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Sisnando Davides and his role in the history of Al-Andalus (410-484 AH/1020-1091 AD)

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Abstract

This paper sheds light on the Mozarab Sisnando Davids, who played a significant role in the history of Al-Andalus, the Kingdom of Castile and León, and the establishment of the Kingdom of Portugal. Sisnando, also referred to as "Sheshnand" in Arabic sources, served in the court of 'Abbadid of Sevilla (433-484 AH/ 1042-1091 AD), Ferdinand I of León (426-457 AH/ 1037-1065 AD), and Alfonso VI of Castile and León (457-502 AH/ 1065-1109 AD). He maintained amicable alliances with the Taifa Kings in Al-Andalus. Sisnando provided counsel to the kings of Castile and León throughout the Reconquista Wars. He gained renown for his astute political analysis of the dynamics shaping the Iberian Peninsula, particularly regarding the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians.

Keywords: *Sisnando Davids – Sheshnand - Kingdom of Castile and León - Kingdom of Portugal - Taifa kings - Ferdinand I of León - Alfonso VI of Castile and León - Seville - Toledo – Coimbra*

In his memoirs, Abdallah ibn Buluggin, the final Zirid king of the Taifa of Granada, bestowed upon Sisnando Davides the appellation "Shshland" (1). However, Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī (2) consistently addressed him as "Sheshnand". European historians commonly identified him as Sisnando Davides (3).

Due to its rarity within the Christian Spanish community at that time, the name Sisnando poses a problem about its origin. There is a limited amount of information available regarding Sisnando's family background. The limited information available about him, however, raises several worries. Based on Spanish documents, he was born to Susanna, a mother, and Davids, a feudal lord in the Coimbra region. The absence of the name David in the annals of the Cathedral of Coimbra raises the question of whether Sisnando had Jewish ancestry. Both names derive from Hebrew etymology (4).

Although the name Davides has Jewish origins, the name Sisnando is of Germanic origin and was frequently taken by Christians. Sisnando's potential Jewish lineage cannot be explicitly proposed, although it is not improbable. Overall, however, this collection of names appears to indicate the presence of miscegenation or multiculturalism in Al-Andalus and Spain (5).

Sisnando is believed to have been born in Tentúgal, a small village located between Montemor-O-Velho and Coimbra, around 411 AH/1020 AD. His father owned 50% of the town's land (6).

Sisnando belonged to the Mozarabs, a community of Christians who maintained their faith in

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Al-Andalus while residing under Islamic governance. According to Islamic law, the Mozarabs are considered as one of the groups belonging to 'ahl ad-dīmah, which refers to the religious minority living in a society governed by Islamic law (7).

Although neither of Arab descent or followers of the Islamic faith, these Christians were known as Mozarabs, signifying their embrace of Arab culture and adoption of Arab traditions, language, and lifestyle (8).

Upon the Arabs' conquest of Al-Andalus, they bestowed upon the native Christian population the right to practice their religion freely and allowed for the appointment of bishops. They granted them permission to undertake pilgrimages to Jerusalem construct churches and monasteries, chime church bells, and observe festivities in the thoroughfares of Andalusian cities. Additionally, they bestowed upon them the autonomy to oversee their own administrative matters, with Qumis (an Arabized term for Conte or Conde, denoting a prince) serving as their supervisor. Furthermore, they enlisted the assistance of certain individuals from their ranks in the governance of Al-Andalus (9).

The Mozarabs had a beneficial influence on the history of Al-Andalus. This exemplified their influence and strong belief in Arab culture and civilization, leading to the establishment of a harmonious and stable existence, accompanied by abundant cultural achievements. The Mozarabs, considering the Arab state's continuance as an extension of its existence, security, and well-being, and recognizing that their own welfare was closely tied to the Arab state due to their citizenship, abstained from undermining the state's interests in Al-Andalus. Nevertheless, they consistently backed the state during all pivotal and significant occurrences (10).

In Al-Andalus, the Arabs commonly referred to Christians as "Naṣārā," although they did not utilize the term "Mozarabs." The name "Mozarab" was originally used and adopted in the regions of Castile (11). After Alfonso VI successfully recaptured Toledo in 478 AH/1085 AD, the name "Mozarab" became more commonly used (12). In a document dated 494 AH/1101 AD, Alfonso VI granted certain privileges to the Mozarabs of Toledo, marking the earliest documented instance of this appellation being used within the Kingdom of Castile. The term Mozarab gained regular usage during the Middle Ages (13).

From Coimbra to Seville

Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Abbad, who ruled from 414 to 434 AH (1023 to 1042 AD), effectively founded the Kingdom of Seville in 414 AH (1023 AD). In particular, the rulers of Seville made significant efforts to expand their sphere of influence at the cost of the other Taifas kingdoms in the Western Al-Andalus region. In 425 AH / 1033 AD, Lisbon was temporarily recaptured by Abu al-Qasim, but the Aftasids of Badajoz (413-488 AH / 1022-1094 AD) effort to gain control of the city (14). Al-Mu'tadid of Seville (434-461 AH / 1042-1069 AD) successfully extended his control over western Al-Andalus and gained sovereignty over the cities of Santa Maria do Algarve, Saltés, Niebla, and Silves (15).

As stated in Reinhart Dozy's book (16), prior to 424 AH/1033 AD, Abu al-Qasim seized a total of three hundred prisoners, including Sisnando, in his military expedition against northwest al-Andalus, namely in the vicinity of Lafões, located to the north of Visuo. According to Luisa de Parga, Sisnando arrived in Seville during the years 432-433 AH / 1041-1042. This happened after Al-Mu'tadid of Seville attacked the Lafões region as part of his struggle with the Badajoz rulers (17).

Research conducted by scholars from both Arab and European sources reveals that Sisnando

was captured during a military incursion by Muslims in the Coimbra area in the years 432-433 AH / 1041-1042 AD, under the leadership of Al-Mu'tadid of Seville. Coimbra served as a strategic location where both powers started their invasions and seized a portion of the gains from these military conflicts. During the period, Coimbra was an unregulated region located on the Iberian Peninsula (18).

Isaac (19) states that Sisnando relocated to Seville while his father was being held captive by Al-Mu'tadid of Seville. Sisnando's acceptance into Seville and his role in the monarchs' court could potentially be rationalized based on his lineage as the offspring of a prominent Muslim official from Coimbra. However, it is important to note that this theory lacks any historical substantiation. Furthermore, Sisnando's treatment in Seville diverged from that of a typical prisoner, as the captive individual lacked education and failed to progress to the same levels as Sisnando. He achieved the post of vizier in the court of Al-Mu'tadid, which was exclusively held by the most competent individuals in the Arab-Islamic administration in Al-Andalus.

Sisnando, an erudite individual, authored certain documents in his own script, providing substantiating proof for this hypothesis. Leontina Domingos Ventura also suggested a possibility that Sisnando accompanied his mother and wife to Seville, rather than going alone, in order to argue that he was not truly seized or imprisoned by the Muslims (20).

According to historical records, Sisnando joined Al-Mu'tadid's court and steadily progressed in his position until he was appointed as the vizier, a title he retained until his death (21). Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī (22) characterises Sisnando as an exceptionally clever individual, displaying both audacity and shrewdness. He was a diplomat who regularly journeyed between the courts of Seville and Castile and León. Al-Mu'tadid dispatched Sisnando as a diplomatic representative to Fernando I, the ruler of Castile and León (23). Ibn Bassām (24) states that "He traveled between Al-Mu'tadid and Fernando, and he concluded treaties and settled problems, and succeeded in the tasks assigned to him." The selection of Sisnando as the military leader of the Kingdom of Seville by Al-Mu'tadid demonstrates both Sisnando's high status in Seville and Al-Mu'tadid's confidence in him (25).

While serving as a vizier and ambassador in the court of al-Mu'tadid, Sisnando formed acquaintances with several Taifa rulers and forged political and diplomatic connections. These interactions probably had a significant impact on Sisnando's subsequent life (26).

Following an extended tenure as vizier in Seville, Sisnando opted to depart from Seville and join the court of Fernando I (27). Sisnando's departure from Seville was probably motivated by his apprehension of being implicated in Ismail's conspiracy to assassinate his father, al-Mu'tadid, in 455 AH/1063 AD. Sisnando likely departed from Seville with the intention of joining Fernando I's court, and subsequently accompanied him in the conquest of Coimbra the following year (28).

At the Court of Castile

Sisnando likely came to the realisation during that period of his life that he had the potential to attain his liberty and reunite with Fernando I in their homeland. Furthermore, Fernando held the belief that Sisnando possessed distinct abilities. Given Sisnando's capability to establish diplomatic connections with the Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, these same capabilities could have considerable importance for the Kingdom of Castile and León (29).

As stated by Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī, he established himself in Galicia and possessed expertise in matters related to transportation routes, territorial boundaries, as well as governance and management (30). Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī depicted Sisnando as possessing various attributes,

such as intellect, valour, and expertise in navigation, frontiers, and confidential governmental affairs. Ibn Bassam claimed to possess exceptional diplomatic skills, citing these specific attributes (31). Perhaps due to these attributes, Fernando I summoned him to his court (32).

Alfonso VI is attributed with the statement "The men of al-Andalus are three: Abu Bakr bin Abdul Aziz, Abu Bakr bin Ammar, and Sheshnand" (33).

Sisnando arrived in Castile following the successful unification of the Kingdoms of Castile and León by Fernando I. He then initiated the Reconquista Wars, aiming to reclaim Al-Andalus and expel Muslims from Spain (34).

Fernando, I have consistently expressed our desire to reclaim our territory, which was previously under Arab occupation. Once we have successfully conquered and defeated the Arabs, they will be compelled to vacate our nation and relocate to the Maghreb. We will persistently wage war until its ultimate conclusion. Fernando I's approach towards the Taifa kings in al-Andalus can be characterised by these remarks. Fernando I initiated a sequence of military conflicts in which he triumphed in capturing the cities of Visuo and Lamego in 449 AH / 1057 AD, and Coimbra in 456 AH / 1064 AD (36) (Map No. 1). In addition, Fernando compelled the monarchs of Toledo, Badajoz, and Zaragoza to annually provide him with tribute as a kind of payment for safeguarding their realms from his incursions (37).

After the death of Fernando I, his sons partitioned the country of Castile and León. However, Alfonso VI managed to reunite the country in 465 AH / 1072 AD. Upon completing the reunification, Alfonso VI commanded his army to capture the Islamic cities and eventually reached Tarifa, a city situated in the southernmost region of Al-Andalus, in 475 AH / 1082 AD. Alfonso VI implemented a policy of subjugating the Taifa rulers by instigating conflicts among them and demanding tribute payments in exchange for protection and non-aggression towards their territories. Alfonso VI's approach achieved all of its objectives with success. In 478 AH / 1085 AD, he successfully captured several cities in Al-Andalus, including Toledo, which was the largest city in the region. His primary objective was to seize possession of Cordoba, the Muslim capital of Al-Andalus (38). The objectives of the Reconquista were carefully strategized and successfully accomplished through the application of this policy. (39).

Abdallah ibn Buluggin, a resident of Granada, received information from Sisnando stating that the Romans once governed Al-Andalus but were ultimately vanquished by the Arabs who forced them to retreat to the destitute area of Galicia. Our objective is to regain control over Al-Andalus. The most effective approach to achieve this is by undermining the authority of the Al-Andalus kings and imposing a tribute on them, thereby eliminating their power. These leaders lack power and wealth, making it increasingly effortless to overthrow them (40). Sisnando expounded upon the Christian perspective of past, elucidating the fundamental ideas that formed the basis of the re-conquest plan (41).

Back to Coimbra

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abdallah al-Muzzaffar (437-461 AH / 1045-1063 AD) successfully ended Fernando I's siege of the Islamic forts in western Al-Andalus, including Santarem fort, by agreeing to pay Fernando I a yearly tribute (Map No. 2). Fernando I relocated from Santarem to Coimbra, where the governor, known as "Randa" per al-Muzzaffar, had authority. After Randa had persuaded himself to endorse Fernando I, he relinquished control of the city to him and let it to face its destiny (42).

In 457 AH/1064 AD, Fernando I launched an assault on the city and, following a nine-month

siege, managed to take it via the use of his sword (43). His decision to expel the Muslims from Coimbra and replace them with Christians, upon gaining control of the city, demonstrates his ruling philosophy for Al-Andalus. Furthermore, Fernando I compelled the 5,000 defenders of the city to surrender, and he expelled all the indigenous inhabitants residing between the Mondego and Douro rivers, substituting them with Christians (44).

Coimbra's dominion encompassed the far northwest region of the Iberian Peninsula. After the conquest of Toledo, the Mondego River was established as the southern border of the Kingdom of Castile and León, thereby forming a new frontier for the kingdom (45). Coimbra ceased to be under Muslim dominion after it was conquered by Fernando I in 457 AH/1064 AD. Furthermore, it successfully resisted the Almoravid invasion that had been ongoing since 479 AH/1086 AD. This event significantly influenced the city's historical trajectory as it became the focal point of the county of Portugal, eventually evolving into a kingdom (46).

Historical accounts indicate that Sisnando counselled Fernando I to invade and conquer Coimbra upon joining his court. Therefore, in 457 AH/1064 AD, Fernando I bestowed upon Sisnando the task of capturing Coimbra and bestowed upon him the noble title of "Count." (47). Fernando I bestowed upon Sisnando the title of governor of Coimbra, in recognition of his invaluable contribution to the victorious capture of the city. He bestowed upon him the designation of "Count," but, Sisnando opted to be addressed as "Alvazil," the title he acquired during his tenure at the Seville court, signifying the impact of Islamic culture on him (48).

Sisnando, being a Mozarab himself, deliberately appointed Mozarabs to key positions in the Coimbra government (49). Due to Fernando I's reluctance to make substantial changes to the structure of Coimbra society, he opted for a transitional administration led by Sisnando. He possessed the knowledge and skills to effectively engage with others who practice the Islamic faith (50). Sisnando was selected as the governor of Coimbra due to his birthplace in Tentúgal, a town situated to the west of Coimbra, and his profound familiarity with the region (51).

Sisnando assumed power in Coimbra a few months before the death of Fernando I in 458 AH / 1065 AD. Following Fernando I's death, his son, King García II of Galicia, became the ruler of Castile. However, Sisnando did not support García II and remained neutral during the conflict between the brothers for the Castilian throne, which took place between 458-465AH / 1065-1072 AD (52).

In 464 AH/1071 AD, García II encountered a revolt from the Portuguese aristocrats, under the leadership of Count Nuño Méndez. Count Nuño Méndez was the final count of the Vímara Pérez dynasty in Portugal and the father of Sisnando's wife, Loba Núñez. Nevertheless, García II was victorious over them (53). Nuño Méndez's properties were seized after he was defeated by García II, but part of them were given back to Sisnando and his wife by Alfonso VI following his victory over García II in the Battle of Pedroso in 464 AH/1071 AD. Sisnando's abstention from joining forces with Nuño Méndez in the Battle of Pedroso signifies his lack of inclination to partake in a struggle concerning the realms of Castile and León or engage in hostilities with García II. Sisnando's stance is logical since he would have faced aggression from García II and his authority would have been at risk if he had displayed a confrontational approach towards Castile (54).

Following Sisnando's successful establishment of trust with Alfonso VI, the king made the decision to promote him to the esteemed roles of counsellor, ambassador to the Taifa rulers, military commander, and judge. Sisnando was entrusted with the responsibility of resolving disputes among officials.

Sisnando participated in the military campaign that resulted in the capture of Oviedo in 467 AH / 1075 AD, alongside Alfonso VI. In the same year, Sisnando participated in Alfonso VI's offensive against Seville and Granada (55). He participated in Alfonso VI's military campaign against the Kingdom of Badajoz in 480 AH/1087 AD (56).

Alfonso VI appointed Sisnando as an envoy to the Kingdom of Zaragoza and the Kingdom of Granada on three occasions: in 468 AH / 1076 AD, 473 AH / 1080 AD, and 481 AH / 1088 AD. Alfonso VI had confidence in Sisnando's abilities and was aware of his strong connections with the Taifa kings (57).

Due to Sisnando's extensive understanding of the legal system in the Kingdom of Castile and León, Alfonso VI from Coimbra repeatedly called upon him to serve as a judge in settling conflicts (58). Together with Rodrigo Díaz De Vivar, El Cid El Campeador (437-493 AH/1045-1099 AD), Sisnando worked as a judge in resolving a controversy between the Count Vela Ovéquiz and the Bishop of Oviedo about the property of the monastery of San Salvador De Tol (59). Furthermore, Alfonso VI entrusted him with the responsibility of settling a separate dispute between the bishops of Braga and Orense regarding a territory called Baroncelli in 467 AH/1075 AD (60).

Sisnando's primary objective during his time in Coimbra was to strengthen the city's defenses and fortify the fortifications located south of the Mondego River. This was done to effectively halt any additional incursions into Muslim territory. He renovated the castles of Coimbra, Lousã, Montemor-O-Velho, Penacova, and Penela (61).

Following the re-conquest, Sisnando also undertook the task of managing ecclesiastical matters in Coimbra. He encountered the Mozarab bishop Paternus, who held the position of Bishop of Tortosa, in Santiago de Compostela during the year 457 AH / 1064 AD. Paternus served as a representative of Ahmad al-Muqtadir, the ruler of Zaragoza from 438-474 AH / 1046-1081 AD, in his diplomatic mission to Alfonso VI. However, Sisnando was unsuccessful in persuading Alfonso VI to appoint Paternus as the Bishop of Coimbra. However, the bishop's relocation to Coimbra was not officially completed until Sisnando arrived in Zaragoza on a diplomatic assignment and successfully persuaded him during the year of 471-473 AH/1078-1080 AD (62). He employed a Mozarabic bishop because, during the rule of Alfonso VI, the Mozarabic upper class and the Spanish religious ritual were marginalized and substituted with the official Roman ritual—the sole ritual acknowledged by the Holy See in Rome—as a result of pressure from the clergy advocating for the Gregorian reform. The rulings were made during the Burgos Council in 473 AH/1080 AD (63). Upon the arrival of Bishop Paternus in Coimbra, Sisnando actively endeavored to safeguard the continued existence of the Spanish rite in the territory. Sisnando vehemently opposed the substitution of the Mozarabic rite with the Roman rite in the Diocese of Coimbra, and he continued this resistance until his demise (64).

Following the demise of Bishop Paternus in 479 AH / 1086 AD, the aristocracy of Coimbra elected Martino Simões as his successor. However, Archbishop Bernard of Sédirac preferred Cresconius, the leader of the Monastery of São Bartholomew de Tui, to take the position. There was a conflict between Sisnando and Alfonso VI, which led to Martino resigning and Cresconius staying away from the Coimbra bishopric until Sisnando's death in 484 AH/1091 AD. This indicates that the issue was probably resolved by diplomatic means. Queen Constance of Burgundy's influence and the necessity of French soldiers following the defeat at the Battle of Sagradas prevented Sisnando from convincing Alfonso VI to choose Martino Simões as bishop (65).

Sisnando was concerned about the implications of the French takeover of Alfonso VI's court, particularly the potential loss of authority for the Mozarabs and the potential impact on the identity of the Mozarabic Cathedral of Coimbra. Sisnando successfully repelled these attacks till his demise in 484 AH/1091 AD (66).

In Toledo: Sisnando's Political Maturity

Toledo is renowned as one of the most sizable cities in Al-Andalus. Prior to the Muslims' conquest in 92 AH/711 AD, the city served as the capital of the Goth Kingdom, which held dominion throughout Spain (67).

The Dhulnunid dynasty gained power over Toledo in 427 AH / 1035 AD, following the downfall of the Umayyad Caliphate in Al-Andalus. They then created a Taifa kingdom in the region (68).

Yahya al-Qadir assumed power in Toledo in 467 AH / 1075 AD, with the assistance of the vizier Abu Bakr Yahya bin Saeed bin Ahmed bin Yahya bin Al-Hadidi. However, Al-Qadir promptly assassinated Ibn Al-Hadidi, inciting the inhabitants of Toledo to rebel against him. An invitation was extended to Abu Hafs al-Mutawakkil, the ruler of Badajoz from 464-488 AH / 1072-1094 AD, to visit Toledo. Al-Mutawakkil arrived in Toledo in 472 AH/1079 AD. Al-Qadir reached out to Alfonso VI, the King of Castile and León, who demanded payment in exchange for his assistance in removing Al-Mutawakkil. Consequently, in 474 AH / 1081 AD, Alfonso VI launched an offensive against Toledo and triumphantly captured the city (69).

Al-Qadir bestowed Alfonso VI with the forts of Soure, Coaia, and Caniles, which are three highly important fortifications in Toledo. These forts are situated to the north of the Tagus River and were acquired in 474 AH/1081 AD (70).

Al-Qadir regained power in Toledo in 474 AH/1081 AD, aided by Alfonso VI. However, the inhabitants of Toledo rebelled against him again when he requested them to gather funds for Alfonso VI (71).

As Toledo's conditions worsened, Alfonso VI sensed that the moment had come to reclaim it. The individual requested Pope Gregory VII (466-478 AH / 1073-1085 AD) to repatriate Toledo's ecclesiastical seat to Spain, as it had been away from the Spanish bishoprics for a significant duration (72).

Alfonso VI completed his preparations for the reconquest of Toledo in 478 AH / 1085 AD, and subsequently laid siege to the city. After Alfonso VI intensified the siege on Toledo, the city's inhabitants, under the guidance of Al-Qadir, gathered to Al-Ma'mun Palace to speak with Alfonso VI. The king's attendants greeted the company with sternness and coldness, attempting to hinder their meeting with him by claiming he was asleep. Sisnando's assistance prompted their visit to Alfonso VI's personal secretary, who then guided them to the king's chamber (73). In his book recounting this encounter, Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī observed that a contingent of individuals approached Alfonso on that particular day. They discovered him in a state of wiping his eyes, with disheveled hair and exhibiting a sour disposition. Alfonso inquired, "What is your purpose?" as they directed their attention towards him. They issued a request, they declared. He thereafter directed his company to introduce Ibn Abbad's envoys, who were transporting the gifts that Ibn Abbad had dispatched. He inquired, "For what duration have you been requesting a meeting with me?" Upon receiving gifts from the Taifa rulers as a plea for peace, he commanded his servants to surreptitiously appropriate their offerings. Toledo's inhabitants abandoned him, firmly convinced of their impending demise, and now anticipate the fate that awaits both themselves and their city" (74).

Alfonso VI displayed haughtiness and disdain towards the people of Toledo when they approached him for negotiations prior to their surrender. He was aware of their vulnerability and anticipated that his ongoing assault on the city would quickly overpower them, as they lacked the backing of the Taifa kings (75).

Toledo was captured by Alfonso VI after a prolonged siege lasting nine months, in 478 AH / 1085 AD. The city was to be surrendered in accordance with the specified conditions (76):

1. Safeguarding the residents of Toledo, including their children and financial assets.
2. Any resident of Toledo has the right to desire to go from the city, and those who opt to do so are permitted to take their funds with.
3. Compelling the remaining inhabitants of Toledo to make tribute payments either personally or on behalf of their families.
4. If any residents of Toledo choose to return to Toledo after his departure, his belongings will be returned to him.
5. Surrendering the city to Alfonso VI.
6. Muslim residents of Toledo have the freedom to adhere to their own legal system, seek guidance from their judges, and enforce their laws.
7. The Grand Mosque of Toledo is under Muslim authority.
8. Muslims contribute taxes to the monarch of Castile and León.
9. The citizens of Toledo offer some of their prominent individuals as hostages.

Alfonso VI's treatment of the people of Toledo following the city's conquest can be described as that of a conqueror towards the defeated. It is crucial to analyze his behavior in relation to his objective of dominating the entire Al-Andalus region (77). Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī provides an account of the situation in Al-Andalus during the period, stating that when Izfunesh captured Toledo, he became arrogant and started to degrade the Taifa rulers, actively seeking to take control of their territories. This caused many of them to surrender to him (78).

The decline of Toledo inflicted a significant setback upon the Muslim presence in Al-Andalus. The Spanish saw the capture of Toledo as a significant triumph due to its strategic position at the heart of Al-Andalus. The conquest of Toledo was subsequently succeeded by the conquest of all its associated cities, such as Magrit (Madrid), Medinaceli, Guadalajara, Uclés, and Cuenca, which encompasses a vast region extending to the boundaries of Cordoba. The Reconquista Movement achieved a splendid triumph with the fall of Toledo because Old Castile, located in northern Al-Andalus, functioned as the capital of the Spanish Reconquista (79).

Historical sources corroborate that Sisnando played a significant part in the recapture of Toledo. In 476 AH / 1083 AD, he departed from Coimbra to join Alfonso VI in his assault on Toledo. His role in coordinating the encounter between the delegation from Toledo and Alfonso VI, after the latter had initially declined it, was of utmost importance (80).

Sisnando assumed the position as the inaugural governor of Toledo upon its conquest. The subsequent are the rationales for this (81):

1. Sisnando's prior role in the court of Seville, a significant city akin to Toledo, provided him with expertise in handling Muslims.
2. Sisnando's skillful diplomacy facilitated the smooth transition of power in Coimbra from Islamic to Christian rule by promoting reconciliation between the incoming Christian population and the subjugated Muslim inhabitants of the region.
3. Both Toledo and Coimbra had significant populations of Mozarabs.

4. The region of Coimbra, located near the Taifa kingdoms, desired to be governed and strategically strengthened. Sisnando achieved this objective during his reign over Coimbra.

Sisnando recommended to Alfonso VI that he should demonstrate benevolence towards the people of Toledo in order to ease their distress (82). Sisnando recommended to Alfonso VI the preservation of the inhabitants of Toledo within their city. He further motivated Alfonso by stating, "You will not encounter a more capable populace to govern the city of Toledo, nor a ruler more submissive to your authority than Ibn Dhu al-Nun," as documented by Ibn Bassam in his book. Nevertheless, Alfonso declined Sisnando's counsel. He requested that he treat the people of Toledo with kindness, refrain from exerting any pressure on the Taifa rulers in Al-Andalus, accept them as his subordinates, and assume that if the Taifa kings were to be ousted, they would seek protection from someone who would defend them against his persecution (83).

Sisnando successfully gained the support of numerous Toledo locals by taking a compassionate and inclusive approach, resulting in some individuals deciding to convert to Christianity. Sisnando successfully executed his strategy because to his Mozarab background, which provided him with firsthand experience living under Muslim rule, interacting with Muslims, and closely observing their moral values. Choosing the most effective approach to assist them and gain their affection was not difficult for him (84).

According to Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī, Sisnando implemented policies in Toledo that including assuming control of the city, engaging its residents in collaborative efforts, alleviating the burden of occupation, and ensuring fair dispensation of justice. A substantial portion of the urban populace showed their support for him, with a considerable number of people adopting Christianity, causing distress and fury among the Muslims living in Al-Andalus" (85). Following Alfonso VI's successful capture of Toledo, Sisnando offered counsel to him, suggesting that he govern Al-Andalus by utilizing the Taifa kings and adopting a tolerant approach towards the Muslim population. In addition, Sisnando warned him that if the Muslims in Toledo were repressed, they would probably seek assistance from external powers. Sisnando's political acumen is evident (86).

Sisnando decided to leave his position of authority in Toledo and return to Coimbra within a few months. Both Ibn Bassam and Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada concur that Sisnando's decision was influenced by the transformation of the Grand Mosque of Toledo into a cathedral. As a result, Sisnando lost control of the city to Queen Constance of Burgundy and Bernard of Sédirac, who was appointed as the archbishop of Toledo (87).

Alfonso embarked on a mission to convert the Grand Mosque into a church, against Sisnando's cautionary advice. Ibn Bassam confirms that Sisnando strongly opposed this decision, as it would provoke the anger of Muslims. Despite Sisnando's advice, Alfonso chose to ignore it and issued the command to convert the mosque into a church. In June 1085 AD, the mosque underwent a conversion and was repurposed as a church (88).

Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada states that Bernard, a monk from Cluny and the abbot of Sahagún monastery, was chosen as the archbishop of Toledo. Upon the king's arrival in the country of Leon, Queen Constance implored the chosen individual to capture the magnificent mosque, and he successfully carried out her request. Alfonso was deeply outraged and filled with intense anger upon learning about the event, as he had made a solemn commitment to safeguard the Muslims' mosque. According to historian Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the main driving force behind the conversion of the mosque into a cathedral was attributed to the Queen and the

Archbishop of Toledo. However, Ibn Bassam attributes the responsibility to Alfonso VI. During a church council held in Toledo in June 478 AH/1085 AD, Alfonso VI elected Bernard of Sédillac, the abbot of the Monastery of Sahagún, as the archbishop of Toledo. His intense fervor was only displayed once he had assumed control. Bernard capitalized on the king's absence from Toledo and, with the consent of Queen Constance of Burgundy, forcefully entered the Toledo Mosque and put bells within. On December 18, 478 AH/1085 AD, the Grand Mosque of Toledo underwent a conversion and became a cathedral. Alfonso VI breached the agreements he had established with the Muslims by failing to take any action in this matter. He made a commitment to safeguard their mosques and their freedom to practice their religious rituals (89).

Historians concur that Sisnando returned to Coimbra subsequent to the conversion of the Toledo Mosque into a cathedral. Nevertheless, historical documents indicate that Sisnando departed from Toledo due to many factors, which encompass:

1. Sisnando experienced the growing influence of the Cluny's clergy and their animosity towards the Mozarabs, particularly after their triumph in the Council of Burgos in 473 AH/1080 AD. This victory resulted in the elimination of the Spanish religious practices in the church and the conversion of the Toledo Mosque into a cathedral, effectively implementing their religious policies. Nevertheless, in December 478 AH / 1085 AD, Sisnando embarked on another journey to Toledo with the purpose of participating in the consecration of Toledo Cathedral, fulfilling his role as the governor of Coimbra (90).
2. The Catholic movement led by Pedro Ansures, Count Robert of Burgundy, and Bernard of Sédillac emerged victorious in Alfonso VI's court. They adhered to the directives of the renowned Monastery of Cluny in central France, which was instrumental in instigating the Crusade against the Islamic East. They opposed the political movement of the Mozarabs, led by Sisnando, and viewed them as infidels. Consequently, they actively sought to expel them from Alfonso VI's court in order to further their radical agenda (91).
3. Sisnando's intention was to maintain the friendly relationships he had with the Taifa kings of Badajoz and Seville (92).
4. Sisnando discovered that the Taifa kings were seeking assistance from the Almoravids in Morocco and that the Almoravids were planning to provide aid to Al-Andalus. He predicted that in the event of Toledo's fall, the Taifa rulers would depend on the Almoravids' influence in Morocco to provide support to Al-Andalus. Due to concerns about potential Muslim attacks, he decided to go back to Coimbra and strengthen its defenses (93).

Based on Spanish sources, Sisnando was cognizant of the communications between the Taifa kings and Yusuf ibn Tashfin, the Almoravid leader in the Maghreb, who aimed to protect them from Alfonso VI's control, notwithstanding As Islamic sources do not mention this, Sisnando returned to Coimbra to fortify the city's defenses and strategize an offensive against the impending influx of invaders. This notion is supported by the counsel that Sisnando provided to Alfonso VI before to the retaking of Toledo, as well as references made in Islamic sources (94).

Upon his arrival in Coimbra in October 478 AH/1085 AD, Sisnando promptly strengthened the area's defenses, focusing particularly on fortifying the frontier along the Mondego River. In addition, he reconstructed the defensive structures of Soure, Santa Eulália, and Montemor, and erected the fortresses of Penela and Arouce (95).

Despite Sisnando's high rank as one of Alfonso VI's most senior men, there is a lack of information regarding his involvement at The Battle of Sagrajas in 479 AH / 1086 AD.

Possibly, Sisnando opted to stay in Coimbra to oversee its administration, out of concern for his own safety, or due to apprehension over relinquishing control over Coimbra along with his departure. Frankish knights' arrival in the Iberian Peninsula (96).

As Alfonso VI prepared to reclaim Toledo, a multitude of Crusaders amassed in the Atlantic Ocean near Lisbon. Upon receiving this information, Alfonso VI promptly approached them and delivered an impassioned speech, encouraging them to engage in battle against the Muslims in Al-Andalus rather than prolonging their search for a route to the Islamic East. He exerted a significant effect over the Crusaders. The individuals assembled in the Atlantic Ocean eagerly joined his battle against Toledo. Upon receiving the blessing of Pope Victor III (478-481 AH / 1085-1088 AD), they proceeded to launch an attack on their adversaries. Thus, Sisnando chose to stay at Coimbra, anticipating the outcome of the conflict between Alfonso VI and Yusuf ibn Tashfin (97).

His death

Sisnando, who had ruled semi-independently in Coimbra for over twenty years, passed away at Coimbra on either August 25 or 26, 484 AH / 1091 AD. He was laid to rest in the historic cathedral of Coimbra (98). Following Sisnando's demise, his son-in-law, Martim Moniz De Montemor, assumed the position of ruler of El Cid El Campeador. He endeavoured to uphold the Sisnando policy that supported the Mozarabs, but he departed from Coimbra and relocated to Valencia, where he became a member of El Cid El Campeador's court (99). The County of Coimbra was incorporated into the County of Portugal during the reign of Henry of Burgundy (489-506 AH / 1096-1112 AD) (100).

Conclusion

Based on the accounts of Arab and Spanish historians, Sisnando was a multifaceted individual who served as a warrior, diplomat, adviser, and fair judge, and had a notable impact on Coimbra and the eventual kingdom of Portugal (101).

Sisnando successfully facilitated a resolution between the Taifa rulers of Al-Andalus and the monarchs of Castile and León. He was entrusted with tasks by the kings of Castile and León, which he successfully performed. His advice had a significant impact on the development of Muslim-Christian relations.

In a remarkable case unique to Christian Spain, Sisnando exercised a certain level of autonomy in ruling Coimbra, similar to the Taifa kings. This is evident from his decisions, such as selecting a bishop for the Diocese of Coimbra and rejecting the entry of a new religious authority into his jurisdiction. When Cresconius was chosen as the new bishop of Coimbra in 481 AH / 1088 AD, shortly after the death of Bishop Paternus, Sisnando prevented him from assuming the position. Cresconius had to wait until 484 AH / 1091 AD, the day of Sisnando's death, to finally take on the role. The "autonomy" Sisnando enjoyed was a result of his strong political connections, initially with Fernando I and later with Alfonso VI. He was one of the trusted individuals of the monarchs of Castile and León. Additionally, the unique social characteristics of the city and region of Coimbra had a role in this autonomy (102).

Sisnando effectively safeguarded the region and city of Coimbra, ensuring its continued Christian control. Following the year 457 AH/1064 AD, the city remained impervious to Muslim conquest, thereby maintaining its Christian identity (103).

Sisnando retained the title of vizier that he acquired during his tenure in Seville due to his satisfaction with his Mozarabic ancestry. While managing Coimbra, he also appointed a council consisting of Mozarabic men (104).

Note

1. Ibn Buluggīn, 2006, p. 95.
2. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, pp. 265-168.
3. Isaac 2013: p. 94.
4. Isaac 2013: pp. 94-98.
5. Alarcão 2021: p. 161.
6. Lay 2009: pp. 9-10; Harrison 2009: pp. 346, Note. 32; Isaac 2013: p. 98, pp. 111-112; Isaac 2014: pp. 59-60; Neves 2015: p. 70.
7. Māky, 1994, p. 32.
8. Māky, 1994, p. 33; Al-'Abādy, 1994, p. 12; 'Abdāllah, 2011, p. 115; Mātlūb, 2021, pp. 208-209.
9. Māky, 1994, p. 32; 'Abdāllah, 2011, p. 98; Āḥmd, 2014, pp. 107-108; Şf Āldyn, 2019, p. 17- 38; Ālmūr, 2022, p. 35.
10. Āḥmd, 2014, pp. 105-106.
11. Beale-Rivaya 2010: p. 54.
12. Beale-Rivaya 2010: p. 61.
13. Moreno 2012: p. 4.
14. Sālim, n.d, p. 376; Al-dārwiş; Al'alyāwiş, 2008, p. 10; Albnā, 2016, p. 139.
15. Khālis, 1965, pp. 24-25, 114-128; Ṭawīl, 1994, p. 138; 'Awişdah, 2021, pp. 558-560; Qamān, 2023, p. 640.
16. Dwzy, 1995, vol. 3, p. 11
17. Molénat 2022: p. 113.
18. 'Anān, 1997, p. 58; Lay 2009: pp. 9-10; Harrison 2009: p. 346, Note. 32; Isaac 2013: p. 118; Isaac 2014: pp. 59-60; Neves 2015: p.72; Albnā, 2016, p. 140; Ālmūr, 2022, p. 109.
19. Isaac 2013: p. 114.
20. Neves 2015: p.72.
21. 'Anān, 1997, p. 58; Ālmūr, 2022, p. 94.
22. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, pp. 165-166.
23. Ālmūr, 2022, pp. 62, 110.
24. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, pp. 166-167.
25. Şf Āldyn, 2019, p. 38; Ālmūr, 2022, p. 94.
26. Harrison 2009: p. 346, Note. 32; Isaac 2013: p. 59.
27. Dwzy, 1995, vol. 3, p. 79
28. Isaac 2013: p. 114; Neves 2015: p 73.
29. Isaac 2013: p. 115,
30. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 166.
31. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 166.
32. Lay 2009: pp. 9-10; Isaac 2013: pp. 41-42; Isaac 2014: p. 61.
33. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 5, p. 44.
34. Al'aābd, 2008, p. 32; Znāty, 2010, pp. 62-63; S'adūn, 2014, 431; Al-dārwiş; Al'alyāwiş, 2018, p. 231; Qamān, 2023, p. 644.

35. Ibn 'Idārī, 1983, vol. 3, p. 282.
36. Al-Nashshār, 1995, p. 34; 'Anān, 1997, p. 85; Al'alyāwiy, 2015, p. 278; Qamān, 2023, p. 644.
37. Khālīs, 1965, p. 131.
38. Ibn Buluggīn, 2006, pp. 94-95; Tawīl, 1994, p. 146; Al-slmy, 2009, pp. 64-65. 103-104; Znāty, 2010, pp. 64-65; S'adūn, 2014, pp. 432-433; Al-dārwiş; Al'alyāwiy, 2019, pp. 47-48; Qamān, 2023, pp. 646-447.
39. Kennedy 1996: p. 149; Lay 2011: p. 129-130; De Ayala 2013: pp. 231-232; Tolan, et al. 2013: p. 41.
40. Ibn Buluggīn, 2006, pp. 91-93, 95.
41. Almansa 2009: pp. 33-34; Lay 2009: pp. 16-17; Lay 2011: pp. 129-130.
42. Dwzy, 1995 AD, vol. 3, p. 82; Sālim, n.d, p. 421; Hālyl, 2007, p. 152; Al-dārwiş; Al'alyāwiy, 2008, p. 11; AlMuḥammady, 2016, p. 185; Albnā, 2016, p. 141; Ilyās, 2018, p. 125; 'Abūd; S'adūn, 2019, p. 307; Mānsūr, 2020, p. 28; Ālmūr, 2022, pp. 111-112; Al'alyāwiy; Al-dārwiş, 2022, pp. 23-24.
43. Alarcão 2021: p. 160.
44. Hālyl, 2007, p. 133; Albnā, 2016, p. 141; Ğwādah, 2022, pp. 1013-1014; Al'alyāwiy; Al-dārwiş, 2022, p. 24.
45. Isaac 2013: p. 30; Alberto & Furtado 2011, p. 14.
46. Isaac 2013: p. 32; Al-Nashshār, 1995, p. 34; Albnā, 2016, p. 142; Al'alyāwiy; Al-dārwiş, 2022, p. 26.
47. Sālim, n.d, pp. 422-423; Muḥammad, 2011, p. 179; 'Abūd; S'adūn, 2019, p. 309; Ālmūr, 2022, pp. 110, 112; Al'alyāwiy; Al-dārwiş, 2022, p. 24; Harrison 2009, p. 346, Note. 32; Isaac 2013: pp. 11, 29, 112, 115; Isaac 2014: p.63.
48. Aillet 2009: p. 87; Isaac 2013: p. 30; Neves 2015: p. 73, Annan, 1997, p. 385.
49. Neves 2015: p. 74.
50. Aillet 2009: p. 73.
51. Isaac 2013: pp. 41, 112.
52. Isaac 2013: p. 57; Alberto & Furtado 2011: p. 14.
53. Lay 2009: p. 13; Isaac 2013: p. 116; Alberto & Furtado 2011: p. 14; Neves 2015: p. 74.
54. Isaac 2013: p. 57; Alberto & Furtado 2011: p. 14.
55. Ḥāssān, 2002, p. 185; 'Aly, 2006, pp. 101-102; Znāty, 2010, p. 111; Isaac 2013: p. 58.
56. Isaac 2013: p. 143; Neves 2015: p. 75.
57. Isaac 2013: pp. 41, 119; De Ayala 2013: pp. 231-232.
58. Neves 2015: p. 81.
59. Isaac 2013: p.118.
60. Isaac 2013: p.119.
61. Isaac 2013: p.53.
62. Harrison 2009: pp. 345-346; Isaac 2013: pp. 98-99; Real; Fernandes 2021: 143.
63. Aillet 2009: p. 73; Isaac 2014: p. 68.
64. Real; Fernandes 2021: p.139.
65. Isaac 2013: pp.109-110.
66. Isaac 2013: pp. 64- 65.
67. Ibn 'Idārī, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 12-13; Al-slmy, 2004, p. 13, 20-21; Al-ḥlyfāt, 2020, pp. 636-637; 'Amrān, 2021, p. 314.
68. Al-slmy, 2004, pp. 105-106; Al-ḥlyfāt, 2020, p. 637-638; 'Amrān, 2021, p. 314; Qamān, 2023, p. 640.

69. Ibn Buluggīn, 2006, p. 99; 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 157-160; Ibn Sa'īd, 1955, vol. 2, p. p. 13-14; Alsḥhybāny, 1998, p. 375; Al-slmy, 2004, p. 120-125; Znāty, 2010, p. 115; AlMuḥammady, 2016, p. 189-191; Ilyās, 2018, pp. 129-130; 'Amr, 2019, p. 24-29; Al-hlyfāt, 2020, p. 642-643; 'Amrān, 2021, pp. 315-316; Qamān, 2023, p. 640.
70. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 3, p. 249; Hālyl, 2007, pp. 110-111; Znāty, 2010, p. 123; Al-dārwiş; Al'alyāwi, 2018, p. 232; Al-hlyfāt, 2020, p. 643; Hūsāyn, 2021, p. 208.
71. Al-slmy, 2004, p. 126; Al-hlyfāt, 2020, p. 648.
72. Al-Maqqarī, 1968, vol. 1, p. 340; Al-slmy, 2004, p. 127-128; 'Amr, 2019, p. 29.
73. 'Anān, 1997, p. 112-113; Alsḥhybāny, 1998, p. 386; Hālyl, 2007, p. 165; 'Amr, 2019, p. 30; Al-hlyfāt, 2020, p. 651-653; Ālmūr, 2022, pp. 115-116.
74. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 167.
75. Bn 'abwd, 1985, p. 38-39; Dwzy, 1995, vol. 3, p. 127.
76. Dwzy, 1995, vol. 3, p. 127-128; 'Anān, 1997, p. 113-114; Znāty, 2010, pp. 126-127.
77. Bn 'abwd, 1985, p. 38.
78. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 167.
79. 'Anān, 1997, p. 114; Fyrāndū, 1998, p. 163; Āḥmd, 2014, p. 109; Hūsāyn, 2021, p. 209; Ālmūr, 2022, p. 118; Qamān, 2023, 647-648.
80. Neves 2015: pp. 74-75
81. Isaac 2013: pp.59-60; Isaac 2013: pp.126-127
82. Bn 'abwd, 1985, p. 34; Al-'Abādy, 1994, p. 13; Muḥammad, 2011, p. 179; AlMuḥammady, 2016, p. 191-192; 'Amr, 2019, p. 31; Al-hlyfāt, 2020, p. 654.
83. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 168.
84. Bn 'abwd, 1985, p. 34-35; Al-'Abādy, 1994, p. 13; Al-slmy, 2004, p. 129-131; Muḥammad, 2011, p. 179; 'Amr, 2019, p. 30; Al-hlyfāt, 2020, p. 654; 'Amrān, 2021, pp. 318-319.
85. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 167.
86. Bemaboud 1978: p.256.
87. Bn 'abwd, 1985, p. 37; Hālyl, 2007, p. 174; Lay 2009: pp. 20-21; Znāty, 2010, p. 129; Isaac 2013: pp. 106-107; Al-dārwiş; Al'alyāwi, 2018, p. 232; 'Amrān, 2021, p. 318.
88. 'Al-Shantarīnī, 1979, vol. 7, p. 168.
89. Māky, 1994, p. 37; 'Anān, 1997, p. 397; Znāty, 2010, p. 129; Ğ'adān, 2023, p. 959.
90. Bemaboud 1978: p. 257; Isaac 2013: pp. 62-63; Isaac 2014: p.71; Neves 2015: p.75; Moreno 2012: p. 24.
91. Bn 'abwd, 1985, p. 45-46; Hālyl, 2007, p. 146; Znāty, 2010, p. 129; Alzrāfy, 2018, p. 66; Al-hlyfāt, 2020, p. 655; 'Awīḍah, 2021, p. 573; Ğ'adān, 2023, p. 949.
92. Isaac 2013: pp. 60-61.
93. Isaac 2013: pp. 107-108.
94. Neves 2015: p. 75.
95. Isaac 2013: pp. 45-46, 108; Isaac 2014: p. 72.
96. Isaac 2013: pp. 63-64.
97. Dwzy, 1995, vol. 3, p. 132; Al-Nashshār, 1995, p. 35; Dlah, 2015, pp. 42-43.
98. Isaac 2013: p. 144; Neves 2015: p. 75.
99. Lay 2009: 51; Alberto & Furtado 2011: 19.
100. Al-Nashshār, 1995, p. 37; Alberto & Furtado 2011: 19; Albna, 2016, p. 142.
101. Isaac 2013: p. 145.
102. Isaac 2013: pp. 146-147.
103. Isaac 2013: pp. 149-150.
104. Neves 2015: pp. 75-76.

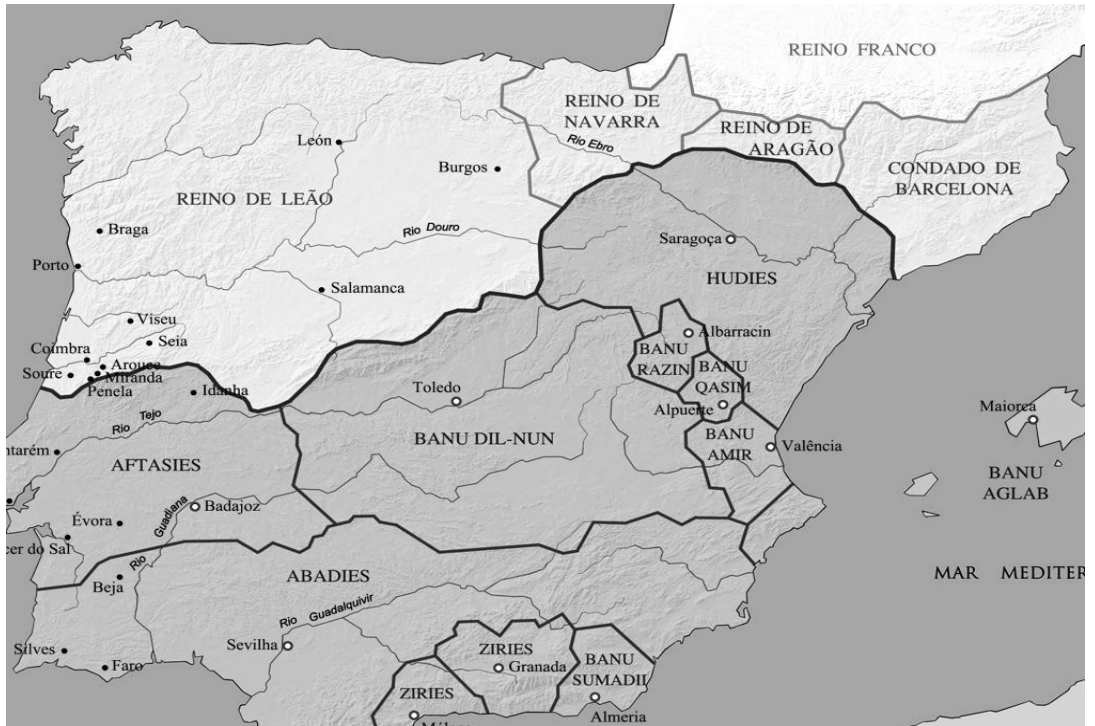
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Map no. 1: Islamic and Christian Lands in the Time of Sisnando, Source: Alarcão 2021: p. 173



MAP 7. Gharb al-Andalus and the Portuguese Reconquest.

Map no. 2: Gharb Al-Andalus, Source: Disney 2009: p. XXX.