Rebel Fortresses and Local Identities in Ninth-Century Al-Andalus

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Fortresses (husun, sing. hisn) in al-Andalus were rural units which crucial for military defense, protection and administration of the surrounding villages, and tax collection from local inhabitants. Some husun were places of permanent residence, while others were fortified constructions for refuge in case of danger. Local people had close ties with a particular fortress which protected them, taxed them and controlled the area. These close ties with a hisn developed a sense of identity, since rural communities were attached to a particular fortress. Rebels in ninth-century al-Andalus controlled fortresses and strengthened the local identities around the husun, as a way to weaken the political unity of al-Andalus and to be able to claim autonomy in particular regions. This essay aims to situate the husun within the context of political, economic and social realities of ninth-century al-Andalus.

KEYWORDS: Rebel Fortresses, Local Identities, Political History, 9th Century Al-Andalus.

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