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

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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 Qurʾānic 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

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(Paris), 16 May 2007 and organized by Cyrille Aillet, Sophie Gilotte, Christophe Picard, Annliese Nef, Dominique Valérian, Jean-Pierre van Staevel and Elise Voguet.

1. Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, *Taʾrīḥ iftitāḥ al-Andalus*, p. 40–41/31–32.

2. This interpretation follows Crone, “Were the Qays and the Yemen Political Parties?”. See Fierro, “Cuatro preguntas en torno a Ibn Ḥafṣūn”, p. 230–233 (English transl., p. 301–303).

of Secunda, al-Şumayl had the upper hand over the Yemeni faction. But tensions continued. Al-Şumayl was approached by Umayyad clients to help them in supporting ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu‘āwiya’s entry into the Iberian Peninsula (‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu‘āwiya was to become the first Umayyad Emir of Al-Andalus after defeating its governor, Yūsuf al-Fihri). Al-Şumayl knew that the arrival of the Umayyads would endanger the independence of the Arabs, a possibility that he described by saying that ‘Abd 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.³ And so al-Şumayl 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 ‘Abd 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.⁴

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 *ğund*-s sent to North Africa to stop a Ḥārīğī Berber rebellion and who, having been defeated, crossed the Straits under the command of Balğ b. Bişr 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 ‘Abd 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 (‘Abd al-Raḥmān III differed from the former Umayyad emirs by having himself proclaimed caliph, adopting the title al-Nāşir li-dīn Allāh).⁵ But before victory and unity were achieved under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, Arab lords—such as the Banū Ḥağğāğ (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 Ğūdī exhorted the Umayyads to abandon the *mulk*, since it belonged to the Arabs (*al-mulk li-abnā’ al-‘arab*).⁶ 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: *abnā’ al-‘arab* in Ibn Ğūdī’s poem were the sons of Arabs on both sides (paternal and maternal).⁷

3. Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, *Ta’rīḥ iftitāḥ al-Andalus*, p. 23/18; *Aḥbār Mağmū‘a*, p. 73–74.

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*.

6. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, p. 30.

7. The change in the acceptance of sons of Arabs and slave women is analyzed by ‘Athamina, “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.⁸ One example shows that, for all his mistrust of the Arabs, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III could not escape his own background or the social importance Arabs still retained. The Yemeni Arab Banū Aḍḥā al-Hamdḥānī 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 'Abd 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. 'Abd al-Raḥmān III is said to have contemplated punishing Ibn Aḍḥā, but he was dissuaded by his vizier and *mawlā* 'Abd al-Malik b. Ğahwar (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.⁹ Being an Arab in the fourth/tenth century still entailed privileges, pride and authority.

'Abd 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 Ğāhiliyya.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² Having to rule an ethnically diverse population, the caliph was thus trying not to be

8. Ibn Ḥazm in his "Epistle on the Merits of al-Andalus" says that the Quraysh are "the noblest, wisest and most patient of men": *Risāla fī faḍl al-Andalus*, Arabic text, III, p. 166–167 (French translation p. 73).

9. Ibn Ḥayyān, *Muqtabis* V, p. 114/138.

10. Bosch Vilá, "La ciencia de los linajes y los genealogistas en la España musulmana"; Ramírez del

Río, *La orientalización de al-Andalus*, p. 74–79 and 201–203.

11. Oliver, "Una nueva interpretación de 'arabe', 'muladí' y 'mawla'", p. 148; Oliver, "Sobre el significado de *mawla* dentro de la historia de al-Andalus".

12. Barceló, "El califa patente: el ceremonial omeya de Córdoba".

associated with a particular ethnic group, so as to build a wider support basis for himself. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s promotion of what has been called an “Andalusī identity”¹³ 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 ‘Abd al-Salām al-Ḥuṣānī was Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ (d. 287/900), the grandson of one of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I’s slaves, whose imperfect relationship with the Arabic language served al-Ḥuṣānī 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-Ḥuṣānī, when the individual responsible for reading the text made an error of pronunciation, provoking the following comment from al-Ḥuṣānī: “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-Ḥuṣānī 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-Ḥuṣānī snapped, “God be praised! Do you think that he is superior to everyone else?” This allusion on the part of al-Ḥuṣānī 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 *ḥadīṭ* an interpretation that differed from his own, al-Ḥuṣānī commented, “Someone from Oviedo will certainly know how to explain the Prophet’s *ḥadīth*!”¹⁴ 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-Ḥuṣānī was making reference to the true origins of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, whose grandfather Bazīʿ was a slave freed by his master ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I, who had bought him between the years 154–158/771–774.¹⁵ The sources do not tell us anything of Bazīʿ’ 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-Ṭaqafī defending the superior merits of the Maṣmūda over the Arabs. The dispute ended with Ḥafṣ’s murder at the hands of Ġālib. The Umayyad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I was not displeased by this outcome, and when Ḥafṣ’s brother threatened an uprising if the Qurayṣ 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. Sa’d, the son of a *mawlā* of the Umayyad caliph

13. Martínez Gros, *Identité andalouse*.

14. Ibn Ḥārīṭ al-Ḥuṣānī, *Aḥbār al-fuqahā*, numbers 126 and 129; Molina, “Un árabe entre muladíes”.

15. Fierro, “Bazīʿ, *mawlā* de ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I”.

al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik. Maymūn came to al-Andalus at the time of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I and it was he who killed the governor Yūsuf al-Fihri. Their family, the Banū Maymūn, spoke the Berber language.¹⁶ 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 ‘Abd 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 Qurayš, perhaps through a cognatic link?

This was later the case with Ibn Tūmart, the Mahdī of the Almohads, who was a Maṣmūda, but was considered to have a Qurayšī 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. ‘Aylān, who is said to have had four sons: Sa’d, ‘Umar—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 ‘Abd al-Mu’min, a Zanāta Berber and follower of the Mahdī 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 *Maḥābir al-Barbar*.¹⁷

Perhaps the passage in *Ajbār maḡmū’a*, putting the Maṣmūda on the same level as the Qurayš, 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 “Mahdī-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 Barghawāta) were not acceptable in Islamic terms. Eventually, they produced an Islamicized version of their claims: in the case of the Zanāta Berber ‘Abd al-Mu’min (who inherited the leadership of the Almohad movement from the Maṣmūda Mahdī, 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 ḥilāfa*).

No claim similar to that put forward by Ḥafṣ b. Maymūn nor genealogical works in the style of the *Maḥābir* 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

16. *Ajbār Maḡmū’a*, p. 113–115/104–105 and 108/110; de Felipe, *Identidad y onomástica de los beréberes de al-Andalus*, p. 76, 173.

17. Fierro, “Las genealogías de ‘Abd al-Mu’min”.

18. On which see Molina, “Los *Ajbār maḡmū’a*

y la historiografía árabe sobre el periodo omeya”; Oliver, “Los autores del *Ajbār Maḡmū’a*”; *id.*, “El *Ajbār maḡmū’a*: una obra polémica”.

19. I first pointed to this connection in my study “Os ulemas de Lisboa”.

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. 'Abd al-Ġabbār b. Ḥaṭṭāb 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 Balğ b. Bišr. Around 127/745 he settled in the area of Murcia. 'Abd al-Ġabbār married Tudmīr's daughter, who gave him as her dowry two villages. The descendants of this 'Abd al-Ġabbār 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.²⁰

This absorption of native lineages by intermarriage with the Arabs and their clients was predominant throughout al-Andalus.²¹ This is also true in the only recorded case of a lineage that preserved the memory of their native female ancestor, the Banū l-Qūṭīyya (sons of the Gothic woman), to which belonged a famous historian of the fourth/tenth century known as Ibn al-Qūṭīyya.

Sāra was the granddaughter of the Visigothic king Witiza. She married twice. Her first husband was 'Īsā b. Muzāḥim, a client of the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz. A notable Sevillian family, the Banū l-Qūṭīyya, 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 (Laḥmī) 'Umayr b. Sa'īd and from this marriage there descended four notable Sevillian families, among them the Banū Ḥaġġāġ 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.²² 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-Qūṭīyya? 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-Qūṭīyya's appellation an expression of the *šu'ūbī* 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-Qūṭīyya 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*)

20. Al-'Uḍrī, *Tarṣīḥ al-aḥbār*, p. 15; Molina, "Los Banū Jaṭṭāb y los Banū Abi Ḥamra".

21. See on this point Guichard, *Al-Andalus. Estructura antropológica*.

22. Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, *Tārīḥ*, 5–6/3–4.

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-Qūṭayya, 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 (*hidma*). 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 Andalusi 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 Šī'ism—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-Qūṭayya'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-Qūṭayya is said to have had two sons with her first husband—called 'Īsā (Jesus)—, both of whom had Biblical names (Ibrāhīm and Iṣḥāq). 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 interesting 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 'Abd 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-Qūṭayya".

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. 'Alī and therefore as anti-Šī'ī. See for the rivalry with the Fatimids as rationale behind Umayyad policies in the fourth/tenth century, Fierro, "La política religiosa de 'Abd al-Raḥmān III".

25. Chrystys, *Christians in al-Andalus*, p. 158–183.

26. Wasserstein, "Inventing Tradition and Constructing Identity".

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 Arabicization and Islamic acculturation. Thus, the Christian Alvarus (one of the ideologues of the movement of the Cordoban 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 (Ġassanid) origins. The report in which this information appears tells of a military campaign against them undertaken by the Abbadid Taifa king of Seville, al-Muṭaḍid (r. 433/1042–460/1069), who claimed a Laḥmī genealogy.³¹ It could be tempting to see this Ġassanid 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 Arabicization 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 Ġassanids were Yemenis, and the Yemenis belonged to the true Arabs (*al-ʿarab al-ʿariba*). 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 Ġassanids (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, muladíes y *mawālī*”.

31. Al-Mawāʿinī, *Rayḥān al-albāb*, apud Dozy, *Historia Abbadidarum* II, p. 6–7.

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 Laḥmids (allies of Persia), which makes a perfect context for a Laḥmī king attacking border Christian fortresses, which is precisely what the report is describing.

The *Mawālī* ³⁵

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.³⁶ 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 (*amṣār*), but settled all over the land and became landowners. A later wave of Arab and *mawālī* armies (the Syrian *ḡund*-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.³⁷ 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,³⁸ 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 *ḡund* 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.³⁹ 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-Ḥudālī, *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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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.⁴² 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 Ḡahwar 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.⁴³

39. Oliver, “Sobre el significado de *mawlā* dentro de la historia de al-Andalus”.

40. Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-‘arab*, p. 502; Ibn Ḥārīṭ al-Ḥuṣānī, *Aḥbār al-fuqahā’*, number 74.

41. Viguera, *Aragón musulmán, passim*; Manzano, *La frontera de al-Andalus*, index.

42. Meouak, *Pouvoir souverain, administration centrale et élites politiques*.

43. Soravia, “Entre bureaucratie et littérature”, p. 184 (quoting Ibn Bassām, *Ḍaḥīra*).

The *Muwalladūn* ⁴⁴

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-ḍimma*) 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 Balğ b. Bišr had settled. These *muwalladūn* took part in rebellions against the Umayyads during the period of unrest (*fitna*) that erupted 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 (*hidma*). 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.⁴⁵

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”.

45. Glick, “The Ethnic Systems of Premodern Spain”; Glick and Pi-Sunyer, “Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History”; Marín Guzmán, “The Causes of the Revolt of ‘Umar Ibn Ḥafṣūn”.

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 'aṣabiyya (group solidarity) or *da'wa* (summoning): 'aṣabiyyat al-muwalladīn 'alā l-'arab, 'aṣabiyya li-l-muwalladīn wa-l-'aḡam wa-inḥirāf 'an al-'arab, da'wat al-'arab, da'wat al-muwalladīn wa-l-'aḡam 'alā l-'arab, da'wat al-muwalladīn, *tawrat al-muwalladīn*. The most famous *muwallad* leader, Ibn Ḥafṣūn, is called *imām tilka al-naḥla* (i.e. *al-musālīma*, *al-muwalladūn*, *naṣārā l-dīmma*). The scholar Ibn 'Abd al-Salām al-Ḥuṣanī was an Arab whose ancestors included a Companion of the Prophet. His mother was also an Arab (Qurayṣ). On one occasion he revealed his hatred of the *muwalladūn* when, having received news that a number of such people had been killed, he exclaimed, "They have been exterminated, and now we are done with that breed".⁴⁶ On the opposite side, two judges from Huesca, both of *mawlā* origin, are said to have manifested their 'aṣabiyya towards the *muwalladūn*. One of them, Ibn al-Sindī (d. 335/946–947), was famous for his group solidarity for the *muwalladūn* and his hatred of the Arabs (*kāna ṣadīd al-'aṣabiyya li-l-muwalladīn wa-'aẓīm al-karābiya li-l-'arab*); for him, the Arabs only had defects and the *muwalladūn* and the slaves (*'abīd*) only virtues (Ibn al-Sindī was the client of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mugallis, who in his turn was *mawlā* of the Arab Banū Fihri). The other, Muḥammad b. Talīd al-Ma'āfirī (d. 295/907–908), was also known for his bias in favour of the *muwalladūn* (*kāna ṣadīd al-'aṣabiyya li-l-muwalladīn*).⁴⁷ 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!"⁴⁸

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

46. Ibn Ḥarīṭ al-Ḥuṣanī, *Aḥbār al-fuqahā'*, number 133; Molina, "Un árabe entre muladíes", p. 345 (English transl., p. 122).

47. Marín, numbers 1208 and 762; Ávila and Molina, "La Marca Superior de al-Andalus en el siglo VIII".

48. Ibn 'Idārī, *al-Bayān al-muḡrib* II, p. 114 (= 117). Dozy, II, p. 17–18. Arabic text: "ṭāla mā 'annafa 'alay-kum al-sultān wa-ntaza'a amwāla-kum wa-ḥam-mala-kum fawqa ṭāqati-kum wa-aḡallat-kum al-'arab wa-sta'badat-kum wa-innamā urīdu an aqūma bi-ṭa'rikum wa-uḥrija-kum min 'ubūdiyyati-kum".

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.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ 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 "'Abd 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.⁵¹

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 *ḍimmi*-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

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".

convert who held such a high position in the emiral *hidma*, 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 Waḍḍāḥ'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 'Abd al-Raḥmān I. He became an expert in the Arabic language and Islamic law; he was also said to be *muḡāb al-da'wa* (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, 'Abbās 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-Bargawātī (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

52. Fierro, *La heterodoxia*, p. 77–80.

53. Fierro, Maribel, "Arabes, beréberes, muladíes y *mawālī*".

54. Al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyīn*, p. 276; de Felipe, *Identidad y onomástica de los beréberes*, p. 244–249.

55. Terés, "‘Abbās b. Nāṣiḥ"; de Felipe, *Identidad y onomástica de los beréberes*, p. 187–192.

Scholars were non-Arabs long before any non-Arab was appointed judge in the Umayyad capital. From the reign of ‘Abd 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 (*šūrā*) was attached to their court. A very influential member of that *šūrā* 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 *Muwattaʿa*, 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-Šaḡundī (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 ‘Abd al-Mu‘min) 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*. Muḍdir b. Sa‘īd al-Ballūṭī (d. 355/966), the judge of Cordoba under ‘Abd 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-wāsi‘* (the ‘ample’ genealogy) precisely because of its (apparently) indiscriminate use. Muḍdir b. Sa‘īd’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. Muḍdir 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-Šaḡundī, *Risāla fī faḍl al-Andalus*, p. 79.

59. Fierro, “Las genealogías de ‘Abd al-Mu‘min”.

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 Baṣkuwāl in the sixth/twelfth century, the percentage has risen to 48%. This increase in Arabic *nisba*-s found in Ibn Baṣkuwāl's work does not refer to those tribal *nisba*-s reflecting Arab settlements in the Iberian Peninsula, but to the *nisba* al-Anṣārī (Ibn Baṣkuwāl himself bore the *nisba* al-Anṣārī). An example of this process is the Berber family of the Banū 'Abd al-Wahhāb: the first documented members are referred to as Ṣanhāḡa Berbers, whereas Ibn Baṣkuwāl mentions Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd 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 “‘Abd 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 “‘Abd 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 “‘Abd 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 (*mu'allim*) living in the Upper Frontier claimed to be a prophet. He made an

60. Fierro, “La *nisba* al-Anṣārī en al-Andalus”.

61. Fierro, “The Anṣārīs, Nāṣir al-dīn, and the Nasrids in al-Andalus”.

62. Fierro, “Lapolítica religiosa de ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III” and *idem*, “Por qué ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III sucedió a su abuelo el emir ‘Abd Allāh”.

interpretation of the Qurʾān 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 Bargawāṭa 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 Mahdī who will fight the Daḡḡāl 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 *muʿallim 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 Ṣīʿite *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 Mahdī. 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 Bargawāṭa 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-Muṭṭalīb (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 Ṭalīb. He also claimed to be a prophet who received visits on the part of the Angel Gabriel. He gave rules to his followers, among

63. Fierro, *La heterodoxia en al-Andalus*, p. 70–74.

64. Le Tourneau, “Barghawāṭa” and Fierro, *La heterodoxia en al-Andalus*, p. 45–48.

65. Fierro, *La heterodoxia en al-Andalus*, p. 28–30.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 106–111.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

68. Madelung and Walker, *The Advent of the Fatimids*.

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.⁶⁹

The Sevillian jurist Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148) described how the Andalusī Taifa rulers sought help from the Almoravid Emir—a Ṣanhāġa 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.⁷⁰

The Berber Almoravids claimed a Yemeni (Ḥimyarī) 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.⁷¹ 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.⁷²

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 (*wuzarāʾ*), not the emirs (*umarāʾ*) of the Muslim community.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴

69. Fierro, *La heterodoxia en al-Andalus*, p. 128–129; *id.*, “Os ulemas de Lisboa”.

70. Viguera, “Las cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurtūšī 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-dīn, and the Naṣrids in al-Andalus”.

74. Turki, “L’engagement politique et la théorie du califat d’Ibn Ḥazm”; Clément, *Pouvoir et légitimité en Espagne musulmane à l’époque des Taifas (v^e/xi^e siècle)*.

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 (*ḥāḡib*). 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.⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ 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 Ġarsiyā’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.⁷⁸

Disparaging the Arabs and their Prophet

We have seen that by the fourth/tenth century, the experts on religious knowledge, the *ʿulamāʿ*, were mostly of convert origin, as shown by the absence of any tribal affiliation in their names. Aḥmad b. Baqī 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.⁷⁹ His contemporary the Berber Muḍir 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,⁸⁰ 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-Aṣfar* again”.

77. This claim is found in Ibn ʿIdārī, *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 descentance from a woman—for all her being

the Prophet’s daughter—was of no relevance whatsoever: see Fierro, “*On al-Fāṭimī* and *al-Fāṭimiyūn*”.

79. Ibn Ḥārīṭ al-Ḥuṣānī, *Quḍāt Qurṭuba*, 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 Quraṣī woman, this son (known as Ibn al-Quraṣīyya 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 Ḥammūdīd caliphate. The Ḥammūdīds 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 Ḥammūdīd branch) soon became highly Berberized. The first Ḥammūdīd caliph, ‘Alī 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 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. Sa‘īd b. Muḥammad b. Bišr 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 Fuṭays (Umayyad clients), continued in the post under the following Ḥammūdīd caliphs (al-Qāsīm and Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī). He was also *qāḍī* of Cordoba under the Umayyad caliphs al-Mustazhir, al-Mustakfī and al-Mu‘tadd, 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 (*šū‘ūbiyya*) and in favour of equality among Muslims, in accordance with the Qur’ānic verse 49:13 so favoured by the Šū‘ūbīs: “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 *šū‘ūbī* 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 *šū‘ūbiyya* 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 Šī‘ism (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-‘Iqd al-farīd* by the Andalusī Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi

81. Ibn Sa‘īd, *Mugrib* I, p. 158; de la Granja, “Ibn García”.

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”.

al-Marwānī (246/860–328/940).⁸⁴ This work has a chapter devoted to the *šu'ūbiyya*, 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.⁸⁵ The influence of Iranian style *šu'ūbiyya* can be found in an unexpected quarter, the *Ṣaqaḷiba*, i.e., slaves of European origin, especially Slavs, who were often eunuchs.⁸⁶

During the caliphate of Hišām II, Ḥabīb al-Ṣaqaḷabī wrote a book (now lost) entitled *Clear and Convincing Proofs Against Those Who Deny the Excellences of the Ṣaqaḷiba* (*Kitāb al-istizhār wa-l-muḡālaba 'alā man ankara faḍā'il al-ṣaqaḷiba*) which is generally considered to be the first example of *šu'ūbiyya* literature in al-Andalus.⁸⁷ The most famous *šu'ūbī* text is the *Epistle* by another Ibn Ġarsiya, a slave who worked for Muḡāhid of Denia and his son 'Alī. Muḡāhid 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,⁸⁸ but Muḡāhid's rule and that of his son 'Alī 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 *Ṣaqaḷiba* engage in this *šu'ūbī* 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 *Ṣaqaḷiba* 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*.

85. See on classical *šu'ūbiyya* Gibb, "The Social Significance of the *Shu'ūbiyya*"; Mottahedeh, "The *Shu'ūbiyyah* Controversy"; Norris, "The *Shu'ūbiyyah* in Arabic Literature"; Agius, "The *Shu'ūbiyya* Movement and its Literary Manifestation"; Szombathy, "Some Notes on the Impact of the *Shu'ūbiyya* on Arab Genealogy".

86. Sato, "Slave Elites and the *Saqaḷiba* in al-Andalus".

87. See on *šu'ūbiyya* in al-Andalus Goldziher, "Die *Šu'ūbijja* unter der Muhammedanern in Spanien"; de la Granja, "Ibn García"; Monroe, *The Shu'ūbiyya in Al-Andalus*; Šayja, "Min maẓāhir al-*šu'ūbiyya* fī l-Andalus"; Graham, "The Meaning of Slavery and Identity in al-Andalus"; Larsson, *Ibn García's Shu'ūbiyya Letter*.

88. Clément, "Origines ethno-culturelles et pouvoir dans l'Espagne musulmane".

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.⁸⁹

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 awliyā' Allāh ta'ālā man huwa afḍal min ġamī' al-anbiyā' wa-l-rusul*). He also mentions that two Eastern Christian followers of Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām insulted the Prophet for his polygamy and observed that Abū Ḍarr al-Ġifārī was more ascetic than he. The relative merits of the saints (*awliyā' Allāh*) 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.⁹⁰

One of the accusations brought against Ibn Ḥātim al-Ṭulayṭulī, accused of heresy (*zandaqa* and *illḥād*) in 457/1064 in Toledo, was his contempt for the true nature of the Prophet (*al-istiḥfāf bi-ḥaqq al-nabī*) 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 istaṭā'a 'alā raqīq al-ṭā'am lam ya'kul ḥašinahu wa-inna zuhdahu lam yakun 'an qaṣḍin*).⁹¹ 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 *sūrat Yūsuf* in the Romance language (*'ağamiyya*) and of asking God to curse the Arabic language and those who used it.⁹²

These were serious attacks against the Prophet, and it is not surprising that during this period Qāḍī 'Iyād wrote a book in defence of Muḥammad, where his superiority in all areas was forcefully argued (*al-Šifā' bi-ta'rif ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*). 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 Qasī did in al-Andalus, basing his legitimacy precisely on his charismatic powers, similar to those of the Prophet, while denying

89. Larsson, *Ibn García's Shu'ubiyya Letter*, p. 123–208.

90. Fierro, “The Polemic About the *Karāmāt al-Awliyā'*”.

91. Fierro, “El proceso contra Ibn Ḥātim al-Ṭulayṭulī”. Cf. Chokr, *Zandaqa et zindīqs en Islam*, p. 120 (on

referring to the Prophet Muḥammad as “a man from Tihāma”) and p. 173 (on the relation between Ṣū'ūbism and *zandaqa*).

92. Oswald, “Spanien unter den Almoraviden”, p. 131; Lagardère, *Histoire et société*, p. 65, number 246 (quoting al-Wanšarīsī's *Mi'yār*).

the validity of genealogy as a basis for entitlement to rule.⁹³ 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.⁹⁴ The roads taken by the genealogies of power in al-Andalus after the fifth/eleventh century deserve another and specific study.

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