Representing “The People of the North” in Select Arab-Islamic Literature

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ABSTRACT

Representing “The People of the North” in Select Arab-Islamic Literature

A thesis presented to the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
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This thesis draws on the rich primary and secondary literature that highlights and analyzes how Muslims and Islamic institutions encountered the West in a period of intense confrontations. It offers a glimpse of how Muslim writers of the 11th/12th century interacted with nations such as the Franks, the Galicians, the Slavs and others and how these interactions were imagined and represented. These nations and their communities were imagined and represented in very interesting ways especially as juxtaposed against the ways of the Islamicate world. It argues that, for the most part, northern Europe, the home of Latin Christendom, was viewed with a curious indifference and neglect and that the main reason for this was the belief that there was little or nothing to be learned from their civilization. Nevertheless, when encounters between the Islamicate world and the “lands of the north” we recognize today as Europe became difficult to ignore, explicit disapproval and derogation was common on the Muslims’ part. These patterns when placed in their historical context of trade, cultural exchanges, war and truce seem less peculiar and more a product of struggles and motivations that can only be partially uncovered.
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Introduction

The subject of historical Muslim encounters with Latin Christianity has been extensively tackled in Western academia with great diversity. However, the focus has often been on how Christendom “encountered,” “experienced” and “responded” to Islam and Muslims.¹ In popular media, the main subject of concern is how Islam and Muslims are received by the West and how their encounters should be managed.² Islam’s historical encounters with the Christian West have been, since their beginning, multifaceted and diverse; their totality cannot be collected in this paper. Instead of the general focus on the responses of the West, this paper draws on the rich primary and secondary literature that highlights and analyzes how Muslims and Islamic institutions encountered the West in a period of intense confrontations. I offer a glimpse of how Muslim writers of the 11th/12th century interacted with nations such as the Franks, the Galicians, the Slavs and others and how these interactions were imagined and represented. These nations and their communities were imagined and represented in very interesting ways especially as juxtaposed against the ways of the Islamicate world. I argue that, for the most part, northern Europe, the home of Latin Christendom, was viewed with a curious indifference and neglect and that the main reason for this was the belief that there was little to nothing to be learned from their civilization. Nevertheless, when encounters between the Islamicate world and the north became

difficult to ignore, explicit disapproval and derogation was common on the part of Muslims. These patterns – when placed in their historical context of trade, cultural exchanges, war, and truce – seem less peculiar and more a product of struggles and motivations that can only be partially uncovered.

The long legacy of European writings on Islam and ‘the Orient’ in general and its interrogation by opponents of orientalism formed the inspiration for this paper. The ways in which representatives of a given civilization articulate interactions and often outright opposition signify, in their complexity, the very complexity of the nations and societies they paint. The initial intent of this paper was to compare the writings of 11th-/12th-century Muslim writers to Orientalist writers that recreated the “Orient” in the image of past and contemporary encounters real and imagined. This quest has already been undertaken in the fascinating work of Nizar Hermes, The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture: Ninth – Twelfth Century AD. However, because, despite Hermes’ impressive contribution to the topic, the comparison of Orientalist works with Classical Islamic ethnographic literature is rather problematic. Though these two worlds may have certain tenets in common, they are not comparable. Orientalism was not merely a stylistic approach, but rather an entire doctrine institutionalized by a colonial enterprise primarily defined by modernity. Medieval Muslim literary productions, and even medieval European ones, are alien to this comparison if only by the sheer virtue of their time frame. Nevertheless, the progression of medieval European polemic against the Islamic world and the historical productions that eventually gave birth to Orientalism

could be attempted using Edward Said’s framework introduced in his book by the same name. At the same time, Hermes’ book happens to be one of few works entirely dedicated to the study of the representation of “Europeans” in medieval Muslim literature written in Arabic. As Hermes explains, scholars have attributed this to the fact that these representations are quite scarce, at least in the surviving works of that time period. However, the few existing works have been to a large extent neglected. Some of them have not even been fully translated, as will be discussed further in the next chapter. This prompted Hermes’ valid critique of orientalists like Bernard Lewis, who claimed that the Muslim world had to await modern colonial enterprises to essentially “discover” Europe.

Instead of Hermes’ model, this paper focuses on select literary works produced in the late 11th century that represented “Europeans” (ahl al-shamāl or ‘the people of the north’ from hereon), while exploring the historical context in which their writers lived. The two main works discussed in the following chapters are: (1) Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī’s (1014-1094) Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik (The Book of Routes and Kingdoms), and (2) Usāma b. Munqidh’s (1095-1188) Kitāb al-Fītābār (The Book of Contemplation). An explanation of these works (and others) and the rationale behind choosing them is discussed in detail in the next chapter. I do not stretch Orientalism back to the medieval age; neither do I attempt to force “Occidentalism” upon the works of al-Bakrī and Ibn Munqidh. I explore the argument that there was little interest on the part of Muslim ethnographers in representing Latin Christendom and al-Bakrī offers a rare example of those few scholars who mention the nations of the north in their writings. I present Ibn Munqidh’s work as the work of one who felt compelled by the circumstances of his day to discuss at least one group of northern folk, the ifranj (Franks), and intended for people to learn

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5 Ibid.
from his encounters. Both al-Bakrī and Ibn Munqidh discussed Arabs and Muslims without reservation, just as they did non-Arabs and non-Muslims. Their main aim was to transmit their knowledge and for their work to serve as an admonition and warning to their readers (‘ibra). Such necessity plagued Ibn Munqidh as a warrior and required him to discuss the Crusaders to a much greater extent than al-Bakrī. The latter’s work would not likely have been considered incomplete by his contemporaries had he chosen to omit the sections on Europe and the “people of the north.”

This thesis is divided into a chapter on the methodology and sources used, followed by four core chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one covers a clarification of the terminology chosen in the following chapters and an explanation of the works analyzed, as well as a brief introduction to their authors. Chapter two discusses the status of non-Muslims, specifically Christians, living under Muslim rule, otherwise known as ahl al-dhimma. The chapter briefly explores the meaning of ahl al-dhimma, its place as a legal category in Islamic jurisprudence, and the difference between non-Muslims living under Muslim rule and those living outside of Islamic territories. This clarifies how both communities or legal categories fit within the Muslim imagination, including that of al-Bakrī and Ibn Munqidh. The subsequent chapters discuss the content and context of al-Bakrī’s and Ibn Munqidh’s works through select themes the authors themselves utilized to portray or differentiate ahl al-shamāl. Chapter three focuses on honor (‘ird) and courage (ba’s; shajā’a) as a trope to showcase the use of these concepts by the writers to show “Otherness” or alterity. Their understanding of honor and courage and the importance of these values in Arab-Islamicate culture and literature allowed them to imagine and represent ahl al-shamāl in a particular light. Chapter four, “On Knowledge,” considers the place of knowledge and education in Islamicate society and the view of an unenlightened north suffering in
ignorance. It explores how Muslim scholars understood knowledge as the building block of civilization that must be sought after and utilized however possible. This chapter clarifies how Latin Christendom was of little consequence in the Islamicate quest for knowledge amid increasing interactions and encounters between the two worlds. Finally, Chapter five brings to light how al-Bakrī and Ibn Munqidh viewed the religions of the north with neglect and disdain respectively, while elevating the perceived civilizational disparities between the two peoples over their confessional differences.
Chapter One: Sources and Methodology

“We are Arab peoples, and God has opened the lands [of Iraq, the Levant (al-Shām), and Egypt] to us [Muslims], and we want to settle the earth, and reside in these lands and corners, so describe for me the cities, their atmospheres and their residences and how the soil and atmosphere affect the disposition of their people.” –Ṣāḥib al-Ḥasan al-Maṣʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādīn al-Jawhar

This chapter offers context and background information about the texts chosen for analysis. What and whom they represent is of great relevance to how we analyze and understand their content. The texts we chose to focus on by al-Bakrī and Ibn Munqidh are from the 11th/12th centuries. A third text discussed with equal attention in Chapter 5 is Ṣāḥib al-Andalusī’s (1029-1070) Ṭabaqāt al-Umam (The Categories of Nations). The three main texts discussed in this paper enjoy a degree of discursive unity in several ways. First, they are three works written in Arabic in a time of turmoil and political conflict as well as a time of increased confrontation and interaction with non-Muslim communities in the north. Second, they show an underlying unity grounded in Arab-Islamicate cultural history. Hence the approach of dividing the analysis thematically, highlighting the development of Arab-Islamicate notions of honor, courage, knowledge, and religious affiliation (of oneself and others). Third, the texts show the convergence of the Islamicate realms in the East and in the West as grounded in a largely shared historical imagination, even as unique and heterogeneous entities that were not geographically connected and whose histories had diverged. This chapter will discuss these three works first and then present other Islamicate texts that feature peoples or nations living to the north of the

Islamicate world for future considerations. Some of these texts are referred to in the following chapters but they are not extensively explored. The significance of these texts lies in their content, what they might tell us about the periods and places they investigate as well as in which they were written. I will first clarify the terminology used in this paper before introducing the texts.

The most important term to introduce here is *ahl al-shamāl*, which literally means ‘the people of the north.’ This was the term used by Muslim scholars in Arabic works to refer to the peoples of northern Europe in their time. Al-Mas'ūdī (896-956 AD) was one such scholar. He also used *bilād al-shamāl* (lands or countries of the north) to refer to the lands beyond the Muslim territories (including Andalusia) to the north. This did not include the Byzantine Empire bordering Muslim polities, but rather went farther beyond to refer mainly to Western and Eastern Europe. Though *ahl al-shamāl* is not a term without problems, using it here is a practical way to refer collectively to the different groups of people discussed by Islamicate scholars.

“Islamicate” is another term that requires clarification. First, Islamicate allows for a more inclusive viewpoint. The word, coined by Marshall Hodgson essentially to challenge Eurocentric, Arabo-centric and anachronistic approaches to the study of Islamic civilizations and institutions, refers to those civilizational and cultural aspects that have been produced in the Muslim majority world while at the same time recognizing the contributions of non-Muslims and the infusion of multiple languages, traditions, and histories that aided them. Second, Islamicate also allows us to account for the non-religious cultural and civilizational considerations that constitute the multiplicity of identity of non-Muslims and Muslims alike. Despite using this term

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8 Ibid.
to express diversity, it is important to note that the scope of this study does not go beyond Arabic literature and the Arab-Muslim cultural history expressed in it.

Our discussion begins with an investigation of how non-Muslims are represented and imagined as a legal category and how they have been understood in the historical context of the so-called ‘Golden Age’ of Islam. In this discussion, we explain the terms *ahl al-dhimma* (non-Muslim subjects under Muslim rule) and *ahl al-kitāb* (People of Book, primarily Jews and Christians). The analysis of the place of these communities in Muslim imagination and realities dismisses the reduction of these complex pre-modern institutions. It also illustrates how different the Islamic understanding of Christians living within *dār-al-Islām* (the “abode of Islam”) was from those living outside its borders in *dār al-ḥarb* (the “abode of war”). These two terms are used in their capacity to express the status of Muslim authority, whereby the people living in *dār al-Islām* are subjects of Islamic rule and those living in *dār al-ḥarb* are in enemy territory and under infidel/ unbeliever (*kufr*) authority. Other classifications like *dār al-ʿahd* (the “abode of treaty”) are not used here for lack of relevance.

**Primary Texts and their Authors**

Ṣaʿīd al-Taghlibī al-Andalusī (1029-1070) was the *qādī* (judge) of Toledo but very little is known about him. He is believed to have been born in Almeria and moved to Toledo to take up his position as *qādī.* His book *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam* (Categories or Hierarchies of Nations) is a study of the history of scientific inquiry in the known world. It divides nations into those who cultivated the sciences and sought knowledge in its various kinds and those who failed to do so. It also explores the scientific heritage of nations the preceded Arabs in their quest for knowledge.

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and were able to develop scientific methodologies and cultures in pre-Islamic times like the Persians, Greeks, Indians, and Hebrews. The edition used in this thesis is the 1912 Arabic edition edited by al-Ab (Father) Luwīs Shīkhū al-Yasūʿī (the Jesuit). The book was translated into English by Semaʿan Salem and Alok Kumar in 1991. Šāʾid is known to have written a number of other books that have been lost. One of the books he mentions in Ṭabaqāt al-Umm is Kitāb Jawāmīʾ Akhbār al-Umm min al-Ṣarab wa-l-ʿĀjm (The Compendium of Histories of the Arab and Non-Arab Nations).

Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī (ca. 1014-1094) was an Arab Muslim Andalusian scholar who was not particularly specialized in any one field. Rather, like many Muslim scholars of his time, he sought after knowledge in many disciplines, including religion, kalām (theology), linguistics, literature (adab), philosophy (falsafa), and geography. His family held high political positions in Saltes and Huelva but much of his background remains unclear. Al-Bakrī was a prominent scholar of his time and was well respected by Andalusian rulers. By his time, what “once ha[d] been the most powerful and centralized European state…had splintered into a multitude of petty principalities.” Andalusia during al-Bakrī’s time was wrought with internal conflicts and external rivalries but was home to an extremely diverse population and a bustling environment that was pronounced in his writings. The collapse of the Umayyad Dynasty and the division of Andalusia into what came to be known as the ṭawāʾif16 invited Christian contenders in the north to expand into al-Andalus. Remarkably, this political decline did not impede cultural, intellectual, and artistic life in the region.

11 Ibid., 3.
12 Ibid., 4.
14 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik (The Book of Routes and Kingdoms) was but one of many books al-Bakrī wrote. Unfortunately, most of his work has been lost. Kitāb al-Masālik was written in c. 1058 and was not restricted to geography but includes ethnographic and historical accounts as well. It is difficult to separate historical accounts at times from local legends and it is worth noting here that al-Bakrī relied not only on his own observations from his own travels but on those of others as well. However, as Nizar Hermes writes: “Despite some differences in views and interpretations, it can be stated with certainty that most of al-Bakrī’s statements on the history of the ancient appellations of the Iberian Peninsula are strongly supported by modern historians.”17 Reports recorded by al-Bakrī include most prominently those of Ibrāhīm b. Yaʿqūb al-Isrāʾīlī (10th century), who was an Andalusian Jewish merchant. Al-Isrāʾīlī seems to have written many books himself, though these too have unfortunately been lost. Al-Bakrī’s Kitāb al-Masālik was acquired in fragments and much of it remains lost until today. Large portions of al-Bakrī’s known works have been translated into French and some into German and Spanish. Al-Bakrī has only been translated into English in relatively small fragments. Al-Bakrī’s book begins with the beginning of creation, the stories of the Abrahamic prophets ending with Muḥammad, and then moves to discuss the early religions of the old Arabs as well as the Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, and the Chinese, among others.

Usāma b. Munqidh (1095-1188) was born in Shayzar, Syria four months before Pope Urban II gave his speech that inspired the First Crusade, which, in the words of Paul Cobb, marked the “genesis of a centuries-long sequence of expeditions that intensified the encounter between the Islamic world and the West.” The Islamicate encounter with the Crusades shaped Ibn Munqidh’s world. Ibn Munqidh was born into a family of high rank and was expected to take over the leadership of his house in Shayzar, until his uncle bypassed him in favor of his own son.

A horseman (fāris), a warrior, a poet, and a man of letters (adīb), Ibn Munqidh grew up witnessing and taking part in combat against the Crusaders as well as against rival Muslim polities. In his time, the Muslim world was wracked by internal divisions, power struggles, and conflict. He moved from the service of one lord to the other, cleverly and bravely maneuvering his circumstances. His works, which includes Kitāb al-Ṭibār (The Book of Contemplation or The Book of Admonition), Kitāb al-ʿAsā (The Book of the Staff), al-Manāzīl wa-l-Dīyār (Dwellings and Abodes) and Lubāb al-Ādāb (Kernels of Refinement), have been extensively translated. Much of the Western scholarly interest in Ibn Munqidh’s Kitāb al-Ṭibār stems from the writer’s extensive account of the Islamicate encounter with the Crusades. This makes Ibn Munqidh’s books, only small portions of which are presented below, extremely different in style and content from other scholarly works like those of al-Bakrī. In the introduction to his translation of Kitāb al- Ṭibār, Cobb states:

Taken together, the writings presented in this book are not just curious samples of medieval Arabic prose and autobiography. They are in fact among the most complete and human examples of Islamic perspectives on the crusades and a window into the new world that was formed after those ‘marked with the cross’ first arrived at the close of the eleventh century.  

Ibn Munqidh’s book has been translated and published in French, Danish, German, Russian, Spanish, Polish, and Serbian. Philip Hitti first translated the book into English in 1929 and Paul Cobb introduced a new translation in 2008. This study relies on Hitti’s Arabic edition, while occasionally consulting Cobb’s English translation.

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Other Texts

Abū al-Ḥassān b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī (896-956) was born in Abbasid Baghdad, travelled across the then Muslim world and beyond, and eventually settled and died in al-Fustāṭ (Old Cairo), Fatimid Egypt ca. 956. His travels are believed to have taken him to the territories of India and China as well as the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. He was a scholar and traveler (rahḥāla) seeking knowledge. His books were not restricted to historical accounts, though he was committed to collecting both geographical and historical information. He also recorded cosmological and astronomical observations, wrote about the different peoples and nations of the world he explored, and discussed political events as well.20

Al-Masʿūdī’s book, titled Murūj al-Dhabab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar fī Tuḥaf al-Ashrāf wa-l-Mulūk, usually translated as The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems (in the Novelties of Nobles and Kings), was one of the earliest books written by a Muslim scholar or historian that mentions the northern lands and peoples. It is also one of al-Masʿūdī’s few surviving works. Al-Masʿūdī’s book was translated into French in the second half of the 19th century by Barbier de Meynard and Abel Pavet de Courteille under the title Les Prairies d’or. A revised version was introduced by Charles Pillat in 1966. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone wrote an abridged and heavily altered version in English relying mostly on the French translation rather than the original Arabic. This version, titled The Meadows of Gold: The Abbasids, is less of a translation and more of a select series of anecdotes. This version has been criticized by Ahmad Shboul, author of Al-Masʿūdī and his World, for its often “inadequate understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances.”21 An earlier English translation of the complete first volume of al-Masʿūdī’s book was written in 1841 by Aloys Sprenger under the title El-Masʿūdī’s Historical

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19 Al-Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhabab, 10.
20 Ibid., 11.
Encyclopaedia Entitled “Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems” and was dedicated to George FitzClarence, the First Earl of Munster. In his introduction, Sprenger explains how al-Mas’ūdī was viewed as the founder of history as the discipline it evolved into among historians writing in the Arabic language in the Islamic world of his time (10th century AD) and into the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. Sprenger claims al-Mas’ūdī as the “Herodotus of the Arabs” noting that his work “combin[ed], like Herodotus, ethnography and geography with history, and learning with experience and oral information.”22

Al-Mas’ūdī’s most famous work and most widely disseminated book is Murūj al-Dhahab, usually printed in two volumes. The first volume begins with al-Mas’ūdī’s history of creation, as consistent with Islamic beliefs, and the stories of the Abrahamic prophets. He follows this up with descriptions of the lands, oceans, and seas of the known world and their wonders. He then proceeds to discuss the histories of ‘old’ nations (umam, s. umma) like the Persians (al-furs), the Romans (al-rūm), the Syriacs (al-siryān), the Franks (al-ifranj), the Arabs of old (i.e., pre-Islamic Arabs) and their religions (adyān), customs (ʿādāt), creeds (madhāhib), calendars (taqāwīm), and noble houses.23 This method of chronicling history beginning with creation then proceeding to a discussion of the geography of the known world was followed, to varying degrees, by historians succeeding al-Mas’ūdī, like al-Bakrī as discussed earlier.

Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĪḍhārī al-Murrākushī’s (ca. 1317) al-Bayān al-Mughrīb is another important text. Unfortunately, very little is actually known about this prominent Andalusian scholar, widely known as Ibn ʿĪḍhārī. His book al-Bayān al-Mughrīb fī Akhbaẓ al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib (The Hidden Account of the Tidings of Andalusia and the Maghrib) is his only known surviving work. The three volumes that have been discovered of this

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23 Al-Mas’ūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, 10.
work have been translated into French. The edition used in this thesis is G. S. Collin and Levi Provençal’s Arabic edition, first published in 1948. This book is essentially a chronicle or a history of the “Western lands,” or *bilād al-maghrib*, which refers to the western regions of Islamicate civilization and is not to be confused with the modern usage of “the West.” Ibn ṢĪḥārī writes in his introduction:

God has made us one of those who witnessed, and thus learned, who were cautioned, and thus sojourned. For the preservation of what is valuable of science and knowledge [of events and occurrences] is the best [thing] that preoccupies [our] thoughts and discussions….24

He then mentions the specific reasons for writing his book, saying:

When I was tasked with [gathering] the news of the caliphs, imāms and the amīrs of the eastern lands (*al-mashriq*) and western lands (*al-maghrib*) and their territories, I was keen on entering into debates with elites and peers of reverence and esteem. Some of those who must be obliged asked me to compile a single book on the kings of the western lands that is succinct and concise. He took to asking me repeatedly, such that I could neither resist nor decline. So I took to compiling and composing [this book] out of compulsion, not choice.25

It is unclear who Ṣīḥārī’s patron was at the time or who had requested this particular book from him. He goes on to explain that he has already presented a copy of ‘this’ book, indicating that the manuscript we possess followed upon an earlier one.26

Ṣīḥārī’s *Bayān al-Mughrib* is divided into three volumes, each of which could be a stand-alone book according to Ṣīḥārī himself. In the first volume, he chronicles the history of the African territories conquered by the Muslims from the time of the first conquests under the caliphate of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān. He notes the most significant events that took place in these territories, the dynasties that ruled over them, and the governors they commissioned. The second volume of the book is devoted to al-Andalus from the beginning.

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25 Ibid., 2.
26 Ibid., 5.
of its conquest through Umayyad rule and its rebellions up to the *tawāʿif* era and its kings. This account ends with the year 478/1085. The last volume includes accounts of the Almoravids (*al-Murābiṭūn*), their beginnings and their sequestration of *al-Maghrib* and *al-Andalus*. This volume also discusses the Almohads (*al-Muwahḥidūn*) and their conflicts and struggles and covers the decline of both dynasties. Ibn Ḥdhārī’s book is different from al-Masʿūdī’s and al-Bakrī’s works in that it is more of a collection or compilation of historical and even contemporary accounts than a true history. Ibn Ḥdhārī preserved many of the works of other scholars and historians and his compilation includes excerpts from al-Bakrī himself, as well as from the *History of Muḥammad b. Jaʿrī al-Ṭabarī* and many others.27 His purpose in doing this was to compile and condense what was known of the western Muslim world from written and verbal accounts into a single book.

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27 Ibid., 3.
Chapter Two: Christians as Ahl al-Dhimma

“And I bequeath [to my successor the responsibility] of those under God’s protection (dhimma) and that of His prophet – to honor their covenant, defend them [from their enemies] and not to subject them to more than they can handle.” – ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb

Early encounters between Muslim and Christian communities were quite diverse, not only due to the social, linguistic and ethnological heterogeneity of the latter, but also due to their theological variations. The hermeneutical otherness that formed in early Islam was naturally in relation to local Christian communities in Arabia and surrounding areas like the Levant. “Western Europe” was not only distant, but also wholly inconsequential until the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the later Ottoman interest in expanding into the northwest. In order to better understand the place of religion in the encounters between the Islamicate world and ahl al-shamāl, it is necessary to discuss how Christianity was represented in Muslim discourse and the differentiation between Christians within the abode of Islam (dār al-islām) and those without. This chapter will explore how the concept of ahl al-dhimma was defined, with a primary focus on Christians, to clarify the distinction between those who dwelt in the world of Islam and those who were encountered by Muslims as geographical and cultural strangers. It will illustrate how ahl al-dhimma could at times occupy a space in the Muslim imagination that was within Islamic

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civilization, as opposed to Christians of the northern kingdoms that occupied a position of
civilizational alterity.

Questions central to Muslim-Christian theological discourse included first and foremost
the unity and oneness of God (tawḥīd) and, by extension, the nature of Jesus. The latter was seen
as a fundamental barrier keeping Christians from accepting Islam and occasionally drove
Muslims to associate Christianity with shirk, or assigning partners to God. On a less
philosophical plane, however, the status of Christians in Muslim lands was more of a practical
concern for governance. The dhimma, or “protected,” status was institutionalized by Muslim
rulers not necessarily in abidance with the Qur’an and Sunna, which did not necessarily provide
clear and structured rules to be used to govern ‘others,’ but rather as a convenience. In the
grander schemes of Muslim dynastic rule, Christian and non-Muslim populations were
approached with a degree of mild indifference, the daily affairs of which were best attended to
by their own institutions. Dhimma was originally an Arab tribal custom that was closely tied to
honor and protection. Since these two values were inevitably tied to tribal merit and reputation,
smaller tribes would enter into the ‘protection’ or ‘honor’ of a larger and stronger tribe.
Similarly, individuals and families would enter into the ‘protection,’ or ‘dhimma,’ of a reputable
tribe. This system extended to marriage as well, whereby men and women would be part of a
tribe’s dhimma by association. Dhimma status in relation to ahl al-kitāb (People of the Book,
primarily Jews and Christians) – and as it extended to other non-Muslim communities under
Muslim rule, like the Zoroastrians – originally meant that such communities had entered into the
‘protection’ and could not, upon the ‘honor’ of God and His prophet Muhammad, be harmed. In
theory, this meant that any violence, insult or injustice done to them would be considered a direct
attack on “God and His prophet,” and therefore that the Prophet and his followers were obligated to protect them as deemed by the original tribal custom.

By the ninth century, relations between Muslims and Christians in the Islamic world were occurring as the scholarly traditions of philosophy (falsafa) and jurisprudence (fiqh) were emerging, which were key elements in the future maturation of Islamic thought and practice. The intellectual development of the Islamic community coincided with a period of philosophical stagnation in Byzantium that began even before the advent of Islam with the closing of the school of philosophy in Athens in the 6th century. With Iraq and later Egypt coming under Muslim rule, the Islamic community had the opportunity to interact with, build upon and decipher various different knowledge systems, both ancient and contemporary. Translations of Greek and Egyptian works for the purpose of accessing philosophical and scientific knowledge were characteristic of inter-communal interactions. Christian intellectuals living under Muslim rule were part of this effort, allowing for the translation of the Bible and Torah into Arabic.

With the increasing military and political pressures Muslim rulers placed on the Byzantine Empire, Byzantine writings became increasingly antagonistic and hostile towards Islam. One historian, Theophanes the Confessor, chronicling events from 284 to 813 AD saw “the message of Islam” as including “references to a sensual paradise, which is obtained by anyone who kills or is killed by an enemy, a call to jihād, military warfare, and an invitation to intemperate living (emphasis mine).”

Hugh Goddard traces this history of Muslim-Christian relations showing that the Islamic community did not have interactions of significant consequence with Christians beyond

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 54.
32 Ibid., 56.
Byzantium until after the Iberian Peninsula had come under Umayyad rule.\textsuperscript{33} The church in North Africa was separate from that in Western Europe, with its own distinct historical and theological development. Byzantium had meanwhile shrunk, preserving little of its former glory. Goddard further explains that Christians not of Arab tribal heritage in Muslim lands slowly transitioned to using Arabic and eventually adopted the language in prayer, conversation and writing.\textsuperscript{34} Thus, Christians of the East, well before the fall of Constantinople in 1453, were integrated to varying degrees into the social, economic and political systems of Muslim polities, while the standardization of Western Christianity came about through its entanglement with Roman cultural traditions.\textsuperscript{35} Native Christians, in what came to be understood by the West as the ‘Orient,’ as will be further discussed in following chapters were without a doubt “othered” during the Age of Crusade in the effort to Latinize the East.\textsuperscript{36} Exacerbated by the newfound threat of Islamic expansion, Western Christian writings on Islam following acquisitions in the Iberian Peninsula developed a predominantly negative tone. This for instance included designating Muhammad as the Antichrist and associating the advent of Islam with the end of the world.\textsuperscript{37} It was (and still is) as Edward Said noted: “…since Christ is the basis of the Christian faith, it was assumed – quite incorrectly – that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity.”\textsuperscript{38}

Thus, Christians residing within the Islamic realm, whether by treaty or conquest, entered into the “protection” of the Muslim polity, which necessitated the establishment of legal mechanisms in governance and the management of increasingly diverse communities. Despite

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\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{36} Goddard, \textit{History}, 76.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{38} Said, \textit{Orientalism}, 60.
\end{flushleft}
the fact that, by virtue of the geographical and cultural differences and the existence of multiple empires and government systems throughout the Islamicate world in various periods, there existed considerable diversity in approaching *ahl al-dhimma*, there were nevertheless several main characteristics maintained consistently by mainstream jurisprudential traditions.

*Ahl al-Dhimma in Jurisprudence (Fiqh)*

In his book *Religious Pluralism and Islamic Law: “Dhimmīs” and Others in the Empire of Law*, Anver Emon argues that the two main myths used as a starting point in studying *ahl al-dhimma* under Muslim governance are: (1) that they existed in a framework of tolerance and (2) that they existed within a context of oppression and persecution.\(^{39}\) Emon’s main focus in the book centers around the complexity of *ahl al-dhimma* as a legal category, but he also greatly problematizes the reductionist tendency by which the status of non-Muslims under Muslim rule is approached. One of the points Emon raises in his work that is of particular relevance to this thesis is that jurists and scholars continued to develop the interpretations pertaining to *ahl al-dhimma* even when they had no real executive authority, and both in times and places of tolerance and of persecution. He writes: “Whether or not jurists operated outside or separate from the realm of government, they nonetheless imagined and developed a jurisprudence that was itself influenced and informed by the demands of an enterprise of governance that faced the challenge of governing amidst diversity.”\(^{40}\) Thus, when *ahl al-dhimma* are discussed in modern scholarship within the context of Muslim-Christian or Muslim-Jewish relations, the subject of discussion is

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\(^{40}\) Ibid., 24.
rarely concerned with communal relations.\textsuperscript{41} Rather, it is often limited to government treatment of minorities and the extent to which they were tolerant and inclusive or not.

With the concerns for governance in mind, the jurisprudential tradition – which developed independently of, and often in opposition to, the dynastic regimes of the Islamicate world – maintained and adapted this legal category for the treatment of non-Muslims who had been increasingly incorporated under the expanding abode of Islam (\textit{dār al-islām}). In this way, the designation of \textit{ahl al-dhimma} was a matter of pragmatism in approaching the issues of governing non-Muslims living under the auspices of Islamic rule. The main tenets of the governance of \textit{ahl al-dhimma} included: taxation and protection, the legal jurisdiction and authority they fell under as individuals and communities, and marriage, lineage and inheritance. Non-Muslims were required to pay the \textit{jizya}, a tax decided by treaty or conquest by the Muslim ruler and which varied from time to time and from one place to another. There were instances of harsher taxation forced upon non-Muslim communities and increased restrictions imposed on \textit{ahl al-dhimma}, as during the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (9\textsuperscript{th} century) and the Fatimid caliph al-Hākim (11\textsuperscript{th} century). By way of example, such measures included, among other things, excluding non-Muslims from public office.\textsuperscript{42} The political logic that instituted the tax was fairly simple; non-Muslims would pay the \textit{jizya} in return for protection and exemption from military service. This tax excluded the old, the sick, slaves, women and the insane. The Ḥanafī school exempted monks as well.\textsuperscript{43} The \textit{jizya} would be returned if the state was unable to provide


protection and was waived when the community opted to fight with the Muslim armies.\textsuperscript{44} Al-\轨arī reported that when Khālid b. al-Walīd negotiated the treaty with the people of al-\轨īra (in modern-day Iraq) following its conquest, the contract included a clause guaranteeing that the tax would be waived should the Muslims fail to provide security:

In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate, this is the covenant of Khālid b. al-Walīd to Ṣalūb b. Nasṭūn and his people, that we have agreed upon the jizya from all those who are able in all of Bāniqyā and Basmā, and protection. [The jizya is] in the amount of ten thousand dinars, excluding the spoils, those who are able to the extent of their ability and those who are poor to the extent that they can manage, every year. You have represented your people and they have accepted you. The Muslims with me and I have accepted [these terms] and so have you and your people. You have the dhimma (covenant) and our protection, so that if we protect you we collect the jizya , or else we do not claim it until we can protect you.\textsuperscript{45}

\textit{Ahl al-dhimma} in all affairs that did not concern the Muslim polity fell under the jurisdiction of their own communities' leadership. Unless the parties involved sought Muslim rule, they remained under the jurisdiction of their religious leaders. When Muslims were involved in a dispute, however, Islamic jurisprudence took precedent and the case would be presented in a Muslim court.\textsuperscript{46} Further, Muslim judges had the sole authority to rule on criminal offenses and between different sects (i.e., Christians and Jews).\textsuperscript{47} Lastly, the concern for lineage and inheritance lay in debates within the jurisprudential tradition that were aimed first and foremost at guarding a Muslim’s way of life. With regards to lineage, which was patrilineal, jurists wanted to assure that children remained within the Islamic tradition and thus intermarriage was restricted to Muslim men marrying non-Muslim women and not vice-versa. Muslim men were discouraged from marrying women from \textit{ahl al-ḥarb} (non-Muslim subjects under enemy


\textsuperscript{45} Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, \textit{Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-Mulūk} (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1967), 368.

\textsuperscript{46} Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny, \textit{Origin and Development of Islamic Law}, vol. 1 (Clark: The Lawbook Exchange, LTD., 2008), 337.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 340.
jurisdiction) by most jurists and completely forbidden by some. They feared that a Muslim would be tempted to live in an enemy state and that he could be driven to abandon his religion. His children could also be enslaved or forced to adopt another religion. Even marrying a Muslim woman in dār al-ḥarb (the abode of war) was concerning to the jurists, who argued that Muslims must practice coitus interruptus, or ḍazl, to avoid having children in enemy lands. These concerns did not hold within the abode of Islam. In other words, a Muslim (or dhimmī) marrying a non-Muslim from ahl al-ḥarb was not considered forbidden or reprehensible should the family live within dār al-islām. In this case, the woman marrying into dār al-islām enters into the covenant of ahl al-dhimma. Inheritance was simple so long as people remained within their creeds, whereby Muslims, Christians and Jews would rely on their own traditions to manage inheritance. Jurists of the different schools of thought disagreed on whether Christians and Jews could inherit from one another but maintained that Muslims and non-Muslims could not inherit from each other. Further, according to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, a thirteenth-century Ḥanbalī jurist, the distinction between ahl al-dhimma and ahl al-ḥarb entailed that the two legal categories of people could not inherit from each other because they were no longer subject to the same authority (li-anna al-muwālāt baynahum munqaṭī‘a). Limiting our understanding of ahl al-dhimma to a jurisprudential category is problematic in that it masks the reality and imagination associated with interaction and encounter. For one, the frontier lands being in such close proximity to enemy territory often complicated the legal status of ahl al-dhimma. As Janina Safran explains: “Jurists were prompted in multiple contexts to differentiate between Christians who were enemies and Christians who were dhimmis and to

49 Ibid., 336.
elaborate on the transition from one legal status (enemy) to another (protected person).”\textsuperscript{51} This was particularly true of Andalusia (and to an extent the Frankish-occupied Levant), of which the political and ideological boundaries with \textit{ahl al-shamāl} placed \textit{ahl al-dhimma} within the abode of Islam. Despite their “vulnerability as coreligionists of the enemies of Islam,” as Safran puts it, both jurists and rulers recognized \textit{ahl al-dhimma} as sharing in the protection of \textit{dār al-islām}, further complicating the “us” vs. “them” dichotomy.\textsuperscript{52} I will present here the works of Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, Usāma b. Munqidh, and Śaʾīḍ al-Andalusī discussing \textit{ahl al-shamāl} in order to bring to light this complexity.

\textsuperscript{51} Safran, \textit{Defining Boundaries}, 169.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
Chapter Three: Honor and Valor

Section I: Al-Bakrī’s Ethnography

“He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies and to devour the property of orphans, and to vilify chaste women.” – Ja‘far b. Abī Ṭālib

The key terms honor (ḥurma), shame (‘ār), debauchery (baghy), corruption (fasād), courage (ba’s, shidda, basāla, lā yarawn al-fīrār), and treachery (ghadr) were discussed by Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī (c. 1014-1094) as an ethnographic method of differentiating peoples. Given the particular parallels between honor and courage in the Arab-Islamic cultural imagination of al-Bakrī, I discuss these two concepts together to emphasize their correlation. The chapter begins with a discussion of the significance and centrality of these tropes in Islamic and Arabic culture and literature. It will also explore how, consequently, these tropes became a lens through which al-Bakrī discussed and represented alterity in his book Kitāb al-Masālik wal-Mamālik (ca. 1058) (The Book of Routes and Kingdoms). Al-Bakrī wrote about the “people of the north” beyond the Muslim domain, or ahl al-shamāl, as well as the Muslim world and its geographical influence. This chapter explores al-Bakrī’s use of honor and valor in many ethnographic sections of this book specifically in order to differentiate peoples. Placing a great deal of significance on codes of conduct and social customs he understood as proper (or not), al-Bakrī scrutinized Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs alike. Using al-Bakrī’s conceptualization of honor and valor in the context of an Andalusia torn apart by strife and disloyalty, this chapter argues that

his use of these concepts for the purpose of showing alterity equates *ahl al-shamāl*, as worthy adversaries, with Muslims when they exhibit a similar sense of honor. Similarly, Muslims are comparable to non-Muslims like *ahl al-shamāl* when they exhibit a lack of honor or “corruption.” Even when other characteristics were discussed by al-Bakrī, the adherence to a code of honor, or at minimum the possession of valor, established proximity between Muslims and others when present and remoteness when absent. More importantly, al-Bakrī in *Kitāb al-Masālik* constructed a world where the ‘Islamicate,’ complete with its Jewish and Christian components, could be differentiated from *ahl al-shamāl*. This trend can also be seen in Usâma b. Munqidh’s work, to be discussed in Section II below, even though it was written many miles away and decades apart.

Al-Bakrī lived during the *tawāʾif* period of al-Andalus.⁵⁴ He offered in his work some insight into the ideals of honor and courage that were of great significance in Muslim societies and highlighted how these were exhibited differently among other non-Arabs. Al-Bakrī uses the term *jins* (pl., *ajnās*) to refer to subgroups within a larger “ethnic group.” He uses it to refer to both Muslims and non-Muslims, as in “*jins min al-turk*” (Turkic people), “*ajnās al-ẓajam*” (non-Arabs), or “*jins min al-ḥabash*” (Ethiopians). To an extent this recognized their diversity. When referring to Arab subgroups however, al-Bakrī used the term *qawm* (pl., *aqwām*), meaning tribe, clan, or people. He represented *ahl al-shamāl*, or those beyond the Muslim domain to the north – like the *ifranj* for example – in ways that highlighted his own perceptions of honor and courage in the political and social context of al-Andalus. *Ahl al-shamāl* were seen through the lens of proper Arab-Muslim values that were not necessarily predominant, but rather were established by the author as normative, contrasting with a great deal of dishonorable acts, lack of chivalry, cowardice and betrayal by both Muslims and others.

The Trope and its Significance

From pre-Islamic times, ideas of chivalry and honorable behavior were a part of Arab tribal moral codes. Honor and chivalry included “ideas of gallantry” towards women, keeping one’s word and pledge, and refraining from treachery on the battlefield. These ideas in the form of a trope or literary genre have held an important place in Arabic productions since the *Muʿallaqāt*, the seven canonical works of poetry created in pre-Islamic Arabia. The association of honor with women and sexual conduct more generally was not disturbed by the advent of Islamic values. On the contrary, this association was consolidated. It is true that Islam is believed to have rid Arabia, or at least attempted to rid it, from tribal fanaticism (*taʾṣṣub*), but the idea of tribal honor survived in the social context of clans and families and in relation to Islam in general. For example, one’s honor as associated with sexual conduct, as in Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib’s statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter, implied not only the protection of women (and men) against being violated, but also to prevent one’s self from violating others. This is summed up in the concept of “violating sanctity,” or *intihāk al-ḥurma*. Jaʿfar’s statement, which was used in the debate against Āmīr b. al-ʿĀṣ before the latter’s conversion to Islam when a group of Muslims sought refuge in Axum at the Negus (al-Najāshī) and Quraysh sent after them, only hints to it. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the principle of *ḥurma* in Islam unquestionably extends beyond sexual violation. It is a general concept that protects the sanctity of the body, even after death, and the privacy of the person and home. As Michael Chamberlain puts it, “*ḥurma* was a

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
quasi-sacred combination of honor and inviolability that referred to cities, women, and sacred objects as well as families and individuals. Further, honor does not exist in a vacuum; other concepts like ḥayā’ (modesty) and ʿird (lit., one’s body and soul) cut across the principle of honor in the history of Arab-Islamic societies. If we take hurma to be at the center of this principle, ḥayā’ and ʿird become greatly significant to our discussion. Ḥayā’ is usually understood as modesty or reserve in the broadest terms. It is to be deterred from immoral deeds and wrongdoing by feeling shame towards oneself. It is a concept that is meant for the protection of the body and mind from violating one’s own honor or that of another.’ This too is not solely sexual in its connotation and also involves, for example, acting with honor on the battlefield, which will be discussed further in the next section. ʿird, on the other hand, has a similar connotation to ḥurma, for it is literally the self (al-nafs) and/or the body that requires protection, and is used to refer to one’s honor. It encompasses a person’s lineage, status and even value because it represents what is worthy of praise or disrespect in one’s self or kin. Thus, it can be violated by one’s own conduct or by another’s attack or violation. Due to the attachment of ʿird or honor to “physical inviolability,” it came to be understood as inextricable from courage. The latter was necessary for the protection of one’s honor the same way honor was a motivation for courage and valor. More often than not, because honor was to be earnestly protected, the ardor and zeal associated with it – essentially the fear for its violation or loss (al-ghīra ʿalā) – is often mistaken for mere jealousy (ghīra), especially in translation.

An early form of Arabic poetry called rajaz, which appears in parts of al-Bakrī’s account below, was often used in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia to incite warriors to battle. Hind bint ʿUtba used rajaz to incite Qurayshī warriors from Mecca fighting against the Muslim army

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led by the Prophet Muḥammad in the Battle of Uḥud. Very similar to al-Shamūs’s poem in the next section, which invited the men to fight for their honor compiled by al-Bakrī in his book, Hind declared:

[We are the daughters] of Ṭāriq;  
We walk on fair carpets,  
Our necks are hung with pearls,  
And musk is on our hair.  
If you advance we’ll [embrace] you,  
Or if you flee we’ll shun you,  
And we’ll no longer love you.  

The “exaltation of honor, of prowess and of humanity” constituted the “fundamental characteristic of chivalry for the Arabs, including those of al-Andalus.” Thus, al-Bakrī’s use of pre-Islamic poetry in telling the tale of al-Yamāma showed a degree of continuity in this understanding of honor and its reverse, corruption.

As Syed Ali writes, “[c]hivalry is innate in the Arab character,” but specifically during the ṭawā‘if period, the Andalusian amīrs nourished this ideal and supported the cultivation of a courtly code of honor. Al-Bakrī’s time was a period in which “chivalrous ideas commenced to develop themselves, joined to an exalted sense of honor and respect” for women. Andalusia made pivotal contributions to Arabic literature, for scholarship and culture were never neglected there. According to Raymond Farrin, al-Andalus was far from isolated from the cultural and literary movements of the Muslim world of the east and by the 9th century, Andalusian intellectuals were well aware that Abbasid Baghdad enjoyed a superior status to their own productions. Popular forms and styles of poetry and literature were characterized by a degree of discursive unity with the East, at least until the 10th century. It was then that a characteristically

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61 Ibid., 94.  
64 Ibid.
distinct Andalusian literature began to emerge. Farrin writes: “As the glory of al-Andalus reached unprecedented heights, a similar spirit of confidence and self-awareness to the one demonstrated by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [III, who declared himself caliph rivaling the Abbasid Caliphate in the East] entered the literature.”65 Yet, a degree of discursive unity continued and Andalusian literature, like its kin to the east, celebrated love and chivalry as well as courage and valor on the battlefield. Consequently, as Adler writes, the Arab ideals of heroism and chivalry deeply influenced those who neighbored the “Moors” of Andalusia and interacted with them. This influence is notable in 12th century Provencal poetry.66

Al-Bakrī on Honor and Courage

Al-Bakrī described pre-Islamic al-Yamāma, a region to the south of Najd in the Arabian Peninsula, as the greatest of lands and one full of riches. Its pre-Islamic legend was recorded by the Andalusian scholar as part of his history of the region, placed strategically in the pre-Islamic era following his chronicle of the stories of the Abrahamic prophets preceding Muḥammad. Al-Yamāma, with its “mantled gardens and aligning castles,” thrived and prospered “until they scorned their [God’s] blessings and violated the sanctity, and thus were ruled by a man from Ṭasm named ā‘Amīlūq whose desire for injustice and brutality could not be deterred.”67 The violation in question here, in al-Bakrī’s words, was a moral and a physical one that transgressed upon the tribe’s honor, lineage, family and religion and, considering his account of the story, suggested a violation of a sexual nature. He wrote “intahakū al-ḥurma,” literally, “they violated

66 Adler, History of Provencal Poetry, 271.
67 Al-Bakrī, al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik, 149.
that which is sanctified and forbidden” or “that whose violation can never be allowed.” Al-Bakrī continues:

A woman from Jadīs called Hazīla bint Māzin sought his ['Amlūq’s] judgment with her husband who opposed her and wanted to take their son away from her and they quarreled over that. And the king ordered that the boy be taken from both of them and be made one of his servants. Hazīla spoke of this:

We brought the Ṭasm brother to rule between us,  
And he ruled for Hazīla with injustice;  
For my life you have ruled without devoutness,  
Nor of the ways of government are you knowledgeable.  
I lamented unyielding, and my husband was perplexed and regretful.

The woman’s words reached ʿAmlūq and he was angered and decreed that no woman of Jadīs would marry and bed her husband before she is carried to him ['Amlūq] to be deflowered. And they found in that a terrible and lingering humiliation until al-Shamūs bint Ghafār got married. It was said [that her] name [was] Ghafira, the sister of al-Aswad b. Ghafār, and al-Aswad was a lord of Jadīs. And on her night as tribute she was carried to ʿAmlūq to lay with him and her handmaidens sang and said:

Submit to ʿAmlūq and rise and ride [him],  
And with an enjoyable affair greet the morning;  
For you will receive that which you do not desire,  
For no maiden can escape him.

Thus, when ʿAmlūq ravaged68 Ghafira, she went to her people in her bloodied and ripped clothes saying:

None is brought more shame than Jadīs:  
Is this what is done to the bride?

She then refused to join her husband and, inciting her people, she said:

Is this that is brought against your girls befitting,  
And you are men numbering the numbers of ants?  
If you are not angered after this,  
Then be women and do not flee from the stallion,69  
Forget the sweetness of the bride,70 but rather  
You were made for bridal dresses and kuhl;  
For if we were men and you were

68 i.e., raped.  
69 i.e., ʿAmlūq. Translated from al-fahl.  
70 Refers to consummation. Translated from wa dūnakum źib al-ʿarās.
Women, we would never withstand the humiliation.\textsuperscript{71}

Al-Bakrī proceeds to describe the conflicts that ensued between the two tribes of Ṭasm and Jadīs, highlighting their deviation from the code of honor. His account offered a glimpse into a well-embedded understanding of honor and disgrace that was eventually carried into Islamic society. It was most clearly expressed by al-Shamūs or Ghaffira when she confronted her tribe for failing to protect the honor and dignity (lā aḥada adhallu min Jadīs) of their people by allowing their women to be violated (fa-law annanā kunnā al-rijāl wa kuntum al-nisāʾ la-kunnā lā nuqirru ʿalā hādhā al-dhull). She lamented her tribe’s lack of manhood and demanded that they at least be as brave as their women, for the women would never have accepted such a disgraceful fate had their roles been reversed. Her tribe, according to al-Bakrī’s account, was angered by her accusations and decided to fight the unjust king. They were to invite ʿAmlūq to a banquet where they could ambush him. Ghaffira opposed the plan, however, and told her brother: “Treachery is shameful, and its consequence is devastation. Meet them in the morning at their homes for either victory or a glorious death.”\textsuperscript{72} Ghaffira’s ideal of honor appears again, favoring the brave approach of riding into battle rather than killing the unsuspecting tyrant and his men at a feast. Her brother, according to al-Bakrī, succumbed to the madhhab, or doctrine, of the tribe’s men and chose “treachery” over Ghaffira’s “honorable” path. Here al-Bakrī’s reference to these two different perspectives on honor using the word madhāhib\textsuperscript{73} shows that the idea of honor can be central to any given belief system and consequently used to show alterity. Al-Bakrī concludes the story by explaining that both sides were fated for demise for their venality and nothing of

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 149-150.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
their lineage remained. Ghafīra was the only symbol of honor in the story as al-Bakrī denounces both tribes for having none.

**Al-Bakrī’s Andalusia**

As Brian Catlos writes, 10th-century Andalusia grew to become a significant economic and cultural power at the far end of the Muslim domain to the west. By the year 929, the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III had managed to subdue the Arab rebellions of the Andalusian elite – descendants of the Arab Muslim warriors who had conquered the area from the Visigoths in the early 8th century. By 1031, however, the caliphate of Cordoba had disintegrated into several smaller emirates or kingdoms ruled by rival groups that came to be known as ṭawāʾif. Much is unclear about al-Bakrī’s life and history, but the following is known about the context in which he grew up and wrote. His grandfather worked for the third caliph of Cordoba, Hishām II, as a judge (wālī radd al-maẓālim) in the late 900s. Following this post, al-Bakrī’s family was situated in Huelva and Saltes for an unknown period of time, but it is believed that his grandfather and his father ruled over these two territories until ca. 1040. It is unclear how autonomous Huelva and Saltes were under the Bakrīs, but they were clients of al-Manṣūr Abū ʿĀmir, who consolidated his power from within the ranks of the Umayyad caliphate. Likewise, they had strong relations with Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād, the first to split off from Cordoba declaring Seville as an independent territory. The Bakrīs were among those descendents of the first Arab Muslims to arrive in Andalusia and little more is known about their origin. They were certainly entangled in the turbulent political setting of Andalusia until the ʿAbbād dynasty turned against them and

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74 Catlos, *Infidel Kings*, 16.
75 Ibid., 17.
77 Ibid., 7.
al-Bakrī’s father was forced to give up Huelva and then Saltes eleven years later and flee to either Lisbon or Cordoba. Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī was subsequently welcomed in Almeria under the patronage of the Banū Sumādiḥ (1012-1091), during which time he wrote his book al-

Masālik wa-l-Mamālik. Al-Bakrī spent his time between the court of Almeria and studying and writing until the Banū Sumādiḥ sent him as a messenger to the ʿAbbād dynasty in Lisbon at the same time that they (the Banū Sumādiḥ) sought the aid of the Almoravids against the Christian kingdoms threatening their rule in Andalusia. It is unclear whether al-Bakrī returned to Almeria or remained in Lisbon.

Like the pre-Islamic Arabs of al-Yamāma, the Andalusians had beautiful gardens and numerous castles, to which al-Bakrī dedicated a chapter in his book. As Catlos explains, since the rise of the caliphate of Cordoba, Andalusia enjoyed a great deal of economic prosperity and access to riches like gold, ivory and slaves from trade and extending its control towards northern Africa. However, internal strife brought the caliphate down, culminating in the tawāʾif period.

Al-Bakrī’s story of al-Yamāma could be seen as comparable to the failure of the tawāʾif and as dispelling mutual destruction for all factions involved, since none of them were truly honorable. Al-Yamāma became a significant symbol of the triumph of Islam after the 7th-century ridda wars during the reign of the second caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, when one Musaylima claimed to be a prophet and refused to recognize the caliph. Musaylima was crushed by Abū Bakr’s army and came to be known since then as “Musaylima al-kadhdhāb” (‘Musaylima the Liar’). There was no victory in al-Bakrī’s Yamāma. Like the tawāʾif, there was only strife, dishonor and betrayal and

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78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 10.
80 Ibid., 11.
81 Catlos, Infidel Kings, 17.
nothing but a lone righteous voice that was ignored out of cowardice. This ultimately overshadowed the beautiful gardens and their prosperity.

Andalusia, according to the image al-Bakrī paints of it as an Islamicate haven surrounded by enemies and quite contradictory to the reality of the *tawā‘if* as a “homeland of unity” (*mawṣūn ṭabā‘*). By the 900s, Muslim civilization in the Iberian Peninsula was recognized for its intellectual advancement and many from the neighboring kingdoms of Christendom sought knowledge there. Thus, it would be inaccurate to consider the Muslim and Christian territories as entities isolated from each other. Trade routes allowed merchants to venture through and as kingdoms expanded and retreated, populations were anything but stagnant. Further, Andalusia was home to a variety of peoples: Arabs with ancestry in the east, North Africans, Slavs and Turkic peoples known to al-Bakrī and his contemporaries as *al-ṣaqāliba*, and many others formed an indisputably heterogeneous society. The religious composition of this society is often discussed in modern scholarship to highlight either a utopian coexistence or intractable conflict. However, the reality of Andalusia was far too complex to be reduced to either category.

The trusted Jewish merchant Ibrāhīm b. Ya‘qūb al-Isrā‘īlī, who was often cited by al-Bakrī as his source for information on *ahl al-shamāl*, was treated in the text as a fellow Andalusian, rendering his Jewishness or, more accurately, his non-Muslimness almost irrelevant. By al-Bakrī’s account, Ibn Ya‘qūb was not from *them* (*ahl al-shamāl*); he was within the space reserved for those with an Islamicate cultural identity. He wondered, just as al-Bakrī did, at the peculiarities of *ahl al-shamāl* and reported on them. He belonged to the Andalusian sphere and

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was accepted by al-Bakrī as such. This is not to argue that religious categories and hierarchies
did not exist; on the contrary, though Christians and Jews often made it into the ranks of the elite
based on their merit, many privileges remained preserved for Muslims. However, those within
the abode of Islam were just that, within, and had their place and protection in society. For the
most part, *ahl al-dhimma* were integrated into Muslim society, as were their institutions. The
manner in which the Umayyad caliphate had structured the place of *ahl al-dhimma* in Andalusia
set the pattern for ages to come. With the incorporation of Christians and Jews into the system,
individuals were able to rise through the ranks in service of the caliphate. Examples of this
include the Christian aristocrat Reccemund, known to Muslims of his time as Rabī’ b. Zayd, who
was appointed by the caliph as bishop of Elvira, as well as Ḥasdāy b. Shaprūṭ who was a Jewish
physician and rabbi trusted by the caliphate to lead high-profile diplomatic missions. As Catlos
puts it, the system involved a “dynamic meritocracy in which neither class nor ethnic
background nor religion posed insurmountable obstacles to success,” simply because the
caliphate’s main concern was maintaining its power. This dynamic did not end with the
collapse of the caliphate; rather, it continued throughout the *tawāʿif* period, perhaps creating a
distinguishable Andalusian identity. Those on the outside, however – like *ahl al-shamāl* – were
strangers at best and enemies at worst. Thus, al-Bakrī drew a clear line between Andalusia and
the “Christian tribes” (*qabāʾil al-Naṣārā*) to the north. Al-Bakrī wrote that Andalusia was like
*al-Shām* in its air, Indian in its scent and intellect, Ahvaz in its composure, China in the richness
of its minerals, and like Aden in the convenience of its shores. This Andalusia he described was
untouched by *ahl al-shamāl*, for they, at least in his imagination, did not leave a mark on her. In

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85 Catlos, *Infidel Kings*, 16.
86 Ibid., 21.
87 Ibid., 22.
one of his accounts of *al-ifranj*, al-Bakrī noted a story that circulated about the reason why the Muslim expansion to the north into *firanja* territory ceased:

It is said that when Mūsā b. Nuṣayr conquered al-Andalus, he wanted to infiltrate what was left of *bilād al-firanja*...He came across a great statue, erect, and upon it [found] written carvings in Arabic that read: ‘O sons of Ismael, you are done, so return.’...He left with the people just as they were about to cut across the land (*bilād*) and achieve their end.\(^{89}\)

This leaves us with an Andalusia that is less a geographical territory and more an imagined space, in which *ahl al-shamāl* had no part and could be kept at bay.

**Honor and Courage in the Representation of Ahl al-Shamāl (the “People of the North”)**

In the *Masālik*, al-Bakrī discusses several tribes (*aqwām*) and peoples (*ajnās*) of the north including: *al-ifranj* (the Franks), *al-jalāliqa* (the Galicians), *al-rūs* (the Russians), and the aforementioned *ṣaqqāliba* (‘Slavs’). This last category, *al-ṣaqqāliba*, was, according to al-Bakrī, multi-racial, multi-national, linguistically Slavic and resided in what is today Central and Eastern Europe. However, like *al-ifranj*, a term expanded to refer to the peoples of the north in general, *al-ṣaqqāliba* was often used to refer to non-Slavic peoples as well.\(^{90}\) In al-Bakrī’s time they formed a great portion of Andalusia’s slaves and servant class and were captured or hired in the greater Islamicate world to serve as mercenaries.\(^{91}\) Al-Bakrī would have certainly encountered them at home, but he wrote of their lands what had been passed down by al-Isrā’īlī.\(^{92}\) He explained who ruled over them at his time and how history divided and unified their different tribes and which tribes formed which peoples.\(^{93}\) He also discussed their religious affiliations and how they came to them, which will be the subject of Chapter 3. Al-Bakrī explained that Muslims

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 893.


\(^{91}\) Lowney, *A Vanished World*, 94.


\(^{93}\) Ibid., 334.
and Jews from the Muslim lands would trade with locals in the region beyond Andalusia to the north. Al-Bakrī, whose surviving work is one of few that we know about that actually shows any interest in discussing the peoples living beyond the Muslim realm to the north, still showed hints of mild neglect towards the region. It was the physical proximity and ostentatious military and economic encounters with Andalusia that rendered the people of the north necessary components of al-Bakrī’s work, beyond which very little scholarly interest would have probably ensued. This was why al-Bakrī, though he widely surveyed them, addressed them only briefly. That said, when it came to discussing the people rather than their territories or cities, al-Bakrī chose the concept of honor – or concepts we established above as being closely related, like valor – as a primary feature of his analysis.

In a rather matter-of-fact way, al-Bakrī wrote an account by Ibrāhīm b. Yaʿqūb al-Īsāʾī, presumably an Andalusian Jewish merchant and one of his main sources, of a city that lay “west of the Russians,” where women rule, own slaves, are impregnated by them, and if they give birth to a male they kill him. “They ride and they enter unto war and they have strength and valor,” al-Bakrī stated, adding that al-Īsāʾī confirmed that this City of Women, “madīnat al-nisāʾ,” truly existed. Also basing himself on the accounts of al-Īsāʾī, al-Bakrī wrote of the Galicians in his book: “[They are] people of treachery and low morals…” He continued to write that the jalāliqa, despite all that, were a people who would rather die than flee from battle. Of the ʂaqalicts al-Bakrī explained what he believed their eating habits to be as well as their style in clothing and added that “their kings veil their women and are intense in their jealousy, and a man would have twenty wives and over.” Al-Bakrī explained that there were many ajnās among the ʂaqalicts and that they were diverse in their religion, customs and mannerisms. He wrote that the

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94 Ibid., 321.
95 Ibid., 891.
96 Ibid.
ṣaqāliba pagan women when married were not given to infidelity (wa nisāʾuhum idhā nukhna lam yaffurn), and appeared to accept pre-marital relations (illā anna al-bikr idhā ahabbat rajulān sārat ilayhi wa aqāmat āindahu shahwatahā). He noted that if a woman was to be married and her husband was to find her a virgin he would say: “If there were good in you, other men would have wanted you and you would have chosen for yourself [a man] to take your virginity,” and send her away.⁹⁷

Bearing in mind the importance of virginity and abstaining from pre-marital sex in Islam, al-Bakrī’s account of this custom, which was based on Ibrāhīm al-İsrāʾīlī’s reports and attributed to him, is curious when juxtaposed against the intense jealousy of the ṣaqāliba mentioned earlier. Noting that women were not found to be promiscuous despite their pre-marital relations certainly places the custom within the “wonders,” or gharāʾib, of ahl al-shamāl. Al-Bakrī noted that this jins are a people in a state of ignorance (jāhiliyya). Pagan Slavic sexual mores have been obscured and forgotten and historians have debated the reality of pre-Christian sexual customs. Eve Levin writes that at the time when Christianity appeared on the scene, “patriarchal monogamy” was the rule and states that “pagan women were neither so licentious nor so liberated.”⁹⁸ Andalusian writers could have been influenced by monastic polemic against Slavic pagan customs. Ritual sex was a part of local pagan customs in the area and because the pagan peoples did not adhere to Christian standards of “sexual propriety,” they were often accused of sexual lewdness and, by extension, of devil worship.⁹⁹ Al-Bakrī’s account was definitely not as polemical as the Christian writings of his contemporaries about non-Christian Slavs. In fact, his implied that the standards for promiscuity differed from culture to culture.

⁹⁷ Al-Bakrī, al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik, 339.
⁹⁹ Ibid., 41.
Section II: Usāma b. Munqidh on the Abode of War and the Abode of Islam

*I shall spend my wealth in gaining noble qualities / To live on after death eternally
And seek warfare afraid not of death / Dreading no knight nor sword
For should I attain what I seek, glory is mine / And should I die, eternal laudation*

- Usāma b. Munqidh

Usāma b. Munqidh (1095-1188), a warrior and man letters, devoted his life to warding off the Crusades. In his work, written decades apart from al-Bakrī’s, a sense of continuity is maintained in the understanding of honor and valor in the culture and its religious importance as mentioned above. Ibn Munqidh, like al-Bakrī, lived in a period of great political upheaval. Both lived in an era when the Christian kingdoms of the north were pushing against Muslim civilization to the southeast and southwest. When the Crusades are discussed, the city of Jerusalem and the Levant are often seen as the subjects in question. Andalusia was sought after by the “Crusades” centuries before they alighted upon the Islamic domains of the east (*al-mashriq*). In fact, the Muslim frontier in the west had been troubled with the “Reconquista” campaigns as early as the eighth century.101 By the eleventh century, these campaigns had developed into an ideological military movement that threatened Islamic rule in Andalusia by attempting to unify a Christian response to the Moors.102 Ibn Munqidh’s accounts of the Muslim encounters with *ahl al-shamāl*, reduced to the *ifranj*, provides a more intimate account defined by war and loss, showing stark differences between a warrior’s lens and that of an elite scholar such as al-Bakrī.

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102 Ibid., 291.
Usāma b. Munqidh on Honor and Courage

Honor and courage go hand in hand in Ibn Munqidh’s view. Like al-Bakrī with the jalāliqa, Ibn Munqidh wondered at how the ifranj could have such courage (shajā’a, ʿazīma) in battle but no honor (ghīra). Ibn Munqidh writes in his Kitāb al-ʿtibār (The Book of Contemplation), “The ifranj possess nothing in the way of regard for honor (ghīra) or chivalry (nakhwa),” explaining what in his view was a lack of proper conduct in ifranjī society, especially in the relations between men and women. Ibn Munqidh shares a story he witnessed of a Frankish man, a wine merchant, who came home to find a strange man in his wife’s bed with her. When he inquired about what business the stranger had with his wife, the man responded that he was simply tired and found a made up bed to which he retired to rest. The extent of the wine seller’s displeasure, according to the story, was (merely) to warn the stranger never to do this again or they would have an argument. Another example Ibn Munqidh shares was told to him by a bath keeper who worked for his father. The bath keeper once opened a bathhouse in his native city Maʿarra when one of the ifranjī knights came in. According to his story, the ifranj “do not take to people wearing a towel around their waist in the bath, so the knight stretched out his hand, pulled off [his] towel from [his] waist, and threw it down.” Impressed by the bath keeper’s shaven appearance, the Frank asked him to shave off his own pubic hair for him. Satisfied by the result and much to Ibn Munqidh’s horror, he then asked the bath keeper to do the same for his wife.

These two anecdotes reported by Ibn Munqidh show continuity regarding the ideals of honor as well as his particular attention to ḥayā’ (modesty) and ghīra (honor / jealousy) in the

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104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., 149.
106 Ibid.
two cases above, even when the vocabulary is slightly different. Ibn Munqidh dedicates an entire section to ḥayā’ under his chapter on manners (bāb al-ādāb) in another book of his, Lubāb al-Ādāb (Kernels of Refinement). In it he explains how the concept of modesty is portrayed in the Qur’an, the hadith, and common sayings. He illustrates the Islamic view of ḥayā’ as more than simple bashfulness and how it was believed to bring both dignity and wisdom. The connection between being honorable and being brave or courageous was irrevocable, however. For Ibn Munqidh, the central reason for having courage was to value one’s honor and thus fight to protect it and die rather than allow it to be violated. After presenting the two anecdotes above in his book Kitāb al-Fitbār, Ibn Munqidh writes regarding the nature of the ifranj and their morals:

“Consider this great contradiction! They have no sense of propriety or honor, yet they have immense courage. Yet what is courage but a product of honor and disdain for ill repute?”

This offers a clear distinction between Ibn Munqidh’s understanding of honor and the practices of the ifranj, placing these latter on a separate plane from the Muslims.

Usāma b. Munqidh’s world  [Move onto next page if this is left hanging as a “widow.”]

On the one hand, the ifranj are treated in Ibn Munqidh’s texts expectedly as invaders and aggressors, demonized and consistently criticized. On the other hand, Ibn Munqidh’s commitment to what he saw as Arab and Islamic values inevitably distorted his image of the ifranj, which quickly came to refer not only to the Franks but in general to anyone who could be associated with the Crusades, i.e., ahl al-shamāl. In Lubāb al-Ādāb, the distinction between the inhabitants of Arab-Islamic lands and those beyond the abode of Islam was equally clear. In his chapter on manners (bāb al-ādāb), Ibn Munqidh quotes a prophetic hadith reported by Sahl b.

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Sa’d which says: “O God, may I elude this time and may it elude me: [a time when] the knowledgeable one is not followed, and there is no reserve (istiḥyā’ / ḥayā’) held for the forbearing; [when there shall be] a people whose tongues are Arabic but their hearts are not (a’ājim).”\(^{109}\) This hadith, quoted in the section on ḥayā’, is adduced alongside others that focus on the importance of this virtue in Islam, maintaining that a Muslim’s faith would be incomplete without it.

The great deal of emphasis Ibn Munqidh places on honor comes within the context of Arab-Frankish relations. Not far from his home in Shayzar, and only three years after his birth, the city of Ma’arra was subjected to a bloody, ruthless and one of the worst invasions by the ifranj. The ifranj laid siege to the city for weeks and, having no formal army but only a few armed militiamen, it was unable to resist.\(^{110}\) Thus, Ma’arra’s elite reached out to the leader of the ifranj at the time, Bohemond, who gave them his word that should they stop resisting and retreat, the lives of their people would be spared. The siege of this city, from that time on, would live on in Arab and Muslim literature as a reminder and a testament to the brutality of the ifranj and the unbridgeable gap between the two peoples. The onslaught, according to Ibn Athīr, lasted three days and resulted in thousands of casualties. However, what set apart this incident was not carnage alone, but the fact that the ifranj wildly engaged in cannibalism, as recorded in both Frankish and Arab sources.\(^{111}\) One Frankish chronicler wrote: “[O]ur troops boiled pagan adults in cooking pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled.”\(^{112}\) Another wrote: “Not only did our troops not shrink from eating dead Turks and Saracens; they also ate dogs!”\(^{113}\)

\(^{109}\) Ibn Munqidh, *Lubāb al-ʿĀdāb*, 281. This is a weak (daʿīf) hadith. See hadith no. 1371 in Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī’s *Silsilat al-Abādīth al-ʿĀfâ wa-l-Mawdāʿa wa ʿĀthār rūḥā al-Sayyīʿa ʿalā al-Ummā*.


\(^{111}\) Ibid.

\(^{112}\) Ibid., 39.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 40.
Though some Frankish leaders claimed that it was the desperation of a famine that led soldiers to resort to cannibalism, Amin Maalouf suggests that this claim is refuted by the behavior witnessed in the city of Ma’arra – namely, of ifranj soldiers “roaming through the country-side openly proclaiming that they would chew the flesh of the Saracens” – as well as by their taking pride in such actions and by the leaders’ utter unwillingness to hold their armies in check.\textsuperscript{114} The often indiscriminate killings committed by the Crusaders, showing that they viewed native Christians (and Jews) as being within the abode of Islam, both supported the role of ahl al-dhimma in society and further problematized it. On the one hand, native non-Muslims remained within the “us” category of the Islamicate world. The 1099 sacking of Jerusalem, where Crusaders “rode in the blood of Saracens up to the knees of their horses,” did not involve Muslims alone. Though Muslim and Jewish civilians in particular bore the brunt of the ifranj’s massacre, native Christians were among the victims as well.\textsuperscript{115} On the other hand, native Christians, being the coreligionists of this now despised and feared enemy, came to occupy a vulnerable position. Prior to the capture of Jerusalem, for example, the Muslim governor, fearing treason, reportedly expelled most of the Christian population. Those who remained, specifically the leadership of the Eastern churches, were forced to leave the city by the Crusaders, who envisioned an exclusively Latin Christian Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{116} This was Usāma b. Munqidh’s world. Though massacring civilians was certainly not exclusive to the ifranj, in the formative days of the Crusades, such atrocities set a pattern and a reputation that would for centuries mar the Crusaders’ relationship with the native population of Ibn Munqidh’s hometown. He saw them through the lens of a collective experience – an enemy that needed to be cast out.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{116} Goddard, \textit{History}, 86.
Conclusion

Al-Bakrī uses honor and valor as a distinguishing characteristic or feature that differentiated peoples and established alterity. His pre-Islamic anecdote of al-Yamāma as a symbol of the Andalusian ْتَوْفِيق, as prosperity and richness brought down by dishonor, shows how Arab Muslims could be equated with non-Muslims when they exhibited the same ideals as these latter (or lack thereof). His descriptions of ْأَهْلُ ٱلشَّامِ show likeness to Arab Muslims when they were believed by al-Bakrī to adhere to the honor and valor set by his literary imagination. However, the significance of ْأَهْلُ ٱلشَّامِ remained miniscule in his work. Despite a relatively wider survey than that undertaken by his contemporaries, his brevity in addressing them in his book, considering the extent of interaction between Andalusia and its non-Muslim kin to the north, suggests that it was due more to a lack of interest than to a lack of knowledge. To al-Bakrī, the geographical proximity of the ْأَهْلُ ٱلشَّامِ necessitated their mention, as did their military and economic interactions with Andalusia. Beyond that, al-Bakrī’s Andalusia, with its paved streets and bustling metropolises, had, as Catlos noted, little interest in the “stunted and primitive cities of Northern Europe.”\(^\text{117}\) Al-Bakrī reimagined Andalusia as the utopian garden, while foreshadowing its demise. At the same time, that Andalusia separated from the people of the north preserved its glory only insofar as these latter were kept at bay. Carefully distinguishing those within al-Andalus from those without, al-Bakrī establishes a category of people that rendered their affiliation to Islam almost secondary to the cultural and civilizational distinction of the other. Thus, the Jews and Christians of Andalusia remained within the constructed image of al-Andalus, unlike the “Christian tribes” of the north.

\(^{117}\) Catlos, Infidel Kings, 17.

Usāma b. Munqidh’s use of honor and courage as irrevocably joined in the Arab and Muslim value system compels a negative assessment of the ِإِفْرَانِ, particularly when
compounded by their position in his world as invaders and aggressors. Like al-Bakrī, Ibn Munqidh appeals to honor and courage in a manner that maintains the place of *ahl al-shamāl* on a different plane. Ibn Munqidh’s account is far more defined by conflict than al-Bakrī’s given his personal involvement in the war against the Crusades in the Levant and Egypt. The confrontational nature of his tales shows that even though religion might have been an obvious feature of the Crusades, his focus on values such as honor and his passing judgment on the Franks in accordance with them complicates the assumption that religion was the primary source and manifestation of animosity between the communities of the Islamicate world and the north.
Chapter Four: On Knowledge

In order to analyze the view that the Muslim scholars discussed here held of *ahl al-shamāl*, with regards to their knowledge and intellect, it is necessary to explore the development of knowledge systems in Islamic civilization. Within fewer than three decades of the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (632 AD), Muslim polities had conquered “the lands that a millennium earlier had fallen to Alexander the Great.”

For the first time since Alexander’s expansions, the region between the Persian territories to the east and Egypt to the west had not been united. Their reuniting under the Islamic expansion allowed for trade to prosper and for people to move more freely through these lands. It is in this context that scientific and philosophical knowledge and scholarship were pursued. Several factors contributed to the advancement of scholarship in the Muslim world. First, in the year 529 prior to the advent of Islam, the Byzantine emperor Justinian ordered the closing of the school of philosophy at Athens, leading some of its members to take refuge in the then Sassanian Gundeshapur. In 637 this territory came under the control of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as did, five years later, the school of philosophy at Alexandria. These events ushered in a period of “intellectual stagnation” for a Byzantium wholly under church authority and gave Muslim scholars access to the works of their predecessors in Sassanian Persia and the Hellenistic world.

Second, the Islamic patronage of the sciences and

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119 Ibid., 12.
120 Goddard, *History*, 50.
121 Ibid.
considering the quest and transmission of knowledge to be a religious duty provided, in contrast to many of the realms of Roman Catholicism, an atmosphere conducive to their advancement. Thus, by the second half of the eighth century, Baghdad, the heart of the Islamic world in the east, became a center for scholarship and the cultivation of scientific knowledge. Abu ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī and Usāma b. Munqidh discussed the intelligence and knowledge systems of ahl al-shamāl, emphasizing the distinction between the Islamicate world and theirs. The current chapter is dedicated to these discussions. Before analyzing their representation of ahl al-shamāl, the chapter explores the historical context in which these works were written in relation to scientific inquiry and the place of knowledge in Islam.

Science as we understand it today is an accumulation of discoveries and inventions and of knowledge systems compiled and developed across our existence as humans living on this earth. However, modern science has been influenced and shaped by doctrines, ideas, and concepts that simply did not exist in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. What was “science” for the Islamicate world of that time period? First, the word used in Arabic is ʿilm, which literally translates to “knowledge.” When pluralized to ʿulūm, it can encompass any discipline that required a systematic study. Thus, “science” in this historical context extends beyond the study of the physical and natural world. For this reason, the line between philosophy and science did not exist as it is so eagerly imposed by modernity. This is not to say that there were no distinctive academic disciplines, or that this method of organization invalidates in any way the fact that they were scientific; on the contrary. The word ʿulūm encompassed everything from the study of revelation and its interpretation, philosophy, the study of language, law, and history to the study of motion, the internal nature of matter, and the physiology of living beings. These diverse

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disciplines were nevertheless defined by qualitatively different criteria and consisted of different practices and methodologies.  

Second, the relationship of conflict and enmity between modern science and religion understood as the outcome and legacy of the Scientific Revolution and the European Enlightenment does not apply to Islamic history. This conflict between “empirical evidence and scriptural authority” is quite specific to the early modern European Christian experience. Even though this notion of inherent conflict has been normalized, globalized, and reproduced, it must not be assumed to apply to other historical contexts. This is not to say that Muslim jurists did not challenge scholars of other “sciences,” just that when they did, as Justin Stearns articulates, “they tend[ed] – with some notable exceptions – to take oppositional stands regarding the ways in which empirical evidence is relevant to the question at hand, but not with the value of empirical evidence itself.” Moreover, because students were schooled in multiple disciplines and their study always began with the study of the Qur’ān, jurisprudential challenges were often responded to by scholars who were both jurists and practitioners of other “sciences” as well. In general, there was no institutional opposition to scientific inquiry in Islam. Scholars were occasionally persecuted under various regimes due to the complexity of the patronage system and the political considerations of each state. Many of these were actually targeted for their jurisprudential interpretations, or more specifically, for not humoring those in power with rulings these latter wished to extract. For example, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was imprisoned by the ninth-century Abbasid caliph al-Ma’mūn for refusing to adopt Muʿtazila beliefs and declare that the

125 Ibid., 270.
126 Ibid.
Qur’an was “created.”\footnote{128 Roy Jackson, \textit{Fifty Key Figures in Islam} (New York: Routledge, 2006), 44 – 47.} Al-Ma’mūn otherwise happened to be one of the greatest patrons of scientific knowledge and of the translation efforts from Greek into Arabic.\footnote{129 Goddard, \textit{History}, 52.}

Lastly, Islamic civilization is rather famous for acquiring, learning, adapting, and building upon the Greek systems of knowledge, which began with the eighth-century translation movement. Scholars of the Islamicate world who were able to access long traditions of knowledge from the various civilizations they encountered, ancient Greece included. While the importance and influence of translating scientific knowledge from various civilizations should not be discounted, it would be a mistake to view the Islamic enterprise as little more than the appropriation of Greek discoveries. This Eurocentric argument, which also often ignores the influence of the Persian and Indian intellectual traditions, disregards the development of a distinctive Islamicate intellectual and scientific world with its various achievements, discoveries, inventions, inquiries, and contributors of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Arab, Persian, Indian, etc.) and religious traditions (Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and irreligious).\footnote{130 Iqbal, \textit{The Making of Islamic Science}, 30.} The euro-centricity of this argument at times culminates in the delusion that what we today understand as Europe is in some form a direct and unmediated heir of Greek civilization – whose knowledge was ironically transmitted to the continent in Arabic as will be elaborated further below. The word “science” will be used here as a translation of the Arabic world ‘ilm (pl., ‘ulūm) as discussed earlier, rather than in its modern usage in English.

\textit{Science and Knowledge in the “Medieval” Islamicate World}

In 1202, Leonardo Fibonacci, often considered the greatest Christian mathematician in Medieval Europe, returned to his hometown of Pisa from a period of education and learning, and wrote his
masterpiece *Liber Abaci*. At twelve, he lived with his father in Almohad Algeria, where he learned Arabic and mathematics. Then through an apprenticeship in commercial travel, he was able to visit Syria, Egypt, and Sicily.\textsuperscript{131} His book essentially introduced the Christian north to the first comprehensive exposition of Arabic numerals. Based on the works of al-Khwārizmī and al-Karajī, Fibonacci’s work also introduced to Europe Muslim developments in algebra and geometry.\textsuperscript{132} At that time and despite almost continuous political decline, the Muslim world still enjoyed a great deal of success and development in various scientific fields and forms of knowledge, not only algebra and geometry, but also astronomy, medicine, philosophy, jurisprudence, and poetry. Major Arabic scientific and philosophical works were beginning to be translated into Latin, the same way Greek and Persian works had been translated into Arabic centuries earlier.\textsuperscript{133} Two decades following Fibonacci’s return to Pisa from his educational enterprise across the Mediterranean, Sicily fell to none other than Frederick II, the scholar’s patron.\textsuperscript{134} Shortly thereafter, the new regime instigated the first wave of Muslim deportations from the island.\textsuperscript{135} Fredrick II, who invaded Sicily with papal support and whose court attracted “learned men of all faiths” (including Muslims), committed to going on a crusade in the east.\textsuperscript{136}

A century prior to Fibonacci’s birth (ca. 1180), the Andalusian principality of Zaragoza (*Saraqūṣa*) welcomed a new king, Yūsuf al-Mu’taman b. Hūd. Al-Mu’taman was also a mathematician with interests in optics and philosophy. He wrote the Book of Perfection (*Kitāb al-Istikmāl*), in which he surveyed the works of Greek authors like Euclid, Archimedes, and

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Al-Hassan, *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture*, 149.
\textsuperscript{135} Alex Metcalf, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 282.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 284.
Apollonius, as well as scholars writing in Arabic like Ibn Sinān and Ibn al-Haytham. The Banū Hūd consolidated their power over Zaragoza in 1039 through a coup led by Sulaymān b. Hūd, who upon his death divided the largest ta’ifa, in Andalusia among his five sons. Despite the political struggles between them, Zaragoza entered a “golden age” complete with diplomatic manipulations and short-lived allegiances of Muslim and Christian kings alike. Under the rule of Aḥmad al-Muqtadir b. Hūd, Brian Catlos writes that “[t]he city became a cosmopolitan center for the arts, literature, religion, medicine and science; a place where Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars found patrons, a massive reference library, and a spirit of open acceptance.” Scholars travelled from Zaragoza to the Muslim realms in the east and vice versa, especially as the rest of al-Andalus grew unstable. Under the Hūd ta’ifa of Zaragoza, the arts and sciences were encouraged and flourished – an encouragement supported by several historical circumstances. It was in Zaragoza, according to Ibn ʿIdhārī, that Mūsā b. al-Nuṣayr came upon the idol warning him to march into the lands of the north no further. Thus, the region around the “White City,” as it was called among the Arabs, with its fortresses, castles, and walls, was considered the farthest frontier, or al-thaghūr al-aqṣā, following the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. It remained as such until its final capture by the Kingdom of Aragon in 1118. As al-thaghūr al-aqṣā, Zaragoza essentially bordered bilād al-shamāl. For example, the ta’ifa’s allegiances with the Christian north allowed for the dispatching of envoys and functionaries. Its internal

138 Independent polity formed after the Umayyad Caliphate’s collapse.
139 Catlos, Infidel Kings, 91.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibn ʿIdhārī, al-Bayān al-Mughrib, 17.
143 Ibn ʿIdhārī, al-Bayān al-Mughrib, 105.
144 After a series of back and forth over Zaragoza, it fell to the “Reconquista” in 1118, remaining from then on in “Christian” hands.
145 Ibid., 92.
division among the sons of Sulaymān resulted in the creation of cross-cultural alliances between the Muslim elite and the Christian kings. Muslim rulers even employed soldiers from the north.  

In general, the pursuit of knowledge up until the “medieval” period and well beyond, in both the maghrib and the mashriq, had been considered integral to the religious message itself. Thus, it came to be seen by Muslim rulers as a source of power rather than a threat to their authority, as was sometimes the case of the Roman Catholic Church. Both the expansion of trade and conquest led to the promotion of scholarly enterprises, allowing seekers of knowledge to travel across vast territories. The premise of the centrality of knowledge in Islamic civilization lies in the belief that all human knowledge comes first and foremost from God. In this manner, the concept of divine revelation itself in the Islamic view is of knowledge passed on from God to man through His prophet, Muḥammad. Thus, the early Islamic community created the divide between knowing God’s path of submission (islām) to the Creator and the age of ignorance (jāhiliyya) of pre-Islamic Arabia. The concept of knowledge in this case was both temporal and intellectual. Al-Bakrī’s Andalusian contemporary, the qādī Abū al-Qāsim Ṣāʿīd b. Aḥmad b. Ṣāʿīd al-Andalusī, explained in his book Ṭabaqāt al-Umam (The Categories of Nations) that in the early Islamic period the quest for knowledge was confined to the cultivation of language, Islamic law, and the practice of medicine. It was not until the Abbasid caliphate that the interest, the means, and the necessary access coalesced to allow Muslim scholars and science enthusiasts to pursue knowledge in a variety of different formats.

146 Ibid., 94.
149 Ibid., 19.
150 Al-Andalusī, Ṭabaqāt, 47.
Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, who wrote in the eleventh century, divided nations by how he viewed their scientific accomplishments. He saw that the nations of the world could be divided into two categories, even “in spite of their different groups and many faiths (madhāhib).” He explained:

One category was dedicated to scholarship (ʻuniyat bi-l-ʾilm), cultivating the forms of science (al-ʾulūm) and the arts of knowledge. The other category was not dedicated enough (lam tuʿna bi-l-ʾilm) and was not worthy of being mentioned or associated with those who have complied [with the ways of science], for they have neither transmitted any useful information or wisdom nor reported any practical outcomes for their ideas.\(^{151}\)

Whether Ṣāʿid’s view was held universally by scholars of his in his time within the Muslim realm of the west or even beyond it in the east is unclear. This division of nations could very well be his opinion alone. It can be argued, however, that the Islamicate world was at least cognizant of its scientific achievements and capabilities. This awareness, often accompanied by a subtle wonder at the ways and methods of others like ahl al-shamāl, appears in Ibn Munqidh’s and al-Bakrī’s works and will be discussed below. Ṣāʿid’s account of the scientific accomplishments of nations contains several peculiarities, like the reasons for their advancement or regression, which will become apparent in the next section when discussing ahl al-shamāl. Another odd characteristic is his use of “Arab” as a nation as opposed to “Islamic,” unlike in the texts of Ibn Munqidh and al-Bakrī. Ṣāʿid identifies the Arabs as one of the eight nations that cultivated science, along with the Indians, the Persians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, the Romans, the people of Egypt,\(^{152}\) and the Hebrews. Many of the scholars he mentions in the section on “Science among the Arabs” (al-ʾulūm ʿind al-ʾarab) would not be considered (ethnically) Arab today, like Abū Jaʿfar b. Mūsā al-Khwārizmī or Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī. He does note that he will discuss known scientists who emerged during the Abbasid era, be they Arabs or not, but still

\(^{151}\) Ibid., 5.
\(^{152}\) Ibid., 38. From original “ahl mīṣr,” whom Ṣāʿid describes were a mixture of different peoples and that Copts form their majority.
titled the section “Science in the Lands of the Arabs” (also despite the Muslim expansion well into territories that were never considered “Arab”). This is because “Arab” could be considered more of a linguistic identity and since all the scholars and scientists he mentioned wrote in Arabic, they, at least in Ṣāʿid’s view, fall within the confines of an Arab nation. The Abbasid era Arabization of conquered lands (Persia in particular) consecrated Arabic as the language of knowledge and scholarship, especially with the boom in the translation movement. What Ṣāʿid alluded to is the development of distinctive (linguistic) Arabic, rather than (ethnic) Arab, schools of thought (madhāhib) and methodologies in the study of various disciplines from astronomy (ʿilm al-nujūm al-ṭabi‘ī) to philosophy (al-falsafa). Most importantly, Ṣāʿid viewed the Islamicate world as embracing and adapting knowledge systems developed by other civilizations as well as producing its own. Accordingly, the notion of monopolizing knowledge or ‘owning’ it was unthinkable, especially considering the Islamic belief that knowledge and the ability to utilize it is God’s gift to man. Instead, the emphasis was placed on spreading knowledge and the creation of mechanisms for its transmission, like the ijāza for example.

The Islamic belief that seeking knowledge was a religious obligation was expanded in the early days of Islam beyond religious scholarship. Knowledge was understood in the intellectual tradition “in the light of the principles of the religion.” In the early years of Islam, education was more informal and children would start their learning at home, moving on to study under scholars in mosques as they grew older. Many scholars would also open their homes to students

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153 Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 129.
154 Al-Andalusī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 60.
who sought to learn under their guidance.  

By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, scholars and students travelling on scholastic expeditions had become an established practice in the Islamicate world. Through travel, such knowledge seekers were able to study under several scholars and diversify their knowledge base. For example, the famous Ibn ʿAsākir (dates?) reportedly studied with 1,300 male teachers and 80 female ones in various cities in the eastern realm during the course of his travels. Though a scholarly elite certainly existed, the eleventh and twelfth century Islamicate world enjoyed the highest public literacy rate among its neighbors, including the kingdoms of Christendom to the north. In fact, eleventh century Cordoba acquired the reputation of being the “most advanced city in Europe” with hundreds of mosques, hospitals, and private and public libraries holding more books than the rest of the continent collectively.

Knowledge & Science in Bilād al-Shamāl

It is reported that a Frankish lord once sent to Ibn Munqidh’s uncle requesting a physician to help treat some of his injured soldiers / knights (?). A native Christian by the name of Thābit was sent to tend to them, only to return a few days later much to the surprise of the elites of Shayzar, Ibn Munqidh included. Thābit had been asked to treat a knight with an abscess on his leg and a woman suffering from a dry temperament. The physician explained that he opened and drained the abscess and dressed the infected area, and that he introduced the woman to a new diet that dampened her temperament. Unfortunately, a Frankish doctor cast doubt on Thābit’s methods and ordered the knight’s leg cut off with an axe. The knight died instantly according to

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158 Ibid., 196.
Thābit’s account. As for the woman, the Frank insisted she was possessed by a devil – so he had her head shaved and returned her to her old diet. When her condition worsened the Frankish doctor concluded that the devil had taken over her mind. He carved a cross into her head reaching her skull and rubbed salt on it, after which the woman died. These examples, Ibn Munqidh noted, were some of the “wonders of their medicine” (*min ʾajib ʿibbihim*). These “wonders” were not all negative, but rather, to use Ṣāʿid’s word, highlighted the differences in the knowledge systems (*madḥāhib*) employed by the Islamicate world and others used by the *ifranj*. Ibn Munqidh recounted, following Thābit’s story above: “I witnessed of their medicine a different example,” explaining that a Frankish doctor washed a knight’s wounds with vinegar after he fell off a horse and severely hurt his leg. His wounds stopped reopening and he began to recover well. Another instance involved a Frankish doctor treating a young boy with scrofula sores after his artisan father had sworn to treat others with such a condition free of any charge.

Ibn Munqidh’s first story shows a serious gap between Frankish and local medicine, mostly driven by what appears to be religious doctrine. The religious aspect is understandable considering that the tools required for the study of medicine were, at the time, confined to monasteries. Moreover, while theories of humoral imbalance did exist in the lands of the north, monks often attributed physical and mental illness to demonic influence or sin (namely, sexual immorality). While the Roman Catholic world was beginning to gain access to Arabic texts in various disciplines and, by extension, Greek works that had been translated into Arabic, the Islamicate world had already reached its peak with an advanced medical corpus. However, the

161 Ibid., 132 – 133.
162 Ibid., 134.
165 Ibid., 125.
negative examples were balanced by positive ones, suggesting that using a binary “advanced” / “backward” relationship to describe the Islamicate world in relation to the ifranj would be anachronistic and inaccurate. Further, Ibn Munqidh’s Kitāb al-FTibār highlighted how complex Frankish-Muslim relations were, at least in his view, being consistently full of conflict, often laden with cooperation, and occasionally even characterized by friendship. Further, the prominence of trade between the world of the Franks to the north and the Islamicate world even prior to the beginning of the Crusades (whether in the east or west), in addition to the mobility of scholars, intellectuals, and emissaries between the two worlds shows an unremitting level of exchange between the two civilizations.

As for Šā‘id al-Andalusī, his writing expresses the conviction that ahl al-shamāl were not among the nations who cultivated knowledge or science (al-umām allatī lam tu’na bi-l-суlūm), but were instead among those who ignored the faculties of wisdom (hikma). He wrote:

The rest of this category that has not cultivated the sciences is more like cattle than men. For those who live deep in the lands of the north within the farthest of the seven regions, at the end of the populated sector of the world to the north, suffer from being extremely far from the sun. Their weather is cold and their air dense, making their temperament in turn cold and their characteristics rude. So their bodies are enormous, their color white, and their hair droopy. They fail to grasp critical ideas or challenging thoughts. They are overwhelmed by ignorance (jahl) and obtuseness (balāda), and stupidity is widespread among them.\textsuperscript{166}

Al-Andalusī argued that even though nations (umām) were equal in being part of humankind, they were distinctive in their morals (akhlāq), languages, and appearance. It was not that ahl al-shamāl were incapable of “advancing” or developing various systems of knowledge. Rather, al-Andalusī saw that they did not make the effort to use their God-given faculties to cultivate science and that their environment made it difficult to concern themselves with intellectual

\textsuperscript{166} Al-Andalusī, Ṭabaqāt, 9.
production.\textsuperscript{167} This conclusion and his survey of the development of the Arab knowledge base suggests that the Arabs, as represented in al-Andalusī’s work, limited their interested to the cultivation of their language until the advent of Islam, which incentivized education in other fields. This is consistent with the historical timeline of scientific development in Islamic civilization. The progression from language to philosophy and natural science in the Arab world as represented in Ṣā‘īd’s book is noticeable in the requirements he identifies for nations to be “scientific.” Such a designation of nations according to their scientific orientation relied upon three requirements: the level of theoretical reasoning, asceticism, and the place that sciences and philosophy occupy in tradition.\textsuperscript{168}

Though Ṣā‘īd’s categorization might have been skewed by the belief that Islam secured these three requirements, thereby giving Arabs their place among the nations of science, it is unlikely that the faith of others was of consequence. His identification of the Greeks, the Hebrews, and pre-Islamic Persia and India as nations of science makes the irrelevance of religion in his assessment apparent. Several historical factors may have contributed to his view. First, the translation movements from Greek, Persian, and Indian works made the accomplishments of these civilizations accessible to Muslim scholars like Ṣā‘īd. Conversely, the north was approached primarily with neglect because, for the most part, Muslims saw that there was nothing to be gained or learned from their civilization. For centuries the Islamicate world lost both the interest and the ability to expand northward beyond Andalusia and further into the lands of the ifranj. Second, the numerous encounters with the kingdoms of the north in light of Andalusia’s boasting of “superior” lifestyles and infrastructure did not challenge this preconceived notion. While Andalusian men and women enjoyed – to varying degrees depending


\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
on their class – access to education and various forms of learning, and while education was even valued in slaves (whereby a slave’s price would be substantially higher if she were educated), the lands of the north were only beginning to experience the intellectual activity that would eventually lead to the Renaissance.\footnote{Sayed Imamuddin, \textit{Muslim Spain: 0711 – 1492 A.D.} (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 37.} Even though the lands of the north were beginning to change intellectually, it would have been difficult for travelers and outsiders to notice. Andalusia was focused inward and appeared as a haven far from the Muslim heart in the east, with a visible disparity in infrastructure and lifestyle vis-à-vis the lands to the north.\footnote{Catlos, \textit{Infidel Kings}, 17.}

One of al-Bakrī’s primary concerns in his work is hygiene; the lack thereof can be tied to the absence of proper knowledge. For example, of the Galicians (\textit{al-jalāliqa}) he wrote: “[T]hey do not clean themselves or wash themselves save once or twice a year with cold water, and do not wash their clothes from whence they wear them until they are torn, and they believe the dirt upon them from their sweat softens their bodies.”\footnote{Al-Bakrī, \textit{al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik} 891.} Also among the \textit{ahl al-shamāl} discussed by al-Bakrī in \textit{Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik} were \textit{al-ṣaqāliba}, as mentioned in the previous chapter. He explains that they had no bath houses but had invented another method to achieve cleanliness. Al-Bakrī reports on the basis of al-Isrā’īlī’s account that, instead of bath houses, the \textit{ṣaqāliba} built wooden houses and sealed their gaps with a natural moss-like substance. They then built stone stoves in one of the corners and allowed for the smoke to escape from a window above. Once the stove became hot enough, they shut the window and the door to the house. They kept a container filled with water inside and would pour it over the stove allowing the steam to rise. Sitting in this structure opened up their pores and cleansed the body of any excess and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Catlos, \textit{Infidel Kings}, 17.
\item Al-Bakrī, \textit{al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik} 891.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
impurities.\textsuperscript{172} This detailed description is consistent with what we would recognize today as a sauna, or “banya” in several Slavic languages.\textsuperscript{173}

Al-Bakrī’s notes on hygiene, based on what was reported by al-İsrā‘îlî, is included in this section because even though Islam places emphasis on ritual purity and cleanliness, this is a part of a large corpus of Islamicate knowledge. The benefits of cleanliness are not spiritual alone but involve caring for the daily life of a Muslim. Ḫusayn Anşāriyān explains that the Prophet Muḥammad emphasized the importance of cleanliness and that he was extremely aware of issues relating to “oral and dental hygiene, cleaning hair and face, clothes and furniture [and] lanes and streets.”\textsuperscript{174} Seyyed Hossein Nasr places hygiene, especially in the sunna, within “questions pertaining to the field of medicine.”\textsuperscript{175} Furthermore, baths (ḥammām, pl. ḥammāmāt) were an important feature of Islamic civilization, one that al-Bakrī mentions when describing the structures and institutions set up by Muslims especially following the initial conquest of any land, including Andalusia. Badajos (Batalyaws), Ceuta (Sabta) and al-Fusṭāt are among the cities mentioned by al-Bakrī as containing baths. In general, public baths were essential to Andalusian society. Even those who had the means to have servants prepare baths for them preferred the ḥammāmāt. They were such a noticeable feature, as mentioned above, to the extent that the Spanish Inquisition ordered their destruction in 1567 as part of the effort to erase all traces of Islamic culture.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 339 – 340.
\textsuperscript{173} James Millar, \textit{Encyclopedia of Russian History}, vol. 1 (Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), 123.
\textsuperscript{175} Nasr, \textit{Science and Civilization in Islam}, 192.
\textsuperscript{176} Wijdan Ali, \textit{The Arab Contribution to Islamic Art: From the Seventh to the Fifteenth Centuries} (Cairo: The American University of Cairo, 1999), 103.
Conclusion

The centrality of education and the acquisition and retention of knowledge in Islamic thought and the reality of the Islamicate world made the question of knowledge and the methods of attaining it important features in measuring the alterity of others like *ahl al-shāmal*. The characteristics of the historical context allowed for diverse forms of encounter between the north, Andalusia, and the Muslim east. These, however, did not influence the discourse of the writers featured here as much as they were influenced by the history of their own traditions and historical imagination. Nevertheless, the exploration of this theme allows us to view the regions of the north, Andalusia, and the Muslim east as intersecting, rather than isolated, and the crusade projects of the east and west as interconnected too. War and conflict suggest an increasing interaction – a negative one, but an interaction nonetheless, one that really skewed the Muslim view of *ahl al-shamāl*. Notwithstanding, al-Bakrī and Şāʿīd, unlike Ibn Munqidh, diminished these interactions: al-Bakrī by creating an insular Andalusian society and both of them by highlighting the distinctiveness of Arabic and Islamicate systems of knowledge and cultural traditions.
Chapter Five: On God and Country

*It seemed remarkable that an educated Muslim living near Damascus at the turn of the fourteenth century would have so little to say and be so poorly informed about Latin Europe and its inhabitants, given the history of conflict and interaction...but it also reflects the general rule that Latin Christendom figured only slightly in the Arabo-Islamic imagination.* –Brian Catlos on Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī.177

The motivations behind Islamicate representations of *ahl al-shamāl* and northern Christian representations of Muslims and their world can be understood in the geographic concept of the “frontier.” The frontiers were essentially borderlands, where one world ended and the other began. For Muslims, as Ralph Brauer explains it: “External frontiers occurred at the periphery of the empire wherever a Muslim polity adjoined an ‘Unbeliever’ one.”178 Thus, they were the farthest ends of *dār al-islām* that reached the territories of enemy states, or *dār al-ḥarb*. In Arabic literature, these frontiers were called *thugūr* (*s., thaghr*) as in the example of Zaragoza in the last chapter. “*Thaghr*” literally means the place whence you fear an enemy’s attack. The root of the word *th*g.*ґ.*h.*ґ.*r* (*ثَغْرَ) means an opening or a gap. *Thugūr al-Andalus* include *al-thaghr al-adnā* (the near frontier) towards the west of Andalusia, *al-thaghr al-awsat* (the central frontier) towards the central region bordering the Kingdoms of Castile and Leon, and *al-thaghr al-aqsā* (the farthest frontier) towards the east bordering the Kingdom of Aragon. Areas in and beyond

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northern Syria were also part of the frontier zones called *al-thughūr al-shāmiyya*.\(^{179}\) Usāma b. Munqidh lived in the Levant at a time when these frontiers were being negotiated between Crusade offenses and Islamicate defenses. During the time of Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī too, though he lived beyond the reach of the kingdoms of the north, the frontiers were being pushed against by the increasingly eager western crusade to claim Andalusia. The frontier was more than geographical territory however. It was also an intellectual intersection where the writers discussed here encountered the Other. This chapter considers Ibn Munqidh and al-Bakrī’s representation of the religion and practices of *ahl al-shamāl* and the geographical and physical description of their countries / lands (*bilād*).

**Civilizations, Conquests, and Frontiers**

The status of the frontiers was like a pendulum that moved from one end to the other, between war and peace, while mostly hanging in the middle. Al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī (1099-1165) lived in the geographical and intellectual space of this frontier world. His invitation into the court of Roger II of Sicily and his work with other Norman scholars under the king’s patronage showed not only the volatility of the frontiers that moved from one civilization to the other, but also the spaces that people were able to negotiate between cooperation and conflict.\(^{180}\) Al-Idrīsī’s book *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq* focuses mostly on geography. Yet his life, work, and encounters show a profound interaction between the Islamicate world and the neighboring Latin kingdoms. On the other hand, al-Bakrī’s image of Andalusia discussed in the previous chapters limited interactions to trade and war and imagined al-Andalus at civilizational heights untouched by the north. Beginning from the early conquests of the peninsula, al-Bakrī’s account expresses appreciation

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\(^{179}\) Ibid., 15.

for the footprints left behind by other civilizations. He wrote that Constantine united it, by which he was referring to the leader of Byzantine Justinian I whose troops conquered Andalusia in 550 AD.181 “In it remain great ruins (āthār) of the Greeks – the people of wisdom and the carriers of philosophy,” al-Bakrī boasts. Al-Bakrī offers a detailed account of the types of plants that grew in Andalusia, the minerals and stones each city and region mined or excavated, and its terrain, including its islands. The conflict and tension of the times only becomes apparent in his statement: “Al-Andalus is a house (dār) of jihād and a home of divine unity (tawḥīd) that has become surrounded to the east, north, and some of its west by different varieties of unbelievers (aṣnāf ahl al-kufr).”182 The establishment of this enclave surrounded by disbelief was certainly an accomplishment in al-Bakrī’s eyes. He noted: “Ka’b al-Aḥbār reported ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān as saying: ‘The people who cross the sea unto al-Andalus and conquer it will be known by their glow on the Day of Resurrection.’ (yuʿrafūn bi nūrihim yawm al-qiyāma).”183

Between the seventh and tenth centuries, the majority of the native population of Muslim controlled Iberia converted to Islam at varied rates.184 Those who did not came to be known as Mozarabs (mustaʿribūn), native Christians who were Arabized in language and culture. Religious leaders and polemicists wept at the extensive Arabization that left the Christian population well read and more inclined towards Arabic than Latin.185 However, the mass conversions and the integration of native Andalusians, who constituted an indisputable majority, did not ease the minds of Muslim jurists. They were faced with the possibility that Muslims might fall under the

183 Ibid.
jurisdiction of infidels and apostates from as early as the ninth century.\textsuperscript{186} This proved to be a legitimate concern for them. The frontiers had been lost and regained several times. However, as Catlos put it, “the mid-eleventh century marked a watershed, in which within the space of a hundred years significant territories across the Mediterranean from the Iberian Peninsula to the holy land were conquered by \textit{al-ifrānj}.”\textsuperscript{187} This brings us to Ibn Munqidh’s world, of a Levant under Frankish control.

The formation of \textit{ifrānjī} (and other) polities in the Levant following the conquest of Jerusalem and the disunity of Muslim rulers and states plunged the Islamicate world into turmoil. Local preachers called on Muslims to unite and to commit to their duty of \textit{jihād} in order to fend off the encroachment.\textsuperscript{188} Usāma b. Munqidh offers us a glimpse into the complexities of living side by side with an enemy, and on rare occasions an ally, whom he was intent on fighting and expelling. Firstly, Ibn Munqidh is very careful while writing about the \textit{ifrānj} not to confuse them with local Christians. He refers to all individuals relating to the Crusades as \textit{ifrānj} and occasionally mentions the Templars (\textit{al-dāwiyya}) specifically. He refers to indigenous Christians as \textit{al-našārā} (s., \textit{naṣrānī}). On one occasion Ibn Munqidh tells a tale of a “cunning” (\textit{makkār}) Christian man by the name of Yūnān who helped the warrior and his party gain safe passage from a band of thieves. Second, at the same time, he was aware that Christianity was a main feature of the \textit{ifrānjī} onslaught and expressed resentment and disdain towards their take over.

Ibn Munqidh explained that the new comers from the lands of the Franks (\textit{al-bilād al-ifrānjiyya}) were more brutish than those who lived among the Muslims. He wrote of his visit to Jerusalem and al-Aqṣā mosque, explaining that there was a small mosque beside it that had been

\textsuperscript{186} Catlos, \textit{Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom}, 14.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188} Jarbel Rodriguez, ed., \textit{Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 67.
converted to a church by the *ifranj*. His friends among the Templars would vacate the small mosque for Ibn Munqidh and allowed him to pray there. He writes: “One day I went into the little mosque, stood to pray and uttered the *takbīr*, when one of the *ifranj* attacked me, held my face to the east and said: ‘Pray like this!’” The Templars pulled him off Ibn Munqidh, after which he attempted to pray again only for the same Frank to push him to pray to the east.\(^{189}\) The event induced the Templars to apologize to Ibn Munqidh, explaining to him that the man was new in these parts and had never witnessed anyone pray except to the east. Ibn Munqidh concluded: “I [marveled] at that devil, the change of his expression, the way he trembled, and what he must have made of seeing someone praying towards Mecca.”\(^{190}\) Another “religious” encounter Ibn Munqidh tells of was of an *ifranjī* who approached the amīr Muʾīn al-Dīn in a mosque in Jerusalem and asked: “Would you like to see God when he was young?” The amīr said yes, then with Ibn Munqidh accompanied the Frank. He brought them to a picture of “Maryam and Christ – peace upon him – young, sitting on her lap.” The Frank said: “This is God when he was young.” Ibn Munqidh wrote: “May God be exalted far beyond what the infidels say!”\(^{191}\) Thus, Ibn Munqidh believed that the Franks who lived among Muslims, or were more “acclimatized,” were much more tolerable than those who had just arrived.\(^{192}\) He gives the example of one of his men being invited to dinner at the house of an old Frankish knight who had Egyptian women cooking for him and did not allow pork in the house. He served clean and delicious food, the mention of which could imply that this was not believed to be the norm. Then later than night when the Muslim guest left and was ambushed by a group of other Franks, the

\(^{189}\) Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-ṭūbār*, 135.
\(^{190}\) Ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation*, 147.
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 148.
\(^{192}\) Ibid., 153.
old knight saved him from what Ibn Munqidh’s man believed to be certain death. Another tale involves Frankish captives who came into the household of Ibn Munqidh’s father; an old woman, her daughter, and son. The son, who was of age, converted to Islam and learned a craft. After living in the house for a while, Ibn Munqidh’s father arranged for a good woman to be his wife, paid for all the wedding expenses, and for his home. He had two sons with her and when they were five and six, he took his wife and children and all they owned, joined the Franks in Apamea, and returned to Christianity.

Ibn Munqidh’s sentiment towards the ifranj came at a low point in Islamicate civilization and at the height of the aggression of the Crusade in the east. One Sevillian scholar, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-ʿArabī, mourned the devastation of Syria and Iraq – the loss of culture and knowledge, and the division of Muslim societies there. He wrote how “too splendid and perfect to be described” were their societies once, “but an evil fate brought a cold wind from the north and south which left Syria like a yesterday that has passed and gone.” Thus, Ibn Munqidh was certainly not alone. It is worth noting here that despite the connection between the Crusade in the east and the efforts to conquer Andalusia in west, the former was unique in several respects. Unlike in the maghrib, Catlos explains, “the conquest was driven by a conscious spirit of aggressive piety and unremitting brutality, and characterized by deliberate massacre and a calculated disregard for natives, whether these were Muslims, Jews or Eastern Christians.” As mentioned in the previous chapter, the invasions in the east were aimed at Latinizing the “Holy Land,” essentially transforming it into a part of “bilād al-shamāl.”

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193 Ibid.
194 Ibid., 143.
195 Catlos, Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, 135.
196 Ibid.
‘Man’ and ‘woman’ in Islam are almost strictly social differentiations that were inevitably tied to the Islamic understanding of family and lineage. Initially exclusively influenced by Arab tribal understandings of family, Islam challenged and forbade many traditions and scorned others predominant in Arabia but essentially kept an understanding of familial structures consistent with customs of the area. The differentiation between men and women in Islam was traditionally seen as part of God’s plan of creating the world in pairs.¹⁹⁷ Men and women were seen as equal before God but different. This is not to say that women were not excluded from public life or marginalized, that oppressive measures were not placed against them, nor that negative associations with the feminine were absent. However, there was a general lack of disdain for women in Islamic philosophy and theology, which could be attributed to the absence of a rejection of carnal desires. In fact, sexual pleasure was given high importance within the framework of permissible or licit relations, like that between a husband and a wife. For example, the 11th-/12th-century theologian al-Ghazālī wrote about the husband’s duty and responsibility in keeping his wife sexually satisfied, while citing the importance of foreplay.¹⁹⁸ Muslim scholars developed a rather intricate regulatory system for sexual relations and the Shari’a did forbid various kinds of sexual acts. However, the purpose behind these regulatory guidelines and rules was primarily to protect the rights of individuals engaging in sexual relations as well as those of their offspring.

Medieval Christian polemic of the northern kingdoms sexualized Muslims in the south and in the east and represented them as generally degenerate. This included, for example, Guibert of Nogent’s (1055-1124) writings, which attempted to present Islam and Muḥammad as

¹⁹⁷ Qur’an 4:1.
the extension of previous heresies that challenged the Church (heresy in the medieval Christian imagination being inherently associated with sexual debasement). Muhammad was portrayed as promoting sexual affairs not only with several wives and concubines, but with beasts as well.\footnote{Tolan, \textit{Saracens}, 146.}

Guibert also wrote a history of the First Crusade titled \textit{God's Deeds through the Franks}. Another example of late Medieval Christian writings that showed the gender- or sex-oriented polemic against Muslims was that of the French bishop Guillaume Adam. He wrote in the early 1300s: “In the Saracen sect any sexual act at all is not only not forbidden, but permitted and praised,” further explaining that effeminate men among the Saracens would sell themselves to others for pleasure.\footnote{Everett Rowson, “Homoerotic Liaisons among the Mamluk Elite in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria,” in \textit{Islamicate Sexualities: Translations Across Temporal Geographies of Desire}, eds. Afsanah Najmabadi et al. (Harvard CMES, 2008), 204 - 239.}

Other writings imagined “a cornucopia of wealth and pleasures: armor, weapons, women, bread, meat, spiced wine,”\footnote{Jerome Cohen, \textit{Medieval identity machines}. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 208.} or in general, excesses of pleasures that Islamic law clearly moderates or forbids. It is associating the corruption of the soul in rejecting Christianity with bodily and sexual decadence that transformed Islam from being an anti-Christian heresy into Muslims “possessing bodies somehow essentially other than Christian bodies” that happily succumbed to carnal pleasures and perversions.\footnote{Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James Alfred Schultz, \textit{Constructing Medieval Sexuality} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 165.} Islam’s otherness can be summarized by Guibert’s conclusion that Islamic law was “neither the antiquity of Moses nor the more recent Catholic teachings,” but rather a law of covetousness.\footnote{Tolan, \textit{Saracens}, 146.}

Medieval Christian theologians of the north alternated between expressing a harsh disdain for women for their perceived wickedness and inferiority and adoration for the purity and chastity associated with the Virgin Mary.\footnote{Barbara MacHaffie, \textit{Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition} (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 50.} The obsession with controlling female sexuality
resulted in a portrayal of women as being not only inferior, but also as sexually insatiable. Bible stories and histories of women “who led men astray” were detailed in books as the female was associated with corruption and evil.\textsuperscript{205} Because sex was associated with evil, virginity was considered “the best lifestyle for women since it dissociated them from sexuality.”\textsuperscript{206}

Polemic was (as it remains) a feature of the encounter with the Islamicate world. Muslim polemic of the time, for the most part, appeared in theological debates attempting to argue against Christianity using what the scholars believed to be logic and reason.\textsuperscript{207} The history of such debates began with the earliest encounters with Christianity and much of it, as mentioned earlier, focused on the nature of Christ. The type of polemic featured above was not the only kind. Theological back and forth between Muslim scholars and Christian theologians was common and constant within and beyond the Islamicate world. John Victor Tolan explains that the Christian polemic shifts from friendly to hostile and back again and that the Christian responses to Islam were extremely diverse and varied from time to time and place to place, depending on the writers’ own motivations and political allegiances. He writes:

To a large extent, one’s own opinion of Islam is a product of how much one knows about Islam and of how much contact one has with Muslims. Perhaps even more important, though, are the needs and interests of the Christian author. If the Saracen (or Moor, or Turk) is the Other, he is an Other who may conveniently be deployed to fit the needs of each Christian author.\textsuperscript{208}

Several factors differentiated the Islamicate interaction with the Christian north from the reverse. First, from the beginning of the encounter it was the Christian populations that were forced to respond to Islam and the Muslim expansions. Second, these expansions into

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} See Al-Qurtubi’s al-I’lām bi mā fi Dīn al-Naṣārā min al-Fasād wal Awhām in Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean, 82.
Christendom, mass-conversions to Islam, and the Arabization of the Christians of the Islamicate world in both *al-magrib* and *al-mashriq* created a considerable anxiety among Christians that Muslim leaders and scholars of the time did not experience. Thus, anti-Muslim polemic was directed at a Christian audience that needed to be encouraged to reject Islam both physically and intellectually. 209 That is not to say that the Islamicate world did not experience threats, real or imagined, from the Christian world to the north. The Crusades certainly inspired polemical responses, but these were less against Christianity as a religion and more a response to Frankish adventures in the east. Further, the theological polemical debates against Christianity began with Muslims encountering the religion within the teachings of Islam itself – a type of encounter that Christianity’s closest experience to would perhaps be Judaism. Moreover, the fact that Muslims developed the concept and legal category of *ahl al-dhimma* allowed them to deal with Christians in a far more pragmatic manner. Christians of the north only began to encounter Muslim subjects after the northern kingdoms began acquiring Muslim held territories in the Iberian Peninsula and following the Frankish invasions of the Levant. The very subjection of Christian populations to Muslim rule in the Islamicate world neutralized Christianity as a possible threat.

The “Wonders” (*'ajā‘ib*) of Northern Religions and Religious Claims

Tolan continues to explain that in the lands of *ahl al-shamāl* “far from the threat of Muslim invasion, ignorance about Islam – and indifference toward it – helps create the fantastic, diabolical, anti-Trinitarian Saracen idolatry.”210 Just the same, the Islamicate world encountered the north with an indifference that led to an introverted perspective in the case of al-Bakrī. The Andalusia of al-Bakrī’s imagination remained untouched by a north incapable of making its print

209 Ibid., xiii.
210 Ibid., xiv.
on her. Nevertheless, al-Bakrī did discuss the religions of the north, even when often only in passing. He wrote of the saqāliba and more specifically the Bulgarians (al-bulqāriyyūn) in accordance with what was transmitted by Ibrāhīm al-Isrā’īlī: “Their king is of high status; he wears a crown on his head and has the sovereignty and [employs] scribes and masons. He is the “commander and forbider” (i.e., the one who calls the shots) in all organizations and structures, as in the example of all great kings. They have knowledge of the languages of others and they translate the Bible into the Slavic tongue (al-lisān al-ṣaqlibī). And they are Christians.” Al-Bakrī continued to dedicate the next portion to al-Isrā’īlī’s historical description of how the Bulgarians had come into the Christian faith and how they had been Christians since the ninth century.  

Of the ifranj al-Bakrī wrote: “Their religion is Christianity as subjects of their monarch and their kingdom is now based in Rèz (Reggio Emilia), and it is a great city... Before the advent of Islam, their kingdom lay in Africa, Sicily and Crete (iqrīṭash), which belong to the Muslims now.” Al-Bakrī explained that the first of the Frankish kings was Clovis I (qalūdiya), who was the first to embrace Christianity at the hands of his wife Clotilde (ghīrtīld), prior to which he had been a Magian (majūsī). Similarly, al-jalāliqa, al-Bakrī wrote, followed the opinion of their kings (wa ra’yuhum ra’y al-malakīyya aydān) and were at war with the ifranj. Other than his description of the Byzantine procession, al-Bakrī did not offer much detail or elaboration on Christianity. When it came to Christians of the Islamicate world, he often briefly recounted their initial conquests by Muslims, the choice they were given between accepting

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211 Al-Bakrī, al-Masālik wal-Mamālik, 335.
212 Ibid. The details of this account about an attempted conquest of Byzantium followed by a treaty by marriage that induced the conversion of the Bulgarian king could not be verified.
213 Ibid., 340
214 Majūs: though initially referred to the Zoroastrians of Persia, expanded by the 11th century to become an umbrella term for pagans.
Islam and paying the jizya, and their eventual acceptance of the terms of taxation. The pagan rituals of the ṣaqāliba, however, received more attention from him. He wrote: “Of these different groups (ajnās) of al-ṣaqāliba, some are followers of the Jacobite creed (madhhab) of Christianity while others have no book and follow no shari‘a and they are [in] ignorance.” A group of these pagan ṣaqāliba, he reported, burn themselves and their cattle if their leader dies. He added: “They celebrate and sing when they burn the dead and claim that their joy and songs are to bring him his God’s mercy.” He continued to explain that the women of the dead cut their hands and faces with knives and “if one of them claims to love him (the dead), she hangs a rope, climbs a chair and pulls against the rope with her neck. Then the chair is pulled from underneath her and she remains hanging and trembling until she dies. Then she follows her husband and is burnt.” Al-Bakrī’s main source on the jalāliqa and the ṣaqāliba appears to be Ibrāhīm al-Isrā’īlī alone. Further, al-Bakrī’s interest in the pagan traditions of the ṣaqāliba but not their Christian traditions nor those of the ifranj or the jalāliqa has several implications. First, paganism was less encountered at that point, especially for an Andalusian, which perhaps made it more interesting to al-Bakrī. Second, his account shows a degree of indifference to the spiritual, religious, and doctrinal traditions of the Christian kingdoms of the north.

**Conclusion**

Al-Bakrī’s and Ibn Munqidh’s statements were not intended to forward a specific understanding of Christianity, nor did they attribute the behaviors observed or reported specifically to the religion. Al-Bakrī’s mention of the Christian religious affiliations of the peoples of the north involved a simple statement that concerned their identity. Ibn Munqidh was directly responding

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215 Ibid., 466.
216 Ibid., 338
217 Ibid.
to the Crusades he was still encountering. In both works the responses were civilizational rather than confessional. Al-Bakrī’s brief discussion of pagans having no holy book to learn from, and of living in ignorance of a monotheistic God was to clarify their distinctiveness as a people – religion being a significant feature and identifier. However, it was neither the paganism nor the Christianity of ahl al-shamāl that rendered his judgment on them. Rather, it was the civilizational and geographic divide between ahl al-shamāl and the Islamicate world that was the focus and concern of his investigation. Further, while Ibn Munqidh was forced by circumstance to engage ahl al-shamāl, al-Bakrī remained in the comfort of his own imagination – keeping them comfortably at bay.
Conclusion

The place of *ahl al-dhimma* in the Islamicate imagination is very distinctive from that of their coreligionists who lived beyond the world governed – to varying degrees – by Islam. Al-Bakrī and Ibn Munqidh show this distinctiveness in their work, the underlying principles of which are rooted in Arab and Muslim cultural traditions and religion. *Ahl al-dhimma* goes beyond being a legal category often approached with a relative degree of pragmatism. It is a concept that shows a great deal of complexity, especially when considered in relation to non-Muslims outside the Islamicate world. *Ahl al-dhimma* fit within the writers’ concept of an Islamic world due to the degree to which Christians (and Jews) were integrated into their societies. The fact that non-Muslims were Islamicate subjects made them in many ways the responsibility of their Muslim rulers. Their religious affiliation was a matter of practical concern – as long as the Muslim way of life and the primacy of Islam were untouched, it was inconsequential. For this reason, Christians of the north were not granted a status recognizing their identity as “People of the Book.” Just because they were followers of the Christian faith did not mean that they were recognized as comparable to Christians under Muslim rule. In many ways, Ibn Munqidh and al-Bakrī showed that the civilizational divide between Latin Christendom and the Islamicate world was greater than their confessional differences and that their coreligionists among local Christian populations were equally distant from them.
The manner in which the texts represent *ahl al-shamāl* show how the neglect for their experiences and histories could be attributed to the Islamic world as having little to offer in terms of knowledge and valuable social traditions (like those pertaining to honor and courage). In other words, there was nothing to learn of their social customs or ‘non-existent’ scholarly traditions that the Muslim world was interested in acquiring. This was the view that dominated the understanding of Islamicate scholars who, like Ṣāʿid, cherished the value of Greek, Persian, and Indian (among other) scholarly traditions. The one compliment awarded the peoples of the north was their bravery, a characteristic in which the 11\textsuperscript{th}-century Islamicate world did not experience a shortage. Thus, the interest in *ahl al-shamāl* may have developed out of scholarly necessity to be as thorough as possible in the description of the “populated sectors” of the known world.\textsuperscript{218} For others, it was the outcome of encounters and confrontations that could no longer be ignored, as in the case of the Crusades, and had to be used to educate and warn contemporaries and all those who bore the burden of maintaining Islamicate civilization after.

\textsuperscript{218} Al-Andalusī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9.
Bibliography


