

From Drops of Blood: Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the *translatio* of the 'Uthmānic Codex of al-Andalus

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Abstract

The account of the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf* of Córdoba, which passed from generation to generation across the western shores of Islam, has played a prominent role in the history of al-Andalus and the Maghrib. The prized codex appears throughout historiographical and literary discourses, stretching from the Hispano-Umayyad caliphate to the dynasty of the Banū Marīn in North Africa. Brought into battle against Christians and fellow Muslims, decorated with ornate coverings, and made into the object of countless panegyrics, the 'Uthmānic codex of al-Andalus offers a glimpse into a sustained network of meaning and power. The codex came symbolically to align successive Muslim dynasties to the early history of Islam. Drawing attention to the parallel phenomena of the *furta sacra* and the *translatio* of relics in medieval Christian tradition, this article explores the broader political, religious, and literary dimensions which silhouette the veneration toward the 'Uthmānic codex.*

Keywords

Qur'ān, *muṣḥaf*, Umayyad caliphate, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, *al-khandaq*, Córdoba, relics, translation, historiography, al-Andalus, North Africa

The story of the 'Uthmānic codex (*muṣḥaf*) of the Qur'ān, once housed in the Córdoba Mosque, forms a discrete chapter in the history of al-Andalus and the Maghrib. The *muṣḥaf* in question is said to be the very one from which the third caliph, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (d. 23/644), was reading when assassinated. According to various competing authorities, Cairo, Baṣra, Ḥims, Istanbul, and Samarqand, not to mention Córdoba, all lay claim to the codex.

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By the time that the Maghribī historian, Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Nāṣirī (d. 1315/1897), addresses the subject of the 'Uthmānic relic in his *Kitāb al-istiṣṣā li-akbbār duwal al-maghrib al-aqsā*, the routine of remembering the marvelous travels of this particular codex was already a fully established trope within the historiographical reconstructions of al-Andalus.¹

The codex of Córdoba has continued to wield such a grip on the imagination that the topic appears as part of a Moroccan grade-school textbook produced by the Ministry of Education and is referenced in an Arabic television-documentary on the Qur'an.² Likewise, several modern Arabic studies have explored the marvelous journey (*al-riḥla al-'ajība*) of the relic. Prominent in Arabic are the studies by Muḥammad al-Manūnī, Saḥar al-Salīm, and Maḥmūd Bū 'Ayād, which explore the various *maṣāḥif* associated with 'Uthmān and follow the miraculous *translatio* of the artifact into al-Andalus and the Maghrib.³ In the context of Hispano-Umayyad pageantry and legitimacy, the historians of Islamic art, Olegar Grabar, Jerrilynn Dodds, and Nuha Khoury have sketched out the importance of the relic in the projection of caliphal authority.⁴ And beyond al-Andalus, Alfred Dessus Lamare and Amira Bennison have described the significance of the relic for the Almoḥad dynasty in North Africa.⁵

Yet despite the attention given to this particular codex, very little has been said about the far-reaching symbolic significance of this episode for the study of the Qur'an as a material object or about the role of scripture in the larger Arabic literary constructions of al-Andalus and the Maghrib. It is the materiality of scripture, in its intersection with the discursive *imaginaire*, where the

¹ Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī 'l-Salawī (d. 1315/1897), *Kitāb al-istiṣṣā li-akbbār duwal al-maghrib al-aqsā*, ed. J. al-Nāṣirī, and M. al-Nāṣirī (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Dār al-Kitāb, 1954), vol. ii, p. 129.

² *Durūs fi 'ulūm al-Qur'an* (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Wizārat al-Tarbiya al-Waṭaniyya, 1995), pp. 52-3; Qanāt al-Madaj al-Wathā'iyya, *Riḥlat al-Qur'an al-'aẓīm* (<http://www.majddoc.com/main.aspx?function=Item&cid=12294>).

³ M. Al-Manūnī, "Markaz al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf bi'l-Maghrib," *Daw'at al-ḥaqq*, 11.3 (Rabāṭ, 1968), pp. 71-9; S. Salīm, *Aḍwā' 'alā muṣḥaf 'Uthmān b. 'Affān: wa riḥlatuhu sharqan wa gharban* (Iskandariyya: Mū'assasat Shabāb al-Jāmi'a), 1991; M. Bū 'Ayād, *al-Riḥla al-'ajība li-nuskha min muṣḥaf al-khalīfa 'Uthmān fi arjā' al-Maghrib wa 'l-Andalus* (Al-Jazā'ir: Mūfam lil-Nashr, 2004).

⁴ O. Grabar, "Notes sur le mihrab de la grande mosquée de Cordoue," *Le mihrab dans l'architecture et la religion musulmanes*, ed. A. Papadopoulo (Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 115-18; J. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), pp. 106-9; N. Khoury, "The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century," *Muqarnas*, 13 (1996), pp. 80-98.

⁵ A. Dessus Lamare, "Le muṣḥaf de la mosquée de Cordoue et son mobilier mécanique," *Journal asiatique*, 230 (1938), pp. 551-75; A. Bennison, "The Almohads and the Qur'an of 'Uthmān: the Legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in the Twelfth Century," *Al-Masaq*, 12:2 (Sept. 2007), pp. 131-54.

Qur'ān itself becomes a site of competition and a source of legitimization. The pre-modern memory of the amazing journey of this codex serves as a literary motif inflecting a range of belletristic and historiographic discourses. As literary artifacts, the anecdotes related, the letters composed and verses sung, in a routinized commemoration of the codex, form part of a broader construction and projection of identity along the frontier. It is this ritualized passing down of the physical codex and the textual memory of it, in a sustained *translatio* across time and space, which situates the significance of the 'Uthmānic codex of Córdoba as a broader metaphor of exchange and rivalry along the western frontiers of Islam.

I. 'Abd al-Raḥmān's *muṣḥaf*

Our journey along the frontier starts in the fourth/tenth century, with the anecdote of how 'Abd al-Raḥmān III (r. 300/912-350/961), the first Umayyad caliph of al-Andalus, lost his codex of the Qur'ān. The Arabic historiographical accounts of the life and reign of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, arguably the greatest of the Hispano-Umayyad rulers, tend toward the register of the hagiographic. 'Abd al-Raḥmān can be credited with the concentration of power domestically, consolidating his control of the border lands (*thughūr*), against the Christians to the north and the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlis to the east, ordaining himself as caliph, along with undertaking monumental, architectural projects, such as the expansion of the Córdoba mosque and the foundation of the palatine city, Madīnat al-Zahrā', outside the Andalusī capital of Córdoba.⁶

For the medieval Arabic historians of al-Andalus, the figure of 'Abd al-Raḥmān appears as the *summum bonum* of governance, seemingly always successful and steadfast. The reigns of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III and his son, al-Ḥakam II (r. 350/961-366/976), represent the apogee of power for the Hispano-Umayyad caliphate. In 316/928-9, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III formally proclaimed himself caliph, whereby he had his name recited in the Friday sermons as *amīr al-mu'minīn*, Commander of the Faithful.⁷ Additionally, he had coins minted with this title, projecting his caliphal authority and challenging the legitimacy of the Fāṭimid and 'Abbāsīd claims to power.⁸

⁶ Cf. M. Fierro, "Sobre la adopción del título califal por 'Abd al-Raḥmān," *Sharq al-Andalus*, 6 (1989), pp. 33-42.

⁷ Cf. E. Lévi-Provençal, "'Abd al-Raḥmān," *EP*; cf. J. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate, the Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2000), p. 19.

⁸ Cf. Antonio Vives y Escudero, *Monedas de las dinastías árabe-españolas* (Madrid: 1893), p. 396.

The caliph earned his sobriquet, *al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh* ('Defender for the True Faith of God'), through his many victorious raids against the petty Christian kingdoms to the North, who in previous generations had made significant inroads against their Muslim neighbors. The panegyric historical *urjūza* of the contemporary court poet and littérateur, Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi (d. 328/940), recasts 'Abd al-Raḥmān's conquests in mythic and saintly terms—"then the Imām raided the abode of war" (*thumma għazā 'l-imāmu dāra 'l-ḥarb*).⁹ In the literary fashioning of this epic poem, 'Abd al-Raḥmān stands as a divinely inspired hero fighting in a righteous cause for the betterment of the faith. Drawing on a long tradition of elevating military campaigns through verse, Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi's historiographical projection of the caliph conquering the infidels and leaving their land "like a blackened piece of charcoal" (*fa-għādarū-hā faḥmatan musakhkhamatan*), fits into a wide-ranging literary discourse of communal conflict and strife.¹⁰

Through the chronicle of Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 469/1076), the *Muqtabas*, we learn of the events surrounding the battle of the *khandaq* in 327/939,¹¹ which marked the only defeat suffered by the caliph during his long and distinguished military career. The *Muqtabas* preserves in great measure the largely lost historical accounts of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Mūsā 'l-Rāzī (d. 344/955), arguably the intellectual forefather of Andalusī historiography, along with material written by his son 'Īsā b. Aḥmad al-Rāzī (d. 379/989). It is on the authority of historians contemporary to the unfolding of events that Ibn Ḥayyān casts for us a collection of testimonies concerning the defeat of the "trench" (*khandaq*). While the subject of this battle, which was actually a series of battles, is well known to modern scholars, the prominent role the Qur'ān plays in the unfolding events has yet to receive adequate attention.¹²

Writing less than three generations after the reign of 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Ibn Ḥayyān was witness to the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate, the fragmentation of power into factional kings, known as *mulūk al-ṭawā'if*, along with the slow attrition of territory into the hands of Christian rulers. The overwhelming pro-Umayyad tenor of the voices quoted in the *Muqtabas* positions us in a largely idealized landscape of caliphal rule. Despite this, the vivid portrayal

⁹ Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, ed. M. Qumayḥa (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), vol. v, pp. 242-265, p. 252; cf. J. Monroe, "The Historical Arjuza of Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, a Tenth-Century Hispano-Arabic Poem," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 91 (1971), pp. 67-95.

¹⁰ Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, vol. v, p. 253.

¹¹ On the question of the exact date, see P. Chalmeta, "Simancas y Alhandega," *Hispania: Revista española de historia*, 133 (1976), pp. 359-444; pp. 405-6, 435-6.

¹² For an overview of the scholarship on the battle, see J. P. Molénat, "Shant Mānkash," *EP*.

of the defeat of 'Abd al-Raḥmān's forces at the hands of Ramiro II (*Rudhmīr*), king of Leon, leaves us with impressive detail concerning the humiliation which the caliph suffered.

One fragment preserved by Ibn Ḥayyān, from the *Kitāb al-fatḥ* ('Book of Victory') of the historian and *wazīr* 'Isā b. Fuṭays (fl. 329/940), describes how 'Abd al-Raḥmān led a campaign (*ghazwa*) to Simancas (*Shant Mānkash*), a village in the modern-day province of Valladolid, into the land of the infidels, the heart of Christendom, against the enemies of God (*a'dā' Allāh*), in order, we are told, to teach them that the word (*kalima*) of God is the truth (*ḥaqq*), so as to strengthen the authority of God's viceroy across the eastern and western regions (*mashāriq / maghārib*) of the world.¹³ The discursive proportions evoked, with tacit similitude to earlier established historiographical models surrounding the various *ghazawāt* of the Prophet against the unbelievers, set the scale of events across the frontiers as part of a larger struggle (*jihād*) in the name of God. The Christians are described as both pigs (*khanāzīr*) and infidels (*mushrikūn*), pictured as stepping forward into battle bearing their crosses and having put their faith in the Devil, who nonetheless deceives them (*qaddamū ṣulbānahum wa wathiqū bi-shayṭānihim alladhī gharrāhum*).¹⁴

'Isā b. Fuṭays continues that the Muslims went up against a huge force of Christians. For this battle, different foreign groups (*kullu ṣinfin min aṣnāfi l-'ajam*) from Castile, Galicia, and Pamplona had gathered, brought under the leadership of Ramiro II.¹⁵ The narrative describes how after several days the Muslim soldiers finally broke the defensive lines of their opponents,¹⁶ hence, the Christians fled into the Duero river valley to San Esteban (*Shant Aštīban*). Chasing after them were 'Abd al-Raḥmān's forces, who reached an area that opened out onto rocky trenches, chasms of debris, and sharp cliffs. The Christians had advanced into this terrain, which they were said to know well. Lying in ambush, they attacked 'Abd al-Raḥmān's rearguard with their cavalry, while simultaneously hurling projectiles (*athqāl*) down upon the Muslim army.¹⁷ From these rocky trenches (*khanādiq*) the battle, where

¹³ Ibn Ḥayyān, *Al-Muqtabas (al-juz' al-khāmis)*, ed. P. Chalmeta, and F. Corriente (Ribāṭ: Kulliyat al-Ādāb, 1979), pp. 438-9. Ibn Ḥayyān, *Crónica del califa 'Abdarrahmān III An-Nāṣir entre los años 912 y 942 (al-Muqtabis V)*, trans. M. Jesús Viguera, and F. Corriente (Zaragoza: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura), 1981.

¹⁴ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, p. 439.

¹⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, p. 440.

¹⁶ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, pp. 440-1.

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, pp. 442-3. Al-Mas'ūdī's description of the unfolding battle and the form of the *khanādiq* differs in significant ways, *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. C. Pellat (Bayrūt: al-Jāmi'a al-Lubnāniyya, 1966-79), p. 403; quoted in al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb wa dhikr wazīrihā Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb*, ed. M. Ṭawīl, and Y. Ṭawīl (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995), vol. i, pp. 341-2.

Ramiro II of Leon waylaid the Umayyad caliph, receives its Arabic name, the battle of the 'trench' (*khandaq*).

The question of treachery in the unraveling of events is picked up in a number of Arabic accounts, which treat the revolt of Umayya b. Ishāq, the governor (*ṣahīb*) of the frontier district of Santarém. Umayya is said to have had a falling out with 'Abd al-Raḥmān over the execution of his brother, the caliph's *wazīr*, whereupon he defected to aid Ramiro against the caliph. The actual role which Umayya played in ambush of the *khandaq* is not entirely clear. However, several sources position him during the attack as a voice preventing Ramiro from completely destroying the caliph's army, whereby he directs the attention of the Leonese king to the treasures (*khazā'in*) and booty (*ghanīma*) to be captured.¹⁸

The Latin sources are hardly silent about what was, from their perspective, a smashing victory. The text of the anonymous *Anales castellanos primeros*, dating back to the end of the tenth century, is the oldest Latin account to survive on this matter. Here we get a significantly different picture of the event. The first battle took place at Simancas, known to our Latin source as Septemmankas, on the sixth of August. However, we are told that three thousand of the *cortoveses* were killed from the forces of 'the wicked king, Abterahaman,' whereupon his army retreated. Then a second battle occurred sixteen days later, at a different location. The anonymous Latin author of the annals refers to this site simply as Leocaput, which appears to correspond to what the Arabic sources name as the *khandaq*.¹⁹ The resulting victory of the Christian army is for the Latin account an occasion of great celebration, "the Christians rejoice returning with much booty, and they are delighted over their spoils" (*et gavisī sunt christiani sicut reversi sunt cum multa munera, et letati sunt super illorum spoliis*).²⁰

A similar scene of jubilation is echoed in the next oldest surviving Latin report of the battle, recorded by Sampiro (d. 1041), Bishop of Astorga, written at the beginning of the eleventh century. According to Sampiro, after the first battle, the Christians chased the caliphal forces until arriving at a city (*urbs*) called Alhandega, where the Muslim army was routed. Here Sampiro

¹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī 'l-tārīkh* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1966), vol. viii, p. 307; also see al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, §§918-9; Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), vol. i, pp. 259-60; al-Ḥimiyārī, *al-Rawḍ al-mi'tār*, ed. I. 'Abbās (Bayrūt: Maktabat Lubnān, 1975), pp. 324-5; *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, op.cit..

¹⁹ Cf. J. Rodríguez Fernández, *Ramiro II, rey de León* (Madrid: CSIC, 1972), pp. 338-90, particularly pp. 362-8.

²⁰ M. Gómez-Moreno Martínez, "Anales castellanos primeros," *Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia de Historia* (Madrid: 1917), pp. 23-8, specifically p. 24.

informs us that 'Abd al-Raḥmān barely escaped with his life (*semiuiuus*), describing how the Christian army carried off much booty (*multa spolia*) of gold and silver, along with precious vestments.²¹ These two vivid accounts of what seems to be the crushing defeat of 'Abd al-Raḥmān's forces rejoice in the spoils won and the *gloria* gained. For Ramiro's part, two months after the victory at the city of Alhandega, he began to populate the valley of the River Tormes with Christian settlers from the North.²²

Ibn Ḥayyān's presentation of the events draws us even closer to the psychological impact of the defeat on 'Abd al-Raḥmān. Ibn Ḥayyān preserves a statement by 'Isā b. Aḥmad al-Rāzī from his lost history of al-Andalus, which brings the significance of this defeat into sharper relief. Al-Rāzī relates that 'Abd al-Raḥmān barely escaped and that the Christians succeeded in capturing the caliph's harness and saddle (*udda*), his pavilion, and his royal belongings that included a particular codex (*muṣḥaf*) of the Qur'ān, which was very valuable to him (*wa lahu min nafsihi makānun makīnun*). We hear how 'Abd al-Raḥmān held in his heart a special place for this Qur'ānic codex, and how anxiety (*qalaq*) and regret plagued him for jeopardizing this invaluable object by bringing it with him into the *dār al-ḥarb*.²³ The caliph continued after the defeat to ask God for forgiveness for such a misdeed, offering to sacrifice any object of desire for the redemption of the codex.²⁴

Ramiro finally returned the *muṣḥaf* piecemeal, leveraging the affair to extract for himself as much benefit as possible. Ibn Ḥayyān relates how in the month of Ṣafar/November, shortly after the battle, a fragment of the codex was delivered to 'Abd Raḥmān, with the rest remaining in Ramiro's possession. This fragment had been handed over in exchange for a large payment. The caliph was forced to send more messengers in petition for the remaining sections. All the while, his desire to recover the complete codex increased. Finally, we learn how Ramiro, referred to consistently as a wicked tyrant (*tāghīya*), produced the missing sections from some corner or other (*fī ba'ḍi zawāyā*) in Galicia, but only after the exchange of a handsome sum.²⁵

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Rāzī, father of the aforementioned 'Isā b. Aḥmad, court historian to 'Abd al-Raḥmān and a contemporary to the events, gives us

²¹ Sampiro, Bishop of Astorga, *Sampiro, su crónica y la monarquía Leonesa en el siglo x*, ed. J. Pérez de Urbel (Madrid: CSIC, 1952), pp. 326-7; cf. *Historia silense*, ed. J. Pérez de Urbel, and A. González Ruiz-Zorrilla (Madrid: CSIC, 1959), p. 167; R. Jiménez de Rada, *De rebus Hispaniae*, ed. J. Fernández Valverde (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), bk. 5, ch. 7, p. 154.

²² See E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane* (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve, 1950), vol. ii, pp. 57-61.

²³ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, p. 475.

²⁴ Ibn Ḥayyān, *ibid.*.

²⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *ibid.*.

even more detail when describing how 'Abd al-Raḥmān immediately rejoiced when Ramiro gifted (*ahdā*) back the Qur'ānic codex with all its contents. Al-Rāzī contextualizes this entire exchange as part of a larger truce between the two sides, recording that this codex was accompanied by thirty Muslim prisoners and many other signs of benevolence toward the caliph. The literary dimension of this transaction is enormous, but historians were busy in providing the details as background to poetic works.

The return of the *muṣḥaf* is staged as a ceremonial exchange of gifts. With an eye toward future relations with Córdoba, Ramiro also bestowed a sizable gift on al-Ḥakam, the son of 'Abd Raḥmān and future caliph of al-Andalus, by which 'Abd al-Raḥmān's pleasure grew tremendously. The caliph in turn repaid twice the value of the gifts of the Leonese monarch, pleased above all by the safe return of the book of God (*kitāb Allāh*). We are told that this ceremonial gift exchange served as the confirmation of the truce, which Ramiro was compelled to honor (*mustamsikun bi'l-silm*).²⁶

Centuries after the event, the court chronicler from Naṣrid Granada, Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375), describes what he calls a shattering blow to the Muslims, during which the Christian enemy succeeded in pushing the caliphal *jund* back until the soldiers fell into a deep trench (*khandaq*) filling up both rims of the ditch with bodies crushed on top of each other.²⁷ When Ibn al-Khaṭīb turns to the spoils which the enemy captured, he does not fail to mention both the loss and subsequent recovery of 'Abd al-Raḥmān's invaluable codex.²⁸ Just as the restoration of the Qur'ān marks Ramiro's fulfillment of the obligations in the truce, something to which Ibn al-Khaṭīb alludes, the loss of the *muṣḥaf* also takes on a larger symbolic importance.

The extent to which the incident of the trench actually affected the caliph's political and military position remains to be seen.²⁹ After his defeat on the frontier, 'Abd al-Raḥmān never personally led another military mission.³⁰ Later Arabic sources approach the incident with a sense of inevitability, as they face the imminent destruction of the Umayyad caliphate, less than fifty years after the end of 'Abd al-Raḥmān's reign. As the heroic grandeur that marks the caliphal aspirations of unification abruptly unravels, so too does the balance of power on the Peninsula begin to shift. Or so writers such as

²⁶ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, *ibid.*.

²⁷ Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb A'mal al-a'lam*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Rabat: F. Moncho, 1934), p. 42.

²⁸ Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *ibid.*.

²⁹ Cf. See P. Chalmeta, "Simancas-Alhndega: al año siguiente," *Actas de las Jornadas de Cultura Árabe e Islámica (1978)* (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-árabe de Cultura, 1981), pp. 623-40.

³⁰ Cf. *al-Akhhbār al-majmū'a*, ed. E. Lafuente Alcántara (Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1867), p. 156.

Ibn Khaldūn (d. 784/1382) and al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632) come to approach the rise and fall of al-Andalus.

As the Arabic sources replay the historical narratives enveloping the *khandaq*, 'Abd al-Raḥmān's codex continues on as a site of intrigue. When set against a larger canvas of conflict between Christians and Muslims, the loss of sacred scripture into enemy hands takes on an added valence of meaning. At a symbolic level, as the Qur'ān and the Cross are brought into battle, and God and the Devil invoked, we may perceive a historiographical desire to stage the political conflict over territory and power as a religious conflict of 'good' and 'evil.' The caliph, God's viceroy on earth, brings the word of God into battle, in a highly charged symbolic gesture, claiming his mission is just, his imperative divinely inspired and his endeavors forever successful.

The potential courtly significance of the *muṣḥaf*, as a function of caliphal ceremonial, is picked up by Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240), the famous mystic of Murcia, in his collection of historical and edifying anecdotes, *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa musāmarāt al-akhyār*, where he describes the now famous account of how 'Abd al-Raḥmān received a Frankish (*Ifranj*) delegation. Placed before the caliph was a saber (*sayf*), a Qur'ānic *muṣḥaf*, and a brazier (*nār*). 'Abd al-Raḥmān is to have said to the delegation, "God commanded us that we call you to this," whereupon he pointed to the codex (*muṣḥaf*). He continued, "If you refuse, by this we will force your submission," gesturing toward the saber. And finally pointing to the brazier, he concluded, "If we kill you, this is the fire that awaits you."³¹ We may feel compelled, as Évariste Lévi-Provençal, to call into question the authenticity of the account by Ibn al-'Arabī.³² Yet the general contours of the anecdote are not entirely implausible, considering the symbolic significance of the codex recovered from Ramiro II after the battle of the trench. Even without Ibn al-'Arabī's account, the centrality of 'Abd al-Raḥmān's *muṣḥaf* for Ibn Ḥayyān's *al-Muqtabas* locates a powerful intersection between Umayyad authority and divine scripture.

We may pause to ask why exactly this particular codex, mentioned in *al-Muqtabas*, was so valuable to the caliph. The various historical narratives surrounding the loss and recovery of the *muṣḥaf* suggest, from the amount of

³¹ Ibn al-'Arabī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa musāmarāt al-akhyār* (Diamashq: Dār al-Yaqza al-'Arabiyya, 1968), vol. ii, p. 454.

³² E. Lévi-Provençal, *L'Espagne musulmane au xème siècle* (Paris: Larose, 1932), pp. 48-9; A. Ḥajjī, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations with Western Europe during the Umayyad Period* (Beirut: Dār al-Irshād, 1970), pp. 136-8. This account, contrary to what Bennison suggests, does not describe the caliph being met alone, nor does the inclusion of the *muṣḥaf* disqualify the account as 'imaginative,' p. 139. Rather, the anecdote is based upon a social logic according to which recourse to the symbolic syntax of scripture and its authority is meaningful, as already clearly established in Ibn Ḥayyān's *al-Muqtabas*.

energy and money expended in recuperating it, that this was no ordinary codex. Nor, for that matter, do the sources point to the anxiety (*qalaq*) of 'Abd al-Raḥmān as based on a simple juridical concern that the words of God might be sullied by the polluting hands of the infidels.³³ Ibn Ḥayyan outlines that contrary to usual practice, 'Abd al-Raḥmān took the *muṣḥaf* with him into battle, implicitly suggesting that the codex normally remained in Córdoba. What significance is to be derived by bringing this *muṣḥaf* into the *dār al-ḥarb*? Whether the loss of any other Qur'ānic codex on the field of battle would have inspired the same reaction remains to be seen.

II. Charisma and Legitimization

The descriptive geography of Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Idrīsī (d. circa 560/1165), which was completed in 548/1154 for the Norman King of Sicily Roger II (r. 1130-1154), popularized the claim that Córdoba housed a unique copy of the Qur'ān. Such later works as Ibn al-Wardī's (fl. eighth/fourteenth century) wonders of the world, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī's (fl. eighth/fourteenth century) encyclopedic world history, and Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥimyarī's (fl. ninth/fifteenth century) geographical dictionary, in a routine of citation, draw their accounts of Córdoba's amazing mosque, and the sacred relic held within, directly from al-Idrīsī's description, itself ostensibly based upon his own eyewitness experience while growing up in al-Andalus.³⁴

In his detailed, ekphrastic account of the Córdoba mosque, al-Idrīsī outlines the intersection between political and religious realms, as he silhouettes the expansions of the mosque made by the various caliphs.³⁵ After a brick-by-brick verbal reconstruction of the mosque, he reveals perhaps the most important object of the entire edifice, a remarkable exemplar of the Qur'ān, located in an inner chamber off the caliphal *mihṛāb*. In this treasury, he informs us, there is a Qur'ānic codex, in which "are four folios from the

³³ See my article, "Touching, Burning, Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qur'ān," (forthcoming).

³⁴ Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīdat al-'ajā'ib*, ed. M. Fākhūrī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Sharq al-'Arabī, 1991), p. 32; al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-mi'tār*, p. 457; Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, *Masālik al-absār fī mamālik al-amṣār* (Abū Zaby: al-Majma' al-Thaqāfi, 2001), vol. i, p. 273. On the intersection of the wonders of the world (*'ajā'ib al-dunyā*) with such fields as descriptive geography and cosmography, see my article, "The Wiles of Creation: Philosophy, Fiction, and the 'Ajā'ib Tradition," *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* (forthcoming).

³⁵ On the architectural and symbolic significance of this entire anecdote in the context of Umayyad legitimacy, see J. Dodds, op.cit..

muṣḥaf of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān and this is the copy which he wrote with his very own hand and in it are drops of his blood.”³⁶

Progenitor of the Umayyad dynasty,³⁷ and remembered by Sunnīs as the third of the rightly guided caliphs (*rāshidūn*), ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, according to tradition, oversaw the authoritative redaction and transmission of the Qur’ān.³⁸ The ‘Uthmānic redaction is referred to as the *Imām*, the model for all other codices. As one of the Companions to the Prophet (*ṣaḥāba*), and as an early leader of the Islamic community, the figure of ‘Uthmān beckons back to the original spread of Islam.

While the number of codices is debated, one popular tradition holds that ‘Uthmān sent three copies of the Qur’ān in its redacted form to the cities of Baṣra, Kūfa, and Damascus and kept one copy with him in Madīna.³⁹ The reference to the bloodstained folios alludes to the long-established account, recorded, for instance, in Ibn Sa‘d’s (d. 230/845) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, that ‘Uthmān was assassinated while reading from the *Sūrat al-Baqara* of the Qur’ān.⁴⁰ ‘Uthmān’s blood was said to have spilled over the codex before him until finally stopping at the following verse:

﴿ فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ آهَدُوا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴾

³⁶ Al-Idrisī, *Opus geographicum = Nuzhat al-mushtāq fi khtirāq al-‘āfāq*, ed. E. Cerulli, et al. (Napoli: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970-78), pp. 577-8.

³⁷ Cf. P. Crone, and M. Hinds, *God’s Caliph* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 31-2.

³⁸ For a detailed treatment of this issue, see H. Motzki, “The Collection of the Qur’ān: a Reconsideration of the Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments,” *Der Islam*, 78 (2001), pp. 1-34.

³⁹ Cf. G. Levi Della Vida, “‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān,” *EP*; al-Zarkashī details two opinions as to the number of copies commissioned. The first lists the four aforementioned codices, the second states that ‘Uthmān had produced seven copies, adding to the list *maṣāḥif* for Mecca, Yemen and Baḥrayn, *al-Burhān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, ed. M. Abū ‘l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Qāhira: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya), 1957, vol. i, p. 240; on the other various opinions, see S. Sālim, *Aḍwā’ alā muṣḥaf*, pp. 17-9.

⁴⁰ Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṣadr, 1957-68), vol. iii, p. 74. See, for example, al-Qurṭubī, *Jāmi’ al-ahkām al-Qur’ān* (3rd ed., al-Qāhira: Dār al-Kātib al-‘Arabī, 1967), vol. ii, p. 143; Ibn Abī Dā‘ūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Sabḥān (2nd ed., Bayrūt: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 2002), vol. i, p. 141; Aḥmād b. Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il al-ṣaḥāba* (Bayrūt: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1983), vol. i, pp. 470-3; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005), vol. vii, pp. 520-1; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa ‘l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1871-1901), ser. I, p. 3007.

So if they believe as you believe, then they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism (*shiqāq*); for God will suffice you against them, for He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (Q. 2:137).⁴¹

The blood beading up on this particular verse not only portentously foreshadows the sectarian divisions which come to plague the early community after 'Uthmān's assassination, but also highlights the righteousness of 'Uthmān and his cause. The dramatic account of the caliph murdered while reading the Qur'an suggests a retrojection of later ideas and circumstances onto the events surrounding the assassination, reading divine order inscribed into a preordained cast of history.

This particular codex of the Qur'an, sanctified by the blood of the martyred caliph, presents Córdoba with an important relic, taken from the earliest history of Islam. The pages of 'Uthmān's manuscript of the revelation are kept in the caliphal treasury of the mosque, as a sign, and trace of primal, divine authority. The transmission of the Qur'an by 'Uthmān's own hand stretches back through the charisma of the Prophet to the authority of God. Located inside the sacred space of the Friday mosque, the relic serves as a centering mechanism, redefining the marginal position of al-Andalus on the western stretch of Islam.

According to al-Idrīsī, the codex was brought out once a day in a ceremonial, candlelit procession. Each morning the codex was carried out in a special covering made with astonishing skill, decorated with the most marvelous (*a'jab*) and wondrous (*aghrab*) precision, whence it was taken to a reading stand in the prayer room, where the Imām would recite one *ḥizb*, or a sixtieth-part of the Qur'an, before the codex was returned again to the treasury of the mosque.⁴² This ritual is wedded to the larger architectural and symbolic vocabulary surrounding the Córdoba mosque, itself a display of Umayyad authority.⁴³

In the course of Islamic history, the charismatic significance of relics, as both objects and bones, is by no means unique to this particular codex.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Cf. Ibn Marzūq, who relates the account of the seventh/thirteenth century historian, Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, records a report concerning the location where the stains of blood appear in the codex; it is of note that Ibn 'Abd al-Malik puts into doubt whether the codex of al-Andalus is the same as the original 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*, *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-ḥasan fī mā āthir wa maḥāsin mawlānā Abī 'l-Ḥasan*, ed. M. Bighāyrah (Al-Jazā'ir: al-Sharika al-Waṭaniyya li'l-Nashr wa 'l-Tawzī', 1981), p. 459; Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa 'l-takmila*, ed. I. 'Abbās (Bayrūt: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1964), vol. i, pp. 165-7.

⁴² Al-Idrīsī, *op.cit.*

⁴³ Cf. N. Khoury, *op.cit.*

⁴⁴ For an overview of the topic see, B. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). The extensive reliquary collected by the

However, on the space of the frontier, the relic takes on an added valence, as it speaks both to the community within and those beyond. In addition to Muslims, the daily procession of the codex could be very well directed toward the Mozarab Christians of al-Andalus and their Christian neighbors beyond the frontier. And yet it is doubtful that the ritual importance of the *muṣḥaf* arose solely through a conscious or explicit response to the Christian veneration of relics in the Iberian Peninsula.⁴⁵ The discursive significance of 'Uthmān's codex, the 'Protecting Imām,' draws upon the early sectarian history within Islam, set to counterweight 'Alid claims of legitimacy and notions of the Imāmate. The symbolic order of relics functions to define the contours and boundaries of a community; like scripture, the relic itself is fundamentally a relational concept.⁴⁶ The power of the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf* weds both scripture and relic together. As part of a larger matrix of meaning, the relic speaks as much to rival Muslim dynasties as to Christian adversaries.

III. *Translatio*

One of the mysteries surrounding this entire story is how 'Uthmān's copy ended up in Córdoba. This dimension of the historical narrative addresses the shrewd pragmatics of legitimacy and political ascendancy and the larger social logic of religious symbolism. When read carefully, al-Idrīsī's account speaks clearly of an idealized past. As he states after his description of the mosque, that the "city of Córdoba during the time of our writing this book has been ground down by the millstone of discord and the advent of catastrophes and mishaps has altered it with the continuance of afflictions over its community."⁴⁷ It thus stands to reason that his description of the mosque made in the middle of the sixth/twelfth century presents an idealized portrayal of perhaps an even older ceremonial practice.

In the historiography on al-Andalus and the Maghrib a well-established discourse emerges concerning the symbolic authority that rulers derive from this specific relic. The Maghribī historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 784/1382), for instance, traces the famous 'Uthmānic codex of al-Andalus back to the period of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dākhil (the 'immigrant'), the forefather of the Hispano-Umayyad rulers, who reached the shores of the Iberian Peninsula in

Ottoman sultans is a vibrant witness to the long tradition of relics in Islam, see H. Aydin, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi ve Mukaddes Emanetler* (İstanbul: 2004), pp. 91-5.

⁴⁵ This is a line of interpretation pursued by J. Dodds, pp. 106-9.

⁴⁶ Cf. W. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁷ Al-Idrīsī, p. 579.

Rabī I 138/August 755, having narrowly escaped the 'Abbāsīd massacre of the Umayyad caliphate of Damascus.⁴⁸ Ibn Khaldūn's suggestion has a certain appeal, for he links 'Uthmān's bloodstained codex with the fallen Umayyad dynasty of Syria, as represented by the continuity of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dākhil, the immigrant prince who planted the first seed of an independent, western Muslim state, which would blossom into a caliphal dynasty, less than two centuries later. Ibn Khaldūn, however, writes too long after the events for his passing statement to bear much weight, as far as the battle of the *khandaq* is concerned.

Even before Ibn Khaldūn, the Maghribī historians Ibn 'Abd al-Malik (d. 703/1303-4) and Ibn Marzūq (d. 781/1379-80) also suggest that, already in the reign of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, the Umayyad mosque housed 'Uthmān's *muṣḥaf*. However, unlike Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn 'Abd al-Malik and Ibn Marzūq both explicitly reference their source, quoting from the now lost history of 'Īsā 'l-Rāzī, the fourth-/tenth-century court chronicler of the Hispano-Umayyad dynasty, who leads us into the inner chambers of the Córdoba mosque.

Al-Rāzī details how in the course of the expansion of the caliphal *maqsūra* and the accompanying *miḥrab*, undertaken by al-Ḥakam II, son of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, great care was taken in protecting 'Uthmān's *muṣḥaf*. On Sunday, 8 Jumādā' al-'Ākhira 354/11 June 965, the *muṣḥaf*, known as the 'Protecting Imām' of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, was placed in the great mosque of Córdoba and arranged so that the *imām* could read from it after the morning prayer each day.⁴⁹ Exactly two weeks later, al-Rāzī describes how the codex was then moved to the house of Yaḥyā b. al-Kharrāz (d. 369/980), the prayer leader (*ṣāḥib al-ṣalāt*) of the Córdoba mosque, for safekeeping during further restoration.⁵⁰

According to al-Rāzī, the caliph took such precautions, as the people of al-Andalus held deep feelings for the *muṣḥaf*, considering it to be a monumental affair (*sha'n 'aẓīm*) and the cause of intense celebration (*iḥtifā' shadīd*). We are told how the office of the custodians (*mashaykhat al-sadana*) of the mosque took responsibility for transporting the *muṣḥaf* to the abode of Yaḥyā b. al-Kharrāz. There the codex remained until the construction was finished, whereupon it was returned to the new *maqsūra*.⁵¹ According to the inscrip-

⁴⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar*, ed. Y. A. Dagher (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 2nd ed., 1959), vol. vii, p. 170.

⁴⁹ Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad*, p. 456. Cf. A. Bennison, p. 139.

⁵⁰ Ibn Marzūq, *ibid.*. On the death date of Ibn Kharrāz, see Ibn al-Faraḍī, *Ta'rikh al-'ulamā'*, ed. 'Izzat al-'Aṭṭār al-Ḥusaynī (al-Qāhira: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1954), vol. ii, p. 82.

⁵¹ Ibn Marzūq, *ibid.*; Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *Al-Dhayl wa 'l-takmila*, p. 158; for a survey of these accounts, see S. Sālim, *Aḍwā' alā muṣḥaf*, pp. 51-3.

tions in the *maqṣūra-miḥrab* complex, al-Ḥakam's expansion was completed that following winter, in the month of Dhū 'l-Hijja 354/November-December 965.⁵²

If we are to trust the transmission of al-Rāzī's fourth/tenth-century account, then the tradition of the 'Uthmānic relic in Córdoba clearly dates to the Umayyad period. Not only does the date given perfectly match al-Ḥakam's expansion, but the unusual depth of detail heightens the credibility of the report. The account related by al-Rāzī, suggests a ritualized importance to the codex as a firmly established part of the Umayyad regime. The care given to protecting the relic and the monumental and ceremonial significance attached to it is striking. It is hard thus to argue, as Amira Bennison does, that the codex for the Umayyads did not have "any direct function to play in caliphal ceremonial."⁵³

When set against the broader significance of the Córdoba mosque in the tenth century, as succinctly detailed by Nuha Khoury's study on the subject, the symbolic importance of the 'Uthmānic codex is all the more magnified. The entire syntax of the *maqṣūra-miḥrab* complex speaks to the caliphal articulation of authority through the power of scripture, functioning according to Khoury, as an "architectural reliquary" for the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*. This reading is in line with the interpretations advanced by Oleg Grabar and Jerrilynn Dodds, who see a clear triangulation of caliphal authority and ceremonial display with the charismatic power of the relic, each in concert with the larger architectural logic of al-Ḥakam's expansion.⁵⁴

It is in this context in which we should read the 'Uthmānic relic, as a ceremonial and routinized projection of caliphal authority. The inscriptions commemorating the expansion of the mosque, expressed throughout the *maqṣūra-miḥrab* complex, explicitly refer to al-Ḥakam as the *imām*.⁵⁵ This title suggests a symbolic confluence between the 'Uthmānic codex (*muṣḥaf*), as the 'Protecting Imām,' and caliphal identity. Such a lineage fuses the power of the *imām*-caliph with the authority of scripture, in an age when the very notion of the *imām* remained highly contested. Al-Rāzī's account, such as al-Idrīsī's description after it, locates the *muṣḥaf* as a central part of the caliphal *maqṣūra* and thus as a ceremonial object in explicit dialogue with al-Ḥakam's Qur'ānic and caliphal inscriptions.

⁵² See E. Lévi-Provençal, *Inscriptions arabes d'Espagne* (Leiden: Brill, 1931), §§10-11.

⁵³ A. Bennison, p. 141.

⁵⁴ See O. Grabar, op.cit.; J. Dodds, op.cit.. As part of a larger symbolic network of legitimization, see the role played by the *minbar* within the mosque complex, M. Fierro, "The Mobile *Minbar* in Cordoba: How the Umayyads of al-Andalus Claimed the Inheritance of the Prophet," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 33 (2007), pp. 149-68.

⁵⁵ See E. Lévi-Provençal, *Inscriptions*, §§10-14; see also O. Grabar, op.cit..

IV. Across the Strait of Gibraltar

Why, then, was the codex which 'Abd al-Raḥmān lost to his Christian adversary during the battle of the *khandaq* so valuable to him? We are left to wonder if, indeed, the two codices were not one and the same. It is of note that in the later historiographic arc of al-Andalus, 'Abd al-Raḥmān and the *khulafā' banī Umayya* are explicitly stated as possessing the *muṣḥaf* of 'Uthmān.⁵⁶ According to the account of al-Rāzī, by the time that 'Abd al-Raḥmān's son assumes the caliphate, an 'Uthmānic relic was at play in the broader ceremonial pattern of caliphal authority. While we may not be able to determine how long before al-Ḥakam the idea of an 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf* had reached the shores of al-Andalus, once there the relic wielded an incredible symbolic significance.

The story of the 'Uthmānic codex continues in the future dynastic successions to function as a metaphor for a broader pattern of movement, loss, and recovery across the frontier spaces of Islam. The sources relate conflicting reports as to the fate of the prized relic. Ibn al-Khaṭīb describes the internecine conflicts that led up to the collapse of the Murābiṭūn dynasty, outlining how Christian forces ransacked the city of Córdoba, with the aid of the renegade *qādī* Ibn Ḥamdīn. On 10 Dhū 'l-Ḥijja/24 May of the year 540/1146, the markets were set ablaze, as the Christians entered into the congregational mosque, tearing up a great number of codices, including the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*.⁵⁷ The Andalusī scholar Ibn 'Amīra (d. 599/1203), writing even closer to the temporary occupation of Córdoba by the *imbārāṭūr* Alfonso VII (r. 1126-1157)—during the tumultuous rebellions of the *mulūk al-ṭawā'if*, leading up to the overthrow of the Murābiṭūn—similarly describes how the Christian forces routed the Murābiṭ ruler, Ibn Ghāniya, and sacked the city of Córdoba. In the process, the infidels (*kuffār*) stormed into the mosque on their mounts and desecrated the sacred *muṣḥaf* of 'Uthmān, tearing it up with their hands.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See pseudo-Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb al-ḥulal al-mawṣiyya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-Marrākushiyya*, ed. al-Fūrātī (Tunis: Maṭba'at al-Taqaddum, 1329/1911), p. 116.

⁵⁷ Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Iḥāṣa fī akhbār Gharnāta*, ed. M. Inān (Al-Qāhira: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1977), vol. iv, pp. 345-6. It is for this reason that we should consider al-Idrīsī's account of the *muṣḥaf* as written before 540/1146. For an overview of these events surrounding the brief conquest of Córdoba from the Christian perspective, see *Chronica Adefonsi imperatoris*, ed. L. Belda Sánchez, (Madrid: CSIC, 1950), pp. lv-lxi; pp. 149-55; on book burning, see pp. 33 & 103. See Pascual de Gayangos' note to his translation of al-Maqqarī's *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain* (London: W. H. Allen and co., 1840), vol. i, p. 497, note 27.

⁵⁸ Ibn 'Amīra, *Bughyat al-Multamis fī ta'rikh rijāl ahl al-Andalus*, ed. R. al-Suwayfī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1997), p. 38.

Quickly, however, the codex reemerges from the flames of destruction, suggesting the energy given by successive dynasties in resurrecting the power of the sacred relic. The Marīnid chronicler Ibn Marzūq, drawing on the Andalusī historian Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1182-3), relates how the city of Córdoba greatly bemoaned the loss of this valuable object, when, on the night of Saturday 11 Shawwāl/16 November in the year 552/1157, ‘Abd al-Mu’min, the Muwaḥḥid leader from North Africa, overran Córdoba taking with him the prized *muṣḥaf*.⁵⁹ The chronicler Ibn ‘Idhārī (fl. 712/1312-3) also makes a passing reference to how the coveted ‘Uthmānic codex survived, when the Muwaḥḥidūn left with *al-muṣḥaf al-karīm*, as they quit al-Andalus.⁶⁰

Closer to the events, ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī (fl. 617/1220) in his historical account of North Africa, *al-Mu’jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, outlines how the codex reached the Muwaḥḥidūn. He describes how during their travels they would take the codex with them, placing it beneath a green mantle, on a red camel, which was covered with valuable jewels and ornate brocade. Following after this camel was a decorated mule on which another codex was placed, said to have been written by the hand of the self-proclaimed *mahdī*, Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130).⁶¹

A similar description of the great veneration for the *muṣḥaf* appears in the local history of the Banū Zayyān and the city of Tilimsān, the *Naẓm al-durr* of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tanaṣī (d. 899/1494). According to this account, when the Muwaḥḥid ruler ‘Abd al-Mu’min took control over al-Andalus, he transported (*naqalahu*) the codex to Marrākush. Al-Tanaṣī describes that during their campaigns the first item to come forth would be a large white banner covering the length of a pole, preceding the noble *muṣḥaf*, which was carried on their largest Bactrian camel, placed inside a square-shaped tabernacle. Delving further into the authority which the Muwaḥḥidūn found in codices, al-Tanaṣī details that after this camel followed the most agile of mules, which carried a large square box covered in silk containing the

⁵⁹ Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad*, op.cit.; cf. al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭīb*, vol. ii, p. 139; pseudo-Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb al-ḥulal*, p. 116.

⁶⁰ Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Kitāb al-bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa ‘l-Maghrib, qism al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, ed. M. al-Kitānī, et al. (Dār al-Bayḍā: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1985), pp. 171-2.

⁶¹ ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu’jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, ed. R. Dozy (Leiden: London Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1847), p. 182; idem, *Histoire des Almohades*, trans. E. Fagnan (Algiers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1893), p. 218. This account of the ceremonies over the *muṣḥaf* performed by ‘Abd al-Mu’min and the Muwaḥḥidūn circulates widely throughout the Arabic historiography, with its appearance for instance in the monumental history, the *Tārīkh al-Islām*, by the Damascene historian, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. circa 748/1348), who quotes directly from the *al-Mu’jib* of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1996), vol. 40, pp. 319 & 322.

Muwattaʿa of Malik, and the major *ḥadīth* collections of Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī, Nasāʿī, and Abū Dāʿūd, suggesting an extension of the realms of *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence into the symbolic order of scripture, as imagined through state regalia.⁶²

The chief *qāḍī* of Marrākush, the Marīnid historian Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 703/1303-4), in his *al-Dhayl wa ʿl-takmila*, continuing the histories of the Andalusī scholars Ibn al-Faraḍī (d. 403/1012-3) and Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1182-3), dedicates a lengthy section to the story of the fabled codex. He outlines how the Muwaḥḥidūn popularized the claim that the *muṣḥaf* of al-Andalus was the very one which ʿUthmān was reading when assassinated. The earlier Andalusī sources which Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik records in this passage—namely Ibn Bashkuwāl, Ibn Ḥayyān, and al-Rāzī—describe the rites and ceremonies surrounding the ʿUthmānic *muṣḥaf*. Yet, unlike al-Idrīsī, they do not specify that ʿUthmān was murdered while reading from this particular codex. As for Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, he relates various accounts which place this bloodstained *muṣḥaf* in the hands of the ʿAbbāsids, arguing that it would be impossible for it to end up then in al-Andalus. Rather, he suggests that the *muṣḥaf* which reached Córdoba was one of the four which ʿUthmān sent before his assassination to the cities of Mecca, Baṣra, Kūfa, and Damascus, and he goes on to associate it specifically with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dākhil and the Umayyads of Syria.⁶³

According to Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, the Muwaḥḥidūn would take the relic with them on their military campaigns. Thus, when the Muwaḥḥid ruler Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Saʿīd was killed while attempting to conquer the city of Tilimsān in Ṣafar 646/June 1248, Bedouins ransacked the royal belongings, and not knowing the value of the codex, they put it up for sale in Tilimsān. Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik informs us on the authority of the Andalusī scholar, al-Shaykh Abū ʿl-Ḥasan al-Ruʿaynī (d. 666/1267), that a broker set about auctioning it off in the book market for seventeen *dirhams*. At this point some folios were missing from the codex. Following in line with conventions of relic-discovery narratives, al-Ruʿaynī, the Andalusī (thus, perhaps all the more qualified), recognized the true value of the *muṣḥaf* and notified the ruler of Tilimsān, Yaghmurāsan (d. 681/1283), founder of the Zayyānid dynasty, who in turn set out to obtain and protect the codex.⁶⁴

⁶² Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tanāsī, *Taʾriḫ Banī Zayyān mulūk Tilimsān*, ed. M. Bū Ayyād (Al-Jazāʾir: al-Muʿassasa al-Waṭaniyya lil-Kitāb, 1985), pp. 123-4.

⁶³ Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik explicitly states that he does not doubt the authenticity of the relic as an ʿUthmānic *muṣḥaf*, but questions the claim that it was stained with ʿUthmān's blood, *al-Dhayl wa ʿl-takmila* pp. 165-7.

⁶⁴ Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa ʿl-takmila*, vol. i, pp. 168-9; cf. Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad*, pp. 460-1.

It would be a mischaracterization to suppose that the interest in the *muṣḥaf* peaked with the Muwaḥḥidūn, or that later discussions were based mostly upon twelfth-century sources.⁶⁵ Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, for instance, describes how the various rival rulers of the Muwaḥḥidūn of Marrākush, the Ḥafṣids of Tunis, and the Naṣrids of Granada all spent a great deal of energy searching for the *muṣḥaf*, each desiring to gain possession of it, and ultimately failing in their aspirations. Writing in the year 702/1302-3, Ibn 'Abd al-Malik records that the Zayyānid descendants of Yaghmurāsān still possessed the noble *muṣḥaf*.

Toward the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, al-Tanaṣī (d. 899/1494) relates, with a certain amount of nostalgia, how the *muṣḥaf* remained with the Zayyānids, according to a larger divine will, whereby God chose upon which dynasty to bestow this blessing. However, al-Tanaṣī, who admits to not knowing the fate of the relic, argues that its disappearance was due most likely to the rise of the Marīnid dynasty of Fez over Tilimsān.⁶⁶

Other sources substantiate al-Tanaṣī's conjecture. The Marīnid historian Ibn Marzūq (d. 781/1379-80), himself based in part on Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, gives an account of the events surrounding the dynastic transfer of the relic. Ibn Marzūq's narrative further details the history of the codex in the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa. As this object came to be wedded in the symbolic legitimacy of several Muslim dynasties, any question concerning its status could potentially function as a criticism of a given regime. Though Ibn Marzūq mentions that some doubts were raised concerning the authenticity of the relic, such questions did not in any way lessen the potential of this sacred object to instill both religious and political legitimacy.⁶⁷

Ibn Marzūq relates how the Muwaḥḥidūn would recite from the codex during the night vigils of Ramaḍān. Taking it on their various military campaigns, they found charismatic authority in this sacred relic (*mutabārikīn bihī*), by always holding onto it, traveling with it, and passing it down from generation to generation.⁶⁸ The notion that the ruling élite of the Muwaḥḥidūn derived *baraka* from the codex is an idea expressed as early as the Muwaḥḥid historian, Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt (fl. 594/1198), who describes the cover protecting the codex as studded with precious gems of various colors.⁶⁹ In the course of Ibn Marzūq's narrative, the fixation of the Muwaḥḥidūn with the physical

⁶⁵ A. Bennison, p. 152.

⁶⁶ Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tanaṣī, *Ta'rikh Banī Zayyān mulūk Tilimsān*, p. 124.

⁶⁷ Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad*, p. 459.

⁶⁸ Ibn Marzūq, *ibid.*, p. 460; cf. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tanaṣī, *Ta'rikh Banī Zayyān mulūk Tilimsān*, op.cit..

⁶⁹ Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Salāt, *al-Mann bi 'l-imāma*, ed. al-Tāzī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Andalus, 1963), pp. 439-40.

codex as a divine embodiment is likened to the veneration of the Israelites for the ark of the covenant (*tābūt*), which according to Q. 2:248 contained divine tranquility (*sakīna*).⁷⁰ Ibn Marzūq traces the genealogy of the codex, as it survives through various conquests and robberies, across al-Andalus and North Africa, until it finally ended up with the Marīnid Sulṭān Abū 'l-Ḥasan (d. 752/1352), after he conquered the Zayyānids.⁷¹

Once Abū 'l-Ḥasan took possession of the noble *muṣḥaf*, he would never let it leave his side. Like the Muwaḥḥidūn, he would travel in full state regalia with the codex and with copies of the major *ḥadīth* collections, symbolically highlighting the legitimacy and authority of his rule.⁷² Indeed, so much did Abū 'l-Ḥasan find *baraka* in the codex, that he would take it with him when on *jihād* against the unbelievers.⁷³ In this way, just as many centuries before, 'Abd al-Raḥmān dangerously negotiated the frontier with his valuable *muṣḥaf*, Abū 'l-Ḥasan lost the 'Uthmānic codex in 741/1340, during the battle of Ṭarīfa against the Castilians and the Portuguese. This object of great veneration was carried off to Portugal, where it remained, until Abū 'l-Ḥasan was able to ransom it back for a huge sum, using merchants from the Moroccan coastal town of Azammūr as go-betweens.⁷⁴

As for the fate of the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*, Ibn Khaldūn traces it from the Umayyads of Córdoba through the fragmented states of the petty kings (*mulūk al-ṭawā'if*) of al-Andalus, and then onto the dynasties of the Muwaḥḥidūn, and the Zayyānids, after which the sacred relic was captured by the Marīnids, when they conquered Tilimsān. According to Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Numayrī (d. 785/1383), who served as *kātib* under the Marīnids, Abū 'l-Ḥasan's son, Abū 'Inān Fāris (r. 749-59/1349-58), had possession of the *muṣḥaf*, which Ibn al-Ḥājj describes as the most marvelous treasure of the Maghrib. Like his father, Abū 'Inān Fāris would take the codex on state processions, wrapped in gold-embroidered silk and accompanied by the *ḥadīth* collections of Muslim and Bukhārī.⁷⁵ Yet according to Ibn Khaldūn, the codex did not remain with the Marīnids very long, finally reaching its end, when a Marīnid squadron, carrying the prized possession, sank off the coast of Tunis in 750/1349.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Cf. Al-Nāṣirī, evidently quoting from Ibn Marzūq, *Kitāb al-istiṣā li-akḥbār*, op.cit.; cf. Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt, p. 445; pseudo-Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb al-ḥulal*, p. 116.

⁷¹ Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad*, pp. 460-1.

⁷² Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad*, p. 456.

⁷³ Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad*, p. 461.

⁷⁴ Ibn Marzūq, *ibid*.

⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥājj al-Numayrī, *Fayḍ al-'ubāb*, ed. Muḥammad b. Shaqrūn (Bayrūt: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmiyya), 1990, pp. 225-6.

⁷⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar*, vol. vii, pp. 170-1; cf. al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-istiṣā*, vol. ii, p. 129. On the thesis that *muṣḥaf* survived the sinking of the squadron and remained in Fez, see

V. A Wonder of the World

Several chroniclers preserve samples of court poetry honoring both the rulers who possessed the codex and the codex itself. Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, for instance, on the authority of Ibn Bashkuwāl, describes how Ibn Ḥabbūs al-Fāsi (d. 570/1174-5) dedicated the following verses from a *qaṣīda* to the Muwahḥid leader, 'Abd al-Mu'min, glorifying the sacred authority of the codex:

هَذَا كِتَابُ اللَّهِ جَلَّ اسْمُهُ مَخْطُ عُثْمَانَ وَفِي رَحْلِهِ
 خَيْرُ إِمَامٍ آخِرَ آجَاءِهِ خَيْرُ إِمَامٍ كَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ
 إِلَيْهِ يَنْمِي كُلُّ مَا مُصْحَفٌ تَأْتِقُ الْعَالَمُ فِي نَقْلِهِ

 وَالْقُدْسُ مَحْفُوظٌ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَأْتُونَ مِنْ أَهْلِهِ
 عَجَائِبُ الْعَالَمِ مَخْتَصَّةٌ بِأَوْلِيَاءِ اللَّهِ أَوْ رُسُلِهِ

This is the book of God, majestic is His name

Written in 'Uthmān's hand and placed on his reading stand.

To the best Imām (i.e. 'Abd al-Mu'min) finally there came

the best Imām (i.e. the *muṣḥaf* 'Uthmānī) who preceded him

Whenever a codex is attributed to him,

the world strives to copy it.

.....

Sanctity is preserved over its family

By God, you are of its family.

The miraculous wonders of the world are special

To the saints of God or His prophets.⁷⁷

Throughout the writing on this subject, wondrous marvels (*'ajā'ib*) are connected to the relic, which speaks to the otherworldly power believed to reside in the *muṣḥaf*. In various poetic portrayals of the codex, we hear of the charismatic uniqueness which binds the relic to the body of the saintly 'Uthmān, the martyred caliph, who stands in as a conceit for the righteousness of orthodoxy.

Bū M. 'Ayād, *al-Riḥla al-'ajība*, pp. 86-90, M. al-Manūnī, "Markaz al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharīf," pp. 72-4.

⁷⁷ Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa 'l-takmila*, vol. i, pp. 160-3; on Ibn Ḥabbūs, see Ibn Abbār, *al-Takmila li-kitāb al-ṣīla*, ed. I. A. al-Ḥasanī (Al-Qāhira: Maktabat al-Khānājī, 1956), vol. ii, p. 677.

Recurrent through the various literary and historical accounts of this relic's miraculous survival is the notion of transmission (*naql*). This transmission links later dynasties with a spiritual genealogy, which associates them, in turn, to the earliest history of Islam. Possession of the codex serves as a centering device, adding legitimacy to each successive ruler. This is a theme consciously played out in the panegyric poetry in honor of the *muṣḥaf*, as demonstrated in the following verses by Ibn 'Ayyāsh (d. 618/1221), dedicated to the third Muwaḥḥid caliph, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr (r. 580-95/1184-99):

فَإِنْ وَرَثَ الْأَمْلَاقُ شَرْقًا وَمَغْرِبًا فَكَمْ قَدْ أَخْلَوْا جَاهِلِينَ بِوَجْهِهِ
وَالْبَسْتَهُ الْيَاقُوتَ وَالذَّرَّ حِلِيَّةً وَعَيْرُكَ قَدْ رَوَاهُ مِنْ دَمِّ صَاحِبِهِ

Kings have inherited it both from the east and west,
How much have they forsaken in ignorance their obligation to it.
You have clothed it with rubies and pearls as an adornment
Someone other than you has drenched it with the blood of its owner.⁷⁸

In a swift juxtaposition, the precious gems adorning the outside of the *muṣḥaf* evoke the bloodstained folios contained within, pointing to the body of the caliph in the relic by drawing the scene of his murder, and ultimately the embedded symbolic significance of the codex itself, to the foreground.

So much of a *topos* had the codex become that the late compiler Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632) dedicates several pages to the subject in *Nafh al-ṭib*, his encyclopaedic reconstruction of the literary and cultural history of Muslim Spain. Despite its unique status, al-Maqqarī details the ongoing dispute concerning the authenticity of the *muṣḥaf* and its relationship to the other known 'Uthmānic codices. Here, doubt as to whether the Córdoba relic is indeed the very copy held by 'Uthmān when assassinated is fully expressed.⁷⁹

Al-Maqqarī concludes his chapter with a curious account taken from the *Rihla* of Ibn Rushayd, written in the eighth/fourteenth century. Ibn Rushayd, for his part, quotes from a prosimetrical epistle ascribed to the celebrated physician, philosopher, and literary luminary Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185-6), who recounts the story (*qiṣṣa*) of the transmission of the *muṣḥaf*, age after age (*wa mā zāla yanquluhu khalafun 'an salafin*), along with the great reverence expressed by the Muwaḥḥidūn dynasty toward this prized possession.⁸⁰ Once

⁷⁸ Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl wa 'l-takmila*, vol. i, p. 164. Cf. Ibn Abbār, *al-Takmila li-kitāb al-ṣīla*, vol. ii, p. 606; al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭib*, vol. ii, p. 141.

⁷⁹ Al-Maqqarī, *ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 139-40.

⁸⁰ Al-Maqqarī, *ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 142.

again, we find invoked the register of the marvelous, which so clearly informs al-Idrīsī's description of the ceremonial and performative aspects surrounding the veneration of the Córdoba *muṣḥaf*.

Ibn Ṭufayl explicitly positions the codex as a part of the historical patrimony of al-Andalus and North Africa, explaining how it was preserved in the hearts of both rulers and subjects, as a guiding Imām. He argues that there can be no doubt concerning the authenticity of the codex, transmitted for generations; it possesses the most amazing qualities (*gharā'ib al-anbā'*), producing miracles (*karāmāt*), as a vehicle for the strange and marvelous (*al-ighrāb wa 'l-i'jāb*).⁸¹

Ibn Ṭufayl describes how the people of the region rejoiced when the *muṣḥaf* reached the Muwaḥḥid caliphs through God's aid, giving proof of their righteousness and of the legitimacy of their spiritual claims. In a lengthy *qaṣīda* dedicated to the subject, Ibn Ṭufayl aligns himself with official propaganda, which affirms the power of the messianic state descended from the *mahdī*, Ibn Tūmart—whose own writing, we are reminded, accompanied the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān in state processions. Ibn Tufayl's following verses position the Muwaḥḥidūn as protectors and champions of orthodoxy:

بِمُصْحَفِ عُثْمَانَ الشَّهِيدِ وَجَمْعِهِ تَبَيَّنَ أَنَّ الْحَقَّ بِالْحَقِّ يُعْضَدُ
تَحَامَتُهُ أَيْدِي الرُّومِ بَعْدَ انْتِسَافِهِ وَقَدْ كَادَ وَلَوْلَا سَعْدُهُ يَبْدَدُ

By the *muṣḥaf* of the martyr 'Uthmān and his collecting it together
Clearly the legitimacy [of the dynasty] is aided by the truth [of the codex].
The hands of the Rūm were kept away from it, after it was blown about
It would almost have been scattered, had it not been for its lucky star.⁸²

The poem suggests how the legitimacy (*ḥaqq*) of the Muwaḥḥidūn is bolstered through their possession of the *muṣḥaf*. With the reference to the Christian hands being kept away from the codex, Ibn Ṭufayl appears to allude to the desecration of the Córdoba mosque by the troops of Alfonso VII, an event which had occurred within his own lifetime. As we have seen, the anxiety that Christians would sully such a sacred relic is not merely a literary trope, but is rather indicative of a long, embattled history of competition along the western frontiers of Islam.

Born out of the great devotion for the *muṣḥaf*, expressed by both the élite and the masses of al-Andalus, Ibn Ṭufayl relates how the Muwaḥḥid ruler

⁸¹ Al-Maqqarī, *ibid.*.

⁸² Al-Maqqarī, *ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 145.

ʿAbd al-Muʿmin (d. 558/1163) ordered that a special display case be made for the sacred object.⁸³ In a prolix description of this fabulous object, he details all the constituent parts of the decorated enclosure holding the codex. Created by the designers of wondrous mechanical devices (*ahl al-ḥiyal al-handasiyya*), the case, inlaid with precious gems, would open up with the turn of a single key.⁸⁴ Through the movement of hidden mechanisms, the codex would then marvelously appear, extended out on a platform. This ingenious device was the crowning ornament to ʿAbd al-Muʿmin’s newly built Kutubiyya mosque of Marrākush, completed in the year 553/1158, aptly located next to the book market, whence its name.⁸⁵

VI. Translation and Appropriation

The many conflicting reports concerning the loss and recovery of ʿUthmān’s bloodstained codex are very much at home in the medieval Christian traditions of the *furta sacra* and the *translatio* of sacred relics.⁸⁶ The Arabic sources, in great part, thematize the continuity of transmission, as they consciously trace how this *muṣḥaf* miraculously survived generation after generation. Ibn Ḥabbūs al-Fāsī’s panegyric verse in its honor affirms a desire meticulously to preserve the sacred connection to the eternal word of God (*ta’annaqa l-ʿalamu fi naqlihi*). In this light, the verb *naqala*, ‘to move, copy, transmit, translate,’ holds a similar semantic valence of moving across as the Latin *translatio* of relics.

Bound to the retrospective recasting of history, the relic instills legitimacy, as a physical intermediary with the world of the divine. Dynasty after dynasty drew upon this object, claiming to be the rightful inheritors of the Umayyad past, aligned with the earliest history of Islam. It is for this reason that we find the ʿUthmānic codex, the ancient bond back to the divine, juxtaposed with other representations of temporal rule. Like the royal mosque, state regalia, and caliphal pageantry, the codex serves to further the symbolic order of authority.

With the political disintegration of al-Andalus, such former pretensions of symbolic authority disappear. In 1236, Ferdinand III of Castile captures the city that once housed the miraculous codex and was home to the Umayyad

⁸³ Al-Maqqarī, *ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 146-9.

⁸⁴ Cf. A. Dessus Lamare, *op.cit.*.

⁸⁵ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-istiṣā*, vol. ii, p. 128; Cf. P. de Cenival, “Marrākush,” *EP*.

⁸⁶ Cf. P. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Caliphate of al-Andalus. Soon after, Córdoba's mosque would be converted into a cathedral to hold only Christian relics. Nonetheless, 'Uthmān's blood-stained codex once housed in the Córdoba mosque could continue to survive through the power of *translatio*.

We may hold doubts about the amazing journey of this one codex from the Umayyads of Damascus to the Umayyads of Córdoba and beyond. While the traffic of relics has often been a commerce of forgeries, the issue of authenticity, for our purposes, is not as significant as the value attached to the codex itself. The history of the reception and dissemination of the Qur'ān, when traced along the frontiers of Islam, reveals the complexity with which sacred scripture has been mediated and appropriated by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The later significance of the term Latin *translatio*, not metaphor or movement, but actual translation, also bears on the history of the Qur'ān in the region. The first Latin translation of the Qur'ān, commissioned by Peter the Venerable and completed by a team of translators under the direction of Robert of Ketton, in 1143, shares part in this legacy of appropriation. We find in some of the manuscript copies of this translation a colophon, which not only gives the date of completion, but also highlights that this was the same year in which the glorious Emperor Alfonso VII captured the city of Coria in Extremadura, putting the Saracens to flight.⁸⁷ Set against such a stage of conquest, the Latin translation of the Qur'ān evokes a discourse of conflict, pitting Muslims against Christians in an apocalyptic struggle for existence.

The imperial history of the reign, the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, written toward the middle of the twelfth century, silhouettes a series of battles against the pagan Saracens, where Alfonso VII implements a scorched-earth policy, which is presented as a holy crusade. Religious symbols are directly at play in the description of the raids, which occurred in 1133, through the lands of Seville and Córdoba:

Sed et omnes synagogae eorum, quas inueniebant, destructae sunt; sacerdotes uero et legis suae doctores, quoscumque inueniebant, gladio trucidabant. Sed et libri legis suae in synagogis igne combusti sunt.

⁸⁷ Cf. J. Martínez Gázquez, "El lenguaje de la violencia en el prólogo de la traducción latina del Corán impulsada por Pedro el Venerable," *Cahiers d'études hispaniques médiévales*, 28 (2005), pp. 243-252; concerning the debate as to when the conquest of Coria took place see, M. Barceló, "La Spurcicia paganorum que había en Coria antes de la conquista cristiana en junio de 1142 d.C.," *Musulmanes y cristianos en Hispania durante las conquistas de los siglos XII y XIII*, eds. M. Barceló, and J. Gázquez Martínez (Bellaterra: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2005), pp. 63-70.

And all their mosques which [the Christian army] came upon were destroyed, and the priests and the scholars of their law, which they met, they butchered by the sword. And the books of their law were set to flame in the mosques.⁸⁸

Though such acts serve as repeated tropes in the chronicle,⁸⁹ the Arabic accounts offer sufficient corroboration for us to contemplate to what extent the Qur'ān was itself, at least symbolically, a site of war, contested by competing political and religious forces. It is of note that this is the same Alfonsine army that is described in the Arabo-Andalusī historiography as having stormed into the mosque of Córdoba, less than two years later, tearing to shreds the sacred codex of the Qur'ān housed there.

And yet, with its miraculous *translatio* to North Africa 'Uthmān's *muṣḥaf* escapes the slow disintegration of al-Andalus. Although various *maṣāḥif* stained with 'Uthmān's blood emerge in other frontier regions,⁹⁰ the journey of the Córdoba codex is emblematic of the unique history of the western stretches of Islam, where scripture could both align and divide communities. This now lost codex, which once served as a ceremonial manifestation of Umayyad authority, landed upon almost every dynasty of al-Andalus and the Maghrib, living well past the Muwaḥḥidūn, who transported it off of the Peninsula. While the story of this particular relic can be partially reconstructed through retracing various annals, as now part of the detritus of the past, the object itself remains just a memory.

⁸⁸ *Chronica Adefonsi imperatoris*, ed. L. S. Belda, Madrid: CSIC, 1950, p. 33.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Chronica Adefonsi imperatoris*, p. 103.

⁹⁰ The *Rihla* of the Tangerine world-traveler, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. circa 779/1377), locates the 'Uthmānic relic with bloodstains on verse Q. 2: 137, not in North Africa but in Baṣra, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, 1960), p. 186. Likewise, in Timūrid Samarqand a codex of the Qur'ān appears which is said to have been the very copy which the caliph 'Uthmān was reading when assassinated. This particular codex is associated both with the empire-building Timūr Lang (d. 807/1405) and the Naqshbandi *shaykh* Khwāja Aḥrār (d. 895/1490); see H. Lansdell, *Russian Central Asia* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1885), vol. i, pp. 571, 582; on the version concerning Khwāja Aḥrār, see A. Jeffery, and I. Mendelsohn, "The Orthography of The Samarqand Qur'an Codex," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 62 (1942), pp. 175-195, cf. E. Schuyler, *Turkistan* (London: Sampson, 1876), vol. i pp. 256-7. There is also the case of the bloodstained codex believed to be 'Uthmān's held in the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, İstanbul, (No. H.S.32), cf. H. Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi ve Mukaddes Emanetler*, pp. 94-5; T. Öz, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi ve Emanat-i Mukaddese* (İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1953), pp. 33-5; see also the introduction to the facsimile edition, *Hız Osman'a İzzâfe Edilen Muṣḥaf-ı Şarîf (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Nüshası)* ed. T. Altıkulkaç (İstanbul: IRCICA, 2007).