9. AN UPRISING AGAINST THE AMIR AL-ḤAKAM (796–822)

Translated from Arabic by Bernard Lewis

*Ibn al-Qūṭiyya was one of the earliest historians of Muslim Spain. His Taʿrīkh ihtitāḥ al-Andalus [History of the Conquest of al-Andalus] was probably written down by one of his students in the second half of the tenth century. Ibn al-Qūṭiyya was born in Seville and later settled in Córdoba, where he collected the tales, personal observations, and anecdotes that went into his work. Although he served the Umayyad family, the author’s name (“the son of the Gothic woman”) indicates that he was of Visigothic descent. This selection, describing events in the reign of the amir al-Ḥakam (r. 796–822), shows some of the difficulties facing the Umayyad rulers in the early period, when factionalism and internal tensions threatened to destroy their new realm. (ORC)*

A group of Cordoban chiefs disapproved of certain actions of the amir,¹ which disquieted them, and tried to depose him. They approached one of his cousins, called Ibn al-Shammās of the line of Mundhir ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muʿāwiya. They approached him on this and wanted to enthrone him and depose al-Ḥakam. He pretended to agree and said, “Tell me who is with you in this business,” and they promised to tell him on a day which they appointed. Then he, himself, went to al-Ḥakam and informed him of this. “You are trying,” al-Ḥakam said to him, “to turn me against the chiefs of my city. By God, you will prove this to me or I will cut off your head.” “Send me someone you trust on such and such a night,” said Ibn al-Shammās, and al-Ḥakam sent his page Vicent and his secretary, Ibn al-Khadā, the ancestor of the Banūʾl-Khadā, and Ibn al-Shammās hid them in a place where they would hear what was said between him and them. They came and discussed the matter, and he asked them, “Who is with you in this?” And they gave names, which the secretary, hidden behind the curtain, wrote down. They named so many that the secretary, fearing that he himself would be named, made a noise with his pen on the parchment. The conspirators were startled, and said, “What have you done, enemy of God?” Those who left at once and fled were saved; those

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¹ Until 929 Umayyad rulers in Spain did not claim the title of caliph but went instead by the title of amir.
who stayed were captured. Among those who fled were ‘Isā ibn Dinār, the chief jurist of Spain, Yahyā ibn Yahyā, and others. Six prominent men were arrested; of these Yahyā ibn Naṣr al-Yahshubī, who lived in Secunda, Mūsā ibn Sālim al-Khawlānī, and his son were crucified.

Because of this the people of the suburbs rose in arms and fought against the army [jund], but being heavily outnumbered, they cried out that they would submit. Some of the viziers advised him to refuse, while others advised him to accept it, saying that among them there were good as well as bad. He accepted the opinion of those who advised leniency and allowed them to leave Córdoba.

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One of those who abetted the rising in the suburbs was Tālūt ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Ma‘āfīrī, who had studied under Mālik and other great jurists. When the rising failed, he fled from his house, which was in the city near the mosque and ditch which bear his name, and remained hidden for a whole year in the house of a Jew until things became quiet and passions were calmed. There was friendship between him and the vizier, Abu’l-Bassām, the ancestor of the Banū’l-Bassām, the keepers of the granary, and as he was growing weary of his stay in the house of the Jew, he went at nightfall to the house of Abu’l-Bassām the vizier. When he arrived, the vizier asked him where he had been, and Tālūt replied, “With a certain Jew.” The vizier promised him safety and reassured him and said, “The Amir, may God preserve him, has regretted what happened.” Tālūt stayed the night with him, and the following morning, having left his guest in safekeeping, the vizier went to al-Hakam and said, “What would you say to a fat sheep that has been kept at the manger for a whole year?” “The flesh of a foddered animal is heavy,” replied al-Hakam. “That of a free-grazing animal is lighter and tastier.” “I mean something else,” said Abu’l-Bassām. “I have Tālūt in my hands.” “How did you get hold of him?” asked al-Hakam. “I caught him with kindness,” replied the vizier.

He was then summoned and given a chair. The old man was brought, overcome with fear. He made obeisance, and al-Hakam said, “O Tālūt, tell me, if your father or your son had ruled in this palace, could they have shown you more generosity and more honor than I did? Did you ever ask me for anything, for yourself or another, that I did not hasten to grant you? Did I not, when you were sick, go to see you several times? Did I not, when your wife died, go to the door of your house? Did I not walk at her funeral as far as the suburbs and then walk back with you to your own house? Then what happened to you? What is the matter with you, that nothing would content
you but to shed my blood, to disgrace and dishonor me?” “At this moment,” said Ţālūt, “I can find nothing that will serve me better than the truth. I hated you for God’s sake, and all that you did for me availed you nothing with me.”

Al-Ḥakam was shocked into silence and then said, “I sent for you, and there is no punishment on earth which I did not think of in order to inflict it on you. But know that He for whose sake you hated me diverted me from punishing you. Go safe and sound, in God’s care! By God, I shall never cease to honor you and treat you as I did before, for the rest of my life, please God. But I wish that what happened, had not happened.” “Had it not happened,” said Ţālūt, “it would be better for you.”

Then al-Ḥakam asked him, “How did Abū’l-Bassām get hold of you?” “He did not get hold of me,” said Ţālūt. “I put myself in his hands and sought him because of the friendship between us.” “And where have you been all the year?” asked al-Ḥakam. “In the house of a certain Jew,” he replied.

Then al-Ḥakam said to the vizier, “O Abū’l-Bassām, a Jew protected him out of respect for his eminence in religion and scholarship and endangered himself, his wife, his possessions, and his children at my hands—and you wanted to involve me again in something which I have already regretted!” Then he said to Abū’l-Bassām, “Leave me! By God, I never want to see your face again!” He gave orders to remove his carpet [i.e., his place in the council] and dismissed him, and his descendants are decayed and degraded to this day. Ţālūt was honored and respected until he died, as the amir had undertaken, and al-Ḥakam attended his funeral.

After this, the Caliph² was stricken by a long sickness which lasted seven years until he died, in contrition and penitence for what he had done. In sickness he grew gentle, and he spent the nights reading the Qur’ān until he died.

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². The author has slipped here, using the title “caliph,” which was used by the late tenth century when he was writing but not during the reign of al-Ḥakam.
10. A CHRISTIAN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF MUḤAMMAD

History of Muḥammad (ca. 850)
Translated from Latin by Kenneth B. Wolf

The Istitia de Mahomet [History of Muḥammad] stands as one of the earliest Latin accounts of the life of the prophet Muḥammad. Its author and date of composition are unknown, but there is evidence that a copy of the text was held at the library of the Leyre monastery, in Navarre, in 850. Although it is not certain, the author was likely Spanish and the text was well suited to an Iberian audience. Possibly the author was a Christian from Muslim-controlled southern Spain who emigrated to the northern peninsula.

The author of the History of Muḥammad must have been familiar with the events of Muḥammad’s life as they are recorded in Muslim tradition. Many aspects of this “life” reflect events in the canonical version (Muḥammad’s youth as an orphan, his marriage to the widow Khadija, the monotheism of Islam and its revelation through the angel Gabriel, the expansion of Muslim armies into Byzantium, even the Prophet’s marriage to Zaynab after her divorce from Zayd), but the account has been altered to suit the polemical purposes, or misconceptions, of its Christian author. (ORC)

The heresiarch Muḥammad rose up in the time of the emperor Heraclius,¹ in the seventh year of his reign. In that time Bishop Isidore of Seville excelled in catholic doctrine and Sisebut held the throne in Toledo. A church in honor of the blessed Euphrasius was built over his tomb in the town of Ildai [Andújar]. Furthermore in Toledo the church of the blessed Leocadia was enlarged with a high roof of wonderful workmanship by order of the aforementioned king. Muḥammad’s beginnings were these. As he was an orphan he was put under the charge of a certain widow. When, as an avaricious usurer, he travelled on business, he began assiduously to attend assemblies of Christians, and as a shrewd son of darkness, he began to commit some of the sermons of Christians to memory and became the wisest among the irrational Arabs in all things. Aflame with the fuel of his lust, he was joined to his patroness by some barbaric law. Soon after, the spirit of error appeared to him in the form of a vulture and, exhibiting a golden mouth, said it was the angel Gabriel and ordered Muḥammad to present himself among his people as a prophet. Swollen with pride, he began to preach to the irrational animals and he made

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¹ Byzantine emperor Heraclius (r.610–641).
headway as if on the basis of reason so that they retreated from the cult of idols and adored the corporeal God in heaven. He ordered his believers to take up arms on his behalf, and, as if with a new zeal of faith, he ordered them to cut down their adversaries with the sword. God, with his inscrutable judgement (who once said through his prophet: “For behold I will raise up the Chaldeans, a bitter and swift people, wandering over the breadth of the earth, to possess the tents that are not their own, whose horses are swifter than evening wolves, and their appearance like the burning wind, reducing the land to emptiness as a demonstration to the faithful”) permitted them to inflict injury. First they killed the brother of the emperor who held dominion over the land and in recognition of the triumph of victory, they established the Syrian city of Damascus as the capital of the kingdom. The same false prophet composed psalms from the mouths of irrational animals, commemorating a red calf. He wove a story of spider webs for catching flies. He composed certain sayings about the hoopoe and the frog so that the stench of the one might belch forth from his mouth and the babbling of the other might never cease from his lips. To season his error he arranged other songs in his own style in honor of Joseph, Zachary and even the mother of the Lord, Mary. And while he sweat in the great error of his prophecy, he lusted after the wife of a certain neighbor of his by the name of Zayd, and subjected her to his lust. Her husband, learning of the sin, shuddered and let her go to his prophet, whom he was not able to gainsay. In fact Muhammad noted it in his law as if from divine inspiration, saying: “When that woman was displeasing in the eyes of Zayd, and he repudiated her, he gave her to his prophet in marriage, which is an example to the others and to future followers wanting to do it that it be not sinful.” After the commission of such a sin, the death of his soul and body approached simultaneously. Sensing his imminent destruction and knowing that he would in no way be resurrected on his own merit, he predicted that he would be revived on the third day by the angel Gabriel, who was in the habit of appearing to him in the guise of a vulture, as Muhammad himself said. When he gave up his soul to hell, they ordered his body to be guarded with an arduous vigil, anxious about the miracle which he had promised them. When on the third day they saw that he was rotting, and determined that he would not by any means be rising, they said the angels did not come because they were frightened by their presence. Having found sound advice—or so they thought—they left his body unguarded, and immediately instead of angels, dogs followed his stench and devoured his flank. Learning of the deed, they surrendered the rest of his body to the soil. And in vindication of this injury,

2. Qur’an 33:37.
they ordered dogs to be slaughtered every year so that they, who on his behalf deserved a worthy martyrdom here, might share in his merit there. It was appropriate that a prophet of this kind fill the stomachs of dogs, a prophet who committed not only his own soul, but those of many, to hell. Indeed he accomplished many sins of various kinds which are not recorded in this book. This much is written so that those reading will understand how much might have been written here.
11. EULOGIUS AND THE MARTYRS OF CÓRDOBA

Paul Alvarus (d.ca.861), *Life of Eulogius* (ca.859)
Translated from Latin by C. M. Sage

Eulogius was a prominent Mozarab clergyman in Córdoba during the reigns of amirs 'Abd al-Rahmān II (r.822–852) and Muḥammad I (r.852–886), famous for his Christian zeal in the face of what he perceived as Muslim persecution. His biography was written by his friend and admirer Paul Alvarus. Although the text contains many familiar hagiographic elements and shows a conscious attempt at classical eloquence, it is told in a more personal style than most other biographies of the time. Eulogius supported certain of his contemporaries in their efforts to achieve martyrdom at the hands of the Islamic administration; he was himself killed in 859. The tale of his death is included in this selection. (ORC)

At the time when the savage rule of the Arabs miserably laid waste all the land of Spain with deceit and imposture, when King Mohammad with unbelievably rage and unbridled fury determined to root out the race of Christians, many terrified by fear of the cruel king and hoping to allay his madness, by a cruel use of evil will endeavored to assail Christ’s flock with various and ingenious temptations. Many by denying Christ threw themselves into the abyss; others were shaken by severe trials. But others were established and confirmed in flourishing virtue. In his time, as we have said, the martyrdom (or, testimony) of the faithful shone gloriously, and the error of the gainsayers was as shifting as waves.¹ For some who were holding the Christian faith only in secret by God’s grace brought out into the open what they had concealed, and without being searched out they sprang forward to martyrdom and snatched their crown from the executioners. Among these was blessed Christopher, of an Arab family, the story of whose passion we plan to write in another place. Among them also were blessed Aurelius and holy Felix, who having practised Christianity in secret, came forward with their wives to the glory of martyrdom. Another of them was the blessed virgin Flora, who indeed flowered with virtues, and despising the transitory pomp of the world won an eternal crown. Our holy doctor Eulogius described the combat of each of these and wrote their lives and acts in a brilliant style.

At this time there was a certain girl named Leocritia, of noble family, but nobler in soul, begotten of the filth of the Moors and born from the womb

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¹. James 1:6.

of wolves, baptized some time earlier by a Christian nun, Litiosa, who was of her kindred. Secretly she blossomed in the Christian faith she had adopted, and knowledge of her spread abroad as a sweet odor. For as in her childhood she visited the nun as relatives do, and Litiosa daily instructed her as well as she could, at length by divine grace Leocritia received Christian faith and preserved it in her breast with the fire of love. When she came to years of wisdom and attained the lights of knowledge, that faith which she had secretly learned in her earliest childhood, increased by spiritual food day by day, she nourished to still greater growth, at first in secret, then publicly and openly. Her parents gave her earnest warnings, but as this had no effect, they tried to assail her with whipping and beating in order to coerce her by punishment, since she was not to be moved by gentler means. But that flame which Christ sent into the hearts of the faithful cannot yield to any threats. When in this conflict she was beaten day and night, and saw herself attacked with severe punishments and tied with heavy bonds, and fearing that if she did not profess her faith publicly she would be burned in hell for her infidelity, she made her case known through messengers to blessed Eulogius, who was already much esteemed in many such cases, and to his sister, Anulo, a virgin dedicated to God. She explained that she wished to go to safer places among the faithful where she might without fear make her faith known. Thereupon blessed Eulogius recognized his accustomed office, and as he was a zealous partisan of the martyrs, he directed her through the same messengers to leave home secretly. She quickly planned a stratagem, and pretending to yield to her parents, and attacking our faith in words, according to plan she donned all her best ornaments and appeared in the manner of those who are out to please and marry in the world; she set out to change their minds by attireing herself in a way she hated. When she saw that everything was now safe for her, pretending to go to the wedding of some of her kindred which was then being celebrated, beautifully dressed as befitted the occasion, she hurried off to the protection of blessed Eulogius and his sister Anulo. At once they received her with joy, and turned her over to trusted friends to be kept in hiding. Her father and mother awaited her, and when they did not see their daughter, wailing that they had been deceived and torturing themselves into an unheard of rage and grief never before seen, they upset everything, confused everything, running about among friends and strangers, using force and the authority of the judge, they loaded into prisons and chains all whom they suspected; they afflicted with stripes and imprisonment men, women, confessors, priests, nuns, and whom they could, hoping that by these and other measures they might in some way get their daughter back. But the saint unmoved changed her from place to place, taking every precaution that the sheep should not fall into the
hands of wolves. Meanwhile she austerely wore down her body, being constant in fasting and vigils, wearing haircloth and sleeping on the ground. The blessed man Eulogius, whose name is to be spoken with reverence, applying himself to nocturnal vigils, and praying prostrate on the ground in the basilica of San Zoilo, spent nights without sleep, beseeching the Lord for help and strength for the maiden, and consecrating her to the Lord by these exercises.

Meanwhile the serene maiden wished to see Eulogius’ sister, whom she loved with warm affection, and came by night to their dwelling, moved by a revelation of the Lord and led by her desire of consolation, to spend just one day with them and then return to her usual hiding place. She told them that twice while praying her mouth had been filled with honey, that she had not dared to spit it out but had swallowed it, wondering at the nature of the thick substance. The saint interpreted this to her as a presage that she would enjoy the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom.

The next day when the maiden prepared to go back, it happened that her attendant did not come at the accustomed hour but only when dawn was breaking. She could not set out, for she used to travel at night to avoid being caught. So it was arranged that the virgin of God should stay where she was that day until the sun should put a term to its light for the earth and the shades of night should grant again the desired quietude. It was indeed by human counsel, but really by God’s decree that she was held back, in order that he might give her her crown, and bestow the diadem of glory on the blessed Eulogius. For on that day, I know not at whose suggestion nor by whose plottings and betrayal, the hiding-place was made known to the judge, and suddenly their whole dwelling was surrounded by soldiers sent for the purpose. It happened that the elect and predestined martyr was there in person. Bringing Leocritia into Eulogius’ presence they arrested both together, and beating them and treating them with disrespect, they brought them to the unjust and infamous judge. The judge at once thought to kill them by scourging, and roused to vehement fury, with truculent face and impatient mind he questioned Eulogius in furious words, and inquired with threatening why he had detained the girl at his house. Eulogius answered him patiently and with good grace, as he commonly spoke, and splendidly made clear the truth of the matter as follows: “Sir, the office of preaching is laid upon us, and it is a part of our faith that we should hold out the light of faith to those seeking it of us, and that we should deny it to no one who is hastening to the highways of life which are holy. This is the duty of priests, true religion demands it, and this also Christ our Lord taught us: that whoever is athirst and wishes to draw from the rivers of faith will find double the drink that he sought. And as this girl asked us for the rule of our holy faith, our purpose necessarily ap-
plied itself to her the more gladly as her desire was the more ardent. It was
not proper to turn away a person asking this, especially not proper for one
who for this purpose was endowed with the office of Christ. Hence as I was
able I have enlightened and taught her, and I have shown her that the faith of
Christ is the road of the kingdom of heaven. In the same way I should be glad
to do it for you, if you should care to ask me.” Then the judge with stormy
visage commanded rods to be brought in, threatening to put him to death
by scourging. The saint said to him: “What do you intend to do with those
rods?” He replied: “I mean to put you to death with them.” Eulogius said:
“Sharpen and prepare the sword with which you may send my soul, released
from the bondage of the body, back to Him who gave it. Do not imagine that
you will cut my body apart with scourges.” And straightway reproaching with
clear invective and much eloquence the falseness of their prophet and law, and
redoubling what he had said, he was hurried off to the palace and brought
before the king’s councillors. One of them who was very well known to him
addressed him sympathetically: “Even though fools and idiots are borne to
this miserable ruin of death, you who are girt with the beauty of wisdom, and
famous for your excellent life, what madness drove you to commit yourself
to this fatal ruin, forgetting the natural love of life? Please listen to me, and
do not rush into this headlong destruction, I beg you. Say only a word in this
hour of your need, and afterward practise your faith where you will. We prom-
ise not to search for you anywhere.” The blessed martyr Eulogius answered
him smiling: “If only you could know what things are laid up for those of
our faith! Or if I could place in your breast what I possess in my own; then
you would not try to hold me back from my purpose, but even more gladly
would you yourself think of giving up your worldly position.” And he began
to offer them the teaching of the everlasting Gospel, and with bold freedom to
pour forth the preaching of the Kingdom. But not wishing to hear him, those
present ordered him to be put to the sword. While he was being led away, one
of the king’s eunuchs slapped him. Turning the other cheek, Eulogius said:
“Please strike this too, and make it equal to the other.” When this had been
struck, he patiently and meekly turned the first again. But the soldiers hurried
him out to the place of execution, and there kneeling in prayer and raising his
hands to heaven, making the sign of the cross and saying a few words of prayer
silently, he stretched out his neck for the blade, and, despising the world, by a
swift blow he found life. He was martyred in mid-afternoon of Saturday, the
eleventh of March. O blessed and wonderful man of our age, who in many
martyrs sent the fruit of his work ahead of him, and in the virgin Leocritia
left another to follow! Raising in his hands the standard of victory, and dedi-
cating to the Lord the sheaf of his labor for himself, offering a pure oblation
and peaceful sacrifices, and what things he had taught others, now in himself he presented to Christ the Lord of all things. As soon as his body was thrown from the upper level onto the river-bank, a dove of snowy whiteness, gliding through the air, in the sight of all flew down and sat on the martyr’s body. They all tried to drive it away by throwing stones from all sides, but being nevertheless unable to move it as it sat there, they sought to put it to flight directly with their hands. But the dove, fluttering rather than flying around the body, came to rest on a tower overlooking the corpse, with its beak pointed towards the blessed man’s body. And I must not be silent about the miracle that Christ worked for the glory of his name over the body of the martyr. A native of Écija, while performing with others his monthly service in the palace and taking his turn with the watch, at night desiring a drink of water arose and went to the projecting water outlet which comes to that place. There he saw above Eulogius’ body, which lay lower down, priests glistening white as snow, holding dazzling lamps, and earnestly reciting psalms. Frightened by this vision he went back to his station, fleeing rather than returning. After telling a companion all about it, he decided to go with him again to the place; but this second time he was unable to see it. On the next day the effort of the Christians obtained the blessed man’s head, and on the third day they gathered the rest of the body, and buried it in the church of the blessed martyr San Zoylo.

As for the blessed virgin Leocritia, though they tried to seduce her with many delights and move her with many promises, she was by God’s grace strengthened in the firmness of faith, and on the fourth day after Eulogius’ martyrdom was herself beheaded and thrown in the Guadalquivir. But she could not be submerged nor hidden in the water, for moving with body erect she presented an astonishing sight to all. So she was taken out by the Christians and buried in the basilica of the martyr St. Genesius, which is in the place called Terzos. Such was the end of the blessed doctor Eulogius, this his admirable departure, such his crossing over after many labors.
12. THE KINGS OF ASTURIAS (850–883)

Chronicle of Albelda (ca.883)
Translated from Latin by Kenneth B. Wolf

The Chronicle of Albelda is generally considered to be the earliest of the surviving Asturian histories, the bulk of it apparently dating from 881, with an additional section that we know was completed in November 883. Its author(s) and place of composition are unknown, but given that the work promoted the legitimacy of the Asturian monarchy we can safely assume its author was connected in some way to the Asturian court.

The Chronicle of Albelda has come down to us as part of a broader historical melange containing geographical information, genealogies, lists of bishops, and curious prophetic materials. The chronicle proper begins with a chronological summary of the reigns of Roman rulers from Romulus to Tiberius III (r.698–704), followed by a similar outline of the reigns of the Visigothic kings. It ends with entries describing Pelayo and his descendants, the rulers of Asturias. We begin here with the entry for Ordoño I. (KBW)

[Ordoño I: 850–866]

Ordoño, the son of Ramiro, ruled for seventeen years. He increased the kingdom of the Christians with the help of God. He populated León and Astorga as well as Tuy and Amaya and he garrisoned many other fortresses. Many times he emerged victorious over the Saracens. He took the city of Talamanca in battle and he permitted its king, Mozeroir, whom he captured there, to go freely to Peña Santa with his wife, Balkaiz. He likewise stormed the strong city of Albelda. He ambushed its exceedingly powerful king Musa at Mt. Laturece and weakened [Musa's] army with the sword. Musa himself was wounded with a lance, but was saved by a certain friend—who was known to have been one of our [men]—and was carried to a safe place by this friend on horseback. In Ordoño’s time, the Northmen came again to the shores of Galicia, where they were killed by a count named Peter. The Moors, coming in their ships, were also defeated on the coasts of Galicia. Such gentleness of soul and mercy [was attributed] to this prince, being so pious to everyone, that he was worthy of being called a father to his people. He died a peaceful death in Oviedo on the sixth day before the Kalends of June [May 27], in the era 904 [866].


1. Sarraeceni is the most common Latin designation for “Arabs.” It is somewhat misleading in the context of Spanish history since the bulk of the original invading force was made up not of Arabs but of Berbers from Morocco.

2. Mūsā ibn Mūsā, one of the leaders of the Banū Qasi, a clan of muwallads (converts to Islam) that controlled much of the Ebro region in the ninth century.

[Alfonso III: 866–910]

Alfonso, the son of Ordoño, assumed the kingship in his eighteenth year. In the first flower of his adolescence—in the first year of his kingship and the eighteenth since his birth—he was deprived of his rule as the result of a rebellion by the apostate count of Galicia, Fruela. The king left for Castile. After a short time, this same rebel and unfortunate king, Fruela, was killed by those faithful to our prince [Alfonso] in Oviedo, and the glorious young man was brought back from Castile. He rejoiced, ruling happily from the throne of his father. From the outset of his reign he always enjoyed victory over his enemies. Twice he humiliated and overcame the fierceness of the Basques with his army. During his reign, in a year long past, the Ishmaelite host advanced toward León under the command of Almundar, son of King Abd al-Rahman [II]⁴ and brother of King Muhammad [I]⁵ of Córdoba. No sooner had Almundar arrived then he was impeded [from achieving his goal], for after losing many of his soldiers there, the rest of the army left in flight. Another army approached Bierzo at that time and was completely annihilated. This happened in many regions controlled by the enemy. [Alfonso] took the fortress Deza and then acquired Atienza peacefully. He depopulated Coimbra, which was held by the enemy, and afterward peopled it with Galicians. He subjected many more fortresses to his rule. In his time the church grew and his kingdom increased in size. The cities of Braga, Oporto, Orense, Eminio, Viseo, and Lamego were populated with Christians. By means of yet another victory, he depopulated and destroyed Coria, Idanha, and the rest of the territory of Lusitania⁶ all the way to Mérida and the sea, consuming it with the sword as well as hunger. Shortly before that, in the era 915 [877], Abuhalit, the consul of Spain and counselor to King Muhammad, was captured in battle in the territory of Galicia and was taken to our king in Oviedo. Afterward he redeemed himself, handing over his two brothers, his son, and his nephew [to be held as hostages], until he paid the king 100,000 gold solidi. During that same time in the era 916 [878], Almundar, son of King Muhammad,⁷ came from Córdoba to Astorga and León with the general Ibn Ganim and an army of Saracens. One contingent of the enemy forces, following opposite the army—a force of 13,000 from Toledo, Talamanca, Guadalajara and other fortresses—was destroyed by our prince in Polvorosa at the river Orbigo. The

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5. Amir of Córdoba (852–886).
6. The old Roman province that corresponds more or less with modern-day Portugal but which also included the cities of Mérida and Salamanca.
7. It is not clear whether this is a different Almundar from the brother (of the same name) of Muhammad mentioned above or simply an error on the part of the chronicler.
[king] knew that Almundar wanted to press on to the fortress of Sublan-cio because of what happened in Polvorosa. Once Almundar learned that our king was waiting with his entire army to do battle with him in the fortress of Sublanicio, he fearfully fled before the light of dawn. At the instigation of Abuhalit, there was a three-year truce between the two kings. Afterward our king, waging war against the Saracens, mobilized his army and entered [Muslim] Spain, in the era 919 [881]. After plundering the castle of Nefza, Alfonso pressed on through the province of Lusitania and, after crossing the Tagus River, advanced to the territory of Mérida. Ten miles outside of Mérida, he crossed the Guadiana River and came to Mt. Oxiferio, which no one before him had ever tried to approach. There he triumphed over enemies with a glorious victory: for more than 15,000 others are known to have been killed at the same mountain. Thus our prince returned to his royal throne in victory. All of the churches of the Lord were restored by this prince and a city was built in Oviedo with a royal palace. He was brilliant in his knowledge and placid in his appearance, dress, and stature. The Lord always inclined [Alfonso’s] soul to rule his people piously. After his long rule [principalis imperium], he passed from his earthly kingdom to his heavenly one. Amen.

[Continuation]

While this king [Alfonso] was ruling, in the era 920 [882], the above-mentioned Almundar, son of King Muhammad, set out from Córdoba to Zaragoza, accompanied by the general Abuhalit and an army from [Muslim] Spain numbering 80,000. [This was because] Ismail ibn Musa9 of Zaragoza had become an enemy of the Cordobans. When the army arrived at Zara-goza, it fought there for twenty-two days but won no victory. From there it advanced to Tudela and attacked a fortress held by Fortun ibn Musa,10 but accomplished nothing. Then Ababdella—also known as Muhammad ibn Lope,11 who had always been, like his father, a friend to us—made peace with the Cordobans and sent the strongest of his [men] to their army out of envy for his uncles to whom the king [Alfonso] had entrusted his son Ordoño to be reared. Thus the army of the Chaldeans,12 entering the confines of our

8. The success of this long-distance raid in particular seems to have been regarded by the chronicler (and presumably his royal patrons) as a sign that the days of Muslim rule in Spain were numbered. Hence the flurry of self-promoting historical literature produced in Asturias in the 880s.
9. Son of Mūsā ibn Mūsā (a member of the Banū Qasi).
10. Another son of Mūsā ibn Mūsā.
11. A grandson of Mūsā ibn Mūsā.
12. Yet another synonym for Saracens, this one emphasizing the biblical role of the “scourge” that Christians often invoked when trying to make sense out of their defeat at the hands of Muslims.
kingdom, first attacked the fortress at Celleirogo but accomplished nothing except to lose many of their own men. Vigila Jimenez was the count in Alava at that time. This same army, coming to the frontier of Castile, attacked the fortress called Poncorbo for three days, but won no victory and lost many of its own [men] to the avenging sword. Diego, son of Roderic, was the count in Castile [at that time]. Munio, son of Nuño, left the fortress of Castrojeriz deserted on account of the advance of the Saracens, because it was not yet heavily fortified. Our king, formidably garrisoned in the city of León with his army, waited for the enemy forces so that he might fight them in the suburbs of the city. But when the [Saracen] forces learned that our king was eagerly and daily anticipating their approach to the city, they, on the advice of Abuhalit, who had spied the king's men [in the city], crossed the river Esla fifteen miles from the city and burned a number of garrisoned fortresses. From the plains of Alcoba, [Abuhalit] sent envoys to the Orbigo River to meet our king, asking for the release of his son Abulkazim, whom the king had been holding [as a hostage] up to that time. So Abuhalit sent [as a hostage], for the sake of peace, the son of Ismail ibn Musa, who had been sent to his father from Córdoba, along with Fortun ibn Alazela, whom they had captured by trickery in Tudela. And so, entreating [King Alfonso] and giving him many gifts, [Abuhalit] received his son and made his way across the river Orbigo to Cea. Then he returned to Córdoba. They arrived in Córdoba, whence they had set out the previous March, in September. Later our king handed over the [hostages] from the Banu Qasi—whom he had received from Abuhalit in exchange for his son—to their friends without ransom. The above-mentioned Ababdella, the son of Lope, turned in hate against his uncles and cousins on account of his friendship with the Cordobans, and the question of war arose between them. That winter, on account of the insolence of Ababdella, his uncle Ismail ibn Musa and his cousin Ismail ibn Fortun moved their armies about seven miles wanting to do battle against Ababdella. Ababdella waited for them in rough terrain. Both Ismails, with light escorts, came to the same rugged mountain where they knew him to be, and ascended it with a few men and servants. Ababdella rushed toward them at full speed and, as they broke into flight, Ismail ibn Fortun fell from his horse and was immediately captured. Likewise Ismail ibn Musa was captured as he tried to seize his nephew. Many of the nobles of the Banu Qasi were also captured. The rest of the army, which had been waiting in the plain, escaped in flight. Having won a victory, Ababdella transported those whom he had captured, bound in chains, to his fortress called Viguera. From there he proceeded to Zaragoza, and took it in the name of peace without resorting to the sword, thus subjecting it to his authority. He sent messengers to Córdoba at once, acting as if he had done all
of this for the sake of the king, so as to appear faithful in all things. But when
the Cordoban king requested the city of Zaragoza itself along with the others
that Ababdella had captured, and Ababdella would by no means consent to
do this, the Cordobans were moved to anger. As a result, [Ababdella and his
kinsmen] were reconciled. He released his uncle and received the fortress of
Valtierra from him. Likewise Ababdella released his cousin and on account
of this received Tudela and the fortress of St. Stephan from him. Ababdella
retained (and still holds) Zaragoza, which he had taken before. During this
same period, Ababdella sustained many raids and attacks from the counts of
Castile and Alava, Diego and Vigila. When he saw that he was hard pressed
by them, he immediately sent legates to our king [Alfonso] for the sake of
peace and indeed he still sends them, but as yet he has not received any firm
peace from the prince. Still he remains friendly toward us and wants to re-
main that way even if our king does not consent [to a formal peace].

Later, in the era 921 [883], that is, in the present year, the above-
mentioned Almundar, son of King Muhammad, was sent along with duke
Abuhalit and with the entire army of Spain by his father to Zaragoza. When
Almundar arrived he found Ababdella inside. He fought there for no more
than two days and tore up trees and fields. He did this not only in Zara-
goza but also in all the lands of the Banu Qasi. Almundar then entered part
of Degio and plundered it, but took over none of the cities or fortresses.
He depopulated Sedia. Later the same army entered the borders of our king-
dom where it fought first at the fortress of Celloirigo, sending many of its
own men to their deaths in the process. Count Vigila garrisoned this fortress.
From there the Cordoban army came to the border of Castile to the fortress
of Pancorbo, and spontaneously began to fight, but on the third day it re-
treated quite beaten. Diego was count [there]. From there the army moved
to the garrisoned fortress of Castrojeriz, but it accomplished nothing. In the
month of August it arrived at the border of León. But when [Almundar]
heard that our king was in the city and learned that he was determined to
fight him from the fortress of Sublancio, he crossed the Cea River by night
and arrived at the fortress at dawn before our army could arrive. But he found
nothing in the fortress except empty houses. The next day our king eagerly
awaited the enemy army at the city. But the enemy not only did not come to
León, but they did not even follow the route of the previous year nor cross
the Eslla River, but instead returned again by way of the fortress of Coyanza
to Cea and destroyed the church of Saints Facundus and Primitivus to its very
foundation. Then they returned to [Muslim] Spain by going back through
the pass called Valat Comaltti. While he was within the boundaries of León,
the same Abuhalit sent many words of peace to our king. In response to this,
our king sent a legate by the name of Dulcidio, a priest of the city of Toledo, with letters to the Cordoban king in the month of September. As of this time, in the month of November, he has not yet returned. The above-mentioned Ababdella has not stopped sending legates seeking peace and the grace of our king. This will come about when it pleases the Lord.
13. ON THE CAMPAIGNS AND DIPLOMACY OF 'ABD AL-RAḤMĀN III (918–939)

The reign of 'Abd al-Rahmān III, from 912 to 961, has been seen as the zenith of Umayyad power in al-Andalus. In contrast to his predecessors, who had held the title of amir, 'Abd al-Rahmān III declared himself caliph in 929. This move may have been motivated by the recent declaration of the Fatimid caliphate in Tunisia, but it also demonstrated the consolidation of Umayyad rule under 'Abd al-Rahmān III. Although the dynasty had been in difficulty when he came to power, with factionalism within al-Andalus and military challenges from the Christian north, 'Abd al-Rahmān was able to solidify his control over the realm. Particularly troublesome was the rebellion of Ibn Hafsūn, a muwallad (Iberian Muslim) who had first raised a revolt in 880. This was centered on the castle of Bobastro (in the mountains near Ronda), and the disturbance continued even after Ibn Hafsūn’s death in 917, since his sons (the Banū Hafsūn) continued to hold out in Bobastro until their final defeat in 928. During the late ninth century, Ibn Hafsūn had been a powerful force in promoting factionalism in al-Andalus, driving a wedge between the Arab Muslims and the indigenous Iberian converts to Islam. This situation altered with his conversion to Christianity in 899, at which point he began to draw on Christian support. Only after 928, with the defeat of the Banū Hafsūn, was 'Abd al-Rahmān III able to solidify his rule throughout al-Andalus. Meanwhile, the caliph was engaged in military skirmishes with Christian armies from the north, while also pursuing more peaceful relations with his northern neighbors through diplomatic channels. These activities are detailed in the following selections from the works of Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi and Ibn Hayyūn. (ORC)

A. Ibn 'Abd Rabihihi (d.940), The Unique Necklace (918–929)

Translated from Arabic by James T. Monroe

Ibn 'Abd Rabihihi, born in Córdoba in 860, was one of the official poets at the Umayyad court during the later reign of Muhammad I (r.852–886). He died in 940 during the reign of 'Abd al-Rahmān III. This selection, taken from his long verse chronicle, the 'Iqd al-farīd [The Unique Necklace], describes events in the Islamic years 306–307 (918–920) and 315–316 (927–928). The first passage concerns the campaign of 'Abd al-Rahmān III against the kings of León and Navarre in retaliation for Christian incursions into the Rioja region. The poet then describes the ongoing struggle with the sons of Ibn Hafsūn and the caliph’s eventual victory at Bobastro. (ORC)

The Year 306/918–919

Then God retaliated against His enemies and decreed victory to His friends: At the beginning of the year newly commencing, truth filled the soul of the hero,

For the purpose of the glorious Imam; the best of those begotten and the best begetter was

To take up the defense of the One, the Victorious, and to vent some of his anger upon the infidels.

So he mustered soldiers and troops and called together with his trumpet, both lord and vassal;

He enrolled [the men] of the borders and frontiers and shunned pleasures and good cheer,

Until, when the troops were complete and recruiters and recruits had been mustered,

He appointed Badr to command the group, for he was held in great awe.

So he set forth accompanied by troops like the torrent and an army like the blackness of night,

Until, when he descended upon Motunia 1 in which the worst of creatures was [lurking],

He waged against them an open war that gave off sparks such that fire could be kindled from it,

And fighting was intense among them while the foot soldiers surrounded them on all sides.

So they waged war all day long, then spent the night with the archers banishing their sleep,

So that during the long passage of the night, they were like those fatigued whose wounds fester on their limbs.

Then they continued warring against them for a few days until death revealed itself to them suddenly and violently.

When they saw the clouds of Fate raining the thunderbolts of misfortune down upon them,

The non-Arabs hurriedly made a break for their foreign land and reassembled under every star;

So the non-Arab came to their rescue on Thursday in the greatest haste:

In front of him went the foot soldiers and knights, and around him the crosses and bells,

For he was hoping to dislodge the army from the side of the fortress that had been destroyed,

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1. Near Calatrava, called Mitonia in Latin sources.
So Badr impeded him with his own men, observing him attentively on his march toward him.
Until the right wing of one army met up with the left wing of the other and breaths got stuck in the windpipe.
Therefore God's partisans were victorious over the two infidels and the familiars of Satan were put to flight.
Thus they were massacred swiftly and dispersed, while the infidel retreated with blame and disgrace,
Whereas [our] people set out for Alcolea and met the enemy on Friday morning.
Then the two infidels met together on the road: the Pamplonan and the Galician
And agreed to plunder the [Muslim] army, [or else] to die before that assembly.
They swore by enchantment and the devil that they would not be put to flight before death's encounter.
So they advanced with the greatest body of unbelievers who had covered the hills in general with horsemen,
Until [our] people drew near on Saturday, and O, what a moment it was!
For spears were aimed among them and cries of "God is very great!" and shouts rose high,
Swords forsook their sheaths, and deaths opened wide their mouths;
Foot soldiers met with foot soldiers and plunged into the thick of the fray
In a place such that glances swerved away from it and in its length lives became too short,
And those gifted with patient forbearance and farseeing prudence acted with brisk energy, for they rushed upon the nonbelieving enemy,
Until there took place the routing of the Basques as though it were a stain of wars,
For the eagles and hounds arose and they cried out, calling upon the captain of the Galicians:
The eagles of a death that snatches away souls and satiates swords and spears.
Thus was the pig put to flight at that time while his shame was revealed in that place;
Moreover, they were massacred in every river bottom and [their] heads were carried [aloft] on poles,

2. A Muslim fortress under attack by the Christians.
And the commander sent forward a thousand heads of the Galicians schooled in hardship.
In this way God’s favor toward Islam was accomplished while the joy of that year embraced us all,
Although the greatest joy that occurred in its course was the death in it of Ibn Ḥafṣūn, the pig!
Thus one conquest was added to a second and one victory to another granted by the aid of God,
Hence this campaign is called “The Decisive” because after it a great calamity was to befall [the enemy].

The Year 307/919–920

For after it, the campaign against Albelda\(^3\) took place, carrying off the apostates [to their death].
Its beginning occurred when the imām, the elect of God, the most trustworthy of earth’s inhabitants in matters of justice and in keeping promises,
Received news of the way in which the pig had died, and that he had gone to hellfire,
[Ibn Ḥafṣūn’s] sons wrote to [the Caliph] proffering their submission and [announcing] their entry into the [Islamic] community,
And [requesting] that he acknowledge their right to govern in exchange for their payment of the land tax and tribute.
Therefore the gracious imām chose [to comply with] that for his thoughts were constantly occupied with the granting of favors.
Then Satan turned Ja’far’s\(^4\) head and because of this his nose became swollen with pride,
So that he broke the treaties and alliances and adopted discord and apostasy, Embracing pact-breakers and lawbreakers of the sort who are neither reliable nor do they keep their word.
But the Caliph supported [by God] impeded him, for he is the man by whom one is reduced to destitution or rendered fortunate; The man over whom there are guardians watching out for any misfortune; guardians who are the [many] eyes of God.
So he mustered troops and companies, appointing commanders and squadrons of cavalry,

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3. Town held by the Banū Ḥafṣūn between Archidona and Bobastro.
4. The oldest son of Ibn Ḥafṣūn. Like his father he was a convert to Christianity. The other three sons remained Muslims.
After which he went into campaign with the greater part of [their] number, seeking to remain in the pale of [God’s] victory and support. Until, when he reached the fortress of Albelda, he left a commander behind as his representative, along with a number [of men], forbidding them from dispersing their cavalry and [ordering them] to stand guard day and night.

Then he went forth, seeking to descend upon the [other] fortresses, and sending out lookouts and scouts. Until [a messenger] bringing good news from Albelda reached him, running with the head of its chief atop a straight lance; therefore he led the horsemen swiftly toward it, alighting in it that very day by hastening toward it.

Then he surrounded it with horsemen, skilled archers, and all the defenders and brave warriors,

While the foot soldiers rushed upon its breaches and the troops thronged blindly upon its gates.

Thus it surrendered, though it had never surrendered before, and so an infidel [community] was delivered up to a believing one, while its infidels were led before the sword and massacred for their just deserts—not out of injustice.

It all came about because of the good fortune of the imām al-Murtada,5 “the satisfied [with God’s decree],” the best of those remaining, the best of those who have passed away.

Then, in his wrath he made for Bobastro and left not a single green stalk in it,

Breaking down plants and standing corn, and tearing up crops and fields. So when the dog witnessed what was clearly evident of [the Caliph’s] firm resolve to countervene his intention,

He humbly submitted to him and requested that he might be spared, with his permission,

And that he might be [recognized] governor under his suzerainty, in exchange for his payment of the land tax out of the tribute [he collected].

Hence the imām bound him by taking hostages, so that he would not become blind to his condition,

And the imām accepted his [terms] out of his own graciousness and inclination to do good, and departed from him.

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5. This was the caliph’s official seal name.
The Year 315/927–928
In it he campaigned against Bobastro, resolving to overrun and destroy its courtyard.
Then he built [the castle of] Taljira on the way to it to obstruct the gullet [lying] between its two neck veins.
He put [Taljira] in charge of Ibn Salîm, one fighting hard, tucking up [his garment] from his shank to wage war,
Until Ḥafṣî perceived the path leading to his own right guidance, after having exerted himself to the limit,
So that he submitted to the imām, repairing humbly to him and obediently surrendering the fortress.

The Year 316/928–929
[That year] he did not campaign, but he went to Bobastro to repair and manage it in accordance with his views,
Filling it with power and glory, while also erasing the traces of the Banū Ḥafṣūn
By restoring it from the corrupt [state] in which it had lain because of them,
and purifying [its] tombs by [removing] their bodies,
Until the hollow of every grave was empty of each profoundly disbelieving apostate.
[They were all] a party belonging to Satan’s sect, hostile to God and the Sultan,
Therefore their bodies were violently destroyed whereas their souls roasted in hellfire.

B. Ibn Ḥayyān (d.1076), Muqtabis
Translated from Arabic by Paul M. Cobb

Ibn Hayyān was born in Córdoba in 978, and he followed his father’s profession working as a secretary at the Cordoban court. Family tradition apparently inspired his loyalty to the Umayyads, despite the fact that he lived most of his life under Taifa rule until his death in 1076. Ibn Hayyān is famous for two works of history: the Muqtabis (from which

6. The last surviving son of Ibn Ḥafṣūn.

this selection is taken) chronicles Umayyad rule in al-Andalus; the Matin (now mostly lost) describes events in his own day. The Muqtabis is a collection of earlier accounts structured chronologically to form a historical narrative. The passages translated here are an extract from a letter purportedly written by Abd al-Rahman III describing the conquest of Bobastro, and a peace treaty negotiated with Christian Barcelona in 939. (ORC)

The Siege of Bobastro

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful!

A lengthy introductory exhortation of praise to God [taḥmīd] follows, stressing the following themes: the prophethood of Muhammad; the role of the caliphs as Successors of the Prophet and upholders of Islam; the virtues of Islam over unbelief; the obligation of struggle against unbelief [jihād]; the conceit of the infidels; and the historical role of the Umayyad caliphate as warriors for the faith through God’s favor.

Now, the city of Bobastro is a foundation of polytheism, a house of unbelief and falsehood, a center of Christian power, its shelter, refuge, abode, and bastion [made] redoubtable from its flanks and perimeter. Whoever dwells in it is protected and whoever cleaves to it is safe.

This state of affairs was prolonged, and [God’s] blessing overtook it. Time aided [God’s blessing] by the continuity of the [Umayyad] dynasty and the [steady] succession of those girded with the caliphate, for fifty years. They continued to dominate it in battles while stratagems honed their swords. Thus the allotted period weighed against [Bobastro], and blazing civil strife increased within it. No expectation arrived, nor did any hope ascend to it. It afflicted every town with harm, and its evil has visited upon the people of every district. It emptied every city, carried away every beauty, took possession of every profit, and denied any advantage to [other cities] equal to it, except for paltry trifles and base refuse.

For [the city of Bobastro] is of lofty situation and thick construction, its apex elevated and its upper reaches [located] high on every side; it has no equal nor match comparable to it in the loftiness of [its] construction. Its dwellings on its extremities are crowded by its inhabitants in its residential quarters. The young are raised in it as fighters, and the old go blind in it as auxiliaries.

The lord [of Bobastro], because of the easy confidence and hope in it, and the watch lengthened upon it, fancied that there was no end to [its continued existence], nor decrease in its numbers, nor loosing of its defenses, nor that the hand of Fate would enter into it, nor that one of his misfortunes would overwhelm it.
And so we redoubled our efforts exclusively on [Bobastro], when we saw the walls encircling it, spreading out as far as we spread, extending from [the heights of] the refuges as far as we extended. [However,] we were resolute and advanced toward it, exerting [ourselves] in [our] effort against it, concentrating on besieging it, laboring toward piercing a hole in it and weakening its strength, each great one [among us] finding it a small [task], and making light of it.

Truly, everyone of our people was imposing in the contention with it, aspiring with hope toward it, and advancing in the expectant struggle against it with a resolve that smote the most remote of [our] desired [goals], that arduously cut the necks of [these] lofty sects, so that when they withdrew from [their] nearby fortresses and were isolated from their neighboring stronghold, its power was severed, its brooks dried up, and its wells were blocked up, so that nothing remained except [the city itself] with its spring, [and] a supply of food within.

We made for it in our eagerness and directed our steps toward it in our resolve, so that we had [our] noble cities built against it, and erected the towering fortress above it. We populated these with officers and the troops, multiplying them in number and in supplies. We then advanced toward [the enemy], prolonging the siege of those within [Bobastro], keeping the blockade tight, and [maintaining] the frequent coming and going of the watch, obstructing and cutting off provisions from every side, ceasing to accept pleas from every level, [raising] the sword against any who exited or entered it, and taking captive those of their women and children whose captivity was necessary. For they had violated that [part of] our pact, and [so] had to acquiesce to [this state] by our command.

Those within the city observed renewed tenacity and increased resolve, until the exertion of the siege and the [continued] observation by day and night devoured them. Part of them went to death, others to captivity, witnessing that for which they had neither patience, resolve, nor acceptance. . . .

A passage follows describing how the enemy offered to return to obedience if the Umayyad army would lift the siege and leave them be. But they saw through this ploy.

So we dissuaded them from remaining in the aerie of their error, and we permitted them to come down out of it, dispersed from it, so that they hastened to that which we permitted them in compulsion of haste, delivered from the constraint of the siege, and we granted them security. We enjoined the vizier Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥudayr to order the preparations for their
evacuation, to make ready their descent, to complete the pact of safe-conduct for them, and to keep all [violent] hands from them... 

The populace dispersed from the city, becoming Umayyad subjects.

Their chief, Ḥāfṣ b. ʿUmar, remained behind them, [his] mind aflutter, [his] heart palpitating. He was not delighted to be leaving devoid of strength, nor was he pleased to be fleeing under the pact of safe-conduct. He dreaded every hand that held him and every branch that clung to him. Fear gripped him such that he almost died from it because of his ruin. So the vizier Ṭāhir b. Muhammad b. Ḥudayr quieted his grief and assuaged his fear and gave him his full share of our generous pact of safe-conduct as a kindness and a [gesture of] tranquillity to rely on. Thus the last of those leaving left and reached those under security.

Thus, by morning his city, that quagmire of error, pulpit of contrariness, mine of deviance, [including] that which surrounded it of walls and houses and dams, and that which was inside it of gardens and buildings, was free of its inhabitants, empty of its tribes as if it had never been filled with residents, as if no inhabitant had settled there. For God reached them from a place whereof they knew not, and cast terror in their hearts\(^1\) because of what they committed...

A passage follows, commenting on how God’s punishment could reduce such a populous and healthy city to desolate rubble, quoting Qur’an 11:102.

At that, we ordered the destruction of the city of Bobastro, reducing its fortifications, pulling down its walls and razing everything standing in it of palaces, dwellings, storehouses, and buildings, returning it to a bare mountain, back to [its state] at its first creation and earliest beginning, abolishing it as a place of unbelief of the oppressors, demolishing it as the abode of the haughty polytheists, obliterating it as a house of polytheism, effacing the rubble of falsehood: In the morning it was as if it was plucked.\(^2\)

Then we summoned the refugee, Ḥāfṣ [b. ʿUmar], to return to what we presented to him of security and strength, and we repeated to him our pardon and guarantee, beginning this through the plain virtue in which God has made us His people. Our doctrine prevailed over his preference, and from this we agreed on that with which he was pleased, and he trusted it, and committed himself to it.

1. Qur’an 59:2.
So know this, and take pause upon it, and praise God. Order the reading of this, our letter to you, to those Muslims under your authority in the mosque of your place, so that they might praise God—may His countenance be exalted!—for the wonder he has made for them and given to them, and so that they might bring forth thanks to Him—may He be glorified!—for that which He warded off from them. The offering up of prayers of thanks to Him makes His pleasure last—may His countenance be exalted!—and by it obtains an increase in His graces—God willing. For in Him assistance is found.

Written on Thursday, five days elapsed in Dhû al-Ḥijja, the year 315.3

Peace with Christian Barcelona

In this year,4 Ḥasdai b. Ishāq the Jewish scribe5 made a treaty of peace with Sunyer son of Wifred the Frank, lord of Barcelona and its provinces (r.914–940), according to only those conditions that al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh6 approved. He sent Ḥasdai to Barcelona to ratify [the peace] with Sunyer, lord [of Barcelona]. It so happened that the navy set sail from the port of Almería7 with Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bajjānī on the last day of Rajab of this year,8 and set upon the city of Barcelona on Friday, the tenth day elapsed of Shawwāl.9 So Ḥasdai informed them about the peace with Sunyer, lord [of Barcelona], and he made them refrain from making war on him, and the navy departed from the port of Barcelona right away.

Ḥasdai called upon the nobles of Barcelona to obey al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh and to make peace with him. A group of their kings agreed to this, among them Unjuh,10 one of their nobles, who had his domain in the land of Arles. So, he sent a delegation to the city to observe for him, and he asked for a guarantee of safety for the various kinds of merchants of his land [traveling] to al-Andalus, and that was agreed upon. The agreement was conveyed to Naṣr b. Ahmad, the commander at Fraxinetum,11 and to the governors of the Eastern Islands12 and of the coastal ports of the land of al-Andalus [ordering] safe passage of all foreigners from the land of Unjuh, and any others from that community who capitulated with regard to their life, property, and everything their ships contained. They were free to engage in trade wherever

3. 1 February 928.
4. 328 according to the Muslim calendar, or 939–940.
5. Jews often served as diplomats between Muslim and Christian courts.
6. Throne name of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III.
7. Almería was the main Andalusí naval base.
8. 11 May 940.
9. 19 July 940.
10. The identity of this person is not known.
11. A Muslim outpost on the southern French coast.
12. The Balearics.
they wished, so that their ships came to al-Andalus from that time on, and the profit increased because of it. Richildis, daughter of Borrell, the sovereign of her people among the Franks, followed the example of Unjuh in this peace with al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh, so she sent Barnāṭ, her Jewish confidant, to him with precious valuables from the various regions of her land. Al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh received them from her, and returned yet more precious [gifts] to her, and entertained her messenger bountifully.

Then Ḥasdai b. Ishāq al-Isrā‘īlī, and with him Gotmar, the messenger of Sunyer, returned to al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh from Barcelona on the last day of Dhū al-Qa‘da of that [year],¹³ after having supervised all of [these diplomatic proceedings] according to the conditions that he stipulated: First, that he [Sunyer] terminate assistance to or friendship with all Christians who are not at peace with al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh, that his obedience to him remain incumbent upon him, that he seek his approval, and that he dissolve the relationship that existed between him and García, son of Sancho, the lord of Pamplona (r.925–971). Sunyer had married his daughter to him [García], so he annulled her marriage contract in obedience to al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh, and guaranteed that all of those who relied upon him from those regions that he ruled would enter with him [in obedience to al-Nāṣr]. Al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh ordered Sunyer to carry out all of that, and sent forth his orders to the governors of the coasts and the commanders of the navy, and he ordered abstinence from his [Sunyer’s] provinces and peaceful behavior toward the people of his land. Al-Nāṣr li-Dīn Allāh contracted the safe-conduct and peace with Sunyer according to all of this, together with a peace with Sunifred and both their descendants for two full years. He gave witness to all of this in his assembly chamber on Wednesday, the twelfth day elapsed of Dhū al-Ḥijja of that year.¹⁴

¹³. 6 September 940.
¹⁴. 18 September 940.
14. A JEWISH ADMINISTRATOR UNDER CALIPH HISHĀM (r.976–1013)

Abraham ibn Daud (ca.1110–1181), *The Book of Tradition* (1161)
Translated from Hebrew by Gerson D. Cohen

Sefer ha-Qabbalah [*The Book of Tradition*] was written by the Andalusi Jewish historian Abraham ibn Daud in 1161 to trace and justify rabbinic tradition from biblical times until his own day. The section describing the Iberian rabbinate is a particularly valuable source of information on Jewish life in al-Andalus during the tenth, eleventh, and early twelfth centuries. Very little is known about Abraham ibn Daud himself. He was born in about 1110 and is reported to have died in 1181. In this passage, the author describes the career of Jacob ibn Jau, a Jewish administrator and tax collector appointed in the late tenth century by the chamberlain (ḥājib) al-Maṣūr ibn Abī Ṭāmir while he was regent for the young caliph Hishām (r.976–1013). The passage indicates the precarious nature of court appointments, in which the appointee might hold a position of power one day and find himself in prison the next. This situation held true for both Jewish and Muslim courtiers. (ORC)

Prior to that, however, the faction opposing the Rabbi, including those who supported Ibn Shatnash, had declined. Among these were two brothers, merchants [and] manufacturers of silk, Jacob ibn Jau and his brother Joseph. They once happened to enter the courtyard of one of the king’s eunuchs, who was in charge of the land of Takurunna, at a time when the Muslim elders of the territory under his charge had come to register a complaint against the officer he had appointed over them. They had also brought him a gift of two thousand Jaʿafariya gold pieces. No sooner did they begin to speak than the minister issued an order to humiliate them, beat them with clubs, and have them hustled off to prison. Now, in the entrance to the palace there were a number of tortuous recesses into one of which the two thousand gold pieces fell. Although they protested vigorously, no one paid them any attention. However, immediately [afterwards], Jacob ibn Jau and his brother Joseph entered
[the palace], found the gold pieces and went off. Once they arrived home, they took counsel [on the matter], saying: "[Since] we have discovered this money in the royal palace, let us make a solemn agreement to return it there, coupled with gifts and offerings. Perhaps we shall be able in [that way] to rid ourselves of the abuse of our enemies and gain the support of the King." So they did just that, and they became successful in the silk business, making clothing of high quality and pennants that are placed at the tops of standards of such high quality as was not duplicated in all of Spain. They brought presents to King Hishām and to King al-Manṣūr ibn Abī ʿAmīr, his guardian, with the result that King al-Manṣūr became very fond of Jacob ibn Jau. Accordingly, the former issued him a document placing him in charge of all the Jewish communities from Sijilmasa to the river Duero, which was the border of his realm. [The decree stated] that he was to adjudicate all their litigations, and that he was empowered to appoint over them whomsoever he wished and to exact from them any tax or payment to which they might be subject. Furthermore, he placed at his disposal eighteen of his eunuchs clad in uniform, who conducted him in the carriage of a vicegerent. Then all the members of the community of Córdoba assembled and signed an agreement [certifying] his position as nasi, which stated: "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son also." Upon taking office, he despatched a messenger to the Rabbi, R. Hanok, [threatening him] that, should he adjudicate [a litigation] between two people, he would cast him into the sea in a boat without oars.

However, at the end of the first year of his rule as nasi, Ibn Jau was thrown into prison by King al-Manṣūr. The latter had been under the impression that Ibn Jau would produce great profits for him by taking money from Jews in all the communities by fair means or foul and turn it over to him. Since [Ibn Jau] failed to do so, [al-Manṣūr] threw him into prison, where he remained for about one year. Finally, on the day of a Muslim festival, King Hishām happened to pass by the prison on his way from the palace to his house of worship, while Ibn Jau was standing in the entrance to the prison directly in the view of King Hishām. When the latter saw him he asked his guardian al-Manṣūr why he had done this to him. He replied: "Because he does not turn in any tribute from all his domain." Thereupon, King Hishām ordered that he be released and restored to his office. Although this was done, he did not regain quite the same [powers] which he had previously had.