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Published in:
Medieval Prosopography: History and Collective Biography 23

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

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PROSOPOGRAPHY OF THE ALMORAVID ADDRESSEES OF IBN KHAFAJA’S POEMS

Arie Schippers

Ibn Khafaja’s poetry—especially that written in the time of the Almoravids—is full of references and dedications to political authorities. Some of his poems are addressed to the highest authorities, that is, to members of the family of Yusuf ibn Tashufin, who was the highest authority in both Morocco and al-Andalus, in the latter at least since the beginning of the 1090s; other poems are addressed to the local authorities, often judges, governors, and viziers, with whom the poet was directly involved. Among these are some relatively unknown personalities; some of them, in fact, were hitherto never mentioned. It will be useful to deal in this article with what Ibn Khafaja says about some of these personalities in his poems, as well as in their headings (which are probably by his own hand). In the laudatory poems the poet does not allude to many specific circumstances: it is from the headings and accompanying rhymed prose that we sometimes can glean more detailed information. In the following, I will compare the information gathered from the poems, headings, and pieces of rhymed prose with material gathered from other sources, which I will mention in the notes.

After Yusuf ibn Tashufin, who is mentioned by Ibn Khafaja in his poem about the battle of al-Zallaqa,¹ his son ‘Ali ibn Yusuf became the most powerful person within the dynasty of the Almoravids. ‘Ali ibn Yusuf is mentioned and praised for intervening in a political affair. In a letter Ibn Khafaja thanks the prince² for

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¹See Schippers, “La bataille de Zallâqa (Sagrajas) dans la poésie d’Ibn Khafajah.”
reinstating the judge Ibrahim Ibn 'Isam in the office of judge after his having been dismissed from it (no. 128). But apparently Ibn Khafaja had more ties with Abu Bakr ibn Ibrahim ibn Tashufin—a cousin of 'Ali ibn Yusuf ibn Tashufin—and Tamim and Ibrahim, two of 'Ali ibn Yusuf's brothers. The famous other brother, Abu 'Abdallah ibn 'A'isha, is less visible in Ibn Khafaja's literary work.

In this article I will deal with (a) persons from the immediate entourage of the Almoravids, that is, Abu Tahir Tamim and Abu Bakr Ibrahim the cousin and Ibrahim the brother; (b) judges and other notables dealt with by Ibn Khafaja such as Ibn Sawab, his master, Ibn 'Isam, Ibn Ruhaym, and Ibn Maymun. In treating these personalities I cannot pretend to have dealt with all the judges and other notables in Ibn Khafaja's work: in this article I make a limited selection. In the epilogue I will make brief remarks about the prominent place of Valencia in the works of our poet, and about the occurrence of the names of some other judges whom I did not hitherto identify.

1. ABU TAHIR TAMIM

One of the first approaches of Ibn Khafaja to the Almoravid dynasty—after his poem about the battle of Zallaqa, and the interference by 'Ali mentioned above—was to appease the prince Abu Tahir Tamim ibn Yusuf, the brother of 'Ali the prince of the Muslims and governor of Granada, later of Sevilla, in 1119, and then finally of Cordoba.

Our poet wrote a long qasida at the end of which he attached a piece in rhymed prose (no. 1) addressed to the prince, whom he praised; he saw in Tamim the perfect man to whom only he was allowed to speak (see verses 56–59). The poet accentuates, in a second qasida (no. 50), the decisiveness of the prince and his thoroughness in developing the circumstances of the government. He mentions the border region which now enjoys stability after serious troubles. Then Ibn Khafaja starts speaking about his own not very splendid personal situation, saying that he has already started to swallow the bitterness of misery and humiliation. He composed

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3 See below, n. 26.


5 See Schippers, "Ibn Khafaja (1058–1139)."
these verses as an alarming cry to pierce the ears and arouse the prince’s compassion, seeking his help and assistance. The prince is his only hope of salvation, and Ibn Khafaja expects from him what a sick man expects from his surgeon. He calls him the king of kings (line 40).

Ibn Khafaja adds to this qasīda a letter in which he again praises the prince and points out that one of his governors, who is among those who have no respect for his old age, has gone too far. Then he mentions the esteem in which he had been held in his youth and of which he would like not to be deprived: “From the time I was young until I became old, a position of high influence was always bestowed on me, one of which I was worthy and one I always treated with respect.” Now that he has grown old, he has all the more right to such respect.

In some of the unpublished texts of Ibn Khafaja’s dīwān (fol. 47b; no. 427) which contain prose, then poetry, then prose again, the poet receives a letter from Ibn Abi Bassam al-Husayni, and the heading mentions Abu Tahir Tamim ibn Yusuf ibn Tashfin and his wife Miryam bint Tifilwit:

The vizier al-Katib Abu Muhammad ibn Abi Bassam al-Husayni had written to him a piece of poetry in rhyme on the letter ha' opening with friendly discourse and inviting his company. This happened at the time that the glorious emir Abu Tahir Tamim—may God support him!—came to the peninsula and [al-Husayni] met him with reverence according to the required rank and excellence. Al-Husayni hastened to serve in the command [as an officer] of the noble entourage of the emir and his wife Miryam bint Ibrahim. Immediately afterwards one of the persons in al-Husayni’s entourage brought this [poem] [to the poet]. And Ibn Khafaja wrote a poem in luzam mā la yalzam to thank him for this service and the words he had said in his poem and which God had inspired in him.

This is followed by a poem by Ibn Khafaja and a piece of rhymed prose (fol. 47b; no. 427c).

2. ABU BAKR IBN AL-HAJJ AND THE MENTION OF MARYAM BINT TIFILWIT, WIFE OF ABU TAHIR TAMIM

Ibn Khafaja also had connections with the prince Abu Bakr ibn al-Hajj, of whom we know nothing except that he was the son of the governor of the city of Valencia. Our poet even sent messages to him when he was outside Valencia. Ibn Khafaja speaks about his noble origin, his generosity, his willingness to intercede, and his experience—all the characteristics one needs to be a successful ruler. The
heading of poem no. 139 informs us that it was written when the first governor of Valencia, Abu Muhammad 'Abdallah ibn Fatima (who had been installed in 1102), was replaced by the father of Abu Bakr ibn al-Hajj: Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn al-Hajj [Ibn Turjut]. Ibn Khafaja repeats in his letter following the qasida the same thoughts as are displayed in the poem itself, and he expresses his sincere love for Ibn al-Hajj, saying at the end (no. 139), "It is beneficial for this prosperous ruling family that you are the ornamented border of the cloak of this brightness and the central pearl of the necklace of that nobleshood."

According to al-Hajjaji, this is a reference to Maryam the daughter of Ibn Tifilwit and the wife of Ibn Tahir Tamim, who made a beautiful, charming impression on Ibn Khafaja. Always, according to al-Hajjaji, Ibn Khafaja saw this noble and cultured woman as very properly to be praised in a qasida in order to acquire her approval, and to be under her protection: by praising her eventually he praised the entire Almoravid clan.

3. ABU BAKR IBN IBRAHIM IBN TIFILWIT, COUSIN OF 'ALI IBN YUSUF

One of the members of the Almoravid family whom the poet praised in his poetry was Abu Bakr ibn Ibrahim ibn Tifilwit, a cousin of the prince of the Muslims 'Ali ibn Yusuf and the husband of 'Ali's sister. 'Ali ibn Yusuf had made him governor of Murcia and then of Saragossa. Ibn Tifilwit was literate and had a taste for poetry, and he loved to mingle with famous personalities, including the philosopher Ibn Bajja, who became his vizier. Our poet was also very much impressed by Ibn Tifilwit, desiring to approach him; and in his dīwān there is a long qasīda (no. 2) of no fewer than ninety-nine verses in which he praises the prince, pointing to the characteristics with which he distinguished himself from his colleagues. The poet wishes that his cry would raise an echo, and so he finishes his poem in this fashion:

9 Al-Hajjaji, Hayat, p. 104.
11 For the animal description and hunting scene at the beginning of this poem see Schippers, "Animal Description in the Poetry of Ibn Hafaga."
99. Be a mediator in spite of the remoteness of the dwelling places for someone who hopes, who gave praise although his house is far away.

The reason for this poem was that the poet was asking Abu Bakr ibn Ibrahim to convey his thanks to the highest commander, Abu 'Abdallah ibn 'A'isha, for helping him in the case of his country estates. This man wrote to him from Morocco, and Ibn Khafaja answered by sending him his poem no. 2.

On another occasion he wrote a letter (no. 128) to the prince. He opens the letter with three verses and—after having mentioned the justness of the addressee and his fairness—he begins by alluding to various governors about whom he has complaints; he alludes to one in particular but does not mention his name, although he suffers from the adversity and misfortune he experienced because of this governor. Ibn Khafaja despairs and thinks it strange that this kind of thing could happen in a time so distinguished by the leadership of a great king such as Ibn Tifilwit, and he asks him by these verses (no. 128),

1. Is your face laughing, while my eyes are weeping, and is your justice there, while a person like me is complaining?

But Ibn Tifilwit died in 1110. Two elegies by the poet refer to his death (nos. 58 and 59): both elegies follow the meter and rhyme of the elegy by the vizier Ibn Bajja (Ibn al-Sa'igh), and therein the poet weeps at the death of a man who was famous for his generosity; in the second the poet cries that there is no way he may be consoled about this calamity, saying (no. 59),

—No! By the life of Glory and Generosity, and the pilgrimage to the House and the Sanctuary!
—May I never be consoled about a king with a bright face of customs and character traits.
—This excellence of his was a filling of my hand, and the praise of his was the filling of my mouth.

4. ABU ISHAQ IBRAHIM IBN T’AYASHT, SON OF YUSUF IBN TASHUFIN

In the first of the above-mentioned poems (no. 58), the praise is for the brother of the prince of Muslims, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Yusuf, who included Ibn Khafaja

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13 Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Yusuf ibn Tashfin ibn T'ayasht (d. 1121); Diwan, no. 9, no. 57, no. 49, no. 60, no. 233; Ibn Khaqan, Qala'id, pp. 3, 275, 276, 351; Ibn al-Abbar, Mu'jam, pp. 8, 55, 241; Ibn al-
among his intimates, gave him generous presents, and recommended him to his good friends. This Almoravid prince is also known as Ibn Ta'ayasht, a reference to his mother. According to the sources, she was a black slave. His brother 'Ali ibn Yusuf made him governor of Ceuta, then of Murcia, then of Valencia in 1110, and finally of Sevilla in 1114. Abu Ishaq distinguished himself by laudable character traits, his interest in science, and the transmission of literature. People loved him and poets praised him, and al-Fath ibn Khaqan devoted his *Qala'id al-'Iqyan* (Golden Necklaces) to him.\(^1\) Ibn Khaqan reminds us of the famous day when Abu Ishaq met Ibn Khafaja and he says,\(^2\)

> I came into Játiva on Fitr Day of the year 510. The prince Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Yusuf ibn Tashufin—May God support him!—came there to observe the feast. . . . And Ibn Khafaja was present there to have his promise fulfilled with the signature of a document prepared by him. When the day of the feast came, and the people assembled and came together, Abu Ishaq rose up and recited the following qasida (no. 9).

By now (ca. 1115) Ibn Khafaja had reached the age of sixty. Our poet did not refrain from mentioning this important event, which had an immense influence on his soul. He quotes it in the preface to his *díwán*, saying:\(^3\)

> When the illustrious prince Abu Ishaq Ibrahim the prince of the Muslims and supporter of the religion, entered the al-Andalus—may God give it His protection and strength—he decided that I should come along to congratulate him on the government and greet him and should cover his elevated carpet fulfilling the plight of obedience paying reverence. He did not hesitate to rise and come near. . . . Thus his piety and beneficial deeds captivated me and his good message and reception bound me, and who is satisfied is engaged: whoever finds good deeds a chain, is bound by chains. And I was there inclined to compose poetry . . . as mantles for the shoulders of my sultan in order to approach him not to ask for presents.

Ibn Khafaja found in Abu Ishaq Ibrahim the savior he was looking for. Especially for Abu Ishaq he wrote five long laudatory poems. In the first—which was composed in 1115 in the city of Játiva, as referred to above—Ibn Khafaja mentions the days of his youth and the happy hours they spent together in the company of friends when he was relieved and not “narrowed of breast.” But there is no room for regret about what has gone before because the prince Abu Ishaq is now present and prepared to answer the prayers of every beseecher. He is indeed one of the

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\(^1\) *Qala'id*, preface, pp. 3, 4.
\(^2\) *Qala'id*, p. 275.
\(^3\) *Díwán*, preface, p. 7 line 9.

I was crying when the dove was singing, and he echoed, I would not cry when the doves did not sing.
I was complaining a time at al-Mushaqar now bygone, while the shadow of clouds of the Youth was scattered.

In the second poem (no. 57), the date of which is difficult to establish, he praises the prince, being sure of his mediation and his bravery in the wars, and is present at the victory of the prince over his enemy Ibn Rudmir at Coria, pointing out that the prince will never know defeat and warning the enemy that he will receive punishment if he would begin a struggle with the prince.

But in 1120 an important event took place which had a great effect on the soul of Ibn Khafaja: the removal of Abu Ishaq Ibrahim to Sevilla by order of the prince of the Muslims 'Ali ibn Yusuf. Our poet regretted this separation and yet again found himself lonely. He composed qasida no. 49 in order to praise the prince and commemorate his siege of the town of Morilla on his way to the border when his enemy appeared there. During this period the prince of Muslims became interested in appointing Abu Ishaq to the district of Sevilla. This news fell on the ears of Ibn Khafaja like a thunderbolt. He saw no other solution than to say farewell to this generous prince, while his eyes were streaming abundantly with tears, to this warm friend whose protection he had enjoyed.

In the letter following this poem he again praises the prince, and declares himself jealous of Sevilla for receiving a generous personality like his. But Ibn Khafaja does not even hint at the reason for transferring the prince from Murcia to Sevilla, although it is very clear that it was because of the defeat Abu Ishaq suffered from his enemy Rudmir in Daroca to the southwest of the town of Saragossa.

\[\text{Ibn Rudmir [Ramiro] was the name of Alphonse I el Batallador (the warrior) king of Aragon, Léon, Castile, Asturias, who died sometime between 1105 and 1134; Lagardère, \textit{Djihad andalou}, pp. 109–14; in 1125 he attacked Abu Ishaq, so the poem must be dated after this year; Ibn al-Kardabus, \textit{al-Iktifa'}, p. 117 [142, 143]. The town mentioned in the heading of the poem is Coria (in the neighborhood of Mérida), which is taken by Abu Ishaq Ibrahim: the punishment of Ibn Rudmir is mentioned. Ibn Khafaja composed it when he was going to the East; this movement coincided with spring.}\]
\[\text{See esp. lines 39–41 of poem no. 57; quoted by al-Hajjaji, \textit{Hayat}, p. 108.}\]
\[\text{See esp. lines 42–45 of poem no. 49; quoted by al-Hajjaji, \textit{Hayat}, p. 109.}\]
\[\text{See al-Hajjaji, \textit{Hayat}, p. 110: on the basis of Ibn al-Abbar it is plausible that the main reason was the shortcomings of the prince which led to the battle of Cutanda.}\]
The distance between the prince and Ibn Khafaja did not prevent the latter from remaining very much concerned about his relationship with him. Good evidence of this is the panegyric (no. 60) he composed in the same year, after his visit to the emir. He starts the qaṣīda by ghazal so that he gets the opportunity to mention the happiness he had enjoyed in the days of his youth. Youth has now vanished because the end of everything in the world is perdition. That belongs to the custom of God in His creation. Human beings can find consolation in this wisdom. Then Ibn Khafaja continues and does not see failure or despair when he realizes that the emir Abu Ishaq is always there and defends him against Time. The poet says,

28. Whiteness and brightness of life is always linked with blackness: juvenile down on the cheeks and locks of black hair.
29. It is a striking enough disaster for me that Time greases my digestion.
30. No, by the Life of Glory and Generosity and Decisiveness of Sword and Pen!
32. Time will not receive from me—because in Ibrahim is my shelter!—
31. A pious utterance comparable with the oath which I already observe [for Ibrahim]: and what an oath that is!

Then Ibn Khafaja starts again his ode to praise the prince, mentioning his mediation and bravery in the bitter wars against an enemy, which tastes only the bitterness of defeat. Abu Ishaq is an excellent personality and everyone who takes refuge with him enjoys safety.

In the last qaṣīda (no. 233)—which was probably composed in that very year 1120 and was sent to Sevilla—we see Ibn Khafaja “asking repeatedly for a rendezvous with the prince, stimulating him in all his circumstances to the most excellent and utmost.” He wishes to comply with his needs so that he can seize this opportunity to praise Abu Ishaq another time. Ibn Khafaja ends his qaṣīda by expressing the love which is in his inner heart and asking the emir to excuse him for not paying him a visit for a reason which he cries out:

42. A painful passion makes him stand up, but a meager body makes him there to sit again.

In the letter following this poem Ibn Khafaja boasts about the rank the emir bestowed upon him, and which he continues to enjoy. The poet adds to the poem a letter in prose. Neither the poem nor its prose had a lasting effect on the emir, because Abu Ishaq died in 1120 or 1121.

21See lines 34–37 of poem no. 233 quoted by al-Hajjaji, Hayat, p. 111.
5. ABU L-‘ALA’ ZUHR IBN ZUHR

The emir Abu Ishaq was not very fast in fulfilling his promises despite the urging of the poet. Perhaps therefore the poet addresses himself in this period (1116–20) to the vizier Ibn Zuhr, no doubt hoping that he would be able to influence the emir. Apparently the famous surgeon Abu l-‘Ala’ Zuhr ibn Zuhr22 had formerly played an important role at the court of the Taifa king al-Mu’tamid ibn ’Abbad, who considered him among his intimates. Afterwards he became connected with Yusuf ibn Tashufin and became one of his ministers. Ibn Zuhr was also in the service of the prince Abu Ishaq Ibrahim. Ibn Khafaja appreciated Ibn Zuhr and glorified him, as two odes composed about him indicate; these were no doubt sent to him in Sevilla. According to the heading of poem no. 69, Ibn Khafaja’s first ode to Ibn Zuhr was written in the month of Ramadan in 1120. What helps to establish this date is the poet’s allusion in his ode to his age:

22. I was complaining, regretting a past time, and the shortcoming of a sixty-year-old man is that he weeps.23

In these verses our poet is not in a very enviable situation. He tries to win the sympathy of Ibn Zuhr to fulfil his needs, and this is after Ibn Khafaja’s letters to the glorious emir Abu Ishaq Ibrahim have succeeded each other one after the other, apparently to no avail, letters written to motivate the emir to give him advantage and protection and to fulfil his longings and his interests. Apparently the poet wanted Ibn Zuhr to intercede for him with the prince. In the first long ode, the poet starts remembering his youth and the luxurious life he led in the bosom of nature in the company of young men. But those days have gone now, and he is alone with his sufferings under the burden of old age. Then the poet moves on to praise the vizier Ibn Zuhr, who distinguished himself by the usual characteristics of praiseworthy men, namely courage, generosity, and mildness.

In the second ode (no. 150) our poet starts with an elegy and weeps for his friends smitten by the hand of Fate. He weeps because he is lonely, then he directs himself to his past and remembers the days of his youth and the hours of happiness. The poet is now happy to come together with Ibn Zuhr and to find consolation in


23 See also Schippers, “Theme of Old Age in the Poetry of Ibn Hafaga.”
these days of misery. Then he switches to praising the vizier, directing his glance to the vexations of the bitterness of life, hoping to receive from him a helping hand in order to save him from perdition:

57. O you who went far away with the morning star high in ambition, and the ladder of inborn qualities in the emirate is high.
58. The pole star of the night sees the dim star of the Great Bear called al-Suha with regard to him as a third, while the full moon of the dark weather pastures there as a second.
59. I ask you forgiveness for someone who went far away, who complained about being moved by love passion, so that these rhymes came into being out of yearning towards you.
60. May he keep alive by them the most fragrant garden with a strong odor and may he make soft embroidery which comes from the part of the wind.
61. It has become moist so that I do not know whether it is a paper which I am adorning, or flowing tears which I am scattering.
62. And you are the sweet water [the Euphrates] for the thirst, and even if you go away, then the generous continent is as a present for me.
63. Brother of generosity, son of intelligence, father of exaltedness, and that is enough as a house high in good qualities.24

In the letter following this qasida Ibn Khafaja complains about some of the employees, and especially their lack of decisiveness. He says,

I have written on a disease that keeps in contact with me and a tiredness which does not go away from me because of the dullness and trouble of the events that happened in this region and the alternation of those in office. As soon as something is prepared, it becomes destroyed, as soon as there is rest, it is annihilated. And who is made familiar with trusted mounts, and is intimate with a splendid and felicitous case, it has become cumbersome for him that he has to descend from that mount to another mount, and that he has to undress a shoulder from the garment of that splendor, especially when Age has transported us from youth to greyness.

The poet would have wanted to improve his situation by means of the excellent help of the vizier, so that he would enjoy respect and consideration in his old age in the same manner as he had in his youth and maturity. It seems strange for a poet to start a laudatory qasida with an elegy. Ibn Khafaja expected this comment and therefore replies to it in his letter:

Perhaps someone would ask what is wrong with the maker of this poem: as soon as he has started with an elegy, he goes on with a passage on love, as soon as he is serious he becomes a jester, and he follows with a panegyric and at the end he comes with self-praise and boastful pride. [The poet's] answer to him would be then that since in the theme of an elegy there is a connection and involvement between the one who praises and the one who

24Nowaihi has dealt amply with this qasida (no. 150) in her Poetry of Ibn Khafajah (see A. Schippers' s review of this book in Journal of the American Oriental Society 116/1 [January–March 1996], 154-55).
is praised, he opens his poem with an elegy as a kind of participation and condolence and consolation, then he ends the poem with praise as a kind of putting at ease and giving comfort. And when he makes an allusion to the grief he suffers and the sufferings he remembers, the words are about him, and he pours them out, out of reverence and loyalty for his friendship with him.

6. IBN SAWAB

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Abi al-Fadl Ibn Sawab seems to have been one of Ibn Khafaja’s masters. He was born in Játiva around 1038. He became a surgeon and established himself at Tangier, then at Fez, and finally at Miknas, where he died in 1115. Probably Ibn Khafaja followed his lessons in 1077, when the poet was twenty years old. Ibn Sawab, who visited al-Andalus several times, also taught grammar and literature. In his published ḍhāwān there are no poems, but a letter, which Ibn Khafaja sent him with much love (ḍhāwān no. 16). This letter was written by the poet while both were in Morocco. When Ibn Sawab visited al-Andalus they had become good friends. The poet ’Abdallah ibn ’A’isha was also participating. An unpublished text from the ḍhāwān of Ibn Khafaja has the following heading (fols. 50a/b, 51a; no. 437):

Between him and master Abu Ishaq ibn Sawab—may God preserve our hope upon his benefits and good deeds—was a complete friendship of partners together and a true love, and when the master set out to travel to the other side [Morocco] and departing from al-Andalus he said among other things to Ibn Khafaja, “Every human being will inevitably disappear.” . . . And Ibn Khafaja was a student of his . . . and before his departure he took leave from him.

The poem that follows has thirty-five lines.

7. IBN ’ISAM

As mentioned above, in Ibn Khafaja’s ḍhāwān there is a letter he wrote to the prince ’Ali ibn Yusuf, thanking him for reinstating the qāḍī Ibn ’Isam in the office of judge, and informing him about the feelings of the people of the town of Murcia towards the prince of Muslims. He says, “This letter comes from this Friday mosque—may God populate it with his remembrance—and the multitude was present in it—may God benefit them with His protection” (no. 127).

The qaṣīda (no. 128) Ibn Khafaja then wrote to his friend Ibn ’Isam26 to con-

gratulate him upon his return to the office of judge contains verses addressed to the prince in which he praises him and sings about his deeds. In the unpublished dīwān of Ibn Khafaja we find the following heading (fols. 39b–40a; 392a): “He wrote to the Supreme Judge (Qādī al-Qudūh) Abu Umayya [Ibrahim ibn 'Isam]—may God have compassion on his soul!—in order to congratulate him on the decision of the Judges and his appointment to the office of vizier.”

In the three-liner which follows Ibn Khafaja says to his friend, among other things, “Join the highest authority, what belongs to the most precious glad tidings. Occupy the place most desired by the souls of mankind.” And the next heading in the same text (fols. 39b–40a; 392b) is:

He heard about the success of the Elevated Most Glorious Judge whose laudable standard attracts to him and comes from him breathing the fragrance of the mention of his name, even though his house is far away. May his life be extended because of the excellence by which he rectifies his people, and the justice by which he embarks upon his mountain path.

The text finishes in this manner: “May you never cease to be adorned with praise as a necklace, and be clothed with good luck scattered by the Will of God Glorious and High.”

8. IBN RUHAYM AND IBN MAYMUN

Another personality with whom Ibn Khafaja had narrow ties of friendship was the vizier Abu Ishaq ibn Ruhyam, about whom we know nothing else except that he was a mushrīf (dignitary) of the Almoravid dynasty. The poet composed two poems about him. The first (no. 137) makes it clear that the poet is older than his friend, which we derive from the wish of the poet to make use of his experience so that Ibn Ruhyam does not lose his way. In the second qāṣīda (no. 198) Ibn Khafaja praises his friend, indicating his beauty and his excellent manners, manners which

are shared by all the members of the Ibn Ruhaym family. At the end he then accentuates his sincerity and pure inner feelings and says,

21. Here you get the poem and are congratulated with the praise in it, I give you a garden with lightning flowers.
22. Glitters from beauty by your glory a mantle, and it breathes perfume burning incense with your glory.
23. Someone other than I lies in some other poem when praising, so be desirous to hear false talk.

Also among the judges were persons attached to Ibn Khafaja, for example Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Maymun. We know that he lived in the town of Majorca, where he fulfilled the function of judge. It is very possible that he was younger than our poet, whom he knew in some of the eastern Andalusian towns. Then there was an affective relationship between the two. The heading of a poem says about him, “Between our poet and the judge there were pleasantries and conversations.” We find in his poetry a poetic fragment addressed to Ibn Maymun (no. 186) because he liked poetry and wrote poetry from time to time. Our poet replies to a poem by the qādī in the same rhyme and meter (no. 187):

1. You have composed with great skill, so that you made an enormous impression, who was Habib [Abu Tammam] compared with that? Woe to him. Who was Abu al-Tayyib [al-Mutanabbi] compared with that?
2. And if these two poets were running to a finish with you, you would win, and these two would lose.

In the unpublished diwan of Ibn Khafaja (fol. 4b; no. 337) we find a mention of both Abu Bakr ibn Maymun and Abu Bakr ibn Ruhaym, perhaps the same persons as mentioned above, or at least belonging to the same family. Ibn Ruhaym corresponds with Ibn Maymun and with Ibn Khafaja because they traveled in the neighborhood of his house and did not visit him, not even by means of a phantasm (wa-law tayfan). First we find a poem written by Ibn Ruhaym for Ibn Maymun and Ibn Khafaja, and then a poem written by Ibn Khafaja for Ibn Ruhaym. Ibn Khafaja’s reply (fol. 5a; no. 337b) to Abu Bakr ibn Ruhaym is in the same rhyme. “He corresponded with him in prose and poetry, reproaching him in earnest and in jest, and al-wazir al-musharraf in the time of his youth united in beauty a full moon with a branch.”

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In another part of this text (fol. 5b/337c) the poet describes in prose a meeting with him when he was coming from Játiva on his way to Denia. At the end of the text (fol. 5b/6a 337d) we find a poem of departure with greetings to him and his father.

9. EPILOGUE: VALENCIA

Perhaps a short note about the mention of Valencia is in order here. The poet had a special relationship with Valencia and its governors, and in the unpublished diwān text the name Valencia occurs several times. The heading of one elegy (fol. 44b; 409a) reads:

He started on the theme of elegy with an extra rhyme letter n [together with the d] to make his speech more embellished and to give a solid base for the speech. He made the following elegy on Abu Manad Badis ibn Taqur—may God remember his soul!—. . . . The person who was bewailed had already fallen as a martyr at the beginning of the Valencia civil war [fīna balāsunīya]. And this was the place he spoke about later. He alluded to the ḥadīth who dies as a martyr dies, happily.

In another poem (fol. 7b; no. 341b) the poet returns a greeting to Ibn Sharaf. He describes how he met him in a vision and pronounces his blessings for Valencia. In yet another unpublished poem (fol. 43b; no. 404a) “He said answering a poem belonging to the comic genre, which two gentlemen of his friends sent him at the time of the siege of the emir Abu Muhammad [‘Abdallah ibn Fatima, with the sobriquet Balanyulan] the governor of Valencia.”

Reading through the diwān of Ibn Khafaja, its poems as well as its rhymed prose letters, it is striking how many names of literati and of lower political functionaries appear that are otherwise virtually unknown, such as his masters like Ibn Sawab, and important lower dignitaries such as Ibn Ruhaym and Ibn Maymun. The poet had real friendships with those lower-ranking people, whereas the family of the Almoravids was further away from him, only useful when seen in relation to their lower colleagues. It is important to reconstruct the society in which a famous poet like Ibn Khafaja lived. Not only do we get an idea of the poet’s involvement in the political situations and the historical events, but also we can grasp the impact of those events during the time of the poet, events in which he participated from afar. Especially the events in the neighborhood of Valencia inspired him to write political poems in which he shows commitment and takes sides.

We know that many poets had a political function and role, as we see for instance in the famous anthologies by Ibn Bassam and al-Fath ibn Khaqan. Therefore looking through the headings of the well-ordered diwān of a poet such as Ibn...
Khafaja can provide us with much information on dignitaries and political functionaries, not only from the poetry and rhyme prose text but also from the headings above poems and prose which explain the historical circumstances and which were probably written by the poet himself. It was he who organized his dīwān twice or more and revised many of his poems. He even wrote a preface to his dīwān with much information about his formation as a poet, and about his political connections, which determined the setting of his poetic oeuvre.

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