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The *History* of Ibn Ḥabīb: al-Andalus in the Last Days

The Andalusī scholar ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (d. 853) was remembered as a legal scholar whose judgements were cited until recent times, but he was active in several other fields. A work of universal history, the History (Kitāb al-ta’rīkh), surviving in a single thirteenth-century copy, was attributed to him. Beginning before creation, it covers the prophets and early caliphs before focusing on the conquest of Spain, ending with a brief account of the rise of Umayyads and a prediction of their downfall. Ibn Ḥabīb was also responsible for introducing into al-Andalus the practice of collecting and commenting on ḥadīth – sayings attributed to the prophet Muḥammad and his followers. Ibn Ḥabīb himself became a noted authority on ḥadīth and used them extensively in the History. Many relate to incidents in the life of king Solomon that are implied but not explained in the Qur’an, which were woven in with stories of his supposed activities in Spain. The text also introduces into the narrative ḥadīth from Egypt and elsewhere about the Last Days, adapted to the Umayyad realm at a period of instability. This paper argues that these apocalyptic ḥadīth are a key to understanding the History’s representation of al-Andalus in the ninth century.

When the Andalusī scholar ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (d. c. 853) compiled his *History* (*Kitāb al-ta’rīkh*) he did so with his eyes firmly fixed on its end:

I begin it with Adam [and] I mention all the prophets and kings who inhabited the world [...] and their history (*akhbār*) [...] and what Allāh worked for them until the time of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him [...] and how the caliphs followed after him [...] until the time of al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (705–715), may Allāh have mercy on him. Then I come to the conquest of al-Andalus and the arrival there of Ṭāriq, the client of Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr (in 711). I mention the number of her governors and those who will govern her until she is destroyed and what will happen after the destruction until the Hour with traditions and the signs [of the end of the world] if Allāh wishes it to come.¹

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam was concerned about how the world would end. Since none of the three monotheisms had a fixed set of eschatological beliefs, the question of the transmission of ideas to Islam from its predecessors is complicated.² However, a pattern of thought common to the Hebrew Bible and the New

¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *‘Abd al-Malik ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Ta’rīkh*, ed. Aguadé, 25–26; Ibn Ḥabīb, *‘Abd al-Malik ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Ta’rīkh*, ed. Aguadé, commentary 88–100. All translations, unless attributed, are the author’s.

² Averil Cameron’s analysis of apocalyptic texts in Greek and Syriac that circulated on the eve of Islam points to their wide variety of view and the difficulty in tracing their influence on the new faith, see Cameron, “Late Antique Apocalyptic;” Hoyland, “Early Islam as a Late Antique Religion,”

Testament is also discernible in the Qur'an.³ Nearly a quarter of the verses of the Qur'an deal with the end of the world.⁴ Indeed, one way to read Muḥammad is as a charismatic preacher who expected the world to end with him; new verses may have been added to the Qur'an after his death to postpone the end.⁵ It is difficult to say when these additions might have been made. Challenging the orthodox view that the text of Qur'an was established by the third caliph, Uthmān (644–656), some scholars have suggested that the text we now have was compiled under 'Abd al-Malik (685–705).⁶ The early radiocarbon dates of Qur'anic fragments discovered in the Yemen and elsewhere, which may even predate Muḥammad's mission, further complicate the discussion.⁷ At the same time, the Qur'an's message is timeless and it does not provide a specific narrative of the Last Days as for instance the Book of Revelation does, but instead provides descriptions of heaven and hell that are loaded with moral significance, intended to warn and correct the believers.⁸

A large body of exegesis of the Qur'an evolved in the first centuries after the death of the Prophet. Muslim scholars used an accumulation of eschatological *ḥadīth*⁹ – the *sunna qawliyya* attributed to Muḥammad – to comment on passages in the sacred text that dealt with death, judgement and paradise. Six portents of the Hour were traced back to the Prophet, preserved by his companion 'Awf b. Mālik. Muḥammad predicted that, after his death, Muslims would conquer Jerusalem.¹⁰ Yet this would not ameliorate the ills of the world, which would be afflicted by plagues and other causes of untimely death. Increasing wealth would result in a civil war (*fitna*), ending in a temporary truce with Byzantium, with the collapse of this truce heralding a final war in which all would be destroyed. Many of these eschatological *ḥadīth* were preserved in the *Book of the civil wars (Kitāb al-fitān)* compiled by an Egyptian contemporary of Ibn Ḥabīb, Nu'aym ibn Hammūd (d. 843), which survives in two late-medieval manuscripts.¹¹ The origins of the *ḥadīth* themselves are obscure. It is likely that some at least of the statements attributed to Muḥammad were later inventions that helped to explain events in historical time. Indeed, eschatological *ḥadīth* referring to actual events have been used to try to pin down the date

1053–1077; Al-Azmeh, "God's Chronography and Dissipative Time," 199–225; Cook, "The Beginnings of Islam as an Apocalyptic Movement;" Donner, "Piety and Eschatology in Early Kharijite Poetry," 13–19.

3 Magdalino, "The History of the Future and its Uses," 3–34; Reynolds, *The Qur'an and its biblical subtext*.

4 Tottoli, "Narrative Literature," 467–480.

5 Shoemaker, "Muḥammad and the Qur'an," 1078–1108.

6 Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik*, 100.

7 Reynolds, "Variant Readings," 14–15.

8 Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*; Rippin, "Literary Analysis of Qur'an, Tafsir and Sira," 151–163; Neuwirth, "Qur'an and History," 1–18.

9 In this paper *ḥadīth* is used for both the singular and the plural *aḥadīth*.

10 Bashir, "Apocalyptic and other Materials in Early Muslim-Byzantine Wars," 173–207.

11 Aguadé, "Messianismus zur Zeit der frühen Abbasiden," 43.

these *ḥadīth* were compiled, although with limited success.¹² Al-Azmeh characterised the use of *ḥadīth* in exegesis and in works of other genres as presenting “the seamless transition between signs past, present and future inscribed in eschatological traditions attributed to Muḥammad through the history of the world from Creation, and the coming apocalypse”.¹³ This is the programme of the *History* of Ibn Ḥabīb. In what follows I hope to illustrate the historian’s intentions by focussing on a number of episodes from the *History*, and more especially his use of *ḥadīth* relating to the end of the World and his development of stories associated with king Solomon. I will go on to argue the importance of eschatological *ḥadīth* for understanding Ibn Ḥabīb’s presentation of the history of al-Andalus.

Born in Elvira, near Granada, Ibn Ḥabīb studied in Córdoba, and travelled for three years in search of learning to Medina, Jerusalem and Egypt. On his return to al-Andalus he served at the court of the Umayyad emir ‘Abd al-Raḥman II, wearing the impressive headgear (*qalansūwa*) awarded to scholars of law and *ḥadīth*. Ibn Ḥabīb’s works in several genres survive either in copies made in the later medieval period or in citations by other authors.¹⁴ His legal judgements were preserved with those of other scholars from al-Andalus and the Maghreb in a number of texts, some of which were still in use in the Maghreb in the modern era¹⁵ and in a legal treatise, the *Kitāb al-Wādiḥa*, which has been reconstructed from citations of it.¹⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb made several collections of *ḥadīth*¹⁷ and it is likely that he was responsible for introducing *ḥadīth* into al-Andalus.¹⁸ His earliest biographer, al-Khushanī (d. 971) recounted in detail Ibn Ḥabīb’s skilful deployment of citations from the Qur’an and *ḥadīth* to defend his wayward brother Ḥārūn against an accusation of blasphemy – a story that, even if is untrue, represents the importance of his use of *ḥadīth* in ensuring Ibn Ḥabīb’s posthumous reputation.¹⁹

One of Ibn Ḥabīb’s surviving *ḥadīth* collections includes forty-three traditions on the Last Days. His biographers remembered another, which is no longer extant, with the title “The Day of Resurrection” (*Kitāb al-qiyāma*). He used *ḥadīth* extensively in several works with eschatological aims. Among these is the Description of Paradise (*Kitāb wasf al-firdaws*). It was edited in Beirut in 1987 without giving the

¹² Cook, “Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions,” 23–47; Görke, “Eschatology, History and the Common Link,” 179–208.

¹³ Al-Azmeh, “God’s Chronography and Dissipative Time,” 201.

¹⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, commentary 58–64.

¹⁵ Müller, *Gerichtspraxis im Stadtstaat Córdoba. Zum Recht der Gesellschaft in einer mälikitisch-islamischen Rechtstradition des 5./11. Jahrhunderts*; Lagardère, *Histoire et société en Occident musulman au Moyen Âge. Analyse du Miyyār d’al Wanšārīsī*.

¹⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tratado jurídico*, ed. María Arcas Campoy.

¹⁷ Muranyi, “‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb.” Wilk, “Women, Families and Lesbianism in the Andalusī Eschatology in the 3rd/9th Century,” 237–254.

¹⁸ Fierro, “The Introduction of *ḥadīth* into al-Andalus,” 68–93.

¹⁹ Muḥammad b. Ḥārīth al-Jushanī, (m.361/971), *Ajbār al-fuqahā’ wa-l-muḥaddithīn* (“Historia de los alfaquíes y tradicionalistas de al-Andalus”), ed. Avila and Molina, 245–254.

name of the editor or details of the manuscript, which was probably a copy from al-Azhar, Cairo, dated 1498.²⁰ Eighty-five folia of the manuscript remain, but there must originally have been at least eight more. Unusually for an Islamic text, the work's title *Description of Paradise*, accurately declares its content. Ibn Ḥabīb made a collection of citations from the Qur'an supplemented by *ḥadīth* and exegesis by the compiler and others. The structure of the work is simple, the large number of eschatological statements in the Qur'an providing the framework into which *ḥadīth* and exegesis could easily be inserted.²¹

As we shall see, the opening section of Ibn Ḥabīb's *History* uses a similar method of complementing citations from the Qur'an with *ḥadīth*. There are, however, problems with the surviving text. It was attributed to Ibn Ḥabīb because of the large number of passages beginning "Ibn Ḥabīb said". Yet the single surviving manuscript, dated 1295/6, cannot be an exact copy of the original, since it continues the annals of the Umayyads for at least thirty years after the supposed author's death. Nor is it a full compendium of Ibn Ḥabīb's historical writings; later sources cited Ibn Ḥabīb on episodes that do not appear in this manuscript. It is likely that this is a copy of a student's version of the *History*, perhaps compiled in the 880s, although later dates have been suggested.²²

It is possible to read *History* as a "universal history" from Creation to the author's own time and place and to assume that its purpose was similar to that of providential Christian history, revealing the working-out of God's purpose for the world. Yet this designation may be misleading.²³ The ultimate origin of Ibn Ḥabīb's *History* was probably a tradition of chronicling the world from Creation that began in Islam in the middle of the eighth century. This seems to have been based on a chronological re-ordering of stories about the Old Testament prophets in the Qur'an, expanded by *ḥadīth*. The same process was applied to Jesus – also a prophet in Islam – and to Muḥammad, the seal of the prophets. One of the earliest authors to work in this genre was probably Ibn Ishāq (d. 760s), who is known for a *Life of Muḥammad* that survives only in a ninth-century version. Many different titles were given to Ibn Ishāq's works when they were cited in later centuries, but they suggest that he prefaced his *Life of the Prophet* with a narrative or a collection of *ḥadīth* on Creation called *Kitāb al-Bad'*, or *Kitāb al-Mubtadā'* ("The Beginning"); this does not survive, although an attempt has been made to reconstruct it from a considerable number of citations of it by later authors, in particular al-Ṭabarī (d. 923).²⁴ Both Ibn Ḥabīb's *History* and al-Ṭabarī's *Chronicle of the Prophets and Kings*²⁵ begin in this

²⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, commentary 66–67, and Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb wasf al-firdaws*; see further Monferrer, "El kitab Wasf al-Firdaws de Ibn Habib."

²¹ Al-Azmeh, "Rhetoric for the Senses," 215–231.

²² Makkī, "Egipto y los orígenes de la historiografía árabe-española," 157–248.

²³ Christys, "Universal Chronicles in Arabic before c. 900," 61–70.

²⁴ Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*.

²⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rikh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, ed. de Goeje et al.

way with a history of creation and the prophets to Muḥammad, followed by a history of the caliphate to the author's day which narrows its geographical focus to the region where the author was writing. Later historiography in Arabic turned towards local histories or was subsumed into works that were encyclopaedic rather than chronological and didactic. Thus Ibn Ḥabīb's *History* and al-Ṭabarī's *Chronicle* are the only surviving texts that approach "universal history". Yet, whilst there are many similarities in content between the two – although Ibn Ḥabīb's work is very much the shorter – they seem to have been written with different aims, if we may believe their prefaces. Al-Ṭabarī did indeed set out to show how men would be rewarded for their virtues and punished for their faults.²⁶ He may, however, have become less convinced of this as the story reached his own day, since his narrative, at least in its edited version, seems to be continuing without reference to the End Times. In Ibn Ḥabīb's *History*, on the other hand, it is possible to follow an eschatological thread running from the preface cited above through the whole work.

Fundamental to a discussion of the Last Days was an understanding of time, with the calculation of the Age of the World and the number of years that had already passed. "First", says al-Ṭabarī

I shall begin with what for us comes properly and logically first, namely the explanation of What is time? How long is its total extent? Its first beginning and final end. Whether before God's creation of [time] there was anything else. Whether it will suffer annihilation and whether after its annihilation there will be something other than the face of the Highly praised, the Exalted Creator.²⁷

Al-Ṭabarī went on to give variant calculations of the Age of the World up to the time of Muḥammad, and how much remains, compared with the Age of the world in Jewish, Christian and *Majūs* (Zoroastrian) calculations. Ibn Ḥabīb also sought chronological definition. At the time of writing, noted Ibn Ḥabīb, "200 years remain of the 500 years up to the end of the 7000 years [but] according to other narratives there are more [years remaining to the End of the World]."²⁸ In parallel with the Christian tradition of Six Ages of the World, each a thousand years long, it was a commonplace of Islamic learning that the World would endure for 7000 years, a day in heaven being equivalent to a thousand years on earth.²⁹

the whole of time revolves around seven days [...] the whole world from its beginning when Allāh created Adam, whom he created on a Friday and sent down to earth on a Friday. The Hour of Resurrection will be on a Friday, and it is the first and last day of the world, [the day of] its beginning and its end. Allāh made each of these days a thousand years and he made the

²⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rikh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Michael de Goeje et al., 5.

²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rikh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Michael de Goeje et al., 5; translated in Rosenthal, *The History of al-Tabarī*, Vol 1, 169.

²⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 73.

²⁹ Q 22:47, cited by Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 15; Bashir, "On Islamic Time," 519–544.

whole of the world until seven thousand years had perished (i.e. to last seven thousand years).³⁰

Ibn Ḥabīb noted the number of years allocated to Adam, Noah and Abraham, the length of time that separated them, and the periodisation of what followed:

A further thousand years passed until Allāh sent down the Torah (*tawrāa*) to Moses, which is five thousand years. Between the Torah and the Psalter (*zabūr*) were five hundred years and between the Psalter and the Gospels (*injīl*) five hundred years and six thousand years were over. And from Jesus (*'Isā*) to Muḥammad – peace and blessings upon him – a full five hundred years passed [...] I will describe what elapsed during the remaining five hundred [years], God willing. According to Ibn Ḥabīb, two hundred years remain of the five hundred years up to the end of the seven thousand years [but] according to other narratives there are more [years remaining].³¹

In his entries on the prophets, Ibn Ḥabīb presented the degeneration of the World from God's perfect Creation as inherent from the very beginning:

Adam was expelled from Paradise and his descendants were prevented from entering it, except for a few. And this is the root of discord and the mother of all evils, the greatest of the great sins and transgressions; it exceeds all [other] sins just as its tree is higher than all [other] trees³² [...] nothing is seen in our times, which are the last of times, to despise except what already existed, or there was something like it, in the time of Adam.³³

Ibn Ḥabīb's treatment of the prophets resembles the method he used in the Description of Paradise: an expansion of citations from the Qur'an with *ḥadīth*. The narrative is allusive, relying on the readers' knowledge of the Qur'an rather as the Qur'an itself relies on the readers' knowledge of Biblical stories, so that Ibn Ḥabīb had only to cite a few short phrases to conjure up the whole story from the reader's memory. This makes the interpretation of both his sources and his intent problematic. In his expansion of the Qur'anic account of the Biblical prophets from *ḥadīth* Ibn Ḥabīb seems to have been selective in his use of the material available to him. This is in marked contrast to al-Ṭabarī, who gives the impression (which may however be misleading)³⁴ of including all the *ḥadīth* at his disposal, even when they are contradictory. Yet it is difficult to understand why Ibn Ḥabīb included some of these *ḥadīth*. Many of the stories Ibn Ḥabīb retells appear whimsical, such as the story of how Satan crept into Noah's Ark by hanging onto the tail of a donkey.³⁵ Further, in contrast to the cursory nature of his overall narrative, some of these stories are recounted in considerable detail, including long passages of direct speech attributed

³⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 25.

³¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 73.

³² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 20.

³³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 34.

³⁴ Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography*, 140.

³⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 38.

to the participants. Ibn Ḥabīb was writing before *ḥadīth* became more formalised, when attempts were made to distinguish “correct” *ḥadīth* – transmitted from the Prophet by an unbroken chain of reliable authorities (*isnāds*) – from the broad mass of *ḥadīth* which were discredited. By the end of the ninth century, stories about Satan and Noah were being hived off into a genre known as the “stories of the prophets” (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*),³⁶ which were not meant to be taken literally.³⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb’s attitude towards *ḥadīth* was controversial even in his own lifetime and led him into public dispute.³⁸ His use of *ḥadīth* in the *History* should be seen as a venture into a genre of historiography that was closely related to *ḥadīth*.³⁹ Its rules were not yet formalised, leaving Ibn Ḥabīb free to experiment with the inclusion of material that enlivened a common fund of knowledge about the lives of the Old Testament prophets and pointed up its moral value for contemporary readers.

Ibn Ḥabīb did not always select the most obvious eschatological material for inclusion in the *History*. He made little use, for example, of what the Qur’an and *ḥadīth* recorded about Gog and Magog;⁴⁰ indeed, he made two references to Gog and Magog without alluding to their Qur’anic role in the Last Days: “When Gog and Magog are let loose and rush headlong down every hill; when the true promise nears its fulfilment.”⁴¹ Ibn Ḥabīb simply noted of Gog and Magog that their people are numerous⁴² and he listed them amongst the nations of the earth: “the inhabited world extends for 44,000 leagues (*farasangs*) and 12,000 of these are allocated to *al-Ṣīn* (China) and *al-Hind* (India) and 8,000 to Gog and Magog and 3,000 to the *Rūm* (Christians in general) and 1,000 to the Arabs.”⁴³ Nor, in this context did he mention the mysterious Qur’anic hero Dhū al-Qarnayn, who built a wall to keep Gog and Magog out, a wall that God will destroy in the Last Days.⁴⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb did mention Dhū al-Qarnayn – whom he identified with “al-Iskander (Alexander) and it was he who built al-Iskandariya, which is named after him”⁴⁵ – but only to point a simple moral. On his journey during which (as we know from the Qur’an) he would build the wall, Dhū al-Qarnayn is chastised by an old man, who refuses to interrupt his prayers to greet the hero.

³⁶ Klar, “Stories of the Prophets,” 338–349.

³⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, commentary, 56.

³⁸ Fierro, “Proto-Maliki, Maliki and Reformed Maliki in al-Andalus,” 57–76 and 227–233; Fierro, “Local and Global in *hadith* Literature,” 63–89.

³⁹ Khalidī, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 73–74.

⁴⁰ Qur’an 18:89–101; Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources*, 61–72.

⁴¹ Qur’an 21:96.

⁴² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 42.

⁴³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 17.

⁴⁴ Qur’an 18:89–106.

⁴⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 68; in some traditions Alexander built the wall to keep out Gog and Magog: see Faustina Aerts-Doufikar in the same volume.

When Dhū al-Qarnayn saw the old man's attentiveness to his prayers and his obliviousness to [Dhū al-Qarnayn], [the latter] decided to approach him. He disembarked [from his ship] and went right up to [the *shaykh*] and sat down in front of him. When the *shaykh* turned away from his prayers, Dhū al-Qarnayn spoke to him face-to-face, saying: 'What prevented you from noticing me and recognising my power as the people have done?' [The *shaykh*] said 'I was talking with One who is greater than you in power, with a greater company and a mightier army. How could I leave Him and turn towards you?' [...] and Dhū al-Qarnayn profited from the *shaykh*, but the *shaykh* did not profit from him.⁴⁶

Here Ibn Ḥabīb passed over the well-known aspects of the story of Dhū al-Qarnayn in order to develop his own exegesis of a familiar figure.

The same strategy is evident in Ibn Ḥabīb's treatment of traditions associated with King Solomon. The Qur'an focuses on the twin topoi of Solomon's wisdom and his building of the Temple, which were taken up in later Arabic literature.⁴⁷ These Ibn Ḥabīb skated over with a few words, concentrating instead on a third aspect of Solomon's story: his idolatry, which resulted in the usurpation of his throne. This tradition is recounted in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁸ The Qur'an, in contrast, merely alludes to it with the statement: "We put Solomon to the test and put a counterfeit upon his throne, so that he at length repented."⁴⁹ It is possible that Ibn Ḥabīb's contemporaries were not familiar with the full story that lay behind this statement. Ibn Ḥabīb recounted at length how Solomon had created an idol at the behest of his wife. As punishment for this, a jinn named *Sakhr* took on Solomon's likeness and occupied his throne; Solomon was driven out of his kingdom and faced great tribulation:

Solomon (*Sulaymān*) – peace and blessings upon him – committed an offence. God, the blessed, the exalted, expedited his punishment in the world and afflicted him with *Sakhr*, one of the jinns, when he took off his ring (or seal, Arabic *khātim*) at the time of his entry into the privy and at the time of sexual intercourse. *Sakhr* disguised himself [as Solomon] before one of the women to whom [the latter] had given [the ring]. He took the ring and put it on and went out to the people and sat on the throne of Solomon. When Solomon came out of the privy he asked one of his women for the ring saying: 'Will you not hand it over?' She said 'No'. And Solomon remembered his offence and [...] knew that he was unclean [...] [then] he departed as a fugitive. God dispossessed him of his kingdom and his dominion [...] his state changed for the worse and he became unrecognisable to anyone who knew him. He took to wandering through the villages, begging the people for food until his hunger and his needs were satisfied. [When] he revealed himself, saying: 'I am Solomon son of David the prophet', they became angry with him and threw stones at him and an old woman of the Jews (*Banū Isrā'īl*) spat in his face.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 68–69.

⁴⁷ Borrut, "La Syrie de Salomon," 107–120.

⁴⁸ Särkiö, "Solomon in History and tradition," 45–56.

⁴⁹ Qur'an 38:34.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé 72.

Ibn Ḥabīb cited the story of Solomon and *Sakhr* on the authority of Ibn Abbās, one of the Companions. Al-Ṭabarī gave two slightly different versions of the same story, with different *isnāds*,⁵¹ but within an account of Solomon which is generally positive. In all three versions, Solomon is eventually restored to God's favour after finding his ring in the belly of a fish.

Solomon hired himself out to the sailors and unloaded fish from the ships. His pay was two fish per day. He exchanged the first for bread and grilled the second and one day out came his ring from one of them. Recognising it, he prostrated himself before God in adoration, praising Him in thankfulness. So his sin was forgiven and his kingdom was restored to him. And when he put the seal on, the sailors recognized him, came towards him and prostrated themselves.⁵²

Solomon's full powers, laid out in the Qur'an, were restored to him:

Solomon went to his kingdom and the people recognized him and welcomed him and accepted his lordship. And at that, he said: Lord 'Bestow upon me such power as shall belong to none after me. You are the Bountiful Giver'.⁵³ God 'subjected to him the wind [...] and the devils',⁵⁴ and subjected to him *Sakhr* also with them who had plundered his ring. [...] And Solomon – peace and blessings upon him – took it [possibly a box in which he had locked *Sakhr*] and strengthened it with copper and threw it into the sea. Solomon remained in his dominion for some time, content with the judgement of his Lord until God, the glorious, the powerful, took him.⁵⁵

Ibn Ḥabīb may have intended this excursus simply as an illustration of the perils of idolatry. Yet his portrayal of Solomon is so much more negative than that of the Qur'an that it seems a deliberate denigration of the prophet. Here Ibn Ḥabīb may have been preparing the ground for the reader to interpret a number of stories that connected Solomon with the conquest of al-Andalus.

Ibn Ḥabīb's account of the conquest cites one of his teachers 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (d. c. 846) and two scholars whose work he may have studied in Egypt: al-Wāqidi (d.c. 823) and 'Abd Allāh b. Wahab (d. 812). It is dominated by a number of the apocalyptic tropes associated with the Islamic conquests in the East.⁵⁶ In Spain, they coalesce around the figure of Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, the governor of North Africa who sent Ṭariq ibn Ziyād to conquer Spain in 711 and followed him to the peninsula in the following year. After besieging an unnamed city without success for "about twenty days" Mūsā ordered his men to call on Allāh.

51 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rikh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, 1, ed. de Goeje et al., 588–597.

52 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*; ed. Aguadé, 72–73.

53 Qur'an 38:35.

54 Qur'an 38:35.

55 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 73.

56 Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*; Makki, "Egipto y los origins;" Christys, "Ibn Ḥabīb and the Conquest of al-Andalus."

And the people said: 'Praise the Lord! Mūsā has lost his senses. He is ordering us to attack the cornerstones when we can't see anything except the walls and there is no means of access.' Then [Mūsā] went ahead between the lines and prayed earnestly and tearfully. We stood by, waiting for his *Allāhu akhbar* and the people cried *Allāhu akhbar* with him. Then he attacked and we attacked and the side of the fortress which was nearest to us was destroyed and the people went in and took captives, merchandise and jewels, too many to count.⁵⁷

Mūsā's success was to be short-lived. From the chronicler's perspective, as the legacy of Solomon's idolatry was played out in the peninsula, Mūsā's failure foreshadowed the end of Muslim rule over al-Andalus, perhaps the Last Days of the world. Ibn Ḥabīb introduced the theme with the following anecdote:

Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr went out to a river [...] where there were idols of men on the right bank and idols of women on the left. Then [...] he came to a place where there were copper domes. He ordered that one of the domes should be broken. Out came a devil who shook his head and said: 'Peace be upon you, Prophet of God, who tormented me in the world.' And when the devil learned that he was not Solomon (*Sulaymān*) he went up to him and Mūsā recognised that he was one of the devils that Solomon, peace be upon him, had imprisoned and he ordered that he should be left alone.⁵⁸

The jinn are some of the devils over whom Allāh gave Solomon control.⁵⁹ In a separate anecdote, another devil whom Solomon had imprisoned predicted the apocalypse. Mūsā came upon three idols

And when he reached the third idol he said 'dig!'. And they dug and there was a sealed bottle. Mūsā ordered [them] to open it and a strong smell issued from it. Mūsā said, 'Do you know what this is?' They replied, 'No'. He said, 'That is one of the jinn which Solomon the prophet, peace be upon him, imprisoned.' Then he went on until he reached one of the islands in the sea where he found sixteen green jars sealed with the seal of Solomon [...] He ordered that one of the jars be broken and out came a devil and shook its head and said 'He who honours you truly informs you of Allāh's prophecy which will not be repeated after the world is corrupted and a created being is destroyed'. And he ordered that the jars remain [where they were] and they were put back in their place.⁶⁰

By linking Mūsā with Solomon, Ibn Ḥabīb made Mūsā the locus for the same type of moral lessons that he had recounted in the section on the prophets. He could no longer call upon the *ḥadīth* concerning the prophets, but there was a store of fantastical tales about the conquest of al-Andalus that could be adapted to his purpose. To the frustration of later historians, Ibn Ḥabīb's narrative of the conquest has little

⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 144; Noth, *Early Islamic Historical Tradition*, 44.

⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 145.

⁵⁹ e.g. Qur'an 21:82.

⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 144.

detail on the itinerary of the conquest,⁶¹ but focuses on the crowns, jewels, rich carpets and other booty that the Islamic armies obtained from Spain and on their failure to hand over the caliph's share and to distribute the remainder among their followers. Ibn Ḥabīb condemned the greed of the conquerors and their deviation from the right path of *jihād*.⁶² His thesis was illustrated by what he recounted about the fate of one of Spain's more fabulous treasures, the Table of Solomon.⁶³

Tariq the client of Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr when he conquered Toldeo obtained there the Table of Solomon, son of David, peace be upon them both, adorned with jewels woven with gold with rows of pearls and sapphires of which no-one knew the value, and another table of onyx, also beyond price.⁶⁴

After Mūsā had been in al-Andalus for two years, he was summoned to the presence of the caliph in Damascus.

Then he returned to Ifrīqiya [...] and he ordered haste, and that the jewels and gold and silver and types of cloth of al-Andalus should be loaded up [...] Mūsā arrived before the death of al-Walid (in 715) and brought him precious things made of pearls and sapphires and chrysolite, together with maidservants and manservants and the Table of Solomon [...] and the crowns [of the Visigoths] adorned with wreathes of pearls and sapphires.⁶⁵

Mūsā's seizure of the Table of Solomon, which was rightfully the property of Ṭariq ibn Ziyād, was one of the instances of his greed that brought his nemesis at the hands of Walid's successor, Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik. The caliph became angry as Mūsā boasted of his conquests and the riches he had obtained for himself in land and goods and Sulaymān resolved to punish his over-mighty subject:

Sulaymān ordered that [humiliation] should be inflicted on him on a very hot summer's day. Mūsā was a large, corpulent man and he stood still [in the sun] until he fell to the ground unconscious. [...] Sulaymān looked at Mūsā as he lay unconscious and said: 'O [Mūsā] I did not think that you would depart from your oath [to serve the caliphate].'

Mūsā was eventually rehabilitated at a huge cost, said to be one hundred thousand dinars. The narrative of Mūsā's nemesis was popular; variants were copied into several Arabic histories and into the Latin Chronicle of 754,⁶⁶ where the chronicler noted that "Mūsā was ignominiously [...] and publicly paraded with a rope around

⁶¹ Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire et la littérature des arabes d'Espagne*, 33–34; Makki, "Egipto y los origins;" Manzano, *Conquistadores, Emires y Califas Los Omeyas y la formación de al-Andalus*, 36; Clarke, *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia*.

⁶² Clarke, *Muslim Conquest of Iberia*; Christys, "From *ḡihād* to *diwān* in two providential histories of Hispania/al-Andalus," 79–94.

⁶³ Rubiera Mata, "La Mesa de Salomon," 26–31.

⁶⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 141.

⁶⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 148.

⁶⁶ *Chronica muzarabica*, ed. Gil, vol. 1: 15–54.

his neck;” he was pardoned only after paying a fine of two million *solidi*.⁶⁷ Yet Mūsā served the caliph until his death, accompanying him on pilgrimage. Thus the story is not about Mūsā alone, but rather it is a moral tale about not withholding the fruits of conquest from the caliph, God’s representative on earth. By giving such a prominent role in the story to Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, Ibn Ḥabīb may also have evoked the town of Dābiq in northern Syria where Sulaymān was buried, one of the sites where, according to Islamic tradition, the events of the Last Days are to be played out.⁶⁸

Above all, Ibn Ḥabīb’s association between Mūsā and another scenario of the Last Days – the fall of Constantinople – highlighted the importance of al-Andalus in eschatological thought. Predictions of the fall of Constantinople in the Islamic eschatological tradition may have originated in similar Christian preoccupations.⁶⁹ Many *ḥadīth* dated this event to the centenary of the Hejira i.e. 717,⁷⁰ which was almost contemporary with the conquest of al-Andalus. The “prediction” was connected in some way to an unsuccessful Muslim siege of Constantinople of 715–717, although the link to real events became increasingly tenuous.⁷¹ According to a number of *ḥadīth* Constantinople was to be the scene of battles between the Muslims and the descendants of Heraclius, when after a great struggle the city would fall into the hands of the last remaining Muslims.⁷² By the middle of the ninth century a connection had been made between the conquest of al-Andalus and that of Constantinople. A tradition attributed to Sayf b. Umar (d.c. 800) held that the third caliph Uthmān “when he sent an army from Qayrawān to al-Andalus to conquer it, wrote to them, saying ‘Certainly, Constantinople will be conquered from al-Andalus. If you conquer [al-Andalus], you will share in the reward’.”⁷³ Later authors confirmed this association, which was a reflection of the liminal position of al-Andalus in the Islamic world. A short eschatological text of the eleventh century or later begins with a statement that “the people of the Maghreb (North Africa and al-Andalus) will continue to bear witness to the truth until the Last Hour.”⁷⁴ The author went on to cite an eleventh-century scholar Ibn Ḥumaydī, who explained that

67 *Cronica muzarabica*, ed. Gil, vol.1: 35, trans. Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, 134.

68 Dābiq was the name of the online magazine published by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 2014–2016, derived from a *ḥadīth* for which I am unfortunately unable to give a reference, naming it as the site of the last battle between Muslims and infidels.

69 Alexander, “Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources,” 997–1018; Álvarez Palenzuela, “Milenarismo y milenaristas en la edad media,” 11–32; Magdalino, “The History of the Future.”

70 Cook, “The Beginnings of Islam as an Apocalyptic Movement.”

71 Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others Saw it*, 26–31; Al-Azmeh, *God’s Chronography*.

72 Cook, “The Heraclian Dynasty in Muslim Eschatology,” 3–24.

73 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tā’rīkh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, ed. de Goeje, 255.

74 Fierro and Faghia, “Un nuevo texto de tradiciones escatológicas sobre al-Andalus,” 99–111.

This statement applies above all to al-Andalus, since its coast is bathed by the ocean beyond which there is nothing [...] the ocean surrounds it on all sides except on the north, which is in the hands of the Christians (*Rūm*) [...] and the land extends continuously from the border with the *Rūm* as far as Constantinople.

Ibn Ḥabīb did not cite these *ḥadīth* in the *History*, but he noted that in the course of his campaign in al-Andalus Mūsā:

Advanced into the land of the enemy until the people became more and more weary. They said ‘Where do you want to go with us? We have considered what is before us. Where do you want to take us – out of the world to seek greater things than God has [already] conquered for us?’ Musa laughed and said ‘By God! [...] I will go on to Constantinople and conquer it, if God wills it’.⁷⁵

Mūsā was forced to turn back from Constantinople and when he left the peninsula for Damascus he did so with a curse: “he turned in the direction of Cordoba and said ‘How wonderful you are! What God made delightful and exalts and glories in your power [will be] your malediction after two hundred years’.”⁷⁶ In fact, according to Ibn Ḥabīb’s continuator, the fulfillment of the prophecy took a little more than two hundred years, until the rule of the emir Abdullah (888–912):

A government that untied all the knots which his father and grandfather had tied in peace; in his reign sorrows followed; family members were arrested and their goods seized; the markets stagnated and prices were very high. Degenerates were raised up and the emir humiliated and the inhabitants of Cordoba the damned, the beloved, were humiliated and will be food for a tribe of Berbers [...].⁷⁷

[Ibn Ḥabīb] said: Cordoba, the whore, woe to her in the second battle, great the outrage, without morals ... She has no agreement or pact; affliction will befall her [...] assailed by spirits from the far places through a man with a snout, a young man of the people of evil omen⁷⁸ in his vanguard the Muslims and in his rear guard the polytheists and the people will flee to Carmona with a cry ‘O you who possess the damned city’.

[...] then Cordoba will be destroyed until no-one lives there except crows; power will move to Seville and the caliphs will come from the sons of Abbās and they will have the leadership until the sons of ‘Abu Talib (i.e. the Shi’ites) until the deceiver goes out and the Dākhl (Dajjāl) of the Quraysh of the sons of Fāṭima will come in and the people of al-Andalus will hand the governorship to him and in the time of this Fāṭimid Constantinople will be conquered.⁷⁹

The reference to Carmona may recall one of the key events in the history of the Umayyads in Spain – the site of the defeat by Abd al-Rahman I of al-‘Alā b.

⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 144.

⁷⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 146.

⁷⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 152.

⁷⁸ Attributees of the Mahdi; see Fierro, “Sobre al-Qarmuniyya,” 83–94.

⁷⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’rikh*, ed. Aguadé, 153.

al-Mughith, campaigning in support of the Abbasids in c. 763. Ibn Ḥabīb was “predicting what had already taken place”: an attempt by the Abbasids to take over al-Andalus. The name Carmona also recalls the incursions of Vikings in 844; when Seville was sacked, the inhabitants fled to Carmona.⁸⁰ A tenth-century historian associated Ibn Ḥabīb with this episode; Ibn Ḥabīb was deeply concerned by the destruction of Seville and wrote a letter to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II urging him to build walls around the town against the Vikings’ return.⁸¹

Ibn Ḥabīb and his continuator used a list of the governors and emirs of al-Andalus to compute the year of al-Andalus’ destruction. They noted that, when Mūsā entered Toledo

He found there a house of the kings and [...] in it were twenty-five royal crowns of pearls and sapphires, as [many] as the number of the kings who ruled al-Andalus (Visigothic Spain). When every one of them died they brought his crown to that house and wrote on the crown the name of its owner, how much he had accomplished in his lifetime up to the day of his death and how much remained in his dominion. And it is said that a number of the Muslim governors of al-Andalus from the day of the conquest will be counted [as the same as] the kings of the Christians (*‘ajam*) who were in it – twenty-five kings.⁸²

The list of the governors and emirs of al-Andalus in the *History*⁸³ has twenty-five names. The list corresponds very closely to the annalistic treatment of the governors by the *Chronicle of 754* for the period up to the middle of the eighth century.⁸⁴ Another very similar list was appended to *Chronicle of Albelda* compiled in northern Spain in the late ninth century: the so-called “Prophetic Chronicle”⁸⁵, also predicted the fall of al-Andalus in the 880s with the expulsion of the “Saracens” from Spain.⁸⁶ The decade was one of instability and a feeling prevailed that Umayyad control over al-Andalus was reaching its end.⁸⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb’s calculation of the End Times for al-Andalus, echoing the chronometric passages at the beginning of the *History*, defined the Last Days more exactly.

Yet, as is true of so many apocalyptic scenarios, it would be a mistake to over-interpret the details of these passages. Some of the *ḥadīth* that Ibn Ḥabīb cited can also be found in the collection of his contemporary, the Egyptian Nu’aym b.

⁸⁰ Ibn al-Quṭayba, *Ta’riḥ iftitāḥ al-Andalus*, ed. al-Abyārī, 78–81; Fierro, “Sobre al-Qarmuniyya.”

⁸¹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *Muqtabis II. Anales de los emires de Cordoba Alhaqem I (180–206 H./796–822 J.C.) y Abderraman II (206–232/822–847) Edición facsimile de un manuscrito árabe de la Real Academia de la Historia* (“Legado Emilio García Gómez”), ed. Vallvé Bermejo, folio 188v.

⁸² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’riḥ*, ed. Aguadé, 140.

⁸³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Ta’riḥ*, ed. Aguadé, 434–442.

⁸⁴ *Chronica Muzarabica*, ed. Gil, vol. 1: 15–54 *passim*; Sumner, “The Chronology of the Governors of al-Andalus to the Accession of ‘Abd al-Rahman I,” 422–469.

⁸⁵ See James Palmer in this volume.

⁸⁶ *Chroniques Asturiennes*, ed. Bonnaz, 8; Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 186.

⁸⁷ Manzano, *Conquistadores, Emires y Califas*, 347–349; Fierro, “Doctrinas y movimientos de tipo mesiánico en al-Andalus,” 159–175.

Ḥammād. Here, however, they “predict” the fall of the Abbāsids and that Constantinople will be conquered from Egypt.⁸⁸ We should read such statements as the expression of general rather than specific concerns: “the ritual reconfirmation of Muḥammadan veracity [...] [through] the simple device of pairing what tradition designated as his apocalyptic statements, gnomic as well as explicit, with specific events.”⁸⁹

Thus the message of the passage on the Last Days of al-Andalus cannot be separated from the selection of *ḥadīth* on the destruction of sinful nations and threats to the believers that accompanies it:

The beginning of the nation was prophecy and mercy and then [...] it became proud and overweening and depraved. [...] a man fasted at that time and gained nothing except hunger; he prayed and gained nothing except sleeplessness and distress; he went on pilgrimage but did not reach his goal; he gave alms but his alms were not accepted; he purified himself but his purity was not acceptable.⁹⁰

[...] the time of trial for the people of Islam is imminent, and especially for the people of the sects who are surrounded by dreadful sanctuaries, so that [some] peoples are converted to Judaism and others adopt Christianity.⁹¹

Rather than commenting on contemporary politics, Ibn Ḥabīb was using eschatological *ḥadīth* in the Islamic tradition that instructed the believers to command right and forbid wrong.⁹² Ibn Ḥabīb was moralising on the evils of al-Andalus in his own day just as he had pointed out how Solomon had erred and Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr had offended the norms of *jihād*. Although this approach to *ḥadīth* was controversial even in the author’s own lifetime, it is fundamental to his concept of history. For, according to the *ḥadīth* tradition, it is when people are at their worst that the Hour will come.⁹³

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⁸⁹ Al-Azmeh, “God’s Chronography,” 201.

⁹⁰ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta’rīkh*, ed. Aguadé, 152.

⁹¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Ta’rīkh*, ed. Aguadé, 155.

⁹² Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*.

⁹³ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, 39–40.

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