

6. ACCOUNTS OF THE MUSLIM CONQUEST (711)

A. *Chronicle of 754*

Translated from Latin by Kenneth B. Wolf

The anonymous Latin Chronicle of 754 was written by a Christian living in al-Andalus during the second generation after the conquest of 711. It was designed as an installment in the ongoing "universal chronicle" begun by Eusebius and Jerome in the fourth century and continued by John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville. Because the extant Arab histories postdate the Muslim conquest of Spain by hundreds of years, the Chronicle of 754 is the single most important source of information on the "settling in" period of Muslim rule—from the invasion to the eve of the establishment of the Umayyad emirate (756). The following selection describes the conquest itself. It is important to realize that, despite its rhetorical expressions of horror and grief, the chronicle as a whole treats the Muslim governors as legitimate rulers, evaluating them in terms of their ability to promote peace and order on the peninsula rather than dismissing them altogether as non-Christians. The dates in the translation reflect the usage in the original and are not always accurate. (KBW)

al-Andalus

In Justinian's time,¹ in the aforesaid year, the first year of his rule and the eighty-ninth of the Arabs, Walīd held the kingship among the Arabs.² In Spain, Witiza continued to rule for his fifteenth year.

In Justinian's time, in the era 747 (709), in his fourth year [*sic*] as emperor and the ninety-first of the Arabs, Walīd received the scepter of the kingdom of the Saracens, as his father had arranged, and fought various peoples for four years. He was victorious and, endowed with great honors, exercised his rule for nine years. He was a man of great prudence in deploying his armies to the extent that, though lacking in divine favor, he crushed the forces of almost all neighboring peoples, made Romania³ especially weak with constant raiding, nearly brought the islands to their destruction, raided and subdued the territory of India, brought cities to utter destitution, besieged fortresses, and, from the twisted paths of Libya, subjugated all of Mauretania.⁴ In the western regions, Walīd, through a general of his army by the name of Mūsā,⁵

English text from *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, edited and translated by Kenneth B. Wolf (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1990), pp. 130–35. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

1. Justinian II, Byzantine emperor (r. 705–711).

2. Walīd I, Umayyad caliph in Damascus (r. 705–715).

3. Asia Minor.

4. Muslim armies had crossed North Africa to Morocco by 705.

5. Mūsā ibn Nusair was appointed governor of Ifrīqiya (roughly modern Tunisia) in 707

1 explain

attacked and conquered the kingdom of the Goths—which had been established with ancient solidity almost 350 years ago from its foundation in the era 400 (362) and which had been extended peacefully throughout Spain from the time of Leovigild for almost 140 years up to the era 750 (712)—and having seized the kingdom, he made it pay tribute.

Roderic
the
rebel

In Justinian's time, in the era 749 (711), in his fourth year as emperor and the ninety-second of the Arabs, with Walīd retaining the scepter of the kingdom for the fifth year, Roderic rebelliously seized the kingdom at the instigation of the senate.⁶ He ruled for only one year. Mustering his forces, he directed armies against the Arabs and the Moors sent by Mūsā, that is against Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād⁷ and the others, who had long been raiding the province consigned to them and simultaneously devastating many cities. In the fifth year of Justinian's rule, the ninety-third of the Arabs, and the sixth of Walīd, in the era 750 (712), Roderic headed for the Transductine mountains⁸ to fight them and in that battle the entire army of the Goths, which had come with him fraudulently and in rivalry out of ambition for the kingship, fled and he was killed. Thus Roderic wretchedly lost not only his rule but his homeland, his rivals also being killed, as Walīd was completing his sixth year of rule. . . .

In Justinian's time, in the era 749 (711),⁹ in his fourth year as emperor, the ninety-second of the Arabs, and the fifth of Walīd, while Spain was being devastated by the aforesaid forces and was greatly afflicted not only by the enemy but also by domestic fury, Mūsā himself, approaching this wretched land across the straits of Cádiz and pressing on to the pillars of Hercules—which reveal the entrance to the port like an index to a book or like keys in his hand revealing and unlocking the passage to Spain—entered the long plundered and godlessly invaded Spain to destroy it.¹⁰ After forcing his way to Toledo, the royal city, he imposed on the adjacent regions an evil and fraudulent peace. He decapitated on a scaffold those noble lords who had remained, arresting them in their flight from Toledo with the help of Oppa, King Egica's son. With Oppa's support, he killed them all with the sword. Thus he devastated not only Hispania Ulterior, but Hispania Citerior¹¹ up to and beyond

6. Roderic (r. 710–711). The term "senate" probably refers to the palace officials.

7. Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād, governor of Tangiers, had been appointed by Mūsā ibn Nuṣair to lead a force to Spain in 711.

8. Location unknown, but perhaps in the region of Medina Sidonia.

9. The author picks up again in 711 after a paragraph on the bishop Sindered, who fled from his post in Toledo in the face of the Arab conquest.

10. Mūsā entered Spain in 712 and, after taking Seville and Mérida, joined up with Ṭāriq in Toledo in 713.

11. Hispania Ulterior and Hispania Citerior refer to the Roman division of western and

the ancient and once flourishing city of Zaragoza, now, by the judgment of God, openly exposed to the sword, famine, and captivity. He ruined beautiful cities, burning them with fire; condemned lords and powerful men to the cross; and butchered youths and infants with the sword. While he terrorized everyone in this way, some of the cities that remained sued for peace under duress and, after persuading and mocking them with a certain craftiness, the Saracens granted their requests without delay. When the citizens subsequently rejected what they had accepted out of fear and terror, they tried to flee to the mountains where they risked hunger and various forms of death. The Saracens set up their savage kingdom in Spain, specifically in Córdoba, formerly a patrician see and always the most opulent in comparison to the rest of the cities, giving its first fruits to the kingdom of the Visigoths. . . .

In the era 750 (712), in Justinian's sixth year as emperor and the ninety-fourth of the Arabs, Mūsā, after fifteen months had elapsed, was summoned by order of the princes and, leaving his son 'Abd al-'Azīz in his place, he returned to his homeland and presented himself to the king Walīd in the last year of his reign. Mūsā brought with him from Spain some noblemen who had escaped the sword; gold and silver, assayed with zeal by the bankers; a large quantity of valuable ornaments, precious stones, and pearls; ointments to kindle women's desire; and many other things from the length and breadth of Spain that would be tedious to record. When he arrived, by God's will he found Walīd angry.¹² Mūsā was ignominiously removed from the prince's presence and paraded with a rope around his neck. . . .¹³

At the same time, in the era 753 (715), in Justinian's ninth year as emperor and the ninety-seventh of the Arabs, 'Abd al-'Azīz pacified all of Spain for three years under the yoke of tribute.¹⁴ After he had taken all the riches and positions of honor in Seville, as well as the queen of Spain, whom he joined in marriage, and the daughters of kings and princes, whom he treated as concubines and then rashly repudiated, he was eventually killed on the advice of 'Ayyūb by a revolt of his own men while he was in prayer. After 'Ayyūb had held Spain for a full month, Al-Ḥurr succeeded to the throne of Hesperia by order of the prince,¹⁵ who was informed about the death of 'Abd al-'Azīz in

eastern Spain. The division did not run exactly north-south and thus much of the southern peninsula was in Hispania Ulterior.

12. Actually, Walīd was ill and died shortly after the return of Mūsā and Tāriq (who left Spain in 714), leaving his successor, Sulaymān, to deal with the conquerors of Spain.

13. To humiliate him publicly.

14. 'Abd al-'Azīz, the son of Mūsā, ruled 714–716. His capital was in Seville; the Andalusī capital moved to Córdoba a few years later.

15. 'Ayyūb ibn Ḥabīb al-Lakhmī ruled briefly in 716, then was succeeded by al-Ḥurr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Thaqafī (r. 716–718) by order of the Muslim governor of Ifrīqiya.

this way: that on the advice of queen Egilona, wife of the late king Roderic, whom he had joined to himself, he tried to throw off the Arab yoke from his neck and retain the conquered kingdom of Iberia for himself.

B. Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Narrative of the Conquest of al-Andalus*

Translated from Arabic by David A. Cohen

The earliest surviving accounts of the Islamic conquest of Spain in Arabic date from the mid- to late ninth century. The best known of these is a collection of stories and legends contained in the Futūh Miṣr [Conquest of Egypt] of Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam (d. 871), a member of a prominent Arab family of religious and legal scholars from Egypt.

Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam's life and writing are typical of the Islamic culture of his time. The most characteristic feature of this culture was the transmission of ideas, religious rules, prophecies, and other knowledge in the form of anecdotes or narratives called ḥadīth. The most important ḥadīth were tales about the prophet Muḥammad, which were used as the basis of Islamic religious law, but stories about profane historical events were told in the form of ḥadīth as well. Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam's history is essentially a collection of ḥadīth. In the first centuries of Islam, oral recitation was the principal means of transmission of the ḥadīth. Since devout Muslims wanted trustworthy reports of actual events, it became customary to preface the ḥadīth with authenticating sequences or chains of oral sources called isnād. This selection from the Futūh Miṣr includes several isnād. A modern reader should keep in mind the pious atmosphere of oral storytelling in which Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam gathered his material. The ḥadīth were often told by holy men inside the mosque, and hearing and learning them were considered forms of religious devotion, as well as instruction and entertainment. A history written from such stories may jar modern tastes, which are accustomed to a very different notion of the relevance of events. Historians in recent decades have tended to discount the usefulness of Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam and accounts like his for the study of the Islamic conquest of Spain. Some have doubted whether many of the persons mentioned, such as Julian and Ṭāriq, even existed. Nevertheless Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam's moralizing tales offer a telling glimpse into the world of mainstream, pious Muslims as they reflected on Islam's experience of conquest. (DAC)

He said:¹ Mūsā ibn Nuṣair sent his son Marwān ibn Mūsā to Tangiers, stationing him on the coast. When he and his friends became tired, he left, and he bestowed the command of his army on Ṭāriq ibn 'Amrū. There were 1,700

Translated from *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa, and Spain Known as the Futūh Miṣr of Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam*, edited by Charles C. Torrey, Yale Oriental Series—Researches III (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1922), pp. 204–13.

1. The “he” of this and similar phrases throughout the text refers to the author. Such constructions recall the circumstances of oral recitation. The Arabic word translated as “narrative” in the title, *dhikr*, can also mean oral relating, remembrance, or recitation.

men, but it is also said there were 12,000 Berbers and 16 Arabs, though this is not true. . . .

There was a strait between [Tangiers] and the people of al-Andalus, and [ruling] over it was a non-Arab man called Julian [Arabic Yulyān], lord of Ceuta and of a city on the passage to al-Andalus called Algeciras.² Algeciras was one of the cities adjacent to Tangiers [i.e., on the Spanish coast opposite Tangiers], and it was Julian's. He was accustomed to obey Roderic [Ludhrīq], lord of al-Andalus, who lived in Toledo. Ṭāriq wrote to Julian and flattered him, until they exchanged presents. Now Julian had sent his daughter to Roderic, lord of al-Andalus, for her education and instruction, and Roderic made her pregnant. When this news reached Julian he said, "I do not see how I can punish him or pay him back except by sending the Arabs against him." So he sent word to Ṭāriq, saying, "It is I who will take you to al-Andalus." At that time Ṭāriq was in Tlemcen and Mūsā ibn Nuṣair was in Qairawan. Ṭāriq answered, "I will not trust you until you send me a hostage," so Julian sent him his two daughters. He had no children other than these two. Ṭāriq put them under secure guard in Tlemcen, and then he went out to Julian, who was in Ceuta on the straits. Julian rejoiced at his arrival and said to him, "I will take you over to al-Andalus." Now there was in the straits, between the two coasts, a mountain lying between Ceuta and al-Andalus called today Gibraltar [Jabal Ṭāriq].

When it was evening, Julian came to him with ships, and he carried him across the strait, and he lay in wait there during the day. The next evening he sent the ships back to the rest of his companions, and they were all brought to him. The people of al-Andalus did not know about them, nor did they think anything except that the ships going back and forth were similar to the [merchant] ships that [usually] went back and forth in the straits for their profit.

Ṭāriq was in the last group of riders, and when he went over to his companions, Julian and the merchants who were with him stayed behind in Algeciras, which was better for their spirit.³ The report of Ṭāriq and those who were with him reached the people of al-Andalus and the places where they lived. Meanwhile Ṭāriq, followed by his companions, went his way over a bridge⁴ from the mountains to a village called Qarṭājanna,⁵ and they marched heading for Córdoba.

2. The identity of this place-name and a number of others in the text are disputed by scholars.

3. This phrase probably means that it was better for the morale of the Muslim soldiers if Julian and the ships remained on the Iberian side to provide a way of escape.

4. The Arabic word translated here as "bridge," *qanṭara*, can mean an arched bridge or a viaduct supported by arches. Ruins of a Moorish viaduct exist today at Algeciras, and in the eighteenth century remains of a viaduct could be found at Gibraltar.

5. Carteya, a Roman town now in ruins.

He said: As my father, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, and Hishām ibn Ishāq told me, there was a house of [many] locks in al-Andalus, and no king could hold power over them unless he added a lock of his own, until there came the king who was attacked by the Muslims. They [the people of al-Andalus] urged him to place a lock on the house just as the kings before him had done, but he refused. "I will not put anything on the house until I know what is inside," he declared, and he commanded that it be opened. In it were drawn pictures of the Arabs, and also there was writing, which said, "When this door is opened, these people will conquer this country."

Then he returned to the *ḥadīth* of 'Uthmān and of others. He said: As Ṭāriq marched, the warriors of Córdoba came out against him, and they were emboldened when they saw how few were his companions. They fought, and their fight increased in intensity until they were defeated. Then [the Muslims] did not stop killing them until they reached the city of Córdoba. When Roderic heard this, he marched out against them from Toledo. They met at a place called Sidonia [Shadūna] at a river called today Wādī Umm Ḥakīm.⁶ They fought a fierce battle, and God, glory and greatness upon him, killed Roderic and those who were with him. . . . Ṭāriq then advanced to Toledo, and he entered it and asked after the table. He had no thought other than for this table, for it was the table of Sulaimān ibn Dā'ūd, as is alleged by the People of the Book.⁷ Yaḥyā ibn Bukair told us that al-Laith ibn Sa'd told him that when al-Andalus was conquered by Mūsā ibn Nuṣair, the table and crown of Sulaimān ibn Dā'ūd, prayers and blessings of God be upon him, were seized. Ṭāriq was informed that the table was in a fortress called Firās, two days' journey from Toledo, and the lord of the fortress was the son of Roderic's sister. So Ṭāriq sent to him a guarantee of his safety and the safety of the people of his house, whereupon he surrendered to Ṭāriq, who kept him safe and carried out all he had promised him. Then Ṭāriq said to him, "Hand over the table," and he did so. On it were gold and gems such as had never been seen. Ṭāriq tore off one of the legs together with its gems and gold, and put in its place a similar one. The value of the table was estimated at 200,000 dinars, because of the gems that were on it. Ṭāriq then took what was his from the gems, weapons, gold, silver, and table service, and it amounted to the same value in money, the like of which had never been seen.

6. According to Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, Umm Ḥakīm was the name of a slave girl of Ṭāriq. An island off the coast of southern Spain captured by Ṭāriq is also said to be named after her.

7. The term "People of the Book" in Islam refers to Christians and Jews, i.e., those who follow religions founded on the Bible. Sulaimān ibn Dā'ūd is the Arabic name for the biblical Solomon, son of David. The story of the finding of Solomon's table caught the imagination of medieval Islamic writers and was subsequently embellished. It appears in the *Thousand and One Nights*.

So he gathered it all up and returned to Córdoba and stayed there. He wrote to Mūsā ibn Nuṣair and told him of the conquest of al-Andalus and the booty he had won. Mūsā then wrote to al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik informing him of this, and he threw himself on his mercy.⁸ Mūsā also wrote to Ṭāriq saying that he should not move beyond Córdoba until he should come to him, and he reviled him bitterly. . . .

Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam continues his account with various stories in which Mūsā, Ṭāriq, and members of the caliphal family in Syria quarrel and intrigue over sharing the vast spoils from al-Andalus. Both Ṭāriq and Mūsā are obliged to travel to the caliphal court to protect their claims and their lives.

. . . it is also said that Mūsā ibn Nuṣair came to al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik when al-Walīd was sick, and Mūsā gave the table [of Solomon] to him as a present. But Ṭāriq declared, "It is I who won the table!" Mūsā called him a liar. So Ṭāriq said to al-Walīd, "Call for the table, and see whether any of the gold from it is missing." Al-Walīd called for it, and he saw how one of the legs was not the same as the others. And Ṭāriq said to him, "Ask him, O Commander of the Faithful, and if he can tell you truthfully about what you seek to know, then he is right." So al-Walīd asked him about the table leg, and he said, "I found it like this." Then Ṭāriq brought out the leg he had taken when he found [the table], and he said, "The Commander of the Faithful asked you about it in order to find the truth about what I have said, and indeed it is I who found it." So al-Walīd trusted him, graciously accepted his account, and valued his prize highly. . . .

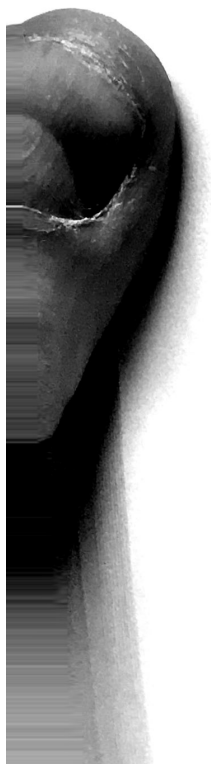
Neither Mūsā nor Ṭāriq ever returned to Spain. Before his departure, Mūsā, as governor of Islamic North Africa, appointed his son 'Abd al-'Azīz to rule as governor over Spain.

Then he returned to the *ḥadīth* of 'Uthmān and others, and he said: After his father departed, 'Abd al-'Azīz married a Christian princess, daughter of a king of al-Andalus. It is said she was the daughter of Roderic, king of al-Andalus, whom Ṭāriq killed. She brought him a great fortune in worldly things, such as cannot be described. When she came to him, she said, "Why do I not see the people of your kingdom glorifying you? They do not prostrate themselves before you as the people of my father's kingdom glorified him and prostrated themselves before him." He did not know what to say

8. Literally, "he gave him his life," i.e., he gave the caliph the right to decide whether he should live or die.

to her, so he commanded that the side of his palace be pierced with a small door. He used to give audience to the people, and for this purpose he would come to the inside of the door, so that someone entering to see him would have to lower his head on account of the smallness of the door. She was in a [hidden] spot watching the people, and when she saw this, she said to 'Abd al-'Azīz, "Now you are a great king!" The people heard, however, that he had constructed the door for this purpose, and some believed that she had made him a Christian. So Ḥabīb ibn Abī 'Ubaida al-Fihri and Ziyād ibn al-Nābigha al-Tamīmī and their friends from the Arab tribes, when they heard about it, stirred up rebellion against him. They decided to kill 'Abd al-'Azīz. They went to his muezzin and said, "Give the call to prayer at night so that we may come out for prayers." So the muezzin called out and intoned the call to prayer, and 'Abd al-'Azīz came out and said to his muezzin, "You have rushed indeed, giving the call to prayer at night!" Then he went to the mosque. Those of the [rebel] party had already gathered there, as well as others who were present for the prayers. 'Abd al-'Azīz went to the front and began to recite, "When the event happens—and there is no lie to the event—casting [some] low and raising [others] high" (Qur'ān 56:1–3), whereupon Ḥabīb struck his sword at 'Abd al-'Azīz's head. 'Abd al-'Azīz turned away in flight until he came to his house, and he went into his garden and hid there under a bush. Ḥabīb ibn Abī 'Ubaida and his companions fled, but Ziyād ibn al-Nābigha followed him. He came upon his tracks and found him under the bush. 'Abd al-'Azīz said to him, "Be merciful, Ibn al-Nabigha, and I will give you whatever you ask." But he answered, "You may not taste life after this!" and finished him off, and he cut off his head.

Ḥabīb and Ziyād took the head to Syria and presented it to the caliph in the presence of Mūsā, the murdered man's father. The caliph asked Mūsā if he knew the victim. Mūsā's reply was laconic: "Yes, I knew him for his fasting and his praying, and upon him be the curse of God if the man who killed him was better than he."



C. Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, *History of the Conquest of al-Andalus*

Translated from Arabic by Ann Christys

Although Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam provides one of the earliest accounts of the conquest of 711, he was writing far away in the eastern Islamic world. In contrast, Ibn al-Qūṭīyya (d. 977) was an Andalusī author who is said to have been a descendent of Sara, the granddaughter of the last Visigothic king, Witiza (Ibn al-Qūṭīyya's name means "the son of the Gothic woman"). He was born in Seville and later moved to Córdoba where he taught Islamic law and tradition. Ibn al-Qūṭīyya's narrative was written long after the conquest that it describes, and it contains elements not found in other accounts. However, these may record family traditions and reflect an Andalusī perspective of events.¹ (ORC)

The last king of the Goths of al-Andalus, Ghītīsha [Witiza] left on his death three sons: the eldest was called Alamundo, after him came Romulo, then Artubās. Because at the time of the death of their father they were minors, their mother remained in Toledo ruling the kingdom. Rodrigo, who was a general appointed by the former king, left the court, followed by the military men who were under his command, and established himself in Córdoba. . . .

When Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād entered Hispania, in the time of the caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik, Rodrigo wrote to the sons of the king, who were already handsome youths and able to manage a horse, inviting them to help him and unite with him against the common enemy. They gathered the frontier troops and marched out, camping in Secunda; they did not dare to enter Córdoba because they did not have complete confidence in Rodrigo: the latter had to leave the city to join up with them.

They set out immediately to meet Ṭāriq, and when the two armies were on the point of joining battle, Alamundo and his brother agreed amongst themselves to betray Rodrigo. The very same night, they sent messengers to Ṭāriq to inform him that Rodrigo was no more than one of their father's vilest vassals, and to ask him for his protection in order that they might cross to his camp on the following morning. They asked him to confirm and assure their possession of the inheritance that their father had held in Hispania. They were three thousand villas, which would later be known as "the royal

English text from Ann Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus, 711-1000* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2002), pp. 174-75. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

1. For a recent translation of Ibn al-Qūṭīyya's whole chronicle, see *Early Islamic Spain: The History of Ibn al-Qutiyya*, translated by David L. James (New York: Routledge, 2009).

villas." At dawn they crossed over to Ṭāriq's camp with the troops which they had brought with them. This was the cause of the conquest. . . .

When the three brothers came before Ṭāriq, they said to him, "Are you your own chief or is there a chief over you?" Ṭāriq answered them, "There is a chief over my head and over his another." He permitted them to join Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr in Ifrīqiya so that their relation with him might be confirmed. They requested of Ṭāriq a letter to Mūsā regarding their affairs with Ṭāriq and the pledge that he had given them. Ṭāriq complied. They set out toward Mūsā carrying Ṭāriq's letter explaining their agreement of submission and the conditions granted them. They met Mūsā in his descent toward al-Andalus in the vicinity of the land of the Berbers. Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr sent them to al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik. They went to the caliph who ratified for them the pledge of Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād. Along with that he concluded a written contract with each one of them. . . .

The *amīr al-mu'minīn* [prince of the believers] found him to be more prudent than the rest, and treated him with honor. The pact which he had made with 'Abd al-'Azīz a short time before was firmly renewed by him. So he returned to Spain rejoicing and remained secure from then on, so that in no way were these powerful bonds dissolved by succeeding Arab rulers.