

Rosario Arquero Avilés
Gonzalo Marco Cuenca

HISHAM II. The Child Caliph.



On the death of Caliph al-Hakan II, his heir and successor, Hisham II or Hixam II, occupied the Umayyad throne. Hisham II, son of al-Hakan II and his concubine Subh, was born in 965 in Cordoba, one year after the production of the Pyxis of Zamora (Puerta Vílchez, 2013).

Hisham II was only 11 years old when his father died and, for the first time in the history of al-Andalus, a child reigned. He had to delegate his powers to Al-Mushafi, his prime minister or *hayih* (Vallvé, 1992). The appointment of Hisham II led to great palace intrigues and conspiracies, motivated by the controversy that he was a minor, as this violated Islamic tradition, which stipulated that a Caliph should be an adult and capable of exercising his religious and political functions.

His premature succession led to an initial conspiracy against his appointment, with some detractors supporting the proposal to elevate his uncle Al-Mughira, the younger brother of al-Hakam II, to power, as an alternative. However, they failed; his mother, Subh, widow of al-Hakam II, the prime minister Al-Mushafi, aided by Muhammad ibn Abi Amir, the Almanzor of the Christian chronicles, defended the rights of the younger Hixam and proclaimed him the third Umayyad Caliph (Calvo Poyato, 2013; Collins, 2013). Al-Mughira would be ruthlessly eliminated by Almanzor, who personally arranged for his assassination (Guichard, 2015).

With Subh's support, Almanzor's career was meteoric. Ibn Hayyan, the primary source of information on the period, suggests that they were lovers and that they had already had relations during the lifetime of al-Hakam II, during which Almanzor transitioned from being a simple writer of memorials to becoming the administrator of the assets of the younger Hisham (Calvo Poyato, 2013).

Hisham II had a theoretical reign of 33 years (976-1009), but the royal power and his person would be controlled by different regents (Valencia, 2011), from his mother Subh, to the vizier Al-Mushafi, and fundamentally Almanzor, who used him as a symbolic figure while consolidating his power.

His reign marked the beginning of the Umayyad decline in al-Andalus, as he was unable to exercise leadership worthy of his grandfather, Caliph Abderramán III, and his father, al-Hakam II.

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