

'Might it not have happened': Ibn al-Khatîb reporting the coup d'état in Granada to the Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Mansûr

Th. Marita Wijntjes<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

How well-informed were the Mamluk sultans about the situation of their fellow-Muslims in the West, and especially of the relation between Muslims and Christians in the Iberian peninsula? That can usually only be guessed from what the Mamluk chroniclers recorded, but in the case of the revolt in Granada it is quite obvious that they could have been well-informed.

In 760 (1359) the Nasrid sultan Muhammad V al-ghanî billâh (755-60, 763-93/1354-59, 1362-91) lost his throne by a coup d'état staged by al-ra'îs Abû 'Abd Allâh, a distant relative who first installed Muhammad's halfbrother Ismâ'îl as king and later, after murdering him, took the sovereignty in his own hands under the name Muhammad VI. Muhammad V lived in exile in Morocco until he succeeded, in 763/1362, to regain his throne with the help of Peter the Cruel, king of Castilia (1350-69) who arrested and executed Muhammad VI.

Lisân al-dîn Ibn al-Khatîb (713-776/1313-1375), wazîr of Muhammad V and principal historian of this period, was ordered to write a letter to the Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Mansûr with a circumstantial report of the event and its historical background.<sup>2</sup> This remarkable example of diplomatic correspondence, by himself preserved for posterity as a model of elegant style, is the subject of this article, in an attempt to render it into English. It is written, as was the chancery custom, in rhymed prose (*saj'*) and adorned with unusual words and poetical metaphors. In a translation most of those finesses get lost, but even without them it is a vividly told dramatic story. Interesting is the use of the history of al-Andalus in a nutshell as a means to promote the kingdom of Granada. The informative part of the letter is framed by flattering and formal elements, which are also translated to give an idea of the style of the correspondence.

The letter is undated, but it must have been written after Muhammad had resumed his reign, on 20 Jumâda II 763/ 16 April 1362<sup>3</sup> and after the return of Ibn al-Khatîb to Granada in Sha'abân 763/June 1362.<sup>4</sup> Although Ibn al-Khatîb was held in high esteem for

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<sup>1</sup> Author's name of Th.M.Koornwinder-Wijntjes.

<sup>2</sup> This was probably the first time he recorded it, he repeated the story in all his major works, *Al-lamha al-badriyya*, *A'mâl al-a'lâm*, *Al-Ihâta fî akhbâr Gharnâta* and *Nufâdat al-jirâb*. See for details Rachel Arié, *L'Espagne musulmane au temps des Nasrides (1232-1492). Réimpression suivie d'une postface et d'une mise à jour par l'auteur*. Paris 1990, p. 108 n.5.

<sup>3</sup> Not 16 March, as given by Arié, *op.cit.*, p.112.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad 'Abd Allâh 'Inân, *Lisân al-dîn ibn al-Khatîb, hayâtuhû wa-turâthuhû al-fikrî*. (English title on cover: Mohamed Abdulla Enan, *Lisanud-din ibn-ul Khatib, his life and work*; the book however is in Arabic only) Cairo 1968, p. 104-5, has Saturday 20 Sha'abân (based on an unedited manuscript of the *Nufâdat al-jirâb*), but as that was not a

his intellectual capacities and his brilliant style, his relation with Muhammad was strained at times. During their exile in Morocco, they didn't live in the same town and Ibn al-Khatîb stayed behind when Muhammad campaigned in al-Andalus. To many scenes described in the letter Ibn al-Khatîb was no eyewitness, but for one of them his source is known: the monarch himself wrote him a letter to invite him to return to Granada with an appendix about the most recent happenings, and another one after he had returned.<sup>5</sup> With al-Malik al-Mansûr the Mamluk sultan al-Mansûr Muhammad b. al-Muzaffar Hâjjî b. al-Nâsir b. Qalâwûn (762-64/1361-63) was meant. In the letter he is called a son of Ahmad b. al-Nâsir b. Qalâwûn, but in fact he was a son of al-Muzaffar Hâjjî, another son of al-Nâsir.<sup>6</sup> The period between the death of the great sultan Qalâwûn and the beginning of the reign of the sultan Al-Ashraf Sha'bân was very confused, with many short-ruling puppet-sultans of which al-Malik al-Mansûr was the last one (his rule lasted 27 months).<sup>7</sup> Seen against this background, the warning of Ibn al-Khatîb was rather ironic: what was a shock in Granada was in Cairo almost yearly routine.

#### The text

Ibn al-Khatîb collected his letters and other papers in several books, this one is found in his *Rayhânat al-kuttâb wa-nuj'at al-muntâb* (The flourished pen of the secretaries and morning and evening search for delicacies). A selection from the *Rayhânat* has been published and translated by M. Gaspar Remiro, first in the *Revista del Centro de Estudios Historicos de Granada y su Reino de 1912-1914*, with the title *Correspondencia diplomática entre Granada y Fez en el siglo XIV*, in 1916 collected in a book with the same title. That it contained some letters to the Mamluks in Cairo can easily be overlooked as a result of that title. Gaspar Remiro published only the part of the letter that describes the revolt.<sup>8</sup> Al-Maqqarî used parts of the letter in his *Nafh al-îb*, that is how

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Saturday but a Tuesday the date is not correct, it should be 17 or 24 if it really was a Saturday, corresponding to 11 or 18 June.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Khatîb included these letters in his autobiography at the end of his *Al-Ihâtâ fî akhbâr Gharnâta*, published by °Inân, *Lisân al-dîn*, p. 286-311. Later °Inân published a complete edition of the *Ihâtâ* in 4 vols., Cairo 1973-77, the autobiography is in Vol IV, p. 438-640. The first letter, dated Wednesday 24 Jumâda II 763/ 20 April 1362, in *Lisân al-dîn* p.104-5 (partly), p. 292-94 (complete) and 335-37 (with appendix); in *Ihâtâ* IV p. 447-450. The second letter, dated Saturday 2 Ramadân 763/25 June 1362 in *Lisân al-dîn* p. 294-96, in *Ihâtâ* IV p. 450-52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ta'rîkh ibn Khaldûn*, 7 vols., Bayrût 1968, vol. V, p. 452-3 about al-Malik al-Mansûr. See also for the genealogy *ET*<sup>2</sup> VI:321a, s.v. Mamluks. Al-Maqqarî (see note 8) made mistakes in the genealogy in his presentations of the letter.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Schäfer, *Beiträge zur mamlukischen Historiographie nach dem Tode al-Malik an-Nâsirs. Mit einer Teiledition der Chronik Shams ad-dîn ash-Shujâ'îs*. Islamkundige Untersuchungen Band 15. Freiburg in Breisgau 1971. (Transliteration of the name of the chronicler adapted to English, because the appropriate diacritics were not available). For an artistic impression of the period, but based on historical sources, see José Maria García López, *El baile de los mamelucos*, Barcelona (Seix Barral) 2003.

<sup>8</sup> On p.352-359 of the 1916 edition.

it came to my notice.<sup>9</sup> Rachel Arié mentioned the first part in her very rich and indispensable study of the Nasrids, in a section about the relations between Granada and the Mamluks.<sup>10</sup> In his book on Ibn al-Khatîb, his life and intellectual legacy, Muhammad °Abd Allâh °Inân gives a resumé of the letter<sup>11</sup>, and also of a slightly later written shorter letter to Yalbughâ al-Khâsikî, who was the *de facto* ruler of the Mamluk state.<sup>12</sup> In 1980-81 the same °Inân published in Cairo an edition of the *Rayhânat*, based on three important manuscripts, one in the Escorial, one in the Royal Treasury in Rabat and one in the Vatican Library (incomplete), of which °Inân considered the one in Rabat as the most reliable.<sup>13</sup> In this edition, the letter is longer than the combined parts in the *Nafh al-tîb*, and it has many variant readings. The unpredictability of the text must have caused many a scribe a headache. For the translation I relied mainly on the text published by Ihsân °Abbâs of the *Nafh al-tîb*, as being the most intelligible. I added the missing lines from the edition of the *Rayhânat*, but as part of it seemed to be out of place, I inserted that in another section of the letter to get a smooth reading. I accounted for the change in the notes, but as the textvariations were usually not vital for the understanding, I did account only for the most important ones.

#### The letter

The gates<sup>14</sup> that are opened for their victory are the gates of heaven, from their skies rainclouds let flow an abundance of favours, the darkness of the night is illuminated by the lights of their lucky star, non-residents and non-believers present their adherence to and membership of their love, whatever the latitudes, whatever the borders, however manifold the names, contentment with the character of their prayers reigns, although their gestures did not reach complete perfection, structures of nails and planks bring them greetings, cutting through the throat of daybreak on the nape of the water-neck. [We hold those gates in high esteem, if the winds had held that conviction, they certainly would have subsided out of respect, the celestial bodies would have hastened their usual revolution, to gather news from you at daybreak, at sunset and at dawn we ask the whiffs of wind to present us their nice words. We are no more satisfied than the pious man when he does not find a shrine (to worship), we consider the absorption by the jihâd against the

<sup>9</sup> Of Ahmad al-Maqqarî, *Nafh al-tîb min ghusn al-Andalus al-ratîb*, several editions exist, the first one in 2 vols. by Dozy e.a. 1855-61, another one in 10 vols. published in Cairo 1949. The one used here is by Ihsân °Abbâs, 8 vols., Bayrût 1968; vol. I, p. 321-326; Vol.V, p. 90-94.

<sup>10</sup> Arié, *op.cit.*, p. 119 n.3.

<sup>11</sup> °Inân, *Lisân al-dîn*, p. 108-9.

<sup>12</sup> °Inân, *Lisân al-dîn*, p. 109. Also Arié, *op. cit.*, p. 119 n. 4, there called al-Jâsikî. The complete text is in al-Maqqarî, *Nafh al-tîb*, ed. Ihsân °Abbâs Vol. VI, p. 271-273.

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad °Abd Allâh °Inân, *Rayhânat al-kuttâb wa-nuj°at al-muntâb*, 2 vols., Cairo 1980-81. Both volumes contain a concordance with Gaspar Remiro's edition and translation. The letter is in Vol. I, p. 490-501, in the section: Letters to affirm friendships.

<sup>14</sup> This first word, *al-albâb*, is probably used as a code for the retrieval of the letter in the chancellery archives.

rebels and heretics, as an excuse for the lack of letters from those far-away countries, the truth makes them only more welcome and loved.

When the girdle of endurance of it became too narrow for what it contains, and we had the choice between shame to cast it and hope to tighten it and the reedpen was sharpened by a longing - that nearly ruined us - for someone to cure it, we dispatched this red letter<sup>15</sup> - shame reddened its cheek -, whose improvised redaction fell short of offering its excuse, it replaces words with allusions, and fears rejection due to neglect of the visitor, standing in the door of the reception hall, not able (to determine) the ranks of the brothers because of the roundness of their table. The most it can accomplish is to obtain disregard for its shortcomings, to lift the neglect of its paragraphs, to be freed from its seclusion (or: banishment), and remoteness from its rank, and get attention for its content and its presence.

Let the noble gates be happy to pay attention, and let the lack of relations be annulled, let their meetings, well-organized on a strong basis, and their bright hallowed insights be informed]<sup>16</sup>, the gates of the great sultan, the sublime the famous, the virtuous the conspicuous, the unique the happiest, the most elevated the most glorious, the highest the righteous, the learned the outstanding the perfect, the sultan of Islam and the Muslims, the pillar of this world and the faith, the promoter of the protection of justice over the worlds, the beauty of Islam, the most eminent authority, the glory of nights and days, the king of two continents and two seas, the imâm of the two Holy Shrines, the expected of capitals and regions, the wearer of the crown of glory, the vanquisher of Franks, Turks and Tatars, the king *al-Malik al-Mansûr*, the son of the highborn the most glorious, the noble the prolific, the virtuous the conspicuous, the great the famous, the august the glorified the highest, the respected the elevated, the glory of the crowd, the sword of the Community, the crown of the emirate, the power of Islam, the protector of humankind, the moon of the battlefield, the lion of the war without end, the hallowed the immaculate prince, the prince *Ahmad*, the son of the father of sultans, the king of the Muslims, the sword of the lieutenants (caliphs) of God on the worlds, the guardian of the believers, the sultan of the jihâd and the hajj, the nominator of the officers of the cry and the flowing of the waters (of the Nile), the founder of religious localities, the suppressor of aggressors, the victor of dissenters and rebels, the protector of the Law, the restorer of the Community, the king of two continents and two seas, the sultan of the two Holy Shrines, the king of the righteous, the learned the effective, [the virtuous the conspicuous, the happiest the elevated, the unique the highest]<sup>17</sup>, the victor the confirmed, the supported the highranking, the august the honoured the expected, the jihâd-fighter the warrior the conqueror, the glorified the perfect, the immaculate the great the famous the glorified *Al-Malik al-Nâsir abû 'Abd Allâh Muhammad b. Qalâwûn al-Sâlihî*, might God make him the pavillion of his prayer, propped with the props of dawn, the action of his energy be built on victory, his complete happiness be evident, his good character be competing in the field of honour.

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<sup>15</sup> The Nasrids used red paper for their official documents.

<sup>16</sup> The section within [] is taken from the *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 493 line 2-15.

<sup>17</sup> Taken from the *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 491 line 2-3.

(Pay attention to this letter sent by) him whose lawful obligation is the performance of the five rites, who is welcoming the arrival of the sun being oriental his horizon, who is renewing today the reign that was established yesterday, among his forfathers, may God have mercy on them, the commander of the Muslims in al-Andalus '*Abd Allâh al-ghanî billâh al-ghâlib billâh Muhammad b. Yûsuf b. Ismâ'îl b. Faraj b. Nâsr*: kind greetings, like the banner of dawn marched on, preceded by vanguards announcing the winds, blossoming branches diffuse their sweet smell, hairlocks framing pretty faces make them more attractive, so your forefathers distinguished themselves, as power held their branches together, as words of victory assisted their arrowheads. The mercy and blessing of God the Elevated.

Now to the heart of the matter, after the praise of God that made Him the first sûra of the Qur'ân and the conclusion of the prayer of people possessing a soul, gratitude to Him for the first of the gift of beneficence, a praise and a gratitude that make use of the gifts of heart and tongue of mankind.

Praise and peace upon our master and lord Muhammad his messenger, the calyx of living beings, the master of the descendents of Adam with their different languages and colours, who broke by God's power the violence of the oppression and by his belief the truth covered the (other) religions. The earth was driven into a corner before him, but he saw that his Community occupied all that had been cornered for him, history confirmed what he saw, and the contentment with his companions, beloved, paternal and maternal uncles and brothers.

The prayer, day and night renewed, dictated by the alternation of dark and light, the fixed hours whereof relieve each other at his sanctified memorial, like birds on the branches skilled in the art of the wooden flutes composing their songs and eyes turning inside for the meanings behind the external eyelids.

The call to your noble gates - may God continue his protection of them and of their two functions of guardkeeping and asking admittance (for visitors), may He make effective their prayer, which is the bliss of the ceremony and the prayercall to the ears, may He make the rotation of the stars to be employed as help and support for their respected authority, so that it be known how the claws of the Wolf defend their safety, how the scales of the Balance extol their justice, that He directs the ball of the playingfield to them through Venus, and through the Crescent instead of the Crozier. May He preserve the core of their authority and prestige in their actions until the day the faces of the kings obey the King of the devout.

We wrote (this letter) to these gates - may God decree internal support for their threshold as He may abash the avaricious clouds by their openhandedness, may He make that the edges of their swordblades, coloured with the blood of the enemy, don't loose their colour and may He with all means add to the division of their opponents - from the royal palace of the islamic kingdom in *al-Andalus*, the *Alhambra of Granada* - may God, glory be to Him, establish the habit of defending its territory, may He with firm hands strengthen the props of its hope on and expectation of God.

(This Al-Andalus) where the battlelines are joined, the price is paid for souls, the fire of war is well-fueled, where the horizon is clad and turbanned in darkness, the sword is drawn and pointed and the dustcloud of the jihâd says: " I am the safe-conduct from the smoke of hell", where Islam for its enemy is like a mark on the skin of a camel, and like

dates are the cargo of a caravan, where the virgins of paradise crowd round the martyrs of the battlefield and the hero's shout "Allâhu akbar", where wounds ornate happy laughing faces with their blood, [blame has fled from their features, its mosques show openly what they had dissimulated, its souls delivered to God their Jupiter, where the "lâ ilâha illâ llâh" had separated it from those behind them, a sea that rises, an unbelief that shrinks not back for an attack upon it and that boasts of the doctrine of trinity - God is above that - and a nation that does not defend its souls against death and does not save them.]<sup>18</sup> This very region, [the care of the citizens whereof is ours]<sup>19</sup>, the saddles of whose mounts have been prepared for our government and the leather bags of whose gifts - thanks to God's favour - have been put in our hands; a unique independent region that is doing better day after day, with excellent plantations, sweet drinkingplaces, fulfilling hopes, realizing expectations, with lively animals, with temperate shades and colours, the middlemost of the seven climates, bearing witness to the wisdom of God's work. Speaking of its horses, they are fiery, greedy to galloping, and of its swords, they don't like to remain in the scabbard, and their spears, [they are swift and pliant, and of their spearpoints]<sup>20</sup>, they are snatching without interruption and of their spearnecks, they have a clear target, and of their arrows, they are carefully shot. But that notwithstanding, Islam is (there) in a basket of snakes, a target for violent quick death, a mark for arrows, fodder for lioncubs, successive invasions trod them underfoot, the advancing borders frighten<sup>21</sup> them, the watchful eyes (of the enemy) hold their possessions under control and are on the alert whatever they devise. But with God's grace it ends well. There is nothing but firmness and beating and mangling and kicking and shouting and confrontation and compulsion. The sea was between them and the brethren of their Community while the healers of their illness carried out this precept on behalf of the people of the earth and gave the Lord of Doomsday the most beautiful loan.

Were it not for the distance, the disastrous destruction, the clamour of the enemies and what else blocked the events, you might have heard the "Allâhu akbar" of the attacks, the roaring of the kerfs, the drone of the hoofs, the clatter of the swords on the helmets, the screaming of the bereaved and the loud calls to God the Elevated. If the shackles of your place had been lifted - but for people like you this belongs to the realm of the impossible - you would have seen the flight of the pointed spearheads loosening from the shaft of the spears like silver coins, you would have watched how the shafts of the lances had become drills, how the swords had become crescents over the fullmoonlike helmets, and how the contracts of martyrdom became light in the eyes of the judge of happiness.

As Your Noble Wisdom would learn from a glance in the chapters of the conquest, drawing another bucketful out of that source, caliph 'Umar al-Fârûq<sup>22</sup> has been attacked with a sword although he was on his guard, he had aroused the jealousy of his successor

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<sup>18</sup> From the *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 492 line 18 - p. 493 line 2. Here started the paragraph (p. 493 line 2 - 15) that I moved to the beginning of the letter.

<sup>19</sup> From the *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 493 line 15.

<sup>20</sup> From the *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 493 line 20-21.

<sup>21</sup> Here the word given in *Nafh al-tîb*, ed. Ihsân °Abbâs, vol. I, p. 324, n. 4 fitted best.

<sup>22</sup> The name means: who distinguishes truth from falsehood.

and was put to death. The horses of Ibn Abî Sarh<sup>23</sup> were left roaming freely in a story that calls for explanation, until when the offspring of Marwân had picked up the ball that had fallen, had munched with full mouths what the inheritors of truth had cooked, had taken the rule in their hands and gained of it what they wanted, al-Walîd outdid his family and brought into it newly acquired and inherited (land)<sup>24</sup>. The horses of Târiq<sup>25</sup> came trampling - there was not enough parchment to contain his stories - great was the benefit, he conquered the supplies that filled his tables, then the blowing of the winds relaxed, the Lord was victorious. When seed is strewn, birds abound. The knights of Syria steered (their horses) to claim part of its welfare and flew on the wings of their will under good omens. The vanguard, Balj b. Bishr and others were heading for it<sup>26</sup>. They opened the locks and captured booty. The good omen was right, the undistinguished got decorated, the famous land was conquered, firstclass virgins were selected, provisions were acquired. Islam passed and transgressed the mountainpasses, cut off the yellow jasmin, had horses and mounts, was confident and lived comfortably, yawned and stretched, until the stages of the postservice had multiplied and the eye of the rebellious Satan was heated. Islam came to possess a large pavillion, awfully shining, with high pillars, of vast dimensions, traces and stories testify to it, great events, papers and lines.

Does the daylight disappear? Each gale is followed by calm, fate is jealous of those who rule.<sup>27</sup> The Franks attacked again and completed their crime. Their birds of prey circled and flew round, {they gleamed and flashed like lightning, they attacked and hung on},<sup>28</sup> let loose their reins without restraints, the best parts that had been separated returned (into their power), so that from the book nothing more rested than the margins, nor from the night more than the intoxication. The covering veils fell, what remained was a destroyed party, the widespread protecting shadows shrank. However, God intervened with people, chosen from among our forefathers, that had a firm footing in the quagmire of death, dedicated their strength and audacity to God and joined their sharp swords to their steps, honour to whom honour is due, until the belief was called in to participate and made the defense more intense and fiercer.

Again there were wars with ups and downs. The Christians learned that God had men at his side. One of our forefathers - may God be content with him - sent to the gates of your forefathers all good news and publicly known facts about battles with the enemy.<sup>29</sup> The front laughed at (the success) showing its teeth, passionate joy spread on all sides. To

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<sup>23</sup> Ibn Abî Sarh was governor of Upper Egypt and the builder of the Arab fleet; see Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London 1961<sup>7</sup>, p. 166. The expression: his horses were left roaming freely (he was given a free hand) is a pun on his name.

<sup>24</sup> The son of the caliph Marwân (683-85), °Abd al-Mâlik (685-705), had four sons, one of them was al-Walîd (705-15). For the genealogy see Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

<sup>25</sup> Târiq b. Ziyâd, the conqueror of the Iberian peninsula.

<sup>26</sup> Balj b. Bishr was the commander of the Syrian army that colonised al-Andalus after 741; Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

<sup>27</sup> From this point the edition and translation of Gaspar Remiro start.

<sup>28</sup> The words within { } are omitted from Gaspar Remiro's translation.

<sup>29</sup> Reference to earlier correspondence with the Mamluks, see Arié, *op. cit.*, p. 118-21.

have it in mind was healing for the breasts, amulets on the necklaces (or: in the houses) and a sentinel in the faces of the full moons.

{The protection of Islam is rooted, its branches are connected with roots in God. How near to grief is one who dwells in injustice. The Community of Believers is - thanks to God 's blessing - united, the souls don't deny nor refuse the truth, the divine decrees are known, hopes are directed towards what's connected with God. When there was no invitation to prayer, prayer was possible, thoughts were effective, everything is entirely dependent on God. Belief is a stranger, the stranger longs for his family. When a man is (alone) far from home, he is multiplied by his brother. }<sup>30</sup>

When God let pass to us their (i.e. the forefathers) healthful inheritance, their splendid authority, their military organisation and their command of the jihâd, he let us - His is the omnipotence - perform what they used to do. He raised our banners on their lofty hills and mountaintops, he made us carry a better burden than they did. In what a unity He organised us for them. He clothed our days in a wide circle of peace, He strengthened the administration, He enabled the cultivation of the land, He facilitated the command and made traveling safe by sea and by land.

However, what overcame them in my person - might it not have happened! - a test to clarify our special position; its golden nuggets were purified through refinement and heavy longing.

We communicate this to you to pass on to you its incitement and to summarize its elements. There is something in the incidents to keep in mind as a warning, a fate once known is not likely to be denied, there are bad and good times in life, happy is he who learns a lesson from others, firmness is the best to be associated with, a mind put to the test becomes hardened and polished.

What happened is this. One of those that are related to us by bloodties<sup>31</sup>, not by nobility of character, and connected to us by a distant relationship, not by a happy insemination, a person we took charge of as an orphan and protected as a censured and abused (individual), one that we provided with a decent house after he had grown up as a mischievous misfit, accursed and mean, lifted him out of his obscurity to a high function and gave him all signs of care instead of condemning his cloudy state; (that man) contacted a brother of us that we kept confined to his castle<sup>32</sup>, but we didn't install measures to mark his detention, we rather permitted him to do many things. We didn't mistrust people arbitrarily, and we were blind for the fire that glowed under the ashes. He invited to join him a group of paupers all skilled in both the breaking of locks and sneaking through the subterranean passages of dissimulation, violators of the commonly accepted rules of society, familiar with the place of ruin and the schools of the godless. With them he scaled the fortress through a breach that he had made in its defences. But the fateful schemes failed to be accomplished completely, in a night that we had preferred to stay overnight in one of the gardens outside the palace and had installed a deputy who

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<sup>30</sup> The words within { } not in Gaspar Remiro. At this point ends the text of *Nafh al-tîb* I, p. 321-26 and starts V, p. 90-94.

<sup>31</sup> Al-ra'îs Abû 'Abd Allâh (Muhammad VI). His biography in *Ihâta*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 531-540.

<sup>32</sup> Ismâ'îl II, his biography in *Ihâta*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 398-404.



was thoroughly instructed of our affairs.<sup>33</sup> He completed the manoeuvre he had begun and invaded and violated the fortress. He knocked down and killed the guards on duty, assaulted the residence of our deputy and had no scruples to maltreat him unto death. He released the wretched brother, installed him and put the crown and the turban of sovereignty on his head, stealing and usurping our command.

The people believed that the plot against our person had been successful and that misfortune had made us suffer and certainly had affected us. For the Helper had vanished, the ties had been cut, {the person kept in confinement had come forward, the courts and palaces had been invaded, the fractions had split, the components had fallen apart}<sup>34</sup>, the eye of the eminent had lost its visionary light. They offered him (i.e. the former prisoner) conventional obedience, and the faces were turned to him.

We had galloped away, fast horses following the tracks to our refuge under cover of darkness. Heaven, under God's protection, protected us, until we had reached safety in the town Guadix, like the moon is saved from the last night of the month, with nothing but our soul at the mercy of what fate decides, surrendered to God's guidance, bereaved of [kingship, {country, wife} and children, of distinction {and insignia}, not knowing what caused the violation of the contract before {the work} could be executed]<sup>35</sup>, in need of a place to settle down. We were sincere with the inhabitants of that town about the siege, and they behaved very rational about defending us, they accepted that their cavedwellings and their vast gardens were ruined by iron and damaged by fire, but they didn't accept guards in their neighbourhood, and no dishonour to their souls. Finally, we left our homeland after many misadventures that the pens describe in full detail, wider ramifying into comment and explanation, stories that make a deep impression on the ears of the audience.

We crossed the sea, while the breasts of the waves throbbed with compassion for us and the winds clapped their hands with grief. We took up quarters in the palace of His Majesty the sultan of the Banû Marîn<sup>36</sup>, that was roomy enough for us - its branch indicating the nobility of its roots - , the noble-hearted who give, nay give liberally. He stepped from his horse to honour us, greeted and showed courtesy, commented on the unsteady time, asked information and smiled, swore solemn oaths, said "Bismillâh", let us go before him and gave us the disposition of horses and servants.

When those who had stayed behind discovered what evils they had gained, and had found out what they had to reckon with, that the scum had floated to the surface and that they had sunk to the bottom, the vile scoundrel delayed not to kill the wretch that had camouflaged his imposture and to lay his sword round his neck as a collar. {That he resorted to inspiring fear indicated his anguish, for the safety of the weakling is in his

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<sup>33</sup> His hâjib Ridwân.

<sup>34</sup> The words within {} not in Gaspar Remiro.

<sup>35</sup> The words within [] from the *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 497 line18-19; the words within {} also in Gaspar Remiro.

<sup>36</sup> The sultan Abû Sâlim Ibrâhîm (760-762/1359-1361), who occupied the throne after a period of exile in Granada. His biography in *Ihâta*, ed. Ihsân °Abbâs, Vol. I, p. 311-318. He solved the problem of rivaling relatives by killing most of them, but nevertheless became victim of a revolt.

cunning. He turned his lion into a falcon for his hunting }<sup>37</sup>, sat alone on his throne as a male ostrich on his empty egg, baldheaded, pretending courage and audacity, showing his former ignorance and moroseness. The way he handled the attempt of the enemy of the faith was bad. When the truth was disclosed, his malicious mind came to light, and his intimi had misgivings about his concealed cowardice. The Christian tyrant opened his mouth and swallowed him, the cross spread out its arms and frightened him, the infidels strengthened their grip on him, but God didn't support and aid him. The well-ordered row of frontteeth of Islam was destroyed and complained to him that it was oppressed, the backs of its butcher's blocks were packed with the remnants and bones of the servants of God, law and society were kicked aside, ambition no longer had success, famine increased.

Then, in the West, rose the sun to which we had directed our appeal, for that was the orientation of our sundial. We crossed the sea, whose shores seemed to approach each other to facilitate the crossing, and the winds seemed only to blow in our direction. Its water was a liquid mixed with an elixir. We had set out on the journey with fright before us, burning of zeal by the appeal to us, allured by a signal and incited by an invitation. The tyrant desisted from molesting the country after he had left it without frontteeth, had seriously scared it and had broken the seals that we had used to seal it. A punishment from heaven struck the traitor so that he lost his mind and his irresponsible nature came to the surface. He gathered all his riffraff and rabble, and was joined by the sincere that he had deceived and corrupted. He headed for the supplies that were safeguarded by firm locks and strong fortresses, filled from them the girdles, took away all the goods and chattels, the swordbelts, the tunics, carried off warequipment and finery, and at night left the city.

His unsound views, his loss of support and the ephemerality of his unjust rule necessitated him to deliver himself to the mercy of the Christian tyrant with all of them, high and low, tall and broad, without a written treaty, nothing to attest to its true content, only that from its conditions apostasy and extermination of the Islamic Community was expected. The result was that he came in his grip and approached the place of his slaughter. For he (i.e. the Christian tyrant) consulted his advisers about his case and condemned the means he had used in committing his treason. He reviled him publicly in his city, killed him with his own hands, and let everybody who had assisted him in his offense and had helped him in his bad conduct share his fate. He sent us their heads, so they were staked at the walls of their treason, forming a necklace around the throat of that building. They were a lesson for those who will learn, and a sign for those who will see. May God make the truth of his sayings come true and eradicate the unbelievers.

We returned to the throne of our kingdom as the moon returns to his house after his successive phases, or the necklace to the neck after its beads had been scattered, or the bird to its nest escaped from the demonic trap of the net. People look at us with eyes that, since we were absent, had not been watered with life-giving mercy, and on whom, since us, no raincloud had showered a fine rain of blessing, who had not passed a night trusting in the government and had not relied on belief or ambition. We rolled up the carpet of reprimand like a letter, we anticipated the lines of reproof for the disturbance, we showed friendly rapprochement to those who had committed crimes and we made access to us

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<sup>37</sup> Words within { } omitted from the translation of Gaspar Remiro.

easy. We asked God's forgiveness for ourselves and for who had sinned against us.<sup>38</sup> Don't ask what that stimulated of redress of regret, of firm footing, of enjoyment of existence after not-being. Praised be He who tests to reward, Who orders a call to be answered, Who awakens from negligence to encourage, Who selects whom He wants, and leads whom He empowers.

We thought it proper to acquaint Your Learned Highness with this event giving occasion to open a well-substanced conversation and paving the way for a renewed friendship. For histories from foreign countries are what kings present to their nightly seances, and with their rarities they dot the halo's of their moons. They learn the best conduct from them, and protection against the changes of fortune, they ask help from experience against destiny, and by the witness they are informed about the absent.

Your country is the source of virtue and virtuous people, the arcade of Islam in whose shadow people from nearby and far-off seek shelter, the origin of the light of the Message, the horizontal basis of the overwhelming mercy, from which the stars start traversing the remote ends of their orbits for us, and mix golden horns with their black hairlocks, and from it rise the full moons, invited to the Maghrib to set. And there rises the sun, freed from the veils of its night, striding over the steps of its slanting course and finally it drags its gracious tail to its setting. In your presence, learning and work gave good results, and freegrazing flocks were tended.<sup>39</sup>

We ask you for a present: as a token of your positive answer only a prayer as replacement for support, and as equivalent of money and equipment.<sup>40</sup> For in the prayer of the believer is present what is deep in his heart, { God knows what his servant reveals and what he conceals }<sup>41</sup>, and Him we ask to remove from us and from you the causes of anarchy and ruinous disasters, and that He stimulate us to follow the rules of the Law, and that He clothe us in the protecting armour of devotion to Him. He - praised be He - gives Your Paternal Authority { good luck }<sup>42</sup> (R) as long as His offices are only executed by the Chief Justice, His rights are written down, His opponents are subdued. Age doesn't exhaust Him and doesn't overburden Him, thanks to God's mercy and power. Noble good blessed greetings forever, in an uninterrupted stream. And the mercy and blessing of God the Elevated.

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<sup>38</sup> Here ends the edition of Gaspar Remiro.

<sup>39</sup> The implication being: restricted in their freedom.

<sup>40</sup> A former appeal had not resulted in financial or material support, see Arié, *op. cit.*, p 118-121.

<sup>41</sup> Words within { } from *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 500 line 18-19.

<sup>42</sup> Words within { } from *Rayhânat*, ed. °Inân, Vol. I, p. 501 line 2.