



The “Bestsellers” of al-Andalus

Maribel Fierro

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the information found both in Arabic biographical and bibliographical dictionaries of scholars, as well as in other sources, we can establish the names and trajectories of 11,831 scholars who were active in al-Andalus between the second/eighth–ninth/fifteenth centuries. Of these scholars, 5007 appear to have either written books of their own, or to have transmitted works written by others. We also know the titles and contents of the 13,730 works written and transmitted in al-Andalus during this period.¹ Because we lack similar figures for other regions of the

This chapter is published open access under a CC BY 4.0 license with funding from the Project *Local contexts and global dynamics: al-Andalus and the Maghrib in the Islamic East*, FFI2016-78878-R AEI/FEDER, UE..

¹The resources that have enabled us to carry out this work are the *Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes (HATA)* (see note 8), and the *Prosopography of the ‘Ulamā’ of al-Andalus*, directed by María Luisa Ávila and accessible at <https://www.eea.csic.es/pua/>

M. Fierro (✉)

Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas: Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean, Madrid, Spain
e-mail: maribel.fierro@cchs.csic.es

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M. Marcos Cobaleda (ed.), *Artistic and Cultural Dialogues in the Late Medieval Mediterranean*, Mediterranean Perspectives,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53366-3_2

Islamic world, it is impossible to assess by comparison the extent to which al-Andalus's literary productivity and book circulation was normal or exceptional, or whether they exhibited any features that were peculiar to the Andalusí context. What is possible to establish, however, is the impact that Andalusí literary production had on the rest of the Islamic world. This chapter therefore aims precisely at providing, for the first time, an overview of the Andalusí works that circulated outside the Iberian Peninsula and achieved widespread popularity, and at explaining why they gained an audience outside the local context in which they were produced, as part of a broader project on the cultural impact of the Maghrib on the *Mashriq*.²

2.2 WHAT IS AN ANDALUSÍ “BESTSELLER”?

In the intellectual sphere, al-Andalus is perhaps best known for its role in the cultural transfer between the Islamic and Western Christian worlds, a favourite topic of researchers both in Spain and elsewhere who have written about the Iberian Peninsula's Islamic past.³ However, Western scholars have shown much less interest in studying the Andalusí intellectual output in its own right, especially as regards al-Andalus's contributions to the Islamic religious sciences. Although there have been some changes to this overall lack of interest, the following reflections made seventeen years ago remain equally valid today:

It is researchers from Muslim countries who have studied Andalusí knowledge within its own context, i.e. that of a pre-modern Islamic society. After all, the Andalusí did not create or transmit their knowledge based on the influence it might have on the Christian or Western world. Their gaze was directed, first and foremost, at themselves, and, secondarily, at the rest of the

²This paper was written within the framework of the projects *Contextos locales y dinámicas globales: al-Andalus y el Magreb en el Oriente islámico* (Local contexts and global dynamics: al-Andalus and the Maghrib in the Islamic East) FFI2016-78878-R AEI/FEDER, EU, IPs M. Fierro and M. Penelas, and *Practicing knowledge in Islamic societies and their neighbours*, Anneliese Maier Award 2014 (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation). A preliminary version was presented at the 2nd International Workshop of the *ArtMedGIS* Project, *Dialogues in the Late Medieval Mediterranean: Between East and West*, organized by María Marcos Cobaleda in Granada, 13–14 November 2017. Materials related to this paper were presented at lectures given at Göttingen University (14 January 2019), the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig (30 January 2019), and at the al-Furqan Foundation (3 April 2019). Many thanks to the organizers of these events for the opportunity to present this research.

³Fierro, “Las huellas del Islam a debate”.

Muslim world. This is why studies by researchers belonging to this same cultural and religious sphere have addressed in detail the Andalusī ‘*ulamā*’ (scholars) who studied fields of Islamic thought such as Qur’ānic commentary, the Traditions of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*), and the many fields of Islamic law. In any list of Andalusī authors and transmitters, the bulk will be made up of scholars of Islamic thought. However, to the non-specialist, the names of these authors will mean little to nothing. By contrast, any knowledgeable person educated in Islamic culture will recognize them immediately: Abū ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Barr, Abū l-Walīd al-Bājī, Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, Ibn al-‘Arīf, al-Shāṭibī, to name just a few.

While the Andalusī authors whose names are familiar to a knowledgeable European (Averroes, Ibn Ḥazm or the mystic Ibn ‘Arabī) were of course important ‘*ulamā*’ in al-Andalus, if one were to have asked an educated Muslim in 9th/15th-century Granada who the most important scholars of al-Andalus were, they might not have mentioned any of the names familiar to a European today. As such, if we wish to break out of a Euro-centric vision of al-Andalus, we will have to make an effort to approach it on its own terms. (Fierro 2001, p. 10–11)

In terms of interest in Andalusī texts within the Islamic world, there have been changes over time in the attention paid to specific authors, genres and works. This means that, here too, the Andalusī authors who are well known today are not always the same as those who were well known in the past (I will return to this point later on). These and other factors must be taken into account when discussing Andalusī “bestsellers”, a term I am using in a very broad sense to evoke the popularity that certain works produced in al-Andalus enjoyed, and, in some cases, continue to enjoy today. Of course, in using this modern term I do not mean to suggest that the mechanisms, dynamics and circuits of production, sales, circulation and consumption were the same as those of the modern-day bestseller.⁴ Several studies have been written on these mechanisms, dynamics and circuits in the Andalusī context⁵; however, there is certainly still room for a

⁴Recent studies on such mechanisms in the premodern Islamic world include—but are by no means limited to, as the literature has grown significantly in recent years—the following publications, in chronological order: Déroche (2000), Hanna (2003), Krätli and Lydon (2010), Gründler (2011), Görke and Hirschler (2011), Gherseti and Metcalfe (2012), Frenkel (2017) and Behrens-Abouseif (2018).

⁵Specific case studies include Dandel (1993), Burns (1996), Mazzoli-Guintard (2006), al-Sāwirī (2009) and Ženka (2018). There are more general studies as well, such as Ferhat (1994), van Koningsveld (1994), Mus’ad (2000), al-Abbadi (2005), Viguera and Castillo

complete monograph on books in al-Andalus, covering everything we know to date and indicating the gaps that still need to be filled. Books were able to circulate outside the commercial circuits, being copied by students in the educational circles of their teachers, and transmitted to subsequent generations via inheritances and pious endowments.⁶

I mentioned earlier that I am using the term “bestseller” in a broad sense, to evoke the widespread popularity that certain works produced in al-Andalus enjoyed in the past. I am not just referring to works that had a particularly broad reach and impact in the territories of the Islamic West (al-Andalus and the Maghrib), but especially to those that managed to enjoy success across the Islamic world as a whole. A separate category would be those works which not only circulated beyond the confines of the Islamic world, but were even translated in the Western Christian world. I will not be addressing this last category here, although I will refer to it in passing in some cases. Likewise, I will not go into detail about the circulation of Andalusí texts following the spread of the printing press throughout the Islamic world, as this would force us to address issues such as print runs, or new circuits and forms of marketing that were very different from the traditional ones which had accompanied the manuscript. Still, I will include some references to this subject in order to illustrate its importance.

A work’s dissemination and impact can be measured by how many times it is cited in other texts,⁷ by the number of manuscripts preserved, or by the number of works interrelated with it. By this I mean works that summarize, comment on, complement, refute or have some other such relationship with a prior work. Another index of popularity is whether or not a given work was widely used in the education process, which in some cases had to do with the author’s efforts to make the work accessible to the broadest readership possible, adapting his discourse to this aim. This is the case of didactic poetry, for example.

(2006), Espejo and Arias Torres (2008) and Martínez de Castilla (2010a), as well as the series *Primavera del Manuscrito Andalusí*. Again, this list is by no means exhaustive.

⁶A useful overview can be found in Rosenthal (1947). See also Toauti (2003) and Hirschler (2012). On al-Andalus, to name just a few studies, we have Ribera (1928), Giladi (1997), Labarta and Escribano (2000) and Martínez de Castilla (2010b).

⁷The digital humanities project *Kitab* directed by Sarah Savant is aimed at analysing the reuse of prior texts within the written production of the Islamic world, even where these works are not explicitly cited. In the future, this will make it possible to determine exactly which works were most widely used: <http://kitab-project.org/author/sarah/>

Here I will focus on works for which a large number of manuscripts have been preserved. As we will see, these were often the same ones that gave rise to a large number of related works, and were also connected to pedagogy. To identify these works, I have used the data collected in *HATA* (*Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes*), a chronological repertoire of the works written in al-Andalus between the second/eighth-ninth/fifteenth centuries, as well as works written outside al-Andalus that are known to have circulated or been transmitted in the Iberian Peninsula. This repertoire includes biographical references to the authors, as well as bibliographical references to the works that they wrote (indicating, where relevant, the extant manuscripts, editions, translations and studies) and the works that they transmitted. This database can be accessed online at <http://kohepocu.cchs.csic.es/>.⁸

Before moving on, there are still a few reflections that need to be made. A work can have a major intellectual impact without enjoying a particularly wide circulation as a material object. This was the case, for example, of Ibn Ḥazm’s legal works, both on casuistry (*al-Muḥallā*, of which some ten manuscripts have survived) and on *uṣūl* (*al-Iḥkām*, three manuscripts). Despite the fact that relatively few manuscripts have been preserved, these works by Ibn Ḥazm elicited numerous refutations, some of them written, and were cited relatively often. Through these refutations and references, successive generations of jurists learned of the main arguments in Ibn Ḥazm’s doctrine without necessarily having read his work firsthand. In this case, because this impact does not translate into a large number of manuscripts, Ibn Ḥazm’s legal works were not a “bestseller” in the past, even though their intellectual legacy was significant.

To continue with the case of Ibn Ḥazm, his legal works could eventually be found easily in public and private libraries following the introduction of the printing press in the Arab-Islamic world. This is a process studied by Ahmad El Shamsy, who has found that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Islamic scholarly tradition and its textual canon were reinvented through the printing press and through the influence of Egyptian *‘ulamā’*, such as the Shākir family.⁹ Ibn Ḥazm’s *al-Muḥallā* and *al-Iḥkām* were published by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir in Cairo in the

⁸ *HATA* includes the references found in Brockelmann and Sezgin’s *Geschichte*, as well as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, works that I will only occasionally refer to directly.

⁹ El Shamsy (2020).

late 1920s, providing both works with a wide readership in the modern world, to the point that they now form part of the private libraries of most Muslim scholars, both Sunnī and Shīʿī.

Ibn Ḥazm is also the author of a modern-day “bestseller”, namely his *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma*, commonly known in English as *The Ring of the Dove* after the title of A. J. Arberry’s 1951 translation. There are several print editions of this book in Arabic, as well as numerous translations into other languages. And yet it is a work that has only been preserved in a single Arabic manuscript, and was not widely read in the pre-modern context. In this case, its fame starting in the early twentieth century could mislead us into thinking that it was also a “bestseller” in the past.

2.3 THE “BESTSELLERS” OF AL-ĀNDALUS

The catalogues of manuscripts preserved at libraries around the world, both inside and outside the Islamic context, reveal that—for a variety of reasons—certain works have come down to us in great numbers. Thanks to the data collected in *HATA (Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andalusíes)*, we can now determine which works have been preserved in the greatest number of manuscripts.¹⁰ Here I will only mention those which surpass a certain number of copies. Moreover, we must bear in mind that these are only approximate figures for several reasons: the catalogues have not been exhaustively reviewed; there are still libraries that have not been catalogued and those that have can still turn up surprises; and, lastly, when there are specific studies on a given work, our awareness of its extant copies tends to increase dramatically. Thus, for works that have not been studied in depth, there is always the possibility that more manuscripts exist than those that are currently identified.

In this case, the works here considered are those preserved in numbers higher than 40 manuscripts. The works in question, listed here in chronological order by the author’s date of death, are:

1. *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* by Maslama b. Qāsim (295/908–353/964). Born in Cordoba, he traveled to the Middle East and returned to al-Andalus, where he died. There are 65 preserved manuscripts of this

¹⁰ *HATA* includes a “catalogue of catalogues”.

- alchemy treatise.¹¹ Unlike the rest of the works in this list, this is the only book that has been published only recently.¹²
2. *Sirāj al-mulūk* by al-Ṭurṭūshī (c. 451/1059–520/1126). Born in Tortosa, he moved to the Middle East in 476/1083, finally settling in Alexandria in 490/1097, where he would end his days without ever returning to al-Andalus. He composed this “mirror of princes” for a vizier of the Fatimid caliph. *HATA* records around 41 manuscripts, and indicates that it was also translated into Turkish and Persian.
 3. *Al-Shifā’ bi-ta’rīf ḥuqūq al-Mustafā* by Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149). Born in Ceuta, this Mālikī jurist never traveled to the East. His work deals with the merits and prerogatives of the Prophet Muḥammad. *HATA* records approximately 200 manuscripts. Dagmar Riedel has identified many more in her project on this work.¹³ There are modern translations into English and French.
 4. *Ḥirz al-amānī fī wajh al-tahānī* or *al-Qaṣīda al-shāṭibiyya* by al-Shāṭibī (538/1143–590/1194). Born in Játiva in 572/1175, he eventually settled in Cairo, where he taught at the Fāḍiliyya *madrasa*. This didactic work for teaching Qur’ānic readings consists of an explanation, in verse, of *al-Taysīr fī l-qirā’āt al-sab’* by Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī (371/981–444/1053).¹⁴ *HATA* records approximately 120 manuscripts. However, Zohra Azgal (École Pratique des Hautes Études) has located many more.¹⁵

¹¹ On this number of manuscripts (*HATA* shows just 17) see Callatāy and Moureau (2015). The authors of this article are currently working on an edition of the work.

¹² Madelung, Wilferd (ed.) (2017): *The Book of the Rank of the Sage, Rutbat al-Ḥakīm by Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurtubī*. Arabic Text with an Introduction (Corpus Alchemicum Arabicum; 4). Zurich: Living Human Heritage Publications)

¹³ The project *Making Books Talk: The Material Evidence of Manuscripts of the Kitāb al-Shifā’ by Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 1149) for the Reception of an Andalusian Biography of the Prophet between 1100 and 1900 (MASHQI)*, Marie-Curie H2020-MSCA-IF-2015, duration: 2017–2018.

¹⁴ *HATA* records approximately 70 manuscripts of this work. Although it should therefore have made the list, I ultimately chose to leave it out since it is also represented in al-Shāṭibī’s work, thus making room to reflect a broader array of topics.

¹⁵ According to her talk at the conference *The Maghrib in the Mashriq*, organized by M. Fierro and M. Penelas (AMOI Project), Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid, 20–21 December 2018. <http://cchs.csic.es/en/event/conference-maghrib-mashriq>. Accessed on 2 May 2019. See now Zohra Azgal, Andalusī Scholars on Qur’ānic Readings in the Islamic East: The Case of Abū al-Qāsim al-Shāṭibī (538–590 H/1143–1194 CE), in M. Fierro and M. Penelas (eds.), *The Maghrib in the Mashriq. Travel, Knowledge and Identity*, De Gruyter, forthcoming.

5. *Urjūzat al-wildān* or *al-Muqaddima al-qurtūbiyya*, attributed to Yahyà al-Qurṭubī. Although it is difficult to identify the text's author,¹⁶ I believe that it can be reliably dated to the sixth/twelfth century, as I will explain further along. It is a treatise in verse on the basic tenets of Islam. *HATA* records more than 40 manuscripts, but given the characteristics of this work (i.e. a didactic poem), a more refined search would likely yield many more.
6. *Kitāb al-jāmi' li-mufradāt al-adwiya wa-l-aghdlhiya* by Ibn al-Bayṭār (576/1180 or 583/1187–646/1248). Born in Malaga, he traveled to the Middle East in around 617/1220, living first in Cairo, in the service of the Ayyubid sultan, and later on in Damascus. There are approximately 80 manuscripts of this book on simples (of which it records some 1400).
7. *Al-jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273). Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Farḥ al-Anṣārī al-Khazraǧī al-Qurṭubī fled al-Andalus following the Christian conquest of Cordoba in 633/1236, eventually settling in Upper Egypt, where he lived until his death. It was there that he wrote the work which earned him a place in posterity, his exegesis of the Qur'ān, 50 manuscripts of which can be found in *HATA*. The encyclopaedic nature of al-Qurṭubī's *Tafsīr* makes it a highly useful reference work in a number of fields, including law. Its popularity continues into the present.
8. *Al-Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274), born in Jaén in 600/1203 or 601/1204, he settled in Damascus, where he lived until his death. The *Alfiyya* is a summary in approximately 1000 verses of a grammatical treatise by the same author, *al-Kāfiya al-shāfiya*, which is in turn 2757 verses long. It is said that he wrote it in imitation of *al-Durra al-alfiyya* by the Egypt-based Maghribi grammarian Ibn Mu'ṭī (564/1168-9-628/1231).¹⁷ There are some 120 preserved manuscripts of this work.
9. *Al-Ājurrūmiyya*, by the North African author Ibn Ājurrūm (672/1273–723/1323).¹⁸ It is a short grammatical treatise explaining the *i'rāb* system. Although *HATA* only includes some 30 manu-

¹⁶ I believe that the common identification of its author as Yahyà b. 'Umar b. Sa'dūn b. Tammām b. Muḥammad al-Azdī al-Qurṭubī (486/1093–567/1172) is mistaken, as I will explain subsequently.

¹⁷ Ibn Mu'ṭī completed his *al-Durra al-alfiyya fī 'ilm al-'arabiyya* in 595/1198–99 (Trouneau, "Ibn Mu'ṭī").

¹⁸ *HATA* includes non-Andalusi authors who spent time in al-Andalus (*ghurabā'*), which is why Ibn Ājurrūm and Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ have been included.

scripts, this work gave rise to approximately 60 commentaries and related works (e.g. versifications) by later authors, which attests to its widespread pedagogical use. It even gave rise to three Latin translations (Troupeau 1962; Aguiar 2019).

10. *Kashf al-asrār ‘an ‘ilm (ḥurūf) al-ghubār* by al-Qalaṣādī (815/1412?–891/1486). ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Qurashī al-Baṣī was born in al-Andalus, performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and studied in Egypt and North Africa. Afterwards he settled in Granada, and died in Bāja (Tunisia). He is the author of a number of works on a wide range of topics, including grammar, law, *ḥadīth*, and in particular arithmetic and algebra, to which his *Kashf al-asrār* belongs. It is in fact a simplified version of his *al-Tabṣira fī ‘ilm al-ḥisāb*, made easier to understand for use in education. Some 50 manuscripts of *Kashf al-asrār* have been preserved.

Bearing in mind that these figures are only approximate, the ranking of the works selected here, from most manuscripts to least, is as follows:

1. *Al-Shifā’* by Qāḍī ‘Iyād (d. 544/1149)
2. *Ḥirz al-amānī fī wajh al-tahānī* or *al-Qaṣīda al-shāṭibiyya* by al-Shāṭibī (538/1143–590/1194)
3. *Al-Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274)
4. *Kitāb al-jāmi li-mufradāt al-adwiya wa-l-aghdlhiya* by Ibn al-Bayṭar (576/1180 or 583/1187–646/1248)
5. *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* by Maslama b. Qāsim (295/908–353/964)
6. *Al-jāmi li-ahkām al-Qur’ān* by al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273)
7. *Kashf al-asrār an ilm (ḥurūf) al-ghubār* by al-Qalaṣādī (815/1412?–891/1486)
8. *Sirāj al-mulūk* by al-Ṭurṭūshī (ca. 451/1059–520/1126)
9. *Urjūzat al-wildān* or *al-Muqaddima al-qurṭubiyya*
10. *Al-Ājurrūmiyya* by Ibn Ājurrūm (672/1273–723/1323)

Among the characteristics of these works, we find the following:

- Five are didactic texts (2, 3, 7, 9, 10), and of these five, three are didactic poems (2, 3, 9) dealing with Qur’ānic readings, grammar, mathematics and the basic beliefs of Islam.
- Three have an encyclopaedic character (1, 4, 6), covering the merits and prerogatives of the Prophet, medical treatments and diet, and the Qur’ān, respectively. In other words, two of them are related to the foundations of Islam (its sacred book and its prophet,

who is also the seal of prophecy), which constitute the basic core of Muslims' religious life, and one of the titles indicates the book's healing power ("Healing through the declaration of the exclusive rights of the Chosen One").¹⁹ The other work has to do with elements or materials that in and of themselves have a therapeutic effect, or which are used as an ingredient in medicines.

- Three works cover non-religious sciences (alchemy, medicine, mathematics), including one (*Rutbat al-ḥakīm*) whose circulation, both past and present, has always been "marginal", insofar as it seems to have left hardly any trace other than these manuscript copies themselves. Some libraries today continue to regulate access to *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*, considering its content to be "dangerous" from a religious perspective. While some situate al-Ṭurūṣhī's *Sirāj al-mulūk* squarely within the context of Islam, it in fact covers a number of topics that are not strictly religious, given its aim of instructing the "prince" in universal political values.
- Two are on grammar (3, 10).
- Lastly, six of the ten works were written between the sixth/twelfth-seventh/thirteenth centuries, from the end of the Almoravid period through the Almohad period: *al-Shifā'* by Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149), *Urjūzat al-wildān*, *Ḥirz al-amānī fī wajh al-tahānī* by al-Shāḥibī (538/1143–590/1194), *Kitāb al-jāmi' li-mufradāt al-adwiya wa-l-aghdlhiya* by Ibn al-Bayṭār (576/1180 or 583/1187–646/1248), *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), and *al-Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274). Therefore, the majority of the "bestsellers" of al-Andalus²⁰ were written by authors either living or brought up under the Berber empires. These six works will be the subject of the following pages.

¹⁹ Adapted from the Spanish translation by Serrano Ruano (2009).

²⁰ I hope to be able to work in the near future on the bestsellers of the Islamic West as a whole, which will necessarily include, probably as number one, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* by al-Jazūlī (d. 869/1465), a text that circulated most of all in Sufi networks.

2.4 THE “BESTSELLERS” OF THE SIXTH/ TWELFTH-SEVENTH/THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s work opens this list of the six “bestsellers” written under the Berber empires. As I have already discussed elsewhere the reasons that led him to write the *Shifā’*, I will merely summarize them here (Fierro 2011; Albarrán 2015). Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ lived under the Almoravids, whom he served as a judge, remaining loyal to them even after the Almohad conquest of Ceuta. His book, which praises the merits and prerogatives of the Prophet Muḥammad, seems to have had as one of its aims—among others—to polemicize against those who believe that other human beings can compare with the Prophet, such as the friends of God (*awliyā*) and the “rightly guided” or Mahdīs. The Almohads arose precisely as followers of Ibn Tūmart, whom they considered a Mahdī and infallible *imām*, a perfect guide whose perfection enabled him to serve as a guide for others. Ibn Tūmart was not only described as *al-Mahdī*, but also as heir to the “station” of prophecy and infallibility (*wārith maqām al-nubuwwa wa-l-‘isma*).²¹ Ibn Tūmart’s profession of faith—which also circulated in Berber, although the text that has been preserved is in Arabic—had to be memorized by the inhabitants of the territory governed by the Almohads, as a way to demonstrate their conversion from the false Islam of the Almoravids (accused of anthropomorphism and therefore infidelity) to the true Islam brought by the Mahdī. The Almohads were the true believers (*al-mu’minūn*), the representatives of the true Islamic doctrine of oneness or *tawḥīd* (hence their name, *al-muwahhidūn*). Differences of opinion (*ikhtilāf*) in matters of religion were to be rejected, as there could only be one Truth, knowledge of which was guaranteed by the Mahdī. The Mālikī school was criticized for its dependence on works of casuistry (*furū’*) that strayed from the content of the two major sources of Islam, the Qur’ān and the Traditions of the Prophet. Mālikī jurists were viewed with suspicion, and the first Almohad caliphs sought to replace them with new politico-religious elites, the *ṭalaba*, destined to promulgate the doctrine of the new regime. They were therefore handpicked by the Almohad authorities, and were expected to work in their service, answering to them

²¹ For this reference, see Fierro (2016, note 68). The chronicler Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalāt (d. after 594/1197) describes Ibn Tūmart as “he who rose up at God’s command in order to carry out the duty” (*al-nāhiḍ bi-amr Allāh ta’ālā qiyām^{am} bi-l-wājib*) and as “he who cured the religion of its sickness and suffering” (*shāfi l-dīn min waṣābihi wa-alamihī*).

directly (Fricaud 1997). The changes introduced by the Almohads were presented not as an innovation, but as a return to the original Muslim community. However, they were experienced as a true revolution for those who lived through them, as they represented a break with what had been considered proper and acceptable till that time, as well as creating a discontinuity with the past down to the level of sight and sound.²² One of the ways that Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ tackled the Almohads' challenge to the Mālikī *fuqahā*' was through his book *al-Shifā*'. This anti-Mahdist book emphasizes the unrepeatable nature of the Prophet, and insists that after his death Muslims must be guided by the '*ulamā*', and specifically by the Mālikī '*ulamā*', scholars who were neither recruited by rulers nor answered directly to them. Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ also composed a biographical dictionary of the Mālikī school, specifically to demonstrate that the school's *fuqahā*' were the ones best qualified—as interpreters of religious law and as guides of the Muslims—to know what to do in this life and how to secure a place in the next.

While the context we have just described explains what drove Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ to write the *Shifā*', it does not explain its great success. Pending the publication of Dagmar Riedel's findings in her study on the manuscript tradition of the *Shifā*',²³ I would venture that one possible reason was the work's content. Although Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) criticized it for exaggerating the figure of Muḥammad, this exaggeration elevated Muḥammad far above the rest of humanity, right at a time when the veneration of the Prophet was growing. There was thus a convergence between the work's content and Muslims' new religious needs.²⁴

Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ was not the only Mālikī to react against the Almohad challenge during its most revolutionary period under the first caliph, 'Abd al-Mu'min (r. 527/1133–563/1168). We will see how the Almohads developed an educational program aimed at "Almohadizing" the territories of the Empire established by 'Abd al-Mu'min, forcing their opponents to push back against these efforts.²⁵ Whereas the Almohads opposed the system of legal schools, and in particular the Mālikī school, and sought to

²² Along these lines, see Fierro (2012).

²³ See note 10 above.

²⁴ On this process, see Rubin (1995).

²⁵ Over time, the Almohads gradually lowered their expectations of change. The Mālikīs, on the other hand, ultimately came to an understanding with the Almohads, even though under the first three caliphs they lost most of the power and authority they had enjoyed under the Almoravids.

impose one sole profession of faith, the Mālikīs and Ash‘arīs rejected a doctrine and set of practices that they considered heretical, and did all that was in their hands to defend themselves against the Almohads’ attacks (A‘rāb 1985; Thiele 2018). The author of *Urjūzat al-wildān* should very probably be situated within the same context.

Urjūzat al-wildān is a poem in *rajaz* verse that briefly explains the five pillars of Islam (the *shahāda*, prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage) from a Mālikī perspective. It belongs to the *qawā‘id al-islām* genre, aimed at teaching the basic tenets of Islam, in this case with a Mālikī slant. Prose works in this genre had already been written in al-Andalus from early on.²⁶ This is the case of the *Mukhtaṣar* by al-Ṭulayṭulī (fourth/tenth century), which Abū Ḥātim al-Ḍarīr (d. before 658/1260) would later render in verse. The genre appears to have flourished especially after the mid-fifth/eleventh century, with Mālikī authors such as Abū l-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) and Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. 520/1126), whose *al-Muqaddima fī l-farā‘id* was later versified by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Raqa‘ī (alive in 853/1449). The most famous text is that of Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, *Kitāb al-i‘lām bi-ḥudūd qawā‘id al-islām*, which remains popular today. There is even a modern Spanish translation, intended to provide converts to Islam with a simple guide to the fundamental obligations of all Muslims. In the past, the work of Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ was widely read, especially in the Maghrib, and was the subject of numerous commentaries, some of them anonymous, others written by well-known ‘ulamā’ such as Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Qabbāb al-Fāsī (d. 778/1376 or 779/1377) and al-Qalaṣādī (d. 891/1486). Similar works were written in later periods.²⁷ *Urjūzat al-wildān* was not the first work in verse written for the purpose of teaching the basic principles of the Islamic faith. In addition to the *Qaṣīda fī l-adab wa-l-sunna* by al-Jazīrī (d. 394/1004), the famous expert in Qur’ān reading Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī (d. 444/1052) wrote an *Urjūza fī uṣūl al-sunna* and transmitted a work related to the genre, *al-Arba‘a al-ahādīth allatī bunīya l-islām ‘alayhā*. We can therefore conclude that, starting in the fifth/eleventh century, in al-Andalus there was a growing need to better understand what it meant to be a Muslim, in terms of both doctrine and religious practice. This need led to the production of works that could be easily memorized and made

²⁶The references to the works listed below can be found in *HATA*.

²⁷Among them are those of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Abī l-Sadād al-Mālaqī (d. 705/1305), *Uṣūl al-khamsa allatī bunīya ‘alay-hā l-islām* and Abū Ḥayyān al-Garnāḥī (d. 743/1342 or 745/1344), *Kitāb al-i‘lām bi-arkān al-islām*.

Muslims' five basic obligations more readily understandable. This development may also be related to the fact that the fifth/eleventh century was when Muslims came to make up the majority of the population of al-Andalus; in other words, it was the moment when the number of "old" Muslims surpassed that of "new" Muslims. A connection can be drawn between this demographic shift and changes of a religious and doctrinal nature, as suggested decades ago by Richard W. Bulliet (Bulliet 1979), as well as the growing concern with tying belief to knowledge and understanding (Serrano 2002).

As for the *Urjūzat al-wildān* or *Children's poem in rajaz verse*, the editors and translators of this didactic poem have pointed out that it is a difficult text, intended to be taught by a teacher who would have to explain in detail the meaning of each word and verse (Ebied and Young 1974). The poem is also known as *al-Manzūma al-qurtubiyya* or *al-Muqaddima al-qurtubiyya*, a title indicating that the work is intended for beginners (the *wildān* or children of the original title), acting as an "introduction" that will lead them to a deeper and broader understanding as they go on to study other types of works. *Urjūzat al-wildān* has proved very successful down through the centuries, especially in the Islamic West. Indeed, the manuscripts are to be found mostly in libraries in Morocco, as well as in Mauritania and sub-Saharan African countries such as Nigeria. Another sign of *Urjūzat al-wildān*'s popularity is the number of commentaries on it. Of these, the most important were those of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Khalīl al-Tatā'ī (d. 942/1535) and the famed 'ālim and Sufi Zarrūq (d. 899/1493), whose *Sharḥ al-Muqaddima al-qurtubiyya* has been preserved in 25 manuscripts.

What is unclear is who actually wrote the *Urjūzat al-wildān*. Y. Ebied and M. J. L. Young, who prepared and edited the text's English translation, follow the identification proposed in Brockelmann's *Geschichte*, which attributes it to Sābiq al-Dīn Abū Bakr Yahyā b. 'Umar b. Sa'dūn b. Tammām b. Muḥammad al-Azdī al-Qurṭubī (486/1093–567/1172), a famous grammarian and traditionist born in Cordoba, who traveled to the East in 506/1112–511/1117 and settled in Mosul, where he lived until his death. There are a number of problems with this identification.²⁸ None of Ibn Sa'dūn's biographers attributed this text to him. If he had written it, we would expect to find manuscripts of the work in the countries where he went on to live, in particular bearing in mind that he probably did not

²⁸ As I have explained in Fierro (2007).

write it before leaving al-Andalus, as he was only 19–24 years old at the time. Moreover, the name that appears in the manuscripts explicitly affirms that the ‘*ālim* who wrote the *Urjūza* was “al-Qurṭubī al-dār”, that is that he had settled in Cordoba but was not from there. Based on the information that appears in the manuscripts, all we know for certain about the author of *Urjūzat al-wildān* is that he was called Abū Zakariyyā’ and/or Abū Bakr Yaḥyà al-Qurṭubī al-dār, lived in Cordoba, and was active after the mid-sixth/twelfth century. This is because the latest authorities cited in the text are the Mālikī jurists Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī al-Ishbīlī (d. 543/1148) and Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149). While this provides us with a *terminus post quem*, we still lack a *terminus ante quem*.²⁹ It is striking that the author’s name given in the manuscripts does not include a *nasab*. He may have been a new convert to Islam who moved to Cordoba and became interested in the five pillars precisely because of his recent conversion. In this case, he would likely have belonged to the *dhimmī* community, as unless he was a native speaker of Arabic it would have been nearly impossible to write a didactic poem in this language. Another possibility to consider is that the author may have wanted to keep his identity a secret, and therefore chose to use an abbreviated version of his name. If so, this would indicate that the author of the *Urjūzat al-wildān* was writing in a hostile environment. Based on this, I would suggest that *Urjūzat al-wildān* could have been written in the early years of the Almohad revolution by a Mālikī author who, concerned that the Almohad educational program would succeed, decided to set down a didactic work that would help educate young people and ensure the survival of the Mālikī school. Compared to the *Shifā’*, whose emphasis on the Prophet has given to Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s work a more universal appeal throughout the Islamic world, *Urjūzat al-wildān*’s sphere of influence was restricted to the predominantly Mālikī territories.

As with the *Urjūzat al-wildān*, the works of al-Shāṭibī and Ibn Mālik are didactic poems, and reflect one of the most salient trends of the Almohad period: an enthusiasm for education.³⁰ Both were “bestsellers” not only of the pre-modern period, but of the modern period as well, and continue to be used throughout the Islamic world today.³¹

²⁹ Locating the oldest extant manuscript could help resolve this issue.

³⁰ Dib (2011). On the Almoravid period, see Benaboud and al-Qadiri (1991). I am presently working on a study on education in Almohad times.

³¹ On West Africa, see <http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/arbms/historical.html>

In al-Andalus, the sixth/twelfth century was characterized by a keen interest in educational reform, with particular attention to the study of Arabic grammar. Prior to the triumph of the Almohad movement, the scholar from Seville Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148)—a Mālikī reformer influenced by Ibn Ḥazm and al-Ghazālī—had already proposed changing the curriculum of study that had prevailed until that time (Cano Ávila, García Sanjuán and Tawfiq 2009). Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī disagreed with the common practice of having children start off by studying the Qurʾān, memorizing a text they could hardly understand, especially in cases where they were not even Arabic speakers.³² Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī was convinced that Arabic grammar should be studied right from the start of the education process, later giving way to the study of the Qurʾān so that students could understand the sacred text.

Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī's proposal was a good match for the revolutionary aims of the Almohads, and, more generally, for the Berber rulers' need to Arabize and Islamicize the populations of their territories across the Maghrib. It was also in line with the aforementioned concern with ensuring that Arabic-speaking Muslims could better understand their belief system, and with opening up the realm of knowledge to all strata of society. Since Islam lacks a hierarchical structure or priestly class like that of the Catholic Church, the world of religious knowledge is, in principle, open to everyone, as is reflected in the education system. The emphasis on personal contact and relationships as opposed to institutional ones, and the preference for orality—without excluding the written word—helped maintain a high level of openness in an education system characterized by its informality. Of course this is not to say that hierarchies did not exist, or that there were not barriers restricting access to knowledge or impeding fully open participation in the education system, as studied by Jonathan Berkey. Despite its open and informal nature, the system did indeed place obstacles in the way of those who wished to join it, for example by allowing the *ʿulamāʾ* to privilege their own descendants, passing positions of scholarship on from father to son. All of this contributed to making the *ʿulamāʾ* an elite group that was difficult to break into.³³ Because one of the Almohads' initial objectives was to replace the old elites with new and

³² Remember that Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī ended his days under both the Almoravids (whom he served as *qāḍī*), and the Almohads. The Almoravids were Ṣanhāja Berbers and the original Almohads Maṣmūda Berbers who were scarcely Arabized.

³³ Berkey (1992, p. 216).

loyal ones, they had to come up with mechanisms to quickly train the young supporters they had recruited from across their empire. Although similar stories can be found in prior periods, it is in the Almohad period where we find the most examples of young people without family connections who nevertheless managed to gain access to the world of scholarship.

The Almohads wanted to create new elites, as well as change certain religious beliefs and practices. In the first period after seizing and consolidating power, such changes were imposed by force. Next, as it became necessary to shift from conversion to conviction, the Almohads took to new methods, such as public debates, discussion sessions (*majālis*), sermons, and public readings of the caliph’s letters at mosques. A key goal was to train new religious elites who would be loyal to the caliphs. Another was to consolidate knowledge of Arabic, since many recruits did not speak the language. Although Berber enjoyed an important position in the empire, over time—and especially following the incorporation of Arab tribes into the caliph’s army—the importance of Arabic would only grow. For instance, the ethnically Berber grammarian al-Jazūlī (540/1145–607/1211) wrote *al-Muqaddima*, a useful introduction to Arabic grammar that was later versified by the poet Abū ‘Amr b. Giyāth al-Sharīṣī (536/1141–619/1223 or 620/1223).³⁴ Likewise, the grammarian Ibn Maḍā’ al-Lakhmī al-Qurṭubī al-Jayyānī (513/1120–592/1196) wrote a book that emphasized the need for educators to make the learning process easier by avoiding complicated grammatical explanations (al-Sarṭāwī 1988; Versteegh 2012). It is no coincidence that Ibn Maḍā’ was appointed by the first Almohad caliph to oversee his own children’s education. During the Almohad period, grammar studies became particularly important, and were considered indispensable for jurists and judges, based on the belief that a proper understanding of grammar would eliminate legal discrepancies (*ikhtilāf*).

Alongside the importance placed on grammar studies, the Almohads also promoted the composition of didactic works in almost every field and they were often written in verse. As in other areas, the Almohads resemble the Fatimids in this respect (Fierro 2010). The great architect of Fatimid legal doctrine, Qāḍī al-Nu’mān, wrote a *qaṣīda* on *fiqh*, *al-Urjūza al-muntakhaba*, and another in defense of Fatimid legitimacy. Both of these

³⁴ See Bencheneb’s biography of al-Jazūlī: having lived in poverty under the Almoravids, the Almohad caliph took him under his wing and tasked him with delivering the Friday sermon at the Friday Mosque of Marrakech. See also Borrego Soto (2011, p. 35).

poems were summaries of other works he had written previously, which he set in verse in order to aid in their memorization and dissemination. He also composed his *Kitāb al-dīnār*, an educational booklet with quotes from the Ismaʿīlī imams, whose low price (one dīnār) was intended to make it accessible to the broadest readership possible (Hamdani 2006, p. 50–52, 178, note 55; Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān 1978, p. 359–60). Similarly, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), the Zāhiri thinker whose doctrines were in some ways similar to those of the Almohads, frequently produced concise compendiums that were summarized in terms of both form and content. They were intended for easy understanding and memorization, so that readers could quickly become familiar with his doctrines. He also wrote the didactic poem *Qaṣīda fī uṣūl al-fiqh al-zāhiriyya*, in which he lists the basic elements of Zāhiri law, accompanied by short explanations (Puerta Vilchez and Ramón Guerrero 2004).

The Almohads did not invent the didactic poem, which can be found across the Islamic world from a relatively early date. These poems appear to have flourished alongside the establishment of the *madrasas*, educational institutions that began to proliferate beginning in the sixth/twelfth century, and especially in the seventh/thirteenth century (Geert Jan van Gelder 1995). Poetry aided memorization, and also had to do with the fact that in the societies of this period reading was a fundamentally spoken and heard activity: readers brought the written word to life by speaking it out loud. Music, poetry and recitation, therefore, had an important role in education. The versification of treatises on a variety of topics (theology, law, medicine, grammar, etc.), especially in *rajaz* verse, was aimed precisely at memorization (Ullman 1966). In the words of van Gelder:

The subject matter could conveniently be compressed, often in highly condensed form, in the space of a relatively short text. This means that, rather paradoxically, many such poems are far from being didactic in the modern sense of the word, if by ‘didactic’ we mean something that introduces a pupil gradually to a certain field of knowledge, teaching him not merely facts or how to apply certain rules automatically, but also making him understand the facts and how they hang together. It is obvious that many an *urjūza* is not so much an introduction to be presented to beginners as an *aide-mémoire*, a handy compendium for those who have already mastered all or most of the subject. In spite of this, it seems that until quite recent times young students were confronted with precisely such poems, to be learned by rote without much, or any, understanding at first. The surprising thing is that this seemed to have worked in many cases. Many *urjūzas* are so obscure,

in fact, that they invite commentators; consequently, there is an extensive body of commentaries and supercommentaries surrounding many famous didactic poems. (Van Gelder 1995, p. 108)

This is the case, as we have seen, of the *Shāṭibiyya* and the *Alfiyya*. Many of these didactic poems formed part of the first tier of the learning process, consisting of *mahfūzāt* (memorized texts) or *mukhtaṣarāt*—that is, abbreviated texts intended to be memorized and learned much like the Qur’ān, prior to beginning what we might call “advanced studies”. The important thing about this first phase was not so much what students memorized, but rather laying the groundwork for them to go on and study with teachers who would focus on textual commentary and problems of interpretation (Messick 1992).

A great many didactic poems were written in the Almohad period. The preacher Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ishbīlī rendered the Almohad creeds in Arabic verse (Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt 1964, p. 229/60). Ibn Ṭufayl (494/1100 or 506/1110–581/1185) wrote his *Urjūza fī l-tibb*, whose precedents are in turn to be found in the work of Ibn Sīna.³⁵ Ibn al-Ghāzī (d. 591/1194), a judge in Ceuta, composed a series of *manẓūmāt ‘ilmiyya* dealing with a number of legal issues (Velázquez Basanta 2013). Averroes (520/1126–595/1198) wrote an *Urjūza ḥawla qawā’id al-islām al-khamsa* (Gómez Nogales 1978, p. 387). Ibn Yāsmīn (d. 601/1204) wrote an *Urjūza fī l-jabr wa-l-muqābala* on algebra, which was widely read and gave rise to a number of commentaries (Brentjes 2018, p. 83, 173, 239, 274).

Although al-Shāṭibī and Ibn Mālīk lived most of their lives outside of the areas under Almohad control, their talent for didactic poetry should be understood in connection with the context in which they were born and raised. Once in the East,³⁶ the education they had received back home was to help them fit in with the *madrassa*-based education system, which demanded the same sorts of educational tools fostered under the Almohads.

³⁵ Muhammad and al-Ḥājj 1986. This work is currently being studied by Regula Foster.

³⁶ They emigrated either out of opposition to the Almohad cause or due to the advance of the Christian armies, or perhaps due to some other cause. In the case of Ibn Mālīk (d. 672/1274), he seems to have emigrated due to the Christian conquests, whereas al-Shāṭibī (538/1143–590/1194), who lived for the first part of his life on the Eastern coast of al-Andalus under Ibn Mardānīsh, left al-Andalus when the area fell under Almohad control. It appears that he began work on the *Shāṭibiyya* while still living in al-Andalus.

Didactic poetry did not stop being written with the fall of the Almohads, since the *madrasas* founded by the post-Almohad dynasties, such as the Merinids, ensured their continued relevance. Ibn Farah al-Ishbīlī (625/1228–699/1299) wrote a *Manzūma fī l-ḥadīth*, while Ibn al-Murāḥḥal (d. 699/1300) and members of the Banū l-Munāṣif family rendered a variety of works into verse.

Educational needs also led authors to produce summarized version of longer texts. This is the case of Ibn al-Qurṭubī al-Mālaqī (556/1161–611/1214), who composed an exhaustive work on prosody (Rodríguez Figueroa 2006). Al-Washqī (ca. 560/1164–ca. 620/1223) is said to have been a specialist in summarizing prior works (Documentación 2012). These same needs gave rise to adaptations in order to satisfy the requirements of different readerships. The grammarian and lexicographer Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Mu’min b. Mūsà al-Qaysī, known as al-Sharīsī (557/1161 or 577/1181–619/1223), dedicated his *Sharḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* to the Almohad caliph al-Manṣūr, preparing three versions: a longer one discussing the literary meanings; a mid-length one containing a lexicography-based selection of the longer version; and a short one that merely discussed linguistic aspects. He wrote the mid-length version because the people of Sijilmāsa, whose native language was Berber, asked him for an easy-to-understand commentary (Borrego Soto 2011, p. 46). The structure is reminiscent of Averroes’ commentaries to Aristotle, which also involved three different types (Puig 2002, p. 16, 18). Umberto Bongianino has recently shown how the formal appearance of manuscripts changed considerably during the sixth/twelfth century. For instance, technical books on medicine, the natural sciences, grammar and lexicography began to include diagrams and tables. Moreover, colours began to be used extensively for chapter and entry headings, as well as for various other parts of the text, giving rise to a rich colour palette that is not to be found in the Islamic East (Bongianino 2017). All of this appears to have been done for educational purposes.

In the Almohad period one also finds a great interest in encyclopaedic works, the field to which the remaining two “bestsellers” belong: *Kitāb al-jāmi’ li-mufradāt al-adwīya wa-l-aghḍīya* by Ibn al-Bayṭār and *al-Jāmi’ li-ahkām al-Qur’ān* by al-Qurṭubī (Fierro 2009). In the case of these two authors, as with al-Shāṭibī and Ibn Mālik, the fact that they immigrated to the Middle East clearly helped their works reach the entire Islamic world, not to belittle their skill as authors or the intrinsic value of their works. Still, it is worth asking whether they would have enjoyed the

same degree of success had their authors never left al-Andalus. The case of Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s book on the Prophet makes clear that it was at least possible: Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ never left the Islamic West and yet, of the works examined here, his reached the broadest readership and had the greatest impact by far. In the case of *Urjūzat al-wildān*, its subject matter would have made it a less likely candidate for such great success. Since it offers a Mālikī perspective on the fundamental obligations of Muslims, its impact would have been limited outside the context of the author’s legal school.

2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Of the rich literary output produced in al-Andalus, ten works have been identified here for the first time as having enjoyed especially widespread circulation, based on the number of extant manuscripts (more than 40, with some reaching much higher figures). Six of these works were written during the sixth/twelfth–seventh/thirteenth centuries, that is, during the period when al-Andalus was part of the Almoravid and Almohad empires. What characterizes three of them—*Urjūzat al-wildān*, *Ḥirz al-amānī* by al-Shāḥibī (538/1143–590/1194) and *al-Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274)—is their didactic character, as versified treatises meant to help students learn. The other three share a common encyclopaedic character: *al-Shifā* by Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149) on the prerogatives and special characteristics of the Prophet, *Kitāb al-jāmi’ li-mufradāt al-adwiya wa-l-aghdbhiya* by Ibn al-Bayṭār (576/1180 or 583/1187–646/1248) on medicinal simples, and *al-Jāmi’ li-ahkām al-Qur’ān* by al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) on Qur’ānic exegesis. As we have seen, it was these characteristics (didacticism and encyclopaedism) that made them attractive to audiences outside al-Andalus. In some cases it was precisely the need to address non-local audiences that determined their character, especially when the author had emigrated from al-Andalus to the *Mashriq* and needed to secure his livelihood. The skill of these Andalusi authors at successfully writing didactic and encyclopaedic works can largely be traced back to the educational developments that took place during the Almohad caliphate, which intensified the demand for this type of compositions. To understand the impact that Andalusi literary production had on the rest of the Islamic world, we must start by contextualizing it in order to uncover the religious, social and political needs that lie behind it.

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