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Al-Andalus in *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*, by Abū al-Fidā'

1 Introduction

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the work *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*, by Abū al-Fidā', acquired great relevance among European scholars, and was considered crucial for an understanding of Islamic history. This keen interest led to the publication of several partial editions of the work, such as *Abilfedae annales moslemici*, published in Leipzig in the late 18th century, the 1831 *Historia anteislamica arabice* by the Orientalist Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer, also published in Leipzig, and an edition by French cleric Jean Gaigner published in Oxford in 1723.

However, as scholars became familiar with the sources upon which Abū al-Fidā' had relied, interest in his chronicle waned. Meanwhile, various Arabic editions were published over the course of the 20th century: a 1907 Cairene edition by publishers al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥusayniyya al-Miṣriyya, which was republished in 1968 in Baghdad; another edition prepared in Beirut between 1956 and 1961 by publishers Dār al-Fikr and Dār al-Biḥār; another by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya in 1997; and, most recently, an edition by Muḥammad Zaynahum, Muḥammad Fakhri and Yaḥyā Sayyid Ḥusayn, published by Dār al-Ma'ārif between 1998 and 1999 in Cairo. However, these editions have done little to rekindle interest in the text, as they lack even the most basic scholarly study one would expect from an academic publication. What is more, they do not even specify the manuscripts used, or offer any sort of critical apparatus to guide the reader through the text.¹

¹ The 1998–1999 edition contains a greater number of explanatory references than the rest of the editions, but in my opinion, it is still insufficient as a critical apparatus.

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Thus, today the outlook for Abū al-Fidā's work is hardly better than in the late 19th century. Modern scholars have paid little attention to it, except for translations of various fragments of the text narrating specific events, and brief biographical studies on the author.²

That said, the present study is based on the premise that for a broad and in-depth understanding of an intellectual context, it is not enough to study just the great historians of the period. Rather, it is important to understand lesser figures as well, as in the case of Abū al-Fidā'. Overall, the aim of this paper is to provide further elements in the construction of a global perspective of the relationships between the authors of this period and the Islamic West.

This paper presents the partial results of my study and analysis of the information about al-Andalus that appears in Abū al-Fidā's *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*.

2 The author

Late Ayyūbid historians have generally been classified into three categories: civil servants or men of state, court historians, and '*ulamā*'.³ While this classification should not be followed categorically, it does describe an overriding trend that extends into the first years of the Mamlūk period as well. As regards Abū al-Fidā's fellow Syrian historians, they hailed mostly from the third group. However, our author constitutes a notable exception to this rule: he came from an aristocratic Ayyūbid family, and his male ancestors were governors of the city of Hama throughout the dynasty's rule.

'Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl b. Alī b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Shāhanṣāh b. Ayyūb al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad⁴ was born in Damascus in the year 672 H/1273 CE. His close relationship with Mamlūk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (d. 741 H/1341 CE) and his active role in the fights against the crusaders propelled him to the fore of Hama's city government. Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn named him sultan of Hama, and sources say his independence and his authority

² Among the exceptions are the partial translation of Holt 1983, the biographical text of Kilānī 1998, or the most recent articles Najm 'Īsā 2006, and Ḥasan 2014.

³ Guo 1997.

⁴ This string of names is recorded by Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar* (1929–31), 1: 371. However, other sources on Abū al-Fidā's biography record as his *nasab* the string of honorific titles attributed to his powerful family: al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad 'Imād al-Dīn Ibn al-Afḍal Ibn al-Malik al-Muẓẓafar Ibn al-Malik al-Manṣūr, *ṣāhib* Ḥamā.

over the city were absolute.⁵ While Hama appears to have enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the central Mamlūk authority, there was nevertheless a clear relationship of dependence at work. Likewise, the close ties between Abū al-Fidā' and the Mamlūk authorities remained in place till the end of his life. Sources have attributed to Abū al-Fidā' a wide variety of texts, including poetic compositions and religious and literary works. However, his prestige stems from two works in particular: the chronicle at the heart of this paper, and a descriptive geographical work titled *Taqwīm al-buldān*.⁶ Abū al-Fidā' died in 732 H/1331 CE.

3 The work of Abū al-Fidā'

*Al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-baṣhar*⁷ falls squarely within the *ta'rikh* genre, and more specifically within the sub-genre of works that order information chronologically by year, *ta'rikh 'alā al-sinīn*, i.e. annalistic history.⁸ It is characterized by its concision, summarizing the information briefly and succinctly.

The type of information the work contains is for the most part descriptive. He mainly selects from his sources information describing the political events that took place in a given year. We occasionally find Abū al-Fidā''s interpretations of the events he draws from his sources, including the author's personal opinions.⁹

In structural terms, the work spans from the creation of the world up to the year 729 H/1329 CE, two years before the author's death. All of the editions contain the summary and continuation of the *Mukhtaṣar* composed by Syrian historian Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749 H/1349 CE), known as *Ta'rikh Ibn al-Wardī*,¹⁰ which covers historical events up to 749 H/1348 CE. Subsequent continuations were also made, for example by Ibn Ḥabīb al-Dimashqī (d. 779 H/1377 CE) or al-Qāḍī Ibn al-Shiḥna al-Ḥalabī (d. 890 H/1485 CE), an indication of the prestige that Abū al-Fidā''s work attained during this period.

The overall structure of the work is straightforward, in line with other works from this genre. It is divided into six parts. The first part begins with the creation of Adam, after which the author lists the prophets in chronological order. When

⁵ See Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar* (1929–31), 1: 371; Ibn Shākir, *Fawāt al-wafayāt* (1973), 1: 183.

⁶ See Gibb, "Abū 'l-Fidā", *EP*; Talmon-Heller, "Abū l-Fidā'", *EP*.

⁷ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997).

⁸ For further information, see Rosenthal 1952, 71–86.

⁹ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 9 and 236–237.

¹⁰ It was published in its own two-volume edition by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya in 1996, under the title *Ta'rikh Ibn al-Wardī*.

he reaches Moses, he inserts information about the leaders and kings of *banū Isrā'īl*, followed by the prophets up to Jesus and the second destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The second part covers the kings of Persia and is organized into generations (*ṭabaqāt*). The third contains information on the pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, along with Greek, Roman and Byzantine rulers. The fourth, “*Mulūk al-‘arab qabl al-islām*”, covers pre-Islamic Arab history. The fifth provides information on the different “nations” (*umam*) of the world. These five parts are short in comparison to the sixth and final section, which, on account of its content and the attention it is given by the author, constitutes the core of the work. It covers what Abū al-Fidā’ refers to as “Islamic history” (*al-ta’rīkh al-islāmī*). It reproduces the conventional structure of this sort of works, which is to say it begins with the biography of Muḥammad, followed by the four Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*), and the subsequent dynasties that succeeded them. It is in this part that we find information on al-Andalus, which shows up sporadically, interspersed with all manner of other information whose only common trait is having occurred in the same year. In all it records around 100 historical events pertaining to al-Andalus.

4 Analysis of the information

Regarding content, apart from general allusions to the Islamic conquests,¹¹ Abū al-Fidā’'s accounts of al-Andalus begin with the arrival of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I (r. 138–172 H/756–788 CE). In this sense he diverges from his main source, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta’rīkh*¹² by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630 H/1233 CE) – whose relationship with our text we will explore further on – which offers an extensive and detailed account of the conquest of al-Andalus and its aftermath. In other words, Abū al-Fidā’ makes no mention of the conquest of the Iberian peninsula, nor of events prior to the arrival of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I.

In general, the information that Abū al-Fidā’ provides on al-Andalus tends to be organized as follows: he first mentions the death of a ruler, followed by the length of his rule and a brief description of him, both physical and intellectual, ending by mentioning his successor, alongside some relevant facts related to the new ruler. This format characterizes his accounts of the emirate and caliphate, with the exception of the occasional anecdote from the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I,

¹¹ Abū al-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 275.

¹² Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987).

and the relatively closer attention paid to the reign of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III (r. 300–350 H/912–961 CE).

By contrast, he pays much more attention to the figure of Muḥammad b. Abī 'Āmir, Almanzor (r. 366–392 H/976–1002 CE). Abū al-Fidā' offers a detailed description of him, emphasizing his military campaigns as a defining trait of his reign.¹³ Perhaps the wartime context in which the author was writing motivated, in part, this extra attention to Almanzor's militarism. Abū al-Fidā' took part in multiple campaigns against the Crusaders, which are described in detail in the *Mukhtaṣar*.¹⁴ The importance he affords to *jihād* is evident not only based on his account of these campaigns, but also can be gathered from his own trajectory. As such, it is only natural that he emphasized Almanzor's military campaigns and his determination to fight against "the infidels".

This stylistic shift can also be detected in the events surrounding the period of *fitna* (399–422 H/1008–1031 CE) and the subsequent *taifa* kingdoms (422–484 H/1031–1091 CE). Abū al-Fidā' details the vicissitudes of the collapse of the 'Āmirid dynasty and the demise of the Umayyad caliphate of al-Andalus.¹⁵ The author of the *Mukhtaṣar* highlights the importance of certain events from this period, such as the fall of Toledo in 478 H/1085 CE, which he attributes directly to the dismembering of Islamic power in the peninsula into a mosaic of independent powers, and the resulting rise of factionalism.¹⁶ This event is related to what our author identifies as the origin "of the collapse of the pillars of the Islamic presence in the peninsula",¹⁷ namely the subsequent attempt by the Almohads to recover Toledo from the Christians. This statement is one of the few examples of critical interpretation that are to be found in Abū al-Fidā''s passages about al-Andalus.

Indeed, the stylistic shift in the narration of these events is clear: in contrast to the brevity and simplicity of the preceding fragments, his account of these periods is rich with detail and explanations, and is much longer by comparison.

The information on the Almoravids and Almohads, however, is subordinated to the events that occurred under both dynasties in North Africa. This shift in the author's focus thus sees al-Andalus cast as a mere extension of a power whose center of gravity is located squarely in the Maghrib. Still, the major milestones of

¹³ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 459.

¹⁴ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 357–358 and 359–361.

¹⁵ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 485–486 and 494–499.

¹⁶ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 9.

¹⁷ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 236–237.

Almohad rule in Andalus territory are briefly mentioned. By contrast, the information on the Almoravid dynasty in al-Andalus is limited to a brief mention of the arrival of Yūsuf b. Tāshufin (d. 500 H/1106 CE), the conquest of the territory, and the subsequent loss of certain enclaves.

Likewise, his lack of attention to the Naṣrid Kingdom of Granada is striking. He records only two events related to the Naṣrids: first, their plea for assistance to the Banū Marīn in the face of a Christian attack;¹⁸ and, second, their participation in the Battle of La Vega in 719 H/1319 CE, in which Ismāʿīl I defeated the *infantes* Juan and Pedro of Castile.¹⁹ This decreased attention paid to the Naṣrids coincides with the general lack of information on Andalus history towards the end of the *Mukhtaṣar*, and, in turn, to the last events recorded by Ibn al-Athīr in his *Kāmil*, Abū al-Fidāʾ's main source, as we have seen. After reaching the last events recorded in the *Kāmil*, which Abū al-Fidāʾ reproduces with slight textual modifications,²⁰ his interest in al-Andalus diminishes considerably.

Apart from historical events, the work also includes biographical information on various Andalus figures. Their appearance does not follow a clear pattern, as he includes some minor figures while leaving out other more relevant ones. Abū al-Fidāʾ tends to provide concise biographical information free of details, essentially confined to a date of death and brief mention of the person's role or occupation.

5 Perception of al-Andalus

Abū al-Fidāʾ first mentions al-Andalus in the chapter on the “nation” of the Christians (*al-naṣārā*) in the fifth part of the book, the one containing descriptions of the different nations of the world. The chapter opens with an introduction explaining the origin of the term *naṣārā*, along with other theological considerations regarding Christianity. He then includes a section titled “The nations who have converted to the religion of the Christians”. In this section Abū al-Fidāʾ mentions al-Andalus as a geographical reference to help the reader locate the *ifranj*, whose country, in the author's words, is contiguous with the peninsula of al-Andalus, lying just to the north. He then, without referring directly to the Islamic history of the peninsula, notes that “the *ifranj* have dominated the majority of the

18 Abū al-Fidāʾ, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 400.

19 Abū al-Fidāʾ, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 431.

20 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 10: 258. Cf. Abū al-Fidāʾ, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 185.

peninsula of al-Andalus".²¹ Abū al-Fidā' uses the term *ifranj* in a general sense to refer to the Christians of Western Europe, in clear opposition to the Byzantine Christians, whom he refers to as *rūm*.

In geographical terms, Abū al-Fidā' conceives of al-Andalus as a clearly bounded peninsula that includes both Christian and Muslim territories. This conception was for the most part accepted among the historians of the Mamlūk period and can be extended to other regions of the Islamic world.²² The geographical sense of the term al-Andalus, which can be inferred in most of the fragments the author dedicates to this territory, prevails over the place name's political-administrative sense.²³ Likewise, one comes away from Abū al-Fidā''s portrayal of al-Andalus with the impression that it is a peripheral region, an unstable borderland of the Islamic territory. As such, it should be borne in mind that he wrote the work in the early 14th century, when Islamic rule in the peninsula had been reduced to the Naṣrid Kingdom of Granada. My own opinion is that the Iberian peninsula's inherent instability, which only worsened after the fall of the Umayyad caliphate of Córdoba – the period where the *Mukhtaṣar* begins to pay the most attention to al-Andalus – reinforces its perception as peripheral and unstable.

6 Sources

Abū al-Fidā''s political status suggests that he must have had access to a wide range of books on a number of topics, which would have served as the backbone of his readings, in line with someone of his political stature. What the sources tell us about this author reinforces this idea, which, in any case, is nothing new. The various biographical texts on Abū al-Fidā' by later authors emphasize his role as patron.²⁴ These testimonies highlight his good treatment of contemporary scholars, his enthusiasm for welcoming them into his circle, and the importance he placed on scholarship (*ilm*) as a whole. We should therefore assume that access to a wealth of sources of information was not an issue for our author. And yet, this work is not characterized by a particularly original or varied use of sources,

²¹ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 147.

²² Along these lines, see García Sanjuán 2006, 43–59.

²³ There are numerous examples. See, for example, Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 147; 2: 87 and 432.

²⁴ A summary of the various opinions found among the sources can be found in the entry devoted to him by Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1089 H/1679 CE) in *Shadharāt al-dhahab*. See Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* (1986), 1: 59–60.

which gives rise to certain doubts as to its nature and aims, as we shall see. In any case, a study of the sources has made it possible to identify common patterns with other authors, and to determine how relevant different works were in the spread of knowledge about the Islamic West.

In this sense, Abū al-Fidā's main source for the *Mukhtaṣar* is, as has been noted, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rikh*, by Ibn al-Athīr. This work is cited at the top of the list of sources provided by the author in the introduction.²⁵ Unlike the rest of the sources, which Abū al-Fidā employs sporadically for information about specific events, the *Kāmil* has a foundational role in his work as it is his main source throughout the different periods and regions that he covers. Despite this heavy reliance, he rarely cites Ibn al-Athīr's work. The information on al-Andalus in the *Mukhtaṣar* is no exception to this rule, and for this region the *Kāmil* is also our author's core reference.

As for Ibn al-Athīr, his principal source – as he himself states – is the *Ta'rikh* of al-Ṭabarī²⁶ (d. 310 H/923 CE). The information that the *Kāmil* provides on al-Andalus, however, contains few references to al-Ṭabarī, which is only logical as the latter only touches on the region tangentially. Ibn al-Athīr himself, after narrating the events of 92 H/711 CE and mentioning the conquest of the Iberian peninsula, states the following:

All of this was mentioned by Abū Ja'far [al-Ṭabarī] about the conquest of al-Andalus, as an example of this grand territory and its conquest, but it is insufficient. I will mention the conquests [of the territory] in order to complete [them], with the blessing of Almighty God, through the works of its people, as they know their country better than anyone.²⁷

Although this fragment by Ibn al-Athīr explicitly recognizes the importance of Andalusī sources for knowledge on the region, it is of little use to us, as only very rarely does he make explicit reference to the Andalusī sources he employs.

Regarding the Andalusī sources that Ibn al-Athīr used in the *Kāmil*, Luis Molina has drawn attention to its relationship to the *Muqtabis* of Ibn Ḥayyān²⁸ (d. 469 H/1076 CE). Although the textual relationship between the two is plain to see, based on the data obtained in our study we agree with Molina's hypothesis that there must have been an intermediate source linking them together. The textual differences between the two works, the apparently arbitrary choice of events, as

²⁵ Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 12.

²⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 1: 7.

²⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 4: 264.

²⁸ Molina 1980, 435–441; Molina 1998, 39–65.

well as the order in which the information appears, seem to point in this direction. Likewise, Mahmood ul-Hasan, in his study on the *Kāmil*, entitled *Ibn al-Athīr, An Arab Historian. A Critical Analysis of his Tarikh-al-kamil and Tarikh-al-Atabeca*, ventures the possibility that *Bayān al-Mughrib* of Ibn 'Idhārī (d. after 712 H/1312-3 CE) shared several common sources, including Ibn Ḥayyān's *Muqtabis*.²⁹ Among the sources we are certain Ibn al-Athīr used³⁰ we find the work of Ibn Abī al-Fayyāḍ³¹ (d. 985 H/1066-7 CE). There is also reason to believe that Ibn al-Athīr knew and used the work of Ibn Khāqān (d. 529 H/1134 CE), *Qalā'id al-īqyān fī maḥāsin al-a'yān*.³²

Apart from Ibn al-Athīr's *Kāmil*, another Eastern source that Abū al-Fidā' used for information on al-Andalus is *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, by Ibn Khallikān (d. 681 H/1282 CE). Ibn Khallikān was an important source for authors from this period. As far as al-Andalus is concerned, *Wafayāt al-a'yān* is a valuable source of information, not only in light of its precision or the fact that Ibn Khallikān regularly cites his sources, but also because it is the only known source for certain events from the peninsula.

Our author makes very peculiar use of this work. He draws on it without citing it in any way, most of all for biographical passages on Andalusī intellectuals and 'ulamā'. As mentioned above, the figures he chooses do not appear to follow any clear criterion. The authors that Abū al-Fidā' takes from Ibn Khallikān's work are, in order of appearance, Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi; Ibn Sīdah al-Mursī; Ibn Zaydūn; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, when mentioning various *ḥadīths* recorded in his *Bahjat al-majālis*; al-A'lam al-Shantamarī; al-Ḥuṣrī al-Qayrawānī, in the form of several verses he dedicated to al-Mu'tamid; Abū Bakr Ibn Baqī, of whom he reproduces a *muwashshaḥa* copied, in turn, by Ibn Khallikān from the *Qalā'id* and which Abū al-Fidā' cites, but via *Wafayāt al-a'yān*; Qur'ān reciter Yaḥyā b. Sa'dūn; Ibn Bashkuwāl; Abū Bakr Ibn Zuhri; and Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn Kharūf al-Ishbīlī.³³

²⁹ Ul-Hasan 2005.

³⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 8: 109.

³¹ A historian from Ēcija who lived in Almería most of his life. He wrote a history book titled *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, of which only three pages have been preserved, in Ibn al-Abbār's (596–658 H/1198–1260 CE) *al-Ḥulla al-siyarā'*. For more information, see the excellent study by Álvarez de Morales 1978–79.

³² Various fragments found in the *Kāmil* coincide with passages that appear in Ibn Khāqān's *Qalā'id al-īqyān*, and follow a similar order. See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 8: 505. Cf. Ibn Khāqān, *Qalā'id al-īqyān* (1860), 28 and 34.

³³ Apart from these, to a lesser degree, brief biographical notes of other Andalusī scholars are recorded. At the end of this article, a list of the Andalusī scholars about whom the *Mukhtaṣar* includes some biographical information is offered in appendix.

In contrast to what we have seen thus far regarding Eastern sources, Western sources in general, and fragments concerning al-Andalus in particular, are less present in Abū al-Fidā's work. These sources are mainly mined for bits of poetry that serve to illustrate the events recorded in the *Mukhtaṣar*, or as evidence of a given figure's literary prowess.

Within this group of sources we find two poetry anthologies: *al-Dhakhīra fī maḥāsīn ahl al-Jazīra*, by Ibn Bassām (d. 542 H/1147-8 CE), and the aforementioned *Qalā'id al-'iqyān*, by Ibn Khāqān. Regarding the former, Abū al-Fidā includes a fragment of a poem to illustrate the events that took place during the *fitna* and the ensuing fragmentation of al-Andalus.³⁴ The verses reproduced by Abū al-Fidā are part of a classical *urjūza* by Andalusī poet Abū Ṭālib 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Mutanabbī, from Alzira (d. after 512 H/1118 CE), which is not included by Ibn al-Athīr and has been preserved in full in the *Dhakhīra*.³⁵ However, it is important to point out the many textual differences between the fragment as reproduced by Abū al-Fidā and as it appears in Ibn Bassām, which could indicate an indirect use of this anthology. There is further evidence that the work of the poet of Santarém, Ibn Bassām, circulated in the East very early on, enjoying considerable prestige from the very beginning. Specifically, we are aware of two compendiums of this work made by Eastern authors: *Laṭā'if al-Dhakhīra wa-ṭarā'if al-Jazīra*, by Ibn Mammātī (d. 606 H/1209 CE), an Egyptian residing in Aleppo; and *Nafā'is al-Dhakhīra*, by the Egyptian 'Alī b. Zāfir al-Azdī (d. 613 H/1216 CE).³⁶ It is therefore fully possible that Abū al-Fidā obtained information contained in this book via another author.

As for the work of Ibn Khāqān, it is mentioned on two occasions. One of them is in fact a copy of the passage from *Qalā'id al-'iqyān* quoted by Ibn Khallikān when discussing poet from Córdoba Abū Bakr Ibn Baqī³⁷ (d. 540 or 545 H/1145-6 or 1150-1 CE). Abū al-Fidā reproduces part of a *muwashshaḥa* by this Andalusī author recorded in *Wafayāt al-a'yān*.³⁸ It is mentioned a second time when relating the exile of al-Mu'tamid (d. 488 H/1095 CE), the last ruler of the *taifa* of Seville, in Aghmat, specifically to introduce a poem by al-Mu'tamid celebrating the end of the period of fasting.³⁹ These verses are also recorded in the *Kāmil* but, unlike Abū al-Fidā, Ibn al-Athīr does not mention their authorship.⁴⁰ The

³⁴ Abū al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 498–499.

³⁵ Ibn Bassām, *al-Dhakhīra* (2000), 1: 696–716.

³⁶ Lirola 2009, 581.

³⁷ Abū al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 85–86.

³⁸ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān* (1972), 6: 204.

³⁹ Abū al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 23.

⁴⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 8: 505.

Mukhtaṣar also contains verses by the poet Ibn al-Labbāna (d. 507 H/1113 CE) on the death of al-Mu'tamid, which Abū al-Fidā' takes from the work of Ibn Khāqān without citing his source.⁴¹

Abū al-Fidā''s handling of these works raises the possibility that, although on occasion he may have used them indirectly via other sources, he may indeed have had access to the originals while writing the *Mukhtaṣar*. Indeed, in some instances he cites the work explicitly, while in others he extracts fragments – mainly verses – that do not appear in his other sources.

We also find references to other Western sources in order to provide specific types of information. Foremost among these are *al-Fiṣal fī al-mīl wa-l-ahwā' wa-l-niḥal*, by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456 H/1064 CE), and *al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib*, by Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī (d. 685 H/1286 CE). Ibn Ḥazm's text is used to clarify information regarding the different religious schools within Judaism and Christianity.⁴² The *Fiṣal* is not cited, and its author is rarely mentioned; however, we must not rule out the possibility that Abū al-Fidā' consulted this book more extensively. By contrast, Ibn Sa'īd's *Mughrib* is cited in numerous passages, in particular when discussing the history of the prophets and nations prior to Islamic history.⁴³ It is safe to say that of the Western works we have identified here, this is the one that our author used the most, not only in quantitative terms, but also as a major authority on pre-Islamic history. It is also used to clarify information from other sources, as in the case of Ibn Khallikān's explanation of the meaning of the *nisba* al-Shalawbīn⁴⁴ (in reference to the Arabic name for the town of Salobreña, Shalawbāniyya). Here Abū al-Fidā' refers to information recounted by Ibn Sa'īd on renowned grammarian Abū 'Alī al-Shalawbīn⁴⁵ (d. 645 H/1247 CE).

Also mention is made of the work of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463 H/1071 CE) of Córdoba *al-Istī'āb fī ma'rīfat al-aṣḥāb* on Muḥammad's companions, from which our author takes some verses attributed to Ḥāritha b. Shurāḥīl in relation to his son Zayd, adopted son of the Prophet,⁴⁶ and the work of Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi *Iqd al-farīd*, which was a fundamental work for the genre of *ayyām al-'arab* (the Battle-Days). Abū al-Fidā' narrates one of these days (*yawm Sha'b*) by explicitly citing

41 Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 23–24. Cf. Ibn Khāqān, *Qalā'id al-iqyān* (1860), 32 and 33.

42 Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 132–133 and 143. Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal* (1927), 1: 48.

43 For some examples see Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 59, 60, 79, 95.

44 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān* (1972), 3: 451–452.

45 Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 282–283.

46 Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 156–157. Cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb* (1992), 2: 544.

the work of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi. Although it is mentioned only on two occasions,⁴⁷ Abū al-Fidā’ should have used this work more frequently.

Lastly, another Western source employed by Abū al-Fidā’ is *al-Jam‘ al-bayān fi akhbār Qayrawān*, by Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ṣinhājī, cited as *Ta’rīkh Qayrawān li-l-Ṣinhājī*. While it is explicitly mentioned as a source in the introduction, it could be that it was also used via the work of Ibn al-Athīr, as the *Ta’rīkh* of al-Ṣinhājī enjoyed a degree of popularity among Eastern authors, including Ibn Khallikān and al-Maqrīzī (d. 845 H/1442 CE). In the *Mukhtaṣar* it appears in relation to the history of the Maghrib, but it is also used in relation to the information provided on the kings of the Zirid *taifa* of Granada.⁴⁸

Another important aspect that in my opinion makes the *Mukhtaṣar* all the more valuable is its close relationship to *Masālik al-abṣār* of al-‘Umarī (d. 749 H/1349 CE). It is important to bear in mind the fundamental differences between these two works. Whereas Abū al-Fidā’'s almost perfectly matches up with our understanding of the *ta’rīkh* genre, al-‘Umarī's *Masālik* stands at the confluence of multiple genres, encompassing geography, biography and history, as was very often the case among contemporary authors from the region.⁴⁹ The connection between Abū al-Fidā’'s work and that of al-‘Umarī is mainly to be found in the purely historical sections of the *Masālik*, i.e. volumes 25, 26 and 27. With the exception of some minor modifications by al-‘Umarī in relation to certain names, and the omission of the biographical fragments recorded by Abū al-Fidā’ and which al-‘Umarī covers in his work's biographical section, one might infer that al-‘Umarī copied the *Mukhtaṣar* in its entirety, including it in his *Masālik* without any mention of its provenance.

In terms of the information on al-Andalus, the relationship between the two works follows the exact same pattern we have just seen, i.e. nearly all the historical information recorded by al-‘Umarī is copied word-for-word from the *Mukhtaṣar*. The similarities run so deep that he even mentions the same sources as Abū al-Fidā’ and, what I find most illuminating, reproduces the same mistakes.⁵⁰ In fact, one of the editors of the 2002 edition of al-‘Umarī's text, Ḥamzah Aḥmad ‘Abbās, had to stop and wonder whether this was really a part of the *Masālik* or was in fact a previously unknown manuscript of the *Mukhtaṣar*.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Abū al-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 131 and 219.

⁴⁸ Abū al-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 2: 11–12.

⁴⁹ On the encyclopedic genre, see the recent work by Muhanna 2018.

⁵⁰ For example, al-‘Umarī reproduces Abū al-Fidā’'s mistake when referring to the aforementioned Abū Ṭālib ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Mutanabbī of Alzira as *al-Muthanā al-Andalusī*. See Abū al-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar* (1997), 1: 498–499; al-‘Umarī, *Masālik al-abṣār* (2010), 26: 211.

⁵¹ Al-‘Umarī, *Masālik al-abṣār* (2001–2004), 27: 6.

This relationship between the two works raises a series of questions that we hope to resolve as our research progresses, so that we can come to terms with the reasons behind this striking similarity.

7 Conclusions

Abū al-Fidā''s *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-baṣhar* is a minor work in relation to others from this same period, as large portions of the text reproduce information from other sources, most notably Ibn al-Athīr's *Kāmil*. Along these same lines, it offers little more than informative summaries, with almost no critical interpretation of the information it presents. Still, the study of "minor" authors is a necessary part of comparative studies that can help us to reach broad conclusions as to the role of the Islamic West in Mamlūk historiography, as stated at the outset of this article. What this study has shown us is that in our author's time certain Andalusī and Maghribī texts still enjoyed a degree of relevance.

Specifically regarding the *Mukhtaṣar*, what we have learned is that the author likely regarded al-Andalus as a region on the periphery. We can infer this from the lack of attention afforded to al-Andalus as compared not only to the Islamic East, but also to the Maghrib. This vision stands in stark contrast to the sense of centrality that surrounds his portrayal of the Mamlūk Sultanate. Likewise, we can draw still more conclusions that are all the more convincing in light of the author's political career. As we have seen, the Iberian peninsula's Umayyad period does not receive the attention that one would expect based on the historical relevance of the dynasty's rule in al-Andalus, as compared to the greater attention he pays to other periods. In this sense, we must not forget that Abū al-Fidā' himself was an Ayyūbid prince, and that, however symbolically, this dynasty's founder, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn b. Ayyūb (d. 589 H/1193 CE), had recognized the preeminence of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate.⁵² Some authors have pointed to Mamlūk historians' preoccupation with narrating "the injustices of the Umayyads".⁵³ While Abū al-Fidā' does not express outright animosity toward the Umayyads, in the *Mukhtaṣar* he does at least treat the dynasty's history with indifference.

Lastly, it is worth considering the work's synthetic character, as well as the preferential treatment afforded to the *Kāmil*. It may be the case that the author's

⁵² Eddé, "Ayyūbids", *EP*.

⁵³ Irwin 2006, 159.

true aim was to write a historical compendium that continued this prior text, adding to it the relevant historical events of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk sultanates. As we have seen, after the last events from al-Andalus narrated by Ibn al-Athīr, Abū al-Fidā's attention to the region is minimal. Although the work continues to provide information on other regions after 628 H/1230-1 CE – the last year covered in the *Kāmil* – the *Mukhtaṣar* begins to take on the characteristics of a local chronicle, focusing mainly on events from the domains of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk sultanates.

Appendix

Next a list of the Andalusis about whom Abū al-Fidā' provides some biographical notes in his work is offered. Those Andalusis that are cited by the author only as a source have not been included, as they have already been mentioned throughout the article. Apart from providing additional information about al-Andalus to that which has been obtained from the analysis of Abū al-Fidā's work, this type of lists will allow us to determine which Andalusī personalities enjoyed greater notoriety and prestige among oriental authors.

The data included in the list are the following:

1. Onomastic chain containing the first three generations of the *nasab* (names of the individual, father and grandfather), then the *shuhra* (name by which is known) and finally, the *kunya* (patronymic).
2. Place of birth and date of death.
3. Reference of the place where the individual appears in Abū al-Fidā's *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar* (1997): AM, volume, page.
4. Link to the character file on the PUA (Prosopography of the 'ulamā' of al-Andalus) Database – directed by María Luisa Ávila –, through which the information relating to these characters can be expanded, and a list of the sources that include his biography can be consulted.

‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Mutanabbī, Abū Ṭālib

Alzira (d. after 512 H/1118 CE)

AM, 1: 498

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=4169

Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad, Ibn Zaydūn, Abū al-Walīd

Córdoba (d. 463 H/1071 CE)

AM, 1: 545–546

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=1207

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Rabbihi, Abū 'Umar

Córdoba (d. 328 H/940 CE)

AM, 1: 419

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=1837

'Alī b. 'Abd al-Ghanī, al-Ḥuṣrī al-Qayrawānī, Abū al-Ḥasan

Ceuta (d. 488 H/1095 CE)

AM, 2: 24

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=6563

'Alī b. Ismā'īl, Ibn Sīdah al-Mursī, Abū al-Ḥasan

Murcia (d. 458 H/1066 CE)

AM, 1: 544

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=6384

'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī, Ibn Kharūf, al-Duraydanuh, Abū al-Ḥasan

Seville (d. 604 H/1207 CE)

AM, 2: 208

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=6806

Al-Faṭḥ b. Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh/al-Faṭḥ, Ibn Khāqān, Abū Naṣr

Seville (d. 529 H/1134 CE)

AM, 2: 82

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=2488

Khalaf b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Mas'ūd, Ibn Bashkuwāl, Abū al-Qāsim

Córdoba (d. 577 H/1181 CE)

AM, 2: 148

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=3132

Mālīk b. Yaḥyā b. Wahīb, Ibn Wahīb al-Andalusī, Abū 'Abd Allāh

Seville (d. 525 H/1130 CE)

AM, 2: 54

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=7729

Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mālik, Ibn Mālik al-Jayyānī, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh

Jaén (d. 672 H/1273 CE)

AM, 2: 339

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=9450

Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Zuhr, Ibn Zuhr al-Ḥafid, Abū Bakr

Seville (d. 595 H/1199 CE)

AM, 2: 186

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=12359

Muḥammad b. Fattūḥ Abī Naṣr, al-Ḥumaydī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh

Mallorca (d. 488 H/1095 CE)

AM, 2: 24

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=10249

Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Hānī’, Ibn Hānī’ al-Andalusī, Abū al-Qāsim/Abū al-Ḥasan

Seville (d. 362 H/973 CE)

AM, 1: 452

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=7934

Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā b. Muḥammad, Ibn al-Labbāna, Abū Bakr

Dénia (d. 507 H/1113 CE)

AM, 2: 23–24

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=10212

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Sahl, Ibn Sahl al-Azdī

Granada (d. 730 H/1329 CE)

AM, 2: 450

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=10387

Muḥammad b. al-Walīd b. Muḥammad, al-Ṭurtūshī, Ibn Abī Randaqa, Abū Bakr

Tortosa (d. 520 H/1126 CE)

AM, 2: 54

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=10651

Mundhir b. Sa‘īd b. ‘Abd Allāh, al-Ballūṭī, Abū al-Ḥakam

Córdoba (d. 355 H/966 CE)

AM, 1: 459

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=11038

ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar, al-Shalawbīn/al-Shalawbīnī, Abū ʿAlī
Seville (d. 645 H/1247 CE)

AM, 2: 282–283

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=7087

Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Baqī, Abū Bakr
Córdoba (d. 540 H/1145 CE)

AM, 2: 85–86

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=11499

Yaḥyā b. Saʿdūn b. Tammām, Ibn Saʿdūn, Abū Bakr
Córdoba (d. 567 H/1171 CE)

AM, 2: 131

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=11535

Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Abū ʿUmar
Córdoba (d. 463 H/1071 CE)

AM, 1: 546–547

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=11873

Yūsuf b. Sulaymān b. ʿĪsā, al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, Abū al-Ḥajjāj
Faro (d. 476 H/1083 CE)

AM, 2: 7

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=11843

Al-Walid b. Bakr b. Makhlad, Abū al-ʿAbbās
Zaragoza (d. 392 H/1002 CE)

AM, 1: 482

https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/personaje/consulta_personaje.php?id=2572

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