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Al-Andalus

War and Society, 796–888

The Annalists

The problems we face in using the Arabic sources for the history of al-Andalus in the ninth to eleventh centuries are both fewer and simpler than those met with in trying to make sense of the preceding period of the conquest, the rule of the governors, and of the first two Umayyads (711–796).[1] But we need to understand the purposes for which they were written and the relationships between them. Some of the earliest historical writings in al-Andalus were composed to resolve legal questions rather than provide factual narratives of events for their own sake. By the early part of the tenth century, however, Andalusi historians were motivated by rather different concerns and began using the relatively copious records of the Umayyad court to produce substantial narrative works containing detailed information on a number of specific topics. These included the appointments made by the ruler each year to military commands and to judicial and administrative posts; the deaths of distinguished individuals; and the aim, course, and outcome of any military expeditions, including the numbers of "infidels" killed and captured.[2] The practice of compiling such lists goes back to the earliest phases of Islamic historiography in the mid-eighth century.[3]

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[1]   Outlined in Collins, *Arab Conquest*, 23–36.
[2]   Mailló Salgado, *De historiografía*, 98–108.
[3]   Hoyland, 29–34.

Based on such yearly records kept by the Umayyad administration, these narrative histories generally took an annalistic form and structured their content into annual units. Only when a ruler died would this pattern be modified, when reports of his life, his wives, his children, his age and appearance, and the chief ministers who had served him would be included in a round-up section added to the appropriate annal. This pattern of historical writing was definitely not unique to al-Andalus, having first emerged around the middle of the eighth century in Syria, quite possibly influenced by the Syriac tradition of annal writing. It developed gradually into its full-grown form in the work of writers such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) in the ʿAbbāsid caliphate from the early ninth century onwards, and its Western equivalents generally followed a generation or more later.[4] Indeed, some of the Andalusi historians wrote with the deliberate aim of providing information on Western events largely overlooked by their ʿAbbāsid predecessors. Such a genesis in the official records of the Umayyad court makes the work of these historians extremely valuable, though it has to be accepted that the details given in government reports can be exaggerated, especially when it is a matter of publicizing the dynasty's achievements.

A more serious problem than allowing for propagandistic distortion of the details of military and other achievements is the fact that many of these works have been lost or survive only as fragments preserved in the larger-scale compilations of later generations of historians. Inevitably this raises the question of how such excerpts were made. Were they verbatim or did a later writer edit or condense the text he was borrowing, possibly interpolating other material? In some cases the survival of fragments of a work permits comparisons with the way it was used by later writers and thus reveals how faithful they were to the texts they were copying or excerpting.

For example, only some sections of the work of the most important Andalusi historian for this period, Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 1076), have survived intact, but the whole of it was used as a source by a North African annalist, Ibn ʿIdhārī, who was writing in 1313/4.[5] Where direct comparison can be made, it is clear that sometimes Ibn ʿIdhārī lightly condensed his predecessor's work but did not otherwise change or distort the information he took from it. However, it would seem that Ibn Ḥayyān was not Ibn ʿIdhārī's only source, as the latter's work includes information not found in the earlier author. As he did not name his informants, we can only guess at whom these others

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[4]   Hoyland, 31–32 and references given there.

[5]   I ignore for the moment the fact that Ibn Ḥayyān himself excerpted text from his own predecessors, and so the subsequent borrowings were of already multi-layered materials.

may have been. So, we cannot simply use Ibn ʿIdhārī's text as a means of reconstructing the lost sections of that of Ibn Ḥayyān.

A general problem with the narrative sources for the history of al-Andalus that may surprise Western medievalists is their limited manuscript survival. Most equivalent Latin historical texts, from any period and almost any part of medieval Christian Europe, normally survive in more than one manuscript copy, and most of them are preserved in many. In most cases, too, at least some of these copies were written close to the lifetime of the author, and in a few instances include authorial originals. The rate of survival of not only Arabic but also Latin works written in al-Andalus in these centuries is generally rather low. In many cases such texts are now only found in a single manuscript, which is usually several centuries later in date than the period of original composition.

A good but not untypical example is that of what is probably the only surviving section of the seventh book of the *Muqtabis* of Ibn Ḥayyān, which covers the history of the Umayyad court in the years 971 to 975 in remarkable detail. This came to light during a visit by the foremost Spanish Arabist of the day, Don Francisco Codera (1836–1917), to Algeria and Tunisia in 1886. His journey was sponsored by the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid and aimed at the discovery of manuscripts containing Arabic historical texts relating to al-Andalus. Alerted to the existence of two such codices in the Algerian town of Constantine (*Qusanṭīnah*), he tried to purchase them via the local Spanish vice-consul, who made the necessary enquiries. The owners, the "heirs of Sīdī Ḥammūda," would not sell but allowed the vice-consul to keep the two manuscripts for a fortnight. By the time Codera was informed and made his way to Constantine, only four of those days remained. He recognized the importance of the finds, especially of the section of the *Muqtabis* that formed part of the contents of one of them, and commissioned a local scribe named al-Fakkūn to make a copy, to be sent on to him in Madrid in due course.[6]

More leisurely study of that copy, completed in 1887, revealed, from a dated colophon, that the manuscript in Constantine was itself a copy of an original made in Ceuta in 1249. But when the manuscript in Constantine owned by the heirs of Sīdī Ḥammūda had been written could not be established. It itself vanished sometime after the 1887 copy was made. Codera was pleased with al-Fakkūn's calligraphy, but when it was examined more closely with an eye to an edition of the text, the intending editor, Don Emilio García Gómez (1905–1995), said that al-Fakkūn had "copied mechanically, without understanding much of what he was writing; he took no account of

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[6]   *Anales Palatinos*, 25–26.

the disordered state of the original" – many of the folios being in the wrong order. Another distinguished scholar characterized it as "a bad copy" and "almost useless."[7] Yet this is all we have, as far as this text is concerned: a poor copy made in 1887 by a semi-literate scribe, which requires substantial editorial alteration of its text to make sense of the contents. The undated manuscript from Constantine, the manuscript from Ceuta of 1249 that it copied, and Ibn Ḥayyān's authorial original from the eleventh century are all lost.[8]

As the study of better preserved texts shows, the process of copying results in the introduction of new errors each time it occurs, and a modern edition would normally rely on many or all of the extant manuscripts in attempting to reconstruct the author's original version. Where a work only survives in a single, late manuscript, it can be assumed that its text will have been corrupted by several generations of scribal errors, affecting names of persons and places in particular, as these are the most prone to such corruption. In addition, when a work is only to be found in a single and relatively late manuscript, as for example with the earliest surviving section of that of Ibn Ḥayyān referred to above, we cannot be confident that we possess the most authoritative version of it. Thus, it could be that the material in the comparable parts of Ibn Idhārī not found in Ibn Ḥayyān, and which we therefore deduce must have come from another source or sources, actually derives from a fuller or less corrupt version of Ibn Ḥayyān's text than the one contained in our sole manuscript of it.

Where the scholar working on Arabic texts can have a hypothetical advantage over one studying medieval Latin ones is that there is a much greater chance of new manuscripts being discovered. In particular, the recent revelation that large libraries of Arabic manuscripts have survived in mosques and madrassas in parts of West Africa, particularly in Timbuktu in Mali, is of particular significance for those interested in al-Andalus, in the light of the close political and trading links between these two areas in the Almoravid (1090–1147) and Almohad (1147–c.1220) periods, and the fact that Andalusi refugees certainly took manuscript books with them into exile in northern Africa in the centuries that followed.[9]

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[7]   *Anales Palatinos*, 27–28. He planned three volumes: text, translation and study, but only published the translation. The work was eventually edited by A.A. al-Hajji in Beirut in 1965.
[8]   Ibn Ḥayyān was himself copying Isa al-Razi, *Anales Palatinos*, 13, and the number of intermediate copies between his original and that of 1249 is entirely unknowable.
[9]   Forna. So far, little has been said about historical, as opposed to scientific, legal and religious texts in these huge collections, said to total 70,000 or more manuscripts, but see Krätli and Lydon.

The earliest phase of historical writing in al-Andalus was prompted primarily by legal debates, such as whether a particular territory had been conquered forcefully or had submitted willingly following an initial Arab victory. On the answer to this depended many practical issues, such as the nature and extent of tribute to be levied and its distribution amongst the conquerors and their heirs. Thus our first Andalusi historical narratives, such as brief *Khatīb al-Ṭa'rikh* or "Book of History" of 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Ḥabīb (d. 853), focus primarily on the conquest period and include much legendary material.[10] Unfortunately, while it would be anachronistic to expect them to provide us with a coherent account of the events of the early eighth century, some scholars are convinced there is still a baby in the bath, and so wish to retain elements of these narratives, such as the roles played by Count Julian, "Sara the Goth," and the supposed sons of Wittiza, while rightly rejecting such totally fanciful features as the Table of Solomon and the sealed chamber in Toledo.[11]

Not surprisingly, the chronological phases of the growth of historical writing in al-Andalus follow two generations or more behind equivalent developments in Egypt or the Near East and are directly influenced by them.[12] The ninth century has been described as "the golden age of conquest narratives," but most of these ignored events in North Africa or Spain.[13] This prompted some Andalusis to try to provide supplements to the narratives of Eastern authors who had omitted the West. An early inspiration to them was the Egyptian Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 870/1).[14] Because of the administrative dependence of the governors of Ifrīqiya and al-Andalus on the *wali* of Egypt, who was effectively the caliphal viceroy in the west, African and Spanish affairs feature in his narrative.

The author of the earliest substantial narrative history of al-Andalus was probably Aḥmad al-Rāzī, who died in 955. The son of a merchant, originally from the Near East, who had also worked as an Umayyad spy in North Africa, Aḥmad was only aged three when his father died in 890. He was brought up on the fringes of the royal court in Córdoba, sharing a tutor with the future amīr and caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III (912–961). His connections and possible government service allowed him access to official records, from which he compiled a set of annals, probably extending from the time of the

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[10]   *Kitab al-Ta'rij* (ed. Jorge Aguadé). Ibn Ḥabīb's other surviving work is a geographical description of al-Andalus.

[11]   Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 34–39. See also Crego Gómez, 28–31.

[12]   Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 26.

[13]   Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 34.

[14]   Maíllo Salgado, *De historiografía*, 91–93.

conquest up to his own day. It was continued by his son Isa al-Rāzī (d. 980), whose part in the combined work may have begun with the accession of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III. This section was more detailed; it also shows the influence of cultural interests of the last years of the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III and, even more so, that of his son, the caliph al-Ḥakam II (961–976), to whom it may have been dedicated. This is most obvious in the inclusion of some Christian Spanish Era dates as well as those of the Hijra and in the much fuller and generally reliable reports of events taking place in the Christian realms in the north. This increased interest partly reflects the closer, if not always amicable, relations then existing between them and Umayyad al-Andalus, but also the caliph's own concern for finding out more about the history of Spain before the conquest of 711 and about that of other lands outside his own. He is recorded as having commissioned the translation of a work on the history of the Franks by a Catalan bishop called Gotmar (938/941–951/2).[15] This text is also said to have been used by the Iraqi historian al-Maʾsūdī.[16] A brief but comprehensible narrative of the kings of Visigothic Spain found in the annals of Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233) may also ultimately be traceable back to al-Rāzī, who used both Visigothic and contemporary Christian-Arabic sources.

The historical and topographic compilation made by Aḥmad and then continued by Isa al-Rāzī no longer survives as an independent work in its own right: a problem that affects several of the earlier and more valuable narrative sources for our period. A much abbreviated version of the part of it compiled by Aḥmad al-Rāzī was translated into Portuguese around 1300 at the court of King Dinis, but even that is now only extant in a Spanish translation made c.1425/30.[17] A better textual survival has been enjoyed by those extracts from the annals of both of the al-Rāzī that were incorporated into the work of later Arab historians, of whom the most significant by far is Abū Marwān ibn Ḥayyān (987–1076), about whose life little is known.[18]

He was the author of numerous works on a variety of subjects, including Arabic grammar and verse, most of which have been lost. As a source for the history of al-Andalus, his *Khatīb al-Muqtabis fī Ṭaʾrikh al-Andalus* ("Book of the Seeker after Knowledge of the History of al-Andalus"), probably divided into ten separate parts or books, is in practice the most important of his

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[15]   Fernández y González, 1: 453–470. It may have been nothing more than a regnal list.
[16]   Fernández y González, 1: 465–468, but as al-Maʾsūdī died in 955, it is hard to see how this can be! See also Vernet, *Cultura hispanoárabe*, 74.
[17]   *Crónica del Moro Rasis*. See also de Gayangos, "Memoria," 1–100.
[18]   Pons Boigues, 114: 152–154; Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 474–477.

writings, although it is only partially preserved.[19] He was also the author of a larger historical work entitled *Khatīb al-Matīn* ("The Solid Book") which is said to have consisted of no less than sixty parts, but this is almost entirely lost, other than for some excerpts in later texts.[20] Although it used to be thought that the *Muqtabis* was an early work and the *Matīn* a late one, recent arguments have shown that both only reached their final form in their author's last years, probably in the later 1060s, and that the difference between them lies in the organization of their contents, with the former being an explicit compilation of earlier texts and the latter a reworking of them into a seamless narrative, with more original contributions by Ibn Ḥayyān himself.[21] Both were structured in the form of annals. In its present state the *Muqtabis*, as it is generally known, commences with the first half of its second book, starting at the accession of al-Ḥakam I in 796 and ending in 847. The third book, which is very brief, deals with the reign of 'Abd 'Allah (888–912), and the fifth covers the first thirty years of that of his grandson and successor, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, from 912 to 942. A final surviving section from Book Seven deals with the events of 971 to 975.[22]

Highly regarded for both his literary style and his qualities as an historian by medieval Arab biographers and modern scholars alike, Ibn Ḥayyān followed Isa al-Rāzī in structuring his work as a set of annals. However, he also incorporated into them large extracts taken apparently verbatim from the writings of both of the al-Rāzī and of other less well-known predecessors. These borrowings are quite explicit, with their authors named, and they are inserted into the text at the appropriate chronological point in the overall narrative. His work, including his own original sections that may have related primarily to the period from 976 onwards, became in turn an authority for several other historians, writing in later centuries and in areas ranging from al-Andalus to Iraq. Not only was he used by Ibn 'Idhārī and Ibn al-Athīr, he was an acknowledged source for the Granadan historian Ibn al-Khatīb (1313–1374), the Berber polymath Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), and

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[19]   There is some uncertainty as to the literal meaning of the metaphorical term *Muqtabis*; see Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 474, and Maíllo Salgado, *De historiografía*, 113.

[20]   On the *Matīn* see Viguera, "Referencia," 4: 429–431.

[21]   Avila, 5: 93–108, and Lopez, "Sobre la cronologia," 7: 475–478. See also Maíllo Salgado, *De historiografía*, 112–117.

[22]   See Ibn Ḥayyān, *Crónica de los emires Alhakam,* 378 for bibliographical references to the editions and translations. It is not clear why in this structure there is no chronological space for a Book Four. Molina "'Ibn Hayyan," 24: 223–238 provides a critical review of this translation.

Muḥammad al-Maqqarī (d. 1632) from Tlemcen, amongst others. Some preserve particular sections of his work more fully than the rest.

While it will become obvious that our Arabic sources for the history of al-Andalus, and indeed the history of the whole of the Iberian peninsula, in this period are far more substantial, wide ranging, and generally reliable than the Latin ones produced in the Christian states in the north, there is a corresponding lack of documentary records. Charters abound from the late eighth century onwards in the Asturian kingdom and its Leonese successor, and even more so in the Catalan counties of the eastern Pyrenees. These record legal transactions of every sort, and in so doing give us insights into the social and political organization of these regions at a micro-level that is entirely lacking in the study of al-Andalus. The explanation for this absolute divergence in the survival of evidence is simple. Such documents were preserved in the Christian realms because they continued to be potentially useful as evidence for rights to property, showing how it had been acquired and what challenges had been faced. On the other hand, the legal records of the Muslim states ceased to have validity as each in turn fell into Christian hands over the course of the medieval centuries. There was thus no incentive to preserve them, and in some circumstances good reasons to destroy them. The same applies to other governmental records of al-Andalus, with the exception of some informal diplomatic correspondence in Latin sent by Christians in the service of Caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III to the Count of Barcelona, preserved in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón.[23]

In consequence, we lack the kind of evidence in al-Andalus for local society, its ethnic composition, naming practices, land holding, economic exchanges, pious giving, social structures, legal and other values, and much else besides that can be recovered to a much greater extent from the documentary records of the Christian north. Only in a few cases, such as that of Huesca following its conquest by the Atagonese in 1096, is it possible even to glimpse earlier patterns of property ownership from the documents recording its redistribution amongst the conquerors.[24] Overall, while the politics and military activity of the Umayyad court can be depicted, sometimes in a remarkable degree of detail, knowledge of Andalusi society and its economy at the local level is at best thin and generalized.

To this deficiency archaeology can provide a partial remedy. As well as illuminating the spatial organization of sections of some towns and cities, of varying size, location, and importance, excavation of certain sites has

[23]   Mundó, "Notas," 187 and plate 6; see in the light of the comments of Collins, "Literacy," 112–113.
[24]   Using Durán Gudiol (ed.), *Colección diplomatica*, especially docs 64–108.

produced much useful evidence of some of the material culture of this period. This includes the discovery of wares, mainly pottery, produced in other centers and imported into al-Andalus, not least from the eastern Mediterranean.[25] It is also possible to achieve some sense of internal trade patterns, from the evidence for the distribution of wares whose production is associated with a particular place or region within the peninsula – for example, Elvira/Granada.[26] There are necessary limitations, in that excavation depends upon opportunity. In a small number of cases whole settlements, abandoned after the period of Islamic occupation, have been available for study, as with the "lost" town of Vascos in the Province of Toledo, abandoned soon after 1085, and the small port of Saltés, near Huelva.[27] But in locations where occupation has been continuous, destruction of earlier levels is inevitably greater and opportunities for excavation more limited. Rural sites have hitherto attracted less attention, not least because of the difficulties of locating and identifying them. Their material culture can also be much more restricted, being mainly local in character and origin, and thus less diagnostic.

Holy War and Order in Umayyad al-Andalus

The history of the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus (661–750) has been characterized as that of "a jihād state," in which periods of holy war intended "to establish God's rule in the earth through a continuous military effort against the non-Muslims" were only rarely interrupted.[28] This description applies not least to the reign of the caliph Hishām (724–743), in which a succession of raids were sent into the much diminished territory of the East Roman (or Byzantine) Empire in Anatolia at a rate of one or two each year. At the same time, expansion was being pursued, with mixed fortunes, on a series of other frontiers, extending from southern France to the fringes of the Hindu Kush. There may already be an important distinction to be noticed here. After the failure of the attempt to take Constantinople in 717, Umayyad expeditions into Anatolia look like raids and not attempts at territorial conquest, although this was still being sought elsewhere.[29] This

[25]   E.g. Aguado Villalba, 52–55.
[26]   Aguado Villalba, 41–43.
[27]   Izquierdo Benito, *Excavaciones*; Bazzana and Cressier, *Shaltish/Saltés*.
[28]   This is the argument of Blankinship, see p. 11 for the quotation.
[29]   Blankinship, 117–121, 162–163, 168–170, 200–202 for details; also Wellhausen, 325–352, and Treadgold, 346–350.

was not because of any successes of note on the part of the defenders. The raids, and the loot they acquired, became ends in themselves.

The same thing may be said about the conduct of warfare in al-Andalus. The initial conquest was territorially comprehensive, though depending on a patchwork mixture of garrisons and local treaties. The imperative for further gain led to the extension of conquest across the Pyrenees and on into Provence and Aquitaine. This was halted and then reversed thanks to a mixture of increasingly resilient opposition and the revolt of the Berbers in Ifrīqiya and then in al-Andalus itself. A further consequence was the loss of control of the northern regions of the Iberian Peninsula and the emergence of the small Christian kingdom of the Asturias, followed later by that of Pamplona.

At the end of the eighth century the Umayyads, who came to power in a coup in 756, still dominated most of the Iberian Peninsula, thanks to the campaigns of their founder, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I (756–788) in the middle years of his reign.[30] But the territories both in and beyond the eastern Pyrenees that had been conquered in the 720s had by then been permanently lost. There would be further, rather smaller, loss when the Franks acquired Girona in 785 thanks to a local revolt and then Barcelona in 801, by conquest. However, this marked the limits of Frankish expansion, which would not thereafter represent a serious challenge, even if the territory lost to them was never recovered. Thus, in practice, something close to a set of fixed, if loosely delineated, frontiers had come into existence early in the ninth century. What is rather surprising, in the light of all that had gone before in the eighth century is that this was not the result of a military balance of forces or an equilibrium of power between the Umayyad state and its northern neighbors. As some of the detailed descriptions of events in this and later chapters will make clear, there were numerous points in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, especially under al-Manṣūr in the closing decades of the latter, in which large-scale reconquest of lands lost in the eighth could have been achieved. In other words, there were times when the Umayyads could have easily reversed earlier losses and resumed a program of territorial expansion. But they did not, and that must have been a deliberate choice.

Under the second of the Umayyad rulers of al-Andalus, Hishām I (788–796), in a pattern of raiding in force into the Christian lands in the north of the peninsula, both *Jilliqiya* (*Gallaecia* – using Late Roman administrative terminology for the province containing the Asturias and

[30]   For these see Collins, *Arab Conquest*, 168–188, which suggests that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān did not acquire immediate control of all parts of al-Andalus following his defeat of the last of the governors in 756, and took over a quarter of a century to do so.

Galicia[31]) and the Frankish March in the lower Ebro were targeted in annual or twice-yearly expeditions very similar to those his ancestor and namesake had directed into Byzantine Anatolia. This is not another example of the "nostalgia for Syria" that some see as a mainspring of much early Umayyad cultural and other activities in al-Andalus. Hishām did not send raids into northern Spain because this had been a favorite pastime of his great-grandfather. But the two may have been similarly motivated.

For Muslims there is an essential difference between the *Dar al-Islām*, the Land of Islām, and the *Dar al-Ḥarb*, the Land of War. As "Islām" means submission, the distinction is between the land in which man has submitted to God and that in which, not having accepted the revelation given through the Prophet Muḥammad, he is at war with him. The theological distinction equates politically to the difference between Islamic and non-Islamic states. In the earliest centuries, for Sunni Muslims, political leadership and spiritual authority over their entire community of fellow-believers rested with the caliphs, seen as God's deputies on earth.[32] Revolt against them was for Muslims an act of *fitna* or apostasy.[33]

In practice, internal political divisions came into existence from the mid-eighth century, but the notional unity of believers was not affected. Not until the tenth century would the caliphal authority of the ʿAbbāsids be undermined. However, all Islamic rulers shared common obligations, including the defense of the *Dar al-Islām* and the repression of internal threats to true belief. Jihād, or holy war against non-believers in the *Dar al-Ḥarb* was another such duty.[34] This involved giving them the three choices of accepting Islām, of submitting and paying tribute but not converting, or of facing destructive warfare and enslavement. The monarch's departure on such expeditions was said to be a cause of "jubilation and delight" to his subjects.[35] The victorious outcome was celebrated by his court poets, some of whose verses are preserved in the works of Ibn Ḥayyān and others.[36]

What this meant in practice depended upon the issue of a *fatwa* by the leading members of the *ulama*, the jurists and religious teachers upon whom the ruler relied for guidance and approval, not least in deciding upon the targets for the annual *saʾifa* or military expedition. As warfare was

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[31]   Interestingly, such late Roman nomenclature was not used for any of the administrative divisions of al-Andalus itself.

[32]   Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 4–23.

[33]   E.g. Ibn ʿIdhārī's description of ʿAbd Allāh's campaign against Ibn Ḥafṣūn in ah 278 (891/2): *al-Bayān* pt 2: 123–124.

[34]   Blankinship, 11–19.

[35]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, ah 300.

[36]   E.g. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, ah 305 on the conquest of Carmona in September 917.

intended for the defense of Islām and the punishment of its opponents, both internal and external, decisions on military matters belonged firmly within the religious sphere. Indeed, a distinction between sacred and secular or lay and clerical can hardly be made. While the appointment to and removal from the office of the *qadī*s, or judges, was by decision of the Umayyad ruler, their learning and piety could give them enormous prestige amongst the urban populace, and thus a vital role in maintaining support for the regime.[37]

There existed several schools of jurists, whose interpretation of the text of the Qur'an and the Hadīth depended upon certain a priori exegetical principles.[38] Some schools favored a strongly literal approach, while others adopted more flexible ways of understanding the meaning of the key texts. In al-Andalus, from the reign of al-Ḥakam I onwards, preference was always given to the Malikite school of Islamic jurisprudence, which was one of the more literal and uncompromising.[39] So, jihād in Umayyad al-Andalus was something a ruler was expected to carry out as part of his duties in a very straightforward and obvious sense: it was the bringing of death and destruction to the lands of the infidels if they did not submit and pay tribute or if they attacked the Muslims.

Whatever their nostalgia for a long-gone Syria that only the first of them had ever actually experienced, the Spanish Umayyads were well aware of the fate of their forbears, the caliphs of Damascus – all the more so, as everything written on the history of their rule was composed under the 'Abbāsids, who overthrew them in 750. So the historiography of the Syrian Umayyads was in some degree the literature of how to fail to be good Islamic rulers.[40] With the solitary exception of 'Umar II (718–720), who was allowed to be the model for certain caliphal virtues, the rest of the dynasty could be pilloried for their exemplary faults. If their Spanish descendants carried away any memories of how the dynasty really had comported itself, this scarcely emerged in the literature of al-Andalus, where the works of the 'Abbāsids' historians set the record. It is thus significant that the courtiers and literary protégés of the Umayyads of al-Andalus tended not to focus on the deeds of their individual Syrian ancestors, except where these related to the conquest of Spain, and preferred instead to emphasize the story of 'Abd

[37]   Such appointments and demotions are recorded at the end of each reign in the narrative of Ibn Ḥayyān, deriving ultimately from Umayyad court records; e.g. Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis,* II. 1, f. 119r for those of al-Ḥakam I.
[38]   Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph,* 58–80.
[39]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* II. 1, f. 119r.
[40]   Blankinship, 258–265; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 50–54; Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, 11–16.

al-Raḥmān I's dramatic escape from the destruction of his family in Syria in 750 and his arrival in Spain.

As the members of a dynasty that had been given a second chance, and with a generally conservative *ulama* to please, it is perhaps not surprising that the Spanish Umayyads found it quite useful to have some relatively unthreatening infidels close to hand against whom jihād could be directed at will and with relative impunity. This would not be the first time that inconclusive warfare was deliberately conducted in Spain for purposes other than territorial conquest. For nearly two hundred years the Roman Republic had done something very similar, maintaining an endemic state of war in the Iberian Peninsula so as to enable successive sets of consuls and praetors to make their reputations and enrich themselves in an ongoing conflict which was actually quite unthreatening as far as Rome's real interests were concerned.[41] Ultimately, this was why the Roman conquest of Spain took two centuries while that of Gaul took less than two decades.

There were other benefits to the Umayyad regime from such a system. Successful raids resulted in loot and captives for sale in the slave markets. They also helped to promote a justification for Umayyad rule over and above the need to satisfy the expectations of the jurists. The expeditions across the frontiers also provided a ready means for the rulers to make their presence felt within their own lands as well as beyond. Lacking the complex bureaucratic and administrative structures of the former Roman Empire (or of the contemporary Tang dynasty China), such peripheral Islamic monarchies as that of the Umayyads had limited means of supervising the conduct of their more powerful subjects and of obliging them to pay heed to commands, including the payment of tax, that they might prefer to ignore.

Because, when it comes down to it, there was not a lot else that the Umayyads did that was much practical use to the majority of their subjects. As we shall see, their attention was almost entirely devoted to their capital, the city of Córdoba, which benefitted economically from the permanent presence of their court, and whose great mosque they built and expanded. But the Umayyads are not otherwise recorded as founding institutions of learning or as sponsoring public works, other than the construction of defensive walls and fortresses. While few functioning Roman aqueducts still survived elsewhere from the Visigothic period, in Córdoba, Mérida, Toledo, and Seville, they were preserved under Umayyad rule for private rather than public advantage. They fed the fountains, garden, and baths of the Umayyads' palaces, but no longer the public bathing and sanitation facilities of Roman times.

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[41]   A thesis convincingly expounded in Richardson, *Hispaniae*.

The Umayyads did not follow the earlier Roman emperors in endowing the main cities of their state with new religious and recreational buildings, or try to enhance their amenities. Their existence was justified by the success of their claim to be good Islamic rulers, repressing dissent and evil-doing within the *Dar al-Islām* and conducting jihād effectively in the *Dar al-Ḥarb*. Hence the emphasis in our sources, which derive from official records, on the numbers of heads of infidels sent back for display on the gates and walls of Córdoba, and on the salutary crucifixion of heretics and rebels. For such ends they took the taxes and tolls due from both Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants of the towns and districts of al-Andalus. It is therefore not surprising that in the course of these centuries their activities beyond their frontiers were frequently hampered by the need to restore and reimpose their authority within them.

Such problems were hardly unique. Western Christian rulers faced similar difficulties in periods in which the ready rewards of territorial expansion were not available. Theirs, more than most Muslim states, were deficient in the apparatus of government, and they depended instead upon a combination of ideological factors and the shrewd manipulation of factional politics both in their own courts and in the provinces. The Franks had long used their annual military expeditions for such purposes, gathering the leaders of regional society to discuss not just military objectives but also new laws and the making of crucial appointments. The securing of consensus amongst the more powerful landed interests and care in the distribution of patronage were essential to successful rule.[42] The Umayyads did not have an equivalent of such assemblies, but they had to be equally cautious in allowing their regional representatives to build up too much local power, especially in the frontier areas.

The Administration

By the late eighth century three frontier districts, or Marches (*Thugūr*), had been created along a diagonal extending from the mouth of the Tagus to that of the Ebro, with Mérida, Toledo, and Zaragoza normally serving as their administrative centers. They were usually known respectively as *al-Ṭagr al-Adna* (Lower March), *al-Ṭagr al-Awsaṭ* (Central March), and *al-Ṭagr al-Aʾlā* (Upper March), and all three played a vital role in the politics of the Umayyad state. Their structure and administrative terminology was by no means fixed, as the concept of "the frontiers of Islām" or *al-Thugūr al-Islām*,

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[42]   E.g. Hummer, 155–208; Goldberg, 186–230.

was found in all parts of the Muslim world bordering on non-Islamic lands, and regions thus designated might cease to be so if expansion continued and political boundaries moved. However, in al-Andalus the phase of conquest and territorial expansion had come to a decisive end, even if not fully recognized as such, in the very late eighth century. So the threefold division of the borderlands then in place became firmly established, even if features of its internal organization remained flexible.

These frontier regions not only had important administrative, fiscal, and military roles, but their location on the edge of the *Dar al-Islām* and fronting the *Dar al-Ḥarb* invested them with particular cultural significance too.[43] Like the rest of al-Andalus, they were divided into a number of provinces, called kuras (*kuwar*), of which there seem to have been roughly eighteen overall, each subdivided into districts (*aqalim*).[44] Those in the frontier marches were known collectively as the *Kuwar al-Thugūr*. All such districts would contain a number of small fortresses and watch towers, depending on local defensive needs. Each of the kuras, which were the bedrock of the administrative organization of the Umayyad state, would normally have a governor, entitled indiscriminately *wali* or *amil*, whose seat would be in the main town or city of the kura, from which the latter in most cases took its name. In the Marches military necessity often led to several individual kuras being placed in the hands of the same man, usually from a family with entrenched local influence. As will be seen from numerous examples, this need to concentrate power in the hands of already well-entrenched local dynasties could produce serious problems if they became disaffected or ignored the authority of the Umayyad rulers.

During the late eighth and ninth centuries Córdoba continued to grow under Umayyad rule; new palaces were built for the rulers and their court, and in 781 work began on the Great Mosque. Expansion was on nothing like the scale that would be achieved in the tenth century, however: its early years saw the construction of the first congregational or local mosques and, though the exact number is not known, several others were erected later in the century.[45] On the other hand, archaeological study has shown that a number of other once important settlements went into decline; in some cases terminally. Urban contraction was not uniform, and in some locations there is evidence of reoccupation, which may be linked to population growth.

[43]   Chalmeta, "El concepto de tagr,"15–28.
[44]   There is a minor disagreement in the sources as to the exact number. See Joaquín Vallvé, *La division*, 227–228.
[45]   Mazzoli-Guintard, *Vivre*, 95–98. There were only ten of them in late tenth-century Cairo: Bennison, *The Great Caliphs*, 81.

A good example of this may be found in Mérida, where an area along the river bank adjacent to the Roman bridge across the Guadiana, has been extensively excavated and reveals that a late Visigothic multiple occupation of former high status Roman houses was followed by a period of complete abandonment and by a phase of rebuilding in the ninth century. This involved the creation of a new road layout, with houses partly built over the earlier paved Roman streets, probably implying these were no longer visible at the time.[46] However, it cannot be assumed that the reoccupation of this area, after a century or more of abandonment, proves a rise in population, as it could also be the result of contraction, with a declining body of inhabitants concentrating themselves in a smaller more easily defended nucleus inside the old Roman walls. Such an interpretation is reinforced by the history of the city in this period, as will be seen.

Dramatic changes occurred in many forms across this span of time. Not least was this the case with the power of the central authority in al-Andalus, in the persons of the Umayyad rulers. They succeeded one another in unbroken succession, without the external challenges, from the ʿAbbbasid caliphate, for example, that had been faced in the eighth century, and the dynasty was never in danger of being replaced. However, the extent of their real power as opposed to their claimed authority fluctuated considerably across the period. From a high point in the last years of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I and the reigns of his three immediate successors, Umayyad control of al-Andalus went into steep decline around the middle of the ninth century, and by the beginning of the tenth at times extended no further than the area immediately surrounding Córdoba, with the two most important towns west of the capital, Seville and Carmona, being amongst the many that defied their authority. As will be seen, the ensuing recovery was swift and dramatic, but also short-lived, with a violent terminal phase preceding the formal extinction of the dynasty's caliphal authority in the 1031.

How these fluctuations in Umayyad control in al-Andalus came about, and what they may have signified, will be examined in the context of the dynasty's own strategies in the light of the institutional and other problems they faced. One of these was the method of succession within the ruling house.[47] At the start of their reigns both Hishām I and al-Ḥakam I (796–822) faced serious challenges from other members of the Umayyad family, who were unwilling to accept the designation of an heir by the ruling amīr as the legitimate means of transferring power. Two of Hishām's brothers, Sulaymān and ʿAbd Allāh, rebelled against him in 788, with some initial

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[46]   Alba Calzado, "Ocupación diacrónica."
[47]   Ruggles, 34: 65–94.

success, before being defeated and driven into exile in North Africa. On his early death in 796 they returned to stake their claim against his son al-Ḥakam. ʿAbd Allāh was the first to move, returning to Valencia, where he had a following among the Berber garrisons, while Sulaymān set himself up in Tangiers, preparing to cross the straits.

These conflicts show that designation by a ruler of one of his sons seems to have been the normal method of transferring power in the Umayyad dynasty, though the processes of selection are never described in our sources.[48] However, it was not enough in itself to secure an untroubled succession if a ruler's other sons, or even his brothers, enjoyed sufficient support. This could be achieved either through the possession of a regional power base or through the backing of a significant faction at court. As most of the Umayyad rulers had several wives and numerous concubines, all of whose sons were potential heirs, the number of candidates to succeed an amīr was generally very large.[49] For example, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II is said to have had fifty sons.[50] As such male heirs approached maturity and their father declined into old age, so the threat of instability and factional conflict within the family grew proportionately.

Conspiracy against the ruler himself was rare, and the only possible case of one being murdered, prior to the eleventh century, was that of the amīr ʿal-Mundhir (886–888), who is said to have been killed in the course of a military expedition on June 22, 888, at the age of forty four.[51] Despite his leaving five sons, the throne was taken by his brother, ʿAbd Allāh (888–912), who is accused by a later author, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1067), of having poisoned al-Mundhir.[52] This was probably no more than rumor, as the context of the story is the amīr being seriously wounded in the course of a siege, and the poison being administered in his medical treatment.[53]

The reign of ʿAbd Allāh, however it began, was marked by intense suspicion within the ruling family. The new amīr executed two of his brothers and several of his sons. He was one of the longest lived members of the dynasty, dying at the age of seventy-two, but this very longevity meant that he was unable to lead military expeditions in person in the last years of

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[48]   Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, 193–203.
[49]   For the evidence on the extent of the membership of the Umayyad dynasty see Uzquiza Bartolomé, 373–430, with genealogical trees.
[50]   Ibn Ḥazm, *Naqt al-ʿArūs*, 105.
[51]   Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān*, provides contradictory information about his age, giving his date of birth as September 29, 845.
[52]   Ibn Ḥazm, *Naqt al-ʿArūs*, 115.
[53]   There are differences in the sources as to the location of the siege. Most agree it was during a campaign against the local warlord ʿUmar b. Ḥafṣūn, who was based in the mountains northwest of Málaga, but an alternative tradition locates it at Toledo.

his reign, and his distrust of his heirs grew as he became older. Two of his sons were arrested by the Saḥīb al-Madīna, or governor of the city, in 890 for leaving Córdoba by the bridge over the Guadalquivir on the same day as their father. They were detained because of standing order issued by the amīr against anyone doing so. The area south of the river was the royal hunting ground, where the ruler would normally only be accompanied by a small entourage.

A hunt also provided easy cover for an attempt at assassination. Our account of this episode says that the two sons were released following their father's return, but we know from other sources that both of them were secretly executed, probably with the assistance of one of their brothers, at around this same time. So, either the affair itself had a different and much darker ending or the suspicions that it aroused led to their deaths soon after. We have a further element in the claim later made by the regional rebel Umar b. Ḥafsūn that he had given refuge for a time to one of these sons of ʿAbd Allāh, implying that he had had to flee from Córdoba. This would suggest this episode was more complex than the basic account implies. No other indication of this aspect of the episode features in the sources, but the mention of it appears in a different context in the work of Ibn Ḥayyān, whose narrative provides everything else that we know about it. The main reason for the evidential obscurity was probably the fact that one of these two sons was the father of ʿAbd Allāh's eventual successor, his grandson ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III. Not surprisingly, the official records may not have preserved the true story of the fate of his father, and historians writing under the patronage of subsequent Umayyad rulers did not wish to discuss it.

One probable consequence of this murky period of family murder and strife was the subsequent decision of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III that his own chosen heir, the future al-Ḥakam II should not be permitted to marry or produce children during his father's lifetime. The length of Abd al-Raḥmān's reign meant that al-Ḥakam was himself well into middle age when he succeeded, and when he died, at the age of only sixty-three, his designated heir was too young to rule in person. This was the first time in the history of the Spanish Umayyad dynasty that the throne had passed to a minor, and it had disastrous consequences as the factional conflicts that ensued left the personal authority of the ruler seriously weakened.

The Rulers: Al-Ḥakam I (796–822)

While it would be unnecessary and probably off-putting to provide here a blow-by-blow account of the events of each year of the reigns of the successive Umayyad rulers, something our fairly substantial narrative sources

would permit, it is worth trying to establish some patterns, identify some common problems, and see how the individual amīrs attempted to deal with them. This, in turn, by comparing their strategies and results, can lead to a better understanding of how a regime that was effectively in control of al-Andalus at the start of the ninth century was finding it difficult to retain even the hinterland of its own capital city by the end of it. This, in many ways, is the most important question to answer when it comes to trying to make sense of this particular period and its otherwise bewilderingly complex sequence of seemingly random events. Each of the three major reigns of the century will be taken in turn.

The challenge from other members of the dynasty had not been the only threat faced by al-Ḥakam I in 796, as revolts also broke out in Toledo and in the Ebro valley. The latter was led by Bahlūl b. Marzūq, who briefly seized control of Zaragoza before being expelled by local leaders loyal to al-Ḥakam I. Amongst their number may have been the *muwallad* Mūsa ibn Fortun of the Banū Qasī, whose death very soon after was followed by Bahlūl's regaining control of the city, but now in alliance with the Umayyad pretender ʿAbd Allah. As would often be the case, a common opposition to the regime in Córdoba could lead to different factions combining, at least temporarily.

Early the following year, a revolt broke out in Toledo following the replacement of the existing governor by the new amīr. The leader of the revolt is named by Ibn Ḥayyān as ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ḥamir.[54] Nothing is known about his previous career or what made him the leader of a popular uprising. Facing threats elsewhere, not least from his uncles, al-Ḥakam ordered ʿAmrūs b. Yūsuf, the commander of the Berber garrison in nearby Talvera, to supress the revolt. As Toledo was too strongly fortified to be effectively beseiged, ʿAmrūs opened secret negotiations with some of the factions inside the city. He promised the leaders of one faction, the Banū Mahsa, that one of them would be appointed governor if they rid him of Ibn Ḥamir, which they promptly did, by murdering him and taking his head to ʿAmrūs in Talavera. They were formally received with great honor, and then promptly murdered by some of the Berber troops, with whom they had a longstanding feud. This was no doubt what ʿAmrūs had intended, as he sent the heads of the Banū Mahsa, along with that of Ibn Ḥamir, to Córdoba to show the amīr that the pacification of Toledo was proceeding. The final stage in that process was already being planned, probably with the approval of al-Ḥakam I. After the slaughter of the Banū Mahsa, ʿAmrūs persuaded the now divided

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[54]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* II. 1, f. 92r. He is called ʿUbayd b. Hamid by Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān* II, ah 181.

citizens of Toledo to submit and admit him to the city. Once within, 'Amrūs built a temporary fortification just inside one of the gates, to defend his troops from unexpected attack, and also arranged a feast for the leaders of the various factions and families who had hitherto dominated Toledo so that they could celebrate the restoration of Umayyad authority. However, he was intending a rather more permanent solution to the problem of the city's political instability. As the guests were ushered individually into the fortress for the banquet through a narrow gate, each in turn was seized and beheaded by 'Amrūs's guards and their bodies were thrown into a ditch that had been dug for the purpose. This gave the resulting massacre its name of "The Day of the Ditch." According to Ibn Ḥayyān about seven hundred people were killed in the course of it.[55]

Whether or not this figure be exact, the episode itself is one of the best recorded events in the reign of al-Ḥakam I. Our knowledge of it comes entirely from Cordoban sources, and we lack any Toledan perspective on it, but this is a problem with virtually all the literary evidence for the history of Umayyad al-Andalus. Even so, some features of the story as reported by Ibn Ḥayyān and others raise interesting questions. For example, the apparent ease with which 'Amrūs turned the Banū Mahsa against Ibn Ḥamir suggests that local society in Toledo was divided, with different groups, families, or factions competing for power; each probably enjoying predominance in particular parts of the city, and representing different ethnic or other interests.

Similarly, the murder of the Banū Mahsa by the Talaveran Berbers hints at the existence not only of murderous feuds but also of a network of local frontiers. Different groups, be they family, tribal, or religious, might be able to live safely in one location, but risk their lives entering another. The Banū Mahsa had not recognized how dangerous it was for them to go to Talavera, even when supposedly under the protection of its governor. The feud itself implies that they had previously been responsible for the killing of some of the Berbers, whether in a dispute over property or in a more casual argument. The lack of effective central authority meant that such local vendettas ran their own courses until such time as the parties involved could be persuaded to come to terms. Even then, sentiments of still-affronted honor or a reminder of past enmities could cause apparently healed conflicts to break out once more. For some, the total massacre of their enemies was the only permanent solution.

Here, as elsewhere, the presence of the unassimilated Berber garrison seems to have added to the regional instability. The Berbers, despite being

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55   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* II. 1, f 92r/v, 27–28; the same number is given by Ibn 'Idhārī.

fellow Muslims, were despised by those who claimed Arab descent. They were also clearly unpopular with the indigenous communities too. Intense local friction led to the massacre of the inhabitants of Tarragona by its Berber garrison in 794, leaving the city abandoned until it had to be reoccupied following the Frankish conquest of Barcelona in 801.

A massacre of opponents, actual or potential, was also the course followed by 'Amrūs in the Day of the Ditch, whether or not he was acting on instructions from Córdoba. The presence of his Berber troops, lacking local ties and with existing feuds with some of the intended victims, facilitated the process. The ensuing general massacre of the leaders of Toledan society was clearly thought to be the best solution to the city's tradition of rebelliousness. For a time, it probably worked, in that we do not hear of any further uprisings against the Umayyad governors in Toledo during the reign of al-Ḥakam, but the memory of this episode left the city a center of simmering resistance.

A similarly robust approach was followed in Córdoba itself firstly when a plot against the ruler was discovered in 805, which resulted in seventy-two of the conspirators being publically crucified.[56] Then even more repressive measures were taken when a revolt actually broke out in the suburb of Secunda, south of the river Guadalquivir, on March 25, 818. Our sources, which derive entirely from the Umayyads' state archives, can find no explanation for this rising other than the "turbulence and insolence" of the inhabitants of this substantial and self-contained section of the city, denying that there had been any provocation from the government's side in the form of increased taxes or the like. That it occurred on the thirteenth day of the month of Ramadan, in which Muslims fast during the hours of daylight, and that in this year this fell in the height of the summer, may explain something of the volatility of the sudden revolt, but it is hard to believe it lacked concrete causes and was not the result of specific grievances on the part of the rioters.

However precipitated, once aroused, an ill-armed mob attempted to march on the amīr's fortress palace (known in Spanish as the *alcazar*) on the other side of the river, only to be attacked by his troops from front and behind, including some led by the son of a former rebel, the amīr's uncle 'Abd Allāh. Poorly armed and trapped on the bridge over the Guadalquivir, many of the rioters were killed, and three hundred of those who were captured were then crucified in a long row in front of the alcazar. The entire suburb was razed, and its surviving inhabitants fled the city to find new homes for

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[56]   Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān* II, ah 189.

themselves elsewhere.[57] Al-Ḥakam I intended to hunt down and slaughter the fugitives, but was persuaded not to by his advisors.[58] Many of them migrated to North Africa, and others, unsurprisingly, resettled in cities like Toledo that were noted for their tradition of resistance to the Umayyads.

The practice of crucifixion was by this time long established as an exemplary punishment in the Umayyad state, both in its previous Syrian form and since 756 in al-Andalus. While etymologically the presence of a cross is implied in our narrative sources, it has been suggested that this was just a linguistic survival from an earlier period and that the process involved the display of the body of the condemned on a stake or gibbet rather than necessarily on a cross. This further implies it had nothing to do with any kind of mocking or other form of reference to Christianity, and the use of this form of punishment in al-Andalus is never mentioned in Christian sources of the period. Although crucifixion had been an exemplary punishment in the late Roman Republic, it had gone out of use following the conversion of Constantine. Its continued employment in the early centuries of Islām is therefore probably the result of Sasanian Persian influences on the early caliphate.

Where there is much more uncertainty is whether the numerous references to people being crucified in the sources for this period indicate a dual process of prior execution, possibly by decapitation, followed by display of the body on a (not necessarily cross-shaped) gibbet or stake.[59] As the primary stage is rather worse than the secondary, as far as the victim is concerned, it seems strange that the form of words used to describe this method of execution only relates to the latter part of the process, and the means of carrying out the actual killing is left totally obscure.

In the two episodes that have been described here, it is notable that in the case of the Day of the Ditch, the bodies of the victims were immediately placed in a mass grave for immediate burial, and not displayed as an example. What happened to the heads is not described. In the Massacre of the Suburb, the rioters who were executed were those who were taken alive. There is no mention of a public display of the bodies of those killed by the amīr's troops as they crushed the riot. The juxtaposition of these two examples might

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[57]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* II. 1, ah 202: ff. 103v-108r, 55–69. He quotes numerous descriptions of these events and several documents in an unusually lengthy account. Cf. Ibn ʿIdhārī, ah 202.

[58]   Arjona Castro, *Anales*, 31–32.

[59]   Marsham, "Public." I am grateful to Dr Marsham for very helpful discussion of these issues, and for bibliographical guidance.

tilt opinion in favor of crucifixion (whether or not on actual crosses) being both the means of execution and an exemplary warning.

The punishment was reserved for those who broke their covenant with the ruler, and thus also with God, by such actions as rebellion, which could include rioting, brigandage, and defection from Islām. It was justified by a particular Qu'ranic text, and as this threatens severe retribution in this life and in that to come, humiliation and pain were deliberate features of the penalty.[60] As already suggested, the element of public display in the punishment was intended as warning and also as a demonstration of the ruler's legitimate, God-given authority.

Particularly significant in this episode is the way an entire section of a city could be obliterated. Secunda appears to have been the first major extension of Córdoba in the Umayyad period, reflecting its growth since becoming the permanent residence and administrative center of the rulers. A similar substantial suburban growth has been detected on the northern edge of Toledo in the Visigothic period, and would occur elsewhere; for example, in Badajoz during the Ta'ifa period (c.1030–1090). The largest such extramural expansion of settlement occurred beyond the western wall of Córdoba in the tenth century. In all these cases the urban growth ended with a sudden and definitive contraction. In Toledo the Visigothic suburb disappeared in the early ninth century, as would the one in Badajoz after the suppression of its ruling dynasty by the Almoravids in 1094.[61] Most dramatically, the large-scale expansion of tenth century Córdoba was reversed, with the new settlement abandoned seemingly completely and virtually instantaneously, probably as the result of the Berber siege and sacking of the city in 1010. The destruction of Secunda in 818, which became part of the Umayyad rulers' hunting grounds, was thus a prefiguring of what would happen to another part of the city on a much larger scale almost two centuries later.

These two episodes, the Day of the Ditch and the Massacre of the Suburb, are the best-known and most fully recorded episodes of the reign of al-Ḥakam I. Both reflect a determination by the ruler to use ruthless force to cow opponents of his rule and to impose order through fear.[62] But, more importantly, they give us an insight into some of the practical problems that the Umayyads had to face and into the ideological underpinning of their regime.

At a practical level, it was not easy for the Umayyad amīrs to impose their will on the lands over which they claimed authority. They had their own

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[60]   Abou el-Fadl, 234–294; a different origin is suggested in Hawting, 27–41.
[61]   Valdés Fernández, *La alcazaba*, 67–74.
[62]   Cf. Abdur Rahman Khan (1880–1901); see Curzon, 41–84.

guards in Córdoba, but these were not numerous enough in themselves to provide an army to use against revolts such as that of Toledo in 797. Other, provincial resources were required, amongst whom should be counted the Berbers, who provided the garrisons of a number of key fortresses, mainly in frontier locations. The Berbers had not integrated into local society, and seem to have been in frequent conflict with sections of it. They thus looked to the Umayyads, and the governors appointed by them, as their principal patrons, and developed few alternative ties that might undermine this loyalty to the ruling dynasty. On the other hand, they were not always easy to control, and their disappearance from our sources in the later ninth century suggest that significant numbers of them may have migrated back to North Africa or had been gradually assimilated. The other main source of military manpower was that provided by the *junds*, the tribal militias settled more generally across the whole extent of al-Andalus. In theory they were descended from the various units of the Syrian army brought across the straits from the Tangiers peninsula under the command of Balj in 741. Because of traditional tribal feuds, exacerbated by conflicts in late Umayyad Syria and then in al-Andalus following their arrival, they were then dispersed to different locations for settlement. While plausible, this interpretation depends mainly on later descriptions of the supposed settlement and a neat systemization of the distribution that followed the civil wars in al-Andalus in 742/44, in particular in the work of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1067) on the subject written around 1035.[63]

As suggested in a preceding chapter, the forces that arrived with Balj in 741 represented no more than a detachment of a larger army sent to Ifrīqiya which had then been decisively defeated. Balj's troops had been sent to quell resistance in the Tangiers peninsula, only to find themselves cut off by the defeat of their parent body and the resulting loss of control of the other North African ports. The size of the contingent that then took refuge in al-Andalus cannot have been great; a few thousand at the very most. Further losses were incurred in the ensuing battles against the rebel Andalusi Berbers and the descendants of the conquerors of 711. The eventual distribution of lands, following the end of these civil wars, was between a much-reduced number of warriors. So, large-scale tribal settlement in al-Andalus stemming from these events is improbable.

A more reasonable expectation may be that the leading members of the Syrian army and their surviving followers were inserted into local contexts to take the place of the indigenous landowning aristocracy that had been dispossessed, either during the conquest or thereafter. In some regions the

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[63]   Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat Ansab al-Arab* (Beirut, 1983).

pre-conquest elite managed to retain power, as seems the case with the Banū Qasī. Since otherwise there was no social or political advantage to be gained from their explicit claim to muwallad status, that can surely be taken to be true, whether or not they were, as they purported, the descendants of a Visigothic "Count Casius." Other such dynasties of local warlords existed, but the Banū Qasī are by far the best known and for a long time the most successful. If the suggestion that Mūsa ibn Fortun was the first of their line to appear in our sources is correct, it might imply that the conversion of the family took place between his generation and that of his father, Fortunatus; roughly in the middle of the eighth century, and not, therefore, in the immediate aftermath of the conquest. What prompted this change of religious adherence is not known, but it was probably related to securing their territorial power in the middle to upper parts of the Ebro valley.

Here they came to be associated in particular with the fortress town of Tudela, though various members of the family can be found at different times controlling larger and more important cities such as Toledo and Zaragoza. Tudela is said by Ibn Ḥayyān to have been founded in 802 by 'Amrūs b. Yūsuf on the orders of the amīr al-Ḥakam I, but recent excavation has revealed evidence of near continuous occupation of the site from the Roman period onwards. An early ninth-century walled enclosure with at least two gates, one of which opened onto a bridge across the Ebro, quickly expanded with the growth of unfortified suburban housing. This was then included inside a second larger town wall, replacing the earlier one, later in the century. Unfortunately very few traces have survived of the mosque or the *alcazar* within the urban precinct, as these seem to have been completely destroyed, down to their foundations, following the Aragonese conquest of the town in 1119.[64]

Abd al-Raḥmān II (822–852)

The pattern of events that emerges from the records for the reign of 'Abd al-Raḥmān II is very similar to that of his father, with several major revolts taking place in the frontier districts and some continuing instability in Córdoba and other parts of the south. An analysis of the most important of them, taken from the account of Ibn Ḥayyān, and the annals of Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn 'Idhārī, for whom his work was the main source, reinforces the sense of the existence of a series of key problems that affected the reigns of all of the ninth-century Umayyad amīrs, without any of them being able

[64]   Bienes, 199–218.

to find long-term solutions to them. An approach by region or individual problem area makes this clearer than one based upon a purely chronological narrative.

'Abd al-Raḥmān II's accession prompted yet another bid for power by that inveterate rebel, his great uncle 'Abd Allāh, the last surviving son of 'Abd al-Raḥmān I. His revolt in Valencia was terminated by his death in 823, and his heirs thereafter accepted the authority of the ruling branch of the dynasty, rapidly disappearing from historiographical view. By the late tenth century there would have been, it is worth noting, large numbers of descendants of the early Spanish Umayyad monarchs in al-Andalus, if the records of their offspring are anything like correct, but they had all long since ceased to be regarded as "throne-worthy." However, they may have provided a useful body of support for the dynasty. On the other hand, factional conflict in the region of "Tudmir" that broke out soon after 'Abd al-Raḥmān II's succession lasted for another seven years, causing over three thousand deaths in localized but bitter feuding. To end it the amīr had to take hostages and move the administrative center of the region to a new fortified settlement of Murcia. Twenty years later "Tudmir" was to be the center of a short-lived but serious revolt.

In 828 a revolt broke out in Mérida, in which the amīr's governor was killed. Although 'Abd al-Raḥmān repressed it swiftly, taking hostages and slighting some of the city's defenses, another rebellion broke out there immediately he returned to Córdoba. His newly appointed governor was imprisoned and the city walls repaired. In 831 the ruler was forced to save the life of the governor by releasing his Meridan hostages after the failure of an attempt to besiege the city into surrender. A further siege the following year was equally ineffective, and it was only in 834 that Mérida once again submitted to Umayyad rule.[65] The leaders of the city's resistance were expelled as part of the terms of surrender, but one of them, Maḥmud b. 'Abd al-Jabbar b. Zahila al-Marīdī, renewed his defiance, and set himself up as an independent warlord in Bádajoz until defeated and expelled by the amīr. Even then he was able to rout two Umayyad detachments sent in pursuit as he escaped into the kingdom of the Asturias. Alfonso II then established him in a fortress on the frontier to defend Christian territory against raids from al-Andalus. His sister married a Christian noble and converted to Christianity. However, he and his followers were later suspected of plotting to return to Umayyad allegiance and so were surprised and killed by Alfonso's troops in May 840.[66]

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[65]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, II. 1, ah 214–218.
[66]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, II. 1, ah 225. See Christys, "Crossing the Frontier," 35–53.

Although we have all too few details, particularly about the political, ethnic, and religious divisions in Mérida, this episode is very revealing. It shows that a dominant group in a city like Mérida could repudiate central authority with relative impunity. Maḥmud b. 'Abd al-Jabbar's career is particularly revealing as, despite his expulsion from Mérida, his local influence was sufficient to enable him to create a new base and then put up an effective military resistance to the amīr. We have no details as to the size of his following or the nature of the ties that created it, but both were clearly powerful. It is noteworthy that he and his followers were willing and able to operate on both sides of the frontier between al-Andalus and the Asturias, and were of sufficient value for the rulers of both to compete for their allegiance.

Toledo, too, remained volatile. 'Abd al-Raḥmān II's problems with Mérida enabled Ḥāshim al-Darrāb, one of the leaders expelled after The Day of the Ditch in the previous reign, to escape from Córdoba and reestablish himself in Toledo in 829/30.[67] This is testimony to the deep roots that such local leaders could have in their own societies, as his return after nearly fifteen years in exile precipitated a new rejection of Umayad authority. The massacre of the Day of the Ditch may have left Toledo subdued but clearly not fully subjugated. Ḥāshim took up the feuds created by that earlier episode, attacking the Berber garrisons of Santaver and Talavera. The Toldans also gained control of Calatrava la Vieja, the most important fortress town between their valley and that of the Guadalquivir. A Toledan garrison held Calatrava until ejected in 834. Although Ḥāshim himself was killed in a battle with an army sent by the amīr in 831 to regain the city, Toledo continued to hold out, being besieged abortively by Berbers from Calatrava in 835 and 836. Finally, in June 837, the city was reduced to submission again by an army led by the amīr's brother al-Walīd, who then became its governor.[68]

In the aftermath, al-Walīd is said to have rebuilt the fortress inside the city that had been destroyed by his father al-Ḥakam I. His purpose was to provide a refuge for the governor and other adherents of the Umayyad regime within the city should another revolt occur; something that was all too likely. This we know, thanks to the survival of a dedicatory inscription, was the explicit reason for 'Abd al-Raḥmān II's construction in 835 of a new fortress in Mérida, now known as the Alcazaba, much of which remains visible today. Re-using part of the Roman defenses and stone taken from at least one former Visigothic church this was located immediately next to the

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[67]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, II. 1, ah 214.
[68]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, II. 1, ah 216–222. Al-Walīd was replaced in ah 224.

main city gate entered from the bridge across the Guadiana that carried the main road from the south. At the same time, it is recorded that the Roman walls around the rest of the city were destroyed, leaving it defenseless against a siege. Although not as comprehensively demolished as the literary record implies, archaeological investigation on an area along the northern bank of the Guadiana west of the amīr's new fortress has uncovered sections of the old wall with regular gaps knocked in it down to ground level, rendering it useless for defensive purposes. This new vulnerability reduced the level of rebelliousness in the ancient city but also may have caused the economic and political decline that seems to have affected it in the decades that followed as its prominence in the Lower March gave way to that of Bádajoz.

The difficulties faced in controlling both the lower and the middle marches meant that 'Abd al-Raḥmān II did not carry out any significant campaigning against the kingdom of the Asturias until both these regions were again pacified. It was not until 838 that raids were directed into the Christian frontier territories, which is why so much of the long reign of Alfonso II of the Asturias (791–842) appears peaceful in the sparse chronicle records of his kingdom. While the Muslim sources report the taking of much loot and of many captives (destined for slavery) in 838 and again in 840 and 846, no major battles took place and no fortresses are described as being taken.[69]

In the Upper March, the Umayyad ruler's involvements elsewhere left his most powerful local representatives, the leaders of the Banū Qasī family, effectively independent after the withdrawal of the expedition sent from Córdoba in 827, which pillaged the lands around Barcelona and Gerona for two months without facing any significant Frankish opposition. The slow arrival of a relief army sent by Louis the Pious to relieve the pressure on Barcelona led to a political crisis in the Frankish court, and, indirectly, to the emperor's short-lived overthrow by his sons in 830.[70]

No further major expedition came from the south into the Upper March until 842. This was intended to cross the Pyrenees and raid Frankish territory around Narbonne at a time when the Frankish empire was wracked by a civil war between the surviving sons of Louis the Pious. However, disputes between the commander appointed by the amīr and Mūsa b. Mūsa, the dominant figure in the Upper March, who was appointed to lead the vanguard, led instead to a collapse of the expedition and the rejection of Umayyad authority by the Banū Qasī.

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[69]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, II. 1, ah 223, 225, and 231.
[70]   *Annales Regni Francorum* s.a. 827–829, and *Annales Bertiniani* s.a. 830.

As a result, in 843 'Abd al-Raḥmān II dispatched al-Ḥārit, another of his generals, to bring Mūsa b. Mūsa to heel. Fighting took place around Borja, which was held by one of Mūsa's sons, who was captured and executed by al-Ḥārit. When Mūsa was himself besieged at Arnedo, he entered into an alliance with "García," the ruler of the small Christian kingdom of Pamplona, and the two of them defeated and captured al-Ḥārit. In 844 the amīr had to send a much larger army led by his son (and eventual heir) Muḥammad, who won a major victory over Mūsa and his Christian allies near Pamplona. Although Mūsa then submitted and handed over one of his sons as a hostage, so great was his entrenched local power, and thus his value to the Umayyads, that he himself was promptly reinstated in Tudela, where he rebelled again in 847.[71] Although we know little of what their local status was based upon, Banū Qasī dominance in this important frontier area made them, for the time being at least, irreplaceable.[72]

It is notable that the solutions attempted in the other two frontier marches could not be applied in the Upper March. The proximity of both the Navarrese and the Catalan-Frankish territories made the dismantling of the fortifications of the major towns and cities of the region inconceivable. Perhaps more significant was the geographical factor. Revolts in or external threats to either the Lower or the Middle March could be countered by the direct dispatch of troops from the Guadalquivir valley; in the case of the former straight along the old Roman road that led from Seville to Mérida, and for the latter, via another set of Roman roads that led out of the upper part of the valley directly towards Toledo. Access to the Upper March was not so easy as the most direct route led on from the vicinity of Toledo up the Jalón valley, past the fortress of Medinaceli, and into the middle of the Ebro valley. Thus, not only was the distance much greater, but when the Umayyads were not in full control of the Middle March it became, as can be seen from the events just described, almost impossible to reinforce the Upper March. The rulers of Córdoba were thus obliged to rely for much of the time on the strength of a local dynasty of warlords, such as the Banū Qasī, both to defend the territory from raids from the Christian lands and to maintain order in the name of the amīr. Handling the Banū Qasī was therefore a very different problem from dealing with the leading families and factions of the other two marches.

On top of all of these problems in maintaining of control over every one of the three marches, our sources record episodes of famine in these years and major floods. One, in 827, destroyed the bridge over the Ebro in Zaragoza

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[71]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, II. 1, ah 227–230 and 232.
[72]   On Mūsa see Lorenzo Jiménez, *La Dawla*, 137–223.

and another, in 850, did the same to that over the Guadalquviir in Ecija, as well as causing considerable damage in both Toledo and Seville. A new menace was the first recorded raid on al-Andalus by the Vikings in 845, who had been ravaging the western coasts of France the previous year.[73] Lisbon, Cádiz, Medina Sidonia, Seville, and Niebla were amongst the settlements attacked and looted in these seaborne raids, against which, at the time, the rulers of al-Andalus had no effective defense. Finally, there were examples of the kind of local threats that the Umayyads had faced since the foundation of their amīrate in al-Andalus. For example, a Berber leader called Ḥ'abība led what is described as a revolt, which may have had a religious inspiration, in the region of Algeciras in 850, and the next year a "false prophet" launched a movement based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of the Qu'ran, which included a prohibition on the cutting of hair and of fingernails and toenails. He was hunted down and crucified.

Muḥammad I (852–886) and Al-Mundhir (886–888)

The death of the sixty-year-old 'Abd al-Raḥmān II in September or October 852 was followed by the succession of his chosen heir, his son Muḥammad I without, for the first time, any recorded resistance within the Umayyad family. But the change of ruler provided the opportunity for the settling of scores in some of the frontier marches. A revolt broke out in Toledo almost immediately, and the governor of the city was held prisoner in order to secure the return of Toledan hostages held in Córdoba. In 853 the Toledans launched a devastating attack on Calatrava la Vieja, resulting in the town's walls being destroyed and the inhabitants massacred or expelled.[74] An expedition had to be sent from Córdoba to restore the walls, but a second army, led by the new amīr's Commander of the Cavalry, that was sent to chastise the Toledans was ambushed.

The kind of inter-urban feuding, with vicious acts of retaliation, which seems to be involved in this conflict between Toledo and Calatrava, can be found elsewhere in periods and places in which central authority was weak. A comparable example would be the long running hostilities between Rome and Tusculum in the twelfth century, which was only ended by the complete destruction of the latter by the Romans in 1198. Such conflicts could originate in economic competition, but defeats and humiliations

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[73]   Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, II. 1, ah 229–230.
[74]   Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān*, II, ah 239, suggests the inhabitants abandoned the town after its defenses were slighted by the Toledans, while Ibn al-Athīr suggests a massacre.

inflicted by one side on the other perpetuated them, as did the individual family feuds resulting from the violent deaths on both sides.

The Toledans now made an alliance with King Ordoño I (850–866) of the Asturias for assistance against the anticipated onslaught from Córdoba. This came in AH 240/AD 854, and resulted in a battle on the river Guadacelete when the Toledans and their Asturian allies, led by Count Gato of the Bierzo, tried unsuccessfully to ambush the Umayyad army led by the amīr's brother al-Ḥakam – the one who had been sent to rescue the Commander of the Cavalry the previous year. According to Ibn 'Idhārī, eight thousand of the allies were killed and their heads sent to Córdoba. Some of these were then sent on for display in various towns in al-Andalus and along the North African coast. Overall, it was claimed that 20,000 were killed in the course of this year's campaigning.

Whether or not this figure be reliable, Toledo continued its resistance, and in 855 the Umayyads could only reinforce the garrisons of Calatrava and other fortresses loyal to them, particularly with cavalry, to try to keep the Toledans contained. In 857 a Toledan attack on Talavera failed, and seven hundred more heads were sent to Córdoba for display. An expedition led by the amīr in person in 858 only resulted in the destruction of the bridge over the Tagus, but when repeated the following year it led to negotiations, with the Toledans requesting a truce, which was granted. However, Umayyad rule in Toledo was not fully restored until 873, when Muḥammad I led another expedition in person to besiege the city and force the inhabitants to submit.

In the meantime, though, the policy of containing the revolt to Toledo itself meant that expeditions could be sent through the Middle March both against the Asturian kingdom and via the Upper March into the Kingdom of Pamplona or the counties of the central Pyrenees. In both 856 and 861 large raids were directed against Barcelona and the Catalan counties that are recorded as bringing back much loot. The first of these was led by Mūsa b. Mūsa of the Banū Qasī and led to the capture of the small fortress of Tarrega, between Lérida and Urgell. Although no significant towns were taken in 861, the expedition that year destroyed the recently created suburbs of Barcelona lying outside the third-century Roman wall.

Raids into what would become the County of Castile, on the southeastern frontier of the Asturian kingdom, took place in 855, 863, and 865. The first of these was also conducted by Mūsa b. Mūsa and was directed from the Upper March, but the other two were full-scale expeditions from Córdoba commanded first by one of the amīr's sons and then by Muḥammad I in person.

Another threat faced by his father reappeared in the reign of Muḥammad with the return of the Vikings in 858. One of their fleets sacked Seville and

Algeciras before raiding the coast of North Africa. As before, the Umayyads were unable to counter these seaborne attacks effectively, though they managed to destroy two of the Viking ships. The raiders also managed to capture King García of Pamplona – though where and how are unknown – and held him for ransom. Perhaps in consequence, in 860 the Umayyads launched a major assault on his kingdom, which at the time was also in conflict with its western neighbor, the Asturian realm. The Umayyad army is said to have spent thirty-three days "ruining houses, destroying trees . . . capturing fortresses." In the course of this raid, King García's son and heir, Fortun, was captured and then spent twenty years as a hostage in Córdoba.

In several areas, the reign of Muḥammad I saw changes taking place that seemed to strengthen his dynasty's authority over some of the regions in which it had previously been most under challenge. A revolt in Mérida in 869 was suppressed promptly, and the walls were again slighted. This time the inhabitants were also expelled: another occasional, if extreme, measure used to deal with a rebellious population, as in the case of the inhabitants of "Secunda" following the suppression of the Revolt of the Suburb. Many of the fugitives subsequently took refuge in Badajoz with a local warlord called Ibn Marwān (d. 889), whose career will be described below.[75] This depopulating of Mérida, which may never have been fully reversed, left the Lower March temporarily deprived of its main urban center. Mérida had long been the largest and most important settlement, both politically and economically, in the whole of the March and had no obvious rivals. In the Ta'ifa period, which followed the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate in the 1020s, Badajoz rather than Mérida became the capital of the kingdom that took control of most of the former Umayyad March. Its new status was the product of the events in the intervening period.

Soon after the depopulating of Mérida, a former rebel from the March, Ibn Marwān al-Jillīqī ("the Galician"), escaped from Córdoba, where he had been held hostage. His nickname implies that, like the Banū Qasī, he was of muwallad descent, and raises the possibility that his power in the March derived from long-established family connections within it. Driven with his following from the fortress of Alange after a three-month siege in 875, he took refuge in Badajoz. Here, attempts to dislodge him by expeditions sent from Córdoba under the command of Muḥammad I's chosen heir, al-Mundhir, proved unsuccessful. On a campaign in 877, initially intended as a raid on Christian territory further north, the Umayyad cavalry was ambushed by an allied force, consisting of Ibn Marwān's followers, led by his son, and of Asturians, with the loss of seven hundred men. This victory

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[75]   Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān* II, ah 262.

suggests the creation of a new alliance between Ibn Marwān and Alfonso III of the Asturias similar to the longer established one between the Banū Qasī and the rulers of Pamplona.

This may have prompted a novel response from Córdoba, perhaps influenced by the recent experience of Viking raids. In 879 Muḥammad I ordered the construction of a fleet to launch an attack on the Christian north, as its ports lacked defense against a seaborne enemy. However, the fleet was destroyed in a storm and the experiment was never repeated. In the years immediately following the annual expeditions from Córdoba, again usually commanded by al-Mundhir, were directed against rebel potentates in the Upper March, and the Lower March seems to have been left to its own devices. Only in 885 was al-Mundhir sent against al-Jillīqī once more, driving him out of Badajoz, which was then burnt. Ibn Marwān, however, relocated his following to another fortress, where he was besieged in 886 by an army commanded by Muḥammad I in person. In the August of the year, in the course of this siege, the amīr died, at the age of 65, leaving al-Mundhir as his successor.

Long-established power structures in the Upper March were also changing in the course of the reign of Muḥammad I. While previous Umayyads had had to accept the local dominance over the region of the Banū Qasī, allied to the Arista dynasty of Pamplona, Muḥammad tried to build a counterweight to it in the form of another regional potentate. When Amr b. ʿAmrūs, who had long rejected Umayyad sovereignty, finally submitted to Córdoba in 873, the amīr gave him control of Huesca, the most important fortress town between Zaragoza and the Christian frontier in Catalunya. His primary purpose, however, was to break the power of the Banū Qasī and their allies in Pamplona. This task was made easier by the already weakened state of Banū Qasī authority following a conflict between them and the Asturian kingdom. Mūsa b. Mūsa had been defeated in 859 by Ordoño I (850–866), and his new fortress of Albelda was destroyed. When he died in 862 several of his heirs were left competing for the authority he had once wielded over the whole of the March and beyond.

Ibn ʿAmrūs, from his base in Huesca, does not seem to have had the strength to impose himself effectively as the amīr's chosen viceroy on the March, and both Zaragoza and Tudela were described as being in revolt in 878. A major expedition to the region commanded by Muḥammad I's son al-Mundhir in 881 captured Roda in Ribagorza, the stronghold of the Banū Ḥud, one of several competing local dynasties of warlords, and threatened Lérida. This was in the hands of Ismail b. Mūsa, one of the several sons of Mūsa b. Mūsa, who was then trying to create a regional power base for himself. Faced with defeat, he submitted to the amīr, but

soon after he began refortifying Lérida, from which he had not been dislodged. In 884, another of the rival heirs of Mūsa, his grandson Muḥammad b. Lubb, was driven out of Zaragoza by an army sent from Córdoba. At the time of the death of Muḥammad I the situation in the Upper March thus remained unstable, with various warlords, including rival members of the Banū Qasī, competing for power, and only recognizing Umayyad authority when it suited them or when, however briefly, they were forced so to do.

The reign of al-Mundhir was the shortest of any of the Spanish Umayyads before the period of civil wars that broke out in 1009: it lasted just one year, eleven months, and ten days. He was also the only one to die, aged about forty-six, from injuries received in battle, though it was later rumored that his death was caused by the administration of poison in the treatment of his injuries. Responsibility for this was attributed to his brother and successor, 'Abd Allah, but the conflict that led to his demise was with yet another regional rebel, the longest to survive and perhaps most successful of all, Umar b. Ḥafsūn.

Like several of the revolts in the frontier Marches, Ibn Ḥafsūn's was initially directed against the amīr's appointed governor, but this time in the kura of Málaga. Whatever issues, rivalry, or clash of personality sparked it off is not recorded, but his following was powerful enough for him to defeat the governor in 880. However, the latter's replacement came sufficiently well reinforced for Ibn Ḥafsūn to have to make his submission to the amīr. In 884 Ibn Ḥafsūn and his men were fighting alongside the amīr's son al-Mundhir in the campaign against Zaragoza, but by 886 he was once more in open revolt in his fortress of Bobastro, in the mountains near Málaga.

While there is no shortage of military activity in the reign of Muḥammad I, and our sources record the frequent though not always annual dispatch of expeditions from Córdoba, the results were less effective than those of the time of his father, 'Abd al-Raḥmān II. In particular, while there were, as we have seen, significant changes in all of the three frontier marches during this period, the outcome in each case was to make the situation less stable. By 866 Umayyad authority in the marches was weaker and less effective than it had been in 852. Not one of the former political and economic centers of the marches, Mérida, Toledo, and Zaragoza, retained its previous importance, and regional power was now much more dispersed than it had been a quarter of a century earlier. In the Lower March, Mérida had been temporarily abandoned and the revolt of Ibn Marwān had been at best contained but not suppressed. In the Central March Toledo had secured its virtual independence but existed in a state of continual conflict with most of the other major settlements in the region. In the Upper March its previous

domination by the Banū Qasī had given way to a situation in which they and other rival warlords tried to establish control over parts of the territory from their fortresses of Zaragoza, Tudela, Roda, Huesca, and Lérida.

It is worth asking what might be meant by "a revolt" (or "apostasy" as it would be called from an Umayyad perspective) in the context of these marches in the middle Umayyad period. In some cases it was clearly the result of some local potentate or community falling out with the amīr's appointed governor to such a degree that they took up arms against him. In other cases, however, the rebel was the dominant figure in the region, invested with authority by the ruler but really deriving his power from his pre-existing status in local society. While an armed insurrection against the Umayyad governor was an obvious act of rebellion, it may be asked how the second, less immediately demonstrative type of revolt expressed itself. Although we lack the localized historical records needed to answer this with certainty, it is likely that a rebel governor either failed to take part in or contribute to a military expedition or withheld the annual tax receipts that should have been sent to Córdoba. In some cases, particularly in the ninth century in the Upper March, a Muslim governor or local potentate could ally with a Christian ruler in attacking another part of Umayyad territory.

That there was a reluctance to pass on tax to Córdoba is understandable enough, in that there few tangible returns for doing so, and whatever the ideological basis for Umayyad rule, it offered limited benefit to the frontier societies of al-Andalus. This seems to have mainly taken the form of paying for the construction of defences.[76] For most of the period covered by this book, there was no serious military threat from the Christian states to the north, and the endemic warfare of the time was little more than raiding, from which the profits might be better enjoyed where they were being made rather than sent as tribute to Córdoba. As is clear from the much better documented examples of frontier societies in later medieval Spain, local feuds and alliances both within and across the political and religious divide provided the real motor for the way political and other relations were conducted. The views of distant rulers would be disregarded where they conflicted with local imperatives.[77] There could be regional truces and alliances that ignored the wishes of amīrs in Córdoba or kings in Oviedo if these seemed more useful to the wielders of local power. The great problem for the amīrs in imposing their authority on their more distant

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[76]   E.g it was said of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II that he "built forts, towns and workshops," and also put up the taxes: *Una descripción anónima de al-Andalus* (ed. and trans. Molina) VII. 21. No specific examples are given.

[77]   For example, Jiménez, 160–175.

territories was that their means of coercion were limited. For this reason the summer *sa'ifa* was a vitally important institution for the Umayyad regime. Its objectives had to be discussed with the leading religious scholars and judges of Córdoba, because its primary purpose was to defend Islām against the attacks of heretics and unbelievers and to compel them into submission. That correct belief also equated in al-Andalus to political adherence to the Umayyad ruler meant that the army could legitimately be used to crush local rebels and impose the amīr's authority on disaffected regional potentates. That these might in our sources be described as Christians or followers of deviant forms of Islām does not necessarily mean that they were, as those who opposed the Umayyads were *ipso facto* not good Muslims.

Such expeditions could therefore be legitimately directed against those within al-Andalus who were resisting the ruler's authority. They became the principal way in which his power could be expressed in the frontier territories, and this was often more of a primary purpose than the chastisement of unbelievers outwith al-Andalus. However, for these expeditions to be effective they depended on the tax receipts and military contributions that the frontier marches would be expected to make. The more numerous and geographically widespread the rejections of the Umayyads' authority, the more difficult it became for them to reimpose it. Facing resistance in several different regions made it all the more important that it be effectively repressed in each of them in turn, as happened under 'Abd al-Raḥmān II. In the reign of Muḥammad I, however, we see a succession of partial and incomplete solutions, with the geographical focus of campaigns shifting from year to year, rebels being defeated but left still active and able to reestablish themselves. When a new focus of rebellion emerged in the south, in the region of Málaga, at the very end of the reign, military resources were just stretched even further, and the cycle of the ineffectual attempts at the repression of opposition became even wider. Following al-Mundhir's failure to crush Ibn Ḥafsūn in 888 a full-blown crisis nearly overwhelmed the Umayyad dynasty.