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## Nests of Pirates? 'Islandness' in the Balearic Islands and la-Garde-Freinet

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### Abstract:

The "World of Medieval Islands" project invites the questioning of the category of island from medieval evidence, and coincided with another project of the author's undertaking a similar exercise with medieval frontiers. Combining these two research areas, this article investigates two island, or island-like, zones that were situated at the edges of early medieval polities, primarily (though variably) of Umayyad al-Andalus, and compares their situation so as to elucidate what about their geopolitical situation made them island-like and how steady that likeness was. Working through the historiographies of the Balearic Islands, which shifted from Byzantine to Islamic control through a variably evaluated transition period, and of the Muslim settlement at la Garde-Freinet, Provence, from inception to extermination, the article concludes that what was island-like or indeed frontier-like about both areas was not continuous, and that the category "island" is historically contingent and subjective despite its apparent geographic concreteness.

Keywords: islands, Balearics, Fraxinetum, al-Andalus, Byzantium, geographers

## Nests of Pirates: 'Islandness' in the Balearic Islands and la-Garde-Freinet

To define an island may seem an easy matter; but even in possession of such a definition, to assemble characteristics common to islands, and therefore to generalise about them, presents significant and unappreciated challenges.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to test the category of "island", this article takes two points of comparison in the early medieval Mediterranean that were linked by membership within a political hegemony, that of the Andalusí emirate and then caliphate, and which are now linked by their reputation in historiography as pirate havens. This two-sided status, both inside and outside regular structures, in contact with but opposed to outsiders, exposes some of the gradients along which this category can vary.

This evaluation of the status "island" here proceeds in dialogue with another discourse on the status "frontier".<sup>2</sup> When the present author first became part of the project that gives rise to this collection of articles, "The World of Medieval Islands", it was simultaneous with another project, "Rethinking the Medieval Frontier", in which

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Darley, Jonathan Jarrett and Luca Zavagno, "Introduction: Insularity and Frontier in and beyond the Mediterranean", *al-Masāq* (forthcoming), and refs there, but otherwise contrast the notions of "island" in e. g. Salvatore Cosentino, "A Longer Antiquity? Cyprus, Insularity and the Economic Transition", *Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes*, 43 (2013): 93–102, DOI: 10.3406/cchyp.2013.1056, and Tristan Platt, "From the Island's Point of View: Warfare and Transformation in an Andean Vertical Archipelago", *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 95/2 (2009): 33–70. I must thank Dr Emma Felber for this latter reference.

<sup>2</sup> A vast literature could be cited here and no selection can be representative. Four checkpoints for the variety of approaches, one medieval and three not, might be *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700*, eds Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Dan Jones, "The Significance of the Frontier in World History", *History Compass*, 1/1 (2003): 1–3, DOI: 10.1111/1478-0542.0035; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th edn (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012); and Juan Carlos Arriaga-Rodríguez, "Tres tesis del concepto frontera en la historiografía", in *Tres miradas a la historia contemporánea*, ed. by Gerardo Gurza Lavalle (San Juan Mixcoac: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2013), pp. 9–47 <[http://www.academia.edu/3401254/Tres\\_tesis\\_del\\_concepto\\_frontera\\_en\\_la\\_Historiografía](http://www.academia.edu/3401254/Tres_tesis_del_concepto_frontera_en_la_Historiografía)> [last modified 12 February 2014 as of 24 August 2014]. Again I owe thanks to Dr Emma Felber for the initial direction towards Anzaldúa's work.

Luca Zavagno is also a participant.<sup>3</sup> Dr Zavagno’s project subtitle, “‘Not the Final Frontier’”, would surely have made comparison between the projects ineluctable, but it has arisen naturally. After all, while not all frontiers are islands, are all islands not necessarily frontiers, at least of land with sea or of inhabitable with uninhabitable? Again, two relatively unlike but related points of comparison are good tools with which to test possible answers to that question.

Of the two points of comparison, the Balearics and the Muslim colony known as *Fraxinetum*, modern la Garde-Freinet in Provence, only the former are, geographically, islands, and are actually several of them. La Garde-Freinet, meanwhile, is a stretch of French mainland coastline, not even a peninsula.<sup>4</sup> Yet as we shall see, both were apparently seen as single islands in the early Middle Ages and share what we might call “island-like” characteristics.<sup>5</sup> This article details this likeness and uses it to test and question our modern sense of what the

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<sup>3</sup> “‘Not the Final Frontier’. The World of Medieval Islands”, Newton Mobility Grant, awarded to Luca Zavagno 16 January 2017, British Academy NG160273; “Rethinking the Medieval Frontier”, British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant, awarded to Jonathan Jarrett, 1 April 2017, British Academy SG 162854. This article could not exist without the generous support of these awards and their funders.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Sénac, *Musulmans et Sarrasins dans le sud de la Gaule, VIIIe–XIe siècle* (Paris: Sycomore, 1980), pp. 45–6, and an anonymous reviewer of this article both maintain that in the medieval period la Garde-Freinet was partly cut off from the mainland by tidal inlets. Neither provided any reference, and I have not been able to substantiate it myself. No medieval source makes such a claim, and none of Sénac, ‘Contribution à l’étude des incursions musulmanes dans l’Occident chrétien : la localisation du Ġabal al-Qilāl’, *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 31/1 (1981): 7–14, DOI: 10.3406/remmm.1981.1900, Sénac, *Provence et piraterie sarrasine* [Islam et Occident, volume I] (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1982) or Sénac, ‘Le califat de Cordoue et la Méditerranée occidentale au Xe siècle : Le Fraxinet des Maures’, in *Castrum 7. Zones côtières dans le monde méditerranéen au moyen âge : Défense, peuplement, mise en valeur*, ed. Jean-Marie Martin [Collection de l’École française de Rome, volume CV/7, Colloque internationale organisé par l’École française de Rome et la Casa de Velázquez, en collaboration avec le Collège de France et la Centre interuniversitaire d’histoire et d’archéologie médiévales (UMR 5648 - Université Lyon II - C.N.R.S. - E.H.E.S.S.) Rome, 23–26 octobre 1996] (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2001), pp. 113–26, repeat it.

<sup>5</sup> Here, perhaps incongruously, I take my formulation from Judith M. Bennett, “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianisms”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 9/1–2 (2000): 1–24.

characteristics pertaining to the category “island” in fact were in the early Middle Ages, including via a short comparison to a third island space in a different geopolitical situation, Malta. I argue that, perhaps unlike Malta, the Balearics and la Garde-Freinet were frontier and island-like spaces only in certain political conditions, of which they were not necessarily the arbiters.<sup>6</sup>

The Balearics, as said, are not one island but several, five that are commonly named and a large number of islets whose total is a matter of definition. The group was perhaps first unified under Roman government, prior to which Mallorca, Menorca and Cabrera, principal members of the properly Balearic group, had been primarily occupied by a Talaiotic archaeological culture, while Ibiza, Formentera and their lesser siblings, known together as the Pityuses, were part of the Punic world.<sup>7</sup> The largest of the major islands is Mallorca, which is approximately 3,500 km<sup>2</sup> in area; next is Menorca, rather smaller, and then in descending order of size come Ibiza, Formentera and Cabrera. The whole complex lies between 150 and 200 km off the coast of modern Spain.

The early Middle Ages did not leave historians very much to go on in reconstructing these islands’ history. Various summaries and reinterpretations of the very limited written evidence have been made, but the hope for real progress is very clearly with archaeology, which is every year producing new data and enriching interpretations of what were once called “the dark centuries” of Balearic history.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Luca Zavagno, “‘Going to the extremes’: the Balearics and Cyprus in the early Medieval Byzantine Insular System”, *al-Masāq* (forthcoming); for a resolution of our differences, as far as is desirable, see Darley, Jarrett and Zavagno, “Introduction”.

<sup>7</sup> Jordi Fernandez, ‘The Prehistory of Eivissa and Formentera’, in *Biogeography and Ecology of the Pityusic Islands*, ed. H. Kuhbier, J. A. Alcover, and C. Guerau d’Arellano Tur [Monographiae Biologicae, volume 52] (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1984), pp. 565–95, DOI: 10.1007/978-94-009-6539-3\_25.

<sup>8</sup> G. Rosselló Bordoy, “Los siglos oscuros de Mallorca”, *Mayūrqa*, 10 (1973): 77–100 <<https://www.raco.cat/index.php/Mayurqa/article/view/117535>> [last modified 23 March 2006 as of 5 June 2018]; cf. G. Rosselló Bordoy, “Nueva luz sobre los siglos oscuros de Baleares y Pitiusas”, *Bolletí de la Societat Arqueològica Lul·liana* 62 (2006): 307–24 <[http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/bsal/index/assoc/BSAL\\_200/6\\_Tom\\_62.dir/BSAL\\_2006\\_Tom](http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/bsal/index/assoc/BSAL_200/6_Tom_62.dir/BSAL_2006_Tom)

There is still, however, something to be got from placing the limited written material more firmly in its context of production and comparing it with that growing archaeological record, and there are various peculiarities and *hapaces* in the current syntheses that deserve isolation. I therefore proceed by giving the absolute minimum political context against which I set the archaeological picture as I understand it, and then add to this in layers the very limited Byzantine written evidence, subsequent Latin references and then Arabic references, each with critique where it seems necessary (though I should admit that I access the Arabic sources only through European translations). This makes clearer where the spaces in the record lie and how different perspectives reveal quite different faces to Balearic political agency.

The absolute minimum context as just offered is very quickly summarised.<sup>9</sup> The whole set of islands were under Roman control by the first century BC but, with the breakdown of Roman power in the west, the islands were drawn into the fighting between barbarian-identified military groups which removed the Iberian Peninsula from central Roman control, with a Vandal raid affecting them as early as 425 and full-blown conquest by the Vandal kings, by then based in Carthage, following in

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\_62.pdf> [last modified 8 January 2009 as of 21 May 2018], pressing p. 314 for an end to attempts to get extra information from the written sources, on the basis that Josep Amengual i Batle (his student) has now done all that can be done in *Els orígens del cristianisme a les Balears i el seu desenvolupament fins a l'època musulmana*, volumes I–II [Els Treballs i Els Dies, volumes XXXVI–XXXVII] (Mallorca: Editorial Moll, 1991). Some readers may feel that Amengual has in fact attempted more than can be done with the sources.

<sup>9</sup> Syntheses of the written material, substantially resting on Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, include Juan Signes Codoñer, “Bizancio y las Islas Baleares en los siglos VIII y IX”, in *Mallorca y Bizancio*, ed. Rafael Durán Tapia (Palma de Mallorca: Asociación Amigos del Castillo de San Carlos «Aula General Weyler», 2005), pp. 45–99

<[https://www.academia.edu/3800253/Bizancio\\_y\\_las\\_Islas\\_Baleares\\_en\\_los\\_siglos\\_VIII\\_y\\_IX](https://www.academia.edu/3800253/Bizancio_y_las_Islas_Baleares_en_los_siglos_VIII_y_IX)> [last modified 27 June 2013 as of 17 February 2018]; B. Vallori, C. Mas and M. A. Cau, “Romanos, Vándalos y Bizantinos: Esbozo histórico de unas islas dominadas”, in *Calvià: patrimonio cultural*, ed. Miquel Seguí Llinàs, volumes I–II (Calvià: Fundación Calvià, 2011), I: 147–63

<<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269994100>> [last modified 21 June 2012 as of 26 May 2018], pp. 147–58; and Margarita Vallejo Girvés, *Hispania y Bizancio: Una relación desconocida* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2012), pp. 439–76, all offering roughly the same information. Vallejo works that material harder than anyone bar Amengual; Vallori, Mas and Cau are perhaps most rigorous.

455.<sup>10</sup> The imperial historian Procopius tells us that the islands were returned to what we would now call Byzantine rule in 534, and although this is the last central imperial testimony to the islands, for at least a while after reconquest they evidently fell under Byzantine control, though the structures and location of that control can probably not be established.<sup>11</sup> By the 930s, and perhaps before—as will be discussed—they had fallen under the control of the Umayyad rulers of Muslim Spain. Between these points, however, much less is certain than we would wish, and these uncertainties help expose some of the field’s assumptions about the normal structures of island geopolitics. The written sources tend to reify such assumptions for the reader, and so it is better to begin with the archaeology, which helps demonstrate that their putative foundations can often be dismantled.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 285–328; Vallori, Mas and Cau, “Romanos, Vándalos y Bizantinos”, pp. 156–7. For the sources see Hydatius, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire*, ed. R.W. Burgess (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), DOI: 10.1093/actrade/9780198147879.book.1, *cap.* 86, and Victor Vitensis, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae sub Geiserico et Hunirico regibus Wandalorum*, ed. Karl Halm [Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctores Antiquissimi, volume III/1] (Berlin: Weidmann, 1879), p. 4 (I.iv).

<sup>11</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 329–58; Vallejo, *Hispania y Bizancio*, pp. 442–7. For the source see Procopius, *History of the Wars, Books III and IV*, ed. H. B. Dewing [Loeb Classical Library, volume LXXXI] (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 248–9 (IV.v.7).

<sup>12</sup> The most useful archaeological synthesis for the reader in English is Miguel Ángel Cau Ontiveros and Catalina Mas Florit, “The Early Byzantine Period in the Balearic Islands”, in *The Insular System of the Early Byzantine Mediterranean: Archaeology and History*, eds Demetrios Michaelides, Philippa Pergola and Enrico Zanini [British Archaeological Reports International Series, volume MMDXXIII, The International Seminar “The Insular System of the Early Byzantine Mediterranean: archaeology and history”, Nicosia - Cyprus, 24th–26th October 2007] (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), pp. 31–45 <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282321862>> [last modified 21 May 2018 as of 21 May 2018]; another useful contribution is Catalina Mas and Miguel Ángel Cau, ‘Rural Settlement in Late Antique Mallorca (Balearic Islands): An Interim Approach’, *Archeologia Medievale*, 34 (2007): 171–80 <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282320126>> [last modified 17 September 2008 as of 21 May 2018].

## The Archaeological Context

Despite the number of islands encompassed in the term ‘Balearics’, it is all too easy to try to tell a single archaeological history of them as a unit. As has already been indicated, this involves glossing over differences between Balearics proper and Pityuses, but also makes it likely that evidence from one island will be deployed to cover silences in others that may themselves be significant. Consequently, the following summary proceeds island by island before generalising.

Beginning with the smallest of the major islands, Cabrera has been subject to a reasonable amount of archaeological investigation, concentrated especially at Pla de ses Figueres on the southern shore, but also several more isolated locations in the hills like Clot del Guix and Son Piconells.<sup>13</sup> At Pla de ses Figueres has been found a small settlement that during the late Roman period operated a factory for wine and garum but also one for making purple dye from murex shellfish, which was an imperial monopoly and bespeaks a certain amount of official oversight.<sup>14</sup> Because it is known that there was a monastery in the island around 600, as will be discussed, and because of a building that may have been a church at this location and a cemetery all of whose occupants were adult males, it has been concluded by several investigators that the Pla de ses Figueres site was the monastic complex from an early date and, indeed, that the other settlements on the island were supporting farms belonging to the monastery.<sup>15</sup> The cemetery contained only three

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<sup>13</sup> There is no summary of Cabrera’s archaeology in English. The most recent round-up is Mateu Riera Rullan, *El monacat insular de la Mediterrània occidental: El monestir de Cabrera (Balears, segles V–VIII)* [Studia archaeologiae christianae, volume I] (Barcelona: Ateneu Universitari Sant Pacià, Facultat Antoni Gaudí d’Història, Arqueologia i Arts Cristianes: Institut Català d’Arqueologia Clàssica, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Mateu Riera Rullan, “El Monestir de Cabrera”, in *El monestir de Cabrera, segles V–VIII dC. del 15 de març al 15 de juny de 2014, Castell de Belver, Palma*, ed. Mateu Riera Rullan [Del 15 de març al 15 de juny de 2014, Castell de Belver, Palma] (Palma de Mallorca: Ajuntament de Palma, 2014), 25–48 <[https://www.academia.edu/21631919/The\\_monastery\\_of\\_Cabrera.\\_V-VIII\\_centuries\\_AD](https://www.academia.edu/21631919/The_monastery_of_Cabrera._V-VIII_centuries_AD)> [last modified 14 July 2014 as of 11 March 2018], 36–8; Riera, *Monacat insular*, pp. 574–5.

<sup>15</sup> Riera, “Monestir de Cabrera”, pp. 40–43; Riera, *Monacat insular*, pp. 587–90.



bodies, however, which is hardly conclusive proof of a monastery, and despite the investigators' claims no unusually Christian artefacts have been found that might indicate liturgical activity.<sup>16</sup> The latest date placed on any finds from these sites is in the eighth century, but in fact none of the finds can be certainly dated later than the second half of the seventh century. The most certainly late item is a coin of Emperor Constans II (r. 641–68) from Carthage recently found at Pla de ses Figueres.<sup>17</sup> Other coin finds are few but include some Vandal material.<sup>18</sup>

The situation in Formentera is considerably less well-evidenced. Some rural sites examined by field survey show a renewal of datable evidence in the sixth and seventh centuries following abandonment in the second or third, but nothing thereafter.<sup>19</sup> While this must partly be down to difficulties in dating coarseware ceramics after the end of the import of Roman mass-produced types, as an absence of evidence compared to the other islands it may still be significant, though so may the very small volume of archaeological investigation here.<sup>20</sup> One ruined fortification

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<sup>16</sup> Necropolis: Riera, "Monestir de Cabrera", pp. 31–4; Riera, *Monacat insular*, pp. 137–43. Riera, "Monestir de Cabrera", pp. 29–30, describes the marble, glass and lamp fragments which have been taken to be church furniture, but Riera, *Monacat insular*, pp. 403, 585 and 586 illustrate these; none necessarily need belong to a church. The only Christian elements appear to be two possible cross decorations on ceramic fragments, which could as easily be domestic as liturgical vessels. On this problem (discussed Riera, *Monacat insular*, p. 572, but seeing Cabrera as a solution, not an example) elsewhere see Ann Hamlin, 'The Early Irish Church: Problems of Identification', in *The Early Church in Wales and the West: Recent Work in Early Christian Archaeology, History and Place-Names*, ed. Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane [Oxbow Monographs, volume XVI] (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1992), 138–44; cf. John Blair, 'Palaces or Minsters? Northampton and Cheddar Reconsidered', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 25 (1996): 97–121, DOI: 10.1017/S0263675100001964.

<sup>17</sup> Object catalogue in Riera, *El monestir de Cabrera*, pp. 50–9; the coin of Constans II was found subsequently to that publication, and can be found in Riera, *Monacat insular*, p. 549. The object catalogue in that work, pp. 544–47, groups the ceramic evidence indivisibly with that from the Balearics as a whole, making Cabrera's own archaeology impossible to distinguish.

<sup>18</sup> Rosselló, "Nueva luz", p. 310.

<sup>19</sup> Cau and Mas, "Early Byzantine Period", p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> On the problem with ceramic dating, see M. Riera Rullan, M. Orfila, and M.A. Cau, "Els últims segles de Pollentia", *Bolletí de la Societat Arqueològica Lul·liana* 55/853 (1999): 335–46  
<[http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/bsal/index/assoc/BSAL\\_199/9\\_Tom\\_55.dir/BSAL\\_1999\\_Tom](http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/bsal/index/assoc/BSAL_199/9_Tom_55.dir/BSAL_1999_Tom)

on the island has been typologically linked to another in Pollentia in Mallorca, which if accurate would make it probably fifth- or sixth-century in date, but it has not been dug and thus how long it continued in use cannot be said. At the moment, therefore, there is no positive evidence for continued occupation of Formentera between the seventh century and the Islamic period, though it will probably some day be found.

In Ibiza (Cat. Eivissa) the very limited archaeological investigation paints a similar picture. The principal Roman city, Ebusus, shows little sign of activity after the fifth century; Byzantine-era remains have been found outside the city walls, including a cemetery whose radio-carbon dates extend perhaps into the second half of the seventh century, that being a plausible date of abandonment also for one rural villa site that has been recently dug (Clot de Baix); on the other hand, another at Can Fita was apparently refitted at around that time and used as a private dwelling until the end of the century.<sup>21</sup> Vandal ceramics have been found at Castell d'Eivissa, which should therefore have been active in the fifth or sixth centuries, but no evidence seems to exist that might demonstrate occupation in the island beyond the end of the seventh.<sup>22</sup> Again it seems unlikely that the island was in fact abandoned at that point, rather than that ceramic identifications are not yet advanced enough to distinguish local coarsewares beyond it, but even so the record would speak of isolation and a shrinking of wider contacts at around that time.

Menorca, understandably given its greater size and consequent volume of archaeology, gives us slightly more to go on. Here the most important site is Illa del Rei, actually a separate islet where a triple-naved church seems from numismatic evidence to have been built in the late sixth or early seventh century.<sup>23</sup> Undatable

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\_55.pdf> [last modified 8 January 2009 as of 21 May 2018], 341–2; cf. Rosselló, “Nueva luz”, 320–1, and on the mainland Jordi Roig i Buxó, Joan Manuel Coll i Riera and Josep-A. Molina i Vallmitjana, “Proposta d’estudi de la ceràmica medieval a la Catalunya vella (s. IX–XI): Contextos estatigràfics i avenç tipològic i funcional”, *Annals de l’Institut d’Estudis Gironins*, 38 (1996): 1445–53.

<sup>21</sup> Cau and Mas, “Early Byzantine Period”, pp. 35 and 37.

<sup>22</sup> Vallori, Mas and Cau, “Romanos, Vándalos y Bizantinos”, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup> Miguel Ángel Cau Ontiveros, Catalina Mas Florit, Gisela Ripoll, Francesc Tuset Bertrán, Montserrat Valls Mora, Margarita Orfila Pons and María José Rivas Antequeras, “El conjunto eclesiástico de la

but “late” Byzantine ceramic material is known from a rural site at Sa Nitja and coin finds are known in the island, sadly without precise context, that extend the chronology of contact with mints in Byzantine Italy into the very early eighth century.<sup>24</sup> This, as with the coins in Cabrera, indicate that wherever we have only numismatic and ceramic dating evidence for occupation in the islands, the numismatic evidence suggests a later date than do the ceramics, but that a decrease in contact with the Byzantine world is indicated by both evidence types, even if not at the same time. Other than the coins, however, no archaeological evidence from Menorca seems to be identifiable between the late seventh century and the Islamic period.

Mallorca nuances and extends these trends, and its archaeology is harder to summarise due to the greater volume of investigation. Three especially significant sites are *Pollentia*, Son Peretó and Santueri. The former of these was the major Roman city of the island, founded on a platform levelled over pre-existent Talaiotic settlement and much developed as a monumental complex in the first and second centuries A.D., including a forum, a rock-cut theatre and extensive associated urban settlement.<sup>25</sup> A substantial fire here seems to have occurred in the 270s or 280s, to

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Illa del Rei (Menorca, Islas Baleares)”, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 18/2 (May 2012): 415–32, DOI: 10.1484/J.HAM.1.102825; Vallori, Mas and Cau, “Romanos, Vandálos y Bizantinos”, p. 159.

<sup>24</sup> Cau and Mas, “Early Byzantine Period”, pp. 35 and 40.

<sup>25</sup> The bibliography on Pollentia, which has been dug episodically since the 1920s and systematically since the 1970s, is immense. For the English reader access is possible through Norman A. Doenges, *Pollentia: A Roman Colony on the Island of Mallorca* [British Archaeological Reports International Series, volume MCDIV] (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), but a better idea of the state of play is given by Margarita Orfila, ed., *El fòrum de Pollentia: Memòria de les campanyes d'excavacions realitzades entre els anys 1996 i 1999* (Alcúdia: Ajuntament d'Alcúdia, 2000). Further important contributions include Antonio Arribas and Miguel Tarradell, “El foro de Pollentia: noticias de las primeras investigaciones”, in *Los foros romanos de la provincias occidentales* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1987), pp. 121–36; M. Tarradell Mateu, A. Arribas Palau, M. Roca Roumans, N. Doenges, J. Sanmartí Grego, N. Tarradell Font and J. Cardell Perelló, “Resultats dels treballs d'excavació a l'àrea central de la ciutat romana de Pollentia (Alcúdia, Mallorca): avanç preliminary”, *Pyrenae*, 25 (1994): 215–24, <<https://www.raco.cat/index.php/Pyrenae/article/view/165094>> [last modified 28 June 2010 as of 9 November 2018]; M. Orfila Pons, A. Arribas Palau, and M.A. Cau Ontiveros, “La ciudad romana de Pollentia: el foro”, *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 72/179–180 (1999): 99–118,

judge from ceramic thresholds beneath the destruction layers; the exact extent of the site affected is hard to determine in the current state of excavation, but it seems that a new and smaller wall was built around the old city centre, cutting through some of the old shops, and that settlement began to refocus on an extra-mural complex to the north at Sa Portella d'Alcúdia.<sup>26</sup> At some point in probably the fifth or sixth centuries, the northern wall of the old forum was fortified, apparently to face Sa Portella rather than to protect it, and the forum may have been incorporated into this complex.<sup>27</sup> If so, however, it did not last long, for an early medieval burial ground

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DOI: 10.3989/aespa.1999.v72.298; Riera, Orfila and Cau, "Els últims segles de Pollentia"; Margarita Orfila Pons and Mateu Riera Rullan, "Alguns vestigis d'època islàmica al fòrum de Pollentia", in *Homenatge a Guillem Rosselló Bordoy*, ed. Catalina Ferrando Ballester, volumes I-II (Palma de Mallorca: Govern de les Illes Balears, 2002), I: 705–24, <[http://www.academia.edu/5784818/Alguns\\_vestigis\\_d'època\\_islàmica\\_al\\_fòrum\\_de\\_Pollentia.\\_Homenatge\\_a\\_Guillem\\_Rosselló\\_Bordoy\\_p.\\_705-724](http://www.academia.edu/5784818/Alguns_vestigis_d'època_islàmica_al_fòrum_de_Pollentia._Homenatge_a_Guillem_Rosselló_Bordoy_p._705-724)> [last modified 21 January 2014 as of 2 December 2018]; Margarita Orfila, Luis Moranta, Antoni Puig and Miguel A. Cau, "El teatro de Pollentia (Alcúdia, Mallorca)", in *Jornadas sobre Teatros Romanos en Hispania, Córdoba 2002*, ed. Carlos Márquez and A. Ventura [III Jornadas Cordobesas de Arqueología Andaluz, Córdoba, 12 al 15 nov. 2002] (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, Seminario de Arqueología, 2006), pp. 339–53, <[http://www.academia.edu/5784827/El\\_teatro\\_de\\_Pollentia\\_Alcutia\\_Mallorca\\_en\\_Los\\_teatros\\_de\\_Hispania.\\_III\\_Jornadas\\_Cordobesas\\_de\\_Arqueología\\_Andaluz\\_2002.\\_Coords.\\_C.\\_Márquez\\_A.\\_Ventura\\_pp.\\_339-360\\_](http://www.academia.edu/5784827/El_teatro_de_Pollentia_Alcutia_Mallorca_en_Los_teatros_de_Hispania._III_Jornadas_Cordobesas_de_Arqueología_Andaluz_2002._Coords._C._Márquez_A._Ventura_pp._339-360_)> [last modified 21 January 2014 as of 2 December 2018]; Miguel Ángel Cau Ontiveros, M. Van Strydonck, M. Boudin, C. Mas Florit, J. S. Mestres, F. Cardona, E. Chávez-Álvarez and M. Orfila, "Christians in a Muslim World? Radiocarbon Dating of the Cemetery Overlaying the Forum of Pollentia (Mallorca, Balearic Islands)", *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences*, 9/7 (October 2017): 1529–38, DOI: 10.1007/s12520-016-0325-0. For direction to several of these works I must thank an anonymous reviewer of this article.

<sup>26</sup> All write-ups of the Pollentia site deal with the fire, but see esp. Arribas and Tarradell, "El foro de Pollentia", pp. 133–5; Riera et al., "Els últims segles de Pollentia", 336–9; Margarita Orfila and Antonio Arribas, "Resultats de les investigacions arqueològiques realitzades sobre el fòrum entre 1996 i 1998", in Orfila, *El fòrum de Pollentia*, pp. 64–121, esp. 117–19. For activity at Sa Portella see Doenges, *Pollentia*, pp. 21, 47–9 and 57.

<sup>27</sup> Mateu Riera, Margarita Orfila, and M. A. Cau, "El recinte fortificat", in Orfila, *El fòrum de Pollentia*, pp. 123–8; cf. Doenges, *Pollentia*, pp. 57–8, arguing for a late-third-century date for the fortress, and Margarita Orfila, 'Conclusions generals referents a l'estat actual de les investigacions arqueològiques en el fòrum de Pollentia', in Orfila, *El fòrum de Pollentia*, pp. 131–59, 155–7, arguing for a Justinianic date. The only hard dating evidence appears to be a reused fifth-century inscription, on the basis of

cuts into its demolition layer; such graves also mark the upper parts of the old theatre.<sup>28</sup> Dating of these graves was contested until very recently, with numismatic evidence suggesting dates in the late fourth or fifth centuries but stratigraphy otherwise suggesting a sixth or seventh century date (although this rested on an evaluation of the fortress as Justinianic, which sits ill with its apparently rapid demolition).<sup>29</sup> Very recent radio-carbon dates have however indicated that burial in the forum was happening in the ninth to twelfth centuries.<sup>30</sup> This opens out the chronology considerably and demonstrates again that we lack good means to judge archaeological chronology in the Balearics from material culture alone, although a single Byzantine glass vessel of probable eighth- or ninth-century date from Sa Portella has heralded some possibility of continuing contact since its discovery in the 1930s.<sup>31</sup> Pollentia's numismatic horizon in the mid-fifth century remains a problem, especially since Vandal and sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine coins are known from elsewhere on the island, including from nearby Sa Portella, but this seems to be a difficulty which must be reckoned with.<sup>32</sup>

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which Cau and Mas, "Early Byzantine Period", pp. 33–4, date the fortress to the later fifth century. This would effectively make it a Vandal building, which might then explain its rapid demolition in what would then have been the Byzantine reconquest and might also explain why the fortification appears to face, rather than include, the continuing settlement on the site.

<sup>28</sup> Orfila et al., "El teatro de Pollentia", p. 341.

<sup>29</sup> Numismatic evidence is summarised in Harold Mattingly, "Pollentia: History and Coinage", in Doenges, *Pollentia*, pp. 60–70, where abandonment is dated to *c.* 425; for interpretation on the fortification see n. 27 above.

<sup>30</sup> Cau et al., "Christians in a Muslim World".

<sup>31</sup> Rosselló, "Nueva luz", 320–1.

<sup>32</sup> Mas and Cau, "Rural Settlement"; Cau and Mas, "Early Byzantine Period", pp. 38–41; cf. José Miguel Rosselló Esteve and Isabel Busquets Porcel, "Ciudades, iglesias y castillos: La transición del poder en las Baleares del siglo III al IX", in *Roma y el mundo mediterráneo*, ed. Noelia Vicent Ramírez and Jaime de Miguel López [UAH obras colectivas: Humanidades, volume XLIII, I Congreso de jóvenes investigadores en ciencias de la Antigüedad de la UAH, celebrado los días 5, 6 y 7 de marzo de 2014 en Alcalá de Henares] (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 2015), pp. 401–12, <[http://www.academia.edu/6783880/Ciudades\\_iglesias\\_y\\_castillos.\\_La\\_traslación\\_del\\_poder\\_en\\_las\\_Baleares\\_del\\_siglo\\_III\\_al\\_IX](http://www.academia.edu/6783880/Ciudades_iglesias_y_castillos._La_traslación_del_poder_en_las_Baleares_del_siglo_III_al_IX)> [last modified 13 March 2015 as of 18 February 2018].

While *Pollentia* thus continues to give us problems of interpretation, Son Peretó is clearer. Here a settlement which included several church buildings, but may also have had other functions, and seems to have been established in the sixth century (like that Illa del Rei off Menorca) continued into the late seventh or eighth centuries, by which time what had been a burial ground was being used as space for industrial production; the site was then abandoned after a major fire.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the site at Santueri, one of several substantial hillfort sites on the island known to the locals as *castells roquers*, has been a cause of great controversy. Although it has been dug, the findings have not been published except in as much as a number of Byzantine seals were located there, including seals for *hypatoi* and even a *dux*, with a probable chronology running from the sixth to the eighth or even the ninth century.<sup>34</sup> One other cemetery may also run so late, but in general the eighth and ninth centuries remain a blank spot in even the Mallorcan archaeological record outside Sa Portella d'Alcúdia and Santueri.

Clearly, therefore, there is no doubt that the Balearic islands were fully part of the Roman Empire at its height.<sup>35</sup> Late Roman, Vandal and Byzantine phases are also clearly evidenced, if not clearly separated, in the archaeology, and especially in numismatic finds, although it has been noted that from the time of Emperor Leo III

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<sup>33</sup> Antoni Puig and Mike Elkin, "On the Edge of Empire: A Mediterranean Melting Pot", *Current World Archaeology*, 48 (September 2011): 33–7, <[http://www.academia.edu/6188215/On\\_the\\_edge\\_of\\_Empire.\\_A\\_Mediterranean\\_melting\\_pot](http://www.academia.edu/6188215/On_the_edge_of_Empire._A_Mediterranean_melting_pot)> [last modified 7 July 2011 as of 4 July 2015]; Mateu Riera Rullan, Miguel Ángel Cau, and Magdalena Salas Burguera, "El sector oest de Son Peretó (Mallorca) entre els segles VI i VIII dC: evolució històrica i funcional", in *IV Jornades d'Arqueologia de les Illes Balears*, ed. Mateu Riera Rullan [Eivissa, 1 i 2 d'octubre, 2010] (Palma de Mallorca: Col·legi Oficial de Doctors i Llicenciats en Filosofia i Lletres i en Ciències de les Illes Balears, Secció d'Arqueologia, 2012), pp. 143–50 <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311767905>> [last modified 5 December 2012 as of 26 May 2018].

<sup>34</sup> Santueri: Juan Nadal Cañellas, "Las bulas de plomo bizantinas del Castillo de Santueri", *Bolletí de la Societat Arqueològica Lul·liana* 62/860 (2006): 325–40. I have not been able to obtain Rosa Maria Aguiló Fiol, Elena Conde, and Josep Amengual i Batle, *Les sivelles del Castell de Santueri: de l'Antiguitat Tardana a l'Edat Mitjana*, 2nd edn [Quaderns de Ca la Gran Cristiana, volume XV] (Palma de Mallorca: Museu de Mallorca, 2016). Controversy: Rosselló, "Nueva luz", 322.

<sup>35</sup> Vallori, Mas and Cau, "Romanos, Vándalos y Bizantinos", pp. 149–54.

(r. 717–41) Byzantine coins reaching the islands were struck in mints in Italy or its islands, whereas previously coins from the eastern Mediterranean had also made it to the Balearics.<sup>36</sup>

Material culture of other kinds also links the islands to Byzantium, especially ceramics, but as we have seen it is not necessarily a good guide to the political position of the islands or their wider contacts: the ability to obtain or the desire for Byzantine ceramics seems to have diminished almost totally rather before coins and indeed officials of the Empire ceased to arrive in the islands, but also to have continued very sporadically thereafter. When so few sites have anything more than ceramic dating evidence, however, the result is an impression that the Byzantine era was in general one of growth compared to the late Roman or Vandal, but that settlement ceased in many locations once imported wares ceased to arrive.<sup>37</sup> This has even been read as a “flight to the hills” such as is also seen in northern Iberia, central Italy or fifth-century Britain, among other places.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, “Islamic” ceramics make it appear that a whole host of settlements sprang up or were reactivated during the Muslim era (whose inception, as we shall see, is not easy to date).<sup>39</sup> This impression of discontinuity was always likely to be false, one might suspect, and now that scientific dating of human remains has begun to show

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<sup>36</sup> Rosselló, “Nueva luz”, 309–13; Signes, “Bizancio y las Islas Baleares”, pp. 54–8.

<sup>37</sup> Mas and Cau, “Rural Settlement”.

<sup>38</sup> Denied *ibid.*, esp. p. 173; upheld by Rosselló and Busquets, “Ciudades, iglesias y castillos”, pp. 406–7, and Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 531–32. Mas’s and Cau’s article makes it clear, however, that while many coastal settlements did cease, the same is true of inland ones and indeed, continuing and new coastal settlement is not hard to evidence: see Riera et al., “Els últims segles de Pollentia”; Riera et al., “El sector oest de Son Peretó”; and Cau et al., “La Illa del Rei”. For other areas’ “flights” see Margarita Fernández Mier, “Changing Scales of Local Power in the Early Medieval Iberian North-West”, in *Scale and Scale Change in the Early Middle Ages*, eds Julio Escalona and Andrew Reynolds, trans. Carolina Carl (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 87–117, DOI: 10.1484/M.TMC-EB.3.4769; Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne & the Origins of Europe: Archaeology and the Pirenne Thesis* (London: Duckworth, 1983), pp. 33–48 (on central Italy); Leslie Alcock, *Kings & Warriors, Craftsmen & Priests in Northern Britain, AD 550–850* [Monographs, volume XXIV] (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2003), pp. 171–91.

<sup>39</sup> Mas and Cau, “Rural Settlement”, *passim* but esp. p. 173.

that local populations continued in some places, along with their apparent attachment to a Christian identity in death, even into the period of Muslim domination, there is scope for considerable re-evaluation in the next few years.<sup>40</sup> It seems likely that further investigation of locations with both late antique and “Islamic” phases and especially of more of the Mallorcan *castells roquers* will reveal, respectively, more continuity of settlement, albeit with the same simplification and localisation of material cultures as is seen all over the early medieval West in this period, and a continuing and Byzantinised, even if not necessarily Byzantine, authority structure.<sup>41</sup> Whether archaeology can demonstrate the suggestion that some historians have made, that it was the local church which assumed authority under a Byzantine aegis, remains to be seen; but in archaeological terms there seems no difficulty in believing that the Balearics, while suffering shrinkage and simplification, remained a part of the Byzantine world, however notional, until the uncertain point when they were removed from it.<sup>42</sup> It should however be noted in passing that the evidence for such long-lived continuity is principally visible in Mallorca, and that elsewhere even basic population continuity into the Islamic period still awaits archaeological demonstration.

### Byzantine and Carolingian Sources

The written sources for the Balearic islands in the early Middle Ages have often been compiled before, and are again elsewhere in this issue, so this treatment must be brief in the extreme.<sup>43</sup> Procopius, as said, records the Vandal conquest of

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<sup>40</sup> Cau et al., “Christians in a Muslim World?”.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 176–8; Cau and Mas, “Early Byzantine Period”, p. 32; cf. more widely Tamara Lewit, “Vanishing Villas’: What Happened to Élite Rural Habitation in the West in the 5th–6th C?”, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 16 (2003): 260–74, DOI: 10.1017/S104775940001309X.

<sup>42</sup> Mateu Riera Rullan, “Introducció històrica”, in *El monestir de Cabrera*, ed. Riera, pp. 16–24, 17; Rosselló and Busquets, “Ciudades, iglesias y castillos”, pp. 404–6; cf. Mas and Cau, “Rural Settlement”, 177, and Cau and Mas, “Early Byzantine Period”, pp. 37–8.

<sup>43</sup> In this issue see Zavagno, “Going to the Extremes”.



the islands and their reconquest by the Empire in 534.<sup>44</sup> In 551, Bishop Victor of Tunnuna, in Africa, found himself exiled briefly to the islands, although curiously he does not specify to which.<sup>45</sup> From 595 we have a letter to one Bishop Vicente of Eivissa, which shows us that even so tiny an island as Ibiza then still had its own prelate.<sup>46</sup> In 603 Pope Gregory I (r. 590–604) ordered his *defensor* John to investigate the morals and conduct of the monks of the island of Cabrera, which has as said above guided interpretation of the archaeology of the whole island.<sup>47</sup> All we

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<sup>44</sup> See n. 11 above.

<sup>45</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 344; Vallejo, *Hispania y Bizancio*, pp. 449–53. For the source see Victor Tonnennensis, “Victoris Tonnensis episcopi Chronica A. CCCCXLIV–DLXVII”, ed. Theodor Mommsen, in *Chronica Minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII*, ed. Mommsen, volumes I–III [Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctores Antiquissimi, volumes IX, XI and XIII] (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892–8), II: 163–206, 204 (s. a. 555).

<sup>46</sup> Vallori, Mas and Cau, “Romanos, Vándalos y Bizantinos”, p. 157; for the source see Licinianus Carthaginensis Episcopi, “Epistola III, ad Vincentium Episcopum Ebositanæ insulæ: Contra eos qui credebant de epistolas de cælo cecidisse in memorium Sancti Petri Romæ”, in *Pelagii II, Joannis II, Benedicti I, summorum pontificum opera omnia. Intermiscentur S. Martini, S. Domnoli, S. Verani, S. Aunarii, S. Leandri, Liciniani, Sedati, Marii, Johannis quorum episcopatu sedes Bracarensis, Cenomanensis, Cabellitana, Autissiodorensis, Hispalensis, Carthaginensis, Biterrensis, Aventicensis, Arelatensis illustratæ sunt, necnon Sancti Germani Parisiensis episcopi S. Radegundis, S. Arigii, Floriani, Joannis Biclarensis, vitam monasticam professorum ac demum Cogitosi, Antonini Placentini Luculentii, Anonymi, scripta quæ exstant universa ad S. Germani opuscula in appendicis vicem accedentibus pretiosissimis antiquæ liturgiæ monumentis, inter que locum principem obtinent Mabillonii libri tres de liturgia Gallicana. Tomum claudit syntagma legum decretorumque selectorum quibus sive reges sive imperatores, sexto præsertim sæculo, sese rebus ecclesiasticis ingesserunt aut suam in Deum pietatem testati sunt*, ed. J.-P. Migne [Patrologia cursus completus series Latina, volume LXXII] (Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1878), col. 699,

<<https://archive.org/details/patrologiaecurs00migngoog/page/n354>> [last modified 15 June 2007 as of 30 December 2018], and Dorothy Haines, ed., *Sunday Observance and the Sunday Letter in Anglo-Saxon England* [Anglo-Saxon Texts, volume VIII] (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 35–8. Cf. Cau and Mas, “Early Byzantine Period”, pp. 35 and 37 for archaeological data.

<sup>47</sup> Mateu Riera Rullan, “El Monestir de Cabrera”, in *El monestir de Cabrera*, ed. Riera, pp. 25–48, 25; Vallejo, *Hispania y Bizancio*, pp. 461–3. For the source see Gregorius I Papa, *Registrvm epistolarvm*, ed. Paul Ewald and Ludwig Hartmann, volumes I–II [Monumenta Germaniae Historica Epistolae, volumes I–II] (Berlin: Weidmann, 1891–9), II: 412–13 (XIII.48); for the archaeology see pp. 00–0 above.

know for sure, however, is that a monastic site of some description was operating there *c.* 600 which had run into trouble; it may have been new then, may not have lasted much longer, and it may well have been at one of the smaller sites on the island rather than occupying the once-imperial factory complex at el Pla de Ses Figueres. Here as elsewhere (Anglo-Saxon England), Pope Gregory's idea of what made a monastery may have differed from local ones.<sup>48</sup>

All these sources can fairly be described as Byzantine; their authors would all have recognised the authority of the emperor in Constantinople, and their writings indicate that some contact with the wider imperial world was possible and maintained, as indeed does the archaeology. After this, however, written evidence lacks until the very end of the eighth century, when the Balearics appear somewhat unexpectedly among the concerns of the Carolingian Empire. Again, these references have often been collected and so the briefest notices may suffice.<sup>49</sup> Word reached the Carolingian court in 798 that Saracens and Moors had subjected the Balearic islands, as a group, to pillage.<sup>50</sup> In 799 the same text, the *Royal Frankish Annals*, report that at that point, indeed, the islands had subjected themselves to Carolingian rule and that Frankish aid consequently sent had defeated more raiders in a subsequent attack.<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that the report of submission was not retained in the later revision of the *Annals*, as if by 829 it was no longer a working claim.<sup>52</sup> Trophies of the 799 victory were sent to Aachen, however, which probably

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 105–8.

<sup>49</sup> E. g. Rosselló, “Nueva luz”, 317–8.

<sup>50</sup> *Annales regni francorum*, ed. Friedrich Kurze, *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi* [Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum germanicum in usum scholarum separatim editi, volume VI] (Hannover: Hahn, 1895) <[http://www.mgh.de/dmgh/resolving/MGH\\_SS\\_rer.\\_Germ.\\_6\\_S.\\_II](http://www.mgh.de/dmgh/resolving/MGH_SS_rer._Germ._6_S._II)> [accessed 5 June 2018], p. 104.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108; see Pierre Guichard, “Les débuts de la piraterie andalouse en Méditerranée occidentale (798–813)”, *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 35 (1983): 55–76, DOI: 10.3406/remmm.1983.1981, pp. 60–2; Signes, “Bizancio y las Islas Baleares”, pp. 66–8 and Vallejo, *Hispania y Bizancio*, p. 474.

<sup>52</sup> *Annales regni francorum*, p. 109. On the revised *Annals* see now Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 97–111.

did then betoken submission to Charlemagne's rule (768–814). (A similar gesture on the part of King Alfonso II of Asturias (r. 791–842) in 798 has given rise to much debate.<sup>53</sup>) That some Carolingian protection of the islands continued is made evident by an annal of 813 recording a victory at sea off the islands for Count Ermenguer of Empúries (attested 813–17), over another such raiding force on its return from Byzantine Sicily.<sup>54</sup> That fleet is not said to have attacked the Balearics themselves, however, and although it has been assumed, neither is Ermenguer's fleet said to have been based there; his own comital seat was a famous harbour, so this certainly need not have been so.<sup>55</sup>

After this point, Latin testimony about the islands becomes much harder to find. Two related chronicles from the court of Asturias notify us that Mallorca and Menorca, and according to one of them Formentera, were victims of Viking attack in 844.<sup>56</sup> Some historians have asserted that Bishop Servedeu of Girona (r. 888–907) sought recognition of his bishopric's sway over Mallorca and Menorca from the pope in 892 and 897, which has been taken to mean that the islands' own bishoprics had

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<sup>53</sup> Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400–1000*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 229–30; cf. Julio Escalona, "Family Memories: Inventing Alfonso I of Asturias", in *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimacy in Medieval Societies*, ed. Isabel Alfonso Antón, Hugh Kennedy and Julio Escalona [The Medieval Mediterranean, volume LIII] (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 223–62, and Alberto González García, "La proyección europea del reino de Asturias: política, cultura y economía (718–910). The European Projection of the Kingdom of Asturias: Politics, Culture, and Economy (718–910)", *El Futuro del Pasado* 5 (2014): 225–98, DOI: 10.14516/fdp.2014.005.001.010.

<sup>54</sup> *Annales regni francorum*, p. 139; cf. Guichard, "Piraterie andalouse", 63 and Signes, "Bizancio y las Baleares", p. 71.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71–2; Xavier Aquilué, "Empúries: Ampurias, capital del condado carolingio", in *Cataluña en la época carolingia: arte y cultura antes del románico (siglos IX y X)*, ed. Jordi Camps [16 diciembre 1999 - 27 febrero 2000, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Palau Nacional-Parc de Montjuïc] (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 1999), pp. 80–3, with English translation pp. 459–61.

<sup>56</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 465–6. For the source (the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*) see Yves Bonnaz, ed., *Chroniques asturiennes (fin IXe siècle), avec édition critique, traduction et commentaire* (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1987), pp. 58–9; only the so-called *Ad Sebastianum* or 'erudite' recension mentions Formentera.

now collapsed, but close examination of the relevant documents by Miquel Barceló has, for the present author, proven that the reference is not to the Balearics but to any islands, plural, 'greater or smaller' (*maioricas et minoricas*) within the bishopric's territory.<sup>57</sup> In any case, as Signes points out, neither text as we have it actually shows the pope approving, rather than simply reporting, the grant.<sup>58</sup> Tellingly, meanwhile, a late tenth-century glossary preserved from the Catalan monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll notes that the Balearics were "where the Greeks' territory is", *ubi pars graecorum est*.<sup>59</sup> Exactly when this note was first written, however, is less clear since, as we shall now see, few indeed would argue that the islands were still Byzantine by the time that manuscript was copied.

### Arabic Material

The third group of sources to deal with the Balearics, the Arabic material, therefore comes into its own here, but these sources have their own problems that need emphasis, to wit, their testimony becomes increasingly, and suspiciously, more

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<sup>57</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 467–81; cf. Miquel Barceló, "La pretesa al·lusió a Mallorca i a Menorca en unes butlles dels papes Formós (892) i Romà (897) al bisbe Servusdei de Girona: Nota sobre la fabricació d'un 'fet'", *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Gerundenses*, 23 (1977): 247–56 <<https://raco.cat/index.php/AnnalsGironins/article/view/53860>> [last modified 19 January 2007 as of 6 June 2018], apparently misunderstood by Signes, "Bizancio y las Islas Baleares", pp. 81–4; cf. Rosselló and Busquets, "Ciudades, iglesias y castillos", p. 407. The documents are now printed in *Catalunya Carolíngia volum V: els comtats de Girona, Besalú, Empúries i Peralada*, eds Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, Sebastià Riera i Viader, and Manuel Rovira i Solà, parts I–II [Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica, volume LXI] (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2003), I: 118–20 and 125–26.

<sup>58</sup> Signes, "Bizancio y las Islas Baleares", p. 84.

<sup>59</sup> Rudolf Beer, *Die Handschriften des Klosters Santa Maria de Ripoll*, volumes I–III [Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, philosophisch-historische Klasse, volumes CLV, CLVII and CLVIII (Wien: A. Hölder, 1907), I: 56, 67 and 104; see Josep Amengual Batle, "«Ubi pars graecorum est»: medio milenio de historia relegada de las Baleares y Pitiusas", *Pyrenae*, 36/2 (2005): 87–113, p. 87.

detailed as their preservation becomes more distant from the facts in question. The present author therefore prefers to err on the side of caution in interpreting these materials, and so the following summary is much thriftier with deductions from them than some previous scholars have been.<sup>60</sup>

By 933, at least, it is clear that the Balearic islands were in Islamic hands. In that year Andalusí fleets left harbour in Mallorca to raid Christian coasts to the north, or so at least we are told by the eleventh-century Andalusí historian Ibn Hayyān.<sup>61</sup> His *Muqtabis*, although they have a manuscript history verging on the fantastic, were based partly on documents from the erstwhile caliphal archives in Córdoba and, while not without an authorial agenda, are usually consistent with other sources on matters of chronology, so there is no immediate reason to doubt this date.<sup>62</sup> There are, however, three dates usually proposed for the point at which this Islamic control had been extended over the islands, each resting on different sources.<sup>63</sup>

The earliest of these dates is also the one which merits the most suspicion. Usually attributed to the Sevillano author Ibn al-Qūṭīya, this anecdote claims that during the command of Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr in Ifrīqiyyā, his son ‘Abd al-Mālik mounted a naval raid on Mallorca and Menorca in 707/8, and captured there the “kings” (*mulūk*) of the islands, whom he sent to his father and who were then dispatched eastwards with the other potentates captured in Mūsā’s subsequent campaigns in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>64</sup> Much speculation has therefore focused on the possible identity of

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<sup>60</sup> On such problems see Nicola Clarke, *The Muslim Conquest of Iberia: Medieval Arabic Narratives* [Culture and Civilization in the Middle East, volume XXX] (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 23–8.

<sup>61</sup> *De quan érem o no musulmans: textos del 713 al 1010: continuació de l’obra de J. M. Millàs i Vallicrosa*, trans. Dolores Bramon [Jaume Caresmar, XIII] (Vic: Eumo, 2000), pp. 275–6, citing Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabas*, eds P. Chalmeta, F. Corriente and M. Subh (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura-Facultad de Letras de Rabat, 1979), p. 218.

<sup>62</sup> Manuela Marín, “El «Halcón Maltés» del arabismo español: el volume II/1 de al-Muqtabis de Ibn Hayyān”, *al-Qanṭara*, 20 (1999): 543–9 <<http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/26087>> [last modified 7 July 2010 as of 6 June 2018].

<sup>63</sup> Cau and Mas, “Early Byzantine Period”, p. 41.

<sup>64</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 441–53; Signes, “Bizancio y las Islas Baleares”, pp. 46–54; Rosselló, “Nueva luz”, 314–6; Vallejo, *Hispania y Bizancio*, pp. 473–5.

these *mulūk*, but more attention should have been paid to the source, for this anecdote does not in fact occur in the surviving text of Ibn al-Qūṭīya's *Tārikh*, and investigation of the actual source does not inspire confidence in its details.

The text from which this story actually comes is the *Ahādith al-Imāma wa'l-siyāsa*, attributed to the mid-ninth-century scholar Ibn Qūṭayba.<sup>65</sup> The attribution to Ibn al-Qūṭīya seems to come only from the fact that both works were translated in the same volume by Juan Ribera, whence it is consistently cited.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, even the attribution to Ibn Qūṭayba seems to be false; it was refuted by Dozy as long ago as 1881 on the grounds of obvious anachronisms, because of which the text cannot date to earlier than 1062.<sup>67</sup> The source of part of it was apparently the history of Ibn Habīb (d. 755), which might briefly inspire confidence except that Ibn Habīb does not include the story of the Mallorcan *mulūk*.<sup>68</sup> It therefore seems extremely likely that this story was imagined in more or less whole cloth in the eleventh century and that its attribution to Ibn al-Qūṭīya is a misunderstanding of Ribera's translation. Its date, like all its other details, must be regarded as suspect in the extreme.

More credible is a report dealing with the years 848/9–849/50 which we find in the pages of Ibn Idhārī's *Bayān al-Mughrib*. This records that, because the inhabitants of Mallorca had broken their pact with Islam and were harassing Muslim

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<sup>65</sup> Gérard Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba (mort en 276/889): L'homme, son œuvre, ses idées* (Damas: Presses de l'IFPO, 1965), DOI: 10.4000/books.ifpo.5888, paras 1184–1212 of the online edition.

<sup>66</sup> Rosselló, "Siglos oscuros", 93 n. 53, cites *Historia de la Conquista de España de Abenalcotía el Cordobés, seguida de fragmentos históricos de Abencotaiba, etc.*, ed. and trans. Julián Ribera [Colección de obras arábigas de historia y geografía que publica el Real Academia de Historia, volume II] (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, 1926) <<http://myslide.es/abenalcotia-historia-de-la-conquista-de-espana-de-abenalcotia.pdf>> [last modified 28 August 2012 as of 26 July 2016], p. 141, which is incorrect; the story actually occurs *ibid.* p. 122, and on that see below. All investigators since 1991 have instead cited Amengual, *Orígens del cristianisme* (who gives the correct reference, I: 442–3) except Signes, "Bizancio y las Islas Baleares", p. 93 n. 5, who cites Ribera's translation without page reference.

<sup>67</sup> R. Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire et littérature de l'Espagne pendant le moyen âge*, 3rd edn, volumes I–II (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1881) <<https://archive.org/details/recherchessurlhi01dozyuoft/>> [accessed 3 November 2018], I: 21–40.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 28–9.

shipping in their waters, the emir of al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-Rahmān II (r. 822–52), sent a punitive expedition against them. This resulted in an embassy to the emir next year, from both Mallorca and Menorca, seeking peace in terms which suggest that a blockade of the islands had been imposed.<sup>69</sup> One may note that Ibn Idhārī, who seemingly had the text of the letter to quote despite writing in Marrakesh around 1310, nearly five hundred years after this should have happened, does not record whether peace was in fact granted.<sup>70</sup> The chronicler, usually punctilious in noting quotation, mentions no other source but the letter, though some intermediary source seems highly likely. Whether this should all be taken to mean that the islands had already been gathered into Muslim government or that they had managed to avoid it under terms of the pact, cannot be settled, although both cases have been made.<sup>71</sup> We return to this point below.

A further notice of the islands before Muslim government is provided by the twelfth-century geographer al-Zuhrī. His notice apparently relates to one of the *castells roquers* of Mallorca, Castell d’Alaró, and is worth providing in full:<sup>72</sup>

“In this island is found an enormous castle built in a lofty place, without equal in the inhabited world. This fortress is known by the name *Hiṣn Alarūn*. The Mallorcans tell how, when the island was conquered in the time of Muhammad, son of the fifth Umayyad emir of al-Andalus, the *Rūm* held out in this fortress, long after the island had fallen, for eight years and five months, without anyone being able to do anything about them, until they had used up all the provisions which they had with them and, faced with this, they found themselves obliged to come down.”

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<sup>69</sup> Ibn Idari, *Historias de Al-Ándalus*, trans. Francisco Fernández González (n.p.: LE, n.d.), pp. 81–2.

<sup>70</sup> Biography in Bramon, *De quan erem o no musulmans*, pp. 36–7.

<sup>71</sup> Compare S. M. Imamuddin, “Islam in Balearic Islands”, *Islamic Studies*, 30 (1991): 95–102, p. 95; Signes, “Bizancio y las Islas Baleares”, pp. 77–80; Vallejo, *Hispania y Bizancio*, pp. 473–5; and Cau and Mas, “Early Byzantine Period”, p. 41.

<sup>72</sup> My translation from Signes, “Bizancio y las Islas Baleares”, p. 85.

Signes has worked hard to disentangle the chronology here implied, which struggles with the fact that Muhammad himself, not his son, was the fifth emir of al-Andalus (r. 852–86). If, as Signes argues, Muhammad is indeed meant, and his father's name has simply dropped out between "son of" and "the fifth", then the date of conquest would fall between 852 and 886, although Signes's argument for a late date in that range risks going back on his own logic, by supposing that one of Muhammad's sons might also be meant, hence the record's confusion.<sup>73</sup> All of this has to vie, however, with a notice in the *Kitāb al-'Ibar* of the fourteenth-century polymath Ibn Khaldūn that the conquest was carried out in 902/3 by a returned pilgrim who had briefly been stranded in the island on his homeward journey and had learned its weak spots.<sup>74</sup> Al-Zuhrī worked in Almería and was closer in time as well as space to these events than the Morocco-based Ibn Khaldūn, but on the other hand his source is acknowledgedly contemporary local hearsay and is internally contradictory, while Ibn Khaldūn made much use of earlier historical writing but frequently scrambled those sources' chronology.<sup>75</sup> The choice of source and its interpretation is probably a matter for the individual historian, but as it is, the two sources have always been read together, as if they are describing the same episode.<sup>76</sup> This obviously need not be so.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85–7; cf. Miquel Barceló, "Comentaris a un text sobre Mallorca del geògraf Al-zuhri (s. VI–VII)", *Mayūrqa*, 14 (1975): 155–62 <<https://www.raco.cat/index.php/Mayurqa/article/view/117570>> [last modified 24 March 2006 as of 6 June 2018], and Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 496–7, which claims that al-Zuhrī gives a date (845) that he appears not to have.

<sup>74</sup> Signes, "Bizancio y las Islas Baleares", pp. 84–5; cf. Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 495–6.

<sup>75</sup> Biographical details from Bramon, *De quan erem o no musulmans*, pp. 32 and 38–9. For two cases of bad chronology in Ibn Khaldūn see Ann Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711–1000)* (Richmond: Curzon, 2002), pp. 108–13, and Simon Mercieca, "The Failed Siege of 868 and the Conquest of Malta by the Aghlabid Princedom in 870", in *60th Anniversary of the Malta Historical Society: A Commemoration*, ed. J. F. Grima (Valetta: Malta Historical Society, 2010), pp. 87–102 <[http://maltahistory.eu5.net/60/60\\_11.html](http://maltahistory.eu5.net/60/60_11.html)> [accessed 16 November 2018], 94–6. Mercieca tries to resolve the problem by doubling the event in question, which seems unnecessary there but may be the solution here.

<sup>76</sup> E. g. Signes, "Bizancio y las Islas Baleares", pp. 84–7.



The exact date of the passing of the Balearics under Muslim rule thus remains unclear: it is archaeologically hard to disassociate from the overall localisation of material culture visible throughout the early medieval West, and the written sources are sharply at variance with each other on the matter. Happily, it is not necessary to solve this problem to be able to say something about the islands as islands, but it has been necessary to go through the evidence like this to explain why the rather cautious synthesis used below in our comparison differs from other syntheses of Balearic history.

### Rule in the Early Medieval Balearics

The division I have made between the sources here is one that is mirrored in the historiography, and it may not be unfair to say that each specialism involved has tried to maximise the period during which the islands belong to their field. Thus, Byzantinists and numismatists have tended to see the Balearics as remaining Byzantine until the last possible moment, and indeed for those who know al-Zuhrī's story of the eight-year siege, beyond.<sup>78</sup> Arabists have contrariwise tended to assume that the islands became part of the *dār al-Islam* (or at least the *dār al-'ahd*, 'zone of the Pact', which gives them the same overall relevance to such scholarship) as early as possible, if not in 707/8 then at least by 848/9.<sup>79</sup> Those who approach from the Carolingian perspective have tended to see the islands as naturally belonging to the Catalan principality of which they would eventually end up part, and to read the early

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<sup>77</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 494–506, assembles all the Arabic sources that report the conquest, which also include al-Himyārī's *Kitāb al-Rawd al Mi'tar* (dating it to 902–3), al-Bakri (repeating that date) and Ibn Sa'īd al-Garnatī, who understood al-Zuhrī to mean 888–912.

<sup>78</sup> Juan Signes Codoñer, "Bizancio y al-Ándalus en los siglos IX y X", in *Bizancio y la península ibérica: De la Antigüedad tardía a la edad moderna*, eds Inmaculada Pérez Martín and Pedro Bádenas de la Peña (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2004), pp. 177–245 <[https://www.academia.edu/1920022/Bizancio\\_y\\_Al-Ándalus\\_en\\_los\\_siglos\\_IX\\_y\\_X](https://www.academia.edu/1920022/Bizancio_y_Al-Ándalus_en_los_siglos_IX_y_X)> [last modified 13 October 2010 as of 15 January 2018], 208–10.

<sup>79</sup> Imamuddin, "Islam in Balearic Islands", 95.

evidence of such contact as if it explains that development.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, archaeologists and historians specialising in the islands themselves have tended to see agency as residing principally with the islanders whom they represent, and indeed to resist inclusion in others' histories as far as possible.<sup>81</sup>

All of these tendencies are explicable in their own terms but hard to reconcile. Élite material culture and even official practice does seem to have been Byzantinised until a fairly late date, though the choices behind that might be more local than Constantinopolitan, or even Sardinian. It seems pointless, likewise, to dispute that appeals were made to the Carolingians and that at some point prior to the final Islamic conquest, Mallorca at least was considered by Córdoba to have accepted a pact with the Islamic government there. It is also just about possible to force all these things into a narrative together, in which a basic Byzantine loyalty was beaten towards Islam in 707—although neither that date nor the associated episode should really be considered historical—before being compromised by subjection to the Carolingians in 798, who had been escaped by 829. Islamic pressure would then have been reasserted in 848/9, following the Viking attacks of 844, and finalised between seven and fifty-four years later.

It is even perhaps possible that these statuses overlapped, that the people whom a governor in Cagliari thought were Byzantium's representatives in the islands were also brokering pacts with Córdoba or turning instead (or as well) to Aachen when that seemed helpful. The people in charge on the islands may have been eager primarily to retain their own autonomy, by finding supporters who could protect them without necessitating their abandonment of other connections. The maritime isolation and distance of the islands from their various neighbours would have strengthened this position between powers as long as a balance could be maintained. These persons would then be the *Rūm* in *Ḥiṣn Alarūn*, whom almost no

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<sup>80</sup> Josep M. Salrach i Marés, *El procés de formació nacional de Catalunya (segles VIII - IX)*, volumes I–II [Llibres a l'abast, volumes CXXXVI and CXXXVII] (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1978), I: 13; Mohammad Ballan, "Fraxinetum: An Islamic Frontier State in Tenth-Century Provence", *Comitatus* 41 (2010): 23–76, DOI: 10.1353/cjm.2010.0053, p. 42.

<sup>81</sup> Rosselló, "Nueva luz", 307 referring to "la historia de mi tierra" and 308 reproaching those who seek to: "enfocar la perspectiva histórica de las Baleares bajo un punto de vista exclusivamente hispánico".

historian has been able to resist calling *mulūk* even though the people whom our most dubious source so names would have ruled 150–200 years prior to siege of Alaró, and were removed from power at that point. Nonetheless, such a position as local power-brokers seem plausible and the natural conclusion of any attempt to synthesise these various testimonies.

It is equally possible, one must admit, that the primary aim of such élites was simply to keep their lands, subjects and own positions from harm, because all of these possibilities have to be seen against the context of the growth of sea-raiding in the Western Mediterranean following the establishment of the Umayyad emirate in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>82</sup> This has been capably studied by Pierre Guichard, whose findings can be summarised here by saying that from the 780s onward there are a growing number of references to attacks by sea-borne raiders on islands and coasts of the Western Mediterranean.<sup>83</sup> Often the raiders are said to have been from Spain, sometimes to have been Arabs or Moors, and sometimes these things coincide, but it seems that this activity was not part of an Umayyad attempt to dominate the seas but rather the turning of the ports of the eastern seaboard of al-Andalus to such activity during their long escape from central government in the Andalusí *fitna* of the ninth century.<sup>84</sup> It is hard to believe that the only time that the Balearics suffered from such activity was in 798 and 799, although the successful defence then may have bought them some peace—except from Vikings—and one must imagine that a principal concern of the islands’ rulers was to find a backer who could cut down such activity, as indeed the Umayyads, Carolingians and Aghlabids together seem to have done.<sup>85</sup>

It is also possible, of course, that Balearic islanders were also participants in such raiding. As we have seen, Ibn Idharī believed that this was the case in Mallorca

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<sup>82</sup> Colin M. Wells, “The Maghrib and the Mediterranean in the Early Middle Ages”, *Florilegium*, 16 (1999): 17–29, pp. 22–3 and nn. 21 and 24; Ballan, “Fraxinetum”, 43–7.

<sup>83</sup> Sénac, *Musulmans et Sarrasins*, pp. 37–40; Guichard, “Piraterie andalouse”, with early sources collected in appendices pp. 74–6.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58–68.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64–6.

in 848/9, and the scholarship has also assumed it at various scales, from the possibility that particular islands might have been pirate bases to the argument that the Andalusí raids further into the Mediterranean would absolutely have necessitated a base in the Balearics.<sup>86</sup> This cannot be settled, but that pirates operated in their waters seems extremely likely.

Before this discussion moves on, the final point needs to be made that the same situation need not have applied in all the Balearic islands at once. The archipelago may have been governed as a unit under Rome, but that does not mean that it remained thus. We have seen that both long-lasting Byzantine connection and possible negotiations with Islam are easiest to attest for Mallorca, and to a lesser extent Menorca, while the situation in Ibiza, Formentera or Cabrera is basically unclear to us after the seventh century (barring Formentera's possible Viking attack). It is far from impossible that some of the tensions between our different sources arise precisely because they passed out of Byzantine control and joined the Carolingian orbit or made pacts with Islam's rulers at different times; some may have become pirate bases while others retained a legal government in the eyes of their backers; there may even have been intra-Islamic contests for control during the half century or more of conquest, of which we now know nothing. This should be borne in mind more than it is when this period is discussed.

### The Balearics under Islam

From the early tenth century, however, the Balearics were evidently considered as part of the *dār al-Islam* both locally and beyond, and the amount of detail we have about them correspondingly opens up considerably, not least because of their description by the tenth-century geographer Ibn Ḥawqal (fl. 960s). He discusses them twice in his *Kitāb ṣurāt al-arḍ*, first Mallorca separately as the source of extremely fine mules that were commonly found in al-Andalus under Caliph

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<sup>86</sup> Amengual, *Els orígens del cristianisme*, I: 466–7; Signes, “Bizancio y las Islas Baleares”, pp. 73 and 69.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān III (r. 912–61), and then the islands as a group in his later survey of the Mediterranean’s outlying territories.<sup>87</sup> This latter section is nicely relevant to this journal issue and is worth quoting:

“Mallorca is an important island governed by the lord of al-Andalus. *Ġabal al-Fulāl* is likewise attached to that state. Mallorca cannot be compared to Sicily on any account, for all that it is fertile, that life can be lived there cheaply, that livestock is abundant there because of the excellent husbandry, and that there is a profusion of agricultural produce there. It is inferior to Sicily for provisions, armaments, the potential for *jihād*, commercial development and the density of the population.”

Ibn Ḥawqal has nothing specific to say of the other islands, however, and after this our information again diminishes. Balearic history in the wake of the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain becomes difficult to set out, but involved rule from the *taifa* kingdom of Denia, possible pacts over Church government with Barcelona, potential independence as Denia was swallowed by Saragossa, take-over by Almoravid fugitives, attack by a Pisan Crusade, conquest by the Almohads and finally liberation, or conquest depending on one’s perspective, by the Catalans or Aragonese—depending on one’s perspective—in 1229.<sup>88</sup> Thereafter their history has followed that of their mainland parent government in either Perpignan or Barcelona.

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<sup>87</sup> I access this text through Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la terre (Kitab surat al-Ard): Introduction et traduction, avec index*, ed. J. H Kramers, trans. G. Wiet, 1st ed, volumes I–II (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1964). The relevant parts here are I: 114 and I: 198 (quoted, in my own translation from the French). Some details on the author can be found *ibid.*, I: ix–xvii; see also Gerald R. Tibbetts, “The Balkhī School of Geographers”, in *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, eds J. B. Harley and David Woodard, volumes I–III [History of Cartography, volume II] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), I: 108–36  
<[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC\\_V2\\_B1/HOC\\_VOLUME2\\_Book1\\_chapter5.pdf](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V2_B1/HOC_VOLUME2_Book1_chapter5.pdf)>  
[last modified 20 May 2011 as of 27 May 2018].

<sup>88</sup> See Travis Bruce, “An Intercultural Dialogue between the Muslim Taifa of Denia and the Christian County of Barcelona in the Eleventh Century”, *Medieval Encounters*, 15 (2009): 1–34, DOI: 10.1163/138078508X286815; Imamuddin, “Islam in Balearic Islands”, and Cau et al., “Christians

At several points in this history, however, the potential for the local powerful in the islands to use their intermediate and distant position to maximise their own power has been clear. Before the Islamic conquest, whenever that finally was, it is possible that no outside power was able to remove and replace these entrenched—indeed, fortified—local power interests, and the status of those interests must have benefitted substantially from being able to balance outside claims on the islands in such a way as to maintain a safe distance with respect to them all. Three to four competing navies nearby—Carolingian, Byzantine, Andalusí and sometimes Aghlabid—as well as whatever independent operators there were, perhaps made the coasts vulnerable, but this situation favoured local autonomy and a frontier sort of independence. Whenever one power could control those waters, however, were it the Roman Empire, the Byzantine one or the Caliphate, and perhaps the Vandals in their time, then the islanders lost their capacity thus to balance outside interests. At those times, the Balearics became part of the dominant power's commercial network: a hub, perhaps, or at least a passageway, but an interior space, forcibly linked to elsewhere by the highway of the sea.<sup>89</sup> In this respect, the position “between barriers and junction” posited for such spaces by Valérien might not be all that advantageous in political terms, however lively it made the economy; the pre-Islamic Balearics were safest from outside control when they could be the junction themselves.<sup>90</sup>

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in a Muslim World”, 1529–30; and Thomas N Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 63–6.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. the situation of Chios described in Nikolas Bakirtzis and Xenophon Moniaros, “History, Economy and Mastic Production in Medieval Chios”, *al-Masāq* (forthcoming), and more locally Josep Amengual Batle, “Las baleares bizantinas, lugar de destierro?”, in *Relaciones inéditas entre España y Grecia*, ed. Joan S. Nadal (Atenas: Instituto Cultural Reina Sofía [Cervantes], 1986), pp. 79–89 <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311456937\\_Las\\_baleares\\_bizantinas\\_lugar\\_de\\_destierro](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311456937_Las_baleares_bizantinas_lugar_de_destierro)> [last modified 25 July 2017 as of 6 June 2018].

<sup>90</sup> Dominique Valérien, “The Medieval Mediterranean”, in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, eds Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), pp. 77–90, DOI: 10.1002/9781118519356.ch5, 78.

### The history of the settlement

Ibn Hawqal also wrote at length about the other area I study here, and indeed it is to him that we owe the clearest comparison of its status to that of the Balearics, already quoted.<sup>91</sup> La-Garde-Freinet (as it now is) was no kind of island, however; it was an area stretching inland from the coast of modern-day Provence, and was called, for much of the late antique period anyway, *Gambracium*. What made it part of Ibn Hawqal's world and this article was its occupation by a Muslim force from Spain in 887.<sup>92</sup> Liudprand of Cremona (d. 972) gives us the most detailed version of events, for what that may be worth from such a chronicler: he tells us that twenty soldiers were able to storm the port and then build an impregnable fortress on the mountain above, from where they were able to terrorise the local area. Soon joined by other Muslims with an eye for booty, their attacks became so troublesome that in 931 Hugh of Arles (r. 924–47), one of two rival kings of Italy, enlisted the help of the Byzantine emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–44). The Byzantine naval squadron sent to his aid reportedly eliminated the Andalusí fleet and destroyed their

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<sup>91</sup> See n. 67 above.

<sup>92</sup> The date is disputed: see Kees Versteegh, "The Arab Presence in France and Switzerland in the 10th Century", *Arabica* 37 (1990): 359–88, p. 361. Other references on the settlement include Philippe Sénac, *Musulmans et Sarrasins*, pp. 41–58, 80–6, 100–6 and 108–11; Sénac, "La localisation du Ġabal al-Qilāl"; Sénac, *Provence et piraterie sarrasine*; Sénac, "Le Fraxinet des Maures"; Ballan, "Fraxinetum"; and Michel Lauwers, 'Des Sarrasins en Provence: représentations ecclésiastiques et luttes pour l'hégémonie en Méditerranée occidentale du Xe au XIIIe siècle', in *Héritages arabo-islamiques dans l'Europe méditerranéenne*, ed. Cathérine Richarté, Pierre-Roland Gayraud, and Jean-Michel Poisson [Colloque international organisé par l'INRAP, Marseille, 11-14 septembre 2013] (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), pp. 25–40

<[https://www.academia.edu/19708975/\\_Des\\_Sarrasins\\_en\\_Provence\\_représentations\\_ecclésiastiques\\_et\\_luttes\\_pour\\_lhégémonie\\_en\\_Méditerranée\\_occidentale\\_du\\_Xe\\_au\\_XIIIe\\_siècle\\_dans\\_C.\\_Richarté\\_R.-P.\\_Gayraud\\_J.-M.\\_Poisson\\_dir.\\_Héritages\\_arabo-islamiques\\_dans\\_lEurope\\_méditerranéenne\\_Paris\\_La\\_Découverte\\_2015\\_p.\\_25-40](https://www.academia.edu/19708975/_Des_Sarrasins_en_Provence_représentations_ecclésiastiques_et_luttes_pour_lhégémonie_en_Méditerranée_occidentale_du_Xe_au_XIIIe_siècle_dans_C._Richarté_R.-P._Gayraud_J.-M._Poisson_dir._Héritages_arabo-islamiques_dans_lEurope_méditerranéenne_Paris_La_Découverte_2015_p._25-40)> [last modified 21 October 2015 as of 26 October 2018], 25–8.

harbour. This contained the situation somewhat, and in 941 Hugh mounted a further campaign, besieging the Muslims in their mountain fastness. At the point of victory, however, Hugh—says Liudprand—decided to allow the Muslims out to occupy the Alpine passes into Italy, so as to keep him safe from his rival Berengar of Ivrea (King of Italy 950–61).<sup>93</sup> There they became more or less irremovable, making the situation far worse than it had been, although sources later than Liudprand record that after the Muslims met a Hungarian army in 954 King Conrad of Arles (r. 937–93) was able to slaughter the survivors of both sides.<sup>94</sup> It is obviously not coincidental that Hugh was an early but ultimately useless patron of Liudprand's, and that Liudprand makes him look like a traitor and coward, despite his victory, in this story should make us wary to trust the details.<sup>95</sup> In 972, however, the Muslims went a final step too far when they captured Abbot Maieul of Cluny (d. 994) on his way to Rome; ransomed, the influential churchman was able to rally a coalition of local nobles under Count Guillaume I of Provence (r. 968–93), with help from elsewhere in Cluny's wide orbit, and they defeated the Muslims in the field at Tourtour then chased them to their mountain base, which they eventually took, ending the presence of this unusually long-lived Muslim outpost in France.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Liudprand von Cremona, "Antapodosis", ed. Joseph Becker, *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona (Liudprandi Opera)*, 3rd edn [Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum rerum germanicum in usum scholarum separatim editi, volume XLI] (Hannover: Hahn, 1915), pp. 1–158  
<[http://www.mgh.de/dmgh/resolving/MGH\\_SS\\_rer.\\_Germ.\\_41\\_S.\\_1](http://www.mgh.de/dmgh/resolving/MGH_SS_rer._Germ._41_S._1)> [accessed 6 June 2018], 5–6, 56–7, 104–5, 134–5 and 139. Liudprand makes it sound as if these events were in immediate sequence; the correct dates are provided by Versteegh, "Arab Presence", 367–9, on the basis of the *Chronicle* of Flodoard of Reims. Cf. Ballan, "Fraxinetum", 289.

<sup>94</sup> Ekkehard, *Casus Sancti Galli*, ed. Hans Haefele [Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters, volume X] (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), p. 244; Versteegh, "Arab Presence", 371–2; cf. Ballan, "Fraxinetum", 30–1.

<sup>95</sup> Karl Leyser, "Ends and Means in Liudprand of Cremona", in *Byzantium and the West, c. 850–c. 1200*, ed. James Howard-Johnston [Byzantinische Forschungen, volume XIII, XVIII Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford 30th March–1st April 1984] (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1988), pp. 119–43; cf. Ballan, "Fraxinetum", 55–61.

<sup>96</sup> Versteegh, "Arab Presence", 370–1 and 372–4; Ballan, "Fraxinetum", 31–3. Scott G. Bruce, "An Abbot between Two Cultures: Maiolus of Cluny Considers the Muslims of La Garde-Freinet", *Early Medieval Europe*, 15 (2007): 426–40, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0254.2007.00215.x, studies the capture of



Thankfully, it is not just on Liudprand that we rely here. A catalogue of attacks recorded in Christian sources scattered as widely as Marseille, Novalesa and Sankt Gallen show that the Muslims possessed serious military power and considerable range, including excellent mountaineering ability.<sup>97</sup> An embassy sent by King Otto I of Germany (r. 936–73) to Caliph ‘Abd al-Rahmān III in Córdoba under Abbot John of Gorze (d. 974), around 944, has been considered to have been intended to get the Muslim ruler to rein in these unruly so-called pirates.<sup>98</sup> Fitting with this to an extent, Ibn Hayyān says that that year or the next, the caliph concluded a treaty, not with Otto, but with Hugh of Arles. This included a cessation of attacks on Hugh’s territory, and the terms of this treaty were notified to, among others, the *qa’id* of *Faraḥsinīṭ*, fairly clearly the Arabic reflex of the Latin name of the pirates’ base, *Fraxinetum*.<sup>99</sup> For these reasons it seems just to describe the settlement, as has Michel Lauwers, as, “a prolongation or a seaward relay of the Caliphate”.<sup>100</sup>

Ibn Hayyān, as we have said, is not the only Arab source to deal with the area: the geographer Ibn Ḥawqal also mentions it too, in these terms:<sup>101</sup>

“*Ġabal al-Fulāl*, situated in the region of France, is in the hands of warriors for the faith: one finds there good agricultural productivity; the watercourses are numerous, just like the fields, so much so that these volunteers live off the land. It is the Muslims who made this corner habitable, since their installation there. They became a menace

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Abbot Maieul, but uses none of the Arabic sources and ignores some of Liudprand’s details, so is of no service here.

<sup>97</sup> Versteegh, “Arab Presence”, 369–71.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 363; cf. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus*, pp. 109–13.

<sup>99</sup> Ibn Hayyān, *Muqtabas*, p. 308, cited by Versteegh, “Arab Presence”, 363 n. 15; he also cites Pedro Chalmeta, “La Mediterranee occidentale et al-Andalus de 934 à 941: Les donnees d’Ibn Hayyān”, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 50 (1976): 337–51, pp. 346–7, as having made the link between *Fraxinetum* and *Faraḥsinīṭ*, although Sénac, “Contribution”, 10–11, makes no recognition of that.

<sup>100</sup> Lauwers, “Des Sarrasins en Provence”, p. 28: “un prolongement ou un relais en mer du califat”.

<sup>101</sup> Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la terre*, I: 199. The English is translated by the present author from the French. The reading of the Arabic place-name as *al-Fulāl* rather than *al-Qilāl* is a feature of the French translation.

to the Franks, but it was impossible to confront them because they were stationed on the mountainside in a hideaway which was only accessible from one side, by a single route where their defences were effective. This mountain stretches for a distance of about two days' travel."

Ibn Hawqal here supplies details that flesh out and help explain Liudprand's account. Given a ninety-year existence, a productive territory of some extent and a warlike potential that could be defeated only by substantial coalitions (or Hungarians), one can therefore ask if "pirate" is really a just term for these Muslim warriors.<sup>102</sup> Recent work on the colony by Mohammad Ballan has made a strong case for seeing them instead as one of a number of colonies of *jihādīs* scattered about the Mediterranean, involved primarily not in personal wealth-building but in battle with the infidel.<sup>103</sup> Certainly, as Ballan argues, the activities of the settlers here could have been described as *jihād* by Muslim jurists, in so far as their victims were Christians and in so far as they had, by setting up there, expanded the government of Islam, and the rest is perhaps a matter of personal preference, both of the tenth-century soldiers and the modern historian describing them. Ballan's characterisation of the Muslims of la-Garde-Freinet as *ghāzīs* also naturally involves him in describing *Fraxinetum* as a frontier, a *thaghr*, which is again a matter of interpretation, but can be justified.<sup>104</sup>

## Depiction of an Island

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<sup>102</sup> Wells, "Maghrib", 23 and n. 24.

<sup>103</sup> Ballan, "Fraxinetum", 51–65.

<sup>104</sup> On the language of the Islamic frontier see Eduardo Manzano Moreno, "Christian-Muslim Frontier in Al-Andalus: Idea and Reality", in *Arab Influence upon Medieval Europe*, eds Dionisius Agius and Richard Hitchcock [Folia Scholastica Mediterranea, volume XVIII] (Reading, IL: Ithaca, 1994), pp. 83–96; Asa Eger, "Islamic Frontiers, Real and Imagined", *Al-'Usur Al-Wusta*, 17 (2005): 1–6 and 10 <<http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/listing.aspx?id=2585>> [last modified 29 October 2009 as of 23 July 2012].

Fascinatingly, however, for Ibn Ḥawqal this place was also an island, even though he seems to have known that it was not. Its exact status is not clear in his text, but there is nothing there which indicates that sea travel would be required to reach it. In one of the maps which accompany Ibn Ḥawqal's work, however, *Ġabal al-Qilāl* is clearly indicated, as a kind of oval sitting below the mouth of a river which one takes to be the Rhône (figure 1).<sup>105</sup>

[Figure 1 here]

There are various complications about this statement that must be made clear straight away. Firstly, this map does not accompany Ibn Ḥawqal's discussion of *Ġabal al-Qilāl*, which is in a section on the "Sea of the Romans", the Mediterranean, towards the end of his work.<sup>106</sup> The map that does accompany that section does not show *Ġabal al-Qilāl*.<sup>107</sup> This is not as surprising as it seems, for two reasons. Firstly, the map which does show *Ġabal al-Qilāl* is said to depict the Maghreb, but actually gives a detailed representation of the Mediterranean, both north and south sides, from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Libyan desert and the Tyrrhenian Sea, and was accompanied with a partner map which continued through to the eastern Mediterranean coast, the Nile and the Bosphorus. This map was sufficiently detailed that when he reaches the Mediterranean section of the text Ibn Ḥawqal expressly says that its accompanying map does not include all the details that are on the larger map of the Maghreb. This presumably explains its apparent omissions.<sup>108</sup>

This, however, must be read in combination with something Ibn Ḥawqal says at the outset of his work, which is that very few of the maps in it were his own design. In fact, the map sequence he used is part of a very long-lived tradition of Islamic world cartography, which had probably begun two writers before Ibn Ḥawqal and would continue long into the Ottoman period.<sup>109</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal's immediate

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<sup>105</sup> Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la terre*, I: inter 60/61, with label and commentary in text p. 61.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 199.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid. inter* I: 188/9.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 187: "Je l'ai représentée approximativement et non d'après la réalité..."; *ibid.*, I: 6: "Comme j'ai intégré la carte de l'Espagne dans la planche du Maghreb, je n'avais rien à en répéter."

<sup>109</sup> Tibbetts, "Balkhī School", resting in this aspect heavily on J.H. Kramers, "La question Balḥī-İṣṭahṛī-Ibn Ḥawqal et l'Atlas de l'Islam", *Acta Orientalia* 10 (1932): 9–30.

predecessor was a geographer known as al-Iṣṭakhrī (fl. mid-10th century AD), whose work, substantially a commentary on his maps, Ibn Ḥawqal was setting out to embellish with greater background detail. In the course of his labours, Ibn Ḥawqal tells us, he actually met al-Iṣṭakhrī, who,<sup>110</sup>

“had drawn a map of Sind, but he had made some mistakes, and he had also drawn Fars, which he had done extremely well. For my part, I had drawn the map of Azerbaijan which occurs on the following page and of which he approved, as well as that of the Jazira which he considered excellent. My map of Egypt, however, he condemned as wholly bad and that of the Maghrib as for the most part inaccurate.”

Despite that censure, it appears to be Ibn Ḥawqal’s own map of the Maghreb that we have and that shows *Ġabal al-Qilāl*. The island and its label appear only in the Maghreb map in the earliest manuscript of the work, Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, MS Ahmet 3446, which dates from around 1086.<sup>111</sup> This is some way from being Ibn Ḥawqal’s original design, therefore, but nonetheless in later manuscripts of this Islamic cartographic tradition, where the maps are included at all, *Ġabal al-Qilāl* is omitted.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, the dedicated map of the Mediterranean in this early manuscript, which as said does not feature *Ġabal al-Qilāl* even though it accompanies the discussion of the place, seems to be much more closely related to al-Iṣṭakhrī’s antetype. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that for the Maghreb, which he knew well, Ibn Ḥawqal felt that he could not retain his adoptive master’s map, and thus included on his version details that he would not be

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<sup>110</sup> Tibbetts, “Balkhī School”, p. 112. Note that this reading is virtually opposite from that of Gaston Wiet, ‘L’Importance d’Ibn Hauqal dans la littérature arabe’, in Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la Terre*, I: x, which instead has Ibn Ḥawqal passing comment on al-Iṣṭakhrī’s maps. Since the text Wiet quoted does not feature in the actual translation, however, and since Tibbetts’s reading appears to fit the sequence of maps as it descends between the two cartographers, I follow him here rather than Wiet.

<sup>111</sup> Tibbetts, “Balkhī School”, p. 108. The Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi have not responded to my attempts at contact.

<sup>112</sup> See Tibbetts, “Balkhī School”, pp. 112–20, with comparative illustrations. As covered there, a recension of the work exists with no maps (although with spaces for them).

able to include elsewhere without redrawing more of the maps, which would have negated the intent to expand on his predecessor's wisdom.

Be that as it may, *Ġabal al-Qilāl* is located quite differently in the maps in surviving copies of al-Iṣṭakhrī's *Kitāb al-masālik wa-al-mamālik*, as a fierce-looking triangular island which obstructs the Straits of Gibraltar on their inner side.<sup>113</sup> The disparity is less obvious than it seems because Ibn Ḥawqal's map may in fact include both islands: there is there an unlabelled land mass clogging the Straits immediately off the coast from Algeciras (see Figure 1). This might be interpreted as Gibraltar, but actually Ibn Ḥawqal never mentions that site, even though al-Iṣṭakhrī had (though he placed it inland on his map).<sup>114</sup> It is also possible that this single island represents the Balearics *in toto*, although if so they are well out of position. What it is not, however, is *Ġabal al-Qilāl*, which Ibn Ḥawqal places quite differently to his predecessor. Why?

The important factor here is probably that Ibn Ḥawqal had actually passed the Straits of Gibraltar, on a trip that had taken him as far down the African coast as Sijilmasa.<sup>115</sup> He therefore knew that there was no island blocking the passage. His map still shows one, perhaps out of courtesy to his source, but does not identify it, and unless it actually is Mallorca it is not mentioned in the text. Perhaps this was one of the ways in which al-Iṣṭakhrī found Ibn Ḥawqal's map of the Maghreb deficient.

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<sup>113</sup> Depicted e. g. *ibid.*, p. 120, or Karen C. Pinto, "'Surat Bahr Al-Rum' (Picture of the Sea of Byzantium): Possible Meanings Underlying the Forms", in *Eastern Mediterranean Cartographies*, eds Giorgos Toliás and Demetres Loupes [Tetradia Ergasias, volume XXV–XXVI, International Conference on the History of Cartography, Athens, 11–16 July 1999] (Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research, 2004), pp. 223–41

<[https://www.academia.edu/1153023/Surat\\_Bahr\\_al\\_Rum\\_Picture\\_of\\_the\\_Sea\\_of\\_Byzantium\\_Possible\\_Meanings\\_Underlying\\_the\\_Forms](https://www.academia.edu/1153023/Surat_Bahr_al_Rum_Picture_of_the_Sea_of_Byzantium_Possible_Meanings_Underlying_the_Forms)> [last modified 16 February 2009 as of 22 February 2018], 227 (decoded p. 228) and 230–33.

<sup>114</sup> Clear in Karen C. Pinto, "Passion and Conflict: Medieval Islamic Views of the West", in *Mapping Medieval Geographies: Geographical Encounters in the Latin West and beyond, 300–1600*, ed. Keith D. Lilley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 201–24

<[https://www.academia.edu/3630073/Passion\\_and\\_conflict\\_medieval\\_Islamic\\_views\\_of\\_the\\_West](https://www.academia.edu/3630073/Passion_and_conflict_medieval_Islamic_views_of_the_West)> [last modified 25 April 2014 as of 22 February 2018], 214, with commentary p. 215.

<sup>115</sup> Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la Terre*, I: 97.

Karen Pinto may well be correct to see in the former's depiction of *Ġabal al-Qilāl* something akin to the Classical idea of the Pillars of Hercules, a mythical island preventing passage further west than the Straits.<sup>116</sup> Such might make more sense to Eastern Mediterranean geographers than to Ibn Ḥawqal, who tells us that he had first been driven to travel by irritation with discrepant testimonies in the works he had read about the world's geography, so that he had to go and see himself.<sup>117</sup>

Nonetheless, one can only go so far with a case for Ibn Ḥawqal as a naturalistic cartographer who privileged experiential knowledge over accepted wisdom before one runs up against the fact that even the maps he apparently drew himself are, substantially, based around geometric shapes, massively over-emphasise rivers and frequently misplace locations by huge distances, as well as being wildly inconsistent about the relative sizes of areas like, for example, the Iberian Peninsula compared to Egypt.<sup>118</sup> Also, as we have seen, the map for the Maghreb depicts as an island a place which we know, and he seems to have known, was not one, and perhaps also depicted an island the cartographer knew well simply did not exist. Again we ask: why?

The mistake here from a modern perspective would be to assume that these maps were intended to represent actual measurable reality. Rather, they were intended to illustrate, and indeed add to, the understanding of the places concerned and their relationships that could be gleaned from the text, which could if necessary stand by itself (and was often so copied). Such additional meaning could be quite deeply encoded. Pinto has gone further than anyone else in detecting such significances, and when she points to the similarity in depiction between *Ġabal al-*

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<sup>116</sup> Pinto, "Passion and Conflict", pp. 213–15; Pinto, "Surat Bahr Al-Rum", pp. 228–9.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la Terre*, I: 3–4: "La citation des villes, des montagnes, des fleuves, des mers, des distances, et d'autres détails que je donnerai, est parfois accessible, mais en ordre dispersé, dans différents récits, et l'homme qui en est curieux peut obtenir sans trop de difficultés ces renseignements auprès des voyageurs originaires de chaque contrée, encore que ceux-ci soient animés d'une partialité en faveur de leur patrie ou de leur tribu, et aient émis des opinions qui ne concordent pas avec mes propres recherches et mes enquêtes personnelles, pour lesquelles j'ai visé à donner le véritable état des choses, en reproduisant des situations réelles."

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Tibbetts, "Balkhī School", p. 120.

*Qilāl* and Gibraltar on the earliest surviving copy of al-Iṣṭakhrī's Maghreb map, it is hard not to agree that we are having suggested for us a connection between the two stark grey triangles, even if one might disagree about what that connection was.<sup>119</sup> Thus, if Ibn Ḥawqal chose to depict la Garde-Freinet as an island, he was probably saying something about it by doing so.

What is being shown here is obviously not a geographic reality, therefore, but it is perhaps instead the way the Provençal colony fitted into the world that Ibn Ḥawqal described, cut off and hard to access but still deeply present in Mediterranean affairs.<sup>120</sup> It is interesting to add to this that the author of an eleventh-century saint's life, the *Vita Bobonis*, was apparently inspired by the episode of Abbot Maieul's kidnap to build a combat with the famous Muslims into its saint's hagiography and repeated this feat of geographical imagination in text: its *Fraxinetum* is a peninsula connected only by a narrow spit of land guarded by a tower.<sup>121</sup> Narratively, historically, even geographically, there were evidently ways in which la Garde-Freinet made more sense as an island.

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<sup>119</sup> Pinto, "Passion and Conflict", p. 215, as opposed to pp. 218–24, where I cannot follow.

<sup>120</sup> A point made also by Ballan, "Fraxinetum", 69–70, who compares it to Ibn Ḥawqal's portrayal of the Balearics. Ibn Ḥawqal's map does not, however, show the Balearics (unless they, and not *Ġabal al-Qilāl*, are represented by the island in the Straits of Gibraltar). Sénac, *Provence*, p. 20, argues that the Arabic word for 'island' need not imply total separation from land; cf. n. 4 above. For a modern example of the same metaphor (likewise in an Arabic context), see David Kennedy, *Gerasa and the Decapolis: A 'Virtual Island' in North-West Jordan* (London: Duckworth, 2007).

<sup>121</sup> Lauwers, "Des Sarrasins en Provence", p. 30: for the source see *Acta Sanctorum Maii V*, ed. by Godefridus Henschenius and Danielis Papenbrochius (Antverpia: Michaelis Cnobarus, 1685) <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k60409>> [accessed 30 December 2018], May 21 pp. 184–91, 185: "Nullus in eam introitus habebatur, nisi quod tellus tenuem linguam in æquora porrexerat, quae cum insula jungebatur, quam ipsi firmissimae turris munitione obstruxerant".

## Synthesis including Malta

What then made this pirates' nest an island, or at least island-like, was not connectivity. La Garde-Freinet was not a hub, of any kind; it was rather a stronghold, an obstacle, and it was enabled to be that fundamentally because it was cut off, difficult of access, with the sea only on one side but still approachable only from one difficult direction.<sup>122</sup> For Ibn Hawqal, apparently, and for the writer of the *Vita Bobonis*, that made this place equivalent to an island. In this respect, being out of control even by its supposed ruler and unreachable by its enemies, it was in our terms more like the Balearics before their conquest by Islam, when they too could avoid any one power determining their fate. As soon as *Fraxinetum's* enemies combined against it, however, it was in trouble, and then sank back into a wider "sea" of landward princedoms.

The similarities between these two apparently quite different zones appear in sharper relief if a third point of comparison is briefly introduced, and an obvious one is Malta, under which heading I also include its sibling Gozo and their islet relatives.<sup>123</sup> Here a similarly difficult and patchy literary record and a similarly insufficient archaeological record nonetheless give us a rather different history of a Mediterranean Byzantine island's passage into Islamic control.<sup>124</sup> The Roman

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<sup>122</sup> Cf. Kennedy, *Gerasa and the Decapolis*, and Rebecca Darley, "The Island Frontier: Socotra, Sri Lanka and the Shape of Commerce in the Late Antique Western Indian Ocean", *al-Masāq* (forthcoming).

<sup>123</sup> I must thank one of the anonymous reviewers of this article for the impetus to include Malta in it, and Dr Nathaniel Cutajar for advice on the archaeology.

<sup>124</sup> As well as the works explicitly cited below, this summary was assembled from A. Molinari and N. Cutajar, "Of Greeks and Arabs and of Feudal Knights: A Preliminary Archaeological Exposure of Malta's Perplexing Middle Ages", *Malta Archaeological Review*, 3 (1999): 9–13; Charles Dalli, "'Greek', 'Arab' and 'Norman' Conquests in the Making of Maltese History", *Storja*, (2003-2004): 9–20 <<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/25542>> [last modified 28 November 2017 as of 16 November 2018]; Joseph M. Brincat, *Maltese and Other Languages: A Linguistic History of Malta* [Maltese Social Studies, volume XIX] (Sta Venera: Midsea Books, 2011), pp. 13–47; and Brunella Bruno and Nathaniel Cutajar, "Imported Amphorae as Indicators of Economic Activity in Early Medieval Malta", in Michaelides, Pergola and Zanini, *Insular System*, pp. 15–29.



invasion here came in the early third century BC. The island's fate at the collapse of Roman government in the West is unclear.<sup>125</sup> It seems to have been under Ostrogothic rule in 535 when Procopius tells us that the fleet off to invade Vandal Africa passed through the islands, perhaps between the two, but all that is really clear is that after a time of relative economic disconnection between fourth and sixth centuries the island sprang back into ceramic life with a boom in imports from (and presumably therefore exports to) Byzantium in the sixth and seventh centuries.<sup>126</sup> During this time Malta, too, received disciplinary ecclesiastical attention from Pope Gregory I, exiles from the Byzantine heartland and a variety of Byzantine seals.<sup>127</sup> The ceramic record indicates a progressive drop in imports over the eighth and ninth centuries, however, and the best-recorded site, the capital city of *Melita*, now Mdina,

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<sup>125</sup> T.S. Brown, "Byzantine Malta: A Discussion of the Sources", in *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights*, ed. Anthony T. Luttrell (London: British School at Rome, 1975), pp. 71–87 <[http://melitensiawth.com/incoming/Index/The Arabs in Malta/1975Byzantine Malta Brown.pdf](http://melitensiawth.com/incoming/Index/The%20Arabs%20in%20Malta/1975Byzantine%20Malta%20Brown.pdf)> [last modified 12 May 2012 as of 11 November 2018], 72–3; Victor, *Historia persecutionis*, p. 4 (I.iv). Victor does not explicitly mention Malta here, but it is assumed to be one of the "insulae maximae" taken by the Vandals along with Sardinia, Sicily, Corsica, Ibiza, Mallorca and Menorca.

<sup>126</sup> Procopius: Brown, "Byzantine Malta", pp. 73–5; Procopius, *Wars, III and IV*, p. 131 (III.xiv.16). Archaeology: esp. Brunella Bruno and Nathaniel Cutajar, "Archeologia bizantina a Malta: primi risultati e prospettive di indagine", in *Da Pyrgi a Mozia : studi sull'archeologia del Mediterraneo in memoria di Antonia Ciasca*, ed. M.G. Amadasi Guzzo, M. Liverani, and P. Matthiae, volumes I–II (Roma: Università degli studi di Roma "La sapienza", 2002), I: 109–38 <[http://www.academia.edu/522901/Bruno\\_B.\\_and\\_Cutajar\\_N.\\_2002.\\_Archeologia\\_Bizantina\\_a\\_Malta\\_primi\\_risultati\\_e\\_prospettive\\_di\\_indagine\\_in\\_Amadasi\\_M.G.\\_Liverani\\_M.\\_Matthiae\\_P.\\_edd.\\_Da\\_Pyrgi\\_a\\_Mozia\\_Studi\\_SullArcheologia\\_del\\_Mediterraneo\\_in\\_Memoria\\_di\\_Antonia\\_Ciasca](http://www.academia.edu/522901/Bruno_B._and_Cutajar_N._2002._Archeologia_Bizantina_a_Malta_primi_risultati_e_prospettive_di_indagine_in_Amadasi_M.G._Liverani_M._Matthiae_P._edd._Da_Pyrgi_a_Mozia_Studi_SullArcheologia_del_Mediterraneo_in_Memoria_di_Antonia_Ciasca)> [last modified 11 April 2011 as of 11 November 2018].

<sup>127</sup> Gregory: Brown, "Byzantine Malta", pp. 74–6, citing Gregory, *Registrvm*, I: 142 (II.43), II: 236–37 (X.1) and II: 388 (XIII.22); exiles: Brown, "Byzantine Malta", pp. 76–7 and see now Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, ed. and trans. Cyril A. Mango [Dumbarton Oaks Texts, volume X] (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1990), pp. 188–9. Seals: Brown, "Byzantine Malta", p. 87, and Nathaniel Cutajar, *Core & Periphery: Mdina and Hal Safi in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, ed. Godwin Vella [Medieval Malta, volume I] (Valletta: Heritage Malta Publishing, 2018), pp. 6–7. I am especially grateful to Dr Cutajar for supplying me with a copy of this last.

seems to have shrunk substantially at that time.<sup>128</sup> In interesting parallels to *Pollentia* in Mallorca some centuries earlier, part of the old public space of the city became a burial space while another part was fortified.<sup>129</sup>

Unlike *Pollentia*, however, this capital seems to have ceased occupation soon after the Islamic conquest in 869/70. The fortress looms large in the story of that conquest, which is told by several Muslim writers, but most notably al-Himyari, who notes especially that the fortress was held by a *Rūmi* governor called 'Amrus (Ambrosios?) and that thereafter the island was left deserted until 1040 or so.<sup>130</sup> Mdina's archaeological record does not contradict this, but recent digs elsewhere in the island have found ninth- and tenth-century Islamic pottery alongside new local manufactures, so here too we have abandonment of some urban spaces in favour of rural ones further off the coast, but an evident persistence of maritime connection nonetheless, albeit to the new Aghlabid and Fatimid masters of the island, not to the Andalusī emirate-then-caliphate which ruled our other two "island-like" spaces.<sup>131</sup> For what it is worth, the island was also mapped by Ibn Ḥawqal, although here his knowledge seems less secure and it has been suggested that his actual description

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<sup>128</sup> Bruno and Cutajar, "Archeologia bizantina a Malta", pp. 125–8; Cutajar, *Core & Periphery*, pp. 10–15.

<sup>129</sup> Bruno and Cutajar, "Archeologia bizantina a Malta", pp. 114–17; Cutajar, *Core & Periphery*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>130</sup> Joseph M. Brincat, *Malta 870–1054: Al-Himyari's Account and Its Linguistic Implications* (Valletta: Said International, 1995), pp. 9–17; Brincat, *Maltese and Other Languages*, pp. 33–9.

<sup>131</sup> Cutajar, *Core & Periphery*, pp. 16–22, effectively rendering redundant the speculations of Stanley Fiorini and Martin R. Zammit, "Οἱ Παῖδες Ἄγαρ Ἀθέου: The Arabs in Malta: 870–1150", *Melita Classica*, 3 (2016): 179–208

<[https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/21152/The arabs in Malta \(no. 75\).pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/21152/The%20arabs%20in%20Malta%20(no.75).pdf)> [last modified 15 September 2016 as of 16 November 2018]. Note, however, that as with Mallorca (cf. n. 38 above) the fact that a "flight to the hills" can be disproved in some places cannot hide the numerous others that shrank or disappeared: cf. Nathaniel Cutajar, "L-iskavi arkeoloġiċi fil-Power Station tal-Marsa – Xatt il-Qwabar 1993", in *Festa tas-Sema Trinità, 10 ta' gunju 2001* (Malta: Ghaqda tal-Muzika Trinità Qadelisa, 2001), pp. 151–5  
<<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/8094>> [last modified 19 January 2016 as of 12 November 2018], and Cutajar, *Core & Periphery*, pp. 14–15 and 16.

of it relates to the smaller island of Jālita, not *Melita* that would be Malta proper.<sup>132</sup> Nonetheless, this was another space he thought made sense as an island.

Here, therefore, we have neither the semi-autonomous jockeying between possible political patrons that I have suggested for the Balearic islands before the Islamic conquest, nor the clear enlistment into a wider maritime territory of which the island comprised a node, but not an edge, which I have delineated for both Balearics and la Garde-Freinet after their conquest. In fact, the reverse applies: before its conquest Malta was clearly incorporated into the Byzantine economic world, and there is little sign that it functioned as a ‘hub’ to transmit imperial goods or loyalties onwards from itself to foreign territories; instead, like the Balearics or la Garde-Freinet under Islam, it was exploited for particular resources by its patron state and allowed to prosper on that basis. Only after the Aghlabid conquest did it perhaps become the kind of frontier interspace that scholarship on islands is so often keen to see.<sup>133</sup> The Balearics, meanwhile, seem to have resisted this cooperative kind of frontiersmanship in favour of a more defensive one as long as they could, in order to retain autonomous powers of community direction, and la Garde-Freinet exercised a far more aggressive military frontier strategy that eventually saw it closed down by its combined enemies. These were not parallel situations in anything except the broadest religious-political outlines, but rather three different ways of playing local circumstances according to their own strengths and weaknesses.

## Conclusions

Does this combination of syntheses thus tell us anything coherent about the situation of an island, or an “island-like” territory, other than that the simple fact of

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<sup>132</sup> Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la terre*, I: 198; see Fiorini and Zammit, “The Arabs in Malta”, pp. 183–4.

<sup>133</sup> Explicitly expressed for Malta by Bruno and Cutajar, “Archeologia bizantina a Malta”, pp. 132–3, and more widely in Paul Rainbird, *The Archaeology of Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511619007; cf. Darley, Jarrett and Zavagno, “Introduction”.

being cut off from other land by nature did not and does not confer as many automatic attributes as we might have supposed? One feels that there should be something, and not just for the genuinely seaward members of our triad; after all, to Ibn Hawqal and the writer of the *Vita Bobonis* la Garde-Freinet could more easily be imagined as an island than in its actual geographical position. Surely this was in part down to how cut off it was from its neighbours, the very same isolation which gave it its defensive strength, but that itself invites comparison along a spectrum, not a simple binary insular or non-insular status. Malta, as described, had little or no agency in its engagement with outsiders: it was simply too close to big powers and plausible shipping routes to escape attention and thus had to make the best of whatever situations befell it.<sup>134</sup> Its seaward status actually made it more accessible, not less, than la Garde-Freinet's impassable landscape did it. Very similar observations, *mutatis mutandis*, have been made of Sicily in this and indeed other periods.<sup>135</sup> The Balearics were a little further off the beaten track, and thus managed to retain more agency at times, but as said, only as long as plural political players operated more or less equally around their waters, and each island may well have taken different paths through the ensuing negotiations until Andalusian dominance was established. In terms of isolation, however, la Garde-Freinet, the landward territory, may have enjoyed more of it than the real islands here studied.

This is obviously not inherent to the presence or not of water around these places: while many a mountain zone in the heart of Europe is perhaps more cut off than Malta or Mallorca were and are, very few such places can be as inaccessible as the genuine island of Sokotra, studied by Rebecca Darley elsewhere in this issue, or Pacific Ocean examples like Pitcairn or Rapa Nui (Easter Island), which amply justify generalisations about isolation, micro-cultures and so forth, although all still had contacts with the outside world now and then.<sup>136</sup> It is just that the significant factor

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<sup>134</sup> Cf. Dalli, "'Greek', 'Arab' and 'Norman' Conquests".

<sup>135</sup> Denis Mack Smith, *Medieval Sicily 800–1713* [A History of Sicily, volume II] (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), pp. xiii-xvi.

<sup>136</sup> Mountain zones: Chris Wickham, *The Mountains and the City: The Tuscan Apennines in the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Patrick Boucheron and Elisabeth Mornet, eds, *Montagnes médiévales* [34e Congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement

here is not water *per se*, but difficulty of navigation and transport measured cumulatively as a human exercise; the isolation of islands is human-geographical (or animal- or plant-geographical), not physical-geographical.

This spectrum of circumstance also played out in terms of ecological scale and sustainability of life. All of the places here considered could viably be lived in without outside contact, although that hardly ever seems to have been attempted. Outside traffic was not required for survival, but it might be required for prosperity. Most of the islands or quasi-islands we have examined here were involved in specialised production for export at some point, be it of garum, purple dye, mules, timber, pitch or whatever, because that made engagement with outside interests, selected or not, more useful and life more comfortable. When those engagements dwindled, however, there was a stark difference between the scale of population that could be supported and that which had previously been possible. Cities emptied, habitation refocused on the countryside or hills and specialised production could no longer occupy very many people. This was so in mainlands as well, however, as numerous studies of the post-Roman world have shown, and the exact level of difference between the island and mainland situations here is again probably not determined by that binary, but by the same spectrum of distance and difficulty of access that we have already outlined.<sup>137</sup>

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supérieur public, Chambéry, 2003] (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003); cf. also Kennedy, *Gerasa and the Decapolis*, for a landward “desert island”. Other refs.: Mel White, “Where the Weird Things Are”, *National Geographic*, 221/6 (June 2012): 122–39, and Darley, “Island Frontier”; John Connell, “The End Ever Nigh: Contemporary Population Change on Pitcairn Island”, *GeoJournal* 16/2 (1988): 193–200, but cf. Guillaume Molle and Aymeric Hermann, ‘Pitcairn before the Mutineers: Revisiting the Isolation of a Polynesian Island’, in *The Bounty from the Beach*, ed. Sylvie Largeaud-Ortega (Canberra: ANU Press, 2018), 67–94 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv8bt270.7>> [accessed 31 December 2018]; Christopher M. Stevenson, Cedric O. Puleston, Peter M. Vitousek, Oliver A. Chadwick, Sonia Haoa and Thegn N. Ladefoged, “Variation in Rapa Nui (Easter Island) Land Use Indicates Production and Population Peaks Prior to European Contact”, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112/4 (2015): 1025–30.

<sup>137</sup> Mainland collapse: Lewit, “Vanishing Villas”, and (much) more widely Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Finally, to bring us back to our starting point, were these island-like places also frontiers, and how was that affected by their island natures? One conception of the frontier is as contact zone, but what made these areas most “between” and interstitial for contemporaries was rather a lack of contact, a separation.<sup>138</sup> They could be defined apart, and in certain ways—not necessarily those fashionable in modern scholarship—profited from that. The Balearics and la Garde-Freinet were not entrepôts or trading places, or at least, when they were it was only as part of al-Andalus.<sup>139</sup> They did not then form borders of that territory, however: they were either inside or outside those borders, and although they were sometimes still the furthest extents of the empires who laid claim upon them, they did not exist to enable entry from outside. If they were frontiers, therefore, they were closed and defended ones only. Malta shows that this was not inherent to island status; but it was the way that circumstances defined the situation of our two main case studies, and those circumstances operated differently because of their “island-like” qualities, which Malta in this respect shared less strongly.

In workshops on the two projects that gave rise to this collection of articles, “The World of Medieval Islands” and “Rethinking the Medieval Frontier”, it was argued by some that one thing that makes an island distinctive from a frontier is that the island can be approached by anyone on the sea, from any direction, whereas a landward frontier usually only has two or at most three sides, and its directionalities are therefore limited.<sup>140</sup> The islands, or islands and quasi-island, discussed here

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<sup>138</sup> Philipp W. Stockhammer and Bogdan Athanassov, “Conceptualising Contact Zones and Contact Spaces”, in *Archaeology across Frontiers and Borderlands*, ed. Stefanos Gimatzidis, Magda Pieniżek and Sila Mangaloğlu-Votruba [Fragmentation and Connectivity in the North Aegean and the Central Balkans from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, volume I] (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2018), pp. 93–112 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv92vpng.8>> [accessed 31 December 2018]. Cf. Magdalena Naum, “Difficult Middles, Hybridity and Ambivalence of a Medieval Frontier: The Cultural Landscape of Lolland and Falster (Denmark)”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 38/1 (2012): 56–75, DOI: 10.1080/13044184.2011.644755, for a medievalist application of such ideas to islands, as well, of course, as Zavagno, “Going to the Extremes”.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Florin Curta, “Markets in Tenth-Century Al-Andalus and Volga Bulghāria: Contrasting Views of Trade in Muslim Europe”, *al-Masāq*, 25/3 (2013): 305–30, DOI: 10.1080/09503110.2013.844503.

<sup>140</sup> Alan V. Murray, pers. comm., 24 July 2017.

invite us to consider whether this must always be true. By such a definition these islands were only islands at some points in their history, and at others very definitely sat within a larger polity, not at its edge, and were easily approachable only from within it. When they were more widely accessible, that was a source of danger as much as or more than enrichment. They were at their most independent when least accessible, and accountable, to outside, but that isolation came with evident material costs.<sup>141</sup> Prosperity, nonetheless, was not always the primary concern for these islanders. They and the circumstances in which they lived thus help call some of our assumptions, both historical and political, into question.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> In this respect they appear very differently to Chios, as discussed by Bakirtzis and Moniaros, “Medieval Chios”.

<sup>142</sup> This article was written in constant dialogue with Luca Zavagno and Rebecca Darley, with whom I have taken great delight both in disagreeing and agreeing. The position I take here is different from that expressed in Darley, Jarrett and Zavagno, “Introduction”, and indeed from that in Zavagno, “Going to the Extremes” and somewhat from that in Darley, “Island Frontier”, but it could not have been reached without the influence of those papers. I am immensely grateful to both other authors. I should also here recognise the help with literature in unfamiliar fields provided by Drs Emma Felber and Nathaniel Cutajar, and the considerable contribution made by the anonymous reviewers for *al-Masāq*, without whose input this article would have been much shorter, but also much less precise, critical or thought-out.

## Figure captions

Figure 1. Ibn Hawqal, map of the Maghreb (western portion), reproduced from Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la terre (Kitab surat al-Ard): Introduction et traduction, avec index*, ed. J.H. Kramers, trans. G. Wiet, 1st ed., volumes I–II (Paris: Maisonneuve and Larose, 1964), I, planche 4. *Jabal al-Fulāl* is diagonally immediately to the south-east of the Iberian peninsula. Note also the semi-circular island in the Straits of Gibraltar.