Maria Isabel Fierro Bello

Genealogies of Power in Al-Andalus. Politics, Religion and Ethnicity during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries.

Conditions d’utilisation

L’utilisation du contenu de ce site est limitée à un usage personnel et non commercial. Toute autre utilisation du site et de son contenu est soumise à une autorisation préalable de l’éditeur (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). Le copyright est conservé par l’éditeur (Ifao).

Conditions of Use

You may use content in this website only for your personal, noncommercial use. Any further use of this website and its content is forbidden, unless you have obtained prior permission from the publisher (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). The copyright is retained by the publisher (Ifao).

Dernières publications

9782724709568 Guide to Deir el-Medina
9782724708585 Cultes et textes sacrés dans l’Égypte tardive
9782724709711 Le temple de Deir Chelouit V
9782724708493 Mirtissa IV
9782724708073 La nécropole hellénistique de Plinthine
9782724709452 L’Égypte pharaonique. Histoire, société, culture
9782724709643 La tombe memphite du prince héritier Chéchonq
et son mobilier funéraire
9782724709353 Stone Canvas

© Institut français d’archéologie orientale - Le Caire
Genealogies of Power in al-Andalus

Politics, Religion and Ethnicity
during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries

Arab Pride and Prejudice

When the Arab al-Ṣumayl b. Ḥātim (second/eighth century)—a member of the Syrian ḡund-s settled in al-Andalus, and a descendant of the killer of al-Ḥusayn in Kerbela—heard the Qur’ānic verse 3:140 (“If a wound touch you, a like wound already has touched the heathen; such days We deal out in turn among men (al-nās), and that God may know who are the believers; and God loves not the evildoers”), was convinced that “men” (al-nās) in that verse could mean only the Arabs (al-ʿarab). When corrected, he deplored the implication that Arabs would have to share authority and power in the new Islamic polity with the slaves and the populace.1

Al-Andalus was at that time immersed in internecine fights among competing factions of the tribal army, expressed through the division between Muḍar and Yemen (Northern/Southern Arabs).2 The leader of the former was al-Ṣumayl, who managed to have his men—such as Yūsuf al-Fihri, an Arab from Qurayš—appointed as governors of al-Andalus. In the battle
of Secunda, al-Ṣumayl had the upper hand over the Yemeni faction. But tensions continued. Al-Ṣumayl was approached by Umayyad clients to help them in supporting ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muʿāwiyah’s entry into the Iberian Peninsula (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muʿāwiyah was to become the first Umayyad Emir of Al-Andalus after defeating its governor, Yūsuf al-Fihrī). Al-Ṣumayl knew that the arrival of the Umayyads would endanger the independence of the Arabs, a possibility that he described by saying that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān belonged to a clan of such importance that if any of its members were to urinate in the Iberian Peninsula, all the tribal leaders would be drowned. And so al-Ṣumayl and the Northern Arabs refused to give their help to the Umayyads, whereas the Yemenis are said to have been more favourable towards the future ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I (r. 138–172/756–788). The latter was also helped by some Berbers, to whom he is said to have been related on his maternal side.

From then onwards, the Umayyads’ policy was aimed at limiting the power of their main rivals, the Arabs, who had come to al-Andalus in two waves:

A. The conquerors—both Arabs and Berbers—, called baladiyyūn;

B. In 123/741, the Syrian ḡund-s sent to North Africa to stop a Ḫāriğī Berber rebellion and who, having been defeated, crossed the Straits under the command of Balg b. Biṣr and settled in the Iberian Peninsula.

During the second half of the third/ninth century, the Umayyads saw how their grip on al-Andalus loosened, while Arabs, Berbers and muwalladūn (native converts) asserted their leadership in towns and fortresses, sometimes fighting each other, sometimes establishing alliances with other rebels, and sometimes acknowledging Umayyad sovereignty before rebelling again. Because ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (r. 300/912–350/961) eventually managed to put an end to this period of endless warfare (known as fitna), the third/ninth century is seen as a period of transition between the conquest society and the final triumph of Islamic tributary society as represented by the establishment of an Umayyad caliphate (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III differed from the former Umayyad emirs by having himself proclaimed caliph, adopting the title al-Nāṣir li-dīn Allāh). But before victory and unity were achieved under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, Arab lords—such as the Banū Ḥaǧǧāǧ (Yemen) in Seville—called themselves “king” (malik), and established their own courts with their poets singing their praises. In one of his poems, the Arab (Muḍar) Ibn Ǧūdī exhorted the Umayyads to abandon the mulk, since it belonged to the Arabs (al-mulk li-abnāʿ al-ʿarab). This striking exclusion of the Umayyads from the ranks of the Arabs must have been based on criticism of the fact that the Umayyads were increasingly the descendants of non-Arab women: abnāʿ al-ʿarab in Ibn Ǧūdī’s poem were the sons of Arabs on both sides (paternal and maternal).

4. The most detailed narrative of these events is to be found in Lévi-Provençal, Histoire de l’Espagne musulmane I, p. 64–98, and Chalmeta, Invasión e islamización.
5. Almansa, Entre el feudalismo y el Islam; Manzano, Conquistadores, emires y califas.
7. The change in the acceptance of sons of Arabs and slave women is analyzed by ʿAthamina, “How Did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women”, p. 392–393.
The Arabs were not the only ones who rebelled against the Umayyads. But of the different groups that caused the fitna it was the Arabs who afterwards seem to have fared better and who managed to retain positions of privilege. The Umayyads themselves were Arabs, from the Qurayš. The idea of Arab supremacy was difficult to eradicate in a society where the memory of Arab ancestry was still recorded and cherished, and where the ruler’s claim to legitimacy implied membership of an Arab tribe, even if this claim was filtered through the religious merits of the Qurayš, the tribe of the Prophet. One example shows that, for all his mistrust of the Arabs, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III could not escape his own background or the social importance Arabs still retained. The Yemeni Arab Banū Aḍḥā al-Hamdhānī had rebelled in the area of Granada during the fitna, but kept their local power after their submission. One of them, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ibn Aḍḥā, described as good looking, generous, eloquent and cultivated, attracted the attention of the caliph, who granted him many benefits and an elevated position. This Ibn Aḍḥā delivered a renowned speech praising ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, in which he referred to him as a righteous imām through whom the Arabs increased their splendour and brilliance. Having appointed this Ibn Aḍḥā governor of Jaén, the caliph sent him a high-ranking non-Arab official—most probably a slave, named al-Qalafāt—to keep an eye, so to speak, on his performance. Ibn Aḍḥā found al-Qalafāt’s control intolerable and his behaviour insolent and rude, and gave orders for him to receive a hundred lashes. Al-Qalafāt managed to flee and complained to the caliph. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III is said to have contemplated punishing Ibn Aḍḥā, but he was dissuaded by his vizier and mawlā ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ǧahwar (a friend of Ibn Aḍḥā), who improvised some verses in which al-Qalafāt’s trial was ridiculed. The caliph al-Nāṣir laughed and Ibn Aḍḥā went unpunished. Being an Arab in the fourth/tenth century still entailed privileges, pride and authority.

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III’s heir and successor al-Ḥakam II promoted the recording of Arab genealogies and lineages (he is said to have been concerned that they might be forgotten), as well as the reception and study of the literature dealing with the Arab Ġāhiliyya. But at the same time, in the historical works written during the caliphate, care was taken that the Umayyads were not referred to as “Arabs” and that the Arabs or Arab clients employed in the caliphal administration were not usually referred to by their Arabic tribal nisba-s. In fact, the Umayyad caliphs tried to distance themselves from the Arabs, while putting the Qurayš and the Umayyad mawālī in a special category, as shown by the court ceremonial. Having to rule an ethnically diverse population, the caliph was thus trying not to be
associated with a particular ethnic group, so as to build a wider support basis for himself. ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s promotion of what has been called an “Andalusī identity” that would erase ethnic differences responded to the problems posed by the fitna, but also probably to rivalry with the Fatimids.

We shall see that non-Arabs had integrated into the world of religious scholarship at an early stage (in the first half of the third/ninth century). But their faulty knowledge of the Arabic language exposed them to the derision of the Arabs. The favourite victim of the Arab scholar Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Ḥuṣanī was Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ (d. 287/900), the grandson of one of ʿAbd al-Rahmān I’s slaves, whose imperfect relationship with the Arabic language served al-Ḥuṣanī as the platform from which to display his disdain for Ibn Waḍḍāḥ in public. Ibn al-Zarrād, one of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ’s staunchest supporters, was once in the presence of al-Ḥuṣanī, when the individual responsible for reading the text made an error of pronunciation, provoking the following comment from al-Ḥuṣanī: “Where did that come from? Oviedo, wouldn’t you say?” (Oviedo is a town in Asturias, the Christian northern part of the Iberian Peninsula). Ibn al-Zarrād, suspecting that al-Ḥuṣanī was making an indirect reference to Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, angrily replied, “I do not have to remain in a gathering at which Ibn Waḍḍāḥ is criticised!” Al-Ḥuṣanī snapped, “God be praised! Do you think that he is superior to everyone else?” This allusion on the part of al-Ḥuṣanī is repeated in another anecdote in which Ibn Waḍḍāḥ plays a part. On hearing of the interpretation that Ibn Waḍḍāḥ gave to a particular term from a ḥadīṯ, al-Ḥuṣanī commented, “Someone from Oviedo will certainly know how to explain the Prophet’s ḥadīth!” These two references to Oviedo in connection with Ibn Waḍḍāḥ may have been a way of referring to the fact that his rival spoke Arabic as poorly as a Christian from Oviedo would. But we can also assume that al-Ḥuṣanī was making reference to the true origins of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, whose grandfather Bazī’ was a slave freed by his master ʿAbd al-Rahmān I, who had bought him between the years 154–158/771–774. The sources do not tell us anything of Bazī’’s origins, but it is quite clear that he was already a slave before he passed into the Umayyad Emir’s hands. He could well have been captured on some incursion into Asturian territory.

**Ethnic Claims of Berbers and Natives**

The Maṣmūda Berber Ḥafṣ b. Maymūn had an argument with the Arab Ġālib b. Tammām al-Ṭaqāfī defending the superior merits of the Maṣmūda over the Arabs. The dispute ended with Ḥafṣ’s murder at the hands of Ġālib. The Umayyad ʿAbd al-Rahmān I was not displeased by this outcome, and when Ḥafṣ’s brother threatened an uprising if the Qurayš did not support his cause, the Emir had him imprisoned; and once in Córdoba he had him executed. Ḥafṣ’s father may be identified with a Maymūn b. Saʿd, the son of a mawlā of the Umayyad caliph

---

15. Fierro, “Bazī’, mawlā de ʿAbd al-Rahmān I”.

Anisl 42 (2008), p. 29-55    Maria Isabel Fierro Bello
Genealogies of Power in Al-Andalus. Politics, Religion and Ethnicity during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries.
© IFAO 2023
Anisl en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net
al-Walid b. ʿAbd al-Malik. Maymūn came to al-Andalus at the time of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I and it was he who killed the governor Yūsuf al-Fihrī. Their family, the Banū Maymūn, spoke the Berber language.⁶ No details are given about this claim of the Maṣmūda’s superiority over the Arabs. It could just have been an expression of the fact that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I was fighting against the Arabs with the support of his mawālī, some of whom were of Berber origin. Had the acculturated Maṣmūda also developed a genealogy that linked them to the Qurayṣ, perhaps through a cognatic link?

This was later the case with Ibn Tūmart, the Mahdi of the Almohads, who was a Maṣmūda, but was considered to have a Qurayṣ genealogy. The Berbers made extensive use of genealogical lore in order to link themselves to the Arabs. The links they established included, for example, a connection with Qays b. ʿAylān, who is said to have had four sons: Saʿd, ʿUmar—whose mother belonged to the Nizār lineage—, Barr and Tumāḍir—whose mother, Tamzīgh, was of Berber origin. Barr b. Qays married his paternal cousin, and that brought about his brothers’ enmity; then his mother sought refuge for him with his maternal relatives, the Berbers, who at the time lived in Palestine. This Qaysī genealogy was used, among others, by ʿAbd al-Muʿmin, a Zanāta Berber and follower of the Mahdi Ibn Tūmart, who became the first Almohad caliph, a genealogical claim that helped to provide legitimacy to Berber rule. Most Berbers, however, seem to have favoured Yemeni genealogies (as in the case of the Almoravids). All these Arab genealogies for the Berbers were severely criticized by Andalusī genealogists such as Ibn Ḥazm, but they were preserved and spread by Berber authors in works such as the Mafāḫir al-Barbar.¹⁷

Perhaps the passage in Aḥbār maǧmūʿa, putting the Maṣmūda on the same level as the Qurayṣ, is an interpolation from Almohad times in a text with a complex redactional history.¹⁸ But the feeling of superiority on the part of the Maṣmūda may also be connected to the fact that it was mostly from this tribe that the Berber prophets came, whether as “false prophets” or as “Mahdi-s”.¹⁹ Prophecy, rule and state formation are closely linked in Islam, following Moses’ model. The polities established by the Berber Maṣmūda prophets (such as that of the Barghawāṭa) were not acceptable in Islamic terms. Eventually, they produced an Islamicized version of their claims: in the case of the Zanāta Berber ʿAbd al-Muʿmin (who inherited the leadership of the Almohad movement from the Maṣmūda Mahdi, Ibn Tūmart) a connection between prophecy and caliphate was made by linking the lineage of the first Almohad caliph to a pre-Islamic Arab prophet and by pointing out that if a lineage belonged to the abode of prophecy (dār nubuwwa), then it also belonged to the abode of the caliphate (dār ḫilāfa).

No claim similar to that put forward by Ḥafṣ b. Maymūn nor genealogical works in the style of the Mafāḥir are to be found regarding the natives. Natives did not develop genealogies as the Berbers did in order to claim prestige and privilege in a culture in which genealogy was.

---

17. Fierro, “Las genealogías de ʿAbd al-Muʿmin”.
18. On which see Molina, “Los Aḥbār maǧmūʿa y la historiografía árabe sobre el periodo omeya”;
Oliver, “Los autores del Aḥbār Maǧmūʿa”; id., “El Aḥbār maǧmūʿa: una obra polémica”.
19. I first pointed to this connection in my study “Os ulemas de Lisboa”.

AnIsl (2008), p. 29-55. Maria Isabel Fierro Bello
Genealogies of Power in Al-Andalus. Politics, Religion and Ethnicity during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries.
© IFAO 2023
AnIsl en ligne
https://www.ifao.egnet.net
a language of power. Arabs and Berbers had been soldiers and conquerors, while the natives had been the conquered. The notables among the conquered who managed to preserve part of their wealth and power were absorbed into the conquerors’ lineages through intermarriage. An example of this is the case of Tudmīr, a local notable from the area of Murcia who had submitted to the conquering Muslim army by way of a treaty. ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār b. Ḫaṭṭāb b. Marwān b. Naḍīr, the descendant of a mawlā of the Umayyad caliph Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, came to al-Andalus with the Syrian army commanded by Balǧ b. Bišr. Around 127/745 he settled in the area of Murcia. ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār married Tudmīr’s daughter, who gave him as her dowry two villages. The descendants of this ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār constituted one of the most powerful local families in the area until the end of Muslim dominion. Soon, they claimed an Arab ancestry (from Azd), while no genealogical memory was preserved of their native maternal ancestors to whom they owed the family’s wealth.

This absorption of native lineages by intermarriage with the Arabs and their clients was predominant throughout al-Andalus. This is also true in the only recorded case of a lineage that preserved the memory of their native female ancestor, the Banū l-Qūṭiyya (sons of the Gothic woman), to which belonged a famous historian of the fourth/tenth century known as Ibn al-Qūṭiyya.

Sāra was the granddaughter of the Visgothic king Witiza. She married twice. Her first husband was ʿĪsā b. Muzāḥim, a client of the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. A notable Sevillan family, the Banū l-Qūṭiyya, descended from this marriage, and in the fourth/tenth century, they were part of the elites loyal to the Cordoban Umayyad caliph. Sāra’s second husband was the Arab (Laḫmī) ʿUmayr b. Saʿīd and from this marriage there descended four notable Sevillan families, among them the Banū Ḥaǧǧāǧ who had acted as kings in the second half of the third/ninth century and who eventually submitted to the Umayyad caliph. Of those families, only the first—descendants in the male line from an Umayyad client—had an appellation that preserved the memory of their female ancestor from the local royal family.

Although Sāra’s male relatives (from the Visigothic royal family) figure in the chronicles dealing with the early history of al-Andalus, almost nothing is heard of their descendants in later times.

Why was the memory of native female ancestry preserved in the case of the Banū l-Qūṭiyya? There is some evidence that the recording of female ancestry was more common in the early times of the Muslim history of Al-Andalus (as would happen later among the Berber Almoravids), before “the rigid patrilinealism” of the Arab genealogical system became exclusive. Most scholars, however, have seen in Ibn al-Qūṭiyya’s appellation an expression of the šuʿūbī tendencies (in the sense of bias against the Arabs and in favour of the non-Arabs) that according to them may be detected in his historical work. But it is safer to say that Ibn al-Qūṭiyya writes as an Umayyad mawlā (i.e., as a non-Arab who is a supporter of the Umayyads), with two moralising aims: a) to remind the Umayyads about those who supported their rule in al-Andalus (i.e., their mawālī)

21. See on this point Guichard, Al-Andalus. Estructura antropológica.
and about how this support was dependent on the treatment they received from the rulers; and 
b) to remind the Umayyad *mawālī* of how their fortunes were inextricably linked to those of 
the Umayyads, and that it was therefore in their best interests to continue to be loyal servants. 
For Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, writing as he did after the establishment of the Umayyad caliphate, what 
was important was justice on the part of the ruler and loyalty (entailing reward) on the part 
of his elites, who were Umayyad clients. 23 If ethnicity in the case of the rulers was still important 
because it linked the Umayyads with the Prophet, in the case of the elites, ethnicity should 
not lead to exclusion from the administration (*ḥidma*). The Umayyads ruled over Muslims 
with different ethnic backgrounds (Arabs, Berbers and native converts; also over Jews and 
Christians), and all Muslims should have equal opportunities in serving them in the civil and 
military administration. This inclusive policy is linked to the emergence and consolidation 
of an Andalusī identity. The rationale for such a policy has traditionally been considered the 
Umayyads’ mistrust towards the Arabs. But as indicated above, this policy might also have 
aimed at replicating—and therefore counterbalancing—that of their rivals in North Africa, 
the Fatimid caliphs, whose Šīʿism—by putting them, as direct descendants of the Prophet, 
above the rest of the Arabs—favoured an egalitarian policy towards their subjects from the 
point of view of ethnicity. 24 The name of Ibn al-Qūṭiyya’s native maternal ancestor, Sāra, also 
perhaps served as a reminder of the mythical ancestor of the native Rūm, who descended from 
the marriage of Abraham with Sāra through Isaac’s son Esau, while the Arabs descend from 
Ismā’īl, the son Abraham had by his slave Hagar. Sāra al-Qūṭiyya is said to have had two sons 
with her first husband—called ʿĪsā (Jesus)—, both of whom had Biblical names (Ibrāhīm and 
Ishāq). Sāra’s probable fictional character has already been discussed. 25

The difficulties that natives had in claiming genealogies of power is also shown in the case 
of the *muwallad* Ibn Ḥafṣūn, whose rebellion in the second half of the third/ninth century 
constituted a serious danger for the Umayyads. Ibn Ḥafṣūn claimed to be the descendant of 
a count (*qūmis*) with a genealogy that mentioned the names of seven of his ancestors, the last 
of whom was called Alfonso. 26 Although the genealogy seems to be a forgery, what is inter-

testing is the Visigothic name Alfonso. While Ibn Ḥafṣūn was claiming such genealogy, the 
king of Asturias, Alfonso III (r. 866–910), was promoting historical writing in which much 
emphasis and attention were given to the exploits of his alleged ancestor Alfonso I—roughly 
a contemporary of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I—, and at the same time to presenting the Asturian 
kingdom as the heir of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo and the fight against the Muslims as 
a recovery of lost territory. 27 Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s forged lineage may have been linked to his alleged

23. Fierro, “La obra histórica de Ibn al-Qūṭiyya”.
24. Note that al-Ṣumayl, depicted as the foremost representative of Arab claims to exclusivity in rule, 
was presented as the descendant of the killer of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī and therefore as anti-Šīʿī. See for 
the rivalry with the Fatimids as rationale behind Umayyad policies in the fourth/tenth century, Fierro, 
“La política religiosa de ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III”.
27. Escalona, “Family Memories: Inventing Alfonso I of Asturias”.
conversion to Christianity, and he may have tried to profit from both of them to vindicate his genealogical legitimacy for ruling as a Christian king in al-Andalus.

The development of a “Visigothist” ideology among the Asturian kings was greatly influenced by Christian emigrants coming from al-Andalus. This “Visigothism” was developed in the circles of Christian resistance against Arabization and Islamic acculturation. Thus, the Christian Alvarus (one of the ideologues of the movement of the Cordovan martyrs, the Christians who during the third/ninth century publicly insulted Islam and were executed for blasphemy) boasted of his Visigothic ancestry, while complaining of the loss of the Latin language at the expense of Arabic.\(^{28}\) Between the third/ninth – fourth/tenth century, the *nisba* al-Qūṭī is found in some Christian names, such as Ḥafṣ b. Albar al-Qūṭī, the descendant of Sāra’s uncle Romulo and a man involved in the translation of Christian works into Arabic.\(^{29}\) However, most of the names of Christians that have been preserved do not bear any *nisba*.\(^{30}\)

There is one case in which natives claimed Arab ancestry in a way that recalls the alleged Arab genealogies of the Berbers, with the difference that while Berbers did so as Muslims, in this case it was done without renouncing Christianity. The Christian inhabitants of two castles in the Duero valley who had made a treaty with the conqueror Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr are said to have claimed Arab (Ǧassanid) origins. The report in which this information appears tells of a military campaign against them undertaken by the Abbadid Taifa king of Seville, al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 433/1042–460/1069), who claimed a Laḫmī genealogy.\(^{31}\) It could be tempting to see this Ǧassanid genealogical claim as an attempt to establish a Mozarab identity, as recently proposed by Cyrille Aillet.\(^{32}\) The name “Mozarab” appears in Christian sources outside al-Andalus from the eleventh century onwards to refer to the Arabicized Christian emigrants from al-Andalus to the Christian kingdoms. “Mozarab” derives either from *mustaʿrib* or *mustaʿrab* (people assimilated to the Arabs). D. Urvoy sees in it an appellation that may have been adopted by the Arabicized Christians themselves in the eleventh century, a reflection of their high degree of Arabization associating them with the non pure Arabs, the *mustaʿriba* (*al-ʿarab al-mustaʿriba* are the secondary or arabicized Arabs, the Northern Arabs).\(^{33}\) But the Ǧassanids were Yemenis, and the Yemenis belonged to the true Arabs (*al-ʿarab al-ʿāriba*). The eleventh century was also the century when the “Orientalization” of Andalusī culture reached its peak, with the Abbadids as its great promoters.\(^{34}\) The Arabic genealogy of the inhabitants of those two castles may just be a literary invention related to this “Orientalization” of al-Andalus: the Ǧassanids (the Arabs of Yemeni background and Christian religion, who

\(^{28}\) Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus*, p. 179.

\(^{29}\) Penelas, “A Possible Author of the Arabic Translation of Orosius’ ‘Historiae’”.

\(^{30}\) The general issue of the absence of genealogical *nisba*-s in al-Andalus is discussed in Fierro, “Arabes, beréberes, muladies y mawālī”.


\(^{32}\) Aillet, “Aux marges de l’islam: le château des Deux Frères et le dernier des Ghassanides”.

\(^{33}\) Urvoy, “Les aspects symboliques du vocable ‘mozarabe’”.

\(^{34}\) Ramírez del Río, *La orientalización de al-Andalus*, p. 209–217.
had served the Byzantines in the frontier with the Arabian Peninsula) were remembered for their fights against their rivals the Laḫmīḍs (allies of Persia), which makes a perfect context for a Laḫmī king attacking border Christian fortresses, which is precisely what the report is describing.

**The Mawālī**

Patronate (walā’) is usually considered to have been the main channel through which non-Arabs could hope to have a share in the conquest society, because it greatly facilitated their acquisition of the Arabic language and culture, as well as their mastery of the new religion, while providing them a genealogical connection to the conquering elites. However, in al-Andalus, the majority of natives converted without walā’. References to walā’ ties arising from manumission (the most lasting legal type of walā’) are scarce even for the early period, perhaps to conceal the fact that an ancestor had been a former slave. For later periods, the scarcity of mentions of walā’ ties probably reflects the fact that most Andalusīs did not have tribal affiliations, and consequently their manumitted slaves did not acquire a tribal nisba.

In pre-classical law there existed walā’ al-islām (a tie arising on conversion at the hands of a Muslim), as well as walā’ al-muwālāt, some other agreement or association between a Muslim and a non-Arab. The conquering army that settled in al-Andalus was formed of Arabs and their mawālī, as well as Berbers, who were the majority. The early conquerors (known as baladiyyūn) did not build garrison towns (amšār), but settled all over the land and became landowners. A later wave of Arab and mawālī armies (the Syrian ġund-s who arrived with Balğ b. Bišr in the year 123/743) became involved in the administration of the lands where they were settled, and received a third of the taxes paid by the Christians. This pattern of settlement meant that the conquerors were not interested in promoting the conversion of the natives, as the decrease of the ḍimmī community through the abandonment of their previous religious affiliation would mean a change in the taxation system and therefore a decrease in their income. Umayyad policies promoted conversion in the long run, but conversion did not mean an increase in the number of Arabs and mawālī. The acceptance of classical fiqh and more specifically that of the Medinese/Maliki legal school meant that patronate arising upon conversion and contractual patronate ceased to be considered legally valid. However, the Umayyad caliphs of the fourth/tenth century often reminded the Berbers of North Africa that they were their clients, since they had converted to Islam under their rule, thus pointing to their status according to pre-classical law.

35. In this section I follow closely the discussion in Fierro,”Mawālī and Muwalladūn in al-Andalus”. See also Crone, Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law.

36. Crone, “mawlā”.

37. Manzano Moreno, “El asentamiento y la organización de los ġund sirios”.

38. As recorded in the caliphal letters sent to the Berber allies: Ibn Ḥayyān, Muqtabis V, p. 176–177/201–203 and 203/228.
By the fourth/tenth century, the term mawālī, in the plural, is found almost exclusively in connection with the ruling Umayyad family. The Umayyad mawālī among the Muslim armies settled in the Iberian Peninsula played an important role in supporting the cause of the first Umayyad Emir. Many of the clients of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I had descendants with important roles in the history of the Umayyad dynasty. The tendency that, from the second half of the third/ninth century onwards, Andalusī mawālī were almost exclusively synonymous with Umayyad mawālī may be illustrated by the case of the Banū Qasī.

The Banū Qasī were the de facto rulers of the Upper March during the second/eighth-third/ninth centuries, acting most of the time independently. Their ancestor was Casius, described as a “count of the frontier in the times of the Visigoths”. This Casius apparently travelled to Damascus where he converted to Islam at the hands of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd (r. 86/705–96/715), becoming his mawlā and boasting of this relationship. There was, however, another version regarding the identity of their patrons by walā’ al-islām. It was said that the Banū Qasī had converted at the hands of a man called Ḥassān b. Yasār al-Huḍālī, qāḍī in Zaragoza at the time of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I. When this rumour reached Muḥammad b. Lubb, this member of the family of the Banū Qasī sought out Ḥassān’s son Muntaṣir and killed him. Why this reaction? Muḥammad b. Lubb’s career shows that rivalry with other members of his family led him to seek the Emir’s support, remaining loyal to the Umayyads for a long period of time. Muḥammad b. Lubb must have had a vested interest in promoting the version according to which his ancestor had converted at the hands of an Umayyad caliph. He would therefore have opposed any other version that attached him to an Arab tribe, especially if Ḥassān’s family were claiming certain rights arising upon conversion, perhaps in the field of inheritance.

Being a mawlā of the Umayyads could be highly rewarding, as the biographies of the members of their elites (buyūtāt) clearly show. But during the period of civil wars (fitna-s) that led to the disappearance of the Umayyad caliphate, when some of those mawālī tried to carve out a kingdom for themselves (the Taifa kingdoms)—as the Banū Ġahwar did in Córdoba—their origin could still be derided. Thus, the secretary Ibn Burd (395/1005–445/1053), himself a mawlā, writing for one of the many Umayyads claiming the caliphal title who were active during the fitna, reminded the mawālī that they were only manumitted slaves, subject to the leadership of others, servants obliged to obey, and that the secret of government was not within their reach, high politics being forbidden to them.

39. Oliver, “Sobre el significado de mawlā dentro de la historia de al-Andalus”.
41. Viguera, Aragón musulmán, passim; Manzano, La frontera de al-Andalus, index.
42. Meouak, Pouvoir souverain, administration centrale et élites politiques.
The Muwalladūn

Ibn Ḥazm refers to the Banū Qasī as muwalladūn, although the information he provides also clearly points to the fact that they were clients (mawālī). What Ibn Ḥazm seems to have in mind in choosing to call them muwalladūn is their political behaviour, i.e., the fact that most of the time they were rebels against the Umayyads, as this is what characterizes the use of the term muwalladūn in Andalusī sources, i.e., it refers to converted natives who exhibit a specific political behaviour.

The spread of Malikism meant the abandonment of patronate arising upon conversion, precisely at the time when conversion was increasing (second half third/ninth – fourth/tenth centuries). This also meant that native converts to Islam (the technical terms for them are musālima and musālimat ahl al-ḏimma) were considered to be clients of the Muslim community as a whole and therefore did not acquire tribal affiliations. The term muwalladūn starts to appear in Arabic sources in the context of events taking place from 206/821 to 316/929. Muwallad means “anyone who, without being of Arab origin, is born among the Arabs and has been raised as an Arab”. Now, the plural form of muwallad seems to have been restricted to al-Andalus. The muwalladūn usually appear in the sources in association with the military districts where the Syrian Arabs who came with Balǧ b. Bišr had settled. These muwalladūn took part in rebellions against the Umayyads during the period of unrest (fitna) that ruptured in the second half of the third/ninth century, acting in a similar way to those rebels who were of Arab or Berber extraction, i.e. imitating the behaviour of the Arab tribal leaders who were resisting the imposition of Umayyad rule which involved losing part of their privileges and status. The muwalladūn imitated this behaviour because men such as Ibn Ḥafṣūn found it very difficult to become integrated into the Umayyad administration (bidma). Ibn Ḥafṣūn, like other converts or descendants of indigenous converts, was not allowed to compete on an equal footing with Arabs and mawālī for the highest honours and stipends. The muwalladūn thus rebelled for their right to share power and compete for economic and social rewards on equal terms with the Arabs and, in the case of converts, with those who were already old Muslims (i.e. the mawālī). Theoretically, and according to the Maliki legal school, the Muslim muwalladūn could participate at all levels of Arab-Muslim society; but, in practice, any attempt on their part to occupy a place in that society ran into obstacles and resistance.

The muwalladūn were active as a social group only during the third/ninth century (no mention is made of them after the establishment of the Umayyad caliphate in 316/929). They were Arabicized indigenous inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, whose Islamicization came about as a result of that Arabicization. In its turn, Arabicization had been made possible by their living among Arabs, and this was the result of the settlement patterns of the Arabs (no

44. In this section I closely follow Fierro, “Cuatro preguntas en torno a Ibn Ḥafṣūn” and id., “Mawālī and muwalladūn in al-Andalus”.


Anisl 42 (2008), p. 29-55  Maria Isabel Fierro Bello
Genealogies of Power in Al-Andalus. Politics, Religion and Ethnicity during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries.
© IFAO 2023  Anisl en ligne  https://www.ifao.egnet.net
amṣār, living on the taxes collected from the indigenous population). The muwalladūn tried to find a place as Muslims in a society where to be a Muslim was still closely connected firstly to being an Arab and secondly, to being a mawlā or a Berber (because of the Berbers’ role in the conquest). The tensions between Arabs and the ruling dynasty provided the muwalladūn leaders with a model of behaviour (rebellion) once the Umayyad elites made it clear that they were not readily willing to grant the muwalladūn space among themselves.

The sources describing the fitna of the second half of the third/ninth century insist that the different factions fighting for power were moved by their ʿaṣabiyya (group solidarity) or daʿwa (summoning): ʿaṣabiyyat al-muwalladin ʿalā l-ʿarab, ʿaṣabiyya li-l-muwalladin wa-l-ʿaḡam wa-inḥirāf ʿan al-ʿarab, daʿwat al-ʿarab, daʿwat al-muwalladin wa-l-ʿaḡam ʿalā l-ʿarab, daʿwat al-muwalladin, ʿawrat al-muwalladin. The most famous muwallad leader, Ibn Ḥafṣūn, is called imām tilka al-naḥla (i.e. al-musālima, al-muwalladūn, naṣārā l-ḏimma). The scholar Ibn ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mugallis, who in his turn was mawlā of the Arab Banū Fihr). The other, Muḥammad b. Talīd al-Maʿāfirī (d. 295/907–908), was also known for his bias in favour of the muwalladūn (kāna šadīd al-ʿaṣabiyya li-l-muwalladin). For his part, Ibn Ḥafṣūn said to his fellow natives: “Too long already... have you borne the yoke of this sultan who seizes your possessions and crushes you with forced tribute. Will you allow yourselves to be trampled underfoot by the Arabs who regard you as slaves? ... Do not believe that it is ambition that makes me speak thus; no, I have no other ambition than to avenge you and deliver you from servitude!”

Once the muwalladūn joined the field in the struggles that were to end with the proclamation of the Umayyad caliphate, they had various options in order to give direction to their own fighting and to legitimize their bid for power. All those options were undertaken by Ibn Ḥafṣūn. After his incorporation into the Umayyad administration (ḥidma) failed because of opposition on the part of the old Muslim converts (mawālī) and after he returned to rebellion (year 271/883), Ibn Ḥafṣūn is said to have apostatized and converted to Christianity in 286/899 and from then onwards “to have helped and protected the Christians and mistrusted the

---

47. Marín, numbers 1208 and 762; Ávila and Molina, “La Marca Superior de al-Andalus en el siglo VIII”.
Muslims”. Later on, he is said to have acknowledged ‘Abbasid and also Fatimid legitimacy. Ibn Ḥafṣūn also tried to present himself as a new ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I within a general climate of messianic expectations. And he also tried to present himself as a descendant of the Visigoths (by claiming an “Alfonso” as his ancestor), an option probably connected to his return to Christianity. In sum, from Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s case it can be concluded that the repertoire of possible muwallad legitimacies involved:

1. Moving back to the East, that is, renouncing the Umayyad secession of the Islamic “West” and re-establishing links with the ‘Abbasid caliphate.

2. Abandoning Sunnism and becoming a “heretic” (alliance with the Fatimids—Šī‘ism).

3. Entering eschatological time by becoming a new “ʿAbd al-Raḥmān” who would establish a new dynasty.

4. Moving back to the pre-Islamic past of the Iberian Peninsula (Visigothic ancestry).

The last two, and especially the fourth, go well with apostasy. Ibn Ḥafṣūn, many of whose followers were Christians, is said to have apostatized in the year 286/898. But then he is said to have acknowledged Fatimid rule in 301/913 and in 303/915–916 to have submitted to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and to have been granted an amān that lasted until his death in 305/918. This behaviour does not seem in keeping with his being a Christian, but later on, when ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III conquered the Ḥafṣūnid fortress of Bobastro in the year 316/929, Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s corpse was exhumed and his burial in the Christian style was thus revealed. The first two options seem to involve Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s recanting his apostasy and becoming a Muslim again.

Another case which shows how social mobility and access to political power was limited for converts is that of Qūmis b. Antunyān, while at the same time it indicates how conversion opened new avenues for status and wealth. For their dealings (especially financial) with the Christian ḍimmī-s, the Umayyads resorted to an official usually called qūmis (count). Qūmis b. Antunyān b. Yulyāna was such an official who had acted as the delegate of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II (r. 238/852–273/886) in the Council of Cordoba in 238/852. There he articulated his opposition to the martyrs’ movement, pointing to the dangers it entailed for the Christian community. We find him again during the reign of Muḥammad (r. 238/852–273/886), a period when room started to be found for Christian converts in positions of prestige and authority, for it was then that non-Arabs seem to have begun to be appointed as judges. When one of the Emir’s viziers and secretaries (of a family of Umayyad mawālī) fell ill, Qūmis b. Antunyān occupied his post. When the vizier died in 242/856, the Emir commented that if only Qūmis were a Muslim, he would replace the deceased man. Qūmis then converted and was named secretary, carrying out his duties with great skill, which points to a high degree of linguistic and cultural Arabicization. Arab and mawālī notables resented the presence of a Christian convert.

49. How this was done is described in Fierro, “Cuatro preguntas en torno a Ibn Ḥafṣūn”, p. 250–255 (English transl., p. 322–327).

50. García Moreno, “Spanish Gothic Consciousness among the Mozarabs”.

51. The difficulty in ascertaining the truth about Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s religious affiliation was pointed by Chalmeta, “Precisiones acerca de Ibn Ḥafṣūn”.

AnIsl 42 (2008), p. 29-55    Maria Isabel Fierro Bello
Genealogies of Power in Al-Andalus. Politics, Religion and Ethnicity during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries.
© IFAO 2023  AnIsl en ligne  https://www.ifao.egnet.net
convert who held such a high position in the emiral *ḥidma*, a position that they felt should have been offered to them. They therefore presented the Emir with the accusation that he was a crypto-Christian, and Qūmis had to provide legal proof of his conversion. After his death, an influential Umayyad *mawlā* unsuccessfully claimed that Qūmis had died a Christian and that as an apostate his fortune had to revert to the Public Treasury (*bayt al-māl*).52

The Integration of Converts in the World of Scholarship and the *Nisba* Al-Anṣārī: A Way of Turning Non-Arabs into Arabs in the Fourth/Tenth Century

As mentioned above, patronate ties have left scant traces in Andalusī sources, and when they are indicated *walā’* is mostly associated with the Umayyads. The introduction of Malikism meant the abandonment of patronate arising upon conversion precisely at the time when conversion was increasing (second half third/ninth – fourth/tenth centuries). This meant that natives converted to Islam without *walā’* (being considered as clients of the Muslim community as a whole) and therefore without tribal affiliations (*nisba*-s). The area of Muslim society where these converts integrated most rapidly was religious scholarship (half of the biographies of Andalusī scholars included in fourth/tenth biographical dictionaries do not mention any *nisba*).53 The faulty knowledge of the Arabic language on the part of some of these non-Arab scholars led in the early period to some unpleasant comments on the part of Arabs, as we have seen in Ibn Waṭḍāḥ’s case, but soon they were not only highly Arabicized, but excelled in fields in which a perfect command of Arabic was deemed necessary.

This initially happened especially with Berber scholars, as indicated by the following cases. The Berber Abū Mūsā al-Hawwārī travelled to the East during the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I. He became an expert in the Arabic language and Islamic law; he was also said to be *muğāb al-daʿwa* (his prayers were answered by God). On his return, he became *imām* in the Friday mosque of Écija. The reason a Berber could be named for such a position was that there was a deep conflict between the Arabs and the *muwalladūn* of the town and the latter refused to have any *imām* of Arab stock. Abū Mūsā al-Hawwārī’s descendants were also scholars and occupied positions in the administration.54 A Maṣmūda Berber, ʿAbbās b. Nāṣiḥ (d. 230/845), from Algeciras, travelled to the East with his father (the slave of a Ṭaqafī woman) and became accomplished in the Arabic language and Islamic law. He is alleged to have made other trips to the East, one of them in the company of Yūnus al-Barḡawātī (who will be discussed below). He was named *qāḍī* of Algeciras by the Umayyad Emir al-Ḥakam I (r. 180/796–206/822) and became a famous poet. His descendants were also poets and judges.55

53. Fierro, Maribel, “Arabes, beréberes, muladies y mawāllī”.
Scholars were non-Arabs long before any non-Arab was appointed judge in the Umayyad capital. From the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II (r. 206/822–238/852) onwards, Cordoban judges—who until then had been Arabs and soldiers—had to deal with a growing non-Arab population. They had also to abide by a legal doctrine that in principle took no account of ethnic differences between Arabs and non-Arabs and did not differentiate between old and new Muslims. In order to ensure that such legal doctrine was followed by the judges, a consultative body of religious scholars (ṣūrā) was attached to their court. A very influential member of that ṣūrā was Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Layṭī (d. 238/842), another Maṣmūda Berber. He is credited with the introduction into al-Andalus of the riwāya of Mālik b. Anas’ legal work, the Muwaṭṭa’, that became canonical in the Islamic West. Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā is also credited with having controlled Cordoba’s legal milieu (he is said to have refused the position of qāḍī, although most probably the reason was that non-Arabs at the time were still not considered to be suitable for such a post in the Umayyad capital). His descendants were among the most influential families in the religious and legal milieu until the end of the fourth/tenth century.56

Early sources recorded some of these highly Arabicized Berbers as such, i.e., as Berbers, by mentioning their Berber tribal affiliations. In rural areas where there were Berber settlements that seem to have preserved their tribal character for a considerable time, genealogies were also preserved57, and some of their leading lineages created independent kingdoms (Taifa) after the disappearance of the Umayyad caliphate. Such was the case of the Banū Razīn and the Banū Dī l-Nūn who, once they became independent rulers, claimed an Arab background. Al-Šaqundī (d. 629/1232), writing about the merits of al-Andalus under the Berber Almohads, omits any reference to their Berber origins and only mentions them as Arabs,58 in the same way that the Almohad caliphs (descendants of the Berber Zanāta ʿAbd al-Muʾmin) presented themselves as Qaysī Arabs.59

It was a Berber scholar who in the fourth/tenth century took an extraordinary step in order to give an “Islamic” nisba to those who lacked an Arab tribal nisba. Mundir b. Saʿīd al-Ballūṭī (d. 355/966), the judge of Cordoba under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, promoted the adoption of the nisba al-Anṣārī by those who had no Arab tribal affiliation, to the extent that anyone visiting al-Andalus was warned not to give any credit to the genealogical affiliation of those Andalusīs called “al-Anṣārī”. This nasab was called al-nasab al-wāsī (the ‘ample’ genealogy) precisely because of its (apparently) indiscriminate use. Mundir b. Saʿīd’s move concedes that Arab ethnicity will always remain prestigious: the Arabs won’t come down, so the non-Arabs have to come up. The nisba “al-Anṣārī” was derived from the name “the Defenders” (al-anṣār) given to those Medinese Arab tribesmen who had helped the Prophet when he settled in Medina. Mundir is recorded as saying that whoever helped the Prophet (i.e., the Islamic religion), at whatever time, was entitled to be called an Anṣārī. In fact, the nisba al-Anṣārī shows a clear

56. Fierro, “El alfaquí beréber Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā”.
57. De Felipe, Identidad y onomástica de los beréberes, p. 74–82.
58. Al-Šaqundī, Risāla fi faḍl al-Andalus, p. 79.
expansion over the course of the history of al-Andalus. In the biographical dictionaries of Andalusī scholars written in the fourth/tenth century, 30% of the biographies bear Arabic nisba-s, whereas in the biographical dictionary written by Ibn Baškuwāl in the sixth/twelfth century, the percentage has risen to 48%. This increase in Arabic nisba-s found in Ibn Baškuwāl’s work does not refer to those tribal nisba-s reflecting Arab settlements in the Iberian Peninsula, but to the nisba al-Anṣārī (Ibn Baškuwāl himself bore the nisba al-Anṣārī). An example of this process is the Berber family of the Banū ʿAbd al-Wahhāb: the first documented members are referred to as Ṣanhāja Berbers, whereas Ibn Baškuwāl mentions Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Muḥammad with the nisba al-Anṣārī.60

The nisba al-Anṣārī was extremely successful in the centuries that followed. It linked al-Andalus with those who had helped the Prophet Muḥammad in Medina. Medina was the city where the founder of the Maliki school of law lived, and the legal practice of Medina was one of the sources of Maliki law. It also linked it to a Yemeni background, as the Anṣārīs of Medina were members of the Yemeni tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj, and the Yemenis were numerous in al-Andalus. Thus, from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards we find it as the genealogy of rulers in different parts of al-Andalus. The best known case is that of the Nasrids of Granada. But there were other cases, the nisba al-Anṣārī being especially associated with rulers with Sufi tendencies, such as Ibn Aḥlā, who was the descendant of a native convert.61

Natives and Berbers as Rulers and “Prophets”

We have seen that Ibn Ḥafṣūn claimed a Visigothic genealogy. The sources also show him to have tried to put himself forward as a new “ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I” at a moment when the Umayyads were trying to re-found their dynasty and its legitimacy in order to counteract the strong claims to rule made by their rivals in North Africa, the Fatimid caliphs.62 Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s attempt to become a new “ʿAbd al-Raḥmān” seems to indicate that he wanted to legitimize his rule within the Muslim community. But perhaps this attempt was connected to the first claim (Visigothic genealogy): in other words, what he was trying to do was to present himself as the descendant of a former dynasty making his entrance into the Iberian Peninsula to claim his right. By combining both the “ʿAbd al-Raḥmān” model and the Visigothic genealogy, Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s aim might have been to establish a new dynasty which was Visigothic and Christian, hence his apostasy.

Natives are not recorded as having followed the road taken by some acculturated Berbers that consisted of proclaiming themselves prophets, a road that was usually associated with, or led to, political claims. The only possible hint of such an attempt is that of the year 237/851, when a teacher (muʿallim) living in the Upper Frontier claimed to be a prophet. He made an

60. Fierro, “La nisba al-Anṣārī en al-Andalus”.
62. Fierro, “LapoliticareligiosadeʿAbd al-Raḥmān III” and idem, “Por qué ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III sucedió a su abuelo el emir ʿAbd Allāh”. 
interpretation of the Qur’an that was peculiar to him and forbade his followers to cut their hair and nails, as well as to carry out any kind of depilation, on the basis that what God had created should not be altered. He was crucified alive. But nothing is known for sure about his ethnic origins.63

More detailed information is found regarding the Berber “prophets”. A Maṣmūda Berber called Ṣāliḥ ruled in 131/744 among the Barḡawāṭa along the Atlantic coast of Morocco and founded a new religion which shows Berber acculturation to Islam. Ṣāliḥ said that he would return as the Mahdi who will fight the Daǧǧāl together with Jesus before the end of the world. His full name was Ṣāliḥ b. Ṭarīf and he came from the Banū Ṭarīf of Osuna in al-Andalus.64

In the year 151/768, a Miknāsa Berber (described as muʾallim kuttāb) rebelled among the Hawwāra in the central part of the Iberian Peninsula. He claimed to be a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, changed his name to ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad and called himself al-Fāṭimī (his mother’s name was Fāṭima). Although he is not said to have claimed to be a prophet, his case is to be understood in the context of the Messianic expectations aroused by the rebellion of the Šīʿite imām Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762. One of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya’s relatives found refuge in the Maghrib in 170/786 and founded the Idrisid dynasty.65

In the year 288/900, an Umayyad known as Ibn al-Qiṭṭ left Cordoba and established contact with Nafza Berbers settled in the central regions of the Iberian Peninsula, raising an army with them. Ibn al-Qiṭṭ preached jihād against the Christians who had recently conquered the town of Zamora. He led his followers dressed all in white and riding a white horse, and he is said to have been a learned man expert in astrology and astronomy, to have been able to perform miracles (karāmāt) and to have made predictions. His Berber followers put him in the place reserved for the Prophet (aqāmūhu maqām al-nabī al-ṣādiq qawluhu) and he claimed to be the Mahdi. He was defeated and killed by the Christians.66 In 315/927, the Umayyad army defeated a prophet called Ḥamīm b. Mann Allāh al-Muftarī who had appeared in the vicinity of Tetouan, and whose preaching was similar to that of the prophet of the Barḡawāṭa in the sense that it consisted in a local interpretation of the Islamic religion.67 Ḥamīm’s case and that of Ibn al-Qiṭṭ are to be understood in the context of the Messianic expectations arising among the Berbers under the influence of the Ismāʿīlī missionary activity that led to the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate in 296/909.68 The Berbers of al-Andalus were responsive to Messianic preaching, and in an Andalusī context that meant that an Umayyad prince such as Ibn al-Qiṭṭ could be invested with those Messianic expectations.

In 333/944 a man appeared in Lisbon claiming that he was a descendant of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (the Prophet’s grandfather) and that his mother Maryam was Fāṭima’s daughter, i.e., a descendant of the Prophet’s daughter married to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. He also claimed to be a prophet who received visits on the part of the Angel Gabriel. He gave rules to his followers, among

66. Ibid., p. 106–111.
67. Ibid., p. 143.
them to shave their heads. Nothing was heard of him after a time. Although he is not said to have been a Berber, the area in which he was active had Berber settlements. The appearance of the name Maryam could also indicate a Christian context.

The Sevillan jurist Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148) described how the Andalusī Taifa rulers sought help from the Almoravid Emir—a Ṣanhāğa Berber—and how he crossed to al-Andalus on two occasions to help them against the Christians. However, the Taifa kings did not show any eagerness in helping him and some of them even made alliances with the Christians. When the Almoravid Emir convoked them for jihād, the Taifa kings retorted: “We shall not join holy war except for an imām from the Qurayš, and you are not from them; or for a representative of such an imām, and you are not that either.” They continued in this rebellious attitude even when the Almoravid Emir Ibn Tāšufīn told them that he served the ʿAbbasid caliph. Eventually Ibn Tāšufīn deposed them and became the only ruler of al-Andalus.

The Berber Almoravids claimed a Yemeni (Ḥimyari) descent, but that was not enough to legitimize their rule in the eyes of the Andalusīs. This is the reason they sought—and seem to have obtained—ʿAbbasid acknowledgment of their rule. That was an easy solution by the sixth/twelfth century, as by then political theory accepted de facto rulers (regardless of their genealogy), as long as they paid formal obedience to the caliph. This solution was complicated in the Andalusī case by the fact that al-Andalus had had its own independent caliphate in the fourth/tenth century. Now, the Umayyad caliphate had been built both against the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa and against the ʿAbbasid caliphate in the East. It took some time after the fall of the Umayyad caliphate for the Andalusīs to pay formal acknowledgement to the ʿAbbasids and, in any case, the solution that eventually was found to be most satisfactory was to pay allegiance to a shadowy and ambiguous “al-imām ʿAbd Allāh amīr al-mūʾminīn”, a formula that was first used in the Taifa period and was maintained by the Almoravids for the greater part of their reign.

The Arab Taifa kingdoms of the fifth/eleventh century, such as the ʿAbbadids of Seville and the Hudids of Zaragoza, claimed a Yemeni Arab background (as did some of the Berber rulers, such as the Aftasids of Badajoz). Now, Yemen had been excluded from the caliphate in the saqīfa episode after the Prophet’s death, when the Qurayš seized his political inheritance. The Yemenis (as represented by the Anṣār) were only left with the possibility of being the viziers (wuzarā’), not the emirs (umarā’) of the Muslim community. This view—that the rule of the umma belongs to the Qurayš—was strongly argued by Ibn Ḥazm in the fifth/eleventh century, and none of the Taifa rulers seems to have openly departed from it from a formal point of view.

69. Fierro, La heterodoxia en al-Andalus, p. 128–129; id., “Os ulemas de Lisboa”.
70. Viguera, “Las cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurṭūšī al soberano almorávid”.
71. Crone, Medieval Islamic Political Thought, p. 222–255.
72. Wasserstein, The Caliphate in the West.
73. See on the implications of the saqīfa episode Fierro, “The Anṣārīs, Nāṣir al-din, and the Naṣrids in al-Andalus”.
However, in the second half of the fourth/tenth century, a Yemeni vizier (wazīr) had tried to have himself proclaimed caliph. The minority of the Umayyad Caliph Hišām II had allowed the Yemeni (Maʿāfirī) Ibn Abī ʿĀmir (the famous Almanzor) to become the de facto ruler acting as the Caliph’s chamberlain (ḥāǧib). Although Ibn Abī ʿĀmir adopted the title al-Manṣūr, he did not go as far as adding to it “bi-llāh”, i.e., he did not go as far as adopting a caliphal title; nor did his son and successor al-Muẓaffar. But when the latter died, another son of Ibn Abī ʿĀmir, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Sanchuelo, had the Caliph Hišām II name him as his successor. Sanchuelo stressed his Qaḥṭānī descent, something that had strong eschatological implications. He also claimed kinship with the Umayyad Hišām II, making the extraordinary statement that he was entitled to the caliphate on the grounds of his maternal lineage: Sanchuelo’s mother was the daughter of the Christian ruler of Pamplona, Sancho Garcés II Abarca, and Sanchuelo considered that, as both his own mother and that of the Umayyad Caliph Hišām were Basque, he could claim to be related to the Caliph through his mother. Such a claim does not make any sense in the Arabic patrilineal system, but it must have found resonance among non-Arabs, for whom cognatic ties were important and meaningful. Precisely because non-Arabs stressed matrilineal kinship, in one of the refutations of Ibn Ġarsiya’s šūʿūbī letter (discussed in the next section), emphasis is put on the fact that women are of no importance whatsoever in the Arabs’ lineages.

Disparaging the Arabs and their Prophet

We have seen that by the fourth/tenth century, the experts on religious knowledge, the ‘ulamā’, were mostly of convert origin, as shown by the absence of any tribal affiliation in their names. Aḥmad b. Baqi b. Maḥlad was appointed judge of Cordoba by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III. Asked about his family’s origins, he answered that they were descendants of the client (mawlā) of a woman from Jaén. His sincerity was considered remarkable: had he vaunted an Arab origin nobody would have dared to deny it. His contemporary the Berber Munḏir b. Saʿīd, as we have seen, promoted the adoption of the nisba al-Anṣārī by those who had no Arab tribal affiliation. In the new caliphal society to be a Muslim was what should matter, even if in practice Arabs still retained a special status for having been the first to convert to Islam and because the Umayyads, after all, had become rulers because of their Arab origin.

75. Guichard, “Al-Manṣūr ou al-Manṣūr bi-Llāh?”. 76. For the Messianic figures associated with Yemen, see Fierro, “Al-Asfar again”. 77. This claim is found in Ibn ʿIḏārī, Bayān III, p. 42. 78. For the different genealogical tendencies among Arabs and non-Arabs, see Guichard, Al-Andalus. Estructura antropológica de una sociedad islámica en Occidente. The genealogical claims of the Fatimids were ridiculed in the Sunnī camp precisely on the basis that descent from a woman—for all her being the Prophet’s daughter—was of no relevance whatsoever: see Fierro, “On al-Fāṭimi and al-Fātimiyyūn”. 79. Ibn Ḥāriṭ al-Ḥušānī, Qudāṭ Qurtuba, p. 192/239; Molina, “Familias”, p. 79. 80. In spite of the fact that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III had a son born from his marriage to a Qurašī woman, this son (known as Ibn al-Qurašīyya precisely to stress this rare fact) was not chosen as heir to the caliphate. The son elected, the future al-Ḥakam II, was born of a slave woman: Marín, Mujeres, p. 129, 542.
The civil war (*fitna*) that erupted at the end of fourth/tenth century and which was to put an end to the Umayyad caliphate facilitated the establishment of the Ḥammūdid caliphate. The Ḥammūdids were members of the Idrisid family, descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through his grandson al-Ḥasan b. Abī Ṭālib, who had established their rule in the Maghreb escaping the persecution that followed the defeat of the pretender al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (see above). The Idrisids (and the Ḥammūdid branch) soon became highly Berberized. The first Ḥammūdid caliph, ʿAlī b. Ḥammūd, proclaimed himself in Cordoba in 407/1016 and shortly afterwards he appointed as qāḍī of the town a man called Abū l-Muṭarrif ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ahmad b. Saʿīd b. Muḥammad b. Biṣr b. Ġarsiya Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār (the son of the maker of rush mats) (364/974–422/1031). This Ibn Ġarsiya, who seems to have been a client of the Banū Futṣays (Umayyad clients), continued in the post under the following Ḥammūdid caliphs (al-Qāsim and Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī). He was also qāḍī of Cordoba under the Umayyad caliphs al-Mustaẓhir, al-Mustakfī and al-Muʿtadd, who eventually dismissed Ibn Ġarsiya and named another judge. All these caliphs followed one another in a short time: Ibn Ġarsiya was judge for twelve years, ten months and four days. Ibn Ġarsiya’s vast legal knowledge was praised by Ibn Ḥazm; of him it was said that he was always prone to disputation and was described as ṣāḥib sunna, which I understand as meaning that he had his own way of interpreting the revealed texts. The historian Ibn Ḥayyān said of him that he stood against Arab claims of superiority (*ṣuʿūbiyya*) and in favour of equality among Muslims, in accordance with the Qur’ānic verse 49:13 so favoured by the Šuʿūbīs: “O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most god-fearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware”. Ibn Ḥayyān did not like this doctrine and described Ibn Ġarsiya in the following terms: “He was a man of low extraction, who held ṣuʿūbī opinions, who was completely against nobility (*al-šaraf*), rude, with a bad inclination to making allusions and a tendency to argue that always leads to enmity”.81 Ibn Ġarsiya did not perform the pilgrimage and refrained from travelling to the East, in spite of the fact that he enjoyed good health and was a rich man.82 Ibn Ġarsiya’s ṣuʿūbīyya thus had a moral and egalitarian character (the most noble among Muslims are the most pious or god-fearing, not those with the best lineage), with political implications favouring Šīʿism (only the most pious are entitled to rule, and the most pious are the direct descendants of the Prophet) and with centripetal tendencies stressing local versions of Islam.

Increasing ascetic tendencies in society must have helped to spread and support ideas of equality among believers.83 The literary Muslim tradition of egalitarianism also found its way into al-Andalus through the introduction of Arabo-Islamic classical literature into Umayyad court circles, and especially with the writing of *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* by the Andalusī Ibn `Abd Rabbīhi

82. Neglect of the duty of pilgrimage is often associated to local empowerment and centripetal tendencies. The Prophet Hamīm is said to have forbidden his followers to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. I am presently preparing a study of this phenomenon.
83. See on these tendencies Marín, “Zuhhād”.

Anisl 42 (2008), p. 29-55  Maria Isabel Fierro Bello  
Genealogies of Power in Al-Andalus. Politics, Religion and Ethnicity during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries.  © IFAO 2023  
Anisl en ligne  https://www.ifao.egnet.net
This work has a chapter devoted to the šuʿūbiyya, but it does not contain a single reference to al-Andalus. The tendency towards egalitarianism was not accompanied by a reivindication of native (Hispano-Roman-Visigothic) non-Arab language, culture and ethnicity as had happened in Iran. The influence of Iranian style šuʿūbiyya can be found in an unexpected quarter, the Ṣaqāliba, i.e., slaves of European origin, especially Slavs, who were often eunuchs.

During the caliphate of Hišām II, Ḥabīb al-Ṣaqlabī wrote a book (now lost) entitled Clear and Convincing Proofs Against Those Who Deny the Excellences of the Ṣaqāliba (Kitāb al-istiżhār wa-l-muğālaba ʿalā man ankara faḍāʾil al-ṣaqāliba) which is generally considered to be the first example of šuʿūbiyya literature in al-Andalus. The most famous šuʿūbi text is the Epistle by another Ibn Ġarsiya, a slave who worked for Muğāhid of Denia and his son ‘Alī. Muğāhid was a former slave of the ‘Āmirids, those Yemenis who had acted as the de facto rulers of al-Andalus under the Umayyad Caliph Hišām II. Other ‘Āmirid slaves had managed to establish themselves, usually for a brief time, as rulers after the fall of the Umayyad caliphate, but Muğāhid’s rule and that of his son ‘Ali lasted longer in a prosperous area. The repertoire of the merits of non-Arabs and of the vices of the Arabs recorded in the Epistle was not new, as Ibn Ġarsiya mostly limited himself to following the literary tradition of the genre. Thus, among the arguments mentioned by Ibn Ġarsiya is that the Prophet’s appearance among such a despicable people as the Arabs may be explained by the fact that sometimes from the worst material something good can be produced; the Arabs descend from a slave woman, Hagar, while the non-Arabs descend from Sāra, etc.

Why did the Ṣaqāliba engage in this šuʿūbi tradition? First, their number had hugely increased in the fourth/tenth century at the courts of the caliphs. Secondly, they occupied positions in the palace and in the caliphal administration that gave them extraordinary power which allowed some of them during the fifth/eleventh century to become rulers of independent kingdoms (although usually for a short time). Being literate, rich and powerful, a way to counteract their slave status was to write about their merits; they had the example of the Ṣaqāliba serving the Fatimids in North Africa, who enjoyed great prestige for their service to the imām-s and left trace of their achievements in the memoirs they wrote. In the case of Ibn Ġarsiya’s Epistle, it has a mainly political aim: that of legitimizing the rule of a non-Arab of

84. See on the egalitarian material contained in this work Marlow, Hierarchy and Egalitarianism.
86. Sato, “Slave Elites and the Saqaliba in al-Andalus”.

AnIsl 42 (2008), p. 29-55  Maria Isabel Fierro Bello
Genealogies of Power in Al-Andalus. Politics, Religion and Ethnicity during the Second/Eighth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries.
© IFAO 2023  AnIsl en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net
Christian/European origin. Muğāhid of Denia, unlike other Taifa rulers of Ṣaqlabī origins, had a descendant who succeeded him: the establishment of a dynasty called for the legitimization of its lineage.  

If the Arabs could be insulted, could the same be done with their Prophet? In other words, could Islam do without its Arab Prophet? Ibn Ġarsiya excluded Muḥammad from his attacks against his people. But the Arab Prophet was not immune from attacks, nor from doctrines that could be seen as involving disparagement of his figure.

According to the Cordoban Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), the theologian al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) was of the opinion that there could be people more excellent than those to whom prophecy was granted, including Muḥammad. Ibn Ḥazm also points out that a Ṣūfī group maintained that among the saints there could be one more excellent than all the prophets and messengers (fi awliya’ Allâh ta’alâ man huwa afdal min ǧamiʿ al-anbiyâ’ wa-l-rusul). He also mentions that two Eastern Christian followers of Ibrâhîm al-Naẓẓâm insulted the Prophet for his polygamy and observed that Abū Ǧârr al-Ǧifârî was more ascetic than he. The relative merits of the saints (awliya’ Allâh) and the prophets were intensively discussed in al-Andalus during the fifth/eleventh-sixth/twelfth centuries, precisely when saints were becoming more visible in the social and political arena.

One of the accusations brought against Ibn Ῥātim al-Ṭulayṭulī, accused of heresy (zandaqa and ilḥâd) in 457/1064 in Toledo, was his contempt for the true nature of the Prophet (al-istiḥfâf bi-ḥaqq al-nabî) and his disrespectful treatment in calling him “the orphan”, “the orphan of Qurayš”, or the “father-in-law of Ḥaydara”. He is also recorded as saying that the asceticism of the Prophet was not sought after, but imposed by the circumstances in which he lived: had the opportunity arisen, he would have behaved in a different way (law istaṭâʿa ʿalā raqīq al-ṭaʿām lam yaʿkul ḥašīnahu wa-inna zuhdahu lam yakun ʿan qaṣdin). A sixth/twelfth century jurist from al-Andalus dealt with the case of a Muslim who was known to pray regularly, but who was accused of saying that the Prophet had come out from the hole for urinating. He was also accused of reciting the sura Yūsuf in the Romance language (ʿaǧamiyya) and of asking God to curse the Arabic language and those who used it.

These were serious attacks against the Prophet, and it is not surprising that during this period Qâḍî ʿIyāḍ wrote a book in defence of Muḥammad, where his superiority in all areas was forcefully argued (al-Šifâ’ bi-taʿrîf ʾuqâq al-Muṣṭafâ). As mentioned above, saints were increasingly evident in the Muslim societies of the time and some of them even tried to seize power in the sixth/twelfth century—as the native convert Ibn Qâṣì did in al-Andalus, basing his legitimacy precisely on his charismatic powers, similar to those of the Prophet, while denying referring to the Prophet Muḥammad as “a man from Tihâma”) and p. 173 (on the relation between Šuʿūbism and zandaqa).


90. Fierro, “The Polemic About the Karâmât al-Awliyâ’.”
91. Fierro, “El proceso contra Ibn Ῥātim al-Ţulaṭulfî.”
Cf. Chokr, Zandaqa et zindiqs en Islam, p. 120 (on referring to the Prophet Muḥammad as “a man from Tihâma”).
the validity of genealogy as a basis for entitlement to rule. In such a context, sainthood could then be understood as a threat to prophecy and also as a means of becoming a ruler. Saints did not in principle need a genealogy, although as they became absorbed into mainstream Islam, one of the ways of dissolving their threat to prophecy was by endowing saints with a Sharifian genealogy, a course taken in the Maghreb. The roads taken by the genealogies of power in al-Andalus after the fifth/eleventh century deserve another and specific study.

Bibliography

Work Tools


Sources

—, Risāla fī faḍl al-Andalus, Arabic text in al-Maqqari, Naṣīḥ al-ṭib min guṣn al-Andalus al-rāṭib,

Studies


ʿAthamina, Khalīl, "How Did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women: The Case of the Jawārī, or the Female Slaves", *Al-Qanṭara* XXVII/2, 2007, p. 381–406.


—, "Were the Qays and the Yemen Political Parties?", *Der Islam 71*, 1994, p. 1–57.


—, “Por qué ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III sucedió a su abuelo el emir ʿAbd Allah”, Al-Qanṭara XXVI, 2005, p. 357–369.


Ramírez del Río, José, La orientalización de al-Andalus. Los días de los árabes en la Península Ibérica, Sevilla, 2002.


