



# Hands, Promises and Submission: Loyalty Oaths as Tools of Domination in Medieval Iberia

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**ENG Abstract:**<sup>1</sup> Oaths formed an important element of communication between rulers and elites of the same and different faiths during the Middle Ages. They were key to validating agreements and treaties between different Islamic and Christian powers. Moreover, this validation was established by means of a gestural vocabulary recognised by both parties: the use of hands. The first part of the article brings together different arguments and examples to demonstrate the importance of hand gestures to practices of Christian-Muslim oath making across the Mediterranean sphere. Focus is then placed on two specific case studies from Medieval Iberia. The first concerns the oaths of allegiance sworn by several Christian princes to the Umayyad caliph al-Ḥakam II (in 351/962) while the second deals with the submission of the Hūdid prince Sayf al-Dawla (in 525/1131) and the Almoravid governor Ibn Ghāniya (in 540/1146) to Alfonso VII of León and Castile. The analysis of these cases makes it possible to establish two different models of imperial domination and submission, with loyalty oaths serving as fundamental instruments for establishing power relations in both of them.

**Keywords:** Loyalty oaths; Interreligious communication; Christian-Muslim relations; Transmediterranean history; Submission; Middle Ages.

## **ES Manos, promesas y sumisión: los juramentos de lealtad como herramientas de dominación en la Iberia medieval**

**Resumen:** Durante la Edad Media, los juramentos constituyeron un importante elemento de comunicación entre gobernantes y élites de la misma confesión y de confesiones diferentes. Eran clave para validar acuerdos y tratados entre diferentes poderes islámicos y cristianos. Además, esta validación se establecía mediante un vocabulario gestual reconocido por ambas partes: el uso de las manos. La primera parte del artículo reúne diferentes argumentos y ejemplos para demostrar la importancia de los gestos con las manos en las prácticas de juramento entre cristianos y musulmanes en el ámbito mediterráneo. A continuación, el foco se pone en el estudio de dos casos concretos de la Iberia medieval. El primero se refiere a los juramentos de fidelidad hechos por varios príncipes cristianos al califa omeya al-Ḥakam II (en 351/962), mientras que el segundo trata de la sumisión del príncipe hūdí Sayf al-Dawla (en 525/1131) y del gobernador almorávide Ibn Gāniya (en 540/1146) a Alfonso VII de León y Castilla. El análisis de estos casos permite establecer dos modelos diferentes de dominación y sumisión imperial, sirviendo en ambos los juramentos de lealtad como instrumentos fundamentales para el establecimiento de relaciones de poder.

**Palabras clave:** juramentos de lealtad, comunicación interreligiosa; relaciones entre cristianos y musulmanes; historia transmediterránea; sumisión; Edad Media.

**Sumario:** 1. Hands and Oaths: Validating Treaties in Christian-Muslim Contexts. 2. Oaths and Submission: The Kings of León Recognise the Authority of the Caliph al-Ḥakam II al-Mustanşir (351/962). 3. Vassalage and Promises as Strategies of Imperial Domination: the Cases of Sayf al-Dawla, Ibn Ghāniya and Alfonso VII (1131–1146). 4. Conclusions. 5. References.

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## 1. Hands and Oaths: Validating Treaties in Christian-Muslim Contexts

In 1167 the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿĀḍid (r. 555–567/1160–1171) was forced to swear an oath to respect the terms of the treaty agreed with king Amalric I of Jerusalem (r. 1163–1174). Egypt was in a delicate situation, being the object of desire of its neighbours. Fearing that he would fall into the hands of Shīrkūh (d. 564/1169), a Kurdish general in the service of the Zengid Turkmān dynasty, the vizier Shāwar (d. 564/1169) decided to renew an old agreement and establish a treaty of perpetual peace between his “theoretical” lord, the Fāṭimid caliph, and the Frankish monarch. The tribute paid to the Franks was increased to 400,000 gold pieces. In return, Amalric would defend Egypt against the Zengid armies. The agreement was concluded between Amalric and Shāwar. However, the Christian king sent Hugh Grenier, lord of Caesarea (c.1154–1168), and the Templar Geoffrey Fulcher to receive the caliph’s personal approval. A member of this group must have described what he saw to the archbishop and chronicler William of Tyre (d. 1186), who recounts the event in considerable detail. The Fāṭimid sovereign approved of the agreed terms, but Hugh was very insistent that he followed the same ceremonial protocols as Amalric. The king of Jerusalem had shaken the hand of one of al-ʿĀḍid’s representatives, and now the lord of Caesarea demanded that the same practice be carried out to validate the treaty. This provoked consternation at the Fāṭimid court, where the Franks’ demands were viewed as unreasonable.<sup>2</sup> However, after consultation, the caliph reluctantly agreed and extended his covered hand to Hugh, who nevertheless said:

Sire, good faith has nothing to conceal, but when princes bind themselves together in

true loyalty everything ought to be open; and everything which is inserted in good faith in any pact should be confirmed or refused with frank sincerity. Therefore, unless you offer your hand bared we shall be obliged to think that, on your part, there is some reservation or some lack of sincerity.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, “with extreme unwillingness,” though “with a slight smile,” al-ʿĀḍid yielded to the demands, took off his glove and placed “his uncovered right hand” into that of Hugh, repeating, almost syllable for syllable, the words dictated by Hugh, and thus swearing that he would fulfil the stipulations of the treaty “in good faith, without fraud or evil intent.”<sup>4</sup> It is clear, as Y. Friedman points out, that there was no doubt about who was dictating terms and that this was a diplomatic victory for the Franks.<sup>5</sup>

This episode not only demonstrates the central importance of oaths as an element of confirmation of a treaty, but also the symbolic value of the right hand as a gesture of ratification. Y. Friedman believes that part of the Fāṭimid caliph’s refusal to offer his right hand to ratify the treaty has to do with the fact that this was not the usual method of corroboration in the East.<sup>6</sup> M. Köhler, for his part, points out that the relationship between sealed agreement and handshake is not entirely clear.<sup>7</sup> It should not be forgotten, however, that this practice was not unknown among Muslims, as shown by the way in which the sovereign was acknowledged (*bayʿa*), and that the gesture dates back to pre-Islamic times.<sup>8</sup> It should also be noted that in Arabic the word *yamīn* refers to both right hand and oath.<sup>9</sup> This does not seem to be a coincidence. Thus, the gesture was widely known and relevant in the Islamic sphere. In our opinion al-ʿĀḍid’s reluctance has more to do with being forced to confirm a pact that was less than favourable, as Y. Friedman ar-

<sup>2</sup> Michael S. Fulton, *Contest for Egypt. The Collapse of the Fatimid Caliphate, the Ebb of Crusader Influence, and the Rise of Saladin* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 59–60.

<sup>3</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), Lib. XIX, 18, 889; trans. Emily Atwater Babcock and A. C. Krey, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (Columbia University Press: New York, 1943), Lib. XIX, cap. 19, p. 319: “Domine, fides angulos non habet, sed in fide media, per quam se obligare solent principes, omnia debent esse nuda et aperta et cum sinceritate et colligari, et solvi convenit universa, que fidei interpositione pactis quibuslibet inseruntur : propterea aut nudam dabis, aut fictum aliquid et minus puritatis habens ex parte tua cogemur opinari.”

<sup>4</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), Lib. XIX, 18, 889: “Tunc demum invitatus plurimum et quasi maiestati detrahens, subridens tamen, quod multum egre tulerunt Egyptii dexteram suam in manum domini Hugonis nudam prebuit, eundem Hugonem, pactorum formam determinantem, eisdem pene sillabis sequens, tenorem conventorum bona fide, sine fraude et malo ingenio se observaturum contestans.”

<sup>5</sup> Yvonne Friedman, “Gestures of Conciliation: Peacemaking Endeavors in the Latin East,” in *Laudem Hierosolymitani. Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture in Honour of Benjamin Z. Kedar*, ed. Iris Shagrir and Ronnie Ellenblum (London: Routledge, 2007), 37.

<sup>6</sup> Yvonne Friedman, “Peacemaking: Perceptions and practices in the medieval Latin East,” in *The Crusades and the Near East. Cultural Histories*, ed. Conor Kostick (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 246–247; Friedman, “Gestures of Conciliation,” 35–38.

<sup>7</sup> Michael A. Köhler, *Alliances and Treaties between Frankish and Muslim Rulers in the Middle East: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Period of the Crusades* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 305–310.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy. Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 24–39; Émile Tyan, “*Bayʿa*,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition 1 (1986), 1113–1114, DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0107](https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0107). M. Köhler himself alludes to the *bayʿa* in his exposition but does not develop the argument.

<sup>9</sup> Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. M. Cowan. Third ed. (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976), 1109; A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, 2 (Paris: Maisonneuve et C<sup>ie</sup>, Éditeurs, 1860), 1635–1636; Federico Corriente and Ignacio Ferrando, *Diccionario avanzado árabe* (Barcelona: Herder, 2005), 1324–1325.

gues, rather than the questions about whether that the practice was widely known.<sup>10</sup>

The hand is a symbol of action and power, with a certain magical and apotropaic character. Hands can be used to harm, but also to protect. In fact, to be in someone's hands means to be at their mercy, but also under their protection. In addition, holding out one's hand is a sign of friendship, devotion or forgiveness. It is for this reason that it was used as a symbol of agreement with legal significance.<sup>11</sup> Hands were used (and are still used) to conclude agreements, pacts and confirm oaths. This gesture of clasping hands had a polysemic symbolism that expressed instruction, defence, judgment, but above all protection. J. Le Goff has already pointed out that, above all, it was demonstrative of the balance between power and submission.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the gesture of the sovereign's extended right hand with the palm facing forward was endowed with magical powers, "the gesture of power," as H. P. L'Orange calls it, for blessing or cursing. In this sign, higher powers and capacities beyond the sovereign were enlisted, and through the hand, divine interference in earthly affairs took place.<sup>13</sup>

The handshake or handclasp is a practically universal representation of solidarity, truce, and agreement. In the words of E. Sánchez Moreno: "a talking symbol of *fides*, a transversal metaphor of rapprochement, friendship, cooperation and concord."<sup>14</sup> The right hand, the beneficent one, that of the *uirtus*, is the testimony of *fides*, and among Celtic and Celtiberian societies there was a ritual of mutilation of the right hand, a sign of its relevance. The *dextrarum iunctio*, an iconographic motif showing the union of the right hands, became popular in Roman times, but was also found in the Greek (*dexiosis*) and Etruscan worlds, symbolising political and matrimonial ties, greetings and engagements.<sup>15</sup> The gesture and its symbolism were common among the Middle Eastern populations such as the Akkadians, Hebrews and Ar-

abs. The Bible usually describes covenants as "giving the (open) hand" (Hebrew *yad*). Syriac has the same terminology. Akkadian vassalage oaths likewise allude to "grasping of hands," and Akkadian also has a word for "supplication" and "submission" that includes "putting forth the hand."<sup>16</sup> This gesture can also be found in Eastern religions such as Mithraism. In a relief from the Nemrut Dagi temple (Turkey), the divinity shakes hands with King Antiochus I of Commagene (70–31 BC), transferring the power to his representative on earth and confirming the divine "contract."<sup>17</sup> In the Iranian tradition, the right-hand grasp was considered a sign of the supreme loyalty, the ultimate expression of security and guarantor of oaths and pledges. In the Hebrew context, one's right hand is the one that God takes or holds for strength and protection.<sup>18</sup> In short, as E. Sánchez Moreno states, "the affinity between the hand as a gesture and communication as an act is evident," with language and physical contact being the most obvious features of oral agreements. Hence, caresses, tickling, cooing, hugging and the laying on of palms are some of the most common gestures and signs across different societies.<sup>19</sup>

However, the hand is only one part of the equation when it comes to establishing a deal. The other element is the oath. This is a phenomenon that can be found in almost all human societies past and present, irrespective of the dominant religion. S. Esders defines an oath as a solemn act of speech, containing a promise for the future, or an affirmation of the certainty of past events. This is done according to an established formal procedure, usually invoking a deity and his power of punishment as a witness if the promise is broken or the affidavit proves false. It is a mechanism often used at times when interpersonal trust and reliability could only be achieved through a solemn personal declaration recognising shared religious and social values.<sup>20</sup> Oaths were added as key

<sup>10</sup> Friedman, "Gestures of Conciliation," 38.

<sup>11</sup> Udo Becker, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 136–7; Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles: mythes, rêves, coutumes, gestes, formes, figures, couleurs, nombres* (Paris: Bouquins, 1982), 599–603.

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 241.

<sup>13</sup> Hans P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo: Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, 1953), 139–170; Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. D. W. Parry (Maxwell Institute Publications, 1994), 236–271, here: 253.

<sup>14</sup> Eduardo Sánchez Moreno, "Trascender antes de morir: juramentos, memoria heroica y *hospitium* entre los vacceos," in *Los vacceos ante la muerte: creencias, ritos y prácticas de un pueblo prerromano*, ed. Carlos Sanz Minguez (Valladolid: Centro de Estudios Vacceos Federico Wattenberg de la Universidad de Valladolid, 2020), 115: "un símbolo parlante de la *fides*, una metáfora transversal de acercamiento, amistad, cooperación y concordia."

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Boyancé, "Le main de fides," in *Hommages à Jean Bayet* (Brussels, 1964), 101–113; Francisco Marco Simón, "Topografía cualitativa en la magia romana: izquierda y derecha como elementos de determinación simbólica," *Memorias de Historia Antigua* 7 (1986), 81–90; Elena Almirall, "La *dextrarum iunctio* y su evolución a los anillos de *fede*. Algunos ejemplos en gemas del Museo Arqueológico Nacional (Madrid)," *Boletín del Museo Arqueológico Nacional* 39 (2020), 139–154; Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp, "*Fides – deditio in fidem – dextra data et accepta*: Recht, Religion Und Ritual in Rom," in *The Roman Middle Republic: Politics, Religion, and Historiography*, c. 400–133 B.C., ed. Christer F. M. Bruun, (Rome, 2000) 223–249; Gabriel Sopeña Genzor, "Acerca de la amputación de la mano diestra como práctica simbólica. El caso de *Hispania* en época de las guerras celtibérico-lusitanas," *Saldivie* 8 (2009), 271–283.

<sup>16</sup> Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Anders Hultgård, "The Mandaean Water Ritual in Late Antiquity," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Waschungen, Initiation und Taufe. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. David Hellholm et al. (vol. 1, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 91; Payam Nabarz, *The Mysteries of Mithras: The Pagan Belief That Shaped the Christian World* (Rochester: Vermont, Inner Traditions, 2005), 25–6.

<sup>18</sup> Hultgård, "The Mandaean Water Ritual," 90–1.

<sup>19</sup> Eduardo Sánchez Moreno, *Meseta occidental e Iberia exterior: contacto cultural y relaciones comerciales en época prerromana*, PhD dissertation (Madrid, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1997), 705, n. 32: "es evidente la afinidad entre la mano como gesto y la comunicación como acto".

<sup>20</sup> Stefan Esders, "Loyalty Oaths and the Transformation of Political Legitimacy in the Medieval West," in *Oaths in Premodern Japan and Premodern Europe*, ed. Philippe Buc and Thomas D. Conlan (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2023), 119–40, at 119 and 121.

elements in processes of greater or lesser ritual elaboration. They were present in commercial contracts, marriage contracts, and in the proclamation ceremonies of different societies. In all these circumstances there are two common elements: there is a change in the status of those involved, and a series of commitments to be respected by both parties. The oath was necessary as a way of sanctioning this.<sup>21</sup> A new type of relationship was established. The sociologist M. Weber characterised it as a special kind of contract:

(...) those primitive contracts by which political or other personal associations, permanent or temporary, or family relations are created involve a change in what may be called the total legal situation (the universal position) and the social status of the persons involved. To have this effect these contracts were originally either straightforward magical acts or at least acts having a magical significance. For a long time their symbolism retained traces of that character.<sup>22</sup>

Those who do so acquire a new status, "each party must make a new "soul" enter his body." A new soul created by magical means or through blood, spittle or other elements. Each participant is placed under the protection of a "supernatural" power or deity, with the capacity to punish acts contrary to the agreement. It is because of this invocation of the divine that "the oath remains even in later times one of the most universal forms of all fraternization pacts."<sup>23</sup> S. Esders put it very well: "By pledging salvation after death, which would be lost in case of breaking the religious promise, the oath leads one's life on earth into a new direction." A new relationship is thus established with another person beyond previous familial, ethnic or friendship ties.<sup>24</sup>

Also, the words and formulas used to swear the oath were perceived as having a certain magical force. It is possible, as Crawley points out, that later on it was the religious elements that came to the fore and replaced, in part, the magic of the word. However, although the fear of magical power was replaced by fear of deities later on, the sense of punishment for perjury remained. The oath was thus shown to be a symbolic form of communication, connecting elements that transcended the earthly world.<sup>25</sup> After all,

by naming the divinity as a witness, the welfare, in this world and the next, of the person swearing the oath was tied to their willingness and ability to fulfil their commitments. Religion is thus a crucial factor in understanding the power of oaths, and the gods themselves were expected to sanction any abuse of an oath taken in their name, but the 'imaginary' consequences associated with oath-breaking differed across cultures and religions.<sup>26</sup> In fact, at the same time, it should be noted that pre-modern societies could treat the oath in a pragmatic manner. In fact, different procedures for breaking oaths were developed, although the room for manoeuvre remained narrow.<sup>27</sup>

The oaths, in any case, were also the primary means of expressing fidelity. Communicating loyalty through oaths, as A. Marsham points out, is one of the great cultural continuities of Eurasian civilisation. In fact, "covenants for alliance and allegiance were the basis upon which pre-modern empires were built."<sup>28</sup> On the American and African continents, oaths were also used to express fidelity, loyalty or integration into communities.<sup>29</sup> The basic idea was common to different cultures: the weaker party swore to obey the one in a superior position. One or more deities sanctioned the pact, announcing terrible punishments for failure to comply, and rewards for loyalty. Herein lies the main strength of the oaths: their capacity to establish self-obligation. This attribute was self-imposed by the person performing the verbal and ritual act because it binds his or her promise of compliance to religious and social values shared by all members of a society, values that are essential and engender trust. Moreover, the act was usually performed in public, with those present acting as witnesses along with the celestial sphere being appealed to. This whole framework served to exercise a kind of social control over the credibility and prestige of the oath maker. From a sociological and psychological perspective, the oath made obedience to a rule or to some kind of expected behaviour an aspect of the inner being of the person making the promise. Therefore, although the oath of allegiance is not law per se, even if it was regulated by law in medieval societies, its usefulness as an instrument for guaranteeing loyalty made it possible to combine power and authority within a wider socio-legal context. For example, a sovereign might not have the means to per-

<sup>21</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language. An Archaeology of the Oath* (Stanford University Press, 2010 [2008]).

<sup>22</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), Lib. XIX, 18, 889; trans. Emily Atwater Babcock and A. C. Krey, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2 (Columbia University Press: New York, 1943), Lib. XIX, cap. 19, p. 319: "Domine, fides angulos non habet, sed in fide media, per quam se obligare solent principes, omnia debent esse nuda et aperta et cum sinceritate et colligari, et solvi convenit universa, que fidei interpositione pactis quibuslibet inseruntur: propterea aut nudam dabis, aut fictum aliquid et minus puritatis habens ex parte tua cogemur opinari."

<sup>23</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 672-3.

<sup>24</sup> Stefan Esders, "'Faithful believers'. Oaths of Allegiance in Post-Roman Societies as Evidence for Eastern and Western 'Visions of Community,'" in *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World. The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1000*, ed. Clemens Ganter et al. (Farnham, Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2012), 359.

<sup>25</sup> Yael Ziegler, *Promises to Keep. The Oath in Biblical Narrative* (Leiden, Brill, 2008), 48.

<sup>26</sup> Esders, "Loyalty Oaths," 119-20.

<sup>27</sup> An example of this is how the 'Abbāsids had to develop new theoretical approaches to revoking the *bay'a* (Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, 194-196, 205-207 and 216-218).

<sup>28</sup> Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Examples include the oaths of allegiance sworn to the Inca emperors (Garcilaso de la Vega, *El Inca, Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru*, ed. Harold V. Livermore, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989, vol. 1, 170-1, 610-2), those included in the "vassalistic" institution of the Rwandan *ubuhake* (Pierre Bettez Gravel, *Remera: A Community in Eastern Ruanda*, Paris: Mouton, 1968, 165; Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture*, 253) or those linked to Japanese warriors (*samurai*) and the blood covenants of Chinese society (Elizabeth Oyler, *Swords, Oaths, and Prophetic Visions: Authoring Warrior Rule in Medieval Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006; Barend J. Ter Haar, *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, 151-79).



manently control the loyalty of his dependents, but the oath of allegiance, and the self-obligation contained in it, made it possible to link the obedience of subjects to honour, trust and self-esteem, generating an important emotional and social impact.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, different cultures saw them as an effective tool for ensuring compliance. Oaths can create interpersonal trust and commitment, hence their contractual aspect and their potential to create relationships of dependency. Thus, loyalty oaths functioned as mechanisms of communication both internally (between different social groups) and externally (with other cultures).

In particular, oaths of allegiance were employed in diplomatic relations between Christians and Muslims. Examples of this can be found in all the Mediterranean regions where contact between the Christian and Islamic spheres existed. Oaths were customarily used in truces (*pax*) and agreements (*foedus*) relating to surrender negotiations.<sup>31</sup> These communal oaths reinforced the commitment to protect the subject community. At the same time, for the conquerors, it corroborated the incorporation of a new subject society into the kingdom. In short, the oath was seen as both an instrument of submission and protection.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, for both societies, the oath of allegiance implied the recognition of a superiority-inferiority relationship and an acknowledgement of the oath-taker's dominance and authority. This can be clearly seen in the confirmatory oaths of treaties and agreements that placed one Islamic or Christian territory under the authority of another. It is very revealing to take a closer look at the oath formulas used in these vassalage pacts. This is the case of the truce pact established in 1432 between John II (r. 1406–1454) and Yūsuf b. al-Mawl (r. 836/1432).<sup>33</sup> The Naṣrid promised to behave as a faithful vassal and made a series of commitments to the Castilian king: handing over Christian captives, not allowing forced conversions to Islam, paying a tribute of 20,000 gold doubloons annually, a gift of horses, and the obligation to provide military aid and attend court.<sup>34</sup> At the end of the document, Yūsuf promised to behave as a faithful vassal and takes the oath:

We swear and promise by the holy name of our Lord God, one, the Almighty, and to his holy prophet Mohammed Aboabdile and by the Qur'ān that he sent us with him and by all those oaths that all Moors must keep and not perjure that we will do well and faithfully and loyally. We will fulfil and keep all the aforesaid to the best of our ability, and if we do not do it and fulfil it, the curse of our Lord God will come upon us and we will understand the ruin and his justice in all our deeds, and in those that we most need his help, his help will be to our detriment.<sup>35</sup>

This is clearly an oath taken by a Muslim, and some of the references and elements are Islamic (the Prophet and the Qur'ān). However, what is most important to underline is that the oath was judged as as necessary by Christians. Their chronicles, while noting that the Muslims swore “on their books of superstitious law,” do not fail to point out, however briefly, that oaths were taken.<sup>36</sup> Without it, the commitments made could not be established and validated. That is, beyond the appeal to different figures (Muhammad on the Muslim side and the Trinity on the Christian side)<sup>37</sup>, the presence of God is required and the elements of punishment and sanction for breaking it appear in the oaths of both societies.

Both were symbolic societies, since, as J. Le Goff pointed out, “every society is symbolic to the extent that it employs symbols in its practices and can be studied with the help of a kind of symbolic interpretation.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, although the symbolic aspect is common to all human societies, in the medieval case, this was reinforced by the application of an ideological system of symbolic interpretation to most of their acts and activities. This omnipresence of oaths in medieval societies indicates, as S. Esders points out, their need to resolve conflicts and create social bonds on a large scale.<sup>39</sup>

For Muslims and Christians, therefore, the oath of allegiance implied the recognition of a superiority-inferiority relationship, under the watchful eye of God, and an acknowledgement of the oath-taker's dominance and authority. The article now turns to analyse

<sup>30</sup> Esders, “Loyalty Oaths,” 122–3.

<sup>31</sup> Gaufredus Malaterra, *De Rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Sicilliae Comitis et Roberti Guiscardi Duci fratris eius*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, 5,1, Bologna 1927–1928), II, XIII, 33 and IV, XVI, 95. We would like to thank Eric Böhme for these examples. See Eric Böhme, “Conquered by Agreement: Surrender Negotiations in Sicily and Eastern al-Andalus in Comparison,” in *L'Italia Meridionale nel Medioevo. Un centro politico, culturale ed economico (Secoli V–XIII) / Southern Italy in the Middle Ages. A political, cultural and economic centre (5–13th centuries)*, ed. Salvatore Liscardo et al. [in print].

<sup>32</sup> Robert I. Burns, and Paul E. Chevedden, *Negotiating Cultures: Bilingual Surrender Treaties in Muslim-Crusader Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 185. See also Alex Metcalfe, “Messaging and Memory: Notes from Medieval Ifriqiya and Sicily,” *The Medieval Globe* 5/2 (2019), 87–104, at 98.

<sup>33</sup> Antonio Benavides, *Memoria sobre la guerra del Reino de Granada y los tratados y conciertos que precedieron a las capitulaciones de la ciudad*, 1845, 41–45. On the truces between Granada and Castile, see Diego Melo Carrasco, *Las relaciones fronterizas entre Granada y Castilla* (ss. XIII–XV). Un estudio a partir de Las Treguas (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2021).

<sup>34</sup> Benavides, *Memoria*, 42–3: É decimos que nos facemos vasallo suyo desde agora para en todos los dias de nuestra vida (...) é prometemos por nos é por todos los que despues de nos heredaren el dicho reyno de Granada de tener é fazer guardar en todo bien y cumplidamente como leales é fieles é verdaderos vasallos como dicho habemos.

<sup>35</sup> Benavides, *Memoria*, 43: Juramos é prometeos por el santo nombre de nuestro señor Dios uno todopoderoso é al su santo profeta Mahoma Aboabdile é por el alcoran que con él nos envió é por todas aquellas juras que todos los moros debemos guardar é non perjurar que bien é fiel é lealmente faremos, cumpliremos é guardaremos todo lo sobredicho á todo nuestro leal poder, é assi non lo faciendo y cumpliendo venga sobre nos la maldición de nuestro señor Dios é comprendanos la ruina é su justicia en todos nuestros fechos, é en aquellos que mas menester ayamos la su ayuda nos sea en contrario.

<sup>36</sup> Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, ed. Pontieri, II, XIII, 33: “(...) libris superstitionis legis suae coram positus, iuramento fidelitatem firmant.”

<sup>37</sup> Hans Hauben, “On the Invocation of the “Holy and Consubstantial Trinity” in Byzantine Oath and Dating Formulas,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 139 (2002), 158–160.

<sup>38</sup> Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture*, 237.

<sup>39</sup> Esders, “Loyalty Oaths,” 119.

this idea and through the analysis of two cases, which demonstrate the use of loyalty oaths as tools of domination in Christian-Muslim relations in the Iberian Peninsula.

## 2. Oaths and Submission: The Kings of León Recognise the Authority of the Caliph al-Ḥakam II al-Mustanşir (351/962)

In 351/962 Ordoño IV (r. 958–960), a dethroned Christian king, went to Córdoba to ask the caliph al-Ḥakam II al-Mustanşir (r. 350–366/961–976) for help.<sup>40</sup> Ordoño (Urdūn b. Adhfūnsh in the Arabic sources) wanted to regain the kingdom of León, from which he had been expelled by his cousin Sancho I (r. 956–958 and 959–966) with the help of the Cordovan troops of the previous ruler, ‘Abd al-Rahmān III (r. 300–350/912–961).<sup>41</sup> The meeting between the two has been preserved in *Nafh al-ṭīb* by the North African scholar al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632).<sup>42</sup> Although this compilation is very late the original source to which al-Maqqarī refers is the work of the Cordovan chronicler Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 469/1076), *al-Muqtabis*, the most important source on early history of al-Andalus and whose sections for this period are unfortunately lost.

The Umayyad Caliph, the most powerful ruler in Iberia at that time, decided to impress the Christian prince and prepared a splendid reception to display all the pomp and pageantry of the Cordovan Caliphate. Ordoño, alone and without support, declared himself “servant of the Commander of the Believers” (*anā ‘abd amīr al-mu‘minīn*) and asked for support to recover his kingdom. The civil war in the kingdom of León offered al-Mustanşir an opportunity to gain considerable advantages and he did not waste it. The sovereign promised to help Urdūn, but in exchange he demanded the following terms:

On the occasion of his arrival, he (the caliph) himself drew up a document, imposing upon him (Urdūn) the obligation to be an ally and to break [his alliance] with Fardhaland, the count. He (Urdūn) concluded this [covenant with the caliph] by clasp[ing] his right hand and giving

his son Gharsiya as a hostage. Gifts in cash and in kind were handed over to him and his companions.<sup>43</sup>

The excerpt makes it clear that the caliph clearly had the upper hand in the negotiations, as evidenced by the fact that he personally set out the terms in a document that the Christian had to accept if he wanted his support. The two most important elements of these compromises are to break his alliance with the Castilian count Fernán González, considered a personal enemy by al-Ḥakam, and to become his ally instead.<sup>44</sup> The latter is important, as Ordoño promised to behave as a faithful ally (*muwālāt al-islām*) of Córdoba. This is not a bond of patronage (*walā*) between a lord and someone who is converting to Islam, but something different.<sup>45</sup> In any case, the fact is that the caliph was establishing a bond of dependence with a sovereign whom he did not see as an equal, but as inferior to him. The idea, however, is the same and is based on reciprocity: submission and pledge of loyalty in exchange for help in regaining power. The way in which the agreement was ratified is noteworthy: by clasp[ing] the right hand (*wa-a ‘tā ‘alā dhalika šafqata yamīnihi*). This is the customary gesture that accompanied oaths in the confirmation of peace, treaties and pacts during the Middle Ages in the Christian and Islamic spheres, both internally and externally. As far as the question of gifts was concerned, this was common in diplomatic relations.<sup>46</sup> It was a way of recognising Ordoño as sovereign and at the same time showing the link that had just been established with him by the caliph.

However, it is very relevant that al-Mustanşir granted Ordoño a robe of honour (*khil’a*),<sup>47</sup> which distinguished him, and it was part of the caliphal policy of alliances as seen in the Umayyad intervention in North Africa. In order to secure pledges of loyalty from tribal chiefs, what Xavier Ballestín has aptly called the “politics of the *khil’a*” was put in place. That is, in exchange for their obedience they were given gifts (robes of honour, weapons, money and horses).<sup>48</sup> The sheikhs received diplomas in which

<sup>40</sup> This case has been analysed in Alejandro Peláez Martín, “962: Al-Maqqarī on the Oath of Allegiance Given by the Rulers of León to al-Ḥakam II,” 5/2 (2023), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2023.5.2.74>. What is proposed here is a different examination, seeking a comparative view with other examples and contexts.

<sup>41</sup> Theresa Earenfight, “Sancho I, King of León,” in *Medieval Iberia: an encyclopedia*, ed. E. Michael Gerli (New York: Routledge, 2003), 729; Margarita Torres Sevilla-Quiñones, “Ordoño IV,” <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/7303/ordono-iv> (06/03/2024). On the kingdom of León at this time and its monarchs, see Alfonso de Ceballos-Escalera y Gila, *Ordoño III, 951-956, Sancho I, 956-966, Ordoño IV 958-959, Ramiro III, 966-985, Vermudo II, 982-999* (Burgos: La Olmeda, 2000), 95–128; Justiniano Rodríguez Fernández, *Sancho I y Ordoño IV, reyes de León* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1987).

<sup>42</sup> al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, 8 vols (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), vol. 1, 384.

<sup>43</sup> al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭīb*, ed. ‘Abbās, vol. 1, 384: “wa-kataba bi-wūṣūlihi mulqiy<sup>an</sup> bi-nafsihi wa-‘āqadahu ‘alā muwālāti-l-islām wa-muqāṭa‘at Fardhaland al-qūmis wa-a ‘tā ‘alā dhalika šafqata yamīnihi wa-rahana waladahu Gharsiya wa-dufi‘at al-šilāt wa-l-ḥum-lān lahu wa-li-aṣḥābihi.”

<sup>44</sup> Gonzalo Martínez Díez, *El condado de Castilla (711-1038). La historia frente a la leyenda*, (Madrid and Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, Marcial Pons Historia, 2005), vol. 1, 419 and 430.

<sup>45</sup> Patricia Crone, “Mawla,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition 6 (1991), 874–882, DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_istlam\\_COM\\_0714](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_istlam_COM_0714) (06/03/2024); Maribel Fierro, “Mawālī and muwalladūn in al-Andalus (second/eighth-fourth/tenth centuries),” in *Patronage and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, ed. Monique Bernards and John Nawas (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 199–201; Paul G. Forand, “The relation of the Slave and the Client to the Master or Patron in Medieval Islam,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2/1 (1971), 59–66.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Coureas, “The Exchange of Gifts between Christians and Muslims on Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus 1192–1517,” *Religions* 14/1163 (2023). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091163>.

<sup>47</sup> On the *khil’a* see Eneko López Martínez de Marigorta, “El ṭirāz omeya de al-Andalus. De la jerarquización social, la centralización y la hegemonía estatal a la diversificación, la especialización regional y el dominio del mercado,” in *Artesanía e industria en al-Andalus. Actividades, espacios y organización*, ed. Adela Fábregas and Alberto García Porras (Granada: Comares, 2023), 21–49.

<sup>48</sup> Xavier Ballestín Navarro, *Al-Mansur y la dawla ‘amiriya. Una dinámica de poder y legitimidad en el occidente musulmán medieval* (Barcelona: Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 2004), 138 and 151–204; Xavier Ballestín Navarro, “Jil’a y monedas: el poder de los Banū Marwān en el Magrib al-Aqṣā,” *Al-Qanṭara* 27/2 (2006), 391–415.

Córdoba invested them with authority to rule over the tribes, acting as their representatives. Al-Ḥakam II was thus making Ordoño his deputy and governor, indicating that status through the robes of honour. The Leonese prince was thus becoming what Michael Brett has called a “creature of the caliph.”<sup>49</sup>

The plans of al-Ḥakam II, however, did not end with this agreement with Ordoño, but also included territorial elements:

We will strengthen the foundations of your royal power, we will make you reign over all those who gather around you from your community, and, to that end, we will establish for you a treaty in which we will fix the boundaries of your kingdom and that of your cousin's. We will also prevent the latter from disturbing you in the territory he will have to cede to you.<sup>50</sup>

According to the passage, the caliph was determined to intervene decisively in Leonese politics with the aim of fragmenting the kingdom in order to establish his ally in an area to be determined by the Umayyad ruler himself and which he would force Sancho I, King of León, to accept. Al-Ḥakam was assuming by this that the territory was “somehow” under his rule. Hence, he could fragment it and grant it to his ally. Ordoño's complete and total dependence on Córdoba was reinforced by the retinue that the caliph imposed on the prince of León. Al-Maqqarī's excerpt is very clear on this point: “The Christian notables of the *Dhimma* departed with him to consolidate obedience among his subjects and to take [his son Gharsiya] as a hostage.”<sup>51</sup> This idea of “helping to consolidate the authority” of the Christian prince among the Leonese is a very diplomatic way of saying that this group of Andalusi Christian notables would make sure that Urdūn b. Adhfūnsh would rule in accordance with the wishes of the caliph and with-

out deviating from the established agreements.<sup>52</sup> The mission of these envoys from Córdoba also included taking his son García hostage to guarantee the father's future compliance. This was a key element in the agreement, as it established a different power relationship to the one that had previously existed. However, it was the oath that formalised this obligation, adding psychological pressure for its fulfilment.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, it is quite possible, although it is not explicitly stated, that the pact included the loan of troops to install Ordoño in Leonese territory. All these are signs that the Umayyads sought to exercise its supremacy over the Christian kingdoms, dividing up their territories and establishing how they were to be governed.

However, news of these political manoeuvres by the caliph soon reached the monarch Sancho I of León (or Shānja b. Rudhmīr in the Arabic sources), cousin and rival of Urdūn. Alarmed by the alliance between the caliph and his enemy, he decided to ingratiate himself with Córdoba by submitting to Umayyad authority: Sancho I “sent his oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) and his obedience on his behalf as well as that of the counts [Arab. Pl. *qawāmīs*] and bishops of Galicia and Zamora.”<sup>54</sup> This was not a gesture of mere formal submission, as some scholars have considered it to be.<sup>55</sup>

The *bay'a* was the way to officially recognise and acknowledge the authority of successive rulers and their heirs in the Arabic-Islamic sphere.<sup>56</sup> It was a sacred commitment made under the covenant of God (*'ahd Allāh*), with the caliphs considered to be the representatives of this pact.<sup>57</sup> Although there is considerable debate about the nature of this institution (contractual agreement, pledge, covenant, promise or oath of alliance), the *bay'a* could be likened to an oath of fidelity.<sup>58</sup> Strictly speaking, the term *bay'a* designates the ceremony, the framework in which the

<sup>49</sup> Michael Brett, “The diplomacy of empire: Fatimids and Zirids, 990-1062,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 78 (2015), 149-159; Coureas, “The Exchange of Gifts”.

<sup>50</sup> al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-fīb*, ed. 'Abbās, vol. 1, 392: “wa-nashuddu awākhi mulkaka wa-numallikuka jami'a man inhāsha ilayka min ummatika wa-na'qidu laka bi-dhalika kitāb<sup>an</sup> yakūnu bi-yadika nuqarriru bi-hi ḥadd mā baynaka wa-bayna ibn 'ammika wa-naqbiḍuhu 'an kull mā yuṣarrifuhu min al-bilādi ilā yadika.”

<sup>51</sup> al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-fīb*, ed. 'Abbās, vol. 1, 384: “wa-anṣarafa ma'ahu wujūhu naṣārā al-dhimma li-yuwaṭṭidū lahu al-ṭā'ata 'inda ra'iyatihi wa-yaqbiḍū rahnah.”

<sup>52</sup> We know their names thanks to the Tunisian historian and thinker Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406): the *qāḍī* Wālid b. Muḥiṭ, Aṣbagh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Nabīl al-Jāthulīq and 'Abd Allāh b. Qāsim, bishop of Toledo (Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār and Khalīl Shaḥāda, 8 vols (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 2000-2001), vol. 4, 186).

<sup>53</sup> See James Wilson, “The ransom of high-ranking captives, tributary relationships and the practice of diplomacy in northern Syria 442-522/1050-1128,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 32/3 (2022), 635-69.

<sup>54</sup> al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-fīb*, ed. 'Abbās, vol. 1, 392: “wa-'inda dhalika ba'atha ibnu 'ammihī Shānja b. Rudhmīr bi-bay'atihi wa-ṭā'atihi ma'a qawāmīs ahl Jilliḡiyya wa-Sammūra wa-asāqifatihim.”

<sup>55</sup> Justiniano Rodríguez Fernández, “La monarquía leonesa. De García I a Vermudo III (910-1037)”, in: *El Reino de León en la Edad Media, III. La monarquía astur-leonesa. De Pelayo a Alfonso VI (718-1109)*, (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidro, 1995), 318: “Estamos ya en el año 966, y por fortuna el poder de Córdoba no había inquietado a León con gestos hostiles, limitándose a obtener un mero reconocimiento formal de superioridad (...).”

<sup>56</sup> Eric J. Hanne, “Ritual and Reality: The Bay'a Process in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic Courts,” in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Alexander Beihammer et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 141-158; Ella Landau-Tasseron, “The Religious Foundations of the Bay'a in Premodern Islam,” *Research Monographs on the Muslim World* 2/4 (2010), 1-44; Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*; Andrew Marsham, “Oath of Allegiance,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 401.

<sup>57</sup> Wadad al-Qadi, “The Primordial Covenant and Human Nature in the Qur'an,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 147/4 (2003), 332-338; Andrew J. O'Connor, “Qur'anic Covenants Reconsidered: *mīthāq* and '*ahd* in Polemical Context,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 30 (2019), 1-22.

<sup>58</sup> Émile Tyan, *Institutions du droit public musulman* (Centre d'études des droits du monde arabe, Université Saint-Joseph, Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Politiques, 1999 [1956]), 139 and 261-273; Eduardo Manzano Moreno, “Relaciones sociales en sociedades precapitalistas: una crítica al concepto de «modo de producción tributario»,” *Hispania*, 58/200 (1998), 881-914; Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society of Islamic Monarchy* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2001 [1980]), 50-1; Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 58; Bettina Dennerlein, “Legitimate Bounds and Bound Legitimacy. The Act of Allegiance to the Ruler (*Bai'a*) in 19th Century Morocco,” *Die Welt des Islams* 41/3 (2001), 287-310, at 291-3 and 310.



proclamation of the Muslim ruler takes place, including promises and pledges, but also and in particular, oaths. In fact, oaths or *aymān al-bay'a* were a key element and integral part of the proclamation process. They were seen as essential to ensure the fulfilment of the loyalty pledged to the leader.<sup>59</sup> The *bay'a*, although it could not be considered the equivalent of a feudal-type vassal oath or the clientelism established by the *walā'*, did constitute a form of subordination. It included commitments and a series of benefits (including the provision of military aid to the recipient) and sanctions for violation. Just as the vassalage pact involved acknowledging the authority of the other as lord and placing oneself under his protection, the *bay'a* was also used by sultans and *amīrs* in this sense: to proclaim themselves dependent rulers of the caliph, whose authority they acknowledged through the oath of allegiance.<sup>60</sup> Given this ability of the *bay'a* to create bonds of dependence, it could be related to different Islamic institutions (*tibā'a*, *luzūm*, *inqiṭā'* and *khidma*) that served to establish relationships of dependency and usually included some kind of oath (*hiḥf*).<sup>61</sup> Likewise, handshaking and hand-kissing were also part of these clientelist institutions and, in fact, a fundamental element of the *bay'a* was the handclasp (*ṣafqa*), later including hand-kissing as well.<sup>62</sup>

Returning to the case of the submission made by the King of León to the Caliph of Córdoba through this oath of allegiance, two historiographers, Ibn 'Idārī (d. ca. 719/1320) and Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260), provide us with essential information for understanding the plans of al-Ḥakam II. It seems that the Umayyad ruler had sent a delegation of Andalusī notables to León with a letter addressed to Sancho with the task of confirming the pact and taking his *bay'a*.<sup>63</sup> The envoys returned to Córdoba with the reply to al-Ḥakam's letter and the oath of allegiance of Shānja b. Rudhmīr, with "which he had committed himself and the people of his kingdom to the Commander of the Believers al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh."<sup>64</sup> What all this shows

is that the Caliph was negotiating with the two Christian princes at the same time, seeking to force Sancho to submit and fulfil the commitments he had made to his father, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, in return for his help. The *bay'a* constituted a confirmation of the agreement and a proof of submission from the Leonese kingdom.<sup>65</sup> With this political manoeuvre, al-Ḥakam succeeded in having Umayyad sovereignty recognised in the Christian north without the need for military action or wasted resources. For this reason, it was no longer necessary to continue offering support to another pretender to the throne. The pact established with Ordoño was forgotten. Of this prince we only know that he died very conveniently in Córdoba that same year, that is to say in 962.<sup>66</sup>

Two centuries later, and in a very different context, it was the Christians who set in motion mechanisms of domination similar to those that the Caliphate of Córdoba had put in place in the 4th/10th century.

### 3. Vassalage and Promises as Strategies of Imperial Domination: the Cases of Sayf al-Dawla, Ibn Ghāniya and Alfonso VII (1131-1146)

In the early thirties of the 6th/12th century, the Almoravid Empire began to show signs of enervation. The empire's frontiers were under attack, as demonstrated by the capture of Saragossa in 512/1118 by Alfonso I the Battler, who also launched military incursions into eastern and southern Iberia. This, coupled with a growing increase in taxation, damaged the reputation and prestige of the regime, whose legitimacy rested above all upon the defence of the Muslim community. All this contributed to a growing unease against the Almoravids in al-Andalus, who felt their domination as foreign, and to the rise of various revolts and opposition movements in the fourth decade of the 6th/12th century.<sup>67</sup> It was in this context that the ruler of the Castilian-Leonese monarchy, Alfonso VII (r. 1126-1157), decided to take advantage of

<sup>59</sup> The Tunisian historian and thinker Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) speaks of this aspect when he says in his *Muqaddima* that "the caliphs demanded to swear the covenant and subsumed every [type of] oath for this [purpose]. Consequently, all this was called the oaths of the *bay'a* (*kāna al-khulafā'u yastahliḥūna 'alā al-'ahdi wa-yastaw'ibūna al-aymāna kullahā li-dhalika, fa-summiya hadhā al-isti'ābu aymāna al-bay'a*)" (Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Darwish, 2 vols. (Damascus: Dār Ya'rab, 2004), vol. 1, 390).

<sup>60</sup> Peláez Martín, "El ritual de la *Bay'a*," 273-314.

<sup>61</sup> Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses. The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), 49; Jürgen Paul, "Khidma in the Social History of Pre-Mongol Iran," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57/3 (2014), 392-422; Gianluca P. Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World. Kin, Religion and Nation State* (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 35.

<sup>62</sup> Peláez Martín, "El ritual de la *Bay'a*," 287-291; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Kitāb al-bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār mulūk al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, ed. Bashār 'Awwād Ma'rūf and Muḥammad Bashār 'Awwād, 4 vols (Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2013), vol. 2, 398; *La caída del Califato de Córdoba y los Reyes de Taifas (al-Bayān al-Mugrib)*, trans., Felipe Maíllo Salgado (Salamanca, Universidad de Salamanca, 1993) 121; Ibn Abī Zar', *al-Anīs al-muṭrib bi-rawḍ al-qirṭās*, s. ed. (Rabāt: Dār al-Manṣūr li-l-ṭabā'a wa-l-warāqa, 1972), 28; *Rawḍ al-qirṭās*, trans., Ambrosio Huici Miranda, 2 vols (Valencia: Anubar, 1964) vol. 1, 55-56.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmilā li-kitāb al-Ṣila. Complementum Libri Assilah: (dictionarium biographicum)*, ed. Francisco Codera, 2 vols (Madrid: Michael Romero, 1889), vol. 2, 565: "wa-wajahhumā al-Ḥakam al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh ilā ibn 'ammīhi malik al-Jalāliqa yu-w'akkidūna 'ahdahu wa-yaqbiḍūna bay'atahu."

<sup>64</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *Kitāb al-bayān*, ed. Ma'rūf and 'Awwād, vol. 2, 220; *Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne intitulée al-Bayān al-Mogrib*, trans. Edmond Fagnan (Alger: Imprimerie orientale P. Fontana et cie., 2 vols., 1901-1904), vol. 2, 389: "wa-awṣalū kitāb Shānja b. Rudhmīr bi-jawāb mā khūṭiba fī-hi wa-bay'atihi allatī 'aqadāhā 'alā nafsīhi jami' ahl mamlakatīhi li-amīr al-mu'minīn al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh (...)."

<sup>65</sup> Al-Mustanṣir imposed several conditions, including the demolition of fortresses on the border (al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭīb*, ed. 'Abbās, vol. 1, 384).

<sup>66</sup> *Historia Silense*, ed. Justo Pérez de Urbel and Atilano González Ruiz-Zorrilla (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1959), 170: "Ordonius adhuc vivens inter Sarracenos mansit, et eiulando penas persoluit."

<sup>67</sup> Pierre Guichard, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista cristiana* (Valencia, Biblioteca Nueva Universitat de València, 2001), 118; Pierre Guichard, *Esplendor y fragilidad de al-Andalus* (Granada, Eug, 2015 [2002]), 234; Francisco García Fitz, *Relaciones políticas y guerra. La experiencia castellano-leonesa frente al Islam. Siglos XI-XIII* (Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla, 2002), 79-84.



the situation and establish a plan for the domination of Andalusī territory.<sup>68</sup>

As F. García Fitz rightly points out, given the remaining strength of Almoravid power and the lack of sufficient means to overthrow it, the monarch relied upon collaboration with the Andalusī actors who were dissatisfied with the Almoravid government in order to achieve his objectives.<sup>69</sup> The solution appeared in the last descendant of the noble lineage of the Banū Hūd: Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Malik Sayf al-Dawla al-Mustanşir bi-llāh (d. 540/1146).<sup>70</sup> It is not clear whether the initial approach was made by the Christian ruler or from the Muslim leader, as the chronicles contradict each other on this point.

The version of events presented by the Arabic sources, on the one hand, makes it clear that there was an agreement (525/1131) between the two, but it is not specified what kind of pact. Al-Yasa' b. Ḥazm (d. 575/1179 or 595/1199) described it as a peace agreement (*al-ṣulḥ*) and relates that Sayf al-Dawla was given fifty thousand Christians to "go out to the land of the Muslims to take the power".<sup>71</sup> Ibn al-Kardabūs (d. ca. first half of 7th/13th century) relates that it was Alfonso who approached the Hūdīd ruler to offer him some territories in Castile in exchange for Rueda, proposing the following:

Then I will go out with you personally, with my armies and my heroes, and I will rule with you over those territories (al-Andalus). You will invite them [the Muslims] to obey you, and whoever agrees with you and enters your community, you will leave people you trust with him and appoint your governors over him; meanwhile, I will protect him from the attacks of the Christians, for I will treat them [the Muslims] like a caring and compassionate father.<sup>72</sup>

It is clear from this passage that the Christian king planned to establish Zafadola as a ruler under his power, helping him to gain control of the territory and incorporating al-Andalus and the Muslims of Iberia into his imperial structure. Accordingly, Alfonso hoped to establish direct rule over the territory by ruling jointly with his vassal in the territories. Sayf

al-Dawla would be in charge of internal administration while the emperor would direct external affairs, protecting it against the other Christian sovereigns. In any case, Alfonso's rule over al-Andalus would be direct, ruling through his subordinate.

The Latin sources, on the other hand, corroborate this strategy and add important details about the nature of the agreement between Alfonso and Sayf al-Dawla. To begin with, the anonymous *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* relates that Aḥmad Sayf al-Dawla was cornered in Rueda del Jalón by the Almoravids. The Hūdīd leader praised the victories of the Leonese king and summoned his family and followers to propose that they surrender to Alfonso (*faciamus eum regem super nos et dominum et amicum nostrum*) to recover with his help the territories that had been taken from him, which they accepted.<sup>73</sup> After sending legates, Sayf al-Dawla presented himself before Alfonso and there "he and his sons became knights of the king, promising to serve him himself and his sons all the days of his life and giving him Rueda."<sup>74</sup> In exchange, the king of León granted him a series of fortresses in the territory of Toledo, Extremadura and the banks of the Duero River. As F. García Fitz rightly points out, this was a genuine vassalage pact, similar to those established by Alfonso VII with other Christian monarchs on the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>75</sup> Thus, King García IV Ramírez of Pamplona (r. 1134–1150) "promised to serve him all the days of his life and became a knight of the King of León, who gave him gifts and a fief."<sup>76</sup> So did Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona (r. 1131–1162) and Alfonso Jordan, the Count of Toulouse (r. 1112–1148), who "promised to obey him in everything and became his knights, after touching the king's right hand to reaffirm their vassalage."<sup>77</sup> In exchange, the king of León gave Saragossa to the former and a lordship and numerous gifts to the latter.

It is clear, therefore, that the procedure followed with Sayf al-Dawla and the other Christian monarchs was the same and that it revolved around vassalage, referring to a framework of feudal relations: a promise to obey and become knights of the king in exchange for a fief and gifts. The king or lord (*dominus* or *senior*)

<sup>68</sup> On the figure of this monarch see Bernard F. Reilly, "Alfonso VII, King of León-Castile," in *Medieval Iberia: an encyclopedia*, ed. E. Michael Gerli (New York: Routledge, 2003), 59–61; Manuel Recuero Astray, "Alfonso VII," <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/6376/alfonso-vii> (17/06/2024).

<sup>69</sup> Francisco García Fitz, "¿Una España musulmana, sometida y tributaria?" *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 31 (2004), 238.

<sup>70</sup> See on this figure María Jesús Viguera Molíns, "Zafadola (Sayf al-Dawla)," <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/5515/zafadola-sayf-al-dawla> (17/06/2024); Anthony Minnema, "A Ṭā'ifa in Exile: Sayf al-Dawla and the Survival of the Banū Hūd," *Al-Masāq* 31/1 (2019), 1–19; Aurora González Artigao, *De Zaragoza a Murcia y Damasco: perspectivas ampliadas sobre los Banū Hūd* (ss. XI–XIII). [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2022.

<sup>71</sup> al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūt, Husayn Asad et al., 25 vols (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1981–1988), vol. 20, 41: "in 'aqada al-ṣulḥ bayna al-Mustanşir bin Hūd wa-bayna al-sulayṭīn malik al-rūm wa-huwa ibn bint Adhfūnsh ilā muddat 'ishrīn sana 'alā an yadfa' a li-l-firanj Rūṭa wa-yadfa' ū ilayhi ḥuṣūn<sup>an</sup> iwaḍahā wa-yu' iynūhu bi-ḥamsin alfan min al-rūm yakhrju bi-hā ilā bilād al-muslimīn li-yumallak."

<sup>72</sup> Ibn al-Kardabūs, *Kitāb al-ikhtifā' fī akhbār al-khulafā'*, ed. Šāliḥ b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ghāmīdī (Medina: al-Jāmi'a al-Islāmiyya, 2008), 1305: "wa-akhruju ma' aka bi-nafsī wa-ajnādī [wa-abṭālī] wa-ataṭawwafu ma' aka 'alā [tilka] al-bilād wa-tad' ūhum ilā ṭā'atika fa-man ajābaka wa-dakhala fī jamā'atika tarakta 'indahu thiqataka wa-ista'alta 'alihi wulātaka wa-ammantuhu [anā] min ghārāt al-rūm wa-kuntu la-hum ka-l-ab al-mushfiq wa-l-raḥīm."

<sup>73</sup> "Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris," ed. Antonio Maya Sánchez, in *Chronica Hispana Saeculi XII*, ed. Emma Falque et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), Lib. I, 27, 163.

<sup>74</sup> "Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris," ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. I, 29, 164: "et ipse et filii eius fecerunt se milites regis et promiserunt ei seruire ipse cum filiis suis cunctis diebus uite sue et dedit ei Rotam."

<sup>75</sup> García Fitz, "Espana musulmana," 238.

<sup>76</sup> "Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris," ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. I, 63, 179: "(...) promisit seruire ei cunctis diebus uite sue et factus est miles regis Legionis, qui dedit ei munera et honorem."

<sup>77</sup> "Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris," ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. I, 67, 181: "(...) promiserunt ei obedire in cunctis et facti sunt eius milites, tacta regis dextra ad fidem confirmandam."

granted his vassal protection and a benefice (*beneficium*, “good deed”) or fief (*feudum*) in the form of an annuity, an exemption from taxation, a series of economic privileges or outright grants of property. Thus, the inferior was bound to the superior by commendation and homage. In return, the vassal promised to serve his lord with loyalty, providing military support and advice. All this was articulated and ratified by means of the oath of fealty, an element that established the responsibilities and penalties for non-compliance.<sup>78</sup>

Alfonso's plans, however, did not come to fruition. The emperor launched a policy of ‘war of attrition’ aimed at convincing the Andalusīs that submitting to Zafadola and placing themselves under the indirect rule of the Castilian-Leonesian sovereign was a better option than remaining under an Almoravid power incapable of defending them. However, although some insurgents sought the support of Sayf al-Dawla and agreed to submit to the Christians, many of the new local leaders, who emerged from the rejection of the Almoravids, were willing to remain independent or to seek help from the new power that was emerging in the Maghrib: the Almohads. It was in this complex and volatile dynamic that Zafadola himself eventually met his death in 540/1146 at the hands of his Christian allies.<sup>79</sup> In any case, whether an accident or a misunderstanding, this did not help the emperor's plans, and he had to change his strategy.

The considerable level of political fragmentation that al-Andalus was experiencing at that time favoured a different project for Alfonso, taking advantage of internal division and confrontation: territorial conquests and annexations where possible, while obtaining submissions where the former was impracticable. One such opportunity was provided by the situation in Córdoba.

The *qāḍī* Ibn Ḥamdān (d. 546/1151) had seized power in the city in 539/1145, but he was later expelled by the forces of the Almoravid governor Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī b. Ghāniya (Avengania in Latin sources) (d. 543/1148) in 540/1146. He first took refuge in Badajoz, and then in Andújar.<sup>80</sup> From there, with the city under siege by the Almoravid forces, he contacted Alfonso in search of

help, sending him this message according to the anonymous author of the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*: “Behold, Avengania and all his army have besieged me. Have pity on me according to your mercy, deliver me, and my friends and I will serve you without fear.”<sup>81</sup>

We do not know what kind of agreement the *qāḍī* and the emperor reached, but what is certain is that the latter not only freed the former from the siege he was suffering, but also helped him to recover Córdoba in Dhū l-ḥijja 540/May 1146. However, while the battle for Córdoba was ongoing, news arrived that the Almohads, in support of some of the anti-Andalusian rebellions, had landed in Cádiz.<sup>82</sup> This meant that the new North African empire had become directly involved in Iberian affairs and was changing the rules of the peninsular chessboard. This altered the dynamics, and now it seemed more advantageous for Alfonso to reach an agreement with Ibn Ghāniya, the Almoravid governor of Córdoba.

The sources have preserved relevant information on the nature of the pact reached. According to the *Kitāb A māl al-a lām* by Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374), this truce was agreed between Alfonso and the lords of his council (*arbāb al-shūrā*) with Ibn Ghāniya in exchange for land and monetary payments from the latter.<sup>83</sup> Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (d. 1247) provided more details about the gestures used to stage the pact. According to his *De Rebus Hispaniae*, Ibn Ghāniya “went out to meet the emperor and handed him the keys of the city, surrendering himself to his rule.”<sup>84</sup> The submission was articulated through an oath of loyalty: the Muslim ruler “swore an oath of vassalage to him (the emperor) and to his son king Sancho on the book of Muḥammad, which is called the Qur’ān.”<sup>85</sup> In another of his works, *al-Iḥāṭa*, Ibn al-Khaṭīb included some reported speech that Alfonso VII delivered to the people of Córdoba:

The conditions were set and Ibn Ghāniya went to him and made a pact with him. He (Alfonso VII) summoned the people of Cordoba and told them: “I have done you good as no one has ever done you before; I have defeated you

<sup>78</sup> Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture*, 237–87; John M. Riddle, *A History of the Middle Ages: 300–1500* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016 [2008]), 182; David E. Luscombe, “Introduction: the formation of political thought in the West,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought: c. 350–c. 1450*, ed. James H. Burns, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), 160; Hunt Janin, *Medieval Justice: Cases and Laws in France, England and Germany, 500–1500* (Jefferson, McFarland & Co Inc, 2009 [2004]), 43. See also classical works on feudalism, such as François Louis Ganshof, *Feudalism* (London, New York, Toronto, Longmans, Green and Co, 1952); Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society: The Growth and Ties of Dependence* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1964) and Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society: Social Classes and Political Organization* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1964).

<sup>79</sup> García Fitz, *Relaciones políticas y guerra*, 89–98; García Fitz, “España musulmana,” 240; Pierre Guichard, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista cristiana*, (Valencia: Biblioteca Nueva Universitat de València 2001), 113–44; María Jesús Viguera Molins, “Taifas post-almorávides,” in *Historia de España de Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Almorávides y almohades. Siglos XI–XIII*, vol. 8–2, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molins (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997), 66–72.

<sup>80</sup> Guichard, *Al-Andalus*, 121–125; Maribel Fierro, “The *qāḍī* as ruler,” in: *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam. Actas del Simposio Internacional: Granada, 15–18 octubre 1991*, (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1994), 87–103, at 90–93; García Fitz, *Relaciones políticas y guerra*, 98–99. On the figure of Ibn Ghāniya see Alejandro García Sanjuán, “Ibn Gāniya,” <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/6117/ibn-ganiya> (17/06/2024).

<sup>81</sup> “Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris,” ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. II, 99, 243: “Ecce Auengania et omnes militia eius obsederunt me. Sed tu misere mei secundum misericordiam tuam et libera me et securus seruiam tibi ego et amici mei.”

<sup>82</sup> “Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris,” ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. II, 100, 243–244; Fierro, “The *qāḍī* as ruler,” 92; García Fitz, *Relaciones políticas y guerra*, 99.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb a māl al-a lām*, ed. Évariste Lévi-Provençal (Beirut: 1956), 254: “fa-iqtadā ra’ yuhu wa-ra’ yu arbāb al-shūrā min qawmihī an yastabqiya Ibn Ghāniya wa-yuhādinahu wa-yunaṣṣibahu sudd<sup>an</sup> fi wajhi l-qawm fa-taraddadat baynahu wa-bayna Ibn Ghāniya al-muḥāwara wa-tamma lahu l-gharaḍa ‘alā shurūṭ<sup>in</sup> min māl<sup>in</sup> wa-bilād<sup>in</sup> iltazamahā lahu Ibn Ghāniya wa-aqla’ a ‘anḥ.”

<sup>84</sup> Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de rebus Hispaniae sive Historia gothica*, ed. Juan Fernández Valverde, *Rodericus Ximinius de Rada opera omnia*, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), Lib. VII, VIII, 229: “Cumque prope eam uenisset, princeps Auengania, qui Cordube presidebat, de uiribus non confidens exiuit obuam imperatori et claudes optulit ciuitatis, eius dominio sese tradens.”

<sup>85</sup> Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de rebus Hispaniae*, ed. Fernández Valverde, Lib. VII, VIII, 229–230: “super librum Machometi, qui Alchoranas dicitur, sibi et regi Sancio filio suo fecit hominimum et iurauit.”

in your city and made you my subjects. Now I give you as governor Yahyā b. Ghāniya.” They heard him and obeyed him.<sup>86</sup>

The passage makes it clear that the Cordovans became subjects of the emperor and that Ibn Ghāniya’s power and position derived from Alfonso’s authority, as it was the emperor who appointed him as governor. Imperial rule was thus established and the promises Alfonso had made to the judge Ibn Ḥamdīn were forgotten. The Castilian-Leonese sovereign thus gained authority and recognition and imposed his supremacy over one of the most symbolically and strategically important Andalusī cities.<sup>87</sup>

However, although the royal documentation affirmed that the Castilian-Leonese monarch was *imperatore in Toletō, in Legionē, in Saragoza, in Naiara, Castella, et Galicia, et Cordube*, the fact is that his control over the town was only indirect and nominal. Alfonso had recognised Ibn Ghāniya’s rule over Córdoba in return for the payment of tribute and the promise of vassalage, but all this depended on the loyalty of this new vassal and the agreement was merely the result of a temporary sense of expediency. This was confirmed when Alfonso himself decided to attack Ibn Ghāniya’s territory, occupying Baeza and other places in his campaign against Almería (1147). This, combined with the demand for an increase in the tribute paid or the cession, if necessary, of Córdoba itself, finally convinced Ibn Ghāniya to enter into negotiations with the Almohads. He surrendered the city to them in 543/1148.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

What can be found in both cases, that of al-Ḥakam II and that of Alfonso VII, is that both sovereigns adopted similar methods of subjugation and domination in their foreign policy and diplomatic relations in Iberia. These methods were based upon the utilisation of loyalty oaths. This mechanism provided the framework for the strategy of conquest and submission that has been the focus of this article. Yet despite the similarities, two different models can be distinguished in the examples analysed above.

To begin with, we find a model that could be termed “direct imperial rule.” Here, a monarch who has been removed from the throne, or the descendant of a marginalised royal lineage who aspires to regain power, turns to a ruler more powerful than himself and with the means to help and support him to do so, an “imperial” sovereign. These are the cases of Ordoño IV and Sayf al-Dawla going to al-Ḥakam II al-Mustanşir and Alfonso VII, the dominant rulers of Iberia at their respective times. Both sovereigns were

more than willing to help them achieve their goals and support them in their aspirations.

There are considerable parallels between the two cases and a similar strategy can be found. To begin with, both Ordoño and Zafadola are “made kings” by the caliph and the emperor. Al-Mustanşir granted Ordoño a robe of honour (*khil’a*), which made him his subject and deputy. Zafadola, for his part, became the knight of Alfonso VII and his vassal. In both cases, moreover, there was an exchange on both sides. As far as Ordoño was concerned, he swore allegiance and gave his son as a hostage in exchange for the caliph’s recognition and his support to govern a part of the kingdom of León assigned by Córdoba. Zafadola also promised to serve Alfonso and gave him Rueda in exchange for some land in Christian territory and support in gaining control of al-Andalus (*Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* calls him *rex Zafadola Sarracenorum*).<sup>89</sup> The pact is ratified by a ceremony involving the hands<sup>90</sup> and, although it is not mentioned, there may have been an oath involved. Feudal vassalage implicitly contained this, and as far as the *walā’* is concerned, we know the existence of the *mawālī l-yamīn* (“kinsmen by oath”).<sup>91</sup> Finally, there is no mention of Alfonso giving gifts to Sayf al-Dawla on becoming his vassal, as was the case with Ordoño and al-Ḥakam. However, the Latin sources indicate that it was customary for the Castilian-Leonese sovereign to give gifts to his monarchs and vassal counts after paying homage to him.<sup>92</sup> In this scheme, the oath serves to “create” a subordinate totally subject to his lord, since his territory is a tributary and not independent. In other words, the imperial sovereign creates a new power, and instructs his vassal how to rule under his “direct” supervision.

The second model, by contrast, could be termed “indirect imperial rule.” In this approach, an independent ruler, faced with pressure from a more powerful ruler, decides to recognise the latter’s authority by taking an oath of allegiance. Both the *bay’a* made by Sancho I of León and the vassalage of Ibn Ghāniya can be understood from this perspective. Both were in a difficult situation to resist the caliph and the emperor respectively and therefore opted to reach a submission pact whereby they “became” subordinates and would rule, in theory, as governors of their lords. In this scheme, the oath serves to “integrate” a territory, kingdom or city into the imperial orbit of another sovereign, but the reality is that the territory remains autonomous. In this model, unlike the previous one, indirect submission is sought, but the imperial government is limited to legitimising a power that already existed. However, this strategy was less interventionist than the former, as it kept the individual in his position and with no mil-

<sup>86</sup> Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥṣān fī akhbār Gharnāta*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ‘Inān, 4 vols (Cairo: 1973–1977), vol. 4, 346: “fa-‘uqīdat al-shurūṭ wa-nazala ilayhi Ibn Ghāniya fa-‘āqadahu wa-istahḍara lahu ahl Qurṭuba wa-qāla lahum anā qad fa’altu ma’akum min al-khayri mā lam yaf’ alhu man qablī ghalabtukum fī baladikum wa-taraktukum ra’iyyatī lī wa-qad wallaytu ‘alykum Yahyā bin Ghāniya fa-asma’ū lahu wa-aṭiy’ū.”

<sup>87</sup> Bernard F. Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla Under King Alfonso VII 1126–1157* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 92.

<sup>88</sup> García Fitz, *Relaciones políticas y guerra*, 99–100 (n. 80) and 102–103.

<sup>89</sup> “Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris,” ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. I, 70, 182.

<sup>90</sup> No mention is made of the hands when it comes to Zafadola becoming a knight of the emperor, but given that the counts of Barcelona and Toulouse paid vassalage to Alfonso VII by touching the king’s right hand, it seems clear that this must have happened in such a way (“Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris,” ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. I, 67, 181).

<sup>91</sup> Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture*, 243; Crone, “Mawālā”, 876.

<sup>92</sup> “Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris,” ed. Maya Sánchez, Lib. I, 63, 179 and 67, 181.



itary forces behind, it depended solely on the loyalty of the supposed vassal. Hence, preserving obedience was more problematic and campaigns to reaffirm it were necessary. This explains why the chronicler Ibn 'Idhārī (d. ca. 719/1320) notes that "the breach [of commitments] on the part of the Galicians became manifest everywhere" after the *bay'a* made by Sancho to the caliph.<sup>93</sup> Ordoño's disappearance had freed Sancho of a competitor and probably made him feel less obliged to fulfil his commitments to al-Ḥakam. Córdoba reacted by launching a series of expeditions and forcing Sancho to accept caliphal sovereignty.<sup>94</sup> As for Ibn Ghāniya, Lucas de Tuy (d. 1259) would say centuries later that 'the Saracens, although they had sworn to our emperor that they would be faithful vassals to him and his sons, broke their word as time went on.'<sup>95</sup> It seems that the pressure exerted by Alfonso VII in the form of campaigns and increased tribute convinced the Almoravid governor to break with an agreement which, in any case, had been the result of a temporary convenience.<sup>96</sup>

These two models make it possible to conclude that, despite religious differences, the (possibly) different functions of oaths in the two societies and the different chronology, the existence of similar events in the 4th/10th and 6th/12th centuries is related to what could be considered as a common strategy of imperial rule. Supremacy was established through covenants and relationships of dependence ratified by oaths and the symbolic use of the right hand. They proved to be mechanisms capable of generating ties of fealty that integrated populations and states into imperial structures, such as those of al-Ḥakam II and Alfonso VII. After all, as E. J. Ward points out, oaths of allegiance were based on reciprocity: loyalty and submission in exchange for protection and recognition. This created a strong bond between those who made them and those who received them.<sup>97</sup> The oath was thus a code, a kind of "common language" recognised by both Christians and Muslims. As R. Fossier points out in his analysis of medieval society, the oath replaced the written contract. People felt they were under the divine gaze when they took an oath which, in addition to salvation, pledged honour.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, the culture of oath making was shared. All these elements explain why both Christians and Muslims, despite their varying institutional frameworks, saw the oath of allegiance as an effective tool for guaranteeing their pacts and agreements, with both internal and external actors.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *Kitāb al-bayān*, ed. Ma'rūf and 'Awwād, vol. 2, 220; *Histoire de l'Afrique*, trans. Fagnan, vol. 2, 389: "ṣahara nakthu al-Jalālīqa bi-kulli jiha."

<sup>94</sup> Évariste Lévi-Provençal, España musulmana hasta la caída del Califato de Córdoba (711-1031 de J. C.), vol. 4 de la Historia de España de Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1950), 378-382.

<sup>95</sup> Lucas de Tuy, *Chronicon Mundi*, ed. Emma Falque (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), Lib. IV, 75, 311: "Sarraceni autem licet iurauerint imperatori nostro, ut essent ei fideles uasalli et filiis eius, tamen tempore procedente mentiti sunt ei."

<sup>96</sup> García Fitz, Relaciones políticas y guerra, 100-104.

<sup>97</sup> Emily J. Ward, *Royal Childhood and Child Kingship: Boy Kings in England, Scotland, France and Germany, c. 1050-1262* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022) 123.

<sup>98</sup> Robert Fossier, *The Axe and the Oath: Ordinary Life in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010), 264.

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