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Articulating the *Ḥijāba*: Cultural Patronage and Political Legitimacy in al-Andalus

The ʿĀmirid Regency c. 970–1010 AD

By

Mariam Rosser-Owen



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IBN KHALDŪN, *Muqaddimah*, 58



This book began more than twenty years ago, in the Fellows' Room at the Departamento de Estudios Árabes, part of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, at that time located in downtown Madrid, where I was lucky enough to be based for the fieldwork year of my doctoral research (1999–2000). Having begun a thesis focusing on the famous Andalusí ivories, my supervisors – Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns – rightly asked me how my contribution to the study of these objects was going to be original and new. I didn't really know. I will be forever grateful to my fellow doctorand, Marcus Milwright, for suggesting that I spend some time in Spain, immersing myself in the museum collections that contained the objects I was hoping to study. In the years before Academia.edu and the widespread digital availability of publications from other nations' disciplines, it was also necessary to be physically present in Spanish libraries to consult the publications I knew about and to discover those I didn't, by browsing the shelves. That year in Spain was funded by two

scholarships granted by the University of Oxford: the Lady Allen Scholarship, and the De Osmá Studentship, which opened up for me the magical world of the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan as one of my institutional homes in Madrid. It was a huge privilege to be able to freely browse the precious collections in the Instituto's empty galleries, introducing me to other media and later periods of Andalusí art, objects which I have carried with me into my career as a curator of Islamic art. I am deeply indebted to its then Director, Cristina Partearroyo, and all my hosts during that year in Madrid, both within CSIC and those whom I encountered on a more personal level, who helped me to improve my spoken Spanish and gave me the enduring sense of Madrid as a second home.

That year was transformative, not least of my doctoral subject, as I became more interested in the objects and fragments that had been made for 'Ámirid patrons, and the historical role those patrons had played in artistic and cultural patronage, which seemed to have been almost entirely overlooked in modern scholarship. This picked up on interests I had developed during my Master of Studies, in which I chose to study the lid, in the Ashmolean Museum, of an ivory pyxis that had been made for al-Manṣūr's son 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Sanchuelo' (Figures 139–141). After a couple of months in Madrid, I had become enthused by the challenge of taking a much broader and more interdisciplinary while chronologically narrower approach to my doctoral subject, one which had been much less studied. Julian (Jeremy was on sabbatical that year) bore with good grace my suggestion that I should change my subject more than one year into the D.Phil., and has been a great support to me ever since, even after he left the University of Oxford to become Director of the Freer-Sackler Gallery in Washington DC. He gave me good advice when, much later, I started to think seriously about turning the thesis into a book. Jeremy shepherded me through to

completion and into the start of my career and has been there for me ever since. I owe a huge debt of thanks to them both, for setting me on the career path I tread today.

The thesis was submitted in 2002, in time for the celebration of the millennium since al-Manṣūr's death. I started working at the V&A straight away, and was soon thrown into the redevelopment of the museum's Islamic Middle East gallery; that, combined with a rocky viva experience, invitations to work on the ivories in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, then other research interests and publishing projects, and further gallery projects at the museum, especially the new Ceramics Galleries, made it difficult for me to think further about al-Manṣūr – but he never went away. I became increasingly aware that the period of the caliphate after the death of al-Ḥakam II was poorly understood, even sidelined, by specialists of Andalusī art: as if history just stopped then and picked up again after the Fitna. Over the years of not seeing anything else published on the art of the 'Āmirid period, I gradually realised my doctoral research still had a contribution to make. The celebration of the millennium since al-Manṣūr's death had engendered many conferences and publications on al-Andalus during the 'Āmirid period, but few of the studies contained therein focused on the 'Āmirids themselves, and there was no outpouring of research on the material culture of the period. There were significant historical publications – by Bariani 2003, Ballestín 2004a, Sénac 2006, Echevarría 2011 – and the occasional publication of relevant new objects or inscriptions, new information from archaeology. The invitation in 2014 from Abigail Krasner Balbale, then at the Bard Graduate Center, New York, to participate in the symposium she was organising on 'Objects and Power: an Interdisciplinary Approach to Medieval Islamic Material Culture', gave me the incentive I needed to re-engage with the 'Āmirids' artistic patronage and to test the waters of scholarly interest in the subject.

Returning to a thesis more than a decade later, and then working on the book over the course

of a further near-decade, has its advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage is that in the intervening time I have deepened and matured my knowledge and perspectives, especially through working in a very hands-on way with objects in such a world-class museum collection, in a way that you never can over the course of a three- or four-year doctoral research project, especially when new to the field as I was when I began my M.St. in 1996. My role at the V&A has helped me to widen my research perspectives into the Mediterranean and on ivory more broadly than just from Iberia; it has helped me to deepen my understanding of ceramics and textiles, of parallel and later histories of al-Andalus and other regions such as Egypt. I have benefitted from new perspectives that have developed in the study of the Islamic West, especially the growing focus on North Africa and the endlessly fascinating world of trans-Saharan trade. Marcus Milwright's invitation to be Lansdowne Visiting Lecturer to the University of Victoria (BC) Medieval Studies Workshop in 2013, where I gave a lecture 'The Gold Route: Trans-Saharan Trade and Luxury Arts in Medieval Europe', helped me to focus my thoughts on the gold trade. Through contacts and friendships I have made or deepened over the years, conversations and information-sharing have helped me understand a much bigger picture.

In the intervening period, no-one else had written on al-Manṣūr or the 'Āmirids from precisely this perspective, but other scholars had written on aspects of their patronage: Susana Calvo's further publications on the mosque inscriptions, for example. There had been new work on the Cordoban ivories, further research on metalwork, new archaeological finds ... There were historical updates to make too. My approach has always been to present the art historical context together with the historical context, indeed that the information provided by material culture is another historical source. This allows us to present a wholistic picture of the 'Āmirid period and to fully understand the motivations for cultural and artistic patronage, which cannot be divorced from historical contexts

and concerns. This is why this had to be such a long book, especially since the history of the period is so little known. I had to update myself with all of that literature, making visits to libraries when possible on trips to Spain for other projects, but also hugely benefitted this time around by the online availability of many academic publications. Spanish scholars excel at uploading their work to Academia.edu! I am deeply grateful to my V&A managers, Tim Stanley and Anna Jackson, for recognising that this was something I needed to get out of my system and for giving me V&A time to work on the book, including for quite focused periods on occasion.

During the last months of drawing this project to its conclusion, I faced a new challenge – that of completing the revisions and sourcing images during the global pandemic caused by Covid-19, of being in lockdown and on furlough, without access to libraries or a professional email account from which to contact institutions for image permissions, institutions which were in any case mostly closed. And there are a lot of images in this book! It was important to me to publish little-known or unknown or unpublished objects and buildings. I have tried to prioritise these, as one way to expand the field of Andalusí art history. I am deeply grateful to all the many people who have helped me to source images, have provided their own images, who sent me PDFs of articles, or answered last minute queries – they are too many to name individually here: some of them are credited in the list of illustrations or the footnotes, but those who are not, know that you have my utter gratitude.

Many people over the years have helped me with this project in a variety of ways. I would not have been able to begin the D.Phil. without funding from the AHRB (now AHRC). The University of Oxford also gave financial support through various top-up funds. The Barakat Trust supported me throughout my graduate study; in particular, the Salahuddin Y H Abuljawad Graduate Scholarship funded my writing-up year in 2001–2. They also generously awarded me a grant to pay for the book's image costs. I am deeply grateful to the

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me images and alerting me to crucial publications of hers that I had missed. Matilde Grimaldi has drawn some beautiful graphics for me, interpreting my sometimes-vague instructions and bad-quality photographs, and patiently tweaking. Pedro Marfil Ruiz gave me an archaeological tour of the Córdoba Mosque in 2009, including the ever-memorable climb down underneath the mosque pavement to visit the excavations of the road beneath the Āmirid extension. María Antonia Martínez Núñez has been extremely generous with her time and epigraphic expertise. Irina Sears of Arabic Language Associates tidied up the Arabic transcriptions in my Appendices, lifting a huge weight off my mind.

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My parents David and Bashiera Rosser-Owen and my sister Isla Rosser-Owen have had to endure me talking about this book on and off for two decades – I am grateful to them for their patience. My unorthodox upbringing, within the British Muslim convert community, with Ramadan trips across London to Peckham – not far from where

I now live – to visit Sufi sheikhs, forged the career that I now pursue. Bashiera came with me on my first ever trips to Madrid and Andalusía, and Isla was my travelling companion on two memorable research trips: our roadtrip in 2000 around northern Spanish museums and treasury collections, and into Narbonne where my French suddenly evaporated; and fourteen years later, to Córdoba where we had the privilege of staying in the apartment within the restored Mudéjar houses that comprise Casa Árabe.

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As always, there is more I could have done, but at some point you have to just stop. As in the sentiment expressed by Ibn Khaldūn in the quote above, I commend this book to the reader, and ask for your patience and tolerance of its shortcomings.

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A number of primary sources, book and journals have been cited repeatedly throughout this study, and are abbreviated as follows:

<i>Anales</i>	<i>Anales Palatinos del Califa de Córdoba al-Ḥakam II, por ʿĪsā ibn Aḥmad al-Rāzī</i> (360–364 AH = 971–975 JC). Translated by Emilio García Gómez (Madrid, 1967)
<i>Bayān</i> II	Ibn ʿIdhārī, <i>Al-Bayān al-Mughrib</i> vol. II. Page numbers refer to Dozy's 1851 edition, and the reference in square brackets refers to Fagnan's 1904 translation
<i>Bayān</i> II (1951)	Refers to Colin & Lévi-Provençal's 1948–1951 edition
<i>Bayān</i> III	Ibn ʿIdhārī, <i>Al-Bayān al-Mughrib</i> vol. III. Page numbers refer to Lévi-Provençal's 1930 edition, and the reference in square brackets refers to Salgado's 1993 translation
<i>Bayān</i> III (appendix)	Refers to the translation of the chapters of <i>Bayān</i> III relating to al-Muzaffar, given in Lévi-Provençal's revision of Reinhart Dozy's <i>Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne jusqu'à la conquête de l'Andalousie par les Almoravides</i> (711–110) (Leiden, 1932), vol. 3, 198 ff.
<i>Dhikr Bilād</i> I	<i>Dhikr Bilād al-Andalus</i> , edited by Molina (1983), volume 1 (Arabic text)
<i>Dhikr Bilād</i> II	<i>Dhikr Bilād al-Andalus</i> , translated by Molina (1983), volume 2 (Spanish translation). The number given after the page number (designated by §) refers to the page number of the original manuscript, and allows

cross-referencing between the English and Arabic volumes of the edition

Al-Maqqarī	All references are to Gayangos' translation of Al-Maqqarī's <i>Naḥḥ al-Ṭīb</i> , unless otherwise specified. Page numbers refer to Vol. II, Book VI, Chapter VII, unless otherwise indicated. Other references to Al-Maqqarī are given in parentheses. References to Gayangos' notes will just have the volume and page number
HEM	Lévi-Provençal's <i>Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane</i> (1950): volumes II = HEM II; volume III = HEM III.
BRAC	<i>Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba de Ciencias, Bellas Letras y Nobles Artes</i>

Exhibition Catalogues:

These are abbreviated as follows – full publication details are given here and in the Bibliography:

<i>Al-Andalus</i>	<i>Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain</i> . Exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1992)
<i>Les Andalousies</i>	<i>Les Andalousies de Damas à Cordoue</i> . Exhibition held at the Institut du Monde Arabe (Paris, 2000)
<i>Año 1000, Año 2000</i>	<i>Dos milenios en la Historia de España: Año 1000, Año 2000</i> , exhibition catalogue ed. P. Martín Llopis (Madrid: España, Nuevo Milenio, S.A., 2000)
<i>Art of Medieval Spain</i>	O'Neill, J.P., ed., <i>The Art of Medieval Spain AD 500–1200</i> . Exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1993)
<i>Arte Islámico en Granada</i>	<i>Arte Islámico en Granada: Propuesta para un Museo de la Alhambra</i> . Exhibition catalogue, Palacio de Carlos V, Alhambra (Granada, 1995)

- Caravans of Gold* Bickford Berzock, Kathleen, ed. *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)
- Esplendor: Catálogo* Viguera Molins, María Jesús, and Castillo, Concepción, eds., *El Esplendor de los Omeyas Cordobeses: La civilización musulmana de Europa Occidental. Catálogo de Piezas*. Exhibition catalogue, Madīnat al-Zahrā' (Granada, 2001)
- Esplendor: Estudios* Viguera Molins, María Jesús, and Castillo, Concepción, eds., *El Esplendor de los Omeyas Cordobeses: La civilización musulmana de Europa Occidental*. Essays accompanying the Exhibition catalogue (Granada, 2001)
- Journal of the David Collection 2* (2005) *The Ivories of Muslim Spain: Papers from a symposium held in Copenhagen from the 18th to the 20th of November 2003. Journal of the David Collection 2* (2 vols) (2005)
- Maroc Médiéval* *Le Maroc médiéval: Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne*. Exhibition catalogue, Musée du Louvre. Edited by Yannick Lintz, Claire Déléry and Bulle Tuil Leonetti (Editions Hazan and Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2014)
- Santiago-al-Andalus* *Santiago-al-Andalus: Diálogos Artísticos para un Milenio. Conmemoración del Milenario de la Restauración de la Ciudad de Santiago de Compostela tras la razzia de Almanzor (997–1997)*. Exhibition catalogue, Mosteiro de San Martiño Pinario (Xunta de Galicia, 1997)
- Trésors* *Trésors Fatimides du Caire. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe du 28 avril au 30 août 1998* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1998)

Supplementary publication dates in square brackets indicate a new edition, eg Torres Balbás 1957 [1996].

Arabic translations are checked against the dictionaries by Hans Wehr and Edward Lane. I have used the Yusuf Ali translation of the Qur'an.

I have italicised all non-English words, except for those that have an accepted or widespread usage in the English language – for example, mihrab and minbar are not italicised, but *maqṣūra* is.

Maps



MAP 1 Map of the Mediterranean region highlighting locations mentioned in this book
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