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## PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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### A LOST WORK BY IBN AL-QŪṬIYYA

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz called Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, “the son of the Gothic Woman” was born in Cordova probably in the final decade of the 3rd/9th century and died there in 367/977 [1]. He was a descendant of one of the last Visigothic princes of Spania his ancestor being the daughter of one of the sons of King Witiza (AD 702—710), penultimate monarch of the Visigothic kingdom. Despite this he was a loyal client and servant of the Umayyad *amīrs* of al-Andalus. He is most famous for his history of Islamic Spain and Portugal, the *Ta’rīkh iftītāh al-Andalus* (“The History of Conquest of Andalus”), which gives an account of the arrival of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula, the flight there of the fugitive Umayyad prince ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu‘āwīyya (138—172 / 756—758), the re-establishment of Umayyad rule and the lives of the *amīrs* down to the reign of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (275—300 / 888—912) [2]. He is considered an *akḥbārī* rather than a *mu‘arrikh*, that is a relater of anecdotes rather than a true historian, although the “science” of Arab history only began to develop in al-Andalus during his lifetime. His own “History” is a fascinating collection of accounts of life in Muslim al-Andalus, embracing not just the Arabic-speaking hierarchy, but all classes and creeds of society.

He was a scholar and teacher at the Great Mosque of Cordova for most of his life, where he taught *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and *akḥbār*. His classes on the latter were enjoyed by many students who were to become servants of the state in later years. It was possibly one of these who put his master's anecdotal oral accounts into written form, which survive in a unique manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France [3]. This, however, is only a summary of his oral — possibly also written — accounts for others appear in the *Muqtabis* (“The Spark”) of Ibn Ḥayyān (377—467 / 987—107) and elsewhere, which are not mentioned in the “History”.

Among his contemporaries Ibn al-Qūṭiyya was revered not so much for his expertise in any of the above disciplines — indeed his teaching of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* was condemned as deficient, too liberal, and not sticking to the letter — but for his immense knowledge of Arabic. When Abū ‘Alī al-Qālī (d. 356/956) visited al-Andalus in

330/952), the caliph al-Ḥakam II (350—366 / 961—976) asked him whom he thought was the greatest scholar of Arabic and without hesitation he answered “Muḥammad b. al-Qūṭiyya”.

Ibn al-Qūṭiyya wrote several works on Arabic but only the titles of two were recorded. The first was the *Kitāb taṣārīf al-af‘āl* (“The Conjugation of Verbs”) which was edited many years ago by the Italian scholar, Ignazio Guido (1844—1935) and published by Brill in 1894 under the title “Il Libro dei Verbi” [4]. Guido based his edition on a manuscript in the Lucchesiana Library, Girgenti, dated 534/1139. The existence of another copy was recorded by the French orientalist Auguste Cherbonneau (1813—1882) in the library of Sidī El Ferkoun in Constantine, Algeria in the mid-19th century, though this was not examined by Guido, and in fact seems to have disappeared [5].

His second work had also disappeared and was long thought to have been lost. This is the *Kitāb al-maqṣūr wa al-mamdūd* (“Book of the Shortened and Lengthened [Alif]”) dealing with words ending in *alif maqṣūra* and *alif madda* which is mentioned by Ibn al-Faraḍī [6]. However in the autumn of 2009 a solitary copy emerged from the mists of history and came into the possession of the London dealers Bernard Quaritch. This was correctly identified by Dr. Meis al-Kaisi of Quaritch as the lost work of Ibn al-Qūṭiyya [7].

The manuscript is in excellent condition and consists of 105 folios measuring 25.5×18 cm. According to the colophon on fol. 105v, it was copied in al-Qāhira in 650/1252 and is therefore late Ayyūbid. The text, seventeen lines to the page, is written on thick cream-coloured Arab paper. The script is an excellent scribal *naskhī* hand, fully vocalized, in black with headings in red. The text is accompanied by glosses on almost every page with each note giving, in red, the name of the author from whose work it has been copied. Importantly on fol. 105v there is a note to say that the text has been collated with the original, which may possibly have been in the hand of the author: *balaghat al-muqābala ḥasab... (?) ...bi-nuskhat al-aṣl... (?)* The binding is later, brown morocco covers, of 19th century date.