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Exile, Encounter, and the Articulation of Andalusī Identity in the Maghrib

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Abstract

This article explores how Ibn al-Khaṭīb's historiographical perspective informed an Andalusī vision of the history of the western Mediterranean and how it articulated an Andalusī identity vis-à-vis the Maghrib, where it became deeply rooted. Through an examination of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's historiographical and geographical work, and considering his own experience of exile and encounter in the Maghrib, I argue that Ibn al-Khaṭīb was both illustrative of a larger trend whereby Andalusī argued for their cultural value as a displaced community in the Maghrib and a crucial actor in articulating and informing the long-term historiographical perspective on the history of the Islamic West and al-Andalus's place in it.

Keywords

Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb – historiography of al-Andalus and the Maghrib – Andalusī exiles and refugees

Introduction

The second half of the fourteenth century witnessed a revolution in the historiography of the Islamic West. The centrality of al-Andalus, its experience as a battleground for *jihād* against the unbelievers, and the fashioning of its culture as the high culture of the wider region constitute some of the principal characteristics of this revolution in historical writing. This was certainly not the first time these issues surfaced; many were present from at least the end

of the eleventh century. However, arguably the two most influential figures in shaping the “story of al-Andalus” as a whole (and especially as it was remembered or recounted in the Maghrib)¹ worked and wrote in the fourteenth century. The historical writings of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 784/1382)² and Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375)³ are pillars of the historiography of the Islamic West (*al-Gharb al-Islamī*), perhaps for the first time conceived of as a whole in this period, and in which the Andalusī experience is given pride of place.⁴ Ibn Khaldūn’s work has received the greater share of attention in the modern era, on account of his articulation of a theory of history and social change, concepts in tune with social scientific ideas of the twentieth century.⁵ In contrast, Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s belletristic style made him less accessible to modern western audiences and scholarship. It is arguably his work, however, that had the greater impact on shaping the narrative and pervading tone of the history of al-Andalus and how it is remembered in the Maghrib and the Arabic textual tradition.

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- 1 I am conceiving of history as a set of literary genres with conventions and themes as well as a set of discursive practices with associated social realities (The prestige of rulers and scholars rested on the intellectual genealogies outlined in texts such as those written by Ibn al-Khaṭīb). By “memory” and “remembering,” I am thus conceiving of an active performance, perhaps even invention. Irrespective of the text’s relation to the past it purports to describe or recover, the perspective here emphasizes the practice as a performance, monumentalization, or as expression and reproduction of the social order.
 - 2 M. Talbi, “Ibn Khaldūn,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*² (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 3:825–831. On the relationship and correspondence between Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn al-Khaṭīb, see Celia del Moral, “Luces y sombras en las relaciones entre Ibn al-Jaṭīb e Ibn Jaldūn a traves de su correspondencia personal,” in *Ibn al-Jaṭīb y su tiempo*, ed. Celia del Moral and Fernando Velázquez Basanta (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2012), 205–221. See also Celia del Moral and Fernando Velázquez Basanta, “La *Risāla* de Ibn al-Jaṭīb a Ibn Jaldūn con motivo de su matrimonio con una cautiva cristiana,” in *Ibn al-Jaṭīb y su tiempo*, 223–239.
 - 3 Jacinto Bosch-Vilá, “Ibn al-Khaṭīb,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², 3:835–837; Jorge Lirola Delgado *et alii*, “Ibn al-Jaṭīb,” in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vilchez, 7 vols and 1 vol. appendix (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2004–2012), 3:643–698.
 - 4 Ramzi Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate: Ifriqiya and Its Andalusis, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 153–154.
 - 5 Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 36–77; Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 102; and Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 222–231.

The symbolic appropriation of the traditions of al-Andalus is something Maghribī dynasties have done since the inception of large-scale regimes there, beginning with the Almoravids in the eleventh century. Two and a half centuries later, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632),⁶ out of a personal investment in the experience of his ancestors, mined the library of the Saʿdī sultans in Marrakesh (although he wrote much of it in Cairo). The result, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb wa-dhikr wazīrihā Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb* (“The Scented Breeze from the Tender Bough of al-Andalus and Mention of its Vizier Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb”), is one of the most influential works on the history of al-Andalus. As is well known, the first part of this work is profoundly influenced by Ibn al-Khaṭīb and the second half is dedicated entirely to him;⁷ it is, thus, a history told through the prism of a figure considered a paragon of Andalusī character. It is also, to some extent, the product of royal Saʿdī sponsorship—through the gathering and preservation of the materials—underlining the cultural investment of this Moroccan dynasty (of its predecessors and successor) in the articulation of this memory and of its public role as preserver. By al-Maqqarī’s time interest in cultivating the history of al-Andalus was widespread among the literate class of the broader Arab world, as the instigation to write the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb* from a fellow scholar in Damascus would appear to indicate.

I would like to argue here that the articulation of Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s idea of al-Andalus is the result, to an important extent, of the encounter of Andalusī and Maghribī, and especially of the evolution of this encounter in the Maghrib,⁸ to where Andalusī were increasingly displaced either by the violent dislocation of the Christian-Muslim frontier or because of internal political conflict (not always entirely separate processes). For Ibn al-Khaṭīb, exile and displacement to the Maghrib as a personal experience was significant in shaping his narrative of al-Andalus, complemented by the accumulated experience of banishment, exile, and refuge, which so characterized the Andalusī experience in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The generation of Ibn al-Khaṭīb

6 Évariste Lévi-Provençal [and Ch. Pellat], “Al-Maqqarī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*² (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 6:187–188.

7 An important example of longer biographical forms which grew in popularity after the thirteenth century. Both of al-Maqqarī’s major works are framed as biographies.

8 Versions of this encounter took place in al-Andalus, over many generations, from the beginning of the conquest. Maghribī, Andalusī, Berber, Arab-Andalusī, and Hispano-Muslim (amongst others) are all identities that were neither monolithic nor stable, however. One of the arguments of this essay is that displacement and encounter in the Maghrib change the perception and articulation of what it meant to be Granadan, Arab-Andalusī, or Maghribī.

witnessed the maturation of this process in which elite Andalusīs like himself sought employment or patronage in the cities and courts of the Maghrib and argued for their cultural and technical value in Maghribī society. One of the consequences of this process was the “Andalusianization” of the historiography of the Maghrib.

In a recent book on the historical development of the Ḥaḥḥid Emirate, Ramzi Rouighi argues, among other things, that Ibn al-Khaldūn’s great history, the *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*⁹ was the most “systematic and comprehensive work ever written to frame the entire history of the Maghrib as the history of ‘Arabs’ and ‘Berbers;’” that is, as a history defined by the interactions of genealogical and ethnic groups of clear identification. “This is significant,” he continues, “because it made an Andalusī perspective the standard way of understanding the Maghrib and its past. Ibn Khaldūn’s understanding of the two categories owed a great deal to their earlier development and use in al-Andalus.”¹⁰ Rouighi goes on to argue that an uncritical reliance, dating to the colonial period, on the work of Ibn Khaldūn and a few other sources produced a distorted reading of North African history in which, for example, the unity of Ifrīqiya as construed by Ḥaḥḥid ideology is taken for granted, understood as “natural.” The result has been to “establish late medieval ideology as history.”¹¹ Much of Rouighi’s book is thus dedicated to analyzing the socio-political context for the production and reception of the historiography of the period, including the work of Ibn Khaldūn who, Rouighi argues, spoke to specific interests in the valuation of his Andalusī genealogy and of its placement within the cultural-intellectual production of the Ḥaḥḥid court.

Rouighi’s book is just one of the better and most recent works on the reception of Andalusī culture in the Maghrib, a process dating back to the tenth century (and in the imagination of Peninsulars and North Africans, even earlier).¹² Interaction between the two coasts intensified greatly at the end of the eleventh century with political unification under the Almoravids. The first half of the thirteenth century witnessed the great territorial decline of

9 ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada’ wa-l-khabar fī ayyām al-‘arab wa-l-‘ajam wa-l-barbar wa-man ‘āsarahum min dhawī al-sultān al-akbar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1956), 7 vols.

10 Ramzi Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate*, 153.

11 Ramzi Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate*, 177.

12 Al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094) ascribes the foundations of Sijilmāsa in the eighth century to a smith being left behind by an Andalusī caravan, a literary trope that ascribes the origins of technical and cultural expertise in the Maghrib to al-Andalus. Abū ‘Ubayd al-Bakrī, *L’Afrique Septentrionale*, trans. Mac Guckin De Slane (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1965), 149.

historical Andalus, including most of its significant urban centers. An exodus of Andalusī to the Maghrib ensued. The second half of the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth century was thus a crucial moment for the settlement of Andalusī communities and elites in the Maghrib where displaced Andalusī found new homes in different urban centers and patronage in competing courts. By the middle of the fourteenth century, this experience had matured or began to be articulated in a clearer form. Ibn al-Khaṭīb's political career—and literary and historiographical production—has its context in this encounter of Maghribī and Andalusī. And the spirit of his work resonated with and amplified the prestige attached to Andalusī origins. Ibn al-Khaṭīb was thus, in a sense, successful in the aestheticization of the memory and culture of al-Andalus and, therefore, in the estimation given to its representatives in the Maghrib. The relationship between the fragmented and competitive socio-political landscape of the Maghrib and Granada and Ibn al-Khaṭīb's production is a topic that deserves greater analysis. In what follows I will focus on the how Ibn al-Khaṭīb constructed the image of al-Andalus in the Maghrib by adopting a comparative framework, most visible in his short work comparing the cities of Málaga and Salé.

The Image of al-Andalus and the Maghrib in the Works of Ibn al-Khaṭīb

From the outset of his autobiography, Ibn al-Khaṭīb traces his genealogy to the historical heart of Andalusī high culture.¹³ In the entry dedicated to himself at the end of the *Iḥāta*, after stating his full name, Ibn al-Khaṭīb writes that he is “of Cordoban origin, then of Toledo, then of Loja, then of Granada.”¹⁴ He informs the reader that his family was among the Arab notables who had left Cordoba after the revolt of *al-Rabaḍ* “like Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Laythī.” Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Laythī (d. 234/848) was an influential *faqīh* (jurist) credited traditionally with transmitting to al-Andalus Mālik's *Muwattaʿa*, the foundational text of the Mālikī school of law.¹⁵ With the invocation of a single name, Ibn al-Khaṭīb associates his ancestors with a figure central to the canonization of the Mālikī school of law in al-Andalus and, therefore, with its principal

13 Ibn Khaldūn does something similar. Ramzi Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate*, 152–156.

14 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Al-Iḥāta fī akhbār Gharnāta*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ‘Inān (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1973), 4:439.

15 Maribel Fierro, “Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Laythī,” *ET*², 9:248–249.

learning establishment.¹⁶ Neither random nor quaint, this association is meant to speak to values shared by Andalusīs and Marghibīs, in which Andalusī origins claimed the centrality of place of origin. The warm welcome afforded Ibn al-Khaṭīb by the Marinid sultan, Abū Sālim Ibrāhīm, which included a comfortable stipend, demonstrates the personal prestige enjoyed by Ibn al-Khaṭīb not only as a scholar and courtier but also as member of the Andalusī elite whose material, literary, and religious culture Marinids and Hafṣids strove to emulate and appropriate. Arab-Andalusī origins were a mainstay of genealogical legitimacy among Andalusī political elites, both in al-Andalus and in the Maghrib, where they migrated in growing numbers.¹⁷ The Nasrids claimed, and Ibn al-Khaṭīb attributed to them, Anṣārī (Medinan) origins.¹⁸ And Arab-Andalusī origins would prove to be of abiding prestige in the Maghrib, inextricably combined with the political tradition of the Umayyads and the elite learning and religious-political tradition they sponsored.

The experience of exile from Granada, in the Maghrib, had an intellectually galvanizing effect on Ibn al-Khaṭīb. He worked here on many of his most important works, including the *Iḥāṭa* and the geographical works discussed below.¹⁹ Being removed from the affairs of the Nasrid court gave him time to reflect, presumably, along with the resulting relative isolation and tranquility. It is likely, moreover, that his creativity was stirred by the experience of being or realizing himself to be Andalusī in the Maghribī context, of being asked (even if not directly) to embody or perform Andalusī-ness and having a comparative perspective from which this Andalusī-ness could be better appreciated. And while he had traveled to the Maghrib in a diplomatic capacity before, the unsettling experience of exile must have made the separation and immersion into the new culture starker. In the *Iḥāṭa*, Ibn al-Khaṭīb does not frame this Andalusī-ness in the chronological narration of the story of the Emirate of Granada, but rather in the encyclopedic, local, generational organization of the *ṭabaqāt* or biographical dictionary, reproducing a significant

16 Also the dominant legal and higher-learning tradition of the Maghrib and west Africa, in the Maghrib from the twelfth century and in west Africa from the fourteenth.

17 The greatest influx would have taken place between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

18 Also the locus of origin of the Mālikī School. On the biography of the founding Nasrid, see Bárbara Boloix Gallardo, “«Yo Soy el Ŷuhayna de sus noticias». Ibn al-Jaṭīb, Historiador de la Dinastía Nazarī,” in *Ibn al-Jaṭīb y su Tiempo*, 28.

19 Cynthia Robinson, “Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1313–1374 or 1375),” in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 1350–1850*, ed. J. Lowry, and D. Stewart (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 166.

proportion of lyric, which itself became essential to the memory al-Andalus and to its preservation and practice in the Maghrib.²⁰

It is in Ibn al-Khaṭīb's geographical works, however, that the comparative framework becomes most explicit. In the *Nufāḍhat al-jirāb fī 'ulālat al-ighṭirāb* ("Morsels from the Travel Bag for Amusement during Exile"), the author describes his travels through the Maghrib on his first exile there.²¹ A significant moment in the description occurs when Ibn al-Khaṭīb learns of the places of imprisonment of two famous Andalusī exiles—and the tomb of one of them: the last deposed 'Abbādi ruler of Seville and the last *ṭā'ifa* king of Granada, Buluggīn b. Bādīs (r. 456–483/1064–1090), "ruler of our country" (*amūr waṭāninā*). Ibn al-Khaṭīb traveled to the cemetery south of Aghmāt to visit the tomb of al-Mu'tamid b. 'Abbād (d. 487/1095) where he lies next to his favorite wife Rumaykiyya (the subject of many of al-Mu'tamid's verses). The Granadan exile paid tribute to the Sevillian king with the lines:

I have visited your grave of my own will in Aghmāt
 considering it my highest priority
 since I had not visited you personally sooner, most generous king
 light of the nights, before becoming a broken man.
 Oh Lord, the age has brought ruin
 to my life, in which I have spoken my verses well.
 I am here at your grave, under the rain,
 conveying warm greetings,
 for, you were generous in life and death, your nobility is famous.
 You are a ruler of the living and dead.
 The likes of you have not been seen in the past nor, it is believed,
 are they seen today nor will they be in the future.²²

The image is a poignant one: the exiled poet-vizier at the tomb of the exiled poet-king. Ibn al-Khaṭīb fears a fate like that of al-Mu'tamid. He also memorializes the 'Abbādid king and his place in the Marinid Maghrib.

20 The corpus of Andalusī poetry forms a significant element of Maghribī classical music known as Andalusī.

21 The manuscript survives in incomplete form. Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, "Riḥlat Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb fī bilād al-Maghrib: 'an *Nufāḍhat al-jirāb fī 'Ulālat al-Ighṭirāb*," in *Mushāhadāt Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb fī bilād al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus*, ed. Aḥmad Mukhtār al-'Abbādi (Alexandria: Mu'assasat Shabbāb al-Jāmi'a, 1983), 119–156.

22 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, "Riḥlat Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb fī bilād al-Maghrib: 'an *Nufāḍhat al-jirāb fī 'Ulālat al-Ighṭirāb*," 133.

In *Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā* (“Boasting Match between Málaga and Salé”), the articulation of Andalusī-ness through comparison to the Maghrib is most apparent. The subject of the short geographical work is the comparison between an Andalusī port city of Málaga and the Maghribī port city of Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s exile, Salé. Emilio García Gómez translated this text into Spanish for the journal *Al-Andalus*.²³ As he explains in a brief introduction, this was on account of its valuable information concerning the author’s personal life as well as for its attestation of the persistence of anti-Berber sentiment among Andalusī Muslims, a subject which interested García Gómez. In an earlier study, he examined this sentiment among Andalusīs,²⁴ conceiving of it as a kind of chauvinism resulting naturally in an urbane society confronted with members of a more rustic one. García Gómez’s perspective on this encounter was predicated on the narrative of the decline of al-Andalus as a result of political fragmentation and invasion by less civilized forces from the Maghrib. According to this narrative, anti-Berber sentiment arose among Andalusīs confronted with the incivility of Berbers and the depredations they wrought. When it eventually transpired that the invaders would not be able to maintain political unity and protect al-Andalus from the encroachment of the Christian kingdoms, outspoken anti-Berber sentiment spread among Andalusīs and persisted through several generations. Ibn al-Khaṭīb is understood to have inherited this sentiment from the Andalusī communal experience.

The foregoing may or may not be true, although I do believe that support for the invaders was more popular than this narrative allows.²⁵ Appraising the “essential” character of Iberian Muslims was a focal point of debate in the twentieth-century historiography of al-Andalus. Recent scholarship takes a more sophisticated approach to group identity and cultural encounter.

I would like to argue that the positive presentation of Andalusī character or Andalusī-ness was deliberately cultivated by Andalusī elites and their descendants as a strategy for staking a claim in the social and political fields in the Maghrib. Andalusī-ness, moreover, as a set of positive values, is something that emerged or became better defined with time as a by-product of the encounter of Andalusīs and Maghribīs, especially of Andalusī exiles and refugees and

23 Emilio García Gómez, “El ‘Parangón entre Málaga y Salé’ de Ibn al-Jaṭīb,” *Al-Andalus: Revista de las Escuelas de Estudios Árabes de Madrid y Granada* 2 (1934), 184.

24 Al-Šaqundī, *Elogio del Islam español (Risāla fi faḍl al-Andalus)*, vol. 2, Serie B (Madrid: Publicaciones de las Escuelas de Estudios Árabes de Madrid y Granada, 1934).

25 Camilo Gómez-Rivas, *Law and the Islamization of Morocco under the Almoravids: The Fatwās of Ibn Rushd al-Jad to the Far Maghrib*, Studies in the History and Society of the Maghrib (Leiden: Brill, 2014), intro.

their Maghribī hosts. This strategy was imbricated with an older Maghribī strategy of political legitimization, starting with Almoravids and Almohads who appropriated Andalusī (often Umayyad) features and symbols. As mentioned above, these two strategies (for social estimation and political legitimacy) had a powerful effect on the historiography of al-Andalus and the Islamic West, the most prominent (but by no means singular) example being the line between Ibn al-Khaṭīb and al-Maqqarī.

The *Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā* is a prime example of the formulation of Andalusī-ness in contrast to Maghrib-ness.²⁶ Composed in rhymed prose, the text is presented as a response to the question of which city is better, Málaga or Salé, or more precisely, to the question of how their virtues and qualities compare. Organized into a selection of discreet categories of comparison, the *Mufākharāt* is a distillation of the ways in which Málaga embodied urban civilization and the qualities inherent to a safe, cultivated, and cultured place versus its opposite, Salé, which in Ibn al-Khaṭīb's description, emerges as wind-swept and sandy place with brackish water and fields good only for camel-pasture. This absence of cultivation, of beneficial natural features, and benign human intervention, Ibn al-Khaṭīb equates, on the whole, and at a crucial moment in the text, with the character of Berber-ness. Also of note is when Ibn al-Khaṭīb wishes to demonstrate how superior Málaga is to Salé in the matter of the illustriousness of their great families and individuals. He does this by listing historical-biographical works, which he calls *ṣilāt*, in reference to a few of the most famous examples, made to represent and embody the prestige learning establishment that Andalusīs claimed. He also directs the reader to his own contribution to biographical historiography: the *Iḥāṭa*. Ibn al-Khaṭīb, exiled in sun-beaten Salé, thus places himself within the intellectual tradition as a representative and exponent of the civilization that produced the city of Málaga.

Ibn al-Khaṭīb begins the *Mufākharāt* through a first-person address, in answer to a question, which serves to frame the composition: "You asked me—may God make you know the benefits of lasting happiness and lead us down the straight path—for a comparison of the virtues of the cities of Málaga and Salé," because, among other things, the interlocutor is said to trust the judgment of the author, who has lived in both cities and "left his mark there"

26 In the fourteenth century, so much more familiar to exiled and refugee Andalusīs than the more distant Maghrib envisioned by the anti-Berber sentiment of Cordobans or Sevillans in the twelfth century.

(*wa-tarki fihimā al-atharu li-l-ʿayn*).²⁷ The author explains, without much elaboration and presumably as justification for the exercise, that only like things can be compared. (“Person and monster, angel and devil, mountain monkey and forest gazelle cannot.”)²⁸ He cautions his interlocutor against thinking there is much of a competition to begin with; Málaga’s illustriousness and significance being so patent, comparison is unwarranted.²⁹ “I will fulfill your wishes, however,” he writes, and proceeds to list a set of categories by which the two cities can be compared (even though Málaga is superior in each and every one of them): impregnability, industry, fertility, renown, living spaces, prosperity, population, economy, and splendor. Later in the text, he places the category of living spaces after splendor and follows that with a category not mentioned in his very brief introduction: “illustrious sons.” Otherwise, the comparison proceeds accordingly, category by category, in most cases summarily, and in a manner in which Málaga emerges triumphant in all things over its Maghribī counterpart.

Málaga is surrounded by well-built walls and towers. It is both beautiful and militarily impregnable, testament to the acuity of its architects and energy and concern of its governors and princes.³⁰ Salé has weak walls, no cistern, and is poorly laid out. This is why, “not so long ago” (*fī ʿahd qarīb*) it fell to the Christians (*al-rūm*) in broad daylight; a lack of arms, valor, a strong wall, and organization made it incapable of withstanding the attack.³¹ Ibn al-Khaṭīb holds no punches; he practically ridicules the city that has taken him in. Málaga produces gold thread and elegant textiles and fine ceramics. In Salé, by contrast, he doubts an appropriate gift or dress can be procured for a festive occasion. Málaga embodies cultivated abundance; its hills are covered in almond and fig trees, its ports are accessible. Its fields yield crops even in bad years. Salé’s pastures are good only for camels; its fields yield only thorns; its port is difficult to access (a cause of many shipwrecks); fish are only available for one season, and its scorpions have sharp stingers.

The litany goes on. Illustrious dynasties have made their homes in Málaga throughout the ages, whereas only one leader thought to make Salé his capital, but he did not finish the job, leaving half-built ruins. Málaga is rich and prosperous. In Salé,

27 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, “Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā,” in *Mushāhadāt lisān al-dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb fī bilād al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus*, 57–66 at 57.

28 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, “Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā,” 57.

29 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, “Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā,” 57.

30 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, “Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā,” 58.

31 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, “Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā,” 59.

fortunes are mediocre; dress mostly follows. Credit, low; expenses thwarted by avarice. Fine dress is brought from abroad. Jewelry is neither known nor reputed. The mosques are filled with plain drapings (*al-aksiyya*) but empty of fine woolen drapes (*ṭayālīs*) and textiles. You see a lot of espadrilles but few leather sandals. The voices, the tongues, the expressions, the manners, are [all] showing a Berber character (*al-sajjyya al-barbariyya*).³²

Any of Málaga's surrounding villages, Ibn al-Khaṭīb writes, is more populous than Salé, a city of which he says two-thirds are empty cemeteries and ruins. Málaga is economically self-sufficient; Salé imports its wheat. Salé has neither hills nor shade from the heat, and on the whole, few beautiful buildings. And as far as illustrious sons, living and dead, Málaga has so many that it has no rival:

The best proof of this is constituted by the *ṣilāt* in which are permanently described the histories orderly recorded. Consult for this the *Mughrib al-bayān*, the *Ta'rikh* of Ibn Ḥayyān, the *Ta'rikh al-zamān*, the books of Ibn al-Faraḍī and of Ibn Bashkuwwal, the *Ṣila* of Qāḍī Ibn Zubayr, with all the illustrious men therein mentioned, the *Ṣila* of Ibn al-Abbār, and the *Ta'rikh* of Ibn 'Askar, with all the news therein reported. And run as well to lift the cover of the *Iḥāṭa*, and you will find eminent wise men, thick woods of historical characters, so many the wide space almost can't contain them.³³

Salé, predictably, has but one family worthy of mention and otherwise little in the way of "illustrious men."

The only quality Ibn al-Khaṭīb's Salé enjoys concerns the piety of its citizens, of which it has many. But even in this, he admits, Málaga is either equal or superior. Ibn al-Khaṭīb concludes that Málaga's superiority is unquestionable; Salé indeed has its virtues, but *only when compared* to other Maghribī cities. Málaga is thus made to stand in for al-Andalus, perhaps as one of its prime examples of urbanity. Salé can boast, but only to its Maghribī counterparts; it has nothing on the cities of the Peninsula.³⁴

32 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, "Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā," 62.

33 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, "Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā," 64–65.

34 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, "Mufākharāt Mālaqa wa-Salā," 66.

Conclusion

Ibn al-Khaṭīb's contribution to the historiography of al-Andalus and the Islamic West is unquestionably one of the most influential of the era. In this short essay, my point has not been to argue for or against this influence. It has been rather to argue for a reading of this historiography and of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's role in it, as a process in which cultural encounter and reception in the Maghrib was a crucial ingredient, not always or often enough taken into account by modern scholars. From this perspective, the Maghribī context is crucial to the composition of certain key texts, to the socio-political impetus for their production, and for the institutionalization and tradition of their reception, reproduction, and interpretation. The interests of particular parties in the Maghrib determined how and when certain histories of al-Andalus were produced and reproduced. Elite Andalusī refugees and exiles such as Ibn al-Khaṭīb had an interest to argue vigorously for the value they represented to their host society. Non-elite Andalusīs presumably adopted similar strategies, although this is more difficult to ascertain. The successive generations of literate Andalusī exiles and refugees who poured into the cities and courts of an often-fragmented Maghrib influenced the narratives—the historiography, memory, and image of al-Andalus—for which the social and political context, along with the motivations of sponsors and writers and audience, were crucial to their formation.

A close reading of one of Ibn al-Khaṭīb's geographical texts demonstrates the importance of encounter to the formulation of the image of al-Andalus and Andalusīs. This text can also be characterized as historiographical, since the great virtue of Málaga, and therefore al-Andalus, is construed by Ibn al-Khaṭīb as something that has accrued over time and can be perceived through the great works of history and biography. (It is thus accumulated human experience and cultivation that Salé lacks.) The experience of exile in the Maghrib was formative for Ibn al-Khaṭīb's construction of an image of al-Andalus—of Granada and Málaga—through the selection of distinct categories and characteristics, represented in selected historical personages and events. It is as if, only from the distance of the Atlantic coast of North Africa, Ibn al-Khaṭīb could see the forest for the trees, which he set about recording with great energy, in a manner that was presumably intelligible on both sides of the strait and that spoke to the political interests and social values of discrete parties and groups, in the principality of Granada *and* in the courts of the Marinid sultans.