

HdO

The Taifa Kingdoms

Reconsidering 11th-Century Iberia



Edited by
Alejandro García-Sanjuán

BRILL

The Taifa Kingdoms

Handbook of Oriental Studies

Handbuch der Orientalistik

SECTION ONE

The Near and Middle East

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VOLUME 189

The titles published in this series are listed at brill.com/ho1

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Alejandro García-Sanjuán



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Cover illustration: Secondary door of the Golden Hall of the Aljafería palace in Zaragoza (Aragon, Spain), with a pointed horseshoe arch, constructed in the 11th century during the reign of Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān al-Muqtadir bi-Llāh (r. 438–474/1049–1081). Photograph by Francis Raher, CC-BY.

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: “Brill”. See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0169-9423

ISBN 978-90-04-73548-4 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-73549-1 (e-book)

DOI 10.1163/9789004735491

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Preface

This volume aims to contribute to a century-long historiographical tradition on the so-called Taifa kingdoms. Associated with the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate, the peak moment of Islam in Iberia, and the arrival of the Berber dynasties, whose rule marked the end of the political independence of al-Andalus, the study of the taifa period remained largely neglected until the first half of the twentieth century. Because of the great wealth of surviving coinage, a product of political fragmentation, scholarly interest in this period initially focused on numismatics, as revealed by the 1926 monograph by A. Prieto y Vives (1870–1939),¹ followed nearly thirty years later by that of G.C. Miles (1904–1975).² The book by H. Pérès (1890–1983), in which he put forward the value of poetry as a historical source,³ and the essay by the Egyptian H. Mu'nis (1911–1996) on the fall of the caliphate,⁴ appeared during the same period and complete the scholarly landscape on the topic over the first half of the century.

Although the great rise of studies on the taifas took place between the 1970s and the 1980s, the 1959 study by J. Bosch Vilá (1922–1985) on the Banū Razīn of Albarracín inaugurated a series of monographs focusing on case studies,⁵ later followed by similar works dealing with Córdoba,⁶ Zaragoza,⁷ Seville,⁸ and Denia,⁹ before D. Wasserstein published in 1985 the earliest overview of the

- 1 A. Prieto y Vives, *Los reyes de taifas. Estudio histórico-numismático de los musulmanes españoles en el siglo v de la hégira (xi d. de J.C.)*, Madrid: Junta de Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas, 1926.
- 2 G.C. Miles, *Coins of the Spanish mulūk al-tawā'if*, New York: American Numismatic Society, 1954.
- 3 H. Pérès, *La poésie andalouse en arabe classique au xi^e siècle, ses aspects généraux et sa valeur documentaire*, Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1937.
- 4 H. Monés, *Essai sur la chute du califat Umayyade de Cordoue en 1009*, Cairo: Imprint Université Fouad, 1948.
- 5 J. Bosch Vilá, *Albarracín musulmán. El reino de taifas de los Beni Razīn, hasta la constitución del señorío cristiano*, Teruel: Instituto de Estudios Turolenses, 1959.
- 6 K. Soufi, *Los Banū Yahwar en Córdoba, 1031–1070 d.J.C., 422–462 H.*, Córdoba: Real Academia de Córdoba, 1968.
- 7 A. Turk, *El reino de Zaragoza en el siglo xi de Cristo (v de la hégira)*, Madrid: Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos, 1978.
- 8 M. Ibn 'Abbūd, *Al-Tā'rikh al-siyāsī wa-l-ijtimā'ī li-Ishbīliya*, Tetouan, 1983. An abridged Spanish version appeared years later: M. Benaboud, *Sevilla en el siglo xi. El reino abbadí de Sevilla (1023–1091)*, Seville: Servicio de Publicaciones del Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1992.
- 9 M.J. Rubiera Mata, *La taifa de Denia*, Alicante: Diputación Provincial de Alicante, Instituto Alicantino de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, 1986.

taifa period.¹⁰ Around the same time, the poetry of one of the key figures of the second half of the eleventh century, al-Mu'tamid, the last ruler of the Banū 'Abbād dynasty of Seville, was published and translated.¹¹

Wasserstein's second monograph, devoted to the post-1031 evolution of the caliphate and the Banū Ḥammūd dynasty, received less favorable reviews than the previous one, at least in Spain,¹² but heralded a great burst of publications on the taifas in the 1990s. P. Scales, harshly criticized because of his inaccurate use of Arabic sources,¹³ revisited the argument of ethnic tensions as the main cause of the caliphate's collapse.¹⁴ Around the same time, F. Clément raised the issue of the legitimacy of power and came up with one of the most outstanding and successful works about the taifa context so far.¹⁵

The books by Wasserstein, Scales, and Clément coincided with a renewal of interest in the taifa period in Spanish scholarship which has continued until today. A first 1992 overview¹⁶ was followed by the work that marked the reappearance of the history of al-Andalus in the series *Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*,¹⁷ interrupted for almost forty years after the death of E. Lévi-Provençal in 1956. T. Garulo shortly afterwards produced the first monograph on the literary production of the period¹⁸ and F. Díaz Esteban coordinated two collective

10 D. Wasserstein, *The rise and fall of the party kings. Politics and society in Islamic Spain, 1002–1086*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

11 M.J. Rubiera Mata, *Al-Mu'tamid ibn 'Abbād. Poesías. Antología bilingüe*, Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1982.

12 D. Wasserstein, *The caliphate in the west: An Islamic political institution in the Iberian Peninsula*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. Reviews by L. Molina, in *al-Qanṭara* 18 (1997), 267–270, and E. Manzano, in *BSOAS* 59, no. 1 (1996), 143–144.

13 M. Fierro, "On political legitimacy in al-Andalus. A review article," in *Der Islam* 73 (1996), 138–150, 138–145; M. Marín, "Review of D. J. Wasserstein, *The caliphate in the west. An Islamic political institution in the Iberian Peninsula*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993," in *al-Qanṭara* 18 (1997), 267–270.

14 P.C. Scales, *The fall of the caliphate of Córdoba: Berbers and Andalusis in conflict*, Leiden: Brill, 1994.

15 F. Clément, *Pouvoir et légitimité en Espagne musulmane à l'époque des taifas (v^e/xi^e siècle). L'imam fictif*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997. The book, however, received rather negative reviews in France by G. Martínez-Gros, in *Médiévales* 35 (1998), 151–152, and S. Makariou, in *Bulletin critique des Annales Islamologiques* 17 (2001), 106.

16 M.J. Viguera, *Los reinos de taifas y las invasiones magrebíes (Al-Andalus del xi al xiii)*, Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992.

17 M.J. Viguera (ed.), *Los reinos de taifas. Al-Andalus en el siglo xi*, Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994.

18 T. Garulo, *La literatura árabe de al-Andalus*, Madrid: Hiparión, 1998.

volumes devoted to the taifa of Badajoz,¹⁹ whose main literary figure was Ibn ‘Abdūn of Évora.²⁰

Over the last twenty years the field has been further enriched with new contributions, starting with a fresh overview by P. Guichard and B. Soravia²¹ and including more case studies focused on specific taifas, namely Granada,²² Denia,²³ and Seville,²⁴ as well as on the Banū Ḥammūd.²⁵ Taking up Wasserstein’s proposal on the continuity of the caliphate after 422/1031, A. Peláez contributed significantly to expanding with new sources the issue of political authority among the taifa rulers.²⁶ Similarly, literary culture has continued to be one of the main focuses of attention, whether with the editing of texts such as the *Dīwān* of Abū Bakr al-Ghazzār, known as “the poet of the Aljafería,”²⁷ and studies on prominent figures, with Ibn Ḥazm holding pride of place.²⁸

In addition to more conventional articles focusing on literary sources, the monograph coordinated by B. Sarr includes works drawing on archaeology, material culture, and architecture, becoming one of the most insightful contributions.²⁹ In the most recent monograph devoted to the taifa period, E. Tixier du Mesnil explores the relationship between knowledge and power.³⁰

This short overview has considered only the monographs published over the last century. For the sake of brevity I have had to leave aside the dozens,

- 19 F. Díaz Esteban (ed.), *Bataliús: el reino taifa de Badajoz*, Madrid: Letrúmero, 1996; F. Díaz Esteban (ed.), *Bataliús II: nuevos estudios sobre el reino taifa de Badajoz*, Madrid: Letrúmero, 1999.
- 20 M.J. Rebollo Ávalos, *La cultura en el reino de taifa de Badajoz. Ibn ‘Abdūn de Évora (m.530/1135)*, Badajoz: Diputación Provincial de Badajoz, 1997.
- 21 P. Guichard and B. Soravia, *Los reinos de taifas. Fragmentación política y esplendor cultural*, Málaga: Sarriá, 2005.
- 22 B. Sarr, *La Granada zirí (1013–1090)*, Granada: Alhulia, 2011.
- 23 T. Bruce, *La taifa de Denia et la Méditerranée au XI^e siècle*, Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2013.
- 24 J. Lirola Delgado, *Al-Mu‘tamid y los Abadíes. El esplendor del reino de Sevilla (s. XI)*, Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2011.
- 25 M.D. Rosado Llamas, *La dinastía ḥammūdī y el califato en el siglo XI*, Málaga: Diputación de Málaga, 2008.
- 26 A. Peláez Martín, *El califa ausente: cuestiones de autoridad en al-Andalus durante el siglo XI*, Madrid: La Ergástula, 2018.
- 27 S. Barberá Fraguas, *Dīwān. Abū Bakr al-Gazzār*, Saragossa: Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 2005.
- 28 C. Adang et al. (eds.), *Ibn Ḥazm of Córdoba. The life and works of a controversial thinker*, Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- 29 B. Sarr (ed.), *Ṭawā’if. Historia y arqueología de los reinos taifas*, Granada: Alhulia, 2018.
- 30 E. Tixier du Mesnil, *Savoir et pouvoir en al-Andalus au XI^e siècle*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2022.

probably hundreds, of articles and book chapters that make up an extraordinarily rich, varied, extensive, and complex historiographical framework.

The Present Volume

Brill's series *Handbook of Oriental Studies* aims to present an updated state of the art that allows the interested reader, not necessarily a specialist in the subject, to learn about the most recent results of academic research on a given historical period. Scholarship about medieval Iberia has experienced sweeping transformations over the last twenty years. The recent volumes devoted to the Nasrid period coordinated by A. Fábregas³¹ and B. Boloix³² reveal the great effort developed by Spanish historians to convey their academic production to an international academic audience, an endeavor traditionally neglected among specialists in this field of studies.

Around forty years after Wasserstein's monograph (the first on the topic) and twenty years after Guichard and Soravia's (the last overview so far of the taifa period), the present volume comes as a new, up-to-date synthesis of a decisive period in the evolution of medieval Iberia. Reliance on literary sources written mostly by ulema generates information predominantly associated with state action and doctrinal and religious aspects. Being mindful of the problems raised by these sources, a great effort has been made to deal with the complex political reality of the time, but also with social and economic issues, as well as those related to the production of knowledge and architecture. On the other hand, this volume takes on a global approach to medieval Iberia, so that the Christian kingdoms, whose evolution during this period underwent developments as decisive as those recorded in Islamic society, have likewise been dealt with, especially in what regards their relationships with the Muslims.

The present volume includes twenty-one articles by twenty-three authors, most of whom work in Spanish universities and research centers, but also in France and the United Kingdom, all historians of medieval Iberia (Arabists, medievalists), and experts in their topics. The work is divided into three main sections, devoted respectively to, first, political dynamics, second, sociopolitical organization, economic, scientific, and artistic activities, and, finally, the sources.

31 A. Fábregas (ed.), *The Nasrid kingdom of Granada between east and west (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries)*, Leiden: Brill, 2020.

32 B. Boloix Gallardo (ed.), *A companion to Islamic Granada*, Leiden: Brill, 2021.

The first part is the most extensive and includes eleven contributions, including three subsections devoted to the history of the different taifas, the first expansion of the Christian conquest, the Muslim reaction, and, finally, the arrival of the Almoravids. A. Montel takes on the decline of the Umayyad caliphate, while four other articles focus on the evolution of the different territories of al-Andalus during the eleventh century: E. Cardoso and J. Ortega discuss the problems associated with the small dynasties in the West and East of Iberia, on which information is more limited, while B. Soravia and Ph. Sénac deal with the most powerful taifas, the medium-sized ones (Córdoba, Málaga, Valencia, Granada, and Almería) and the expansive ones (Seville, Toledo, Badajoz, and Zaragoza), respectively. In the second subsection, X. Ballestín, C. Laliena, and C. de Ayala discuss the beginning of Christian expansion into Islamic territory and the complex relations between Christians and Muslims during the eleventh century, focusing respectively on the Catalan counties, the kingdoms of Aragon and Pamplona, and the kingdoms of León and Castile. This first section closes with contributions by P. Buresi and A. Bennison on the arrival of the Almoravids, the halting of Christian expansion, and the progressive wiping out of the taifas.

The second part includes eight articles, divided into two sections. The first opens with an article in which A. Peláez tackles the legitimacy of power and the political-institutional organization of the taifas. In addition, E. López Martínez de Marigorta, B. Sarr, and A. Hernández López address respectively the economic aspects, the problems associated with ethnic tensions, and the inter-confessional relations between Muslims, Christians and Jews. One of the most salient features of the eleventh century is the combination of political crises and social tensions with literary and cultural splendor. In the second subsection, M. Fierro develops the issues associated with the “politics of knowledge,” with special attention to the decisive role played by the ulema in the volatile political taifa context. The wide and varied Arabic poetic production, not exempt from relevant political and social connotations, is the central object of T. Garulo’s study, while M. Marcos and V. Rabasco tackle the architecture of the period, and J. Samsó and M. Forcada give an account of the scientific production. The third and final part focuses on the sources and their problems, with three articles devoted respectively to literary sources (M. Penelas), numismatics (C. Domenech), and epigraphy (M.A. Martínez). For reasons beyond the control of the volume editor, Archaeology has unfortunately been left out of these pages.

In the closing remarks of this brief presentation, I would like to express my thanks to some people. The original idea of this volume arose from a suggestion by M. Fierro, to whom I am sincerely grateful for having trusted me

to carry it out. Apart from the authors, all of whom I thank for their invaluable collaboration and enthusiasm, over the years two people have played a relevant role in the development and execution of this collective project. On the one hand, I am extremely grateful to Abdurraouf Oueslati for his endless patience and always kind attention in resolving all the issues associated with a somewhat long editorial process. On the other hand, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Consuelo López-Morillas for her excellent translation and edition of the texts.

Alejandro García-Sanjuán

Huelva, December 2024

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Notes on Contributors

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PhD in Medieval History, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2020, is a historian focused on the study of the medieval Islamic West, particularly on issues related to religious violence, the history of jihad, the figure and veneration of prophet Muhammad, the creation of sacred memory and spaces, and encounters between religions. He has been postdoctoral fellow at the RomanIslam Center (Hamburg University, 2020–21) and Assistant Professor of Medieval History at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (2022–24). Currently he holds a tenure-track position (Ramón y Cajal) at the Department of Medieval History of the University of Granada. He has published several books, book chapters and articles in peer-reviewed journals such as *Al-Qantara*, *al-Masaq*, *al-Usur al-Wusta*, *Religions*, *Studia Historica*, *Der Islam* or *The Journal of Medieval Worlds*. His last two books are *Ejércitos benditos. Yihad y memoria en al-Andalus* (siglos X–XIII), (University of Granada Press, 2020), and *Al-Andalus y la Guerra* (La Ergástula, 2024).

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Amira K. Bennison

is Professor in the History and Culture of the Maghrib at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Magdalene College. She is also currently the Director of the Centre of Islamic Studies and Chair of the Academic Publishing Committee of Cambridge University Press and Assessment. Her work focuses on religious and political legitimacy in the pre-modern Maghrib. Her publications include *Jihad and its Interpretations in Precolonial Morocco* (2002), *The Great Caliphs* (2009) and *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (2016), edited volumes on cities in the Islamic world and the western Mediterranean, and

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(*"Libro de las lluvias y de los precios"*) de Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Baqqār (fl. 1411–1418). Brepols, Turnhout, 2018; *On both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar. Studies in the history of medieval astronomy in the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghrib*. Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2020.

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