

Translating inside al-Andalus: from Ibn Rushd to Ibn Juljul*

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Most of Aristotle's works were not translated into Latin during the Roman Empire. Around 1260, the first Latin translation of Aristotle's *Politics* was carried out by the Dominican William of Moerbeke (d. ca. 1286) – perhaps at the suggestion of Thomas of Aquinas (d. 1274) – using a copy of the Greek text from Byzantium as no Arabic translation existed.¹ In fact, the *Politics* was among those few of Aristotle's works that were not translated into Arabic.² Thus, much to his disappointment, in al-Andalus (i.e. Muslim Spain and Portugal) Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd (1126–1198), our Averroes and the great commentator of Aristotle, could not access the text in spite of his longing for it. Did he ever consider the possibility of searching for the Greek original and having it translated?³ Could he also have considered the possibility of learning Greek as William of Moerbeke did in order to read Aristotle's works in the language in which they were written? Was there any Andalusī local tradition for translation and for learning languages other than Arabic that would have facilitated direct access to the legacy of Antiquity?

In the eleventh century, the Toledan Ṣā'īd (d. 1070), the famous author of the *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* (Categories of Nations) dealing with the history of the sciences of the ancients, documented how for him and like-minded scholars the sciences were universal, Aristotle was a crucial intellectual figure for mankind, and the Greek philosophical and scientific tradition was maintained in al-Andalus. According to Ṣā'īd, Andalusī Muslims and Jews were now in charge of what before had been centred in Baghdad after the Abbasids had fallen under the influence of both women and Turks, thus abandoning the pursuit of philosophy since the caliphate of al-Rāḍī (r. 934–940) with only a few Muslims and non-Muslims left to cultivate sciences such as astronomy, geometry and medicine under the protection of some rulers.⁴ With their increased self-esteem, by the sixth/twelfth century – especially after the Almohad revolution which famously proclaimed that knowledge now resided in the Maghrib – Andalusīs seem to have been less and less interested in the scientific and philosophical works authored in the Eastern regions of the Islamic world.⁵ If the scientific and philosophical legacy of Antiquity was kept alive in al-Andalus and the

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¹ Schütrumpf, *The Earliest Translations of Aristotle's Politics*

² Brague, 'Note sur la traduction arabe de la Politique d'Aristote', pp. 423–33; Syros, 'A Note on the Transmission of Aristotle's Political Ideas', pp. 303–09

³ Contacts between the Islamic world and the Byzantine Empire continue to be attested at the time: El Cheikh, 'Byzantium through the Islamic prism', pp. 53–69, and thus – at least in theory – the Muslims could have tried to obtain a copy of the Greek text of Aristotle's *Politics* as Moerbeke did.

⁴ Balty-Guesdon, 'Al-Andalus et l'héritage grec', pp. 231–342

⁵ Richter-Bernburg has shown how in the fields of medicine and astronomy, Ṣā'īd's information on the Mashriq rapidly decreased from the end of the tenth century: 'Ṣā'īd, the *Toledan Tables* and Andalusī Science', pp. 373–401. See also Samsó, *On both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar*.

East had lost centrality, why would Andalusis not look for the original texts of that legacy and have them translated as had happened under the early Abbasids?

For all the expenses that this may have occasioned, Ibn Rushd counted on the support of the Almohad caliphs whom he served as judge, physician, and also philosopher. Ibn Rushd's commitment to commenting on Aristotle was initially supported by the second Almohad caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (r. 1163–1184) when he was still a prince, thus in an initiative that originated in the caliphal court.⁶ By then, the Almohad caliphs needed to establish their legitimacy in new ways after the charismatic phase that had brought the dynastic founder 'Abd al-Mu'min to power and to empire-building by means of a Messianic figure, the Maḥdī Ibn Tūmart (d. 1130). Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf's interest in philosophy and encyclopaedism was a way to redirect Maḥdism after the initial phase of conquest and revolutionary violence, in a process that bears similarities with developments that took place among the Ismailis during the early Fatimid caliphate⁷. The Almohad caliphs Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf and Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb (r. 1184–1198) gave support to the study and teaching of the sciences of the ancients among their learned elites – a support that had also previously existed in a minor scale in Umayyad caliphal Cordoba and in the Taifa kingdoms of Toledo and Saragossa. The Almohad programme of intellectual renovation directed to philosophically orient Revelation faced, however, opposition in different sectors, not only among the traditional Maliki scholars but also among the Almohad elites, specifically among those who saw in such orientation the danger of having the figure of Ibn Tūmart diminished, which would in turn affect their own legitimacy and authority. In 1197, Averroes' persecution and that of those who occupied themselves with the rational sciences took place, to be followed shortly after by the death of the philosopher. Philosophy lost then the prominent place it had gained during Averroes' life.⁸ Had the context in which Ibn Rushd operated lasted and especially had the numbers of those involved in the study of philosophy increased and given a stable place among the *ṭalaba* (the Almohad learned elites), things may have evolved different as William Montgomery Watt explained in a thought-provoking article in which he analyzed the intellectual and related social developments that had taken place under the Almohads.⁹ With continuing caliphal support, a stable place among the Almohad elites given to the practitioners of the ancient sciences, and an educative programme adapted to different types of audience, the conditions may have been created for initiating the search of Greek originals in order to translate or retranslate Aristotle's works – an endeavour that counted with the prestigious model offered by the Abbasid caliphate.¹⁰ Eastern Arabic sources both Christian and Muslim mention that Byzantine emperors had sent books to the Abbasid caliphs, especially during the second iconoclast period (815–843) that coincided with the reign of al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–833). No sending of books from Byzantium to Bagdad is mentioned from the middle of the third/ninth century. This may have been caused by internal developments in Byzantium, some scholars have argued, specifically the classical renaissance that started with the Macedonian dynasty in 867 – and perhaps even with the last iconoclast emperor, Teophilus (829–842) – as the Byzantines would not have

⁶ Morata, 'La presentación de Averroes en la corte almohade', pp. 101–22

⁷ Fierro, 'Ibn Ṭufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzān'.

⁸ Fierro, 'Averroes' "disgrace" and his relations with the Almohads', pp. 73–118

⁹ Watt, 'Philosophy and theology under the Almohads', pp. 101–07

¹⁰ Gutas, *Greek thought, Arabic culture*; Yücesoy, 'Translation as Self-Consciousness', p. 552, quoting the Maghribi al-Ḥimyarī for the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn's (r. 198/813–218/833) search of ancient manuscripts: al-Ḥimyarī, *Rawḍ al-mi'ṭār*, p. 16.

been willing any longer to part with books they now valued.¹¹ In any case, apart from the Abbasid model, the Almohads counted also on the precedent of the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate during which two books (Dioscorides' *Materia Medica* and Orosius' *History*) were said to have been sent by the Byzantine emperor to be translated into Arabic. This was a relevant precedent given that in their search for legitimacy, the Almohads insisted on connecting themselves with the Cordoban Umayyads.

However, the place of translation in Andalusī culture and society was in fact rather limited as we shall see. This may come as a surprise, as translating activities are prominently associated with Medieval Iberia, but they refer to the process of translating Arabic books on sciences and philosophy into Latin and Hebrew on the part of Christians and Jews who lived outside al-Andalus. Compared to the great amount of research carried out on the translations from Arabic into other languages that took place outside the territory under Muslim rule,¹² there is little regarding translating activities made by Muslims and dhimmis (Christian and Jews) inside al-Andalus.¹³ There are reasons for this. Balty-Guesdon has shown how for Ṣā'īd al-Ṭulayṭulī pre-Islamic Iberia had no scientific legacy to offer. Even if other sources record some scientific activities on the part of the Christians living in al-Andalus that drew on pre-Islamic intellectual traditions,¹⁴ by the fourth/tenth century for both Andalusī Muslims and non-Muslims access to philosophy and the sciences of the ancients meant Arabisation. The scientific legacy of Antiquity – together with the contributions made within the Islamic world – arrived to the Iberian peninsula in Arabic, and thus it was as Arabic sciences that Andalusī Muslims, Jews and Christians became familiar with them.¹⁵ For Isabel Toral, the fact that the range of languages spoken in al-Andalus did not include either Greek or Syriac – only Latin – meant that in Cordova there was no material basis for a translation movement similar to that in Baghdad.¹⁶ In the field of the sciences of the ancients – together with some translations from Latin and some updating of Dioscorides' *Materia Medica* as we shall see – Andalusī activity concentrated on the reception of texts already translated in the East.

Christians translated some of their religious works from Latin into Arabic: Ḥafṣ b. Albar al-Qūṭī's translation of the *Psalms* is usually dated in the second half of the third/ninth century and in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century the Canons of the Visigothic Church were translated.¹⁷ Evidence regarding other translating activities – apart from the case of Orosius' *History* to be discussed below- is not as

¹¹ Signes Codoñer, 'La diplomacia del libro en Bizancio', pp. 153–87; Sypianski, 'Arabo-Byzantine relations', pp. 465–78

¹² Two examples: Gutas, 'What was there in Arabic for the Latins to Receive?' pp. 3–21, and in the same volume Hasse, 'The social conditions of the Arabic-(Hebrew-)Latin Translation movements', pp. 68–86.

¹³ An overview in Vernet, *Lo que Europa debe al Islam de España*. Gilbert's study *Reading Cultures* is unpublished. For a more general perspective see Santoyo, *La traducción medieval en la Península Ibérica (siglos III-XV)*.

¹⁴ A recent overview in Cyrille Aillet, *Mozarabes*.

¹⁵ Balty-Guesdon, 'Al-Andalus et l'héritage grec', pp. 231–342

¹⁶ Toral, 'Translations as Part of Power Semiotics' <http://hdl.handle.net/10261/13949> (consulted 19/06/2017). Cf. van Koningsveld, 'Greek Manuscripts in the Early Abbasid Empire', pp. 345-372.

¹⁷ See footnote 14. The Arabic translation of the Canons is now being studied in the Gerda Henkel Foundation research project *Christian Society under Muslim Rule: Canon Collections from Muslim Spain* directed by A. Echevarría and Matthias Maser https://lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/christian_society_under_muslim_rule_canon_collections_from_muslim_spain?nav_id=8609&focus_comments=1

clear as these two. The Christians of al-Andalus seem to have known some or parts of the translations of the Bible into Arabic made outside al-Andalus, and perhaps they also carried out their own.¹⁸ In the field of science, there is some scanty evidence on translations of medical and astrological Latin knowledge that was of interest for the Muslims.¹⁹ In the field of history such interest is more apparent. The *Chronica Pseudo-Isidoriana* was initially the translation of a Latin source into Arabic,²⁰ and at least some parts of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* were also available in Arabic,²¹ while there has been much discussion about other possible Latin sources in Andalusī Arabic historiographical and geographical writings, with Orosius' *History* occupying a prominent position.²²

As for the Andalusī Jews, translations of their religious literature into Arabic carried out in the East such as those by Saadya Gaon (892–942) circulated among them, but there were no translations made in al-Andalus.²³ The Jews' deep Arabization allowed them to read Arabic books on grammar, belles lettres, poetry, science, philosophy, and mysticism without any need to translate them into Hebrew. They also wrote in Arabic in those fields and this eventually led to the need to translate some of their Arabic production into Hebrew, but this took place outside al-Andalus to cater for the needs of those co-religionists who knew no Arabic.²⁴

As for the Muslims, translations made in the East circulated in al-Andalus although no general overview tracing when, how, and why they were introduced exists, except for certain disciplines such as astrology and medicine.²⁵ By the fifth/eleventh century, the reception of the works of the Arab *falāsifa* and of the 'Arabic' Aristotle is well attested, while the circulation of Hermetic and alchemical literature translated into Arabic is attested already in the tenth century.²⁶ Together with the circulation of medical works such as those by Galen, this tenth century interest in Greek learning is to be connected with the establishment of the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate and with the need to rival in the intellectual arena with both the Abbasids and the Fatimids, a process in which the figure of the 'wise' al-Ḥakam II, before and during his reign (r. 961–976), was crucial as also was the exchange of

¹⁸ A useful overview referring to the research carried out on this topic by scholars such as P. Sj. van Koningsveld, M.-Th. Urvoy and J. P. Monferrer among others in López Guix, 'Las primeras traducciones bíblicas', <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/1611/article/viewFile/275764/363728>. Among more recent studies, Monferrer, "'You brood of vipers!'", pp. 187–21. The materials found in Ibn Barrajān's (d. 1141) works are now to be added: Casewit, 'A Muslim scholar of the Bible', pp. 1–48.

¹⁹ Samsó, *Las ciencias de los antiguos en al-Andalus*.

²⁰ *La Chronica Gothorum Pseudo-Isidoriana* (ms. Paris BN 6113).

²¹ Ducène, 'Al-Bakrī et les *Étymologies* d'Isidore de Séville', pp. 379–97.

²² Sánchez-Albornoz, *Fuentes latinas de la historia romana de Rasis*, and Vallvé, 'Fuentes latinas de los geógrafos árabes', pp. 241–60. Both scholars tend to stress such a use, while Molina, 'Orosio y los geógrafos hispano-musulmanes', pp. 63–92, Penelas in a number of studies (such as 'Contribución al estudio de la difusión de la Cosmografía de Julio Honorio', App. 1–18) and Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus. 711-1000*, are more cautious with the extant evidence.

²³ Judah ha-Levi translated some Hebrew verses into Arabic: Tobi, 'Yehudah Ha-Levi's Translations of Arabic Poems', pp. 369–86. I owe this information to Jonathan Decter.

²⁴ See for example Freudenthal, 'Arabic into Hebrew', pp. 125–143.

²⁵ For the sciences of the ancients, see above notes 10 and 16, as well as Samsó, 'Al-Andalus, a bridge between Arabic and European science', pp. 101–25. For philosophy see Plessner, 'Hispano-Arabic vs. Eastern Tradition of Aristotle's and al-Fārābī's writings', pp. 109–14; Guerrero, 'Para la historia de al-Andalus: Primera presencia de al-Fārābī', pp. 1191–208; Hernández, 'La recepción de los *falāsifa* orientales en al-Andalus: problemas críticos', pp. 37–51.

²⁶ See *Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes (HATA)*, sections XII and XV at <http://kohepocu.cchs.csic.es/>

embassies with Byzantium.²⁷ It is in the context of such an embassy that translations being undertaken in al-Andalus with the involvement of Muslims are mentioned.

As noted above, the translations involved Dioscorides' *Materia Medica* and Orosius' *History*, the books that were sent by the Byzantine emperor to the Cordoban Umayyad caliph. The Cordoban scholar and doctor Ibn Juljul (943–994) is the main source on this episode in a narrative that must have been included in the lost prologue to his work *Tafsīr asmā' al-adwiya al-mufrada min Kitāb Diyusqūrīdus* (Commentary on the Names of the Simple Remedies of the Book of Dioscurides),²⁸ and that has been preserved by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a (d. 1270).²⁹ There are other related texts,³⁰ but here we shall concentrate on Ibn Juljul's narrative. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's may have recorded it faithfully, although there is no way to ascertain if he introduced any changes in it.

Ibn Juljul was five years old when the Byzantine embassy arrived in Cordoba in 948.

قال ابن جُلجُل وورد هذا الكتاب إلى الأندلس وهو على ترجمة إسطفن منه ما عرف له أسماء بالعربية ومنه ما لم يعرف له أسماء فانتفع الناس بالمعروف منه بالمشرق وبالأندلس إلى أيام الناصر عبد الرحمن بن محمد وهو يومئذ صاحب الأندلس فكاتبه أرمانوس الملك ملك قسطنطينية أحسب في سنة سبع وثلاثين وثلاثمائة وهاداه بهدايا لها قدر عظيم فكان في جملة هديته كتاب ديسقوريدس مصور الحشائش بالتصوير الرومي العجيب وكان الكتاب مكتوباً بالإغريقي الذي هو اليوناني وبعث معه كتاب هروسييس صاحب القصص وهو تاريخ للروم عجيب فيه أخبار الدهور وقصص الملوك الأول وفوائد عظيمة.

وكتب أرمانوس في كتابه إلى الناصر أن كتاب ديسقوريدس لا تجتنى فائدته إلا برجل يحسن العبارة باللسان اليوناني ويعرف أشخاص تلك الأدوية فإن كان في بلدك من يحسن ذلك فزت أيها الملك بفائدة الكتاب وأما كتاب هروسييس فعندك في بلدك من اللطيين من يقرأه باللسان اللطيني وإن كشفتهم عنه نقلوه لك من اللطيني إلى اللسان العربي.

قال ابن جُلجُل ولم يكن يومئذ بقرطبة من نصارى الأندلس من يقرأ اللسان الإغريقي الذي هو اليوناني القديم فبقي كتاب ديسقوريدس في خزانة عبد الرحمن الناصر باللسان الإغريقي ولم يترجم إلى اللسان العربي وبقي الكتاب بالأندلس والذي بين أيدي الناس بترجمة إسطفن الواردة من مدينة السلام بغداد.

فلما جاوب الناصر أرمانوس الملك سأله أن يبعث إليه برجل يتكلم بالإغريقي واللطيني ليعلم له عبيداً يكونون مترجمين فبعث أرمانوس الملك للناصر براهب كان يسمى نقولا فوصل إلى قرطبة سنة

²⁷ A. al-Ḥajjī, 'Al-'Alāqāt al-diblūmasiyya bayna al-Andalus wa-l-Bizanta', pp. 53–91; Wasserstein, 'Byzantium and al-Andalus', pp. 76–101

²⁸ On Ibn Juljul and his works see Garijo Galán, 'Ibn Yūlūl, Sulaymān', pp. 163–66, n° 1396. See also Ana M. Cabo-González, 'Action et interaction entre les peuples de la Méditerranée. La traduction en arabe de textes scientifiques grecs dans le califat de Cordoue'.

²⁹ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, 'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'. pp. 37–41 (Arabic)/36–40 (translation); a version in al-'Umarī (d. 1349), *Masālik al-abṣār*, IX, pp. 311–12. Rosenthal translated it into English in *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, pp. 194–96. A new translation has been carried out by E. Savage-Smith, S. Swain and G.J. van Gelder <https://brill.com/view/db/lhom>.

³⁰ For example, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) refers to this event in his *Kitāb al-'ibar*, Būlāq, II, pp. 88, 197; Beirut, II, pp. 169, 401–02. The problematic character of these passages has been discussed by Penelas in her study accompanying her edition of Orosius' history (see below note 36).

Ibn Juljul said: “This book [Dioscorides on simples] reached al-Andalus in the translation of Iṣṭifan,³¹ a book in parts of which the translator either did not know the name [of the simple] in Arabic or did not know the original name. People profited from what was clear in it in both the Mashriq and al-Andalus until the days of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad [i.e. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III al-Nāṣir] who was at the time the ruler of al-Andalus. Armāniyūs,³² the emperor (*mālik*) who reigned in Constantinople, wrote to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in the year 337/948 sending him presents of great value and among those presents there was the *Book* of Dioscorides with illustrations of the herbs according to the admirable Byzantine/Christian (*rūmī*) way of illuminating. The book was written in Greek that is Jonian (*al-yunānī*). The emperor also sent the *Book* by Orosius, the historian (*ṣāhib al-qīṣaṣ*) which is an admirable history of the Christians (*al-rūm*) which contains stories of the past, narratives on the kings of earlier times, and important useful lessons.

Armāniyūs wrote in his letter to al-Nāṣir: ‘The utility of the *Book* of Dioscorides could not be harvested by you except with a man who mastered its expression in the Greek language and knew the plants of those simples. Is there in your land such a person who masters the language so that you – oh, King! – could profit from the utility of the book? As regards the *Book* of Orosius, you have in your land among the people who speak Latin someone who could read it in the Latin language so that if you make them study it they will translate it (*naqalūhu*) for you from Latin to the Arabic language.’

Ibn Juljul said: ‘There was at that time among the Christians of al-Andalus none who could read the Greek language that is called ancient Greek (*al-yunānī al-qadīm*).³³ The *Book* of Dioscorides remained in the library of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir in the Greek language without being translated (*lam yutarjam*) into the Arabic language. The *Book* remained in al-Andalus while what circulated among the people was the translation by Iṣṭifan that had arrived from *Madīnat al-salām*, i.e. Baghdad.’

When al-Nāṣir answered the emperor Armāniyūs, he asked him to send him a man who spoke Greek and Latin to teach, thanks to him, slaves (*‘abīd*) who would then become translators. The emperor Armāniyūs then sent to al-Nāṣir a monk called Nicholas. He arrived in Cordoba in the year 340/951.

³¹ Iṣṭifan b. Basīl, as previously explained by Ibn Juljul, had translated the *Materia medica* during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, and Ḥunayn b. Ishāq had added glosses to it. But a number of simples had been left un-translated. For an overview on the complex history of the Arabic Dioscorides see Gutas’ review of Ullmann’s seminal work (*Untersuchungen zur arabischen Überlieferung*), ‘The Arabic Transmission of Dioskurides’, pp. 457–62.

³² This name has been understood as referring to Romanus I (r. 920–944), but it may refer also to Constantine VII (r. 944–959), whose reign corresponds to the dates given in the text, as the Byzantine emperors from 867 to 1065 belonged to the Macedonian dynasty also called Armenian. I owe this point to S. Brentjes.

³³ When I presented this paper at the Advanced School in the Humanities (see note *), some of the attendants expressed their surprise at the terminology used in this text to refer to the Greek language.

There were at that time in Cordoba among the doctors a group who were involved in investigation and scrutiny (*qawm lahum baḥṭh wa-taftīsh*) and who desired to figure out in Arabic what was ignored of the names of the medicaments mentioned in the *Book* of Dioscorides. The most inquisitive and willing (*wa-kāna abḥathahum wa-aḥraṣahum*) in this thanks to his proximity (*taqarrub*) to the king ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir was Ḥasdāy b. Shaprūt al-Isrā’īlī and the monk Nicholas became most esteemed by him and most intimate with him.³⁴

Scholars who have dealt with this text have paid attention to the chronological problems related to the emperor mentioned in the text,³⁵ and to the identification of the translators of Orosius’ *History* from Latin into Arabic,³⁶ but among other relevant issues largely left untouched is why a Byzantine emperor would have decided to include books among the presents sent to a Muslim ruler and why specifically those two.

Regarding the first issue and as already noted, books had been sent from Byzantium to the Abbasids,³⁷ and having the same happening in al-Andalus made the Cordoban Umayyads equal to their Abbasid rivals, in the same way that having mosaics sent from Byzantium to Cordoba made them equal to their Umayyad ancestors in Damascus.³⁸ Taken this into account, contrary to what the narrative implies, the suggestion may have been made from the Umayyad court that books were appropriate gifts to be sent as part of the exchange of embassies. To note that contemporary Byzantine embassies to the other Umayyad caliphal rival, the Fatimid imam-caliph, did not include books or at least they are not mentioned in the reports at our disposal.³⁹ The fact that relics were included among the presents in this case is to be connected with Fatimid interests.⁴⁰ To note also that a letter sent by the Byzantine emperor to al-Ḥakam II (r. 961–976) when he was still a prince reveals the eagerness with which the Cordoban Umayyads were demanding from Byzantium books by the philosophers and men of science (*al-ḥukamā*).⁴¹ In such letter the emperor states: “As regards your request that I should present him with (such) books”⁴² As part of

³⁴ The reference to Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a’s work in note 29 above.

³⁵ This refers to those who understood the text as mentioning the emperor Romanus I (r. 920–944), but cf. what is said in note 32.

³⁶ Levi Della Vida, ‘La traduzione araba della storie di Orosio’, pp. 257–93; Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus (711-1000)*, pp. 140–45; Penelas, ‘A possible author of the Arabic translation of Orosius’ *Historiae*’, pp. 113–35.

³⁷ See above note 11.

³⁸ Fierro, ‘En torno a la decoración con mosaicos de las mezquitas omeyas’, pp. 131–44

³⁹ A Byzantine embassy to the Fatimids in North Africa took place in 957-8: Stern, ‘An Embassy of the Byzantine emperor’, pp. 239–58 (Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi*, p. 331, mentions a previous embassy dated in 946). Among the presents sent by the Emperor Nikephoros Focas to al-Mu‘izz (r. 953–975) there was the sword of Muḥammad that had been captured in Palestine: Cutler, ‘Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy’, pp. 90 and 92; later the saddles of Alexander the Great were sent by Michael IV Stratiotikos to the mother of the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir: Mundell Mango, ‘Hierarchies of Rank and Materials’, p. 369 quoting Hamidullah, ‘Nouveaux documents’, p. 286–88.

⁴⁰ Walker, ‘Purloined Symbols of the Past’, pp. 364–87

⁴¹ Stern, ‘A letter of the Byzantine emperor’, pp. 37–42 and Krönung, ‘Ein Schreiben des Konstantinos VII. Porphyrogenetos’, pp. 93–99. The letter has been preserved with a copy (now lost) of the Arabic translation of Apollonius of Tyana’s *Kitāb al-‘ilal*, a magical text.

⁴² The request is done not by the Umayyad himself but by one of his courtiers, most probably Ḥasdāy b. Shaprūt, of whom a fragment of a letter that he sent to the Byzantine emperor has been preserved:

the Umayyad construction of the Cordoban caliphate, the initiative must have originated in Cordoba, but Ibn Juljul later obscured the demand that put the Cordoban caliph in a position of inferiority vis-a-vis the Emperor so that in his narrative the Emperor sends the books on his own initiative.

Regarding the second issue, for some modern scholars the mention of Orosius' *History* among the presents sent by the Emperor is puzzling for a number of reasons,⁴³ among them that many copies of this Latin text circulated in the Iberian Peninsula and that a translation seems to have been carried out before the embassy as materials from Orosius are quoted by Aḥmad al-Rāzī (d. 955). Thus, the translation would have taken place within the Christian community in Cordoba with the aim of providing such community – by then largely Arabized – with a universal history written from a Christian point of view (roughly at the same time, Orosius' *History* was being translated into Old English to cater for the needs of another Christian community). This context would explain why the Arabic translation at our disposal incorporated a summary of Visigothic history: it is implausible that a copy coming from Byzantium would have contained such kind of materials.⁴⁴ But such summary could have been added during the process of translation, as caliphal needs cannot be completely ruled out: the Umayyad caliphal political and religious project involved the desire to integrate the history of the communities who lived in the Iberian Peninsula prior to the arrival of the Arabs.⁴⁵ The project was of course larger, the creation of a distinctive Andalusī culture – not depending any longer on Iraq - in which Muslims, Christians and Jews would equally participate with Umayyad intellectual patronage embracing them all. Regarding the Jews, and as D. Wasserstein notes, Ḥasdāy is portrayed in Ibn Juljul's text as acting in concert with his employer, the caliph of Cordoba:

“Ḥasdāy's work, in separating the Jews of al-Andalus from those of Iraq, and in offering the patronage and creating the conditions in which a distinctive Jewish cultural identity came into being in the Iberian Peninsula, parallels that of his own patron, al-Ḥakam II al-Mustanṣir, in which exactly the same happened, at exactly the same time, for the Muslims of al-Andalus.”⁴⁶

Doubts can thus be reasonably shed on the inclusion of a copy of the Latin Orosius among the books sent by the Emperor to the Cordoban Caliph. What about the case of Dioscorides's *Materia Medica*? As noted, the book had been translated incompletely into Arabic for the Abbasids in Baghdad towards the middle of the third/ninth century: in the translation made from a Greek original by Iṣṭifān b. Basīl – with glosses by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq – no Arabic equivalents had been found for a number of technical terms.⁴⁷ According to Ibn Juljul's narrative, the Byzantine Emperor

Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, pp. 188–91; Mann, *Texts and studies in Jewish history and literature*, pp. 10–12. I owe these references to Jonathan Decker.

⁴³ While al-Ḥakam's request was for philosophical and scientific books, the embassy mentioned by Ibn Juljul included a historical text. We do not know if it had been requested (see the discussion below) or if was included on the Byzantine emperor's initiative.

⁴⁴ Penelas, introduction to *Kitāb Hurūṣiyūṣ*, pp. 27–30. See also Penelas, ‘¿Hubo dos traducciones árabes independientes?’, pp. 223–52 (the answer is negative), and ‘Fuentes no identificadas y contenidos no conservados del Libro 7 del Orosio árabe’, forthcoming (available at <https://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/159608>). See also Matesanz Gascón, ‘Desde Bizancio hasta Córdoba,’ proposing that Apianus' historical writings may have been those sent by the Byzantine emperor.

⁴⁵ Sahner, ‘From Augustine to Islam’, pp. 1–27

⁴⁶ Wasserstein, ‘The Muslims and the Golden Age of the Jews in al-Andalus’, p. 194

⁴⁷ See note 31. Which simples were those is not known.

warned the Caliph that someone familiar with ‘old Greek’ would be needed, as if assuming that persons (such as slaves and merchants) who could speak what can be termed ‘colloquial Greek’ were available in al-Andalus but they would be unable to access the original medical text.⁴⁸ The monk Nicholas was thus sent to Cordoba after ‘Abd al-Raḥmān requested someone capable to speak Greek (*ighrīqī*) as no one with such an expertise had been found in al-Andalus. The caliph intended to have such person teach slaves who would eventually act as translators,⁴⁹ but if that was the case the slaves are nowhere mentioned again. Among the group of doctors mentioned by Ibn Juljul as being involved in investigation and scrutiny (*qawm lahum baḥth wa-taftīsh*)⁵⁰ and who desired to figure out in Arabic what was ignored of the names of the medicaments mentioned in the *Book* of Dioscorides, some are mentioned by name: Muḥammad al-Shajjār, al-Basbasī, Abū ‘Uthmān al-Jazzār al-Yābisa, Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Ṭabīb, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ishāq b. Haytham, and one Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṣiqillī.⁵¹ Those names suggest neither slaves nor Christians, except perhaps in the case of the Sicilian of whom it is said that he spoke Greek⁵² and knew the remedies. A Sicilian connection appears in another report having to do with Muslims trying to understand the text of Dioscorides. The Sevillian poet and litterateur Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh, known as Ghulām al-Ḥurra, travelled to the East, made the pilgrimage and visited many regions of the Maghreb looking for plants. He was interested in medicine and had knowledge of plants, writing a *Sharḥ fī Kitāb Diyāsqrūdūs* from which people derived many benefits as he was able to point to the specific plants behind the terms mentioned by Dioscorides. He did so by using the knowledge of a slave woman he owned called Ana the Greek and of whom he had taken possession from among the captives taken in Syracuse (Sicily). This slave-girl’s mother had been a midwife expert in plants and simples.⁵³ Direct and practical knowledge of the plants appears to have been more helpful than any ‘old Greek’ for improving the existing Arabic translation of the *Materia Medica* by making it understandable in the local Andalusī context.⁵⁴ Thus, in the case of Dioscorides’

⁴⁸ This point was made by Vernet, ‘Los médicos andaluces’, pp. 445–62. The use of the expression ‘*al-yunānī al-qadīm*’ deserves to be studied in itself. A tenth-century copy of the Greek Dioscorides is preserved in Ms 652 Pierpont Morgan Library New York <http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/3/143825>

⁴⁹ On the prominent role played by slaves in translating activities see P. S. van Koningsveld, ‘Muslim Slaves and Captives in Western Europe during the Late Middle Ages’, pp. 5–23. For the view that most Muslims regarded the study of non-Islamic languages as demeaning see Lewis, *The Muslim discovery of Europe*, pp. 71–88.

⁵⁰ Insistence on the importance of investigation, research and reasoning is paramount in Ibn Juljul’s *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’ wa-l-ḥukamā’*.

⁵¹ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*’, p. 39 (Arabic)/38 (translation). Ibn Juljul met them all during the caliphate of al-Ḥakam II.

⁵² Which means that between 948 (embassy) and/or 951 (arrival of the monk) and the time when Ibn Juljul’s team was active someone had been found who spoke Greek.

⁵³ al-Marrākushī (d. 1302), *al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila li-kitabay al-Mawṣūl wa-l-Ṣila*, V.1, p. 239 (483). Given the absence of any other chronological data in this scholar’s biography, the mention of the conquest of Syracuse has led some scholars to conclude that Ghulām al-Ḥurra lived in the third/ninth century, as when Syracuse was conquered in 264/878, many slaves were made: Haremska, ‘Gulām al-Ḥurra, Abū l-Ḥasan’. But other episodes may be behind: in the fourth/tenth century, the Byzantines conquered the city and held it for three years; in 1086, the Normans conquered it; later there was a Muslim expedition from Ifriqiya and in 1127 an Almoravid attack. One of these later dates and most especially the twelfth century seems to be the most probable period for Ghulām al-Ḥurra’s life which coincides with Ullmann’s view: *Untersuchungen zur arabischen Überlieferung*, p. 65.

⁵⁴ The need to pay attention to practical expertise has been highlighted by Zuccato, ‘Arabic singing girls, the Pope, and the astrolabe: Arabic science in tenth-century Latin Europe’, pp. 99–120.

book it may have been included among those sent by the Emperor to the Cordoban caliph, most probably also including books on the occult sciences such as Apolonius of Tyana's *Kitāb al-ʿilal*.⁵⁵ Writing under al-Manṣūr b. Abī ʿĀmir – responsible for the purge of al-Ḥakam II's library during which the books dealing with the science of the ancients were burned excepting those considered to be acceptable for Muslim needs – Ibn Juljul would have omitted such suspicious books and added Orosius, an historical book that was not problematic.⁵⁶

Returning now to Ibn Rushd, if the presents sent by the Byzantine Emperor to the Cordoban Umayyads and the Fatimids reflected the interests of both dynasties (books and relics), a further differentiation can be added. The Fatimids as Ismaili imam-caliphs were endowed with supernatural knowledge and had no need of being enlightened by foreign books, thus the Fatimids – who could have had easier access to Greek translators through Sicily – do not appear to have started any translating movement. On their part, the Cordoban Umayyad caliphs were Sunnis and thus for them knowledge was acquired, not given, and the possession and study of books was part of such acquisition process. The Almohads were influenced by both precedents, but in the case of the Andalusī Averroes he would have been more inclined to stress the Cordoban Umayyad model which could have opened the way for an Almohad project of translating into Arabic the legacy of Classical Antiquity, including Aristotle's *Politics*. Luis de Mármol Carvajal (1524–1600), in his *Description of Africa*, states that the Maghribis use a book on agriculture that was translated from Latin into Arabic in Cordoba during the reign of Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr, i.e., the third Almohad caliph who ruled from 1184–1198.⁵⁷ No evidence exists of such translation, but the mention is indicative that the Almohad period was remembered as one in which translating activities could have taken place.

⁵⁵ See above note 41. On the Cordoban Umayyads' interest in such sciences see Fierro, 'Plants, Mary the Copt, Abraham, donkeys and knowledge', pp. 125–44.

⁵⁶ For Ibn Juljul's relations with al-Manṣūr b. Abī ʿĀmir see M.-G. Balty-Guesdon, 'Les *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ wa l-ḥukamāʾ* d'Ibn Ḡulḡul', pp. 49–59, and cf. Alvarez Millán, 'Medical anecdotes in Ibn Juljul's Biographical Dictionary', pp. 141–58.

⁵⁷ Mármol Carvajal, *Description de l'Afrique*, 1, p. 15

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