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# Trying to restore obsolete toponyms, as an expression of the ideal world: the case of Islamic State

## Abstract

After the terrorist assaults in Paris, on November 13, 2015, Islamic State (henceforth IS) communicated that the perpetrators 'had come from all over the world to Gaul'. Doing this, IS drew on a long forgotten medieval name variant; in current Arabic, France is called *Faransa*.

Going back to obsolete toponyms is in itself not a recent phenomenon. For example, many Soviet locations have been renamed after the disintegration of the Soviet-Union; and the name of the Holy Roman Empire dates from the 14th century, long after the Roman empire had ended. It was intended to suggest that the supreme power had been inherited from the emperors of Rome.

This paper[1] inventarizes such restored or would-be restored ames: *Andalus* 'Spain', *Gaul* 'France', *Habasha* 'Ethiopia' and *Rumiyya* 'city of Rome'.[2]

1. According to NESSER, jihadis in general have the idea "that they are to reoccupy European territories held by Muslims at the height of the Muslim expansion"[3] (Figure 1, showing 7th and 8th century expansion; for later - Ottoman – expansion, Figure 2). By the "height of Muslim expansion" the author probably means the first mentioned Arabic expansion period, before the territorial losses in southern Europe became very substantial. As an example, he mentions Andalus,[4] the Muslim-occupied part of the Iberian Peninsula, which was conquered in the 7th century but from the 9th century on gradually reconquered by Christendom,[5] and finally lost in 1492 (Figure 3).[6] This paper tries to examine to which extent and in which historical periods the now obsolete toponyms were in general use in the Arabic Muslim world, and whether IS uses the obsolete toponyms in the same meanings as their religious ancestors did.

2. Attention will be paid to obsolete toponyms which refer to geographic features that nowadays carry other names than those used by medieval Arabic-Muslim authors. 'Arabic-Muslim' authors are those whose mother language is Arabic, as well as those who wrote in Arabic, but had another mother language (e.g. Persian).[7] Data with regard to such sources were mainly collected from KÖNIG 2015 and other publications on relationships between the Muslim empire and western countries.

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[1] I am indebted to prof. dr. Nico Landman and Mark Demmink for helping me to interpret some Arabic terms.

[2] IS' periodical *Dabiq* employs only the now usual names.

[3] NESSER 2015: 32.

[4] The Arabic definite article *al* – or *el-*, which in Arabic toponyms is a more ot less arbitrarily used element, has been omitted in this article.

[5] The *reconquista* ('reconquest of Muslim-occupied territories') started as early as (probaby) 722 (battle of Covadonga) (see *Wikipedia* s.v. *Reconquista*).

[6] Non-jihadi muslims see the height of Islam, however, in a broader – also cultural – context, and extend the golden age of Islam to the 13th century (*Wikipedia* s.v. *Islamic Golden* Age) or even to at least the early part of the Ottoman period (between the 15th century, when Constantinople was conquered by the Turks (see TORRES SORIANO 2009: 939), and the end of the 17th century (failure of the Vienna siege)).

[7] I follow here MICHEAU 2000: 53.

Figure 1. *Islamic expansion in the 7th and 8th centuries*. (Source: christianworldviewpress.com ). The 'Islamic Caliphate' or 'Patriarchal Caliphate' (633-661) is the one founded directly after Mohammed's death; it was followed by the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750). Caliphs were supposed to be the succcesors of the prophet Muhammad.



Figure 2. Islamic expansion after the 8th century. (Source: http://nazaroo.blogspot.nl/2014/11/isis-is-now-islamic-state.html )
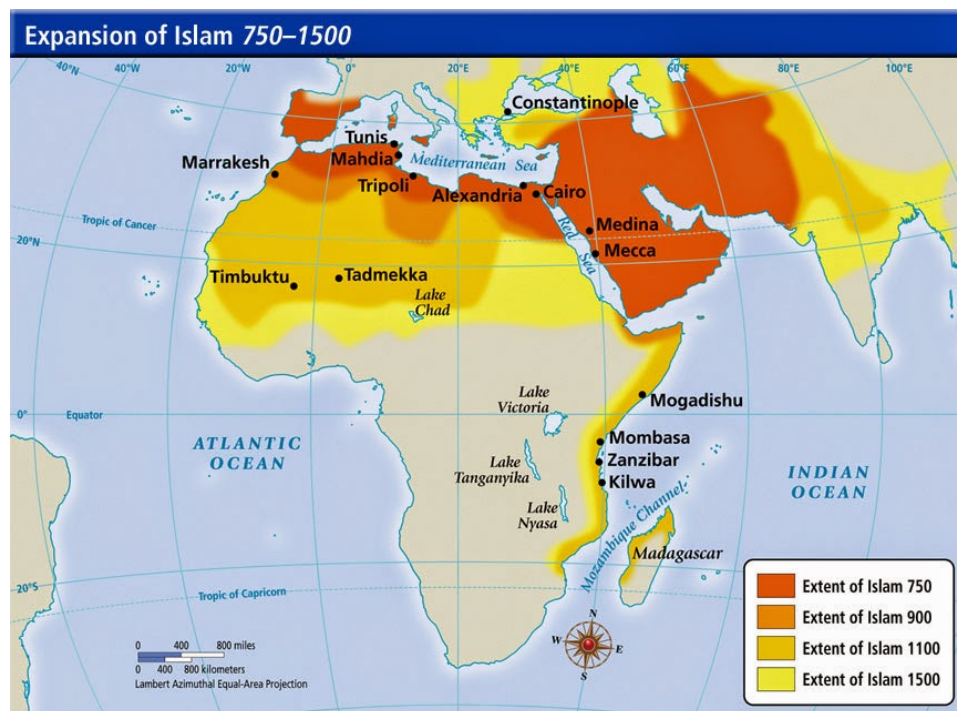


If obsolete names do not correspond with modern names, they have been ignored in this paper. The following names were left aside:

1. *Khorasan*. In IS language, it refers to a large territory stretching from eastern Iran into Afghanistan, not corresponding to any actual official name. In modern Arabic it refers to an Iranian province.

2.  *Alkinana*. This name (rarely used) refers in IS l;anguage to northeast Africa (including Egypt) and does not correspond to any actual official name.

Figure 3. The seven phases of the Reconquista, starting from the North and ending in the South, and rendered by the colors yellow (before 914), orange (914-1080), etc. Source: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconquista_(Spanje).
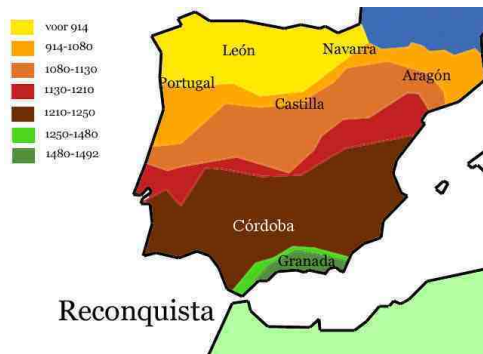


Obsolete toponyms have been collected, among others, from a map, published in 2014, and showing supposed future Muslim conquests in the world (Figure 4). Although the provenance of this map (henceforth indicated as Conquests Map) is unclear, and has been the object of criticism because of multiple mistakes and incongruities,[8] it seems to reflect IS ideas.[9] Moreover, IS never dissociated itself from it, which seems a good reason to involve it in our material. In this study, the rationality of the (presumed) IS claims as they are expressed by the map will be disregarded. This applies, for example, to the suggestion, evoked by the map, that Ethiopia as a whole would have been Muslim in the past.

Figure 4. *Conquests map*. Source: HOSKEN 2016: x. Orobpa = 'Europe', Qoqzaz = Caucasus, Sham = Levant, Habasha = Ethiopia, Yaman = Yemen.



As mentioned above, four obsolete toponyms were found; see table 1 .

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[8] See, for example, *Media Matters for America* 3 July 2014 (https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2014/07/03/why-is-the-media-taking-these-isis-world-domina/199984 ) and *Info Wars* 27 June 2014 (https://www.infowars.com/war-propaganda-the-isis-five-year-plan/ ).
[9] See HOSKEN 2015: 260-261.

Table 1. Obsolete toponyms used by Islamic State, with actual copgnates or synonyms.

| Obsolete toponym | Intended actual toponym | Official (actual) Arabic toponym[10] |
|---|---|---|
| 1.  Andalus | Spain | Isbāniyā |
| 2.  Gaul | France | Faransa |
| 3.  Habasha | Ethiopia | Aṯyūbiyā |
| 4.  Rumiyah | Rome | Rūmā |

[10] See http://en.bab.la/dictionary/english-arabic .

### 2.1. Andalus

*Andalus*

Figure 5 shows the Muslim-ruled area in the Iberian Peninsula. In table 2, the name *Andalus*, as used by Muslim State, is compared with name use in Islamic-Arabic sources.

Figure 5. Al-Andalus (green territory) circa 1000 AD. Source: *Wikipedia* s.v. *Al-Andalus*. 'Caliphate of Cordoba' refers to the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba (929-1031).



Table 2. Territories referred to by means of the toponym *Andalus* by Islamic State, compared with territories referred to by historical Islamic-Arabic sources*,* from the 9th until the 17th century. Sources are in chronological order.

| Meanings used by IS | historical meanings | chronology |
|---|---|---|
| 'Iberian Peninsula' | 'Iberian Peninsula' | 9th – 14th century |
| 'Muslim-ruled parts of Spain' | 'Muslim-ruled parts of Spain (without Portugal)' | 9th – 15th century |
| | 'Muslim-ruled parts of Spain and Portugal' | 9th – 15th century |
| | Muslim-ruled part of Iberian Peninsula' | 9th – 16th century |
| ''Spain as a whole' | - | - |

As the table demonstrates, IS is using *Andalus* in three meanings. Two of these correspond with historical meanings.

1. 'The entire Iberian Peninsula'. In this meaning, the name can be found on the Conquests Map, and this meaning may have been intended in 2015, when IS communicated: "We want, Allah willing, Paris before Rome and before Al-Andalus".[11]
2. Muslim-ruled southern Spain, once occupied by Muslim forces (Figure 5) and not coinciding with the present province of Andalucía (Figure. 6).

Figure 6. The Spanish province Andalucía. Source: *http://www.credoespana.com/spanje/andalucia/* .



In historical Arabic-Muslim sources, however, *Andalus* had four possible meanings. Table 3 also shows that some historical Arabic authors, as a matter of fact, used the toponym in more than one meaning, see for example Ibn Khaldūn (nr. 14).

Table 3. Territories referred to by means of the toponym *Andalus* by Arabic-Muslim scholars from the 9<sup>th</sup> until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Sources are in chronological order.

| Territory | historical Arabic-Islamic sources; years of birth and death between brackets; † refers to year of death | Mentioned or quoted in |
|---|---|---|
| Iberian Peninsula (with Christian territories) Muslim-ruled part of the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal not evidently excluded) | al-Balādhurī (?-892) | KÖNIG 2015: 151, note 16 |
| | al-Masʿūdī (896-956) | KÖNIG 2015: 130, 131 |
| | Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī (1029–1070) | MARTINEZ-GROS 2000: 214, note 35[12] |
| | ibn Ḥayyān (987-1076) | KÖNIG 2015: 194 |
| | al-Marrākushī († 1224) | KÖNIG 2015: 218, 315 |
| | Yāqūt († 1229) | KÖNIG 2015: 226, 309, 310 |
| | Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233) | KÖNIG 2015: 312; GABRIELI 1973: 41; KÖNIG 2015: 313 |
| | Abū l-Fidā († 1331) | KÖNIG 2015: 228 |
| | al-Nuwayrī († 1333) | KÖNIG 2015: 227 |
| | al-'Umarī († 1349) | KÖNIG 2015: 224 |

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[11] SPENCER 2015: 253.

[12] In the Arabic text, however, Andalus is equated with Spain.

| | Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) | KÖNIG 2015: 74, 146, 147, 203 |
|---|---|---|
| | al-Qalqashandī (1355-1418) | KÖNIG 2015: 320 |
| | Abd al-Hakam (803-871) | KÖNIG 2015: 168 |
| | al-Masʿūdī (896-956) | KÖNIG 2015: 300 |
| | al-Iṣṭakhrī (? -957) | KÖNIG 2015: 301 |
| | ibn Ḥayyān (987-1076) | KÖNIG 2015: 302, 303 |
| | Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233) | GABRIELI 1973: 41) |
| | al-'Umarī († 1349) | KÖNIG 2015: 228 |
| | Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) | KÖNIG 2015: 147) |
| | al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442) | KÖNIG 2015: 321, note 455 |
| Muslim-ruled part of the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal obviously excluded) | Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233) | KÖNIG 2015: 313 |
| | al-Maghribī (1213-1286) | KÖNIG 2015: 272 |
| | Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) | KÖNIG 2015: 220 |
| Muslim- ruled part of Spain | Ahmed Ibn-Ghanim (1592) | MATAR 2009: 130 |

Insofar as the historical word meanings could without any doubt be established in the data collected in this study, *Andalus* meant mostly 'the Iberian Peninsula as a whole' (11 times), from the 9th until the 15th century. This name meaning has been attested from the very first start: two dinar coins dating from the period between 715 and 717 show both a Latin inscription with the name *Span* (short for *Spania* 'Hispania', a terminological heritage from the Roman past,[13] and the Arabic inscription *Andalus*.[14] And al-Marrākushī (nr. 7), for example, referred to "the city Silves [Shalab] on the *peninsula* of al-Andalus" (my italics). In the same period, sources also used a more restricted meaning: 'the Muslim-ruled part of the peninsula' (7 times); the historian ibn Ḥayyān (table 3, nr. 6) recorded military confrontations of the Christian Basques "with Andalus". Out of 15 authors, four use both meanings in their texts.

Initially, medieval Arabic-Muslim sources did not differentiate between the concepts 'Spain' and 'Portugal'. In the heydays of Islam in the Peninsula, parts of the territories now known as Spain as well as parts of present Portugal belonged to Andalus.

The earliest attestation of the name of Portugal in Arabic-Muslim sources dates from the 11th century (al-Bakrī, 1014-1094): *al-Burtuqālish*.[15] It does not refer to Portugal as an independent polity, but as one of the four provinces of Galicia. After three ages, Portugal was mentioned by Ibn-Khatib (1313-1375) and Ibn-Khaldūn (1332-1406) as a polity of its own. In that period, the name probably denoted just a fraction of present Portugal, namely the land between the rivers Douro and Minho, in the north of the present country.[16] The name *España* for Spain, in the present meaning, emerged in 1474, when the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon merged.**[17]** Since the 16th century, Spain has been indicated in Arabic by *Isbaniya* or *Ishbanya*[18] and discerned from the historical name *Andalus*. Among some descendants of expelled Muslim emigrants, however, *Andalus* remained in use with reference to their former home country. As late as in 1785, inhabitants of Testour, in Tunesia, made inquiries of the

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[13] *Wikipedia* s.v. *Hispania.* Sometimes *Hispania* denoted exclusively the Christian part of the peninsula, e.g., when Alfonso VI (1040-1109) took the title *Imperator totius Hispaniae.*
[14] BOSSONG 2002: 149.
[15] KÖNIG 2015: 317. Ibn al Khatīb (1313-1375) used the Arab name *Burtuqāl.*
[16] In non-Islamic sources, the name *Portugal* has been attested much earlier, in the 9th century. It derives from Latin *Portus Cale*, for a city now called *Vila Nova de Gaia*. In 868 a county was named *Portucale* 'land between Douro and Minho'. In 1109, the latter name denoted the territory of this county plus Coimbra.
[17] See *Wikipedia* s.v. *Kingdom of Castile*. Some authors, however, continued using 'Spain' until the 16th century and even in the 19th century with regard to the whole peninsula. See EGLI 1872: 538-9.
[18] MATAR 2009: 31.

Moroccan ambassador who visited Tunesia, asking after 'their land, al-Andalus, which I [the ambassador] had observed when I traveled there'. Their ancestors had been expelled in 1609.[19]

By applying the meaning 'Spain as a whole', Muslim State is, from a historical point of view, mistaken. Moreover, the irony is that IS, by using the meaning 'Spain as a whole', is in a sense more 'modest' in its territorial claims than early medieval history might justify: why not claim 'muslim Portugal', too? Projecting the modern concept 'Spain' on the medieval past is, however, not an IS prerogative. For example, *Wikipedia* (Dutch version) s.v. *Reconquista (Spain)* describes *Andalus* as 'the Arabic Spain', while SPENCER 2015 equates Andalus with "Muslim Spain".[20] And even for an Islam expert like BEARMAN et al. 2005, this use matches indeed with the one of those medieval Arab writers for whom *Andalus* referred to 'the Muslim part of *Spain* "whatever its territorial extent"' (my italics).[21] The simplication is well understandable, though, considering that Portugal's name as a regional entity and polity arose in non-Arabic Muslim sources as late as the 11th century; specific terms for the territories now called Spain and Portugal, were lacking, as mentioned above**.**

Although the Conquest map does in this respect more justice to history, it is erroneous, too: it suggests wrongly that the whole peninsula was under muslim rule, and neglects the Christian territories in the north.

**3.2** Gaul

After terrorists had assaulted Paris in 2015, Muslim State (IS) communicated that the perpetrators 'had come from all over the world to Gaul'. I could not find the Arabic text (or a transcription thereof) of the original IS message in which the Arabic equivalent for *Gaul* might have occurred. So, the terrorists may have employed – apart from *Gaul* - the present Arabic name *El-Ghāl* (denoting Gaul as the Roman territory),[22] or – less probably - the obsolete variants *Ghālīsh* or *Ghālliya.* Obviously, the terrorists referred to France. In present Arabic, France is called *Faransa*. To my knowledge, it was the first and only time that France was indicated this way by IS.

Table 4 shows that in medieval days *Ghālīsh* was the current Arabic equivalent of Latin *Gallia*, *Ghālliya* having been used only once, as a variant of *Ghālliya* in one and the same source. These medieval terms did, however, *not* refer to France but to other geographical entities (see table 5). As a matter of fact, the usual medieval-Arabic name for the Frankish empire (Figure 7) and, later on, for France, was *Faransa, Faransīs, Ifrans,*[23] *Ifransa*[24], *Ifranjiyya*[25] or *Ifrānsiya.*[26] Since the 16th century, *Ifransa* was the common Arabic name for France.[27]

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[19] MATAR 2009: 15.The author does not mention any details concerning the background of the ambassador's visit.

[20] SPENCER 2015: 211, 213, 253, 342.

[21] BEARMAN et al. 2005 et al., s.v. *Al-Andalus*. Elsewhere in this same article, however, we are correctly told that *al-Andalus* "in the Islamic world up to the end of the Middle Ages, denoted the Iberian peninsula, that is, modern Spain and Portugal".

[22] The Reverso Dictionnaire (http://dictionnaire.reverso.net/francais-arabe/gaule ) translates French *Gaule* in بلاد الغال. I thank Mark Demmink for his transcription. He kindly comments that the word may indicate the country Gaul as well as one of its inhabitants. See also https://www.google.nl/search?q=rabitat+vertaling&oq=rA&aqs=chrome.1.69i59l3j69i60j69i57j69i60.4467j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#q=galli%C3%AB+vertaling+arabisch

[23] KÖNIG 2015: 228.

[24] KÖNIG 2015: 136. This term was the most usual one since the 16th century (see MATAR 2009: 31).

[25] KÖNIG 2015: 213. Also LEWIS 1987: 146 ("Ifrandscha").

[26] KÖNIG 2015: 227.

[27] MATAR 2009: 31. https://translate.google.com/?text=undefined&hl=en&langpair=auto%7Ctr&tbb=1&ie=undefined#auto/tr/gaul

Table 4. Territories referred to by Islamic State by means of the toponym *Gaul*, compared with territories referred to by cognates in Islamic-Arabic sources*,* from ca. 900 – ca. 1300. Sources are in chronological order.

| *Territory referred to by IS* | *Territories referred to by historical sources* | *historical Arabic cognates* | *chronology* |
|---|---|---|---|
| France | | | |
| | Gaul (Roman province) | *Ghālliya, Ghālīsh* | ca. 900 |
| | Septimania (Roman region in France)' | *Ghālīsh* | 11th century |
| | Northern France | *Ghālīsh* | ca. 1300 |

Table 5. Territories referred to by means of the toponyms *Ghālliya* and *Ghālīsh* by medieval Arabic-Islamic sources. Sources are in chronological order.

| **Territory** | **historical Arabic-Islamic sources; years of birth and death between brackets; † refers to year of death** | **Mentioned or quoted in** |
|---|---|---|
| Gallia (Roman province) | restructured translation (ca. 900), of Orosius' (385-420) *Historia adversus paganos* [History against the pagans]: *Ghālliya, Ghālīsh* | KÖNIG 2015: 43 |
| | al-Bakrī (1014-1094) *Ghālīsh* | KÖNIG 2015: 43, 197 |
| | Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233) *Ghālīsh* | KÖNIG 2015: 144 |
| | Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406): *Ghālīsh* | KÖNIG 2015: 146 |
| Septimania (Roman region in present southern France) | al-Bakrī (1014-1094): *Ghālīsh* | KÖNIG 2015: 140 |
| Northern France | Ibn Abd al-mun'im al-Himyarī (ca. 1300): *Ghālīsh* | KÖNIG 2015: 209 |

Figure 7. Frankish empire. Source: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankische_Rijk
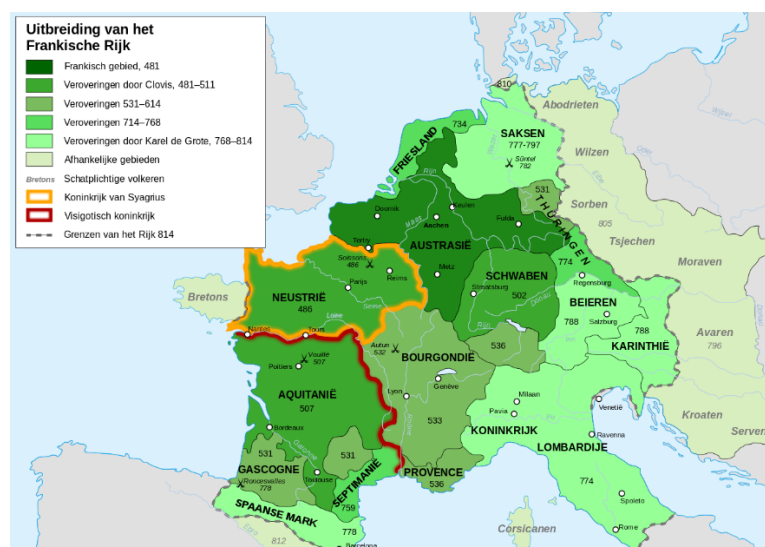
The *Gaul* terminology in Arabic sources originates from the beginning of the 9th century, when the earliest Arabic translations of PTOLEMY's geographical oeuvre were made, and *Gallia* was transcribed in Arabic script.[28] It goes without saying that PTOLEMY's *Gallia* referred to the Roman province of that name (Figure 8), and so did the *Historiae adversus paganos* by historian Paulus Orosius (375 – after 418). The latter book was translated ca. 900 into Arabic, which lead to the translations *Ghālliya* and *Ghālish*.[29]

*Figure 8. Gaul as a part of the Roman empire. Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaul



Why did the jihadis who attacked Paris choose the toponym *Gaul* with regard to France? Obviously they did not realize that their religious ancestors did not use this name with regard to France. The following scenario seems probable. (1) A need was felt for an obsolete name for France, expressing nostalgia for the Muslim heydays. (2) Since the late Middle Ages, in many countries the name *Gaul* adopted a narrowed meaning, 'France'; *Gaul* came into fashion among humanists in Western Europe and became especially popular in poetical and more or less anti-French contexts.[30] For example, the German poet Friedrich Gottlieb KLOPSTOCK (1724-1803) wrote: "Gallia Sklavin; Gallia frey; sie erniedrigt zur Wilden / Dann sich, schaffend sogar Marat, den Scheusal zum Gott:/ Bleibt, bleibt Wilde." [Gaul slave, Gaul free; she demeans herself to a savage / Then, while making Marat, the monster, even a god/ remains savage].[31] Likewise, the English poet Robert BURNS chose the Gallia name in 1795, at a critical moment in English-French relationships: "Does haughty Gaul invasion threat! Then let the louns bewaure, Sir!"[If haughty Gaul threatens us with an invasion, etc.].[32] In the Netherlands, a poet reported: 'The thunder of Holland's and Zeeland's guns stroke terror into [… ] Castilia, filled Britain with awe, and Gaul with esteem'.[33] Anyway, the jihadi toponym Gaul (or any modern or obsolete Arabic equivalent) should be considered as a would-be obsolete variant: it does

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[28] KÖNIG 2015: 199.
[29] KÖNIG 2015: 43; 197.
[30] BRÜHL 1990:75.
[31] KLOPSTOCK, t, p. 493.
[32] BURNS 1795: 436-7.
[33] BERKHEY 1769-1811: III, 642.

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not mirror the medieval past. In this respect, 'Frankish empire'[34] or 'Francia'[35] would have been a better (and likewise obsolete) name for France.

Although the humanist Gaul naming habit did not reach the common language,[36] the juxtaposition Gallia = France obviously has survived. Firstly, jihadis may have been inspired by the Astérix comics (Fig. 9).[37] Secondly, in 1965, René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo published the comic *Le tour de Gaule d'Astérix* [The Tour de Gaul], alluding to the Tour de France. And in this tradition also fits a quote like this: "Il y a environ deux mille ans, la France c'était la Gaule" [Some two thousand years ago, France was Gaul].[38] The humanist identification of Gaul with the French state was probably due to the fact that France, projected on the historical map, was the main part of Roman Gallia.

Figure 9. Map of Gaul in *Astérix le gaulois*. Source: http://asterix.wikia.com/wiki/File:Map_of_Gaul.png
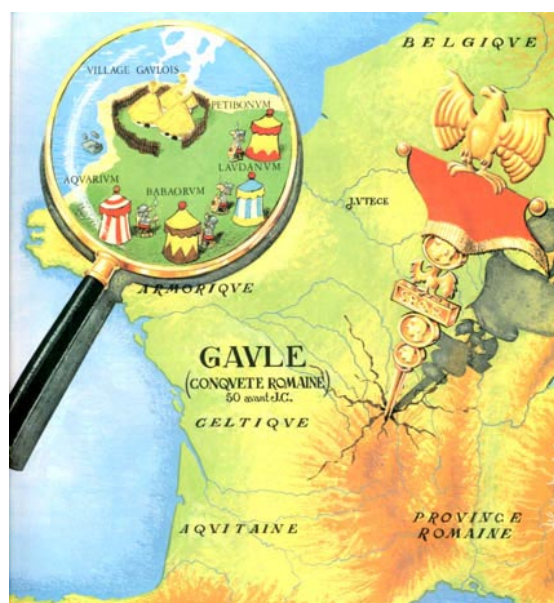


**3.3** Habasha

Table 6 shows the meanings of *Habasha* as used by Islamic State in comparison with meanings in historic sources.

Table 6. Territories referred to by Islamic State by means of the toponym *Habasha*, compared with historical Muslim-Arabic cognates, from the 7th until the 16th century. Sources are in chronological order.

| Territory referred to by IS | Territories referred to by historical sources | historical Arabic cognates | chronology |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ethiopia (country) | Ethiopia (country) | Ḥābeš | 7th century – 8th century |
| | | Habashat | 7th century – ca. 1137 |

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[34] Translation in RAGEP & RAGEP 2009: 427.
[35] Translation in KÖNIG 2015: 213.
[36] BRÜHL 1990:75.
[37] Translated a.o. into Arabic.
[38] BEAUVAIS 1970: 8.

| | | Habasha | 9th century – 16th century |
|---|---|---|---|
| | continent (smaller than Africa} | Ḥābeš | 7th century – 8th century |
| | | Habasha | 9th – 10th century |
| | part of Libya | Ḥābeš | 7th century – 8th century |
| | | Habasha | 10th century |

The meaning used by IS corresponds with one of the three historical meanings (see table 7). It may seem amazing that Muslim State uses an obsolete, 'nostalgic' name for Ethiopia. Considering that Ethiopia has never been considered by anyone as an Muslim country – rather a Christian one with an Muslim minority - it is remarkable that the Conquest map implies that the country has to be reconquered by Muslims. At present, Ethiopia is predominantly Christian. Islam is the second religion (34 percent adherents). Ethiopia adopted Christianity in the 4th century. In 615, the first muslims immigrated.[39] The first large scale penetration of Islam dates from the 11th century. The 16th century, however, was a critical period: under the rule of Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (1506-1543), three quarters of Ethiopia came under Muslim control, some of his fellow combatants being Ottoman Turks.[40] In 1527, al-Ghazi made plans to conquer all Ethiopia, but the threat soon disappeared. Possibly it is especially this historical period jihadis are alluding to if they use the Arabic name *Habasha*.

*Habasha* (*ḥabaša*[41]) is a toponym as well as an inhabitant name. As a toponym, it is the obsolete Arab equivalent of *Abyssinia*, which, as an official name, was the precursor of *Ethiopia*. Well into the 20th century, *Abyssinia* and its cognate variants (like Arab *Habasha*) were in use along with *Ethiopia* and its cognates. In 1925, *Abessynia* was formally replaced with *Ethiopia*, at least by the authorities in the country itself.[42] Outside the country, the name change proceeded somewhat slow: as late as 1945 the country entered the United Nations as Abyssinia, not Ethiopia. May that be as it is, in the Arab world the Ethiopia name has officially rooted: Aṯyūbiyā.[43]

Table 7. Territories referred to by means of the toponyms *Habasha*, *Ḥābeš*, *Habashat* or *Habash* by Arabic-Islamic sources from the 7th until the 16th century. Sources are in chronological order.

| Territory | historical Arabic-Islamic sources; years of birth and death between brackets; † refers to year of death | Mentioned or quoted in |
|---|---|---|
| Country, more or less coinciding with the present country[44] | 7th and 8th century: *Ḥābeš* used by Arabs who had been frequenting the Horn of Africa since Antiquity | DEROY & MULON 1993: 165 |

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[39] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abyssinian_people#Antiquity
[40] J. SPENCER TRIMINGHAM 1952: 85.
[41] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia
[42] http://www.opride.com/2009/11/02/abyssinia-to-ethiopia-from-obfuscation-to-confusion/ This source refers to a source I could not consult: Ronald K. STARRETT (ed.), *Documents on Ethiopian Politics*, vol. 2 (1976): 1920-1929, The Consolidation of Power of Haile Selassi.
[43] http://en.bab.la/dictionary/english-arabic/ethiopia
[44] One example of a difference between historical and present Habasha can be found in al-Battāni (ca. 858 – ca. 929), who situated the now Egyptian city of Aswan in Ethiopia (Uswān al-Habasha); cf. RAGEP & RAGEP 1996: 432.

| | 7th century – ca. 1137: *Habashat* | MUNRO-HAY 1991: 94 |
|---|---|---|
| | Al-Battānī (ca. 853—ca. 929): *Ḥabasha* | RAGEP & RAGEP 1996: 434 |
| | Ibn al-Husain (ca. 950): *Ḥabashat* | MUNRO-HAY 1991: 95 |
| | Agapius (end of 10<sup>th</sup> century): *al-Ḥabasha* | RAGEP & RAGEP 1996: 432 |
| | Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406): *Ḥabasha* | RAGEP & RAGEP 1996: 433 |
| | Shihab al-Din Ahmad (Arab Faqih) († ca. 1534): *Futuh al-Habasha*, book title [= The conquest of Abyssinia] | |
| Continent, smaller than Africa (but viewed as a part of it) | 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century: *Ḥābeš* | DEROY & MULON 1993: 165 |
| | Al-Battānī (ca. 853—ca. 929): *Ḥabasha*[45] | RAGEP & RAGEP 2009: 433 |
| Part of Libya (as one out of four 'sections' of the inhabited earth | 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century: *Ḥābeš* | DEROY & MULON 1993: 165 |
| | RAGEP & RAGEP 1996: 433 | |
| | Ibn al-Faqīh (10th century): *al-Ḥabasha* | RAGEP & RAGEP 1996: 427, 433 |

**3.4** Rumiyah

*Rūmiyāh* is the title of an English language periodical published by IS, being the successor of their periodical *Dabiq* (see figure 10).The title page says "*Rumiyah*", followed by: "O muwahhidin [= monotheists], for by Allah, we will not rest from our jihad except beneath the olive trees of Rumiyah – Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir."[46]

Figure 10. Front page of *Rumiyah.* Source: https://twitter.com/_davidthomson/status/773052281893814272
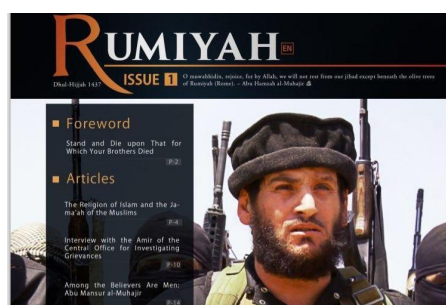


Obviously, *Rumiyah* refers to the city of Rome.[47] This points to some knowledge on *Rumiyya* as the most frequent name version in medieval Arabic with regard to the city of Rome). The IS name corresponds with *Rūmiyyā* (*Romiya*) as an urbanonym in historical Muslim sources (see table 8). I

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[45] The author situated the Canarian Islands opposite the Habasha continent (cf. RAGEP & RAGEP 2009: 432f.).
[46] Abu Hamza al-Muhajir was al-Qaeda in Iraq leader († 2010).
[47] This name variant seems also in use in orthodox – but not nessessarily jihadi – circles. In 2002, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradavi was reported to use *Romiyya* (referring to the city of Rome); see SPENCER 2015: 214. In present-day Arabic, the city is called *Rūmā*; see http://nl.bab.la/woordenboek/engels-arabisch/rome.

could not find this variant in other IS utterances, such as videos. In present-day Arabic, the city is called *Rūmā*.[48]


Table 8. Territories referred to by Islamic State by means of the toponym *Rumiyah* ('Rome'), compared with historical Islamic-Arabic cognates, from the 9<sup>th</sup> until the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

| *Territory referred to by IS* | *Territories referred to by historical sources* | *historical Arabic cognates* | *chronology* |
|---|---|---|---|
| city of Rome (Italy) | city of Rome (Italy) | *Rūmiyyā, Rūmiyā, Romiyya* | 9th – 13th century |
| | Roman empire | *Rūmiyyā, Rūmiyā* | 10th – 16th century |
| | Constantinople | *Rūmiyyā* | end of 9th century |
| | Europe North of the Mediterranean | *Rūmiyyā* | 9th century |


Apart from this, the historical sources show three meanings not used by IS (see table 9).


Table 9. Territories referred to by means of the toponym *Rūmiyāh* and its cognates by Arabic-Islamic sources from the 7<sup>th</sup> until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Sources are in chronological order.

| **Territory** | **historical Arabic-Islamic sources; years of birth and death between brackets; † refers to year of death** | **Mentioned or quoted in** |
|---|---|---|
| City in the Apennine Peninsula | Ibn Khordadbeh (ca. 820-912): *Rūmiyyā* | KÖNIG 2010: 9; KÖNIG 2015: 207, 271, 289; HERMES 2012: 71 |
| | Ahmad Ibn Rustah († after 913): *Rūmiyyā* | KÖNIG 2015: 289 |
| | Harun Ibn Yahya (10th century): *Rūmiyyā* | HERMES 2012: 78 |
| | Ibn al-Faqīh (10th century): *Rūmiyyā* | KÖNIG 2010: 12 |
| | Ya'qal-Masʿūdī (896-956): *Rūmiyyā* | KÖNIG 2015: 131 |
| | al-Iṣṭakhrī (? -957): *Rūmiyyā* | KÖNIG 2015: 289 |
| | Hakim al-Nishapuri (933-1014; *Rūmiyyā, Romiyya* | HERMES 2012: 78 |
| | al-Bīrunī (973-1048): *Rūmiyyā* | CASARI 2011: 150-151 |
| | *Hudud al 'Alam* (982): *Rumiya*[49] | |
| | Abū Ḥāmid (1058-1111): *Rūmiyya* | KÖNIG 2010: 24 |
| | Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233): *Rūmiya* | KÖNIG 2010: 22 |
| Roman empire | *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* (10th century): *Rūmīya* | GEORGACAS 1971: 76 |

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[48] see http://nl.bab.la/woordenboek/engels-arabisch/rome.
[49] http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/55329/7/07_chapter%201.pdf , p. 11.

| | Yākūt al-Hamawi (1179-1229): *Rūmiyyā* | MIQUEL 1975: 284 |
|---|---|---|
| | Sa'deddin (1536-1599): *Rūmīya* | GEORGACAS 1971: 78 |
| Constantinople | al-Qāṣṣ (end of 9th century – ca. 946): *Rūmiyyā* | CASARI 2011: 139[50] |
| Europe north of the Mediterranean | al-Ya'qūbī († 897/'98): *Rūmīya* | KÖNIG 2010: 9 |

Comparison of IS toponym use with toponym use in the distant past does not present a univocal picture. Firstly, a discrepancy occurs in the case of Spain: IS tries to relate a present polity to a historical one, *Andalus*, probably without realizing that in the early Middle Ages Spain was not a polity in itself, coinciding with modern Spain, let alone that medieval Arabs had a special name for the area corresponding with modern Spain. Moreover, Andalus is not exclusively the alleged precursor of Spain. It is Portugal's, too.

With regard to *Gaul*, the discrepancy between medieval and IS terminology is bigger – it could hardly be greater. The jihadi name use does not correspond at all with medieval Arabic name use. The jihadi placing of Gaul on the same footing as France does not stem from Arabic linguistic and cultural history, but from the European cultural past – possibly courtesy of the Astérix comics. It is ironic that the jihadi name use reflects – unknowingly – the intellectual legacy of Humanism.

In the case of *Habasha*, IS terminology is quite consistent with its medieval precursors *Ḥābeš*, *Ḥabasha* and *Habashat*, all of which were used to denote the country. The Habasha name suggests that, apart from the Arabic Muslim empire, the Ottoman period, too is deemed essential. This would refute NESSER's opinion that ISIS fosters exclusively the early (Arabic) heydays of Muslim expansion.

The obsolete name *Rūmiyyā*, as used in IS language, too, corresponds with the name use of medieval precursors. Just like their religious ancestors, they use *Rūmiyyā* for the city of Rome.

IS toponymic nomenclature is not a completely isolated phenomenon. At least one name, *Andalus*, is not exclusively employed by IS and other jihadi groups, like Al- Qaida.

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[50] According to CASARI 2011: 130-131, some scholars maintain that Ibn Khordadbeh's description aimed as a matter of fact at Constantinople. The spelling *Romiyya* is used, among others, by SPENCER 2015: 214.

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