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Muslim Diplomatic Activity on Iberian Peninsula between 711 A.D. and 1252 A.D. A Note on Sources

It is extremely difficult to embrace all the forms of diplomatic activity in the region of Iberian Peninsula during the times of Muslim political presence in the area, because the interaction between Christians, Muslims, and Jews was very frequent, and a lot of political, economic, and military problems required a big variety of diplomatic actions, embassies, and envoys in the region in order to reduce the tension among all the religious groups, or in order to lead to common, mutually satisfying economic relations, like trade, navigation, or the function of post.

Due to this huge national and religious diversity, the sources to conduct enquiry are to be found in a lot of different languages like: Arabic, Spanish, French, Latin, Italian, and many others, all of them necessary to look at the problem from a lot of different perspectives, leading to the best results in research. Therefore, this paper includes a lot of sources written by French, Arab, American, British, and Spanish scholars, all of them involved in researching the history of the region.

The most valuable sources for the enquiry are in Arabic and come from works of Ibn Ḥayyān (D. 1076), despite we do not possess all of his best chronicle titled *Al-Muqtabis*¹, translated by A.A. al-Hajji, and E. Levi-Provençal, which is the primary source to examine the relations between Andalusia and northern Spain. Unfortunately, the rest of *Al-Muqtabis*² remains unedited in the Moroccan Royal Library in Rabat, and therefore not open to investigation. The second book is *Al-‘Uḍrī*'s (D. 1085) *Niẓām*

¹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, vol III, ed. Melchor Antuna, Paris, 1937, quoted in *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations with Western Europe...*, Abdurrahman Alī el-Hajji, Beirut: Dār al-Irṣād 1970.

² ‘Uḍrī (Aḥmad Ibn ‘Umar Ibn Anas al-), *Niẓām al-marğān*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ahwānī, Madrid, 1965.

al-Marǧān, which is essentially the work about geography, but gives the only description of Aṭ-Ṭurtūšī's meeting with Pope John XII. The third one, Al-Bakrī (D. 1094), who was a student of Al-'Uḍrī, is believed to have access to the archives of Cordoba, and wrote Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik³, a book about cosmography observed during his travels, giving the details of the meeting between Otto the Great and Aṭ-Ṭurtūšī. Ibn 'Iḍarī (D. 1303), in his Al-Bayān⁴ takes advantage of the information of Ibn Ḥayyān, hidden in the rest of the missing parts of his Al-Muqtabis, and also cites the works of Al-'Uḍrī. One of the most important sources is the Andalusian encyclopedia by Al-Maqqarī, titled Nafḥ at-ṭīb⁵, and Al-Muṭrib⁶ by Ibn Dihya dealing with al-Ġazal's embassy to the Vikings. A number of scholars quote Ibn Ḥaldūn and his work Al-'Ibar⁷, where there is a lot of information concerning Andalusia. All these sources were the base of E. Levi-Provençal's *Histoire de L'Espagne musulmane*⁸, volume II: "La conquête et l'emirat Hispano-Umayyade (719-912)," where one finds the most important facts concerning the first diplomatic relations between Cordoba and the Byzantine Empire. The importance French scholarship in this matter is enhanced by the book by R. Brunshvig, titled *La Berberie orientale sous les Hafside*⁹, where he gives us marvelous description of the Muslim institutions of the Maghreb, and Umayyad Spain directly connected with diplomatic activity in the region. The second very important book dealing with the Islamic Institutions was *A Political History of Muslim Spain*¹⁰, by S.M. Imamuddin who compared Qalqašandī's *Ṣubḥ al-a'šā*¹¹ and its institutions with the Maghribi sources. Unique descriptions of embassies were presented by C.E. Dufourcq in his two books: *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIIe et XIVe siècles*¹²,

³ Bakrī (Abū 'Ubayd al-), *Al-Masālik wa-āl-mamālik* [The Routes and the Countries], ed. by A. El-Hajji, Beirut, 1968.

⁴ Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-Mughrib*, ed. G.S. Colin and E. Levi-Provençal, Leiden, 1889.

⁵ Maqqarī (Al-), *Nafḥ at-Tib*, ed. M.M. 'Abdu'l Hamid, Cairo, 1949.

⁶ Ibn Dihya, *Al-Muṭrib min aš'ār ahl al-Mağrib*, ed. I. A.A. Badawī, al-Ibyārī, Cairo 1954.

⁷ Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Al-'Ibar*, Beirut, 1956-8, vols. I, IV, VI.

⁸ Levi-Provençal, E., *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, Paris: E.J. Brill, 1950.

⁹ Brunshvig, Robert, *La Berberie orientale sous les Hafside: des origines à la fin du XVe siècle*. Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1947.

¹⁰ Imamuddin, S.M., *A Political History of Muslim Spain*. Karachi: Najmahsons, 1961.

¹¹ Qalqašandī (Al-), *Ṣubḥ al-a'šā*. Cairo, 1915, vol.V.

¹² Dufourcq, C.E., *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966.

and *L'Iberie chretienne et le Maghreb XIIIe-XVe siècles*¹³, and B.F. Reilly in his work *The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain (1031-1157)*¹⁴, gave a very comprehensive outlook on Andalusian society divided by so many religions in the Middle Ages.

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF ANDALUSIAN PENINSULA AFTER
MUSLIM CONQUEST

The beginning of the Muslim rule in the territory of Iberian peninsula is marked by the expedition of Ṭāriq Ibn Ziyād who crossed the strait of Gibraltar in April, 711, and therefore the name of the strait was applied as Ḡabal Ṭāriq—[Mountain of Tariq]¹⁵, but unofficially Mūsà Ibn Nuṣayr the governor of Maghrib crossed the strait in July, 710, with 100 horsemen, and 500 warriors to perform razzia expedition, but the expedition of Ṭāriq Ibn Ziyād marks the continuous Muslim expansion onto the Iberian peninsula, and after summoning both Mūsà and Ṭāriq by the ḥalīfa—[caliph] ‘Abd al-Mālik (705-715)¹⁶, the conquest of Spain will lead through the forty-five years “Period of Governors” until the battle of Poitiers (Tours), Balāṭ aš-Šuhadā’—[Field of the Martyrs], in October, 732, where the military commander of the Muslims, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Ġāfiqī received fatal wounds.¹⁷

Before that all the cities of Spain were surrendering one by one, and for a lot of nationalities who had survived Visigothic persecution, the Muslims were welcomed as liberators and often helped. Near Tarazona, a Visigothic count named Cassius, son of Fortunatus, not only capitulated but became a Muslim and a client of the caliph under the name of Banū Qāsim—[The Clan of Cassius]. In 732 a new governor, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn ‘Abd Allāh sacked Bordeaux and was marching on the immensely rich shrine of St. Martin at Tours, and it was only in 738 that Charles Martel managed to expel the

¹³ Doufourcq, C.E., *L'Iberie chretienne et le Maghreb XIIIe—XVe siècles*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1990.

¹⁴ Reilly, B.F., *The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain (1031-1157)*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

¹⁵ el-Hajji, ‘Abdurrahman, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations with Western Europe during the Umayyad Period, (A.D. 755-976): A Historical Survey*. Beirut: Dar al-Irshad, 1970, p. 27.

¹⁶ Lomax, Derek, W., *The Reconquest of Spain*. London: Longman, 1978, (p.12-13).

¹⁷ el-Hajji, op. cit., p. 28.

Muslims from Provence, and only in 751 that his son Pepin III reconquered Narbonne.¹⁸ The Muslims however had to restrict themselves beyond the Pyrenees, because of their internal problems and disputes in Andalusia. In Damascus, the resentment against the Arabs and the Umayyads led to the overthrow of the Umayyad caliphate in 750, and its transfer under a new dynasty, the 'Abbasids, one who escaped killing, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Mu'āwiya Ibn Hišām, known as 'Abd ar-Raḥmān I ad-Dāḥil, reached Spain in 755, where he won support from Berbers, Kalbiters and some Qaysites, defeated the existing governor and proclaimed himself emir in 756.¹⁹

The "real" Umayyad period ended with the death of Al-Ḥakam II in 976, because his son Hišām II, Al-Mu'ayyad (d.1013), was eleven when became the ruler of the Umayyad Spanish empire, and all the responsibilities were in the hands of the powerful ḥāḡib Al-Manšūr. Due to the very lively diplomatic activity the times of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān II al-Awsaṭ (822-852), and the times of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān III an-Nāṣir (912-961), is very important to the course of the events on Iberian Peninsula. The crisis in the Muslim state became very obvious during the times of the Amiride dynasty after the accession of Al-Manšūr in 1002, and the period of anarchy and attempts to restore the Umayyad Caliphate led finally to the division of Andalusia into twenty independent emirates, during the age of *mulūk aṭ-ṭawā'if*—[The Party Kings], (1031-1091), followed by Almoravids rule in Andalusia superseded by the Almohads in 1145. The period of anarchy resulted in the erecting the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada (1233-1492), which was the final stage of the Muslim presence in the region, those who did not leave to North Africa became known as Moriscos, and those who stayed in some parts of Andalusia, Los Mudejares.²⁰

THE MUSLIM INSTITUTIONS OF ISLAMIC SPAIN INVOLVED IN DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

Before I will begin to describe all particular embassies involved with the diplomatic activity in Iberian Peninsula and its vicinity, I would like to discuss the basics concerning the Muslim Institutions of the Umayyad Spain, Hafsid Tunisia, Almohad, and Almoravid empires, which however based on the same Islamic principles were sometimes very different, than

¹⁸ Lomax, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

²⁰ el-Hajji, *op. cit.*, p. 30-32.

their own origins depicted in *Ṣubḥ al-aʿṣā* and created in the Middle East. The Umayyads in Spain by breaking away from the caliphate of Baghdad in 756, continued to call themselves very modestly as *amīr*, till 929, when the Umayyad *amīr* ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān III assumed the title of caliph, and he was the supreme, spiritual, and temporal head of his state, and additionally the coin was struck in his name, and *khutbah* was read in the same manner.²¹ The actual administration of the country was run by his *wazīrs*, but in fact there was a difference, because even ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān I, had a number of *shaykhs* with him in order to assist him with their experience and advice, and during receiving foreign embassies.²²

Qā’id and a *qāḍī* were appointed for military and judicial duties respectively, and there were four principal departments of *dīwān*, finances, justice, war, and foreign affairs, very much evident comparably to similar Islamic empires of those times, taking care of almost all diplomatic activity of the Spanish Umayyads. Sometimes the Foreign Affairs minister was in charge of two offices, mostly connected with the *wazīr* of War, and had a title *dū ʾal-wizāratayn*, but it was relatively rare. In Spain, accordingly to primary sources, there was neither a representative *nā’ib*, of a caliph, nor was he a chief minister as the word *wazīr* denoted in the ‘Abbasid East. The caliph was approached through the prime minister known as *ḥāḡib* in Umayyad Spain, and as a representative of the caliph he was the president of the Council of ministers, he represented *khalifah* in all state affairs, dealt with all the royal mandates, administered the country and led military expeditions. During the regime of the weak rulers the *ḥāḡib* practically ran the entire show of administration, and all diplomatic envoys depended upon his good will.²³

There is a lot of confusion concerning the title of *ṣāḡib*, or *shaykh* so many times very much intermingled in Umayyad Spain, therefore I shall proceed to the *ḥuṭṭa*—secretariat, which was so important in creating diplomatic correspondence, and from there all the letters of the *ḥalīfa* and the *ḥāḡib*, were founding its way to the world. The secretariat was led by Chief Secretary in charge of *ḥadamāt al-ḥilāfa*, and had a special part under *kātib* (*ṣāḡib*) *ar-rasā’ il*, which dealt with the royal correspondence, and took part in the deliberations of the Council. During the years all this department grew up in sub-divisions and in order to expedite the diplomatic correspondence, was directly connected with the part led by *ṣāḡib al-barīd*, who was in

²¹ Imamuddin, *op.cit.*, pp. 334-335.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 335.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

charge of postal organization. The diplomatic correspondence was even taking advantage of pigeon post, and *ṣāhib al-barīd* was the king's informer about the envoys approaching the capital, their routes, and activities. The local governor *wālī* and their chief officers *ḥākims* were helping to protect the envoys even through the system of *atalaya*, the strategic points to watch the frontier.²⁴ I especially excluded here very well known function of *turjuman*, because of his obvious forms of activity in the Umayyad Spain, but most of them were directly associated with *kātib ar-rasā'il*. Sometimes, especially during the times of Almohads the head of the chancery used to be called *wazīr al-faḍl*, and the secretary taking care of all the secret diplomatic letters, *kātib as-sirr*²⁵. Some rulers connected the function of *ṣāhib al-inšā'* with the *ṣāhib al-'alāma*, who was in a possession of the sultan's seal used to finish the diplomatic letters for the envoys.

I would like to describe something very important and unique in Andalusian diplomacy, because the navy of the Umayyad Caliph was in fact used very frequently for the purpose of diplomatic activity in the region, and many times they were entrusted with many secret missions. Their structure was very much taken from the structure of Persian fleet, which sounds almost amazing comparing the distance between the empires. The high officials were called *ru'asa*, and low officials *aṣḥāb al-arḡud*, but the crew of a ship sent on assignment included *naḥuda*—[the master], *raḥbān* - [captain], and *didbān*—[inspector and lookout man]²⁶. These terms appear during the famous mission to the Vikings, or to the Byzantine Empire, which tells us, that either the crew was hired from Persian stock, or the terms were borrowed from Persian origins.

Most of the court terms were very similar to those of Hafsid Tunisia, Islamic Sicily, or Maghreb, however there we can observe a typical structure of *dīwān al-inšā'*, more similar to the one described in *Al-Qalqašandī's* *Ṣubḥ al-a'šā*, but *Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī* mentions additionally the ceremony of receiving foreign envoys in his *Al-Masālik wa-āl-mamālik*, always with a group of musicians using tambours—*ṭubūl*, bugles—*būqāts* and *nafirs*, all performed under the careful eye of the palace intendant, usually eunuch *qahramāndār*, who was responsible for the organization of the palace functions when a diplomatic envoy arrived. He had to provide *ḥadamāt as-*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 336-337.

²⁵ *Brunschvig*, *La Berberie orientale sous les Hafsidés...*, in chap. „L'Organisation Politique et Administrative,” p. 61, quoted from *Al-Masālik wa-āl-mamālik*.

²⁶ *Iḥmāduddīn*, *A Political History...*, in chap. „Administration,” p. 350.

sultān, all the butlers, slaves, and young boys employed as servants—*ṣibyān*²⁷. Some Almohads were using special guards established from palace officers called *waqqāfūn*, who assist and traveled with the sultan during the public ceremonies and especially during diplomatic receptions, coordinated by *ṣāhib al-‘alāmāt*—master of the ceremony usually coming from the clan of important *shaykhs*.²⁸

During the times of Hafsids, Almohads, and Nasrids there was also the function of *maḥzan*—the sultan’s administration²⁹, which was also used for the head of merchant community in *funduq* of Al-Qayrawān, who were performing the role of ambassadors. Similar transformation concerns the function of *qā’id*, who became for example the leader of certain religious community and a diplomat for Christian rulers, because head of the Christian secular diplomatic envoys *nuncii*-agents, and their representatives—*procuratores*³⁰, were many times unable to conduct diplomatic missions, and the Christian rulers had to use their merchants in order to proceed with negotiations.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DIPLOMATIC TREATIES AND ENVOYS IN MUSLIM SPAIN BETWEEN 710 A.D. AND 1252 A.D.

1. THE FIRST DIPLOMATIC TREATY AND ENVOY IN THE HISTORY OF MUSLIM SPAIN BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND ‘ABD AR-RAḤMĀN IBN MU‘ĀWIYA

After the escape of ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Mu‘āwiya (ad-Dāḥil) following the fall of the Umayyad in Syria, and coming of the ‘Abbasids in 750, Ad-Dāḥil landed in Andalusia in the province of Elvira at the port of Almuñecar, at the beginning of 755³¹. The attempts to establish his domain were quite successful and he chose Cordoba as his capital, but since the Christian Spain was not yet clearly defined as a political body, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān had to sign

²⁷ Brunschvig, *La Berberie orientale...*, in chap. „Les institutions et la vie,” p. 30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, in chap. „L’entourage du souverain,” p. 49.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, in chap. „Chancellerie, poste, finances, monnaie”, p. 61.

³⁰ Queller, Donald, E., *Medieval Diplomacy and the Fourth Crusade*. London: Variorum Press, 1980, in the article „Thirteenth-Century Diplomatic Envoys: ‘Nuncii’ and ‘Procuratores’,” (p.196-197).

³¹ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, in chap. „Relations with Christian Spain,” p. 60.

in 759 a pact of security and peace between the invaders, and the Christian of the north. Accordingly to Levi-Provençal³² it is not easy to form a just opinion about the authenticity of the treaty, but accordingly to Simonet³³ at the beginning of the Muslim rule in Andalusia, Ad-Dāḥil had to secure his frontiers after the Galician raids, and this very treaty is mentioned in Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb's *Al-Iḥāṭa*³⁴. Unfortunately there are no details concerning neither the envoy itself, nor a treaty, or a ruler, but accordingly to el-Hajji it falls within the reign of Fruela I (757-775)³⁵. The treaty was written in Cordoba in 759, and it seems like the envoy from the north had to arrive in the Muslim capital in order to sign it, Ad-Dāḥil offered in it peace and security to the people of Castile but in order to keep his word requested 10,000 ounces of gold, 10,000 pounds of silver in the period of five years, 10,000 good horses and as many mules, 1000 cuirasses, 1000 swords, and the same number of lances³⁶. What is very significant here that the Christians gave Ad-Dāḥil the tools to conduct further expeditions against them and proves high level of the diplomatic practice of the Spanish Umayyads, who in fact arrived already with all very well advanced and well-structured administration and had a tremendous advantage over the Christians. Most of the evidence for the existence of the treaty is also highly supported by such a trustworthy authority as Ar-Rāzī mentioned by Gayangos in *La Cronica del Moro Rasis*³⁷.

2. THE ANDALUSIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE VIKINGS

The Danish Vikings since they were so very well skilled in navigation were committing a lot of pillages all over the northern Europe, but later they began to attack also Andalusia. Their first attack occurred in August 844, with supposingly 54 boats, but different chroniclers give us totally different numbers. The second attack occurred in 859, the third in 954, the fourth in

³² Levi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne...* in chap. II, pp. 91-104.

³³ Simonet, F.J., *Historia de los Mozarabes de España*. Madrid, 1897-1903.

³⁴ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *Al-Iḥāṭa fi aḥbār Ġarnāṭa*, ed. M.A. 'Inān, Cairo, 1955, vol. I., and in 'Amal al-a'lām, ed. Levi-Provençal, Beirut, 1956.

³⁵ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic...*, in the chap. „Relations with Spain,” p. 62.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, el-Hajji quoting Conde's book, *History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain*.

³⁷ Gayangos, Pascual, de, *Memoria sobre la autenticidad de la Cronica denominada del Moro Rasis*. Real Academia de la Historia de Madrid, 1852.

966, the fifth in June or July 971³⁸ and the sixth at the end of 971. Those were the documented ones by Ibn Ḥayyān, or Al-‘Udrī, and all of them created the need to built up the naval arsenal of the Umayyad Spain, modernize vessels, and of course sending the embassy to the Vikings in order to establish friendly relationships, and prevent the costs of Spain, we must remember that the Vikings marched even to Cordoba, and plundered the city taking everybody by surprise, so there was a need of a direct contact, to prevent further attacks.

Such a sophisticated embassy as the one to the Vikings required a very sophisticated person to send there, therefore, the caliph chose Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyà Ibn Ḥakam al-Bakrī al-Ġayyānī, known as Al-Ġazal (770-864), who was not only a linguist, but also a poet, philosopher and sage of his times³⁹. Sending of the embassy was accompanied also by huge built up of the Umayyad navy by ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II. It is possible to believe that the Vikings sent the embassy first and ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II, replied with an envoy to their country, and Al-Ġazal’s diplomatic experience who earlier performed such a task to the Byzantine Emperor in 840, was eminently suitable. The earliest Muslim chronicler mentioning this embassy according to the sources we have was Ibn Diḥya in his book *Al-Muṭrib min aš‘ār ahl Al-Maġrib*⁴⁰. In the text we have a very detailed description of the land of the Vikings, called Al-Maġūs, because of their religious worshipping the fire, including the poetry written to the queen of the Vikings Nud, by Al-Ġazal, and the customs on Danish pagan court. Similarity of the poetry used by copyists in description of the envoy to the Byzantine Empire caused a lot of confusion, and Levi-Provençal tried to deny all the events, but the difference in description of the Vikings’ land and the Byzantine Empire leads most of the scholars to totally different conclusions acknowledging the fact of existence of such an envoy to the land of the Vikings.

The Viking embassy would have been in Cordoba in March 845, and the embarkation of the Adalusian embassy to the Vikings in April 845, and it was received by the king Horic⁴¹, who gained power in 844. All the events should show how extensive and well experienced was the diplomacy of the Spanish Umayyads, and their excellent orientation in foreign policy, all this

³⁸ El-Hajji, A.A., *The Andalusian Diplomatic Relations with the Vikings during the Umayyad Period*, in “*Hesperis Lambda*”, 1967, vol.8, p. 70.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁰ Ibn Diḥya, *Al-Muṭrib*...

⁴¹ El-Hajji, A.A., *The Andalusian Diplomatic Relations with the Vikings during the Umayyad Period...*, p. 90.

would not be possible however without strong Muslim Institutions of the empire in the court in Cordoba, like well-developed *dīwān al-inšā'* with its skilled advisors, because the heads of all their embassies came directly from court.

3. THE MISSION OF IBN YA'QŪB AṬ-ṬURTŪŠĪ IN 965

During the times of the Umayyads in Spain, a lot of Jews acquired quite important positions thanks to their good education provided by the Jewish school in the cities of Iberian Peninsula, many times sharing the prominent positions with Slavic slaves, who had a lot of luck in social mobility within the empire. Ibrāhīm Ibn Ya'qūb al-Isrā'īlī aṭ-Ṭurtūšī, was a Spanish Jew from Tortosa, who was a doctor, merchant, traveler, and what was the most important, of high culture and multi linguistic⁴². The unique source for Aṭ-Ṭurtūšī's diplomatic activity is the record of his travels which we possess in fragments thanks to Al-'Uḍrī, Al-Bakrī, and Al-Qazwinī. Accordingly to them Aṭ-Ṭurtūšī had a meeting with the Emperor Otto the Great in Germany in 965 or 973, at Magdeburg, however Al-'Uḍrī says that it took place in Rome instead of Germany⁴³.

Today most scholars are in agreement that the meeting took place in Germany, and the date of his meeting falls into the reign of Otto I (936-973). Aṭ-Ṭurtūšī accordingly to Al-Bakrī had also a meeting with Pope John XII in Rome in 961, and most likely he has met Otto I in 965, because then he returned to Andalusia about 967, and wrote his travels about 968, and then presented it to the Cordovan caliph Al-Ḥakam II (d.976), but the real facts were preserved by later Muslim geographers⁴⁴. Aṭ-Ṭurtūšī mentions in his accounts all of the Slavic kings who were in power during his travels, and gives a brief description of geography of Germany, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and the Balkans, and it is very hard to find more active diplomats during his times in Europe and in the Middle East⁴⁵.

⁴² el-Hajji, A.A., Ibrahim Ibn Ya'qub at-Turtushi and His Diplomatic Activity, in "The Islamic Quarterly", no. 14., (1970), (p.23).

⁴³ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴⁵ On the relation of Ibrahim about Poland see Tadeusz Kowalski, *Relacja Ibrahima z podróży do krajów słowiańskich w przekazie Al-Bekriego*, Kraków 1946.

4. THE EMBASSIES BETWEEN CORDOBA AND BYZANTIUM

The Byzantines being hard pressed by the 'Abbasid attack on the eastern frontier of their Empire and the regular raids of the Cretans on the Byzantine islands and coasts opened negotiations with the Umayyad rulers of Spain. According to Ibn Ḥayyān the Byzantine Emperor took the initiative in establishing diplomatic relations between Andalus and Byzantium. In 840, the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus sent a Greek called Qartiyus, who knew Arabic to the court of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān II in Cordoba, with the request to conclude the treaty of friendship with him⁴⁶. He induced him at the same time, to recapture his ancestral territory in the East denouncing the attitude of the 'Abbasids and their vassals, the Aghlabids. He claimed once again the restoration of Crete which had been occupied by the Cordovan chief Abū Hafṣ al-Ballūti to him, but he could not achieve much from these negotiations nor could he create any interests in the Amir for his ancestral territory. The Amir was satisfied with concluding a friendly treaty with him and sending presents in return through two of his courtiers. The successors of Theophilus also failed to procure aid from Cordoba against the Cretans, but 'Abd ar-Raḥmān III being influenced by the cultural and economic superiority of the Byzantines entered into friendly relations with the Emperor, although politically neither of the two gained anything concrete out of this friendly relation⁴⁷.

Al-Maqqarī places this embassy in 839⁴⁸, which seem to be the most adequate and he is mentioning the function of Qartiyus as a real institution of *turjuman*, and what is really interesting mentions the role of two astrologers in the envoy—*munaḡḡims*⁴⁹. Accordingly to al-Maqqarī, Levi-Provençal cites the name of the head of the envoy Yahyà Ibn Ḥakam - Al-Ġazal, and his first mission before the departure to the Vikings, Al-Maqqarī places in his text the same poem which Al-Ġazal as a poet and diplomat from *arbāb al-qalam*, recited to the king of the Vikings—Nud, which causes a lot of confusion and Levi-Provençal's doubts concerning the mission to Jutland. Al-Ġazal had a meeting with the Empress Theodora, and gave a description

⁴⁶ Imamuddin, S.M., *A Political History of Muslim Spain*, in chap. „The Rule of Cordovan Muslims in Iqritish,” pp. 364-365.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, and Tadeusz Kowalski, *Relacja Ibrahima z podróży do krajów słowiańskich w przekazie Al-Bekriego*, pp. 364-365.

⁴⁸ *Nafḥ at-tīb*, *op.cit.*

⁴⁹ Levi-Provençal, E., *Une echange d'ambassades entre Cordoue et Byzance au IX siècle*, in “Byzantion”, vol. XII, 1937, pp. 6-7.

of the Byzantine court life and the palace calling it *akādīmiyā min marmar*⁵⁰, all the mission ended in 842 and Al-Ġazal departed to the Normans in 844, according to Ibn Diḥya in *Al-Muṭrib min aš‘ār ahl al-Maġrib*⁵¹, so the probability of this exact course of events for Al-Ġazal is very high.

5. THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN NAVARRA AND ‘ABD AR-RAḤMĀN II

The political situation in northern Spain was far from normal and stable in the IX century, and the success of the Spanish Umayyads was to some extent due to very divided Christian kingdoms in the north, constantly attacked by the Franks. Navarra was an exemplary kingdom where desire for independence in their own affairs was always strongly expressed. The solution was a treaty with its Muslim neighbors who could constitute a counterpart against the Frankish political advances, so the people of Navarra were very interested to conclude a treaty of friendship with ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II and the envoy was sent in 824 for this purpose. A treaty was concluded so the Andalusians would defend them against the external attacks, and the Navarrese in return would help the Andalusians in crossing the Pyrenees to attack France⁵². After the death of Azur who concluded the treaty the Basques continue the rides into the Andalusian territory, so ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān attacked them and subdued Tudela, forcing the Basques to ask for peace and security, and this embassy is mentioned by Ibn Ḥayyān, who mentioned sixty-one notables arriving in Cordoba⁵³ including the president of the envoy García Iniguez from Pampeluna, and that the *amān* was granted to them. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II was a very smart politician, and he knew very well that the treaty concluded on very advantageous financially conditions was much better solution than fighting the Basques in the mountains.

⁵⁰ *Nafḥ at-ṭīb*, pp. 12-17.

⁵¹ *Al-Muṭrib min aš‘ār...*, op.cit.

⁵² el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, in chap. “Relations with Christian Spain,” p. 67, Prof. A.A. el-Hajji stated that no date to this embassy was mentioned but since it is mentioned that it appears after the second battle of Roncesvalles in 824 during the reign of Azur, the year seems to be the same.

⁵³ *Al-Muqtabis*, vol. III, and el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, pp. 67-68.

6. THE EMBASSY OF BARCELONA TO THE CALIPH AL-ḤAKAM

This embassy is mentioned also by Ibn Ḥayyān and took place at the end of ša‘bān 971 with Enrico Borrell, the head of the envoy from Borrell, the count of Barcelona. The envoy was accompanied by twenty nobles with special gifts for the caliph Al-Ḥakam, twenty young slaves, twenty measures of wool, ten suits of mail, two hundred Frankish swords, five measures of copper, and thirty Muslim captives⁵⁴. The slaves were constant objects of gift exchange, but the most important parts of it were the swords and copper, because the first could be used for the military purpose, and second melted into coins. Due to the disappearance of a lot of sources all these details concerning gifts are extremely important, because they inform about the diplomatic custom, local economy, popular means of exchange, etc. The letters were brought directly from the count of Barcelona, and his chief of the army called “lieutenant,” and at first the envoy was met by the chief of police of Cordoba, and the captain of Tortosa and the province of Valencia⁵⁵. When we read the text of Ibn Ḥayyān very carefully, it gives us a detailed description of the form of reception, and not all of the relations of envoys contain such a specific information concerning not only diplomatic custom, but also institutions of the Muslim and Christian sides.

Later the embassy was directed to the place of their reception in the palace of Naṣr⁵⁶, which was situated on the outskirts of Cordoba, and that tells us directly that embassies were not allowed in the city until the appointed time for the Caliph’s reception, and that they were guarded by the police and soldiers. It is very interesting that the chief of the police was completing all the necessary arrangements for the meeting with the Caliph, and he was the provider of good care for them, and he even ordered to decorate their residence⁵⁷. The caliph Al-Ḥakam received the envoys ceremoniously in the hall of the ambassadors called Madīnat az-Zahrā’, overlooking the gardens outside, and he was sitting on his sarir surrounded by his ministers, chamberlains, and the men of state. The ambassadors were always accompanied by a group of soldiers for ceremonial and security

⁵⁴ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*, vol III, op.cit., and el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, pp. 83-84.

⁵⁵ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, in chap. “Relations with Christian Spain”, p. 84-85.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Prof. el-Hajji explains that the munya of Naṣr was built on the outskirts of Cordoba by the amīr ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad, p. 84.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

reasons, accompanied by the Cordovan Christian Mozarabs, who acted as interpreters⁵⁸. The envoys had to kiss the hand of the caliph and then presented him the letters of the count of Barcelona. The caliph concluded the treaty of friendship between Barcelona and Cordoba, and confirmed it corresponding to the requests of ambassadors under the conditions of destroying the castles which constituted danger to the Muslim frontiers, and refrain from helping other Christian in attacking the Muslims.

The envoy from Barcelona arrived in July, and left Cordoba with the caliph's reply in August which tells us about quite long preparations of chancery work, talks and ceremony, and again the count of Barcelona received twenty slaves from Al-Ḥakam which tells us that not only the Muslim rulers loved to exchange slaves and trade with them, but the Christians were doing it quite enthusiastically. All the processes of diplomatic exchange would not be possible to observe without Al-Muqtabis⁵⁹, the primary source describing in details all the involved Muslim Institutions of the Umayyad Empire and the Christian Institutions.

7. THE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE FRANKS

Unfortunately there are a lot of empty holes when one tries to describe the diplomatic activity between the Franks and the Andalusians and the relations were in most cases hostile, but the first period of peace is one in the last days of the reign of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān I, Ad-Dāḥil, documented by al-Maqqarī. Al-Maqqarī states there that Ad-Dāḥil corresponded with Charlemagne, called in Arabic Qarluh, King of the Franks and ṭūgāt, but Charlemagne was inclined to invite him to intermarriage and peace. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān I accepted the peace but no intermarriage took place, and it is needless to say that most of the scholars doubt in this story mentioned by Al-Maqqarī⁶⁰, and Ibn Ḥayyān omits most of it in his Al-Muqtabis⁶¹.

The most trustworthy description is presented by Abū Bakr Muḥyī ad-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (1164-1240), who gave us imaginative account of the Frankish embassy that came to the court of An-Naṣr. He says that the three-mile road from Cordoba to Az-Zahrā' was spread with mats and lined with soldiers whose scimitars formed an arch over the envoys heads. At the gate

⁵⁸ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, in chap. „Relations with Christian Spain,” p. 84, quoted Ibn Ḥayyān and his al-Muqtabis.

⁵⁹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis*....

⁶⁰ Nafī aṭ-ṭīb quoted by el-Hajji in *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, p. 126.

⁶¹ *Al-Muqtabis*.

of the palace the embassy was met by the dignitaries dressed in silk and brocades, and from the gate to the court the path was spread with brocade likewise, marked with richly attired officers, but the Caliph himself was wearing simple clothing in contrast to the ceremony and the ambassadors had to prostrate before him, and after dismissing them, they signed a peace accepting his conditions⁶². Again there were a lot of doubtful points of this embassy remarked by Levi-Provencal and Murphy, but the reception took place in the hall of ambassadors called Al-Mağlis al-Mu'nis in the caliphal palace at Az-Zahrā'⁶³. The only good relations with the Franks usually transcended the diplomatic sphere only during the times when Andalusia gained prominence for the seekers of knowledge and learning, especially during the reign of Al-Ḥakam II.

8. THE EMBASSY OF JOHN OF GORZE

The embassy of John of Gorze occurred in 953, when the first exchange of ambassadors between Otto and An-Nāṣir failed to reach the final solution in regard Fraxinetum—Provence. The Emperor consulted Bruno, the Archbishop of Cologne who is to be sent on such an important assignment, and they chose very well educated monk, John of Lorraine, Abbot of Gorze in Metz in Lorraine. The envoy traveled through France down the Rhone valley and in Marseilles embarked the ship to Barcelona, so from there they sent the messenger to Tortosa about their arrival to the caliph⁶⁴. The caliph replied with utmost grace, ordering to welcome them on their way to Cordoba as the most honored guests, but despite this statement they had to wait in Tortosa for about one month before all the necessary permits were completed and the preparations done. Again they lived in the palace on the outskirts of Cordoba called Munyat an-Na'ūra⁶⁵, conveniently near the Church of Saint Martin so they could perform their religious duties. The main goal of the embassy was to stop the Andalusian attacks on Provence-Fraxinetum, to learn about the extent of Andalusian intellectual and

⁶² Ibn al-'Arabī, *Al-Musāmarāt wa-āl-muḥāḍarāt*, II, Cairo, 1865, p.342, also el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, p. 136-137.

⁶³ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, in chap. "Relations with the Franks," (p.138).

⁶⁴ Ibid, in chap. "Embassies between Otto and an-Nasir," pp. 214- 215.

⁶⁵ Accordingly to Prof. el-Hajji this Munya was situated in south-west of Cordoba, and the son of the caliph welcomed the envoy in his house, and it could be Munyat an-Na'ūra.

scientific progress, and check the situation of the Mozarabs. An-Nāṣir however did not want to meet the envoy because of a derogatory letter written by the Emperor insulting the caliph's faith and methods of his policy, therefore the caliph sent John, Bishop of Cordoba to discuss the matters with the German ambassador⁶⁶. It is important to mention the caliph's emissary and messenger who was a very well educated Jew Hasdāy Ben Šabrūt, showing the importance of Jewish emissaries in diplomatic activity in the Umayyad Spain⁶⁷. Ultimately the delegation did not see the Caliph who finally accepted the letter and in return send a delegation to the German Emperor asking him to change this derogatory letter. Overall the situation shows how delicate and difficult were some of the diplomatic endeavors, and how important was the role of a good chancery, proper letters and emissaries involved in it, also enlightening us about the intelligence activity of most of the envoys, counting on a support of the Christian community in Andalusia, so no wonder why all the envoys were strictly guarded and placed outside of Cordoba.

9. THE EMBASSY OF RECEMUNDO

The general failure of the diplomatic efforts of John of Gorze due to unfortunate contents of the Emperor's letter and overall political difficulties around the problem of Provence An-Nāṣir had to find the solution to this situation, and he had to establish his own envoy to the Emperor with a prudent response. His choice was the Christian Mozarab monk Recemundo, in Arabic Rabī' Ibn Zayd al-Usquf al-Qurtubī, versed in Latin and Arabic languages and a monk, who could be more convincing negotiator than a Muslim one. Before his journey Recemundo met John of Gorze, who gave him a letter to the Abbot of Gorze, after already he had met with the Caliph who gave him his instructions and a letter to the German Emperor. Recemundo left Cordoba in 955, in May, and spent autumn and winter at the Abbey of Gorze where he was a guest of Bishop Adalbert, getting to know more about the political situation in the Otton's Empire and left for Frankfurt in February 956.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 217.

⁶⁷ Baer, Yitzhok, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. Philadelphia, transl. L. Shoffman, 1961, p. 224.

⁶⁸ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, in chap. "Embassies between Otto and an-Nasir," pp. 218-220.

Recemundo discussed with the Emperor all the possible variants of the situation and Otto agreed to write a moderate letter, which asked to conclude a treaty of friendship resulting in stopping the raids of the Andalusian adventurers in Fraxinetum. Recemundo's skills were so good that he even did not waste his time and left for Cordoba with Dudo of Verdun, the Emperor's emissary carrying his letter and they both arrived in the capital in March 956.⁶⁹ So finally after three years all the German embassy was able to see the Caliph in June 956, in Madīnat az-Zahrā'⁷⁰ and during the ceremony soldiers lined up on both sides of the road, whilst the cavalry displayed their horsemanship during the envoy's march to the city, and to the caliph's palace. On approaching the caliphal palace, the dignitaries were greeting the embassy and walking over the carpets the delegation arrived in the hall of ambassadors Mağālis al-Mu'nis. An-Nāşir was sitting on his sarīr and John of Gorze kissed his hand and presented the new letter persuading to intervene in Fraxinetum. An-Nāşir realized Otto the Great's military superiority and to be truthful he had no influence or a connection with the adventurers of Fraxinetum, but promised to help in the situation, therefore the principal aim of the German envoy was accomplished to persuade the caliph to use his authority to stop the activities of the Andalusian adventurers in Fraixenetum, and the delegation departed from Cordoba in August 956⁷¹.

To conclude this mission one has to remark how important was hiring the right person to conduct a diplomatic activity, and especially how many delicate things counted in order to achieve a success. There was a question of ambassador's religion and it was simply better to send an ambassador of the same religion as the recipient of an envoy, and linguistic skills of the ambassador were a must not only to conduct the negotiations, but also to perform intelligence activity. The mission of Recemundo together with the mission of John of Gorze shows also the difficulties of medieval embassies with sometimes huge time frames necessary in order to accomplish the goal.

⁶⁹ Ibid., in chap. "Embassies between Otto and an-Nasir," pp.220-221.

⁷⁰ In al-Maqqarī's *Nafḥ at-tīb*, and *Azhār ar-riyād*, II.

⁷¹ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, in chap. "Embassies between Otto and an-Nasir," p. 226.

10. THE EMBASSY OF ABRAHAM AL-FAḤAR AND THE TREATY OF SALE

This embassy seems to be quite distant in time from the most famous envoys of the Spanish Umayyads, but I would like to mention it because of its unique character to the political situation on the Iberian peninsula between kings of Castile and Almohads. Kings of Castile were all in fervor of reconquista and Henry and Berengere of Castile are becoming allies of Al-Mustaṣṣir in 1216 and in 1221 against Almohads present on the Spanish territory.⁷²

Many political situations in this paper showed clearly that the religion was never a problem when it came to gaining a power, and this alliance of the kings of Castile has to be presented as a very different example of diplomacy than that of Christians, their rulers, and the Umayyads, because in that time the Christians became "mature enough" to seek alliances with the Muslims. The Castilian embassy which left for Morocco was led by a Jew called Abraham al-Faḥar, very well instructed about the Almohads plan to recreate the Muslim state, in order to put diplomatic pressure and sign a treaty with the Muminids⁷³. The treaty was concluded in October 1221, and renewed in 1215⁷⁴, and proves that seeking of power through diplomacy has never had any boundaries established by the difference of religion. Unfortunately we do not possess a lot of information about the treaty of Sale, but it was also important for economic reasons, because the settlement of Sale was situated on the most important caravan route, and conducted the trade transactions with Spain for centuries. Secondly, all the military militia⁷⁵, or as Ibn Ḥaldūn says *ṣurṭa* in Sale was recruited from the Castilian soldiers who had a lot of power in the Muminid court.

11. THE CATALAN EMBASSY TO TUNIS

This embassy is the last one I would like to describe and it took place in 1246, after the intervention of the Pope Innocent IV in favor of Christians in

⁷² Dufourcq, C.E., *L'Iberie chretienne et le Maghreb XIIIe-XVe siècles*, in chap. "Les relations du Maroc et de la Castile pendant la première moitié du XIIIe siècle," in "L'Ambassade d'Abraham al-Fakhar," (p.40).

⁷³ el-Hajji, *Andalusian Diplomatic Relations...*, p. 39.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁵ Dufourcq, C.E., *L'Iberie chretienne...*, in chap. "Les milices chretiennes d'Al-Mostaṣṣir (1213-1224) et d'Al-Mamoun (1227-1232)," p. 41.

Ifriqīya, but what really was very important here was the trade route, and excellent amount of income originating in trade exchange in Tunisia. Barcelona after relatively friendly relations with the Muslims understood how important were the trade centers, and first thing after strengthening the Aragon monarchy was to establish trade politics toward Sicily, and Tunisia⁷⁶. Under the pretext of protection of the Christians Jacques the Conqueror established a diplomatic mission to stop the attacks on the Christians, but in reality, to preserve the commercial presence in Tunis. He received help from the Pope Innocent IV and the Pope's negotiator a Dominican doctor Raymond the Penafort, very well skilled linguistically in order to perform such embassy. In reality all the negotiating process took about ten years between 1236 and 1246, but the Hafids were very careful when it concerned the trade revenues, and the Christian community there was already very rich, benefiting from the trade between Barcelona and Sicily. This is perhaps very different type of envoy than those of political embassies of the Umayyad Spain, but in order to present as many types of diplomatic activity around the Iberian peninsula I decided to place it in this paper, because after the eleventh century we have more and more diplomatic envoys in the Mediterranean interested in commercial activity, and the profits from trade were always connected with politics in the region. Another important thing is the fact that the commercial and diplomatic activity between Barcelona and the Hafids was inseparable, and the representative of the merchants called in Tunis *muḥzin*⁷⁸, was in fact the ambassador in Tunis, and *funduq* for the Catalan merchants were the centers of diplomatic activity in the region. Also the head of the Christian community in Tunis called there *qā'id*⁷⁹, had a lot to do with the envoys and acted as *turjuman* in all the matters concerning politics and trade.

⁷⁶ C.E. Dufourcq's *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib...*, in chap. "Penetration pacifique des Catalans en Ifriqya," in "Une ambassade catalane à Tunis et une intervention auprès du pape en faveur de l'Ifriqya, en 1246", pp. 97-98.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, in chap. "Les consulats de Tunis et de Bougie et leurs dependances", pp. 99-102.

⁷⁹ Dufourcq, C.E., *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib*, in chap. "Donnes generales et portée économique" in „Les personnages influents: 'caids,' ambassadeurs et consuls", pp. 516-518.

THE CONCLUSION

It was extremely difficult to present all the forms of diplomatic activity during the times of the Muslim rule in Spain, and different forms of embassies depending on their character and the time they took place. I wanted to present as many possible forms of diplomatic activity as possible, emphasizing the ones trying to heal political conflicts between the Spanish Muslims and the outside world, and show how sophisticated and effective was the diplomacy of the Muslim Spain. Even these two last embassies of Barcelona to the Hafsids, and Castilians to al-Mustansir are very much connected with the Andalusian diplomatic tradition, because of taking its root from the very well developed system of schools and intellectual learning in the Muslim Spain. All the previous practices of the Muslims were taken over by the rulers of Barcelona, Aragon, Leon, and Navarra who had to deal with the Muslims for centuries and thanks to them learned about the skill of diplomacy.

The final stage of the Andalusian diplomacy and its successors had the same historical and technical aspect, which were general rules and principles of diplomacy and the goals behind the establishing of relations. The Umayyads of Spain for example established the manner in which the negotiations were conducted and stages through which they develop, leading to the conclusions of treaties. The procedure of receiving ambassadors and the protocol concerning ceremonies, and the factor of the principle of diplomatic immunity was definitely developed by the Spanish Umayyads and later borrowed by the Christian rulers of Spain, with the addition of bigger stress on the matters of trade, than the peace treaties, which were prevailing earlier.

I would like to stress the fact of extreme difficulties to compare the missions, embassies and events due to lack of material and appropriate sources, because most of the primary ones disappeared during the course of history. In general it does create chronological difference, and that is why Levi-Provençal had so many doubts concerning the subject of existence of certain envoys. Additionally, early Andalusian diplomacy during the times of Umayyads possessed a lot of elements of intelligence activities, due to tremendous scientific and intellectual development in the region. The topic still awaits further examination and revealing the remaining part of Al-Muqtabis in the Royal Moroccan Library in Rabat, as a lot of other important matters concerning the Andalusian diplomacy.