

Conversion and Propaganda in the *Muqtabis* of Ibn Ḥayyān

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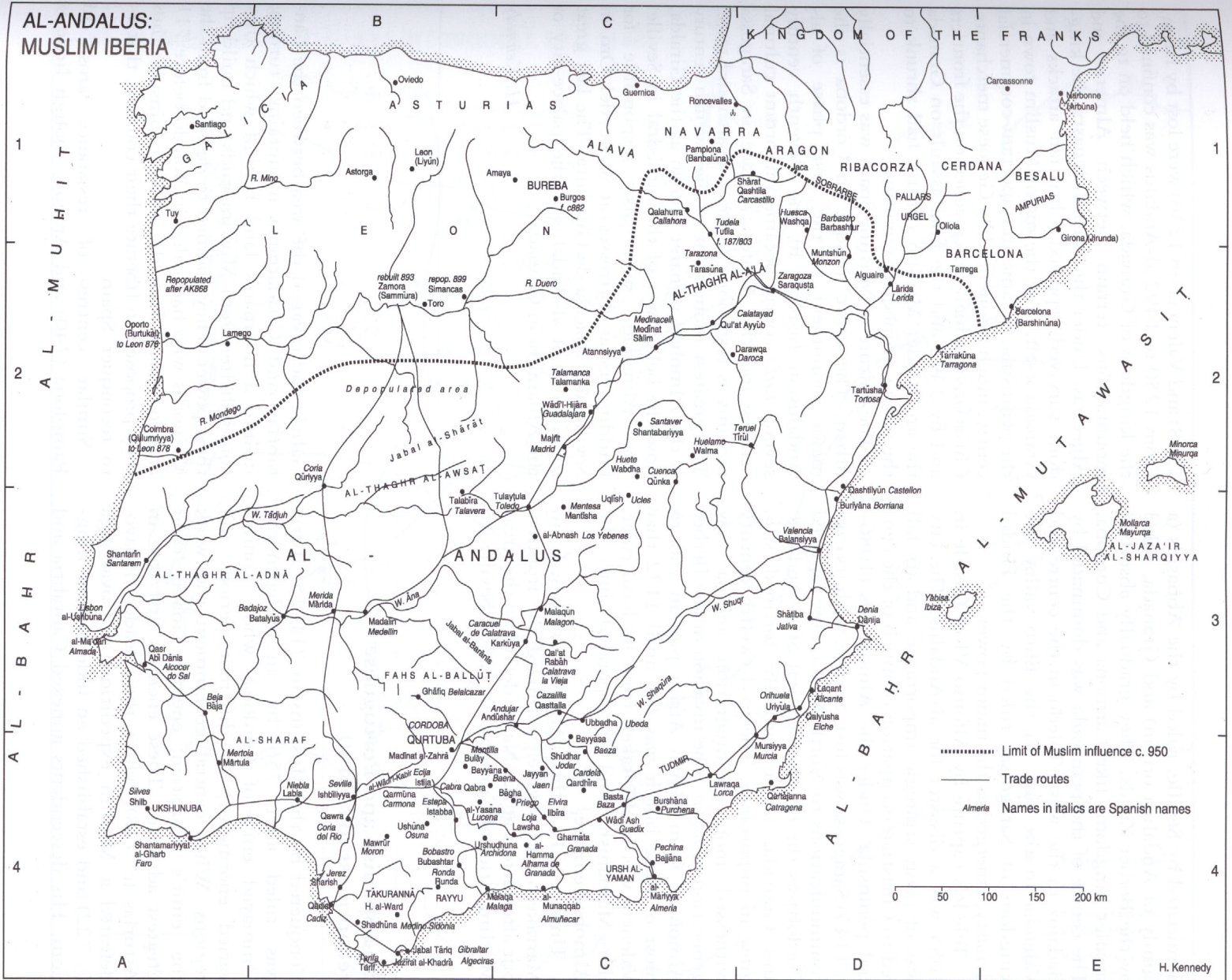
I am indebted to Dr Hussein Fancy for having first introduced me to the wonderful strangeness of Muslim Spain (though he will surely find cause for alarm in the deterioration of my writing style since I took his class), and to Drs Sherman Jackson, Alexander Knysh, and Andrew Shryock for the large role that they have played in making my study of the Near East fruitful and enjoyable. The latter merits additional recognition for his spontaneous generation of an otherwise unattested aphorism that I have seen fit to include in this work as an epigraph.

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Chronology

711	92	the Muslim conquest of Iberia begins
756	138	beginning of the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I, first Umayyad amir of al-Andalus
850	235	birth of ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣūn
880	266	Ibn Ḥafṣūn begins his rebellion, during the reign of the amir Muḥammad I
886	272	the reign of the amir al-Mundhir begins
888	274	the reign of the amir ‘Abdallāh begins, upon the assassination of his brother
912	299	the reign of the amir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III begins
917	304	death of Ibn Ḥafṣūn
928	315	surrender of Ḥafṣ ibn ‘Umar, the last of the rebellious Ḥafṣūnids
929	316	‘Abd al-Raḥmān III proclaims himself caliph
961	349	death of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III
987	377	birth of Ibn Ḥayyān
1002	392	death of the ‘Āmirid vizier al-Manṣūr, under whom the caliphate reached its geographical apogee
1009	399	civil war begins, and with it the effective collapse of the power of the Umayyad dynasty
1031	422	the last Umayyad caliph of al-Andalus, Hishām III, is dethroned
1076	467	death of Ibn Ḥayyān

Map



Iberia circa 950/338, during the reign of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III. Taken from: Ditchburn, *Atlas of Medieval Europe*.

General introduction

Il est temps de revisiter, en compagnie de Lévi-Provençal, l'époque bénie où ils vivaient heureux dans ce qu'ils n'ont cessé de décrire comme un paradis.

– Abdallah Laroui, in the preface to Lévi-Provençal's *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*

The problem with Muslim Spain is that everyone keeps trying to make it mean something.

– Andrew Shryock

Muslim Iberia has seen its profile rise in recent years, within the academy but especially among the lay public. This is unsurprising: al-Andalus speaks to the West's preoccupations with religious pluralism, multiculturalism, and the clash of civilizations with an immediacy that is almost uncanny. It furthermore holds the promise of a sort of Islamic history in miniature, one conveniently delineated in time and space but following the same trajectory as that of the larger Islamic world, whence we may draw all manner of conclusions to be applied to the parent civilization. Scholars have at times sought to find somewhere within the eight centuries of al-Andalus (briefer once they have lopped off the centuries that do not interest them¹) a successful model of interreligious coexistence², or a warning against the dangers of fanaticism, or evidence of the genius of medieval Islam, or an answer to the question of why Islam fell behind the West (the “what went wrong?” impulse transplanted from its Ottomanist heartland).

These arguments miss the mark. We cannot elevate al-Andalus to the position of an archetypal and exceptional nation, one whose great wisdom and even greater folly shines down through the centuries to illuminate our own reality, without wrenching it from its true context. Al-Andalus was a place in time like any other in history, not the setting of a centuries-long tragedy enacted by the gods for the edification of later generations. That is not to say, however, that the proper course of action lies at the opposite extreme. We should not prowl through the history of al-Andalus seeking to unmask at

1 For my part, I have seen fit to lop off all but one.

2 See María Rosa Menocal's *The Ornament of the World* for a notable example of the genre.

every turn the dispassionate economic forces that we will declare the true causes of the splendor of Córdoba, of the flourishing of its sciences, of its religious and cultural pluralism³, or of its ultimate demise. That the application of our own agendas and preoccupations to the medieval Iberian context is inappropriate and ineffectual does not mean that we should treat al-Andalus as a sort of dumb clockwork mechanism ticking away the centuries until its disappearance.

We cannot ignore the importance of economic and political considerations in determining the course of history. But it is imperative that we look beyond them, to the beliefs and ideologies guiding the historical actors whose lives' contexts we seek to understand. If we are to arrive at some measure of understanding of a place distant from us in time we must find a way past quantitative reductionism and the retroprojection of modern ideas. This does not mean, of course, that historical actors were never motivated by pure self-interest, or by what we might tend to term “pragmatism”: indeed, it seems probable to me that this was very frequently the case. But no man is an island, as the saying goes, and few selfish or pragmatic men are entirely above the need to explain and justify themselves before their peers (at least not until the rise of law of the jungle capitalism *à l'américaine*). The justifications that men motivated by self-interest give for their actions, even when they ring hollow, may well tell us a great deal about the ideological landscapes of the societies in which they live.

It is with this goal in mind that I have undertaken the study of the history of al-Andalus, or more properly my own *taifa*-sized tranche thereof: to understand the motivations, both ideological and pragmatic, of historical actors, and to examine the justifications they (or others) leave for their actions in the historical record. I have from the first been drawn especially to two overlapping events spanning the latter half of the ninth century and the middle of the tenth: the first, and the one in which I am most invested, is the rebellion of the supposed apostate ‘Umar ibn Ḥaḫṣūn, the second the reign of the first

³ See Catlos, “Contexto y conveniencia. . .” for a treatment of ethno-religious interaction in medieval Iberia that depends heavily on economic explanations.

Umayyad caliph of al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III (hereafter referred to exclusively by the initialism AR3)⁴. Among the most detailed accounts of these events is to be found in the *Muqtabis* of the eleventh-century Andalusī historian Ibn Ḥayyān, which I have chosen to employ as my sole primary source for this project.

The *Muqtabis* is in many ways an ideal work through which to explore the ideologies and motivations of Ibn Ḥafṣūn and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. It was composed within a century of the latter's death, by a man about whom we know a reasonable amount. This last point is crucial: everything we know of Ibn Ḥafṣūn and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III comes to us, by necessity, through the mediation of later historians. The personalities of these historians, then, become just as important as those of the figures whose lives they chronicle. It is with this consideration in mind that I have approached the work of Ibn Ḥayyān. It is not enough to question why Ibn Ḥafṣūn or ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III might have done a thing, and to make reasonable suppositions on that point. Rather must we interrogate the chronicle itself, and the chronicler. And the *Muqtabis* is not simply the work of one man: it is a chronicle not only of Ibn Ḥayyān's making but also, to a greater or lesser extent (this point has been debated, as we shall see), of the works of several of his predecessors and contemporaries. It affords us, then, the opportunity to examine, as much as is possible in a single work, the ideological landscape of al-Andalus at this moment in its history.

We must first begin, then, with an introduction to the *Muqtabis* itself, to its complexities, and to the life of its author. Following this, I devote a chapter each to the rebellion of Ibn Ḥafṣūn and to the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. My conclusions follow, as is customary.

4 Kidding.

Introduction to the *Muqtabis*

In spite of the fact that the *Muqtabis* is widely considered to be among the most important of the histories of Muslim Spain, it has been the subject of comparatively little English-language scholarship, and such scholarship as has been written on it in Spanish has for the most part not been translated. As such, even determining which volumes of the *Muqtabis* are currently available in print, both in Arabic and in translation, can seem a somewhat daunting task to the non-hispanophone scholar, nevermind coming to an understanding of the scholarly consensus on questions such as when it was written and how much of it consists of Ibn Ḥayyān's own words. It has seemed to me worthwhile, then, to attempt a summary of the most important scholarly treatments of Ibn Ḥayyān's work.

First, however, I will present a brief account of Ibn Ḥayyān's life⁵. Abū Marwān Ḥayyān ibn Khalaf ibn Ḥusayn ibn Ḥayyān was born in Córdoba in 987 (377 hijri). His father was a member of the court of the 'Āmirid vizier al-Manṣūr⁶. He fell on hard times over the course of the ruinous *fitna* and the subsequent political domination of al-Andalus by Berber tribes⁷, until finally finding employment with the Jahwarid rulers of the newly-constituted *taifa*⁸ of Córdoba after the final abolition of the Umayyad caliphate in 1031. He spent the rest of his life working as a scribe and writing his histories, the most notable of which were the *Matīn*, which dealt with the *fitna* and the beginning of the *taifa* period, and the *Muqtabis*, which dealt with what came before. He died in 1076, in an Andalus much changed from that of his youth.

No book-length treatments exclusively devoted to the historiography of Muslim Spain have, to

5 See especially al-Makkī's introduction to volume II of the *Muqtabis* for a more detailed biography. The contents of this paragraph are largely taken from it, as well as from García Gómez, "A propósito. . ." and Antuña's introduction to the third volume of the *Muqtabis*.

6 The 'Āmirids were a dynasty of viziers who ruled on behalf of the Umayyad caliphs from 978 to 1009. The aspirations of the third of the line, 'Abd al-Raḥmān "Sanchuelo", to the caliphate sparked the great *fitna*.

7 Approximately 1009 to 1031.

8 I treat this word as a borrowing from Spanish for purposes of diacritization, due to its prevailing pronunciation even within the field of Islamic studies as /'tajfə/.

my knowledge, been published, but an article by Pedro Chalmeta entitled “Historiografía medieval hispana: Arabica”, appearing in the journal *Al-Andalus* in 1972, serves as a valuable point of departure for the budding Ḥayyānist (and ‘Idhārist, for that matter). While certainly useful for its broad overview of medieval Hispano-Arabic historiography and for its short biography of Ibn Ḥayyān (much of it borrowed from earlier works by Emilio García Gómez and others), Chalmeta’s “Historiografía” stands out especially for its relatively detailed summaries of the ten component volumes of the *Muqtabis*, including both those still extant and, perhaps more importantly, those that have not survived to the present. I have translated those portions of the passage that seem relevant to the present endeavor:

Muqtabas: I. – A geographical description of the peninsula (surely strongly inspired by that of al-Rāzī), legends about its first inhabitants, Roman and Visigothic Spain, the Arab invasion of 91/710, emirs dependent on Damascus, reigns of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I and Hishām I. That is to say, at the least, those events occurring between 91/710 and 180/796.

II. – Reigns of al-Ḥakam I, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II (the part lost by É Lévi-Provençal must have covered the years 180 to 232) and Muḥammad I (until 267, nothing more; this is the section edited by M ‘A Makkī).

III. – Beginning of the rebellion of ‘Umar ibn Ḥaḥṣūn, continuation of the reign of Muḥammad I, al-Mundhir and ‘Abdallāh (the part published by M Antuña spans the years 275/2 to 299/3).

IV. – I believe (with all the reservations imposed by a case where we lack clear references, albeit taking as guide the structure of volume III) that this volume must have contained essentially the history of the Hispano-Muslim “petty lords”. Perhaps it did not cover the history of the Ḥaḥṣūnids, but it is probable that it contained a description of all the other “petty-lords” and their “dynasties”, possibly in a form like that of al-‘Udhri. Logically it would include the Sevillian Ḥajjājids, the Banū Marwān of Badajoz, the “lords” of Toledo, and especially those of the Upper Marches, that is to say the Banū Qasī of Tudela, the Banū Ṭawīl of Huesca, and the Tujībids of Zaragoza; furnishing us with valuable data about these regions with autonomist tendencies, pre-history and substrate of the supremely confusing period of the taifas, helping to understand those events.

V. – (The beginning is missing a few pages). The [Royal Library of Rabat]’s manuscript contains 166 pages, mentioning: the sons of al-Nāṣir, the expedition of Monteleón, Sevilla, Carmona, rendition of the Banū Ḥaḥṣūn, expedition of Mérida, Toledo, the seizing of Ceuta, embassy of the Ḥasanids, news from Morocco, of the king of Castille, the defeat of al-Khandaq, holy war, ministries, names of those who discharged duties, mawālī, news of Zaragoza and Huesca. The mentioned facts are contained between the years 299 and 330.

One may suppose that in the missing pages was the proclamation of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, his physical and moral characteristics and a brief description of the socio-politico-economic situation when he acceded to power, the problem of the content of volume IV still standing.

VI. – Would include the rest of 330 until 350, date of the death of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, a recounting of his generals and judges as well as an obituary of illustrious individuals. We must suppose as well that it would narrate all the data in an analistic format (as the text would appear from his auto-proclamation as caliph, which is not in the expected part of volume V), the description of the expansion of the great mosque, construction of Madīnat al-Zahrā’, etc., together with all the information on incomes, taxes, market rights, etc., that certain authors have preserved for us. . .⁹

Fortunately enough, it would appear that most of what Ibn Ḥayyān wrote on the subject of Ibn Ḥafṣūn and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III has indeed survived to the modern era, with the exception of the last twenty years of the latter's reign in the unattested volume VI, as well as a few pages missing from the beginnings of volumes III and V. Regretfully, it appears that no copy of the first volume of the *Muqtabis* has come down to us. We may presume that this volume would have included an introduction to the overall work and to Ibn Ḥayyān's sources. Though the first volume would not have discussed the timeframe that concerns us, it doubtless would have provided us with valuable insights into Ibn Ḥayyān's agenda and motivations, and those of his sources.

The surviving volumes of the *Muqtabis* have been collected by a number of different editors, several of whom give no indication as to which volume of the work comprises their edition. It is unclear if this is due to ignorance of the organizing scheme employed by Chalmeta or disagreement with it. It would appear, however, that the scheme predates Chalmeta's article by some time, as Melchor Martínez Antuña explicitly labels his 1937 edition of the *Muqtabis* “tome troisième”. Antuña's edition of volume III is, in fact, the earliest part of the *Muqtabis* to see publication, and along with Chalmeta's own edition of volume V (the most recent, published in 1979) it is the only one to carry its volume number in its title. Why exactly the intervening editors did not see fit to employ this numbering scheme for their editions remains somewhat unclear to me; it does not appear to be discussed in any of the

⁹ Chalmeta, “Historiografía. . .” 381-382

introductions to the editions in question. No one has explicitly taken issue with this method of numbering the volumes, however, and so I feel it safe to employ in this work.

The modern era has seen four successful publications of parts of the *Muqtabis*, as well as at least two that ended in failure. The first of these abortive publications was a section of part II (entitled, in flagrant disregard of the aforementioned numbering scheme, *Muqtabis, I: Kitāb al-Muqtabis fī tāriḫ rijāl al-Andalus*) edited by Évariste Lévi-Provençal and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Bey al-‘Abbādī to have been published in Alexandria in 1950. This manuscript was apparently lost: Chalmeta says that “no such edition was ever published and the whereabouts of the manuscript lent to Lévi-Provençal are unknown”¹⁰. The second was a section of part VII to have been edited by Emilio García Gómez and published in Madrid in 1950. Chalmeta says only that “this never came to pass and it is probable that it will never be published, asserts the individual concerned”¹¹.

The publication of the remaining volumes was, thankfully, uneventful. For ease of consultation I present them here in table format:

Subtitle:	Volume number ¹² :	Editor(s), publication:
min anbā’ ahl al-Andalus	II	Makki, Cairo 1971
III, fī tāriḫ rijāl al-Andalus	III	Antuña, Paris 1937
V	V	Chalmeta, Corriente, Ṣubḥ, Madrid 1979
fī akhbār balad al-Andalus	VII	al-Hajji, Beirut 1965

In addition, there were published several translations of portions of the work into Spanish. Of these the only ones longer than twenty or so pages were those by José Guraieb (presumably of the third volume) appearing in the journal *Cuadernos de Historia de España* between 1950 and 1960, which Chalmeta helpfully deems “quite flawed and of no note”, and by Viguera and Corriente of the 1979

¹⁰ Chalmeta, “Historiografía. . .” 373. It has recently come to my attention that this volume, or part of it, may have been rediscovered and published by al-Makki and Corriente in 2001 in Zaragoza, under the title “Crónica de los emires Alhakam I y ‘Abdarrahman II entre los años 796 y 847 [Almuqtabis II-1]”. Having not had the chance to hold the volume in my own hands, and having been fooled more than once by inaccurate bibliographical mentions of imaginary editions of the *Muqtabis*, I leave all belief in its existence to the reader’s discretion.

¹¹ Chalmeta, “Historiografía. . .” 375

¹² According to Chalmeta’s summary of the various editions in “Historiografía. . .”, translated above.

edition of volume V, published in Madrid in 1981.

In terms of scholarly treatments of Ibn Ḥayyān himself, we again find it to be the case that relatively little has been written in or translated into English. The foundational work in Spanish is Emilio García Gómez's "A propósito de Ibn Ḥayyān", published in *al-Andalus* in 1946. This essay formed the basis for most subsequent biographies of Ibn Ḥayyān, including Chalmeta's in his "Historiografía". By some measure the most thorough treatment of Ibn Ḥayyān, however, is Maḥmūd 'Alī al-Makkī's introductory monograph to his edition of volume II. At 123 pages it is far and away the longest of any such study, and Chalmeta states that "[it is] the most methodical and complete, we may accept practically all of its conclusions and hypotheses, excepting a few details"¹³. Most of García Gómez's conclusions appear to have been accepted by later scholars, but there are certain areas of disagreement between his view of the *Muqtabis* on the one hand and more recent scholarship on the other.

The first such difference concerns the date of the drafting of the *Muqtabis*. The question was first raised by Dozy and later by Antuña, who compared the *Muqtabis* to the *Matīn* and found that the latter seemed to be written in a more eloquent style¹⁴. They therefore concluded that the *Muqtabis* had been the work of Ibn Ḥayyān's youth and the *Matīn* the work of his maturity, operating under the (perhaps questionable) assumption that a scholar's literary powers tend to ripen with age. García Gómez agreed with the conclusion that the *Muqtabis* could not have been written during Ibn Ḥayyān's old age (that is to say, much later than approximately the year 400 hijri), but objected to the idea that the shift in style constituted valid evidence of the date of its drafting. García Gómez argued that the style of the *Muqtabis* cannot possibly be indicative of Ibn Ḥayyān's own writing style, because "Ibn Ḥayyān was not *sensu stricto* the author of the *Muqtabis*. . . this work is no more than a patchwork of earlier chronicles. . . The work of Ibn Ḥayyān in the *Muqtabis* is *pure editing* of earlier chroniclers:

¹³ Chalmeta, "Historiografía. . ." 377

¹⁴ García Gómez, "A propósito. . ." 413

reconciliation (and not always) of concordant or discordant passages of the different authors; indication of lacunae; an isolated note, clarification, or commentary”.

Later scholars, while agreeing with García Gómez that the *Muqtabis* should not be treated as the (so to speak) literal word of Ibn Ḥayyān the author, disagree with him (and with Dozy and Antuña before him) on the date of its drafting. Chalmeta states that “on the other hand, Makkī (pp. 56-8) [and myself], based on the prior investigations and bibliothecophile¹⁵ inquests that the preparation of any work aimed at the past must necessarily entail, believe that [the *Muqtabis*] must have been written over the course of many years of work and therefore after [Ibn Ḥayyān] had reached his intellectual maturity”¹⁶. Chalmeta further postulates that the *Muqtabis* may have been released as a “complement” to the *Matīn*.

Modern scholarship seems to have settled on a biography of Ibn Ḥayyān that would see the *Muqtabis* being written between the years 420 and 440 hijri. An article by María Luisa Ávila entitled “La fecha de redacción del *Muqtabis*”, appearing in *al-Qantara* in 1984, is largely in agreement with the conclusions expressed by Chalmeta in his “Historiografía” on this count. Ávila's work is of further value for the great lengths to which she has gone in order to catalog Ibn Ḥayyān's use of his sources in the *Muqtabis*. The article gives page numbers for every individual use of every one of Ibn Ḥayyān's sources in all published editions of the work, and is an invaluable aid for those who would attempt to compare and contrast the tone taken and the facts related by the individual historians whose accounts collectively make up the *Muqtabis*.

The second major challenge to García Gómez has emerged only recently. As I have mentioned above, it was the belief of García Gómez that Ibn Ḥayyān's role in the creation of the *Muqtabis* was one of “pure editorship” and not of authorship per se. This analysis had been accepted more or less uncritically by Ḥayyānist scholars until the last decade. In an article appearing in the journal *Talia Dixit*

¹⁵ This word does not exist in English, but should.

¹⁶ Chalmeta, “Historiografía. . .” 385

in 2006 entitled “Técnicas de *amplificatio* en el *Muqtabis* de Ibn Ḥayyān”, however, Luis Molina problematizes García Gómez's stance, and argues that Ibn Ḥayyān's role in the composition of the *Muqtabis* goes far beyond simple editorship.

This question of the authorship of the *Muqtabis*, both in terms of individual passages and the overall nature of the work as a whole, is of crucial importance. There can be no doubt that, as Molina says, “ascertaining whether a passage transmitted by Ibn Ḥayyān is a literal reproduction of his source or a personal elaboration (and, in this case, to what extent he modifies the text) is not a vain exercise in inconsequential erudition but an inescapable step towards attaining an exact comprehension of the structure and functioning of the historiographic system of al-Andalus”¹⁷. But this is not always possible. The overwhelming preeminence of the *Muqtabis* in the minds of later historians has caused many of the works upon which Ibn Ḥayyān relied to disappear from the historical record¹⁸. We do not always possess the means by which to determine the extent to which Ibn Ḥayyān altered the sources that he incorporated into the *Muqtabis*.

Recognizing this, Molina sets out to compare passages of the *Muqtabis* with their analogs in the works they were borrowed from, choosing for this purpose three works that are still extant independently of Ibn Ḥayyān's: the bibliographical dictionaries of Ibn al-Farāḍī, al-Zubaydī, and Ibn Ḥārith. He finds that the extent and nature of Ibn Ḥayyān's alterations to his source texts go much further than García Gómez had surmised: rather than isolated changes or comments, the alterations amount to a “constant and perceptible intervention”¹⁹. Furthermore, Molina demonstrates that Ibn Ḥayyān made not only linguistic and stylistic alterations to his sources' words, but factual corrections as well.

We must, of course, exercise caution in applying these conclusions to every instance of

17 Molina, “Técnicas. . .” 56

18 Molina, “Técnicas. . .” 59

19 Molina, “Técnicas. . .” 71

borrowing and summarizing in the *Muqtabis*, as the extent to which Ibn Ḥayyān altered the words of his sources surely varied. No scholar has, as of yet, seen fit to undertake a truly exhaustive analysis of Ibn Ḥayyān's treatment of his sources throughout the entire extant of the *Muqtabis*, and I am most assuredly not about to nominate myself. Still, Molina's analysis has, in spite of its incomplete nature, adequately demonstrated that Ibn Ḥayyān was more than willing to make substantial alterations to the words of his sources when he found it necessary to do so.

I therefore view it as prudent to take the text of the *Muqtabis* as being representative of Ibn Ḥayyān's own opinions and worldview, except in the instances where he offers two explicitly contradictory versions of events. The alternate approach of treating Ibn Ḥayyān as the “mere editor” of the work and treating the opinions expressed within it as more properly belonging to their “original” authors seems to me much more problematic: Molina has, in my view, demonstrated that Ibn Ḥayyān was more than willing to make alterations to passages whose contents he found inaccurate or objectionable. When Ibn Ḥayyān copies an earlier historian without making significant alterations to the original text, then, it is simply a sign that he agrees with and endorses the version of events as laid out by his source. The *Muqtabis* therefore constitutes an accurate reflection of Ibn Ḥayyān's opinions and worldview, even in those situations where the literal words of the text harken back to an earlier author.

In general it is not the quality of the scholarship on the *Muqtabis*, and on Ibn Ḥayyān, that is lacking, but simply its quantity. The principle Ḥayyānists are diligent and their works of great utility, but they seem somewhat isolated from broader trends in Islamic historiography, due perhaps to the relative dearth of Spanish-language proficiency among Arabists globally, compounded by a lack of translations into more widely-read languages. That it has taken half a century for the words of García Gómez regarding the authorship of the *Muqtabis* to be challenged²⁰ is surely a sign that the field can

²⁰ Molina, “Técnicas. . .” 77. “Pero estas afirmaciones de García Gómez, que todos hemos aceptado como válidas hasta ahora, merecen ser matizadas, en especial en su consideración de Ibn Ḥayyān como mero editor de la historiografía

only stand to benefit from an infusion of interest and attention from scholars worldwide.

The rebellion of Ibn Ḥafṣūn

The rebellion of the (alleged) apostate ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣūn and his sons has been reasonably well-covered by modern historians, certainly in terms of its place within the broader socio-economic context of Andalusī society²¹. I intend to present here a different sort of analysis: a close reading, in a sense, of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's presence in the *Muqtabis*. The Ibn Ḥafṣūn of flesh and blood becomes the paper Ibn Ḥafṣūn of the *Muqtabis* only by passing through a series of ideological filters. At this remove from the life of the rebel and his chronicler there is no hope that we will be able to cast aside these filters and apprehend the real man in all his complexity: there is no system by which to divide him back into his origins, in the words of a modern author. But there is still value in making the effort: if we pay close enough attention to the *Muqtabis*, to its contradictions and omissions, to those passages that simply do not make sense, we can see these ideological processes as they occur and guard against them. In so doing, we will deepen our understanding not only of the rebel but of his chronicler and of the society of which they formed a part.

The Ḥafṣūnid rebellion spans the entire third volume of the *Muqtabis* and most of the fifth. This chapter will deal for the most part with those events that are recounted in the third volume of the work; I will cover Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellion during the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III (that is to say, as it appears in the fifth volume of the *Muqtabis*) in the next chapter. The volumes themselves are arranged chronologically – for the most part. We will have occasion to remark upon instances where Ibn Ḥayyān deviates from a strictly chronological presentation.

The early life of Ibn Ḥafṣūn does not appear in the *Muqtabis*; we may assume that it is contained in earlier pages of the third volume that have been lost to bookworms or in the non-extant second volume of the work, if at all. Lévi-Provençal, relying largely on Ibn al-Khaṭīb, provides us with

²¹ See Acien Almansa, *Entre el Feudalismo y el Islam*, among others.

a summary of the famous rebel's early years, which I quote here in full for the entertainment as much as for the edification of the reader:

La biographie d'Ibn Ḥafṣūn débute comme un véritable roman. ‘Umar est un jeune homme d'une famille de propriétaires aisés qui refuse de se soumettre à la discipline normale du milieu social qui l'entoure, se lance dans l'aventure et tourne mal. Son père Hafs, un gentilhomme campagnard, vit largement du revenu de ses terres dans une bastide de la région de Ronda, Torrecilla, non loin du château d'Auta. C'est un muwallad récemment islamisé: son aïeul Dja‘far, qu'on surnommait pour cette raison al-Islami, “le néo-musulman”, s'est converti à la religion officielle du pays sous le règne d'al-Hakam I. Tous ses ancêtres portent des noms latins ou ibériques. . . Un jour, il se querelle avec un voisin et le tue sans plus de façons. Son père le renie, mais, craignant pour sa vie, il l'envoie se cacher dans la montagne escarpée qui surplombe l'étroit ravin du Guadalhorce, à quelque quarante kilomètres à l'Est de Ronda, là où précisément ‘Umar aménagera plus tard son repaire. Le jeune homme, bientôt las de sa solitude, se met à battre la campagne avec quelques vauriens et se fait arrêter; le gouverneur du district de Reiyō (Malaga), dans l'ignorance où il est du crime que le jeune homme a commis à Torrecilla, se contente de lui faire administrer le fouet. Ibn Ḥafṣūn croit prudent de s'éloigner davantage et passe en Afrique. Il finit par échouer à Tahart, la capitale de l'imam rustumide Abu l-Yakzan; là, un de ses compatriotes andalous, qui est tailleur, le prend comme apprenti; un autre Espagnol remarque ‘Umar dans l'échoppe, l'aiguille à la main; il l'entretient du pays natal et le promet aux plus hautes destinées s'il y brandit l'étendard de la révolte. Ibn Ḥafṣūn prend peur; sans doute l'imam va-t-il, s'il est reconnu, livrer le transfuge à son suzerain umaiyade. Mieux vaut essayer de rentrer au bercail, et, si son père demeure inflexible, aller vivre sous le toit de son oncle, qui est plus accommodant. Ainsi fait-il. En 850 (267), ‘Umar est de retour en Andalousie, où le frère de Hafs lui fournit, pour lui permettre d'exercer son brigandage, une petite troupe de valets de ferme bien décidés comme lui à vivre hors la loi. C'est à ce moment que commence vraiment l'équipée d'Ibn Ḥafṣūn. Il repart pour la montagne qu'il avait abrité avant sa fugue en Afrique du Nord et y installe sa base d'opérations, dans une enceinte haut perchée, qui est sans nul doute d'origine antique: la fameuse Bobastro, au pied de laquelle, non loin de la gorge sauvage du Chorro, coulent les eaux rapides du Guadalhorce.²²

After a brief stint campaigning alongside the amir on a *ṣā'ifa* to the north, during which he acquits himself bravely, he abandons the comforts of the court (and the contempt of the Arab courtly class), returns to Bobastro, deposes its *chargé d'affaires*, and sets about attacking the allies of his former master. Some time later, in 887/274, the amir al-Mundhir was able to drive Ibn Ḥafṣūn to sue for peace, only to be almost instantaneously betrayed by the wily rebel, who promptly attacked a loot-

22 Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, vol 1 pp 301-303

bearing caravan headed for Córdoba²³. Already we see that, whatever his flaws, the rebel would seem to have an uncanny knack for convincing people to trust him who would really be better off keeping as far from him as possible.

The third volume of the *Muqtabis* begins one year later, in 888/275. The first passage is unfortunately quite riddled with lacunae and is as a result somewhat difficult to decipher. We may be certain, however, that our hero has already gotten up to no good, as the amir al-Mundhir is once again mounting a siege of Bobastro. It would appear that al-Mundhir's brother ‘Abdallāh arrives at the outskirts of the fortress with reinforcements only to find that the amir has succumbed to illness²⁴. ‘Abdallāh lifts the siege and flees to Córdoba with the body of his brother, there to be proclaimed amir in his place. The “renegade” (مُرْتَد), as Ibn Ḥayyān refers to him, is thereby given time to regroup – a grave error, and one that will cost the Umayyads dearly (as similar errors will cost them dearly in the future).

Ibn Ḥayyān and his sources refer to Ibn Ḥafṣūn by a number of unflattering terms, “renegade” being perhaps among the gentlest of them. Each contains a different set of implications *vis à vis* Ibn Ḥafṣūn's character and the nature of his rebellion. In the case of “renegade”, for instance, the intent may be purely descriptive: Ibn Ḥafṣūn had rebelled against the authority of the Umayyad amir, he was therefore a renegade in the political sense. On the other hand, the term may also connote “apostate”, “heretic”. This might, on the face of it, seem plainly unchronological: Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion to Christianity, as well as any possible dabblings in Shi'ism, will not have occurred until several years later than the episode at hand. We might be tempted to conclude, therefore, that Ibn Ḥayyān is simply employing the word to refer to Ibn Ḥafṣūn's act of political disloyalty, and to let the matter lie. But let us examine for a moment certain other possible explanations.

²³ Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane* vol 1 p 308

²⁴ Later historians claim that al-Mundhir was assassinated by ‘Abdallāh, who would later go on to kill his other brothers and several of his sons.

One is that Ibn Ḥayyān's use of the word is indeed to be interpreted in a religious context, and that it is not merely unchronological but purposefully so. Here he may be foreshadowing Ibn Ḥafṣūn's later apostasy, or more properly alluding to it, if we are to assume that his audience was generally familiar with the fact that the rebel did at some point become an apostate. Another possibility, and one that I shall address in more detail later, is that in Ibn Ḥayyān's mind Ibn Ḥafṣūn had privately abandoned Islam long before he publicly declared his Christianity. As such, to accuse him of apostasy at this early stage need not be interpreted as an unchronological statement on Ibn Ḥayyān's part, but rather as a sort of implication of *zandaqa* or crypto-Christianity (there is evidence within the *Muqtabis* that would seem to support this interpretation, as we shall see).

Ibn Ḥafṣūn accumulates more epithets as we progress through the *Muqtabis*. We may, generally speaking, divide them into three groups: those that emphasize Ibn Ḥafṣūn's seditious and rebellious nature, those that criticize his personality and morals, and finally those that attack him using explicitly religious terminology. The first group of epithets includes the likes of “lord of strife” (عميد الشقاق), and are perhaps the most straightforward: Ibn Ḥafṣūn does indeed spend most of his time causing trouble for the Umayyads and for the Arabs of al-Andalus.

The second group includes references to him as a “rake” (فاجر) and “debaucher” (فاسق), and may in fact belong to a genre of standard-issue invective directed against rebels or enemies of the dynasty in general, irrespective of their individual characters. The fact that the plurals of these terms (especially “evildoers”, فسقة) are frequently employed to refer to the collectivity of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's allies might indicate that we needn't interpret their use as telling us anything material about any character traits that Ibn Ḥafṣūn may or may not have had. Still, Ibn Ḥafṣūn certainly seems to come in for more abuse of this sort than most of his contemporaries in rebellion, and so we may conclude that Ibn Ḥayyān seemed to find him an unusually reprehensible fellow – whether this is due to antipathy on the author's part

toward apostates or antipathy toward people who incessantly betray everyone around them we cannot be sure.

Before moving on to the final group epithets, however, we should first examine the exact circumstances of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's supposed apostasy. These are to be found on page 128 of the third volume, in a passage describing events in the year 286 hijri “in which the accursed ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣūn made manifest his Christianity”. We may note, of course, that the text explicitly does not refer to Ibn Ḥafṣūn's having converted or apostatized at this juncture. The implication is rather that his Christian faith had long been a feature of his personality, and that it was only at this point that he chose to unveil it.

A passage that appears earlier in the volume would seem to indicate as much. On page 108 the *Muqtabis* describes an assault by the amir's troops on Ibn Ḥafṣūn's fortress at Bobastro, saying that Ibn Ḥafṣūn quit the fortress accompanied by a band of evildoers (فساق) to defend the town and to defend “a nearby church that his accursed father Ḥafṣ had built”. This is quite puzzling. The implication is that not only was ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣūn himself a crypto-Christian (for why else would Ibn Ḥayyān specify that he quit his fortress to defend a church?), but so too was his father Ḥafṣ ibn Ja‘far – indeed, not so much a crypto-Christian as a quite blatant Christian, unless he somehow hid the fact that he was in the habit of building churches from his contemporaries²⁵. This clearly contradicts what we read in later chronicles to the effect that it was not Ḥafṣ who had converted to Islam but ‘Umar's grandfather Ja‘far, but this in itself is not particularly surprising – it is on the balance quite likely that Ibn Ḥayyān does not have access to particularly detailed information about Ibn Ḥafṣūn's family history, and indeed he does not claim to.

²⁵ Later on Ibn Ḥayyān describes how the amir's troops razed the towns surrounding Bobastro and “the great churches around it” (*Muqtabis* III 140), though at least some of these may have been built in the intervening years between the date of his conversion (286) and the date the passage is referring to (291).

What is more puzzling is simply the implausibility of it all²⁶, especially in light of what comes next, for the announcement by Ibn Ḥaḥṣūn of his Christianity seems to have come as a surprise to his closest allies, not to mention Muslim society at large – indeed, if it hadn't come as a surprise one might question why the announcement needed to be made in the first place. Ibn Ḥayyān tells us that Ibn Ḥaḥṣūn roused the Christians of dhimmi status (العجم نصرى الذمة) and turned their hearts against the Muslims. At this point two of his allies, ‘Awsaja ibn al-Khalī‘ al-Tākranī and Yaḥyà ibn Antala, turned against him and made war on him and exposed his apostasy (here the text is explicit: دة) to the broader Muslim community. The amir then deployed military expeditions (مغزى) against him in both summer and winter campaigns (صوائف وشواتي).

This description of the latter event is interesting on two counts. The word *maghāzī* has clear religious implications: it is the term used to describe the military campaigns of the Prophet against the pagans of Mecca. Its use casts Ibn Ḥaḥṣūn explicitly into the role of enemy of Islam, not a simple rebel like his contemporaries. This is also the first time that the word is used – all prior instances of campaigns against Ibn Ḥaḥṣūn (or other rebels, for that matter) have used the less explicitly religious terms *ghazā* and *ghazwa*. Similarly, while the amirs have up to this point been described as embarking on *ṣawā'if* against various rebels throughout the Muqtabis, clearly illustrating that the term had evolved to mean something more than raids exclusively undertaken against the Christian north, this is the first time that Ibn Ḥayyān mentions the amir's unleashing of both summer and winter campaigns against anyone. The implication may be that the event of Ibn Ḥaḥṣūn's conversion was of such grave import that the normal yearly rhythms of raiding were cast aside.

Ibn Ḥayyān, then, would seem to be attempting to portray the reaction to Ibn Ḥaḥṣūn's

26 I hasten to add that these seeming inconsistencies are not simply the result of disagreements among Ibn Ḥayyān's sources: both the account of Ibn Ḥaḥṣūn's apostasy and its immediate aftermath and that of his father's church are recounted on the authority of 'Īsà ibn Aḥmad al-Rāzī.

conversion as being swift and severe, not only on the part of the amir but on the part of the entire Muslim community: two of his lieutenants rebel against him and the amir unleashes campaigns of unprecedented vigor (or at least unprecedented rhetorical vigor) to bring him to heel. But the extent to which this is an accurate assessment of the reaction of the Muslim community to Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion (or outing himself as Christian) is questionable.

Firstly, as we have mentioned, Ibn Ḥayyān's recounting of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion is at least somewhat contradictory. How could two of his close allies have failed to realize that he was a Christian (and the son of a Christian) even after he had explicitly set out to defend a church that his father had built? How could the rest of Andalusī society have failed to realize it? It seems to me highly unlikely, although not entirely impossible, that both the story of the church and the story of his allies' betrayal can be true simultaneously. Which, then, is more likely to be accurate? I would argue that it is the latter: it seems unlikely that the account of his lieutenants' defection could have been fabricated and subsequently believed by both al-Rāzī and Ibn Ḥayyān. The story of the church, on the other hand, seems both so implausible and so difficult to verify (how, for instance, does Ibn Ḥayyān know that Ibn Ḥafṣūn set out specifically to defend that church?) that it seems more likely that it snuck in later on, as a rumor that repetition had lent credence. In any event, this scene illustrates how Ibn Ḥayyān and his sources may have on occasion exaggerated, inadvertently or not, the circumstances of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's apostasy – and potentially the nature of the retaliation to it.

For if we are to read between the lines it would appear that nothing much changed in the relationship of Ibn Ḥafṣūn to Andalusī society upon his apostasy, contrary to what Ibn Ḥayyān seems to imply. Ibn Ḥafṣūn doesn't seem to have lost all of his Arab-Muslim allies: on the very next page we are informed that he had struck up an alliance with Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥajjāj, ruler of Sevilla, who is explicitly referred to as an Arab. Furthermore, the rhetoric of *maghāzī* dries up in very short order: this passage stands out as one of very few wherein the word is used in the context of Ibn Ḥafṣūn for the remainder

of the volume. The extent to which Ibn Ḥayyān himself treats Ibn Hafsūn's apostasy as a conversion event, and the extent to which Ibn Ḥafṣūn's own contemporaries treated it as a conversion event, is very much in doubt. If anything there may indeed have been a brief burst of religious zeal directed against Ibn Ḥafṣūn upon his conversion, but it would seem that things very quickly returned to normal. It would appear, then, that Ibn Ḥafṣūn as a Christian rebel appears to have had very much the same relationship to his contemporaries and to his society as he had had as a Muslim rebel (an outwardly Muslim rebel, in any case). Any great groundswell of opposition to the newly-minted apostate would appear to be an artifact of the *Muqtabis* itself.

At this point we may return to the final category of epithets. It contains those, such as “enemy of God” (عدو الله), that have clear religious significance, as well as more ambiguous examples: the aforementioned “renegade”, for one, as well as epithets such as “imam of malefactors” (امام المجرمين), which employ religious terminology without necessarily making a statement on Ibn Ḥafṣūn's own faith. There appears to be little connection, however, between Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion event and Ibn Ḥayyān's use of these terms and phrases to describe him: both “enemy of God” and “imam of malefactors” appear before the point in the text where Ibn Ḥafṣūn announces his Christianity, nor do they appear more frequently once he has converted. Whether this is because Ibn Ḥayyān prefers to describe Ibn Ḥafṣūn in terms that encompass the whole of his life or because he believes the rebel to have long been a crypto-Christian we cannot be sure. It is clear, however, that for the purposes of Ibn Ḥayyān's prose Ibn Ḥafṣūn did not undergo any sort of conversion event: his personality and his relationship to the Muslim community, as reflected in the terms used to describe him, remain static throughout.

There is, of course, another possible explanation for the use of terms such as “enemy of God” to describe Ibn Ḥafṣūn: that these epithets are not, strictly speaking, dependent upon the religion of whomever they are applied to, or at least not dependent on any definition of religion that we would

readily recognize as such. There are signs that Ibn Ḥayyān is prepared to accord to the Umayyad amirs of Córdoba the same legitimacy as rightful leaders of the Muslim community that he will later accord to the caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. The thought process behind declaring Ibn Ḥafṣūn an “enemy of God” may not involve his apostasy (or crypto-Christianity) at all, but rather the simple fact of his opposition to the Umayyad dynasty. Political opposition to their rule over a united Muslim community might in itself have been considered a form of apostasy.

Evidence for this position can be found at Ibn Ḥayyān's not infrequent conflation of the actions of the amir and his agents with those of “the community” (الجماعة) in general. That the epithet “enemy of God” is applied so much more frequently to Ibn Ḥafṣūn than to other rebels would, if this interpretation is correct, simply reflect his position as the rabble-rouser *par excellence* of ninth-century al-Andalus: as the foremost rebel it would make sense that he would become the foremost enemy of God, in Ibn Ḥayyān's view.

But could this really be the case? It seems unlikely. It is not simply that rebels contemporaneous to Ibn Ḥafṣūn are only infrequently called “enemy of God” or the like: it doesn't appear that such terms are ever applied to them. Indeed, in many respects Ibn Ḥafṣūn seems to have been a sort of *sui generis* figure – one might be forgiven for thinking that, to Ibn Ḥayyān's mind at least, Ibn Ḥafṣūn is not so much a common rebel as a sort of supervillain. He is described as being the most important and pervasive of the challenges confronting the amir ‘Abdallāh over the course of his reign²⁷. His portrayal is almost larger than life: he is involved in almost every rebellion that challenges the Umayyad dynasty, allied at some point or another with almost every other rebel (as well as with the Umayyads' exterior enemies). His name is mentioned on every second page of the third volume, on average – he even makes cameo appearances in sections of the work devoted to other individuals.

I do not mean to suggest that Ibn Ḥayyān is exaggerating the scope of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellion. It

27 Muqtabis III 50

seems at least somewhat likely, however, that Ibn Ḥayyān deems Ibn Ḥafṣūn responsible for events that may not have been, strictly speaking, entirely his doing. Most notably, the extent of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's capacity for treachery is phenomenal: he betrays his allies almost constantly, leading us to wonder why exactly people keep allying themselves with him. Ibn Ḥafṣūn marries his son to the daughter of another rebel, ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Shāliyya, whom he then betrays. He sends the head of another of his former allies, Khayr ibn Shākir, to the amir as a ruse, and then proceeds to wage war against him while his guard is down by sacking the fortress at Jaén²⁸. This treachery continues unabated for many decades. If Ibn Ḥafṣūn truly had such a history of serial betrayal it would seem unlikely that he would find it so easy to find new allies to dupe. Either Ibn Ḥafṣūn had the good fortune to live a life surrounded by the fabulously gullible, or Ibn Ḥayyān is at times blaming him for events that might be more charitably described as mutual fallings-out.

Ibn Ḥafṣūn allies himself not only with an ever-rotating assortment of anti-Umayyad rebels within al-Andalus, but with the dynasty's external enemies as well: Ibn Ḥayyān informs us that Ibn Ḥafṣūn declared his allegiance to the Abbasid governor of North Africa²⁹ and later states that he at one point allied himself with ‘Abdallāh al-Mahdi³⁰, the Shi'ite caliph of North Africa³¹. His willingness to form alliances with the dynasties of North Africa³², described by Ibn Ḥayyān as “the land of the enemy” (بلد العدو), may be an action as beyond the pale as his apostasy.

We have reason, then, to question Ibn Ḥayyān's recounting of certain events, but prudence demands we exercise restraint in doing so. Our powers of deduction are no match for the passage of

28 *Muqtabis* III 92

29 *Muqtabis* III 93. Almost certainly a reference to the Aghlabid Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad.

30 *Muqtabis* V 142. I shall discuss the strange placement of this anecdote later on.

31 Referred to within the work as ‘Ubaydallāh.

32 Interestingly enough, however, he is not once mentioned as having allied himself with any Christian powers external to the Muslim-controlled parts of Iberia, certainly not with those Christian kingdoms at this time holed up in the mountainous north of the peninsula. This may simply have been as a result of geographic distance: Ibn Ḥafṣūn's stronghold was sufficiently far from the northern frontier, and cut off by large expanses of hostile territory, that it is doubtful that communication could have occurred with much facility between them. Ibn Ḥayyān does mention alliances between the Christian north and the Tujībids of Zaragoza.

time. And how we resolve these inconsistencies in the text fundamentally has little bearing on what sort of a man Ibn Ḥafṣūn is to Ibn Ḥayyān and to his fellow historians. The events upon which I have cast doubt all serve to accentuate Ibn Ḥafṣūn's principle characteristics: his sheer opportunism, his propensity for betrayal. What deception could be beneath the dignity of a man willing to cast aside his religion for convenience's sake? What bonds of alliance or friendship could be sacrosanct to such a man?

Indeed, Ibn Ḥafṣūn appears in the *Muqtabis* precisely as we might expect him to appear. Each time Ibn Ḥayyān recounts yet another instance of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's perfidy serves to reinforce the fact that, in the historian's mind, apostasy is not simply a shift in political allegiance, even though it may well have meant little more than that to Ibn Ḥafṣūn's contemporaries. Rather, to Ibn Ḥayyān treachery is the very nature of the apostate, and this preconception seems at times to influence the chronicler into recounting events that depict the rebel in a worse light than he perhaps warranted.

For in spite of his opportunism, Ibn Ḥafṣūn is not wholly devoid of principles. While he is willing to change his religious affiliation to suit the exigencies of war, he is unwilling, or unable, to alter his *ethnic* identity. The rebellion that Ibn Ḥafṣūn wages as a nominal Muslim is much the same as the one he wages later on as a nominal Christian. Indeed, Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellions can be viewed as a single, protracted struggle against the Arab, that is to say Umayyad, elites of al-Andalus – he fights on his own behalf, of course, but also on behalf of those like him, Muslims and Christians alike. *ʿAṣabiyya* is at the heart of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellion, at least at first, religion very much on the periphery. His protean shifts in religious and political affiliation, then, mask a fundamental consistency: irrespective of the terms in which he (or anyone else) couches his actions, Ibn Ḥafṣūn is always fighting the same fight for the same underlying reasons. The fact that he changes his religious identity so frequently implies that it in fact means very little for him, and there is some evidence that it may have meant relatively little for his contemporaries as well.

For the Andalusis of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's time, then, it would appear that his being considered a non-Arab is enough to render the question of what sort of non-Arab he is largely immaterial. The rhetoric of apostasy, then, would appear to have another source: one that we may be able to trace to the propaganda efforts of the first caliph of al-Andalus.

The reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III

The reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III was a period of military success and political consolidation for the Umayyad dynasty in al-Andalus. The amir mounted a string of campaigns, most of them successful, against internal rebels (including the indefatigable ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣūn and his unruly sons) and the Christian kingdoms of the north, as well as a series of what might be more accurately called military-diplomatic adventures into North Africa against the Shi’ite Fatimid dynasty. These military endeavors were accompanied by the amir's autoproclamation as caliph in the year 929/316. The transition from emirate to caliphate was only the most significant of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III's efforts to elevate the legitimacy and prestige of his reign to the levels enjoyed by his Umayyad forebears in Damascus. I shall endeavor not to tread on the toes of earlier scholarship in discussing this matter: the issue of the nature of the ideology constructed by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III to bolster his reign has been more than adequately covered by, among others, Gabriel Martínez-Gros³³ and Maribel Fierro. I shall focus instead on the role that Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellion played in the construction of this ideology, and the ways in which the ideology itself influenced Ibn Ḥayyān's account of the rebellion.

The fifth volume of the *Muqtabis*, wherein is contained most of Ibn Ḥayyān's account of the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III (the rest is to be found in the non-extant sixth volume of the work), is acephalous. Chalmers indicates in his introduction that he believes the initial pages to have included “a physical description of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, his *nisba* and family details, his sovereign attributes, his proclamation (as amir), notable dates of his reign, and his principle functionaries”. The rest of the volume is, like the third, roughly chronological.

The rebellion of Ibn Ḥafṣūn continues for only two or three years after the ascension of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III to the emirate. Ibn Ḥayyān's treatment of the rebel has not undergone any changes since the

33 See especially *L'Idéologie omeyyade and Identité andalouse*.

third volume: he still emphasizes that most of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's supporters are Christians³⁴ and still refers to him as the “root of hypocrisy and imam of perdition”³⁵, among other things. One instance only from this period merits closer examination: Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥajjāj, the son of the Arab rebel and ally of Ibn Ḥafṣūn whom we had the pleasure of meeting in the third volume, sends an envoy to Córdoba to express his desire to abandon his rebellion and submit to the authority of the amir³⁶. Ibn Ḥayyān has the amir's right hand, Badr ibn Aḥmad, declare that Ibn Ḥajjāj's surrender would have been possible, desirable even, if only he had not allied himself with the dastardly Ibn Ḥafṣūn, and that this fact had dashed all hope of a peaceful surrender.

Ibn Ḥayyān once again portrays Ibn Ḥafṣūn's apostate rebellion as a truly distinct phenomenon in the context of Andalusī society and the ideology of the Umayyad dynasty, such that even a temporary alliance with him is enough to brand a man forever enemy of the faith. Except, of course, that Ibn Ḥajjāj's envoy manages to convince Badr ibn Aḥmad to acquiesce to the surrender within the space of a paragraph. This seems, then, to be another instance where the ideological stance of the Umayyads as transmitted through their official statements and later apologists (Ibn Ḥayyān and his sources included) does not appear to be reflected in their actions, which seem pragmatically unconcerned with talk of apostasy. Ibn Ḥafṣūn appears in the text as the implacable and unpardonable enemy of god, but if we read between the lines his actual presence in the society of al-Andalus seems much less exceptional.

This becomes especially clear in 915/303, when, at long last, ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣūn, the “imam of renegades” himself, sues for peace³⁷. His inclination is towards surrender (انحراف عمر إلى السلم), we are told, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III is willing to grant it to him. Ibn Ḥayyān describes Ibn Ḥafṣūn's change of heart

34 *Muqtabis* V 37, 42. All page numbers given for the fifth volume refer to manuscript pages.

35 *Muqtabis* V 44

36 *Muqtabis* V 45

37 *Muqtabis* V 73

as being due to the devastating blows the new amir had dealt him since his ascension to the throne, and certainly it seems that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III is vastly more effective than his hapless predecessors in one respect at least: he immediately suspects a trap. He charges his vizier Badr ibn Aḥmad to evaluate whether Ibn Ḥafṣūn's overtures of peace are genuine, and deploys his doctor Yaḥyà ibn Ishāq ostensibly to negotiate with Ibn Ḥafṣūn. In reality, however, his role seems to have been to sound out the other members of the rebel's court.

Yaḥyà ibn Ishāq finds that the strongest proponents of peace within Ibn Ḥafṣūn's entourage are a group of prominent Christians led by the bishop of Bobastro, Ja‘far ibn Maqsim. Here Ibn Ḥayyān provides us with several tantalizing glimpses into the internal politics of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellion. Ja‘far ibn Maqsim and the other leading Christians, we are told, had long been desirous to enter into the service of the amirs “due to ties that their ancestors had had with the Umayyad dynasty in times of rectitude” (لأسباب سلفت لهم ولأسلافهم بالسلطان أيام الاستقامة)³⁸. They had in the past been strongly denounced for these tendencies by the “wicked” ‘Umar and his sons, but the military prowess of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III had at last forced the rebel to heed their words: Ja‘far ibn Maqsim manages to persuade Ibn Ḥafṣūn's Muslim companions (أصحابه المسلمين) of the need to make peace with the amir. Once again, we see that Ibn Ḥafṣūn's apostasy does not seem to have had any noticeable effect on the political calculations of his contemporaries: the Christians of his court, at least, do not seem to treat him as any sort of religious champion.

Ibn Ḥayyān goes to great lengths to emphasize Ja‘far ibn Maqsim's virtues. He says that the bishop was renowned for his wisdom and manhood (رجولة), and that when Ibn Ḥafṣūn at one point attempted to oust him from his position as bishop the outrage from the monks and the Christian elders (مسيخة العجم) was such that Ibn Ḥafṣūn had no choice but to reinstate him, thereby increasing his prestige

38 A topos that is frequently repeated when Ibn Ḥayyān discusses the Berber tribes of North Africa.

and stature.

It is clear, then, that there are internal conflicts within Bobastro, but they do not reflect religious divisions between Ibn Ḥafṣūn's Muslim and Christian supporters – or rather, they do, but not as we might expect. Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion to Christianity does not appear to have endeared him to the Christians of Bobastro, nor does it appear to have alienated his Muslim companions: once again the actual impact of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion on his place within his society appears to be minimal. It may have enabled him to rouse the Christian peasantry more effectively against the Umayyads – Ibn Ḥayyān's insistence that a majority of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's troops were Christians may be an indication of this (or it may not: the majority of his troops may have been Christians simply because a majority of the sort of people who tend to become troops in the region of Bobastro were at that time Christians). But it does not appear to have swayed the opinions of those in personal contact with him. Might the Christian-born elite of the area have come to view him as an interloper rather than as a champion? Certainly Jaʿfar ibn Maqsim seems to believe that a cessation of hostilities with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III would be preferable to ongoing warfare – perhaps he feared that the consequences for the Christian community of Bobastro would be severe if Ibn Ḥafṣūn fought to the bitter end, or perhaps he did not view the rule of an only nominally-Christian *caudillo* as being in any way preferable to the rule of an avowedly-Muslim, but relatively distant, amir.

Or it may be that this whole conversion business has been serially exaggerated in the text of the *Muqtabis*. Ibn Ḥafṣūn may simply not have converted at all – or at least not in the manner that Ibn Ḥayyān says he did. There is, for one, no explicit mention of his having reconverted to Islam, only of reconciliation and obedience (طاعة). Ibn Ḥayyān does make a puzzling statement to the effect that he returned stubbornly to his apostasy (ارتداده) at the end of his life, but without having ever abandoned Christianity it is unclear how he could have returned to it – unless either Ibn Ḥayyān simply neglected

to mention his reconversion to Islam, which seems to me quite doubtful, or unless his initial conversion to Christianity had simply not occurred. The question of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's faith will be raised again, as we shall see, upon the final victory of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III over the Ḥafṣūnids, many years later.

In any event, it would appear that Ibn Ḥafṣūn's surrender was a genuine one. Certainly the fact that the terms of his surrender were in no way onerous contributed to that fact: he was allowed to retain control over 160 fortresses in perpetuity, and to pass them on to his descendents³⁹. The amir's leniency appears to have paid off, however, as the elder Ibn Ḥafṣūn never again returned to rebellion. When Ibn Ḥafṣūn's son Sulaymān attacks the lord of Ubeda (near Jaén) the amir at first deems it yet another trick on the part of the wily rebel, but ‘Umar travels to Ubeda and takes custody of his son⁴⁰. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III appoints a Christian named Ibn Bizant to lordship over Ubeda, but shortly thereafter Sulaymān attacks the fortress for a second time, ousting Ibn Bizant. Al-Rāzī alone of Ibn Ḥayyān's sources states that Sulaymān “favored Christians like his father had”⁴¹, though Sulayman could not have been in control of Ubeda for more than a few months. Ibn Ḥafṣūn, at this point too ill for travel, writes to the amir distancing himself from his son's actions, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III sends one of his generals to capture Sulaymān, who is brought to Córdoba. Sulaymān, like his father before him, distinguishes himself in campaigns against the Christian north before once again betraying the amir and returning to Bobastro⁴².

Ibn Ḥafṣūn dies in the year 917/305, and his end-of-life allegiance to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III still does not seem to have endeared him to Ibn Ḥayyān. He is the “accursed” Ibn Ḥafṣūn still, “the seed of hypocrisy, the imam of perdition, the refuge of dissent, the cave of sedition (كهف الخلاف), the hearth of the fire of *fitna* and the refuge of evildoers”⁴³, all this in spite of the fact that he had just sided with the

39 *Muqtabis* V 75

40 *Muqtabis* V 86

41 *Muqtabis* V 88

42 *Muqtabis* V 104

43 *Muqtabis* V 91

amir against his own son, not once but twice. His death was considered, we are told, as “a signal of divine will and an excellent augury of the elimination of *fitna*”. Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion to loyal ally of the Umayyads, like his earlier conversion to Christianity, does not appear to have changed anything in Ibn Ḥayyān's eyes: he is still the implacable enemy of the faith he has always been.

Ibn Ḥayyān next recounts to us how Ibn Ḥafṣūn's son Ja‘far took over the lordship of Bobastro. He made manifest (أظهر, the same word used to describe Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion event in the third volume) his Christianity to the Christians of Bobastro, and claimed that his father had likewise been a Christian without displaying it. This is a bizarre statement, as there was certainly nothing secret about Ibn Ḥafṣūn's Christianity, at least not according to the *Muqtabis*: he had declared himself to be openly Christian years ago! It is possible that Ja‘far is referring to an end-of-life reconversion to Islam on the part of his father that Ibn Ḥayyān has neglected to explicitly mention in his chronicle, but at this point the possibility of any such event having taken place seems very slim indeed. Ja‘far proceeds to bury his father according to Christian custom (and, in a somewhat petty move, neglects to invite Ibn Maqsim and his allies to the funeral).

Ja‘far's portrayal of himself as a champion of Christianity does not prevent the amir from recognizing his lordship over Bobastro, though ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III would soon come to regret this (a common sentiment when dealing with the Banū Ḥafṣūn), for Ja‘far almost immediately rebels against him. This act of treachery inspires our chronicler to new heights of invective: Ja‘far is “imprudent, vacuous, cowardly, feeble, mean, ugly, covetous, spiteful, eager to find fault in and complain to those who favor him, ungrateful to friendliness, a friend of scoundrels and companion of nasty people, naturally disinclined to righteous actions and unattached to goodness”. Ibn Ḥayyān is not the young man's only enemy, however: Ja‘far is assassinated by some of his father's men (“*‘ajamī* Christians”, we are told – as opposed to Arabized Christians like the Banū Ḥafṣūn?) who accused him of being a

crypto-Muslim, and of showing preference to Muslims⁴⁴. Here the internal divisions of Bobastro emerge once again: Ibn Ḥayyān had said that Ibn Ḥafṣūn's sons were allied with his Muslim companions, and it would appear that this is still the case with Ja‘far. Ja‘far is promptly replaced by his brother Sulaymān, who flees the amir's service and allies himself with the infidels (بالكفرة). He pretends to be loyal, however, and the amir confirms him in his position. This proves to be exceedingly foolish, as Sulaymān immediately rebels. He dies in battle and is crucified at the gates of Córdoba⁴⁵. He is succeeded by his brother Ḥafṣ, whom ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III finally has the good sense not to confirm. Not that it does any good: Ḥafṣ takes over Bobastro and continues the rebellion.

At long last, in the year 316 hijri, the Ḥafṣūnid rebellion comes to a close, setting the stage for one of the strangest episodes in the *Muqtabis*. Ḥafṣ is defeated and the amir's forces enter Bobastro. The town's old mosque, which Ibn Ḥayyān claims was long abandoned without specifying where Ibn Ḥafṣūn's Muslim allies prayed, is reopened and prayers are once again reinstated⁴⁶. Next, we are told, “God revealed the secret of the heretic (ملحد) ‘Umar. . .and made apparent his vacillation between appearing to be Muslim and adhering to Christianity and the confusion that had arisen with the passage of time”: he had been buried as a Christian, with his arms crossed over his chest. Many people saw him thus, we are told, and several jurists who had accompanied the amir on the expedition all agreed that he had died as an infidel⁴⁷. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III orders his body disinterred and displayed before the gates of Córdoba, so that all might know that he had apostatized from Islam, the faith into which he was born (no mention of his father's church-building here).

How to explain the fact that Ibn Ḥafṣūn, after decades of rank apostasy and years of loyal

44 *Muqtabis* V 110

45 *Muqtabis* V 132. Ibn Ḥayyān remarks here that Sancho the Basque also died in this year, and was renowned, like Sulayman, for the harm he had done the Muslims.

46 Ibn Ḥayyān declares that the shoddy condition of the region's mosques and the excellent construction of its churches and their proximity to ‘Umar's palace were the firmest proofs possible of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's apostasy.

47 *Muqtabis* V 139

service to the amir, needs to have his apostasy discovered and confirmed and his corpse disinterred? There are a number of possibilities, but two seem to me the most plausible. The confusion surrounding Ibn Ḥafṣūn's religious affiliation may simply indicate that, for all Ibn Ḥayyān's insistence on his apostasy, the issue was simply not of much importance during his life. The direct consequences of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's supposed conversion to Christianity are, after all, few and ambiguous until several years after his death, when ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III saw fit to use his body as a propaganda setpiece. The other possibility is that Ibn Ḥafṣūn had simply not converted at all, or perhaps that he had maintained a stance of studied (or even guileless, if such a word can ever be applied to the crafty rebel) religious neutrality throughout his life. We have no way of knowing which, if either, of these explanations is the more plausible. They both seem to lead to the same conclusion, however: that Ibn Ḥafṣūn's religious affiliation was determined for him, to a significant extent, after the fact, by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III's propaganda efforts.

A bit further along Ibn Ḥayyān presents another strange account of the aftermath of the conquest of Bobastro that would seem to bolster this conclusion. He claims that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III destroyed the mosque that Ibn Ḥafṣūn had built at the beginning of his rebellion, before he had decided to favor Christianity. He hadn't built it for piety, of course, according to Ibn Ḥayyān, but rather to spread Shi'ite propaganda in an effort to ingratiate himself with ‘Abdallāh al-Mahdi, the caliph of Fatimid North Africa. That Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion as described in the *Muqtabis* predates Ubaydallah's rise to power would seem to cast doubt on this account, as would its non-chronological placement in the text. The fact that Ibn Ḥayyān does not here cite his source here casts further doubt on the legitimacy of these claims.

Still, the fact that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and Ibn Ḥayyān both go to great lengths to portray Ibn Ḥafṣūn as both a Christian and an ally of the Shi'ites demonstrates the extent to which Ibn Ḥafṣūn's own personality and motivations are subsumed to meet the needs of Umayyad propaganda. The amir

quickly sets about maximizing his gain from the defeat of the Ḥafṣūnids: he proclaims himself caliph the very next year⁴⁸. The long war against the Ḥafṣūnids is portrayed here as a long war against polytheism, and we see one of the first outright mentions of *jihād*. The caliph, as he has become, is not about to let a good crisis go to waste: the city of Bobastro is the “base of polytheism. . .the glory and refuge of Christianity”, which he had “made barren”⁴⁹. Upon clarifying once more that he is the descendent of caliphs, all of the most potent elements of the Umayyad ideology have been brought together to lay the groundwork for the caliphal declaration. Ibn Ḥafṣūn, originally a *muwallad* fanning the flames of ‘*aṣabiyya*, has managed to become, within the pages of the *Muqtabis*, a crypto-Christian, an apostate (possibly an apostate twice over), and a sympathizer with both the Abbasid caliphate and the Shi’ites. Whose defeat could have possibly been more ideal to usher in the revival of the Umayyad caliphate?

And it is not only ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III whose interests are served in the *Muqtabis*'s portrayal of Ibn Ḥafṣūn. The defeat of the Ḥafṣūnids (and the mopping up of the few remaining rebels in the region) has made “the people into one peaceful *umma*. . .obedient, tranquil, subject and not sovereign, governed and not governing”⁵⁰: here the voice of Ibn Ḥayyān himself is clear. After the chaos of the *fitna* and the *taifa* period it is no small wonder that he goes to pains to laud a nation that had been made “governed and not governing”: the defeat of the rebel is for the chronicler evidence of the necessity of a strong ruler to unite al-Andalus.

With Ibn Ḥafṣūn out of the way, the newly-proclaimed caliph would appear to have need of a new enemy to justify his title. Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellion had long been the overwhelming priority of the Umayyads of al-Andalus: I would estimate that the number of words devoted to Ibn Ḥafṣūn and his sons up to this point in the *Muqtabis* surpasses that devoted to the Christians of the north and the

48 *Muqtabis* V 159

49 *Muqtabis* V 151. The quotation is of Qur’ān 68:20.

50 *Muqtabis* V 141-142

Shi'ites of the south combined. But Ibn Ḥafṣūn had never been as natural an ideological enemy of the Umayyads as either of these, in spite of the fact that he was militarily and logistically a much a more dangerous foe. The protean nature of his rebellion made it easy to tar him with as many brushes as could be found, however: the convenience of being able to fight a non-Arab apostate-Christian Shi'ite-sympathizer within a hundred miles of the capital cannot be overstated.

But a newly-minted caliph cannot rest on his laurels. Soon after his proclamation, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's campaigns against the Christian north become "conquests" (فتوح), like those of his caliphal forebears. Later the war in the north becomes, at long last, a true *jihād*, as if 'Abd al-Raḥmān III had not been permitted to wage war on behalf of the faith so long as the apostate lurked at his doorstep. He begins to intervene militarily and diplomatically in North Africa as well, allying himself with various Berber tribes (bound once again, we are told, by old agreements with his ancestors the Umayyads of Syria) as well as Ḥasanids (Ibn Ḥayyān, child of the *fitna* as he is, does not think highly of the Berbers, declaring that they would bring ruin upon al-Andalus⁵¹). These campaigns have been covered in great detail by other scholars, and in any event the desire of a Muslim monarch (or any monarch, for that matter) to win glory and legitimation for himself and his own rule by conquering infidels and heretics is, in my view, less than problematic.

There is another element in the ideology of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III and the Umayyads that I would touch on, however: the constant orientation of the dynasty around the East, both in terms of its official propaganda and in terms of what we might call its perception of self. At times the East appears in the *Muqtabis* as a source of evil beliefs, of heresy and innovation: Ibn Masarra, a Sufi ascetic who preaches doctrines offensive to the Māliki school, is described as having brought them from the east⁵². In other places we may identify a sort of yearning to match the glories of the eastern court. Much of 'Abd al-

51 *Muqtabis* V 192

52 *Muqtabis* V 11

Raḥmān III's court poetry is concerned with refuting the perceived superiority of the east. In one poem we read that he is “the imam of the West, who for humility has no desire to be caliph of the East”⁵³. In another, the great poet Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi says that he has seen “a marvel. . . a full moon bearing aloft a star, and for the sake of seeing it the East would wish to be the West”⁵⁴. Both of these lines are in reference to the Abbasid East, the East of the usurpers.

There is another East in the Umayyad ideology, however: the East that their forebears had lost. At one point ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III is attacked by a deranged man⁵⁵. Ibn Ḥayyān informs us that the then-amir's guards immediately assume the man is a Kharijite – this in spite of the fact that we have heard absolutely nothing of Kharijites in al-Andalus throughout the *Muqtabis*. Is this an attempt to link ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III to the caliph ‘Alī, assassinated by a Kharijite many centuries prior? I would argue that it is more than that: it is an attempt to link the political circumstances of al-Andalus with those of the early caliphate⁵⁶. The community is still, according to this worldview, under attack by splittist groups, by deviants and heretics. Who better to tie the struggles of an Andalusī ruler to the caliphal past than a Kharijite assassin, even one whose Kharijism has been perhaps exaggerated?

Finally, there is a peculiar convention of nomenclature in al-Andalus that merits examination. When ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III begins his campaign to stamp out the various rebels of al-Andalus, we are told that the first group of soldiers to heed his call are named the *jund Dimashq*, the army or province of Damascus, based out of Elvira⁵⁷. Elvira is, in fact, at times referred to as “Damascus” within the *Muqtabis*; similarly, Jaén is frequently called “Qinnasrīn” or the “*jund Qinnasrīn*”. The Umayyad dynasty arrived in the Iberian peninsula from Syria in 756, the Syrian presence on the peninsula must have predated this fact. Apparently, however, the descendents of the Syrians who had supported ‘Abd

53 *Muqtabis* V 61

54 *Muqtabis* V 96

55 *Muqtabis* V 23

56 For the Umayyads there was, naturally, no distinction between the rightly-guided caliphs and their own dynasty.

57 *Muqtabis* V 35

al-Raḥmān I during his exile had maintained for some two hundred years not only their identity as Syrians but even the archaic term for province that had been in use in Umayyad Syria. At another point, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III's most loyal partisans are described as being “Syrians and Umayyad [sympathizers]”⁵⁸.

It would seem, then, that the partisans of the Umayyad dynasty considered al-Andalus to be a sort of “New Syria”, one whose geographic and political landscape were explicitly analogized to that of the previous heartland of the Umayyads. The deliberate archaisms of Andalusī nomenclature reflect a society and a dynasty perpetually in the process of reliving its history: a society, to paraphrase a modern author, “stoked with spoorless analogs of all that had been, endlessly reenacting the dramas and parables of its own past”. History takes on a different cast when seen through this lens: it becomes something cyclical, where the present reflects the past and the past presages the future. History becomes allegory. For the caliph the dangers facing al-Andalus are the same as those that had faced the Umayyads of the east. Only the names have changed, and even those but partially.

Or at least, that is the interpretation that the caliph's propaganda would seem to promote. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know to what extent this worldview reflected the caliph's own, and to what extent it was simply for show. Certainly ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III's handling of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's rebellion does not appear to be motivated by a feeling of existential dread or religious fervor: he concludes a generous peace arrangement with the rebel without making any sort of effort to ensure that the wily ‘Umar returned to Islam. The contrast to the public spectacle that is made out of Ibn Ḥafṣūn's death could not be more stark: it is only in death that the rebel's supposed Christianity is integrated into the caliph's propaganda, or so it would seem.

58 *Muqtabis* V 44

Conclusions

What, then, of the men of flesh and blood beneath their paper masks? We knew from the very beginning the roles that each of these men was to play: the rebel, the caliph, the chronicler. And at first glance they play their roles in as predictable a fashion as could be imagined. The rebel apostatizes, betrays his allies, sows disorder. The caliph unites the community, shows clemency, wages holy war. The chronicler damns the former, lauds the latter, despairs for his own time.

But this is a façade. The men of flesh and blood are to be found as much between the lines of the *Muqtabis* as printed on its pages. The truth is beneath the text, obscured but not so much so that glimpses of it are not visible in its interstices. The *Muqtabis* has an agenda, and Ibn Ḥayyān had an audience in mind when writing it. It is not, in other words, a work of dispassionate and objective history – no more than is any work, in any event. The same ideology that permeates Ibn Ḥayyān's rhetoric when he denounces the enemies of God or lauds the mercy of the sovereign has shaped the entire work.

Martínez-Gros speaks in *L'Idéologie omeyyade of a littérature califale* that emerged alongside ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III's adoption of the caliphal title, describing it as a “littérature de l'ésotérique. . .qui ne recule pas devant l'ésotérisme dans son souci de rendre fidèlement les indications de Celui qui la guide à travers tous les chemins de ce labyrinthe”⁵⁹. We see elements of this phenomenon in the *Muqtabis*, as well we might expect to. We see it in Ibn Ḥayyān's cyclical approach to time, according to which a Kharijite assassin might materialize out of nowhere onto the streets of Córdoba, according to which the armies of Elvira and Jaén are the *junds* of Damascus and Qinnasrin, populated in perpetuity by loyal Syrians. We see it as well in the superhuman villainy of Ibn Ḥafṣūn, whose calling card is found at the scene of every crime, no matter how farfetched, such that even his sons are fated to reenact the steps of his rebellion with almost perfect regularity.

⁵⁹ Martínez-Gros, *Idéologie* 21

We ask ourselves while reading the *Muqtabis*: How could the amir have been so blind? Why would he accept the loyalty of a son of Ibn Ḥafṣūn when he must have known it would be worth nothing at all, and that he would be betrayed at the earliest possible convenience? But that is to miss the point. Surely ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III was no fool. When we read that he confirmed the sons of Ibn Ḥafṣūn as lords of Bobastro only to be instantaneously betrayed we need not believe that Ibn Ḥayyān intends for the passage to be taken literally. Rather it is a symbol of the honor and clemency of the sovereign. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III adhered to the bargain that he had made with Ibn Ḥafṣūn because such was his character. When we read that Ibn Ḥafṣūn's father had been a crypto-Christian building churches in the countryside around Bobastro, a statement which flies in the face of all logic, are we really to believe that Ibn Ḥayyān was blind to the contradiction? Not at all. The church built by Ḥafṣ ibn Ja‘far almost certainly did not exist – its existence in the *Muqtabis* is as a symbol, a representation of the perfidy of the rebel's lineage.

The elements of Ibn Ḥayyān's chronicle that seem contradictory to us are not the mark of a shoddy historian – far from it. They are the mark of a different sort of historian: one explicitly concerned with drawing lessons from the past and applying them to his own time. Ibn Ḥayyān has no desire to approach the history of the Umayyad caliphate dispassionately or impartially, as should be abundantly clear from the tenor of the text. His aim is to inform, yes, but also to persuade: he seeks to demonstrate the superiority of unified rule under a strong and just ruler. He detests the weakness and division of al-Andalus during his own lifetime, and aims to present a portrait of the peninsula during happier times.

And what of the rebel himself? Ibn Ḥafṣūn emerges from our analysis as the man whose true identity has been, perhaps, the most distorted by the *Muqtabis*. The work needed a villain, one supposes, and Ibn Ḥafṣūn was an excellent candidate for the post. But the portrait of Ibn Ḥafṣūn stitched together by Ibn Ḥayyān begins to unravel when tugged at. Fundamentally, the *Muqtabis*

appears to be attempting to force the rebel into a paradigm that simply doesn't fit him: the standard-bearer of religious division and Christian nationalism, the enemy of Islam who will stop at nothing in his support for dissent and strife.

But Ibn Ḥafṣūn is no champion of the cause of Christian *'aṣabiyya*, no true analog of the Persian nationalism that brought down the Umayyads of the east. The “native” Christians of Bobastro seem to be barely able to tolerate the man, and it is not even clear, beneath the layers of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III's propaganda, whether or not he considered himself a Christian at all, any more than he had considered himself a loyal Abbasid or a Shi'ite during his flirtations with those movements (if such flirtations did indeed take place).

Indeed, Ibn Ḥafṣūn's Christianity seems more and more a threadbare edifice. Even if he did truly apostatize, presumably to facilitate recruitment of disaffected Christians to his cause, it does not appear that he did much more than go through the motions of being Christian. His closest advisors are still Muslims at the time of his surrender, his son his assassinated by Christians for favoring Muslim interests at Bobastro. Ibn Ḥafṣūn's relationship to the “native” Christian population of al-Andalus is complex enough that it would seem to warrant more study: if he did indeed convert to win support for his cause among the Christians of al-Andalus we might expect to find mention of him in contemporaneous Christian texts⁶⁰.

It would be doubly interesting to know if his conversion had succeeded at rallying Andalusī Christians to his cause taking into account the utter lack of impact it seems to have had on his personal relations with his Muslim and Christian allies, and even his enemies. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III does, after all, allow the supposed apostate to die peacefully of old age in his home, secure in the knowledge that his lands would be passed down to his heirs, and the rebel retains numerous Muslim allies after his supposed conversion. It is almost as though he had never converted at all, though I personally do not

⁶⁰ Lévi-Provençal mentions a *Vita Beatae Virginis Argenteae*, supposedly dealing with Ibn Ḥafṣūn's (Christian) daughter Argentea. *Histoire* vol 2 p 21.

find it probable that the entire story was fabricated out of whole cloth. I find it more plausible that Ibn Ḥafṣūn's conversion, such as it was, was not considered a particularly grave crime at the time of his surrender – indeed, that it may not have been considered a particularly grave crime until the lives of Ibn Ḥayyān and his fellow chroniclers of the *taifa* period, if then.

Still, the lack of societal repercussions for his conversion is an intriguing phenomenon. Could it be that Andalusī society at this time simply did not view religious conversion as being all that repulsive an act? Was there perhaps a difference between different segments of the society in this regard, with the peasantry responding in perhaps a different way to allegations of conversion than the urban elite? If it is true that apostasy was not much remarked upon during Ibn Ḥafṣūn's lifetime, why is it the case that Ibn Ḥayyān seems so concerned with the issue? Could it be that the attitudes of Andalusī society towards conversion shifted in the intervening century? Or could it be that the audience for which Ibn Ḥayyān wrote, comprised as it was of the creatures of the courts, was more sensitive to these matters than the hardened military men of the frontiers or the peasants of the countryside? These questions, among many others, remain to be answered. We have found our men of flesh and blood, yet the society in which they lived remains as elusive as ever – we can be sure only that it was not quite as they portrayed it.

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