Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries)

ELSA RAQUEL FERNANDES CARDOSO

DISSERTATION

MASTER’S DEGREE IN HISTORY OF ISLAMIC MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETIES

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A proof of the fear of truth is that it does not provide anyone with a path to it nor does it deprive anyone of the hope of reaching it. It leaves people riding the deserts of perplexity and drowning in seas of doubt. Those who believe having attained it have been detached from it, and those who believe having been detached from it have lost their way. You cannot reach it without running away from it – it is ineluctable.

Naguib Mahfouz

“Arab Nights and Days”
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II. Abstract

This dissertation aims to study the diplomatic relations that Cordoba, as the capital of al-Andalus, kept with the Byzantine, Christian Iberian and Western European courts from the beginning of amīr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s reign (822) until the death of Caliph al-Ḥakam II (976).

Articulating the political intents of these diplomatic exchanges with its ceremonial features is one of its main goals. To achieve this purpose, a broader picture of the political situation of the Mediterranean in the 9th and 10th centuries is analysed, as seen by al-Andalus.

For the ceremonial, the oriental influence from Baghdad that al-Andalus underwent at this time is tested by comparing the ceremonial prevailing in diplomatic receptions of both courts. Ceremonial protocol practiced in the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos had also an impact in the court of al-Andalus and will be addressed in the dissertation.

The ceremonial displayed during ambassadorial receptions was an outcome of the bureaucratization of the court of Cordoba, as it was also the cause of increasing power, being the result of the Umayyad legitimacy and at the same time creating it. Indeed, the oriental influence was not only one of the main products of diplomacy but also one of its causes.

**Keywords**: al-Andalus, Umayyads of Cordoba, Oriental influence, Ceremonial, Diplomacy, ‘Abbasids, Byzantium, Mediterranean.
III. Resumo

Esta dissertação pretende estudar as relações diplomáticas que Córdova, enquanto capital do al-Andalus, manteve com Bizâncio, os potentados cristãos da Península Ibérica e com as cortes da Europa ocidental desde o início do reinado do amīr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II (822) até à morte do Califa al-Ḥakam II (976).

Um dos seus principais objectivos consiste na articulação entre as intenções políticas destas trocas diplomáticas e as suas características cerimoniais. Para tal, será analisado o amplo quadro político do Mediterrâneo nos séculos IX e X, visto a partir do al-Andalus.

Para o cerimonial a orientalização que o al-Andalus sofreu nesta época por influência de Bagdad será testada, recorrendo à comparação do cerimonial existente nas recepções diplomáticas das duas cortes. O protocolo cerimonial praticado na corte de Constantino VII Porphyrogennetos teve impacto similar na corte do al-Andalus e como tal será abordado nesta dissertação.

O cerimonial exibido durante as recepções de embaixadores foi a consequência da burocratização da corte de Córdova, e simultaneamente uma causa do seu poder crescente, tendo sido o resultado da legitimidade omíada e ao mesmo tempo o seu criador. De facto, a orientalização não foi apenas um dos principais produtos da diplomacia, mas também uma das suas causas.

Palavras-chave: al-Andalus, Omíadas de Córdova, Orientalização, Cerimonial, Diplomacia, Abássidas, Bizâncio, Mediterrâneo.
IV. Cambridge History of Islam system for Arabic transliteration

Long vowels:

\begin{align*}
\text{ا} & = \ddot{a} \\
\text{و} & = \ddot{u} \\
\text{ي} & = \ddot{i} \\
\text{ي} & = \dddot{i} \\
\text{و} & = \text{uww}
\end{align*}
1. Introduction

The original idea of this thesis owes much to Miquel Barceló’s article “El califa patente”, in which its author invites new researchers to explore the “prodigious bureaucracy” of the Umayyad ceremonial.1 Barceló’s statement was the result of the impression caused by the exemplary case of John of Gorze, ambassador of Otto I, who was kept secluded for almost three years in his ambassadorial lodgings in Cordoba, during which he was not allowed to see the caliph. Juan de Gorze witnessed and underwent the anxieties resulting from the extremely bureaucratized and complicated ceremonial which made the ambassador go through a long and never ending spiral of torture.

This thesis attempts to bring light to the origins and features of the ceremonial displayed during ambassadorial receptions in the court of Cordoba. Efforts have been made to understand the political or military meaning of these exchanges, though they do not reflect on their ceremonial purposes.

The arrival of official foreign envoys in Cordoba are reported during the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, from Byzantium, Christian Iberian and Carolingian courts. However, it is from the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III that their arrival is more constant and thus the rule of his son al-Ḥakam II will witness the arrival of several foreign missions each year. The political motivations of these exchanges will be articulated with the ceremonial displayed, as the first appears to be the reflection of the second. The Mediterranean of the 9th and 10th centuries is a political stage which comprises the Umayyad al-Andalus.

The oriental influence of al-Andalus was not only witnessed through its administrative models. Ceremonial displayed seems to be infused with a strong oriental influence from Baghdad. The Byzantine court also played an important role for the adoption of eastern models, and thus, I intend to compare the ceremonial prevailing in diplomatic receptions of the three courts.

Works concerning the exchange between Byzantium and other Christian powers and al-Andalus have been published, concerning the political meaning of these exchanges. However a work which articulates Christian embassies received in Cordoba with its ceremonial purposes was still due.

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I shall proceed to analyse ambassadorial exchanges in times of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II after a brief incursion through the concepts addressed in this study, as well as an inventory of the State of the Art regarding exclusively Andalusi exchanges with Byzantium and other Christian powers, as studies concerning ceremonial features of the court of Cordoba are scarce, and specifically on ceremonial ambassadorial symbology and its origins are almost inexistent.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān II is described by sources as the first amir who attempted to introduce the ceremonial and pomp, considered as the necessary ritualization of the state bureaucracy, which the fourth Umayyad ruler organized. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān structured state hierarchy, adopting ‘Abbasid models. In fact, it was under his rule that the oriental influence of al-Andalus became unremitting and frequent. Nevertheless, ceremonial descriptions on sources regarding ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s reign are scarce and concerning the proceedings observed during ambassadorial receptions are inexistent.

It was the first caliph of al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, who developed court ceremonial and his son al-Ḥakam II established specific ceremonial protocol features, according to the provenience and rank of the envoys. Although for al-Andalus we do not possess a source concerning the setting of rules and regulations for protocol ceremonies, such as the Byzantine *The Book of Ceremonies* of Constantine VII *Porphyrogennetos* or *The Rules and Regulations of the ‘Abbasid Court* (*Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa*) by Hilāl al-Sabi’, sources such as Ibn Ḥayyān, Ibn Khalduṇ and al-Maqqārī include descriptions of some of the ambassadorial receptions received in Cordoba. In order to discuss the ceremonial symbology and features of diplomatic exchanges studied by this thesis, one needs to describe at length the exhaustive steps of receptions and ceremonial displayed. The model applied by Clifford Geertz for interpreting the symbology of state ceremonial in nineteenth-century Bali reveals quite adequate for the comparison intended in this study:

*Practically, two approaches, two sorts of understanding must converge if one is to interpret a culture: a description of particular symbolic forms (a ritual gesture, an hieratic statue) as defined expression; and contextualization of such forms within the whole structure of meaning of which they are a part and in terms of which they get their definition.*

Keeping this in mind, I shall first proceed to survey ambassadorial descriptions contained in historical sources, as well as to discuss their political motivations, which are intrinsically linked to the ceremonial displayed during such receptions. Indeed, according to the diplomatic perception of that time, receiving an embassy from Byzantium and another from a peripheral Christian power of Iberia was not the same thing. A Christian principality could not expect the same display of pomp and ceremonial as a Byzantine embassy would have. This is mainly the reason why this work allows more attention towards Byzantine embassies: they have a much more elaborated political and ceremonial meaning. And of course, as put into words by Pierre Guichard and Philippe Sénac, this historical phase is marked by the puissance of Muslim powers within the Mediterranean, such as al-Andalus or the Fatimid Empire, leaving Christian principalities to rely on feeble peace treaties imposed by them.³

The articulation of the political meaning of Byzantine embassies and its ceremonial denotes two elements which appear to be inseparable when reading the sources. Lévi-Provençal appears to be the first researcher who articulated these two indivisible elements, though not developing this issue with more detail. Thus, associating a political meaning to the first Byzantine embassy received in Córdoba, he nevertheless perceived its diplomacy and ceremonial meaning when describing ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s letter to Theophilos as a “masterpiece of the Cordovan diplomacy”.⁴

I intend to identify the structure of meaning underlying beneath the ritualized gestures or in Foucault’s words:

*The system of signatures reverses the relation of the visible to the invisible. Resemblance was the invisible form of that which, from the depths of the world, made things visible; but in order that this form may be brought out into the light in its turn there must be a visible figure that will draw it out from its profound invisibility. This is why the face of the world is covered with blazons, with characters, with ciphers and obscure words – with ‘hieroglyphics’, as Turner called them.*⁵

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⁴ Lévi-Provençal, “Historia de España Musulmana”, vol. 2, 162.
2. Concepts

2.1. Oriental influence: al-Andalus and the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean has always been a privileged space for mutual acculturation. One of its most important phenomenon, a concept yet to be studied in a broader range, is the oriental influence – or as it is addressed by Spanish or Portuguese historians as orientalización and orientalização, respectively.

This phenomenon is not exclusive of the Iberian Peninsula under Muslim rule, as it is previous to the formation of al-Andalus. Nevertheless, and because al-Andalus was such an oriental influenced formation, this historical chronology of the Iberian Peninsula is decisive to study such a phenomenon.

It is precisely under the Umayyad amīr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, who rules from 822 to 852, that the oriental influence becomes unremitting, reaching one of its highest moments.

José Ramírez defines orientalización as a crucial process regarding the political and territorial formation of al-Andalus, an identity which resulted from the acculturation process of its population to patterns originated from the East.6

Hugh Kennedy asserts that the court developed under “eastern models”, allowing its evolution into a formal court, especially regarding bureaucracy and administration. Kennedy goes farther when asserting that “this period marks the first age of Andalusi culture, silver if not golden”.7

Lévi-Provençal also addressed this subject, assigning a vital role to the influence of Baghdad on al-Andalus, where Provençal describes the adoption of eastern models achieved by “mimicking” Bagdad.8

Likewise, Pierre Guichard brings the subject of oriental influence of Iberia, from an anthropological point of view, analysing the importance not only of Arab social structures, but also asserting a prominent role to North African and Berber social structures, traditionally tribal based. In fact, this work rises from the traditional debate

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6 José Ramírez del Río, La orientalización de al-Andalus: Los días de los árabes en la Península Ibérica (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2002), 19.
which splits Spanish historiography of al-Andalus between “continuity” and “disruption”, models that indeed give way to both key concepts addressed in its title – *eastern* and *western* social structures. In this regard, the author underlines that the majority of Spanish medievalists tended, until lately, to see Muslim rule of Iberia as an exclusive Hispanic process of historical continuity, a point of view intended as a reaction to 19th century theories that placed al-Andalus as a historical parentheses in Spain. It should be noted that approximately two centuries later the same theories have not been entirely renounced by Portuguese medievalists who work exclusively on the Christian identity of Iberia. This is even more obvious in pre-university studies, where al-Andalus has not yet find its place in the History national program. Hermenegildo Fernandes dedicated an article to the state of the art of the Arab studies in Portugal, pointing out the relative weakness of these studies, which has become an “obligatory *topos* of reference in recent decades”. The rupture with historiographical tradition was advocated in Portugal by historians such as David Lopes, António Borges Coelho, Oliveira Marques, António Dias Farinha or the archaeologist Cláudio Torres who understood the importance of al-Andalus for the formation of Portugal. More recent works have been produced by Portuguese scholars researching in the field of Arab studies. However, the popular imagery of the Reconquista paradigm is still present, and this *topos* is the reflection of it.

It is not debatable the role played by the ‘Abbasid world upon the adoption of eastern models for administrative and ceremonial purposes in the court of al-Andalus. Nevertheless, we must pay attention to another leading figure in the Mediterranean: the Byzantine Empire, which had a political role as a shaping element for the still embryonic Muslim empire, ruled by the Umayyad Caliphs of Damascus. After the fall of the Umayyad dynasty of Damascus, ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin Marwān, grandson of the 10th Umayyad caliph of Damascus, Hishām bin ‘Abd al-Malik, escapes from a mass murder of the male lineage of the Umayyads of Damascus, at the hands of the newly arisen dynasty, the ‘Abbasid Caliphs. At first, ‘Abd al-Rahmān will take refuge in the Maghreb with his mother’s Berber tribe. In 756, and thanks to the still existing client ship ties towards the Umayyad lineage, ‘Abd al-Rahmān *al-Dākhil* (“the Immigrant”) takes

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10 Ibid., 9.
12 Ibid., 548, 556-560.
Cordoba as his capital and establishes the independent Umayyad Amirate of al-Andalus. He will be responsible for introducing to al-Andalus administrative models brought from Damascus. The Umayyads of Damascus, as rulers who conquered and established in a traditionally Byzantine region, the Syrian-Palestinian corridor, adopted administrative, ceremonial and architectural prototypes of Byzantium. Many architectural examples still persist nowadays, such as the Mosque Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, or the Great Mosque of Damascus, in which construction Byzantine craftsmen were employed and it stands where once St. John the Baptist Cathedral was.

Thus, the embassy sent from Theophilus in 839/840, or the adoption of eastern ‘Abbasid models by ‘Abd al-Rahmān II, fall within the frame of a much wider process of oriental influence. This process, in the specific case of the Umayyad identity of al-Andalus, was started outside Iberia long before the arrival of ‘Abd al-Rahmān I.

It should be recalled that the Visigoth Kingdom of Toledo underwent a profound Byzantine influence, particularly from the sovereignty of king Leovigildo who adopted administrative and ceremonial models from Constantinople.

Theophilus’ embassy is the only account for the 9th century exchanges pursued between al-Andalus and Byzantium. But, I believe this embassy is the door that opened al-Andalus for a new age of oriental influence from Byzantium. It is also the “excuse” for the continuous flow of diplomatic exchanges which will later be received in 10th century Caliphate of Cordoba, documented by *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenetos, Ibn Ḥayyān’s *Muqtabis* or in the work of al-Maqqarī. 13

Pedro Bádenas reflects on the exchanges between al-Andalus and Byzantium, stating that the Mediterranean has always operated as a space for privileged interaction,14 from the most-western part of Europe to what we nowadays call Middle East. This author also mentions that “the relations between Byzantium and al-Andalus from the VIIIth to 10th centuries consist on the most interesting and better documented period for the diplomatic, political and cultural exchanges for the Peninsula and Byzantium”.15 This specific phenomenon of oriental influence by the Byzantine Empire upon the Iberian

14 Inmaculada Pérez Martín and Pedro Bádenas de la Peña (eds.), *Bizancio y la Península Ibérica: de la Antigüedad Tardía a la Edad Moderna* (Madrid: CSIC, 2004), IX.
15 Ibid., XIII.
Peninsula is usually referred to by Spanish historians as *bizantinización*. Cynthia Robinson asserts this term was coined by Felipe Pereda,\(^{16}\) concerning the religious art from Byzantium adopted by Castille.\(^{17}\) Pereda refers to this term as one which characterizes both an intellectual process associated to an assimilation worship category developed by the Eastern Church as well as an artistic process that retrieves Eastern models.\(^{18}\) However, this term seems to be in use before Pereda’s work was published, and associated to the Byzantine influence exercised during the Visigoth Kingdom in Iberia. Dionisio Pérez in 1989 wrote that *bizantinización* has been accurately associated with Leovigildo’s reign, Visigoth sovereign who introduced new administrative models, according to Isidore of Seville.\(^{19}\)

Pedro Bádenas refers to the “*bizantinización peninsular*” when discussing the Byzantine influence upon the Visigoth Kingdom.\(^{20}\) In the same work, Javier Arce describes the introduction of *bizantinización* in the Visigoth ceremonial, by king Leovigildo.\(^{21}\)

### 2.2. Diplomacy

Diplomacy hasn’t always been perceived as nowadays world does. States, empires or sovereignties were not granted the same status as today does the Charter of the United Nations, which declares in Chapter I, Article 2 that “the Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members”,\(^{22}\) although we could argue on its practical implementation in some cases.

Though some works and entries in encyclopaedias seek to define the concept of diplomacy, either in Medieval Ages or in the Islamic Medieval world, the focus is only directed towards descriptions and actions taken in those exchanges. A more careful

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\(^{16}\) Felipe Pereda, *Las imágenes de la discordia. Política y poética de la imagen sagrada en la España de 400* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007).


\(^{18}\) Pereda, *Las imágenes de la discordia*, 148.

\(^{19}\) Dionisio Pérez, *El ejército en la sociedad visigoda* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1989), 113.

\(^{20}\) Pérez and Bádenas, *Bizancio y la Península Ibérica*, X.


reflection on the actual concept of diplomacy is needed, as its practical definition has suffered changes.

In the Encyclopaedia of Islam, María Jesus Viguera describes diplomacy in what is still referred to as “Muslim Spain”.23 In this entry, Viguera reports how sources account to diplomatic exchanges and the Arabic words and roots used to refer to it, concluding they all report to a messenger or ambassador who mediate such exchanges.24 Viguera focus on the prominence of Andalusi messengers sent in these diplomatic missions, as she also brings the attention into the categorization of foreign missions: those exchanged with Dār al-Islām, or Muslim territories, and those from Dār al-Harb, literally House of war, or non-Muslim territories. Other encyclopaedic works tell these exchanges apart, especially when we are dealing with territories which bordered Dār al-Harb, such as al-Andalus.25 Adding to this categorization, another encyclopaedic work stresses that “medieval diplomacy had four basic agenda: imperial, political, commercial, and exploratory”.26 Exploratory agenda concerned non-official relations or secret diplomacy; commercial was the most common exchanges in medieval ages; and political purposes involved issues such as peace, treaties or alliances. Last but not least, the imperial agenda description of Ivana Elbl, author of this entry, is the one which is closest to the reflection on how diplomacy was perceived, either by Medieval Islam or by the Byzantine Empire, who regarded surrounding states as “inferior and natural subjects”. She further states that this was either to keep these “inferior states” as tributaries or to prevent them from endangering the empire. However, this concern does not intend to reflect in the concept of diplomacy itself.

This reflexion occurred while reading the account of the first Byzantine embassy received ever in Cordoba in al-Muqtabis II-I by Ibn Hayyān. In this account Ibn Ḥayyān states: “Este Teófilo fue el primer rey Cristiano que propuso ese lazo entre ellos y los soberanos de Alandalús, no importándole el desdoro de tomar él la iniciativa, lo que

23 “Muslim Spain” or “España Musulmana” is an old-fashioned term which was used by the first historians who studied al-Andalus, though attempting to associate it to the territory that later became the Kingdom of Spain. The problem is that this concept is not only anachronism as it is not applicable to the whole territory of al-Andalus, as it intends to claim. It aims to see the present day Spanish territory as the heir of al-Andalus cultural heritage, disregarding the political evolution of its neighbour Portugal, whose territories were once part of Gharb al-Andalus.
suelen evitar los tiranos, al enviar a este embajador suyo con su carta al emir ‘Abdarrahman b. Alhakam, en la que se congraciaba con él y buscaba su benevolencia (…)”. 27 This was of course considered to be contrary to a presumable “imperial agenda”. What impresses the chronicler was that the most important power in the Mediterranean demeaned itself by taking the initiative to send an embassy to a power that from then on could be considered as having its own imperial agenda. This allows me to consider that for different foreign missions a kind of protocol, though not written, was in use, according to the power attributed to its sender. This does not mean that the protocol differed strongly, it is intended to mean that for each power there was more or less ceremonial displayed, according to the perception the receiver had of its sender.

It is not the place nor should my intention be to draw a thesis on the perception of diplomacy in the 9th and 10th century Islamic states, but the issue is crucial for other researchers who pursue this subject.

Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries)

3. State of the Art

3.1. Diplomatic relations between al-Andalus and Byzantium

This chapter essentially aims at presenting a summary of the authors who address this subject in a more detailed manner, disregarding more broaden studies on al-Andalus which mention briefly embassies arriving or departing from Cordoba.

The diplomatic relations between the Iberian Peninsula and Byzantium have not always meant steady and continuous contacts, although we cannot refer to it as episodic exchanges with no consequences.

Although at a first glance we cannot identify the exact number of embassies exchanged between the Umayyad court of al-Andalus and the Byzantine court of Constantinople, there are several medieval chroniclers who testify a number of diplomatic contacts between both powers.

Lévi-Provençal is the first author who reports the arrival of the first Byzantine embassy to Cordoba in 839/40. Until the relatively recent publication of the first part of the second volume of Ibn Ḥayyân’s manuscript Muqtabis, which was thought to be lost, and was only recovered after the death of his last holder, Emilio García Gómez, this embassy was only known and recorded in Lévi-Proveçal’s work.28 This exchange is also recorded by Provençal in the volumes of História de Espanha by Ramón Menéndez Pidal on Muslim Spain.29 He analyses with detail the Muslim and Byzantine sources known by then which addressed the exchanges between Byzantium and al-Andalus. Provençal draws special attention to the first known diplomatic contacts between Cordoba and Byzantium, under the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, dedicating to it a subchapter under the title “The first exchanges between Cordoba and Byzantium”.30 To the Byzantine initiative ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II responds by sending two ambassadors back to Constantinople, who are to meet emperor Teop hilos and his wife. Lévi-Provençal suggests it was the feebleness of the Byzantine Empire towards the growing Aghlabid expansion in the Maghreb that triggered the beginning of diplomatic exchanges, especially after previous embassies to Venetians and Franks had failed their purposes. Also, the conquest of Crete by inhabitants

28 Évariste Lévi-Provençal, “Un échange d’ambassades entre Cordoue et Byzance au IX siècle”, Byzantion XII (Bruxelas: 1937). Unfortunately, I was not able to consult this account, due to lack of access to it.
29 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”.
30 Ibid., 161-163.
from Cordoba suburbs, who had been expelled by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s father, al-Ḥakam I, is presented by Provençal as one of the reasons to entail the first contacts with Cordoba.

We may call it an excuse for the ceremonial display of power by two Mediterranean sovereigns, as Provençal is never too much committed on finding a deeper political meaning to this embassy, pointing out that the basileus could not have put too much hope on hypothetical military help from the Umayyad amīr. Nevertheless the author’s caution, he draws attention towards the fact that Emperor Teophilos insinuates his intentions towards ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, whom he believes should take action against the insubordination of his own subjects ruling in Crete. Thus, Teophilus takes his chance invoking a common enemy, the ‘Abbasid dynasty of Bagdad, suggesting that the time had come for the Umayyad amīr to retake the legitimate power of his ancestors, the caliphs of Damascus, assertion which leads Provençal to state in his turn that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II “felt extremely flattered, as nothing else could secure him most in his conviction that he was a powerful and respected sovereign”. 31 Provençal qualifies as “a masterpiece of the cordovan diplomacy”32 the letter in which ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II replies to the Byzantine Emperor, because nevertheless its extension, was a vivid artefact of the dynasty’s rhetoric propaganda intended to soften his negative response.

Lévi-Provençal highlights as well in a subchapter, “Cordoba and Byzantium in the middle of the 10th century”,33 exchanges with Byzantium under the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, of whose reign he says that not a year goes by without receiving envoys at his capital and that those coming from Constantinople caused deep sensation at Cordoba, as they testified the relevance and power of the Umayyad caliphate of the west. 34 Once more this author seems to follow the lead of the Andalusi sovereignty of Crete, as he underlines that the resume of diplomatic exchanges, in 946-9, between both powers coincides with the attempts of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos to reconquer Crete, although Provençal is not convinced this was the purpose of the embassy.

Provençal points out that this time the exchange of the embassies was started by the sovereign of al-Andalus, as the Muslim chroniclers do not mention the intents behind it, 35 nor do they mention who took the initiative, in opposition to Ibn Ḥayyan’s overstatement on the first exchange under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, by referring to Teophilus

31 Ibid., 162.
32 Ibid., 162.
33 Ibid., 345.
34 Ibid., 345.
35 Ibid., 347.
as an emperor who had humiliated his imperial image when undertaking such an enterprise without any precedents.

Provençal prefers an explanation in which precisely no explanation is needed as the allure Byzantium provokes in Cordoba seems to him reason enough. He goes farther and states that in several ways the capital of al-Andalus was still a cultural tributary of Byzantium. He additionally explores his thought by relying on rather unconvincing arguments referring to Islamic capitals of that time as inferior to Constantinople. Although Cordoba treated the envoys and the exchanges originated from Byzantium in a more fanciful manner, and political and ceremonial models of an-Andalus were influenced by the empire which once reigned through the whole Mediterranean, the judgements of the famous French historian should be consigned to a time where the idea of the “oriental despot” was still quite cherished. The author seems to forget that before the ascension of Constantine VII, the previous dynasty suffered a great influence from the ‘Abbasid court of Baghdad, to whom they had to bow before so many times.

Provençal also concludes that what he believes to be an initiative undertaken by the Umayyad caliph aimed at balancing the oriental influence exercised by the court of Baghdad.

Proceeding in a more distant chronology of works regarding these exchanges, Alexander Vasiliev, Russian historian who posthumously is still considered to be an academic authority in Byzantine studies, published in 1900 a work concerning relations between Byzantium and Arab powers, especially with the ‘Abbasids, later translated into French. In regards to this research, Vasiliev articulates those embassies sent to Venice and to Louis the Pious court in Ingelheim, after the defeat inflicted in Amorium, to that sent to ‘Abd al-Rahmān II in the same year. The author, though not citing any source, states this embassy was received in Cordoba in November 839, after requests to Venice’s doge and to Louis had failed. His work is also concerned about the conquest of Crete and Sicily, as well as it discloses unpublished extracts relevant to the historian’s research activity.

36 Ibid., 347.
37 Ibid., 348.
38 Alexander Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes. La Dynastie d’Amorium (820-867), trans. Henri Grégoire and Marius Canard, vol.I (Brussels: Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales, 1935). A second volume was also published, concerning the Macedonian dynasty. Unfortunately, I did not have access to it.
39 Ibid., 177-187.
The article of Juan Signes Codoñer is the latest approach of relations between Byzantium and al-Andalus between 9th and 10th centuries. It does not only concern embassies exchanged between both powers, as it explores earlier situations concerning Mauri pirate attacks and former Byzantine territories, such as Baleares archipelago.

In fact, the idea and main corpus of this article arises from a previously published article by Eduardo Manzano, though developing more thoroughly Manzano’s ideas and presenting conclusions carefully documented. Indeed, Eduardo Manzano’s article aims at articulating past events taking place in the Mediterranean, the “troublesome sea”, during the 9th century, when parallel emerging powers, such as al-Andalus, and independent adventurers take advantage of Byzantine lack of strategy, though not becoming sea powers, and retracting their capitals for interior regions due to maritime danger.

As a scholar who dedicates his work to the history of Byzantium, Signes cherishes the idea of the 9th century Byzantine puissance over other Mediterranean powers, suggesting that Teophilos when sending his envoys to Cordoba was in fact trying to attain the sovereign of al-Andalus into his political orbit of influence, which could not be more unrealistic as Constantinople was experiencing a time of decay. He also addresses with detail the situation in Crete and the possession of the island by adventurers from al-Andalus, and although referring the dangerous Byzantine situation both in Crete and in Sicily, Signes believes it was the conquest of Amorium in 839 by the ‘Abbasid caliph which triggers the exchanges.

For this interlude of communications, and because no further embassies were exchanged until the middle of the 10th century, Signes reaches a quite peculiar conclusion, defending that perhaps the only consequence of the contacts undertaken in the 9th century was the introduction in al-Andalus of a new type of fig tree, stating as well that both powers belonged to opposite worlds. This implies believing no mutual influence had taken any part in the reception and sending of delegations, which was precisely the opposite purpose of the research. The introduction of Byzantine models in al-Andalus can be reported from the conquest of Hispania by the Umayyads of Damascus, who not only

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42 Signes, “Bizancio y al-Andalus”, 199.
43 Ibid., 199.
44 Ibid., 207.
adopted these models in Syria, as they embraced pre-existing ones of the Visigoth kingdom they conquered. After their fall in the East, when migrating to the West, they transported Byzantine court models to al-Andalus. The introduction of the ṭirāz in al-Andalus, manufacture institution which existed both in Byzantium and in the Sassanid Persian Empire, also testifies this influence.  

Although the resume of exchanges took place more than a century after, cultural exchanges and mutual influence seems to have taken place.

For the embassies exchanged under the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, Signes did a remarkable and exhaustive work, by comparing each account concerning these foreign missions in several sources. It was also one of his objectives to address the real number of embassies sent and received, as the accounts in different sources report different dates. Usually, because of this chronological problem, exchanges have been perceived as referring to only three or four embassies. Thus, for the historian these exchanges could be doubled, which meant an incessant exchange between both powers.

Signes’ article explores as well the use of religious minorities in al-Andalus, as Christian Mozarabs and Jews were sent in the quality of ambassadors. The author mentions historical personalities, such as the bishop Hishām bin Hudhāyyl or the Jewish diplomat and physician Ḥasdāā bin Shabrūt, dedicating special attention to the last one, whom is believed to have exchanged correspondence with the emperor’s wife in order to learn further details about the Khazarian kingdom which had taken Judaism as the official religion.  
The use of these minorities for the Cordovan diplomacy perhaps could be addressed in a whole different thesis. However, attention should be drawn for Signes’ conclusion:

(...) the fact that the greatest Mozarabic ecclesiastical authority headed the Andalusian delegation to Constantinople, does not only give the idea of the importance assigned to the mission, as it is also a symptom of the inexistence of qualified characters.

45 The ṭirāz, because of the word’s Persian origin, has raised some debate. However, this institution was also established by the Byzantine Empire, first under the name of ginecea, which purpose was the production of royal costumes. As the Umayyads of Damascus established themselves in a Syrian environment, inherited from the Byzantine Empire, was via this empire that they adopted the institution of tiraz. In this regard, see: Nasser Rabbat, “Ṭirāz”, in Encyclopaedia of Islam, ed. P.J.Bearman et al., vol X, T-U (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 534-535.

among the Arab surroundings of the caliph, who could successfully carry out the mission”. 47

Ethnic-religious anachronistic considerations are addressed, especially in what concerns the Mozarabs, which are not to be debated here. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it was not because there were no qualified “Arabs” (I believe the author intended to mean Muslims) in the caliphal court, but because using these “minorities” was part of a carefully designed diplomatic strategy intended to make the communication easier and to draw an impact towards who received them as ambassadors.

For Signes, the reception of a delegation of merchants from Amalfi arriving at Cordoba in 942 sustains the mercantile aiming of the diplomatic exchanges. 48 He also points out another interesting political meaning: the existence of a new common enemy, the Fatimid Caliphate, which represented a threat not only to North Africa interests pursued by the Umayyad caliph, as it had proven a direct threat for the Byzantine Empire. 49 To confirm this theory, Signes uses a Fatimid source from the 10th century, Qadi al-Numan, who believes the purpose of one of the embassies sent from Cordoba was to detain the Fatimid power, who had recently attacked Almería. He believes there is enough evidence to see an attempted joint military action between ‘Abd al-Rahmān III and Constantine Porphyrogennetos on the shores of Sicily. 50 Caution is needed at this point, as the only source who testifies this presumptive military alliance is one that responded directly to the Fatimid caliph and whose main purpose was to speak of his lord as the legitimate detainer of the Mediterranean, fighting in this sea not only against the Christians but also against the power who proclaimed as the true caliphate, the Umayyads of Cordoba, and who allied with the Polytheists (Byzantium). However, the Fatimid threat only revealed itself more strongly with the Almería attacks in 955, after the first exchanges took place.

As an article which aims to explore a broader image of the diplomatic exchanges, and taking into account sources from all perspectives, courts and interests, it brings new light towards its meaning, pointing out as well that the decline of the exchanges coincides

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47 Ibid., 214. The translation is mine.
48 Ibid., 236.
49 Ibid., 237.
50 Ibid., 238.
with the signing of a treaty between the Byzantine empire and the Fatimids in 958, and thus Cordoba would eventually become an inconvenient ally.\textsuperscript{51}

Juan Signes, after the writing of the previous article, presents the researcher with yet another one, concerning travellers in a chronology that goes from the times of Charlemagne until the Crusades.\textsuperscript{52} In another article Juan Signes deals, as the title clearly suggests, with a more cultural influence of Byzantium towards other powers.\textsuperscript{53} For the sake of this research, he remarks the books sent by Emperor Romanus to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, or the letter from a Byzantine emperor to caliph al-Ḥakam II.\textsuperscript{54}

Roberto Matesanz considers classical Greek works from Antiquity sent to the caliphate of Cordoba in an introductory article which aims to revert the traditional research on this subject pursued by Greek philology scholars and avoided by medievalists.\textsuperscript{55} Another very recent paper also takes into consideration the intellectual dimension of diplomatic exchanges between Byzantium and Arab powers, mentioning the reception in al-Andalus of both the manuscript of Dioscordies and from the history of Orosius.\textsuperscript{56}

Fátima Roldán Castro, Pedro Díaz Macías and Emilio Díaz Rolando address these exchanges on an article on relations between Hispania and Byzantium, pursuing a wider chronology which starts during the Visigoth Kingdom and describe in a concise way the waves of Byzantine influence (bizantinización) in the Iberian Peninsula.\textsuperscript{57} While a great extension of the article follows verbatim the aforementioned \textit{History of Muslim Spain}, by Lévi-Provençal, we can though find some interesting remarks. The authors recall that the reader must bear in mind that Syria was the privileged place where most of exchanges are witnessed between the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire. Special mention is made to military Byzantine models adopted by the Muslim army, such as the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 239.
\item Juan Signes Codoñer, “La diplomacia del libro, algunas reflexiones en torno a la posible entrega de libros griegos a los árabes en los siglos VIII-X”, \textit{Scrittura y Civiltà} XX (1996).
\item Ibid., 182-185.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
organization in *jund*.\(^{58}\) Notwithstanding, they believe the new oriental influence from Baghdad marks a disruption with the Byzantine models of Syria.\(^{59}\)

General works report these exchanges as well. Krijnie Ciggaar’s work concerning western travellers to the Byzantine capital address exchanges with the Iberian Peninsula and embassies sent to the court of Cordoba.\(^{60}\)

The recently published volume 2 of the book *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900-1050)*,\(^{61}\) dedicates one chapter on Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations, from the beginning of Islam in the 7th century, until the year 1000, authored by Nicholas Drocourt. As a bibliographical history it does not aim to present all the accounts described by the sources exhaustively, nor to analyse in detail the political reasons for these exchanges, but rather to operate as a survey describing some of their aspects, such as official missives, peace treaties and finally receptions of delegations, ceremonial, economic aspects and gift exchange. As he does not circumscribe his chapter to the relations of al-Andalus and Byzantium, Drocourt provides the reader summaries of the embassies exchanged and of recent detailed works on the matter, inviting researchers to pursue studies on the diplomatic language used in the sources.\(^{62}\)

The article of Philipe Sénac, who writes about the relations ‘Abd al-Rahmân III kept with Christian powers of Europe, devotes a small section to the relations of al-Andalus with Byzantium.\(^{63}\)

Unfortunately this state of the art is not complete because of the inaccessibility of some works, inexistent in Portugal, given the institutional lack of support, particularly to fields of Arts and Humanities.

Works in German considering Byzantine relations have been published, from the point of view of the Byzantine studies. Otto Kresten, mentions these exchanges when addressing the art of writing in gold.\(^{64}\) This was part of a ceremonial display in Byzantine

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 269.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 270.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 71-72.
diplomacy, and such letters were received in the court of Cordoba. In yet another article dedicated to embassies received in Constantinople in the middle of the 10th century, Kresten discusses the chronology of the first Andalusian embassy received by Constantine VII.\textsuperscript{65}

3.2. Diplomatic relations between al-Andalus and Western Europe

Diplomatic relations with Western Europe are documented and frequent, especially due to territorial proximity of Christian Iberian principalities and the Carolingian Empire with al-Andalus. Nevertheless, their nature, status and aims were not the same as those of the Byzantine embassies. The reader of Muslim chronicles describing receptions can distinguish grades of precedence, almost colour shaded difference, between accounts regarding Byzantine embassies and Western European ones. Al-Maqqarī is the only chronicler who states it directly. He asserts the reader that the embassy coming from Byzantium, under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s rule, was the most celebrated one and received with greater ceremonial and pomp.\textsuperscript{66} This hierarchy or order of precedence, customary in ceremonies of the Umayyad court and in treatment towards its administration representatives and officials, is also adopted towards envoys, who are treated according to their rank. Therefore, ambassadors from distant Byzantium are received with the state of the art pomp. The stairs of hierarchy descend until representatives of counts from northern Iberia. Of course the political issues were also different, in order of precedence, as we will see further ahead.

Embassies from Christian Hispania aimed frequently to accomplish peace treaties to keep the status quo of the Peninsula. These Iberian principalities were also regarded as inferior by Cordoba, as most of these exchanges were intended to pay respects and tribute to al-Andalus, especially during the caliphate. These exchanges directly concerned minor military skirmishes in the Marches (thughūr), therefore they were addressed with less display of ceremonial. As for embassies from Western Europe, although a great display of ceremonial was evidenced when John of Gorze, ambassador of Otto I, was received, John was kept as a prisoner in Cordoba, while this would most certainly be regarded as a


\textsuperscript{66} Al-Maqqarī, Naḥī II, 140.
completely unthinkable and unacceptable conduct towards Byzantine ambassadors. In his recently published work, which addresses the Mediterranean as the “Sea of the Caliphs”, Christophe Picard sustains that the 10th century marked the Muslim blossoming in the Mediterranean, especially the Umayyad and Fatimid caliphates, who will dispute the Mediterranean supremacy with the Macedonian dynasty of Constantinople.67

The most complete work regarding diplomatic relations kept with Western Europe is the research of Abdurrahman Ali al-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations with Western Europe during the Umayyad Period (A.H. 138-366/A.D. 755-976)*, published more than four decades ago.68 Its publishing date is important, as if we find difficult nowadays to access some of the sources, back then it required traveling to several cities just to read a few lines on a manuscript. The researcher also uses Arabic bibliography, which is still quite innovative, however, and as stated before by Derek Lomax, naivété and pro-Moslem bias are everywhere, accepting historical myths if these favour Muslims, but not the other way around.69

A substantial part of al-Hajji’s research is a descriptive one, which reveals the results of an exhaustive investigation for each embassy. The historian gives special attention to skirmishes, military encounters or summer campaigns, aiming at contextualizing diplomatic encounters. Al-Hajji also regards truces and peace agreements as diplomatic exchanges. In this research I will focus on official diplomatic exchanges properly documented, giving special relevance to those accounts more complete, regarding ceremonial display.

Al-Hajji also dedicates a considerable part of his research to a traveller, Ibrāhīm bin Ya‘kub al-Isrā‘īlī al-Ṭurṭushī, whom is believed to have visited both Otto I, according to al-Bakri, and Pope John XII, according to al-ʿUdhri.70 Al-Hajji suggests that he was somehow in contact with caliph al-Ḥakam II and that he presented to the sovereign of al-Andalus written accounts of his travels and a message from the Pope. However it is of hard evidence if in fact this traveller acted under direct orders of Cordoba, or if he had

70 Al-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations with Western Europe*, 228-271.

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any official diplomatic ties with the courts he claimed to visit. No description of receptions nor the names of the rulers are mentioned.

Lévi-Provençal in the previously mentioned *Historia de España Musulmana*, takes into consideration the relations between Cordoba and the principalities of the northern Peninsula. For the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III he gives special relevance to León and Pamplona in a subchapter under the title “Cordoba and the kingdoms of Leon and Pamplona in the last years of al-Nāṣir’s reign (951-961)”.

Special emphasis goes to the reception of Queen Regent Toda Aznárez of Navarre, her son and king García Sánchez, and her grandson, Sancho I, deposed king of Leon in favour of Ordoño IV, *el Malo*. Lévi-Provençal underlines the intermarriage policy between al-Andalus and northern kingdoms, as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III was Queen Toda’s nephew. Therefore, for Provençal these kinship ties prompted Toda to resort to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III for helping her grandson and son, as he also was of Basque royal blood. The author underlines as well the supremacy of al-Andalus over the whole Peninsula, as the sovereign received tribute from Leon, Burgos, Pamplona, and probably Barcelona.

Lévi-Provençal makes a clear distinction between embassies received from Christian-Iberian principalities, Byzantine receptions, and envoys received from Western Europe. Therefore, Provençal still dedicates one more subchapter regarding Western European relations: “The European embassies. Andalusian piracy and the odyssey of the moors of Fraxinetum”. In fact, Emperor Otto I’s embassy received in Cordoba meant a clear disclosure of power and ceremonial for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and his court. Provençal collects accounts of Arab and Latin chroniclers at that time to discuss the aims of this embassy. He argues Otto’s purposes to take ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III accountable for Andalusian adventurers attacks on the coast of Provence and conquest of Fraxinetum, which displeases the caliph, who will keep Otto’s ambassador in Cordoba for quite some time without conceding him an audience. Provençal underlines that for some chroniclers, such as Ibn Hawqal, it was quite undoubtable that these Andalusian pirates were under the sovereignty of the caliph. If this was the fact or not it is difficult to prove, concerning the lack of information in he sources towards Fraxinetum. What matters for Provençal is the fact that Otto got into the trouble of sending envoys. As discussed above, the events

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71 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 296.
72 Ibid., 299.
73 Ibid., 301.
74 Ibid., 352.
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concerning the embassy of John of Gorze were perceived as a “diplomatic incident”. ‘Abd
ar-Rahman III learnt the content of Otto’s message even before the reception of the
ambassador. As he was not pleased with it, the caliph ordered the envoy to deliver only
the presents and dismiss the message, otherwise no reception would be held. John, who
displays little diplomacy perception, was accused to act as insolent towards the caliph, so
he was kept in his golden cage in Cordoba until new messengers from Otto I would arrive
at Cordoba. These new messengers were expected at al-Andalus after the caliph sent
Recemund or Rabī’ bin Zayd to Frankfurt, who was to ask for a more acceptable letter. It
was in the court of Otto where Recemund met Luitprand of Cremona, who dedicated to
the future bishop of Elvira his work Antapodosis. This leads Fernando Valdés to write, in
a short article regarding diplomatic receptions and presents offered to rulers, that the
diplomatic skills of Recemund and Liutprand avoided a diplomatic incident.75 This article
concerns also the role of presents in cultural and architectural exchange, dealing as well
with presents received by the caliphs in Cordoba, such as mosaics and craftsmen to build
the mihrab of the Great Mosque in Cordoba.

The display of Cordoba’s power is even more apparent during the reign of al-
Ḥakam II, who inherits from his father a peaceful and well established state, as noticed
by Provençal. In this respect, and concerning a subchapter regarding “Cordoba and
Christian Spain under the rule of al-Ḥakam II”,76 Lévi-Provençal underlines the political
supremacy of al-Andalus. For proving his point, the historian accounts Ordoño IV’s
official visit to al-Ḥakam II, stating that the deposed sovereign of Leon was prepared for
every possible humiliations to obtain Cordoba’s favours, as he even prostrated himself on
an-Nāṣir’s graveyard.77

Lévi-Provençal includes in this subchapter embassies received from Byzantium,
perhaps because no detailed account of these exchanges are reported. We could argue as
well, considering the changing of alliances envisaged by the Byzantine Empire, that
during the reign of al-Ḥakam II, embassies exchanged with Byzantium did not have a
distinctly political meaning, but a more intellectual one, as I will discuss further ahead.

A more recent work by Pierre Guichard and Philippe Sénac concerns relations of
Muslim powers with the Latin world, from the 10th century, dealing at first with the
sovereignty of the Muslim world in general towards Western Europe and then with the

75 Fernando Valdés, “De embajadas y regalos entre califas y emperadores”, Awraq 7 (2013).
76 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 378.
77 Ibid., 379.
turning point marked by the Crusades. For the present case study the first chapter is essential for the listing of exchanges between Cordoba and Christian powers, also dealing extensively with military encounters between both powers. This work articulates events in the Mediterranean with these exchanges. Therefore, its authors offer the reader with the description of some events that sometimes can explain an internal policy or measures treated restrictedly as a result of endogenous events. They consider that the Western Mediterranean was disputed not only by Umayyad and Fatimid Caliphates, but also by pirates, some of them whose origin was from al-Andalus. They also underline the mercantile meaning of these relations, in a world where the Mediterranean was a central stage. The authors draw the reader’s attention to the opening of mercantile relations with Amalfi. In 942 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III received merchants from this city, and later on a reception was held to the envoy from the ruler of Sardinia, who was in the company of Amalfitan merchants.

In a more distant time than more recent studies presented until now, the Spanish scholar Francisco Codera, in a small article on embassies from Iberian Christian principalities received by al-Ḥakam II, reflects on its purposes, stating that “the embassies apparently intended only to present friendship and submission declarations, not always sincere, and thus not responding to exceptional circumstances towards the ambassadors, the receptions, nevertheless, display quite an array”. It is clear for the historian that there was a clear goal of ceremonial parade for these exchanges. The article aimed for calling scholars to study such exchanges, in a time in which the volume of the Muqtabis concerning al-Ḥakam II’s reign was still to be translated and published.

One subject regarding these embassies, still controversial in nowadays Academia, is the alleged embassy of al-Ghazāl, as envoy of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, to the king of the Majus, or Vikings, in the same chronology of the despatch of al-Ghazāl’s embassy to Constantinople. Dozy translates the account from a manuscript of Ibn Dihya bearing the title al-Motrib fi ach’āri ahli ’l-Maghrib in his Recherches sur l’histoire et la littérature de l’Espagne pendant le Moyen Age. According to Dozy, Ibn Dihya takes this specific account from a work in prose by Tammām bin ‘Alqama, important courtier who lived

78 Guichard and Sénac, Les relations des pays d’islam avec le monde latin.
79 Ibid., 22.
80 Ibid., 32.
81 Francisco Codera, “Embajadas de príncipes cristianos en Córdoba en los últimos años de Alhaquem II”, Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia, 13 (1888), 453.
during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s reign, and therefore probably transcribed this account directly from al-Ghazāl. However, no dates, names nor places are mentioned by the chronicle. The lack of data in Ibn Dihya’s account and the fact that it describes events duplicated from al-Ghazāl’s embassy to Constantinople, allows Lévi-Provençal to assert this embassy is a fabricated fairy tale.83 Nothing is mentioned about the Norman king nor his reign’s location. Dozy asserts that this is due to al-Ghazāl’s diplomatic qualities: although he revelled to his friends, such as Tammām bin ‘Alqama, his adventurers and anecdotes, he did not let displayed anything about his mission to this kingdom.84 As for al-Hajji, the similarity between both accounts is not reason enough to doubt the existence of one of them, nor does he find it meaningful that Ibn Ḥāyyān does not mention such exchanges in his Muqtabis.85 However, lack of sources and descriptions makes impossible to conclude its location or its sovereign, so theories regarding details of this embassy are only the results of speculation.

Last but not least, Dozy is one of the first historians to report diplomatic relations of Cordoba with Christian principalities of Iberia, in his Histoire des Musulmans d’Espagne. The historian gives special significance to the embassy of Queen Toda, her son García Sánchez and grandson Sancho, el Craso. He accredited special political meaning to this pompous reception, as he puts it. For him, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III had chosen the moment well, as he finally had at his feet the son of his terrible enemy, Ramiro II, who had provided him such thunderous defeat at Simancas, and with whom Toda had allied herself. And, although he was defeated at Simancas, his opponents were paying him homage. This was exploited ad nauseam in Umayyad chronicles and used as a legitimacy weapon.

Far from aiming at trailing all books or articles ever written on the matter of exchanges between Cordoba and Christian Mediterranean powers, this state of the art intends more to compare studies that either can be complemented or that bring new light towards the subject.

These embassies, received quite often during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and al-Ḥakam II’s reigns, at a first glance can be perceived only as “more about display and prestige than political alliances”, as stated by Hugh Kennedy.86

83 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 163.
84 Dozy, Recherches II, 278.
85 Al-Hajji, Andalusian Diplomatic Relations, 193-203.
86 Kennedy, Muslim Spain and Portugal, 98.
Features concerning the display and ritualization of power are undeniable and were part of the central core which impelled rulers to send and receive embassies. It is however unquestionable that these exchanges had political purposes, such as the pursuing of alliances that could assure Cordoba its Mediterranean interests. These interests are not only related to political purposes, but also to mercantile concerns. Cultural exchanges, either the offer of Dioscorides manuscript or Orosius’ history by the Byzantine emperor, or the commission from Constantinople of columns to Madīna al-Zahrā’ and the mosaics to the Great Mosque of Cordoba, are prove enough of these interests. The flow of materials suggests a mercantile alliance between both powers. These exchanges reveal a persisting interest and an unceasing circulation of goods throughout the Mediterranean and it can be perceived an outspread trade coordinated by both powers.

Anthony Cutler points out the central role of gift exchange during receptions of ambassadors. Cutler underlines economic consequences of gift exchange which were fundamental for negotiating trade agreements. Declassified as a part of economic history, gift exchanges were dismissed for being perceived as a symptom of “archaic” or “primitive” societies, and conventionally seen as superfluous luxury goods, without any consequence. 87

Offering scientific books, architectural works or works of art does not appear to me as part of “primitive” societies. These presents were perceived as a “luxury sample”, intended to seduce his addressee to recognize the advantages of a trade agreement which should include the circulation of such goods.

By the 10th century, Cordoba was a Muslim metropolis, capable at competing with Qayrawan and other eastern cities, far exceeding contemporary western Christian cities, and could only be equalled to Constantinople. 88

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88 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 358.
4. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II

4.1. The first Byzantine embassy in Cordoba

The first accounted Byzantine embassy received in Cordoba is transmitted by Ibn Ḥayyān, 11th century chronicler form al-Andalus, in one of the volumes of al-Muqtabis, his encyclopaedic work on the Umayyads of Cordoba, which survived until nowadays.\(^{89}\)

The Andalusian historian, citing ‘Īsā bin Aḥmad al-Rāzī, accounts that “this Theophilos was the first Christian King who suggested such ties between both”.\(^{90}\)

Although the historian mentions specifically this was the first exchange between both powers, since relations had been suspended upon the fall of the Umayyads of Damascus, in another passage of his work Ibn Ḥayyān mentions what appears to be a previous diplomatic exchange with Constantinople. This excerpt, that seems to be neglected by scholars, relates to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s choice of the poet al-Ghazal to accompany the Byzantine ambassador back to Constantinople. In this account, Ibn Hayyan transmits the poems wrote by al-Ghazāl, who was trying to be exempted from this task. Ibn Hayyān, citing ‘Īsā bin Aḥmad al-Rāzī, writes: “Said (al-Ghazāl), among other things, in a large qasida, in which he follows the festive style and alluded maliciously to the ambassador sent previously to the country of the Byzantines (…)”.\(^{91}\)

Thus, this comment may contribute for scholars to consider previous relations, though not accounted in any known source. There is also the possibility that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, upon receiving the embassy in 839/40, might have despatched an envoy to Theophilos, before sending al-Ghazāl to Constantinople, who should accompany the Byzantine ambassador received in Cordoba.

Ibn Hayyān writes with nostalgia about the already defeated Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba. He transcribes previous sources in a very concise and yet, at the same time, detailed manner the historical accounts on the Umayyad dynasty of Cordoba. His most important primary source was ‘Īsā bin Aḥmad al-Rāzī.\(^{92}\) This volume, concerning both reigns of al-Hakam I and his son ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, is the main source which accounts the first Byzantine embassy, as no Byzantine chronic attests its arrival at Cordoba.

\(^{89}\) Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 294-298 (“Noticia de la correspondencia entre el emperador bizantino y el emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān”).
\(^{90}\) Ibid., 294-295.
\(^{91}\) Ibid., 229.
\(^{92}\) Eduardo Manzano, Conquistadores, Emires y Califas: los Omeyas y la Formación de al-Andalus (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006), 475.
Although *al-Muqtabis II-I* does not convey the content of Emperor Theophilos’ letter to the *āmīr*, Ibn Hayyān transmits the whole missive sent by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II to Theophilos, providing the reader with two different versions. Ibn Ḥayyān, in another account of *al-Muqtabis II-I*, also provides some descriptions regarding the stay of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s ambassador, the famous Andalusi poet al-Ghazāl, in Constantinople, which I will discuss in the next chapter.93 This last account, though reporting “anecdotic” stories, also transmits interesting details for court ceremonial and customary differences between receptions in al-Andalus and Byzantium, which reflects distinguished perceptions of the sovereign’s complexion.

As for the ceremonial displayed in the reception of the Byzantine ambassador, unfortunately we do not possess an account of it. Only the content of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s letter is revealed.

Aḥmad al-Maqqarī, Muslim chronicler from North Africa, living and writing between the 16th and 17th centuries, copies this embassy’s account from Ibn Ḥayyān, author whom he quotes throughout his narrative.94 He leaves us with a short, though acute political analysis, which could only have been drawn by a historian distanced in time from the events.

Theophilos’ letter arrives at Cordoba in 225 of Hegira (from 12/11/839-30/10/840),95 carried by a Byzantine ambassador whose personal details, given by Ibn Hayyān, are quite scarce: his name was Qurtiyūs and was a professional interpreter.

Ibn Hayyān never discloses directly this embassy’s main goal. Nevertheless, he insinuates, not so subtly, that it was intended to establish an alliance with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II against the ‘Abbasids who harassed directly Byzantium. For this purpose Theophilos prompted ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II that the time had come to avenge the Umayyad Empire, usurped by the ‘Abbasids:

A letter arrived from Theophilos, emperor of the Byzantines of Constantinople, who is mentioned by Habib b. Aws Atta’i in his poem about the seizure of ‘Ammuriyyah, taking the initiative of offering to him the establishing of relations, resuming those which existed with his ancestors of the East, mentioning his right to the caliphate encroached

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93 Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis II-I*, 228-244. Al-Ghazal and his partner Yahya al-Munayqilah, also in the quality of ambassador, are sent to Constantinople by the Umayyad *āmīr*, accompanying Theophilos’ envoy.  
95 http://www.mela.us/committees/hegira.html. This source will be used to convert Muslim calendar dates to the Christian calendar throughout the text.
there to his family, inciting him to avenge against those who harmed them, the sons of Al’abbas.⁹⁶

It is quite obvious how the Umayyad amīr kept himself well informed about the crisis situation which Byzantium was dealing with, as Ibn Hayyān refers to the plight of the conquest of Amorium. The chronic reveals Umayyad awareness by recalling, as an excuse, a Syrian poem which refers to Theophilos and to the conquest of Amorium, in 838, by the ‘Abbasid caliph. It discloses that far from ingenuously receiving an embassy from the basileus, the Umayyad court might have previous knowledge on the reasons which moved Theophilos.

Even considering that Ibn Hayyān magnified his own appraisement of this embassy, it is undoubtable that its despatch highlights the prominence of the Umayyad amīr in the political and imperial frame of that time, with whom Byzantium understands an equivalent treatment must be pursued. Thus, Theophilos, though al-Andalus was a peripheral power, acknowledges the political and territorial importance of the Umayyad amīr.

Nevertheless, for al-Maqqařī there are no doubts that the true aim of this embassy was to pursue a friendship pact. He asserts that because of the ‘Abbasid attacks advocated by Caliphs al-Mā’mūn and al-Mu’taṣim on Byzantine territories, Theophilos had in mind a joint of forces with the Umayyad against a mutual enemy. He believes this conclusion was the result of Theophilos’ incitement towards the Umayyad:

_The Greek, who had of late been greatly harassed by the armies of Al-mamun and Al-mu’tasem, asked Abdu-r-rahman to join forces with him against their common enemies of the house of ‘Abbas. To this end he tempted Abdu-r-rahman with the conquest of the empire which his ancestors had possessed in the East._ ⁹⁷

Most certainly that when reading and then copying Ibn Hayyān, al-Maqqařī understood the not so subliminal message contained in _al-Muqtabis II-1_ when mentioning the conquest of Amorium. As I have underlined above, al-Maqqařī as a late chronicler, had the advantage of possessing a broader image of past events which took Theophilos to ask for the amīr’s help.

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⁹⁶ Ibn Hayyān, _al-Muqtabis II-1_, 294. The translation is mine.

⁹⁷ al-Maqqařī, _Naḥī II_, 115.
By this time Byzantium had long ago established diplomatic relations with the ‘Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad,\textsuperscript{98} to whom Constantinople pays tribute in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century. Lévi-Provençal suggests that Theophilos intended to create a common front against the Aghlabid Amirate, who not only were tributaries of the ‘Abbasids, as they had recently started to conquer Sicily,\textsuperscript{99} former important naval and mercantile base of Byzantium.

Although Ibn Hayyān declares that the Umayyad amīr felt extremely flattered by this mission, he clarifies how Theophilos, the “insolent infidel”, must be regarded as a diminished sovereign who humiliated himself when decided to send this embassy, by his own initiative.\textsuperscript{100} Because Theophilos was regarded as humiliating himself, it can be assumed that his despair for help was one of the reasons which motivated this mission.

It was under the reign of Theophilos that the Byzantine Empire underwent a decline in favour or the ‘Abbasids, suffering as well an identity crisis due to the last period of the Iconoclasm. Theophilos was indeed the last emperor who sustained Iconoclasm. Theophilos’ Iconoclasm, as a solitary Byzantine figure who professed this religious doctrine, was a clear sign of the influence that the ‘Abbasid dynasty exercised towards the Byzantine court. Hélène Ahrweiler has no doubt that the Iconoclasm policy was pursued with the clear goal of defending the Byzantine state, which was being harassed either by land and sea by several Arab dynasties, especially those in Asia Minor where the emperor had to look for the support of Byzantine citizens who lived in the forefronts of the empire. Ahrweiler adds that the Iconoclasm will disappear once the Arab danger disappears as well in the frontiers.\textsuperscript{101} Thus, this was the political and territorial situation of Byzantium by the time Theophilos decided to send his envoys to Cordoba.

4.2. The letter of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II to Theophilos

‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s letter is a living testimony of the bureaucratic development of al-Andalus, and Lévi-Provençal accurately classifies it as a “master piece of the Cordovan diplomacy”.\textsuperscript{102} Despite the length of the letter, the text was only characterized by a rhetorical propaganda intended to ease the negative response contained in it. This rhetoric,

\textsuperscript{100} Ibn Hayyān, \textit{al-Muqtabis II-I}, 295.
\textsuperscript{102} Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 162.
as showed above, spun around the contempt expressed towards the ‘Abbasids, seen as assassins of the Umayyad clan and rapists of their harem, and the call made by the Byzantines that the time had come to fulfill the long awaited God’s promise to recover their encroached authority. However, this letter is a masterpiece of the Umayyad noncommittal, putting an end to any hopes sustained by the Byzantine Emperor.

Certainly as a response to a presumed culpability expressed by Theophilos towards the Cordovan Amirate, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II dismisses any liability for Andalusian pirates. These “pirates”, addressed in the letter, were forced to the exile by al-Ḥakam I, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s father, after an uprising in Cordoba’s arrabalde (suburbs), and ca. 827 conquered Crete, former Byzantine possession in the Mediterranean.

4.2.1. The Cordoba uprising of ca. 202 A.H. and the conquest of Crete

‘Abd al-Raḥmān II expresses firmly his approval on a Byzantine military action against the Amirate of Crete:

*Regarding the Andalusi Abu Hafs and those of our country who accompany him, who have submitted to Ibn Maridah [mockery by which Ibn Hayyān refers to the ‘Abbasid caliph] and entered into his obedience, and about asking for my intervention in their affairs and condemning their actions, those who joined him were only part of the scum, a mob, of depraved tramps among them, and they are not in our country nor under our responsibility, (...) and we do not account you incapable nor feeble to punish them.*

From these excerpts of Ibn Hayyān, it is possible to rebuild the main topics exposed in Theophilos’ lost letter. First of all the conquest of Amorium was most certainly one of its focuses. It was one of the latest losses for Byzantium, amongst others suffered mainly at the hands of the ‘Abbasids. Therefore, Theophilos probably asked, if not professedly, perceptively enough, for an alliance that allowed his empire to count on the Umayyads for the recovery of some of the recently lost territories, such as Crete, whose leadership had recognized the ‘Abbasid Caliph.

By the time Theophilos had sent his envoys to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, Crete had been conquered almost 14 years ago. Their conquerors, pirates or adventurers from al-Andalus,
were expelled from Cordoba by mid Ramadan 202 A.H. (end of March 818). Ibn Ḥayyān gives several versions of the revolt as well as the reaction of al-Ḥakam’s army.104

When introducing the revolt in Cordoba, Ibn Ḥayyān tells us that it was due to several grudges held by the Cordovan population against their sovereign. Here is how would go an abbreviated description of the events: after al-Ḥakam’s army was able to contain the revolt, they started a slaughter in the eastern suburb of Cordoba, where the revolt had ignited, and which lasted for 3 days. After the usual exemplary executions, al-Ḥakam conceded them the *aman*, or peace agreement, providing they would leave the capital. Ibn Ḥayyān copies Ibn al-Qūṭiyya account in *Tāʾrīkh al-Iftitāḥ*, when giving more details about these rebels’ departure from the Umayyad capital. Most of them left al-Andalus, a part of them is presumed to have settled in North African shores, and about 15,000 of them shipped to the East, until reaching Alexandria, where they established until being expelled by the city’s ‘Abbasid governor, who agreed on their peaceful leaving, providing them with the choice of a Mediterranean island.105

Ibn Ḥayyān proceeds in his *Muqtabis II* to reveal to the reader several versions on the dispersion of these population. As for the majority of Ibn Ḥayyān’s account, his main source for the events is Ahmad bin Muḥammad al-Rāzī. He accounts that most of these rebels ran to Toledo, city which often defied the central power.106 Following the later text and citing Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, who lived as well in the 10th century, Ibn Ḥayyān writes that these fugitives departed from al-Andalus to North Africa, and that 15,000 of them arrived at Alexandria, whose inhabitants attacked them, causing the Andalusis to fight and kill much of them. Ibn al-Qūṭiyya identifies these Andalusis with those who conquered Crete, after a treaty convened with Ibn Ṭāhir, ‘Abbasid governor in Egypt. Ibn al-Qūṭiyya furthermore identifies Crete as a Byzantine island abandoned by the Greeks. According to this chronicler, the rebellion in Cordoba’s *arrabalde* was also connected with the activity of several renowned *fuqahā* (sing. *faqīh*), such as Yahya bin Yahya, who escaped to Toledo and later was forgiven by al-Ḥakam I.107 Ibn Hayyān also mentions another version of this rebellion, by al-Ḥassan bin Muḥammad bin Mufarrij, Andalusi chronicler of the 10th and 11th centuries, who asserts that the sedition started on the extreme shore of Guadalquivir river in 189 A.H. (805-806) and that his goal was to

104 Ibid., 55-75.
105 Ibid., 65-66.
106 Ibid., 65.
107 Ibid., 65-68.
proclaim one of the amīr’s cousins as sovereign. Ibn Mufarrij, through Ibn Hayyān, clearly states that long after his partisans were put to death or escaped, there was a rebellion in the western arrabalde of Cordoba, due to one tenth of the production of cereal, charged by the amīr.108

It is quite clear by this description that Cordoba bore witness of not one but two different rebellions, one taking place in 189 A.H. and another in 202 A.H., caused by the dissatisfaction felt towards the amīr, during times in which al-Ḥakam I had also to face sedition in cities, such as Toledo, and family proclaiming their suzerainty against him. Ibn al-Athīr refers also to the rebellion, giving yet another date, 198 A.H., stating that its motivations were due to the lascivious character of al-Ḥakam I, who from the beginning of his reign started to drink wine publicly, and thus the fuqahā’ supported such a revolt.109

In the sequence of the account of Ibn Mufarrij, Ibn Hayyān states, using yet another source, Muḥammad bin Ḥafṣ bin Faraj, that after being defeated by al-Hakam’s troops, the rebels asked for his aman, causing them to flee to Toledo, to North Africa – where some of them settled in Fez – or to Crete. These version does not mention their brief stay in Alexandria.

Further ahead in the account of Ibn Mufarrij, Ibn Hayyān also cites Ibn al-Qūṭīyya. As referred above, Ibn al-Qūṭīyya states that after embarking to the Mediterranean, the adventurers arrived first at Alexandria where, after being attacked by their inhabitants, the Andalusis were able to defeat them. After the arrival of the ‘Abbasid governor, Ibn Ṭāhir, to Alexandria, the Andalusis were offered one of the islands of the Mediterranean, having chosen Crete.110

Al-Maqqarī accounts that the rebellion was ignited by Yaḥya bin Yahya, disciple of Mālik bin Anas, and other theologians, whose disenchantment towards the amīr’s “propensity to worldly pleasures” gave way to the proclamation of one of al-Ḥakam’s relatives. For al-Maqqarī, the settlement of this revolt was not the eastern suburb but the western, as accounted by Ibn Mufarrij for the second rebellion in 202 A.H. The chronicler describes the suburb’s destruction, asserting that al-Ḥakam troops did not even spare their mosques, driving afterwards its inhabitants to flee to Fez, where they established an Andalusi quartier, and others to Alexandria, led by one of the rebels, Abū Ḥafṣ. He adds

108 Ibid., 72.
110 Ibid., 74.
more accurate information than Ibn Hayyān, when referring to ‘Abd Allāh bin Ṭāhīr, governor in Alexandria of the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Ma’mūn. He is held responsible for expelling the Andalusis after they had promoted several rebellions against Alexandria’s population, and transported them to Crete, “which they conquered, and held until, after a considerable length of time, the Franks [referring to Byzantines who conquered the island in 961] dispossessed them of it”.

Ibn al-Athīr gives more details about the arrival and departure of Andalusis in Alexandria. Ibn al-Athīr accounts they were expelled from the Egyptian city by ‘Abd Allāh bin Ṭāhīr in 210 A.H. (24/4/825-13/4/826). He also connects their arrival in Alexandria, under the leadership of Abū Ḥafṣ, with the disorders promoted by Ibn al-Sārī, situation that extended until the arrival of Ibn Ṭāhīr to the city. E. Fagnan, Ibn al-Athīr translator, give further details on ‘Ubayd Allāh bin al-Sārī who was proclaimed by the military jund and detained Egypt’s government from 207 until 210 A.H. Therefore, and taking into account al-Sārī year’s rise to power, E. Fagnan further adds that the arrival of Andalusis in Alexandria took place long after the events in Cordoba’s suburbs. Ibn al-Athīr proceeds stating that after the arrival to Alexandria of Ibn Ṭāhīr, the Andalusis demanded the aman, conceded to them by the governor of Egypt who, in exchange, demanded heir departure and settlement in one of the Rūm [the Byzantines] dominions, outside Muslim territories, which resulted in the conquest of Crete.

According to all of these accounts – Ibn Hayyān, al-Maqqārī, and Ibn al-Athīr – the route undertaken by the Andalusis could be the following: after being expelled from Cordoba’s arrabalde, some of them sailed to North Africa and settled in places such as Fez. Because of discrepancies contained in sources, we are drawn to believe they might have drifted in the Mediterranean for some time where plundering and pirate attacks would take them. They would first arrive at Alexandria, and then would be forced to seek another location from where to undertake their attacks and mercantile actions, conquering Crete.

Further accounts make the reconstruction of their path more complicated as their identity becomes more obscure. The Byzantine chronic Theophanes Continuatus, though not providing the reader with dates of events nor mentioning a rebellion in Cordoba,
asserts that the population of the westernmost part of al-Andalus (what is known usually as al-Gharb al-Andalus), because of the very poor condition of the soil, decided to migrate taking as leader Aḥū Ḥafṣ, who embarked with several men, carrying out pirate actions against Byzantine islands without any resistance, settling afterwards in Crete. He also connects the revolt of Thomas and the consequent disregard of the Byzantine fleet towards Crete with the easiness that these Andalusis conquered the island. Vassilios Christides also underlines that the revolt of Thomas the Slav, a Byzantine commander who rebelled ca. 821, was a great disaster for the Greeks, who left the island without protection.

Al-Ṭabarī also connects the Andalusis of Alexandria with those who later occupied Crete. This account is described under the events which took place in 210 A.H., and describes briefly how ‘Abdallah bin Tahir entered Egypt and made an ultimatum to the Andalusis: either they would surrender or war would be declared upon them. The Andalusis agreed to submit to the ‘Abbasid governor with the condition of obtaining immunity to leave Alexandria peacefully for a territory belonging to the Rūm, which could not be under Muslim rule, choosing Crete.

Al-Nuwayrī, Egyptian historian who lives between the 13th and 14th centuries, asserts that before the arrival of the Andalusis to Crete, the island testified previous Muslim incursions and that a character called Ḥamīd bin Mayūn al-Hamadānī, in times of the ‘Abbasid caliph Ḥārūn al-Rashīd, had conquered part of the island. Therefore, Crete was long under the eye of Muslim powers or piracy, as they evidently understood its privileged geographical position as a door to enter into the Aegean Sea. Al-Nuwayrī understands clearly its importance as he adds to its narrative that from Crete its new rulers, with a fleet of 40 vessels, “infested with their incursions all the islands among its circuit”. Moreover, al-Nuwayrī identifies these new occupants of Crete as those who previously had been in Alexandria, city they ruled for some time, as described by the historian, and from where they were expelled by Ibn Ṭāhir who was obliged to pay them a stipulated amount of money and to transfer them to Crete. Al-Nuwayrī underlines the power of the Amirate of Crete, stating that during Romanus II’s reign Byzantium paid

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114 Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 73-76.
116 Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes I, 287, “Extraits de Tabari”.
118 Ibid., 274.
their rulers an amount to prevent them from ravishing territories around Crete and to obtain a permit for Byzantine traders to freely disembark in the island, from whom the government of Crete would receive rights over merchandise.\textsuperscript{119} Al-Nuwayrī accounts as well, in a theatrical narrative, worthy of the Trojan horse tale, that the island could only be conquered under Romanus II’s rule, through the use of a stratagem: the emperor had recently asked the amīr of Crete to accept 500 mares who were to give birth in his territory, because of Constantinople’s drought. After the Cretan accepted it, Romanus sent an army, under the greatest of secrecy, lead by Nikephoras Phocas, who, when arriving in Crete, rode their own horses and easily conquered the island.\textsuperscript{120}

As exposed by Vassilios Christides, Greek scholar who wrote the most detailed study dedicated to the Amirate of Crete, the Aegean island seems to have been conquered in stages, as dates differ both in Byzantine and Arabic sources, though 827/8 is the date mostly accepted by scholars.\textsuperscript{121} Nevertheless, he believes that its conquest by Abū Ḥafṣ and his followers should be directly connected to the previously mentioned revolt of Thomas, and therefore Muslim landing in Crete should have happen ca. 824, succeeded by the gradual conquest of the island. Christides also adds that before its conquest the island suffered Muslims raids. After that, the ‘Abbasids took the opportunity of having a Muslim ally in the Aegean area and incited the undesirable Andalusis of Alexandria to conquer it, and even offered to transfer them there.\textsuperscript{122}

Juan Signes believes that Andalusi pirates and adventurers, often described by Christian sources as Mauri, are reported to attack Mediterranean islands, such as Sardinia and Corsica, since 806. These attacks were often repelled either by the Carolingians or joint forces of Naples, Gaeta and Amalfi. He further points out that the rebels of Cordoba were not the real conquerors of Alexandria nor Crete, territories which he believes had already been occupied by Hispanic pirates who were helped in their conquests by these new migrants.\textsuperscript{123}

Although previous existence of adventurers or small communities of Andalusis in the Mediterranean is undoubtable, I believe the sources are quite evident concerning the

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 275.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 275-6; Coelho, “Portugal na Espanha Árabe, 181-182. Borges Coelho translates this excerpt.
\textsuperscript{121} Christides, The Conquest of Crete, 84-86.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 90-91.
occupation of Crete, intrinsically connected with the inhabitants of Cordoba suburbs, driven there around 826/827 by Ibn Ṭāhir. It is also quite clear, either in Muslim and Byzantine sources, that Crete, though forgotten at the moment by Byzantium and suffering several Muslim raids, was officially one of its potenates. Furthermore, Crete was occupied as a result of one of al-Ma’mun or Ibn Ṭāhir’s prerogatives – the island could not be a Muslim dominium.

Ibn Mufarrij gives trails of previous piracy manoeuvres when describing not one but two rebellions taking place in Cordoba. The first rebellion in 189 A.H. could sustain M. Canard’s believe that the settling of Andalusians in Alexandria was as early as 816, whose occupation lasted until 827, year in which they finally sailed to Crete, island, “according to the Byzantine sources, they already knew from having made a raid there”.124

This issue is relevant for this thesis, insofar as to understand adventurers were long known to act in the Mediterranean. Their provenience is sometimes obscure, but it is clear they came from al-Andalus. They are thought to have arrived in Crete at different chronologies and without connection amongst them other than their disenchantment of al-Ḥakam I’s policies. The aforementioned chronicle of Theophanes Continuatus also contributes for addressing the importance of these adventurers, who were known in the Mediterranean since the beginning of the 9th century. The reasons which moved them were mainly their social condition. Theophanes Continuatus refers the precarious situation of Andalusis living in Gharb al-Andalus. This version is also consistent with that of Ibn Mufarrij, presented by Ibn Ḥayyān’s chronic, which identifies a second rebellion in 202 A.H (after a first one taking place in 189 H.), as a result of the “rejection of the taxation he [the amīr] made to them on tithes over grains”.125 This tax was considered, according to Muslim law, as illegal as it was not part of the legal almsgiving (zakat), a problem that was each day more present in al-Andalus muwalladun society, especially because al-Ḥakam I and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s reigns saw a great rise of conversion to Islam, causing, ironically, a great fall for state revenue, which lived mainly of legal taxes paid either by Christians or Jews.

Very little is known about the history of the Amirate of Crete, which lasted ca. 135 years, and the best research has been accomplished by Vassilios Christides, as

125 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 72.
mentioned above. Even the names of its rulers are obscure and only known by Byzantine and Arab sources outside Crete. Several attempts were made by Byzantine emperors to reconquer it, such as under the regency of Theodora, when in 843 a great expedition against Crete was conducted, resulting in the partial liberation of the island, though it did not last long. From this important naval base they questioned Byzantium’s hegemony in the most important mercantile channel, the Mediterranean. From the Amirate of Crete attacks were conducted against Byzantine bases, one of the first attacks starting short time after the Andalusi settling in the island, in October 829 when a Byzantine fleet was defeated in the Battle of Thasos. This battle seems to be followed by other attacks in the Aegean Sea shores, such as the 829 attack on Mount Athos, causing its desertion.

After the danger they represented in the Aegean Sea, it was time for the Cretans to go as far as the Propontis Sea (nowadays Marmara Sea), in the 860’s or early 870’s. Under “Saelus Apochapsis filius, Cretae dominus” a Cretan fleet is reported by Georgius Cedrenus to have arrived as far as the Prokonnesos island (today Marmara island), commanded by Photius, having been able to cross the Hellespont, being however defeated by the droungarios Nicetas Oryphas. Apparently for the first time, a Cretan fleet was able to reach quite near the Byzantine capital, and their rulers had to wait a hundred years more to put an end to the danger inflicted on them by the Amirate of Crete. Georges C. Miles goes farther, stating that “not since Umayyad days had Muslims so closely threatened the capital”, ironically the ancestors of the Umayyads of al-Andalus, the Umayyads of Damascus who attempted to conquer the city for the second time in 717/718.

Ninth century saw other raids perpetrated by the Cretans. The early 10th century was even more destructive, as it saw in 904 the attack of a joint force of Arabs from Crete, Syrian and North African, commanded by Leo of Tripoli, a military renegade who fled to Syria. This resulted in the great sack of Thessaloniki, making several prisoners and slaves. Joint attacks between Cretans and Syrians appear to have become usual and both powers seem to have been in contact.

126 Ahrweiler, Byzance et la Mer, 112.
127 Theophanes Continuatus, 137.
129 Canard, “Iktirish”, 1083. M. Canard says that he was probably a renegade from the Greek army.
130 Georgius Cedrenus, trans. Immanuel Bekker, (Bonn, 1839), 227.
131 Miles, “Byzantium and Arab relations”, 9.
132 Ibid., 10.
133 Canard, “Iktirish”, 1084.
An interesting theory even reports an occupation of Athens by the Cretans, between 896 until 902. Archaeological findings have uncovered typically Andalusi Kufic calligraphy in marble fragments, which presumably belonged to the mosque built in the Greek city, and of which chronology Miles places it after 961, identifying this “Arab presence” with traders rather than raiders. Thus, after the conquest of Crete by the Byzantine Empire in 961, some of the Cretans who escaped might have established in Athens, from where they conducted their business mercantile affairs.

Research also points out that Byzantine sources accounting names of sovereigns of the Amirate of Crete, as well as archaeological findings of coins, have contributed to reconstruct a political regime of succession, whose trade in the area was based on a monetary system of three metals.

This clearly suggests these men, usually identified as being only pirates, were powerful enough to issue golden currency, and whose trade seemed equally important as their “piracy” acts. Accounts reporting the existence of quḍāʾ (sing. qāḍī), or judges, as well as individuals traveling to Crete to learn with scholars there, may evidence the existence of an embryonic court culture, which was starting to take form around the Cretan amīr.

Their power seemed to have expanded, likewise other Muslim powers, in the Mediterranean. Apparently other islands in the Aegean Sea were controlled by them, such as Patmos Island in the Southern Sporades. Byzantine sources even point out that Naxos, another Aegean island, paid tribute to the Cretan Amirate. As seen above, al-Nuwayrī even reports an amount paid annually to Crete to prevent their attacks in the Aegean area and to safeguard maritime trade.

However, the reconquer of the island reduced to sand the remainders of the Amirate, leaving us with no relevant archaeological evidence, even in its capital, Chandax or Khandaq. However, Crete could be described as a “treasure house of objects of art and

135 Ibid., 19-20. To see more about this presence in Athens the reader must report to the following article: George C. Miles, “The Arab mosque in Athens”, Hesperia, 25 (1956).
136 Ibid., 15-16.
137 Christides, The Conquest of Crete, 81. Vassilios Christides says that the identification of these men as pirates is a misconception, as their origin should be identified as muwalladūn under al-Ḥakam I’s reign, who decided to take action against the discrimination they believed to suffer and that before being expelled from al-Andalus never had any experience in sailing.
luxury”, as Byzantine sources by the time of its conquest reveal the immensurable booty obtained by Nicephoros Phocas, as Crete was a museum of objects collected from raids.\(^{139}\)

The negligence of Constantinople towards Mediterranean islands, such as Crete, which eventually caused it to be conquered by Abū Ḥafṣ and his followers, revealed to be one of the main factors for the self-inflicted loss of the primacy in the Mediterranean. Byzantium did not only lose their primacy in the Mediterranean, they were about to have loose ends in the Aegean Sea, as from the conquer of Crete the Byzantine Empire could not control any longer who entered the sea which eventually would lead to the Marmara Sea, towards the capital. This primacy was now in the hands of several Arab powers, such as the Aghlabids who took Sicily in 827/28, or the Umayyads of al-Andalus. Hélène Ahrweiler asserts that 9th century was without discussion the Arab maritime century, who became the new referees for trade in the Mediterranean.\(^{140}\) On this matter a new reference work, which premise was long due to date, has been published recently under the authorship of the French scholar, Christophe Picard. The historian points out that Arab expansion in the Mediterranean is often vulgarized by medieval history, which imposes a Latin chronology, speaking only of Arab piracy attacks in a sea mastered by Latin sea ports. This generalized view of Western Academia is quite opposed to the idea of those Arab chroniclers who described the Mediterranean space as an exclusively Muslim area.\(^{141}\)

It is not reliable to believe the Amirate of Crete answered for their acts to the amīr of Cordoba, though some sources presumed they maintained mercantile relations with al-Andalus, importing olive oil from there.\(^{142}\) As they were offered help from the ‘Abbasid governor in Egypt, Ibn Ṭāhir, to settle in Crete, they are thought to recognize, although only nominally, the authority of the ‘Abbasid caliph in Bagdad. This is also sustainable because in 853 a Byzantine army attacked Damietta, seizing arms which were supposed to be shipped to Crete.\(^{143}\) The content of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s letter, as seen above, also assert that the Cretans were under ‘Abbasid rule.

‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II discarded any responsibility towards the Amirate of Crete, exhorting Theophilos’ own capacity as basileus to get rid of this new Muslim power. He only makes a very unrealistic promise: in the event the ‘Abbasids would be deposed and

\(^{139}\) Miles, “Byzantine and Arabs”, 21.  
\(^{140}\) Ahrweiler, Byzance et la Mer, 96.  
\(^{141}\) Christophe Picard, La Mer des Califes, 10-11, 81.  
\(^{142}\) Canard, “Iktirish”, 1082.  
\(^{143}\) Canard, “Iktirish”, 1083.
the Caliphate was restored to his own dynasty, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II would as well restore Byzantine power in territories conquered recently by Muslim powers. This also supports the theory that the Amirate of Crete was under nominal rule of the ‘Abbasids, as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II seems to presume that a clear connection was set between the capacity of the Amirate of Crete to sustain their power and the power held in Baghdad by the ‘Abbasids. Christides has no doubt that Crete recognized nominally the Caliphate of Baghdad, which is proved by their coins bearing the name of the ‘Abbasid caliph.144

4.2.2. The conquest of Sicily and the Andalusi adventurers

The golden maritime era for Arab powers saw some still obscure alliances. Ibn ‘Idhārī reports that in Rabī‘ al-Awwal of 212 A.H. (May-June 827), year in which Andalusis are reported to conquer Crete, the Aghlabid amīr, Ziyāda Allāh, sent an expedition to Sicily under the leadership of qāḍī Asad bin al-Furāt, who will be followed by “nobles of the jund of Ifrīqiyya, Arabs, Berbers and Spaniards”, obtaining great booty there and putting siege in Syracuse, only possible because of supplies and help sent form Ifrīqiyya and al-Andalus (“Espagne”).145 Lévi-Provençal has no doubt that this was part of Andalusian piracy, organized under the suzerainty of al-Ḥakam I, but completely alien to central power.146

The chronicler does not mention whether this support was official or unofficial. Ibn Khaldūn also asserts that in 214 A.H. a fleet from al-Andalus arrived together with North African vessels to Sicily, when Aghlabid troops were almost succumbing to the Byzantines. Ibn Khaldūn also says that these troops were able in 217 A.H. to conquer Palermo.147 It is known how amīr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II started to develop a policy of interests towards North Africa, even taking into his tutelage the Rustumid rulers of Tahart.148 Sources keep total silence about relations with other North African powers such as the Aghlabids, as this Amirate was nominally an ‘Abbasid province. Though it is doubtful the existence of a connection between those fleets from al-Andalus with the central power in Cordoba, it is also not possible to believe their actions were not of the

144 Christides, The Conquest of Crete, 114.
146 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 159.
148 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 159.
amīr’s knowledge. In fact, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II and his court seemed to be quite familiarized with manoeuvres taking place in the Mediterranean and even in the East. Al-Ḥakam I and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II kept agents in the ‘Abbasid court. In one passage of his Muqtabis, Ibn Hayyān expresses how their agents, who were also traders, were able to attend ceremonies in the ‘Abbasid court in Iraq. This account describes al-Ghazāl attributes to poetry, who happened to be at the time performing at the ‘Abbasid court, where simultaneously was the amīr of Egypt, ‘Abd Allāh bin Ṭāhir, precisely the governor who expelled the Andalus from Alexandria, who is accounted to have appreciated al-Ghazāl’s poetry.149 Though the Umayyads did not have official relations with the ‘Abbasids they were quite informed of the situation in the East, and al-Ghazāl and the Umayyad agents seem to have successfully contacted the governor of Egypt. It is also known how ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān was the first amīr whose agents travelled to Iraq to obtain and copy books from Classic authors, becoming the first who introduced these works in al-Andalus.150

In fact, Theophilos refers in his own letter that the alliance between ‘Abbasids and Aghlabids, was suffering a dissension. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II in his answer wrote: “and what you say about the rulers of Ifriqiyyah and their alienation from Ibn Maridah, their disobedience to him and their disgust towards his dynasty (…)”.151

This passage is clear about Theophilos’ intentions: the basileus was trying to convince ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān into joining forces against events taking place in Sicily. Theophilos thought that the amīr of al-Andalus was more powerful than in reality was. The Theophilos might have thought that he could intercede on his behalf and reach an agreement with his neighbours, the Aghlabids, whom he could take into his own tutelage. Thus, he makes use of a new plea: the Aghlabids could be defeated as they were not fully protected by the ‘Abbasids, with whom they were in dissension.

The translators of Muqtabis II-1 assert that no sources report this disagreement. However, future events show that an alliance with the Aghlabids was not that inconceivable, as ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II’s successor, Muḥammad I, engages in relations with these rulers, with whom he exchanges embassies ca. 875.152

149 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 146.
150 Ibid., 169-170.
151 Ibid., 296.
152 Ibid., 296, see note 624. The translators account these exchanges with Muḥammad I in 875, attested by al-Muqtabis II-2.
Theophilos understands that a new Mediterranean era orchestrated by the Arabs was taking shape, and that is precisely why he sends his embassy to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II.

Theophilos, as Ibn Khaldūn or Ibn ‘Idhārī, knew Andalusis took part in expeditions against his own possessions in Sicily – if they were connected or not to the central power is an irrelevant question, especially in the eyes of the Byzantine Emperor – took the initiative in sending an embassy to whom he thought should take responsibility for his own subjects, who might as well present a threat to al-Andalus.

4.2.3. An overview

As for Theophilos’ hopes for recovering territories recently conquered from foreign powers to Byzantium, they seem to be quite low, as he had already tried to establish alliances before, resorting afterwards to al-Andalus. Lévi-Provençal suggests that the basileus, having failed an alliance with the Venetians and Franks, sent a mission to al-Andalus.153

In fact, The Annals of Saint Bertin, account an embassy from Theophilos arriving at the court of Louis the Pious at Ingelheim on 18 May 839.154 The mission, headed by Theodosius, metropolitan bishop of Chalcedon, and Theophanus the Spatharius, is reported to concern the confirmation of the treaty of peace and perpetual friendship between both sovereigns. However, this embassy had evidently other aims, such as the fight against piracy attacks suffered by both empires. It seems that this embassy was received in Ingelheim before the reception of the embassy in Cordoba, and the ambassadors’ names do not coincide with the name of the ambassador sent to al-Andalus.

Why would Theophilos send an embassy to the distant Umayyad Amirate of al-Andalus? At first sight, and as I have written above, exchanging embassies was a way of recognition of a hegemonic Mediterranean power in relation to another which is becoming so. Therefore, this does not seem the right question to ask, but another appears to me as more relevant: why would Theophilos choose to send this embassy precisely at this moment?

As pointed out earlier in this thesis, Juan Signes seems to suggest that Theophilos was aiming for attracting al-Andalus into his own orbit, which for the historian would be

justified by exploiting the traditional hostility felt towards the ‘Abbasids. Nevertheless, Ibn Ḥayyān sees this initiative as an imperial humiliation. Of course it must be taken into account that Ibn Ḥayyān was a partisan of the Umayyads, and therefore might have had a propaganda agenda. However, and as it was exposed before, it is most unlikely that Constantinople could be in a position to possess intentions of attaining a new tributary state.

Theophilos had more ambitious problems, one of them called Sicily, island that was being conquered gradually, though irreversibly, by the Aghlabids. The loss of Sicily meant as well a great event for the Arab dominance of the Mediterranean and the consequent feebleness of Byzantium: it meant for Byzantium not only losing control of Italian coastal regions, but more importantly the loss of sovereignty of territories possessed beyond Sicily. Therefore, deprivation of Sicily did not only meant the loss of Sicily, it marked the block of access to the whole western Mediterranean, and irreversibly from then on no longer accessible to Byzantium. It doomed Byzantine mercantile interests and sovereignty of other islands such as Sardinia, which will act as an independent power from then on, and in fact will later send an embassy to Caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III of al-Andalus. Geography allied to the Aghlabid control of Sicily will dictate a great loss for the Byzantine Empire. The strait between Ifrīqiyya (nowadays Tunisia) and Sicily, which control was now on the hands of the Aghlabid, marks the loss of Byzantine access to the western half of the Mediterranean.

Constantinople understands that its control of the Mediterranean is threatened and the western part of the sea is lost. Crete, which was long being harassed, since the beginning of the 9th century, either by independent groups of Muslim sailors or by Muslim powers, was finally conquered by a group of Andalusi, expelled from al-Andalus. Either they were pirates or just unsatisfied peasants, they were for some time, though chronologies might be discussed or several independent migrant groups from al-Andalus might be involved, able to detain at least a part of Alexandria, one of the most important Mediterranean seaports.

So it can be argued that they were obviously looking not only for a fertile and sustainable land, but also and more importantly, for a territory that would bring them the benefits of the Mediterranean trade, detained by then mostly by Muslims. It seems as well that the ‘Abbasids would benefit from this alliance, though a nominal one, which might

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155 Signes, “Bizancio y al-Andalus”, 199.
open the Aegean Sea for Muslims. This revealed quite profitable for the new lords of Crete, as they even managed to enter the Marmara Sea, and at some point were receiving taxes levied on traders and goods arriving at the island, which apparently had become a trading centre, and not only an Amirate living only out of plunder.

Not long after Crete was occupied by Andalusian adventurers, the Aghlabids, Berber dynasty tributary of the ‘Abbasid caliph, started to conquer Sicily in 827.

Andalusi independent sailors are known to intervene in Sicily, such as those described by Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn ‘Idhārī. In fact, one of these fleets, arriving in Sicily in 214 A.H., approximately 830 A.D., would eventually be part of the conquering of Palermo and the reason why the Aghlabids did not succumb to Byzantine army in the island, as Ibn Khaldūn testifies. This means the “official” loss of the island for Theophilos.

Ibn Khaldūn does not mention anything regarding the connection between this fleet and the central power in Cordoba. For Lévi-Provençal there are no doubts that these adventurers were acting at their own risk and no ties could connect them to the amīr of al-Andalus.156 However, even Provençal admits, in the same passage, that although sources kept silence towards relations with the Aghlabids, these certainly existed, as Qayrawan was an important trading city from where goods and innovations from the east arrived at Cordoba.

The connection seems to lack credibility, but that was irrelevant for Theophilos. It is quite evident that the Byzantine emperor, either the adventurers of Crete or those arriving at Sicily would have or not ties with Cordoba, believed ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II should answer and rectify acts perpetrated by his own subjects. The basileus assumed that ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II possessed a naval fleet which aimed to protect his own interests in the coasts of Maghreb al-Aqṣā, and could act against them. It is also known that ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II was very well informed of events taking place in North Africa, and even taking part in its politics. He had tributaries in North Africa, such as the Rustumids, who sent an embassy to Cordoba in 822.157 At some occasions ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II even intervened directly in their politics, such as the occasion in which Cordoba sent 10,000 dracmas to the Rustumid amīr as a reward for having destroyed the palatine city of the Aghlabids, al-‘Abbasiyya.158 In this case it is quite apparent that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II supported sovereigns who declared

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157 Ibid., 159.
war against the Aghlabids. Although he might fear the rapid expansion of the Aghlabids in the Mediterranean, especially with the help of presumable independent armadas departing from al-Andalus, he benefited from the trade arriving from Qayrawan. It was not ‘Abd ar-Rahman II who should worry about the Aghlabid expansion but the Byzantines, whom he left to act alone in Sicily.

Some sources, cited previously, even claimed the Cretans possessed trade ties with al-Andalus, which if they did was of the knowledge of the amīr.

If in fact ‘Abd al-Raḥmān possessed a naval fleet or armada before 844, when a Viking attack urged for a strongest coastal defence, is still a debatable issue amongst scholars. Eduardo Manzano believes that Theophilos’ hopes, when despatching an ambassador to al-Andalus, were based on the misconception that ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II possessed a naval fleet able to control adventurers or pirates acting in the Mediterranean, as the amīr did not own a “proper fleet” and his response to the basileus revealed that he could not “set up a Mediterranean policy”. Nevertheless, there are accounts reporting the existence of vessels and previous coastal defence, such as ḥuṣūn (sing. ḥiṣn) or ribāṭāt (sing. ribāṭ). Of course ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II could not undertake an expedition to the East, nor to act on his own in the central Mediterranean, but what matters for this embassy’s sake is the fact that political legitimacy and projection of the Umayyad of al-Andalus reached Theophilos’ court, who believed ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s pretensions to the righteous al-Andalus were based in real power. Perhaps ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II incapacity in acting officially (as with his own armada or fleet) was obviated by independent adventurers in the Mediterranean, of whose activities the amīr benefitted, though acting independently. If the ‘Abbasids seem to have benefited from the activities of the Cretans, either selling them weapons or taking a tribute from them, why wouldn’t ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II do the same, by taking advantage of trading or military benefits from Andalusi adventurers?

In fact, before the 844 Viking attacks, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II is presumed to have used the potential of these independent sailors, “renting” their fleets or armadas. It

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159 Manzano, “Byzantium and al-Andalus”, 227
161 Delgado, El poder naval de al-Andalus, 98.
appears that it was even before the advent of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II that his father, al-Hakam I, took advantage of private maritime initiative. Al-Ḥakam I decided to make Tortosa a regional capital and naval base, from where “pirates” are thought to have departed to help the Aghlabids in Sicily in 830, “in the name of the Amirate jihad”, which later, during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III caliphate, would become an official military capital with its own navy yard.162

Therefore it is in cities like Tortosa, established as naval bases due to independent sailors and private enterprise, where foundations of state controlled and owned naval fleet must be sought. Thus, the use and cooperation with these private naval initiative would later allow Caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III to crush all independent initiative and control all these naval communities.

Picard suggests as well that the Umayyad amir, before the Viking attacks of 844, used these private enterprises of independent sailors whenever necessary, and that they revealed to be a key factor, allowing an immediate reaction after the pillage of Seville.163

Ostrogorsky points out that the Mediterranean defence of Byzantium had become negligent after the fall of the Umayyad dynasty of Damascus, who possessed a strong naval fleet. Therefore, the empire overlooked that a new danger had arisen from Hispania, from where Andalusí adventurers left to conquer Crete.164 These independent Andalusi were causing great instability in the Mediterranean, and Theophilos might have presented the blocking of this instability as a great advantage for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s territory. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān could benefit himself from their fall, if he was not already taking advantages of the prevailing situation.

Ostrogorsky, who does not mention diplomatic exchanges between Cordoba and Constantinople, asserts that the loss of Crete for Muslim adventurers from Spain meant the loss of one of the strategic bases in the eastern Mediterranean, rapidly succeeded by the emergence of the Aghlabids in Sicily in 827.165

The conquest of Amorium by al-Mu’taṣim in August 838, one or two years before the dispatch of Theophilos embassy to al-Andalus, is described by Ostrogorsky as causing

162 Picard, La Mer des Califes, 150.
163 Ibid., 302-303.
165 Ibid., 206.
an “overwhelming impression” over Byzantium, as it was not only the most important city in Anatolia, but as well the crib of the ruling dynasty.\footnote{Ibid., 208.}

Therefore, Amorium, also an important trade city, could be perceived as the “last drop” for the Byzantines. Vasiliev articulates the disaster of Amorium with the despatch of several embassies from Constantinople to Western European courts. After al-Mu’taṣim conquest, Theophilos sent embassies to Venice and to Louis the Pious, as already mentioned. Nevertheless, Vasiliev sees in embassies despatched to Venetians and Franks a goal to achieve help against those “western Muslims” who were conquering Byzantine possessions in the Mediterranean. As for the embassy sent to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II he suggests that its political failure was due to al-Andalus’ internal problems and Viking attacks, leaving Theophilos to act on his own against the ‘Abbasids.\footnote{Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes I, 177-187.} However, it is unlikely that Theophilos could presume the Umayyad of Cordoba would have the power to help him in Amorium’s reconquest.

To better understand the amount of losses inflicted against Byzantium through the whole 9th century, it should be underlined once more that Sicily had a strategically situation in the Mediterranean and the events taking place from 827 on doomed the articulation the island staged before then, becoming on the contrary a separation of the western and eastern parts of the Mediterranean. Even the eastern part of it did not belong entirely to the Byzantine supremacy. Sicily had played an important role for the Byzantium, and Syracuse even became the empire’s capital in 663 when Emperor Constant II thought its strategic location would stop and control Arab and Lombard attacks.\footnote{Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 122.}

It is also important to keep in mind that Theophilos, probably because of his Iconoclasm vocation and Byzantium’s weakness towards the ‘Abbasids, was quite open to Eastern influence originated from Baghdad. Ostrogorsky goes farther, asserting that Theophilos build his character by mimicking the ‘Abbasid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd.\footnote{Ibid., 206.}

All this oriental influence from Baghdad, suffered by the court of Constantinople, will lead Theophilos to send several emissaries to Muslim powers, such as the Umayyads. This enchantment towards Muslim culture resulted from Byzantium’s feebleness in the imperial frame of that time, precisely because one century and a half earlier his empire
had served as model for the Umayyad caliphs of Damascus. In the 9th century the process reverts and the hegemony of the ‘Abbasids was perceivable through the adoption of its models by surrounding powers, such as Byzantium.

Crete, Sicily, Amorium. The combination of these three disasters for Byzantium triggered Theophilos to send several embassies to western powers, such as al-Andalus, whom he probably held accountable for Crete’s loss, and which appears to be the main topic of Theophilos own missive and reason for despatching an embassy. He also seized the opportunity, not only to establish friendly relations with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, but also to try to seduce ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, whom he knew to be a natural enemy of the ‘Abbasids. Crete, as well as those Andalusi adventurers acting in the western Mediterranean, and whose help appeared to Ibn Khaldūn as the main reason for the success of Palermo, seems the main reason for the embassy. They were also a necessary excuse for the basileus to contact the Umayyad amīr, on whom he puts his hopes after both embassies to the Venetians and Franks had failed.

The abrupt interruption of these exchanges with Cordoba can also be explained by the alliance of 841 between the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Mu‘tasim and Theophilos, which seems to have been desperately requested by the basileus. After Theophilos request for the exchange of captives, al-Mu‘tasim “displayed insolent generosity”, writing a letter to the emperor stating: “We cannot compare the values of Muslims and Christians, for God esteems those more than these. But if you restore me the Saracens without asking for anything in return, we can give you twice as many Romans, and thus surpass you in everything”. Such was the situation of Byzantium of that time. Of course the existence of Byzantium was not directly threatened. Baghdad was too far and the borders of the empire more or less stable, though its power was enough to surpass the Byzantine Empire and inflict losses within it.

Aiming for an equilibrium among his diplomatic relations, Theophilos seeks to explore new exchanges with the Umayyads, whose peripheral though emergent power had manage to build a new cultural and political identity under the auspices of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II. This new identity achieved the recognition of Umayyad legitimacy, not only in the eyes of its subjects, but also in the eyes of imperial powers such as Byzantium.

Theophilos sees a chance to use the Hispanic danger to his own benefit. He understands as well that the Umayyds had their own circle of tributaries, exploring his

170 J. B. Bury, A history of the Eastern Roman Empire from the fall of Irene to the accession of Basil I (A.D. 802-867) (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), 274.
own interests in North Africa, and that Byzantium could attempt to ask and use all these players in an alliance aiming at recovering Crete or Palermo, as it is not reliable that Theophilos had any hopes to recover remote Amorium with the Umayyds’ help. Special emphasis seems to be placed in the situation of Crete. But also Sicily, as Theophilos referred to the Aghlabids and their presumable disagreements with the ‘Abbasids. The basileus saw in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II a potential powerful ally in western Mediterranean that could hold the Aghlabid pretensions as well as those possessed by his own subjects.

No further diplomatic exchanges are accounted between both powers until more than a century later, due to a peace agreement between Theophilos and al-Muta’sim. These exchanges will be renovated again under the sovereignty of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in al-Andalus and Constantine VII in Byzantium, who will undertake several military campaigns which aimed to conquer Crete.

Even though no political or military agreement is achieved and a century goes by without diplomatic exchanges, the Byzantine embassy served a clear purpose: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II “felt extremely flattered, as nothing could sustain more his conviction that he was a powerful and respected sovereign.”

4.3. The poetics of the scenography of power: the embassy of Yaḥya al-Ghazāl to Constantinople

After Theophilos sent the first Byzantine embassy to Cordoba in 839/840, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II commissioned al-Ghazāl and al-Munayqila to escort him to the Byzantine capital where they were also to deliver the missive from the amīr to Theophilos.

Yaḥya bin Ḥakam al-Bakrī, nicknamed al-Ghazāl, because of his beauty (al-Ghazāl means gazelle, an attribute given to both women and young boys), was a poet and courtier who was born in Jaen during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s reign and died under the rule of Muḥammad I (852-886).

His companion and homonymous, Yaḥya, called Ṣāḥib al-Munayqilla (the man with the little clock), is not known to us. Ibn Ḥayyān does not convey more biographical data than his name and nickname.

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171 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 162.
172 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 144, 244.
The chapter describing both the requisition of al-Ghazāl by the amīr to carry out this diplomatic task and his stay in Constantinople is presented by Ibn Ḥayyān before the account reporting the arrival of Qūrtiyus, ambassador of Theophilos, and the description of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s missive.\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 228-244.} This is easily explained, as Ibn Ḥayyān compiled previous works.

This account has been acknowledged by Lévi-Provençal as describing “interesting and picturesque details, as well as attractive anecdotes”.\footnote{Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 163.} Thus, the lack of description concerning the reception of Qūrtiyus’ embassy oppose to al-Ghazāl’s mission in Byzantium, which possesses extensive anecdotes. Due to its “anecdotic” nature this account is usually neglected by scholars who do not manage to find historical, ceremonial and political meaning in it, choosing often not to describe it nor to comment on it.

Though some caution may be expected from researchers, there are events described in this account that arise interest regarding ceremonial and its influence from the East.

At first, Ibn Ḥayyān accounts poems composed by the courtier who, because of his advanced age, was trying to be exonerated from his mission, most of them in a sarcastic tone, describing his bad-tempered wife whom he equals to an ogre due to her aging.\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 229.} So, Ḥsa bīn Ḥmad al-Rāżī, from whom Ibn Hayyan copies this account, and who speaks of it as having witnessed most of these events, seems more worried to entertain the audience, as in fact was the poet’s aim, than to give an accurate description of the events, though they are still relevant.

Other verses follow in Ibn Ḥayyān’s account with this intention. Nevertheless, these did not help al-Ghazāl, as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II was resolute to send him. Ibn Hayyan’s account proceeds to describe the ambassadorial route to Constantinople, first by land and then by sea. Ibn Ḥayyān informs that the “secret message” of the amīr was delivered to the “tyrant”.\footnote{Ibid., 236.} The Andalusi historian then accounts the stratagem of al-Ghazāl, who escapes from prostrating at Theophilos’ feet, and a presumable burglary of a fine glass by the poet. I will discuss both events further ahead, as I shall first argue the importance of poetry, and in this specific case al-Ghazāl’s poetry, in court ceremonial and ambassadorial receptions.
Scenic events with Theophilos’ consort, Theodora, about whom al-Ghazāl composed odes to her beauty, and with the crown prince, Michael, are described.

Al-Ghazāl was known in the court of Cordoba as an innovator who brought new poetry styles to al-Andalus, while being in Iraq, where al-Hakam I and his son and successor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II kept informers or agents. This can be perceived through accounts, such as the trader who Ibn Hayyān mentions to have attended a ceremony at the ‘Abbasid court, where the governor of Egypt, ‘Abd Allāh bin Ṭāḥīr, showed his appreciation towards al-Ghazāl’s recitation of a type of poetry innovated by himself called ta’īn or confession of impotency.178

Though he became known while he was young in al-Ḥakam I’s court by his panegyric style,179 later on his easiness and integration in the court were such that he developed a satirical tone, and most of his poetry is labelled by Ibn Ḥayyān as “festive” and of “pleasantry”. This granted him quite a few enemies, especially in the circles of religious groups of the court, such as those of the fuqaha’, who accused him of being an atheist.180 His satirical poetry towards Ziryāb, Iraqi musician and courtier who enjoyed preferential treatment by the amīr, also granted him banishment from al-Andalus, which ironically provided him with a visit to Iraq, where he learnt the poetic models of great eastern masters.181 For poets such as al-Ghazāl, who was not even ashamed to depreciate his own sexual attributes by developing the style of “confessing impotency”, transgressing social standards was permissible and he made plenty use of this privilege, accusing the fuqaha’ to enrich through obscure ways at the expenses of Islam.

When ‘Abd ar-Rahman II “asked” al-Ghazāl to accompany the Byzantine ambassador, the poet, who was already septuagenarian, requested to be dismissed from this task, which involved travelling and time. It is in this passage that al-Ghazāl refers to a previous ambassador sent to Constantinople, which would antagonize Ibn Hayyan’s own account that this exchange was the first amongst the Umayyads of Cordoba and the Byzantines. With this allusion, al-Ghazāl intended to be dismissed from his mission, suggesting that the amīr should send “the other”, whose name was Ibn Abī Tilbah, in his turn – “and he alluded maliciously to the ambassador who was sent before to the country of the Byzantines”.182 This could be referring to an ambassador sent right after the

178 Ibid., 146.  
179 Ibid., 142.  
180 Ibid., 144, 149.  
reception of Qūrtiyyus, who later, upon his returning, was accompanied by al-Ghazāl and al-Munayqila. Perhaps the two ambassadors were to be reunited with a first one sent to Theophilos. Nevertheless, this is just speculation as we do not possess other sources mentioning a previous embassy.

Thus, the amīr seems to have chosen al-Ghazāl because of his skills regarding spoken and written word. The poet wrote:

Estos versos tan solo los compongo
Por necesidad de la fortuna a que me enfrento;
Los cristianos no tienen poesía que les recite,
Cuando llegue a parlamentar con ellos,
Ni querrán que copie sus libros,
Ni les ajuste cuentas, ni afrente en la fe;
Si lo que necesitan es barba grande
Sin juicio para el caso de rivalizar,
Abundo hay de cabrones alpujarreños.183

The poem, though intended to dismiss al-Ghazāl from his ambassadorial task, as Christians did not appreciate poetry, paradoxically and subtly makes the praise of al-Ghazāl qualities as poet, scholar and possessing a beard, an attribute for wise men, whose type, nevertheless, al-Ghazāl believed to prolifically exist in Alpujarras (mountain region of southern al-Andalus).

However, the Umayyad was determined in his preference for al-Ghazāl, most probably because such a courtier, proficient in the art of poetry and wordplay, would achieve with success the ungrateful task of presenting the emperor with the polite answer which transpired the negative of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s reply in acting with Byzantium against Andalusi adventurers in the Mediterranean, who conquered Crete around 826/827. In fact, one of al-Ghazāl’s verses seems to allude to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s aim to acknowledge friendly relations with Byzantium, but at the same time refusing to act jointly:

Se olvidaron de mí cuando había esperanza,

183 Ibid., 231. Poems accounted in this chapter will remain in its Spanish translation, as I do not feel comfortable to translate poetry.
Pero ante lo ingrato me empújan

Nonetheless his stubbornness, al-Ghazāl was reassured by the amīr who conceded his family plenty of donations and qataʾī (rents), which he begged from the amīr, by means of his poetry.

Poetry played a central role in court culture as well as in ceremonies, such as receptions of ambassadors. In fact, sources describing ulterior receptions give to poets and intellectual men a central role in court ceremonial, as they were commissioned to speak eloquently about the sovereign and his power, and to show knowledge of eastern masters. They were expected to present to the audience and the Caliph, seated centrally in his sarīr, a qaṣīda praising his power, and further attaching to the rich scenic tapestry stage, composed by Quraysh family members, ḥujjāb, wuzarāʾ, kuttāb, eunuchs and others, carefully placed by order of precedence, a veneration atmosphere. Sometimes this worship, luxurious, and at the same time rigorous set, was such a heavy feast for the eyes and heart that even the poet would stammer and “was soon reduced to silence by the terror that this most imposing scene produced in his mind”. On the same occasion, al-Maqqarī reports that a poet named Mundhir bin Saʿīd was chosen to address the audience, revealing his poetic attributes, which earned him the office of qāḍī al-jamaʿ. So, the court and even its most meticulously drawn ceremonies presented to poets an opportunity to shine in the eyes of the representative of the divine, the sovereign, the highest of the patrons of arts, who appointed poets for administrative offices, based on their poetic skills, which were strongly associated to their political expertise.

The vivid ceremonial image accounted in al-Maqqarī history, though reporting to later days of the Umayyad dynasty, during the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, evidently had its roots under the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II. Ibn Ḥayyān describes ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II as the first sovereign who introduced pomp in al-Andalus: “‘Abd al-Raḥmān II was the first of the marwanid caliphs who gave splendour to the monarchy in al-Andalus, assigning it with pomp and majesty, conferring to it a reverential feature and electing the right men for each function”.

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184 Ibid., 231.
185 Ibid., 229, 233.
186 Al-Maqqarī, Naqīf II, 138. The historian is reporting the account of a Byzantine embassy received in Córdoba in 336 A.H. (ca. 947).
187 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 171.
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The majlis where these receptions took place in Madinat az-Zahra is a true stage of a theatrical play, coated with the finest tapestry and carved stucco, where order of precedence must be attended to and the magnificence and terror produced by this scenography of power was expected to be put into words by poets.

This stage was indeed an “imitatio of divine creation” and the social order reproduced in it “mirrors the cosmic order”.  

Poetry seems to be as well part of a puzzle set composed by three pieces: poetry, music and dancing. This was true for a more relaxed context in a courtly scenario, with cultural and amusement purposes, where drinking alcohol played a strong role. Oleg Grabar understands these semi-private ceremonies as an integral part of the court life, of which influences must be sought amongst Sassanid rulers, but not exclusively, as drinking and listening to music had been an almost mandatory connection for societies preceding the Umayyads.

If ceremonies such as receptions of ambassadors or religious festivities should be understood as an imitatio of divine creation, so poetic recitation, music and drink ought not to be dismissed as mere relaxation environments, but assumed as part of an idyllic paradisiacal scenario, that of the janna’, the Muslim paradise. Descriptions of this paradise are quite famous, where believers enjoying their family company and exquisite banquets served in priceless vessels, with the same pomp and magnificence as in a court, are provided with gardens adorned by fountains and rivers of milk, honey and wine, and drinking from it does not cause intoxication.

As courtly complex ceremonies, such as a reception, seem to coexist with paradisiacal banquets showered with wine, the same phenomenon is transposed for poetry where panegyrics coexist simultaneously with the obscene style (mujun). Thus, as for a divine imitatio on earth, the educated society of the court could transgress Muslim prohibitions, such as that of wine drinking, as they were above the hierarchy, able to impersonate and attain paradise. Paradoxical ambivalence has been studied in the field of mujun poetry and it seems to occur frequently among medieval Muslim societies.

189 Oleg Grabar, “Ceremonial and Art at the Umayyad Court” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1955), 81-83.
191 Miguel Boronha, “Male homosexuality in Islamic normative and in the mujun literature of al-Andalus and the Maghreb between the 10th and 13th centuries” (MA diss., University of Lisbon, 2014).
especially among an elite of poets associated with court society, as poets seem to have enjoyed liberties not allowed to other courtiers.

This is quite evident in the account of Ibn Hayyān, as he transmits a poem of al-Ghazzāl to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II that begins with praise style and then proceeds in the mujun style. The poet at first refers to the amīr as the chosen one to rule both the East and the West, showing how al-Andalus was well informed about apocalyptic rumours circulating in the East prophesying the end of the ‘Abbasids, and made profit out of it, in order to claim its legitimacy:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Dios no me libere, si no nos traes} \\
\text{A la memoria al buen 'Umar,} \\
\text{Y el Oriente te ansía,} \\
\text{Con celos de Occidente}\end{align*}\]

Then the poet proceeds to expose his misfortunes caused by the prison, where he was then, and how frustrated he was by not being able to masturbate without feeling his chains.

As the excerpt evidences, legitimacy was a central role of the panegyric style adopted by Muslim courts such as the Umayyad of Cordoba. It served clear political purposes of propaganda of the dynastic lineage of the Umayyads. It is not an accident that this legitimacy was fully achieved during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s reign, described as the representative of “the first age of Andalucian culture”.

Poetry was indeed an exclusive and intrinsically Arabic art, dating back from a time previous to the coming of Islam. In jāhiliyya days, poets were part of a central set of the tribal identity and legitimacy, and this art developed and was inherited by urban and strongly educated court societies, where values of Bedouin ancestors were nothing but a memory. This specifically Arabic tradition was inherited by the first dynasty of caliphs of the Muslim Empire, the Umayyads of Damascus, who after their fall in the East transferred the literary genre of the panegyric qaṣīda to al-Andalus “as an integral element

192 Manzano, “Byzantium and al-Andalus”, 223. Theophilos seems as well to have taken these claims as a way to convince ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II to join forces with him against a mutual enemy.


194 Kennedy, Muslim Spain and Portugal, 46.

195 Hugh Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world. The rise and fall of Islam’s greatest dynasty, (United States: Da Capo, 2004), 113.
of the courtly ceremony and the insignia of authority of the cultural hegemony of the Arab conquerors and of Arabo-Islamic rule”\textsuperscript{196}

This transition suffered by poetics and poets, from a tribal and Bedouin environment to a quite complex court society, is in fact assigned to the Umayyads of Damascus. Though their status in a tribal society is reported to have been a more freely one, they acquired a new prestige under Umayyad rule: from a position of “translators of the feelings and emotions” of the people, poets started to express emotions of an elite\textsuperscript{197}

This tradition was also preserved by the ‘Abbasid court, as most of the poetry produced there was of praise style. As for al-Andalus the panegyric to the ruler seems sometimes to be one of the faces of the same coin, as the other was the \textit{muju\textsuperscript{n}} style. In the 9\textsuperscript{th} and 10\textsuperscript{th} centuries the ‘Abbasid court becomes the paradigm not only for Muslim courts but also for the Byzantine empire which centre emanates models that are to be followed by those who dream of surpassing it, as the Umayyads of Cordoba.

Indeed, the Umayyads, who once were the paradigm of models, now became receptors of a new one located in a Persian environment. In Ibn Ḥayyān’s account of this embassy, the poet is reported as proficient in the use of Iraqi masters such as Abū Nuwās,\textsuperscript{198} poet and courtier of the ‘Abbasid court, and was henceforth considered to be himself, al-Ghazāl, a master, due to his knowledge of the new paradigm of innovations. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II surrounds himself with groups of poets, similarly of what was practice in the court of Baghdad, where “golden dinars were showered on successful poets”.\textsuperscript{199}

Though it might be hard for nowadays Western societies to appreciate the aims of this praise poetic style, as Hugh Kennedy suggests, this can be easily understood when explained by a more westerner paradigm:

\textit{Perhaps we can see a parallel in the court portraiture of ancien régime monarchies in Western Europe. When we admire a heroic portrait, an image of Philip IV of Spain by Velázquez, for example, we know that Philip was a monarch with his share of imperfections and that the painter has made him look bolder and more impressive than he ever was in real life. But this apparent ‘dishonesty’ does not prevent us from appreciating the painting as a work of art. So it must have been for much of the audience}
for this praise poetry; of course it was exaggerated, but that did not detract from the skill of the poet or the imagination and originality of his compliments and comparisons.  

In a society where pictorial representation was a transgression, as no human soul should attempt to possess divine qualities of creation, what was later appreciated by the artistic eyes of 17th century European court societies, was long before appreciated by the artistic ears of 9th century Muslim court societies. As painting was a language of the Spanish court of the 17th century, poetry was the ceremonial language of Muslim courts.

As for the purpose of being dismissed of conducting the embassy to Constantinople, as well as for praising the empresses and her son’s qualities, al-Ghazal makes use of the poetry, art in which he was mastered and which was traditionally Arabic and develops under the patronage of the umarā’ and caliphs.

Ibn Hayyan describes how once Theophilos received al-Ghazāl in his private chambers, where the empress was also attending, “bejewelled and groomed as a rising sun”. As he was so lost in Theodora’s beauty, he did not take any attention to Theophilos’ words, and he was only forgiven due to the eulogy he made towards his wife, who started to act on al-Ghazāl’s behalf, “obtaining from the king those objectives which were complicated”. In the same passage, Ibn Ḥayyān describes how al-Ghazāl, who had a reputation of being greedy, asks that Theodora offers him some of her necklaces, so that he would be able to marry his daughters.

Another anecdote of al-Ghazāl’s relation with the empress reports an episode where Theodora takes the liberty to present her son, presumably the crown prince Michael, future Michael III, to al-Ghazāl private chambers:

I honour you by bringing my son to your side, the light of my eyes, to spend the night with you drinking and benefiting from your culture.

200 Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world, 114.
202 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-I, 236.
203 Ibid., 237.
204 Ibid., 237. The translation is mine.
Al-Ghazāl feels extremely flattered with this offer, but refuses on the ground that his religion did not allow him to do so and, as he claimed, he disliked it. Hence, his “decency” appears to have pleased the emperor, who later heard of this story. Al-Ghazāl dedicated a poem to both Theodora and her son:

Me tiene afecto el que aprecia mi persona
Y a menudo de tarde me visita; me vino un día con odre de vino
De aroma perfumado como almizcle en mecha,
A beberlo conmigo, pernoctar,
Y afirmar nuestro amor de amigos
Con él venía su madre y parecían
Cierva y cervatillo de alcoholados ojos;
Me lo confiaba diciendo: ‘Temo
Que sufra frío en la larga noche’.
Mas dije en mi locura tontería:
‘Por favor, no soy bebedor’
¡Que ocasión, Dios sea loado,
De haber sido yo sensato!205

Though al-Ghazāl seems tempted to take part in what appears to be an initiation ritual, paradoxically he excuses himself with religious beliefs. If this in fact happened, or if it was only intended to detract the royal habits of the Byzantine court, it is not for us to determine. Thus, pederasty was a social-cultural behaviour typical of Classical Greece, and seems to be followed under Muslim culture.206

Anecdotes alluding to sexuality and pleasantry with the empress are multiple, but this is not the place to debate it further.

Returning to the ceremonial around al-Ghazāl’s reception in Constantinople, there are two episodes most relevant to be discussed here.

One concerns the first time al-Ghazāl was received by Theophilos in Constantinople, when presumably he handed over to the emperor the letter from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I. As Theophilos knew that it was not customary for Muslims to bow when entering into the presence of the sovereign, he resorts to a trick: the door which gave

205 Ibid., 238.
206 Boronha, Male homosexuality in Islamic normative, 86.
access to the platform where the emperor was seated had been lowered, so that the ambassador was only able to cross it on his knees.\(^\text{207}\) As al-Ghazāl had previously been advised by the courtiers about what was customary in the Byzantine court, he complained and this was transmitted to the emperor, who resorted to this artifice of lowering the door. However, the same “anecdotic” account, reports al-Ghazāl escaping to this humility by entering the door on his back, which earned him compliments of the emperor, because of his sharpness.

Maribel Fierro, who addresses in an article what was customary during Western Muslim ceremonies in Medieval Islam, reports a quite similar event during the period of the governors of al-Andalus. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, governor of al-Andalus of the 8\(^{\text{th}}\), is accused by military commanders of building such a door in his audience chamber, so that those entering his presence would bow before him, something that is accounted to have been an advise of his wife, widow of Rodrigo, last Visigoth king. This trick prompted his assassination.\(^\text{208}\)

Bowing, at first was not accepted amongst Muslim sovereigns, even if the scenography of power was intended to attain a divine character. Indeed, bowing is perceived as an exclusive act reserved only for God, as shown by the ritual \textit{raka’} or bowing which follows the recitation of the Quran while standing, during the \textit{salā}, or pray. As in Ancient Greece, the Muslim court societies, initially, do not accept the bowing before a sovereign. The habit of the \textit{proskynesis},\(^\text{209}\) or bowing, in Byzantium, seems to have its roots in the Persian ceremonial. References to \textit{proskynesis} in Greek first appears in Herodotus or in Aeschylus when reporting Persian traditions in the court, and it seems to be introduced in Greece by Alexander the Great.\(^\text{210}\) \textit{Proskynesis} also implied waving a kiss, while prostrating on the ground, which was unacceptable for the early Muslims, as it was before Alexander the Great introduced it in Ancient Greece.

The \textit{Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa}, of Hilāl al-Ṣābi’, 11\(^{\text{th}}\) century chronicler who accounted ‘Abbasid ceremonial rules and regulations customary in the X\(^{\text{th}}\) century, states categorically that “it was not the practice of old for an \textit{amir}, a \textit{wazir}, or a high dignitary to kiss the ground when he entered the presence of the caliph”.\(^\text{211}\) This practice was not

\(^{208}\) Fierro, “Pompa y Ceremonia”, 136.
\(^{209}\) Signes, “Bizancio y al-Ándalus, 207. The author refers to \textit{proskynesis} when reporting the episode of al-Ghazāl and the lowered door.
accepted before the 10th century. Most probably it was not customary before the coming of the ‘Abbasids, who were influenced by the traditions of the Sassanid Persian court. He describes in the same passage how kissing the hand of the caliph, who would cover it with his sleeve to prevent it to be touched by mouth or lip, was replaced by prostrating on the ground. Al-Ṣābi’ asserts that both kissing the hand and proskynesis were only customary towards someone considered of high rank by the caliph, who was acknowledging his position and doing him a favour. He also adds that in the past, “the members of Hashemite House kissed neither the hand nor the ground.” Nevertheless, proskynesis and kissing the ground were adopted in receptions among the ‘Abbasids, as Ṣābi’, asserts that by his time kissing the hand had been replaced by kissing the ground:

*Now, however, they (the courtiers) have joined the others in kissing the ground, except for a few who have continued to avoid this practice.* 212

Thus, the principle of not kissing the ground and bowing seems to be perceived by Hilāl as one that used to distinguish Muslim rulers and “others”. Even though this practice was adopted during ‘Abbasid times, some courtiers are reported to refuse to do so. This adoption, amongst others, is certainly due to influence received from Persian civilization, which they continued to rule, as the ‘Abbasid civilizational area was centred in the former Persian Empire, as opposed to the Umayyad dynasty centred in Syria, former important stronghold of the Byzantine Empire.

This “innovation” does not seem to have expanded in Western Muslim territories, where instead kissing the hand was kept as customary and was usual when the sovereign received ambassadors. 213 At least, not during most receptions, as we will see further ahead.

We do not possess a description of the ceremonial at ambassadorial receptions, for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s rule. However, al-Maqqarī, 17th century North African historian, reports the arrival of Byzantine ambassadors under the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. In this account the ambassadors are not reported to have kissed neither the ground nor the caliph’s hand, as al-Maqqarī only states that after everyone was at his place, “the

212 Ibid., 29.
213 Fierro, “Pompa y Ceremonia”, 137.
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ambassadors were then introduced to the presence of the Khalif” and “they approached the throne, and delivered their credentials into the hands of the Khalif”.

In fact, *proskynesis* does not seem common protocol in al-Andalus, and it was associated by Muslim Andalusi chroniclers, such as Ibn Ḥayyān, as a ceremonial tradition amongst Christians. When Caliph al-Ḥakam II received king Ordoño IV in Madinat az-Zahra, the deposed sovereign of Leon is reported not only to have prostrated himself at the caliph’s feet and kissed the ground, as he is also accounted to have performed the gesture of *proskynesis* to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s grave in Cordoba. Proskynesis in al-Andalus seems to be practiced only by those Christian Iberian foreign missions arriving at Cordoba with the purpose of submitting as tributaries of the caliph. The *proskynesis* of Ordoño IV clearly intends to glorify the caliph’s power over Christian principalities in the Iberian Peninsula, and therefore the *amīr al-muʾminin* felt extremely powerful.

As for accounts reporting the arrival and reception of Muslim umarāʾ from the North Africa who came to al-Andalus to recognize al-Ḥakam II’s caliphate, they never bow before the caliph. When Ja’far bin ‘Alī, former Fatimid governor of the North African city of Masila, came to a reception in al-Andalus to recognize the power of al-Ḥakam II, he entered the *majlis* in Madīna al-Zahra’, where the caliph was seated in his *sarīr* in the centre of the room, kissed the threshold of the hall and then proceeded to the *sarīr*, kissing the caliph’s extended hand and then pronounced the ceremonial *taslīm* or salutation.

As for Byzantium, *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, in the chapter under the title “What is necessary to observe when a reception is held in the Great Hall of the Magnaura, when the rulers sit on the throne of Solomon”, describes the protocol of the *proskynesis*. It states that when the foreign is led to the presence of emperors “he falls down on the ground making obeisance before the rulers”. Nevertheless, *De Ceremoniis* when describing the reception of “Saracens” in Constantinople, does not refer to the *proskynesis*.

In al-Andalus, eastern influence from the ‘Abbasid court was undoubtedly adopted, and it served as a legitimacy weapon for aiming to surpass those they were trying

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215 Ibid., 161.
217 Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis*, 566-568.
218 Ibid., 583-584.
to mimic. Nevertheless, it seems to have been developed a ceremonials of legitimacy to articulate its claims for the caliphate as the righteous and orthodox ones, as opposed to the innovations adopted in Baghdad that defied religious precepts.

Another “anecdote” in Ibn Ḥayyān’s Muqtabis, concerning the reception of al-Ghazāl in Constantinople, reports an episode where the poet was invited to seat with the emperor. In this account, the emperor was astonished by al-Ghazāl’s action: after the poet asked for a glass of water, a glass of gold and pearls was offered to him and after finishing it and emptying the remainder, he kept it inside his sleeve.²¹⁹ The emperor then ordered the interpreter to ask the reason why al-Ghazāl was acting like this, and al-Ghazāl answered:

_It is a rule of our caliphs, of whom you are allied with, that if in their presence water is requested by a noble ambassador, and he is honoured with a fine glass, he may take it and after drinking from it, he does not give it back, usage that I have been following, but if it is not customary amongst you, I will return it._²²⁰

For scholars, this act is usually dismissed as a joke and associated with anecdotes that report al-Ghazāl’s greediness. However, a description of Hilal al-Sabi’ shows similarities to this account by Ibn Hayyan. Al-Muhallabī, a wazīr of the ‘Abbasid Caliph Mu‘izz al-Dawla, upon returning to his river boat after his reception with the Caliph al-Muti‘ bi-Allāh, “was followed by a servant and a well-dressed and good looking Turkish ghulām carrying, in one hand, a golden tray with a crystal jug covered with a dabiqi cover, and in the other hand, a drying towel”. When he finished the water, the wazīr returned the jug to the ghulām, who was then ordered by the servant to go with the wazīr who, puzzled with the situation, asked why:

_Because, replied the servant, when such things leave the Residence it is not customary to return them. What I am now doing is in accordance with rules that have been set for me and it is not in my power to contravene them. The ghulām is now with you, and what he has is for you._²²¹

²¹⁹ Ibn Ḥayyān, _al-Muqtabis II-I_, 239.
²²⁰ Ibid., 239. The translation is mine.
²²¹ Al-Ṣābi’, _Rusūm_, 56.
Even though the event in which al-Ghazāl attended, and presumably took place in the palace, is slightly different from the account concerning the ‘Abbasid ważīr that took place outside the Residence (though in the enclosure of the palace), the similarity is also unquestionable. Thus, this account appears to be much more than an “anecdotic” one. It evidences how al-Ghazāl was informed about what it was customary to observe in the ‘Abbasid court, though it escaped him that this would happen only once outside the palace. Hence, the main core of this ‘Abbasid rule of attendance was transmitted.

Al-Ghazāl’s knowledge of rules of attendance practiced in the ‘Abbasid court is one of the many clues existing in Ibn Ḥāyyān’s Muqtabis, that leads to the conclusion that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II reorganized the Andalusi court taking ‘Abbasid models, which he knew due to agents he kept in the East and to scholars or traders who travelled frequently there. As for the organization of the offices inside the court, Mohamed Meouak’s work evidences how the administration suffered changes upon innovations coming from the ‘Abbasid East.222

Evidently, as poetry is intrinsically connected with the court, al-Ghazal acknowledged practices concerning ceremonial, which granted him in al-Andalus his good reputation as a diplomat and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s categorical and unchangeable choice.

4.4. Ibn Dihya and the presumable embassy of al-Ghazāl to a Viking king

Abu al-Khaṭṭāb bin Dihya was born in Valencia in the middle of the 12th century and died in Egypt in 1235. Tammām bin ‘Alqama is his source for this account, whom Dozy believed to have heard directly from al-Ghazāl the description of a mission to a Viking kingdom.

Dozy translates and reproduces Ibn Dihya’s text in his Recherches.223 In this account Ibn Dihya states that after ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II received in his court an embassy from the king of the majus, name by which the Vikings were known among Arab chronicle,224 after Seville was attacked by Vikings (ca. 844).

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222 Mohamed Meouak, Pouvoir souverain, administration central et élites politiques dans l’Espagne ummayyade (IIe-Ve/VIIIe-Xe) (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1999).
223 Dozy, Recherches II, 267-278. Borges Coelho also translates an excerpt of this passage into Portuguese. See Coelho, Portugal na Espanha Árabe, 172-173.
224 The word was used to refer to Zoroastrians. See Ann Christys, “The Vikings in the South through Arab eyes”, in Visions of Community in the post-Roman World, ed. Walter Pohl et al. (Ashgate: 2012), 2.
Ibn Hayyan reports that in the end of 229 A.H. (around August 844 A.D.), a Viking fleet was seen in the western shore of al-Andalus. They arrived first at Lisbon with a fleet of 54 ships. Other version transmitted by Ibn Ḥayyān speak of 80 Viking ships. After that they disembarked at Cadiz and then Sidonia. In the month of Muharram 230 A.H. (October 844), they finally stopped at Seville, which had no naval protection, city they plundered for 7 days, until they were finally defeated at Tejada, in Seville’s surroundings. They were put to flee, having abandoned 30 ships. After this victory, ‘Abd al-Rahmān II sent letters with the news of the Viking’s defeat, not only to al-Andalus’ provinces, but also to the clients of the dynasty in North Africa.\(^\text{225}\)

Apparently, after their defeat, the sovereign of these Viking men, decided a truce was needed, and presumably sent an embassy to the court of Cordoba. The amīr decided to answer to this king and sent al-Ghazāl, “who had the courage and boldness, and who knew how to walk in and out of all doors”,\(^\text{226}\) together with Yahya bin Ḥabīb, who could have been the same ambassador sent to Constantinople. No name of the kingdom is mentioned, neither its location nor the king’s identity. Both ambassadors are reported to have embarked in Silves, located in Gharb al-Andalus, carrying a message to the king of the majus, and accompanying his ambassador back to wherever his reign was located. No year is mentioned, though Ibn Dihya asserts its despatch happened after the Viking attacks of 844, and also after the arrival of an ambassador of the majus. Similarly to the embassy of al-Ghazal to Constantinople, this mission is also reported to have suffered the inconveniences of the sea, though in Ibn Dihya’s a location is mentioned, the mountain of Alowiya, that Dozy identifies as the Cape of San Vincent. After this storm, the historian reports their arrival to the territorial limits of the kingdom of the majūs. Once they rested, and after the king was informed of their arrival, the ambassadors were taken to his presence. The account gives a general description of the place where the king resided, but it does not mention any name, nor a location in its proximities. It states that the residence of the king was located in an island in the ocean and that it was three days or three hundred miles from mainland. The account also mentions that other islands surrounding the one where the king lived were part of his kingdom. Ibn Dihya mentions the adoption of the Christian religion by this kingdom and their renunciation of paganism.

\(^{225}\) Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-I, 312-316.

\(^{226}\) Dozy, Recherches II, 269. A reference to the account which reports al-Ghazāl’s clever entry through a lowered door into the presence of Emperor Theophilos.
The account proceeds with precisely the same description of events taking place in al-Ghazāl’s embassy to Constantinople: the king of the _majūs_, after being advised that the Andalusian ambassadors would not accept to prostrate before the sovereign, lowered the door which they had to walk in to be received. Al-Ghazāl’s response was the same as the one performed in Constantinople: he walked in the door on his back. The king’s reaction was exactly the same as Theophilos’: he admired al-Ghazāl’s wisdom.

Nothing else is mentioned about the ceremonial of the reception, and after al-Ghazāl gave to the king the message of ‘Abd al-Rahmān II, he was dismissed and sent to the chambers prepared for the ambassadors, where they were treated with luxury.

Likewise, the account of Ibn Dihya describes how al-Ghazāl won the queen’s favour, as Ibn Hayyan’s description does for the embassy received in Constantinople, with some innovations though. This queen’s name was Tūda, according to al-Maqqari who writes a small description of the embassy, although Dozy states that al-Maqqari’s manuscript refers to a queen Nūd, the same name which is accounted in Ibn Dihya’s. This might be the result of some difficulty regarding the reading of diacritics in the original source, either by Dozy or al-Maqqari’s translator. Ibn Dihya describes how one day she ordered other women in the court to attend to her reception of al-Ghazāl, so that the poet could inquire if they were as beautiful as she was. She also wanted to give al-Ghazāl a present due to his eulogies towards her, and when she was prepared to do so, the poet refused it as he only wished to enjoy her presence whenever he pleased. Later on, the poet assumed to Tammām bin ‘Alqama that she was not as beautiful as he described her, but that his poetic praises to her revealed to be of profit. Her empathy towards al-Ghazāl became such that she could not spend a day without seeing him, and when al-Ghazāl was advised that he could be misunderstood, and she discovered that this was the reason for the decrease in the frequency of his visits, she informed him that jealousy was not customary among the _majūs_, and that women would only rest with their husbands whenever they pleased, and once they would get tired of them, they would leave them.

Ibn Dihya also accounts poems of al-Ghazāl written to the queen. Other anecdotes are quite similar to those described by Ibn Ḥayyān, regarding the poet’s mission to the Byzantine capital.

Ibn Dihya finishes this account, stating that upon al-Ghazāl returning to al-Andalus, his mission made a stop in Santiago de Compostela, where the ambassador of

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227 Al-Maqqari, _Nafḥ II_, 115.
the majūs had to deliver a letter and where al-Ghazāl stayed for two months, though the account never reveals any date.\textsuperscript{228} He is reported to arrive at Cordoba 20 months after his departure.

Lévi-Provençal declares categorically that this embassy “is an invented fairy-tale from head to toe”, as the elements concerning its description are a copy of the events which took place in Constantinople.\textsuperscript{229} He further adds that this legend became part of the popular belief in al-Andalus, due to the articulation of the “novelistic data” existing both in the account of al-Ghazāl’s embassy to Constantinople and in the arrival and sack of the Vikings in Iberia, which eventually contributed for the construction of a common popular tale.

As for Dozy he believed in the authenticity of Ibn Dihya’s account, because the Valencian historian cited Tammām bin ‘Alqama, who is presumed to have taken the account directly from al-Ghazāl.\textsuperscript{230}

Huici Miranda shapes Provençal’s thought. He firmly states as well that both al-Ghazāl’s embassy to Constantinople and the memory of Viking incursions resulted in the “legend invented in the 12\textsuperscript{th} or 13\textsuperscript{th} centuries by the Valencian Ibn Dihya”.\textsuperscript{231} Miranda points out the “falseness” of the account when reporting al-Ghazāl and his companion were nine months in Atlantic waters upon returning to al-Andalus, as well as the role of popular tales in distorting historical reality.

However, Abdurrahman al-Hajji, who dedicated his Ph.D thesis to diplomatic exchanges between al-Andalus and Western European courts, believes in the authenticity of al-Ghazāl’s mission and that there is evidence to believe that this was directed to Danish Vikings. Al-Hajji dedicates a whole chapter to these presumable exchanges. An earlier research by W.E.D. Allen attempts as well to reconstruct al-Ghazāl’s embassy.\textsuperscript{232}

Al-Hajji suggests the Viking embassy was received in Cordoba in March 845, after the Vikings vanished from the Andalusi coast in November/December 844, and that al-Ghazāl and his companion were despatched in April 845 and were finally back to al-Andalus in September 846.\textsuperscript{233} As for the place where the Andalusi ambassadors landed,
he dismisses Ireland, where the Norwegian Vikings were only invaders and more worried about securing their sovereignty there, pointing out that al-Ghazâl embassy was received by king Horic of Denmark.\textsuperscript{234} Other theories believe the embassy was directed to Ireland.\textsuperscript{235}

Al-Hajji dismisses theories that remark the similarity of the queen’s name, Nud (Tûda in al-Maqqarî), with Ota, Turgeis wife, king of Ireland. He maintains that territorial description in Ibn Dihya’s account evidences the place was Denmark. W.E.D. Allen argues that the embassy was directed to Ireland, presenting however the same argument: that the geographical description points out the court was located in Shanon, Ireland. The account of Ibn Dihya refers that the island/peninsula had gardens. Allen, who presumes al-Ghazâl’s mission was received during the Spring 845, claims that by that time the gardens in Ireland were in its full glory. He further argues that Ireland measured three thousand miles (as accounted in Ibn Dihya’s text).\textsuperscript{236} In fact, geographical accounts of Ibn Dihya are so general and foggy, that they sure can be taken as arguments to sustain concurrent theories.

Attention must be drawn to the fact that King Horic is mentioned in \textit{The Annals of Saint Bertin}, when sending an embassy to king Louis, the German, in 845, after the Northmen were defeated by him.\textsuperscript{237} Though this could be presented as an argument in favour of Denmark, it is not referred by al-Hajji. The chronicle adds more information to this account. In March 845, 120 Viking ships were sent up the Seine to Paris, only stopping when Charles offered them 7,000 silver lb. It also states that “Horic, king of the Northmen, had sent 600 ships up the Elbe in Germany, against Louis”. The chronicle also mentions, in the same account, that the Danes had ravaged Aquitaine in the year before, which corresponds to the same year that al-Andalus was severely attacked.

It is not my intent here to exhaustively discuss arguments for and against its veracity, as this was already done extensively by al-Hajji and W.E.D. Allen, who presume of the authenticity of these exchanges, even admitting the confusion and fantasy presented by Ibn Dihya’s account.

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid., 183-186.
\textsuperscript{235} Allen, \textit{The Poet and the Spae-Wife}, 37-42. José Carlos Sánchez, “Los ataques vikingos y su influencia en la Galicia de los siglos IX-XI”, \textit{Anuario Brigantino}, no. 33 (2010), 64. Its author does not aim to show where the embassy took place, he rather presents several theories by other researchers. This article gives more extensive information concerning the Viking attacks, as well as cooperation between al-Andalus and Northern Iberian principalities, who were usual the first to be attacked and would send the alarm to the Andalusian sovereign.
\textsuperscript{236} Allen, \textit{The Poet and the Spae-Wife}, 38, 39.
\textsuperscript{237} \textit{The Annals of Saint Bertin}, 61-62.
I do not have the authority neither to categorically accept it nor to refuse it, as this is also impossible due to lack of description and sources. Moreover, discussing in detail the place of this kingdom and date would lead merely to a speculative exercise, as no source accounts it. Additionally, my lack of knowledge regarding Viking kingdoms and their geography in the 9th century does not allow me to study with further detail their history, articulating it with the account of this embassy. Also, this has already been attempted by researchers mentioned above.

It is only left of me to point out some issues that require extreme caution when dealing with such controversies:

1) Ibn Dihya is indeed the only historian who presents this account;
2) The historian does not offer the reader a date for these exchanges;
3) He does not provide us neither the name of the Viking king nor his kingdom, (nor with other locations nearby);
4) Ibn Dihya transmits the same events that took place in Constantinople;
5) Caution must be taken when addressing the term that Ibn Dihya employs when describing the place where al-Ghazāl landed. *Jazīra* in Arabic can either be island or peninsula, which makes the placing of its location even more volatile;
6) If in fact al-Ghazāl had gone to a Viking kingdom we would probably have more information about Normand attacks of Iberia, and in contrary their identity is still controversial;
7) Ibn Ḥayyān was the primary source for the history of the court of Cordoba. He reports the embassy of al-Ghazāl and Yaḥya al-Munayqila to Constantinople and gives an extensive biography of the famous Andalusi poet. This leads to a question: if exchanges with a Normand kingdom did in fact took place, why Ibn Ḥayyān does not mention anything about it, if he was so well informed about al-Ghazāl? Ibn Ḥayyān, most certainly did not have access to Tammām bin ‘Alqama accounts, as Ibn Dihya did.

These issues seems to be understood by al-Maqqarī, who transmits Ibn Dihya’s account, but dismissing descriptions that coincided with those described for al-Ghazāl’s embassy to Constantinople.

Nevertheless, a careful read of *The Annals of St. Bertin*, as presented above, allows us to rethink these exchanges. Presumably, at the same time that Horic sent in 845 an embassy to Louis the German after his defeat in the Northern coast of France, he might
have sent an embassy to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, who was also able to repulse his attacks. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān would in his turn respond favourably to Horic’s ask for peace, sending al-Ghazāl to Denmark.

Furthermore, recent research has identified in Sweden objects originated from Arab trade. Such is the case of a very well preserved silver ring with a violet coloured glass inscribed with Kufic characters, interpreted as “il-la-lah” or “for/to Allāh”, found in a ca. 850 Viking woman grave at Birka, Sweden.238 Glass was a prestigious imported material and other goods such as ‘Abbasid coins were find among other graves at Birka, and presumably Viking kingdoms reached as far as the ‘Abbasid caliphate area.239 As the Umayyad Amirate was connected through trade with the East, it could also be the case that these materials would have passed first through al-Andalus before reaching Sweden.

If these exchanges did in fact took place, its aims were in fact quite simple: the king of the majūs intended to present a treaty to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II after he was defeated when sacking al-Andalus in 844. On the other hand it was in the best interest of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II to stop these incursions. As for its location, it will remain an object of discussion as no source refers to it. Ann Christys states that Vikings will remain the “Other” in Arab chronicles and that later readers were more interested in anecdotes than geographical details.240 As the majūs did not convey us with chronicles describing their deeds, we are left with their representation by Arab chroniclers, and the majūs became part of popular imagination as the pagan devil who from time to time ravaged the Andalusi coasts.

4.5. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II and Muhammad I: exchanges with Charles the Bald and relations with Christian Iberian principalities

In 847, the first diplomatic exchange between Cordoba and the Carolingian Empire is reported by The Annals of St. Bertin:

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238 Sebastian Wärmländer et al., “Analysis and interpretation of a unique Arabic finger ring from the Viking age town of Birka, Sweden,” *Scanning*, vol. 9999, 1-7 (2015). I believe “Lā illah ilā Allāh” could also be suggested for the interpretation of the inscription, and thus it would refer to the Muslim *shahāda*, or profession of faith.
239 Ibid., 5-6.
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Envoys from ‘Abd al-Rahman [II] king of the Saracens came from Cordoba in Spain to Charles to seek a peace and draw up a formal treaty. Charles received them with fitting ceremony at Rheims, and later let them leave.\(^{241}\)

Ibn al-Qūṭīyya also accounts this embassy, referring to the ambassador commissioned by Cordoba, whose name was al-Cosbí, to the court of Charles and also to Constantinople, though we know the names of the two ambassadors sent to Theophilos.\(^{242}\)

Other exchanges are reported during the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I, and al-Ḥakam I (for example between the first amīr of al-Andalus and Charlemagne). However, these exchanges took place in a time outside the chronology adopted by this thesis. Their main goals concerned military temporary advances and retreats. Phillip Sénac reports an embassy in November 816 sent by al-Ḥakam I’s heir apparent, future ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, to Louis the Pious’ court in Compiègne.\(^{243}\) The aim of this embassy was to preserve the peace in the thughūr. After three months, the ambassadors who were sent by the heir apparent from Zaragoza were sent back, resulting on the renewal of the truce for three years. However, in 820, the truce was not renewed, as it was considered to be of no benefit for both parts, and the hostilities restarted. Sénac points out that these exchanges were part of al-Ḥakam’s initiative, probably because he did not want to concern with the situation in the Upper March, as he already had too many rebellions to deal with, as the one which took place in Cordoba’s arrabalde.\(^{244}\)

The situation changed. Regarding the exchanges between Cordoba and the Carolingian world, the chronological period chosen in this thesis was not accidental. After Louis Pious death, the Carolingian empire became extremely fragmented. Charles the Bald was the only diplomatic intervenient in al-Andalus, as his territory bordered with Hispania. To dictate policies in the thughūr was no longer a possibility for the Carolingian sovereign, neither his main concern. He was more worried about maintaining a truce with Cordoba, who was also interested in blocking parallel sovereignties there. On the other hand, it was under the reign of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II that al-Andalus achieved its own distinct identity. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, though at the beginning of his reign had to deal with

\(^{241}\) The Annals of Saint Bertin, 64.  
\(^{243}\) Phillipe Sénac, Los soberanos carolingios y al-Andalus (siglos VIII-IX), trans. Beatriz and María José Molina Rueda (Granada: University of Granada, 2010), 114.  
\(^{244}\) Ibid., 115.
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muwalladūn uprisings, such as the Banū Qasī in the Upper March, did not have the structural social problems of his father, who had to deal with a rebellion at his alcazar doors. He was able to intrinsically interlace al-Andalus’ identity with the Umayyad dynasty and rule.

Phillipe Sénac asserts that the Carolingian hope of conquering al-Andalus was not abandoned, as it was delegated on the counts of Cataluña. Whatever hopes the Carolingians had, the reality converted Charlemagne’s old dream only in a rhetorical weapon for legitimacy.

I must state first of all that it is not my concern to analyse the thughūr situation between al-Andalus and Christian powers, as this thesis concerns diplomatic exchanges and not military ones. Also, a major work by Eduardo Manzano has been dedicated to encounters between Cordoba and thughūr powers, either rebel wilayia (sing. wāli = governor), northern principalities or the Franks. Moreover, it has been surveyed and commented by historians who study military and political relations between Cordoba and Western Europe, such as Phillipe Sénac or Abdurrahman al-Hajji.

Al-Hajji reports that a mission was received in Cordoba in 232 A.H./846 A.D., headed by Ghilyalim bin Barbat bin Ghilyalim, or William, count of Toulouse. The count requested the help of ‘Abd al-Rahmān II against the Frank ruler, probably Charles the Bald. This help was granted to him by the amīr, who ordered ‘Abd Allāh bin Yahya, governor of Tortosa, and ‘Abd Allāh bin Kulayb, governor of Zaragoza, to assist the count militarily. Due to this help, William was able to attack Barcelona and Gerona, and after two years he visited Cordoba again, probably to thank the amīr’s support. William was supporting Pepin against his uncle, Charles the Bald, and this is evidently one of the reasons for ‘Abd al-Rahmān II to have sent an embassy to Rheims the next year, to finally settle peace with the kingdom that bordered al-Andalus. However, in the same year that

245 The word muwalladūn was first used when referring to vocabulary of stock-breeders, thus meaning a crossing of animal breeds. However, it was adopted after the Arab expansion, and designated those who were not pure Arabs, but instead were the result of mixed marriages, or even native lineages who had converted to Islam and adopted Arab traditions. Muwalladūn gave origin to the Spanish word, muladí, and it further designated the clientship ties of Arab lineages, such as the Umayyad, with native ones. See Pedro Chalmeta, “Muwalladun”, in Encyclopaedia of Islam, ed. C.E. Bosworth, et al., vol. VIII, MIF-NAZ (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 807-808.

246 Ibid., 145.


248 Abdurrahman al-Hajji’s work on diplomatic relations kept with Western Europe, also describes these military encounters, as he also dedicates a whole chapter to relations maintained between rebel governors of al-Andalus and the Franks or Iberian principalities.

249 Al-Hajji, Andalusian Diplomatic Relations, 131. The author cites the Muqtabis II-2 of Ibn Hayyan, which unfortunately I was unable to consult.
'Abd al-Rahmān II sent his envoys, William, son of Bernard, who had been himself in mission at the Cordovan court, captured Barcelona and Ampurias.\footnote{The Annals of Saint Bertin, 66, see note 7. The translator provides the reader with more details about William. Janet Nelson states that the capture of Barcelona is probably linked to the collapse of Pepin’s actions in Aquitaine and that he received help from the amīr of Cordoba, as a response for Charles’ help to Musa b. Musa.} Nevertheless, in the end the alliance between ‘Abd al-Rahmān and Charles the Bald, revealed to be a successful one, as in 850 William was killed in Barcelona, “captured by a still craftier trick”, after he had participated in the capture of counts Aledramn and Isembard.\footnote{Ibid., 69. The translator says this capture was due to the end of the treaty he kept with the amīr of Cordoba.} Another reason for these exchanges was connected with the unstable situation of the governor of Tudela. Musa bin Musa, of the Banu Qasi, a muwalladūn lineage, was known to ally with Charles the Bald, against the amīr of Cordoba. Thus, ‘Abd ar-Rahman II wished to put an end to this swinging situation.\footnote{The Annals of St. Bertin, 64, see note 1. The translator refers to this situation as the probable cause for the despatch of ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s embassy to Rheims.} Mūsā bin Mūsā bin Fortūn bin Qasī had crossed loyalties, especially at a time when muwalladūn lineages were still fighting what they saw as a “discrimination” in favour of those who claimed Arab ascendance. Eventually, muwalladūn were able to affirm their legitimacy in al-Andalus and even to develop something similar to an identity ideology, proud of their Iberian lineage, as cherished by the historian Ibn al-Qūṭiyya (son of the Gothic woman), who claimed to be a descendant of Wittiza, Visigoth king, through his granddaughter Sara the Goth. At times, Mūsā showed his loyalty towards Cordoba, as he is accounted of having commanded the Amirate troops against the Franks in 840,\footnote{Al-Maqqarī, Nafi‘ II, 114.} nevertheless this loyalty was barely prevailing and his submission towards Cordoba only brief. Soon, the territorial distance between his governorate and Cordoba meant as well his loyalty detachment. His family mutual blood-ties with the still embryonic dynasty of Pamplona were known. Mūsā bin Mūsā was the uterine brother of Iñigo Iñiguez (Iñigo II of Pamplona) and Fortún Iñiguez, as his mother, after the death of his father, married the first king of Pamplona, Iñigo Arista.\footnote{Lévi-Provençal, “Du nouveau sur le royaume de Pampelune au Ixe siècle”, Bulletin Hispanique, vol. 55, no. 1 (1953), 11; Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 143.} Mūsā bin Mūsā also married his nephew Assona, daughter of his brother and king of Pamplona, Iñigo Iñiguez. Furthermore, Mūsā’s daughter, Oria or Awriya, married her cousin, King García I of Pamplona, son of Iñigo Iñiguez.\footnote{Al-Hajji, Andalusian Diplomatic Relations, 105. See Annex.}

250 The Annals of Saint Bertin, 66, see note 7. The translator provides the reader with more details about William. Janet Nelson states that the capture of Barcelona is probably linked to the collapse of Pepin’s actions in Aquitaine and that he received help from the amīr of Cordoba, as a response for Charles’ help to Musa b. Musa.
251 Ibid., 69. The translator says this capture was due to the end of the treaty he kept with the amīr of Cordoba.
252 The Annals of St. Bertin, 64, see note 1. The translator refers to this situation as the probable cause for the despatch of ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s embassy to Rheims.
253 Al-Maqqarī, Nafi‘ II, 114.
Mūsa bin Mūsa seems to have been a key figure for the newly born dynasty of Pamplona, having united his military efforts with them. In Shawwal 228 A.H. (July 843) a joint army of Mūsa bin Mūsa, García Íñiguez (Pamplona’s king), and Mūsa’s brother Fortún Íñiguez, was defeated by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, who had left in expedition with his two sons Muḥammad and al-Muṭarrif. Ibn Ḥayyān adds that this campaign was so destructive for Mūsa and his allies that it resulted in Fortún’s death, whose head was sent, together with other Pamplona nobles’ heads, by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II to Cordoba. In the meantime, Velasco Garcés (son of the wounded García Íñiguez) asked ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II for the aman, together with other 60 nobles from Pamplona. This was conceded to him, which did not prevent Velasco to carry again in 847 an offensive against Cordoba.\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, \textit{al-Muqtabis II-I}, 310.} Al-Hajji sees in this seeking of aman a diplomatic mission. For this purpose, he only transmits to the reader the passage where it can be read that Velasco with a group of 60 companions presented themselves before the amīr.\footnote{Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 144.} The author does not present the reader with the whole account, in which Ibn Ḥayyān clearly places ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II not in Cordoba but in Pamplona with his two sons in military campaign. He is even reported to have sent by himself the heads of his defeated enemies to Cordoba. Ibn Ḥayyān writes that in the meantime Velasco asked for the aman. Ibn Ḥayyān accounts as well that after ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II received this “delegation” seeking the aman, he returned to Cordoba.\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, \textit{al-Muqtabis II-I}, 311.} A surrender taking place near the battlefield, which includes a trophy of several heads, can hardly be considered as a diplomatic exchange.

As for other relations with Christian Iberian principalities, al-Hajji furthermore mentions an embassy sent to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II from Navarre, as “a desire for freedom by the people of Navarre from Frankish control”, in which “a treaty was concluded to the effect that Andalusians would defend them against external attacks and the Navarrese in return would help the Andalusi in crossing the Pyrenees to attack France”.\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, \textit{al-Muqtabis II-I}, 311.} Ibn Ḥayyān does not refer to this matter and al-Hajji does not mention a historical source.

Another embassy is mentioned by al-Hajji, under the reign of Muḥammad I. The historian accounts that in 883 the amīr sent an army against Leon, due to support provided
by Alfonso III to the Banū Qasī, which in the end resulted in an armistice. After this, the author asserts an ambassador, called Dulcidio, bishop of Salamanca, was sent by Alfonso III to Cordoba, achieving a truce with Muḥammad I. Al-Hajji does not present the account of this embassy nor its source.

In *The Annals of Saint Bertin*, when accounting ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy to Rheims, it is also mentioned a situation of a bishop called Bodo, who had abandoned the Christian faith and Frankish territory, and “devoted himself to urging all the Christians living in Spain under the king and people of the Saracens that they should abandon Christianity and convert to the insanity of the Jews or the madness of the Saracens, or, said Bodo, they would certainly be killed”. The chronicler further adds that Christians of Spain sent a letter to King Charles in order to stop harass by Bodo.

It is interesting that the chronicle accounts a letter to the King of the Franks, especially as we only have knowledge of the existence of a letter from Louis the Pious to the Christians of Mérida in 828, mentioned by Lévi-Provençal, regarding the events related to the Mozarabic population of Cordoba. Probably the Christians of al-Andalus were complaining about their fiscal situation due to taxes required from non-Muslims, as Louis in his answer refers to unfair tributes, inviting them to migrate to Frank territories as they would not have to pay these taxes.

In another passage, dedicated to the year 839, Bodo is accounted as well as a deacon, Aleman by birth, who had gone in the previous year in pilgrimage to Rome, and who converted to Judaism, leaving to Zaragoza.

Zaragoza was also a realm of the Banū Qasī and one of the most important cities of al-Andalus, as from its Muslim conquest until it was taken by Alfonso I of Aragon in 1118, remained the capital of the Upper March. Furthermore, it was under the sphere of influence of the Banū Qasī, who from time to time became its masters, and Mūsa bin Mūsa would eventually become governor of the city in 852, along with Huesca and Tudela, styling himself as the “tertium regem in Spania”.

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261 Ibid., 68-69.
262 *The Annals of Saint Bertin*, 64.
263 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 151.
Though the account on Bodo seems exaggerated it points out the situation of Zaragoza and its surroundings: it was a realm where the majority of population appears to be Christian, or with crossed religious alliances, due to its border situation and cross loyalties of the Banū Qasī. This situation was perhaps aggravated as Christians of the rest of al-Andalus possibly took refuge in these Marches areas, against taxation of areas controlled by the central power, thus using their Christian identity against Cordoba.

Thus, if by one side the Carolingians incited Mūsa bin Mūsa against Cordoba, and provided help to Christian rebellions, on the other hand ‘Abd al-Rahmān II had also his own allies amongst the Franks, as seen by the embassy and treaty exchanged between himself and the count of Toulouse. Therefore, both rulers, ‘Abd al-Rahmān II and Charles were evidently interested in preventing a climbing of the already porous situation of the thughūr. These situations, though sometimes might result in military triumphs, eventually revealed to be brief, volatile. These campaigns also required military costs, which was ungrateful for both sides, who would waste so much effort for a soon to be vanished victory. Besides, none of the central powers, Cordoba or the Carolingians, seemed to gain anything with these floating loyalties. Support given to them usually revealed counterproductive, as they served only their own interests.

Other interests also united ‘Abd al-Rahmān II and his counterpart in Rheims. Northmen were periodically ravaging both Andalusi and Aquitaine coasts, and the Vikings even adventured themselves up rivers, as happened in Guadalquivir in 844, or the Seine and the Elbe in 845. In the preceding subchapter I have discussed these attacks, described both by Ibn Ḥayyān and The Annals of St. Bertin. This last chronic accounts an embassy sent by Horic, king of Denmark, to Louis the German in 845, after his ships were defeated and his incursion stopped.267 As seen above, the king of the majūs, probably Horic, sent an embassy to ‘Abd al-Rahmān II after the amīr stopped his incursion in 844. Even though Horic sent an embassy to presumably achieve a treaty with Louis, this did not prevent the Danes to attack Frisia next year. So, this was possibly another topic concerning this embassy.

Sénac believes, though other embassies are not mentioned, other exchanges with Cordoba took place under ‘Abd al-Rahmān II’s reign, as The Annals of St. Bertin unusually account the amīr’s death in 852 and his succession by Muḥammad I.268

268 Ibid., 75.
Exchanges with Charles the Bald continued under Muḥammad I’s rule. Once again, the first exchange between both sovereigns are reported by *The Annals of St. Bertin*. Muhammad sent an embassy to Charles, and its reception took place in the Palace of Verberie, possibly on 25 October 863 or shortly after that date, as the account is given right after the synod of the same day:

*He also received with customary ceremony the envoy of Muhammad king of the Saracens who came with many gifts and with letters speaking of peace and a treaty of friendship. He decided to wait at Senlis for a suitable time to send this envoy in dignified fashion back to his king with honour and due protection and all the help he needed.*

I shall start by contextualizing the moment in which the embassy was received. In 862 the death of Mūsa bin Mūsa, “third king of Hispania”, marked the end of the military services provided in favour of Cordoba, such as the successful summer campaign of 856 against Barcelona. Although, Mūsa bin Mūsa had become an independent ruler by the end of Muḥammad’s father rule, he nominally recognized the Umayyads and both sides seemed to have reached a compromise solution and Mūsa would occasionally lead military expeditions ordered by the amīr, and of great benefit for the last. I believe this is a key element to understand the renewal of exchanges between both powers. Thus, upon his death, Muḥammad had no similar figure in the Upper March that, though independent, who could be a strategic piece in the chess game of the Carolingian frontier. Consequently, Muḥammad probably thought that this could be explored by Charles the Bald and so he rushed in sending an embassy to the king.

At the same time, Muḥammad played in other battlefields. He sent a successful expedition, in the same year of the embassy, against Ordoño I, king of Aragon. Another topic of the embassy might have been again the Normand attacks. In 858-61 al-Andalus was once more attacked by the *majūs*, however it was not such a successful attack, as after the attacks on Seville in 844, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II provided for a proper navy fleet. After being repelled from al-Andalus, they went to Pamplona, and after that to France, devastating Arles, Nimes and Valence.

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269 Ibid., 110. This embassy is not reported in al-Hajji’s work.
270 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulumana”, 204-205.
271 Ibid., 205.
272 Ibid., 203-204.
The embassy sent by Muḥammad I in 863 stayed in Charles’ court until July 864.

Returning from Pitres, Charles reached Compiègne around 1 July. The envoy of Mohammed king of the Saracens, who had come to him the previous winter, he now endowed with many large gifts and sent him back to his own king accompanied by missi in honourable fashion.\footnote{The Annals of St. Bertin, 119-120. This embassy is not reported by al-Hajji.}

Therefore, a diplomatic mission sent by Charles was received in Cordoba by Muhammad. The next year, 865, \textit{The Annals of St. Bertin} account that the ambassadors sent by Charles returned to Compiègne:

\textit{Charles received at Compiègne the envoys he had sent to Mohammed at Cordoba the previous year. They came back with many gifts: camels carrying couches and canopies, fine cloth of various kinds and many perfumes.}\footnote{Ibid., 129.}

Though the account appears to specifically refer to a reception of ambassadors, it is not very clear if Charles received only his own ambassadors with the presents sent by Muḥammad or if Charles’ ambassadors were also accompanied by envoys from Cordoba. Al-Hajji accounts a reception of Frank ambassadors sent by Charles the Bald in 252/866, who wanted to rest his mind from renewed Muslim attacks on Septimania. However no historical source is mentioned.\footnote{Al-Hajji, \textit{Andalusian diplomatic relations}, 132. The historian refers to a work by M.A. Enan, \textit{Dawlat al-Islam fi al-Andalus}, (Cairo, 1960)}. This could be a renewed embassy sent by Charles after he received Cordovan ambassadors at Compiègne in 865.

These exchanges seem to cause quite an impression on Charles’ court, especially considering these telegraphic accounts of \textit{The Annals of St Bertin}. Though they never mention neither the ceremonial of the reception, nor its political aims (peace is referred generically), they do refer to splendorous and exuberant gifts sent from Cordoba. Ibn ʿİdhārī refers to exchanges between Cordoba and the Franks, though not giving any dates, also mentioning the importance of presents sent by its sovereign:

\footnote{Ibid., 129.}
Ferdinand, king of France, appreciated highly his intelligence and sent him luxury gifts and presents. It is this Ferdinand who ordered the construction of a statue of Jesus, weighing 300 lb. of pure gold, incrusted with rubies and emeralds, and sustained by a golden base also incrusted with rubies and emeralds. When this image was finished, he kneeled before it and ordered the subjects of his country to do the same, which occurred at that time; after that, he offered it to the ruler of the Golden Church, in Rome.276

Ibn ‘Idhārī mistakenly reports the King of the Franks to be Ferdinand, instead of Charles. He was surely impressed by luxury shown towards religious ceremonial. The same account is transmitted by Ibn al-Khaṭīb, though he reports rightly the name of the king, Charles.277

The importance of gift exchange between medieval courts has been pointed out in chapter 2. Cutler underlines its economic consequences, as gift exchange was a central piece in the ceremonial for negotiating trading agreements.278 However, instead they were dismissed by researchers as part of “primitive” or “archaic” societies, and considered as unnecessary luxury merchandise. These were more of a luxury “sample”, intended to seduce the monarch with its advantages, whichever product, and to agree to extend its trade to a broader audience, as the court would serve as a consumer pattern for the rest of society.

Unfortunately, we do not possess more details about these exchanges, nor the description of the ceremonial displayed during its receptions. However, it seems that a truce between both powers was achieved.

In fact, a cease of Muslim incursions evidences a truce between both powers, and for Charles the Bald this meant taking his worries towards the rest of his kingdom.279 For Sénac, the approximation of the Carolingians to Cordoba meant that the alliance kept with the ‘Abbasids did no longer make sense. The historian speaks of a “game of alliances” which was drawn by Pepin the Younger, who sent an embassy to al-Manṣūr in 765, uniting the Carolingians to the ‘Abbasids against the Umayyads and Byzantines.280 Sénac’s theory is interesting, and it leads me to think that this was perhaps the reason why

279 Sénac, Los soberanos carolingios y al-Andalus, 136.
280 Ibid., 146.
later Theophilos thought he could appeal to the Umayyad amīr, as the Byzantine Empire kept the memory of this axis of alliances. Relations between the Carolingians and the ‘Abbasids were kept until 831, year in which Emperor Louis the Pious received in the villa of Thionville an embassy from the “Amir al-mamoun of Persia”, seeking a treaty.281 This was Caliph al-Ma’mūn, son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, with whom Charlemagne is presumed to have exchanged embassies and sumptuous presents.282 It is known that the ‘Abbasids, upon acknowledging that an independent Umayyad Amirate had been achieved by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I in 756, sent agents, even to al-Andalus, aiming at defeating Umayyad pretensions. Evidently, this might have been a topic for ‘Abbasid exchanges kept with Charlemagne. Thus, it appears the ‘Abbasid agents acted towards this end in the Carolingian court until 831, last ‘Abbasid embassy accounted in The Annals of St. Bertin. After the fragmentation suffered by the Carolingian Empire the situation changed. Charles the Bald kept a fragment of it and could not pursue his grandfather’s pretensions, which the ‘Abbasids seem to have noticed. The Umayyad of al-Andalus was there to stay and Charles sought for a status quo.

Unlike the relations that al-Hakam I kept with Charles the Bald predecessor, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s embassy received in Rheims in 847 opens a period in which diplomacy between both powers acquired a different purpose: it was intended to preserve peace or truces for longer, and at the same time, though shyly, get to know better one another.

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282 Sénac, Los soberanos carolingios y al-Andalus, 65-66. Charlemagne is reported to have sent two envoys, Lanfred and Segismundo, and presumably a Jewish translator, Isaac, to Hārūn al-Rashīd, in 797. In 801 the ‘Abbasid Caliph sent an ambassador accompanied by an envoy of the Aghlabid amīr. In 802, Isaac, the translator present to Charlemagne an elephant, a present of Hārūn al-Rashīd. In the same year, the Carolingian Emperor sent another embassy to Hārūn, and the Caliph sent another one back in 807.
5. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III

5.1. The Golden Age for al-Andalus and Byzantium

More than one century after al-Ghazāl’s mission to Constantinople, ca. 840, diplomatic exchanges with Byzantium are renewed under the rule of the first Caliph of al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, Emperor of Byzantium.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān III succeeded his grandfather ‘Abd Allāh in 912. He inherited a fragmented Amirate where several governors were powerful enough to declare their dissension towards Cordoba. Although governors recognized nominally the central power, when the new amīr ascended to the throne Cordoba and its surroundings were the only factual territorial controlled by the Umayyads. The central power had to deal with governors who had associated their political administrative position with their own lineage. Thus, the administrative role of the wilāya (governorate) of a specific province had been affiliated within a family lineage, inherited from father to son.

In fact, one of these lineages of governors had declared their independence quite near the capital. The Banū Hafsūn, a lineage which proclaimed their Iberian genealogy, had resorted to Bobastro, a mountain region, to declare its independence. Of course the Banū Hafsūn were not the most powerful of these governors, but they were the most dangerous, due to their proximity with the capital. After a successful military campaign, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III was able to victoriously enter Bobastro, where he believed the Banū Hafsūn had converted to Christianity and thus were charged with the religious crime of apostasy.

This success offered the amīr the perfect moment for finally declaring the Umayyad Caliphate of the West. In 929 he despatched several letters to all the governors of al-Andalus, proclaiming his legitimacy to a title long overdue, taking as a laqab an-Nāṣir li-dīn Allāh, “the champion in the faith of God”. He was also able to reunite administratively the territory of al-Andalus. Furthermore, proclaiming the Caliphate of al-Andalus was the logic consequence after the Fatimids rose to power and declared their own caliphate in 909. The decision of ‘Abd Allāh to appoint his grandson ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd Allāh was a political one. Since the ascension to rule of Muḥammad I the political control of Cordoba towards the united territory of al-Andalus had decreased, achieving a dangerous and rebellious situation under the rule of ‘Abd
Allāh. This resulted as well in the non-existence of an external policy, thus no exchanges are reported. ‘Abd Allāh understood that this volatile situation of the Umayyads could suffer its final strike with the rise to power of a new caliphate, so close to al-Andalus, the Fatimids who had first established in Qayrawan. Therefore, he chose his still young grandson, shaping him for the succession, so that he would become a charismatic figure able to legitimize Umayyad power within the whole territory of al-Andalus. Legitimacy propaganda was a key factor for achieving this purpose. His recognition by a strong power of the Mediterranean, such as the Byzantine Empire, was also part of his legitimacy and propaganda program.

Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos’ rule also corresponded to a golden age for the Byzantine Empire. He ascended to the empire’s throne in 945. Ostrogorsky describes him as a scholar: “Even more strongly than in his father Leo VI, the scholarly litterateur in Constantine VII outweighed the politician”\(^2\). He inherited a stable and prosperous empire, which allowed him to develop these scholarly activities. There is a possible analogy between Constantine VII and ‘Abbād al-Raḥmān III’s son, the Caliph al-Ḥakam II who will succeed to his father in 961. Al-Maqqārī says of al-Ḥakam that “he would employ merchants and agents to collect books for him in distant countries”, and “such literary treasures were amassed in Andalus as no sovereign ever possessed before or after him, if we except the library which is said to have been collected by al-Nāṣir, son of al-Must’adhi bi-Allāh, of the house of ‘Abbās”\(^3\). Constantine VII left us his legacy on a major work: *De Ceremoniis*. Because of this book, it is possible to know in detail the rules and ceremonial displayed for each reception and occasion. Al-Maqqarī also assigned to al-Ḥakam II the authorship of a complete history of al-Andalus, unfortunately his immense library was destroyed by the fitna that put an end to the Umayyad Caliphate of al-Andalus.

Both ‘Abbād al-Raḥmān III and Constantine VII represented the golden ages of al-Andalus and the Byzantine Empire, respectively. Their legitimacy power was unquestionable. However, another agent had emerged in the Mediterranean shores: the Ismaili Fatimid Caliphate, first established in 909 in al-Maḥdiyya, then in al-Manṣūriyya and finally in Cairo when they conquered Egypt in 969. The Fatimids – name that declared their genealogy through Prophet Muḥammad’s daughter, Fatima al-Zahra’– were able to expand their territories in North Africa, defeating the Aghlabids. They

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Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries)

inherited their power in Sicily, where Byzantium had lost its feeble and last stronghold of Taormina in 902. Their expansion was potentially dangerous both for the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean. Both al-Andalus, which ruled several regions in the Maghreb al-Aqṣā, and Byzantium must pay attention to this new emergent power.

5.2. Exchanges with Byzantium

5.2.1. An Andalusi embassy in De Ceremoniis II

The Book II of De Ceremoniis accounts an embassy received in the great Hall of Magnaura from the “Spaniards”. The Book of Ceremonies of Constantine VII accounts, in a small paragraph, the arrival of ambassadors from Hispania, in the same chapter concerning the reception of envoys of the ‘Abbasid Caliph, arriving from Tarsos at Constantinople, which was held on May 31st 946.285

Regarding these “Spaniards” (Hispanon, on its original Greek form), and reporting to ambassadors from the “amerine” (amīr al-mū’minīn), it is stated:

Note that when the Spaniards came a reception was held like this one [referring to the embassy from Tarsos], except that the pergola of the Magnaura was not decorated with sendals but entirely with great skaramangia, and the Phylax’s enamelled objects were also hung in it. The reception for the Spaniards was held on October 24th.286

As the reception of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III is reported to have been held “in all respects” like the one received from Tarsos, I shall attend to its ceremonial features.

First of all, the ‘Abbasid envoys were received on 31 May 946. In the same account of this embassy it is referred that an embassy from Hispania was received with the same display of ceremonial on 24 October. Thus, it seems that the embassy from al-Andalus was received on October 946 in Constantinople, after a first one was held on May of the same year. Otto Kresten however draws attention towards the fact that October 24, 946 was not a Sunday, and usually receptions of ambassadors were held on Sundays, as it was the embassy from Tarsos. Therefore, Kresten suggests that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s

285 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 570-588.
286 Ibid., 571.
embassy was received on October 24th 947, which was a Sunday, and it was afterwards added to accounts regarding receptions of 946. The account of the reception in The Book of Ceremonies is preceded by the general rules, arrangements and protocol expected to be observed when such a reception in held in the great Hall of the Magnaura. The attention to detail is exhaustively narrated. First, I shall present a description of this account, as such ceremonial display was also observed by Andalusi ambassadors. This description will be of great value as it will be further commented on the chapter concerning the comparison of ceremonial displayed in such occasions in the courts of al-Andalus, Baghdad and Byzantium.

The senate must change into ceremonial dresses in the Hall of Magnaura, instead of preparing for the daily procession at the Palace. Two members of the kouboukleion (the imperial apartment) are essential regarding the preparation of ceremonial: the praipositoi or head of eunuch koubikoularioi (those eunuchs who served directly the rulers and who held administrative positions at the court) and the master of ceremonies. Even the time dedicated to each task is carefully controlled. The changing into ceremonial dresses should take about an hour and after that the praipositoi, as the rest of the members of the royal chambers, would go in the Church of the Lord, where the rulers would come in wearing a particular protocol dress. The rulers were to be escorted by the kouboukleion members, the manglabitai and the heritaireia (units of the imperial bodyguard), who would accompany him through the Holy Forty Martyrs, the Sigma, and finally enter the Church of the Lord, to light candles. They proceed to the Sakelle and the Oval Hall until the Magnaura Hall. Before proceeding to the throne of Solomon, the rulers go to the bedchamber on the left of the Hall, and they only present themselves in front of the theatrical stage of the Magnaura Hall when advised by the master of ceremonies, the praipositoi and the logothete (head of secretariat) that everything is set up for the ceremony. The rulers walk to the throne of Solomon, set on the east-side of the hall, while on the west side there are two loose-hanging curtains, separating the sovereigns of the church-singers expected to recite “May God make your holy reign long-lasting”, right after the praipositoi put on the emperors the chlamyses (sleeveless cloak) and the imperial crowns, and after the emperors seat on the throne of Solomon.

Kresten, “Staatsemfänge”, 31-34.

Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 566-570. “What is necessary to observe when a reception is held in the great Hall of the Magnaura, when the rulers sit on the throne of Solomon”.

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This carefully timed ceremony is followed by the customary arrangement of members of the court, both on the right and left sides of the throne, led and set by order of precedence. The praipositoi leads the kouboukleion and afterwards three ostiarios (door keepers) lead three different groups inside, the magistroi (masters of offices), the patricians and the senators, by this order.

In front of the two-loose hanging curtains, both on its right and left, stand the katepano (military commander of the emperor’s men) and the domestikos (administrative official) and other members of the Chrysotriklinos.

So, this protocol ceremonial, which imply at least two hours, as a half of it is described to last about an hour, consists only in the elaboration of the scenic act to that will then be presented to the ambassador. Only when all this is ready on its stage the praipositoi signals the ostiarios of the gold staff to let the foreigner in. The foreigner, always accompanied by an interpreter, can be led to the imperial presence either by the katepano, komes of the stable or by the head groom. The foreigner, the katepano, komes, head groom and the interpreter are always preceded by the logothete, who leads this sort of small procession.

The foreigner is expected to fall on the ground to make obeisance before the emperors, at the sound of the organs. However, and as seen in chapter 4, when the “Saracen” guests were received at the Hall of Magnaura, The Book of Ceremonies only asserts that the “customary ceremonial” was completed, thus it seems to avoid referring to the existence of the ritual of proskynesis.\textsuperscript{289}

When the ambassador stand again and proceeds at a considerable distance to the throne, the music stop. He is accompanied usually by other members of the foreign mission, who will repeat the ambassador’s gestures and will afterwards stand with him inside the two loose-curtains.

Then, the logothete directs to the ambassadors the customary questions. These questions are accounted in chapter 47 of De Ceremoniis, Book II. Specific greetings and questions must be attended to when dealing with Muslim envoys.\textsuperscript{290} This chapter transmits these customary greetings directed towards the emperor: “The greetings to the emperor when ambassadors from the amermounnes come from Syria”:

\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 584.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 683-683.
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Peace and mercy to you, joy and glory from God to the sublime and great emperor of the Romans! Good life and health to you and a long life from the Lord, peace-making and virtuous emperor! May justice and abundant peace dawn in your time, most peaceable and philanthropic emperor!

This was part of a generic address towards the emperor, which should be used by Muslim envoys, as preceding accounts of greetings made by Christian envoys are quite different. The envoys from “Old Rome” should refer that the holy father of the church of Rome was paying homage to the imperial power, or the messengers from Bulgaria, on their turn, should address the emperor as “the divinely crowned emperor, the spiritual grandfather of the ruler of Bulgaria” and as “the most holy and ecumenical patriarch”. These addressing could not be asked from a Muslim envoy as they did not recognized in Emperor Constantine VII any religious symbolism. And thus, when accounting the logothete’s questioning of Muslim envoys, The Book of Ceremonies directly states that the only changing concerning addressing for Muslim ambassadors should be the amir’s possessions:

How is the most highly distinguished and most nobly-born and admirable amermoumnes? How is the emir and the council of elders of Tarsos? If, however, the emissaries of the amermoumnes come from another emirate, they should ask questions about that emir and his council of elders. How are you? How were you received by the patrician and strategos of Kappadokia? How did the imperial emissary conduct you on your journey? We trust that nothing untoward or distressing happened to you on the way? Approach with great gladness and rejoicing; today you are dining with our holy emperor.

In the specific case of the embassy of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, as he sent himself his foreign mission and did not rely on any principality or governorate to do so, as it happened with the mission from the amīr of Tarsos, representing the ‘Abbasid Caliph, the logothete evidently only mentioned his concerns towards the amermoumnes. Also, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s ambassadors were not coming from the East, but from the West and thus they were not received by the strategos of Kappadokia. We also ignore if an imperial emissary was sent to escort the Umayyad Caliph’s envoys, once the emperor knew they were entering

291 Ibid., 680-681.
his territory. Furthermore, we know that the ambassadors form ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III did not dine with Emperor Constantine VII in the Chrysotriklinos on the day of the reception.292

Chapter 15 further proceeds with rules of attendance for foreigners received in Constantinople. After the customary questions of the logothete, it is described that lions roar and birds on the throne and trees sing. These animals are also said to stand upright while the gifts from the ambassador’s ruler are presented to the emperor by the protonotary. Evidently, the description of these animals concern mechanical machines introduced by then in the court ceremonial. These were called automaton in Greek and are accounted to have extensively existed at the court of Baghdad, where they were ingenuously developed, and at the court of Byzantium in Theophilos’ time, which were destroyed by his son Michael III, but again accounted with the utmost fashion in Constantine VII’s receptions.293 The existence of birds, lions, griffins as well as a golden organ, accounted in The Book of Ceremonies, was a result of knowledge of the work of Heron of Alexandria (died ca. 70 A.D.), which explains its mechanisms, and it seems that this tradition was explored by Muslim scholars under the rule of the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Mā’mūn in the 9th century.294 Scholars such as the three Banū Mūṣa brothers were to collect works in Byzantium relating to this matter. Moreover, these type of mechanisms seem to be more developed and sophisticated at the court of Baghdad, and it is discussed if their introduction at the Byzantine court of Theophilos could be assigned to the ‘Abbasids, as the Greek manuscripts in Byzantium regarding the work of Heron date from the 10th century, when al-Ma‘muns scholars had already collected Heron’s work and had develop such automatons.295 Indeed, it is well known the influence played by the ‘Abbasids on the iconoclast court of Theophilos. Michael is accounted to have destroyed these devices, and in 917, Byzantine ambassadors received at the ‘Abbasid court were presumably amazed by an artificial tree with singing birds placed on a pond,296 which could only mean they were not familiar with such devices. These wind-powered devices

292 Ibid, 580.
294 Juan Signes, The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829-842. Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the last phase of Iconoclasm (United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2014), 444-447.
295 Ibid., 448.
296 Dolezal and Mavroudi, “Theodore Hyrthakenos’ Description”, 129.
survived both in the Fatimid court and Umayyad court of Cordoba, particularly animal metalwork statues for fountains.297

Liutprand of Cremona, who narrates his mission of 949 sent by Berengar II, Margrave of Ivrea, to Constantinople, was fascinated by a “certain tree of gilt bronze, whose branches, similarly gilt bronze, were filled with birds of different sizes, which emitted the songs of the different birds corresponding to their species.”298 In the same passage, Liutprand describes how the throne of the emperor, called the throne of Solomon, moved mechanically, as it was raised and lowered in the same occasion, and was flanked by coated golden lions that “seemed to guard him, and striking the ground with their tails, they emitted a roar with mouths open and tongues flickering”.

*De Ceremoniis* further describes that after the gifts had been offered to the emperor, the organs stopped and the lions flanking the throne of Solomon sat down and the birds stop singing. However, while the foreigner is conducted outside the Magnaura Hall, the organs sound as the birds and lions, who stand upright by the throne. But then again, once the ambassador goes out through the curtain, all the paraphernalia sounds stop and each animal seat on its base.

Once the ambassadors have left, at the command “If you please”, pronounced by the praipositoi, the magistroi and the senators say “For many years”. The same command is repeated and the same answer is given by the members of the Chrysotriklinos and the kouboukleion. It was only after everyone had left that the emperor would stand up and leave the throne, taking the protocol costumes, and escorted by the kouboukleion, the emperors would enter the Palace and when going through the Chrysotriklinos the kouboukleion, standing, prayed “For many years”.

As for the passage which specifically reports the reception of ambassadors from Tarsos, and in which Spaniards are also accounted to have been received in the same manner, it concerns primarily detailed descriptions of the decoration of the whole palace and its members, especially with luxury clothes and military weapons with precious stones, displayed for such occasions.

After every group of officials of the palace had entered, the Hall of Magnaura was sprinkled with rose-water. The floor of the pergola around the Hall of the Magnaura was

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fully covered with precious Persian clothes, as it was the platform which were to lead the visitors to the inside of the hall. Inside the Magnaura, near the throne of Solomon the imperial insignia was displayed, such as sceptres or golden pennons. Church-singers of the Church of the Holy Apostles were also summoned to these receptions. Their role in these ceremonials can be compared by the role of poets in the Muslim courts, as both would direct eulogies towards their rulers.

As for the reception in itself and taking into account what was previously described, the “Saracens” were led, mounted on horses, from their lodgings, in the Chryson, then towards the Stable of the Augousta and the vault of Anethas, and then via the Chapel of the Holy Well. Once arrived at the Chalke gate, they dismounted their horses and went through the Hall of the Scholai and the Tribunal, where at the right was a vault which was properly arranged for them to sit and wait until the emperor arrived at the Magnaura. The emperor was the central cosmos and the actor who honoured everyone else with its presence at these receptions, and therefore he should be the one to be awaited.

The details concerning the reception are not transmitted in this account, as it is presumed the reception went exactly as described before, according to rules and regulations. As ambassadors from Tarsos dined with the emperor in the Chrysotriklinos, on the same day of the reception, they were dismissed from the Hall of Magnaura after the customary reception was completed and then were prepared for the banquet. They were led through the pergola outside the Magnaura, until the Hall of Kandidatoi, and from there to the Onopodion and the Hall of Augousteus, where they entered and sat until the emperor went to the Palace. After that they were conducted until the Hypodrome and Skyla and then until the Hall of Justinian where they sat and were given ceremonial dresses. At the banquet there was also a great display of ceremonial and kandidatoi were standing on the left and right of the Chrysotriklinos holding Roman gold sceptres. The singers of the Church of the Holy Apostles and those from Hagia Sophia also attended, singing imperial eulogies, hidden by curtains. This was also the opportunity for Constantine VII to offer gifts to the ambassadors, symbol of Byzantium’s riches, so both envoys were presented each with 500 miliaresia (silver coins) on golden plates with precious stones. They were also given fragrant essences and perfumes, which they used to wash themselves in the Hall of Justinian. Perfumes played an important role both in Byzantium and Muslim courts, and was part of the oriental influence received in Cordoba.

In fact, Ziryāb, musician and poet from the court of Baghdad when migrating to Cordoba, introduced in al-Andalus several luxury products related to hygiene, as I will discuss...
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further ahead. They were then conducted to their lodgings, the Chrysion. To get there, the ambassadors were again conducted to the Chrysotrklinos, through the Lausiakos Hall and the Horologion, and leaving the place where the banquet had taken place, they went along the terrace of the Church of the Theotokos of the Pharos and the New Church and from there to the Tzikanisterion or polo-ground, where they mounted on their horses and went to the Chrysion, which was probably located not too far from this polo-ground, but at a safety distance from the imperial palatine enclosure. However, we know that a banquet was not served during the reception of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s ambassadors.

5.2.2. Andalusi and Byzantine exchanges on Arab sources

Usually, the embassy accounted in De Ceremoniis is considered by researchers to be the first one exchanged between Cordoba and Constantinople after al-Ghazāl’s mission in ca.840. Lévi-Provençal, who dates this mission to Constantine VII on 24 October 949, though not presenting its reasons, believes that opposing to Theophilos initiate in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century, this time the initiative was taken by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. He believes this is quite apparent, as the Arab sources keep total silence about it.\textsuperscript{299}

However, a chronological problem arises. Ibn Idhari accounts under events occurred on 334 A.H. (August 945 – August 946) a Byzantine embassy arriving at Cordoba.\textsuperscript{300} The description of Constantine VII’s embassy in Cordoba is also presented before events taking place in the end of Safar 334 A.H., which could mean that Ibn Idhari dated the Byzantine mission on or before October 945 A.D. The North African historian writes that Constantine, son of Leo, sent an embassy to Cordoba, to present his letters to the Umayyad sovereign. The narrative of the reception is brief, especially if compared to the one presented for the Umayyad embassy in Constantinople. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III is said to have attended the reception seated on his throne at the Cordovan Palace (presumably in Madinat az-Zahra). A military escort was sent to the ambassadors who were to be accompanied and paraded until Madīna al-Zahrā’. The order of precedence was strictly attended. At the caliph’s right hand was his son and heir apparent al-Ḥakam, and his other sons were flanking him, seated, at his right and left, also according to order of precedence. The same happened with his wūzarā’ and hujjāb, arranged in a row, according to their ranks.

\textsuperscript{299} Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 357-348.  
\textsuperscript{300} Ibn ‘Idhari, \textit{al-Bayyān II}, 353.
Once everything was set, the ambassadors would go inside the hall, preceded by the presents sent by their emperor, and Ibn ‘Idhārī affirms once they stepped inside they halted suddenly, due to the intimidating display of royal magnificence and the amount of people presented before their eyes. This description serves of course legitimacy purposes, as the ambassadors of Constantine were used to these ceremonial displays, as the one accounted before. The envoys are reported as intending to prostrate before ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s feet, nevertheless the caliph signalled them not to do so. Then, they presented to the Andalusi sovereign with the letter from Constantine VII, a blue letter written in gold.

Ibn ‘Idhārī yet accounts another Byzantine embassy received in Cordoba, four years later, in 338 A.H. Ibn ‘Idhārī states that Constantine’s envoys were seeking to establish friendly relations and a frequent correspondence between the two powers. As the previous narration, al-Nāṣir provides the ambassadors with provisions and sends a military escort to receive them. He adds that this reception was one of the most famous, “because never a sovereign before him had displayed such pomp and power”. As Ibn ‘Idhārī compiles his work from previous sources, he states that the description of the reception is long, unfortunately, he does not copy it. Most certainly, his source was Ibn Hayyan, but his Muqtabis V is incomplete, covering accounts only until the year of 942. Ibn Idhari only reports the letter received by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III: it was parchment dyed in blue and written with gold. On the letter there was a golden stamp, weighing four mithkal, and on one of its faces was printed the image of the Messiah and on the other the effigies of both Constantine VII and of his son and co-emperor Romanus. Ibn ‘Idhārī does not mention if these embassies, upon returning to Constantinople, were accompanied by Andalusi emissaries.

Al-Maqqarī also accounts these exchanges:

“When the Christian nations saw ‘Abdu-r-rahmân’s repeated successes, they were filled with terror; and all hastened to send ambassadors to him, with a view to obtain his friendship and propitiate his good-will. Accordingly, in the year 336 (beginning July 22, A.D. 947) an embassy arrived in Cordova with presents from Constantine, the Emperor of Constantinople.”

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301 Ibid., 357.
Al-Maqqārī’s source for this reception accounted in 336 A.H. is Ibn Khaldūn. Luckily, for contemporary historians, al-Maqqārī details the ceremonial displayed in Cordoba on the day of their reception.302 The same account is reported directly in Ibn Khaldūn’s ‘Ibar, which is reproduced almost ipsis verbis by al-Maqqārī. In his ‘Ibar, Ibn Khaldūn specifically states that his source was Ibn Ḥayyān.303

When Constantine’s ambassadors arrived at Cordoba, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III ordered great crowds to be collected in order to meet them when entering the city. As for what happened during the reception of ambassadors in Constantinople, the caliph ordered that the troops were given new arms and the royal residence was decorated magnificently with luxury curtains, draperies and the floors covered with costly carpets.

The caliph was seated on his throne and was surrounded, on both sides, by his sons, brothers, uncles and other family members. Thus, in this description al-Maqqārī follows the order of precedence:

The Wizirs, and the officers attending on the royal person, were all drawn out, keeping their proper places in the utmost order.

After this, the ambassadors were conducted to the inside, “and were struck with astonishment at the splendour and magnificence displayed before them”. As for Ibn ‘Idhārī’s description, the envoys approached the sarīr, or throne, and handed their letters into the hands of the Caliph.

Afterwards, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III “commanded the learned of his court to address the assembly in speeches in which they should commemorate the superiority of Islam and the power of the Khalifate”. This account has already been mentioned in chapter 4: the scholars who were supposed to address the audience failed to do so because “they were so overpowered by the dread of the august assembly”. The terror made the poets and scholars stammer, and they sure were accustomed to be around the sovereign and attended him daily. The caliph ordered Abū ‘Alī al-Qalī with the task of addressing the audience, as he was a learned man who had lately been on Iraq and was part of al-akam’s enclosure. Iraq is usually mentioned in chroniclers accounting events in al-Andalus, as this was a

way to assert that the westernmost part of the Islamic territory was well informed and had knowledge of innovations coming from the eastern ‘Abbasid Caliphate.

Nevertheless, Abū ‘Alī al-Qalī was not able to address the audience, and therefore the scholar Mundhir bin Saʿīd volunteered himself, “though not accustomed to speak extempore”. This was of course an opportunity to shine and to please the sovereign, which was accomplished and a long praising poem delighted the audience, who “murmur of approbation”, “notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion”. This granted the poet with his appointment of qāḍī al-jamaʿ. However, we do not know the praising qaṣīda addressed to the caliph.

When Constantine’s envoys left, they were accompanied by Hisham bin Hudhayl, carrying a present for ‘Emperor Constantine and instructed to conclude an alliance. Hishām bin Kulayb al-Hāyliq, هشام بن كليب الحليق, as Ibn Khaldūn calls him, was probably the bishop of Cordoba.304 Al-Maqqarī states that after two years Hishām returned to Cordoba, accompanied by Constantine’s ambassadors. This would mean that three embassies were exchanged between both powers, two embassies in Cordoba, and one in Constantinople.

Further ahead, al-Maqqarī presents another account of diplomatic exchanges between both powers. The historian transmits these exchanges reported in Ibn Ḥayyān’s work. He states that the same diplomatic exchanges have been accounted in his work, using Ibn Khaldūn as a source. Furthermore, the chronicler affirms that while Ibn Khaldūn places these exchanges in 336 A.H., Ibn Ḥayyān accounts the month of Ṣafar of 338 A.H. (August 949), “which of the two dates is the right one, God only knows”.305 In this account, al-Maqqarī, citing Ibn Ḥayyān, states as well that no nation who had heard of him did not send envoys, thus using the same manner attributed to Ibn Khaldūn’s narrative. Ibn Khaldūn might have confused the dates when copying this narrative from Ibn Ḥayyān. Moreover, the narrative that al-Maqqarī takes from Ibn Khaldūn seems as an abridged version of Ibn Hayyan’s own version, which is more extensive and alert to detail. Ibn Ḥayyān starts by informing that as soon as al-Nāṣir knew that Greek ambassadors had arrived to Pechina, arrangements were made for the reception. The Andalusian historian also states that this was the most celebrated embassy of all which were received in

304 Ibid., 143; Signes, “Bizancio y al-Andalus”, 213. Juan Signes mentions that the name of the Andalusian ambassador should be read as Yatalik, which would designate in this case the highest Christian authority of al-Andalus, thus the bishop of Cordoba.
305 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥī II, 140.
Cordoba. He despatched his most distinguished courtiers to meet the ambassadors, such as Yaḥya bin Muḥammad al-Layth, and provide them with everything needed until reaching the capital. Once they arrived at Cordoba, a military ceremony (burūz) was ready to receive them. The troops were fully armed, and were to escort them, as in a parade, until reaching the lodgings carefully prepared for them. Similarly to what was customary in the court of Constantinople, eunuchs played a central role in the ceremonial displayed and two of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s chief eunuchs were assigned with the duty of providing the greatest attention and honours towards the ambassadors, “for the eunuchs of those days were among the highest functionaries at court, being exclusively employed in «the service of the Khalif or in that of his harem, and being, moreover, intrusted with the custody of the royal palace”’. The ambassadors were lodged at Munya Nāṣir, located in the eastern bank of the Guadalquivir, which belonged to the heir apparent al-Ḥakam. This was a sort of a golden cage, as no one was allowed to visit or contact the ambassadors. Hujjāb plus a guard of 16 troops at the palace’s gate were there to make sure this was strictly followed. Ibn Ḥayyān transmits precious information regarding the administration of Cordoba: though the caliph lived in Madīna al-Zahrā’, the Alcazar at Cordoba was still used for administrative purposes. He was conducted there, where he appointed Saturday, 11th Rabi‘ al-Awwal 338 A.H. (29 Augusto 949) for the reception day and “fixed upon the vaulted hall [bahw] in his palace of Al-Zahrā’ as the place where he would receive their credentials”. Lévi-Provençal, describing details from the original source, asserts that the reception took place in the vaulted (arched roof, vestibule, hall, and originally bahw) of the pavilion called al-Majlis al-Zahir. Then he issued all the high bureaucrats and military commanders to be prepared for the reception. As seen in Ibn Khaldūn’s description, one of the main concerns was the decoration of the hall. Ibn Ḥayyān’s narrative is more exhaustive and describes that “a throne glittering with gold and sparkling with gems was raised in the middle of it”. So, the reader might presume that it was not customary to have a throne or sarīr of gold, at least in the hall where the reception took place, and that this was probably provided specifically for the reception of Byzantine ambassadors, intended to impress envoys who were accustomed to see the golden Solomon throne in the Hall of the Magnaura. Ibn Ḥayyān proceeds, stating that five sons of the caliph, transmitting their names, were standing at the right of the throne. The first on his right was of course al-Ḥakam. On his left stood another three sons.

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307 Ibid., 352.
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wuzara were the first, according to order of precedence, standing both right and left of the caliph; the hujjāb were second and then came the sons of the wuzara, the freed slaves and officials of the palace (wakil). Besides luxury carpets, Ibn Hayyān describes that the doors and arches were covered with silk awnings. Ibn Hayyān also witnesses the amazement of ambassadors when entering the hall. The ambassadors then presented to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān the letter of Constantine.

The letter was written in Greek upon sky-blue paper, and the characters were of gold: within the letter was an enclosure, the ground of which was also sky-blue, like the first-mentioned, but the characters were of silver; it was likewise written in Greek, and contained a list and description of the presents which the Lord of Constantinah sent to the Khalif. Upon the letter was a seal of gold. Of the weight of four mithkals, on one side of which was a likeness of the Messiah, and, on the other, those of the King Constantine and his son. The letter was enclosed in a bag of silver cloth, over which was a case of gold with a portrait of King Constantine admirably executed on stained glass. All this was enclosed in a case covered with a cloth of silk and gold tissue. On the first line of the ‘Inwán or introduction was written, ‘Constantine and Romanin (Romanus), believers in the Messiah, Kings of the Greeks’, and in the next, ‘To the great and exalted in dignity and power, as he most deserves, the noble on descent, ‘Abdu-r-rahmān the Khalif, who rules over the Arabs of Andalus. May God prolong his life!’

As attested in Ibn Khaldūn’s, the poets and kuttāb were summoned to address the assembly, praising the caliph’s power. Collecting these scholars was a duty intrusted to the heir apparent. Other names are presented in Ibn Hayyān’s narrative, and the first one who should have addressed the assembly was the faqīh Muḥammad bin al-Barr al-Kasinianī, but he was terrified with such a scene. Then, the same happened with Abū ‘Alī al-Kalī al-Baghdādī, who is reported to be an Iraqi “prince” on rhetoric, but could not address the audience. At the same time that the historian praises the caliph who recruited for his court the most notable scholars coming from Baghdad, he intends as well to lightly demean those eastern learned men, who were being astonished by the ceremonial of the Umayyad Caliphate and surpassed by Andalusi scholars. Ibn Ḥayyān describes that afterwards, an Andalusia unexperienced scholar, Mundhir bin Saʿīd, immediately got up
and addressed the assembly. Ibn Ḥayyān says that before he was appointed qāḍī al-jama‘ he was given the position of imam of the Great Mosque.

Ibn Abī Usayb‘iya, Damascene physician of the 13th century, in his work ‘Uyūn al-Anbā‘ fi Tabaqāt al-Āṭibā‘ or Lives of the Physicians, also reports these exchanges, almost inadvertently, when giving the account of the Andalusi physician of Caliph Hishām II, called Ibn Juljul. Ibn Juljul reported the arrival of a copy of Dioscorides’ work, on medicinal features of plants, to al-Andalus. The chronicler believes (“if I am not mistaken”) that this was offered to the caliph of al-Andalus in the year 337 A.H. and that it was a present from Armānūs, or Romanus, who was co-emperor at that time.\(^{309}\)

The book was written in Greek and was illuminated. At the same time, Ibn Juljul reports the offer of another book, the work of the Greek historian Orosius. Emperor Romanus (who was still co-emperor) is reported to have written on the letter accompanying the presents that “the books of Dioscorides ought to be translated into Arabic by a man well versed in the Greek language, and acquainted also with the properties of simples [medicines]; without this requisite the merits of this wonderful composition will never be duly appreciated and brought to light“.\(^{310}\) As for the book of Orosius, it was written in Latin. However, Ibn Juljul accounts that no man in al-Andalus knew Greek, and that a translation of Dioscorides’ acquired previously in Baghdad was used, until ‘Abd ar-Rahman III, when returning the embassy of Byzantium, asked the emperor to send a translator who could teach this language in al-Andalus. Therefore, a monk named Nicholas was sent, arriving at Cordoba in 340 A.H.. Ibn Juljul writes that the Greek monk taught several physicians in al-Andalus, being the most prominent of those, Hasdāī bin Bashrūṭ, the Israelite.\(^{311}\) Ibn Juljul’s himself knew and was taught by the monk Nicholas, who died in the first year of al-Ḥakam II’s rule, ca. 961/962.

So, Ibn Juljul’s dating of these exchanges are also different from those presented by Ibn Ḥayyān, Ibn ‘Idhārī and Ibn Khalduhn.

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\(^{310}\) Ibid., xxv.

\(^{311}\) This must be Hasdāī bin Shabrūṭ, Andalusi physician, secretary of ‘Abd ar-Rahman III and diplomat of Jewish faith, as his laqab shows (al-Isrā‘îlî). He is mentioned by Ibn Ḥayyān (Muqtabis V) for several missions to Christian Iberia. He was also sent to the court of Otto I. For more information about Hasdāī see: Manuel Carredo Tejedo, “Un sol esplendoroso en León: el judío Hasdai de Córdoba (941-956)”, Estudios Humanísticos. Historia, 7 (2000).
Aḥmad al-Maqqarī, who presented extensively knowledge of previous historians whom he compiled, was always careful when transmitting these accounts. As written above, he understands that Ibn Ḥāyyān, being an historian who collected these accounts directly from those who were attending the reception, is the most trustworthy. And indeed, Ibn Ḥāyyān is considered to be the original source for Andalusi Umayyad history. For the account of the first Byzantine embassy in al-Andalus during the Amirate times, Ibn Ḥāyyān, who did not hear directly this reception from those who attended it, presents the reader only with the year of the reception. So, in this particular case, the chain of transmission was longer. However, for the account regarding exchanges during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s time he heard directly from his courtiers.

Juan Signes discusses widely the dating of these embassies, presenting arguments against and in favour of different dating. Nevertheless, it seems that for an embassy four different dates are given by distinct Arab historians (334 A.H., 336 A.H., 337 A.H., and 338 A.H.).

It appears that the initiative was taken by the ruler of Cordoba, and hence an embassy is accounted to be received on 24 October 946 at the Hall of Magnaura in Constantinople. Then, to respond to this Andalusi embassy, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos sent an embassy to Cordoba, accounted by several historians, though with different dates. We also know that this first embassy from Constantine VII’s in Cordoba triggered two more embassies, one from the caliph to Constantinople and again another from the emperor to Cordoba. Therefore, and taking al-Maqqarī’s accounts as the most reliable source, this presents us with exchanges, of which order of events fluctuate between two different chronological boundaries: one from 336 A.H. until 338 A.H. and another from 338 A.H. until ca. 340 A.H., as the Andalusi ambassador sent to Constantinople after the first Byzantine reception in Cordoba, upon his own returning to Hispania was accompanied by ambassadors from Constantine. So, according to such a drawing of events four embassies were exchanged, two in Constantinople and two in Cordoba.

In a more optimistic proposal we could have instead of four, five embassies, if we consider that Ibn ‘Idhārī’s date (334) corresponds to the first Constantine’s embassy in Cordoba, which would put the initiative of such exchanges on the Byzantine side. As for Ibn Juljul account, would probably be too optimistic to consider the embassy described

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312 Signes, “Bizancio y al-Andalus”, 212-223.
Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries)

as an extra embassy in Cordoba. Ibn Juljul is quite unsure when presenting the year 337, which was not the case when accounting the year 340 for a Constantinople’s embassy at Cordoba. This last date coincide with the chronological boundaries presented by al-Maqqaṟī. Also, accepting a distinct Byzantine embassy in Cordoba in 337 would mean an extra embassy of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in Constantinople, as he is accounted to respond to the emperor’s mission, asking for a Greek translator, which perhaps would reveal a far excessive hectic pace of exchanges.

Lévi-Provençal states that it is most probable that both Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Juljul’s accounts are the result from a subsequent contamination of Ibn Ḥayyān’s narrative on the reception of 11 Ṣafar 338 A.H. (8 September 949).³¹³

Thus, four seems to be the safest number for embassies exchanged between Cordoba and Constantinople under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s rule and the number presented by a careful and methodical historian, such as al-Maqqarī. Indeed, if the exchanges were four, five, six or even seven, it is impossible for the present day historian to conclude with confidence, as sources do not speak more than what their writers wanted to transmit.

Al-Maqqarī also accounts the arrival of several architectural materials to Cordoba from Constantinople. The greatest architectural achievement of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, and perhaps of the whole Umayyad dynasty of al-Andalus, was the construction of the palace-city in the outskirts of Cordoba. This was of course the city of Madīna al-Zahra’. Its construction was not only due to the growing of the administrative bureaucracy, but above all it served a monumental excuse.³¹⁴ Its construction started in 936, and the caliph dedicated half of his sovereignty to its construction, especially after being defeated by Ramiro II of Leon and a joint Christian army, at the battle of Simancas in 939. As other Muslim dynasties, such as the Fatimids and the ‘Abbasids had already dedicated part of its rule to the construction of such courtier cities, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s endeavour resulted from his caliphal privilege and was part of a carefully drawn plan of the Umayyad legitimacy. It was also a reaction towards the increasing power of the Fatimid caliphate, who by this time had already built a palace-city in North Africa: al-Maḥdiyya.³¹⁵ Its construction falls within the oriental influence of al-Andalus, following the model of the foundation of new palace-cities such as Baghdad of the ‘Abbasids and even the

³¹³ Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 351.
Constantinople palace of Byzantium. Similarly to the palace in Constantinople, Madīna al-Zahrā’ consisted of several courtly constructions or pavilions. Its construction no doubt was a caliphal attribute and a symbol of the recognition of the Umayyad power, whose destiny was intrinsically attached to that of al-Andalus. In fact, “the magnitude of the monuments erected by a dynasty is proportional to its power, as its construction demands a power who directs and funds such necessary labour force.”

Al-Maqqarī states that 140, of the 4,000 columns employed for the construction of the city, were a present from the Byzantine Emperor. Nevertheless, the historian does not give any further details.

Al-Maqqarī further accounts, compiling a narrative by Ibn Ḥayyān, that among the greatest wonders of the palatine city were two fountains, “so valuable for their exquisite workmanship, that, in the opinion of that writer [Ibn Ḥayyān], they constituted the principal ornament of the palace.” Al-Maqqarī asserts that one of these fountains was also brought from Byzantium, made of gilt bronze and carved with basso-relievo representing human figures. This fountain was brought from Constantinople by Aḥmad al-Yunānī (the Greek) and Rabi‘, the Bishop. This Bishop was of course Recemund or Rabi‘bin Zayd, Mozarab courtier of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. We know that he only received the diocese of Elvira as a reward for volunteering to be the ambassador sent to Otto I ca. 955 (his embassy was received in February 956), avoiding a diplomatic incident, as we will see further ahead. Therefore, this mission to Constantinople was probably after he was appointed bishop, which means an extra embassy from those accounted previously. Al-Maqqarī writes that the other fountain, which was smaller and of green marble, was either brought from Syria or Constantinople, also by Aḥmad al-Yunānī and the Bishop of Elvira. The historian described the smaller fountain as a work of art, because ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III ordered it to be placed in the Eastern Hall called al-Mun‘is and fix on it 12 animal figures made of red gold and precious stones.

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318 Ibid., 236.
Al-Maqqrī additionally asserts, that this marble greened fountain was placed in the centre of the hall called Kasr al-Khilāfa, and that on top of it was a pearl, offered by Emperor Leo of Constantinople.\(^{320}\) Probably the historian means Constantine VII, son of Leo, as Emperor Leo IV died in the same year ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III ascended to the throne. This hall caused the most splendid and terrifying experience for those who visited it, as its roof was made of golden and silver tiles and also transparent blocks of marble of various colours. This transparent marble was also used for the walls. Al-Maqqrī cites Ibn Bashkuwāl who transmitted that a basin full of quicksilver was placed on the centre of the hall. So, once the sun penetrated in this hall, the caliph would order one of his Sclavonians to set the quicksilver in motion, which would create a terrifying and resplendent vision of multiple flashes, as if the room was moving. This has a deeper meaning, as referred by the historian: the caliph meant to create the illusion, resorting to luxury materials and quicksilver, that the room was always moving and following the course of the sun.

Some of these materials are clearly identified as presents from the Byzantine Emperor, such as the columns and the pearl. Probably, the mission of Rabi‘ bin Zayd to the East and to Constantinople to acquire materials for the construction of Madīna al-Zahrā ‘ was also part of a diplomatic mission, sent after 956, as the Bishop was accounted to visit Otto I in this year. Nevertheless, al-Maqqrī’s information is scarce.

Finally, a 10\(^{th}\) century Fatimid source, Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, official historian of the Fatimid caliphs, in his *Book of Audiences and Travelling* he accounts that after the Fatimid attack of Almeria in 955, the Umayyad caliph sent an embassy in 344 A.H. (April 955 – April 956) to Constantine VII, asking for his help against the Fatimid hegemony, which was conceded to him, and an Andalusi fleet on the shores of Sicily was joined by a Byzantine fleet.\(^{321}\) In the same passage, al-Nu‘man accounts that the Byzantine fleet was defeated by the Fatimids and fled to the strait of Reggio, though not mentioning what happened to the Umayyad fleet. However, according to this source an embassy of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III was received in Constantinople between 955 and 956. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān was a partisan and employee of the Fatimids,

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thus writing their history to please his rulers and concealing some aspects, such as the fortune of the Umayyad fleet.

5.2.3. Al-Andalus and Byzantium according to Liutprand of Cremona

Liutprand of Cremona, Lombard diplomat of the 10th century, was sent by Berengar II, margrave of Ivrea, in 949 to Constantinople. Liutprand, after returning from his mission seems to have fallen out of favour in Beregar's court and changed loyalties to Otto I, in whose court he met the Andalusi ambassador Recemund or Rabi’ bin Zayd, Bishop of Elvira, to whom he dedicated his work Antapodosis.

Liutprand, when leaving Pavia in his mission to Constantinople, arrived at Venice in August 949, where he met the eunuch Salomon, ambassador of Byzantium, who was going back to Constantinople after his missions to al-Andalus and Saxony. Salomon was accompanied by both Andalusi ambassadors (probably Hishām bin Kulayb) who were to respond to Constantine’s mission, and by Liutfred, envoy of Otto I, then King of Germany and Duke of Saxony.

Liutprand then proceeded with Salomon, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s ambassadors, and Liutfred, until reaching Constantinople on 7 September 949.

5.2.4. Al-Andalus and Byzantium on Hebrew sources

‘Abd al-Raḥmān III was known for employing in his administration prominent Andalusi Christians and Jews. One of his most celebrated courtiers regarding diplomatic relations was Hasdai bin Shabrūṭ, already mentioned in this chapter. He is even accounted to have cured the excessive obesity of Sancho I (el Craso) of Leon, who had been deposed by Ordoño IV.

Hasdāī was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s physician and was also employed by the caliph to diplomatic mission to Christian Iberian courts. Although he is not accounted to have taken any mission to Byzantium, Hebrew medieval documents, which content was kept and transmitted through Genizah documents, report his diplomatic correspondence with

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322 Liudprand of Cremona, “Antapodosis VI”, 197.
323 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 299. As Sancho the Fat, was the grandson of Toda Aznárez of Navarre, he took refuge at Pamplona’s court. His grandmother asked for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s help and presumably the caliph sent them Hasdāī bin Shabrūṭ, “who was just as good doctor as diplomat”. Provençal, nevertheless does not mention the source where Ibn Shabrūṭ is regarded as the heeler of Sancho I.
Byzantium and the kingdom of the Khazars. Hasdāī maintained correspondence as well with other kingdoms, nevertheless, for this thesis the relevant letters, or portions of these letters, are those written to Empress Helena of Byzantium and to King Joseph, ruler of the Khazars.

Ibn Shabrūṭ sent a letter to Byzantium, addressing a royal female, and asking her to intercede in favour of the Byzantine Jews, pointing out that the Christians of al-Andalus, under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, were benevolently treated. This plea of Hasdāī has been justified by scholars as a result of religious persecution of Jews in the end of Romanos Lekapenos’ rule, predecessor of Constantine VII. Ibn Shabrūṭ also asked Helena about the Khazarian kingdom, as he might have heard about it from Byzantine ambassadors arriving at Cordoba. The recipient of this letter has been identified by scholars as Empress Helena, wife of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. The letter does not bear any date, however, most probably, it was taken to Byzantium after Constantine VII’s ambassadors came to Cordoba.

In the fragment concerning the letter of Hasdāī to the Khazarian ruler, the physician expresses his joy when the court of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, “King of the Sefarad” received King Joseph’s letter. The fragment transmission is scarce, nevertheless, this letter was most probably intended to learn more about a distant kingdom whose official religion was Judaism. Hasdāī’s letter to King Joseph resulted in some exaggerated statements by Golb and Pritsak:

(...) Hasdai had the prerogative of writing letters of an official nature in Hebrew, which could then be translated by Jewish scholars upon arrival at the royal courts for which they were destined. Similarly, to bridge the language barrier, Jewish translators or aides in the service of European rulers might have been charged with the same task when communication was sought with the court of Cordova. In the tenth century, Jewish communities were located throughout continental Europe, whereas individuals having

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326 Ibid., 10; Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew documents*, 79.

327 Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 12.

328 Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew documents*, 83.
knowledge of Arabic were not likely to be found there. Letters sent in Hebrew to Hasdai could then be translated to Arabic by him or by his secretaries (...). \(^{329}\)

‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, who is mentioned in the letter, probably had previous knowledge of Hasdā‘i’s enterprise. This could have been a private enterprise though. Hasdā‘i or any other diplomat or secretary working under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s administration, could not send official letters without the caliph’s knowledge. The bureaucracy and administration was one of the caliph’s priorities, and it was extremely developed and controlled under his reign. The writing of official documents was under one of the most important administrative offices, the kitāba. \(^{330}\) Evidently, such an intrinsically Arabic court would not issue official documents in Hebrew whenever relations were intended to be seek with Christian Europe or Byzantium, nor would Christian powers send letters to a Muslim and Arab ruler in Hebrew to be then translated into Arabic. As we have seen in De Ceremoniis, interpreters of Arabic in the court of Constantinople accompanied the Cordovan and Aleppo’s envoys. Also, Byzantium had close relations with the ‘Abbasids and Fatimids. An administration such as that of Constantinople employed translators and interpreters who were to be used in their frequent diplomatic relations with the surrounding Muslim sovereigns.

It is unlikely that the correspondence of Hasdā‘i resulted in more exchanges than those reported by Arab historians. It was the eagerness and interest of Hasdā‘i which made him use his high position in the court of Cordoba to send parallel correspondence, secured by his own messenger Ishāq bin Nathān, who would probably accompanied ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s envoys, such as Hishām bin Kulayb, and then proceeded to travel until reaching the Kingdom of the Khazars. Ibn Shabrūṭ’s letters aimed to inform other Jewish communities of the existence of the Sefarad community in al-Andalus. Nevertheless, this is a valuable testimony, as it proves the incessant diplomatic exchanges maintained by Cordoba.

5.2.5. Motivations for Andalusi and Byzantine exchanges

Political motivations, though important and evidenced by the political frame of the Mediterranean, as seen in chapter 4, offered the perfect excuse or argument for the

\[^{329}\] Ibid., 83-84.
\[^{330}\] Umayyad administrative structures have been studied by Meouak, Pouvoir Souverain, 52-55.
central role played by ceremonial. It was an essential part of court and bureaucratic organization. It was the necessary ritualization of the administrative and political power of the sovereign. It was not the result of an archaic or primitive society, on the contrary it was the reflexion of its civilizational, cultural and power development. The detailed description of such ceremonies transmitted by the chroniclers reflects the centrality of the ceremonial and ritualization role. Ibn Hayyān, for exchanges under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II and Theophilos seems more concerned in accounting the political motivations which moved the Byzantine emperor to send a mission to al-Andalus. On the contrary, the Andalusi historian, and others who follow his account, express more concern on the description of such scenario.

Such ceremonies represented the *imitatio* of the divine, the hierarchy of the cosmic sphere transported to the earth, in which the ruler was almost *divinized*, as he was the centre of the world around whom the whole ceremonial flows. His court is the paradise on earth, where the prominent men exceeded themselves in the arts, politics and administration. He is the patron of such a developed culture. And of course, at the end the ceremonial served a legitimacy agenda.

However, this does not mean that the adulation of the holder of the power was the objective of such ceremonies. Clifford Geertz underlines that such ceremonies did not intend the worship of the state:

*The state cult was not a cult of the state. It was an argument, made over and over again in the insistent vocabulary of ritual, that worldly status has a cosmic base, that hierarchy is the governing principle of the universe, and that the arrangements of human life are but approximations, more close or less, to those of the divine.*

Thus, the ceremonial was the crucial nourishment for the court society, and responded to its necessity of ritualizing the power. Such was the case for the Byzantine Empire and al-Andalus. The first was the direct heir of the Greek classical civilization and indeed the Umayyad al-Andalus fancied itself in the same way and acquired in fact such a reputation among Arab chroniclers. Al-Maqqarī writes:

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(...) it is generally asserted that they are of all nations that which most resembles the Greeks in their knowledge of the physical and natural sciences (...).\textsuperscript{332}

The author proceeds to enumerate the Andalusi qualities and knowledge of medicinal plants, which must be a reflex of Greek books, brought, translated and studied in al-Andalus, such as the copy of Dioscorides.

I shall discuss now the political meaning of these exchanges, as I will return to the ceremonial, legitimacy and cultural exchanges in the last chapter of this thesis.

The declaration of the western caliphate in al-Andalus by ‘Abd al-Rahmān III and his \textit{de facto} territorial power over the whole peninsula resulted as well in the caliph’s expansionist agenda. The Maghreb al-Aqṣā and the western Mediterranean were the obvious territorial and maritime extensions of al-Andalus. In fact, the Arab geographers describe al-Andalus as a new hub of the Muslim space, competitor of Baghdad, Qayrawan and later on, Cairo.\textsuperscript{333}

The recently declared Fatimid Caliphate, in 909, and its successful expansion in North Africa as well as in Sicily revealed to be a real threat for al-Andalus. Contrary to the political situation of al-Andalus in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century, where the ‘Abbasids did not present a real threat towards the existence of al-Andalus, the Fatimids were expanding to east and west of the Maghreb and at this time it was not certain that they would settle in an eastern Mediterranean axis, as in fact happened when they conquered Fustat and founded Cairo in 968. Surely the Aghlabids were the ‘Abbasid agents in the western Mediterranean, nevertheless their conquests never presented a threat to Hispania and also their political agenda towards the Umayyads was dubious, as discussed in chapter 4. As for the Fatimids, this was not the case, and they even threatened directly the maritime borders of al-Andalus, as they were able to sack Almeria in 955. Indeed, it was not by coincidence that the Fatimids chose Almeria as the target of their attack. It had become the busiest port of al-Andalus and both its activity, which was only compared to al-Mahdiyya, and its name, al-Mahdiyya, represented the rivalry between both powers.\textsuperscript{334}

Indeed, the preference of ‘Abd Allāh for ‘Abd al-Rahmān III as his successor was influenced by this new Mediterranean power, the Fatimids. As underlined before, ‘Abd al-Rahmān III inherited a fragmented territory, and the political sedition spread all over

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{332} Al-Maqqari, \textit{Nafh I}, 118.
\textsuperscript{333} Picard, \textit{La Mer des Califes}, 143.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., 153.
\end{footnotesize}
al-Andalus, and especially in the Marches regions, was also a reflexion of the quarrels among the Umayyad family. ‘Abd Allāh, who presumably had his predecessor and brother, al-Mundhir, assassinated, also instigated the death of his son Muṭarrif, and then ordered the assassination of this one, who was suspected of treason. Apparently, ‘Abd Allāh nominated his grandson ‘Abd al-Raḥmān his heir apparent, who was presented as closing a cycle of seven umarā’, a number with great religious significance for the Fatimid Caliphs, and opening (as the eighth amīr of al-Andalus) another cycle.335

Thus, the expansion and the structuring of an axis of influence especially in the Maghrebi Mediterranean shores was not only an Umayyad ambition as it was also a necessity to maintain and endure territorial and mercantile power of al-Andalus.

Hence, if the sea had become the theatre of Umayyad naval operations,336 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s court had become the theatre state.

Constantinople had also to deal with the Fatimid threat. Again the Byzantine Empire had to revive the Sicilian loss. In 902 the last Byzantine base in Sicily, Taormina, was lost, and in 909 the island’s ownership falls into the hands of the even strongest (than the Aghlabis) Fatimid rulers. The Fatimid Caliphate also revealed its interest towards southern Italian shores. In 928, the Fatimids landed on Apulia, stormed Taranto and Otranto, and threatened Campania, which led Salerno and Naples to pay the Fatimid fleet their withdrawal from the Italian shores and Romanos Lekapenos to accept the payment of a tribute, between 931 and 932, in exchange for the security of Calabria and Apulia.337 It seems that the Byzantine Empire wanted this truce situation to prevail, as in October 946 Constantine VII sent an embassy to al-Maḥdī.338 This was precisely on the same year and month that De Ceremoniis places ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s delegation in Constantinople.

As discussed above, it seems that it was the Andalusí caliph who took the initiative to resume new exchanges between both powers, as Ibn Ḥayyān, the most reliable source for the Umayyad dynasty, places the first Byzantine embassy to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III on 11 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 338 A.H. (8 September 949). Evidently, the Caliph of Cordoba, upon being informed of Fatimid military actions on Italian shores and in Sicily, showed his

335 Maribel Fierro, “Porque sucedió ‘Abd al-Rahman a su abuelo el emir ‘Abd Allah”, Al-Qantara XXVI, 2 (2005), 365-366. The Ismā‘īlī Shi‘a doctrine is based on the belief of seven Imams.
336 Picard, La Mer des Califes, 146.
338 Maribel Fierro, Abderramán III y el califato omeya de Córdoba (San Sebastián: Nerea, 2011), 141.
concern about the growing puissance of the new North African dynasty. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that the political and territorial situation of Byzantium was not the same as in the 9th century, when Theophilos’ desperate situation regarding the Amirate of Crete, the Aghlabids in Sicily and the ‘Abbasids in Amorium, triggered the despatch of several embassies to the western Mediterranean courts. Indeed, upon acknowledge diplomatic relations and a truce achieved between the Fatimids and Constantinople, ‘Abd al-Rahmān III was concerned that this alliance could develop into a joint force which would defend both Fatimid and Byzantine interests in the Mediterranean and North African shores. As the caliph understood that Byzantium had to accept a truce because of the Fatimid puissance in the Mediterranean, he did not wanted to waste any time, so he anticipated any potential danger of such an alliance and probably made use of these arguments to achieve an alliance with his Byzantine homologous. As the Italian shores were one of the main concerns for the mercantile interests of the Byzantines, why not send an embassy to Constantinople and discuss mutual territorial and mercantile interests? In fact, Amalfitan merchants arrived at al-Andalus in the end of Jumādā al-Thānī 942 (March 942), intending to open the Andalusi trade routes to Amalfitan trade, which they successfully achieved, as the caliph was pleased and acquired most of the merchandise brought to them, and from then on the mercantile exchanges between Andalusis and Amalfitans developed.\(^{339}\) Indeed, \textit{al-Muqtabis V} reports another stay of Amalfitan merchants in al-Andalus, when they arrived among the members of a diplomatic delegation sent by the ruler of Sardinia, once more bringing luxury goods, such as ingots of both silver and gold or satin.\(^{340}\)

The Fatimid power was of course one of the main political concerns regarding exchanges between ‘Abd al-Rahmān III and Constantine VII, and being such rivals of the Umayyad of Cordoba their control of the Mediterranean area comprising Sicily and Italian shores could not only mean the loss of Umayyad influence in the Maghreb as it could damage its mercantile interests. In fact, Amalfitan merchants were able to draw an axis of mercantile interests from al-Andalus, Maghreb, Egypt and Syria-Palestine within the Muslim territories, connecting these trade networks to Byzantium.\(^{341}\)


\(^{340}\) Ibid., 365.

\(^{341}\) Dominique Valérian, “Amalfi e il mondo musulmano: un laboratorio per le città marinare italiane?”, \textit{Rassegna del Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana}, XX (2010), 201.
Juan Signes believes that an alliance based on mutual interests in the Sicilian and North African shores is proved through the aforementioned narrative of the Fatimid historian Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān.\textsuperscript{342} The account of this historian, as seen above, is somehow obscure, as it does not mention details about such a joint expedition undertaken by Byzantium and al-Andalus. However, this does not mean it did not take place. In fact, the attack on Almeria in 955 might have provoked an impact on the political power of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. Of course this attack intended more to provoke and served legitimacy purposes, as the Fatimids did not intend an open military conflict against the Umayyads, who by this time had a strong and developed fleet, a caliphal attribute of power.\textsuperscript{343}

In fact, the Fatimid attack of Almeria in 955 seems to be a direct response to an Umayyad’s attack against a Sicilian ship in the same year. Provençal asserts that in 955, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III sent a ship to Alexandria, with merchandise intended for trade, and on its way when sailing through Ifrīqiyya’s shores it came across a Sicilian ship from the Fatimid governor of Sicily to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu‘izz. The Umayyad ship attacked the Sicilian, taking its merchandise as well as official documents for the Fatimid Caliph. Following this event, al-Mu‘izz sent his representative in Sicily, al-Ḥassan bin ‘Alī to attack with his fleet the Andalusi shores, devastating Almeria.\textsuperscript{344}

If Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān mentions that an Umayyad fleet met a Byzantine fleet around 955/956 in the Sicilian shores, Ibn Idhari accounts that after the Almeria attack, ‘Abd ar-Raḥman III sent the admiral of his fleet, Ghālib, in 345 A.H. (April 956-April 957) to devastate the Ifrīqiyya’s shores, after curses were casted towards the Fatimids from mosques all over al-Andalus, and letters sent to the governors.\textsuperscript{345} As dates coincide, this fleet mentioned by Ibn ‘Idhārī could be the same mentioned by Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, and while the Byzantine fleet was supposed to devastate and perhaps regain some of the Byzantine possessions in Sicily, the Umayyad fleet was devastating the Ifrīqiyya’s shores, and thus making a statement that the Maghreb shores was one of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s policies. Therefore, this attack mentioned by Ibn Idhari could be part of a plan joint attack between the Caliph of Cordoba and Constantine VII, and hence corroborating the narrative of Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān. While one of the fleets was devastating the Sicilian part of the Fatimid possessions, another one was attacking the Ifrīqiyya shores, and hence both

\textsuperscript{342} Signes, “Bizancio y al-Andalus,” 237.
\textsuperscript{343} Picard, \textit{La Mer des Califès}, 154-155.
\textsuperscript{344} Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana,” 319-320.
\textsuperscript{345} Ibn ‘Idhārī, \textit{al-Bayyān II}, 366.
were mutual diversions of each other. Nevertheless, the Fatimid fleet reacted quickly and concentrated its forces against the Byzantine fleet which was defeated, as mentioned by Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān.

Lévi-Provençal further mentions, though not providing the reader with the source, that Ghālib, al-Nāṣir’s admiral, with a fleet of 70 ships, attacked Marsa al-Kharaz, Sousse and Tabarka. Due to the fact that each attack, either from the Umayyads or the Fatimids, gave way to a new offensive, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s North African policy in his last years of reigning are described by Provençal as bitter, as the Fatimids made sure to attack his most precious possessions in the Maghreb, such as Tahart, leaving him with only two strongholds: Tangier and Ceuta.346

In fact, ‘Abd ar-Rahman III foreign policy regarding his interests in North Africa, was based on a chain of influences in the Maghreb, where he kept his agents. Indeed, Ibn Idhari describes that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III kept agents in North Africa, and that in 946 he received Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Kulayb in Cordoba, who had arrived from Qayrawan to announce the death of Abū al-Qāsim bin ‘Ubayd Allāh, Fatimid Caliph who died in Maḥdiyya while he was sieged by Abū Zayd, and thus succeeded by his son Ismāʿīl.347 This was of course the Fatimid Caliph al-Qāʾim bi-ʿAmr Allāh, or Abū al-Qāsim, who died in 946 while was being sieged by the rebellious Abū Yazīd, a Zanata Berber khārijī, known as Ṣāḥib al-Ḥimār (the possessor of the donkey), a symbol of his humbleness, and who is said to have sent agents to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III as he intended to recognize the Umayyad Caliphate and obtain his military help against the Fatimids.348 However, the Cordovan caliph did not react on time, and Abū Yazīd was defeated by the Fatimids.

Regarding this specific political frame, which witnessed the fragility of the Fatimids, threatened at their own capital, Byzantium and al-Andalus, might have seen in 946, year in which the Andalusi-Byzantine exchanges restarted, a window of opportunity to destroy the Fatimid Mediterranean power.

Another topic of these exchanges was again the situation in Crete. It is known that Constantine VII’s tried to disembark on the island at this time. De Ceremoniis describes the preparation of an expedition in 949.349 Lévi-Provençal also mentions the Byzantine

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348 Fierro, Abderrahmān III, 126-127.
349 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 662-79.
Emperor’s attempts to reconquer Crete, adding that nevertheless Constantine VII did not had any valid excuse to evoke al-Andalus’ responsibility towards the actions of Abū Ḥafṣ’ descendants, and hence he assigns to the motivations of these exchanges a cultural role. Thus, the French historian prefers to evoke Constantinople splendour which “eclipsed that of the most rich and prosperous capitals of Islam.”

There is indeed an unquestionable cultural role for these embassies, as the chroniclers report several of such exchanges and even placing the Andalusi as the direct descendants of the Greek culture. Nonetheless, there are also some clues left by sources which might allow us to foreseen political motivations as well.

The situation of Crete on the Mediterranean and Aegean areas has been discussed in detail in chapter 4. Even though this was not the main concern of these exchanges, as it seems that the initiative was taken by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, Constantine VII took advantage of his privileged situation as the one who was being honoured for such an initiative, probably mentioning the situation of Crete. He also knew that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III possessed a powerful fleet defending his interests in the Mediterranean shores of the Maghreb and even extending his mercantile interests towards the Italian shores.

The Book of Ceremonies, when describing the expedition of Crete, mentions the fitting out of the fleets and cavalry for other Byzantine provinces. It is quite interesting that in this passage is mentioned that from the imperial fleet, three units with the ostiarios and nipsistarios Stephen were to be sent for service in Hispania. The Book of Ceremonies does not add any more details to this account.

It is also not possible to tell if these fleets prepared for Hispania had some relation to the expedition of Crete. De Ceremoniis, in the same passage describes that fleets were also sent to Dalmatia, Dyrrhachion and Calabria. Cretans were still powerful enough to threat the Aegean Sea, and between 930 and 940, the Amirate attacked Pelopponese and central Greece, also attacking Athos again. However, the expedition of 949 was unsuccessful. There are also accounts of diplomatic exchanges between Constantinople

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351 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 664. The translators clarify that for the fleet, one unit would either correspond to a crew or to a ship and its crew. As for the ostiarios and nipsistarios, the first was a court title given to “a palace eunuch whose function was to introduce dignitaries to the emperor or empress,” the second also refers to an eunuch “whose function was to give the emperor a basin and ewer with which to wash his hands before he left the palace or before other ceremonies”. See Glossary of De Ceremoniis, page 832. Courtier titles in this thesis will follow definitions of the same glossary.
and Crete, in 913/914, aiming to exchange prisoners taken from raids. The Cretans also damaged the Eastern Mediterranean trade interests of Byzantium.

We know that this account reports to 949, the same year in which a Byzantine embassy was received in Cordoba. Could it be the fleet in which the Byzantine ambassadors travelled to al-Andalus? It could also be the case that after the first embassy of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III was received in Constantinople and exposed their mutual concerns regarding the Fatimids, Constantine VII would send a fleet to be part of a joint action on Fatimid potentates both in Sicily and Maghreb. However, this is just a hypothesis, as, to my knowledge, no other source mentions the display of Byzantine naval power to Hispania. But the reasons for such a favourable joint interest have been exposed above. This would also mean that the Andalusi and Byzantine fleets would have met more than once, besides the expedition mentioned by the Fatimid historian, Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān.

5.3. Exchanges with Western Europe: Otto I and Frankish rulers

Exchanges between ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and Otto I, King of Germany and future Holy Roman Emperor, are accounted extensively by John of Saint Arnoul, biographer of John, Abbot of Gorze, ambassador sent to the court of Cordoba. Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn ʿIdhārī and al-Maqqarī, who compiles accounts from both Ibn Ḥayyān and Ibn Khaldūn, also report the arrival of Otto’s embassy.

John, Abbot of Saint-Arnoul, who praises John of Gorze’s religious qualities throughout his text, accounts that it was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III who took the initiative of sending an embassy, as he reports that an embassy from the caliph arrived and was received with great honours at Otto’s court, where they were withheld for quite some time (three years). Paz y Melia, who transmits and translates the account for Spanish, places the arrival of Cordovan envoys to Otto’s court in 950. This is probably due to following events reported by John of Gorze’s biographer, as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III expresses his dissatisfaction regarding the fact that his envoys were retained at Otto’s court for three years, and thereby informed Otto’s ambassador of his intentions to keep him in Cordoba for three times as much, which would be 9 years.

353 Picard, *La Mer des Califes*, 260.
During these three years, one of the two ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s ambassadors, a bishop of al-Andalus (the account does not mention any name) died. The chronicler also mentions that the caliph’s letter contained some blasphemies against Christ. Most certainly, this was due to preliminary religious rhetoric contained in his letter. Therefore, the Abott states that “the envoys who would be sent to him [to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III] should address him their admonitions, at the same time that they would present him the emperor’s letters, or try to tempt him away from his profanity.”

After searching for some time the right envoys who should be sent to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, John of Gorze volunteered for the mission, and the king handed him his letters and presents. John of Gorze was accompanied by a citizen of Verdun, probably a merchant, whose name was Ermenhard, and a deacon called Garamano.

Their way to al-Andalus was through Langres, Beaune, Dijon and Lyon. From there, in 953, they embarked on the Rhône, then from the Mediterranean they finally arrived at Hispania. First they arrived at Barcelona, where they stayed for 15 days, and then they were received at Tortosa, after the governor of this town informed Cordoba of their arrival. In Tortosa they stayed for one month, from where orders to other governors were sent so that on the way to the capital the envoys would be received with great honour. When they arrived at Cordoba, in 954, they were given lodgings far from the capital. This was when the caliph’s men who were at their service, and upon being asked, informed the envoys of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s intentions to keep them there for nine years. John of Gorze was also persuaded to display the content of the letter, but he refused as he would only reveal its content in the presence of its addressee, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. The Abbot also accounts that Otto’s ambassadors were threatened, as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s men advised them they were in great danger because of the content of the letters they were carrying. John states that its content had been leaked by the companion of the deceased bishop, who had previously been sent to Otto, and who had accompanied them from Toul until Tortosa, from where he departed to Cordoba before John of Gorze.

It is perceivable from the Abbot’s account that Otto’s letter contained “commonplaces aimed at the perfidia of the caliph which could only be regarded as blasphemy of the Islamic faith,” thus the penalty would be death.

To reason with John of Gorze, “the most astute of men ever seen by ours”, the Jewish diplomat and physician Hasdāī bin Shabrūṭ, was sent to them. He advised them, as if they would be imprisoned, their status as diplomats would be disregarded and therefore the content of the letter was defying ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. He was able to speak to John of Gorze who explained to him that he was ordered to give the presents at the same time he would address the letter to the caliph.

After some months a bishop called John was sent to them, aiming at achieving the same purpose demonstrated by Hasdāī. John of Gorze replied stating that as the caliph’s letter to Otto had displayed blasphemies against Christ he regarded only as fair that the Emperor’s letters would refute ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s errors. Furthermore, he stated that he preferred the death rather than changing even a comma of its content.

Thus, John of Gorze’s role as ambassador seems to be perceived by himself and his companions not only as a political duty but also as a religious mission. He surely displayed a “dangerously impolitic behaviour.” Indeed, John of Gorze was a monk and not a diplomat, as for example Liutprand of Cremona or Hasdāī bin Shabrūṭ. He was used to proselytise rather than negotiating agreements, and his naïveté meant nothing less than his own astonishment regarding Bishop John’s behaviour, who accepted the rule of a Muslim caliph rather than resisting to the established power. He professed arguments worthy of a 10th century Christian martyr. His inflexibility did nothing but extend his own agony in his golden cage at Cordoba and even damaged Otto’s own goals, as the king was forced had to send another mission with another letter.

Again, after more than a month, envoys from the caliph were sent to him, but still his decision did not change. Abbot John reports that a letter full of threats was addressed to him on a Sunday, in which presumably was stated that if the Christians of Cordoba would be submitted to slaughter this would be entirely his fault. Further correspondence was exchanged and after some time the caliph decided to send an ambassador to Otto I, apparently at John of Gorze’s advice. Recemund, described as a catholic by the abbot, volunteered himself, and as a reward he was appointed bishop. This character was of course the Mozarab Rabi‘ bin Zayd, Bishop of Elvira to whom Liutprand of Cremona dedicated his Antapodosis. In fact, it seems that they both met at Otto’s court when Recemundo or Rabi‘ was received in 956 by the king to decide upon the destiny of John of Gorze’s missive.

359 Karl Leyser, Communications and Power, 134.
Recemund made a stop at Gorze in June 955, where he was received by the Bishop Adalberon and stayed during the fall and winter. In February 956 he was received in Frankfurt. Otto wrote to John of Gorze ordering him to disregard the first letters, presenting himself to ‘Abd al-Rahmān III just with the presents, and that “any means should be seek to achieve peace and friendship in order to stop the activities of the Saracen pirates.”

Otto despatched as well a new envoy, Dudo from Verdun, with more presents and new instructions, leaving in March 956 with Recesmundo, arriving both at Cordoba in June.

After three years of enclosure, John of Gorze was advised that a reception had been scheduled with the caliph and that he was expected to present himself cleaned and dressed accordingly. The caliph sent him 10 lb, so that he would provide ceremonial clothing, which he gave to the poor, refusing to dress anything else rather than his black religious costume. ‘Abd al-Rahmān III answered that he would receive him anyway, even if he would be wearing a sack.

The description of the ceremonial before the reception is precisely the same as the receptions accounted in Arab chroniclers, and even more complete. The jeīsh, or the army had occupied the road all the way from the ambassador’s lodgings until the city and then to the palace. The infantry were the first in line, each with their spades on the ground and holding with the other hand a lance or other projectile weapons, executing military drills. Other soldiers were mounted on mules and lightly armed, and behind of those was the cavalry. The abbot also describes “strange moors” who were performing military exercises. After being driven to the palace, they were received by the high personalities of the court until reaching the outside of the hall, and everything was covered with carpets and precious cloths.

From the terrace of the reception hall they could see the caliph, “alone, as a deity, visible for only a few”; and everything was covered with cloths which made difficult to tell floor and walls apart. There, in the middle, was the caliph, reclined on a cushion, “as they do not use, like other peoples, thrones or chairs, but beds or pillows in which they recline, crossing one leg over the other, either to eat or to talk”. When John presented himself in front of the sovereign, he gave the palm of his hand for the ambassador to kiss, considered to be a favour only addressed to court personalities or to ambassadors. A chair

361 Ibid., 147.
had been prepared for him and the caliph ordered him to sit upon it. It was the caliph who broke the silence, acknowledging that he understood John of Gorze’s hostility, but that reason beyond his will demanded that he could not be received. John of Gorze was so pleased that he is described to have disregarded the intimidations he had experienced as mere intents to negotiate rather than real threats.

The caliph further asked about Otto’s kingdom and for the presents he had brought, which was offered to him at that moment and John asked for his immediate return home. However the caliph persuaded him to stay longer as he would like to meet with him more than once, saying that it would be only with a third meeting that their friendship would be cemented. The abbot accepted it and then the second envoy presented himself before the caliph, also offering his presents. Afterwards, they all returned to their lodgings. John was brought, at least once more to the caliph, speaking of Otto’s kingdom and naively stating that he had never known any other sovereign who could compete with the German king. The caliph answered that the ambassador had no reason to praise like that his lord, which prompted John’s reply, asserting that experience would someday testify it. Abd al-Rahmān III at this occasion showed his astute diplomatic skills, stating that contrary to Otto’s believe that power should be distributed to his subjects in order to maintain their loyalty, experience had proved it otherwise, as Otto’s own son-in-law had reduced the king’s son to perfidy, exercising tyranny openly against him, to the extent that the Hungarians were even able to ravage the core of his kingdom. This statement by ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, contained in an Ottonian source, is in fact quite accurate and reveals how the caliph was informed about political activities in the German kingdom. Indeed, Conrad, Duke of Lorraine (also known as Conrad the Red), married to Otto’s daughter Liutgarde, joined Otto’s son, Liudolf, Duke of Swabia in a conspiracy against the King of Germany’s kingship. As Liudolf had hopes for the crown of the Lombard kingdom, was being excluded from both Italy, where Otto had wined his kingship, and succession to his father’s kingdom. Therefore, he revived both his claims and together with his brother-in-law Conrad was backed by the aristocracy of Swabia. Meanwhile, the Magyars renewed their attacks in 954, with whom apparently Conrad and Liudolf allied with. However, the rebellion collapsed and both Otto’s son and son-in-law lost their duchies.362 Thus, ‘Abd al-Rahmān III contrasted his own political and administrative centralization

endeavours with the political autonomy of the Ottonian duchies, which he saw as a threat for Otto’s rule, as the treason of both Conrad and Liudolf had proven.

In the same account that Ibn Khaldūn describes the arrival of a delegation sent by Constantine VII, which he places in 336 A.H., the historian briefly reports the arrival at Cordoba of messengers from the King of Sclavonians, Otto. The account can be dubious, as Ibn Khaldūn writes:

\[\text{ثم جاء رسل ملك الصقليبة وهو يمتد هوتو وآخر من ملك اللمان} (...).\]

“Then, arrived envoys from the king of the Sclavonians, who was Otto (Hūtū) and another from the king of Germany (...).” Nevertheless, it could be translated as: “Then, arrived envoys from the king of the Sclavonians, who was Otto, the last/the most recent king of the Germans.” Ibn Khaldūn proceeds his narrative reporting other embassies from Frankish powers, always referring the name of the king or ruler. But for the account reporting messengers from king Otto and “another” from Germany, he does not add further information on whom he was referring. Therefore, even if there is a slight confusion on Ibn Khaldūn’s transmission of Ibn Ḥayyān’s Muqtabis, he indeed intended to refer only to one embassy. Furthermore, al-Hajji states that medieval Arab historians used both terms when referring to inhabitants of Germany: Ṣaqāliba and al-Limān, and thus this account corresponds only to one embassy.

Ibn ‘Idhārī also transmits the reception of envoys from Otto, King of the Saqaliba, in 343 A.H. (May 953-May 954).

Al-Makkari, compiling the news accounted in Ibn Khaldūn’s ‘Ibar, reported above, and also after addressing the news regarding the reception of Greek ambassadors, asserts that afterwards an embassy from the king of Sclavonians arrived at Cordoba. Pascual de Gayangos’ translation of this passage states:

\[\text{After this [the arrival of Byzantine ambassadors] arrived another embassy from a King of the Sclavonians, whose name was Dhuku, as well as from the King of the Alaman} (...)\].

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366 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥf II, 139.
It seems clear that some confusion persisted in Arab sources reporting the arrival at Cordoba of envoys from Otto. Especially, in this case, the transmission of the name of the king seems to pose some problems for the Arab historians. Most certainly, al-Maqqarī when copying the name of the king might have misinterpreted two of its letters, or the manuscript of al-Maqqarī was not very clear for the translator. Furthermore, al-Maqqarī reports that after the reception of Sclavonian ambassadors, the Bishop Rabi‘ bin Zayd accompanied them back, stating clearly that they reached Otto’s court and that the Cordovan ambassador returned to Cordoba after two years. There is no doubt, once more, that the Sclavonians are identified as Otto’s ambassadors, King of Germans. Al-Maqqarī’s account on Recemund’s mission to Otto probably does not report the Bishop of Elvira’s first mission to Otto, prompted by John of Gorze’s refusal of being received without Otto’s letter. The first mission of Recemund was in fact quite short, as he only stayed in Frankfurt for less than two months. Thus, al-Maqqarī reports a second mission, when he accompanied both John of Gorze and the second ambassador, called Dudu, back to Frankfurt.

Regarding the dating of these exchanges, the chronicle of John of Saint-Arnoul carefully accounts the years and months concerning the receptions and travelling of ambassadors. According to his account, a first Cordovan embassy was received by Otto, probably in Frankfurt, ca. 950 and then in 954 John of Gorze arrived at Cordoba, where he stayed for almost three years. In the meantime, Recesmundo would leave Cordoba by the end of 955, arriving at Otto’s court in February 956 and leaving by the end of March. John of Saint-Arnoul states that the Bishop was back to Cordoba in June of the same year, accompanied with a new ambassador carrying new orders. Therefore, five different embassies can be identified by these accounts: Cordovan ambassadors in Frankfurt in 950; John of Gorze’s embassy arriving in 954 at Cordoba; Recemund’s mission to Frankfurt in 956; new German ambassador, Dudu, at Cordoba received in June 956 on the same day as John of Gorze; and finally a Cordovan embassy led by the Bishop of Elvira who accompanied Otto’s ambassadors back to Frankfurt, after 956, according to al-Maqqarī.

Al-Hajji believes that the initiative of these exchanges was taken by Otto, as the motive for such relations was the threatening actions of Saracen pirates directed against the Ottonian kingdom. Therefore, this researcher understands that there was an Ottonian
embassy directed to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān previous to the year 950. In fact, it was of Otto’s interests to stop activities of such Muslim sailors, nevertheless, there is no account which reports a previous embassy.

The biographer of John of Gorze clearly asserts that the reason for exchanges between the future Holy Roman Emperor and the Caliph of Cordoba were the attacks of Muslims pirates.

These Saracen pirates, who are held accountable by Western European chroniclers to ravage the shores of Provence, are identified by no other than Liutprand, who became Bishop of Cremona in 961, and who met ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s envoy in 956 when he was received by Otto in Frankfurt. Rabiʿ bin Zayd urged him to write his memoirs, which Liutprand did after some time, dedicating his work *Antapodosis*, or *Retribution*, to the Bishop of Elvira. Liutprand reports more than once in this work the existence of a village, called Fraxinetum, held by Saracen pirates, which was located on the border between Italy and Provence. In a particular passage Liutprand, addressing the Bishop of Elvira states:

*As it is plainly exposed to all, one fact I reckon scarcely escapes you, indeed one you know better than I – since you can learn about it from the residents [of Fraxinetum], who are tributaries of your king, that is, ‘Abd al-Rahman – is that the village’s site is shielded on one side by sea, and is defended on the other sides by a very thick grove of thorny plants.*

For Liutprand there are no doubts that Fraxinetum was tributary of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, and he surely had privileged information, given to him by his friend, the Bishop of Elvira, to whom he addresses this passage, as he knows that the Muslims of Fraxinetum are under the sovereignty of the Umayyad Caliph. Liutprand accounts that 20 Saracens left Hispania and arrived at Fraxinetum by chance, due to winds. They disembarked there and were able to secretly enter the village, slaughtering their Christian inhabitants, taking the neighbouring mountain called Moor’s Mountain as their refugee, from where they were able not only to resist the native populations, but also to attack Provence. Furthermore, Liutprand, reports they sent messengers to Hispania, “who

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368 Juan, Abad de San Arnulfo, “La embajada,” 145.
369 *Liutprand of Cremona, The complete works*, 45-46. The translator adds in note 12 that *Fraxinus* is the Latin name for “ash tree” and Fraxinetum means “ash wood”.

extolled the place and promised they considered the neighbouring populations to be nothing,” and whom the Bishop of Cremona held accountable to have sent troops to Fraxinetum.

Ibn Hawqal identifies this region as Jabāl al-Qilāl, a mountain region which belonged the sovereignty of al-Andalus, as Baleares islands did. The geographer further adds that Jabāl al-Qilāl was located in France and that it was inhabited by those who fought for the Muslim faith, the mujāhidīn, who made the area habitable for humans, and developing agriculture. Ibn Ḥawqal also says that this mountain extended by two days journey and it was unattainable by the surrounding populations due to its elevation.

Jabāl al-Qilāl in Fraxinetum has been identified by contemporary historians as the Moor’s Mountain or Massif des Maures, located in the modern La Garde-Freinet, near Saint-Tropez, Provence, conquered by Andalusi Muslims ca. 887. Their activity extended throughout the 10th century and Liutprand further accounts that they even reached Acqui, a city located 40 miles from Pavia. Furthermore, the Bishop of Cremona adds that Italy was being also harassed by Muslims coming from North Africa, who occupied Calabria, Apulia and Benevento, fortifying Mount Garigliano, and blocking peregrination to Rome. Liutprand, in yet another passage identifies one of the leaders of the Muslims of Fraxinetum, named Sagittus, killed in battle after he reached Acqui.

Muslim piracy against Frankish territories was already acknowledged in The Annals of Saint Bertin, which reports that Saracens and Moors (Saracen was used as a more broader term for referring to Muslims and Moors referred more specifically to Muslims from North Africa, Sicily or Iberia), in 846, were even able to get to Rome, up the Tiber, sacking the Basilica of St. Peter and trying to get to the tomb of the apostle. However, they were crushed and killed by Lothar’s commanders after resorting to a mountain located 100 miles from the city. The Annals of Saint Bertin also account that in 842 Moorish pirates sailed up the Rhône until reaching the surroundings of Arles.

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372 Liutprand of Cremona, *The complete works*, 94.
373 Ibid., 142.
sacking everything on their away, and without being stopped were able to escape with their ships loaded.\textsuperscript{375} This attack was perpetrated right after another Viking plundering. Arles was again ravaged by Moors in 850.\textsuperscript{376} The same source asserts that Camargue used to have a Saracen trading port.\textsuperscript{377} This was shortly before the date in which Fraxinetum was taken by Muslim pirates. If all of these Muslim plus Viking attacks were concerns which drove the Carolingians to exchange embassies with ‘Abd al-Rahmān II and Muḥammad I, it appears that the topic was still valid for exchanges with Otto I.

Furthermore, Ibn Ḥayyān reports a peace treaty with the Franks, in May 940, which was conducted by the diplomat Ḥasdāĩ bin Shabrūṭ who concluded peace with the ruler of Barcelona and suggested that other nobles would submit to an-Nāṣir. He was successful and a noble known as Unyū, sent an embassy to ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, asking for safeguard for merchants of his country to visit al-Andalus, “which was conceded to him, and thus orders were given to Nāṣir bin Aḥmad, qā‘id of Fraxinetum and to governors of Baleares and other sea ports of al-Andalus to respect visitors arriving from the country of Unyū.”\textsuperscript{378} A treaty was concluded and luxury presents were exchanged between both powers. Lévi-Provençal and al-Hajji believe that Muslims for Fraxinetum had no official connection to Cordoba.\textsuperscript{379} Nevertheless, even the Muqtabis of Ibn Ḥayyān clearly connects these “adventurers” to a qā‘id under the caliph’s rule. Most certainly they had a semi-independent status, providing privileges and clearance for trade routes from al-Andalus to other Mediterranean ports. They would however survive from military and financing from the ruler to whom they reported and whose qā‘id obeyed his orders.

Mohammad Ballan identifies this Unyū as Hugh of Italy and believes that Fraxinetum was a frontier state or thughūr, which is why they had a qā‘id instead of a wālī.\textsuperscript{380} Picard also identifies this Unjū or Unyū as Hugh of Arles (or Hugh of Italy), who sent a delegation in 941 to the caliph of Cordoba, represented by one envoy of count Sunyer of Barcelona.\textsuperscript{381}

In fact, Hugh of Italy was committed to end the activity of Muslims from Fraxinetum. Indeed, at the same time he signed a treaty with ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, he sent

\begin{itemize}
\item Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis V, 341-342.
\item Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 353; al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 226.
\item Ballan, “Fraxinetum”, 70-71. Ballan asserts that a qā‘id had more powers than a wālī, and was usually assigned port cities. A qā‘id was responsible both for military and civil affairs.
\item Picard, La Mer des Califes, 159.
\end{itemize}
an embassy to Constantinople to Romanus Lekapenos, asking him for ships equipped with Greek fire, in order to finish Muslim rule over Fraxinetum. The Byzantines responded positively to this request and sent a fleet to the Thyrrhenian Sea, where Hugh was expecting them with his own fleet. Nevertheless, it appears that at the last minute Hugh made an agreement with the Fraxinetan Muslims, as he was fearing an invasion of Berengar of Ivrea, sending the Byzantine fleet back home. Ballan also suggests that its last minute decision was perhaps due to a “broader rapprochement” with al-Andalus. It is probable that Hugh saw more advantages in the mercantile agreement set with ‘Abd al-Rahmān III than in a military confrontation, in which he had no benefits, as he also had to display his military efforts towards other Frankish rulers.

Frankish rulers were only able to reconquer Fraxinetum in 972, after an expedition led by Guillaume I of Provence joined with nobles from Italy, Provence and Septimania.

The Muslim sovereignty of Fraxinetum was probably a secondary topic of exchanges between ‘Abd al-Rahmān III and Constantine VII, as the Byzantine rulers had commercial interests in this area of the Mediterranean, which was also suffering losses which benefited the Fatimid rulers, who were able to attack Calabria and Apulia, controlling the whole Sicilian territory.

In the same account that Ibn Khaldūn places the arrival of Otto’s envoys, which John of Saint-Arnoul places in 954, the historian reports, also briefly the arrival of the king of Western France, Uqūh, and of the king of Eastern France. For The King of Eastern France the account presents some problems. Ibn Khaldūn writes that envoys arrived at Cordoba from “ملك الفرنجة بقاصية المشرق وهو يمنى كلدة” (King of Eastern France, Kalda). Ibn Khaldūn in the same account refers once more to “كلدة ملك الفرنجة” (“Kalda, Malik al-Afranja), stating that when envoys from “Kalda, Malik al-Afranja” arrived, they were accompanied with a messenger from the ruler of Barcelona.

Al-Maqqarī also reports these exchanges, stating that envoys came from Ukūh, or Hugh, the King of Franks from beyond the Jabal al-Bort, the Pyrenees, and another sent by Kaldūh, king of the Eastern part of France. Furthermore, al-Maqqarī, when copying from Ibn Khaldūn’s ‘Ibar, reports again a mission from Kaldūh, who went to Cordoba

382 Liutprand of Cremona, The complete works, 176.
383 Ibid., 181.
384 Ballan, “Fraxinetum”, 29.
385 Ibid., 32.
386 Ibn Khaldūn, ‘Ibar, 143.
with an envoy from the King of Barcelona and Tarragona, however the translator states that in some copies it can be read “Kalda, Malika al-Afranja” (“Kalda, queen of the Franks”), instead of Kaldūḥ, king of the Franks. The translator believes that the copies which transmit the name and title in the feminine either are a corruption or can report to the widow of Charles the Simple, as Charles was already dead when these exchanges took place. Eadgifu, widow of Charles the Simple, was the mother of Louis IV of France, who after his father was deposed was taken by his mother to England (that is why he is called Louis d’Outremer) and returned to France in 936, reigning until 954.

Al-Hajji asserts that medieval Arab historians were referring to exchanges not with Charles the Simple, who died in 929, but with his son, Louis IV d’Outremer. He further believes that both Hugh and Louis sent embassies as they were competing for power in France, thinking that perhaps ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III would intervene.

However, if we admit that when Ibn Khaldūn refers to a female called Kalda or Kilda he instead means Kaldūḥ, as for Charles the Simple’s son Louis, why the “mistake” is repeated in several copies and even al-Maqqārī underlines the female nature of both the name and royal title? In fact, this could have been to address not relations with Charles, nor Louis or his mother Eadgifu, but with Richilda, or Rikilda, daughter of the late Wifredo Borrel I, count of Barcelona, who did not leave male heirs. In fact, Ibn Ḥayyān in his Muqtabis V, reports relations and mercantile agreements with Rikilda, in the year 940, to whom the historian refers as “ruler of some of Franks”. As Ibn Khaldūn is not sure about the dating of these Christian Iberian embassies, he reports their arrival after the embassies which came from Constantinople. Nevertheless, he could have meant the trade agreement reported by Ibn Hayyan, or perhaps intended to account another subsequent agreement.

Cultural exchanges, probably a result of gift exchanges, which were mandatory for diplomatic exchanges, are reported by al-Maqqārī. The North African historian reports that 19 columns used for the edification of the caliphal city of Madīna al-Zahrā’ came from the country of the Franks.

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389 Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 134.
390 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis V, 342.
391 Al-Maqqārī, Naṣḥ I, 234.
Yet another account transmits the arrival of Frankish envoys to al-Nāṣir’s court. Ibn al-‘Arabī, famous Andalusi Sufi poet who lived between the 12th and 13th centuries, accounts the arrival of “al-Ifranj” ambassadors. Ibn ‘Arabī reports that the ambassadors were received at Madīna al-Zahrā’ and that the road from Cordoba until the palace-city was covered with tapestry, and that soldiers were lining on both sides of the road, whose scimitars formed an arch over the envoys’ heads. Once they reached Madīna al-Zahrā’, court officers were at the gates to meet them in full ceremonial attired. The path from the gates until the audience hall was covered with brocade and other officers were on their posts. They were so richly dressed that Ibn ‘Arabī accounts that every time they saw one of them they prostrated at their feet, as they believed they were finally meeting the caliph, until they were informed they were only slaves. When they at last arrived at the middle of the sanded courtyard where the caliph was, they witnessed the ruler was dressed in “cheap clothes,” worth four dirhams and sat on the floor with bowed head and before him he had his insignia, his Quran, a sabre and a brazier. The envoys were informed they were before the caliph and they prostrated at his feet. According to Ibn ‘Arabī the caliph said: “‘Allah has commanded us to bid you to conform to this’ (pointing to the Quran); ‘if you will not, we will constrain you by this,’ (the sabre), ‘and if we kill you this is the fire that awaits you’. Thus, the poet asserts that they accepted the caliph’s demands and signed peace with him. The reception is quite different from others accounted by primary sources. Most certainly this is a fantastic account of a poet and a Sufi whose main religious activity aimed at praising the military achievements of Islam, and thus upon reaching to his hands several accounts concerning Christian rulers who submitted to ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, Ibn ‘Arabī drawn what he perceived as an idyllic reception, where the ruler did not even concern about what the Sufi interprets as unnecessary luxury.

5.4. Exchanges with Christian Iberian kingdoms

In the year 322 A.H. (934 A.D.) the caliph left Cordoba for a campaign in the Northern part of the Peninsula. He was seen by Cordoba’s population upon leaving the capital, mounted on one of his finest horses, displaying his arms, surrounded by his qā ’da and his military squads, holding his flags with the eagle, insignia which was invented by the caliph himself. In this occasion, once he was already in the northern part of Hispania,

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he intended to arrange a campaign against Pamplona, in the Upper March. However, Toda Aznárez, Regent Queen of Navarre, directed envoys to the caliph, sending word that she wished to be welcomed to his obedience, invoking the consanguinity which existed among their families.\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis V, 251-253.} In fact, Toda was the paternal aunt of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, as she was the uterine sister of the caliph’s father, Muḥammad. Toda and Muḥammad had the same mother, Inīga, married first with Aznar Sánchez, Toda’s father, and once he died she married the amīr ʿAbd Allāh, having Muḥammad as their son.\footnote{Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 59. See annex.} Inīga, or Oneca as she is sometimes referred to, was also the daughter of Fortún Garcés al-Anqar (the One-eyed), King of Pamplona and who was captured together with his daughter Inīga, by the amīr Muḥammad in 860. Toda was the Queen Regent of Pamplona, as her son García Sánchez was still a boy when he inherited the reign of Navarre. Nevertheless, she will continue to hold the sovereignty of Navarre, even after her son had achieved the legal age to reign independently. As Toda intended to prevent a devastation of her own territory, she asked from the caliph to remove his troops and in exchange she would submit as one of Cordoba’s tributary principalities. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III exchange welcomed her visit and respects in his own military lodgings at Calahorra. Thus, Toda also informed the nobles of Navarre of her submission and she presented herself with her entourage at Calahorra, carrying a present for the caliph, who ordered the jeīsh to assume position and wear their gala equipment in order to receive Toda with the utmost pomp. Ibn Ḥayyān describes that she was taken to his tent together with some of her counts, where Toda humbly presented her requests. An agreement was conceded by the caliph, to whom she submitted, which meant that no alliance should be carried with other Christian rulers aiming at harming the authority of Cordoba. It was also demanded from her that she should inform the qāʿda of the Marches against any possible insurrection. Toda had also to release Muslim hostages and the agreement between both rulers was witnessed by al-ʾNāṣir’s army:

\begin{quote}
\textit{al-ʾNāṣir’demanded from his army to testify his own fulfilment of their agreement and invested the queen’s son, García bin Sancho, the Basque, with the authority of Pamplona and its districts, offering to her and her companions generous presents and dresses which pleased everyone.}\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis V, 252. The translation is mine.}
\end{quote}
The humbleness of Toda towards the caliphal power was again mentioned in a panegyric by the poet Ismā’īl bin Badr, who accompanied an-Nāṣir in his campaign. The role of the panegyric poetry has been underlined in this thesis and it is exposed in chapter 4, and this account of Ibn Ḥayyān reveals how poets also played a role during military campaigns, perhaps aiming at cheering the caliph’s military commanders as well as attending possible ceremonies, such as the reception of Toda.

The next year Ramiro bin Ordoño, Ramiro II of León, sent his envoys to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III to ask for peace. The Umayyad campaigns to raid Christian territory were frequent and Ramiro wanted to avoid new skirmishes in the Marches. Therefore, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III responded positively and in Rabi’ al-Thānī 323 A.H. (April 935), sent his wazīr Yaḥya bin Ḥishāq to Leon who received Ramiro’s submission together with the nobles from his kingdom. Ibn Ḥayyān affirms that al-Nāṣir’s motivations to accept such an agreement were due to the rebel governor of Zaragoza, Muḥammad bin Ḥāshim, who frequently received the help of Leon. Therefore, the alliance established with Ramiro II and the nobles of Leon intended to cut the military help provided to Muhammad. However, as noted by the Andalusi historian, Ramiro II did not take long to break the agreement, as by the end of the year 324 A.H. he again supported Muḥammad bin Ḥāshim at-Tujibī, joining also forces with the ruler of Barcelona being afterwards crushed by an-Nāṣir’s troops in Shawwal 324 A.H. (August 936), who later in 937 was able to conquer the territories of Zaragoza and submit them to Cordoba’s rule.

Toda of Navarre also broke her truce with ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān III, therefore, the caliph directed an offensive against her territory in August 937. Toda of Navarre furthermore allied with a joint force led by Ramiro II of Leon together with troops from Castile of the count Fernán Gonzálezes, against Caliph ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān III in Simancas in the summer of 327 A.H./939 A.D.

Ibn Ḥayyān describes the preparations for this military campaign of Cordoba and the presumable treason perpetrated against the Umayyad sovereign by key military figures. Ibn Ḥayyān furthermore transmits the account of Aḥmad al-Rāzī, who believes the defeat of the Andalusis was due to a pit (al-Khandāq, which became known as the

396 Ibid., 273-274.
397 Ibid., 283-284; 300-302.
398 Ibid., 299.
399 Ibid., 323-327.
name of the battle) towards where the Christian forces led the Muslim army, and then surrounding them, the caliphal troops were put to death or were forced to flee. The caliph was able to escape, nevertheless his military camp was sacked and his Quran together with his favourite mail armour and his banner. It was indeed a great defeat for the Muslim troops, which provoked in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III a great concern of the equilibrium of politics in Iberia. Ibn Ḥayyān describes the state of mind of the caliph:

_He had confused thoughts and was not fair with himself, and therefore he was advised to keep away from his concerns, and look for his most pleasant distraction, the building. It is said that he dedicated to himself to the founding of al-Zahrā’ located beneath Cordoba, resting his mind in the pleasantry and majesty of his constructions, forgetting about everything else, as from then on he never headed again personally a military campaign._

However, the Caliph did not waste any time in finding the presumable authors of treason against his army, and he draw a very calculated plan to expose them in front of Cordoba’s population, ordering the construction of a platform with ten crosses, outside the Alcazar of Cordoba, near Bab al-Suddā’, where ten of his military knights were crucified and left to die, while he addressed them and his subjects who had come to attend the show:

_See, this poor people – signalling the population who were looking at them – have they by any chance granted to us authority, submitting to us, if it was not for us to defend and protect them? But, if we become equal to them in flinching before the enemy and lack of character, how can we be superior to them, if we just intend to save our own lives?_

The theatre to which Cordoba attended that day of September 939 was in fact a remarkable play aiming to legitimize the caliph’s defeat. The account of Ibn Ḥayyān describes in detail the treatment of one of the caliph’s prisoners and presumable traitors. Fortun, to whom the tongue had been cut off, wanted to speak and curse the caliph, but because no sound rather than the blood and saliva came out of his mouth he spat on the

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400 Ibid., 328. The translation is mine.
401 Ibid., 335. The translation is mine.
Umayyad ruler, who was not spilled just out of luck. The description is worthy of a scene of the epopee cinema style.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān III indeed did not waste time in planning his revenge towards Jiliqiyya (literally Galicia, but the word is used by Arab medieval historians to refer to the Northern Christian part of the peninsula). He planned a new military campaign for next year. Nevertheless, when in Cordoba all the arrangements for the campaign were ready, in Jumada 338 A.H. (March 940) an envoy from Ramiro II arrived with a letter requesting peace, to which the caliph answered positively, responding to the King of Leon’s letter and sending his own messenger to him. The same year, Ramiro sent a letter to the qā’id Najda bin Ḥusayn, and this in his turn sent the message and Ramiro’s envoy, Mūṣā bin Rakajish, to the caliph, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III responded favourably to the request for peace, in the beginning of Ramaḍān 328 (June 940). Afterwards, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III received in the end of Shawwāl (August) received Ramiro’s envoys, Muḥammad bin Ya’la and Mūṣā bin Rakajish with the count Fortūn, aiming for a peace agreement. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III accepted some of its terms, rejecting others, and then he sent his messenger, Aḥmad bin Ya’la to present his own terms to Ramiro II in the end of Dhu al-Qa’da 328 A.H. (September 949). In the beginning of 329 A.H. (October 940), and having succeeded to conclude a treaty with Ramiro, Aḥmad bin Ya’la left Jiliqiyya and returned to Cordoba.

Exchanges with Ramiro did not stop here, as the King of León was still in possession of the spoils of war collected after the Muslim defeat at Simancas. He was still holding as a captive Mūṣā bin Ḥāshim al-Tujībī. Therefore, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III sent his secretary and diplomat Ḥasdāī bin Shabrūṭ to Jiliqiyya in Jumādā al-Thānī 329 A.H. (March 941) to seek for the liberation of the governor of Zaragoza. Ibn Ḥayyān asserts that he sent Ḥasdāī as no one else equalled his culture, subtlety and ability. Ḥasdāī first pretended his interest towards Ramiro, who enjoyed his company and conversation, and it was only after he gained the king’s trust that he decided to introduce the subject, having successfully persuaded Ramiro. The release of the prisoner was conceded and agreed and in Ramadan of the same year, Muḥammad at-Tujībī sent a letter to al-Nāṣir asking for the caliph to send the bishops of al-Andalus to discuss the payment of his own ransom. ‘Abbas bin al-Mundhir, Bishop of Seville, Ya’qūb bin Mahran, Bishop of Pechina, and

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402 Ibid., 338.
403 Ibid., 344-345.
404 Ibid., 350-351.
‘Abd al-Mālik bin Hassan, Bishop of Elvira, were sent to Jilliqiya in Sha‘bān (May). The peace was concluded in Dhu al-Qa‘da (July-August) of the same year, by the hand of Ḥasdā‘ī bin Ishāq bin Shabrūṭ who was in charge of the terms of the pact and who rectified it. At the same time, peace was concluded with the King of Pamplona (Ibn Ḥayyān mistakenly identifies Sancho Garcés as the king, however he died in 925, leaving the throne to his small child García Sánchez, son of Toda Aznárez), Fernán González, count of Castille, Banū Gómez and Banū Ansur, noblemen from Leon.

Upon the release of Muḥammad al-Tujibi, in Ṣafar 330 A.H. (October-November 941), Ramiro II returned the parts which were missing from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s Quran. This was part of the gifts when peace was concluded and when sending the released governor of Zaragoza, taken by Fath, ambassador of Ramiro, together with 30 Muslim prisoners, and many other precious goods, including a present for the heir apparent al-Hakam II. Al-Nāṣir sent in return his own ambassador, in Rabi‘ al-Thānī 330 A.H. (January 942).

Ibn Ḥayyān also accounts in his Muqtabis V exchanges and peace settlements with the noblemen of Barcelona, who were under Frankish rule by then. In 328 A.H. the caliph sent Ḥasdā‘ī to the ruler of Barcelona, Suñer bin Wifredo, that is Sunyer, count of Barcelona. Ḥasdā‘ī suggested the noblemen from Barcelona was sent to suggest that they submit to al-Nāṣir, which was accepted by some of them. This account was already mentioned in the subchapter above, as the noble referred by Ibn Ḥayyān as Unjū can be identified with Hugh the Great. Ibn Ḥayyān also reports that Richilda, who was “ruler of some of the Franks” and daughter of Borrell, count of Barcelona, sent an ambassador, the Jew Bernat, to al-Nāṣir, offering to the caliph precious gifts, who returned the embassy and the gifts. This Richilda was the daughter of Wifredo Borrell I who died in 911 and was the older brother of the aforementioned Sunyer I of Barcelona, who inherited his brother title and dominions. However, it seems that Sunyer I shared some of his dominions with his niece Richilda, apparently the only child of Borrell I. Ibn Ḥayyān further accounts that Ḥasdā‘ī returned to Cordoba in the end of Dhu al-Qa‘da (September 940) accompanied by an envoy of Sunyer I, called Gotmar. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III imposed some conditions to achieve a truce with Sunyer: he should no longer provide military help to other Christian principalities and therefore he should also dissolve the marriage between his daughter and García Sánchez of Pamplona, which he did. The truce was

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405 Ibid., 356-357.
406 Ibid., 341-342.
concluded in 12 Dhu al-Hijja 328 A.H. (18 September 940), solemnly testified by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III’s court and it was fulfilled for two years, not only with Sunyer but also with Sunifred and the sons of both. It is probable that ambassador Gotmar, mentioned by Ibn Ḥayyān, might be Gotmar, Bishop of Gerona, who is mentioned by al-Hajji as the possible ambassador who is reported by al-Masʿūdī to offer to the heir apparent, al-Ḥakam, a book on the History of the Franks, precisely in 328.407

For exchanges regarding the Christian Iberian principalities we do not possess more accounts by Ibn Ḥayyān, as the volume V of al-Muqtabis only reports news until 942.

From Rabi II 330 A.H. (January 942) until 345 A.H. (April 956 – April 957) we do not possess accounts of further exchanges. Ibn Idhari reports that the caliph sent an envoy, Muḥammad bin Ḥusayn, to the court of Ordoño bin Rudmīr, that is Ordoño III of Leon in 345 A.H. Upon his return he was accompanied by the diplomat Ḥasdāʾī bin Shabrūṭ, carrying a letter asking for peace.408 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III upon discussing this matter with his heir apparent, agreed on a truce, however he imposed his conditions for peace. Dozy, who reports these exchanges, says that probably Ordoño agreed upon the destruction of some of the fortress in the Marches. Al-Maqqarī also accounts these exchanges, though he attributes to Ordoño the initiative of such relations. Al-Makkari asserts that an embassy form Ordoño bin Rudmīr arrived at Cordoba in 344 A.H. (April 955-April 956) asking for peace, which was granted to him. Afterwards, another embassy was sent in 345 A.H., requesting that the count of Castile, Ferdeland (Fernán González), would also be contemplated by such agreement, which the caliph consented.409 Thus, it appears there was a first embassy sent by Ordoño to Cordoba in 344, a second one led by Muḥammad bin Ḥusayn to Leon, and a third mission in Cordoba in 345, which intended to confirm the peace agreement, including the count of Castile within it. However, through the account of Ibn ʿIdhārī one can perceive that Ḥasdāʾī was already in the court of Leon and did not leave Cordoba with Muḥammad bin Ḥusayn, he could have gone in a first mission to Leon, in order to persuade Ordoño to agree and solicit peace to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III. This peace was of course connected with Ordoño’s attacks on Lisbon in 955,

407 Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 135. Al-Hajji cites al-Masudi for this account, who mentions that he found a copy of a book in Cairo on the history of the Franks, which was offered to future al-Hakam II in 328 by ʿUrmar, Bishop of Jarbadah. Al-Hajji did not had have access to al-Muqtabis V, as it was not edited nor translated.

408 Ibn ʿIdhārī, Bayyān II, 366-367.

409 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥī II, 139.
as the Leonese sovereign was able to enter so deep into Muslim territory, without being stopped until Lisbon.

Ordoño succeeded his father in 951, when Ramiro died, as he was the eldest son. Ibn ‘Idhārī reports that upon Ordoño’s succession to the throne, his brother Garcia disputed his right to the throne, which allowed the Muslims new victories.\footnote{Ibn ‘Idhārī, al-Bayyān II, 360.} Evidently Ibn ‘Idhārī, when addressing the dispute of Ordoño’s brother was referring to Sancho, brother of Ordoño III, and not García. Ordoño died in 956. Al-Maqqarī, also confused about the multiple consanguinity existing between the ruling families of Navarre, Leon and the county of Castile, which are clarified by Lévi-Provençal,\footnote{Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 297.} gives further details about this dispute. He transmits that after the death of Sancho, his son García succeeded to the throne.\footnote{Al-Maqqarī, Naḥf II, 138.} The translator perceives al-Maqqarī’s confusion and asserts that the North African historian meant the death of Ordoño in 956 (as the account in presented together with events taking place in this year) and his brother’s succession, Sancho I of Leon. Most certainly al-Maqqarī was confusing García Sánchez of Navarre, uncle of Sancho I of Leon, with the new sovereign of Leon. Sancho I, who once had rebelled against the succession of his brother Ordoño III, after the death of their father, Ramiro II, had to face now a rebellion against his own succession. Al-Maqqarī asserts that this rebellion was led by the count of Castile, Ferdeland, who supported Ordoño, son of Ramiro as King of Leon. Once again, the translator reports that al-Maqqarī meant Ordoño IV, el Malo, son of Alfonso IV of León. Probably, the historian’s confusion is due to the fact that four years before Sancho I had been deprived of the crown’s dignity in favour of his brother Ordoño III. Al-Maqqarī proceeds, stating that as García bin Sancho (he means Sancho, son of Ramiro) was the grandson of Toda, Queen of Navarre, she decided to take her grandson’s side and presented herself to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in 347 A.H. (March 958 – March 959):

\textit{(...) imploring the continuance of peace with herself and her son Sancho, son of Ramiro [García son of Sancho], and requesting at the same time that he would assist her grandson Sancho, son of García [Sancho, son of Ramiro], to reconquer his kingdom, and to take the field against his enemies. For this purpose, Theuda and the two princes repaired to the court of an-Nasir, by whom they were received in state; and not only did}\
the Khalif grant the queen and her son the peace which they asked, but he also sent an army to replace Garcia [Sancho] on the throne of Galicia; which was speedily accomplished, after depriving Ordoño [IV] of it, and causing the Galicians to swear allegiance to him. Seeing this, Theuda dispatched an embassy to thank An-Nasir, and likewise sent her letters to all the provinces [inhabited by the Christians], acquainted the people with that event, and with the treacherous conduct of Ferdeland, the Count of Castile. The inhabitants believed her statement, and reprobed the conduct of that chieftain; and an-Nasir, moreover, ceased not to protect and assist him [Sancho] till he died.413

According to this account it can be perceived that a first embassy was sent by Toda, in 347 A.H., after her grandson Sancho I succeeded to Ordoño III and was being challenged by noblemen from both Leon and Castile who did not supported him. She presented herself at the Umayyad capital with her two princes, García Sánchez, her son, and Sancho, Crassus, of Leon, her grandson. The caliph granted her and García Sánchez the peace requested and sent an army against Leon to depose Ordoño IV, el Malo, who had replaced Sancho, and then made sure allegiance was sworn to Sancho I. Afterwards, Toda sent an embassy to thank the caliph for this success and sent letters, probably as a prerogative for ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s help, to Leon, Castile and Navarre accusing Ferdeland of treachery, and more importantly, this letter implied both her and her grandson’s submission to the caliph. Lévi-Provençal says that the reason for Sancho’s submission to the caliph was due to the fact that after he ascended to the throne he denied the observance of the treaty agreed between Ordoño III and ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, which implied the destruction of fortresses between the frontier of al-Andalus and Leon. As ‘Abd al-Rahmān III sent his general Aḥmad bin Ya’la who defeated Sancho, the Leonese king’s projection towards his subjects was worsened by this defeat, being shortly after deposed and taking refuge with his grandmother.414 Provençal further adds that before Toda and her princes were received in Cordoba, Ḥasdāʾ bin Shabrūṭ was sent to Pamplona, not only to negotiate the peace treaty and her submission but also, as he was a physician, to cure Sancho of his extreme obesity. Nevertheless, the French historian does not mention his source, and I do not know any account which reports Ḥasdāʾ’s stay in

413 Ibid., 139.
414 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulumana”, 299.
Pamplona in order to heal Sancho. Indeed, Sampiro attributes Sancho’s cure to “Agareni herbam”, nevertheless he does not mention Ḥasdāī.415

It is quite evident that relations with Christian Iberian principalities had quite different features and motivations than those coming from Otto’s court or Byzantium. Rather than intending to negotiate in a Mediterranean environment where trade was intrinsically connected with political and territorial movements, relations with Toda, Ramiro II, Ordoño III or Ferdeland had in mind a renovation of truces to prevent new military display and skirmishes in the Marches. Except for the treaties signed with Sunyer I and Wifredo Borrell’s daughter, Richilda, who were under the nominal rule of Frankish kingdoms, relations with Christian Iberia had a military character than diplomatic. However, ‘Abd al-Rahmān III knew how to use the legitimacy features of Christian Iberian receptions in Cordoba and even outside in the Marches, as he made plenty of propaganda out of it, and we can only imagine the ceremonial display around the reception of Toda together with Sancho I of Leon and her son García Sánchez, as they were submitting to the Umayyad monarch.

Indeed, these agreements were not mere ideological propaganda, as it translated in military and financial advantages for the Umayyad state revenue, demanding from the Christian states had to let go of several strongholds in the thughūr and pay a regular tribute to guarantee the continuity of the truce.416

Thus, ‘Abd al-Rahmān III, through his diplomatic relations with Christian kingdoms, even though he and his army were humiliated in Simancas, was able to submit Ramiro II, Toda Aznárez and Fernan González to his own agreements, erasing both the tremendous impression caused on his own territory and the optimistic impression caused on Christian kingdoms.

5.5. Other exchanges

Al-Maqqařī, when compiling Ibn Ḥayyān’s accounts, when praising ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s power, asserts that no power who had heard of him did not send an embassy, affirming that this was the case of Byzantium, the Franks or the Majūs. Embassies exchanged with Byzantium and Franks are accounted. Nevertheless, no source refers to

416 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 301.
exchanges with the *Majūs* under the rule of the first caliph of Cordoba. Perhaps, due to Viking attacks it is possible that missions were exchanged. Nevertheless, we do not possess any source accounting it.

It appears that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s power was even acknowledged in Rome. Ibn Khaldūn and al-Maqqarī, when accounting Ibn Khaldūn’s *‘Ibar*, mention an embassy from the “Ṣāhib ar-Rūmā,” that is the lord of Rome or the pope, who was sent to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III requesting the caliph’s friendship.\(^{417}\) Nevertheless, no further information is given nor the date. The sending of envoys from the papal authority in Rome was most certainly related to the Moorish holdings in Fraxinetum and their activity in the Mediterranean, as well as in the Italian Peninsula. It has been mentioned before that Muslims arriving from North Africa attacked Calabria, Apulia and Benevento and fortified Mount Garigliano. Due to their activity and settlements they were even able to block religious peregrination to Rome, according to Liutprand of Cremona (see page 129). It must not be forgotten that pirate Moors are reported to have sacked the Basilica of St. Peter in 846.

Ibn Ḥayyān’s *Muqtabis* V further reports other interesting exchanges, especially concerning the Mediterranean trade routes.

On 8 Dhu al-Hijja 330 A.H. (24 August 942) arrived at al-Nāṣir’s court a delegation from the ruler of Sardinia, together with merchants from Amalfi, carrying precious goods, such as ingots of gold and silver, or satin.\(^{418}\) ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III had previously received Amalfitan merchants, in the end of Jumādā II 330 A.H. (March 942), in Cordoba, who asked for the caliph’s safe-conduct in order to trade safely with al-Andalus.\(^{419}\) Ibn Ḥayyān remarks that before al-Nāṣir’s time, there was no commercial relations with the Amalfitans, as their entry in al-Andalus had no precedents. The caliph acquired most of the merchandise they had, such as satin or purple cloths, and the rest was purchased by his subjects and merchants from the capital. Moreover, Ibn Ḥayyān states that they continued their profitable visits to al-Andalus. Therefore, we known that they came back together with ambassadors from the ruler of Sardinia, which undoubtedly means that relations with the Mediterranean island had mercantile purposes.

Sardinia from the 8\(^{th}\) until the 11\(^{th}\) centuries was under the sovereignty of an independent ruler. This independency from the Byzantine central political power was

\(^{419}\) Ibid., 358-359.
increased with events taking place in the Mediterranean, as Sicily was conquered by the Aghlabids and then taken by the Fatimids. Fatimid expansion on Italian shores had also an impact on Sardinia’s communications with Byzantium. The German expansion towards the Italian peninsula also influenced the isolation of the Byzantine administration of the island, although they nominally were under Constantinople’s authority, as in 913 a contingent of Sardinians witnessed Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos’ coronation, emperor who also had a bodyguard of Sardinians. Sardinia was furthermore a target of Muslim interests, and it was for some time one of the Mediterranean possessions of the empire held by the Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus, as it was conquered in 706 by ‘Abd Allâh, future governor of al-Andalus and son of the governor of Ifriqiyya, Mūṣâ bin Nuṣayr. However, no Muslim power settled there, as opposed to Crete or the village of Fraxinetum in Provence. Perhaps, this was one of the topics of Sardinia’s ruler embassy to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, as due to their proximity with Fraxinetum they might have suffered either their attacks or were indirectly harmed by their actions as they threatened mercantile routes and were a potential danger for the transport of such goods. As the Amalfitans asked for the safe-conduct of the caliph, the Sardinians, who most certainly traded with this Italian city, wanted the same privileges, which they probably achieved. Thus, a trade route could be drawn from al-Andalus port cities and Baleares islands, towards the European Mediterranean side, reaching Fraxinetum in Provence, then Sardinia and Amalfi. Additionally, trade routes of North Africa also witness incessant maritime exchanges, as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s influence on Maghreb al-Aqṣā guaranteed him his mercantile interests in the sea ports of this region. Amalfi traders and North African traders would transport goods from Qayrawan or Egypt towards the Western Muslim territories. Certainly, the agreement with Amalfitan traders and the ruler of Sardinia was also meant to achieve an equilibrium in the Mediterranean, as the Fatimids were expanding fast.

421 Picard, La Mer des Califes, 248.
6. Al-Ḥakam II

After the death of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in 961, his son al-Ḥakam II, who during the rule of his father participated actively in the political and diplomatic life of the court, succeeded him in the throne of al-Andalus. The centralization of power was one of the most important legacies of his father, and henceforth he rarely had to leave the court in military campaigns. Al-Ḥakam II is identified as the highest cultural exponent of the Umayyad al-Andalus. He is the wise and intelligent caliph, famous throughout al-Andalus and Western Europe for building his own library.

Besides bequeathing his son a unified territory, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III leaves his heir an efficient administration, which economic prosperity was achieved through a systematic collection of taxes. It is most likely that it was al-Ḥakam’s father who prepared his heir and son to become a distinct ruler from himself.422 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and al-Ḥakam II were the only two caliphs who detained actual power upon their administration and territory. Maribel Fierro, although agreeing that the second caliph of al-Andalus persevered his father’s policies, suggests that his reign marks the beginning of the end of Umayyad Western Caliphate, as he appointed his son Hishām as his heir. When Hishām II inherited the rule of al-Andalus he was only 11 years old, which meant that he had not yet achieved the legal age to rule, according to Muslim Sunni precepts. In fact, it was during al-Ḥakam’s rule that Ibn Abī ‘Amir will develop his military and political career in the court of Cordoba, where he had a strong influence on al-Ḥakam’s favourite and mother of the heir apparent, Sobh. After the death of al-Ḥakam II, he achieved the khuttāt al-ḥijjāba (the office of chamberlain), and due to the fact that Hishām was underage, he became the regent. He even took a laqab, which is considered as an exclusively caliphal attribute, and thus being known as al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh, though never declaring himself as amīr al-mūminīn. He founded the ‘Amirid dynasty, as he never ceased to be the actual holder of power in al-Andalus, and their sons inherited his office. It seems that Hisham never opposed to the power of his ḥājib. Eduardo Manzano asserts that he was seen as a “half idiot relative” by the ruling family.423

Under al-Ḥakam II exchanges with Byzantium were kept, and he received several embassies each year from northern Christian principalities, asking for truces. Al-Ḥakam

422 Fierro, Abderramān III, 16.
423 Manzano, Conquistadores, Emires y Califas, 478
II was able to dedicate himself not only to the arts, but also to the construction and new projects conceived by Madīna al-Zahrā’, as well as to external policy and diplomacy.

6.1. Exchanges with Byzantium

The first account regarding exchanges under al-Ḥakam II and the Byzantine Empire are reported by Ibn ‘Idhārī. The North African chronicler accounts that in Jumādā II 345 A.H. (June 965) the works for the construction of the mihrab’s dome of the Great Mosque of Cordoba were completed. In the same month the incrustation of mosaics is started.

Al-Ḥakam had written to the king of Byzantines concerning this matters and ordered him (sic) the despatch of a skilled craftsman, similarly to what was done by al-Waleed bin ‘Abd al-Malik upon the construction of the Mosque of Damascus. The envoys of the Caliph brought him the mosaicist, as well as three hundred and twenty quintals of cubes of mosaics, which the king of the Rūm sent as a gift. The prince received and treated with honours the craftsman, to whom he makes available several of his own mamlouks in the quality of apprentices, and these slaves worked with him and acquired an innovative talent that allowed them to surpass their master.424

Ibn ‘Idhārī asserts that after the Byzantine craftsman departed from Cordoba, who received luxury presents and cloths from the caliph, the mamlouk slaves of the caliph will keep working on the dome of the mihrab. In Shawwal (October), the caliph went himself from al-Zahrā’ to the Great Mosque of Cordoba to examine the extension works of the mosque, which were already very advanced, and the four columns which were sustaining the old mihrāb were placed on the sides of the new one. The new mihrāb suffered other changes and the extension of the mosque was completed in Rajab 355 A.H. (June-July 966).425

These exchanges thus seem strictly consigned to cultural relations, as the only intent of the caliph was to bring to Cordoba a mosaicist in order to build the new mihrab of the Great Mosque, which he was expanding. The reference of the eighth century Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd bin ‘Abd al-Mālik, or al-Walīd I, sixth Umayyad caliph of

424 Ibn ‘Idhārī, al-Bayyān II, 392. The translation is mine.
425 Ibid., 393.
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Damascus, is not by chance. Al-Walid I was one of the most prominent Umayyad caliphs, who achieved great territorial expansions for the recently born Islamic Empire. It was indeed during al-Walid I’s khilafat that the Iberian Peninsula was conquered. As his father, ‘Abd al-Mālik, who build the Mosque Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, al-Waleed I embodied the figure of the sovereign-constructor, and it was under his patronage that the Great Mosque of Damascus was built, remaining forever associated with the Umayyad rule (it is known as Jāma’ Banū Umaiyya al-Kabīr, or The Great Mosque of the Umayyads) and one of the most important mosques in the world. Its architecture is extremely Byzantine, as the St. John’s Basilica was transformed into a mosque. One of the Mosque of Damascus’ greatest architectural features are precisely the mosaics, typically Byzantine. One could easily take the floral and plant motifs’ mosaics of the Mosque of Damascus as craftworks belonging to the Hagia Sophia. The same happens with the mihrāb of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. Thus, al-Ḥakam II by means of his architectural decisions was indeed placing himself within the long lineage of the Umayyads of Damascus, his ancestors, who took the Byzantine art and architecture, transforming and associating it to a specifically and recognizable Islamic Umayyad art.

André Miquel speaks of “a century of the mosques” under the Umayyads of Damascus, whose main feature was the syncretism of the arts, and asserts that Islam bequeaths more than it copies, as what they built originated from local craftworks, nevertheless what they created was unmistakably Islamic.426

Ibn ‘Idhārī does not mention the year of the arrival of the craftsman. He was not only a mosaicist sent from Constantinople, as he could also be considered an envoy from the Byzantine Emperor. Indeed, he was carefully chosen by him and was sent with gifts, such as the mosaics, from the ruler of Constantinople and was lodged, received and treated as a true ambassador. Nevertheless, the historian mentions that the works for incrusting the mosaics was started on June 965 and that the mihrāb and the extension works of the whole mosque were completed on June/July of the next year. The caliph also “ordered” (the translator asserts that it was the original term contained in the Arabic manuscript) the emperor to send him the materials and the craftsman. This was of course before the extension works of the mosque. Before the incrustation started in June 965, the mosaicist, who had already arrived at Cordoba, had evidently to teach the mentioned mamluks this architectural art. Therefore, he might have arrived in the beginning of 965,

which means that al-Ḥakam II sent his envoy to the Byzantine Emperor no later than 963, as the traveling, collection of materials and searching for a craftsman involved some preparation time, before the final arrival at Cordoba.

Juan Signes also suggests that the mosaicist, along with the materials, could have been sent in the end of Constantine VII’s reign (d. 959), when al-Ḥakam II was still the heir apparent. Nevertheless, the extension of the Great Umayyad Mosque of Cordoba was an architectural program of al-Ḥakam II as caliph. His abilities as a constructor had already been tested during his father’s reign, as the heir apparent was assigned with the task of supervision of Madīna al-Zahrā’s construction. Although the palace structures were ready during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s reign, al-Ḥakam II did renovations and reinvented some of its halls, some of them which were completely rebuild.

Another cultural exchange between al-Ḥakam II and the Byzantine Empire is mentioned in a manuscript of the Madrid National Library. The manuscript has been identified by contemporary historians as a copy of The Book of Causes (Kitāb al-‘Ilāl) by Appolonius of Tyana, philosopher of the 1st century A.D. In the end of the manuscript the content of a letter is reproduced, a letter from the Byzantine Emperor to al-Ḥakam II, in which the basileus offers the book to al-Ḥakam. The Arabic text of the letter was transmitted and translated by S.M. Stern, who also leaves us with a brief though valuable comment on it. In the heading of the letter can be read:

_This is the letter of the Emperor of the Byzantines to al-Hakam, Commander of the Faithful, in which he explains to him the excellence of this book._

No date is mentioned in the letter and the Byzantine Emperor is not identified. Thus, the basileus could be Romanus II (reign. 959-963), Nicephoras II Phocas (reign. 963-969), John I Tzimices (reign. 969-976) and Basil II Porphyrogennetos (10 January 976-1025), as al-Ḥakam II died in the second day of Šafar 366 A.H. (29th September 976). However, Basil II could be dismissed from this list, as indeed his power only became de facto when the eunuch paracoemomenus, also named Basil, was deported in

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429 Ostrogorsky, _History of the Byzantine State_, 298.
430 Al-Maqqari, _Nafti II_, 174.
985, as he held the real power under the nominal rule of Basil II.\(^{431}\) Also, Basil II was more of a warrior emperor than a scholar, opposed to his grandfather, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. It was indeed under the rule of Basil that the Byzantine Empire achieved a new golden age, due to military campaigns, which allowed the extension of the empire from the mountains of Armenia to the Adriatic and from the Euphrates to the Danube, as well as due to Basil’s measures towards restraining the magnates’ power.\(^{432}\) In fact, a comparison could be established between his measures aiming at centralizing the empire’s power and the same methods applied by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in al-Andalus. These actions essentially allowed both powers to live a golden age and also to bequeath their heirs a legacy of a centralized and peaceful empire, as well as a taxation system which led to stability of state revenue. Nevertheless, not long after both ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and Basil II’ deaths, a disintegration can be perceived. The first caliph of Cordoba’s legacy was very well managed by his son and successor al-Ḥakam II, nevertheless the second caliph surrounded himself by powerful characters inside the court of Cordoba, such as Ibn Abī ‘Amir, who would become the famous al-Mansūr. He also committed a great mistake when nominating his child Hishām as the heir apparent. He was an eleven year-old boy and his mother was influenced by Ibn Abī ‘Amir, who rapidly knew how to seize his opportunity. As for the Byzantine Empire, a relaxation time rather than consolidation was pursued after the death of Basil II, and if the foreign policy of the empire was living out of the prestige won previously by Basil, the internal policy gave way for the rising of several parallel forces, which would eventually lead to disintegration.\(^{433}\)

As for the content of the letter addressed to Caliph al-Ḥakam II, the Byzantine emperor then proceeds to state that he had read al-Ḥakam’s previous letter, in which the Andalusi ruler asked him for philosophy books. The emperor asserts that his interest for science equalled the caliph’s, and that he had acquired such scientific learning that he asked from God to assist the amīr in achieving the same highest degree of knowledge, as he had collected such an amount that he did not need any more.

Then, the emperor refers to a third party:

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\(^{431}\) Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 300.
\(^{432}\) Ibid., 307, 314.
\(^{433}\) Ibid., 320.
As regards your request that I should present him with such (books) as he is worthy of, it can be said that this request was made by a man of the highest aspirations and one who greatly desires them. A man of whom this can be said would necessarily have deserved to be helped by us even if he were a man of small fame and of obscure status; how much more so, when he is the most important person, and the most perfect in wisdom, after the Caliph, may God prolong his life; how could one withhold from him books of which he is worthy, when the philosophers only wrote them for the sake of men like him?434

The letter is incomplete, and does not refer the name of this third person, so worthy of the emperor’s praise, and in knowledge only comparable to the caliph himself and placed right after him. The translator of the letter asserts that it is safe that a previous letter had been sent asking for books such as The Book of Causes by Appolonius of Tyana. Stern remarks that a previous scholarly gift was made by Emperor Constantine VII to al-Ḥakam’s father: the book of Dioscorides in Greek and the history of Orosius in Latin. Stern reminds the reader that in that occasion, as no one in al-Andalus knew Greek, the caliph asked from Constantine VII the sending of a scholar who would teach this language in Cordoba. Thus, the monk Nicholas was sent and one of his illustrious students was Ḥasdāī bin Shabrūt, physician and courtier. Therefore, Stern suggests that the third person mentioned in the letter could be Ḥasdāī, as he was one of the scholars who improved Dioscorides’ Arabic translation.435

A Byzantine embassy is also mentioned in Muqtabis VII of Ibn Ḥayyān, which accounts al-Ḥakam’s rule from 971 to 975. It is a quite brief account which reports the arrival of an ambassador from Constantinople to Cordoba on 21 Jumādā I 361 A.H. (10 March 972), according to the translation.436 It seems that the translator faced some problems, as the original stated that the embassy was received in the first day of the week (iawm al-ahad, the day of Sunday), on 23 Jumādā I, which was not a Sunday, but Tuesday.437

Once more the account reveal the knowledge of Cordoba regarding foreign events, as Ibn Ḥayyān mentions the inheritance of power within the Byzantine court:

435 Ibid., 39.
436 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 93.
The one who murdered him [the previous emperor] was this king who was now sending his ambassador to Caliph al-Mustansir bi-Allāh, and whose name was Tzimisces, who did not belonged to the aristocracy, but was instead a simple servant of Nicephorus, his predecessor, whom he replaced.\(^{438}\)

In fact, John Tzimisces belonged to the military aristocracy and was a general and friend of the previous emperor, Nicephorus Phocas, who was assassinated in his bedchamber on the night of 10-11 December 969, after a complot urged by his own wife, Theophano (she was also the wife of Emperor Romanus II, and mother of Basil II and Constantine, purple-born emperors), who had become John Tzimisces’ mistress.\(^{439}\)

The ambassador was lodged in Munya al-Bunti and was assigned with a luxury pension. That is all which is accounted in Ibn Ḥayyān’s, and no further embassies from Byzantium are accounted in other sources.

This is also the only account which specifies both the date and the ruler who sends this embassy. The arrival of the mosaician represents a strict cultural exchange, as the intention of al-Ḥakam II when sending word to the Byzantine emperor was to receive a craftsman in Cordoba for the building of the mihrāb of the Great Mosque. Such exchanges, more cultural than diplomatic, can be placed between the beginning of al-Ḥakam’s reign (961) until 965, when the incrustation of the mihrab is started.

However, the sending of The Book of Causes is more difficult to date. Juan Signes believes this was sent by Emperor Romanus II, who had already sent, during his father reign, as co-emperor, the Monk Nicholas to teach Greek to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s courtiers.\(^{440}\) Nevertheless, as the letter is not conclusive, this could have also been sent by Emperor John Tzimisces as a gift accompanying the ambassador who was received in Cordoba in 972. It could have also been a gift when the mosaician, together with the materials for the mihrab, was sent to Cordoba, ca. 961-965. Nevertheless, the dating of its sending will remain inconclusive, also due to the fact that the volume the Muqtabis for al-Ḥakam’s reign only concerns the years between 971 and 975, thus 10 years of the Cordovan sovereign are not reported by the primary source of the Umayyad dynasty, Ibn Ḥayyān.

\(^{438}\) Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 93. The translation is mine.

\(^{439}\) Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 293.

\(^{440}\) Signes, “Bizancio y al-Andalus”, 220.
6.1.2. Motivations: al-Ḥakam II as the follower of his father’s policies

Upon his succession to the throne of al-Andalus al-Ḥakam II continued his father’s policy regarding foreign relations. If motivations under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III were not only political but also cultural, as he received the books of Dioscorides and Orosius, as well as columns and basins, under al-Ḥakam’s rule the exchanges with Byzantium were indeed much more cultural. Al-Ḥakam II, recognized as the scholar-caliph, also developed the court ceremonial, and one of his first acts as a caliph was to surround “his person with all the pomp and magnificence of the empire.” Nevertheless his dedication to the arts and sciences, he persisted his father’s policy both in al-Andalus and North Africa, keeping the Umayyad interests. However, most of the political reasons which moved both Constantine VII and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III to exchange embassies did not make sense under al-Ḥakam’s rule.

In 959 Constantine VII died, leaving his place to his son Romanus II, who left the conduction of his state affairs to his paracoemomenus Joseph Bringas, leaving also the great military campaigns to commanders such as Nicephorus Phocas. Indeed, it was under Romanus II’s reign that Nicephorus Phocas leading a large squadron was able to conquer Crete in March 961, after a siege which lasted the whole winter, and its capital Chandax, fell again on the hands of Byzantium after the Andalusi adventurers founded the Amirate of Crete ca. 827. It was in fact a vigorous victory for Byzantium, as finally they could control the main entrance to the Aegean Sea. Most certainly ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III knew of this Byzantine victory, as he only died in October 961 (Ramadan 350).

Signes suggests that the inexistence of exchanges from ca. 840 until ca. 946, as well as the opening of al-Andalus to Amalfitan traders, indicate mercantile interests rather than just political motivations. He also advocates that a frequent exchange of embassies, from 958, between the Byzantines and the Fatimids, as well as the conquest of Egypt and the foundation of Cairo as the new Fatimid capital, will determine a decrease of exchanges with al-Andalus, which becomes an inconvenient ally.

The Mediterranean situation, from the point of view of al-Andalus, has been discussed before in chapter 4 and 5. The Fatimid power in the Mediterranean and their interactions and confrontations with the Umayyads have been mentioned in chapter 5.

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441 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥf II, 156.
442 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 284.
443 Signes, “Bizancio y al-Andalus,” 236.
444 Ibid., 239.
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Even after the conquest of Crete in 961 and the agreements that might have been the result of exchanges between Byzantium and the Fatimid Caliphate from 958, al-Andalus probably remained as an asset or a safe ally for the Byzantines, who most certainly did not look favourably towards Fatimid increasing power in the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. The conquest of Egypt in 968 by the Fatimids and the consequent foundation of Cairo near the settlement of Fustat, must have been regarded as a potential threat to the Byzantines. Even though Crete had been reconquered by Nicephorus in 961, the conquest of Egypt in 968 opened a new balance in the Mediterranean. The Fatimids now controlled Alexandria, one of the most important trade centres, which connected Italian cities, such as Amalfi, with the North Africa and Byzantium. It must not be forgotten that settlers who established the Amirate of Crete arrived from Alexandria, then under the ‘Abbasids, who saw the conquest of the island as the foundation of a stronghold capable of securing Muslim trade in the Mediterranean and at the same time a threat for the Byzantine Aegean Sea. The Fatimids moving to Egypt did not only meant that the Andalusi shores and North African Umayyad holdings would cease being attacked by the Fatimids, it also meant that their attacks could harm Byzantine interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Evidently, Byzantine fears lead to frequent embassies and inquiries towards the Fatimid court. Of course, the Fatimid Caliphate upon the conquest of Egypt redirected their policy towards more oriental Mediterranean shores, nevertheless Byzantium kept sending ambassadors to Cordoba, as the one sent in 972 by John Tzimisces. Even after the Byzantine conquest of Crete or the Fatimid conquest of Cairo, mercantile interests of Byzantium implied their political motivations and political alliances. Mercantile interests towards the Italian shores were intrinsically connected to al-Andalus, as the arrival of Amalfitan traders and ambassadors from Sardinia demonstrated before. In fact, a chain of interests appear to be explored by diplomatic relations maintained by Cordoba.

972 was also the year in which Fraxinetum, most certainly under the rule of the Caliph of Cordoba, though indirectly, was conquered by a joint force led by Guillaume I of Provence. Nevertheless, some sources described its final conquest as late as 990.445 This might point out that though the conquest by Guillaume was achieved in 972, there were still some settlements or attempts to take Fraxinetum back to Muslim hands. We also know that Otto I, at the same time that he sent ambassadors to Cordoba to discuss

445 Ballan, “Fraxinetum,” 32.
the attacks of Muslims of Fraxinetum, whom they were certain responded to ‘Abd ar-Rahman III’s rule, also despatched envoys to the court of Constantine VII. Thus, Fraxinetum remained active in Frankish and Italian shores during al-Ḥakam II’s rule, and as have been pointed out before Byzantium maintained interests in Italy.

If the Fatimids could have desired a broader expansion towards the Eastern Mediterranean, it should be underlined that the Byzantines had not yet lost their hopes to reconquer Sicily. It seems that Basil II, after his several military achievements, started preparations for a campaign against the Fatimid rule in Sicily, nevertheless he died in 1025, before he could attempt it. Emperors such as Nicephorus I Phocas or John Tzimisces, professional warriors, evidently might have had the same plans. Especially Nicephorus, who conquered Crete, a conquest that looked impossible by previous emperors.

Al-Ḥakam II continued his father’s policy towards North Africa. If the Umayyad Caliph was informed about the Fatimid movements in the Mediterranean, so was Byzantium regarding Andalusi fleets. Byzantium knew that the caliphal fleets went as far as Alexandria, and even devastated Fatimid territories, as happened during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s reign. These fleets had a double objective, as they transported goods intended for trade and military and political purposes. At the same time the fleet travelled for mercantile purposes, it attacked Fatimid territory, thus defending Umayyad interests.

6.2. Exchanges with Christian kingdoms and principalities

As for relations with Jilliqiyya, as it is referred in Arab sources, al-Maqqarī, citing Ibn Khalduṅ, states that “no sooner was the death of al-Nāṣir divulged, that the Galicians began to make attacks upon the Moslem frontier. Indeed, Ordoño IV had to take refuge first in Asturias and then Burgos, after al-Nāṣir supported the accession of Sancho I to the throne of Leon. However, after ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III died, al-Maqqarī describes that he sought help with his father-in-law, the count of Castile, Fernán González. The North African historian additionally describes Fernán González as one of those Christians who were not respecting the peace agreements, and therefore al-Ḥakam invaded his territories successfully.

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446 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 283.
447 Ibid., 314.
448 Al-Maqqarī, Nafḥ II, 158.
449 Ibid., 159.
Consequently, as Ordoño IV was in need of further help to be crowned King of Leon, he went to meet the governor of Medinaceli, together with 20 of his followers, to ask permission to address the Cordovan sovereign to whom he intended to swear allegiance with. Al-Maqqarī describes in detail this episode, as well as its motivations, an account borrowed from Ibn Ḥayyān.\(^{450}\)

Al-Maqqarī asserts that after hearing that al-Ḥakam II was preparing a military expedition against him, Ordoño IV decided to put himself under his tutelage. Therefore, he headed to Medinaceli, where Ghālib al-Nāṣirī, the Umayyad governor of the city, received him and sent word to the caliph, who did not waste any time and sent an army to meet him by the end of Ṣafar 351 (March 962), headed by Muḥammad and Zayād, sons of Aflāḥ al-Nāṣirī, members of the important military lineage of the Banū Aflāḥ, who also served under the rule of the first caliph.\(^{451}\) Al-Maqqarī asserts that the day after the arrival of al-Ḥakam’s army to Medinaceli, they left with Ordoño and his followers towards Cordoba. Once they were approaching the capital, al-Ḥakam sent Hishām al-Muṣḥafī\(^{452}\) at the head of a numerous army, completely armed, as if they were going to war. This description evidently anticipates an enormous display of ceremonial. Once they were escorted to Cordoba, and crossed the city gates, between Bāb al-Suddā’ and Bāb al-Janān, Ordoño asked for the location of the tomb of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, and upon being informed, he headed to the cemetery of the Alcazar, alighting from his horse, took off his cap, and prostrated himself, praying, at al-Nāṣir’s tomb. This description is indeed remarkable, as the Arab historians describes his behaviour as humble, but at the same time with a note of ridiculousness, as he was not only showing his subservience towards Cordoba, but displaying more than what he was asked for.

Ordoño was then conducted to Munya al-Nawra, where he was lodged. Similarly to what happened during his father’s reign, al-Mustanṣir bi-Allāh ordered that preparations were made previously to the ceremony of the reception; carpets, cushions and furniture were provided to furnish the whole palace. And on a Saturday, Ordoño was received. The troops were equipped, as if they were leaving to war, and the Sclavonian guard was also in their ceremonial attire. The khaṣṣa had been previously notified of the

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\(^{450}\) Ibid., 160-166.


\(^{452}\) Ibid., 184. Hishām bin Muḥammad bin ‘Uthmān al-Muṣḥafī was the nephew of the ḥājib Ja’far bin ‘Uthmān al-Muṣḥafī (not to be confused with the ḥājib Ja’far bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Siqlābī), and held military administrative posts. He also held the wizara title as well as commander of the supreme police force (ṣāḥib al-shoṭa al-‘uliā’).
reception, and the presence of the *ulamā‘*, theologians, *kuttāba* (secretaries) and poets was demanded in the audience hall, and the high administrative officials, such as the *wuzarā‘*, should be at his post at the appointed hour.

Al-Ḥakam II was seated on his *sarīr* (throne) in the Eastern Hall (*Majlis al-Sharqī*) of the palace in Madīna al-Zahrā‘, which opened into the terrace. This Eastern Hall has been identified by Antonio Vallejo as the main hall of the palace-city, which today is known by Hall of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III. Although sources do not mention transformation works, archaeological findings show otherwise, as this hall was the result of a change of the original architectural plan, between 953 and 957.\(^453\) Besides bearing witness of Ordoño’s reception, this was also the hall where Toda Aznárez, her son García Sánchez and her grandson Sancho I of León were received during ‘Abd ar-Rahman’s rule, as well as the Byzantine ambassador from John Tzimisces, the count Borrell’s envoys and Fernán González’ messenger. Al-Hajji believes that the Eastern Hall can be identified as the *Majlis al-Mu‘nis*, as he believes this was the hall where Ordoño was received, as well as most of the embassies arriving at Cordoba, after the conclusion of the construction of Madīna al-Zahrā‘.\(^454\) The *Majlis al-Mu‘nis* is mentioned by al-Maqqarī when describing a basin which came from Syria or Byzantium, of green marble to which Caliph ‘Abd al-Rahmān III added 12 animal figures, and placed in the dormitory of the eastern hall called *al-Mu‘nis*.\(^455\) It seems that the *Majlis al-Sharqī* (Hall of ‘Abd al-Rahmān III) can be identified with the eastern hall called *al-Mu‘nis*, nevertheless, as Madīna al-Zahrā‘ suffered some changes it is inconclusive if the *Majlis ash-Sharqī* was once the *Majlis al-Mu‘nis*, or if it was located in another part of the city.

During the reception, the caliph was surrounded by his brothers, nephews and other relatives (he did not have any children yet), followed by his *wuzarā‘*, *qudā‘* (judges), civil magistrates and theologians, “in rows according to their rank or station.” Al-Maqqarī mentions the presence of the supreme judge of al-Andalus, Mundhir bin Sa‘īd al-Bulutī, who was the same poet who addressed a reception of Byzantine ambassadors held by ‘Abd ar-Rahman III, and because of his poetic qualities was named *qādī al-jama‘* (see pages 63 and 106).


\(^{454}\) Al-Hajji, *Andalusian diplomatic relations*, 78, 223, 296.

\(^{455}\) Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ I*, 236.
Ordoño was introduced by Muḥammad bin al-Qasīm bin Tamis (or Ṭumlūs).\textsuperscript{456} The historian describes how Ordoño was dressed, in a tunic of white brocade, of Christian manufacture, and a surtout, wearing a Christian cap with costly jewels. He was escorted from Cordoba to Madīna al-Zahrā’ by a group of prominent Christians from Cordoba, such as Walīd bin Khayrūn, judge of the Christians in Cordoba, who on this occasion acted as interpreter, ‘Ubayd Allāh bin Qasīm, Bishop of Toledo. Near the palace, bodies of infantry were placed on each side, in richly uniforms and armours, which caused a great impression on the Christians, who “repeatedly crossed themselves”. Having made their way from Cordoba, they arrived at the Bāb al-Aqūbāb, or Door of the Domes, where Ordoño was met by the caliphal entourage. The caliph’s officials dismounted, as only Ordoño’s suite was allowed to walk the city gates on horseback. They were let to Bāb al-Suddā’, where everyone had to dismount, except for Ordoño and Muḥammad bin al-Qasīm bin Ṭumlūs, who were mounting, until reaching the Dār al-Jandal or House of Stones, where they alighted upon a raised platform, of which steps were covered with silver cloth. The propaganda of this reception is clearly transmitted by Ibn Ḥāyyān, as the historian asserts that this was the same place where Sancho the Fat had alighted when visiting the first caliph of al-Andalus. Then Ordoño and his followers sat there and waited until one of the caliph’s officials brought al-Ḥakam’s permission for the reception to proceed. They all walked until the terrace, arriving at the Eastern Hall, where Ordoño took of his cap and stopped in amazement, “under the impression that he was now approaching the radiant throne of the caliph.” On the terrace two rows of soldiers were flanking Ordoño’s steps.

When he had arrived before the throne, he threw himself on the floor, and remained for some time in the most humble position; he then stood up, advanced a few paces, again prostrated himself, and repeated his ceremony several times, until he arrived at a proper distance from the Khalif, when he stretched out his hand, and al-Ḥakam gave him his. After this he went backwards, without turning away his face, to a seat covered with gold cloth, which had been prepared for him at about ten cubits’ distance from the royal throne, being all the time awe-struck at the imposing scene.\textsuperscript{457}

\textsuperscript{456} Meouak, \textit{Pouvoir souverain}, 156. Ibn Tumlūs held military posts and from 971 was \textit{wazīr qā’id al-ḥasham} (vizier commander of the mercenary troops).

\textsuperscript{457} Al-Maqqārī, \textit{Naḥī I}, 162-163.
Ordoño’s companions who had been allowed to enter the caliphal presence, repeated their master’s gestures and then took their places, flanking their own king.

The caliph was the first to break the silence:

‘Welcome to our court, O Ordoño! May thy hopes be realized and thy wishes fulfilled! Thou wilt find in us the best advice and the most cordial reception, much beyond thy expectations.’

At al-Ḥakam’s words, Ordoño stand and then kissed the ground before the caliph, stating:

‘I am the slave of the Commander of the Faithful, my lord and master; and I am come to implore his favour, to witness his majesty, and to place myself and my people under his protection. May he be pleased to grant me his powerful patronage, and consent to receive me into the number of his slaves!’

Again, at a positive and warm answer from the caliph, Ordoño prostrated at the caliph’s feet, remaining there for some time in prayer. He then exposed his situation regarding his cousin Sancho I, who had only be granted the throne of Leon because of the help and favour from Cordoba, which he now was seeking. He also underlined that Sancho was obliged to go to Cordoba, as he had been expelled from his kingdom, whereas Ordoño was placing himself in a vassalage position of his own free will. The caliph promised him his letter patent declaring support towards Ordoño and depriving Sancho of his dominions.

Then Ordoño was conducted towards the Western Hall, also opening upon a terrace, where he prostrated himself before the empty throne of the amīr al-mūminīn. He then went with the eunuchs to a pavilion in the northern extremity of the Western hall, where he was told to seat on a cushion with gold brocade. He was then approached by the ḥājib Ja’far al-Muṣḥafī, to whom he attempted to kiss his hand, which the last withdrew. This clearly is meant for underlining the rustic behaviour of Ordoño, who was not familiar with court ceremonial protocol. Ja’far embraced him, and promised success to his mission. Ordoño was offered a dress of honour, a tunic of gold tissue and a bornūs
(woollen cloak, *alboroz* in Spanish) of the same material, with a golden belt with pearls and rubies, “of such beauty that the eyes of the barbarian rested complacently on them”. He was dressed by Jaʿfar, and then again Ordoño prostrated on the floor, praying. Ordoño’s entourage then entered Jaʿfar’s presence and were also offered ceremonial dresses, according to their rank.

They then left and were conducted to the central pavilion where they had previously alighted. The caliph had ordered that a steed with the saddle and bridle ornamented with gold should be prepared for Ordoño. The deposed king mounted the steed and Ibn Tumlūs escorted him and his companions to the palace of al-Russafā’, which was completely furnished with luxury exclusively for them.

Of course all this ceremonial display was also intended for the subjects of al-Andalus, as either the ambassadors, or in this case the king himself, were strategically asked to parade themselves from Cordoba gates until the caliphal palace of Madīna al-Zahrā’. The narrative of Ibn Ḥayyān, transmitted by al-Maqqarī, evidences precisely this feature, as the historian states that the population did not speak of anything else for days, which was “the glorious manifestation of Islam.” Ibn Ḥayyān also mentions the role of poets in such occasions, as it was discussed before in chapter 4. Unfortunately, none of these panegyrics are accounted in al-Maqqarī. Furthermore, al-Maqqarī asserts that Ordoño’s son García was left in Cordoba as a hostage.459

The reception of Ordoño IV seems to have had the intended effect on Sancho I, who immediately sent a message to al-Ḥakam II, submitting to him, together with the counts and bishops of Galicia and Zamora. The caliph accepted it, under the condition that Sancho would order the demolition of fortresses and castles in the *thughūr* between his dominions and al-Andalus, which was done.460 Thus, this was unfortunate for Ordoño, as he had humiliated himself, in the eyes of the Arab historians who report his submission and arrival to Cordoba, and his hopes were not fulfilled.

Ibn ‘Idhārī also accounts the arrival of Ordoño, son of Alfonso, to Cordoba, due to his pretension for the Kingdom of Leon against his cousin Sancho I. Although he does not transmit the description of the reception he accounts a *qaṣīda* by ʿAbd al-Mālik bin Saiʿd.461 In the same passage, Ibn ‘Idhārī also accounts the arrival of Sancho’s envos to Cordoba, after the reception of his cousin Ordoño. Amongst his envos were ʿAbd al-

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460 Ibid., 166.
Rahmān bin Ja’far, qādī of Valencia, and Ayyūb bin al-Tawīl, who arrive to Cordoba in Rabi’ II 351 A.H. (May 962), to hand a letter to the caliph in which they recognize his authority.\textsuperscript{462}

Thus, Dozy asserts that the Arab historians cease to account any news concerning Ordoño IV, whom he believes to have died in Cordoba in the same year.\textsuperscript{463}

Despite Sancho’s promises, as soon as he heard about Ordoño’s death, he dismissed his submission towards Cordoba, as accounted in the aforementioned passage of Ibn Idhari, and allied with the count of Castile, the king of Navarre and the counts of Barcelona Borrell and Miró, and therefore al-Hakam II left in expedition in 963 towards the North. \textsuperscript{464} In this expedition he was able to take the fortresses of San Esteban de Gormaz, which led count Fernán González to ask for a truce, which he broke again, and the caliph had to strike again taking yet another fortress in Atienza.

Sancho I died in 965/6, poisoned by Gonzalo, usually identified as Gonzalo Menéndez (or Gonçalo Mendes in Portuguese), a magnate who used the title of dux, and member of an important lineage bounded to the monastery of Guimarães.\textsuperscript{465} Gonzalo Menéndez, or Gonçalo Mendes was the first Galician count of Portucale to use the title of dux. However, as the patronymic is omitted Sancho’s assassin could have been Gonçalo Moniz (Gonzalo Muñoz or Gonçalo Munio), count of the southern territories of river Duero.\textsuperscript{466} Both victorious expeditions and the death of Sancho I revealed quite profitable for Cordoba, as Sancho was succeeded by his three year old son, Ramiro III, whose regency was taken by Sancho’s sister Elvira, and consequently the noblemen of Leon were compelled to declare their independence towards the child-king.

Therefore, from 966 onwards several of these independent rulers sent embassies to Cordoba in order to declare their vassalage towards the Caliphate. Such was the case of the missions accounted in al-Maqqarī. The North African historian reports the arrival at Cordoba of missions from Barcelona, Tarragona, “and other cities”, asking for a renewal of the peace treaty, “sending as presents twenty Sclovonian eunuchs, twenty kintars of sable’s fur, five kintars of martens’ fur, ten suits of Sclovonian armour, one

\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., 389.
\textsuperscript{464} Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana,” 381.
\textsuperscript{465} Amancio Isla, Ejército, Sociedad y Política en la Península Ibérica entre los siglos VII y XI (Madrid: Ministry of Defense/CSIC, 2010), 190.
hundred Frankish swords, and other articles, which the Khalif accepted, granting their request on the condition of their dismantling all the fortresses in the vicinity of the Moslem frontier (…), of their lending no assistance to the people of their faith in their wars with the Mohammedans, and lastly, of their endeavouring to deter other Christian nations from joining their forces against the Moslems.  

The sovereign of Barcelona was the count Borrell II, who later will send several mission to Cordoba, as accounted in the Muqtabis of Ibn Ḥayyān. Dozy asserts that Miró, also count of Barcelona who shared with his brother Borrell II the ruling of the county, also dismantled fortresses which bordered with al-Andalus.

In the same account, al-Maqqarī transmits the arrival of ambassadors from García Sánchez, king of Navarre, accompanied by bishops and counts from Navarre, requesting peace, “which was likewise granted, notwithstanding the procrastination and deceit which that monarch had lately manifested.” The historian does not mention any date, asserting only that these ambassadors were received in Cordoba some time after the arrival of Sancho’s envoys. As Sancho died in 966, and the counts of Leon rebelled against his son Ramiro III, it was probably after those events and before 970, as García Sánchez also died in 970, being succeeded by his son, Sancho Garcés II, known as Sancho Abarca.

Furthermore, al-Maqqarī transmits the arrival of the mother of Rodrigo Velázquez, a Galician count who also used the title of dux, whom the historian describes as a powerful chieftain, whose states bordered Leon. The princess was received by al-Hakam II, who previous to the reception sent the great officials of his court to meet her. She asked for peace in her son’s name, and then left Cordoba with “a large sum of money to be distributed among her attendants, besides a rich present for herself.” Al-Maqqarī describes briefly the ceremonial, stating that the day she was received was a day of festivities and crowds of people came to see her, “mounted on a swift mule, the saddle and bit of which were richly ornamented with gold,” like Ordoño’s horse. The chronicler also asserts she had a second audience with al-Ḥakam II before departing.

These embassies had no further motivations, rather than secure peace and authority, as well as the status quo between al-Andalus and northern principalities, and Cordoba surely knew how to handle and turn the disputes existing among Christian rulers in its own favour, and Ramiro III’s accession opened a period for tranquillity for al-

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467 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥī II, 166.
468 Dozy, Histoire III, 106.
469 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥī II, 166.
Andalus, who had several tributaries amongst Christian Iberia, and received ambassadors every year.

The volume VIII of Ibn Ḥayyān’s Muqtabis, which accounts events taking place between 971 and 975, also reports several arrivals of ambassadors.

The first one to be received was Bon Filio, ambassador of Borrell II, count of Barcelona. Ibn Ḥayyān reports his journey to Cordoba, by the end of Shaʿbān 360 A.H. (end of June 971), accompanied by the šāhib al-shorta and qāʾid of Tortosa and Valencia, Hishām bin Muḥammad bin ʿUthmān al-Muḥāfī, the same official who met Ordoño IV on his arrival in Cordoba. Bon Filio bin Sindari, a confident of Borrell II was carrying a letter to al-Ḥakam II in which he expressed his vassalage towards Cordoba. He also carried presents to the caliph, amongst which were 30 Muslim captives. Bon Filio was also accompanied by 20 nobles from Borrell’s entourage. Ibn Ḥayyān refers that he also arrived at Cordoba with an ambassador from Gitar, whom the Andalusi historian reports as a count who was the deputy of Borrell in Barcelona and who had previously sent a mission to Cordoba. Al-Hajji identifies him as Guitardo, Borrell’s deputy as well as probably his governor in Barcelona. Bon Filio was carrying a letter, and was accompanied by three noblemen. They were all lodged in Munya Nasr and Hishām bin Muḥammad was received by the caliph, informing him of the arrival of the ambassadors.

Therefore, on 4 Ramadān 360 (1 July 971), they were received in “a solemn session organized in perfection,” at the Majlis al-Sharqī, which opens to the gardens. The viziers were the first to be received and seated according to their hierarchy. At the caliph’s right the first by order of precedence was the wazir qāʾid Ghālib bin ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, and after him the wazir šāhib al-hasham Muḥammad bin al-Qasīm bin Tumlūs, who was in charge of presenting Ordoño IV to the caliph’s presence, upon his visit to Cordoba. At the caliph’s left the first one was his wazir šāhib al-madīna of Cordoba Jaʿfar bin ʿUthmān al-Muḥāfī and after him the wazir šāhib al-madīna of al-Zahrāʾ, Muḥammad bin Aflḥ.

Jahwar bin al-Shaykh was sent to guide the ambassadors of Borrell, and he was also escorted by a squad of the jund and accompanied by a group of important Christians of Cordoba, as it was seen previously during Ordoño’s reception. They were preceded by the present of Borrell, the aforementioned 30 Muslim captives, amongst whom were men, women and children, as well as brocade and arms. They were not conducted directly to the caliph’s presence, as they were driven by Jahwar towards the hall of the Dār al-Jund

470 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 44-47.
471 Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 83.
in al-Zahrā’, where they waited for all the preparations of the ceremony to be concluded. Once the permission was given for the ceremony to start, Bon Filio was followed by his main companions as well as by 5 prominent Christians from Cordoba, who were to serve as interpreters. Once they arrived at the entrance of the majlis they prostrated themselves, until they reached al-Ḥakam, whose hand they kissed. They then moved backwards, standing and handing Borrell’s letter to the caliph. The caliph asked them news about their lord and the situation of his territories. The caliph spoke of awarding for those who submitted to him, and after they answered, they were dismissed and accompanied back to their lodgings by Jahwar and the troops. The caliph then ordered that the captives should be attended to and returned to their respective territories.

Ibn Ḥayyān in the same passage also transmits a poem by Aḥmad bin Ibrāhīm, treasurer of al-Zahrā’, “who congratulated the caliph for the uninterrupted arrival of Christian embassies which came and turned to him, requesting his grace.”

Este Ibn Sancho [Ramiro III], que es su rey,
Ha pensado que lo más recto era someterse, y lo más seguro venir.
Ifranya y su gobernante te tienden la mano
Y, si no te la tenderian, vendrian a ti maniatados.
Todo ello sirve de anuncio tanto a los de Oriente como del Occidente,
Lo mismo que el deslumbramiento del relámpago anuncia el trueno.
Sólo queda que (el Califa) se aposente en la Meca,
Para echar de ella a los que merecen ser expulsados. 472

The rhetoric regarding the right of the Umayyads to the Eastern and Western Caliphate was already explored during the sovereignty of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II, and it was perceived in the East, both in the Abbasid territory and the Byzantine, as a prophecy. Thus, once more it is testified the role of poetry in solemn court ceremonies.

Bon Filio, as Rodrigo Velázquez’s mother, was also received in a farewell reception, in Shawwāl of the same year (July-August) which also took place at the Majlis al-Sharqī. Again the same preparations were made, and once they were introduced to the caliph’s presence he ordered his courtiers to give them the answer to Borrell’s letter, as well as a present for Bon Filio to carry to his sovereign. Al-Ḥakam transmitted to them,

472 Ibid., 46.
by word, what was to be answered to Borrell, and the attitude he expected from him as well as his obedience. Once they left the caliphal presence, they were given clothes and saddles, according to the category of each receiver. Once they were authorized to leave, they abandoned Cordoba in the middle of same month.

In the same year, on 25 Ramadan (22 July), Ibn Ḥayyān reports also the arrival of an ambassador, called Silis or Zinis, sent from Astorga carrying a letter from the count Gundishalb bin Munío.\(^\text{473}\) The letter dated from 12 Ramadān (Sunday, 9 July), and addressed the issue of the arrival of Vikings who were able to enter river Duero, raiding Santaver on Saturday. The letter was sent the day after the Majūs were first seen. The alliances of the caliph and the vassalage the Christian kingdoms kept towards Cordoba, allowed al-Andalus to acknowledge in advance the arrival to the Peninsula of these dangerous crews. It was this warning from Gundishalb that triggered the sending of a fleet from Pechina to Algarve (al-Gharb, which means to the Atlantic), by the end of Ramadān.\(^\text{474}\) The arrival of the ambassador of Gundishalb at Cordoba coincides with the dates in which Bon Filio was at the Andalusí capital with his companions. Al-Ḥakam II not only received yearly several ambassadors, as he also accommodated in Cordoba different envoys from different principalities at the same time.

Al-Hajji, who edited the text of the manuscript of Ibn Ḥayyān in 1965 in Beirut, transmits and translates the passage regarding the arrival of this Gundishalb to Cordoba. In al-Hajji’s edition instead of Gundishalb bin Munío, it can be read Gundishalb bin Masarra.\(^\text{475}\) The name of the city from which the ambassador of Gundishalb was sent is accounted by al-Hajji as Madīna Lastara (مدينة لسترة), which García Gómez translates as Madīna Astorga. Al-Hajji refers that the text in the manuscript is somehow obscure, as the preceding folios have been lost. The historian believes that the manuscript refers to Gonzalo Menéndez (or Gonçalo Mendes in Portuguese), as he believes the Massara is a corruption of Menéndez, and that the text when reporting that the ambassador had arrived from the “south of Jiliqyya” (اداني جليقيا), means the territories of the independent western Galicia, comprising the region from the river Miño to the south of river Duero. Furthermore, al-Hajji believes that “Lastara” is a corruption of Lâmego, in the shores of river Duero, instead of Astorga.

\(^\text{473}\) Ibid., 50.
\(^\text{474}\) Ibid., 51.
\(^\text{475}\) Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 85-87. Al-Hajji also reproduces the page of the facsimile edition of the copy of the Real Academia de Historia de Madrid.
Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries)

Gonçalo Mendes was the son of Hermenegildo (also called Mendo) Gonçalves, a comes of a territorial unity, created in the end of the 9th century, comprising the territories to the south of river Lima and north of river Duero, with its main centre in Portucale (Oporto), which originated the name of this recently created identity.476 This territory was gradually acquiring its independence, as part of the administrative unity of Galicia, from the Kingdom of Asturias and then Leon. Gonçalo Mendes was the first to use the title dux. He was also the son of Mumadona (or Muniadona) Díaz. Thus, in the case we accept the identification of Gundishalb bin Munio as Gonçalo Mendes, “Munio”, as appears in García Gómez’s translation could be a reference to Gonçalo’s mother, as a corruption of “Munia”, instead of a corruption of Mendes.

Nevertheless, Gonçalo Mendes has a contemporary and homonymous, named Gonçalo Munio, Moniz or Muñoz, who was comes of Coimbra, and was the son of Munio Guterres, grandson of Guterre Mendes and great-grandson of Hermenegildo (or Mendo) Guterres.477 They were tenens or governors of Coimbra, another province located in the south of Duero, until it was reconquered by the caliphate of Cordoba around 987, under the rule of the Andalusi ḥājib al-Mansūr, when Munio Gonçalves, son of Gonçalo Moniz, was comes.478 José Mattoso points out that, due to lack of patronymic, the count arriving at Cordoba could be either Gonçalo Mendes or Gonçalo Moniz. He also underlines that it was Gonçalo Moniz, and not Gonçalo Mendes, who poisoned Sancho the Fat in 965, as discussed above (see page 160).479

Sancho I, who was able to achieve the throne of Leon due to the military efforts of ‘Abd al-Raḥmūn III, to whom he submitted ca. 958/959, had recently, in 963, failed to fulfil the agreement achieved with Cordoba. Ordoño IV, who had been deposed by Sancho I, was received in 963 by al-Ḥakam II, who promised to help him in regaining his throne. When Sancho I heard of Ordoño IV’s submission, fearing for his own deposal, sent his envoys to Cordoba and agreed upon the surrender of some of the Marches’. However, Ordoño IV died in the same year and thus the lack of rival prompted Sancho to rebel against Cordoba. Perhaps, it is not too speculative to assume that Gonçalo Moniz poisoned Sancho the Fat, due to his own submission and loyalty towards the Caliphate of Cordoba. In fact, the turbulent times for Leon which resulted from Sancho’s death...

478 Oliveira Marques, História de Portugal I, 49.
479 José Mattoso, A nobreza, 123-124.
benefited extensively the Caliphate, who got rid of Sancho, who had been for a long time a thorn in the side for Cordoba.

Therefore, it is most likely that the ambassador who arrived at Cordoba was sent by Gonçalo Moniz or Gundishalb bin Munio, as he was the son of Munio, whose territories were located to the south of Duero, where Lânego is comprised, and bordered directly with the Caliphate of Cordoba. The Norsemen are described by Ibn Ḥayyān as entering into river Duero and going as far as Santaver province, thus Lânego was one of the first cities which witnessed their incursion. It should be pointed out that the Muqtabis of Ibn Ḥayyān still represents one of the main sources for the history of the northern kingdoms and counties. Therefore, further attention from medievalists studying the chronology regarding Christian Iberia should be attended to. Also, such frontier societies and cultures demand an exhaustive joint effort between medievalists from both Christian and Arab history.

Also in the same year more missions arrived at Cordoba. On 16 Shawwal (12 August 971) the caliph sat on his sarīr in the Majlis al-Shargī to receive more foreign ambassadors. The Andalusi historian mentions that the wuzarā‘ and hujjāb (chamberlains) attended the ceremony. It is interesting that the translator mentions the office of the hijjāba, thus using the plural. Mohamed Meouak reports another occasion where an Arab historian accounts the presence of more than one ḥājib attending the reception of an embassy from Constantinople, in times of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. He believes that this is intriguing, especially in a time in which the Cordovan administration employed only one ḥājib. Therefore, this reception reports yet another occasion where more than one ḥājib is accounted to have comprised within the administration of al-Andalus.

According to Ibn Hayyan, all the preparations were conducted and the army was set, as in previous similar occasions. He first received Sancho Garcés II, or Sancho Abarca, of Pamplona. He was the son of the recently deceased García Sanchez, and thus grandson of Toda Aznárez of Navarre, which meant he was also related to al-Hakam II. Sancho’s ambassadors were Bassal, the Abbot, and Velasco, judge of Nájera, one of the main centres of Navarre. Each one of them were accompanied by two important noblemen.

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480 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 75-76.
481 Meouak, Pouvoir Souverain, 67.
from their entourage. Pérez de Urbel identifies Bassal and Velasco as two important Navarrese noblemen who signed the Fuero of Nájera.482

Then, the caliph received the ambassador al-Layt, accompanied by the ‘ārif (learned, scholar) ‘Abd al-Mālik, both coming from the court of Elvira, daughter of Ramiro (II), Queen Regent of Leon in the name of her nephew Ramiro III.

Ibn Ḥayyān accounts that after Elvira’s messengers, the caliph received the envoys Ḥabīb bin Tawīla and Sa‘āda, ambassadors from Fernán Láinez, count of Salamanca. Fernán Láinez was the count of Salamanca, who repopulated the city of Alava and fighted against the Mauri in 975.483 However, in 971 he was paying homage to the caliph of Cordoba.

Afterwards, it was the turn of ambassador García bin Gatón or Anton,484 sent by García bin Fernando bin Gundishalb, ruler of Castile and Alava, that is García bin Fernández, son of Fernán González, count of Castile, who had died ca. 970.

Then, arrived Esimeno with his companion Elgas (al-Hajji believes their names were Jimeno and Fernando, respectively), ambassadors of Fernando Ansúrez, count of Monzón, Peñafiel and Campos.485 The last ambassadors to be received by the caliph were Sulayman and Khalaf bin Sa‘d, both envoys of “the count Gundishalb.” Martínez believes that once more the lack of patronymic leads to speculation if he is either Gonçalo Mendes or Gonçalo Moniz.486 However, this mention makes it credible to identify this count Gundishalb as the same who sent the warning regarding the arrival of Vikings to the peninsula, on 22 July of the same year, thus Gonçalo Moniz.

Ibn Ḥayyān reports they all brought news to Cordoba about their territories and transmitted their desire to continue the truce. After receiving presents they all returned home.

Still, in the same year, al-Ḥakam II received ambassadors from northern principalities. On Saturday, 6 Dhu al-Hijja (30 September) the caliph held a solemn reception in al-Zahrā’. In this account the Majlis in which the reception took place is not mentioned. Al-Ḥakam II received first Malih, the Abbot, ambassador of Elvira, which means that Elvira sent two embassies in a very short time to al-Ḥakam II. Next, the

482 Pérez de Urbel, “España Cristiana”, 314.
483 Gonzalo Martínez Diez, El Condado de Castilla (711-1038). La historia frente a la leyenda (Valladolid: Marcial Pons, 2005), 464.
484 Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 89.
485 Martínez, El Condado de Castilla, 464.
486 Ibid., 464.
sorveigned received the count Esimeno bin García bin Sancho, described as a hostage for his brother Sancho bin García, ruler of Pamplona. Esimeno Garcéz is identified as Jimeno, son of García Sáncez I, and thus brother of Sancho Garcés II or Sancho Abarca, then ruler of Navarre. He was probably sent as a hostage in order to secure intentions of the truce and submission of his brother.  

In this reception, al-Ḥakam II also received Khamīs bin Abī Salit, “lord of Castile,” and Didaco bin Shabrit, ambassador of Ibn Ashur (Fernando Ansúrez). The translation is not very clear at this point, and it is not possible to understand if Khamis bin Abi Salit was a companion of Didaco bin Shabrit, but it seems as if they were part of two different embassies, and Khamīs was the ambassador of other noblemen from Castile. As for Didaco bin Shaprit, one cannot help but to notice the similarity of his patronymic with that of Ḥasdāī bin Shabrūṭ. Even if they were not related it is most interesting that Castilian rulers also used religious minorities to conduct their diplomacy. As they also used ambassadors who had Arabic names, either Muslims or Mozarabs, they seem to have employed Jews as well in such a task. This was a shared policy with Cordoba, and of course it was most appropriate, as these men were learned in several languages.

Ibn Ḥayyān further adds that these ambassadors were received by Andalusí Christians: the qādi Asbagh bin Nabīl, the Bishop ʿĪsā bin Mansūr, the comes Muʿāwiyya bin Lūbb and the Bishop of Seville, ʿUbayd Allāh bin Qasīm. They all served as interpreters and after being heard the ambassadors were sent home. It is most interesting that Ibn Lūbb is identified with a Christian title and at the same time included in the list of important Christians in Cordoba. He is perhaps related to the Banū Lūbb, mentioned in Muqtabis V, who were governors of Tudela, in the Upper March, such as the governor ʿAbd Allāh bin Muḥammad bin Lūbb bin Mūsā, whom Ibn Ḥayyān says was related to the Banū Qasī lineage, and thus related to the Pamplona royal house. 

Ibn Ḥayyān advises the reader that a gap regarding the year of 361 A.H. in the text of ʿĪsā al-Rāzī, his main source, did not allow him to learn most events taking place from the end of 361 A.H. (ca. September 972) until the second half of 362 A.H. (ca. March 973).  

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487 Pérez de Urbel, “España Cristiana”, 314. The historian points out that Sancho Abarca could have been also held prisoner in Cordoba, after being captured during a military expedition.
488 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis V, 103.
489 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 123.

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For the embassies’ sake, this means that we will only learn further arrivals from September 973, and thus 972 remains a gap for the report of envoys to Cordoba.

In Dhu al-Hijja 362 (23 September 973) al-Ḥakam II again sat on his throne in Madīna al-Zahrā’ to receive foreign envoys. The first ones to be received were the Muslim ambassadors, representing the North African sovereigns, tributaries of Cordoba.490 The first Christian ambassadors to be admitted in al-Ḥakam’s presence were the envoys of García Sánchez II of Pamplona. After them, it was the turn of Fernando Ansúrez’s ambassadors. Then, the ambassadors of the Banū Gómez, counts of Saldaña- Carrión.491 The last ambassadors to be received were those sent by Rodrigo Velázquez, whom the translator refers as, probably, count of Algarve. Al-Hajji, clarifies this obscure translation, asserting that the manuscript refers to Rodrigo bin Velasco as qumis al-arab (قوميس العرب), a corruption of qūmis al-gharb (قوميس الغرب), in which expression the term Jilliqiyyya is missing (qūmis al-gharb jilliqiyyya).492 Al-Hajji further adds that Ibn Khaldūn, when copying this account from Ibn Hayyan, understood the omission, and thus transcribed it as al-qūmis bi-l-qurb min Jilliqiyyya (القومس بالقرب من جليقية), the count of the neighbouring Jilliqiyyya. Al-Hajji further asserts that this embassy was not only sent by the powerful Galician count, as it was headed by his mother Oneca, which is referred by Ibn Khaldūn, passage that al-Hajji transmits.493 Rodrigo Velázquez was an important Galician count, whose power grew at Sancho I’s court in Leon.494

In the same year al-Ḥakam received more Muslim and Christian embassies, on 17 Ṣafar 363 (17 November 973).495 The Christians were the last to be received, according to protocol. These ambassadors were sent by Elvira and were attended by the qāḍī of the Cordovan Christians, previously mentioned, Asbagh bin ‘Abd Allāh bin Nabīl. Ibn Hayyan accounts that the caliph did not only disapproved the ambassador’s message, but also the translation of the interpreter, thus putting an end to the reception and ordering both the qāḍī and the ambassadors to leave the majlis, reproaching them. However, Ibn Ḥayyān accounts that he mainly blamed the interpreter, to whom he deprived from his office. Zyaḏ bin Aflah, sāḥib al-khayl, commander of the cavalry, received both the ambassadors and the interpreter at the Military House (Dār al-Jund), to let the envoys

490 Ibid., 173-174.
491 Martínez, El condado de Castilla, 477, 608, 620.
492 Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 90.
493 Ibid., 91-92.
494 Pérez de Urbel, “España Cristiana”, 141, 144, 147.
495 Ibn Hayyān, Anales Palatinos, 185.
know that if it was not for their diplomatic immunity they would have been punished. He also reproached the qāḍī, to whom a severe punishment was expecting him, as he did not draw the attention of the Christians towards their insolent terms. Moreover, the ambassadors were expelled from Cordoba, and escorted to Elvira’s court by Āḥmad bin ‘Arūs al-Mawrurī, a jurist, as well as ‘Ubayd Allāh bin Qasīm, Bishop of Seville, as interpreter.

The expelled ambassadors left Cordoba in the end of Ṣafar, and the chancellery of al-Ḥakam II wrote to Muḥammad bin Muṭarrif, who was by then near the western Galicia, to join them from there. The caliph’s power in Iberia had achieved such a state that he could expel ambassadors without any harm for the alliances he intended to draw in the fragmented Christian peninsula, and also sent his own envoys who were not only to escort Elvira’s ambassadors to her territory, as they were also to reproach the Queen Regent due to her envoys’ behaviour.

On the 1st of Shawwāl of the same year (25 June 974), Muḥammad bin Rizq al-Ja’farī, governor of Lérida, Monzón and the Upper March, arrived at Cordoba, accompanied by Guitardo or Gitar, ambassador and main subject of the count of Barcelona, Borrell II, as well as a small group from his court. Guitardo was carrying a letter from Borrell, declaring Barcelona’s submission, as well as the intentions of keeping the truce. With Borrell’s ambassador came also the count Ashraka bin ‘Umar Dawūd, as the ambassador of Otto II, king of the Franks (Holy Roman Emperor), carrying a letter asking for the renovation of friendship. The Fraxinetum issue has been discussed in this thesis, regarding John of Gorze’s embassy at Cordoba during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III caliphate. Presumably, Fraxinetum was finally conquered in 972, nevertheless some sources account its final conquest only took place as late as 990’s. If this was indeed the case, this must have been a topic for discussion between Otto II and al-Ḥakam II, or perhaps other naval activity of the Umayyad caliphate, which could be of damage to the Holy Roman Emperor.

Then the ambassador Esteban bin Abika was received, sent by Nuno bin Gundishalb, similarly asking for the renovation of the truce, which was almost at its end. The last one to be received was Balbis (or Vélez) bin Shadrit (perhaps Shabrit), ambassador of the Bishop of J.r.n.sh. and Fernando Ansúrez, with a letter asking for the same truce.

Al-Hajji believes Esteban bin Abika could be Esteban bin Iñigo, envoy from Gerona. The historian further considers that the Bishop of Jirnish, or Gerona was Nuño
González. Thus he believes Ibn Hayyan wrote that Esteban Iñigo was the envoy of a Bishop of Gerona called Nuño González, contrary to García Gómez’s translation which considers that Esteban Iñigo was the envoy of both the Bishop of Jirnish and Nuño González, two different characters. Moreover, al-Hajji asserts that Nuño González was a son of Fernán González, previous and deceased count of Castile, thus brother of the current count of Castile García Fernández, as well as his ambassador.\(^{496}\)

Another reception was held on Saturday 9 Dhu al-Qa’da of the same year (1 August 974).\(^{497}\) The caliph sat on his throne, flanked on his right side by the \(\text{wazīr kātib} \ sāhib \ al-madi\text{n}a\) of Cordoba, Ja’far bin ‘Uthmān al-Muṣafī, and after him the \(\text{sāhib} \ al-\text{ḥasham}\) Ziyad bin Aflāḥ. Once more the translation of García Gómez addresses more than one \(\text{ḥajib}\), stating that there were two rows comprised by \(\text{ḥuğjāb}\), which were then followed by rows of several administrative courtiers.

The caliph received ambassadors from precisely the same rulers of the previous reception. First, Guitardo, ambassador of Borrell, then Ashkara, ambassador of Otto II, and again Esteban Abikah or Iñigo, who was either ambassador of the Bishop of Jirnish and Nuño González or ambassador of the Bishop of Jirnish, called Nuño González. The last to be received was Balbis or Vélez bin Shadrit, as previously mentioned. They all had the same intention: ask for the extension of truces. The previous reception had been held in the end of June, and this took place in the first day of August. Only one month separated the two receptions, which received exactly the same ambassadors as the previous one.

The last Christian embassy reported by Ibn Ḥayyān involves yet another “diplomatic conflict.” Ibn Ḥayyān reports that on Saturday 21 Dhu al-Hijjja 363 A.H. (12 September 974), a day after the departure of ambassadors sent by the count of Castile, García Fernández, al-Ḥakam II received news that he lord of Castile had violated the truce, after having expressed intentions to extend it. Indeed, on Saturday, the caliph received news from the \(\text{Thaghr al-Awsat}\), or Middle March, that on Thursday 11 Dhu al-Hijja (2 Septembre), García had undertaken a military campaign against the fortress of Deza and its surroundings, under the jurisdiction of ‘Amrīl bin Timlit, governor of the region. After ‘Amrīl’s sons persecuted García’s army, the count had prepared an ambush in which the \(\text{qā’id}\) Zīrwāl had died in battlefield, a place called Faḥṣ al-Barka, in the vicinities of the fortress of Mada. Thus, when the caliph received these news, he ordered that García’s ambassadors, who had left the day before, should be brought back to

\(^{496}\) Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 95.

\(^{497}\) Ibn Hayyān, Anales Palatinos, 221-222.
Cordoba. The ambassadors refused to be back and threatened to kill the envoy of the caliph. Consequently, Ibn Aflah, commander of the cavalry, was ordered to capture them with a military squad. They were found, hidden on a ravine in Caracuel de Calatrava, still in Muslim territory, and were violently brought to Cordoba and imprisoned.

Al-Hajji reports that after this incident, the rulers of Leon sent an embassy to al-Ḥakam II, to lessen the effects of García Fernández’s expedition. However, the historian does not account any primary source.498

García Fernández did not retreat and thus, on 15 Sha’bān (30 April 975), news arrived at Cordoba that a joint army of Castile, Leon, Pamplona and other counties had started, on 2 Sha’bān (17 April) to besiege the castle of Gormaz in the taghr of Medinaceli, or Thaghr al-Awsat.499 Thus, all the rulers, kings or counts who had previously submitted to al-Ḥakam II were now rebelling. The castle was only liberated by Muslim forces after having been besieged and attacked for 74 days, on 15 Shawwāl 364 A.H. (28 June 975). Ibn Ḥayyān states that a joint army, composed by Sancho Garcés II of Pamplona, García Fernández count of Castile, Fernando Ansúrez count of Monzón, the Banū Gómez, had also been incident by Ramiro III and his Regent Elvira, who also joined the siege of Gormaz. They all attacked Gormaz on 15 Shawwāl but were defeated, and the count of Castile was persecuted as well as Ramiro III and both escaped from Muslim territory.500 Thus, the final years of al-Hakam II were not so peaceful, as his tributaries in the thughūr were rebelling against him. Nevertheless, the military efforts of Hisham II’s ḥājib al-Manṣūr will once more revert the situation.

498 Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 97. Pérez de Urbel, “España Cristiana”, 147. Pérez de Urbel accounts that after the ambassadors from García were put to prison, a Christian embassy from Leon will be received in Cordoba and humiliated. However, the historian does not account any source.
499 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 258.
500 Ibid., 278-281.
7. Ceremonial and oriental influence

7.1. ‘Abd al-Rahmān II and the first age of the Andalusi culture: oriental influence and Ziryāb

As stated before in this thesis ‘Abd al-Rahmān II’s reign, who rules for 30 years, is considered to represent the first period of the Andalusi culture, which coincides with the first period of unremitting oriental influence.

In fact, ‘Abd al-Rahmān II is described by Ibn Ḥayyān as a scholar amīr, who since an early age initiated himself in humanities and sciences of his time and developed a critical scientific character by reading the works of ancient masters.501 Indeed, even before his rise to rule, he sent a mission to the ‘Abbasid Iraq, in order to collect books and copy other ancient manuscripts, works which were already known at ‘Abbasid court.502 He hired for his court poets, scholars, philosophers, astronomers, as well as singers, such as the famous Ziryāb. I have discussed somewhere else in detail the importance of Ziryāb as a protagonist of the oriental influence of the court society in Cordoba.503

Ibn Ḥayyān dedicates to Ziryāb an extensive account, which is the most important report on oriental influence of al-Andalus.504 Ziryāb symbolises each innovation from the ‘Abbasid court arriving at al-Andalus, from perfumes to hygiene and eating habits. He is described as a singer, poet and astronomer, arriving at the court of ‘Abd al-Rahmān II, during the first year of the sovereign’s reign. Ibn Ḥayyān reports that after Ziryāb had become the favourite musician of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the most famous ‘Abbasid Caliph, as he was the inventor of a new type of oud, he also succumbed to his own master’s envy, Ishaq bin Ibrāhīm al-Mawsili. Having been threatened to death by Ishaq, Ziryāb took refuge first in Iffiqiyya, where he was contacted by agents of al-Ḥakam I, ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s father, who invited and convinced the musician to move to the court of al-Andalus. Meanwhile, al-Ḥakam I died and thus Ziryāb doubted that he would still be welcomed by his successor. Nevertheless, the two agents of Cordoba, who were also

502 Ibid., 170.
musicians, persuaded Ziryāb to keep his plans and hopes as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II was even more talented and interested in the arts and humanities than his father.

Once he arrives at Cordoba, the amīr lodges him in a residence contiguous to the al-Qaṣr and thus, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II “preferred and made him his most intimate courtier,” even building a door from the musician’s residence with direct entrance for the palace, for the exclusive use of Ziryāb. He was also given an excessive revenue of 200 dinars per month, which not only was 20 times more than the average 10 dinars earned by other court musicians contemporary of Ziryāb, as his salary statement appeared immediately after the names of the viziers in the list of the court payments. Such numbers might be perceived as unrealistic, nevertheless similar amounts are recorded to be attributed to other courtiers, although later during the caliphate’s times.505 Either part of the court reality or a fantastic amount exaggerated by historians, when attributing to courtiers such a monthly revenue, the Andalusi chronicler intended mainly to testify the luxury of a true court, which achieved its real splendour by then. It also bears witness of the central role of scholars and artists in the creation and development of court society in al-Andalus, especially as transmitters of oriental traditions. The political influence exercised by Ziryāb over the amīr in this respect is quite clear. In the first session the amīr conceded to his new acquisition, Ziryāb, one of the first enquiries of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II regarded the “conduct of the caliphs and anecdotes of the wise men,” in a clear reference towards the former lords of the musician, the ‘Abbasids of Baghdad.506 Indeed, this account reveals the incessant circulation and exchange of information, though indirectly, between the receptive Umayyad court and the ‘Abbasid court of Baghdad.

Although Ziryāb’s most appreciated talent was the music, as he not only invented a new type of oud, but also added the fifth string to the same instrument, which is described as sublimating its sound,507 Ibn Ḥayyān attributes to him other relevant innovations, especially regarding the etiquette.

Ziryab juntaba a estas grandes cualidades suyas el no ser lego en puntos de elegancia y humanidades múltiples, sabiendo tratar correctamente y distinguiendo a las distintas personas, poniéndose a su altura hablarles. Practicaba la etiqueta de la tertulia y la buena conversación, el experto servicio de los príncipes y diversas especialidades de

505 Manzano, Conquistadores, Emires y Califas, 307-308.
506 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-I, 199.
507 Ibid., 201.
Etiquette was indeed conceived by the historian as the “expert service of the umara,” and thus intrinsically connected to court ceremonial and behaviour expected according to each occasion. In fact, regarding the aspect of the formal court, Ibn Ḥayyān asserts that “‘Abd al-Raḥmān II was the first of the marwanid caliphs who enhanced the monarchy in al-Andalus, coated it with pomp and majesty and conferred to it a reverential character, selecting the (adequate) men to each function.”

In fact, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II was the first amīr who organized the state administration, establishing the “hierarchy of the magistrates,” and recruiting officials and administrative staff from the khaṣṣa. The fourth amir of al-Andalus was indeed the first sovereign of Cordoba who established the daily attendance of the wuzarā’ at the palace, and according to Ibn Hayyan, he founded a hall for such meetings and sessions, “which use persists until nowadays under the name of Bayt al-Wizarā’ [House of the Ministry], from where he called them to his platform” to discuss orders, prohibitions, appointments or destitutions. It was indeed ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II who recruited specific men for each wizarā’, thus delegating a distinct function to each one of them, and attending himself daily to the House of Ministry he created at the palace.

The hierarchy of the administration and the khaṣṣa employed at the palace have been studied by Mohamed Meouak, who associates the adoption of court ceremonial to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s will to fix the elementary rules of state administration. The Bayt al-Wizarā’ was already established at the ‘Abbasid court and it is described by Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ as a central piece in ambassadorial receptions during al-Muqtadir bi-Allāh’s caliphate, as the envoy would be led first to the wizarā’ previously to enter the presence of the caliph, where he was to remain with the wāzīr until the caliph was ready to receive him. The wizarā’ was fully furnished with drapes and seats of honour and had a view for the Tigris, and the sight of it would lead the ambassador to believe he was in the

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508 Ibid., 203.
509 Ibid., 179.
510 Lévi-Provençal, “España Musulmana”, 31; Meouak, Pouvoir souverain, 70.
512 Meouak, Pouvoir Souverain, 27.
presence of the caliph, while instead he was being received by the wazir, in this case Ibn al-Furāṭ. Nevertheless, it appears that the wizarā’ had a different conception in al-Andalus, as well as the hījāba, and it might be said that this was an innovation introduced by the Umayyads of Cordoba. In fact, Meouak asserts that the Umayyad hājib had a privileged situation regarding that of the wazir; while for the ‘Abbasids the wazir was the direct deputy of the caliph, this position was held in al-Andalus by the hājib, who was indeed the second in hierarchy after the sovereign.514 Perhaps this originality in the Iberian Peninsula is due to a Visigoth legacy of the administrative offices, where several comes held each one a specific administrative function within the palace. In fact, it appears that there is a Hispanic understanding between the Christian title comes and the Muslim title wazīr, especially during the time of ṭā’ifā kingdoms.

Quite interestingly, Ibn Ḥayyān associates to etiquette several practices regarding hygiene, such as the use of perfumes, as well as clothing. Hygiene was fundamental in court ceremonial and, more specifically during receptions of ambassadors, as the envoys were expected and ordered to present themselves neat, clean as well as perfumed. All the products necessary for these procedures were offered to the ambassadors, previously to the reception. As for hygienic products, Ziryāb introduced in al-Andalus the use of litharge, obtained through the lead oxide, and which he prescribed as a kind of “anti-stain deodorant”, as it not only avoided unpleasant odours, but also perspiration stains.515 He is also considered the inventor of several aromas and perfumes. In the chapter of the hygiene and fashion, it was Ziryāb who established the habit of haircut. Once people saw his own haircut, sons and wives, cut in order not to cover the forehead and eyebrows, and rounded at the ears, the Andalusı adopted such models and demanded from his own eunuch servants and distinguished slave girls to adopt the same hair style, which persisted until the days the chronicler wrote.516

During solemn receptions a central role was similarly given to the ceremonial clothing, which was also provided to the envoys. Ceremonial attire should be given to the ambassador accordingly to his status as well as the kingdom, principality or empire which he was representing. This characteristic is quite evident during the long process which eventually resulted in the reception of John of Gorze, as ambassador of Otto I, King of Germany. Jonh of Gorze, who was indeed a monk, refused the money which was given

514 Meouak, Pouvoir soverain, 63.
515 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 203.
516 Ibid., 203.
to him, which was intended to buy him a ceremonial dress to attend the reception of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. However, using the pretext of being a monk, the abbot of Gorze refused to use the money in such a frivolity, as he regarded it, and thus finally the Umayyad caliph conceded him a reception even if he would be wearing a sack, as described by the biographer of John of Gorze (see page 129). Therefore, also for members of the caliph’s court, clothing should be also accordingly to the hierarchy, status and office which was occupied by those who were wearing it, either a vizier or a secretary. In fact, this is fully documented for contemporary Byzantine and ‘Abbasid receptions, by *De Ceremoniis* and the *Rusūm Dār al-Khilafā*, respectively. *De Ceremoniis* describes in detail the attire expected for all the courtiers who were attending the reception of ambassadors, as the description of welcome of ambassadors from ‘Abbasid envoys, which corresponds exactly to the reception of Umayyad envoys. Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ also dedicates a part of his work to clothing which both caliphs and courtiers should wear when attending court ceremonies.517

It was precisely under the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II that the institution of the ṭirāz was established in al-Andalus.518 Ṭirāz is a Persian word and it means embroidery or decorative work, and it was used to identify the manufactures where luxury clothing, tapestries and other sumptuous clothing were fabricated, and several of these productions were then introduced in al-Andalus by the fourth amir. Such manufactures already existed in the ‘Abbasid and Byzantine Empires and it was present both in Sasanian and Byzantine courts, and thus its origins can be traced to early Persian and Roman states.519

In regards to clothing, Ziryāb is considered to innovate the whole concept of dressing in al-Andalus. He is described as the introducer of the concept that we would nowadays associate with *fashion collections*, according to seasons. Indeed, his innovations in al-Andalus allowed the introduction of spring/summer and autumn/winter *collections*. Ibn Ḥayyān asserts that it was his preference and delimitation the use of white clothing from six days before the end of June until the beginning of October, once he would advise that coloured clothing should be worn, as well as he prescribed the wearing of a *mid-season collection*, during the season the Andalusis called autumn.520

Ziryāb was also a central piece, as the most distinguished courtier of ‘Abd al-Rahmān II, in semi-private sessions, such as those where poetry and music coexisted. The role of poetry for court ceremonies and during the receptions of ambassadorial missions has been discussed in chapter 4, when addressing al-Ghazāl’s embassy to Theophilos.

Poets of al-Andalus wrote for Ziryāb and he composed the music. Musicians and poets were employed in the court. Ibn Ḥayyān also accounts the role of wine in these encounters and compositions. The Andalusi historian reports how Ziryāb had two slave girls, both proficient in the art of music and who also knew how to play the oud, whom Ziryāb would count on to transmit and register his compositions, as when he composed he was in such a state of intoxication that he would not remember its musical creations. Thus, they were known as the “recorders.” Wine played indeed a role in this semi-intimate sessions, which was already addressed in chapter 4 (see pages 63-64). It was part of an idyllic paradisiacal scenario, and if solemn ceremonies were intended to be an imitatio of the divine creation and hierarchy, indeed such semi-intimate receptions were intended to be a reproduction of the divinely paradise. Regardless the prohibition towards the drinking of alcohol, the umarā’ or caliphs, as the maximum representatives of the divine on earth, could in fact transgress the rules while playing such a scenario. Thus, transgress without transgression, as they were the almost divine, according to the state hierarchy. In fact, there was ambiguity and ambivalence in such a prohibition for such sophisticated and developed court societies, for its banishment coexisted not only with its consumption but also with its production. Indeed, even during the caliphate its production was widespread throughout al-Andalus. Al-Maqqarī transmits, indeed more to legitimize the caliph’s religious character than perhaps to report an authentic decision, that al-Ḥakam II had ordered the destruction of all the vines throughout his dominions, as he had perceived that “the use of wine and other spirituous liquors forbidden by law had become quite common in al-Andalus.” The historian reports that the caliph only gave up of such a task after being advised by one of his wisest courtiers that this decision would lead to the ruin of “many poor people.” Even after the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate and the rise to rule of what is usually seen as more orthodox dynasties, such as the Almoravīds and the Almohades, there is evidence that the prohibition coexisted with its drinking. An Andalusi illustration of the 12th century, depicting the story of Bayād and Riyad, contained in the manuscript known as Vaticano arabo 368, represents a singer and

521 Ibid., 201.
522 Al-Maqqarī, Nafḥ II, 171.
musician, playing the oud, and his audience, composed by both men and women, enjoying the palace gardens and holding glasses and a bottle (see annex).

However, and as seen above as well, poetry was not an exclusive piece of semi-private sessions. It was fully integrated in the court solemn sessions, and the presence of both poets and scholars was requested and ordered by the sovereign, as witnessed by descriptions of ambassadorial receptions. It seems however that music was not part of such solemn sessions, and this is evident in al-Andalus, as descriptions mention the recitation of panegyrics. Nevertheless, accounts report that in the 10th century ‘Abbasid court, during official receptions, panegyric were sung in praise of the caliph, as singing was preferred to recitation.523

The employment of poets for exclusively political tasks, and especially for the external policy of Cordoba has also been discussed in chapter 4, as the rhetoric and etiquette must have been perceived as the expert service of these scholar courtiers.

Ziryāb might have represented more than what he in fact starred. He might be perceived as a key figure, especially as the chronicler seems committed to protect the Umayyad legitimacy character of the amīr, who was indeed the real protagonist of the introduction in al-Andalus of such ‘Abbasid innovations. When reporting the introduction of several institutions such as the Bayt al-Wizarāʾ or the ṭirāz, Ibn Ḥayyān does not mention which model ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II was taking, as according to the Umayyad legitimacy rhetoric display, the ‘Abbasids were the usurpers of the holders of the true caliphate, the Umayyads. By attributing all other innovations, from the perfumes to the etiquette, Ibn Ḥayyān was indeed leaving intact the Umayyad image of the amīr. I do not intend to assert that Ziryāb was not a protagonist of the oriental influence in al-Andalus, on the contrary. Nevertheless, he was one of the protagonists, as he was far from being an isolated case and he was no exception to the rule.

If on one hand the Umayyad court of al-Andalus publicly despised the ‘Abbasid dynasty of Baghdad, everything of which provenience was from the Iraqi court, was treated as possessing the utmost quality, and in fact Ibn Ḥayyān cannot hide his fascination when reporting such innovations.

Other leading characters for the oriental influence are accounted by the historian. Ibn Ḥayyān reports that after the death of Ziryāb, his slave girls, the “recorders”, called

Gizlan and Hunayda, were brought to the palace of the amīr where they established a sort of school for the slave girls of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, to whom the “recorders should pass on their own musical knowledge”[^224]. The Andalusi historian acknowledges, in his chapter dedicated to women and concubines of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, who he describes as “hopelessly womanizer” and a “music lover,” another relevant character for the oriental influence of the court. He reports that the amīr’s agents in Medina, the medieval Islamic centre for learning music and singing, bought a slave girl named Faḍl, of not only extreme beauty, but also skilled in the art of singing. Furthermore, she was known as the “Medinese”, because she was taken to Medina to improve her skills, as she had once belonged to one of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s daughters and was originally from Baghdad.^[225] Faḍl was brought to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II together with her companions, such as ‘Alam, also known as the “Medinese,” thus giving name to the house known as “House of the Medinese,” most certainly where slave girls were taught the art of singing and music playing, similarly to Ziryāb’s slave girls who were proficient in oud playing. Faḍl was considered to be the most important singer of the House of the Medinese, which is described as a place of excellence and of sophisticated education. The amīr would organize private sessions, where these slave girls would participate. In the same passage, Ibn Ḥayyān describes yet another of such slave girls, who distinguished herself as the most proficient and versatile in distinct varieties of singing. Moreover she is described by Ibn Ḥayyān as scholar, excellent calligrapher (her name was Qalam, pen), transmitter of poetry and learned in several humanities. Most interesting, the Andalusi historian reports that she was a Basque captive, daughter of a noblemen among the Basque counts, who was taken to Medina where she learned the art of singing and from there was also bought for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II.

Other events acted as agents of utmost importance for the oriental influence of al-Andalus. The war of succession between Hārūn al-Rashīd’s sons, after their father’s death in 809, and the subsequent sack of the ‘Abbasid palace by al-Mā’mūn’s supporters against his brother al-Amīn is described by Ibn Ḥayyān as an opportunity for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II to acquire the finest articles of unequal value.^[226] Ibn Ḥayyān further adds that the war of succession and the sack of the ‘Abbasid palace coincided with the opening of al-Andalus to eastern maritime merchants, who took possession of the treasures of the palace of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries).

[^224]: Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 201.
[^225]: Ibid., 192-193.
[^226]: Ibid., 181.

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Baghdad and to avoid the claims for the returning of such materials, they transported it towards the “other end of the earth, to al-Andalus.” Paradoxically, the troubled time damaging the ‘Abbasid golden age was precisely the period of growth of the western Umayyad court into a formal court. Therefore, the amīr acquired such treasures, precious pearls, luxury clothing and carpets, and bought for one of his favourites, called ash-Shifa, the “Dragon necklace” which in its turn had belonged to Zubaydah bint Ja’far bin al-Mansur, favourite of Hārūn al-Rashīd and mother of the deposed Muḥammad al-Amīn. Additionally, the account on the war of succession, the sack of the palace, as well as the opening of the Andalusi market to eastern traders, comes immediately after the report on the establishment of the tīrāz.

Ziryāb was indeed the dearest product from the ‘Abbasid court, and as other intervenient, such as Faḍl or the eastern merchants, transmitted news and innovations arriving directly from the Iraqi court. The adoption of ‘Abbasid models does not only mean the desire of the Umayyads to equal such a developed court society, but most importantly the desire to surpass it, especially during a time in which Cordoba had no longer nothing to fear from remote Baghdad and the ‘Abbasid dynasty had long ago renounced their pretensions to reconvert the peninsula into a province. Furthermore, the territorial and identity existence of al-Andalus was now intrinsically bonded to the Umayyad legitimacy. Al-Andalus destiny was essentially attached to the Umayyad destiny and right to rule over it. Even after the fall of the western Umayyad dynasty and the division of the peninsula into several small units, the tawahīf (sing. tā’if), the mulāk al-tawahīf will base their claim to rule into the long disappeared figure of the third Umayyad Caliph, Hishām II.

After the death of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II all the prerogatives which had allowed a peaceful age, when the court society and al-Andalus in general had developed such exquisite tastes and culture, were progressively lost until the rule of ‘Abd Allāh. In fact, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s golden age for al-Andalus was attainable through the centralization of the state, possible not only because of territorial unity but also due to a centralized and constant collection of taxes, registered and instituted through the chancellery and bureaucracy of the palace.527

However, when ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III ascended to the throne in 912, Cordoba’s influence did not go any further than the province which delimited it. It was only possible

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527 Ibid., 181.
to attain a new golden age after the military campaigns of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, who after uniting al-Andalus’ provinces declared the western Umayyad caliphate. A new age of oriental influence coincides as well with the caliph’s pacification of his own domains. He could now dedicate himself to the construction of his new caliphal city, a prerogative of his title and his legitimacy as the inheritor of the eastern caliphate. He was also able to dedicate himself to the external policy, which not only brought a new wave of oriental influence from Baghdad, but from Byzantium, from where several columns, fountains and pearls were used in the construction of his city and books such as the history of Orosius and the medical treaty of Dioscorides were studied and thus a school for learning Greek was established in his own palace. Caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III also preconized an administration renewal and reorganization, as mentioned before. He will also introduce administrative titles and offices, such as the dhu al-wizarataīn, or the double vizierate, which al-Makqqarī asserts was already used by the ‘Abbasid vizier Sa’id bin Makhlīd (in 882-883), and was an innovation in al-Andalus.\[528\]

Under the reign of his successor and son, al-Ḥakam II the oriental influence was even more constant and frequent. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III had previously reunited all the necessary conditions which allowed al-Ḥakam II to dedicate himself to the arts and humanities. Al-Maqqarī reports that the second caliph hired several scholars from Baghdad, “for the fame of his repeated success both in Africa and in Andalus, of his liberality to the learned, and of the tranquillity which prevailed in the territories subject to Islam owing to his wise measures and to his zeal for the administration of justice, induced numbers of illustrious Moslems to repair to Andalus.”\[529\] Al-Makqqarī cites several of these scholars from Baghdad, and he also mentions learned men arriving from territories under the Fatimids, “where those who refused to embrace the cause of those sectarians” were persecuted and arrested. Furthermore, al-Makqqarī adds that scholars hired for al-Ḥakam’s court were employed in the art of transcribing, binding, or illuminating books.\[530\] Having also employed agents in acquiring books for himself and his court, his library is said to have amounted to four hundred thousand volumes. The eunuch keeper of such a library is said to have a catalogue of the books which consisted of 44 volumes, each volume of 20 sheets of paper, with the titles and description of the books. Al-Makqqarī attributes to al-Ḥakam II the writing of a history of al-Andalus.

\[528\] Al-Maqqarī, Nafḥ II, 150.
\[529\] Ibid., 168.
\[530\] Ibid., 169.
Unfortunately, as the library of al-Ḥakam II was plundered, sold and destroyed after the fall of the Umayyads of Cordoba by Berber troops, ordered by one of al-Mansūr’s freedman, most of it was lost.

If ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III achieved his legitimacy through centralization and his extremely propagandized military campaigns, his son and heir accomplished it by associating his royal character to the model of the wise sovereign, and his permissibility and liberality towards scholars convicted by his enemy caliphates allowed him to build such an image of himself. His scholarly attributes led historians to see al-Ḥakam II as a representative of the Umayyads who no longer needed to resort to the strong religious legitimacy and propaganda, as his father had to. The image of sovereign scholar can only be related to his ancestor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II.

7.2. The scenography of power in al-Andalus: comparison with the ‘Abbasid and Byzantine ceremonials

Ceremonial features were already introduced in the court of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, as it can be perceived, for example, by the bay’a ceremony (oath of allegiance) described by Ibn Ḥayyān. Nevertheless, the lack of detailed description of solemn receptions is not only a reflexion of the lack of sources but more importantly the lack of a standardized, customized and established ceremonial. Indeed, Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Maqqarī or Ibn ‘Idhārī, for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s rule, do not provide the reader with any specifics of how, where and even when exactly were these ambassadors received. It’s only possible to learn that the envoys were received in audience.

It was indeed during ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s rule that the ceremonial became more developed, institutionalized as well as more detailed. Receptions of envoys sent from Constantinople are described by Ibn ‘Idhārī, Ibn Khaldūn and al-Maqqarī, with great pomp and display of ceremonial. It is precisely the first Caliph of Cordoba who initiates the construction of the greatest architectonical project of al-Andalus, the palace-city of Madīna al-Zahrā’, which was indeed a condition for the development of court ceremonial. However, as pointed out before, other conditions were necessary to be reunited before such an architectural, ceremonial and legitimacy construction could be consecrated.

531 Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Muqtabis II-1, 167.
Hay que hacer notar, de todos modos, que el ceremonial que rodea el evanescente califa no es el resultado de una simple exigencia ideológica: en todo caso, esta exigencia es el resultado de la naturaleza misma de un poder político basado en una minuciosa fiscalidad, que genera una amplia y diligente burocracia que actúa a través de escritos y en la que existen jerarquías funcionariales con tareas muy específicas. Esta burocracia, en gran medida de origen no árabe, permite que el califa sea invisible, remoto, inalcanzable, y a la vez enormemente presente en todo el espacio social que domina. (…)

Por otra parte, el Estado califal, que centraliza una gran cantidad de excedente, se convierte en el gran estimulador de cierto tipo de producción (tejidos de lujo – tiraz – acuñación de monedas…) y de intercambios y movimientos de mercancías. Este Estado enormemente activo, continuo generador de gastos, gira en torno al califa, un eje progresivamente oculto, sin más rastro de sus funcionarios, pero que va construyendo en su interior una forma de vida remota, regida cada vez más por códigos propios que no son sino el revés del mundo exterior. La mineralización de la naturaleza verde, la transformación de lo vivo en lo muerto, la inmovilización, que tan bien ha detectado M.ª J. Rubiera como tendencia de la estética árabe, podría ejemplificar esta clausura hermética del poder califal que crea un entorno del artificio ilustrado por la balsa de mercurio hecha construir por ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir li-Din Allah en el palacio de Madinat al-Zahra, justo en medio de una sala donde se reflejaba el sol que relampagueaba contra las paredes revestidas de oro y plata y las columnas de mármol y cristal.532

Thus, the ideological requirement of the ceremonial, which is conducted around the axis of the evanescent caliph who is the son reflected on the quicksilver, placed in the middle of the exuberant and gardened palace-city of Madīna al-Zahrā’, is indeed the result of a centralized and a tax efficient state. Ideology, ceremonial, architecture, political centralization and strong fiscal system are crucial ingredients for the recipe of the caliphal program of both ‘Abd al-Rahmān III and his son, and the first three elements cannot be created without the last two.

The flashing sun on the golden and platinum walls of the Majlis al-Khilâfa described by al-Maqqarī,533 reflects as well the name of the city, Madīna al-Zahrā’, as a response towards the continuous strength of the Fatimid caliphate, who had previously

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533 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥi I, 236-237.
built the palace-city of al-Manṣūriyya. Al-Zahrāʾ means “the most resplendent” or “the brightest,” and is also the name given to Prophet Muḥammad’s daughter Fatima al-Zahrāʾ, from whom the Fatimids claim to be descendants.

Madīna al-Zahrāʾ, thus symbolizes the centralization of power under the caliphate of Cordoba, held by the righteous Umayyad caliphs who fight through diplomacy, as seen in previous chapters, against the heterodoxy of the Fatimids in the Mediterranean. Madīna al-Zahrāʾ is also the stage of ambassadorial receptions. As it has also been pointed out before, the Negara (Sanskrit word which means palace, capital or state) state concept of Clifford Geertz, as the core of a “system of superordinate political authority”, which represents the most important centre of the cosmic hierarchy, will be used as a model.534 Consequently, ceremonial is indeed a key ingredient to represent such a cosmic centre of the imitatio divine.

The construction of the palace-city of Madīna al-Zahrāʾ had as well its precedents both in Byzantium and in Baghdad. It has been underlined, through the accounts of ambassadorial reception of Muslim envoys in Constantinople, described by De Ceremoniis, the role of the architectural for the ceremonial, as the envoys were conducted through several pavilions of the palace, as in a parade, before reaching the presence of the emperor. In fact, Madīna al-Zahrāʾ also reveals a structure of palace complex, shaped with several pavilions, carefully constructed to mimic the hierarchy. Madīna al-Zahrāʾ was also idealized as a terrace construction, comprising several pavilions, carefully architected according to the hierarchy of the city. In fact, Madīna al-Zahrāʾ is seen as the fruit of the union between the architectonic ideas present at both Baghdad and Constantinople palace-complexes.535 For Madīna al-Zahrāʾ, the caliphal residence was part of the uppermost plan of the city, the intermediate level was dedicated to the reception hall, the Majlis al-Sharqī, and the inferior level was accessible to the Cordovan subjects, who would imagine how the caliph and his entourage would live in the upper level gardens of his palace.536 From the construction of the Majlis al-Sharqī, also known as Hall of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, pavilion which was most certainly the result of an architectural transformation between 953-957, as seen before (see page 156), this central

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534 Geertz, Negara, 4.
Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries)

hall of receptions became the main axis of the caliphal city, which replaced the centrality of the Dār al-Mulk, the caliphal residence located in the upper level.537 The terrace-based construction of the palace-city of the western Umayyad Caliphate falls within the paradigm of the Late Antiquity. In fact, the palace-city complex of Constantinople was also architecturally planned as a terrace-based city, erected over the Bosphorus, where the most important buildings, first built in the sixth century, were the Constantinian palace and the Hippodrome, located in the upper level and where court ceremonial and life took place.538 Nevertheless, due to the antiquity of the Byzantine palace, the uppermost level progressively became only a stage for special ceremonial occasions, and the lower level became the central core of daily court life, with the Chrysotriklinos as its axis. Meanwhile in Madīna al-Zahrā’, a city which only lasted for less than a hundred years, the intermediate level was the dedicated to solemn ceremonial occasions, such as ambassadorial receptions. Court ceremonial was also the main cause for the foundation of the palace of Baghdad, founded by al-Manṣūr in the eighth century, and by the ninth century Theophilos, who took several court models from the ‘Abbasids, built the Byras Palace in Constantinople in imitation of the palace of Baghdad.539 The ‘Abbasid dynasty and administration, upon increasing its bureaucracy, founded the palace-city complex of Samarra in the ninth century, and thus Nadia Maria El Cheikh believes its construction opened a new precedent in Islam: the concept of a royal palace “hidden, secluded and self-sufficient.”540 Thus, the same concept persists when constructing the palace complex of Madīna al-Zahrā’, where the caliph was always present, but at the same time evanescent, secluded, evidencing his divine character, as his figure could not be seen nor represented, but the architecture was in charge of attributing to every object a caliphal meaning.

Therefore, I shall now discuss the ceremonial held on receptions of foreign envoys and its correlations with both the ‘Abbasid and Byzantine ceremonials. Descriptions presented earlier in this thesis will be used as a model. As for the ‘Abbasid ambassadorial receptions, the protocol contained in Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa of Hilāl al-

539 El Cheikh, “‘Abbasid ceremonial,” 355-356.
Ṣābi’ will be scattered for models concerning Iraqi ceremonial, as well as a particular description of a Byzantine embassy received in Muḥarram 305 A.H. (June-July 917 A.D.) by the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir bi-Allāh, transmitted by Ibn Miskawayh in his *Tājārib al-Umām.* Descriptions concerning ‘Abbasid ceremonial receptions are scarce, as already noted by Marius Canard, one of the most important orientalist historians, who wrote an article aiming for a comparison between Fatimid and Byzantine ceremonial. Therefore, I have chosen one of the few descriptions on ambassadorial receptions. The same reception is accounted by Hilāl al-Ṣābi’, and yet another source describes it with the utmost details, which is transmitted by Hugh Kennedy. As for Byzantine receptions, the descriptions of *De Ceremoniis,* previously cited in chapter 5, will be used.

I will analyse the procedures during receptions of ambassadors, as well as objects or insignia of power exclusively present in such ceremonies. The intent is not merely to compare shared display of ceremonial among the three courts – Constantinople, Baghdad and Cordoba – but also an attempt to attain its symbolism. Indeed, the mere fascination caused by such ceremonial descriptions do not display more than its mere presentation, and Clifford Geertz’s efforts to analyse the symbology of power of the Negara state have revealed a step into the interpretation of cultures and its structures. As he puts it, if one wants to be left with more than the mere fascinated wonderment, one must undertake the task of digging out state rituals, as they indeed embody doctrine, even if its mere presentation form do not allow the immediately apprehension of its symbolism. Therefore, the approach at first must be the description of particular symbolic forms, as it was done in the above chapters, and secondly the aim is to contextualize such forms within the whole structure of meaning.

Thus, this chapter aims in fact at showing and understanding what the presentation of such display of ceremonial is representative of. Furthermore, it intends to distance from an orientalist trivial sense which sees nothing but the fascinated wonderment felt towards

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543 Al-Ṣābi’, *Rusūm,* 16-18.

544 Kennedy, *When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world,* 152-156. The source cited by Kennedy is al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi, *Tārīkh Baghdād,* ed. H Keller (Leipzig, 1908), which unfortunately I was unable to consult.

545 Geertz, *Negara,* 103.
societies usually catalogued as primitive, acknowledging its rituals as mere praise and eulogy towards a static and despotic ruler, and disregarding its structure of meaning.

The first detailed account of an embassy received in Cordoba, in Madīna al-Zahrā’, is transmitted by al-Maqqarī. As al-Maqqarī uses his primary source, Ibn Ḥayyān, as well as Ibn Khaldūn, the embassy can either be placed in August 949 or in 947, respectively. A detail account of an ambassadorial reception at Madīna al-Zahrā’ is also transmitted by a Christian source, the biographer of John of Gorze, and indeed details of the reception and its preparations coincides with those described in Arab sources. Descriptions or details missing in one source are sometimes overcome by other chronicle, and thus the reconstruction of each step taken during ambassadorial receptions can be drawn. Not only ambassadors were sent in foreign missions to Cordoba, as rulers of Iberian Christian principalities also presented themselves in Cordoba. This was the case of Queen Regent Toda Aznárez, who was received at Madīna al-Zahrā’ in ca. 958/9, accompanied with her son and King of Navarre, García Sánchez, and her grandson the deposed king of Leon, Sancho I. It was also the case of Sancho I’s rival, his cousin Ordoño IV, who was received in 962 at the palace-city complex with the state of the art ceremonial display. Indeed, though we possess several accounts of embassies, which testifies the incessant arrival of foreign missions to Cordoba, only a few account the detailed ceremonial. Thus, the most detailed accounts of Christian embassies are: Al-Maqqarī’s account, which he compiles both from Ibn Ḥayyān and Ibn Khaldūn, regarding the arrival of Byzantine ambassadors ca. 947-949; Otto I’s mission on June 956, transmitted by John of St. Arnouil, biographer of John of Gorze; and the mission of the deposed king Ordoño IV, received in 962 and accounted by al-Maqqarī, who compiles his primary source, Ibn Ḥayyān. Therefore, I will use mainly these three accounts for a comparative exercise. Foreign missions from North African rulers received in Cordoba are also thoroughly described by Ibn Ḥayyān for al-Ḥakam II’s sovereignty, as the account analysed and commented by Janina Safran, regarding the ceremonial submission of Ja’far bin ‘Alī al-Andalusī, former Fatimid governor of Masila. Details regarding such ceremonies prepared for North African rulers and their representatives will also be of value for the reconstruction of the ceremonial.

The reception of the ceremonial within the Muslim Empire had a quick development. In fact, the paradox of such a display could be found among the first Muslim

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546 Janina M. Safran, “Ceremony and submission.”
conquerors of the 7th century, who saw in the ceremonial an unnecessary luxury. Nevertheless, upon developing an urban society, the increasing bureaucracy demanded such protocol and display.

7.2.1. Ceremonial preparation before the reception: the unattainable caliph

The first characteristic common to Byzantine, ‘Abbasid and Umayyad ambassadorial receptions is the preparation of the ceremony, which goes farther beyond the reception in itself. Al-Maqqarī reports that no sooner had the caliph known about the arrival of Byzantine ambassadors at the maritime city of Pechina, in 949, he ordered preparations to be started, thus sending one of his courtiers, the theologian Yahya bin Muḥammad al-Layth, who were to escort them until their lodgings, at Munya Naṣr, and once in Cordoba they witnessed a military ceremony whose generals and troops were fully armed and equipped to meet them. The caliph also ordered that two of his chief eunuchs were to meet and serve them at all times. They were lodged at Munya Naṣr and ḥujjāb and a guard of 16 men at the gate, in order to keep the intruders out of the residence. Indeed, the lodgings given to ambassadors were intended for their seclusion, in order for them not to have any contact with the outside world, which might damage the political negotiations. In fact, no other envoy experienced such a seclusion as John of Gorze, ambassador of Otto I, who was kept in his golden cage, which was strategically located outside the palace-complex, as a security measure, for almost three years, where he lived in anguish the “invisible presence of the patent caliph, through what he calls ‘sclavi cubiculari’, endlessly coming and going with letters, reports, notes.” These ‘sclavi cubiculari’ were most certainly the eunuchs who were to serve as intermediaries between the ambassador and the court. The attitude of the caliph, who sent note to the Ottonian ambassador that he planned on keeping him in Cordoba three times more than his own ambassadors were held in Germany, thus transmits the message, though exaggerated, of diplomatic reciprocity upon a presumable diplomatic accident caused by blasphemous language included in correspondence between the two powers.

Similarly, at the arrival of Ordoño IV at Cordoba the general Hishām al-Muṣṭafī was sent at the head of an army, fully armed. From the city gates at Cordoba, Ordoño IV

547 El Cheikh, “‘Abbasid cerimomial,” 354.
548 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥī II, 140.
was then taken to his lodgings, outside both Cordoba and Madīna al-Zahrā’, at Munya al-Nawra, which was previously prepared and fully furnished in a way that both Ordoño and his companions would not have anything else to wish for.\textsuperscript{550}

The same procedures are described by Ibn Miskawayh, as once the Byzantine envoys arrived at Baghdad, via Euphrates, requesting a truce, they were lodged at Dār Sa‘id bin Maklid (the House of Sa‘id bin Maklid), outside the palace complex, which was completely furnished by the powerful wazīr Abū al-Ḥassan bin al-Furāt.\textsuperscript{551} It seems that foreign ambassadors at Constantinople were also lodged outside the main core of the palace-complex, if we assume that the Chrysion, the lodgings where the envoys of the amīr of Tarsus, as representatives of the ‘Abbasid Caliph, were staying, is located outside the palace-city.\textsuperscript{552}

The next step, also common for the three courts, was the preparation for the reception itself. The date of the reception had first to be fixed upon, as it was for the Byzantine ambassadors, which was scheduled for 29 August 949. Usually, ambassadors were kept waiting for some time before being received. This is more than evident for the reception of John of Gorze, who arrived at Cordoba early in 954 and was received during the summer of 956, after having left his country three years earlier. Hugh Kennedy also points out that according to a tradition passed down from one of the caliph’s concubine, the Byzantine ambassadors were kept waiting for two months in Tikrit on the Tigris, in order for the preparations to be taken care of for their reception.\textsuperscript{553} Therefore, the waiting seems to be a key factor for the reception of ambassadors, thus aiming to create an anxiety which would lead to a thorough amazement when presented with the great display of ceremonial.

Furthermore, this anxiety is perceivable in Ibn Miskawayh’s account, as the ambassadors after having asked for an audience with Caliph al-Muqtadir bi-Alläh were told by one of the courtiers called Abu ‘Umar ‘Uday bin ‘Abd al-Bākī, who was appointed as their interpreter and intermediated between them and the wazīr, that it was not easy to get a reception with the caliph, as they first had to meet with the wazīr in order to discuss the issue of the basileus’ letter to al-Muqtadir.\textsuperscript{554} In fact, it appears that according to the perception of this particular reception, ‘Abbasid diplomacy foresaw that the ambassadors,

\textsuperscript{550} Al-Maqqarī, \textit{Naḥf II}, 161.
\textsuperscript{551} Ibn Miskawayh, \textit{Tajārīb}, 54.
\textsuperscript{552} Constantine VII, \textit{De Ceremoniis}, 586.
\textsuperscript{553} Kennedy, \textit{When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world}, 153.
\textsuperscript{554} Ibn Miskawayh, \textit{Tajārīb}, 53.
who came to negotiate a peace agreement and exchange prisoners, should first display
the content or the issue of the negotiations first to the wazīr, who would then prepare the
caliph for deciding on the matter, who in his turn would schedule an audience once the
negotiations were agreed upon. Most certainly this was a precaution, in order to prevent
unpleasant and unpredictable situations, such as the one witnessed on 17 November 973
at the Majlis al-Sharqī in Madīna al-Zahrā’, when ambassadors of Queen Regent Elvira
of Leon and the interpreter, the qādī of the Christian population in Cordoba, Asbagh bin
‘Abd Allāh bin Nabil, were expelled by Caliph al-Ḥakam II from the hall during their
audience, as both Elvira’s message and the translation of the interpreter displeased the
ruler (see page 169).556 Most certainly, when al-Hakam’s father, Caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān
III, tried to persuade John of Gorze to display the content of Otto’s letter aimed at
avoiding such a scene at the majlis. The Caliph of Cordoba knew from previous
information that his own letter was perceived at Otto’s court as containing blasphemies
against Christ, or thus this was John of Gorze’s perception. Therefore, and upon learning
that the response of Otto included what John of Gorze understood as refutation of such
blasphemies, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III refused to receive the ambassador, unless he would
agree upon being received only with the king’s presents and dismiss the letters, which he
did not. The matter was only solved after an ambassador was sent to Otto’s court and a
new letter was issued by the future Holy Roman Emperor (see pages 123-124).557 Both
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III and al-Ḥakam II would always sent, as seen before, their courtiers
who would either accompany the envoys or stay with them at their lodgings, in order to
acknowledge the intents of the embassy.

Nevertheless, the reception and the central role given to the ʿAbbasid vizier
evidences Cordoba and Baghdad’s different understanding of such administrative office.
It has already been pointed out the originality of the Cordovan Umayyad state regarding
the office of the ḥijjāba, as gradually the hājib appears to have become the caliph’s right
arm instead of the wazīr. If by its turn the wazīr was the true right arm of the ʿAbbasid
Caliph, in Cordoba this administrative office reveals to be a dignity or honourable title
and, contrary to what was practiced in Baghdad, it was shared by several courtiers who
served the Umayyad ruler as his advisers.558 Indeed, both the accounts of Ibn Miskawayh

555 Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world, 152.
556 Ibn Hayyān, Anales Palatinos, 185.
558 Meouak, Pouvoir souverain, 58-59.
and Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ reveal the prominence and individuality of the chargé of the wazīr during al-Muqtadīr’s sovereignty. Ibn Miskawayh describes the ceremonial displayed for the wazīr’s reception of the Byzantine ambassadors, similarly to the caliph’s reception which will take place afterwards. It was requested that the army should be in its positions all the way from where the ambassadors were lodged (the house of Sa‘īd bin Makhlid) up to the Great Hall, the one with the golden roof, furnished and decorated with expensive furniture and draperies worth 30 thousand dinars, located in the pavilion known as Dār al-Bustān (House of the Gardens) where the wazīr was to receive them, surrounded on his right and left by his servants, quwwād (commanders) and wuliyā’ (governors) who were lined until filling the terrace. It was this scenario which was seen by the ambassadors, described as amazed, who were received by the wazīr seated on cushions. Indeed, he could not be seated on a sarīr, as it was only reserved to the amīr al-mūminīn.

According to Ibn Miskawayh, it was only after meeting Ibn al-Furāt and present him the request for redemption towards al-Muqtadīr, which the wazīr in his turn discussed with the caliph, that the later accepted to receive the Byzantine ambassadors. The reception was scheduled and it was summoned that wuliyā’, quwwād and all courtiers should be present in such ceremony. Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ described that during the reception which was held for a Byzantine envoy in 917, the ambassador was first led to the residence of the ḥājib Naṣr al-Qushūrī, whom he mistakenly took by the caliph, treating him with reverence until being told he was only the ḥājib. The ambassador was then led to Dār al-Wizarā’, where he witnessed a greater display of ceremonial and where he met the wazīr Ibn al-Furāt, whom he also took by the caliph. Al-Ṣābi’ additionally describes that Ibn al-Furāt received the ambassador surrounded by ghilmān (slave boys) and servants, carrying battle-axes and swords and that the envoy was led to seat on a place between the Tigris and the gardens. For Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ the Byzantine messenger was received by the caliph on the same day Ibn al-Furāt held his own reception, as he waited at the wizarā’ until being called in a few hours to meet with the caliph. Whereas the political role as direct deputy of the caliph or prime-minister was assigned in Baghdad to the wazīr, in Cordoba it was meant for the ḥājib. For al-Andalus this is quite evident during al-Ḥakam II’s reign, in which the Ja’far bin ‘Uṭḥmān al-Muḥāfī acquired a central role. Indeed, upon Ordoño IV reception at Madīna al-Zahrā’, and after the deposed king was received by the caliph at the Majlis al-Sharqī, Ordoño was led to the Western Hall by eunuchs, direct servants

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559 Ibn Miskawayh, Tajārib, 53-54.
of the caliph, where he was received by Ja’far, who reassured him of his hopes, promising the caliph’s help in order to regain his right to rule over Leon. Ja’far also received him surrounded by eunuchs, servants and by the utmost luxury, as Ordoño was seated on a cushion of gold brocade and was offered ceremonial clothing. The scenario must have caused an impression on Ordoño, as he is reported to have prostrated at Ja’far’s feet a few times, and even attempted to kiss his hand, which was an exclusive gesture reserved for the caliph.

As seen in Ordoño’s reception, eunuchs as direct servants of the ruler, to whom the task of leading a foreign king through the palace, acquired a high status in Cordoba, “for the eunuchs of those days were among the highest functionaries at court (…) being intrusted with the custody of the royal palace.” In fact, the central office of the ḥijjāba was even held in Cordoba by a eunuch. After the accession to the throne of al-Ḥakam II in 961, the caliph appointed in the same year Ja’far bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Siqlābī as his ḥājib. Ja’far al-Siqlābī was considered as the favourite courtier of al-Ḥakam II, who proceeded to transformations within the original architectural plan of Madīna al-Zahrā’, which resulted not only in the new plan of the Majlis al-Shargī, but also in the building of what is nowadays known as the House of Ja’far bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Siqlābī, where the ḥājib lived from 961 to 971, upon his death. As al-Maqqarī witnesses that other ḥājib, Ja’far bin ‘Uthmān al-Muṣḥafī, was attending Ordoño, it is not clear if they held the office of the ḥijjāba at the same time. Furthermore, Ja’far al-Muṣḥafī will held the office of wazīr šāhib al-maḍīna of al-Zahrā’ in 971 and in 974 is mentioned as wazīr kātib al-maḍīna of Cordoba.

Both Ibn Miskawayh and al-Ṣābi’ account the extensive presence of khadam (word which usually refers to servant eunuchs) during such ceremonies, as employed in the direct service of the caliph and wazīr. In Byzantium their presence in court ceremonies and during ambassadorial receptions is documented. The eunuchs were employed as direct servants of the imperial chamber – the eunuchs koubikoularioi – and the praipositoi (head of eunuch koubikoularioi) played a central role, together with the

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561 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥḥ II, 141.
562 Ibid., 158; ‘Ibn Idhārī, al-Bayyān II, 386.
564 Ibn Hayyān, Anales Palatinos, 44-47; 221-222.
master of ceremonies and the logothete of the post (senior official in charge of the post and foreign affairs, somehow a minister of foreign affairs), during the reception of foreign missions. The ostiarios, a palace eunuch who was to introduce dignitaries to the presence of the emperor, played also a central role during receptions of ambassadors, as he was a kind of door keeper who would lead the courtiers and ambassadors into the reception hall of the Magnaura, once the praipositois would signal him to do so. The power of the eunuchs in Byzantium was such that they were even able to detain de facto imperial power, as it was the case of the parakoimomenos, or the most senior eunuch, guardian of the imperial bedchamber, called Basil, who ruled under the nominal power of Basil II, case already mentioned before.

Furthermore, in Byzantium, eunuchs were sent in foreign missions, as ambassadors, and such a task assigned to servant eunuchs let us foreseen that eunuchs were highly educated courtiers, who enjoyed much more benefits and privileges than other courtiers who had a free social status. That was the case of eunuch Salomon, already mentioned before, whom Liutprand of Cremona met in Venice when on his way to Constantinople in 949. Indeed, Charles Pellat asserts that, even though the castration of servants had been a practice both in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, with the intent to create private eunuchs for the palace, Arab chroniclers considered it to have been an innovation of the Byzantines. Furthermore, Arab chroniclers, such as Ibn Ḥawqal, believed all slave eunuchs found everywhere in the world originated from al-Andalus, as the “industry” of such process of emasculation was owned and applied by Jews from Pechina, who castrated especially white slaves, from western Europe, known as Saqāliba. Employing eunuchs in high administrative posts, such as the ḥījāba held by Ja’far, under the rule of al-Ḥakam II, also ensure that the administrative office would not be held within a family lineage, thus avoiding the foundation of a dynastic power associated to that office. The most famous case in al-Andalus was that of the ḥājib Ibn Abī ‘Amir, who held de facto power under the nominal rule of al-Ḥakam II’s son, Hishām II, and took the laqab of al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh, whose sons succeeded him in his post.

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566 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 567.
567 Ibid., 568
568 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 300.
569 Liudprand of Cremona, “Antapodosis VI”, 197.
7.2.2. Military formation and parade: the powerful caliph

The troops and caliphal bodyguard were also part of the ornaments of the ceremonial displayed for the reception of ambassadors. When Byzantine ambassadors arrived at Cordoba one of the first actions towards their honourable reception was to collect crowds to meet the ambassadors, as well as troops, who were given new arms to display in such occasion, so that a *burūz* or military ceremony was performed in their honour.\(^{571}\) Even when outside the capital, the caliph would order the *jaysh* to take their positions and wear ceremonial attire, as happened in 934 when Toda went to the military camp where ‘Abd al-Rahmān III prepared a campaign against Pamplona.\(^{572}\) Also, upon the reception of Otto I’s embassy at Cordoba, the *jaysh* had flanked the road all the way from the ambassador’s lodgings until Cordoba’s city gates and then to the palace, and according to the biographer of John of Gorze, “strange moors” executed military drills. The infantry were the first in line, with spades on the ground and holding with the other hand projectile weapons; soldiers were mounted on mules, and behind them was the cavalry (see page 124).\(^{573}\) Similarly, troops were also prepared, fully attired and equipped as in time of war to meet Ordoño IV upon his arrival at Cordoba in 962, as were the Sclavonian guard of the caliph.\(^{574}\) This Sclavonian guard evidences once more the role of *Saqāliba* eunuchs at the direct service of the caliph, and also employed to ensure his safety. Furthermore, on the day scheduled for the caliphal reception of Ordoño, once near they were near the palace, the parade of the king and his entourage, as well as those Cordovan Christian who accompany them and served as their interpreters, entered a passage flanked on each side by bodies of infantry, and the attires, equipment and armours were so luxurious that the Christians crossed themselves several times.\(^{575}\)

The reception of Otto’s ambassadors is indeed the most complete description regarding the military formation of the troops. Nevertheless, Ibn ‘Arabī, in the description of his fantasy embassy from *al-Ifranja*, further adds that a line of soldiers were flanking both sides of the road from Cordoba until Madīna al-Zahrā’, holding scimitars which formed an arch, under which the ambassadors walked.\(^{576}\) Moreover, the account on the

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\(^{571}\) Al-Maqqari, *Naḥf II*, 137, 140.


\(^{573}\) Juan, Abad de San Arnulfo, “La embajada”, 146.

\(^{574}\) Al-Maqqari, *Naḥf II*, 160.

\(^{575}\) Ibid., 161.

reception of the North African ruler, Ja’far bin ‘Alī al-Andalusi, can reconstruct this military formation, as al-Ḥakam II ordered that 16,000 men from Cordoba were armed and formed lines from the munya where he was lodged until Madīna al-Zahrā’.  

As seen before, Ibn Miskawayh also accounts the presence of the jaysh, ordered to flank the road from the ambassadors’ lodgings until the reception hall, not only for the reception held by the caliph but also in the previous session held by the wazīr Ibn al-Furāt. The army also stayed in line once the reception was finished and upon the returning of the ambassadors to their lodgings. Al-Ṣābi’ also testifies the presence of soldiers, displaying their arms and equipment, in ceremonial attire, drawn up in two lines and mounted on animals with saddles of gold and silver, stretching from the upper Shammasiyya Gate (now al-Salikh in the eastern part of Baghdad) until near the ‘Abbasid Residence.

7.2.3. The labyrinthine palace-city complex: anxiety and expectation for the unreachable caliph

The reception of Ordoño IV reveals to be a remarkable fragment for the reconstruction of the route undertaken in such occasions. As it describes a strict protocol, it can be securely presumed that other foreign missions received in Cordoba undertook a similar path. The envoys and the king would be met at the munya where they were lodged and paraded on horseback first to Cordoba’s gates and from there to the palace-complex of Madīna al-Zahrā’. In fact, the reception of Ordoño can be perceived as a protocol model to be followed at all times, except for some variations, as the gates and several pavilions crossed were not the same at all times, as it can be perceived by other receptions. Ordoño’s entourage arrived through Bāb al-Aqbāb, or Gate of the Domes, where all of those Andalusi officials who went there to meet him dismounted their horses, while Ordoño and his companions continued on horseback until arriving at the inner gate called Bāb al-Suddā’, where they all dismounted, except Ordoño and Muḥammad bin Qasīm bin Tumlūs, who later assumed the office of wazīr šāhib al-ḥasham (minister in charge of the mercenary troops), taking part in the reception of Bon Filio, ambassador of count Borrell.

577 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 67; Safran, “Ceremony and submission,” 195.
578 Ibn Miskawayh, Tajārib, 54, 55.
579 Al-Ṣābi’, Rusum, 17.
of Barcelona, on July 1st, 971. Thus, the honour of being carried on horseback was
reserved for such honourable guests, as the representative of the mission, and for the
courtier who was appointed to guide them, who might be perceived as their own personal
master of ceremonies.

The description of the route undertaken by foreign missions is indeed intended to
cause a feeling of being inside a labyrinth, of continuous walking and waiting. Each gate,
each hall or pavilion traversed, was meant by the protocol to be perceived as a new feeling
of anxiety in regards to the reverence intended to be felt towards the monarch. The anxiety
grew and gave place to the astonishment of the ceremonial stage of corridors, halls and
gates. Ordoño was then led to the gate of Dār al-Jandal or House of Stones, where he had
to sit and wait upon a raised platform carefully prepared and decorated for himself and
his entourage. Timings, even the waiting, seem to be carefully attended to, even if the
route inside the palace-city complex appears as too long. This waiting was also accounted
during the reception of the ambassador of the count Borrell of Barcelona, held on 1 July
971, who had to wait in the Dār al-Jund for all the preparations and the caliph to be ready.
Ja’far bin ‘Alī al-Andalusī had also to wait in Dār al-Jund (House of the Army), after
traversing several gates and passageways upon entering Madīna al-Zahrā and before
being received by the caliph.

Similarly, Ibn Miskawayh describes not only the waiting between the reception
undertaken by the wazīr, but also the endless route before finally reaching the presence
of the caliph, as they had to traverse several terraces and passageways, being led by the
ḥujjāb, who were exercising their duty of masters of ceremonies. In the same manner,
Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ intends to transmit the feeling of waiting and anxiety when the Byzantine
envoys were led to mistakenly think (twice) that they were in the presence of the caliph,
first when entering the residence of the hājib Naṣr al-Qushurī, and then the Bayt al-
Wizarā’, as mentioned before. The multiple pavilions, halls and passageways are in fact
part of the labyrinthine ideal of the forbidden palace, where all the courts can be
connected through secret passages, finally culminating with the longed and earned
audience with the caliph himself. Thus, the evanescent caliph, secluded, was

580 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 45.
581 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥf II, 162.
582 Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 44-47, 69.
583 Ibn Miskawayh, Tajārib, 55.
paradoxically present at all stages, as the anxiety was felt upon the thinking of eventually and finally foreseeing him, as the centre around whom everything is staged.

_De Ceremoniiis_ describes with the utmost profusion the labyrinthine route which should be undertaken by foreign missions, as well as the customary waiting until finally being admitted to the imperial presence. The ambassadors would be led first from their lodgings, as the Chrysion, where ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s envoys were staying during their reception in 946 at Constantinople. They would then go through a stairway until reaching the Stable of the Augousta; then traversing the vault of Anethas until the Chapel of the Holly Well. After arriving at the Chalke gate, similarly to the protocol observed at Madīna al-Zahrā’, they would dismount and proceed on foot until reaching the Hall of Scholai and the Tribunal and wait on a vault on the right side of the hall, properly decorated for the occasion with silks, until being advised to proceed to the Magnaura Hall where they would be received by the emperor.\(^{585}\) As the construction of Madīna al-Zahrā’ assimilated much of the architectural models of Baghdad and Constantinople, the concept of the forbidden palace could be demonstrated through a _guided tour_ for foreign envoys which was customary within the reception held by the three courts.

7.2.4. The reproduction of the _janna_: the paradisiacal gardens

Before reaching the hall, foreign missions were conducted through its gardens and terraces, as the _Majlis al-Sharqi_, where most of these receptions took place after 953, and which is identified by nowadays’ historians as the Hall of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, is described by Ibn Ḥayyān as the hall which opens to the gardens.\(^{586}\) As seen before, the gardens of Muslim palaces have a paradisiacal meaning. Maribel Fierro highlights the paradisiacal meaning within the construction of Madīna al-Zahrā’. First its construction was a direct response to the growing Fatimid Caliphate and its prophetic features, thus assimilating a vegetal architectural language, quite evident in the decoration of the walls of the Hall of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III; second, the gardens evoked not only a Quranic meaning, but also literary traditions, which evoke the gardens of the Muslim _janna_ (paradise) as terrace levels, where the most worthy believers, such as Prophets, would be secluded in the inaccessible upper level.\(^{587}\)

\(^{585}\) Constantine VII, _De Ceremoniiis_, 583.
\(^{586}\) Ibn Ḥayyān, _Anales Palatinos_, 44.
Gardens as part of the exuberant and luxurious stage of the ceremonial are also present in descriptions of the Byzantine reception in Baghdad. The ṣāḥib Ibn al-Furāt received the Byzantine envoy, who was seated in a place between the Tigris and the gardens, where he waited until being summoned by the caliph.\(^{588}\) The description of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdadī is even more evident regarding the presence of gardens inside the palace-complex. He describes that when the envoys were led inside the court, from pavilion to pavilion, they visited the gardens where the caliph kept a zoo inhabited by wild animals who ate from their hands. Furthermore, they visited other gardens, containing artificial ponds and rivers, four hundred palm trees and other citrus trees.\(^{589}\) Additionally, al-Khaṭīb describes that the envoys, still paraded during their unending visit through the palace, before reaching the reception hall, were taken to the famous House of the Tree, which was said to have been built under the rule of al-Muqtadir, the same caliph with whom they were to meet that day. In the centre of this court was an artificial tree, made of silver and gold branches, carrying jewels in the shape of fruits. Artificial birds, made of silver, sang while the leaves rustled. The presence of such mechanical devices is also documented in Byzantium, as has been discussed before, and it seems these automatic devices survived in al-Andalus, although in less complex forms, as animal metalwork statues for fountains (see page 97). The automaton artificial tree, both in Baghdad and Byzantium, would perhaps be an allegory for the paradisiacal tree, forbidden to Adam and Eve by God. The tree in the centre of the House of the Tree, which by its turn was in the centre of an artificial pool, was unattainable and belonged only to the divine simulacrum of the palace. Furthermore, al-Khaṭīb describes that the caliph received the ambassadors in the Palace of the Crown, facing the Tigris. The paradisiacal meaning of such gardens is evident. The court as the imitation of the divine, displayed its (Eden) garden of creation, containing all the animals, trees, flowers and rivers. The duo Tigris-garden, reproduced both on al-Ṣābi’ and al-Khaṭīb’s accounts, reflects as well another metaphor for the paradisiacal creation, as rivers will flow in the garden.\(^{590}\) It appears as well that the Magnaura Hall was also facing a vine-covered walks garden, called Anadendrion.\(^{591}\)

\(^{588}\) Al-Ṣābi’, Rusum, 18.

\(^{589}\) Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world, 153-155.


7.2.5. The cosmic centrality of the *sarrīr*: the symbology of power

In Madīna al-Zahrā’ the gardens would lead to the terrace and finally to the hall where the caliph was seated. The astonishment of Ordoño is transmitted by al-Maqqarī, who asserts that the king even took his *bornūs*, a Christian hat.\(^{592}\) The caliph was seated on his throne, or *sarrīr*, placed in central end of the central *bāhw* (vestibule, arched roof) of the *Majlis al-Sharqī*, also located in the centre of Madīna al-Zahrā’, in its intermediate level, thus connecting the unattainable upper level, only reserved for the caliph, with the lower level, from where the foreign missions arrived. It appears that in Madīna al-Zahrā’ there was no “throne room” previous to the reception of Byzantine ambassadors in 949, at least not in the hall where the ambassadors were received, identified by Lévi-Provençal as *Majlis al-Zahīr*, where al-Maqqarī asserts a glittering throne of gold and jewels was raised there, especially for the occasion (see page 104).\(^{593}\) Thus, the transformation of the palace-city probably resulted on the remodelling of a central hall, which occasioned the final plan where the Majlis ash-Sharqi was the main reception hall, as well as the throne hall.

The caliph, to whom each initiative taken, each appointment and each exoneration had to be known, appears not to be fully satisfied with his leading figure role, and thus he intends to stage and dramatize it.\(^{594}\) The seat of the ruler represented the axis of the world, inside of the sacred palace-complex, with courts within courts, as a replica of the divine cosmos.\(^{595}\) Furthermore, all the theatre staged outside the reserved zone of the *majlis* and its surroundings was meant as a legitimacy stage targeting the caliph’s subjects, who were previously gathered and collected, as underlined before, and the days of such receptions were considered to be festive times at Cordoba. Indeed, if there is no audience, the theatre stage and state does not find its place. Thus, the figure of the king, as the representative of the divine, triggers the exemplary divine shape that is enabled through a quadrangular formula: the ruler, the state, the society and the self.\(^{596}\) Indeed, the ruler and the court are the exemplary emanating centre, whose models are adopted by the society. However, the

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596 Ibid., 109.
court society has no meaning without the society who legitimizes their power and centrality. Without the society’s belief in their legitimacy, their existence would be doomed and not be possible. Thus, the audience would be inexistent without the construction of symbols, ideology and legitimacy.

The sarîr is the most secluded, intimate, nevertheless the most sacred place, and paradoxically its symbology is present outside the walls of the majlis, Madīna al-Zahrā’, outside Cordoba and throughout the provinces and the tributary states. The sarîr which was raised in the centre of the Majlis al-Zahîr for the reception of Byzantine envoys can thus be taken as a model for the throne used from then on and once the Majlis al-Sharqî was completed and used in the later years of ‘Abd al-Raḥmân III’s rule and during the whole sovereignty of al-Ḥakam II. The presence of a throne made of gold and precious gems, which is attested during the reception of Byzantine envoys in 949 at the Majlis al-Zahîr, could easily blend as an integral part of the luxurious decorated Majlis al-Sharqî, with its walls fully decorated and carved with vegetal motifs, the floors covered with costly carpets and curtains hanged over the hall.

The religious and legitimacy symbology of the throne is common for the three courts. The throne of Solomon at the Magnaura Hall in Constantinople is traditionally described as elevated by six steps, made of gold and ivory, with a lamb represented on its backrest and as having two lions, each by its armchair, as well as twelve more at each side, on each step. Thus, due to the myth of Solomon as the sovereign-builder, several mythical objects have been identified as relics which had belonged him, as the table of Solomon, which presumably the Muslim conquerors were hoping to find in al-Andalus, as it was believed that the Visigoths had took hold of it after the sack of Rome. Such an iconic figure, as the idealized ruler and deputy of God, was represented on the throne’s symbology, through the mimicking of the mythical throne of Solomon, as several automaton or mechanical devices were constructed as part of the throne, as seen before. This mythology, not alien to the Muslim rulers, pre-existed on the court of Byzantium. Thus, Byzantines, Visigoths and Muslim rulers aimed at attaining the same meaning attributed to Solomon. The Hall of Magnaura, where ambassadors of ‘Abd al-Raḥmân III were received in 946, was the seat of the throne of Solomon, as described by De Ceremoniis. The lions flanking the throne, as artificial mechanical devices, would roar

598 Ibid., 68.
599 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 566-569.
and sit upright in their bases, once the customary questions were addressed to the ambassadors, as well as the birds also on the throne, would start to sing. After the ambassador and the emperor had interchanged the protocolled greetings, the beasts stop to roar and would sit down on their bases. Nothing similar is described in al-Andalus, nevertheless the symbology of the throne points out the oriental influence, as previous to the reception of Byzantine ambassadors it seems that no throne existed in the palace-city complex, and a glittering of gold and precious gems throne had to be raised or built at the majlis. Surely, the caliph, who had already heard from his own envoys that the throne of Solomon at the Magnaura Hall at Constantinople caused such a sensation, and thus understanding its symbology, he ordered a precious throne to be built for his own reception of Byzantine ambassadors.

The military formation of troops and the architecture of the palace-complex composed the ceremonial stage, meant to produce amazement on foreign missions, which would culminate with the appearance of the caliph. Arab historians add another relevant piece of the ritualized reception: the decoration with luxury clothes. Ibn Khaldūn, when accounting the reception at Cordoba of Byzantine ambassadors, first mentions the formation and new arms received by troops, especially for the occasion, and secondly proceeds to describe how magnificently decorated the royal apartments were.600 The hall of the reception was “spread with the most costly carpets,” and furthermore Ibn Khaldūn adds that the hall was “hung with the richest curtains and draperies,” perhaps to distinguish, separate and seclude the areas of the hall, and especially the caliph seated on his sarīr. It appears that the Byzantine court was the most concerned regarding customary decoration of the halls and passageways, and indeed the descriptions of decoration, not only of luxury draperies but other insignia, as well as ceremonial dresses is exhaustive.601 The throne in the Magnaura Hall is also described to be secluded by a curtain.602 Luxury draperies were also decorating the palace during the reception of Byzantine ambassadors in Baghdad, as it is described that 38.000 curtains were hung throughout the palace, as well as 22.000 carpets were ornamenting the multiple corridors and halls to be covered by the ambassadors’ steps.603 Furthermore, al-Ṣābi’ asserts that it was customary on caliphal receptions at Baghdad that a curtain was hung in front of the caliph, which was

601 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 566-570.
602 Ibid., 575.
603 Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world, 153.
lifted when those who wore being received are admitted to the presence of the ruler and lowered whenever he wanted to dismiss them.\textsuperscript{604}

Research has pointed out that contrary to customary ceremonial both in the ‘Abbasid and Fatimid courts, the Umayyad Caliph in his receptions seems not to have been veiled by a curtain.\textsuperscript{605} Barceló adds that the sitr or curtain would make impossible the presence of brothers (or other relatives) on the right and left of the throne, as it is attested by the sources, contrary to what was observed for ‘Abbasid and Fatimid receptions, to which the historian asserts no brothers are accounted to have flanked the throne. As al-Ḥakam II did not have sons yet, those were replaced by his brothers in such solemn receptions. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s receptions assert the presence of his sons. The succession to brothers was evident when no sons were produced. But, in fact ‘Abbasid receptions assert the presence of relatives in such occasions, such as the ceremonial upon the arrival of Byzantine ambassadors to the court of al-Muqtadir. Al-Khaṭīb asserts that the caliph’s sons were flanking his throne, three on his right and two on his left.\textsuperscript{606}

Nevertheless, attention must be drawn for the description of Ibn Khaldūn’s decoration during the reception of Byzantine ambassadors in 949. The historian reports that curtains and draperies were hanged at the Majlis. Also, when John of Gorze is received, his biographer reports that from the entrance of the hall, the caliph, alone as a deity, was only visible to a few, as everything was covered with draperies and it was difficult to tell floors and walls apart.\textsuperscript{607} Curiously, the chronicler also mentions that the caliph was not seated on a throne, but reclined on a cushion, “as they do not use thrones like other people, but instead beds and cushions where they recline, crossing one leg over the other, either to eat or to talk.” The shape of the bed-throne of the Umayyads must have been different from those amongst Christian courts, as it caused such an impression on John of Gorze. Although of golden and decorated with jewels, as asserted by al-Maqqarī’s description on the Byzantine embassy received in Cordoba, the Umayyad throne appears to be bed-shaped, perhaps as a raised platform, as those which still decorate the Ottoman Topkapı Palace. This bed-throne would then be harmoniously fitted under the great horseshoe arch designed on the wall of the end of the central bahr of the Majlis al-Sharqī.

\textsuperscript{604} Al-Ṣābi’, \textit{Rusūm}, 73-74.
\textsuperscript{606} Kennedy, \textit{When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world}, 155.
\textsuperscript{607} Juan, Abad de San Arnulfo, “La embajada”, 147.
7.2.6. Ceremonial cosmos: the representation of state hierarchy

The sarīr was flanked, on both sides, first by the caliph’s sons, as described for the Byzantine envoys’ reception in 949. They were in line, ordered according to their political relevance. Al-Ḥakam, the heir apparent, was the first on his father’s right, followed by order by ‘Abd Allāh, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Asbagh and Marwān. On his left stood al-Mundhir, ‘Abd al-Jabbar and Sulaymān. Next to them, and after them, were the wuzara, on the right or left of the throne according to their rank. The ḥuṭṭāb were placed after the wuzara. Note that the plural is used, thus the Andalusi administrative originality regarding the dichotomy between the office of the wizarā’ and that of the ḥuṭṭāb, appears not to be attended to, as several ḥuṭṭāb are reported to have taken the office title, and furthermore on the ceremonial stage of the hall which received foreign ambassadors, they were attributed an inferior rank at the caliphal court and placed after the wuzara. After the ḥuṭṭāb, stood the sons of the wuzara’, the freed slaves of the caliph and the wakils, lined. Ibn Idhari also refers to the same order of precedence, placing the ḥuṭṭāb (using the plural) after the wuzara’. They were all in a row, according to their rank. It seems they were all drawn in a line throughout the central vault/baḥw of the majlis, until reaching its entrance and extending throughout the terrace as well. Al-Maqqarī, when transmitting Ibn Khaldūn’s account, adds that the throne was surrounded on all sides not only by the caliph’s sons, but also by his brothers, uncles and other relatives. As for Ordoño’s reception, it appears to be one of the few occasions where ḥuṭṭāb are not mentioned to have attended in rows placed near the throne, and after the wuzara’. In fact, al-Maqqarī describes that al-Ḥakam II was flanked on both sides by his brothers, nephews and other relatives, as he did not have any sons yet. They were followed by the wuzara’, judges, civil magistrates and theologians as well as other high officers. It appears that they were all seated in rows, thus contrary to ‘Abd al-Rahmān III’s reception of Byzantine ambassadors, as the relatives and most distinguished courtiers are accounted to stand near the throne. As after Ordoño IV’s caliphal reception he was received by the ḥājīb Ja’far al-Muṣḥafī, no other ḥuṭṭāb are mentioned to have attended the ceremony. In fact, it is not clear if Ja’far attended the caliphal reception of Ordoño, as he is only mentioned when

608 Al-Maqqarī, Naṣf II, 140.
609 Meouak, Pouvoir Souverain, 67.
610 Ibn ‘Īdhārī, al-Bayyān II, 353.
611 Al-Maqqarī, Naṣf II, 138.
612 Ibid., 161.
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the eunuchs of the caliph took Ordoño to meet him at the Western Hall of Madīnat al-Zahrā.  

It seems the oriental tradition to appoint several ḥujjāb, who served as master of ceremonies during receptions, was attended to, despite what has been identified as the central role of a single ḥājib, perceived in al-Andalus and a sort of prime-minister. The perception in al-Andalus of this post has been identified as a singular office, second in hierarchy after the caliph, which was held in Baghdad by the wazīr. Nevertheless, further reflection on such a perception must be seek, as it appears several ḥujjāb were appointed at the same time, under the rule of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and al-Ḥakam II, perhaps playing the role as the masters of ceremonies of the palace. Therefore, on 12 August 971, when al-Ḥakam II received several Christian Iberian ambassadors, the sarīr was flanked by the wuzarā’ and the ḥujjāb are reported to have ministered the ceremony,  

thus acting as masters of ceremonies. It is also curious that no relatives are mentioned in this occasion. The ḥujjāb are also reported to have ministered the reception of Christian ambassadors on 23 September 973, and only wuzarā’ are mentioned to have attended.  

The reception of the 17 November 973 does not mention relatives, neither. Perhaps it is omitted, as the relatives appear to be perceived as part of the administrative categories in other occasions. However, their presence seems to be omitted in what is considered as minor foreign receptions, as Christian Iberian embassies arrived each year to al-Ḥakam II’s court. Either not present or omitted, it reveals the perception of these embassies as less relevant foreign missions, and their lower level when compared with the honour of attending Byzantine ambassadors or the person of the king himself from Leon or the rulers of North Africa, offering their submission, as happened on 19 September 971.  

The ḥujjāb who ministered the ceremony for the caliph served somehow as a shield between the ruler and the rest of the court. Their function was instricically connected with the seclusion of the unreachable and evanescent caliph. Indeed, the etymology of the word ḥājib evidences their function as concealers of the caliphal authority within the court. The Arabic radical of the word, h.j.b. (حجب, hajaba), means “to conceal,” “seclude,” “to veil.”

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613 Ibid., 165.
614 Ibn Hayyān, Anales Palatinos, 76.
615 Ibid., 174.
616 Ibid., 185.
617 Ibid., 64-71.
618 Meouak, Pouvoir souverain, 64.
The setting up of the scenario of the Umayyad audience hall, with all the administrative officials arranged on rows, closer or farther from the caliph according to their rank, seems to be assembled before the caliph enters the majlis and sits in his sarīr. Barceló, who draws the formation of such stages for the religious ceremonies of al-Hakam II, points out that previous to the transfer of the caliph from al-Zahrāʾ’ mosque to the majlis the bureaucratic and political groups were already at their places. Once the caliph enters in the majlis, alone, the fixed stage starts to move around the centrality of the caliph, as the officers present their greetings to the ruler, according to hierarchical order, returning afterwards to their places.619

As descriptions of such religious ceremonies are more precise according to the order of precedence displayed in the room, it can be presumed that the stage for the receptions held for foreign missions were formed the same way. Therefore, the omissions regarding all the administrative categories attending ambassadorial receptions are presumed by the chroniclers as evident, thus not necessary to be transmitted in detail, as those descriptions correspond to solemn religious receptions, as the ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā (Feast of the Sacrifice) or ʿĪd al-Fiṭr (Feast for Breaking the Fast). In fact, religious ceremonies, studied already by Barceló, bring light to the order of precedence attended at the majlis, which in its turn resulted from their hierarchical status within the state administration and palace. The order of precedence displayed during the ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā, celebrated on 4 October 971, and the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr on 5 July 973, was the following: brothers of al-Ḥakam II; wuzarāʾ; aṣḥāb al-shorta al-ʿuluyā, al-wustā and al-ṣughrā (magistrates of the supreme, central and lower police); after leaving an open space, came the ashab al-makhzun (courtiers in charge of the khizāna al-māl or public treasure; treasurers and ʿurrāḏ (administrative office in charge of paying the army); kuttāb (secretaries) and umanāʾ (trustees). After this first stage is set is time for giving entrance to the Quraysh, members of the tribe of the Prophet, as well as the mawālī (clients) of the Umayyad dynasty, who sat on the lateral bahw of the hall, on the left of the caliph.620 Nevertheless, it is not clear if the members of the Quraysh tribe and the mawālī attended receptions of foreign missions. The description of the ʿEid al-Adha of 973 also evidences that fityān and eunuchs, who held administrative posts such as those of the Kittāba, were standing both

620 Ibn Hayyān, Anales Palatinos, 81, 152-153; Barceló, “El califa patentre,”160- 163. The historian also presents the reader with architectonic plans indicating the positions in rows, according to order of precedence, of the court bureaucrats and politicians, which is reproduced in the annex of this thesis.
on the right and left of the majlis, probably behind the high officials.\footnote{Barceló, “El califa patente,” 162.} As also noted by Barceló, the reception on the occasion of the ‘Eid al-Adha of 973 also suggests that during these years, the wuzarā’ and the aṣḥāb al-shorṭa would act as ḥujjāb in such ceremonies, as they are said to have ministered the reception for the caliph.\footnote{Ibn Ḥayyān, Anales Palatinos, 152; Barceló, “El califa patente,” 164.} It has been pointed out before the shifting perception of the role of the ḥājib under the rule of ‘Abd al- Raqām III and al-Hakam II.

The order of precedence for the entrance, greeting and place on rows must have also followed the model described for the bay’a (oath of allegiance) ceremony of al-Hakam II. Thus, the caliph received, by order, his brothers, the wuzara, the sons of the wuzarā’, the brothers of the wuzarā’, the aṣḥāb al-shorṭa (magistrates of the police) and finally the servants of the palace.\footnote{Al-Maqqarī, Nafī II, 157.} Some variances are perceived regarding the sons and brothers of the wuzarā’, as the ḥujjāb for some ambassadorial receptions would follow the wuzarā’ and take their places after them, but before their sons. Al-Maqqarī further adds that the eunuchs were standing in lines beginning to the right and left of the throne extending until the end of the hall. Next to them were the servant eunuchs, drawn over two lines over the terrace; on the adjoining parapets of the terrace were the eunuchs of the guard, and the Sclavonian eunuchs. After these were the Sclavonian eunuchs of inferior rank and afterwards the archers of the guard; next to the Sclavonian eunuchs were the black slaves. At the gate of as-Suddā’ were the door keepers and outside the horse-guard of black slaves, extending in lines to the Gate of the Domes; next to them were the caliph’s bodyguard (mawlas or freed slaves), also on horseback; after that were the rest of the army, slaves, archers, until the lines reached the gate of the city leading to the country. Thus, such description brings light to the outside scenario, as well as to the list of precedence, which reflected on the positions taken, either inside or outside the hall. We also know that ulamā’, theologians and secretaries attended such ceremonies, as well as poets. Furthermore, it appears that the eunuchs of the guard, archers and other soldiers were only allowed on the parapets of the terrace and not inside the hall. This can also be observed through the description of Ordoño’s reception at the Majlis al-Sharqī, where terrace outside the hall was flanked by two rows of soldiers, one at each side.

The caliph, whose entrance starts all the motion around himself as the emanating cosmic centre, the sun which starts the orbit of his subjects around him, sits on the throne
and receives first his sons, brothers, uncles, nephews and other relatives, followed by the wuzara and other administrative officials, who will then retract to their marked positions, in rows towards the central bahw of the majlis.

As for the hujiab their function appears to be ceremonial, as they would prepare the stage, in order to coordinate and give order for the entrance of the different administrative categories. At occasions, such as the religious solemn receptions, they are not mentioned to take any position in the order of precedence represented by the rows of officials draw in the central bahw, from the throne until the entrance of the hall, perhaps because they were coordinating all the ceremonial features, as masters of ceremonies, admitting the courtiers to al-Ḥakam II’s presence.

The chief chamberlain (ḥājib) in Baghdad, position which was held by Nasr al-Qushurī, during al-Muqtaḍir’s Caliphate, had as well the function of master of ceremonies. On procession days he would “sit in the corridor behind the scene”, in order to perform his duties as director of the theatre which will take its form at the majlis. As happened during Umayyad receptions, it was only after all the administrative groups were ordered at their places, that the caliph would enter the majlis and sit on the throne. Indeed, it was only after the courtiers had taken their places, that the chief chamberlain would send a note to the caliph, who would then make his entrance. For the Byzantine embassy received in 917 by al-Muqtadir, Ibn Miskawayh describes that the caliph was seated on his sarīr and flanked by both sides, first by his wazīr Ibn al-Furāt, as well as by the eunuch Mou’nis, who was commander of the army, and other eunuchs stood on his right and left; however, according to al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi, the caliph’s sons sat before him, on his right and left. The Rusūm also points out the order of precedence during receptions and procession days. It is the chamberlain who admits the courtiers at the caliphal presence. The first one to be admitted was the wazīr, followed by the commander of the army, the chiefs of the diwans (administrative offices), the secretaries, the lieutenant and his generals, by this order. After they all were set on the theatre stage, the chamberlain would command the descendants of the Hāshim (family to which presumably the Prophet belonged to) and the leaders of prayers. Then the chamberlain admitted the judges, preceded by the Judge of the Judges or qādī al-ḥadra (Judge of the capital). Afterwards, the soldiers were ordered to stand in two lines between two ropes at the al-Salam

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624 Al-Ṣābi, Rusūm, 63.
625 Ibn Miskawayh, Tajārib, 55; Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world, 155.
626 Al-Ṣābi, Rusūm, 64.
Courtyard. Thus, the soldiers also do not enter the *majlis*, standing at the terrace of the main reception hall.

The master of ceremonies in Constantinople, as described by *De Ceremoniis*, also prepares everything previously to the entrance of the *basileus*, together with the *praipositoi* (head of the *koubikoularioi*), the *logothete* (head of secretariat) and the master of ceremonies. The *praipositoi* would advise the rulers to go where the *chlamyses* (cloaks) and imperial crowns were placed and these were put on them by the *praipositoi*, and the emperors would go up and sit on the thrones. The plural is evident and intentional, as the emperor usually named his own successor and son as co-emperor. And thus, both emperors attended the reception, each on his throne. However, it is only when the emperor is seated that the *praipositoi* leads several groups of courtiers, such as the *kouboukleion* (personal staff of the imperial apartment), the *magistroi*, patricians, senators, the *katepano* (commander of military unit) and the *domestikos* (term which designates several high officials) and other members of the Chrysotriklinos, inside the hall, who will stand on right and left, “in front of the two loose-hanging curtains.” Thus the scenography of power would only be completed once the emperor would sit on his throne, giving way for the courtiers to go inside and take their positions.

### 7.2.7. Ceremonial attires and insignia of the caliph

We do not known what caliphs ʿAbd al-Raḥman III and al-Ḥakam II wore for such occasions. In fact, for al-Andalus there is no detailed description concerning solemn reception attending on the way the caliph dressed. There are some scattered notes, which allows us to imagine how luxurious the ceremonial dresses were, as some of the caliph’s clothes are reported to be offered as gifts to honourable guests and courtiers. Also courtiers would offer luxurious clothes to the caliph, as Ibn Shuhayd, who made such presents to the caliph, which were then handed to the *ṣāḥib al-ṭirāz* (master of the manufacture of cloths) and included and written in the books of the wardrobe. Such impressive gifts granted Ibn Shuhayd with the title of *dhu al-wizarataīn*. For a later chronology, Hishām II, al-Ḥakam II’s son and successor, is described in a parade wearing

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627 Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis*, 567-568.
628 Al-Maqrī, *Naḥī II*, 152.
luxury clothes and with a turban on his head, around a qalansuwa, or hat, with a plume hanging, and carrying on his hand his sceptre.629

Ibn ‘Arabī, in his fantastic description of a presumable Frankish embassy arriving at al-Nāṣir’s court, accounts that the caliph wore “cheap clothes,” worth four dirhems and sat on the floor with bowed head and before him he had his insignia, his Quran, a sabre and a brazier.630 His clothes are unlikely to have been such as those described by Ibn ‘Arabī, especially according to more authentic accounts transmitted by Arab historians, which transpire such a pomp. The Quran and the sabre might have been part of his insignia displayed in such occasions, but the presence of a brazier, and especially with the function Ibn ‘Arabi attributes to it (as a symbol of the fire which awaited the ambassadors, in case they would not submit to Islam), seems unlikely.

According to al-Ṣābi’, the ‘Abbasid caliph when seated on his throne for procession and reception days, would wear a long-sleeved garment, dyed black, as this was the colour of the ‘Abbasids, with an outer garment either plain or embroidered with white silk or wool, avoiding at such occasions the wearing of silk brocade or patterned clothes. The caliph would also wear red boots. He also wore a black rusafiyya on his head, and would display as his insignia the sword of the Prophet, also keeping another sword on his left, between the two cushions of the throne. In front of him the Quran, believed to have belonged to Caliph ‘Uthmān is placed. On his shoulders the garment of the Prophet is placed and on his hand he holds the staff of the Prophet.631 Al-Khaṭīb asserts that on the day of the reception of Byzantine envoys, the caliph wore dabiq brocade embroidered with gold and a high cap on his head, having on his right side nine strings of precious stones, and seven on his left.632

Most certainly, in a court with such an oriental influence as that of Cordoba, the caliph wore luxurious clothes, as well as a turban and the qalansuwa and perhaps the sceptre, as it is later attested for Hishām II’s rule. Fierro also points out the relevance of the ring-seal (khatam) of the Umayyads of al-Andalus, passed from each ruler to his successor, insignia which was not very common around the Muslim world, but had its origins on the seal of the Prophet, used in correspondence with the Byzantine emperor and was lost by Caliph ‘Uthmān.633

629 Fierro, “Pompa y Ceremonia” 149.
630 Ibn ‘Arabī, al-Musamarat, apud. Al-Hajji, Andalusian diplomatic relations, 136-137
631 Al-Ṣābi’, Rusūm, 73.
632 Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world, 155.
633 Fierro, “Pompa y ceremonia,” 149.
As the ‘Abbasid caliph had the staff of the Prophet, the Umayyad had his sceptre, probably with the same meaning. Also, the Umayyads of Damascus are accounted to have worn ceremonial dresses, as the long-sleeve jubbah and a ridā’ (cloak) worn by the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, as well as the turban and qalansuwa were considered to be official headwear. The cloak of the Umayyad caliph of Damascus might have been one of the multiple Byzantine influences which were adopted by the Syrian dynasty, as the basileus also wore a cloak, the chlamys.

However a great difference persisted between the personal insignia of the Byzantine Emperor and the Muslim Caliph: the tāj. No Muslim ruler dared to wear it, and indeed those who attempted were seen as apostates. That was the case of the governor of al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who married the widow of the belated Visigoth king Rodrigo. His wife, Um ‘Ashīm, associated the right to rule with its main insignia, the crown, and thus for her a king without a crown was a king without a kingdom. He refused at first, stating that Islam forbade it. Nevertheless, she persuaded him to wear such an insignia, in the intimacy of their home. As he was seen once by a visitor, he was accused of apostasy and killed in 717.

Moreover, the Quran and the sabre might have been present for such occasions. We know that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III always carried his Quran, even when he was absent for military campaigns.

If there are no descriptions of what the Umayyad caliphs wore in such occasions, the historians report a few ceremonial dresses worn by the foreign envoys. That was the case of Ordoño IV who was given a ceremonial tunic of white brocade, of Christian manufacture, as well as outer garment of the same quality and colour; on his head he had a Christian hat, a bornūs, ornamented with precious jewels. The ceremonial dresses were provided by the palace, and according to this account it becomes evident that the clothes were also carefully chosen according to the rank and religion of the foreign. As evidenced by the account of John of Gorze’s embassy, the envoy should also present himself groomed and cleaned. However, in this occasion the protocol was defeated by

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635 Akhbār Majmu’a, ed. and trans. Emilio Lafuente Alcántara (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1867), 31-32.
636 Al-Maqqarī, Nafḥ II, 161.
637 Juan, Abad de San Arnulfo, “La embajada,” 146.
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John of Gorze’s stubbornness, as he presented himself to the caliph in his poor monk’s robe.

As for the ‘Abbasid ceremonial, the cleanliness was also expected from those who entered the presence of the caliph, they should also be perfumed with aromatic scents, avoiding however strong perfumes which would displease the ruler, and clean their teeth, while at the same time keeping their breath from the amīr al-mūminīn.638

Similarly, in Constantinople, when foreign envoys were to dine at the Chrysotriklinos with the emperor, they were provided tailored tunics and ceremonial dresses. In regards to perfumes and cleanliness, the ambassadors of the amīr of Tarsos, after dining with the emperor at the Chrysotriklinos, sat on the Hall of Justinian and the emperor sent them vine-flower scent and rose-water, as well as other fragrances and perfumes. There they washed themselves from chased silver basins, and afterwards were given perfumed oils and unguents.639

Another relevant feature and insignia of these embassies is the letter exchange. In fact, letter exchange and its content reveal the legitimacy and propaganda insignia of the ruler, as seen before regarding the text of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s letter to Theophilos. Also, object insignia seem to have been present in such letters. This was the case of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetus’ letter to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. It was written on gold upon sky blue paper, and it had the seal of Constantine VII and his son Romanus II, representing the likeness of both father and son, and on the other side that of the Messiah.640 The content of the letter also points another protocol and customary characteristic of embassies exchange. It contained a list of the gifts from the emperor to the caliph. The importance of gift-exchange has been discussed before and Anthony Cutler studies its usually dismissed centrality for the success of such missions. In fact, if John of Gorze had accepted to disregard the letter of Otto I, considered to have contained blasphemies against the caliph, and agreed upon his reception bearing only the gifts, as he was asked by the palace, he would have avoided such a “diplomatic conflict,” as well as his enclosure for almost three years.

The significance of gifts was also a cultural one, as demonstrated by manuscripts received in Cordoba, such as Dioscorides and Orosius’ works. Book exchange triggered the establishment in al-Andalus of the scholarly habit to learn Greek, as no one new how

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638 Al-Ṣābi’, Rūṣūm, 30-31
639 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 584, 586.
640 Al-Maqqāri, Naḥf II, 142.
to speak Greek before Romanus II sent the monk Nicholas in the mid-10th century. The knowledge of such a language was also cultivated by the ‘Abbasid Caliph himself, as al-Muta’ did was fluent in Greek.641

In fact, the extract of a letter directed to the Caliph of Cordoba, contained in a copy of The Book of Causes (Kitāb al-ʿIlāl) by Appolonius of Tyana, which was offered by a Byzantine emperor to the caliph, reveals how such exchanges were frequent (see pages 147-148). The letter of the emperor, preserved in this manuscript evidences how both 10th centuries courts, the Byzantine and the Umayyad, shared the model of the ideal ruler, which was also cultivated by al-Muqtadir, and his predecessor who founded the Dār al-Hikma (The House of Wisdom): he should be the seeker of all sciences, until having acquired his semblance of the scholar-ruler, reached by the incessant collection of knowledge through books, until he did not need any more. And, indeed, the pattern of such knowledge was the Classical Greece. If their direct successors were the Byzantine, the Umayyad and the ‘Abbasid proclaimed themselves as transmitters and keepers of its sciences.642

7.2.8. The ritualization of praise towards the caliph: proskynesis, kissing the hand and tasām

Once the foreign mission would be at the entrance of the majlis, they would be motioned to proceed, as it happened with Ordoño IV, who moved slowly between the two lines of soldiers drawn on the terrace of the majlis, and upon entering the hall he prostrated on the floor, remaining in such a humble position for some time. He stood up and after few steps, he threw himself on the floor again, thus repeating the same gesture several times, before reaching a proper distance between himself and the caliph, and upon stretching his hand, the caliph gave him his to be kissed. He then took the seat prepared for him, though never turning his face away from the caliph and thus walking backwards.643

Proskynesis has been discussed before in chapter 4, regarding al-Ghazāl’s reception in Constantinople. According to the accounts, everything points out for its association in al-Andalus with a strictly non-Muslim protocol procedure. Its origins are

641 Al-Ṣābi’, Rusum, 71.
643 Al-Maqqarī, Naḥfi II, 162.
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to be found in the non-Muslim Persian Empire, which by the 10th century was an ‘Abbasid area *par excellence*. Surely, the rejection of such an eastern tradition was intended as a statement by the Andalusi dynasty, as the orthodox Umayyad Caliphs of Damascus were unfairly deposed by the innovative ‘Abbasids.

When John of Gorze was received by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III he did not perform the act of *proskynesis*. The caliph gave him the palm of his hand to be kissed, which he did, as it was considered in al-Andalus as a gesture only reserved for those whom the ruler intended to honour. Similarly, Ja’far bin ‘Alī al-Andalusī, North African ruler submitting to the Umayyad caliphal authority, when being received at al-Zaḥrā‘ kissed the threshold of the hall and then proceeded towards the *sarīr*, from where the caliph gave his hand to be kissed.\(^{644}\) The account of John of Gorze’s reception is quite detailed as it makes obvious that it was the palm and not the back of his hand which was customary for the caliph to give to be kissed. The Umayyad ritual gesture of kissing the hand seems to have survived and is still performed in nowadays Morocco, as a highly honour which the *amīr al-mūminīn* (the King of Morocco) reserves only for a few.

However, it appears that the gesture of *proskynesis* is also reported for other Christian Iberian embassies, although rejected by the Andalusi rulers and not customary for other foreign envoys such as North African rulers or Byzantines. Thus, it seems the prostration was gradually introduced it the Umayyad court, especially under the rule of al-Ḥakam II, however as a gesture strictly reserved for Christians tributaries. In fact, Ibn ‘Idhārī reports that when ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān III received Constantine Porphyrogennetos’ ambassadors in Cordoba, the envoys attempted to perform the gesture of proskynesis towards the caliph, but he halted them from doing it.\(^{645}\)

In his imagined account of an embassy received by al-Nāṣir, Ibn ‘Arabī reports that the Frankish ambassadors prostrated at the caliph’s feet. Also, upon the reception of Bon Filio, count Borrell’s ambassador, on 1 July 971, the envoy together with his companions executed the gesture of *proskynesis* towards Caliph al-Ḥakam II, until reaching the throne and kissing the ruler’s hand, and then walking backwards in order not to turn their backs on the ruler,\(^{646}\) exactly how Ordoño IV did. Similarly, the act of kissing the hand was an honour which the caliph alone could bestow upon his subjects. Indeed, when Ordoño intended to kiss Ja’far al-Muṣḥafī’s hand, the ḥājib removed his hand.

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\(^{646}\) Ibn Hayyān, *Anales Palatinos*, 46.
In Baghdad, Ibn Miskawayh accounts that the Byzantine ambassadors entered the presence of the caliph and prostrated and kissed the ground, staying in that position, as advised by the ḥājib. The account transmitted by al-Khaṭīb differs from Ibn Miskawayh’s. Although Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ asserts that the ‘Abbasid court had joined the practice of other courts regarding the kissing of the ground, al-Khaṭīb asserts that the Byzantine ambassadors when driven towards the presence of al-Muqtadir only bowed, evading from kissing the ground, as ‘Abbasid envoys in Constantinople were also dismissed from the proskynesis, and they fear their performance of the prostration would demand that the caliph’s envoys to the basileus would be obliged to execute the same gesture. Thus, it appears a sort of principle of reciprocity was observed between Byzantium and the ‘Abbasid ruler. Indeed, the Byzantine ambassadors appeared to be concerned that the diplomatic principle of reciprocity would be broken.

In spite of the protocol and rules of attendance reported by the account of De Ceremoniis, regarding the necessary rules to be observed during such ceremonies, as the foreign should fall on the floor and make obeisance before the rulers, it seems that Muslim ambassadors were dismissed from this practice. In fact, the gesture of proskynesis is omitted in the account concerning the reception of ambassadors from the amir of Tarsos and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III. De Ceremoniis when accounting this reception resorts to the statement that after “the customary ceremonial had been completed the Saracens went out,” thus avoiding its detailed description. If this was in fact the case, and not only a result of the omission of customary regulations stated and described previously, it would explain why the Byzantine envoys received in Cordoba did not prostrate towards the caliph. Furthermore, the Byzantine court was aware that Muslim envoys could refuse to abide by rules of the performance of the proskynesis, as evidenced not only by al-Khaṭīb’s accounts on the dismissal of such act by ‘Abbasid ambassadors, as well as earlier, in the 9th century when the poet al-Ghazāl, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II’s ambassador to Emperor Theophilos, who refused to prostrate at the basileus’ feet.

The information on the chronicles regarding what was said and done after the caliph honoured the ambassador are scarce. Thus, the most complete of these are the account of reception of both John of Gorze and Ordoño IV. They were both prepared a

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647 Ibn Miskawayh, Tajariḥ, 55.
648 Al-Ṣābi’, Rusūm, 29; Kennedy, When Baghdad ruled the Muslim world, 155.
649 Constantine VII, De Ceremoniis, 568.
650 Ibid., 584.
seat at the majlis where they were received. John of Gorze had a chair and Ordoño a seat covered with gold cloth, located about ten cubits away from the caliph, which is more or less 4.5 meters.

It must have existed a protocol taslīm or salutation. Thus, the account of Ordoño IV’s reception transmits what it seems as such a customary greeting, which should be used by those tributary northern states who wished to seek a truce and submit to the caliph. That customary taslīm is transmitted previously in chapter 6 (see pages 157), and appears to be the only account reporting protocol taslīm, concerning Christian embassies received in Cordoba during the chronology studied in this thesis. Most certainly, protocol taslīm exchanged between the caliph and foreign envoys from Byzantium, the Holy Roman Emperor or North African rulers might have been different. Such formulas seem to have been developed and standardized by al-Ḥakam II, as for the reception of John of Gorze, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III is said to have broken the unpleasant silence, resulted from the hostility of John of Gorze regarding his long stay at Cordoba, which ‘Abd al-Raḥmān acknowledged by verbalizing his understanding of such situation. Thus, the ceremonial becomes more complex, most certainly due to a frequent and constant oriental influence due to foreign exchanges, under the rule of al-Ḥakam II.

Neither the Rusūm of Hilāl al-Ṣābi’, nor the historians who account the reception of Byzantine ambassadors in 917 by al-Muqtadir, transmit the customary taslīm for such occasions. Nevertheless, al-Ṣābi’ reports that no one should mention anything nor talk without being asked or addressed, and the voice should be kept low. Additionally, al-Ṣābi’ reports that before the introduction of the proskynesis within the ‘Abbasid court, it was customary for those who entered the presence of the caliph to greet him using the following formula:

*Peace be upon you, O Commander of the Faithful, and may the mercy and blessings of the Allah be upon you.*

The historian further adds that the caliph could be addressed by using a kunya, as long as it prevailed the use of the second person singular. However, it appears that such taslim was not used anymore among the ‘Abbasids. Of the three courts, it seems that it

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653 Al-Ṣābi’, *Rusūm*, 31, 29.
was only Byzantium which was able to save through *De Ceremoniis* its customary, standardized and customized greetings, according to the provenience of the foreign envoy (see page 96).^654^

It is not very clear how the scenography of power of receptions would be disassembled after reaching its end. We know that the envoys would be led again through the same way until reaching the lodgings prepared for them. Afterwards, most certainly, the theatre would vanish once the caliph would leave the *majlis* and the master of ceremonies would act once more as a stage director and lead the actors outside, probably attending the principle of precedence. The caliph would withdraw from his central cosmic *sarîr*, which had testified one of his few court appearances. The courtiers would all go back to their strictly administrative functions, until being summoned once again to take their parts at a ceremonial reception, in which they would be reminded of their hierarchical places in the cosmos. Indeed, if the stage of soldiers, guards and troops (who were not allowed to go inside the *majlis*), is directed towards the caliphal subjects, the scenography prepared inside the *majlis*, inaccessible for most of the caliph’s subjects, was projected not only for the foreign, but for the court society, as the stage portrayed their hierarchy inside the palace.^655^

If the subjects and courtiers were the internal witnesses of the caliphal power, the foreign was the external crucial figure for projecting towards the outside world the ruler’s legitimacy. He was also the leading figure for the interchange of ceremonial traditions between the court he represented and the court who received him.

In a perspective of a broader picture, the foreign – either an official ambassador received with the state of the art pomp or scholars and artists housed as courtiers – represented a key figure for the oriental influence of al-Andalus.

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^654^ Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis*, 682-683.
8. Final Act

Whichever kind of conclusion one could write for a thesis sounds always somehow redundant, as the dissertation contains in itself the results of the research.

Although this work concerns a considerable part of foreign missions received during the Umayyad rule of al-Andalus, the chronological and thematic models of the object of study demand that some of its part are left outside. That is the case with North African foreign missions received in the Umayyad court, although some of its features have been pointed out here. As for the ceremonial models, the reception of ambassadorial missions concerns only a part of the “prodigious bureaucracy” developed by the Umayyads of al-Andalus.

We have seen how ceremonial features and the incessant exchange of foreign missions, luxury and scholar goods are the reflex/result of the political situation of al-Andalus not only within the Western European frame, but especially and more importantly within the Mediterranean frame. Exchanges with Byzantium, concerning the situation of Crete and Sicily, underline ‘Abbasid, Fatimid and Umayyad blooming within the Mediterranean, which during this chronology is described by Arab historians as an Arab lake. Even exchanges with Western Europe, for example with Carolingian rulers and the Ottonian dynasty, emphasise a Mediterranean policy concerned with the actions of the Muslim governorate established in the Provençal site of Fraxinetum, which according to Arab and Latin historians belonged and responded to the ruler of al-Andalus. The biased perspective that reduces these Muslim holdings as mere pirate settlements reveals the common adage of the Medieval History which confines the Muslims in the Mediterranean to the concept of piracy in a sea dominated by the Latin mercantile cities, as pointed out by the recent study of Christoph Picard. This biased perspective is frequently a premise for studies concerning the exchanges between Byzantium and al-Andalus. This resulted in the assumption that Byzantium was trying to attract al-Andalus into its sphere of influence, as well as reduce other Muslim potentates to mere piracy peripheral societies, rather than taking part in the Muslim conquer of the Mediterranean.

On the contrary, Arab historians report a reverse situation. Indeed, even Amalfi, followed by Sardinia, asked for the permission of the Caliph of Cordoba to trade their goods and extend their mercantile routes to the Western Mediterranean dominated by the Umayyads of Cordoba.
Between the 9th and 10th century, the ceremonial developed and became much more complex. This is not only due to the lack of descriptions and sources for the 9th century, but also the result of the absence of a fixed protocol, consisting of determined rules and regulations of which observance should be attended at all times and according to each occasion. For the Western contemporary eyes the luxury and the ceremonial displayed during such occasions appears as a mere fascination caused by the exhibition of unnecessary wealth. It was this limited perspective on the ceremonial within the medieval societies, such as the Umayyads of Cordoba, the ‘Abbasids of Baghdad and the Byzantines of Constantinople, which has been attempted to be overlapped in this study.

The ceremonial was a result of the bureaucratized and organized power of the dynasty which displayed it. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and al-Ḥakam II create an axis of three main characters for the oriental influence of al-Andalus, which is intrinsically connected to Cordoba’s diplomacy. Indeed, the oriental influence was not only one of the main products of diplomacy but also one of its causes. The development of the ceremonial was only possible after other features were achieved, such as the centralization of the state within the cosmic centrality of the figure of the caliph, which was only possible after the success of both military campaigns and tax collection. Nevertheless the growing seclusion of the figure of the ruler within the state administration and ceremonial, the evanescent caliph was paradoxically present at all stages, as the anxiety was felt upon the thinking of eventually and finally foreseeing him, as the centre around whom everything is staged. At the same time, the ceremonial was not only the result of the caliphal power but also its cause. The symbology within the ceremonial features (throne, gestures, insignia, disposition of the palace-city complex, decoration) was displayed not only to remember the subjects and the courtiers within the society and palace, but also for international legitimate purposes, as the foreign envoy was the pretext for such display towards the Cordovan.

The legitimacy of a dynasty lingers for a long time, even after the fall of their creators and their ceremonial stages, its cities. This was evident in al-Andalus, where the Umayyad legitimacy was such, even after their fall and disappearance, that the mulūk al-tawā’if continued to justify their claims to rule by asserting they were governing under the nominal rule of Hisham II, son of al-Hakam II. The symbolic Umayyad signatures (architecture, ritualization) persisted in the tawā’if (sing. tā’ifā) kingdoms, such as the palaces built by them and the mimicking of the Umayyad scenography of power. Ibn Khaldūn when speaking of the importance of monuments as stages of the political power,
which “are proportionate to the original power of a dynasty,” addresses the symbolic meaning of their legitimacy. The historian asserts that when Hārūn al-Rashīd attempted to destroy the Hall of Khosraw in the Sassanian palace, gave up as its destruction was impossible:

It is worth noting that one dynasty was able to construct a building that another dynasty was unable to tear down, even though destruction is much easier than construction.656

The intended physical destruction described by Ibn Khaldūn is also a metaphorical and symbolic figure, as it is almost every element of a classical civilization, as Foucault points out.

The heritage of Antiquity, like nature itself, is a vast space requiring interpretation; in both cases there are signs to be discovered and then, little by little, made to speak. In other words, divinatio and erudition are both part of the same hermeneutics; but this develops, following similar forms, on two different levels: one moves from the mute sign to the thing itself (and makes nature speak); the other moves from the unmoving graphism to clear speech (it restores sleeping languages to life).657

These mute signs and the unmoving graphism are precisely the main elements of the hermetic ceremonial displayed during solemn receptions. Foreign exchanges of Cordoba surely had political meaning, but we can see them as well as an excuse to perform the theatrical states they acted to be: they should nourish their own need for legitimacy purposes.

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657 Foucault, The order of things, 37.
Annex

Map 1. Al-Andalus in the 10th century
Source: Al-Hajji, *Andalusian diplomatic relations*
Map 2. The Mediterranean in the 9th century
Source: Picard, *La mer des califes*
Map 3. The Mediterranean in the 10th century
Source: Picard, La mer des califes
Genealogical table 1. The Umayyad dynasty of al-Andalus
Source: al-Hajji, *Andalusian diplomatic relations*
Genealogical table 2. The Umayyads and the ruling family of Navarre
Source: al-Hajji, *Andalusian diplomatic relations*
Genealogical table 3. The Banū Qasī
Source: al-Hajji, *Andalusian diplomatic relations*
Plan 1. Madīna al-Zahrā’
Source: Vallejo, “Madinat al-Zhara. Transformation of a caliphal city”
Plan 2. Order of precedences in the *Majlis al-Sharqī*
Source: Barceló, “El califa patente”

The *Majlis al-Sharqī* during al-Ḥakam II’s celebrations of religious festivities. The order of precedence during ambassadorial receptions must have been quite similar, nevertheless it is not conclusive if the members of the Quraysh family and the *mawāli* of Cordoba attended such ceremonies.
Plan 3. Constantinople palace-city
Plan 4. Detail of the Byzantine palace
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Figure 1. Aerial view of the palace-city of Madīna az-Zahrā
Source: Conjunto arqueológico de Madinat al-Zahra

Figure 2. Majlis al-Sharqī/Hall of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III
Source: Conjunto arqueológico de Madinat az-Zahra

Figure 3. Detail of the vegetal decoration of Madīna az-Zahrā’
Source: author
Figure 4. Illustration of the manuscript Bayād wa Riyad  
Source: Vatican Apostolic Library (Codex Vat. Arabo 368)
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