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‘Syria Rises to Receive the Caliph’: Umayyad Caliphal Titles from Cordoba to Damascus

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Abstract: The concept and image of a court is strongly associated with its main character, the sovereign around whom court life revolves. How was the Umayyad caliph named and conceptualized in al-Andalus? Keeping this in mind, the purpose of this paper is the discussion of the Umayyad Andalusī caliphal titles. Sources repeatedly stress the Umayyad legitimacy to the caliphate as heirs of the Umayyads of Damascus. In a panegyric, even Syria rises to receive the Andalusī caliph. The contrast of these titles with those reserved for rebels will also be considered. While the caliph was seen as a sun, the darkness was associated with rebels. Official titles used for bureaucracy and metaphorical titles reproduced in official letters and panegyric poetry will be considered, which were preserved in Andalusī sources such as the *Muqtabis* of Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 1075) or the *Iqd al-Farīd* of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 940). Ceremonial situations will also be considered as the figure of the caliph was central and praised in official letters and panegyric poetry.

Keywords: Umayyads of al-Andalus, Umayyads of Damascus, Islamic court studies, concepts, caliphate

The Sun-Caliph: Astronomical Metaphors and the Umayyad Heritage in the West

When summarizing one of the receptions held at the palace of Cordoba, the *Qaṣr al-Khilāfa*, Ibn Ḥayyān describes poetically ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s 11 sons – as many as Joseph’s brothers – as “resplendent moons surrounding their father, a rising sun” – *aqmār zāhira yaḥūffūn min abīhim shamsan tāli’atān*. The first Umayyad Andalusī caliph appears as a rising sun, a *Sun-Caliph*. Although he had not yet declared the caliphal title, this metaphor presents him as an exemplary center around whom several moons orbit. Ibn Ḥayyān reports that seven of these moons would sit around his throne – *sarīruhū* – on reception days or would ride behind their

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father while parading in Cordoba.¹ The popular symbolism of the number seven became stronger when the Fatimid dynasty declared the caliphate in North Africa. As Ismā'īlīs, the Fatimids believed in the caliphate of seven imams, acknowledged as direct descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad. The use of the adjective *zāhira* in a reference to the princes (*aqmār zāhira*) addresses the religious significance associated with Prophet Muḥammad's daughter, Fāṭima al-Zahrā', from whom the Fatimids claim their genealogy.

The astronomical metaphors in poetry are also present in Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's account on 'Abd al-Rahmān III, in which he is described as the *sayyid al-khulafā'* ("lord of the caliphs"), in a remembrance of his Umayyad heritage. At the same time, he is also "the blossoming moon" – *al-qamr al-azhar*. In the verses preceding Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's famous *urjūza* to the first caliph of Cordoba, the Andalusī poet associates the ascension of 'Abd al-Rahmān III to the rise of the new crescent moon – *badā al-hilāl jadīd*^{an}.²

These metaphors in the panegyric poetry reveal the role of astrology in the writing of history or political decision making.³ The works of Julio SAMSÓ are unprecedented in this respect, especially for the case of al-Andalus, for which he has stressed the importance of astrology, and especially *court*⁴ astrology, as one of the most developed sciences in al-Andalus.⁵ Due to their influence in official matters, the role of astrologers in the Umayyad *court* of Cordoba was envied by the *fuqahā'* and even by *court* poets who, ironically, used these metaphors, such as Ibn 'Abd Rabbih.⁶ To the unscientific character associated with astrology, the confusion between astrology and astronomy should be added.⁷ Following George SALIBA, Antoine BORRUT also examines the overlap between astronomy and astrology evidenced in sources, which became separate disciplines in the thirteenth century.⁸

Ibn 'Abd Rabbih associates the astrological phenomena of the moon to the heritage of the caliphate, belonging to the Umayyads. In the verses preceding the *urjūza*, the caliph is called the "son of caliphs" – *yā ibn al-khalā'if*. He is also "the full moon in the darkness of her [the earth]" (*yā badr ẓulamtihā*), as well as "her

1 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 17; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 23.

2 Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 239.

3 I would like to thank Antoine Borrut, who is working on astrological histories and historical writing, for his suggestions on the role of astrology in history writing.

4 Italics will be used when referring to Islamic *courts*, as this is a Western concept. On the concepts of *court* in al-Andalus, see CARDOSO 2020, 2021, 2023.

5 See, for example, SAMSÓ 1979, 228–243; 2007.

6 SAMSÓ 1979, 230–231.

7 SAMSÓ 1979, 230–231; VIGUERA 1977, 364.

8 BORRUT 2014, 455–501, 457–458; SALIBA 1994, 57.

rising sun" (*shams ṣubḥatihā*). The poet stresses that there were no similar examples of battles under the sovereignty of other kings (*li-malik min al-mulük*), from pre-Islamic to Islamic times,⁹ which evidenced the memory of the first battles of Islam¹⁰ and the significance of these astrological phenomena on the auspices of a battle. Similarly, while 'Abd al-Rahmān III is accounted as the most eminent of the Banū Marwān and the *mu'ayyad* ("supported by God"), he is also described as "saluting the power with the crescent moon" (*ṣabbaḥa al-mulk ma'a al-hilāl*), "so that they both arose in the morning like two rivals in beauty." Additionally, the following verses describe "how the land was illuminated by his light (*bi-nūrihi*) and the stirring up of evil and mischief was interrupted."¹¹ The poet thus associates the astrological phenomena of the crescent moonlight stemming from the caliph as causing the cessation of political rebellion. The comparison of the ruler to the light has mystic resonances around the figure of the Prophet. The light of Muḥammad – *nūr Muḥammad* – was interpreted as the primitive creation of God, seen by Ibn 'Arabī as the sun whose bright essence nourishes the spirits.¹² The light arising from 'Abd al-Rahmān III to the earth was confirmed as divine, when he was elected as the Caliph of God (*khalīfat Allāh*), from "the best descendants of the Imāms," an "evidence of [God's] light."¹³

The metaphor for the caliph as a rising sun appears to be a theme of the panegyric type, having also been used by Miquel Barceló to name a collection of his works, *El sol que salió por occidente* ("the sun arising from the West"). The title is based on 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Ḥusayn al-Qarawī's verses:

*La-qad ṭala'at bi-l-gharb shams khilāfat¹⁴
Adā' lahā fi l-mashriqayn shurūq¹⁴*

The following verses also underline the Umayyad genealogy and their claims for the *two Easts*, that is, *the East and the West*: "Syria [al-Shām] rises to receive the Caliph, whose rights over her are old."¹⁵ If the first Umayyad Caliph of al-Andalus

⁹ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 240.

¹⁰ ALBARRÁN 2020, 138–139.

¹¹ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 242. See the translation of the *urjūza*: MONROE 1971, 81.

¹² ALBARRÁN 2015, 90–91.

¹³ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 243; MONROE 1971, 81.

¹⁴ BARCELÓ 2010, 151–169; Ibn Hayyan, *al-Muqtabis VII* (1965), 163; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII*, trans. (1967), 203. Translation: "The sun of a caliphate has arisen from the West, which will shine with splendour in the two Easts." "Por occidente ha salido el sol de un califato que ha de brillar con esplendor en los dos orientes."

¹⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII* (1965), 163; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII*, trans. (1967), 203.

was like a rising sun (*shams*^{an} *tālī’at*^{an}), his dynasty ascended once more under his auspices, as the *shams khilāfatin* (“the sun of a caliphate”).

Another court poet, Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī recited a panegyric to al-Ḥakam II for the *Īd al-Fitr* of 974. The caliph is described as the quintessence of God’s creatures, “who drag their tails above the sun (*al-shams*).” He further compared the divine honor bestowed on the ruler (*imām*) to the honor granted to prophecy.¹⁶

The Umayyad Heritage in the East and West: The “Two Easts”

The sun appears not only as an epithet to the ruler himself, almost as a Sun-Caliph, but it was also linked to the dynastic power of the Umayyads. This heritage is frequently claimed by mentioning both the *Shām* and the *shams* in panegyrics. *Al-Shām* geographically corresponds to the regions of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Etymologically, it means “the left-hand region,” as when in western and central Arabia, one would be facing the rising sun, having Syria on the left.¹⁷ The symbolic use by the Andalusī Umayyads connects the rising of Syria (*al-Shām*) to receive the caliph with the sun rising in the West. If in al-Andalus the caliph had Syria on his right, he kept facing the rising sun coming from *al-Shām*, proclaiming the memory of the two Easts, which is meant as a reference to the East and West. Antonio VALLEJO has pointed out the symbology of “the two Easts” in Andalusī panegyrics, a feature reflected in the architecture of the Umayyad palace-city of Madīnat al-Zahrā’. The name of the main reception hall, *al-Majlis al-Sharqī* (Eastern Hall), had symbolic and legitimacy purposes rather than geographical reasons. The hall facing the *al-Majlis al-Sharqī* was named *al-Majlis al-Gharbī* and was used for the receptions of the heir apparent, who received at the same time as his father. Its name did not stress a geographical location but rather symbolized the caliphal claims of the Umayyads over the East and West.¹⁸ These claims were also used in the panegyric production of the Umayyads of Damascus. When the poets Kuthayyir

16 Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 157; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 198.

17 BOSWORTH, “al-Shām,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 9, 261–262.

18 VALLEJO 2016, 445. On legitimacy features of the Umayyads of al-Andalus, see also SAFRAN 2011. For example, she points out that historical texts stress an association between al-Andalus and the East, including in poetic compositions: SAFRAN 2001, 32, 79, 181.

(d. 723), al-Āḥwāṣ (d. 728/729), and Nuṣayb (d. 726–731)¹⁹ were received by ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717–720), Kuthayyir declared in a panegyric the justice of the caliph “between Eastern and Western parts of the entire earth” (*bayna sharq al-ard wa l-gharb kullihā*).²⁰

The political and dynastic references to the Umayyad heritage – ‘irth al-*khilāfa*²¹ – are frequent in sources describing the *courts* of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III and al-Hakam II.

In a letter sent by two family members of the Banū Idrīs, Ibrāhīm and Abū l-‘Aysh recognize ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s right as caliph (*amīr al-mu’minīn*). Further ahead, he also acknowledges the dynasty’s heritage to the imamate – *āthār imāmatihi*.²²

For the ‘*Id al-Fitr* of 363/974, the poet Muḥammad b. Shukhayṣ acknowledged the heritage of Hishām as heir apparent, as he was the grandson of Marwān – a reference to the Umayyads of Damascus – and the son of the Mahdī, in a reference to his father.²³ Alejandro GARCÍA SANJUÁN has stressed the existence of a panegyric Umayyad program meant to legitimize the proclamation of Hishām as heir to the throne, as he had not reached the minimum age to rule.²⁴ In the political Mediterranean panorama of the tenth century, the use of the title *Mahdī* at the Umayyad *court* is significant, being a Messianic epithet with Shī‘ī resonances, echoing the rivalry with the Fatimids. Maribel FIERRO has pointed out that the Ismā‘īlis were expecting the appearance of the *Mahdī* or Messiah in 300 AH, a year with apocalyptic connotations in the Islamic world, in which ‘Abd al-Rahmān III ascended to the throne.²⁵

Following several military campaigns, the centralization program of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III was finally crowned with the surrender of Bobastro. The village was located in a mountain region near Cordoba, which allowed the Banū Ḥafsūn to rebel against the Umayyads. After the defeat of the Banū Ḥafsūn in 928, the remains of

¹⁹ On these poets, see ‘ABBĀS, ‘Ihsān, “Kuthayyir b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān,” *EP*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4587 (accessed June 1, 2022); PETRÁČEK, “al-Āḥwāṣ,” *EP*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0436 (accessed June 1, 2022); PELLAT, “Nuṣayb al-Akbar b. Rabāḥ,” *EP*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6000 (accessed June 1, 2022).

²⁰ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd* (1983), vol. I, book 4, 333–336; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*, *trans.* (2006–2011), vol. I, book 4, 275–278.

²¹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 17; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, *trans.* (1981), 22.

²² Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 375; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V *trans.* (1981), 281.

²³ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 162; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII *trans.* (1967), 202.

²⁴ GARCÍA SANJUÁN 2008, 45–77.

²⁵ FIERRO 2011, 19–20. FIERRO further refers to several Fatimid symbols that were appropriated by the Umayyad Caliphate, aiming at dissociating them from its rulers and ascertaining the Andalusī sovereigns as the true holders of the caliphal title.

‘Umar b. Hafṣūn, who had died more than ten years earlier, were publicly exhumed in order to prove his apostasy to Islam. Under the Umayyad legitimacy program, he was also accused of having received envoys from the ‘Abbasid and Fatimid caliphs and, at different times, mentioned them in the *khuṭba*. This victory was celebrated by court poets such as Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Idrīs, who wrote that “the darkness of her [Bobastro] infidelity faded and the sun and the moons shine over it.”²⁶ The sun and the moons clearly contrast with the darkness of Bobastro’s infidelity against the *amīr* and the religion. Furthermore, for Ibn Ḥayyān, the campaigns of the first caliph resulted in the extinction of the rebels and the coming of brightness (*ashīfa*) that guided the lost ones.²⁷ As pointed out before, the mention of the light recalls the symbology of the light of the Prophet. Hishām, who was the only son of the Caliph al-Ḥakam, was called “the full moon of power” (*badr al-mulk*) who orbited around the glory in a panegyric by Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Malik for the reception of the ‘Id al-Adḥā of 974.²⁸

The Umayyads of al-Andalus are also described by Ibn ‘Idhārī as glorifying and surpassing the memory of their Eastern ancestors. ‘Abd al-Rahmān III is described as the sun who eclipses other sovereigns of his own dynasty. He was the “son of the caliphs” (*yā ibn al-khalā’if*) and while he honored them, at the same time he eclipsed their memory.²⁹ The mention of the Umayyad caliph as the son of the caliphs (*yā ibn al-khalā’if*) was previously used by Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Rabbih in the aftermath of the surrender of Calatayud in 937.³⁰ Ibn Ḥayyān also transmits panegyrics following this thematic trend. For the Feast of Breaking the Fast of 361/972, Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Ṭubnī recited a *qaṣīda* acclaiming the caliph as *ibn al-khalā’if*, who had allowed prosperity to the community of Aḥmad, another given name for the Prophet Muḥammad.³¹

The astronomical phenomena described by Ibn Ḥayyān were also premonitory. In an account describing the peace agreement of 303/916–917 with the rebel ‘Umar b. Hafṣūn, in a reference to the much later adoption of the caliphal title, Ibn Ḥayyān describes ‘Umar’s intentions as resulting from the evidence of the “arising of the star of the caliphate” (*ṭulū’ najm al-khilāfa*).³² The astronomical program present in the panegyric poetry is also expressed in the architecture and wall decoration of

26 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 221; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 170.

27 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 277; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 210.

28 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 186; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 225.

29 Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib* (1948–1951), vol. 2, 241; Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, trans. (1904), vol. 2, 372.

30 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 399; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 298.

31 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 83; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII trans. (1967), 106.

32 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 112; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 94.

al-Majlis al-Sharqī and *al-Majlis al-Gharbī*. Vegetal motives cover the lower panels of the halls while polygons in the shape of stars are represented in the upper ones. Manuel ACIÉN has interpreted it not as a direct Quranic reference but rather as the cosmographic representation of the nature and of the celestial world of the stars, respectively.³³ The paradisiacal meaning of the panels has been stressed by Maribel FIERRO, which is also present in the gardens of Madīnat al-Zahrā' and its terraces, reflecting the different levels of the Muslim paradise. This symbology was also a result of the rivalry between the Umayyad and the Fatimid Caliphates.³⁴

Old Titles, New Meanings in Dispute

The Umayyad *Khalīfat Allāh* Against an ‘Abbāsid Invented Memory

These astronomical references for naming the Umayyad caliph appear mostly in the panegyric poetry transmitted by sources. We shall now look more closely at the common official designation for the Umayyad caliph. *Khalīfa* appears to be the most common title given to the Umayyad ruler of al-Andalus, even for those who had not yet claimed the caliphal heritage. When mentioning the moving of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s son out of the palace of Cordoba, al-Rāzī states that the Dār al-Mulk, the residence of the Umayyad ruler, received this name as several “caliphs” (*khalā’if*) had previously inhabited it.³⁵

In the context of claiming the Umayyad heritage of the Caliphate of Cordoba, the rhetoric against the ‘Abbāsids or the Fatimids is also discussed in the sources. Ibn Ḥayyān stressed that the title really belonged to ‘Abd al-Rahmān III – *huwa bi-l-haqīqa lahū* – who was the son of the caliphs.³⁶ When Muḥammad b. Khazar swore his allegiance to the caliph in 317/930, he wrote in a letter to the *amīr al-mu’minīn*, reproduced by Ibn Ḥayyān, that he was the most worthy amongst those who adopted the title – *annaka awlā bi-l-khilāfa min kull man yantahilu ismāhā ma’aka*. At the same time, he named his previous allegiance to the Eastern Caliphate as “black ties” (*hibāl al-muswada*), apparently a reference to the color worn by the ‘Abbāsids, further proclaiming them as “the infidels of the East” (*kuffār al-mashāriqa*).³⁷

³³ ACIÉN 1995, 177–195, *apud* VALLEJO 2016, 449.

³⁴ FIERRO 2004, 301, 306, 310.

³⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 17; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 22–23.

³⁶ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 241; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 184.

³⁷ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 266–267; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 201–202.

But the 'Abbāsid Caliphate was far and the rhetoric against it did not go any further, contrary to the rivalry with the Fatimids. Ibn Ḥayyān reported the death of the Fatimid Caliph 'Ubayd Allāh, in 934, while transmitting a letter sent by Mūsā b. Abī l-Āfiya to the Umayyad sovereign, in which the Fatimid caliph is presented as '*'Ubayd Allāh al-Shī'ī, sāhib al-Mahdiyya, 'amīd hādhihi al-niḥla al-mashriqiyā al-dālla*' – "Ubayd Allāh the Shiite, lord of al-Mahdiyya of this sect of Eastern perdition."³⁸ The association of the dynasty to the right of the caliphate is also obvious when Ibn Ḥayyān names the Fatimids and his caliph, 'Ubayd Allāh, as *dawlat al-ḍalāla*, the "dynasty of the error."³⁹ The East acquires in the Umayyad West, when used in reference to the Fatimid and 'Abbāsid Caliphates, a sense of infidelity and perdition. The political association with these two caliphates is perceived in the Umayyad West as an infidel act. The taking of the caliphal title by 'Abd al-Rahmān III was also justified by the unrighteousness of the concurrent caliphates. Al-Maqqarī underlines how the Umayyad ruler was the first to take the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* in al-Andalus while the power of the caliphate weakened in the East and the Turks ruled over the Banū l-'Abbās.⁴⁰ This justification was also given by Ibn 'Idhārī.⁴¹

These justifications occurred while, at the same time, the first 'Abbāsid caliphs built a deviant image of the Umayyads and associated themselves to what later would be classified as Classical Islam.⁴² If the 'Abbāsid caliphs lost the *de facto* power, the Umayyads needed even more to react. Thus, after the taking of the caliphal title, in 929, in the letters sent to the governors of the provinces, 'Abd al-Rahmān III underlined that everyone else who used it had unjustly appropriated the title. Furthermore, the taking of the caliphal title was not only a right but an obligation.⁴³

The use of the title of *khalīfa*,⁴⁴ as well as *amīr al-mu'minīn*, corresponded to him, as he was the son of the princes of the believers – *huwa ibn umarā'*

38 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 354; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 266.

39 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 262; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 199.

40 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib* (1855), vol. 1, 23; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib*, trans. (1840–1843), vol. 2, 147.

41 Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib* (1948–1951), vol. 2, 161–162; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, trans. (1904), vol. 2, 261, 327.

42 On the Umayyad memory, see: BORRUT 2011.

43 *Una crónica anónima de al-Nasir* (1950), 153.

44 The discussion of the meaning of the title *khalīfa* has been the focus of several studies. The most famous of these is the study of Patricia CRONE and Martin HINDS, in which is demonstrated that the title was originally *khalīfat Allāh* and not *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, as later tradition stressed. It was used to underline the Umayyad caliphs as both religious and political authorities. This religious authority would later collapse and become dispersed in the hands of several 'ulamā'. At the same time, the presumption of *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* as the original caliphal title gained power under a historical framework that saw the Umayyads as corrupt and unorthodox caliphs. See CRONE / HINDS 1986.

al-mu'minīn.⁴⁵ The overstatement of the caliphal nomenclature was also used in al-Maqqarī when the historian mentions the title of *khilāfat amīr al-mu'minīn* when referring to the sovereignty of the caliph.⁴⁶

Al-khalīfa appears to be the title most used by Ibn Ḥayyān and al-Maqqarī when referring to the caliph of Cordoba, followed by *amīr al-mu'minīn*. When al-Ḥakam II received the North African tributaries Ja'far b. 'Alī al-Andalusī, his brother Yaḥyā, and the Banū Khazar on 360/971–72, Ibn Ḥayyān refers to the ruler as *al-khalīfa al-Muṣṭansīr bi-llāh*.⁴⁷ He is also referred solely as *al-khalīfa al-Ḥakam*. As mentioned before, in chronicles, the Umayyads were given the caliphal title retroactively, even before the declaration of the caliphate in 316/929–30. In his first horse ride after his accession to the throne in 300/912–13, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III is referred to by Ibn Ḥayyān as *al-khalīfa al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh*.⁴⁸

However, for Ibn 'Idhārī, when the historian refers to the decision of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* is favored while *al-khalīfa* is maintained when the historian transmits tenth-century panegyric poetry.⁴⁹ This tendency appears to be followed throughout the text as the ruler is mostly mentioned by his name or *laqab* or, less frequently, as *amīr al-mu'minīn*. *Khalīfa* is also mentioned frequently by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih for the rule of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, especially in the *urjūza* he dedicates to the caliph, a frequency only compared to the use of the title of *imām*.⁵⁰ Perhaps as later sources, Ibn 'Idhārī and al-Maqqarī reproduce the titles prevalent in their own times and focused less on the legitimacy propaganda evident in the works of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih or Ibn Ḥayyān.

The concept *khilāfat rasūl Allāh* appears to be nonexistent in the Umayyad Andalusī sources, while *khilāfat Allāh* appears in Ibn Ḥayyān or in Ibn 'Abd Rabbih. When one day 'Abd al-Raḥmān III decided to spend the night with his wife and cousin Fāṭima, Murjān (or Marjān), a concubine of the *amīr*, congratulated her for such an honor bestowed by the *khilāfat Allāh*, as Fāṭima would be able to spend the night with the *sayyid al-bariyya* (the lord of creation), a reference with strong eschatological features.⁵¹ The fifth volume of the *Muqtabis* of Ibn Ḥayyān opens

⁴⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 231; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans., (1981), 177.

⁴⁶ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib* (1855), vol. I, 245.

⁴⁷ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 50; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 68.

⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 58; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 76.

⁴⁹ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib* (1855), vol. I, 233; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib*, trans. (1840–1843), vol. 2, 147; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib* (1948–1951), vol. 2, 161–162, 212–213, 240–241; Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, trans. (1904), vol. 2, 261, 327–328, 372.

⁵⁰ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd al-Farīd* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 243–260.

⁵¹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 10; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 16.

with this novelesque account,⁵² which aims to anticipate the good auspices of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s future and his heir. The astrological reference – *sayyid al-bariyya* (the lord of the creation) – was a sign of prosperity to the Umayyads of al-Andalus and ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s son and heir, al-Ḥakam II, son of Marjān. In her greeting, Marjān blessed Fāṭima by reciting verses that allowed her to buy the night with the caliph for herself, for ten thousand dinars, and become one of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s favorite and the mother of the apparent heir.

In Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih’s *urjūza*, when referring to ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s military campaigns, while comparing the caliph to a light able to unite earth and heaven, the poet calls him *khalīfat Allāh* and the best descendant of the *imāms*.⁵³ He is also referred as *khalīfat Allāh ‘alā ‘ibādihi* (“the Caliph of God over His worshipers”), as well as *khalīfat al-rahmān*, as well as *al-khalīfa al-mu’ayyad*, the caliph supported by God, or only *al-mu’ayyad*.⁵⁴ The use of *khalīfat Allāh* as a title is reinforced by the official text of a letter sent by the Caliph al-Ḥakam II – referred to as *‘abd Allāh al-Ḥakam al-Muṣṭaṣir bi-llāh amīr al-mu’minīn* – to the North African chieftain Abū l-‘Aysh b. Ayyūb. The caliph demanded total obedience to God – *wa-amarahū bi-taqwā Allāh al-‘azīm* – and commanded him the recognition of *His* caliph (God’s caliph) – *wa-tā’at khalīfatihi*,⁵⁵ in a reference to the title *khalīfat Allāh*, which was previously attested for the Umayyads of Damascus.

According to the famous work by Patricia CRONE and Martin HINDS, the title of *khalīfat Allāh* and *khalīfat al-rahmān* were used by *court* poets, as in the *Iqd al-Farīd*.⁵⁶ Although the ‘Abbāsid caliph is represented later as *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, the title *khalīfat Allāh* was also used.⁵⁷ The Fatimid caliph was also *khalīfat Allāh ‘alā al-‘ālamīn*,⁵⁸ a reference that recalls the title attributed by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih to ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, *khalīfat Allāh ‘alā ‘ibādihi*, perhaps in a resignification of the title in the context of the political dispute with the Fatimids.

It is possible to acknowledge the existence of a reconstruction of the memory of these titles and their significance under the ‘Abbāsids, evidenced, for example, in the ‘Abbāsid “manual of ceremonies” of Hilāl al-Ṣābi’, *Rusūm*. While al-Ṣābi’ asserts that after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad Abū Bakr was called *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* or ‘Umar used the title *khalīfat khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, changing it afterwards to

52 There is a gap in the first account of this volume.

53 Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farīd* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 243; MONROE 1971, 81.

54 Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farīd* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 254, 251, 255; MONROE 1971, 88, 86.

55 Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII* (1965), 111; Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII*, trans. (1967), 142.

56 CRONE / HINDS 1986, 17.

57 CRONE / HINDS 1986, 13–14.

58 CRONE / HINDS 1986, 17.

amīr al-mu'minīn,⁵⁹ at the same time, throughout his text, he refers to the 'Abbāsid caliph as *khalifat Allāh*. The Caliph al-Tā'i lillāh was addressed by the Būyid *amīr* 'Aḍud al-Dawla, in the ceremony which invested him, in 977, "Allāh's viceregent on His earth" (*khalifat Allāh fi arḍihī*).⁶⁰

The Conventional *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* or the *Khalīfa*?

The title of *khalīfa* was the official designation of the Eastern Umayyad caliph, although the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* was more common.⁶¹ For Fred DONNER, the first title to be used was *amīr al-mu'minīn*. Accordingly, *khalifat Allāh* appears attested for the first time under the sovereignty of 'Abd al-Malik, in the transitional coins representing the image known as the standing caliph. The inscription alludes to *Quran* 38: 26 in which God tells David that he made him a *khalīfa* on earth. The symbolic prophecy of the foundation of Jerusalem by David was thus used when 'Abd al-Malik was building the Dome of the Rock.⁶² In the case of the Umayyad al-Andalus, *khalīfa* was usually used in chronicles when referring to the caliph, which preceded the *laqab* or the given name, even if *amīr al-mu'minīn* was the common title mentioned in the official correspondence.

As Umayyad sources usually conceptualize and refer to the power, state, and *court* as *Bāb Suddat al-Khalīfa*, in a reference to the main door of Cordoba and later Madīnat al-Zahrā', the title *khalīfa* thus appears associated with the most popular representation of the Umayyads.⁶³ When mentioned in association to the gate, the titles *amīr al-mu'minīn* and *khalīfa* refer to the entrance at the *court* and to the submission to the caliph. When 'Abd al-Rahmān III received the governor of Zaragoza, for the occasion of his submission in March 938, Muḥammad b. Hāshim al-Tujībī went to *Bāb Suddat al-khalīfa al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh*.⁶⁴ When Ja'far b. 'Alī arrived in Cordoba to submit to al-Hakam II, Ibn Ḥayyān mentions how the tributaries decided to rush to the door *Sudda* of the Prince of the Believers – *al-līhāq bi-Bāb Suddat amīr al-mu'minīn*.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Hilāl al-Šābi', *Rusūm*, trans. (1977), 105.

⁶⁰ Hilāl al-Šābi', *Rusūm* (1964), 82; Hilāl al-Šābi', *Rusūm*, trans. (1977), 66.

⁶¹ CRONE / HINDS 1986, 10.

⁶² DONNER 2010, 209–211.

⁶³ On the conceptualization of the *court* of Cordoba, symbolically and architecturally, see CARDOSO 2020, 2021, 2023.

⁶⁴ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 423; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 316.

⁶⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 41; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 61–62.

But while the title *amīr al-mu’minīn* is more common in letters, it also appears in official correspondence associated with other titles. In the letter of Muḥammad b. Idrīs submitting to Cordoba after the conquest of Ceuta in 931, he addresses ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III as *sayyidunā amīr al-mu’minīn* (“our lord, Prince of the Believers”) and *imāmunā* (“our *imām*”).⁶⁶

References to the institution of the caliphate are also documented in official correspondence. The first caliph claimed his rights to the caliphate in the East (*al-khilāfa bi-l-Mashriq*) to North African princes.⁶⁷ In reply, Mūsā b. Abī l-Āfiya addressed the caliph as *amīr al-mu’minīn*.⁶⁸ In his answer to Mūsā, the caliph compares his fight against heresy as the righteous path of the *al-khulāfa’ al-rāshidūn*.⁶⁹ Thus, while *amīr al-mu’minīn* is used commonly in caliphal correspondence as a title referring directly to the caliph, the institution of the caliphate – *khilāfa* – is mentioned as a legitimacy tool in reference to the four *rāshidūn*, which aims to underline that the Umayyad heritage goes back to ‘Uthmān.

In the correspondence exchanged with the *basileus* of Constantinople, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III is called *al-khalīfa al-hākim*,⁷⁰ a title that had been used by the Caliph Hishām of Damascus.⁷¹ The letter was sent to the caliph by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, which was carried by the Byzantine ambassadors received in Cordoba in 949. According to al-Maqqarī, it was written in Greek, in golden characters, on sky-blue paper, with a seal of gold with the likeness of Christ on one side and on the other those of the *basileus* and the co-emperor, his son. The letter was addressed to “the great and exalted in dignity and pride, the noble in descent, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān the caliph who rules over the Arabs of al-Andalus” (*al-azīm al-istihqāq al-mufakhir al-sharīf al-nasab ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-khalīfa al-hākim alā al-‘Arab bi-l-Andalus*). We do not know the Greek term used in the original letter. While for al-Maqqarī, transmitting from Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-khalīfa* was the translation of the term contained in the Greek letter, *De Ceremoniis*, when reporting the embassy received in Constantinople by the *amīr* of Tarsos, as a subject of the ‘Abbāsid caliph, *amerimmne* or *ameroumnes* is mentioned as the customary address to the caliph, being the Greek transcription of *amīr al-mu’minīn*.⁷²

⁶⁶ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 292–293; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1967), 220–221.

⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 305; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans., 230.

⁶⁸ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 308–312; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1967), 233–235.

⁶⁹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 312; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1967), 235.

⁷⁰ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭib* (1855), vol 1, 237; al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭib* (1840–1843), trans., vol. 2, 142.

⁷¹ CRONE / HINDS 1986, 35.

⁷² Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De Ceremoniis*, trans. (2012), vol. 2, 570, 682–683.

Imām, Mahdī, and Amīn: Between the Umayyad Heritage and the Projection of New (Fatimid) Meanings

In the reception held for the Feast of the Sacrifice of 971, Muḥammad b. Shukhayṣ recited verses in which the Caliph al-Ḥakam II is acknowledged as *amīn Allāh*.⁷³ Another poet, Muḥammad b. Maḥāmīs al-Iṣṭījī, asserted that Allāh acted through al-Ḥakam under whose rule the religion of Muḥammad (*dīn Muḥammad*) shines, while praising the “Umayyad imamate” (*imāma Umawiyya*).⁷⁴ In the occasion of the taking of the caliphal title, Ibn Ḥayyān mentions the “righteous and virtuous descent” (*sulālat al-hudā al-fāḍilīn*) of the Umayyads, who are also called “the pious imams” (*al-ā'imma al-muttaqīn*).⁷⁵ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih also mentions the title of *imām*.⁷⁶ He further calls the Umayyad caliph “the glorious *imām*” (*al-imām al-majīd*), “the imam elected (by God)” (*al-imām al-muṣṭafā*) or “the gracious imam” (*al-imām al-muṣīdīl*),⁷⁷ or “the imam (God is) satisfied with” (*al-imām al-murtaḍā*).⁷⁸

Imām was also used as a title for the Umayyads of Damascus. Also, the Fatimids did not innovate in these titles as they were inherited by earlier Islamic traditions. According to CRONE and HINDS, ‘Uthmān was called “a rightly guided caliph” (*khalīfatān mahdiyyān*). The *rāshidūn* caliphs Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān, together with Mu‘āwiya and ‘Abd al-Malik, “were the four (sic) *khulafā’ al-rāshidūn al-muhtadūn al-mahdiyyūn*” Sulaymān and al-Walid were called *mahdī*, and ‘Umar II was *al-mubārak al-mahdī wa l-ḥakam al-rashīd*.⁷⁹ While *mahdī* was not an eschatological title for the Umayyads, nevertheless, according to CRONE and HINDS, these references were associated to a redeemer.⁸⁰ CRONE and HINDS further stress how the Prophet was seen as *mahdī* and *imām al-hudā*, as he had brought guidance and was sent with “guidance” (*hudā*) and *dīn al-haqq*, as epigraphic coinage proclaims.⁸¹ The ‘Abbasids continued to use the same titles of the Umayyads, also styling themselves as “imams of guidance” (*imām al-hudā*) and “imams of justice” (*imām al-‘adl*), further adopting epithets such as *al-mahdī* or *al-amīn*.⁸² It was only after the abolition of the *mīḥna* in 848 and the rise of the *‘ulamā’* that they too became known

⁷³ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 60; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 82.

⁷⁴ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 62; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 84.

⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 241; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 184.

⁷⁶ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 245; MONROE 1971, 82.

⁷⁷ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 248, 250; MONROE 1971, 85.

⁷⁸ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 254; MONROE 1971, 88.

⁷⁹ CRONE / HINDS 1986, 36.

⁸⁰ CRONE / HINDS 1986, 37.

⁸¹ CRONE / HINDS 1986, 40, 34, note 57.

⁸² CRONE / HINDS 1986, 80–81.

as imams.⁸³ In the context of the Fatimid-Umayyad rivalry, the title had messianic resonances.⁸⁴ In fact, the title remained strongly associated to the Shī‘ī party, as it was first used by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, son of ‘Alī,⁸⁵ although the articulation of a distinct tradition dates from a much later time.

For the reception of Ja‘far b. ‘Alī with his brother and the Banū Khazar, in 971, the poet Muḥammad b. Shukhayṣ not only calls the caliph *imām* and *mahdī* but he also addresses him as the opposite of the figure of the Fatimid allies, such as the rebel Zīri b. Manād. On this occasion, the head of Zīri b. Manād was paraded in Cordoba while the poet called him Pharaoh (*fīr’awn*), associating him with rebellion.⁸⁶ While the Umayyad caliph was the *mahdī*, the Fatimids and their partisans were seen as Egyptian despots. In the same manner, the metaphor of the Pharaoh was also used to describe the famous rebel Umar b. Ḥaṣūn as a proud tyrant.⁸⁷

As shown by these examples, despite the origins of the titles *imām* and *mahdī*, new eschatological meanings were circulating in the context of the tenth century. On some occasions, the Fatimid caliph was also accounted as *imām* in Umayyad sources. For example, while submitting to the Umayyad caliphate, Ja‘far b. ‘Alī, governor of Masīla, is said to have broken his ties with the *imām* Ma‘add.⁸⁸ FIERRO has stressed how ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s decision in taking the caliphal title was a reaction to Fatimid power. The Umayyad caliphate was declared in 300/929, a year associated with messianic expectations circulating in the Mediterranean. These beliefs resulted in a specific symbology and legitimacy tools, such as the *laqab* al-Mahdī of the first Fatimid caliph or the *laqab* al-Qā‘im bi-llāh, for the first Umayyad caliph, a variation of the title of the second Fatimid caliph al-Qā‘im bi-Amr Allāh.⁸⁹

This political context triggered the rhetoric on the Umayyad heritage, proclaiming titles such as *amīn Allāh*, trustee of God,⁹⁰ strongly associated with the Umayyads of Damascus, as pointed out by CRONE and HINDS. At the same time, in the panegyric production, al-Ḥakam II was “king” (*malik*),⁹¹ implying the power (*mulk*) held by the sovereign.

⁸³ CRONE / HINDS 1986, 97–98.

⁸⁴ FIERRO 1989, 37.

⁸⁵ KENNEDY 2016, 58.

⁸⁶ Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 54–55; Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 72–73.

⁸⁷ FIERRO 2011, 97.

⁸⁸ Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 41; Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 54.

⁸⁹ FIERRO 2011, 97.

⁹⁰ Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII (1965), 60; Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* VII, trans. (1967), 82.

⁹¹ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farīd* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 255; MONROE 1971, 88.

The symbology of the title “the *imām* of guidance” (*imām al-hudā*), recalling the orthodox caliphs and the Prophet,⁹² was also used by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih for ‘Abd al-Rahmān III as *al-muẓaffar al-manṣūr ‘alā janībihi al-hudā wa l-nūr* – “the one rendered victorious, aided (by God), upon whose forehead lies (the imprint of) the Guidance and the Light.”⁹³ For the poet Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Ṭubnī, al-Ḥakam II was “the king crowned by the orthodoxy/guidance” (*al-malik al-mutawwaj bi-l-hudā*), victorious against the darkness,⁹⁴ making him the elected to guide mankind. Both references associate the guidance to the light, thus resonating the Prophet’s attributes.

Al-Ḥakam II was also “imām of justice with the crown of power” (*imām ‘adl bi-tāj al-mulk*) in a panegyric by the poet ‘Abd al-Qaddūs b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb,⁹⁵ a typically Eastern Umayyad title combined with metaphors relating to the crown. In the correspondence exchanged in 974 between his general Ghālib and the rulers of Fez, the second caliph was called *al-imām al-‘adl al-Ḥakam al-Muṣṭaṣir, amīr al-mu’minīn*.⁹⁶ The caliphs ‘Uthmān, Mu‘āwiya, ‘Abd al-Malik, ‘Umar II, Yazid II, and Hishām used the variants of ‘adl as an appellation, such as *imām ‘adl*, *imām al-‘adl*, *al-imām al-‘ādil*, or *khalīfat al-‘adl*.⁹⁷

The titles of the Umayyad caliph of al-Andalus are also documented in epigraphy, especially in Madīnat al-Zahra’. María Antonia MARTÍNEZ NUÑEZ has shown that epigraphs reproduce not only the title of *amīr al-mu’minīn* or the *laqab* of the caliph but also the titles of *imām* or *‘abd Allāh*, inside *al-Majlis al-Sharqī*, as well as in the central pavilion, identified as *al-Majlis al-Gharbī*.⁹⁸ While these inscriptions did not use Quranic references, they include the *basmala*, reduced to *bi-ism Allāh*, and the blessing formula *baraka min Allāh*, followed frequently by the appellation *‘abd Allāh*. Official titles such as *imām* are also attested. These formulae were further reproduced in the fabrics of the caliphal *ṭirāz*, a model that implied the transformation of the original Umayyad formula with the complete *basmala* to a text favoring the sovereign.⁹⁹ According to MARTÍNEZ, the foundational epigraph of *al-Majlis al-Sharqī* and the main inscriptions of *al-Majlis al-Gharbī* witness for the first time the use of the title *imām* in epigraphical sources under the rule of ‘Abd

92 CRONE / HINDS 1986, 40, 34, note 57.

93 Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd al-Farid* (1983), vol. 5, book 15, 252; MONROE 1971, 86.

94 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII* (1965), 94; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII*, trans. (1965), 118.

95 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII* (1965), 165; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII*, trans. (1965), 204.

96 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII* (1965), 175; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII*, trans. (1965), 213.

97 CRONE / HINDS 1986, 37.

98 VALLEJO 2016, 442.

99 MARTÍNEZ NUÑEZ 1995, 139, note 72.

al-Rāḥmān III.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen, this innovation in epigraphical sources – significantly, in the foundational epigraph of *al-Majlis al-Sharqī* – is also accompanied by written sources. Before the declaration of the caliphate, the title of *amīr* was used while *amīr al-mu’minīn* was for the first time documented in 318/930.¹⁰¹ In epigraphy, the title of ‘*abd Allāh* is attested for the Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, but also for the ‘Abbāsids and Fatimids.

A Summary of Official Titles

As we have seen, in written sources, the titles of *imām*, *amīn Allāh*, or *mahdī* were mostly present in the panegyric production of al-Andalus. It could be argued that these appellations were only part of the poetic production and were only metaphors. Nevertheless, as CRONE and HINDS noted for the title of *khalifat Allāh*, which is mainly attested in poetic sources, they were not only concepts of “flattery” but reflected “official usage, not poetic inventiveness.”¹⁰² Despite the fact that *imām*, *amīn Allāh*, or *mahdī* appear mainly in poetry, we should not forget that the panegyric production, far from being mere flattery, was quite official as it was part of the ceremonial setting of official caliphal ceremonies. The recitation, as part of the *majlis* of the caliph, was meant at addressing officially the *court* and the caliphal guests, and it is significant that it was transmitted by official Umayyad chronicles. The panegyric poetry was rather an Arabic tradition inherited by the Umayyads of Damascus, who after their fall in the East brought the panegyric *qaṣīda* to al-Andalus, which was considered a central piece of *court* ceremonial expressing the hegemony of the Arab-Muslim rule.¹⁰³

While concepts such *amīn Allāh* or *mahdī* appear mainly in poetry, *imām* is attested in the inscriptions of Madīnat al-Zahrā’ and in the Mosque of Cordoba as well as in coins, which reflects its official use and not only a poetic vanity, together with the titles of ‘*abd Allāh* or *amīr al-mu’minīn*. The *Iqd* attests the use of the title of *imām* not only in poetry but also in the accounts transmitted for the Umayyads of Damascus or the Umayyads of Cordoba. The *Muqtabis* also transmits this title as part of official letters. *Khalifa*, *khalifatuhu*, and *khalifat Allāh* also appear in descriptive sources. *Khalifa* is a rather common appellation when the chronicler refers to the caliph in function, either followed by his given name or his *laqab*. This leaves no

¹⁰⁰ MARTÍNEZ NUÑEZ 1995, 144.

¹⁰¹ MARTÍNEZ NUÑEZ 1995, 144.

¹⁰² CRONE / HINDS 1986, 7, 12.

¹⁰³ STETKEVYCH 2002, 254.

doubt to the usage of these titles as official concepts, together with the more traditional designation of *amīr al-mu'minīn*, predominant in the official correspondence, but not exclusively, as it is usually combined with other titles such as *imām*.

The double symbology of the caliphal titles (*khalifat Allāh*, *amīn Allāh*, *al-imām al-'adl*, *mahdī*), revealing both the Eastern Umayyad influence and the rivalry with the Fatimids, is consequently mirrored in the double justification of the taking of the title: the Umayyad legitimacy and heritage, repeated to exhaustion by sources, and the opposition against the concurrent caliphates. While the institution of the 'Abbasid Caliphate was criticized for living out of an empty title, devoid of its political prerogatives,¹⁰⁴ the Fatimids were condemned for their heresy.

Eventually, the power of the Umayyads of al-Andalus fell at the hands of the *de facto* power of Muḥammad b. Abī 'Āmir al-Manṣūr, and then his sons, under the sovereignty of Hishām II, a caliph-puppet who, nevertheless, was still mentioned as *khalifa*¹⁰⁵ and *imām*.¹⁰⁶ Finally, al-Manṣūr's son, 'Abd al-Rahmān, better known as Sanchuelo (his mother 'Abda or Urraca was the daughter of Sancho II of Pamplona), made Hishām II swear him as heir apparent, as the inheritor of the imamate – *al-imāma*. This decision triggered the fall of both the 'Amirid and Umayyad dynasties.¹⁰⁷ As FIERRO has underlined, the Umayyad legitimacy (*haqq*) and its heritage (*mīrāth*) were of fundamental importance when associating a name to the caliphal institution, which could not be done lightly.¹⁰⁸ Even the taifa (*tā'ifa*) kingdoms that arose after the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate (1031) would not dare to make use of the caliphal honorific titles, with a clear tendency to avoid precise references both to the 'Amirids and to Umayyad institutions, as underlined by François CLÉMENT.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the only reference to titles shared with the Umayyads would be the use of the *tāj* as a metaphor for power. As we have seen, the Umayyads were crowned with the "crown of power" (*bi-tāj al-mulk*). Following CLÉMENT, with five of the eleven taifa sovereigns adopting honorific titles, they settled for sultanic *laqab*, such as the "anodyne" title of *tāj al-dawla* ("the crown of the state").¹¹⁰ Despite the triviality of the title *tāj*, the metaphor is still recognizable under the taifas as it is used carefully with the appellation of *dawla* instead of *mulk*, which was used extensively by the Umayyads even in ceramic production, as attested by archaeology.¹¹¹ This reveals

¹⁰⁴ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib*, trans. (1840–1843), vol. 2, 147; FIERRO 2011, 94–95.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib* (1855), vol. 1, 264.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib* (1855), vol. 1, 262; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib*, trans. (1840–1843), vol. 2, 199.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib* (1855), vol. 1, 277; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭib*, trans. (1840–1843), vol. 2, 222–223.

¹⁰⁸ FIERRO 1989, 40–42.

¹⁰⁹ CLÉMENT (1997), 224–228.

¹¹⁰ CLÉMENT 1997, 227.

¹¹¹ BARCELÓ CRESPI 1993.

the importance given to the caliphal institution on al-Andalus and to its assigned official titles, as well as the recognition of a common language of power, accepted, acknowledged, and respected, even after the fall of the caliphate.

A *Sultān* in the Transition?

The tenth century saw the rise of ruling dynasties that usurped the *sultān* (central power). The caliph became a nominal ruler, though keeping the symbolic aura of the caliphal lineage. Eduardo MANZANO has pointed out that from the eleventh century onward, Muslim political theory accepted that the caliphate was not the only type of government available, and thus other rulers would seize power, holding titles such as *sultān*. According to MANZANO, before the eleventh century the term *sultān* was not used as a title as it was rather a reference to the central power embodied by the caliph, but which surpassed him, such as '*askar al-sultān* (army of the *sultān*) or *rasūl al-sultān* (envoy of the *sultān*).¹¹²

Due perhaps to the important shift of authority within the medieval Islamic world, the concept of power (*sultān*) appears, in some cases, to have connotations as an appellation in the tenth century al-Andalus. When Ibn Ḥayyān recounts the escape of the caliph after the defeat of the battle of Simancas in 939, the concept *sultān* apparently was used as a title. The caliph is said to have been forced to enter the pit (*al-khandaq*), which was dug by the Christian forces as a trap for the Muslim army: "and the *sultān* entered with them and was carried out with *his* army, and abandoned everything of *his* *sawād*, which was taken" (*fa-dakhala bihim al-sultān mud̄arran wa-nafadha fi ajnādihi, wa-taraka sawādahū bi-mā fihi*).¹¹³ The action – entering the pit – and the use of the verb point out to the concept *sultān* as an appellation, in this particular case. It was the *sultān* who was forced to enter the pit, and not an abstract reference of his power, together with his army. Consequently, his *sawād* was sacked from the military camp. The chronicler adds that both the *sawād* of the army and the equipment of the *sultān*, his tent and his insignia of power were seized by the enemy (*wa-mulika sawād al-askar wa-uddat al-sultān wa-surādiqahū wa-alātahū al-sultāniyya*).¹¹⁴ Perhaps this is not a reference to the equipment of the entourage of the caliph, as his men to whom he would delegate the power, but

112 MANZANO 2019, 93.

113 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 435; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 325–326. *Sawād* refers to the royal insignia or belongings of the caliph, which in the Spanish translation appears as "real."

114 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V (1979), 436; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* V, trans. (1981), 326.

rather the equipment of the caliph himself, such as his tent, his insignia, amongst which Ibn Ḥayyān specifies it was his Qur’ān and his mail coat. The mention of the seizing of the *sawād* of the caliph’s army makes a distinction between the personal equipment of the caliph – in this case, the *sultān*’s – and the *sawād* of the military.

The Andalusī sources highlight the term *sultān* to identify the central power held by the caliph, such as on the occasion that the Caliph al-Ḥakam II received Ja’far b. ‘Ali and Ibn Ḥayyān states that they intended to be hosted by the “sacred of the Commander of the Faithful” – *ḥaram amīr al-mu’minīn* – and to abide to their power (*sultānuhūm*).¹¹⁵ When Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik al-Ṭawīl, lord of Huesca, was received in Cordoba in 940, he is said to have presented himself at the door of the *sultān* – ‘alā al-qudūm ilā Bāb al-Sultān’.¹¹⁶ Although the idea of *Bāb al-Sultān* enunciates also the abstract conceptualization of the *court* as the center of power (*sultān*),¹¹⁷ it is also true that as a synonym of *Bāb Suddat al-Khalīfa* it could also mean its new resonances as an appellation.

Thus, the concept of *sultān* apparently appears in some cases in its transition form, from a mere reference to the abstract concept of power to its association with the ruler, revealing a starting point in the perception of *sultān* as a title in tenth-century al-Andalus. This transition in al-Andalus is plausible, especially in the same context observed for the titles of *imām* or *mahdi*, which dwell between their original meanings, going back to the times of Prophet Muḥammad, and with the newly eschatological significance acquired with the messianic beliefs that both the Umayyad and the Fatimid caliphates tried to answer.

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¹¹⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII* (1965), 52; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis VII*, trans. (1967), 70–71.

¹¹⁶ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis V* (1979), 453; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis V*, trans. (1981), 340–341.

¹¹⁷ CARDOSO 2020, 2021, 2023.

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