

# The Visual Culture of al-Andalus in the Christian Kingdoms of Iberia

Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries

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## Eagles and peacocks in tenth to twelfth-century Iberian art

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### 3 Eagles and peacocks in tenth to twelfth-century Iberian art

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The relationship between Romanesque and Islamic art has been a subject of scholarly study since the early twentieth century. At first, it was the transmission of architectural resources – scrolled corbels, ribbed vaults, trilobe arches, etc. – that caught the attention of authors such as Émile Mâle, Ahmed Fikry, and Émile Lambert.<sup>2</sup> Other scholars examined Islamic influences on sculpture, notably Émile Bertaux, who went so far as to claim that the capitals in the cloister of the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos had been carved by Andalusí artists.<sup>3</sup> These interpretive excesses gave rise to a counterreaction among prominent scholars such as Marcel Durliat, who denied the existence of any artistic connection between Romanesque and Islamic art – particularly in the case of Le Puy-en-Velay Cathedral – and established a new historiographical paradigm that dominated the field from 1975 onward.<sup>4</sup> This is probably the reason why Katherine Watson’s conscientious work on Andalusí elements in French Romanesque, published in 1989, did not enjoy a strong reception in academic circles and had no historiographical continuity.<sup>5</sup>

Subsequent research on artistic connections between Romanesque and medieval Islamic art has primarily focused on the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>6</sup> Despite some valuable contributions to the subject, general works on Romanesque tend to neglect its relationship with Islam. The presence of figurative elements of Andalusí origin has received even less attention than the exchange of architectural features. As a result, the proliferation of fantastic and hybrid animals, together with certain ornamental and compositional schemes, in Romanesque art, has been largely linked to the East in a general sense, attributing its origin to Mesopotamia and Sassanid Persia without providing a clear and consistent account of the possible routes of transmission from a chronological and geographical perspective.<sup>7</sup>

Some figurative themes found in Hispanic Romanesque appeared in al-Andalus a century earlier, including certain pairs of birds facing each other, some representations of curved-tailed griffins and lions, and various motifs consisting of human figures, such as musicians, in Andalusí attire. Although formal and thematic connections have been identified,<sup>8</sup> there is a need for a systematic and rigorous comparative study of each motif which may allow us to determine to what extent these two artistic traditions were connected, and to establish when and where the shared forms arose, and what their meaning was in each context.

Two of the figurative themes in Romanesque sculpture whose formal features betray their inspiration in Andalusí art are certain images of peacocks and eagles. The following pages offer an analysis of these two motifs, following their trail of transmission and reception as they spread across Iberian art between the tenth and twelfth centuries, with the aim of uncovering their role in the context of inter-religious relations in the peninsula.

### Peacocks with intertwined necks

Peacocks have enjoyed a long artistic life since early antiquity in the Near East. They evolved considerably in Sassanid Persian and Roman art, when they began to be placed symmetrically around a stem or axis.<sup>9</sup> Early Christian art subsequently copied the distinctive peacocks that featured in Roman mosaics and sarcophagi, arranged in pairs around a bunch of grapes or *kantharos*, and carrying a new eucharistic meaning.<sup>10</sup> Some Iberian Christian reliefs from the pre-Romanesque and Romanesque periods are direct descendants of this figurative tradition and reproduce those images of peacocks facing each other on either side of a tree or a cross.<sup>11</sup>

The peacock motif also appears extensively in eastern Islamic and Andalusí art. Its shape was stylized in a fashion that originated in the Sassanid Persian world and diverged from the naturalistic appearance found in Roman images of the bird.<sup>12</sup> In fact, a new representational mode arose in al-Andalus in which peacocks appeared in pairs, with their necks intertwined, their heads in profile facing one another, and their beaks touching in perfect symmetry (Figure 3.1). This theme became particularly widespread in the Amirid and Taifa periods, although there is evidence to suggest that it was already established in the early days of the caliphate. The motif is present, for instance, on one of the corners of a tenth-century marble plaque from Madinat al-Zahra preserved in the Museo de Madinat al-Zahra in Córdoba, where a pair of peacocks with intertwined necks and connecting beaks face each other on either side of a stalk/axis.<sup>13</sup> An impressive example of this theme is an embroidered silk textile from the Caliphal period preserved



Figure 3.1 Xàtiva basin. Relief in one of the long sides. Museo del Almodí in Xàtiva, Valencia, eleventh century (Photograph by Maria Dolores Requena).



Figure 3.2 Right side of the casket from Santo Domingo de Silos, 1026 CE, Museo de Burgos, Spain (Photograph by the author).

in the monastery of San Salvador in Oña, whose vividly colored decoration includes three medallions containing pairs of peacocks with entwined necks.<sup>14</sup> It dates from around the year 930 CE, during the reign of ‘Abd al-Rahman III, and is probably the earliest surviving example of this motif.<sup>15</sup>

Peacocks with interlacing necks are a recurrent theme in eleventh-century Andalusi art. It appears several times on a beautiful casket dating from the early eleventh century which is preserved in London’s Victoria & Albert Museum.<sup>16</sup> Dating from the same period, the stone Xátiva basin is evidence of the widespread use of this motif at the time and of its adaptability to different supports and formats. It probably stood in the gardens of a palace in the Taifa of Valencia in the eleventh century and shows a pair of peacocks inside a circular shield on the left of one of its long sides (Figure 3.1).

The peacock theme became very popular during the Taifa period and is often found on pieces produced in the Cuenca ivory workshop.<sup>17</sup> The most remarkable of these is a box dated 1026 CE, commonly known as the Casket of Santo Domingo de Silos because it was housed in this monastery since the twelfth century or earlier. Today it is displayed in the Museo de Burgos. The central motif on the right side of this piece is a symmetrical arrangement of peacocks with intertwined necks and delicately carved plumage (Figure 3.2).

Considering the large number of artifacts bearing this motif, it is reasonable to assume that it was very popular in Andalusi art, so that it became a distinctive emblem of both the Amirid dynasty and the subsequent Taifa rulers, who claimed the right to inherit the caliphate by adopting its iconography. Some of the pieces mentioned above, such as the Oña textile and the Silos casket, fell into Christian hands at an early date – in the eleventh or twelfth centuries – and there is evidence that they were treasured in sacred environments.<sup>18</sup>

Christian art in the Iberian Peninsula began to adopt the theme of peacocks with interlaced necks in the late eleventh century. Some of the Romanesque sculptures featuring this motif began to appear in recently captured border areas, such as the upper Douro River and the provinces of Soria and Segovia. The oldest Romanesque example of this theme is one of the capitals that frame a window in the belfry of the church of San Miguel in San Esteban de Gormaz, Soria province, dated to 1081 (Figure 3.3), paired with a capital showing lions face to face. The details of the peacock capital are barely discernible due to erosion, but it appears to have been carved by far less skilled hands than the Andalusi ivories. Here the birds’ necks are not only interlaced but knotted together, and their heads point symmetrically in opposite directions instead of touching at the beak. The thematic similarities to Islamic art in the rest of the iconography of this church led Gaya Nuño to attribute its authorship to local Mudejar masons.<sup>19</sup>

A similar sculpture dating from a century later can be found in the church of Santa Marta del Cerro, Segovia province, less than 70 km from San Esteban de Gormaz, where a corbel is splendidly decorated with a pair of peacocks with intertwined necks, connecting beaks, and bodies that extend downwards to fit the shape of the support (Figure 3.4). Although their distinctive tails are not represented, the birds can be identified as peacocks by the feathers crowning their heads, which are shown as linear incisions, while their plumage is defined by simple parallel lines.

Variations on this theme can be found in many churches in northern Iberia, where different types of birds with their necks entwined and interlaced abound.<sup>20</sup> A related motif was created by the famous sculptor Master Esteban, who worked on the largest churches built in that period – the cathedrals of Pamplona and Santiago de Compostela. It consists of two birds facing each other symmetrically, whose necks twist around one



*Figure 3.3* Right capital of the east window in the belfry of the church of San Miguel in San Esteban de Gormaz, Province of Soria. 1081 CE (Photograph by the author).



*Figure 3.4* Corbel located on the north side, near the apse of the church of Santa María in Santa Marta del Cerro, Province of Segovia, c. 1180 (Photograph by the author).



*Figure 3.5* Reused relief. Left side of the façade of Santa María la Real de Sangüesa, first half of the twelfth century, Province of Navarre (Photograph by the author).

another as they peck at their own feet (Figure 3.5). The theme was replicated in Romanesque churches across northern Iberia throughout the 1100s. It also appeared on capitals and archivolt in Navarre and Aragon in the first quarter of the twelfth century, and subsequently spread to numerous churches in Burgos and Segovia.<sup>21</sup>

Despite certain formal differences between Islamic and Romanesque examples, the detail of the intertwined necks is so distinctive that we can infer that the Christian sculptures were inspired by eleventh-century Andalusí art. Given the close social contact between Christians and Muslims in these areas and the use of luxury objects from al-Andalus in many northern churches, we can legitimately assume that the artists were consciously replicating a specifically Andalusí theme.

Generally speaking, the peacocks found in Caliph and Taifa settings are more skillfully sculpted than their Romanesque counterparts, while no evidence has been found of a connection that might suggest the transfer of craftsmen from Andalusí workshops to Romanesque churches.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the Romanesque examples described above involve a formal reinterpretation of the Islamic motif as different figurative combinations were introduced, resulting in a wide variety of birds with intertwined necks where the artist plays with the position of the heads.

Be that as it may, the iconographic programs implemented in Romanesque churches were subject to strict clerical supervision. Irrespective of the artificers' place of origin, what were the reasons that led the patrons of these buildings to adopt such a typically Andalusí motif? To deepen our inquiry, let us explore another theme that also appears to have traveled across cultural contexts: the eagle.

### The spread-winged eagle

One of the most significant themes in Iberian art during the central centuries of the Middle Ages is the eagle in frontal position with outstretched wings, sometimes known as the heraldic eagle. Eagle iconography dates back to Mesopotamian art and was incorporated in Sassanid Persian art as a symbol of royalty, where it was frequently portrayed with a quarry in its talons.<sup>23</sup> The quintessential bird of prey also featured in ancient Egyptian art, where it had strong solar connotations, and later in Roman art as an emblem associated to Jupiter and the triumph of light over darkness. The Romans represented the eagle without prey and displayed it on votive altars and graves.<sup>24</sup> The eagle eventually became a military ensign to be displayed in parades in ancient Rome, and from the first century CE onward it represented the Roman legion. It was likewise used as a battle standard by kings and high dignitaries in the Sassanid empire,<sup>25</sup> and appeared in the earliest Christian artworks as a messianic symbol with baptismal connotations.<sup>26</sup>

The eagles are also characteristic of some late antique Gothic fibulae, such as the famous sixth-century Visigothic brooch of Alovera preserved in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, whose decoration with cloisonné enamel techniques reveals a Byzantine influence. It has recently been suggested that these pieces may not be eagles, as traditionally considered, but peacocks.<sup>27</sup> The truth is that these Gothic examples have wings much smaller than the tail, and therefore they are far from the spread-winged eagle motif that we are going to discuss in this section. Thus, it seems that it is in tenth-century Byzantine silk textiles that the Roman imperial eagle re-emerged, adopting a frontal position with outspread wings and head in profile.<sup>28</sup>

The eagle also played a prominent role in contemporaneous Islamic art, especially in the caliphate of al-Andalus. According to Ibn Ḥayyan, it featured on battle ensigns and banners during 'Abd al-Rahman III's reign, by which time it had become a key political and military symbol, first of the Umayyad dynasty and later of the caliphate of Córdoba itself.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the earliest surviving specimens of the eagle theme date from 'Abd al-Rahman III's reign, the most notable of which is a superb textile preserved in the monastery of San Salvador de Oña (c. 929–934 CE), whose embroidered silk design includes four medallions enclosing eagles in frontal position. Four further medallions feature a variation on the eagle motif, exclusive to Andalusí art, in which the bird is shown grasping a quarry in its talons.<sup>30</sup> The image of an eagle clutching its prey follows an eastern model and is different from the Roman-Byzantine imperial eagle, having originated in Sassanid Persian art and arrived in Europe via al-Andalus.<sup>31</sup>

The eagle theme became increasingly common in al-Andalus during the tenth century as a symbol of the caliph or ruler. It is found on ivories, such as a small pyxis created for al-Hakam II around the year 964 (Victoria & Albert Museum, Inv. 217–1865), whose lid is decorated with four eagles in a radial arrangement, with wings and legs splayed, fanned tails, and an ornamental beaded pattern. This motif became even more widespread and significant in the Amirid period, when al-Mansur and his descendants





*Figure 3.6* Short side of Al-Mansur's basin, 988 CE. Marble 103 × 76 × 67 cm. Museo Arqueológico Nacional de Madrid, Inv. 50428 (Photograph by the author).

sought to legitimize their dynastic rights by appropriating the sovereignty symbols of the Umayyad caliphs. The best example is the marble al-Manşur basin, which was commissioned by the *hajib* himself in 988 CE. On one of the minor sides is decorated with two eagles holding small deer (Figure 3.6), a model that appears replicated in every surviving Amirid marble basin.<sup>32</sup>

Ivories from the Caliphal and Amirid periods also feature eagles, with or without prey, but always with their wings symmetrically spread. Two major types may be discerned depending on the position of the body: forward facing, or in profile with the tail to one side and the head also in profile.<sup>33</sup> The latter group includes two ivory jars produced in Madinat al-Zahra around 970 CE – the lid of the Ziyad pyxis and the pyxis in the al-Sabah collection – both of which feature eagles with their tails to one side.<sup>34</sup> The same applies to the central eagle on the lid of the Leyre casket (Figure 3.7), dating from the early eleventh century, which is portrayed grasping a hare in its claws, its wings bisected by a beaded ribbon. The lid's decoration includes two further eagles, in frontal position and without prey, inside polylobed medallions. Eagles in profile and without prey can also be found on ivories from the same period.<sup>35</sup>

Several decades later, in the late eleventh century, eagles began to appear frequently in Iberian Romanesque sculpture, either alone or in pairs, decorating capitals and corbels. Their presence cannot be attributed to a biblical theme or to John the Evangelist, who is represented by an eagle in the Tetramorph. Close analysis shows that these sculptures emulate the ornamental forms found on Andalusí portable objects. Indeed, examples of Umayyad artworks can be found to match every existing Romanesque variation on



Figure 3.7 Lid of the Leyre casket, 1004 CE. Museo de Navarra (Pamplona) (Photograph: Museo de Navarra ©).

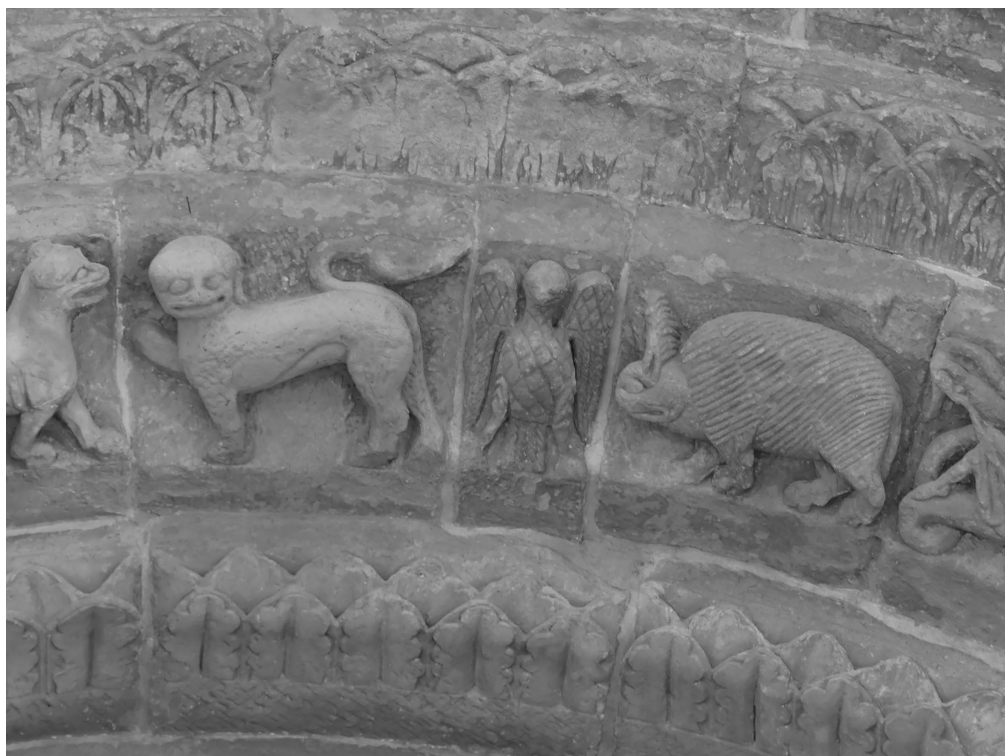


*Figure 3.8* Capital in the south gallery of the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Jaramillo de la Fuente, Burgos. Late twelfth or early thirteenth century (Photograph by the author).

the theme. For instance, the variant where the eagle is displayed with its body in profile and front-facing wings is displayed on a capital in the church of Jaramillo de la Fuente, Burgos, where it appears duplicated in a symmetrical arrangement, as in other Castilian churches and in Andalusi ivories (Figure 3.8).<sup>36</sup>

Eagles in frontal position are also present in Castilian Romanesque, as for example on the rose window in the church of Santo Domingo in Soria, where the bird is flanked by two lions whose curved tails are also reminiscent of ivory pieces from the Caliphal period (Figure 3.9). Front-facing eagles occupy the corners of Romanesque capitals in portals and cloisters in Castile, Navarre, and Catalonia,<sup>37</sup> as well as in the courtyard of Kairouan mosque in North Africa.<sup>38</sup>

Walter Cook identified these connections a century ago. In his work on Romanesque altars in Catalonia, he studied the heraldic eagles that adorned antependia, such as the Treserra frontal, and pointed to Andalusi ivories as direct models used for carvings in Romanesque buildings both in France and Catalonia.<sup>39</sup> Christian ivories produced in the late tenth century may have been the first support for the transmission of these animal motifs, such as the cross of San Millán de la Cogolla, which is closely linked to the Umayyad pieces.<sup>40</sup> Romanesque eagles in frontal position occasionally appear with their heads in profile, a defining feature of Amirid basins and Andalusi silk textiles.<sup>41</sup> Other



*Figure 3.9* Center of the rose window of the façade of the church of Santo Domingo de Soria. Late twelfth or early thirteenth century (Photograph by the author).

examples display highly revealing details in the birds' plumage. For instance, an interior capital in the church of San Claudio de Olivares, Zamora, shows an eagle with a large curved beak pointing to the right and a fanned tail between its legs (Figure 3.10), closely resembling some of the birds carved on ivory caskets (Figure 3.7). The semicircle outlined by a line of beads at the top of its left wing seems to imitate a textile model that can be observed on an Islamic cloth dated to 950–1070, preserved in the church of San Zoilo, Carrión de los Condes, as well as on the profusely decorated shroud in the abbey of Saint Germain d'Auxerre (*c.* 1000), which is understood to be of Byzantine origin. The bird's feathers are represented as scales in a reticular pattern resembling the plumage of the eagle in San Claudio de Olivares. Its wings are bisected by a horizontal strip, another distinctive feature of Andalusí ivories, including the pieces from the Victoria & Albert Museum, Silos and Leyre.

Romanesque capitals sometimes display a curious variation on the theme of the front-facing heraldic eagle: the double-headed eagle. Samples of this motif are mainly confined to eastern areas of the Segovia province, which suggests that this variation was not as widespread in Hispanic Romanesque as the types discussed above. Double-headed eagles can be found in several churches in the area, but their dates of manufacture and their craftsmanship vary widely, indicating that their presence cannot be attributed to



*Figure 3.10* Capital inside the church of San Claudio de Olivares, Zamora. Mid-twelfth century (Photograph by the author).



*Figure 3.11* Exterior capital of the apsidal window of the church of San Miguel de Ayllón, Province of Segovia. Mid-twelfth century (Photograph by the author).

the existence of a single sculpture workshop; instead, it is far more likely that these carvings were based on a shared model. The oldest example is a capital on the outer side of the apse of the church of San Miguel in Ayllón, which is decorated on two sides by double-headed eagles with outspread wings and heads in profile facing in opposite directions (Figure 3.11). Their bodies also appear to be divided into two symmetrical halves, and the beaded collars that bind the twin heads are reminiscent of Andalusí models.<sup>42</sup> Other capitals in the region display slight variations on this theme.<sup>43</sup>

The double-headed eagle originated in ancient Mesopotamian and Hittite art. According to Jalabert, it was conveyed to Europe via eastern Islamic art and began to appear around the tenth century in many embroidered silks of Byzantine, Fatimid and Andalusí origin which were kept in the treasuries of European churches.<sup>44</sup> The most remarkable example in our Segovian geographical context is perhaps the blue silk of San Zoilo, a stunning samite measuring 2.75 × 2.08 meters decorated with 36 double-headed eagles. As in the case of Al-Mansur's basin, these eagles have striking ears but their formal development – with their tail fanned out between their legs – corresponds more to the figure of an eagle than to that of any fantastic being, such as the griffin or the simurgh. It probably arrived in the monastery of Carrión de los Condes, Palencia province, in 1070 and may be of Fatimid provenance.<sup>45</sup> Other Andalusí textiles from the eleventh and twelfth centuries feature double-headed eagles bound together by a beaded collar, as in the Segovian capitals mentioned above.<sup>46</sup>

Representations of eagles clutching their prey are also abundant in Iberian Romanesque. As discussed above, this was a major theme in the decoration of Córdoba ivories and Amirid basins (Figures 3.6 and 3.7), a hallmark of Andalusí art of Sassanid Persian origin, and distinct from Roman or Byzantine models.<sup>47</sup> Eagles in frontal position with outstretched wings and a quarry in their talons abound in Romanesque churches. The transmission of this Caliphā theme to Christian art has an early precedent in an illustration from the Girona Beatus of 975.<sup>48</sup> It is a regular topic in the decoration of Romanesque corbels and capitals, as can be seen, for instance, in the cloister of the monastery of Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona province, built in 1190–1220, where each of the corners of capital No. 5 is decorated with an eagle grasping a hare. The hare is a habitual quarry of the eagle in Islamic ivories.<sup>49</sup>

Corbels are another common support for this iconography, particularly in border areas of the Castilian plateau. A good example may be observed in the church of Santa María de El Rivero in San Esteban de Gormaz, Soria province, where an outstretched eagle holds an unidentifiable animal due to its poor condition (Figure 3.12). Corbels displaying eagles with their prey are to be found in churches in the provinces of Segovia, Burgos, and León,<sup>50</sup> as well as in the rest of Castile, the Basque Country, Asturias, and Cantabria, where they also appear in archivolt and capitals.<sup>51</sup> A few large-scale sculptures of hunting eagles exist, as on the western façade of the church of San Pedro in Olite, Navarre, where the portal is flanked by two vast birds with hares at their feet. The relative sizes of predator and prey in every one of these examples are particularly striking, given the enormous size of the eagle and the smallness of the quarry, even in the case of bulls or other large animals. This lack of proportion is typical of Andalusí art in the Amirid and Taifa periods, as Terrasse lucidly observed, confirming that proportions between animals in fighting scenes were disregarded to show the attacker in monumental scale.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, a variant of this motif in both Romanesque and Andalusí art represents the eagle in a more aggressive stance, swooping on its prey with its head lowered ready to devour it. In contrast to the types described above, this version of the eagle theme displays the bird with outspread wings and body in profile. This model seems to have proliferated in al-Andalus during the eleventh century – the earliest instance known dates from the Amirid era – but the motif continued to be used in the Taifa period. It is present on the lid of the Victoria & Albert Museum casket and on an ivory plaque from the eleventh or twelfth century.<sup>53</sup> But the most significant Islamic sample of this theme dating from the period in question is the Xàtiva basin on account of the size and central role of the motif on the piece. It decorates one of the smaller sides of the sink and consists of two eagles attacking hares in a symmetrical arrangement (Figure 3.13). The Xàtiva basin is linked to Romanesque carvings of this theme by its chronology (eleventh century), the size of the motif, and the use of stone as support material.

Eagles in profile ready to pounce are as plentiful in Iberian Romanesque art as those that appear clutching their prey.<sup>54</sup> Just like in Andalusí art, the victim in Romanesque reliefs tends to be a rabbit or a hare. Although hunting eagles are very frequent in Romanesque art across the peninsula, a surprising number of these images are concentrated in the region known as Castilian Extremadura. A case in point is one of the exterior capitals of the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Sequera del Fresno, Segovia province, where two eagles facing each other thrust their beaks into rabbits lying at their feet (Figure 3.14). This theme is replicated on a metope in the same church and in other churches in the province, whose symmetrical arrangements of hunting eagles resemble those on the Victoria & Albert Museum casket and the Xàtiva basin.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 3.12 Corbel of the south façade (left) and capital of the gallery (right) of the church of El Rivero in San Esteban de Gormaz, late eleventh or early twelfth century (Photograph by the author).





*Figure 3.13* Xàtiva basin. Relief in one of the short sides. Museo del Almodí in Xàtiva, Valencia, eleventh century (Photograph by Maria Dolores Requena).

The upper Douro area abounds in reliefs on this theme, such as the capitals and corbels decorated with hunting eagles in the churches of San Miguel and Santa María de El Rivero in the town of San Esteban de Gormaz, Soria province (Figure 3.12). The reliefs in San Miguel are slightly more deteriorated, due perhaps to its older age, but the sculpture in both buildings is strikingly similar.<sup>56</sup> In the lower cloister of the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, capital No. 58 in the southern gallery shows birds of prey in pairs pecking at hares while ensnared in stalks. Although this cloister was extremely influential and the vegetal element is present in other churches, it is a relatively rare variation on the hunting eagle theme in Romanesque art.<sup>57</sup>

It can therefore be seen that Romanesque churches contain a vast number of reliefs replicating a distinctive theme of Andalusí art which appears to have inspired a wide variety of representations which had no precedent in Christian art. This objective fact, however, raises numerous questions, the first of which concerns the reasons that led Christian patrons to choose to transplant this artistic theme so widely. To answer this question, we must visit the social and ideological climate surrounding the construction of Romanesque churches and look into the availability of Andalusí luxury objects and skilled workers in that environment. But the key issue underlying this figurative transfer relates to the meaning and function of these forms, both in al-Andalus and in Christian religious buildings.

### **The meaning of forms**

As mentioned above, the eagle became a major motif in Andalusí military banners from ‘Abd al-Rahman III’s caliphate (912–961 CE) onward. According to the chronicler Ibn

Ḥayyan, the first caliph of Córdoba used the eagle emblem in “infidel territory” during his campaign against Osma in 934 CE. It was an “invented” symbol “because no sultan had ever had it before”. He added that the device aroused a great deal of “curiosity and delight” among people as an “ingenious adoption” and inspired many complimentary poems.<sup>58</sup> Added to this, Maribel Fierro has noted that the ensign – known as the “Eagle Flag” – recalled one of the prophet Muhammad’s banners and considers it to be a powerful war symbol that harked back to ‘Abd al-Rahman I via an earlier narrative tradition.<sup>59</sup>

Isa ibn Ahmad al-Razi – official chronicler to al-Hakam II (r. 961–976 CE) – added an important detail to descriptions of this military ensign when he mentioned “eagles attacking their prey” on the flags exhibited in a parade in 971 CE.<sup>60</sup>

These arguments have led specialists to conclude that, from the caliphate of Córdoba onward, the eagle in any form was likely to represent sovereign power and the individual ruler. This symbology was projected onto luxury ceramic objects produced in al-Andalus whose decoration included an eagle or a falcon riding a horse, and on textiles such as the embroidered silk of San Salvador de Oña.<sup>61</sup> A captured animal below the bird underlined the latter’s triumphant status – a feature that was already part of the symbolism of the conquering lion, which was at the time the epitome of military victory over the enemies of Islam.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, Mariam Rosser-Owen has argued that it was not until the Amirid era that the heraldic eagle became a habitual presence and adopted specifically Andalusí pictorial features.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the eagle as an emblem played a significant role on Amirid basins, such as al-Mansur’s (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid) where it is represented twice on one of the shorter ends, holding a gazelle in each of its talons (Figure 3.6). The inscription on this piece betrays its strongly propagandistic nature: it declares that it was made for the *hajib*’s palace complex, Madinat al-Zahra, with the intention of leading him to victory.<sup>64</sup> Bearing in mind that al-Mansur led over 50 military campaigns against the Christians in the space of 25 years, it is reasonable to infer that the image was an emblem explicitly representing victory over the northern confessional foes, and that it was created for propaganda purposes. Both the front-facing and the hunting eagles displayed on luxury items such as the Leyre casket appear to share this belligerent meaning, since they consisted in transferring onto stone or ivory the designs that appeared on the military banners al-Mansur and his descendants carried into battle.<sup>65</sup>

This idea gains weight when the eagle theme is combined with that of lions attacking gazelles or deer in the decoration of ivories from this period, such as the Leyre casket, and the Amirid basins, where hunting lions figure prominently on the frontal panels.<sup>66</sup> The sense of glorification of victory over the Christians is further enhanced in ‘Abd-al-Malik’s basin, made for al-Mansur’s favorite son, to whom the Leyre casket was also dedicated.<sup>67</sup>

Written sources confirm the relationship between this emblem and religious war. Al-Mansur’s panegyric poet Ibn Darraj evokes the image of the eagle as an ensign of the Amirid army which was recognized by Christians and also stood as a metaphor of death in the battlefield:

The Christians walked in the shade of the standards which reminded them of the days when they were harried by eagles and birds of prey. And it was necessary to protect the insignia belonging to every victor, which were sometimes beset by wind and others devoured by peril. And every eagle aspires to devour the livers of its enemies with the tip of its sharp beak.<sup>68</sup>

To try to apprehend the meaning of the hunting eagle in Romanesque art, let us now turn to the Latin sources that circulated in the northern realms, where the social,

religious, and political context was quite different from that of al-Andalus. The image of birds devouring other animals in Hispanic Romanesque sculpture has largely been interpreted by art historians in spiritual terms. The most intensely studied example is capital No. 58 in the lower cloister of the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, where birds of prey, themselves ensnared by stalks, attack hares with their beaks. The hare is said to represent lasciviousness on this capital, and hence the sinner's punishment. The hare as a symbol of lust appears in the writings of numerous Christian authors, from the Fathers of the Church to prominent medieval theologians such as Raban Maur.<sup>69</sup> The birds of prey displayed in Romanesque churches in Castile and León have also been interpreted as symbols of the Christian soldier's struggle against evil and sin, which suggests that these reliefs represent the "death of the soul".<sup>70</sup> Latin sources from the peninsula point to this spiritual reading based on biblical texts, but they contain an additional allusion to war. Deuteronomy 28:26 conjures up the image of the vanquished lying on the battlefield to be food for the birds as a punishment from Yahveh; Revelation 19:21 uses the same image to refer to the wicked at the end of time. In his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, written c. 798, Beato de Liébana explains that the birds represent the saints and the church, "which will always eat the flesh of its enemies" and identifies those whose bodies are to be devoured as "members of the Antichrist".<sup>71</sup> Some illustrated Beatus manuscripts include the image of a drowned man beneath Noah's Ark being devoured by a raven, in a reference to the sinners who perished in the Flood.<sup>72</sup>

The image has a similar interpretation in Hispanic chronicles, but it is more directly associated to military defeat. Birds of prey are usually assimilated to corpse-devouring carrion eaters, although the latter also represent spiritual damnation. The epic *Poema de Almería* (1147) describes the Christians' fear of defeat at the hands of the *Moors* with the statement "and the birds in the air will tear our flesh apart".<sup>73</sup> This notion was also present in Ibn Darraj's Poem 109 quoted above, where a parallel is drawn between the images on Córdoba's banners and the fate of the defeated Christians, whose bodies are left to the mercy of beasts.

Assimilating military defeat to divine punishment is consistent with a providential interpretation of events that conforms to mental attitudes at the time, on both the Christian and Muslim sides, so that the result of a battle was often attributed to God's will, as a punishment to sinners and a reward to the righteous.<sup>74</sup> In addition, the extra punishment meted out on executed heretics and dissidents, both in Córdoba and in Castile, was no other than abandoning the corpse to be eaten by scavengers – the worst possible end for a person in societies where the integrity of the body in the grave was a ritual requirement and a necessary condition for the salvation of the soul.<sup>75</sup>

As stated earlier, the double reading of the image of the eagle – as an act of war and a divine punishment – was based on scripture. Indeed, the new liturgy performed in Romanesque churches from the eleventh century onward included a recitation of the curses in Deuteronomy, and in particular of the following passage:

The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, a hard-faced nation [...] they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the Lord your God has given you. (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Deuteronomy 28:49–53)

The purpose of including this passage in the liturgy promoted by the Gregorian reform was to denounce the current enemies of the Church.<sup>76</sup> Biblical quotes were also inserted in the rallying speeches that drove the fight against Islam, just as quotes from the Quran were used by Muslim leaders.<sup>77</sup>

Some Iberian Romance and Latin chronicles from the thirteenth century draw an interesting link between the Christian king who defeats the Muslims and the hunting eagle. Thus, in *Primera Crónica General de España* it is said that the Leonese king Ordoño I pounced on the Moors “like the eagle when it is very eager to find its prey”; similarly, in *Crónica latina de los reyes de Castilla*, Fernando III is said to have arrived in Salamanca, just before the conquest of Córdoba, “like an eagle flying toward its prey”.<sup>78</sup> This metaphor also became a stereotype in contemporaneous epic literature, such as the *Poema de Fernán González*, where it is applied to the Christian knight who attacks Muslims “like a hungry eagle wanting to feed”.<sup>79</sup>

This notion was therefore rooted in the Bible and more or less universally known in medieval Iberia, but it reached a climax in belligerent discourse, being first adopted by the Muslims and later by the Christians in the context of their mutual confrontations in the peninsula. The hunting eagle began to be mentioned in Latin sources in relation to the war against Islam – to symbolize attacks from or inflicted on the enemy – from the eleventh century onward, when Christian kings started to impose their territorial supremacy. The reiteration of this metaphor in Latin sources suggests, first, that their authors had direct knowledge of the famous Cordoban military emblem replicated on all manner of Andalusi artifacts from the tenth century onward; and second, that the Christians adopted the discourse of their foes. The tendency to symmetry in the construction of images of both the other and the self has been documented on different levels, via Arabic and Latin sources from the Peninsula, notably by Ron Barkai, who coined the apposite concept of “mirror image” in this context.<sup>80</sup>

Just like the peacocks, the hunting eagles that proliferated in Romanesque art appear to be linked to their counterparts in Islamic art. As we have seen, these reliefs often display formal features that explicitly replicate those found on Islamic textiles, ivories, and artifacts. By introducing these aesthetic options, the artificers conjured up Andalusi visual culture and its messages. Given the deep-rooted military connotations of this symbol in frontier areas of Iberia, both on Andalusi objects and in the Latin sources, it may be assumed that the Romanesque carvings evoked the same imagery, which appears to have been widely understood among society. This did not prevent the sculptures in question from having a double eschatological and spiritual reading which was already present in both Latin and Arabic written sources, and which had been subsumed into the collective mindset.

But an important additional factor needs to be borne in mind in the interpretation of these reliefs: their tendency to occur in border areas between the Christian kingdoms and al-Andalus.

### A frontier art

Many of the Romanesque churches that contain carvings of peacocks or eagles with distinctively Andalusi formal features are located in the border areas of the upper Douro River and Castilian Extremadura. We have seen that the earliest sculpture showing peacocks with intertwined necks is in the church of San Miguel, in San Esteban de Gormaz; that the examples of bicephalic eagles are mainly in the northeast of Segovia province;

and that churches in this region abound in the three main types of eagle representations found in Andalusí art: in frontal position, in profile, and in hunting mode.

The region comprising what are today the provinces of Soria and Segovia was conquered by Islamic troops at an early stage, between 715 and 750 CE. Despite historiographers' long-held belief that this area was uninhabited at the time and was only settled after the Christian occupation, it is now known that at no time was it unpopulated.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the area is very rich in Arabic toponyms and home to major Andalusí architectural and archaeological remains.<sup>82</sup> The most significant of these is the Castle of Gormaz, which stands in a walled enclosure some 500 meters wide, the largest in Europe at the time. This fortress had an important role in the days of al-Mansur, when it was used as a base for the *razzias* that scourged the northern Christian territories.

The towns of San Esteban de Gormaz and Ayllón lie at the heart of the area that suffered 'Abd al-Rahman III's 934 incursion – in which the caliph first flew the eagle standard – and was later repeatedly targeted by al-Mansur.<sup>83</sup> It was therefore a frontier area and the setting of constant battles of conquest and reconquest on both sides during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Castle of Gormaz – only 20 km from San Esteban de Gormaz – was eventually taken in 1059 by the Leonese king Fernando I (r. 1035–1065), together with other significant locations in the region such as Aguilera, Berlanga, and Bordecorex. It fell to his son Alfonso VI (r. 1065–1109) to reorganize and repopulate the territory after his momentous conquest of Toledo in 1085. King Alfonso established the different dioceses of Castilian Extremadura, such as Segovia, Zamora, and Ávila, funded monasteries, and introduced the Gregorian ecclesiastical reform.<sup>84</sup> However, the Christian occupation of this region suffered a serious setback as a result of the Almoravid conquest (1086–1147), which caused several towns to revert to Islam and triggered instability until 1117. Consequently, although the Christians conquered the area surrounding San Esteban de Gormaz in the last 30 years of the eleventh century, neighboring districts were not Christianized until well into the 1100s.<sup>85</sup>

The birth of cities such as Soria, Segovia, Zamora, and Salamanca was therefore defined by their defensive role before the Almoravid threat. The territory under Christian rule was structured into *Comunidades de Villa y Tierra*, an administrative system based on councils (*concejos*) which were granted a charter (*fuero*) and mustered the militias required to further territorial expansion.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, once the towns had been taken and the Romanesque churches built, many of the region's inhabitants continued to participate regularly in the recurrent military campaigns on the Andalusí border until well beyond the thirteenth century. It is also known that the local *Mudejar* population remained in the area for a very long time, so that it is fair to say that the territories between the Douro and Tagus Rivers were a space of permanent contact between Christians and Muslims.

Both military confrontation and coexistence with Islam are reflected in the iconography of the Romanesque churches built in this region. To interpret correctly the Romanesque reliefs explored in this chapter, they must be contextualized as part of an overall iconographic program. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to undertake a detailed analysis of each of these frontier churches, some general remarks are in order.

The churches in question do not display a linear narrative program in their ornamentation. Instead, a repertoire of figures is displayed on capitals and corbels which unfold into an array of symbols and messages. Some of their common elements are war-related iconography, images of fantastic animals (harpies, mermaids, griffins), numerous lions and eagles, and human figures identifiable as Muslims by their attire. These churches abound in battle scenes and figures dressed in turbans and kaftans, which suggests that this war-related iconography pointed unequivocally to religious conflict. The two Romanesque churches in

San Esteban de Gormaz are particularly representative. Although many of their carvings are no longer readable due to erosion, the capitals in San Miguel's porticoed gallery (1081) include five peacocks (Figure 3.3), two eagles in frontal position, and at least three eagles attacking their prey. The first two capitals represent fortresses with horseshoe arches, while the corbels are populated by birds and lions mounted on their quarries, Muslim archers, Christian soldiers, and many figures dressed in turbans and *wide sleeve tunics* or kaftans.<sup>87</sup> The capitals in the gallery also feature Andalusí musicians playing string and wind instruments – similar to those found on ivories from Córdoba – and a conspicuous carving of a double-tailed mermaid wearing a turban. Considering the sinful character of these fantastic beings in Romanesque sculpture, this figure seems to identify Muslims with evil, as I have proposed in other works.<sup>88</sup> The town's other church, Santa María de El Rivero, displays virtually the same iconography, including the turbaned mermaid and the musicians in Andalusí clothing on its gallery capitals, plus numerous soldiers and hunting eagles on both capitals and corbels (Figure 3.12). Two capitals, flanking the window of what is now the vestry, showcase one of the most easily recognizable and detailed representations of turbaned Muslims in the whole of Romanesque art.<sup>89</sup>

The aforementioned churches in the province of Segovia also feature elements of war iconography which appear to refer directly to local campaigns of conquest. For instance, one of the capitals flanking a window in the church of Sequera del Fresno is decorated with predatory eagles, while the adjacent tympanum shows a warrior striking another with his sword (Figure 3.14). The corbels in Santa Marta del Cerro display, as well as



*Figure 3.14* Exterior window of the apse of the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Sequera del Fresno, Province of Segovia. Late twelfth or early thirteenth century (Photograph by the author).

peacocks with interlaced necks (Figure 3.4), musicians characterized as Muslims and an impressive figure wearing a turban and a wide-sleeved kaftan.<sup>90</sup> In a nutshell, the iconographic environment of Romanesque churches in the region between the rivers Douro and Tagus can be defined by the combined presence of battle scenes, images of Muslims, and motifs taken from Andalusí art.<sup>91</sup>

### Appropriating a symbol of power

The hunting eagle appears as a metaphor of victory over a religious enemy not only in Arabic and Latin literary sources and chronicles but also in the decoration of Andalusí artifacts. It seems to have had a similar role in frontier Romanesque churches, where it was accompanied by abundant war-related iconography in a reference to the recent conquest of the territory. Let us not forget that the fortress-like Romanesque churches in these environs were themselves symbols of the Christianization of a land which had been under Muslim rule for centuries. In addition, according to contemporaneous chronicles, ecclesiastical sources, and epic poetry, the ideology that viewed the conflict with Islam as a holy war had sunk deep roots in Christian attitudes in the peninsula and was often projected onto Romanesque sculpture.<sup>92</sup>

Other examples of appropriation of the eagle symbol have been documented. The king of Navarre Sancho VII *the Strong* (r. 1194–1234) adopted it as his personal emblem, to the extent that he drew a black heraldic eagle on a document dated 1205, accompanied by the statement “Este es mi signo que sigue a continuación ha sido hecho por mi propia mano” (the sign that follows is my own and has been drawn by my own hand).<sup>93</sup> It was probably displayed on his banner in the famous battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), in which he fought beside the Castilian king.

Other European monarchs who took part in the crusades, particularly Germanic ones, adopted the eagle or the double-headed eagle as their device.<sup>94</sup> But despite the occasional use of this motif by Christian leaders, it was still considered an Andalusí emblem in late medieval Iberia. Evidence of this is the silk cape commissioned for Archbishop Don Sancho (Museo de la Catedral de Toledo, c. 1266–1275), which is decorated with the emblems of the four main kingdoms in the peninsula: the eagle for al-Andalus, the castle for Castile, the lion for León, and the bars for Aragon. The very origin of Western heraldry appears to be closely linked to the crusades and to the fight against Islam in Iberia, and some scholars consider the development of these emblems to have originated in the imitation of the military ensigns employed by the Muslims.<sup>95</sup>

A further iconographic theme which was duly transferred from al-Andalus to the Christian kingdoms is the image of a victorious lion mounted on a bull or other herbivorous animal, which was seen across the Islamic world in the Middle Ages as a symbol of political domination. This motif appears in Andalusí art as a visual metaphor for the monarch, explicitly representing victory over the Christians in several artworks.<sup>96</sup> Examples of this are the Amirid marble basins, as well as the Leyre casket, which was commissioned in the year 1004 to celebrate the conquest of León by ‘Abd al-Malik.<sup>97</sup>

The conquering lion also appears in some unique examples of Romanesque art. One of these is Capital No. 4 in the southern gallery of the cathedral of Santa María in Girona, dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century, which has lions attacking bulls on two of its sides, alternating with the figures of two mounted archers in Islamic dress. As I have explained in another work, the human figures on this capital represented the Almohad

soldiers who had recently been ousted from New Catalonia – the area gained after the conquest of Lleida and Tortosa in the mid-twelfth century – while the lion symbolized the Christians' victory over their foes.<sup>98</sup> King Roger II of Sicily reused this symbol of conquest in a similar way for the decoration of his famous silk mantle, where a lion is shown crushing a camel (1133–1134, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). Both on the mantle and on the Girona capital, the lions are portrayed in the characteristic fashion of Islamic art, a phenomenon we have already observed with respect to certain representations of eagles and peacocks.

The inclusion of specific features of Islamic aesthetics in these Romanesque reliefs made it possible to make explicit references to the Andalusi visual universe and to signify the process of appropriation that was being implemented at the time. Given the Christian ideological climate – based on religious confrontation and territorial expansion – these artistic transfers cannot be interpreted as mere tokens of aesthetic admiration or cultural hybridism.

The appropriation and Christianization of forms in the case of motifs such as the eagle and the lion had a parallel in the reuse of Andalusi luxury objects as part of church treasures. Indeed, many of these textiles and ivories, such as the Oña silk and the Leyre and Silos caskets, arrived in the northern kingdoms in the eleventh century, after the caliphate's collapse, as traded items, diplomatic gifts, *paria* payments, or spoils of war.<sup>99</sup> The Islamic origin of these objects did not create a conflict with their new function as containers of sacred relics. On the contrary, their provenance appears to have boosted their prestige.

Hispanic chronicles often mention luxury items wrested from Muslims in battle. Sometimes the Christian monarchs themselves carried these objects to war, with relics inside, as protective amulets.<sup>100</sup> In certain cases, these pieces, such as the Leyre casket, were even used to accommodate the mortal remains of saints who were considered martyrs in the war against Islam.<sup>101</sup> A case in point is Hisham II's *almaizar* (976–1013 CE, Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid), one of the most outstanding surviving pieces from the Caliphal period. It was used as a wrapper for relics and remained concealed in the church of Santa María de El Rivero, San Esteban de Gormaz until it was found in the course of an excavation in 1853. Its inscription suggests that it was a fabric belonging to the caliph of Córdoba himself. If it really was his *almaizar*, given that the turban was part of the Andalusi warrior's attire at the time, one can only imagine the symbolic significance ascribed to this piece of fabric in this frontier church.<sup>102</sup>

The abundance of Andalusi luxury objects in the northern kingdoms of Iberia and the close social interaction between Muslims and Christians in frontier areas lead us to infer that the Christian clergymen who chose to include peacocks with intertwined necks and hunting eagles in the decoration of their church walls were consciously replicating motifs typical of Islamic art. We have also argued that the models were reinterpreted rather than imitated in most cases, since the motifs underwent mutations and variations in the transfer to Romanesque art that reveal the artists' creative skill, while patently evoking Islamic aesthetics. In the case of peacocks whose necks interlace, the craftsmen played with the position of the heads, while images of hunting eagles occasionally display the distinctive representation of plumage seen in Andalusi luxury objects. In other words, the formal diversity observed in Romanesque carvings suggests that the Andalusi models were reinterpreted rather than copied. This figurative phenomenon seems to have been deliberate and cannot be fully explained by claiming that the creators of these pieces had come from the Taifa kingdoms. The introduction of formal permutations became a stylistic resource that gave expression to the artistic appropriation of themes, thereby demonstrating that



new hands and sensibilities were reusing motifs and ornamental features. In the case of peacocks, the ornamental nature of these birds appears to have been above their symbolic dimension, and the purpose of replicating them in Romanesque reliefs would have been to exhibit the appropriation of the enemy's visual universe. In the case of hunting eagles, forms and symbols seem to have been reused to paraphrase their original message. This message could, however, be compatible with a Christian and spiritual reading of the images and refer in parallel to the "death of the soul" mentioned above. It is frequent in Romanesque sculpture the existence of a double earthly and transcendent significance of the figures, for example, in war scenes. Also written sources show how the outcome of battles and other everyday events were considered a direct manifestation of divine support or punishment.

### Final observations

The Umayyad caliphate of Córdoba conceived the image of the hunting eagle in the tenth century as a symbol of military victory. Its use reached a climax in the Amirid period, denoting triumph over the Christians, and it subsequently proliferated in Iberian Romanesque churches, especially in frontier areas where Christians had had the opportunity to observe this image on the enemy's battle standards and luxury objects for decades. This symbol of victory started to appear in church ornamentation in the final quarter of the eleventh century, a time of far-reaching political changes in the Peninsula, when the Christian kingdoms seized the initiative and began to capture lands from a weakened and fragmented al-Andalus. The adoption of the eagle theme therefore takes place against a backdrop of territorial confrontation, Christian expansion, and dissemination of the ideology of holy war. As the issuer of this symbol of military power changed, it reflected the transformations that had taken place in the political sphere and gave visual expression to the reversal of the territorial situation.

The Christian appropriation of the symbolic discourse of the enemy that we find in the written sources seems to have been accompanied by the appropriation of its aesthetics. Evidence of this is the adoption of distinctive figurative details from Andalusí art, such as the representation of peacocks with intertwined necks and eagles. Clergymen introduced these elements in the figurative programs of buildings that were rich in war iconography, and at the same time they turned mosques into churches, and exquisite coffers into reliquaries. This suggests that these figurative motifs acted as visual spolia, as reused elements capable of evoking both their foreign origin and the new semantic context in which they were immersed.

### Notes

- 1 This chapter has been undertaken with funding from a National Research Challenge Grant from the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities for the Research Project PID2020-118603RA-I00 "Artistic transfer in Iberia (9th to 12th centuries): the reception of Islamic visual culture in the Christian kingdoms" (2021-2025), led by Inés Monteiro and funded by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033. Open Access to this Chapter has been financed by a Grant awarded by my university, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, within the Plan de Promoción de la Investigación 2024.
- 2 Mâle, "Les influences arabes dans l'art roman", 311-343; Fikry, *L'Art roman du Puy et les influences islamiques*; Lambert, *Art Musulman et Art Chrétien dans la Péninsule Ibérique*.
- 3 Bertaux, "Santo Domingo de Silos", 27-44. The origin of the artists was an argument widely used in the historiography of the last century to explain these artistic transfers, see Chapter

- 7, notes 45 to 47. However, knowing that the Romanesque image was a quite homogeneous manifestation and an instrument of communication directed by the ecclesiastical authorities, the main question lies in explaining why the promoters of the churches decided to introduce these forms, since the artists did not enjoy freedom in this regard.
- 4 Durliat talks about the “mythe orientale” in “L’art dans le Velay”, 17. On the impact and duration of these claims, see Barral i Altet, “Sur les supposées influences islamiques dans l’art roman”, 115–118.
  - 5 Watson, *French Romanesque and Islam*.
  - 6 Dodds, “Islam, Christianity, and the Problem of Religious Art”, 27–37; Dodds et al., *The Arts of Intimacy*.
  - 7 Baltrusaitis, *Art Sumérien Art Roman* is very representative of this attitude.
  - 8 Puig i Cadafalch, “A propos du portail de Ripoll”, 303–320; Antón, “Las influencias hispano-árabes en el arte occidental”, 67–108; Monteiro, *La influencia islámica en la escultura románica de Soria*. On French romaneseque, see Jalabert, “De l’art oriental antique à l’art roman”, 173–194. On Norman Romanesque and the circulation of objects as transmitters, see Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability”, 17–50.
  - 9 Mokhtari, “The Influence and Spread of Sassanids”, 618–621; Canillas, “La iconografía del pavo real en la Edad Media”, 143–144.
  - 10 As, for example, on the sarcophagus dated 400–800 CE in the basilica of Sant’Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna (Italy), see <https://www.christianiconography.info/Edited%20in%202013/Italy/sarcTempleVeilClasse.lidRightEnd.smal.jpg>
  - 11 We find it on a Visigothic altar screen in Salvatierra de Tormes, dated 600–650 and preserved in the Museum of Salamanca. A later example is a small thirteenth-century stone urn that served as an ossuary, Museo Episcopal de Vic (Inv. MEV 10623), where two peacocks are arranged around a cross following the Roman pattern.
  - 12 Pavón Maldonado, “Iconografía hispanomusulmana (matizaciones y connotaciones)”.
  - 13 Previously in the Museo Arqueológico de Córdoba, white Marble decorative plaque, 106 × 51 × 5 cm, tenth century. See [https://www.museosdeandalucia.es/image/journal/article?img\\_id=119843772&t=1617776925450](https://www.museosdeandalucia.es/image/journal/article?img_id=119843772&t=1617776925450)
  - 14 Dated also to the tenth century; reproduced and analyzed in Rosser-Owen, *Articulating the Hijāba*, 302, fig. 137.
  - 15 Dated 929–934 by Casamar y Zozaya “Apuntes sobre la yuba funeraria de la Colegiata de Osma”, 36–90.
  - 16 The inscription on this piece has been lost and therefore so has its date. Rosser-Owen considers it to be Amirid because of its similarities to the Leyre casket; *Articulating the Hijāba*, 322–327. The Victoria & Albert Museum dates it c. 1000–1025, Inv. 10–1866.
  - 17 Some examples of detached plates in Marinetto “Plaquitas y bote de marfil del taller de Cuenca”, 57, figs. 19–22.
  - 18 Miriam Ali considers that this embroidered silk was most likely made for ‘Abd al-Rahman III and would arrive in Castile around 1011 CE, during the reign of Sancho García; Ali de Unzaga “Nuevos datos sobre el bordado de Oña”, 568. Several enamels with Christian themes were added to the Silos casket around 1150 at the workshop of Santo Domingo de Silos, where it has remained ever since, although it may have been donated to the monastery by Alfonso VI himself after the conquest of Toledo in 1085. A complete bibliography on this piece can be found in Monteiro “Artistic Interchange between Al-Andalus and the Iberian Christian Kingdoms”.
  - 19 Gaya Nuño, *El Románico en la Provincia de Soria*. 12, 50, 51, 56.
  - 20 As, for example, a late twelfth century capital in the church of San Pedro y San Pablo in Gredilla de Sedano, Burgos, showing two birds whose necks interlink. It forms a pair with another capital decorated with two winged monsters, flanking a window in the south wall.
  - 21 As on the first archivolt of the Porta Speciosa in Leyre Monastery, on a capital in the crypt at Sos del Rey Católico, and on the left side of the façade of Santa María la Real in Sangüesa, all dated to the first quarter of the twelfth century and reproduced in Íñiguez, *Arte Medieval Navarro* II, figs. 155 and 156. Later in the twelfth century, the theme appeared on an archivolt in the portal of Santa María de Uncastillo (Aragón), inside the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Becerril (Segovia), and in other local churches such as the Ermita del Santo Cristo Corporario (capital on the epistle side) and San Miguel de Fuentidueña (interior south

- wall), where they look like eagles. The motif appears three times on capitals inside the church of Santa María de la Sierra in Collado Hermoso.
- 22 This was Gaya's theory for some churches in the Soria province (see note 18) and the argument used by Mâle and Fickry in the works cited above (see note 1), an interpretative excess that has prompted strong criticism.
  - 23 Baltrusaitis, *Art Sumérien Art Roman*, 56–57; Pavón “Iconografía hispanomusulmana”.
  - 24 Wittkower, “Eagle and Serpent”, 296–311.
  - 25 See Kavanagh, *Estandartes militares en la Roma antigua*, 25–173; Malekzadé–Bayani, “L’aigle symbole de la grâce divine”, 9–25.
  - 26 It is also occasionally represented catching a snake with her beak in Christian imagery of the sixth and seventh centuries. Wittkower, “Eagle and Serpent”, 317.
  - 27 Barroso and Morín, “Insignia de poder imperial, signo de identidad gótica”, 351–366.
  - 28 Beckwith, “Byzantine Tissues”, 45. Many of these Byzantine textiles decorated with eagles reached the West – including both the Carolingian court and the caliphate of Córdoba – through diplomacy and trade, and there is evidence of close contacts with Abbasid and Fatimid art; Rosser-Owen, *Articulating the Hijāba*, 363. The motif was already present in Western art in Late Antiquity, such as the famous fibula of Alovera, a sixth-century Visigothic brooch preserved in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, showcasing both the eagle motif and the use of *cloisonné* enamel techniques, and indicating the existence of contact with Byzantium. It has recently been suggested that these pieces may not be eagles, as traditionally considered, but peacocks; Barroso and Morín, “Insignia de poder imperial, signo de identidad gótica”, 351–366.
  - 29 Ibn Ḥayyan, *Muqtabis V*, 250–251.
  - 30 Four fragments of this piece have been preserved, totaling four isolated eagles and four eagles attacking gazelles; Ali de Unzaga, “Embroidered Politics”, 2.
  - 31 Wittkower, “Eagle and Serpent”, 317–319.
  - 32 As many as 13 of these basins exist, some in fragmentary condition. The best preserved are the ‘Abd al-Malik basin and the Badis basin, both dated to the early eleventh century and featuring eagles with their prey; Rosser-Owen, *Articulating the Hijāba*, 275. On the eagle, see also pages 362–373 of this work. It should be noted that these eagles sometimes have ears, which has led some scholars to interpret them as fantastic animals such as the griffin or the *simurgh*, although the most widespread interpretation is that of the eagle due to its formal development.
  - 33 While García Hernández defines three types of eagles with spread wings – body in profile, in frontal position, and carrying prey – Rosser-Owen identifies only two variants – body in profile or in frontal position – since both modalities can appear with or without prey, and in all cases their wings are symmetrically arranged. See García Hernández, “Representations of Eagles in Hispano-Muslim ivories”, II, 670–676; Rosser-Owen, *Articulating the Hijāba*, 662.
  - 34 The al-Sabah pyxis is preserved in the Kuwait National Museum (Inv. LNS 19 I), c. 970–980, Madinat al-Zahra; and the Ziyad ibn Aflah pyxis, c. 969–970, is currently in the Victoria & Albert Museum, Inv. 368–1880. Both are reproduced in Silva Santa-Cruz, *La eboraria andalusí*, figs. 128p and 131, 162 and 169.
  - 35 Such as the casket in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence (Inv. 81/C), and the smaller sides of the Victoria & Albert Museum casket, Inv. 10–1866.
  - 36 A capital in the church of Grado de Pico, Segovia, displays symmetrically paired eagles whose bodies are also turned sideways, like the eagles that mirror each other on certain Andalusí ivories, such as the base of the Ziyad pyxis, reproduced by Silva Santa-Cruz *La eboraria andalusí*, fig. 128i, 160.
  - 37 Examples are a capital in the gallery of Santa María de El Rivero in San Esteban de Gormaz (Soria); exterior capitals in the churches of San Miguel in Sacramenia (Segovia), San Pantaleón de Losa (Burgos), and San Claudio de Olivares (Zamora), as well as on several interior capitals in San Pedro de Cervatos (Cantabria). It is also present in the chapel of Loarre Castle (Navarre). Similarly, we find eagles with body and head in frontal position on capital angles in several Catalan monasteries, such as the cloisters of Santa María de Ripoll and San Frutós de Bagés, and an exterior capital in the monastic church of Sant Cugat del Vallès.
  - 38 Located in the extension built by Ibrahim II in 875. Marçais, *L’architecture: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne, Sicile I*, 12.

- 39 Cook mentions an interesting relief with eagles on the lintel of the Romanesque house in Villemagne- l'Argentière, adding that it is very common in Catalan cloisters; Cook, *The Stucco Altar-Frontals of Catalonia*, 57–59.
- 40 On this piece see Anderson, “Sign of the Cross: Contexts for the Ivory Cross of San Millán de la Cogolla”.
- 41 As, for example, on an exterior corbel in the monastery of Irache, Navarra; on an exterior capital in San Isidoro de León, framing the window that separates the two south portals, paired with a capital showing griffins; or in the cloister of Sant Pere des Galligants in Girona.
- 42 On beading in Caliphal ivories and its forerunners, see Silva Santa-Cruz, *La eboraria andalusí*, 67–68. The bead necklace reappears, for example, in the eagle embroidery on the reliquary of Santa Librada in Sigüenza Cathedral, attributed to the Almoravid period; Partearroyo and Ali de Unzaga, “Tejidos del periodo almorávide”, 105–106.
- 43 Such as an exterior capital in the apse of the church in Cerezo de Arriba, where two eagles are bound back-to-back by a single bead necklace, forming a heart shape with their bodies while their heads look in opposite directions. A two-headed bird decorates a corbel in the apse of the church in Tejadilla, where the beaks connect at the tip, similar to the peacocks mentioned above. At some distance from this area, but also in a border zone, a double-headed eagle decorates a corbel in the apse of the church of San Cristóbal, in the city of Salamanca.
- 44 Jalabert (1938), 178–179. Several examples in Pavón, “Iconografía hispanomusulmana”, 15 and fig. 20; García Hernández, “Representaciones de Águilas en los marfiles hispanomusulmanes”, 674; Partearroyo and Ali de Unzaga, “Tejidos del periodo almorávide”, 125, note 4; and Jalabert, “De l’art oriental antique à l’art roman”, 185.
- 45 I am grateful to Miriam Ali for information on this piece, which is compiled in a monograph pending publication. On the finding and transfer of the saint’s remains from Córdoba, see Senra “Dos telas islámicas encontradas en el monasterio de San Zoilo”, 332–340. On the dating of the piece, see also Borrego, Saladrigas and Andrés, “Technical and Symbolic Study of Two Complete Mediaeval Cloths Found in Carrión de los Condes, Spain”, 163–170.
- 46 Such as the eagle weave of San Bernart Calbó, preserved in the CDMT, Tarrassa, Inv. 307, and attributed to both the Taifa or Almoravid periods, see Saladrigas “Sedas, santos y reliquias”; and the *aljuba* belonging to Don García, dated 1145–1146, from the monastery of San Salvador de Oña (Burgos); Partearroyo and Ali de Unzaga, “Tejidos del periodo almorávide”, 99–100, fig. 2.
- 47 Malekzadé-Bayani, “L’aigle symbole de la grâce divine”, 9–25; Wittkower, “Eagle and Serpent”, 294.
- 48 Fol. 165r; Archivo de la Catedral de Girona. Grabar, “Éléments sassanides et islamiques dans les enluminures des manuscrits espagnols”, 316.
- 49 As, for example, at the center of the Leyre casket (Figure 3.7) or on the Ziyad pyxis; Silva Santa-Cruz, *La eboraria andalusí*, 162, fig. 128p.
- 50 In San Millán, Segovia, the eagle stands out for its enormous talons holding a quadruped. It also appears on corbels in the churches of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, Bahabón de Esgueva (Burgos), and Nuestra Señora del Mercado (León), with the peculiarity that the latter’s wings are folded, perhaps to adapt to the shape of the corbel.
- 51 An eagle with prey – an undetermined quadruped – appears on a corbel in San Pedro de Tejada in Puentearenas, Burgos; on an archivolt in Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Tuesta, Álava, presumably attacking a cow, like the bird that occupies a corbel in the church of San Juan de Priorio, Asturias. It also appears on a corbel in the collegiate church of Santa Juliana, in Santillana del Mar, where the prey could be a hare, and on several interior capitals in the church of San Pedro, in Cervatos, both in Cantabria.
- 52 Terrasse, “Les tendances de l’art hispano-mauresque à la fin du Xème et au début du XIIème siècle”, 20–21.
- 53 Victoria & Albert Museum, Inv. 217–1865. See pictures in <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O76562/pyxis-unknown/>. Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin, Inv. I 6375; Galán y Galindo, *Marfiles Medievales del Islam* II, 360–361. As early as c. 930, the Oña silk included eagles in attack position, albeit with folded wings.
- 54 Wittkower argues that it was the Andalusí model that was replicated in Hispanic Romanesque, pointing out the Beatus as a precedent. “Eagle and Serpent”, 317–319. On the hunting

- eagle in Romanesque sculpture and its Caliphal origin, see also Monteiro, *La influencia islámica*, 87–89.
- 55 Especially in a relief on one of the walls of the church of Cerezo de Abajo (Segovia), where two eagles in profile attack a hare in a symmetrical arrangement.
- 56 In Santa María de El Rivero, the theme is repeated four times on the seventh capital of the gallery. It also takes center stage in the portal, where the second capital on the left shows an eagle pouncing on a pair of birds which are crushed under its claws. The peculiar bird's eye view of this image seems to have been popular in the region and we find it again on a corbel in the church of Montejo de Tiermes. Birds of prey are also displayed on a capital in the chapterhouse of Burgo de Osma, Soria. The motif also appears in the church of Virgen de la Peña, Sepúlveda, northern Segovia, where it is difficult to identify the animal being attacked; Monteiro, *La influencia islámica*, figs. 85, 87, 89, 92.
- 57 Such as capital 11 in the west gallery of the cloister of Tudela cathedral, which reproduces the Silos model.
- 58 Ibn Ḥayyan, *al-Muqtabis V*, 250–251, esp. 255. Another description in 265.
- 59 Fierro, Maribel, *Abderramán III y el califato omeya de Córdoba*, 53, and note 82.
- 60 Al-Razi describes “admirable ensigns” decorated with “lions with gaping jaws, terrifying leopards, eagles swooping on their prey and hideous dragons”; Isà ibn Ahmad al-Razi, *Anales palatinos del califa de Córdoba al-Hakam II*, Ch. 26, 68. On these banners and their iconographic projection, see Millán, “Estandartes medievales hispanos”, 14.
- 61 Such as the *ataifor* of Madinat Ilbira, dating from the second half of the tenth century, preserved in the Museo Arqueológico de Granada, Inv. CE 855. It is accompanied by the inscription “*al-Mulk*” (“the power”); and on the *ataifor* of Sant Jaume de Fadrell, today in the Museo de Bellas Artes de Castellón, dated *c.* eleventh century; Armengol et al., *El ataifor de Sant Jaume de Fadrell*, 43, 49.
- 62 Ettinghausen and Hartner, “The Conquering Lion”, 161–171.
- 63 Rosser-Owen, *Articulating the Hijāba*, 372.
- 64 Bariani, *Almanzor*, 21.
- 65 As Rosser-Owen states in *Articulating the Hijāba*, 372.
- 66 On this long-standing iconography see Silva Santa-Cruz, “El combate de animales en el arte islámico”, 13–22; and Monteiro “Of Archers and Lions”.
- 67 In the inscription of ‘Abd al-Malik’s basin (dated 1004–1007, Dar Si Sa’id Museum, Marrakesh, Inv. mar. 0.03/1071/92), al-Mansur’s son is already mentioned by the appellation “sword of the state”, which he was given after his victory over the Christians at Leon; Rosser-Owen, *Articulating the Hijāba*, 289–293.
- 68 Ibn Darray, *Almanzor en los poemas de Ibn Darrāy*, poem 109, vv.19–24.
- 69 Pinedo, *El simbolismo en la escultura medieval española*, 61–70; Váldez del Álamo, *Palace of the Mind*, 88.
- 70 Ruiz Maldonado, *El Caballero en la escultura románica de Castilla y León*, 72.
- 71 Beatus of Liébana, *Comentario al Apocalipsis de San Juan*, 66–67. The members of the Antichrist are mentioned in Book XI, 610–11.
- 72 As in the Beatus of Urgell. Fol. 82v. Klein, *Beatus de Liebana. Codex Urgellensis*, 94–96.
- 73 “*Et carnes nostras volucres coeli lacerabunt*”, *Poema de Almería*, v. 360, 185 and 205.
- 74 This has been described as the “providentialist view of history” (*visión providencialista de la historia*), as applied to Christian chronicles. See Laliena, “Encrucijadas ideológicas”, 326, which has clear parallels in Andalusí sources; Lapidra, “Reconquista cristiana y pérdida de al-Andalus en las fuentes árabes”, 302; García Sanjuán, 2019, 68. In the Arabic sources it is the notion of *fath* mentioned by García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica de la península ibérica y la tergiversación del pasado*, 68–76.
- 75 In al-Andalus, the corpses of those who were considered to be offenders of religion were left at the mercy of wild beasts. Latin epic poems also offer multiple examples confirming that this treatment of the corpse was considered particularly undesirable and applicable to sinners. Several sources are collected in Monteiro, *El enemigo imaginado*, 162, 163, 166.
- 76 Little, *Benedictine Maledictions. Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France*, 59–72.
- 77 Lapidra, “Reconquista cristiana y pérdida de al-Andalus en las fuentes árabes”, 302.
- 78 Ordoño I is described as “*ell aguila quando a muy grand sabor de fallar su caça*”; Alfonso X, *Primera Crónica General*, 395; *Crónica latina de los reyes de Castilla*, 98.

- 79 “*Ferio luego entre ellos, non les dio nul vagar,/com aguila fanbryenta que se querya çebar;/ quando oyeron los moros a Castiella nonbrar,/quisyeran sy podieran en Cordova estar*”, *Poema de Fernán González*, XXX, 134.
- 80 Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes en la España medieval (El enemigo en el espejo)*.
- 81 Maíllo, “Sobre la presencia de los musulimes en Castilla la Vieja”, 18.
- 82 Retuerce and Cobos, “Fortificación islámica en el Alto Duero versus fortificación cristiana en el Alto Duero”, 227–257.
- 83 Ibn Ḥayyan writes about Osma, in the vicinity of Gormaz Castle, Ayllón and the “Duero fortresses”; 230–231, *Al-Muqtabis V*, 256–257.
- 84 Martínez Sopena, “La circulation des objets en temps de guerre”, 258.
- 85 San Esteban de Gormaz, Calatañazor and Berlanga were conquered around 1059, but nearby towns such as Almazán (Soria) or Atienza (Guadalajara) did not fall into Christian hands until the 1110s.
- 86 Monsalvo Antón, “Frontera pionera, monarquía en expansión y formación de los concejos de Villa y Tierra”, 45–126.
- 87 Gaya thought that the two Romanesque churches of San Esteban de Gormaz in Soria had been the work of Muslim sculptors due to the presence of figures dressed in Muslim style and the abundance of bestial figures, Gaya Nuño, *El Románico en la provincia de Soria*, 12, 50, 51 and 56.
- 88 See Monteiro, *El Enemigo imaginado*, 440.
- 89 Shown on the cover and in figs. 12, 13 and 64 of the book Monteiro, *La influencia islámica en la escultura románica de Soria*.
- 90 Monteiro, *El Enemigo imaginado*, 443, fig. 20.
- 91 Many other Castilian examples link war and hunting iconography to the image of the eagle. Some, such as Tiermes, have been mentioned in notes 45, 59 and 60. In Cerezo de Arriba, Segovia, birds attacking rabbits with their beaks flank the portal, paired with a relief of knights facing each other. It is surprising to find a mermaid wearing a turban on an exterior capital of this church. Other interesting Castilian examples are beyond the scope of this chapter, such as a relief preserved in the Casa del Hospital in Padilla de Arriba, Burgos, showing an Andalusí archer in a turban next to a heraldic eagle.
- 92 Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes en la España medieval*; Monteiro, *El Enemigo imaginado*.
- 93 On a parchment signed in Olite and preserved in the Archivo General de Navarra (AGN, Sección de Compto, Caja I, nº 74). See Bango Torviso, *La edad de un reyno*. Cat. 79, Vol I, 225.
- 94 Such as Frederick I of Hohenstaufen *Barbarossa* (1155–1190), see Cardini, “L’Aquila, simbolo base universale”, 27–56. His aim was to recover a Roman military emblem, despite its long Sassanid tradition. Another Germanic king, Otto IV, chose to adopt the double-headed eagle for his coat of arms on his return from the Crusades in the early thirteenth century. This emblem continued to be linked to the Holy Roman Empire thereafter. Documented by Matthew Paris in his *Chronica Majora*; fol. 18. The Byzantine Palaeologian dynasty also adopted the double-headed eagle for its coat of arms around the same time. The motif first appeared on Eastern silks in the tenth century.
- 95 Montaner, “La heráldica en el Palacio de la Aljafería de Zaragoza”, 172–173.
- 96 Ettinghausen and Hartner, “The Conquering Lion, the Life of a Symbol”, 161–171. Silva Santa-Cruz “El combate de animales en el arte islámico”, 13–22; Rosser-Owen, *Articulating the Hijāba*, 284–288, 329–358.
- 97 The theme of the conquering lion on top of its prey appears twice on this piece. Several specialists have pointed out that the iconography on the lid and the back directly symbolizes this conquest; Robinson, “Love in the Time of Fitna”, 99–112.
- 98 Monteiro, “Of Archers and Lions”.
- 99 Shalem, *Islam Christianized*; Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability”, 17–50; Monteiro, “Artistic Interchange between Al-Andalus and the Iberian Christian Kingdoms”.
- 100 Rodríguez, “Narrating the Treasury”, 61–80.
- 101 Harris, “The Leire Casket in Context”.
- 102 Fierro, “El alfaquí beréber Yahyà b. Yahyà al-Layti (m. 23/848)”, 325–326. Marín “Signos visuales de la identidad andalusí”, 137–180.

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