CHAPTER 8

Poems in Stone: Imagery, Text and Meaning in ʿĀmirid Art

In the centre of the hall is a large basin of green water
in which the turtles continually make sounds.
The water pours from the jaws of a lion whose mouth
could only be more terrible if it spoke.
It is of scented aloeswood and around its neck
one sees a handsome necklace of pearls.
Meanwhile, the jasmine watches from its throne, as if it were a king,
When a sudden blaze of light would have brought down the head
And narcissus, wallflowers, violets and roses stop exhaling their perfume.
They watch languidly, and out of happiness they can scarcely contain
the desire to speak to you, despite not having tongues.
At your side you have lilies that sprout from themselves,
The luminosity of the spring, such is the beauty which they give out.
All of these [flowers], in their abundant diversity, remind you
Of the victorious banners trembling on the day of combat.
In this hall, without doubt, a king, whose riches are without number,
has gathered all happiness[es] for his people.
And thanks to him the West has attained such power
That even the East feels envy because of him.

ABŪ MARWĀN AL-JAZĪRĪ (d. 1003)[1]

The patronage of the luxury arts by the ʿĀmirid *ḥujjāb* was not motivated merely by the desire to surround themselves with beautiful objects, but entailed the full-scale mobilisation of an industry that had been established by the caliphs in order to articulate their power and authority. The physical location of the Dār al-Ṣināʿa, or at least a branch of it, within the ʿĀmirid power-centre and under their direct control, via their *fityān*, enabled the *ḥujjāb* to dictate their messages of self-expression, not only visually through the iconography they chose to employ, but also through their epigraphic programmes. The objects commissioned by al-Manṣūr and his two sons fit squarely into the formal tradition of the luxury arts produced under their caliphal predecessors, in the sense that in the broad terms of material, shape and decorative vocabulary, ʿĀmirid art continued traditions that had been established at the caliphal Dār al-Ṣināʿa. The iconography employed in Andalusi art draws on the standard repertoire of images that form the 'princely' or 'courtly cycle' – stock scenes such as the seated ruler with cup in hand, the falconer on horseback, and the paired or single animals connoting royalty (such as lions, eagles or peacocks), are as pervasive in al-Andalus as in other contemporary Islamic contexts. However, the images chosen to adorn ʿĀmirid works of art were not simply scenes selected at random from the stock repertoire, but had a particular ʿĀmirid meaning. We can elucidate this meaning by considering the iconography in direct relation to imagery that was current in the contemporary poetry likewise created for ʿĀmirid patrons. The presentation of a particular text or image on an object was a deliberate choice on the part of the patron, and as we will discuss here, the ʿĀmirids' choice of what to

1 Continente 1969, 131–132; Echevarría 2011, 181–2.

depict on their art shows significant variations from the caliphal norm. Understanding their iconographic and epigraphic programmes allows us to reconstruct the ways in which they wished to present themselves, to the audiences to whom their objects were displayed.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Arabic poetic imagery draws on a complex system of quotation and topoi, whose references and resonances would have been instantly recognisable to the educated audience. It was this same audience, composed of the Andalusi social elite, which patronised the luxury arts, and the imagery of Andalusi poetry can therefore not be separated from that of the surviving art. The trend towards increasing figurativism noticeable in both the luxury and literary arts under the ʿĀmirids may be a symptom of this interrelationship. As Cómez Ramos notes, images 'passed from one medium to another, from poetry to the plastic arts and vice versa … producing a game of allusions and references'; he describes the lion and eagle motifs which feature on the ʿĀmirid marble basins as '[visualisations of] the metaphors which [the] poets sang', as 'poems in stone'.[2]

The use of poetic testimony thus allows us to understand the impression that an image might have conjured in the mind of a member of the Andalusi elite with a position at the ʿĀmirid court. Part 1 of this chapter will focus on elements of the ʿĀmirids' decorative vocabulary that between them cover most of the surface area of these objects – we can surmise that these images were therefore intended to be the most striking elements of the ʿĀmirid visual programme and thus of the *ḥujjāb*'s 'public image'. These elements comprise the motif of a lion attacking a gazelle; nature imagery; the 'heraldic' eagle, which has a probable visual association with the banners of the Umayyad army; and the possibility of allusions to literary illustrations, in particular the *Kalīla wa Dimna*. I will not engage in art historical taxonomies of the origins and trajectories of these motifs, but will focus on how their meaning was understood in the specific, *local* context in which they were created and consumed – the ʿĀmirid court in al-Andalus in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The inscriptions and semantic games used on these objects will be discussed in Part 2.

1 Poetic and Visual Imagery

1.1 *The Lion and Gazelle* (*Figure 157*)

By far the largest surface area on objects produced under ʿĀmirid patronage is dedicated to scenes of combat between animals, or between animals and humans. The Pamplona casket (Chapter 7: 2.1) provides something of a catalogue of combat scenes, which form the decoration of eight of its nine carved plaques. These include dogs, lions, eagles and other birds of prey attacking weaker animals; tense scenes of affronted wild or mythological animals poised before combat; and hunting scenes, showing men on foot or horseback spearing leopards/cheetahs or lions, and the representation of what seems to be a joust on the back of the casket. However, the combat motif that most frequently recurs in ʿĀmirid art is that of the 'conquering lion', which, as Ettinghausen stated, '[renders] the … concept of uncompromising rule by the paramount power'.[3]

The lion as a symbol of royalty and secular power is millennia-old. 'Lion-thrones' possibly visualised a reference to Solomon as the ideal ruler,[4] and Islamic rulers kept physical representations of

2 Cómez Ramos 1982, 132–4. All his examples are taken from Pérès 1937, and therefore date from the Fitna and Taifa periods, since Pérès' study did not include poetry from the caliphal or ʿĀmirid periods.

3 Ettinghausen 1964 [1984], 167.

4 Cf. Bible 1 Kings 10:18–20: '(18) Then the king [Solomon] made a great throne inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. (19) The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. (20) Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom'. On allusions to Solomon's lion-protected throne in Islamic art, see Soucek 1976, 1993.

lions near their thrones: this may have been the function of the lion statue found at Mshatta,[5] or the limestone footrest in the form of a double-headed lion, found in Badajoz and possibly dating from the Taifa period.[6] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III associated himself physically with lions in an extremely vivid manner. In addition to the lion among the fountain-heads which he commissioned to adorn his gift from the Byzantine Emperor (Chapter 2), and the massive golden lion he added as the termination of the aqueduct at the Munyat al-Nāʿūrah (below), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān used live lions 'to make his punishment more terrifying', a tactic which Ibn Ḥayyān says he imitated from 'the tyrannic kings of the East'.[7] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān received lions as gifts from his Berber clients in the Maghrib,[8] and to house them he constructed a special lion-house behind his palace at Cordoba, 'on a bridge that was elevated over a gully … which still today bears the name of the Bridge of Lions'.[9] They were kept chained and attended by tamers, but on one occasion a lion is said to have broken loose and wandered into a nearby mosque where a holy man was praying. The lion sat down next to him and started roaring, but the man did not interrupt his prayer until he had finished. At that point he saw the lion, called on Allah, and cried at the lion to get far away 'because this was not his place'. The lion turned and left the mosque, just as his guard came looking for him, and took him back to the caliphal lion-house. Though it is unlikely that this 'miraculous story' was true, it was no doubt related by Ibn Ḥayyān to illustrate how ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's association with lions fulfilled the qualities of the ideal (Solomonic) ruler: in the same way that the builder of Mshatta kept stone lions near his throne, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān used living lions to symbolise his royal authority.

Located in the palace gardens, not far from the *majlis*, the lions on the ʿĀmirid marble basins may have conveyed this same idea. As discussed in Chapter 4, it is also possible that al-Madīnat al-Zāhira's precincts contained a menagerie, where al-Manṣūr housed the fierce beasts, including a tiger, which he received as part of Zīrī ibn ʿAṭiyya's gift – the *ḥājib* may thus have lived in physical proximity to such creatures, in the same way that the caliph had done. In art, the lion is most frequently depicted in combat with a bull, an image that originated in the Iranian world where it symbolised the astronomical conflict between Leo and Taurus.[10] It is this motif that most frequently occurred in the Islamic East, where it was used, for example, on Buyid donative coinage;[11] it is also the lion-bull motif that features on the Cordoban ivories produced under caliphal patronage, for example on the al-Mughīra pyxis (Figure 171), or the David Collection casket.[12] However, where the lion-bull motif represents a combat between two equally strong animals, the ʿĀmirid objects feature the very different image of the unequal struggle between lion and gazelle. Indeed, as far as we can tell from the surviving objects, this motif first seems to have become popular in al-Andalus under the ʿĀmirids, beginning in 987 with al-Manṣūr's basin (Chapter 7: 1.2).

The lion-gazelle motif has been variously interpreted as having the same cosmological and pseudo-Zoroastrian religious symbolism as the lion-bull combat,[13] or as having no more than a

5 Now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. I. 6171. See Annette Hagedorn, "Lion from the Palace of Mushatta", in *Discover Islamic Art, Museum With No Frontiers*, http://islamicart.museumwnf.org/database_item.php?id=object;ISL;de;Mus01;2;en (consulted 12 January 2020).

6 *Les Andalousies*, cat. 155.

7 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 40–42 (§§23–25).

8 Fierro 2007, 107.

9 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 40–42 (§§23–25).

10 See Hartner's section on "The Lion Bull Combat, an Astronomical Symbol", in Ettinghausen 1964 [1984], 161–164.

11 See Ilisch 1984.

12 There is an extensive bibliography on the al-Mughīra pyxis, but for basic catalogue information, see Ferrandis 1935, vol. 1, cat. 13; Kühnel 1971, cat. 31. On the casket acquired by the David Collection in 2002, see *Journal of the David Collection* 2/2, cat. 10, and the article by Kjeld von Folsach in 2/1.

13 In his discussion of the lion-bull combat, Hartner says, 'Since the constellation of the Deer sets simultaneously

FIGURE 171 Medallion with lion-bull combat, pyxis made for al-Mughīra, dated 968, ivory; Musée du Louvre, inv. OA 4068

talismanic or apotropaic function.[14] The ʿĀmirid use of the lion-gazelle can be compared to the mosaic in the *dīwān*/apodyterium of the Syrian Umayyad bath-complex at Khirbat al-Mafjar,[15] which is perhaps the most famous example of this motif. Here the depiction of a large fruiting tree is flanked on the left by two gazelles grazing peacefully, and on the right by the motif of a lion attacking a third gazelle. This scene has likewise been interpreted in a number of ways: as symbolising the peaceful *dār al-islām* as opposed to the *dār al-ḥarb*, the realm of war outside the bounds of Islam;[16] as evoking the erotic meaning of the lion-gazelle topos in love poetry;[17] or as representing the 'generosity-ruthlessness doublet', one of the central virtues of Islamic princes as praised by their panegyrists, in which the ruler shows generosity towards his friends and ruthlessness towards his foes.[18]

These interpretations open up a variety of possible meanings for the use of the lion-gazelle motif in ʿĀmirid art. However, it is clear from the external evidence of the 'poetic testimony' that one meaning is paramount. In the panegyric poems composed for the ʿĀmirids by Ibn Darrāj, which are exactly contemporary with the surviving ʿĀmirid objects, the lion is one of the most repetitive images, with a clear and consistent equivalence to their role as *mujāhidūn*. Significantly, this association of the lion with *mujāhid* seems to have developed under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III. The language of Ibn Ḥayyān's *Muqtabis* shows that the lion was inherent in metaphorical descriptions of the Umayyad army, in both poetry and prose, and there are numerous references to the army as 'brave' or 'fierce lions'.[19] The most explicit passage occurs in a letter which ʿAbd al-Raḥmān sent to his Berber allies, asking them to prepare troops for a campaign against the Fatimids. The men he wants should be

"people of pure intent, sincere will and firm courage, who will not be frightened of rivals, and a squadron of whom will not be frightened of an opposing army, like lions which advance or dragons which devour, seasoned to war and accustomed to its vicissitudes, like sons to their mother."[20]

As we will discuss below, like the heraldic eagle the lion was carried on banners by the Umayyad army, and in this way may have come to represent them visually and metaphorically.

However, there are few surviving instances in caliphal poetry of the lion as an explicit symbol of the caliph himself, which is how it is employed under the ʿĀmirids. Where the image occurs, its meaning is clear: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān *is* 'a fierce lion which runs to the fight, or perhaps even more brave',[21] and in the following verses, composed on the occasion of the first blood-letting ʿAbd

with the Pleiades, the other well-known motif, the Lion-Deer combat, has to be regarded as a symbol having the same meaning as the Lion-Bull combat': Ettinghausen 1964 [1984], 164. The often outlandish interpretations of this motif on the ʿĀmirid marble basins are outlined in Cómez Ramos 1982, 130–131. Amador de los Ríos 1877, 315–317, even believed the artist of al-Manṣūr's basin to have been Persian, since he interpreted its iconography as representing the principles of Mazdaean dualism.

14 Gómez-Moreno 1951, 191; Cómez Ramos 1982, 133.

15 See Hamilton 1988. Khirbat al-Mafjar was probably built by al-Walīd II (r. 743–744) before he became caliph.

16 Ettinghausen 1972, 44–46.

17 Behrens-Abouseif 1997, 14–16.

18 This theory was outlined in a paper entitled "Gazelles and Lions: Political Symbols or Sex Symbols? The apse mosaic at Khirbat al-Mafjar revisited", presented by Prof. Julie Scott Meisami at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, on 17 May 2002. On her concept of the 'generosity-ruthlessness doublet', see Meisami 2003, 183–4: *zakhm u raḥm* in Persian, 'wounding and mercy', 'which are, respectively, the downfall of the ruler's enemies and the support of the "friend"'.

19 For example, Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 149 (§124), where the Muslims set upon their enemy like 'brave lions'; or 330 (§299) describing the Alhándega campaign (327/938–9), where the Muslim troops rushed forward onto the Christians 'like fierce lions'.

20 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 231 (§207).

21 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 138 (§114), l. 10.

al-Raḥmān underwent after moving to al-Zahrā', the image takes on the resonance of a title:

"From him is perfumed the scent of honours and of generosity, and its fragrance reaches the most remote horizons.
The *lion of the caliphate* (*asad al-khilāfa*) dwells among his cubs, when he walks round his territory and in his dwelling,
And the perfume of his blood-letting oozes out, its aroma spreads out over the whole earth."[22]

The designation here of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān as 'the lion of the caliphate' recalls the epithet which the military exploits of his ancestor, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I, earned him – the 'falcon of the Quraysh' (*ṣaqr quraysh*).[23] However, after his defeat at the Battle of Alhándega, in 327/938–9, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III never again led an army into the field, nor did al-Ḥakam after his accession to the caliphate. This would explain the relative scarcity of lions in the poetry composed for the second caliph: a study of the twenty-six panegyrics included in al-Rāzī's Annals, many of which are very long, reveals only four instances of lion imagery, whereas the thirty-three surviving ʿĀmirid panegyrics by Ibn Darrāj yield twenty-nine instances. Of course this kind of comparison is not an exact science, dictated as it is by issues of survival, but it is clear that in the contemporary poetic imagery, the lion was a favoured metaphor for al-Manṣūr and his sons.

Furthermore, there is always a suggestion of distance between al-Ḥakam and the lion: see, for example, these verses from a poem by al-Muhannad, composed for the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr celebrations of 363/973–4, which fell soon after the defeat of Ḥasan ibn Qānūn, the major military victory of al-Ḥakam's career:

"Your lions killed their lions; your strong lion-cubs [killed their] strong lion-cubs."[24]

These lines are significant for the way in which the lion here does not represent al-Ḥakam himself, but rather his victorious general, Ghālib. Though a number of panegyrics in honour of military victories are sung to al-Ḥakam during the course of al-Rāzī's Annals, lion images are in general conspicuous by their absence.

In contrast, the lion is one of the most frequent images in the panegyrics composed for the ʿĀmirids by Ibn Darrāj. An interesting verse in poem 119, l. 5, quells any doubt over the meaning of this metaphor: composed as al-Manṣūr departed on campaign, the poet sings of the glories he will achieve, saying, 'his enemies will later tell that lions are men'. Some examples of the image of al-Manṣūr as the lion of the battlefield are as follows. On the occasion of the *ḥājib*'s campaign against Zīrī ibn ʿAṭiyya, the poet warns

"Let him who wants to kill [al-Manṣūr] understand that his mother will want to bury him, because he is going to confront a strong lion."[25]

In similar language, on the occasion of a campaign against García Fernández of Castile, Ibn Darrāj addresses the enemy:

"Where will you be able to save yourself when the lion of the lairs, the protector al-Manṣūr, has come to you enraged?"[26]

On the *ḥājib*'s return from a campaign against León in 995, the poet praises him,

"You are like a lion which risks its life in battle."[27]

22 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 46 (§28), second poem on this page, ll. 3–5.
23 *HEM* 1:133. This epithet was given to him by his sworn enemy, the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr.
24 *Anales*, §180 (l. 18 on p. 198).
25 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 1, l. 44.
26 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 106, l. 20.
27 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 111, l. 17.

His sons are also identified with lions. In a poem dedicated to al-Muẓaffar, after mopping-up campaigns against García Fernández *circa* 994, at which Ibn Darrāj was himself present, his lust for the fight is described as follows (l. 23):

"The lion of the forest, who does not leave or return except in search of glory, runs at [the ranks of swords] …"[28]

And when Hishām granted ʿAbd al-Malik his *laqab*:

"You were called al-Muẓaffar when you were triumphant,
and you had attacked your enemies like a fierce lion."[29]

On the occasion *circa* 997 when al-Manṣūr executed fifty Navarrese knights who had violated the peace by making incursions into al-Andalus, Sanchuelo himself, aged only fourteen, killed one of his own relatives; in his praise, Ibn Darrāj exclaims,

"the vizier was like a lion – who could be his father, except the ʿĀmirid?"

and later, in the same poem, the relative he executed was

"a lion which fell at the burn of the gaze of a lion-cub."[30]

Echevarría notes that the increasing reference to al-Manṣūr's sons in the panegyric of this period, especially that associated with the Santiago campaign, began to prepare the way for the dynastic succession of the *ḥijāba*.[31]

By the early 990s, therefore, the equivalence between lions and the ʿĀmirid *ḥūjjab* was firmly embedded in Ibn Darrāj's poetry. But such an image would only have gained currency through the extent to which it pleased the panegyric's addressee. Indeed, a poem which al-Manṣūr is said to have composed himself might suggest that the lion was part of the ʿĀmirids' self-image from a slightly earlier period. It is undated, but it is tempting to relate its metaphor of construction to his architectural projects of the late 980s:

"In person, as a magnanimous nobleman should, I have faced the gravest perils, and had nothing with me but a brave heart, an excellent lance, and a sharp and polished sword.

Launching into combat troops of warriors, veritable lions which clash with other lions in their lairs, in person I have led leaders of all kinds and done battle until I found myself triumphant.

It is not a new edifice which I have constructed, but I have enlarged that which ʿAbd al-Malik and ʿĀmir built.

We [the ʿĀmirids] have by means of our exploits rejuvenated a nobility which we possess from long ago Maʿāfir."[32]

In these verses, al-Manṣūr is concerned with establishing his right to the *ḥijāba*, emphasizing the noble status he inherited from his ancestors in order to justify his elevated position. The reference to Maʿāfir here stresses the ʿĀmirids' Arab origins and their ancestors' participation in the original conquest of al-Andalus – Hugh Kennedy makes the interesting point that, as a result, al-Manṣūr's 'family could claim to have been in al-Andalus longer than the Umayyads themselves'.[33] Al-Manṣūr adduces two further points to the main argument of his nobility: his military victories, symbolised by the lion metaphor, and a tantalising reference to his architectural patronage, especially his extension to the Cordoba Mosque in the line, 'It

28 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 126, ll. 28–29.
29 *Bayān* III:18 [translation, 25].
30 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 116, ll. 9, 17.
31 Echevarría 2011, 175.
32 *Bayān* II:293 [translation, 455]; *Dhikr Bilād* I:185–186 [II:197]; Echevarría 2011, 238.
33 Kennedy 1996, 109.

is not a new edifice which I have constructed, but [one] I have enlarged …'

These dual aspects of his 'nobility' remind us of the decoration of his marble basin, whose two long sides visualise these same sentiments. It could be said that in both the poem he composed and the object he commissioned, lions and architecture – standing for his role in jihad, and his cultural patronage – are presented as the two pillars of al-Manṣūr's particular virtues as *ḥājib*. In fact, I would argue that the iconography of ʿĀmirid art is precisely concerned with representing its patrons as fulfilling the virtues of the ideal ruler – his physical courage and his courtly refinement. Because of this, the lion metaphor seems to have been deliberately emphasised, artistically and poetically, as a symbol of ʿĀmirid self-expression. That the propaganda worked is clear from its contemporary reactions: compare this verse, written by al-Muṣḥafī during the period of his persecution by al-Manṣūr, which contains an interesting inversion of the lion image:

"Fortune has made me fearsome to lions themselves, but now it is I whom she makes tremble before the fox."[34]

The force of this slander of al-Manṣūr lies in the way it questions the ʿĀmirid self-image: the *ḥājib* was a fox, not a lion as he claimed, and al-Muṣḥafī should know, having encountered so many *real* lions in his career.

The natural complement to the image of the 'conquering lion' is the gazelle, precisely because of its ancient poetic relationship in the type of lyric poems that Doris Behrens-Abouseif cites in her interpretation of the Khirbat al-Mafjar mosaic.[35] However, this does not imply that the pairing of the two in ʿĀmirid art represents an erotic motif. Rather, the weaker animal represents the conquered enemy, who is also paraded before us in the panegyrics sung on the occasion of the defeated foe's ceremonial visits to the ʿĀmirid court. While, in the poetry, the lion frequently occurs as a single image, the weaker animals usually occur in combination with a fierce animal that terrorises them. The pairings conform to a logical pattern: fierce birds such as falcons and eagles are repeatedly combined with cranes and partridges,[36] whereas the lion is most usually combined with varieties of deer. Thus, al-Ḥakam's enemies

"climb to inhabit the mountains
and make themselves the neighbours of ravens and antelopes, and declare war on [him] …
With the fury of a lion who gathers together his cubs, [al-Ḥakam] sends against him [Ḥasan ibn Qānūn] one part of his troops
which, as thick as a cloud of locusts, covers the mountains and the face of the earth …"[37]

By making themselves their 'neighbours', al-Ḥakam's enemies metaphorically become 'ravens and antelopes', terrorised by the lion of the caliph's fury. In the poem composed by Ibn Darrāj on the occasion of al-Manṣūr's campaign against the Christian coalition in 1000, the ʿĀmirid troops are represented as lions and the conquered enemy as

"herds of wild gazelles who have turned their cheeks away from the battle, showing eyes in which can be seen their confusion and hunger."[38]

It is also likely that the imagery of Ibn Darrāj's poems reflects the language of al-Manṣūr's own rhetoric. During this same campaign, part of the Umayyad army fled in the face of the overwhelming odds. Ana Echevarría cites a long address with which al-Manṣūr castigated them: this has

34 *Bayān* 11:291 [translation, 452].

35 Behrens-Abouseif 1997, 14–16.

36 Cf. Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 58 (§38); *Anales*, §198 (p. 226): poem by Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (from 363/973–4): l. 23; Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 113 (written 993), l. 13.

37 *Anales*, §180 (p. 205): second poem by Abū Mujāhid al-Istījī, ll. 7–8, 13–14.

38 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 105, ll. 19–20.

survived in the form of a letter sent to the troops, which their generals read out to them – the text of this letter must have been recorded by Ibn Ḥayyān (whose father was present at the battle). In one part of the address, al-Manṣūr rebukes the troops:

"So you fled like a herd of gazelles before the lions of the forest and you were scared away, terrorised, like ostriches before hunters. Oh how you have covered yourselves in ignominy!"[39]

However, the most explicit 'image' is provided by a living metaphor: during al-Manṣūr's campaign against García Fernández of Castile in 995, Ṣāʿid al-Baghdādī captured a gazelle and symbolically named it 'Gharsiyya'. He brought the animal, still alive, to al-Manṣūr, along with 'an elegant *qaṣīda*' in which he expressed the wish that the same might happen to its namesake:

"O refuge of the terrified, asylum of the persecuted, comfort to the vilified!
O string of virtues and repository of every brilliant quality! Thou art the refuge of the needy.
A slave [of thine] whom thou didst take by the hand and didst raise from his station, presents thee with a stag.
I named it Gharsiyya and I sent it to thee [with a rope around its neck], that the same may happen with its namesake [the Christian king].
Shouldst thou accept [this my present], I would consider it as the greatest favour that a generous man can bestow."[40]

The living metaphor was made real when, that very day, García Fernández was captured while hunting by al-Manṣūr's cavalry. As ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III maintained a symbolic physical association with real lions in order to terrorise his people, so it can be said that the metaphorical ʿĀmirid lion made of his enemies real gazelles.

The ʿĀmirids' use of the lion image signified a deliberate intensification of a standard element in the vocabulary of panegyric. The relative infrequency with which it was used under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and al-Ḥakam may be due to the fact that, after 939, neither caliph personally led an army into the field. As noted above, it was a source of pride to al-Manṣūr that his military exploits were conducted 'in person', and as discussed in Chapter 1, his role as *mujāhid* played a fundamental part in legitimising his position as *de facto* ruler of al-Andalus. Al-Manṣūr saw himself as the warrior *par excellence*, hence the lion *par excellence*.

It is likely that the ʿĀmirids' use of the lion image could have evoked resonances of the first caliph, whose association with lions was made controversial by his use of live lions in punishment, and visually striking by his construction of a massive lion fountain at his Munyat al-Nāʿūrah, discussed below. As we have frequently mentioned, al-Manṣūr imitated in many respects a model of legitimation that was established by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III in the articulation of his caliphate; perhaps the ʿĀmirids adopted the lion motif precisely because it resonated of that caliph's authority. However, by introducing the gazelle, this image differed from those the caliphs themselves used: their ivories bore the lion-bull motif. Al-Manṣūr may thus have intended the image of the lion-gazelle to serve as an ʿĀmirid symbol, as 'a meaningful emblem of political power'.[41] This would explain its repeated use on ʿĀmirid objects across different media. Its use on the ivories later made for the Dhū'l-Nūnids – such as the Silos casket (Figure 174)[42] – may be a deliberate evocation of this ʿĀmirid emblem, one of the ways in which they referred to Cordoba in their attempt at legitimising themselves (Conclusion).

39 Echevarría 2011, 176. Were ostriches considered a particularly ignoble animal?

40 Al-Maqqarī, 206 (Arabic text given in Gayangos, II, 484–485, n. 17); *Dhikr Bilād* I:190–191 [II:200–201]; Molina 1981, 226.

41 Ettinghausen 1964 [1984], 166.

42 Ferrandis 1935, vol. 1, cat. 25; Kühnel 1971, cat. 40.

A final point concerns the function of the ʿĀmirid marble basins as the reservoirs for fountains. In Islamic art more broadly, the iconographic association between lions and water is frequent.[43] We know from poetic descriptions as well as surviving examples that lions were popular as fountain heads: the murmuring noise of the water passing through its internal pipes and out through its mouth gave rise to a poetic topos of the lion roaring, as in al-Jazīrī's poem (quoted at the start of this chapter). In fact, there is a greater significance to this association between lions and water: while, again, this seems to have an ancient and possibly cosmic origin,[44] the symbolism is in fact very simple – of the ruler's generosity and ability to provide for his people. The ruler's construction of aqueducts and water infrastructure, to bring water from mountains to cities, was considered an act of great piety. It was also to the ruler whom the people looked to provide rain in times of drought: it was incumbent on him to authorise a special prayer (*istisqāʾ*), which was recited by his designated representative in one of the two *maṣalla*s outside Cordoba.[45] This is expressed in the verses sung to al-Ḥakam by Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭubnī on the occasion of ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā in 361/972:

> "On this holy day the rain comes to pay you obeisance;
> Even if, instead of the rain, your generosity had watered the earth, she would have been forever safe from drought …"[46]

It is due to the ruler's capacity as bringer of rain that water also became an important topos in poetic imagery, especially in relation to what Julie Meisami has styled the 'generosity-ruthlessness doublet'. For example, Ibn Darrāj says of al-Manṣūr that 'you give more gifts than the torrential rain';[47] that 'he has irrigated those who desire his favour like an abundant rainfall';[48] and that 'the rain which you have made fall / has abundantly irrigated Islam'.[49] On the other hand, however, the ruler can turn this power against his enemies: '[al-Manṣūr] is for Islam a beneficial rainfall, and for heresy he is a destructive storm'.[50] As he provides water for his people, so he can take it from his enemies: 'He did not leave … a single place among his enemies for them to drink'.[51] Furthermore, in keeping with the increasingly martial aesthetic discernible in ʿĀmirid poetry, this image can be given a macabre spin: for example, Ṣāʿid al-Baghdādī talks of al-Manṣūr 'making the countryside fertile with the deaths of polytheists';[52] and the image of the land irrigated by enemies' blood pervades the poems of Ibn Darrāj.[53]

The use of lions in the decoration of waterworks is therefore also symbolic of the ruler's virtues

43 Graves 2018, 199, notes that 'the lion protome' is a 'strikingly consistent feature of the *kilgas*', marble stands for earthenware waterpots made in Egypt from the twelfth century, and discusses the wider association between lions and water. More generally on the *kilga*s, see Graves 2015; 2018, 181–213.

44 Tanavoli 1985, 14, traces the relationship to the legend that the Zoroastrian goddess of water, Anahita, was made pregnant by Mithra, who was symbolized by a lion. Furthermore, if we understand the lion as symbolic of the constellation Leo, it is when the sun is in Leo that the Nile floods.

45 Cf. 'Istiskā'', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition. Also, see Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 88 (§67); 159 (§132–133); 161 (§134); 190 (§165); 357–358 (§321–322). Also, *Bayān* 11:173 [translation, 276]; 204 [translation, 317–318]; 213 [translation, 330]. Bariani 2003, 157, discusses *istisqāʾ* ceremonies c. 988–9 to call for rain.

46 *Anales*, §82 (p.118): ll. 5–6.

47 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 110, l. 16.

48 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 115, l. 28.

49 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 107, ll. 29–30.

50 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 101, l. 30.

51 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 126, l. 15.

52 *Bayān* 11:297 [translation, 460].

53 Cf. for example, Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 102, praising the successes of al-Manṣūr's two sons in mopping-up operations after the Santiago campaign, saying (l. 38), 'They have showered their hills with blood like rain which falls abundantly for the good of the faith …' Other instances of this image are Ibn Darrāj 1969, poems 103, l. 21; 105, l. 7; 118, l. 32; 126, ll. 21–22.

as presented in the poetic imagery. A lion was among the gold statues which ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III commissioned for his Byzantine fountain basin (Chapter 2), though he also constructed a much more striking visual relationship between lions and water:

"At the beginning of this year [329/940–1], al-Nāṣir finished the construction of the extraordinary man-made aqueduct that brought fresh water from the mountains to the Qaṣr al-Nāʿūrah on the west side of Cordoba. Water flowed through fabricated channels on a fantastic arrangement of connecting arches, emptying into a large pool at the edge of which was a lion, enormous in size, unique in design, and fearful in appearance … It was plated with gold and its eyes were two brilliantly sparkling jewels. Water entered through the rear of the lion and was spewed into the pool. It was dazzling to behold in its splendour and magnificence and its copious outpouring, and the palace's entire range of gardens were irrigated by its juices which flowed over the grounds and the surrounding area."[54]

This massive golden lion was thus a prominent and highly-visible statement of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's royalty, his power to convert the natural landscape, and his fulfilment of the ideals of rulership, in 'bringing' water. However, this was not a public aqueduct – it was for his private use in the Munyat al-Nāʿūrah. In discussing ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's pre-Madīnat al-Zahrā' palaces, Ruggles observes that they 'consumed a spectacular amount of water', and that 'the role of water in giving life to the gardens … of the Munyat al-Nāʿūrah was celebrated through these displays of abundance'.[55] Was it, rather, a celebration of the fact that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's power as caliph was so great that he could provide ample water for his people, and *still* abundantly irrigate his own palace and gardens? Was the golden lion from which the waters of the aqueduct debouched a visualisation of the quasi-title of the 'lion of the caliphate' which he had received in poetry? Though they are smaller in scale, the ʿĀmirid marble basins capture something of the sentiment of this aqueduct. Al-Manṣūr, through his construction of a new cistern and ablutions pavilions at the Cordoba Mosque, demonstrated his ability to fulfil the ruler's role in providing water for the city's residents. The basin's large size and impressive appearance underlines the relationship between lions and water, and possibly visualises the poetic role of the ruler as rainmaker.

This was a genuine concern at this period. Manzano discusses the 'many episodes of drought', whose 'terrible effects' were mitigated by handouts from the state.[56] As we saw in Chapter 4, al-Manṣūr had granaries and mills constructed at al-Madīnat al-Zāhira, to allow the city to be self-sufficient in the supply of food during times of hardship, and as discussed in Chapter 5, he constructed an enormous new cistern at the Cordoba Mosque. Indeed, during a 'terrible famine' throughout al-Andalus, the Maghrib and Ifrīqiya, which began in 379/989–990 and lasted three years, 'al-Manṣūr ordered that every day … should be made 22,000 loaves of bread, which were distributed amongst the poor'.[57] He 'behaved as no king before him had ever acted, and made kind gestures: he helped the Muslims, fed the weak, waived the tithes, buried the dead and succoured the living'. Significantly, the description of al-Manṣūr's generous behaviour during this time is comparable to that of al-Ḥakam during an earlier famine, in 353/964–5, and they

54 Al-Maqqarī, *Analectes*, 1:371, translated in Ruggles 2000, 50; cf. also her n. 84; see also Anderson 2013, 111–3. This was a Roman aqueduct, refurbished by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III; part of it survives, still visible at Valdepuentes near Madīnat al-Zahrā'.

55 Ruggles 2000, 52.

56 Manzano 2019, 47–48.

57 *Dhikr Bilād* 1:153–154 [11:193]; see also Ibn Abī Zarʿ 1964, 115.

are both credited with caring personally for the needy.[58] On this occasion, 'al-Ḥakam took care of the sick and needy, whether in Cordoba, its suburbs or al-Zahrā'. He gave them nourishment and he thus saved their lives'.

This discussion raises the possibility that the use of the lion image by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, and by al-Manṣūr in combination with the gazelle, represented 'a meaningful emblem of [their] political power',[59] that is, it functioned as a type of dynastic, even heraldic, emblem which signified that patron. In this way, al-Nāṣir might have visualised the quasi-title the 'lion of the caliphate' which he had received in poetry, while the presence of the lion-gazelle 'emblem' identified particular objects as ʿĀmirid. The particular way in which they are consistently rendered on these basins might evoke the designs on the military banners of the Umayyad armies, an idea which will be discussed in detail below. The addition of fountain heads that were also in the form of lions underlined the lion imagery carved onto the basins, making it even more powerful.

1.2 *Nature Imagery*

While scenes of violent combat might call most attention in ʿĀmirid art, it is significant that a completely contrasting aesthetic coexists on these same objects: that is, the abundance of images of nature, which form compositions in themselves as well as the backdrop to more representational scenes. Particularly favoured are stylised representations of plants and flowers: the basins made for al-Manṣūr and ʿAbd al-Malik both dedicate one long side – over a metre of decorative surface – to floral decoration (Figures 114, 130). Certain aspects of the nature imagery from caliphal and ʿĀmirid panegyric poetry have already been mentioned, since this formed an essential element in the poetic vocabulary of the ruler's virtues. The full spectrum of poetic nature imagery encompassed the entire natural world, both on the earth and in the sky, and an important aspect relates to the natural universe, employing metaphors of light, the stars, planets, sun and moon to describe the ruler's attributes. I will concentrate here on the depictions of *cultivated* nature, which can be considered as reflections of the poetic image of the fertility that the ruler's generosity brings to the land. This includes the natural backdrop to more representational scenes, such as the garden *majlis* on the Pamplona casket.

A natural consequence of the ruler's ability to bring water, most often in the form of rain, is that the land becomes fertile and flourishing. This is a favourite topos of Ibn Darrāj's panegyrics to al-Manṣūr, as is its complement of the desert as symbolic of the ruler's withdrawal of generosity. The sentiment is clearly illustrated in his line, 'The universe is flourishing under your reign';[60] and in the following short *nawriyya*:

"How pleasant is the timidity of the apples,
adorned with varieties of flowers,
Surrounded by jonquils like eyes that gaze from
under the eyebrows of an awoken lover,
As if the colour these apples had blushed with
shame was like the red colour of the moon's
dawnlight appearing bit by bit.
In the *diwan* of the king al-Manṣūr they are fresh
as if they had been nourished by his abundant
generosity."[61]

Such a blossoming of the natural world, as a result of the ruler's generosity, also gives rise to the topos that his protection is like the shade of a tree.[62] The two are combined in the verse,

58 *Bayān* II:251 [translation, 389].

59 Ettinghausen 1964 [1984], 166.

60 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 111, l. 2.

61 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 149, ll. 1–4. Does the use of 'malik' in this poem suggest it was written after 996, when al-Manṣūr is said to have adopted the title 'al-malik al-karīm'? (though Bariani 2003, 173–4, is dubious about whether he ever adopted such a title).

62 For example, Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 111, ll. 2, 10–11: 'Tender shady tree of your nobility, whose branches

"Without your blessings what shade will surround me, and without your gifts from which trough will I draw water?"[63]

Elsewhere images of rain and fertility are linked to the ruler's generosity: for example, Ibn Darrāj says, 'You have watered my soul with the generosity of your gifts', and later talks of 'the fruits of the gifts which you have given me';[64] similarly, 'A well-timed rainfall has come to bring life to the world … / The earth has dressed up in holiday clothes …'.[65] In turn, the good ruler, who brings rain and allows the earth to flourish, can expect to find his way to the ultimate garden, in Paradise.[66]

Such images pervade Ibn Darrāj's poetry, though it must be noted that, unlike the poetic use of figurative motifs, this was not a new or particularly intensified phenomenon under the ʿĀmirids: metaphors of nature are probably the most abundant image in caliphal poetry, and some of the topoi we have noted here from Ibn Darrāj's poems were obviously perpetuated from those used by caliphal panegyrists. For example, the following poems in honour of al-Ḥakam:

"Justice reigns, Islam shines, and the branch of the Empire turns green and bears its fruits …"[67]

Or,

"With his face he has made the smiling spring return before its season,
And gardens and flowers have returned to the earth, and a fertility which has completely eclipsed sterility …"[68]

Lastly,

"Do you not see that God has put him in charge of his earth, and he [Hishām] has made fertile any uncultivated land?
He fights sterility with gifts …"[69]

In general, however, these images of nature function as metaphors of generosity or other virtuous attributes of the ruler: they evoke the concerns of a people who essentially lived off the land.[70] The tenth century saw an upsurge in the construction of *munya*s, which were essentially countryside retreats surrounded by orchard gardens.[71] These gardens were not necessarily cultivated so that the *munya* would be self-sufficient, but rather so that their owners could display their wealth and status by surrounding themselves with 'organised nature'. As we saw in Chapter 3, the ideal *locus amoenus* for a wine party was an environment that evoked nature but was not '"natural" nature',[72] as better suited the tastes of the urbanised society of tenth-century Cordoba. This 'caused the city dwellers to [rediscover] nature in much the same way that modern man goes to the countryside on weekends to avoid the maddening rush of city

reach the highest spaces / And whose shade has spread out for the security of the Muslims and its fruits for the nourishment of the people'; cf. also poems 77, l. 15; 100, l. 46; 116, l. 20.

63 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 1 *bis*, l. 18.

64 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 114, ll. 24 and 33.

65 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 108, ll. 5, 22–23.

66 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 105, l. 4.

67 *Anales*, §33 (p. 84): l. 4 of the poem composed by Muḥammad ibn al-Istījī.

68 *Anales*, §198 (pp. 225–6): ll. 7–8 of the poem by Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik.

69 *Anales*, §237 (pp. 273–75): ll. 4–5 of the poem by Muḥammad ibn Shukhayṣ.

70 See ʿArīb ibn Saʿd/Pellat 1961. Six-sevenths of the revenue of al-Andalus was from agriculture: see Chalmeta 1992, 750–751.

71 On agriculture in al-Andalus, see the first two chapters of Ruggles 2000, 3–32. On the phenomenon of the tenth-century Cordoban *munya* as an 'Islamic villa', see Anderson 2013; for a wider collection of studies on this phenomenon in the Islamic West, see Navarro Palazón and Trillo San José 2019.

72 Scheindlin 1986, 7.

life'.[73] The popularity of poetic images of nature therefore reflects an 'urban and cultured appreciation of the nature that could be found in the gardens and palatial residences of Cordoba'.[74] As this appreciation developed, the theme of flowers and nature accrued in cultural significance, so that poetic anthologies came to be given titles which implicitly likened the book to a garden in spring, full of blossoming flowers – that is, the floral poems within it.[75] Prose writers even gave such titles to works of history and geography, calling the chapters 'flowers'.[76]

The poetic use of these natural metaphors is embodied visually in the contemporary art, in the backdrops of cultivated plants and flowers which frame the more primary scenes of animal and human figures. The use of nature as a backdrop is symbolic of all that is right in the state, since it resonates of the ruler's poetic role to make the land fertile, and also evokes the very real fertility which the object's viewer can observe in their natural surroundings. However, though nature plays an important secondary role in such scenes, the main visual message is contained in the image which the nature frames: this is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the ivory pyxides – especially the Braga pyxis (Chapter 7: 2.2, Figure 15) – whose architectonic form and vegetal background decoration evoke 'pavilions amid lush gardens'.[77] While the gardens are essential for the setting, the important thing is the pavilion.

Thus the arcade of three lobed arches is the primary message of the back of al-Manṣūr's basin, though its apparent setting in a blooming garden probably provides a significant supplementary meaning. This arcade alludes to al-Manṣūr's role as a patron of architecture – could it represent the idealised *locus amoenus*, the physical setting of the poetic *majālis* which played such an important role in the legitimation of his rule? Or does it relate to another architectural project, which al-Manṣūr would have wanted to commemorate in perpetuity – his construction of the Cordoba Mosque extension? Though the images are (deliberately?) multivalent, I would argue for the latter as the primary meaning. Most simply, this basin was commissioned in the same year as the mosque construction began – it is the only (extant) exception to the 'rule' that the manufacture of luxury objects did not coincide with major architectural projects, and vice versa (Chapter 6). Secondly, the *fatā al-kabīr al-ʿāmirī* who is named as the director of this commission was Khalaf or Khayrah, both of whom also worked on al-Manṣūr's mosque extension. There was very likely to have been a personnel connection between the two projects, via the workshop that produced this basin and the decoration for the mosque. In terms of the decoration itself, the lobed arches evoke those which al-Manṣūr inserted into the mosque's internal arcading as space-filling devices (Chapter 5). More particularly, though, they evoke the blind arcades of the gates which he built on the eastern façade, and the epigraphy around three sides of the basin's periphery evokes the framing inscriptions of those gates (Figures 68–74, 82). It seems highly likely, therefore, that the basin was a special commission by al-Manṣūr to commemorate his extension to the mosque, an act which was so symbolic to him that he preserved it in poetry as well (as we saw above). Lastly, the nature imagery that flourishes on this basin encapsulates al-Manṣūr's sovereign generosity at undertaking such an important and pious work for the Cordoban people – the visual embodiment, in fact, of Ibn Darrāj's verse, 'The universe is flourishing under your reign'.[78] It also evokes what Grabar has called the 'effect' of the mihrab within the mosque itself: its chamber form makes it appear as 'a gate, open towards the invisible or the unknown' – open, in fact, towards

73 Monroe 1974, 10.

74 Monroe 1971, 10.

75 For example, the lost *Kitāb al-Hadāʾiq* ('Book of Gardens') by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Jayyānī, a poet of al-Ḥakam's era: see Monés 1969, 211.

76 For example, al-Maqqarī, 206, uses the fourteenth-century history by Ibn Simāk, entitled *Al-Zaharāt al-manthūra fī nukat al-akhbār al-maʾthūra*, 'The Book of Scattered Flowers or the Memorable Deeds [of al-Manṣūr]'. Cf. Ibn Simāk 1984.

77 Robinson 1995, 642.

78 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 111, l. 2.

Paradise, represented in poetry and the Qur'ān as the ultimate garden.[79]

In contrast to the use on al-Manṣūr's basin of natural decoration in a significant but supplementary role, on the back of al-Muẓaffar's basin, flowers and nature comprise the *only* decoration. The decoration of these two basins thus stands in the same relation to each other as do nature metaphors to *nawriyyāt* – those short poems that embody the purest expression of nature imagery. Consisting of a few verses in description of a particular flower and ending with a verse of praise to the addressee,[80] they indulge in descriptions of nature for its own sake, rather than illustrating a larger concept, as the nature metaphors do.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the genre of floral description began to develop under al-Manṣūr, but it was a poetic form particularly favoured by al-Muẓaffar. Ibn Ḥayyān tells us that

"[he] asked his poets, in some springtimes during his reign, [that they compose] poetic fragments [on the theme of] white flowers, about *manzūr* (stocks), and about *zahra* (orange blossom) and other types of flowers. He was very fond of this [type of poetry] and continually sought out variations on this theme. [He] liked his singers to introduce [flowers] into their songs. People wrote copiously [about] them, bearing in mind the beauty and rarity of the subject. And among the [poems] that he accepted were the compositions of Ṣā'id al-Baghdādī, his drinking companion (*nadīm*) …"[81]

Such poems came to be favoured as 'vehicles of praise', and sometimes served to introduce a longer, panegyric poem.[82] Poets presented them as gifts to their patron, like a bouquet of flowers.[83] This genre of floral poetry embodied the late tenth-century preference for 'nature in a controlled state': whereas ordinary speech in Arabic is *nathr*, 'scattered words', poetry is *naẓm*, 'arranged words',[84] and the words (metaphorically, flowers) of the floral poem are arranged to symbolise a carefully cultivated garden. It seems possible, then, that we can read in the structure – horizontal, like the verses of a poem? – of the four bands of flowers on al-Muẓaffar's basin the 'petrification' of a *nawriyya*, of verses composed in his favourite poetic genre. Such a basin would have been commissioned by him to adorn a garden in the private reaches of his palace, where he would have gathered with his *nudamā'* and listened to such floral images being conjured in their poetry. This interplay between furnishing and environment, between artistic and poetic images, is one of the noteworthy characteristics of 'Āmirid art (Chapter 7) – it would likewise have been noted and admired by al-Muẓaffar's *nudamā'*, and perhaps even served as the springboard for further literary creativity. However, the ways in which this repeats the arrangement of the decoration on al-Manṣūr's basin leads to the consideration that it signified more than that. The repetition on 'Abd al-Malik's basin of the lion-gazelle motif may well imply that this image functioned as a dynastic emblem, identifying the patron as an 'Āmirid by virtue of his military role and exploits. If this is the case, then it can be argued that the other side of the basins represented another symbolic aspect of each 'Āmirid's rule: if for al-Manṣūr it was his mosque extension, for al-Muẓaffar it may have been his love of *nawriyyāt*. These stand

79 Grabar 1988, 115–116.

80 Menocal et al 2000, 214.

81 *Apud Bayān* III:18–21 [translation, 25–28]. He goes on to give six *nawriyyāt* by Ṣā'id al-Baghdādī and two by Ibn Darrāj, on myrtle, lemon balm, narcissus, violets, stocks, roses and lilies. The two Ibn Darrāj poems are translated and discussed in Monroe 1971, 9–10.

82 Robinson 2002, 118; Monroe 1971, 10.

83 Al-Ḥimyarī 1940, 132 (cited by Robinson 2002, 118) gives one occasion on which a poet accompanies floral-themed praises with an actual bouquet of flowers. The poem as a gift presented to the patron is a topos, and it may also be represented as a luxury object: cf. the motif in ll. 32–34 of Ibn Darrāj's first panegyric poem to Sulaymān (Ibn Darrāj 1969, 51–57 (poem 27)) where the poem is likened to a jewel. Cf. also the title of the book dedicated to al-Manṣūr by Ṣā'id al-Baghdādī – the *Kitāb al-Fuṣūṣ*, or 'Book of Gems'.

84 Scheindlin 1986, 8–9.

for the broader cultural interests of the particular patrons: architecture for al-Manṣūr, literature for al-Muẓaffar.

The primacy of literature at al-Muẓaffar's court is probably also represented on another object made for the same patron: the Pamplona casket. As we have mentioned (Chapter 7), eight out of this object's nine figurative panels represent scenes of violent combat. However, they are balanced on the front of the casket by a peaceful scene of an outdoor gathering. Its three eight-lobed medallions contain '"courtly" scenes' that 'constitute segments of one larger scene', which Cynthia Robinson has read as 'a visual representation of the sensual, intimate, literary and – above all – *pleasurable* gatherings which [were] a major focus of court literature' under the ʿĀmirids.[85] As discussed in Chapter 7, it is likely that here we see al-Muẓaffar and his *nudamā'* gathered at a poetic *majlis* in the gardens of his palace, listening to the poetry sung by the musicians at the centre, and enjoying wine and the scent of flowers, that will no doubt lead to further poetic improvisation. This leisure activity is earned through the success of al-Muẓaffar's military exploits – his legitimising role as *mujāhid* – visualised on the back of the casket in which he fends off the attack of two lions, and underscored by the scenes of human and animal combat on the casket's remaining panels.

The coexistence on ʿĀmirid objects of such contrasting images – peaceful nature and belligerent combat – was a deliberate iconographic choice. Moreover, it was a choice that implied the ways in which the ʿĀmirids wished to represent themselves. It has also been observed that the poetic equivalents of these images are important concepts in the vocabulary of the virtues of the ideal ruler. In fact, it is these contrasting but complementary virtues (the 'generosity-ruthlessness doublet' again) which the iconography of all these objects encapsulates: it is not quite the dichotomy of *dār al-islām*/*dār al-ḥarb* that Ettinghausen read in the Khirbat al-Mafjar mosaic, but to an extent that scene may evoke the same combination of the ruler's physical courage – which he used for the defense of Islam – and his courtly refinement, epitomised through his cultural patronage, which we see encapsulated on the ʿĀmirid objects. It should be remembered that the development and maintenance of a flourishing court is only possible in an atmosphere of security – indeed, that courtliness is a luxury of peacetime. The iconography of these ʿĀmirid objects thus represents two sides of the same coin, and tells us much about the ways in which the *ḥujjāb* saw themselves as fulfilling the ideals of rulership. This interpretation will be further elaborated below.

1.3 *The 'Heraldic' Eagle* (*Figures 116, 132, 158*)

In contrast to the motifs discussed above – which, though they seem to have clear meanings in this specific local context, were nevertheless quite common elements in the artistic and poetic vocabulary of rulers throughout the Islamic world – the splayed eagle, another of the prominent images on ʿĀmirid objects (seen on the three large marble basins, the Pamplona casket, a version of it on the Suaire de Saint Lazare), was not. While the image of the bird of prey (whether eagle or falcon) alighting on a weaker bird or animal is relatively common in the art of al-Andalus both before and during the ʿĀmirid period, there is an important formal distinction which allows the differentiation of two types: the bird alighting is usually represented with its body in profile and its wings uplifted on either side – I will call this the 'profile' pose; in contrast, the 'frontal' eagle maintains a hieratic and impossible pose, with its full-frontal body, legs and wings splayed straight out to its sides, and its head turned in profile. The two types can be compared on the lid of the Pamplona casket, where the 'profile' type fills the central medallion of the topmost plaque (Figure 124A), while two 'frontal' eagles occur at the extreme right and left sides of the back slope of the lid (Figure 124B).

85 Robinson 2007, 109. Naváscues y de Palacio 1964a, 244, describes this scene as 'an open-air fiesta'.

The visual models for this motif are not problematic to identify. If, as suggested in Chapter 6, Andalusi carvers at this period were looking to locally sourced examples of Classical and Late Antique art for their models and inspiration, there was no shortage of eagles – the quintessential Imperial emblem – to choose from in the region that had once been the capital of Roman Hispania. One such example is the late second-century marble altar dedicated to Venus Victrix from Mérida, now in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid (Figure 98). Designers of ʿĀmirid objects might also have looked to textile models, and it is remarkable how similar stylistically the eagles on the basins are to contemporary Byzantine silks. Particularly close comparisons are the silks used for the shroud of Saint Germain (d. 448), from the church of Saint Eusèbe, Auxerre (Figure 87), and the chasuble of Saint Albuin (975–1006) at Brixen/Bressanone.[86] John Beckwith supposed that these silks were produced at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries, since an inventory mentions that the Auxerre shroud was donated *c.* 1030 by Hugues de Châlons; it also describes it as *casula … purpurea grandes aquilas coloris coccinei intextas*, 'a purple chasuble with large eagles woven in a red colour'. It must have been at this time that the silk was translated into the tomb of Saint Germain. However, it is certain that the eagle was being used in Byzantine textiles well before this: in 938, the Emperor Romanos Lecapenos (r. 920–944) sent to the Abbasid caliph al-Rāḍī bi-llāh (r. 934–940) a gift which included 'seven silk carpets (*sufar dībāj*) for eating off, made of silk and decorated with images of eagles in two colours'.[87] It is thus probable that the datable eagle silks from Auxerre and Brixen came from a well-established industry, rather than indicating the beginning of a tradition.

Byzantine textiles decorated with such motifs must have existed in al-Andalus: as we have seen, Byzantine embassies came to Cordoba during the reigns of all three caliphs, and no doubt brought such imperial gifts with them. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III seems to have been in possession of at least one Byzantine imperial textile by the 930s as he redeployed it in his own gifts: the gift to Mūsā ibn Abī al-ʿĀfiyya in 934 included a 'large silver caliphal perfume chest … whose interior was lined with purple fabric'.[88] Such silks may have been highly visible at the court: we know that the caliph displayed prestigious or meaningful gifts, such as the great pearl he had received from the Emperor Leo VI (r. 886–912) that hung in his throne hall (Chapter 2).[89] During the reception of John of Gorze in 956, the caliphal *majlis* was so completely covered with sumptuous textiles that 'the walls and the floor seemed the same'.[90] On such an occasion, calculated as it was to overawe, it is likely that prized Byzantine textiles, received during diplomatic encounters and thus pointed indicators of the caliph's imperial connections, would have been displayed. 'Robes of *rūmī* brocade' were mentioned among the textile gifts which al-Manṣūr distributed after the Santiago campaign (Chapter 6), suggesting that the ʿĀmirids also had access to Byzantine silks. However, the eagle on Byzantine imperial silks is a lone creature: it never features smaller animals grasped in its talons, which is how the design invariably occurs on ʿĀmirid objects. Perhaps this represents an Islamicising of the Byzantine image, absorbing this royal creature into the more familiar repertoire of animal combats, which also accords with the martial sense of ʿĀmirid objects. Another Islamicising feature seems to be that the eagles are rendered with pointed ears. As discussed in Chapter 7, it has been suggested that, because they have pointed ears, these large birds are not eagles at all, but instead represent frontally depicted griffins, which are represented with pointed ears on Roman sarcophagi (Figure 97). However, griffins in al-Andalus tend to be depicted with the body

86 Beckwith 1989, 45. On the Byzantine silks, see also Muthesius 1995 and 1997, and Cutler 2003.

87 Hamidullah 1960, 287.

88 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 264 (§238).

89 Ruggles 2000, 67.

90 Paz y Melia 1931, 147, chapter 133.

of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. The viewer of this motif on the basins undoubtedly *sees* an eagle here, and that is what matters for its interpretation.

The 'heraldic' eagle was adopted and adapted from Roman and Byzantine art as much for its striking appearance as for its connotations of imperial power. But its forceful repetition in ʿĀmirid art indicates that it had a deeper significance than this. This is one motif where the poetry is not particularly helpful in elucidating its meaning, since the eagle is an uncommon poetic image. In contrast to the plethora of lion images in Ibn Darrāj, the eagle occurs only once:

"Direct [the Muslim armies] against the disordered enemy, who are like eagles and falcons that have sought refuge in the inaccessible summits of the highest mountains …"[91]

On the few occasions the eagle does occur in Andalusi poetry of this time, it has a clear association with death, as for example,

"But over his head there hovered the eagles of death,
Suffocating him with their gigantic wings …"[92]

This is also how the image is used in some verses by Ibn Khafāja (1058–1138):

"And what is the soul of man if not the prey (*ṭarīda*) over which glides the eagle of death (*ʿuqāb al-ḥimām*)?"[93]

This poetic image might suggest a meaning for the artistic representation of the eagle which traps prey in its claws, though the implication of flight in all these verses would perhaps imply that as images they relate better to the 'profile' type. However, there is one particular poetic context in which eagles do consistently occur – in passages describing military processions, where they adorn the banners of the Umayyad army. For example, in Ibn Darrāj's description of the embassy of Ibn Gómez to Cordoba *c.* 995 (Chapter 2),

"The [Christians] walked in the shadows of the banners which reminded them of the days when eagles and birds of prey beset them
And they had to take care of the blazons of each victor which, at times, attacked the wind and, at others, devoured the danger,
And every eagle wishes to devour the livers of their enemies with the tip of its sharp beak
And a dangerous serpent snakes about the heads of the dead enemies to devour them
The lions roar, and the banners wave as if they were [fluttering] hearts
And the cavalry is lined up one next to the other in a formation which no-one could attack …"[94]

Likewise, on the occasion of Sancho Abarca's visit to Cordoba in 992, the striking images on the banners are implicated in his terror of the army and of al-Manṣūr's mercy:

"Awe of the army frightened him so that he drew back in terror …
He didn't blink an eye, unless a lion should attack another out of terror of the lances,
And a snake, which the air attacked in alarm, lay in wait one black night for another snake,
And eagles of the mountains, who seemed to [Sancho] at war [with each other], continually swirled around his cadaver …"[95]

91 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 78, l. 55.
92 *Anales*, §180 (p. 202): poem by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Husayn al-Qarawī, l. 4, talking of Ḥasan ibn Kānūn.
93 Pérès 1990, 471, quoted by Cómez Ramos 1982, 132.
94 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 109, ll. 19–24.
95 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 107, ll. 36–39.

These verses play with the poetic conceit that an image seems so real that it might come alive, a sensation which must have been enhanced in real life by the movement of the banners in the wind. They conjure a picture of so many banners that they clash together, suggesting that their designs of seemingly-real animals are trying to attack each other. These verses imply, further, that the banners were clustered together according to designs (so that lions attack lions, eagles eagles etc), which could suggest that these three animals – lions, snakes, and eagles – identified particular divisions within the Andalusi army.

To confirm that these poetic passages do accurately describe the kinds of banners that the Umayyad army carried, we can refer to the textual descriptions of two similar military processions (*burūz*) during al-Ḥakam's reign. In the year 360/971, a major ceremony was arranged to receive the brothers Jaʿfar and Yaḥya ibn ʿAlī al-Andalusī, two men who had previously been high members of the Fatimid administration in North Africa but who sought allegiance with the Umayyads at this time.[96] Their visit to Cordoba was escorted by Ibn Abī ʿĀmir. They

"passed before a formation of banner-bearers, who held aloft admirable flags of extraordinary kinds and workmanship, a hundred in number, with terrible images, such as lions with their jaws open, terrifying leopards, eagles swooping on their prey and horrible dragons …"[97]

There is an almost identical passage in the description of Ghālib's triumphal procession in 364/975, after his defeat of Ḥasan ibn Qānūn:

"Then they passed … between two ranks of men holding banners and standards of rich textiles and surprising forms, together with other flags on which were represented the figures of lions, tigers, dragons, eagles and other terrible images …"[98]

The mention of 'lions with their jaws open' and 'eagles swooping on their prey' once again evokes the decoration of the ʿĀmirid basins. This description also indicates that the eagles on the banners had prey, as they do on the ʿĀmirid objects (indeed as they are also represented in the few poetic citations mentioned above). The word translated by Emilio García Gómez as 'dragons' (*thaʿbān*, ثعبان) could equally imply 'griffins', another motif that was emerging in Andalusi art at this time.[99]

1.3.1 Banners

"One of the emblems of royal authority is the display of banners and flags and the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets and drums."

IBN KHALDŪN[100]

We know very little about the banners of the Umayyad army, or indeed about banners from the early Islamic period in general. As discussed in Chapter 5, from the 'religious ceremony' of the knotting of the banners before the Andalusi army departed on campaign, we know the names of 'three of the most esteemed banners': al-ʿUqda, al-ʿAlam and al-Shaṭranj.[101] The latter seems to

96 Manzano 2019, 173–4; Bennison 2007a, 75.

97 *Anales*, §26 (p. 68); see also García Gómez 1967, 168–169.

98 *Anales*, §203 (pp. 237–238); cf. García Gómez 1967, 168–169.

99 I would like to thank Xavier Ballestín for confirming this. In an anecdote (related in *Bayān* III:114 [translation, 103–104]), the Zanāta chieftain of the Banū Birzāl reproaches the Umayyad caliph Sulaymān for having appointed a Shiʿi, ʿAlī ibn Ḥammūd, as governor of Ceuta. ʿAbd Allāh al-Birzālī comments, 'You have made him a dragon/griffin/monster snake (*thaʿbān*) when he was only a snake (*aḥnāsh*)'. This political error came home to roost when a short time later ʿAlī ibn Ḥammūd overthrew and killed Sulaymān.

100 Ibn Khaldūn 1969, 214–5, cited in Alexander 2000, 229.

101 *Anales*, §9 (pp. 48–50); cf. García Gómez 1967, 168–169; Manzano 2019, 292–5.

have been the most important of the three, as it is mentioned in other processions as well: when al-Ḥakam II left Madīnat al-Zahrā' in 971 he was 'proceeded by different classes of banners and ensigns, amongst which, for the special honour with which his lord distinguishes it, was the lofty Shaṭranj'; on another occasion, Ghālib sent a military detachment to Cordoba 'in perfect formation with parade ornaments including the Shaṭranj'.[102] This was probably so-called because it had a design like a chess board; as David Nicolle notes, this 'checky' pattern is the oldest in northern European heraldry[103] – could it have been influenced by this Umayyad caliphal ensign? As we have seen, other banners borne by the Andalusi army had figures, described in al-Rāzī's Annals as *rāyāt muṣawwara* (§203). As such the Andalusi Umayyads seem to have been unusual in employing such a range of figurative motifs, though the Fatimids used lion-shaped windsocks in their ceremonial processions, as discussed below.

As Andrew Marsham notes, banners already played an important role in 'rituals of Islamic monarchy' during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, and there are many references to banners in the historical tradition: 'Possession of a banner tied by the Prophet was a mark of authority and honour: the names of those given banners by the Prophet before raids were remembered; which banners subsequently took part in important battles were also remembered. When the Prophet delegated military command to a tribal envoy, he is often said to have "tied a banner for him over his people" (*'aqada lahu liwā'an 'alā qawmihi*) … The banner was the pre-eminent symbol of a "co-liable-group" in assembly for war, and in battle itself'.[104]

However, the historical texts preserve very little information about what military banners actually looked like. The earliest available visual evidence, for the Islamic West or East, are the illustrations in Castilian manuscripts such as the *Cantigas de Santa María* or Islamic manuscripts such as the *Maqāmāt*, dating from the thirteenth century, while the earliest surviving objects that can definitely be identified as banners are Marinid, from around the middle of the fourteenth century (Figure 172).[105] These examples are all epigraphic, with bold Qur'ānic quotations or religious slogans. A rare depiction from the tenth century, on an Abbasid lustre bowl, likewise shows an epigraphic banner.[106]

As early as the Battle of Ṣiffīn in 37/657, Islamic tribal groupings on each side bore distinctive emblems on their military banners (Ar. *rāya*, *liwā'*, or *'alam*), which served to identify them as members of a kinship group, and even their status within that group: the *liwā'* probably signified military command, while *rāyāt* were the emblems of a kinship group, or in some cases a personal emblem.[107] The two sides could be distinguished

102 Nicolle 2001, 13–14.

103 Nicolle 2001, 14.

104 Marsham 2009, 64–66.

105 The so-called 'Pendón de las Navas de Tolosa' (*Al-Andalus* cat. 92, *Maroc Médiéval* 98–9) has been uncritically accepted as a banner seized by Alfonso VIII of Castile in his resounding defeat of the Almohads in 1212; however, more recent studies place its technique and decoration in the fourteenth century, and associate it with surviving Marinid banners, made in Fez: see Ali-de-Unzaga 2006, Ali-de-Unzaga 2007, *Maroc Médiéval* 542–7, cat. 330. The silk fragment tapestry-woven with epigraphic bands in gold thread found at the church of Colls in Huesca is often described as a banner, following a suggestion made by Cristina Partearroyo, but this is much more likely to be a *ṭirāz*, with its mirror image inscriptions (only the *basmala* is preserved) on either side of a decorative band: *Al-Andalus*, cat. 22. Very few surviving textiles can be definitively identified as banners, though it seems that a textile in the Newberry Collection (Ashmolean Museum, inv. 1984.137), featuring a white appliqué lion on a blue cotton ground, may have been. The textile has been carbon dated to 980–1100, so it was certainly Fatimid-era. It was published by Suleman 2011, 223–225, fig. 86, who says that, rather than a banner carried in court processions, this 'may have functioned as one of the decorative textiles described by mediaeval historians that were used by the residents and shopkeepers of Fatimid Cairo to adorn their homes and shop-fronts during public holidays and court processions'.

106 Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. MAO 23.

107 Hinds 1996, 104 ff; see also Kennedy 2001, 99.

FIGURE 172 Banner made for the Marinid Sultan Abū'l-Ḥasan, 1339–40, silk with tapestry decoration in silk and gold thread; Toledo Cathedral

from one another,[108] and while these emblems were mainly non-representational – their distinguishing characteristics based rather on varying colours, patterns or religious inscriptions – others were figurative, such as the *rāya* of the Banū Ghanī and Bāhila, which featured lions.[109] Furthermore, though it probably did not represent this visually, the black *rāya* of the Prophet Muḥammad was known as 'al-ʿUqāb', 'the Eagle'.[110]

As Hugh Kennedy describes, Islamic armies were conventionally drawn up for battle in lines; every officer (*qāʾid*) should know his men and 'each man must know his position in the line (*markaz*) and the banners and flags (*bunūd*, *aʿlam*, *rāyāt*) under which he serves'.[111] Banner-holders had an important role as the banners were 'a key element in maintaining cohesion and morale in the confusion of a closely fought conflict'.[112] In the civil war between the sons of Hārūn al-Rashīd – al-Maʾmūn and al-Amīn (between 811 and 819) – al-Amīn's general, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsa ibn Mahan, arranged his 40,000 strong army into groups of 1000, each with a banner.[113] These could vary greatly in size: al-Ṭabarī, for example, records that the Abbasid general, al-Afshīn, 'used to carry twelve huge black banners … and about 500 small banners'.[114] For the Marinid period, in particular between 1250 and 1350, Amira Bennison comments that 'frustratingly, flags and standards are rarely described in any detail and we are left to ponder what, if any, the difference was between *rāyāt*, *aʿlām* or *bunūd*. In general, however, *bunūd* and *aʿlām* are used in the plural to indicate the massed banners of the army while *rāya* is used for the royal standard of the sultan himself or his representative'.[115] The Marinids used banners on the battlefield to identify the ruler and individual military tribal contingents, and to facilitate order.[116]

In more ceremonial contexts, 'the only distinction between the cavalcade of an official and that of the caliph was the number of flags, or the use of particular colours for the caliph's flag'.[117] In the description of a particularly elaborate New Year procession from towards the end of the Fatimid period, the vizier – who played the same role as the *ḥājib* in al-Andalus – was distinguished by his own insignia: 'he received two standards on long lances, which were carried immediately in front of him, and in addition to these, he received ten banners (*bunūd*), which were larger than the standards (*liwāʾ*) and made of embroidered *dabīqī* linen in various colours'.[118] Here the material is probably significant in distinguishing the vizier from the caliph, who was always surrounded by silk. At the same New Year procession, the caliph was accompanied by two 'standards of praise' (*liwāʾay al-ḥamd*), 'made of white silk embroidered in gold [and] attached to two long lances'; and by 21 fine banners (*rāyāt liṭāf*), each carried by one of the caliph's mounted escort, 'embroidered with silk in contrasting colours and bearing the Fatimid slogan, *naṣr min allāh wa fatḥ qarīb*, "Victory from God and speedy triumph". They were attached to lances and each had three *ṭirāz* bands. Behind these banners came about 3000 cavalry'.[119] Fatimid processional banners were thus predominantly epigraphic, bearing the dynasty's propagandistic slogans. But there is also one interesting use of a figurative banner. Closest to the caliph and carried by two members of his

108 Hinds 1996, 105.
109 Hinds 1996, 108, and fig. 28.
110 Hinds 1996, fig. 4; and "Ukāb', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition.
111 Kennedy 2001, 23.
112 Kennedy 2001, 29.
113 Kennedy 2001, 108.
114 Alexander 2000, 228. I would like to thank Stéphane Pradines for bringing this article to my attention.
115 Bennison 2014, 269–70.
116 Bennison 2014, 273.
117 Alexander 2000, 229.
118 Sanders 1994, 89. Sanders reconstructs the New Year procession at pp. 87–94, following the eye-witness description of Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, which 'dates in all probability from the last three decades of Fatimid rule' (i.e. approx. 1140–70). See also the mentions of banners in the *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, see al-Ḥijjāwī al-Qaddūmī 1996, 157–158, and 231–232 on the *khazāʾin al-bunūd*.
119 Sanders 1994, 89, 93.

elite bodyguard (*ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*) were 'two lances with crescents of solid gold (*dhahab ṣāmiṭa*), each with a yellow or red brocade lion … The mouths of the lions were round disks, which the wind entered to puff up the figure'.[120] This description makes it clear that the lion banners in the Fatimid procession were windsocks. Could that also have been the case with the figurative banners borne by the Andalusi Umayyad army? This would have given them a more three-dimensional quality and perhaps made them move more vigorously in the wind. Unfortunately there is no indication of this in the texts.

The Fatimid context is the only other context I have found which mentions figurative banners, and even so this is restricted to the image of the lion which, in the Ismaʿīlī context, probably symbolises ʿĀlī, as Fahmida Suleman has argued.[121] Returning to the Andalusi context, and to the specific motif of the eagle, it is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III who can be credited with introducing the eagle onto the banners of the Umayyad army. In 322/933–4, just a few years after proclaiming his caliphate, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān set off on campaign against Osma, preceded by a magnificent and luxurious military *burūz*. After describing the caliph's appearance, his mount, and the formation of troops around him, Ibn Ḥayyān continues:

"So as to make the display more spectacular [al-Nāṣir] increased the types of military equipment used and the formidable, beautiful and important insignias of the different types of banners and standards, and on this occasion the eagle appeared among the banners, which [al-Nāṣir] had invented, since no ruler before him had had it, and the people gazed at it with curiosity and delight, and it was the subject of endless conversations … [Afterwards] the poets mentioned in many and excellent poems the magnificence of the parade and departure of al-Nāṣir on this expedition, the majesty of his banners, the great number of his soldiers, his impressive attire and the brilliance of his entourage, and greatly praised the recent and ingenious adoption of eagles onto the banners …"[122]

As was noted above, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān created a striking visual association between himself and the lion. It seems he did something similar with its counterpart, 'the lion of the air',[123] introducing it onto military banners in this highly conspicuous manner. The eagle's poetic association with death would make it an appropriate image for a banner carried into battle (signifying the imminence of the enemy's death). However, it is also probable that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān intended to draw a visual parallel between himself and the Byzantine Emperors who used this image, especially if the representation of the eagles on the banners was based on Imperial silks that the caliph had received through diplomatic exchanges. It therefore became a striking emblem of power, inextricably associated in the minds of the Andalusi poets and people with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. Was he also making a link to his ancestor, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I, who had been known as the 'falcon of the Quraysh' (*ṣaqr quraysh*)? Was ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III laying claim to be the '*eagle* of the Quraysh', as well as the 'lion of the caliphate'? He may also have perceived a connection between his adoption of the eagle onto his banners, and the fact that the Prophet Muḥammad's *rāya* was named 'the Eagle' (al-ʿUqāb). As mentioned, this *rāya* was probably aniconic, however the tradition of its name must have been well-known to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān as an Islamic ruler and warrior who claimed descent from the Banū Quraysh, and who claimed to be the Prophet's legitimate successor (*khalīfa*).

While the adoption of the eagle banners was still brand new, later the same year ʿAbd al-Raḥmān included other banners with figurative designs,

120 Sanders 1994, 89, 93, discussed at p. 96: 'The colors red and yellow were associated directly with the caliph and also appeared in the banners with the lions'.

121 Suleman 2011.

122 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 250–251 (§§224–225).

123 "Ukāb', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition.

including an eagle, in his extensive diplomatic gift to Mūsā ibn Abī al-ʿĀfiyya:

"This gift had, among the curiosities of weapons, four banners (*bunūd*). The first banner had the image of a varicoloured eagle. It had a silver head, with gilded inscriptions; two red eyes; and in the middle of its forehead, a green stone. A second banner had the image of a lion that was also decorated. It had a silver head and sky-blue eyes. A third banner was of a large white horse sewn in gold with writing covering a wide area on its three sides. A fourth banner was red. Sewn in silver on its three sides was writing covering a wide area."[124]

Thus, by 934, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's banners already included other figurative emblems in addition to the eagle. Since the eagle is the only one highlighted in Ibn Ḥayyān's description of the *burūz* before the campaign against Osma, it is likely that the other motifs – the lion and the white horse – were already in use. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān clearly also made use of epigraphic banners, and the text indicates that these inscriptions were 'written' (*maktūb*) in contrasting colours – silver on a red ground in the last case. These inscriptions 'cover[ed] a wide area on its three sides': as such it calls to mind the way the inscription is organised around three sides of the back of al-Manṣūr's marble basin. Finally, the colour combinations of each banner are carefully noted – as mentioned above, the use of different colours might distinguish different individuals within a procession or on the battlefield, so their colourways are significant.

The intention of including these banners in Mūsā's gift was obviously that he should display them and thereby display his allegiance to the Umayyads. It is clear from other passages in the *Muqtabis* that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's Berber allies publicised their Umayyad allegiance through the hoisting of banners, and their rejection of the Fatimids by refusing to hoist theirs: for example, Idrīs al-Ḥasanī, lord of the Rashgūn, sent ʿAbd al-Raḥmān two letters in consecutive years, in both of which he pleaded, 'I swear by my relationship with the Prophet that I never accepted the [Fatimids'] pretensions, nor did I raise their banner'.[125] Similarly, after the victory over the Ḥafṣūnids and the conquest of Bobastro, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's appointed representatives entered the city, 'taking possession of it for the *sulṭān* and hoisting his banners on the walls'.[126] These passages and others indicate that the raising of banners represented an important display of Umayyad allegiance; it follows that these banners must somehow have been recognisably Umayyad, and recognisably *not* Fatimid.

Michael Brett has recently described the insignia that accompanied the *sijillāt* (diplomatic correspondence) sent by the Fatimids to the Zīrids in Ifrīqiya in the 1020s, in the context of waning allegiance on the part of the latter. Brett notes that 'such insignia … undoubtedly served as the outward signs of … conferment, and in that capacity were … indispensable to the public display which may have been the essential proof of the transaction. Presumably for that reason the insignia described in the sources were most conspicuously flags'.[127] Two flags sent in 414/1023–4 were called *manjūq*, 'evidently sumptuous banners of gold and silver brocade, in addition to the more numerous *bunūd* or *alwiya* that came with every delegation, some fifteen or twenty at a time, embroidered with gold. All were immediately displayed to the populace in spectacular cavalcades'.[128] Interestingly, in 411/1020, the Zīrid ruler al-Muʿizz sent a letter to the Fatimid al-Ḥākim (r. 996–1021), 'reporting the demise of the rival Umayyad caliphate at Cordoba'; in response, the 'message from

124 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 265 (§239); this translation was prepared by Stuart Sears for Anderson and Rosser-Owen 2015.

125 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 200 (§§174–175).

126 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 164 (§137).

127 Brett 2015, 153.

128 Brett 2015, 153–4.

Cairo [was] one of congratulation, accompanied by the presentation … of fifteen gold-embroidered flags, whose arrival was the occasion for a celebratory parade'.[129] Since the texts give no indication of figurative designs, it seems likely that the many gold-embroidered banners sent to the Zīrids were epigraphic, probably displaying the Fatimid slogan (*naṣr min allāh wa fatḥ qarīb*) or other Ismaʿīlī religious formulae.

Might this fundamental consideration have been another concern behind ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's introduction of the eagle onto his banners since, unlike the lion, it was not an image the Fatimids used? When Ibn Ḥayyān says that 'no ruler before [al-Nāṣir] had had [the eagle]' as a symbol, he obviously means 'no *Muslim* ruler'. The evidence we have for the Fatimid use of such emblems all post-dates this period: the earliest examples of the Fatimid depiction of an 'imperial' eagle are the lustre bowls signed by Muslim (Figure 119), which date from the late tenth century at the very earliest, and probably the early eleventh.[130] Do these Fatimid eagles reference Andalusi models? The lion-shaped windsocks mentioned above date from the second half of the twelfth century.

Adopting the eagle into his military art, where it probably joined a menagerie of other fierce animals – a menagerie which seems only to have expanded during al-Ḥakam's reign, judging by the descriptions in al-Rāzī's Annals – was a significant move in terms of the articulation and legitimation of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's caliphate. The eagle seems to have become a recognisably Umayyad emblem – the fact that it was singled out by Ibn Ḥayyān in discussing its adoption onto the banners would indicate that. Its appearance inside several of the medallions on the Oña silk (Figure 137C) may be a good reason for associating that embroidery with a caliphal production under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, as Casamar and Zozaya did.[131] This might invite the consideration that other motifs contained within the medallions of that embroidery were also used on the banners – for example, the enigmatic motif of the bird riding on the back of a horse: as we saw above, one of the banners sent to Mūsā was adorned with a 'large white horse'. If, as suggested in Chapter 7, textiles such as the Oña embroidery served as hangings in campaign tents, or even within palace halls, the encapsulation of motifs from the military banners would surround ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and his courtiers with an iconography of war.

Before the ʿĀmirid period, the heraldic eagle appears very infrequently in Andalusi art and, apart from this embroidery, the only other extant object to employ it is the small ivory pyxis made for al-Ḥakam (Figure 86): the sole decoration of this openwork container, apart from minimal vegetal motifs and its inscription in simple Kufic, are the four heraldic eagles on the lid, enclosed within four-lobed medallions. Significantly, this pyxis may have been commissioned for al-Ḥakam to celebrate the birth of his son, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān – the identical phrasing of its inscription to that made for his consort Ṣubḥ in 964, and the fact that they both appear to preserve their original mounts, made in an identical style and technique, indicates that they were made as a pair.[132] Al-Ḥakam was around 50 years old by that date, and one of the main concerns of the period had been the need for an heir to continue the Umayyad caliphate into the next generation. The eagles on his

129 Brett 2015, 155.

130 Jenkins 1968.

131 Casamar and Zozaya 1991, 56–57, who argue for a very precise dating of the embroidery to the early 930s precisely because of the introduction of the eagle to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's banners. More recently, see Ali-de-Unzaga 2012a, 2012b.

132 For al-Ḥakam's pyxis, see Ferrandis, 1935, vol. 1, cat. 5; Kühnel 1971, cat. 27. For the 'Zamora pyxis', made for Ṣubḥ (which has generated a long bibliography), Ferrandis, 1935, vol. 1, cat. 4; Kühnel 1971, cat. 22; for a discussion of them as a pair, based on the close similarity of their mounts, see Rosser-Owen 2012, 309.

pyxis might triumphalise the fact that this longed-for Umayyad heir had finally arrived.

It seems highly probable, then, that by the time al-Manṣūr ordered four heraldic eagles to be carved on to the short ends of his marble basin (Figure 116), the 'frontal' type had become a recognisable emblem of the Umayyad caliphate in al-Andalus. The ʿĀmirids' highly visible employment of this emblem in their artistic vocabulary may thus have been intended to display their *own* allegiance to the Umayyads – just as the caliphate's Berber clients did by publicly displaying the banners which bore this image. This implies that the 'petrification' on the basins of the banners which the Umayyad troops, led by their ʿĀmirid generals, carried into battle, was intended to underline the ʿĀmirids' control of the army and their role as *mujāhidūn*. But the motif on the basins has a twist. The eagles on both the Oña silk and al-Ḥakam's pyxis are depicted in very similar fashion to the Byzantine imperial textiles, in that they do not have pointed ears nor clutch prey in their talons. This might be a symptom of the relatively recent introduction of the motif, implying that artisans were still looking to the original model of Byzantine silks and had not yet 'naturalised' this image. On the other hand, these elements, which are so consistently used on the ʿĀmirid objects, could have been a deliberate ʿĀmirid innovation: indeed, was this the way the emblem appeared on the ʿĀmirids' own military banners?

In al-Manṣūr's and ʿAbd al-Malik's basins, the eagles grip gazelles in their talons, and support small lions on their 'shoulders'; small griffins are under the eagles' feet. If the griffin motif stands for the office of the *ḥājib*, as Montejo has suggested (Chapter 6), this placement and relative scale is significant. The large bold eagle, which stands for the Umayyad army and by extension the caliphate, is supported by small griffins, representing the ʿĀmirid *ḥujjāb*, who support the caliph by standing in for him in battle, since Hishām was not capable of leading the Umayyad armies into the field himself; the griffins are also *under the feet* of the Umayyad emblem, showing the ʿĀmirids' subservience to the caliphate. The prey – gazelles – grasped in the eagle's talons represent the enemies of the Umayyad state and the fate that will befall them in battle, while the small lions also stand for the ʿĀmirids, an association underlined by its metaphorical repetition in panegyric poetry. Perhaps the pointed ears were adopted to make the eagles look even more fierce. This then becomes a new emblem. Its use on the basins, disposed so insistently as symmetrical pairs at each short end, thus 'petrifies' the designs of the banners which the ʿĀmirids themselves carried into battle; it speaks to the way in which they identified themselves through their role as leaders of the Andalusi armies, whose victories enhanced the power and prestige of the Umayyad state, but also as servants and supporters of the caliph, and actors in his name.

Given the numbers of campaigns in which al-Manṣūr engaged throughout his *ḥijāba*, military banners and their devices likely played an important role in ʿĀmirid visual identity. As discussed in Chapter 4, al-Madīnat al-Zāhira was located next to a military camp, whose forces could be called on to defend the city at any time; it may also have been sited in geographical proximity to the Faḥṣ al-Surādiq, the army's mustering ground (Figure 17). The vista which al-Zāhira presented may thus have been one in which the banners of the different regiments were constantly fluttering. Both Ibn ʿIdhārī's statement, that 'from [al-Zāhira] the standards marched direct to certain victory', and the metaphor of flowers evoking 'victorious banners trembling on the day of combat', in al-Jazīrī's description of the ʿĀmirid palace in the poem quoted at the start of this chapter, seem to contain a memory of this visual association between banners and the palace-city.[133] Furthermore, the ceremony of knotting the banners was a key moment in the ritual of preparing for campaign, and under the ʿĀmirids this may have taken place in the new tribune constructed within the Cordoba Mosque by al-Manṣūr (Chapter 5). Not only would these banners have been carried in their hundreds by the Umayyad

133 Bariani 2002a, 328, citing *Bayān* II:277.

troops when marching in procession or onto the battlefield, but al-Manṣūr himself – 'at their centre in the most protected position'[134] – would surely be visibly identified by banners of particular designs, colours and quantities, in a similar way to the use of banners by the Abbasids, Fatimids and Marinids, as outlined above. Was the motif of the eagle with its prey supported by griffins the particular emblem that surrounded al-Manṣūr when he rode with his troops?

The descriptions cited above of the banners displayed at al-Ḥakam's *burūz* mention not just eagles but also lions with their jaws open, terrifying leopards, tigers (which might be the same as the leopards), horrible dragons (probably griffins), and 'other terrible images'; this suggests at least four motifs of animals who instill terror in their prey (lions, leopards, griffins, eagles). Ibn Darrāj's poems repeatedly mention three: lions, eagles and birds of prey, and snakes ('dangerous serpents'). These might be the three motifs most closely associated with al-Manṣūr, displayed in terrifying force on the occasion of the two Christian rulers' visits to Cordoba. This might imply, further, that the particular way in which the lion-gazelle motif is depicted in ʿĀmirid art 'petrifies' another of the emblems with which al-Manṣūr was visibly associated in his role as general of the Umayyad armies. All the poetic connotations of that image, discussed above, would still be in play, rendering this motif a particularly aggressive statement of the fate of the Umayyads' enemies. From the surviving evidence, the snake does not become a common motif in ʿĀmirid art – perhaps, outside of the material context of the banner, which is itself fearsome, it is difficult to render this successfully as a fierce creature, though there does seem to be a suggestion of a snake's body on the basin fragments in Granada (Figure 134 L&M). The recurrence of the worm or watersnake in the border motifs of the large ʿĀmirid basins and on many of the small basins does not perhaps relate to the banners, but possibly to a different context entirely, as we will discuss next.

1.4 *The Tale of the Tortoise and Two Ducks*

The motif that inhabits the borders of the large basin group and comprises the main decoration on the small basins shows ducks pecking variously at worms, fishes, and turtles (Figures 117A, 157). As we have seen, these rather unusual motifs relate to the water which the basins contained, to the 'natural' setting of the ʿĀmirid palace gardens in which the basins were located, possibly even to the live ducks, fishes and turtles that swam inside the basins, as al-Jazīrī's poem indicates. On the small basins in Seville and Granada (Chapter 7: 4.2.3.2 and 3, Figures 164–168) the turtle is singled out for a particularly prominent role: on the Granada basin, it occupies two of the chamfered corners of the basin (alternating with paired fishes on the other corners); while on the Seville basin, it forms the central focus of a scene that is repeated on all three of its decorated sides, in which ducks appear to bear down on a tortoise whose legs are splayed as if swimming (or flying?). It seems to be framed by a circular device that suggests a lily-pad or perhaps a pond, and two fishes underneath enhance the association with water. The motif as depicted on the Seville basin bears a striking resemblance to the way in which the 'tale of the tortoise and two ducks' is represented in illustrated versions of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* (Figure 173).[135] Is this pure coincidence?

The *Kalīla wa Dimna* was a 'mirror for princes', told through animal fables, in which the eponymous characters are two jackals at the court of

134 Echevarría 2011, 160.

135 I owe this idea to José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, who presented the Seville basin alongside an illustration of this scene from the copy of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (MS Arabe 3465, folio 67r, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8422961l [consulted 12 January 2020]), in a lecture at the Victoria and Albert Museum, "Qurtuba/Cordoba: Monumentality and artistic sensibility in al-Andalus", on 19 June 2014. I am grateful to Prof. Puerta Vílchez for discussing this idea with me further by email (27 June 2014).

FIGURE 173 *Kalīla wa Dimna*, illustration of the story of the ducks and turtle: Paris, Bib. Nat., MS Arabe 3465, fol. 67r; Syria, about 1200–1220

the lion. Dimna aspires to a higher rank at court, and helps the lion to overcome his fear of the ox, who eventually becomes the lion's boon companion; Dimna is jealous of this friendship, finding his influence with the lion replaced by that of the ox, and resorts to treachery, telling each that the other is about to kill him. Through parables and tales within tales, the different characters teach lessons in morality and wise conduct.[136] The original fable was written in ancient India and translated into Pahlavi for the Sasanian court in the sixth century, then into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ around 750 – though this simple summary belies the multiple origins of many of the fables, including the Panchatantra and the Mahabharata.[137] The earliest surviving illustrated manuscripts in Arabic do not date from before the early thirteenth century, so there is no direct evidence that earlier versions were illustrated, though Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ himself refers to illustration in his own introduction to the book: 'the depiction of animal images in a variety of colours and pigments, so that they delight the hearts of kings; and their enjoyment is increased by the pleasure to be had from these illustrations (*ṣuwar*)'.[138] Ṭabarī's history refers to an illustrated copy of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* in Samarra in 841, while in his introduction to the *Shahnama*, Firdausi mentions that the Samanid sultan Naṣr II ibn Aḥmad (r. 913–42) commissioned a translation into Persian from the poet Rudagi (d. 916), when 'many paintings were added to illustrate the text'.[139] Raby 'safely concludes' that there was a continuing tradition of illustrated *Kalīla wa Dimna* manuscripts between its creation in the eighth century, and the first surviving examples of the thirteenth.[140]

The consistent way in which certain episodes are illustrated across time has convinced scholars that these 'core-images' were 'hardly ever altered'.[141] Ernst Grube pinpoints the tale of the tortoise and two ducks as one of the most memorable: 'Nobody who has ever seriously looked at an illustrated copy of the tales known as *Kalīla wa Dimna* ... will have missed – and once seen, forgotten – the extraordinary image of the "flying tortoise" ... It is an image that was clearly devised for a particular effect: leading him who peruses the manuscript directly into the text'.[142] This story appears in nearly all the early surviving manuscripts of *Kalīla wa Dimna*, and Grube comments that 'it is very likely that this image, and others like it, had been consciously created at the time these stories were first formulated, for they appear in renderings that predate the surviving manuscript illustrations of the *Kalīla wa Dimna*'.[143] He shows two examples of Indian stone sculpture, of which one – a relief of two men killing the tortoise, made in Mathura in the third century – shows the tortoise rendered in a remarkably similar way to the ʿĀmirid marble basins.[144]

The tale tells of a tortoise, who lived in a pond with two ducks, 'joined by the strong ties of friendship'.[145] There came a time when the water in the pond was greatly reduced, and the ducks decided that they had to leave and travel to other places. The tortoise begged them to take her with them, saying 'only people like me suffer when the water runs out, because I cannot live if I am not near it'. The ducks offer to carry the tortoise by each grabbing one end of a stick in their beaks, onto which she can fasten herself by firmly biting it. But, they advise, she must under no circumstances respond to any of the people who will see them along the way. The tortoise agrees, and the ducks take off; the astonished people below, seeing such a spectacle, exclaim to each other, 'Look! How extraordinary! Two ducks carrying a tortoise through the air!' The tortoise, forgetting the ducks'

136 Atıl 1981, 80.
137 Atıl 1981, 55–60; Raby 1987–8.
138 Raby 1987–8, 386.
139 Atıl 1981, 61; Raby 1987–8, 386.
140 Raby 1987–8, 390.
141 Grube 1991, 36.
142 Grube 1991, 36.
143 Grube 1991, 36.
144 Grube 1991, figs 23 and 22 (relief on a stone pillar in Bodh-Gaya, sixth century).
145 This is based on the synopsis provided by Grube 1991, 155 (D2), with adaptations based on the Spanish translation kindly sent me by José Miguel Puerta Vílchez.

advice and 'believing herself strong', opens her mouth to respond; she thus loses her grip on the stick and falls to her death. As Esin Atıl puts it, the 'tortoise did not profit from wise counsel'.[146]

The depiction of the tortoise and ducks on the Seville basin lacks an essential element of the story, that is, the stick which the tortoise bites on in order to fly. This suggests that the scenes on the basin are not intended as a direct representation of this tale, but may still evoke it – even if the primary message was the natural aesthetic of the ʿĀmirid palace garden, the way in which these motifs were represented may still have been informed by an illustrated version of this tale from the *Kalīla wa Dimna*. Could this have been another literary work available at the Umayyad court, providing an iconographical source for the depiction of certain artistic images? As Francisco Prado-Vilar has argued, the existence of an illustrated copy of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* in al-Andalus at this time is highly likely. This book 'stood out as one of the most renowned best-sellers',[147] while Atıl calls it 'the most popularly copied and translated book in Islamic literature'.[148] Given what we know of al-Ḥakam's obsessive acquisitiveness, it is extremely likely that he could have done what he could to obtain a copy for his library. We may recall that he 'sent 10,000 dinars of pure gold to buy the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* from Abū'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, who sent him a copy … even before it saw the light in his native Iraq'.[149] Perhaps other wealthy men of the Cordoban court also had copies of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* in their private libraries. As Jonathan Bloom says, these tales were 'unusually popular in the Middle Ages'.[150] Translations into medieval Hebrew and Latin are known, and a fragment of an illustrated Greek version, copied on parchment, has been attributed to southern Italy between 980 and 1050.[151] Its illustrations bear similarities to those in the later Arabic and Persian manuscripts, which has prompted scholars to suggest that all the extant illustrated versions descend from a common but lost Arabic manuscript dating as early as the tenth century – could this hypothetical illustrated copy of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* have come from al-Andalus?

Prado-Vilar argues that *Kalīla wa Dimna* was a major source for the Andalusi 'mirror for princes', *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, compiled by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī during the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III; indeed, that *al-ʿIqd* was 'likely one of the resources used for the instruction of the caliph's sons, namely the future al-Ḥakam II and al-Mughīra'.[152] He argues that these sources translated into the distinctive and enigmatic iconography of the ivory pyxis made for al-Mughīra in 968 (Figures 3, 171). He has called attention to the resemblances between certain images on the pyxis and illustrations of the *Kalīla wa Dimna*, as if 'the images on the pyxis serve as visual tokens to recall specific episodes'.[153] Familiar with the illustrations of *Kalīla wa Dimna* as al-Mughīra could thus have been, the motifs of lion-bull combat, affronted goats, parrots and falconer, which we see on the ivory, would have called to mind the relevant episodes from the text. Further, in proposing that Ibn Abī ʿĀmir was the 'creative force behind the al-Mughīra pyxis', Prado-Vilar argues that he himself would have known the illustrations of the *Kalīla wa Dimna*, being 'profoundly learned, interested in poetry … and intimately acquainted with the literary productions of the East'.[154] Leaving aside the question of whether or not Ibn Abī ʿĀmir conceived the decorative programme of the al-Mughīra pyxis, it seems plausible that, if illustrated versions of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* were circulating in al-Andalus in the late tenth century, al-Manṣūr and his boon

146 Atıl 1981, 23, 80.
147 Prado-Vilar 2005, 154.
148 Atıl 1981, 61.
149 Puerta Vílchez 2013a, 76 (English version p. 63).
150 Bloom 2001, 166–7.
151 Raby 1987–8, 382–6. The manuscript is Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS 397.
152 Prado-Vilar 2005, 143.
153 Prado-Vilar 2005, 143.
154 Prado-Vilar 2005, 154.

companions from the state elite would have been familiar with the stories, as well as the ways in which they were visualised.

Could the ducks and tortoises on the ʿĀmirid basins be referencing such visualisations of the 'tale of the tortoise and two ducks'? As Grube notes, 'These animal fables used images to communicate clearly and instantly "political" or "didactic" points. If one knows the text or the story, one instantly recognises a pictorial interpretation of a given story, the image becoming a symbol rather than being a mere illustration'.[155] Beyond the witty allusion to the natural environment in which the basins and their viewers sat, this visual reference could have been recognised, admired and appreciated for the way in which it conjured a literary image, perhaps at the same time providing a starting place for further poetic inspiration and improvisation. While pondering this scene with which his basins were adorned, al-Manṣūr would call to mind the story of the tortoise who came to a bad end because she did not understand or respect the rules of good and intelligent conduct. Surrounded by the boon companions who supported and advised him, he would be constantly reminded of the importance of remembering wise counsel.

In sum, the iconography of the ʿĀmirid marble basins, which was carried over into other objects made for the ʿĀmirids, encapsulated their role as *mujāhidūn* for the Umayyad state. This was the fundamental tool by which their role as *ḥujjāb* was legitimised, since the caliph was not able to lead the armies himself. The lion-gazelle motif emblematised the ʿĀmirids' physical courage, which they used for the defence of Islam in their always-victorious military encounters. The incorporation of the eagle emblem from the Andalusi military banners also made an explicit statement of allegiance to the Umayyads, in whose name they always acted, and without whom they would not be in office. Both images acted as 'emblems' in that they may 'petrify' the devices used on the ʿĀmirids' personal banners. The other scenes on the basins allude to their cultural patronage – their love of architecture, poetry on the themes of flowers and nature, literary genres such as the moralising fables of the *Kalīla wa Dimna*. As such, the decoration of the basins evoked the full gamut of princely virtues. These messages were underlined by the inscriptions on these objects – their employment of particular epigraphic formulae, and the deliberate relationships between text and image.

2 Text and Image in ʿĀmirid Art

Under the ʿĀmirids we see a number of interesting changes in the standard formulae of blessings used in the inscriptions on objects. Art historians usually search for an object's messages in its iconography, since it is reasonably assumed that a patron's choice of certain scenes on an object reflects the ways in which he wished to represent himself. However, where an inscription is an integral part of the decorative programme – as it is on the objects we are studying here – this text is no less the result of deliberate choices on the part of the patron, and thus the messages *it* might contain should not be ignored.

In the objects manufactured in al-Andalus at this period, the inscription was fundamental. The epigraphic space was integral to the overall conception, since the inscription was carefully designed to fit the available space, and care was taken over its decorative appearance: seen, for example, in the floriated terminations of many letters, or the floral space-fillers and beaded decoration of the letters themselves on the Pamplona casket (Figure 120). The inscription was also integral to the decoration in that it directed the order in which the scenes should be read – not just from right to left, but also where the iconography begins. Moreover, the placement of key words in direct relation to the iconography was a carefully considered feature of certain inscriptions: for example, the organisation of the decoration at the front of Sanchuelo's pyxis lid (Figures 140) concentrates

155 Grube 1991, 36.

the gaze on the patron's name.[156] This was noted in Chapter 7 as an innovative characteristic of the 'language' of ʿĀmirid art, and an attention to the relationship between inscription and iconography can be seen in other objects too.

As with architectural inscriptions, it is usually the historical information provided – the names of patrons, dates and occasionally places of manufacture – that is the most considered feature. But this is not the sum of what these inscriptions tell us. While the 'historical' formulae remain more or less constant, varying only in the substitution of differing names and dates, the words and phrases of blessing (*adʿiya*, sing. *duʿāʾ*) vary from object to object. As with the Qurʾānic inscriptions studied in Chapter 5, the particular *adʿiya* employed have been an unjustly neglected element of these objects' inscriptions, and they repay a more detailed analysis.

It should be emphasised that these *adʿiya* are drawn from a standard repertoire that is not unique to al-Andalus. In this respect, the blessings used in inscriptions can be seen as the equivalent of the stock repertoire of images that form the 'princely cycle'. Nevertheless, in both cases, a patron's choice of a particular text or image to adorn his commission has implications for the interpretation of that object's meaning, and for the message the patron wished to project about himself. In the case of the ʿĀmirid objects, the relationship between poetic text and image certainly aids the understanding of their meaning, as we have explored above. But what do their inscriptions tell us?

A survey of published inscriptions on the extant luxury objects and architectonic elements produced in al-Andalus between 318/929–30 and 441/1049–50 indicates that four phases are discernible in the phraseology of *adʿiya*, which broadly coincide with the reigns of the first two caliphs, the ʿĀmirid *ḥujjāb*, and the Banū Dhūʾl-Nūn in Taifa-period Toledo. I will not discuss the first or last of these phases. From the surviving evidence, the use of *adʿiya* in al-Andalus seems to have been standardised under the patronage of al-Ḥakam, and the full range of blessings begins in al-Andalus *circa* 966. There is some degree of experimentation with the words used: for example, the adjective *tāmma* ('complete', 'perfect', used with 'baraka'), is used for only two years,[157] and *salāma*, *rafʿa* and *karāma* all occur once only.[158] The blessings which become most frequent are *surūr* ('joy, happiness, pleasure'), *ʿizz* ('strength, might, honour'), *ʿāfiya* ('health, well-being, vigour'), *niʿma* ('blessing, grace, favour') and *yumn* ('good fortune, prosperity'). The most significant aspect of the *adʿiya* used in the pre-ʿĀmirid phase is that they are all simple wishes for health, happiness and well-being, which can be considered appropriate for luxury objects made to be given as gifts.

This characteristic changes under the ʿĀmirids. In general there is a high degree of continuity from the previous phases (in the use of 'royal' phrases such as *aṭāla allāh baqāʾa-hu*, 'May Allah prolong his life!', and *fa-tamma bi-ʿawn allāh*, 'completed with the help of Allah'); there is more experimentation (*dawām*, 'perpetuity', for example, occurs once only, on the Hishām *ṭirāz*, see Figure 9, though in the previous phase *dāʾim* was frequently used as an adjective), and also some interesting revivals from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's phase (such as *aʿazza-hu allāh*, 'May Allah esteem him' or 'make him mighty'). However, the defining characteristic of the ʿĀmirid phase is the introduction of *new* formulae, which have significant implications for the interpretation of the objects on which they occur. These new formulae reflect the ʿĀmirids' military role as defenders of the faith and the

156 Rosser-Owen 1999, 24–25, and discussion in Chapter 7 (3.1).

157 See Ocaña 1941: this word occurs on capitals produced in al-Ḥakam's name between 363/973–4 and 364/974–5 (his #3 and #6).

158 *Salāma* ('blamelessness, well-being') occurs in the inscription of the ivory casket in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs (dated 355/966), which was made for an unspecified patron, 'li-ṣāḥibi-hi': Kühnel 1971, 25. *Rafʿa* ('exalted status') and *karāma* ('nobility, esteem') both occur on the fountain basin made for al-Ḥakam (dated 360/970–971): Cabanelas 1980–81.

state: this is most blatant on ʿAbd al-Malik's marble basin (Appendix 4.13), which describes him as *sayf al-dawla nāṣir al-dīn wa qāmiʿ al-mushrikīn* ('Sword of the State, Defender of the Faith and Tamer of Polytheists'), and the Pamplona casket (Appendix 4.11), which wishes him the 'fulfilment of hopes through good (or pious) works' (*bulūghu amali fī ṣāliḥi ʿamalin* – which could refer to his continued campaigns against the Christians). This also seems to be the sense of a new ʿĀmirid formula, *waffaqa-hu*(*m*) *allāh*, 'May Allah bring him (them) complete success'.[159] Another phrase used by the ʿĀmirids is *ayyada-hu allāh*, 'May Allah strengthen him', which revives a formula experimented with briefly by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.[160] This phrase and the related noun *taʾyīd*, 'support, endorsement', now become standard ʿĀmirid formulae; significantly, *taʾyīd* is invariably paired with *naṣr*, 'victory', which also becomes standard under the ʿĀmirids. Both *taʾyīd* and *naṣr* had each occurred once only under the caliphs, and in both cases in military contexts,[161] which indicates that jihad was implicit in the sense of both words. Of course, since the 960s, the Fatimids had employed the word *naṣr* in their dynastic slogan – *naṣr min allāh wa fatḥ qarīb*, 'Victory from God and speedy triumph' – which was explicitly related to jihad.[162] As observed in the discussion of the naming of al-Madīnat al-Zāhira's main gate, at the end of Chapter 4, the deliberate use of semantics by al-Manṣūr may have had a Fatimid influence. Thus, in contrast to the gentle tone of the phrases employed in the previous (caliphal) phases, which wished the ruler a long life or general well-being, the new ʿĀmirid formulae adopted a martial tone, reflecting the trends in poetry and in artistic iconography that we observed above.

It is perhaps significant that *naṣr* and *taʾyīd* had first seen use under the first two Umayyad caliphs. But given the consistency with which they are paired on ʿĀmirid objects, there is more to the choice of these words than a deliberate association with the caliphs or the reflection of an increasingly militaristic state. This pairing now becomes a standard epigraphic formula: in chronological order of the objects' creation, the phrase *naṣr wa taʾyīd* occurs on al-Manṣūr's basin (987, Appendix 4.7); then on Sanchuelo's pyxis lid (999, Appendix 4.10), which also features *ayyada-hu allāh* after the patron's name, giving extra emphasis to the new formula; then on ʿAbd al-Malik's basin (1004–7, Appendix 4.13). The formula does not feature on the Pamplona casket but in general that inscription features non-standard phrases which also convey martial messages (Appendix 4.11).

It is no accident that *taʾyīd* and *ayyada-hu* share a root with the *laqab* taken by Hishām II, 'al-Muʾayyad bi-llāh', 'He who is supported/endorsed by Allah'. It is a significantly weaker title than those of his father (al-Mustanṣir, 'he who is made victorious by Allah') and grandfather (al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, 'champion for the religion of Allah'), both deriving from the root *n-ṣ-r*. The phrase *ayyada-hu allāh* may have been revived precisely because of its semantic association with the new caliph. However, it becomes even less of a coincidence when we consider that 'al-Manṣūr', 'he who is (made) victorious [understood: by Allāh]', also derives from the root *n-ṣ-r*.

159 Lévi-Provençal 1931, 189 (#204), translates this phrase more neutrally, as 'may Allah assist him (them)', but the verb *wafaqa* only has the sense of 'assist' in form V, and it is form II that is used in the ʿĀmirid inscriptions.

160 He had used *ayyada-hu allāh* in the foundation inscription of the arsenal he built at Tortosa in 333/944–5: cf. Lévi-Provençal 1931, 83–84 (#86).

161 The inscription from the arsenal at Tortosa contains the phrase *fa-tamma bi-ʿawn allāh wa naṣri-hi*, cf. Lévi-Provençal, 1931, 83–84; and a *burj* built by al-Ḥakam at Baños de la Encina (Jaén), dated 357/968, contains the phrase *fa-tamma wa kamala bi-ḥawl allāh wa taʾyīdi-hi*: Lévi-Provençal 1931, 134–135 (#150). This pairing of *taʾyīd* with *ḥawl* conveys a clear sense of Allah's *power*, which would be an appropriate concept for a military installation.

162 Bloom 1985, 31; Bloom 2011, 144. He notes that this phrase (Qurʾān 61:13) is particularly used on objects made soon before the Fatimids' conquest of Egypt (such as the ivory casket made for al-Muʿizz, now in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid), and not afterwards.

The consistent pairing of the two words *naṣr wa taʾyīd* in the ʿĀmirid inscriptions is not just an anodyne request for favour from God; instead, it encodes the throne-names of both the caliph and his *ḥājib*. The ordering of the words may also be significant – 'al-Manṣūr' always comes first – and since the phrase follows immediately from *baraka min allāh*, the implication is that it is also from Allah that *naṣr* and *taʾyīd* derive. This construction thereby proclaims that *both* men drew their power from God, and thus seems to have been a subtle yet intentional legitimising device on the part of the ʿĀmirid patrons.

This encoded epigraphic pairing of Umayyad and ʿĀmirid mirrors the visual pairing seen in the iconography of the marble basins, in particular in the eagle emblems that may have adorned the ʿĀmirids' banners. It is clear that through this combination of epigraphy and iconography, the ʿĀmirid patrons aimed to convey a message about the nature of their power, and from where it derived. In this regard it is probably significant that the inscriptions on most of the ʿĀmirid objects (al-Manṣūr's basin, the Pamplona casket, the Braga pyxis, ʿAbd al-Malik's basin) state that 'this is what [the ʿĀmirid patron] ordered to be made for *himself*', *mimma amara bi-ʿamalihi* (Appendix 4.7, 11, 12, 13). (The Sanchuelo pyxis merely lists the blessings *for* (*li-*) the young vizier, possibly implying that someone else – his father? – commissioned the object for him: Appendix 4.10.) From what we have discussed of the Dār al-Ṣināʿa under the ʿĀmirids, it is clear that they could direct the creation of these works, as well as the invention of a new set of visual motifs and invocation formulae. Moreover, when we examine the placement of these key words in relation to the images beneath, the messages conveyed in the inscriptions can shed light on the meaning of the objects' visual programme.

As we have noted, in Islamic art, an object's inscription and its decoration cannot be considered separately, since the order in which the decoration should be read naturally follows the direction of the inscription. The owner of one of the ivory pyxides – which are small and light enough to be handled and whose circular shape invites them to be turned in the hand – could cast his or her eye with ease between the messages of both inscription and iconography. Likewise, the fact that the ʿĀmirid basins are decorated on all four sides implies that they were located in a setting where the viewer could walk around them to read their messages. The visual images presented there were likely to be familiar to the viewer from poetry or other contexts, and he may immediately have recognised their individual meanings. Nevertheless we should not neglect the importance of the inscriptions in conveying to that viewer an overall message which the decorative motifs illustrated.

It has been observed (Chapter 7) that a characteristic of ʿĀmirid art was a carefully-disposed relationship between text and image, which is most obvious in the great care that was taken over the placement of – even emphasis on – the patron's name. Sanchuelo's name on his pyxis lid is highlighted by the disposition of the decoration immediately above it (3.1), and a similar 'signposting' device is used on both the front and back of the Pamplona casket (2.1, Figure 124), where paired medallions on both sides of the lid contain horsemen who direct our gaze down to the decoration on the box below; the device is especially reminiscent of Sanchuelo's pyxis lid at the front of the casket, where the spear plunging into the animal's body points towards the lockplate and by extension the text and image below it. The wishes for *ghibṭa wa surūr* ('prosperity and happiness') in that part of the inscription fit appropriately with the peaceful scene of a garden *majlis* below it. This signposting can also be noted on the Doha box, though there we do not have a named patron (4.1.1).

It is therefore clear that the ʿĀmirids thought carefully about the messages they wished to convey in their art, and about the way in which those messages should be conveyed. The new formulae which the ʿĀmirids introduced to the standard blessings and phrases of invocation on objects carried a martial message that reflects

their self-identity as *mujāhidūn*, in contrast to the gentle wishes of long life and well-being employed under al-Ḥakam's patronage. Though the inscriptions on neither al-Manṣūr's nor al-Muẓaffar's basins survive in their entirety, it is clear from both that they began on the long sides decorated with the lion-gazelle motif (Figures 115, 129). On both objects, then, this motif was what the viewer was intended to consider first. Significantly, on both objects, it is also on this side that the phrase *naṣr wa ta'yīd* occurs, thus the concept of 'victory and support' – coming, it must be remembered, from Allah – is linked to the visual image of lions attacking gazelles. On al-Muẓaffar's basin, the inscription continues with the phrase *sayf al-dawla nāṣir al-dīn wa qāmiʿ al-mushrikīn*, and would have had an unmistakable relation to the combat scenes below. This relationship of text and image indicates definitively that, rather than having an astronomical or erotic connotation, the lion-gazelle combat scenes visualised the victories of the ʿĀmirid *mujāhidūn* over their foes (*mushrikūn*), be they Christians or heretics (Masarris or Fatimids).

Furthermore, these inscriptions inextricably linked this visualisation of military victory to the name of the object's patron, since they continued with the construction *li'l-ḥājib* – or *li'l-wazīr* in the case of Sanchuelo's pyxis lid – followed by his full name including titles. On both basins, the name starts at the end of the side with the lion-gazelle motif and continues round the corner, onto the first short side with eagles: this unites the two images, as well as establishing a clear visual association between the heraldic eagle symbol and the ʿĀmirids' dynastic name (*ibn abī ʿāmir*) (Figure 117B&C). The martial associations of this image, which may 'petrify' the ʿĀmirids' personal military emblems, imply that the eagles on al-Manṣūr's basin symbolised those victories celebrated by and encapsulated in his *laqab*, inscribed on this side of the basin. Similarly, on the Pamplona casket, the phrase *waffaqa-hu allāh*, 'may Allah bring him success', finishes at the exact centre of the inscription on the back of the casket (Figure 122): its placement immediately above the medallion containing a man (undoubtedly al-Muẓaffar) fighting two lions suggests that the 'scenes of war' that comprise the decoration of this side of the casket were intended to visualise the victories which the *ḥājib* was manifestly achieving, and would continue to achieve, as a result of Allah granting him success (*tawfīq*), victory (*naṣr*) and support (*ta'yīd*).

2.1 *Visualising the Ideal Ruler*

This careful placement of the inscriptions to encapsulate and in places elucidate an object's iconography indicates that the ʿĀmirids sought to convey particular messages in their art; furthermore, that they esteemed the luxury arts as vehicles of self-expression, and had a particular audience in mind – their *nudamā'*, with whom they relaxed in private and who consisted of powerful members of the Cordoban elite, whose support and advice legitimised the ʿĀmirid *ḥijāba*. The ʿĀmirid patrons filled their objects with images that were highly symbolic of their status as quasi-caliphs, and which in combination made a strong statement that the ʿĀmirids were fulfilling the virtues of the ideal ruler.

Fortunately, we possess some contemporary testimony regarding what the ʿĀmirids considered these virtues to be: it was observed above that the poem which al-Manṣūr composed about himself presented lions and architecture as twin aspects of his 'nobility'. Since, in that poem, proving his nobility seems to have been an important step in legitimising his role as *ḥājib*, it can be argued that al-Manṣūr perceived his military victories and cultural patronage (most especially in the form of the Cordoba mosque extension) as his most important 'virtues'. Another indication of al-Manṣūr's self-perception is contained in a passage that concludes al-Ḥijārī's anecdotes about Hishām II, which Bariani has used to conclude that the caliph was not in full possession of his mental faculties (Chapter 1, 'Rupture'):

"I brought myself to Ibn Abī ʿĀmir who, informed of Hishām's stroke of genius, knelt down

repeating, "God be praised, God be praised!" Finally al-Manṣūr said to me, 'Do you not realize that in Hishām's very conduct, of which you disapprove, lies the salvation of the Muslims? There can be only two types of Sulṭān who are most beneficial for their subjects: the conquering, judicious and independent ruler, who knows what will happen and when is the time to withdraw himself; and the ruler like Hishām, who needs someone to govern in his name. And the one who takes care of his power need not fear misfortune.'"[163]

It would appear from this passage that al-Manṣūr considered himself a ruler of the first type: a 'conquering, judicious and independent ruler', fulfilling the ideal of kingship since Hishām himself was not capable of doing so.

These ideals sit well with the main themes around which the salaried poets, the *shuʿarāʾ ʿāmiriyyīn* (Chapter 3) composed their panegyrics. If we recall the passage in which Ibn Ḥayyān described the exodus of the ʿĀmirid poets from Cordoba as a result of al-Mustaʿīn's neglect of his patronage duty, we remember that they 'composed in his praise good poems in which they appealed to religion (*dīn*) and manly virtue (*murūʾa*), and most of them recited them openly in his public audience'.[164] It can be assumed that these poets continued to celebrate the themes which had earned them success at the ʿĀmirid court. However, the English does not fully convey the range of meanings implied by the Arabic terms *dīn* and *murūʾa*, both of which encompass extremely complex concepts. *Dīn*, for example, 'covers three things: *Islām* in its five elements…; *Īmān*, Faith; *Iḥsān*, Rightdoing';[165] and has also been taken to encompass (Islamic) 'civilisation' (*tamaddun*), the *madīna* being the place where that 'civilisation' is propagated. It might thus be generally translated as the pious deeds and lifestyle by which a Muslim contributes to the security and civilisation of his environment. *Murūʾa*, deriving from the basic word meaning 'man' or 'human being' (*marʾ*), 'means the embodiment of those qualities which make up a man', and includes 'generosity', 'sense of honour', 'valour', 'chivalry', 'manliness', 'comprising all knightly virtues'.[166] It also has a significance in terms of Muslim ethics and morals, 'covering a number of qualities, especially those of kings and lords', and 'in Muslim Spain … it meant politeness and civility'.[167]

In combination, then, in *dīn* and *murūʾa* – those concepts that earned favour in the poems recited by al-Manṣūr's court poets – we can interpret the contrasting but complementary virtues of the ideal ruler: his physical courage, which he used for the defence of Islam, and his courtly refinement. The use of such concepts as the fundamental themes of ʿĀmirid panegyric recalls the literary genre known as 'mirrors for princes', of which the *Kalīla wa Dimna*, discussed above, was a prime example. These were 'manuals of statecraft', which 'testified to the widespread interest not only in establishing the practical ethics of kingly conduct, but in defining the nature of kingship and the qualifications of the ideal sovereign'.[168] Such works would include chapters on the 'Conduct of Jihad', the 'Conduct of Kings', the 'Character of the Pious', the 'Virtue of the Imāms', the 'Etiquette of Islam', and the 'Lawful and Unlawful'.[169] Such important ethical matters also recurred in panegyric poetry, though 'the ethical dimension of court poetry has received little serious attention … despite abundant evidence … for the view that an important function of poetry is moral instruction by example'.[170]

Did ʿĀmirid poetry have such a didactic purpose? It seems, rather, that it was entirely adulatory,

163 Bariani 1998, 101; Bariani 2001, 420.

164 Ibn Hayyan, *apud* Ibn Bassām 1989, 1:i:50. Cf. Blachère 1933, 108, n. 3, 109; Stetkevych 1997, 11.

165 'Dīn', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition.

166 'Murūʾa', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition; definitions given by Hans Wehr's Arabic-English dictionary.

167 'Murūʾa', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition.

168 Meisami 1987, 5, 180.

169 These titles come from the *Baḥr al-Favāʾid*, a mid-twelfth-century 'mirror', on which see Meisami 1991.

170 Meisami 1987, 11–12.

singing frequently of the ʿĀmirids' virtues in glowing terms. For example, al-Manṣūr was the

"son of noble kings, whose descent from Ḥimyar has occupied the summit of every genealogy,
Quintessence of their glories, pupil of their eyes, moon of their nights, and sun of their days,
The most worthy of their honour, the most victorious, the most generous, the most courageous on the day of battles, you are their knight,
Heir of the power of kings and receiver of their glory and greatness, born to lead knights in honour, he *inherited the booty of kings*.
Men of power and of virtues, whose crowns are worthy and proud of them."[171]

Explicit in these verses is the notion that al-Manṣūr was the *heir* to the Umayyads, a concept which is rendered even more explicit in a poem by Ibrāhīm ibn Idrīs, who addresses al-Manṣūr as the 'son of Umayya'.[172] Other occurrences of such sentiments in Ibn Darrāj's *dīwān* can be found at poem 99, ll. 19–20: 'Those who reign in the name of God … / … for them there are dwellings built in Paradise'; poem 100, l. 43, where al-Manṣūr is praised as a 'man of letters, of glory, lord of the stars and of the Arabs'; poem 115, ll. 12 and 31, 'the virtues, the generosity, the courage have made appear in him a noble king'; poem 119, ll. 10 and 13, 'your virtues have shone out in the midday brightness, and comparisons and metaphors are incapable of capturing their sense'; and poem 126, l. 13, which is dedicated to al-Muẓaffar. Though al-Manṣūr did not – ultimately – attempt to rise to the caliphate itself, we have seen throughout this study that in his cultural and architectural patronage, he stated clearly that he saw himself as fulfilling the caliph's role. This statement is arguably most explicit in his artistic patronage – in the very visible use of symbols which had come to be associated with the office of the caliphate, due to their adoption by the first Andalusi caliph and perhaps the fact that they emblematised the Umayyad army. In the ʿĀmirids' self-perception, they had just claim to use these images, since they possessed in abundance the appropriate kingly virtues. Their employment of such symbols was an important means by which the ʿĀmirids could demonstrate that they were the right men for the job, and thereby enhance the legitimacy of their rule.

While the resonant emblems of the lion-gazelle and heraldic eagle and the martial tone of the epigraphy symbolised the ʿĀmirids' military role, the artistic allusions to their architectural and literary patronage, and the prominence of imagery of flowers and nature, evoked the full gamut of princely virtues, in particular their construction of pious works. Al-Manṣūr had accomplished this most strikingly through the construction of Cordoba IV and the associated water infrastructure, of ablutions pavilion and cistern, but we can now see that the luxury arts were also implicated in the legitimisation of the dynasty. The ʿĀmirids used their art as the vehicles to project their 'public image' as fulfilling the virtues of the ideal ruler. The messages on these objects would have been displayed in private contexts, within the ʿĀmirid palaces and gardens, where the regents relaxed in poetic soirées with the members of the Córdoban elite who comprised their court. These intimate gatherings enabled the ʿĀmirids to build personal relationships with those noble families whose support they required to legitimise their *de facto* rule. In addition, this audience was well versed in the imagery of contemporary poetry, especially that sung in praise of the ʿĀmirids by their *dīwān* of poets. They would have understood the mutuality of the literary and artistic imagery, all the better to understand that the marble basins encapsulated – petrified even – the poetic language of the rulers' virtues, as praised in panegyric in terms of the 'generosity-ruthlessness doublet'.

171 Ibn Darrāj 1969, poem 3, ll. 47–52.

172 *Bayān* II:302 [translation, 468].