

1009: Adémar of Chabannes on the Destruction of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

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Abstract: The article analyses an account by the French chronicler Adémar of Chabannes which provides an explanation for the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1009. According to the chronicler, this destruction was instigated by Jews and Muslims from al-Andalus. The article compares his account with the reports of other Christian authors from Latin Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean and contextualises it as part of the medieval history of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In the early eleventh century, this building was significantly affected by the anti-Christian religious policies of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākīm. Adémar's narrative appears to imply that he possessed basic information about the caliph's reign.

Source

Adémar de Chabannes: *Chronicon* (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 129), ed. Pascale Bourgain, Turnhout: Brepols, 1999, lib. 3, cap. 47, pp. 166–167, transl. Johannes Georg Stolk and John Aspinwall.

Ipsō anno sepulchrum Domini Hierosolimis confractum est a Judeis et Sarracenis, III^o kalendas octobris millesimo X^o anno ab incarnatione ejus. Nam Judei occidentales et Sarraceni Hispanie miserunt epistolas in Orientem, accusantes Christianos et mandantes exercitus Francorum super Sarracenos orientales commotos esse. Tunc Nabuchodonosor Babilonie, quem vocant Admiratum, concitatus suasu paganorum in iram, afflictionem non parvam in Christianos exercuit, deditque legem ut quicumque christiani de sua potestate nollent fieri Sarraceni, aut confiscarentur aut interficerentur.

Unde factum est ut innumerabiles christianorum converterentur ad legem Sarracenam, et nemo pro Christo morte dignus fuit preter patriarcham Jherosolimorum, qui variis suppliciiis occisus est, et duos adolescentes germanos in Egipto, qui decollati sunt et multis

In the same year, the sepulchre of the Lord in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Jews and Saracens, on the third calends of October in the year 1010 since his Incarnation. This was because the western Jews and the Saracens of Spain had sent letters to the Orient accusing the Christians of having raised a Frankish army and to have this army come upon the Saracens in the Orient. Greatly angered by this information from the pagans, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom they refer to as Admiratus, then inflicted not a little misery on the Christians and issued a law according to which all Christians under his rule unwilling to become Saracens would either be dispossessed or killed.

Hence it happened that countless Christians converted to the Saracen law, and no one was worthy to die for Christ except the patriarch of the Jerusalemites, who was put to death in an agonising manner, and two young men in Egypt, who were brothers, were beheaded and [later] shone in many miraculous

claruerunt miraculis. Nam ecclesia Sancti Georgii, que actenus a nullo Sarracenorum potuit violari, tunc destructa est cum aliis multis ecclesiis sanctorum, et peccatis nostris promerentibus, basilica sepulchri Domini usque ad solum diruta. Lapidem Monumenti cum nullatenus possent comminuere, ignem copiosum superadiciunt, sed quasi adamans immobilis mansit et solidus. Bethleemicam ecclesiam, ubi Christus natus est, cum niterentur destruere, subito apparuit eis lux fulgurans, et omnis multitudo paganorum corruens exspiravit, et sic ecclesia Dei genitricis intacta remansit. Ad monasterium quoque montis Sinai, ubi quingenti et eo amplius monachi sub imperio abbatis manebant, habentes ibidem proprium episcopum, venerunt Sarracenorum decem milia armatorum, ut monachos perimentes habitacula eorum cum ecclesiis diruerent. Propinquantibus autem a quatuor fere milibus, conspiciunt totum montem ardentem et fumantem, flammisque in celum ferri, et cuncta ibi posita cum hominibus manere illesa.

Quod cum renunciassent regi Babilonio, penitencia ductus tam ipse quam populus Sarracenus valde doluerunt de his quae contra Christianos egissent, et data preceptione, iussit reaedificari basilicam Sepulchri gloriosi. Tamen redincepta basilica, non fuit amplius similis priori nec pulchritudine nec magnitudine quam Helena mater Constantini regali sumptu perfecerat. Mox e vestigo super omnem terram Sarracenorum fames incanduit per tres annos, et innumerabilis eorum multitudo fame mortua est, ita ut plateae et deserta cadaveribus replerentur, et fierent homines cibum et sepultura feris et avibus. Secuta est eos gladii vastitas. Nam gentes Arabiae super terram eorum diffuse sunt, et qui remanserant fame, gladiis interierunt. Captus est ab eis rex Babilonius, qui se contra Deum erexerat in superbiam, et vivus, ventre dissecto, visceribusque extractis, impiam animam

manifestations. Finally, the church of St. George, which no Saracen had yet succeeded in desecrating, was destroyed, as were many other churches of the saints, and the church of the Lord's sepulchre was pulled down to the ground because of our sins. [But] they were unable to break the stone of the sepulchre in any way, although they laid a great fire, but it remained immovable and firm as diamond. When they endeavoured to destroy the church in Bethlehem, where Christ was born, a dazzling light suddenly appeared to them, and the whole multitude of the heathen collapsed and died, and so the church of Our Lady remained unharmed. Also at the monastery on Mount Sinai, where more than five-thousand monks were staying under the leadership of the abbot, and where they had their own bishop, ten-thousand Saracens came with weapons to kill the monks and destroy their cells and churches. But when they had come within about four miles, they saw the whole mountain glowing and smoking, and the flames reached up to heaven. But all that was there, with the people, remained unharmed.

When this was reported to the king of Babylon, he and all the Saracen people repented of what they had done to the Christians, and he issued a decree to rebuild the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in all its splendour. But the rebuilt church did not remotely resemble that of the first one which Helena, Constantine's mother, had built with royal funds, in its beauty and grandeur. Shortly afterwards, a famine that lasted for three years took the whole country of the Saracens, and countless of them died of starvation, so that the roads and the desert were filled with corpses, and the people found their burial as food for the wild beasts and birds. This was followed by destructions of the sword, for the nations of Arabia spread over their territory, and those who had survived the famine died by the swords. They [i.e. the peoples of Arabia] took the king of Babylon captive, who had risen up in pride against God, and they cut up his abdomen

ad baratrum projecit. Venter ejus, lapidibus oppletus, consutus est, et cadaver, ligato plumbo ad collum, in mare demersum est.

whilst he was alive, tore out his intestines, and threw his nefarious soul into the abyss. His stomach was filled with stones and sewn up, and his body weighed down with lead and sunk in the sea.

Authorship & Work

[§1] Adémar of Chabannes was born around 989 into a family of the lower nobility from the village of the same name, Chabannes, in Aquitaine. At the age of seven, he entered the monastery of Saint-Cybard d'Angoulême, but in 1007 he transferred to the abbey of Saint-Martial in Limoges, where he completed his novitiate.¹ In 1014 he was ordained priest in Saint-Cybard. Some years later, he began collecting material for his chronicle, from which the passage quoted here is taken.²

[§2] From around 1028, Adémar was a follower of a local movement that had set itself the goal of declaring the patron saint of the monastery, Saint-Martial of Limoges (died in the 3rd century), an apostle of Christ. In this context, Adémar authored two texts in which he, on the one hand, moved the dates of Martial's life to the presumed lifetime of Jesus Christ (*Commemoratio abbatum sanctis Martialis*) and, on the other hand, confirmed the apostolate of the saint in the form of a forged papal letter (*Epistola de apostelatu sancti Martialis*). In addition to these (pseudo-)hagiographic texts, Adémar of Chabannes produced sermons, smaller spiritual writings and countless copies and illustrations of the fables of Phaedrus (died in the 1st century).³ His contribution to the so-called School of St. Martial, which was formed around the Abbey of Limoges and is known for its monophonic and polyphonic musical compositions, is also significant.⁴

[§3] His most important work, however, is the aforementioned chronicle, which has survived as the *Chronicon* or *Historia*. It is divided into three books, which describe Frankish history in Aquitaine from its beginnings to Adémar's lifetime. The first book deals with the origins of the Carolingian dynasty, which he traces back to Troy, following Roman tradition, up to the death of Pippin (r. 751–768). The second book focuses on the reign of Charlemagne (r. 768–814). The third book covers the period from his death to 1029. The value of the chronicle lies especially in the third book, as the first two books are mainly a compilation.⁵ For example, the first fifty-one chapters of the first book are borrowed from the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, while for the remaining chapters of the first and second books Adémar used other works such as the continuation of the Fredegar Chronicles or the *Annales regni Francorum*.⁶ Only from the sixteenth chapter of the third book, or in the period after 830, does the chronicle contain original material.

[§4] Adémar's work is characterised by the widespread expectation of the Last Days in his time. Research even assumes that Adémar's preoccupation with history and chronography was aimed at gaining more precise knowledge about the coming of the Apocalypse and the Antichrist, which were expected for the years between 1025 and 1037.⁷ Adémar probably began writing

¹ Landes, Relics, p. 85.

² Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, transl. Chauvin and Pon, p. 11.

³ Adémar de Chabannes, *Opera omnia*, ed. Grier.

⁴ Grier, Adémar.

⁵ Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, transl. Chauvin/ Pon, p. 17.

⁶ Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, transl. Chauvin/ Pon, pp. 18–19.

⁷ Landes, Relics, pp. 125, 287.

the chronicle around 1025. A first “draft,” referred to as “Alpha” in the edition used here, dates from 1026/1027. It was followed by the “Beta” version, which Adémar compiled in Angoulême in 1028.⁸ The Gamma version, the most detailed manuscript, was probably completed in 1029.⁹ In 1033, Adémar set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to experience the end of the world under the protection of God.¹⁰ He had previously completed his works and left them at the Abbey of Limoges.¹¹ In 1034, Adémar of Chabannes died, probably near Jerusalem.

Content & Context

[§5] This source passage stems from Adémar’s chronicle, more precisely it is taken out of the forty-seventh chapter of the third book, and deals with the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In the introductory sentence, this is dated to the third *calendars* of October (29 September) 1010, although other sources indicate that the destruction had already taken place the previous year.¹² In the same paragraph, Adémar identifies “the Jews and the Saracens” as the responsible perpetrators. The narrative then begins with Adémar explaining the cause of the destruction: “the western Jews” and “the Saracens of Spain” had sent messages to the Orient, claiming that “the Franks” were busy raising an army to occupy the “Saracen lands in the Orient.” “Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon” was furious at this news and sought revenge against the Christians. The “Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon,” as can be concluded from the historical circumstances, refers to the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ḥākīm (r. 386–411/996–1021), whom Adémar probably gave the name Nebuchadnezzar in reference to the Old Testament kings of Babylon.¹³ Babylon, on the other hand, was a common name in Latin sources both for the ‘Abbāsīd capital Baghdad (near the biblical Babylon on the Euphrates) and, as here, for the Fāṭimid capital Cairo (near the Roman military fortress of Babylon, the later al-Fustāt or Old Cairo). Adémar further reports that the ruler was called *admiratus*, which could either be translated literally as “the admired one” or interpreted as a Latinisation of the Arabic-Islamic title *amīr*, which can mean “commander” or “ruler,” but in the extended form *amīr al-mu’minīn* (“commander of the faithful”) also represents the title of the caliph.¹⁴

[§6] In response to the content of the letters and the threat of a Frankish army evoked in them, the caliph had issued the order that all Christians in his domain should “become Saracens” (*fieri Sarraceni*, i.e. accept Islam) or else be dispossessed or killed. Adémar emphasises that, with the exception of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and two young brothers in Egypt, none were worthy to die for Christ, which is to say that most Christians chose conversion, but these three chose martyrdom.

[§7] Such attacks on Christians further escalated with the destruction of the Church of Saint George in the city of Lod, as well as other unspecified churches, and even the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (*basilica sepulchri Domini*) by the Caliph’s men, whom Adémar refers to alternately as pagans (*pagani*) and Saracens (*Saraceni*). At this point, Adémar emphasises that despite setting fire to the building, they did not succeed in destroying the “stone of the monument” (*lapidus monumenti*). This stone could refer either to the rock tomb of Jesus described in the Gospels (Mk 15:46) or to the foundation stone of the monument above the

⁸ Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, transl. Chauvin and Pon, p. 15.

⁹ Landes, *Relics*, pp. 217–221.

¹⁰ Landes, *Relics*, pp. 326–327.

¹¹ Landes, *Relics*, pp. 324–327, 315.

¹² As for the various datings in the sources see Krönung, al-Ḥākīm, p. 140; Weltecke, *Zerstörung*, p. 267.

¹³ Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, transl. Chauvin and Pon, p. 259.

¹⁴ See Al-Dūrī, *Amīr*; Hamilton, *Amīr al-Mu’minīn*.

tomb described in the fourth century by Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 330/340),¹⁵ the so-called *aedicula*.

[§8] Further, Adémar reports that the Saracens also tried to destroy the church in Bethlehem, supposedly marking the birthplace of Jesus, but that it was miraculously saved when a dazzling light (*lux fulgurans*) caused all the pagans to perish in the attack. Adémar describes something similar in connection with the attack of 10,000 armed Saracens on the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai. During the march on the monastery, both the monastery and Mount Sinai were engulfed in supernatural flames: this prevented the Saracens from entering, while the monastery and its monks remained unharmed.

[§9] When the caliph learned of this, he and the entire “Saracen people” were filled with remorse, so that al-Ḥākim issued the decree to rebuild the church. At this point, Adémar emphasises that the new basilica cannot compete with the original church built by Helena (d. c. 329), the mother of Emperor Constantine (r. 306/324–337). Finally, Adémar reports on a three-year famine that blighted “the land of the Saracens” and had claimed countless victims. In addition, “peoples from Arabia” (*gentes Arabiae*) invaded the country and, as executors of a divine judgement, captured the caliph, cruelly murdered him, and sank his body in the sea.

Contextualization, Analysis & Interpretation

[§10] Adémar’s account of the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem establishes several multi-layered references between the Latin-Christian West and the Arab-Islamic sphere and connects them with inner-Christian discourses. The following section first discusses the history of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its significance for Latin Christians and then, against the background of several parallel sources, discusses Adémar’s account and justification of the anti-Christian measures of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim and their consequences. Finally, the focus is on Adémar’s knowledge of the intra-Fatimid developments related to the “peoples of Arabia” as well as his potential sources of information.

[§11] First of all, the quoted passage illustrates the author’s interest in the sanctuary of Jesus’ burial place, whose destruction was a shock for the Christian world and earned the year 1010 the name *annus terribilis*. By uniting the hill of Golgotha and the rocky tomb of Christ in one series of buildings, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem still forms one of the most central and significant points of reference for Christianity and pilgrimage.¹⁶ Under Emperor Constantine, cult and memorial sites were built in Palestine at the most important stations of Jesus’ life (birth, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension) and the region was, thus, shaped as a Christian memorial space.¹⁷ This included the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the original form of which Eusebius of Caesarea reports as comprising the rock tomb marked by an *aedicula* in the west, over which a rotunda was erected, and a basilica in the east.¹⁸ Consecrated in 335, the site soon acquired outstanding importance as a pilgrimage centre, so that Jerusalem became a meeting place for Christians of different origins and denominations as well as representatives of other religions, especially Jews and later Muslims.¹⁹ The church was damaged and restored several times until its destruction by al-Ḥākim, for example after the Sassanid invasion (614) by the Byzantine Emperor Herakleios (r. 610–641) in 630. In the course of the Arabic-Islamic expansion, the city was conquered, but the sanctuary remained intact for the Christians, but was shaken by a severe earthquake in the middle of the eighth century. The attack on the church

¹⁵ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vier Bücher über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin*, transl. Pfäffisch and Bigelmair, , lib. 3, cap. 34–39, pp. 118–119.

¹⁶ Arbeiter, Grabeskirche, p. 10.

¹⁷ Arbeiter, Grabeskirche, p. 7.

¹⁸ Arbeiter, Grabeskirche, p. 10.

¹⁹ König, 570: Kontakte.

under the Caliph al-Ḥākim caused the most serious damage, so that—contrary to Adémar’s claims—even the structures at the actual rock tomb were apparently affected.²⁰

[§12] In addition to the attack on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Adémar speaks of other attacks on Christian places of worship and monasteries, as well as increased pressure on Christians to convert during al-Ḥākim’s reign. These forms of oppression are also documented in other sources and thus confirm the widespread negative image of this probably best-known and most controversial ruler of the Shiite-Ismaʿili Fatimid dynasty: As early as 393/1003, on al-Ḥākim’s orders, some churches were converted into mosques; the following year, Jews and Christians were forced to publicly identify themselves by wearing a black belt (*zunnār*) and turbans; the following year, wine, which is central to religious and liturgical practices of Jews and Christians, was banned; 397/1007 al-Ḥākim banned Palm Sunday processions; 398/1008 confiscated the properties of some Egyptian churches and monasteries; 399/1009 required minorities to identify themselves by wearing signs (even in baths); in addition, churches in Cairo and Damascus were destroyed and people forced to convert through torture. This was followed in 400/1009–1010 by the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem and other churches.²¹

[§13] The fact that the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was part of a long process of exclusion and oppression of Christian *and* Jewish minorities under al-Ḥākim’s rule is not clear from Adémar’s account. Rather, he attributes these measures to a conspiracy initiated by Jews and Saracens. It is remarkable that Adémar emphasises the trans-regional nature of this plot, since “Jews of the West” and “Saracens of Spain” allied with each other and stirred up the Muslims in the Middle East through lies. While it remains unclear which Muslim-Iberian groups Adémar has in mind here, it is striking that his resentment against the Jews was directed primarily against those of his own world, namely the “Jews of the West.” The Benedictine monk and contemporary of Adémar, Rodulfus Glaber (d. 1047), also dealt with the question of what had been the causal background for the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.²² For Glaber, only the Jews living in Western Europe were to blame, above all the Jews of Orléans, who had sent a messenger to the Caliph to incite him against the Christians.²³ Adémar’s and Glaber’s attribution of the Jews as pro-Muslim and tools of the devil,²⁴ as well as their idea of a “global” conspiracy of the Jews against the Christians, can be identified as proto-antisemitic or anti-Judaic narratives that fostered a dangerous mood in their region of origin. Thus, there were outbreaks of violence against Jews in towns in Aquitaine, and the Jews were expelled from Mainz in 1012 under King Henry II (r. 1002–1024).²⁵ This emerging anti-Judaism²⁶ was also accompanied by conversion efforts and the idea that Jewish “heresy” threatened the Christian world order and would result in the rise of the Antichrist. However, Adémar even announces that the disaster of destruction was “brought about by our sins” (*peccatis nostris promerentibus*). In this way, he breaks with his actual pattern of explanation, which assigns the blame to the “Jews” and “Saracens,” but at the same time he takes up the fear of the approaching apocalypse and the Antichrist, which appears again and again in his chronicle, and which is closely connected to the motif of sinfulness on this side. Thus, immediately before the source passage quoted here, Adémar reports on the forced conversion

²⁰ On the history of the building see Ousterhout, *Rebuilding*.

²¹ Canard, al-Ḥākim.

²² On the source passage concerning the alleged letters and the ‘Jewish conspiracy’ see Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, ed./transl. France, lib. 3, cap. 14, pp. 133–136.

²³ Rodulfus Glaber (d. 1047) identifies them as the Jews of Orléans, see Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, ed./trans. France, lib. 3, cap. 14, p. 134.

²⁴ Jestice, *Conspiracy?*, p. 27.

²⁵ Palmer, *Apocalypse*, pp. 219–220.

²⁶ Fried, *999 Jahre; Heil, Juden*.

of the Jews in Limoges as well as other portents of the end times, of famine, the alignment of certain constellations, dried-up rivers and a weeping Christ on the cross who appeared to him in the southern sky.²⁷

[§14] The writings of Christian authors from the Islamic-controlled sphere show other patterns of interpretation: As justification for al-Ḥākim's order to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, they cite that the caliph wanted to stop the descent of the Holy Fire at Easter, which Christians celebrated as miraculous.²⁸ Interestingly, this approach is found not only among Christian but also among Arabic-Islamic chroniclers.²⁹ The Jerusalem Easter liturgy and the associated celebrations were an inter-religious festival in which Muslims of different social ranks took part alongside Christians of various denominations³⁰ and even exercised organisational functions.³¹ However, some Arabic-Islamic authors suspected that the monks living at the Holy Sepulchre Church used aids to kindle the Holy Fire, which al-Ḥākim is said to have experienced and interpreted as malicious deception and malice. He then ordered the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.³² Furthermore, with regard to the reception of al-Ḥākim's erratic and discriminatory decisions, it is interesting that, for example, the Coptic bishop Michael of Tinnis (d. in the eleventh century) saw the measures against the Christians as God's punishment for the purchase of offices in the Coptic dioceses on the one hand, and on the other hand, justified them by saying that inner-Christian conflicts had too often been carried to extra-ecclesiastical authorities, such as the caliph, which now resulted in dissent and destruction.³³ Compared to the Oriental Christian reception, Adémar's approach clearly shifts the causes.

[§15] In addition to the destruction of Christian sanctuaries and their surroundings, the description of the consequences is also extensive in the source excerpt dealt with. Thus, after the miracle of the fire at Sinai, which may be an allusion to the biblical motif of the burning bush at Sinai (Ex 3:2) (to this day, a bramble bush is venerated in St Catherine's Monastery as an offshoot of this thorn bush), the caliph and all Muslims were overcome by great remorse, which is why he allowed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to be rebuilt.³⁴ However, some time passed before this was negotiated between the caliph and the Byzantine emperor, so that it was not until the reign of Emperor Michael IV Paphlagon (r. 1034–1041) or Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042–1055) that the actual reconstruction was undertaken.³⁵ Adémar's statement that the rebuilt church does not resemble the original church built by Emperor Constantine's mother Helena must be considered against this backdrop.

[§16] Furthermore, Adémar reports of a famine that afflicted the Muslims' lands (*omnem terram Sarracenorum*) as a punishment and he also mentions the invasion of so-called "peoples of Arabia" (*gentes Arabiae*), who are said to have killed the caliph. While Adémar uses the term "Saracens" (*Sarraceni*) both generally as a generic term for Muslims and specifically for the followers of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim, the *gentes Arabiae* probably refers to Arab Bedouin tribes. However, it is not exactly clear which ones are being referred to. On the one hand, it could refer to the tribes of the Banū Hilāl and Banū Sulaym, who had already come to Egypt from the Arabian Peninsula in the second/eighth centuries and were forcibly resettled in

²⁷ Adémar, *Chronicon*, lib. 3, cap. 46, pp. 165–166.

²⁸ Callahan, *Destruction*, p. 16.

²⁹ Jestice, *Conspiracy?*, p. 28.

³⁰ Kedar, *Convergence*, pp. 59–69.

³¹ Weltecke, *Anfragen*, pp. 260–261.

³² Canard, *Destruction*, pp. 39–42.

³³ Weltecke, *Anfragen*, p. 267.

³⁴ On the reconstruction see Ousterhout, *Rebuilding*.

³⁵ Halm, *Kalifen*, pp. 339–347, 349; on a later dating see Ousterhout, *Rebuilding*.

Upper Egypt after the Fatimid founding of Cairo (358/969),³⁶ and then moved on to North Africa (Ifriqiya) at the beginning of the eleventh century to fight against the Zirid dynasty there, which did not want to bow to the Shiite supremacy of the Fatimids. Members of the Banū Hilāl devastated the territories of North Africa considerably, so that the Fatimids briefly managed to reassert their rule there. Soon, however, the Banū Hilāl distanced themselves from their Fatimid patrons, carried out independent military actions and discarded Shiite Islam in favour of Sunni Islam. On the other hand, al-Ḥākim also had to contend with other groups of Arab Bedouins, namely in Cyrenaica (395/1004), where tribes directed from Córdoba advanced towards Egypt, and in a revolt in Palestine (402/1011–1012).³⁷ The fact that Adémar was informed about these events, even if only very vaguely, is quite remarkable.

[§17] However, the statement that al-Ḥākim was killed by these “peoples of Arabia” cannot be substantiated. The Fatimid ruler was known for his nocturnal rides, which some scholars attribute to a serious sleep disorder. In 411/1021, al-Ḥākim did not return after one of these rides. Only his donkey and his robes, torn by dagger stabs, were found a few days later.³⁸ Adémar also seems to have known about the caliph’s missing body, as he emphasises that the body, weighted down with lead, had been thrown into the sea. Where exactly Adémar got his information about the events in the Fatimid dominions remains uncertain. But it is known that Adémar met the Byzantine cleric Simeon (also called Simeon of Trier) in Angoulême in 1027, when Simeon was travelling through Latin Europe with a companion named Kosmas on behalf of the monastery of St. Catherine, which was located on Mount Sinai. According to Alfred Haverkamp’s assessment, this was Adémar’s main inspiration and source for reporting on the Holy Land and Egypt in the chronicle, which otherwise focused strongly on Aquitaine.³⁹

[§18] Finally, it should be noted that the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was used by future generations as a legitimising reason for warlike enterprises in the Holy Land: Pope Sergius IV (sed. 1009–1012) is said to have drawn up initial plans for a crusade in response to the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre and proclaimed them in a crusade encyclical.⁴⁰ In it, the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre as well as the increasing oppression and even persecution of Christians is named as the reason for waging a war against the “enemies of God” and the Muslims. Although this writing is generally regarded as a forgery, it nevertheless indicates the far-reaching impact of this event.⁴¹

[§19] The source passage cited here, thus, not only summarises a decisive historical event and its “causes” and consequences, but also provides an insight into the patterns of perception and interpretation with which a monk in Aquitaine around the year 1000 explained events in the Holy Land and in Muslim-ruled territories. Thus, Adémar not only conveys one of several narratives on the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as well as on the socio-political conditions under the rule of Caliph al-Ḥākim. At the same time, it gives an impression of the burgeoning hostility towards Jews and the fear of heresies in a Latin West that was already tense due to apocalyptic expectations. The source passage, thus, provides important insights into Latin–Christian–Muslim and Latin–Christian–Jewish relations in the early eleventh century.

³⁶ Grohmann, *al-‘Arab*.

³⁷ Halm, *Kalifen*, pp. 209–224; Halm, *Fatimiden*, p. 218.

³⁸ Halm, *Fatimiden*, p. 183.

³⁹ Haverkamp, Simeon, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, pp. 102.

⁴¹ Schaller, *Kreuzzugszyklika*; Cowdrey, *Martyrdom*, pp. 49–50.

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