

# War, Diplomacy and Peacemaking in Medieval Iberia



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Edited by

Kim Bergqvist, Kurt Villads Jensen  
and Anthony John Lappin

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## INTRODUCTION

The interdisciplinary conference *Historians of Medieval Iberia: Enemies and Friends* (A Marcus Wallenberg Symposium), held in Stockholm in March 2016, sought to continue and revitalise an international and multi-faceted discussion of medieval Iberia. It was very much a scholarly collaboration. Gathering medievalists within many different disciplines from Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, it brought different methodologies and source materials to bear, and, not least importantly, shed light on the three religions of the Peninsula in the middle ages. It thus focused on their internal and external collaboration and conflicts throughout the long period between the eighth and the fifteenth centuries. This is the second volume to appear from that conference, and concerns further questions of warfare and allegiance, together with the activities of diplomacy, peace- and treaty-making that were carried out under the spectre of war.<sup>1</sup>

While examining actual instances of military conflict, diplomatic campaigns, and peace agreements, the volume also contributes to the exploration of narrative and mnemonic representations of these events. The interactions between opponents in open conflict, as well as the friendships and alliances ensuing from peace-making efforts, led to influences and entanglements that have left traces in the documentary and literary record of medieval Iberia and beyond. The contributors to the present volume consider how literary text and other narratives reconfigure and reshape actors, events, and relationships — whilst undesirable connections are hidden or glossed over in attempts to rewrite the past. In conjunction with the careful sifting of the archival documentation, intricate analyses of narratives and polemic emanating from the medieval Iberian context remind us of how neither war, diplomacy, nor peace-making are ever constant, one-sided or unproblematic.

The volume opens with John Wreglesworth's discussion of the phenomenon of Muslim warlords crossing the border into Christian

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<sup>1</sup> The first volume is entitled *Conflict and Collaboration in Medieval Iberia*, ed. Kim Bergqvist, Kurt Villads Jensen, and Anthony John Lappin (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020).

territory during the ninth century. Whilst in later periods, episodes of cross-border exile or voluntary service by Christian nobles in Muslim lands are well-documented and studied, references to notable Muslim guests of the Asturian monarchy are tantalizingly brief, where they are made at all — suggestive of a much greater number lost to history. At the beginning of the ninth century, roughly a hundred years after the establishment of Islamic rule in Spain, Muhājir ibn al-Qaṭīl made a fleeting appearance in the north as a respite from the desires for vengeance on the part of the Umayyad ‘amīr, al-Ḥakam, whence he returned to lead yet another rebellion in Toledo for just under a decade until it was brought back into the Cordoban fold. In the fourth decade of the century, the most important of the rebels to cross the frontier, Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār, “the Meridan”, settled in Asturias for seven years; he holds the distinction of being mentioned in both Arabic and Christian histories. Conspiring to return to the Umayyads, his plans were discovered and he was besieged by Alfonso II in the frontier castle with which he had been provided as a buffer against Cordoban incursion. Indeed, the Christian chronicles suggest that Maḥmūd had actually become a rallying-point for a Muslim invasion of the Asturian kingdom. There was, finally, Ibn Marwān “the Galician”, whose first attempts at rebelling in his native Mérida led to his internal exile, in the small village of Badajoz; this he fortified, and used as a base for a further rebellion in alliance with another Marcher lord and Alfonso III — a much more successful enterprise, but one which left him exposed to Umayyad reprisals, and so he took his men directly into Alfonso III’s service, using local knowledge to assist the king in military campaigns around Mérida. Lasting one year longer than Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbar in Christian lands, Ibn Marwān moved back down to Badajoz, which, despite intermittent pressure from Córdoba, he succeeded in keeping independent for his remaining fifteen years; it continued as a distinct polity for another forty. Wreglesworth ends with a number of reflexions on the absence of two of these three from Christian remembrance, pointing to the decidedly patchy historical record for some tenth-century Asturian monarchs against others, as well as the possibility that Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār was used by Christian chroniclers to allude to the contemporary Ibn Marwān without needing to name him.

In his related study, Fernando Correia focuses almost exclusively upon the account of Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbar from the recently translated *Muqtabis*. He is at pains to illustrate the local nature of Maḥmūd’s concerns, and reconstructs his journey from Mérida to the fortress of Santa Cristina by virtue of the description provided, with some philological observations on the representation of garbled place-names by the scribe of

the *Muqtabis*, thereby creating a coherent route for Maḥmūd and his men to have followed. Taken together, then, these two chapters provide an in-depth analysis of the nature of ninth-century alliances between local warlords disaffected with the Cordoban régime and Christian monarchs willing to take advantage of their manpower and insider knowledge. Given that these Marcher lords had, inevitably, a foot in both camps, the long-term prospects of such alliances were not great, and were perhaps always doomed to failure, given the disparity in economic and military power between the emirs in Cordoba and the Asturian monarchy. Christian diffidence towards those who would inevitably sell them out may explain why chroniclers were so chary about mentioning the presence of such allies at court, and, indeed, Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbar is given prominence only because his defeat implied a significant victory for the Christian monarch. Another crucial aspect is the importance of Mérida as a rebellious weak-point in Córdoba’s dominance of the Muslim-ruled peninsula. The city itself was in all probability still majority-Christian, and this may have had its own effect on rendering palatable to Berber or *muwallad* leaders the social, political and military costs of transit over the religious frontier.

Enass Khansa considers not the relationship of warlords to the Asturian monarchy but rather the caliphs themselves during the tenth century, and particularly a comparison of the claims to legitimacy of rule which were fashioned in the court of Alfonso III to be repeated by his successors and the adoption of such arguments — refracted through an Arabo-Islamic prism — in the newly-minted caliphate of Córdoba. The preceding emirate had been forced to reckon with Alfonso III as one of its most capable and powerful enemies. Focusing on the deployment of the political trope of “restoration” allows Khansa to draw out the similar moves made by Alfonso III (the restoration of the reign of Alfonso I, and beyond him the kingdom of the Visigoths) and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I (the restoration of the Umayyad caliphate). Both relied upon an architecture of reminiscence of the lost capitals of Toledo and Damascus, respectively, and a search for legitimizing relics: the relics of St James, enshrined in the pilgrimage church of Santiago de Compostela; the Qur’ān the rightly-guided caliph, ‘Uthmān, was supposed to have been reading when he was assassinated and so was stained with his blood, enshrined in the Great Mosque in Córdoba. Thus, whilst the declaration of a caliphate in Córdoba is usually seen as part of an inter-Islamic tri-directional competition, with the Abbasids in Baghdad as well as the Fatimids in Egypt the other points of the agonistic triangle, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān may also have had one eye on more domestic, i.e. Peninsular, concerns, eager to learn from and compete

with his northern neighbours, and project an image accessible to all his subjects, Muslim and Christian alike.

Aimone Grossato widens the vista still further in his consideration of the diplomatic contacts between the Ottonian kings and the Umayyad caliphs of Córdoba during the tenth century, focusing upon their common interests in the theatre of the Italian peninsula as a means of re-opening discussion on John of Gorze's embassy to Córdoba in 953 and moving the conversation away from the focus upon the Saracen pirate enclave of Fraxinetum (which he in turn suggests was in fact more of an Umayyad bridgehead than den of robbers). Placing Ottonian relations within a complex diplomatic and military situation which saw the Andalusis clashing with the Fatimids, certainly with Byzantine encouragement and probably with their direct assistance, Grossato explores the Ottonians' growing interest in the Italian peninsula, and in particular the worrying presence of Fatimid subordinates in Sicily — a presence which was equally troubling to Córdoba.

Anthony John Lappin approaches another record of diplomatic contact, the colourful description via a series of vignettes of Al-Bāqillānī's late tenth-century embassy to the court of Basil II in Byzantium, which is included in the earliest biography of the famed Mālikī jurist and theologian, composed of a roughly chronological series of exempla written by Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (as part of one of his voluminous collections of writings) which are deeply marked by Andalusī traditions and by a particular political moment: the critical phase of the end of Almoravid rule. Despite the vivid and eminently quotable nature of the tales situated in Byzantium, features such as their being recounted in the first-person voice of al-Bāqillānī himself and authoritative-seeming interjections from worthy narrative traditors, Lappin argues, are designed to hide both the actual purpose of the legation (humdrum negotiations over tax revenues and border castles) and its result (retrospective failure demanding a new negotiation almost immediately, combined with loss of status as al-Bāqillānī was not used again by his sovereign). In the place of historical reminiscence are inserted theological dialogues which effectively silence Christian voices by forcing their assent to Islamicized depictions of Christian beliefs and practices, and their agreement with equally Islamicized arguments — but then, the intended audience was not a Christian one, but a Muslim, fully aware of Christian resurgence and religious debate in al-Andalus.

Ana Miranda offers a convincing study of the inter-relations of two of the most important taifa states to arise from the ashes of the Caliphate of Córdoba after its destruction in 1031, the southwestern polities built around the cities of Seville and Badajoz, the latter acting very much as a

brake on the expansionist intentions of the former towards the west of the peninsula. Although the history of the period is often framed in terms of wars and truces, Miranda seeks to go deeper, and to look for signs of tension which did not involve all-out warfare and to search out those circumstances which allowed the two kingdoms to co-operate. In sum, overt hostilities were limited to the first half of the century as a function of each polity's need for affirmation and a general instability which encouraged ideas of territorial expansion; as, however, external enemies became much more of a threat — in particular, Fernando I and Alfonso VI — the survival of both taifas necessitated a much more conciliatory approach. However, this did not stretch to providing a united front when faced with the incursion of the Almoravids, with both falling rapidly to the North African onslaught.

Kurt Villads Jensen considers the emotional history of religious warfare with particular attention to the accounts provided in the two immediately contemporary accounts of the sieges of Santarem and Lisbon, *De expugnatione Scallibis* and *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi*. Some of the emotional highs in the latter are, perhaps, unexpected: the tears of repentance and fear of the English crusaders as they were caught in a turbulent storm when crossing the Bay of Biscay; the modulated appeal to the crusaders by the bishop of Porto, featuring a graphic depiction of the desecration of Mother Church whilst at the same time insisting on the rational underpinning of sacred warfare; a tearful speech, by Hervey de Glenville, imploring the Norman contingent to stay with the other crusaders now they had reached Lisbon; the archbishop of Braga's invitation to the Muslims to surrender to avoid bloodshed, the rejection of the same, the insults to the cross and the increasing bitterness of the besiegers as resentments piled up; tears of relief as the siege ended and the crusaders could enter the city unopposed. The *De expugnatione Scallibis* offers a rather different style of narration, placing part of the story in the Portuguese king's own voice, and relying on rhetorical, biblical and symbolic patterning to convey a sense of the great moment which was being described, some of which is conveyed through the set-piece recreation of Afonso's harangue to his small number of troops just before the battle, stressing their commonality in the fray, and the ease with which they may kill their opponents. In what is perhaps a glance at the prophetic character of much of the First Crusade, Afonso foretells signs in heaven which would themselves presage the overturning of Muslim rule over the city, the apocalyptic overtones plugging in to a native tradition of foretelling the end of Islamic domination over the peninsula.

Whilst the crusaders required a certain amount of mediation between themselves and their Portuguese allies, a wholly Christian attempt at conciliation is presented by Ana Paula Leite Rodrigues, who considers the careful balancing act required by the Cistercian monastery of Santa Maria de Oia (founded 1145) whose estates were split between Castilian-dominated Galicia and territories much further south, around Lisbon, and therefore subject to the Portuguese crown. These territories had been granted to the monastery as part of the policy of repopulation of newly-won areas (particularly with individuals from the highly-populated Galician coast) and as a means of attracting monastic support for an attempted expansion of Portuguese sway over the southernmost parts of Galicia. In the fourth decade of the fourteenth century, however, Portugal and Castile were at war; the monastery's Galician and cross-border estates were ravaged, and contact lost completely with the Portuguese holdings, which had been seized by local elites who preferred to ignore peace-treaty stipulations that the properties be handed over to their rightful owner. As part of the succession conflict after the proclamation of João I as king of Portugal in 1383, Oia's Portuguese territories were effectively nationalized and used not just to reward a faithful supporter, but also to affirm greater control over the loyalty of the inhabitants of these zones, who had shown greater affection for the invading Juan I of Castile than to the new Portuguese monarchy. The situation was quickly reversed when the abbot of Oia both declared his support for the pope supported by the Portuguese crown during the Great Schism and also promised to reside in Portugal. (This may have been nugatory: after the devastating success at the battle of Aljubarrota (1385), the Portuguese and their allies were steadily nibbling away at significant Galician towns, such as A Coruña, Santiago, Ourense, Tui). A new abbot, however, determined to throw in his lot with Castile, and in 1426 its lands in Extremadura were expropriated and handed over to a loyal supporter, thus limiting any perceived Castilian influence in the kingdom.

Victòria Burguera maintains our attention on Christian lands — or rather, seas — with a discussion of Aragonese maritime policy during the second decade of the fifteenth century. During the short reign of Fernando of Aragón (1412–16), the monarch aimed for a diplomatic policy of entente, through peace-treaties and truces with most of the traditional foes of the Aragonese; nevertheless, Aragonese merchant shipping was beset with hostile action on the high seas, often from the same, supposedly reconciled former enemies. Using in-depth study of local sources, Burguera has been able to show that particular difficulties and dangers accrued to those shipping food supplies, particularly during times of

famine, or those trading with Muslim lands to the south. The appendices, particularly, are a mine of information.

Pol Junyent Molins continues with the Aragonese theme, considering not the vicissitudes of the vulgar but the military options open to Alfonso the Magnanimous in the third decade of the fifteenth century, with particular regard to the continuing attempts by the Crown of Aragón to dampen down secular conflicts as his planning and direction of thought looked towards the conquest of Naples. With regard to this over-arching aim, the decade of the 1420s has to be considered something of a failure, in that the military conflicts of that period were little more than a distraction and a drag upon the monarchy's Mediterranean ambitions.

James Ellis closes the volume by considering the literary response to the problems that beset Juan II of Castile in the shape of the disloyalty of his nobility, thanks to the inveterate rivalry of the court favourite, Álvaro de Luna, with the Infantes de Aragón and their corresponding factions amongst the nobility. The situation provoked a degree of anxiety in those for whom fighting against Muslim Granada should have taken precedence over *bellum intestinum*, and a number of treatises were written which placed the blame firmly in the corner of Castilian chivalry and argued strenuously for its reform, thus casting the knightly calling as both the disease afflicting Castile and, properly administered, its cure.

Thus the volume offers examples of very differing Christian–Muslim interaction in the cross-border warlords and the Lisbon crusaders, representations of diplomatic activity between Christian and Muslim entities, with John of Gorze's and al-Bāqillānī's embassies; purely Muslim, with the taifas of Seville and Badajoz; or Christian negotiation with Christians, such as the tightrope walked by the monastery of Santa Maria de Oia, the military and mercantile strategies of the Aragonese, or those who chose to lecture the Castilian nobility on their defective conception of chivalry. As with our previous volume, we have chosen to place the chapters in a roughly chronological order, thus encompassing the ninth to the fourteenth century. We would also like to record our thanks to Stephen Pink who greatly helped with language correction.

The editors

Kim Bergqvist, Kurt Villads Jensen, Anthony John Lappin



# CHAPTER 1

## MUSLIM WARLORDS, CHRISTIAN KINGS AND THE ASTURIAN CHRONICLES

JOHN WREGLESWORTH

*Three regional Muslim warlords during the ninth century found it expedient to cross the developing frontier between the Christian kingdom of Asturias and the Muslim emirate. Against a background of unrest, harsh retaliation against rebellion and the strength of Marcher lords, the chapter describes the cross-border careers of Muhājir ibn al-Qatīl from Toledo, whose stay amongst the Christians is only retold in Arabic sources; of the troublesome Meridan, Maḥmud ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār, who rebelled against his hosts according to Christian chroniclers; and Ibn Marwān al-Jillīqī, who served in Alfonso III’s campaigns but eventually established himself as an independent ruler in Badajoz. Most strikingly, Ibn Marwān, despite his long stay in Asturias, is not mentioned in contemporary Christian chronicles, although it may be suggested that Maḥmud ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār may have been recorded in the Christian sources to point to the contemporary developments concerning Ibn Marwān.*

### **Introduction**

By the close of the eighth century, as the tide of Muslim conquest ebbed south of the Pyrenees, a frontier had formed between al-Andalus and the newly-emergent Christian territories of northern Iberia. This zone was neither permanent nor impermeable. It was crossed repeatedly by armies and ambassadors, merchants and migrants in the first two centuries after the fall of the Visigothic kingdom in 711 AD. In the ninth century, regional Muslim warlords, operating on the unstable border regions, carved out territories that were effectively independent of amirs in distant Córdoba. They built local power bases from personal charisma, family

connections, astute diplomacy and brute force. Men of overlapping ethnic and religious identities, they were able to navigate their way through the porous cultural and political frontiers separating Christian and Muslim Spain. Through Arabic and Latin historical writings, we can see something, at least, of the careers of three Muslim individuals who crossed from territories claimed by the rulers of Muslim al-Andalus to those claimed by the Christian Asturian kingdom. The Muslim sources name all three while the Christian texts name only one, and are silent about the border-crossing warlord closest to their time of composition. A partisan attribution of motive by the respective historiographical sides is understandable; the total absence of such a significant figure from the contemporary Christian sources, however, is puzzling.<sup>1</sup>

## Frontiers and Rebels in Muslim Spain

The abrupt and unexpected collapse of the Visigothic kingdom at the start of the eighth century brought about a transformation of Hispanic society under its new Muslim rulers. The context, nature and speed of these changes continue to be a matter of lively historical debate in many aspects. To existing ethnic and geographical regional difficulties in governing the peninsula, these newcomers added fresh challenges of ethnicity and confessional belief along with the importation of their own traditional rivalries. The new dominant class brought with it, from the far end of the Mediterranean, long-standing factional feuds between northern and southern Arab tribes (Qays/Muḍar against Yemen). There was a religious divide between Muslim conquerors and their Christian subjects, but this was less significant politically than tensions within the Islamic community between Arabs and Berbers, *mawālī* (non-Arab Muslim clients) and *muwallads* (native converts).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain 710–797* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), and his *Caliphs and Kings: Spain 796–1031* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: a political history of al-Andalus* (Harlow: Longman, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> For the conquest and its immediate aftermath, see Enrique Baquedano, ed., *Zona arqueológica, no. 15, 711. Arqueología e historia entre dos mundos*, 2 vols (Alcalá de Henares: Museo Arqueológico Regional, 2011). For internal dissension, see Collins, *Caliphs and Kings*, 8–10 (for Berbers and clients), 29–36 (for dynastic quarrels and rebellions). For Arab factions, see Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, 23, 26–28, and Eduardo Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, emires y califas: los omeyas y la formación de al-Andalus* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006), 129–66 and, additionally, 166–86 for Berbers.

The birth of al-Andalus was attended by political tumult. The Muslim governors, followed after the mid-eighth century by Ummayyad amirs (and, from 929, caliphs), all found it a difficult place to govern. The glorious cultural legacy of Spanish Islam should not obscure the disturbed, turbulent political history of al-Andalus with its repeated cycle of rebellion and repression, betrayal and reconciliation. By the end of the eighth century the age of Muslim conquest and expansion in Iberia was over. As Hugh Kennedy commented, “The ruling Ummayyads came to spend more time trying to assert their authority over the northern areas of al-Andalus than they did over the Christian lands”. There were even moments during the late ninth and early tenth centuries when, surrounded by rebels, the authority of Amir ‘Abd Allah (888–912) extended little further than the walls of Córdoba and its neighbouring region.<sup>3</sup>

By the ninth century the border lands of al-Andalus were organised against the northern Christians as three frontier Marches (*Thaḡr*, plural *Thuḡūr*), centred on the cities of Zaragoza, Toledo and Mérida, which ran north-east to south-west across the Iberian Peninsula, from the mouth of the Ebro to the mouth of the Tagus. In the north-west, they faced the Asturian kingdom, first of the Christian polities to emerge from the wreckage of Visigothic Spain. By the middle of the ninth century, it had pushed westwards into modern Galicia and was cautiously venturing south beyond the protective Cantabrian mountains and onto the northern plains. Farther to the east, Pamplona had become the heart of an independent kingdom of Navarre in the first quarter of the century. The Carolingian Franks established a trans-Pyrenean protectorate, the “Spanish March” (*Marca hispanica*), over counties that formed a buffer zone between the river Ebro and the Pyrenees. The term *Marca hispanica* appears in Frankish sources some twenty times between 821 and 850, although “without any clear territorial or geographical precision”.<sup>4</sup>

The *Thuḡūr* of al-Andalus resembled forms of defensive organisation on other frontiers of the Muslim world. Their fundamental purpose was to defend Muslim lands and facilitate raids into enemy territory. After the

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<sup>3</sup> On the ruling Ummayyads, see Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, 52. For the classic account of al-Andalus, see É. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane*, 2 vols (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1999). For rebels, see Manzano Moreno, “Los Rebeldes,” in *Conquistadores*, 317–59.

<sup>4</sup> On the Asturian kingdom, see Collins, *Caliphs and Kings*, 50–82, and 205–37 for the “Spanish March”. On use of the latter term see Ann Christys, “Crossing the Frontier of Ninth-Century Hispania,” in *Medieval Frontiers: concepts and practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2002), 35–53 at 39 and n. 18.

capture of Barcelona in 801 by Frankish forces, the Upper March (*Thaġr al-A' lā* or *al-Aqṣā*) of al-Andalus, along the Ebro valley, with its capital at Zaragoza, remained settled for almost three centuries. In the centre and west of the peninsula, effective Muslim control never passed beyond its central mountain ranges, the Cordillera Central. Here, the Middle March (*Thaġr al-Awsaṭ*), based upon Toledo and the Lower March (*Thaġr al-Adnā*), centred on Mérida, came to contest a “No Man’s Land” with the Asturian Kingdom. As with the *Thuġūr* of the Arab–Byzantine frontier, they seem to have enjoyed financial privileges, in the form of either direct subsidies or reduced taxation. The human geography of the Upper March in al-Andalus was a more complex ethnic mix than in the other two frontier zones, with a greater element of its population claiming an actual or desired Arab ancestry in a region that was more urbanised. In the Lower and Middle Marches of al-Andalus, each a less urbanised area, political power was dominated not by Arabs but by Berbers and *muwallads* (native converts to Islam), groups with an often tenuous loyalty to Córdoba. Toledo and Mérida, then, were fiscally privileged, militarily capable and, often, politically disaffected.<sup>5</sup>

Challenges to the ruling dynasty could (and did) come from close at hand, either socially or geographically. The usual method of transferring power by a ruler designating a son as successor was always problematic because of the numbers of potential candidates from within the family. Only one amir, al-Mundhir (886–888) is rumoured to have been assassinated, perhaps by a disgruntled servant or, possibly, by his own brother, ‘Abd Allāh (888–912) – who, more certainly, went on to murder several close family members. But there are other instances of dissension between an amir and his uncles, brothers or sons. At the start of his reign, al-Ḥakam (796–822) was challenged by two uncles, one of whom died in battle while the other was pensioned off, with two more being imprisoned in Córdoba before eventual execution. A decade later, in 805, the amir brutally suppressed an attempted plot which had his cousin as its reluctant figurehead. Perhaps the greatest challenge to the Ummayyads came not from within their extended family but from a rebellion in the very heartland of Cordoban power. In the late ninth century, Ibn Hafṣūn established himself in a stronghold at Bobastro in the Serranía de Ronda, from which he controlled the hinterland of Málaga until his death in 918. His proximity to Córdoba rather than his actual power made him a dangerous irritant. But the most persistent rebels lived at a greater distance

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<sup>5</sup> On the nature, organisation and purposes of the Marches, see Collins, *Caliphs*, 27–28; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, 54–59; Eduardo Manzano Moreno, *La frontera de al-Andalus en época de los omeyas* (Madrid: CSIC, 1991), esp. 25–69.

in the frontier Marches, where the Umayyads had to rely on entrenched and, from a Cordoban perspective, worryingly independent-minded local dynasties, such as the Banū Qasī along the upper Ebro valley.<sup>6</sup>

Rebellion in al-Andalus from the eighth to the tenth century was frequent, with varied motives for disaffection. These derived from a broad spectrum of social interactions: dynastic ambition, traditional rivalries, political grievances, personal feud, ethnic tensions, over-reaching ambition, and even spiritual revelation. All were failures, as the Umayyads maintained their authority, survived the dangerous crises of the late ninth century, and sustained the dynasty until its definitive fall in the eleventh.<sup>7</sup>

For unsuccessful rebels, the prospects in defeat were decidedly unappealing. The best outcome would have been a negotiated surrender, with the urge to diplomatic resolution given impetus by the nearby presence of a Cordoban army. For some, there was a state-funded retirement. ‘Abd Allāh had been a rebel first against his brother, Hishām I (788–796) and then against his son and successor al-Ḥakām (796–822). Having agreed to voluntary exile to North Africa on receipt of a generous subsidy, the returning ‘Abd Allāh failed in his later attempts to carve out a territory along northern Spain’s Ebro valley. In 802, he negotiated an agreement with his nephew al-Ḥakām which settled him in Valencia with a comfortable monthly pension of 1000 dinars plus an annual bonus. A double marriage confirmed this arrangement. The deal suited both sides as ‘Abd Allāh now accepted Cordoban authority, along with the regular payments, while directing his future military activity against Christians along the frontier. For other failed rebels, there was the possibility of relocation to Córdoba as de facto hostages where they, or family members, could be supervised but also serve as useful additions to the amir’s military strength. Of course, any such agreement reached under duress could be broken and resistance resumed as soon as the immediate threat receded, although this could be fatal for hostages. Much worse for the

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<sup>6</sup> On Umayyad family disputes, see Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 190–213. On Ibn Hafsun and his significance, see Manuel Acién Almansa, *Entre el Feudalismo y el Islam. ‘Umar ibn Hafsun en los Historiadores, en los Fuentes y en la Historia* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Jaén: Editorial Universidad de Jaén, 1997). For the Banū Qasī, see Jesús Lorenzo Jimenéz, *La dawla de los Banū Qasī: origen, auge y caída de una dinastía muladí en la frontera superior de al-Andalus* (Madrid: CSIC, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> On motives for rebellion, see Collins, *Caliphs*, 43, 48–49; Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 318–59.

defeated was the possibility of capture and later execution, a fate that could be inflicted by loyalist forces or by disaffected followers.<sup>8</sup>

The only other option for the defeated was flight. Escape northwards to the independent-minded Marcher regions of Toledo and Mérida, especially, prospects of salvation for rebels against Córdoba. In 818, after a failed revolt in the Cordoban suburb of Secunda, 300 ringleaders were executed and their corpses put on public display while the area itself was destroyed. Fleeing from the vengeance of Amir al-Ḥakam, survivors are said to have departed for Toledo while others travelled even farther afield, to Morocco, where some 800 families reportedly settled in the city of Fez. Egyptian sources claim, rather improbably, that some fifteen thousand Cordoban refugees took to a pirate's life at sea, occupying Alexandria for a dozen years before being moved on to Crete, from where they terrorised the eastern Mediterranean until a Byzantine reconquest in 961.<sup>9</sup>

### **Christian-Muslim Contact (eighth–tenth centuries)**

Since the time of conquest in 711 there had been interaction between the Christian population and the Muslim invaders. The violent overthrow of the Visigothic kingdom, so vividly depicted in the *Chronicle of 754*, the near-contemporary Latin account of the invasion, as well as in the later Arabic writings, was mediated by communities surrendering on negotiated terms. The text of a treaty accepted by Count Theodemir, ruler of several towns in south-eastern Spain, is a fascinating insight into the specifics of such agreements. In return for his submission and the payment of tribute, which may possibly have reflected pre-invasion levels of taxation, Theodemir was confirmed in possession of his lands. By 745, under Athanagild, Theodemir's successor and possible son, this settlement appears to have ended, indicating the political vulnerability of such unequal arrangements. Curiously, after the initial conquest, the majority Christian population of al-Andalus disappears from view in Muslim sources. Apart from some accounts of frontier warfare and legal texts on inter-communal relations, writers in Arabic lacked any interest in what

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<sup>8</sup> On 'Abd Allāh, see Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 194–96. On hostages and the fate of rebels, see Collins, *Caliphs*, 34–36 and David James, *Early Islamic Spain: the History of al-Qūṭīya* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 129 n. 53.

<sup>9</sup> On the Secunda rising, see Collins, *Caliphs*, 34–36; Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I:165–71; Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 330–36.

may have been the majority faith population, at least in rural areas, until the tenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the eighth century, and after, there are examples of diplomatic ties between Muslims and Christians. As Muslim armies campaigned across the Pyrenees into Francia, there was, around 731, an alliance with a Christian regional ruler, Duke Eudo of Aquitaine (d. 737), as well as the more celebrated appeal in 777/8 to Charlemagne (767–814) by regional lords of Zaragoza, Barcelona and Girona which ended badly in the legendary and misattributed disaster at Roncesvalles. South of the Pyrenees, an independent Asturian kingdom had emerged just over a decade after the Muslim invasion of 711. It survived repeated raids ordered by Cordoban amirs although there was no attempt at permanent conquest. Asturian relations with closer Muslim neighbours were more complex. The Banū Qasī, who dominated the upper Ebro valley in the ninth century, enhanced their independence from Córdoba by diplomatic ties with the Christian kingdoms of Pamplona and the Asturias. The ambition of their leader Mūsa b. Mūsa, said to have been acclaimed by his followers as ‘the third king of Spain’, was eventually humbled in 859 by the Asturian king Ordoño I (850–866). Nevertheless, diplomatic opportunism ensured that afterwards there were continuing close ties between Christian rulers in Oviedo and the Muslim Banū Qasī: Alfonso III (866–910) sent his son Ordoño II (913/14–924) to be raised among them while Fruela II (924–25), another of Alfonso’s sons, married into the clan through Urraca, daughter of the governor of Tudela. Independent-minded Toledo continued to look to the Banū Qasī and the Asturian kingdom for assistance from the mid-ninth until the early tenth century.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On the Chronicle of 754, see José Eduardo López Pereira, *Crónica mozárabe de 754: estudio, edición crítica, y traducción* (Léon: Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones San Isidoro, 2009) and, for an English translation, see K.B. Wolf, “The Chronicle of 754,” in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999). On Theodemir, see Collins, *Arab Conquest*, 7–8; and for the treaty’s text and translation, Charles P. Melville and Ahmad Ubaydli, *Christians and Moors in Spain*. Vol. III: *Arabic Sources* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1992), 10–13. On the “absence” of Christians, see Ann Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus (711–1000)* (Surrey: Curzon, 2002), 2–3.

<sup>11</sup> On Eudo of Aquitaine, see Ian N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), 281–84. On Charlemagne, see Pedro Chalmeta Gendrán, *Invasión e Islamización* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1994), 367–81 and Collins, *Arab Conquest*, 175–78. On Muslim raids, see Victor M. Aguirre Cano, “La guerra entre el emirato de al-Andalus durante el reinado de Alfonso II (791–842),” *Boletín del Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos* 63 (2009): 181–253 for a very

Throughout the first two centuries of Muslim Spain there was a flow of Christian refugees migrating northwards out of al-Andalus. But in the ninth century, for the first time, written sources report a different phenomenon, as the growth of the Asturian kingdom offered a bolt-hole for Muslim dissidents from al-Andalus crossing “no man’s land” to seek refuge within Christian territory. Arabic and Latin historical writings name three refugees or warlords who found asylum in the Asturian kingdom, and report, in varying detail, on their careers: Muhāğir b. al-Qatīl; Maḥmud b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār and Ibn Marwān al-Jillīqī. These sources, Christian and Muslim, present their own particular problems of content, purpose and transmission.<sup>12</sup>

### Windows on the Past: Christian and Muslim sources

The earliest Muslim sources on the origins of al-Andalus essentially combine religious vindication and heroic tradition, historical anecdote and official palace records. In the eleventh century, Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 1076), a prolific writer and compiler, cited and named earlier, now lost, authors in his own work, the *Muqtabis*, a ten-volume history of al-Andalus. By an historical irony, much of his own historical writing has only survived as fragments that later authors in turn have abbreviated or recycled. Ibn Ḥayyān’s work is our fullest source of information for the three frontier-crossing Muslim warlords. Other Muslim historians of ninth-century al-Andalus are even farther from the events they describe in terms of time, geography, or both.<sup>13</sup>

Latin sources for the Asturian kingdom in the eighth and ninth centuries are decidedly sparser. A narrative history of the Asturian kingdom from its foundation has to be attempted from two late ninth-century chronicles associated with the royal court at Oviedo. They share a complex history of

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helpful list of campaigns and sources at 188. On Mūsa and the Banū Qasī, see Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, “El Tercer rey de España,” in *Origenes de la nación española: estudios críticos sobre la historia del reino de Asturias*, 3 vols. (Oviedo: Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, 1972–75), II: 235–73, Alberto Cañada Juste, “Los Banū Qasī,” *Príncipe de Viana* 158/9 (1980): 5–96, and Collins, *Caliphs*, 74–75.

<sup>12</sup> On Mozarab migration, see Cyrille Aillet, *Les Mozarabes. Christianisme, Islamisation et Arabisation en Péninsule Iberique (IX<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2010), 247–79 and Christys, *Christians*, 91–94.

<sup>13</sup> On Muslim sources, see Collins, *Caliphs*, 14–21; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, 7–10; Felipe Maíllo Salgado, *De historiografía árabe* (Madrid: Abada, 2008). For Ibn Ḥayyān, see *Cronica de los emires Alhakam I y ‘Abdarrahman II entre los años 796 y 847 [Almuqtabis II-I]*, trans. Mahmud ‘Ali Makki and Federico Corriente (Zaragoza: Instituto de Estudios y del Oriente Próximo, 2001).

transmission and provide, for the most part, tantalisingly limited material.<sup>14</sup> Possibly the earlier, the anonymous *Chronicle of Albelda* is named after the Riojan monastery where it was copied a short time after 976. Initially it was compiled in 881, and then continued with minute detail to 883.<sup>15</sup>

The *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, the other source, was probably compiled in Oviedan court circles towards the end of the ninth century. Named after the king who has been proposed as its author, at least in part, it exists in two distinct forms: the *ad Sebastianum*, so-called from a prefatory letter to an otherwise unknown addressee, and the *Rotensis*. It remains a puzzle as to why the styles of this chronicle's two versions should contrast so strikingly, with differences in content and emphasis, although, less surprisingly, there is much in common. The chronicle itself is a series of royal biographies of the Asturian kings from Pelayo to Ordoño I (d. 866). There is no certainty as to the two versions' relationship with each other nor with the Chronicle of Albelda. It is clear, however, from their omissions and emphases that they each have an ideological agenda, perhaps reflecting their respective times of composition. As with the Arabic historians mentioned above, partiality influences the historical accuracy of their content, although, charitably, it may also derive from the deficiencies of their source material.<sup>16</sup>

## Three Who Crossed the Lines

### *Muhajir ibn al-Qatīl*

The first known Muslim individual to seek asylum is Muhajir b. al-Qatīl. He was a failed Toledan rebel who had fled for safety in 198 AH (813–4) to the lands of the “infidels”, “polytheists or “Jillīqiyyah” (Galicia), terms indicating the Asturian kingdom. After a running battle in which he abandoned his sons, for several years Muhajir ibn al-Qatīl escaped the anger of al-Ḥakam, the Cordoban amir, through asylum in Christian-held territory. Most probably because of his political roots there, he was called

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<sup>14</sup> On the Asturian chronicles, see Armando Besga Marroquín, *Orígenes Hispano-Godos del reino de Asturias* (Oviedo: Real instituto de Estudios Asturianos, 2000), 38–65; Yves Bonnaz, ed., *Chroniques asturiennes (fin du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1987); J. Gil Fernández, J. Luis Moralejo and J. Ignacio Ruiz de la Peña, *Crónicas asturianas* (Oviedo: University of Oviedo, 1985); Jan Prelog, *Die Chronik Alfons' III* (Frankfurt: Peter D. Lang, 1980).

<sup>15</sup> On the Chronicle of Albelda, see Collins, *Caliphs*, 52–55.

<sup>16</sup> On the Chronicle of Alfonso III, see Collins, *Caliphs*, 55–59.

back to Toledo by survivors of the brutally-suppressed uprising in Córdoba (818, ‘massacre of the Suburb’) who had settled in the frontier city.<sup>17</sup> Muhajir led the city’s resistance until 822, when he was captured by Cordoban forces. At this point, he disappears from the historical record, probably because he was executed. A brother, Mālik ibn al-Qatīl, seems to have ended his days imprisoned in Córdoba while Ayman ibn Muhajir, who may have been another relative, fleetingly reappears during another Toledan uprising (835/6, 221 A.H.). He led a flying column of raiders before falling out with his companions, switching sides to join the Cordoban loyalists and, eventually, taking part in their attack on his native city (837).<sup>18</sup>

Only Muslim sources have anything to say about Muhajir b. al-Qatīl’s residence in the Asturian kingdom. The admittedly meagre Christian chronicles, those of *Albelda* and *Alfonso III* (in both versions), are silent about him, although they each report on the sojourn of Maḥmūd in Galicia some years later in the 830s. If there is an authorial reason for Muhajir ibn al-Qatīl’s absence, it is not readily discernible. This may simply be down to a dearth of information or tradition that was available to late ninth-century Christian historians. On the other hand, for Muslim writers, like the late-ninth-century Rāzīs who drew on earlier material, to record their co-religionists’ flight to the land of “unbelievers” without further comment might suggest that this type of movement was a more common occurrence than is indicated by our limited sources. It would be fascinating to have an insight into the terms of settlement agreed between Muslim warlord Muhajir ibn al-Qatīl and Christian king Alfonso II (791–842). How and where would he have been settled? Subject to the size of his following, how would he have provided for them? If land was allocated, how would this have impacted on the indigenous population? Perhaps there was space available on the vulnerable fringes of the Asturian kingdom’s territory. Since his accession, Alfonso had felt the weight of repeated attacks by Cordoban armies. Powerful Muslim raids in 794 and 795 devastated Oviedo, Alfonso’s new capital, forcing the king himself into an undignified flight. If he was prepared to welcome Muhajir ibn al-Qatīl, was it as dependent “outsider” support for the Asturian ruler against internal

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<sup>17</sup> Collins, *Caliphs*, 35.

<sup>18</sup> On Muhajir b. al-Qatīl, see Ibn Ḥayyān, *Crónica*, 59, 60, 290–91; María Crego Gómez, *Toledo en Época Omeya (ss. VIII–X)* (Toledo: Diputación de Toledo, 2007), 56–79, 85–99; Manzano Moreno, *La frontera*, 261–310.

dissent, a useful reinforcement against invading Cordoban armies or, perhaps, as a possible key to the city of Toledo?<sup>19</sup>

### *Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn Zāhila al-Marīdī*

Just over a decade later in the 830s, during the last years of Alfonso II, another refugee, Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbar ibn Zāhila al-Marīdī (the Meridan) settled in the Asturian kingdom. His activities are reported in great detail by Muslim sources, especially by Ibn Ḥayyan, as they follow Maḥmūd’s turbulent life in al-Andalus and on into Christian territory. He is the only one of the three men known to have crossed frontiers who appears in the Christian texts. The late ninth-century Asturian chronicles (*Albelda* and, especially, *Alfonso III*) are our fundamental sources for Maḥmūd’s residence in Galicia. They supply limited information, inevitably much less than modern historians would like, depicting him as an ungrateful refugee and, ultimately, failed rebel against his host. Maḥmūd and his dealings with the Asturian king, Alfonso II, are recorded in later Latin historical writings: the *Historia silense* and the *Chronica naierensis* (both anonymous twelfth-century texts), the thirteenth-century *Historia de rebus Hispaniae* of Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (although it is absent from his *Historia arabum*) and the *Chronicon mundi* of Lucas of Tuy. The later chronicles add some unique (and probably unreliable) embellishing detail, such as Maḥmūd being a relative of the Cordoban amir (*Historia de rebus Hispaniae*), or Maḥmūd’s stay in Galicia only lasting two years (*Chronicon mundi*). Most impressively, Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo (1101-1130, 1142-1143), an assiduous manipulator of documents in the interests of his see and himself, even relocated the story of Maḥmūd back in time to the 780s in order to add substance to privileges being claimed in an account of a Church council supposedly held at Oviedo (821).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> On frontiers see, Christys, “Crossing the Frontier,” 35–53, esp. 42–44 and 48 for “desert between Christians and Muslims”. On resettlement, see Luis A. García Moreno, “Los Hispani: emigrantes y exilados ibéricos en la Francia carolingia. Realidad y mito historiográfico,” in *Movimientos migratorios, asentamientos y expansión (siglos VIII–XI). XXXIV Semana de Estudios Medievales* (Gobierno de Navarra: Institución Príncipe de Viana, 2008), 53–76. On Muslim raids, see Aguirre Cano, “Guerra,” 181–253 and esp. 188; Sánchez-Albornoz, “La Campaña de ‘Abd al-Karim Ibn Mugait” in *Orígenes*, II, 509–29.

<sup>20</sup> On Christian sources for Maḥmūd, see the *Chronicle of Albelda* in Gil Fernández, *Crónicas*, 174–75 and Bonnaz, *Chroniques*, 24–25; *Chronicle of Alfonso III* in Gil Fernández, *Crónicas*, 140–42 and Bonnaz, *Chroniques*, 51–52; *Historia silensis*, ed. J. Pérez de Urbel and A. González Ruiz-Zorilla (Madrid, 1959), 140–41; *Chronica naierensis*, ed. J. Estévez Sola, *Chronica Naierensis*,

From this material we can perceive, although dimly at times, Maḥmūd's background and activity. Probably a Berber and a citizen of Mérida, he took a prominent role in the uprising of 828. An Arabic inscription of 835 from Mérida reports that the rebellion had been suppressed the previous year by the amir, 'Abd al-Raḥmān II. In company with Sulaymān ibn Martīn, probably a *muwallad* (native convert to Islam), Maḥmūd had escaped from Mérida. Together, they ranged between Badajoz and other strongholds along the upper Guadiana valley. Sulaymān eventually headed north, only to be surrounded by loyalist forces and then die during a dramatic (but unsuccessful) attempt at a night-time escape. Pursued by Cordoban forces, Maḥmūd went south, terrorising the people of Beja (in modern Portugal) and the district of Oconoba (modern Faro). Eventually, he took up residence on Monte Sacro, a mountainous stronghold around twenty km from Silves. Here, his daring exploits as a military leader passed from history to legend, while the deeds of his beautiful and belligerent sister Jamīla were said to have been celebrated in wedding songs for a long time. Improbably, Ibn Ḥayyān notes that, taken prisoner after her brother's death, she converted to Christianity and produced a son who became bishop of Santiago de Compostela. Ummayyad pressure eventually forced Maḥmūd to head northwards. He was welcomed into the Asturian kingdom after negotiation with Alfonso II and settled in Galicia. Following a seven year residence, Maḥmūd conspired against his Asturian host. There are marked differences between Christian and Muslim writers on the length of Maḥmūd's stay and the motives attributed to his rebellion. He was eventually forced into a desperate last stand at the stronghold of Santa Cristina in 840 AD. A wild cavalry sortie ended badly for Maḥmūd, who died after being thrown from his horse although, even so, nervous Christian warriors hesitated for some time before daring to approach the corpse and decapitate the fallen rebel. Both versions of the Chronicle crowed that Alfonso II's victory over Maḥmūd cost the lives of fifty thousand "Saracens" who had joined him from Muslim Spain.<sup>21</sup>

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(Corpus Christianorum, *continuatio mediaevalis*, LXXI A) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995); *Historia de Rebus Hispaniae*, ed. J. Fernández Valverde, *Historia de rebus Hispaniae* (Corpus Christianorum, *continuatio mediaevalis*, LXXII) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 131; *Chronicon mundi*, ed E. Falque Rey (Corpus Christianorum, *continuatio mediaevalis*, LXXIV) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 236–37. On Bishop Pelayo, see Simon Barton and Richard Fletcher, eds. and trans., *The World of El Cid: Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 64–73.

<sup>21</sup> On Maḥmūd's career, Víctor M. Aguirre Cano, "Mahmud ben Abd al Yabbar: un rebelde bereber en el reino de Alfonso II de Asturias," *Letras de Deusto* 40/129 (2010): 121–45; Christys, "Crossing the Frontier," 35–53; Sánchez-Albornoz,