

“THE CHRISTIAN COMPANION”:
A RHETORICAL TROPE
IN THE NARRATION OF INTRA-MUSLIM CONFLICT
DURING THE ALMOHAD EPOCH

“EL COMPAÑERO CRISTIANO”:
UN TROPO RETÓRICO
EN LA NARRACIÓN DEL CONFLICTO INTRA-MUSULMÁN
EN LA ÉPOCA ALMOHADE

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Abstract: This paper will explore representations of intra-Muslim conflict between the Almohads and Andalusí Muslim chieftains as reflected in the Almohad chronicle *al-Mann bi l-imama* by Ibn Sahib al-Sala. Following Foucault’s notion of the “violence of representation”, I analyze the rhetorical strategies the author employs to create binary oppositions contrasting the legitimacy of the Almohads with the illegitimacy of their enemies, focusing especially on the “Christian companions” of the Andalusí rebels, and comparing his narratives of Almohad and rebel violence. I conclude that the representations of violent conflict positively reify Almohad identity as the defenders of the true faith.

Key words: Conflict; Violence; Representation; Discourse; Almohads; Ibn Mardanish; Ibn Sahib al-Sala; Muslim historiography.

Resumen: En este ensayo se examinarán las representaciones de conflictos intramusulmanes entre los Almohades y los caudillos andalusíes reflejadas en la crónica almohade, *al-Mann bi l-imama* de Ibn Sahib al-Sala. Siguiendo la noción foucauldiana de la “violencia de la representación”, analizo las estrategias discursivas que emplea el autor para construir “oposiciones binarias”, contrastando la legitimidad del poder almohade a la ilegitimidad de sus enemigos, centrándome particularmente en los “compañeros cristianos” de los rebeldes andalusíes, y comparando las imágenes de la violencia almohade y rebelde. Concluyo que las representaciones de conflicto violento juegan un papel positivo, reafirmando la identidad almohade como defensora de la religión verdadera.

Palabras clave: Conflicto; Violencia; Representación; Discurso; Almohades; Ibn Mardanish; Ibn Sabib al-Sala; Historiografía musulmana.

SUMMARY

Introduction.- I. The “Violence of Representation”: Narrating the Almohad-Andalusí Conflict: 1. The Violence of Binary Opposites: The Rebels. 2. The Violence of Binary Opposites: The Almohads.- II. The Christian Companions.- Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; the blessings of God be upon Muhammad and his family. And in this year, which was 554 (23 January 1159 to 11 January 1160) Muhammad b. Sa'id b. Mardanish left the city of Murcia with his army and with his companions the Christians —may God annihilate them— with his corrupt army in their perverse decision to take advantage of the situation —or so they thought—, raving and deluded by the consumption of wine into thinking that in the absence of the Commander of the Faithful 'Abd al-Mu'min they could defeat the Almohads in the peninsula of al-Andalus and lay siege to the city of Jaén, whose governor Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Kumi had connived with him to violate his *bay'a* [oath of allegiance to the Almohad authority], bending himself to [Ibn Mardanish's] will and to him whose evil judgment induced him to rebellion¹.

The above passage from the introduction of Ibn Sahib al-Sala's *al-Mann bi l-imama* (*The Gift of the Imamate*) exemplifies the narratives of political enmity, religious rivalry, ideological conflict, and military confrontation which figure prominently in the historiographical sources spanning the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties that governed parts of the Maghreb and the Iberian Peninsula between the late eleventh and the thirteenth centuries². For the most part, the hostility was an internal affair between the two North African Islamic dynasties seeking to legitimate their power through a combination of mutual religious and ideological disqualification and brute military force. At the same time, the above citation illustrates that the Almohads, like their predecessors the Almoravids, also faced dissent from independent-minded Andalusi *caudillos* such as al-Mustansir ibn Hud Sayf al-

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¹'Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bi l-Imama. Ta'rikh bilad al-Maghrib wa l-Andalus fi 'ahd al-Muwahhidina*, ed. 'Abd al-Hadi AL-TAZI, 3rd. ed., Beirut, 1987, pp. 65-66; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-Imama. Estudio preliminar, traducción e índices* por Ambrosio HUICI MIRANDA, *Textos Medievales*, 24, Valencia, 1969, pp.12-13. Henceforth I will be citing both the Arabic text and the Spanish translation. To avoid confusion I will cite HUICI MIRANDA as the author when quoting from the Spanish text.

²Ambrosio HUICI MIRANDA, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 2 vols., Tetuán, 1956-57; María Jesús VIGUERA MOLINS, *Los reinos de taifas y las invasiones magrebies (Al-Andalus del XI al XIII)*, Madrid, 1992, pp. 205-328; Hugh KENNEDY, *Muslim Spain and Portugal. A political history of al-Andalus*, London, 1996, pp. 196-272.

Dawla (d. 540/1146)³ and Ibn Mardanish (d. 567/1172)⁴ who sought to exercise direct rule in al-Andalus rather than submit to the Berber caliphs. As is well known, the Almoravid-Almohad conflict also transpired within the larger context of the military campaigns perpetrated by the Crowns of Portugal, Castile, Aragon, and Navarre to take advantage of Muslim infighting and wrest control of al-Andalus from the Muslims. Hence, this Muslim aggression could be turned outward toward a common Christian enemy. Our concern here, however, will be limited to situations of conflictivity between Muslim rivals in which a Christian appears not as a common enemy whose presence functions as a catalyst to provoke a temporary Muslim unity, but rather as an agent combating on behalf of the Muslim power with whom a Christian ruler has established a pact against a common *Muslim* enemy.

This paper will explore representations of intra-Muslim conflict involving the Almohads as reflected in the historical chronicle *al-Mann bi l-imama* (*The Gift of the Imamate*). *Al-Mann bi l-imama* is an unabashedly pro-Almohad account written by the historian and belletrist Ibn Sahib al-Salah (d. c. 1198) who, as Secretary of the Treasury under Almohad caliph Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf I (r. 1163-1184), provided a first-hand eyewitness testimony of the events he narrated⁵. The sole manuscript that has come down to us is the second part of a larger three-volume work on the “History of the Almohad Caliphate”⁶. This surviving portion spans the period which begins in 554 (January 1159-January 1160), the year in which “Muhammad b. Sa‘id b. Mardanish left the city of Murcia with his army and with his companions the Christians” to attack the city of Jaén, and ends in the year 568 (July, 1173) on a triumphant note describing the caliph’s “noble order to attack the Christians,” the ensuing victory of the coalition of Almohad and Andalusi soldiers over their infidel enemies, and the subsequent humiliating petition for peace on the part of the Christian governor of Toledo, el Conde Nuño and the governor of Coimbra, Alfonso Enríquez (ibn al-Rink). *Al-Mann bi l-imama* narrates the conflicts that arose from the challenges, be they Muslim or

³On al-Mustansir b. Hud and the other members of the Hudid dynasty, see, D. M. DUNLOP, “Hudids”, “Encyclopaedia of Islam”, 2nd edition (“EI²”), 3, p. 542; IBN IDHARI, *al-Bayan a-mughrib*, ed. E. LEVI PROVENÇAL, 2, 221ff; IBN AL-KHATIB, *A‘mal al-a‘lam*, ed. E. LEVI PROVENÇAL, Rabat, 1934, pp. 197-204, 319-330; A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Los Banu Hud de Zaragoza, Alfonso I el Batallador y los almorávides: (nuevas aportaciones)*, Zaragoza, 1962.

⁴Known in the Iberian chronicles as *el Rey Lobo*. Ibn Mardanish seized power in Valencia and Murcia following the defeat of the Almoravids. He also governed Jaén, Baeza, Carmona, and Cádiz jointly with his father-in-law Ibrāhīm Ibn Hamushk. See, Jacinto BOSCH-VILA, *Ibn Mardaniš, Abū Abd Allah Muhammad b. Sa‘d b. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Djudhami or al-Tudjibi*, “EI²”, 3, p. 864; IBN AL-KHATIB, *A‘mal al-a‘lam* (M.A. ‘ABBADI and M.I. AL-KATTANI, eds.), Casablanca, 1964), pp. 259-62; IDEM, *Al-Ihāta fī ajbār Garnāta* (M. ‘Abd Allah INAN, ed.), Cairo, 1973.

⁵Virtually nothing is known about the life of Ibn Sahib al-Sala, including the exact date of his death. The few details that we have derive from the internal evidence of the text *al-Mann bi l-imama*. See the short article in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and A. HUICI MIRANDA’s Prologue to his Spanish translation; J.F.P. HOPKINS, *Ibn Sahib al-Salat, Abū Marwan ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad al-Badji*, “EI²”, 3, p. 924; A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 5-8.

⁶A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 6. It survives in a single manuscript, Bodleyan Library, MS no. 433.

Christian, to Almohad power, and the efforts of the latter to retain their hold on the territories under rule.

As an Almohad propagandist, we cannot expect Ibn Sahib al-Salah to describe the conflict between his patrons and their Andalusi and Christian enemies in the neutral terms of an objective observer. Instead, he represented the events in order to achieve the political goal of justifying the Almohad dynasty's claim of being the sole legitimate, divinely chosen rulers of the Maghreb and al-Andalus. This understanding of the historical text as fundamentally a transmitter of politico-religious ideology positions itself in line with recent scholarship on medieval Arabo-Islamic historical writing in which the text is regarded not as a "depository of information," but rather as a "constructed literary artifact" whose literary codes and narrative forms must be deciphered⁷. My main concern here will not be with evaluating the historicity of the events as related by Ibn Sahib al-Salah, but rather with the *literary representation* of hostile conflictivity. Specifically, I will be arguing that the representations of violent conflict play a constructive role in the text as the medium through which the author reaffirms the divinely endowed legitimacy of the Almohad imamate. That is, every challenge to Almohad rule posed by their Andalusi rivals Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk and their Christian allies provides an opportunity to moralize the conflict between the Almohad caliphs and their enemies, mystifying the violent acts of the former and vilifying those of the latter, in spite of the obvious parallels between them. Given that both the Almohads and their Andalusi opponents commit mass murder and wantonly destroy and pillage property, Ibn Sahib al-Salah must resort to strategies that render invisible the parallels between the two conflicting factions, and emphasize instead the moral differences between them.

The author's representation of the Christian allies of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk as "companions" is especially significant in this regard because the symbolically-laden epithet insinuates a friendship and camaraderie with the infidel that by definition would discredit the pretensions of the Andalusi *caudillos*. Other principal strategies to be discussed include the construction of a semiotic association between the devil, his Christian cohorts, and their morally weak Andalusian allies; and the use of religious and affective symbols to construct morally opposed portraits of the just violence perpetrated by the Almohads and the illegitimate violence of their Andalusi

⁷See Fedwa MALTI-DOUGLAS, *Texts and Tortures: The Reign of al-Mu'tadid and the Construction of Historical Meaning*, in *Power, Marginality, and the Body* (Fedwa Malti-Douglas, ed.), Aldershot, 2001, 313-315, op. cit. In addition to Malti-Douglas' many important articles on medieval Arabic historiography, such as her *Controversy and Its Effects in the Biographical Tradition of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi*, "Studia Islamica", 46 (1977), pp. 115-131, other seminal studies include, H. A. R. GIBB, *The Arabic Sources for the Life of Saladin*, "Speculum", 25 (1950), pp. 58-72; Marshall G. S. HODGSON, *Two Pre-Modern Muslim Historians: Pitfalls and Opportunities in Presenting them to Moderns*, in *Towards World Community* (John NEF, ed.), The Hague, 1968, pp. 53-68; Marilyn ROBINSON, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamic Historiography*, Columbus, 1980; Jacob LASNER, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Inquiry into the Art of Abbasid Apologetics*, New Haven, 1986; Stefan LEDER, *Story-Telling in the Framework of Arabic Non-Fiction Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1998; and Julia BRAY, ed., *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*, London, 2006.

Muslim and Christian enemies. In so doing, I suggest that Ibn Sahib al-Sala's representation of the conflict is itself an act of violence insofar as it consciously denies an autonomous voice and agency to the Andalusí rivals. I conclude that the constructive identity-forming role played by conflict enables the author to moralize violence in a way that transcends the binary opposition of normative violence versus cruelty, allowing him free reign to portray the Almohads committing acts of violence that are even more ferocious and brutal than the violence perpetrated by their enemies.

The onus on literary representation necessarily raises the issue of the role of language in determining how events are presented to the intended audience. In this I am guided by Foucault's and Armstrong and Tennenhouse's concept of the “violence of representation”⁸ and Derrida's notion of “the originary violence of language”⁹, in which language is deployed to categorize and inscribe difference with the aim of establishing binary opposites, such as pious versus sinners, believers versus unbelievers, or righteous versus tyrants. For Derrida, Foucault, Armstrong and Tennenhouse, the discourse of binary opposites is itself an act of violence which can, in turn, be invoked to justify physical violence. A vivid example of their understanding of the relation between language, representation, and violence may be seen in the discursive strategies that Ibn Sahib al-Salah utilizes to construct binary opposites that portray his Almohad patrons as paragons of orthodoxy, fidelity, loyalty, righteousness, piety, divine inspiration, morality, and justice, and depict the enemy as the infidel, hypocritical, satanically inspired, corrupt, perverse, tyrannical, cruel, treacherous, conniving, and perfidious. Invariably, such narratives “do violence” to the enemies portrayed therein by casting them as illegitimate and unfit to rule by definition due to their state of sin and rebellion. As propagandistic narratives, they situate themselves as the sole legitimate voice of authority by refusing to admit contested views of the events and persons depicted, and often the voice of the narrator, the historical chronicler, is indistinguishable from that of the patron-ruler.

In this regard *al-Mann bi l-imama* typifies post-Umayyad Islamic historiography in which Muslim court-sponsored writers and scholars drew upon scripture and the traditions about the Prophet Muhammad, his Companions, and other legendary rulers to portray their patrons in a favorable light as orthodox, just, and legitimate rulers over and against their political rivals¹⁰.

⁸Michel FOUCAULT, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, 1972; Nancy ARMSTRONG and Leonard TENNENHOUSE, eds., *Violence and Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*, London, 1989. On the notion of “representation”, see also, STUART HALL, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, 1997.

⁹Jacques DERRIDA, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak, Baltimore, 1972, p. 112.

¹⁰On the origins of Arabic historical writing and the strategies employed therein, see, Erling Ladewig PETERSEN, ‘Ali and Mu'awiya in *Early Arabic Tradition: Studies on the Genesis and Growth of Islamic Historical Writing until the End of the Ninth Century*, Copenhagen, 1964, p. 9; Tayeb EL-HIBRI, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate*, Cambridge, 1999; Chase F. ROBINSON, *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge, 2003; Konrad HIRSCHLER, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors*, London, 2006; and Andrew C.S. PEACOCK, *Medieval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Ba'lamí's Tarikhnama*, London, 2007.

This discourse of binary opposites convinces because it is not the author's invention, but rather derives from paradigms from the sacred past—the Qur'an, Hadith, and the biographies of the Prophet, the first caliphs and other Companions—and from poetic and epic lore that the author has consciously deployed for a moralizing purpose in the present. These sources furnish a canon of stereotypical models (persons, actions, and events) upon which the chronicler patterns his narrative, thereby guiding the reader toward the "correct" interpretation of the text¹¹. Some of the most compelling moments of this shared sacred history are of those emblematic struggles that confronted the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions against the polytheistic Quraysh, the treacherous and insincere Muslim converts, dubbed "hypocrites," and the Jewish tribes. I believe that such stories served as models from which Ibn Sahib al-Salah represented the conflicts involving the Almohads. The alterity and infidelity of Muhammad's pagan, Jewish, and "hypocritical" Muslim enemies offered Ibn Sahib al-Salah particularly convenient paradigms with which to depict the relationship between the Andalusi Muslim rebels and their Christian allies. The author employs the Christian "companion" as a rhetorical figure whose alliance and camaraderie with one of the Muslim parties offers the other party the perfect excuse to vilify and de-legitimize the Muslim rival with accusations of siding with the idolatrous opponents of Islam. In the rhetoric of de-legitimization, the Muslim foe is guilty of infidelity by his companionship with Christians, and is indeed portrayed as identical to, or worse than, the Christians.

This study also seeks to bring evidence from Islamic historiography to bear upon recent inquiries into medieval conflict, particularly with respect to how violent conflict is perceived and portrayed, and the basis, if any, for differentiating between legitimate or just violence and cruelty¹². Anne McKim's research into Scottish chronicle accounts of the Berwick massacre perpetrated by England in 1296 demonstrates the influence of nationalist sentiment in producing diametrically opposed interpretations of political violence¹³. Whereas the Scottish texts portray Scottish violence as chivalric and just and English violence as villainous and cruel, the opposite would be true if the source were an English text¹⁴. In their study of medieval cruelty,

¹¹David HERMAN, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 2002, pp. 7, 85, where the author cites Jerome BRUNER, *The Narrative Construction of Reality*, "Critical Inquiry", 18 (1991), pp. 1-21.

¹²See, for instance, Richard W. KAEUPER, *Violence in Medieval Society*, Woodbridge, 1999; M.D. MEYERSON, D. THIERY, AND O. FALK, eds., *'A Great Effusion of Blood'? Interpreting Medieval Violence*, Toronto, 2004; Daniel Baraz, *Medieval Cruelty: Changing Perceptions, Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period (Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past)*, Ithaca, 2003; Jodi ENDERS, *Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence*, Ithaca, 1999; Nancy ARMSTRONG and Leonard TENNENHOUSE, *The Violence of Representation*, London and New York, 1989; Ruth MORSE, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality*, Cambridge, 1991.

¹³Anne MCKIM, *Scottish National Heroes and the Limits of Violence*, in *'A Great Effusion of Blood'? Interpreting Medieval Violence* (M.D. MEYERSON, D. THIERY, and O. FALK, eds.), Toronto, 2004, pp. 131-146.

¹⁴This is an example of what R. James GOLDSTEIN called "the war of historiography" in his *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narratives in Medieval Scotland*, Lincoln and London, 1993. Cited in A. MCKIM, *Scottish National Heroes*, p. 140.

Meyerson, Thiery, and Falk conclude that one has to be attentive to how royal or state institutionalization affects the interpretation of violent conflict through a discourse that arrogates to itself the sole legitimate right to wage violence and polemicizes the violence perpetrated by others in terms of rebellion or treason¹⁵. Daniel Baraz posits that ethnic and religious differences became increasingly important in the Christian West in distinguishing between the just violence of orthodox Catholic Christians and the cruelty of the heretic, pagan, or Muslim “other”. He further remarks that Christian authors marked this alien cruelty by resorting to hyperbole and emotive language¹⁶.

My reading of Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s portrayal of Almohad violence as legitimate and just largely accords with the findings of Meyerson, Thiery, and Falk that medieval writers represented violence as “productive” of communal and religious identity¹⁷. Yet when we compare Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s descriptions of Almohad violence with his accounts of the violent acts committed by their Muslim enemies Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk and their Christian allies, we find compelling evidence that challenges Baraz’s assertions that the “othering” of cruelty arose only in late medieval Western Christian discourse: Although Ibn Sahib al-Sala portrays all opposition to the Almohads, be it from Berber or Andalusi Muslims, Christians, or Jews, indistinctively as perverse, cruel, and diabolically inspired, he takes pains to emphasize the “foreignness” or “remote foreign cruelty” of certain Muslim enemies to explain the particular brutality of their “oppression” or “treason”. And while we do find instances in *al-Mann bi l-imama* of what Baraz describes as a change of register from neutral to emotionally charged language to qualify violent acts, these changes obtain in narratives featuring both the Almohads and their enemies. For the most part, Ibn Sahib al-Sala resorts to the insertion of discreet references to sacred time or pious acts, contrasting emotional states, and other textual cues that prompt the intended reader to interpret discreet acts of violence as sanctioned or forbidden according to Islamic law. The cruelty, or to be more precise, the illegitimacy of violence seems to inhere more in the identification of the aggressor as rebel and in the fact of rebellion, than in the nature of the violent act. Hence, there are scenes in which Almohad violence is represented as even more ferocious and brutal than the violence of their enemies precisely because it is righteous and sanctioned by God.

I. THE “VIOLENCE OF REPRESENTATION”: NARRATING THE ALMOHAD-ANDALUSI CONFLICT

The full title of Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s chronicle provides a succinct example of the “violence of representation” as seen from the perspective of the Almohad regime with respect to their potential rivals: *al-Mann bi l-imama*

¹⁵M.D. MEYERSON, D. THIERY, and O. FALK, eds., ‘*A Great Effusion of Blood*’, p. 316.

¹⁶Daniel BARAZ, *Violence or Cruelty? An Intercultural Perspective* in, ‘*A Great Effusion of Blood*’, pp. 164-189.

¹⁷M.D. MEYERSON, D. THIERY, and O. FALK, eds., ‘*A Great Effusion of Blood*’, pp. 6-9.
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'ala l-mustada'ifin bi an ja'alahum Allah a'imma wa ja'alahum al-warithin (*The Gift of the Imamate to the Meek such that God Made them Imams and Made Them His Heirs*)¹⁸. The title extols the imamate of the Almohads as a gift that God bestowed upon a people who considered themselves weak and unworthy of the responsibility, but whom God nevertheless elected to be the rulers and heirs of his stewardship on Earth. The title contains symbolically-laden language: The word *al-mann*, which I have translated as “gift”, is in fact the same word for the biblical manna from heaven which saved the Israelites during their 40-year odyssey in the desert¹⁹. The noun derives from the verb *manna*, which means “to do a favor” or “bestow a blessing”²⁰, and thus implies the expectation of a reciprocal obligation²¹. The underlying message of this term is that the bestowal of the imamate is not a free gift but rather a celestial blessing and a salvation for the Muslim community, as long as it upholds its covenantal obligation of sincere fidelity to God—a scenario that is analogous to the scriptural giving of the manna.

Those familiar with theories of gift exchange will recognize that the divine gift is not gratuitous, but rather is, as Marcel Mauss posited, “in reality given and returned obligatorily”²². In other words, the *al-mann* or gift of the imamate forms part of a vertical reciprocal chain in which God necessarily rewards the group or community that best fulfils its obligation to show Him gratitude, fidelity, orthodoxy, and obedience. At the same time, however, in the divine-human covenantal relationship as imagined in Islamic discourse, humans are expected to act not out of self-interest, calculating the recompense of their good deeds, but rather with sincerity and purity of intentions²³. The

¹⁸The text was translated into Spanish by Ambrosio HUICI MIRANDA as *El Don de imamato para los que no merecieron que los colocase Dios como imames y los puso como sus herederos*.

¹⁹Compare the Qur'anic texts, Q 2:47, Q 7:160; Q 20:80 with the biblical version: Ex. 16: 30-35; Num. 11: 8-10.

²⁰J.M. COWAN, ed., *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Ithaca, 1994, 4th ed., p.1085

²¹Murata and Chittick observe that the Qur'an sometimes uses the verb *manna* in the negative sense of “try[ing] to make people feel that they owe you a favor”, an attitude which the Qur'an condemns in the context of human relations. For instance, “O you who have faith, do not void your acts of charity by imposing favors and hurting...” (Q2:264). Cited in Sachiko MURATA and William C. CHITTICK, *The Vision of Islam: The Foundations of Muslim Faith and Practice*, London, 1996, pp. 279-280.

²²Cited in Natalie ZEMON DAVIS, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Oxford, 2000, p. 4. See also, Marcel MAUSS, *Essai sur le Don. Forme et Raison de l'Échange dans les Sociétés archaïques*, “L'Année sociologique”, n.s. 1 (1923-24), pp. 30-186; M. MAUSS, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by W.D. HALLS, foreword by Mary DOUGLAS, New York, 1990; Maurice GODELIER, *L'énigme du don*, Paris, 1996; Marshall SAHLINS, *Stone Age Economics*, Chicago, 1972; Barbara ROSENWEIN, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049*, Ithaca, 1989; and, Stephen D. WHITE, *Custom, Kinship and Gifts to Saints: The “Laudatio Parentum” in Western France, 1050-1150*, Chapel Hill, 1988.

²³According to Louis Gardet, in Qur'anic discourse sincerity (*ikhlas*) conveys the double idea of the “unadulterated purity” and “sincerity of one's religious actions and the pure and absolute devotion solely to the one true God, e.g. Q 2:139, Q 4: 146, Q 39: 2-3, Q 40: 14,65. Surah 112 of the Qur'an, entitled *Surat al-Ikhlās*, expounds the doctrine that God “does not beget and is not begotten,” which the Almohads adopted as the leitmotif of their ideology. See, A. HUICI MIRANDA, *al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 96; Louis GARDET, *Ikhlās*, “EI²”, 3, pp. 1059-1060; and S. MURATA and W.C. CHITTICK, *The Vision of Islam*, pp. 278-282. Additionally, it is a basic tenet of Islamic ethics that all acts, but particularly the prescribed acts of worship (*ibadat*), must be preceded by a declaration (verbal or mental) of one's intention or *niyya*. Although the term does not appear in the Qur'an, the notion is widely attested in the canonical hadith. A. J. Wensinck ANUARIO DE ESTUDIOS MEDIEVALES (AEM), 38/2, julio-diciembre 2008, pp. 793-829. ISSN 0066-5061

qualities of sincerity and pure intentions are implied in the term *al-mustada'ifin*, which the Spanish translator A. Huici Miranda has rendered as “*los que no merecieron* (those who did not deserve)”. By his own admission²⁴, Huici Miranda has not fully grasped the religious symbolism of the word *al-mustada'if*, whose meaning unites the concepts of weakness, being oppressed and downtrodden, meekness, humility, dependence upon God, purity of heart, and righteousness, such as we find in the following Qur'anic verses: “And remember when you were few, deemed weak (*al-mustada'ifuna*) in the land, fearing lest people might carry you off by force, but He sheltered you and strengthened you with His aid and gave you of the good things that you may give thanks” (Q 8:26) and, “Except those who are (truly) weak and oppressed (*al-mustada'ifina*)--men, women, and children--who have no means in their power, nor (a guide-post) to their way. For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive: For Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again” (Q 4: 98-99). The latter verses may be compared with Matthew 5:5 and 5:10: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” and, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”.

Al-mustada'ifin is thus a powerful signifier that distinguishes those whose extreme weakness, meekness, sincere humility, pure beliefs and actions, and genuine devotion to God made them deserving of God's election, in contradistinction to their political rivals whose lust for power, pride, hubris, and greed were diabolically driven. The conceptual opposites of sincerity (*ikhlas*) are hypocrisy (*nifaaq*) and associating others with God (*shirk*)²⁵, and these are, not coincidentally, the very characteristics for which Ibn Sahib al-Sala most frequently condemns the Andalusí Muslims Ibn Hamushk and Ibn Mardanish and their Christian “companions”. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that the binary opposition between the pure intentions of the Almohads and the base intentions of their enemies underlies all the other aforementioned contrasts that Ibn Sahib al-Sala describes between the believers versus unbelievers, just versus tyrants, and so forth. Finally, the phrase “*God made them imams (a'imma) and His heirs (warithin)*” is unequivocal in the representation of Almohad rule as a manifestation of the divine will.

Needless to say, such a title could only come from one within the employ of the Almohads and firmly convinced of the legitimacy of the Almohad project. The author, Ibn Sahib al-Sala, a native of Beja in Portu-

points out that al-Bukhari's hadith compendium opens with the following tradition which functions as a motto: “Works are only rendered efficacious by their intention (*innama 'l-'amal bi 'l-niyya*). Every man receives only what he has intended”. The same tradition is recorded by Malik b. Anas in his *al-Jana'iz*, tradition no. 36, to which he adds, “his wages shall be in accordance with his intention”. Wensinck further observes that in the post-canonical hadith period the moral criterion of the intention of the person came to supersede the performance of the act itself, so that an act of worship even if performed strictly according to the precepts of the law could be deemed invalid if done with a sinful intention. In the words of AL-GHAZALI's *Ihya' ulum al-din*, Cairo, 1908-1910, 4, p. 316, “Ceremonial acts without *niyya* are invalid”. See, A. J. WENSINCK, *Niyya*, “EI²”, 8, p. 66.

²⁴See, A. HUICI MIRANDA, *al-Mana bil-imama*, p. 4, where he comments that it is a “bit of a strange title (*titulo un poco extraño*)”.

²⁵L. GARDET, *Ikhlas*, “EI²”, 3, p. 1060.

guese Algarve, served as treasury secretary to Yusuf I, the heir of the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min and admits to having attended the classes in the Almohad dogma of *al-tawhid* (divine unity) that the court secretary Abu ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Amira gave to the students (*taliba*) of the court in Marrakesh²⁶. The implications of Ibn Sahib al-Salah’s apparently sincere conviction that the Almohads rule by divine right is that the conflicts arising from the challenges to the Berber dynasty, both from the Andalusí Muslims Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk and from their Christian allies, cannot be imagined in the neutral terms of a political struggle among foes whose claims for power are equally valid and legitimate. Rather, for Ibn Sahib al-Sala and his Almohad patrons, the “real” conflict is between God and those whose stubborn unbelief, perfidy, and vulnerability to Satanic temptation and corruption have induced them to rebel against the will of God. Moreover, the fact that the Muslim rebels Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk allied themselves with Christian “infidels” against the Almohad cause provides Ibn Sahib al-Sala with the rhetorical ammunition needed to homologize Christian and devilish influence and thus disqualify the rebels as the enemies of God. Contrary to what one might think, from a narrative perspective conflict is “good to think with” in the sense that Claude Lévi-Strauss used the phrase: every act of rebellion against the Almohad power and its subsequent restoration of Almohad rule offered up a reflection of the righteousness and legitimacy of Almohad rule.

1. The Violence of Binary Opposites: The Rebels

Although virtually nothing is known about the circumstances under which Ibn Sahib al-Sala came to write his chronicle, there can be no doubt that the author writes as the official voice of the Almohad regime. His perspective or “focalization”²⁷ of the persons, actions, and events that he represents restricts their interpretation to the “official line” and leaves no room for ambiguity regarding the identities of the “heroes” and the “villains” of the Almohad-Andalusí conflict: As the title of the chronicle makes patently clear, God bestowed the imamate upon the Almohads; therefore all other pretenders and challengers are by definition sinful, illegitimate rebels. Of particular interest here are the textual cues and strategies that he employs in describing key protagonists, and in representing their actions and the motivations behind them. Throughout *al-Mann bi l-imama* Ibn Sahib al-Sala assigns moral value judgments to the character of the protagonists, the actions that they perform, and the events that they participate in a way that invites, if not demands, his audience to succumb to the violence of binary opposites.

I will illustrate this through a detailed analysis of two narratives recounting scenes of military conflict, the first featuring the rebels, and the

²⁶A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 71; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 185.

²⁷On the term “focalization” as an alternative to narrative perspective, see, Mieke BAL, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2nd ed., Toronto, 1997, pp. 142-160; and D. HERMÁN, *Story Logic*, pp. 301-330.

second featuring the Almohads as protagonists. I will be comparing three examples of the rhetoric of binary opposites: the attribution of devilish or divine influence to the actions of the protagonists, and the attendant moral qualifications of their character; the representation of violence as illegitimate and cruel or legitimate and just; and the depiction of non-Muslim allies on both sides, with special attention accorded to the image of the Christian “companions” of the Andalusí Muslim rebels. Where necessary, I will supplement my comments on these passages with evidence from other chapters of the chronicle. My first example is taken from the description of the campaign to capture Granada waged by Ibn Mardaniš and Ibrahim b. Hamušk with the help of their Christian and Jewish allies. Ibn Saḥib al-Salā dedicates several chapters to the incident. The first chapter is entitled “The account of the treason (*ghadr*) of Ibrahim b. Hamušk against the city of Granada by means of gaining entry to it through the tempter (*al-ghawī*) Ibn Dahri, along with the Jewish converts the inhabitants who converted to Islam by force, and the events that occurred therein”²⁸.

Ibn Saḥib al-Salā begins by providing some background information about the events that led to the “treason” of Granada, starting with a reiteration of “the news of Ibrahim b. Hamušk’s vile outrage against the city of Córdoba”, in which he “demolished and destroyed its crops every summer and sacked its outskirts and its country houses during the years in which our lord the Commander of the Faithful —may God grant him salvation— was occupied with his campaign in al-Mahdiyya and with its conquest and that of Ifriqiyya”. Ibn Hamušk “and his petty band of troops” then “seized control through treason of the city of Carmona”. It was after hearing that the Almohads regained control of Carmona that Ibn Hamušk became filled with “rancor, and his heart was set ablaze with the flame of sedition, and he decided upon his hypocritical intent to betray the city of Granada”. Ibn Saḥib al-Salā explains that Granada was the city of choice for several reasons: “it was nearby”; Ibrahim b. Hamušk knew that he could count upon the help of its residents, “the Islamicized Jews and their patron, the one known as Ibn al-Dahri, the corrupt hypocrite”; and the Almohad governor was conveniently absent. “The illustrious Lord Abu Sa‘id, son of the caliph [‘Abd al-Mu‘min] —may God grant them both salvation— was away from Granada visiting his father”. This gave “the traitor Ibn Hamušk” and the “villain Ibn Dahri” the opportunity to “connive in secret that on the appointed night” Ibn Dahri would lead the rebel soldiers to al-Rabḍ Gate in Granada where they would enter the city. The ruse worked since, according to Ibn Saḥib al-Salā:

The traitor Ibrahim b. Hamušk arrived as according to plan, having united his group, the infidels. They broke open the bar and the gate and shouted the cry, ‘Oh, Companions!’ When the people in the city heard the shouting and the fighting, all those of fidelity and faith in the true religion and its defense hurried to flee to the fortress (the Alhambra) to aid and assist their beloved brothers the Almohads.

²⁸A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 38; IBN SAḤIB AL-SALĀ, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 123.

Ibn Mardanish amassed all the soldiers of his territory (in Murcia) and summoned his companions the Christians, who came to his aid. He went out with his miserable group coveting that which the traitor Ibn Hamushk had promised him from his accursed Satan. Ibn Hamushk established himself...in the Alhambra...and began the combat from there and set up the manjaniks to throw stones at the Almohads in their fortress with the greatest determination. They tormented the Almohads who fell into their hands and mocked them, hurling them with the levers of the manjaniks, thereby despising and mocking the Creator by ravishing His creation. God helped the Almohads in the fortress and He aided them and sustained them with His aid and assistance²⁹.

Certainly the most striking element of Ibn Sahib al-Sala's representation of the Andalusí rebels is the repeated attribution of the acts of Ibn Mardanish and Ibrahim b. Hamushk to diabolical influence, and the concomitant ascription of divine assistance to the Almohads. The notice of the Ibn Hamushk's "treasonous" attack against Granada deliberately evokes Qur'anic and Hadith motifs about the devil as "the persistent rebel" (cf. Q 4: 117) who induces rebellion, discord, and sin, arouses illicit desires, and leads people astray³⁰. The account establishes a causative link between Satan and the immoral acts of the Ibn Hamushk, Ibn Mardanish, and their allies in two ways: through the direct attribution to diabolical agency, and indirectly through the use of action verbs and adjectival attributives that mimic or evoke the handiwork of the devil. For instance, Ibn Sahib al-Sala remarks that Ibn Hamushk was motivated to commit treason by "his accursed Satan". The use of the personal pronoun recalls the theological position that all human beings have a demon (*shaytan*=Satan) attached to them, accompanying them in all their activities, as a number of sound hadiths attest³¹. Nevertheless, in *al-Mann bi l-imama*, it is only the rebels and infidels who appear in the company or under the influence of Satan. An allegation of direct satanic inspiration over Ibn Mardanish is found in a subsequent chapter describing the counter-offensive to retake Granada led by the Almohad caliph's heir Abu Ya'qub Yusuf and his "companion, the virtuous and intelligent shaykh Abu Ya'qub b. Sulayman, *caudillo* of the Almohads". Ibn Sahib al-Sala states that "Ibn Mardanish had already arrived [in Granada] with his troops, his army, and his faction (*shi'atuhu*) the Christians avidly coveting (*tami'an*) that which Satan made him covet (*atma'ahu*), perdition and ruin having driven him."³² We have already encountered an instance in which devilish influence is insinuated in the

²⁹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 38-39. IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 123-126.

³⁰Among the numerous other verses from the Qur'an that speak of the pernicious influences of the devil, see, Q 2: 36, Q 4: 117-120, Q 7:20, Q 8:48, Q 9:44, Q 25:29. From the Hadith, see for example, MALIK B. ANAS, *al-Muwatta'a*, Book 54, no. 54 11:29.

³¹See, T. FAHD, *Shaytan*, "EI²", 9, p. 406, where the author cites two hadith: "There is not one of you who does not have a *qarin* (companion) derived from the *djinn* (genies = evil spirits)", and, "There is no descendant of Adam who does not have a *shaytan* attached to him". Muslim IBN AL-HAJJAJ, *Sahih Muslim*, Book 39, n^o 6757; Samuel M. ZWEMER, *The Familiar Spirit or Qarina*, in IDEM, *Studies in Popular Islam*, London, 1939.

³²A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 42, 43; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 130, 131.

opening passage of *al-Mann bi l-imama*, which I cited at the beginning of this article. Although that quotation did not mention Satan by name, the accusation that the governor of Jaén, Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Kumi “had connived with [Ibn Mardanish] to violate his *bay‘a* [oath of allegiance to the Almohad authority], *bending himself to his (Ibn Mardanish’s) will and to him whose evil judgment induced [Ibn Mardanish] to rebellion*” alludes to the devil. Obviously, the motif of Satanic inspiration and/or temptation aims to deny any legitimacy to challenges against the divinely ordained Almohad rule in Jaén, Granada, and elsewhere, and effectively to portray any such challenge as the work of the devil.

Ibn Sahib al-Sala also evokes devilish inspiration in his deliberate use of verbs and adjectival attributes that are associated with Satan in the collective conscience of his audience. This mimesis is evident in the double usage of words derived from the same Arabic root, *t-m-*, to qualify the actions of Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk, and Satan. The basic meaning of *t-m-* is “to covet”, “to desire”, “to be ambitious”, but it is best understood here in the negative sense of coveting something that rightfully belongs to someone else, in this episode, the territory of Granada. The causative form of the verb, *atma‘a*, “to make covet” is one of the signature activities of Satan, who is depicted in Islamic theology as tempting humans to covet that which is forbidden and thus leading them astray (cf. Q 4:60, Q 7:27, Q 22:52, Q 47:25)³³. Similarly, the labeling of Ibn Hamushk’s accomplice Ibn Dahri as “the tempter (*al-ghawi*)” consciously evokes the well-known attribute of Satan the tempter or seducer (cf. Q 7: 175, Q 15:42).

In general, Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s choice of qualifying adjectives and verbs play a significant role in moralizing the events he reports. Throughout the chronicle the author selectively deploys emotive and provocative verbs with a negative connotation rather than neutral language to describe the actions of the enemy: Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk, and their allies do not legitimately seek territory and power, they “covet” them. They do not simply “agree” or “pact” with other local Arab rulers or Christians and Jews to attack Almohad territory, they “collude,” “connive,” “plot,” and “scheme” with “infidels”, “hypocrites”, and “wicked traitors” such as Ibn Dahri. Almost invariably, these plots are launched in secret, taking advantage of the absence of the caliph or his governors: Recall that Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Kumi, the governor of Jaén, took advantage of the caliph’s absence during his campaign to subdue al-Mahdiya to conspire with Ibn Mardanish to hand the city over to the Murcian *caudillo*. And we have just seen that the caliph’s son Abu Sa‘id was absent from Granada when Ibn Hamushk and Ibn Mardanish “connived” with the “wicked traitor Ibn Dahri” to seize that city. Accordingly, Ibn Sahib al-Sala decries their pretensions as acts of “rebellion”, “treason”, and “hypocrisy” in the case of those such as Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Kumi who pledged the *bay‘a* of submission to Almohad rule only later to “violate his oath” and conspire to support Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk.

³³On the Islamic understanding of Satan, see, T. FAHD, *Shaytan*, “EI²”, 9, p. 406. ANUARIO DE ESTUDIOS MEDIEVALES (AEM), 38/2, julio-diciembre 2008, pp. 793-829. ISSN 0066-5061

And rarely does the author mention the names of Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk, and their accomplices without a negative qualifier such as “the traitor”, “the perfidious”, “the evil”, “the cruel”, “the hypocrite”, “the vile”, and so forth.

It is also interesting to observe Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s reflection on the psychological state of the rebel protagonists. They are constantly shown motivated by negative emotions and states, such as personal greed, ambition, rancor, their hearts “afire with the fire of sedition”, and “raving and delusional” under the impact of the forbidden wine, and so forth, and their succumbing to the temptations of Satan and his infidel partisans is less a statement on the power of the devil, and more a condemnation of the moral weakness of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk. As regards Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s portrait of the involvement of “infidels” in the rebellions against Almohad power, I will discuss in further detail below the rhetorical value of the motif of the “Christian companions” of Ibn Hamushk and Ibn Mardanish. Here I wish to draw attention to the author’s ascription of a pernicious role to non-Muslims who act as intermediate figures between the devil and the rebel Muslims, aiding and abetting the latter in the act of “treason” against Almohad rule. Undoubtedly, it was the Christian “companions” of Ibn Mardanish who furnished him with the wine, the consumption of which left him “raving and deluded” into thinking he could mount a rebellion against ‘Abd al-Mu’min, and who function as the abettors of Satan in inflaming Ibn Mardanish’s desire to capture Granada. Equally, the plot of the “tempter” Ibn Dahri to hand Granada over to Ibn Hamushk could not have been executed without the complicity of the city’s Jewish converts to Islam. The author intentionally underscores the fact that the Jews had converted under pressure in order to cast aspersions upon the sincerity of their religious identity and thus explain their readiness to betray the Almohads. Ibn Sahib al-Sala represents the intromission of non-Muslims in the rebellion in a way that parallels representations in the Qur’an and the *Sira* (biography) of the Prophet Muhammad of infidels and hypocritical Muslims who act as the guardians or comrades of Satan (cf. Q 4:38, Q 7:27) —a narrative stratagem that further serves to de-legitimize the Andalusi revolts against Almohad rule.

Finally, regarding the depiction of the revolts, Ibn Sahib al-Sala devotes much of his chronicle to narrating accounts of uprisings and rebellions against Almohad rule and the ensuing Almohad military response to re-establish their hold over the disputed territory. Sooner or later these conflicts are resolved with a resounding Almohad victory perpetrated by God on behalf of “His devotees the Almohads”. A comparison of Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s graphic descriptions of violence committed by the Almohads and by their Muslim and Christian enemies reveals obvious parallels as both sides carry out mass murder, forced exile, and the seizure or wanton destruction of the property of the defeated. Consequently, the author resorts to various narrative strategies of differentiation to sacralize Almohad violence and vilify the violent acts of the Andalusi rebels and their Christian allies.

Mention has already been made of the direct or indirect attribution of diabolical inspiration to the decision of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk to

rebel against the Almohad caliphs, and of the use of negative and polemical attributes to vilify the character and actions of the rebels. Ibn Sahib al-Sala exhibits a preference for inflammatory and dramatic language in describing the violence perpetrated by Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk and their Christian “companions”, and makes no effort to hide his contempt for the perpetrators. For instance, in the above scene narrating the battle in Granada, Ibn Sahib al-Sala does not say that Ibn Mardanish and his troops “fought” or “engaged” the Almohads using *manjaniqs*. Instead, he focuses on the treatment of the captured Almohad soldiers, noting that Ibn Mardanish’s troops “tormented” or “tortured (*‘adhaba*)” and mocked (*‘abatha*) the Almohad prisoners and, in so doing, “despised God by ravishing and mocking His creatures”. In the next chapter, which narrates an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Almohads to retake Granada, Ibn Sahib al-Sala emphasizes the mockery and cruelty of the Almohad prisoners of war once more: “Ibn Hamushk went from this battle with his companions the Christians to the Alhambra in Granada with the Almohad prisoners in his grip, killing them and tormenting and mocking them *ya’bathu fi-him*) before the eyes of their brothers...”³⁴.

Other typical examples of the focalization of the violence perpetrated by the Andalusí rebels include the characterization of Ibn Mardanish’s campaign in Cordoba as a “vile attack (*qabih nikaya*)”. Such language of condemnation stands in marked contrast with the neutral manner in which he reports in the very same passage that the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min was at the same time “occupied with his campaign in al-Mahdiya and with its conquest and that of Ifriqiya”. The use of a neutral tone to describe the Almohad “campaign” in al-Mahdiya and Ifriqiya imposes an interpretation of their actions as normative and righteous in comparison with the “vileness” of Ibn Mardanish’s “attack” against Cordoba. Also note that Ibn Sahib al-Sala routinely utilizes condescending and derogatory attributives such as “petty”, “miserable”, “corrupt”, or “vile” when referring to the enemy troops.

At times Ibn Sahib al-Sala allows the cruelty of the enemy’s actions speak for itself by showing them perpetrating crimes that exceed the limits of just war as defined by Islamic Law. The notice of Ibn Dahri’s “betrayal” of Granada began with an allusion to the wanton destruction of crops, the demolition and sacking of private property, and other outrages committed against the civilian population which Ibn Mardanish waged “every summer” in Cordoba in the caliph’s absence. Ibn Sahib al-Sala also vividly described the depraved mockery and torture of the captured Almohad soldiers who were used as cannon fodder for the *manjaniqs* to attack the enemy. Ibn Sahib al-Sala reports the actions of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk aware that his intended audience of pious erudite Muslims would interpret the events in light of their pre-stored knowledge of the Islamic laws concerning jihad. Military jurisprudence distinguished between the just or justified war fought “in the path of God” in defense of a Muslim community (cf. Q 2:190), and the common feud or other armed conflicts fueled by the more mundane and

³⁴A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 41; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 129.

ignoble desires to attain wealth or territory, to cause wanton destruction, or to sow discord and corruption (cf. Q 2:204-205). The *shari'a* forbids indiscriminate killing, attacks against an unarmed civilian population--particularly women and children, the gratuitous destruction of crops, water supplies, and livestock, and the murder, deliberate torture, torment, mutilation, and debasement of captive soldiers. Even in the throes of war, Islamic law mandates minimum rules of ethical conduct, including permitting one's opponents access to water³⁵. In evoking the unlawful nature of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk's conduct in warfare, their illicit collusion with their Christian "companions" against their fellow Muslims, and the baseness of their motives for "betraying" the Almohads, Ibn Sahib al-Sala aims to outrage his readers and gratify their belief in the righteousness of the Almohad cause by accentuating the impiety and cruelty and hence the illegitimacy of the rebellion against the Almohads.

Yet for all Ibn Sahib al-Sala's emphasis on the diabolical inspiration behind the rebel attacks, the vileness and hypocrisy of the rebels, and the cruelty, immorality, and illegality of their enterprise, at no point does the Almohad chronicler ever directly attribute the successes of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk on the battlefield to their own initiative (and certainly not to that of their "accursed Satan"). In the passage preceding the scene just described, in which Ibn Hamushk returned to the Alhambra with Almohad prisoners of war, Ibn Sahib al-Sala writes that it was "God [who] maintained the Almohad besieged in the fortress of Granada" and that this was "a spectacular disgrace for them"³⁶. A more remarkable example is found toward the end of the chronicle in Ibn Sahib al-Sala's account of the siege of Huete, which pitted the Almohad armies against the Christians. Although the victory of the Muslims was apparently assured since they greatly outnumbered their rivals, we read that "God wrenched the conquest of the city from the hands of the Muslims" due to their "laziness and negligence"³⁷. The author summarizes the content of a sermon delivered by the preacher Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahid b. 'Umar berating the Almohad soldiers for having "faltered, steered from the straight path and betrayed God", and for having "not been sincere" in

³⁵In pre-Islamic Arabia it was customary to murder prisoners of war or to debase them by forcing them to beg for their food and sustenance. Muhammad ended this practice. Although war captives were often routinely enslaved, they were not to be summarily executed or ill-treated and had to be fed. Several Qur'anic verses urge that prisoners of war be treated with kindness and promise a spiritual reward for ransoming captives and manumitting enslaved prisoners (cf. Q 2:177, Q 4:36, Q 4:92, Q 5: 92, Q 9:60, Q 24: 33, 58, Q 58:3). That said, the schools of law differ on the question of whether adult male prisoners may be executed, and the Maliki and Shafi'i madhhabs permit such executions. See, Jonathan E. BROKOPP, Sohail HASHMI, and KHALID ABOU EL-FADL, *Islamic Ethics of Life*, Columbia, 2003; and S.A. NIGOSIAN, *Islam: Its History, Teaching, and Practices*, Bloomington, 2004; and David COOK, *Understanding Jihad*, Berkeley, 2005.

³⁶A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 41; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p.129

³⁷A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 210; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 409.

“waging holy war for God”, and for being “negligent in the cause of God in waging jihad”³⁸.

Contrary to Huici Miranda’s assertion that Ibn Sahib al-Sala systematically minimizes the failures of Yusuf I³⁹, here we see that the caliph is not immune from criticism: Twice Ibn Sahib al-Sala mentions the failure of the Commander of the Faithful to heed the pleas of his ally Abu l-‘Ala’ b. ‘Azzun to send more reinforcements to fight the Christians because they were “too occupied with the *taliba* of the court discussing questions of [Almohad] dogma”. When Ibn ‘Azzun obtained no answer to his requests either from the caliph or his brother Abu Hafis, he then “understood that the purpose of the holy war had become perverted, and that the expedition had failed...”⁴⁰. Ibn Sahib al-Sala also comments that the caliph had given “the order to forbid the infidels from gathering water”⁴¹. Shortly thereafter he reveals that the Christians won the first battle because of divine intervention: “God sent a torrential downpour with booming thunderbolts and rolling lightning— and this in the [Christian calendar month of] June”, which forced the Muslims to withdraw and provided the Christians with enough water to quench their own thirst and that of their animals⁴². In this scene the Almohad caliph is depicted committing three serious faults that “pervert” the paradigmatic pure intentionality and execution of the noble jihad: He fails to give the jihad against the Christians due priority over the pursuit of vain discussions of dogma in the comfort of the Almohad court. He fails in his obligation to provide his subjects with the necessary reinforcements to wage the jihad. And he oversteps the boundaries of the rules of military engagement and commits an act of cruelty in denying his enemies any access to water. Ibn Sahib al-Sala does not need to explicitly accuse the caliph of any shortcomings, much less cruelty. The mere mention of the fact that the miraculous summer thunders-torm supplied the Christians with all the water they needed exposes the caliph’s sin and the consequent perversion of the cause of the holy war. It was only after the Almohads “repented” their negligence and renewed their solemn intention to wage jihad sincerely in the path of God that they were granted victory⁴³. In one stroke Ibn Sahib al-Sala achieves two aims: he denies any power or agency to the enemies of the Almohads— whatever victories they

³⁸A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 214; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 411.

³⁹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 7. Ibn Sahib al-Sala is certainly more critical than the Almohad preacher Abu Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahid b. ‘Umar, who berated the Almohad soldiers for their negligence in waging jihad but apparently exonerated the caliph of any shortcomings: “The Commander of the Faithful cannot stand to see you, due to your negligence in the path of God in waging jihad, despite your superior numbers”. See, A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 214; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 411.

⁴⁰A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 210, 211; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 408-409.

⁴¹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 211; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 409.

⁴²A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 213; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 410.

⁴³A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 214; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 411.

achieve are temporary and the result of divine design rather than due to their own military or moral superiority, and he ultimately vindicates the continued legitimacy of the Almohad imamate.

2. The Violence of Binary Opposites: The Almohads

The moral failings of Yusuf I and the Almohads during the siege of Huete is the proverbial exception that proves the rule. The second passage, to be analyzed below, is taken from the chapters following the account of Ibrahim b. Hamushk's "treason against the city of Granada". The narrative recounts the Almohad counter-offensive led by the caliph's heir Abu Ya'qub to win back the city, and is far more representative of Ibn Sahib al-Sala's portrayal of the Almohads. We shall see that overwhelmingly the chronicler represents the Almohad rulers and soldiers and their allies as the binary opposites of the Andalusí rebels and their infidel partners. Ibn Sahib al-Sala's emphatic portrayal of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk as rebels and traitors prey to Satanic and infidel influences is matched by his unflinching reaffirmation of the legitimacy of Almohad rule, his systematic representations of the caliphs, the Almohads, and their supporters as exemplary in their relation to God, and his frequent exposition of God's direct intervention on behalf of the Almohads in the military conflicts with their enemies.

The narrative begins with a description of the caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min's reaction to the news of the defeat suffered by the Almohads in Marj al-Ruqad, "some four miles from Granada", at the hands of "Ibn Hamushk and the Christians and their partisans", which resulted in the "martyrdom" of a number of Almohad shaykhs⁴⁴. The Commander of the Faithful immediately gathered together "the most powerful and valiant of the emirs of each tribe" and he "exhorted them and informed them of the eternal, assured, and certain honor and reward that they would gain from God for defending truth and defeating error." They and their knights and foot soldiers "pledged themselves to God and guaranteed to the caliph, the Commander of the Faithful that they would exterminate the evil ones, the infidel enemies, the infidel Christians in defense of God and of the [true] religion and in aid of their brothers the Almohads, who had endured the siege in the fortress of Granada". The caliph placed in command of the operation "his beloved son Abu Ya'qub Yusuf" and "as his companion the virtuous and intelligent shaykh Abu Ya'qub Yusuf b. Sulayman, *caudillo* of the Almohads". They went out from Malaga with their "victorious troops" against their enemies "with the help of God" heading toward Granada. It will be recalled from the previous discussion of the diabolical influences motivating Ibn Mardanish that the Murcian *caudillo* "had already arrived [in Granada] with his people and his troops and with the Christians his allies, coveting what Satan made them covet, and spurned on

⁴⁴A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 41; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 129.

by perdition and ruin”⁴⁵. Ibn Sahib al-Sala vividly describes the arrival of the Almohads to the scene of battle and the ensuing massacre that they perpetrate against their enemies:

The Almohads —may God help them—⁴⁶ continued their path with their habitual slowness, their pureness of intention, and the assistance of God made their banners tremble until they arrived at the place called Dilar River, close to the village of al-Hamdan⁴⁷, where they camped.

On Thursday, the 27th of Rajab of the year 557 (July 12, 1162), the [now] deceased shaykh Abu Ya‘qub gathered together all the military chiefs (*ashyakh*) of the Almohads —may God help them— [and the other shaykhs] and he exhorted them and repeated his exhortations of the rewards that they would gain from God for their jihad against the infidels, His enemies and their enemy, and of the paradise promised to them by God if they were sincere in their intentions and they fulfilled what they had promised and proclaimed. They renewed their proposal to wage holy war and purified their intentions before God, fed their horses after the midday prayer that day, and decided to march out for combat that very night. They put on their armor and mounted their horses after the night prayer [of Thursday] to Friday, the day of the victory on the 28th of Rajab (July 13).

When the light of dawn could be distinguished on the aforementioned morning of Friday, 28 Rajab, [the Almohad soldiers] waylaid the camps of the infidels that morning, beginning to slaughter them in their beds, ripping apart their entrails with their swords and lances, and [the Christians] did not manage even to mount their horses before God had surrounded them and hemmed them in their disgrace. There were later on their part some struggles, fighting, and attempts at defense, in keeping with their habitual infidelity and rebellion and the worshipping of their crosses.... God defeated [the infidels and Ibn Hamushk] and He helped his partisans the Almohads. The Christian El Calvo, grandson of Alvar Fáñez was killed in the battle. His head was cut off and carried to Cordoba a few days after the defeat and hung atop Alcántara Gate...⁴⁸.

The logic of the binary oppositions becomes fully apparent when considering Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s representation of the Almohad offensive to recapture Granada in light of the previous account of Ibn Hamushk’s “treason” against the city. This is no mere description of a battle between two opposing armies; the author casts the military conflict in terms of a confrontation between the divinely guided forces of the Almohads under the leadership of their pious caliph, and the Andalusí Muslim rebel forces and their Christian allies, led by Alvar and the sons of the Count of Urgel, and spurned on by the nefarious influence of Satan. To this end, Ibn Sahib al-Sala reiterates time and

⁴⁵A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 43; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 131.

⁴⁶Omitted from Huici Miranda’s translation on page 43.

⁴⁷Huici Miranda identified the toponym as al-Mahdan (p. 44), however, according to ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Tazi, the editor of the Arabic text of *al-Mann bil-imama*, the correct name is al-Hamdan, as the village was named after the eponymous famous Arab tribe, and corresponds to the present-day Alhendin. See, IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, p. 132, note 3.

⁴⁸*Al-Mann bil-imama*, A. HUICI MIRANDA, pp. 43-44; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 131-133.

again the semiotic links between divine assistance and the legitimacy of an Almohad imamate that is exemplary in its piety and devotion to God.

This is seen, first of all, in the representation of the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu’min as a paradigmatic ruler, pious, devout, and zealous in his efforts to wage jihad in defense of God and the true religion against God’s enemies. For upon hearing the news of the Almohads’ defeat near Granada, the chronicler reports that the caliph summoned his best and most valiant men and exhorted them with a harangue about the spiritual rewards to be obtained for “defending the truth and defeating error”. He is portrayed as motivated by these higher, spiritual aims over and against the more mundane, baser desires for vengeance and power. The same may be said for the caliph’s commander-in-chief Abu Ya’qub Yusuf. Ibn Sahib al-Sala refers to his military intervention in Granada as a jihad and shows him, like his father the caliph, piously exhorting his men to be sincere in their efforts to fight against the “infidels their enemies”, “purifying their intentions before God”. The pure and disinterested motives of the Almohad caliph and his supporters blatantly contrast with the Satanically-inspired lust for power and vengeance that drive the Andalusi rebels and their Christian allies, and ultimately explains why God is on their side.

In the passages just described and elsewhere in *al-Mann bi l-imama* phrases such as “God helped the Almohads” or “the Almohads set out with the help of God” are veritable commonplaces that constantly signal to the audience the righteousness of the Almohad position vis-à-vis their opponents. Even more striking are the direct attributions of Almohad victories to divine agency. Such claims are encountered in the very first chapter in reference to the caliph’s campaign in al-Mahdiya: “The narrator⁴⁹ said: ‘When God conquered the city of al-Mahdiya with His stunning effortlessness and His handy success, the Christians —may God annihilate them— abandoned it and it was purified for Islam to the delight of our lord the Caliph...’”⁵⁰ In the passage referred to above describing the Almohad counter-offensive in Granada, Ibn Sahib al-Sala boldly stated that “God had surrounded [the Christian army] and hemmed them in their disgrace”, and that “God Almighty defeated the [infidels and Ibn Hamushk] and He helped His devotees (*awliya’uhu*) the Almohads”. It is important to note the religious significance of the term *waliy*, pl. *awliya’*, which I have translated as “devotees”, and Huici Miranda translates as “partisans”. The basic meaning of *waliy/awliya’* encompasses the ideas of closeness, being a friend, or following someone closely. In the context of human social relations the term may be translated as “helper”, “supporter”, “benefactor”, “sponsor”, or “partisan”. Yet in the context of human divine relations a *waliy* may be understood as someone who is the recipient of God’s patronage in His capacity as “the Patron” (cf. Q

⁴⁹Ibn Sahib al-Sala incorporates historical accounts from numerous sources into his chronicle. In most cases he mentions them by name, yet in other cases he simply refers to “the narrator (*al-rawiyya*)”.

⁵⁰A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 14; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 70-71.

13:11; Q 22:7), and thus someone particularly close to God, a friend of God, or, by extension, a holy person or even a saint. The expression as Ibn Sahib al-Sala employs it bears this broader religious significance and therefore contributes to the narrative representation of the Almohads as the political and military instruments of a larger divine plan. Moreover, the motif of direct divine intervention definitively confirms the righteousness of the Almohad position as loyal patrons and devotees of God, and contrasts with the depictions of their Andalusí enemies, whose inspirer, the devil, is never portrayed as directly intervening on the side of the rebels in a way analogous to God’s intercession. Rather, Ibn Sahib al-Sala depicts Satan working through the agency of “his partisans” the “infidels” and “hypocritical” Muslims.

Most intriguing is the psychological element of Satan’s inspiration, depicted, as will be recalled, in the mention of the negative emotions and states afflicting Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk, and their accomplices, such as excessive ambition, covetousness, rancor, anger, their hearts “afire with the fire of sedition”, and “raving and delusional” under the impact of the forbidden wine, and so forth. To these destructive passions born out of Ibn Hamushk and Ibn Mardanish’s sins of rebellion and disobedience, we may add an example in which God is depicted as inflicting terror and a state of dementia upon the rebels. The above-mentioned account of the surprise attack at dawn that the Almohads waged against the Christian accomplices of Ibn Hamushk and Ibn Mardanish to recover control of Granada goes on to record that “God terrorized the infidels and Ibn Hamushk, and He made them lose their senses, for they thought that the terrain of Mount al-Sabika was adjacent to the camp of Ibn Mardanish. But He blinded them, for [the camp] was separated by the River Darro.... [T]hey fell into the River Darro in the darkness of the clouds of dust, and their bodies were torn apart in the precipices of the river and their cadavers turned black on that felicitous morning”⁵¹.

The psychological turmoil of the rebels contrasts with the states of serenity and felicity with which Ibn Sahib al-Sala characterizes the Almohads and which permeate his own editorializing of the events he records, as is evident by his striking allusion to the “felicitous morning” on which the enemy fell to its death in the Darro River. The chronicler often underscores the serene, orderly, and slow manner with which the Almohads embark upon a campaign to fight their enemies. Recall that in the scene mentioned earlier, in which the Almohad troops set out from Malaga to combat the rebels in Granada, Ibn Sahib al-Sala related that they “continued their path with their habitual slowness, their pureness of intention, and the assistance of God...” He reiterates this image in a later passage as the Almohad soldiers reach their destination nothing that “they walked slowly all night along Mount al-Sabika over its rocky surfaces and bends, but God smoothed and flattened the

⁵¹ *Al-Mann bil-imama*, A. HUICI MIRANDA, p. 44; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 132-133.

path...and guaranteed them His aid..."⁵². Similarly, the notice of the caliph's expedition to Rabat al-Fath to wage war against Berber rebels reports that the "Commander of the Faithful left Marrakush... He established his march...with his well known noble custom of walking slowly.... The fortunate soldiers who advanced with him saw that luck was on their side and was their ally. They walked in his company united and complete, brilliant and prosperous, in the most beautiful state and with the most perfect hope..."⁵³. Such narratives associate the slow, serene, and orderly gait of the Almohad armies with divine aid and signal the righteousness of their cause over and against the actions of their enemies whom they set out to combat.

Regarding the imagery of Almohad happiness, Ibn Sahib al-Sala most often relates this sentiment with the arrival of the caliph and his army to visit his dominions, to resolve a situation of conflict provoked by a rebel incursion, or to celebrate a victory over their enemies. A typical example is found in the following scene in which the heir "the illustrious lord Abu Ya'qub", then governor of Seville, travelled to Gibraltar to receive his father the caliph, who had just crossed the Straits to visit al-Andalus. Ibn Sahib al-Sala writes that Abu Ya'qub "invoked God to allow him to hurry and rush to benefit from the blessing of meeting [the caliph]...and upon seeing His Majesty, to be the first among those who rushed to render him the homage of loyalty and to delight in this sweet felicity"⁵⁴. The author describes the caliph's arrival as "fortunate and felicitous, surrounded by an aura of security and manifest victory"⁵⁵. Most importantly, he illustrates that these sentiments were general and not confined solely to the caliph's closest relatives: "The day that [the caliph] crossed the sea, a throng came to meet him on the beach, which only their Creator could count. It was a happy day in which the greatness of the kingdom and its power were manifest, the likes of which was never seen in olden times and which no one could imagine"⁵⁶.

Likewise, in a later scene "the illustrious lord Abu Hafs" is depicted as heading out from Ceuta on his way to Marrakesh "with his general happiness and the most complete well-being", where he encountered his brother Abu Sa'id and the two expressed "the most complete happiness over their reunion and over the triumph and the subjugation of the hypocrites and the infidels, with the most complete and merry victory". Ibn Sahib al-Sala reports that this joy was "exteriorized" by all with "the most beautiful sentiment" through the drumming of the tambourines, the unfolding of banners, and a feast in which everyone was invited, with the accompaniment

⁵²A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 44; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 133.

⁵³A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 55; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 148.

⁵⁴A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 24; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 92.

⁵⁵A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 24; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 92.

⁵⁶A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 25; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 92.

of poetic recitation and the sermons of preachers who marvelled the people with their eloquence⁵⁷.

Ibn Sahib al-Sala also makes frequent mention of the happy state of the Almohad army, both in general terms and as a consequence of victory over their enemies. For instance, Abu Hafs' expedition against Ibn Mardanish is qualified as “happy and glorious”⁵⁸. After narrating the Almohad massacre of Berber rebels in Gomara, the chronicler observes that the Almohad army “returned with luck”, making a “beautiful return and a happy retreat”⁵⁹. And when the caliph Yusuf I went out in person to examine his troops en route to wage jihad in the Peninsula and protect it “against the two classes of enemies, the hypocrites and the infidels”, Ibn Sahib al-Sala remarks that this “was the most happy of armies, who instilled the greatest fear into the hearts of the hypocrites and the infidels”⁶⁰. Even when the enemy manages to defeat the Almohads, no analogous expressions of happiness are manifested. Instead, Ibn Sahib al-Sala omits any comment about the interior state of the rebels and concentrates rather on the suffering of the Almohad martyrs, prisoners, or subjects⁶¹. At most, he depicts a sinister, distorted version of happiness, as we saw in the aforementioned discussing of Ibn Hamushk's “mocking” and “making fun of” the Almohad prisoners of war by using them as cannon fodder for the rebels' manjanics⁶². In these passages the emotional states of serenity, happiness, felicity, and contentment are inextricably linked to the blessings and security inherent in accepting the rule of the divinely elected Almohad imamate. The positive emotions of the caliph, his relatives, and his subjects reflect not only “the greatness of the kingdom and its power” but also its legitimacy and that of its rulers.

Another strategy by which Ibn Sahib al-Sala focalizes the legitimacy of the Almohads in opposition to their enemies is through the ubiquitous use of laudatives, honorifics, and other positive attributives. For instance, when referring to the caliph, Ibn Sahib al-Sala consistently employs his honorific titles “*al-khalifa* (the caliph)”, “*Amir al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the Faithful)” and/or “*al-imam* (the leader)” alongside or in lieu of the ruler's given name, followed by the blessing, “may God grant him salvation”. The aforementioned episode describing the caliph's victory in al-Mahdiya reported that the city was “purified” from the contamination of the Christian invaders “to the delight of our lord the Caliph the Imam, the Commander of the Faithful the Caliph —may God grant him salvation”. Mention must also be

⁵⁷A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 73; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 187.

⁵⁸A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 74; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 195.

⁵⁹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 102; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 233.

⁶⁰A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 138, 139; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 290.

⁶¹As seen for example in A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 41; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 129.

⁶²A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 39; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 126.

made of the honorifics and attributives that Ibn Sahib al-Sala appends habitually to the names of those men most loyal to the caliph, particularly the “sublime Lord (*al-sayyid al-a‘la*)” and heir Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf; the “sublime Lord Abu Hafs,” son of caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min and uterine brother of Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf, who played a prominent role in ensuring the smooth transition in the caliphal reigns of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min and Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf⁶³, and whose military campaigns proved decisive in the conquest of Murcia from Ibn Mardanish⁶⁴; and “the virtuous and intelligent shaykh Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf b. Sulayman” who, together with Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf, led the counter offensive to regain Granada.

The employment of these honorifics and titles is not merely formulaic. Fedwa Malti-Douglas has drawn attention to their relevance in her studies of the Arabic biographical tradition, pointing out the controversy and scandal that the omission of such titles could produce⁶⁵. Hence every usage of the caliphal titles and honorifics is an act of social recognition of ‘Abd al-Mu‘min’s, and after him, of Yusuf I’s uncontested legitimate right to the caliphate and, simultaneously, a statement rejecting the claims of the rebels and dissidents. Equally, the blessing that is included in the Arabic text⁶⁶ after every mention of the caliph and his relations, “may God grant him salvation,” is a speech act that invokes God’s continued favor upon the caliph and his family, and more specifically, seeks *through its utterance* the continuance of the Almohad imamate⁶⁷. Another obvious focalizing contrast appears in the pairing of blessings upon the Almohad soldiers with curses upon the infidel and rebel armies, for instance:

The resounding resultant defeat came upon the rebels and the Christians from all sides, and the Almohads--*may God help them*--captured them, killing them with the points of their lances and their sharp swords on the plains and in the mountains with the help of God, the One and Only, the Victor⁶⁸.

⁶³As revealed in the chapter entitled, “Notice of the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf, son of the Commander of the Faithful, which occurred the night on which his father died...and notice of the determination of the sublime Lord Abu Hafs, his uterine brother, to designate him, defend him, and prepare him for the caliphate...” A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 61-62; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 163-164.

⁶⁴A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 154-163; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 313-316.

⁶⁵Fedwa MALTI-DOUGLAS, *Islamic Biography*, in IDEM, *Power, Marginality, and the Body in Medieval Islam*, Aldershot, 2001, p. 3.

⁶⁶In the Spanish translation Huici Miranda systematically omits the ritual blessing after the references to the caliph, no doubt because it encumbers the fluidity of his translation, but also perhaps because of his stated aversion to the “adulatory verbiage (*verborrea adulatoria*)” that the author resorts to in his “servile praises (*elogios serviles*)” of the Almohad caliphs. A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 7.

⁶⁷On the subject of speech acts, see the classic studies by John L. AUSTIN, *How to Do Things with Words*, Cambridge, M.A., 1962; John R. SEARLE, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge, 1969; and Kent BACH and Robert M. HAMISH, *Linguistic Communications and Speech Acts*, Cambridge, 1979.

⁶⁸A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 45; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 134.

Ibn Mardanish left the city of Murcia with his army and his companions the Christians —*may God annihilate them*— in their perverse decision to take advantage of the situation...and lay siege to the city of Jaén⁶⁹.

Thus far we have put forth a number of examples of the rhetoric of binary oppositions. The attributions of divine guidance, assistance, and direct intervention on behalf of the Almohads contrast with the attributes of Satanic and infidel influences behind Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk’s challenges to Almohad power. While the actions of the Almohad caliph, his sons, and soldiers are undertaken for a pious rationale, with pure spiritual intentions and sincere devotion to God and with serenity and felicity, the Andalusí rebels and their infidel allies act under the base impulses of misplaced ambition, covetousness, and drunkenness and are depicted in the grips of rage, fear, and other irrational passions. And whereas Ibn Sahib al-Sala routinely employs legitimating laudatives, honorifics, and blessings at the mention of Almohads, he likewise accompanies every allusion to Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk and their Christian and Jewish allies with curses and invective attributives such as “vile”, “perverse”, “corrupt”, “evil”, and effectively discredits their challenges to Almohad rule with the pejorative label “rebellion” and “treason”.

The discourse of binary opposition becomes less straightforward, however, when we consider the descriptions of violent combat. In the battle over control of Granada Ibn Sahib al-Sala painted a vivid portrait of the cruelty and sadism of the Muslim rebels who “tormented” and “tortured” the Almohad soldiers and violated the laws of Islam by tormenting, mutilating, and mocking the prisoners of war by using them as cannon fodder for the *manjaniqs*, and by wantonly destroying or stealing the food and property of civilian populations. Recent studies on medieval violence by Richard Kaeuper, Mark Meyerson, and Daniel Baraz reveal how Christian authors distinguished between the legitimate or just violence of their patrons and coreligionists and the cruelty and barbarity of their religious and political opponents⁷⁰. The more cruel and vicious the violence of the enemy, the more patently clear one’s own morality, chivalry, piety, and righteousness in resorting to the use of force could be exhibited and exalted.

The narratives of military conflict in *al-Mann bi l-imama* reflect a somewhat different opposition between the legitimacy of Almohad violence, *however ferocious and brutal*, and the illegitimacy of rebel violence *per se* whether ferocious or ineffectual. Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s description of the Almohad counter offensive to regain control of Granada offers scenes of violence that are equally if not more graphic and brutal than that of the rebels. As we saw, the Almohad soldiers ambushed Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk’s Christian allies at dawn while they were still asleep in their camp. Ibn Sahib al-Sala seems to derive delight in noting that the “infidels” did not

⁶⁹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 11-12; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 65-66.

⁷⁰See note 12 above.

even have the opportunity to “mount their horses” or draw their weapons before having their entrails “ripped to shreds”. He disdains the ineffectual attempts of the Christian troops to defend themselves from the surprise attack as “in keeping with their infidelity and rebellion, and their devotion to their crosses” and frequently uses condescending terms such as “petty” and “miserable” to describe the rebel troops. In this same battle Ibn Sahib al-Sala also described how the dawn was so darkened by the dust of battle that one could only hear “the mortal blows of swords, the cries of war, and the cutting off of heads”, which included the murder and decapitation of the Christian commander “El Calvo”, and the subsequent posting of his head atop Granada’s Alcántara Gate. Again, the author revels in the blackening of the corpses of all the dead rebel soldiers who had fallen into the Darro River “on that happy [Friday] morning” of the Almohad victory⁷¹.

The brutality and the carnage of these images contrast with the brief and matter-of-fact manner in which Ibn Sahib al-Sala described the scene immediately prior to the battle of Granada, in which Ibn Hamushk along with the Christians and their partisans defeated the Almohad and Andalusí soldiers at Marj al-Ruqad. Ibn Sahib al-Sala merely states that “the people were defeated in the place indicated and became fugitives” and that “shaykh Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah b. Abi Hafs b. ‘Ali suffered martyrdom that day” together with “many Almohads and Andalusis, and that this was a great disgrace and a considerable damage”. As I indicated above, however, the chronicler went on to attribute this defeat to divine providence: “God maintained the Almohads besieged in the fortress of Granada”⁷², thereby resting power and agency away from the Andalusí rebels and their Christian allies and displacing it onto God. In a similar way, it could be argued that the more graphic and brutal violence on the part of the Almohads is intended not as a sign of their greater “cruelty” but rather as an exhibition of their superior, legitimate, and divinely endowed power.

I will return to the issue of the relation between divine intervention and the representation of violent conflict. But first it must be noted that in addition to the depictions of the Almohads inflicting carnage upon their enemies in the heat of battle, they are also shown engaging in the wanton destruction and pillaging of property. After the reconquest of Granada, the Almohads went on the offensive and waged a “happy and glorious expedition against Ibn Mardanish” in his own territory of Murcia on Friday the 7th of Dhu al-Hijja of 560 (15 October, 1165)⁷³. After relating that “God granted [the Almohads] victory over Ibn Mardanish’s soldiers and “his friends the Christians”, and that “God obliterated their vestiges with His sword”, the

⁷¹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 45; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 6.

⁷²A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 41; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 127.

⁷³A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 78; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 200.

Almohads went in pursuit of Ibn Mardanish at his place of residence. There, we are told that the Almohads

...established their camp on the plain and celebrated the Feast of the Sacrifice (Monday, October 18th) in [Ibn Mardanish's] plantation and in the resting place of his residence in plain sight on the outskirts of Murcia, destroying his gardens and permitting themselves all manner of license and free reign,...and they filled the terrain with ruins and razed it in all its expanse. They carried away the goods of its inhabitants and had their way, secure of their position, and repeated their raids all over, taking booty with the utmost tranquility. In their sackings they reached the greatest limits, far surpassing their expectations and aims⁷⁴.

Of course, objectively speaking, the sacking and raiding of the property and goods of the inhabitants of Murcia does not differ from the destruction and pillage that Ibn Hamushk wrought upon the inhabitants of Cordoba⁷⁵. The obvious similarities between the two instances of sacking, raiding, and pillaging are deliberately obscured by the appeal to the legality of the former, perpetrated by the legitimate power, and the illegality of the latter, undertaken by rebels and infidels; the violence and destruction itself are the same. Most significantly, this differentiation in the manifestations of violent conflict is achieved by explicit association with divine intervention. It is important to note that both the Almohad victory in Granada and their defeat of Ibn Mardanish's armies near Murcia are attributed directly to God, a God who not only “helps”, “assists” and “succors” the Almohads but who Himself “destroys”, “annihilates”, and “obliterates” His enemies. One could venture that the paradigm of divine total destruction justifies and serves as the template for the violence and ferocity of Almohad military action. Additionally, Ibn Sahib al-Sala often infuses his descriptions of Almohad violence with a halo of heightened piety and sacredness. Military action often commences on a Friday, as was the case in both Granada and Murcia. Muslim hadith and pious lore consider Friday to be an especially sacred and meritorious day, while Rajab, the month in which the Granada offensive took place, is considered to be “the month of God”, i.e. God's preferred month. Pious deeds undertaken during these sacred times with sincere intentions are deemed worthy of a greater celestial reward⁷⁶. Hence both narratives also emphasize the piety and devotion of the Almohads and their sincere intentions in fighting jihad in the path of God, as witnessed by the depictions of the Almohads performing the obligatory ritual prayer before setting off to fight in Granada, or celebrating the Feast of the Sacrifice before sacking and pillaging Murcia, the frequent mention of their “pledging” or “renewing to pledges to God”, and the scenes showing the caliph or his commanders

⁷⁴A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 78; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 200.

⁷⁵A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 38; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 125.

⁷⁶On the spiritual merits of the month of Rajab, see, M.J. KISTER, *Radjab*, “EI²”, 8, pp. 373-375; and IDEM, *Rajab is the Month of God: A Study in the Persistence of an Early Tradition*, in IDEM, *Studies in Jahiliyya and Early Islam*, London, 1989.

exhorting the Almohad soldiers and reminding them of the heavenly rewards to be gained for fighting sincerely in the cause of God. This halo of religiosity moralizes and justifies the following scenes of carnage and destruction. Yet it is not meant to mitigate the ferocity of Almohad violence, but rather to glorify its legitimacy in the face of challenges from the rebels and traitors Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk and their infidel “Christian companions”. Almohad violence, however brutal, is not represented as excessive or cruel since ultimately God is the subject or agent of the Almohad action.

II. THE CHRISTIAN COMPANIONS

I shall now turn my attention to the recurring motif of the Christian companions. From the very beginning of his chronicle and throughout, Ibn Sahib al-Sala specifies repeatedly that the “rebellions” and “treason” that Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk undertake against the Almohads are carried out with the aid of his Christian “companions”. The term appears in a number of passages considered thus far, starting with the very first sentence of the chronicle: “Ibn Mardanish left the city of Murcia with his army and his *companions* the Christians —may God annihilate them— in their perverse decision to take advantage of the situation..., and lay siege to the city of Jaén”. In the same chapter we further read that, “Ibn Mardanish amassed all the soldiers of his territory (in Murcia) and summoned his companions the Christians, who came to his aid”. Likewise, in the account of the “treason” against Granada Ibn Sahib al-Sala wrote that “Ibn Hamushk went from this battle with his companions the Christians to the Alhambra in Granada with the Almohad prisoners in his grip, killing them and tormenting and mocking them *ya’bathu fi-him* before the eyes of their brothers...”⁷⁷. As I suggested previously, I believe that Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s use of the term “companions (*ashab*)” is deliberately provocative. Almohad historiography and especially the hagiography of Ibn Tumart consciously portray the founder of the Almohad movement as a replica of the Prophet Muhammad, albeit never transgressing the unique position of Muhammad’s prophetic mission. In a way similar to that of medieval Christian hagiographers who moulded the lives of the saints to imitate the humility, suffering, and passion of Christ, so, too, in Almohad hagiography and historiography there is a conscious attempt to mimeticize the key events of the life of the Mahdi by using tropes and motifs related in the life of Muhammad and his Companions⁷⁸.

⁷⁷A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 41; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 129.

⁷⁸On the hagiographic elements of the biography of Ibn Tumart, see, Ambrosio HUICI MIRANDA, *La leyenda y la historia en los orígenes del imperio Almohade*, “Al-Andalus”, 14 (1948), pp. 339-376; David J. WASSERSTEIN, *A Jonah Theme in the Biography of Ibn Tumart in Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madélung* (Farhad DAFTARY and Josef W. MERI, eds.), London, 2003, pp. 232-249; and J.F.P. HOPKINS, *Ibn Tumart*, “EI”, 3, pp. 958-959.

One of these tropes is the ten companions who first swore loyalty to Ibn Tumart recognizing him as the Mahdi, in the same way that the ten Companions of Muhammad acknowledged his prophethood⁷⁹. As depicted in the Qur’an (cf. Q 9:100 and Q 61:10), the Companions (*ashab*) were the earliest followers of Muhammad, the first to convert to Islam, and accompanied him in the key historical events that proved his prophethood. They followed him from Mecca to Medina and fought in the Battle of Badr. They are often called the Companions of the Tree (*ashab al-shajara*) because during crucial negotiations between the partisans of Muhammad and the Quraysh regarding the Muslim’s access to Mecca, Muhammad called upon his men to take “the pledge of good pleasure (*bay‘at al-ridwan*)” promising to follow him in whatever he decided. This pledge of loyalty to Muhammad was immortalized in the Qur’an (Q 48:18): “God was well pleased with (*radiya*) the believers when they pledged themselves under the tree”.

But the Qur’an also offers negative paradigms of companions of unbelievers, notably Q 25:38 and Q 50:12, in reference to “the Companions of the Ditch (*ashab al-rass*), referring to Ad, Thamud, and other unbelievers who cast their prophet into a ditch and were punished with annihilation, or even more suggestively, “the Companions of the Trench (*ashab al-ukhdud*)” in Q 85:4-8, in reference to a group of people who will burn in the hellfire because of “what they were doing against the Believers, ill-treating them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah”. Nor must one forget the “Companions of the Blazing Hellfire (*ashab al-nar*) (Q 35:6), referring to the “adherents” or “faction” of the devil, sinners who follow the temptations of Satan instead of “treating him as the enemy” that he is.

Bearing in mind the religious significance of the term “companions,” the reference to the Christian companions of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk would have been understood by Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s audience as representing a mirror image, a distorted inversion of this rhetorical mimesis of the archetypal relation between the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, and Ibn Tumart and his companions. At the same time, the scenes of conflict that Ibn Sahib al-Sala describes between the Almohads and Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk and their “companions” resonate with these Qur’anic paradigms of unbelieving comrades. Ibn al-Sahib al-Sala’s insistence on the alterity of the *Christian* “companions” or “friends” of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk allows him to emphasize that *as unbelievers* they can only represent a distorted, inverted image of companionship and loyalty. For this reason from

⁷⁹According to J.F.P. Hopkins, ‘Abd al-Mu’min, the successor of the Mahdi Ibn Tumart and many subsequent Almohad historiographers consciously modeled the Mahdi’s first ten companions, of whom he was one, after the “blessed ten (*al-Ashara al-mubashshara*)” Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. See, J.F.P. HOPKINS, *Ibn Tumart*, “EI”, 3, pp. 958-959 and the bibliography contained therein; and A. HUICI MIRANDA, *La leyenda y la historia en los orígenes del imperio Almohade*, “Al-Andalus”, 14 (1948), pp. 339-376. For a general overview of the characteristics or virtues (*fada’il*) of the Companions of the Prophet that would become paradigmatic of the Islamic notion of companionship, see Muslim IBN AL-HAJJAJ, *Sahih Muslim*, Book 31; and Muhammad b. Isma’il AL-BUKHARI, *Sahih al Bukhari*, Book 57, where the compilers include a number of traditions praising the piety and trustworthiness of the Prophet’s Companions, as well as a record of their deeds, bravery, and sacrifices on the battlefield alongside him.

the very first passage Ibn Sahib al-Sala draws special attention to the perverse and immoral influence of the Christian companions as clearly indicated by his choice of the same morally-charged verb *afsada* (to spoil, pervert, deprave) to describe the army of the Christians and the pernicious effects of wine drinking which “deluded” Ibn Mardanish into thinking that he could rebel against the Almohads.

An even more blatant version of the corrupting and perversity of the “companionship” of the Christians is seen in the aforementioned notice of Ibrahim b. Hamushk’s treason against the city of Granada in collusion with “the evil hypocrite” Ibn Dahri of Granada and his clients the “Islamized Jews”. Of immediate relevance is Ibn Hamushk’s perverse use of the term “companions” to fool the Granadan population during his attack. Ibn Sahib al-Sala writes that “when the traitor Ibn Hamushk arrived in accordance with what was agreed [between him and Ibn Dahri], the infidel having assembled his people, they broke the bar and the gate and launched the cry, ‘Oh, Companions!’” When the people in the city heard the cry and the commotion they rushed out and, realizing they were under attack, all those who “had firm belief in their religion” fled to the Alcazaba to help their beloved brothers the Almohads. This passage shows Ibn Hamushk perverting the conception of the companion. The battle cry “Oh, Companions” is deliberately ambiguous here. The cry could and probably did refer to his summoning “the infidel, his people,” that is, Ibn Dahri and his Islamizing Jews, and would thus draw attention to his perversity in taking infidels and hypocrites as companions. Yet the cry could also have been given with the intention of attracting the Granadan Muslims to his side or, more likely, to fool them into coming out into the open in order to better attack them. In this case, the ruse failed because the righteous Granadans refused to associate with the infidel attackers and fled to the Alcazaba, demonstrating their “firm belief in their religion”.

It is significant to note as well that the notice of the Almohad’s victory in Granada ends with the news that “Ibn Mardanish, defeated, “abandoned his tents and his weapons, just as he had abandoned his companions”⁸⁰. An almost verbatim comment is found at the end of the description of the Almohad campaign against Ibn Mardanish in his own territory of Murcia. There, too, we read that “Ibn Mardanish, defeated, abandoned the battle field of his allies and partisans, all of them infidels, and took cover in a mountain next to the battle field, where he set up camp, pretending to be mounting a war tactic, and remained there with the rest of the fugitives...until the night blanketed him and surrounded him with loss and disgrace”⁸¹. These remarks would have been understood as a criticism not only of the fact of taking “infidels” as companions, but also because a true companion does not abandon his own to their fate; Ibn Mardanish should have stayed and helped his companions or died alongside them, as an authentic, loyal companion would have done.

⁸⁰A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 45; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 134.

⁸¹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 78; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 200.

Many more examples of Ibn Sahib Sala’s use of the term “his Christian companions” could be cited, always with the purpose of undermining the Muslim enemies of the Almohads, Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk. I will end with a consideration of whether Ibn Sahib al-Sala associates diabolically-inspired evil, sin, moral depravity, violent conflict, and cruelty with alterity *per se*. If this were so then one would expect to find no positive images of non-Muslims and particularly of Christians in *al-Mann bi l-imama*. Despite Almohad propaganda against making pacts with the Christian infidel, historians of medieval Iberia and the Maghreb are well aware that such arrangements did exist⁸². The question is how Ibn Sahib al-Sala deals with this uncomfortable fact, given that his chronicle is strewn with curses against the Christians and is structured to semiotically associate Christian alliance with diabolical influence.

An intriguing response is found in Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s treatment of the agreement forged between the Almohad caliph Abu Ya’qub and Fernando Rodríguez, the governor of Trujillo⁸³. The events occurred in Seville during Ramadan of 1168 when Fernando, whom Ibn Sahib praises as “celebrated among the Christians for his lineage and valor,” arrived in Seville along with his brothers “with the desire to become the servant (*raghiban an yakuna khadiman*) of the Commander of the Faithful, abandoning the company of the infidels”⁸⁴. The Sevillian Almohads asked the caliph for permission to allow Fernando and his men to remain in Seville and there they stayed for five months “beneath the banners of the sublime power and [enjoying] considerable favors and gifts and guaranteed provisions”. Subsequently we read that Fernando’s “heart was softened by these great gifts until he almost converted to Islam (*hatta kada an yuslima*) and he promised God to be a faithful counsel to the Almohad power, lending them his best service, and he submitted himself and guaranteed that he would not raid the territory of the Almohads and that he would be a pillar of strength for them, allied with the Muslims...”⁸⁵.

One must begin by noting that Ibn Sahib al-Sala has avoided at all cost the use of the polemically-charged terms “companion” and “friend” to describe the relation between the caliph and the Christian governor. Instead, the Almohad chronicler opts to emphasize a relation of servitude, starting with the crucial point that it was Fernando who took the initiative to travel from Trujillo to Seville to offer himself in the service of the Almohad caliphate.

⁸²For instance, according to Maya Shatzmiller, when the Almohads defeated the Almoravids, they incorporated Christian mercenary soldiers from the Almoravid army into their own regiments, and later continued the practice of recruiting Christians, both prisoners taken into slavery and free men, Castilians and Catalans, who enlisted on their own accord. See, Maya SHATZMILLER, *Al-Muwahhidun*, “EI”, 7, pp. 801-806 and the bibliography contained therein.

⁸³A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 135-136; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 284-288.

⁸⁴A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 135; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 285.

⁸⁵A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 135; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 285.

With this, Ibn Sahib al-Sala seeks to avoid possible accusations that Abu Ya‘qub sought to enter into an alliance with an “infidel”. The five months that Fernando and his men spent in Seville enjoying the gifts and hospitality of the Almohads served to cement this relationship of indebtedness and servitude to the Muslim ruler. This relation of servitude is twice reiterated at the end of the notice when Fernando promised God that he would offer his “best service” as a “faithful counsel” to the Almohads and, subsequently, that he “submitted himself” to the Almohads and promised not to raid their territories. The insistence on the “submission” and “servitude” of Fernando and his men vis-à-vis the Almohads is a far cry from the friendliness and intimacy connoted by the term “companion”. Only at the very end of the notice does the author indicate that Fernando and his men offered their fraternity and companionship to the Almohads, which is not the same as saying that they *were* the companions of the caliph. The difference is subtle, but important. By contrast, Ibn Sahib al-Sala depicts Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk’s companionship with the Christians in terms of morally weak Muslims under the evil sway of their Christian companions, who in turn are spurned on by the devil.

Given the repeated evocations of Christian treachery and perfidy, one suspects that the placement of the detail that Fernando “almost converted to Islam” immediately before the news that he promised God to be a faithful servant to the Almohads is meant to indicate that the promise of *this* Christian is trustworthy because of his exposure to Islam. The critical point is that Ibn Sahib al-Sala has found a rhetorical motif (servitude and near conversion to Islam) that enables him to evaluate a Christian “other” in positive terms.

Contrarily, Ibn Sahib al-Salah’s profile of Ibn Hamushk (prior to his conversion to the Almohad dogma of *tawhid*)⁸⁶ demonstrates that the obverse can also be true, that it is possible to “other” a Muslim. This is witnessed in the account of “the arrival of the sublime order of the two illustrious lords to install themselves in Cordoba and to install there the reigns of power and the armies to patrol the region”⁸⁷. We are thus dealing with the aftermath of the Almohad victory in Cordoba over the rebel enemies. The righteousness of the victory is reinforced by the comparison of the Almohads’ decision to establish their seat of government in Cordoba to that of the legendary Umayyads (“as the Banu Umayyad did by their ancient right”⁸⁸). The key passage is found in the description of the trials and tribulations the Cordoban population had to endure at the hands of Ibn Hamushk before the Almohad victory: “Verily, Cordoba and its people tasted in the calamity of this Andalusian civil war (*fitna*) the likes of which their forebears had never suffered during the revolt of the Hammudids, due to the oppression of Ibn Hamushk and to his remote

⁸⁶A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 146-151; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*.

⁸⁷A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 48-52; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, pp. 138-142.

⁸⁸A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 48; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 138.

foreign cruelty”⁸⁹. The phrase “remote foreign cruelty (*qisawatuḥu al-qassiyya al-‘ajamiyya*)” alludes to his infidel origins, having descended from a family of Christian converts to Islam. Even though his ancestors converted long ago, he still bore the taint of their “foreign infidel” origins and this alterity explains for Ibn Saḥib al-Sala Ibn Hamušk’s propensity for “cruelty”. The comparison with the Hammudids, a Berber *taifa* dynasty that ruled parts of southern Spain, notably Malaga, sporadically between 1016 and 1058⁹⁰, is interesting. Ibn Saḥib al-Sala seems to be suggesting that as the Hammudids were Berber Muslims their *fitna* was somehow less cruel than that perpetrated by the “remotely foreign” Ibn Hamušk. Although Ibn Saḥib al-Sala was an Andalusī Muslim from the Algarve, he seems to be under the sway of Berber chauvinism.

CONCLUSIONS

Al-Mann bi l-imama offers a prime example of the discursive tyranny of binary opposites. In the rhetoric of “us versus them”, the two sides are never equivalent; they do not and cannot share or be seen to share the same moral value. Positive values are invariably assigned to “us”: virtuous, pious, orthodox, faithful, humble, loyal, righteous, and legitimate, while their opposites are assigned to “them”: evil, corrupt, impious, heretical, infidel, arrogant, treacherous, perfidious, tyrannical, illegitimate, and so forth. I believe that such language is consistent with what Derrida, Foucault, Armstrong and Tennenhouse called the “violence of representation” in which the one employing language to categorize and differentiate discursively seeks to resolve a situation of conflict by creating an “us” that is by definition in a position of power and superiority over “them”.

I have attempted to show that Ibn Saḥib al-Sala consciously resorts to a “violence of representation” whose foundational paradigm is a cosmic conflict between God and his devout partisans the Almohads, whom He has elected to govern on one side, and Satan and his partisans, the hypocritical Muslims and infidel rebels on the other. The violence of representation is achieved through a number of narrative strategies and textual cues, most notably, the attribution of divine aid or God’s direct intervention on behalf of the Almohads versus the attribution of Satanic and infidel influences to the Andalusī Muslim rebels; and the deployment of value-laden, emotive, and provocative attributives to moralize the persons and events described. ‘Abd al-Mu’min and after him Yusuf I are referred to always “the caliph” and

⁸⁹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 50; IBN SAḤIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 140.

⁹⁰On this dynasty, see, Ambrosio HUICI MIRANDA, *Hammudids*, “EI²” 3, p. 147; E. LEVI-PROVENCAL, *Historia de España Musulmana*, 2, pp. 328-330; Clifford E. BOSWORTH, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual*, Edinburgh, 1996, pp. 16ff; IBN IDHARI, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib fi akhbar al-Andalus wa l-Maghrib*, ed. E. LEVI-PROVENCAL, Beirut, 1967, 3, pp. 115ff; and ‘Abd al-Wahid AL-MARRAKUŠHĪ, *Al-Mu‘jib fi talkhis akhbar al-Maghrib*, ed. Muhammad Sa‘id AL-‘IRYAN and Muhammad AL-‘ARABĪ AL-‘ILMI, Beirut, 1976, pp. 35-38.

“Commander of the Faithful”, while Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk are invariably dubbed “traitors”, “rebels”, and “hypocrites”. The pious, orderly, serene, and divinely-succoured Almohad armies are routinely contrasted with the “petty”, “miserable”, “corrupt” troops of the Andalusi rebels and their infidel partisans. Equally, the psychological states and motivations of the “felicitous” Almohads who act “in the cause of God” are readily distinguished from the wine-induced “delirium”, rage, covetousness, and other base passions that inspire the Andalusis to rebel. And most suggestively, the Almohad rulers only seek the companionship of their loyal, virtuous Muslim fellows and conduct themselves as paradigmatic loyal companions in turn. By contrast, the Andalusi rebels prefer the infidel Christians as their companions and present a distorted parody of companionship in abandoning their companions on the battlefield.

Framing the political conflict in this way suited the chronicler’s moralizing agenda of legitimating Almohad rule to the exclusion of all other contenders. In reality, Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s need to portray the events in the black and white terms of a Qur’anic conflict between the forces of light and the darkness, the righteous and the corrupt, the virtuous and the evil, the legitimate and the rebellious, etc. attempts to mask a political reality that is decidedly grey, in which the heroes and the villains cannot easily be distinguished by their actions. The rhetoric of binary opposites functions propagandistically as a powerful authoritative discourse marshalled to convince those indecisive Andalusi Arabs who appear to be motivated less by a sense of religious solidarity and more by mundane political interests. Above all, *al-Mann bi l-imama* reflects the *instability* of Almohad rule, an almost permanent situation of conflict in which “perverse”, “corrupt”, “evil” “hypocrites” and “traitors” are constantly shown lying in wait, ready to “take advantage of the absence of the caliph” or his representatives to “violate their oath of allegiance” and “connive” with “infidels” to “betray” or “rebel against” the legitimate Almohad governor. Ibn Sahib al-Sala seeks to resolve the very real, mundane political problem of shifting loyalties, or, to use his term “treachery”, by recourse to an absolutist rhetoric of binary opposites which “cosmosizes” the events and admits no grey spaces of uncertainty.

This is eloquently illustrated in the notice of the conquest of al-Mahdiya, “a victory for which the sky opened and illuminated with its lights the shadows of darkness”. In this battle the Riyah Arabs chose wrongly in allying themselves with Ibn Mardanish and were justly annihilated for “preferring the squawk of Satan to the call of the Merciful”⁹¹. Ibn Sahib al-Sala goes on to say that there were “other Arabs” who had to make a choice between one of “two clearly trodden paths”, the path of Truth, meaning God and his “partisans (*ahluhu*)” the Almohads, which would lead to a “splendid reward”, or the path of tyranny and injustice, which would lead to “severe

⁹¹A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 19; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 79.

torments (*‘adhab nakr*)”⁹². Three times the author reiterates the image of the two paths, and his final comment reveals that the imagery is charged with an eschatological symbolism that transcends the physical space of a mere road: the “real” choice is between “tyranny and rejecting the truth” with the concomitant result of “tasting the bitter torment of hell”, or “remaining faithful and doing right and gaining the prize”. *Al-Mann bi l-imama* is most likely directed at persuading these “other Arabs”.

As for the representations of violent conflict and the scholarly observations regarding Christian literary distinctions between violence and cruelty, I believe that sufficient evidence has been brought forth to suggest certain correctives to the theses propounded by Meyerson and Baraz, among others. In general terms, the conflicts depicted in *al-Mann bi l-imama* fulfil what Meyerson et al described as an identity-constructing function. The challenges posed by Ibn Mardanish, Ibn Hamushk and their Christian “companions” to Almohad rule allow Ibn Sahib al-Sala to reify Almohad identity as the defenders of the true faith against infidelity by portraying every conflict as a manifestation of the foundational paradigms of the cosmic conflict between a God who disposes and a rebel Satan who opposes, and of the Prophet Muhammad’s battles against the infidels and hypocrites in the subjugation of Medina and Mecca— paradigms that are, of course, also the foundational myth of the mahdi Ibn Tumart’s claims to power.

Yet when we consider the question of a differentiation between violence and cruelty, the author of *al-Mann bi l-imama* did not articulate the differences between the violence perpetrated by the Almohads and that undertaken by the Andalusi rebels and their allies strictly in these terms. To be sure, Ibn Sahib al-Sala resorts sometimes to inflammatory and dramatic language, for instance, the “vile attack”, “tormenting” the Almohads, “despising” God and “ravishing and mocking” his God’s creatures. Yet he often allows the cruelty of the enemy’s actions speak for itself by showing them perpetrating crimes that exceed the limits of just war as defined by Islamic Law as, for instance, in the wanton destruction of crops, or in their depraved mockery and torture of captured Almohad soldiers. Such actions “speak for themselves” because Ibn Sahib al-Sala appeals to the pre-stored knowledge of his pious erudite Muslim audience who would immediately know that Islamic laws concerning warfare forbid such acts. Still, too, there were scenes in Ibn Sahib al-Sala employed a neutral tone or even the passive voice to describe the rebel violence against the Almohads, preferring instead to focus upon the psychological devastation provoked by the defeat.

By contrast, Ibn Sahib al-Sala’s depictions of Almohad violence often exhibit a brutality and ferocity that surpass those of their enemies. Almohad soldiers are reported “cutting and gutting” and “ripping out the entrails” of the rebel enemies. One can almost hear the sounds of the swords as they chop off enemy heads, and Ibn Sahib al-Sala often betrays his own delight in

⁹²A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 19; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 79.

describing the “felicity” and “happiness” of the Almohads as they contemplate the blackened corpses of their defeated rivals. Furthermore, the scenes of Almohad soldiers sacking and pillaging the property of the inhabitants of the lands controlled by the rebels often point out that their gains “far surpassed their expectations”. I believe that the contrast does not hinge upon the qualifying of some acts as “violent” and others as “cruel”, but rather on the issue of the legitimacy of the persons carrying them out. Almohad violence against the hypocritical and infidel rebels is *per se* legitimate, while rebel or infidel violence, whether weak and ineffectual or successful, is *per se* illegitimate. Since the discreet acts of violence differ little on both sides, Ibn Sahib al-Sala resorts to narrative strategies that construct and highlight difference. The most important of these strategies was to attribute Almohad violence directly to God, and to foreshadow the graphic carnage and destruction committed by the Almohads with an aura of piety, for instance, by referring to the sacred times, depicting the Almohads praying and commending themselves to God, and so forth. Whereas some scholars would interpret such acts as an attempt to mitigate the hero’s violence, I see it as a strategy to exalt and perhaps even to exaggerate the brutality of Almohad violence as a sign of their uncontested power and legitimate right to rule. The Almohads are represented as gloriously following in God’s footsteps, the god who “annihilates” infidel rebels and “obliterates their last trace”, whereas in reality, their victories proved to be ephemeral.

There is also sufficient evidence to challenge Baraz’s thesis that the “othering” of cruelty and the portrayal of one’s own violence as “normal” arose only in the Christian West. Baraz based his findings upon a comparative reading of Christian and Muslim chronicle accounts of the Mongol invasions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He discovered that only the Christian texts systematically employed hyperbole and emotive language in describing the Mongols, and that only they exaggerated the alterity and even inhumanity of the Mongol invaders⁹³. My analysis of *al-Mann bi l-imama* leads me to suggest several amendments to Baraz’s thesis: Firstly, while I agree with Baraz that “the distinction between violence and cruelty is culturally dependent”⁹⁴, I would add that it is also religiously and genre dependent, and that Muslim writers likewise were capable of associating cruelty with non-Muslim others when it suited their purposes. Although any challenge to Almohad power, even from other Berber Muslims is described with the polemical terms of “treason” and “rebellion”⁹⁵, it is undeniable that Ibn Sahib al-Sala polemically deploys the culturally-charged motif the “Christian

⁹³D. BARAZ, *Violence or Cruelty? An Intercultural Perspective*, p. 172

⁹⁴D. BARAZ, *Violence or Cruelty? An Intercultural Perspective*, p. 172.

⁹⁵See, for instance, the notice of the Berber rebellion in Gomara, where Ibn Sahib al-Sala refers to the leader of the “rebellion”, Saba’ b. Munjafad, as “perverse, sinful, and corrupt”. A. HUICI MIRANDA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 101; IBN SAHIB AL-SALA, *Al-Mann bil-imama*, p. 232. For an alternative comparative study of representations of Muslim and Christian violence, see, Maribel FIERRO, *Decapitation of Christians and Muslims in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula: Narratives, Images, Contemporary Perceptions*, “Comparative Literature Studies”, 45/2 (2008), pp. 137-164.

companions” to denounce the machinations of the Andalusí Muslim rebels as especially evil and pernicious. Similarly, the author attributed Ibn Hamushk’s particular “cruelty” to his “remote foreign” non-Muslim origins. The repeated association of Christian perfidy and cruelty with satanic influence demonstrates that Muslim writers, like their Christian counterparts, could also demonize their enemies.

Secondly, the observation that Ibn Sahib al-Sala chose at times to describe the rebels’ violence using neutral, matter-of-fact language, exposing the cruelty and immorality of their actions through its very illicitness, challenges the assumption that the cruelty of “the other” can only be signalled through the use of melodramatic language and hyperbole. The fact that Ibn Sahib al-Sala reserved his most graphic and melodramatic imagery for the scenes of Almohad violence further challenges this assertion. More to the point, one should not underestimate the power of seemingly neutral informative reports. According to Fedwa Malti-Douglas, such statements do not simply provide “pure information”; they “*signify*” orienting the reader in a “moral universe” of “moral and religious judgements” of the author’s making and shared by his readers⁹⁶. This shared semiotic system enables Ibn Sahib al-Sala to rhetorically de-legitimize the rebellion of Ibn Mardanish and Ibn Hamushk by simply reporting that they destroyed the crops of the civilian population and by invoking repeatedly the incriminating words “Christian companions”.

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⁹⁶Fedwa MALTI-DOUGLAS, *Dreams, the Blind, and the Semiotics of the Biographical Notice*, in IDEM, *Power, Marginality, and the Body*, Aldershot, 2001, pp. 140-141, 161-162.