical age and to my reformulation or recontextualization of rhetoric in both the High Abbasid classical court *qaṣida* and the post-classical praise poem to the Prophet.

As I see it, in the Abbasid period, the rhetorically dense and complex *badīʿ* style served as the linguistic correlative or verbal embodiment of divinely ordained caliphal power and was therefore *de rigueur* in court panegyric. Given its status as the most elevated form of language (other than the Qurʾān, of course) this rhetorical ornateness, which was then buttressed by the classical Arabic rhetorical formulations of *Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*, became equally compulsory in medieval poems of prophetic praise. The prophet deserved a level of language at least equal to that for a caliph!

Having made what contributions I could to the newly flourishing field of post-classical/pre-modern Arabic literature, my current project is to return to where I belong—the Abbasid *qaṣida*. I am now grappling with the poetic works of the blind Syrian acerbic ascetic Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (d. 1059). While his first collection, *Saqṭ al-Zand* (*Sparks of the Flint*), is what I would call somewhat hybrid forms of the High Abbasid *qaṣida*, his second collection, the celebrated *Luzūmiyyāt* (Compulsories) is a programmatic alphabetically ordered collection of double-rhymed poems in every rhyme consonant of the Arabic alphabet and with every vowel, plus *sukūn*, ending. The argument that I hope to present is that in the transition from his worldly performative *Saqṭ al-Zand* poems to his ascetic programmatic *Luzūmiyyāt* we can see the transformation from classical to post-classical Arabic aesthetics.

Should I survive that trial, I will follow al-Ma‘arrī’s obsession with rhyme, to return to the roots of Arabic poetry in the Jāhiliyyah, in an attempt to understand how the mono-rhyme and monometer serve both compositionally and mnemonically to shape the Arabic *qaṣida*. For example, the monorhyme at once limits the length of the poem, but also—especially when we include the vowel patterns that are part of the consonantal rhyme—bestows a unique sonority that both defines and preserves the poem in an oral-formulaic setting.

This should bring us full circle in the issue of poetry and history. As I know that most MEM members are historians, I am aware that we are all grappling with issues of the authenticity and historicity of materials—particularly vexing in the early Arab-Islamic period. Poetic texts are

doubly problematic: first, as poetry, they are eminently non-narrative and what is expressed is conveyed through allusion, metaphor, simile and in the context of a performative and ritual negotiation. The poet does not record events, rather he transforms them into the material of negotiation and cultural myth. The “texts” of early Arabic poems (until sometime in the Umayyad period), as we now know, were largely oral-formulaic in composition and, for the most part, orally transmitted, until the *tadwīn*-project of the 8th-9th century linguists. However—and this is key—what we know now of the mnemonics of oral poetry, and of the even more stringent case of Arabic poetry with its mono-rhyme and monometer (as opposed to mere parallelism, or meter but no rhyme, or varying rhyme) is that the poetic materials we possess from the pre-and early Islamic periods should be more stable, and therefore more authentic, than the prose narratives that have come down to us. [By this I mean the “high” *qaṣīd* poetry, not the more common-place and eminently imitable *rajaz*-type poetry such as we find in *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*.] So, we may have a body of material that is authentic, but, nevertheless, does not say what it means—or rather, does not provide the information that historians are looking for—or at least, not in the form we are looking for.

What then remains before us, concerning the problematics of poetry and history, is to ascertain what poetry aims to do and then see if it can answer any of our historical questions. It is not meant to record names and dates and battle descriptions, rather, at least as I now see it through my work, it is a key part of a performative ritual that negotiates issues

of legitimacy, status and allegiance. In this regard, it is ripe for further exploration as we deal with political, religious and cultural history.

If this presentation has seemed altogether too solipsistic, it is because it would take far too long to name all the teachers, colleagues, students and friends, not to mention scholars and poets, whose

dedication to scholarship and poetry and whose kindness and generosity to me has made my work possible. My greatest hope is that the new generation will find something in my work to inspire them to continue in the exploration and explication of Arabic poetry and Arab-Islamic cultural history.

Mecca and Macoraba*

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Abstract

Claudius Ptolemy's second-century Geography places the name Macoraba in the west of the Arabian Peninsula. There is a consensus in Orientalist scholarship that Macoraba is Mecca, and to a lesser extent that the name derives from an Ancient South Arabian word for "temple." This paper traces the identification of Macoraba as Mecca back to Samuel Bochart in 1646 and assesses the changing interpretations of Macoraba since then. It concludes that no satisfactory derivation has been proposed to explain the difference between the names Mecca and Macoraba, and argues that the consensus should now be abandoned or more rigorously defended.

“Macoraba: 73° 20′ 22°.”

— Ptolemy, *Geography*, §6.7.¹

Claudius Ptolemy was a Greek writer in Alexandria in the second century CE. He was the author of several works, the most influential being his astronomical *Almagest*; but his *Guide to Geography*, completed between 141 and 147 CE, would also prove highly influential in Europe and the Middle East. It consisted of a theoretical introduction, a list of notable places across the known world, and some accompanying maps. In order to preserve

* This work was partially supported by the Marie Curie Initial Training Network *Power and Institutions in Medieval Islam and Christendom* (PIMIC-ITN), funded through the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) under grant agreement no. 316732. British academia owes an irredeemable debt to the European Union. I would like to thank Sarah Greer (St Andrews), Joshua J. Little (Oxford) and Maaïke van Berkel (Radboud) for their invaluable comments on earlier drafts. My thanks also go out to the anonymous reviewers, whose recommendations have done this article so much good.

1. Alfred Stückelberger and Gerd Graßhoff, eds., *Ptolemaios: Handbuch der Geographie*, 2 vols. (Basel: Schwabe, 2006), vol. 2, 630–631. Previously the best Greek edition had been Karl Friedrich August Nobbe (ed.), *Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia* (Leipzig: Karl Tauchnitz, 1845), vol. 2 (of 3), 105.



the maps' accuracy when they were copied and recopied, Ptolemy gave coordinates for the place names, which he had calculated with some accuracy: a Ptolemaic map is distorted, but recognizable.

The exact sources for most sections of his *Geography* are an open question. He hinted at having travelled himself, but he must have compiled most of his information from earlier texts available to him in Alexandria. The town had long been the capital of a sophisticated Ptolemaic administration (305–30 BCE), which was then inherited by the Romans. It was also the leading center of Greek science in Ptolemy's day. It stands to reason that he should have had access to geographical data in the form of maps and accounts of trade routes, whether stored in archives or circulated in scientific works.² One such work was that of Marinus of Tyre, who is believed to have flourished between 107 and 114 CE, when Ptolemy himself was probably still a child. Consequently, Ptolemy's *Geography* may reproduce knowledge that was first available in Alexandria before his lifetime, and which may already have fallen out of date.

Ptolemy devotes a chapter to the western and southern regions of Arabia, which has long been exploited by students of pre-Islamic history: until the later twentieth century, historians relied overwhelmingly on foreign sources when tracking the rise and fall of towns, polities, religions and trade routes, since the peoples of ancient Arabia did not produce and preserve any comparable literature.³ But if the Arabians were not literary, they were to some degree literate,⁴ and in recent decades the intensive study of epigraphy—especially in the western half of the Peninsula—has greatly enriched our understanding of toponymy and political geography.⁵ The task of integrating these native sources to the literary data is ongoing.

For the time being, many of Ptolemy's locations are still unknown or disputed. Others can be confidently identified, such as “Lathrippa,” which is ancient Yathrib, present-day Medina. In the same chapter Ptolemy lists the name “Macoraba: 73° 20' 22°,” which he presents with no further comment. The coordinates would place it in the west of the Arabian Peninsula, either in or near the Hijaz, a mountainous belt along the Red Sea coast.⁶ To the best of my

2. His sparse biography is treated in Stückelberger and Graßhoff, *Handbuch*, vol. 1, 9–11.

3. On those foreign literary sources, see Michael C.A. Macdonald et al., “Arabs and Empires before the Sixth Century,” in Greg Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Empires before Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015), 11–89, 62–74.

4. Michael C.A. Macdonald, “Ancient Arabia and the Written Word,” in id. (ed.), *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 5–28. Macdonald et al., “Arabs and Empires,” 12–56.

5. See e.g. the broad view taken by Jérémie Schiettecatte and Mounir Arbach, “The Political Map of Arabia and the Middle East in the Third Century AD Revealed by a Sabaeen Inscription,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 2 (2016), 176–196; and for the local scale, María del Carmen Hidalgo-Chacón Díez, “Place names in the Dadanitic inscriptions of al-‘Uḏayb,” *Adumatu* 30 (2014), 15–30.

6. Stückelberger and Graßhoff, *Handbuch*, vol. 2, 630–631. Greek Μακοράβα *Μακοράβα*, for which no manuscript variants are reported; transcribed into medieval and modern Latin as *Macoraba* and rarely *Machoraba*. I follow the English convention in using ‘Macoraba’, unless the Greek spelling is directly at issue.

knowledge, the name Macoraba has not been identified in the epigraphical texts.⁷ No other ancient source records the name Macoraba.⁸

There is a consensus in academic scholarship that Macoraba is Mecca.⁹ The coordinates put it roughly in the right place, and the name looks about half-right. Several etymologies have been proposed, but the preferred solution today is that it comes from an Ancient South Arabian word *MKRB*, meaning “temple.”¹⁰ It would follow that Macoraba was a noteworthy center of pre-Islamic religion as far back as the second century CE, if not sooner. Readers who encounter Macoraba in scholarly literature are quite likely to find this etymology, and extremely likely to find the identification with Mecca.¹¹

7. I am reasonably confident that if Macoraba had been identified in the epigraphic record, I would have found some reference to it in the course of researching this article. Current databases, though already useful and highly promising, are far from exhaustive; one could start by perusing the word lists at the University of Pisa’s *Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions*, dasi.humnet.unipi.it (consulted on 26.06.18) or by testing the searchable parameters of Oxford’s *Safaitic Database Online*, <http://krcfm.orient.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd#bdrs> (consulted on 26.06.18). I am grateful to Ahmad Al-Jallad (Leiden) for guiding me to these resources.

8. There have been claims to the contrary. E.A. Belyaev did once confuse Ptolemy with Herodotus, which led Suliman Bashear to believe that Ptolemy and Herodotus had *both* mentioned Macoraba. On the other hand, Patricia Crone correctly located Macoraba in Ptolemy’s *Geography*, but also called him Pliny by mistake, leading Aziz Al-Azmeh to faithfully misattribute Macoraba to Pliny. E.A. Belyaev, *Araby, Islam i Arabskij Khalifat v Rannee Srednevekov’e*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 96; tr. Adolphe Gourevitch, *Arabs, Islam and the Arab Caliphate in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Pall Mall, 1969), 87. Sulaymān Bashīr, *Muqaddimah fī al-Ta’rīkh al-Ākhar: naḥwa Qirā’ah Jadīdah li-al-Riwāyah al-Islāmiyyah* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1984), 110 and nn. 26–27. Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 136 n. 15. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and his People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 156.

9. Edward D.A. Hulmes s.v. “Mecca,” in Ian Richard Netton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilisation and Religion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 401: “Ptolemy... called the city *Macoraba*.” Arent Jan Wensinck and Jacques Jomier s.v. “Mecca,” in P.J. Bearman et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005): “Mecca... was apparently known to Ptolemy as *Macoraba*.” Jacqueline Chabbi s.v. “Mecca,” in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 337–341, 337: Mecca and Bakkah “may well be derivations from a more complete rendering of the name, which would be recognized in the *Macoraba* mentioned by Ptolemy.”

10. For the word itself, see Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 251–252. A.F.L. Beeston et al. (eds.), *Sabaic Dictionary (English-French-Arabic)* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1982), 78. Stephen D. Ricks, *Lexicon of Inscriptional Qatabanian* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 87.

11. Stückelberger and Graßhoff, *Handbuch der Geographie*, vol. 2, 630–631, boldly translate the Greek “*Makoraba*” as “*Makoraba/Mekka*,” and n. 111 provides the gloss “eigentlich ‘Heiligtum,’” shrine. Isabel Toral-Niehoff, s.v. “*Macoraba*,” in Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (eds.), *Brill’s New Pauly* (Leiden: Brill, 1996–), consulted online on 26.06.18: “According to Ptol. 6,7,32, city in north-western Arabia Felix, already at an early time equated with Mecca. Based on the southern Semitic root *mkrb* (‘temple’, ‘sanctuary’ but also ‘altar’).” Federico Corriente, *Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 375 n. 885: “Apparently [*Mecca* is] an abridgement of Sar. *mkrb* ‘sanctuary’... to judge from the Lt. form *Macoraba*.” Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur’an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 32: “... the name *Macoraba* may be derived from the South Arabian *mikrab*, meaning ‘temple’, a name which would have been highly appropriate for a city which contained ‘the inviolable place of worship’.” But cf. 58, 304 n. 8. Paul Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Ten*

Consensus is not unanimity: there have been dissenting opinions.¹² The most prominent so far was from Patricia Crone in her seminal monograph *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*. She evaluates Macoraba in a short survey of modern attempts to find Mecca in ancient literature.¹³ Crone's conclusions are negative across the board: "The silence is striking and significant. It is so striking that attempts have been made to remedy it." In particular she concludes "that the name of Macoraba has nothing to do with that of Mecca, and that the location indicated by Ptolemy for Macoraba in no way dictates identification of the two."¹⁴ We shall revisit Crone's specific arguments later.

Meccan Trade has had a strong impact on Early Islamic Studies, but Macoraba-as-Mecca remains a staple of academic writing on ancient Arabia. The reason, I will argue, is not that our interpretation is especially sound or explanatory, but that Macoraba has become so familiar that we do not think to reexamine it. It has been part of the discourse on Early Islamic Studies for a very long time. Crone responds to literature going back to the early twentieth century, but this article will show that the idea goes back as far as the mid-seventeenth. We shall proceed in the spirit of genealogy: by historicizing Orientalist scholarship on Macoraba, we may learn to see more clearly the roadmaps *and horizons* we have inherited.¹⁵

It should be declared at the outset that this research would have been all but impossible one or two decades ago. An extraordinary number of scholarly books and articles in Western languages from the sixteenth to the twentieth century have been digitized with optical character recognition, archived, searchable, and open-access. Many of the citations in this article may be followed, gratis, from a personal computer. Technology allows us to go far beyond previous surveys of the Macoraba problem. It also shapes our behavior as researchers, not always for the better. As a specialist in Early Islamic Studies, I do not claim expertise in the early modern sources I adduce; and while I try to situate the Macoraba problem in the broader trends of intellectual history, I trust that specialists in early Oriental Studies will find a great deal here to build on.

Centuries (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 12: "In the Ptolemaic corpus [Mecca] appeared under the orthography *Makoraba*, surely a Greek rendering of the Sabaeen *MKRB*, ...signifying 'sanctuary'."

12. D.S. Margoliouth s.v. "Mecca," in James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 8 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 511–514, 511: "The classical geographers, who devote considerable attention to Arabia, are apparently not acquainted with this settlement; for the *Makoraba* of Ptolemy (vi. vii. 32) is derived from a different root." It is not clear that Margoliouth had engaged with the arguments collected in this paper. In any case, his objection was approvingly cited by Ibn al-Rawandi (ps.), "Origins of Islam: a Critical Look at the Sources," in Ibn Warraq (ps., ed.), *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus, 2000), 89–124, 98; who also recapitulated Crone, below.

13. Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 134–136.

14. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 136.

15. Mark Bevir, "What is Genealogy?," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 2 (2008) 263–275. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," in Suzanne Bachelard (ed.), *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 145–172.

Where was Macoraba?

If we suppose that Macoraba is Mecca, there is a slight problem with its coordinates. Ptolemy puts it southeast of Yathrib; Mecca is southwest. In 1799 the historical geographer Konrad Mannert noticed that Macoraba was too far from the coast; he speculated that Ptolemy's sources knew Mecca from the overland caravan route, and had never approached the town from the sea.¹⁶ Even this solution may be too elaborate, because in general it seems that Ptolemy had more trouble calculating longitude than latitude, meaning that his towns are more accurately positioned north-south than east-west.

This had decisive consequences for his geography of Arabia. Dumat al-Jandal (*Dumaiṭha*) is indeed further north than Tayma (*Thaima*), which is further north than al-Hijr (*Egra*), Yathrib (*Lathrippa*), and Najran (*Nagara*); but then Ptolemy puts Najran too far east, in the middle of the Peninsula. The overall effect is to push towns away from the coast, crowding the heart of the Peninsula and practically erasing the Empty Quarter of harsh desert in the southeast.¹⁷ Under these constraints, Macoraba's location with respect to Mecca may be considered within a margin of error.¹⁸

This is encouraging. In contrast, some other ancient names and places that have been associated with Mecca are more easily located in other parts of the Peninsula: up in the region of the Sinai and the Gulf of Aqabah, or down by Oman and the Yemen.¹⁹ Macoraba has the virtue of at least being placed in (or near) the Hijaz. But we should be cautious. This margin of error is not itself evidence that Macoraba is Mecca; it merely opens the door for investigation. We should heed Patricia Crone's counsel: Ptolemy's coordinates "are inexact; but if they are inexact, one cannot identify places on the basis of them alone."²⁰

The problem remains that Macoraba (*Makoraba*) and Mecca (*Makkah*) are different words. If we see Mecca in the first half of Macoraba, then we need to explain the second half; if Mecca is an abbreviation of Macoraba, then we should ideally want to explain how that came about; and if Macoraba is an epithet for Mecca, that too demands an explanation. Indeed, there is a long tradition of incompatible attempts to bridge the two names.

16. Konrad Mannert, *Geographie der Griechen und Römer*, vol. 6 part 1 (Nuremberg: Ernst Christoph Grattenauer, 1799), 113. As we shall see, Edward Gibbon was among those who have identified Mecca with Macoraba; but one of his editors would later anonymously object that "the situations do not agree." Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 5 (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 442 n.

17. Hugh Kennedy, "Arabia According to Ptolemy," in id. (ed.), *Historical Atlas of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), consulted online on 26.06.18.

18. Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 32, observes that Macoraba is "about the right distance from Yathrippa for it to be Mecca, but too far east and hence too far inland. Nevertheless, in view of other distortions in Ptolemy's cartography, this was probably simply an error on his part."

19. We shall encounter these below.

20. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 136 n. 15. Crone names Pliny, which is a typographical error: it is clear from the previous sentences that Ptolemy's coordinates are at issue.

Macoraba and the Medieval Geographers

Our investigation should begin with early Muslim literature. Since the medieval scholars often made reference to Ptolemy, and since they took a great interest in the history and geography of Arabia, we might expect them to have commented on Macoraba. This does not seem to have been the case. To my knowledge, earlier studies have not adduced a single medieval text that calls Macoraba by name, and I have encountered none myself.²¹ The Arabic geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229) does quote Ptolemy on the location of Mecca, which should tell us whether or not he identifies it with Macoraba. Strangely, though, the coordinates he attributes to Ptolemy (78° 23°) do not line up with Macoraba (73° 20′ 22°), or with anything else in his *Geography*, and they would put Mecca even further east than Ptolemy puts Macoraba.²² Meanwhile Yāqūt has no entry for a place called Macoraba.

It is unlikely that Yāqūt and his colleagues had access to the *Geography* itself, even in translation. According to Ibn al-Nadīm, writing in the later tenth century, the scholars of Baghdad did produce Arabic translations of the *Geography*;²³ but these works are lost, and they could easily have been adaptations rather than faithful renditions. Ibn Khurdādhbih (d. 300/912) claims to have translated something of Ptolemy's, possibly the *Geography*, as a precursor to his own study on *Roads and Kingdoms*;²⁴ but again the translation is lost, while the only detail that he specifically attributes to Ptolemy—that there are 4,200 towns in the known world—does not appear in the *Geography*.²⁵ To make matters worse, variants of this fact in other medieval works do not seem to link it with Ptolemy.²⁶

21. In addition to the works cited below, see the section on Mecca by al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897), ed. T.J.G. Juynboll, *Kitāboʻl-Boldān* (Leiden: Brill, 1861), 99–103.

22. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (ed.), *Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch [Muʿjam al-Buldān]*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1869), 616, s.v. “Makkah.” For the origins of this datum in a so-called *Malḥamah* named for Ptolemy, see Fuat Sezgin, *Mathematical Geography and Cartography in Islam and their Continuation in the Occident*, vol. 4, *Authors* (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arab-Islamic Science, 2011), 197–198; but there seems to be a mistake in the table comparing the *Malḥamah* with the *Geography*, because the coordinates for Mecca are given as 73° 23′ rather than 78° 23′.

23. Gustav Flügel (ed.), *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (Leipzig: F.C.W. Voegel, 1872), 268: “Al-Kindī [fl. ca 235/850] made a poor translation, then Thābit [ibn Qurrah, d. 288/901] made a good translation of it into Arabic.”

24. M.J. de Goeje (ed.), *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 6, *Kitāb al-Masālik waʻl-Mamālik* (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 3 (Arabic) = 1 (French).

25. Id., 5 (Arabic) = 3 (French); previously noted by V.V. Barthold, tr. V. Minorsky, *Hudūd al-ʿĀlam* (London: Luzac, 1939), 14. For Ibn Khurdādhbih's substantial comments on Mecca, bearing no trace of influence from Macoraba, see (Arabic) 125–35, 185–93 = (French) 96–103, 145–151.

26. Yāqūt puts the number of towns in the northern world at 4,000, but his sources are left strikingly vague: “some say,” “it is said.” Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (ed.), *Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch [Muʿjam al-Buldān]*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1866), 17. The number 4,530 appears in the *Meadows of Gold* by al-Masʿūdī, on the authority of a certain philosopher's *Jughrāfiyā*, but al-Masʿūdī's description of this book does not very much resemble Ptolemy's *Geography* as we know it. C. Barbier de Maynard and Pavet de Courteille (eds. and trs.), *Les prairies d'or [Murūj al-Dhahab]*, vol. 1 (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1861), 183–185. Sezgin, *Mathematical Geography*, 204, has “no doubt” that this source was the *Ṣūrah* commissioned by al-Maʿmūn. Alternatively, J. Lennart Berggren and Alexander Jones, *Ptolemy's Geography: An Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 48, suggest that the “philosopher” might have been Marinus of Tyre.

Ptolemy's findings were extensively adapted for new Arabic compositions and his authority was invoked, rightly or wrongly, to ground the science in ancient knowledge. For want of a common source text, material was easily lost or misattributed.²⁷ An egregious case would be Ibn Ḥazm's (d. 456/1064) assertion that Ptolemy had written about Gog and Magog in his *Geography* and measured out their domain beyond the great wall.²⁸ The medieval scholars seem to have known that misattribution was a problem: Ibn Ḥawqal (d. 370s/980s?) complains about a source that ascribes patently false information to Ptolemy.²⁹

Beyond misattribution, the loss or substitution of Ptolemaic data may represent advances made, independently, by the medieval geographers: al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), for one, believed the great map commissioned by al-Ma'mūn (r. 197–218/813–33) was an improvement on the previous works by Ptolemy, Marinus and others.³⁰ Whatever has survived of Ptolemy's *Geography* in the medieval literature, it has surely been mediated through a sequence of adaptations. The earliest surviving example of such an adaptation is the *Geography* of al-Khwārizmī (d. after 232/847), probably also composed in the reign of al-Ma'mūn. Even he does not seem to know Macoraba by name or by Ptolemy's coordinates, and he puts Mecca at 67° 21',³¹ as do some later geographers.³²

Orientalist scholarship has long recognized that the coordinates given for Mecca by the medieval geographers do not correspond with Ptolemy's for Macoraba.³³ The nearest we have is the use of latitude 22° for Mecca by Ḥabash al-Ḥāsib (d. after 255/869)³⁴ and

27. To better understand how misattribution comes about, cf. a study of misattribution in the Arabic historical tradition by Ella Landau-Tasseron, "On the Reconstruction of Lost Sources," *Al-Qanṭara* 1 (2004), 45–91, esp. 48–57.

28. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah (eds.), *al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa-al-Ahwā' wa-al-Naḥil*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Buḥayl, 1996), vol. 1, 206.

29. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1992), 22: "I have read in a text other than the *Geography* that, according to Ptolemy, [the Caspian Sea] draws on the Mediterranean; but heaven forefend that someone like Ptolemy should say something preposterous or describe something differently from how it is." His substantial comments on Mecca, which cannot be related to Macoraba, are on 30, 35–37.

30. M.J. de Goeje (ed.), *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa'l-Ishrāf* (Leiden: Brill, 1893), 33. The translation by B. Carra de Vaux, *Le livre de l'avertissement et de la révision* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1897), 53, understands this to mean that it surpassed them *in beauty*, but I concur with Sezgin, *Mathematical Geography*, 204.

31. Hans von Mžik, *Das Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ des Abū Ġāfar Muḥammad Ibn Mūsā al-Ḥuwārizmī* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1926), 10.

32. David A. King, "Al-Bazdawī on the Qibla in Early Islamic Transoxania," *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*, 7 (1983), 3–38, 16.

33. Carlo Alfonso Nallino, *Al-Battānī sive Albatēnii Opus Astronomicum* (Milan: Reale Osservatorio di Brera, 1899–1907), vol. 2, 37–38, §103.

34. Reported in brief by Marie-Thérèse Debarnot, "The *Zīj* of Ḥabash al-Ḥāsib: a survey of MS Istanbul Yeni Cami 784/2," in David King and George Saliba (eds.), *From Deferent to Equant: A Volume of Studies in the History of Science in the Ancient and Medieval Near East in honor of E.S. Kennedy*, (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1987), 35–69, 49. My thanks go to Sean W. Anthony (Ohio State) for bringing this to my attention.

Abū al-Wafāʾ al-Būzjānī (d. 387/998).³⁵ These two early geographers use the same latitude for Mecca as Ptolemy does for Macoraba. On the other hand, they do not call Macoraba by name, and their longitudes differ from Ptolemy's. We should allow the possibility that they arrived at 22° independently, just as others arrived at 21°, 21° 40', 23°, or 23° 20'.³⁶ Ḥabash himself is associated with different numbers in that range: he reports a latitude of "approximately" 21° 42' calculated by al-Ma'mūn's scientists, and in turn, he is named as an authority for 21°.³⁷ The fact that (very few) medieval geographers put Mecca on the latitude where Ptolemy puts Macoraba should tell us no more than we already knew: the two places are not very distant. In itself, that is no reason to think that medieval scholars ever recognized them as the same place.

On the contrary, neither Macoraba's name nor its coordinates have been securely identified in the medieval literature: it is entirely possible that Macoraba was omitted from the Ptolemaic tradition that the Muslim scholars inherited (perhaps through Syriac). It is also possible that they saw Macoraba in the data, found no significance in the name, and discarded it. As we shall see, the identification of Macoraba with Mecca is a modern hypothesis: it is an idea with a history. We should not take for granted that premodern Muslim scholars read Macoraba the way Orientalists have read it.

There is another possibility, which invites further research. Medieval geographers may have tried to correct Ptolemy's perceived errors by converting groups of his coordinates according to a regular formula. It is therefore conceivable that Macoraba will eventually be recovered from the medieval data. I am not competent to investigate this; those who wish to identify Macoraba with Mecca—at least in the medieval literature—might help their case if they start to address such problems. The arguments that *have* been made for Macoraba-as-Mecca are not mathematical but philological, and they were first articulated in Western Europe.

The Search for Ancient Mecca

By the fourteenth century, historical geography had become a major preoccupation of the Western humanists. Their method was antiquarian but critical: geographical data from disparate periods were collated, tested and synthesized. The humanists practiced cartography and published the results of their comparative toponymy in gazetteers and

35. A fragment attributed to him in the anonymous *Dustūr al-Munajjimīn*, MS Paris BN Ar. 5968, ff. 63b–64b, on f. 64a l. 2. Photographs in E.S. Kennedy, "Applied Mathematics in the Tenth Century: Abū 'l-Wafā' calculates the distance Baghdad–Mecca," *Historia Mathematica* 11 (1984), 193–206, 195–197, and commentary on 200.

36. 21° 40' is the commonest latitude reproduced by the medieval geographers. King, "Al-Bazdawī on the Qibla," 16, 19, 24 n. 3. As for 23° 20', al-Hamdānī (d. 334/945?) attributes this datum to al-Fazārī, who wrote in the late 8th century. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Akwa' al-Ḥawlī (ed.), *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-'Arab* (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Irshād, 1410/1990), 82; cf. Sezgin, *Mathematical Geography*, 4:201–203. The other estimates we have encountered already.

37. The former in his *Kitāb al-Ajrām wa-al-Ab'ād*. Y. Tzvi Langermann, "The Book of Bodies and Distances of Ḥabash al-Ḥāsib," *Centaurus* 28 (1985), 108–128, 116 (Arabic) = 123 (English), §10. The latter by al-Hamdānī, ed. al-Ḥawlī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-'Arab*, 82.

concordances.³⁸ These findings were further developed over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Western thought underwent a “spatial turn,” propelled by complex forces.

At home, states were increasingly territorialized; abroad, Westerners practiced empire and trade across unfamiliar regions. The Age of Exploration and the rise of a new eastern power, the Ottomans, revived a general interest in travel literature. Printing technology made cartography a cheaper, more exact science. The Americas posed a challenge to biblical accounts of human migration, even as the Reformation posed a hermeneutic challenge to scripture as a whole. Theories and techniques for understanding space were now more intensely debated. The historical geography of humanism was fed into this crucible to forge the early modern genres of cosmography and sacred geography: Roman, biblical and contemporary sources were combined to fashion a world with global breadth and historical depth.³⁹ Arabia, which was known to both Roman and biblical sources, was among the regions at stake.

In this far-reaching process of spatial revision, Ptolemy’s *Geography* had a special role: being a huge index of places and peoples, its value for historical geographers was unsurpassed. It was available to Western scholarship after 1397, when a Byzantine diplomat moved to Florence to teach Greek to the humanist community, bringing a copy with him. The first Latin translation was completed as early as 1409; in the latter half of that century sumptuous manuscripts of Latin translation circulated in princely libraries.⁴⁰ The first printed translation was published in Vicenza in 1475, and the first printed edition of the original Greek came out of Basel in 1533.⁴¹ And from the 1530s onward, Ptolemy’s *Geography* was involved in a well-recorded, evolving discussion over the identification of Mecca in ancient sources.

The humanists were not the first to seek Mecca in ancient sources. It was a matter of biblical exegesis from early in the history of Islam. Despite their competing theologies, medieval scholars often agreed that Mecca was Paran, the desert where Abraham had sent Ishmael to live (Genesis 21).⁴² Certain rabbis argued instead that Mecca was Mesha, settled

38. George Tolia, “Ptolemy’s *Geography* and Early Modern Antiquarian Practices,” in Zhur Shalev and Charles Burnett (eds.), *Ptolemy’s Geography in the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 2011), 121–142.

39. For the ‘spatial turn’ in depth, see Zhur Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), ch. 1, “Early Modern Geographia Sacra: Themes and Approaches,” 1–22.

40. Zhur Shalev, “Main Themes in the study of Ptolemy’s *Geography* in the Renaissance,” in Shalev and Burnett, *Ptolemy’s Geography in the Renaissance*, 1–14.

41. Desiderius Erasmus (ed.), *De Geographia Libri Octo* (Basel: Froben, 1533); Macoraba on 392.

42. Paran is identified as Mecca in two early Armenian sources: a *Geography* attributed to Ananias, whose recensions may even date to the seventh century, and the *History of the House of the Artsrunik’*, composed in the late ninth century. Robert H. Hewsen (tr.), *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (AŠXARHAC’YOYC’): The Long and Short Recensions* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1992), 70–71, 70A–71A; and Hewsen’s comments on dating the work, 1–35. No ed., *Patmut’iwn Tann Artsruniats’* (Konstandnupōlis, Hōrt’agiwl: Pōłosi Arapean Apuch’ekhts’woy, 1852) 109, 111–112 = Marie-Félicité Brosset (tr.), *Collection d’historiens Arméniens*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1874), 89–90. Examples of Muslim commentary are noted by Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: from Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 159, 268–270.

by the descendants of Joktan (Genesis 10).⁴³ Ishmael and Joktan were both considered Arabian patriarchs. Western scholars inherited these arguments and went on debating their merits into the eighteenth century; but significantly, they also conferred with Roman and contemporary geographies. Ptolemy was a common reference. Critics argued, for example, that Mesha was Muza, which Ptolemy had placed on the Red Sea coast, or that Paran was Pharan, which Ptolemy had placed in the Sinai. Such towns could not be identified with Mecca.⁴⁴

Literary humanism was clearing the way for more innovative research, as Greek and Latin texts were recovered, revisited and recentered; discussions about ancient Mecca were no longer so dependent on the Bible and parabiblical literatures. To be sure, these remained important sources, but starting in the 1530s there were cumulative and lasting efforts to find Mecca in Roman sources. Ancient geographers, especially Ptolemy, helped Western scholars to sharpen the dimensions of the Arabian Peninsula, while the “spatial turn” compiled names from different epochs into cohesive maps and gazetteers. Hypotheses could now be checked against more variables, so that arguments became slowly more sophisticated. This is not the place to explore these developments in detail, but we should take note of the major hypotheses, to sketch out the kind of discourse that proved able to identify Macoraba with Mecca.

As early as 1535 a translation of Ptolemy sported a marginal note equating Mecca with Pharan, in accordance with the medieval argument that Mecca was biblical Paran.⁴⁵ On the same page, the nearby region of Munychiatis was identified as Medina, perhaps on the assumption that Medina should be close to Mecca. It seems as though the editors had no real sense of where these towns were, but were trying to shore up their own frail knowledge with authoritative reports from Ptolemy and the Pentateuch. Indeed, many writers confused Medina with Mecca, so ultimately Munychiatis became identified with Mecca as well.⁴⁶

43. Saadia Gaon (10th century), ed. and tr. Joseph Derenbourg, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 1, *Version Arabe du Pentateuque* (Paris: Ernest Leroux 1893), 17. David Qimḥi (13th century), ed. Abraham Kohn, *Comentar zur Genesis von Rabbi David Kimchi [Perush Radaq ‘al ha-Torah... Sefer Be-Reshit]* (Pressburg/Bratislava: Abraham Ginzburg, 1842), 33b. Abraham Zacuto (15th century), *Sefer Yuḥasin* (Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1580), 135b.

44. Against Paran: Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture* (London: William Rogers, 1697), 159–60. Against Mesha: Samuel Bochart, *Geographia Sacra*, vol. 1, *Phaleg seu de Dispersione Gentium et Terrarum*, etc. (Caen: Petrus Cardonellus [Pierre de Cardonnel], 1646), 360, cf. 164; Johann David Michaelis, *Spicilegium Geographiae Hebraeorum Exterae, post Bochartum*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Anna Vandenhoeck, 1780), 211–212.

45. “Phara” is at the bottom of the first column, and by the top of the second column is the note “Mecha Mahumeto sacra domus.” Willibald Pirckheimer (tr.), *Clavdii Ptolemaei Alexandrini Geographicae Enarrationis* (Lyons: Melchior Trechsel and Gaspar Trechsel, 1535), 98. Due to this misalignment, the uninformed reader may have understood that Mecca was the town immediately next to the note: Elana, modern Aqabah! Indeed, this mistake was affirmed by a later edition, where the marginal note was written into the main body in italics, under not Pharan but Elana: Sebastian Münster (ed.), *Geographia Universalis, Vetus et Nova* (Basel: Heinrich Petrus, 1545), 103.

46. Jean Nicot (ed.), *Thresor de la Language Francoyse*, vol. 3 (Paris: David Douceur, 1607), 112: “Munychiatis, a town of Arabia Petræa, today Medinath Alnabi, where [there is] Mahomet’s tomb, Mecha.” Thomas Herbert,

A very different approach was tried in 1553 by the French traveler Pierre Belon: he identified Mecca with Petra on the grounds that both were meant to have been entrepôts on the spice trade.⁴⁷ Petra was known from ancient geographers, including Ptolemy, but not from the Bible. This hypothesis had its supporters, but in the long run Petra was ruled out because it was found to be in the wrong area. In the classical schema, Petra was part of Arabia Petraea, comprising the Sinai Peninsula and the Gulf of Aqabah; on the other hand Mecca was (correctly) understood to be in Arabia Felix, comprising the western and southern reaches of the Arabian Peninsula.⁴⁸ The same calculation may have worked against Pharan and Munychiatis.

Within Arabia Felix, then, in 1557 a Venetian geographer proposed that Mecca was ancient Mochura. Unlike Pharan and Petra, this also sounds a bit like Mecca.⁴⁹ The same consideration will surely have been given to Mariaba, proposed by a French geographer in 1670.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, in 1660, a Swiss Orientalist proposed that a people in Arabia Felix called the Macae were in fact the ancient Meccans.⁵¹ These toponyms were all drawn from Roman geographers, and all could be found in Ptolemy. Their hypotheses were quite sophisticated: they sought Mecca in the right classical subdivision of Arabia, and they assumed, not unreasonably, that Mecca should have had a similar name in the centuries before Islam. The same confluence of location and morphology yielded the Macoraba hypothesis in 1646.

On closer inspection, none of these proposals entirely suits the location of Mecca. The Macae were in southeastern Arabia, opposite Carmania.⁵² Mariaba was in the Yemen, probably to be identified with Mar³ib.⁵³ Ptolemy places Mochura north and Macoraba

Some Yeares Travels into Divers Parts of Asia and Afrique, revised ed. (London: Jacob Blome and Richard Bishop, 1638), 252: "...Mecca (Mocura and Munychiates in old writers, the Arabian Metropolis)."

47. Pierre Belon (Bellonius), *Les Observations de Plusieurs Singularitez* (Paris: Gilles Corrozet, 1553), 111, 121. In the 1554 edition: 111, 120, 171.

48. Giovanni Antonio Magini, *Geographiae Universae* (Venice: Simone Galignani de Karera, 1596), 273. The exact location of Petra in northern Arabia was only discerned centuries later. In our time the identification of Mecca with Petra has been revived outside academic scholarship, notably by Dan Gibson, *Qur'anic Geography* (Saskatoon: Independent Scholars Press, Canada, 2011). The context for this identification is however radically different, informed by the skeptical turn in academic Early Islamic Studies since the later 20th century. Historiography has not simply repeated itself, though it has rhymed. Gibson's book is sharply discredited by David A. King, "From Petra back to Makka—From 'Pibla' back to Qibla," published at <http://www.muslimheritage.com/article/from-petra-back-to-makka> (consulted on 08.11.18).

49. Dominicus Marius Niger, *Geographiæ Commentariorum libri XI* (Basil: Henricus Petrus, 1557), 547–548.

50. Philippus Ferraris Alexandrinus, ed. Michael Antonius Baudrand, *Lexicon Geographicum* (Paris: Franciscus Muguët, 1670), vol. 1, 459, 468. Michael Antonius Baudrand, *Geographia Ordine Litterarum Disposita*, vol. 1 (Paris: Stephanus Michalet, 1682), 625, 636, 660. Even if Baudrand did not invent this identification, he was apparently the first to publish it.

51. Johann Heinrich Hottinger, *Historia Orientalis: quae, ex Variis Orientalium Monumentis Collecta* (Zürich: Johann Jacob Bodmer, 1660), 213. This was proposed again by Guillaume Dye, "Le Coran et son contexte: remarques sur un ouvrage récent," *Oriens Christianus* 95 (2011), 247–270, 250 n. 10.

52. Isabel Toral-Niehoff s.v. "Macae" §1 in Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (eds.), *Brill's New Pauly* (Leiden: Brill, 1996—); consulted online on 26.06.18.

53. Walter W. Müller and Albert Dietrich s.v. "Mariaba" in *Brill's New Pauly*.

southeast of Lathrippa, while Mecca is southwest of Yathrib.⁵⁴ Macoraba was perhaps the least aberrant, but the scholars were rarely concerned with such geodesic arguments: as late as the mid-eighteenth century a German geographer identified Mecca with Mariaba, which his own map placed in the Yemen.⁵⁵ The deciding factor, it seems, was not geography but etymology. Macoraba, one of many fruits of the “spatial turn,” came with a convincing derivation that would secure its place in the scholarly tradition and ultimately supplant its rivals.

Great Mecca

From the fourteenth until the mid-seventeenth century, Western scholars knew the name Macoraba from Ptolemy, but it had no apparent significance to them. Editions of the *Geography* glossed Pharan as Mecca, but they never did this for Macoraba; when it was listed in gazetteers, Macoraba went unexplained. Yet by the nineteenth century it had become the favorite candidate for ancient Mecca in Western scholarship. The earliest on record to identify Macoraba with Mecca is almost certainly Samuel Bochart (d. 1667), a Huguenot scholar and pastor based in Caen.⁵⁶ Insofar as we can trace the vectors of influence across scholarly works, they converge on Bochart: not only his arguments for Macoraba, but even his turns of phrase would ripple across languages and genres for the next two centuries.

Bochart was recognized in his lifetime as a distinguished Orientalist; he learned Hebrew and Arabic in order to study the Bible in its Near Eastern context, which was the priority of Oriental Studies at the time.⁵⁷ His most influential work was a *Sacred Geography* (1646) in two volumes. The first, entitled *Phaleg*, traced the settlement of ancient peoples according to the Book of Genesis, a project that entailed an overall study of ancient geography. His myriad sources included of course Ptolemy. In a chapter arguing that Cush was the ancestor of the “Saracens,” Bochart gave an account of Arabian geography. He correctly identified the location of the Hijaz and named some of the towns therein, including Mecca, which “in Ptolemy is Macoraba, i.e. מכה רבה *Mecca rabba* or ‘great Mecca.’”⁵⁸

This is the first recorded instance where Macoraba has been identified with Mecca. Note that it relies on a specific location and derivation: the choice is by no means arbitrary. But it is not immediately clear what language this derivation is meant to be drawn from. Bochart has transcribed MKT RBH—*Makkah rabbah*—in Hebrew characters, but this need not imply that Hebrew was the language intended: typefaces in other Semitic languages were

54. Stückelberger and Graßhoff, *Handbuch*, vol. 2, 631.

55. Johann Michael von Loën, *Neue Sammlung der merkwürdigsten Reisebeschichten*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt/Leipzig: the Brothers van Türen, 1751), 203 n. 15; vol. 2 (1749), map 7, spelt “Maraba.”

56. For his biography, see Zhur Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), ch. 4, “The Phoenicians are Coming! Samuel Bochart’s Protestant Geography,” 141–203, 150–155.

57. Cf. Alexander Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2018), 12–13; Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–3.

58. Samuel Bochart, *Geographia Sacra*, 2 vols. (Caen: Petrus Cardonellus, 1646), vol. 1, *Phaleg*, 242; cf. 137, 237.

hard to come by, so Bochart in the *Sacred Geography* followed convention by transcribing Arabic words with Hebrew characters.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, MKT RBH cannot be Arabic, because the adjective *rabb(ah)* does not exist in Arabic.⁶⁰ Orientalists of Bochart's generation must have known this, as the word was correctly absent from their lexicons.⁶¹ Besides, an Arabic derivation would strictly have to be *Makkah al-rabbah*.⁶²

The adjective *rabb(ah)*, "great," is however typical of the Northwestern group of Semitic languages, such as Aramaic, Hebrew and Phoenician. Not coincidentally, Phoenician was of particular interest to Bochart: the second volume of his *Sacred Geography*, entitled *Chanaan*, was a study of the Phoenician diaspora. Bochart argued that the diaspora had founded many towns across the Mediterranean and beyond, leaving clues to their presence in local legends and toponyms. Their language was not well attested, but already the resemblance to other Semitic languages was apparent.⁶³ Bochart argued that it was properly a dialect of Hebrew. Methodologically, this meant that he could infer Hebrew etymologies for ancient towns in order to show that they had been founded by Phoenicians.⁶⁴ *Makkah rabbah* would have been an acceptable Hebrew derivation for Macoraba, and therefore—in Bochart's schema—a plausible Phoenician colony. So it should be no surprise that "Macoraba, i.e. 'great Mecca,'" made another appearance in his second volume, as part of a chapter exploring the possibility of Phoenician colonies along the Red Sea.⁶⁵ Bochart grounded his investigation in 2 Chronicles 8, which describes a trade mission jointly supported by Solomon, king of Israel and Judah, and the Phoenician king Hiram I of Tyre: they sent ships from Ezion-Geber, a port near Eilat, to a mysterious place called Ophir. Bochart assumed that this route would have stayed open until the reign of Jehoram I of Judah, when the region of Edom achieved independence, taking the Red Sea ports with it. In Bochart's reckoning this gave the Phoenicians "a hundred and fifty years, more or less" to make their mark on the Red Sea.

59. His publisher, Pierre de Cardonnel, may have acquired an Arabic typeface from the printer Jean Jannon, but this would have been confiscated in a raid by local authorities shortly before the *Geographia Sacra* was published. The State claimed a monopoly on foreign typefaces and was in any case wary of Protestant Orientalism. Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds*, 160, 164; Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 9, "Pierre de Cardonnel (1614–1667), Merchant, Printer, Poet, and Reader of Hobbes," 259–316, 269–271. On early Arabic printing, see also Bevilacqua, *Republic of Arabic Letters*, 57–58.

60. The medieval lexicons are consulted for the root RBH in Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863), 1002–1007.

61. Frans van Ravelingen, *Lexicon Arabicum* (Leiden: posthumous publication from the author's office, 1613), 170. Antonio Giggi, *Thesaurus Linguae Arabicæ*, vol. 2 (Milan: Ambrosian College, n.d. [1632]), 286–290. Jacob van Gool, *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* (Lyon: Bonaventure Elzevir and Abraham Elzevir, 1653) 924–925. Cf. Bevilacqua, *Republic of Arabic Letters*, 14.

62. This objection was previously noted by Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 135 n. 12.

63. Since the 1530s European scholars had tried to derive Maltese from Punic, the Carthaginian offshoot of Phoenician; Maltese is in fact derived from Arabic. Thomas Freller, "'Rusticorum Melitensium sermo fertur esse semi-Punicus?': Some notes on an international 18th century discussion," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 149/2 (1999), 205–220.

64. Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds*, 181–185.

65. Samuel Bochart, *Geographia Sacra*, 2 vols. (Caen: Petrus Cardonellus, 1646), vol. 2, *Chanaan*, 761–762.

Even here, though, Bochart did not say outright that Macoraba was founded by the Phoenicians; he merely listed it among those places on the trade route that could be identified from Ptolemy. But he certainly believed that the Phoenicians were capable of leaving their telltale markers in Red Sea toponyms. In the same chapter he argued that an island off northern Ethiopia was named for a Phoenician goddess: Ptolemy calls it *Astartē*, which happens to be the Greek name for Ishtar.⁶⁶ We should bear in mind that Bochart was able to see *Makkah rabbah* in Macoraba when nobody else could; the reason, surely, was that Bochart had prepared himself to recognize Phoenician (Hebrew) derivations along the Red Sea.

If Macoraba was indeed “great Mecca,” it was fair to ask by what standard it was “great.” In *Phaleg*, Bochart observed that the qualifier could stand alone, or alternatively it could distinguish “great Mecca” from another, smaller Mecca.⁶⁷ To illustrate this, he drew a parallel with Hamat from the Hebrew Bible. Usually the name Hamat referred to the town of Epiphaneia, but there was also a “great Hamat,” *Ḥamat rabbah*, which the commentator Jerome (d. 420) had identified as Antioch.⁶⁸ This was a sophisticated argument: not only did *Makkah rabbah* sound like Macoraba, but the comparison with *Ḥamat rabbah* seemed to anchor the hypothesis in trusted sources.

Bochart’s *Sacred Geography* expertly wove biblical, Roman, medieval and contemporary sources. It became a standard reference for historical geography, reissued in 1674, 1681, 1692 and 1707. Scholars found it practical to cite and even quote him, and when they did, the passages they quoted sometimes included the identification of Mecca with Macoraba.⁶⁹ By the turn of the century the derivation “great Mecca” was appearing, unattributed, in works of history and historical geography.⁷⁰ No less an authority than Edward Gibbon

66. Bochart, *Chanaan*, 765.

67. Bochart, *Phaleg*, 242.

68. J.P. Migne (ed.), *S. Eusebii Hieronymi... Opera Omnia*, books 5–6, *Patria Latina* vol. 25 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1845), 1059, under Amos 6:2. A rabbinical commentary from perhaps the fifth century also identifies *Ḥamat rabbah* as Antioch: *Leviticus Rabbah* 5:3, discussing the same verse.

69. Stephanus Byzantinus, ed. Abraham van Berkel, *De Urbibus* (Leiden: Daniel à Gaesbeeck, 1688), 451 n. 79; Albert Schultens, *Historia Imperii Vetustissimi Joctanidarum in Arabia Felice* (Harderwijk: Johannes van Kasteel, 1786), 60; both quoting Bochart, *Phaleg*, 137: “...to Macoraba, i.e. Mecca, to the north.” Pascal-François-Joseph Gosselin, *Recherches sur la géographie systématique et positive des anciens*, vol. 2 (Paris: L’imprimerie de la République, 1798), 115 and n. 1; tr. Gabriel Gottfried Bredow, *Untersuchungen über einzelne Gegenstände der alten Geschichte, Geographie und Chronologie*, vol. 2 (Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1802), 144; reiterated in Adamance Coray (Adamantios Korais, tr.), Pascal-François-Joseph Gosselin (ed.), *Géographie de Strabon*, vol. 5 (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1819), 298 n. 4; and apparently plagiarised by Christoph Gottlieb Groskurd, *Strabons Erdbeschreibung*, vol. 3 of 17 (Berlin / Stettin: Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1833), 319 n. 6.

70. Olfert Dapper, *Naukerige Beschryving van Asie* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1680), vol. 2, 9. Hieronymus Ditzel (tr.) and Simon de Vries (ed.), *Algemeene Weereld-Beschryving*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Amsterdam: François Halma, 1705), 64. Jodocus Crull (attributed), *An Introduction to the History of the Kingdoms and States of Asia, Africa and America* (London: T. Newborough, J. Knapton and R. Burrough, 1705), 387–8. This was a continuation of Samuel von Pufendorf’s history of Europe; it was immediately translated into German under von Pufendorf’s name: C.J. Wilke (tr.), *Einleitung zu der Historie der vornehmsten Reiche und Staaten von Asia, Africa und America* (Frankfurt: Friedrich Knochen, 1707), 798. Urbain Chevreau, *Histoire du Monde*, vol. 5 (Paris: Michel David the Elder, 1717), 9.

identified Mecca with Macoraba in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, commenting that “the termination of the word is expressive of its greatness.”⁷¹

But remarkably, not one of these references would lead us to think that Macoraba was derived from Phoenician. The very framework that had made it possible to equate Mecca with Macoraba was abandoned, but the derivation lingered. We can imagine why. Most of those who consulted the *Sacred Geography* were not themselves Orientalists: they trusted Bochart’s reputation, but they were not able to assess the arguments pertaining to Semitic languages. And as we have seen, Bochart did not explicitly say that Macoraba was a Phoenician colony, named from the Phoenician language. Many readers will have faithfully carried “great Mecca” into their studies without seeing its relevance to the Phoenician diaspora. Orientalist readers, on the other hand, will have known the word *rabbah* from Hebrew and Aramaic, and may have expected the conventions of toponymy in the Levant to shade into the Arabian Peninsula, without reasoning through the intrinsic problems of language and culture. *Ḥamat rabbah* set a commonsense pattern for *Makkah rabbah*, despite the geopolitical distance between Antioch and Mecca.

The upshot is that “great Mecca” was barely challenged at first, and never on historical grounds. And once it was established that Mecca was indeed Macoraba, this basic fact was free to circulate without explanation or derivation. Macoraba was then confidently identified as Mecca in histories, historical geographies and the burgeoning genre of encyclopedias over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷²

Not only in scholarly literature did the idea take hold. Andrew Ramsay’s best-selling historical novel *The Travels of Cyrus* (1727) depicted the Persian king on his journeys through the ancient world, including Macoraba, a city in the mild, perfumed region of Arabia Felix. The city itself barely features in the story, but Ramsay was moved to add a footnote: “Today Mecca. It has always been a holy place for the Arabs.”⁷³ Within a century,

71. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 5 (London: Andrew Strahan and Thomas Cadell, 1788), 117. He does not credit Bochart, and his footnote leads to works that do not identify Mecca with Macoraba, nor do they provide this etymology.

72. Étienne-Évode Assemani (ʿAwwād al-Simʿānī), *Bibliothecae Mediceae*, etc., (Florence: Albiziano, 1742), 203, 206. J.N. Buache de la Neuville, *Géographie élémentaire moderne et ancienne*, vol. 1 (Paris: D’Houry, 1772), 70. Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin, *Orbis Antiqui* (Strasbourg: Jean Frédéric Stein, 1776), 162. Claude-François-Xavier Millot, *Éléments d’histoire générale*, part 1, *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. 2 (Switzerland: Associated bookstores, 1778), 357–8. Fabre d’Olivet, *Lettres à Sophie sur l’Histoire*, vol. 2 (Paris: Lavillette, 1801), 254–255. (Dietrich) Christopher Rommel, *Abulfedea Arabiae Descriptio* (Göttingen: Heinrich Dietrich, 1802), 67. Conrad Malte-Brun, *Précis de la Géographie Universelle*, vol. 1 (Paris: Buisson, 1810), 153. Pierre-Armand Dufau and Joseph Guadet, *Dictionnaire universel abrégé de géographie ancienne comparée* vol. 2 (Paris: Desray, 1820), 132, 144. Friedrich C.L. Sickler, *Handbuch der alten Geographie* (Cassel: J.J. Bohné, 1824), 768. David Brewster (ed.), *The Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, 1st American ed., vol. 12 of 18 (Philadelphia: Joseph and Edward Parker, 1832), 576. Alexandre-François Barbié du Bocage, *Dictionnaire géographique de la Bible* (Paris: Crapelet, 1834), 13. Andrew Crichton, *Arabia: Ancient and Modern*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and brothers, 1834), 45. Edward Hughes, *Outlines of Scripture, Geography and History* (London: Longman et al., 1853), 42. Samuel Griswold Goodrich, *A History of All Nations*, vol. 1 (Buffalo: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1854), 350. William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1858), 131. François Lenormant, *Manuel d’Histoire Ancienne de l’Orient*, vol. 3 (Paris: A. Lévy, 1869), 100.

73. Andrew Michael Ramsay, *Les Voyages de Cyrus* (Paris: Gabriel-François Quillau, 1727), 135, n.

Bochart's unique idea had graduated from scholarly to literary Orientalism. Closer to our time, Arthur Conan Doyle would refer to Mecca as Macoraba in a short story from the point of view of a Byzantine merchant who encounters Muḥammad.⁷⁴

As awareness grew, so did usage. It was conspicuously absent from three landmark encyclopaedias, all of which did comment on Mecca: d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale*, Chambers' *Cyclopædia*, and the latter's successor, the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert.⁷⁵ The first expansion of the *Encyclopédie* even had an entry for Macoraba, but did not relate it to Mecca.⁷⁶ But the compilation of historical and geographical knowledge was intensive and cumulative. As reference works went through new editions and reissues, several added Macoraba-as-Mecca for the first time.⁷⁷ Macoraba was not self-evidently Mecca to all observers at all times, but once Bochart had made the identification, it slowly became the preferred contender for ancient Mecca. The identification went mainstream in the eighteenth century, sometimes (but not always) accompanied by the derivation "great Mecca." And this was only the beginning for Macoraba.

Macoraba's Latitude Adjustment

Not very long after Bochart's publication, others started to build on the Macoraba hypothesis. In 1669, Jacob van Gool at Leiden University strongly implied that Macoraba

74. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Last Galley: Impressions and Tales* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and co., 1911), 137. Other examples in fiction are David Hoffman, *Chronicles Selected from the Originals of Cartaphilus, the Wandering Jew*, book 8, vol. 2 (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853), 152, 529, 545, 548; and Robert Silverberg's novella "A Hero of the Empire," first published in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* vol. 97 nos. 4–5 (October–November 1999), 148–180.

75. Barthélemy d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale* (Paris: Compagnie des libraires, 1697), s.v. "Meccah," 569–70; on which, see Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), ch. 4, "The Making of d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale*," 168–204. Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols. (London: James and John Knapton et al., 1728), s.v. "Mahometanism." Denis Diderot and Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 10, *Mammelle—Myva* (Neuchâtel: Samuel Faulche [a pseudonym at a fake address], 1765), 229, s.v. "la Mecque."

76. Edme Mentelle (ed.), *Encyclopédie méthodique: géographie ancienne*, vol. 2 (Paris: Charles-Joseph Panckoucke, 1789), 314.

77. Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren, *Asiatische Völker: Perser, Phönicier, Babylonier, Scythen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1796), 622, "the caravan route... probably went to Mecca." Id., *Historische Werke*, vol. 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1824) 111: "the caravan route... probably went to Mecca, the ancient Macoraba." J.J. Eschenburg, revised ed. and tr. by N.W. Fiske, *Manual of Classical Literature* (Philadelphia: Key & Biddle, 1836), 620, §171 on Arabia Felix. Eadem, *Manual of Classical Literature*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: E.C. and J. Biddle, 1844), 53: "Macoraba was the name by which the Greeks knew Mecca." No author, *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyklopädie für die gebildeten Stände. Conversations-Lexikon*, 9th ed., vol. 9 of 15, *Ligny bis Mörsien* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1846), 467: "The history of the town begins with Muhammad...". No author, *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyklopädie*, etc., vol. 10 of 15, *Lüneberg bis Myus* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1853), 346: "[Mecca] was already mentioned by Ptolemy under the name Macoraba; but the history of the town begins with Muhammad...." Charles Maclaren (ed.), *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, 6th ed., vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1823), s.v. "Arabia," had no mention of Macoraba; a new entry was composed, including Macoraba, for MacVay Napier (ed.), *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, 7th ed., vol. 3/1 (Edinburgh: Adam Black, 1842), s.v. "Arabia," 341, signed by "E."

was Mecca in his commentary on al-Farghānī's *Compendium of Astronomy*. He made a startling claim about the towns' location: "Mecca. A town built in a valley, latitude 21° 40', where Ptolemy locates Macoraba."⁷⁸ In fact this latitude does not correspond with Ptolemy's *Geography* as we have it, nor with Yāqūt; but it is one of the latitudes that Muslim geographers had calculated for Mecca. Van Gool should have known this: 21° 40' appears among the coordinates for Mecca in early modern works, but Ptolemy's 22° does not.⁷⁹ That is to say, he *conflated* the latitudes for Mecca and Macoraba, believing them to be the same place. It was presumably Bochart who convinced him of this: in the same work van Gool described him as "most learned" and his book *Phaleg* as "preeminent."⁸⁰ But while Bochart's arguments were philological, van Gool had launched a (superficially) persuasive geodetic argument.

Van Gool's claim that Mecca was on the same latitude as Macoraba circulated over the following century. A few works followed his lead by merely implying some relationship between the two names.⁸¹ But others joined the dots,⁸² and as early as 1680 his latitude was presented alongside Bochart's etymology, posing an explicit argument that Macoraba was Mecca. The author was another Dutchman, Olfert Dapper, in his *Precise Description of Asia*: "Some hold Mecca to be Ptolemy's ancient town Macoraba, since Mecca lies on the same latitude, 21° 40', while Ptolemy puts Macoraba to the south of Iathrippa. Furthermore Macoraba sounds just like *Mekka rabba*, i.e. great Mecca, so called because of its noteworthy size or in contradistinction to another, smaller one."⁸³ Dapper did not name his sources, but the arguments were unmistakably lifted from Bochart and van Gool.

Dapper's short passage was plagiarized into broader encyclopedic works in Dutch and German over the following decades.⁸⁴ It was indeed fortunate that Bochart's idea had time

78. Jacob van Gool (Golius), *Elementa Astronomica* (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius, 1669), 98.

79. Examples are collected by Johann Andreas Michael Nagel, *Prima Alcorani Sura* (Altdorf: Johann Adam Hessel, 1743), §23, 32–37. Cf. Barthélemy d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale* (Paris: Compagnie des libraires, 1697), s.v. "Meccah," 569.

80. Van Gool, *Elementa Astronomica*, 235.

81. Caspar Calvör, *Fissuræ Sionis* (Leipzig: Johann Christoph König, 1700), 1094; reprinted in *De Variis Orbis Religionibus* (Leipzig: Johann Christoph König, 1705), 1094: "As Golius describes it with precision in the Arabic *Alfraganus*, [Mecca] is built in a valley on latitude 21° 40', where Ptolemy puts Macoraba." George Sale et al. (eds.), *An Universal History*, vol. 7 (London: Thomas Osborne et al., 1744), 236: "[Mecca] stands in a stony and barren valley... under the same parallel with the Macoraba of Ptolemy." Bernhard von Jenisch (tr.), *Historia Priorum Regum Persarum* [extracted from *Rawḍat al-Ṣafā'*] (Vienna: Joseph von Kurzböck, 1782), 95: "...Mecca, a town built in a valley on latitude 21° 40', which of course Ptolemy also attributes to Macoraba, as Golius points out."

82. Johann Hermannson, *De Mecca, Patria Muhammedis* (Upsalla: Werner, 1725), 4–5, citing van Gool, placed Mecca on 21° 40' and called it Macoraba.

83. Olfert Dapper, *Naukerige Beschryving van Asie* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1680), vol. 2, 9 = Johann Christoff Beern (tr.), *Umständliche und eigentliche Beschreibung von Asien* (Nuremberg: Johann Hoffmann, 1681), 300.

84. Hieronymus Ditzel (tr.) and Simon de Vries (ed.), *Algemeene Weereld-Beschryving*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Amsterdam: François Halma, 1705), 64. No ed., *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, vol. 20 (Halle/Leipzig: Johann Heinrich Zedler, 1739), 8. No ed., *Historisch-Politisch-Geographischer Atlas*, vol. 7 (Leipzig: Johann

to circulate before the encyclopedia as a modern, scientific genre came to maturity in the eighteenth century: encyclopedias were then an important vector in the transmission of Macoraba-as-Mecca. But while “great Mecca” was carried into the nineteenth century, van Gool’s faulty latitude was not. Ptolemy’s *Geography* may have been too accessible for the mistake to go unnoticed in the long run.⁸⁵

Rabbath-Moab and Maco-Raba

In 1766 the geographer J.B.B. d’Anville discussed Macoraba briefly, but with unusual sophistication for the time. Unlike van Gool, he recognized that Ptolemy’s latitude for Macoraba was 22°, but then he observed that this was only a third of a degree from the predominant latitude for Mecca, 21° 40’. He agreed with the mainstream view that Macoraba meant “great Mecca,” supposing that its “greatness” was justified by its ancient and venerable temple. His most original contribution was to draw a comparison between Macoraba and a pair of ancient towns further north: he observed that the word *rabbah* had appeared (in construct form) in the names of Rabbath-Ammon and Rabbath-Moab, today Amman and al-Rabbah in Jordan.⁸⁶ Like Bochart with *Ḥamat rabbah*, d’Anville trusted that the conventions of toponymy in the Levant would carry over into the Hijaz. If “Arabians”—broadly conceived—were known to call their towns *rabbah*, then the popular reading of Macoraba as “great Mecca” would surely be strengthened.

Sadly, his contemporaries did not acknowledge and address this contribution. D’Anville’s study of the Red Sea was less influential than his *Abridged Geography*, where he did again refer to “Maco-raba”—“the second part of which is fit to designate a large and principal town”—but not the comparison with Rabbath-Ammon and Rabbath-Moab.⁸⁷ Other historical geographers therefore reproduced the spelling “Maco-raba” from d’Anville, but neglected the comparison with biblical toponyms.⁸⁸

Samuel Heinsius, 1747), 1006–1007.

85. This careful distinction would even approach a reversal of van Gool’s position in 1809, when G.W.S. Beigel carried out geodesic calculations on the assumption that Mecca lay at 22° latitude, because this was where Ptolemy put Macoraba. He did acknowledge that 21° 40’ was the preferred figure among the Arabic geographers, but he reasoned that these thinkers had owed a great deal of their knowledge to Ptolemy, so Ptolemy’s data should take precedence. Georg Wilhelm Sigismund Beigel, “Abulfeda’s Beschreibung von Aegypten,” etc., in (no ed.) *Fundgruben des Orients* (Vienna: Anton Schmid and K.K. Privil, 1809), 409–425, 416 n.

86. Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville, *Mémoires sur l’Égypte ancienne et moderne, suivis d’une description du Golfe Arabique ou de la Mer Rouge* (Paris: L’Imprimerie Royale, 1766), 246–247. Excerpts tr. Johann Christoph Gatterer, *Allgemeine historische Bibliothek*, vol. 11 (Halle: Johann Justinus Gebauer, 1769), 27–130; Macoraba is on 114.

87. Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville, *Géographie ancienne abrégée*, vol. 2 of 3 (Paris: Merlin, 1768), 217.

88. Alexander Adam, *A Summary of Geography and History, both Ancient and Modern*, 3rd ed. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1802), 791. Karl Friedrich Köppen and Samuel Christoph Wagener, *Universal-Lexicon der Völker- und Ländergeschichte*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Maßdorff, 1806), 220. Louis de Barentin de Montchal, *Géographie ancienne et historique, composée d’après les cartes de d’Anville*, vol. 1 (Paris: Égron et al., 1807), 120–121. James Playfair, *A System of Geography, Ancient and Modern*, vol. 6 of 6 (Edinburgh: Peter Hill, 1814), 9. Emma Willard, *Ancient Geography, as Connected with Chronology*, etc. (Hartford: Oliver D. Cooke and sons, 1822), 22. Émile Lefranc, *Histoire Ancienne*, 4th ed. (Roanne: Étienne Perisse, 1837), 29. S. Augustus Mitchell, *Mitchell’s Ancient*

D’Anville’s contribution was soon forgotten, but it was not lost forever. The comparison of Macoraba with Rabbath-Moab would be revived—independently, it seems—more than a century later by Aloys Sprenger, Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Bern. In his *Ancient Arabian Geography* (1875), Sprenger argued that *rabbah* had the sense of “capital,” as in Rabbath-Moab, the capital of Moab. (He did not adduce Rabbath-Ammon, which might equally be read as the capital of Ammon.) Macoraba, on the other hand, would be “Mecca the capital,” which does not quite fit the model. Sprenger anticipated this, and further argued that Macoraba was an abbreviation of the town’s full name, which had fortunately been recorded by Pliny in his first-century *Natural History* as Mariaba Baramalacum, a town of inland Arabia.⁸⁹ Sprenger read this full name as “Mecca the capital of the Malik tribe.”⁹⁰

The problems are manifold. It is hard to see Mecca in Mariaba, which should also be in the construct form, *Makkah rabbat*. Sprenger’s evidence for a Malik hegemony in Mecca is highly conjectural; besides, this tribe would be the “sons of Malik” in Arabic, *banū Malik*, suggesting a form like *Makkah rabbat banī Malik*, which does not agree with Baramalacum. Sprenger tried to explain that Baramalacum was from the Aramaic *bar*, meaning “son of;” but even if we had reason to place an Aramaic name in Mecca, the plural of *bar* is surely *bnay*.

These linguistic objections are troubling, but there is also a weakness in his source: Mariaba Baramalacum suffers from inconsistent spelling across manuscripts of Pliny. Sprenger’s reading is harder to derive from Marippa Palmalacum, for example.⁹¹ Furthermore, it is unclear whether the two words should be read together as “Mariaba of the *Baramalaces,” where the *-um* of Baramalacum represents a Latin genitive, or separately as distinct place-names in a list: “Mariaba, Baramalacum,” etc.⁹² And even if we assume that Sprenger has reproduced and parsed the text correctly, we are left with the problem of geography. Pliny’s description seems to lead us down the Red Sea coast past the Minaeans before reaching Mariaba Baramalacum; since we know the Minaeans were in northern Yemen, that would place the town well south of Mecca and Macoraba.

Sprenger’s use of Mariaba Baramalacum was rightly neglected; in a later survey of the Macoraba question, Adolf Grohmann would say that it “naturally cannot be taken seriously.”⁹³ Sprenger’s treatment of the Macoraba problem was one of the most ambitious,

Geography (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait and co., 1845), 35.

89. Harris Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History*, vol. 2 (London: William Heinemann, 1961), 455–456 (§6.32).

90. Aloys Sprenger, *Die alte Geographie Arabiens als Grundlage der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Semitismus*, (Bern: Huber and co., 1875), 155, 210. Cf. id., “The Campaign of Ælius Gallus in Arabia,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, New Series, 6/1 (1873), 121–141, 130.

91. Otto Blau, “Altarabische Sprachstudien,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 25/4 (1871), 525–592, 587.

92. The latter reading is followed by Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History*, vol. 2, 455–456.

93. Adolf Grohmann, “Makoraba,” in Georg Wissowa et al. (eds.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: Neue Bearbeitung*, vol. 14/1, “Lysimachos–Mantike” (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1928), 807–808.

but it was also one of the last to favor the derivation “great Mecca.”⁹⁴ Bochart’s unique idea to read Macoraba as *Makkah rabbah* had projected the name into the Orientalist canon, and his original derivation predominated for two hundred and fifty years; but other derivations were attempted, drawing on several other languages, and one of these would emerge as the new consensus by the early twentieth century. We shall now examine these other bids to etymologize Macoraba.

Macoraba the *Mihrāb*

Once it was established that Macoraba was Mecca, Western thinkers were free to imagine alternative derivations to Bochart’s “great Mecca.” In 1711 Jean Chardin, a traveller in Persia, India, and the Caucasus, proposed that Macoraba was “Mecca of the Arabs,” “following the ancient habit of joining a name to a town—that of the country where it was situated or the people who lived there—of which we see several examples in the Old Testament.”⁹⁵ Chardin may well have been thinking of Rabbath-Moab and Rabbath-Ammon. Though it is hard to say why, Chardin’s readers do not seem to have disseminated his idea. Much later the Victorian officer Richard F. Burton proposed the same derivation,⁹⁶ but in recent years it has been confined to apologetical literature.⁹⁷ Rightly so: the diverse, divided peoples of ancient Arabia would scarcely have thought to call themselves “the Arabs.”⁹⁸

Far more successful was a hypothesis by Giuseppe Simone Assemani (al-Sim‘ānī), a Lebanese priest and Orientalist who studied Near Eastern manuscripts for the Vatican.⁹⁹ He wrote a history of the Nestorian Church, published in 1728, which included a dense treatment of the history and geography of Arabia. Unsurprisingly, Ptolemy and Bochart were among his sources. When it came to Mecca, Assemani first acknowledged Bochart’s opinion, then offered an alternative: “Mecca, or Becca, Ptol. Macoraba, i.e. *Mecca rabba* or great Mecca as Bochart thinks; or perhaps محراب *Machrab*, temple, because there was a shrine of the Arabs there, inside which was the idol Beccha or Baccha.”¹⁰⁰ The next year he

94. Clément Huart, *Histoire des Arabes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1912), 6, likewise contended that Macoraba was Aramaic for ‘great Mecca’.

95. Jean Chardin, *Voyages de monsieur le chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l’Orient*, vol. 7 (Amsterdam: Jean-Louis de Lorme, 1711), 373–374.

96. Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1874), 36 n.

97. E.g. Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2002), 302.

98. This is the central argument of Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

99. His biography is in Georg Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, vol. 3 (Vatican City: Vatican Apostolic Library, 1949), 444–455; cf. Alexander Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2018), 22–23.

100. Giuseppe Simone Assemani (Joseph Simonius Assemanus), *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 3 part 2, *De Syris Nestorianis* (Rome: Sacrae Congregationis, 1728), 561.

published the same gloss, almost verbatim, in his commentary on a translation of Buṭrus ibn al-Rāhib.¹⁰¹

The Arabic word here—which he has unhelpfully transcribed “Machrab”—is *miḥrāb*. In general usage a *miḥrāb* is a niche in the wall of a mosque signalling the direction of prayer, usually toward Mecca. Apparently, though, Assemani was referring to a less common sense of the word, meaning a place of worship. This definition was rare but the medieval lexicographers did acknowledge it, and it may have been one meaning of the term as used in the Qur’an.¹⁰² In historical context it made sense for Macoraba to be a “temple” because Mecca had been a center of the pagan cult before Islam. The traditional view was that before Muḥammad, the Kaʿbah had housed cult images.¹⁰³ Some early Orientalists believed that Bacchus was one of these “idols,” and that his name was preserved in yet another name for Mecca, Bakkah.¹⁰⁴ Assemani approved this.¹⁰⁵ It was a coherent solution: in ancient times Mecca was known for its temple and its god, both of which became metonyms for the town itself, Macoraba and Bakkah.

Because Assemani gave Bochart’s “great Mecca” alongside his own “temple,” subsequent literature reproduced them together. In 1768 A.F. Büsching named both scholars with their opinions in his *New Geography*;¹⁰⁶ this work proved highly successful and was translated into Dutch, Italian and French.¹⁰⁷ In 1799 Konrad Mannert reproduced the two derivations, unattributed, in his *Geography of the Greeks and Romans*, as did Ludwig Georgius in his *Ancient Geography*, 1838.¹⁰⁸ Then in 1844 Albert Forbiger at Leipzig University directly cited Mannert for the two etymologies in his *Handbook to Ancient Geography*, and again in 1846 for an encyclopedia entry on Macoraba. This was published in August Pauly’s *Encyclopaedia*

101. Abraham Ecchellensis (al-Ḥaḳilānī, tr.), Giuseppe Simone Assemani (ed.), *Chronicon Orientale Petriarhebi Aegyptii* (Venice: Bartholomeus Javarina, 1729), 228.

102. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1865), 541, s.v. مِحْرَاب. Cf. Qur’an 19:11: “So he went out to his people from the *miḥrāb*....” I would like to thank two readers of my personal blog, whom I know only as David Marrakchi and Tariq, for kindly bringing this usage to my attention.

103. For an alternative view on pre-Islamic “idolatry,” see G.R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: from Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

104. The notion that Mecca (*Makkah*) was also known as Bakkah is traditionally inferred from Qur’an 3:96: “The first temple established for the people was the one at Bakkah....” There is however no convincing explanation for the difference between the two names.

105. Bochart, *Phaleg*, 242–3; Assemani, *De Syris Nestorianis*, 583.

106. Anton Friderich [sic] Büsching, *Neue Erdbeschreibung*, vol. 5 part 1 (Hamburg: Johann Earl Bohn, 1768), 523.

107. Jacobus de Jongh Jr. (tr.), *Nieuwe Geographie, of Aardryks-Beschryving*, vol. 5 part 1, *Verscheide Landen van Asia* (Amsterdam: Steven van Esvelt and Abraham van Paddenburg, 1770) 561–2. Christian Joseph (Gaudioso) Jagemann (tr.), *Nuova Geografia*, vol. 28 (Venice: Antonio Zatta, 1779), 194. Jean-Pierre Béranger (tr.), *Géographie de Büsching*, vol. 8 (Lausanne: Société Typographique, 1780), 476. An English translation was also published, but too early to comprise Büsching’s volume on Asia: Patrick Murdoch (tr.), *A New System of Geography*, 6 vols. (London: Andrew Millar, 1762).

108. Konrad Mannert, *Geographie der Griechen und Römer*, vol. 6 part 1 (Nuremberg: Ernst Christoph Grattenauer, 1799), 113; cf. 198, where he does explicitly cite Bochart apud Assemani. Ludwig Georgius, *Alte Geographie*, etc., vol. 1, *Asia. Afrika* (Stuttgart: Schweizerbart, 1838), 268 n. 3.

of *Classical Antiquity*, a landmark in modern historical studies and the first in a series of “Paulys.”¹⁰⁹

Crucially, everyone who carried Assemani’s derivation from “temple” also copied his transcription “Machrab,” but never the word *miḥrāb* in Arabic script. This proved fatal to Assemani’s contribution. Classicists faithfully reproduced the claim that a “Machrab” was a temple, without being able to assess it; and Orientalists, who might otherwise have respected and reinforced the derivation, may not have understood what “Machrab” signified either. Even a fluent Arabist would struggle to recognize it as the word *miḥrāb*: not only was the spelling unhelpful, but the meaning “temple” was relatively uncommon.¹¹⁰

This was unwittingly illustrated in the second “Pauly.” The new entry on Macoraba, published in 1928, was then the fullest survey of the name’s interpretations in Western scholarship. However, the author, Adolf Grohmann, did not understand what “Machrab” signified. He might have understood better if he had found Assemani’s original argument with the word *miḥrāb* in Arabic text, but he was unable to trace the idea back further than Mannert, who had neglected to name his sources. As a result, Grohmann conflated Mannert’s derivation with another—which we shall examine below—deriving Macoraba from a word for “temple” in Ancient South Arabian; in reality, this was first proposed long after Mannert’s death. It was no longer clear that “Machrab” was even an Arabic word.¹¹¹

Without Orientalist backing, the *miḥrāb* hypothesis failed to establish itself in the twentieth century. Few scholars have tried to derive Macoraba from *miḥrāb* since then.¹¹² This is for the best. The Arabic letter ḥā’ represents a pharyngeal fricative, which the Greek writers could not approximate, so they tended to drop it from transcription: thus *Abderaman* for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Arethas* for Ḥārith. They would hardly approximate it with

109. Albert Forbiger, *Handbuch der Alten Geographie*, vol. 2, *Asia. Africa*. (Leipzig: Mayer and Wigand, 1844), 751 n. 52. Id., “Macoraba,” in August Pauly (ed.), *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaften*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1846), 1346.

110. For examples of this usage, see R. B. Serjeant, “*Miḥrāb*,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22/1/3 (1959), 439–453, 439–441; and Nuha N. N. Khoury, “The Mihrab: from Text to Form,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30/1 (1998), 1–27, esp. 6–14.

111. Adolf Grohmann, “Makoraba,” in Georg Wissowa et al. (eds.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: Neue Bearbeitung*, vol. 14/1, “Lysimachos–Mantike” (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1928), 807–808. Already in 1911 Martin Hartmann—a supporter of the Ancient South Arabian hypothesis—recognized that Mannert could not have made a derivation from that language, and correctly intuited that “Machrab” was an attempt to transcribe *miḥrāb*. Martin Hartmann, “Makoraba. Eine Abwehr und eine Warnung,” *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 6 (1911), 281–282.

112. Jean Morillon, *Massignon* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1964), 39, says that Macoraba may derive from “a Semitic word, ‘mihrab’, meaning ‘temple’.” But his footnote leads to A.J. Wensinck and Jacques Jomier s.v. “Ka’ba,” in the French translation of the second *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, where the derivation is “south Arabian or Ethiopian *mikrab*, i.e., a temple”—we will discuss this derivation below. Morillon’s “mihrab” is therefore a typographical mistake or an overcorrection; it is not clear that he had reasoned through the derivation. *Miḥrāb* is now out of favor among historians, though it is mentioned as a possibility in a theological work by Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, tr. Desmond Maurer and Saba Risaluddin, *The Praised and the Virgin* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 5 n. 5.

their own letter *kappa*, a velar stop.¹¹³ The derivation of Macoraba from *miḥrāb* was always spurious.

City of the Ḥarb

Nevertheless, another derivation, with its own unique line of argumentation, would try to read Macoraba with a *ḥāʾ*. This one was coined by a Victorian churchman called Charles Forster. His most famous work is the unappetizing *Mahometanism Unveiled*, which opposed Gibbon’s secular historiography, instead offering a providential role for Islam as a gateway to Christianity.¹¹⁴ But he wrote other imaginative studies of Near Eastern languages and historical geography, including a *Historical Geography of Arabia* (1844), in which he proposed a new derivation for Macoraba. Although Macoraba was “correctly pronounced by the learned” to be Mecca, in his view, Forster did not address any of the earlier hypotheses; nevertheless, his original argument for Macoraba developed certain other conclusions from Samuel Bochart’s *Sacred Geography*.¹¹⁵

Bochart had applied his Phoenician method to the names of peoples as well as places. Agatharchides in the second century BCE and Pliny the Elder in the first century CE seemed to report independently the name of a certain people in southwest Arabia, called the Karbai in Greek and the Cerbani in Latin. The ancient sources knew almost nothing about them; Pliny merely reported that they and their neighbors “excel as warriors.”¹¹⁶ That was enough for Bochart to speculate that the name Karbai or Cerbani was derived from a Phoenician word for warlikeness: in Hebrew a root for warfare is *qrb*.¹¹⁷ Forster appreciated Bochart’s linguistic reasoning, but argued that a Phoenician derivation was unnecessary when the same meaning could be derived from the native Arabic root *ḥrb*, also used for matters of war. He further posited that the Karbai/Cerbani were the Ḥarb tribe, attested since the early centuries of Islam: the name itself can be read literally as “sons of war,” and the tribe was—he argued—appropriately belligerent.

These were bold conclusions, but Forster did not stop there. A major objective of the *Historical Geography* was to affirm “the truth of the Mosaic accounts of the first peopling of Arabia;”¹¹⁸ like the humanists before him, Forster meant to harmonize the Bible with other kinds of evidence. He therefore argued that “sons of war” was a *nom de guerre* for the biblical Qedarites, a similarly warlike Arabian people. This implied a resonance between

113. Occasionally Arabic *ḥāʾ* was rendered by Greek *chi*; see Maxime Rodinson, “Sur la prononciation ancienne du *qāf* arabe,” in David Cohen (ed.), *Mélanges Marcel Cohen* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 298–319, 315–316. In Ancient Greek *chi* was another velar stop; but in later stages, by the time Greek writers were transcribing Arabic words, it was pronounced as a palatal or velar fricative, much closer to *ḥāʾ* than *kappa* ever was.

114. Charles Forster, *Mahometanism Unveiled*, 2 vols. (London: James Duncan and John Cochran, 1829).

115. Charles Forster, *Historical Geography of Arabia; or, The Patriarchal Evidences of Revealed Religion* (London: James Duncan and Frederick Malcolm, 1844), vol. 1, 251–266; cf. vol. 2, 141, 325.

116. Stanley Mayer Burstein (ed.), *Agatharchides of Cnidus: On the Erythraean Sea* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1989), 159. Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History*, vol. 2, 458–459, §6.32.

117. Bochart, *Phaleg*, 162.

118. Forster, *Historical Geography*, vol. 1, vii–viii.

biblical and Islamic genealogy, for the patriarch Qedar was a son of Ishmael, who had resided at Mecca, and both patriarchs were considered progenitors of Muḥammad's tribe, the Quraysh. If Forster's equation held true, then Mecca was originally the capital of the Qedar, also known as the Ḥarb, whose namesakes had prospered in the Hijaz until Forster's time. Assuming that Mecca was Ptolemy's Macoraba, Forster was able to derive the town's name from the Arabic word *muḥāribah*, meaning literally "warlike" and implying some relationship with the Ḥarb. "Mecca" was then "an idiomatic abbreviation" of this original name.

Forster's hypothesis was cited a decade later in a successful *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, under the entry for Macoraba, by George Williams—another churchman with a penchant for ancient geography.¹¹⁹ But it had little to no impact on the Orientalist community. Forster took such leaps of interpretation—geographical, historical and phonological—that we hardly need to critique the argument. His grandson, the novelist E.M. Forster, would modestly say that the old rector "had the disadvantage of resting on imperfect research."¹²⁰ We might add that Forster's book was a tribute to works like Samuel Bochart's *Sacred Geography*, weaving theology and history with great imagination but not much rigor.

Great Slaughter

While Forster dallied with Bochart, the Orientalist community was already starting to forget him. Some twenty years later when Reinhart Dozy approached Macoraba, it was through more recent geographies, which took for granted that it was an ancient name for Mecca.¹²¹ What these geographies lacked was any attempt at etymology. Dozy, who was an accomplished Arabist and longstanding Professor of History at Leiden, proposed a new derivation in his monograph *The Israelites at Mecca* (1864), a radical application of biblical criticism to the study of Islam's origins.

Dozy noted a problem with the conventional view of Macoraba: for all its nebulous chronology, the Muslim historical tradition may indicate that Mecca was founded too late for Ptolemy to have known it. Some Orientalists had therefore rejected the identification of Macoraba with Mecca.¹²² Dozy conceded that this was a problem, but offered a novel

119. George Williams s.v. "Macoraba," in William Smith (ed.), *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, vol. 2 of 2, *Iabadius—Zymethus* (London: John Murray, 1857), 239–240, 239. Williams published a historical geography of Jerusalem and announced, but never released, a study of the Holy Land: see William Prideaux Courtney s.v. "Williams, George (1814–1878)," in Sidney Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 61 (1900), 399–400.

120. Jeffrey M. Heath (ed.), *The Creator as Critic, and Other Writings by E.M. Forster* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008), 109.

121. He names two, which appear to be Carl Ritter, *Die Erdkunde... oder allgemeine, vergleichende Geographie*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1818), 211; Heinrich Kiepert, *Atlas der Alten Welt* (Weimar: Geographische Institut, 1848), 19.

122. I do not know which scholars he is referring to, still less whether they wrote on the subject. Yet an anonymous reviewer would quote Dozy on this point, adding: "None of the Professor's new arguments have induced us to leave the ranks of the Orientalists." *The Athenæum* 2007 (January–June 1866), 499.

solution: the name had existed before the town. Not only that, but since no Arabic root could account for the name Mecca—in Dozy’s view—the solution linking Mecca to Macoraba was to be sought in another language altogether.

Like the historical geographers before him, Dozy found Mecca in the Hebrew Bible: Macoraba was the Hebrew term *makkah rabbah*, “great slaughter,” as in 2 Chronicles 13:17. Mecca was built on the site of a great battlefield. “No wonder the Arabs, who did not know Hebrew, could not explain the name!” For Dozy, that battlefield was the one where the Simeonite tribe of Israel had defeated a party of Canaanites. Judges 1:17 reports that they “destroyed” (*yaḥarimu*) the Canaanites’ town, which is punningly called Ḥormah. The town is unidentified, but Dozy related it to the Arabic word *ḥaram*, the “sanctuary” at Mecca. He argued therefore that the Simeonites had conquered the land where Mecca would eventually grow. The settlers became known as Ishmaelites, and also “immigrants,” in Hebrew *gerim*, which gave its name to the Jurhum tribe of Meccan folklore. Through this narrative Dozy was able to explain certain parallels between Muslim and Israelite rituals as the residues of an Israelite conquest.¹²³

The book caused an immediate furor. Dozy’s arguments were learned but often tenuous, delivered in a polemical and irreverent style that could only have rankled a large section of the community: it was still a matter of fierce debate whether philology was even a legitimate approach to the Bible. A handful of reviewers with their own connections to the liberal circles at Leiden did appreciate Dozy’s revisionist narrative, including his derivation for Macoraba.¹²⁴ But the overwhelming reaction from rabbis and Orientalists was critical to the point of cruelty.¹²⁵

Objections were also levelled specifically at the Macoraba hypothesis. K.H. Graf, a pioneer of source-criticism, panned the book and insisted that Hebrew *makkah* “does not mean a battle, still less a victory, but a defeat; is it really conceivable that a people should have named its shrine or its city *Clades Magna*?”¹²⁶ And beyond the formal territory of Orientalist scholarship, a more eccentric objection came from the British explorer Richard F. Burton, who had come to believe that Mecca was sacred to the Hindus and Zoroastrians in ancient times, rather than the Simeonites; as for “great slaughter,” was this “a likely name for a Holy Place?”¹²⁷

123. Reinhart Dozy, *De Israëlieten te Mekka van Davids tijd tot in de vijfde eeuw onzer tijdrekening* (Haarlem: A.C. Kruseman, 1864), 80–81, 94–95; id., *Die Israeliten zu Mekka von Davids Zeit bis in’s fünfte Jahrhundert unsrer Zeitrechnung* (Haarlem: A.C. Kruseman, 1864), 72–73, 85.

124. Michael Jan de Goeje, “De Israëlieten te Mekka,” *De Gids* 28 (1864), 298–312, Macoraba on 301; Jan Pieter Nicolaas Land, “Een nieuwe Lichtstraal op het Oude Verbond,” *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 29 (1864), 227–229, Macoraba on 227; Jan Carel Matthes, “Een nieuwe Ontdekking,” *De Tijdspiegel* 2 (1864), 349–369, Macoraba on 359.

125. Ran HaCohen, tr. Michelle Engel, *Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible: German-Jewish Reception of Biblical Criticism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 140–151; Herman Paul, “Virtue Language in Nineteenth-Century Orientalism: A Case Study in Historical Epistemology,” *Modern Intellectual History* 14/3 (2017), 689–715.

126. Karl Heinrich Graf, “Die Israeliten zu Mekka,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 19 (1865), 330–351, 343.

127. Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz,

Over the following years, even those who saw value in *The Israelites at Mecca* did not promote his “great slaughter” with much enthusiasm. Henricus Oort, who built extensively on Dozy’s narrative, did not see fit to adduce Macoraba himself.¹²⁸ Leone Caetani welcomed the derivation in his influential *Annals of Islam*, but this was effectively hidden among the addenda.¹²⁹ Its most vocal supporter was probably the Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso, who also wrote a translation of Oort.¹³⁰ But once the initial flurry of controversy had passed, Dozy’s revisionist narrative attracted few supporters, and over time he came to doubt it himself.¹³¹ Julius Wellhausen would speak for the next generation of Orientalists in asserting that Dozy had found no “solid evidence” that Mecca was a “Jewish foundation.”¹³² In spite of Dozy’s abiding reputation as a heavyweight scholar, the largely hostile reception of *The Israelites at Mecca* doomed “great slaughter” to obscurity.

A conservative paradigm would reign over Early Islamic Studies for another century. History was the study of great men and their politics, inscribed in literature, which the shrewd historian could assess for bias. Muḥammad’s life was a matter of record, and the Qur’an was an authorial testament to the changing course of his career.¹³³ This positivistic understanding of Early Islam had little patience for more challenging works like *The Israelites at Mecca*, which were swept to the margins, for better or worse. These conditions held until the 1970s, when a minority of scholars—independently, with many distinct approaches—began agitating for radical changes in method and theory. Reluctantly, the paradigm was shifting.¹³⁴

One of these “revisionists” was Günter Lüling. Today he is best known for arguing that parts of the Qur’an were developed out of Christian strophic hymns, imparting a very un-Islamic theology; this was the subject of his doctoral dissertation at Erlangen-

1874), vol. 1, 61–62 n.; vol. 3, 36 n. Burton’s ecumenical vision for the ancient Ka’bah has deeper roots in the Orientalist tradition, which I hope to explore in a future publication.

128. Henricus Oort, *De Dienst der Baälīm in Israël* (Leiden: P. Engels, 1864).

129. Leone Caetani, *Annali dell’ Islām*, vol. 1 (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905), xv.

130. John William Colenso, *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, Critically Examined*, vol. 5 (London: Longmans, Green and co., 1865), “Appendix I: The Israelitish Origin of the Sanctuary at Mecca,” 265–278, esp. 272–274. Id., “Israelites in Mecca,” *The Athenæum* 2007 (January–June 1866), 497–498. Id. (tr.), *The Worship of Baalim in Israel* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1865).

131. Michael Jan de Goeje, “Levensbericht van Reinhart Dozy,” in (no ed.) *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1883) 12–52, 37–39; tr. Victor Chauvin, *Biographie de Reinhart Dozy* (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 30–31.

132. Julius Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, vol. 3, *Reste arabischen Heidentumes* [sic] (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1887), 89.

133. This was already the established mode of Orientalist scholarship: see Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75, on “positivist historicism.”

134. Chase F. Robinson, “Crone and the End of Orientalism,” in Asad Q. Ahmed et al. (eds.), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 597–620.

Nuremberg.¹³⁵ But he also applied himself to Biblical Studies. In a little-known article, published in 1985, Lüling affirmed and elaborated Dozy's narrative of Simeonite conquest: not only were there Simeonites at Mecca, but over the following centuries the Meccan cult was controlled by Levite emigrants. In this article he tried to lay the foundations for a "New Paradigm" for the study of both Ancient Israel and Early Islam.¹³⁶

Lüling argued that the local sanctuary or "high place" in Israel and Arabia was originally a grave where the local hero was interred and revered. The priesthood at each site was figuratively adopted by the hero and empowered to enforce the blood feud in that community. In Israel the local heroes all came to be identified as Yahweh, which effectively merged the priestly families into one tribe, the Levites. But wherever a state tried to exercise a monopoly on violence, the blood feud and its priestly enforcers stood in the way. Consequently, when Josiah reformed the Judaeen cult in the later seventh century BCE, he shut down the "high places" in favor of the temple in Jerusalem.

In Lüling's interpretation, this reform dispossessed the local Levites, who then abandoned the centralizing state of Judah and established themselves among the tribal societies of Arabia, performing the rites at their neighbors' "high places" without fear of state intervention. One was at Mecca, conquered from the Amalekites in a "great slaughter." The Hebrew diaspora went on to seize and manage the Arabian incense trade, leaving subtle clues to their identity: for instance, the renegade priests who were condemned in Judah as "heretics" (*minim*) became known in the Yemen as Minaeans.

This sketch is enough to show how Lüling made use of Dozy's derivation for Macoraba, but the article is denser and richer than I can adequately convey; it is unfortunate that, like all of Lüling's work, it was neglected during his lifetime. Outside of Erlangen, German academia refused to acknowledge his troublesome dissertation: his academic career was over before it had begun.¹³⁷ As a result, Lüling published many of his findings—including this article—through an independent press under the family name. Even when he translated his "New Paradigm" into English, he published it through a smaller journal that folded a few years later. While Dozy's book had drawn a rapid fierce response, Lüling's article has drawn scarcely any attention; and while Dozy's revisionism put a wobble in an otherwise stable career, Lüling's was judged harshly enough to expel him from the academy.

Lüling did not, therefore, encourage a new generation to recall and contest "great slaughter" as a possible reading of Macoraba. But he did illustrate how that reading might be rehabilitated. "Great slaughter" will sound most implausible unless we allow the possibility

135. Günter Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qur'ān: Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qur'an* (Erlangen: Hannelore Lüling, 1974); revised and translated as *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, etc. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003).

136. Günter Lüling, "Ein neues Paradigma für die Entstehung des Islam und seine Konsequenzen für ein neues Paradigma der Geschichte Israels," in id., *Sprache und Archaisches Denken: Neun Aufsätze zur Geistes- und Religionsgeschichte* (Erlangen: Hannelore Lüling, 1985), 193–226; Macoraba on 212. An English translation was published as "A New Paradigm for the Rise of Islam and its Consequences for a New Paradigm of the History of Israel," *The Journal of Higher Criticism* 7/1 (Spring 2000), 23–53.

137. Fred M. Donner, "In Memoriam: Günter Lüling," *al-Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 25 (2017), 229–234.

that there were Hebrew speakers in ancient Mecca—just as we should allow for Aramaic or Phoenician speakers in the case of “great Mecca.” If we make that allowance, we may then find room for speculation: a struggle between native inhabitants and the Hebrew immigrants *could have been* memorialized as a proven collocation, *makkah rabbah*, whose meaning was later forgotten.

There is a difficult lesson in this. “Great Mecca” has persisted and developed since Bochart’s day, but its sponsors have never adequately accounted for the use of Aramaic or Phoenician in a name for Mecca. On the other hand, “great slaughter” has generated next to no further research, but Dozy and Lüling each attempted a historical context for this derivation. I do not mean to vindicate “great slaughter”—it is assuredly fanciful—but to ask why any other hypothesis should blithely parachute foreigners into Mecca to account for a pleasing derivation. As we shall see, Ancient Judaeans are not even the strangest people to have visited Macoraba.

Akkadian and Ancient South Arabian

Until the late nineteenth century, speculation over Macoraba recruited Arabic, Aramaic and Hebrew (albeit once posing as Phoenician), all of which were available to Orientalists. Then, major advances in historical linguistics opened up new possibilities. In 1841 two German scholars independently published their research deciphering Ancient South Arabian, a small family of closely related Semitic languages in the Yemen in the centuries leading up to Islam.¹³⁸ Around the same time Akkadian, the imperial language of Babylonia, was recovered. In 1857 the Royal Asiatic Society ran a test where four scholars independently translated an unpublished Akkadian text; the results were satisfactory.¹³⁹ From then on, Akkadian and Ancient South Arabian were potential resources for Orientalist scholarship. Both languages were eventually adduced to explain Macoraba.

A leading contributor to the study of both languages was Joseph Halévy, based in Paris. In 1905 he proposed Akkadian influence on the name Macoraba. Like Bochart’s Phoenician hypothesis, Halévy’s idea should be read within a broader framework. In his lifetime, the early history of Babylonia was highly uncertain. Today we know that cuneiform was used to write a non-Semitic language, which we call Sumerian, before it was adapted to Akkadian; the two languages had an intimate literary relationship in the third millennium BCE. At the turn of the century the existence of a Sumerian people was already posited, but Halévy firmly denied it: to his mind, Babylonia was thoroughly Semitic, linguistically and racially.¹⁴⁰ Moreover—he believed—the speakers of Semitic languages shared a racial disposition that facilitated cultural diffusion. The unique brilliance of Babylonian civilization therefore radiated into the more primitive societies of Arabia and the Levant.

138. Also known as Old or Epigraphic South Arabian. Edward Lipiński s.v. “South Arabian,” in Keith Allen (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 272–274.

139. William H. Stiebing, Jr., *Uncovering the Past: A History of Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 92–96.

140. The political commitments informing the Sumerian hypothesis are outlined by Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 202.

His examples were mostly drawn from comparative mythology. In Arabia, he maintained, not only the gods but also the institution of priesthood were taken from Babylonia. If Arabian religion was drawn from Babylonia, then the foremost Arabian temple might plausibly have borrowed its name from Akkadian in the distant past: Macoraba “originally designated the celebrated central sanctuary of the region. This name is derived from the verb *karaba*, which in Babylonian means ‘worship, bless, pray,’ an evident proof of an ancient borrowing from the idiom of the cuneiform texts.”¹⁴¹ Halévy had an Akkadian root for Macoraba and a framework for situating Akkadian words in the Hijaz, although he did not examine the morphology of Macoraba and how it might relate to Akkadian forms.

Halévy’s idea was not taken up; perhaps other scholars did not share his view that cultural diffusion would account for an Akkadian toponym in the Hijaz.¹⁴² Far more successful, around the same time, was a hypothesis drawn from Ancient South Arabian. The first to suggest this was probably Eduard Glaser, a Bohemian archaeologist whose work in the Yemen was pathbreaking. He wrote an *Outline of Arabian History and Geography* (1890) where, with easy confidence, he asserted that Mecca was Macoraba, and Macoraba was derived from “Makrab, Mikrâb or Makârîb,” meaning “temple.” In fact Glaser went further: he related Macoraba to Mochorba, a port mentioned by Pliny, and speculated that this was modern Jeddah or some other port serving Macoraba, for which it would surely have been named.¹⁴³

The latter claim did not catch on, which is probably for the best, as Pliny’s Mochorba is not in the Hijaz, but in the southeast, around Oman.¹⁴⁴ As for the derivation of Macoraba, Glaser’s “Makrab, Mikrâb or Makârîb” was not Arabic, but a series of attempts to vocalize an Ancient South Arabian word for “temple,” MKRB. This derivation assumed, once again, that Macoraba was Mecca, and that Mecca was the site of a very old and famous temple. To that extent, it cohered with the traditional view of Meccan prehistory. Yet Glaser did not explain how a town in the Hijaz might have acquired an Ancient South Arabian name.

Such an explanation was attempted in 1909 by Martin Hartmann in his archaeological study of the Yemen. According to early Muslim lore, he observed, tribes had periodically migrated from the Yemen and established themselves elsewhere in the peninsula, including

141. Joseph Halévy, “The Relations of Babylonia with Other Semitic Countries,” in Henry Smith Williams (ed.), *The Historians’ History of the World*, vol. 1, *Prologomena; Egypt, Mesopotamia* (London: The History Association, 1905), 309–317, 314. For the Akkadian root, cf. A. Leo Oppenheim et al. (eds.), *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, vol. 7 (Chicago, Illinois: Oriental Institute, 1960), 62–66; vol. 8 (id., 1971), 193.

142. In the broader Orientalist community at the turn of the century, Babylonian diffusion was hotly debated for its purported influence on the Hebrew Bible: the potential for anti-literalist and even anti-Semitic readings was plain to see. We may wonder if the conservative pushback might have dampened the reception of Halévy’s pan-Babylonianism. Cf. Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 227–251.

143. Eduard Glaser, *Skizze der Geschichte und Geographie Arabiens*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1890), 87, 235.

144. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 134–135. Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History*, vol. 2, 450–451 (§6.32): “portus Mochorbae.”

Mecca; some of these migrants may have spoken Ancient South Arabian.¹⁴⁵ An alternative solution was proffered by Philip Khuri Hitti in 1973. In Ptolemy’s day the Yemen was a producer and a distributor on the incense route between India and the Mediterranean, and it has long been assumed—though never proven—that Mecca was a caravan city on the same route. Hitti postulated that Mecca was a Yemeni entrepôt. With an irony that Bochart would appreciate, Hitti called the Yemenis “the Phoenicians of the Arabian Sea.”¹⁴⁶ Whichever solution scholars have preferred, they have not struggled to imagine Ancient South Arabian speakers at Mecca.

M_{KRB} became the favored etymology for Macoraba in the twentieth century. Early supporters included Frants Buhl and Leone Caetani;¹⁴⁷ even Halévy called it “very seductive.”¹⁴⁸ It seemed to bind Mecca’s antiquity, the success of its temple, the name given by Ptolemy, and (by abbreviation) the name that Muslims knew. Scholars may also have found Ancient South Arabian to be a relatively new and exciting resource for historical linguistics, inviting its recruitment to the study of early Islam. M_{KRB} was endorsed in the second *Pauly* by Adolf Grohmann in 1928; again in the *Supplement* by Hermann von Wissmann in 1970; and once again in the *New Pauly* by Isabel Toral-Niehoff around the turn of the century.¹⁴⁹ It has remained the most commonly cited derivation for Macoraba, such that we may call it the consensus viewpoint, and scholars have continued to develop the hypothesis.

Grohmann himself tried to expand the M_{KRB} hypothesis with reference to another source, the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus (4th century CE). Among the “choicest cities” of Arabia, Ammianus had listed a certain *Geapolis*, which—said Grohmann—had a variant spelling as *Hierapolis* or “holy city.” Grohmann argued that this name was a translation of M_{KRB}, while Ptolemy’s *Makoraba* was a transcription. “Evidently Mecca was not only an

145. Martin Hartmann, *Der Islamische Orient: Berichte und Forschungen*, vol. 2, *Die Arabische Frage, mit einem Versuche der Archäologie Jemens* (Leipzig: Rudolf Haupt, 1909), 121–122. On these migrations, see Harry Munt et al., “Arabic and Persian Sources for Pre-Islamic Arabia,” in Greg Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Empires before Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015), 434–500, 440–443.

146. Philip K. Hitti, *Capital Cities of Arab Islam* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), 4–5. Curiously, although he endorsed a “South Arabic (Sabaeen)” derivation for Macoraba, Hitti reported that it meant “house of the Lord,” which is not the meaning of M_{KRB}. He may have believed (like al-Sharīf, discussed below) that the RB stood for *rabb*, an Arabic and ASA word for ‘lord’. This is all the stranger for the fact that he had previously identified Macoraba as a “Sabaeen” word for “sanctuary”: Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: from the earliest times to the present*, 5th ed. (London: MacMillan, 1951), 103.

147. E.J. Simcox, *Primitive Civilizations*, vol. 1 (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1894), 503 n. 2. Frants Buhl, *Muhammeds Liv* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1903), 117. Leone Caetani, *Annali dell’ Islām*, vol. 1 (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905), 97 n. 1. Henri Lammens, *L’Islam: croyances et institutions* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1926), 17.

148. His review of Glaser’s *Skizze* in the *Revue des études juives* 19 (1889), 312–317.

149. Adolf Grohmann, “Makoraba,” in Georg Wissowa et al. (eds.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: Neue Bearbeitung*, vol. 14/1, “Lysimachos–Mantike” (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1928), 807–808; Hermann von Wissmann, “Makoraba,” in id., *Supplement*, vol. 12 (id., 1970), 792. Isabel Toral-Niehoff, “Makoraba,” in Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (eds.), *Brill’s New Pauly* (Leiden: Brill, 1996–); consulted online on 26.06.18.

important site for trade and fairs deep in pre-Islamic times, but it also played a leading role in the cult.”¹⁵⁰ However, Grohmann’s argument is fatally undermined by the fact that—as Crone has pointed out—Ptolemy *also* mentions a place called *Gaia polis*.¹⁵¹

A more intriguing contribution was made in 1987 by Werner Daum, a student of contemporary Yemeni folklore. Every year, he reported, a community northeast of al-Ḥudaydah performed a ritual symbolizing the marriage of a local hero to the woman he had saved from a water demon. This was meant to encourage rainfall and fertility. The happy couple was represented by two poles daubed in henna and wrapped in cloth. Daum argued that the ritual had pre-Islamic roots in Sabaeen theology. Furthermore, in the postscript to this article, he proposed that a similar tale might be encoded in the early Muslim legend of Isāf and Nāʾilah. According to the mythographer Hishām ibn al-Kalbī (d. ca 205/820), these two lovers came up from the Yemen long ago on pilgrimage to Mecca, where they had pre-marital sex in the Kaʿbah. They were turned to stone, whereupon the people, falling into idolatry, began to worship them. For Daum, this was evidence for a (half-remembered) Sabaeen ritual at the Meccan temple before Islam. If Mecca was indeed Macoraba, and Macoraba was indeed a MKRB, then a MKRB “must be” a place where the sacred marriage was held.¹⁵²

Macoraba has therefore been turned back on the study of the ancient Yemen. It has also been spun on a slightly different geographical axis. Some commentators have noted that MKRB is cognate with Ethiopic *mekʷerāb*, also “temple.”¹⁵³ Consequently a few scholars—including A.J. Wensinck in the first and second *Encyclopaedia of Islam*—have supposed that Macoraba could be Ethiopic just as easily as Ancient South Arabian.¹⁵⁴ In 2012 Rosa Conte posited that Macoraba was an Ethiopian entrepôt, illustrating the tight sociolinguistic ties between Arabic and its neighbors.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps in the coming years other scholars will explore the interpretive potential of the Ethiopic hypothesis, but it has not yet seriously contended with Ancient South Arabian.

150. Grohmann, “Makoraba.” John C. Rolfe (tr.), *Ammianus Marcellinus*, vol. 2 (London: Harvard University Press, 1940) 374–377 (§23.6).

151. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 136 n. 18.

152. Werner Daum, “A Pre-Islamic Rite in South Arabia,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1987), 5–14; Macoraba on 14.

153. Wolf Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Geʿez* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 341. Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaeen Dialect* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 251–252. Federico Corriente, *Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 375 n. 885.

154. Joseph Halévy, review of Glaser’s *Skizze* in the *Revue des études juives* 19 (1889), 312–317; Frants Buhl, *Muhammeds Liv* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1903), 117. Arent Jan Wensinck s.v. “Kaʿba,” in Martijn Theodoor Houtsma et al. (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1913–1938); id. and Jacques Jomier s.v. “Kaʿba,” in P.J. Bearman et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (1960–2005). Brannon Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 155. Daniel C. Peterson, *Muhammad: Prophet of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 26 n. 45.

155. Rosa Conte, “Alcune considerazioni sulle lingue in uso presso gli Arabi,” *Linguistica Zero* 5 (2012), 14–47, 21–22; citing August Dillmann, *Lexicon linguae Aethiopiae, cum indice Latino* (Leipzig: Theodor Oswald Weigel, 1865), 427, s.v. QRB; 836–837 s.v. KRB.

MKRB or MQRB?

The Ancient South Arabian root *KRB* bears a superficial resemblance to Arabic *QRB*, to do with closeness, and by extension sacrifice.¹⁵⁶ The resemblance is so strong that *MKRB* has been occasionally misspelt with a *Q*. For example, in his *History of Islamic Peoples and States* (1939), Carl Brockelmann spelled the word “mikrab” in the original German, but in the English and Arabic translations, this was rendered “miqrab.”¹⁵⁷ Unsurprisingly, then, attempts were made to interpret Macoraba with reference to the Arabic root *QRB*.¹⁵⁸ The Indian scholar Muhammad Hamidullah observed in 1957 that the *MKRB* hypothesis “supports the tradition of the South Arabian origin of the Jurhumites, who were the first to inhabit Mecca,” but he also declared that *MKRB* should be derived “from the Arabic *maqrab* = location of *qurb* or *qurbān*, i.e. altar, place of religious sacrifice.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, for Hamidullah, Macoraba was an Ancient South Arabian word, but one that should be understood in light of its (purported) Arabic cognate.

A similar but distinct argument was posed by the Iraqi scholar Jawwād ‘Alī in his *Detailed History of the Arabs before Islam* (1951–1953). We know from inscriptions in Ancient South Arabian that the word *MKRB* signified not only a temple, but also a major official. The pronunciation is uncertain, but we may call this person a *mukarrīb* for clarity’s sake.¹⁶⁰ Scholars writing after ‘Alī have suggested that the *mukarrīb* was a high king; ‘Alī supposed it was an arbitrator (*ḥākim*) of the sort that we find in the Hijaz before Islam. He speculated that the *mukarrīb*’s justice was the justice of the gods, whose work effectively brought the people closer to the gods. In Arabic, a person who brings-things-closer would be a *muqarrīb*, so ‘Alī posited that this was the true meaning of *mukarrīb* in Ancient South Arabian. He then turned his attention to Mecca. Like the *mukarrīb*, the town of Mecca brought people closer to the gods: it was a temple before Islam. ‘Alī observed that holy sites like Mecca tended to attract epithets: in Arabic, Jerusalem is known as “The Holy” and “The Holy Temple.” Mecca

156. Of course, the same root *QRB* also exists in ASA. Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 465–466.

157. Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der islamischen Völker und Staaten* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1977 [first printing 1939]), 11. Joel Carmichael and Moshe Perlmann (trs.), *History of the Islamic Peoples* (New York: Capricorn, 1960), 12. Nabīh Amīn Fāris and Munīr Ba‘labakkī (trs.), *Ta’rīkh al-Shu‘ūb al-Islāmiyyah*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-al-Malāyīn 1978 [first edition 1948]), 31.

158. Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 136: “If Macoraba was located in an Arabic-speaking environment, its name is more likely to reflect an Arabic form such as **Muqarraba* than a derivation from South Arabian *krb*.”

159. Muḥammad Ḥamidullah [sic], “Al-Īlāf, ou les rapports économique-diplomatiques de La Mecque pré-Islamique,” in (no ed.) *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, vol. 2 (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1957), 293–311, 295.

160. Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 251–252. A.F.L. Beeston et al. (eds.), *Sabaic Dictionary (English-French-Arabic)* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1982), 78. On the official’s function, see first of all A.F.L. Beeston, “Kingship in Ancient South Arabia,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 15/3 (1972), 256–268, 264–265. However A.J. Drewes, “The Meaning of Sabaean *MKRB*, Facts and Fiction,” *Semitica* 51 (2003), 93–125, prefers the vocalization *makrūb*, meaning ‘blessed’, and underlines how speculative and unsound much of the previous scholarship on this title has been.

would therefore have gained the epithet *al-Muqarribah*, the place that brings us closer to the gods.¹⁶¹

Great Valley (*Makā-rabā*) and Lord's Temple (*Makk-rabb*)

Though its interpretations have varied, MKRB has remained the most popular derivation for Macoraba. But we should acknowledge that there were other, less successful hypotheses put forward in the twentieth century.

When Brockelmann's *History* was translated to Arabic in 1948, a marginal note was added under MKRB to suggest a completely different etymology. The contributor who authored this note was 'Umar Farrūkh, Professor of Philosophy at the Maqasid College in Beirut. Farrūkh related the name Bakkah to Baalbek in the Levant. Implausibly, he derived the element BK(κ) from BQ^c, a Semitic root used for valleys. Baalbek would then be a Valley of the Lord (*ba'al*). Moreover, following Muslim tradition, he asserted that Bakkah was synonymous with Makkah. It would follow that Macoraba could be read as another Valley of the Lord (*rabb*), if not a Great (*rabbah*) Valley.

In Farrūkh's opinion, moreover, a Syriac derivation would explain how Ptolemy had spelt Macoraba. Most commentators have assumed that the "o" in Macoraba renders *a* or *ā*, but Farrūkh observed that a long *ā* would be pronounced in Syriac more like *ō*. Macoraba might therefore reflect *makō rabō* or the like.¹⁶² But then a Syriac derivation would have other repercussions: "great" should be marked with a hard *t* in the feminine suffix (*rabtō*), whereas "of the Lord" should have a possessive marker (*d-rabō*).

Another peripheral hypothesis was advanced by Aḥmad Ibrāhīm al-Sharīf in his study on *Mecca and Medina* (1965). He observed, again, that Mecca had been inhabited by South Arabians; and he claimed that in Ancient South Arabian *makk* meant "house" or "temple," so Macoraba would be 'the Lord's Temple'.¹⁶³ However, al-Sharīf did not give a citation for this, and there is no apparent reason to think that *makk* should have meant "temple" in Ancient South Arabian.¹⁶⁴ Such a mistake would not be unprecedented: Jurjī Zaydān had once proposed that Mecca should be derived from an Akkadian word for temple, *makkā*,¹⁶⁵

161. Jawwād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī Ta'rīkh al-'Arab qabl al-Islām*, vol. 4, 2nd ed. (Baghdad: University of Baghdad, 1413/1993), 9–10.

162. 'Umar Farrūkh in Fāris and Ba'labakkī, *Ta'rīkh al-Shu'ūb al-Islāmiyyah*, 31 n.

163. Aḥmad Ibrāhīm al-Sharīf, *Makkah wa-al-Madīnah fī al-Jāhiliyyah wa-'ahd al-rasūl* (Cairo: Dār al-fikr al-'arabī, 1965), 109, 112. One of his citations is Yāqūt, but as we have seen, Yāqūt's Mecca is not Ptolemy's Macoraba. Cf. a more recent popular history by Marcel Hulspas, *Mohammed en het Ontstaan van de Islam*, digital ed. (Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 2015), start of ch. 5: "The likeliest interpretation of the name 'Mecca' is that it is derived from 'Mokarib', which in Sabaeen means 'house of Almaka'." λMQH was a prominent god in the South Arabian pantheon.

164. Cf. where one should expect to find the root MK(κ): A.F.L. Beeston et al. (eds.), *Sabaic Dictionary (English-French-Arabic)* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1982), 84–85. Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 274.

165. Jurjī Zaydān, *Kitāb al-'Arab qabl al-Islām*, vol. 1 (Cairo: al-Hilāl, 1922), 244. This has been unfortunately revived by Hanrī S. 'Abbūdī, *Mu'jam al-Ḥaḍārāt al-Sāmiyyah* (Tripoli, Lebanon: Jarrūs, 1411/1991), 249.

but such a word does not obviously exist.¹⁶⁶ We should acknowledge that many scholars of the twentieth century labored without the dictionaries, databases and other resources at our disposal today. Without specialist knowledge of the ancient languages in question, they (or their unknown informants) could easily have misunderstood some detail in the previous literature.

Crone's Skepticism

Since Bochart's time, discussions about Macoraba have almost universally assumed that Mecca was an ancient city, far predating the rise of Islam. Indeed, the Victorian explorer James Hamilton believed that Mecca could be found in a relief from the 13th century BCE. It was installed by Ramses II at the temple of Beit el-Wali, Nubia, and depicts a gargantuan pharaoh and his prince attacking a fortress full of easterners. For Hamilton "the fortified city... is no other than Mecca, which under the name of Macoràba, existed in very early times, and was then a place of strength, though"—he admitted—"since the institution of Islam, it has been without walls."¹⁶⁷

Western scholarship has largely followed the example of medieval Muslim historiography by projecting Mecca's significance into the distant past. There have been exceptions: in 1785 the historical geographer Paul Jakob Bruns insisted that Mecca could not have been a major town before Muḥammad, so if Macoraba was indeed "great Mecca," then it must have been a late interpolation into Ptolemy's work.¹⁶⁸ By and large, though, Western scholars have taken for granted that Mecca was a center of trade and pilgrimage long before Ptolemy's day.

This assumption was, however, tested in the later twentieth century, when the "revisionists" experimented with alternative paradigms for early Islam. As we have seen from the case of Günter Lüling, not all experiments were taken seriously, but as a whole they exposed the weaknesses of Orientalist positivism. Patricia Crone, a Danish scholar in the British and American systems, was arguably the most influential contributor to the paradigm shift.¹⁶⁹ Her monograph *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (1987) challenged the mainstream view that Mecca was a major node on the incense route;¹⁷⁰ not only that, but

166. One may consult for example: Jeremy Black, Andrew George and Nicholas Postgate (eds.) *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000). Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, vol. 2, M–S (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972). Miguel Civil et al. (eds.), *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, vol. 10, M, parts 1–2 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1977; 3rd printing 2004).

167. (L'Abbé) James Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz, and Soudan: Wanderings* (London: Richard Bentley, 1857), 168–170; vaguely citing John Gardner Wilkinson, *Topography of Thebes, and General View of Egypt* (London: John Murray, 1835), 484–486. From their descriptions, this relief is very likely to be the one now interpreted as Ramses II storming a Syrian fortress: Herbert Ricke, George R. Hughes and Edward F. Wente, *The Beit El-Wali Temple of Ramesses II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 13 and plate 12.

168. Paul Jakob Bruns, *Handbuch der alten Erdbeschreibung*, vol. 2 part 1 (Nuremberg: Christoph Weigel and Schneider, 1785), 183–184.

169. See again Chase F. Robinson, "Crone and the End of Orientalism," 597–620.

170. For alternative views of the trading economy, see also Patricia Crone, "Quraysh and the Roman Army:

she argued that the scale of fictionalization in the Arabic historical tradition jeopardized any hope of understanding socioeconomic conditions in the Hijaz.

In keeping with her skeptical historiography, Crone maintained that Mecca was totally absent from the historical record before Islam. To this end, she revisited two of the *Pauly* contributors we have already encountered, Adolf Grohmann and Hermann von Wissmann, both of whom had tried to situate Mecca in the Roman sources.¹⁷¹ Wissmann had argued that *Dabanegoris regio* in Pliny's *Natural History* was the "region of the Quraysh," Muḥammad's tribe, which Crone rightly dismissed;¹⁷² but the other hypotheses to hand all centered on Macoraba. Crone therefore wrote the first (and perhaps the only) noteworthy refutation of Macoraba-as-Mecca.¹⁷³

The coordinates were incorrect, she observed, Macoraba being further east than Mecca; and Pliny's *portus Mochorbae*, which Glaser had construed as the port for Macoraba, was far southeast of both. She correctly identified *Makkah rabbah* as the earliest derivation, and called it "most implausible." It could not be Arabic, nor was there an attested Arabic equivalent for "great Mecca" along the lines of *Makkah al-kubrā*; and the comparison with Rabbath-Moab and Rabbath-Ammon was "false inasmuch as these names are constructs," while *Makkah rabbah* was not.

Moving on to MKRB, she protested again that it was not Arabic; even if it were, it would lack the feminine suffix to account for the final vowel in Macoraba.¹⁷⁴ She also rebuffed Grohmann's contribution—that MKRB was translated to *Hierapolis* and misspelt as *Geapolis* in manuscripts of Ammianus—by showing that *Gaia polis* was also listed separately by Ptolemy. Furthermore, Crone did not accept that MKRB could have been abbreviated to *Makkah*, since the geminated *k* in *Makkah* should rather imply the root MKK.¹⁷⁵ "It follows

Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70/1 (2007), 63–88; Gene W. Heck, "Arabia without Spices': An Alternate Hypothesis," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123/3 (2003), 547–576.

171. Grohmann, "Makoraba;" Wissmann, "Makoraba."

172. Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History*, vol. 2, 450–451 (§6.32). Wissmann's argument was approved by Irfan Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), 351; and refuted by Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 134–135. Wissmann read *Dabanegoris regio* as an Ancient South Arabian construct: $\text{DBN QR}(y)\text{š}$, 'that which belongs to the Banū Quraysh'. However, Pliny puts this region in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula; the Arabic historical tradition would not lead us to think that the Quraysh were established at Mecca at such an early date; and the patronymic *Banū Quraysh* is not known to have existed. We may add that his reading is extrapolated from what seems to be a genitive declension in the Latin, whereas we might expect the native Arabian name to be more accurately reflected in the nominative, perhaps **Dabanegos*.

173. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 134–137.

174. This objection is probably her weakest, because Ancient Greek has been known to affix a final vowel to foreign toponyms for the sake of euphony, as in *Lathrippa* for *Yathrib*.

175. Indeed, it has never been adequately demonstrated how the name Mecca could have evolved from MKRB. This problem was noted as early as Carlo Landberg, *Études sur les dialectes de l'Arabie méridionale*, vol. 2, part 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1909), 642–643 n. Federico Corriente has argued for the influence of *tarkhīm*—an Arabic phenomenon where names that follow a vocative particle are shortened—coupled with "the instability of labial consonants in South Arabian" and "of sonorant phonemes" in general. These suggestions are quite ingenious, but they raise other questions: how often do Arabian toponyms undergo such phonetic erosion through the historical record, and how *in practice* should a vocative form overcome and dislodge the nominative? Federico

that Ptolemy would be referring to a sanctuary town which was *not* called Mecca. Why then identify the two?”¹⁷⁶

Having cast doubt on Macoraba, Crone went on to ask why so much effort had been spent to find Mecca in ancient Roman sources, while the Late Antique sources in the run-up to Islam bear no trace of it. Even after the Muslim conquerors had brought word of Mecca to the outside world, the earliest references to Mecca and the Muslim temple would display “not the faintest trace of *recognition*.”¹⁷⁷ It was not enough to secure Mecca’s place in ancient sources, in Crone’s opinion, for one should then have to explain the centuries of silence between Ptolemy and Muḥammad.

Crone’s skepticism was reasoned and parsimonious. In particular, she cast light on two crucial problems which had scarcely ever been acknowledged. First, if Mecca were attested in Classical Antiquity and again during the Muslim Conquests, we should expect to find it in Late Antiquity. Second, the leading derivations for Macoraba have resorted to languages outside of Mecca itself. Macoraba is anomalous in time and space: have we been grasping at straws? Yet Crone’s distinctive treatment of the Macoraba problem did not stimulate a reassessment in wider scholarship. Even in the twenty-first century, the old consensus reigns with confidence: “By the time of Ptolemy (...who called the city *Macoraba*), Mecca was already[!] an ancient commercial center and a place where the followers of numerous idolatrous sects in pre-Islamic Arabia gathered at specified times of the year for the pilgrimage to the Ka‘ba.”¹⁷⁸ Crone’s robust counterarguments have barely registered.¹⁷⁹

Accessibility was surely a problem. The unfamiliar researcher would have assumed that *Meccan Trade* was about Meccan trade; few would have thought to consult it for Crone’s thoughts on Ptolemy. The book was controversial, which helped to generate new scholarship, but on the other hand its notoriety may still deter a more casual readership.¹⁸⁰ And even if someone did happen to see Macoraba in the index, they would find the case presented over just four pages, all in Crone’s dense and demanding style, in service of much heavier theses on historiography, socioeconomics, and new religious movements. It takes more than a glancing blow to break a beloved consensus.

Corriente, “On a proposal for a ‘Syro-Aramaic’ reading of the Qur’ān,” *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 1 (2003), 305–314, 314 n. 24; cf. id., *Introducción a la gramática comparada del Semítico meridional* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1996), 16. On *tarkhīm*, see Wolfdietrich Fischer, tr. Jonathan Rodgers, *A Grammar of Classical Arabic*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 96 §159.

176. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 135–136.

177. *Ibid.*, 137.

178. Edward D.A. Hulmes s.v. “Mecca,” in Ian Richard Netton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilisation and Religion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 401.

179. F.E. Peters did approve Crone’s skepticism, albeit in a footnote in his “Introduction” to id. (ed.), *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), xxx n. 78.

180. There was even a dissertation on the subject of Meccan trade, not long after Crone’s book, which made a conscious choice not to engage with her arguments, citing a famously negative review by a well-regarded Arabist. Salamah Salih Sulayman Aladiéh (diss.), *Meccan Trade prior to the Rise of Islam* (Durham: University of Durham, 1991), xlvii–xlvi; R. B. Serjeant, “Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110/3 (1990), 472–486. Cf. Crone’s response, “Serjeant and Meccan Trade,” *Arabica*, 39/2 (1992), 216–240.

Macoraba after Crone

When historians did address Crone's opinion on Macoraba, it was therefore in defense of the trade-route paradigm that *Meccan Trade* had aspired to overturn. In a 2010 article, Mikhail D. Bukharin argued that the classical trade in spice and incense endured through Late Antiquity, passing through the immediate environs of Mecca itself. Although "one cannot speak of a Meccan supremacy in the perfume trade," Bukharin inferred that Mecca was a market town in the peninsular network.¹⁸¹ He reiterated that Macoraba was the name by which Mecca was known to outsiders; but this was unlikely to have been Ancient South Arabian, in Bukharin's judgment, since the (unaspirated) Greek letter *kappa* "rarely corresponds" to the (aspirated) Semitic letter *kāf*.¹⁸² Bukharin preferred a derivation from Arabic *Maghrib*, "West," signaling Mecca's location in the Peninsula.¹⁸³

We should credit Bukharin for this new application of historical linguistics to the Macoraba problem. If the *k* in *Makoraba* seldom represents the *k* in Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew and Phoenician, that should threaten not only MKRB, but older derivations like "great Mecca" and "great slaughter." Bochart's unique idea to read Mecca into Macoraba would stumble at the first hurdle. Yet it seems to me that Bukharin drew the wrong conclusion: rather than abandoning the consensus view that Macoraba must be Mecca, he fashioned yet another derivation to bridge the two names.

This would underestimate the strength of Crone's arguments. Suppose that Ptolemy had recorded a town called *Maghrib* to the southeast of Yathrib. Such a town would have different coordinates and a different name from Mecca; and Mecca itself would not be attested in the historical record for another half a millennium. To borrow Crone's rhetoric: "It follows that Ptolemy would be referring to a [market] town which was *not* called Mecca. Why then identify the two?"¹⁸⁴ Still, this has been the guiding principle of scholarship on Macoraba since 1646: it is better to spin off new derivations than to question the fundamental assumption that Macoraba is Mecca.

Following Bukharin came G.W. Bowersock in his monograph *The Crucible of Islam* (2017). Bowersock agreed that Mecca was a "natural destination" for traffic on the caravan route; and if the scale of trade has been "exaggerated" in the past, it was still greater than Crone has allowed.¹⁸⁵ To highlight Mecca's reputation within the trade network, he affirmed that Macoraba was Mecca. He cited Bukharin to that end; and like Bukharin, he was unconvinced

181. Mikhail D. Bukharin, "Mecca on the Caravan Routes in Pre-Islamic Antiquity," in Angelika Neuwirth et al. (eds.), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 115–134, 131.

182. Semitic *kāf* was more often perceived by Greek speakers as their aspirated letter *chi*, so that for example the Arabic name Malik would be transcribed in Greek as *Melech* rather than *Melek*. This negative comparison had already been drawn, with abundant examples, by Maxime Rodinson, "Sur la prononciation ancienne du *qāf* arabe," in David Cohen (ed.), *Mélanges Marcel Cohen* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 298–319, 304–15, 318.

183. Bukharin, "Mecca on the Caravan Routes," 122.

184. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 135–136.

185. Glen Warren Bowersock, *The Crucible of Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 49–53.

by MKRB and its Ethiopic cognate, reasoning that the Ka‘bah was a shrine for pilgrimage as opposed to a temple for congregation.

Bowersock preferred the older derivation from “great Mecca.” Again he drew the comparison with Rabbath-Moab, declaring that the foreign element *rabbah* could have “easily seeped into the local language through the Jews we know to have been in Yathrib and elsewhere.” Crone was wrong to demand an Arabic derivation “despite the absence of Arabic toponyms in this period,” and if there was no “great Mecca” in later Arabic sources, there was at least a “correlative, reverential adjective” in the term *Makkah al-mukarramah*, “noble Mecca.” He even supported Adolf Grohmann’s idea that Mecca was *Geapolis* in Ammianus Marcellinus on the tenuous grounds that *Gaia polis* in Ptolemy is two words, while *Geapolis* is just one; therefore these are two separate places, and *Geapolis* is free to be identified with Macoraba instead.¹⁸⁶

Despite Crone’s warning, Bowersock did not account for the fact that Rabbath-Moab is a construct, unlike *Makkah rabbah*; and though he conceded to Crone’s reasoning that an Arabic counterpart would help his case, his solution, “noble Mecca,” is both late and a semantic step removed. Nor did he consider Bukharin’s objection to reading Greek *kappa* as Semitic *kāf*. Most troubling is the need, again, for a foreign diaspora to yield the building blocks for Macoraba. Bowersock may be right that Arabic toponyms are unattested for Ptolemy’s era: that problem absolutely deserves to be part of the conversation, and it might even weigh against Bukharin’s *Maghrib*.¹⁸⁷ In itself, though, it cannot justify the recruitment of languages from outside Mecca.

In Late Antiquity the Jewish diaspora is well attested for the northwest¹⁸⁸ and the southwest of Arabia.¹⁸⁹ It is not attested for the region in between; not even at Mecca, where we might expect to find reminiscences of a Jewish settlement in the Arabic historical tradition. Moreover, the roots of this diaspora cannot be traced with confidence. Medieval and modern scholars have often adduced the Hebrew Bible, seeing the potential for migration in the “ten lost tribes,” the fall of the First Temple, and the various military

186. Bowersock, *Crucible of Islam*, 53–55 and nn.

187. Inscriptions that may be considered Old Arabic are concentrated further north than Mecca itself, maybe suggesting a late spread of Arabic from the Syrian frontier down through the Peninsula. Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 61–62. That said, as the study of ancient Arabia continues to grow, rapidly assimilating newly documented epigraphic sources, the state of the field may change unpredictably in the coming years.

188. Michael Lecker, “Waqidi’s Account on the Status of the Jews of Medina: A Study of a Combined Report,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54 (1995), 15–32. Robert Hoyland, “The Jews of the Hijaz in the Qur’ān and in their Inscriptions,” in Gabriel Said Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Qur’ān: The Qur’ān in its Historical Context 2* (Abingdon: Routledge 2011), 91–116. Haggai Mazuz, “Northern Arabia and its Jewry in Early Rabbinic Sources: More than Meets the Eye,” *Antiquo Oriente* 13 (2015), 149–168.

189. Christian Julien Robin, “Ḥimyar, Aksūm, and *Arabia Deserta* in Late Antiquity: The Epigraphic Evidence,” in Greg Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Empires before Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015), 127–171, esp. 129–137. Michael Lecker, “Judaism among Kinda and the *Ridda* of Kinda,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (1995), 635–650. For both ends of the Peninsula, see moreover the compendious chapter by Christian Julien Robin, “Quel Judaïsme en Arabie?,” in id. (ed.), *Le Judaïsme de l’Arabie antique* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 15–295.

campaigns against the southern neighbors of Israel and Judah. Yet there is little else to support Jewish settlement along the Peninsula before the Second Temple fell in 70 CE, and it is a matter of controversy to what extent the Late Antique communities were descendants of Jewish settlers or merely converts.¹⁹⁰

That is to say, in the centuries before Ptolemy there may or may not have been Jewish communities in the Hijaz, and we can only speculate whether they might have lent a new title to Mecca, where they are not themselves known to have lived. Bowersock's argument may be bolder than the evidence allows. More broadly, any argument that reads Northwest Semitic *rabbah* into Macoraba should ideally be able to find other toponyms in the Hijaz that also bear this element. Otherwise it may be hard to credit that ancient Mecca uniquely shared a naming convention with towns in the far Levant.

If the Jewish communities of Arabia cannot explain *Makkah rabbah*, they may yet have ramifications for the MKRB hypothesis. Since Glaser's time it has been widely assumed that a MKRB was a pagan temple, serving the native cult of Ancient South Arabia. But as Christian Robin has observed, there is good reason to believe that a MKRB is properly a Jewish synagogue. All datable inscriptions that use the word are within the period of Jewish ascendancy over the Yemen, roughly 350–500 CE; and wherever a MKRB is documented, the context may be read as Jewish or at least Judaizing.¹⁹¹

Bukharin and Bowersock have both acknowledged that the word MKRB could mean a synagogue, and while it does not overtly factor into their decision to reject MKRB as a derivation for Macoraba, it certainly could.¹⁹² It is one thing to situate a pagan MKRB in faraway Mecca, the site of a pagan temple according to Muslim tradition; it is quite another thing to put a Jewish MKRB in the same place, where no Jewish communities are attested. Chronology is also a problem, since the word can only be dated to the Jewish period in the Yemen, starting around two hundred years after Ptolemy was writing. The MKRB hypothesis, which has predominated over the twentieth century, may no longer be tenable, in which case Bukharin and Bowersock may herald a general departure from that derivation in the century to come.

Macoraba and the Holy Hill

Here end some 370 years of speculative etymology. There is however one more contribution that we should address. In his monograph *The Arabs in Antiquity* (2003), Jan Retsö has proposed that the medieval Arabic historical tradition bears the dim recollection of a place called Macoraba.¹⁹³ Retsö pointed to the ninth-century Meccan historian

190. Robin, "Quel Judaïsme en Arabie?," 160–174. Moshe Gil, "The Origin of the Jews of Yathrib," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984), 203–224. Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia: from Ancient Times to their Eclipse under Islam* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), ch. 2, "Legends and Ancient Origins," 14–23.

191. Robin, "Quel Judaïsme en Arabie?," 122–126.

192. Bukharin, "Mecca on the Caravan Routes," 122. Bowersock, *Crucible of Islam*, 54.

193. Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their history from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (Abingdon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 450 n. 61.

Muḥammad al-Azraqī and his *Accounts of Mecca*, which incorporates legends about the Kaʿbah in ancient times. Al-Azraqī relates:¹⁹⁴

The site of the Kaʿbah vanished and perished in the flood between Noah and Abraham. Its site was a hill of red clay which the deluge did not submerge. Yet the people knew that the temple was located there, even though it was not confirmed. Those who were oppressed and sought protection came from all over the world and called out to it “*al-makrūb!*,” there were few who called out like this whom it did not answer.

Retsö inferred that al-Azraqī did not understand the meaning of *al-makrūb* in this passage. Usually a *makrūb* is someone anxious and troubled; the root has many unrelated applications according to the medieval lexicographers, but none can be said to obviously fit this text.¹⁹⁵ The word’s use here seems to be arcane. Retsö’s implication was that *al-makrūb* could be the ancient name Macoraba, passed orally down the generations.

This was ostensibly a Meccan legend reported by a Meccan writer, which affords the matter some evidential weight that has been lacking in the more hypothetical discussions of etymology. Still, we should reserve serious doubt whether we can relate *al-makrūb* to Macoraba. Their morphologies are quite different—it is hard to find the long vowel *ū* in Ptolemy’s spelling—and we have seen that Semitic *kāf* is relatively unlikely to be rendered as Greek *kappa*. Most pressing is whether a story about the holiest site in the young religion, a story that is already obscure by the time it reaches our source, has much historical value.

Among the problems explored by Crone’s *Meccan Trade* is the fraught relationship between pre-Islamic Arabia and early Muslim historiography.¹⁹⁶ The medieval accounts have been weathered by literary forces for so long and with such intensity that the least conspicuous of details are brought into question. Characters are swapped in and out; narremes are relocated to new environments; law and exegesis grow in dialectic with historical reminiscence. This activity is most energetic where the storytellers had the most interest: in the composition of the Qur’an, the biography of Muḥammad, and the history of the Meccan cult. An opaque word in a tradition of *Heilsgeschichte* may prove too ephemeral to link up with a toponym attested seven hundred years earlier, and possibly older than that, depending on Ptolemy’s sources. Those who are sanguine about the Arabic tradition’s historicity would do well to consider this anecdote in their treatments of Macoraba; others should tread carefully.

194. Muḥammad al-Azraqī, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, *Chroniken der Stadt Mekka [Akhbār Makkah]*, vol. 1. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1858), 20.

195. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 7 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1885), 2602–2603, s.v. *KRB*. A.J. Drewes, “The Meaning of Sabaeen *MKR*, Facts and Fiction,” *Semitica* 51 (2003), 93–125.

196. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 203–230. Cf. ead., *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), ch. 1, “Historical Introduction,” 3–17.

Conclusion

Medieval scholars never identified Mecca with Macoraba. This idea was one of the many fruits of early modern historical geography, where it was first adduced as evidence for the Phoenician diaspora. The Phoenician hypothesis did not catch on, but Macoraba was now credibly established as a candidate for ancient Mecca. In the eighteenth century the identification found its way into encyclopedias, and in the nineteenth it was common knowledge among Orientalists and Classicists. Since then, it has been almost universally accepted that Macoraba is Mecca.

Given the scale of agreement on this basic fact, we should be astounded at the variety of interpretations which have been brought to bear. Macoraba has been variously decoded as a great battlefield, great Mecca, Mecca of the Arabs, city of the Malik, city of the Ḥarb, city of the West, valley of the Lord, house of the Lord, a place of sacrifice, a place that brings us closer to the gods, and a temple; derived from Arabic, Syriac, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Phoenician, Akkadian, Hebrew, and Ancient South Arabian. If that language is not attested for ancient West Arabia, the reason is that foreigners conquered, founded or traded at Mecca, or else cultural diffusion carried it from a neighboring empire; and this occurred sometime over the millennium between King Solomon and Claudius Ptolemy.

The remarkable plasticity of Macoraba speaks not to the strength of its central claim, but to its extreme weakness. These derivations are often adduced to show that Mecca was a prominent site for religion or trade long before Islam.¹⁹⁷ In practice, though, scholars have *assumed* that Mecca had such a history, they have *assumed* that Mecca was Macoraba, and they have gone looking for etymologies to cohere with those assumptions. It is telling that after 370 years of experimentation we now have a range of incompatible derivations, none of which fits.

It is also telling that the most elaborate hypotheses—such as Sprenger’s *Mariaba Baramalacum* and Dozy’s Israelite invasion—have been roundly ignored or scorned. Solutions to the Macoraba problem are more likely to be accepted the less generative they are; the less they actually explain anything. If the Phoenicians did not coin “great Mecca,” then it could easily have been the Jews; if the MKRB was not founded by southern migrants, they could easily have been southern merchants. The discourse on Macoraba has favored rationalization *ad hoc* over the kind of integrative world-building that might yield a coherent, rigorous account of the ancient Hijaz.

The failure to build a cumulative line of research on Macoraba is a symptom of its exposition in the scholarly discourse: it is a common but marginal presence in our literature.

197. E.g. Mircea Eliade, tr. Alf Hiltebeitel and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. 3, *From Muhammad to the Age of Reforms* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 63–64: “Mecca (Makkah) was the religious center. This name is mentioned in the Ptolemaic Corpus (second century A.D.) as Makoraba, a word derived from the Sabaean Makuraba, ‘sanctuary.’ In other words, from its beginning Mecca was a ceremonial center around which a city progressively arose.” Walter Dostal, “Mecca before the Time of the Prophet: Attempt of an Anthropological Interpretation,” *Der Islam* 68/2 (1991), 193–231, 194 n. 1: “...a corresponding term ‘makoraba’ could be found in the Sabaic word for holy place, temple ‘mukariba’... This indication shows that a familiar cult center must have been situated in the area of Mecca, otherwise Ptolemaeus would have made no mention of it.”

To my knowledge, no extensive study has ever been devoted to Macoraba; no book or article has teased out the implications of each hypothesis. All conversation has been held in the footnotes, paragraphs and subsections of diverse studies, which recruit Macoraba to any and all narratives; or else in authoritative but incomplete encyclopedia entries, which serve to narrow our vision to a consensus viewpoint. Because there has never been a full survey of literature on the Macoraba problem, we have never seen how dissonant and creative it is: the historiography of Macoraba is an embarrassment of riches.

If not Mecca, what *is* Macoraba? There is no obvious candidate. Despite major advances in epigraphical studies, many of the names in Ptolemy's Arabia remain unfamiliar to us. Here and there we can try to infer their identity from the details of geography, but often, Ptolemy's imprecise coordinates and partial commentary do not leave us enough to work with. We should acknowledge the length of timescales involved. Alexandrians had been studying the trade routes (*periploi*) of Arabia since Eratosthenes (d. 194 BCE);¹⁹⁸ it is possible that Ptolemy learned the name Macoraba from the merchants of his own day, but equally, his sources may have been very old indeed. The town may have perished or lost its name centuries before or centuries after Ptolemy wrote it down. As one commentator has warned, "many well-known towns of our day are recent, or in any case late to emerge, while famous towns of ancient times were either destroyed or reduced to mediocrity."¹⁹⁹

The case for Macoraba-as-Mecca now seems arbitrary and fragile, but future investigations may still recover it. We cannot prove a negative; and if this article does not break the consensus, it should at least raise the standards of evidence and argumentation. A strong case for Macoraba would account for the discrepancy between that ancient name and the medieval name for Mecca; it would test any derivation against our current knowledge of historical linguistics; it would situate Macoraba within a rigorous account of peoples and their languages in the ancient Hijaz; and it would explain why the town fell into obscurity for half a millennium until the rise of Islam. Without these conditions, Macoraba's identity can only be conjecture. Patricia Crone would seem to be vindicated.

And for now, we do not *need* Macoraba to write the history of Mecca. No other ancient source has been shown to describe the town or its temple;²⁰⁰ and in the centuries before

198. Fragments of his work, recovered from various ancient writers, are published in translation by Duane W. Roller, *Eratosthenes' Geography* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010); see index under "Arabia" and "Arabia Eudaimon." For commentary, see moreover Retsö, *Arabs in Antiquity*, 301–308.

199. Johann David Michaelis, *Spicilegium Geographiae Hebraeorum Exterae, post Bochartum*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1780), 211–212. Michaelis was opposing the identification of Macoraba with Meshah, given the length of time between Ptolemy's *Geography* and Moses' *Genesis*.

200. Edward Gibbon thought he had found the Ka'bah in an early description of the Red Sea coast, transmitted by Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE) from a report by Agatharchides of Cnidus (2nd century BCE). The report mentioned a temple that was sacred to "all Arabians." "The character and position are so correctly apposite," wrote Gibbon, "that I am surprised how this curious passage should have been read without notice or application." But Gibbon had *misread* the passage: he placed the temple "between the Thamudites and the Sabæans," but it was actually between the Thamūd and the Gulf of Aqabah, near a bay on the northwestern coast. This mistake has persisted in popular histories, but specialists have largely ignored it. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 5 (London: Andrew Strahan & Thomas Cadell, 1788), 190–191 and n. 45. C.H. Oldfather (tr.), *Diodorus of Sicily*, vol. 2 (London: William Heinemann, 1967), 216–217.

Islam, none of our Late Antique sources refers to Mecca, nor to Muḥammad's tribe, the Quraysh.²⁰¹ The town's oral history disintegrates into biblicalizing legend sometime before the Quraysh take control, and since the oral tradition has no chronology to speak of, it may be impossible to date the earliest reminiscences.²⁰² Arabic poetry from the sixth and seventh centuries refers to Mecca and its pilgrimage, but this is largely confined to poets from the Hijaz, celebrating the Quraysh; it is not clear that Mecca was known and venerated across the Peninsula, even during Muḥammad's lifetime.²⁰³ The town came to prominence only after the rise of Islam, and even then its two most conspicuous markers, the direction of prayer and the rites of pilgrimage, were negotiated with other sites during the seventh century.²⁰⁴ Mecca's place in Arabian sacred geography was neither ancient nor immutable.

With cognate accounts, in translation: Stanley Mayer Burstein (ed.), *Agatharchides of Cnidus: On the Erythraean Sea* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1989), 152–153. On Diodorus and his source Agatharchides see also Retsö, *Arabs in Antiquity*, 295–300. For recent examples of this argument in popular history, along with Macoraba, see Ziauddin Sardar, *Muhammad: All That Matters* (London: Hodder, 2012), 26; Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96.

201. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 137–138. Stephen of Byzantium (fl. 6th century) in his geographical dictionary, the *Ethnika*, has entries for both Jurhum (Gorama) and Thamūd, but neither Quraysh nor Mecca. Augustus Meineke (ed.), *Stephani Byzantii Ethnicorum quae supersunt*, vol. 1 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1849), 211, 306. And, as F.E. Peters has noted, Byzantine writers like Procopius (d. ca. 560) in their reports on Arabia say nothing about Mecca, Macoraba, or the Quraysh: the “Introduction” to F.E. Peters (ed.), *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), xxi. We should note in passing the inscription Ja 919 / RES 4862 at al-‘Uqlah, which records a visit by some Arabian women affiliated to a place or people called QRŠ. It was inscribed for Il‘azz Yaluṭ, who reigned probably in the early third century. The modern editor supposed that QRŠ was Quraysh, and Wissmann concurred; but that would leave an uncomfortable gap of three or four centuries until the Quraysh are next attested. The identification is therefore tentative at best. Wissmann, “Makoraba,” citing Albert W.F. Jamme, *The al-‘Uqlah Texts* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 37–39.

202. For the sixth century the most common reference for calculating dates is the ‘Year of the Elephant’. Yet the triangulation of Muḥammad's birthdate against this semi-legendary event gave rise to a great many conflicting opinions: at the extremes, he was said to have been born fifteen years beforehand and seventy years after. M.J. Kister, “The Sons of Khadija,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 16 (1993), 59–95, esp. 81 n. 100. If this is the state of sixth-century chronology, there is little hope of schematizing the more distant past. On the slow and contentious elaboration of chronology within the Arabic historical tradition, see Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins* (Princeton N.J.: Darwin, 1998), ch. 10, “Chronology and the Development of Chronological Schemes” and its Appendix, 230–254; Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin, 1995), ch. 12, “Chronology,” 189–214.

203. Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 82–83; Nathaniel Ashton Miller (diss.), *Tribal Poetics in Early Arabic Culture: The Case of Ash‘ār al-Hudhaliyyīn* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2016), 103–105.

204. Stephen Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Philadelphia Press, 2011), 223–228.

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Thematic Dossier

Formulating the Caliphate in the Islamic West: Umayyads, Ḥammūdid, and Almohads

Guest Editors

MARIBEL FIERRO AND PATRICE CRESSIER

Contents:

- Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier, “Introduction”
- Isabel Toral-Niehoff, “Writing for the Caliphate: *The Unique Necklace* by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih”
- Jan Thiele, “Facing the Mahdī’s True Belief: Abū ‘Amr al-Salālijī’s Ash‘arite Creed and the Almohads’ Claim to Religious Authority”
- Javier Albarrán, “The *Jihād* of the Caliphs and the First Battles of Islam: Memory, Legitimization and Holy War, from Cordoba to Tinmal”
- Pascal Buresi, “Preparing the the Almohad Caliphate: The Almoravids”
- Almudena Ariza Armada, “The Ḥammūdid Caliphate: A New Look Through the Lens of Numismatics”

Introduction*

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The 2014 proclamation of a new caliphate headed by Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī by the so-called Islamic State¹ sparked renewed interest in the history of the caliphal institution. In 2016, two books by renowned scholars appeared, offering a general overview of the subject addressed to both specialists and a larger audience.² Previous recent studies had focused on specific historical aspects, such as the presence of messianic trends in the caliphate's conception and the extent of the caliph's authority.³ The abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924 has also been a subject of analysis.⁴ That abolition—not the first one to happen in the history of Islam, as we shall see—caused special commotion among different sectors of the Islamic community, including Egyptian intellectuals who were re-thinking the place of Islam in the modern world, and Indian Muslims under British colonial rule.⁵ The abolition had less of an impact in the former North African Ottoman

* We want to express our deep gratitude to Antoine Borrut and Matthew Gordon for their invaluable help in editing this dossier.

1. M. Al-Rasheed, C. Kersten and M. Shterin (eds.), *Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts* (Oxford, 2012); J.-P. Filiu, *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and its Jihadi Legacy* (London, 2015).

2. H. Kennedy, *Caliphate: the history of an idea* (New York, 2016); N. Mouline, *Le califat. Histoire politique de l'islam* (Paris, 2016).

3. Just two examples: H. Yücesoy, *Messianic Beliefs and Imperial Politics in Medieval Islam: The Abbasid Caliphate in the Early Ninth Century* (Columbia, SC, 2009); E. J. Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in his Place. Power, Authority and the Late Abbasid Caliphate* (Madison, NJ, 2007).

4. M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden-Boston, 1999); M. Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: a Transregional History* (Princeton, 2016).

5. M. Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashid Rida's Ideas on the Caliphate," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117(2) (1997), 253-277; John Willis, "Debating the Caliphate:



territories, which were also subjected to colonial rule. Morocco had resisted Ottoman expansion but was not spared colonial rule, and there caliphal symbolism was maintained by the presence of a “Commander of the Faithful” (*amīr al-Mu’minīn*), the ‘Alawī sultan,⁶ which served as a reminder of the long history of locally constructed caliphates. The Islamic West—corresponding to what are now Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, as well as the Iberian Peninsula (al-Andalus) and Sicily when they were under Muslim rule—in fact had its own peculiar caliphal history that has not received the attention it deserves and has not been fully integrated into the general study of the caliphate. The dossier presented here intends to remedy this situation by contributing to a future comprehensive history of the caliphates of the Islamic West.

The Islamic conquest and the initial formation of the Islamic societies of North Africa and al-Andalus occurred at the time when the Umayyad caliphs ruled from Damascus. The ‘Abbasids, following their rise to power in 132/750, were acknowledged as caliphs in Ifriqiya (modern-day Tunisia) even if the Aghlabids ruled autonomously, while in the extreme Maghreb the ‘Alid prince Idrīs I (r. 172/789-175/791) and his successors established an independent polity that provided the basis for a future foundational myth which supported the use of evidence of descent from the Prophet Muḥammad (Sharifism) to legitimize later Maghrebi polities.⁷

In al-Andalus, the Umayyad prince ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I (r. 138/756-172/788), having escaped Abbasid persecution, also managed to establish an independent emirate with Cordoba as its capital. Local autonomy reached its peak with the proclamation of the Fatimid imam-caliphs in Ifriqiya in the year 296/909⁸ and the subsequent proclamation of the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate in 316/929.⁹ The Fatimid move to Egypt after the foundation of Cairo in 358/969—which involved the transfer of corpses of the deceased imam-caliphs to be buried in the new capital—would eventually result in them loosening their control over North African territories and lead to the abandonment of Fatimid allegiance on the part of

Islam and Nation in the Work of Rashid Rida and Abul Kalam Azad,” *The International History Review* 32(4) (2010), 711-732.

6. J. Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful. The Moroccan Political Elite - a Study in Segmented Politics* (New York, 1970); Y. Belal, *Le cheikh et le calife: Sociologie religieuse de l’islam politique au Maroc* (Lyon, 2011).

7. H. L. Beck, *L’image d’Idrīs II, ses descendants de Fās et la politique sharīfienne des sultans marīnides (656-869/1258-1465)* (Leiden, 1989).

8. On the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa see F. Dachraoui, *Le califat fatimide au Maghreb (296-365H/909-975 JC): histoire politique et institutions* (Tunis, 1981); H. Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi. The Rise of the Fatimids*, transl. M. Bonner (Leiden, 1996); M. Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids. The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Tenth Century CE* (Leiden, 2001), and *The Fatimid Empire* (Edinburgh, 2017).

9. On the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate see G. Martinez-Gros, *L’idéologie omeyyade: La construction de la légitimité du califat de Cordoue (X^e-XI^e siècles)* (Madrid, 1992); J. Safran *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge, MA, 2000); M. Fierro, *Abd al-Rahman III: The First Cordoban Caliph* (Oneworld, 2005).

their former representatives, the Zirids, who in 440/1048 proclaimed their obedience to the Abbasid caliph.¹⁰

During this period, the Ibādī communities in North Africa developed their own understanding of the imamate within a Khārijī conceptual framework that stressed election and egalitarianism: the leader of the community had to be chosen not because of his genealogy but because of his piety and knowledge. Internal schisms among the Ibādīs were frequent. In the case of the Ibādī Rustamid imamate of Tāhert, hereditary succession among the descendants of the *imām* ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rustam ibn Bahrām (of Persian origin although born in Qayrawan) ensured continuity until the defeat at the hands of the Fatimids (161/778-296/909).¹¹ On his part, the Ṣufrī Midrarid ruler of Sijilmasa—a Miknāsa Berber—minted coins in which he claimed the caliphate for himself.¹²

Umayyad collapse in al-Andalus after a succession crisis gave way to another caliphate, that of the Ḥammūdids, whose legitimacy was based both on their Idrisid (‘Alid) descent and their claim to the inheritance of the Umayyad caliphate.¹³ In Cordoba, the civil wars that ruined the town led to an unprecedented decision made by the notables of the town: the abolition of the caliphate in the year 422/1031.¹⁴

During the fifth/eleventh century, the Islamic West also confronted the issue of the imamate by paying allegiance to a caliph who was most often referenced as *al-imām ‘abd allāh amīr al-mu’minīn*. This was an ambiguous formula that could refer to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, but could also be understood as acknowledging the “idea” of the caliphate without expressing much concern about who actually embodied it.¹⁵ The Almoravids—Ṣanhāja camel-drivers from the Sahara who founded the town of Marrakech in 463/1070—found it useful to resort to Abbasid legitimacy to support their rule in the empire they had managed to establish, which extended from the south of what is now Morocco to

10. On the Zirids see H. R. Idris, *La Berbérie Orientale sous les Zirīdes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1959); M. Brett, *Ibn Khaldūn and the Medieval Maghrib* (Aldershot, 1999); A. Amara, *Pouvoir, économie et société dans le Maghreb hammadide (395-1004/547-1152)*, Ph.D. Thesis, Université Paris 1, 2003.

11. U. Rebstock, *Die Ibaditen im Magrib (2-8, 4-10 Jh): Die Geschichte einer Berberbewegung im Gewand des Islam* (Berlin, 1983); A. El-Ghali, *Les États kharidjites au Maghreb. II^e-IV^e s./VIII^e-X^e s.* (Tunis, 2003); A. Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers: The Origin and Elaboration of the Ibadī Imamate Traditions* (New York-Oxford, 2010).

12. H. Kassis, “Coinage of an Enigmatic Caliph: The Midrarid Muhammad b. al-Fath of Sijilmasah,” *Al-Qanṭara* 9 (1988), 489-504.

13. M. D. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī y el califato en el s. XI* (Málaga, 2008); A. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán. Las emisiones monetales a nombre de los califas ḥammūdīes de al-Andalus* (Grenoble, 2015).

14. D. J. Wasserstein, *The Caliphate in the West. An Islamic Political Institution in the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford, 1993).

15. On this see Wasserstein, *The Caliphate in the West*; M. Fierro, “On Political Legitimacy in al-Andalus. A Review Article,” *Der Islam* 73 (1995), 138-150; F. Clément, *Pouvoir et légitimité en Espagne musulmane à l’époque des Taifas (v^e/xi^e siècle). L’imam fictif* (Paris, 1997); T. Ibrahim, “al-Imām ‘Abd Allāh on the Coinage of al-Andalus and the Maghrib al-Aqsa,” *Congresso Internazionale di Numismatica, Messina/Taormina, September 21-26, 2015*, https://www.academia.edu/16305297/_Al-Imam_Abd_Allah_on_the_coinage_of_al-Andalus_and_the_Maghrib_al-Aqsa.

the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁶ The division between an Almoravid emir who was a political and military leader, and the Maliki jurists who were in charge of the law proved to be a working solution for some time, but with increased taxation and military defeats, the Almoravids were soon challenged by the local judges who became rulers in a number of Andalusí towns—with some of them even claiming caliphal titles.¹⁷ They were also challenged by charismatic figures claiming the imamate according to a model closer to Shi‘ism than to Sunnism.¹⁸

One such charismatic figure was the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart, a Mašmūda Berber from the mountains of southern Morocco who united his and other tribes by preaching his own understanding of God’s unity (*tawḥīd*). The “Unitarians” (*al-muwaḥḥidūn*) under his leadership and that of his successor, ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, constituted a powerful army that brought about for the first time the political unification of the Islamic West (North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula) under a caliphal dynasty, that of the Mu‘minids. Its founder, ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, was a Zanāta Berber who claimed Arab descent for himself.¹⁹ The Almohad caliphate lasted from 524/1130 to 668/1269. Mahdism, violence, and religious coercion characterized its early history, including attempts to convert all those living under Almohad rule to the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart’s doctrines on Divine unity and anti-anthropomorphism.²⁰ The establishment of the Mu‘minid dynasty led to new developments: the construction of a highly centralized and efficient state that symbolized God’s order (*amr Allāh*), the creation of new religious and intellectual elites whose training included philosophy, and many other innovations.²¹ Although increasing attention is being paid to these and other Almohad

16. V. Lagardère, *Les Almoravides jusqu’au règne de Yūsuf b. Tashfin (1039-1106)* (Paris, 1989); A. K. Bennis, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (Edinburgh, 2016).

17. M. Fierro, “The qādī as ruler,” *Saber religioso y poder político. Actas del Simposio Internacional (Granada, 15-18 octubre 1991)* (Madrid, 1994), 71-116.

18. On such figures see M. García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdis of the Muslim West* (Leiden, 2006).

19. A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*. 2 vols. (Tetouan, 1956-7, repr. with preliminary study by E. Molina López and V. Oltra, 2 vols. Granada, 2000); P. Guichard, “Les Almohades,” in J.-C. Garcin (ed.), *Etats, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval, X^e-XV^e siècle*, Nouvelle Clio, 3 vols. (Paris, 1995-2000), vol. I, 205-232; A. J. Fromherz, *The Almohads: the Rise of an Islamic Empire* (London-New York, 2010); M. Ghourigate, *L’Ordre almohade (1120-1269): une nouvelle lecture anthropologique* (Toulouse, 2014). On the genealogy of the Almohad caliphs see M. Fierro, “Las genealogías de ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, primer califa almohade,” *Al-Qanṭara* XXIV (2003), 77-108.

20. A. Kaddouri, *Mahdisme. Crise et changement dans l’histoire du Maroc. Actes de la table ronde organisée à Marrakech par la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Rabat du 11 au 14 Février 1993* (Rabat, 1994); Y. Benhima, “Du *tamyīz* à l’*i’tirāf*: usages et légitimation du massacre au début de l’époque almohade,” *Annales Islamologiques* 43 (2009), 137-153; M. Fierro, “Conversion, Ancestry and Universal Religion: the Case of the Almohads in the Islamic West (Sixth/Twelfth–Seventh/Thirteenth centuries),” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2/2 (2010), 155-173.

21. ‘I. ‘U. Mūsā, *Al-Muwaḥḥidūn fī l-gharb al-islāmī tanzīmātuhum wa-naẓmuhum* (Beirut, 1411/1991); P. Buresi and H. El Allaoui, *Governing the Empire: Provincial Administration in the Almohad Caliphate (1224-1269)* (Leiden, 2012); É. Fricaud, “Origine de l’utilisation privilégiée du terme *amr* chez les Mu‘minides almohades,” *Al-Qanṭara* XXIII (2002), 93-122; É. Fricaud, “Les *ṭalaba* dans la société almohade (le temps d’Averroés),”

practices and doctrines in a collective effort that will eventually lead to updated syntheses, we will still have to wait years until we have at our disposal the results of the research that is now being carried out, for example, in Igilliz (Ibn Tūmart's birthplace).²² Some Almohad caliphal rituals and ceremonies have also been studied;²³ this field of research will eventually reveal much more to us about the Almohad and the other caliphates.²⁴

With the collapse of the Almohad caliphate, new polities emerged—those of the Marinids in Morocco, the Abd al-Wadids in Algeria, the Hafsids in Tunisia, and the Nasrids in Granada—each of which differently “digested” the caliphal absence after the disappearance of the Muʿminid dynasty.²⁵ Caliphal claims were occasionally made by some of those rulers, but with the exception of the Hafsids for a brief period, these claims were made *sotto voce*, more by suggestion than by explicit and sustained proclamation. The case of the “Nasrid caliphate” is of special interest since it departed from traditional political doctrine (the caliph had to be from Quraysh) and its local adaptation (the Almohad caliphs had claimed a Qays ʿAylān genealogy), by claiming an Anṣārī (Yemeni) genealogy.²⁶

The Ottoman conquest of most of North Africa and the Christian conquest of the Nasrid kingdom stopped possible new developments. Only Morocco maintained both its independence—at least until the 20th century—and its concern for caliphal legitimacy under

Al-Qanṭara XVIII (1997), 331-388; J.-P. van Staëvel, “L’art almohade fut-il révolutionnaire?,” *Perspective. Actualité en histoire de l’art* 2 (2017), 81-102.

22. J.-P. van Staëvel, A. S. Ettahiri and A. Fili, “Nouvelles recherches archéologiques sur les origines de l’empire almohade au Maroc: les fouilles d’Ġgīlīz,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 2013, 1109-1142; J.-P. van Staëvel, “La foi peut-elle soulever les montagnes ? Révolution almohade, morphologie sociale et formes de domination dans l’Anti-Atlas et le Haut-Atlas (début XII^e s.),” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 135 (2014), 49-76.

23. A. K. Bennison, “The Almohads and the Qurʾan of ʿUthmān: The Legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in Twelfth-century Maghrib,” *Al-Masaq* 19/2 (2007), 131-154; P. Buresi, “Les cultes rendus à la tombe du Mahdī Ibn Tūmart à Timnāl,” *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. Comptes Rendus des séances de l’année 2008. Janvier-Mars*, Paris, 2008, 391-438; P. Buresi, “Une relique almohade: l’utilisation du Coran (attribué à ʿUṭmān b. ʿAffān) de la Grande Mosquée de Cordoue,” *Oriente Moderno* LXXXVIII-2 (2008): 297-309; T. Zadeh, “From Drops of Blood: Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the Translation of the ʿUthmānic Codex of al-Andalus,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39/3 (2008): 321-46; M. Ghouirgate, “Comment se comporter avec un roi chrétien: l’ouvrage perdu d’Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn al-Qaṭṭān et les enjeux du cérémonial almohade,” *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 138 (2015) version online <https://remmm.revues.org/8587>.

24. See some of the studies collected in A. K. Bennison (ed.), *The Articulation of Power in Medieval Iberia and the Maghrib* (Oxford, 2014), Proceedings of the British Academy, 195; M. Fierro, “Rituals and the Ruler in the Medieval Islamic West: The Ismaili-Fatimid Legacy,” in O. Mir-Kasimov (ed.), *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: the Ismaili Thread*, forthcoming. Of special relevance are the studies of historical anthropology by J. Dakhliā such as *Le Divan des Rois. Le politique et le religieux dans l’Islam* (Paris, 1998).

25. R. Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Ḥafṣides, des origines à la fin du XV^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1940-1947); A. Dhina, *Les états de l’Occident musulman (XIII^e, XIV^e et XV^e siècles)* (Algiers, 1984); A. Khaneboubi, *Les premiers sultans mérinides, 1269-1331. Histoire politique et sociale* (Paris, 1987); M. Shatzmiller, *The Berbers and the Islamic State. The Marīnid Experience in Pre-Protectorate Morocco* (Princeton, 2000).

26. M. J. Rubiera, “El califato nazarī,” *Al-Qanṭara* XXIX (2008), 293-305; M. Fierro, “The Anṣārīs, Nāṣir al-dīn, and the Naṣrids in al-Andalus,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 32 (2006), 232-247; B. Boloix, “The Genealogical Legitimization of the Naṣrid Dynasty: the Alleged Anṣārī Origins of the Banū Naṣr,” in Bennison (ed.), *The Articulation of Power in Medieval Iberia and the Maghrib*.

the umbrella of the political and religious ideology constituted by Sharifism, which was at work both under the Saʿdids and the ʿAlawis and continues today.²⁷

This brief summary reveals that we have at hand some peculiar developments: an early abolition of the caliphate; the foundation of an Ismaili polity—the Fatimid caliphate—led by imam-caliphs; the emergence of a “Berber” caliphate—that of the Almohads—that combined Sunni and Shiʿi models in novel ways²⁸; and the maintenance of a local caliphate in Morocco built upon Sharifism, the latter ideology acting as a form of Shiʿism under the reins of Sunnism. These original peculiarities are little known outside the sphere of North African and Iberian studies, as shown for example by their limited coverage in a recent compilation of studies in English on the caliphate.²⁹ Scholarship in French and Spanish offers a more extensive and inclusive overview; this is also partly the case in Arabic scholarship, although here the pressure from political and religious ‘orthodoxy’ often involves interpretative constraints.³⁰

In 2015-2016 a project entitled *Los califatos del Occidente islámico/Les califats de l’Occident islamique* (The Caliphates of the Islamic West) was carried out under the sponsorship of two European institutions, the French Casa de Velázquez and the Spanish Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), and under the direction of Patrice Cressier and Maribel Fierro. Two seminars and a course were organized,³¹ a number of research papers were written by students in their final year or for their MA Thesis,³² and

27. St. Ch. Cory, *Reviving the Islamic Caliphate in Early Modern Morocco* (Surrey, 2014); St. Cory, “Sharīfian Rule in Morocco (Tenth-Twelfth/Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries),” in M. Fierro (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. II, *The Western Islamic World, Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2011), 451-479; N. Mouline, *Le califat imaginaire d’Ahmad al-Mansūr. Pouvoir et diplomatie au Maroc au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 2015).

28. As explored by ʿA. al-Idrīsī, *al-Imāma ʿinda Ibn Tūmart: dirāsa muqārana maʿa l-imāmiyya al-ithnā ʿashariyya* (Algiers, 1991), and M. Fierro, “The Almohads and the Fatimids,” in B. D. Craig (ed.), *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker* (Chicago, 2010), 161-175.

29. C. Kersten (ed.), *The Caliphate and Islamic Statehood - Formation, Fragmentation and Modern Interpretations*, 3 vols. (Berlin-London, 2015).

30. To our knowledge no comprehensive monograph on the issue of the Maghribi caliphal experience has been written in Arabic, and extant studies tend to concentrate on political history.

31. The first Seminar took place on November 6 2015 <https://www.casadevelazquez.org/es/investigacion/novedad/los-califatos-del-occidente-islamico-1/>, and the second on June 20 2016 <https://www.casadevelazquez.org/es/investigacion/novedad/los-califatos-del-occidente-islamico-3/>, both at the Casa de Velázquez (Madrid). Members of the project collaborated in a course organized by Prof. Santiago Palacios, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, April 4-15 2016, *Los califatos desde los sucesores de Muhammad al Estado Islámico*: http://www.uam.es/ss/Satellite/es/1242652866332/1242693243668/cursocortaduracion/cursosCortaDuracion/Los_Califatos,_desde_los_sucesores_de_Muhammad_al_Estado_Islamico.htm

32. A. Arroyo Herrero, *Introducción al estudio de la obra del cadí Nuʿmān (s. IV / X), al-Manāqib wa-l-Maʿālib*, Trabajo Fin de Grado, Universidad de Salamanca, September 2015; D. Bercito, *A Paper Caliphate. Understanding the Islamic State through its Documents*, Trabajo Fin de Máster (Máster en Estudios Árabes e Islámicos Contemporáneos-UAM), June 2015 (now published in *Malala* (Brasil) 5 (2017), 68-88); A. Peláez, *El califa ausente. Cuestiones de autoridad en el siglo XI en al-Andalus*, Trabajo Fin de Máster, Máster Universitario

collaboration was established through the organization of a conference on the Fatimids and Umayyads.³³ The present dossier and the five papers it contains are the fruit of an ongoing project that aims to analyze the links of the caliphates of the Islamic West both in relation to one another, and with the caliphates of the rest of the Islamic world in terms of representation and self-representation, political ideology, legal systems, iconography, and architecture.

The five contributions included here treat three of the Western Islamic caliphates: the Umayyad, the Ḥammūdīd and the Almohad,³⁴ with the latter receiving the lion's share of attention (Jan Thiele, Javier Albarrán, and, indirectly, Pascal Buresi). This reflects the fact that in the last two decades—and despite previous neglect—the Almohad state has generated renewed interest that honors the originality and broad implications of Almohad history. The authors of the five contributions have different backgrounds (philology, history, Arabic and Islamic studies) and interests (intellectual history, political history, numismatics) and thus illustrate the variety of perspectives from which the caliphates of the Islamic West are presently being studied. New layers of understanding from different disciplines will lead to more comprehensive and unitary treatments in the future.

The common thread among the contributions is that they deal with the ways in which the Western caliphates were represented or represented themselves. Knowledge, *jihād*, and coins were crucial elements in this representation, and they constitute the axes around which the studies included in this dossier revolve.

As political and religious leaders of their communities, caliphs needed to convince their people of their special mission, and this included the Sunni caliphs who claimed less religious authority than the Shi'ī imam. This made knowledge of paramount importance, and it was not uncommon for caliphs to sponsor scholars in order to promote the writing of works. Although there is no direct evidence that this was the case with the Cordoban Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940) and his *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (*The Unique Necklace*), Isabel Toral-Niehoff makes a convincing case for firmly placing this composition within the context of the caliphal court. A compilation frequently quoted for its wealth of *adab* materials, but seldom studied *per se*, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* is here revealed to be yet another example of encyclopaedism. Encyclopaedism is often inextricably linked to imperial aspirations, in the sense that a cultural practice that aims to embrace all human knowledge within a limited work parallels a political construction where diverse territories and their peoples are under the control of a dominating power and culture. What makes *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* even more interesting is that Cordoban Umayyad imperial ambitions had to rely heavily on a culture produced elsewhere, that is, in Abbasid Iraq. Thus, under the renewed Umayyad caliphate whose capital was now in Cordoba, al-Andalus continued its long process of cultural “Orientalization.” This had

en Estudios Medievales Hispánicos, UAM, 27/09/2016, now published: A. Peláez, *El califa ausente: cuestiones de autoridad en al-Andalus durante el siglo XI* (Madrid, 2018).

33. *Fatimids and Umayyads: Competing Caliphates* <http://iis.ac.uk/fatimids-and-umayyads>, September 23-25, 2016 at the Institute of Ismaili Studies (London), organized by M. Ali-de-Unzaga, P. Cressier, F. Daftary and M. Fierro.

34. The studies related to the Fatimid caliphate will appear in the book resulting from the international conference *Fatimids and Umayyads: Competing Caliphates*.

deep implications with regard to the construction of a cultural memory and identity which was not extensively rooted in the local context.³⁵ The Iberian Peninsula thus appears as a periphery eager not only to connect itself to a globalizing religious and literary culture, but to appropriate that culture in an effort to re-center Islamdom.³⁶

The Almohads were bolder in transforming the periphery into a center by turning the Maghrib into a new Hijaz. Of paramount importance in this move—whose roots had been developed under the preceding imperial power, i.e., that of the Almoravids, as highlighted by Pascal Buresi—was the fact that the Almohad movement had been launched by a charismatic, impeccable, and rightly guided figure, the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart. Thus, the knowledge the Almohads possessed was of higher kind than that claimed in the past by the Cordoban Umayyads. Jan Thiele reminds us that the Almohads imposed on their subjects the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart’s creed, which had to be memorized and followed, thus departing from standard Sunni practices that allowed many creeds to co-exist. Theological knowledge that conveyed certitude (because it had been formulated by a Mahdī) was one of the assets that the Almohads offered in their totalizing political and religious project. However, even if they tried to control the belief system, they did not in fact succeed in eliminating previous theological views, and even new creeds were written under their rule. In analyzing the Ash‘ari creed by Abū ‘Amr al-Salālijī (d. 564/1169, 574/1179 or 594/1197–8), Jan Thiele shows its dependence on the thought of al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). His study also offers new insights that allow for a more precise understanding of both Ibn Tūmart’s creed and its links with Mu‘tazilism and Ash‘arism, and the limits of the Almohad “revolution.” For a scholar who worked for some time in the Almohad court, al-Salālijī does not seem to have suffered any persecution for reminding his readers that infallibility or impeccability was limited to the prophets—thus excluding Ibn Tūmart and his representation as *al-imām al-ma’sūm al-mahdī al-ma’lūm*—and that Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī were the rightly guided caliphs and imams (*fa-hum al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn wa-al-a’imma al-mahdiyyūn*), a characterization that the Almohad caliphs tried hard to associate with themselves in various ways.

Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih wrote a poem celebrating the military campaigns of the Cordoban Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. This speaks to the effort by the Almohad caliphs in sponsoring books that memorialized the Prophet’s military expeditions and conquests that led, in turn, to the Islamic empire under the rule of the four rightly guided caliphs. Javier Albarrán—after offering an overview of the role played by *jihād* in the political legitimization of the caliphs, highlighting in particular the case of the Cordoban Umayyad

35. On this issue the standard studies are M. ‘A. Makkī, *Ensayo sobre las aportaciones orientales en la España musulmana y su influencia en la formación de la cultura hispano-árabe* (Madrid, 1968), and J. Ramírez del Río, *La orientalización de al-Andalus: Los días de los árabes en la península ibérica* (Sevilla, 2002). On the relationship to the pre-Islamic past see J. Gómez de Caso Zuriaga, “La cultura islámica medieval ante los restos del mundo clásico hispano,” in L. A. García Moreno, E. Sánchez Medina and L. Fernández Fonfría (eds.), *Historiografía y representaciones. III Estudios sobre las fuentes de la conquista islámica* (Madrid, 2015), 233–285, and J. Elices Ocón, “El pasado preislámico en al-Andalus: fuentes árabes, recesión de la antigüedad y legitimación en época Omeya (siglos VIII-X),” Ph.D. Thesis Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2017.

36. Of special interest along these lines is the dossier on *Le polycentrisme dans l’Islam médiéval : les dynamiques régionales de l’innovation* published in *Annales islamologiques* 45 (2011),

caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III—explores how caliphal *jihād* and the memory of the first battles of Islam served Almohad needs.

Ibn Tūmart and the first Almohad caliph had fought against the *kuffār*, which they identified largely with the Almoravids and those who acknowledged their rule and religious beliefs. Their successors emphasized the importance of the figure of the “ghāzī-caliph”—he who personally conducts *jihād* against the enemies of God—through magnificently staged parades, epigraphic reminders, and the commission of works on *jihād*. A chapter on this topic—added to the *Kitāb* attributed to Ibn Tūmart—was alleged to have been written by the second caliph, Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, who also ordered Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185) to compose a poem inciting holy war. Albarrán pays special attention to the case of Ibn Ḥubaysh (d. 584/1188), who in his *Kitāb al-ghazawāt* concentrated on the conquests organized by the *rāshidūn* caliphs Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān. He points out that “Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work joins a discursive tradition that looks at the past from the present moment and seeks to legitimize itself through the production and reproduction of the memory of early Islamic times and the symbolic capital that this historical period contained,” thereby establishing a direct connection between the origins of Islam and their self-presentation as its restorers. Ibn Tūmart reminds us of the Prophet while the *rāshidūn* resemble the first Almohad caliphs—an equation that was not new, as Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940) had done the same with the Umayyads of Damascus and Cordoba in his *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*. Albarrán explains that the absence of ‘Alī in Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work was motivated by the fact that ‘Alī’s rule was associated with a narrative of *fitna*, of civil war or conflict within the Islamic community, in conjunction with the fact that by the time the work was written, the Almohads were already emphasizing their links with Cordoban Umayyad legitimacy.

Before the Almohads, the Almoravids had also emerged as champions of *jihād*. In fact, their need to legitimize such practice in the eyes of the Andalusis had led the Almoravids, according to one source, to acknowledge the Abbasid caliphate: only on the orders of a legitimate imam, the Andalusis had claimed, could war be considered *jihād*.³⁷ The renunciation to guide the community they ruled over as imams was made explicit by the Almoravid adoption of the title “Commander of the Muslims” (*amīr al-muslimīn*), another indication of the political and religious resourcefulness of the non-Arabs—in this case, Berbers—when they assumed a political power that they had initially been denied. The corrective made by the Andalusis regarding Almoravid *jihād* could be understood as one way in which the Andalusis—who had been acculturated to normative Islam since much earlier than the Berber populations of the extreme Maghreb (*al-maghrib al-aqṣā*) such as the Saharan Ṣanhāja and the Maṣmūda of the Sūs—sought to integrate the new rulers into their own worldview. The portrayal of the Almoravid experience as that of an imperial power that had emerged in a tribal context but had to cope with al-Andalus allows us to better understand how and why the Almohads departed from such experience through a complex combination of change and continuity, as discussed by Pascal Buresi.

37. M. J. Viguera, “Las cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurṭūṣī al soberano almorávid Yūsuf b. Taṣufīn,” *Al-Andalus* XLII (1977), 341-374.

The number of mints under the Almoravids was proof not of the weakness of the central government but rather, according to Buresi, of its de-centralized method of managing the administration. After the disappearance of the Ḥammūdids in the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, the Almoravids took control of the mines in central and southern Maghreb that had provided silver to previous rulers.

In her discussion of their coinage, Almudena Ariza Armada points out that certain innovative features of the monetary system of the Ḥammūdīd caliph Idrīs II recall specific features of Almoravid currency. She also offers new insights into the amount of power wielded by the Ḥammūdīd caliphs, the extent of their rule, and the steps they took to legitimize it. On the one hand, there was the clever fusion between the Umayyad Sunni tradition and its Shi‘ī counterpart, which favored their acceptance as caliphs both in Sunni al-Andalus and in the Maghreb where Shi‘ī trends were stronger. On the other hand, at a certain point it seemed necessary to emphasize the Sunni aspect, and Idrīs II adopted the title “Emir of the Muslims” and the Qur’anic quotation 3:85 (“Whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him and in the world to come he shall be among the losers”), both of which would be later employed by the Almoravids.³⁸

But what is particularly striking in Ḥammūdīd coinage is its rich iconography: the fish symbol; the proliferation of stars; the octogram symbol; the hexagram or “Seal of Solomon;” isolated letters (*wāw* and *hā’*) that according to Ariza should be taken for their numeral value (six and eight respectively); and the hexagon that demarcates the legends in the area, and was used by the Buyids (Shi‘īs ruling over a Sunni majority). Some of these features appear in the copies (manuscripts) made by the Counts of Barcelona that, thanks to Jewish trade, travelled as far as Kiev. Ariza analyzes the magical and protective qualities that can be assigned to the Ḥammūdīd repertory in a much-needed effort to recover the symbolic meanings that accompanied the caliphal experiences in the Islamic West. In the case of the Almohads, we still do not fully understand the implications of their choice to use squares and circles in the coins they minted,³⁹ in contrast to the Cordoban Umayyads who favored floral motifs.⁴⁰

The five studies offer new approaches to old issues and provide us with new materials that we hope will pique the interest of those who are not familiar with the history of the Islamic West and contribute to existing efforts to better integrate the Maghreb into writings about of the history of Islamic societies, including the domain of material culture. Recent years

38. For the Qur’anic verse see H. Kassis, “Iyāḍ’s doctrinal views and their impact on the Maghreb,” *Maghreb Review* 13/1-2 (1988), 49-56, 52, and “Muslim Revival in Spain in the Fifth/Eleventh century: Causes and Ramifications,” *Der Islam* 67 (1990), 78-110. For the Almoravid title see É. Lévi-Provençal, “Le titre souverain des Almoravides et sa légitimation par le califat ‘abbāsīde,” *Arabica* II (1955), 265-80.

39. C. Bressi, “L’intrigant ‘carré dans le cercle’. Un exemple de diffusion d’un type monétaire dans le monde musulman du XIII^e siècle,” *Annales Islamologiques* 45 (2011), 243-254; S. Peña Martín, “El término de origen coránico *amr Allāh* (Disposición de Dios) y el linguocentrismo trascendente islámico, en torno al siglo XII,” *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 22 (2011), 197-224

40. A. Canto, “De la ceca de al-Andalus a la de Madinat al-Zahra’,” *Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahra’* 3 (1991), 111-19, English translation “From the Sikkat al-Andalus to the Mint of Madinat al-Zahra’,” in M. Marín (ed.), *The Formation of al-Andalus. Part 1: History and Society*, Ashgate: Variorum, 1998 (The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 46), 329-345.

have seen a resurgence of research in this domain, especially in regard to al-Andalus. New findings and, more importantly, the new direction followed by archaeological programs, allow us to access information that is often absent in the literary sources and thus enrich the knowledge we have acquired through previous means, sometimes even contradicting it. The advances made in regard to the issue of the caliphate in the Islamic West have been noteworthy, stretching from its genesis to its urban formulation. The excavations in the *ribāṭ* of Īgilliz in the High Atlas (Morocco) offer us insight into the daily life of the Almohad movement, before the decisive moment when the caliphate was proclaimed.⁴¹ The analysis of the architecture and urbanism of Madīnat al-Zahrā', from the point of view of archaeology, has provided highly precise information regarding the function of different palace areas and the role played by the architectonic forms and their decoration in affirming of the identity of the caliphate as well as the sources of its legitimacy.⁴² In all of these domains, the comparative approach is indispensable for its ability to draw clearer conclusions.⁴³ The two seminars organized in Madrid included contributions dealing with material culture and we hope to publish a dossier devoted to this topic in the near future.

41. A. S. Ettahiri, A. Fili and J.-P. van Staëvel, "Contribution à l'étude de l'habitat des élites en milieu rural dans le Maroc médiéval : quelques réflexions à partir de la *qaṣba* d'Īgilliz, berceau du mouvement almohade," in S. Gutiérrez Lloret and I. Grau Mira (ed.), *De la estructura doméstica al espacio social. Lecturas arqueológicas del uso social del espacio* (Alicante, 2013), 265-278, and see also above note 22.

42. A. Vallejo Triano, *La ciudad califal de Madīnat al-Zahrā'*. *Arqueología de su arquitectura* (Cordoba, 2010).

43. P. Cressier and A. Vallejo Triano, "Madīnat al-Zahrā' et Ṣabra al-Manṣūriyya : deux versions d'un même scénario," *Journal of Islamic Archaeology* 2 (2) [2015], 139-169, and the Conference *Fatimids and Umayyads: Competing Caliphates* already mentioned (note 32). Transcultural approaches have also been undertaken in the case of the Abbasid caliphate: A. Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat: der imperiale Monotheismus im Früh- und Hochmittelalter* (Frankfurt, 2015); W. Drews, *Die Karolinger und die Abbasiden von Bagdad. Legitimationsstrategien frühmittelalterlicher Herrscherdynastien im transkulturellen Vergleich* (Berlin, 2009).

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Writing for the Caliphate: *The Unique Necklace* by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih*

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Abstract

This study undertakes a political reading of the ‘Iqd al-farīd by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (246/860-328/940). It proposes to identify this adab encyclopaedia, composed in Cordova as a “caliphal” composition, by interpreting its conceptual agenda and compositional structure against the background of (neo-) Umayyad caliphal ideology as reconstructed by Janina Safran and Gabriel Martínez-Gros. It reads the text as “imperialistic” in its claim to represent Umayyad leadership, as unique and universal, against that of its contemporary rivals, the Abbasids and Fatimids. The Umayyads in al-Andalus suffered from a peculiarly precarious legitimacy, since, in contrast to the Abbasids and Fatimids, they could not refer to a kinship link to the Prophet. Their territory was also situated far outside the central lands of Islam and did not dominate the Holy Sites in the Ḥijāz (required for a caliph), which was a source of embarrassment. Therefore, there was a particularly strong need for a consistent ideology to compensate for this weakness. The study concentrates on three arguments. First, that the ‘Iqd al-Farīd was written by a man of the Umayyad regime under the tutelage of the caliph; second, that the ‘Iqd reflects a cultural program that aimed at educating Cordovan elites according to cultural models set forth by caliphal Baghdad; and third, that, as an encyclopaedia, it reflects an inclusive, globalizing, culturally imperialistic program that matched the contemporaneous caliphal universal aspirations of the Umayyad regime.

In the year 316/929, the Umayyad emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who had been ruling in al-Andalus since 300/912 as successor to his grandfather ‘Abdallāh (275/888–300/912), ended the long period of the Umayyad emirate in Cordoba that had begun in 136/754.¹ He achieved this through a dramatic course of action: by assuming the title of Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-mu‘minīn*) and then asserting the prerogatives of *khuṭba* and *sikka*. Thus he initiated the short but splendid era of the Second Umayyad caliphate that lasted

* This work was presented in the *II Jornada de Estudios los Califatos del Occidente Islámico* and was worked out in the context of my participation in the research project I+D funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, ref. FFI2013-43172-P.

1. M. Fierro, “Sobre la adopción del título califal por ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III,” *Sharq Al-Andalus* 6 (1989), 33-42.



until 422/1031.² The period of Umayyad al-Andalus not only signified an important moment in Islamic history, but was also a time of extraordinary cultural splendour that would later be celebrated as a Golden Age comparable to the mythical Baghdad of the Abbasids and memorialized as a period of vivid cultural and intellectual activity that produced remarkable achievements in literature, art, and science, many of which would gain status as timeless classics of Arabic culture.

One of the many masterpieces produced in caliphal Cordoba is the multivolume *Unique Necklace* (*al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*) by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (246–328/860–940), a popular literary compendium that exists in more than 100 manuscripts and was frequently quoted, excerpted and summarized.³ The enthusiastic *exordium* in the Beirut reprint of the standard Cairo edition of 1940–53, for instance, clearly expresses the high esteem in which the book is held in Arab culture to date.⁴ It is regrettable that we still lack profound studies of this extremely rich collection that, like many other *adab* anthologies, has been regularly used as a material quarry for the study of *akhbār*, but almost never evaluated as a composition in its own right.⁵ This neglect is also particularly unfortunate since the *ʿIqd* stands out as the most extended and sophisticated literary text composed before the final collapse of the Umayyad regime in 422/1031, which allows it to capture the self-perception of intellectual elites during the triumphant phase of the caliphal age without the distortion of nostalgia and decadence that we find in most of our sources.⁶

2. For this denomination, used to make a distinction from the “First” Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus, cf. J. M. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge, M. 2000). The Umayyads had ruled as emirs since 138/754 on the Iberian Peninsula and had never recognized the legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphate in the East; however, they never asserted their own counterclaim until then.

3. For a state of research on the *ʿIqd*, J. Haremska, “Ibn Abd Rabbih,” in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. 1, ed. J. Lirola Delgado, Enciclopedia de la cultura Andalusí 1 (Almería, 2009), 620–9; R. Arié, “Un lettré hispano-musulman du Haut Moyen Age: Ibn Abd Rabbih. État des recherches,” in *Homenaje a José M. Fórneas*, (Granada 1994), I, 65–72; J. Veglison Elías de Molins, *El collar único, de Ibn Abd Rabbihi* (Madrid: Sintesis, 2007); W. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih: (246/860–328/949): ein Beitrag zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1983); HATA, “Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes (Hata),” <http://kohepocu.cchs.csic.es/>.

4. S. pp. *alif-yāʾ* by ʿUmar Tudmīri in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, 7, + Index, ed. A. Amīn and I. al-Abyārī (Bayrūt, 1990; repr. Ed. 1940–53, Cairo).

5. The only monograph on the *ʿIqd* to date is J. Veglison Elías de Molins, *El collar único, de Ibn Abd Rabbihi*, but is rather a short summary of previous studies. The author of this article is preparing a monograph on the *ʿIqd*. It should be said that in the last several years, there have been several published studies that study compendia as compositions in their own right, such as the very inspiring by H. Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the Author’s Craft in Abū l-faraj al-Iṣbahānī’s Kitāb al-Aghānī* (London, 2003). For the problems of authorship in pre-Modern Arabic literature cf. the studies collected in L. Behzadi & J. Hämeen Anttila (eds), *Concepts of authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts* (Bamberg, 2015).

6. For this perspective of later sources that look at the caliphate as a symbol and reference of past unity in al-Andalus cf. G. Martinez-Gros, *L’idéologie omeyyade: la construction de la légitimité du Califat de Cordoue (x^e-xⁱ^e siècles)* (Madrid, 1992), 163–328 and 185–195; cf. also J. Safran, *The second Umayyad Caliphate: The articulation of caliphal legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge, M. 2000), 185–195.

The following study proposes to undertake a political reading of this text that *prima facie* presents itself as a non-political, literary compendium.⁷ It should be mentioned that, nevertheless, certain passages do convey a more explicit political message. In a previous study, I have already discussed the historical sections found in book 15 in the *‘Iqd*, “The Book of the Second Adorable Jewel on Caliphs, their Histories, and Battles.” There I have shown that Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih organized his history as biographies of an uninterrupted chain of legitimate rulers (*khulafāʾ*) that linked the Prophet, via the eastern Umayyads, with the Umayyads in al-Andalus, ending with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir. As already emphasized by Janina Safran, this “chain of authority” (connected by genealogy and legitimate delegation) was the main argument the Umayyads in al-Andalus used to support their claim to universal rule.⁸ From a more general perspective, the first book in the *‘Iqd*, dealing with *sulṭān*, gives us an idea of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih’s idea of governance and good rule, which coincides with the *adab*-standards of the time: political authority is part of the divine order and is bestowed by God; and good advice by adequate counsellors is essential.⁹ Finally, the text also presents interesting information regarding Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih’s understanding of the Umayyad caliphate in his *urjūza* on the military campaigns of caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir, studied by James T. Monroe.¹⁰

This article approaches the question from a different angle. It proposes to read this *adab* text as a *caliphal* composition by interpreting its conceptual agenda and compositional structure against the background of the (neo-)Umayyad caliphal ideology as reconstructed by Janina Safran and Gabriel Martinez-Gros, and assumed to be basically imperialistic in its claim to be the unique and universal leadership against its contemporary rivals, the Abbasids and the Fatimids.¹¹ As both scholars point out, the Umayyads in al-Andalus suffered from a peculiarly precarious legitimacy, since, in contrast to the Abbasids and Fatimids, they could not refer to their parentage with the Prophet. In addition, the fact that their territory was situated far outside the central lands of Islam and did not dominate the

7. The task involves the difficulty of undertaking the political reading of a literary text, i.e. of “politicising the aesthetic” which is indeed a methodological challenge. Julia Bray has rightly observed that it is not possible to read the *‘Iqd* as a plain piece of political propaganda: J. Bray, “Abbasid Myth and the Human Act: Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih and Others,” in *On Fiction and Adab in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. P. F. Kennedy, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 1–54.

8. I. Toral-Niehoff, “History in Adab Context: “The Book on Caliphal Histories” by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (246/860–328/940),” *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015), 79; for the “chain” Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, 32.

9. Cf. I. Toral-Niehoff “The ‘Book of the Pearl of the Ruler’ in the Unique Necklace by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih: Preliminary Remarks,” In *Global Medieval: Mirrors for Princes Reconsidered*, edited by R. Forster and N. Yavari (Boston, Mass., 2015), 134–50.

10. J. T. Monroe, “The Historical Arjuza of Ibn Abd Rabbih, a Tenth Century Hispano-Arabic Epic Poem,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971), 67–95.

11. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate* and Martinez-Gros, *L’idéologie omeyyade*. I do not follow the far-reaching thesis of Martinez-Gros about an “esoteric” aspect of this ideology; however, his book underlines rightly the importance of studying the legitimizing discourse for the Second Umayyads because of its precariousness. It is regrettable that he did not study the *‘Iqd* from this perspective in his book.

Holy Sites in the Ḥijāz (as was required for a caliph) was embarrassing.¹² Therefore, we must suppose that they felt an even greater need to develop a convincing and coherent caliphal ideology to compensate for this weakness.

To this end, the following study concentrates on three arguments. First, that the text was written by a man of the regime, i.e. by a *caliphal* man, in the sense that he was a representative for the cultural elites of his day who stood close to the caliph; from this, we can presume that his oeuvre reflects the caliphal perspective. It is also of importance that the Umayyad regime was very concentrated on Cordoba, a city that emerges in our sources as practically the sole focus of political and cultural life in al-Andalus in the early fourth/tenth century. The multifocal and variegated panorama of potential sponsors and competing centers that we find in the contemporaneous East, which provided the opportunity for a certain independence among intellectuals and litterateurs,¹³ is not to be found in al-Andalus in this period. For this reason, I regard it as quite unlikely that a poet of limited economic resources, as was the case for Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, would have been able to compose an oeuvre of such proportions without the endorsement of the caliph.

Second, I will argue that the *‘Iqd* reflects a cultural program that aimed at educating the Cordovan elites and transforming them into veritable *caliphal* men per cultural models already established by Baghdad. The court culture in Baghdad had already been the model throughout the first stages of the “orientalization” of al-Andalus in the third/ninth century, during the advent of the noteworthy singer al-Ziryāb (d. 243/857) and it continued to be the standard in the tenth¹⁴.

The third argument is very much connected with the second one. After showing that the *‘Iqd* is a very encyclopaedic *adab* work (the *‘Iqd* is a case in point exemplifying that the phenomena of encyclopaedism and *adab* often appear in conjunction), I will put forth the thesis that this encyclopaedism makes the *‘Iqd* very *caliphal* since it reflects an inclusive, globalizing, imperialistic cultural program that matched the contemporaneous *caliphal* universal aspirations of the Umayyad regime.

The *‘Iqd*: Written by a Caliphal Man

First, the *caliphal* dimension of the *‘Iqd* is suggested by the biographical data: Abū ‘Umar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (246/860–328/940), though not a politician, was in close personal proximity to the ruling elite surrounding the caliph and, not being very wealthy, he depended on their favor and economic support. The clear indications are that he was a regular member of the courtly circles in Umayyad Cordoba, to which he likely

12. Cf. the locus *classicus* “He who controls the two sanctuaries Mecca and Medina and leads the pilgrimage thus merits the caliphate” in, e.g., Ya‘qūbī (d. 284/897), *Ta’rīkh*, II, 321. For the spatial aspects in the *‘Iqd*, see Toral-Niehoff, “History in Adab Context,” 73.

13. L. Osti, “Culture, Education and the Court,” in *Crisis and Continuity at the Abbasid Court, Formal and Informal Politics in the Caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–932)*, ed. by M. van Berkel, N. M. El Cheikh, H. Kennedy and L. Osti (Leiden, 2013), 187–214.

14. J. Ramírez del Río, *La orientalización de al-Andalus: Los días de los árabes en la península ibérica* (Sevilla, 2002).

belonged from the times of emir Muḥammad (reg. 238/852273/886) until his death under the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in 328/940,¹⁵ functioning mainly as court poet. He came from a local family whose members had been clients (*mawālī*) of the Umayyads since the rule of emir Hishām I (reg. 172/788–180/796).¹⁶ The Umayyad clients formed a privileged group, whose support was essential for the Umayyad regime, however, Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih seems to have been regarded as being of a lower status,¹⁷ probably because he did not belong to the prestigious *mawālī* of Eastern stock (i.e. descendants of those *mawālī* who had immigrated in earliest times from the East, mainly from Syria¹⁸); in fact he was a local *mawālī*. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih belonged to a class of citizens on the inferior rung of the social ladder who sought the patronage of those above them: this is suggested by the fact that he addressed several of his panegyrics to two prestigious members of the elite *buyūtāt* (large aristocratic houses), namely to the commander Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Abdā¹⁹ and the minister ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Zajjālī,²⁰ which indicates that the precariously employed court poet was seeking to gain access to the inner circles.²¹ We do not know if he ever held an official position in the court administration as a *kātib* or some other capacity.²² After a period spent outside Cordoba during the fitna at the end of the 3rd/9th century, he returned to the Umayyad court of Cordoba around 300/912, where he spent the last decades of his life as court poet of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir, whom he praised in numerous poems, the most famous being a long *urjūza* celebrating military campaigns undertaken at the beginning of his rule.²³ It is likely that the cumbersome collection and composition of the *‘Iqd* took place during this tranquil period in his life, under the tutelage of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir. However, although it is highly probable, we do not know if the caliph officially sponsored

15. Cf. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-‘Iqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ‘Abdrabbih*, 18–19.

16. Ibn-al-Faraḍī, *Kitāb ta’rīḥ ‘ulamā’ al-Andalus*, ed. F. Codera (Matriti, 1892), no. 118.

17. Actually, he and his family do not appear among the *buyūtāt* listed by Mohamed Méouak in his prosopographical study of the elites in Umayyad Cordoba: M. Méouak, *Pouvoir souverain, administration centrale et élites politiques dans l’Espagne umayyade: (ii^e-iv^e/viii^e-x^e siècles)* (Helsinki, 1999). His ancestor is mentioned in M. Fierro, “Los *mawālī* de ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I,” *Al-Qantara* XX (1999), 65–98, number 49.

18. i.e. what M. Méouak calls “Le noyau dur du personnel politique: Les *buyūtāt* d’origine “arabo-orientale”/ *mawālī*,” *Pouvoir souverain*, 74–162.

19. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-‘Iqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ‘Abdrabbih*, 19. For this prestigious family, cf. Méouak, *Pouvoir souverain*, 77–79. For Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, the most famous member of the family, cf. p. 88–91. He was in charge of the Cordovan army under emir ‘Abdallāh and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. He died in 303/917.

20. Méouak, *Pouvoir souverain*, 177. He was one of the secretaries of emir ‘Abdallāh and continued holding diverse administrative positions under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. Died in 301/914.

21. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-‘Iqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ‘Abdrabbih*, 19.

22. Under the turbulent rule of emir ‘Abdallāh (275/888300/912) he left Cordoba and searched for the protection of the rebellious Ibn Ḥajjāj in Seville, a semi-independent chiefdom under the rule of one of the leading Sevillian families, the Banū Ḥajjāj: Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-‘Iqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ‘Abdrabbih*, 20. This episode not only indicates a certain alienation from the emiral court, but also the fragility of his position.

23. Monroe, “The Historical Arjuza of Ibn Abd Rabbih.” The *urjūza* is quoted in the *‘Iqd* in the 15th book.

the time-consuming composition of the *ʿIqd*, as the text does not contain a formal dedication to the caliph. It is important to note, however, that formal dedications within prefaces were not yet a convention of the genre at the time, so one would not necessarily have expected to find one.²⁴

A very interesting point in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih’s biography is that he never left al-Andalus²⁵ to undertake pilgrimage and study in the Islamic East as many of his contemporaries did.²⁶ This means that in order to compose his enormous collection of *adab*, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih would have had to cull from the copious Iraqi material that was already circulating in Cordoba at the time. In this regard, the *ʿIqd* is an indirect testimony about the quality and quantity of Abbasid material that had reached al-Andalus by then, and which marked the climax of the “Iraqization” of al-Andalus that had begun in the 3rd/9th century.²⁷ Further, it indicates the astonishing degree of cultural globalization in the Islamicate world of the age, a point that will be addressed later. With regard to this, it is also important to consider Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih’s excellent education: Ibn al-Faraḍī mentions in his entry on Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih his three distinguished teachers: Baqī b. Makhlad (d. 276/889), Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ (d. 287/900) and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Khushanī (d. 286/899). The first two were the most celebrated *fuqahāʾ* and *muḥaddithūn* of the period and are credited with being the first to introduce *ʿilm al-hadīth* in al-Andalus, a discipline until then scarcely known in a region where Mālikism and the unsystematic doctrine of *fiqh* had been firmly rooted since the days of Emir al-Ḥakam (reg. 154/770–206/822).²⁸ The third teacher was a famous scholar who introduced substantial poetry, philology and *adab* material to al-Andalus.²⁹ A commonality between the three is that they spent long periods of time in the cultural centers of the East before becoming some of the most important disseminators of Abbasid culture, science, and wisdom in al-Andalus.

In summary, since Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih was in close contact with the center of power and dependent on the favor of higher social circles, we must suppose a certain level of political involvement on his part. It is also highly improbable that he could have composed his huge oeuvre without the backing of the Umayyads and especially of the caliph, so we can assume that his oeuvre will most likely reflect the *caliphal* standpoint and ideology.

24. P. Freimark, *Das Vorwort als literarische Form in der Arabischen Literatur* (Münster, 1967), 109-11.

25. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 22-23; discussing also M. Shafī, “A Description of the Two Sanctuaries of Islam by Ibn Abd Rabbihi,” in *A Volume of Oriental Studies presented to Edward G. Browne on his 60th Birthday*, ed. T.W Arnold and R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1922), 416-38, who claims he had done the pilgrimage in Mecca.

26. M. Marín, “La transmisión del saber en al-Andalus (hasta 300/912),” *al-Qantara* 8 (1987), 87-98; L. Molina, “Lugares de destino de los viajeros andalusíes en el *Taʿrij* de Ibn al-Faradi,” in *Estudios onomástico-biográficos de al-Andalus, I* (1988), 585-610.

27. Ramírez del Río, *La orientalización de al-Andalus*

28. M. Fierro, “The Introduction of *hadīth* in al-Andalus,” *Der Islam* 66, no. 1 (1989), 78-83.

29. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ʿAbdrabbih*, 254-62. L. Molina, “Un árabe entre muladíes: Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Jusanī,” *EOBA. VI*, 337-351. English transl. in M. Marín (ed.), *The Formation of al-Andalus. Part I: History and Society* (Ashgate, 1998), 115-28.

The Iraqism of the *‘Iqd*

The *‘Iqd* was composed in Umayyad Cordoba by an Andalusī author active in courtly circles, but in contrast to later Andalusī works, which would owe their popularity to their detailed accounts of local culture, the *‘Iqd* did not become famous because it depicted regional color and featured a wealth of local traditions. It might come as a surprise, but there is scarcely any information about al-Andalus in the *‘Iqd*. On the contrary, the *‘Iqd* provides the reader with a well-ordered encyclopaedic sample of the best examples of Arabic literature, poetry, wisdom and ethics that were circulating in late third/ninth century Abbasid Iraq, and which formed the corpus of texts that would become part of the classic canon. The result is such a perfect mimicry of Iraqī *adab* that it is easy to forget that it was not composed in Baghdad, but rather in the remote occidental periphery of the Islamic world.

This peculiarity also explains why the *‘Iqd* was not considered canonical for Arabic culture until much later, and even suggests that it might have contributed significantly to the construction of its literary canon. There is a famous anecdote which is commonly quoted to illustrate the alleged lackluster reception to the *‘Iqd* in the East of the Islamic world,³⁰ but which does not do justice to its actual achievements, which are evidenced by the wealth of preserved manuscripts and the popularity of the work today. According to the story, when the famous Būyid vizier and man of letters, Ṣāḥib b. ‘Abbād (326/938–385/995),³¹ heard about the *‘Iqd* by the Cordovan Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, he took pains to get a copy, but after reading it reacted in disappointment to the absence of authentic Andalusī material and exclaimed: “This is our merchandise brought back to us! I thought it would contain notices on their country (al-Andalus), but it merely contains notices about our country. We do not need it!”

In my opinion, the anecdote—first mentioned in al-Yāqūt’s *Irshād* (d. 626/1229)³²—was probably constructed later and reflects the attitudes that later generations in the Middle period, who responded with dismay after reading the “Iraqī” *‘Iqd*, held toward Andalusī works. In fact, the *‘Iqd* as a collection seems not to have reached the East until Ayyūbid times, when it was introduced by Ibn Diḥya (d. 633/1235), who transmitted the *ijāza* to Yāqūt, as he himself mentions in his *Irshād*, and it is only from then onwards that we can reliably attest to its reception. Al-Tha‘ālibī (d. 420/1029), often mentioned as evidence for the early reception of the *‘Iqd* in the East, was in fact only aware of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih’s poetry and some rather confusing biographical notices, and since he also quotes verses by him not

30. The anecdote appears e.g. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen*, 38; Vegliason, *Collar* 79; Brockelmann, *GALS* 1, 251. Yāqūt seems to be the first to mention the story

31. The anecdote refers to Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abbād. For him see Pellat, Ch. “Ibn ‘Abbād” in *EP*.

32. Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 2/67: *Hādhihī biḍā‘atunā ruddat ilaynā! Zānantu anna hādihā al-kitāba yashtamilu ‘alā shay’in min akhbāri bilādihim, wa-innamā mushtamilun ‘alā akhbār bilādinā lā ḥājata lanā fihī! Fa-raddahū*. The anecdote denotes an interesting opposition between the “us” of the Mashriqīs and the “they” of the Maghribīs.

contained in the *ʿIqd*, we must suppose he had access to his *Dīwān*, otherwise unpreserved,³³ rather than to the *ʿIqd*.

This “Iraqism” of the *ʿIqd* has also converted the text into a remarkable source for a study of the transfer of knowledge, and as such has been studied by Walter Werkmeister. He showed that the *ʿIqd* is almost completely culled from Abbasid material that was at the time circulating in scholarly circles as informal draft-books, reflecting a stage in the production of the ordinary book.³⁴

Accordingly, the setting of the poetic and prose quotations is almost completely confined to the Eastern part of the Islamic world. With the exception of several historical sections in book 15 that Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih dedicates to the Andalusī Umayyads—probably based on local material, but very difficult to identify—there is scarcely any reference to the Andalusī local context.³⁵ As has been correctly emphasized by Julia Bray,³⁶ the anecdotes within the *ʿIqd* are set in the placeless realm of Abbasid myth, namely Hijaz, Iraq and the timeless Jāhiliyya on the Arabian Peninsula. The only materials that can be unmistakably identified as Andalusī are the poetic fragments composed by the author himself, which are spread across the entire collection. It is likely that he thus hoped to frame his oeuvre in a way that put it on par with the metropolitan poetry produced in Iraq so the *ʿIqd* could share in its prestige.

I propose that this peculiar “Iraqism” of the *ʿIqd* is also part of its *caliphal* agenda. As we will see, the *ʿIqd*, with its plethora of Iraqi *adab*, was probably intended as a handbook for the provincial Umayyad court-man of Cordoba that instructed him in how to become a cultivated *adīb* in accordance with the latest metropolitan Abbasid fashion, thus transforming the reader into a *caliphal* man on a par with those living in Baghdad. Despite the well-known political tensions between the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, and the contemporaneous political decadence of the Abbasid caliphate, the *ʿIqd*’s ‘Iraqism’ shows that Abbasid Baghdad had already established what *caliphal* culture should look like.

The Encyclopaedism of the *ʿIqd*

The *caliphal* dimension of the *ʿIqd* goes even further and is closely related to its character as typically representative of *adab* encyclopaedism. Hillary Kilpatrick, in 1982, classified the *ʿIqd* as an emblematic *adab*-encyclopaedia, thus introducing this textual category as an interpretative framework for several vast, multi-thematic, and miscellaneous works like the *ʿIqd* and *ʿUyūn al-Akḥbār* by Ibn Qutayba, and for later collections of almost elephantine

33. One fourth of his verses are preserved in the *Yatīmat al-Dahr* by al-Thaʿālibī, in the 9th section of the ninth chapter, dedicated to Andalusī and Maghribī poets. The Andalusī material came to al-Thaʿālibī via his friend Abū Saʿd b. Dūst, who had them from al-Walīd b. Bakr al-Faqīh al-Andalusī (d. 392/1002), a travelling scholar that had visited Syria, Iraq, Khorasan and Transoxania and who had transmitted a lot of knowledge from the Maghrib. Cf. B. Orfali, *The Anthologists Art: Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī and his Yatīmat al-dahr* (Leiden, 2016), 126-128.

34. Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen.*, 463-69 and passim. These results of Werkmeister’s study became central for the theses of G. Schoeler.

35. The only exception is the historical section, namely book 15, already studied in my study: Toral-Niehoff, “History in Adab Context.”

36. J. Bray, “Abbasid Myth and the Human Act.”

proportions like the *Nihāya* by al-Nuwayrī. She defined an *adab-encyclopaedia* as: “a work designed to provide the basic knowledge in the domains with which the average cultured man (an *adīb*) may be expected to be acquainted (...) characterized by organization into chapters or books on the different books treated.”³⁷

The *ʿIqd* can be duly seen as an encyclopedic work: it is a multivolume, *adab*-work with a sophisticated structure, reflecting a very broad cultural program. It is instructive to read in the main introduction how the author himself explicates his highly ambitious, totalizing, cosmopolitan cultural program that clearly fits into an encyclopaedic scheme. His main objective is indeed to order, present, and organize the many pieces or “jewels” of knowledge, wisdom, and *adab* as preserved and accumulated by earlier generations from all cultures and languages (i.e., from all past humankind), and to select from them the very best:³⁸

People of every generation and experts of every nation have spoken about *adab* and have philosophized about branches of learning in every tongue and in every age; and every one of them has given his utmost and done his best to summarize the beautiful ideas of the ancients and to select the gems of the sayings of past generations. They have done this so profusely that their summaries have needed summarization and their selections have needed choice-making (...) I have compiled this work and selected its jewels from the choice gems of *adab* and the best picks of eloquence.

The title “The Unique Necklace” is not only ornamental, but points to the text’s organizing principle: knowledge is presented as a necklace of twenty precious pearls, and, following this metaphor, each book-title corresponds to the name of a gem or pearl.³⁹ These twenty-five monographic *kutub* cover a very broad selection of subjects and are ordered according to a hierarchy of importance. Within the books, the *ʿIqd* also features a molecular structure, further developing the metaphor of the jeweled collar. As with many compilations of this type, the structure can be described as a large string of short narrative, poetic, and gnomic units that serve as illustrations of the chapter’s main theme. The twenty-five monographic *kutub* or chapters cover various subjects and are ordered according to a decreasing hierarchy of importance.

The wide thematic range impressively evidences the author’s broad and encyclopaedic idea of *adab*; and the organization of the material testifies to his efforts to systematize the variegated and then-emerging field of knowledge.⁴⁰ However, in contrast to encyclopaedias

37. H. Kilpatrick, “A Genre in Classical Arabic Literature: The *Adab* Encyclopaedia,” in *Proceedings of the 10th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. R. Hillenbrand (Edinburgh 1982), 34

38. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, I,16; trans. I. J. Boullata, *The Unique Necklace* (Reading, UK, 2007), 2.

39. Titles that make use of the metaphor of “collar of jewels” or “pearls” to designate a book (especially anthologies) abound in Arabic literature, the most famous being “The Ring of the Dove,” the *Tawq al-ḥamāma* by Ibn Ḥazm. However, these titles are normally only ornamental. Cf. the explanation of the title by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih himself in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, I,4.

40. Cf. the table of content in the Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, I, 18-19 and the thematic survey in Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd des Andalusiers Ibn ‘Abdrabbih*, 27-43.

that are organized following a systematic and scientific epistemology of knowledge (inspired by Greek models and philosophy, still in *statu nascendi* then in al-Andalus),⁴¹ the *ʿIqd* is arranged in accordance with thematic clusters that follow a descending hierarchy of knowledge (*descensus*).⁴² The systematic structure of the *ʿIqd* also made it very manageable, so that later authors like al-Nuwayrī and al-Qalqashandī were able to easily excerpt whole books from the *ʿIqd* for their own works.⁴³

The *ʿIqd* reflects a broad curriculum that includes, for example, knowledge of statecraft, the military, diplomacy, courtly etiquette, literature, poetry, history, and diverse witty anecdotes; this suggests that it encompassed the broad base of knowledge that a cultivated member of the courtly elite in Cordoba would be expected to have. This would also explain the rather secular focus, which points to the courtly and humanistic understanding of knowledge typical for *adab* (there are no monographic chapters on religious themes in the *ʿIqd*, although religion is still present as a conceptual reference and through frequent quotations from the hadith and the Quran). This also harmonizes with the notion that the nature of knowledge is universal—as shown by the previous quotation, it is the very essence (*jawhar*) of the perennial, universal wisdom that was accumulated by earlier generations. This is an inclusive concept of wisdom that justifies and even recommends the frequent use of non-Islamic material: thus, we will find many pieces localized in the pre-Islamic *jāhilīya* and in Greek, Iranian, and Indian material⁴⁴.

Moreover, the cultural ideal of *adab* as reflected in the *ʿIqd* emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things, since in fact, an *adīb* was supposed to know “a little bit of everything.” Thus, we can also say that *adab* is conceptually linked to the concept of encyclopaedism, which has a political dimension. Encyclopaedism, if understood broadly, refers to a cultural practice that aims to encompass all human knowledge in one work, which then serves as a sort of *panorama* or *speculum mundi*. In this larger sense, it is an extended transcultural practice that can be found in diverse scriptural societies, often in the context of Empire and connected to the configuration and consolidation of cultural memory.⁴⁵ The totalizing scope, categorizing impulse, and universal perspective further link

41. H. H. Biesterfeldt, “Medieval Arabic Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy,” in *Islamic Medical and Scientific Tradition*, ed. P. E. Pormann (London, 2011), 48–65. H. H. Biesterfeldt, “Arabisch-islamische Enzyklopädien: Formen und Funktionen,” in *Die Enzyklopädie im Wandel vom Hochmittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit: Akten des Kolloquiums des Projekts D im Sonderforschungsbereich 231 (29.11.-1.12.1996)*, ed. Ch. Meier-Staubach (München, 2002), 43–84.

42. Ch. Meier-Staubach, ed., *Die Enzyklopädie im Wandel vom Hochmittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit: Akten des Kolloquiums des Projekts D im Sonderforschungsbereich 231 (29.11. - 1.12.1996)* (München, 2002).

43. Veglison Elías de Molins, *El collar único, de Ibn Abd Rabbihi*, 80.

44. For this concept of wisdom in Islam, see L. Marlow, “Among Kings and Sages: Greek and Indian Wisdom in an Arabic Mirror for Princes,” *Arabica* 60, 1-2 (2013), 1–57. D. Gutas, “The Greek and Persian Background of Early Arabic Encyclopedism,” in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. G. Endress and A. Filali-Ansary (Leiden, Boston, 2006), 91–101.

45. P. Binkley, ed., *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996* (Leiden, New York, 1997); G. Endress and A. Filali-Ansary, eds., *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World* (Leiden, Boston, 2006); J. König and T. Whitmarsh, “Ordering Knowledge (Chapter 1),” in *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*, ed. J. König and T.

encyclopaedism with imperialism,⁴⁶ an inclusive discourse that embraces all of humankind under the umbrella of one dominating culture.

Finally, the idea of preserving the cultural memory of a “we-group” (“our” legacy) is also very present in the *‘Iqd*. However, there is a certain irony in this, since the legacy from which Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih is drawing is not local (there is no reference to any Gothic, Iberian, or local Maghribī/Andalusī knowledge), and he in fact references the standard Abbasid program. So, the “we” he is speaking about is the “we” of Abbasid Iraq, so that “our jāhiliyya” (as used in the book 17 on *ayyām al-‘Arab*) comes to have taken place in the Arabian Peninsula. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih is thus not preserving, so much as constructing, a new cultural memory for al-Andalus; by this means, he successfully inscribes his homeland onto the realm of Islamic-Arabic culture as it was shaped by Abbasid Iraq in the 2nd/8th -3rd/9th centuries.

The *‘Iqd*: An Encyclopaedia for the Caliphate? Some Proposals

In summary, I propose that the *‘Iqd* stands as a *caliphal* text in many regards and deserves more profound study from this perspective. First, it was composed by a man close to the *caliphal* regime who was probably supported by elite circles; second, it reflects a cultural program aimed at converting the elite Andalusī reader into a *caliphal* man in accordance with pre-set Abbasid models; and third, it conveys a universal, encyclopaedic and humanistic understanding of wisdom that proceeds to subsume precedent knowledge into Islamic *‘ilm* and which is thus conceptually connected to a *caliphal* ideology. From this perspective, the *‘Iqd*’s cultural program reflects an inclusive discourse: it is a literary monument that transmits ideas of global order, completeness, and universal wisdom that is shared by humanity of all ages and cultures. Here, I see a conceptual connection to the imperialistic and integrating goals of the Umayyad caliphal project and its universalizing tendency.

The material basis of this “universalizing” compound of knowledge and *adab*, however, is not actually global. Rather, it draws from the peculiar compound of traditions circulating in Abbasid Iraq, as it were: Arabic-Islamic, Arabic-pre-Islamic, and Biblical lore, as well as Iranian, Indian, and Greek elements. Thus, the *‘Iqd* evidences and summarizes the climax of the great acculturation process in al-Andalus that had been initiated in the 3rd/9th century, and which signified an enormous transfer of knowledge from the Mashriq to the Maghrib, coupled with an appropriation of Abbasid literary culture, which resulted in “orientalising” al-Andalus and inscribing it into the world of Islam. Therefore, it is also fascinating evidence of the Arabo-Islamic globalization process of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries.

The *‘Iqd* embodies a cultural programme that simultaneously follows a dynamic of implementation (transferring Abbasid culture into Umayyad al-Andalus), and of inclusion

Whitmarsh (Cambridge, 2007), 3–39; A. Álvar Ezquerro, ed., *Las enciclopedias en España antes de l’Encyclopédie* (Madrid, 2009), in particular M. Fierro, “El saber enciclopédico en el mundo islámico,” *Las enciclopedias en España antes de l’Encyclopédie*, ed. A. Álvar Ezquerro, 83–104.

46. J. König and T. Whitmarsh, “Ordering Knowledge (Chapter 1),” in *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*.

(inscribing Umayyad al-Andalus into global Islamic culture as embodied by the Abbasid element). It further transforms Umayyad Cordoba into a place that holds a supreme position in *adab* and Arabic culture, which is portrayed as universal and perennial.

This ambitious program, strongly connected to its caliphal context, would also explain why al-Andalus only plays a subordinate role in the *ʿIqd*, in contrast to later anthologies and compendia composed in al-Andalus, that have a regional and local scope and reflect a cultural vision of the post-caliphal era on the Peninsula. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the *ʿIqd*, written for the *caliphate*, would later become more successful in the Islamic East than in post-caliphal al-Andalus.

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Facing the Mahdī's True Belief: Abū 'Amr al-Salālijī's Ash'arite Creed and the Almohads' Claim to Religious Authority*

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Abstract

This paper addresses the impact of the Almohad caliphs' claim to religious authority, their religious policy, and specifically their propagation of the creeds attributed to the movement's founder Ibn Tūmart. It offers a case study of an Ash'arite creed, Abū 'Amr al-Salālijī's al-'Aqīda al-burhāniyya which was produced in the sixth/twelfth-century Almohad period. The author argues that rather than echoing the teaching of the Almohads, al-Salālijī's creed closely draws on and often literally reproduces a comprehensive compendium of Ash'arite theology, namely al-Juwaynī's Kitāb al-Irshād. A specifically noteworthy feature of al-Salālijī's creed is that it makes theological claims that should have been considered, from the perspective of Almohad doctrine, highly problematic. This in turn raises questions discussed in this paper about the extent to which theological scholars were impacted by the Almohad agenda.

During the early history of Islam, the question of whether or not the legitimate leader of the Muslim community was required to combine political and religious authority gave rise to a momentous controversy. As is well known, fierce discussions in regard to this issue eventually led to the community's most significant schism. Those who supported the view that the legitimate political head of the Muslims should also be their highest religious authority came to form the seedbed of Shi'ism. Its various sub-groups agreed on the basic principle that the community's supreme authority, the *imām*, must be a descendent of the prophet's cousin and son-in-law 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/600–661) and at the same time serve as the community's spiritual guide. Sunni scholars, on the other hand, formulated the position that political authority could be exercised by any member of the prophet's tribe, Quraysh, without his being granted superior religious standing. In the end, the Sunni position gained acceptance among the majority of the Muslim community, and

* The research leading to these results has received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) under REA grant agreement n° 624808. I wish to thank Maribel Fierro and the anonymous reviewers for offering helpful suggestions.



the office of the caliph was increasingly reduced to a mere political function where the caliph was not expected to provide spiritual guidance.¹

Yet in the sixth/twelfth-century Maghrib, we observe a contrary development. With the rise of the Almohads, the region saw the triumph of a movement that brought all of Maghrib and al-Andalus under its political control. Although they never declared themselves Shī‘ites, the new Almohad rulers claimed they had religious authority and thereby broke with established Sunni practice. The movement’s founder, Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130), was proclaimed by his successors to be the infallible (*ma‘ṣūm*) and rightly guided (*mahdī*) leader.² The major lines of the Almohads’ doctrinal teachings were laid down in several creeds attributed to Ibn Tūmart.³ The Almohad caliphs gave these texts the normative status of true belief and imposed their ideas on the rest of the population. Whoever rejected the Almohad creed could be declared an unbeliever, and Christians and Jews were forced to convert.⁴

Both pre-modern and modern scholars have struggled to situate Almohad doctrines within the spectrum of Muslim theological traditions. There is a consensus that at least some specific elements of Ibn Tūmart’s theology correspond to the teachings of the Ash‘arites, the dominant school of theological thought in the Islamic west since the fifth/eleventh century.⁵ Actual points of agreement between the two include man’s obligation to acquire knowledge about God by means of rational reflection,⁶ the reasoning provided as proof of

1. For an account of the Sunni doctrine of the imamate and its historical emergence see P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 2004), 219–255.

2. Maribel Fierro pointed out the fact that the Almohad movement emerged in a context where large parts of North Africa were under the rule of the Fāṭimids. Her discussion, regarding the extent to which the Almohad conception of the caliphate drew on Ismā‘īlī-Fāṭimid ideas, is found in M. Fierro, “The Almohads and the Fatimids,” in B. D. Craig (ed.), *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker* (Chicago, 2010), 161–175 [reprinted in M. Fierro, *The Almohad Revolution. Politics and Religion in the Islamic West During the Twelfth–Thirteenth Centuries* (London, 2012), text IV].

3. Ibn Tūmart’s writings were edited as part of J. D. Luciani, *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert mahdi des almohades. Texte arabe accompagné de notices biographiques et d’une introduction par I. Goldziher* (Algier, 1903). Two texts are particularly relevant for the Almohads’ theological teaching: the short *al-Murshida fi al-tawḥīd* (pp. 223–224) and *al-‘Aqīda al-kubrā* (pp. 313–325); for a French translation see H. Massé, “La profession de foi (‘aqīda) et les guides spirituels (*morchida*) du Mahdi Ibn Toumart,” in *Mémorial Henri Basset. Nouvelles études nord-africaines et orientales, publiées par l’Institut des hautes études marocaines* (Paris, 1928), 105–121.

4. For an up-to-date survey of research on the Almohads’ theology and religious policy, see M. Fierro, “The Religious Policy of the Almohads,” in S. Schmidtke (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford, 2016), 679–692; D. Serrano, “Later Ash‘arism in the Islamic West,” in S. Schmidtke (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford, 2016), 522–527.

5. Pre-modern scholars who draw this doctrinal link include Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406); for further details, see D. Urvoy, “La pensée d’Ibn Tūmart,” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 27 (1974), 20.

6. F. Griffel, “Ibn Tūmart’s Rational Proof for God’s Existence and Unity, and His Connection to the Nizāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad,” in P. Cressier, M. Fierro, and L. Molina (eds.), *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), 775–777.

God's existence,⁷ and denial of the idea that God possesses corporeal and spatial qualities.⁸

Yet the Almohad creed also established a number of doctrines that were strongly opposed to Ash'arite teaching. As a corollary to the creed's central concern that God is absolutely distinct from any of His creations, it radically dismissed what it considered anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*).⁹ This included the rejection of such beliefs as affirming, for example, that God possesses knowledge by virtue of which he is described as knowing.¹⁰ Ash'arite theologians, in turn, stressed the actual existence of such attributes and supported their claim by using the exact line of reasoning that Ibn Tūmart rejected in drawing an analogy between man and God.

From the perspective of Ash'arite theologians, the Almohads' claim to their founder and spiritual leader's infallibility remained in conflict with their own Sunni mainstream conceptions. Nor would they typically consider it the caliph's business to impose specific doctrines on his subjects. Yet if their teachings were incompatible in several respects, what was the position of Ash'arite theologians vis-à-vis the theology promoted by the Almohad rulers? To what extent did Ibn Tūmart's doctrines affect them in formulating and defending their own positions?

Questions about the impact of Almohad teachings on scholars who lived and wrote during their caliphate have been raised primarily with regard to the discipline of *falsafa*, that is, Hellenizing philosophy, and specifically with regard to the teaching of Averroes. The latter served the Almohads over many years, participating, for example, in scholarly circles at the caliph's court in Marrakesh. It was there that he wrote several commentaries on Aristotle's works, whose Latin translations would become the foundation for his later renown in Christian Europe. Modern scholars' portrayals of Averroes's teachings range from describing them as containing "certain traces of the Almohad ideology"¹¹ to claiming that they were actually formulated within the theoretical framework of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine.¹² Several works, in which he engages with *kalām* and defends *falsafa* against the theologians' attacks, are specifically relevant in the assessment of the relation between the Almohads' and Averroes's teachings. One of these works, entitled *al-Kashf 'an manāhiġ al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla* appears to have caused controversy within the Almohad court. In response,

7. Urvoy, "La pensée d'Ibn Tūmart," 24; Griffel, "Ibn Tūmart's Rational Proof," 782–793—more precisely, Ibn Tūmart's argumentation supporting God's existence was connected to teachings developed at the Nizāmiyya *madrasa* in Baghdad.

8. M. Fletcher, "The Almohad Tawhīd: Theology Which Relies On Logic," *Numen* 38/1 (1991), 119–120.

9. The Almohads' rejection of anthropomorphism was one way to stress their break with the previous Almoravid dynasty and to underline the reformist claim of their movement: see D. Serrano Ruano, "¿Por qué llamaron los almohades antropomorfistas a los almorávides?," in P. Cressier, M. Fierro, and L. Molina (eds.). *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), 815–852.

10. Cf. Ibn Tūmart, *al-'Aqīda al-kubrā*, 337.

11. S. Stroumsa, "Philosophes almohades? Averroès, Maïmonide et l'idéologie almohade," in P. Cressier, M. Fierro, and L. Molina (eds.). *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), 1137–1162.

12. M. Geoffroy, "À propos de l'almohadisme d'Averroès: L'anthropomorphisme (*taġsīm*) dans la seconde version du *Kitāb al-Kāšf 'an manāhiġ al-adilla*," in P. Cressier, M. Fierro, and L. Molina (eds.). *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), 853–894.

Averroes produced various revisions of the text that allowed him to accommodate his differing positions to the Almohad creed.¹³

The specific case of Averroes supports the typical view that the Almohads claimed both religious authority and spiritual leadership. Should we therefore conclude that ideological control and, perhaps, even a ban on teachings that deviated from the creed of the infallible Mahdī were among the methods used by the Almohads in the exercise of their caliphal authority? And if so, would not the practitioners of *kalām*, for whom issues addressed by the Almohad creed were of chief concern, have been expected to have been specifically affected by this agenda? In this article of admittedly limited scope, I will approach the question by studying a short theological epistle from the earlier Almohad period, entitled *al-‘Aqīda al-burhāniyya*.¹⁴ More precisely, I will examine the intellectual and textual sources of this treatise in order to ask whether the Almohad doctrine is echoed in this work.

Al-‘Aqīda al-burhāniyya was written by Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān al-Salālījī. Born c. 521/1127–8, al-Salālījī died either in 564/1169, 574/1179 or 594/1197–8.¹⁵ A theologian with some level of mystical inclination, he was primarily active in the city of Fes, where he received his elementary education and later studied at the Qarawiyyīn mosque. Later, he traveled to the Islamic east (*bilād al-mashriq*) to seek further instruction. However, it appears that Almohad attempts to discourage their population from making the pilgrimage to Mecca¹⁶ spoiled al-Salālījī’s plans: he made it no further than Bugie (Bijāya), where the local governor prevented him, along with other travelers, from continuing their journey. Al-Salālījī had to return to Fes, where he obviously achieved a reputation as being well-versed in grammar. Eventually, his good name captured the attention of a member of Marrakesh’s Almohad elite, who was looking for a teacher who could help his sons learn Arabic. Al-Salālījī accepted the offer and moved from Fes to Marrakesh. While there, he also met Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Lakhmī al-Ishbīlī (d. 567/1171), a major figure of Maghrebi Ash‘arism.¹⁷ At some point, he returned to Fes, where he devoted himself primarily to the teachings of *‘ilm al-kalām*.¹⁸

13. Geoffroy, “À propos de l’almohadisme d’Averroès;” S. Di Donato, “Le *Kitāb al-Kašf ‘an manāhiḡ al-adilla* d’Averroès: les phases de la rédaction dans les discours sur l’existence de dieu et sur la direction, d’après l’original arabe et la traduction hébraïque,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25/1 (2015), 105–133.

14. The text is available in several recent editions. I have consulted Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān b. ‘Alī al-Salālījī, *al-‘Aqīda al-burhāniyya al-ash‘ariyya*, ed. Jamāl ‘Allāl al-Bakhtī (Tetouan, 2008), and *al-‘Aqīda al-Burhāniyya wa-al-fuṣūl al-īmāniyya li-al-imām Abī ‘Amr ‘Uthmān al-Salālījī ma‘ Sharḡ al-‘Aqīda al-burhāniyya li-al-imām Abī ‘Uthmān Sa‘īd b. Muḥammad b. al-‘Uqbānī*, ed. Nizār Ḥammādī (Beirut, 1429); when citing the *‘Aqīda*, I provide pages for both editions. On the *‘Aqīda* and al-Bakhtī’s edition of the text see also M. Bilal-Achmal, “Textos del legado aš‘arī magrebí. *Al-‘aqīda al-burhāniyya al-aš‘ariyya* de Abū ‘Amr al-Salālījī al-Fāsī,” *Al-Qantara* 34/1 (2013), 205–213.

15. For the sources on al-Salālījī’s death dates, see the introduction in *al-‘Aqīda al-Burhāniyya wa-al-fuṣūl al-īmāniyya*, 14–15.

16. M. Fierro, “The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd’s *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10/3 (1999), 227.

17. Serrano, “Los almorávides y la teología aš‘arī,” 503; Serrano, “Later Ash‘arism in the Islamic West,” 519.

18. Al-Salālījī, *‘Aqīda*, 115–33; al-Salālījī’s service to the member of the Almohad elite is reported by Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā Ibn Zayyāt al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-tašawwuf wa-akhbār Abī al-‘Abbās al-Sabtī*,

Although al-Salālijī—at least for part of his life—interacted relatively closely with the Almohad elite, he appears to have always been a dedicated Ash‘arite. Several biographical reports stress that from as early as his introductory studies in the field of theology, al-Salālijī was deeply influenced by his readings of Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī’s (d. 478/1085) *Kitāb al-Irshād*. While teaching grammar in Marrakesh, he deepened his knowledge of the text by studying with Abū al-Ḥasan al-Lakhmī.¹⁹ It is consequently not surprising that some religious scholars pointed to the *Irshād*’s impact on al-Salālijī’s *al-‘Aqīda al-burhāniyya*, going so far as to describe the latter text as a brief summary (*mukhtaṣar*) of al-Juwaynī’s theological *summa*.²⁰ As I will discuss in more detail, this characterization is appropriate, especially if one bears in mind that al-Salālijī immensely shortened al-Juwaynī’s voluminous work into just a few pages.

The text of *al-‘Aqīda al-burhāniyya* itself does not reveal anything about al-Salālijī’s motivation in compiling the short creed. Later sources—including al-Salālijī’s student Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Ibn Mu‘min al-Khazrajī (d. 598/1193), who is quoted in one of the commentaries on the *‘Aqīda*—report that al-Salālijī wrote it at the request of an Andalusī woman named Khayrūna.²¹ Thus, the fact that al-Salālijī composed this work for his Almohad patrons appears to have been omitted.

Let us start examining the text. Al-Salālijī’s *al-‘Aqīda al-burhāniyya* follows the typical structure of an Ash‘arite *kalām* treatise.²² After the *ḥamdala*, the work opens with the definition of the world (*al-‘ālam*) and of atoms (*jawāhir*) and accidents (*a‘rāḍ*), which are the world’s components according to the concept of the *mutakallimūn*. Atoms are defined as “that which occupies space” (*al-mutaḥayyiz*), and accidents as “entities that subsist in atoms” (*al-ma‘nā al-qā’im bi-al-jawhar*). The wording of these definitions has been reproduced almost verbatim from al-Juwaynī’s *Irshād*.²³

ed. A. al-Tawfiq (Rabat, 1404/1984), 199–200. French translation: Ibn Zayyāt al Tādilī, *Regard sur le temps des Soufis: vie des saints du sud marocain des v^e, vi^e, vii^e siècles de l’hégire*. Texte arabe établi, annoté et présenté par Ahmed Toufiq. Traduit de l’arabe par Maurice de Fenoyl (Casablanca, 1995), 149–150.

19. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 17–19. For the transmission of this work to the Islamic West see J. M. Fórneas Besteiro, “De la transmisión de algunas obras de tendencia aš‘arī en al-Andalus,” *Awrāq* 1 (1978), 7–8.

20. See al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 51, quoting the famous traveller and religious scholar Ibn Rushayd al-Fihri al-Sabti (d. 721/1321): Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Umar Ibn Rushayd al-Fihri al-Sabti, *Mil’ al-‘ayba bi-mā jumi‘a bi-ṭūl al-ghayba fi al-wijha al-wajīha ilā al-ḥaramayn Makka wa-Ṭayba*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb Ibn Khawja (Tunis, 1982), 2:226. See also Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Fihri al-Labli’s (d. 691/1292) *Fahrāsa*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shūbad (Rabat, 1434/2013), 88; al-Labli studied with al-Salālijī’s student Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Kātibi (d. 596/1295).

21. See al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 50–51, who quotes ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Madyūni’s *Sharḥ*; this is also related by Aḥmad Ibn al-Qāḍi al-Miknāsī, *Jadhwat al-iqtibās fi dhikr man ḥalla min al-a‘lām madīnat Fās*, 2 vols. (Rabat, 1973), 2:458.

22. For the basic scheme of Ash‘arite compendia see R. M. Frank, “The Science of *Kalām*,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 2/1 (1992), 7–37, as well as fn. 12 on the general omission of theoretical discussions on knowledge and reasoning in such shorter works as the one discussed here.

23. Cf. al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 87–9/23 and Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭi‘ al-adilla fi uṣūl al-‘itiqād*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā, and ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Abd al-Ḥamid (Cairo, 1369), 17 (l. 5–8).

The next section of the *‘Aqīda*, Chapters 1-5, focuses on arguments for God’s existence. Specific historical developments in the argumentation of Muslim theologians allow us to conclude that al-Salālījī’s proof draws on arguments that were advanced in some of al-Juwaynī’s writings. Beyond the boundaries of theological schools, the traditional *kalām* proof for God’s existence departed from the assumption that because the world is created, it consequently requires a creator, who must be God. The world’s createdness was demonstrated by the so-called “proof from accidents,” that built upon the following reasoning: 1) accidents—like movement, rest, composition, or separation—do exist, 2) accidents have a temporal existence, 3) bodies necessarily carry accidents, and 4) whatever does not precede the temporally existent is itself temporally existent.²⁴

Al-Juwaynī appears to have been the first person within the Ash‘arite school to recognize that this proof had several shortcomings and propose revisions.²⁵ To prove God’s existence, he developed the so-called “particularization argument” that finds its most elaborate shape in *al-‘Aqīda al-Niẓāmiyya*.²⁶ Its argumentative strength lie in the fact that it no longer presupposed the existence of accidents. A preliminary revision of the revised proof can be found in al-Juwaynī’s earlier works *al-Irshād*²⁷ and *Luma‘ al-adilla fī qawā‘id ahl al-sunna wa-al-jamā‘a*,²⁸ where he still relies on the proof from accidents argument. Unlike the traditional proof, al-Juwaynī now infers from the createdness of atoms that the existence of the world is possible (*jā‘iz al-wujūd*), which means that rather than being existent, it is just as possible that the world could also be non-existent or come into existence at different times. This leads him to the conclusion that there must be an agent that chooses arbitrarily whether or not the world exists and when, who in other words “particularizes” (*ikhtaṣṣa*) the world’s creation and who cannot be anyone other than God.²⁹

Al-Salālījī’s argumentation in his *‘Aqīda* follows al-Juwaynī’s earlier revision of the proof as found in the *Irshād* and the *Luma‘*: using the proof from accidents, he first establishes the createdness of atoms and then concludes that the world’s existence is possible. Based on

24. H. A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York/Oxford, 1987), 134–143; D. Gimaret, *La doctrine d’al-Ash‘arī* (Paris, 1990), 219–227; U. Rudolph, “La preuve de l’existence de Dieu chez Avicenne et dans la théologie musulmane,” in A. de Libera, A. Elamrani-Jamal, and A. Galonnier (eds.), *Langage et philosophie. Hommage à Jean Jolivet* (Paris, 1997), 340–341.

25. Similar concerns were articulated earlier by the Mu‘tazilite theologian Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 426/1044); see W. Madelung, “Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s Proof for the Existence of God,” in J.E. Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One. Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank* (Leuven, 2006), 273–280.

26. Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī, *al-‘Aqīda al-niẓāmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Zubaydī (Beirut, 2003), 11–13.

27. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 17–21, 28–29.

28. M. Allard, *Textes Apologétiques de Ḡuwaynī* (Beirut, 1968), 120–131 (Arabic edition and French translation of al-Juwaynī’s *Luma‘*).

29. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 161–162; Rudolph, “La preuve de l’existence de Dieu,” 344–346; Madelung, “Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s Proof for the Existence of God,” 279.

these assumptions, he then affirms the need for a “particularizer,” that is a Creator (*ṣāniʿ*), whose arbitrary choice causes the world to be precisely the way it is.³⁰

In Chapter 6 of the *ʿAqīda*, al-Salālijī presents proof of the Creator’s eternity (*qidam*). He reasons that if the Creator were not eternal, He must also have been created and His existence would consequently have required the existence of another creator before Him—clearly absurd reasoning, since this process of creation would result in an infinite regress.³¹ Al-Salālijī literally reproduces parts of the corresponding chapter in al-Juwaynī’s *Irshād*.³² The same line of reasoning is also found in al-Juwaynī’s *Shāmīl* and *Lumaʿ*.³³

In Chapter 7, al-Salālijī affirms that God “subsists by Himself” (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*). In fact, the description *qāʾim bi-nafsihi* was open to interpretation, and it appears that al-Ashʿarī himself hesitated in regard to whether or not it could be rightly—or exclusively—applied to God.³⁴ It is again al-Juwaynī’s *Irshād* that offers an almost literal parallel to the *ʿAqīda*.³⁵ Al-Salālijī’s argument is, in turn, because it is so condensed, not entirely clear:

The proof for God’s subsisting by Himself is that He must be described as living, knowing and powerful. Yet attributes (*al-ṣifāt*) cannot be described by predications necessitated by other entities (*al-aḥkām allatī tūjibuhā al-maʿānī*). If God is necessarily described [as living, knowing and powerful], he must consequently subsist by Himself.³⁶

If we compare this passage with al-Juwaynī’s *Irshād*, we realize that al-Salālijī’s reasoning is based on the implicit premise that if God did not subsist by Himself, He would need a substrate (*maḥall*) and would be an attribute that qualifies His substrate.³⁷ If we add this premise from the *Irshād* to the passage from the *ʿAqīda*, the argument makes sense: according to Ashʿarite teaching, God is living, knowing and powerful by virtue of the entities of life, knowledge, and power. However, life, knowledge, and power cannot subsist in an attribute and therefore God must subsist by Himself.

In Chapter 8, al-Salālijī establishes that God is absolutely distinct (*mukhālīf*) from His creation. He consequently follows the progression of arguments found in the *Irshād*, but without reproducing textual elements that can be clearly identified as quotations from al-Juwaynī’s text. Al-Salālijī argues that two things are identical whenever they share all of their essential attributes (*jamiʿ ṣifāt al-nafs*).³⁸ The same reasoning was already put forward by al-Ashʿarī to prove God’s otherness, and al-Juwaynī also draws on it in the *Irshād*.³⁹ Based

30. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 90–96/24–25.

31. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 97/25.

32. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 32 (l. 6–7).

33. Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmīl fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. F. ʿAwn, and Sh. M. Mukhtār (Alexandria, 1969), 617–618; Allard, *Textes Apologétiques de Ğuwaynī*, 130–131.

34. Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 257.

35. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 34 (l. 4–5).

36. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 98/25.

37. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 34.

38. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 99/25.

39. Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 249; al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 34.

on this conceptualization of the resemblance of two things, al-Salālijī goes on to argue that God transcends all qualities (*simāt*) of atoms and accidents and, therefore, is distinct from them. Atoms are distinguished by the fact that they occupy space and consequently exist in a specific location, in that they carry accidents and may form composites. Accidents in turn subsist in atoms, which means that they need a substrate; they have no self-sustained continued existence and cannot be described by predications necessitated by other entities. These fundamental properties of atoms and accidents cannot be applied to God, which proves, according to al-Salālijī, His absolute distinctiveness.⁴⁰ Some of these arguments can also be found—in more elaborate versions—in various chapters on the distinctions between God and His creatures in al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*,⁴¹ whereas others were already affirmed in the proof of God's self-subsistence.⁴²

In Chapter 9, al-Salālijī goes on to prove that God is knowing, powerful, willing, living, hearing, seeing, perceiving and speaking. The line of argumentation, and the reliance on certain specific formulations, confirm the 'Aqīda's dependency on the *Irshād*. Al-Salālijī supports the claim that God is knowing and powerful with the evidence of His creation, every detail of which He ordered and arranged. Like al-Juwaynī, and in almost the same words, he argues that this implies that God is knowledgeable and powerful.⁴³ The intentionality of God's acts, revealed by the fact that they come into being at a specific moment and in a specific shape rather than coming into existence at another possible moment and in a different shape, serves as proof of God's will.⁴⁴ Unlike al-Juwaynī in his *Irshād*, however, al-Salālijī does not support this claim by drawing an analogy to man's voluntary acts.⁴⁵ In order to prove that God lives, he argues that only living beings can possibly possess the aforementioned attributes. This is a standard argument in *kalām*, although God's knowledge and power are often considered sufficient evidence for the claim that God lives.⁴⁶

Al-Salālijī then reproduces, almost verbatim, a passage from the *Irshād* to prove that God hears, sees, perceives, and speaks. The argument goes as follows: all living beings can possibly hear, see, perceive, and speak; if God could not hear, see, perceive, and speak, he would be defective, and this would be an absurd assertion.⁴⁷

In Chapter 10, al-Salālijī expounds upon the doctrine that God possesses co-eternal attributes, including life (*ḥayāt*), knowledge (*ʿilm*), power (*qudra*), and will (*irāda*), by virtue

40. Al-Salālijī, 'Aqīda, 99–102/25–26.

41. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 39 (God does not occupy space and has no location), 44 (He does not carry accidents) and 42–43 (He is not a composite).

42. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 34 (unlike God, accidents cannot be described by predications necessitated by other entities).

43. Al-Salālijī's proof (*Aqīda*, 103/26) is mainly composed of fragments from the corresponding chapter in the *Irshād*, namely pp. 61 (l. 4)–62 (l. 1) and 61 (l. 10–11).

44. Al-Salālijī, 'Aqīda, 104/27.

45. Cf. al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 64.

46. In the *Irshād*, al-Juwaynī also builds his argumentation exclusively on God's being knowing and powerful: al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 63.

47. Al-Salālijī, 'Aqīda, 104–5/27; the almost identical formulation is found in al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 72 (l. 15)–73 (l. 4).

of which He is living (*ḥayy*), knowing (*ʿālim*), powerful (*qādir*), willing (*murīd*), and so on. This claim was considered valid within Ashʿarite thought, but for other theologians it posed a fundamental problem: how could there be co-eternal beings if God alone is eternal and free from multiplicity of any kind? It was primarily the Muʿtazilites who, on the basis of this claim, accused the Ashʿarites of violating the notion of monotheism. Yet in our specific context, it is even more important that Almohad doctrine, as expressed in Ibn Tūmart's *al-ʿAqīda al-kubrā*, also rejects the idea of co-eternal attributes. However, unlike the critics from the Muʿtazilite school who intended to resolve the problem posed by God's multiple qualities rationally, the Almohad creed categorically rebuffs such speculations about God's attributes and explicitly rejects any attempt to analyze God's attributes by way of analogy between God and His creatures.⁴⁸

Drawing such analogies was at the center of the Ashʿarite approach, whose goal was to logically resolve the problem.⁴⁹ In accordance with the solution proposed by the Ashʿarites, al-Salālījī presents two arguments that correspond to the first and third of the four analogies used by al-Juwaynī in his *Irshād* to establish God's co-eternal attributes.⁵⁰ The first posits that whenever a predication or judgement (*ḥukm*) in this world is grounded in, or causally depends on, another entity (*muʿallal bi-ʿilla*), the same must be true for the transcendent. That is, if we affirm that man's knowing something is grounded in an entity of knowledge, God must be omniscient by a co-eternal entity of knowledge. Al-Salālījī's second argument is that the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) behind predications such as "he is knowing" is identical irrespective of whether it is affirmed of man or of God: if in the case of man, it means that knowledge subsists in the subject described as knowing (*qāma bihi al-ʿilm*), the meaning cannot change when the same is affirmed about God.⁵¹

It is worth recalling here the case of Averroes and the fact that it was precisely the question of God's attributes that created controversy around his *al-Kashf ʿan manāhiḥ al-adilla*. The dispute finally led Averroes to revise the sections of his text which, from the Almohad perspective, were seen as problematic. The reason for the debate was Averroes's conviction that sophisticated explanations for corporeal and spatial descriptions of God would be inaccessible to common people, and, even worse, would cause people to deviate from the truth. He therefore claimed that a literal understanding of God's hands, face, or

48. Ibn Tūmart, *al-ʿAqīda al-kubrā*, p. 337. See also Urvoy, "La pensée d'Ibn Tūmart," 27–28.

49. I do not agree with Fletcher, "The Almohad Tawhīd," 114–117, who identifies Ibn Tūmart's affirmations of God's attributes in the *Murshida* with Muʿtazilite doctrine and then suggests that the Mahdī revised his position in *al-ʿAqīda al-kubrā* according to the Ashʿarite doctrine. The denial of co-eternal attributes as found in the *Murshida* is actually confirmed by the passage of *al-ʿAqīda al-kubrā* quoted in fn. 48; the *ʿAqīda* only adds that man has to refrain from speculating about the modality of God's qualities. This is in agreement with neither Muʿtazilite nor Ashʿarite teachings: indeed, the Muʿtazilites denied any co-eternal attributes, but they nonetheless described God by multiple qualities and attempted to explain their reality by rational means; the Ashʿarites in turn not only affirmed co-eternal attributes of God, but they also explained them rationally (their *bi-lā kayf* approach was limited to such revealed qualities as those which appeared to suggest corporeality or spatial characteristics in God).

50. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 83 (l. 5–9 for the *ʿilla*-argument) and 84 (l. 1–3 for the *ḥaqīqa*-argument).

51. Al-Salālījī, *ʿAqīda*, 106–107/27.

His sitting on the throne is fully legitimate. From the position of the Almohad creed, this was illicit anthropomorphism.⁵² Yet drawing analogies between man and God, as in the example of Ash‘arite reasoning described above, should have provoked the same accusation. Nonetheless, al-Salālijī draws on the controversial argument and makes no concession to the Almohad claim that God is absolutely transconceptual.

Chapter 11 is devoted to presenting proof of God’s oneness (*waḥdāniyya*). The argument advanced by al-Salālijī was actually used by theologians from the entire spectrum of *kalām* schools. Essentially, the argument is that there can be only one God, because if there were two, any time their wills were opposed they would mutually prevent each other from acting.⁵³ This so-called *tamānu*‘-argument (from *tamāna*‘a, “to mutually prevent”) was already raised by Mu‘tazilite theologians and also used by al-Ash‘arī.⁵⁴ There are some textual similarities between this chapter and the corresponding one in al-Juwaynī’s *Irshād*.⁵⁵ In addition, al-Salālijī quotes Q. 21:22, 40:62, and 42:11 to support the claim of God’s oneness.⁵⁶

In Chapter 12, al-Salālijī argues that the possible—that is, things that come to be or are possible but will not come to be—are infinite in number. This position entailed a certain risk, since it could be misinterpreted as being a violation of the monotheistic idea that except for God, everything is finite. Yet the discussed question has additional implications for the conception of God as omnipotent: the reason behind this is that the possible is tantamount to potential objects of God’s creative capacity (*al-maqdūrāt*).⁵⁷ Hence, if the possible was finite, then God’s power would likewise be finite. In order to prove the infiniteness of possible things, al-Salālijī departs from the contingency of the world; this means that the world could also be considered differently, because there could have been things other than those that actually exist. Now possible things do not come into existence by themselves (*lā yaqa‘u bi-nafsihī*), but rather their existence must be caused by God. However, if God’s power was limited to the finite things that actually come to be, we would have to concede that that which is possible but does not happen is impossible—and this, al-Salālijī argues, is self-contradictory.⁵⁸ Here again, al-Salālijī’s argumentation reproduces phrases from al-Juwaynī’s corresponding chapter in the *Irshād*.⁵⁹

Chapter 13 of al-Salālijī’s *‘Aqīda* contains rational proof of the possibility of beatific vision (*ru’yat Allāh*). The entire chapter is an almost verbatim reproduction of a passage found in

52. Geoffroy, “À propos de l’almohadisme d’Averroès;” Di Donato, “Le Kitāb *al-Kašf ‘an manāhiḡ al-adilla* d’Averroès.”

53. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 109–111/28.

54. Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 252–254.

55. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 53 (l. 4–6 and 11–12).

56. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 111/28.

57. For the Ash‘arite conception of the possible and its identification with objects of God’s creative capacity see R. M. Frank, “The Non-Existent and the Possible in Classical Ash‘arite Teaching,” *Mélanges de l’Institut Dominicain d’Études Orientales* 24 (2000), 1–37 (specifically p. 6).

58. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 112/29.

59. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 57 (l. 4–6 and 8).

the corresponding chapter of al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*.⁶⁰ The line of argument originates from ideas about how visual perception operates in the created world. The distinct objects of our perception, it claims, all have in common the fact that they exist. The specific features (*aḥwāl*), by virtue of which these objects can be distinguished, do not affect their visibility in any way: what actually makes these objects visible to the human eye is their very existence. Now, if we see objects because they exist, we must necessarily conclude that whatever exists can be seen—this, *a fortiori*, includes God.⁶¹ Al-Salālijī's Ash'arite interpretation of the vision of God—and specifically its rational justification—clashes with Ibn Tūmart's doctrine in his *ʿAqīda*: although the founder of the Almohad movement in principle affirms that God will be seen at the Last Judgement, he insists that this is true only as it is expressed in the Qurʾān; any further explanation that derives from visual perception in this world must be avoided and he categorically excludes the possibility that man will see Him with his eyes.⁶²

At this point in the text, the style of al-Salālijī's *ʿAqīda* changes slightly. Unlike the previous sections, the remaining ones no longer consist of short rational proofs, but rather of a series of doctrinal statements. These doctrines are in fact Ash'arite commonplaces. They are also affirmed by al-Juwaynī in his *Irshād*, but the brevity of al-Salālijī's exposition no longer allows a clear inter-textual dependency to be established. In the following synopsis of the remaining chapters of al-Salālijī's *ʿAqīda*, I will provide references that show our theologian's indebtedness to Ash'arite teaching, and more specifically I will also point to the sections in al-Juwaynī's *Irshād* where the same doctrinal principles are formulated.

Chapter 14 is a highly condensed affirmation of the Ash'arites' belief in God's absolute arbitrariness. It includes the following doctrines: God's creation of man's acts belongs to the realm of possible existents; God's acting is not necessary; He is not compensated for His acts; whenever He compensates man, He grants him a favor; God's punishment is just and He judges man as He wills.⁶³

Following this, Chapter 15 contains the major lines of prophetology and consists of the following positions: it is possible (*jāʾiz*) for God (in other words, it is not necessary for Him) to send prophets and to support their veracity by miracles; the prophet's miracles disrupt the habit and they are God's acts; they are a challenge to imitators and whoever attempts to produce something similar will fail.⁶⁴

60. Al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 177 (l. 2–8).

61. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 113–114/29.

62. Ibn Tūmart, *al-ʿAqīda al-kubrā*, 337–338; see also Urvoy, “La pensée d’Ibn Tūmart,” 28 on Ibn Tūmart's position on beatific vision.

63. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 115–116/29. For the Ash'arite position see Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 433–451. In his *Irshād*, al-Juwaynī treats these principles on pp. 188 and 381.

64. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 117–118/29–30. Cf. Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 453–454 and 459–463 for the identical Ash'arite position; in his *Irshād*, al-Juwaynī treats these doctrines on pp. 302–303, 307–309, 312–313; see also Allard, *Textes Apologétiques de Ġuwaynī*, 169.

Chapter 16 affirms the two fundamental qualities of prophets as found in Ash‘arite teaching: the prophets are infallible in what they say, and do not commit grave sins (*kabā’ir*).⁶⁵

In Chapter 17, al-Salālijī starts with a record of the prophet Muḥammad’s miracles, by which he challenged his rivals and sceptics.⁶⁶ He then advocates the principle of theological voluntarism, as is typical in Ash‘arite ethics: good and bad are not distinguished by rational principles but can only be extracted from the Prophet’s message.⁶⁷ The sources for moral judgments include the Qur’ān, the prophetic tradition (or *sunna*), and the consensus of the community or of the community’s learned men.⁶⁸

In the same chapter, al-Salālijī moves on to a subject where followers of Ash‘arite teaching should have strongly disagreed with Almohad doctrine: namely, the question of who is to be considered a believer. Al-Salālijī introduces the issue by defining the notion of repentance (*tawba*) for one’s sins according to the Ash‘arite understanding as being tantamount to regret (*nadam*). Further following Ash‘arite teaching, he claims that repentance may be accepted by God to such an extent that He would even forgive a believer who committed a grave sin (*kabīra*), or He could alternatively punish him for some time before He lets him enter paradise. This position was derived from the teachings of the Murji’ites, a theological strand of early Islam: arguing against Mu‘tazilites and Khārijīs, they believed that even a grave sinner should be regarded as a believer. They claimed that actual belief was not demonstrated through moral conduct, but that it merely consists of knowing that God exists and expressing belief in His existence. They deferred judgment of man’s fate to God, and therefore refrained from declaring others infidels—the practice known as *takfīr*. The Ash‘arites later followed the Murji’ite line of reasoning and defined belief as “assent” (*taṣdīq*) in one’s heart, that is, a mere interior act. This is also al-Salālijī’s position in the *‘Aqīda*.⁶⁹ One might wonder whether this could not be interpreted as de-legitimising the Almohad practice of *takfīr* of people who refused to profess the creed they imposed.

The *‘Aqīda* closes with two chapters, 18 and 19, on the imamate. Al-Salālijī professes in just a few lines the major lines of mainstream Sunni teaching, also shared by Ash‘arite theologians.⁷⁰ As scholars have argued previously, this teaching differed significantly from

65. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 119/30 (in Ḥammādi’s edition, this passage is not a separate chapter); for the Ash‘arite doctrine see Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 459, and the corresponding passage in al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 356.

66. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 120–122/30 (in Ḥammādi’s edition, this passage not a separate chapter); see al-Ash‘arī’s list of Muḥammad’s miracles in Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 464–467 and al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 345, 353.

67. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 123/30; for al-Ash‘arī’s ethical voluntarism see Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 444–447 and al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 8, 358.

68. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 124–125/30–31.

69. Al-Salālijī, *‘Aqīda*, 126–128/31; for the corresponding sections in al-Juwaynī’s *Irshād* see pp. 398, 401, 403–404; for the Ash‘arite understanding of belief, its origins in the teachings of the Murji’a and the sinner’s fate see Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 469–500; more specifically, on the identification of the notions of *tawba* and *nadam*, see Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 490 and for the definition of belief as “assent,” see R. M. Frank, “Knowledge and *Taqīd*: The Foundations of Religious Belief in Classical Ash‘arism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109/1 (1989), 38–46 and Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 472–479.

70. See for the Ash‘arite theory of the imamate Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 547–566 and Y. Ibish, *The Political Doctrine of al-Baqillani* (Beirut, 1966).

the Almohad doctrine, which was centered on the infallible figure of the rightly guided *imām*, the community's highest authority.⁷¹ Nothing in al-Salālijī's exposition reflects the Almohad conception of the imamate: for him, the *imām* is legitimized by a contract (*ʿaqd*), and possible candidates must fulfill the following criteria: they must be members of the Quraysh tribe; they must be qualified for the practice of *ijtihād*, that is, individual reasoning in legal matters; and they must act competently and vigorously whenever calamities and unrest occur.

In addition, for al-Salālijī, the prophets alone are infallible (*lā maʿṣūm illā al-anbiyāʾ*), whereby he concludes that infallibility does not apply to the *imāms*. In other contexts, this claim would have exclusively targeted Shiʿite doctrines. It is therefore clear why al-Salālijī rejects, immediately afterwards, the idea that the *imām* must necessarily be designated (a claim Twelver-Shiʿites actually made), since he can also be legitimated by election (read in both editions *ikhtiyāran* instead of *ijtihādan*).⁷²

Finally, al-Salālijī professes the Sunni opinion that after the death of the prophet Muḥammad, the people preferred (*afḍala al-nās*) Abū Bakr, followed by ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, then finally ʿAlī. To whom did al-Salālijī address his assertion that these four are the rightly guided caliphs and *imāms* (*fa-hum al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn wa-al-aʿimma al-mahdiyūn*)?⁷³ One can only speculate as to whether, in his chapters on the imamate, al-Salālijī actually intended to dismiss the Almohads' claim that their founder Ibn Tūmart was infallible and rightly guided.

My observations from al-Salālijī's brief treatise do not permit any conclusions regarding larger-scale tendencies in Ashʿarite teaching under the Almohad caliphate. A much wider corpus of theological texts from this era will have to be analyzed to draw a more comprehensive picture. At this point, the examined text can only speak for itself. Considering the prominent place of Ibn Tūmart's creed in Almohad propaganda, it is striking that al-Salālijī in no way echoes the Mahdī's teaching. He does not even attempt to hide or minimize points of disagreement, or to argue that Ashʿarite teaching perfectly harmonizes with Almohad doctrine—let alone that he developed some form of "Almohadized" Ashʿarism. Instead, *al-ʿAqīda al-burhāniyya* could have just as easily been written in any other Ashʿarite context. It actually reflects an analogous trend found in the eastern Shāfiʿite milieu, where al-Juwaynī's *Irshād* was an influential compendium: there it also served as the basis for numerous derivative works, including commentaries and abbreviations.⁷⁴

71. M. García Arenal, "The Almohad Revolution and the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart," in M. García Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdīs of the Muslim West* (Leiden, 2006), 179–181.

72. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 129–130/31. For al-Juwaynī's criteria for the Imām in the *Irshād* see 426–427; for the rejection of the necessity of the Imām's designation see pp. 419–423; and for the possibility of his election p. 424.

73. Al-Salālijī, *ʿAqīda*, 131/32. Al-Juwaynī treats the four rightly guided caliphs on pp. 428–430 of his *Irshād*.

74. Such works include Abū Saʿd ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maʿmūn al-Mutawallī's (d. 478/1086) *al-Mughnī*, Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī's (d. 512/1118) *Sharḥ al-ʿIrshād* (preserved only in manuscript form) and *al-Ghunya*, or the only surviving work written by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's father Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Makkī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, that depends greatly on Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī's *Ghunya*.

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The *Jihād* of the Caliphs and the First Battles of Islam: Memory, Legitimization and Holy War, from Cordoba to Tinmal

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how the memorialization and commemoration of early conflicts in Islamic history influenced the performance and legitimization of jihād, especially on the part of caliphs who ruled in the Islamic West. Jihād is defined here as an ideology, a discursive tool that appealed to accepted and shared sacred elements; created a framework for the justification of specific actions on the part of the caliphs; and generated new authority. The paper also discusses the importance of the maghāzī and futūḥ, as well as its later impact, reception, reinvention, and re-contextualization. The focus of this study, however, is the key role that military expeditions during the founding period of Islam played in the conceptualization of jihād, which turned primitive episodes of war into legitimizing elements by utilizing the image of ideal behavior enjoyed by Muḥammad and the rāshidūn within the Umma. This study considers the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate and the Almohad movement, two periods during which al-Andalus was ruled directly by a caliph. By considering both chronological and geographical contexts, the paper analyzes the commemoration of the first battles of Islam, wherein both caliphates in the Islamic West presented themselves as a renewal of the early “golden age” of Islam. A comparison between the caliphates illuminates their similarities and differences.

In the year 840/1411 Ibn Nuḥās died near Damieta while defending the town of al-Ṭīnah against a crusader attack. Thereby, he died as a martyr in the fulfillment of the *jihād*. Previously, he had written on the merits of the *jihād* in his work *Mashāri‘ al-ashwāq ilā maṣāri‘ al-‘ushshāq*, which from chapter 32 on included a brief but interesting history of *jihād*.² The bulk of the text is composed of the Prophet’s campaigns, the *maghāzī*,³ followed

1. This work was supported by the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007- 2013) / ERC grant agreement n° 323316. PI: Mercedes García-Arenal. I would like to thank Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier for inviting me to participate in this volume. A first version of this paper was presented at the conference *Les Califats de l’Occident Islamique I. Formuler, Représenter et Légitimer le Califat*, 6th November 2015, Casa de Velázquez (Madrid).

2. Ibn Nuḥās, *Mashāri‘ al-ashwāq ilā maṣāri‘ al-‘ushshāq* (Beirut, 2002), 840 and ff.

3. The term *maghāzī*, apparently from the times of al-Wāqidi’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* (3rd/9th century), if not earlier,



by the battles and conquests of the first caliphs, the *rāshidūn*, as well as of a summary of the most important Islamic victories. Following a traditional narrative that can be found in books devoted to the Prophet's expeditions⁴ and still widely disseminated in the Islamic world today, Ibn Nuḥās describes (prior to discussing the expeditions) how God did not allow the Muslims to fight against the infidels until the *hijra*. That is to say, the *jihād* did not begin until Muḥammad's arrival in Medina. Ibn Nuḥās then organizes the Prophet's battles into two sections: firstly, those that Muḥammad conducted himself and, secondly, the expeditions that he dispatched but did not participate in.⁵ Although the author emphasizes that the *jihād* would not end until Judgment Day and that it was a duty of all Muslims of every age, the outline of this chapter seems to show that the most important fight was the one carried out by the Prophet against the infidels and hypocrites of his time, while the rest were mere derivations of it. That is to say, the *maghāzī* represented the true and pure spirit of *jihād*. Following these sections, and also of great interest, were the conquests of the "rightly guided" caliphs.

The memory of the battles of the Prophet and the *rāshidūn* caliphs is also reflected in al-Shaybānī's (d. 189/805) theory of the "four swords," according to which God had given the Prophet four swords to use in his fight against the infidels: the first was brandished by Muḥammad himself and used against the polytheists; the second was used by Abū Bakr against the apostates; the third was raised by 'Umar against the People of the Book; and the fourth was used by 'Alī to fight against the rebels.⁶ In this sense, Shams al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī (d. 490/1090), one of the great jurists of the classical period, claimed that the actions related

referred to the Prophet's expeditions, and thus not only battles, of the Medina period. The first of the stories in al-Wāqidī concerns the departure of 30 men led by Hamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who in 1/623 intercepted a caravan of Qurayshis heading from Mecca to Syria along the coastal route. The last story in the text concerns an expedition conducted by Usāma b. Zayd along with 3,000 men toward Syria in 11/623, right after the Prophet's death. See al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad. Al-Wāqidī's Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, ed. R. Faizer (London/New York, 2011); J. Horowitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors* (Princeton, 2002; ed. orig. 1927); R. Paret, *Die Legendäre Maghazi-Literatur* (Tubinga, 1930); J. Schacht, "On Mūsā b. 'Uqba's Kitāb al-Maghāzī," *Acta Orientalia* 21 (1953), 288-300; J. Jones, "The Chronology of the Maghāzī-A Textual Survey," in Uri Rubin (ed.), *The Life of Muḥammad* (Aldershot, 1998, 1st ed. 1957), 193-228; M. Hinds, "Maghāzī and sira in early Islamic scholarship," in T. Fahd (ed.), *La vie du prophète Mahomet* (Paris, 1983), 57-66; M. Hinds, "al-Maghāzī," *EL*, vol. 5, Leiden, 1986, 1161-1164; Ḥ. Mujīb al-Masrī, *Ghazawāt al-Rasūl Bayn Shu'arā' al-Shu'ūb al-Islāmiyyah: Dirāsah fī al-Adab al-Islāmī al-Muqāran* (Cairo, 2000); M. Hammīdullāh, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad, with Maps, Illustrations and Sketches: A Continuation to Muslim Military History* (New Delhi, 2003), and Ma'mar ibn Rāshid, *The expeditions. An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, ed. and transl. Sean W. Anthony (New York/London, 2014), xv-xix.

4. Ḥāmid Aḥmad al-Ṭāhir, *Ghazawāt al-Rasūl* (Cairo, 2010), 7 and 26 ff.

5. The second category is known as the *sarāyā* (sing. *sariyah*). M. S. Tantāwī, *Al-Sarāyā al-Ḥarbiyyah fī al-ʿAhd al-Nabawī* (Cairo, 1990), 21. Like many other biographers of the Prophet, Ibn Ishāq distinguishes the campaigns conducted in person by Muḥammad from the *sarāyā*, but, in narrating them, omits the distinction and follows a strictly chronological order. Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford, 1955), 659-660.

6. M. Khaddūrī, *War and Peace in the Law of Islām* (Baltimore/London, 1955, 1st ed. 1949), 74; A. Morabia, *Le Ğihād dans l'Islam médiéval. Le « combat sacré » des origines au xii^e siècle* (Paris, 1993), 303 and 502 n. 66, and R. Booney, *Jihad. From Qur'an to bin Laden* (New York, 2004), 53.

to the *jihād* of the four orthodox caliphs served as a precedent, or as legal justification.⁷ The jurist ‘Alī Ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 499-500/1106) also recounted the memory of the first caliphs’ victories in an attempt to revitalize the *jihād* he had carried out after the First Crusade with his treatise on holy war.⁸ Just as the *rāshidūn* had done, contemporary rulers had to lead the *jihād* against the infidels.

Therefore we can see the fundamental relationship between the idea of *jihād* and the memory of the first battles of Islam. The resignification and recontextualization of the expeditions of the Prophet and the first caliphs’ memory, along with the symbolic capital that these expeditions carried, played a key role in the conceptualization and theorization of *jihād*, which turned the earliest episodes of war into legitimizing elements due to the image of an ideal behavior enjoyed by Muḥammad and the *rāshidūn* within the *Umma*, or, in other words, what Tarif Khalidi calls “social ideality.”⁹

Let me briefly explain what I mean by “memory” of the first expeditions of Islam.¹⁰ In the first place, it is important to take into account the position that the early Islamic times, that is, the time of the Prophet and the *rāshidūn* caliphs,¹¹ occupy in the collective imagination. This period is understood as an exemplary “golden age” that must be constantly emulated and referred to. The Prophet and his life experience, followed by the orthodox caliphs, carry a symbolic capital¹² and an absolute charisma.¹³ Whenever the memory of this period

7. T. Osman, *The Jurisprudence of Sarakhsī with Particular Reference to War and Peace: A Comparative Study in Islamic Law*, PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 1993, 108 and ff., and Booney, *Jihad*, 75.

8. E. Sivan, “La genèse de la Contre-Croisade: Un traité damasquin du début du XI^e siècle,” *Journal Asiatique* 254 (1966), 197-224 and N. Christies, *The Book of the Jihād of ‘Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 1106): Text, Translation and Commentary* (Aldershot, 2015).

9. T. Khalidi, *Images of Muhammad. Narratives of the Prophet in Islam Across the Centuries* (New York, 2009), viii.

10. For an overview of “memory studies,” see M. Tamm, “Beyond History and Memory: New Perspectives in Memory Studies,” *History Compass* 11/6 (2013), 458-473.

11. Quoting El-Hibri: “the age of the rashidun is more a form of religious representation than one of actual historical fact.” T. El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York, 2010), 4. The concept of “*rāshidūn* caliphs” was an Abbasid-era development and I will use it in that sense, since this idea was also consolidated in tenth century al-Andalus with the arrival of works such as al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rīkh* and Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ’s history. For example, in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih’s *al-‘Iqd al-‘Farīd* the four *rāshidūn* (Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī) are included to support the idea that the Umayyads succeeded them. A. Al-Azmeh, “Muslim History, Reflections on Periodisation and Categorisation,” *The Medieval History Journal* 19/1-2 (1998), 195-231; A. Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: L’espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (72-193/692-809)* (Leiden, 2011); A. Borrut, “Vanishing Syria: Periodization and Power in Early Islam,” *Der Islam* 91/1 (2014), 37-68; A. Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford, 2008), 57; I. Toral-Niehoff, “History in *Adab* Context: ‘The Book on Caliphal Histories’ by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (246/860-328/940),” *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 2 (2015), 61-85.

12. P. Bourdieu, *El sentido práctico* (Madrid, 2008), 179-193.

13. M. Weber, *Sociología del poder. Los tipos de dominación* (Madrid, 2007); M. Weber, *Sociología de la religión* (Madrid, 2012); D. Barnes, “Charisma and Religious Leadership: An Historical Analysis,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17 (1978), 1-18; B. Turner, *Weber and Islam* (London, 1978); J. Post, “Charisma,” in R. Landes (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements* (New York, 2000), 118-125; P. Rieff, *Charisma: The Gift of Grace and How it Has Been Taken Away from Us* (New York, 2007); K. Jansen and M.

is voiced, it produces an appropriation and reproduction of this symbolic capital along with the charisma and social authority that it confers. In fact, through this memorialization, throughout the resignification and recontextualization, in this case of the expeditions of the Prophet and the memory of the first caliphs, the aforementioned charismatic authority is reactivated. As a consequence, new obligations are simultaneously generated and demanded while evoking the sacred symbols of shared culture and memory and associating them with images that have, again, an enormous symbolic capital. Accordingly, as Sean Anthony says, “*maghāzī* are also sites of sacred memory,” events and stories of sacred history that left their mark on the collective memory of the community of believers.¹⁴ Thus, these early expeditions of Islam are part of the cultural memory of the *Umma*, where we understand “cultural memory” as Jan Assman defined it: as “that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image.”¹⁵

In order to better comprehend this phenomenon of “memorialization,” I will draw on the idea of “commemoration” as a dynamic process in which stories and reports from the past are recovered, re-narrated, and recontextualized in a given present in order to serve future aims. These narratives, and the beliefs and values they contain, can create cohesion within the group that performs the commemoration while simultaneously conflicting with the collective myths and narratives of other groups. Consequently, collective memorialization is not neutral since it is always linked to issues of identity and power.¹⁶ Therefore, by studying the commemoration of the first battles of Islam through repeated mention and narration, we will carry out an exercise in “mnemohistory.” Coined again by Assmann, this term “is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story-lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past.”¹⁷ Thus, the interest is not only the factuality of the *maghāzī* and *futūḥ*, but their later impact, reception, reinvention, and recontextualization.

Rubin, “Introduction” in K. Jansen and M. Rubin (eds.), *Charisma and Religious Authority. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Preaching 1200-1500* (Turnhout, 2010), 1-16.

14. Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, *The expeditions*, xviii. For the idea of “sites of memory,” P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1984).

15. J. Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 125-133. See also J. Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* (Stanford, California, 2006); J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011).

16. For more on this concept of “commemoration” see, for example, D. Tilles and J. Richardson, “Poland and the Holocaust. A New Law Exposes the Problematic Nature of Holocaust Remembrance,” *History Today* 68/5 (2018) Published online: <https://www.historytoday.com/daniel-tilles-and-john-richardson/poland-and-holocaust>

17. J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 54. As Marek Tamm says, one of the earliest examples of “mnemohistory” in medieval studies is G. Duby, *Le dimanche de Bouvines* (Paris, 1973). Tamm, “Beyond History and Memory,” 458-473. See also M. Tamm, “History as Cultural Memory: Mnemohistory and the Construction of Estonian Nation,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39 (2008), 499-516.

This paper will analyze, then, using several different cases as examples, the process by which memorialization, the commemoration of the first battles of Islam, becomes an important element for the performance and legitimization of *jihād*.¹⁸ *Jihād* is here understood as an ideology, a discursive tool that appeals to accepted and shared sacred elements; creates a framework that provides justification for specific actions; and generates powerful doses of authority. Therefore, holy war should be understood, rather than as a concrete action, as a flexible performance setting, centered on a discourse of struggle against the enemies of God. It has a concrete language, can be adapted to different contexts, and is used by a variety of actors in order to legitimize their actions.¹⁹

Regarding the choice of geographical and chronological context, I will focus on the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate as well as on the Almohad movement, two cases in which al-Andalus was ruled directly by a caliph. Additionally, I consider this framework suitable for the analysis of the commemoration of the first battles of Islam, since both caliphates presented themselves as a recommencement of the early days of Islam, that is, as a return to that “golden age,” by referring to the eschatological times of its appearance—the year 300 in the case of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and 500 in Ibn Tūmart’s—or the idea that Cordoba was the new Medina and Tinmal the destiny of a new Hijra,²⁰ issues to which I will return later. Thereby, we can also establish a comparison between the two cases.

The Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba

In Umayyad al-Andalus, the frontier of the Islamic world for eight centuries, *jihād* and the memory of the first battles of Islam maintained an intense relationship. The chronicles portrayed the Umayyad sovereign, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III (d. 350/961) in particular,²¹ as a

18. For the use of memory within the discourse of *jihād* see, for example, A. Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam. A comparative study of the late medieval and early modern periods* (London-New York, 2009); B. Shoshan, *The Arabic Historical Tradition and the Early Islamic Conquests. Folklore, Tribal Lore, Holy War* (London, 2016), and M. Cook, *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics: The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton, 2014), 215 ff.

19. For a similar approach see, for example, A. Krasner Balbale, “Jihād as a Means of Political legitimation in Thirteenth-century Sharq al-Andalus,” in A. Bennison (ed.), *The Articulation of Power in Medieval Iberia and the Maghrib* (Oxford, 2014), 87-105.

20. See, for example, M. Fierro, “The Movable Minbar in Cordoba: How the Umayyads of al-Andalus Claimed the Inheritance of the Prophet,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 33 (2007), 149-168; M. Fierro, *Abderramán III y el califato omeya de Córdoba* (Guipuzcoa, 2011), 28 ff; M. Fierro, “Le mahdi Ibn Tūmart et al-Andalus: l’élaboration de la légitimité almohade,” in Mercedes García-Arenal (coord.), *Mahdisme et Millénarisme en Islam* (Aix-en-Provence, 2001), 107-124.

21. C. Picard, “Regards croisés sur l’élaboration du jihad entre Orient et Occident musulman (VIII^e-XII^e siècle). Perspectives et réflexions sur une origine commune,” in D. Baloup and Ph. Josserand (eds.), *Regards croisés sur la guerre sainte : guerre, idéologie et religion dans l’espace méditerranéen latin (XI^e-XIII^e siècle)* (Toulouse, 2006), 33-66. G. Martínez-Gros, *L’idéologie omeyyade: La construction de la légitimité du califat de Cordoue (X^e-XI^e siècles)* (Madrid, 1992); J. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge MA, 2000), and Fierro, *Abderramán III*.

warrior-ruler, as a “ghāzī-caliph”²² who personally led the expeditions, as the Prophet had on numerous occasions. It was the caliph who incarnated holy war.

The idea that one of the duties of the ruler was to defend Islam and the fight against the enemies of God was fully developed in al-Andalus. In a fragment praising ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in the *Muqtabis*, Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 469/1076) says that he was following in the footsteps of the *rāshidūn* caliphs, “fighting and defending Allāh with the sword of God, making the truth triumph over the false.”²³ This position as defender of Islam and its community, claimed and exercised by the Cordoban caliph, granted him a high level of legitimacy. In fact, it was one of the main reasons that justified the *auctoritas* that he possessed. Supposedly, it was explained by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III himself at the time of the execution of the culprits of the defeat of Simancas/al-Khandaq in 327/939,²⁴ when he addressed the prisoners: “Look at these poor people—pointing to the populace that was watching them—have they given us authority (*maqāda*), becoming our submissive servants, but for us to defend and protect them?”²⁵ In addition, the term translated here as “authority,” *maqāda*, has a direct relationship with the military context, that is, the direction of an army, as they are derived from the same root, as in, for example, the word *qā'id*.²⁶ Therefore, the leadership that the community had given to the caliph was closely linked to his capacity and duty to lead the war. The campaigns launched by the Cordoban state served for the defense of the realm, like many of those carried out by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in response to different Christian threats. The effort was to consolidate the border or even to expand territory, as with the fortification of Medinaceli in 334/946 or, perhaps, Almanzor’s expeditions. But these efforts also had a strong discursive component directed towards their internal audience: they were a legitimating instrument of extraordinary scope that was renewed year after year with each new campaign. They strengthened the hand of the ruler, particularly when he led the armies in person. Therefore, holy war cannot be considered, in the Cordoban caliphate, as simply a reactive element to external pressures;²⁷ it must also be thought of as a highly significant political asset.

Thus, it is not surprising that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III exploited this image as soon as he ascended to power, a moment of *fitna* in which Cordoban authority was under siege and

22. The term “ghazi-caliph” was first used by C.E. Bosworth in the introduction to the 30th volume of the English translation of the history of al-Ṭabarī, and referred to the warlike activity of the Abbasid caliphs, particularly of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī vol. 30: The ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate in Equilibrium: The Caliphates of Mūsā al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rashīd A.D. 785-809/A.H. 169-193*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany, 1989), xvii. See also M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War. Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, 1996), 99 ff.

23. Ibn Ḥayyān, *Al-Muqtabas V* (Rabat, 1979), 22.

24. On this battle P. Chalmeta, “Simancas y Alhandega,” *Hispania* 133 (1976), 359-444; J. P. Molénat, “Shant Maankash,” *El²*, vol. 9 (Leiden, 1997), 304, and T. Zadeh, “From Drops of Blood: Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the Translation of the ‘Uthmānic Codex of al-Andalus,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39 (2008), 321-346.

25. Ibn Ḥayyān, *Al-Muqtabas V*, 446.

26. R. Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes* (Leiden, 1881), vol. II, 424-425.

27. P. Chalmeta, “Las campañas califales en al-Andalus,” in *Castrum 3. Guerre, fortification et habitat dans le Monde Méditerranéen au Moyen Age* (Madrid-Roma, 1988), 33-42.

in which it was necessary to utilize all available legitimating tools: he would be presented as a ghazi-ruler, a sultan who personally led the armies against their enemies.²⁸ The chronicles, creators, and bearers of ideology underlined again and again the military events of each year, thus configuring an image of a state that consistently took action against its adversaries.

In Ibn Ḥayyān's work, in the chapters devoted to the period of caliphal Cordoba, the term *jihād* is mostly associated with the caliph's capacity for leading the holy war. The term is connected not only to propagandistic passages that concern the person of the sovereign, such as letters encouraging the fight against infidels and heretics, but also to circumstances like the departure of volunteers to "the fight in the path of God." It is used as a means of dramatizing an exceptional moment of fighting against the enemies of Islam, in a kind of account that is different from a mere military speech.²⁹

For instance, in the anonymous chronicle on 'Abd al-Raḥmān III the word *jihād* refers to the expeditions and encounters of the caliph against the Christian kingdoms. It occurs in a passage narrating the sovereign's decision to go out himself on a campaign and send letters ordering the recruitment of troops to fight the enemies of God and inciting them to participate in the *jihād*.³⁰ In these sources, the caliphal expeditions follow a narrative model very similar to that used for the Prophet's *maghāzī*. In the Simancas campaign, for instance, Ibn Ḥayyān, following Ibn Fuṭays' *Kitāb al-Faṭḥ*, recounts how 'Abd al-Raḥmān III led the Umayyad army against the enemies of God to teach them that the word of Allāh is the truth,³¹ thus calling to mind Muḥammad's actions against the infidels. The battle, which ended in defeat for the caliphal troops, became known in Arab sources as *al-Khandaq*, the trench, probably alluding to the famous siege of Medina by the Arab pagans during the times of the Prophet.

We might consider it as a two-way discourse: on the one hand, the Cordoba caliph's actions during war were related to those of the Prophet; on the other hand, no completely covert criticism was being made by remembering that members of his family were defeated that day in the presence of the messenger of God.³² But this is not the only example of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's use of the memory of the Prophet's activity as a military leader, that is, in commemorating the *maghāzī*. In the campaign of Osma (322/934), the caliph used the flag

28. M. Fierro, "Abd al-Rahman III frente al califato fatimí y al reino astur-leonés: campañas militares y procesos de legitimación político-religiosa," in *Rudesindus. San Rosendo. Su tiempo y legado. Congreso Internacional Mondoñedo, Santo Tirso y Celanova 27-30 junio, 2007* (Santiago de Compostela, 2009), 30-50; E. Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, emires y califas. Los omeyas y la formación de al-Andalus* (Barcelona, 2011), 354 and ff.

29. Picard, "Regards croisés sur l'élaboration du jihad," 33-66.

30. C. de la Puente, "El Ŷihād en el Califato Omeya de al-Andalus y su culminación bajo Hišām II," in Fernando Valdés (coord.), *La Península Ibérica y el Mediterráneo en los siglos XI y XII. Almanzor y los terrores del Milenio* (Aguilar de Campoo, 1999), 23-38.

31. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas V*, 438-439.

32. M. Fierro, "The Battle of the Ditch (al-Khandaq) of the Cordoban Caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III," in A. Ahmed, B. Sadeghi and M. Bonner (eds.), *The Islamic Scholarly Tradition. Studies in History, Law, and Thought in Honor of Professor Michael Allan Cook* (Leiden/Boston, 2011), 107-130.

known as “the Eagle,” which called to mind one formerly used by Muḥammad in the battles of Badr and Khaybar.³³ Also Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940), on occasion of a Cordoban victory over the Count of Barcelona (324/935-6), composed a poem in which he compared that action to the battles of Badr and Ḥunayn.³⁴

Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih also compared the campaigns of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III with Badr and Ḥunayn in the *urjūza* devoted to the caliph in the *Kitāb al-masjada al-thāniya fī al-khulafā’ wa al-tawārīkh wa ayyāmihim*, one of the books in his *Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*.³⁵ The *urjūza* is a long poem in which a constant parallelism is created between the Umayyad ruler and the Prophet. The choice of Badr and Ḥunayn was not unintentional and speaks to the importance of both battles for the development of the Islamic idea of holy war, as well as for the very history of the Umayyad dynasty.

Badr, as the most commemorated battle in the history of Islam, is endowed with more symbolic capital and prestige than any other such episode, at least in terms of religiosity and sacredness. The participants in the clash are typically held up as the most exceptional among the Muslims after the *rāshidūn* and ten of the Prophet’s companions, whose entrance to paradise had already been guaranteed.³⁶ Thus, according to the *urjūza*, the fighters who followed the Cordoban caliph were new “Badrites.” The text recontextualizes the meaning of the battle, and thus guarantees salvation to these fighters. On the other hand, an important element of the Qur’ānic doctrine of holy war is contained in *Sūra 8 (al-Anfāl)*, and exegetes hold the chapter to have been revealed following the battle of Badr, to which, they argue, the chapter refers.³⁷

The battle of Ḥunayn, also led by the Prophet, is of great importance as well since it is one of the only battles that is directly named in the Qur’ān (Q. 9: 25). God participated in the event through His angels, as He had at Badr, and a huge spoil was obtained. Additionally, Abū Sufyān, ancestor of the Umayyads, having now converted to Islam, participated in the expedition, and, in fact, together with the Prophet, was one of the few who endured the attack of the pagans.³⁸ The battle is thus one of the most important in “Umayyad memory,” since the positive role of Abū Sufyān in Ḥunayn is undeniable. It is also worth remembering that Abū Sufyān, both as a pagan and enemy of the Prophet, was often used by the enemies of the Umayyads, for example the Fatimids, to attack the Cordoban dynasty.³⁹ Moreover, in order to give more

33. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas V*, p. 334; Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, 289 ff, 510 ff; al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 322.

34. Fierro, “The Battle of the Ditch (al-Khandaq),” 107-130. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas V*, 380.

35. J. Monroe, “The Historical Arjuza of Ibn ‘Abd , a Tenth-century Hispano-Arabic Epic Poem,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971), 67-95; Toral-Niehoff, “History in *Adab* Context,” 61-85.

36. See, for example, Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims*, 57 ff.

37. Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, 321 ff.; al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 66 ff. See, for example, Bonner, *Jihad*, 62-63.

38. Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, 566 ff.; al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 435 ff.

39. See, for example, al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *Founding the Fatimid State: The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire. An Annotated English Translation al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s Iftitāh al-Da‘wa*, trans. H. Haji (London, 2006), 140 ff.

importance to the remembrance of the battle of Badr by the Umayyads, Abū Sufyān did not fight that day against the Prophet.⁴⁰

In the *ʿIqd al-Farīd*, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih goes even further with the comparison between ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III and Muḥammad, trying to prove that Cordoba’s mosque was a renewal of Medina’s, thereby linking the new Umayyad capital with the Prophet’s city.⁴¹ In the same sense, as Maribel Fierro has shown, Mundhir b. Saʿīd al-Ballūṭī (d. 355/966), the Cordoban *qādī*, encouraged the adoption of the *nisba* al-Anṣārī among the Andalusī Muslims without a tribal Arabic filiation. These Andalusīs became the new Prophet *anṣār*, “helpers,” and Cordoba the “new Medina” that had to be defended.⁴²

The practice of mixing Umayyad family memory with the commemoration of outstanding battles and the ideology of *jihād*, as in the case of Abū Sufyān, was a recurrent tool in Umayyad-era texts. A further example occurs in an interesting poem by Muḥammad Ibn Shukhayṣ, in which the poet remembers the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ. The context was the declaration of obedience by the Banū Khazar to al-Ḥakam II in the war against the Fatimids in 360/971.⁴³ Both dynasties considered the conflict between them,⁴⁴ as holy.⁴⁵ The battle of Marj Rāhiṭ, in 64/684, pitted the Banū Kalb, supporters of the Umayyad caliph of Damascus, Marwān I, against the Banū Qays. The latter were supporters of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, who had proclaimed himself caliph and who had previously supported the proto-Shiʿī rebellion of al-Ḥusayn.⁴⁶ Ibn al-Zubayr was remembered, especially in narratives transmitted by pro-Umayyad circles,⁴⁷ as the prototype of an anti-caliph. Following his defeat, according to these accounts, his body faced the same fate as that of apostates: decapitation and crucifixion.⁴⁸

40. Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, 289 ff.; al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 11 ff.

41. Fierro, *Abderramán III*, 28.

42. Fierro, *Abderramán III*, 29.

43. On al-Ḥakam II see Martínez-Gros, *L'idéologie omeyyade*; J. Vallvé, *El Califato de Córdoba* (Madrid, 1992); D. Wasserstein, *The Caliphate in the West. An Islamic Political Institution in the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford, 1993); Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*; Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, emires y califas*.

44. On the Umayyad intervention in the Maghreb see, for example, J. Vallvé, “La intervención omeya en el norte de África,” *Cuadernos de la Biblioteca Española de Tetuán* 4 (1967), 6-37; Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, 25 ff.

45. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas VII. Al-Muqtabas fī ajbār balad al-Andalus*, ed. al-Ḥaḡḡī (Beirut, 1965), 55.

46. Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī vol. 20: The Collapse of Sufyānid Authority and the Coming of the Marwānids. The Caliphates of Muʿāwiyah II and Marwān I and the Beginning of the Caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik A.D.683–685/A.H. 64–66*, trans. G. R. Hawting (Albany, 1989), 54-69; G. R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750* (London and New York, 2000), 46 ff.; H. Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London, 2001), 31-32.

47. Antoine Borrut (see for example Borrut, “Vanishing Syria,” 37-68; Shoshan, *The Arabic Historical Tradition*, 171 ff.) has shown that, in addition to al-Andalus, there was a “competing historiography” in the tenth-century East that made Umayyad memory very much alive and that also made an uninterrupted chain of succession between Damascus and Cordoba, even prophesying a return of the Arab dynasty to the Mashreq, an idea with which the Cordoban Umayyads flirted. See, for example, Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas V*, 306-307.

48. Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, 92-98.

The texts are very specific in drawing a clear parallel between Marj Rāhiṭ and its recontextualization: the Banū Khazar were the new Banū Kalb, the original supporters of Marwān I. Al-Ḥakam II thus appears as the latter's successor, confronting the allies of the apostate anti-caliph, represented by the Fatimid ruler, whose words and deeds acted against the religion of the Prophet. Just as Ibn al-Zubayr had been defeated, the Ismā'īlī imām—as predicted indirectly by the poem—would be too.

Indeed, the memory of the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ was widely used in Umayyad memory production circles. Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, for example, compared the confrontation with one that had taken place between 'Abd al-Raḥmān I (d. 172/788) and Yūsuf al-Fihri (d. 138/756) when the former entered al-Andalus. Both contests took place on the day of 'Īd al-Aḍḥā, and in both events, members of the same families fought against each other: 'Abd al-Raḥmān I, as a descendant of the caliph Marwān, and Yūsuf al-Fihri, the descendant of al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. al-Qays al-Fihri, one of Ibn al-Zubayr's commanders.⁴⁹

The battle of Marj Rāhiṭ also appears in Ibn 'Idhārī's *Bayān*, where it is compared with one of the victories of Almanzor.⁵⁰ He, Ibn Abī 'Āmir al-Manṣūr (d. 392/1002), known in Christian sources as Almanzor, is, doubtlessly, the best representation of the figure of the warrior-ruler in caliphal Cordoba.⁵¹ As *ḥājib* of the caliph Hishām II, he conducted more than fifty expeditions against Christian territories, including one to Santiago de Compostela.⁵² He is said to have been buried in his combat clothing.

In contrast with the period of the Umayyad caliph al-Ḥakam II, who did not directly lead any campaign,⁵³ Almanzor incarnated the figure of the military commander. He symbolized the spirit of *jihād*, which he used as a basis for his legitimacy.⁵⁴ He also justified his government in front of his subjects by becoming the standard-bearer of the holy war and the defender of orthodoxy. The historian al-Ḥumaydī (d. 488/1095) says that he did not reside in Cordoba because he was concerned with *jihād*, leading razzias against the

49. Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, *Ta'rīkh iftitāḥ al-Andalus (Historia de la conquista de España de Abenalcotia el Cordobés)*, ed. and trans. Julián Ribera (Madrid, 1926), 26-27. See also Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*, 131.

50. Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, eds. G. S. Colin and É. Lévi-Provençal (Beirut, 2009 [1948-1951]), vol. II, 298.

51. L. Molina, "Las campañas de Almanzor," *al-Qanṭara* 2 (1981), 204-264; L. Bariani, *Almanzor* (Madrid, 2003); P. Sénac, *Al-Mansur, le fléau de l'an mil* (Paris, 2006), and A. Echevarría, *Almanzor: un califa en la sombra* (Madrid, 2011).

52. Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. II, 294; *Dhīkr bilād al-Andalus*, ed. and trans. L. Molina (Madrid, 1983), vol. I, 194; M. Fernández Rodríguez, "La expedición de Almanzor a Santiago de Compostela," *Cuadernos de Historia de España* 43-44 (1966), 345-363; R. Pinto de Azevedo, "A expedição de Almançor a Santiago de Compostela em 997, e a de piratas normandos à Galiza em 1015-1016," *Revista Portuguesa de História* 14 (1974), 73-93; M. I. Pérez de Tudela, "Guerra, violencia y terror: La destrucción de Santiago de Compostela por Almanzor hace mil años," *En la España medieval* 21 (1988), 9-28; C. de la Puente, "La campaña de Santiago de Compostela (387/997): ḡihād y legitimación de poder," *Qurtuba* 6 (2001), 7-21.

53. Nonetheless, the sources depict him as an active and victorious caliph in the battle. Thus, according to the *Muqtabis*, in the victory of Ghālib b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān in the year 360/971 against the Normans, it was because of the grace of al-Ḥakam II that they obtained the triumph and it was his zeal to defend Islam that had led his followers to the fight. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas VII*, 37.

54. Picard, "Regards croisés sur l'élaboration du jihad," 33-66.

Christians to such a degree that he would go out to pray on a holy day and instead of returning to his palace would set out to war.⁵⁵

The propaganda machine boosted the imagery of Almanzor as a “ghāzī-ruler,” and *mujāhid*; in these accounts of his role, the memory of the first battles of Islam would grow in importance. For example, in the poem written by Ibn Darrāj honouring Almanzor and his sons, ‘Abd al-Mālik and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, after the expedition against Compostela,⁵⁶ the campaign (in which, according to the panegyrist, the true religion had defeated infidelity) is compared to the Muslim victory at the battle of Ḥunayn, an expedition led personally by the Prophet and which resulted, much like the Compostela campaign, in substantial booty.⁵⁷ Moreover, as the Prophet resisted the pagans in Ḥunayn with only a few warriors, now Almanzor and his sons were defending the *Umma* alone.

In this discursive process of enthronement of the Cordoban *ḥājib* as a *mujāhid*, the historiographical-biographical texts also played an important role. Two works stand as examples in this regard: the *Kitāb al-ma’āthir al-‘āmiriyya fī siyar al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Āmir wa-ghazawātihi wa-awqātihā* of Ibn ‘Aṣim al-Thaqafī (d. 450/1058 or before 461/1069)⁵⁸ and the *Ghazawāt al-Manṣūr b. Abī ‘Āmir* of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064).⁵⁹ Each of the two texts is modelled after the works of the Prophet’s *maghāzī/ghazawāt*.⁶⁰ Thus, for example, each follows the pattern—evident in Ibn Darrāj’s association of Compostela with Ḥunayn—of comparing Almanzor’s actions with those of the Prophet, thus using Muḥammad’s symbolic capital and memory in his (Almanzor’s) effort to legitimize himself.

The Expansion of the Almohad Movement: Ibn Ḥubaysh’s *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt*

Following the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba,⁶¹ it is not until the arrival of the Almohads that we will see a caliph once again ruling directly over the whole of al-Andalus, in this case unified with the Maghreb. The North African dynasty copied many of the legitimation elements of the Umayyads, presenting themselves on some occasions as their successors.⁶² The use of *jihād* and of the commemoration of the first battles of Islam were among these discursive tools.

55. Al-Ḥumaydī, *Jaḍwat al-muqtabis fī ta’rīkh ‘ulamā’ al-Andalus*, ed. al-Abyārī (Beirut, 1989), n° 121.

56. M. A. Makki, *Dīwān Ibn Darrāj* (Beirut, 1970), 314-320. See also M. La Chica, *Almanzor en los poemas de Ibn Darray* (Zaragoza, 1979).

57. Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, 566 ff.; al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 435 ff. See also Ḥāmid Aḥmad al-Ṭāhir, *Ghazawāt*, 474 ff.

58. *Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes*, vol. VI, 77.

59. *Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes*, vol. VI, 79 ff. As is very well known, Ibn Ḥazm was a passionate defender of the Umayyad caliphate. For more information, see C. Adang, M. Fierro and S. Schmidtke (eds.), *Ibn Ḥazm of Cordoba: The Life and Works of a Controversial Thinker* (Leiden, 2013). Ibn Ḥazm also wrote a *Sīra* of the Prophet. M. Jarrar, *Die Prophetenbiographie im islamischen Spanien* (Frankfurt, 1989), 169-173.

60. See footnote 3.

61. P. Scales, *The Fall of the Caliphate of Cordoba: Berbers and Andalusis in Conflict* (Leiden, 1993).

62. See, for example, Zadeh, “From Drops of Blood,” 321-346; A. Bennison, “The Almohads and the Qur’an of ‘Uthman: The Legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in Twelfth-century Maghrib,” *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 19/2 (2007), 131-154.

Indeed, if ever there was a moment in which the relationship between *jihād* and the memory of early Islam and its battles was more evident in al-Andalus, it was during the Almohad period. As we will see, two key elements of Almohad discourse were the allusion to the beginnings of Islam, viewed during this period as a model to return to, and a strong reliance on *jihād* as a source of legitimation and justification. It was the memory of the Prophet's expeditions and the first caliphs that connected both elements.

The first of these two elements, the Almohad reform project,⁶³ was established in the beginnings of the sixth/twelfth century by Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart in his role as the "restorer" of the original purity of Islam. Almohad discourse made frequent reference to the hadith that claimed: "Islam began as something strange and it will return as strange as it began, so glad tidings for the strangers!"⁶⁴ Ibn Tūmart and his followers, the true believers, were identified with strangers, *ghurabā'*, in a world of religious decadence.⁶⁵ The "perversion" of religion was most apparent in two forms of intoxication (*sakratāni*): ignorance, that is, forgetfulness of religious knowledge, and love of the worldly life, which implies forgetfulness of the eternal life and neglect of *jihād*. The fight against this supposed period of corruption would become one of the objectives of the Almohad project, which consequently strived to remove the two sources of "intoxication."

To this end, Ibn Tūmart appeared as a *mahdī*,⁶⁶ or saviour, and an *imām ma'ṣūm*, impeccable and infallible in his religious knowledge, someone who wanted to break with the immediate past and return to the first moments of Muḥammad's community by reverting to the model of moral puritanism and military activism represented by the Prophet and the *rāshidūn* caliphs.⁶⁷ Ibn Tūmart's own history was narrated with a rhetorical construction that linked his vital experience with that of the Prophet's career. Thus, for example, he began his mission as a religious reformer in a cave, *al-Ghār al-muqaddas*, a reference to the cavern in Mount Hira where the Prophet used to retire and where he encountered Gabriel for the first time, thus starting the revelation of the Qur'ān.⁶⁸ Similarly, Ibn Tūmart's flight

63. A. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (Edinburgh, 2016).

64. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut, 1987), n.º 270.

65. M. Fierro, "Doctrina y práctica jurídicas bajo los almohades" in P. Cressier, M. Fierro and L. Molina (eds.), *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), vol. II, 895-935. For more information about the figure of the *ghurabā'* see M. Fierro, "Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The *Ghuraba* in al-Andalus During the Sixth/twelfth Century," *Arabica* 47/1 (2000), 230-260. M. Ghouirgate, *L'ordre almohade (1120-1269) : une nouvelle lecture anthropologique* (Toulouse, 2014), 231 ff.

66. M. Fierro, "Doctrinas y movimientos de tipo mesiánico en al-Andalus," in J. I. de la Iglesia Duarte, *IX Semana de Estudios Medievales. Milenarismos y milenaristas en la Europa Medieval* (Logroño, 1999), 159-175. Fierro, "Le mahdī Ibn Tūmart," 107-124.

67. Fierro, "Le mahdī Ibn Tūmart," 107-124. L. Bombrun, "Les Mémoires d'al-Baydaq. L'écriture de l'histoire à l'époque almohade," in A. Nef and É. Voguet (eds.), *La légitimation du pouvoir au Maghreb médiéval : de l'orientalisation à l'émancipation politique* (Madrid, 2011), 93-108.

68. J. P. van Staëvel, "La caverne, refuge de « l'ami de Dieu » : une forme particulière de l'eremitisme au temps des almorávides et des almohades (Magreb extrême, XI^e-XIII^e siècles)," *Cuadernos de Madīnat al-Zahrā'* 7 (2010), 311-325.

to Tinmal was remembered as akin to the Hijra of Muḥammad and his first followers.⁶⁹ This process can be also observed in the fact that the Almohads neglected their duty to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, considering that they had their own sanctuary in Tinmal, where Ibn Tūmart was buried.⁷⁰

In this context, devotion to the direct study of the revealed sources, the Qurʾān and the *Sunna*, was undoubtedly, from a doctrinal point of view, one of the Almohads' main objectives. The founder of the Almohad movement made his own recension of Mālik's *Muwattaʿa*⁷¹ and a summary of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.⁷¹ Under the caliphate of al-Manṣūr the study and teaching of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, as well as the composition of hadith works, like the so-called *Arbaʿūn*, the "forty" hadiths, spread.⁷² ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī reports that, in the course of a discussion between the caliph al-Manṣūr and the Maliki jurist, Abū Bakr b. al-Jadd, about the reasons for diversity in scholarly opinion (*ikhṭilāf*), the caliph replied that, on the one hand, there was only the Qurʾān and the Prophet's tradition, specifically Abū Dāwud's *Sunan*, and, on the other, the sword, that is, *jihād*.⁷³

The second of the elements that we have pointed out, *jihād*, turns out to have been fundamental. It was proclaimed from the very beginning against the Almoravids,⁷⁴ denying their condition as true believers.⁷⁵ The Almohads used the doctrine of *takfīr*,⁷⁶ classifying

69. A. Huici Miranda, "La leyenda y la historia en los orígenes del imperio almohade," *Al-Andalus* 14 (1949), 139-176. The sources that transmit his biographical data were written chiefly as a means of legitimizing the Almohad empire. M. Fierro, "El *Mahdī* Ibn Tūmart: más allá de la biografía oficial," in M. A. Manzano and R. El Hour (eds.), *Política, sociedad e identidades en el Occidente islámico (siglos XI-XIV)* (Salamanca, 2016), 73-97. As ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī points out, he also traced his lineage back to the Prophet. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Muʿjib fī Talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib*, trans. Ambrosio Huici (Tetouan, 1955), 146-147. ʿAbd al-Muʿmin, the first Almohad caliph, also did something similar when he included Quraysh, Prophet Muḥammad's tribe, in the *qaysī* genealogy that was attributed to him. M. Fierro, "Las genealogías de ʿAbd al-Muʿmin, primer califa almohade," *Al-Qanṭara* 24/1 (2003), 77-107.

70. P. Buresi, "Les cultes rendus à la tombe du Mahdi Ibn Tūmart à Tinmâl," *Comptes Rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 152/1 (2008), 391-438. Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade*, 416 ff.

71. D. Urvoy, "Les écrits de Ibn Tumart," in *Le Maroc médiéval. Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne* (Paris, 2014), 274-280.

72. M. Fierro, "Revolución y tradición: algunos aspectos del mundo del saber en al-Ándalus durante las épocas almorávide y almohade," in M. L. Ávila and M. Fierro (eds.), *Biografías almohades*, vol. II (Madrid-Granada, 2000), 131-165.

73. M. Fierro, "The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10/3 (1999), 226-248.

74. E. Lévi-Provençal, *Documents inédits d'histoire almohade. Fragment du "legajo" 1919 du fons arabe de l'Escorial* (Paris, 1928), 3.

75. M. Fierro, "La religión" in M. J. Viguera (ed.), *Los reinos de taifas. Al-Andalus en el siglo XI*, vol. VIII/1, *Historia de España Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid, 1994), 399-496. A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política del Imperio almohade* (Tetouan, 1957), vol. I, pp. 32-38. See also D. Serrano, "¿Por qué llamaron los almohades antropomorfistas a los almorávides?" in P. Cressier, M. Fierro and L. Molina (eds.), *Los almohades*, vol. II, 815-852.

76. C. Adang, H. Ansari, M. Fierro and S. Schmidtke (eds.), *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr* (Leiden, 2016).

believers as infidels, just as the Khārijis had done before them.⁷⁷ *Jihād* was to be conducted against all those who did not accept the Almohad vision of Islam, which they considered the only true one. After fleeing to Tinmal (the new *hijra*), they became the new *muhājirūn*, emigrants who had escaped from a corrupt society and now had to bring it to an end by means of *jihād*.⁷⁸ The effort was thus conceived of as a holy war against the Almoravid state, which they thought of as unjust and illicit. In this sense, *jihād* was intertwined with *ḥisba*, the notion of “commanding right and forbidding wrong.”⁷⁹

The *jihād* was soon extended to the Christians,⁸⁰ especially after the Ifrīqiya campaign had been carried out by ‘Abd al-Mu’min in the year 552-553/1158. That same year, the caliph directly confronted a Christian power, that of the Normans, by taking Mahdiyya. Two years later, in 554-555/1160, ‘Abd al-Mu’min crossed the Strait of Gibraltar announcing, during the festival of the Sacrifice, the next *jihād* against the Christians.⁸¹ This is how the figure of the “ghāzī-caliph” reappeared, something the Almohad state devoted great care to, through, for instance, carefully planned parades.⁸²

Official propaganda also emphasized this notion to the point that, for example, letters announcing victories over the infidels (*kutub al-fath*) were sent to the capitals of the empire in the names of the caliphs and publicly read in the most important mosques.⁸³ Works on

77. Booney, *Jihad*, 56. Apparently, the Almoravids may have qualified the Almohads as Khārijis. A. Kadhim, *Estudio crítico, traducción y análisis de la obra Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, Tesis Doctoral, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1991, vol. II, 10-13. The Fatimids also used this discourse to authorize violence against other Muslims, although in their sources only the *takfir* is implicit. The terms *kāfirūn* or *kuffār* are only recalled to refer to the infidels that opposed Abraham, Moses, or Muḥammad, but, according to the various descriptions of *kufir* behavior, one can deduce an analogy between the infidels who deny God and those Muslims who deny the *ahl al-Bayt* and the Ismaelite doctrines. See D. de Smet, “*Kufr et takfir dans l’ismaélisme fatimide: Le Kitāb Tanbīh al-hādī de Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*,” in C. Adang, M. Fierro, H. Ansari and S. Schmidtke (eds.), *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam*, 82-102. Also the Cordoban Umayyads called some of their Muslim enemies *kuffār*. See, for example, Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas V*, 234.

78. The Khārijis also viewed themselves as *muhājirūn*. Booney, *Jihad*, 56.

79. M. García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform. Mahdīs of the Muslim West* (Leiden, 2006), 157-192. M. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 2001), 390, 478, 496 and 511.

80. M. H. M. al-Qarqūṭī, *Jihād al-muwaḥḥidīn fī bilād al-Andalus, 541-629 H/1146-1233 M* (Argel, 2005); S. M. A. al-Raqab, *Shi’r al-jihād fī ‘aṣr al-muwaḥḥidīn* (Amman, 1984). See also P. Buresi, “La réaction idéologique almoravide et almohade à l’expansion occidentale dans la péninsule Ibérique (fin xi^e-mi xiii^e siècles),” in *L’expansion occidentale (xi^e-xv^e siècles) Formes et conséquences XXXIIIe Congrès de la S.H.M.E.S.* (Paris, 2003), 229-241, and M. Fierro, “La palabra y la espada: posturas frente al «otro» en la época almohade” in M. A. Carmona and C. Estepa (coords.), *La Península Ibérica en tiempos de Las Navas de Tolosa* (Madrid, 2014), 53-77.

81. Fierro, “La palabra y la espada,” 53-77.

82. M. Marín, “El califa almohade: una presencia activa y benéfica,” in P. Cressier, M. Fierro and L. Molina (eds.), *Los almohades*, vol. II, 451-476; M. Fierro, “Algunas reflexiones sobre el poder itinerante almohade,” *E-Spania. Revue Interdisciplinaire d’Études Hispaniques Médiévales et Modernes* (8 December 2009), available online at <http://e-spania.revues.org/18653#bodyftn9>, n. 9. (accessed 29 May 2016), and Ghourigate, *L’Ordre almohade*, 311 ff.

83. C. Mohamed, “Notions de guerre et de paix à l’époque almohade,” in P. Cressier and V. Salvatierra (eds.), *Las Navas de Tolosa (1212-2012): miradas cruzadas* (Jaén, 2014), 53-68. For the importance of the concept of *fath* as holy war in the Almohad context, see A. García Sanjuán, “La noción de *fath* en las fuentes árabes andalusíes y magrebíes (siglos VIII al XIII),” in C. de Ayala, P. Henriot and S. Palacios (eds.), *Orígenes y desarrollo de la*

jihād were also composed at the express request of the Almohad authorities, as in the case of Ibn al-Munāṣif (d. 620/1223), the *qāḍī* of Valencia and Murcia. In the introduction to this work, commissioned by the governor of Valencia, who was none other than the youngest son of the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min, the author explained why he had composed it: to fulfill the noblest of duties and express the best way to subordinate oneself to God, namely through *jihād* against Allāh’s enemies.⁸⁴

But although Ibn Tūmart never confronted the Christians, since the scope of his action never extended beyond the Atlas, later Almohad rulers tried to highlight the fact that the founder of the Unitarian movement also included in its doctrine the idea of repelling the followers of Jesus through the use of armed force.⁸⁵ Ibn al-Qaṭṭān,⁸⁶ for instance, offers numerous examples of alleged discourses of the *mahdī* filled with allusions to the Christians, as well as Qur’ān verses referring to those who, according to the chronicler, were recited by the founder of the Almohad movement.⁸⁷ In fact, under the second caliph, Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, a specific chapter on *jihād* was added to the *Kitāb* attributed to Ibn Tūmart.⁸⁸

Therefore, it is along these two major lines of the Almohad project, the alleged return to the origins of Islam and the revitalization of *jihād*, where one must situate the reproduction of the memory of the first battles of Islam as a shared element of both pillars.

One of the best examples is Ibn Ḥubaysh’s *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt*. Ibn Ḥubaysh, born in Almería in 540/1111, was a *faqīh*, *qāḍī*, *khaṭīb*: traditionist, genealogist, and lexicographer. Having studied in Cordoba with scholars like Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī, he became a renowned expert in the field of hadith. He witnessed the Christian conquest of Almería in 542/1147 and, in 556/1161, established himself in Murcia, where he took up the post of judge under the Almohad government. He died in 584/1188.⁸⁹ Allegedly, the same day he was appointed judge, the Almohad caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf asked him to write the *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt*, as is stated in the prologue of the work.⁹⁰ The work deals with the wars and conquests that took place under the government of the three first caliphs of Islam, namely Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān. For its composition, Ibn Ḥubaysh used eastern sources like Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*, al-Wāqidī’s *Kitāb al-Ridda*, al-Ṭabarī’s *Kitāb al-Ta’rikh*, Sayf b. ‘Umar’s *Kitāb al-Ridda wa*

guerra santa en la Península Ibérica (Madrid, 2016), 31-50, especially 42-50. See also F. Donner, “Arabic *fath* as ‘Conquest’ and its Origin in Islamic Tradition,” *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 24 (2016), 1-14.

84. Mohamed, “Notions de guerre et de paix,” 53-68.

85. For more information about *jihād* against Christians and about the ideology promoted by the Almohads towards the followers of Christ, see J. Albarrán, “De la conversión y expulsión al mercenariado: la ideología en torno a los cristianos en las crónicas almohades,” in M. A. Carmona and C. Estepa (coords.), *La Península Ibérica*, 79-91.

86. Kadhim, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, vol. II, 52-56.

87. Q. 3:149, 9:123, 33:1 and 33:48.

88. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, 95-100.

89. A. Carmona, “El saber y el poder: cuarenta biografías de ulemas levantinos de época de Ibn Mardaniš,” in M. L. Ávila and M. Fierro (eds.), *Biografías almohades*, vol. II, 57-130 and A. Rodríguez Figueroa, “Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥubayš,” in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. III (Almería, 2004), 472-476.

90. D. M. Dunlop, “The Spanish Historian Ibn Hubaysh,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 73/4 (1941), 359-362 and Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt* (Cairo, 1983), vol. I, 1.

al-futūḥ, and a *Kitāb futūḥ al-Shām*, of which he reports having seen several copies, each attributed to a different author, but which were in fact copies of al-Azdī's *Kitāb*.⁹¹

The production, implications, and readings of Ibn Ḥubaysh's *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt* must be understood in the context of the Almohad movement and what it sought. Just as Ibn Tūmart's biography had been constructed similarly to that of the Prophet or the fictitious genealogy that the first Almohad caliph, 'Abd al-Mu'min, invented for himself,⁹² Ibn Ḥubaysh's work joins a discursive tradition that looks at the past from the present moment⁹³ and seeks to legitimize itself through the production and reproduction of the memory of early Islamic times and the symbolic capital that this historical period contained. It is therefore a link within the social process of construction and the re-reading of history that was started by the Almohads themselves, in which they attempted to connect directly with the origins of Islam and present themselves as its restorers, thereby commemorating this sacred memory.

Ibn Ḥubaysh's *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt* also played an important role in regards to the Almohad *jihād* ideology, which prevailed especially during the government of Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, a great promoter of the holy war against the Christians of the Iberian Peninsula. Not only did Abū Ya'qūb die in the midst of a battle at Santarem, but he was also the caliph who added the section on *jihād* to Ibn Tūmart's *Kitāb* and who ordered Ibn Ṭufayl to compose a poem inciting a holy war.⁹⁴ Ibn Ḥubaysh's work thus acted as a pious exhortation encouraging believers to follow the example of the first Muslims and their victories along the path of God and *jihād*.

Moreover, this function would not belong exclusively to the *futūḥ*.⁹⁵ The traditionalist and historian al-Kalā'ī (d. 634/1236), a disciple of Ibn Ḥubaysh, authored his *Kitāb al-iktifā'*

91. S. Mourad, "On Early Islamic Historiography: Abū Ismā'īl al-Azdī and his *Futūḥ al-Shām*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120/4 (2000), 577-593 and E. Landau Tasserou, "New data on an old manuscript: An Andalusian version of the work entitled *Futūḥ al-Shām*," *Al-Qanṭara* 21 (2000), 361-380. On the *futūḥ* work by al-Azdī see L. Conrad, "Al-Azdī's History of the Arab Conquests in Bilad al-Sham: Some Historiographical Observations," in *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Bilad al-Sham During the Early Islamic Period up to 40 AH/640 AD* (Amman, 1987), vol. I, 28-62; Mourad, "On Early Islamic Historiography," 577-593; A. Mazor, "The *Kitāb futūḥ al-Shām* of al-Qudamī as a Case Study for the Transmission of Traditions About the Conquest of Syria," *Der Islam* 84 (2007), 17-45; J. Scheiner, "Writing the History of the *Futūḥ*: the *Futūḥ* Works by al-Azdī, Ibn A'tham and al-Wāqidi," in *The Lineaments of Islam* (Leiden, 2012), 151-176. Suleiman Mourad's paper also includes information about its transmission in al-Andalus. On other *futūḥ* works see R. Paret, "The Legendary *Futūḥ* Literature," in Fred M. Donner (ed.), *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State* (Aldershot, 2008), 163-175; Y. Dehghani, "Historical Writing in Baghdād: The Case of the *Futūḥ al-Shām* Ascribed to al-Wāqidi (d. 207/822)," in J. Scheiner and D. Janos (eds.), *The Place to Go: Contexts of Learning in Baghdād, 750-1000 C.E.* (Princeton, 2014), 587-599; Shoshan, *The Arabic Historical Tradition*.

92. Fierro, "Las genealogías de 'Abd al-Mu'min," 77-107. For the genealogies invented by Ibn Tūmart and 'Abd al-Mu'min see Lévi-Provençal, *Documents inédits d'histoire almohade*, 30-32.

93. T. Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," in *Occasional Papers Series* (Washington, 1986), 1-22.

94. E. García Gómez, "Una qaṣīda política inédita de Ibn Ṭufayl," *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos* 1 (1953), 21-28. For other poets that wrote about the *jihād* see T. Garulo, "La poesía de al-Andalus en época almohade" in *Música y poesía. El Legado andalusí* (Barcelona, 1995), 149-160.

95. For brief notes on the production of works about the Prophet and the first caliphs of the Almohad period, see Jarrar, *Die Prophetenbiographie*, 265 ff.

fi maghāzī al-muṣṭafā wa al-thalātha al-khulafā,⁹⁶ a work describing the battles of the Prophet and the first three caliphs, which was based on Ibn Ḥubaysh's text, among others.⁹⁷ Apart from being the secretary of the Almohad governor of Valencia, he was closely linked to *jihād* tendencies, whereby his work acted as a stimulus by reviving the memory of the first battles of Islam. Having participated in many campaigns, he died on Dhū l-ḥijja 19th, 643/August 13th, 1237 in the battle of Anisha, north of Valencia, during which he accused fleeing soldiers of, in his words, fleeing from paradise.⁹⁸

When we consider reformation in this sense, it is not difficult to find examples within the Almohad context that connect the *jihād* phenomenon with the idea of restoring the purity of early Islam. The repeated return to the direct study of primary Islamic sources is evidenced within the context of war. For example, 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī relates an episode which describes how, while preparing an expedition against the Christians in 574-5/1179, the caliph Abū Ya'qūb, the patron—it must be noted—of Ibn Ḥubaysh's work, ordered the 'ulamā' to dictate the available traditions on *jihād* to the Almohads which they then copied onto wooden tables and learned by heart. The spirit of warlike religiousness described by the chronicler was such that one of these scholars, Abū al-Qamar, ordered that his tables be kept so that he could be buried with them.⁹⁹

These same ideas can also be associated with a copy of 'Uthmān's Qur'ān that was used on the battlefield. Four chroniclers reported that the Almohad caliphs carried a copy of the Qur'ān in military parades and in war expeditions, yet only three of them specified that it was a copy of the Qur'ān of the third of the *rāshidūn* caliphs, 'Uthmān.¹⁰⁰ Along with this codex, they also carried another Qur'ān that had been copied by hand by the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart, thus linking the caliphs who carried these copies with the origin of the Almohad movement; their possession of this symbolic capital, which was associated with the memory of the early caliphs, granted them a high degree of legitimization. According to 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, 'Uthmān's Qur'ān had belonged to the Umayyads;¹⁰¹ it was the copy that, according to some traditions, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III himself carried into battle and that the Umayyad used to commemorate the times of the *rāshidūn*.¹⁰²

96. Al-Kalā'ī, *Kitāb al-iktifā' fi maghāzī al-muṣṭafā wa al-thalātha al-khulafā* (Beirut, 2000).

97. Landau-Tasserou, "On the Reconstruction of Lost Sources," 45-91.

98. A. Carmona, "Ibn Sālim al-Kalā'ī," in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. V (Almería, 2007), 205-211.

99. 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib*, 208.

100. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *Al-Mann bil-Imāma*, trans. Ambrosio Huici (Valencia, 1969), 178. Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, trans. Ambrosio Huici (Valencia, 1964), vol. II, 433. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib fi ikhtiṣār akhbār muluk al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, trans. Ambrosio Huici, Almohad part, vol. I (Tetouan, 1953), 63. 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib*, 206-207.

101. Most likely brought by 'Abd al-Mu'min from Cordoba.

102. According to these traditions, this exemplar of the Qur'ān, copied by hand by 'Uthmān himself, would be the same one the caliph was praying with when he was assassinated, as evidenced by the blood stains that could be visible in its pages. Zadeh, "From Drops of Blood," 321-346. See also A. D. Lamare, "Le *muṣḥaf* de la mosquée de Cordoue et son mobilier mécanique," *Journal asiatique* 230 (1938), 551-575; Bennison, "The Almohads and the Qur'an of 'Uthman," 131-154, P. Buresi, "Une relique almohade: l'utilisation du Coran (attribué a 'Uṯmān b. 'Affān) de la Grande Mosquée de Cordoue," *Oriente Moderno* 88/2 (2008), 297-309 and P. Buresi, "D'une Péninsule

Another episode that directly reminds us of the first battles of Islam, specifically the Prophet's campaigns against the Meccans (something which further strengthens the possible context of production that I propose for Ibn Ḥubaysh's work), is narrated by Ibn Abī Zar^c, and is no doubt based on the memory of the battle of Badr, and in particular the appearance of angels¹⁰³ during the fighting.¹⁰⁴ The episode describes how, prior to the Alarcos battle, the Almohad caliph al-Manṣūr had a dream in which a knight, described as an angel, riding a white horse and carrying a green standard, announced the imminent victory of the Unitarian leader by the grace of God.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's *urjūza* also says that 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's armies were preceded by angels, like those of the Prophet at Badr and Ḥunayn.¹⁰⁶

Let's return to Ibn Ḥubaysh: If we keep in mind the ideas we have set forth about the Almohad movement, its continued desire to restore the past, and its commitment to *jihād*, the reading that I propose for his introduction to his *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt* appears to be fully coherent. Indeed, Ibn Ḥubaysh expresses that, having been commissioned by the Almohad caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf to compose it, he will set out to describe the battles and conquests that took place during the stable and peaceful times of the first three caliphs: Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān.¹⁰⁷ Ibn Ḥubaysh also points out that the *baraka* associated with the caliphs and linked to the Prophet's campaigns, was "destructive of the enduring foundations of polytheism"¹⁰⁸ and, at the same time, fundamental for the consolidation of *tawḥīd* and the pillars of Islam.¹⁰⁹

According to his introduction, it is certainly reasonable to argue that Ibn Ḥubaysh establishes a parallelism between nascent Islam and his own times, just as Ibn 'Abd Rabbih had done with 'Abd al-Raḥmān's campaigns and the *maghāzī*. The Prophet thus equates Ibn Tūmart—an idea that was already being circulated, as we have seen—and the *rāshidūn* parallel the first Almohad caliphs. By focusing on the caliphs rather than on the Prophet, Ibn Ḥubaysh aims to legitimize the institutionalization and the routinization—in the Weberian sense—of Almohad authority. The Almohad rulers are presented as the embodiment and continuation of Ibn Tūmart's charismatic domination and of the rupturist movement he led, perhaps echoing what possibly occurred after the Prophet's death. The Almohad caliphs are responsible for continuing the *mahdī*'s work, just as the *rāshidūn* were responsible

à l'autre: Cordoue, 'Uṭmān (644-656) et les Arabes à l'époque almohade (xii^e-xiii^e siècle)," *Al-Qanṭara* 31/1 (2010), 7-29. Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade*, 337 ff.

103. Within Islam, angels appearing in a dream represent divine assistance, ennoblement of the dreamer and his fate as a martyr. P. Lory, *Le rêve et ses interprétations en Islam* (Paris, 2003), 145-149. See also G. H. A. Juynboll, "Fighting Angels. Reply to Waugh's «Jealous Angels»," *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 2 (1974), 85-87.

104. An example of this is the following hadith transmitted by al-Bukhārī: "The Prophet, to whom Allāh may give His grace and peace, said on the day of Badr: There is Jibrīl grabbing the head of his horse and equipped for war." Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Granada, 2008), 380.

105. Ibn Abī Zar^c, *Rawd al-Qirtās*, vol. II, 438.

106. Monroe, "The Historical Arjuza," 67-95.

107. Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt*, vol. I, 1.

108. *Al-hādīma limā istiṭā' min mabānī al-shirk*.

109. Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt*, vol. I, 1.

for continuing the Prophet's, and therefore the prophetic *baraka* (or Ibn Tūmart's, if we focus on the parallelism we have established) was associated with them. Moreover, the *Rāshidūn* caliphs had acted just as the Almohad caliphs were now trying to act in their role as restorers of that alleged golden past.¹¹⁰ With their battles and conquests, which the *jihād* conducted first against the apostates¹¹¹ and later against the infidels, they were undermining polytheism and strengthening the *tawhīd* and the pillars of Islam. In this context, we must not forget how essential the insistence on radical divine unity (*tawhīd*) was to Almohad thought,¹¹² as seen, of course, in the adoption of the name *al-muwaḥḥidūn*.¹¹³ *Tawhīd* was conceived of as the key element of Revelation. The Almohads were thus fulfilling the mandate of God (*Amr Allāh*)¹¹⁴ just as the Prophet and the first caliphs had done, and it was acknowledged as such, for instance, in one of the Unitary rulers' titles: *al-qā'im bi-amr Allāh*.¹¹⁵ In fact, the chronicles often show the conversion to *tawhīd* of entire populations, either infidels or Muslims, after being conquered by the Almohads.¹¹⁶

The occurrence of the term, *tawhīd*, in the introduction of Ibn Ḥubaysh's work in connection with the first campaigns of Islam cannot be due to chance. As had occurred during the times of the *rāshidūn*, the war on the infidels was a fundamental part of the attempt to restore the purity of the first period of Islam, a process which would result in a period of stability similar to the one supposedly enjoyed by Muslims under the government of the first caliphs. This is how both caliphates, the *Rāshidūn* and Almohads, are presented: as the restorers of order for the *Umma*, in contrast to the disorder that was represented by the period of the *Ridda* and the government of the Almoravid hypocrites, and the establishers of *tawhīd*.

Neither is it by chance that the expression, "let God extend the overflowing of their lights,"¹¹⁷ was used for the Almohad caliphs and their legacy. According to Almohad thought, the knowledge (*ʿilm*) created by God revealed itself inside the believer as a lamp. As a *mahdī*, Ibn Tūmart believed that his mission was to again reveal the light that had dimmed

110. Equating caliphs (and even emirs) to the *rāshidūn* is not new. It had already been done, for instance, by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in his *Kitāb al-masjada al-thaniya fī l-khulafāʾ wa al-tawārīkh wa-ayyāmihim* of his *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*. Toral-Niehoff, "History in *Adab* Context," 61-85.

111. One of the chapters of Ibn al-Munāshif's work defined the notion of *jihād* as war against the apostates. We can also detect here a clear parallelism between the *ridda*, the apostasy wars that took place after the Prophet's death, and the war that the Almohads declared on the Almoravids, whom they considered to be hypocrites and false Muslims.

112. R. Brunschvig, "Sur la doctrine du Mahdī Ibn Tūmart," *Arabica* 2 (1955), 137-149 and M. Fletcher, "The Almohad *Tawhīd*: Theology Which Relies on Logic," *Numen* 38 (1991), 110-127.

113. According to some sources, the original name of the movement may have been that of *al-Muʾminūn*, "the believers," thus indicating that the remaining Muslims had lost the path of Allah, *sabīl Allāh*, and had to be led back to the right track. Fierro, "Revolución y tradición," 131-165.

114. E. Fricaud, "Origine de l'utilisation privilégiée du terme de *amr* chez les Muʾminides almohades," *Al-Qanṭara* 23/1 (2002), 93-122.

115. L. Jones, "The Preaching of the Almohads: Loyalty and Resistance Across the Strait of Gibraltar," *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013), 71-101.

116. Albarrán, "De la conversión y expulsión al mercenariado," 79-91.

117. *Madda Allāh fī ifāḍat anwārihim*. Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Kitāb al-Ghazawāt*, vol. I, 2.

after the Prophet's death.¹¹⁸ Just as the Prophet had been identified with the notion of *nūr muḥammadī*,¹¹⁹ Ibn Tūmart is clearly identified with the principle of "illumination" in the appellative *Asafu*, apparently meaning in Berber "light" or "lamp," a nickname which some of his disciples called him by during his youth. Such an identification may also be extended to 'Abd al-Mu'min, "the lamp of the Almohads," *sirāj al-muwaḥḥidīn*.¹²⁰

The association of the Almohad caliphs, especially the first ones, with the *Rāshidūn* caliphs may also be noted in other testimonies like the inscription on the axis of the Almohad lamp kept at the Qarawiyyin of Fez, made between 598-609/1202-1213 which identified Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr as the son of the *rāshidūn* caliphs;¹²¹ or in documents such as the letter sent from Ifrīqiya by 'Abd al-Raḥmān, son of the Almohad caliph al-Nāṣir, to the authorities of Pisa, Girardo Visconti, in April 1202. At the beginning of the letter, where he includes various Almohad titularies, he refers to the *Rāshidūn* imam caliphs, as well as the imam caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, prince of the believers and son of the immaculate imam caliphs (*ṭāhirīn*).¹²²

Therefore, the restoration of true Islam and *jihād*, as pillars of the Almohad project, are legitimized in this work through the commemoration of the *Rāshidūn* caliphs' *futūḥ* and the symbolic capital they carried. They are justified by the remembrance of the origins they wish to return to, which had been established by Ibn Ḥubaysh as a mirror-image of his own time. However, memory involves not simply remembrance, but also selective forgetting. And omissions often reveal the anxieties of a given discourse. Since we have already explained the absence of the Prophet, it is more relevant to shed light upon what had happened—and was still happening for the Almohads—after the death of the founder, be he the Prophet or the *mahdī*.

But another absence is worth noting: that of the fourth of the *Rāshidūn* caliphs, 'Alī. This omission may have to do with what a given discourse suggests about the government of the figure being discussed. According to Donner's classification,¹²³ the narrative on 'Alī more closely resembles a narrative of *fitna*, that is, civil war or conflict within the Islamic

118. M. Brett, "The Lamp of the Almohads: Illumination as a Political Idea in Twelfth-century Morocco" in Brett, M. (ed.), *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib* (Aldershot, 1999), 1-27, and García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, 182-184.

119. U. Rubin, "Pre-Existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), 62-117.

120. Kadhim, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, vol. II, 40. García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, 182-184.

121. *Le Maroc médiéval*, 334. Linda Jones, in her interesting paper on Almohad sermons, refers to the form of address, "son of the *rāshidīn* caliphs" (here for caliph al-Nāṣir), in a *khuṭba* transmitted by 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī. Jones, "The Preaching of the Almohads," 71-101.

122. M. Amari, *Diplomi arabi dell' archivio fiorentino* (Florence, 1864-1869), vol. I, 65-71; A. al-Tazi, *al-Tarikh al-diblumasi li al-maghrib* (Rabat, 1987), vol. VI, 202-205; A. Azzawi, *Nouvelles lettres almohades* (Kenitra, 1995), 226-228 and P. Buresi, "Les documents arabes et latins échangés entre Pise et l'Empire almohade en 596-598/1200-1202: la chancellerie au cœur des relations diplomatiques," in A. Regourd (dir.), *Documents et manuscrits arabes* (Paris, 2012), 21-96.

123. F. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins. The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, 1998), 184 ff.

community, a discourse which is more closely related to the struggle for the leadership of the *Umma*. However, the discourse of the Almohad movement was not one of internal struggle between two Islamic models, but of a return to the pure form of Islam to face external enemies. Therefore, it was not the discourse of *fitna* that was of interest, but that of *ridda* and *futūḥ*, the discourse of war against apostasy and infidelity. Besides, the caliphate of ‘Alī and the *fitna* represent the end of stability and unity in the *Umma* and, therefore, of that alleged golden period that the Almohads wished to restore.

Additionally, ‘Alī did not fit well in the discourse that the Unitarians had constructed and even inscribed in the line of the Damascus and Cordoba Umayyads through symbolic acts such as designating Cordoba as the capital of al-Andalus in 557-8/1162 or restoring the dynasty’s emblematic color to white rather than using black like the Abbasids, who had legitimized the Almoravids.¹²⁴ In this sense, this re-elaboration of the classical historiographic periodization in regard to the *Rāshidūn* caliphs, imposed especially by the Abbasids, reminds us of certain pro-Umayyad testimonies studied by Antoine Borrut that also “forgot” ‘Alī and that had now perhaps been restored by the first Almohad caliphs, especially through the Andalusī historiographical memory.¹²⁵ In fact, in the pro-Almohad chronicle, *Nazm al-jumān*, one can see how ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s caliphate is legitimized. He is described as the “lord of the conquests” through a prophecy which was supposedly included in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih’s pro-Umayyad work, *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*.¹²⁶ That is to say, there is apparently a search for Umayyad sources to support and justify the Almohad project.

The Dusk of Almohad Power: Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s *Ghazawāt*

Ibn Ḥubaysh’s work was written in a moment when the Almohad movement was expanding rapidly and reaching its climax. As the caliphate extended its power, conquests were made one after another both in the Maghreb and in al-Andalus. Consequently, the commemoration of the conquests of the first caliphs as well as the expansion of Islam in what was considered a golden period fit perfectly within the discourse that the Almohads were trying to promote. However, the recourse to the memory of early Islam and its recontextualization also became rhetorical tools in moments of crisis and decadence, when the message was no longer that of expansion, but rather of recovering the initial impulse of Islam.

In 625/1228, al-Ma’mūn, who had proclaimed himself caliph in al-Andalus in 624/1227, and upon entering Marrakech, renounced the doctrinal core of “Almohadism.”¹²⁷ He abjured not only central Almohad doctrines, but also the figure of Ibn Tūmart himself, noting that Jesus was the only *mahdī*. Among other things, he ordered the removal of Ibn Tūmart’s

124. Fierro, “The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs,” 226-248, and P. Cressier and P. Marinetto Sánchez, “Les chapiteaux islamiques de la péninsule Ibérique et du Maroc de la renaissance émirale aux Almohades,” in *L’acanthé dans la sculpture architecturale de l’Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1993), 211-246.

125. Borrut, “Vanishing Syria,” 37-68.

126. Kadhīm, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qaṭṭan*, vol. II, 167.

127. Ibn Abī Zar‘, *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. II, pp. 487-488. Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. I, 318-319.

name from the *khuṭba* and also from coins. This doctrinal change clearly reflects the crisis the Almohad power was experiencing.¹²⁸ The caliphs that succeeded al-Ma'mūn tried to recover the splendor of the *tawhīd* movement, but it was already too late.

Among those who devoted considerable effort to the cause, at least in framing Almohad discourse, was the new caliph, al-Murtaḍā (r. 646-665/1248-1266).¹²⁹ Appointed during his provincial rule in Sale, he stood out, according to the sources, for his intelligence, piety, and modesty.¹³⁰ The onset of his reign coincided with the Merinid seizure of Taza, which clearly indicates the degree of unrest the government he headed was experiencing. Although he led numerous campaigns in an effort to re-activate the image of the ghāzī-caliph and thus prevent Almohad collapse, almost all of them failed. Likewise, the chronicles show how, from the very beginning of his reign, he tried to model his rule on the practices of previous Almohad caliphs. Immediately after his acknowledgment as caliph, he began to put into practice the *ḥisba*¹³¹ and, when he arrived to Marrakech from Sale, Almohad notables received him in full, beautifully adorned dress as well as horses, drums, flags, and regular soldiers.¹³² On Ramaḍān 1st 649/November 17th 1251 he went to Tinmal to visit and honor Ibn Tūmart's sepulchre and receive his *baraka* by kissing and touching his remains.¹³³ The new caliph also ordered the immediate punishment of anyone that raised doubts about the doctrine of infallibility of the founder of the Almohads.¹³⁴ In this sense, before each expedition, he visited the *mahdī*'s tomb in the custom of his forefathers and applied their standards to it.¹³⁵ He also marched to combat in the same formation his predecessors had, and carried the famous *afrāj*, a linen rim that isolated the ruler's tent from the rest of the encampment.¹³⁶

Sources also portray him as a literate ruler and poet. He liked to read books attentively and also compose them. He asked the *faqīh* Abū Muḥammad Ibn al-Qaṭṭān to compose several books for him, paying him in great positions and significant goods. These works were, according to Ibn 'Idhārī: the *Naẓm al-jumān*, the *Kitāb shifā' al-ghilal fī akhbār al-anbiyā' wa al-rusul*, the *Kitāb al-iḥkām li-bayān ayātihi*, the *Kitāb al-munājāt* and the *Kitāb al-masmū'āt*.¹³⁷ In this list, however, another work commissioned by al-Murtaḍā to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān is missing: the *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt al-bahiya al-wasīma fī ghazawāt al-nabawiyya al-karīma*.

128. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, vol. II, 476-7.

129. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, vol. II, 541 ff.

130. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. II, 198.

131. *Fa-min ḥaynihi nahā wa amara*

132. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. II, 200.

133. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. II, 219.

134. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. II, 309-311 and Jones, "The Preaching of the Almohads," 71-101.

135. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. II, 218 and 239.

136. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. II, 221-222. Ghouirgate, *L'ordre almohade*, 314 ff.

137. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Almohad part, vol. II, 309-311.

Little is known about Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, who was probably born in Fez or Marrakech around the year 579-580/1185.¹³⁸ Son of Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d. 628/1231) and known for his work as a historian, most notably as the author of the *Nazm al-jumān*, it seems obvious that he was raised according to the principles of the Almohad movement and that he inherited from his father his belief in these doctrines. The latter served as one of the *ṭalaba* for the caliphs al-Manṣūr, al-Nāṣir, and al-Mustanṣir and became a principal apologist of the regime through such works as the *Risāla fī al-Imāma al-Kubrā*, whose main objective was to legitimize the Almohad empire.¹³⁹ Abū Muḥammad followed in his father's footsteps and entered the service of the caliph al-Murtaḍā, for whom, as we have seen, he composed many works. The *Nazm al-jumān*, his most famous work, evinces his enthusiasm for the Almohad movement. Apparently, it was a huge encyclopedia on the geography and history of the entire Maghreb, although the manuscript in which it is preserved only comprises a very short time span of the years 500-533 of the Hegira (1107-1138).¹⁴⁰

Of key interest is another of the works that al-Murtaḍā ordered Ibn al-Qaṭṭān to write and that, as already mentioned, Ibn ʿIdhārī did not include in his list, which was perhaps the reason why it has gone unnoticed by researchers. The *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt al-bahiya al-wasīma fī ghazawāt al-nabawiyya al-karīma* is a *maghāzī* work which still remains unpublished; a manuscript of the work is housed in the Qarawiyyin library in Fez.¹⁴¹ At the beginning of the manuscript, it is said that al-Murtaḍā ordered him to compile and write the work¹⁴² and at the end that it was finished in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja of the year 662 (September-October 1264),¹⁴³ just before the end of al-Murtaḍā's government in 665/1266. Likewise, in a note added later in the margin of one of the first pages, it is said that the manuscript entered the Qarawiyyin library in the month of Rajab of 1009 (January-February 1601) during the regency of the sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr.¹⁴⁴

Just as we saw in Ibn Nuḥās' treatise on *jihād*, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān divided his work into two unusual parts in *maghāzī* books: the first is dedicated to the expeditions directly conducted by the Prophet,¹⁴⁵ whereas the second deals with those that Muḥammad sent, but did not

138. A. Rodríguez Figueroa, "Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, Abū Muḥammad," in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. IV (Almería, 2006), 398-403.

139. A. Rodríguez Figueroa, "Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, Abū l-Ḥasan," in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. IV (Almería, 2006), 390-398.

140. Kadhīm, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan* and M. Fletcher, "The *Nazm al-Juman* as a Source for Almohad History," in *Actes du 1^{er} Congrès d'histoire et de la civilisation du Maghreb* (Tunis, 1979), 193-200.

141. Mss. 296. My dissertation (*La memoria de las primeras batallas del islam y el yihad en el Occidente islámico. Ss. XII-XIII*, directed by Carlos de Ayala and Mercedes García-Arenal) will include a study of this work and of this manuscript. For a paleographical edition of the introduction see J. Albarrán, "Memoria y *yihad* en el ocaso del poder almohade: el *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt al-bahiya al-wasīma fī gazawāt al-nabawiyya al-karīma*," *Al-Qanṭara* 38/2 (2017), 387-406.

142. We follow the numbering of the manuscript. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 3.

143. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 252.

144. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 3.

145. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, ff. 11-173.

participate in.¹⁴⁶ Ibn al-Qaṭṭān announces that he will mainly follow Ibn Ishāq, but will also attend to discrepancies with other authors, like al-Wāqidi.¹⁴⁷

The text must be understood and read within the framework of the revitalization project of the Almohad movement that al-Murtaḍā started without success. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's text emphasizes the link between *jihād* and the first battles of Islam and, as in Ibn Ḥubaysh's work, that between the *Rāshidūn* caliphs and the early Almohad rulers. It also creates a clear link between the Prophet and Ibn Tūmart,¹⁴⁸ and, ultimately, between the latter and al-Murtaḍā in his efforts to recover Almohad doctrine and tradition. The author, commissioned by the caliph, commemorates the difficult beginnings of the Almohad movement as well as the fight of the *mahdī* and his followers against their enemies through the recontextualization of the arduous beginnings of Islam and of the encounters of the Prophet and his companions with the pagans.

In his introduction, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān states that God sent the Prophet guidance and "true religion" in order to reveal it.¹⁴⁹ Curiously enough, in the *Nazm al-jumān* he also speaks in these terms in regard to Ibn Tūmart's role.¹⁵⁰ That is to say, the mission of the *mahdī* is likened to Muḥammad's. He then introduces a series of images of fighting, war, and *jihād*, with direct allusions not only to infidels in a general manner, but also to Christians: the Prophet was sent to "raise the sun of faith over the infidels and vanquish its enemies, in order to destroy the source of infidelity, its lighthouses and its temples, and to wipe out and break their crosses."¹⁵¹ Likewise, as in Ibn Ḥubaysh's introduction, the metaphor of the "lights" is shown again, on this occasion to illustrate the triumph of faith and of the Prophet. Looking back at the *Nazm al-jumān*, one notes how the *mahdī* is represented as the carrier of light against injustice.¹⁵²

In the *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt*, God had promised victory to the Prophet and fulfilled his word by giving him triumphs in his expeditions until he could establish his religion and punish the hypocrites, a term used by the *mahdī* and the Almohads to qualify the Almoravids in their practice of *takfīr*, as we have seen. Muḥammad's objective was to lead *jihād* until his religion prevailed over the world, since salvation was achieved by testifying that there was no other god than God.¹⁵³ This claim in the introduction of the *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt* takes us back to the *Nazm al-jumān*, to a passage in which Ibn al-Qaṭṭān mentions the duty to fight against the infidels already pointed out by Ibn Tūmart by using the verse Q. 9:123, as well

146. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, ff. 173-252.

147. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, ff. 11.

148. The comparison Muḥammad /Ibn Tūmart is constant in the *Nazm al-jumān*. Kadhim, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, vol. II, 76 ff. It also appears in another Almohad sources such as al-Baydhaq, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamid Hajjiyāt (Argel, 1975). See also Bombrun, "Les Mémoires d'al-Baydaq," 93-108; Fierro, "El Mahdī Ibn Tūmart," 73-97.

149. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 4.

150. Kadhim, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, vol. II, 76 ff.

151. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 4.

152. Kadhim, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, vol. II, 107.

153. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, f. 5.

as a hadith according to which the Prophet said: “It has been ordered to fight against the people until they say ‘There is no other god than God.’”¹⁵⁴ The use of this hadith in both Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s works emphasizes again the parallelism Muḥammad/Ibn Tūmart.

Moreover, in the *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt* Ibn al-Qaṭṭān establishes a chronology for the beginning of the Prophet’s *jihād*. In citing a narrative of Abū ‘Ubayd (d. 224/838) he says that *jihād* was forbidden before the Hijra and that until that moment Allāh had ordered the predication of Islam without fighting. However, that prohibition was lifted after the emigration to Medina, where the permission to fight the polytheists was obtained until there remained no more *fitna*.¹⁵⁵ That is to say, he is following the traditional outline of the evolution of *jihād*.¹⁵⁶ During the first period, that of the beginning of revelation in Mecca, the Muslims were forbidden to participate in battle, according to the interpretation of several Qur’ānic verses (Q. 5:13; 23:96; 73:10; 88:22). The second one, as seen in Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’s work, begins after the Hijra, when Muḥammad received the authorization to fight.

What is interesting is that the outline articulated around the Hijra can also be seen in the case of the Almohad movement and their own “Hijra” to Tinmal. After this flight, the companions of the *mahdī*, just like those of Muḥammad, are also called *muhājirūn*, a theme that also occurs in the *Nazm al-jumān*.¹⁵⁷ Thus, from this point of view, both emigrations not only meant a change in space, but also a shift in relations with the enemies of Muḥammad/Ibn Tūmart. In this sense, the Hijra signifies the entry into a state of war and demonstrates the necessity of carrying out *jihād*.¹⁵⁸

Therefore, through the *Kitāb al-Rawḍāt* (and other works with which the *Nazm al-jumān* dialogued) the caliph al-Murtaḍā and Ibn al-Qaṭṭān created a rhetorical framework that commemorated, by employing the memory of the Prophet’s *jihād*, the beginnings of the Almohad movement as well as the figure of the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart, in order to discursively legitimize their attempted recovery of their doctrine, legacy, and glory during times of decadence and crisis for the Almohad caliphate, a project that would eventually fail. Although the Almohad empire did not obtain the revitalization that al-Murtaḍā was after and in the end disappeared, one must not underestimate the effort, especially on an intellectual level, that this ruler made in his attempts to return the Almohad movement to the space it had occupied decades prior.

154. Kadhim, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, vol. II, 54-55. Muslim, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Book of the Faith, chapter 9, n° 31.

155. Mss. Qarawiyyin 296, ff. 9-10.

156. R. Firestone, *Jihād. The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (Oxford, 1999), 47 ff., and García Sanjuán, “Bases doctrinales y jurídicas del ḡihād,” 243-277.

157. Kadhim, *Nazm al-Yuman de Ibn al-Qattan*, vol. II, 29.

158. P. Crone, “The First-century Concept of Hiḡra,” *Arabica* 61 (1994), 352-387; M. Ebsstein, “The Connection Between *Hijra* and *Jihād* in Classical Islam,” *Jamā‘a* 15 (2005-2006), 53-85; I. Lindstedt, “*Muhājirūn* as a Name for the First/Seventh-century Muslims,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74/1 (2015), 67-73.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this study we have seen how the Islamic discursive tradition¹⁵⁹ (in this case around *jihād*) is dominated by the memory of the Prophet and of early Islamic times, and vice-versa, how this memory has been limited and molded by this discursive tradition. The remembrance of the first battles of Islam and their recontextualization has proven to be a fundamental tool for the conceptualization and legitimization of *jihād*. The most important war was the one carried out by the Prophet against the infidels and hypocrites of his time, and after it the conquests of the *rāshidūn* took place. All other *jihads* within Islamic history are simply derivations of the initial one. Ergo, the *maghāzī* and *futūḥ* represented the true and pure spirit of *jihād*. Theories like that of al-Shaybānī's "four swords" further underpinned this reality. The first expeditions of Islam functioned as a "social ideality" in times when *jihād* had to be conceptualized and justified.

During the period of the Cordoban caliphate, the ruler's consolidation of power and authority was sought through the figure of the "ghāzī-caliph," a figure that in turn was legitimized through the commemoration of the first expeditions of Islam in a dynamic process whereby these battles were recovered, re-narrated and recontextualized. However, except in the case of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, there does not seem to be a systematic program of memorialization of *maghāzī* and *futūḥ*: no one wrote, for example, a work on these topics. Rather, together with other legitimation tools such as the recourse to the own memory of the Umayyad dynasty, they were used as punctual discursive mechanisms.

On the other hand, in a project like that of the Almohads, which attempted to restore the alleged purity of the times of the Prophet and the *rāshidūn* and which had a marked emphasis on *jihād*, the commemoration of *maghāzī* and *futūḥ* became the perfect link between holy war and the origins of Islam. The recontextualization of the Prophet and the first caliphs' charisma and the symbolic capital they had acquired due to the establishment of contemporaneous parallelisms, became the perfect legitimization tool. In this case, we do find a systematic program of remembrance with which the Almohad rulers, through the commission of *maghāzī* and *futūḥ* works, legitimized their actions. In this exercise of "mnemohistory" we have seen how, in different contexts, the Unitarian caliphs reformulated and appropriated the first battles of Islam as sites of sacred memory, to shape Ibn Tūmart as a new Muḥammad and themselves as the new *rāshidūn*, thus unifying a revival of Islam and their ideology of *jihād*.

159. Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology," 1-22.

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Preparing the Almohad Caliphate: The Almoravids*

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Abstract

Until the fifth/eleventh century, the Muslim West constituted a periphery under the influence of the Eastern Islamic world. This does not mean that the western provinces of the Dār al-Islām were closely controlled by the capitals of the Middle East, but that until that date, Arab elites retained significant authority over local populations. This was also the case in al-Andalus where the dynasty of the Umayyad emirs (138/756-316/929), then the caliphs (316/929-422/1031), reinforced this Arab supremacy. However, during the fifth/eleventh century and for several centuries thereafter, indigenous Berber dynasties seized power and founded original political structures that operated differently from those in the East. The first two dynasties that led the way to Western emancipation from the Eastern Arab matrix were the Almoravids (462/1070-541/1147) and the Almohads (541/1147-667/1269). The Almoravids respected the symbolic authority of the Eastern caliph by claiming only derived authority and functioning as an emirate. The Almohads, for their part, following the overthrow of the Almoravid dynasty, adopted a universalist claim to lead the entire community of believers; in doing so, they built an original and dogmatic political and religious system. The Almohad sovereigns also took the supreme titles of Islam as their own, those of imām, caliph, and prince of believers. In addition, they claimed possession of characteristics of holiness and divine election including impeccability (ʿiṣma), Mahdism, and proximity to God (wilāya). The article demonstrates that, despite opposition between the two dynastic systems, the Almoravid experience paved the way for the political and religious emancipation of the Muslim West under the Almohad caliphate.

Historical comparison is a delicate practice that requires a certain methodological rigor. This is particularly true for historians who intend to compare and contrast two successive political systems in the same geographical area. By playing with

* This study is part of the IGAMWI (*Imperial Government and Authority in Medieval Western Islam*) project and is financed by the 7th PCRD of the European Research Council: FP7-ERC-StG-2010-263361. Participating in this project, led by Pascal Buresi (CNRS-CIHAM, EHESS, IISMM), Mehdi Ghouirgate (Univ. Bordeaux III), Hassan Chahdi (EPHE), Moez Dridi (CNRS-UMR 8167), and Travis Bruce (McGill University). English translation by Courtney Krolikoski, PhD student (McGill University).



the chronological and geographical scales and shifting the historical viewpoint, distinctive features and key elements can emerge. As an example, across the Mediterranean Basin during the pre-modern history of Islam, the people whom Jean-Claude Garcin called the “new peoples of Islam” came into power in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.¹ These non-Arab groups came from the periphery of major urban centers that had appeared or developed during the first centuries of Islam. These groups seized power and promoted political and religious reforms; from the East came the Seljuks and the Ayyubids, while from the West came the Berber Almoravids, Almohads, and Marinids. The perception of two of these periods, the Almoravid and the Almohad, depends on the chronological and geographical scale of the study as well as its perspective. From the Iberian perspective, in the chronological framework established by al-Andalus (1492/897-711/92),² the reigns of the two Berber dynasties resemble those of foreign powers, intervening in the Peninsula at the moment when the Christian kingdoms of the North threatened the existence of al-Andalus. From the historical perspective of the Maghrib, however, the perception of the Berber dynasties was fundamentally different. Their reign corresponded with the culmination of a process that saw the Islamization and Arabization of a growing portion of the local population and the slow emergence of local authorities whose influence extended far beyond the period and geographic framework of the Maghrib. Ultimately, the reputation of the Almohad Empire was perceived in the East in a new way. This political construction was not only regarded as one of the many peripheral powers of secondary princes, but also viewed simultaneously as a threat and a model.

Determining the fractures and continuities between the Almoravid period (c. 441/1050-541/1147) and the Almohad period (c. 513/1120-667/1269) in the Maghrib and al-Andalus is further complicated by the *damnatio memoriae* that covered the period and the political system of the Almoravids; any sources concerning the Almoravids have either been erased or rewritten by their successors and gravediggers. It is because the war against the Almoravids lasted long after the fall of their dynasty in 541/1147 that the rewriting of Almoravid sources by Almohad authors was so effective and had such a great significance. Indeed, its effects could be felt until the beginning of the thirteenth century, as the Banū Ghāniya, a dynasty whose founder was governor of Cordoba under the Almoravids, became the last resisting representatives of their Emirate. As successors and heirs to the Almoravids,

1. J.-Cl. Garcin (ed.), *États, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval. x^e-xv^e siècle*. 3 vols. (Nouvelle Clio, PUF, 1995 and 2000), t. 1, 123-167 (chapters by J.-C. Garcin and P. Guichard: “Les nouveaux peuples de l’Islam”).

2. This is already a historiographical postulate, depending on whether we consider the Arab, Berber, and Muslim conquest of the eighth century as a turning point (P. Guichard), or that its influence was superficial (Cl. Sánchez-Albornoz). Some authors, such as I. Olagüe went even further, supporting the fallacious theory that the conquest never took place, and the Islamicization of al-Andalus was due to massive conversion to Islam (I. Olagüe, *Les arabes n’ont jamais envahi l’Espagne*, 1969). It also depends on whether we insist on the permanence of Muslims and Islam after the “Reconquista” or, rather, the total elimination of all components of the Andalusī society after the disappearance of the kingdom of Grenada. On Islamic periodization, see A. Borrut, “Vanishing Syria: Periodization and Power in Early Islam,” *Der Islam* 91/1 (2014): 37–68, and S. Bashir, “On Islamic Time: Rethinking Chronology in the Historiography of Muslim Societies,” *History and Theory* 53/4 (December 2014): 519–44.

they expressed a permanent hostility and remained a threat to the Almohad Empire, first from their maritime base in the Balearic Islands, where they had sought refuge during the third quarter of the twelfth century, then from their foothold in Central Maghrib, and finally through their alliance with the Arab tribes and the Ghuzz, a Turkish tribe sent from the East by the Ayyubids to counter the Almohad advance in Ifrīqiya and Tripolitania.³ The survival of the Banū Ghāniya, the number of conflicts they participated in, both on land and at sea, and their tenacious nature have undoubtedly prompted such a rereading of the history of the Saharan Almoravids. The Almohad sources insist that Ibn Tūmart's dogma and reform represented a radical break from Almoravid ideology. The maintenance of a dynasty—the Banū Ghāniya—representative of an earlier, alternative legitimacy helped to strengthen the ideological identity of the Almohads and led them to further stand out from their predecessors. The Almohad political system was therefore built in opposition to the Almoravid one. The theorists of Almohadism (*tawḥīd*) were forced to refine their political system until well after the initial reign of 'Abd al-Mu'min (r. 524/1130-558/1163) had ended. This decades-long political and military antagonism has been integrated into, and indeed strengthened, the historiography of the opposition between the two dynasties, thus influencing both parties: Ṣanhāja vs. Maṣmūda, plains vs. mountains, Sahara vs. Atlas, nomads vs. sedentary populations, Emirate vs. Caliphate, Abbasid legalism vs. the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart's Imamate, East (*Sharq*) vs West (*Gharb*), Malikism vs. Almohadism, *taqlīd* vs. *ijtihād*, *tajsīm* vs. *ta'wīl*, and so on. These points of opposition were re-worked by the Almohads so that certain ideas were emphasised: the wearing of the veil (*lithām*), the role of women, the use of *furū'*—rather than the Koran and the Sunna—by the Almoravids. Other developments that came from this rewriting include the Imamate; the infallibility of the movement's founder; the different roots of the Almohad authority; and the alleged illiteracy of the Almoravids. Some important steps were also taken; some were institutional and dogmatic, like the prohibition of the Maliki school, while others were symbolic, such as the choice of white as the emblematic color of the dynasty, or the reorientation of the *qibla* in the congregational mosques of the Empire (in Marrakesh, Tlemcen, Fez, and other cities).

While the bulk of the historiography concerning the Almoravids and the Almohads has focused on the differences between these two dynasties, this article will instead stress the elements of continuity between them. This perspective will show how, both despite and thanks to their apparent differences, the Almoravid period prepared the way for the emergence of the Almohad Caliphate and determined, either directly or indirectly, the features of the Almohad dynasty. The rise to power of the Almoravids, the political structures that they developed, and the challenges they faced at the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century paved the way for the Almohad Caliphate-Imamate as well as the unification and independence of the Maghrib from the Eastern core of the religious and political authority.

3. A. Bel, *Les Benou Ghanya et leur lutte contre l'Empire almohade* (Paris, 1903); J.-M. Mouton, "La conquête de la Cyrénaïque et de la Tripolitaine par Qarāqūsh: initiative individuelle ou entreprise d'État?" in *Aux Rives Des Syrtes: La Libye, Espace et Développement de l'Antiquité à Nos Jours*, ed. Ch. Chanson-Jabeur (Paris, 2000), 59–69; A. S. Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banū Ghāniya: The Contest for North Africa (12th and 13th Centuries)* (Boston, 2015).

The Rise to Power of the Almoravids

The geopolitical dimension of this period plays an important role in understanding the appearance of the Almoravid movement. Until the end of the fourth/tenth century, the Umayyads of Cordoba and the Fatimids of Ifrīqiya were engaged in an extreme game of competing influences in the Western Maghrib. This played out through the exchange of embassies, financial support given to different groups, and military backing. Eventually, in 358/969 the Fatimids of Ifrīqiya moved their capital to Egypt, founded al-Qāhira, and relocated the tombs of the first Imams of the dynasty. Meanwhile, across the Strait of Gibraltar, the Caliphate of Cordoba entered a period of crisis that lasted from 399/1009 to 422/1031. Due to the remoteness or disappearance of the previous competing powers, interventions in the Maghrib gradually ceased working and ultimately resulted in a power vacuum that allowed for local forces to emerge. It was in this moment that the Almoravids came to power, “to proclaim the truth, fight against the violations of the Law, and suppress illegal taxes,”⁴ and thus asserted their presence in the region. Interestingly, the two etymologies of the name “Almoravids” (*al-murābiṭūn*) proposed by the Arab sources are either the “refugees in a fortified convent (*ribāṭ*)” or those “who form a highly cohesive group” (*murābiṭūn*).

The Almoravid movement first developed out of the Sanhāja tribes, particularly from the Banū Gudāla and the Banū Lamtūna. It was both Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm, a tribal chief responsible for political and military functions, and ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Yāsīn, a spiritual guide, who were responsible for leading the movement. Al-Bakrī reported that Ibn Yāsīn would have met the grand master of Kairouan, Abū ‘Imrān al-Fāsī, after returning from pilgrimage. Born between 405/1015–411/1020 and deceased in Jumāda I 450/July 1059, Ibn Yāsīn was a missionary (*dā‘ī*) and reformer.⁵ Through his association with Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm, Ibn Yāsīn was able to impose his message on the Gudāla tribes, and then later, by force, on the Lamtūna. United by a common reformist ideology, these two tribes fought other tribes until the emir Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm’s death. The Gudāla were ultimately expelled by Ibn Yāsīn, who was welcomed by the emir of Lamtūna, Abū Zakariyyā’ Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar b. Buluggīn b. Turgūt b. Wartasīn al-Lamtūnī. The Lamtūna wiped out the Gudāla in 433/1042. Then, after uniting in 446/1055 while still under the direction of Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, the two tribes seized Sijilmāssa and Awdaghust, two major caravan hubs at the northern and southern ends of the western trans-Saharan routes, thus linking the Kingdom of Ghana to the Mediterranean. After the death of the emir Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, his brother, Abū Bakr b. ‘Umar, succeeded him.

4. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (4 vols. Beyrouth, 1983), t. 4, 11: *qāmū bi-da‘wati al-ḥaqqi wa raddi al-mazālim wa qaṭ‘i al-maghārim wa hum mutamasikkūn bi-al-sunna*.

5. Although Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, when he returned to Kairouan, he said to the great *faqīh* Abū ‘Imrān al-Fāsī that his people had no religious knowledge and did not belong to any school: *mā lanā ‘ilm min al-‘ulūm wa lā madhhab minā al-madhāhib li-annanā fī al-ṣaḥrā’i munqaṭi‘ina lā yaṣil ilaynā illā ba‘ḍ al-tujjār al-juhḥāl* (Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Bayān*, t. 4, p. 7). ‘Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn gathered around him 70 *fuqahā’*, small or important, to teach them and strengthen them in their faith (p. 8).

In 463/1071 Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar laid the foundations of the capital in Marrakech (*Murr Yakush* = the “City of God” in Berber⁶), thus establishing the roots of the movement in the territory. Symbolically, the construction of the *Qaṣr al-ḥajar*, the “stone palace,” in an area where most palaces were built from adobe, presented a stable and enduring foothold to the federation of nomadic tribes. This decision was the first step in the construction of an Emiral State and the transformation of a reform movement into a polity. That same year, Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar appointed Yūsuf b. Tashfīn as his lieutenant while he returned to the South to confirm his power in the Sahara. This episode is more important than it seems. Here, two very different models of political and social organizations are competing. The first is the nomadic model of the tribes in which the power moves with the *shaykh*, the second the static model of the emirate whose institutions (offices, chancellery, palace guard, clientele) constitute the heart of power by ensuring the permanence of the prince’s sovereignty in his absence and establishing a fallback position for him.⁷ Indeed, Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar left Marrakech after having established it as the capital. However, his departure also occurred before he had established any institutions. It was his lieutenant, Yūsuf b. Tashfīn, who ultimately established a number of the institutions that were initiated by his master and cousin. These included administrative offices; taxes, including a specific tax on Jews within the territories, and which respected the limits of Koranic taxation on Muslims; a princely court; diplomacy; the dispatching of ambassadors across al-Andalus; and a royal guard composed of black slaves and Christian mercenaries whom he outfitted with horses.⁸ In doing so, Yūsuf b. Tashfīn founded the administrative, fiscal, political, and military structures that allowed him to wield authority using a post-tribal model and the clientelism of his supporters. Based on these realizations and the established land base, in 465/1073 he was able to carefully depose his cousin and marry his wife, Zaynab bt. al-Nafzāwiyya, thus becoming the undisputed ruler and true founder of the Almoravid emirate.

The base of the Almoravid power, as with the Fatimids and the Abbasids before them, was two-pronged: an *imām*, a “religious” authority, who interpreted texts and traditions, and a political leader who was in charge of military choices and the politics on his behalf.⁹ The

6. On the origin of the name Marrakech, see M. Ghouirgate, *L’ordre almohade (1120-1269). Une nouvelle lecture anthropologique* (Toulouse, 2014), 88-102.

7. After the victory of Zallāqa, Yūsuf b. Tashfīn returned to Maghrib and to Marrakech because his heir, Sīr, had died. The continuity of dynastic power was threatened, and the physical presence of the sovereign was required for the reassertion of his authority. Al-Andalus was for the Berber dynasties one of the territories where the legitimacy was reinforced, particularly via the *jihād*, but it was in the Maghreb where the power was imposed.

8. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayān*, t. 4, ed. I. ʿAbbās, 23: “Once his power was strengthened, Yūsuf b. Tashfīn procured some black slaves for himself. He sent people to al-Andalus to find white slaves (*aʿāj*) for him, purchased with his own money. There were two hundred and forty of them and there were two thousand black slaves, he outfitted them with horses and made it his personal guard (*ḥasham*). His veil expanded (*fa-ghaluḥa ḥijābuhu*) and his power was consolidated (*wa ʿazuma mulkuhu*).”

9. In the middle of the third/eighth century, Muslim, head of the armies of Khurasān, a heavily militarised border province of the Umayyad Arab Empire and a region where many Arab rebels had been exiled, raised supporters against the Umayyad dynasty, considered as unfaithful. He undertook his revolt in the name of the prophet’s family, from which the community’s legitimate *imām* was to be recruited. This *imām*, well inspired,

prominence enjoyed by the charismatic *imām* allowed the political leader to make decisions that, without a spiritual and religious endorsement, might have shocked tribal traditions. If the supra-tribal movement was launched thanks to the personality of a preacher-reformer,¹⁰ then it was his death that allowed for the emergence of a political sovereignty and the establishment of a dynastic power. Tribal solidarities did eventually reappear, but the *dawla*, the “wheel” of power, was sufficiently rooted and would persevere without many risks to the ancient power structures. Indeed, prominent tribal members preferred this new system and took advantage of the benefits it provided rather than questioning it and risking the loss of everything.

Some sources claim that Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar (d. 488/1095) was the first to adopt the title of “Emir of the Muslims,” which did not previously exist within the Islamic political tradition.¹¹ However, even if that is the case, it was not until Yūsuf b. Tashfin sought out and received the recognition and official investiture from the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad that this title gained any sort of legitimacy.¹² An army of the faithful, guided spiritually by a reformer, was transformed into an army of compromise, where the solidarities, internal rivalries, and divergent interests were arbitrated by the sovereign. Yūsuf b. Tashfin was thus able to maintain his power through his ability to satisfy the appetites of some without arousing the jealousy and opposition of others.

The Provincial Organization of the Almoravid Emirate

The organization of provincial power in the Almoravid period satisfies this requirement to a certain extent. It favored the members of the movement’s founding tribes through a device based on the *niyāba*, the delegation of power.¹³ The governor was the *nā’ib*, that

was to restore the divine order. At the end of the victorious revolt that led to the fall of the Umayyads (132/750), it was among the descendants of ‘Abbās, the prophet’s uncle, that the new *imām* emerged and seized power. Shortly after his proclamation as Caliph, al-Saffāḥ (r. 132/750-136/754), executed Muslim, whose charisma and authority threatened his power. The Fatimid revolution followed much the same pattern. At the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, a Fatimid propagandist-missionary (*dā’ī*), Abū ‘Abd Allāh, raised the Berber tribe of the Kutāma in Ifriqiya and overthrew the Aghlabid dynasty that ruled the region on behalf of the Abbasids of Baghdad. He preached and led his military and political struggle in the name of a descendant of the prophet of Islam. There again, the accession to power of a new *imām*, al-Mahdī (r. 296/909-322/934), resulted in the execution of the military leader.

10. The use of the standards (*rāyāt*) and the organization by the Emir of the orders of battle were also a way to impose a supra-tribal authority, without knowing if the sovereign truly combined the troops from different tribes, or if he only imposed a unified command on them, which is most likely (see Ghouirgate, *L’ordre almohade*, 62-66).

11. Translation of al-Qādī Iyād in Ch. 26 of J. F. P. Hopkins and N. Levtzion, eds., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 102.

12. É. Lévi-Provençal, “Le titre souverain des Almoravides et sa légitimation par le califat ‘abbāsīde,” *Arabica* 2 (1955): 265-288; M. J. Viguera Molins, “Las cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurṭuṣī al soberano almorávide Yūsuf b. Tashfin,” *Al-Andalus* 42 (1977): 340-74; V. Lagardère. “Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī, grand cadī de Séville,” *Revue de l’Occident Musulman et de La Méditerranée* 40 (1985): 91-102, especially 96-97.

13. On the issue of the delegation of power, a useful parallel can be found in M. Cook, “Muhammad’s Deputies in Medina,” *Al-‘Usūr al-Wuṣṭā* 23 (2015): 1-67.

is to say the “substitute,” of the prince, and thus had all his prerogatives. Several letters, which were representative of the Almoravid approach to the responsibilities of provincial governors, were written after Ibn Tashfīn’s ascent to power in 537/1143:

It is our substitute (*nāʿib*), for your leadership, for the conduct of your affairs, and for the government of the young and old among you; no one has the authority to these things [except for] him, [...] and we appoint the governor for all of you [...]; and everything that he will do, it is us who does it through him, and what he will say to this affect, it is as if we were saying it [...]; with our tongue, he speaks [...] so listen to him, obey him, and do not defy him.¹⁴

Almoravid governors are thus characterised, both in fact and in law, by a fair amount of independence. Control over the governors by the prince of the Almoravids, however, remained very strong, since he was the one who was responsible for their appointment or dismissal.¹⁵ In fact, the independence of the governors was closely supervised. Any political, military, or fiscal failure in the provinces was blamed on the provincial governor. For example, as he was the one who organised the military expeditions of legal war (*jihād*) against the Christians each year, any failure on this front inevitably led to his dismissal by the prince. Mehdi Ghouirgate points out how, in this regard, command of the armies was the chief source of the tribe’s authority.¹⁶ This was preserved in the Almoravid era, as control of the armies was delegated to the provincial governors for the practice of razzias. This is especially true of Tāshfīn b. ʿAlī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn who, as governor of Cordoba and Granada, carried out *jihād* against the Christian principalities of the North. It was also the Almoravid governor who controlled the coinage. Contrary to what the numismatists often argue concerning the privatization of governmental functions that affected Latin societies, the proliferation of coinage mints did not imply a weak central government in the Almoravid emirate. In fact, changes in the various mints (mentions of the crown prince, changing the name of the designate heir, etc) were implemented in all the mints of the emirate within a year. The number of mints—since all seats of government had one—does not reveal a weakness in the central government as it did in contemporary Latin Christendom, but instead highlights a decentralised mode of territorial management.

Mehdi Ghouirgate, in *L’ordre almohade*, identifies a link between Almoravid use of the veil (*lithām*) and the delegation of power. By visually differentiating the ruling elites from the rest of society, the veils of the Almoravids created an association between all who wore the veil and the exercise of power. Anyone who wore the veil became an indistinct

14. They were written by Abū Bakr Ibn al-Qasira on behalf of ʿAlī b. Yūsuf from his camp in the outskirts of Cordoba: *wa huwa al-nāʿib ʿannā fī tadbīrikum wa iqāmat umūrikum wa siyāsāt ṣaghīrikum aw kabīrikum laysa li-aḥad maʿahu fī dhalika yad [...] wa ḥakamnāhu fī jamīʿikum [...] wa mā faʿala min dhalika kulluhu fa-naḥnu faʿalnāh wa mā qāla fīhi fa-kaannā naḥnu qulnāhu [...] bi-lisāninā yatakallam [...] fa smaʿū wa ḥiʿū wa lā taḥālafūhu* (M. A. Makkī, “Wathāʿiq taʾrīkhiyya jadīda ʿan ʿaṣr al-Murabiṭīn,” *Revista Del Instituto de Estudios Islámicos de Madrid* 7–8 (1960 1959): 109–98, letters n° 5, 6 and 7: 174–177).

15. The average length of a governor’s term was two and a half years, which reveals the full control over government careers by the sovereign.

16. Ghouirgate, *L’ordre almohade*, 177–178.

representative of the Emir.¹⁷ The “ethnic” dimension in the historiography on the wearing of the *lithām* in al-Andalus is well known. The Andalusis would have been boldly opposed to the Berber domination of the Almoravids, who would have been considered crude louts, barely out of the desert. But the distinctions between the Almoravids and non-Almoravids in Ibn ‘Abdūn’s manual of *hisba*, written at the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century by an Andalusī scholar, were influenced by the communal nature of the laws, the protection of the privileges of officers, social distinctions, and the positioning of scholars against violence in the city, rather than by an opposition of an ethnic nature or a manifestation of a kind of Andalusī nationalism.¹⁸ Ibn ‘Abdūn’s main concern does not seem to be the superiority of the Andalusis. Instead, his focus is on the respect garnered by elite social standing and legitimate political authority, whether foreign or local. Additionally, this manual contains the opposition of a lawyer to factors that might lead to disorder, in particular individuals carrying weapons within the community. If the ruling class had the sole right to wear the veil as a sign of distinction and respect, it was certainly not permissible for a simple man-at-arms to also wear one. As a sign of respect that was meant for an Almoravid officer, the *lithām* was usurped from the nobility when it was worn by people considered undeserving of it. It was against this usurpation that Ibn ‘Abdūn rebelled, not in the name of a kind of Andalusī pre-nationalism against a Berber domination.

The last feature of this period of Almoravid domination that this paper will examine is, on the one hand, the relationship of the sovereigns with the ‘*ulamā*’ and the Maliki school of law and, on the other hand, the relationship between the central power and the provincial legal-judiciary elites. In al-Andalus the political disintegration of the fifth/eleventh century made room for the emergence of local elites in the different Taifa courts. In the fifth/eleventh century it was the “secular” elites, the *kuttāb*, who emerged. Bruna Soravia characterised the most famous representatives of this elite element as king-makers.¹⁹ However, in the middle of the sixth/twelfth century, in the midst of the Almoravid crisis, it was the “religious” elites who seized power, as they had in Seville or Granada. This was only possible because their power had been asserted under the reign of the Almoravids. At first the Almoravid rulers attempted to force Maghribis into positions of responsibility in the cities of al-Andalus, but then they had to compromise with the great local families.²⁰ Thus, in 490/1097, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Samajūn, who belonged to a family that was close to the Emir and had been earlier appointed *qāḍī* of Algeciras, was appointed *qāḍī*

17. Ghouirgate, *L’ordre almohade*, 63.

18. E.g.: Ibn ‘Abdūn advised that four of the ten auxiliaries (‘*awn-s*) of the *qāḍī* of Seville ought to be black Berbers in cases concerning the Almoravids (Article 99). Ibn ‘Abdūn thus reserved the use of the veil (*lithām*) to Ṣanḥāja, Lamtūna, and Lamṭa and prohibited it to the mercenaries and the militias of black Berbers, because the veil should be a distinctive sign of the Almoravids “who must be regarded with honor and respect and who should receive aid and assistance” (Article 56).

19. B. Soravia, “Entre bureaucratie et littérature: la *kitāba* et les *kuttāb* dans l’administration de l’Espagne umayyade,” *Al-Masāq* 7 (1994): 165–200.

20. For a complete study of the appointments of judges in the Almoravid period, see R. El Hour, *La administración judicial almorávide en al-Andalus: élites, negociaciones y enfrentamientos* (Helsinki, 2006).

of Granada by Yūsuf b. Tashfīn himself.²¹ However, the tensions with the population and with the *fuqahā*²² from Granada provoked the dismissal of the judge.²² Twenty years later, another North African Berber, Khallūf b. Khalaf Allāh, was appointed *qāḍī*, though the post was quickly reclaimed by a major local lineage. Also in Valencia it seems that there was an attempt to impose a Maghribi *qāḍī* and *khaṭīb* by the Almoravid *qā'id* al-Mazdalī.²³ All of these attempts ultimately failed and the Almoravids were forced to come to terms with the local Andalusī elites who continued to exercise the office of the judicature and to control its access throughout this period, to the point that they were able to claim power during the crisis of Almoravid power in the middle of the sixth/twelfth century.

Negotiation with the Andalusī religious elites and, to a lesser extent, Maghribis, became all the more necessary as the Almoravids had chosen a path of legalism and respect of the Maliki school. The two pillars on which Yūsuf b. Tashfīn built his emirate were thus the two legal requirements of direct concern to the people of al-Andalus: respect for a tax regime that was framed and limited by the sacred texts, and military unity to confront the Christian kingdoms on the Peninsula. Military defeats²⁴ and the proliferation of non-Koranic taxes eventually undermined the legitimacy of the Almoravid sovereigns in al-Andalus, who were at the same time weakened by the Almohad rebellion.

Almohad Achievements and Continuities

The differences between the bases of power in the successive eras of the Almoravids and Almohads are fairly clear. The former claimed an authority over the Maghrib and al-Andalus that was derived from the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad and they also relied on the *‘ulamā*²⁵ to legitimate their authority. The latter, however, claimed the universal direction of the *umma*, refusing any instance of legitimization other than the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart and his “orthodox successors” (*al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*). Even with these differences, it is possible to reconstruct an overview of the relationships between the Almohads and the memory and heritage of their Almoravid predecessors.

Initially, from the preaching of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart (c. 513/1120-525/1130) until the conquest of Marrakech (541/1147), the opposition was total and the discourse

21. M. Lucini, “Los Banū Samayūn: una familia de cadíes,” *Estudios Onomásticos Biográficos de Al-Andalus* 5 (1992): 171-98, esp. 186.

22. F. Rodríguez Mediano, “Instituciones judiciales: cadíes y otras magistraturas,” in *El retroceso territorial de Al-Andalus: Almorávides y Almohades, siglos XI al XIII*, ed. M. J. Viguera Molíns, Historia de España, 8/2 (Madrid, 1997), 171-186, esp. 175-177.

23. P. Guichard, *Les musulmans de Valence et la Reconquête (XI^e-XIII^e siècles)* (Damas [Paris], 1990), t. 1, 81.

24. The military defeats culminated with the disaster of “Cullera” or “Alcala” near Alcira on the left bank of the Júcar in *Rajab* 523/June 1129. It was because of this defeat that Abū Marwān Ibn Abī al-Khisāl reportedly wrote a letter insulting the Almoravids: “Sons of vile mothers, you flee like wild asses... The time has come when we will give you a heavy punishment, in which no veil will hide your face, and we will chase you in your Sahara and we will wash al-Andalus from your filth” (cited in P. Guichard, *Musulmans de Valence*, t. 1, 91-92). Episode evoked by al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-mu’jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, ed. R. P. A. Dozy (Amsterdam, 1968), 127-128, ed. Khalīl ‘Umrān al-Manṣūr (Beyrouth, 2005), 125, Spanish translation A. Huici Miranda, *Lo Admirable en el Resumen de las noticias del Magrib* (Tetuan, 1955), 134.

polemical: the Almoravids were accused of supporting an anthropomorphist interpretation of the Book (*tajsīm*) and betraying the text of Revelation. In this way the Almohad movement was constructed in opposition to the power of the reigning dynasty. Their ideology and militant organization was thus turned towards the fight against the Saharan enemy of the plains. There only exists later testimony that reconstructs this period in the hagiographic model of the prophetic *sīra* and messianic or Mahdist movements. Further, these movements themselves had likely tapped into an Islamic, or perhaps pre-Islamic, tradition. This first phase of the development of the Almohad ideology, compared with the Almoravids, can be linked to the story that describes the meeting between the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart and Yūsuf b. Tashfīn in the Great mosque in Marrakech:

Once in Marrakech, the *imām* went to the *maṣjid Sawma‘at al-ṭūb* (“the oratory of the clay minaret”). We remained there until Friday. Then he went to the congregational mosque of Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tashfīn. He found the latter sitting on the mantel of Ibn Tīzamt. The viziers were standing near him. They said to the *imām*:

—“Welcome the Emir by his title of Caliph.”

—“Where is the Emir? I only see veiled (*munaqqabāt*) courtesans (*jawārī*).”

At these words, ‘Alī b. Yūsuf took off the veil that covered his face and said to his followers: “He’s right!”

When he saw the Emir’s face uncovered, the Infallible said:

—“The Caliphate belongs to God and not to you, O ‘Alī b. Yūsuf!” And he continued: “Arise from this denatured [thing] (*qum ‘an hadhihi al-mughayyarati*), and if you want to be an *imām* of justice, do not sit yourself on this denatured carpet (*hadhihi al-ghifārati al-mughayyarati*)!”

The Emir pulled it out from under him and gave it back to the one to whom it belonged and said to the Mahdī:

—“What has denatured it? (*mā taghayyarahā*).”

—“It was woven with rot (*li-annahā tu‘qad bi-al-najāsa*),” he answered.²⁵

The story, constructed as a dialogue between the Mahdī and the Emir, highlights the pre-science of Ibn Tūmart.²⁶ His knowledge of hidden things allowed him to immediately distinguish the pure from the impure. However, paradoxically, he was not able to distinguish the Emir from the other veiled persons who accompanied him. This

25. Interview reported in Ibn Simāk (attributed to), *Al-Ḥulal al-mawshiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Būbāyah (Beyrouth, 2010), 167, and especially by Abū Bakr b. ‘Alī al-Ṣanhājī al-Baydhaq, *Kitāb akhbār al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart wa ibtidā’ dawlati al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, ed. É. Lévi-Provençal (Paris, 1928), 67-68, french transl. É. Lévi-Provençal, *Documents inédits d’histoire almohade. Fragments manuscrits du ‘legajo’ 1919 du fonds arabe de l’Escorial, publiés et traduits avec une introduction et des notes par É. Lévi-Provençal*. (Paris, 1928), 108-109, cited by Ghouirgate, *L’ordre almohade*, 52-53.

26. Ibn Tūmart is characterized by his knowledge of things and beings. In the account of his meeting with ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, he knows who is ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, before him and better than him. He knows both his obscure past and his illustrious future. For accounts of the meeting in al-Baydhaq see *Documents inédits*, 85 and following, and al-Marrākushī, *Mu‘jib*, text 129-130, transl. 156-157.

difference—the perception of the impurity of the carpet vs. the non-recognition of the figure of the Emir—creates two figures of authority. The first figure is inspired; he sees the religious things and is distinct from the rest of the mortals because of his own qualities. The other figure, dressed as a woman, confuses the genres, ignores the impure nature of the objects he touches, and does not stand out from the ordinary because of either his charisma or his extraordinary knowledge. In both cases it is the fabric that creates the connection between the two orifices: the pure one for speech and the impure one for excrement. M. Ghourigate highlights how the Almoravids considered it obscene to show their mouths. This story utilizes this taboo to better discredit these figures: how would it be possible for the Almoravids to govern with accuracy and justice if they could not distinguish the pure from the impure, the men from the women, or, indeed, one part of their anatomy from another? Furthermore, the Almoravid Emir is presented as an usurper who, by agreeing to unveil and leave the “denatured carpet,” is implicitly recognised to be completely disqualified from using the title of *khalīfat Allāh*, “God’s Caliph,” that was reserved for Ibn Tūmart and his successor ‘Abd al-Mu’min.

This mention of the term *khalīfat Allāh* in association with the Almoravids is not an isolated incident. It can also be found in Ibn ‘Idhārī’s *Bayān*, a “dis-Almohadised” Merinid chronicle (Émile Fricaut’s neologism), concerning the invention of the title of the “prince of Muslims” by Yūsuf b. Tashfīn:

That year, the *shaykh*-s of the tribes gathered around prince Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf b. Tashfīn and said to him:

—“You are God’s Caliph in Maghrib (*anta khalīfat Allāhi fī al-Maghrib*) and you have the right to call yourself not ‘commander’ (*amīr*) but rather ‘commander of the believers’ (*amīr al-mu’minīn*).” He replied to them:

—“God forbid that I claim this title, for it is that borne by the Caliphs, and I serve the Abbasid Caliph (*wa anā rājilu al-khalīfati al-‘abbasī*), charged with spreading his call in the West (*wā al-qā’imu bi-da‘watihi fī bilādi al-Gharb*).”

—“You need a title that distinguishes you.”

—“So it will be ‘Commander of the Muslims’ (*amīr al-muslimīn*).”

It is said that it is he who chose this title for himself and that he ordered the secretaries of the chancellery to write letters with this title, in his name or in addressing him.²⁷

In both of these cases, it is the prince’s entourage that assigns the title to the Almoravid sovereign, possibly along with that of “commander of the believers.” That these two chronicles—one Almohad, intended for an Eastern population, and the other post-Almohad—mention the presentation of the title of “God’s Caliph” to the Almoravid Emir, shows that the fifth/eleventh century Almoravid political construction was important enough that its founder could claim the Caliphate at least as much as his Umayyad and Fatimid predecessors.

27. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Bayān*, t. 4, 27.

A new era began after the conquest of Marrakech in 541/1147. The last Almoravid sovereign was executed, the principal city of the central Maghrib joined the Almohad movement, and the capital of the emirate fell. However, after al-Māssi's revolt in 542/1148, all the provinces (except Marrakech and Fez) required that the Almohads change from their original militant organization into a territorial administration, and appeal to the skilled ancient elites, whose support was essential in ensuring control over a territory where they still retained some power: the central Maghrib and al-Andalus. 'Abd al-Mu'min, the first Almohad Caliph, attempted to use the Almoravid heritage. Judges, administrators, possibly the tribes, and even the great dignitaries who had served the fallen dynasty were integrated into the Almohad imperial administration. That is the case, for example, of the *kātib* Ibn 'Aṭīyya who became, as Vizier for a time, the closest advisor and favorite of 'Abd al-Mu'min (r. 524/1130-558/1163).²⁸ Similarly, Yintān b. 'Umar, who led the Almoravid troops during the first victorious battle against Ibn Tūmart, became Vizier. He was supposedly spared for having defended Ibn Tūmart during his interview with 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tashfīn. His subsequent appointment to the post of Vizier demonstrated the confidence he had inspired in the Almohad sovereign, despite his former responsibilities in the heart of the Almoravid regime. Generally, the families of the secretaries seem to have retained their power despite the change in dynasty. Abū al-Ḥakam 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Lakhmī al-Murkhī was the secretary for 'Abd al-Mu'min, following his father, who held the same position under 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tashfīn. Similarly, when 'Abd al-Mu'min decided to restore Cordoba as the capital of al-Andalus, he entrusted this task to a former Almoravid dignitary, Barrāz b. Muḥammad al-Massūfī.²⁹ Many other examples of the continuity of careers between the two dynasties can be seen in the Chancellery, in the legal-judicial field (with the Banū Rushd), and even in the control of the armies (e.g. the Banū Maymūn, the Almoravid admirals of the fleet). The Almohad sovereign also exploited certain episodes from Almoravid history for their political and religious value; for example, 'Abd al-Mu'min asked Ibn 'Aṭīyya to bring forward those who participated in the battle of Uclés, an Almoravid victory, where the heir-apparent of Castile-León died, in 501/1108. 'Abd Allāh b. Zaydūn and 'Umar b. Tūrzigīn *min ash-yākh al-Lamtūna* were thus invited to participate with the *shaykh*-s of the *jund* at the High Council (*al-majlis al-'ālī*), where, after having testified, they were rewarded with 500 dinars each, while the Almohad *shaykh*-s in attendance received 100.³⁰

Until the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century, the Banū Ghāniya resistance, descendants of the Almoravid sovereign who were sheltered in the Balearic Islands, put the integration of the ancient Almoravid elites at risk. Ibn 'Aṭīyya and his brother were ultimately executed as the result of a plot carried out by some Almohads who were jealous

28. Ibn 'Aṭīyya was married to Yūsuf b. Tashfīn's grand-daughter and his brother-in-law was Ibn al-Ṣaḥrāwīyya, a notorious, fierce and stubborn Almoravid rebel who repented and was forgiven by the Almohads in 550/1155.

29. Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalā, *Al-Mann bi-al-imāma*, ed. 'Abd al-Hādī Tāzī (Beyrouth, 1987), 138-139.

30. Ibn al-Qattān, *Nazm al-jumān*, ed. M. 'A. Makkī (Beyrouth, 1990), 177-178. There is a precedent for this, in the story of the battle of Yarmūk by Bal'amī. Khālīd b. al-Walīd made those who participated in the battle of Badr leave from the ranks and demanded that they pray instead of fight (cited in *Les quatre premiers califes, extrait de la Chronique de Tabari (m. 922)*, translated by Hermann Zotenberg, Sindbad, Paris, 1981, pp. 108-110).

of their power. It is not known if their ties to the earlier power was the determining factor in their fate, or, rather, if they were killed because of their acquired power and the danger inherent to being in the proximity of the prince.³¹ After ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s death in 558/1163, the exclusion of the heir, Muḥammad Abū ‘Abd Allāh, can also be attributed to his Almoravid ancestry as his mother came from Sūs. The future Caliph, Abū Ya‘qūb, and his half-brother Abū Ḥafṣ, grandsons from the maternal side of a Maṣmūda judge, were more skilled in dealing with the system of tribal hierarchy that the Almohads were implementing. However, this opposition appears to have been of a political nature as much as an ideological one. This also applies to the elimination of the brothers of the Maḥdī Ibn Tūmart in 552/1157-1158. As the main body of Almohad ideology formed gradually, including the apocryphal draft of the writings of the Maḥdī, one might ask whether the Almohad opposition to the Maliki school might not also have been based on a political rationale rather than a dogmatic one, in order to compete with the local elites who, through the patrimonial heritage of judicial offices, formed an “aristocratic judicature” with great financial power in al-Andalus.³²

The portrait painted by al-Marrākushī of the Almoravid sovereign, ‘Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tashfīn, in his *Mu‘jib*, reveals that Almohad writers were selective in their appreciation of the Almoravids and that they only paid tribute to certain sovereigns of the Saharan dynasty. As it was intended for an Eastern audience, the characters in this narrative consisted of princes who were famous for their piety. Criticisms are actually reflected in certain explanations or details, and contributed to the value of the path followed by the Almohad Caliphs:

When he succeeded his father, he took the same title of *amīr al-muslimīn* (‘Commander of the Muslims’) and called his companions “Almoravids.” He followed the path taken by his father (‘*alā sunan abīhi*) in choosing the *jihād*; in terrorising the enemy (*ikhāfat al-‘aduww*); and in defending the country (*wa ḥimāyat al-bilād*). He had good behavior and good intentions, a noble soul, he stayed away from injustice (*ba‘d^{an} ‘an al-ẓulm*); he was closer to the hermits (*zuhhād*) and the ascetics (*mutabattilīn*) than the king (*mulūk*) and the dominant ones (*mutaghghalibīn*). Very attached to the people of the Law and Religion, he made no decisions in his kingdom without first consulting the doctors of the Law (*mushāwarat al-fuqahā*). When he appointed a *qāḍī*, he demanded that they appeal to four doctors of the Law, when making any decision.³³

‘Alī’s piety, presented here as a quality, becomes a flaw due to his over-the-top character and the excessive caution that it generated in him. It is in this way that the Almoravids

31. A. K. Bennison, “Tribal Identities and the Formation of the Almohad Elite: The Salutary Tale of Ibn ‘Atiyya,” in M. Meouak (ed.), *Biografías Magrebíes: Identidades y Grupos Religiosos, Sociales y Políticos en el Magreb Medieval*, Estudios Onomásticos Biográficos de Al-Andalus, XVII (CSIC, 2012), 245–71.

32. On this question, see M. Fierro, “The Qāḍī as Ruler,” in *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam: actas del Simposio Internacional (Granada, 15-18 octubre 1991)* (Madrid, 1994), 71–116. The figure of the judge benefitted from his dedication to the *‘ilm* (the monopoly over the transmission of science had a strong power of legitimization), but also from his financial strength. This judge-wealth relationship is a topos in the Arab sources and clearly designates the judicature as a source of political power.

33. al-Marrākushī, *Mu‘jib*, ed. 122, Spanish translation 127.

served as counter-models and shaped, in part, representations of the Almohad power by the court authors.

Conclusion

If the often-rewritten chronicles do not allow us to know whether the idea of the Caliphate was present with the first Almoravids, then the later sources, by the credit they granted to this notion and by certain allusions, reveal that the Caliphate was the target of all important powers in the Maghrib in the fifth/eleventh century. The etymology of the place-name, ‘Marrakech,’ composed from *amūr* and *Yākush* and meaning “The City of God,” reveals the original nature of the political-religious project of the Almoravids: the construction of a city of God on earth. The recognition of the Abbasid authority was therefore a pragmatic and cautious path chosen by the Almoravids. However, it was the political structures that they founded in both the Maghrib and al-Andalus that paved the way for the Almohad emancipation. The conservation of the capital and the semantic revitalization of its name by ‘Abd al-Mu’min ensured that the Almohad mission was a progression from the Almoravid movement. The Almohad authors also presented the accession of the Almoravids in a positive manner. This can be seen in a passage from the *Muʿjib* that equates the assimilation of al-Andalus at the end of the fifth/eleventh century with the *jāhiliyya*, and consequently, in implicit terms, the intervention of Yūsuf b. Tashfīn in the unification of the Arabian Peninsula by Muḥammad:

The situation of the kings of al-Andalus, after the *fitna*, resembled the situation of the kings of the Taʿifas of Persia after the murder of Darius, son of Darius. The situation of al-Andalus was weakening; its borders were troubled; the appetite of its Christian neighbours increased; and they multiplied their interventions. This lasted in this way until God assembled the word, resolved the objections, organized the group, suppressed the dissents, strengthened the religion, elevated the word of Islam, and broke the ambitions of the enemy through the fortunate intervention of the Prince of the Muslims (*amīr al-muslimīn*) and Defender of the religion (*nāṣir al-dīn*), Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf b. Tashfīn al-Lamtūnī—Peace of God in his soul.³⁴

In the system of government that was developed in the fifth/eleventh century, the Almoravids imposed the *faqīh* as a point of legitimization and a source of law. They also delegated a fraction of their power to the provincial governors, as shown through the proclamation and leadership of the *jihād* as well as coin production. The Almohads thus aligned their legitimacy and authority in the person of the *imām*-Caliph, who had a monopoly over all functions, including that of Supreme Judge, general in chief of the army of the faithful, interpreter of the Rule, and as the source of the Law. This resulted in the Almohad Era, from the military perspective, through the disappearance of the summer border raids and by an increasing number of truces. The *jihād* gave rise to the formation of large Caliphal armies led personally by the *imām* (in 547/1153, 556/1161, 567/1172,

34. al-Marrākuṣī, *Muʿjib*, ed. 64, Spanish translation 74.

580/1184, 591/1195, 601/1205, 607/1211, 608/1212) and, from a monetary perspective, through the removal of any reference to the date or the workshop stamped on dinars and dirhams. The provincial Almohad organization was thus the culmination of a process set in place by the Almoravids through the development of nation-state structures with a concentrated and extreme centralization of powers.

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The Ḥammūdid Caliphate: A New Look through the Lens of Numismatics

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Abstract

Of the caliphates of the Islamic West, the rule of the shortest duration was that of the Ḥammūdids (407/1016–446/1055). The Ḥammūdids, as descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad and members of the Idrisid branch that had ruled in al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā (170/786–375/985) before succumbing to Umayyad-Fāṭimid rivalry, claimed the inheritance of the Umayyad caliphate after its breakdown and were paid allegiance by given Taifa kingdoms. The paper discusses how the scarcity of texts dealing with the Ḥammūdid period can be compensated for by close consideration of the numismatic evidence. Building upon the author's previous studies, published in Spanish, that discussed new coin hoards and new typologies and offered reassessments of the major public and private collections, this contribution offers an overview of the present-day state of the art including new readings, interpretations and valuations. It also debunks commonly accepted historiographical claims concerning the Ḥammūdid coinage and its political and religious implications, and sheds new light on the alleged 'Shī'ism' of the Ḥammūdids. Without the study of this particular caliphal experience, the conception of the caliphate in the Islamic West cannot be fully understood.

1. Introduction

In the last few years, significant headway has been made in the expansion of our knowledge regarding the Ḥammūdid caliphate established in al-Andalus in the first half of the 5th/11th century. Major new developments have stemmed chiefly from numismatic studies, which have reported new coin hoards and the emergence of new typologies while offering reassessments, published or unpublished, of the major public and private collections.

In light of the literary sources, the analysis of the numismatic material has opened the door to new readings, interpretations, and valuations. It has also created space for new hypotheses, which have directly impacted the historical knowledge we have about the Ḥammūdid dynasty thus far. Analysis of the coinage has made it possible to debunk



commonly accepted historiographical claims concerning not only the Ḥammūdīd coinage itself, but also its political and religious implications.

Ḥammūdīd politics raises key questions regarding the institutional history of the caliphate. These questions, neglected for far too long, relate directly to the crisis of the Cordovan Umayyad caliphal state. The new perspectives derived from this study¹ show how the Ḥammūdīd caliphate, usually forgotten, considered marginal, or regarded as just another Taifa kingdom, had a specific relevance. During the first half of the 5th/11th century, the Ḥammūdīds—who were descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad and legitimate caliphs of al-Andalus—made use of their caliphal sovereignty in a variety of ways that influenced the political life of the Taifa kingdoms that were organized according to their fidelity either to the Ḥammūdīd or to the Umayyad caliph. The Ḥammūdīds were recognized not only in many areas of Andalusi territory, but also in the Maghreb, where the legitimacy of the Taifa kingdoms and that of the alleged Hishām [II] proclaimed as caliph in Seville were not recognized. Without the study of the Ḥammūdīds, the conception of the caliphate in the Islamic West cannot be fully understood.

This paper summarizes, as thoroughly as is possible, these developments which present the Ḥammūdīd dynasty in a new light.

2. The Ḥammūdīd Dynasty: Ascent to Power²

2.1. ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd, Caliph Sulaymān’s Ḥājib?

The first references to the Ḥammūdīds in the textual sources date to 400/1010: ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and seized Ceuta on behalf of the Cordovan Umayyad caliph Sulaymān al-Musta‘īn³. Three years later, ‘Alī was the *qā’id* of the ‘Alawī faction (*firqā*) of Sulaymān’s army during the storming of Cordova. As compensation for Alī’s help, Sulaymān handed over to ‘Alī and his brother, al-Qāsim, the rule of the Maghreb,⁴ by putting the former at the helm of Ceuta and the latter in charge of Tangier and Asilah.

1. This paper is a summary of the contributions (in Spanish) made by A. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes de al-Andalus (V/XI)*. E-prints, Complutense University of Madrid. Vol. 1, 2010 <http://eprints.ucm.es/11196/> and A. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán. Las emisiones monetales a nombre de los califas ḥammūdīes de al-Andalus* (Grenoble, 2015). They are at present the only available comprehensive studies regarding the history and monetary issuances of the Ḥammūdīd Caliphate. In them, the contributions of the sporadic studies published since the 1877 work by Codera—the only previous historical-numismatic study about this dynasty—are critically analyzed. At the same time, the coin hoards and the abundant numismatic materials preserved in the main private and public collections (with a total of 2.461 exemplars) are systematically studied within the context provided by the textual sources.

2. A genealogical chart is offered at the end of the article.

3. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III = Kitāb al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal and G. S. Colin. 2 vols. (Leiden, 1948-1951), vol. II, 96-99. Spanish trans. by F. Maíllo Salgado, *La caída del Califato de Córdoba y los Reyes de Taifas (al-Bayān al-Mugrib)* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1993), 90-92.

4. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 114; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 103-104.

In that same year, 403/1013, the name of ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd appeared for the first time on Caliph Sulaymān’s coins.⁵ These coins seem to attest to the fact that, during his time in Ceuta, ‘Alī was appointed as al-Musta‘īn’s chamberlain (*ḥājib*). If we consider the origin and evolution of the appearance of proper names on caliphal coins in al-Andalus,⁶ in conjunction with the evolution of his name’s location on the coin dies (it shifts from the location once reserved for the governors of the Maghreb to the most prestigious space occupied by the great *ḥājibs*, Ja‘far al-Ṣiqḻabī al-Nāṣirī and Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Āmir Almanzor), we can hypothesize that not only did ‘Alī appear on the coins in his role as ruler of the Maghreb, but also as Sulaymān’s *ḥājib*; a hypothesis that could very well be validated by the sources⁷ (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Type Ariza Pre.5.1, Dirham, 405, *Madīnat Sabta*. Tonegawa Collection.

The fact that gold coinage was struck at the Ceuta mint is also quite significant. Indeed, the remaining issues that appeared under the authority of allegedly independent princes who recognized Caliph Sulaymān as *imām* during the *fitna* were coined at the generic *al-Andalus* mint.⁸ Furthermore, the fact that the latter are made of silver, as opposed to gold, which was used to strike Ḥammūdīd coins, makes the preferential status that ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd enjoyed over the other local powers of the time clear. If resorting to the generic *al-Andalus* mint was a clear sign of submission,⁹ it could well be said that the arrival of the *Madīnat Sabta* mint was the symbolic materialization of a certain degree of independence,

5. These are dinars (type Ariza Pre1.) and dirhams (type Ariza Pre2-Pre8) struck in the name of Caliph Sulaymān at the Ceuta Mint in 403, 404 and 405: Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 83-90. The above-mentioned typologies as well as the others in this work refer the new typological catalog on Ḥammūdīd coinage in Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 405-437.

6. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 80-83.

7. “When Sulaymān and the Berbers seized Cordova, in this their second rule, both the *ḥājib* and the vizier were theirs; as it was Sulaymān who established the Berber reign in Cordova”: Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 114; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 104. See also *Una descripción anónima de al-Andalus*, ed. and trans. L. Molina (Madrid, 1983), 213. Along the lines of the narrative, they could refer to ‘Alī and al-Qāsim as *ḥājib* and vizier, respectively.

8. Except for those struck by al-Mu‘izz : A. Vives y Escudero, *Monedas de las dinastías árabe-españolas* (Madrid, 1893), 495. Concerning the North African coinages displaying the name of Hishām [II] see the references cited in Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 96, note 357.

9. Vives y Escudero, *Monedas de las dinastías árabe-españolas*, XXXII.

a degree greater than what can be discerned from the written sources. This idea is in accordance with Acién's prior statement about the fact that 'Alī b. Ḥammūd's actual power was greater than what was then believed¹⁰; and it was precisely within this said power that his hypothetical *ḥājib* status resided.¹¹

Additionally, the appearance of the Ḥammūdīd *nasab* on both sides of a coin in one of 'Alī's typologies (type Ariza Pre8), in one linked to 'Alī's name and, in the other, devoid of any *ism*, suggests that the latter is a reference to his brother al-Qāsim, who would thus have been portrayed for the first time on a coin die (Fig. 2). Al-Qāsim, who was in charge of Tangier and Asilah, was in the Maghreb with his brother at the time. His presence alongside him on the coins supports another argument in favor of the notion that Alī and al-Qāsim could have been *ḥājib* and vizier, respectively, and would be depicted as such on this coin typology's die.



Figure 2. Type Ariza Pre.8, Dirham, 405, *Madīnat Sabta*. Benito de los Mozos Collection

2.2. Ceuta, a Ḥammūdīd City

From the moment 'Alī b. Ḥammūd was appointed governor of Ceuta, the Maghrebi city became an essential stronghold in Ḥammūdīd politics. The city, let us not forget, had once been part of the territories controlled by the Idrīsīd 'Umar,¹² an ancestor of the Ḥammūdīds.

10. M. Acién Almansa, "Los ḥammūdīes, califas legítimos de Occidente en el siglo XI," *Actas del Congreso de Toledo a Huesca. Sociedades medievales en transición a finales del siglo XI (1080-1100)* (Zaragoza, 1998), 54.

11. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 96. The fact that he minted gold coinage in the name of Sulaymān, as he would later do it on behalf of Hishām [II], does not imply, as has been claimed in Acién Almansa, "Los ḥammūdīes," 53-54, and M. D. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī y el califato en el s. XI* (Málaga, 2008), 35, that he had used the caliphal coining prerogative before he was proclaimed as caliph. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 93, 75-79.

12. Ibn al-Khatīb, *Kitāb A'māl al-A'lām*, ed. Evariste Lévi-Provençal (Beirut, 1956), 203-207; Spanish trans. by R. Castrillo (Madrid, 1983), 124-125. As regards additional sources on this matter, see D. Eustache, *Corpus des Dirhams Idrīsītes et Contemporains. Collection de la Banque du Maroc et autres collections mondiales, publiques*

Ceuta would not only become the “Doorway to the Strait,” but also play a major role as the seat of the heirs who would inherit the rule of the Maghreb.¹³

Furthermore, it was ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd in his role as governor of Ceuta, who, in the year 403/1013, opened the first mint there. The original mint remained active throughout the entire Ḥammūdīd era and became key to the dynasty’s monetary issues and policies. Although there are no textual references, one must attribute the motivation to open the mint to Caliph Sulaymān’s need to pay the Maghrebi troops. As is generally known, during the Umayyad period, the caliphs of Cordova sent massive amounts of currency to the Maghreb to cover the costs of their alliances with the Berber tribes. Consequently, it is sensible to believe that, during the civil war into which Caliph Sulaymān was dragged, it likely became difficult for him to send money to the Maghreb and make the necessary payments to his main allies, the Berbers. Thus, his lieutenant in the Maghreb, and his then right-hand man, ‘Alī, likely opened the new mint so they could pay the Berber troops directly. These were the troops which, in accordance with Arabic textual sources, he was enlisting for war at the time.¹⁴ Through them, the coinage struck in Ceuta would arrive in the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁵

The huge flow of Ceuta-struck coins in al-Andalus takes on enormous importance if we consider that an equally abundant presence of Maghrebi currency in the Iberian Peninsula has never been confirmed. What is more, not even during the course of the Ḥammūdīd era were other North African mints so richly represented in peninsular coin hoards. This new development could well be the sign of a much more direct policy pursued by the Ḥammūdīd caliphate, than that once pursued by the Umayyad dynasty in the Maghreb.¹⁶

2.3. ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd, the Legitimate Heir of Hishām [II]

The already powerful ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd withdrew his allegiance and, in the year 405/1014-1015, revolted against Caliph Sulaymān, revealing an alleged letter in which Hishām [II] presumably offered him, in exchange for helping him defeat Sulaymān, the opportunity to be his successor in the caliphate.¹⁷ As heir, (*walī al-‘ahd*), he would appear on the coins

et privées (Rabat, 1970-1971), 33, note 17. Let us bear in mind that Ceuta was within the sphere of influence of al-Andalus since it was conquered by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [III] al-Nāṣir in the year 319/931. Cf. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān* (reed. Beirut, 1983), I, 200-204, II, 204.

13. ‘Alī, Yaḥyā, Idrīs [I], Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā and his son, Muḥammad [I], Muḥammad [II] (b. Idrīs [II]). Except for al-Qāsim, who had not been designated as heir, Yaḥyā [II] b. Idrīs (“the insurgent”) e Idrīs [II], who may or may not have been designated as heir (see *infra*), but of whom there is no record of his passing through Ceuta. Vallvé already stressed the importance of the heir’s residing in Ceuta: J. Vallvé Bermejo, “Suqqūt al-Bargawāṭī, rey de Ceuta,” *Al-Andalus* XXVIII (1963): 171-209.

14. *Una descripción anónima*, 214.

15. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 69.

16. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 69-70.

17. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 114-116; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 104-106.

issued in the name of Caliph Hishām [II]¹⁸ (Fig. 3, 4, 5). To some, these issues are proof of the existence of the letter. To others, they are nothing but evidence of its fabrication. This is a central point in the matter of the much-discussed legitimacy of the Ḥammūdīd caliphate.¹⁹



Figure 3. Type Ariza Pre9.3. Dinar, 406, *al-Andalus*. Tonegawa Collection.

At any rate, what these issues show is that all those who rose with ‘Alī against Sulaymān accepted his status as heir. Although his three main allies, the ‘Āmirid, Khayrān al-Siqḷabī, and the Ṣanhāja Berbers, Zāwī b. Zīrī, and Ḥabbūs b. Māksan b. Zīrī, expected to find Hishām [II] alive, they knew that ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd was to rule after him.²⁰

Once on the peninsula, ‘Alī captured Malaga, and the coins issued at the *al-Andalus* mint in the name of Hishām [II], dated 406/1015–1016, must have been the first ones struck in Malaga by the Ḥammūdīds²¹ (Fig. 3, 4).



Figure 4. Type Ariza Pre9.4. Dirham, 406, *al-Andalus*. Tonegawa Collection

18. Issues of the years 405/1014-1015, 406/1015-1016 and 407/1016-1017, both gold and silver, from the *al-Andalus* and *Madīnat Sabta* mints (type Ariza Pre9.1-8).

19. Cf. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, 117-124.

20. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 90-92.

21. A. Ariza Armada, “Monedas andalusíes de Málaga,” *Mālaqa, entre Malaca y Málaga* (Málaga, 2009) 105–107; A. Ariza Armada, “De la legitimidad ḥammūdī a la legitimidad almorávide: la moneda de taifas (siglo V/XI),” *Revista internacional Omni*, Special Issue 1, *Las monedas hispano-musulmanas* (2014), 116. Concerning other evaluations of these issues cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 90-92.



Figure 5. Type Ariza Pre9.5. Dinar, 406 *Madīnat Sabta*. Tonegawa Collection.

3. The Ḥammūdīd Caliphate

3.1. ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd (r. 407/1016 to 408/1018), a Shī‘ī Caliph?

In the year 407/1016, ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd, descendant of Idrīs [II],²² the founder of the Idrīsīd dynasty, from the Banū ‘Umar branch, was proclaimed caliph in the *Bāb al-Sudda*. The event occurred at the citadel (*alcazar*) in Cordova, a symbol of the caliphate’s sovereignty, which would only reassert the legitimacy of his proclamation.²³ He was the first non-Marwānīd caliph of al-Andalus, the first Hāshimīd ruler to bear the title of *imām*,²⁴ which could have been decisive in the development of the ensuing Sharīfism.²⁵

‘Alī b. Ḥammūd cleverly fused the Umayyad Sunni tradition and its Shī‘ī counterpart which favored his acceptance as caliph, both in Sunni al-Andalus and in the Maghreb, where Shī‘ism is likely to have been even more influential. Thus, on the one hand, he took the titles of al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh and Mutawakkil ‘alā Allāh,²⁶ *laqabs* that had been used before him by the first Umayyad caliph of Cordova and the tenth ‘Abbāsīd caliph. In doing so, not only did he express his will to align himself with the caliphate of Cordova to gain acceptance in the rest of al-Andalus,²⁷ but also equated his own dynasty with the Umayyad dynasty, and himself, as the first ‘Alīd caliph, with the first Umayyad caliph. This allowed him to disassociate himself from any suspicion of radical Shī‘ism, while expressing, in

22. The verisimilitude of Ḥammūdīd ancestry has been questioned by D. J. Wasserstein, *The Caliphate in the West. An Islamic Political Institution in the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford, 1993), 50 and ss., but as we will see, ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd’s Shī‘ī inclinations seem to confirm his ‘Alīd origin.

23. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, vol. 1, 169-170.

24. The Idrīsīd protocol reserved the title for the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs of Baghdad. Cf. A. Ariza Armada, “Leyendas monetales, iconografía y legitimación en el califato ḥammūdī. Las emisiones de ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd del año 408/1017-1018,” *Al-Qanṭara* XXV, 1 (2004), 209.

25. Ariza Armada, “Leyendas monetales, iconografía y legitimación,” 209-211.

26. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 122; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 110; Ibn Bassām. *Al-Dhakhīrah fī maḥāsīn ahl al-Jazīrah*, ed. I. ‘Abbās, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1979-1981), Spanish transl. in M. D. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī y el califato en el siglo XI* (Málaga, 2008), para. 35; Ibn al-Athīr. *Al-Kāmil fī al-ta’rīkh*, French trans. E. Fagnan, *Annales du Maghreb et de l’Espagne* (Alger, 1898), IX, 271.

27. P. Guichard, *De la Expansión Árabe a la Reconquista: Esplendor y fragilidad de al-Andalus* (Granada, 2000), 120.

reference to the ‘Abbāsīd caliph, the Shī‘a tendencies attributed to him by the literature and the assertion of his noble Fāṭimid lineage.²⁸ On the other hand, while maintaining the continuity of Umayyad issues by continuing with the previous standards, he developed a legitimating iconographical program, laden with connotations to Shī‘ism and, as we shall see,²⁹ of clear propitiatory value of a magical-religious nature.

The dual (religious-ideological) overtones of his *laqabs*; his superstitious nature³⁰; the ensemble of characters he allowed into his Cordovan court (of Muwallad origin and Berbers); his appointment of a *Shu‘ubī* vizier (Ibn García),³¹ chief judiciary and prayer leader; the tribute to his Fāṭimid origin and his denomination as a Shī‘ī in the laudatory poems that Ibn Darrāj al-Qaṣṭallī, Ibn Ḥannāṭ and Ibn Mā’ al-Samā’ dedicated to him;³² and the iconography displayed on his coinages suggest that the first Ḥammūdīd was more heterodox than what has thus far been historiographically accepted.

Amidst the campaign against the Umayyad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [IV], who had revolted in *Sharq al-Andalus*, ‘Alī was murdered in the bathroom of his alcazar, probably in Jaén (408/1018), as Christian chronicles attested, and not in Cordova, as has been traditionally believed. From there, his corpse was transferred to the capital of al-Andalus where it was presented to his brother al-Qāsim, who would succeed him as head of the caliphate.³³

The first Ḥammūdīd was not buried in the *rawḍa*, at the alcazar in Cordova, where, starting with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [I], all of the Umayyads had been buried; instead his body was moved to Ceuta, where a mosque was built to house his tomb. Perhaps this can be interpreted as a sign of the will of the Ḥammūdīd dynasty to distinguish itself from the Umayyad dynasty, in an attempt at dynastic vindication.³⁴ It would occur again with his son Idrīs [I] who would also be buried in Ceuta.³⁵

28. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, vol. 1, 165-166.

29. This question is developed in the epigraph 3.2. “The Ḥammūdīd Iconographical Program.”

30. Regarding the superstitious nature of ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd see, for example, Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 123; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 110-111. About the assessment of this fact in relation to the iconography of his coins with fishes from the year 408/1017-1018, see Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, vol. 1: 194-195; Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 109.

31. Cf. F. de la Granja, “Ibn García, cadí de los califas ḥammūdīes. Nuevos datos para el estudio de la *šū‘ūbiyya* en al-Andalus,” *Al-Andalus XXX* (1956), 63-78 (repr. in *Estudios de historia de al-Andalus*. 21-39. Madrid, 1999). From a more general perspective: S. B. Savant, “Naming Shu‘ūbīs,” in A. Korangy, W. M. Thackston, R. P. Mottahedeh and W. Granara (eds.), *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy* (Berlin/Boston, 2016).

32. Regarding his court and administration cf. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, vol. 1, 177-186.

33. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, vol. 1: 174-175. Rosado Llamas has indicated that the Arabic baths of the palace of Villardompardo are called “the baths of King Ali,” which could be a further indication of the verisimilitude of the information provided by the Christian source; Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 115.

34. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, vol. 1, 175-176.

35. *Crónica anónima de los Reyes de Taifas*, Spanish trans. by F. Maíllo Salgado (Madrid, 1991), 18. Data collected by L. Seco de Lucena, *Los ḥammūdīes, señores de Málaga y Algeciras* (Málaga, 1955), 34.

3.2. The Ḥammūdid Iconographical Program

On his coins, the first Ḥammūdid caliph initiated a legitimizing graphic program of a prophylactic nature, which was maintained throughout the issuances of his son, Yaḥyā, and his grandson, Idrīs [II], even though the latter, as we shall see, had to make attempts to distance himself from anything that would create the suspicion of Shīʿism during his second period.

Consequently, ʿAlī b. Ḥammūd introduced the fish symbol on his Ceuta currency (type Ariza ʿA4.1-3) as a symbolic reference to the prophet Moses and to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, or even to al-Khaḍir. This symbol legitimized him as a wise and just caliph, as these were the symbolic referents of the latter³⁶ (Fig. 6). Moreover, especially on the Ceuta coinages, we find the second iconographic element: the proliferation of stars (Fig. 6, 7). Although these were already linked to the Umayyad tradition, they would now acquire a new connotation in connection with Shīʿism, which had to do with their protective character (*amān*) over his house members (*ahl al-bayt*), and over his bloodline, which was attributed to them by the Prophet.³⁷ The Ḥammūdid caliph, descendant of the “sons of Fāṭima,” was thus legitimized.



Figure 6. Type Ariza ʿA4.3 Dirham, 408, *Madīnat Sabta*. A.N.S. 1928.999.112.



Figure 7. Type Ariza ʿA4.2. Dirham, 407, *Madīnat Sabta*. Tonegawa Collection.

36. Cf. Ariza Armada, “Leyendas monetales, iconografía y legitimación,” 203-231; S. Peña Martín and M. Vega Martín, “The Qurʾānic symbol of the fish on Ḥammūdid coins: al-Ḥaḍir and the Holy Geography of the Straits of Gibraltar,” *Al-Andalus Magreb* 13 (2006), 269-284; Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 107-110.

37. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 117-118.

His son, Yaḥyā, in addition to resorting to the stars, introduced the octogram symbol (type Ariza Ya2) (Fig. 8) to the coins. This symbol, besides having legitimizing and propitiatory value, which is closely linked to the symbology of the hexagram, can also be identified with the *Rubʿ al-Ḥizb*. Thus, it made symbolic reference to the “Party of God,” to which the Ḥammūdids belonged as noble descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad.³⁸ Yaḥyā also made use of the symbology of a series of isolated letters (*wāw* and *hāʾ*), which, once other possibilities have been ruled out, could very well represent numbers (types Ariza Ya5.1-9, Ya6.1-5) (Fig. 9). Their numerical values, according to the Maghrebi *abjad*, would be six and eight respectively, which, given their high level of religious significance and their obvious connection with the hexagram and the octogram, could well be regarded as propitiatory value symbols.³⁹



Figure 8. Type Ariza Ya2. Dinar, 413, *al-Andalus*. Tonegawa Collection



Figure 9. Type Ariza Ya6.2. Dirham, 416, *Madīnat Sabta*. Tonegawa Collection.

After Yaḥyā, his son, Idrīs [II], would also resort to the octogram (type Ariza IdII10), thus making his intent to carry on with his father’s graphic program abundantly clear. This can be understood as an additional element of legitimacy (Fig. 10). As for his own additions, Idrīs [II] added the hexagon to the coin dies (type Ariza IdII10), thus demarcating the legends in the area (Fig. 10), a novelty on both coinages from *al-Andalus* as well as from the Maghreb that would not be used again in *al-Andalus*, but that was concurrently used by the Buyids, a

38. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 178-182.

39. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 184-194.

Shīʿī dynasty which also ruled over a Sunni majority. Another geometric resource of great symbolic value that Idrīs [II] added to the caliphal currency was the hexagram or “Seal of Solomon” (types Ariza IdII3 and Ariza IdII16⁴⁰), a monetary symbol whose origin, both in the East and in the Maghreb, had a strong pro-ʿAlīd component (Fig. 11). The symbolic reference to the prophet Solomon conferred a magical and protective quality to the coins, and, in turn, legitimized not only Idrīs [II] as a righteous, wise and just caliph, much like the king-prophet himself, but, in a sense, the coin issues themselves as well.⁴¹



Figure 10. Type Ariza IdII10.1. Dirham, 446, *al-Andalus*. Tonegawa Collection.



Figure 11. Type Ariza IdII3.1 Dirham, 438, *al-Andalus*. Tonegawa Collection

Through this monetary symbology, numismatics clearly shows the differentiation of this family branch, which would confront the other branches of the dynasty in the struggle for power (Table 2). The fact that it is precisely this branch that is related to the figure of Sawājjāt al-Bargawāṭī⁴²—known also as Suqqūt—a client of the Ḥammūdīds of well-known Shīʿī tendencies, also strengthens the idea that these three caliphs could have been even

40. Cf. Type Ariza IdII.16 in A. Ariza Armada, “Nueva tipología con hexagrama a nombre del califa ḥammūdī Idrīs [II] al-ʿAlī,” *Numisma* 258 (2014), 207-210.

41. The hexagram as a numismatic symbol in its origin and first development is related to pro-ʿAlīd territories or dynasties, and is linked to Shīʿī legends, even if though it was later used by Sunni powers and/or dynasties as well as Shīʿī ones: Ariza Armada, “Iconografía y legitimación en el califato ḥammūdī. El símbolo del hexagrama,” *Numisma* 254, LX (2010), 61-83; Ariza Armada, “Nueva tipología con hexagrama,” 207-210; Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 267-269.

42. Vallvé Bermejo, “Suqqūt al-Bargawāṭī.”

more influenced by Shi‘ism than what historiography has conceded. In addition, the loyalty shown by Suqqūt to ‘Alī, his son Yaḥyā and his grandson Idrīs [II] could not only have been a matter of personal fidelity, but could also have been influenced by a religious component.⁴³

3.3. The Recognition of the Ḥammūdīd Caliphate in the Maghreb

The caliphate of ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd was widely recognized in the Maghreb. Not only does the testimony of literary sources indicate that it was recognized in Tangier, Ceuta and even Fez, but the recently published dinar coined at the Oran mint (*Madīnat Wahrān*)⁴⁴ in the year 407/1016–1017 (Fig. 12) indicates not only the continuity of caliphal recognition, from the Umayyads to the Ḥammūdīds, but that the Ḥammūdīd caliphate enjoyed far greater recognition than what had thus far been believed.



Figure 12. Type Ariza ‘A7.1 Dinar, 407, *Madīnat Wahrān*.

Despite the silence of the chronicles, the appearance of *al-Manṣūr*’s name in this typology of Oran would be the numismatic testimony of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s recognition of ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd’s caliphate.⁴⁵ This would mean that, on this date, a young ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was in control of the city of Oran, a position of power in the Maghreb, which could have favored his later being appointed by the ‘Amirids and taking a leading role at the head of Valencia.⁴⁶

Furthermore, although it was omitted in the chronicles, numismatics also demonstrates that recognition of the Ḥammūdīd caliphate continued in Fez after ‘Alī’s death in his successors, his brother, al-Qāsim, and his son, Yaḥyā. Al-Mu‘izz b. Zīrī, lord of Fez (391–416/1000–1026),⁴⁷ recognized al-Qāsim during his first caliphate, issuing currency in his name, at least in the year 410/1019–1020. Therefore, given the likelihood that Yaḥyā crossed over to the

43. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, 236–237.

44. S. Gaspariño, “Nota sobre un nuevo dinar de ‘Alī b. Hammud,” *Omni* 1 (2009), 71–76; S. Gaspariño, “Una nueva ceca Ḥammūdī: Oran,” *Omni* 7 (2013), 142–156.

45. As he will later recognize the sovereignty of Caliph al-Qāsim by sending him beautiful presents and mentioning him in the *khutbah*, in exchange for which the latter bestowed the title of *al-Mu‘tamin Dhū al-Sābiqatayn* on him: Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 164–165; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 142–143.

46. See the various theories concerning this specimen in Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 113–114.

47. Or in 417: Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l’Afrique septentrionales*, French trans. Le Baron de Slane, 4 vols. (Paris, 1925–1934, repr. Paris, 1999), t. 3, 251.

Iberian Peninsula in this year, and that this issue does not include the name of any heir, the support of al-Mu‘izz for the caliphate of al-Qāsim at the time of his nephew Yaḥyā’s manifest rebellion seems evident. To date, we have no numismatic evidence of al-Mu‘izz’s political position during the confrontation of both caliphs (Table 1), nor do we know whether or not he came to recognize the sovereignty of Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī during al-Qāsim’s second caliphate. However, when al-Qāsim left Cordova, in 414/1023, for the second and last time, al-Mu‘izz recognized Yaḥyā before the end of that same year, during which he was still acting as caliph in Malaga.⁴⁸ Today we know he was also recognized and had coins minted in his name by Ḥamāma b. al-Mu‘izz b. ‘Aṭīyya and Mu‘anṣar b. Mu‘izz, who must have briefly had control of Fez between the death of his cousin, al-Mu‘izz b. Zīri, and the rise to power of his brother, Ḥamāma b. al-Mu‘izz.⁴⁹

But there is not only numismatic evidence for the recognition of the caliphate of the first three Ḥammūdīds in the Maghreb: Oued Laou (*Wādī Lāw*) would also strike coins in the name of Muḥammad al-Mahdī, which proves the extent of the caliphate’s recognition across time.⁵⁰

After the confrontation between al-Qāsim and Yaḥyā, the consequent rift in the dynasty, and the proclamation of the alleged Hishām [II], the different Berber tribes threw their weight behind rival Ḥammūdīd caliphs (Table 1). In the Maghreb, the Maghrāwa tribes, especially the Barghawātas and Banū ‘Aṭīyya, supported the dynastic branch represented by the sons of Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī, while the Ghumāra supported the sons of Idrīs [I].⁵¹ However, given the monetary evidence, and, as we shall see, problems that the Taifas experienced in receiving silver from the Maghreb, only the legitimacy of the Ḥammūdīd caliphate was recognized in the Maghreb, but never the purported legitimacy of the different Taifas or of the supposed caliph Hishām [II], who had risen in Seville.

3.4. *Al-Qāsim (r. 408/1018 to 414/1023) vs. Yaḥyā (r. 412/1021 to 427/1035)*⁵²

Although ‘Alī al-Nāṣir had, by making it apparent on the coin, appointed his son Yaḥyā as his heir and had also handed over the government of Ceuta to him, the Zanāta Berbers put al-Qāsim, the late caliph’s brother, in power. According to the *Bayān*, and as recorded by historiography,⁵³ Yaḥyā and his brother Idrīs pretended to recognize al-Qāsim while

48. A. Ariza Armada, “Las emisiones de los Banū ‘Aṭīyya de Fez a nombre de los califas ḥammūdīes. Soberanía califal y conflictos tribales,” in M. Meouak and C. de la Puente (eds.), *Vivir de tal suerte. Homenaje a Juan Antonio Souto Lasala* (Cordova, 2014), 66-71; Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 157-159.

49. Ariza Armada, “Las emisiones de los Banū ‘Aṭīyya de Fez,” 72-80; Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 205-213.

50. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 311-314.

51. Ariza Armada, “Las emisiones de los Banū ‘Aṭīyya de Fez,” Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 205-213, 311-314.

52. The dates given are from their first proclamation until their definitive dismissal or death, respectively, because even when they lost control of Córdoba and no longer received recognition from some of the local powers, they maintained Caliphal dignity and continued to issue coins as such.

53. Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 131; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 117. By way of example: A. Delgado y Hernández, *Estudios de Numismática Árabe-Hispana considerada como comprobante de la*

they waited for a timely opportunity to assert their dynastic rights, in exchange for the proclamation of Yaḥyā as heir. Nonetheless, numismatics seems to instead corroborate al-Bakrī's view, which denies such recognition and in fact entertains the idea that Yaḥyā was never truly recognized by his uncle as heir. That he appeared as such on all the Ceuta issues displaying caliph al-Qāsim's name,⁵⁴ whilst he only appeared on some issuances coined at the al-Andalus mint, seems more like a token of support or recognition of Yaḥyā's inheritance rights offered by local powers in different cities, not an indication of the somewhat overdue expression of such recognition on the part of caliph al-Qāsim. In other words, considering the information we currently have, the issue raised by these monetary issues could only be explained if they had been coined by the local powers that supported Yaḥyā's succession rights, as cities other than Cordova or Malaga must also have been involved in the minting of the generic al-Andalus coins.⁵⁵

Furthermore, in the year 409/1018–1019, coinciding with the campaign undertaken by the Umayyad 'Abd al-Raḥmān [IV] al-Murtaḍā and his allies against caliph al-Qāsim,⁵⁶ Yaḥyā went from appearing as heir on the obverse side of the coins to appearing on the reverse side. Yaḥyā could well have seized upon the moment of crisis in which the caliph found himself to strengthen, through the message sent by the change in his monetary legends, his claim to the right to the caliphate.

Moreover, al-Qāsim's monetary issues reinforce the idea that in order to gain the support of the people of al-Andalus, the new caliph pursued a policy of prudence. For example, he did not introduce any elements that could be related to Shī'ism into his currency, despite the fact that he was qualified as Shī'ī to do so according to literary sources,⁵⁷ and continued to maintain his brother's court.⁵⁸ It is true that the expression *bi-Llāh*, which appears on one of the coin typologies in his name⁵⁹ (Fig. 13), seems to conflict with this suggested policy of prudence, which included omitting mention of an explicit connection to God in his *laqab*.⁶⁰

dominación islámica en la península, ed. A. Canto García and T. Ibrahim (Madrid, 2001), 157; Seco de Lucena, *Los ḥammūdies*, 20-21; A. Chejne, *Historia de España Musulmana* (Madrid, 1980), 51.

54. With the exception of a typology of the year 410 (type Ariza Qā10).

55. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 128-131, 195-199.

56. The Umayyad 'Abd al-Raḥmān [IV] al-Murtaḍā was supported by the coalition formed by Khayrān, Mundhir b. Yaḥyā al-Tujībī and Sulaymān b. Hūd, with the help of their ally Count Ramon Borrell I of Barcelona and, probably, Mujāhid.

57. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 425; al-Ḍabbī. *Bughyat al-multamis fi ta'rīkh rijāl ahl al-Andalus*, ed. F. Codera and J. Ribera (Madrid, 1885), I, 50; 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-mu'jib fi taljīs akhbār al-Maghrib*, ed. R. Dozy, *The History of the Almohades, preceded by a sketch of the history of Spain, from the time of the conquest till the reign of Yūsuf Ibn-Téshufīn and of the history of the Almorávides* (Leiden, 1881), Spanish transl. A. Huici Miranda (Tetouan, 1955), 43; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab fi funūn al-adab*, Spanish transl. by M. Gaspar Remiro, "Historia de los musulmanes de España y África por el-Nugairi," *Revista del Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su reino* VI (1916), 85; al-Ḥumaydī. *Jadhwat al-muqtabis fi ta'rīkh 'ulamā' al-Andalus*, ed. Muḥammad Ibn Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo, 1952), Spanish trans. M.D. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī y el califato en el siglo XI* (Málaga, 2008), para. 11 indicates that, although he indeed was Shī'ī, he did not state it or impose it on anyone.

58. Cf. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los ḥammūdies*, 228-229.

59. Cf. type Ariza Qā25; Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 158-159.

60. Guichard, *De la Expansión Árabe a la Reconquista*, 121.

Given that these were coined in Fez, perhaps what they show is a lack of prudence on the part of those who recognized him.



Figure 13. Type Ariza Qā25.1. Dirham, 410, *Madīnat Fās*. Tonegawa Collection.

Following Yaḥyā's proclamation as caliph in Cordova, al-Qāsim took refuge in Seville (412/1021–413/1023). The absence of news of his time in Seville, according to chroniclers and historiography, seems to show that what was really important at this point was control of the seat of caliphal power, Cordova, since being caliph of Cordova also meant being the ruler of al-Andalus. Nevertheless, from the perspective of power, not being in possession of the capital does not in fact undermine the caliph's sovereignty. Indeed, evidence seems to indicate that he was even able to mint coins in Seville, thus maintaining his caliphal dignity. It was also in Seville where al-Qāsim must have abandoned the idea of having his son, Ḥasan, succeed him in the caliphate, as it was his other son, Muḥammad, who appeared on the coins as heir from the moment al-Qāsim regained power in Cordova for the second time (413/1023).⁶¹

As for Yaḥyā's allies, it is worth mentioning the Banū Īfran. Although the textual sources say nothing about their political stance while Jaen was occupied by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Mālik, grandson of Almanzor, between 412/1021–1022 and 419/1029, they must have shown their allegiance to Yaḥyā b. Ḥammūd by minting coins in his name. This would explain why they welcomed Yaḥyā's son, caliph Idrīs [II], years later in Ronda, if for only a few months, after his time in the Maghreb where he waited to recover the caliphate in Malaga.⁶²

3.4.1. Malaga, Capital of the Ḥammūdīd Caliphate

As his uncle had done before him in Seville, Yaḥyā, in spite of being exiled in Malaga, maintained his caliphal dignity by striking coins on which *Madīnat Mālaka* appeared as the

61. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 149-150, 152-155.

62. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, 232.

mint's name,⁶³ and did so even before finally settling in the city.⁶⁴ Of these, the coinage of the Malaga mint from the year 416/1025 are most relevant. Not only was this the first time that the name of the Malaga mint appeared on the die of coins struck in al-Andalus,⁶⁵ but the issues are also the only evidence of Yaḥyā's first stay in Malaga between 413/1023 and 416/425. These issues must have been coined by the Ḥammūdīd caliph in the first eight months of the year, prior to his return to Cordova, and their existence seems to verify that he must have also minted coins in the preceding years at the *Dār al-Sikka* in Malaga,⁶⁶ the opening of which reveals, as has been previously underscored by Prieto, the importance that the city would acquire for the dynasty from this moment on.⁶⁷

Although he briefly returned to Cordova (416/425), Yaḥyā ultimately settled in Malaga, turning it into the Ḥammūdīd *Dār al-Mamlaka*.⁶⁸ Two months later, Mujāhid and Khayrān, allies of Ḥabbūs b. Māksan, entered the former Umayyad capital, triggering a massacre of Berbers.⁶⁹ Yaḥyā, Dūnās b. Abī Rūḥ and Aḥmad b. Mūsā managed to escape alive, the latter fleeing to Malaga while ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAṭṭāf al-Īfranī had to remain in Cordova, as the numismatic evidence seems to attest. After the blood bath, the Cordovans ousted the Ḥammūdīds. Also, I believe the fact that the latter are referred to as Fāṭimids in the *Bayān*,⁷⁰ as opposed to Ḥammūdīds, suggests more than mere literary aesthetics; instead, its function seems to be to stress, once again, the Fāṭimid ancestry of the dynasty and highlight both its religious connotation and the consequent threat to Sunni al-Andalus.⁷¹

From Malaga, Yaḥyā saw the Cordovan *fuqahā'* revoke his *bayʿa*, the true legitimating element of a caliph, and abolish the caliphal institution. However, regardless of the legitimacy of this act, the abolition of the caliphate was not fully achieved, since caliphs continued to be recognized in several territories of al-Andalus and the Maghreb. This included the

63. Type Ariza Ya1.3. This issue is the only known case in which the mint's name appears in the orthographic form *Madīnat Mālaka* (مدينة مالكة), since it will be later generalized as *Mālaqa* (مالقة), as already noted by Prieto: A. Prieto y Vives, *Los Reyes de Taifas. Estudio histórico-numismático de los musulmanes españoles en el siglo V de la Hégira (XI de J.C.)* (Madrid, 1926), 111.

64. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 177-178. Concerning the issues of the Malaga mint in Islamic times cf. Ariza Armada, "Monedas andalusíes de Málaga."

65. Malaga had previously been a Visigothic mint. Cf. P. Rodríguez Oliva, "La antigüedad," *Málaga. Historia*, t. II (Granada, 1984), 466.

66. Although its location is unknown, it must have been situated within the citadel (*alcazaba*) of Malaga, of whose time the oldest aulic area is contemporary, especially considering that it appears to have been proven that during this period there already existed a clear dissociation between the *alcazaba* and the medina. Cf. M. I. Calero Secall and V. Martínez Enamorado, *Málaga, ciudad de al-Andalus* (Málaga, 1995), 339.

67. Prieto y Vives, *Los Reyes de Taifas*, 111.

68. Cf. M. I. Calero Secall, "Dos ciudades Ḥammūdīes: Málaga y Ceuta," *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebráicos XLII-XLIII* (1993-1994), 37.

69. See Rosado Llamas's considerations in this respect, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 143.

70. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 145-146; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 127. The actual term used in the source is *khalaʿa* (to dismiss, to depose). See on the appellation as Fāṭimids see M. Fierro, "On al-Fāṭimī and al-Fāṭimīyyūn," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), 142.

71. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, 248-249.

Ḥammūdīds, and, in Seville, the alleged Hishām II. Numismatics confirms this point, since, from a typological standpoint, there was no significant change in the Ḥammūdīd coins of the time. The successive members of the dynasty continued to issue coins of the “caliphal” type. Nevertheless, this does seem to confirm that the disappearance of the Cordovan caliphate, along with the resulting increase in political instability, negatively impacted the production volumes of, at least, the Ḥammūdīd silver coin.⁷²

3.4.2. Al-Qāsim’s Last Alliances

Al-Qāsim held power in Cordova for the second time for just over seven months before he had to leave the city (414/1023) and face the betrayal of the *qāḍī*, Ibn ‘Abbād, who refused to accept him in Seville. In spite of this, not only did al-Qāsim have the support of the emir ‘Abd al-‘Azīz of Valencia, as literary sources indicate, but, thanks to a specimen from 415/1024–1025, we know that al-Qāsim also enjoyed Yaḥyā b. Mundhir al-Tujībī’s recognition. This issue shows that probably from the very beginning of the uprising that would expel al-Qāsim from Cordova, the caliph counted on his support, or at least counted on him in the year 415/1024–1025, in which he appears on the coin die as the caliph’s *ḥājīb*. This, in turn, turned the Taifa of Saragossa into a first-order ally,⁷³ but none of this support could prevent his nephew, Yaḥyā, from besieging him and taking him prisoner in Jerez.

Different authors who have dealt with the subject have considered that, since the textual sources seem to date al-Qāsim’s imprisonment in Malaga to the year 414/1023–1024, these issues were carried out while the caliph was already in his nephew’s hands.⁷⁴ Some will even say that, as he was already a prisoner, the issues were nothing but “feigned obedience”⁷⁵ or a mere reference to the “least awkward” but powerless caliph.⁷⁶ To others, they were considered only “a stratagem to disguise the ‘regal’ ambitions of the Banū Tujībī.”⁷⁷ However, in my opinion, these coinages, which represent at least a theoretical recognition by the Taifa of Saragossa, show that, despite al-Qāsim’s confinement, they did not, at least initially, concede defeat. In addition, the fact that Yaḥyā b. Mundhir issued his own coinage in the following year (416/1025–1026) in the name of *imām* ‘Abd Allāh (type Prieto 222a), signals that, from the moment that Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd regained power in Cordova following the deposition and escape of Muḥammad [III] al-Mustakfī that same year (416/1025–1026), the Tujībīs abandoned al-Qāsim’s cause, and completely ceased to recognize the Ḥammūdīd

72. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, 250-253.

73. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 160-161.

74. F. Codera y Zaidín, Francisco. “Estudio crítico sobre la historia y monedas de los Hammudīes de Málaga y Algeciras,” *Museo Español de Antigüedades* VIII (1877), 440-441; F. Guillén Robles, *Málaga musulmana. Sucesos, antigüedades, Ciencias y Letras Malagueñas durante la Edad Media* (Málaga, 1880, Repr. Málaga, 1957), 247.

75. Vives y Escudero, *Monedas de las dinastías arábigo-españolas*, LIV.

76. Prieto y Vives, *Los Reyes de Taifas*, 125.

77. P. Guichard and B. Soravia, *Los reinos de taifas. Fragmentación política y esplendor cultural* (Málaga, 2005), 51.

caliphate. In fact, they even acknowledged the last Umayyad of Cordova, Hishām [III],⁷⁸ as the numismatic evidence indicates.⁷⁹

3.5. Idrīs [I] (r. 427/1035 to 430–431/1039)

Idrīs b. ʿAlī was at the helm of the government of Ceuta when his brother, Caliph Yaḥyā al-Muʿtalī, died during the Battle of Carmona (427/1035). Although, according to Ibn ʿIdhārī, Yaḥyā had designated his youngest son, Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, as his heir, “his paternal uncle, Idrīs b. ʿAlī forestalled him.”⁸⁰ To date, the belief has been held that the young age of his nephews, Idrīs and Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, was a determining factor for Idrīs’s immediate proclamation as caliph in Ceuta. However, Ḥasan never appeared as heir on Yaḥyā’s coins. Only his uncle Idrīs, who also became the ruler of Ceuta, did.⁸¹ This would explain why, as suggested by al-Bakrī,⁸² in that very place he proclaimed himself caliph, adopting the *laqab* al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh⁸³ and, in that same year, departed for the Iberian Peninsula where he proclaimed himself in Malaga⁸⁴ under the nickname of Mutaʿayyad bi-llāh (“The one helped by God”).⁸⁵ He was the rightful successor.

The fact that Idrīs [I] took a new *laqab* upon arriving in Malaga has been interpreted as a political shift whereby he ceased to support the Idrīsīd cause, symbolized by the title al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh, and adopted a new Umayyad line of continuity. Thus, he abandoned his North African orientation to focus more on al-Andalus.⁸⁶

Historiographic records would have us believe, in line with what is stated in the *Crónica anónima* (*The Anonymous Chronicle*), that Idrīs [I] died on 16 Muḥarram 431/October 8th 1039, or at least in the same year, days after the victory over the ʿAbbādid army.⁸⁷ However,

78. M. J. Viguera Molíns, “Las Taifas,” chap. III of *Los Reinos de Taifas. Al-Andalus en el siglo XI*, vol. VIII de *Historia de España Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid, 1994), 74; M. J. Viguera Molíns, *El Islam en Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1995), 61.

79. Prieto and Vives, *Los Reyes de Taifas*, 225–227.

80. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 216; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 181.

81. Regarding the identification of Idrīs as heir in Yaḥyā’s issues cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 183.

82. al-Bakrī, *Al-masālik wa-al-mamālik*, ed. Le Baron de Slane (Algier, 1913), 133. To date, it is the only Arabic source known to have reported this information, whose credibility has been confirmed recently by numismatics.

83. The first to highlight this news were J. J. Rodríguez Lorente and T. Ibrahim, *Numismática de Ceuta musulmana* (Madrid, 1987), 41.

84. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān III* (Arabic), 144; Spanish trans. Maíllo Salgado, 126; *Primera Crónica General de España*, ed. R. Menéndez Pidal with study by D. Catalán. vol. II (Madrid, 1977), 465.

85. Cf. M. Vega Martín and S. Peña Martín, “Un dirham a nombre del ḥammūdī Idrīs al-ʿAzīz bi-[A]llāh (luego llamado al-Mutaʿayyid bi-[A]llāh),” *Al-Qanṭara* XXV, 1 (2004), 245–251.

86. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 155, following the considerations of Vega Martín and Peña Martín, “Un dirham a nombre del ḥammūdī Idrīs al-ʿAzīz bi-[A]llāh.”

87. *Crónica anónima*, 18–19. All the authors who have dealt with the subject thus far date the death of Idrīs [I] in 431, except for Codera, who underscored that “according to some author” the events took place in the year 430 (Codera y Zaidín, “Estudio crítico sobre la historia,” 448) and Guillén Robles, who indicated, in a footnote, that Arabic authors disagree on the date of these events, but failed to specify to which authors they referred (Guillén Robles, *Málaga musulmana*, 65, nota 1).

numismatic studies have raised many questions about this date, given that we know issues were made by his successor, Ḥasan al-Mustanṣir, in 430/1038–1039. To Wasserstein, these issues prove that Ḥasan forestalled the demise of Idrīs [I] by minting coins in his own name in Ceuta because Idrīs [I] had changed his mind about his succession in favor of his own son, Yaḥyā Ḥayyūn al-Qā'im.⁸⁸ This hypothesis has been countered by Rosado Llamas,⁸⁹ who sees the contradictory dates as evidence of a possible “internal problem in the capital before the succession” upon the caliph’s death.⁹⁰ In my opinion, the numismatic evidence does confirm what is stated in al-Ḥumaydī’s *Jadhwa*: that he died in the year 430/1038–1039.⁹¹

On the other hand, the issues struck in Ceuta on behalf of Idrīs [I] indicate that al-Najā al-ʿAlawī could well have been the caliph’s *ḥājib*.⁹² His power continued to grow during Ḥasan al-Mustanṣir’s caliphate, so that his name came to occupy a more prestigious position on his coins.⁹³ In some of the typologies of Idrīs [I] and Ḥasan, we find, next to al-Najā, a name usually read as Ḥabūn, Harras, Haras, Harāsh, Harās, Khalaf or Hanzun, which I believe must be read as Hārūn. He was probably a member of the Banū Hārūn, from the Algarve, of the Banū Salah, or of the Azdāja, who was in service to caliph Idrīs [I] and, succeeding, to Ḥasan al-Mustanṣir, under whom he would occupy a prominent political position.⁹⁴ Another unidentified person also appears on the peninsular issues of Idrīs [I], whose name, I suggest, must be read as Khayrūn instead of Shahwar, Hanzūn, Ḥabūn or Khabrūn.⁹⁵ Although it has been claimed that he was a mint worker,⁹⁶ he must have held a relevant political office, as is the case for all of the individuals who appear on Ḥammūdīd coins.

Furthermore, the prosperity that prevailed in his territories, as described in the literary sources,⁹⁷ clearly contradicts the argument in numismatic studies regarding the virtual disappearance of dinars and a drastic reduction in fineness in the case of dirhams.⁹⁸ However, based on the data we have at present, this theory cannot be maintained, as 47.8% of the known monetary production consisted of dinars. This would apply exclusively to the case of the al-Andalus mint, since we only know of one dinar, as opposed to the ten

88. Wasserstein, *The Caliphate in the West*, 85–87.

89. Cf his arguments in Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 165–166.

90. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 160.

91. al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwa*, transl. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, para. 26. See the historiographical debate with respect to this topic in Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 237–238.

92. Type Ariza IdI4.-5; cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 233–235.

93. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 248–250.

94. Type Ariza IdI6; cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 235–237. For Ḥasan al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh’s issues cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 250–253.

95. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 231–233.

96. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 158–159.

97. M. J. Viguera Molíns, *Los Reinos de Taifas y las invasiones magrebíes (Al-Andalus del XI al XIII)* (Madrid, 1992), 114, referring to Ibn al-Khatīb, *Aʿmāl*, 140 and *Dhayl Bayān III*, 289.

98. Rodríguez Lorente and Ibrahim, *Numismática de Ceuta musulmana*, 41.

Maghrebi ones. Notwithstanding, there is proof of the existence of dinars from all years of his caliphate, except for the year 428/1036–1037, from which none have been preserved.⁹⁹

3.6. *Ḥasan al-Mustaṣṣir bi-llāh* (r. 430–431/1039–1040 to 434/1042–1043)

Ḥasan was proclaimed caliph in Ceuta, where he was at the time due to his standing as heir.¹⁰⁰ From there, he headed to Malaga to seize power; the city had been taken from him by his cousin Yaḥyā [II] b. Idrīs, of whose ephemeral caliphate there is no numismatic record. It has also been suggested that Yaḥyā's appellation, al-Qā'im, rather than referring to the *laqab*, al-Qā'im bi-amr Allāh, could have been in reference to the conspiratorial role attributed to him, meaning "the rebel" or "the insurgent," as the name never appears complete.¹⁰¹

Once in power, Ḥasan incarcerated his brother Idrīs b. Yaḥyā, and although textual sources suggest that the act was arbitrary, this could not have been the case. Although it is not mentioned in the chronicles, the typology Ariza Ḥa3 could serve as evidence of Idrīs b. Yaḥyā's designation as his brother Ḥasan's heir, which would explain that a rift, perceived as a threat by Ḥasan, led him to imprison his brother in Airós. His designation as heir justified his subsequent release and proclamation as caliph. However, if on the contrary the Idrīs mentioned on the coin referred instead to the son left by Ḥasan in Ceuta, thus signifying his designation as heir, it could well be said that status, counter to his uncle's aspirations, was the reason for the disagreement between the brothers and the ensuing imprisonment of Idrīs b. Yaḥyā. In either case, Ḥasan's actions would be justified.¹⁰²

There are only nine extant exemplars bearing the name of Ḥasan and all, except for one, whose existence has been questioned,¹⁰³ were struck in Ceuta. Wasserstein sees this as evidence of an absence of control over Malaga. Rosado Llamas, on the other hand, attributes it to an economic downturn resulting from the lack of raw materials on the peninsula "offset by the Ceuta reserves," which runs counter to the economic information in the textual sources.¹⁰⁴ In my opinion, the economic decline is not so much evidenced by the lack of raw materials as by the loss of quality of the Ḥammūdīd currency that begins to be apparent at this time. However, I also believe that the peninsular coinages simply have not been discovered yet, since denying their existence would imply that Ḥasan al-Mustaṣṣir did not make use of the caliphal prerogative of issuing currency in the same capital of his caliphate, which was his center of power. And even if this might have happened occasionally, the practice would not have been sustained over time, given the duration of his government and the economic news reported by the textual sources.¹⁰⁵

99. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 241.

100. It appeared as such in the last series of the issues of Idrīs [I]. See the most recent cataloging proposal in Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 229.

101. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 161.

102. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 253–254.

103. Type Ariza Ḥa3.

104. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 165.

105. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 255–256.

3.7. The Innovations of Idrīs [II] b. Yaḥyā (r. 434/1024–1043 to 446/1054–1055) and His Likely Dissociation from Shīʿism during His Second Reign.

During his first period in power, Idrīs [II] had continued the numismatic graphic program with Shīʿī connotations introduced by his grandfather, which entailed maintaining the octogram as well as innovatively adding the hexagon and the hexagram, or “Seal of Solomon,” as I previously discussed. However, during his second reign in Malaga, there was a turning point.

First, numismatic studies have been able to confirm that Idrīs [II] actually took the *laqab* al-Ẓāfir bi-ḥawl Allāh, which according to al-Bunnāhī, he adopted upon his return to Malaga.¹⁰⁶ Thus, he introduced it on the monetary dies,¹⁰⁷ so that it would become the defining characteristic of the issues of his second government, which, in turn, allows us to clear up any doubts about when his second period in power began. It can now be dated to 445/1053–1054.¹⁰⁸

However, it is noteworthy that Idrīs [II] kept his first *laqab*, which can also be seen on his issues. Although this is an uncommon occurrence, it was paralleled by the issues of the ʿAbbādids, which demonstrates a unique case among caliphal issuances in al-Andalus, and, more specifically, among those of the Ḥammūdīds; typically, when a caliph adopted different honorary titles (such as Idrīs [I] for instance), he did not have them concurrently appear on his coinages. Even more important though is the fact that both *laqabs* are theoretically contradictory in their possible religious overtones. While al-ʿĀlī bi-llāh has a significant pro-ʿAlī connotation,¹⁰⁹ al-Ẓāfir bi-ḥawl Allāh, previously used by Sulaymān al-Mustaʿīn after his return to Cordova, has no such implication, and resembles the root *ZFR*, which appears in several *laqabs* that evoke strictly “personal” triumphs.

Secondly, Idrīs [II] introduced two other innovative elements that would define the Ḥammūdīd currency as a precursor to Almoravid minting. The first of these was the introduction, for the first and only time on a caliphal coin in al-Andalus, of the title *walī ʿahd al-muslimīn* (“heir [to the emir] of the Muslims”) (type Ariza IdII11). Idrīs [II] himself was designated as *amīr al-muslimīn* on the appointment record of the *qāḍī* of Malaga, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Ḥasan.¹¹⁰ Therefore, the Almoravids were neither the first nor the only ones to use this title as it has been argued; unlike the Almoravids, who adopted this title in order to avoid using the title of *amīr al-muʿminīn*, which was reserved for the caliph of Baghdad, Idrīs [II] kept this caliphal title and incorporated it onto his coins. Hence, in my opinion,

106. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 180, coinciding with the textual interpretation of A. Cuellas in his translation of al-Bunnāhī, *Kitāb al-Marqaba al-ʿUlyā*, transl. A. Cuellas, ed. Celia del Moral, *Al-Marqaba al-ʿUlyā de al-Nubāhī (La atalaya suprema sobre el cadiazgo y el muftiazgo)* (Granada, 2001).

107. Until recently, the monetary legend had been considered to have propitiatory value (الظافر هو الله or الظافر بالله), however, Rosado Llamas has identified the text as the *laqab* of Idrīs [II]. Concerning its different readings and interpretations, see Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 272-274.

108. On the issue of the timing of his second government, see Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 274.

109. Ación Almansa, “Los ḥammūdīes,” 56; F. Clément, *Pouvoir et légitimité en Espagne musulmane à l’époque des taifas (v^e-xi^e siècle). L’imam fictif* (Paris, 1997), 251; Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 169-170.

110. Concerning this figure cf. M. I. Calero Secall, “Un personaje clave en la conquista de la Málaga Ḥammūdī por los ziríes,” *Baética* 8 (1985), especially 542.

his adoption of this title signifies a reassertion of sovereignty after his confrontation with Muḥammad al-Mahdī's supporters during his attempt to dominate al-Andalus. Actually, the appearance of the title on the coin could have represented the reaction of al-Andalus to the new Almoravid power that was emerging in the Maghreb, in which case, on the one hand, it would reaffirm the integrating consciousness of al-Andalus as a region of the *Dār al-Islām*; and on the other hand, it would reaffirm the Ḥammūdīd claim to leadership, even during this period of time, in which historiography regards them as nothing more than another taifa.¹¹¹

The second innovative element that appeared on the currency was the introduction of Surah 3:84 of the Qur'an¹¹² as a marginal legend on the reverse of a typology. This was another novelty added by Idrīs II to al-Andalus currency, evident in its concentrically arranged legends (type Ariza IdII12). This arrangement has been deemed an imitation of Fāṭimid coinages and, consequently, a reference to Shi'ism,¹¹³ which runs counter to the use of said verse, which was used by Sunni Malikis as their paradigm against Barghawāṭa heterodoxy and Fāṭimid "apostasy." In my view, the contemporaneity and similarity of Ifrīqiya's Zirid specimens to those of Idrīs [II] belie the idea that the concentric alignment of the legends can be interpreted as proof of Shi'ism. Far from being interpretable as a sign of heterodoxy, this typology could be seen as pointing to a reaffirmation of the Ḥammūdīd caliph's orthodoxy, although it should not be ruled out that Idrīs sought to strengthen the support of the Zirids of the Taifa of Granada by sharing some monetary traits with the branch of the Zirids of Ifrīqiya. Both the title of "Emir of the Muslims" and the Qur'anic quotation were later adopted by the Almoravids, becoming their predominant monetary texts and characteristic of their monetary issues.¹¹⁴

Therefore, the new *laqab* adopted by Idrīs [II] and the legends of his new monetary typologies seem to point to the notion that he dissociated himself from Shi'ism in his second government, undertaking, as had his grandfather, 'Alī b. Ḥammūd, a skillful synthesis of both traditions. This would explain why Idrīs also kept his first *laqab*, the concentric disposition of the legends, and the incorporation of the title *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*, which had first appeared on the coins of 'Abbāsīd caliph, al-Mahdī, and which had been used to designate the eighth Shi'ī *imām*, 'Alī al-Rīdā.

Furthermore, the only economic news conveyed by the literary sources¹¹⁵ portrays Idrīs [II] as a charitable man: "He would give 500 dinars every day" to charity. This news suggests that the dearth of this caliph's gold specimens is due solely to the fact that they had not yet reached us. As for silver, signs of decline in the quality of the dirhams progressively become

111. Concerning the typology and the use of the title *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn* on currency and other media cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 279-280.

112. "Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter."

113. F. Clément, "L'apport de la numismatique pour l'étude des taifas andalouses du v^e/xi^e siècle," *Archéologie Islamique* 4 (1994), 66.

114. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 280-283.

115. al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwa*, I: 46-49, transl. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, para. 31.

more apparent, which was related not so much to “the need to make payments to the Zirids and the Ifranids,” as has been stated,¹¹⁶ but rather to the so-called “Silver Crisis,” which affected to a greater or lesser extent all of al-Andalus.¹¹⁷

3.8. Muḥammad [I] al-Mahdī (r. 438/1047 to 444/1052–1053)

The caliphal title with which Muḥammad [I] al-Mahdī assumed the caliphate has been the object of careful analysis by several authors, due to its important connotations. While Wasserstein claims that the *laqab* is devoid of any special meaning,¹¹⁸ in the eyes of Fierro, it is a response to “eschatological resonances associated with the concept of fitnah.”¹¹⁹ In contrast, Clément suggests that it refers to ‘Alī, the term *mahdī* as the Shi‘i epithet par excellence.¹²⁰ This, however, has been recently refuted by Rosado Llamas, who considers it simply “another pro-Alīd *laqab*.”¹²¹ That said, from my viewpoint, and taking into account that there are no elements on the coin that link him to Shi‘ism, the use of the *laqab* (*al-Mahdī*) by Muḥammad [I] may have another possible reading. On the one hand, let us not forget that Muḥammad [I] took the title of al-Mahdī when he was proclaimed caliph against his cousin Idrīs [II] al-‘Alī, from whom the caliphate was taken. On the other hand, in Islam, the concept of the *mahdī* has not always been necessarily associated with Shi‘i messianism. In fact, Sunni *mahdīs*, more than being drawn to spirituality, have generally been oriented towards management, “external organization,” “perfecting collective affairs,” suppressing internal conflicts, and subjugating infidels.¹²² Consequently, by adopting the title of al-Mahdī, the new caliph presented himself as a reformer who would put an end to his predecessor’s mismanagement and the conflict that ravaged al-Andalus, thus legitimizing himself against the deposed Idrīs [II]. This image of Muḥammad [I] would complement the one depicted in some chronicles.¹²³

After his proclamation as caliph, Muḥammad [I] named his brother and fellow prisoner, Ḥasan, his heir, using the *laqab* of *al-Sāmī*. Literary sources discuss a rift between the two brothers that resulted in the departure of Ḥasan to Gumāra territory, where he was recognized in Oued Laou (Wādī Lāw), and from where he maintained his claim to the

116. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 173.

117. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 292-294.

118. D. J. Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings. Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002-1086* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1985), 125, note 21. In Wasserstein, *The Caliphate in the West*, there is no mention of this matter.

119. Also applicable to the cases of Muḥammad b. Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, and the last Ḥammūdīd, Yaḥyā b. Idrīs b. ‘Alī, as we shall see. Cf. M. Fierro, “La religión,” in M. J. Viguera Molíns (ed.), *Los Reinos de Taifas. Al-Andalus en el s. XI, Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*, vol. VIII-1 (Madrid, 1994), 399.

120. Clément, *Pouvoir et légitimité en Espagne musulmane*, 251.

121. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī*, 174.

122. M. Fierro, “Sobre monedas de época almohade: I. El dinar del Cadí ‘Iyāḍ que nunca existió. II. Cuando se acuñaron las primeras monedas almohades y la cuestión de la licitud de acuñar moneda.” *Al-Qanṭara* XXVII, 2 (2006), 464-465. See also P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic political thought* (Edinburgh, 2004), 251-252; M. García Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform. Mahdīs of the Muslim West* (Leiden, 2006), 157-192.

123. *Crónica anónima*, 22; al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwa*, transl. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī Jadhwa*, para. 33.

caliphate. However, the numismatic evidence suggests that he ruled the Maghrebi territory on behalf of his brother, minting coins in his name until 441/1049–1050, in his capacity as heir to the caliphate. Since Ceuta, the traditional seat of the heirs, was in favor of Idrīs [II], Muḥammad [I] sent him to the territory in which he would find support, that of the Ghumāra, thus securing recognition from the Maghreb.¹²⁴

The fact that the northern mines of present-day Morocco were held by the Maghrāwa, who were also supporters of Idrīs [II], explains why the “Silver Crisis” was more evident in the case of Muḥammad al-Mahdī’s currency than in the currency of Idrīs [II]. This crisis also affected the Taifas since the passage of the Strait was controlled by pro-Ḥammūdīd tribes. After the disappearance of the Ḥammūdīds, in the second half of the 5th/11th century, the mines in Central and Southern Maghreb would be brought under control by the Almoravids. Neither the Berber tribes of the north nor the Almoravids recognized the legitimacy of the Taifas, which explains the lack of silver supply on their part.¹²⁵

Last, but not least, the new cataloging proposal of the specimens attributed to Muḥammad al-Mahdī of Malaga, and those of his namesake of Algeciras, clarifies both their dates of death, thus solving the chronological discrepancy between the textual sources and the issues,¹²⁶ dating the former to the year 444/1052–1053 and the latter to 446/1054–1055.¹²⁷

4. The Sicilian Fate of the Last Ḥammūdīds

After the demise of Muḥammad [I] al-Mahdī, there is no numismatic evidence of the recognition of another member of the dynasty as caliph. However, respect for the final members of the Ḥammūdīd dynasty persisted in the Maghreb. There, both sons of Idrīs [II], Muḥammad [II] al-Musta‘alī,¹²⁸ and ‘Abd Allāh¹²⁹ settled. ‘Abd Allāh’s son, Muḥammad, who was rumored to be the Mahdī, settled in the Sicilian court of Roger. The Ḥammūdīds were present on the island until the twelfth century, through the converted branch of Chamutus’s offspring, in the regions of Castrogiovanni (Enna) and Calabria (in the vicinity of Mileto), and through the Muslim branch, which was equally favored by the Normans, and represented by the Banū Ḥajar, amongst whom Abū al-Qāsim Ḥammūd stood out.¹³⁰

5. Circulation and Imitations of Ḥammūdīd Currency

Coin hoards reveal that the coinage of ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd, al-Qāsim, and Yaḥyā was used widely across and beyond al-Andalus. However, the degree of dispersion of their

124. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 311-314.

125. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 319-322.

126. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 306-309.

127. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 314-316.

128. Cf. Ariza Armada, *Estudio sobre las monedas de los Ḥammūdīes*, 571-574.

129. Grandfather of the geographer al-Idrīsī, author of *Libro de Roger*. Cf. F. Pons Boigues, *Ensayo bio-bibliográfico sobre los historiadores y geógrafos árabe españoles* (Madrid, 1898, reprint Madrid, 1993), 231-240; Oman, “Al-Idrīsī,” *EP*.

130. A. Amara and A. Nef, “Al-Idrīsī et les Ḥammūdīdes de Sicile: nouvelles données biographiques sur l’auteur du *Livre de Roger*,” *Arabica* XLVIII (2001), 121-127.

successors's coins gradually decreased as their sovereignty and power became increasingly limited. Despite this, only those coins struck in the name of the last of the Ḥammūdīd rulers, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, have not been discovered in what was then Christian territory.¹³¹

Their circulation, nonetheless, was not limited to Christian territories alone. Given the quality and prestige of their coins, the dinars issued in the name of the first three caliphs were copied by the Counts of Barcelona. These imitations, known as *mancuses*, were made by minters, such as the Jews Bonhom (Fig. 14) and Eneas, or by the counts themselves (Fig. 15). They had coins minted in the name of the Ḥammūdīd caliphs, and had their names appear on some typologies, as did the local powers in al-Andalus. In this way, they had at their disposal high-quality, prestigious coins that were accepted by both Muslim and Christian populations, but which in turn were an expression of the recognition of, and even vassalage to, Ḥammūdīd sovereignty, at least the one exercised by the first three caliphs of the dynasty.¹³²



Figure 14. Bilingual *Mancus* (BONNOM).



Figure 15. Bilingual *Mancus* (RAIMVNDVS COMES). *Gabinete Numismático de Barcelona* 15151.

The *mancuses* that imitated Yaḥyā's coinages, and probably others as well, traveled to places as far away as Kiev, in Old Russia (Rus), thus becoming material evidence of

131. They circulated through the Taifas of Seville, Cordova, Toledo, Valencia, Denia and Majorca, Saragossa and, of course, Malaga, as well as through the Christian Catalan Counties and the Kingdom of Navarre, i.e., present-day Cordova, Malaga, Seville, Alicante, Valencia, Majorca, Guadalajara, Soria, Saragossa, Navarre and Barcelona. On Ḥammūdīd currency hoards and circulation cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 35-72.

132. Cf. Ariza Armada, *De Barcelona a Orán*, 339-349.

the contact between the Sephardim and the Jewish community of the first Eastern Slavic state.¹³³

6. Conclusion

The numismatic record appears to show that ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd was appointed *ḥājib* and his brother, al-Qāsim, vizier, by the caliph Sulaymān. From the moment the first Ḥammūdīd became governor of Ceuta, the city acquired new significance as the seat of the heirs to the Ḥammūdīd caliphate. The rule of the Maghreb would fall to them. It was actually ‘Alī who started the first mint in Ceuta, which was opened to cover the expenses of the Berber troops who were loyal to Caliph Sulaymān, and whose issues circulated widely across the Iberian Peninsula.

Whether or not the letter in which Hishām [II] offered to appoint him as his successor to the caliphate existed, ‘Alī b. Ḥammūd was recognized as such by all who supported his uprising against Sulaymān. After his proclamation as caliph, a decisive step in the development of the subsequent Sharīfism, he skillfully synthesized the Sunni and the Shī‘ī traditions, in order to enjoy acceptance both in al-Andalus and in the Maghreb. Having said that, his Shī‘ī orientation must have been much greater than has been accepted by historiography. This inclination materialized through a monetary symbolic program that would be continued by his direct successors, thus marking the differentiation of this dynastic branch that would confront the rest of the branches with its claim to caliphal power.

The third Ḥammūdīd, Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī, chose Malaga as the new seat of the caliphate, retaining his caliphal sovereignty despite the dubiously legitimate abolition of the caliphate in Cordova.

The Ḥammūdīd caliphate enjoyed an extensive and continued recognition in the Maghreb (which even reached Oran), where the different Berber tribes recognized the caliphs of one or another branch of the dynasty. That never happened in the cases of either the alleged Hishām [II] or the Taifas, thus explaining the so-called “Silver Crisis.”

Ḥammūdīd numismatics sheds light on some of the contradictory dates for the dynasty’s history. It also shows that all the individuals appearing on their coins held high political positions. Some of these individuals, in fact, even bore the title of *ḥājib*, as was the case of al-Najā al-‘Alawī. The numismatic evidence also shows that the innovative monetary policy of Idrīs [II] was a direct precursor, in several respects, to Almoravid currency.

The widespread circulation of Ḥammūdīd coinage in the Peninsula, including Christian territories, as well as the fact that the dinars of the first three Ḥammūdīd caliphs were imitated in the Catalan Counties, evinces the quality and prestige of the Ḥammūdīd gold coinage, imitations of which reached territories as distant as the Principality of Kiev.

Following the disappearance of the Ḥammūdīd caliphate, the trail of the last Ḥammūdīd can be followed to Sicily, where their presence has been confirmed until the twelfth century.

133. V. Kuleshov, “Mankus Barselonskogo grafstva XI v. iz Kijevskogo klada 1899 (An Eleventh-Century Mancus of the County of Barcelona from the Kievan Hoard of 1899),” *First Stone Churches of Old Rus, Transactions of the State Hermitage Museum* LXV (2012), pp. 211- 217.

Table 1: Genealogical Tree of the Ḥammūdid Caliphs

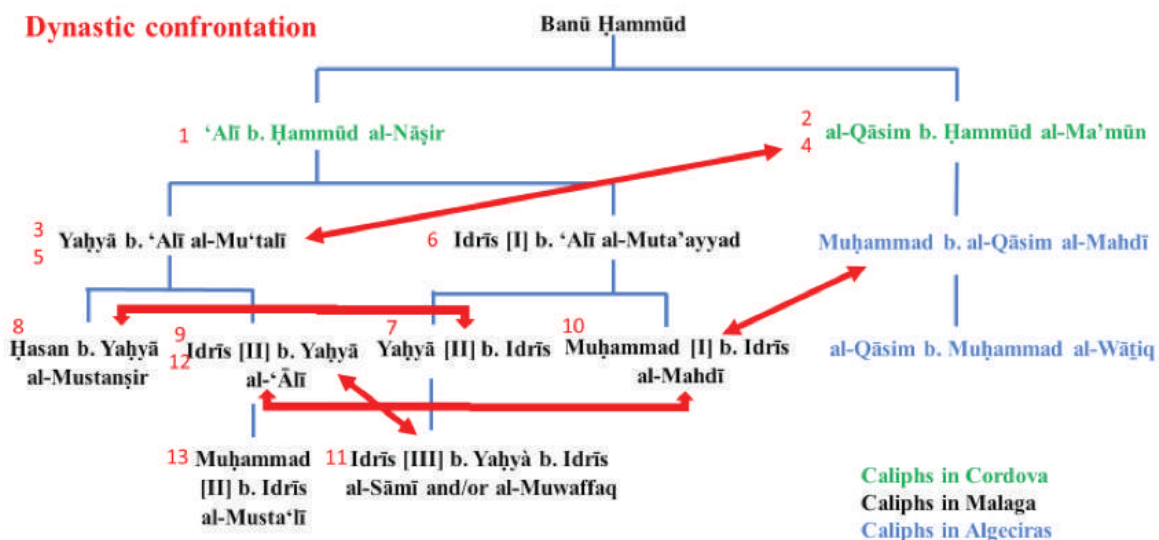
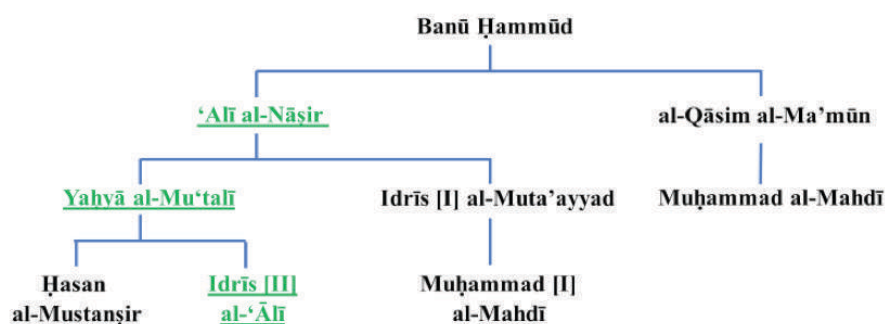


Table 2: Ḥammūdid Caliphs Who Minted Coins According to the Latest Proposals*



*Underlined in green is the dynastic branch which developed the iconographical monetary program started by 'Alī b. Ḥammūd and which struggled for power against the other branches of the dynasty.

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Notes and Brief Communications

Early Arabo-Islamic Epigraphy and the Positivist Fallacy: A Brief Communication

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The last two decades have witnessed a veritable explosion of new finds in the field of Arabian epigraphy. Fortunately, these new discoveries have not left the field of early Islamic history untouched. No less a shift in Arabo-Islamic epigraphy is its entrance into the digital age, as can be seen in the transformation of the *Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique* into an online portal.¹ Amateur enthusiasts have also become a key engine in disseminating awareness of and enthusiasm

for these inscriptions among a broader public, and even specialists, through blogs and digital platforms such as Twitter.² However, despite the swift progress of Arabian epigraphic studies in recent years, historians of the early Islamic period remain, as Jonathan Brockopp has recently observed, “at the earliest stages of properly describing the material.”³ Studies of this material by linguists, philologists, epigraphers, intellectual historians, and the like remain pressing desiderata.⁴

1. URL: <http://www.epigraphie-islamique.org/>.

2. The most prolific and skilled among these are Farīq al-Saḥrāʾ (URL: <http://alsahra.org>, last accessed 31 May 2018) and Mohammed Almoghathawi (URL: <https://twitter.com/mohammed93athar>, last accessed 31 May 2018). Although well-meaning, the concern that professionals and, more importantly, their methods be given priority still remains of the foremost concern. The documentation and publication of new epigraphic material must still be carried out by scientific teams who have acquired research permit and legal permissions to do so.

3. J. Brockopp, “Islamic Origins and Incidental Normativity,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84 (2016): 28-43.

4. For Arabo-Islamic epigraphy, the recent work of Frédéric Imbert is of particular note. See F. Imbert, “L’Islam des pierres : l’expression de la foi dans les graffiti arabes des premiers siècles,” *REMMM* 129 (2011), online, URL: <http://remmm.revues.org/7067> (last consulted 31 May 2018); idem, “Le Coran des pierres: statistiques épigraphiques et première analyses,” in *Le Coran, nouvelles approches*, ed. Mehdi Azaiez and Sabrina Mervin (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013), 99-124; idem, “Graffiti arabes de Cnide et de Kos: premières trace épigraphiques de la conquête musulmane en mer Egée,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 17 (2013): 731-58.



This brief reflection concerns one of the hermeneutical hazards that historians of the early Islamic period must face when interpreting this material: the ‘positivist fallacy’. The term was coined by Anthony Snodgrass, a specialist in ancient Greek archaeology, in the 1980s in a series of publications. Snodgrass defined the positivist fallacy as the assumption that, “archaeological prominence and historical importance are much the same thing; that the observable phenomena are by definition the significant phenomena.”⁵ He later reframed it as “requiring the evidence of excavation to express itself in the language of historical narrative.”⁶ The fallacy, in Snodgrass’s view, is best illustrated by close consideration of specific case studies, but the more vulgar version of the fallacy often appears in public misconceptions about archaeology, that it ‘proves’ or ‘disproves’ this or that ideological vision of history, and in journalistic treatments of archaeological surveys and excavations that rush to sensationalize archaeologists’ findings by, for example, connecting said findings to famous historical, or even mythic, figures and events.

To illustrate the hazards of historical interpretation posed by the positivist fallacy as it relates to epigraphy and

early Islamic history, I will consider the example of an Arabo-Islamic graffito discovered in the Ḥismā region near Tabūk and anticipate, merely for illustrative purpose, how the positivist fallacy might misconstrue it. The graffito has been recently edited, analyzed and dated in the groundbreaking 2017 dissertation of Maysā’ al-Ghabbān (see figures 1-3), whose skillful analysis of the text does not succumb to this fallacy.⁷ The graffito in question appears on a rock face above two other graffiti whose content need not concern us here (notwithstanding their importance in a proper epigraphic analysis of the find, as is found in Dr. al-Ghabbān’s dissertation).

The paleography of the inscription, which is undated, indicates that is indubitably early, certainly no later than the second century AH (eighth century CE). Furthermore, the textual content of this graffito hits several striking points of intrinsic historical interest: 1) its use of an early *taṣliyah* formula asking for God to bless Muḥammad as His servant (*‘abd*) and messenger (*rasūl*) in accord with a qur’anic injunction (cf. Q. Aḥzāb 33:56); 2) a prayer asking God for a noble death in His path (*sharaf al-qatl fī sabīlih*), thus evoking a militant piety resonant with early qur’anic discourse;⁸ and 3) the mention of a famous

5. A. Snodgrass, “Archaeology,” in *Sources for Ancient History*, ed. M. Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 142 [137-184].

6. A. Snodgrass, *An Archaeology of Greece: The Present State and Future Scope of the Discipline* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 38.

7. M. al-Ghabbān, *al-Kitābāt al-islāmiyyah al-mubakkirah fī haḍbat Ḥismā bi-minṭaqat Tabūk: Dirāsah taḥlīliyyah āthāriyyah wa-lughawīyyah*, Ph.D. dissertation, King Saud University (2016-17), 103-4.

8. The reading *sharaf al-qatl* is to be preferred over *sharaf al-qit[ā]* as *qatl* here stands in lieu of the words ‘martyrdom’ (Ar. *shahādah*, *istishhād*) and ‘death’ (Ar. *al-mawt*) broadly attested similarly themed inscriptions; moreover, the idiom *al-qatl fī sabīl Allāh* is widely attested in the *ḥadīth* literature—e.g., “To be slain in Path of God covers all sins (*al-qatl fī sabīl Allāh yukaffiru kull khaṭi’ah*).” See the careful argumentation of Ilkka Lindstedt, “Religious warfare and martyrdom in Arabic graffiti (70s-110s AH/690s-730s CE),” in *Scripts and*

Figure 1: Photo from Fariq al-Saḥrāʾ



Photo source: ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Muḥammad Shafīq Khālīd al-Bayṭār, Sa’d Sulaymān al-Sa’īd, and Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Dāmīgh, *Nuqūsh Ḥiṣmā: kitābāt min ṣadr al-islām shamāl gharb al-Mamlakah* (Riyadh: Manshūrāt al-Majalla al-‘Arabiyya, 2017), 127 (Figure 8).

historical figure of early Islamic history, Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān.

Mu‘āwiyah, a contemporary of the Prophet Muḥammad, ruled over the early Islamic polity as Commander of the Faithful from 661-680 CE and is typically considered the founder of the Umayyad caliphal dynasty. Although this particular

inscription bears his name, it does not call him by his regnal title, ‘Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-mu’minīn*),’ as do all other pertinent discoveries.⁹ Can one, therefore, conclude that this inscription dates to the time *before* his reign as *amīr al-mu’minīn*? If so, this graffito would be unprecedented on multiple accounts: it

Scripture: Writing and Religions in Arabic, 500-700 CE (Chicago: Oriental Institute, forthcoming), 23n72. I cite there the pre-published paper available online at: https://www.academia.edu/35307034/Religious_warfare_and_martyrdom_in_Arabic_graffiti_70s_110s_AH_690s_730s_CE_ (last accessed 31 May 2018). On militancy in early qur’anic piety, see Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 82 ff.

9. Robert Hoyland, “New documentary texts and the early Islamic state,” *BSOAS* 69 (2006): 399.

Figure 2: Arabic text based on Ghabbān, 103-4

- (1) اللهم صلى على محمد عبدك ورسولك واعظم أجره
 (2) واكرم نذله وكتب سعيد بن ذكوان [أن مولى معاوية
 (3) ابن أبي سفيان هو يسئل الله بأفضل ما سأله عبد من الأولين
 (4) والآخرين أن يرزقه شرف القتل في سبيله

Figure 3: English Translation

- 1) God, bless Muḥammad Your servant and Your messenger. Make great his reward*
 2) And make noble his reception** and [thus] wrote Saʿīd ibn Dhakwān,
 the freedman (mawlā) of Muʿāwiyah
 3) ibn Abī Sufyān and he asks God the most virtuous thing His servants ask of Him,
 of the earliest
 4) and the latest generations***: to grant him to be slain nobly in His Path

* cf. Q. Ṭalāq 65:5, Muzzammil 73:20

** viz., in Paradise; cf. Q. Sajdah 32:19.

*** cf. Q. Wāqiʿah 56:49

would be the earliest material evidence for virtually every piece of historical datum that it conveys. In other words, it would be the earliest mention in Arabic of Muḥammad by name as well as by epithet; the earliest mention of Muʿāwiyah himself; and the earliest historical testimony to the qurʾanic themes it invokes.

However, such an interpretation of the evidence contained in the inscription would be wholly misguided, and it is to Maysāʾ al-Ghabbān's credit that she does not even deign to entertain such an interpretation. The assumptions behind such an interpretation would exemplify 'the positivist fallacy': it uses ambiguous evidence and, ignoring its inherent ambiguity, posits the most historically significant possible reading. This hypothetical reading achieves this aim, moreover, at the expense of the

inscription's value per se as material evidence and instead favors extrinsic considerations of 'historical significance'. Paleographic analysis suffices to exclude this interpretation as an anachronism: one of the most conspicuous orthographic indications that the inscription does *not* date to the earliest stratum of Arabo-Islamic inscriptions can be seen in its transcription of the name Muʿāwiyah. The utilization of a plenary medial-*alif* and a 'closed', rather than 'open', medial-*ʿayn* places the inscription squarely outside the earliest stratum of Arabo-Islamic inscriptions – the orthography of the graffito provides sufficient intrinsic evidence to demonstrate that it could not possibly date to the period of Muʿāwiyah's reign, let alone before that period.

Further ambiguity lies in the wording of the inscription itself, specifically the

reference to ‘Sa‘īd son of Dhakwān.’ Frédéric Imbert and Maysā’ al-Ghabbān have pointed out, in reference to the phrase, “Sa‘īd son of Dhakwān the *mawlā* of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān,” that it is not entirely clear which of the men named is the freedman/client (*mawlā*) of Mu‘āwiyah. Is it Sa‘īd or his father, Dhakwān, who is the *mawlā* of Mu‘āwiyah? Both readings are plausible.¹⁰ The literary sources name, after all, a *mawlā* of the Banū Umayyah named Dhakwān who was bound by clientage to ‘Amr ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ.¹¹

This observation relates to a further question raised by the positivist fallacy. It concerns the connection between *literary* and *material* evidence. The positivist fallacy can lead one to presume that, for example, a person mentioned in a *literary* source is necessarily the same person mentioned in a *documentary* source, even when there is insufficient warrant for making such an identification. Consider, then, the following mention of a certain “Sa‘īd the *mawlā* of Mu‘āwiyah” in an anecdotal report from the *Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, a fourth/tenth-century source by the Egyptian Ḥanafī scholar, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Taḥāwī (d. 321/933):¹²

Yūsuf ibn Yazīd related to us, saying:
Ḥajjāj ibn Ibrāhīm related to us,
saying: ‘Īsā ibn Yūnus related to

us from ‘Abd al-Malik, from ‘Aṭā’,¹³ who said:

Sa‘īd, the *mawlā* of Mu‘āwiyah, and some of his companions were fortified in a citadel in al-Ṭā’if, but were captured and taken to ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, who was in Mecca. [Ibn al-Zubayr] sent a message to Ibn ‘Abbās, asking, “What is your judgement concerning these men (*mā tarā fī hā’ulā’i al-nafar*)?” He said, “In my judgment they should be set free, since they were granted safe-conduct when you brought them into the Ḥaram (*arā an takhalliya sabīlahum fa-innahum qad amanū idhā dakhkhaltahum al-ḥaram*)” Ibn al-Zubayr wrote back to him, “Should we simply remove them from the Ḥaram and crucify them?” Ibn ‘Abbās replied, “Why did you bring them into [the Haram] in the first place?” Ibn al-Zubayr took them outside the Ḥaram and crucified them.

Is the Sa‘īd mentioned in the inscription from Ḥismā region the same Sa‘īd mentioned here in the anecdote? If so, it would seem to date the inscription to before the outbreak of the Second Civil War and thus Ibn al-Zubayr’s consolidation of power in the Ḥijāz and his capture of Mecca, Medina, and al-Ṭā’if. To be more precise, the identification of the two Sa‘īds

10. Ghabbān, 101, 408; F. Imbert, “Califes, princes et compagnons dans les graffiti du début de l’Islam,” *Romano-Arabica* 15 (2015): 68.

11. Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971), *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 25 vols., ed. Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymīya, 1983²), 6: 61-62.

12. Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, 2 vols., ed. Sadettin Ünal (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1998), 2: 311 and idem, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār*, 16 vols., ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, 1994), 9: 379.

13. The authority cited here is the Meccan scholar ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ (25 or 27–115 or 114/646 or 648–733 or 732); see *ET*³, art. “‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ” (H. Motzki).

requires that the graffito predates the sudden death of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah in 64/683.¹⁴ If this dating of the graffito is correct, the inscription takes on remarkable value. It may not date prior to Mu‘āwiyah’s assumption of the title ‘Commander of the Faithful’ as in the hypothetical reading entertained above, but it would be extraordinarily early nevertheless. The graffito would offer us our earliest Arabic attestation of Muḥammad’s name and epithet, ‘the Messenger of God’ (Ar. *rasūl allāh*), predating by perhaps several years what is currently the earliest known attestation: coins minted in Bīshāpūr on behalf the counter-caliph ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr by his brother-in-law and governor of the East, ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Amir, between 66/685 and 69/688-89.¹⁵

Based on the paleographic evidence itself—i.e., the interpretation of the material evidence *qua* material evidence—arguments for such an early date for the inscription remain nigh impossible to maintain. How, therefore, should one treat the literary evidence adduced above? Fortunately, the literary sources take a real interest in this seemingly obscure episode of the Umayyad *mawlā*’s capture in al-Ṭā’if and his eventual execution in Mecca, for

reasons having to do both with its legal ramifications for the shedding of blood within the sacred precincts of Mecca and for its role in polemics directed against the legitimacy of the Zubayrids. Thus, for example, the sources have Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib,¹⁶ and those who revered him as his father’s successor and as the sole legitimate Imam of the Muslims, reference Ibn al-Zubayr’s cruel execution of the *mawlā* and his companions as sufficient reason to reject his claim to be the Commander of the Faithful and thus deny him their pledge of fealty (Ar. *bay‘ah*). Not only did Ibn al-Zubayr lack the broad consensus of the community (Ar. *ijmā‘*), they argued, but he had also unjustly shed blood in pursuit of the highest office of leadership over that community, thereby nullifying his candidacy.¹⁷

A broad survey of the earliest sources regarding the controversy reveals, in fact, that al-Taḥāwī’s account is an outlier: in all likelihood, al-Taḥāwī recorded the name of the slain *mawlā* erroneously. All other accounts give the name of the *mawlā* as *Sa‘d* rather than *Sa‘īd* (i.e., سعد, not سعيد)—names that are easily confused.¹⁸ Indeed, the oldest source to mention Ibn al-Zubayr’s crucifixion of the man—the *Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī

14. For a new discussion, see May Shaddel and Michael Bates, “‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya, and the Beginnings of the Second Civil War: A Reappraisal,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 45 (forthcoming 2018).

15. Hoyland, “New documentary texts,” 396-97.

16. Known widely as Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah, ‘son of the woman from the Ḥanīfah tribe’, since he was the son of ‘Alī’s concubine, Khawlah, unlike his brothers al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, who were the sons of the Prophet Muḥammad’s daughter Fāṭimah.

17. Wadād al-Qāḍī, *al-Kaysāniyyah fī al-tārīkh wa-al-adab* (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1974), 85-87.

18. Cf. Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 2, ed. Wilferd Madelung (Beirut: Klaus Schwarz, 2003), 656; Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an ta’wīl āy al-Qur‘ān*, 26 vols., ed. ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Hajar, 2001), 5:603; Ibn al-Athīr (d. 620/1233), *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, 11 vols., ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām al-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, 2012), 3: 318.

(d. 211/827)—even claims that it was not Mu‘āwiyah but rather his brother, ‘Utbah ibn Abī Sufyān, who was the crucified client’s Umayyad patron.¹⁹ This “Sa‘d, the *mawlā* of Mu‘āwiyah,” mentioned in the literary sources has, therefore, no connection at all with the inscription, and all that we know about him is his small part in the conflict between the Umayyads and the Zubayrids.

In light of the above considerations, Maysā’ al-Ghabbān’s dating of the graffito to the late-first/seventh or early-second/eighth century stands, notably on the basis of the paleographic evidence, the evidentiary merit of which stands on its own. My aim in the foregoing discussion has been to demonstrate the hazards of the ‘positivist fallacy’ and importance of taking the data intrinsic to the material

evidence seriously before making appeals to ‘historical significance’ based on literary evidence. Integrating material and literary evidence into our accounts of the past requires care and a good dose of epistemological humility. “The danger posed by the ‘positivist fallacy’,” as recently noted by Jonathan M. Hall, “resides in the extremely fragmentary nature of our evidence.”²⁰ To treat the remains of the past, literary and material alike, as anything other than fragmentary opens the door to gross historical error. What we know about the ‘Sa‘īd ibn Dhakwān’ is only what his graffito tells us: that he was likely a descendant of freedman/client of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and that he espoused a religiosity in which honoring Muḥammad as God’s Messenger and fighting in His path played a central role.

19. ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, 10 vols., ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1970-72), 5: 151-53; see also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 4(1), ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979), 319 (citing al-Haytham ibn ‘Adī, d. ca. 296/821) and Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 9 vols., ed. ‘Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā’, 1991), 5: 156.

20. Jonathan M. Hall, *Artifact and Artifice: Classical Archaeology and the Ancient Historian* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 208.

Conference Report

**Navigating Language in the Early Islamic World
(The Marco Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies,
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 6-7 April 2018)**

Conference Organizer:

Alison M. Vacca (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)

Co-Organizers:

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Al-Balādhurī (d. 892) explains the Arabization of the Umayyad *dīwān* with an anecdote about a Greek scribe who urinated in the inkpot. In response, we are told, ‘Abd al-Malik dismissed Greek scribes from their posts and changed the language of the administration to Arabic. This is a concise, entertaining explanation for linguistic change in the Near East. Nevertheless, al-Balādhurī’s explanation falls somewhat short of scholarly expectations. The process of Arabization was not merely the purview of the caliph and his scribes, but rather a broad social phenomenon, as merchants, scholars, soldiers, and administrators alike turned to Arabic as a lingua franca. Muslims used Arabic, the language of the Qur’ān, to compose religious texts, record bills of sale, write philosophical and scientific texts, and adorn buildings. Jews and Christians also composed and engaged texts in Arabic, signaling the appreciation of Arabic across religious boundaries. Yet despite the appeal and the undeniable

significance of the Arabic language, it did not spread evenly or quickly throughout the entire Islamic world. From Central Asia to the Caucasus to the Iberian Peninsula, the populations of many provinces continued to write and converse in other languages such as Persian, Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac, to name a few.

The aim of the symposium, “Navigating Language in the Early Islamic World,” was to situate the history of Arabic and Arabization within a broader setting of linguistic diversity in the Islamic world. The papers represented a number of different approaches to the study of the early Islamic Near East, bringing art history, linguistics, religion, and history to the same table. They also spanned the geographical reaches of the early Islamic world with an aim to frame the discussion across both the Mediterranean and the Iranian cultural sphere. The participants began with three goals: (1) to explore evidence of multilingualism in an ethnically and religiously pluralist



environment, including through engagement with studies of the pre-Islamic Near East; (2) to investigate the ways that communities produced, employed, and transformed Arabic in their own settings; and (3) to contribute to the ongoing discussion of textual and oral transmission of narratives and historical accounts between the various languages of the Islamic world.

Muriel Debié (École Pratique des Hautes Études) opened the symposium with a paper entitled “The Languages of Diplomacy and Religion in the Late Antique Near East: the Arab Tribes and Surrounding Official Languages.” She investigated the diplomatic and religious languages of Arab tribes in the period immediately before the rise of Islam to conclude that the choice of language in each context was dependent on both region and setting. Debié identified numerous instances when Arabs participated in diplomatic exchanges, the accounts of which presuppose the presence of interpreters or multilingual conversations, e.g., Ghassānid complaints against the Lakhmids aired in Constantinople. Debié also pointed to the lasting use of Syriac in the Near East in matters of religion, speculating in particular about inter-Miaphysite diplomacy in Greek and Syriac, set against the competition between the Miaphysite churches and the Church of the East to expand among Arab communities in the Near East. She concluded that official languages predominated in matters both political and religious, demonstrating that multilingual Arabs participated in these discussions in both the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires. The use of Arabic, then, appeared in moments when Arabs were not participating in this broader Near

Eastern dialogue, but instead largely in communication aimed at other Arabs.

Khodadad Rezakhani (Princeton University) presented on “Pidginization, Creolisation, and Hybridity: the Interaction of Languages in the Early Islamic East Iran and Transoxiana.” He began with the acknowledgment that modern studies on Persian follow nationalist readings, i.e., that Persian survived Arabic. Rezakhani challenged this reading by pointing out that the very idea of a single Middle Persian is constructed; rather, he argued, we should understand the Zoroastrian texts in Middle Persian language and Pahlavi script to reflect a single dialect among many. He pointed to the localized hybridity of Middle Persian, e.g., the relationship between Middle Persian, Aramaic and Arabic in Mesopotamia. This set the stage for the languages of the East (in particular, Khwarazmian, Sogdian, and Bactrian) to serve as the missing links between the “official” languages (as canonized later) and localized forms. In this, the early Islamic period emerged as a particularly significant moment, when we find the pidginization of language, such as when Arabic and Persian in particular mix in *amṣār* like Basra and Kufa. Here again, the East offers an interesting case study of a sort of linguistic melting pot, particularly the legal documents in Bactrian and mercantile in Sogdian. In this, Rezakhani brought the linguistic diversity of the East to bear on the modern interpretations that streamline the development from a single Middle Persian to New Persian.

Petra Sijpesteijn (Leiden University) concluded the first panel with her paper, “A Policy of Multilingualism in the early Muslim Empire.” She started with a review of the ways in which the Arabization of the

dīwān appears in our ‘Abbāsīd-era sources as the result of the initiatives of al-Ḥajjāj in Iraq, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Malik in Egypt, and Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik in Syria. These examples form the rationale for modern scholars’ understanding of Arabization as a deliberate policy, implemented by the Umayyad élite to make Arabic the language of both religion and state. Yet these accounts would have us believe that Arabization was both sudden and top-down. While the Umayyads instigated similar empire-wide initiatives (e.g., the reform of coinage), Sijpesteijn argued that this reading of Umayyad Arabization cannot make sense of the extant documentary evidence. Multilingual papyri in Arabic, Greek, Sogdian, and Coptic culled from both Egypt and Khurāsān demonstrate that the shift from local administrative languages to Arabic cannot have been absolute or immediate. With examples from the 640s (a Greek-Arabic receipt for sheep) to the 830s (land measurements in Arabic, reusing a Greek papyrus), Sijpesteijn argued that the early caliphs opted for and promoted a multilingual administration, even investing in an infrastructure to maintain it.

Phillip Stokes (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) kicked off the second panel of the symposium with a paper entitled “New Perspectives on the Linguistic Landscape of Arabic in the early Islamic Period.” He argued that the study of Arabic has focused on Classical Arabic and now needs to incorporate pre-Islamic and non-Islamic evidence. Pre-Islamic Arabic was tremendously diverse, both philologically and by script. To illustrate this, Stokes offered several examples of linguistic diversity as evidenced through inscriptions

and early Qur’ān manuscripts. He argued that differences between readings and orthography of certain Qur’ānic phrases cannot indicate that the scribes did not know Classical Arabic. Rather, we should understand these variations as cues to the spoken norms of Arabic in the Ḥijāz. As such, Stokes suggested that we consider the orthography seriously rather than dismiss variations, as a way to uncover the norms of pre- and early Islamic Arabic. He also suggested, then, that we might uncover the variations of early Islamic Arabic by revisiting the traditional corpora, focusing specifically on Christian Palestinian Arabic and Judeo-Arabic. By looking at the spelling of certain words, e.g., the use of *nun sofit* or *alef* in Judeo-Arabic texts to render the accusative marker, we can hypothesize about the use of cases in Arabic. Qur’ānic *muṣḥafs*, Christian Arabic inscriptions, and Judeo-Arabic texts all point in the same direction, namely that there existed several varieties of Arabic in the early Islamic period, signaled in these examples by the differences in case endings. Classical Arabic, Stokes concluded, was the result of the successful ‘Abbasid project that married the systemization of Arabic grammar (e.g., Sibawayh) to a wider discourse on Arab identity.

Fred Astren (San Francisco State University) offered a paper on “‘Abbāsīd Book Culture and Ninth-Century Jewish Sectarianism,” in which he tracked the involvement of Jews in the “writerly culture” of ‘Abbasid cities. While primarily interested in Baghdad, he pointed to the broader processes of urbanization across the Islamicate world. Relying on toponymy, he demonstrated Jewish involvement in the growth of the urban middle class. Jews were merchants and bankers; Astren

ties their participation in the urban social structure to the rise in literacy and, as a result, to the production of texts, including those outlining religious differentiation. The combination of urban intellectualism and the availability of paper allowed for people to search widely for their modes of expression, as Astren demonstrated with an anecdote about a certain Muqammiṣ, a Jewish Muʿtazilī scholar who converted to Christianity, whose story paints very porous borders between religious and intellectual communities. To clarify the ramifications of Jewish participation in the changing urban conversations, Astren turned to studies of seventeenth-century England, which demonstrate certain parallels such as increased urbanization, shifts in land use and tenure, and rises in literacy. Astren thereby explained the form of Jewish sectarianism based on participation in intellectual communities of the ʿAbbasid metropole.

Judith Lerner (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World) brought an art historical perspective to the discussion with a paper entitled “From Bactrian to Arabic: Seals and Sealing Practices Observed in the Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Documents from Bactria.” Starting with the late Sasanian period, she analyzed the seals on documents from the Iranian East, examining evidence from Sogdiana, Balkh, Gorgan, and Marw. Despite the introduction of Arabic in the Umayyad period, she indicates a few markers of continuity, such as references to the same family name or toponyms in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic documents or the use of the same Sasanian-era seal even on a document dated to 721/2. Lerner also elaborated on several examples of how the documents and their seals can

demonstrate changes in the cultural norms of the East as, for example, in the use of single documents as opposed to the double documents used in Sasanian practice. In one example, she addressed the relationship between Sasanian coins and the stars on early Islamic seals, arguing for changes in the style that might indicate different artistic models. Instead of relying solely on east Iranian models to explain the form of these seals, Lerner suggested that we recognize the varieties of cultural practices in Umayyad-era Iran, born of both cultural interactions in Central Asia and lasting inheritances from the region’s Hellenistic past.

Alison Vacca (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) concluded the first day of the symposium with a paper on “Language, Power, and Storytelling: Arabic in Caliphal Armenia.” She opened with a challenge facing the study of Arabic in Umayyad and ʿAbbasid-era Armenia, namely the lack of direct evidence for multilingualism in written sources. All of the material extant today—e.g., inscriptions, jewelry, glasswork—dates to a later period or can be traced to Arabs in Armenia. We therefore have no proof that Armenians employed Arabic, though common sense suggests that they did. In response to this challenge, Vacca offered the eighth-century history of Lewond as a demonstration that Armenian authors were familiar with stories circulating in Arabic in the early ʿAbbasid period. First, Lewond’s account of the Islamic conquest of Duin in the 640s relies on topoi commonly found in Arabic *futūḥ* collections. Second, the inconsistencies in Lewond’s account of the Battle of Bagrewand in 775 can only be explained through recourse to Ibn Aʿtham’s explanation of the battle. Vacca

argued that these examples demonstrate Armenian familiarity with Arabic, whether attributed to Lewond or to his underlying sources. These examples do not suggest that Armenians were reading Arabic, but rather that they were part of the same narrative circles in which stories about the conquests circulated in the eighth century.

The second day of the symposium opened with informal conversations led by three graduate student participants. The participants each brought with them a brief description of their project and/or a research problem that they were working on. They opened their discussions in small groups by introducing their projects before fielding questions or open conversations. After a half hour discussion, the graduate student participants then changed tables, allowing them each three separate conversations in small groups. Kader Smail (University of Maryland) introduced the *Epistle* of the caliph al-Mahdī to the people of Mecca, a document that chronicles the history of the city, the claims of the Quraysh, and the requests and recommendations of the caliph regarding, for example, how people should act in relation to the Kaʿba. This document, particularly when read in light of inscriptions, suggests that Mecca enjoyed rising prominence in the early ʿAbbasid period, perhaps related to the construction of orthodoxy in light of the nearby ʿAlid revolts. Pamela Klasová (Georgetown University) presented a snippet of her dissertation on the Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj, focusing on the relationship between language and power. Noting the significance of oratory as a key tool of empire and a vehicle of ideology, she analyzed the speeches of al-Ḥajjāj to argue that these were transmitted

orally in a far more stable format than the surrounding narrative. Even in cases where certain words were changed, the rhythm is maintained. Klasová’s work integrates studies on orality and literacy, Arabic poetry, and Qurʾānic Studies to place oratory at the heart of the Umayyad state apparatus. Abby Kulisz (Indiana University) opened a discussion on the problem of translating the Arabic word *dīn* as “religion.” She indicated that the association of religion as a personal belief is a very modern concept, which might not translate correctly in a medieval setting. *Dīn* may alternatively suggest a way of life or a social concept, rather than a personal ideology. This segued into a broader discussion about the meaning of *dīn* and the lack of the plural form *adyān* in the Qurʾān.

Aaron Butts (Catholic University of America) started off the final panel of the symposium with a presentation, “Intersections between Arabic and Aramaic: The Case of Syriac Christians.” He redressed the prevailing accounts about the shift from Aramaic to Arabic, focusing on the continued knowledge and use of both languages to argue for diglossic communities in the early Islamic period. Despite the fact that some of the more famous works, such as those of Abū Qurrā, exist today only in Arabic, we know that many also circulated in Syriac, as well, whether in translation, abridgements, or adaptations. Butts also indicated that the imagined transfer from Aramaic to Arabic needs to be complicated to allow for multiple registers and dialects of both languages. Syriac-speaking communities continued to speak in Syriac after the conquests, though their language became increasingly distant from written Syriac.

Similarly, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq may have written in Arabic, but this was a literary language quite removed from the Arabic that he spoke. As such, the relationship between Aramaic and Arabic emerges as a complicated conversation, rather than a unidirectional progression of language change.

Marie Legendre (University of Edinburgh) continued with a discussion entitled “State Representation vs. Practical Use: The Administrative Languages of the Umayyads.” She argued that the traditional narratives of language change cannot make sense of documentary evidence from Egypt. So, for example, she pointed to the dramatic drop in Greek documents in the period between 700 and 750. This fits neatly with the traditional models ascribing Arabization to the Marwānids. However, she also demonstrated that the documentary evidence in Arabic increased at a lower rate than we might expect: while Greek documents before 700 numbered to 11,989 and dropped to 4,298 in the period between 700 and 750, Arabic documents from the same periods increased only from 47 to 315. Far more remarkably, the number of Coptic documents remained steady, with 4,196 Coptic documents before 700, compared to 4,386 between 700 and 750. Legendre reiterated that Greek, the administrative language of Byzantine Egypt, was continuously used in the Umayyad period and thus confirms that administration was deliberately multilingual. The use of Coptic, however, changed in the early Islamic period, as the fiscal documents were never in Coptic in the Byzantine period; this was a Marwānid innovation, certainly explained by the role of monks in the payment of taxes. Legendre argued that by *naql al-dīwān*,

the transfer of the registries, we should understand the reassessment of the fisc and a change of personnel. As such, the Marwānid reform was not linguistic so much as administrative reorganizing.

In the final presentation, “Towards an Arabic Cosmopolis: Culture and Power in Early Islam,” Antoine Borrut (University of Maryland) presented the two main narratives that have dominated the discussions of language change in the early Islamic world, Arabization and the translation movement. He argued that we should keep multilingualism as the sounding board for these discussions. He offered the study of cosmopolitanism as a way to complicate the traditional narrative, focusing on the “politics of difference” (cf: Lavan, Payne, and Weisweiler) and the relationship between language, culture, and power (cf: Pollock). Stemming from this, he asked whether we might compare Arabic to Latin, a local vernacular that spread with the state, or perhaps more aptly, to Sanskrit as a transregional vernacular. The models developed to discuss South Asian cosmopolitanism and language offer a number of potential avenues of study for the state of Arabic and, particularly, the translation movement. Here, Borrut turned to the work of Ronit Ricci to suggest that literary networks promulgated the memory of a communal past. The translation of texts went hand-in-hand with conversion and cultural integration. Taking the documentary evidence from Qubbat al-Khazna in the Great Mosque of Damascus, and particularly the number and nature of Greek texts, Borrut argued for a process of subordination in early Islamic Syria, where social difference was not elided, but rather organized. At the

same time, he stressed that such models cannot be cast as immutable or universal, pointing to other models, particularly one of assimilation in al-Andalus. Cosmopolitan policies generated cultural, social, and political tensions that can shed a fresh light on the rise of an Arabic cosmopolis and on the fragmentation of the Caliphate that paved the way to an “Islamic commonwealth.”

The ten presentations and three graduate student conversations brought together a number of different themes about the social history of language in the early Islamic world. The papers spanned a remarkably large geographical area to include both the Iranian oikoumene and the Mediterranean. They also brought a number of different disciplinary approaches—notably, history, art history, linguistics, and religious studies—into conversation. This disciplinary diversity fostered the discussion of a wide array of sources across many genres, providing a glimpse at the remarkable varieties of spoken languages (in their many incarnations) in the Near East. The symposium gravitated towards a number of different themes, among which would be the role of the “official” language under the Umayyads or in the pre-Islamic period under the Byzantines or Sasanians. Many of the talks sought to escape the

shadow of ‘Abd al-Malik’s reforms in order to envision language change as a more organic, complicated process. On the one hand, the participants discussed the role of empire and the relationship between prestige languages and power; on the other, they also signaled a larger conversation about administrative flexibility and the use of languages outside of the political setting. The theme of intersections within a polyglot culture recurred as the participants repeatedly argued for multilingual engagements across religious lines. Further, the relationship between different languages of the Near East must be complicated by the varieties of any given language. We cannot understand Classical Arabic, Syriac, or Middle Persian to be static, but rather we should recognize that the multiplicity of languages of the Near East must embrace localized variations and differing registers within any given language.

The papers will be published through Brepols as part of the Marco Symposium Series. A number of other scholars have joined the team, including Arianna D’Ottone (Università degli Studi La Sapienza di Roma) on Latin and Arabic; Rob Haug (University of Cincinnati) on the trilingual coins minted in Khurāsān; and Marijn van Putten (Leiden University) on Berber and Arabic.

Conference Report

**Post-Eurocentric Poetics:
New Approaches from Arabic, Turkish and Persian Literature
(American University of Beirut, 21 May 2018)**

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A marathon one-day-only symposium took place at AUB on May 21st, 2018. A splendid collaborative effort, the event was organized by members of The Center for Arts and Humanities (CAH) directed by Abdel-Rahim Abu-Husayn (Department of History) and Hany Rashwan, the Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center. Bilal Orfali (Chair, Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages) and Hany Rashwan welcomed the audience and introduced the conference. Fifteen scholars from at least twelve nations were on hand to discuss “*Post-Eurocentric Poetics*” in an attempt ‘to present and extend the indigenous poetics of Islamic traditions, showing how literary figures and devices from these traditions can advance our understanding of world literature in the broadest sense of the term.’

The gathering spent the better part of twelve hours at the conference venue in the basement of College Hall on the AUB campus. The ambitious program was

successfully completed before the sun set. Moreover, the experience was thoroughly rewarding for both the participants and the wider audience. Fifteen scholars grouped in four panels presented papers on, respectively, *Medieval Persian Poetics; Arabic and Ottoman Literary Poetics; Andalusī and Sicilian Poetics; and Modern Arabic Literatures*.

The first speaker was **Rebecca Gould** (Birmingham University). In her keynote address, entitled “A Persian Contribution to Global Literary Theory: Shams-i Qais on the Controvertibility of Creation and Interpretation,” Gould argued that a method of global literary theory is still missing and could be advanced only if the canons of Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Georgian poetics were included in the process. Persian literary theory argues that creation and interpretation are controvertible, as are the poet and critic. She encouraged members of the discipline of comparative literature to engage with this argument.



The first panel followed with scholars from three nations—Turkey, Germany and Iran—dealing with medieval Persian poetics. **Ferenc Csirkés** (Sabanci University) spoke on “The ‘Fresh Style’ (*tazah-guyi*) in Safavid Persian and Turkic Poetry, Misnamed ‘Indian Style’ in Europe. He asked whether “Safavid poets recycled or recast some of their Persian poetry or looked to Turkic models.” He indicated ways to better understand and interpret the history of Turkic literary tradition in Iran, and “the relationship between vernaculars and “Classical” literary idioms in a Persianate context.”

Christine Kämpfer (The Philipps-Universität of Marburg) discussed the “Dynamics of Transmission in Medieval Persian Literature,” using the 14th-century romantic epic of *Humāy-u Humāyūn* by the poet Khaju Kermani as an example. She argued that, if viewed in its entirety, the uninterrupted and self-contained tradition of Persian literary production over half a millennium possessed its own “dynamic for the transmission of literary tradition.” Western approaches, focused on major poets like Ferdowsi and Nezāmī, have led to “one-dimensional and ahistorical” interpretations inadequate for evaluating Persian literature as a whole. Finally, **Leila Seyed Ghasem** (The University of Tehran) discussed the function of *taqdim* and *ta’khir* (preposing and postposing) in medieval Persian prose using Abolfazl Bayhaqi’s history of Ghaznavid rule of the eleventh century as a case study. Although only partially preserved, this source is the most important record of the period in question as well as a major masterpiece of Persian prose. Scholars of Persian studies ought to investigate how the undeniable aesthetics of Persian prose affect readers

as works of art and also influence the intent of the message.

The second panel dealt with the literary poetics of Arabic *balāgha* (“eloquence, proper style”). The first speaker, **Alexander Key** (Stanford University) posed the question whether the 11th-century Persian poet, ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjāni, equipped us for work on poetry in general. Aristotle clearly perceived rhetoric as dealing with politics and hence divided it from poetics. This, however, was an Aristotelian divide and Ibn Sina saw no such break. The image in the eastern context was rather that of two lions fighting, one representing the lexical and the other the metaphorical meaning of a word. The second speaker, **Hany Rashwan (American University of Beirut)**, presented a paper entitled “Rethinking al-Jurjāni’s Literary Conditions of *Tajnis* in Relation to his *Nazm* Theory.” Rashwan translated the concept of *balāgha* as “eloquence;” dealt with comparative rhetoric, including that of animals (!); and compared poetry and ornate prose. The paper discussed the conditions of *jīnas* or *tajnis* as offered to literary critics and writers by Persian Arabist ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjāni, in order to master the use of this literary device. Vocables in different languages like *paranomasia*, pun, *Wortspiel* and *calembour* demonstrate that words can acquire a different emphasis of meaning depending on the context of the respective language.

The third panel was chaired by Rebecca Gould and consisted of presentations by five speakers from four nations dealing with Ottoman Literary Poetics. **Veli N. Yashin** (The University of Southern California) dealt with the “Poetics of Late Ottoman Print Culture and the Thinking of Sovereignty” in the context of the Arabic



Conference participants at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, 2018.

renaissance (*nahda*) and Ottoman reform (*tanzimat*). He discussed the problems of translation and transliteration, where the worst case could be termed today unreferenced ‘plagiarism’ versus the best-case scenario when the translation surpasses the original. Late Ottoman print culture reached a wider public sphere where sovereignty was elaborated both as a political and poetic problem. Yashin stated that in this context “sovereignty is not one, since it does not depend on a single ‘native’.”

Marc Toutant (CNRS, Paris), the next speaker, discussed two 15th-century Central Asian treatises about ‘*Arūz*, “a system of Persian poetry that did not easily fit the Turkish language.” He stated that there was an “attempt to ‘persify’ Turkic prosody and poetry because the latter was considered to be of comparatively low prestige.” The 15th-century Timurid poet, Mir ‘Alī Shir Nawā’ī, composed his *Mizan al-awzan* in Central Asian Turkish. Turkic

had emerged as a valid literary medium. The founder of the Moghul Empire, Babur, criticized Nawā’ī’s comparisons. The next speaker, **Murat Umut Inan** (University of Ankara) considered questions of imitation and appropriation. He based himself on a twelve-volume Eurocentric source claiming that the Ottomans attempted to write Persian poetry because it was considered to be superior. 16th-century poets – like all poets ever before and long after – were required to know Arabic and Persian and master considerable literary works by heart. Ottoman culture blended Arabic, Persian and Turkish. It was perceived that poetry would prepare one for an understanding of the Qur’ān. Good poetry created meaning. A period illustration showed a copy of Hafez’s text in the hands of Ottoman students. Murat pointed out parallels between poetry of the sixteenth and nineteenth century respectively. He highlighted “the multilingual and multi-literary underpinnings of Ottoman poetics

and the role it played in the making of a literary culture modeled after that of both Persia and the Arab lands.”

Sooyong Kim (Koç University) discussed Ankaravi's *Miftah al-Balāgha* of the early seventeenth century, attempting a poetics of continuity and translatability that was aimed at a wide local audience. Kim discussed the link between poetry and rhetoric. The renewed Ottoman interest in language and concern with local audiences perhaps explains why technical terms were not translated. The last presentation of the panel, by **Aida Gasimova** (Baku State University), was entitled “Many Faces of the Qurʾān in the Depiction of the Face (Hurūfī Poetics of Nesīmī).” She dealt with ʿImādudīn Nesīmī an important figure in medieval Azeri Turkic literature. She introduced the poet's biography and poetry and discussed his usage of the names of the Qurʾān.

The fourth panel was composed of four motivated women from four nations with Murat Umut Inan as chair. The panel swept over an entire millennium from Andalusī and Sicilian Poetics to modern Arabic literatures. **Enass Khansa** (AUB), the first speaker, spoke on “The Poetics of Affinity (*ittisāq*) and the Question of Legitimacy in Andalusī Adab.” She examined “the understanding of poetics through the interplay of the literary and the political in three *adab* works produced in conversation with different political orders,” dating successively from the fourth, sixth and seventh Hijrī century. The rhetoric continuity survived dynasties, and Andalusī medieval scholarship acquired political legitimacy in the process. **Ferial Bouhafa** (The University of Cambridge) dealt with “The Qurʾānic Rhetorical

Challenge within the scope of Peripatetic Rhetoric in Ibn Rushd's Thought.” She concluded that Ibn Rushd departed from the theological grounds of prophecy, and established a basis for cross-pollination between Aristotelian and Arabic rhetoric. This represented a drastic break with traditional theological interpretation.

Chiara Fontana (The University of Rome) presented a paper entitled “A Pragmatic Approach to the Rhetorical and Metrical Analysis of Contemporary Arabic Poetry: Nağīb Surūr's *Kalimāt fī al-hubb*.” She extended the subject into modern Arabic literature, applying rhetorical and metrical analyses to works of a generation of Egyptian authors of the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Such text analyses of pre-modern as well as contemporary literature may lead to a deeper comprehension of aspects of classical and contemporary Arabic poetics from within their roots. **Claire Savina** (The University of Paris-Sorbonne/The University of Oxford) discussed “Tēlēmachus in Egypt.” She had with her the hefty volume of the 17th-century French original, *Les aventures de Télémaque*, and suggested that al-Tahtāwī's translation represented not only an Arabization of the text but also a revival of classical Arabic literature, in that he had in fact originally translated the work for his students and not for publication, but one of his rivals published it while al-Tahtāwī himself was in exile. Savina argued that the translation is much more than a translation: “it uses the French to play with the Arabic.” The Arabic version also bears a different title and vision of the travels from those of the original, more like a 19th-century Jules Verne.

Conference Report

Approaches to the Study of Pre-Modern Arabic Anthologies (Beirut, 10–12 May 2018)

Conference Organizers:

Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn and Bilal Orfali

Report by:

Louise Gallorini

The conference was organized over three days by Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn and Bilal Orfali and generously supported by the Jewett Chair of Arabic Studies and the Center for Arts and Humanities of the American University of Beirut (AUB). The first day of the conference was held on the premises of the AUB, after which the Bristol Hotel in Beirut became the venue for the second and third days of the conference.

Nadia Maria El Cheikh (Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, AUB), Bilal Orfali (Chair of the Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages, AUB) and Abdul Rahim Abu-Husayn (Director of the Center for Arts and Humanities, AUB) welcomed participants on the Thursday. This conference, which they had hoped to organize for many years, should result in the publication of the papers presented. The different presentations explored the overwhelming presence of anthologies in pre-modern Arabic literature, a phenomenon unique to this literature,

where you find such works on a variety of themes, including love, wine, travel, death, music, difficult words, and blaming or praising things. What were the reasons for the popularity of the genre, and what was its function? To what extent can they be considered as original works in themselves, how the author's influence can be traced in his manner and method of compiling? What can be inferred from the chosen excerpts over what has been left out by an author and most of the time lost to us? What do these compilations say on the historical and cultural context in which they were produced? These questions and many others have long been raised about this genre, and continue to rise for the readers and scholars today.

The conference was composed of eight panels on the following themes: "Emotions," "Pleasure," "Faith and Education," "This is Not a Tale," "Poetry," "Compilation, Authorship and Readership," and "Geography." Each panel was followed by discussion that allowed



the audience to participate and engage with the participants. Ramzi Baalbaki (AUB) gave the keynote address on the second day, Beatrice Gruendler (Freie Universität of Berlin) a guest honorary speech on the third day. The conference concluded with a dinner.

Thursday May 10th

Panel 1: "Emotions"

Chaired by Julia Bray (University of Oxford), the first panel of the conference opened with a paper by Lyall Armstrong (AUB) on the subject of death and dying, as seen through the reconstruction of one of the earliest works by a Muslim scholar on the topic. Indeed, *Dhikr al-mawt* by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281/894-5), an author known to have had a special interest in the matter of death, and whose work influenced later scholars interested in writing on the subject. It contains excerpts from the Qurʾān and religious literature as well as poetry and anecdotes.

Going back to the world of the living, Karen Moukheiber (University of Balamand) presented a paper on *al-Imāʾ al-Shawāʿir* by al-Isfahānī (d. 356/967), an anthology of courtesan-poetesses of the early Abbasid period. She analyzed the vocabulary pertaining to emotions used in the text, thus reflecting a male gaze on female characters, by using Barbara Rosenwein's concept of "emotional community." Without being able to discover the reality of emotions felt by individuals at the time, her analysis allows us nonetheless to explore the representation of gendered relations and what emotions were highlighted and valued (or not) in written testimony of this kind.

The panel concluded with a return to the idea of dying, this time specifically with martyrs of love, with the presentation of Vahid Behmardi (Lebanese American University) on *Maṣāʾir al-Ushshāq* by Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad al-Sarrāj al-Qārīʾ (d. 500/1107). An anthology dealing specifically with tales and poetry of poets dying from love, it also contains the author's own poems on passionate forms of love. Through an analysis of the text, its *isnāds* and organisation, clearer light can be shed on the origins of love stories in classical Arabic love literature.

Panel 2: "Pleasure"

Chaired by Bilal Orfali (AUB) the second panel included two presentations on the theme of pleasure. Musical pleasure came first, with the presentation of Carl Davila (State University of New York) on *Kunnāsh al-Ḥāʾik*, a famous collection of song-texts of the Andalusian tradition of North Africa, as found in MS#144 at the Khizāna Dāwūdiyya in Tetouan, dated from 1202/1788. His analysis of the manuscript spoke to the social context of the Moroccan Andalusian musical tradition.

The second paper dealt with physical pleasures. Jeremy Kurzyniec (Yale University) discussed an unedited manuscript in a presentation entitled "The *Encyclopedia of Pleasure: a Ḥarīf's Guide to the Bedroom Sciences*," a medieval example of diversely sourced knowledge on the particular subject of sex. From poetry to medical sources, from Greek, Persian and Indian sources, the anthology lists and categorizes what needs to be known regarding matters of the bedroom. Analyzing the text and situating it in its larger cultural milieu, one discovers that

the Indian kama-sutra was known and circulated, at least in part, in the medieval Islamic world.

Friday May 11th

Panel 3: "Faith and Education"

The second day began with the theme of faith and education. Kristen Brustad (University of Texas) chaired a panel in which sadly two participants were unable to attend. Kirill Dmitriev (University of St Andrews) opened with a presentation on the anthology tradition and its theoretical aspects through an example from Christian Arabic sources. The combination of the popular Arabic anthology genre and the medieval Christian literature and traditions made it natural that Christian authors would engage with this genre. The presentation reviewed the different categories of Christian Arabic anthologies and their authors, and focused on *Buṣṭān al-ruhbān*, an anthology compiled by Jirmānūs Farḥāt (d. 1732).

The second presentation by Samer Traboulsi (University of North Carolina) explores the use of anthologies as educational tools, specifically in the Ṭayyibī Ismāʿīlī tradition in Yemen and the teaching of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*. The paper used the *Kitāb al-azhār* by Ḥasan ibn Nūḥ al-Bhārūchī (d. 939/1533) as an example. This unpublished and lengthy text exists in several manuscripts, hinting at its wide circulation among scholars. The analysis of its great variety of content provides a better picture of the ways in which Ismāʿīlī doctrine was taught, where most historians have focused on sermons rather than on these instruction manuals.

Panel 4: "This is Not a Tale"

Chaired by Enass Khansa (AUB), this panel started with Maurice Pomerantz (New York University, Abu Dhabi) who presented a paper focused on 'Uqalā' *al-majānīn* by al-Nisābūrī (d. 406/1016). This is an example of an anthology on the theme of the madman; the text mentions around a hundred of such characters, from the historical to the legendary, in tales dealing with piety, foolishness and truth. Matthew L. Keegan (American University of Sharjah) presented the second paper on "commentary as anthology" with the example of the Andalusī al-Sharīshī's (d. 619/1222) commentary on al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*. Using the device of commentary, the author collected and compiled *adab* excerpts from the Islamic East and West. Analyzing the commentary and the ones inspiring the author, Keegan showed how commentary evolved into an anthologizing form of writing in itself.

Panel 5: "Poetry"

Chaired by Tayeb El-Hibri (University of Massachusetts, Amherst,) the last panel of the day, on the topic of poetry, began with a presentation by Adam Talib (Durham University) on the relationship between poetry anthologies and *dīwān*. Talib spoke to what has been recovered of poetry thanks to anthologies against what has been lost, that is, poetry left out of anthologies. This is an important question for a type of literature that has not been transmitted to us in a direct fashion, most of it having been recorded through anthologies, with what it implies of the reasons for which authors included poems or left them out. Talib also argued that the making of a poetry *dīwān* did

not necessarily precede the making of anthologies; it might have been the other way around.

David Larsen (New York University) presented an on-going project of anthology reconstruction from the fragments found in subsequent works and his method for doing it. He dealt with the genre of *maʿānī* texts, that is, the study of obscure meanings. Working on the now lost *Kitāb abyāt al-maʿānī* by Abū Naṣr al-Bāhilī (231/855), Larsen showed how sifting through citations of the work in later anthologies allows for an attempt at reconstructing the original text. He spoke of the challenges he faces in doing so. His reconstruction will be published in an upcoming edition and translation.

Bilal Orfali (AUB) concluded the panel with a presentation on poetry in Sufi anthologies or manuals. The poems constitute in their own right an anthology with its own uses within wider anthologies such as works by al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) and Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120). Poetry is used in this type of work to express sentiments otherwise difficult to express in prose. It is also used during the beatific audition (*samāʿ*), as well as to conclude chapters. These thematic chapters compile different sources on a particular theme, from the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, and other types of literature such as poetry. The choice of poetry excerpts is particular to an author, even though the author does not compose poetry himself. The paper concluded with discussion of the use of poetry in the *Kitāb al-Bayāḍ wa-al-sawād* of al-Sīrjānī (d. ca. 470/1077).

Keynote Speech

Ramzi Baalbaki (Jewett Chair, AUB) delivered the keynote address on overlooked aspects of pre-modern lexical anthologies. Shedding light on an understudied genre, Baalbaki focused on Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) and his famous *Lisān al-ʿArab*, and the process by which he combined five different sources in his lexicon. Baalbaki demonstrated, for the first time, how Ibn Sīda (d. 458/1066) internally arranged his lemmata on semantic grounds and how Ibn Manẓūr adopted that system and supplemented Ibn Sīda’s material from his four other sources.

Saturday May 12th

Panel 6 & 7: “Compilation, Authorship, and Readership”

The theme of compilation, authorship, and readership was explored through a double panel, the first one chaired by Adam Talib, the second by Maurice Pomerantz. Enass Khansa (AUB) presented the first paper on different aspects of the anthology genre: an anthology presents itself as a reference work, a scholarly endeavor, that sources material from different fields to be presented to a wider readership than what some of these excerpts might have been previously been exposed to. These aspects were presented with an attempt at exploring a possible reconstruction of the readership of these anthologies, and how they inform material research of history and culture through examples such as Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih’s *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* in al-Andalus.

The second talk was given by Boutheina Khaldi (American University of Sharjah) on *Maṭālaʿ al-budūr fī manāzil al-Surūr*, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bahāʾī al-Ghuzūlī’s

(d. 815/1412) anthology of the Mamluk period. Khaldi highlighted the process by which the anthologist organized his compilation; his presence throughout the text; and in this particular case, how the process follows or differs from classical times, challenging the thesis of decline in literature after the Abbasid age.

Presented by Rana Siblīni (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies), the third paper focused on a particular example, *al-Manāzil wa-al-diyār* by Usāma ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188). On the theme of the homeland, it includes many excerpts otherwise lost. One of the particularities of this work is its personal character. Siblīni showed how the author, grieving for his hometown, included poetry of his own, and interfered with other's verse, and how this relates to the author's views on rhetoric and general experience.

As one of the participants was unable to attend, the second panel had only a single presentation. Isabel Toral-Niehoff (Freie Universität of Berlin) spoke on the theme of authorship and readership. Her talk focused her talk on *al-Iqd al-farīd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940) and the author's organizational principle. It was related, in a complex way, to the organization of the *Uyūn al-akhbār* by Ibn Qutayba (276/889). The paper placed the work in its historical context before following its gradual reading through time, from being read as a literary anthology to being read as an encyclopedia.

Panel 8: "Geography"

Chaired by Vahid Behmardi, the final panel of the conference explored the geographical dimensions of anthologies. The first paper, by Nathaniel A. Miller

(University of Cambridge), explored the geographical and ideological dimensions of the evolution of anthologies. Miller used the example of the works by 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī (d. 597/1201), and his predecessors, al-Tha'ālibī (d. 429/1038) and al-Bākhārī (d. 467/1075). He explored the shift in literary social practices; the Sunni revival coupled with the transfer of an Iranian institution such as the anthology on Syrian lands; and the decline of court patronage in the Mamluk period, which influenced both the content and readership of the anthology genre.

Ghayde Ghraoui (New York University) presented a paper on *Rayḥānat al-alibbā* by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khafājī (d. 1069/1658), a literary anthology compiling works of the author's contemporaries as well as his own, in a particular political context. The author's rejection from imperial patronage is one of the main reasons for the anthology's existence; the presentation explored why al-Khafājī chose this means to respond to the Ottoman elite, and the historical information contained in the text. The work situated itself in continuation with an established literary tradition while being a support for political stances.

The final paper, by Suleiman A. Mourad (Smith College/Nantes' Institute for Advanced Studies), dealt with a subgenre of religious and historical anthologies, the compilation of the *fadā'il* of Jerusalem, showing the importance of the city in Islam. Reviewing authors from al-Ramlī (d. 300/912) to authors contemporary to the Crusades, the presentation focused on an understudied aspect of these anthologies, that is, the agency of their authors in selecting and presenting their

compilations, each anthology shaping a specific legacy for its readers.

Honorary Guest Speech

Beatrice Gruendler (Freie Universität of Berlin), in her honorary guest speech, spoke on her on-going project on *Kalīla wa-Dimna* by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 139/756), which should be the object of an upcoming critical edition. She presented it as an anthology, that is, a compilation of edifying and educative tales, with its sources in Indian wisdom, an example of the transfer of Indian material to Arabic literary works. Before its medieval translations into Syriac, Greek, Persian, Hebrew, Castilian and Latin, not much is known of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*'s early textual history. Gruendler used several

charts to map the numerous translations, across time and geography; the different known sources of the work; and studies done on the subject. She also spoke to the difficulties in reconstructing the original sources used by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ; her critical edition will involve juxtaposing and comparing versions of the different existing manuscripts. This will allow for documenting the history of the text and an analysis of the context of its development. So, for example from an indirect transmission of the Buddhist tale “King Shādrām and the Wise Bilād,” found both in the *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and in a treatise on wisdom sayings by Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), she will consider differences in translations and the manner in which the Arab translators adapted Indian sources to fit the Arabic corpus and readers' demands.

Book Review

Muriel Debié. *L'écriture de l'histoire en syriaque. Transmissions interculturelles et constructions identitaires entre hellénisme et islam*. Late Antique History and Religion 12 (Louvain: Peeters, 2015), xxxiv+724 pp. ISBN 978-90-429-3237-1, Price: €105.

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Muriel Debié's *L'écriture de l'histoire en syriaque* represents the consolidation of a recent dam-burst in the study of a long neglected aspect of the pre-modern Middle East. It is nothing less than a compendium of historical writing in Syriac in the late antique and medieval periods. It puts Syriac historiography on the map. It treats this thousand-year-long tradition with the same seriousness as the other great ventures in historical writing associated with the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire, with the formation of medieval Western Europe and with the stunning historiographical output connected with the rise and establishment of Islam. It brings little-known writers, usually known to us only as so many names lurking at the very bottom of footnotes, into sudden, gripping focus as authors and historical actors in their own right. It conjures up places and landscapes as distant from each other

and from ourselves as the Constantinople of Justinian, the Baghdad of the Abbasid caliphs, and the plains and mountainous folds of modern eastern Turkey and northern Iraq.

Debié even takes us to the great western capital of the Chinese empire at Xian-fu, where an official inscription in Chinese, erected in 781, cites an imperial document of 638, which registered the coming of Christianity—"The Religion of Light"—to China. Covering as it does a hundred and fifty years, the Xian-fu inscription is a miniature essay in historiography. Framed by the names of the monks and clergy involved in this venture, and written in firm Syriac script, it is a monument to an "improbable encounter" (p. 127) between East and West such as only the Syriac Christianity of Iran and Central Asia, with its "apostolic," Eurasia-wide horizons, could have brought about (pp. 123–27).¹

1. See also Scott Johnson, "Silk Road Christians and the Translation of Culture in Tang China," in *Translating*



But Debié does far more than bring to light a vivid strand in the culture of the late antique and medieval Middle East. She treats the Syriac historians of the time with respect. They are no mere sources to her. They offer a way into a series of distinctive world-views, which change significantly over time.

One of the underlying ideas [of this book] is that the study of the memory and of the past of these societies was not fixed. It was a creation of the historians, and, as such, constitutes a way into their identity, their culture, their networks (p. xv).

In order to do this, she enters into the minds of these historians. She questions their notions of time and space. She reads over their shoulder, as it were, as they put together, often in seemingly mindless compilations, memories of the distant past. She shows how the image of the past, preserved in the great composite chronicles, which were characteristic of medieval Syriac historians, were never as inert as we might think. They were never mere blocks of information transferred, as if by human xerox-machines, from one book to another. Small changes in the copying—small inclusions and exclusions, barely noticeable additions—worked, like genetic “splicing,” to create significantly new versions of the past and its relation to the present. By abandoning the modern western notion of the single “author” in favor of a renewed respect

for the ingenious “patchwork” artistry of generations of alert scribes, Debié can make the seemingly mute pages of Syriac chronicles speak (pp. 70–75).

In this, she joins a lively tradition of recent studies of the relation between memory of the past and identity-formation in early-medieval Western Europe. Far from being fixed in some primeval mold of an “ethnic” (or in the case of the Syriac Christians of the Middle East, a “confessional”) identity, potentially fluid groups were constantly at work, thinking themselves into shape through constant retellings of their own past. This is what the Franks were doing in Western Europe at much the same time as the Syriac Christians struggled to define themselves in the Middle East.²

Debié reminds us that this work of memory was a constant feature of the rival religious confessions of the medieval Middle East. History-writing was a way of staking out the boundaries between different groups. Frontiers rendered dangerously fluid by a shared culture and by the shared rhythms of daily life were in constant need of firming up. Different Christian groups had to be constantly reminded (by stories of martyrdom and of long-past conflicts) that they were different from each other and from their Muslim neighbors, just as Christians in the perilously open world of the Sassanian Empire had to be reminded, through a particularly dramatic and poignant series of martyr-tales, of non-negotiable frontiers

Christianity, ed. S. Ditchfield, C. Methuen and A. Spicer, *Studies in Church History* 53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 15–38.

2. Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550-850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

in a world that normally functioned, dangerously well, in a “state of mixture.”³

Even the physical form of the manuscripts in which Syriac histories were written tells its own, mute story of tectonic changes of mentality. What does it mean to move from sets of chronological tables in which Christianity and the Roman empire seem to converge, literally “on the same page,” as in the Greek tradition of Eusebius, to the careful distinction between “things of the church” and “things of the world”—empires and all—that emerged with western Syrian writers of the early middle ages (pp. 86–98)? Behind this neat separation lie centuries in which not only had the political profile of the Middle East changed, with the diminution of the Christian Roman empire, but the Christianities of the Middle East themselves had been slowly shaken loose from the grand mirage of an easy union of church and empire, of Christianity and civilization, such as still haunted the chroniclers of Byzantium and of the Latin West. Those clearly visible gaps between the columns in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (patriarch of Antioch from 1166–99) (fig. 5, p. 96) are not mere clutter: they sum up, in visual form, centuries of sad thought on the role of the Christian churches in a world doomed to remain forever separate from the spiritual “Kingdom of Christ.”

Last but not least, Debié adds to her 500 or so pages of text a 130-odd-page Repertory of Syriac and Syro-Arabic texts from all the different confessions of Eastern Christianity. Just to look at the

bibliographies attached to each text shows how, in recent decades, Syriac studies have lurched forward. Syriac has, at last, attained the status which it has long deserved beside Greek and Latin, as the third great language of Early Christianity, and as a resource for the study of Islam that we can now no longer afford to ignore. Aided by data-banks such as the *Syriac Portal—syriaca.org*, directed by Professor David Michelson at Vanderbilt University, we are, at last, in a position to take the measure of one of the most long-lasting cultural empires in the history of the Middle East: “a nation—feeble indeed but whose salt seasons all kingdoms.”⁴

What can scholars who are not directly involved in the progress of Syriac studies draw from this magnificent book? Here let me speak for myself. For me, a particularly valuable contribution of Debié are the vivid portraits which she offers of the writers of so many of these histories. They are not what we had thought they were. A long tradition of European prejudice in favor of single, great authors (as in the classical Greco-Roman tradition) had led us to expect that, if such authors did not emerge in the Syriac tradition, then the only “fall-back” open to our imagination, when faced by the work of ecclesiastics, were faceless, credulous monks.

Nothing could be more different from this tenacious stereotype than the great ecclesiastical leaders who emerged as the chroniclers of the Syriac world. A man such as Dionysios of Tell Mahre came from a well-established noble family in Edessa.

3. Richard Payne, *A State of Mixture. Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 23–58.

4. Bar Hebraeus, *The Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, translated by David Wilmshurst (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2016), 244.

He described a local elite whose memories reached back over six generations to the days of Persian rule under Khosrow II, and whose great palaces, four storeys high, sheltered tenacious family legends of treasures buried in the last, dramatic days of Byzantine rule. Edessa still had its *jeunesse dorée*, devoted to horses and to hunting dogs, who had changed little, in their worldly swagger, from the days of Bardaisan and Abgar the Great. Edessa also still produced a *Geistesadel*. One of the most prominent features of the city was the Beth Shabta, a classical tetrapylon shaded by a dome,

where the elders used to rest after the morning service and discuss theological and philosophical topics until lunchtime.⁵

Dionysios became patriarch of Antioch from 818 to 845. Though an ecclesiastic, his position placed him at the charged friction point between his church and the outside world. We know so much of his life because the two columns, of “worldly” and “ecclesiastical” affairs, separated by the neat blank spaces in the text of the chronicle that recorded his deeds, were, in reality, joined in his person. The joining generated mighty sparks. It was aristocrat-bishops such as Dionysios, proud and multilingual, who acted as hinge-men between their local community and the distant court of Baghdad. They were permitted to approach the caliph on horseback and to stroll with him in the palace gardens. This was because they were useful to him. They

acted a “whistle-blowers,” keeping an eye on the caliph’s own, Muslim provincial governors, as provincial elites had done from time immemorial in the ancient Near East. Men well versed in the ways of the world, and not the bigoted and timorous monks of our imagination, were the historians of Middle Eastern Christianity. Altogether, Muriel Debié shows that it is important that we should do justice to the tenacity of the layers of social status among the Christians of the Middle East, who were only too often rendered faceless by their conquerors, in the manner of most conquest—and, later, of colonial—regimes (pp. 136–43).

But there is another, more silent development, which Muriel Debié has followed with unusual skill: Syriac historiography slowly but surely weaned itself from power. It is a model example of a trend which Michel Foucault acutely diagnosed in the changes in historiography in *Ancien Régime* France, when French antiquarians began to study the structures of early medieval Gaul at the time of the barbarian conquests, and the long-term effects of these conquests on the present state of French society: losers also had a history.

Up to this point, history had never been other than the history of power as told by power itself.

This new discourse [he adds] brings with it what might be called a new pathos.⁶

5. Bar Hebraeus, *The Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, p.124, copying Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* XII, 13, trans. Chabot, *Michel le Syrien* (Paris: 1899= Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), 3: 61–62.

6. Michel Foucault, “Society must be defended,” *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, ed. M. Bertrains and A. Fontana, English editor Arnold J. Davidson, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 1997), 135.

Syriac historiography (written by canny survivors such as Dionysios of Tell Mahre and Michael the Syrian) was never exactly a *vision des vaincus*. But it did project a de-mystified vision of empire. Furthermore, it tended to privilege the periphery at the expense of the center, and the local over the imperial. It involved a change from an emphasis on the fate of one single, privileged empire—the Christian Roman empire as presented by Eusebius, with his relentless diagram of the convergence of all history on the new Christian Rome of Constantine—to a more “polycentric” relation of different Christian peoples to the greatest King of all: to Christ. This was the only relationship that mattered, and it could be seen, in any corner of the world, in terms expressed by the prophets of ancient Israel – that is, in terms of the afflictions visited by Christ on His people for their sins and of the removal of these afflictions as a result of their repentance.

A history that moved to the pace of an inexorable alternation of affliction and mercy could be played out anywhere, but it would be experienced at its most gripping in one's own region. The writer of the article on Syriac literature for the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1911 understood this well:

Nearly all the best writers are characterized by a certain naïve and earnest piety which is attractive and not infrequently displays a force

of moral indignation which arrests attention.⁷

It was this de-mystified view of a humankind subject to the double scourge of nature and of government which ensured that Syriac historical sources were sought out by historians of provincial society in the Later Roman Empire long before Syriac studies were thought of as other than a somewhat dingy adjunct to the study of the Early Church. To permit myself a personal memory: when I was challenged by the resolute Marxist historian of ancient Greece, Geoffrey de Sainte Croix, in 1957, to name any classical author who itemized in any detail the rise of food-prices in a time of famine, I was surprised to be told by de Sainte Croix that no Greek or Roman author had ever bothered to mention such humble things; but he told me that a Syriac work—*The Chronicle of Our Time of Afflictions*, written by Joshua the Stylite—contained such precious details, when describing the onset of famine at Edessa in 500–1.⁸

These local histories do not have to be only histories of affliction. The “polycentric” nature of Syriac historiography sometimes offers us tempting glimpses of life in the provinces in the first, formative centuries of the Islamic empire, before local memories succumbed to the formidable centralization of historical memory and to the erasure of provincial differences brought about by the rise of the Caliphate of Baghdad (p. 383).⁹

7. Norman McLean, s.v. “Syriac Literature,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition (New York: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1911), 26: 311.

8. See now G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 220.

9. Antoine Borrut, “Vanishing Syria: Periodization and Power in Early Islam,” *Der Islam* 91 (2014): 37–68.

Afflictions linked to sin, however, were the privileged vectors of historical causality in most Syriac works. The so-called *Chronicle of Zuqnān* of 775 deliberately follows in the footsteps of the sixth-century *Chronicle* of Edessa. The events which it describes were seen as re-enactments of the affliction of Israel in the Bible. “Here,” writes the author, “Jeremiah the Prophet was of great use to us.” No other author but Jeremiah, the witness to the last days of the kingdom of Jerusalem, could do justice to the phenomenon of the collapse of an entire society, irrespective of religion and of Christian denomination. Terms such as “worshipping towards the South” [Muslims towards Mecca] and “Worshipping to the North [for Zoroastrians]” had become irrelevant. Even the sufferings of the Christian martyrs lost their unique glamor compared to the shared martyrdom of an entire region: “Truly the Lord had a case against all the inhabitants of the earth.”¹⁰

Yet this penitential language had another side. God might punish, but, as Christ, He still ruled in glory. The dogged capacity of Christian communities to endure up to the very end of the Middle Ages and beyond derived, in part, from an attitude to Christ as the King of His Church. Whatever happened in the world where mortal rulers (emperors or thugs: usually both in one) came and went, the Church was the *real* Kingdom. In it, Christ ruled undisputed, hidden only by the thin veil of the flesh—a veil as opaque yet as

light as the veil before the altar. Beyond that veil, all subjects were equal. Humans and angels would sing together “Glory to God in the Highest,” as the angels had once sung when the great blue veil of heaven itself had been lifted, for a moment, at the birth of Christ, “singing while clapping their hands and stamping their feet.”¹¹

This vertical dimension, this sense of the veiled majesty of a kingdom where heaven and earth were joined even in the smallest, most neglected church, had survived among the battered Christian communities of northern Iraq in the fifteenth century. It would last. It was still there when the American Evangelical missionaries made contact with what to them were “lost” Christians in the mountains around Lake Urmia (in northwestern Iran) in the 1830s.

But the Christians of the Church of the East with whom these eager westerners came into contact did not feel “lost” at all. Looking out over a landscape like the top of the world—a landscape where (in nearby Takht-i Suleyman) Mongol Khans had camped beside the palace of the Sassanian King of Kings as world rulers, the rich grazing grounds of their horses overlooking the plains of the Middle East—the Christians of a “Church of the East” that had once reached as far as western China still knew that they stood at the imagined center of the world, “on the river of the Garden of Eden,” in the words of one of their patriarchs.¹² Their church was the prototype of the Kingdom of God, the only certain landmark in a changing world:

10. *The Chronicle of Zuqnān: Parts III and IV, A.D. 488-775*, trans. Amir Harrak (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999), 168, 273, 290.

11. Thomas Carlson, *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 108.

12. Adam Becker, *Revival and Awakening. American Evangelical Missionaries in Iran and the Origins of Assyrian Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 61.

“Existing always in a higher frame outside of earthly time, it moves through this world as a ship on a voyage to its haven.¹³

This makes it all the more tragic that precisely the region which the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* of 775 presented as ravaged by famine, flight, and violence is the scene of similar horrendous events today. These are the areas of eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, where the plains meet the mountains in an ill-fated combination of places of seeming refuge, criss-crossed by valleys that have always served as

busy thoroughfares to men of violence. If anything of the former richness of the “surprisingly polyphonic world”¹⁴ once shared by Muslims and by Christians of Syriac culture in the Middle East is to be saved, Syriac studies—for long the Cinderella of the study of the Early Church and of the Islamic world—must be taken seriously. And there could be no better way to do so than that proposed by Muriel Debié in her masterwork, *L'écriture d'histoire en syriaque*.

13. Becker, *Revival and Awakening*, 9.

14. Carlson, *Christianity*, 259.

Book Review

Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābiʿ, *Dīwān Rasāʾil al-Ṣābiʿ*. Edited by Iḥsān Dhannūn al-Thāmīrī. 2 vols. (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2017), 832 pp. ISBN 978-1-78814-719-4. Price: £80.00.

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Preparing textual editions is among the most pressing challenges for the progress of the historical study of the premodern Middle East. Yet it is a form of academic work that is not sufficiently acknowledged by the many historians who use these materials. Over the past decade, the Al-Furqān Foundation of London (<https://www.al-furqan.com/>) has undertaken the publication of numerous important texts. Notable among these works are the monumental editions of the *Kitāb al-fihrist* of Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990) (2014, 2nd ed.), the *Kitāb al-mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (known as *the Khīṭaṭ*) of Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) (2013, 2nd ed.), and Ibn al-ʿAdīm’s (d. 660/1262) *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī tārikh Ḥalab* (2016, 1st ed.). In an age that is otherwise witnessing the proliferation of cheaply produced and regrettably error-filled versions

of classic texts of Arabic literature, the Al-Furqān Foundation’s efforts in bringing these important books to the scholars is laudable.

Criticism of recently published editions has an important role to play in alerting scholars to the promises and pitfalls of these newly edited texts, and may also encourage the preparation of fiable editions in the future. Experts have offered valuable critiques of two of the previously mentioned historical works. Devin Stewart’s exemplary article-length review of Ayman Fuʿād Sayyid’s edition of the *Fihrist* offered pages of suggestions and emendations, useful in the preparation of any further revised edition.¹ In his review, Stewart lamented the fact that the editor did not address the work of earlier editors and scholars, which admittedly remain difficult to access given the limited

1. Devin J. Stewart, “Editing the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm,” *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 1, no. 2 (2014): 159–205, ISSN: 2214-2371, doi:10.1163/22142371-12340007



availability of specialist publications and language barriers.

Frédéric Bauden similarly authored an important review of Sayyid's edition of al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ*. In it, Bauden considered the work that had gone into making the edition: he critiqued the choices that Sayyid had made in identifying and selecting manuscripts; pointed to the lack of an *apparatus criticus*; noted a certain arbitrariness in separating authorial notations from the main text; and identified the editor's overzealous use of already-published sources to correct al-Maqrīzī. Thus while Bauden positively noted that Sayyid's new edition was based on earlier manuscripts than the 1853 Būlāq edition, he nevertheless concluded that it was impossible to "consider [Sayyid's] work a critical edition, as it is defined nowadays or a definitive one."²

The work under review here, *The Registry of al-Ṣābi's Letters (Dīwān Rasā'il Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi)* (d. 384/994) edited by Iḥsān Dhannūn al-Thāmīrī, is an essential work for anyone interested in Buyid history, Arabic epistolography, Classical Arabic prose literature, and the conduct of premodern Muslim politics and statecraft. Although precious little remains from the collections of scribes from the period of 2nd–3rd/8th–9th centuries, numerous large-scale *dīwāns* of fourth/tenth century prose writers

such as the letters of al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995), 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Yūsuf al-Shīrāzī (d. 375/985), Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī (d. 383/993) and Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008) were collected primarily for the training of scribes employed in state chanceries. Most of these fourth/tenth century letter-collections have been published, however the editions are based on small numbers of manuscripts and thus need to be used with caution.³

There was perhaps none of this aforementioned group of epistolographers more esteemed by his contemporaries and influential for later generations of scribes than al-Ṣābi'. The number of surviving epistles from his pen more than doubles that of any of these other scribes and is at present the largest known collection of letters from the first four centuries of Muslim rule. Anthologists and critics from his own time, such as Muḥassin b. 'Alī al-Tanūkhī (d. 384/994), Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. after 400/1010), and the preeminent anthologist of the fourth/tenth century, Abū Manṣūr al-Tha'ālibī (d. 429/1039), held his epistles in great esteem. Al-Ṣābi's letters were also influential for later prose writers, such as Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) and al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418).

One possible reason for the oversized presence of al-Ṣābi' and his letters must

2. Frédéric Bauden, "Review of *Al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* li-Taqī al-dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī. Edited by Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid. Vol. I (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1422/2002), alif-'ayn, 140-772 pp. with several plates. HB £35.00. ISBN 1-873992-63-7. Vol. II (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1423/2002), 100-614 pp.," *Mamluk Studies Review* 11, no. 2 (2007): 169-176, 176.

3. Al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, *Rasā'il al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād*, ed. 'A. Azzām and Sh. Ḍayf (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1946); al-Shīrāzī, *Rasā'il al-Shīrāzī*, ed. Iḥsān Dhannūn al-Thāmīrī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2010); al-Khwārizmī, *Rasā'il*, ed. M. Pourgol (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār va Mafākhīr-i Farhangī, 2005); al-Hamadhānī, Badī' al-Zamān, *Kashf al-ma'ānī wa-al-bayān 'an rasā'il Badī' al-Zamān*, ed. I. al-Ṭarābulsī (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kāthūlikiyya, 1890).

have been the length of his tenure in the office of the head of the chancery, serving for more than thirty years in Baghdad (*ṣāhib dīwān al-inshā'*) from 349–374/959–984. Unlike the other Buyid capitals where viziers held sway, the head of the chancery of Baghdad was responsible for drafting letters on behalf of the caliphs, the Buyid emirs of Baghdad, and their viziers. Al-Ṣābi' composed letters of nearly every possible type, allowing readers of his collections of epistles to have a sense for the great range of communication required by the leading state scribes. Moreover, this was surely a momentous time, during which the Buyid emirs of Baghdad refashioned the relationship between the amirate, vizierate and caliphate, and these features are reflected in the correspondence of the era.

The letters of al-Ṣābi' are also of great potential interest to historians as sources for the events that they recount, and the role of epistolography in the conduct of state affairs. Details of Buyid dynastic and political history can now be better traced and documented with reference to these letters. As several studies of letter collections such as those of Johann-Christoph Bürgel, Klaus Hachmeier, and the present reviewer have shown, epistles can be an invaluable source for deepening our understanding of the ways that states used chancery writing in the conduct of statecraft.⁴

The collection is also a remarkable window into the life of a leading

administrator and statesman. Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābi' was from a family of Sabians of Ḥarrān that had long served the Abbasid administration. He had entered the service of the Buyid dynasty during the momentous reign of Mu'izz al-Dawla (d. 356/966) in Baghdad when the courtly life of the Buyids was at its peak. He remained a loyal servant to Mu'izz al-Dawla's son, 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār (d. 367/977), which led to an infamous falling-out with the chief emir 'Aḍud al-Dawla (d. 373/983). The letters, composed on behalf of state officials as well as others, reveal the ways in which state affairs and personal relationships were inextricably bound up with one another.

The letters of al-Ṣābi' also reveal the complex intersections between politics and religion. Al-Ṣābi' was a non-Muslim, yet his contemporaries praised the extent to which his letters deployed Qur'ānic imagery and language. His voluminous correspondence with contemporary Sunnī and Shī'ī intellectuals in belles-lettres, poetic criticism, philosophy and the natural sciences are valuable witnesses to the diverse intellectual culture of the fourth/tenth century. There is also a remarkable set of letters (2: 602 and following) preserved of his correspondence with members of the Sabian community in Ḥarrān, which should merit the attention of any historian interested in the ways that high-ranking officials might intercede

4. Johann-Christoph Bürgel, *Die Hofkorrespondenz 'Aḍud al-Daulas und ihr Verhältnis zu anderen historischen Quellen der frühen Buyidenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965); Klaus U. Hachmeier, *Die Briefe Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi's (st. 384/994 A.H./A.D.), Untersuchungen zur Briefsammlung eines berühmten arabischen Kanzleischreibers mit Erstedition einiger seiner Briefe* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2002); Maurice A. Pomerantz, *Licit Magic: The Life and Letters of Al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995)*, Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

on behalf of their families, neighbors, and co-religionists.

The present edition was carefully prepared by Iḥsān Dhannūn al-Thāmīrī. Among editors working today, al-Thāmīrī stands out as having a particular interest and affinity for chancery literature, having previously edited the letter collection of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Yūsuf al-Shīrāzī (d. 388/998) based on a *unicum* manuscript, MS Berlin Staatsbibliothek 8825.⁵

Prior to the edition of al-Thāmīrī, there were several small collections of al-Ṣābi’s letters edited and published, beginning with Shakīb Arsalān’s edition of 1898, which selected 42 letters from the 95 that were contained in MS Istanbul Aṣīr Efendi 317.⁶ This edition was followed by another collection of the letters exchanged between al-Ṣābi’ and al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, edited by Y. Najm and published in 1961.⁷ Klaus Hachmeier published 36 of al-Ṣābi’s letters in the course of his exemplary work, *Die Briefe Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Sābi’s*, published in 2002.⁸ Al-Thāmīrī’s is the first edition to aim at a complete corpus of al-Ṣābi’s letters.

One of the basic problems identified by Devin Stewart in his review of the *Fihrist* was that the editors of texts are often unaware of important research articles published on the works that they are editing. This can often have profound consequences for the subsequent editions, and it must be said that al-Thāmīrī’s work

on the edition would have benefited from a thorough familiarity with Hachmeier’s thesis, book, and articles.

In the case of extant manuscripts of al-Ṣābi’s letters, al-Thāmīrī describes how he has based his edition on ten manuscripts, which he lists in his introduction. However, were he to have read Hachmeier’s 2002 dissertation and subsequent article of 2010, he would have learned that Hachmeier had identified nineteen manuscripts containing al-Ṣābi’s letters. Hachmeier’s descriptions of these manuscripts, updated in the 2010 article with further information, provide the definitive census of the manuscripts of al-Ṣābi’s letters, a description of their contents, and a *stemma* of their probable filiation.⁹

The implication for the present edition of overlooking this earlier scholarship is dramatic. Rather than the 419 letters that al-Thāmīrī has edited, the total extant number of letters found by Hachmeier is 523. This alone should be reason for a new revised edition taking into account the basic manuscript evidence presented by Hachmeier.

Each of the letters in al-Thāmīrī’s edition is identified by the manuscript(s) in which it is located, as well as reference to any literary sources that also reproduce it. In addition, al-Thāmīrī often supplies helpful historical details that provide the immediate context for the authorship of

5. Al-Shīrāzī, *Rasā’il al-Shīrāzī*, ed. Iḥsān Dhannūn al-Thāmīrī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2010).

6. Al-Ṣābi’, *Al-Mukhtār min rasā’il Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl b. Zahrūn al-Ṣābi*, ed. Sh. Arsalān (Ba‘abda: n.p., 1898).

7. *Rasā’il al-Ṣābi’ wa-al-Raḍī*, ed. Y. Najm (Kuwait: Dā’irat al-Maṭbū‘āt wa-al-Nashr, 1961).

8. Hachmeier, *Die Briefe Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi’s*, 325–452.

9. Klaus U. Hachmeier, “The Letters of Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi’: A Large Buyid Collection Established from Manuscripts and Other Sources,” *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph*, no. 53 (2011): 107–222.

the letter. This is all extremely helpful for the modern reader, and al-Thāmirī's linguistic notes are thoughtful and generally on target.

The arrangement of the letters of al-Thāmirī is a modern invention. Thus an extremely helpful addition to this collection would have been a listing of dates of letters (when possible). Often in dealing with a letter collection, the historian is trying to cross-reference details of historical events in chronicles, and to look for contemporary pieces of evidence found in other letter collections. Moreover, it should be said that the current arrangement suffers from a bit of anachronism. For instance, the terms "political letters" (*rasā'il siyāsiyya*) and "personal letters" (*rasā'il shakhṣiyya*) obscure more than they clarify.

This reader would have preferred that the editor retain technical terms for the varied types of letters (e.g., *rasā'il fī al-futuḥ*, *uhūd*, *manāshīr*) found in these manuscripts. This is something where the editor would again have benefited greatly from reading Hachmeier's survey of manuscripts. Hachmeier prudently distinguished between what appear to be "complete" manuscripts of al-Ṣābi's letters, and those which are selections from complete manuscripts, and arranged letters according to their types following the structure of the letter-collections. In so doing, he was able to preserve features of the form in which the letters of al-Ṣābi' were arranged and understood by copyists rather than attempting to place them in assumed historical order.

As for the transcription of individual letters in the collection, I compared a letter in this edition to one transcribed

and edited by Klaus Hachmeier. Because the text of the letters is quite dense with parallelism, figurative language, and long *clausulae*, scribes often would deviate from one another in the ways in which they reproduced the same exemplar. The letter in question is 1:161–70 = letter #218 found on pages 348–352 in Hachmeier's 2002 publication. In the first place, Hachmeier's edition aims to be critical, clearly identifying the sources of the variants he has provided. By contrast, al-Thāmirī provides very minimal notes when he prefers one reading over another. This is unfortunate, because it leaves the reader at a loss as to when the editor has preferred a particular word and why. Thus differences between manuscripts are easier to trace in Hachmeier's edition of the letter because he notes the variants. That said, al-Thāmirī's choices are often quite good and one wishes to know whether there was manuscript evidence behind his emendations. Without recourse to Hachmeier's edition or the manuscripts it is impossible to know.

Scholars of Abbasid history and Arabic literature would be well advised to take a look at this new edition of al-Ṣābi's letters and they should be grateful for the efforts that al-Thāmirī expended in preparing it. They should, however, be aware that this is not a definitive or critical edition of the letters. Students of the letters of al-Ṣābi' would still be wise to consult the manuscripts, and earlier scholarship, in order to be certain of their conclusions. This reviewer is grateful to have a printed edition of these epistles and he hopes that this will spur the editor or other scholars to embark on a more complete and critical revised second edition.

Book Review

Lena Salaymeh, *The Beginnings of Islamic Law: Late Antique Islamicate Legal Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), xiii+242 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-13302-0. Price: £64.99/\$99.99.

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This is apparently a reworking of Salaymeh's Ph.D. dissertation (UC Berkeley, 2012). As she describes her vantage point, "I engage in a post-foundationalist understanding of history that rejects the positivist methodologies of modernism and the nihilistic relativism of post-modernism. A postfoundational understanding of historical objectivity rejects the positivist notion that particular methodologies generate Truth" (15–16). I confess I do not follow her theory, which seems to veer between accepting multiple truths (as in refusing to take contradiction as a sign that one or more of the accounts in question are untrue) and seizing on unanimity (i.e. lack of contradiction) as a reason to believe that something did happen as described. My approach in this review will therefore be to look past her theory to see whether she explains particular early legal problems in ways that seem useful to a traditional historian of Islamic law.

One chapter, then, deals with the problem of whether prisoners of war may be executed. Reports vary but Salaymeh thinks the preponderant suggestion is that the Prophet's precept and example forbade execution after a battle (although, as she notes, there is no report that he said anything explicitly). She treats Ibn 'Abbās and Mujāhid's comments on some relevant verses of the Qur'ān. The latter expressly interprets Q. 9:5 ("kill the polytheists wherever you find them and take them and confine them"—Jones transl.) as allowing the Muslim leader to execute, ransom, free, or enslave prisoners of war, but she argues that *killing* and *taking* treat respectively before and after the conclusion of combat, so that the Qur'ān really allows killing only in battle. It seems to me, to the contrary, useless for an historian to identify what the Qur'ān means. It is the nature of Scripture to be interpretable in multiple ways, and the most an historian should try to do is to assess why some interpretation either



did or did not catch on. Salaymeh's survey of later commentators and jurists is adequately wide-ranging, and her conclusion agrees with my own sounding of the evidence: that jurists of the Followers are commonly quoted as doubting whether prisoners should be killed, of the ninth century and later as leaving it completely up to the leader. But she implicitly dismisses retrojection of competing eighth-century views to account for the confused picture we have of practice in the earlier seventh.

Salaymeh next surveys the law of circumcision, which she finds weakly supported as an obligation for Muslims and only sometimes advocated as a boundary marker, distinguishing Muslims from others. It is as if the early community took circumcision so much for granted that it did not trouble to document its exact legal status. I was reminded of Norman Calder's generalization about ritual purity laws:

The Rabbinic system is a complex and rarefied elaboration of a common Near Eastern set of beliefs about purity (complicated by its hermeneutical relationship to the biblical laws). The Muslim system is probably very near to that common or basic system; and has proved on the whole rather resistant to efforts at making it more complex.¹

Salaymeh never cites Calder, but the similarity of her conclusion shows that she proposes nothing upsetting here to conventional opinion.

Salaymeh's survey of wife-initiated divorce in Jewish and Islamic law turns up much variation earlier on, then a certain

convergence on allowing judges to dissolve marriages for specified reasons and wives to dissolve marriages with some reduction of the normal settlement. She also detects a certain shift from considering divorce a sort of emancipation to considering it a breach of contract. The Jewish parallel is interesting. In this case, it was Jewish jurists who rejected earlier practice on the grounds that it reflected external influence, presumably Islamic. However, although Salaymeh is sure that influence and borrowing are bad concepts, she offers only the vaguest generalities such as "a shared social space and historical tradition" (p. 193) to explain the similarities.

A theoretical chapter against the idea of identifiably Aryan or Semitic origins of Islamic law seems mostly an exercise in knocking down straw men. Another chapter proposes to identify the following stages of legal history: "Legal circles and networks (c. 610–800 CE), Islamic legal beginnings; Professionalization of legal schools (c. 800–1000 CE); Consolidation and formalization (c. 1000–1200 CE); Technocratization (c. 1200–1400 CE)" (pp. 147–48). The obvious difference between Salaymeh's scheme and, for example, Marshall Hodgson's is that she simply marks out periods of 200 years, whereas he implicitly points to political changes as major pivots: the advent of the Marwānid caliphs to mark the end of the "Primitive Period," the advent of the Būyads (my spelling) to mark the end of the "High Caliphate Period," the Mongol conquest of Baghdad to divide two "Middle Periods." One point of Salaymeh's scheme is to stress the arbitrariness of any periodization. This

1. Norman Calder, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 212.

seems to me easy to concede but minor inasmuch as all classifications break down at the margins. *Contra* Salaymeh, a scheme like Hodgson's that turns on political events does not downplay contingency. Rather, it stresses what a difference politics can make (and indeed dynasties play major roles in Salaymeh's own detailed description of the evolution of Islamic law, as by judicial appointments). More original, at least for a professed history of Islamic law, is the following periodization of Jewish legal history, identifying similar developments in each of her 200-year periods.

Minimally, I would say that Salaymeh offers credible sketches of how discussions of rules changed over time with relation to the three problems of killing prisoners, circumcision, and wife-initiated divorce. The second seems the most successful, but anyone wishing to make more thorough surveys will wish to consider these chapters as starting points. On the other hand, I do not see that she offers credible alternative explanations to existing ones based on supposedly faulty historiographical theories. Maximally, I would venture that her ambitions are thwarted by systematically looking away from conflict among classes and status groups in the premodern Middle East. She admits a conflictual understanding

of divorce law, men asserting control over women, while expressing regret that evidence is lacking to show exactly the basis of women's power to resist. (I do not object except for the contrast with Salaymeh's earlier scorn for those who say we sorely lack evidence from the seventh century and so can say little with certainty.) But this is more typical: "Interpretive communities give meaning to legal texts in ways that cut across social, geographic, or confessional boundaries" (p. 203). More credible, to my mind, is that the medieval legal texts on which Salaymeh relies (like the rest of us) reflect the interests and views of particular, aristocratic interpretive communities intent on protecting their own moral and material interests.

Transliteration is accurate. Dates are given in CE only, sometimes carefully split, sometimes not; e.g., al-Awzā'ī said to have died precisely in 774, whereas he is most often said to have died in 157, which overlapped 773 and 774, but also 155, 151, 156, and 158, and never with a month. The bibliography usually includes editors' names but sometimes alphabetizes strangely; e.g., Mālik under *i* for Ibn Anas, Muslim under *q* for al-Qushayrī. Also strange is its identification of al-Muzanī as the editor of *al-Umm*.

Book Review

Sabine Schmidtke, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 815 pp.
ISBN 978-0-19-969670-3. Price: \$175 (cloth).

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Not so long ago, the notion that the Islamic faith (not unlike the Jewish) is more a matter of orthopraxy than orthodoxy had attained the stature of a bromide. In recent years that view has begun to face substantial challenges. It has been for too long a given, even among educated Muslims, that Muslims “don’t do theology,” but that characterization is arguably no more applicable to “all” Muslims than it is to “all” Christians. The amply proportioned *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* offers a virtually encyclopedic overview of solid evidence for the overdue demise of such misperceptions.

Editor Sabine Schmidtke’s densely packed “Introduction” maps out the broad terrain of the volume with admirable concision and clarity. Defining “theology” in a gratifyingly expansive way, thereby including a rich plurality of perspectives, the collection does the great service of portraying this large, complex intellectual tradition in all its rich diversity. Overall, virtually every important theme and

methodology with clear theological resonance merits consideration from one or more points of view and/or in multiple historical-geographic contexts, with welcome acknowledgment of inter-Abrahamic theological concerns as well. Contributors from across two full generations include specialists in a remarkable array of related topics.

In the market niche of one-volume reference tools in Islamic Religious Studies, the nearest approximation of the present *Handbook* is Cambridge University’s *Companion to Islamic Theology*. But the two are about as different in structure and coverage as one might imagine. At just under half the size of the Oxford volume, the Cambridge Companion divides its fifteen entries into five “historical perspectives”—Qur’an and early creedal formulation, *falsafa*, “developed” *kalām*, and the “social construction of orthodoxy”—and ten thematic essays dealing with God’s essence and attributes, divine existence, creation, revelation, ethics, religious law



and theology, worship, epistemology, eschatology, and Sufism. Oxford's *Handbook*, by contrast, organizes its 41 essays in a set of three historical categories (formative/early medieval, later medieval/early modern, and end of early modern/modern), punctuated by two sets of four case-studies each that explore a variety of themes (such as occasionalism, ethics, and logic) and historical phenomena (such as two Islamic variations on the theme of 'inquisition,' and other theological implications of administrative policy). The historical sweep and inclusiveness of the *Handbook* is remarkable, as is the range of thematic and institutional coverage.

An especially welcome aspect of the volume's historical coverage is the organic treatment of major schools, from their precursors to their more "formal" foundational origins, through their survival and continuations across the centuries. A cluster of substantial discussions of early-medieval developments (Chs. 12, 13, 21, 22) anchor the Ash'arite school's story historically. Another four chapters (28–31) provide excellent overviews of the later medieval and early modern history of Ash'arism. In addition, portions of still more chapters (e.g., 23, 25, 39) offer further detail on major themes and figures.

On an initial cursory glance at the table of contents, one might get the impression that the Ash'arite wing got the lion's share of coverage among major schools, perhaps at the expense of its too-little studied and under-appreciated opposite number, the Māturīdīya. Fortunately, the contributors of several regional studies in which the Māturīdīya has been a major presence balance things off nicely. Though the name may be absent in the titles, apart from an excellent broader overview in relation to

the Ḥanafī *madhhab* (Ch. 17), the Māturīdī tradition's role and impact in regions such as Central and South Asia under several major dynasties, and in its far-flung partnering with the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, is well accounted for. One entry—a "case study" (Ch. 39) describing the generally irenic interaction of Ash'arism and Māturīdism under both Mamluk and Ottoman rule, is particularly helpful, given the methodological similarities of the two schools. Here a brief summary listing of points of agreement/disagreement on major themes would have been pedagogically useful. Index entries on both "schools" and their eponyms suggest roughly equal attention in all, though major individual intellectual descendants of Ash'arī figures (Bāqillānī, Juwaynī, Ghazālī, in particular) receive more explicit coverage than their lesser known Māturīdī counterparts, with Pazdāwī (d. 1100) a notable exception in this regard.

Mu'tazilism merits a breadth of coverage roughly equal to that of the Ash'ariya. Three full chapters (Chs. 7–9) explore Mu'tazilism's origins, early major figures, and "scholastic phase." Two additional chapters (10–11) follow up with specific attention to the school's considerable influence on both Zaydī and Twelver Shī'ī thought. All or significant portions of at least five studies (Chs. 22, 23, 25, 36, and 40) explore further aspects of the history of Mu'tazilism, including its impact on several modern thinkers.

By contrast, "Traditionalist" (esp. Ḥanbalī) thought receives noticeably less explicit attention than one might expect, with only one (albeit very substantial) dedicated chapter (35). Further detail on the Ḥanbalī persuasion appears in discussions of the Mu'tazilī "inquisition"

(Ch. 36) and of major twelfth-century Ḥanbalī theologians (Ch. 37).

As a contribution to broadening the interested reader's further education in matters theological—including here even the occasional jaded Islamicist—the rich collective coverage of Ash'arī, Māturīdī, Mu'tazilī, and (though to a significantly lesser degree) Ḥanbalī thought and history is perhaps the volume's single greatest achievement.

In addition to treatments of these four most widely influential theological collectives, the volume's inclusion of lesser-known individuals and “religio-theological strands” (Schmidtke, 16) of thought is noteworthy. These include most prominently pioneers of systematic thinking (*kalām*) and “strands of thought” that were precursors of developments that would gain much broader influence in subsequent centuries, especially the Qadarīya, Jahmīya, early Shī'ī thought (Chs. 1–4), connections to Late Ancient Christian theology (5), Ismā'īlī and Sufi theologies (19, 20) and a variety of theologically marginal approaches including the likes of the “free-thinkers.” Other such strands include also less influential stand-alones such as early Ibādī off-shoot of the Khawārij and the early medieval Persian

Karrāmīya (Chs. 14, 15), the latter related in interesting ways to the Jahmīya and *solā fidē* “murji'a” (postponers).

Particularly gratifying for readers who wonder whether vestiges of genuine Islamic theology have managed to escape medieval captivity and made themselves evident in more recent times, the final two chapters (40, 41) offer brief but judicious assessments of a number of major twentieth-century thinkers from a variety of ethnic and cultural settings. Among the more intriguing are the Egyptian Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd and the Iranian 'Abd al-Karīm Surūsh.

As for ancillary devices, the combined bibliographic entries appended to each essay add up to an enormously rich sampling of major scholarship on theological history and themes, and the 24-page index is adequate to its primary task. Should the volume ever appear in a paperback edition, the addition of a global timeline and glossary of technical terms would markedly enhance its pedagogical utility. In its current configuration, the *Handbook* is a most welcome contribution to broadening the theological literacy of specialists in Islamic studies more generally and comparative religious studies alike.

Book Review

Diego R. Sarrío Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285)*. The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, Vol. 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2014). ISBN: 978-90-04-28560-6. Price: €141.00/\$191.00.

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This book sets out to explore a question that is deliberately more ambitious than it could possibly exhaust, namely: how could the history of polemical literature, which is ostensibly quite confrontational, set Christian-Muslim relations on a less confrontational course than their shared history? More ambitious, because the answer depends on whether the interpretation that this book models will influence future studies or not, and on what the effect of such influence would be. But the question itself is both important and well positioned.

Since its inception, the study of Muslim polemics against other religions was to a large extent shaped in the shadow of the study of Christian anti-Jewish polemic. Over the course of the nineteenth century, German scholars, many of whom were Lutherans who taught or were trained at Tübingen, applied the new methods of source criticism and systematic philology to articulate a new paradigm for the rise of Christianity and the role of Jesus Christ.

According to this school of New Testament studies, Second Temple Judaism had become a sanctimonious, excessively legalistic religion, in which God was remote and inaccessible. In their penchant for dry codification the Pharisees had been responsible for the long and inevitable drift away from the spiritual creativity that characterizes parts of the Pentateuch. What is more, while Jesus and his teaching grew directly from this same tradition, his intellectual and spiritual program were the exact antithesis of Judaism. Influential theologians such as Julius Wellhausen and Ferdinand Wilhelm Weber took the polemics against Judaism that are found in the New Testament—e.g., Phil. 3:2; Matt. 23; Gal. 3:1–5—at face value. For them, the tension that is felt most strongly in Paul's epistles speaks to the fact that the Jews living during the time of Christ and the Apostles were in fact hypocrites, but adhered at the same time to the same corpus that the Christians inherited *en masse*. In other words, Paul's (perceived)



polemical attitude toward the Mosaic Law and toward observing it seemed not only warranted (because it was true, that is), but also necessary.

This was equally true for Church Fathers and early Christian theoreticians who composed tracts that polemicized against the Jews. For Weber and his students, if indeed Pharisees were dangerous “Judaizers,” then early Christians, who belonged to a split and persecuted sect, had to explain why some of their fundamental ideas were rooted in the same tradition. From Barnabas to Augustine, the polemic was not with “real” Jews, but with an abstraction that stood for the scripture that Christianity inherited. Its crucially important objective was to articulate a hermeneutics with which to read the Hebrew Bible that was the consequence of the Christology that is embedded in the Gospels. For proponents of the Tübingen school and its offshoots, Christian polemic is fundamentally benign, free of any political hostility; it is a hermeneutical endeavor, in which theoretical Jews are staged as an interpretive foil, born out of fear of assimilation and oppression.

Not so, however, in Islam. Nineteenth-century orientalists did not view polemics as a necessary component in the Muslim theological tradition. The Qur’ān points out the shortcomings of Judaism and Christianity, but on the whole is appreciative of the previous revelations. At the same time, Islam did not adopt the Old and New Testaments as scripture. The need to articulate a hermeneutical position vis-à-vis previous revelations, in other words, did not exist in the same way as it did for Christianity. As a religion that very soon after its founding achieved political hegemony, its attitude toward neighboring

faiths could not have been driven by the threat of persecution or silencing. For such critics as Steinschneider, Goldziher, and Becker, therefore, the polemical impulse that started to become manifest fully in the ninth century was a sign of the virulent hostility that characterized Islam’s attitude toward other faiths. It is no wonder, furthermore, that scholars viewed polemical exchanges from the crusader period—a time when the religions were indeed engaged in an ongoing political and spiritual battle—as particularly emblematic of this inherent enmity.

The past two decades, however, have seen a shift in our understanding of the complex inter-religious conversations that unfolded in the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Frankish Near East. While scholars recognize the complicated political circumstances in which authors made attempts to engage with (putatively) rival traditions, there is also a growing understanding that the longstanding intellectual exchange that emerged during this period speaks to the rise of what could be called a polemical dialogue. The pioneering work of David Thomas, Paul Khoury, and Thomas Michel has identified Paul of Antioch as a key figure in the history of this discourse, facilitating through his treatises a constructive inter-religious conversation that spanned religions and regions. It is to this recent impulse that Diego Cucarella’s masterful and provocative study of al-Qarāfī’s treatise *al-Ajwiba al-fākhirā* belongs.

Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285) was an Egyptian Mālikī jurist who rose to prominence as a teacher of *fiqh* in various institutions of learning during the second half of the thirteenth century. A true intellectual, al-Qarāfī commanded

knowledge in a wide range of fields that stretched well beyond the classical Islamic sciences, including astronomy, optics, mathematics, and logic. It was at some time between 1250 and 1278—relatively late in his life—that he turned to the systematic and argumentative defense of Islam. Indeed, in both title and structure, *al-Ajwiba* is positioned as a response to an attack that was set forth by an unnamed Christian critic. In fact, the first chapter consists of replies to every single claim that is found in Paul of Antioch's *Letter to a Muslim Friend* (although it is important to note that al-Qarāfi probably responded to some later rendition of the original letter). But *al-Ajwiba* is far more ambitious a project than an attempt narrowly to defend Islam from the claims of the Melkite theologian. The composition, for example, begins with a series of anthropological observations concerning secular institutions in Christian communities around the Mediterranean. For al-Qarāfi, the fact that Franks in the Levant resort to the Ordeal (trial by combat), a foolish practice that is incapable of achieving justice he says, or the annual persecution of Jews in Castile and Provence on the basis of the ludicrous accusation that they “stole the [Christian] religion” (which is subsequently restored after three days), all prove that Christianity has become an ignorant sect overcome by servile conformism (p. 100). The centrality of bishops in Christian society, al-Qarāfi explains, is to be blamed, for without the firm voice of prophetic guidance the corrupt clerical elite introduces blameworthy innovations and error into society. Indeed, in all its sections *al-Ajwiba* draws heavily on a wide range of sources, both geographically and thematically,

which creates the impression that its opinion on Christianity and defense of Islam is not only exceptionally erudite but also intentionally broad. In the first two chapters of the book Cucarella meticulously lays out this thematic and intellectual breadth. He furthermore points out that al-Qarāfi set out not only to launch a narrow philosophical attack on the theological tenets of Christianity (and, to a lesser extent, Judaism); rather, by addressing questions of prophetology and revelation, he also sought to establish the supremacy of Islamic culture, as a doctrinal system but also as a civilizational project. This ties in to Cucarella's larger argument in the book, to which I shall return momentarily.

Chapters 3–6 provide a thorough and insightful survey of *al-Ajwiba* in its entirety. Chapter 3 treats the first chapter of *al-Ajwiba*, which is also the most polemical one in tone and content, where al-Qarāfi responds to the claims brought forth in the Melkite tradition that stand at the bottom of this correspondence. Cucarella shows that while Paul of Antioch's critiques of Islam are numerous and diverse in theological nature, al-Qarāfi's response hinges on one main point on which the two traditions disagree; namely, the doctrine of prophetic infallibility that had become the consensus in Muslim theology by al-Qarāfi's time. If Muḥammad was an infallible envoy of divine revelation, then by definition his message is to be accepted as universally true. The same, however, is not true for the apostles, who may have distorted Jesus' message, or even for the Hebrew Bible that may have become corrupt through faulty transmission. In this way al-Qarāfi both disproves Paul's Christological interpretation of several

Qur'ānic passages, and undermines his claim regarding the restricted quality of Muḥammad's teachings. What is more, this disagreement on the issue of prophetology, which results in conflicting views of scriptural truth, leads al-Qarāfī to draw far-reaching conclusions not only on the veracity of Christianity as a creed, but on the very ability of contemporary Christians to lead a healthy communal life.

Despite the harsh critique of Christian error, on the whole the first chapter is apologetic, with the objective of escaping the uncomfortable consequences that result from Paul's reading of the Qur'ān. In the next two chapters, however, al-Qarāfī shifts to the offensive. Cucarella points out that in Chapter Two al-Qarāfī is still responding to various attacks on Islam, but the stakes are clearly higher, and the tone more acerbic. Al-Qarāfī, for example, defends the Muslim rejection of Christ's crucifixion. He scrutinizes the narrative in the Gospels to show that even on the basis of a plain literary analysis, it is an unreliable report of the event. The story as it unfolds in the Gospels, in other words, shows that between the arrest and the crucifixion there were several moments in which the identity of the person being crucified was not sufficiently clear. But fundamentally, for al-Qarāfī here, too, what lies at the bottom of the matter is a question of epistemology. Arguably the most important moment in Christian soteriology is an event about which we know via the report of a few people who were present and four scribes, none of whom was a prophet.

Later in the chapter al-Qarāfī responds to one of the earliest and most widespread arguments against Islam; namely, that it had spread through the use of

brute force, showing that its claim for theological supremacy is in fact weak and unconvincing. This argument, of course, invokes not only the history of the early conquests, but also verses in the Qur'ān that are seen to preach violence against unbelievers. Here again al-Qarāfī returns to his basic critique of Christianity as a religion that has strayed from the truth revealed to its prophet due to the unchecked influence of "innovative" bishops. If Christians engage in warfare, which they clearly did in al-Qarāfī's time, despite the pacifist command to "turn the other cheek" in the Gospel, then this must be because power-hungry princes have lured bishops to abrogate Christ's teaching in a way that has left this community, unlike the Muslim one, hopelessly misguided. This dismissive tone characterizes the subsequent chapter, which as Cucarella states, is the most combative and the least original in *al-Ajwiba*. Al-Qarāfī collected 107 arguments against Christianity from a variety of sources, most dominantly al-Ja'farī's *Takhjīl man ḥarrafa al-tawrāh wa-al-Injīl*, which was extremely popular at the time. Al-Qarāfī questions and directly refutes many of the basic practices and doctrines that his Christian counterparts endorse. Because they did not take the teaching of Jesus as the one and only authority (which, as a result, has become inaccessible), Christians have on the one hand introduced into their faith blameworthy innovations – such as the Eucharist and celibacy – and on the other hand have irresponsibly abandoned practices that Christ is reported to have observed – such as ritual purity, circumcision, and the prohibition of eating pork. But in this chapter al-Qarāfī directs his arrows mainly at the person he thinks

is responsible for the most destructive corruption of Christ's teaching: St. Paul. The chapter dwells at length on several narratives of Paul's conversion and his subsequent deceitful ploys that drove the followers of Christ away from their original monotheistic faith. Cucarella traces masterfully the complicated history of these narratives in their various manifestations in the anti-Christian polemical tradition.

The final chapter of *al-Ajwiba* (and the penultimate chapter in Cucarella's book) deals with proofs of Muḥammad's prophecy that al-Qarāfī attempts to find in the Old and New Testament. As Cucarella points out, this contradicts al-Qarāfī's previous attack on the integrity of these scriptural traditions, but the use of these prooftexts here is strictly polemical. Al-Qarāfī turns to these texts, in other words, not as religiously authoritative, but simply to substantiate the prophethood of Muḥammad on the basis of traditions that Jews and Christians accept as revealed truth. Cucarella does not quite spell this out, but as a consequence of this attitude al-Qarāfī's treatment of the biblical text does not amount to scriptural polemic in the hermeneutical sense. All of his arguments are historical in nature: passages in the Torah or Psalms or the Gospels, he says, should be seen as referring to Islam simply because the descriptions correspond most accurately to Muḥammad or the Umma. For example, those of whom it is said that "praise of God [is] in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands" in Ps. 149:6 must be Muslims because they are the only ones who praise God with loud voices in the call to prayer and are allegedly the

only ones who use two-edged swords (p. 248). Al-Qarāfī, in other words, does not accuse Jewish or Christian exegetes of misinterpreting the Bible because they lack the tools or cognitive ability to understand its true meaning; rather, because of their political entanglements that are the result of the lack of proper religious leadership, they deliberately refuse to acknowledge the plain (i.e., historical) meaning of their own texts.

That Cucarella chose not to draw out this point further is rather surprising, as one of his main arguments in the book is that *al-Ajwiba* should be seen fundamentally as a political text. He reiterates the notion that al-Qarāfī was driven by a sense of threat to Muslim hegemony, which led him to compose a defense not only of the Qur'ān and Muḥammad, but of Islamic civilization. In the context of the recurring conflicts with Latin Christians and the rising threat of the Mongols, as well as the so-called Coptic renaissance, Cucarella states aptly, polemics seemed like an appropriate vehicle to trumpet the truth not only of Islam but of the Muslim community as the "best nation ever brought forth to men" (Q 3:15). This is most visible where al-Qarāfī's critique strays from the nuts and bolts of philosophical polemic and turns to issues that concern the ordinary practices of neighboring communities.

But this point is more subtle (and urgent) than simply a reminder to consider the context in which this treatise was composed and that shaped the experience of its author, for what underlies Cucarella's treatment of *al-Ajwiba* is the claim that inter-religious discourse is in fact about the basis of human civilization precisely because, through the debate about various

doctrinal differences, authors really attempted the construction of separate identities, which are always profoundly entangled. Yet especially after Vatican II, says Cucarella, those who have engaged in efforts to resolve long-lasting religious conflicts have tended to assume that the various doctrines are incommensurably different, and that the source of all conflict is the struggle for power. If only we could “depoliticize” theology and refrain from comparison, some say, we might achieve harmony. This fantasy, however, has been rejected even by some of the most vocal supporters of the message brought forth by Vatican II. In contrast, Cucarella claims, citing Hugh Nicholson, we should recognize that some of the most profound doctrinal differences “are the contingent product of the complex processes of selection, emphasis, and recognition through which religious communities situate themselves politically in relation to proximate rivals” (p. 11). In other words, religious discourse—even the most refined and seemingly insular theological treatment—is part of the identity construction through which Muslims and Christians situate themselves ‘politically’ in relation to each other (p. 268).

This provocative insight is the engine behind Cucarella’s approach, which is stated in the question with which this review began: could polemical literature help us foster a better understanding between Muslims and Christians? It is crucially important to recognize, says Cucarella, that the seeming polarity between the traditions is not essential but rather results from a dialectic of mutual

perceptions that was fashioned over centuries of heated and engaged discussion. Moreover, polemic plays a decisive role in building this very discourse, the purpose of which was in part to intensify the political sense of ‘us’ against ‘them.’ A sympathetic reading of the polemical tradition, therefore, could teach us that the othering, which now seems so deep and inextricable, owes to various social and political exigencies as much as it does to theological precepts. But how do we both do justice to medieval authors who clearly treated the precepts of their own tradition as axiomatic, and at the same time hold that the very same precepts are the mutable product of political identity construction? This juggling act seems to put the modern commentator in charge of cleaning up what Cucarella calls “the rhetorical excesses” of medieval polemics. Indeed, it seems that even Cucarella wishes that al-Qarāfī had had the courtesy to evaluate Christianity according to its own standards, and that he had talked with and not “past” his Christian interlocutor. One has to be careful that this approach does not end in the same kind of reduction that is created by the comparative theologian who cedes to the other religion only the thinnest common denominator that would anticipate a comfortable, yet useless, bridge. Needless to say, however, this is an impressive book and a laudable program, not only for its potential impact on the efforts for a better understanding between religious communities, but also for how we read the pre-modern ancestors of debates that continue to rage.

Book Review

Michael Brett, *The Fatimid Empire. The Edinburgh History of the Islamic Empires* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017), viii+337 pp. ISBN 978-07-48-64076-8. Price: £20.99.

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Those of us intimately involved in the study of Fatimid history, as well as others who teach areas of Islamic history in which this dynasty played a significant role, have long lamented the lack of a good, substantial one-volume account of that era suitable for use in classroom instruction and also generally available and accessible for anyone interested in the period. Among those who have such an interest is, of course, a large world-wide population of Ismaili Muslims who continue to regard the Fatimid caliphs as the divinely chosen imams of their religious tradition. I am quite pleased to announce that finally we have just such a work.

For the many times I have offered a course specifically devoted to the Fatimids, it has been a challenge to cobble together an adequate set of reading materials,

most especially if the only language the students could use was English. Heinz Halm's truly monumental three-volume history¹ is in itself excellent but only one volume has appeared in English thus far. Without German the rest remains, sadly, inaccessible. There exist fine works in French, notably some by Th. Bianquis, and Arabic is reasonably well served, most recently by A. F. Sayyid.

Even in English the situation is not hopeless but until now it has required gathering together many separate items: a few book length works, articles on various topics, Genizah studies, and the increasing and quite valuable publications of the Ismaili Institute in London which has added, over the years, immeasurably to our store of Fatimid era Ismaili texts in translation. Yet others have become available due to the efforts of several

1. Heinz Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdis: Der Aufstieg der Fatimiden (875-973)* (München: C.H. Beck, 1991); *Die Kalifen von Kairo: Die Fatimiden in Ägypten, 973-1074* (München: C.H. Beck, 2003); *Kalifen und Assassinen: Ägypten und der Vordere Orient zur Zeit der ersten Kreuzzüge, 1074-1171* (München: C.H. Beck, 2014).



scholars (including Tahera Qutbuddin, Devin Stewart, most especially Ismail Poonawala). *Encyclopaedia of Islam* entries are often useful and now updated with the latest in the *EI3*.

SOAS's Michael Brett has all along been a major contributor to Fatimid studies with an important book on the rise of the dynasty and its early tenth century phase,² plus a long stream of articles on various aspects and periods of its existence. Until this book appeared I had thought I was keeping up with his many publications. However, I now see from its bibliography how many I had missed. One of the lesser but still important benefits it offers is a list of them.

There are several areas where Brett's previous work is essential, among them the role of the Berbers and the importance of trans-Saharan trade, along with the wider problem of tribal versus urban economies and social organizations. His attempts to explain major economic factors, as in the land granting *iqṭā'* system, with its various medieval recalibrations, is also noteworthy, but these are only those that come immediately to mind. After reading this new book, it would seem that he not only well understands a wide range of issues, problems and puzzles peculiar to the Fatimid case, but can often explain them as clearly as anyone might be expected to do and with the highest standards of scholarly investigation.

The Ismaili dimension of this empire and the concomitant role its *da'wa* played, both inside and outside of the domain of its direct rule can, as in many past efforts, prove how difficult it is to adequately

integrate religion in an ordinary historical account of its political affairs. Al-Maqrīzī's key *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, the sole medieval attempt to cover the whole period (both the North African and Egyptian phase together) in one work, indicates that he wanted to know much more than he did but that he lacked access to most of Ismaili materials that we now have. Happily Brett appears at home with much, if not most, of the recently uncovered works of the *da'wa*. It is true that we owe to Farhad Daftary and his *The Ismā'īlīs*, substantial credit for the basic, full account that serves this purpose quite well. But, as his work mainly concerns religious history, putting together both religion and state was often not adequately done. And the Ismaili *da'wa*, its sectarian appeal and membership, was far wider than the political empire, encompassing as it did nearly the whole of the Islamic world, East, West, North and South, with pockets of adherences spread to places far from the North African or Egyptian home of the imam-caliph. Brett devotes considerable space in this book to the far-flung *da'wa*, in some cases exceeding what I would have expected at best, for example with the Nizār-Musta'li split and the subsequent history of the independent polity founded by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and centered on Alamut.

For a work that needs to cover well over two and a half centuries and territories as diverse and far apart as the furthest Maghrib in the West and central Asian Khurasan in the East, from northern Iran to the Yemen and on to India, there are bound to arise more than a few bits and pieces that one could quibble with.

2. Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century CE*, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 30 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

Brett's insistence that al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *Da'ā'im al-Islām* had no successor (p. 66, 68) ignores Ibn Killis's later work³ of at least the same size and kind wherein he collected the pronouncements of the Fatimid imams of his own time. At one later point the government actually ordered legal authorities to memorize and refer to it along with the *Da'ā'im*. Al-Maqrīzī, centuries later still, possessed a copy. In another example Brett would have al-Ḥākim's mother be a Melkite Christian and implies that her brothers became Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria, missing entirely, it seems, the fact that this Melkite family belonged to the caliph's half-sister's mother. These Patriarchs were Sitt al-Mulk's maternal uncles, not al-Ḥākim's; he was not related to them by blood in any way. But here I must quickly add that my few quibbles

pale by comparison to the many items of information I picked up from this book, interpretations of issues I am now forced to rethink and look at in a new light, terms such as "seveners" I previously thought misleading and obsolete but may have been convinced otherwise, along with many works in the bibliography that ought to be read or reread. Throughout, the level of detail is impressive for a volume designed as one of a series on various Islamic empires. A great deal of material has been skillfully reduced to a single narrative that seldom leaves anything out. For the expert this book will certainly reward; for the novice it is a trustworthy introduction and more. Hopefully it will serve to attract more attention to the Fatimids in the wider scholarship on the classical Islamic period. There is still much left to investigate.

3. Paul E. Walker, "Ibn Killis," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. K. Fleet, G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, E. Rowson. Online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30871

Book Review

Matthew S. Gordon and Kathryn Hain, eds., *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), xi+354 pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-062218-3, Price: \$99 (Cloth)/Price Varies (E-Book).

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In this exciting new volume, co-editors Matthew Gordon and Kathryn Hain provide scholars and students an important resource for the study of slavery and enslaved women. The book comprises fifteen substantive articles plus a useful introductory overview by Gordon and an interpretive epilogue by Hain. It ranges from the seventh century through the eighteenth, across Andalusia and the Maghreb, through Arabia and the Levant, to Turkey, Iran, and Central Asia. “The shared aim,” Gordon writes, “is a reconstruction of the lives, careers, and representations of women across this same expanse of time, social organization, and political drama” (“Introduction: Producing Songs and Sons,” 1).

The contributors, who range from doctoral candidate to full professor, are mostly historians and literary scholars, but there is also a musicologist and a librarian. Roughly sixty percent of the contributions are by women and most of the essays cite secondary scholarship by women in due

proportion. There are overlapping clusters of chapters on the Abbasid era; on *qiyān*—enslaved singers; on Andalusia; and on enslaved (or, surprisingly, not) concubines in royal households.

A few contributions will be of particular interest for those in religious studies, including Nerina Rustomji’s “Are Houris Heavenly Concubines?” and Elizabeth Urban’s exploration of how mid-eighth-century contests over legitimate authority came to invoke Abraham and Muhammad’s enslaved concubines to “justif[y] the political aspirations of the children of slave mothers” (“Hagar and Mariya: Early Islamic Models of Slave Motherhood,” 230). In a similar vein, Michael Dann’s “Between History and Hagiography: The Mothers of the Imams in Imami Historical Memory” looks at hagiographical accounts of the mother of the twelfth imam as part of the construction of a theologically and politically robust messianic legitimacy. Younus Mirza’s “Remembering the *Umm al-Walad*: Ibn Kathir’s Treatise on the Sale



of the Concubine” is the closest the volume comes to sustained focus on jurisprudence, although the text on which it focuses is not a work of law; it does, however, address how authoritative precedent is constructed and contested.

One of the questions that inevitably arises in discussions of Islamic history is precisely what is “Islamic” about it. What are the commonalities as well as the distinctions among norms and implementation of slavery in majority-Muslim contexts and other contexts? This collection highlights certain recurring patterns—the legal protections governing the *umm walad*, for instance—but also reveals substantial divergences among forms of concubinage and enslaved courtesanship. It also reveals how dependent such practices were on local contexts and norms as well as the specifics of given historical moments. In “The Ethnic Origins of Female Slaves in al-Andalus,” Christina de la Puente tackles the complex ways that race, ethnic origin, skin color, and more play into norms about insiders, outsiders, and status. One intriguing suggestion offered by Gordon (34) is that later scholars may have read whiteness or European origins into descriptions of beauty where none are there in original texts. Issues of ethnicity crop up in other places from time to time; as Marina Tolmacheva notes, the fourteenth-century “Moroccan globetrotter” Ibn Battuta rarely names his wives or concubines, typically referring in the latter’s case to their ethnic/geographic origins (“Concubines on the Road—Ibn Battuta’s Slave Women,” 163).

One of the merits of this volume is the number of enslaved women about whom it presents biographical information—

though of varying levels of detail and facticity. We know very little about the numerous enslaved women whom Ibn Battuta, who “never traveled without a concubine if he could help it” (168), bought, gave away, used sexually, impregnated, and occasionally mourned. More often than not, what is true for Ibn Battuta’s enslaved companions is true more broadly: we catch a few telling glimpses of their life experiences, but these are nearly always subordinated to, and told in terms of their relevance to, their owners. There are some exceptions, however. The sources permit Betül İpşirli Argit to give a rich account of early-eighteenth-century Ottoman concubine turned queen mother Gülnuş Sultan (“A Queen Mother and the Ottoman Imperial Harem: Rabia Gülnuş Emetullah Valide Sultan [1640-1715]”). Captured and enslaved as a child in Crete, she became a favorite consort of Sultan Mehmed IV. Two of her sons ruled successively, from 1695–1715. Her skill at networking and making alliances enabled her participation in internal Ottoman politics as well as foreign affairs. Another set of exceptional women are certain *qiyān*, who are the subject of multiple chapters, including Matthew S. Gordon’s “Abbasid Courtesans and the Question of Social Mobility,” Lisa Nielson’s “Visibility and Performance: Courtesans in the Early Islamicate Courts (661-950 CE),” and Dwight F. Reynolds’ “The *Qiyān* of al-Andalus.”

It is almost a truism among specialists that the term “slavery” obscures vital differences among the array of legal, social, and personal relationships that fall under its umbrella. Islamicists who write about Mamluks or palace concubines often toss around the phrase “elite slavery” without conscious awareness of its oxymoronic

nature. Certain institutions combined legal servitude with social prestige, informal—and occasionally formal—power, and control over wealth. In her 2003 essay on the Abbasid post of *qahramāna*, steward/keeper of the harem, Nadia Maria El Cheikh mentions the remarkable Thumal, a *jāriya* of the caliph's al-Muqtadir's mother. That venerable woman placed Thumal in charge of the *mazālim* courts, causing considerable consternation.¹ But the blurry boundaries among status, influence, and power can be even trickier to analyze when sexuality and self-determination enter into the equation. Several contributors focus on questions of social mobility for enslaved women, which require negotiating what Marion Katz has called “the avenues of opportunity and forms of constriction that were navigated by individual women.”² In her epilogue (“Avenues to Social Mobility Available to Concubines and Courtesans”), Hain points out that “While slave women in Islamic society could use their wits, charm, talent, and beauty to achieve social mobility, they remained vulnerable” (336).

The book's title highlights the inescapable sexual dimension to “feminine slavery” (2). While authors acknowledge the legal right of (male) masters to have sex with any unmarried women they own (e.g., 78), expectations of seclusion for enslaved girls and women kept as concubines were far more stringent than those attending enslaved servants assigned household work. At the same time, owing to historians' available sources, concubines, particularly those in courtly and elite households, are

those whose presence is most visible to us now. (Contributors rely mostly on literary and documentary sources, occasionally including formularies and fatwas, both for historical reconstruction and for evidence of mentalités, dynastic propaganda, and hagiography.)

While not all *qiyān* were sexual partners for their owners, many were—at least when those owners were male—and their sexual allure was part of the point. Attachments—and possibilities for manipulation—could be enhanced by *qiyān* and others who had resources, including education, networks, and social cachet, beyond those of the uprooted women and girls who seem to have comprised the majority of enslaved concubines. Singer-composers and other educated enslaved women (see Jocelyn Sharlet's “Educated Slave Women and Gift Exchange in Abbasid Culture” as well as Pernilla Myrne's “A *jariya*'s prospects in Abbasid Baghdad,” which follows the poet Inan al-Natifi) wielded resources beyond those of many other concubines. Although the two educated women whom Ibn Battuta bought and ultimately returned to their owners themselves had no say in the matter, the men who sold them, and then had changes of heart and sought their return, seem to have been more attached to them than Ibn Battuta was to most of the women he bought or was given.

The variety of terms used throughout the book to name and discuss enslaved women reflects both the diversity of terms used in sources from various languages, eras, and genres and the different

1. Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, “The Qahramāna in the Abbasid Court: Position and Functions,” *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003), pp. 41–55.

2. Marion Katz, “Textual Study of Gender,” in Léon Buskens and Annemarie van Sandwijk, eds., *Islamic Studies in the Twenty-first Century: Transformations and Continuities* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 87–108 at 97–98.

sensibilities of the volume's contributors. Some, as I have tended to do in the past, use "slaves" and others, as I try to do now, make a point of using "enslaved person."³ The latter phrase highlights that enslavement is not a natural state but something that is actively done to one human being by another, who is not simply a "master" or "mistress" but a "slaveowner." English terms such as concubine and courtesan (or borrowed terms such as geisha) connote varying levels of status and agency; Nielson argues that "the ambiguity" attending prestigious, highly trained *qiyān* carved out "a liminal social and legal space between free and unfree" which makes courtesan a more accurate term than ones conveying "concubinage or servitude alone" (81). Reynolds, while noting "myriad" divergences, suggests that "the geisha of Japan are perhaps the most comparable form of socially institutionalized female companionship and entertainment for male patrons" (100).

Various contributors ponder how scholars can address consent, affection, and power within relationships between owners and the people they kept enslaved. How does one conceptualize human relationships across such vital power divides?⁴ Is meaningful consent to a sexual relationship possible when one

party is legally unfree? Many modern Muslims struggle with the institution of concubinage—including although not only in prophetic precedent—in part because consent has come to take center stage in discussions of sex (if not always in its practice).⁵ Yet as Myrne observes, "the system of sexual slavery seems to have been taken for granted on the part of society at large; it is hard to find evidence of any sort of opposition" (89). While I suspect numerous captured and enslaved women remained unconvinced of the justice of others' claims to own them and have sexual rights over them, it is true that there was not widespread protest against the entire institution of captivity, enslavement, or concubinage; no religious scholars railed against the practice.

Any sustained consideration of slavery, sex, and consent must address the overlap, conceptual and otherwise, between free and enslaved women and between concubinage and marriage. If the legal relationship of ownership encompassed a wide variety of de facto relationships, so did the contractual relationship of marriage. Marriage was sometimes a partnership of (nearly) equals; (some) women could negotiate de jure protections or carve out de facto ones, sometimes by forgoing de jure rights. At other times, marriage was a matter of domination and servility. Gordon

3. Katy Waldman presents an overview of the debate among historians: http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_history_of_american_slavery/2015/05/historians_debate_whether_to_use_the_term_slave_or_enslaved_person.html.

4. For instance, Ehud Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

5. In addition to Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (London: Oneworld, 2nd. ed., 2016), chapter 3, see my "Consent and Concubinage" in "Roundtable: Locating Slavery in Middle Eastern and Islamic History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 49, 2017, pp. 148–52; see also my "Redeeming Slavery: The 'Islamic State' and the Quest for Islamic Morality," *Mizan: Journal for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations*, 1:1, September 2016. Online)

deems it “impossible to quantify when sexual union was coerced and thus violent, and when it was consensual and thus expressive of emotional ties”—and this observation holds for marriages as well, involving both free and enslaved women. As he points out, “medieval Arabic literary sources,” to which I would add scriptural and legal texts, “speak to a spectrum of conduct from sexual assault to close, extended personal relationships” (4).

The book’s subtitle reads “Women and Slavery in Islamic History.” The subtitle is accurate insofar as the volume’s focus is notably on women rather than gender. Its contributions say little about enslaved men, sexual use of boys, norms of masculinity, or the relevance of eunuchs for regulating and controlling women’s sexual comportment, including enslaved women. Free slave-owning women make brief, important appearances; not only are there royal women such as the Abbasid queen Zubayda but also women who “owned, trained, and traded in *jawari*” (64), such as the wife of Cordoba’s chief judge, who supported him in part by training *qiyān* (113).

Yet questions about enslaved, freed, and free women and their interrelationships beg for further exploration, both at the conceptual level and in their historical particularities. As Marion Katz notes, there are major limitations to the idea of “woman” as a unified legal and social category.⁶ The historiography of United States slavery has challenged the notion of white women in plantation households as mere downtrodden subjects of

patriarchal male authority; as Thavolia Glymph has shown, despite their legal debility compared to their husbands, mistresses exercised brutal power over enslaved women, rather than being somehow their natural allies on the basis of shared femaleness.⁷ In contexts where Islamic law granted women, including married women, full rights to property ownership, and where there was no marital property regime, questions about ownership and control of enslaved people in a specific household undoubtedly operated differently. (Polygyny, too, would affect these relationships.) There remains much to explore about women’s interrelationships within and across households, including but not limited to royal harems; contributors to this volume provide helpful, though not systematic, evidence for interactions among free and enslaved women.

One thread weaving through the volume is the way that reproductive strategies, especially but not only when rulership is in play, might lead to shifting preferences for marriage to free women, who could offer family alliances, or concubinage with enslaved women, whose lack of such ties would avoid potential divided loyalties. Majied Robinson’s statistical analysis of Umayyad-era Qurashi genealogies (“Statistical Approaches to the Rise of Concubinage in Islam”) shows two seemingly contradictory trends among Umayyad caliphs during the eighth century: increased cousin marriage (endogamy) and increased concubinage with “foreign slave women, who are the most exogamous

6. Katz, “Textual Study of Gender,” 93–102.

7. Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

marriage partners possible” (19). Usman Hamid’s account of the freeborn Muslim women incorporated into Timurid royal households as concubines—contrary to standard interpretations of Islamic law—was a way of circumventing the restriction on the number of legal wives a man could take while accruing the benefits of marriage alliances (“Slaves Only in Name: Free Women as Royal Concubines in Late Timurid Iran and Central Asia”). As Hain concludes, “Reproductive politics favored slave concubines” (336).

Issues of rulers’ reproduction also come to the fore in Heather Empey’s chapter, “The Mothers of the Caliph’s Sons: Women as Spoils of War in the Early Almohad Period,” but the most valuable contribution this chapter makes is to provide a case study of the intersections of war, capture, enslavement, and politico-religious legitimacy. The Almohad practice of enslaving and selling non-Almohad freeborn Muslim women—and the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min’s practice of keeping them as concubines, contrary to Islamic law—makes clear that “the Almohads dealt with the Muslim populace of the Maghrib as though they were non-Muslim enemy combatants or apostates” (155). What Empey shows explicitly, and other contributors implicitly, is that the study of enslaved women provides valuable,

otherwise unavailable, perspectives on important historical phenomena.

No volume can cover everything but one obvious lacuna in this volume is non-Maghrebi Africa. A chapter on the Sokoto caliphate, for instance, could have followed up on the apologetic mentions of the integration of captured women into Sokoto caliph households in Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack’s account of Nana Asma’u’s career.⁸ Another important comparative context would be the Indian Ocean human trade as well as case studies on the subcontinent. The fact that the book omits these topics is not an indictment but a call for more work that builds on Hain and Gordon’s substantial accomplishments in this volume.

Concubines and Courtesans is essential for scholars who study women or slavery in Muslim contexts and valuable for those who work on other topics in the Abbasid era, Andalusian history, or courtly cultures, and for scholars of slavery in other contexts. It will be useful for courses in history and Islamic studies. Each chapter is followed by endnotes and bibliography, a feature which makes it easier to select chapters for use in the classroom—and many of these would be good to teach with. The essays in *Concubines and Courtesans* will help set our scholarly agenda; there is much work to do.

8. Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman’s Jihad: Nana Asma’u, Scholar and Scribe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 35–6 and passim.

Book Review

Vanessa Van Renterghem, *Les élites bagdadiennes au temps des Seldjoukides. Étude d'histoire sociale*, 2 vols. (Beirut-Damascus: Presses de l'IFPO, 2015), Vol. 1 xx + 530 pp., Vol 2. 493 pp. ISBN: 978-2-35-159704-0. Price: €150 (Paper). Available in OpenEdition Books (<https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/9172>).

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The book focuses on a central topic of medieval Islam: Baghdad and its elites under the Saljuqs, between 447/1055 and 575/1180. This Baghdad was the caliphal capital where al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) taught and where Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) preached—a city transformed by the foundation of *madrasas* and *ribāṭs*, and fought over by the Saljuq Turks, their Iranian viziers, their emirs, the *‘ayyārs*, and the Abbasids Caliphs. The city was indeed the heart of “Traditional Islam,” to quote the late George Makdisi (d. 2002), the leading figure in “Baghdad studies” during this key period. For all these reasons, the potential readership of Van Renterghem’s book is far greater than what is normally expected for monograph on a medieval city.

The author aims to offer a social history of Baghdad by focusing on the best documented section of the population: its elites (p. 21-22). Her book is based upon a PhD dissertation submitted in 2004 at the University of Paris, Sorbonne. The

result is two volumes, 3.4 kg, a thousand pages in-quarto; 30 maps and graphics, 53 tables and 34 genealogical trees; a lexicon including about 550 entries; and a bibliography of more than 650 titles. Imposing in its size, the work is also unique in its statistical basis. At the core of the book is a database of 2,639 persons having lived in Baghdad long enough to be considered as Baghdadi. To generate this prosopographical database, Van Renterghem has dug through in a vast corpus of 23 biographical sources (listed in Table 1.1, and discussed in Vol. 1: 25-39). Unexpectedly, Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Muntaẓam* and Ibn al-‘Imād’s (d. 1089/1679) *Shadharāt* contain the highest number of relevant notices. But other sources, often disregarded, have proven invaluable: for example, 70% of the notices drawn from al-Bundārī’s (d. after 639/1241-2) *Dhayl Ta’rīkh Baghdād* (still in manuscript at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France) are not found anywhere else, and the figure is 74% for Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643/1246) (see



Table 1-2). Van Renterghem explains in detail how the database was designed, with its 97 fields (see Vol. 2: 5-21).

This huge dataset fuels the maps, graphics and tables that make up most of the second volume. These figures are, in turn, commented upon in great detail in the first volume of text. As such the work honors the French tradition of statistical method applied to history. After all, it was Pierre Chaunu who founded quantitative history in the 1950s.¹ For Medieval Islam, it follows Dominique Urvoy's milestone work on the 'ulamā' of al-Andalus, as well as the *Onomasticon Arabicum* project.² Outside of France, this statistical approach has been developed and theorized by Richard Bulliet.³ These studies are mentioned in the introduction, along with a discussion on the concept of elites (its inception in the seminal work of the Italian sociologist Pareto as a reaction to Marxist theory; the new approach brought by prosopography; the major contributions of Elias and Bourdieu) and an analysis of the Arabic terms used in the sources (*khāṣṣa/āmma*, *a'yān*, *bayt*, etc.). Eventually, Van Renterghem defines the Baghdadian elites as follows: they enjoyed a superior social status recognized by their peers and by the rest of the population; they developed strategies of legitimation and distinction; and they lived in Baghdad long enough to implement these strategies (p. 21). Van Renterghem thus differentiates herself from the classical Weberian trilogy of power, money, and prestige as she

considers that economic factors are not paramount.

The author successively takes three different approaches: functional, sociological and spatial. After a presentation of the sources, the first section of the first volume contains a functional analysis of the various fields in which elites can be identified: religious authorities (Chap. 2), sufism (Chap. 3), traditional sciences (i.e. transmitters and 'ulamā') (Chap. 4), the judiciary (Chap. 5), the military (Chap. 6), the divans (Chap. 7), the Abbasid court (Chap. 8), and the bazars (Chap. 9).

In the second section, the author switches to a socio-historical approach. It focuses on the "practices of distinction" in a set of activities: eating, moving, and getting dressed (Chap. 10). Van Renterghem then turns to the "signs of reverence" during the processions (*mawākib*), funerals, or investiture ceremonies (Chap. 11). Elaborating upon this Bourdieusian model, the next chapter highlights practices of "social reproduction" through the example of fifteen great families, such as the Dāmghānis (who controlled the office of the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* throughout the period), the family of Ibn al-Jawzī, the Zaynabīs (the great Hanafī family of Baghdad), and the Banū Muslimas. This part, which highlights the links and the unity within the elites, counterbalances the analytical presentation of the first section (although we had already been told

1. Pierre Chaunu, "Histoire quantitative ou histoire sérielle," *Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto* 2/3 (1964): 165-176.

2. Dominique Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas andalous du v^e/xi^e au vii^e/xiii^e siècle. Étude sociologique* (Geneva: Droz, 1978). The *Onomasticon Arabicum* is available online: onomasticon.irht.cnrs.fr (it now aggregates over 25,000 records).

3. Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979).

that the Sufis and the *faqīhs* had followed the same curriculum, p. 103).

The third and final section of the book takes a spatial turn. After a presentation of the topographical framework, Van Renterghem analyzes in great detail where these men (and women) lived and died, and also how their presence was felt in the urban space (through *mawākib*, funeral processions, or festivals) (Chap. 13). Next, she scrutinizes the competition between various actors for urban control: the Saljuqs (through the *‘amīd*, and the *shihna*), the caliph (through the *hājib* and the *muhtasib*), and the Hashemites (through the *naqīb*) (Chap. 14). Finally, Chapter 15 examines the politics of architectural patronage in Baghdad.

This last chapter is typical of how Van Renterghem proceeds. The text comments on two detailed tables and five maps. Table 15-1 (12 pages long) is a list of the 100 building projects launched between 447/1055 and 573/1177 in Baghdad, not counting the *madrasas* and *ribāṭs*, which are dealt with elsewhere. Table 15-2 lists the 66 known patrons of building projects, this time including *madrasas* and *ribāṭs* (112 in total because powerful and wealthy patrons could launch several projects). Map 17 synthesizes all the data, and maps 18 to 21 contain a more precise representation of the areas favored by various actors (respectively Saljuqs, Abbasids, Abbasid officials, and civilians). The tables are extremely detailed, and conveniently include mention of the primary sources. The maps are well drawn, in color, and very readable.

Many of the diagrams and figures which aggregate the results of the database are truly enlightening. For example, a series of four charts elucidates the evolution of

hadith transmission in Saljuq Baghdad. Elaborating upon a method designed by Dominique Urvoy, Van Renterghem is thus able to identify four generations of hadith transmitters. With the exception of the first generation, they include an equivalent number of masters (about 17) and disciples (about 550). The diagrams (4-2 to 4-5) show how many disciples the various transmitters had in common. In the first period (before the arrival of the Saljuqs), we see a clear hierarchy within two groups of transmitters which do not communicate; conversely, in the second period (transmitters who died between 439/1047 and 479/1086), the network is remarkably integrated (i.e. a student has many professors, and no professor stands out); in the third period, the network has lost density and five transmitters prevail; finally, in the last period (transmitters who died between 510/1116 and 564/1168), the network is strongly polarized around the figure of one transmitter (the pro-Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Ḥusayn, d. 525/1131). Van Renterghem concludes that “we can witness a tightening of the circle of hadith transmitters around ever less numerous figures and ever more dominant ones” (p. 139). She offers no definitive explanation for such a trend—though she suggests that the distinction between the Ḥanbalīs and the other Sunni groups may have played a role—but the visual representation of this phenomenon is striking.

Another valuable series of illustrations are the maps of residential areas. Several filters are successively applied and the results are telling. While hardly any social zoning can be highlighted (see maps 2 and 3, which show that simple transmitters and high-profile elites live

in the same districts), we clearly see that the center of gravity of Baghdad moved to the East during the century of Saljuq rule (compare maps 4 and 6). Also compelling is the evidence of residential segregation according to *madhhab* (map 10) and occupation (map 7-9). We now have a clear idea of where the Ḥanbalīs were living: South-West of Dār al-Khilāfa on the East side, and South of the Jāmi‘ al-Manṣūr on the West side.

I could mention dozens of other such valuable “hard facts” offered throughout the book. I cannot resist mentioning two further examples: of the 31 Sufis who are known to have studied *fiqh*, 29 are Shāfi‘ite (p. 105)! This is quite striking. Similarly, I found interesting the low proportion of mystics among the persons who enjoyed divine *baraka* (4 out of 32): unlike later periods, the Sufis did not have the monopoly on *baraka*.

The endeavors of the author to provide her readers with a robust documentary basis on which the analysis is built is admirable. History, however, is not a science and Van Renterghem does not pretend that she has found the Grail (she is aware of the unbalanced character of her corpus), but as long as new sources are not discovered (which is very hypothetical), it seems unlikely that the general picture painted in her tables can be challenged.

That said, the whole project suffers from two problems. The first is the decision to hermetically isolate the documentary evidence (maps, tables, trees, graphics) from the text; all this valuable material is

relegated to the second volume (alongside the bibliography and indices). This choice is questionable for a volume of this scale, because following the argumentation requires constantly navigating between two in-quarto volumes, an operation which is hampered by the type of binding (the volume often closes by itself) and the absence of clear running heads.⁴ I am aware that one figure can be used in multiple passages, and appendices work just fine with significantly smaller books. In this case, however, this sort of reasoning has proved counterproductive, and many figures (all the genealogical trees, all the diagrams and maps; many tables) could easily have been inserted into the text section.⁵

Another problem is the content and scope of the book itself. It says too much and not enough at the same time. Too much because Van Renterghem seems to refuse to choose what story she wants to tell with her abundant material. As a consequence, for each category or issue, she adds up quantitative data, anthropological analysis, and case-studies. Here again there is a scale effect: what is possible for other cities less well documented does not work well here. Take one example: in the corpus of sources on Saljuq Isfahan, I have not been able to find a single mention of a *muḥtasib*, though such figures naturally existed in that place and time as in any other city; but for Baghdad, 23 *muḥtasibs* can be identified, often with many details (see Table 14-3). Multiply this by the number of “catégories élitaires”

4. The running head at the top of the page only refers to the number of any given table, not to its subject. Since the volume lacks a detailed list of figures, precious time is wasted in searching for them.

5. Strikingly, one previous reviewer of the book starts by stating that he will discuss *only* the first volume, as if the “annexes” (appendices) contained only marginal information. See M.H. Benkheira, *Studia Islamica* 112/2 (2017), 303-314, here p. 303.

defined by Van Renterghem and it is easily understandable how we end up with this behemoth of a book. This is aggravated by the overreaching approach: thus, in the first section of the book, Van Renterghem deals with the “milieux élitaires,” but instead of restricting herself to the relevant positions (preachers, etc.), she also adds a spatial dimension and speaks about the institutions (she deals with the *ribāṭ* in the chapter on the Sufis, with the *madrassa* in the chapter on the traditional sciences). This leads to repetition in the last section of her discussion, which is space-oriented.

There are, indeed, a very high number of repetitions throughout the text. These are sometimes small anecdotes,⁶ but also include much longer developments.⁷ At some point we would have expected the author to choose an angle and stick to it, even if it meant leaving aside a vast amount of hard-won data (scholars' computers are full of such treasures waiting to be dealt with!).

At the same time, much of the story that the book contains has already been told. Van Renterghem's work is truly admirable, and every scholar has a natural tendency to overvalue his or her contribution to the field. But the case of Saljuq Baghdad

can hardly be compared to the state of scholarship on pre-Mongol Nishapur when Bulliet started investigating it, or on Saljuq Isfahan when I embarked on its study.

“Very few works have been carried out on Iraqi cities, including Baghdad, despite its status as the seat of the caliphate,” Van Renterghem writes in the introduction (p. 9). The presentation of the scholarship which follows aims to substantiate that claim. Le Strange's topographic study is mentioned briefly in a footnote. George Makdisi's seminal work is alluded to in only a few lines, in a rather curious way: can we really say that he limits himself to “political and intellectual history” and “does not aim to analyze urban society” (p. 10)? While he never engaged in quantitative analyses, Makdisi insisted on the fact that the life of a public person such as Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513/1119) could only be truly understood through a global analysis of the period, space, and milieu in which he lived.⁸ Also, his substantial article on the *madrassas* not only includes a list of all the “institutions of learning” in the Saljuq period, but also proposes a new understanding of their function (a tool for the elites “to control the masses”) based on a reflection on the power relationship

6. 50 pages apart, we read exactly the same anecdote about the *faqīh* Abū Ishāq Shīrāzī, who refused to pray in the madrasa in which he teaches; cf. pp. 423-424 and p. 486, with full references in both cases.

7. The lexicon of social preeminence is dealt with in the introduction (pp. 14-20), then again in Chapter 11 (pp. 326-329); the function of the Abbasid *ḥājib* is presented in the functional analysis (Chap. 7, pp. 220-222) and also in Chapter 14, which focuses on social order (p. 468). The *mawkib* is dealt with in Chapters 11 (pp. 329-330) and 13 (p. 436). Even the concept of elites is explained as far into the book as page 416. Other examples abound: e.g., the issue of clothing imposed on dhimmis (p. 302 = p. 209), and the role played by women in urban development (pp. 248-251 and pp. 495-500). Other examples abound: e.g., the issue of clothing imposed on dhimmis (p. 302 = p. 209), and the role played by women in urban development (pp. 248-251 and pp. 495-500).

8. George Makdisi, “The Topography of Eleventh Century Baḡdād: Materials and Notes,” *Arabica* 6/2 (1959): 178-97 and 6/3 (1959): 281-309.

in that very time and space.⁹ Likewise, his article on the topography of Baghdad¹⁰ is much more than an arid list of toponyms: Makdisi shows how the urban space was fought over between the Abbasid caliph and the Saljuq sultan, which is precisely the subject of Van Renterghem's last chapter (15). And Makdisi's annotated translation of the *Journal* of Ibn al-Bannā' (d. 471/1079), which is naturally abundantly used by Van Renterghem, provides a unique insider perspective on an urban (Ḥanbalī) community.¹¹ In the same section, one would have expected at least one reference to Simha Sabari's study on popular movements in Abbasid Baghdad, inasmuch as Claude Cahen—Sabari's supervisor—was the first to connect the *fitnas* with power struggles among the elite (Sabari is dismissed much later in a footnote as too “descriptive”).¹²

Brushing away Makdisi, Van Renterghem dedicates a little more to Ephrat's work on the Sunni ‘*ulamā*’ of eleventh-century Baghdad. It was published in 2000 and was not particularly well received. Indeed, reviewers pointed out that her study was marred by too many factual errors, by several essential sources

and studies simply overlooked and, above all, by a thesis which proved untenable.¹³ That being said, and despite what Van Renterghem implies, her book and Ephrat's have much in common: the same main biographical sources, the same focus on the ‘*ulamā*’ (not the only elites dealt with by Van Renterghem, but certainly the most documented), and the same themes (e.g. assessing Baghdad's attraction or the family background of the ‘*ulamā*’). Moreover, in a nutshell both books share the same approach: statistics *cum* historical anthropology. Van Renterghem has not referenced modern authors in her 88-page index section, but an online search reveals that she refers only exceptionally to Ephrat's study outside the introduction.

These few examples lead to a broader concern: Van Renterghem too seldom refers to the existing scholarship in the course of her argumentation. She justifies herself in the introduction by the wish to stay immune from any “foreign problematics,” be it that of Medieval Europe (e.g., the issue of autonomy, which largely defined the history of Western cities) or of “Islamic cities,” especially in Syria and Egypt. The fact is that the

9. George Makdisi, “Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24/1 (1961): 1–56.

10. George Makdisi, “The Topography of Eleventh Century Baghdād: Materials and Notes,” *Arabica* 6/2 (1959): 178–97 and 6/3 (1959): 281–309.

11. George Makdisi, “Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdād,” *BSOAS* 18/1 (1956): 9–33, 18/2 (1956): 239–260 and 19 (1957): 13–48.

12. Simha Sabari, *Mouvements populaires à Bagdad à l'époque 'abbasside, IX^e-XI^e siècles* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1981). Claude Cahen, “Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du Moyen-Age,” *Arabica* 5 (1958) and 6 (1959) (with separate pagination).

13. Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni 'Ulama' of Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000). See, notably, the reviews by T. El-Hibri in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 736–738; V. Van Renterghem in the *Bulletin Critique des Annales Islamologiques* 18 (2002): 65–67; and, most importantly, Shahab Ahmed in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123/1 (2003): 179–182.

questions at the heart of Ephrat's study were derived from Michael Chamberlain and Joan Gilbert's studies on Damascus.¹⁴ I can understand this line of reasoning (i.e., to let the sources speak for themselves), but this works best when no source stands above the others, like in Bulliet's *Patricians*, Garcin's *Qūṣ*, or the urban studies based upon Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176) or al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071).¹⁵ This is not the case with Saljuq Baghdad. In some cases, Van Renterghem adds a note to say that her results confirm other studies (e.g., on the precarious situation of the viziers, p. 243, or on the versatility of the emirs, p. 218). On rare occasions, recent studies are discussed in the text (Aloha's unpublished statistical inquiry into al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's dictionary is used as a compendium, p. 131; the same is true for Tor's book on the 'ayyār, p. 457).¹⁶ But the level of critical engagement with the existing scholarship remains insufficient. For example, at the outset of the second section, the author introduces examples of "social deaths" (disgrace, infamy parade) without referring to Christian Lange's essential book on the subject.¹⁷

Van Renterghem rightly considers the *niqāba* as a key institution, and the *naqīb* appears in several passages of the book as one of the most important public persons in Baghdad. But can we say with the author that "the *niqāba* is an institution not well known" (p. 84, repeated p.474, with a reference to a single article in Italian), when the *naqībs* of Baghdad are dealt with by Badrī Muḥammad Fahd, a scholar who, incidentally, has published extensively on Baghdad during the Saljuq period, but is never mentioned?¹⁸ This is to say nothing of a new stream of research, best exemplified by the studies of Kazuo Morimoto, who has profoundly renewed our understanding of the issue.¹⁹ Can we speak of the guilds ("corps de métiers," p. 440) without hinting at the substantial bibliography on the subject, in particular in relation to the Abbasid capital studied long ago by Massignon. A quick look at the footnotes reveals that Van Renterghem hardly refers to the relevant scholarship, even when she tackles issues as hotly debated as the attitude of the 'ulamā' toward rulers, the relationship between

14. Joan Gilbert, *The Ulama of Medieval Damascus and the International World of Islamic Scholarship* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 1977); Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

15. Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo: IFAO, 1976 ; 2nd ed. 2005).

16. Deborah Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the "Ayyār" Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007); Judith Ahola, *The Community of Scholars: An Analysis of the Biographical Data from Ta'rīkh Baghdād* (PhD St Andrews, 2004).

17. Christian Lange, *Justice, Punishment and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008).

18. See Muḥammad Badrī Fahd, *Ta'rīkh al-'Irāq fi al-'aṣr al-'abbāsī al-akhīr*, Baghdad: Irshād, 1973. Fahd has also investigated the *amīr al-ḥajj* before Van Renterghem (p. 206-10); see his article "Ta'rīkh umarā' al-ḥajj," *al-Mawrid* 4 (1981).

19. See Kazuo Morimoto (ed.), *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012) with extended reference to previous scholarship.

the Saljuqs and the Shī'ites, and the place of the horse in medieval societies.

This is also true for individuals or specific families. The Ibn Jahīr family and Abū Shujā' are well known to specialists of the period, but a reference to Hanne's study on the Abbasid vizierate during the Saljuq period would be expected.²⁰ With regard to the *shihna* (i.e., the military governor representing Saljuq power), Van Renterghem's lengthy discussion offers a case study on the career of Jawhar Ā'in. But she does not mention the key thing for which Jawhar Ā'in was famous, namely his role in the capture of the Byzantine emperor at Manzikert, nor an article encapsulating the career of the same emir.²¹ For the many individuals connected to Isfahan and discussed by Van Renterghem throughout her book, much more relevant material would have been found in my own work.²² And that is not even to mention scholarship in Turkish and Persian.

Another consequence of her lack of engagement with the existing scholarship is that Van Renterghem misses several key problematics. I will limit myself to three examples that illustrate the problem. Van Renterghem claims that 'Amīd al-Mulk

al-Kundurī, Toghrīl Beg's vizier, was "well-known" for his "Hanafi leanings" (p. 184). This view is that of Ibn al-Athīr and al-Subkī, two of the main sources used by Van Renterghem. But one of the most famous—and brilliant—scholarly article about Saljuq rule (Halm's on the fitna in Nishapur) precisely shows that al-Kundurī's *madhhab* was not clear, and that he remained close to the great Shāfi'ī families of Nishapur to whom he owed his rise.²³ As a second example, in the section on clothing, Van Renterghem refers to an Ash'arī preacher walking through the city surrounded by armed bodyguards (p. 304). This anecdote could have provided the occasion to discuss the issue of the militarization of society. Following Cahen's pioneering analysis, important research (in particular by Jürgen Paul) has been dedicated to this important issue of "civilian" elites engaging in warfare in the Iranian world. Interestingly enough, the preacher mentioned by Van Renterghem was an Iranian (his *nisba* is al-Ṭūsī). As a final example, also concerning military matters, the term *khādim* is recurrent in the sources, but beyond its generic meaning of "servant," it could mean more specifically "eunuch," a key figure

20. Eric Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place: Power, Authority, and the Late Abbasid Caliphate* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2007).

21. Kosuke Shimizu, "Amīr Gawhar Ā'in," *Orient* 32 (1997): 26-36.

22. David Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Iṣfahān in the Saljūq Period* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), e.g., p. 185 about the two *qādis* al-Khāṭibi, who played a critical political role at the Saljuq court; or p. 466, n. 146, regarding an emir who occupied the post of *shihna* in Isfahan and in Baghdad (for whom Van Renterghem erroneously writes that "no notice is available").

23. Heinz Halm, "Der Wesir al-Kundurī und die Fitna von Nišāpūr," *Die Welt des Orients* 6/2 (1971): 205-233. Generally speaking, Van Renterghem lists German scholarship in the bibliography but never in the text. For example, about the Shī'is during the Buyid period (p. 81), Van Renterghem refers to Donohue's book (which she criticizes elsewhere), but not Busse's authoritative work. John J. Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334 H./945 to 403 H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). See Heribert Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig. Die Buyiden im Iraq (945-1055)* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1969), 405-431.

in pre-modern Muslim polities as Ayalon has shown. (Van Renterghem exclusively translates *khādim* as “serviteur,” hence she considers that a *khādim* cannot be *shihna*, p. 467). This is all the more frustrating given that Ayalon’s relevant studies on the subject are duly listed in the bibliography.²⁴

The lack of a broader perspective is particularly problematic when dealing with the Saljuqs themselves. In the very first pages of the book, we read that “the sultans did not stay much [*résident peu*] in Baghdad, which was a secondary basis of their power” (p. 4); later, in the chapter on the military elites, the “instability of the Saljuq regime” (p. 197) is noted, but merely as one of the various threats to Baghdad’s security. But nowhere do we read the obvious: any Saljuq ruler with imperial ambition had to control Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate. At the same time, however, he could not cut himself off from his main source of power, which remained on the Iranian plateau. This is the reason why we see an itinerant pattern emerging at the end of the reign of Malik-Shāh that would last until 547/1152, when the Saljuq state imploded. According to this practice, the sultan and his court spent their winters in Mesopotamia, usually in Baghdad, and moved back to the plateau during the spring. (Isfahan, the first *dār al-mulk*, was abandoned for Hamadan when the “instability of the Saljuq regime” imposed not only shorter routes, but also

greater proximity to Azerbaijan, the new mainstay of power).²⁵ After the end of the dynastic crisis (485/1092–498/1105) and the victory over the Ismailis of Isfahan in 500/1107, Sultan Muḥammad travelled to Baghdad every winter, not just three times as posited by Van Renterghem (p. 484, n. 3). Although his son Mas‘ūd spent 12 of the 18 winters of his long reign in Baghdad, it was clearly not he who “made Baghdad one of his residences” (p. 225). Assessing the Saljuq presence in the city correctly is not a small issue for understanding the consequences of the Saljuq domination of local society. Beyond some of the specifics, it is the global logic of this pattern that is missed: Alp Arslan never bothered to go to Baghdad because the presence of the most powerful Saljuq Sultan was not needed there to have his authority respected. But his great grand-son Mas‘ūd kept going to Baghdad precisely because he was weak: he had to be physically present to keep the centrifugal forces in check (since he could not physically visit all his territories, he focused on Baghdad and Hamadan, and let Fārs and Azerbaijan slip away).

Similarly, Van Renterghem is, I believe, mistaken about the relationship of the Saljuqs to city life. She contends that the sultans preferred the way they were received in Iranian cities (p. 485) but, in Baghdad as in Iran, the sultans actually did not *live* inside the city. At best they spent time by the walls, in a military camp. In Baghdad, this camp dated back to the Buyid

24. See especially David Ayalon, “The Mamlūks of the Seljuks: Islam’s Military Might at the Crossroads,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 6/3 (1996): 305–333, here p. 306. Reprinted in *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study of Power Relationships* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1999).

25. This is an issue I have tackled in my book (*Iranian Elites*, pp. 319–323 with a table listing the stays of the sultans in Isfahan or elsewhere). I have further investigated the topic in subsequent articles (quoted by Van Renterghem in her bibliography), e.g. “Where Did the Saljūqs Live? A Case Study Based on the Reign of Sultan Mas‘ūd b. Muḥammad (1134–1152),” *Studia Iranica*, 42 (2011): 211–58.

period and is called in the sources the *Dār al-mamlaka*; it had several buildings and its own Friday mosque. But elsewhere the Saljuq court was set in a tented encampment, sometimes with a pavilion called *kūshk* in the Persian sources (see Turk.: *kōşk*, but not *kishk* as the author writes erroneously on p. 493).²⁶

Does this mean that the Saljuqs were “Türkmens”? Van Renterghem constantly refers to them as such: “souverains turkmènes,” “dynastie turkmène,” “sultanat turkmène,” “empire turkmène.”²⁷ They were, indeed, the leaders of Türkmens at the very beginning, but they quickly became much more than that and soon presented themselves as legitimate Iranian rulers. It is true that, contrary to what has been argued in the past, the Saljuqs did not sever their links with the Türkmens after the establishment of the sultanate.²⁸ Likewise, Saljuq court poets celebrated the Turkish identity of their patrons. But it is inaccurate to systematically speak

of the Saljuqs as Türkmens. It gives the false impression that they were nothing more than pastoral nomads, which was certainly not the case, at least from the time they occupied Baghdad in 447/1055.²⁹ Powerful groups of Türkmens occupied parts of the mountainous regions East of Baghdad (especially in the Liḥf region, or around Shahrazūr), but Van Renterghem’s text give the impression that they were systematically inside Baghdad.³⁰

The overall lack of familiarity with the Saljuqs and with Saljuq rule is all too visible throughout the text. Thus, Van Renterghem forgets to mention Nishapur or Marw among the most important Saljuq cities (p. 4); misses the *panj nawbāt* (privilege to have a fanfare played five times a day) when dealing with a text obviously referring to it (p. 437); improperly vocalizes a well-known Turkish name;³¹ assumes that the position of *shihna* could be given to non-Turkish emirs (p. 464);³² or confuses the functions

26. See David Durand-Guédy, “The Tents of the Saljuqs,” in *Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life* ed. David Durand-Guédy (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), 149-189.

27. *Ibid.*, 4, 48, 506, 507, 516.

28. For a critic of “diversion theory” (i.e. Iranized Saljuq sultans diverting turbulent Turkmen tribes to frontier regions in the Caucasus and Anatolia), see, following Cahen’s insight, A.C.S. Peacock, “Nomadic Society and the Seljūq campaign in Caucasia,” *Iran and the Caucasus*, 9/2 (2005): 205-230; A.C.S. Peacock, *Early Seljūq History. A New Interpretation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 139-151.

29. When Van Renterghem says that the “Saljūqs kept their nomadic habits and... were accompanied by their families, mounts, and herds” (p. 314), the first part of the sentence can be supported, but the last half is at best misleading (Saljuq armies could be followed by some cattle, just like any other army).

30. See pp. 393-394, about “the presence of the Turks and the Türkmens” in Baghdad; see p. 459 about the departure of the “Turkmen troops from Baghdad.”

31. *Qimāj* (cf. index) for *Qumāj*. *Qumāj* of Balkh was the key actor of the fall of Sanjar’s rule in the East.

32. Actually all the names in Table 14-2 are Turkish. The “*Salār Kurd*” of the year 542/1147 is not a name but a function.

of *shihna* and *‘amīd*.³³ I also spotted a fairly significant number of factual errors.³⁴

But enough with the minutia. A broader issue is that the general conclusions are frustrating. Vague statements are quite typical: “les collections de notables de la Bagdad seldjoukide formaient des ensembles mouvants, traversés par des lignes de fracture et composés d’individus hétérogènes en terme de statut social, de richesses matérielle ou de prestige” (p. 505). This generality may be due to the fact that Van Renterghem never clearly articulates the main questions guiding her investigation. By contrast, it was easy to get the thesis of Ephrat’s work (“madrasas were not that important after all”), and Ahmed was right to note that despite all its shortcomings, it was a book that “makes people think, and think hard.” One problem with the present book is that, after reading over 500 pages, I have found a lot of data and am convinced that these data are as exhaustive as possible—even if not entirely new—but I have not found a clear thesis.

One option could have been to clearly focus on what happened in Baghdad during the Saljuq period. Makdisi and even Ephrat tried to answer this vexing

issue. This is obviously not a question for me to answer, but what struck me while I was reading the book was the importance of the Iranian presence in Baghdad. The database is filled with Iranian *nisbas*. The function of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* was entrusted to the Dāmghānis; the preeminent figures of Baghdadian Sufism were all Iranian (Zawzanī, Mayhanī, Suhrawardī and Nīshāpūrī); a great proportion of *mudarrisūn* (23 out of 70) were connected to Iran; most of the *‘amīds* (Nihāvandī, Iṣfahānī, Dihistānī) were Iranian (and naturally all the Saljuq secretaries as well). This was to be expected: Jean-Michel Mouton has shown a similar pattern for Saljuq and Burid Damascus,³⁵ but it is naturally more conspicuous here. Indeed, the importance gained by Iranians among the local elite would have deserved study for its own sake. It is only at the very end of the book that we read:

L’intégration de Bagdad dans un ensemble oriental de tradition turco-iranienne consolida les liens de la ville et de la société locale avec une sphère culturelle non arabophone porteuse d’héritage propres et de penchants idéologiques se distinguant, par

33. On p. 460, Van Renterghem apparently does not see that the *shihna* commanded the garrison, while the *‘amīd* was in charge of what can be called non-military affairs. This is evidenced by the latter’s actions: seizing the *iqṭā‘* of the caliph, abolishing the unlawful taxes (*mukūs*), presiding over the *mazālim* court, initiating building projects.

34. For example, on p. 4, Malik-Shāh’s death (492/1085) did not mean the end of the Great Saljuq period (which occurred 60 years later, with the death of Sanjar in 552/1157; some scholars even speak of the Great Saljuqs until the demise of the dynasty in Iran in 590/1194). On p. 30, it should be noted that Bundārī did not write a history of the Saljuqs, he merely abridged one. On p. 440, there is confusion between Muḥammad b. Malik-Shāh and his son Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad. On p. 455, it should be clarified that the “Ibn Qāwurd” mentioned by Ibn al-Jawzī is not “the son of” Qāwurd, but his descendant. On p. 485, Toghrīl Beg did not build the *masjid-i jāmi‘* al-sultān in Baghdad—it was actually Malik-Shāh. On p. 488, the vizier of Malik-Shāh in 480/1087 was not Tāj al-Mulk but Nizām al-Mulk (Tāj al-Mulk was not promoted to the vizierate before Nizām al-Mulk’s murder in 485/1092).

35. Jean-Michel Mouton, *Damas et sa principauté sous les Seldjoukides et les Bourides, 468–549/1076–1154* (Cairo: IFAO, 1994).

certain aspects de ceux prévalant dans les régions centrales de l'ancien empire abbaside (p. 515).

In other words, Saljuq Baghdad was connected first and foremost to Western Iran. Here, it seems to me that the most important sources on Saljuq Baghdad encapsulate a Ḥanbalī-Abbasid point of view that, to some extent, was embraced by Van Renterghem. Following Bulliet, I would argue that adopting the view from the edge is always fruitful, and so looking at Baghdad from Iran would have much to offer. In her introduction, Van Renterghem notes that the scholarship on urban studies deals primarily with the Egyptian and Syrian cases (pp. 6-7); and yet in her conclusion she does not refer to Cairo (Lapidus) or Damascus (Chamberlain, Gilbert), but focuses on Nishapur (Bulliet) and Isfahan (myself) (while Jean Aubin is notably absent from her discussion).

The above criticisms should not obscure the fact that Van Renterghem has done

a tremendous service to the scholarly community. Her monumental book is a product that perhaps only publishing houses of state-funded French research institutes can publish. The author should be thanked for having provided fellow scholars with an indispensable tool to navigate the complex waters of the Abbasid capital in Saljuq times. Given the importance of Bagdad in the Muslim world, any specialist of the pre-Mongol period will benefit from her work, notably thanks to the valuable indices and tables, covering a wide array of subjects. The formidable quantity of data carefully amassed throughout the book will foster future research on a variety of topics. For these reasons, Van Renterghem's volume should be kept close at hand, and will likely become a standard reference work. This is all the easier now that the book is freely available online (<https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/9172?lang=en>, accessed 23 Sept 2018).

In Memoriam



EHSAN YARSHATER
(1920–2018)

The passing of Ehsan Yarshater, the Hagop Kevorkian Professor Emeritus of Iranian Studies at Columbia University, on 2 September 2018 in Fresno, California, was a tremendous loss not just for Iranian studies but for the scholarly world.

Yarshater was born in Hamadan, Iran, on 3 April 1920. Orphaned at a young age, he moved to Tehran to live with a maternal uncle. He resumed his education in 1934 after obtaining a scholarship to attend the newly opened Danesh-sara-ye Moqaddamati high school, graduating at the top of his class. He went on to attend the Teachers Training College (Danesh-sara-ye ‘ali), later part of the Faculty of Letters at the University of

Tehran, and the Faculty of Law at the University of Tehran. He received a D.Litt. degree in 1947 with a dissertation on Timurid poetry (published in 1955). Yarshater received a fellowship from the British Council in 1948 to study educational methods, but after arriving in London he became a student of Iranian philology with Walter Bruno Henning at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Upon his return to Iran in 1953 to conduct research for his dissertation on southern Tati dialects, which conclusively demonstrated their connections to Median, he taught ancient Iranian languages at the University of Tehran and founded or helped found the Institute for the Translation and Publication of Books

(Bongah-e Tarjoma va Nashr-e Ketab), the Book Society (Anjoman-e Ketab), and the journal *Rahnema-ye Ketab*. With the recommendation and support of Henning, Yarshater received a visiting position at Columbia University in 1958, and, in 1961, was appointed to the new Kevorkian chair in Iranian studies there, which he held until his retirement in 1999. In addition to chairing the Middle East Studies department for several years, Yarshater also revived the Center for Iranian Studies at Columbia in 1968 and served as its director until 2016. In recognition of his many years of contributions to academic life at Columbia, the center was endowed and renamed the Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies in August 2018.

Yarshater's scholarly interests were every bit as diverse and accomplished as his life story would suggest. His own books and articles included studies not only on linguistics, dialectology, and many periods of Persian literature but philosophy, painting, history, religion, ethnology, music, and other topics. Among them are many works of significance for the membership of Middle East Medievalists, notably his edition of volume III of the *Cambridge History of Iran* (including his own important entries on Mazdakism, the "Iranian World View," and "Iranian National History") and thought-provoking and seminal articles such as "Theme of Wine-Drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry," "Textual Aspects of the *Andarznama*," "Were the Sasanians Heirs to the Achaemenids?," and "The Persian Presence in the Islamic World."

Yarshater's contributions, however, go well beyond his own monographs. He continued the love of books and talent

for publication he had shown in Iran while at Columbia, even establishing for a while his own press (Bibliotheca Persica). Under his direction, the Columbia Center sponsored six series of publications, producing over a hundred titles including translations of Persian classics, scholarly monographs in Iranian studies, editions of texts (including a new edition of the *Shah-nama*), and illustrated works on Persian art and architecture as well as publication of lecture series he had helped found at SOAS, Harvard, UCLA, and the Collège de France. Yarshater tirelessly promoted the work of other scholars by organizing conferences and symposia, compiling editing volumes, and sponsoring monographs. Moreover, he was responsible for creating and raising funds for two private foundations dedicated to the promotion of Iranian studies and culture, the Persian Heritage Foundation and the Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, that have the means to carry on his work indefinitely. There are few scholars in the field who are not in his debt directly or indirectly for help with publication, letters of recommendation, financial support for projects, and the like.

Finally, one must make a special acknowledgement of what Mary Boyce called Yarshater's "genius in envisaging ends and securing means," as it applies to conceiving, organizing, and producing major collaborative scholarly projects. Yarshater was not only the principal investigator and general editor for the longest continually funded NEH project, but also the only scholar to supervise three major NEH projects simultaneously, all of them of particular interest for members of MEM: the forty volume Tabari translation (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985–2007); the three volume translation of Bayhaqi's

History (ILEX/Harvard University Press, 2011), and the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (ongoing, London: I.B. Tauris, 2008-). The *Encyclopaedia Iranica* remains unfinished,

as does another major project, *The History of Persian Literature* series, but thanks to Yarshater's foresight and planning, they can continue to progress.

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ISSN 1068-1051



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26

